



Let Freedom Ring Vol. 2

BAM's provocative public/outdoor art project returns with meditations on freedom by Laylah Amatullah Barrayn, Jordan Casteel, Kevin Claiborne, Lizania Cruz, Deborah Roberts, Amy Sherald, and Jasmine Wahi

For a limited time
February 12-15, 2021

Bloomberg Philanthropies is the Season Sponsor

Let Freedom Ring Vol. 2

Curated by Larry Ossei-Mensah

Art by Laylah Amatullah Barrayn, Jordan Casteel, Kevin Claiborne, Lizania Cruz, Deborah Roberts, Amy Sherald, & Jasmine Wahi

February 12-15, 2021

The BAM sign screen (corner of Flatbush Ave & Lafayette Ave)

Run time: Looped continuously

FREE

February 8, 2021/Brooklyn, NY—Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM) presents the highly anticipated *Let Freedom Ring Vol. 2*, a provocative exploration of the meaning of freedom. The digital billboard-based series features artwork by established and emerging artists deeply engaged in an ongoing dialogue about the artists' role in art, social justice, equity, and inclusion. Set to coincide with Black History Month and President's Day, *Let Freedom Ring Vol. 2* will run for a limited time on the BAM sign screen located at the corner of Lafayette and Flatbush Avenues, from February 12-15, 2021.

Spearheaded by BAM Curator-at-Large, Larry Ossei-Mensah, the new installment of the public art project features work from Laylah Amatullah Barrayn, Jordan Casteel, Kevin Claiborne, Lizania Cruz, Deborah Roberts, Amy Sherald, and Jasmine Wahi. The artwork chosen by each artist depicts their response to Ossei-Mensah's question: *What does freedom mean?*

Let Freedom Ring Vol. 2 is a follow up to last month's Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. [tribute installation](#), described by *The New York Times* as "what freedom looks like when it undergirds the lives of Black and Latino people." The project aims to spark a continuous civic discourse in Brooklyn and encourage viewers to reflect on what freedom means in 2021.

For press information, contact Cynthia Tate at ctate@bam.org

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Laylah Amatullah Barrayn is a documentary photographer. Barrayn is a frequent contributor to *The New York Times* and has been published in *Le Monde*, *National Geographic*, *Vogue*, *NPR*, *VOX*, *Vanity*

Fair, among other publications. Her work was recently nominated for a 2020 News and Documentary Emmy. Barrayn is the co-author of the book *MFON: Women Photographers of the African Diaspora* and a member of Kamoinge, a pioneering collective of African American photographers founded in 1963. She was included as one of the Royal Photographic Society's (UK) Hundred Heroines.

Her work has been exhibited nationally and internationally, with solo exhibitions at The Museum of the African Diaspora San Francisco, The Taubman Museum of Art (VA), MAK Gallery (Venice + London), and the Museum of Contemporary African Diasporic Arts (NY). Her work has been shown collectively at the MANIFESTA Biennale (Italy); Brighton Photo Biennial (UK); The Museum of Contemporary Photography (Chicago). Barrayn is currently working on a book on contemporary Black photographers. www.LaylahBarrayn.com

Jordan Casteel has rooted her practice in community engagement, painting from her own photographs of people she encounters. Posing her subjects within their natural environments, her nearly life-size portraits and cropped compositions chronicle personal observations of the human experience. Casteel received her BA from Agnes Scott College, Decatur, GA for Studio Art (2011) and her MFA in Painting and Printmaking from Yale School of Art, New Haven, CT (2014). In 2020, Casteel presented a solo exhibition titled "Within Reach," curated by Massimiliano Gioni, at the New Museum, New York, presented in conjunction with a fully illustrated catalogue published by the New Museum. Other recent institutional solo exhibitions include "Jordan Casteel: Returning the Gaze," presented at both the Denver Art Museum, CO (2019), and the Iris & B. Gerald Cantor Center for Visual Arts at Stanford University, CA (2019–20). In recent years, she has participated in exhibitions at institutional venues such as San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, CA (2020); Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, IL (2020); Kunsthal KAdE, Amersfoort, Netherlands (2020); Baltimore Museum of Art, MD (2019); Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, AR (2018); MoCA Los Angeles, CA (2018); The Studio Museum in Harlem, NY (2017 and 2016); and MASS MoCA, North Adams, MA (2017). Casteel is an Assistant Professor of Painting in the Department of Arts, Culture, and Media at Rutgers University - Newark. The artist lives and works in New York.

Kevin Claiborne is a multidisciplinary conceptual artist whose work examines intersections of identity, social environment, and mental health within the Black American experience. Using photography as a foundation and language as material, Claiborne uses his art as weapon and armor in the fight for liberation. He is a graduate of the historically Black college North Carolina Central University (2012), Syracuse University (2016), and currently an MFA Visual Arts candidate at Columbia University (2021).

Lizania Cruz is a Dominican participatory artist, designer, and curator interested in how migration affects ways of being and belonging. Through research, oral history, and audience participation, she creates projects that highlight a pluralistic narrative on migration. Cruz has been an artist-in-residence and fellow at the Laundromat Project Create Change (2018-2019), Agora Collective Berlin (2018), Design Trust for Public Space (2018), Recess Session (2019), IdeasCity: New Museum (2019), Stoneleaf Retreat (2019), Robert Blackburn Workshop Studio Immersion Project (SIP) (2019), A.I.R. Gallery (2020—2021), BRIClab: Contemporary Art (2020—2021), Center for Book Arts (2020—2021), and Jerome Hill Artist Fellow, Visual Arts (2021-2022).

Larry Ossei-Mensah uses contemporary art as a vehicle to redefine how we see ourselves and the world around us. The Ghanaian-American curator and cultural critic has organized exhibitions and programs at commercial and nonprofit spaces around the globe from New York City to Rome featuring artists such as Firelei Baez, Allison Janae Hamilton, Brendan Fernandes, Ebony G. Patterson, Modou Dieng, Glenn Kaino, Jori Minaya and Stanley Whitney to name a few. Moreover, Ossei-Mensah has

actively documented cultural happenings featuring the most dynamic visual artists working today, such as Derrick Adams, Mickalene Thomas, Njideka Akunyili Crosby, Federico Solmi, and Kehinde Wiley.

A native of The Bronx, Larry Ossei-Mensah is also the co-founder of ARTNOIR, a 501(c)(3) and global collective of culturalists who design multimodal experiences aimed to engage this generation's dynamic and diverse creative class. Ossei-Mensah currently serves as Curator at Large at BAM, where he curated the inaugural exhibition *When A Pot Finds Its Purpose* featuring the work of Glenn Kaino at the Rudin Family Gallery. He will be co-curating with Omsk Social Club 7th Athens Biennale in Athens, Greece in 2021. Ossei-Mensah was named to Artnet's 2020 Innovator List. Ossei-Mensah has had recent profiles in such publications as the *New York Times*, *Artsy*, and *Cultured Magazine*, which recently named him one of seven curators to watch in 2019.

Deborah Roberts is a mixed media artist whose work challenges the notion of ideal beauty. Her work has been exhibited internationally across the USA and Europe. Roberts' work is in the collections of the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, New York; Brooklyn Museum, New York, New York; The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York, New York; LACMA, Los Angeles, California; the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, Virginia and the Blanton Museum of Art, Austin, Texas, among several other institutions. She was selected to participate in the Robert Rauschenberg Residency (2019) and is the recipient of the Anonymous Was A Woman Grant (2018), Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant (2016), and the Ginsburg-Klaus Award Fellowship (2014). Roberts received her MFA from Syracuse University, New York.

Roberts lives and works in Austin, Texas. She has a solo exhibition at The Contemporary Austin. Roberts is represented by Stephen Friedman Gallery, London and Susanne Vielmetter Los Angeles Projects, CA.

Through her monumental portraits of African American subjects, **Amy Sherald** explores alternate narratives of blackness through the exclusion of color from the notion of race. The Baltimore-based artist is best known for her stylized, figurative paintings of vibrantly dressed individuals rendered in grayscale skin tones against flat, highly-saturated backgrounds that evoke a sense of timeless identity.

Sherald was the first woman and first African-American ever to receive first prize in the 2016 Outwin Boochever Portrait Competition from the National Portrait Gallery in Washington D.C.; in February 2018, the museum unveiled her portrait of former First Lady Michelle Obama. In 2014, Sherald was awarded the Joan Mitchell Foundation Painters Grant. Sherald has also received the 2017 Anonymous Was A Woman award and the 2019 Smithsonian Ingenuity Award. Alongside her painterly practice, Sherald has worked for almost two decades along-side socially committed creative initiatives, including teaching art in prisons and art projects with Baltimore youth.

Jasmine Wahi is the Holly Block Social Justice Curator at the Bronx Museum of the Arts, and the Founder + Co-Director of Project for Empty Space, a Newark, NJ-based non-profit organization that supports artists who are interested in social discourse and activism. Her practice predominantly focuses on femme empowerment issues, complicating binary structures within social discourses, and exploring multi-positional cultural identities through the lens of intersectional feminism. In 2019, Wahi joined the TED speaker family with her first TEDx talk on intersectionality and visibility, entitled *All The Women In Me Are Tired*. Wahi is a Visiting Core Critic at Yale University and a faculty member at the School of Visual Arts: MFA Fine Arts department. Wahi received her Masters in Art History from New York University's Institute of Fine Arts.

Credits

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