

Harlem's Studio Museum Reopens With a Striking New Home and Bold Mission for Black Art

After years of anticipation, the landmark institution reopens in November with a stunning new building and exhibitions honoring its legacy.

By [Denny Lee](#) | Updated on October 12, 2025



The Studio Museum in Harlem, in New York.
Credit: Dror Baldinger FAIA/Studio Museum in Harlem

[Harlem](#) is buzzing again. This fall, the neighborhood welcomes back one of its cultural cornerstones: the Studio Museum in Harlem. After years of anticipation, the institution unveils its striking new home on Nov. 15—a seven-story, [82,000-square-foot](#) building designed by [Adjaye Associates](#) that promises to be both an architectural landmark and a beacon for Black creativity.

For Thelma Golden, the museum's longtime director, the reopening is more than just a return. It's a reaffirmation of place and purpose. "Harlem is a place like no other," she says. "This neighborhood is synonymous with creative innovation, cultural movements, and social revolutions."

The museum's inaugural exhibition brings the story full circle, celebrating the works of [Tom Lloyd](#)—an artist and activist who appeared in the museum's very first show back in 1968, when the fledgling institution occupied a loft above a jewelry store on Fifth Avenue. Alongside Lloyd's work, the galleries will showcase highlights from the museum's permanent collection of more than 9,000 pieces, including works by Rashid Johnson, Lorraine O'Grady, and Faith Ringgold.



From left: "Lawdy Mama" by Barkley L. Hendricks; "Bonfire" by Norman Lewis.
Credit: From left: ©Barkley L. Hendricks. Courtesy the Estate of Barkley L. Hendricks and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York; ©Estate of Norman Lewis, Courtesy Michael Rosenfeld Gallery LLC, New York, NY

The new Studio Museum is more than an art space—it's a cultural anchor in a neighborhood that has been reshaped by waves of gentrification. That duality is not lost on Golden. "Despite these varying perspectives and ideas of Harlem, there is one thing that endures: Harlem is Black culture," she says.

Here, her picks for Harlem's other must-see cultural sites.

The Apollo Theatre

This is a Harlem icon. Its stage has been graced by the likes of Ella Fitzgerald, Sarah Vaughan, Billie Holiday, Sammy Davis Jr., James Brown, Gladys Knight, Lauryn Hill, and so many others. To step into The Apollo is to engage directly with the great history of Harlem and its creative legacy.

The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture

A branch of the New York Public Library, the center is much more than a collection of books—it is an archive of Black culture. It is also a community archive, with collections from Maya Angelou, James Baldwin, Harry Belafonte, Lorraine Hansberry, and Malcom X—landmark figures within Black culture.

Dance Theatre of Harlem

Its origins are humble. Formed in a converted garage in Harlem in 1969 by Arthur Mitchell (who is said to have established the company after hearing of the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr.), the theater has long been dedicated to uplifting expansive ideas around Black identity through the form of ballet.

National Jazz Museum in Harlem

If there is a music genre synonymous with Harlem, it would be jazz. Many jazz legends came to fame in the neighborhood's speakeasies and clubs. This museum brings that history to light, and—through free and low-cost workshops, performances, and events—ensures that jazz remains accessible to all.

National Black Theatre

The theater's history has always been entangled with ours. Both were founded in 1968 out of the same cultural conditions, and were located in the building above a jewelry factory. It is the longest-running theatre dedicated to showcasing and producing work by Black artists.

El Museo del Barrio

Founded in 1969, El Museo emerged out of a desire to create new models within the arts, and celebrates, presents, and preserves art by Puerto Rican and Latin American artists. Its permanent collection includes over 8,500 works that showcase more than 800 years of Latin, Latin-American, and Caribbean art.

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