



# Battery Park City Authority

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*Credit: Battery Park City Authority*

## **BATTERY PARK CITY AUTHORITY UNVEILS JAMES HOUGH'S 'JUSTICE REFLECTED' AT ESPLANADE PLAZA**

*Temporary public art installation of stained glass panels by formerly incarcerated artist draws awareness to inequities in the American justice system*

*Builds on Authority's mission to inspire community with world-class public art and culture*

The Battery Park City Authority (BPCA) and the Art for Justice Fund, a sponsored project of Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors, in partnership with the Ford Foundation, today unveiled *Justice Reflected*, a series of three mosaic panels created by critically acclaimed artist and muralist James Yaya Hough. Located at Battery Park City's Esplanade Plaza, the temporary installation uses glass compositions to depict the experiences of incarcerated people, evoking feelings of isolation, despair, fear, and hope. Hough had been incarcerated for 27 years and now uses art as a medium to amplify the voices of incarcerated people and raise awareness and empathy for those directly impacted by the American justice system. *Justice Reflected* is planned to be on display for one year.

The three window-like panels of *Justice Reflected* are arranged on five-foot circular medallions in the style of stained-glass windows, each presenting different topics related to the carceral system. Hough contrasts the somber imagery with bright and bold colors, offering a sense of optimism for the future. *Justice Reflected* will be on view to the public along the sweeping 90-foot-long granite wall overlooking Esplanade Plaza and the Hudson River. Hough selected the location for its openness and accessibility, as well as its proximity to high foot traffic areas in Lower Manhattan.

*"Justice Reflected builds on Battery Park City's legacy as an international destination for meaningful world-class public art,"* said **B.J. Jones, President & CEO, Battery Park City Authority**. *"We are proud to display Hough's inspiring work, and look forward to welcoming New Yorkers and visitors to view this poignant piece."*

“I envisioned and created a visual journey – one forged by my experiences and observations,” said **James Yaya Hough**. “I designed *Justice Reflected* for the wall in Battery Park City so that others can take this journey as well.”

To further activate the installation, BPCA is committed to facilitating connections between Hough and local community partners to expand the reach of his work over the course of its run. BPCA will host community events and conduct educational outreach to reach people beyond New York City, expanding the overall impact of Hough’s art. See below for a schedule of upcoming public programs.

- **Saturday, November 12 | 3:00 PM | Esplanade Plaza**

*Justice Reflected* Opening Celebration is a conversation between James Yaya Hough and Dr. Nicole Fleetwood, James Weldon Johnson Professor of Media, Culture and Communication at New York University. Composer and musician Craig Harris and ensemble will give a performance of “Requiem for Fred Hampton.”

- **Sunday, November 13 | 2:00 PM | Esplanade Plaza**

*Justice Reflected* public art talk and tour led by James Yaya Hough and Abby Ehrlich, BPCA Director of Community Partnerships and Public Art. Take home an art activity designed by the artist. All ages welcome.

BPCA has a longstanding history of bringing engaging art to Battery Park City, creating meaningful conversations among the local community and giving artists a public arena to display their work. The siting of *Justice Reflected* in Battery Park City speaks to the Authority’s longstanding commitment to public art and artists. It also, coincidentally, highlights the work of Agnes Gund, who both served on Battery Park City Authority’s Fine Arts Committee during the initial development of the neighborhood in the early 1980s, and also, as the founder of the Art for Justice Fund, which serves as *Justice Reflected*’s benefactor today.

“James Yaya Hough’s commission for Battery Park City is a selfless act of resistance against a prison system that unjustifiably targets poor, people of color,” said **Agnes Gund, Founder & Board Chair, Art for Justice Fund**. “His commitment to reforming our prison system and abolishing life without parole is remarkable as an artist, activist, and as our 2020 inaugural artist-in-residence at the Office of the District Attorney of Philadelphia.”

“Hough’s ability to interweave his own experiences in the criminal legal system with broader voices rallying for change and recognition is extraordinary,” said **Helena Huang, Project Director, Art for Justice Fund**. “His work draws viewers in, putting the human experience above everything else; and calling attention to the inhumane conditions and brutal systems that keep far too many individuals incarcerated for far too long. For enduring change to take root, there must be a powerful force behind it; art, particularly public art, can be that powerful force. A4J is grateful to be partnering with Battery Park City to ignite public interest in this work, the artist, and the urgency for change.”

“James Yaya Hough’s art is rooted in history and also in powerful historic precedents. Like artists before him, he calls upon art as an agent of change,” said **Abby Ehrlich, Director of Community Partnerships and Public Art, Battery Park City Authority**. “Justice Reflected communicates directly with viewers in color and composition beyond the reach of written or spoken languages. It brings forward an insider’s understanding of the extreme harm that mass incarceration does to individuals, communities and humanity. Through this artist’s lens the public can see iconic images of despair and injustice, and of hope and a promising future. Through James Yaya Hough’s art, empathy and action is stirred and a new vision and a more just society can be achieved. It’s an honor to work with the artists and present his work in a free and public place.”

*Justice Reflected* is funded by the generous support of the [Art for Justice Fund](#), which invests in artists, giving them a platform to show the human impact of mass incarceration through the transformative power of art. Often removed from the conversation on justice and social change, the Art for Justice Fund increases opportunities for formerly incarcerated people and works to eliminate the barriers they face once returning to their communities. Through partnerships with public benefit organizations, such as BPCA, the Art for Justice Fund is able to support reform efforts and repeal excessive prison sentences and incarceration laws while working with their grantee partners to reinvest toward justice on a local level for those hit hardest by poverty, violence, and incarceration.

Hough’s work was recently featured in an exhibit at MoMA PS1 titled, *Marking Time: Art in the Age of Mass Incarceration*, which featured work by more than 35 artists portraying the social and cultural impact of mass incarceration alongside the growing COVID-19 crisis across the country’s prison system. *Marking Time* is currently on view at Brown University through December 2022. Following the exhibition’s run at MoMA PS1, seven of the previously incarcerated artists, including Hough, presented new work at Martos Gallery. Continuing his exposition on criminal justice reform, *The Collective: Chosen Family* features seven ink drawings by Hough set on the backside of prison cafeteria menus and office documents, explicitly depicting bodies bound in chains and processed by machines to bring attention to the for-profit nature of the U.S. prison industrial complex. His art is currently featured in the 58<sup>th</sup> Carnegie International in Pittsburgh through April 2023.

**About BPCA:** Established in 1968, The Hugh L. Carey Battery Park City Authority is a New York State Public Benefit Corporation charged with developing and maintaining a well-balanced, 92-acre community of commercial, residential, retail and open space, including 36 acres of public parks, on Manhattan’s Lower West Side. Through execution of its [first-ever strategic plan](#), BPCA works daily toward being an inclusive community, a safe and climate resilient place, and a vibrant public space, all while demonstrating leadership for the future with a team dedicated to improving service and project delivery. For more info visit: [bpca.ny.gov](http://bpca.ny.gov).