



Brooklyn Public Library Extends “Art and Society Census” Initiative Developed with Curator Laura Raicovich Through June 1, 2021

Working Groups Examining Initial Survey Results **Open to Participants throughout April 2021**

Survey Results to Be Analyzed and Transformed into Free Tools for Museums and Cultural Institutions Across the Country

Brooklyn, NY—Updated April 13, 2021— **Brooklyn Public Library** (BPL) announced the extension of the **Art and Society Census**, a project soliciting public opinion and group visioning designed to evolve the role of the arts and culture in contemporary life, **through June 1, 2021**. Developed in collaboration with independent curator and Leslie-Lohman Museum of Art Interim Executive Director **Laura Raicovich**, the Census is live and open for public comment [at this link](#). The Art and Society Census invites a collective rethinking to dissolve the boundaries of canonized art and institutions, in the hopes of finding new approaches, values and actions that can restructure the cultural field based on what audiences deem most important or overlooked. As museums, performing arts institutions, libraries, and other cultural organizations nationwide work to reassess how they are serving their communities, BPL’s Art and Society Census aims to be a leading organizer of a public referendum on culture, inviting a grassroots transformation of the arts sector.

"In the face of unprecedented racial injustice, climate, economic crises currently reshaping our country, and for that matter the entire world, Brooklyn Public Library turns to a broad range of people to ask them to think together with us to recalibrate what we expect from art and how the curatorial work of cultural spaces might be restructured. Together with Laura Raicovich, through the Art and Society Census we are tapping into the wisdom and imagination of the participants of the survey to generate a new platform and tools that can be adapted and applied by cultural institutions nationwide," said **László Jakab Orsós, Vice President of Arts and Culture at Brooklyn Public Library**.

Laura Raicovich added, "Within cultural institutions the mode of communication is overwhelmingly outward-facing; museums broadcasting to their audiences. This project solicits an exchange with the public, providing a way for them to present their knowledges to institutions. Undertaking the Art and Society Census is a step towards making institutions more equitable via a more practical understanding of what people might actually want from culture."

Though April 2021, BPL is convening a series of **public working groups** based on initial survey results to examine and make actionable the public responses to the census. Each Working Group takes place over the course of one month, with the first two weeks focused on the topics outlined above, and the second two weeks focused on **Visioning**, imagining the kinds of arts experiences and spaces we want. **To RSVP to attend a Working Group, visit:** <https://www.bklynlibrary.org/event-series/art-and-society-census>

The working group topics and facilitators include:

“The Money Question” – Facilitated by independent curator Regine Basha

What are the ways in which art and culture gets supported in the US? How do artists get paid and what are some new ways cultural organizations might sustain their work? Are there other, free ways

to access art ? Other ways to support art and artists? Can art be more like a gift, a conversation, a mental health need, rather than a commodity, and how?

“Encounters” – Facilitated by educator Fadwa Abbas and New York Public Radio Executive Producer Jennifer Keeney Sendrow

How do we enter cultural space and what do we find when we get there? Do you feel welcomed or watched? How can arts and cultural institutions meet us where we are? How do we learn the unspoken rules of entering a museum or art space--or change them altogether?

“Where Art and Life Meet” – Facilitated by community organizer Suhaly Bautista-Carolina and *Hyperallergic* Editor-in-Chief Hrag Vartanian

How does art help us encounter our world? What is the relationship between cultural experiences and our everyday lives? How do we find both reflections of our lived realities, as well as joy and the unexpected within cultural spaces? How should cultural spaces cultivate this multiplicity of experiences?

“Connecting with the Local” – Facilitated by writer Kazembe Balagun

How can we expand on culture in the local context? What can museums do to more fully engage you in their work? How can cultural organizations bring all of their resources (intellectual, human, financial) to the communities that surround them or that they seek to engage? Is there a local museum or cultural space that you’ve never been to, and why haven’t you visited? How do institutions become more responsive to participant/visitor knowledge?

Following this period of analysis, BPL will organize a public presentation of the resulting tools in a summer 2021 convening of New York City residents, artists, art-appreciators, national and international arts workers, museum and public institutional directors and staff. Continuing BPL’s commitment to designing and implementing arts and cultural programming that relies on and responds to public needs and desires, the Art and Society Census follows original BPL programs including the nine-month-long *28th Amendment Project*, through which Brooklyn residents discussed, debated, and proposed the next amendment to the U.S. Constitution; *Democracy Lab*, a seven-day convening of Brooklyn residents focused on civic engagement, social justice, public space, utopia and democracy; and *University Open Air*, a free series of classes taught by professors, researchers, and academics who were trained outside of the U.S. developed in collaboration with the Prospect Park Alliance.

BPL’s Art and Society Census expands on the Library’s mission to redefine libraries as centers for ideas and exploration through more than 60,000 free programs each year, and is part of a fall season of in-person and online programming that aims to strengthen community ties and provide access to the highest quality arts and cultural programming at a critical time for Brooklyn and the nation. A complete calendar of upcoming programs can be found [here](#) along with information about how to log-in and register for specific events.

Art & Society Census is funded by the Emily Hall Tremain Foundation’s Innovation Fund. Brooklyn Public Library is grateful for additional support for the Art & Society Census from media partner *Hyperallergic*.

About the Working Group Facilitators

Fadwa Abbas was born and raised in Sudan and immigrated to the United States at the age of fourteen. She currently lives in Brooklyn, NY, and works as an educator. She has taught students ranging from the age of five to the age of eighty years old.

Kazembe Balagun is a public programmer and writer living in The Bronx. His work has appeared in the UK Guardian, Metrograph.com and The Independent. He works as a project manager at Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung New York Office.

Regine Basha is an independent curator, writer and educator as well as an advisor to artists and to non-profits. For over 25 years her career has taken her through Canada, across the US and into the MENA and Latin American regions. As a curator, she often works at the intersection of revisionist histories, sound/music cultures, and context-specific exhibitions and public projects. She is also the founder of the online digital archive and storytelling project, Tuning Baghdad. Basha sits on the Executive Board of Art Matters and is a graduate of the first class of Center for Curatorial Studies at Bard College. She currently is an Adjunct Professor in the Columbia University MFA program. See bashaprojects.com.

Suhaly Bautista-Carolina (she/her) is an herbalist, educator, arts administrator, and community organizer whose work is rooted in the collective wisdom and power of community. Throughout her roles at the Caribbean Cultural Center African Diaspora Institute, Creative Time, ArtBuilt, and Brooklyn Museum, Suhaly has centered radical care and love as essential values in the arts and culture landscape. In 2019, Suhaly joined The Met as Senior Managing Educator of Audience Development and Engagement, and was recently named a 2021 Women inPower Fellow at the 92Y's Belfer Center for Innovation and Social Impact.

Jennifer Keeney Sendrow is the Executive Producer for Multiplatform Content at New York Public Radio, home to WNYC and WQXR, New York's flagship public radio and classical music stations. There, she curates the programming in its street level live performance venue and broadcast studio, The Jerome L. Greene Performance Space, and leads WNYC Studios' internationally recognized annual festival for women in audio, Werk It. Earlier in her career, Sendrow held positions as a writer, reporter, and producer at WNYC, Sirius XM, Martha Stewart Living, Guide Michelin, Not For Tourists, and Explorer Guides. Sendrow holds a B.A. in literature from New York University and completed a Fulbright year studying politics at the University of Aarhus, Denmark.

Hrag Vartanian is the editor-in-chief and co-founder of *Hyperallergic*. Vartanian is an editor, art critic, curator, and lecturer on contemporary art with an expertise on the intersection of art and politics. In 2016, Hrag launched the *Hyperallergic Podcast*, which tells stories from around the world (iTunes). Some notable episodes have delved into the history of Surrealism in Egypt, the little-known story of female Abstract Expressionists, and front-line coverage of the artists taking part in the #StopDAPL action at the Standing Rock reservation in North Dakota. His curatorial interests are focused on theories and practices of decolonization, which is informed by his own experience of being part of a post-genocide diaspora.

About Brooklyn Public Library

[Brooklyn Public Library](http://BrooklynPublicLibrary.org) is one of the nation's largest library systems and among New York City's most democratic institutions. As a leader in developing modern 21st-century libraries, we provide resources to support personal advancement, foster civic literacy, and strengthen the fabric of community among the more than 2.7 million individuals who call Brooklyn home. We provide nearly 60,000 free programs a year with writers, thinkers, artists, and educators—from around the corner and around the world. And we give patrons millions of opportunities to enjoy one of life's greatest satisfactions: the joy of a good book.

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