



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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“Let America Be America”: Fountain House Gallery Exhibition is Inspired by Iconic Langston Hughes Poem

On view (online): September 24 – November 11, 2020

NEW YORK CITY – Fountain House Gallery – the premier venue in New York City representing artists with mental illness – today announced the upcoming exhibition [Let America Be America](#), inspired by the Langston Hughes poem [“Let America Be America Again.”](#) The show will be presented online from September 24, 2020, through November 11, 2020.

In this election year, when many Americans are raising their voices in pursuit of social justice, Fountain House artists raise their diverse artistic voices in *Let America Be America*. Following the lead of Hughes’s iconic words, in this exhibition these visual artists explore the meaning of “We the People.”

The exhibition is curated by Fountain House Studio Coordinator Karen Gormandy, who said, “To know the work of Langston Hughes is to know the soul of America and to feel America in our hearts. In ‘Let America Be America Again’ he beautifully and tragically portrays the struggles and the triumphs of the common man and points to who that common man is: the ‘We’ whose ancestors came to this country as slaves from the banks of Africa, as well as Native Americans, immigrants hailing from numerous lands, working people, youth, and more.”

The “We” is reflected in Susan Spangenberg’s *Becoming KALI*, with its figure swathed in multinational flags alongside a segment of the Stars and Stripes, and in Kelly Han’s *Street Preacher*. In his *This is a Police State*, Raymond Lopez boldly confronts the issue of law enforcement excesses. *I, Too, Am America* is Zeus Hope’s powerful declaration of the quest for inclusion; Maybellene Gonzalez’s *Wearing Rainbows* features a brown-skinned woman fixing her gaze on the viewer through rainbow-hued spectacles. In the photograph *American Rose*, Eva Tortora depicts a discarded, trodden-upon flower. Angela Rogers’s Tarot-inspired *Untitled 3* gives a tip of the hat to the “We” who embrace the mystical.

Let America Be America showcases more than 60 works in mediums including acrylic, watercolor, collage and mixed media, and digital photography.

The online exhibition can be viewed at: <https://www.artsy.net/show/fountain-house-gallery-let-america-be-america>

Read the Langston Hughes poem: <https://poets.org/poem/let-america-be-america-again>

This program is funded, in part, by generous support from the Renate, Hans and Maria Hofmann Trust, the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation, the David Rockefeller Fund, and the Laurie M. Tisch Illumination Fund.

Langston Hughes (1902 – 1967)

James Mercer Langston Hughes is often referred to as "America's Poet." Born in Joplin, Missouri, Hughes was not only a poet but also a social activist, a novelist, a playwright, and a columnist. A resident of New York City, he was known as a leader of the Harlem Renaissance. Both of his paternal great-grandmothers were enslaved Africans, and both of his paternal great-grandfathers were white slave owners. Hughes was at various times in his life a Merchant Mariner, a busboy, a world traveler and an accused Communist who in 1953 was called before the Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations. Hughes's ashes are interred beneath a floor medallion in the middle of the foyer in the New York Public Library's Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture in Harlem. The design on the floor is an African cosmogram entitled *Rivers*. The title is taken from Hughes's poem, "The Negro Speaks of Rivers." Within the center of the cosmogram is the line, "My soul has grown deep like the rivers."

About Fountain House Gallery

Fountain House Gallery and Studio provides an environment where artists living with mental illness can express their creative visions and exhibit their work. Founded by Fountain House in 2000, the storefront Gallery in Manhattan sells original artworks and collaborates with a wide network of artists, curators and cultural institutions. The Studio, located in Long Island City, is a collaborative workspace that furthers the professional practice of our artists. Embracing artists who are emerging or established, trained or self-taught, Fountain House Gallery cultivates artistic growth, makes a vital contribution to the New York arts community, and challenges the stigma surrounding mental illness.

Fountain House Gallery

www.fountainhousegallery.org

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Hours: Tues.-Sat. 11-7; Sun. 1-5

More than a gallery. A movement.

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