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## Barnes tackles urban experience with 'Person of the Crowd'

The Associated Press



Surface Tension 1, 3A-9, 2A-C by artist Jean Shin backdrops The Great White Way, 22 Miles, 9 Years, 1 Street by Pope.L at "Person of the Crowd: The Contemporary Art of Flanerie" at The Barnes Foundation Wednesday Feb. 22, 2017, in Philadelphia. The Barnes is taking art to the streets - and bringing the streets into the museum - as part of a major new exhibition that looks at engaging with public space and the urban experience. "Person of the Crowd: The Contemporary Art of Flanerie" runs from Feb. 25 to May 22, 2017.

PHILADELPHIA The Barnes Foundation in Philadelphia is taking art to the streets — and bringing the streets into the museum — as part of a major new exhibition that looks at engaging with public space and the urban experience.

"Person of the Crowd: The Contemporary Art of Flanerie" runs from Feb. 25 to May 22, adding a decidedly present-day edge to the museum known for its legendary trove of Renoirs, Cezannes, Matisses and Picassos.

More than 50 American and international artists are featured in the exhibit, which not only takes place inside the museum's Roberts Gallery, but also reaches into the streets of Philadelphia itself, via street performances, billboards, posters, themed walks and public participation in the show's social media components.

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"It's the Barnes' most ambitious project to date," said Thom Collins, the museum's executive director and president.

The idea of "flanerier" stems from an 1840 Edgar Allen Poe story called "The Man of the Crowd." It introduced the concept of a "flaneur" (a French word meaning "one who strolls") who ambles through the city streets, observing its fabric and inhabitants. Two decades later, poet Charles Baudelaire brought added attention to the idea of the "flaneur" when he called it the engine behind the new art movement of French Impressionism.

The idea of the city observed through flanerier was central to art though the 1940s, until abstract expressionism started looking more inward than outward. The idea was revived again in the 1950s through artists like Robert Rauschenberg and Guy Debord, and the trend continues.

The gallery installation mixes video and objects. Visitors to the show find themselves getting in the way of the video projections, and find their own silhouettes projected onto the screen, becoming part of the installation.

Highlights of the gallery portion include gelatin silver prints by Marina Abramovic called "Role Exchange" documenting her changing roles with a prostitute in Amsterdam in 1975; and Vito Acconci's "Following Piece" inkjet prints depicting his selection of a passerby whom he followed for an entire day on the streets of New York.

Among the street performers is Cuban installation artist Tania Bruguera, Chicago native Ayana Evans, and Wilmer Wilson IV of Richmond, Virginia, who calls his work "intentional urban wandering."

Evans will travel to touristy and iconic Philadelphia locations — cheesesteak joints, the "Rocky" steps, swanky hotels — over 10 hours in one day to perform her physically demanding art. Wearing her signature neon yellow zebra patterned catsuit and high heels, she'll do jumping jacks, push-ups and roll around in the street, all documented on video.

"It's taking over a territory in an aggressive way," she said of her work. It's a response to the double standard of women being questioned about their attire or behavior and how "it generally doesn't apply to men. I'm sort of giving the finger to that," she said.

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On May 10 she'll host a dinner party open to the public in the museum's lobby. Her edited 10-hour performance will be shown on the lobby's walls during the festivities.

Artist Man Bartlett is using technology and social media to explore the idea of "cyberflanerie."

"We Are/We See/We Hear" is his project that incorporates artificial intelligence, high school students' filmed observations and videos of the various street performances around the city during the exhibit.

He's encouraging the public to post a photo response to the question "Where do you stand?" to Instagram using the hashtag #Personofthecrowd. A computer will access those photos and describe what it sees, and the audio and text will be streamed into the museum's lobby.