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Brooklyn Exhibit Explores The Many Faces of Black Life

"Printing Black America," on display at the Central Library through May 31, is an exhibit that portrays Black life in the 21st century based on the data visualizations created by W.E.B. Du Bois.

BK Reader Staff
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Over 125 years after [W.E.B. Du Bois](#) unveiled his award-winning data portraits, *Printing Black America* is on display through May 31 at the Central Library, giving Brooklyn audiences a fresh perspective on his historic work.

The exhibition brings together Du Bois' original hand-drawn infographics with contemporary interpretations by [urbanist Shraddha Ramani](#) and visual artist [William Villalongo](#), showing how the past continues to inform and inspire Black life today.

Du Bois debuted his data portraits at the 1900 Paris World Fair, earning a grand prize for a bold, new way of representing Black life and achievement in post-Reconstruction America. Using

surveys, workshops and the limited census data available on Black communities, he created intricate infographics celebrating progress, culture and resilience despite systemic oppression. His work combined artistry and data in a way that was revolutionary for the era, highlighting the dignity, creativity and contributions of Black Americans.

Ramani and Villalongo's work builds on that legacy, translating Du Bois's approach into a contemporary context. Their projects focus on "living communities" across the U.S., using printmaking and mechanical reproduction methods that echo Du Bois's original techniques.

The exhibition pairs historical source materials with modern prints and installations, emphasizing both continuity and evolution in Black visual storytelling. Visitors can see the interplay between past and present, reflecting on the ways history shapes contemporary possibilities and community-driven creativity.

Brooklyn holds a special connection to Du Bois, who lived here from 1951 to 1961, his final U.S. residence before relocating to Ghana. During that decade, he completed four books, the first written at age 83, continuing to explore the intersections of culture, politics and social justice. The Brooklyn exhibition honors that local chapter of his life while connecting it to national and global conversations about Black identity and empowerment.

In addition to the visual displays, Brooklyn Public Library commissioned essays by leading scholars and artists to accompany the exhibition. Contributors include Professor Corey D.B. Walker, Dean of the School of Divinity at Wake Forest University and Director of its Program in African American Studies; Dominique Jean-Louis, Public Historian at the Center for Brooklyn History; artist Stephanie Dinkins, the Yayoi Kusama Professor of Art at Stonybrook University; and curatorial researcher Karole Dill Barkley.

These essays provide historical context, critical insights and reflections on contemporary artistic practice, enriching the experience for visitors.

The exhibit highlights not only historical achievement but also ongoing creativity, resilience, and self-determination, making it a must-see for the community and visitors alike.