



DRAFT NOT FOR RELEASE

**NEW YORK CITY AIDS MEMORIAL OBSERVES WORLD AIDS DAY 2021
FEATURING A SITE-SPECIFIC INSTALLATION BY JEAN-MICHEL OTHONIEL AND OTHER
COMMEMORATIVE EVENTS
December 1, 2021 5:00-6:30 PM**

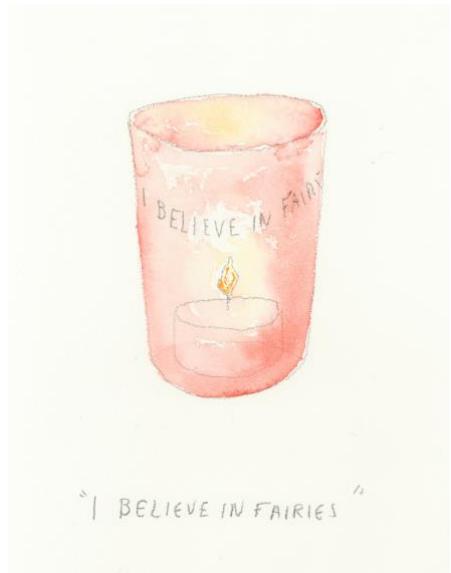
NYC AIDS Memorial Park at St. Vincent's Triangle, Greenwich Avenue & West 12th Street.



Rendering of the December 1, 2021 World AIDS Day memorial

November 19, 2021 (New York) - The New York City AIDS Memorial is pleased to announce an evening series of programs for World AIDS Day, and honoring the 5th anniversary of the Memorial's public dedication, including a candlelight vigil, *Words of Remembrance* - a poetry reading lead by New Yorkers living with HIV - and *I BELIEVE IN FAIRIES* - an installation of 250 engraved votive candles designed by internationally renowned French sculptor, Jean-Michel Othoniel. Created by the Othoniel to remember those taken by AIDS, the glass candle holders will be lit and arranged at the AIDS Memorial in New York City on World AIDS Day, December 1, in celebration of their lives. These objects are intended as a gift to the community attending the events and vigil and will be free for attendees to take home with them.

Othoniel, like many of the generation who came of age at the peak of the AIDS epidemic, was deeply impacted by the trauma following the immeasurable loss and devastation occurring during this time – both personally and on a global scale. Deconstructing the feelings of associating desire with death, of bodies becoming sick and ultimately disappearing, Othoniel uses his artistic practice to transform



painful concepts and memories into beautiful and elegant sculptures, exemplifying what he has called a “hyper-optimism” in the face of a darkening world.

“More than 40 years into the AIDS crisis, we are honored to be a special and sacred place for New Yorkers to gather to remember, reflect, and renew – in particular on this World AIDS Day through the words of poets, authors, and activists, through a candlelight vigil, and through the beautiful gift to the Memorial and our visitors by Jean-Michel Othoniel. Today, the New York City AIDS Memorial stands not only as a tribute to those we have lost and those who have long fought to end the epidemic, but also as a monument to community spirit and caretaking on our fifth anniversary,” notes Dave Harper, Executive Director of the New York City AIDS Memorial.

Engraved with the phrase “I BELIEVE IN FAIRIES” the 250 votive candle holders have been fabricated in red glass by the artisans at Brooklyn Glass, and are intended as a tribute to those lost by serving as a gift to the community attending the vigil at the New York City AIDS Memorial. Othoniel often cites his mentor and friend, the artist Félix González-Torres who died of AIDS-related illness in 1996, as a touch-point for his interest in materiality and iteration, and for helping him to “dissolve long-hallowed boundaries between Conceptualism and emotion.” Through balancing seemingly oppositional forces – sadness, rage, and fear against optimism, strength, and courage – Othoniel exemplifies the complexities surrounding the memorialization of an epidemic which has not yet ended, the reckoning with a difficult history, and our desire to still create a hopeful and beautiful future.

The installation serves as the centerpiece of an early evening ceremony. Starting at **5pm on December 1**, the New York City AIDS Memorial will present Words of Remembrance: New Yorkers Living with HIV Read from the Work of Those We've Lost to AIDS, curated by writer Tim Murphy, and featuring ten Long-Term HIV Survivors reading the words of poets, authors, activists, and others lost to the epidemic. Featuring writing by Tory Dent, Essex Hemphill, Michael Slocum, Iris de la Cruz, David Frechette, Reinaldo Arenas, Paul Monette, Mary Bowman, David Feinberg, and B. Michael Hunter, readers will include Murphy, Jay W. Walker, Kevin Hertzog, Patricia Shelton, John Grauwiler, Ed Barron, Lillibeth Gonzalez, Kineen MaFa, Bruce Ward, and Ivy Kwan Arce. The reading will be followed by remarks by Emma Wade-Smith, British Consul General New York and Her Majesty's Trade Commissioner, North America.

Immediately following the reading, **beginning at 6pm**, the New York City AIDS Memorial will host the 30th anniversary of Out of Darkness - a gathering and candlelight vigil which is to be followed by a procession to St. John’s Lutheran Church at 81 Christopher Street where the names of those lost to AIDS will be read aloud alongside speakers and performances later in the evening. During the gathering, portions of the International AIDS Memorial Quilt will be on display.

Additionally, in partnership with the New York City AIDS Memorial, Avant Arte will be releasing a limited-edition sculptural work by Jean-Michel Othoniel on World AIDS Day, with proceeds benefiting the New York City AIDS Memorial’s Arts & Education Fund. More information on the edition can be found at www.avantarte.com/ - full URL TK.

About The NYC AIDS Memorial:

Founded as a grass-roots advocacy effort in 2011, the NYC AIDS Memorial organization is now a 501(c)(3) corporation, with a fourteen-person board of directors, chaired by Keith Fox.

The Memorial sits at the gateway to a public park adjacent to the former site of St. Vincent's Hospital, which housed the city's first and largest AIDS ward. The hospital became the symbolic epicenter of the disease through depictions in *The Normal Heart*, *Angels in America*, and other important works of film, literature, and art that tell the story of the plague years in New York. The park site is also one block from the LGBT Community Center on 13th Street, where ACT-UP and other AIDS advocacy/support groups first organized. Furthermore, the site is highly visible, accessible, and surrounded by amenities for visitors. For all these reasons, New York City officially named the new park that houses the memorial the "New York City AIDS Memorial Park at St. Vincent's Triangle." The Memorial was dedicated on World AIDS Day, December 1, 2016.

Today, the New York City AIDS Memorial honors the more than 100,000 New Yorkers who have died of AIDS and acknowledges the contributions of caregivers and activists who mobilized to provide care for the ill, fight discrimination, lobby for medical research, and alter the drug approval process. The Memorial aims to inspire visitors to remember and reflect as well as empower current and future activists, health professionals, and people living with HIV in the continuing mission to eradicate the disease through the maintenance of our permanent, architecturally significant Memorial as well as through educational and cultural programming.

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