



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

651 ARTS Announces Fall 2020 Virtual Season
My Black Art Matters, I Matter

Presenting

Micro-Works Project: *My Black Art Matters, I Matter* featuring
Carla Cook, Toni Blackman, Nsangou Njikam, April Matthis, Chen Lo,
Ana “Rokafella” Garcia and More

Martha Redbone Roots Project Live at BRIC

In a Special Live Recorded Performance

Honoring Native American Heritage Month

And the Centennial of the Suffragette’s Movement and Women’s Right to Vote

Premiering on Tuesday, November 24th at 7pm

Memoirs of a ...Unicorn: The Visual Project

A Film Based on the Stirring Dance Installation by Award-winning
Choreographer **Marjani Forte Saunders** and Composer **Everette Saunders**

Premiering on Thursday, December 3rd

And Including The Launch of a Major Institutional Initiative with

The Neighborhood Project

Spotlighting Brooklyn’s Emerging Creatives and Their Diverse Neighborhoods

(**BROOKLYN, NY** – October 8, 2020) – 651 ARTS, Brooklyn’s premier institution for the African Diasporic performing arts, today announced details for its Fall 2020 season to include a virtual mix of feature presentations, performances and the launch of new initiatives. 651 leadership made the decision to move forward with a season that will allow the institution to safely serve audiences and to be able to continue to support and provide a platform for local artists as arts organizations across the country continue to navigate through the effects of the global pandemic. In response to the current landscape and tone of the national conversation around race in America, the Fall season will center around the theme of “*My Black Art Matters, I Matter*” and will celebrate the resilience and diversity of Black performance.

651's Fall lineup will kick off on October 26th with the inaugural Micro-Works Project as the institution re-engages its alumni artists from across New York City to create one-minute video performances under the season theme of *My Black Art Matters, I Matter*. Participating artists will include GRAMMY nominated jazz singer **Carla Cook**, Hip Hop ambassador **Toni Blackman**, actor and playwright **Nsangou Njikam**, Obie Award-winning actress **April Matthis**, co-founder of Soul Science Lab **Chen Lo** and pioneering B-Girl **Ana "Rokafella" Garcia** with more artists to be announced at a later date.

The season also includes a special live recording by Award-winning musician **Martha Redbone** performing from BRIC (November 24-30) in honor of Native American Heritage month and the Centennial of the Suffragette's Movement and Women's Right to Vote. Additionally, 651 will present the world premiere of *Memoirs of a ... Unicorn: The Visual Project* (December 3-5), a film on the experimental collaging of intimate encounters and experiences in the three year journey of the dance installation *Memoirs of a ... Unicorn* by choreographer Marjani Forté-Saunders and composer Everett Saunders.

651 is also excited to announce that three gifted, emerging Brooklyn-based artists have been invited to participate in The Neighborhood Project following a two-month application and selection process. The selected Resident Artists (RA) in this inaugural cohort are: soulful singer and musician **Courtnie Henson**, spoken word artist and filmmaker **Kearah-Armonie** and choreographer, dancer and Founder of STooPS **Kendra J. Ross**. Beginning in October, the RAs will take part in a monthly salon, a professional development series of facilitated conversations and networking opportunities with guest artists and practitioners, presenters, and artist partners. They will go on to partner with small businesses within their neighborhoods to re-imagine these spaces as homes for art making and community engagement. This Artist As Resident program takes place in Brooklyn neighborhoods beginning Fall 2020 and culminates in a public sharing/performance in March 2021. Curated by artist **Najee Omar**, the performances will investigate what it means to live in Brooklyn today particularly in the aftermath of the global pandemic.

This Fall season will mark the institution's first under the programmatic leadership of **Monica L. Williams** in the role of 651's first ever Director of Programs and Chief Curator (DPCC) role. In this newly created role, Williams oversees all aspects of 651's programs, presentations and curations.

"In Fall of 2020, we find ourselves in unprecedented times in the World and in our lives, our Black lives. Building on the legacy of 651 ARTS, we take a moment to look inward and we remind ourselves of our significance, our connection, our brilliance. We embrace innovation, reclaiming our time and the discoveries being made during this time of a virtual pivot," said Williams about her first season with 651. "We restate and reinvigorate our passionate dedication to Black Art and Black Artists during these times and proclaim a guidepost for this season, because this is true no matter what – Black Arts Matter, I Matter."

FALL 2020 FEATURE PRESENTATIONS

Micro-Works Project: "My Black Art Matters. I Matter"

Date: Premieres October 26, 2020; available throughout the season; Weekly

651 ARTS presents the inaugural Micro-Works Project inviting its esteemed alumni artists from across New York City to create one-minute video performances under the season theme of *My Black Art Matters, I Matter*. 20 artists will share their lived experiences as they have been navigating the complexities of this moment while extending their influence to other artists throughout the City by nominating one emerging artists to also create a one-minute video on the theme. Participating artists will include GRAMMY nominated jazz singer **Carla Cook**, Hip Hop ambassador **Toni Blackman**, actor and playwright **Nsangou Njikam**, Obie Award-winning actress **April Matthis**, co-founder of Soul Science Lab **Chen Lo** and pioneering B-Girl **Ana "Rokafella" Garcia** with more artists to be announced at a later date. Artist videos will roll out weekly throughout the season.

651 Presents Martha Redbone Roots Project Live at BRIC

Date: Premieres November 24, 2020 at 7pm; available through November 30, 2020

In honor of Native American Heritage month and the Centennial of the Suffragette's Movement and Women's Right to Vote, 651 ARTS presents singer-songwriter **Martha Redbone**, considered one of the most important voices in music today, in a special live recording at BRIC. The intimate performance will be a musical exploration reflecting on how the Indigenous and African American women leaders and the urban Native community in Lenapehoking are coping with COVID-19 - with references paying respect to the centennial of the Suffragette's movement and women's right to vote, past and present. Performance will include excerpts of readings as well as a conversation with 651's DPCC Monica L. Williams and Martha Redbone interwoven with song and music.

Memoirs of a ...Unicorn: The Visual Project

Dates: Premiere – December 3, 2020; available through December 5, 2020

651 presents the world premiere of *Memoirs of a ...Unicorn: The Visual Project* (December 3-5), a film on the experimental collaging of intimate encounters and experiences in the three year journey of the dance installation *Memoirs of a ...Unicorn* by choreographer Marjani Forté-Saunders and composer Everett Saunders.

Weaving sound and media to offer historic and personal narratives between father and daughter, the original dance piece was inspired by the artist's father's life in Arkansas and explores the tenants of identity, fatherhood and the natural state of 'blackness' as a unicorn state – the unreal state of finding one's self. Designed by filmmaker and Unicorn's Bessie-Award winning designer Meena Murugesan, the film will be a multi-sensory visual experience, offering an interpretation of the internal processes and dreams at the core of this work and it's team. It explores the performative-ness of creative process, the relationship of light and shadow on the screen as a metaphor for the celestial journeys of sun and moon, and the three generations of Black men who orbit Marjani's life. The premiere event will include a discussion with artists involved in the making process sharing their personal accounts of making work in times of distress.

For Tickets and information, please visit www.651.org

651 ARTS INITIATIVES

The Neighborhood Project

Launching: The Neighborhood Project Salons launch in October

The Neighborhood Project supports emerging Black Brooklyn-based artists by partnering them with small businesses within their neighborhoods, and reimagining these public spaces as homes for art making and community engagement. As part of the program, The Neighborhood Project Salons are designed to impart specific skills and best practices to Resident Artists over the course of a four month period from October, 2020 through February, 2021. Salons include facilitated conversations and networking opportunities with guest artists and practitioners, presenters, and artist partners. They are intended to support Resident Artists in both the development of original works created during this Residency as well as their short and long-term career goals.

Resident Artists will also work closely with a Community Engagement Specialist who will support them in crafting and tailoring engagement strategies most relevant to neighboring residents and most appropriate for the projects presented. This Artist-As-Resident program culminates in a public sharing/performance in March 2021. The Neighborhood Project is curated by Brooklyn artist and activist Najee Omar. It is supported by a Building Demand for the Arts grant from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation.

**Note: Micro-Works Project, Martha Redbone's Performance and The Neighborhood Project are part of 651 ARTS Artist As Resident Initiative.*

Since its inception in 1988, 651 ARTS has become a trusted convener of contemporary African Diasporic artistic expression, a champion and nurturer for emerging artists and their work and a vital cultural resource for its surrounding community. As it moves forward, part of 651 ART's mission is to preserve the legacy of Black culture in Brooklyn, celebrate the eclecticism of Black performance and to pioneer new visions of African Diaspora artists. Helmed by Executive Director, David J. Roberts, the institution continues to look ahead and lay the framework for the next five years that will further help to reinforce 651 ARTS' role as a leader of African Diasporic culture while also establishing it an incubator for artistic innovation in the 21st century.

651 ARTS' programs are made possible by gifts from generous individuals and grants from the Bay and Paul Foundations, Con Edison, Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, Ford Foundation, Howard Gilman Foundation, Lambent Foundation, the LuEsther T. Mertz Charitable Trust, Mertz Gilmore Foundation, the Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation, New York Community Trust, the Emma Sheaffer Charitable Trust, the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council, including Majority Leader Laurie A. Cumbo, and the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York State Legislature.

About 651 ARTS

Founded in Brooklyn, NY in 1988, the mission of 651 ARTS is to deepen awareness of and appreciation of contemporary performing arts and culture of the African Diaspora, and to provide professional and creative opportunities for artists of African descent.

651's signature programs have featured pioneering black choreographers from around the world including Germaine Acogny, Nora Chipaumire, Carmen de Lavallade, Diane McIntyre, Bebe Miller, Abdel R. Salaam and Jawole Willo Jo Zollar. As part of its commitment to the furtherance of conversations and celebration of Diaspora music, the institution has presented dialogues and performances by Somi, Hugh Masekela, and Grammy-winning artist Betty Carter, to name a few. Theatrical and text-based works by Anna Deavere Smith, Sekou Sundiata, Marc Bamuthi Joseph, Ntozake Shange, Okwui Okpokwasili and Maria Bauman are representative of the hundreds of artists and productions featuring solo creations, collaborations, emerging artists, and works-in-development all produced by 651's visionary leadership in the field of Black performance.

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