

# LIZZI BOUGATSOS & LONNIE HOLLEY NEVER THE SAME SONG

MAY 18 - SEPTEMBER 15, 2024

The Museum of Fine Arts, St. Petersburg is pleased to present the first exhibition dedicated to Lizzi Bougatsos and Lonnie Holley, two artists whose visual practices defy categorization and whose works are steadfastly dedicated to the transformative potential and power of found materials. The title, *Never the Same Song*, references the artists' shared musical backgrounds, as well as the role of improvisation, crucial to their work.



Lizzi Bougatsos



Lonnie Holley

Having met ten years ago at a performance in New York City, Bougatsos and Holley have maintained a connection through shared interests in environmental protection, social justice, and the reuse of everyday objects. This exhibition allows for examination of these artists' independent practices—some from the MFA's collection—and will also premier collaborative artworks that the two will be fabricating in Holley's studio in Atlanta. The artists will present a youth workshop on opening weekend, focused on the waterways of Tampa Bay, and encouraging young artists to find inspiration in found materials. *Never the Same Song* is guest curated by Viva Vadim, an independent curator and artist, and by Katherine Pill, Senior Curator of Contemporary Art.

Lizzi Bougatsos (b. 1974, Queens, NY) is an internationally recognized visual artist and experimental musician. Known for her unique, ethereal vocal style, often referenced as shamanistic, she equates her sculptures and installations to performances. Her work has been described as an act of healing, evoking, and alchemically metamorphosing, rather than capturing, the earth's elements. Bougatsos' legendary band Gang Gang Dance, active for over two decades, was included in The Whitney Biennial (2008). Bougatsos is included in the collections of the Brant Foundation, New York and Greenwich, CT; The Astrup Fearnley Museum, Oslo, Norway; The Dikeou Collection, Denver, CO; and The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, NY. Selected performances include *Concert for Yoko Ono, Washington and the World* at the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, D.C., and an adaptation of John Cage's *4'33* in conjunction with *John Cage: There Will Never Be Silence* at the Museum of Modern Art in 2014. Her 2023 solo exhibition *Idolize the Burn, an Ode to Performance* at TRAMPS in New York City, was acclaimed in reviews by *Artforum*, *Frieze*, *Vogue*, and *The New York Times*. She is represented by James Fuentes Gallery, NY.

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Lonnie Holley, *Without Skin*, 2023, Fire hose, wooden chairs, and nails, Courtesy of the artist, BLUM Gallery (LA/NYC/Tokyo), and Edel Assanti Gallery (London). Photo Truett Dietz.

Lizzi Bougatsos, *The Pillar*, 2022. Metal, wood, and burn suits. Courtesy of the artist and James Fuentes Gallery, NY.



Lonnie Holley, *Watering Myself the Best I Can*, 2019, Tin watering can and funnel. Courtesy of the artist, BLUM Gallery (LA/NYC/Tokyo), and Edel Assanti Gallery (London). Photo Truett Dietz.

Lizzi Bougatsos, *Idolize the Burn*, 2022, Brass chandelier, red wax, silver, candles, resin dipped toe shoes, and wood. Courtesy of the artist and James Fuentes Gallery, NY.

Since 1979, Lonnie Holley (b. 1950, Birmingham, AL) has devoted his life to the practice of improvisational creativity. His art and music, born out of struggle and hardship, but perhaps more importantly, out of furious curiosity and biological necessity, has manifested itself in drawing, painting, sculpture, photography, performance, music, and filmmaking. Holley's sculptures are constructed from found materials in the oldest tradition of African American sculpture. Already imbued with cultural and artistic metaphor, objects are combined into narrative sculptures that commemorate places, people, and events. His work is now in collections of major museums throughout the world, including The Museums of Fine Arts, San Francisco; The Metropolitan Museum of Art; The Philadelphia Museum of Art; The Smithsonian American Art Museum; The National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, and many others. His works are also permanently displayed in the United Nations and exhibited in the White House Rose Garden.

Viva Vadim is a photographer, textile artist, metalsmith, and curator based in Brooklyn, NY. Her work has been shown in museums and galleries in the U.S., and she received the American Visions Award for Visual Arts. Vadim comes from a long line of progressive activists and patrons of the arts, whose passion for art and the environment are woven into her DNA. She was conceived under a Gee's Bend quilt and has spent time in juvenile detention for protesting America's lack of action on climate change. Vadim received the Women's March Generational Courage Award for climate activism. She is currently a student at Pratt Institute and has worked and collaborated previously with both Lizzi Bougatsos and Lonnie Holley.

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