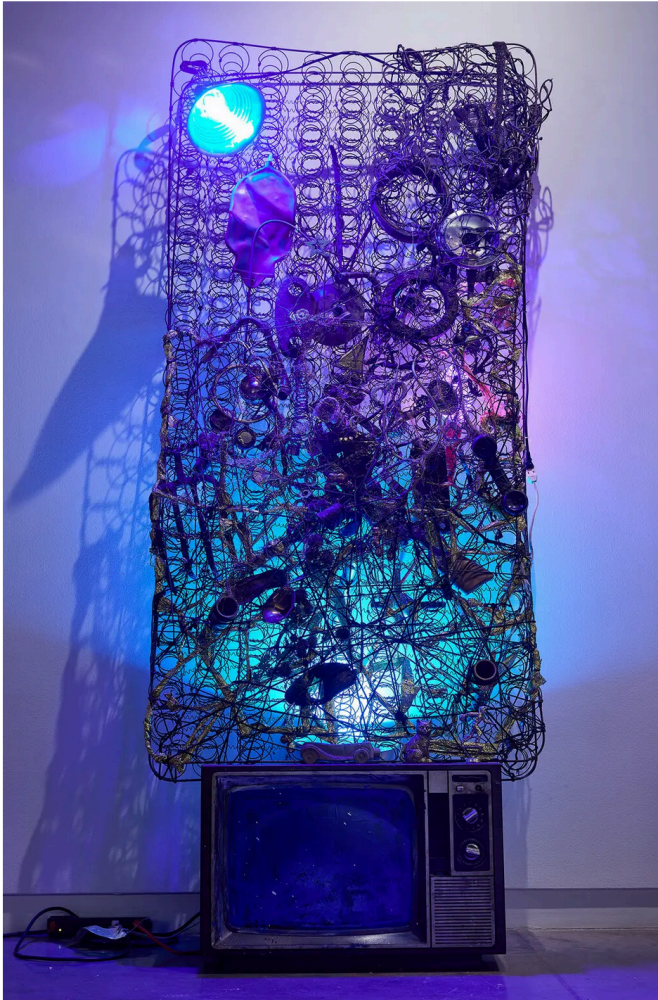


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An Artist's Ode to the Bronx



From left: Abigail DeVille's "Bronx Heavens (bed)" (2022) and "Dark Matter, No Matter" (2020). Left: Courtesy of the artist. Installation view in "Bronx Heavens" at the Bronx Museum of the Arts. Photo: Argenis Apolinario. Right: Installation view at Simon Lee Gallery, New York. Photo: Pierre Le Hors. Courtesy of the artist

By Abigail Glasgow

Abigail DeVille has always loved sci-fi and history, which explains her interest in the space race and her view of it as a mirror of the United States' colonial legacy: Both fantasize the unknown, both seek to produce wealth, both use exploration as a means of power and control and both are what she calls "larger systems that we're a part of, though not always consciously." In her latest show, "Bronx Heavens," the multimedia artist nods to these themes through Afrofuturist sculptures like a space capsule that visitors can enter, or a deconstructed mannequin on a wire-framed rocket ship. The latter, inspired by Gil Scott-Heron's song "Whitey on the Moon," examines how the moon landing distracted the United States, both fiscally and emotionally, from inequities at home. Taken together, her pieces consider what these types of new-world pursuits erase or leave behind.

To counter this erasure, the Bronx native, 41, seeks to play a part in preserving her home and one of the nation's most diverse neighborhoods. Through nontraditional record-keeping, she has built work with local scraps like cigarette butts, synthetic hair or materials left behind by her late grandmother; she has erected vintage TVs that broadcast little-known and newly shot footage of the neighborhood's historical sites. She will also, she shares, "record unexpected snippets and unofficial histories of the people living here now" through the space capsule, which will start in the museum and eventually make its way to nearby schools and cultural festivals. As DeVille says, "There are an infinite amount of ways in which we hold history, in which we pass it down to one another that exists outside of the written record." "Bronx Heavens" is on view at the Bronx Museum of the Arts until April 2023, bronxmuseum.org.