

ARTnews

Lauren Halsey to Transform the Hollywood Bowl with Immersive World for a Concert Headlined by Erykah Badu



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Lauren Halsey.
PHOTO RUSSELL HAMILTON/COURTESY THE ARTIST, DAVID KORDANSKY, AND GAGOSIAN

The Los Angeles–based artist Lauren Halsey will transform the Hollywood Bowl tonight for a one-night only event with a star-studded line-up, headlined by Erykah Badu.

With some tickets still available, doors to the Bowl open tonight at 6 p.m. where visitors will see a large-scale installation-cum-environment that Halsey has created to set the stage for Badu—she's also done the stage design. Also performing are The Alchemist, DJ Pee .Wee (Anderson .Paak), Flea, and artist Charles Gaines who is collaborating with Black Nile and Devin Daniels. Actor Yvonne Orji will serve as host.

After meeting Johanna Rees, vice president for programming and creative partnerships at the Hollywood Bowl, Halsey pitched an idea that had long been brewing in her mind. "I knew that I just had to jump in, and the opportunity wasn't going to come to me," she told *ARTnews*. "I said to her, 'What would you think about a visual artist doing a campus takeover—very maximalist esthetic, all anchored by a stage or a headliner.' ... I thought how cool it could be to just remix it and turn it on its head."

Rees agreed and they soon invited Badu, whom Halsey had in mind when she first pitched the concept as she had recently asked Badu to DJ the Hammer Museum's 2025 gala, which honored Halsey alongside actor and activist Jane Fonda.

The Hollywood Bowl has been an important part of Halsey's creative imagination since childhood. She remembers the impression it left when she would visit on field trips or go to summer camp there. "The spaciousness, how beautiful it is—I always knew I wanted to do something there," she said.

Since even before her days at California Institute of the Arts (CalArts), where she earned her BFA in 2012, Halsey has always embraced working across disciplines, making sets for performances at the church she attended. The elaborate sets of the band Parliament-Funkadelic were a key inspiration. "It's always been a goal of mine to contextualize objects around musicians in a live setting," she said.

As Halsey's star has risen, she's also tapped musicians to celebrate with her. When her dealer, LA's David Kordansky, expanded to New York and inaugurated its space with a solo show for the artist, Halsey asked Ms. Lauryn Hill to perform at the after party, at the Boom Boom Room. Other musicians she's hired have included Badu, Doechii, and, of course, Parliament-Funkadelic.

The Hollywood Bowl performance builds off that first collaboration with Badu. "I built a sort of world around her, and I'm excited to present it," Halsey said. That world references Halsey's own visual language, in particular her collage works, which she described as "super saturated, super dense."

"I started going back to this typology I call my 'funk mounds' that have these little vignettes inside of them, and isolating moments that I wanted to scale in a very experimental way," she said. "I don't want to give it away, but I've done that basically."

Her takeover of the Bowl's campus references another iconic LA locale, the Santa Monica Pier. She's brought the arcade and carnival games found on the boardwalk—like ping pong tables, mini golf, and basketball games, the latter a favorite of the artist's. "I'm doing my own version of that, in my language," she said.

She's also drawing on her 2024 show at the Serpentine Galleries in London, "emajendat," which lends its title to the Bowl performance. "That whole show was me chasing my funk and having fun," she said. "I've tried to bring that energy and that looseness, and that sort of free-spirited way of making to this—and it's been liberating."

It's been a ton of work, Halsey said, but she thinks it's time well spent as she expects the evening to draw in "a multitude of demographics and ages," including ones who might not typically go to museums and galleries.
