



**His work was buried. His memory all but destroyed.
But Kendal Hanna's day has come.**

A Sundance-supported feature documentary 10 years in the making, “Brigidy Bram” is slated for release in January 2024. The production team is seeking an Executive Producer—and you can get your name in the credits for only \$50 via their Kickstarter campaign, here: <http://kck.st/45dAD3t>

Directors Kareem Mortimer (*Cargo, Passage, Children of God*) and Laura Gamse (*Couchsurfing, “Hello,” We Lied, The Creators*) have brought an intimate portrait circling fact and fiction to screen. **The true story of prolific painter Kendal Hanna reveals a case study of how we codify genius—and institutionalize difference.** In the film, Hanna pieces together the truth of his life story, pinpointing the forces threatening to erase his memory, his work, and his name from history.

The title of the film, “Brigidy Bram”, is a Bahamian figure of speech (Bahamian—not Bohemian—aka from the Bahamas). To elderly islanders, it means “the sound you make when you fall down the stairs—the last two steps go ‘brigidy BRAM!’”. To Hanna, “brigidy bram” means the interrelation of everything at once: complex, chaotic, unorganized, and beautiful. The film sets this sensibility in cinematic motion, propelling the audience into the life and mind of Kendal Hanna.

Born in 1936 in New Providence, Bahamas, Kendal Hanna is a painter and sculptor known today as the most famous living Bahamian artist. Despite exhibiting extraordinary talent from a young age, Hanna was deported from the US, committed to a psychiatric institution, diagnosed with schizophrenia and subjected to a draconian regimen of electroshock therapy (2-4 treatments per week for an undisclosed number of years; much of Hanna's memory has been lost, as have the medical records).

Modern electroconvulsive therapy (ECT) is a medical intervention used to treat depression and bipolar disorder—though the electrical stimulation of the brain may create permanent gaps in memory, the benefits are worth the risk to many patients. The electroshock therapy of Hanna’s time, however, was a **far more blunt instrument** which we now know would have had no effect on schizophrenia. That is, if Hanna were schizophrenic at all.



Due to his treatment, Hanna’s memories have become understandably muddled. Dates have been lost, names come and go, individual memories surface and sink. Drawing from the strong literary and cinematic tradition of anachronistic narratives, we uncover with Hanna the many mysteries of his life, as one might put together a jigsaw puzzle, piece by piece. Wrapped up in a wild tale —similar to “Searching for Sugarman” and “Stories We Tell” — is an excavation of the pernicious forces that institutionalized and silenced Hanna in the prime of his life. His “commitment to pure negritude” influenced his artwork and his perception as an artist—but did it also influence his diagnosis?

In 1968, psychiatrists called schizophrenia “the protest psychosis,” a disease that afflicted civil rights activists with ‘delusions’ regarding racism. Revolutionaries were erroneously diagnosed with schizophrenia, as symptoms were not found in medical fact, but rather social fabrication. As Jonathan Metzl writes about *The Protest Psychosis: How Schizophrenia Became a Black Disease*, “Associations between insanity and the civil rights movement played out extensively in American popular culture, and helped to shape the emergence of a much wider set of stigmatization of schizophrenia—that it was an unduly hostile or violent disorder.” To this day, black men (particularly those from the Caribbean) are disproportionately diagnosed with schizophrenia.

This is a story of how society overlooks genius, pathologizes blackness, and how the patient persistence of one man can quietly change the world. We find that Kendal is a profoundly sane individual living in a seemingly ‘schizophrenic’ society: one with paranoid delusions regarding the perceived threat of people of color. In the words of Nina Martin and Renee Montagne, “For much of...history, these types of disparities were largely blamed on blacks’ supposed susceptibility to illness and their own behavior. But now many social scientists and medical researchers agree, the problem isn’t race but racism.”

Call to Action: *Back the Brigidy Bram Kickstarter campaign to (1) get your name in the credits of the film for a mere \$50 (2) buy an authentic Kendal Hanna print for \$300 or (3) join the team as a Contributing Producer for \$10,000. <http://kck.st/45dAD3t>*