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**For immediate Release**

**West Harlem Art Fund  
& Iconic Linx  
Present**

## **FUSION NEW YORK DAY 2 ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**New York, NY ...** The West Harlem Art Fund in partnership with Iconic Linx is presenting FUSION NY in Harlem. FUSION NY is a thematic event series comprised of art exhibitions, panels, a jazz concert, and tours during Armory Week 2016.



Second day panels focus on art and technology and a present-day focus on Basquiat and his influence on pop culture. Announcements will be made about the new 125<sup>th</sup> Street Wireless Network

**Location: Rendell Memorial Presbyterian Church, 59 W 137th St #61, New York, NY 10037**



### **FUSION NY PANEL LINEUP – March 2<sup>nd</sup>**

**Art and Technology** -- Panel (45 minutes) 3 p.m.

**Moderator:** Hannah Ghorabshi, Artnews

**Panelists:** Kevin Cunningham, Executive Director

Debra Swack, Digital & Sound Artist

Erica Kermani, Director of Community Engagement at Eyebeam

Madison Maxey, Creative Technologist and 2013 Thiel Fellow

Break

**Basquiat Still Fly @ 55** -- Panel (45 minutes) 4 p.m.

**Moderator:** Jeffrey Deitch

**Panelists:** Ja'nell Ajani

Ayanna Legros

## **BIOS**



Ja'nell Nequeva Ajani is the co-curator and co-founder of the Basquiat: Still Fly @ 55 project. A Master's candidate in Africana Studies at New York University, with a concentration in Museum Studies, Ajani's research interests include branding, contemporary black artists, and the commodification of celebrities. Her current writing project: More Than 15 Minutes of Fame: Black Celebrity Branding in Andy Warhol's Interview Magazine analyzes how black celebrities and models throughout this iconic publication's history have branded themselves and maintained success by negotiating race, gender, and sexuality. Ajani is a member of the Director's Circle, Tastemaker and Feminist Art

Council at The Brooklyn Museum and is the Technology Peer Group Coordinator for the New York Museum Educators Roundtable (NYCMER). She currently serves as an Adjunct Professor teaching courses in fashion, film, music and critical race studies.



Kevin Cunningham is an award-winning writer, director, designer, producer and entrepreneur based in New York City. Throughout his 30-year career he has authored, designed and directed many multi-disciplinary artworks, including a new collaboration with Chuck Mee, entitled, Paris Orgy. Over the last 10 years he has focused on large scale live multimedia performance and experimental interactive work, receiving selection for the USITT American Pavilion at the Prague Quadrennial, the premier international exhibit for performance design, and the 2007 American Theater Wing Hewes Design Award for Production Design of Losing Something. He is the founder and Executive Artistic Director of 3-Legged Dog.



DEBRA SWACK is an artist, writer, Fulbright Specialist and Phi Theta Kappa in computer science who works with immersive and interactive sound environments. She is mentioned in Art and Innovation at Xerox Parc published by MIT Press (1999) and has received three co-production grants and a Fulbright grant from Banff Centre. While a visiting artist at the American Academy in Rome in 2014, she presented Cloud Mapping Project (all manifestations of the cloud from arts to technology) at the Pera Museum in Istanbul for MIT. The Emotions after Charles Darwin (about the universality of emotions

on a biological level, created in collaboration with the Mind Brain Institute to help them with autism research) was most recently published by MIT Press in 2013 and exhibited internationally. Animal Patterning Project; about the role of the displaced animal in the urban environment was projected interactively onto dancers with New Chimes, (companion piece to 95 Chimes)

in collaboration with West Harlem Art Fund and Pratt Institute in 2015. 95 Chimes; a sound installation relating music to string theory inspired by Brian Greene's *The Elegant Universe* (first presented at the Museum of Natural History in 2002 in conjunction with ASCI-SCI Art Symposium) was presented in *Resonant Structures* at the Staller Center in 2016, adapted for 16 channel sound installation. She is collaborating with evolutionary biologist Monica Gagliano on Creative Capital's *On our Radar 2016* pic; *Bloom*, a project about bioacoustics communication between plants that will be published individually by Monica Gagliano and MIT Press. She is doing a podcast on sound art for *Vasari21* with Ann Landi, Contributing Editor for *Art News* and the *Wall Street Journal* on February 9th, 2016.



Erica Kermani is an artist, educator, and community organizer based in Brooklyn, NYC. As Director of Community Engagement at Eyebeam, Erica develops and produces project-based public programming around social justice, arts, and technology. Her roles as organizer, educator and arts administrator have been informed by over fifteen years of experience at organizations including BRIC Arts Media, Arts High Foundation, Media Arts Center San Diego, Center on Policy Initiatives, and Q-Team. Erica's arts practice involves traditional textile fabrication and new media installation informed by queer identity, subversion, feminism, and Iranian culture. Erica received a Bachelor's of the Arts in both Visual Arts (Media-Computing) and Political Science at the University of California, San Diego.



Ayanna Jessica Legros is a Masters candidate in Africana Studies and MacCracken Fellow at New York University's Graduate School of Arts and Sciences. Her research focuses on Afro-Latino/a and Caribbean identity and diaspora within larger questions of racial geopolitics, political activism, migration and anti neo-colonialism. She completed her Bachelors of Arts in International Studies and African American Studies at Northwestern University. Upon graduation she worked at the Movement of Dominican-Haitian Women (MUDHA) as a Kathryn W. Davis 100 Projects for Peace fellow. This past summer, Ayanna worked with the Foundation for the Development and Ethno-Cultural Re-vindication of Afro-Descendant Communities in Cali, Colombia through New York University's Global Fellowship in Human Rights. At the moment: Legros is working on a thesis project concerning the political activism of Haitian exiles during the Duvalier governments from the 1950s-1980s. In addition, she is the co-founder and co-curator for the *Basquiat: Still Fly @ 55* project.



Madison Maxey is a creative technologist and 2013 Thiel Fellow. Her work and contributions to the wearable technology space have been featured in *Wired*, *Fast Company* and *New York Magazine* and she has provided wearable tech insights to the likes of the White House and Google. At age 16, she was the youngest to intern at Tommy Hilfger and is a *Teen Vogue* and *CF+DA* scholarship recipient. She has also been named a "founder to watch" by *Women 2.0* and is an entrepreneur in residence at *General Assembly*. In addition to acting as an EiR, she is an advisor for the *500 Startups* and *General Assembly* pre-seed accelerator and is on the board of the *Urban Assembly Maker Academy*, a school focused on fabrications and design thinking.



Maddy will be a resident at Autodesk this fall and has had prior residencies at the School of Visual Arts and fellowships with Undercurrent (acquired by Quirky) and the Brooklyn Fashion + Design Accelerator. More than anything, she loves fabricating the future at The Crated, a product innovation studio focused on 2nd generation wearable technology.

## MODERATORS



Jeffrey Deitch has been involved with modern and contemporary art for more than forty years as an artist, writer, curator, dealer, and advisor. He opened his first gallery in Lenox, Massachusetts near Tanglewood, the summer home of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, in 1972. During the final week of the gallery's summer season, a New York artist who had been a regular visitor sat down with Deitch and told him that even though he had some aptitude for the field, he did not know what he was doing. He advised him to get an art education. Deitch has been working on his art education ever since.

Deitch had moved to New York without knowing a single person. Within six months, thanks to his job at the epicenter of the art discourse, he had met close to half of the art world. Listening to the gallery artists challenge each other while they sat around the office was an extraordinary education. Sol LeWitt was rigorous and exacting in his opinions about art, but was an exceptionally generous teacher. LeWitt became a life long inspiration.

Deitch has been active as an art writer since the mid 1970s. He received an Art Critic's Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts in 1979 and in the 1970s and early 1980s was a regular contributor to Arts and Art in America. His 1980 essay for Art in America on the Times Square Show was the most extensive first hand account of this seminal event. Deitch also served as the first American Editor of Flash Art. He has written numerous catalogue essays including texts on Keith Haring for the Musée de l'art moderne de la Ville de Paris, the Stedelijk Museum, and the Whitney Museum, and most recently on Jeff Koons for the Whitney. His essay The Art Industry, which analyzed the new art economy, was included in the catalogue for Metropolis at the Martin-Gropius-Bau, Berlin in 1991.

Deitch's own art involved constructing situations where the form of the work created itself. In 1976, he instigated arguments on busy New York street corners and photographed the movements of the crowds. A series from 1977 re-created the end of the aisle supermarket displays of cereal boxes and other consumer goods that were stacked by stock boys. A work from this series was shown at White Columns in 2007.

Deitch has been especially engaged with the careers of three of his artist contemporaries, Jean-Michel Basquiat, Keith Haring, and Jeff Koons, since 1980. Deitch was the first writer to review the work of Basquiat and had the sad task of delivering the eulogy at his funeral. He served for many years on the Authentication Committee of the Basquiat Estate. Deitch wrote one of the essays for the first publication on the work of Keith Haring in 1982 and continues to write about his art. He was the exclusive commercial representative of the Estate of Keith Haring from 1998 – 2010. In addition to his writings and exhibition projects with Jeff Koons, Deitch

helped to introduce Koons's work to several of his most important patrons and helped them to build their collections of his work. Deitch was Koons's American dealer during most of the 1990s and co-produced the artist's ambitious Celebration series.

Deitch Projects, the New York gallery that Deitch operated from 1996-2010 presented more than two hundred-fifty projects by artists from thirty-three countries. It was a unique organization, more like a private Institute of Contemporary Art than a commercial gallery. In addition to its gallery exhibitions, Deitch Projects was known for its performance program and public events like the Art Parade. The gallery's program is documented in *Live the Art, Fifteen Years of Deitch Projects*, published by Rizzoli in 2014.

Deitch closed the gallery to become Director of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles. During his three years at MOCA, he presented fifty exhibitions and projects including *The Painting Factory* and *Art in the Streets*, which had the highest attendance in the museum's history. Deitch also initiated the first museum YouTube channel, MOCA TV.

Deitch was born in 1952 in Hartford, CT. He is now based in New York and is working on historical and contemporary exhibition projects.



Hannah Ghorashi is a writer for *ARTnews*. Founded in 1902, *ARTnews* is the oldest and most widely-circulated art magazine in the world. Its readership of 180,000 in 124 countries includes collectors, dealers, historians, artists, museum directors, curators, connoisseurs, and enthusiasts. Published in print four times a year, it reports on the art, people, issues, trends, and events shaping the international art world. The magazine's thousands of contributors have included Alfred Barr, Bernard Berenson, Kenneth Clark, Robert Coles, Arthur Danto, Carlos Fuentes, Pete Hamill, Aldous Huxley, Steve Martin, Louise Nevelson, Bob Nickas, Francine Prose, Harold Rosenberg, David Salle, Jean-Paul Sartre, and William Carlos Williams.

## **A Brief History of Rendall Memorial Presbyterian Church**

The congregation of Rendall Memorial Presbyterian Church is blessed with a heritage of the descendants of a distinctive group of African-American people whose origins lie along the coasts of South Carolina and Georgia, as well as the adjacent Sea Islands. These families, often known in their origins as the Gullah people, are connected to the transatlantic slave trade of the 17th and 18th centuries. In 1670, the first English-speaking settlement was established in South Carolina. The Gullah people often lived in small farming and fishing units and developed a strong sense of community that survived slavery, the Civil War, and the emergence of modern American culture. This sense of community (or as Martin Luther King, Jr. called it--"the Beloved Community") is present in their descendants in Rendall Memorial Presbyterian Church today.

Rendall's history is also connected to the Bureau of Refuges, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands, known as the Freedman's Bureau, established by the United States Congress prior to the end of the Civil War. The Bureau was the first line of assistance to everyone affected by the war, including white people, as well as destitute freedmen. Northern philanthropists also contributed to the education of the freedmen. Religious denominations, including Presbyterians, and northern philanthropists also provided for support for the establishment of schools and colleges for African-Americans in South Carolina.

African-Americans flocked to the privately supported freedom schools and the new public schools, anxious for the opportunity to learn to read and write denied them during slavery. Most freedmen, women, men, girls, and boys, desperately wanted to learn. Prior to the end of slavery some black people had established schools. Many of Rendall's members come from a long history of several generations of Presbyterians; families who attended elementary, high school, and colleges established by the Presbyterian Church during and after the antebellum era of slavery in America.

The history of Rendall Memorial Presbyterian Church is also connected to the largest population movement of Americans in United States history. In the years of 1916 to 1940, between World War I and the eve of World War II, over three million African-Americans migrated from the segregated South to the urban industrial centers of the North. They uprooted themselves and made their way northward in the hope of building better lives. Many of Rendall's members are from families who came from South Carolina to Harlem compelled by the incentive to pursue northern opportunities for better jobs and education.

The need for churches grew for African-Americans as they followed the great migration from the South to the North. Rendall's history is importantly linked in this regard with the history of St. James Presbyterian Church. In 1915, St. James Presbyterian Church followed the northward movement of black people and moved to Harlem. There they erected a church building at 59 West 137th Street. The congregation remained at this location until 1927, after which the building became home to Rendall Memorial Presbyterian Church.

Rendall Memorial Presbyterian Church had its beginnings as a mission in the home of one of its members, Mrs. Owens, on 133rd Street in New York City. The church was first known as Washington Mission in honor of Booker Taliaferro Washington (great founder of the historic Tuskegee Institute) and began its life and work in 1917. The struggle for life was difficult and the mission moved to several locations before it began to purchase a permanent home.

After two years, the presbytery thought the mission should become a church. After much planning and consultation with the group, the Reverend William R. Lawton (founder and organizing pastor from 1919-1925) persuaded the group to change the name to Rendall as a memorial to Dr. Isaac Norton Rendall, the first president of Lincoln University and his former teacher. Dr. Rendall was president of Lincoln for forty years and then president *ex-honoree* until his death in 1912.

A Presbyterian minister, the Reverend John Miller Dickey, and his wife, Sarah Emlen Cresson, a Quaker, founded Lincoln University in 1854. They founded the school for the education of African-Americans, who had few opportunities for higher education. Later it was renamed Lincoln University (after the

assassination of President Abraham Lincoln) and became the first degree-granting, historically black university. Lincoln University produced many notable alumni including Thurgood Marshall, Langston Hughes, Cab Calloway, the first president of Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah, the first president of Nigeria, Nnamdi Azikwe, and Gil Scott-Heron.

The presbytery organized the renamed Rendall Memorial Presbyterian Church with the Reverend Lawton guiding the new church through its first faltering steps. In 1927, the presbytery turned over the building at 59 West 137th Street to the congregation. After the Reverend Lawton, Rendall called the following pastors to serve in its history:

<b>The Reverend James Mahoney</b>	Stated Supply	1925-1927
<b>The Reverend Thomas J.B. Harris, D.D.</b>	Installed	1927-1944
<b>The Reverend W. Eugene Houston, D.D.</b>	Installed	1944-1968
<b>The Reverend Thomas C. Monroe, Sr.</b>	Installed	1969-1980
<b>The Reverend John McCray</b>	Stated Supply	1981
<b>The Reverend Dr. Robert T. Newbold</b>	Installed	1982-1990
<b>The Reverend Gregory L. Brown</b>	Interim	1991-1993
<b>The Reverend Pauline Haynes</b>	Interim	1994-1996
<b>The Reverend Robert A. Smith, Jr.</b>	Stated Supply	1996-1997
<b>The Reverend Bruce T. Grady</b>	Installed	1997-2001
<b>The Reverend Spencer C. Gibbs</b>	Interim	2001-2011
<b>The Reverend Dr. Flora Wilson Bridges</b>	Installed	2013

Today Rendall Memorial Presbyterian Church continues in the tradition of its origins and founding. Its members come from all over New York City and the greater New York area. It is a warm, loving congregation characterized by its profound love for God in Jesus Christ, strong sense of community and love for the neighbor, high regard for an educated ministry, and motto of: "Building a Ministry of Hope. "Our goal is to give people a sense of hope and to be a witnessing community where men, women, boys, and girls may receive the gospel of Jesus Christ in word and deed."

Rendall's mission is:

- To win persons to Christ by spreading the good news that God is good and God is our salvation.
- To reach out to our community assisting and nurturing our brothers and sisters
- To witness and proclaim God's love for all humanity through our Lord Jesus Christ by our words and deeds.

Today the congregation is thriving--growing spiritually and numerically as it joyfully and faithfully continues in the tradition of its ancestors embodying the Beloved Community through the sustaining power of belief in the Lord Jesus Christ.