

Stephen Friedman Gallery

Culture Type

The Hirshhorn Museum Asked Artists About Their Influences. Amy Sherald Chose Deborah Roberts, Jordan Casteel Selected Faith Ringgold

By Victoria L Valentine

25 August 2019



“For its fifth annual gala in New York, the Smithsonian’s Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden is paying tribute to 42 artists, an “intergenerational vanguard” including Jordan Casteel, Faith Ringgold, Amy Sherald, Deborah Roberts, and David Hartt.”

The museum is assembling the group by inviting 21 artists to identify an additional honoree who “has influenced their thinking.” Sherald chose Roberts; Casteel selected Ringgold; and photographer [Christopher Williams](#) reached out to Hartt. The five African American artists being recognized at the Artist x Artist gala are experiencing new levels of growth and recognition.



From left, Amy Sherald. | Courtesy the artist; Jordan Casteel. | Photo by David Schulze

Sherald and Roberts both focus on black representation and recently presented solo exhibitions at the Spelman College Museum of Fine Art in Atlanta. Sherald, who paints imagined portraits of real people, is connected with another Smithsonian museum. She won the National Portrait Gallery’s [Outwin Boochever Portrait Competition](#) in 2016 and famously painted First Lady Michelle Obama’s official portrait, which was unveiled at the museum in 2018. Sherald’s [first exhibition](#) at Hauser & Wirth gallery in New York opens Sept. 10.

Austin, Texas-based Roberts makes collage portraits that explore girlhood and boyhood and the influence of pop culture on identity, vulnerability, and perceptions of beauty. Earlier this year, she had exhibitions at [Vielmetter Los Angeles](#) and Stephen Friedman Gallery in London, her first solo show in Europe. Two volumes, [“Deborah Roberts: The Evolution of Mimi”](#) and [“Deborah Roberts: If they come,”](#) the first dedicated to her practice, were just published documenting her exhibitions in Atlanta and London.

Currently on view at Serpentine Galleries in London, [“Faith Ringgold”](#) is the artist’s first solo show at a European institution. The five-decade survey features early paintings examining the state of race and gender in America, 1970s era political posters, story quilts dating from the 1980s, and more recent work.

In recognizing Ringgold, 88, Casteel, is actually acknowledging two artists who have come before her and inspired her. Casteel has said her favorite artwork is a 1977 portrait of Ringgold by Alice Neel (1900-1984). “The painting that Alice Neel did of Faith Ringgold is one of those paintings that is just stuck in my psyche,” Casteel says in a [New York Times video](#).

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Casteel, 30, lives in Harlem and paints large-scale portraits of people she encounters, including street vendors, business owners, stoop sitters, and subway riders, people in the community who she has said “might be easily unseen.” She sees a sense of humanity in Neel’s portraits, a level of consciousness reflected in her own work—her choice of subjects, and the pride and care she takes in representing them.

“Jordan Casteel: Returning the Gaze” is the artist’s first solo exhibition at a major museum. After debuting at the Denver Art Museum, Casteel’s hometown museum, the show is traveling to the Cantor Arts Center at Stanford University where it opens Sept. 29.



David Hartt is a 2018 Pew Fellow. His commission at Beth Shalom, the synagogue designed by Frank Lloyd Wright in Elkins Park, Pa., is supported by The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage. | Photo by Ryan Collerd

Hartt’s multidisciplinary practice is based in Philadelphia. When the Johnson Publishing Company headquarters was sold in 2011, he photographed the Chicago building interiors and presented the work in an exhibition called “David Hartt: Stray Light” at the Studio Museum in Harlem. A new show, “David Hartt: The Histories (Le Mancenillier),” opens Sept. 11 at Beth Shalom in Elkins Park, Pa. The synagogue was designed by Frank Lloyd Wright in 1959. Hartt is the first artist commissioned to “activate” the National Historic Landmark. Featuring paintings, sculpture, film, tapestry, plants, and sound, the exhibition will explore the connections between the black and Jewish diasporas.

“Each year, the Hirshhorn’s fall gala recognizes boundary-pushing individuals who, through their artwork, encourage new ways of understanding the world around us,” said Hirshhorn Director Melissa Chiu in a statement. “This year’s celebration invites influential artists to recognize others. The resulting assembly of 42 honorees embodies the museum’s dedication to promoting and preserving connections between creators across generations, borders and art forms.”

The following artists are being recognized at the gala:

Korakrit Arunanondchai x Matthew Ritchie

Lynda Benglis x Clytie Alexander

Jordan Casteel x Faith Ringgold

Sarah Crowner x Mary Heilmann

Alex Da Corte x Polly Apfelbaum

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Cyprien Gaillard x James Wines
Loie Hollowell x Ann Agee
Luchita Hurtado x Andrea Bowers
Alex Israel x Laurie Anderson
Alicja Kwade x Gregor Hildebrandt
Erik Lindman x John Zurier
Jaume Plensa x Ann Hamilton
Julian Schnabel x Jorge Galindo
Karin Schneider x John Miller
Amy Sherald x Deborah Roberts
Suling Wang x Tehching Hsieh
Lawrence Weiner x Catherine Opie
Christopher Williams x David Hartt

The Hirshhorn's 2019 Artist x Artist gala is Nov. 4 at Lincoln Center. Artists Theaster Gates and Hiroshi Sugimoto are serving as co-chairs of the celebration. CT

UPDATE (8/27/19): When the Hirshhorn announced the gala on Aug. 21, the list of recognized artists included Marina Abramović x Anohni and Michael Joo x Wu Tsang, who are unable to participate. The list above has been revised accordingly. The final group of 42 artists being honored at the gala is still being confirmed.

FIND MORE about artists [Jordan Casteel](#), [David Hartt](#), [Faith Ringgold](#), [Deborah Roberts](#), and [Amy Sherald](#) on their websites

BOOKSHELF

["Amy Sherald,"](#) the artist's first monograph, was published recently by the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis on the occasion of her first solo museum show, which traveled to the Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art in Bentonville, Ark., and Spelman College Museum of Fine Art in Atlanta. The first publications dedicated to exploring the work of Deborah Roberts were recently published. ["Deborah Roberts: The Evolution of Mimi"](#) documents her exhibition at the Spelman College Museum of Fine Art, and ["Deborah Roberts: If they come"](#) accompanied a presentation at Stephen Friedman Gallery, her first solo show in Europe. ["Jordan Casteel: Returning the Gaze"](#) was published to coincide with Casteel's exhibition at the Denver Art Museum, her first solo show at a major museum. A new book from the Museum of Modern Art, ["Faith Ringgold: Die \(One on One\),"](#) considers the artist's painting "American People Series #20: Die" (1967). ["American People, Black Light: Faith Ringgold's Paintings of the 1960s"](#) coincided with her traveling exhibition. ["Stray Light"](#) documents David Hartt's exhibition, serving as a time capsule of the historic Johnson Publishing Company headquarters in Chicago.