
THE SHED **Press Release**

THE **BLOOMBERG** BUILDING
545 West 30th Street
New York, NY 10001

The Shed Presents *Fighting Dark*, a New Audio Tour and Film by Visual Artist and Storyteller Kamau Ware

Two-part project exploring NYC's July 1863 race riots as part of the history of racial violence in the city, and the power of Black resilience, in conjunction with *Howardena Pindell: Rope/Fire/Water*

For more information, please contact:

Christina Riley
Senior Publicist
(646) 876-6865
christina.riley@theshed.org



Still from *Fighting Dark* courtesy Kamau Ware.

NEW YORK, NY— February 1, 2021— The Shed presents *Fighting Dark*, a new audio tour and film by artist and storyteller **Kamau Ware** (Founder, Black Gotham Experience). This two-part project features an online audio tour and a short film that explores Manhattan and Brooklyn's 19th-century history of racial violence and resilience. *Fighting Dark* is commissioned in conjunction with *Howardena Pindell: Rope/Fire/Water*, an exhibition currently on view at The Shed, and connects to Pindell's investigation of the legacy of racial violence in the United States. *Fighting Dark*'s audio walking tour is streaming for free on The Shed's website (theshed.org/fightingdark). The film will debut on theshed.org in the coming weeks.

“Collectively our country has focused on the racial violence inflicted on free Black communities in the South after the Civil War, specifically during the Reconstruction Era,” said Kamau Ware. “The insurrection that took place in the streets of New York City the week of July 13th, 1863, less than two weeks after the Battle of Gettysburg, was a blueprint for disenfranchising Black people before the Reconstruction Amendments were drafted. This racial violence has been hiding in plain sight with the incorrect label of 'draft riots' for over a century and a half.”

The immersive, self-guided audio tour maps 11 sites in Manhattan and Brooklyn with narration by Ware that probes historic events that took place at each location. The audio tour can be experienced as a walking tour for site-specific engagements across the city or as an audio-only experience from home.

THE SHED
THE BLOOMBERG BUILDING
545 West 30th Street
New York, NY 10001

The tour traces back 100 years from the May 1963 Children’s Crusade in Birmingham, Alabama, explored by Pindell in the exhibition’s Shed-commissioned film. Ware’s project draws a line between that moment in the civil rights movement in the South and New York City’s 1863 race riots. According to the project, these riots have often been explained as a consequence of the Civil War draft, an alibi that obscures the racial violence that white New Yorkers directed at their Black neighbors at the time.

Within this historiography, both the film and audio tour in *Fighting Dark* speak to a dark side of American history, and particularly New York City history, as well as the people who have been impacted by it, especially the Black New Yorkers who fled in the dark of night during the 1863 riots and those who enlisted in the Union Army during the Civil War in what was called the “Colored Troops 20th Infantry” from New York City. *Fighting Dark* ultimately provides a platform to draw out lessons on how Black people find resilience in the face of racial violence and shares the history of Weeksville in central Brooklyn, one of the largest free Black communities in pre-Civil War America, as an exceptional example of it.

The film takes on a poetic narrative exploring racial history throughout NYC and features music by **Jason 'classicbeatz' Minnis** and black resilience chorus with poetry by **Cyrus Aaron**.

“We commissioned this piece from Kamau because we wanted to ensure that we could contextualize Howardena Pindell’s work, particularly the central video work *Rope/Fire/Water*, within the streets and the history (and present) of racial violence (and resilience) in our own city,” said **Solana Chetman**, Director of Civic Programs. “We knew this was key as part of our civic mandate, but couldn’t have imagined just how unfortunately timely it was going to be. We hope people will take the time to walk, listen, learn, reflect, gain awareness, get inspired, and continue (or start) taking action in their own ways.”

Howardena Pindell: Rope/Fire/Water

Through April 11, 2021

This solo exhibition by Howardena Pindell explores the brutality of racism and the healing power of art. It includes Pindell’s first video work in decades, a project unrealized by the artist since the 1970s that The Shed commissioned, as well as new large-scale paintings and several abstract paintings from earlier in her career. Timed tickets for admission are available at www.theshed.org.

About The Artist

Kamau Ware is an award-winning visual artist and storyteller based in New York City. Ware creates new narratives about the African diaspora’s history through photography, films, exhibitions, and events. He founded the Black Gotham Experience (BGX) in 2010 to illustrate the impact of the African diaspora through art and walking tours that ask participants to embody historic figures through imagination and empathy. BGX has been in residence in the Seaport District of Lower Manhattan since 2017, serving as a gallery, event space, and visitor’s center for walking tours. Ware has been commissioned to create original works by the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, BRIC Media, The Mile Long Opera, and the first Black history walking tour of New York City Hall by the New York City Public Design Commission.

THE SHED
THE BLOOMBERG BUILDING
545 West 30th Street
New York, NY 10001

Ware has spoken at SXSW, Yale University, John Hopkins University, the Municipal Archive in Amsterdam, the Public Theater, the Apple flagship store, and has been featured on ABC and NBA and in the *Atlantic*, the *New York Times*, *Atlas Obscura*, *Hyperallergic*, *Curbed*.

From Our Sponsors

Major Support for The Shed's Public Programs and *Howardena Pindell: Rope/Fire/Water* is provided by the Ford Foundation. Additional support is provided, in part, by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council. The Shed is connected by Altice.

About The Shed

The Shed is a new cultural institution of and for the 21st century. We produce and welcome innovative art and ideas, across all forms of creativity, to build a shared understanding of our rapidly changing world and a more equitable society. In our highly adaptable building on Manhattan's west side, The Shed brings together established and emerging artists to create new work in fields ranging from pop to classical music, painting to digital media, theater to literature, and sculpture to dance. We seek opportunities to collaborate with cultural peers and community organizations, work with like-minded partners, and provide unique spaces for private events. As an independent nonprofit that values invention, equity, and generosity, we are committed to advancing art forms, addressing the urgent issues of our time, and making our work impactful, sustainable, and relevant to the local community, the cultural sector, New York City, and beyond.