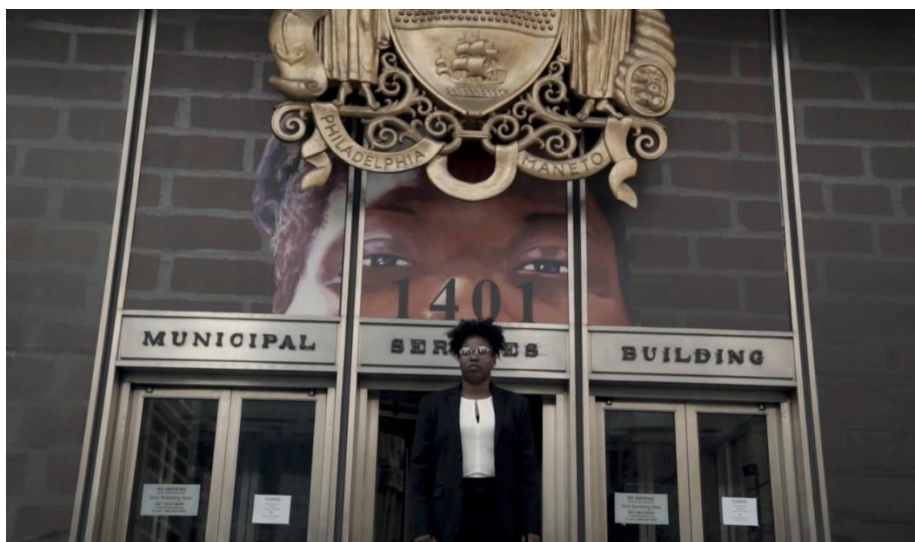


Media Alert

The Brooklyn Museum Presents *Mary Enoch Elizabeth Baxter: "Ain't I a Woman,"* Marking the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Landmark *Roe v. Wade* Decision

Related programming includes a convening on reproductive justice and a special report by For Freedoms highlighting the voices of individuals previously and currently incarcerated.



Mary Enoch Elizabeth Baxter. Still from *Ain't I a Woman*, 2018/23. Single-channel video (color, sound): 15 min., 1 sec. © Mary Enoch Elizabeth Baxter

On the fiftieth anniversary of *Roe v. Wade*—and in the year after its overturning—*Mary Enoch Elizabeth Baxter: "Ain't I a Woman"* examines the long history of reproductive injustice in the United States from an activist point of view. By foregrounding Black girls and Black incarcerated women, the exhibition expands the discourse on abortion access into a more nuanced conversation. Understanding that the right to abortion is not a standalone fight, Baxter illuminates its connections to other pressing human rights issues, as well as to the need for empathy and liberation. The exhibition is on view at the Brooklyn Museum from January 20 to August 13, 2023.

A Philadelphia-based artist and prison abolitionist, Mary Enoch Elizabeth Baxter (born 1981) employs autobiography as a means of instigating change in the carceral system. She is also the cofounder of the Dignity Act Now Collective, an advocacy group of Black activists and artists directly impacted by incarceration.

The exhibition features Baxter's 2018 film *Ain't I a Woman*, which links the inhumane conditions faced by incarcerated women to the national fight for reproductive rights. At once a documentary and a rap video, the film follows Baxter's life from her turbulent youth in Philadelphia to her pregnancy, arrest, incarceration, and childbirth, culminating with her growth as an advocate and prison abolitionist. Baxter shares her harrowing

experience of being shackled for forty-three hours while giving birth, raising the question of who is considered a “woman” by society and the law—and who is considered worthy of human rights. The musical documentary presents Black incarcerated women’s access to safe health care as the necessary starting point for creating a social fabric that truly supports bodily autonomy for all.

Presented alongside the film is *Consecration to Mary*, a multipart photographic work that connects the histories of abuse faced by Black children to “adultification bias,” a social reality in which Black youths are systemically treated as adults. In the piece, Baxter confronts and combats sexually exploitative nude photographs of a young Black girl taken by white American artist Thomas Eakins in 1882. Baxter inserts herself into two of Eakins’s photographs, to protect the violated, and presents other images as closed daguerreotype cases, obscuring them from public view. A third open photograph of Baxter as a child links the artist herself to these histories of societal abuse. When paired with Baxter’s documentary, *Consecration to Mary* underscores how, for Black women, the fight for bodily autonomy begins in childhood.

Mary Enoch Elizabeth Baxter: “Ain’t I a Woman” is organized by Catherine Morris, Sackler Senior Curator, with Jaileen Pierre-Louis, former CITI Intern, Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art, Brooklyn Museum.

Major support for this exhibition is provided by the Elizabeth A. Sackler Museum Educational Trust.

Related Programming

During the exhibition’s opening weekend, the Brooklyn Museum will host programs dedicated to examining the issues of reproductive justice and mass criminalization.

For Freedoms News Special Report: News from the Inside

Saturday, January 21, 2–3:30 pm

Register in advance and pay what you wish (suggested admission: \$10).

Join renowned artist and activist Bryonn Bain (Lyrics from Lockdown) and transformative justice practitioner Claudia Peña (UCLA Prison Education Program / For Freedoms) as they host a For Freedoms News Special Report. The program focuses on the injustice of mass criminalization as seen through the eyes of people who are currently and formerly incarcerated or impacted by this system. Presented as a follow-up to For Freedoms News, an artist-led reimagining of television news launched during a fall 2022 residency at the Brooklyn Museum.

50 Years since Roe: A Convening on Reproductive Justice

Sunday, January 22, 12–5 pm

This program is free; reservations are encouraged.

This afternoon of art, film, and storytelling highlights the ongoing fight for reproductive justice and Black incarcerated women’s pivotal role in this movement. The program includes an exhibition tour and a screening of *Ain’t I a Woman*, followed by a conversation with Mary Enoch Elizabeth Baxter and curator Catherine Morris. Throughout the day, participate in Abortion Stories USA BK by listening to stories from people who have had an abortion and, if desired, sharing your own. This session of Abortion Stories features facilitation and artwork by Wildcat Ebony Brown, Christen Clifford, Carolina Franco, Rebecca Goyette, Amy Khoshbin, Cassandra Neyenesch, and Lydia Nobles.