

NEWS

Walker Art Center to Premiere Newly Commissioned Work by Choreographer and Dance Artist Leslie Parker

Divination Tools: imagine home

Features Powerful Collective of Black Visual Artists, Musicians, and Femme Dance Artists

May 11 – May 13,

with Special Processional Event on Opening Night

MINNEAPOLIS, April 24, 2023—The Walker Art Center is pleased to premiere [Divination Tools: imagine home](#), a newly commissioned work by St. Paul-based choreographer, dance artist, and educator [Leslie Parker](#). Presented May 11 through May 13, at 8:00 p.m. each night, in the Walker's McGuire Theater, the evocative performance brings together a powerful collective of Black visual artists, musicians, and femme dance artists to explore, through music and improvised movement, Black divinity, lineage, and contemporary experience. The work features a specially-made set and environment that grounds performers and audiences and offers a Black space for remembrance, healing, and the conjuring of freedom. *Divination Tools: imagine home* is the culmination of Parker's multi-year collaboration with the Walker's Performing Arts department, which first began in 2021 and reflects the institution's commitment to providing artists with time and opportunity to experiment and develop new projects. It is also the latest iteration of Parker's ongoing [Call to Remember](#) initiative, which embraces multifaceted collaborations and emphasizes Black improvisation and community building, including through dance workshops previously presented in Minneapolis in partnership with the Walker, Pillsbury House Theatre, and Pangea World Theater. Following its premiere at the Walker, *Divination Tools: imagine home* will travel to Danspace Project in New York.

Ticket information for *Divination Tools: imagine home* at the Walker is available on the [institution's website](#).

To celebrate the premiere of *Divination Tools: imagine home*, on the opening night on May 11, Parker will stage a free public processional that will begin in the Minneapolis Sculpture Garden and weave through the public spaces of the Walker, culminating in the McGuire Theater lobby. Through drumming, dance, and visual arts components, the processional, titled [Threshold of Change](#), connects the exterior and interior environments of the Walker and brings together visitors in a moment of individual and communal expression. *Threshold of Change* takes place on one of the Walker's free Thursday evenings, inviting a wide range of audiences to engage with each other and the artists and encouraging a moment of improvised unity and connection, setting the stage for the theatrical world premiere of *Divination Tools: imagine home* in the McGuire. *Threshold of Change* is

a collaboration between Parker, the *Divination Tools: imagine home* collaborators, as well as the Walker's Performing Arts and Public Engagement, Learning, and Impact departments. It was also partially conceived as part of Parker's May 2021 residency at the Pillsbury House Theatre, as she was contemplating the one-year anniversary of George Floyd's murder, which took place only three blocks from the Theatre.

The full cast and collaborative team for *Divination Tools: imagine home* includes: Leslie Parker, choreographer and dance artist (Twin Cities); Bayou Bay, visual artist (Twin Cities); Sharon Bridgforth, dramaturge (Los Angeles); Tenisha George, dance artist (Tallahassee); Jordan Hamilton, visual artist (Twin Cities); Seitu Jones, visual artist (Twin Cities); Farai Malianga, musician/sound designer (Tallahassee); Naimah Petigny, dance writer (Providence); Samantha Mame Diarra Speis, dancer artist (New York); Dameun Strange, musician/sound designer (Twin Cities); Michael Wimberly, musician/sound designer (New York); and Nioka Workman, musician/sound designer (New York).

"*Divination Tools: imagine home* captures the experimental and innovative qualities of Leslie's practice, which I, along with the rest of the Walker team, have had the pleasure to experience and learn from over the past several years," said Philip Bither, McGuire Director and Senior Curator, Performing Arts. "Leslie's ability to explore and grapple with the real and challenging events that have shaped the communities of the Twin Cities through dance and other artforms is incredibly poignant and compelling. I'm so thrilled that the Walker could support the development of *Divination Tools: imagine home* and Leslie's practice more broadly through our residency program, which has been core to our work with artists for many years."

"The addition of *Threshold of Change* is also an opportunity to explore different ways of connecting artists and communities and to further the sense of welcome and openness at the Walker," said Amanda Hunt, the Walker's Head of Public Engagement, Learning, and Impact. "Leslie's vision for this moment ahead of the performance premiere speaks so beautifully to our common desire to find meaning, expression, and critical moments of both reflection and joy. We hope that visitors will come together in this experience, and look forward to sharing it with everyone."

Divination Tools: imagine home is accompanied by a booklet to be handed out at the performances that captures the vision for the work and the broader practice in which it is grounded. It also includes an essay based on an interview with Parker, Marlies Yearby, Nia Love, and Naimah Petigny.

MORE ABOUT LESLIE PARKER

Leslie Parker is a dance artist, maker, improviser, performer, director, collaborator, and educator from the Rondo community of St. Paul, Minnesota. Her practice is driven by a vision to bring Black cultures into the future, by developing supportive Black Space(s) and encouraging creative exchange through dance art. She designed Leslie Parker Dance Project, LLC, as a group of independent artists working together in performance and as a means to experience dance art more intuitively with witnesses/observers/participants. Through the Project, she highlights unique individual contributions and experimentations, while digging into collective memory. Her aesthetic encompasses an organic physical/movement hybrid influenced by the Black and African Diaspora: Traditional W. African, Black and African American vernacular/social dance, Improvisation, and Contemporary/Modern technique that is derived from and exchanged across multiple continents. More information about her vision, approach, and work can be found on her website:

<https://www.leslieparkerdance.com/>

ABOUT THE WALKER ART CENTER

The Walker Art Center is a renowned multidisciplinary arts institution that presents, collects, and supports the creation of groundbreaking work across the visual and performing arts, moving image, and design. Guided by the belief that art has the power to bring joy and solace and the ability to unite people through dialogue and shared experiences, the Walker engages communities through a dynamic array of exhibitions, performances, events, and initiatives. Its multiacre campus includes 65,000 sq. ft. of exhibition space, the state-of-the-art McGuire Theater and Walker Cinema, and ample green space that connects with the adjoining Minneapolis Sculpture Garden. The Garden, a partnership with the Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board, is one of the first urban sculpture parks of its kind in the United States and home to the beloved Twin Cities landmark *Spoonbridge and Cherry* by Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen. Recognized for its ambitious program and growing collection of more than 15,500 works, the Walker embraces emerging art forms and amplifies the work of artists from the Twin Cities and from across the country and the globe. Its broad spectrum of offerings makes it a lively and welcoming hub for artistic expression, creative innovation, and community connection.

Visit walkerart.org for more information about upcoming presentations, programs, and opportunities to experience the art of our time.

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