



GENERATIONS

LARGE EXHIBITION TEXT

MassArt
Art Museum

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L'MERCHIE FRAZIER

DANIELA RIVERA

WEN-TI TSEN

MAY 22–NOVEMBER 30, 2025

GENERATIONS celebrates artists who are deeply connected to Boston's creative community: L'Merchie Frazier, Daniela Rivera, and Wen-ti Tsen. Working in sculpture, painting, textiles, and public art, these artists explore themes of community memory, identity, and cultural stories. They are the first recipients of the Wagner Arts Fellowship, which awards mid-career artists who are changemakers in Greater Boston. This fellowship was created by Wagner Foundation in partnership with United States Artists. It is based on the belief that art and culture is essential for healthy communities and that artists need support to stay and grow here.

Frazier, Rivera, and Tsen are storytellers, dedicated to honoring earlier generations and inspiring the next. Each artist shares stories of immigrant experiences; the healing power of art; and that cultural transformation happens when we come together. The artworks on view pay tribute to people who have changed the world, in Boston and beyond.

GENERATIONS was curated by Abigail Satinsky, Program Officer and Curator of Art & Culture, and Maggie Wong, Gallery Coordinator at Wagner Foundation, based in Cambridge, MA. The Wagner Arts Fellowship gives awards to three artists annually at a pivotal moment in their careers. The fellowship provides each artist with \$75,000 in unrestricted funding, along with access to supplemental artist services.



WEN-TI TSEN

*Concord, NH #2: Farid, Sylva, Mme. Boyadjian,
and Duke, 2006*

Oil on canvas

48" × 96"

Wen-ti Tsen, born in Shanghai, China in 1936, is a painter and public artist. Since the 1970s, his work has built cultural connections through paintings, art installations, and large public projects. His work lifts up working-class and immigrant experiences and shows how art can shape a city's culture.

Tsen has made several public artworks that honor immigrant workers in cities across the United States including Yakima, Washington, and in Boston's Chinatown. Tsen's own life has been full of migration and travel. He grew up in Paris and London, then studied at Boston's School of the Museum of Fine Arts. A fellowship allowed him to travel across Asia, Europe, and the Middle East. This travel helped him understand the effects of colonization, imperialism, and class inequity. This wide view of the world

inspires his work, like his *Concord, NH* series. This series depicts the story of two artist friends he met in Beirut and who later moved to the United States to flee civil war. Tsen's work as a union billboard painter and movie projectionist for 30 years inspired his interest in social and class issues. He often paints on large 4- by 8-foot canvases that replicate a movie's widescreen framing. Through public art and painting, Tsen makes monuments to everyday life and people.

WEN-TI TSEN

Concord, NH #6: Sylva and Farid, 2014

Oil on canvas

48" × 96"

I first met Farid Haddad about one week after I arrived in Beirut, Lebanon, to start a three-year position as an art teacher, almost 50 years ago. We left a peaceful and thriving Beirut in 1972—full of life—theaters, fashionable boutiques, cafés, and intellectual discussions in three or four interchangeable common languages. In 1975, a vicious, political-religious, civil war erupted that was to last for the next 15 years. Farid found a teaching post in a college in New Hampshire, and [he and his wife Sylva] settled to live close by, in Concord, NH.

Through thirty-some years, with our proximity, and some shared and understood history, we got to be very good friends. At a post-Christmas dinner at our house, I thought of Beirut, Concord, and of the different paths of cultural distinction that we navigate in our lives. I started this series of paintings

to try to sort out aspects of what I saw as their “American” lives. I am very grateful to them for collaborating with and letting me borrow them as personages to sound my own feelings of navigating as an American, and of life in general.

—Wen-ti Tsen

WEN-TI TSEN

The Worker Statues in Chinatown, 2024

Maquettes of bronze sculptures created for Boston Chinatown, in design phase with the Mayor's Office of Arts & Culture and Boston Art Commission

Presenting partners include The Mayor's Office of Arts and Culture, Rose Kennedy Greenway Conservancy, Chinatown Community Land Trust (CCLT), Boston Chinatown Neighborhood Center (BCNC)/Pao Arts Center, Asian Community Development Corporation (ACDC), and Oxford Properties

The Worker Statues in Chinatown: The Grandmother Caretaker and Child

Resin casts

22.5" × 18" × 22"

The Worker Statues in Chinatown: The Laundryman

Resin cast

27.5" × 18" × 18"

In 2026, Tsen will debut a group of four life-size bronze public artworks in Boston's Chinatown. *The Worker Statues in Chinatown* series intends to honor the jobs—doing laundry, working in the kitchen, sewing clothes, and caregiving of children—that were often historically limited to the Chinese immigrant workers in the United States. For this work, Tsen referred to detailed oral history interviews so that the sculptures would show real people's stories. The works also show how people start a new life and create communities and economies. The maquettes displayed here were first shaped out of clay and then made into resin casts. They serve as models for the finished life-sized bronze statues.

WEN-TI TSEN

Concord, NH #3: Sylva, 2008

Oil on canvas

48" × 96"

*Concord, NH #4: Farid, Sylva, Severnia, a Neighbor,
and Duke, 2008*

Oil on canvas

48" × 96"

*The Worker Statues in Chinatown: The Garment
Worker*

Resin cast

23" × 18" × 18"

DANIELA RIVERA

Ella Nunca Chuteo la Pelota (1033 botes)/She Never Kicked the Ball (1033 bounces), 2021

Double-sided drawing, 1033 soccer ball bounces, charcoal, malachite, azurite, copper point drawing on paper, table, tilted mirror

30" × 62" × 48"

Ella Nunca Chuteo la Pelota (2624 botes)/She Never Kicked the Ball (2624 bounces), 2022

Double-sided drawing, 2624 soccer ball bounces, charcoal, malachite, azurite, copper point drawing on paper, mirror

37.5" × 28.5" × 28.5"

Ella Nunca Chuteo la Pelota/She Never Kicked the Ball series addresses themes of agency, collaboration, and political representation. The women of the Chilean mining town Chuquicamata were excluded from the social protections provided by the national mining company that employed their husbands. To organize their own support, they met for coffee in

each other's homes. They asked for protective gear, professional training, and access to better medical care. After their request gained no traction, they approached Cobreloa, the town's men's soccer team. This team, formed by their husbands and sons, recognized them as the Cobreloa female branch. They never kicked the ball, but this recognition provided them with enough visibility to access political representation. This series is built on the tenacity of these women and the idea that freedom is found in the collective, not the individual.

—Daniela Rivera

DANIELA RIVERA

Tilted Paradigm #2, 2025

Wood structure, adobe, earbuds, mirror, sound
10/25/2019 (full day) The Largest March in Chile from
the sound archives of Galeria CIMA (Santiago, Chile)
of the 2019-2020 Chilean protest movement known as
Estallido Social, and sound from symphony orchestra
tuning

96" × 84" × 84"

Daniela Rivera was born in 1973 in Santiago, Chile,
during the time of the Pinochet dictatorship.

She utilizes different materials, and combines
contemporary drawing and sculpture with traditional
methods to tell stories of collective action and
memory. Her materials and techniques often
reference the history of mining, environmental
harm, and the erasure and changes to traditional
building practices. Rivera's use of adobe construction
looks back at decisions made by colonialists and
industrialists as they encountered and expanded
into Latin America. The artist's use of copper

drawing tools stresses the worker's labor involved in this mineral's production. Chile is the largest exporter of copper in the world. Rivera's site-specific installation is a redefinition of a monument that visualizes seemingly intractable structures in society. Containing sounds of resilience and resistance, Rivera's work speaks to the importance of community strength and collaboration.

Ella Nunca Chuteo la Pelota (25 botes)/She Never Kicked the Ball (25 bounces), 2021

Malachite and azurite stains, copper point drawing, soccer ball bounces, and copper leaf

20.25" × 22.25"

DANIELA RIVERA

Sobremesa (Karaoke Politics) maquette, 2019

Doll tables, homemade little tables, concrete

18" × 24" × 3.25"

Project drawing #1 for *Sobremesa (Karaoke Politics)*,

2019

Watercolor and gouache on paper

26" × 40"

In 2019, Rivera took part in the Boston Public Art Triennial (then known as Now + There) Accelerator program, which helps artists create new temporary artworks in Boston. Her project, *Sobremesa (Karaoke Politics)*, was set up in an empty lot in the Grove Hall neighborhood. It gave the community a space to come together through a stage made of connected tables. People were invited to hold their own conversations or events, including karaoke. The word *sobremesa* means “over the table” in English. It is an important part of Spanish and Latin American cultures where people stay at the table after a meal

to talk and share stories. By sharing these traditions, Rivera created an accessible intersection that blurred boundaries and highlighted the cultural richness of Boston's neighborhoods.

L'MERCHIE FRAZIER

L'Merchie Frazier was born in Jacksonville, Florida, during the era of Jim Crow segregation. She is a visual activist, fiber artist, historian, poet, and the Executive Director of SPOKE ART. She uses cloth as a language, creating multimedia works, quilts, and public artworks that create layered stories of five centuries of Black and Indigenous history, as well as contemporary narratives of redlining, discrimination, legacy and activism.

An active citizen, she serves on Boston's Reparations Task Force and the Massachusetts Art Commission. She is a studio resident in the African American Master Artists-in-Residence Program, started at Northeastern University in 1977 by artist Dana C. Chandler. The AAMARP exemplifies the tradition of Black Power-era artist collectives in the United States. Frazier is a lifelong member of The Women of Color Quilters Network. Collective memory in

Black American life and the African diaspora are the through line in Frazier's work, connecting the past to the present. As Frazier says of her work, "I remember, I reclaim, I restore, I reimagine. That's my life's work."

L'MERCHIE FRAZIER WITH RALPH HELMICK

Call and Response: Radiating Safety, 2025

Window screen maquette and planning materials for public art installation at Fire Station 42 in Roxbury, with Mayor's Office of Arts & Culture and Boston Art Commission

Dimensions variable

Call and Response: Radiating Safety, is a public artwork by L'Merchie Frazier. This steel and light artwork honors the long fight for better community and emergency services for Black and Brown people in Boston. The piece will be unveiled to the public in summer 2025. It will be installed on the exterior of the Fire Station 42 in Roxbury, Boston's first new firehouse in 30 years. This sculptural mural shows the community's call for safety and protection, and the hope that firefighters will answer with trust and service.

L'MERCHIE FRAZIER

Barricades: The Mathematics of Racism, Living in the Calculus 2, 2022

Nylon, synthetic tape, and Thinsulate fabrics

43" × 31.5"

Barricades: Living in the Calculus, 2022

Nylon, synthetic tape, and Thinsulate fabrics

30" × 41"

The subject of barricades in this artwork identifies the yellow tape used to target and block out defined space. All too familiar today is the yellow CAUTION tape that marks the stories of the urban street theater of tear gas filled air, protesters, police, and rubber bullets as well as the use of barricade tape highlighting the dynamics between property owners and property-less, and the lack of humanity in our immigration policies.

One quilt features a young Black woman pondering her weight in a world of protest and social issues seen as "living in the calculus" of the geometry of

transparencies across many complicated spaces of caution. “Living in the Calculus” is a quoted lyric by rapper Malik B.

With respect to Black and Brown bodies, what exists on either side of the equation is truly critical. Both quilts beg CAUTION in English and in Spanish, and we can see the algebra of the matrix grid in the weaving, warning “Caution / Cuidado” on the x-y axis of inequality and inequity. Marked in memory are the unprotected rights and lives of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Trayvon Martin, Freddie Gray, Ronald Greene, now Jason Blake, many Black and Brown immigrants and too many more. Who is barricaded in and who is barricaded out? How many more stories? How many more barricades?

—L’Merchie Frazier

L'MERCHIE FRAZIER

Call Me Mrs. Mary E. Pleasant: The Midas Touch, 2021

Appliqued nylon fiber, digital printing

40" × 41.5"

Entrepreneur, civil-rights activist, and benefactor, Mary Ellen Pleasant made a name and a fortune of over \$30 million in Gold Rush-era San Francisco, shattering racial, gender, and class taboos. Born in 1814, her story begins as an indentured servant girl with no formal education, later becoming an active abolitionist in Boston. Later in San Francisco, Pleasant became a real estate innovator, building the first boarding houses for wealthy men in the city. There she also became known as the “Mother of Civil Rights of California,” resulting from her 1866 suit Pleasant vs. North Beach and Mission Railroad Company, where she successfully challenged and won against discrimination on horse-drawn street cars. Alongside her financial partner, Thomas Bell, Pleasant invested in the Bank of California and built the thirty room Bell Mansion featured in the quilt. Pleasant’s image is

highlighted within a frame and her jewelry embossed with 18K gold foil [that] I applied to the fabric in honor of her financial sensibilities and wealth.

—L'Merchie Frazier

L'MERCHIE FRAZIER

Who's In My Neighborhood, from *The Target Series*,
2018

Pieced nylon fabric, machine quilting

34" × 79"

The Target Series is an ongoing series of works that are designed to discuss targeted populations. As a visual artist and historian, I pose questions that address the dominant narrative of social and spatial justice. In Who's In My Neighborhood, the central figure is a young man ...looking onto the theater of his neighborhood landscape, caught in the spiral target. On one side for him is the Ferguson police and on the other, girls jumping double dutch. In the surface below are the Petri dish cartographic maps that define, experiment, and redline neighborhoods, like those in Uphams Corner in Dorchester, and others that could map any neighborhood.

—L'Merchie Frazier

L'MERCHIE FRAZIER

Ericka Huggins: Liberation Groceries, 2019

Nylon, synthetic tape, and Thinsulate fabrics

50" × 40"

This quilted chronicle moment is June 24, 1972 during the Black Community Survival Conference as Bobby Seale and Elaine Brown announced their candidacies for mayor of Oakland, CA and city councilman-at-large. Seated next to them was Ericka Huggins, the Director of the Black Panthers' Intercommunal Youth Institute, with a bag of groceries next to her furnished by the Black Panther Party Free Food Program.

Huggins was arrested in 1969 with Bobby Seale, tried and acquitted after two years, in New Haven, Connecticut. She states: "Our lives were difficult and sometimes sorrowful, but we found joy in serving the people. I was so glad to be out of prison alive and being with my daughter and working with the children."

—L'Merchie Frazier

L'MERCHIE FRAZIER

Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, Written By Herself: The Bronze Muse, 2015

Machine quilted nylon fiber, small literature

72" × 40"

Frances Ellen Watkins Harper was an orator, poet, author, abolitionist, suffragist, and one of the founders of the National Association of Colored Women. Harper suggested that African American writers must present their own stories to break the cycle of misrepresentation that contributes to the oppression of Black Americans, the act of telling one's own story to affirm one's right to justice.

Harper spoke on the same themes about which she wrote—abolition, equal rights, politics, temperance, education, community service, morality, and personal integrity for numerous organizations and movements including the Underground Railroad, the National Association of Colored Women, and the American Equal Rights Association. She shared platforms with advocates Frederick Douglass, William

Lloyd Garrison, Lucy Stone, Susan B. Anthony, and John Greenleaf Whittier. Harper led sit-in efforts to integrate Philadelphia's horse-drawn street cars in 1857, along with defying restrictions against public speaking for women, and her lecture circuit included presentations at Boston's African Meeting House in 1854 and 1864.

—L'Merchie Frazier