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Ama Josephine B. Johnstone Named as 2020–21 Keith Haring Fellow in Art and Activism at Bard College



Ama Josephine B. Johnstone. Photo by Zachary Maxwell-Stertz

The Center for Curatorial Studies (CCS Bard) and the Human Rights Project announced today that Ama Josephine B. Johnstone has been selected as the seventh recipient of the Keith Haring Fellowship in Art and Activism. Her appointment is made possible by the Keith Haring Foundation as part of the second series of a five year-grant

supporting the Fellowship—an annual award for a scholar, activist, or artist to teach and conduct research at Bard College. Johnstone’s appointment marks the shared commitment of the College and the Foundation both to exploring the interaction between political engagement and artistic practices and to bringing leading practitioners from around the world into Bard's classrooms.

“The Keith Haring Fellowship in Art and Activism is an ongoing dialogue with leading artists, writers and scholars, bringing new modes of thinking, pedagogical models and ways of working into the Bard community. International in scope, the Fellowship continues to evolve, raising issues that are current and introducing innovative responses to the challenges of the present,”

said Tom Eccles, executive director of the Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College.

Ama Josephine B. Johnstone is a speculative writer, artist, curator and pleasure activist whose work navigates intimate explorations of race, art, ecology and feminism, working to activate movements that catalyze human rights, environmental evolutions and queer identities.

Johnstone is a PhD candidate in psychosocial studies at Birkbeck, University of London. She describes her research as taking “a queer, decolonial approach to challenging climate colonialism in Sub-Saharan Africa with a particular focus on inherently environmentalist pleasure practices in Ghana and across the Black universe.”

“Ama says that her work 'thrives in the fecund liminal spaces between the museum and the academy, the gallery and the protest,' and in this sense, among many others, she exemplifies the spirit and practice of Keith Haring. Her fearless creativity, coupled with her relentless critical curiosity, especially about human rights discourse itself, are going to be essential guides in any journey through our perilous times,” said Thomas Keenan, director of Bard's Human Rights Project.

Johnstone will be in residence at Bard during the spring 2021 semester to teach and develop local collaborations in the Hudson Valley, succeeding Pelin Tan as the 2019–20 Fellow. Details on the **Keith Haring Fellowship in Art and Activism** and previous fellows can be found at ccsbard.edu.

About the Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College and the Human Rights Project at Bard College

Bard College seeks to realize the best features of American liberal arts education, enabling individuals to think critically and act creatively based on a knowledge and understanding of human history, society, and the arts. Two pioneering programs developed under this mission are the Center for Curatorial Studies (CCS Bard) and the Human Rights Project.

CCS Bard was founded in 1990 as an exhibition and research center for the study of late 20th-century and contemporary art and culture and to explore experimental approaches to the presentation of these topics and their impact on our world. Since 1994, the Center for Curatorial Studies and its graduate program have provided one of the world's most forward thinking

teaching and learning environments for the research and practice of contemporary art and curatorship. Broadly interdisciplinary, CCS Bard encourages students, faculty, and researchers to question the critical and political dimension of art, its mediation, and its social significance.

The Human Rights Project, founded at Bard in 1999, developed the first interdisciplinary undergraduate degree program in Human Rights in the United States. The Project maintains a special interest in freedom of expression and the public sphere, and through teaching, research, and public programs is committed to exploring the too-often neglected cultural, aesthetic, and representational dimensions of human rights discourse.

Since 2009, CCS Bard and the Human Rights Project have collaborated on a series of seminars, workshops, research projects, and symposia aimed at exploring the intersections between human rights and the arts, and doing so in a manner that takes neither term for granted but in fact uses their conjunction to raise critical, foundational questions about each. While academic in nature, this research and teaching nevertheless draws heavily on the realm of practice, involving human rights advocates, artists, and curators.

About the Keith Haring Foundation

Keith Haring (1958-1990) generously contributed his talents and resources to numerous causes. He conducted art workshops with children, created logos and posters for public service agencies, and produced murals, sculptures, and paintings to benefit health centers and disadvantaged communities. In 1989, Haring established a foundation to ensure that his philanthropic legacy would continue indefinitely.

The Keith Haring Foundation makes grants to not-for-profit entities that engage in charitable and educational activities. In accordance with Keith's wishes, the Foundation concentrates its giving in two areas: The support of organizations which enrich the lives of young people and the support of organizations which engage in education, prevention and care with respect to AIDS and HIV infection.

Keith Haring additionally charged the Foundation with maintaining and protecting his artistic legacy after his death. The Foundation maintains a collection of art along with archives that

facilitate historical research about the artist and the times and places in which he lived and worked. The Foundation supports arts and educational institutions by funding exhibitions, programming, and publications that serve to contextualize and illuminate the artist's work and philosophy. haring.com

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MEDIA CONTACTS:

For further information, images, or to arrange interviews, please contact:

BARD COLLEGE CONTACT:

Mark Primoff

Director of Communications

Tel: +1 845.758.7412

Email: primoff@bard.edu

CCS BARD CONTACT:

Ramona Rosenberg

Director of External Affairs

Tel: +1 (845) 758-7574

Email: rosenberg@bard.edu

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Bard

Campus Road, PO Box 5000
Annandale-on-Hudson, New York 12504-5000
Phone: 800-BARDCOL
Admission Phone: 845-758-7472
Admission E-mail: admission@bard.edu
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