



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

The South Orange Village Center Alliance (SOVCA) is pleased to introduce our panel of jurors for our Valley Street Mural installation: Bisa Butler, Nigel Freeman, Tricia Laughlin Bloom, Ph.D., Diedra Harris-Kelley and Bernard Jackson. As a whole, the panel comprises a wide variety of expertise in the arts, and individually, each juror is highly-accomplished in their field. You can read more about each jurist in the bios below.

“We are proud to have such a diverse team of highly-qualified and talented professionals judging the entries to our Valley Street Mural installation. We are looking forward to their selection and are grateful for their participation and support,” stated Julie Doran, Executive Director of SOVCA.

The call for mural artists remains open through March 15. The jury will select a qualified artist or team of artists to design and install a mural at 20 Valley Street in South Orange, NJ. The mural should convey the theme of “Harmony” and the idea that people are connected to each other and the world around us. Details and submission guidelines can be found at: [Valley Street Mural RFP](#)

### **Jurist Bios**

#### **Bisa Butler**

Bisa Butler was born in Orange, NJ, and raised in South Orange, NJ. She currently resides in West Orange, New Jersey, and is a Newark Public School art teacher. A formally trained artist, Butler graduated Cum Laude from Howard University, with a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree. Recently, Butler had the honor of having her artwork displayed at the Smithsonian Museum of American History, and at Walt Disney World’s Epcot Center. In 2021, she was chosen as one of 60 United States Artists Fellows.

#### **Nigel Freeman**

Nigel Freeman is the director of the African-American Fine Art department at Swann Auction Galleries. Since founding the department in 2006, he has set numerous auction records for important African-American artists. Outside of Swann, Nigel is a print appraiser on the PBS television show Antiques Roadshow. He has lectured on the subject of African-American art at the Detroit Institute of Arts, the Rhode Island School of Design Museum, the Studio Museum in Harlem, and the South Side Community Art Center in Chicago. Nigel has a background in fine art as a painter and printmaker with a Master of Fine Arts degree from Columbia University and a Bachelor of Arts degree in History and Art from Brown University. Previously, Nigel was the associate director of Swann’s Prints & Drawings department.

#### **Tricia Laughlin Bloom, Ph.D.**

Tricia Laughlin Bloom, Ph.D. is the Curator of American Art at Newark Museum, responsible for the exhibition, research, publication, and acquisitions for the Museum’s Collection. Dr. Bloom was previously a Research Associate, American Art, at the Newark Museum. Previously, Dr. Bloom served in several capacities at the Brooklyn

Museum, most recently as Associate Curator of Exhibitions. Dr. Bloom holds a Doctorate in Twentieth-Century Art History from Rutgers University, New Brunswick, where she received a Graduate School Fellowship; she also holds a Masters of Arts degree in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Art History and Criticism from the State University of New York at Stony Brook; and a Bachelor of Arts Degree in English and Art History from James Madison University.

### **Diedra Harris-Kelley**

Diedra Harris-Kelley is co-director of the Romare-Beardan Foundation, where she pays homage to her creative roots, keeping the art and legacy of her uncle significant not just to the art world, but to conversations in history, academia, and culture. She has an MFA focused in painting and drawing from University of Michigan and is a lecturer and workshop leader as well as a teacher of college-level courses in studio art and cultural studies.

### **Bernard Jackson**

Bernard Jackson is an artist and gallery owner who lives in South Orange, NJ. He has owned five art galleries, three of which have been located in South Orange Village. His current gallery, Gallery on the Ave, is located in the heart of the Village on Vose Ave. He previously worked at the Museum of African History in Detroit and was a scenic designer for many movies and television shows. He has Masters in Fine Arts from the University of South Carolina and has worked on multiple public art projects.

### **About South Orange Village Center Alliance**

The South Orange Village Center Alliance (SOVCA) is a non-profit organization that is dedicated to making downtown South Orange a vibrant place to live, work and enjoy through events, beautification and advocacy for the downtown business district. SOVCA's mission is to strengthen the vitality of the downtown business district by supporting existing businesses and attracting new ones to improve the Village's retail mix; raising funds for improvement and public art projects; producing events that complement existing stores and services; maintaining a clean, safe, and pedestrian-friendly downtown; and helping our governing body manage new development while preserving the attractive architectural legacy of the downtown area. The organization is run by an Executive Director and a volunteer board of directors made up of property owners, business owners, residents and other stakeholders. For more information, visit [sovillagecenter.org](http://sovillagecenter.org).

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