

ARTIST NAJJA MOON SELECTED FOR THE INAUGURAL COMMISSION OF THE BASS' *NEW MONUMENTS* PROGRAM

Titled *Your Mommas Voice in the Back of Your Head*, Najja Moon's monument to mothers will be temporarily installed in Collins Park

On view March 2021



MIAMI BEACH, Fla. (DEC 10, 2020) – The Bass is pleased to announce that Miami-based artist and cultural practitioner Najja Moon has been selected as the inaugural winner of its *New Monuments* commission through an open artist call issued in July 2020 to Miami-based artists. The initiative, which will be renewed for the next five years, is supported by the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation through the museum's Knight Art Commissions Program established in 2019. As part of *New Monuments*, Najja Moon will install a public sculpture entitled *Your Mommas Voice in the Back of Your Head* in Collins Park, where it will be on view from March 2021 until January 2022.

Speaking to the deeply personal yet universal relationship between mothers and children, *Your Mommas Voice in the Back of Your Head* configures multidirectional speakers encased in gradient dichroic glass, echoing mantras, scolds and colloquialisms voiced by Moon's own mother, as well as those from her friends and family. Through recording sessions open to the public, Moon will also gather the voices of Miami-Dade County residents in English, Spanish and Creole.

"Your mother is a monument. A constant reminder. A well of advice. An angel on your shoulder with a lot of attitude," explains Moon. "For this piece I want to recreate that sound bath that is your mommas voice in the back of your head. That voice is empowering, challenging and even confusing until 'you'll understand when you have children.' Voices bouncing from different directions, just like the light, will hone in on the tough love, as well as the blind faith we receive, digest and give."

The Bass is situated in Collins Park, a public park of Miami Beach, where there are presently four monuments commissioned by different groups at various times. Sitting atop stone plinths in the south side of the park, these existing monuments pay homage to Cuban epidemiologist Dr. Carlos Finlay, Venezuelan political leader Simón Bolívar, Nicaraguan scientist Dr. Luis Henry Debayle and Cuban writer Jose Martí. Amid an international debate on monuments and their legitimacy, *New Monuments* seeks to provide artists

in Miami-Dade County the opportunity to produce a new, fifth monument and to reimagine the future of public installations and memorials.

“The Bass conceived of *New Monuments* as a way to elevate artistic voices in Miami,” said Silvia Karman Cubiñá, Executive Director and Chief Curator of The Bass. “For the next five years, we will be opening a space where artists can engage in the national conversation of redefining monuments and who or what they honor and represent.”

Building upon the question of what our monuments represent, *Your Mommas Voice in the Back of Your Head* will be the first work in the *New Monuments* series initiated by The Bass. Following Moon, this initiative will select five local artists over the next five years from an open call. Each artist will probe the idea of a monument to provide varying answers with a work of art that will be on view in Collins Park for approximately 10-12 months each.

For more information, including upcoming special programming, please visit www.thebass/newmonuments.org

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

New Monuments is part of the Knight Art Commissions Program funded by the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation.

ABOUT NAJJA MOON

Najja Moon is a Miami based artist and cultural practitioner, born and raised in Durham, North Carolina. Her practice is an amalgamation of practicalities that improve her life: design and language, cultural responsibility and community. In her visual arts practice, she uses drawing and text to explore the intersections of queer identity, the body and movement, black culture and familiar relations both personal and communal.

Her most recent exhibitions included: *Time Sensitive*, 2020, Spinello Projects (Miami); *Dust Specks on the Sea*, 2020, Little Haiti Cultural Center (Miami); *Grounded*, 2019, Spinello Projects (Miami); *SPRITS* Issue 9, 2019, Endless Editions, NYABF @MoMA PS1 (New York); *How to Patch a Leaky Roof*, 2019, Commissioned by O, Miami (Miami); *2 & a possible*, 2019, Supplement Projects xArts.Black(Miami); *Project Art: Currents*, 2019, Museum of Contemporary Art (North Miami); *Paradise Summit Miami*, 2018, Emerson Dorsch Gallery (Miami).

In 2015, She co-founded the BLCK family, a Miami based creative collective responsible for the installation of mobile performance art shows centered around culinary, visual, performing and social arts. She co-founded the former queer social club for womxn, This Girls lunchbox (2017-2019), that centered art as a convening point

ABOUT THE BASS

The Bass is Miami Beach’s contemporary art museum. Founded in 1964 by the City of Miami Beach, the museum was established after the donation of a private collection by residents John and Johanna Bass and opened in what was formerly the Miami Beach Public Library and Art Center, a 1930s Art Deco building designed by Russell Pancoast. Recognized for organizing the first solo museum exhibitions in the United States of international artists such as Erwin Wurm, The Bass has also presented major exhibitions by influential artists including El Anatsui, Isaac Julien, Eve Sussman and Piotr Ukiński. The exhibition program encompasses a wide range of media and artistic points of view, bringing fresh perspectives to the diverse cultural context of Miami Beach. The Bass is a nonprofit, tax-exempt organization accredited by the American Alliance of Museums. The Bass is generously funded by the City of Miami Beach, Cultural Affairs Program and Cultural Arts Council, the Miami-Dade County Department of Cultural Affairs and the Cultural Affairs Council, the Miami-Dade County Mayor and Board of County Commissioners, and The Bass membership. For more information, please visit www.thebass.org, or follow The Bass on social media at www.facebook.com/TheBassMoA or Twitter and Instagram via @TheBassMoA.

ABOUT THE JOHN S. AND JAMES L. KNIGHT FOUNDATION

Knight Foundation is a national foundation with strong local roots. We invest in journalism, in the arts, and in the success of cities

where brothers John S. and James L. Knight once published newspapers. Our goal is to foster informed and engaged communities, which we believe are essential for a healthy democracy. For more, visit www.knightfoundation.org.

CURRENT EXHIBITIONS AT THE BASS

Abraham Cruzvillegas: *Agua dulce*

November 29, 2020 – April 18, 2021

What Remains

November 29, 2020 – April 11, 2021

The Willfulness of Objects

Ongoing

Open Storage: Selections from the Collection & Works on Loan

Ongoing

Art Outside

Ongoing

Work from Home

November 29, 2020 – April 18, 2021

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For a complete selection of high-res imagery and to access the full press kit, please visit www.thebass.org/presskit.

[Image: Rendering of *Your Mommas Voice in the Back of Your Head*. Courtesy of the artist.]