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### **Shantell Martin Expands Artwork on Governors Island With ‘The May Room’**

*With signature black-and-white drawings, Martin transforms the exterior and now the interior of a former military chapel into an immersive, contemplative space open to the public for the first time in 20 years*

*Free poetry readings to be held in ‘The May Room’ in partnership with the Poetry Society of America*

*Shantell Martin’s ‘The May Room’ and ‘Church’ will be on view through October 31*

**Updated October 1, 2019.** The Trust for Governors Island announced a new work as part of *Shantell Martin on Governors Island*, a public art commission for the Island’s 2019 season. Opening the doors to *Church*, Martin’s work that enlivens the exterior of the former military chapel Our Lady Star of the Sea, *The May Room* will transform its interior into an immersive, introspective environment. Welcoming the public inside the building for the first time in 20 years, *The May Room* will transform the space into a site for gathering, reflection and performance. Martin will use the floors and walls as a canvas for her signature line drawings and will install custom-built furniture of her own design. Opening to the public on Sunday, September 8 at 11AM, *The May Room* will be open weekends through the end of the Island’s season and will also host free public programs including a series of readings presented by the Poetry Society of America, featuring poets from national organizations Kundiman and CantoMundo.

*The May Room* is the latest in a series of installations as part of *Shantell Martin on Governors Island*, the Trust for Governors Island’s 2019 Public Art Commission. *Church*, which opened in June and *The May Room*, opening September 7, will remain on view for the rest of Governors Island’s public season, through October 31.

“We’re thrilled to expand our 2019 commission with Shantell Martin’s latest work, *The May Room*,” said **Clare Newman, Trust for Governors Island President and CEO**. “Each season Governors Island visitors are delighted by public art that enlivens the historic district and park. Martin’s work is just the latest in our growing commitment to providing high-quality, free public art and cultural programs that New Yorkers will enjoy each season for years to come.”

“Shantell Martin’s monumental work *Church* has become a beacon in the landscape of Governors Island. We are now thrilled to open the doors of this structure to reveal *The May Room*, an immersive, meditative and dynamic space that surrounds visitors with the free-flowing drawings of Shantell Martin,” said **Meredith Johnson, VP of Art and Culture at the Trust for**

**Governors Island.** “By taking this once-abandoned, former place of worship and reopening it to the public for self-reflection and the collective sharing of ideas, Martin adds to the cultural legacy of the Island through images, language and performance.”

With *The May Room*, Shantell Martin will create a labyrinthine installation spanning the floors and walls of the building that will act as a place of both quiet reprieve and shared discussion. To expand on her monumental work *Church*, which transformed the façade of Our Lady Star of the Sea, Martin now reimagines the interior of this former chapel built in 1942 with her signature black-and-white line drawings. Custom-built furniture in the shape of letters that can be arranged to spell out words will dot the floor of the space, allowing visitors to move and interact with the work. The building’s nave, which has been closed to the public since 1996, will be restored as part of Martin’s project.

*The May Room* will open to the public on Sunday, September 8. Throughout the remainder of the season, the interior work will be on view Saturdays and Sundays from 11AM-5PM through October 27. *Church*, Martin’s drawing on the exterior of the building, will remain on view daily through October 31.

In addition to regular open hours for visitors to explore the installation, *The May Room* will host a series of poetry readings presented by the Poetry Society of America in partnership with national poetry organizations including Kundiman and CantoMundo. These free events will respond to the spirit of Shantell Martin’s work and the architecture and setting it exists within.

#### **Schedule of Poetry Society of America readings and partner organizations:**

##### ***Saturday, September 14: CantoMundo***

CantoMundo is a national poetry workshop dedicated to supporting and developing Latinx poets and poetry.

##### ***Saturday, September 28: Kundiman***

Kundiman creates an affirming and rigorous space where Asian American writers can explore, through art, the unique challenges that face the new and ever changing diaspora.

##### ***Saturday, October 5: Puerto Rico en mi corazón***

This reading celebrates the publication of *Puerto Rico en mi corazón*, a bilingual anthology of 40 Puerto Rican poets in response to Hurricane Maria.

All readings take place from 3-4PM.

“The Poetry Society of America is thrilled to be working with the Trust for Governors Island to organize poetry readings within Shantell Martin’s installation,” said **Brett Fletcher Laurer, Poetry Society of America Deputy Director**. “It makes perfect sense for this space, which was designed for contemplation and transformed by Martin’s meditative work, to be filled with poetry.”

Shantell Martin’s drawings interrogate the role of artist and viewer. With a meditative process, 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 teaches as an adjunct professor at NYU Tisch ITP and was an

MIT Media Lab Visiting Scholar. Martin's body of work includes solo shows at the New York City Ballet, the 92Y Gallery, the Albright-Knox Art Gallery and MoCADA.

Built in 1942, Our Lady Star of the Sea originally opened as a Catholic chapel during the Second World War and 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.

Generous support for *Shantell Martin on Governors Island* is provided by Charina Endowment Fund, The O'Grady Foundation and Facebook Art Department. Additional support is provided by Pullman, Sherwin-Williams and Krink.

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.

### **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](http://www.govisland.org) and [www.shantellmartin.art](http://www.shantellmartin.art).