



WADSWORTH ATHENEUM MUSEUM OF ART

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“Mark Bradford / MATRIX 172” Opens June 4 at Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art

Continuing the 40th anniversary celebration of its groundbreaking MATRIX exhibition series, the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art will present, “Mark Bradford / MATRIX 172,” June 4 – Sept. 6, 2015.

Mark Bradford (American, born 1961) grew up in South Central Los Angeles, where the everyday realities of the local community and urban landscape inform his racially and politically charged work. Known for his tactile, map-like collage paintings, Bradford’s trademark monumental, mixed-media abstractions layer string and advertising posters stripped from the streets of his notoriously rough neighborhood, where he maintains his studio. In his work, the layered merchant posters are largely painted over and sanded down, but offer glimpses of texts that betray the area’s problematic social and economic issues. Ads for bail bonds businesses, money-cashing stores, and paternity- and disease-testing clinics target and prey upon the grim realities of the poor, inner-city community. These social and political interests intrinsic to Bradford’s “post-black” work are symbolically represented, veiled in abstraction.

“As I set out to plan the 40th year of MATRIX, I looked at artists whose work embodied the program’s origins as a forum for art that is challenging and relevant,” said Patricia Hickson, the Emily Hall Tremain Curator of Contemporary Art. “Mark Bradford’s MATRIX project will not only be provocative, but it will celebrate a landmark moment for the museum. We are thrilled to be working with such a creative force for MATRIX 172.”

For Bradford’s MATRIX project, he will create a site-specific wall drawing inspired by Sol LeWitt, the conceptual artist and Hartford native who is the source of the “wall drawing” art form, of which there are four on view in the museum. Along the 60-foot wall in MATRIX’s

Bunce Gallery, Bradford will apply dense layers of vibrantly colored paper, paint and rope, which he will then sand, peel, strip and cut away from the wall to create a vivid and textured composition. Akin to an excavation, Bradford's installation will become a metaphor for 40 years (or layers) of MATRIX history at the museum. The wall drawing will be accompanied by two recent "pull paintings" by the artist, a new technique he developed through the process of making MATRIX wall drawing tests in the studio.

Bradford has also designed a limited-edition poster to celebrate the 40th anniversary year of MATRIX—a fitting commemoration given that the program's inaugural MATRIX poster was designed by Sol LeWitt in 1975.

Public Programs

Bradford will give talks about his MATRIX project on Thursday, June 4, at 6 p.m. and 7 p.m., in MATRIX's Bunce Gallery during the museum's First Thursday event. Bradford will also participate in an artist conversation with MATRIX 169 artist Ruben Ochoa Sept. 2 at 6 p.m.

Exhibition Credit

The MATRIX program is generously supported in part by Jeffrey G. Marsted and Marcia Reid Marsted, Carol LeWitt in honor of Andrea Miller-Keller, as well as the current and founding members of the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art's Contemporary Coalition. Support for the Wadsworth Atheneum is provided in part by the Greater Hartford Arts Council's United Arts Campaign and the Department of Economic and Community Development, which also receives support from the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency.

About the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art

Founded in 1842, the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art is the oldest continually operating public art museum in the United States. The museum's nearly 50,000 works of art span 5,000 years, from Greek and Roman antiquities to the first museum collection of American contemporary art. The Wadsworth Atheneum's five connected buildings—representing architectural styles from Gothic Revival to modern International Style—are located at 600 Main Street in Hartford, Conn. Since 2010 the museum has been undergoing a major, \$33 million renovation, and will celebrate a grand reopening Sept. 19, 2015. Hours: Wednesday – Friday: 11 a.m. – 5 p.m.; Saturday and Sunday: 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.; First Thursdays: 11 a.m. – 8 p.m. Admission: \$5 – 10; discounts for members, students and seniors. Public phone: (860) 278-2670; website: thewadsworth.org.

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