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LaToya Ruby Frazier

More Than Conquerors: A Monument for Community Health Workers of Baltimore, Maryland 2021-2022

March 2 – April 15, 2023

Opening Reception: March 2, 5–7pm

530 West 21st Street

New York, NY 10011

Gladstone is pleased to announce its first exhibition with LaToya Ruby Frazier. The show presents the artist's most recent work, *More Than Conquerors: A Monument for Community Health Workers of Baltimore, Maryland 2021-2022*, for the first time in New York after its recent premiere at the 58th Carnegie International, in which it was the highest award. Comprising stainless steel IV poles, archival inkjet prints, and text panels, this installation was created as a celebration of the community health workers (CHWs) of Baltimore, Maryland, and proposes a new approach to monument making in the 21st century.

The origin of this work was first borne from a conversation in 2015 hosted by The Contemporary and The Baltimore School for the Arts between the artist and Dr. Lisa Cooper, Bloomberg Distinguished Professor at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine and Bloomberg School of Public Health and the director of the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Equity, on the ways in which art, science, medicine, technology, and politics might intersect to benefit society and address health inequity and environmental racism. During this discussion, Dr. Cooper explained the medical significance of one of Frazier's most seminal bodies of work, *The Notion of Family* (2001-14), and how this photographic documentary series was a form of medical visual art that closely related it to a concept known as photovoice, in which oppressed individuals use cameras and storytelling to document disparities in their environments that are shared with doctors and policymakers in order to bring forth awareness and change. Their friendship grew more personal when Dr. Cooper interceded on behalf of Frazier's mother with the healthcare system. Conversations continued and the two began to think through how to collaborate on a project around social justice and health equity.

As the COVID-19 Pandemic and quarantine ensued Frazier received a 2020–21 National Geographic Storytelling Fellowship and a commission for the Carnegie Museum 58th Carnegie International. After experiencing yet another incident of medical injustice while trying to obtain a first dose of the COVID vaccine, Frazier was connected through Dr. Cooper with mentees Chidinma Ibe, assistant professor at the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine and Anika Hines, assistant professor and health equity researcher at Virginia Commonwealth University, and Reverend Debra Hickman, president and CEO of STAR (Sisters Together and Reaching Inc.) an organization with CHWs involved in the initial vaccination rollout. Dr. Ibe introduced Frazier to Tiffany Scott, the first certified CHW in the state of Maryland and the co-founder and chair of the Maryland Community Health Worker Association. Together they introduced Frazier to CHWs, individuals who play an essential role in providing life-saving support to those overlooked or blocked from receiving adequate medical assistance. Since the 1970s, CHWs have been invaluable connectors between residents, healthcare systems, and state health departments, increasing awareness of public health access and threats to ensure the safety of underserved communities.

Overlooked themselves, Frazier conceived of a worker's monument to honor CHWs on the frontlines of the COVID-19 pandemic and to honor the leadership, research, and relationships of Dr. Cooper, Dr. Ibe, Dr. Hines, Rev. Hickman and Tiffany Scott who are at the forefront of advocating and impacting policy change in support of community health workers. Between July 2021 – September 2022 Frazier made portraits and conducted interviews with CHWs while performing outreach and vaccination rollouts serving their communities. Additionally, Frazier taught CHWs how to make their own photographs in workshops led by Dr. Ibe for a photovoice component of the study "Amplifying the Lived Experiences of Community Health Workers" (ALEC) at the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Equity. With her incisive documentary approach to artmaking Frazier then transcribed, edited, printed, mounted, framed, designed and fabricated this monument for workers' thoughts on behalf of, for, with, and about the role and importance of

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CHWs in society and their relationships with doctors and faith leaders in their community who strongly advocate for their work and livelihoods. This monument proclaims that community health workers should be seen as a profession, as salaried employees with full healthcare benefits and leave. The monument is comprised of eighteen medical IV poles that are nine feet tall and social distance spaced. The audience is welcome to walk among them to embody the social distance we've come to know so well, to contemplate and reflect on each testimony and portrait face-to-face, and to have a moment of silence in order to mourn the loss of loved ones to COVID-19.

Through the close relationships the artist formed with the CHWs, doctors, and faith leader that were part of this significant undertaking, *More Than Conquerors: A Monument for Community Health Workers of Baltimore, Maryland 2021-2022* uproots the notion of what a monument can look like, who it serves, and what it celebrates in order to bring us closer to a more equitable and just society.

This work was made in collaboration with Dr. Lisa Cooper, Director of the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Equity; Dr. Chidinma Ibe, Nico Dominguez Carrero, and Alison Trainor of the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Equity; Dr. Anika L. Hines of the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Equity and Virginia Commonwealth University; Mrs. Tiffany Scott, co-founder and Chair of the Maryland Community Health Worker Association; Reverend Debra Hickman, President and CEO of Sisters Together and Reaching, Inc (STAR) and co-chair of the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Equity's Community Advisory Board.; and Community Health Workers: La Kerry B. Dawson, Tracy BarnesMalone, Karen Dunston, Kenya Ferguson, Griselda Funn, Erica Hamlett, Donnie Missouri, Veda Moore, Kendra N. Lindsey, Evelyn Nicholson, Helen Owhonda, Gregory Rogers, Wilfredo Torriente, and Latish Walker.

Commissioned by the Carnegie Museum of Art for the 58th Carnegie International.

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LaToya Ruby Frazier was born in 1982 in Braddock, Pennsylvania. Her artistic practice spans a range of media, including photography, video, performance, installation art and books, and centers on the nexus of social justice, cultural change, and commentary on the American experience. In various interconnected bodies of work, Frazier uses collaborative storytelling with the people who appear in her artwork to address topics of industrialism, rust belt revitalization, environmental justice, access to healthcare, access to clean water, workers' rights, human rights, family, and communal history. This builds on her commitment to the legacy of 1930s social documentary work and 1960s and '70s conceptual photography that address urgent social and political issues of everyday life. Frazier's work has been the subject of many solo exhibitions at institutions in the US and Europe and her work is held in numerous public collections.

For further information, please contact press@gladstonegallery.com