

JEAN-MARC SUPERVILLE SOVAK

SEPTEMBER 15–DECEMBER 22, 2022

THE PRICE OF
HALF-FREEDOM:
MANUEL DE GERRIT DE REUS;
ENSLAVED, CONDEMNED,
PARDONED AND FREED,
1641-1644

SHIRLEY FITERMAN ART CENTER BMCC 81 BARCLAY STREET NEW YORK, NY 10007

Jean-Marc Superville Sovak's exhibition, *The Price of Half-Freedom* is a site-specific installation based on the story of Manuel de Gerrit de Reus and the role of slavery in New Amsterdam, the capital of New Netherland, which was a provincial extension of the Dutch Republic from 1624-1644. The English would later name it New York when they seized the colony from the Dutch. Manuel de Gerrit de Reus was among the first enslaved people brought to New Amsterdam by the Dutch West India Com-pany. Enslaved laborers were crucial in developing the colony's infrastructure, building roads and defensive walls, and clearing, cultivating, and protecting the land. In 1641, Manuel de Gerrit de Reus and eight other enslaved peoples confessed to the murder of Jan Premero (also enslaved by the Dutch) and "leveraged their collective value against what the Dutch West India Company called 'justice,'" as Sovak describes, to secure for themselves, and others, a "conditional form of freedom two hundred years before the Emancipation Proclamation."

Jean-Marc Superville Sovak
Manuel de Gerrit de Reus #9
Printed fabric
2022
144in x 54in



The Price of Half-Freedom is comprised of an installation that includes video, historic documents, a sculptural brick work, and a sequence of large-scale prints on fabric representing de Reus and the eight others.

The bodies used to portray these men are appropriated from prints by Dutch artist Peter Paul Rubens and the images of their faces are taken from a number of other major European painters.

The choice to appropriate Rubens stems from the artist's unprecedented visibility and fame: both a diplomat for the Dutch Republic and a major figure in art history, Rubens is perfect symbol of the long standing interconnectedness between art and politics. In his practice as a multidisciplinary artist, through projects such as this, Sovak examines the history and legacy of colonialism and seeks to reframe the historical narratives surrounding slavery—as well as art history—in the United States.

Shirley Fiterman Art Center, BMCC, CUNY

Gallery Hours:

Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday 12-5PM

& By Appointment

To make an appointment please contact the gallery:

shirleyfitermanartcenter@bmcc.cuny.edu or 212-776-5631