

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## NBMAA Presents: NEW/NOW Shantell Martin

October 22, 2020-April 18, 2021

NEW BRITAIN, CONN., October 19, 2020, The New Britain Museum of American Art (NBMAA) is honored to present a solo exhibition featuring the work of Shantell Martin (b. 1980) on view from October 22, 2020-April 18, 2021. Part of the NBMAA's *NEW/NOW* series devoted to emerging and established contemporary artists, this exhibition represents Martin's first museum career retrospective.

Among the most innovative artists working today, Shantell Martin is known for her exploration into the vast potential of the drawn line. Using an ink marker, she creates improvisational compositions with meandering lines and a recurring cast of characters, symbols, and messages that reflect a deeply rooted interest in identity—her own and also the viewer's—as well as intersectionality, society, culture, and play. Martin's signature black-and-white works reveal her personal mantra to “draw on everything,” and comprise small personal sketches, monumental murals, live-drawing performances, and collaborations with fashion brands, science and technology innovators, and cultural icons.

Featuring nearly two decades of work created in London, Japan, New York, and across the United States, *NEW/NOW: Shantell Martin* explores the evolution of Martin's artistic style and technique while highlighting key aspects of her output, including art, performance, commerce, and technology, and their myriad cross-sections. Her large-scale site-specific mural entitled *Transparency* (2020) was created on the occasion of her exhibition at the NBMAA, and reflects the artist's response to both the space and time in which it was made.

### Related Programs

Visit <https://nbmaa.org/exhibitions/new-now-shantell-martin> for information on related programs, including a Virtual Gallery Talk on November 4, and read a recent Q&A conversation with the artist.

### Exhibition Highlights

The exhibition spans almost 20 years of Martin's oeuvre, from her studies in London to the present.

Martin's devotion to drawing is evident in every aspect of the show. Offering unique insights into her creative process are a selection of **early sketchbooks and various drawing implements**. These underscore the degree to which drawing has long served as the foundation and springboard for her creative processes. **Drawings dating from 2008 to today** showcase the development of Martin's technique, from highly-detailed compositions created with 0.05mm graphic drawing pens, to looser and more expansive images rendered with marker that characterize her recent work. As her drawing tools and techniques have evolved over time, so too have the motifs, words, and cast of characters that appear, reflecting her ongoing exploration of the self. Documentation of Martin's artistic processes are captured in **photographic series by Jon Paciaroni and Theo Coulombe**. The artist's drawn works culminate in a **40x16 foot site-specific mural entitled *Transparency* (2020)**, that she created as a live-drawing for her exhibition at the NBMAA.

Martin's collaborative pursuits are represented in numerous works that reveal her engagement with technology, commerce, and her own personal history. Among the earliest work in the exhibition,

Martin's *Dear Grandmother* comprises an installation of nearly 100 embroidered images and texts that she created in collaboration with her grandmother Dot Martin over the course of 13 years (2002-15). These pieces, which include phrases such as 'Come Home/Go Home' and 'British/English,' serve to bridge the distance between the two women and communicate across generation, race, and culture in a way that is playful, sincere, and productive.

Martin's interest in technology is evident in a group of **3D printed drawing tools** that she created as part of her 2016 residency at Autodesk's Pier 9 Workshop in San Francisco; as well as a series of **circuit boards** that she designed in collaboration with programmer Jonathan Bobrow during her residency at MIT Media Lab in Cambridge, MA—each of which features imagery that reveals its functionality.

Examples of Martin's partnerships with prestigious apparel or design companies are widely represented in the show. These include her limited-edition **sunglasses created with Italian fashion brand Max Mara** as part of their 2017 "Prism in Motion" collection; as well as a custom **helmet designed for Vespa**. Martin's spontaneous drawings adorn **shoes and apparel created for Puma in 2018**. Produced specially for her NBMAA *NEW/NOW* exhibition are **couch, loveseat, and ottoman by French furniture company Ligne Roset**, upholstered in **textiles that Martin created in collaboration with Momentum Design Studio** in 2017.

These works and more demonstrate Martin's incredibly prolific output and her remarkably innovative and groundbreaking approach to art, object, and idea-making.

*NEW/NOW: Shantell Martin* is part of 2020/20+ Women @ NBMAA presented by Stanley Black and Decker with additional support provided by Bank of America.

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### **About the Artist**

Shantell Martin was born in 1980 in Greenwich London. From 1999-2000 she studied at Camberwell College of Arts **Ars**, London and from 2000-2003 at Central Saint Martins, London, where she received her BA in Graphic Design and Illustration. Her work has been the subject of solo exhibitions at the Denver Art Museum (2019); Governors Island, New York (2019); Lincoln Center, New York (2019); 92Y, New York (2018); Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo (2017); and the Museum of Contemporary African Diaspora Arts, Brooklyn (2014), among others. She has served as a Visiting Scholar at MIT Media Lab, Cambridge Massachusetts (2014-16); a Fellow at Brown Institute of Media Innovation, Columbia University, New York (2014), and currently teaches as an adjunct professor at NYU Tisch Interactive Telecommunications Program (2013-present), where she works with her students to push the boundaries of storytelling, visual art, and technology. Martin's collaborations span prestigious brands including Ligne Roset (2019), United Airlines (2019), Tiffany & Co. (2018), Puma Select (2018), Jose Cuervo 1800 (2018), Max Mara (2017), Art Basel Miami Beach and American Express (with Kendrick Lamar) (2016), Kelly Wearstler (2014), among many others. Her first artist's monograph *LINES* (HENI Publishing, 2020) charts her prolific career and diverse output. Martin lives and works in New Jersey.

**About the New Britain Museum of American Art:**

The New Britain Museum of American Art is the first institution dedicated to solely to acquiring American art. Spanning four centuries of American history, the Museum's permanent collection is renowned for its strengths in colonial portraiture, the Hudson River School, American Impressionism, the Ash Can School, as well as the important mural series *The Arts of Life in America* by Thomas Hart Benton. The singular focus on American art and its panoramic view of American artistic achievement, realized through the Museum's extensive permanent collection, exhibitions, and educational programming, make the New Britain Museum of American Art a significant resource for a broad and diverse public.

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