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**Ford Foundation Gallery presents  
*Reverberations: Lineages in Design History***



Image courtesy of Polymode

**Ford Foundation Center for Social Justice | 320 E 43rd Street, New York**

On View March 4 - May 3, 2025

Opening Event March 4, 2025 | 5-7pm

Gallery Hours: Monday - Saturday | 11am-6pm

**New York, NY** – The [Ford Foundation Gallery](https://fordfoundation.org/gallery) is pleased to present ***Reverberations: Lineages in Design History***, opening on March 4th with a celebration from 5 to 7 p.m. The exhibition will transform the gallery into an expansive educational space, reimagining design history to feature Indigenous, Black, and People of Color designers and cultural figures. In amplifying these many stories, *Reverberations* counters the narrative of design tradition as a single dominant line and seeks to undo erasures by reconnecting and rippling out to those who have been silenced, misrepresented, and miscategorized. The featured artworks reflect rich

cultural ancestries that reverberate across epochs into futurity. With over fifty artists and designers, the show's reverberations bring forward and celebrate many voices that have gone unheard.

*Reverberations* is curated by Brian Johnson and Silas Munro with the advice of curatorial advisors Randa Hadi, Lisa Maione, and Ramon Tejada. The exhibition is inspired by [BIPOC Design History](#), a series of courses facilitated by the design studio [Polymode](#). First held as online classes beginning in 2021, these collectively authored, collaborative courses create a one-room schoolhouse informed by generations of design practitioners, encompassing subjects including Black design in America, plural Latinx design lineages, design traditions from the Southwest Asia and North Africa (SWANA) region, Indigenous design lineages traced in the upcoming course, *(re)Creating Turtle Island: Native American Design Through Remembered History*, and design histories of Japan through East Asia, Southeast Asia, and related geographies, in a future course. The classes are an experiment in expanding access to learning while inspiring future generations.

Through a dazzling assemblage of historical and contemporary works of art and design, visitors are invited into a thematically organized experience tracing reverberations in design over the centuries, landscapes, and traditions they flow out of and into. The works take many ingenious forms: multidimensional maps reveal layers of experience and counter colonial flattening and erasures; varied alphabets and graphic languages transmit contours of wisdom across cultures; intricate Indigenous traditions of beadwork and textile art weave ancestral knowledge into the future; posters intertwine text and image to bring people together and drive social action; and works such as avant-garde data visualizations, vivid narrative painting amplified through poster design, and stamp design reveal facets of visual strategies deployed by Black designers past, present, and future. Poetic points of connection among these diverse artworks are highlighted by their many artistic acts of storytelling, mapping, symbolizing, teaching, languaging, and futuring. Strength and hope emerge through these lineages being carried into the future by BIPOC artists in the present.

Lineages in design, passed from one maker or generation to the next, can be fraught in having the effect of concealing what they exclude. Design history has often been modeled on a procession of “masters,” individual experts, and successes based on profit and popularity, forming as it did within hierarchical systems that now extend their harms into digital realms. This framework often forces binaries, between ‘known’ and ‘unknown,’ ‘strong’ and ‘weak,’ ‘inside’ and ‘outside,’ ‘fine art’ and ‘commercial,’ ‘design’ and ‘craft.’

Reverberations, by contrast, are prolonged, continuous sounds that extend, reflect, and overlap in ways that appear to come from a single source. They also envelop and extend in multiple directions. When integrated, reverberations and lineages can allow for adaptation, reframing, and inclusion, expanding in dimensionality and webbing to interconnect. Reverberations recur in waves, interacting with many points of reflection, movements echoed by the many patterns and motifs in the featured works that resonate powerfully with each other.

This effect almost borders on the audible among the gathered works, particularly through the many powerful words and phrases of text that call out through them. Rippling together in their many striking and varied uses of repetition, emphasis, and volume, the works' words undulate and build in multivocal resonances that, like reverberating waves themselves, integrate form, sound, movement, and reflection, prompting the action and interaction that they render material. In prints by **Amos Paul Kennedy, Jr.**, calls for social change, driven by handset wood and metal type, reverberating in multiple overlaid layers of text, burst out against geometric patterns informed by traditions of printing among Black designers in the U.S., as seen in *The Central Tenet of EARTHSEED as written by Lauren Oya Olamina* (2025). Two billboards will also bring art's power to activate self-reflection and questioning and call for outward accountability and action in community into the gallery, through statements in large-scale text that are at once direct and complex in their refractory effects, echoing out beyond the act of viewing. One by artist **Anna Tsouhlarakis**, a member of the Navajo Nation with Creek and Greek descent, *I REALLY LIKE THE WAY YOU RESPECT NATIVE AMERICAN RIGHTS* (2019-), seeks to promote deep reflection and engagement with Indigenous Peoples' rights and their many unique cultural lineages. The artist's words take on facets of meaning brought to the work by viewers' responses to them, deepening layers of impact and accountability through the relationship between viewer and artwork, and individual and community. Another by **Alisha B Wormsley**, *There Are Black People In The Future* (2012-), shares words that have rippled out through many activations, including its 2017 installation in East Liberty, a gentrifying Pittsburgh neighborhood, where its removal ignited community protest. Both billboards challenge the boundaries of art and what it means to view it, literally and publicly elevating the artists' voices, their nuanced social impacts ever-expanding with each new iteration and encounter.

Artists in *Reverberations* weave stories through pattern, type, technique, and form. Lebanese American graphic designer **Wael Morcos's** typographic woven blankets, like the exhibited artwork *Brooklyn* (2024), feature his evocative and elegant Arabic and Roman font and type design that amplifies complex cultural stories with nuance and depth. Similarly intricate stories are shared through Tanzania-born designer and educator **Ziddi Msangi's** powerful

work that reflects his visual research and exploration into the complex form and deep meaning of the East African cloth Kanga, created in dialogue with the community-authored textile printed with visual and typographic language. Arising as a communication system within the context of the transatlantic slave trade, it preserves and disseminates truth, history, and ancestral strength. Striking narratives also emerge through juxtapositions of personal and national iconography in three featured collage-like posters by Japanese illustrator and graphic designer **Tadanori Yokoo**, with their psychedelic refusal of Western modernism's influence in Japan through avant-garde artistic rebirth.

The interplay of form, line, color, and visual mapping in *Reverberations* reveals complex dimensions of cultures outside of and in resistance to colonial, heteropatriarchal models. An infographic created by exhibition curators and designers **Brian Johnson** and **Silas Munro** with designer **Ben Warner**, *Gays, Queers, Fags, Dykes, Sissies, And Abstract Art* (2020) maps the nodes and links among key events in queer political and cultural history and visual culture, showing the fundamental interconnections that resist erasures and violence. Related visual strategies for mapping relationships and history are reflected in the *Two Row wampum belt (replica)* (2024-2025) created by **Tony Gonyea**, a Faithkeeper for the Onondaga Nation, which embodies rich and vibrant traditions of Indigenous diplomacy and intricate ancestral practices for weaving interconnections. Similarly tracing community ties, *lukasa*, or memory boards, wooden tablets covered with colorful beads and symbols, serve to map and remember important people, places, relationships, and events in the culture of the Luba people, like the one featured. A selection of maps and other related visualizations from many cultures and times—including maps reflecting plural cultures of the Perso-Arab world, anticolonial maps that center Indigenous knowledge and perspectives, an interactive graphic charting nonlinear nuances of Latinx art, and paintings by the Mbuti people on bark cloth evoking the landscape of the Ituri Rainforest—reveal how strategies for mapping and charting are shaped by worldviews and lived experience.

Works in *Reverberations* offer stunning views into graphic design's unique potential to manifest futures that grow out of ancestral knowledge, capturing meaning beyond words through technique, pattern, and symbol. Māori artist **Hone Bailey** preserves art forms like *tukutuku*, woven panels that tell stories honoring ancestors and their descendants who carry these lineages forward, as seen in the featured work celebrating these relationships that transcend time. Radiantly colored wool tapestries by Navajo textile artist **Melissa Cody**, like her featured textile work *Untitled* (2022), render traditional Navajo iconography and technique with effects reminiscent of the digital in her complex geometric patterns, mapping infinite future possibilities. Also working with complex symbology, Ecuadorian designer

**Vanessa Zúñiga Tinizaray's** experimental, kinetic typography translates the visual symbols of Indigenous cultures of Latin America to disseminate their ancestral wisdom.

Like the courses it builds on, the exhibition traces many landscapes and traditions of design: work by designers from Indigenous communities across Turtle Island that carry living history forward; Māori design traditions preserving and sharing deeply skilled technique; work reflecting rich traditions of art and design created by Black people in America used in liberation movements, and the many facets of Black design; the pluralistic design emerging from diverse cosmologies in the Latinx diaspora; the various visual cultures, identities, and design histories from the SWANA region and diaspora; and compelling, future-facing design work from Asian diasporas grappling with complex histories to offer bold visions through visual culture.

Visitors will be welcomed into the gallery with a video work, *Mega Mix of BIPOC Design History* (2025), created by Polymode designer **Edgar Casarin**, providing an illuminating background on the significance of BIPOC design lineages, how they have been excluded from design histories, and the richness and profound social significance of these plural, vital, and powerful stories. Adding layers to the experience that will reverberate within and beyond the gallery visit, guests will also be offered a coupon code that gives access to a selection of BIPOC Design History courses. Creating waves of interconnections and ongoing conversations, *Reverberations* will offer an experience grounded in hope, connection, and collaboration.

Contributors to the exhibition include: Akwesasne Notes, Munirah AlShami, Gail Anderson, BIPOC Design History with Edgar Casarin, Hone Bailey, MJ Balvanera, Alan Bell, Pedro Bell, Dina Benbrahim, Pilar Castillo, Melissa Cody, Shannon Daronio Chavez, Gráfica Latina (José Menéndez & Tatiana Gómez), Schessa Garbutt, Jeffrey Gibson, Tony Gonyea, Nathan P. Jackson, Louise E. Jefferson, Amos Paul Kennedy, Jr with David Hernaiz & Zdravko Toic., Jon Key, Luba People, Jacob Lawrence, Yoon Soo Lee, Beatriz Lozano, Mbuti People, Saki Mafundikwa, Wael Morcos, Ziddi Msangi, Nontsikelelo Mutiti & Tinashe Mushakavanhu, Ella Myers, Shiva Nallaperumal & Juhi Vishnani, Onaman Collective (Christi Belcourt & Isaac Murdoch), Monique Ortman, Livia Perez, Jackson Polys, Shraddha Ramani & William Villalongo, Roberto Rodriguez, Jennifer Sapiel Neptune, Theresa Secord, Bahia Shehab, Sarah Sockbeson, Mary Sully, Ramon Tejada & Carlos Avila, Pedro “Monky” Tolomeo Rojas Meza, Madeline Tomer Shay, Anna Tsouhlarakis, Dori Tunstall, Kelly Walters, Ben Warner, Lauren Williams, Alisha B Wormsley, Vocal Type, Tadanori Yokoo, and Vanessa Zúñiga Tinizaray.

## About the Curators

### Brian Johnson

Brian Johnson, a member of the Monacan Indian Nation, is an award-winning designer and curator. He is a partner of Polymode, where he focuses on amplifying marginalized and forgotten voices through poetic research, learning experiences, and impactful design. He has guest lectured and hosted workshops at the School of Visual Arts; the Walker Art Center; AIGA's National Design Conference; his alma mater, the Rhode Island School of Design; and is one of the founders of the online learning platform BIPOC Design History. As a curator, he is the author of *Posters That Sing: Indigenous / Native American Printed and Designed Works*, an exhibition scheduled to open September of 2026, at Poster House museum in New York. Deeply invested in the production of good design without the expense of sacrificing our humanity or environment, he extends these values to his recent clients: *The New York Times Magazine*, MIT Press, A24, Nike, Airbnb, MoMA, the Brooklyn Museum, Storefront for Art and Architecture, the Art Institute of Chicago, Dia Art Foundation, and the Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum. Johnson is the recipient of the 2023-24 Emily Hall Tremaine Journalism Fellowship for Curators for which he is focusing on Indigenous-made works to combat erasure and decolonize design. The three-part article series, "Designing a History of Indigenous Graphic Artists", "How Can a Poster Sing?", and "Can We Find Our Way to Indigenous Joy?", appear on *Hyperallergic*. He is a contributor to the upcoming publication, *Gatherings: New Directions in Indigenous Book History* published by the University of Pennsylvania Press.

### Silas Munro

Silas Munro is a designer, artist, writer, researcher, curator, surfer and descendant of the Banyole people of Eastern Uganda. He is the founder of the design studio Polymode based in Los Angeles and Raleigh that works with clients across cultural spheres. Commissions and collaborations include: *The New York Times Magazine*, MIT Press, Nike, Airbnb, the Brooklyn Museum, Storefront for Art and Architecture, the Art Institute of Chicago, Dia Art Foundation, and the Cooper Hewitt Smithsonian Design Museum. Munro is the curator and author of *Strikethrough: Typographic Messages of Protest at Letterform Archive* in 2022-2023. He was a contributor to W. E. B. Du Bois's *Data Portraits: Visualizing Black America* and co-authored the first BIPOC-centered design history course, *Black Design in America: African Americans and the African Diaspora in Graphic Design 19th-21st Century*. His work was recently exhibited at the Raizes Gallery at Lesley University, the LA Design Festival, and the Scottsdale Museum

of Art, and is included in the collections of Tufts University, Lesley University, and the Montalvo Arts Center. Upcoming exhibitions in 2025 include a solo show at The University of Hartford's Joseloff Gallery, and in the group show *Data Consciousness: Reframing Blackness in Contemporary Print* at Print Center New York curated by Tiffany E. Barber. Munro is Founding Faculty, Chair Emeritus for the MFA Program in Graphic Design at Vermont College of Fine Arts.

## About the Ford Foundation Gallery

Opened in March 2019 at the Ford Foundation Center for Social Justice in New York City, [the Ford Foundation Gallery](#) spotlights artwork that wrestles with difficult questions, calls out injustice, and points the way toward a fair and just future. The gallery functions as a responsive and adaptive space and one that serves the public in its openness to experimentation, contemplation, and conversation. Located near the United Nations, it draws visitors from around the world, addresses questions that cross borders, and speaks to the universal struggle for human dignity.

The gallery is accessible to the public through the Ford Foundation building entrance on 43rd Street, east of Second Avenue.

## About the Ford Foundation

[The Ford Foundation](#) is an independent organization working to address inequality and build a future grounded in justice. For more than 85 years, it has supported visionaries on the frontlines of social change worldwide, guided by its mission to strengthen democratic values, reduce poverty and injustice, promote international cooperation, and advance human achievement. Today, with an endowment of \$16 billion, the foundation has headquarters in New York and 10 regional offices across Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East. Learn more at [www.fordfoundation.org](http://www.fordfoundation.org).

**For press inquiries, please contact Hannah Gottlieb-Graham ([hannah@almacommunications.co](mailto:hannah@almacommunications.co)) at ALMA Communications.**