

For Immediate Release
January 14th, 2021

New York, NY The Bronx Museum of the Arts is pleased to present *Shaun Leonardo: The Breath of Empty Space*. This exhibition features a collection of drawings by the Brooklyn-based artist that critique how mediated images of systemic violence against Black and Brown young men in contemporary American history have shaped our fear, empathy, and perception. The exhibition will be on view in the Museum's North Gallery from Thursday, January 21st, 2021 through Sunday, May 30th, 2021. Visitors can reserve free timed tickets through the Museum's website ticketing portal.

Created between 2014 and 2019, the works trace high profile stories of lives ended or forever altered by systems of law enforcement from the 1970s to today. Leonardo encourages a new and nuanced way of looking at the content—and ourselves. Through his intimate drawings based on images widely circulated in popular media, the artist calls on the additive nature of drawing to explore the reductive nature of memory, examining how time and circulation affect what is recalled, forgotten, or ignored. The use of mirrored tint, blurring, highlight, negative space, and semi-opaque die-cut plexiglass, redirects the eye in order to question what and how we see while reframing the embodied knowledge we bring to the images before us.

A call for empathetic witnessing, *The Breath of Empty Space* aims to create a space for quiet contemplation. The artist, curator, and museum acknowledge the impact that the content may have on viewers. We believe the gallery experience and accompanying programming encourages reflection, conversation, and critique of the systems and issues explored. As we mourn the magnitude of Black and Brown lives lost, we honor the necessary, ongoing work within communities to seek justice. Thank you for your openness, willingness, and presence.

This exhibition is organized by Independent Curator John Chaich, in collaboration with The Bronx Museum's Holly Block Social Justice Curator, Jasmine Wahj, and the Education Department. Prior to its arrival in The Bronx, *Shaun Leonardo: The Breath of Empty Space* traveled to Maryland Institute College of Art and the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art.

Support for this exhibition has been generously provided by SRI Fine Arts Services and the Director's Circle, the Bronx Museum's premier support group.

About the Artist

Shaun Leonardo's multidisciplinary work negotiates societal expectations of manhood, namely definitions surrounding black and brown masculinities, along with its notions of achievement, collective identity, and experience of failure. His performance practice, anchored by his work in Assembly—a diversion program for court-involved youth at the Brooklyn-based, arts nonprofit Recess—is participatory and invested in a process of embodiment.

Leonardo is a Brooklyn-based artist from Queens, New York City. He received his MFA from the San Francisco Art Institute, is a recipient of support from Creative Capital, Guggenheim Social Practice, Art for Justice, and A Blade of Grass, and was recently profiled in The New York Times and CNN. His work has been featured at The Guggenheim Museum, the High Line, and New Museum. This exhibition began at the Maryland Institute College of Art and traveled to the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art, and ends at The Bronx Museum of the Arts.

Starting in 2021, Leonardo joins Recess as Co-Director, helping guide the organization's continuous evolution as an engine of social change.

About the Bronx Museum of the Arts

For 50 years The Bronx Museum of the Arts has championed the people of the Bronx, dedicating itself to sharing the rich, local culture that has influenced contemporary artists and audiences across the city and beyond. Founded in 1971 by community leaders and activists at a time when the borough was in crisis - in our 50th year, we recommit ourselves to our founding ethos and renew our investment in our local communities, people of color, women, LGBTQIA, and belief that art and culture are essential on the path to achieving social justice and equity.

BRONX MUSEUM

The Bronx Museum of the Arts

Between 2021 and 2022, the Museum's exhibitions will focus on the stories, visions, and voices of historically underrepresented artists and highlight the work of the Bronx and New York-based artists, along with alumni of the Museum's Artist in the Marketplace Program.

Connect

Instagram: @bronxmuseum

Twitter: @BronxMuseum

Facebook: @bronxmuseum

#BronxMuseum

Press Contact

Claudette McQueen

press@bronxmuseum.org