

The Bronx Museum of the Arts Presents *Born in Flames: Feminist Futures*



Above: Tourmaline, *Salacia*, 2019. Courtesy of the Artist.

(NEW YORK, NY – APRIL 14, 2021) – The Bronx Museum of the Arts is pleased to announce *Born in Flames: Feminist Futures*, the first in a year-long series of exhibitions celebrating the institution's 50th Anniversary and legacy as a museum dedicated to social justice. On view April 28 – September 12, 2021, this group exhibition of fourteen femme-identified and non-binary artists critically examines current struggles for equity by exploring strategies for justice and equality through multifaceted futurisms.

Including works created over the last four decades, the show demonstrates not only the artists' place within a futurist lineage, but also exposes the ongoing impulse to imagine new realities on their own terms. Artists include: **Caitlin Cherry, Chitra Ganesh, Clarissa Tossin, Huma Bhabha, Firelei Báez, Lizzie Borden, María Berrío, Pamela Phatsimo Sunstrum, Rose B. Simpson, Sin Wai Kin (fka Victoria Sin), Saya Woolfalk, Shoshanna Weinberger, Tourmaline,** and **Wangechi Mutu.**

The exhibition takes its name from **Lizzie Borden's** iconic 1983 documentary-style feminist fiction film, *Born In Flames*, which explores racism, classism, sexism, and heterosexism in an alternative United States socialist democracy. The film sets forth an essential question within the exhibition: What can the future hold if our present is part of a long-standing cycle of capitalist values? The artists expand on this question by calling to light the realities of capitalism and patriarchy through envisioning futures that either defy our current oppression or understand that its reality is insurmountable.

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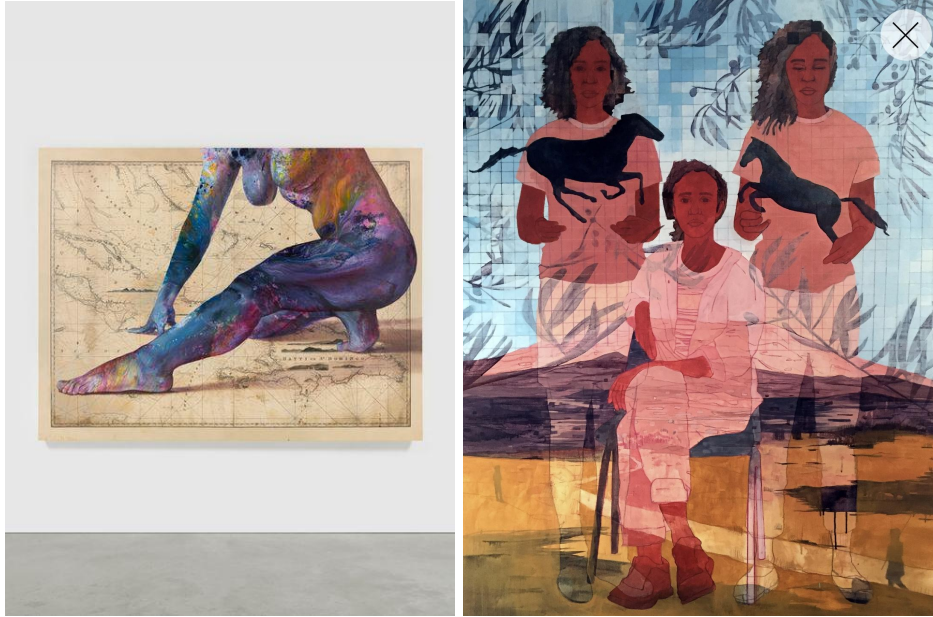
The works posit that futurity and social justice are inextricably connected, as writer Walidah Imarisha notes in her introduction to *Octavia Brood: Science Fiction Stories from the Social Justice Movement*. She writes, “Whenever we try to envision a world without war, without violence, without prisons, without capitalism, we are engaging in speculative fictions.” When we envision a world where social justice is no longer a radical idea, but a reality, we reaffirm the bond between futurism and justice.

This is evident in **Tourmaline’s** short film *Salacia*, in which a split screen shows the imagined everyday lives of the citizens in Seneca Village, a 19th-century free Black community in upper Manhattan that was demolished in 1855 to create Central Park, commenting on the erasure and displacement that results from urban renewal. Recently returning to their Cantonese birth-name, **Sin Wai Kin (fka Victoria Sin)**, is known for their use of performance, film and speculative fiction to deconstruct the limits of the body. In *Today’s Top Stories*, Sin invites the audience into a universe where there is a dividing, but no beginning nor end. In the disguise of a news anchor covered by galaxy blue facial and body paint, Sin performs their emblematic poetic narration in the style of a televised news program, about life, existence, naming, identity and consciousness.



Left: Sin Wai Kin (fka Victoria Sin), *Today’s Top Stories*, 2020. Right: Lizzie Borden, *Born In Flames*, 1983.
Courtesy of the Artists.

Born in Flames highlights a number of artists referencing non-Western folklore and mythologies to create alternate futures, including **Firelei Báez**, **Wangechi Mutu**, and **Pamela Phatsimo Sunstrum**. Upon entering, visitors encounter a new site-specific installation by Mutu: a shrine that creates a womb-like structure. It is a sanctuary that is both fierce and protective. In Báez’s *Untitled (New Chart of the Windward Passages)*, a vibrantly-colored figure crouches onto a reproduction of a map from 1794 which describes the navigation of the West Indies. Báez choreographs a new relationship with these channels of movement, challenging and reclaiming legacies of capitalism and imperialism to create possibilities for self-determination.



Left: Firelei Báez, *Untitled (New Chart of the Windward Passages)*, 2020. Courtesy of the Artist.
Right: Pamela Phatsimo Sunstrum, *Sister*, 2018. Courtesy of the Newman-Scott Collection.

The insurmountable fear that we are beyond redemption of the realities of capitalism resonates with Brazilian artist **Clarissa Tossin**, whose twenty-foot-tall weaving, *When the River Meets the Sea*, comprises imagery from the world’s longest rivers: the Nile, the Amazon, the Yangtze, and the Mississippi. Tossin reflects on the way these regions have been shaped by histories of colonialism, and the more recent impact of international shipping companies such as the Amazon corporation, whose name is derived from the river and rainforests of her native Brazil. Meanwhile, Columbian artist **María Berrío**’s first venture into sculpture work, *The Petition*, extracts femme characters into a dystopian tableau. The primary figure is an adolescent girl lying on the ground surrounded by long-billed birds, standing over her like vultures.

“There is a trepidation, and anxiety for some artists, that the damage has already been done, and what lies ahead cannot be divorced from history,” says **Jasmine Wahi, Holly Block Social Justice Curator**. By organizing the artists in pods, the exhibition creates a galaxy of different visions of what the future could be. “These microcosmic elements are representative of how each artist is thinking about futurism—including Afro-, Asian-, Indigenous-, and Latinx-futurism, or something that emerges from those narratives,” continues Wahi. “All of these artists are world-makers, and we’re getting to experience pieces of their worlds.”

Curatorial Credit:

Born in Flames: Feminist Futures is curated by Jasmine Wahi, Holly Block Social Justice Curator.

Exhibition Support:

Support for *Born in Flames: Feminist Futures* is made possible by the Henry Luce Foundation, Rockefeller Brothers Fund: Culpeper Arts & Culture Program, Agnes Gund, Kathleen Landy and The Feminist Institute, Carole Server and Oliver Frankel, Elden Services, Mamais Construction, Island Acoustics, LLC, Gotham Drywall, Inc., Kamco Supply Corp., and SRI Fine Art Services.

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About The Bronx Museum of the Arts:

The Bronx Museum is one of the only major NYC museums 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 NYC annually. Today 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.

Currently on view is **Shaun Leonardo: The Breath of Empty Space** (Jan 21, 2021 - May 30, 2021). Recent critically acclaimed exhibitions include **Sanford Biggers: Code Switch** (2020-2021); **José Parlá: It's Yours** (2020-2021); **The Life and Times of Alvin Baltrop** (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); **¡Presente! The Young Lords in New York** (2015); and **Sarah Sze: Triple Point (Planetarium)** (2014).

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