



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**Brooklyn Historical Society Announces Fall Exhibition
An Opening by Kameelah Janan Rasheed**

**Rasheed Presents an Audio and Visual Installation Inspired by
Brooklyn Historical Society's *Muslims in Brooklyn* Oral Histories**

On View: September 7, 2019 - June 30, 2020

(BROOKLYN, August 6, 2019) — Brooklyn Historical Society (BHS) is pleased to announce **An Opening**, an audio and visual installation by Brooklyn-based artist Kameelah Janan Rasheed, who is known for her immersive large scale installations, text-based art work, publications, and audio recordings. Rasheed draws on BHS's *Muslims in Brooklyn* oral histories to create a unique audio and visual experience that challenges narrow conceptions of Muslim identity and history. The installation and oral histories are part of *Muslims in Brooklyn*, a public arts and history project launched by BHS in 2017 to preserve and amplify stories of Brooklyn's diverse Muslim communities. On view from September 7, 2019, to June 30, 2020, at Brooklyn Historical Society (128 Pierrepont Street), the installation pairs geometric and text-based works created by Rasheed with recordings of stories shared by Muslims in Brooklyn. **An Opening** invites visitors to experience these conversations both visually and aurally as they explore an ecosystem of sound and art that moves beyond linear narrative, fixed categories, and static identities.

The title, **An Opening**, refers to the first chapter of the Qur'an, *Sura Al-Fatiha*, which translates to "The Opening."

Visitors to the exhibition are outfitted with an iPod Touch and headphones. As they move around the room, they hear sounds of speech and snippets of stories, as if encountering conversations in a crowded room. As they stand facing each new work of art in the gallery, the iPod Touch plays an audio piece, selected by the artist, to accompany the image. Rasheed has created a non-linear and fluid experience determined entirely by the body's movement and positioning, offering each visitor a chance to direct their own individual experience.

"Working with the oral histories gave me an opportunity to engage in a meditative process of deep listening and reflection as I moved in and out of different stages of creating," says Rasheed. "I am appreciative of those who shared their histories and humbled by their willingness to allow me to reflect on these narratives through my installation."

A second exhibition curated by **BRIC's** Chief Curator, Elizabeth Ferrer, will be presented at BRIC (647 Fulton Street) in conjunction with *Muslims in Brooklyn* and brings together eight

New York-based artists alongside Rasheed's exhibition at BHS. *Beyond Geographies: Contemporary Art and Muslim Experience* explores the dimensions of the contemporary Muslim experience and will be on view from September 12 to November 17, 2019.

For well over a century, Muslims have lived, worked, and prayed in Brooklyn, making it a major center of Muslim life for NYC and the nation. As such, the histories and experiences of Brooklyn's Muslim communities hold great resonance for national conversations on religious diversity and pluralism. BHS's *Muslims in Brooklyn* project centers on several premises. Muslim communities have been a part of American life since before the nation's founding, and established Muslim communities have been in Brooklyn for over a century. Brooklyn Muslim identities span many ethnicities, cultures, and nationalities. Muslims in Brooklyn are Brooklynites who have both shaped and been shaped by life in Brooklyn. Through this project, their oral histories have been captured by BHS in over ninety hours of audio with first-hand memories from narrators born as early as 1944. More than twenty Brooklyn neighborhoods are represented in their stories.

In addition to **An Opening**, the *Muslims in Brooklyn* project incorporates public programs, educational programs, a free digital curriculum, and multiple podcast episodes. The first fall public program will be a panel discussion at BHS on September 26 with three Muslim visual artists, Kameelah Janan Rasheed, Baseera Khan, and Asif Mian, moderated by artist Sara Raza.

"BHS's *Muslims in Brooklyn* oral history collection captures the stories of living individuals, their experiences, observations, thoughts and memories dating back to 1944," said Deborah Schwartz, president of Brooklyn Historical Society. "With her immersive sound and visual installation, Brooklyn-based artist Kameelah Janan Rasheed offers incredible insights about how people tell their own stories, what history is made of, urging visitors to think about space in between our experience and the larger historical narrative.

"Brooklyn Historical Society is very excited to partner with Brooklyn-based artist Kameelah Janan Rasheed," said Zaheer Ali, Oral Historian at Brooklyn Historical Society and Director of the *Muslims in Brooklyn* project. "Inspired by the rich collection of *Muslims in Brooklyn* oral histories, Rasheed's work creatively interprets the long and dynamic story of the Muslim experience in Brooklyn. The words take shape – literally and figuratively – in her work."

Kameelah Janan Rasheed is a learner and an interdisciplinary artist who seeks to make her thinking (somewhat) visible through an ecosystem of iterative, provisional projects as well as through experiments. These projects and experiments include sprawling, Xerox-based "architecturally-scaled collages" (*frieze magazine*, Winter 2018); publications; large-scale text banner installations; digital archives; lecture-performances; library interventions; poems/poetic gestures; stand-up comedy; and other forms yet to be determined. In her work, she looks at experimental poetry, examples of intimate intertextuality, literacy, non-institutional archival modes, anecdotes of syncretism, histories of human as well as non-human communication systems, and ecological studies as languages to explore knowledge production and processes of learning/unlearning. Rasheed has exhibited at the 2017 Venice Biennale, ICA Philadelphia, Pinchuk Art Center, Brooklyn Museum, Queens Museum, New Museum, Studio Museum in Harlem, Brooklyn Public Library, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, and The Kitchen, among others.

The *Muslims in Brooklyn* project is made possible through the generous support of Constance L. Christensen; AT&T; the [Doris Duke Foundation for Islamic Art's Building Bridges Program](#);

[Ford Foundation](#); [New York Community Trust](#); [Nissan Foundation](#); [Pillars Fund](#); [Pop Culture Collaborative](#), a fiscally sponsored project of Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors; and public funds from the NYC Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the NYC Council, special thanks to Council Members [Robert E. Cornegy, Jr.](#), [Rafael Espinal](#), and [Brad Lander](#).”

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About Brooklyn Historical Society: Founded in 1863, Brooklyn Historical Society is a nationally recognized urban history center dedicated to preserving and encouraging the study of Brooklyn's extraordinary 400-year history. Located in Brooklyn Heights and housed in a magnificent landmark building designed by George Post and opened in 1881, today's Brooklyn Historical Society is a cultural hub for civic dialogue, thoughtful engagement, and community outreach. In May 2017, BHS opened a second site in DUMBO's Brooklyn Bridge Park. For additional information, visit brooklynhistory.org.

About BRIC: Currently celebrating its 40th anniversary, BRIC is a leading presenter of cultural programming in Brooklyn. BRIC presents and incubates work by artists and media-makers who reflect the diversity that surrounds us. BRIC programs reach hundreds of thousands of people each year. Their main venue, BRIC House in Downtown Brooklyn, offers a public media center, a major exhibition space and project room, two performance spaces, a glass-walled TV studio, and artist work spaces. Some of BRIC's acclaimed programs include the BRIC Celebrate Brooklyn! Festival held each summer in Prospect Park, a renowned contemporary art exhibition series, and two distinct media initiatives: Brooklyn Free Speech, Brooklyn's public access initiative, and BRIC TV, a community TV channel and digital network. BRIC also offers arts and media education and other vital programs at BRIC House and throughout Brooklyn. For additional information, visit www.bricartsmedia.org

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