

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Vancouver Art Gallery presents Celebrating Black Futures

The Gallery launches a month-long program of art, music, literature and film



January, 2025, VANCOUVER, BC // Traditional Coast Salish Lands including the x^wməθk^wəyəm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and səllwətał (Tseil-Waututh) Nations.

This February, the Vancouver Art Gallery is proud to present **Celebrating Black Futures**, a month-long program focusing on the intersection of art, music, literature and film. The bespoke line-up, brought together in honour of Black History Month and in partnership with **Artspeak**, **Nooroongji Books**, **Space Lab**, **the Vancouver International Film Festival**, **Vancouver Black Library** and **We the Roses**, celebrates Black Futures in Vancouver, Canada and beyond.

“We are thrilled to be presenting a full and vibrant program to Celebrate Black Futures, and with such fantastic partners,” said **Anthony Kiendl, CEO & Executive Director** at the Vancouver Art Gallery. “We see these events as an opportunity to celebrate the rich cultural heritage of Black communities, to acknowledge Black histories and truths, and to find and encourage new ways of listening to Black voices. By working collaboratively and ambitiously, we can help to create a more inclusive future for all.”

Led by cultural producer **Hafiz Akinlusi** and presented in partnership with **Space Lab**, the Gallery will host its first interactive Hi-Fi listening session that responds to the themes of *Firelei Báez*, including identity, migration and Afro-Caribbean heritage. The session will feature high-fidelity sound, experimental music and a guided reflection, offering a new way to engage with Báez's richly layered work. The session offers participants the opportunity to explore the intersection of sound, culture and art in a deeply immersive environment.

Firelei Báez's powerful paintings and installations will also inspire a Sound Bath: *In Drexciya*, held within the heart of the exhibition, led by artist and designer **Courtenay Mayes**. Participants are invited to connect deeply with themes of identity, resilience and transformation present in Báez's art. This experience includes a crystal bowl sound bath which invites participants to connect mindfulness practices with art appreciation, encouraging a reflective exploration of the emotions and narratives evoked by Báez's art.

The Gallery has also partnered with the **Vancouver International Film Festival (VIFF)** to screen two feature films and one documentary that speak to the vibrancy of Black and African cinema. The first screening presents *Mami Wata* (2023), a black-and-white fantasy thriller film, written and directed by **CJ Obasi**, based on West African folklore. The evening will also include the short documentary *Drexciya* (2010), a portrait of an abandoned public swimming facility located in Accra, Ghana, directed and produced by **Akosua Adoma Owusu**. The second screening presents *The Inheritance* (2020), the inventive first feature from **Ephraim Asili** that weaves together the history of the MOVE liberation group, the Black Arts Movement and the filmmaker's own formative experiences in a Black Marxist collective.

Later in the month, in partnership with **Artspeak** and the **Vancouver Black Library**, the Gallery will host a special conversation between critic and educator **Erica Cardwell** and writer, curator and director of **Artspeak Gallery**, and Curator in Residence at the Vancouver Art Gallery, **Nya Lewis**. The two will discuss Cardwell's book *Wrong Is Not My Name: Notes on (Black) Art* (2024), offering new perspectives on the writing that inspire dialogue and reflection. This will be an intimate, interactive conversation held inside the Gallery's Library & Archives.

Celebrating Black Futures is organized by **Kika Memeh**, Public Programs Assistant at the Vancouver Art Gallery, in collaboration with **Stephanie Bokenfohr**, Public Programs Coordinator.

For more information, visit: www.vanartgallery.bc.ca/celebrating-black-futures-2025

Celebrating Black Futures is presented in partnership with:

VIFF Centre Artspeak,

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2025 SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

Hi-Fi Listening Session

Room 4East, Vancouver Art Gallery

February 6, 6 PM. Doors open at 5:45 PM to offer attendees the opportunity to experience the exhibition before the performance begins. Tickets can be booked online at: www.vanartgallery.bc.ca/events/hi-fi-listening-session-feb-6/

Film Screenings

VIFF Centre

Mami Wata (2023) + Drexciya (2010)

February 10, 6:30 PM and February 23, 3:30PM

The Inheritance (2020)

February 16, 3:30 PM and February 24, 6:30PM

Tickets can be booked online at: www.viff.org/series/celebrating-black-futures/

Sound Bath: In Drexciya

2nd Floor, Vancouver Art Gallery

February 18, 5 PM

Capacity is limited.

Curator Tour of Firelei Báez with We The Roses

2nd Floor, Vancouver Art Gallery

February 18, 6 PM

The Vancouver Art Gallery is proud to partner with **We The Roses** to offer an invite-only tour of *Firelei Báez*, led by **Eva Respini**, Deputy Director & Director of Curatorial Programs.

Library Talk: Erica Cardwell and Nya Lewis

Library & Archives, Vancouver Art Gallery

February 21, 5:30 PM

Capacity is limited. Tickets are free and can be booked online at: www.vanartgallery.bc.ca/events/library-talk-feb-21

EXHIBITIONS

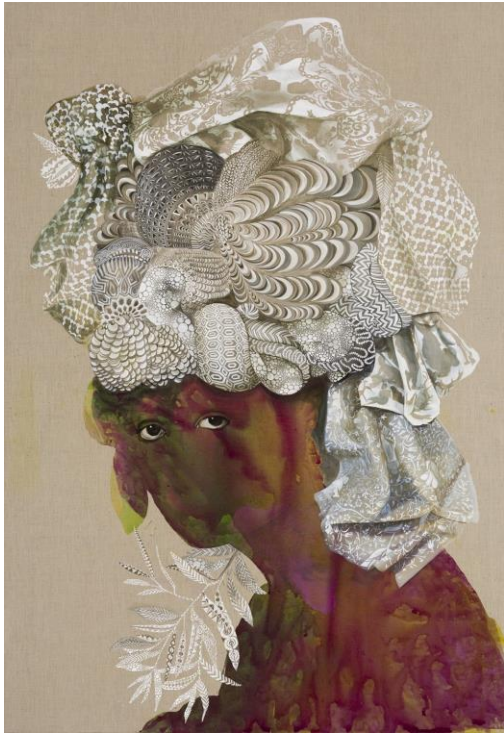
FIRELEI BÁEZ

Until March 16, 2025

3rd Floor, Vancouver Art Gallery

A career-spanning solo exhibition dedicated to one of the most exciting painters of her generation, Firelei Báez. Over the past fifteen years, she has made work that explores the all-too-real legacies of colonial rule in the Americas and the Caribbean, drawing on sci-fi, fantasy, folklore, social history and mythology.

Organized by the Institute of Contemporary Art/Boston and curated by **Eva Respini**, Deputy Director & Director of Curatorial Programs, Vancouver Art Gallery (former Barbara Lee Chief Curator, ICA/Boston), with **Tessa Bachi Haas**, Curatorial Assistant, ICA/Boston.



Firelei Báez, *Sans-Souci* (*This threshold between a dematerialized and a historicized body*), 2015, acrylic and ink on linen, Pérez Art Museum Miami, Museum purchase with funds provided by Leslie and Greg Ferrero and Rose Ellen Meyerhoff Greene, Photo: Oriol Tarridas, © Firelei Báez

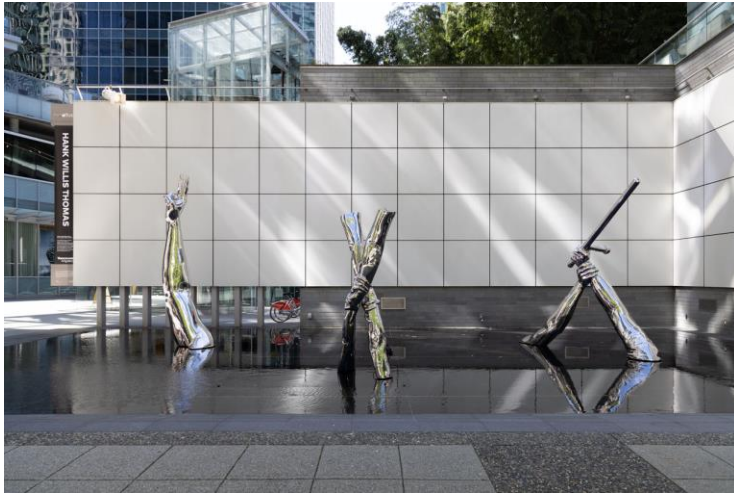
OFFSITE: HANK WILLIS THOMAS

Until April 27, 2025

Offsite, located at 1100 West Georgia Street, just west of the Shangri-La Hotel.

The Gallery presents three major sculptures by New York-based artist Hank Willis Thomas. In his wide-ranging conceptual art practice, Thomas explores how contemporary society commodifies race and gender and perpetuates cultural stereotypes. Thomas' powerful sculptures represent disembodied hand gestures that evoke symbols of care, triumph and exaltation.

The exhibition is organized by the Vancouver Art Gallery on behalf of the City of Vancouver Public Art Program and curated by **Eva Respini, Deputy Director & Director of Curatorial Programs**, with **Julie Martin, Curatorial Assistant**.



Installation view of *Offsite: Hank Willis Thomas*, site-specific installation at Vancouver Art Gallery Offsite from June 7, 2024 to April 27, 2025, Photo: Vancouver Art Gallery

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VANCOUVER ART GALLERY

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ABOUT THE VANCOUVER ART GALLERY

Founded in 1931, the Vancouver Art Gallery is recognized as one of North America's most innovative visual arts institutions. The Gallery's ground-breaking exhibitions, extensive public programs and emphasis on advancing scholarship all focus on historical and contemporary art from British Columbia and around the world. Special attention is given to the accomplishments of Indigenous artists, as well as to those of the Asia Pacific region. The Gallery's exhibitions also explore the impact of images in the larger sphere of visual culture, design and architecture. The Vancouver Art Gallery is a charitable not-for-profit organization supported by its members, individual donors, corporate funders, foundations, the City of Vancouver, the Province of British Columbia through the BC Arts Council and the Canada Council for the Arts.

The Vancouver Art Gallery is situated on the ancestral and unceded territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səlilwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations, and is respectful of the Indigenous stewards of the land it occupies, whose rich cultures are fundamental to artistic life in Vancouver and the work of the Gallery.