

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

American Academy in Rome Presents *June Jordan, The Poetry of Design*

Exhibition Features Rarely Seen Works by June Jordan, R. Buckminster Fuller, Charles Henry Alston, Colleen Browning, Alice Neel, and Whitfield Lovell

April 20 to June 11, 2023

Press Preview: April 19, 2022, 11:30am-1:00pm | RSVP to m.bonicelli.ext@aarome.org

Opening Reception: April 20, 2023, 6:00pm

Full Press Kit Available [Here](#)

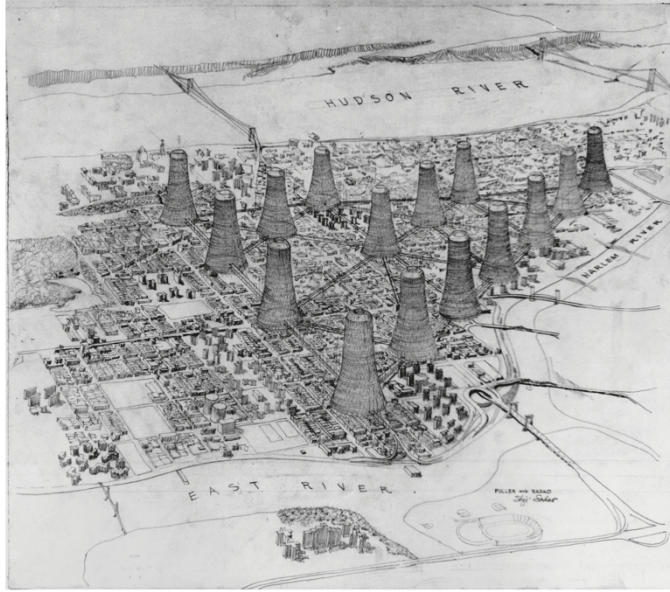
ROME AND NEW YORK – From April 20 to June 11, 2023, the American Academy in Rome will present *June Jordan, The Poetry of Design*, the first exhibition of the work of the Harlem-born poet, designer, and activist. From the mid-1960s, when she collaborated with architect R. Buckminster Fuller on an urban plan for Harlem, to the mid-1970s, June Jordan (1936-2002) pushed the boundaries of environmental design. While Jordan’s poetry and political essays have been widely acclaimed, her contributions to architecture are only beginning to come to light. This exhibition represents a significant expansion in our understanding of Jordan’s early career and how her explorations across disciplines affected her later social justice activism. A fully illustrated catalogue has been produced in concert with the show.



unknown
June Jordan, Rome, c. 1970
gelatin silver print, 20.3 × 25.4 cm (8 × 10 in.)
June Jordan Papers, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, Harvard University

“This exhibition draws from the archives of the American Academy in Rome, highlighting the rich history of the Rome Prize,” said **Mark Robbins, AAR President and CEO**. “It is part of a continuing project to represent the complexity of the American experience.”

In 1970, Jordan won a Rome Prize in environmental design. The year she spent in Rome marked a turning point in her career, and in the history of the American Academy. Through photographs she took in particular—presented here for the first time—Jordan expanded her vision of the ways urban space impacts living experience. In addition to pushing environmental design to extend beyond architecture and encompass literature and mass media, she argued it should serve—and include—a multiplicity of voices across American society. As the first Black woman to earn the Rome Prize, and as a feminist, queer artist,



Design by R. Buckminster Fuller and June Jordan
Original drawing by Shoji Sadao
"Skyrise for Harlem," 1964
digital print, 50.8 x 61 cm (20 x 24 in.)
Image file from R. Buckminster Fuller Collection, Stanford University Library and Special Collections.
Courtesy The Estate of R. Buckminster Fuller

she pioneered new forms of inclusivity at the Academy.

The material the exhibition brings together—paintings, drawings, photographs, film stills, illustrated books, and magazines—underscores the expansiveness of Jordan's creativity in the 1960s and early 1970s. Rarely seen drawings for urban interventions in Harlem and central Italy by Fuller show how his collaboration with Jordan strove to improve the living standards of the poor and powerless. Paintings by acclaimed American artists Charles Henry Alston, Colleen Browning, and Alice Neel, which Jordan wrote about in her 1969 poem on Black America, *Who Look at Me*, illustrate the dignity of the community—and their need, in her words, for "vastly improved dwellings"—that fueled Jordan's activism through design. The exhibition

also features audio recordings of poems she wrote around her time in Rome that express her architectural ideas through literature. Together, the works on view show how Jordan drew on the power of literature, architecture, urbanism, and visual art to catalyze change in society.

June Jordan, The Poetry of Design is curated by Lindsay Harris, interim Andrew Heiskell Arts Director, with Lexi Eberspacher, assistant curator.

June Jordan, The Poetry of Design

April 20–June 11, 2023

Open on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays, from 4:00 to 7:00pm

AAR Gallery

American Academy in Rome

Via Angelo Masina 5, Rome, Italy 00153

Opening Reception

April 20, 2020, 6:00-9:00 PM

AAR Gallery

A *Conversation/Conversazioni* with the between Sean Anderson (2005 Fellow), associate professor of architecture at Cornell University and former Museum of Modern Art curator, and the architect J. Yolande Daniels (2004 Fellow, 2023 Resident), associate professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, will be held in conjunction with the opening.



Alice Neel
Abdul Rahman, 1964
oil on canvas, 50.8 x 40.6 cm (20 x 16 in.)
© The Estate of Alice Neel
Courtesy the Estate of Alice Neel, David Zwirner and Victoria Miro
Mohamad and Mahera Abu Ghazleh Collection

Support

June Jordan, *The Poetry of Design* is supported by the Terra Foundation for American Art, the Estate of R. Buckminster Fuller, and the June M. Jordan Literary Trust. The Academy gratefully acknowledges the support of Bloomberg Philanthropies.

Publication

The exhibition is accompanied by an illustrated catalogue with essays by Lindsay Harris, Ousmane Power-Greene, Erica R. Edwards, Cristina Iuli, and a preface by AAR President Mark Robbins. The book (softcover, 143 pages, 42 illustrations) will be available for purchase at AAR in-person and on aarome.org.

American Academy in Rome

Established in 1894, the American Academy in Rome (AAR) is America's oldest overseas center for independent studies and advanced research in the arts and humanities. The Academy has since evolved to become a more global and diverse base for artists and scholars to live and work in Rome. The residential community includes a wide range of scholarly and artistic disciplines, which is representative of the United States and is fully engaged with Italy and contemporary international exchange. The support provided by the Academy to Rome Prize and Italian Fellows, and invited Residents, helps strengthen the arts and humanities.



June Jordan
Giovanni Jacobucci staircase, Janiculum Hill, Rome, c. 1970
gelatin silver print, 20.3 × 25.4 cm (8 × 10 in.)
June Jordan Papers, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, Harvard University

To learn more about the American Academy in Rome, please visit aarome.org.

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