

MASS MoCA

Jason Moran: *Black Stars: Writing in the Dark* brings audiovisual impressions to MASS MoCA

Black Stars: Writing in the Dark is on view at MASS MoCA December 17, 2022 – November 2024

North Adams, MA, December 13, 2022 – MASS MoCA announces the upcoming opening of *Black Stars: Writing in the Dark*, an installation bringing together works on paper and mixed-media *STAGED* sculptures by pianist, composer, and artist Jason Moran. On view in B6: The Robert W. Wilson Building through 2024, the exhibition – curated by Alexandra Foradas – visualizes the embodied experiences of making and listening to live music and explores the residues and memories that music-making leaves behind.

The multidisciplinary Jason Moran has frequently grounded his creative impulses in the rich connections between visual art, musical composition, and jazz history. *Black Stars: Writing in the Dark* presents Moran's forays in translating performance to paper, and presents sculptural works that pay homage to venues where artistic experimentation in jazz has historically thrived.

Moran's works on paper document the creation of compositions as an embodied event. Richly pigmented works on paper register the movements of the artist's fingers across piano keys; by placing fabrics on his piano and playing with pigment-covered fingers, Moran creates visual impressions of his auditory creations, recording and archiving the traces of his performance practice and technique. In *Black Stars: Writing in the Dark*, more than 40 new works on pink Gampi paper are exhibited unframed for the first time.

Black Stars: Writing in the Dark also presents two works from Moran's *STAGED* series, a suite of sculptural installations developed from extensive research into the archives of jazz musicians which reconstruct and reimagine interior spaces essential to jazz's development in the 20th century. *STAGED: Savoy Ballroom 1* (2015) visually references the arced wall of the famed 1930s venue where integrated audiences were allowed to dance together (a rarity among venues at the time); *STAGED: Studio Rivbea*, the other sculpture on view, is a new work commissioned for this exhibition which honors the storied loft of musician Sam Rivers and his wife and artistic collaborator, Beatrice Rivers, at 24 Bond Street in Manhattan, NY. Sam Rivers, a pivotal figure in the free jazz movement, collaborated with Moran on the acclaimed 2001 album *Black Stars*, which NPR listed as one of the 50 most important albums of 2000-2009. The exhibition's title honors this collaboration, pointing towards the ways that the artists and histories that shape the *STAGED* series have influenced Moran's practice.

Moran's works in *Black Stars: Writing in the Dark* encourage visitors to explore their own proximity – both physically and historically – to the embodied acts of making and witnessing live music. As Moran has said, "Where do we sit to be moved? I sit up close."

Artist Bio:

Jazz pianist, composer and artist Jason Moran is the Artistic Director for Jazz at The Kennedy Center. Moran is deeply invested in reassessing and complicating the relationship between music, language and location. Moran was named a MacArthur Fellow in 2010 and has released 18 solo recordings for Blue Note Records and his own label, Yes Records. He has collaborated with other artists such as Joan Jonas, Theaster Gates, Glenn Ligon, Julie Mehretu, Lorna Simpson, Adam

Pendleton and Kara Walker. His work is in the collections of MoMA, SFMOMA, Houston MFA, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Walker Art Center and the Whitney Museum of American Art. He currently teaches at the New England Conservatory and was recently inducted into the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

For more information, or to request press imagery, please contact:

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