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The Newark Museum of Art Presents Community Day: Her Story/Our Story

The Museum invites the public to celebrate and honor the legacy of Harriet Tubman, alongside the Museum's historical American Art collection



Nina Cooke John, *Shadow of a Face* 2022.

February 27, 2023 — **The Newark Museum of Art** is pleased to announce the upcoming **Community Day: Her Story/Our Story**, a celebration on **March 11** featuring live performances, art-making activities, gallery tours, and more to honor the arrival of a new Harriet Tubman public monument and the reinstatement of NMOA's *Seeing America: 18th & 19th Century* galleries.

Taking place between 11:30am through 5pm EST at the Museum and also across the street at Harriet Tubman Square, the festivities will include performances by Yendor Theatre Company, Fyütch, DJ Quin Bee, Seychelle Elise, New Jersey Tap Ensemble and more, alongwith activities inspired by some of the newest artworks joining the *Seeing America: 18th & 19th Century galleries*, like Terence Hammonds' *The Black Abolitionists Wallpaper*. Other activities will include storytelling by Christine Platt, drum making, puzzle making, and 3D Birthday card making for Harriet Tubman. On the occasion of this event, visitors can enjoy free general admission to the Museum on March 11.

“The Museum has played an important role in Newark Black Liberation’s history, as well as the history of Harriet Tubman Square,” said Silvia Filippini-Fantoni, PhD, Deputy Director, Learning & Engagement. “The Ballantine House is one of the oldest remaining buildings facing the square, and the land where the Museum now sits was the house of Governor Marcus Ward, who secured the state’s ratification of the 13th Amendment. During the 1967 Newark uprising, the Museum remained open for all who needed a place of healing and dialogue. By collaborating with the City of Newark in the creation of the Harriet Tubman Monument and the Community Day, the Museum is once again playing its part in bringing the community together to mark a significant moment in the city’s history.”

Ahead of celebrations for Community Day: Her Story/Our Story, the Museum will open the *Seeing America: 18th & 19th Century galleries* on March 9. Featuring nearly 80 artworks spanning the 17th century to the present, the reinterpreted galleries reframe the Museum’s historical American art collection to foreground slavery and Black and Indigenous histories.

Along with the reinstalled galleries, the Community Day will also celebrate the new public art monument commissioned by the City of Newark in Harriet Tubman Square. Titled *Shadow of a Face* and designed by artist and architect Nina Cooke John, the artwork is an outgrowth of the 2020 reckoning to honor the legacy of abolitionist, human rights activist, and Underground Railroad “conductor” Harriet Tubman.

“Since the inception of the Harriet Tubman Monument Project, the museum has played an integral role by lending their expertise to provide an engaging educational experience.” said **Fayemi Shakur, City of Newark’s Arts and Cultural Affairs Director**. “I think that’s the most important thing, that people learn something they didn’t know before.”

In conjunction with Cooke John’s design, local residents contributed to the public artwork, creating tiles to be displayed in the monument. Designed by the residents in a number of workshops set up at the Museum, Newark Public Library, and throughout the city, the tiles were then prepped and fired at the Museum by artist Adebunmi Gbadebo to be incorporated in the finished monument.

Accompanying the visual elements of the monument is an audio component produced by Audible, which collaborated with actress and singer Queen Latifah and other luminaries to narrate stories about Tubman and the City's history of Black liberation. Excerpts of the recordings will also be available in the Museum's [Bloomberg Connects App](#).

The Community Day is also a memorialization of Harriet Tubman Square, the venue of Cooke John's public artwork and some of the Community Day activities. Located in downtown Newark, the park is a historic public space that sits on the unceded Indigenous land of the Munsee Lunaape (Lenape) people. Since 1975, the area, formerly known as "Washington Square Park," has become the City's first historic district, an axis for neighboring cultural and civic institutions, like the Newark Public Library, The Newark Museum of Art, and Rutgers Business School.

In 2022, in celebration of Juneteenth, the park was renamed Harriet Tubman Square, in acknowledgement of the under-recognized histories of African Americans and abolitionists who played a role in the quest for liberation and justice in the United States.

"Today, Harriet Tubman Square remains a touchstone of our city's history, culture, and community, and the Museum is honored to be a part of its expansion as we welcome the work of Nina Cooke John to memorialize an important legacy," said Linda C. Harrison, Director and CEO. "Many of the Underground Railroad's stations resided in New Jersey, and at least one was here in Newark. Community Day: Her Story/Our Story serves as a reminder of why we as a City and as neighbors must continue to venerate the cultural memory of these individuals, their courage, and their stories."

Additional programming surrounding the monument and *Seeing America* unveilings includes a curriculum guide for teachers and tour programs, which incorporate *Shadow of a Face* and other new works related to Abolitionism.

For more information on Community Day: Her Story/Our Story and *Seeing America 18th and 19th Century* galleries, please visit the Museum's [website](#).

NMOA's Community Days are presented by The Horizon Foundation for New Jersey.

Seeing America: 18th & 19th Century was made possible in part by the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

Shadow of a Face is a Design for Freedom by Grace Farms Pilot Project, which is dedicated to eliminating forced labor in the building materials supply chain.

The Harriet Tubman Monument Project and audio tour were funded by The City of Newark, Audible, The Mellon Foundation, and individual Newark residents in collaboration with The Newark City Parks Foundation, Newark Arts, The Newark Museum of Art, and the Newark Public

Library. Local historians James Amemasor, Noelle Lorraine Williams, and Linda Caldwell Epps were also commissioned to contribute research for the project.

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About the Newark Museum of Art

Founded in 1909, The Newark Museum of Art (NMOA) is the largest museum in New Jersey and ranks twelfth nationally in collection size, with more than 130,000 artworks and significant holdings of science and natural history. The NMOA is committed to the values of Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion by responding to the evolving needs and interests of diverse audiences through participation, visitor experiences, and community engagement.

From the ancient world to contemporary art, the Museum boasts a renowned collection of exceptional quality and depth, spanning concentrations in the Arts of Global Africa; Arts of Global Asia, featuring a Tibetan Buddhist altar; Arts of the Americas; American Art, with a particular strength in Native American art; Decorative Arts; Arts of the Ancient Mediterranean; and Science.

With a focus on welcoming everyone with inclusive experiences that spark curiosity and foster community, the NMOA offers groundbreaking exhibitions, engaging programming, a research library with 60,000 volumes, paid internships, and impactful local and global partnerships. A four-acre campus includes The Ballantine House (1885), a National Historic Landmark; the Ward Carriage House (1860); the Old Stone School House (1784); the Alice Ransom Dreyfuss Memorial Garden; and Horizon Plaza. Under the leadership of Director and CEO Linda C. Harrison, the NMOA has launched an era of transformation to create an engaged citizenry by reimagining the role of the art museum in the 21st century.