Mark Bradford Creates Newly Commissioned Painting for Hirshhorn

Largest Indoor Work Artist Has Ever Produced

Renowned artist Mark Bradford will exhibit a suite of site-specific paintings at the Smithsonian’s Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden next year—Nov. 17, 2016–Sept. 17, 2017. The new work, the largest the artist has ever created, will occupy the entire circumference of the Inner Circle galleries on the museum’s second level, forming a monumental circular “fresco.” The exhibition is Bradford’s first in Washington, D.C.

“The Hirshhorn building presents an unparalleled opportunity for artists to interact with its sweeping circular architecture,” said Melissa Chiu, the Hirshhorn’s director. “The Inner Circle spaces have hosted large-scale artworks by artists before, but this is the first time that the full expanse of the second-level ambulatory walls will be turned over to a single artist. Mark Bradford has won acclaim for his site-specific works, and we are thrilled to see what he does at the Hirshhorn.”

Bradford, 54, lives and works in Los Angeles and creates works informed by personal experience that expand the language of abstraction by imbuing it with historical significance. Working with colored paper that he collages and transforms through cutting, tearing and abrading, Bradford reconciles the formal qualities of abstract expressionism with the need to have his art address issues of cultural importance. His works often
address issues of race and gender as much as art history. Recently, Bradford was one of the founders of Art + Practice, a foundation in Los Angeles with a mandate for arts education. Bradford’s exhibition will be accompanied by a substantial series of educational and community programs for the duration of his exhibition.

Bradford has had solo exhibitions at major venues, including the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles; the Wexner Center for the Arts in Columbus, Ohio; the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York; and the Studio Museum in Harlem. He has participated in group exhibitions such as the Ninth Gwangju Biennale, the 12th International Istanbul Biennial, the 55th Carnegie International and the 2006 Whitney Biennial.

His work is in the collections of the Hirshhorn; the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York, the Broad Art Foundation in Santa Monica, Calif.; the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, among others. Bradford attended the California Institute of the Arts, where he received a bachelor’s degree in 1995 and a master’s degree in 1997. He has received numerous awards and honors, including the U.S. State Department’s Medal of Arts in 2015, the MacArthur Foundation’s “genius” grant in 2009 and the Joan Mitchell Foundation Award in 2002.

Photo: Fredrik Nilsen. Courtesy the artist and Hauser & Wirth