

FREE AS THEY WANT TO BE:

Artists Committed to Memory

AUGUST 2026





Free As They Want To Be: Artists Committed to Memory first debuted at the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center (Cincinnati, Ohio) in 2022. Now a travelling exhibition, it considers - in comparative perspectives - the historic and contemporary role photography and film have played in remembering legacies of slavery.

In concert with the originating curators and in partnership with three organizations across three historically significant sites, it will be adapted for a **first-of-its-kind, site-specific presentation in southern Louisiana.**

About the Curators

► **Deborah Willis, Ph.D.,** is

University Professor and Chair of the Department of Photography and Imaging at the Tisch School of the Arts at New York University. She is the recipient of the MacArthur Fellowship and a Guggenheim Fellowship and is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. Professor Willis has curated exhibitions for the Maryland Institute, College of Art; the Smithsonian's National Portrait Gallery; and Indiana University.



► **Cheryl Finley, Ph.D.,** is

Director of the Atlanta University Center Art History + Curatorial Studies Collective, Distinguished Visiting Professor of Art History at Spelman College and Associate Professor at Cornell University. She leads an innovative undergraduate program at the world's largest HBCU consortium in preparing the next generation of African American museum and visual arts professionals. She is a curator, contemporary art critic, and award-winning author.

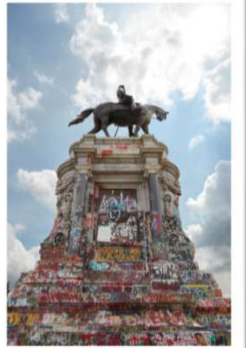


FREE AS THEY WANT TO BE:

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to Memory*

SELECT ARTISTS TO BE FEATURED:

Bisa Butler, Carrie Mae Weems, Isaac Julien, Catherine Opie, Omar Victor Diop, Hank Willis Thomas, Deborah Willis, and Dawoud Bey
(Full list follows)



FEATURING NATIONAL VISITING ARTISTS:

Terry Adkins
Radcliffe Bailey
James Presley Ball
A.S. Thomas
Sadie Barnette
Dawoud Bey
Sheila Pree Bright
Bisa Butler

Bisa Butler
Omar Victor Diop
Nona Faustine
Adama Delphine Fawundu
Daesha Devon Harris
Isaac Julien
Monica de Miranda
Catherine Opie

Yelanie Rodriguez
Hank Willis Thomas
Lava Thomas
Carrie Mae Weems
Wendel White
William Earle Williams
Deborah Willis

INCORPORATING LOCAL ARTISTS:

John Alleyne
Justin Tyler Bryant
Malaika Favorite

Randell Henry
John Isiah Walton



A New Partnership



Baton Rouge Gallery

A contemporary art center and artist cooperative that has been part of the area's cultural landscape for 60 years. Since 1984, it has been located inside a former pool house that was the site of the demonstration known as The Baton Rouge Swim-In (1963).

Southern University



Louisiana's largest historically Black college or university (HBCU), Southern was established in 1880. Its flagship institution in Baton Rouge sits on 512 acres of river-parish land shaped by plantation histories. Today the university system serves more than 12,000 students.

West Baton Rouge Museum



A regional history museum situated on the grounds of a 19th-century sugar plantation that, today, interprets local histories around labor and sugar. It sits on 6 oak-studded acres just across the Mississippi River from the State Capitol.



The adaptation of ***Free as They Want to Be*** for its presentation in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, will see the works thoughtfully allocated across three historically relevant sites so the original curatorial thesis literally inhabits Baton Rouge's built memory. You can help make it possible.

Sponsorship Opportunities

\$15,000 Sponsorship

- ▶ Private tour at each exhibition location for a group of 12
- ▶ Invitations for 12 to a private reception with curator Deborah Willis
- ▶ Signed copy of Deborah Willis's book, *Reflections in Black: A History of Black Photographers: 1840 to the Present*
- ▶ Signed copy of the *Free As They Want To Be* exhibition catalogue
- ▶ Complimentary use of Baton Rouge Gallery for a private event (subject to availability, valued at \$1,850)
- ▶ Twelve tickets to KINETICS, BRG's annual art auction and cocktail event on Friday, November 13 (a \$900 value).
- ▶ Your name/logo prominently featured in *Free As They Want To Be* marketing materials and promotions

Sponsorship Opportunities

\$10,000 Sponsorship

- ▶ Invitations for 8 to a private reception with curator Deborah Willis
- ▶ Signed copy of Deborah Willis's book, *Reflections in Black: A History of Black Photographers: 1840 to the Present*
- ▶ Signed copy of the *Free As They Want To Be* exhibition catalogue
- ▶ Complimentary use of Baton Rouge Gallery for a private event (subject to availability, valued at \$1,850)
- ▶ Eight tickets to KINETICS, BRG's annual art auction and cocktail event on Friday, November 13 (a \$600 value).
- ▶ Your name/logo featured in *Free As They Want To Be* marketing materials and promotions



Sponsorship Opportunities

\$7,500 Sponsorship

- ▶ Invitations for six to a private reception with curator Deborah Willis
- ▶ Signed copy of the *Free As They Want To Be* exhibition catalogue
- ▶ Six tickets to KINETICS, BRG's annual art auction and cocktail event on Friday, November 13 (a \$450 value).
- ▶ A 12-month Patron-level BRG membership, which includes 10% off art purchases (except KINETICS)
- ▶ Your name/logo in *Free As They Want To Be* marketing materials and promotions

\$5,000 Sponsorship

- ▶ Invitations for four to a private reception with curator Deborah Willis
- ▶ Signed copy of the *Free As They Want To Be* exhibition catalogue
- ▶ Four tickets to KINETICS, BRG's annual art auction and cocktail event on Friday, November 13 (a \$300 value).
- ▶ A 12-month Patron-level BRG membership, which includes 10% off art purchases (except KINETICS)
- ▶ Your name/logo in *Free As They Want To Be* marketing materials and promotions

Sponsorship Opportunities

\$2,500 Sponsorship

- ▶ Signed copy of the *Free As They Want To Be* exhibition catalogue
- ▶ Invitations for two to a private reception with curator Deborah Willis
- ▶ Two tickets to KINETICS, BRG's annual art auction and cocktail event on Friday, November 13 (a \$150 value).
- ▶ A 12-month Patron-level BRG membership, which includes 10% off art purchases (except KINETICS)
- ▶ Your name/logo in *Free As They Want To Be* marketing materials and promotions

Recognition includes:

- ▶ Your name or logo in *Free As They Want To Be* marketing materials and promotions, including direct mail, emails, social media, exhibition website at batonrougegalleries.org, and signage at all three hosting sites, plus recognition at programmed events throughout the exhibition.
- ▶ Acknowledgement of your generosity will reach the audiences of all three organizations.

“

Freedom is not something that anybody can be given; freedom is something people take, and people are as **free as they want to be.**

”

- JAMES BALDWIN



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