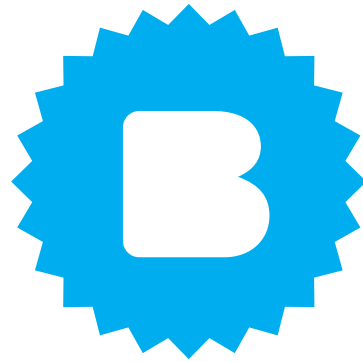


Press Release



November 2011

Video Installation Features Dialogue among 150 Diverse Black Men On View January 13 through June 3, 2012

Question Bridge: Black Males, an innovative video installation created by artists Hank Willis Thomas and Chris Johnson in collaboration with Bayeté Ross Smith and Kamal Sinclair, will feature dialogue among 150 Black men recruited from eleven American cities and towns. On view at the Brooklyn Museum from January 13 through June 3, 2012, it will also be presented at the Oakland Museum of California from January 21 through April 21, 2012. The exhibition will include multiple video screens, placed in two arcs, playing videos of the men responding to questions. The videos were edited so that it appears as if the men are having a conversation.

For the past four years the four collaborators have traveled throughout the United States to locations including New York, Chicago, Oakland, San Francisco, Birmingham, Atlanta, New Orleans, and Philadelphia, creating 1,500 video exchanges in which the subjects serve as both interviewers and interviewees, posing and answering one another's questions. Their words are woven together to simulate a stream-of-consciousness dialogue, through which important themes and issues emerge. The subjects addressed include family, love, interracial relationships, community, education, violence, and the past, present, and future of Black men in American society. The men represent a range of American geographic, economic, generational, educational, and social strata.

The artists hope that the *Question Bridge* project will be a catalyst for constructive dialogue among Black men and others in the nation that will help deconstruct stereotypes about Black male identity in our collective consciousness. "In the end, the objective is to create something that resonates as essentially genuine to viewer and subjects, and provides audiences with an intimate window into the complex and often unspoken dialogue between African American men," they note in their Artists' Statement. "In this light, 'Blackness' ceases to be a simple, monochromatic concept. A major ambition is to transform our audiences' appreciation of any demographic and provide new opportunities for healing and understanding."

The *Question Bridge* videos are a part of a larger project that also includes a user-generated website and a curriculum currently being offered to high schools and universities throughout the United States.

Brooklyn Museum

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The Brooklyn Museum will present a wide range of public programs in conjunction with the project. *Question Bridge* will be the theme of the February edition of *Target First Saturdays*, the Brooklyn Museum's monthly free evening of art and entertainment. There will also be a roundtable discussion with invited community leaders and youth inspired by a moment in the video when a young Black man asks members of the civil rights generation, "Why didn't you leave us the blueprint?" The exhibition was also included in two programs for educators in the fall of 2011 in which the *Question Bridge* curriculum was presented

About the Collaborators

Chris Johnson (codirector) originated the *Question Bridge* concept with a 1996 video installation created for the Museum of Photographic Arts and the Malcolm X Library in San Diego California. Professor of Photography at the California College of the Arts, he is also the Media Wall Project Manager and member of the Public Art Management Team at the Oakland Museum of California.

Hank Willis Thomas (codirector) is the creator of many digital media works including video exhibitions. His work was awarded the Aperture West Book Prize and has been shown at the Studio Museum in Harlem, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, the Wadsworth Atheneum, the Smithsonian, the High Museum of Art, and the Brooklyn Museum.

Bayeté Ross Smith (producer) is a former photojournalist whose work has been presented at the 2008 Sundance Film Festival, the Goethe Institute (Ghana), Leica Gallery, Rush Arts Gallery, and the Oakland Museum of California.

Kamal Sinclair (producer) is the founder of Universal Arts and director of *The Beat* and *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome*. She has directed numerous arts and arts-education projects and has served on the boards of the Children's Theater Company and Fractured Atlas, and on the Alvin Ailey Dance Theatre Ambassador's Council.

Other collaborators include award-winning actor, director, and producer Delroy Lindo (executive producer) and Deborah Willis, Ph. D. (executive producer), a 2000 MacArthur Fellow and Chair of Photography and Imaging at Tisch School of the Arts, New York University. A 2005 Guggenheim and Fletcher Fellow and an artist, she is one of the country's leading historians of African American photography.

Question Bridge: Black Males is co-organized by Patrick Amsellem, former Associate Curator of Photography, and Tricia Laughlin Bloom, Project Curator, Brooklyn Museum. This exhibition was supported in part by a grant from the Open Society Institute and Tribeca Film Institute. Additional support was provided by the Jack Shainman Gallery.

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