

Press Release



Derek Fordjour (American, born 1974). *Blue Horn*, 2017. Oil pastel, charcoal, acrylic, cardboard, and carved newspaper mounted on canvas, 60 x 40 in. (152.4 x 101.6 cm). Brooklyn Museum. Gift of Tiffany Holt, 2019.31. © Derek Fordjour. (Photo: Brooklyn Museum)

The Brooklyn Museum Presents *The Slipstream: Reflection, Resilience, and Resistance in the Art of Our Time*

Opening May 14, the exhibition contemplates the tumultuous year 2020 and its lasting impact on our future, with new contemporary acquisitions from the collection, including artists Mel Chin, Arthur Jafa, Tschabalala Self, Simone Leigh, and others.

A major new commission for the Museum's façade, Nick Cave's *Truth Be Told*, will be presented in conjunction with the exhibition.

The Slipstream: Reflection, Resilience, and Resistance in the Art of Our Time draws examples from the Brooklyn Museum's renowned collection of contemporary art to contemplate the profound disruption that occurred in 2020. Borrowing its title from an aeronautical term that refers to the pull of the current that is left in the wake of a large

and powerful object, the exhibition examines the placement and displacement of power that runs throughout American history and continues today. In the slipstream of 2020, the confluence of the devastating effects of the pandemic, civil unrest across the United States, a contested Presidential election, and unchecked climate change will continue to shape conversations about the state of the nation and world. The exhibition seeks to hold space for individuals to find their feelings of fear, grief, vulnerability, anger, isolation, and despair—as well as those of joy, determination, and love—reflected in the art.

The Slipstream: Reflection, Resilience, and Resistance in the Art of Our Time is curated by Eugenie Tsai, John and Barbara Vogelstein Senior Curator, Contemporary Art, with Joseph Shaikewitz, Curatorial Assistant, Arts of the Americas and Europe, Brooklyn Museum.

Centering artists of color, *The Slipstream* features works created by multiple generations of artists dating from the 1960s to the present day. More than sixty artworks, in a variety of mediums and styles, will be organized in seven sections around themes such as collective power, family ties, spiritual well-being, relationships to nature, and the simple rituals of daily life.

“The concept of the slipstream provides a vantage point from which to contemplate what has just passed while still feeling its pull, and to consider meaningful ways to move forward,” says Eugenie Tsai. “The exhibition underscores the Brooklyn Museum’s longstanding commitment to building a collection that reflects diversity, equity, inclusion, and access, and to presenting art that centers the stories of people of color. We are very grateful to our benefactors for making it possible to represent these narratives, since many of the exhibition’s artworks have been generously gifted to the Museum.”

Many of the artworks in *The Slipstream* are recent acquisitions. Among them are major installations including Mel Chin’s long-running environmental justice project *The Fundred Reserve* (2008–19) and Simone Leigh’s *Loophole of Retreat* (2019), which is inspired by American abolitionist Harriet Jacobs’s autobiography recounting her journey to freedom. The exhibition also features a number of recently acquired film and video works: Arthur Jafa’s film *akingdoncomethas* (2018), made from found footage of Black churches’ services and gospel performances; William Kentridge’s *4 Soho Eckstein Films* (1989–91), which explores race and whiteness in South Africa’s apartheid system; and Tourmaline’s *Salacia* (2019), which follows a Black trans woman and sex worker as she navigates brutal systems of racism and transphobia in New York in the 1830s.

In addition to its conceptual approach, the exhibition presents a broad range of techniques and materials that characterize and expand the boundaries of contemporary art-making, including textiles, appliqué, collage, and text. Each of these mediums has its own long history but has been reinvigorated in innovative ways in the hands of artists working today. For example, in *My Father’s FBI File; Government Employees Installation* (2017), Sadie Barnette takes an archival approach by enlarging and embellishing five hundred files that the F.B.I. gathered on her father, a former Black Panther member. In *cycle* (2020), Hugo McCloud incorporates hundreds of scraps from single use plastic bags to comment on the way plastics travel from mass manufacturing to consumption and disposal. Several works also incorporate textile techniques traditionally relegated to handcraft: Tschabalala Self’s painting *Piss* (2019) uses painted and found fabric appliqué and collage to capture a moment of lighthearted mischief among three exaggerated human forms, and Diedrick Brackens’s *when no softness came* (2019) is an exuberant textile work inspired by Black cowboys that reimagines the trope of the heroic male on horseback.

In order to reckon with the year 2020, the exhibition also turns to earlier works in the collection that speak to the current moment. Paul Ramírez Jonas's *The Commons* (2011) reconsiders the purpose of monuments by depicting a riderless horse that evokes the imperial motif of equestrian statues; viewers are invited to add to the sculpture, which is made of cork, thereby shifting the focus from an individual leader to collectively held power. Other highlights include Dindga McCannon's joyful painting *West Indian Day Parade* (1976), which celebrates the annual Caribbean carnival that energizes the streets surrounding the Brooklyn Museum, and Emma Amos's *Flower Sniffer* (1966), a depiction of leisure and joy in the lives of Black people that was a political act in its time and remains so today.

In conjunction with *The Slipstream*, the Museum will debut a major commission designed by Nick Cave in collaboration with Bob Faust for the Museum's lower façade. An earlier iteration of *Truth Be Told* was made in response to the police killing of George Floyd in the summer of 2020 and was first exhibited outdoors at Jack Shainman Gallery's Kinderhook, New York, space known as The School. The installation will speak across all of the Museum's collections as it welcomes visitors and sets the tone for the works on view.

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