

Press Release  
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**Contact:**  
Lauren Muney, Silhouettes By Hand  
silhouettesbyhand@gmail.com  
301-210-6161

## **Baltimore artist to feature up to 300 city residents in a historic public art project**

Artist Lauren Muney has received a Public Art grant from the state of Maryland to feature historical-style portraits of community members at the Peale in downtown Baltimore

Baltimore MD — Lauren Muney of Silhouettes By Hand, an artist in a historic style of portraiture, was awarded a “Public Art Across Maryland” grant for 2022 to create a custom frieze of contemporary silhouette portraits for long-term public display at the [Peale](#), America’s oldest purpose-built museum, in Baltimore. These historically inspired portraits will enable current-day city residents to visualize themselves as a part of history.

For the community participants, it may be the first time they have sat for a portrait, or taken home an original, artist-made portrait of themselves. Artist Muney looks at each person’s profile to create a freehand portrait in less than two minutes using only scissors and paper. When the installation is completed, the participants will see their faces honored and represented in a public place of historic and contemporary significance. Through this democratic form of representation, the project aims to build self- and community respect and to shift paradigms of inequity in society.

The “Your Face, Your Place in History” installation includes public engagement as an inherent part of the project: community members will participate in the making of their own portrait, receive their silhouette to take home, and have the opportunity to record a personal story to be preserved at the Peale. The frieze will present up 200-300 silhouettes — miniature portraits of Baltimore’s friends and neighbors. The installation is one of the first exhibits in the Peale’s newly renovated building, which is reopening later this year. These “Peale Faces” and stories of the community will debut in tandem with the Peale’s 208th birthday in August. This is Muney’s first public art installation.

“We are grateful to have the opportunity to present this exciting new public artwork when we reopen the 1814 Peale Museum building this year,” says Krista D. Green, the Peale’s Chief Administrative Officer. “Lauren’s silhouettes are a powerful way to preserve and share authentic Baltimore stories in an innovative format that bridges historic and digital media, connecting the Peale’s past with contemporary communities in service of our city’s collective future.”

Artist Lauren Muney says, “Although a silhouette is a historical portrait form, this frieze of faces will connect to contemporary values of equality: each ‘sitter’ will be equally represented and equally valued because they are seen for their essence and not their skin color nor social class, nor any weight of society’s judgements. Silhouettes are elegant and detailed, as we all are inside.”

Silhouettes have long been cut in Baltimore, including at the original Peale Museum starting in 1814. Before photography, silhouettes were the most accessible and popular form of portraits — available to anyone with a few pennies, in contrast to expensive, painted portraits only affordable by the rich. Silhouettes are, by their nature, a portrait of the community. The Peale focuses on the history of Baltimore, its people, and their stories, including silhouettes. The new [Moses Williams Center, the teaching gallery of the Accomplished Arts Apprentices \(“AAA”\) program at the Peale](#), even takes its name from the early 19th-century Black silhouette artist, Moses Williams (1777–c.1825), a formerly enslaved artist who cut profile pictures in the Peales’ Philadelphia museum.

To create the historical feel of the portraits being given to the sitters, [Historic St. Mary’s City](#) in St. Mary’s City, MD, will allow special use of their reconstructed ca.1720 press to print the backgrounds of the portraits to be given to the public. This printing press’s prints — and the resulting image — would be similar to the silhouette experience at the Peale family’s museums in the 19th century. Each portrait sitter will feel like they have had a truly historical experience, connecting to Baltimore’s and Maryland’s past.

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#### About Lauren Muney, Silhouettes By Hand:

Lauren Muney creates silhouettes in the traditional manner: with only paper and scissors. Her work is commissioned by private individuals, featured at live or virtual events, and offered at public or private celebrations or educational events. She explores the human and historical side of portraiture, creating participatory, interactive history that people love to experience, collect, display, and enjoy. For more information, visit [www.silhouettesbyhand.com](http://www.silhouettesbyhand.com)

#### About The Peale:

The Peale Center for Baltimore History and Architecture (the Peale), is home to the world's largest digital collection of Baltimore stories. The building is the first museum building in the United States, established by artist Rembrandt Peale in 1814. The Peale works with local creators – storytellers, griots, performers, artists, architects, historians, students, educators, and other culture-keepers to produce and share their narratives of the city, its places, and the diverse people who have made Baltimore what it is today. For more information, visit [www.thepealecenter.org](http://www.thepealecenter.org)

#### About Historic St. Mary's City:

HSMC is dedicated to studying and interpreting the lives of the ancestors of contemporary Native American groups, the European colonists, the people of African ancestry who were forced from their homes and transported across the Atlantic Ocean to labor in perpetual bondage. The interactions of these groups of people gave rise to the complex legacies of opportunity and oppression whose effects are still being felt today. HSMC continues to engage both students and the general public in educational programs in novel and exciting ways, encouraging people of all ages to connect the past with their contemporary lives. For more information, visit <https://www.hsmcdigshistory.org/>

#### About the "Public Art Across Maryland" program:

The [Maryland Arts Council](#) offers funding to artists and organizations to support the planning, creation, and installation of new local public art projects developed through a community process. The "Public Art Across Maryland" grant committee recognized the "Your Face" project as an exceptional participatory public installation, featuring the community members and a deeply public museum.

#### Hashtags:

#publicart #communityengagement #publicengagement #communityart #sociallyengagedart #thepeale  
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