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Governors Island Opens 2019 Public Art Commission with Shantell Martin

Martin enlivens the former military chapel with signature black and white drawings

'Shantell Martin on Governors Island' will be on view June 1-October 31

June 3, 2019. The Trust for Governors Island today announced the opening of its next project as part of its annual public art commission program. Open June 1, the Trust presents *Church*, and immersive, contemplative work by Shantell Martin, who enlivens the façade of Our Lady Star of the Sea, a former military chapel, deconsecrated for over 20 years and located in the Island's Historic District. The season-long exhibition will be on view daily through October 31. Expanded, site-specific programming related to Martin's work will open in Fall, 2019.

"We are thrilled to be working with Shantell Martin for our 2019 commission, whose performative drawings will be in direct conversation with the movement of the Island and its community of visitors," said **Meredith Johnson, Vice President of Art and Culture at the Trust for Governors Island.** "This immersive work will act as a dynamic and unifying marker in the Island's landscape, fostering discussion, meditative exploration and cross-disciplinary collaboration."

Bringing new life to Our Lady Star of the Sea, Martin uses her signature black and white drawings to create a living, visible beacon in the Island's Historic District. Inspired by her personal experiences and research on the vibrant history of the Island, *Church* invites visitors to circumnavigate the former chapel's architecture through image and narrative, engaging with the dynamism of the landscapes that surround it. In this way, the work serves to highlight and help reimagine a building that has long been empty and closed to the public. Reflecting upon the building's history, Martin's large-scale drawing pays tribute to the disused former military structure and honors its legacy as a place of great significance on the Island during its half-century of active use.

Built in 1942, Our Lady Star of the Sea originally opened as a Catholic chapel during the Second World War and the expansion of the former U.S. Army base. Serving as a central hub of religious activity on the Island along with nearby St. Cornelius Chapel, Our Lady Star of the Sea remained in use until 1996 when the U.S. Coast Guard ceased operations on Governors Island. Deconsecrated for over 20 years, the former chapel is one of the few non-landmarked buildings located within the Governors Island Historic District. Martin's project brings new life and visibility to the former chapel for the first time in years.

Expanding and evolving throughout Governors Island's public season, in Fall, 2019 the Trust will host weekend programming that is free and open to the public, including poetry readings and events. Additional programming will launch in September, including a partnership with the Poetry Society of America, who will curate three free readings inspired by Martin's work.

Below the surface of Shantell Martin's signature black and white drawings is an artist's inquiry into the role of artist and viewer, where a work of art is more than an object of admiration disconnected from its inception. With a meditative process defined by an uninhibited flow, her compositions embody her internal state and the impermanence of the world around her. Exploring themes such as intersectionality, identity and play, Martin is a cultural facilitator, forging new connections between fine art, education, design, philosophy and technology. London born and New York-based, Martin's body of work includes solo shows at the New York City Ballet, the 92nd Street Y Gallery, the Albright Knox Gallery and the Museum of Contemporary African Diasporan Arts (MoCADA). She currently teaches as an adjunct professor at NYU's ITP (Interactive Telecommunications Program) – where she works with her students to push the boundaries of storytelling, visual art and technology – and is a former MIT Media Lab Scholar.

This year's commission is co-curated by Meredith Johnson, the Trust's VP of Arts and Culture and Shane Brennan, the Trust's Director of Public Programs. Since opening to the public in 2005, The Trust has worked with dozens of artists and arts and cultural organizations from across New York City to bring a robust calendar of commissions, exhibitions and events to the Island's diverse audience. The Trust's commissioning program gives artists the opportunity to engage with audiences through site-specific projects responding to the Island's unique conditions.

Previous commissions on Governors Island include Rachel Whiteread's *Cabin*, a permanent work sited on Discovery Hill within the Island's park space, and *Day is Done*, a large-scale instrumental sound installation by Susan Philipsz. In 2011-2012 Storm King Art Center sponsored an exhibition of 12 monumental works by Mark di Suvero throughout the Island. Governors Island's commissioning program was relaunched as an annual series in 2017 with *Rock, Mosquito and Hummingbird*, a winding sculptural installation by David Brooks telling the story of the Island's 'pre-history' through continuous rock core samples assembled in historic Fort Jay. In 2018, Jacob Hashimoto's 15,000 delicate bamboo and paper kites filled Trinity Church and *Never Comes Tomorrow*, a colorful, whimsical outdoor installation, hung overhead in the landmark Liggett Hall Archway. The latter work is being extended through October 31 of this year.

Generous support for Shantell Martin on Governors Island is provided by Charina Endowment Fund and The O'Grady Foundation. Additional support is provided by Pullman.

Governors Island is open every day from May 1 through October 31. On weekdays, the Island is open from 10 AM to 6 PM. On weekends and holidays, the Island is open from 10 AM to 7 PM. On Friday and Saturday evenings between Memorial Day weekend and Labor Day weekend, the Island will be open until 10 PM.

About The Trust for Governors Island

The Trust for Governors Island is the nonprofit corporation created by the City of New York that is responsible for the redevelopment and operation of 150 acres of Governors Island. The Trust's mission is to transform Governors Island into a vibrant resource for New York City, making this

island at the center of New York Harbor a destination with extraordinary public open space, as well as educational, not-for-profit and commercial facilities.

For more information, visit www.govisland.org and www.shantellmartin.art.