



A Blade of Grass Announces Public Art Performance of *Black Movement Library: Movement Portraits*

**Outdoor Dance and Video Performance Outside of Brooklyn Public Library will
Showcase Ongoing Work and Research by New York-based Artist LaJuné McMillian**

New York, NY—May 13, 2021—A Blade of Grass, an arts nonprofit dedicated to social engagement, is excited to announce a large-scale public outdoor performance organized by new media artist, creative technologist, and educator LaJuné McMillian, hosted by Brooklyn Public Library on Grand Army Plaza on Wednesday, June 23, 2021, from 8:30PM to 10:00PM. The performance, which is the culmination of a digital workshop series organized by A Blade of Grass as part of its ongoing *Curriculum for the Future* initiative, will showcase work and research from McMillian’s ongoing project *Black Movement Library* and is curated by independent curator Yvonne Mpwo. Taking the form of multiple short acts, the evening will feature both live and prerecorded “Movement Portraits,” or 2D video representations of peoples’ movements created using perception neuron motion-capture suits. Four Black New York-based performing artists will create their “Movement Portraits” live in front of the audience, dancing on the plaza in front of the Library and sending their movement data to be translated into projected visuals in real-time. The evening will also include pre-recorded videos of “Movement Portraits” created by participants in the workshop series earlier this year. During the intermission, the audience will have the opportunity to participate in the creation and archiving of movements collaboratively through sharing their own movements to be projected.

Black Movement Library is an archival project launched by McMillian in 2018 as an online database of motion capture data from Black performers and Black character base models, who are currently misrepresented and underrepresented in existing online databases. It seeks to gather diverse data, making the data pool more accurate and inclusive, while growing community through the use of performances, extended reality (XR) experiences, workshops, conversations, and tool making. McMillian’s six-part digital workshop, titled *Understanding, Transforming, and Preserving Movement in Digital Space*, took place from late March to late April as part of A Blade of Grass’ *Curriculum for the Future* series. In the workshop, McMillian invited participants to learn about XR tools and their relationship to race, gender, and culture. McMillian and workshop participants explored issues of cultural representation, erasure, and exploitation through readings and discussions as well as learned about motion capture, avatars, rigging, and 3D environments. In addition to continuing the development of the *Black Movement Library* archive, the workshop culminated in the creation of the “Movement Portraits” that will be projected outside of Brooklyn Public Library on Grand Army Plaza.

“I cannot think of a more joyful way to come out of isolation after more than a year of pandemic restrictions than coming together around McMillian’s work. Creating and using a digital archive of Black movement is so important at this moment of adjustment--so much more of our lives will continue to unfold in digital spaces. And being able to physically celebrate a more compassionate and inclusive digital space by moving together is a perfect expression of the connection we crave, and what’s possible as we build the future we want.” said Deborah Fisher, Executive Director of A Blade of Grass. “A Blade of Grass believes in artists like McMillian who are ambitiously and collaboratively creating the future, and that art can be a concrete resource that helps us imagine and prototype a more just and equitable world. McMillian’s work is a perfect example of this: their *Black Movement Library* and the recent workshop and upcoming performance brings the community together to simultaneously learn digital and artistic skills, develop critical awareness, and create a learning environment that enacts a conscious community.”

More details about the *Black Movement Library: Movement Portraits* performance, including the names of the performing artists and dancers who will perform live, will be announced in June.

About LaJuné McMillian

LaJuné McMillian is a Multidisciplinary Artist, and Educator creating art that integrates performance, extended reality, and physical computing to question our current forms of communication. They are passionate about discovering, learning, manifesting, and stewarding spaces for liberated Black Realities and the Black Imagination. LaJuné believes in making by diving into, navigating, critiquing, and breaking systems and technologies that uphold systemic injustices to decommodify our bodies, undo our indoctrination, and make room for different ways of being.

LaJuné has had the opportunity to show and speak about their work at Pioneer Works, National Sawdust, Leaders in Software and Art, Creative Tech Week, and Art & Code's Weird Reality. LaJuné was previously the Director of Skating at Figure Skating in Harlem, where they integrated STEAM and Figure Skating to teach girls of color about movement and technology. They have continued their research on Blackness, movement, and technology during residencies and fellowships at the Jerome Hill Artist Fellowship, Eyebeam, Pioneer Works, Barbarian Group, and Barnard College.

About A Blade of Grass

[A Blade of Grass](#) is a New York-based arts nonprofit dedicated to social engagement. The organization is guided by the core beliefs that artists have essential roles to play in fostering critical conversations on social change and creating new systems and structures that benefit our communities and our lives. A Blade of Grass collaborates actively with artists to realize their visions for specific socially engaged projects or programs, offering a variety of tools that amplify artists’ work and build their audiences. It produces public programs, workshops, performances, installations, and other community actions that raise the visibility of artists who are creating change in communities through art.

A Blade of Grass’ *Curriculum for the Future* series includes panel discussions and workshops that explore important questions about social structures, systems of care, the dynamics of power, and the ongoing impact of this pandemic moment on all aspects of contemporary life. *Curriculum for the Future*

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About Brooklyn Public Library

[Brooklyn Public Library](#) is one of the nation's largest library systems and among New York City's most democratic institutions. As a leader in developing modern 21st-century libraries, we provide resources to support personal advancement, foster civic literacy, and strengthen the fabric of community among the more than 2.7 million individuals who call Brooklyn home. We provide nearly 65,000 free programs a year with writers, thinkers, artists, and educators from around the corner and around the world. And we give patrons millions of opportunities to enjoy one of life's greatest satisfactions: the joy of a good book.

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