



"I Count Because" sign used at a New York City Council press conference, April 23, 2019 Photograph by John McCarten; Courtesy John McCarten / New York City Council

***WHO WE ARE: VISUALIZING NYC BY THE NUMBERS***  
**OPENS NOVEMBER 22 AT MUSEUM OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK**  
**New Multimedia Exhibition Examines the Importance and Impact of the Census--**  
**How We Are Counted and What's At Stake**

**Crowdsourced Data Visualization Experiments**  
**Led by Giorgia Lupi and Ekene Ijeoma, Conducted and Featured As Part of Show**

**On View through Summer 2020**  
**Press Preview: November 19, 10 AM-12 PM**

(NEW YORK, NY – November 7, 2019) – **Museum of the City of New York** today revealed details of its major fall exhibition, ***Who We Are: Visualizing NYC By The Numbers***. Presented in anticipation of the 2020 Census, the multimedia show features works by cutting edge contemporary artists, designers, and researchers--alongside rare archival objects and documents, maps and photographs--and explores, celebrates, and underscores the power of the population count and demographics in understanding the past, present, and potential future of New York City. *Who We Are* opens to the public on November 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2019.

Census data has long been a tool to better understand New York City and its dense, chaotic mosaic of some eight and a half million inhabitants. *Who We Are* poses provocative questions about how the data collected about us as individuals reflects who we are as a society, and presents the data in novel ways that transcend mere reportage.

According to **Whitney Donhauser**, Ronay Menschel Director and President of the Museum of the City of New York, “We are presenting *Who We Are* as a way to highlight the importance of the upcoming census – including what’s at stake in terms of ensuring fair political representation and sufficient funding for education, infrastructure, and social programs. That said, our hope is that by featuring contemporary art and presenting the data in a visual way, we can humanize and decipher the swirl of information and help everyone better understand our city and its residents.”

Building on this in an interview recorded especially for *Who We Are*, New York City’s Chief Demographer Joseph Salvo says, “We need the information to be able to provide people with access to services to incorporate them into the city’s fabric, because the more we incorporate our newcomers and our domestic migrants, the better off the city will be for the long haul. This is what makes the city special, our ability to take all people from all over the world, from all over the nation, and somehow they become New Yorkers. We incorporate them into our labor force, we incorporate them civically into our communities, and what we end up with is a special kind of chemical demographic reaction which produces what we call New York City, and it’s truly a situation where the total is greater than the sum of the parts.”

“Census categories--and the ways we describe ourselves--have evolved over time, reflecting the eras in which they were created,” says **Sarah Henry**, Chief Curator and Deputy Director of Museum of the City of New York. “No matter what has changed, accurate numbers—and a share of the billions in federal funding that comes with them— is, as always, essential to New York’s future, as well as the health and well-being of the U.S. overall. The census is critical to understanding the dynamics of a city that has hundreds of different ethnic, language, racial, and ancestry groups; it helps us encapsulate this understanding into a description of what our neighborhoods are like and how they are changing. The data is more critical than ever because, the truth of the matter is, you can’t count if you’re not counted.”

To illustrate the point: A range of documents, infographics, photographs, recorded interviews, and more – from the first-ever Census in 1790 through today, will be on display including:

- **A reproduction of a page from the U.S. Federal Census, New York – South Ward (1790)**, featuring Aaron Burr’s name and family information
- ***Rank of the Most Populous Cities at Each Census: 1790-1890, 1898***, one of several charts that were seminal in the history of data visualization, showing the relative rank of U.S. cities from 1790 to 1890 -- a period of rapid population growth and urbanization.
- A photograph of **Representative Shirley Chisholm being sworn in as a census worker and canvasser in Bedford-Stuyvesant (1970)**
- Recorded **interviews** with **NYC’s Chief Demographer Joseph Salvo** and **noted author N.K. Jemison**
- **A copy of the 2020 Census form**, which will be shared with American households beginning in March

In addition, *Who We Are* includes projects by contemporary artists and designers interested in both visualizing and interpreting demographic data. The work in the show represents a vanguard of people active at this intersection of art, design, social sciences, and data science. What unites their work is a desire to ask provocative questions about who we are as a society, as reflected in the data that is collected about us as individuals (much of which comes from the census). By visualizing the data in novel

ways, or making it otherwise sensory or experiential, these works show dimensions of urban life that usually go unnoticed.

Many of the works aim to uncover unusual or unexpected insights and to do so with explicitly political or activist intent. Some of the contributors focus on how race is defined and inscribed in the economic and political landscape, or the degree to which immigration has shaped the city, two issues which reflect the political discourse of our time. Others draw attention to the extremes of income inequality in New York, one of the richest cities on earth. Many of the pieces interrogate the very process of collecting demographic data, encouraging us to consider the questions we ask of ourselves, how we represent ourselves to the world, the way we are categorized, and what goes missing or unstated in the process.

Select contemporary art pieces in ***Who We Are: NYC By the Numbers*** include:

- Two works by **Ekene Ijeoma**: ***Wage Islands*** (2019) -- an interactive sculpture that addresses the economic inequities of New York City, in which geographic “islands” of affordability become less isolated and the landscape of the city more contiguous for those with higher incomes; and ***A Counting*** (2019) – a crowdsourced audio piece and listening station highlighting people counting in the 100+ languages of NYC from Armenian to Yiddish, giving particular weight to those that are endangered
- **R. Luke Dubois’s *A More Perfect Union: New York City*** (2019), a map of the self-descriptive words used to in dating site profiles, with each part of the city represented by the work used more commonly there than anywhere else.
- A piece by **Pedro Cruz, John Wihbey, and Felipe Shibuya** -- ***Simulated Dendrochronology of Immigration to New York City, 1840-2017*** (2019)—that visualizes decades of immigrant arrivals as growing tree rings, which gradually accrete cell by cell, each of which corresponds to immigrants’ geographic origins.
- ***Powers of Ten: Census Edition (2019)***, a map by **Jia Zhang**, that applies the narrative construct of exponential scaling to census data in order to give meaning to the relative scale of the geographies and demographics inherent in the data.

Also featured: A crowdsourced data visualization experiment, designed by **Giorgia Lupi**, an information designer whose work takes a humanistic approach to data. Visitors will be able to participate in a survey in which the questions asked cut to the heart of our emotional and social conception of self, and the visualization of the answers to those questions foster new realizations about identity, belonging, and representation, now and in the future. There are two outputs from the survey: Firstly, a button emblazoned with the user’s unique data portrait will be printed in the Museum's shop and redeemable through a code from the iPad survey; secondly, a website version of the data visualization projected in the gallery will allow those at home to track the data inputted and this collective illustration of users’ data portraits.

***Who We Are: Visualizing NYC By The Numbers*** will be accompanied by an array of public, education, and family programs including:

## "WHO ARE THE PEOPLE IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD?" - NYC ACCORDING TO THE CENSUS

**Tuesday, December 3rd, 6:30 PM – 8:00 PM**

Price: \$18 & up | \$15 for Museum Members

Every 10 years, the Census provides an unparalleled opportunity to observe the changes in the population living in the hundreds of neighborhoods that comprise New York City. This panel discussion will zoom in on the most significant population shifts reflected in recent Census data, not only through immigration, but also other demographic changes, and anticipate what the 2020 Census will reveal. It will also explore how the population churn affects New Yorkers' common ideas and assumptions about neighborhood identity across the five boroughs, from East Harlem and St. George to Sunset Park, Morrisania, and LIC.

Participating panelists include:

- **Héctor R. Cordero-Guzmán**, Professor at Baruch College and CUNY Graduate Center
- **Nancy Foner**, Professor at Hunter College and CUNY Graduate Center
- **Bitta Mostofi**, Commissioner of the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs
- **Joseph J. Salvo**, Chief Demographer, NYC Department of City Planning
- **Hansi Lo Wang** (moderator), National Correspondent, NPR

## GETTING OUT THE CENSUS: COUNTING NEW YORKERS IN 2020

**Wednesday, January 23rd, 6:30 PM – 8:30 PM**

Price: \$12 & up | \$10 Museum Members

It's almost time to "Get Out the Census" and the stakes could not be higher for New York City in terms of federal funding and electoral representation. What are government, community and civic leaders doing to ensure that every single resident of New York City is properly counted in April 2020? Despite the political controversies that have threatened the prospects of a full and accurate count of all New Yorkers to date, a massive mobilization effort is underway in all five boroughs on every conceivable platform to encourage people to fill out the 2020 Census. Hear directly from those on the front lines about how the effort is proceeding and what setbacks remain.

Participating panelists include:

- **Julie Menin**, Director of the Census for New York City and Executive Assistant, Corporation Counsel for Strategic Advocacy
- **Melva M. Miller**, Executive Vice President of Association for a Better New York (ABNY)
- **Robert J. Rodriguez**, New York State Assemblymember
- **Steven Romalewski**, Director of the CUNY Mapping Service at the Center for Urban Research (CUR) at CUNY Graduate Center
- **Juan Manuel Benitez**, journalist, NY1 (host)

## THE DATA WE DON'T SEE with Giorgia Lupi

**Thursday, February 13th, 6:30 PM – 8:30 PM**

Price: \$18 & up | \$15 for Museum Members

Today, data are everywhere. But what does the data really mean, and how can we extract real value from it in our daily lives? In this illustrated talk, information designer Giorgia Lupi will discuss our new data reality and “data humanism,” her unique philosophy for understanding and working with data. Surveying her diverse work over the last decade, Lupi will also introduce her distinctive approach to data visualization and discuss the development of her brand new installation for the Museum's exhibition, *Who We Are: Visualizing NYC by the Numbers*.

***Who We Are: Visualizing NYC by the Numbers*** was guest curated by Kubi Ackerman, in collaboration with Sarah Henry and Monxo Lopez. The exhibition was designed by Isometric.

#### **SUPPORT**

***Who We Are*** is made possible in part by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation; an Anonymous Family Foundation; Carnegie Corporation of New York; Bloomberg Philanthropies; The New York Community Trust; Charles H. Revson Foundation; and Blair and Cheryl Effron.

Public programs inspired by this exhibition are made possible by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

Education programs featuring this exhibition are made possible in part by The New York Community Trust.

Special thanks to NYC Census 2020, led by Director Julie Menin; Joe Salvo, Director of the Population Division, New York City Department of City Planning; and Edward Widmer, Macauley Honors College, CUNY.

Made possible in part by The New Network Fund, supported by  JLGreene

#### **About the Museum of the City of New York**

The Museum of the City of New York fosters understanding of the distinctive nature of urban life in the world's most influential metropolis. It engages visitors by celebrating, documenting, and interpreting the city's past, present, and future. To connect with the Museum on social media, follow us on Instagram and Twitter at @MuseumofCityNY and visit our Facebook page at Facebook.com/MuseumofCityNY. For more information please visit [www.mcny.org](http://www.mcny.org).

#### **Media Contact:**

Meryl Cooper, (917) 974-0022 / [mwcooper@mcny.org](mailto:mwcooper@mcny.org)

Sheryl Victor Levy, (917) 492-3482 / [svlevy@mcny.org](mailto:svlevy@mcny.org)