

"Black Atlantic," temporary sculpture exhibition at Brooklyn Bridge Park, explores Black identity

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NEW YORK - On the banks of the picturesque East River, visitors to Brooklyn Bridge Park this summer can see five sculptures scattered across several piers. It's part of an exhibition called "Black Atlantic," commissioned by the [Public Art Fund](#).

Hugh Hayden, co-curator and artist, says the project was inspired by the diaspora that connects Africa with Europe and the Americas.

"It's important that all these works aren't, like, dwelling on slavery and sort of more focused on the idea of being a person alive today," he says. "Everyone has a really diverse background and a different range of Blackness."

Another artist, Leila Babirye sculpted a complex work made of wood and materials she collected in the trash. Her work, which stands on Pier 1, is meant to invoke togetherness.

"It's totally my own style, like, how can I do all the forms and come up with something else?" she says of her art.

Babirye is an LGBTQ activist who fled from Uganda. She now lives and works in Brooklyn, and says her totem-inspired forms are meant to stand as beacons of freedom.

"If we forget who we are or where we come from, then we're doomed," Babirye said.

This art is right on the waterfront, exposed to the elements. The works are meant to be touched, interacted with. Artists tell CBS2's Hannah Kliger that they've already seen their works change from the water, sun, and people touching them.

"At times I come and just hide and sit just over there and just see the drama and see how people interact with the work," Babirye says, pointing to a nearby bench.



"Gulf Stream" by Hugh Hayden

Hayden's work, "Gulf Stream," looks like a lifeboat from the outside, with a whale skeleton interior.

"Is it a boat that has swallowed someone, has eaten someone? Where are the passengers, where did it come from? These are all questions I think that people can interpret in a range of ways, and as an artist I'm facilitating this sort of opportunity for discussion," he says.

The other works include a set of flat cast iron sculptures in the grass, inspired by disk-shaped marine creatures.



There is also a plush looking chaise lounge chair that looks deceptively soft, but is instead made of concrete.



Finally, the last work is called "Ruins of Empire," and it reimagines the monument that stands on top of the U.S. Capitol Building, in decay. The artist's work stands with a clear view of the Statue of Liberty in the distance.



"Ruins of Empire"

The sculptures will be on display until Nov. 27. They stand on Piers 1, 2, and 3.