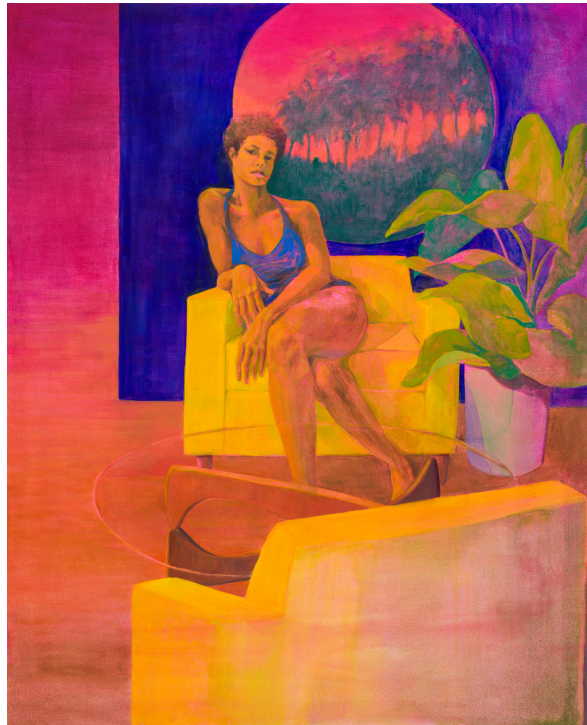




FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Public Art Fund to Present Adrienne Elise Tarver's Multi-City Bus Shelter
Exhibition Exploring Black Matriarchy and the Power of Rest**



**Adrienne Elise Tarver: *She who sits*
August 14 - November 24, 2024
JCDecaux Bus Shelters
Citywide throughout New York, Chicago, and Boston**

June 17, 2024, New York, NY—Opening August 14, Public Art Fund and JCDecaux will present *Adrienne Elise Tarver: She who sits*, six new images displayed on 300 bus shelters across New York City, Chicago, and Boston. Tarver's newest body of work is an ongoing exploration of the centrality of the Black matriarchal figure, combined with new imagery where her subjects reject spectatorship, proclaim agency, and engage in self-affirming rest while seated in intimate environments. *She who sits* marks Adrienne Elise Tarver's first solo public art exhibition.



“Adrienne Elise Tarver is incredibly skilled at building rich and complex worlds in which her subjects get to live, and her viewers get to witness,” said **Public Art Fund Assistant Curator Jenée-Daria Strand**. “Each painting possesses a vivid color story that offers a backdrop to an equally rich narrative—a narrative of radical rest that underscores the right of refusal and the reclamation of selfhood.”

Many of the works in the exhibition feature Vera Otis, a fictional subject whom Tarver has developed over the past 10 years. Originally inspired by an anonymous woman from a vintage photograph in a thrift store, each new portrayal of Vera Otis expands her story. Through Otis’s fabricated biographical narrative, Tarver investigates her own family history, complicates definitions of belonging, and contemplates how personal experiences are intertwined with historical accounts. In *She who sits*, Vera Otis is the muse through whom Tarver contextualizes rest and the posture of sitting as power. Though inspired by iconic Black actresses of the 1920s through 1960s such as Dorothy Dandridge, Eartha Kitt, Hattie McDaniels, and Lena Horne, Otis does not seek to entertain. She is composed and self-contained, yet at ease and relaxed, not rushing or waiting for anyone. Otis exists as both a meditative focal point for, and in direct contrast to, her commuter audiences.

“In the development of *She who sits*, as a continuation of my recent work focused on the fictional character, Vera Otis, I was thinking about archetypes, mythologies, and expectations placed on Black women,” said **Adrienne Elise Tarver**. “These works are an exploration of the power of sitting historically and in daily life, subverting the idea of it being a mundane or insignificant act.”

The exhibition’s title nods to Black actresses’ mandate to perform gleefully on and off stage, the prevalence of Black women’s labor in domestic spaces, and the significance of sitting in public space to enact social change. Dually, it refers to the exhibition’s presentation on bus shelters, where passengers sit as they await their next destination. In New York, Chicago, and Boston, Tarver’s subjects will mirror the posture of nearby commuters, offering physical respite and spaces of quiet confrontation.

Tarver undertakes extensive research to create new series, deriving images from a wealth of source material. Family photographs, found imagery, and media archives—especially that of *Ebony Magazine* and *Jet*—reside in each of the paintings, some more recognizable and others less so. By combining imagery that spans time and place, Tarver connects the past to the present.



For example, in the painting *Dark Star*, Tarver presents a reinterpreted image of model and actress Vera Francis—originally published on a 1951 *Ebony Magazine* cover—omitting all markers of her identity and leaving only Francis’s silhouette. Visible at the heart of her obscured figure is a dark blue celestial starburst that Tarver offers in a nod to Afrofuturism, and as a depiction of a Black woman’s prayer to the heavens for refuge and release. The concealed subject raises questions about the figure’s potential expressions of her mental and emotional state, especially when compared to the figure’s vibrant surroundings. Consistent throughout the exhibition is Tarver’s commitment to duality, blurring history and the present, invisibility and visibility, private and public.

She who sits is Tarver’s first solo Public Art Fund presentation, having participated in the 2020 group exhibition [Art on the Grid](#), also presented with JCDecaux. The three exhibition cities each hold unique significance for the artist. Boston is where Tarver lived during her undergraduate years; Chicago is where she spent her teen years and returned to obtain her MFA; New York City is where she currently lives and works.

Adrienne Elise Tarver: She who sits is curated by Public Art Fund Assistant Curator Jenée-Daria Strand.

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WHEN & WHERE: Starting on August 14, 2024, *She who sits* will be on view on JCDecaux bus shelters throughout New York City, Chicago, and Boston. The exhibition can also be explored anytime, anywhere, on the free [Bloomberg Connects](#) app.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Adrienne Elise Tarver is an interdisciplinary artist based in Brooklyn, NY with a practice that spans painting, sculpture, installation, photography, textiles, and video. Her work addresses the complexity and invisibility of Black female identity including the history within domestic spaces, the fantasy of the tropical seductress, and the archetype of the all-knowing spiritual matriarch.

She has exhibited nationally and abroad, including solo shows at the Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art in Connecticut; the Academy Art Museum in Maryland; Atlanta Contemporary in Atlanta, Georgia; Dinner Gallery (formerly Victori+Mo) in New York; Ochi Projects in Los Angeles; Wave Hill in the Bronx, NY; BRIC Project Room in Brooklyn; and A-M Gallery in Sydney, Australia and two-person exhibitions at Hollis Taggart in New York; Wedge Curatorial in Toronto, Canada. She recently received the Distinguished Alumni Award from her alma mater, Boston University, and the Nancy Graves Foundation Grant. She has been commissioned for



projects through the New York MTA, the Public Art Fund, Google, Art Aspen, and Pulse Art Fair and has been featured in online and print publications including the New York Times, Forbes, Brooklyn Magazine, ArtNews, ArtNet, Blouin ArtInfo, Whitewall Magazine, and Hyperallergic, among others. She received her MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and BFA from Boston University.

In 2024, Tarver was announced as the inaugural awardee of a new summer residency at Stoneleaf Retreat, in partnership with Artnoir. Her solo exhibition, *Where the Waters Go*, will be on view at Dinner Gallery in New York City from May 16, 2024 to June 29, 2024. Tarver is represented in Los Angeles, CA and Sun Valley, ID by OCHI.

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Public Art Fund Talks: Adrienne Elise Tarver

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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.

Begun in 2017, Public Art Fund's partnership with JCDecaux has grown to include twelve exhibitions across seven cities around the globe.

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SUPPORTS

Bloomberg Philanthropies is the presenting sponsor of *Adrienne Elise Tarver: She who sits*.

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IMAGE CREDITS:

Adrienne Elise Tarver

Dark Star, 2023; *Between here and there*, 2024

Courtesy of the artist; Public Art Fund

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