

# AKG:

## Press Release

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## BUFFALO AKG TO MARK CLOSE OF *BEFORE AND AFTER AGAIN* WITH SPECIAL LIVE PERFORMANCE ON OCTOBER 11

September 24, 2024: Today the Buffalo AKG Art Museum announced a new special event to mark the close of *Before and After Again*, a landmark exhibition that responds to the tragic slaying of ten members of Buffalo's Black community on May 14, 2022. To date, the exhibition, which was extended in response to community demand, has been visited by tens of thousands of people.

On Friday, October 11, from 7 to 9 pm in the museum's Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Town Square, celebrated artist Drea D'Nur will present a special live performance titled "A Requiem for Our Suffering." The performance will blend music, narrative, and visuals, offering a moving testament of remembrance dedicated to honoring collective grief while creating space for healing. The event will be free and open to the public. For more information about Drea D'Nur and the upcoming performance on October 11, visit [dreadnur.com](http://dreadnur.com).

*Before and After Again* features new paintings, poetry, and prose by artists Julia Bottoms, Tiffany Gaines, and Jillian Hanesworth. Hanesworth previously served as the inaugural Poet Laureate of the City of Buffalo and was recently nominated for an Emmy Award for her work on the "Choose Love" video with the Buffalo Bills. The exhibition is on view and free of admission charges in the Buffalo AKG's M&T Bank Gallery.

The May 14 mass shooting at Tops Friendly Markets in the city of Buffalo's East Side brought national attention to the active forces of racism and segregation that continue to plague Western New York. Bottoms, Gaines, and Hanesworth engaged in intimate and profound dialogue with members of Buffalo's Black community, including the families directly affected by the tragedy, to consider how humanity and resilience endure in the face of systemic racism. The resulting exhibition includes portraiture, symbolically charged still life paintings, a series of fourteen new poems, and written testaments to communal healing.

*Before and After Again* is an embodiment of the Buffalo AKG's mission to serve as a creative and welcoming space shaped by and for its community. With a newly renovated and expanded campus, the museum has the space and resources to realize this mission and act as

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a platform for these three Black women artists and the vital stories and ideas they express. The M&T Bank Gallery and the Seymour H. Knox Building are free of admission charges all year, allowing the exhibition to be accessible throughout its duration.

Aaron Ott, the Buffalo AKG's Curator of Public Art and curator of *Before and After Again* says, "I see this exhibition not as a memorial, but a living expression of resistance, resilience, humanity, and a love that prevails over all other forces. Led by powerful local Black voices, the exhibition stands to elevate growing, critical, and crucial dialogue in our city about equity and our shared cultural responsibility to elevate and respect the lives of our Black citizens, neighbors, friends, and families."

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*Before and After Again* is presented by Tops Friendly Markets and M&T Bank. The exhibition is made possible through the generosity of the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of the Office of the Governor and the New York State Legislature, and an anonymous donor.

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## **About Julia Bottoms**

Buffalo-based artist Julia Bottoms has been painting portraiture of Black subjects ever since the devastating murder of Trayvon Martin in 2012.

Bottoms has already crafted extraordinarily moving works through her participation in the production of *The Freedom Wall*. *Before and After Again* is a continuation of how the artist works in and with her community. The goal is not merely to represent, although making humanity visible is still fundamental. Bottoms has expanded her scope of representation past portraiture and embraced a deep and thoughtful storytelling that demonstrates what it means to be alive, create family and community, and leave a legacy.

By working with journalists, poets, community leaders, and activists, Bottoms has produced the most nuanced work of her career, calling direct attention to the scope of the tragedy that our community suffered to ensure that we do not allow complacency, fear, or normalization of violence to render us inert in the face of an epidemic of violence and racism.

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## **About Jillian Hanesworth**

Jillian Hanesworth worked close by on the day of the tragic event and since has become an advocate and resource for the many affected families to share and find voice. Her poem “Water” was installed as part of an in-store memorial to the victims after the Tops Friendly Markets location reopened to the public. That poem begins with the invocation, “Let the hopeful healing waters flow,” calling on all of us to recognize that “even our small marks / on this huge world are necessary.”

Hanesworth’s remarkable talent is grounded in her ability to listen, validate, and transform the immense emotional scale of our tragedy into words. As a liaison between fellow exhibition artists and families affected by the tragedy, she created space for her creative partners and our entire community to listen deeply. In her capacity as a poet, she continues her journey as a trusted source and an empathetic voice by creating original poetry for the exhibition.

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## **About Tiffany Gaines**

Tiffany Gaines is a writer, curator, and multimedia creator interested in highlighting the diverse arts and artists of her community through curatorial work, content creation, and writing. As an artist and creative, her growing practice unpacks the intersections of narrative, history, and possibility as she explores her own identity as a Black woman in America. She says, “The work that I do allows me to amplify the voices of artists of color who have been historically excluded from the fine arts, whose work resonates with my experience of the world on a personal level, as well as explore my own lived experiences through my art practice.”

Gaines earned her undergraduate degree in journalism and was asked to create prose to complement Hanesworth’s poetry and Bottoms’s paintings for *Before and After Again*. Her goal is to center the voices of her community, reflecting an unwavering and tenacious sense of pride, love, and perseverance. She writes, “There is an intricate poetry to Blackness, to say the least. Blackness is not a monolith, but rather a dynamic flow of intertwined stories that connect us back to our past through shared values. These values transcend moments of survival and struggle, resilience, and righteousness to live at the core of our understanding and purpose.”

Her work in this exhibition is an extension of her artistic and professional mission to “encourage people from all walks of life to

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engage in art on multiple levels.” It is her firm belief “that art can be an impactful way to weave communities together; it is only through the shared emotion, reflection, and contemplation experienced through art that real change becomes possible.”

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## **About the Buffalo AKG Art Museum**

Founded in 1862, the Buffalo AKG Art Museum (formerly the Albright-Knox Art Gallery) is the sixth-oldest public art institution in the United States. For more than 160 years, the Buffalo AKG has collected, conserved, and exhibited the art of its time, often working directly with living artists. This tradition has given rise to one of the world’s most extraordinary collections of modern and contemporary art.

In June 2023, following the completion of the most significant campus development and expansion project in its history, the Buffalo AKG opened anew to the public. The project was funded by a \$230 million capital campaign, the largest such campaign for a cultural institution in the history of Western New York, including \$195 million raised for construction and \$35 million in additional operating endowment funds.

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