



## ***NEW YORK RESPONDS: THE FIRST SIX MONTHS* OPENS DECEMBER 18, 2020**

### **MUSEUM OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK EXHIBITION DOCUMENTS THE CHANGES AND CHALLENGES OF NEW YORK CITY DURING 2020**

Includes Community Jury Selections and Animated Timeline

Complementary Digital Exhibition Offers Deeper Dive

NEW YORK, NY (December 1, 2020) – The Museum of the City of New York announced its upcoming exhibition, *New York Responds: The First Six Months*, which builds upon the outdoor photography installation that opened this summer. Pulling from the more than 20,000 objects, photographs, artworks, and stories submitted to the Museum’s open call, the exhibition features selections made by a community jury, reflecting the changes and challenges of life in New York City from March through August 2020. Opening December 18, *New York Responds* paints a poignant and powerful portrait of the city, and it will be accessible both at the museum and online in a digital exhibition.

"History shows us that New York City always prevails despite challenges," says Whitney Donhauser, Ronay Menschel Director and President of Museum of the City of New York. "Now, as we close out this unprecedented year, this exhibition highlights many of the powerful personal and public stories that unfolded. We thank the thousands of people who contributed to our open call, and the NYC community as a whole for their support during this tumultuous time."

*New York Responds: The First Six Months* includes photographs, objects, videos, and works of art that document the impacts of Covid-19 and activism in 2020. Objects and images include:

- Creative handmade masks and social distance markers;
- Photographs of mutual aid efforts, including food donation, community fridges, and volunteers;
- A pan used in the 7 o'clock clapping for health care workers;
- Photographs of activism for Black Lives Matter, including healthcare workers taking a knee;
- An innovative ventilator devised by medical personnel at The Mount Sinai Health System;
- Photographs of essential workers, including food delivery and public transportation.

Interactive elements also allow visitors to contribute their own experiences online, through an oral history recording project in partnership with StoryCorps and the ongoing open call. Rounding out the exhibition are original works testifying to the creative responses of artists to the events of the year, including three major works on plywood that were created on storefronts in SoHo during the summer of 2020.

After more than 20,000 nominations were submitted to the Museum’s open call, via hashtags #CovidStoriesNYC and #ActivistNY and by nonprofit collecting partners across the city, a community jury comprised of members from all walks of life made selections for the exhibition. To represent the vast

quantity of contributions, the exhibition will also include a word cloud visualizing words from the thousands of nominated image captions.

“It’s not typical for us to document history while still living through it, but our open call provided an opportunity for the Museum to include a varied and diverse set of perspectives from across the five boroughs,” says Sarah Henry, Robert A. and Elizabeth Rohn Jeffe Chief Curator and Deputy Director at Museum of the City of New York. “It has been an honor to work with the talented members of our community jury to provide their perspective and expertise to our exhibition as our city transforms and adapts, and to reflect the work of so many institutions working to document this moment in our history.”

The *New York Responds: The First Six Months* Community Jury represent a range of backgrounds and perspectives of the city: Members included: **Rohit T. Aggarwala**, co-head of Urban Systems at Sidewalk Labs, Alphabet's urban technology subsidiary; **Kurt Boone**, author and street photographer; **Rick Chavolla**, educational consultant and Board Chair for the American Indian Community House of New York; **Cheryl Cohen Efron**, real estate developer and a senior adviser to Tishman Speyer Properties; **Elsie Encarnacion**, Dean of Family and Community Partnerships at East Harlem’s Innovation Charter High School; **Jonathan Giftos**, physician activist; **Amanda Johnson**, South Bronx-based artist and photographer; **Juanita Lanzo**, visual artist and arts consultant; **Sarah Thankam Mathews**, writer and activist; **Alicia Parker** retired New York City Police Lieutenant; **Lucas Sin**, restaurateur/entrepreneur; **Kei Francis Williams**, queer transmasculine identified organizer, artist, and historian.

*New York Responds: The First Six Months* was organized by a curatorial team led by Sarah Henry, Robert A. and Elizabeth Rohn Jeffe Chief Curator and Deputy Director; with Lilly Tuttle, Curator; Azra Dawood and Monxo López, Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Post-Doctoral Curatorial Fellows; Sarah Seidman, Puffin Foundation Curator of Social Activism; Sean Corcoran, Curator of Prints and Photographs; Hannah Diamond, Education Manager; and Tracy McFarlan, Manager of Curatorial Projects and designed by Marissa Martonyi, Design Director. Christopher Paul Harris was a special advisor to the project.

#### **Support:**

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Story Corps; Allen Hillery and the Data Visualization Society at Columbia University, including Elena Dubova, Daniel Hui

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### **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).

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