

**Major Lindsay Adams Solo Exhibition at Irene and Richard Frary Gallery Features  
New Work Exploring Black Movement and Speculative World-Building**

**Abstract painter's work is paired with JHU holdings of rare archival materials from  
Langston Hughes, Billie Holiday, Josephine Baker, and more**

***ELECTRONIC PRESS KIT: Press Release and Images***

**Washington, D.C. (September 15, 2025)**—This fall, the **Irene and Richard Frary Gallery** at the **Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg Center** in Washington, D.C. will present *Ceremony*, the first institutional solo exhibition for artist **Lindsay Adams** (b. 1990), who was most recently commissioned to create a site-specific installation for the new Obama Presidential Center in Chicago. Drawing on Adams' background in international studies and cultural anthropology, the exhibition explores the histories of Black movement, migration, and world-building by placing new works in conversation with never-before-seen ephemera from the collection of Johns Hopkins Sheridan Libraries. On view from **October 29, 2025, through March 7, 2026**, *Ceremony* invites visitors to imagine alternate spaces of joy, safety, and reflection through Adams' gestural brush strokes that unfurl into abstract landscapes.

Centered around *Kind of Blue (1959)* (2024), a large diptych named after Miles Davis' iconic album, and the only preexisting, though never-before-seen, work in the show, the exhibition is composed of 14 paintings and five works on paper, shown alongside nearly 20 archival objects that place the themes of Black mobility running through Adams' work into historical context. Resonating with and informing Lindsay's work, rare books and personal correspondence from historical figures such as Langston Hughes, Hazel Scott, Josephine Baker, and Billie Holiday, as well as objects from unknown individuals underscore the deep historical connection between artistic production and Black freedom. Writings from Adams' personal notebook will also be displayed in the gallery, and visitors are invited to offer their thoughts on postcards in return, to become part of the space and "join the ceremony."

"The exhibition unites physical fragments of the Black experience with Lindsay's conceptual meditations on that same history, creating an impermanent space for togetherness, reflection, and imagination," said *Ceremony* curator, **Claudia M. Watts**. "Visitors are invited to honor the past while envisioning new futures. Lindsay's works become a site of memory, where themes of Black spatial refusal and world-building guide her hand toward a vision of collective existence. Inspired by Sylvia Wynter's *The Ceremony Found* and Sarah Cervenak's *Black Gathering: Art, Ecology, Ungiven Life*, the exhibition stands as a testament to an unending journey for solace, safety, a place to celebrate, a moment to grieve, and a chance to dream."

Engaging with formal and conceptual notions of togetherness, the exhibition is organized around three major themes: domestic world-building, international migration, and movement in the United States. Each examines the physical and ineffable spaces in which the Black community has exercised self-determination and agency within a world that has, throughout history, imposed restrictions on them.

“By approaching the canvas as a site, I scrape, add, and excavate layers of paint to imagine places for myself and those like me,” said **Lindsay Adams**. “Through abstraction, I create spaces of belonging untethered from geography, rooted instead to an ephemeral core—spaces where imagination becomes our most concrete tool for progress. *Ceremony* not only reflects histories of Black liberation; it also inspires the creation of new ones.”

Adams’ practice includes painting and drawing, using rigorous conceptual investigation as the starting point for her vivid canvases. She uses both abstraction and representation to construct layered compositions that reflect both personal and communal narratives. By layering gestural and chromatic elements, Adams examines the fluid and changing nature of time and memory. Many of Adams’ works are inspired by Black musical histories and compositions, literature, and poetics; building upon a tradition begun by African American abstractionist painters in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century who connected their work to visual representations of jazz and poetry, drawing on the form’s improvisational nature.

To complement the exhibition, the installation will be accompanied by a curated soundscape from **Sean Jones**, the Richard and Elizabeth Case Chair in Jazz Studies at the Peabody Institute of The Johns Hopkins University. The playlist, which further reflects on the historic and ongoing connections between Black artistic and cultural production, will be available for download in the gallery through the Bloomberg Connects app.

“The Irene and Richard Frary Gallery at the Hopkins Bloomberg Center is a space where art, scholarship, and community converge to spur discovery and dialogue,” said **Cybele Bjorklund**, Executive Director of the Hopkins Bloomberg Center. “This exhibition brings together expertise from across Johns Hopkins University by uniting international studies, jazz music and traditions, and relevant items from our extensive, rare collections.”

“Exhibiting the work of Lindsay Adams, an artist who was raised in the Washington, D.C. area, illustrates the gallery’s ability to function as a space where the cultural and historic threads of the neighborhood are both celebrated and reimagined,” said **Caitlin Berry**, Director of the Irene and Richard Frary Gallery. “Through Lindsay’s evocative abstractions, in dialogue with rare archival material from JHU Sheridan Libraries, the exhibition underscores how art can honor history while also becoming—and nurturing—spaces of belonging.

Furthermore, the presentation is curated by Claudia M. Watts, an independent curator who hails from Baltimore County and has been shaped by her time there. By connecting creatives from the broader Baltimore and Washington, D.C. communities, the exhibition represents our mission at Johns Hopkins to build bridges between the cities in which the University has a footprint through programming at the nexus of art and culture.”

*Ceremony* is the first solo body of work to be exhibited at the Irene and Richard Frary Gallery, which was inaugurated in October 2024. Advance reservations are requested, and admission to the gallery is free and open to the public.

Programming for the exhibition opening includes a performance from the Graduate Jazz Ensemble at the Peabody Institute directed by Sean Jones on October 31. The program will include selections from Miles Davis' quintessential album, *Kind of Blue*, for which the central painting in the show is named. For more information about the exhibition and related programming, visit <https://washingtondc.jhu.edu/arts-culture>.

### **About Lindsay Adams**

Lindsay Adams (b. 1990, Washington, D.C.) is a writer and painter working across traditional mediums. Employing her educational foundation as a social scientist, with a background in foreign relations, sociology, and cultural anthropology, she systematically engages in her work with precise critical analysis and a perceptive understanding of the complex fabric of social dynamics. Lindsay received her B.A. degrees in both International Studies: World Politics and Diplomacy and Spanish from the University of Richmond and an MFA in Painting and Drawing from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

Embracing her intersectional identity, Lindsay's work serves as a reflection of self, exploring personal and collective histories and the role imagination plays in mining the complexities and nuances of life. Her current body of work is a conceptual investigation of the balance between the known and the possible, examining themes of place, liberation, expanse, and freedom. Each intuitive mark invites a dialogue between reality and dreaming, as she mines through layers of gesture and color to build worlds. Adams alternates between abstract and representational forms, employing formal techniques that highlight the physicality of paint and the delicacy of gesture. In this way, she weaves multiple paintings within one, crafting a rich tapestry informed by interconnected experiences that invites reflection on the boundlessness of dreaming. Her work highlights her interest in constructing imagined ecologies—spaces in which rhythmic gestures and dynamic hues engage in a continuous dialogue.

She has been the recipient of the Helen Frankenthaler Award (2024) and the New Artist Society Merit Award (2023). Her work has been exhibited at the Baltimore Museum of Art, MD, and the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library, Washington, D.C., and is included in the collections of the Baltimore Museum of Art, Northwestern Law School, and Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA). Most recently, she presented solo exhibitions at PATRON Gallery, Chicago, IL, and Sean Kelly Gallery, Los Angeles, CA. In 2025, Adams was commissioned by the Obama Presidential Center for a public installation titled *Weary Blues*, reimagining one of her gestural, gem-colored abstract paintings. Named after the Langston Hughes poem of the same name, the work integrates visual art and Black literary legacy into a communal café space. Currently, Adams is an Artist-in-residence at the World Trade Center through Silver Art Projects.

### **About Claudia M. Watts**

Claudia M. Watts is a multidisciplinary writer, curator, and scholar from Baltimore County, Maryland. She currently works in the department of Modern and Contemporary Art at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C.

Previously, Claudia served as the Director of Culture at Eaton Hotel, managing the property's permanent collection, creating arts-centered programming, providing resources to Washington, D.C.'s creative community, and fostering relationships with the local community and cultural institutions. During her tenure, she presented seven exhibitions featuring local artists, including Lindsay Adams, and partnered with the National Women's Law Center for a nationwide campaign that used art to celebrate COVID-19 frontline care workers.

Prior to Eaton, Claudia worked at the Smithsonian Institution, first as a docent in 2014, before becoming special assistant to the director at the Smithsonian's Anacostia Community Museum (ACM). In this capacity she conceptualized and managed the museum's first online story collection effort, "Moments of Resilience" (2020); commissioned artist Adrienne Gaither to create a mural inspired by the collection for the museum's community lounge; collaborated with ESPN's The Undeclared to reinstall "Separate and Unequal: Black Baseball in the District of Columbia" for the 2018 Major League Baseball All-Star Game; and worked with community organizations, educational institutions, and artists to create programs that supported museum initiatives.

Claudia has written exhibition reviews and essays for several publications including *BmoreArt Magazine*, *Hyperallergic*, *Millennium Film Journal*, and *The Washington Informer*. She received her M.A. in art history from American University and her B.A. from Howard University. She also holds an M.S. in management from the University of Maryland Global Campus.

### **About the Irene and Richard Frary Gallery**

The Irene and Richard Frary Gallery presents free, rotating exhibitions drawn from the University's collections and special exhibitions in partnership with leading museums and collections. Under the leadership of Inaugural Director Caitlin Berry, the jewel box gallery's exhibitions and programs provide a platform for creative expression across a broad range of viewpoints, artistic traditions, and disciplines, showcasing the work of both contemporary and historically significant artists. Complementing the Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg Center's mission to bring together the brightest minds in policy, business, academics, and nonprofits to find solutions to global challenges, the Gallery illuminates the integral role that the arts and artists play in shaping global conversations by both responding to and reflecting the world around them.

For more information about the Hopkins Bloomberg Center and for a full list of upcoming events, visit <https://washingtondc.jhu.edu/bloomberg-center/>. For more information about the Irene and Richard Frary Gallery, including timed entry, visit <https://washingtondc.jhu.edu/arts-culture/irene-and-richard-frary-gallery/>.

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