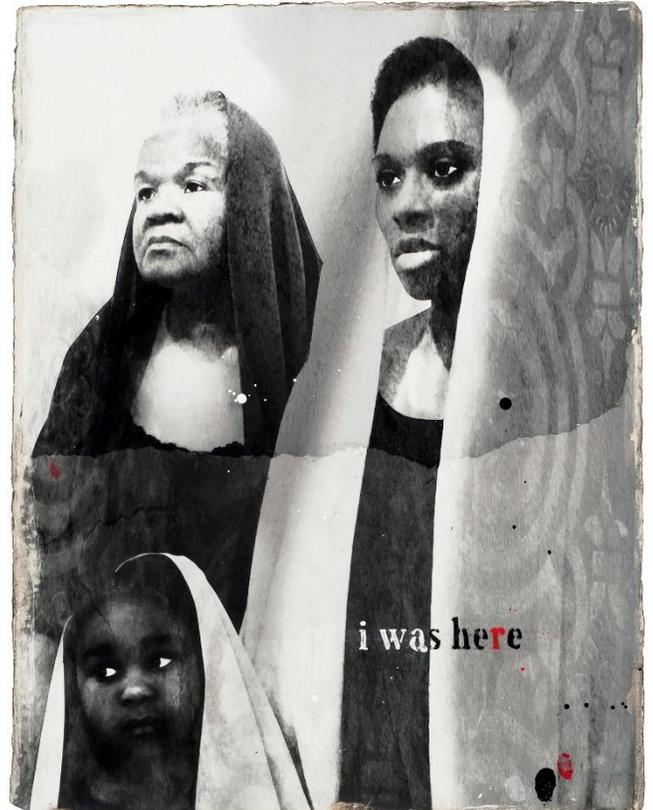


DATE: June 10, 2020

***i was here* to Receive \$20,000 Grant from the
National Endowment for the Arts**

Lexington, Kentucky — National Endowment for the Arts Chairman Mary Anne Carter has approved more than \$84 million in grants as part of the Arts Endowment’s second major funding announcement for fiscal year 2020. Included in this announcement is an Art Works award of \$20,000 to *i was here* for a city-wide installation of Ancestor Spirit Portraits throughout the Lexington Public Library branches. This is one of 1015 grants nationwide that the agency has approved in this category.

“These awards demonstrate the resilience of the arts in America, showcasing not only the creativity of their arts projects but the organizations’ agility in the face of a national health crisis,” said Mary Anne Carter, chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts. “We celebrate organizations like *i was here* for providing opportunities for learning and engagement through the arts in these times.”



“***i was here*** asks us to engage with history of place, creating a path for communities across America to share the truth of the past and the possibilities of the future. In honoring a piece of the human puzzle that makes us who we are, we are planting a vision of what the word **US** means in the heart of America.”

The portraits featuring contemporary African Americans transforms individuals into representative ancestors. They are of all ages and genders just like those once sold. They are printed on translucent tapestries, allowing viewers to literally see through them and for light to shine through them. These figures are integrated with longitude and latitudes of prominent Trans-Atlantic history sites asking viewers to consider the broader connections of enslaved people sold at auction to vast histories of enslavement.

At the heart of the project is the concept of connection. Every place that the installation travels to will bring the connections between sites of the internal trade into conversation. The portraits connect across the space of the square where viewers can see multiple pieces from one vantagepoint. Visitors connect to the images and the histories of mid-Atlantic slavery, from sites of the slave trade in West Africa to sites of enslavement in the United States through the coordinates provided. Sites in Kentucky are connected to cities and towns all over the American South through the enslaved people who passed through the city as chattel. Viewers in different geographic locations where the project is installed connect to each other through the pieces. *i was here* asks us to engage with history of place and in doing so, craft a path to our future. Vanessa Holden, Assistant Professor of African American studies at the University of KY, specialist in the history of American slavery.

For more information on this National Endowment for the Arts grant announcement, visit [arts.gov/news](https://www.arts.gov/news).