



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**651 ARTS Presents**  
**Juneteenth Celebration: (RE)VISION**  
**Co-presented in association with Downtown Brooklyn**  
**Partnership and Rooftop Films**

**Live Film Screenings - The Plaza at 300 Ashland in**  
**Downtown Brooklyn**  
**Friday, June 18, 2021 and Saturday, June 19, 2021 at 8pm**

(Brooklyn, NY – May 19, 2021) - 651 ARTS presents, in association with Downtown Brooklyn Partnership and Rooftop Films, its inaugural Juneteenth commemoration - **651 ARTS' Juneteenth Celebration: (RE)VISION** - featuring a weekend of film screenings that center around the theme of futurism in the spirit of moving forward in the ongoing fight for equality and justice and in a post-pandemic world. The Celebration will span over the course of three days to include live “silent” film screenings (headsets to be provided) held outdoors at the institution’s future home, The Plaza at 300 Ashland in Downtown Brooklyn, on Friday, June 18<sup>th</sup> and Saturday, June 19<sup>th</sup> at 8pm as well as a day of virtual screenings happening on Sunday, June 20<sup>th</sup>. Soho House resident DJ **Qool DJ Marv** will create two 1-hour sets, one for each night to sonically set the tone for the evening.

For its first year, 651 ARTS' Juneteenth Celebration: (RE)VISION will highlight films that look through the lens of futurism and movement to illuminate stories about the Black perspective and the Black experience in America told through hybrid presentation that explores what it means to be Black and how to imagine a way forward together. Headlining the film screening will be the short film *WATA*, along with the regional premiere of Charles O. Anderson's *(RE)current Unrest*, an encore presentation of 651's world premiere of Marjani Forté-Saunders' *Memoirs of a...Unicorn: BLUEPRINT* and the world premiere of the provocative *Cyborg Heaven*, an exploration of the Black urban movement through House Ballroom culture and hip hop. The full list of films to be featured in this year's celebration part of the screenings is listed below. Moving forward, 651's annual Juneteenth Celebrations will reflect each season's theme and will be responsive to current events and emerging trends.

“Amidst a year of enduring pandemics, civil unrest, family separation and many lost lives, we wanted to be intentioned and thoughtful about what a Juneteenth initiative would look like for 651.

This inaugural Celebration was created as a way to illustrate a path forward and the mere act of gathering again is a major step toward healing on so many different levels,” said **Monica Williams**, Chief Curator and Director of Programs for 651 ARTS. “Our goal with this is to gather our community on the steps of our future home, in the spirit of our ancestors who knew to envision and pursue their own freedom before they could see it and before they were seen as free. We honor the spirit of resistance and resilience of African Americans in the United States by taking inspiration from the fact that many Black people proclaimed and pursued freedom long before the Freedmen’s Bureau arrived in Galveston, Texas declaring independence.”

Marking the first time 651 ARTS audiences will gather together in person since the beginning of the pandemic, the Celebration’s location is also especially significant for the institution as the outdoor screenings will be hosted on The Plaza of 651’s future new space at 300 Ashland. The eventual move is a milestone in the organization’s history as it will be the first time in its history that 651 will have a permanent space in which to independently program and operate, allowing it to comprehensively foster artists and cultivate new audiences. The organization is expected to take residence in Fall of 2022.

2021 denotes the first year that New York City is recognizing Juneteenth as an official citywide holiday. The Juneteenth holiday is an annual commemoration of the end of slavery in the United States. Though the Emancipation Proclamation freeing slaves was signed January 1, 1863, enslaved African Americans in Galveston Bay, Texas learned of their freedom from the Union Army, June 19, 1865, after the Emancipation Proclamation was announced. Juneteenth is the longest standing African American holiday observed in the United States.

### **651 ARTS’ Juneteenth Celebration 2021: (RE)VISION - Feature Films Synopsis**

**WATA**, a collaboration between Ronan Mckenzie and Joy Yamusangie. WATA weaves together considerations of ancestry, cross cultural connections, music and migration. Telling the story of Mami Wata, a water deity traced back to West Africa, Central Africa and the Caribbean, in Mckenzie and Yamusangie’s interpretation she is drawn into a dance with The Musician. The Musician is tantalized by Mami Wata’s jewels, and in his desire to bring them to the surface, the two circle the lines between finding, taking and finally appreciating. With an original score, interweaving a dual narrative of sound and visuals, musicians Melo-Zed, Roxanne Tataei, Boofti and Birame are brought together for the first time. WATA is the culmination of a long-term friendship and exchange between Mckenzie and Yamusangie, opening up an avenue through which they explore their love and fascination with the color blue, West and Central African Jazz music, as well as their own African and Caribbean ancestry. The film was selected as the winner of categories; Best New Fashion Film, Best New Director and Best New Music at Fashion Film Festival Milano 2021 A film supported by Gucci, in partnership with Garage.

**(Re)current Unrest** by Charles O. Anderson is an investigation of legacy, authorship and the history of Black art and protest through the lens of the erasure of the Africanist presence in Reich’s compositions. *(Re)current Unrest* explores the kinesthetic state of unrest - the condition of unease, discontent and social disturbance. This physical state of agitation represents “staying woke.” To stay woke refers to an intangible level of awareness about community issues and social justice. *(Re)current Unrest* is inspired by James Baldwin's *The Fire Next Time*, Ta-nehisi Coates'

*Between The World And Me*, and current and historical Black protest movements. Anderson's signature Afro-contemporary choreographic voice explores the resultant condition of unease and discomfort produced by this inescapable level of social awareness—We stay woke. Contains mature content, themes, language and imagery that some might find disturbing. Suitable for audiences 17+.

**Cyborg Heaven** the short film, centers the poetics and performance aesthete of the black and queer radical poetic traditions, and the black urban movement rooted in House Ballroom culture and hip hop. Individuals, audiences, and publics are encouraged to explore Cyborg Heaven's core, universal themes by centering their own lives, likes, struggles and experience rather than co-opting those of others. Cyborg Heaven is both an invitation and a provocation that insists peoples and communities and collectives start with who they are and what they have to show us how they push through to co-create new and habitable futures for themselves, their community and the world.

**Memoirs of a... Unicorn: BLUEPRINT** illustrates how the Black family structure is integral to an individual's self-identity and how through time that structure has been tested - from slavery through Jim Crow to today. *Memoirs...* is an art film from choreographer Marjani Forté-Saunders, composer Everett Saunders, and filmmaker, Meena Murugesan.

**Ticket Info:** Admission to all events, including the film and online screenings, are free. Tickets for live events are limited and pre-registration is required. Registration goes live on May 18, 2021, on [651arts.org](http://651arts.org) via Eventbrite.

Please note: All local COVID-19 protocols will be followed in order to ensure the safety of the attendees.

For additional information, please visit: [www.651ARTS.org](http://www.651ARTS.org).

### **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.

### **About Downtown Brooklyn Partnership**

Downtown Brooklyn Partnership is a not-for-profit local development corporation that serves as the primary champion for Downtown Brooklyn as a world-class business, cultural, educational, residential, and retail destination. Working together with the three business improvement districts (BID) that it manages – the MetroTech BID, Fulton Mall Improvement Association, and Court-

Livingston-Schermerhorn BID – the Partnership’s diverse activities include attracting new businesses and improving the environment for existing companies; facilitating the construction of public spaces and streetscapes that promote an active and cohesive community; supporting and promoting Downtown Brooklyn’s cultural assets; and encouraging a unified sense of place and an engaged civic community. For more information, visit [www.downtownbrooklyn.com](http://www.downtownbrooklyn.com).

### **About The Plaza at 300 Ashland**

The Plaza at 300 Ashland sits at the heart of the Brooklyn Cultural District, adjacent to the brownstone Brooklyn neighborhoods of Fort Greene, Boerum Hill, and Park Slope. DBP has partnered with premier Brooklyn arts organizations such as BAM, BRIC, Brooklyn Public Library, Mark Morris Dance Group, MoCADA, 651 Arts, and Theatre for a New Audience (TFANA) to offer free, high-quality programming for everyone. Programming at The Plaza at 300 Ashland is made possible by support from Two Trees Management Co.

### **About Rooftop Films**

Rooftop Films is a non-profit organization whose mission is to engage and inspire the diverse communities of New York City by showcasing the work of emerging filmmakers. Rooftop is best known for their annual Summer Series, a summer-long outdoor film festival that has grown to become the largest outdoor showcase for new independent films in the USA. Rooftop also provides grants to filmmakers, rents equipment at low-cost to artists and fellow non-profits, and supports screenings citywide with the Rooftop Films Community Fund. For more information and updates, please visit [rooftopfilms.com](http://rooftopfilms.com).

*651 ARTS’ programs are made possible by gifts from generous individuals and grants from Bay and Paul Foundations, The Black Seed, Con Edison, Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, Ford Foundation, Howard Gilman Foundation, Lambent Foundation, Mertz Gilmore Foundation, Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation, New York Community Trust, Emma Sheafer Charitable Trust, Wallace Foundation, 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.*

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