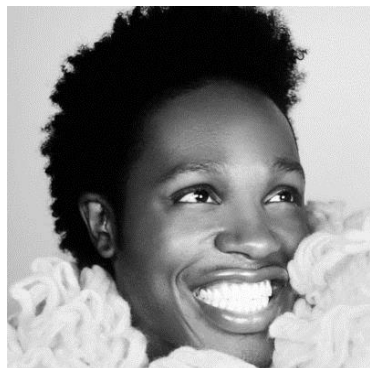


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[Peter 'Souleo' Wright](#)

Journalist and curator

On the "A" w/Souleo: Harlem's New Children's Museum Opens to the Public

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Visual artist, David Shrobe wishes that during his childhood in Harlem he had his own local children's museum. As a fourth generation Harlemithe he is finally seeing that dream manifested with the opening of [Sugar Hill Children's Museum of Art & Storytelling](#). And proving that the cliché 'beyond my wildest dreams' is sometimes appropriate, Shrobe is the museum's first artist in residence through a partnership with the Laundromat Project.



Museum exterior/Credit: Wade Zimmerman

The museum is within the Sugar Hill Development, a mixed-use site that also includes affordable housing units and a preschool. Developed by [Broadway Housing Communities](#) and designed by esteemed architect David Adjaye, the \$80.2 million building is located within the historic neighborhood of Sugar Hill.



David Shrobe's Artist-in-Residence Studio/Credit: Wade Zimmerman

The area once was home to the likes of W.E.B. Du Bois, Zora Neale Hurston and Langston Hughes. However, the neighborhood has since faced high poverty rates and increasing housing costs as gentrification spreads throughout Harlem. It is a paradox familiar in many U.S. cities. For Shrobe--who generally opposes gentrification--the museum's presence represents positive neighborhood change.



Mural by Saya Woolfalk and Aya Mitchell/Credit: Wade Zimmerman

"A lot of gentrification I don't agree with but this is the real change Harlem truly needed," he said. "It is an amazing cultural resource and this residency has given me the opportunity to give back to Harlem."

During Saturday's opening, Shrobe displayed several of his pop culture inspired mixed media works and studies. Also on display was a dreamscape mural by artist Saya Woolfalk and daughter Aya Mitchell, selections from the Studio Museum in Harlem organized by Lauren Haynes and a text themed exhibition co-curated by the museum's associate director of curatorial programs, Lauren Kelley and El Museo del Barrio's Rocio Aranda-Alvarado. For Kelley, the sophisticated concepts offer an alternative to what may normally be found at a children's museum.

"We really want to make this a place where product placement is not the big draw as much as engagement with art and storytelling," she said. "We are excited about all children's museums but toys are an easy sell. We won't depend on toys or cartoons from movies and TV. Fine artists have so much stimulating imagination and that should be enough."