



The Fabric Workshop
and Museum

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Fabric Workshop and Museum presents
JAYSON MUSSON: HIS HISTORY OF ART

July 22—November 13, 2022
Press Preview: Thursday, July 21



Jayson Musson as “Jay” with “Ollie.” Jayson Musson, in collaboration with The Fabric Workshop and Museum, Philadelphia, *His History of Art*, 2022. Photo credit: Carlos Avendaño.

Philadelphia, PA, Thursday, June 30 2022—**The Fabric Workshop and Museum** (FWM) is pleased to present **Jayson Musson’s *His History of Art***, on view from **July 22 to November 13, 2022**. Utilizing costuming, props, puppetry, and scenery created in collaboration with the FWM studio team, *His History of Art* debuts a new three-channel video series written, starred, and co-directed by Musson, who describes it as “a sitcom orbiting art history and all the fun to be had dancing on the minefield of the past.” Taking inspiration from the structure and tone of educational programs such as PBS children’s shows and nun-turned-art critic Sister Wendy Beckett, Musson conducts a satirical survey on art history, its relationship to the general public and the ways in which popular art historical images impact our cultural consciousness.

“Jayson’s wildly creative, multilayered, and often playful approach to the critique of art history is sure to resonate with audiences and comes at a time when the role of institutions and broader authorities of art and history are being reexamined,” says Fabric Workshop and Museum Executive Director Christina Vassallo. “From costume making, puppetry, and sculpture to a fully-fledged film set, his creative vision has also provided an ideal platform for everything that our FWM Studio Team is capable of.”

His History of Art centers on a sitcom-style video series, in which Musson—performing as “Jay”—endeavors to educate his skeptical puppet sidekick Ollie on the relevance of art. Dressed in bespoke tailored corduroy suits, Jay and Ollie journey across a three-episode arc from prehistoric art through the present, encountering figures as varied as Pablo Picasso and a larger-than-life Venus of Willendorf along the way. After viewing the episodes on large screens installed across the museum’s second floor, visitors will encounter Jay’s living room set featuring his art collection—props from the production that play upon art historical icons—and an animatronic Ollie. The experience culminates in a process lab that reveals to visitors how the production came together through the display of script material, set designs, props, and costumes.

The full effort inspired by Musson’s vision goes well beyond the exhibition. Visitors will be invited to engage with Musson and various collaborators, including puppeteers, writers, filmmakers, and other artists, through a robust schedule of programs and workshops planned through the fall (select programs detailed further below). In addition to an exhibition catalogue, a special edition “Ollie” doll will be produced in collaboration with Musson and FWM on the occasion of the exhibition.

“Good humor always moves toward truth,” Musson explains. “This exposure of truth is what causes a joke to resonate with a listener and connect with their often-unspoken experiences and feelings. Jokes uncover, jokes expose, jokes bring into the light things which are oft-buried by individuals and a society. Comedy’s propensity to dig up skeletons and parade them in front of an audience with little regard for consequence or moral constraint is one of the main reasons it has been a useful tool in exposing inequality and grand social failings.”

Jayson Musson became an internet sensation in 2010 with his ART THOUGHTZ video performance series. Over the course of 20 YouTube-based performances, Musson, through his character Hennessy Youngman, incisively satirized both pop culture and art “insiders,” exposing the elitism of the art world and critiquing contemporary art while offering new ways of understanding the cultural landscape he traversed. Ten years later, art institutions are re-examining their role and acknowledging the fault lines in their foundation. Yet, the fundamental instrument of validation in the art world—the field of art history—remains narrow in scope and entrenched in a Western, male-dominated canon. This will be the focus of Musson’s next cultural critique, with an approach that equally informs and interrogates through his signature humor and accessibility.

Film Credits

His History of Art (2022)

Written and Directed by Jayson Musson

Assistant Director: Scott Ross

Produced by All Ages Productions

Props and set by Jayson Musson in collaboration with The Fabric Workshop and Museum

Organizing Credits

The exhibition is organized by Project Coordinator Avery Lawrence and Interim Director of Exhibitions Alec Unkovic in collaboration with the artist, and was initiated by the originating curator Karen Patterson, FWM’s former Director of Exhibitions.

About Jayson Musson

Jayson Scott Musson was born in the Bronx, NY. He received a BFA in photography from University of the Arts and an MFA in painting from the University of Pennsylvania, both in Philadelphia, also attending the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in Skowhegan, ME in 2011. Musson is represented by Salon 94 in New York and Fleisher/Ollman in Philadelphia. His solo exhibitions include *We Sing in A Dead Language*, Zidoun-Bossuyt Gallery, Luxembourg City, Luxembourg (2019); *Demon All Day*, Salon 94 Freemans, New York (2017); *The Truth in the Song*, Fleisher/Ollman Gallery, Philadelphia (2016); *The Grand Manner* at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia (2011); and *Too Black For BET*, Dazed & Confused Magazine Gallery, London, England (2008). His work has been included in group exhibitions at the Whitney Museum of American Art, Lisson Gallery, and Postmasters Gallery, New York; Whitechapel Gallery, London; Galerie Perrotin, Paris; Grimmuseum, Berlin; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; David Castillo Gallery, Miami; and Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco, among others.

About The Fabric Workshop and Museum

The Fabric Workshop and Museum (FWM) is an internationally acclaimed contemporary art museum devoted to the creation, presentation, and preservation of innovative works of art. Its mission—*Collaborating with artists, revealing new possibilities*—embodies a 45-year commitment to helping artists experiment with the expressive possibilities of a broad spectrum of new materials and techniques. Through its renowned Artist-in-Residence Program, FWM provides artists at all stages of their careers with the opportunity to collaborate with its studio staff and take their work in fresh and often unexpected directions. FWM presents large-scale exhibitions, installations, and performative work, utilizing innovative fiber and other media including sculpture, installation, video, painting, photography, ceramics, and architecture. Founded in 1977, FWM brings this spirit of creative investigation and discovery to an eager audience, broadening access to art and advancing its role as a catalyst for innovation and social connection.

Public Events

Reception

Opening Celebration

Thursday, July 21

6:00–8:00 pm

Be among the first to experience *Jayson Musson: His History of Art*. Light refreshments served

FREE | advance registration encouraged

Workshop

First Friday: Why this, not that?

Friday, August 5

4:00–6:00 pm

In *His History of Art*, Jay and his puppet companion, Ollie, are often engaged in the age-old debate over what should be considered art and who or what determines its value. Enter the conversation by reflecting on your own experience of art and your own perceptions of value. Participants will use collaged images from the past and present to center the art that matters to them.

\$10.00 Public | \$5.00 Members

Space is limited. Advance registration encouraged

Workshop

Power Tees

Sunday, August 21

2:30–4:30 pm

In Jayson Musson's exhibition, *His History of Art*, Jay tells Ollie that power is conveyed through art by using composition, form, color, symbols, and repetition. How would you reimagine and redefine the power structures in our world using art? Join us for this special opportunity to create your own t-shirt design. Participants will learn how to use custom pixel art, and screenprinting techniques to create their own powerful, new look!

\$25.00 Public | \$20.00 Members

Space is limited. Advance registration encouraged

Film Screening

A Night of Video Art Curated by Jayson Musson

Friday, September 9

7:00–9:00 pm

Lightbox Film Center at University of the Arts

401 South Broad Street, Philadelphia, PA 19147

Join Artist-in-Residence Jayson Musson at his alma mater with Lightbox Film Center Curator Jesse Pires for an evening of performance art videos curated from the collection of Electronic Arts Intermix.

Ticketing available via Lightbox Film Center

Space is limited. Advance reservations encouraged

Master Class

Puppet Making with Cedwan Hooks and his friend, Jayson Musson

Saturday, September 17

2:00–4:00 pm

How do you bring a puppet to life? What patterns, materials, tricks, and techniques must come together? Learn this and more from puppeteer and puppet maker Cedwan Hooks (*Helpsters*, Apple TV+; *Doom Patrol*, HBO Max), who performed the role of Ollie the rabbit in *His History of Art*. Hear from Artist-in-Residence Jayson Musson and the FWM Studio team about the process of envisioning and creating the puppets for the exhibition, followed by a master class in puppet making with Cedwan Hooks! Participants will leave with their own custom-made hand puppet.

\$50.00 Public | \$35.00 Members

Space is limited. Advance reservations encouraged

Lecture + Performance Workshop

Herstory of Art with Stephanie Santana of Black Women of Print

Saturday, September 24

2:30–4:30 pm

What does it mean to have an inclusive art history canon? Following a curated presentation of images and objects from the FWM collection prepared by artist Stephanie Santana of Black Women of Print., create your own work of art in fabric, paper, collage or paint. Together, we'll develop a collective tableau with inspiration from the work of celebrated women artists such as Faith Ringgold, Betty Woodman, Lorna Simpson and Shahzia Sikander, whose artist boxes we'll explore. All ages, no prior

experience required!

\$20.00 Public | \$18.00 Members | \$5.00 Kids 5–12
Space is limited. Advance reservations encouraged

Virtual Master Class

Filmmaking for Artists—DIY Filmmaking Hacks with Director/Producer Scott J. Ross

Thursday, September 29
4:00–6:00 pm

Join this virtual master class in DIY filmmaking from co-producer, assistant director, and lead editor of *His History of Art*, Scott J. Ross. Based in Los Angeles, Scott J. Ross is a filmmaker who specializes in comedy, documentary, and fine art film. This practical online workshop for visual artists will focus on cinematography, editing, and an overview of the most exciting new filmmaking tools and software.

\$35.00 Public | \$30.00 Member | \$15.00 Student
Space is limited. Advance reservations required.

Lecture + Workshop

Funny, but not Frivolous with Nina Katchadorian

Friday, October 14
6:00–8:00 pm

"Funny and frivolous are not the same thing, and sometimes humor can be the only way to approach something extremely serious." —artist Nina Katchadourian

Join artist Nina Katchadourian for a discussion on humor and a close look at the ways artists use it in their work. The multi-disciplinary artist often uses humor as a device to bring viewers into her work, to help them become more attentive, or to call attention to fraught historical or cultural questions. Katchadourian will present projects of her own that utilize humor, and also introduce some theories of humor as described by various philosophers and critical thinkers. As part of this playful, interactive workshop, participants will be asked to read a short essay before attending and then the group will apply these ideas to a selection of found videos we'll watch together.

\$15.00 Public | \$12.00 Members | \$10.00 Students with ID
Space is limited. Advance reservations encouraged

Performance + Workshop

Storytellers of Art Histories with Alpesh Kantilal Patel

Tuesday, October 18
6:00–8:00 pm

In our future, the history of art could be taught as a story—stories that embrace the possibility of multiple voices, many frameworks for seeing, and a philosophy of both/and instead of either/or. These are some of the ideas put forth in *Storytellers of Art Histories* edited by Alpesh Kantilal Patel and Yasmeen Siddiqui. Join us for a night of non-visual storytelling, where Temple University, Tyler School of Art and Architecture, PhD art history candidates perform stories drawn from this anthology.

Following the performance, join a hands-on workshop to screen print your own conversational tote bag, sparking the exchange of future stories of art history!

\$10.00 Public | \$8.00 Members | \$5.00 Students with ID
Space is limited. Advance reservations encouraged

Master Class

Reinventing Humans with Comedy Writer David Sacks

Sunday, November 13

2:30–4:30 pm

Celebrated comedy writer of *Simpsons* fame, David Sacks would like to know how you feel about being human in the world today. What makes it hard? How could humans be better designed and better equipped for the challenges we face? How would you reinvent humans?

Participants will workshop their ideas with David Sacks, then collaborate with a balloon artist, sketch artist, or sculptor to bring their ideas to life!

\$50.00 Public | \$35 Members

Space is limited. Advance reservations encouraged.

More programming to be confirmed soon. Check fabricworkshopandmuseum.org/events for updates.

Sponsors

Major support for *Jayson Musson: His History of Art* has been provided by The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage, with additional support from The National Endowment for the Arts, The Wyncote Foundation, and All Ages Productions.

Major support of FWM is provided by the Marion Boulton “Kippy” Stroud Foundation. FWM receives state art funding support through a grant from the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, a state agency funded by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency. Additional support is provided by Agnes Gund and the Board of Directors and Members of The Fabric Workshop and Museum.

###

Note to Editors: A media preview of the exhibition will be held the morning of Thursday, July 21, 11:00 am–12:30 pm

Media Contacts

Lourdes Miller

Blue Medium, Inc.

Tel: +1-212-675-1800

lourdes@bluemedium.com

Philadelphia-based inquiries:

Justin Rubich

FWM Communications

Tel: 215-561-8888 x224

jrubich@fabricworkshopandmuseum.org