GROUNDS FOR SCULPTURE

“Shantell Martin: Past, Present, Future” inspires visitor participation, reflection on time

Artist prompts and an engagement space encourage visitor self-expression

Hamilton, NJ — October 27, 2026 — The immersive, site-specific installation “Shantell Martin: Past, Present, Future” at Grounds For Sculpture (GFS) features murals, a sculpture placed within the gardens, a two-year daily meditative practice, an engagement space, and a community quilt.

The artist is known for her playful and visually captivating work that often involves performance, play, and linework. Self-exploration and continuous curiosity are key to her practice, and she invites viewers to join in the creative process that is as much about kindness as the act of creating.

In the park’s West Gallery, an engagement space encourages visitors to pull from three towers of paper to make their own drawings inspired by the key exhibition themes of time, discovery and play. The towers of paper will shrink and grow, reflecting the passage of time.

Also in the gallery are two freeform, intuitive murals created onsite during the summer of 2026, and a selection of drawings from a new body of work called the “Reply Card Project.” This project documents two years of Martin's daily drawing practice and showcases a small selection of the 730 images created. These meditative moments bring visual cues from the past into the exhibition space. The many health benefits of drawing and self-expression are continuous threads within this exhibition.

“Shantell Martin’s creative practice explores the meditative nature of artmaking with collaboration and playfulness,” shared Kathleen Ogilvie Greene, chief audience officer at Grounds For Sculpture and the exhibition’s curator. “By uniting artmaking with self-care and bringing art into the gardens, the exhibition underscores GFS’ pillars of art, nature and wellness.”

Martin has a history of working with textiles and continues her collaborative practice by working with the Princeton Sankofa Stitchers Modern Quilt Guild (PSSMQG) in the creation of four large quilts made in collaboration with local community partners and the GFS community; the public can learn more about the quilt workshops and register on the sculpture park’s website. PSSMQG honors the legacy of African American quilting by sharing its traditions with the broader public. The quilts will be in process through February 2027 with a public celebration of the completed work, which will be on view in the West Gallery, will be held in April 2027.

Outside in GFS' gardens, visitors can encounter additional murals on select pathways and the largest sculpture Martin has created to date. This sculpture, entitled "BENN," (2026), began as a drawing Martin made more than 20 years earlier. It was produced at the Johnson Atelier, an onsite high-tech art fabricator and restorer that joined with GFS in 2025 and often functions as an extension of the artist's studio.

"Returning to that drawing now feels like a conversation with an earlier version of myself," Martin explained. "There were ideas in it that I could recognize, but also possibilities I hadn't yet imagined. Bringing a drawing into three dimensions opens up so many questions. On paper, a character can exist through just a few lines. In sculpture, you have to consider its weight, balance, scale and what happens when someone walks around it. What does the back look like? How does it occupy space?"

Martin, who performed live at the exhibition's opening celebration, will return to GFS to participate in the annual Garden Retreat on April 17, 2027.

"Shantell Martin: Past, Present, Future" is on view at Grounds For Sculpture through July 23, 2028.

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About Grounds For Sculpture

Grounds For Sculpture (GFS) is a 42-acre not-for-profit sculpture park, arboretum and museum, founded by the late Seward Johnson. Featuring over 300 contemporary sculptures by renowned and emerging artists in a beckoning, ever-changing landscape, Grounds For Sculpture combines art and nature to surprise, inspire and engage visitors from all backgrounds in the artist's act of invention. Grounds For Sculpture offers exhibitions in six indoor galleries alongside experiential art, horticulture and wellness programs and its campus includes 25 artist studios and Johnson Atelier, which boasts state of the art sculpture fabrication and restoration capabilities. Located in Hamilton, New Jersey, Grounds For Sculpture is easily accessible from the New York City and Philadelphia metropolitan areas by public transit and is open year-round. For more information, visit groundsforsculpture.org.

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