

Oakland Museum of California



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OAKLAND MUSEUM OF CALIFORNIA PRESENTS INNOVATIVE TRANSMEDIA PROJECT EXPLORING BLACK MALE IDENTITY IN AMERICA

Video Installation Project Features Dialogue between 150 Diverse Black Men

This release is available online at: www.museumca.org/pressroom

(Oakland, CA) December 12, 2011—The Oakland Museum of California (OMCA) presents ***Question Bridge: Black Males*** on view **January 20 through April 22, 2012**. The innovative video installation features dialogue between 150 black men recruited from eleven American cities and towns. The project includes multiple video screens placed in two arcs in the Museum's Gallery of California Art that will play videos of black men responding to questions edited in a way so that it appears as if the men were having a conversation. *Question Bridge* will also be presented at the Brooklyn Museum (January 13 through June 22), Sundance Film Festival's New Frontier exhibit (January 19 through 29), Salt Lake City Arts Center (January 19 through May 19), and at the Castain Arts Gallery in Atlanta (January 27 through March 10).

Question Bridge was directed by celebrated African-American artists **Chris Johnson** and **Hank Willis Thomas**, in collaboration with **Bayeté Ross Smith** and **Kamal Sinclair**. For the past four years the four collaborators have traveled throughout the United States to towns and cities including Oakland, San Francisco, New York, Chicago, Birmingham, Atlanta, New Orleans, and Philadelphia creating 1,500 video exchanges in which the subjects serve as both interviewers and subjects—posing and answering each other's questions that are woven together to simulate a stream-of-consciousness dialogue through which important themes and issues emerge. Among subjects focused on are family, love, interracial relationships, community, education, violence, and the past, present, and future of black men in American society. Represented are men from different geographic, economic, generational, educational, and social strata of American society. The *Question Bridge* videos are a part of a larger project that also includes a user generated website, QuestionBridge.com, and a curriculum currently being offered to high schools and universities throughout the United States.

The artists hope that the *Question Bridge* project can be a catalyst for constructive dialogue among Black men and the nation; and help deconstruct the limiting stereotypes about Black male identity in our collective consciousness. “In the end, the objective is to create something that resonates as essentially genuine to viewer and subjects, and provides audiences with an intimate window into the complex and often unspoken dialogue between African American men...In this light, ‘Blackness’ ceases to be a simple, monochromatic concept. A major ambition is to transform our audiences’ appreciation for the diversity within any demographic and provide new opportunities for healing and understanding,” notes the Artists’ Statement.

Question Bridge is sponsored by the Bay Area Video Coalition and supported in part by a grant from the Open Society Institute: Campaign for Black Male Achievement, The Tribeca Film Institute, the Sundance Film Institute’s New Frontier Story Lab, the LEF Foundation, The Center for Cultural Innovation, UPM, DualStar Digital, and The California College of the Arts; and in collaboration with transmedia producers Innovent, LLC, and general production partner farWord, Inc.

OMCA Public Program

Question Bridge: Black Males Blueprint Roundtable

Saturday, February 11, 1–3 pm

The forum responds to a question posed by a member of the Hip-Hop generation to members of the Civil Right generation, “***Why didn’t you leave us the blueprint?***” This question will be the catalyst for a multigenerational discussion about values, leadership, and strategies for overcoming the social issues that have emerged in local communities over the past 40 years. **Chris Chatmon**, executive director of the Oakland Unified School District, moderates the panel of local black male youth and young adult community leaders and established local black male community leaders. The audience is invited to participate and pose questions of their own, in person and via Twitter. Included with Museum admission.

About the Collaborators

Chris Johnson (co-director) originated the Question Bridge concept with a 1996 video installation created for the Museum of Photographic Arts and the Malcom X Library in San Diego California. A Professor of Photography at the California College of the Arts, he is also the Media Wall Project Manager and Public Art Management Team member for the Oakland Museum.

Hank Willis Thomas (co-director) is the creator of many digital media works including video exhibitions. The recipient of the Aperture West Book Prize, his work has been

featured in the Rubell Family Collection, the Studio Museum, the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, the Wadsworth Atheneum, the Smithsonian, the High Museum of Art, and the Brooklyn Museum.

Bayeté Ross Smith (producer) is a former photojournalist whose work has been presented at the 2008 Sundance Film Festival, the Goethe Institute (Ghana), the Leica Gallery and Rush Arts Gallery, and at the Oakland Museum.

Kamal Sinclair (producer) is the founder of Universal Arts and director of *The Beat* and *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome*. She has directed numerous arts and arts education projects and has served on the board of the Children's Theater Company of NYC, Fractured Atlas, and on the Alvin Ailey Ambassador's Council.

Other collaborators include award winning actor, director, and producer **Delroy Lindo** (executive producer); **Deborah Willis, Ph. D.** (executive producer) a 2000 MacArthur Fellow and Chair of Photography and Imaging at the Tisch School of the Arts at New York University. A 2005 Guggenheim and Fletcher Fellow and an artist, she is one of the country's leading historians of African American photography; Antonio Kaplan and Elise Baugh (tranmedia producers) creative strategist behind Innovent LLC; and Jesse Williams (executive producer), critically acclaimed actor from *Grey's Anatomy* and *Brooklyn's Finest*.

ABOUT THE OAKLAND MUSEUM OF CALIFORNIA

The Oakland Museum of California (OMCA) brings together collections of art, history and natural science under one roof to tell the extraordinary stories of California and its people. OMCA's groundbreaking exhibits tell the many stories that comprise California with many voices, often drawing on first-person accounts by people who have shaped California's cultural heritage. Visitors are invited to actively participate in the Museum as they learn about the natural, artistic, and social forces that affect the state and investigate their own role in both its history and its future. With more than 1.8 million objects, OMCA is a leading cultural institution of the Bay Area and a resource for the research and understanding of California's dynamic cultural and environmental heritage.

VISITOR INFORMATION

The Oakland Museum of California (OMCA) is at 1000 Oak Street, at 10th Street, in Oakland. OMCA is situated between downtown Oakland and Lake Merritt. Museum admission is \$12 general; \$9 seniors and students with valid ID, \$6 youth ages 9 to 17, and free for Members and children 8 and under. OMCA offers onsite underground parking and is conveniently located one block from the Lake Merritt BART station, on the corner of 10th Street and Oak Street. The accessibility ramp is located at the new 1000 Oak Street main entrance. For more information, visit museumca.org.

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