

Press Release

The Brooklyn Museum Kicks Off Twenty-Five Years of First Saturdays by Honoring Black History Month

Themed “Legacy,” the February 4 program recognizes the integral role of Black artistic production in shaping Brooklyn’s globalized culture and launches the twenty-fifth anniversary celebration of First Saturdays, the Museum’s flagship community-centered series, sponsored by Bank of America.



The Brooklyn Museum’s lineup for February’s First Saturday—the first event in the 2023 series sponsored by longtime partner Bank of America—spotlights examples of Black artistic excellence and emphasizes the borough’s place as a nexus of cultural exchange. Continuing the series’ tradition of presenting exciting musical acts, lauded Brooklyn musicians Yaya Bey and Delmar Browne are joined by New Orleans trumpeter Jelani Akil Bauman to soundtrack the evening. Additionally, the program celebrates the legacy of making spaces for Black joy with *The Lay Out*, a community event formed during the pandemic, featuring DJ sets by Niara Sterling and Quiana Parks and percussion by Frankie Malloy. Visitors can also attend a performance of *A Mother’s Rite* by Jeremy McQueen’s Emmy Award–winning Black Iris Project, a ballet inspired by the countless Black mothers who have lost children to police brutality.

Other “Legacy” highlights include a pop-up market offering handmade items by more than thirty Brooklyn artisans, poetry readings, a curator talk spotlighting Black artists in the

Brooklyn Museum

American Art galleries, and a partnership with the Crown Heights cocktail bar Ode to Babel. See the [full schedule](#) of February's program. The event is free but [advance registration](#) is required.



The first and longest-running series of its kind, First Saturdays—free after-hours programming on the first Saturday of months throughout the year—has been replicated by museums around the globe since its inception in 1998. As the Brooklyn Museum's marquee public program for twenty-five years, First Saturdays has also influenced cultural programming at home, inspiring a wave of similar offerings across the city. In Brooklyn, First Saturdays has

become one of the borough's most beloved and popular series, welcoming approximately 1.5 million visitors at its 250 iterations thus far. Each First Saturday is linked with themes from the Museum's exhibitions and collections, or with broader heritage observances, and comprises dynamic events that attract a wide array of guests. Artists of all disciplines activate nearly every inch of the Museum to celebrate the multifaceted communities of Brooklyn, New York City, and beyond.



First Saturdays' rich lineups appeal to all ages. Each year, thousands of children, families, students, and teachers participate in art-making workshops and other educational programs during First Saturdays. Film screenings and panel discussions enliven the Museum's five hundred-seat auditorium. Galleries are filled with poetry pop-ups, curator-led tours, and conversations with a wide variety of speakers, such as Common, Michaela Angela

Davis, Janet Mock, Jodie Patterson, Mickalene Thomas, and Carrie Mae Weems. First Saturdays also features DJs, musicians, dancers, and other artists who perform throughout the Museum's landmark spaces. Each evening's thoughtfully curated slate of performers draws from Brooklyn's deep pool of talent and provides a springboard for emerging artists. For example, many acts who debuted at First Saturdays have built strong followings and critically acclaimed careers, such as Alsarah and the Nubatones, Arooj Aftab, Bilal, DJ Rekha, DJ Tunez, Juliana Huxtable, Leikeli47, Lion Babe, MeLo-X, Phony Ppl, and Tank and the Bangas.

Along with these talented artists, the Museum has built relationships with a host of community partners that have participated in and supported First Saturdays. Among them are the Audre Lorde Project, Belladonna* Collaborative, Black Alliance for Just Immigration, Brooklyn Caribbean Literary Festival, Brooklyn Community Pride Center,



Brooklyn Poets, Carnegie Hall, Cave Canem, dapperQ, El Grito de Sunset Park, Flatbush Tenant Coalition, The Free Black Women's Library, Haitian Women for Haitian Refugees, Interference Archive, Kundiman, Lesbian Herstory Archives, Make the Road New York, New York Immigration Coalition, NYC Trans Oral History Project, Sylvia Rivera Law Project, Urban Word NYC, Visual AIDS, Well-Read Black Girl, Women Make Movies, and many more.

Lauren Argentina Zelaya, Director of Public Programs, has been with the Museum since 2012 and has played a key role in building the program's success. "First Saturdays is a love letter to Brooklyn and we are grateful for the community partnerships, creatives, and local businesses who make this success a reality," she says. "We are thrilled to see them thrive because of it. First Saturdays proudly embodies the values of our borough and celebrates the dynamism of its artistic excellence and the communities that have made a home here for generations."

"There's nothing like First Saturdays anywhere. It pulsates with creativity and energy. I am constantly amazed by the ability of this program to bring our communities together to learn, celebrate, and spark joy. None of this would be possible without our cherished partners and sponsors, whose dedication and support have been critical to its success," says Anne Pasternak, Shelby White and Leon Levy Director, Brooklyn Museum.

The Brooklyn Museum's partner Bank of America is the presenting sponsor for this year's First Saturdays, supporting this community-centered effort to bridge cultures and build understanding through the arts. "An iconic cultural institution, the Brooklyn Museum is an invaluable community partner and an essential conduit for the arts in Brooklyn and communities across New York City and beyond," says José Tavarez, President, Bank of America New York City. "Private sector support for the arts is critical for ensuring that treasured programs like First Saturdays continue to thrive. We look forward to the launch of First Saturdays in 2023, elevating the series' excitement and its legacy of education and appreciation through this year's special twenty-fifth anniversary lineup."



First Saturdays will be held in February–August and October 2023. Each month's program will feature throwback performances by veteran DJs and musical artists who shaped the series into what it is today. Other themes for the anniversary year are **Women's History Month / Gender Justice** (March 4), **National Poetry Month** and the **Fiftieth Anniversary of Hip-Hop** (April 1), **Celebrating Asian American Pacific Islander Heritage** (May 6), **Pride** (June 3), **Africa Fashion** (July 1), **Caribbean Heritage** (August 5), and **Latinx Heritage** (October 7).

Download [images of First Saturdays](#). For live anniversary coverage during each 2023 First Saturday, follow the Museum's social channels (@brooklynmuseum).

Ticketing info: The February First Saturday is free; [advance registration](#) is required.

Brooklyn Museum

Founded in 1823 as the Brooklyn Apprentices' Library Association, the Brooklyn Museum contains one of the nation's most comprehensive and wide-ranging collections, enhanced by a distinguished record of exhibitions, scholarship, and service to the public. The Museum's vast holdings span 5,000 years of human creativity from cultures in every corner of the globe. Collection highlights include the ancient Egyptian holdings, renowned for objects of the highest quality, and the American collections, which are unrivaled in their diversity, from Native American art and artifacts and Spanish colonial painting, to nineteenth- and early twentieth-century American painting, sculpture, and decorative objects. The Museum is also home to the Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art, which is dedicated to the study and exhibition of feminist art and is the only curatorial center of its kind. The Brooklyn Museum is both a leading cultural institution and a community museum dedicated to serving a wide-ranging audience. Located in the heart of Brooklyn, the Museum welcomes and celebrates the diversity of its home borough and city. Few, if any, museums in the country attract an audience as varied with respect to race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, educational background, and age as the audience of the Brooklyn Museum.

Bank of America

Bank of America is one of the world's leading financial institutions, serving individual consumers, small and middle-market businesses and large corporations with a full range of banking, investing, asset management and other financial and risk management products and services. The company provides unmatched convenience in the United States, serving approximately 67 million consumer and small business clients with approximately 3,900 retail financial centers, approximately 16,000 ATMs and award-winning digital banking with approximately 56 million verified digital users. Bank of America is a global leader in wealth management, corporate and investment banking and trading across a broad range of asset classes, serving corporations, governments, institutions and individuals around the world. Bank of America offers industry-leading support to approximately 3 million small business households through a suite of innovative, easy-to-use online products and services. The company serves clients through operations across the United States, its territories and approximately 35 countries. Bank of America Corporation stock (NYSE: BAC) is listed on the New York Stock Exchange.



Proud Sponsor of First Saturdays 25th Anniversary Season

IMAGE CREDITS

Top to bottom: First Saturday at the Brooklyn Museum, June 2021. (Photo: Kolin Mendez). First Saturday at the Brooklyn Museum, March 2015. (Photo: Khamaali Vernon). First Saturday at the Brooklyn Museum, July 2012. (Photo: Cat Guzman). First Saturday at the Brooklyn Museum, August 2017. (Photo: Kolin Mendez). First Saturday at the Brooklyn Museum, October 2013. (Photo: Debra Reyes)