

FOR IMMEDIATE
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Cedric Harper, *Untitled*, 2022.

In 'Ancestral Language', Boston Artist Cedric Harper Creates a New but Timeless Language Through the Discarded

Curated by Carol Moses, the exhibition plays with symbolism, metaphor, and the nature of change by giving repurposed materials new meaning.

Exhibition Dates

Opening Reception: March 16, 2023 | 6–9PM

On view: March 11, 2023–April 15, 2023 | Wed–Sat, 1–6 PM

Public Program: March 30, 2023 | 6–7:30PM

Location: BCA Mills Gallery, 551 Tremont St., Boston MA 02116

BOSTON, MA — Boston Center for the Arts (BCA) is pleased to announce the opening of *Cedric Harper: ANCESTRAL LANGUAGE*, curated by Carol Moses, the seventh exhibition in the *1:1 Exhibition Series* presented at the BCA Mills Gallery. In *ANCESTRAL LANGUAGE*, Boston poet-artist Cedric Harper creates an immersive environment that takes the form of a forest of vertical artworks. He shapes artworks with influences from varied cultures, borrowing from global gestural languages. Employing both text and symbolism, Harper contemplates love, loss, style, queerness, and perseverance.

Drawing on his personal experience as a Black gay man, and rooted in his long exploration of found materials and world languages, Harper's work is sensitive to what he experiences as the ruinous path of the world in material consumption and environmental devastation. In sculptural as well as two-dimensional works, he innovates by the scrambling of language: the scripts and organic patterns look ancient but are very new, timeless in their recurrence through human history, as they are derived from nature.

On March 30, 2023 from 6–7:30pm in the BCA Gallery in support of *ANCESTRAL LANGUAGE*, Cedric Harper and four artist friends will discuss their artistic use of materials that have been thrown away. This event, titled "[Creating From The Unwanted: Artists In Conversation About Working With Discarded Materials](#)," brings together [Cedric Harper](#), [Michelle Lougee](#), [Jeffrey Nowlin](#), [Adriana Prat](#), and [Rebecca McGee Tuck](#) — a group of painters, sculptors, and textile artists. They are all members of the i3C (inspiring Change for the Climate Crisis) Artists group ([i3Cartists.com](#)), in conversation about their paths, motivations, and processes in making artwork from discarded, unwanted materials. .

Throughout the duration of *Cedric Harper: ANCESTRAL LANGUAGE*, visitors will also be able to view [Project Room No. 4: Chick Byrne](#) in the BCA Mills Gallery, as part of the *Project Room Exhibition Series*; a rotating series that features work by a BCA Studio Resident. In his work, Byrne portrays human connection and latent potential. Looking at the beauty that exists within, his work illustrates that trauma, fear, and abuse are not defining traits, but rather informative elements that change us as we evolve and learn.

Artist Statement: Cedric Harper

My creative work comes from manipulation of language symbols and dreams whether that transforms itself into tables, sculpture, totems, or panels as its form.

All pieces start from recycled materials. Items that have been disregarded, rejected or tossed out as trash. The subject is usually determined by the recycled materials as to what it will become, a table, a totem, a sculpture. Those materials are cleaned, repaired, re-imagined, and become what I see in them.

Quotes for Use

This quote is the product of a conversation between Cedric Harper and John Mercuri Dooley:

"I have these pieces of wood I collect at random, the totems, their meaning is partly in their shape: the whole idea of a stick. It looks like the history of Black people, of

American Indians, of people who have carried and still carry protest banners, the history of the first person who got knocked over the head with a piece of wood. But also the history of Black American heroes like Angela Davis, Billie Holiday, and James Baldwin (not only a hero, but a gay hero). You can't turn away when you're confronted with their strong, unflinching, and calm voices. All they had to do was whisper. The totems represent all of that. I have made 70 totems and I'm not sure if they found me or if I found them."

—Cedric Harper

This quote is the product of a conversation between Cedric Harper and John Mercuri Dooley:

"My father's father came from South Sudan. He married a woman here who was half Black, half Native American. Her being a Native American brought a lot of ideas forth, and I grew up surrounded by different symbols: references to the ancient, in America, in the land, of the people, the nature. I feel a connection with the African in me, the Native American in me, being a Black American, and being gay; and with the stories that we were taught by my elders about how to be safe and correct as human beings. A lot of the symbols or characters in my work are alluding to markings or languages people forgot, like in cave drawings. Some are blessings, some are warnings, and some are saying, "consider this." "

—Cedric Harper

"When you observe life and live life, the better your art becomes, one uplifting the other."

—Cedric Harper

"The world is his ancestor and he can just pick from anywhere to draw inspiration"

—Carol Moses

About the Curator: Carol Moses

Carol Moses is an artist living in Cambridge, MA, who creates non-representational tableaus, employing grids, patterns, repeated linear elements, and biomorphic forms, in a distinctive visual vocabulary. Discrete styles namely calligraphic, gestural, and geometric appear throughout her omnivorous practice that moves between drawing, painting, printmaking and photography. Her artistic work creates balance, moving through color and form to create a visual neologism all her own. In childhood, Moses gravitated towards logic, math, and science, absorbing the nuance and minutiae of patterns in the natural world.

Study in cultural anthropology and linguistics also tacitly influenced her sui generis painting and photography.

In her broader art life, Moses concerns herself equally with making and showing her work, and with promoting work of colleagues she admires, and causes she espouses. To these ends, she founded a gallery program in 2009 in a neighborhood community center in Cambridge – head full of visions of bringing artists to light and helping them gain income from selling work. In the end it was more the former, to no one's surprise but her own. However curatorial experience was gained, and great connections were forged and strengthened.

Currently, Moses has a work studio at Vernon St, and exhibits in Boston at studio 213 at SoWa, 450 Harrison, Boston, sharing the space with Cedric Harper and other artists. She participates in international residencies, when circumstances allow, creating fascinating portrait and interview series of expansive demographics. Indefatigable, Moses is hatching new projects and media all the time. Enjoy this impressive curation of Cedric Harper's rich art brain.

Website: <https://www.carolmoses.com>

About Boston Center for the Arts:

Boston Center for the Arts (BCA) supports working artists to create, perform, and exhibit new works; develops new audiences; and connects the arts to community, and has for over five decades engaged the creative community for public good. While the organization's physical residence is in the historic South End, BCA touches every part of Boston's cultural ecosystem. A leading force in the city's cultural community, BCA has supported thousands of individual artists, small organizations, and performing arts companies, who add depth and dimension to the Boston arts ethos. Through residencies and programming, BCA serves as an epicenter for an expanding cohort of artists working across all disciplines, and has catalyzed careers by providing fertile ground for experimentation and artistic risk-taking.

To learn more about Boston Center for the Arts, visit www.bostonarts.org

More Information:

Images for Use:

[https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1aU1mGeh7nms0RXXhEZbu-Def8gqrHAvC?usp=share link](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1aU1mGeh7nms0RXXhEZbu-Def8gqrHAvC?usp=share_link)

Exhibition details:

<https://bostonarts.org/experiences/exhibitions/cedric-harper-ancestral-language/>

Public Program:

<https://bostonarts.org/event/creating-from-the-unwanted-artists-in-conversation-about-working-with-discarded-materials/>

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