

The Bronx Museum of the Arts Presents
Jamel Shabazz: Eyes on the Streets



Jamel Shabazz *Flying High*. Brownsville, Brooklyn. 1982. Courtesy of the artist.

(NEW YORK, NY – APRIL 6, 2021) – **The Bronx Museum of the Arts** is pleased to announce ***Jamel Shabazz: Eyes on the Streets***, the first museum survey celebrating the illustrious career of New York’s most vital street photographer. On view from **April 6 - September 4, 2022**, the exhibition is curated by Sergio Bessa and features over 150 photographs, including 61 works from the Museum’s collection alongside works from the artist’s personal archives—many of which will be exhibited for the first time. A formidable archive of New York’s communities in the outer boroughs, this exhibition pays homage to Shabazz’s illustrious career of over forty years documenting the vibrant interaction of New Yorkers with their neighborhoods.

Starting at the young age of fifteen, Brooklyn-born photographer Jamel Shabazz identified early on the core subject of his lifelong investigation: the men and women, young and old, who invest the streets of New York with a high degree of theater and style, mixing traditions and cultures. Despite following a celebrated tradition of street photography that includes Gordon Parks, Garry Winogrand, and Lee Friedlander, it is to his credit that Shabazz has been one of the first photographers to realize the joyous, infectious potential of youth culture in neighborhoods such as Red Hook, Brownsville, Flatbush, Fort Greene, Harlem, Manhattan’s Lower East Side and the Grand Concourse section of the Bronx.

The pioneering work of grassroots activists to save New York's historical districts from being replaced by a brutal system of speedways has been for some time the focus of academic speculation. Nevertheless, Jane Jacob's observation that "large numbers of people entertain themselves, off and on, by watching street activity" resonates beyond the walls of academia and finds validation in the work of Jamel Shabazz. Indeed, his photographs attest to the endurance of Jacobs' belief that informal activities taking place in the streets contribute to public safety.

Shabazz's photographs capture the intricate ballet of daily life in the metropolis, where everyone is both part of the audience and on display at the same time, where everyone is at once a stranger and an equal. At the core of his practice is his steadfast sense of empathy with the common man and woman he meets on the streets, regardless of their race or social status.

Through his lens, everyone gets the same share of exposure; whether Black, White, Native American, or Latino his subjects are presented as the natural proprietors of the street. His images cast an impartial gaze on everyone he meets, including inmates, or fellow correction officers he met during his twenty-year tenure at Rikers Island; dapper b-boys, or young Muslim men and women dressed in their finest. The photographs in this exhibition were all made between 1980 and 2020. All of the people shown in these photographs reside within the five boroughs of New York City.



Jamel Shabazz, *Joy Riding*. 1980. Courtesy of the Artist.

Curatorial Credit:

Jamel Shabazz: Eyes on the Street is organized by the Bronx Museum's chief Curator Emeritus Antonio Sergio Bessa. The exhibition is part of *Our Stories, Our Voices*—a year-long series of exhibitions and public programs celebrating the 50th Anniversary of The Bronx Museum of the Arts. These exhibitions are organized around the idea that visibility is a tenet of social justice.

Exhibition Support:

Jamel Shabazz: Eyes on the Street is made possible by the lead sponsorship of an anonymous patron and the additional support of Derrick Adams, Dana Emmott, Joseph Mizzi, Melissa Osterwind, Steve Shapiro, and SRI Fine Art Services. Special thanks to Griffin Editions, and Faith Art Gallery.

About the Artist:

Jamel Shabazz was born and raised in Brooklyn, New York. At the age of fifteen, he picked up his first camera and started to document his peers. Inspired by photographers Leonard Freed, James Van Der Zee, and Gordon Parks, Shabazz says his goal is to contribute to the preservation of world history and culture. Through analog film and digital photography, his work showcases the cultural vibrancy of the city's Black and Brown communities, dismantling negative stereotypes of communities that are often painted as dangerous or decaying.

In the past 10 years he has had over two dozen solo exhibitions which have been shown from Argentina to The Netherlands, England, Italy, Germany, France, Japan and throughout the United States. Shabazz has also presented at Art Basel; Miami, the Brooklyn Museum, the Newark Museum, the Contact Photo Festival, the Victoria and Albert Museum, The Studio Museum in Harlem, Duke University, and the Adidas Photo Festival in Ethiopia. In 2018, he was an honoree at the Gordon Parks Foundation Awards Dinner and Auction, where he received the Gordon Parks Foundation Award.

Shabazz sees his photography as “visual medicine” and is dedicated to mobilizing his practice toward service. He has worked with many youth organizations, including the Rush Philanthropic Arts Foundation, the Bronx Museum's Teen Council youth program, and the Studio Museum in Harlem's Expanding the Walls Project, to teach people about photography and social responsibility. Moreover, he has also lectured at the Fashion Institute of Technology, The International Center for Photography, The Brooklyn Historic Foundation, Haverford College, and Parsons New School of Design. He is the author of 5 monographs and has contributed to numerous others. He is presently working on a new book, titled “The Book of Life”.
www.jamelshabazz.com

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.

Recent critically acclaimed exhibitions include **Wardell Milan: Amerika. God Bless You If It's Good To You** (2021); **Born in Flames: Feminist Futures** (2021) **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).

VISIT THE MUSEUM:

1040 Grand Concourse
Bronx, New York 10456
T: 718-681-6000
<http://bronxmuseum.org>

CONNECT:

Instagram: [@bronxmuseum](https://www.instagram.com/bronxmuseum)
Twitter: [@BronxMuseum](https://twitter.com/BronxMuseum)
Facebook: [@bronxmuseum](https://www.facebook.com/bronxmuseum)
#BronxMuseum

PRESS CONTACT:

Cultural Counsel
bronxmuseum@culturalcounsel.com