

The Bronx Museum of the Arts Presents
Abigail DeVille: Bronx Heavens



(NEW YORK, NY – AUGUST 1, 2022) – The Bronx Museum of the Arts is pleased to announce ***Abigail DeVille: Bronx Heavens***, the artist's first museum survey which will examine the myths and realities of local, familial and ancestral histories and the convoluted notion of freedom in a country fraught with oppression and racism. On view from **October 12, 2022 - April 9, 2023**, *Bronx Heavens* will feature DeVille's work created over the past ten years, and examine different aspects of the borough's 120 year history as a haven for immigrant and migrant communities, including for several generations of DeVille's family who have lived in the area and were part of the Great Migration. *Bronx Heavens* is organized by **Eileen Jeng Lynch**, her first exhibition at The Bronx Museum as the new Director of Curatorial Programs.

Inviting visitors to discover and experience alternative narratives, DeVille has created an interactive installation for The Bronx Museum's lobby, taking the form of an oral history project. DeVille describes the installation as based on the pyramid of Djoser which houses a space capsule that visitors are invited to enter, share their stories, and be transported. In keeping with her ongoing performance art practice that takes to the streets and engenders spirited community gatherings, the space capsule will travel on select days to outdoor cultural festivals, schools, and senior centers in the Bronx to collect stories. At the Museum, visitors will also be able to listen to the recordings from a large monolithic sculpture, a nod to Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey*.

An installation of vintage television monitors playing clips that reference the past century of Bronx history, further activate viewers' senses and initiate a dialog about how the past is documented and re-presented over time. DeVille's work thus focuses on the forgotten stories of marginalized people and places, contending with social issues, racial oppression, and lost histories through site-specific immersive installations.

Continuing the tradition of assemblage that recalls African-American visionary artists of the South such as Thornton Dial and Noah Purifoy, who constructed sculptures out of materials found after the Watts Rebellion in Los Angeles, DeVille similarly culls materials from the Bronx—such as architectural salvage, shopping carts, and everyday appliances—that evoke complex narratives and represent contradictory symbols of freedom. Through sourcing rubbish and found objects often from areas surrounding the exhibition site, DeVille's part-archaic, part-Afrofuturist sculptures and installations transcend time, as cycles of rebirth and regeneration permeate her practice.



Bronx Heavens will include eight new sculptures from DeVille's *Libertas* series—inspired by the Roman Goddess of liberty who became the patron of freed enslaved people in Roman society—that will lead to a large-scale living room installation housing earlier paintings and sculptures related to familial histories. Akin to her breakout commission by Madison Square Park Conservatory, *Light of Freedom*—which drew inspiration from an 1876 photograph of the disembodied hand of Frédéric-Auguste Bartholdi's Statue of Liberty when it was housed in the park, and comprised a monumental torch alight with mannequin arms that form a bright blue flame—a floor-to-ceiling monument of mannequin parts that are shrouded with a dark, punctured covering serves as an homage to the unknown inhabitants of the Bronx, referencing their invisible labor and layers of history that have been erased.

Director of Curatorial Programs Eileen Jeng Lynch says: “DeVille’s work weaves together the lost and living stories of the Bronx, functioning as a bridge that unites the past, present, and future of this abundant community. The exhibition reminds us that history is incomplete and ever-evolving, and by providing a way for the contribution of counter narratives suggests hope through a critical lens.”

Executive Director Klaudio Rodriguez adds: “Abigail DeVille’s practice perfectly encapsulates the mission of The Bronx Museum, as it seeks to both reflect and engage with the community that makes it unique. Her work in this exhibition sheds new light on our shared history and highlights the important role that every individual plays in telling our story.”

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Curatorial Credit:

Abigail DeVille: Bronx Heavens is curated by Eileen Jeng Lynch, Director of Curatorial Programs. Previously, she was the Senior Curator of Visual Arts at Wave Hill, where she created exhibitions and programming that explore the intersections of nature, culture, and place, including commissioning artists on site-specific projects.

Photo Credits:

Image 1: Abigail DeVille, *Freedom Triumphant in War and Peace*, 2021, and *The Observatory*, 2021. Installation view of *Brand New Heavies*, curated by Racquel Chevremont and Mickalene Thomas (*Deux Femmes Noires*), at Pioneer Works. Photo by Olympia Shannon / Dan Bradica Studio. Image 2: Abigail DeVille, *New York at Dawn*, 2010. Courtesy of the artist. Image 3: Abigail DeVille, *Dark Matter, No Matter*, 2020. Various found materials, 77 1/4 in x 64 x 34 inches. Courtesy of the artist. Photo by Pierre Le Hors.

About the Artist:

Abigail DeVille’s most recent solo exhibition was *Light of Freedom*, organized by Madison Square Park Conservancy (2020-21), and traveled to the Momentary at Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, AR (2021) and the Hirshhorn Museum Sculpture Garden, Washington, DC (2021-22). Other commissions and solo museum shows include *The American Future*, Portland Institute for Contemporary Art, Portland (2018-19); *Lift Every Voice and Sing* (*amerikanske gorki*) at Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami (2017-2018); *Empire State Works in Progress* (2017) at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; *No Space Hidden* (*Shelter*) at Institute of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (2017-2018), and *Only When It’s Dark Enough Can You See The Stars* at The Contemporary, Baltimore (2016).

Recent group shows have been held at the Swiss Institute, New York (2022); Pioneer Works, Brooklyn (2021); Wave Hill, Bronx (2019); National Museum of Women in Arts, Washington, DC (2018); Socrates Sculpture Park, Queens (2016), Sculpture Center, Queens (2014), El Museo del Barrio, New York (2011, 2014), CAMH, Houston (2014); the Bronx Museum of the Arts; (2013), The 55th Venice Biennale (2013), The Studio Museum in Harlem (2012, 2014); ICA, Philadelphia (2012); New Museum (2012); and the Stedelijk Museum (2011). DeVille was a 2018 United States Artists Fellow, 2017-2018 Rome Prize fellow at the American Academy in Rome, 2015 Creative Capital grantee, 2014-15 fellow at The Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study at Harvard, 2013-14 Artist in Residence at The Studio Museum in Harlem, and 2012 Joan Mitchell Foundation grant recipient. DeVille teaches in the Interdisciplinary Sculpture Department at the Maryland Institute College of Art in Baltimore and at Yale School of Art.

DeVile's work is in prominent collections, including The Bronx Museum of the Arts, Bronx; Centre National des Arts Plastiques (Cnap), Paris; Kadist Art Foundation, San Francisco; Kaviar Factory, Henningsvaer; Memphis Brooks Museum of Art (MBMA), Memphis; Pinault Collection; and The Studio Museum in Harlem (New York). DeVile received her MFA from Yale University and her BFA from the Fashion Institute of Technology. DeVile was born in New York and works in the Bronx.

About The Bronx Museum of the Arts:

The Bronx Museum is the only major contemporary art museum in NYC with free admission, making it a vital resource not just for residents in The Bronx, but thousands of residents from all five boroughs and tourists visiting annually. Now an internationally-recognized cultural destination, for the past five decades The Bronx Museum has presented hundreds of exhibitions featuring works by culturally diverse and under-represented artists. The Museum's permanent collection of 2,000+ works preserves and documents artists who are not typically represented within traditional museum collections by showcasing work by artists of African, Asian, and Latin American ancestry, as well as artists for whom the Bronx has been critical to their development. Now in its 50th year, the Bronx Museum continues to promote its mission of the arts accessible to all audiences.

Recent critically acclaimed exhibitions include *Jamel Shabazz: Eyes on the Streets* (2022); *Wardell Milan: Amerika. God Bless You If It's Good To You* (2021); *Born in Flames: Feminist Futures* (2021) *Sanford Biggers: Code Switch* (2020-2021); *José Parlá: It's Yours* (2020-2021); *The Life and Times of Alvin Baltrap* (2019-2020); *Henry Chalfant: Art vs. Transit, 1977-1987* (2019-2020); *Rochelle Feinstein: Image of an Image* (2018); *Diana Al-Hadid: Delirious Matter* (2018); *Eddie Martinez: White Outs* (2018); *Gordon Matta-Clark: Anarchitect* (2017); *Angel Otero: Elegies* (2017-2018); *Martin Wong: Human Instamatic* (2015-2016); *iPresente! The Young Lords in New York* (2015); and *Sarah Sze: Triple Point (Planetarium)* (2014).

VISIT THE MUSEUM:

1040 Grand Concourse
Bronx, New York 10456
T: 718-681-6000
<http://bronxmuseum.org>

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PRESS CONTACT:

Cultural Counsel
bronxmuseum@culturalcounsel.com