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PUBLIC ART FUND ANNOUNCES 2021 EXHIBITION PROGRAM

Awol Erizku

Opening February 24 on JCDecaux Bus Shelters Across New York City & Chicago

Melvin Edwards

Opening May 4 at City Hall Park, Lower Manhattan

Claudia Wieser

Opening July 2021 at Brooklyn Bridge Park

Martine Gutierrez

Opening August 2021 on JCDecaux Bus Shelters Across New York City & Chicago

Gillian Wearing

Opening October 2021 at Doris C. Freedman Plaza, Central Park

February 11, 2021, NEW YORK, NY—Public Art Fund announces its 2021 exhibition program featuring five solo exhibitions by internationally acclaimed artists working across a range of mediums. Beginning on February 24, **Awol Erizku** will debut a new series of portraits and still-lives on JCDecaux bus shelters in both New York and Chicago. Inspired by the recent birth of Erizku's daughter, *New Visions for Iris* will present a new visual vernacular that unpacks pressing contemporary issues around identity and religion. In May, a thematic survey of sculptor **Melvin Edwards's** signature welded metal work from the 1970s to today will be on public view for the first time at City Hall Park. The exhibition highlights two key motifs—the chain and the rocker—and features a new large-scale commission for the south end of the park. The summer begins at Brooklyn Bridge Park with **Claudia Wieser's** first-ever outdoor public artwork; a grouping of large-scale geometric structures composed of hand painted tiles, photographs of New York City, and mirror polished stainless steel will be in dialogue with the Manhattan Bridge and DUMBO's surrounding architecture, creating an immersive experience for the public to explore. In August, photographer and performance artist **Martine Gutierrez's** unique series of self-portraits representing powerful historical figures including Cleopatra, Mulan, and Sacagawea will appear concurrently on 350 JCDecaux bus shelters across New York City and Chicago. In the fall, **Gillian Wearing's** tribute to photographer Diane Arbus will stand in Doris C. Freedman Plaza at the entrance to Central Park. The park was a favorite location for Arbus to find and photograph her subjects. The sculptural monument coincides with the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum's major Gillian Wearing survey exhibition to open on November 5, 2021.

"Over the past year, the pandemic has highlighted our shared outdoor spaces as essential community resources and spaces of both physical and spiritual renewal." says **Public Art Fund Director & Chief Curator Nicholas Baume**. "We're proud to continue to bring new work to New

York City—and now Chicago—where the public will experience groundbreaking artworks by Awol Erizku, Melvin Edwards, Claudia Wieser, Martine Gutierrez, and Gillian Wearing safely, openly, and for free.”

Just-Announced Exhibitions:

CLAUDIA WIESER: REHEARSAL

Opening July 2021

Brooklyn Bridge Park



Berlin-based Claudia Wieser is known for her Modernist-inspired geometric constructions that reference Bauhaus architecture and design, spirituality, alchemy, and furniture design, with a nod to 20th century abstract and expressionist artists such as Hilma af Klint, Wassily Kandinsky, and Paul Klee. In July 2021, the German artist will unveil her first outdoor public commission, a cluster of angular sculptures that will be the focal point of the iconic terminus of Washington Street in DUMBO, Brooklyn. Nestled among historic brick buildings and cobblestones where the Manhattan Bridge frames the Empire State Building, the structures will occupy the plaza at the Main Street entrance to Brooklyn Bridge Park creating an immersive environment that harkens back to ancient Roman forums, acting as both a meeting place and a theatrical set where park goers become actors in their own urban narrative. The sculptures range in height from eight to 13-feet and will feature colorful hand-painted glazed tiles, combined with imagery depicting the city, and reflective stainless steel. Juxtaposing and echoing the surrounding architecture to highlight the dynamism of the city and its inhabitants, the work's mirrored surfaces will invite the public into the exhibition, enabling them to pause and escape for a moment.

Claudia Wieser: Rehearsal is curated by Public Art Fund Assistant Curator Katerina Stathopoulou.

MARTINE GUTIERREZ: ANTI-ICON

Opening August 2021

JCDecaux Bus Shelters Across New York, NY & Chicago, IL



For the fifth iteration of Public Art Fund’s partnership with JCDecaux, Brooklyn-based photographer and performance artist Martine Gutierrez will continue her exploration of identity across the cultural landscapes of race, gender, class, and celebrity. Transformed into a multitude of roles, she will create new photographic interpretations of a diverse canon of radical historical and legendary figures, using solely herself as the performer. Through the use of wigs, makeup, disguises, natural elements, and props, Gutierrez captures earthly representations of idols including Cleopatra, Joan of Arc, Mulan, Sacagawea, and the Virgin of Guadalupe, among others, who will appear on JCDecaux bus shelters in 200 locations in New York and 150 in Chicago. “When summoning direction in these uncertain times, the chronicles of the divine feminine endure—the leading women of mankind—the femmes of our forefathers,” says Gutierrez. “Not

celebrity or starlet, but a symbol martyred. These anti-icons embody the radical ethos of femininity, challenging history through their strength, perseverance, and beauty.”

Martine Gutierrez: ANTI-ICON is curated by Public Art Fund Assistant Curator Katerina Stathopoulou.

GILLIAN WEARING

Opening October 2021

Doris C. Freedman Plaza, Central Park



British conceptual artist Gillian Wearing’s cast bronze tribute to the groundbreaking photographer Diane Arbus will be on view at Central Park’s Doris C. Freedman Plaza beginning in October. Arbus lived near and frequented the park, which was much like an open-air studio where she interacted with everyday New Yorkers and created what would become some of her most celebrated works. Wearing has chosen to depict Arbus at lifesize, poised with her finger on the shutter button of her camera as she might have appeared in the park. Presented informally, at street level without a plinth, passersby are able to experience the work up close. Details of the sculpture—including Arbus’s shoes and parts of the camera—will be painted realistically to further humanize the appearance of the bronze statue, while a plaque

will accompany the monument bearing Arbus’s name and quote, “If you scrutinize reality closely enough, in some way you really, really get to it, it becomes fantastic.” The installation coincides with the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum’s major survey of Wearing’s work, *Gillian Wearing: Wearing Masks*, opening on November 5, 2021.

Gillian Wearing’s exhibition is curated by Public Art Fund Director & Chief Curator Nicholas Baume with Assistant Curator Katerina Stathopoulou.

Upcoming Exhibitions:

AWOL ERIZKU: NEW VISIONS FOR IRIS

February 24-June 20, 2021

JCDecaux Bus Shelters Across New York, NY & Chicago, IL



Known for images that bring together colorful, attention-grabbing compositions with meditative underpinnings, Awol Erizku’s new body of 13 photographs will debut on 350 JCDecaux bus shelters, with 200 across New York City and 150 in Chicago. This is the first exhibition in Public Art Fund’s ongoing partnership with JCDecaux to be on view in two cities concurrently. Titled *New Visions for Iris*, the work presents a new visual lexicon that explores the space between imagination, spirituality, and image making, and was inspired by the recent birth of Erizku’s daughter—Iris—as a way for him to discuss with her difficult contemporary subjects, including those of identity and religion. The photographs, influenced by pre-colonial and oral African history, pay homage to the past while sharing fresh perspectives on the present and future. Challenging the traditional western canon, Erizku’s still lifes, intimate and contemplative portraits, and depictions

of birds evoke the introspection of our current moment. For his first solo public exhibition, Erizku imagines—with a reworking of the language of advertising and consumerism in mind—an inclusive reinvention of our shared public spaces that challenges the status quo of typical commercial images.

Awol Erizku: New Visions for Iris is curated by Public Art Fund Curator Daniel S. Palmer.

MELVIN EDWARDS: BRIGHTER DAYS

May 4-November 28, 2021

City Hall Park, Lower Manhattan



For more than 60 years, New York-based artist Melvin Edwards has created seminal sculpture that addresses identity and cultural history grounded by his belief in the civic, social, and aesthetic value of public art. Public Art Fund first showed Edwards's work in 1991, and this May will present the first major survey of the artist's public works at City Hall Park. *Brighter Days* will include five works created between 1970 and 1996, as well as a new sculpture commissioned in 2020 for this historic show, and will offer an

in-depth look at the legacy and impact of Edwards's practice. The exhibition will explore two key recurring motifs—the chain and the rocker—which carry deep personal symbolism and speak to African-American culture. Edwards uses chain links in different formal iterations: to suggest oppression, but also connection and linkage between generations and communities, and broken chains to evoke liberation or rupture. His practice combines geometric and abstract forms that expand the formal and conceptual boundaries of contemporary sculpture, while drawing on personal experiences and his engagement with the history of race, labor, violence, and themes of the African Diaspora. *Brighter Days* will resonate with City Hall Park's history as an African burial ground, the site of the first public reading of the Declaration of Independence, and more recently the 2020 occupation of City Hall and Black Lives Matter protests. Initially scheduled to open in June 2020, Public Art Fund and Melvin Edwards shifted the date due to impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic and in solidarity with protests at City Hall calling for action to end systemic racism.

Melvin Edwards: Brighter Days is curated by Public Art Fund Curator Daniel S. Palmer.

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ABOUT PUBLIC ART FUND

As the leader in its field, Public Art Fund brings dynamic contemporary art to a broad audience in New York City and beyond by mounting ambitious free exhibitions of international scope and impact that offer the public powerful experiences with art and the urban environment.

SUPPORT

Public Art Fund is supported by the generosity of individuals, corporations, and private foundations including lead support from Bloomberg Philanthropies, along with major support from the Charina Endowment Fund, Con Edison, the Joseph and Joan Cullman Foundation for the Arts, The Marc Haas Foundation, Hartfield Foundation, NYC COVID-19 Response and Impact

Fund in The New York Community Trust, the Donald A. Pels Charitable Trust, and The Silverweed Foundation.

Public Art Fund exhibitions and programs are also supported in part with public funds from government agencies, including the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew M. Cuomo and the New York State Legislature, and the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council.

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[Gillian Wearing portrait](#)

Photo by Gillian Wearing

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[Awol Erizku exhibition image](#)

Awol Erizku, *The Last Tears of the Deceased*, 2020

Commissioned by Public Art Fund for *Awol Erizku: New Visions for Iris*, an exhibition on 350 JCDcaux bus shelter displays across New York City and Chicago, February 24 to June 20, 2021

Courtesy of Awol Erizku

[Melvin Edwards exhibition image](#)

Melvin Edwards

Song of the Broken Chains, 2020

Stainless steel

Courtesy Alexander Gray Associates, New York; Stephen Friedman Gallery, London

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