

The New York Times



"Waters of a Lower Register" focuses on the landscape of northern Florida, where the artist Allison Janae Hamilton was raised.
Credit: Allison Janae Hamilton, Creative Time and Marianne Boesky Gallery

In Brooklyn Bridge Park, Artwork Confronts Climate Change

By: Jane Margolies
December 6, 2020

Those who wander the circuitous paths of Pier 3 in Brooklyn Bridge Park may be drawn to the western edge of the pier by the lapping of water. But the sounds may not be coming from the East River, which borders the site.

Rather they may be emanating from an installation of videos of lush and swampy Southern landscapes.

It will all be part of "Waters of a Lower Register," a work by the artist Allison Janae Hamilton, which will play on five 70-inch screens, beginning Dec. 16 and continuing until Dec. 20. The screens will be placed in an arc on the northwest corner of Pier 3, offering the intimacy of a screening room and the safety of an open-air setting, with the view of the Lower Manhattan skyline behind them.

Ms. Hamilton, 36, has lived in New York since 2006. "Waters of a Lower Register" focuses on the watery landscape of northern Florida, where she was raised, to explore the human-inflicted forces of climate change. Rising sea levels and violent storms affect both Florida and New York, Ms. Hamilton said. And Brooklyn Bridge Park is in a flood zone, after all.

"It's meant to be immersive," Ms. Hamilton, said by phone from Florida, where she has been holed up for much of the pandemic.

The artist is intentionally juxtaposing the rural areas of her home state with the urban cityscape of New York. But she explained that even seemingly untouched landscapes have been shaped by humans, often to the

detriment of people of color. She shot some of her footage from a kayak on the Wacissa River, which was bisected by a canal built by enslaved people.



Even seemingly untouched landscapes have been shaped by humans, Ms. Hamilton said.
Credit: Allison Janae Hamilton, Creative Time and Marianne Boesky Gallery

“Waters of a Lower Register” came about when Creative Time, the public art organization, had to rethink its event calendar in the early days of the pandemic, said Justine Ludwig, its executive director. Ms. Ludwig contacted Ms. Hamilton in July, and the artist seized the opportunity to create a new work that would express the turmoil of a year that has included, in addition to the health crisis, frequent hurricanes and horrific instances of racial injustice in the United States.

The video sequences take the viewer “from drowning to flying,” Ms. Hamilton said, adding that it “mimics the roller coaster of this year.”

The 13-minute film installation will play on a loop from 4:30 p.m. until the park closes at 1 a.m. An online talk with the artist will take place December 17 at noon.



The video sequences shift from moments of quiet to periods of chaos, Ms. Hamilton said.
Credit: Allison Janae Hamilton, Creative Time and Marianne Boesky Gallery

The new work highlights the potential for Pier 3, which opened in 2018, as a site to showcase complex works of art.

Pier 1, opened in 2010, has been home to multiple temporary art installations, including Anish Kapoor's whirlpool-like "Descension" in 2017 and the giant orange bells of Davina Semo's "Reverberation," currently on view. But Pier 3 has recently proven itself a formidable outdoor gallery as well.

Earlier this year the same paved plaza at the end of the pier that Ms. Hamilton's installation will occupy was the setting for Antony Gormley's gigantic slinky-like "New York Clearing," which proved popular with parkgoers.

Placing a large artwork there "was the aha moment when it hit us that, wow, this is a fantastic place for art," said Eric Landau, president of Brooklyn Bridge Park Corporation, which runs the park.

Ms. Hamilton is curious what sounds the city itself will contribute to the experience of viewing "Waters of a Lower Register," and what will seep in. "I think it could be interesting to hear a taxicab honking" in the background, she said. "It could enhance the work perhaps in a way we don't yet know."