

Damon Davis Unveils New Multimedia Experience at Oakland's Leading Cultural Arts Venue, Betti Ono Gallery

As Betti Ono's first-ever, virtual artist-in-residence, work from the acclaimed post-disciplinary artist will align with the Gallery's mission to build power through culture and narrative therapy

OAKLAND, CA (June 11, 2021) -- Acclaimed post-disciplinary artist Damon Davis and Oakland's leading cultural arts venue, Betti Ono Gallery, have announced Davis' new multimedia experience, *Darker Gods at The Lake of Dreams*. The follow up to Davis' *Darker Gods in The Garden of Low Hanging Heavens*, *Darker Gods at The Lake of Dreams* is the second episode of the Afro-Surrealist art saga that is a mythical parable speaking to aspects of the Black American experience. The exhibition will open to the public Friday, June 18 with a celebration and viewing from 7-10 p.m. and then be on display Saturday, June 19 through Friday, August 13 from 1-5 p.m. at Betti Ono Gallery located at 1427 Broadway, Oakland, CA 94612. Visit BettiOno.com for more information on the exhibition, upcoming events, and to sign up for your slot to privately view *Darker Gods at The Lake of Dreams*.

"For over 10 years, Betti Ono has been a site of creative instigation, discourse, and political action," said Ankya Barber, founder and owner of Betti Ono Gallery. "Davis' practice challenges reductive representations of Blackness and gives reverence to Black life. I can not think of a better time for us to present the monumental works of this artist, whose practice centers on Black identity, power, and world-building."

A full multimedia experience, *The Lake of Dreams* encompasses visual art, textiles, film, music, writing, as well as NFT art to create a boundless immersive experience. Through Davis' partnership with Betti Ono Gallery and the virtual event space provider, Arium, Davis will bring the world of *The Lake of Dreams* to life in the physical and virtual realm, a mirrored exhibition similar to the reflection that is cast when looking in *The Lake of Dreams*.

"The stories we tell ourselves and those we collectively agree upon determine our worldview and where we see ourselves in it," said Damon Davis. "If we can change the narrative we can change everything."

The Story Behind *Darker Gods at The Lake of Dreams*

In this episode of the trilogy, we follow the journey of John Icarus (also known as Black Icarus) the only mortal to ever see The Garden of Low Hanging Heavens where the Darker Gods walk on this plane of reality. Icarus escapes lynching where he was being tarred and feather by flapping and flailing his arms, while having his neck in the noose. Through his sheer will to survive, those feathers bound to his arms and became wings, allowing Icarus to escape the hangman's noose and find salvation atop a holy mountain, where The Garden of Low Hanging Heavens resides.

While exploring the garden, Icarus stumbles upon a child god, Blake the Great, trapped by chains at the shore of his Lake of Dreams. Blake tells Icarus that a pale horse had come into the sacred garden uninvited and had tricked the child god by offering him the enchanted chains that now held Blake in place, for a chance to drink from The Lake of Dreams. The horse drank from the lake and consumed it down to its last drop, then, leaving the child god in chains, moved on, going throughout the garden, encountering other Gods, tricking and hurting them and their followers, and consuming everything in its path. Blake the Great offers Icarus a wager, if he could find the horse and keep it, retrieve the key to the chains and free the boy god, then Blake would let Icarus go out into the lake and fish out his wildest dream.

***Lake of Dreams*, the Album, and *Light and Water*, the Film**

In addition to art hanging on the walls and digital NFT work adorning the digital space, Davis has created an accompanying album, *Lake of Dreams*, as the soundtrack to the experience. *Lake of Dreams* the album will be accompanied by the short musical film, *Light and Water*, a surrealist fantasy in which a man goes to sleep, and in his dream drinks from a lake. This consumption initiates three hallucinations that encompass a journey through fear, death, and eventually a path to his dreams.

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About Damon Davis

Damon Davis is an award-winning, post-disciplinary artist who works and resides in St. Louis, Missouri. His first solo exhibition *Darker Gods in The Garden of Low Hanging Heavens* premiered in St. Louis in 2018, traveling to Art Basel Miami later that year. Davis has work in the permanent collection at the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture and has exhibited at the Museum of Contemporary African Diasporan Arts and the San Diego Contemporary Museum of Art.

Filmmaker Magazine selected him and Sabaah Folayan as part of the "25 New Faces of Independent Film 2016" for their work co-directing the critically acclaimed documentary *Whose Streets?* chronicling the Ferguson uprising of 2014. In 2020, critic Ben Davis cited Davis' project *All Hands on Deck*, which captured the hands of people who shaped and upheld the Ferguson movement, as one of the "100 Works of Art That Defined the Decade."

Davis' work has been nominated for a Critic's Choice Award, Gotham Award, and NAACP Image Award. He is the founder and creative director of St. Louis-based music label and artist collective FarFetched. Davis is a 2015 Firelight Media Fellow, 2016 Sundance Music and Sound Design Lab Fellow, 2017 TED Fellow, 2017 Root100 Honoree, 2020 Kennedy Center Citizen Artist Fellow, and 2020 Monument Lab Transnational Fellow.

About Betti Ono Gallery

Betti Ono is an award-winning, multidisciplinary art space whose mission is to build power through culture. Named by Essence Magazine as one of the 5 reasons to visit Oakland twice in 2018, Betti Ono was founded by Oakland native Anyka Barber. The Betti Ono global headquarters is home to an active cultural arts venue, gallery, and art + design store in the heart of Downtown Oakland's Black Arts Movement & Business District (BAMBD). Offering arts and culture experiences, exhibitions, and public programs that inspire and empower, Betti Ono is a 100% Black women and survivor-led organization.