



# Exhibits Newsline

Have you seen an interesting new exhibition lately – something that touched you, made you laugh, or moved you to action? Consider writing about it for Exhibits Newsline! Entries should be brief (300 words max), breezy (tell what made it so great), and include three to four high-res images.

For more information, email: [NAMENewsline@gmail.com](mailto:NAMENewsline@gmail.com).

INSTITUTION National Museum of African American History and Culture

LOCATION Washington, DC / Web

## A Virtual Space for Self-Reflection on Race



Fig. 1.

Illustration of a diversity of faces included in a section about bias.

With exhibitions closed to the public due to the coronavirus pandemic, the National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC) launched a new online portal, “Talking About Race” (fig. 1) which offers a virtual space to address the question visitors ask most frequently when they visit: how do we talk about race?

The NMAAHC (fig. 2) interprets the life, history, and culture of Black Americans, and people look to the museum to provide guidance on having conversations about race. “Talking About Race” was initially planned for a later date, but was released early in response to multiple incidents of police brutality resulting in the deaths of Breonna Taylor and George Floyd, among others.

In an effort to continue to be at the center of their communities in an exclusively digital environment, “Talking About Race” provides resources and tools on topics like race and racialized identity, being anti-racist, whiteness, and systems of oppression. Resources are categorized by audience and topic, making it easy to find what you are looking for as an exhibition developer, an educator, a person committed to equity, a caregiver. Through navigating the portal, I came across a social identity worksheet that helped me understand how my social domains intersect with one another and shape my life experiences. In the self-care section, I experienced two minutes of stillness paired with the sound of waves (fig. 3).

ISTOCK



Fig. 2.

The exterior of the National Museum of African American History and Culture.

As someone who has struggled to find my identity as a mixed-race person, engaging with elements of the portal provided me the virtual space and tools to reflect on my own relationship with race. “Talking About Race” instills self-reflection as a critical foundation to having these challenging conversations. While I can’t visit NMAACH in person, I will be doing some of the anti-racist work in this digital space.

You can visit “Talking About Race” at: [nmaahc.si.edu/learn/talking-about-race](http://nmaahc.si.edu/learn/talking-about-race).

**Chaya Arabia**, MFA candidate, Museum Exhibition Planning and Design, University of the Arts, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

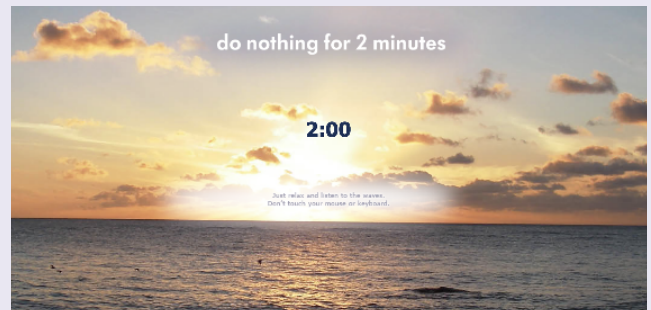


Fig. 3. Prompt to “do nothing” but listen to the sound of waves for two minutes.

INSTITUTION Various

LOCATION New York, New York

## Using the Street and the Square to Exhibit Social Justice



Fig. 1.

A “Hispanic Star” graphic, sus franjas y estrellas (“its stripes and stars,” evoking the national anthem of the United States) on a LinkNYC digital media kiosk.

ALL PHOTOS BY BARBARA COHEN-STRATYNER

COVID-19 forced art about social justice outside to roadways, bus shelters, Wi-Fi kiosks and recycling bins, creating mini-exhibitions in found space.

Protests of police shootings spurred wall murals. This spring's calls for social justice inspired many cities to inscribe directly on roadways and pavements. The first, created by the Washington, DC Department of Public Works and Mayor Muriel Bowser, set the pattern: BLACK LIVES MATTER in all caps in yellow paint.

Inspired, New York City developed roadway murals in each borough, painted, even during the lockdown, by community volunteers and supervised by artists of color. In Brooklyn, on either side of BLACK LIVES MATTER, artist Dawud West added names from civil rights history and the current protest campaigns encased in abstract casket shapes, inspired by the open-casket burial of murdered teenager Emmett Till (whose name follows the word "MATTER"). Yellow and black were discarded for murals in Harlem, where each capital letter was a different color, and at lower Manhattan's African Burial Ground memorial, where artist Tijay Mohammed painted West African kente and adinkra motifs on BLACK and artist Sophie Dawson featured faces on LIVES.

With museums and galleries closed, artists reflected on the pandemic and protests in found space. The Public Art Fund displayed commissioned posters from 50 artists on the vertical end panels of bus shelters. Messages for the City (a project of Times Square Arts and the Poster Museum for outdoor digital media only) put its commissioned art on Times Square's huge digital billboards and on LinkNYC kiosks. Those Wi-Fi hotspots, looking like giant cell phones, also presented protest projects through Art on Link, including the Black Lives Matter memorialized names, and "Hispanic Star" graphics celebrating Latinx essential workers (fig. 1).

Times Square Arts placed graphics on Bigbelly recycling bins – although theaters and the TKTS booth are closed, people still discard (fig. 2). Word on the Street, in collaboration with the collective House of Trees, commissioned word art from women artists, currently featuring Laurie Anderson, Naomi Shihala Nye, and Tania Bruguera (fig. 3).

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**Barbara Cohen-Stratynier,**  
independent cultural worker and  
blogger at [outsidethemuseumblog.wordpress.com](https://outsidethemuseumblog.wordpress.com)

**Fig 2.** (top) Summer 2020 Word on the Street poster on a Bigbelly recycle bin.

**Fig 3.** (bottom) Summer 2020 Word on the Street poster by Tania Bruguera.



INSTITUTION ARTECHOUSE

LOCATION Web

## An Online Exhibit to Calm Us

**Fig.1.**

The landing page gives a glimpse of the blue universe and invites users to explore and create.



*Exploration of Blue*, a web-based audiovisual experience by ARTECHOUSE, is inspired by ARTECHOUSE NYC's February 2020 installation, *Submerge*, based on Pantone's 2020 Color of the Year: Classic Blue. I found it through the email my professor sent in April as a part of our weekly ritual of "Show & Tell," wherein we share inspirational things with the class.

This experience filled me with wonder. The application gave me the power to shape the mesmerizing kinetic artwork – instead of just watching. Drawn into the experience through interactivity, I felt fully immersed, even though I was sitting in front of my laptop. It showed me the difference between an "online installation" and a website experience.

The website takes the user on a journey to explore and create (fig. 1). As you scroll through, it gives a little insight into the experience and prompts you to launch

yourself into the blue universe within the browser tab. The webcam picks up your face movement and creates ripples in the field of free-flowing particles. Hold down the mouse and see the particles gather around it. The side panel lets you regulate the flow, attraction, intensity of the particle, and brush size (fig. 2). The backbone of the application lies with "cables.gl," an online tool to create interactive web-based content, and the music is from a Mexico-based producer and programmer, Paperworks (Eduardo Montero).

As I toggled between the mouse and panel options, the digital artwork on my screen morphed from one blue universe to another, integrating me into a live, calming transformational journey (fig. 3). I found my mind meditating to the converging and diverging flow as my eyes swayed with the particles and body to the music's rhythm.

Filled with wonder and calm, I quickly shared the website link with my friends across the world. A sudden realization struck me: while we are homebound during the pandemic, this experience has transcended boundaries and elevated the installation. It holds the power to unite humanity with calmness, leaving a positive emotional and psychological impact of the color blue through art, music, and technology.

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**Bhawika Mishra** is pursuing a Masters degree in Exhibition and Experience Design at the Fashion Institute of Technology

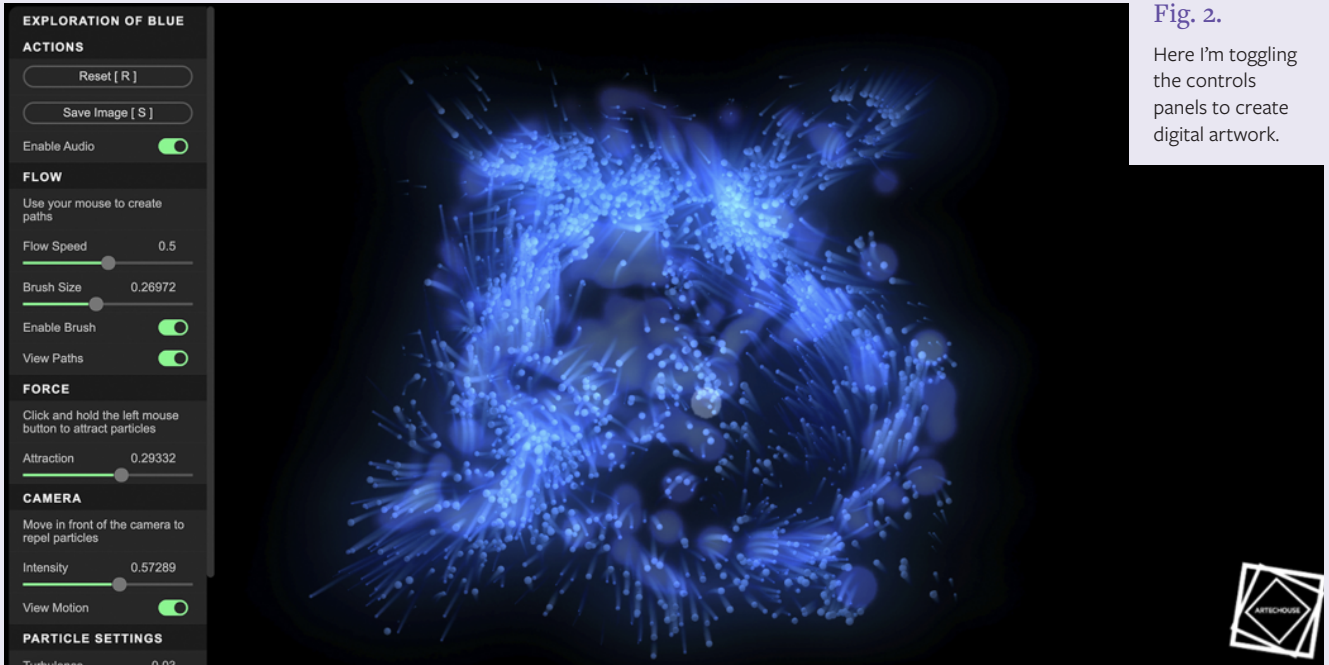


Fig. 2.  
Here I'm toggling the controls panels to create digital artwork.

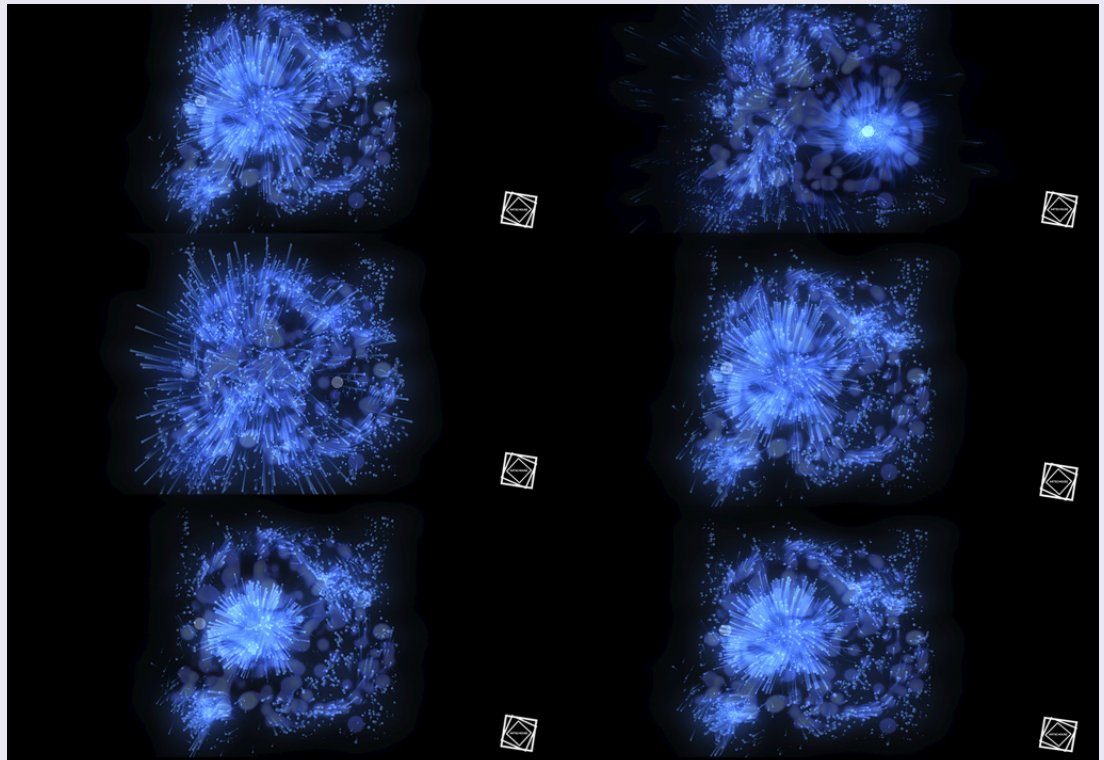


Fig. 3.  
Digital artworks I created and captured in *Exploration of Blue*.