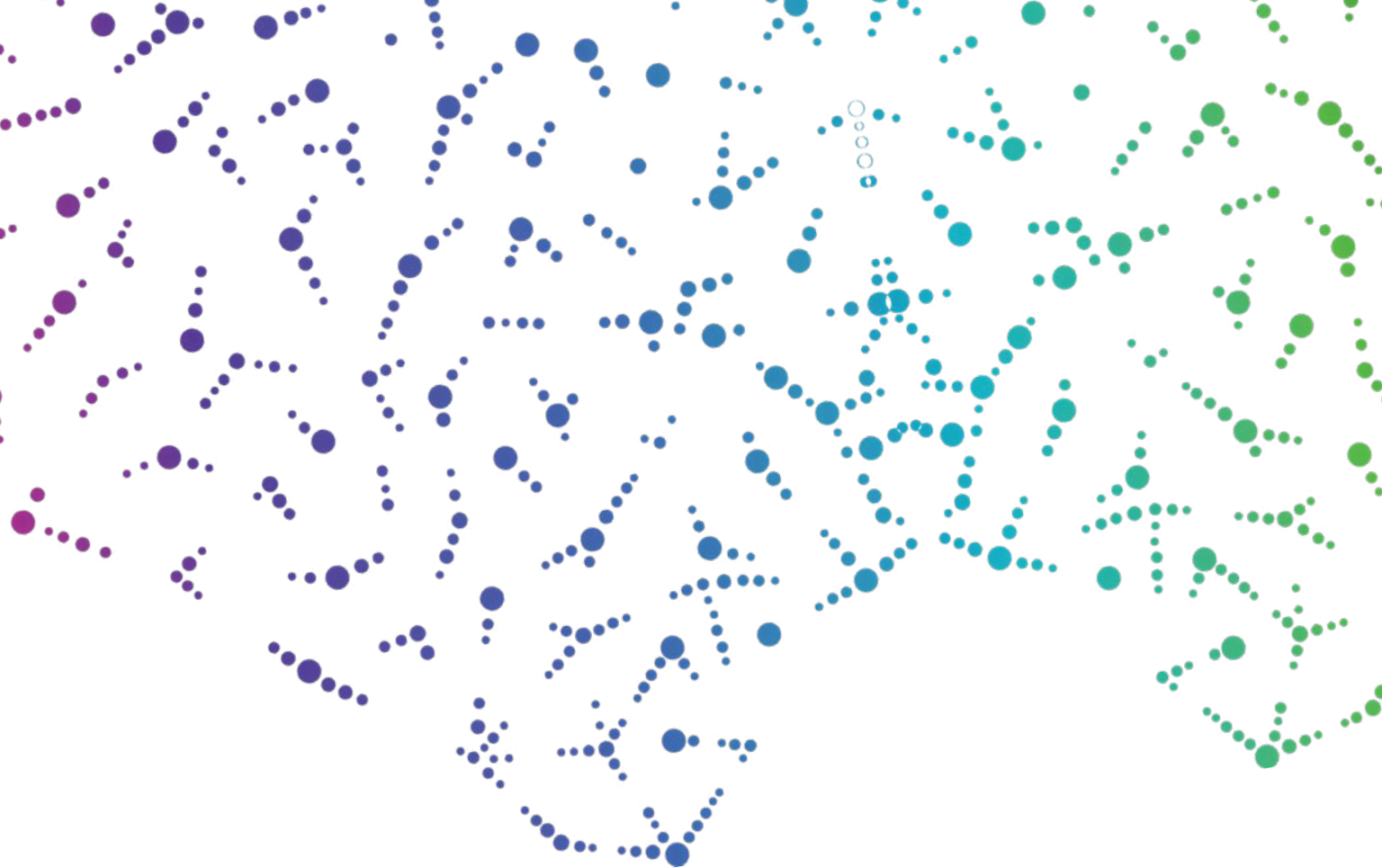


ACCESS/VSA EMERGING YOUNG ARTISTS 2023
A JEAN KENNEDY SMITH ARTS AND DISABILITY PROGRAM



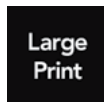
INTERCHANGE



Cover artwork by Miranda Chao.

Artwork photography by Margot Schulman Photography.

Alternative formats of this publication are available on request.





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ABOUT INTERCHANGE

Interchange is the 20th exhibition presented by the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts as part of the Access/VSA Emerging Young Artists Program, a Jean Kennedy Smith Arts and Disability Program. The result of an over 20-year collaboration with Volkswagen Group of America, this national art program and exhibition features fifteen artists with disabilities, ages 16-25, displaying their work in venues across the country where each artist's individual talent, mode of expression, and view of the world is highlighted and valued. With this traveling exhibition, the program amplifies the work of artists with disabilities throughout the United States, positioning them to broaden our understanding of disability and the arts.

This year's theme, *Interchange*, invites artists to explore the intersection of their disability and artistic identities in a way that engages others in conversation. Director of Accessibility and VSA Betty Siegel notes "Interchange is not just a word or title for this exhibition, it is an expression of the way in which these young artists weave and intermingle the realities of their individual lived disability experiences with their bold artistic expression. Whether they paint, weld, draw or photograph these artists push the interchange of societies ideas and perspectives on disability."

How does their art interact with their disability identity and the world? How are they initiating dialogue with others? What conversations does their art inspire for the viewer? What new connections and pathways will the viewer explore as a result of their interchange with the artwork?

ABOUT ACCESS/VSA EMERGING YOUNG ARTISTS PROGRAM

Since 2002, the Kennedy Center and Volkswagen Group of America have teamed up for the Access/VSA Emerging Young Artists Program, a Jean Kennedy Smith Arts and Disability Program, to recognize and showcase the work of emerging young artists living with disabilities in the United States. This collaboration creates opportunities for these artists at a critical time when many are making the life-defining choice to pursue arts-based careers. The Kennedy Center and Volkswagen are committed to investing in the future of young artists living with disabilities.

Every year, hundreds of emerging young artists living with disabilities compete to be included in a curated exhibition formed around a unique theme. After a rigorous adjudication process, 15 artists are selected to participate in the program. Each artist receives a \$5,000 award, participates in professional development and networking activities, and has their work featured in a national exhibition.

kennedy-center.org/emergingyoungartists



Fragmented Self Portrait (2023)
mixed media (plexiglass, watercolor, glue, etc.) (24" x 20" x 3")



MELINA AHMAD

Brooklyn, New York · Age 17

Biography - As a young, queer, disabled artist, Melina Ahmad strives to communicate their story through art. They were unable to create art for a year after developing a chronic illness, postural orthostatic tachycardia syndrome, which rendered them bedbound. However, over time, they regained enough strength to pursue visual art, beginning with small works until they had recovered enough to create ambitious works of watercolor, sculpture, and mixed media.

Now, Melina studies neuroscience and visual art at Bryn Mawr College, inspired by their chronic illness. They plan to attend graduate school for neuroscience research, while continuing to explore and celebrate disability through art and science alike.

Statement - Melina Ahmad's work is an ode to the human figure, in all forms of ability. Through multimedia works centering their own disabled body, they demonstrate the practice of finding beauty within disability. Their work emphasizes the naturalness of the human form with deep greens, blues, and reds to add depth to their watercolors and three-dimensional shapes to make the physical presence of their subjects known.

In *Fragmented Self Portrait*, Melina fractures a painting of themselves, depicting the struggle of self-perception in a world that alienates and degrades disabled people. By separating pieces of the portrait with layers of fragile plexiglass, they communicate the delicate connection between the body and mind of a disabled person.

Headshot courtesy of the artist



Blue Moon, 2021
color pencil, acrylic (20" x 16" x 1")



GRACE BENJAMIN

Woodbridge, Virginia · Age 23

Biography - Grace Benjamin is an artist and designer hailing from the Northern Virginia/Washington D.C metro area. Her works pull from a diverse range of mediums, showcasing an affinity for storytelling deeply influenced by her background as a child of refugees. With elements of illustration, graphic design, weaving, and figurative painting in her repertoire, Grace constructs art that explores and reflects human connections. Inspired by her parents' journey from South Sudan, the memories of their past, and their dreams for her future, she uses her pieces as a bridge that binds their story, finding balance in human emotions and tradition.

Statement - My artistic narrative is a dance between the ephemeral and the eternal – a reflection on the mutability of the human experience. I tread the line between traditional and digital realms, blurring the boundaries of these disparate domains. The digital form allows for reproducibility and accessibility while the physical, confronts us with its inevitable decay. This duality underscores my creative process.

A fascination with collage art and its historical feminist implications further informs my artistic journey. The female figures in my work, steeped in symbolism from Nilotic mythology, echo powerful stories from the Nile River inhabitants, handed down through generations, including from my mother to me.

However, my work is also shaped by personal challenges. While themes in my work may delve into serious or even somber territories, my creative process, ignited by my attention deficit disorder, infuses a playful and experimental dimension that challenges and complements these themes. My art becomes a dialogue between introspection and outward expression, resilience and vulnerability, past and present, ultimately interpreting my multidimensional human experience.



Self-Portrait (with Large Pharmaceutical) (2021)
inkjet print (30" x 20" x 0.125")



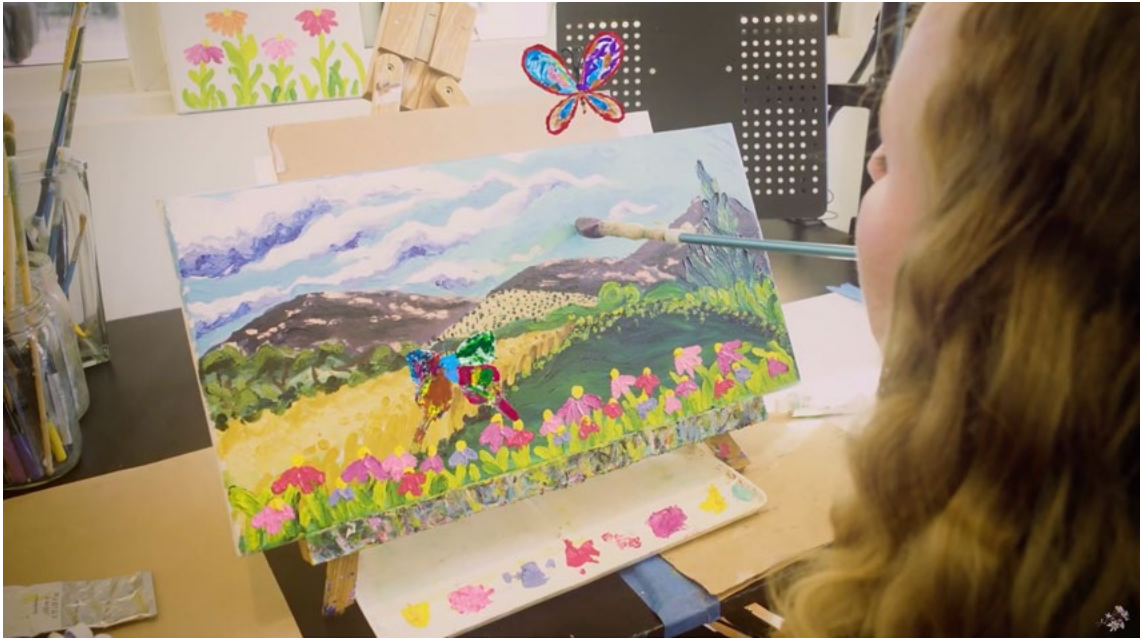
RUBY CROMER

Minneapolis, Minnesota · Age 25

Biography – Ruby Cromer is a photographer from Minneapolis making still lifes and self-portraits that ruminate on illness and investigate the power dynamics of patient care. Forced to abandon painting because of a changing hand disability, she moved to photography and received her BFA from the University of Minnesota. Recent group exhibitions include *DESTROY THE GAP* at Bowling Green State University, *the bed beside me* at Fresh Eye Gallery, and *Booting Up* at Chronically Online Gallery. Cromer’s work has also been published in WMN and Sinister Wisdom. **RubyCromer.com**

Statement – As a “medical impersonator” experimenting with gendered tropes of medical providers in my self-portraiture, I aim to disrupt the power dynamics between photographer and subject and reveal the parallel dynamics in the American medical system that harm both medical workers and patients. I have a particular interest in using self-portraiture to critique the expectation of self-surveillance placed on disabled people and to investigate the elements of performance both in how I navigate an ableist medical system and in the system itself. My work engages with the double-edged privilege of passing or masking—as straight and gender conforming, as non-disabled, as a professional—all within the confines of a photograph.

Headshot courtesy of the artist



A Critter Fable (2021)
video



GRACE FISHER

Santa Barbara, California · Age 25

Biography - Grace Fisher was raised in Santa Barbara, California where she embraced music at a young age. At age 17, she developed a rare neurological disease, Acute Flaccid Myelitis, leaving her paralyzed from the neck down. Following Grace's diagnosis, she discovered mouth painting and music composition and graduated from UCSB with a BA in music composition. She now is an award-winning composer and artist passionate about bringing the arts to other individuals with disabilities. Her physical limitations demand a different approach, but she has embraced a new mantra: "My only limitation will be my imagination."

Statement - My artform is painting and music composition. I like to combine the two when possible because I think the two artforms can be transformative and expressive in a deeply emotional construct. My painting process is usually a scene in nature or landscape that inspires me with color and beauty. I enjoy revealing textures and colors to give the artwork life. I often imagine it in movement, even though I am capturing an instant or a moment of reflection. Sometimes I hear music when I experience my painting and have composed music and given some of my painting animation to tell a larger story or communicate a profound experience. Most of my paintings are inspired by things that are around me, celebrating and connecting with the world in my own experience.

Headshot courtesy of the artist



*The Complexities of an
Inhospitable Environment* (2021)
acrylic on wood
15.5" x 11.5" x 1"



*Anger, Anguish, and the
Angel of Apathy* (2021)
acrylic on wood
14.5" x 10" x 1"



AL GATTA

Flushing, New York · Age 21

Biography – Al Gatta is a visual artist and painter born and raised in New York City. Motivated by their experiences living with a chronic neuropsychiatric illness, they primarily make work that attends to notions of bodily autonomy in the contemporary age and the evolving relationship between tech and humanity. Al has exhibited work at the CUE Art Foundation and more recently at the Westbeth Gallery in NYC. They are currently working towards a BFA in Painting from the Maryland Institute College of Art in Baltimore. When not in school they live and work in NYC.

Statement – The experience of my limbs moving on their own, my back arching when I want it to be straight, hearing my vocal cords make whimpers and cries in an otherwise quiet room and my own resulting discomfort forces me to consider the point of view of others watching me twitch and writhe. Despite the pain these movements cause, much of the difficulty I face is in information space. The disabled body is in a constant state of surveillance, not by CCTV but by every person who encounters it. I take up more metaphysical space, I inhabit a larger sphere of influence because I cannot be discreet. My brain, which often gets separated from the force that is me and from the body we inhabit, won't process information correctly and so that information gets expressed as a movement. It leaves the realm of electric signals for a brief moment before being re-coded into someone's memory, or if they're so inclined, the internet. My work deals with this transfer of information and seeks to externalize the experience of lost control. Building off of the electric aspect of this experience, I utilize abstraction and imagery associated with science fiction as modes through which I can scrutinize codes of conduct, and what it means for someone's existence to subvert them. Within my work sweeping forms reminiscent of plants or ancient life-forms are combined with computational and medical equipment to draw connections between the body, digital technology, and the records both leave behind.



IV (2022)
plywood, acrylic paint, matte medium, sculpey, plastic sheet (6' x 3' x 2")



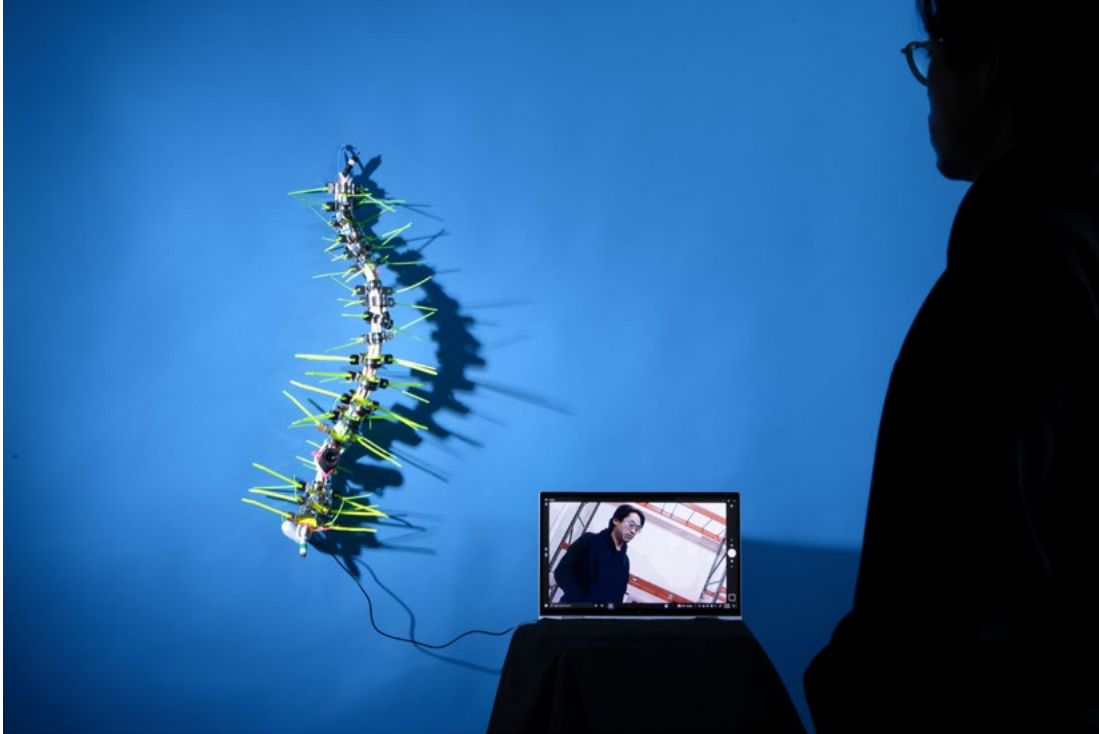
SOPHIA GIBBINS

New York, New York · Age 18

Biography - Currently in her freshman year of college, Sophia Gibbins is a multicultural born and raised New Yorker. At 16 she was hospitalized for extreme stomach pain and diagnosed with an autoimmune disorder called Crohn's Disease. While accepting the idea of a lifelong illness posed challenges, facing the lack of awareness around chronic illness in her community was its own unique hurdle. People often reacted with discomfort, tiptoeing around her illness which led her to stop bringing it up in conversation. She saw the opportunity of using her art to encourage conversation and at six feet tall her artwork is impossible to ignore. Her artwork facilitates a dialogue that not only helps her share her experience but connects her with others going through similar struggles bringing to life a community in which she feels a sense of belonging.

Statement - My artistic process is steeped in experimentation, an ever-changing hunt for the perfect materials to tell my story. I was taught only to use paper and canvas as the foundation for my art. When I relinquished that idea, I saw potential for art all around me. Suddenly wood, old books, mirrors, glass, fabric and even paper plates became inspiration for me to create. Unconventional materials help me better tell my story by providing a richer canvas. Instead of working on a blank surface, I seek out materials that already have character in texture or pattern. I examine how I can transform the natural associations we have with these materials into themes for my work. By connecting my artwork to the material's origin, I intertwine various themes to create a cohesive work.

Headshot courtesy of the artist



The Tumor Watched Me Grow (2023)
VGA wires, zip ties, circuit bent webcam, pipe bands (39" x 8" x 3")



JOHN GROVES

Woodbine, New Jersey • Age 24

Biography - John Groves (they/she/he) is a 24-year-old lens-based artist. They are a recent graduate from the Fashion Institute of Technology with a Bachelor of Fine Arts in photography and related media. Their current practice revolves around the relationship glitch media has with chronic illness and ableism within society. As a chronically ill artist themselves, they question where and how the body exists within society. Through sculpture, installation, and lens-based work they create pieces that make the viewer reflect on the body and how it exists within medical spaces. They currently work a day job as a barista to support their art practice and create work on their days off.

Statement - My current body of work centers around exploring the chronically ill experience through glitch art and multimedia pieces. Using lens-based mediums, I aim to examine the implications of owning a body and the resulting societal/institutional consequences, particularly through glitch art. The process itself allows space to challenge conventional notions of “brokenness” and embrace existence in all its forms. Through glitch art, I create space to question how society perceives and interacts with chronically ill/injured bodies, while also exploring my personal experiences. My goal is to prompt viewers to question how they examine their own bodies and to encourage them to consider why medical institutions exist as they do. Through my work, I aim to spark introspection and critical thinking about how a body is examined and the societal implications of medical institutions.

Headshot courtesy of the artist



Center of Influence (2023)
ink pen, marker (12" x 9" x 0")



PINS LEESE

Lorton, Virginia • Age 20

Biography – Benjamin “Pins” Leese is a comic book artist and illustrator, graduating from Bowling Green State University this spring. His dedication to ink illustration has garnered widespread recognition and a devoted fan base of over 70,000 online followers. With a passion for storytelling that transcends the boundaries of traditional comic art, Pins has carved out a unique niche in the world of sequential art. His work is a testament to his unwavering commitment to the craft, as he deftly weaves narratives and visual aesthetics into captivating and thought-provoking illustrations. Pins is an active participant in the art community, recently working an internship at Gallery Underground in Arlington. He serves as a gallery artist, collaborating with Uniting US Arts to curate and present exhibitions in the vibrant arts scene of Washington, D.C.

Statement – I am an illustrator specializing in comic book art and narrative design with a focus on ink and marker materials. My work serves as a commentary on modern socialization through metaphors of anthropomorphic animals. These animals contextualize interactions through mutualism, commensalism, and parasitism which mirrors the relationships individuals have as they encounter more people. My art explores themes of sonder, confronting mortality, and nostalgic inspirations. The works of artists like Art Spiegelman and Will Eisner have significantly inspired my character design, shading techniques, and overall layout. My artistic goal is to tell stories through my art that move people on a personal level, showcasing the epitome of what it means to be human through the means of cartoon animals.

Headshot courtesy of the artist



Rooted in Two Worlds (2023)
cardboard, acrylic paint, watercolor and digital media (14" x 10.5" x 0")



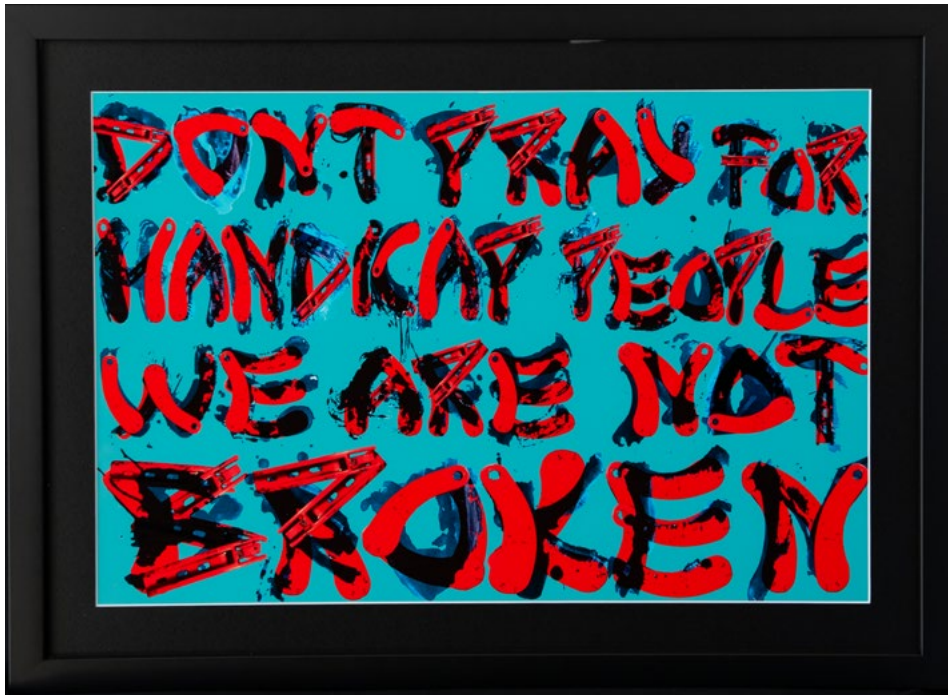
SANTIAGO LÓPEZ

San Diego, California · Age 21

Biography - Growing up in San Diego and San Miguel de Allende, Mexico, art became López's way of speaking up and finding purpose. An illustrator and storyteller he works to start conversations around the intersections of his Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and Latinx identity. His art sheds light on social justice themes to spark dialogue about our shared humanity. López just completed his Associates Degree in Studio Art at San Diego City College with plans to continue his art education. His work has been featured in publications, won awards and exhibited at places like the California Center for the Arts, Centro Cultural de la Raza and the Nickelodeon Gallery.

Statement - Art is storytelling and I use visual metaphors and symbols to communicate ideas. To spark a shift and flip the script, my work searches for hidden narratives that whisper beneath the surface. Mindful that every angle brings depth and meaning to the story, I'm driven to explore diverse perspectives. Fusing traditional tools with digital media, I blend imagery with textures crafted by hand or photographed like peeling paint or windswept sand. My work is a dialogue about what makes us human, the shared struggles and dreams that define our lives. Starting conversations around the intersections of my ASD and Latinx identity, my art is both a reflection and invitation to an inclusive world.

Headshot by Candice López



Different Does Not Mean Broken (2023)
ink, accessibility aid, photoshop (11" x 17" x 0")



NICOLE MATTICK

St. Petersburg, Florida • Age 25

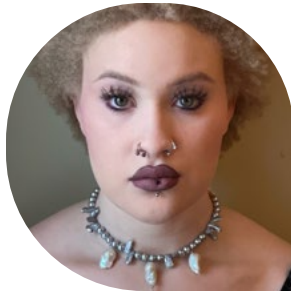
Biography - As a senior Graphic Design student at USF, I am passionate about creating meaningful art that makes an impact. Though I was born with cerebral palsy and faced physical challenges, I never let it stop me from pursuing my dreams and living life to the fullest. Alongside my studies, spending time with my friends and family is also an important part of my life. Whether it's our late-night dinner debates about music or exploring local art shows for inspiration, I cherish these moments as they help me grow both personally and creatively. Through my work, I strive to create designs that not only look beautiful but also carry a strong message that inspires and connects with people on a deeper level.

Statement - As an artist, I believe that creativity is a powerful tool for expressing emotions, ideas, and messages. My work reflects my personal experiences, memories, and observations of the world around me living as a disabled person. I am constantly inspired by nature, music, and the people I meet on my travels. My goal is to create art that captures the essence of these experiences and evokes an emotional response in the viewer. I work primarily with digital graphics and physical mixed media, such as acrylic paint, experimenting with texture and color to create depth and dimension in my pieces. I am drawn to bright, bold colors and contrasting elements that create a sense of movement and energy. My work often features abstract shapes and patterns, layered with imagery and text that convey a deeper meaning. As an artist, I am committed to pushing myself outside of my comfort zone and exploring new techniques and styles. I believe that art has the power to inspire change and I hope that my work can make a positive impact on the world.

Headshot by Carlos I. Miramónz



Effervescent Coalescence (2023)
beaded jewelry/wearable art (6" x 16" x .5")



CAMARI MICHAEL

Jackson, Mississippi • Age 23

Biography - I am a 23-year-old designer and multidisciplinary artist with albinism. I grew up in the small southern city of Jackson, Mississippi. Over the years, I garnered many skills within the realm of performance art. I learned sound design, stage management, dramaturgy, costume design, and set design. The culmination of these experiences helped me to figure out what path to eventually take as a career. After exploring these disciplines, I began my secondary education at the Fashion Institute of Technology, where I would branch out and further my creative expertise while building the foundation to start my own jewelry business, Biting Bat Collection.

Statement - Biting Bat Collection is a jewelry project that seeks to reimagine accessories and promote radical self-acceptance through wearable art. I create extravagantly elegant and complex art pieces with the love and boundless creativity that has existed within me since childhood. The way I make jewelry is akin to how I choose to live my everyday life- slow and with intent. I love to make everything I wear and share it with others. I find most value and beauty in items that have been crafted by hand, rather than mass-produced and rushed, which is why I continue to create my pieces.

Headshot by Rakim Cephus



THE EXHAUSTION IS REALLY GETTING TO ME NOW (2023)
silicone (12" x 60" x .5")



JESS SCHWARZ

Lawrenceburg, Indiana • Age 22

Biography - Jess Schwarz, a 22-year-old LGBTQ+ interdisciplinary artist, now calls Pittsburgh home. A recent graduate, they are a glass studio technician apprentice at the Pittsburgh Glass Center, blending artistic passion with hands-on expertise. Hailing from the Appalachian foothills, their journey of self-discovery began when they left home at 15. Pursuing a BFA in Art History at the Columbus College of Art & Design, Jess's academic excellence allowed them to connect their love for art with scholarly inquiry, offering catharsis and a medium to share their unique experience. As an artist with autism and physical disabilities, their work sparks dialogues challenging misconceptions and fostering unity and understanding among differing perspectives. Jess aspires to become a practicing artist and technician, advocating for inclusion and embracing differences.

Statement - My artistic process seamlessly intertwines my life experiences as an Appalachian LGBTQ+ individual with disabilities. It's a deliberate exploration of the unconventional, blurring the boundary between humor and contemplation while shedding light on often overlooked voices. As an autistic person, navigating the complexities of communication, I wield language as both a tool and symbol, abstracting it to mirror daily barriers. My unorthodox journey bridges diverse worlds, using silicone, latex, and plastic to symbolize the alienation I've encountered in conformist society, inviting dialogue and guiding viewers toward uncharted terrain, fostering reflection. Beyond my personal journey, I ignite societal discussions, conveying my story through visual language, prompting contemplation of the elusive boundaries surrounding disability. In both academia and art, my unconventional path serves as a bridge, celebrating perseverance and adaptability.

Headshot by Kasie Kissel



Isolation (2022)
photography (21" x 29" x 0")



SARAH SIMMONS

Laurinburg, North Carolina · Age 22

Biography – Sarah Simmons, a North Carolina lens-based artist, draws inspiration from the natural world and her lived experiences. Through the manipulation of imagery, she creates art about living with neuromuscular disease and the barriers that accompany advocating for equal access in all facets of life. A summa cum laude graduate of Savannah College of Art and Design with a BFA in photography, Simmons is currently pursuing an MFA in Photography at SCAD with hopes of becoming a professor. Her desire to teach at the college level grew out of her wonderful learning experiences there where she fell in love with the art of critique and the philosophy of aesthetics, where the power of a good education was realized after experiencing education-based discrimination throughout high school. Simmons also aspires to work with nonprofit organizations for artists with disabilities, giving back to the community that has embraced her, helping others find their light and voices through art as she has found hers.

Statement – As a lens-based artist, I draw inspiration from the natural world’s cycle of life and death. Through multiple exposures layered with medical imaging, medical aids, and patterns from nature, the work highlights invisible symptoms and alludes to genetic information only attainable on a microscopic or cellular level. The domestic objects in the works reflect the isolation of the everyday, and mirror the feelings I experience living with neuromuscular disease and advocating for equal rights. By relating back to a simpler way of living, depictions demonstrate the external effects of physical disability, the need for therapies from infancy to prosper, the cost of medical care, and the financial impact it has on families. Most of all, I create to push forward the depiction of disability in art to redefine what it means to be disabled, promote inclusion and awareness through visual communication, and educate viewers who would otherwise be uninformed.

Headshot courtesy of the artist



Chrysalis (2022)
sheet steel, clear enamel coating, and undyed wool (5' x 8' x 5")



CELESTE TOOTH

Baltimore, Maryland · Age 23

Biography - Celeste Tooth (they/them) is a 23-year-old non-binary lesbian. Their fine art practice centers primarily on their Disabled identity and the disability community. Upcoming shows include *Opulent Mobility* and their first solo show *The Body Out of Motion* which opens in April 2024. Recent publications include *Beloved Zine* and *Look Deeper Zine*. Their work in *Drawn Poorly* is archived at the Wellcome Collection Museum in London.

Tooth is also engaged in disability justice advocacy work in various contexts including being selected as a France-Merrick Fellow working with artists at Make Studio Baltimore, a Transform Mid-Atlantic Civic Fellow, a Covid Safe Campus Ambassador, and a Diversity Coordinator at Maryland Institute College of Art's Office of Culture and Identity. They are currently working as head curator on their third exhibition centering Disabled artists in Baltimore. Their commentary on ableism has been featured in magazines such as *Hyperallergic*, *Xtra Magazine*, and *The Art Newspaper*.

They are a senior at Maryland Institute College of Art in the BFA Interdisciplinary Sculpture Program with a humanistic studies minor in Gender Studies and an arts minor in Illustration.

Statement - My work chronicles my lived experience with disability and queerness through semi-abstract references to systems within the body. I utilize metal fabrication, wood working, mold making\casting, and digital fabrication to bring those ideas into the 3D world. I heavily reference –and in turn become part of– the longstanding tradition of utilizing art as a means of protest within disability culture. Much of my work revolves around subversion in reverencing the discarded abject body. Often referencing the “Ugly Laws” —a historical discriminatory ableist practice in the US— and their lingering impact today, my sculptures are a discussion of the right to belong.

Headshot courtesy of the artist



Vestige (2023)
hand-woven fabric, industrially knitted fabric, paint (92" x 97" x 4")



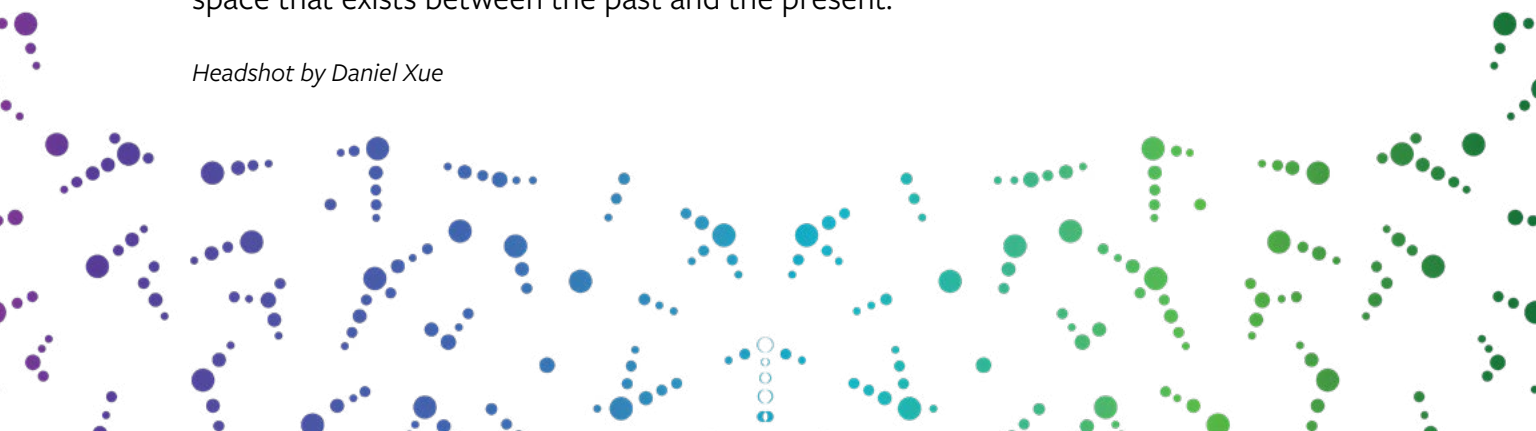
MARIS VAN VLACK

Mansfield, Massachusetts · Age 21

Biography - Maris Van Vlack grew up in Massachusetts surrounded by the historical textiles practices in the Boston area and the quiet beauty of the New England forested habitats. Her time studying at the Rhode Island School of Design in the Textile Department's BFA program with a Drawing minor has taught her to intertwine ways of making and think critically about what inspires her textiles work. She is primarily a fiber artist, constructing surfaces using weaving techniques that are then layered with drawn marks and coats of pigment. Her work centers around deep and spatial compositions imitating the landscape that comes through the layering processes.

Statement - Maris Van Vlack is an interdisciplinary artist whose work bridges fiber art and painting practices. Using traditional textile techniques, she constructs tactile images that reference landscapes from the past. She builds up surfaces by handweaving panels of fabric thread by thread, slowly constructing surfaces that trap memory and history in the sedimentary process. She then layers drawn, painted, and stitched marks on the woven surface to simultaneously reveal and obscure atmospheric imagery that depict spaces and architecture from her family's history that have been lost with time. Her work is a window through which to see layers of time and memory, depicting the space that exists between the past and the present.

Headshot by Daniel Xue



JURY PANEL



Rachel Adams is the Chief Curator and Director of Programs at the Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts. Her areas of interest are varied but focus on creating meaningful connections for artists. Projects tend to include the crossover between contemporary art and architecture, as well as sound, performance, video sound and new media practices. Past curatorial appointments include Senior Curator at UB Art Galleries, Curator-in-Residence at Disjecta Contemporary Art Center (now Oregon Contemporary) and Associate Curator at Arthouse at the Jones Center (now The Contemporary Austin). Adams holds an MA in Exhibition and Museum Studies from SFAI and a BFA from SAIC. Select exhibitions include *Jennifer Ling Datchuk: Eat Bitterness*, *Raven Halfmoon: Flags of Our Mothers* (co-curated), *Presence in the Pause: Interiority and its Radical Immanence*, *Maya Dunietz: Root of Two, All Together*, *Amongst Many: Reflections on Empathy*, *Paul Mpagi Sepuya: Drop Scene*, *Claudia Wieser: Generations* (co-curated), *Alison O'Daniel: Heavy Air*, *Jillian Mayer: TIMESHARE*, *The Language of Objects*, *Wanderlust: Actions, Traces, Journeys 1967-2017* and *Introducing Tony Conrad: A Retrospective* (co-curated). Forthcoming projects include exhibitions with Paul Stephen Benjamin, Miatta Kawinzi and the group exhibition *From the Great Lakes to the Great Plains: The Visible Current of Climate Change*.



Victoria Dugger (b. 1991, Columbus, Georgia) is a visual artist who lives and works in Athens, Georgia. Dugger received her BFA from Columbus State University (2016) and her MFA from in Painting at the Lamar Dodd School of Art at the University of Georgia (2022). Her practice spans painting, mixed media works, and sculpture. Working across these forms, she produces objects that blur accepted categories, exploring novel modes of self-expression and embodiment. She dissects her identity as a Black, disabled woman through a blend of playful compositions and grotesque imagery. Dugger had her debut new York solo show “Out of Body” with Sargent’s Daughters in July 2021, which was featured in *Vogue*, *Hyperallergic*, *artnet*, *ARTnews*, *Whitehot Magazine*, and *artdaily*. She was selected as a 2023 Georgia Woman to Watch by the National Museum for Women in the Arts and was featured in *FRIEZE* and *The New York Times*. Dugger was recently chosen as the 2023 South Arts Southern Prize Winner. She is represented by Sargent’s Daughters.



Born in 1993 in Varanasi, India, **Janhavi Khemka** is an interdisciplinary artist who studied printmaking at Kala Bhavana, Santiniketan, graduating in 2017. She completed her Master of Fine Arts Studio Arts, at School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 2023. Khemka approaches acoustics through woodcut printmaking and experimental installations composed of animation, sound, performance, and vibratory material. Activating sensory capacities through visuals, touch, taste, and smell, Khemka attended Santiniketan interjecting a male-dominated lineage of master printmakers. Growing aware of the limitations of printmaking and seeking deeper motives, Khemka moved to Chicago to complete her master’s at the School of the Art Institute where she gravitated toward animation, sound design and performance, activating works on paper through bodily intervention. Transcending imposed identities, she has been developing environmental interruptions, splicing together two- and three-

dimensional realms, inviting the viewer to locate their inner assumptions and aural subjectivities. Khemka's recent exhibitions at Comfort Station and SITE Student Galleries, Chicago, IL, have received critical attention. She was awarded fellowships at KALA Art Institute Residency, Berkeley (CA) and the 3Arts/Body of Work Residency, between UIC and the MCA Chicago. She has worked closely with Japanese print maker Paul Furneaux in Edinburgh, UK, and in 2022 earned the Lalit Kala Akademie Award for her installation 'Sapna'.



Sally Gunhee Kim (she/her) is an Objects Conservator at the Royal British Columbia Museum, situated on the traditional territory of the Lekwungen peoples, today represented by the Songhees and Xwsepsum Nations. Previously, Kim worked as the Andrew W. Mellon Fellow in Objects Conservation at the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian, where she collaborated with Assiniboine artists to develop an inclusive, accessible education program for museum visitors. Kim obtained a Bachelor of Arts with Honors in Physical Chemistry and Visual Arts from Brown University, and then completed the Master of Art Conservation Program at Queen's University. Kim identifies as deaf and Person of Color, and actively advocates for Disability Justice and Universal Design through American Institute for Conservation (AIC) and Canadian Association for Conservation of Cultural Property (CAC) organizations. Kim proposed the design and development of the 2021 AIC Accessibility Survey which was the first ever to gather data on accessibility in the field of conservation in North America. She also founded Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility (IDEA) Committee for the CAC organization.



Sarah Langsam is a Jersey City-based sculptor and public installation artist. As an adult living with mental health disorders, Langsam identifies with the disability community. She's a vendor for the NJ Department of Developmental Disabilities, who teaches, mentors, and provides in-home art instruction for adults with disabilities. Langsam's artwork, which often utilizes natural materials, investigates and celebrates the individual, while juxtaposing concepts of unity and togetherness. She embodies these themes by engaging with communities when creating installations. Langsam originally connected with Access/VSA when she was the 2013 Emerging Young Artist First Place Awardee, and exhibited at the Kennedy Center in 2015 during the program's retrospective exhibit Focus Forward. Recently, Access/VSA acquired one of Langsam's wooden mosaics for their permanent collection. Langsam has installed art nationally in public indoor spaces such as the St. Croix Falls Public Library (WI) and the Nashville International Airport (TN), as well as along trails, on building facades, and in parks. She recently created a permanent memorial commemorating September 11 in Crescent Park (NJ). Currently she's working on a commission that'll be installed in an affordable housing complex in Cambridge, MA, in 2024. The artist has a BFA from the University of Delaware.



Visual artist **Gordon Sasaki's** work blends unconventional techniques with contemporary ideas of identity and culture. Combining an unexpected use of images and materials, his work purposefully crosses over traditional categorical boundaries to create possibilities of inclusion. His work includes disability advocacy and education through first-person experience as a wheelchair user himself. And continues to highlight the contributions of artists with disabilities through numerous programs, including as a founding and primary member of the Wynn Newhouse Awards.



The Kennedy Center has been at the forefront of making the performing arts accessible to persons with disabilities. Serving the international disability and arts community, the **Office of Accessibility and VSA**, a Jean Kennedy Smith Arts and Disability program, provides opportunities for people with disabilities of all ages across the globe to learn through, participate in, and enjoy the arts. The Office focuses its efforts on cultural access for patrons and visitors with disabilities; arts and special education initiatives; professional development for educators and cultural administrators; and career opportunities in the arts for people with disabilities. For more information, please visit kennedy-center.org/vsa.

Access/VSA Staff:

Betty Siegel, Director, Office of Accessibility and VSA

Stephanie Litvak, Manager, Access/VSA Programs

Jessica Swanson, Manager, Accessibility

Wynsor Taylor, Access/VSA Programmer

Emily Maddox, Assistant Manager, Accessibility

Sara Kuba, Coordinator, Accessibility



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For the past 50 years, the Kennedy Center has brought equitable and accessible arts education to students across the country. This work is achieved through a vast ecosystem of over 40 educational initiatives, each designed to meet the unique needs of the students and communities they serve, focusing on reaching the students least likely to have access to the arts. With its reach extending to all 50 states, the Center can convene educators and key stakeholders from across the country, creating meaningful partnerships that facilitate collaboration and support to best serve students' needs. The Kennedy Center's role as the National Cultural Center coupled with its longstanding history of arts education programming leaves the Center uniquely positioned to support students and educators, while also serving as a national hub for knowledge, strategies, and promising practices across the field.

As the Center looks to the next 50 years, arts education will remain a priority. Named as a pillar in the Center's recently unveiled strategic plan, powerful education will play a pivotal role in the Center's work moving forward. Over the next five years the Center will focus on two main priorities: ensuring that every child has art in their lives, communities, and classrooms; and changing the national conversation from the value of arts education to the value of arts in education. This will be achieved by gathering and disseminating evidence-based support on the beneficial outcomes of the arts, and by encouraging innovation and collaboration through programming, research, digital resources, citizen artistry, accessibility, and professional development. For more information, please visit **kennedy-center.org/education**.



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