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MIT & BLACK PUBLIC MEDIA WELCOME ANDREA WALLS TO THEIR VISITING ARTISTS PROGRAM

Philadelphia poet and artist will incubate Museum of Black Joy

NEW YORK (October 8, 2021) – Black Public Media (BPM) and Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) are delighted to announce that artist and poet Andrea Walls is one of two recipients of their 2021 MIT & Black Public Media Visiting Artists Program, hosted by MIT Open Documentary Lab ([OpenDocLab](#)) and sponsored by MIT Center for Art, Science & Technology ([CAST](#)). Walls, who is based in Philadelphia, will develop her project, *Museum of Black Joy*, a celebration of Black life.

For Walls, who is self taught, the piece that she conceptualizes [during the residency](#) will be her first emerging-tech production. *Museum of Black Joy* already comprises street photography, video collages, and a website ([museumofblackjoy.com](#)). Walls would like to create a piece that is not confined to traditional, art exhibition spaces. “For me, it’s about access,” says Walls. “Everybody can’t afford to visit a museum, and everyone doesn’t always feel welcome at them.” Walls is currently an [Activist-Curator Fellow](#) with [Chronicling Resistance](#).

Filmmaker Ngardy Conteh George, based in Toronto, is the other 2021 recipient. She will develop her virtual reality film, *Wa’Omoni Rising*. Both artists began their residencies in September and will participate in OpenDocLab activities for a full academic year. Black Public Media will invite each Visiting Artist to present their projects in April 2022 at PitchBLACK, Black Public Media’s pitch event for 2D film projects, web series, and emerging-tech projects. Six creative technologists, including the first two recipients of the MIT & BPM residency, pitched augmented reality, virtual reality, and motion capture projects at PitchBLACK 2021.

BPM, OpenDocLab, and MIT CAST designed their Visiting Artists Program to serve Black creative technologists, specifically—given the well-documented, low numbers of Black filmmakers, executives, and artists working in the tech industry. The Visiting Artists Program, formerly known as the MIT & Black Public Media Fellowship, invites Black filmmakers and artists to develop emerging-tech projects by joining OpenDocLab and working with Black Public Media to develop a package of pitch materials. In addition, each Visiting Artist receives \$7,500 from MIT CAST. OpenDocLab is a vibrant community of storytellers, scholars, and technologists, all focused on nonfiction storytelling. Black Public Media will executive produce both *Museum of*

Black Joy and *Wa'Omoni Rising* and plug the artists into BPM's tight-knit network of Black creative technologists.

Both 2021 Visiting Artists will participate in the residency remotely, attending weekly OpenDocLab programming and regular production meetings with Lisa Osborne, BPM's director of emerging media.

"We received applications from eight countries this year—Brazil, Canada, France, Kenya, the Netherlands, Nigeria, the UK, and the U.S.," said Osborne. "In their interviews, Andrea and Ngardy both spoke about craving the community and camaraderie of makers, like themselves, who have an interest in using cutting-edge technologies to tell stories. I'm thrilled that the Visiting Artists Program will help them fulfill that desire."

"We are proud to support Black artists working at the intersection of art, film, and technology," said Leila Kinney, executive director of MIT CAST. "Our Center presents transdisciplinary, artistic research and practice, and the work of Andrea Walls and Ngardy Conteh George exemplify this mission."

Filmmakers Carla LynDale Bishop and Fabiano Mixo were the first recipients of this program, which launched last fall. LynDale Bishop, who is a film professor at Arizona State University, used the program to research *Mapping Blackness*, a digital archive of historically Black communities, and Mixo, a filmmaker and artist in Rio de Janeiro, started prototyping *Meshmemories*, an AR sculpture of Beatriz Moreira Costa, an African-Brazilian writer, activist, and religious leader.

"Partnering with Black Public Media and MIT CAST has allowed us to offer a residency that fully supports Black artists, from financial support to conceptualization and production," said Sarah Wolozin, director of OpenDocLab. "It's deeply satisfying to watch the fellows' projects blossom. And diversity of perspectives and people is what makes our lab sing."

BPM was created 42 years ago and receives funding primarily from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. It is the only American, public media organization actively focused on increasing the participation of Black storytelling talent in emerging-tech industries and reducing barriers to entry. Black Public Media is a founding member of [Black Innovation Alliance](#), a growing network of 60+ organizations that serve Black entrepreneurs and innovators. BPM's emerging-tech programs, collectively known as BPMplus, are funded by the MacArthur Foundation, private gifts, and other sources.

To learn more about BPM's programs for artists who use technology as a medium, visit blackpublicmedia.org/bpmplus or follow #bpmplus on social media. Black Public Media is @blackpublicmedia on Instagram and @BLKPublicMedia on Twitter.

LINKS

Museum of Black Joy

<https://www.museumofblackjoy.com>

OpenDocLab

<http://opendoclab.mit.edu/presents/andrea-walls-fellow>

<http://opendoclab.mit.edu/presents/ngardy-conteh-george-fellow>

Black Public Media's BPMplus Programs

www.blackpublicmedia.org/bpmplus

MIT Center for Art, Science & Technology

<https://arts.mit.edu/cast/>

About Black Public Media:

Black Public Media is committed to enriching our democracy by educating, enlightening, empowering and engaging the American public. The nonprofit supports diverse voices by developing, producing, and distributing innovative media about the Black experience and by investing in visionary content makers. BPM provides quality content for public media outlets, including, among others, PBS, PBS.org, and BlackPublicMedia.org, as well as other platforms, while training and mentoring the next generation of Black filmmakers. The mission of [BPMplus](#) is to increase Black participation in extended reality and other forms of emerging-tech storytelling.

About MIT Open Documentary Lab:

Drawing on MIT's legacy of media innovation and its deep commitment to open and accessible information, the MIT Open Documentary Lab brings storytellers, technologists, and scholars together to explore new documentary forms with a particular focus on collaborative, interactive, and immersive storytelling. OpenDocLab is based in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

About MIT's Center for Art, Science & Technology:

A major cross-school initiative, the MIT Center for Art, Science & Technology (CAST) creates new opportunities for art, science and technology to thrive as interrelated, mutually informing modes of exploration, knowledge and discovery. MIT CAST's multidisciplinary platform presents performing and visual arts programs, supports research projects for artists working with science and engineering labs, and sponsors symposia, classes, workshops, design studios, lectures and publications. The visiting artists program is a cornerstone of CAST's activities, which encourages cross-fertilization among disciplines and intensive interaction with MIT's faculty, students, and researchers. MIT CAST is based in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

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