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Exhibitions @ Brooklyn Public Library

Crossing Brooklyn:
Angel in Crown Heights
Lobby Gallery, Lobby Cases

January 6- Feb 27, 2003
Deborah Masters

Crossing Brooklyn Series

Opening January 6, 2003, a new series of works entitled "Crossing Brooklyn" will be exhibited at Brooklyn Public Library's Central Library on Grand Army Plaza. The series, free and open to the public, will present new works by Brooklyn artists whose innovative sculptures reflect enduring aspects of life in the borough.

Deborah Masters

Deborah Masters, known for such works as her 28-panel "Walking New York: at JFK International Airport, "Sacred Matter" at Smack Mellon Studios, "Circle" in the Whitney Museum of American Art's "Urban Figures" show, and "Pond Virgins" created for Brooklyn's Prospect Park, will open the series with a new installation entitled "Angel in Crown Heights."

"Angel in Crown Heights" is a site-specific work of a larger than life sculpture of Angel and three large black and white drawings overlaying the three walls of the rectangular Lobby Gallery space. The figure is based on Masters' assistant, Angel Mohaammed. The Sculpture of Angel, seated on a box and drawing on his knee, is cast in Ultracal and painted in earth tone with a dull finish. Angel sits within the context of the three drawings of the Crown heights neighborhood where he grew up. One drawing, situated on the central wall of the gallery, depicts stairs leading up to the front door of his brownstone, with adjacent drawings featuring the buildings on either side.

The combination of the two mediums of sculpture and drawing create a provocative juxtaposition of weight and textures in Masters' work. Her figures are massively stated, yet her themes frequently have to do with our transit through this world, our environment, and our place in it. Her work seems to suggest figures of 'everyman', endowed with the intrinsic weight of life, journeying through with the epic struggles that face us all. There is nothing small or provincial about the way Masters sees or renders humanity in her sculptures. Like the monumental figures of Aristide Maillol or of classical Greek sculpture, the weight of human experience is substance made live in Masters' work. The cultures, textures, and imperfections of humanity as rendered in the human figure are both representative and specific in her work. The personal is the historic, and vice versa.

A separate exhibition of Masters' preliminary drawings for "Walking New York" at JFK International Airport Project will be on view in the second-floor balcony cases, The project used three New York artists for a million-dollar public-private venture for art installations for the opening of the new Terminal 4 at JFK International Airport in 2001. For the project, Master created 26 bold narrative reliefs, each 8.5 feet high by 10 feet wide covering a 350-foot-wide span above the terminal's immigration booths. Sculpted murals with reliefs up to six inches deep and 800 pounds each great passengers with vibrant scenes of daily New York life ranging from Coney Island, Wall Street, the Brooklyn and Manhattan bridges, and subway rides to city parades. The scenes vividly portray the rich and diverse cultural life of New York.

This exhibition is organized for Brooklyn Public Library by Smack Mellon and curated by Marian Griffiths.

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