ABIGAIL DEVILLE

LIGHT OF FREEDOM

Abigail DeVille

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Light of Freedom

Mad. Sq. Art 2020
Abigail DeVille
Light of Freedom

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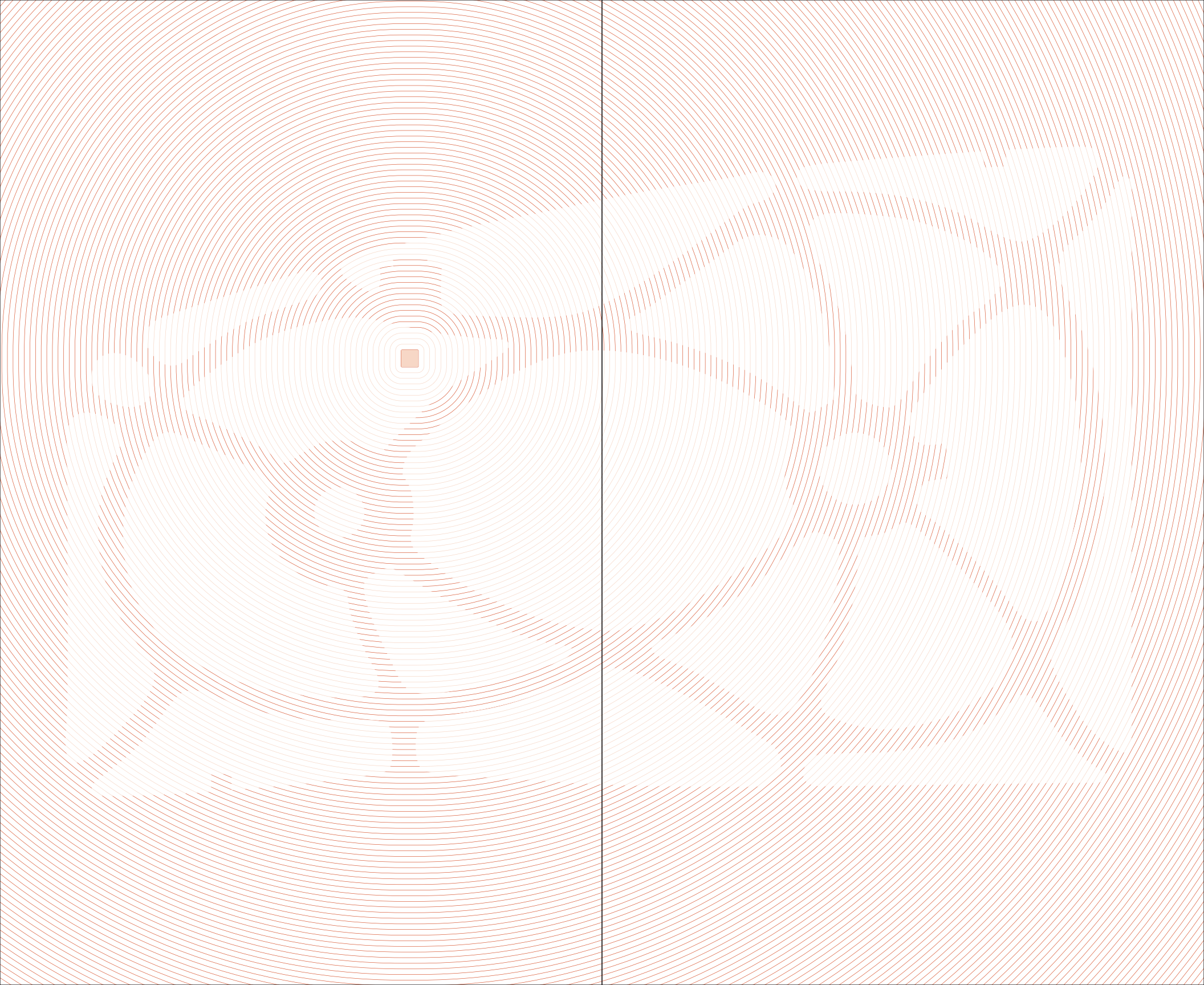

FIG. 1

Contents

Introduction 11
Brooke Kamin Rapaport
Deputy Director and Martin Friedman Chief Curator

Artist's Statement 17
What Is Freedom?
Abigail DeVille

The Propaganda of History 21
Taylor Renee Aldridge
Visual Arts Curator and Program Manager
California African American Museum, Los Angeles

Light a Fire 31
Andrew Russeth
Art Critic

Abigail DeVille 39

Work in the Exhibition 39

Support 51

Acknowledgments 54

Madison Square Park Conservancy 55

Previous Mad. Sq. Art Exhibitions 58

Photography and Figure Credits 60

FIG. 2

FIG. 3

Introduction

Brooke Kamin Rapaport

During this turbulent period of pandemic, the presidential election, and protests, the manifold roles of a civic site like Madison Square Park continue to take shape and become even more conspicuous. Many communities gather on the Park's seven acres for their needs and demonstrate the adaptability of public space in the urban center that is New York City. We look to artists like Abigail DeVille to realize works in the public realm to inspire, sustain, and challenge all Parkgoers. And DeVille does so with her sculpture *Light of Freedom.*

Light of Freedom is the Conservancy's fortieth art project and likely the most accelerated we have planned and implemented in the history of our art program, as we posed the question of how public art can respond to this period of turmoil. The artist has answered with a powerful project made of her signature materials of found objects. DeVille's work often looks to art history, particularly twentieth-century modernism and to the practices of collage and assemblage. In the early 1900s, Pablo Picasso (Spanish, 1881–1973) and Kurt Schwitters (German, 1887–1948) experimented with scrap elements in their compositions. More recently, Louise Nevelson (American, born Ukraine, 1899–1988), Noah Purifoy (American, 1917–2004), and Robert Rauschenberg (American, 1925–2008) incorporated found materials with great innovation in their three-dimensional work. DeVille credits them as influential to her practice. Nevelson may be best known for creating all-white or all-black works in which she painted scavenged materials into monochromatic sculptural compositions. She also constructed a series of gold-painted sculptures in the early 1960s summoning her earliest immigrant childhood years, when she had been told that the streets of America were paved with gold. The parallel here is to DeVille's gold-painted scaffolding; she found a workaday structure and transformed it through glistening, golden coloration. It heightens the prevailing emphasis of *Light of Freedom*, which guides with its brightness.

FIG. 4

FIG. 5

Light of Freedom is a thirteen-foot-tall reference to the torch and flame of the Statue of Liberty. The statue's hand and torch were on view in Madison Square Park from 1876 to 1882 as a nineteenth-century-style marketing event intended to rouse excitement and gather funds to complete the statue in France before it was installed in New York Harbor in 1886. In a sense, the artist is conjuring the ghost of Lady Liberty and appealing to her majestic presence and symbolic openness to meet this moment.

DeVille has filled the torch and flame with a reused well-worn bell and the arms of mannequins. The artist typically mines untold histories in public space for the subject matter in her work. In this piece, she conjoins significant crossroads in African American history in New York for a sculpture that is inspiring and introspective. DeVille recognizes and hallows the earliest enslaved Africans who were brought to New Amsterdam in 1626, and she critiques the promise of American liberty and justice for all with a focus on today's Black Lives Matter movement. Abigail DeVille is an artist who is also a citizen archaeologist. She excavates the strata of civilization to unearth histories, artifacts, and cultures, and brings those to her work.

Light of Freedom carries cogent symbols. The artist found a schoolhouse bell—an instrument that heralds freedom—which, though rusted and weary, expresses a timeworn beauty. She collected mannequin arms, limbs that beseech the viewer, and inserted them into a metal armature that resembles the torch of the Statue of Liberty, then encased all the materials in a golden scaffold that metaphorically prevents access, but possesses luminosity. The scaffold also recalls a work site, an ongoing and insistent image in the urban landscape. In *Light of Freedom*, DeVille focuses on a central point of the oration that statesman and abolitionist leader Frederick Douglass delivered in Canandaigua, New York, on August 4, 1857, when he stated: "If there is no struggle there is no progress."

Like all of Madison Square Park's exhibitions, *Light of Freedom* could not have been realized without the consistent support and counsel of the Conservancy's Board of Trustees, including Board Chair Sheila Davidson. Our Art Committee, chaired by Ron Pizzuti, is a group of thoughtful advisors who share their guidance, generosity, and wisdom. Many members of the Conservancy's Art Council contributed project support, and we thank Council Chair Sarah Stein-Sapir for her ongoing efforts. We are grateful to Christopher Ward of Thornton Tomasetti and to John Hunt at HuntLaw. Our sincere thanks to Kurt Wulfmeyer at KC Fabrications, who worked on a clipped schedule with the Conservancy and the artist on this project. Gratitude also to Spencer Byrne-Seres. Our colleagues in

FIG. 6

the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation—Jonathan Kuhn, Jennifer Lantzas, and Elizabeth Masella—are encouraging to the Conservancy's art program.

During the pandemic, our staff collaborated through constant Zoom meetings and emails to realize this project. My colleague Tom Reidy, Senior Project Manager, brings great skill and forethought to all aspects of planning and implementation. Keats Myer, Dana Klein, Robin Lockwood, Stephanie Lucas, Nicole Rivers, Rosina Roa, Deepka Sani, Stephanie Stachow, Hannah Sterrs, Andie Terzano, and Jill Weissman have given their all to make it happen. We also thank Nicole Berry and Eliza Osborne at The Armory Show, Eve Biddle at the Wassaic Project, Tara Sansone at Materials for the Arts, and Eric Shiner at Pioneer Works. Catalogue essayists Taylor Renee Aldridge and Andrew Russeth have each shared their perceptive interpretations of *Light of Freedom* for this volume. Andy Romer has focused his lens for the wonderful photographs seen here. Thank you to photographer Tonje Thilesen. For their work on this volume, we thank Adela Goldsmith, Anna Jardine, and our colleagues at McGinty—Miko McGinty, Julia Ma, and Rebecca Sylvers.

Keats Myer and I express gratitude for the great generosity of project supporters who are listed on page 51 of this volume, and we recognize Candy and Michael Barasch, Patricia Blanchet, Suzanne Deal Booth, Deborah Brown, Molly Gochman, Bernard Lumpkin and Carmine Boccuzzi, Joel Wachs, and Darren Walker. After its stay in New York, *Light of Freedom* will travel to the Momentary at Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art in Bentonville, Arkansas and to the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in Washington, DC. In Bentonville, Director of Artist Initiatives and Curator of Contemporary Art Lauren Haynes and Associate Curator, Contemporary Art Allison Glenn endorsed Abigail's work from the outset. In Washington, we are grateful to former Chief Curator Stéphane Aquin and Associate Curator Anne Reeve for their commitment to this work.

Works of art can help us to interpret a period or to make sense of it. In her past work and today, Abigail DeVille has shed light on a collective reckoning and convening around communities and histories. *Light of Freedom* brings new ideas and stories to the public realm. For this, we congratulate Abigail.

Brooke Kamin Rapaport is Deputy Director and Martin Friedman Chief Curator of Madison Square Park Conservancy.

FIG. 7

Artist's Statement

What Is Freedom?

Abigail DeVille

Freedom is defined in the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* as "the absence of necessity, coercion, or constraint in choice or action," or "liberation from slavery or restraint or from the power of another: INDEPENDENCE."

Freedom, it seems, is easily defined, infinitely elusive. The intense, unrelenting struggle for the happiness of some and abject oppression of others is a dance of death over centuries, in different settings, places, languages, and costumes. All of this, too, defines what it means to be an actor or individual on the American stage. To find yourself here and now is the sum of many decisions, and if you were born here, then none your own.

One of the earliest armed conflicts of the American Revolution took place in New York City, six weeks before the Boston Massacre in January 1770. The Battle of Golden Hill was the result of numerous skirmishes over an embattled liberty pole. There were several injuries but no deaths, so it remains a lesser-known fight.[1]

What is a liberty pole? A liberty pole was first hoisted in the air in the aftermath of the assassination of Julius Caesar by a group of senators in 44 BCE. The senators called themselves Liberatores. They processed through the streets in celebration, bloody weapons raised, one spear capped with a pileus—a brimless, snug-fitting felt hat given to emancipated slaves in Roman society. The Liberatores named themselves agents of the Goddess Libertas, borrowing her rod or staff used in the manumission ceremonies.[2] The pileus, when conferred liberated, signifying emancipation.[3]

In the colonies, liberty poles were wooden flag-poles erected by the Sons of Liberty as a simultaneous gesture of celebration and agitation of the Stamp Act's repeal. The British Parliament passed the contested legislation in March 1765 as a result of Britain's seven-year war with France for control of the North American continent.[4] Britain argued that this war was for the benefit of the American colonies. The battle was a costly affair. Who should pay for it? Well,

the American colonists, of course. Herein enters the Stamp Act which directly taxed the colonists. It was applied liberally and to all sorts of everyday goods.

The repeal of the act was a victory achieved through secret meetings, various boycotts, organizing, intimidation tactics, and destruction of private property. It was the first victory for the Sons of Liberty, and it pointed to the impending revolution. Who were the Sons of Liberty? They were a group of merchants, lawyers, and other united men of all walks of life scattered in regional factions.[5]

FIG. 8

New York's first liberty pole was raised by the Sons of Liberty on King George III's birthday, June 4, 1766. British soldiers cut down the first pole, which was located not far from their barracks on the north end of Chambers Street, on August 28. The next day, as the Sons of Liberty were preparing to put another pole in its place, soldiers attacked them. There ensued a saga of the poles. On January 13, 1770, British soldiers attempted to destroy the fourth pole with gun-powder. They failed. Enraged, soldiers attacked men in front of a tavern that served as the sons of liberty headquarters on Broadway. In the days following the brawl, soldiers succeeded in tearing the pole down and chopping it into hundreds of pieces; immediately a two-day conflict involving three thousand New Yorkers raged. The latter defiantly labeled the city's soldiers' enemy. Though both sides were armed, there were no deaths.

Significantly, this early battle of the revolution was over a living monument which embodied liberty, property rights, celebration, agitation, free speech, and collective gathering. A century before Liberty Enlightening the World entered New York Harbor, the symbol of Libertas declaring freedom from her ancient bonds was alive in lower Manhattan. It is not lost on me that the symbols this nation metabolized draw from classical struggles of enslavement. Liberation on the continent of North America was fought from the margins. The Black Lives Matter marches redefined the

summer of 2020, four hundred one years after the first Africans arrived in colonial Virginia. A century after the Red Summer of 1919, hundreds of thousands of face-masked Americans walked together to demand life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness for Black Lives in America.

Light of Freedom aims to recalibrate lost mythologies embedded in the Statue of Liberty. The blue arms are chain-linked to one another as the flame that burns hottest. The gold scaffold protects an idea of rule by the people. A decommissioned school bell calls for the right to education as much as the right to breathe free. These symbols of liberty nesting dependent on one another swaying together in Veterans Lawn in Madison Square Park.

> Let me give you a word of the philosophy of reform. The whole history of the progress of human liberty shows that all concessions yet made to her august claims, have been born of earnest struggle. The conflict has been exciting, agitating, all-absorbing, and for the time being, putting all other tumults to silence. It must do this or it does nothing. If there is no struggle there is no progress. Those who profess to favor freedom and yet depreciate agitation, are men who want crops without plowing up the ground, they want rain without thunder and lightning. They want the ocean without the awful roar of its many waters.
>
> Frederick Douglass
> West India Emancipation speech
> August 4, 1857

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FIG. 9

The Propaganda of History[1]

Taylor Renee Aldridge

From 1876 to 1882, the massive hand and torch of the Statue of Liberty sat in Madison Square Park as a preview and fund-raiser to fabricate a full-body monument. Severed from its future body, the Liberty hand with its arm and torch were sent from France by its designer, Frédéric-Auguste Bartholdi (1834–1904), to incite excitement and monetary donations from Americans who were not very enthused about the Liberty statue.[2] The sculpture was intended to mark solidarity between the Americans and the French, and celebrate the independence of a relatively new democracy, which was then about one hundred years old. At the time, Bartholdi was unsure whether he would obtain the necessary funds for the project, so he decided to start with the hand and torch, in case he was unable to complete the full body. In his mind, carrying the torch of freedom was the most significant aspect; if Americans could not have the entire Lady Liberty, at least they would have part and parcel of it. This facet of the monument's production would ultimately mirror history, and foreshadow the complicated concept of liberty within the United States altogether, highlighting ideologies of freedom and democracy in the country that were always conditional and made opaque by its founding fathers. Freedom in America would always be paltrier and less accessible than what it had been marketed to be. By the time of the torch installation, America was

FIG. 10

branding itself as a liberated land, and descendants of Africans who had been forcibly brought to the country and enslaved were legally emancipated from forced labor and bondage. However, their citizenship and humanity would constantly be undermined and withheld, through Black Codes, sharecropping labor, white supremacist terror, and policies limiting their civil rights.

In her recent work *Light of Freedom*, installation and performance artist Abigail DeVille engages the trajectory of freedom in the United States to reimagine the torch of liberty and what it means for Americans in 2020. Consisting of dozens of found mannequin arms painted blue and assembled in the shape of a flame, and a worn schoolhouse bell signaling "a call to action,"[3] *Light of Freedom* is encased in a thirteen-foot-tall gold-painted scaffold. This orientation is a physical metaphor for the barriers many Americans encounter in their quest for freedom within this country, a place where, for many, liberty often must be fought for, upon which it is obtained in leftover scraps, if at all.

As we ponder DeVille's take on the liberty torch, she encourages us to consider the presence of Black people in New York City history. In the eighteenth century, more than a hundred years before the Statue of Liberty was commissioned, "A Law for Regulating Negroes and Slaves in the Night Time" was passed in the city. The law stated:

> If any such Negro, Mulatto or Indian Slave or Slaves, as aforesaid, shall be found in any of the Streets of this City, or in any other Place, on the South side of the Fresh-Water, in the Night-time, above one hour after Sun-set, without a Lanthorn and lighted Candle in it, so as the light thereof may be plainly seen . . . then and in such case it shall and may be lawful for any of his Majesty's Subjects within the said City to apprehend such Slave or Slaves.[4]

FIG. 11

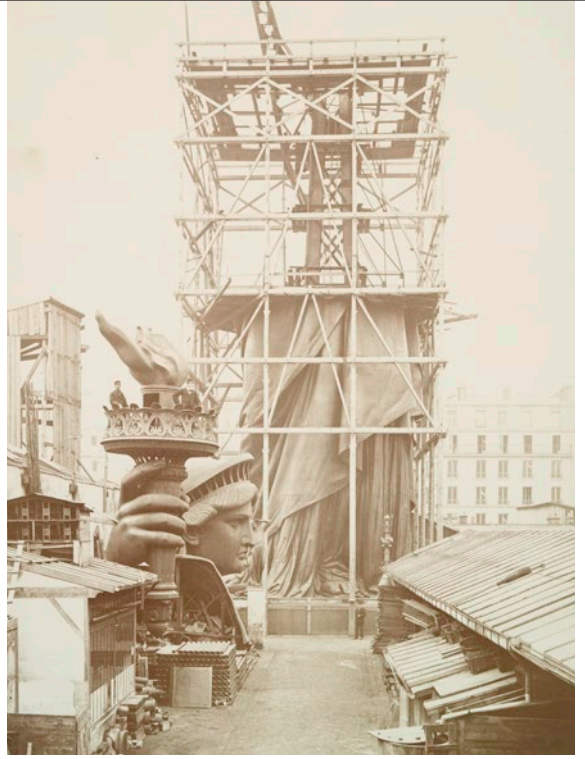

FIG. 12

In other words, failure to go unilluminated in the streets of New York City during this time was illegal for any person of color. A carried torch of fire indicated an entirely different meaning for an arm attached to a Black person: the potential for capture and reenslavement. In *Dark Matter: On Surveillance and Blackness*, Simone Browne contemplates this racialized surveillance: "We can think of the lantern as a prosthesis made mandatory after dark, a technology that made it possible for the black body to be constantly illuminated from dusk to dawn, made knowable, locatable, and contained within the city."[5] An ironic confluence as we consider an illuminated arm for white Americans and European immigrants that signals freedom, whereas for a Black person during this time, an illuminated arm becomes a marker of surveillance and fugitivity. What can be said of this lineage of illumination, which precedes the light of liberty from France a century later? An illumination that thwarts all possibility of freedom for all brown-skinned

people navigating the city of New York. Browne identifies for us the cartographies of surveillance within the city's history, and how a torch-bearing illuminated hand indicates for the Black body not freedom in a new country but a white gaze perpetuating Black capture.

DeVille's oeuvre is often informed by illusions and atrocities of American history like the Lantern Laws of the eighteenth century, which continuously dispossessed Black Americans of their own bodies. Working through performance, assemblage, sculpture, and found objects, DeVille examines how lived experiences bound by injustice and unfreedoming are elided through tales of the victor.

In a 2016 site-specific work at the Peale Museum in Baltimore, *Only When It's Dark Enough Can You See the Stars*, DeVille offered a multiroom installation of found photography, paper, television sets, and taxidermy to unearth opaque histories related to the legacy of Charles Wilson Peale (1741–1827), who is known for his portraits of American Revolutionary figures. In another work, *The American Future*, installed in 2018–2019 at the Portland Institute for Contemporary Art, she examined the friendship between Thomas Jefferson (1743–1826) and Thaddeus Kościuszko (1746–1817), a Polish nobleman who fought on the side of the colonists in the Revolutionary War. DeVille discovered that Kościuszko, bewildered by his friend's desire to keep Africans in bondage, stipulated in his will that his money be used to buy the freedom of those enslaved by Jefferson. In *The American Future*, DeVille contended with the paradox of American liberty through this friendship in a ten-thousand-square-foot installation consisting of a pyramid made up of newspapers, and an immersive "Tunnel of Ancestors." DeVille's works are often physical portals in which theatrical stage forms, colonial history, and participatory engagement converge.

Installed during a year of countrywide protests to thwart violence against Black lives, and a month before the monumental 2020 presidential election between Democratic nominee Joseph Biden and the tyrannical forty-fifth president of the United States, Donald Trump, (through whom the very structure of democracy has consistently been compromised), the sculpture *Light of Freedom* is a call to arms, but also an invocation of specific New York histories that reveal experiences of fugitivity and unfreedom

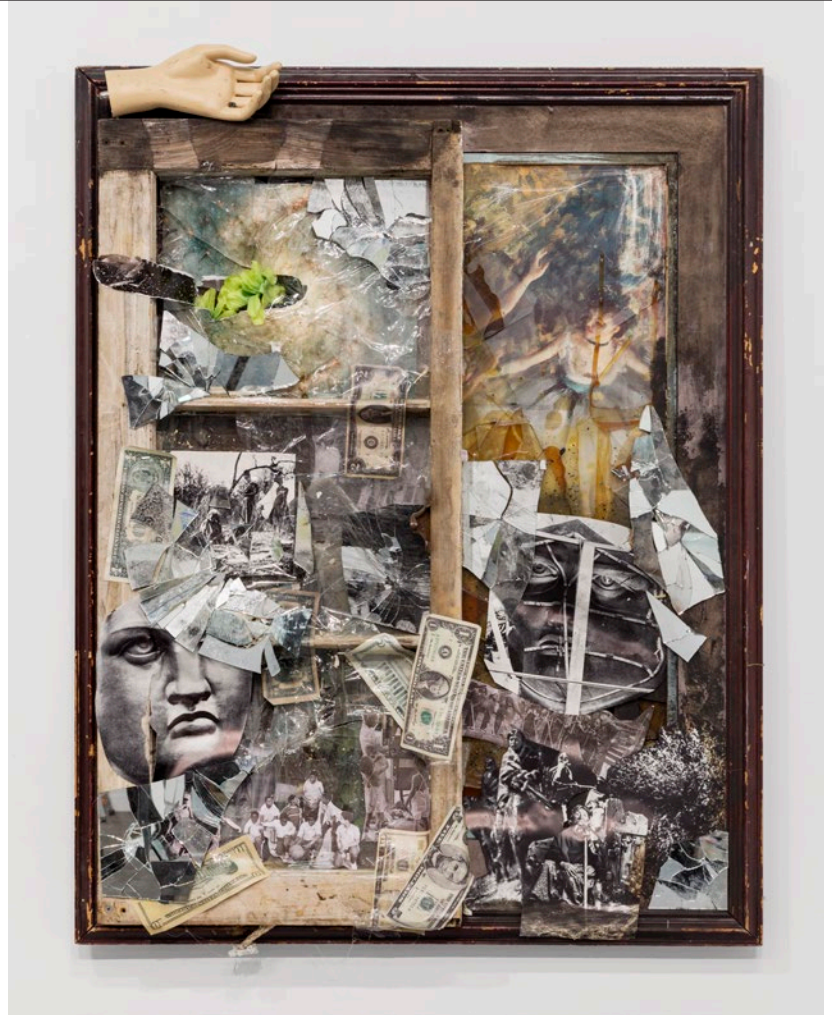

FIG. 13

FIG. 14

FIG. 15

for African Americans. Motivating this work is a speech given in 1857 by the formerly enslaved abolitionist and orator Frederick Douglass (1818–1895), in which he declared that liberty does not come without earnest struggle. *Light of Freedom* also invokes the first group of Africans brought to New York, then New Amsterdam, by the Dutch in the seventeenth century. Some of the enslaved Angolans were permitted to own property as they petitioned for "half freedom" and "full freedom." Some Africans in New Amsterdam were already living with "half freedom," meaning they were required to labor when needed but with pay.[6] They lived on farmland north of Fresh Water Pond, near what is now Washington Square Park.[7] Their communities were eventually razed to develop what is now Manhattan.

Light of Freedom, like many of DeVille's previous works, exposes the paradox and perfidy of freedom-making in America. Instead of simply imbuing this fact onto and through material objects, DeVille creates gateways and thresholds for her audiences to experience the psychic, emotional, and potentially fantastical departures that exist with the marginalized and hidden narratives of American history. DeVille's audiences are not only unencumbered with the weight of white supremacist terror but also given new possibilities to gesture through and outside it.

Taylor Renee Aldridge is the Visual Arts Curator and Program Manager at the California African American Museum (CAAM) in Los Angeles. She is also the co-founder of ARTS.BLACK, a journal of art criticism from Black perspectives.

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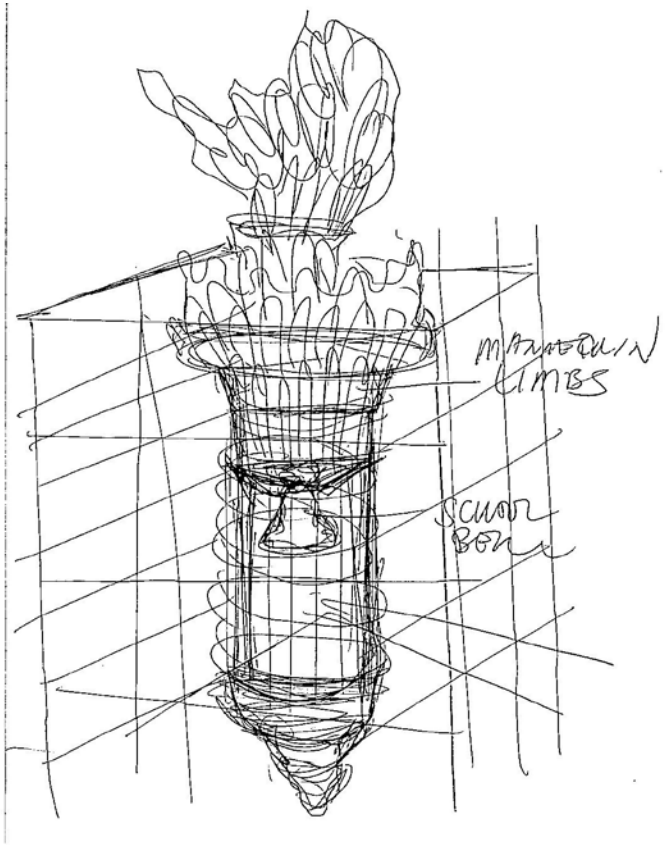

FIG. 16

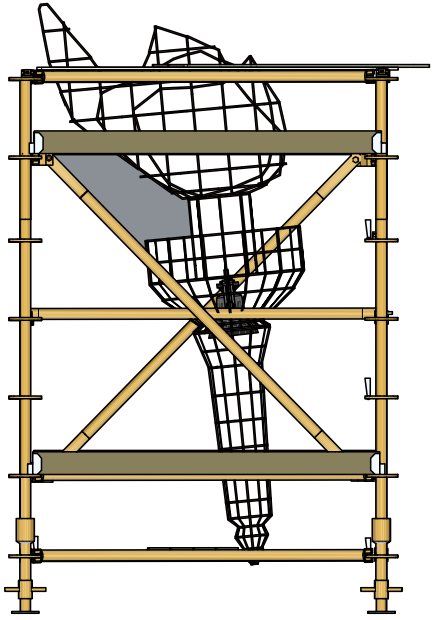

FIG. 17

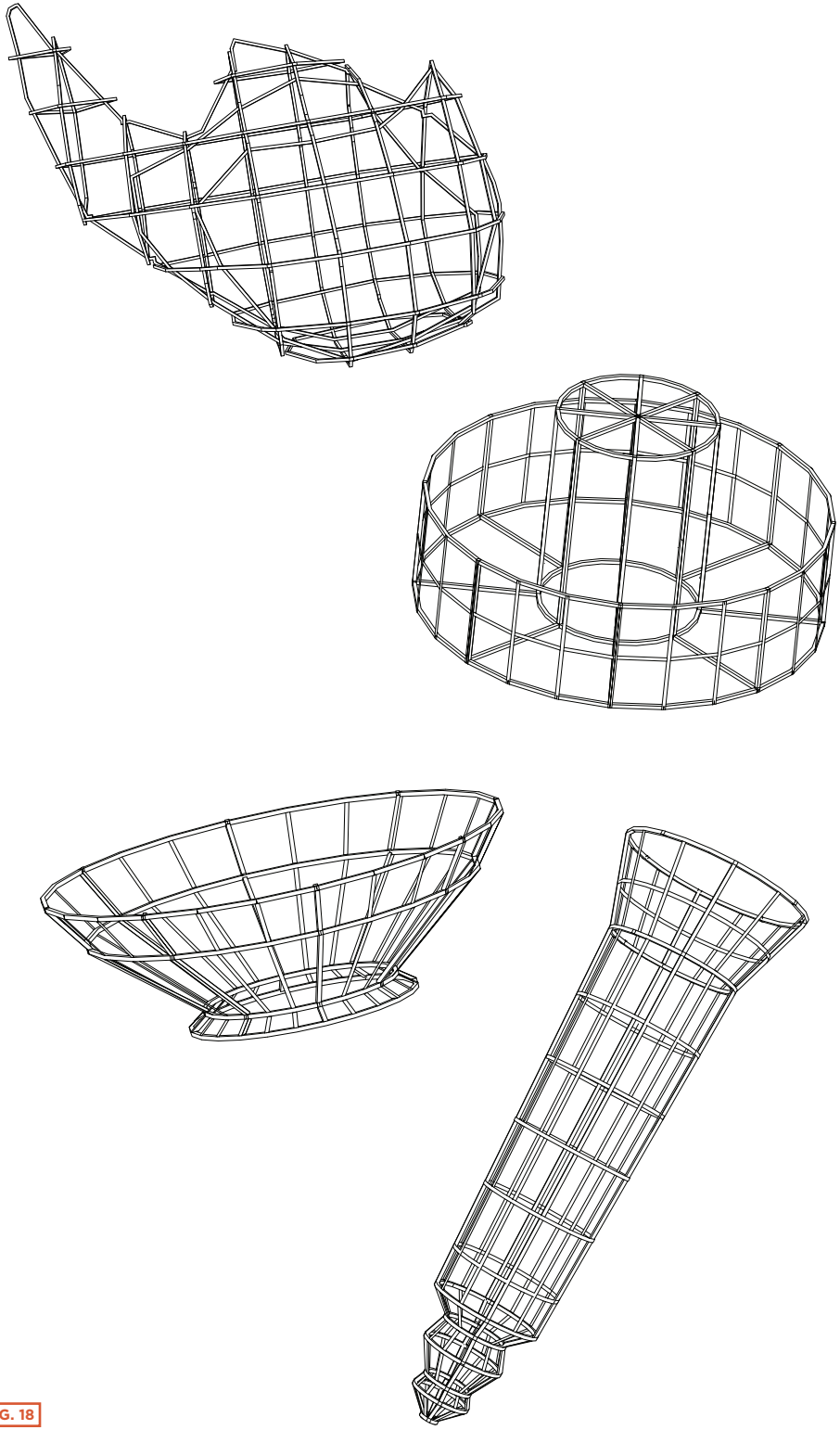

FIG. 18

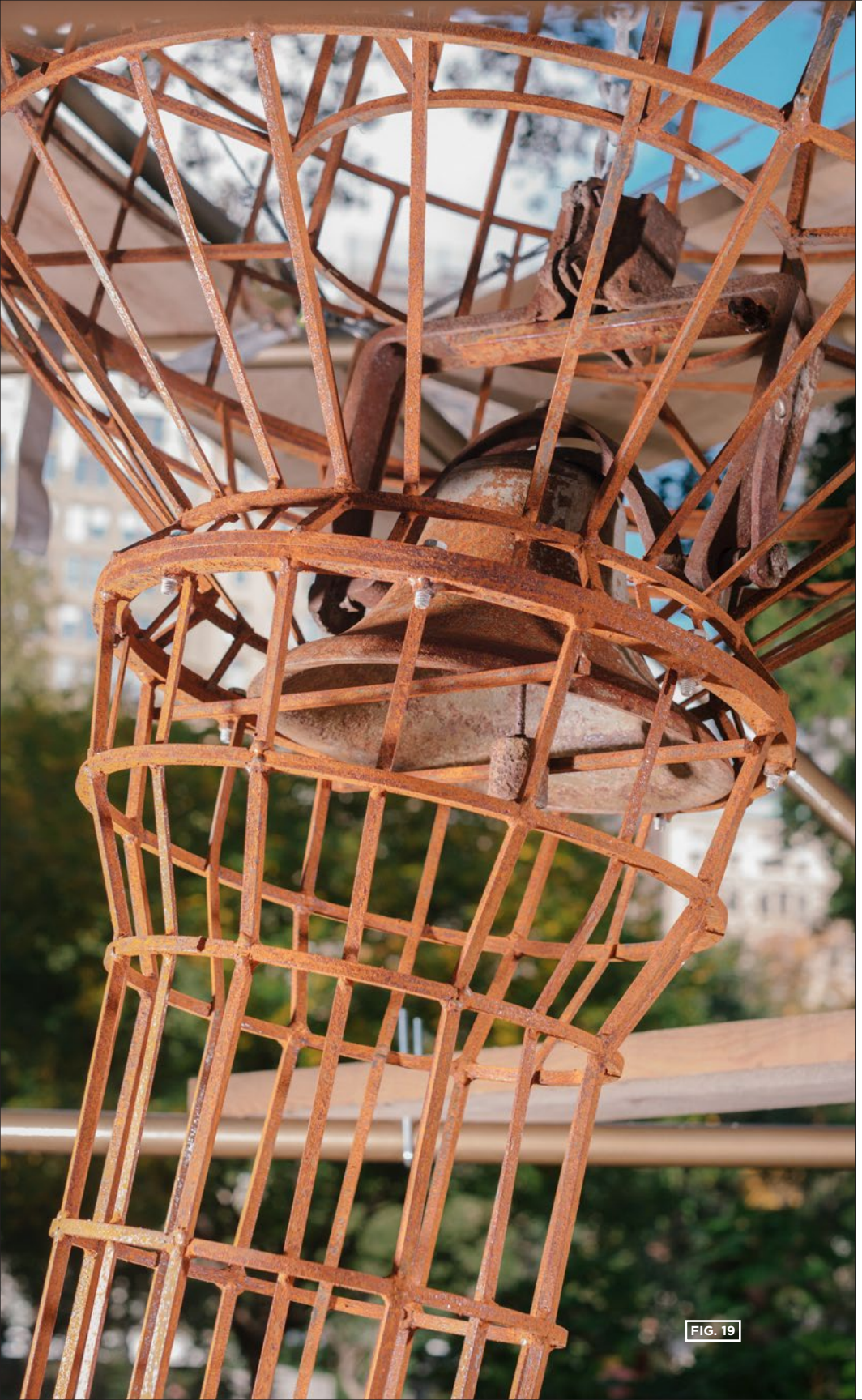

FIG. 19

Light a Fire

Andrew Russeth

On October 28, 1886, more than two thousand notables—all but two of them white men—assembled on Bedloe's Island in New York Harbor to dedicate *Liberty Enlightening the World*, the 151-foot-tall copper statue by Frédéric-Auguste Bartholdi that France had donated to the United States as a symbol of the centennial of the Declaration of Independence and the bond between the two nations.[1]

The mood in the city was, by all accounts, jubilant, but from the very start, the Statue of Liberty was understood in radically different ways. A school for Black children in Brooklyn observed the occasion by holding an "African American Liberty Day," with speeches and songs presented alongside the flags of France and the United States and a large picture of the sculpture.[2] Suffragists protested on a boat in the harbor, and one of them, Matilda Joslyn Gage, declared that it was "the sarcasm of the nineteenth century to represent liberty as a woman."[3] An article published soon after in the Black-owned *Cleveland Gazette* argued: "It is proper that the torch of the Bartholdi statue should *not* be lighted until this country becomes a free one in reality."[4]

Exactly 134 years after the statue's unveiling, in October 2020, a slightly smaller version of its torch appeared in Madison Square Park, as the centerpiece of *Light of Freedom*, a new work by Abigail DeVille. It was a spiritual homecoming of sorts, since Bartholdi's flame, gripped by Liberty's right hand, had stood in the park for more than six years, from 1876 to 1882, while the American Committee, composed of local business and political leaders, raised funds for the full statue's pedestal.

Although it channels that moment, DeVille's work is very much a monument for right now, pointing to hidden histories in order to spur action. In sharp contrast to Bartholdi's studied neoclassicism, her torch is a skeletal structure of thin metal lines. Held at a slight angle by metal wires attached to gold-colored scaffolding, it looks precarious and provisional, as if still under construction—though the rust suggests that it has been that way for quite a while.

Trawling junkyards, flea markets, and eBay, DeVille is an expert scavenger, always attuned to the way quotidian objects can conjure diverse, layered biographies and psychic states; as the curator Jamillah James has written, the artist's installations recover legacies that have been "marginalized and left unseen" and can "trigger associative memories."[5] Even in this fairly austere piece, such references loom everywhere. DeVille has secreted an antique bell inside the torch's handle, and the flame is made of mannequin arms that have been painted—visibly by fingers, in some passages—a strong blue.

FIG. 20

FIG. 21

FIG. 22

The connotations here are double-edged, both disconcerting and heartening. Like the metal that encages it, the bell is weathered and rusted. Its shape recalls Philadelphia's Liberty Bell, but it could also have grave uses: to mark a funeral or to sound an alarm. A chain connects the yoke with the blue smoldering above. (The one at Liberty's feet, on the other hand, is broken, alluding to the end of slavery in the United States.)

Those arms. They pop out of the metal outlining the flame in places, but near its tip they reach toward the sky. DeVille has mentioned as one touchstone Faith Ringgold's mordantly titled *We Came to America* (1997), an indelible painted quilt of Lady Liberty—a Black woman cradling a child—before an ocean filled with drowning Black men and women, their arms outstretched. Liberty's fire has torched what appears to be a distant slave ship.[6]

These disturbing, disfigured arms are clearly engaged in vital endeavors—demanding justice, reaching out for help, or perhaps calling people together. Arrayed at an upward slant, they are loosely reminiscent of an element of another key public artwork concerned with togetherness, liberty, and multigenerational struggle: the soaring hand that cradles a chorus of singers in Augusta Savage's *Lift*

FIG. 23

Every Voice and Sing (*The Harp*), displayed at the World's Fair in Queens in 1939.

History even closer to the park—but far deeper in the past—directly informed DeVille's piece. While conducting research, she came across stories of the first eleven enslaved individuals who were brought to New Amsterdam, in 1626, and who were later given farmland near the area after being granted "half freedom" by the Dutch, meaning they still had to pay tribute to the government and serve the colony when it was deemed necessary; their children remained enslaved.[7] DeVille's flame points south, in the direction of their vanished homestead, established by Paulo d'Angola, Simon Congo, Antony Portuguese, and others. (The names of those who took the land of freed Blacks around the city when the British decreed that they could not own it will be far better known to New Yorkers today: Bleecker, Van Cortlandt, and so on.[8])

DeVille's torch arrives at a time when the Statue of Liberty has once again become a battleground. (It seems fitting that the display of DeVille's work in New York spans a presidential election and inauguration.) In 2018, activist Patricia Okoumou climbed atop the statue's base to protest the U.S. family separation policy. A year earlier, right-wing presidential adviser Stephen Miller delivered a lecture to the press about how the Statue of Liberty was not originally intended as a symbol welcoming immigrants, noting that Emma Lazarus's 1883 lines inviting "your huddled masses yearning to breathe free" were not emblazoned on a plaque at the statue until 1903.[9]

As it happens, Lazarus's lines "Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me, / I lift my lamp beside the golden door!" moved DeVille to gild her scaffolding—an ornamentation of simple metal that may also nod to the present Gilded Age.[10] Because there are wooden beams on that scaffolding, a viewer might reasonably expect that workers are going to return and finish the torch, filling in or covering its metal grid. Before long, then, that scaffolding would come down. And so one begins to wonder: What could that potent torch adorn? What might it come to symbolize? What remains to be built?

Andrew Russeth, an art critic based in Seoul, South Korea, has been an editor at *ARTnews*, *Surface*, and *The New York Observer*.

1. Bartholdi's wife and a daughter of French diplomat Ferdinand de Lesseps were allowed to attend, according to Cara Sutherland, *Statue of Liberty* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2003), 106.
2. Rebecca M. Joseph, Ph.D., with Brooke Rosenblatt and Carolyn Kinebrew, "The Black Statue of Liberty Rumor: An Inquiry into the History and Meaning of Bartholdi's *Liberté éclairant le Monde*," report, Northeast Region Ethnography Program, National Park Service, September 2000, 68; summary update at nps.gov/stli/learn/historyculture/black-statue-of-liberty.htm.
3. Quoted in Mary E. Corey, "Matilda Joslyn Gage and Woman Suffrage History," in *Encyclopedia of American Social Movements*, ed. Immanuel Ness (New York: Routledge, 2015), 276.
4. Joseph, Rosenblatt, and Kinebrew, "The Black Statue of Liberty Rumor."
5. Jamillah James, "Into the Void," in *Fore*, exh. cat. (New York: Studio Museum in Harlem, 2012), 54.
6. The author is grateful to the artist for taking the time to discuss her work on site on October 20, 2020.
7. Leslie M. Harris, *In the Shadow of Slavery: African Americans in New York City, 1626–1863* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 23.
8. Edith Evans Asbury, "Freed Black Farmers Tilled Manhattan's Soil in the 1600's," *The New York Times*, December 7, 1977, https://www.nytimes.com/1977/12/07/archives/freed-black-farmers-tilled-manhattans-soil-in-the-1600s-blacks.html.
9. Hillel Italie, "Miller Comments on Lazarus Poem Echo Far-Right Opinions," Associated Press, August 4, 2017, https://apnews.com/article/b815605ef54d448790d3728a8badab7e.
10. Hilarie M. Sheets, "Reimaging Lady Liberty's Torch to Meet This Moment," *The New York Times*, October 24, 2020, https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/23/arts/design/abigail-deville-madison-square-park.html.

FIG. 24

FIG. 25

Abigail DeVille

WORK IN THE EXHIBITION

Light of Freedom, 2020
Welded steel, cabling, rusted metal bell, painted mannequin arms, painted metal scaffolding, wood
156 x 96 x 96 inches
Collection the artist

BIOGRAPHY

1981 Born in New York City
Works in Bronx, NY

EDUCATION

2011 MFA, Yale School of Art, New Haven, CT

2007 Skowhegan School of Painting & Sculpture, Skowhegan, ME

2007 BFA, Fashion Institute of Technology, New York City

To learn more about *Light of Freedom* please visit:
https://www.madisonsquarepark.org/mad-sq-art/abigail-devilles-light-freedom

SOLO & TWO-PERSON EXHIBITIONS

2020
Light of Freedom
Madison Square Park Conservancy, New York

No Space Hidden (Under Heaven)
University of Michigan, Ann Arbor

2018
The American Future
Portland Institute of Contemporary Art, Portland, OR

2017
No Space Hidden (Shelter)
Institute of Contemporary Art Los Angeles

Chaos or Community?
Galerie Michel Rein, Brussels

2016
Only When It's Dark Enough Can You See the Stars
Peale Museum, The Contemporary, Baltimore

2015
AMERICA
Galerie Michel Rein, Paris

Nobody Knows My Name
Monique Meloche Gallery, Chicago

The Day the Earth Stood Still
Byerly Gallery, Radcliffe Institute, Cambridge, MA

2014
Cousin Suzy and the Infinite Deep
Marginal Utility, Philadelphia

The New Migration
5x5, DC Commission on the Arts & Humanities, Anacostia, Washington, DC

2013
Invisible Men: Beyond the Veil
Galerie Michel Rein, Paris

Gastown Follies
Artspeak, Vancouver, Canada

XXXXXX
Iceberg Projects, Rogers Park, Chicago

New Works: Njiedka Akunyili and Abigail DeVille
Zidoun Gallery, Luxembourg

2012
If I don't think I'm sinking, look what a hole I'm in
Night Gallery, Los Angeles

Inside-Outliers' Alchemy: Working the Edges of Perception
M55 Gallery, Long Island City, Queens, NY

Invisibility Blues
Recess Activities, Dependent Art Fair, New York

2010
Dark Star
Recess Activities, New York

Gold Mountain
Marginal Utility, Philadelphia

2009
Black Gold
Bronx River Art Center, Bronx, NY

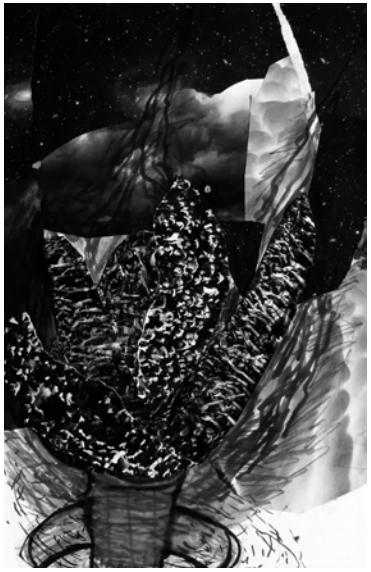

FIG. 26

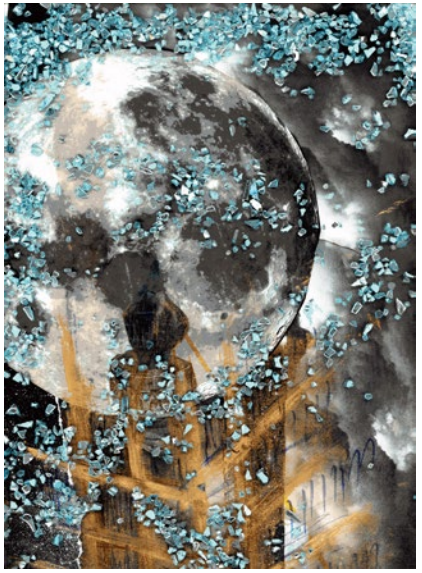

FIG. 27

FIG. 28

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2020

Ministry of Truth: 1984–2020
Art at a Time Like This, Bronx, NY

Untitled, 2020
Punta della Dogana, Venice

Another Country
Terrault Gallery, Baltimore

2019

Figuring the Floral
Wave Hill Art Gallery, Bronx, NY

MoMA PopRally X the Bronx: *Beauteous*
Andrew Freedman Home, Bronx, NY

Baneful Medicine
Anya and Andrew Shiva Gallery
John Jay College, New York

Assemblage
Leonard Pearlstein Gallery, Drexel University, Philadelphia

2018

Postcard from New York II
Anna Marra Contemporanea, Rome

Out of Easy Reach
DePaul Art Museum, Chicago

The Tesseract
Cinque Mostre 2018, American Academy in Rome

Black Value
Fondazione Biagiotti, Progetti Arte, Florence

Magnetic Fields: Expanding American Abstraction, 1960s to Today
National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington, DC

2017

Sculpture Garden Commission
Miami Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami

Empire State Works in Progress
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York

20/20
The Studio Museum in Harlem and
Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh

A Picture of the Universe in Clock Time
Momentum 9, Moss, Norway

Magnetic Fields: Expanding American Abstraction, 1960s to Today
Kemper Museum, Kansas City, MO

Harlem: Found Ways
Cooper Gallery at Hutchins Center,
Harvard University, Cambridge, MA

Urban Planning: Contemporary Art and the City 1967–2017
Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis

Platform at the Armory
Armory Show Pier 92, New York

The Intersectional Self
The Shelley & Donald Rubin Foundation, New York

2016

Strange Oscillations
University Galleries, Illinois State University, Normal

Home
Caribbean Cultural Center African Diaspora Institute,
New York

Material Girls
Contemporary Calgary, Calgary, Canada

LANDMARK
Socrates Sculpture Park, Long Island City, Queens,
NY

Revolution in the Making:
Abstract Sculpture by Women, 1947–2016
Hauser & Wirth, Los Angeles

2015

If You Leave Me Can I Come Too?
Hunter East Harlem Gallery, New York

From the Ruins . . .
601 Artspace, New York

Consequential Translations
Centro Cultural de España, Santo Domingo, Dominican
Republic

When You Cut into the Present the Future Leaks Out
Old Bronx Borough Courthouse, Bronx, NY

Material Girls
Central Gallery and Central Mediatheque,
Dunlop Art Gallery, Regina, Canada

2014

Puddle, pothole, portal
Sculpture Center, Long Island City, Queens, NY

Playing with Fire: Political Interventions, *Dissident Acts, and Mischievous Actions*
El Museo del Barrio, New York

Material Histories
The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York

Sensitive Instruments
Corbett vs. Dempsey, Chicago

Rites of Spring
Contemporary Art Museum Houston

2013

Guts
Abrons Art Center, Henry Street Settlement, New York

Black in the Abstract
Contemporary Art Museum Houston

Gastown Follies
Artspeak, Vancouver, Canada

Who Wants Flowers When You're Dead?
The Poor Farm, Little Wolf, WI

Bronx Calling
The Second AIM Biennial, Bronx Museum of the Arts,
Bronx, NY

Future Generation Art Prize Exhibition
55th Venice Biennial, Venice

They might as well have been remnants of the boat
Calder Foundation, New York

2012 Future Generation Art Prize Exhibition
Pinchuk Art Centre, Kyiv, Ukraine

Space Invaders
Lehman College Gallery, Bronx, NY

First Among Equals
Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia

The Ungovernables
The New Museum Triennial, New York

2011 *Bosh Young Talent Show*
Stedelijk Museum, 's-Hertogenbosch, Netherlands

The (S) Files 2011
El Museo del Barrio, New York

The Un-nameable Frame
Green Gallery, Yale School of Art, New Haven, CT

Reflecting Abstraction
Vogt Gallery, New York

2010 *Bonzai*
Red Lotus Room, Brooklyn, NY

Planet of Slums
Mason Gross Galleries, Rutgers University,
New Brunswick, NJ

Critical Perspectives
Green Gallery, Yale School of Art, New Haven, CT

Rompe Puesto
Bronx River Art Center, Bronx, NY

2009 *How the Other Half Lives*
Green Gallery, Yale School of Art, New Haven, CT

A proposito: Pan Latino Dialogues
John Slade Ely House Galleries, New Haven, CT

The Open
Deitch Studios, New York

2007 DK Magazine
Pro qm, Berlin

Fine Arts BFA 2007
The Museum at FIT, New York

CAA & NYCAMS BFA Exhibition
New York Center for Art & Media Studies, New York

2006 *Artstar*
Deitch Projects, New York

AWARDS, GRANTS, FELLOWSHIPS & RESIDENCIES

2018 United States Artists Fellow

The Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation Grant

2017 Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Artist Residency

Chuck Close Henry W. and Marion T. Mitchell Rome Prize

2016 William H. Johnson Prize, honored finalist

2015 William H. Johnson Prize, honored finalist

Theo Westenberger Estate Award

Cité Internationale des Arts Paris Artist in Residence

Obie Award for Design, for sets and costumes for
Prophetika: An Oratorio
La MaMa Experimental Theatre Club

Creative Capital Visual Artist Award

2014 Rema Hort Mann Foundation Emerging Artist Grant

Radcliffe Institute for Advance Study Fellowship,
Cambridge, MA

2013 The Studio Museum of Harlem Artist in Residence, New York

2012 Joan Mitchell Foundation Grant, New York

Artist in the Marketplace, Bronx Museum of Art, Bronx, NY

LMCC Swing Space Resident, Governors Island, New York

Recess at Pioneer Works, Artist in Residence, Brooklyn, NY

The Edward and Sally Van Lier Fund of the New York
Community Trust

International Studio and Curatorial Program, Brooklyn, NY

2011 Alice Kimball Traveling Fellowship, Yale School of Art,
New Haven, CT

2007 Camille Hanks Cosby Fellowship, Skowhegan School of
Painting & Sculpture, Skowhegan, ME

2005 Frank Shapiro Memorial Award for Excellence in Fine Arts,
Fashion Institute of Technology

THEATRICAL INSTALLATIONS & COSTUME DESIGN

2019

Moon Medicin, costume design, Kennedy Center, Washington, DC

2018

within the sand and the sea: a meditation on lost and forgotten places and people, installation/costume design, Ussher Fort, Jamestown, Accra, Ghana

Shasta Geaux Pop, costume design, Out of Line, High Line, New York

Right About Now Festival, Compagnietheater, Amsterdam

Under the Radar Festival, The Public Theater, New York

2017

Parable of the Sower, set art, New York University Arts Center, Abu Dhabi; Carolina Performing Arts, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

Shasta Geaux Pop, costume design, WOW Festival, San Diego; Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati

Geneva Project, set/installation design, The Bronx Academy of Arts & Dance, Bronx, NY

2016

Can I Get a Witness? The Gospel of James Baldwin, set/installation design, Harlem Stage, New York

Bee Boy, costume design, residency at MIT Center for Art, Science & Technology

Shasta Geaux Pop, costume design, The Bushwick Starr, Brooklyn, NY

House or Home, Socrates Sculpture Park, Long Island City, Queens, NY

Geneva Project, set/installation design, Jack, Brooklyn, NY

2015

Geneva Project, set/installation design, Jack, Brooklyn, NY

Prophetika: An Oratorio, installation/costume design, La Mama Experimental Theatre Club

The Day the Earth Stood Still, costume design, MIT Music & Theater Arts, Cambridge, MA

2014

A Midsummer Night's Dream, installation/set design, Stratford Festival, Stratford, Canada

She Talks to Beethoven, set design, Jack, Brooklyn, NY

The Sun Ra Visitation Series, (Part 2) *Sun-ology*, orb maker, Joe's Pub at The Public Theater

SELECTED COLLECTIONS

Bronx Museum of the Arts, Bronx, NY

Centre National des Arts Plastiques, Paris

Kadist Art Foundation, San Francisco

KaviarFactory, Henningsvær, Norway

The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York

FIG. 29

FIG. 30

Support

Leadership support for *Light of Freedom* is made possible by the Ford Foundation.

Major support is provided by Candy and Michael Barasch, Suzanne Deal Booth, Ed Bradley Family Foundation, Harold and Colene Brown Family Foundation, The Lumpkin-Boccuzzi Family, Stardust Arts, and The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts.

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Madison Square Park Conservancy is a public/private partnership with the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation.

Thank you to Materials for the Arts.

After the exhibition in Madison Square Park, *Light of Freedom* will be on view at the Momentary, a satellite contemporary art space of Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art in Bentonville, Arkansas and the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, DC.

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Acknowledgments

Madison Square Park Conservancy is the not-for-profit organization whose mission is to protect, nurture, and enhance Madison Square Park, a dynamic seven-acre public green space, creating an environment that fosters moments of inspiration. The Conservancy is committed to engaging the community through Madison Square Park's beautiful gardens, inviting amenities, public art program, and world-class programming. Madison Square Park Conservancy is licensed by the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation to manage Madison Square Park and is responsible for raising 100% of the funds necessary to operate the Park, including the brilliant horticulture, park maintenance, sanitation, security, and free cultural programs for visitors of all ages.

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For more information on Madison Square Park Conservancy and its programs, please visit madisonsquarepark.org.

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11 Madison Avenue, 15th Floor
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FIG. 31

FIG. 32

Previous Mad. Sq. Art Exhibitions

2020 Krzysztof Wodiczko *Monument*

2019 Leonardo Drew *City in the Grass*

2018 Arlene Shechet *Full Steam Ahead*
Diana Al-Hadid *Delirious Matter*

2017 Erwin Redl *Whiteout*
Josiah McElheny *Prismatic Park*

2016 Martin Puryear *Big Bling*

2015 Teresita Fernández *Fata Morgana*
Paula Hayes *Gazing Globes*

2014 Tony Cragg *Walks of Life*
Rachel Feinstein *Folly*
Iván Navarro *This Land Is Your Land*

2013 Giuseppe Penone *Ideas of Stone (Idee di pietra)*
Orly Genger *Red, Yellow and Blue*
Sandra Gibson and Luis Recoder *Topsy-Turvy: A Camera Obscura Installation*

2012 Leo Villareal *BUCKYBALL*
Charles Long *Pet Sounds*

2011 Jacco Olivier *Stumble, Hide, Rabbit Hole, Bird, Deer, Home*
Alison Saar *Feallan and Fallow*
Jaume Plensa *Echo*
Kota Ezawa *City of Nature*

2010 Jim Campbell *Scattered Light*
Antony Gormley *Event Horizon*
Ernie Gehr *Surveillance*

2009 Shannon Plumb *The Park*
Jessica Stockholder *Flooded Chambers Maid*
Mel Kendrick *Markers*
Bill Beirne *Madison Square Trapezoids, with Performances by the Vigilant Groundsman*

2008 Olia Lialina & Dragan Espenschied *Online Newspapers: New York Edition*
Richard Deacon *Assembly*
Tadashi Kawamata *Tree Huts*
Rafael Lozano-Hemmer *Pulse Park*

2007 Bill Fontana *Panoramic Echoes*
Roxy Paine *Conjoined, Defunct, Erratic*
William Wegman *Around the Park*

2006 Ursula von Rydingsvard *Bowl with Fins, Czara z Babelkami, Damski Czepek, Ted's Desert Reigns*

2005 Jene Highstein *Eleven Works*
Sol LeWitt *Circle with Towers, Curved Wall with Towers*

2004 Mark di Suvero *Aesop's Fables*, *Double Tetrahedron*, *Beyond*

2003 Wim Delvoye *Gothic*

2002 Dan Graham *Bisected Triangle, Interior Curve*
Mark Dion *Urban Wildlife Observation Unit*
Dalziel + Scullion *Voyager*

2001 Navin Rawanchaikul *I ♥ Taxi*
Teresita Fernández *Bamboo Cinema*
Tobias Rehberger *Tsutsumu N.Y.*

2000 Tony Oursler *The Influence Machine*

From 2000 to 2003, exhibitions were presented by the Public Art Fund on behalf of the Campaign for the New Madison Square Park.

Photography and Figure Credits

Unless otherwise noted, all works by Abigail DeVille (American, b. 1981)
Collection the artist

FIG. 1
Light of Freedom, 2020
Welded steel, cabling, rusted metal bell, painted mannequin arms, painted metal scaffolding, wood
156 × 96 × 96 inches

Photo by Andy Romer

FIG. 2
Installation of *Light of Freedom*, 2020

Photo by Andy Romer

FIG. 3
Light of Freedom, 2020
Welded steel, cabling, rusted metal bell, painted mannequin arms, painted metal scaffolding, wood
156 × 96 × 96 inches

Photo by Andy Romer

FIG. 4
Brown Brothers, New York City

Manhattan: 5th Avenue—Broadway, 1884
Photograph
Irma and Paul Milstein Division of United States History, Local History and Genealogy, The New York Public Library, Digital Collections

FIG. 5
Fabrication of *Light of Freedom*, 2020

Photo by MSPC

FIG. 6
Light of Freedom, 2020
Welded steel, cabling, rusted metal bell, painted mannequin arms, painted metal scaffolding, wood
156 × 96 × 96 inches

Photo by Andy Romer

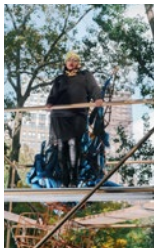

FIG. 7
Artist with *Light of Freedom*, 2020

Photo by Tonje Thilesen

FIG. 8
Charles MacKubin Lefferts (1873–1923)

Scenes from the American Revolution: Fifth Liberty Pole on the New York Commons, ca. 1910
Watercolor, gouache, black ink, and graphite on board
19 × 7⅜ inches
Gift of Charles MacKubin Lefferts, New-York Historical Society, 1920.130.
Photography © New-York Historical Society

FIG. 9
Light of Freedom, 2020
Welded steel, cabling, rusted metal bell, painted mannequin arms, painted metal scaffolding, wood
156 × 96 × 96 inches

Photo by Andy Romer

FIG. 10
E. and H.T. Anthony, Publisher

Olympic Theatre, Hand Torch, Madison Square, c. 1876
Stereograph
The Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints and Photographs: Photography Collection, The New York Public Library, Digital Collections

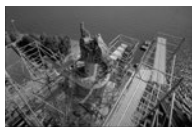

FIG. 11
View looking down on torch and flame from top of scaffolding; ventilator cap has been removed from flame prior to removal of torch on July 4, 1984, 1984
Photograph
Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, HAER, Reproduction number HAER NY, 31-NEYO,89-

FIG. 12
Assemblage of the Statue of Liberty in Paris, showing the bottom half of the statue erect under scaffolding, the head and torch at its feet, 1883
Albumen print
The Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints and Photographs: Photography Collection, The New York Public Library, Digital Collections

FIG. 13
Two Dancers on a Stage Lady Liberty, 2017
Archival photographs, wooden sash window, broken glass, mirror shards, paper, mannequin hand, tape, artificial plants, fake money, polyurethane, charcoal
38 × 30 × 3.1 inches
Private Collection

FIG. 14
Charm City Round House, 2016
Tarps, brown paper, accumulated debris, heirlooms, found objects, bicycle, scale model of The Peale Museum, tarp version of *The Star-Spangled Banner*, mannequins
Installation view, The Peale Museum, Baltimore
240 × 180 × 96 inches
Courtesy the artist

Photo by Abigail DeVille

FIG. 15
Light of Freedom, 2020
Welded steel, cabling, rusted metal bell, painted mannequin arms, painted metal scaffolding, wood
156 × 96 × 96 inches

Photo by Andy Romer

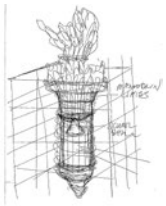

FIG. 16
Light of Freedom (first drawing), 2020
Ballpoint pen on notebook paper
8.5 × 11 inches

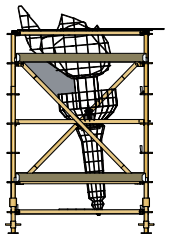

FIG. 17
DeVille Studio with Spencer Byrne-Seres
Computer rendering of *Light of Freedom*, 2020

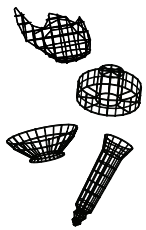

FIG. 18
DeVille Studio with Spencer Byrne-Seres
Computer rendering of *Light of Freedom*, 2020

FIG. 19
Light of Freedom, 2020
Welded steel, cabling, rusted metal bell, painted mannequin arms, painted metal scaffolding, wood
156 × 96 × 96 inches

Photo by Tonje Thilesen

FIG. 20
Light of Freedom, 2020
Welded steel, cabling, rusted metal bell, painted mannequin arms, painted metal scaffolding, wood
156 × 96 × 96 inches

Photo by Tonje Thilesen

FIG. 21
Sarcophagus Blue, 2017
Boat, mannequin legs, nylon stockings, wood, rope, paint
132 × 48 × 36 inches
Courtesy the artist

Photo by Abigail DeVille

FIG. 22
Faith Ringgold (American, b. 1930)
We Came to America, from the series; "The American Collection," 1997
Painted story quilt, acrylic on canvas with pieced fabric border
74½ × 79½ inches
Courtesy of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia. Art by Women Collection. Gift of Linda Lee Alter. © 2020 Faith Ringgold / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York, Courtesy ACA Galleries, New York"

FIG. 23
Augusta Savage (American, 1892–1962) working on "Lift Every Voice and Sing,"
ca. 1935–45
Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library, Digital Collections

FIG. 24
Installation of Light of Freedom, 2020

Photo by Andy Romer

FIG. 25
Light of Freedom, 2020
Welded steel, cabling, rusted metal bell, painted mannequin arms, painted metal scaffolding, wood
156 × 96 × 96 inches

Photo by Andy Romer

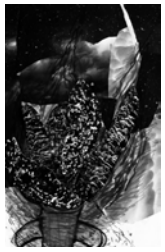

FIG. 26
Light of Freedom (fire by night), 2020
Collage on graph paper, ink, markers, color pencil
10 × 12 inches

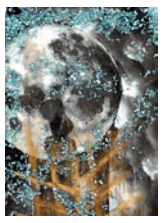

FIG. 27
Light of Freedom (golden scaffold), 2020
Collage, Vaseline, color pencil, marker, paper
10 × 12 inches

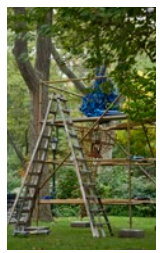

FIG. 28
Installation *of Light of Freedom*, 2020

Photo by Andy Romer

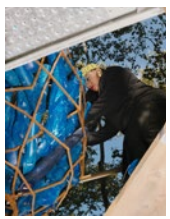

FIG. 29
Installation of *Light of Freedom*, 2020

Photo by Tonje Thilesen

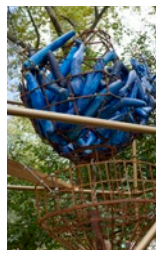

FIG. 30
Light of Freedom, 2020
Welded steel, cabling, rusted metal bell, painted mannequin arms, painted metal scaffolding, wood
156 × 96 × 96 inches

Photo by Andy Romer

FIG. 31
Light of Freedom, 2020
Welded steel, cabling, rusted metal bell, painted mannequin arms, painted metal scaffolding, wood
156 × 96 × 96 inches

Photo by Andy Romer

FIG. 32
Light of Freedom, 2020
Welded steel, cabling, rusted metal bell, painted mannequin arms, painted metal scaffolding, wood
156 × 96 × 96 inches

Photo by Andy Romer

COVER
Light of Freedom, 2020
Welded steel, cabling, rusted metal bell, painted mannequin arms, painted metal scaffolding, wood
156 × 96 × 96 inches

Photo by Andy Romer

BACK COVER
Light of Freedom, 2020
Welded steel, cabling, rusted metal bell, painted mannequin arms, painted metal scaffolding, wood
156 × 96 × 96 inches

Photo by Tonje Thilesen


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