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Media Contacts

Voleine Amilcar: 415.321.8687; vamilcar@ybca.org

Yerba Buena Center for the Arts Launches

Come to Your Census: Who Counts in America?, an Art and Civic Experience to Drive Awareness and Mobilize the Diverse Communities of the Bay Area around the 2020 US Census



Color Checker (Pileup) 2 by Stephanie Syjuco (2019)

Four-month community engagement initiative part of a larger arts-driven citywide campaign led by Art+Action and headquartered at YBCA

FREE TO THE PUBLIC

March 27– July 31 2020

San Francisco, California, February 24, 2019 – [Yerba Buena Center for the Arts \(YBCA\)](#) announced today [Come to Your Census: Who Counts in America?](#), an art and civic experience intended to drive awareness and mobilize the diverse communities of the Bay Area around the urgent, long-term impact of the 2020 US Census.

The results of the census determine the allocation of federal funding and political representation for the next decade and impact the health of every community throughout the United States—from affordable housing and transportation to education and arts funding. In San Francisco alone, each person who completes the census directs \$20,000 to community programs, potentially putting more than \$17 billion into the city over the next ten years.

Recognizing what is at stake for the Bay Area and the country, ***Come to Your Census: Who Counts in America?*** opens YBCA's campus to serve as a convening place to experience art, organize, engage in discourse around census-related issues—and inspire each individual to be counted. As part of this work, YBCA will feature works by over twenty-five Bay Area artists in response to the census; provide multilingual resources for visitors to complete the census on-site; and offer a gathering space for the community to organize around the census. This participatory experience is part of ***Come to Your Census***, a citywide arts-driven campaign mobilizing around the 2020 census and led by **Art+Action**, which is headquartered and incubated at YBCA and commissioned by the City of San Francisco's Office of Civic Engagement and Immigrant Affairs (OCEIA). **Free to the public, *Come to Your Census: Who Counts in America?*** will run for four months, **March 27 through July 31, 2020** during the active census period.

“Given all that is at stake, it is crucial that everyone in the Bay Area and this country feels safe and empowered to participate in the census,” remarks **YBCA CEO Deborah Cullinan**. “We welcome artists and creative thinkers to YBCA to spark conversations across our campus and our city about how we can move toward a more inclusive and equitable society where all are seen, heard, and counted. At YBCA, we are committed to being a forum for art-driven civic engagement and we are honored to be a trusted partner to the City's Office for Civic Engagement and Immigrant Affairs and all the coalition members of Art+Action.”

Art-Based Responses

For this unique art and civic experience, YBCA has engaged more than twenty-five Bay Area artists working across a range of disciplines to offer art-based explorations of identity, visibility, and citizenship against the backdrop of a city that many historically marginalized and undercounted communities call home. Ranging from site-specific and participatory installations to paintings, films, ceramics, and photographs, the works interrogate the social, political, and cultural implications of being counted.

“The Bay Area has a vast legacy of artists working across mediums to explore what it means to be seen, heard, and counted among peers and communities, and by the government,” adds **co-curator Martin Strickland, YBCA’s Associate Director of Public Life**. “The artists offering responses are navigating the impact of the census in deeply personal ways. Some riff on the actual nine-question form; others weave their experiences into works that speak to family histories that have profoundly impacted their art practices and existence as US residents.”

There are more than twelve opportunities for the public to touch, respond to, or co-create work on a daily basis. *Ten Card*, an interactive work by **Rodney Ewing**, upends the typical fingerprint by encouraging participants to share cherished personal histories that go beyond bodily descriptions and statistics. *SOMOS VISIBLES (WE ARE NOT INVISIBLE)*, an activation station by **Ana Teresa Fernández** and **Arleene Correa Valencia**, invites participants who have taken the census to iron “SOMOS VISIBLES” (“WE ARE NOT INVISIBLE”) in reflective vinyl letters onto high-visibility shirts which they can then take. The idea is to encourage those from traditionally underrepresented communities such as the undocumented, immigrants, and laborers to visibly claim their fair share of resources and political representation. **Dorothy Santos** invites the public to play a game based on the nine questions of the census. In *73 Questions*, **Leah Nichols** presents a ten-minute stop-motion animated film that follows Steve Jones, who at the time of the film’s making was experiencing homelessness. Nichols will select nine questions from the original *73 Questions* and ask viewers to respond to them inside of the installation as a way of visualizing universal experiences. **Liz Lerman’s** *Minds on the Move: The Treadmill Tapes* invites the public to conduct an on-the-go conversation on moving treadmills about whatever they find most current, curious, urgent, or vexing.

A number of artists will offer new artworks, including **Lukaza Branfman-Verissimo**, who will debut existing works alongside a new mural, *Untitled* (2020), which furthers her practice of re-creating and retelling her personal tales and those of the people around her. **Cece Carpio** responds with four new works, *Ilhan Omar*, *Mumia Abu-Jamal*, *Miss Major Griffin Gracy*, and *Victorina Morales* (2020), that illustrate the concerns of underrepresented populations, such as whether federal funds will be properly distributed once the census is over. **June Grant** debuts *We See Ourselves* (2020), a visual survey of International Boulevard and 14th Street in Oakland, overlaid with images of everyday people and their environment.

Additional contributions include **Lava Thomas's** *Freedom Song No. 5 (We Shall Not Be Moved)* (2019), which engages the intimate and civil act of bearing witness. *Between Memory and Landscape, 1105-D* (2017) by **Mark Baugh-Sasaki** is a scale replica of a single-family barrack using materials from the Japanese internment camp where his grandfather was imprisoned during World War II. **Richard Misrach** will draw on his *Border Cantos Project* (2009–present) and contribute photographs of the physical remnants of immigration at the California-Mexico border. These photographs will appear alongside composer and artist **Guillermo Galindo's** sound-based sculptures constructed from the same fragments of trash and debris in Misrach's photographs.

For the full list of participating artists, visit ybca.org/event/come-to-your-census-who-counts-in-america.

Participatory On-Site Engagement

Significant threats such as escalating anti-immigrant rhetoric, built-in language barriers, and cybersecurity concerns present challenges to a safe and accurate census count. Through ***Come to Your Census: Who Counts in America?***, YBCA will offer multiple census-taking stations throughout its galleries and lobby where communities can safely participate in the census. Printed directions in four languages—traditional Chinese, English, Spanish, and Tagalog—will assist with navigation of digital completion of the census. Staff will be on hand to provide assistance and information about how the census impacts individual rights, neighborhoods, and cities. YBCA will also host a

monthly tour in each of the four designated languages and have translators present to assist visitors in completing the census in their preferred language.

Artists and organizations such as the **Census Open Innovation Lab**, **Social Justice Sewing Academy**, and **Ramkeon O'Arwisters** have been invited to lead workshops that will offer visitors inspiration and tools to develop in-language, in-culture materials for census outreach and mobilization efforts in their own communities. Various play areas for children, including storytelling hours and self-guided making stations, will provide a safe and inspiring place for families and youth to experience art and civic engagement.

City-Wide Outreach

In advance of and throughout the active census period of **March 12 through July 31, 2020**, Art+Action is offering programs, performances, and community workshops throughout San Francisco as part of the citywide campaign to inspire participation in the census and improve the quality of life for every San Franciscan over the next ten years. The coalition, under the leadership of Amy Kisch, Art+Action's Founder and Artistic Director of Social Impact, has also commissioned and open-sourced arts-based materials—including posters, postcards, and digital assets—that are available for free at www.ComeToYourCensus.us for communities nationwide to create powerful calls to action to ignite census participation in their region. Many of the materials will be available in the four official languages of San Francisco: traditional Chinese, English, Spanish, and Tagalog.

On the ambitious plans to reach as many San Franciscans as possible, **Art+Action's Founder and Artistic Director of Social Impact Amy Kisch** remarks: "It was clear that for this campaign to truly reach and reflect the multitude of communities in San Francisco, the voice and force behind it had to be a cross-sector, cross-cultural coalition of trusted community messengers, as opposed to the voice of a singular entity. Just as the ethos of the census is one of equity and parity—that everyone counts equally—it was also key that the creative voices behind the campaign reflect this plurality and include both internationally renowned and emerging artists."

Come to Your Census: Who Counts In America? is presented by a coalition of curators convened by YBCA and includes **Martin Strickland**, YBCA's Associate Director

of Public Life; and **Sarah Cathers**, YBCA's Director of Public Life; with **Amy Kisch**, Art+Action Founder and Artistic Director of Social Impact; **Brittany Ficken**, Art+Action Executive Producer and Project Director; **Candace Huey** of re.riddle; and curator **Ashara Ekundayo**. They are supported by Art+Action's curatorial committee, comprised of Micki Meng, Founder of Art & Friends Indeed Gallery; Dorothy Santos, writer, curator, and artist; Christo Oropeza, Founder of Incline Gallery; Rozz Nash, Founder of the People's Conservatory; Meklit Hadero, YBCA's Chief of Program; and Isabel Yrigoyen, YBCA's Curator of Performing Arts.

CREDITS

Art+Action is supported by funding from the Office of Civic Engagement and Immigrant Affairs, City and County of San Francisco, and powerful communities dedicated to creativity and transformation. www.ComeToYourCensus.us

Ana Teresa Fernández and Arleene Correa Valencia's *SOMOS VISIBLES (WE ARE NOT INVISIBLE)* is made possible with the generous support of Levi's.

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ABOUT YERBA BUENA CENTER FOR THE ARTS

Yerba Buena Center for the Arts (YBCA) is one of the nation's most innovative contemporary arts centers. Founded in 1993, YBCA's mission is to generate culture that moves people. Through powerful art experiences, thoughtful and provocative content, and deep opportunities for participation, YBCA is committed to creating an inclusive culture that awakens personal and societal transformation. YBCA presents a wide variety of programming year-round, including performing arts, visual arts, and civic

engagement. For tickets and information, call 415.978.ARTS (2787). For more information, visit ybca.org.

ABOUT ART+ACTION



Art+Action—San Francisco’s first coalition for civic participation that spans art, creative, community, business, technology, philanthropy, activist, and government sectors—has launched a citywide arts-driven campaign that positions artists as catalysts to humanize the issues around the 2020 US Census. In partnership with trusted institutions and messengers, including Yerba Buena Center for the Arts (YBCA)—their headquarters and a lead partner—and ignited by support from San Francisco’s Office of Civic Engagement and Immigrant Affairs (OCEIA), they’re galvanizing communities to participate in the 2020 US Census to receive their fair share of resources and political representation. Although the movement is starting locally, the goal is to set off a national spark. www.ComeToYourCensus.us

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