



Catalyst

2025 Access/VSA Emerging
Young Artists Program



Access/VSA
The Kennedy Center

A Jean Kennedy Smith Arts and Disability Program

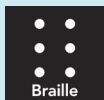
About Catalyst

Catalyst is the 21st 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. This national art career development program and exhibition features fifteen artists with disabilities, ages 16-25. Each artist's unique talent, mode of expression, and view of the world is highlighted and valued. With this exhibition, we aim to amplify 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, *Catalyst*, invites artists to explore how the intersection of their art and their disability identity sparks something new. As you view the work and learn more about these incredible young artists, we hope it ignites new perspectives for you.

Artwork photography
by Sonya Pencheva.

Alternative formats
of this publication are
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Large
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About Access/VSA Emerging Young Artists Program

Our programs for artists with disabilities shape the future of the arts. The Access/VSA Emerging Young Artists Program amplifies the voices of emerging visual artists through career development and professional empowerment.

This national juried exhibition seeks artwork that demonstrates the excellence and important perspectives of artists with disabilities, ages 16-25, residing in the United States. Fifteen artists each receive a \$3,000 award, engage in professional development activities at the Kennedy Center, and have their submitted work featured in an exhibition.

kennedy-center.org/emergingyoungartists



Frustration (2024)
charcoal on paper (8" x 6")



Amy Jacques

KISSIMMEE, FL • AGE 17

Amy Jacques is a 17-year-old artist who was born with sickle cell disease, her condition has shaped her perspective on life and art. As a kid her peers had misconceptions about her disease, assuming it was contagious, they avoided her, leaving her alone in isolation. So, at an early age drawing became her way to cure her loneliness and communicate feelings too complex for words. Her chronic illness makes her body unpredictable, and art was the way she regained control and embodied her life. The process of creating is therapeutic for her, and she hopes to transform her pain and resilience into something that others will be able to relate to. In college, she hopes to study art history, and intends to use her degree to help others find their own voices through creative expression.

ARTIST STATEMENT

My artwork is deeply personal and influenced by living with sickle cell disease and the complexities of having a chronic illness. It allows me to convey things that are not easily expressed in words. Much of my work revolves around themes such as pain, strength, and identity and captures both the adversity and resilience that exist within them. I tend to work with charcoal and colored pencils because their immediacy and texture allow me to channel emotion directly onto the page, capturing both the weight and nuance of what I am trying to express. My artwork is not just something that I do, it's an integral part of who I am, art is how I cope with pain, emotion, and experiences too much to bear. Through sharing my story, I want to start discussions around disability, chronic illness, and how art can help connect those that may not share the same experiences. If my work can make one person hesitate, consider, or feel something differently, then I know I am doing what I am meant to do.

HEADSHOT PHOTO BY AMY JACQUES



stranger (2024)
acrylic on OSB wood (48" x 36" x 1")



Angelica Jones

**BALTIMORE, MD/
HIGH POINT, NC • AGE 21**

Angelica Jones is a multidisciplinary portraiture-based artist currently based in Baltimore, Maryland. Her approach to portraits is inspired by drag, Black Southern aesthetics, and the process of finding queer connections in digital spaces. She grew up in High Point, North Carolina surrounded by a tight-knit community emphasizing ancestry and spirituality. Her work has often served as an open archive where she documents feelings and experiences of her community on and off-line. Her work has been featured in shows across Night Owl Gallery in Baltimore, Maryland, the United States Capitol Building, and most recently, a solo show in Fred Lazarus IV Center in Baltimore, Maryland. She is currently studying at Maryland Institute College of Art in pursuit of a BFA in Painting and, while not in school, is an educator with Summer Arts for Learning and a Gallery Assistant at Make Studio.

ARTIST STATEMENT

Through the use of textured surfaces and vibrant mediums, I create images that call into question the conventions of representation and beauty. I collect tender, vulnerable, and visceral moments from my communities' lives and magnify them through an exaggerated lens inspired by Club-Kids, Afro-Futurism, and my own Southern upbringing. My work places relaxed and authentic Black figures onto objects like scrap wood and found fabric. I paint on "found objects" that carry with them deep histories, experiences, and energies. The haze of chalk pastels, the vibrancy of acrylic, the grit of oil pastel all come together within my work to aid in creating complex narratives around interpersonal dynamics, marginalization, and poverty. My work is an open archive, capturing images of nightlife, domestic scenes, and family photos. Used in conjunction with neon glazes to highlight the way nostalgia, escapism, and trauma can distort experiences/memory. This divergence from reality is meant to act as a consistent reminder to myself and viewers to envision a world beyond these struggles.

HEADSHOT PHOTO BY JORDAN CARTER



Kitten Dreams (2024)
oil on wood (20" x 16" x .25")



Austen Maybee

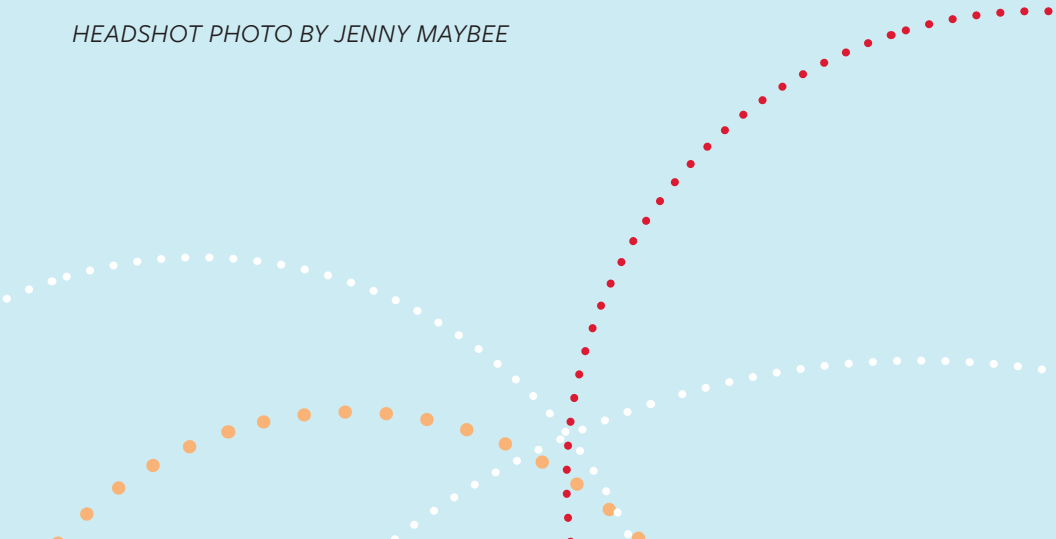
BOULDER, CO · AGE 17

Austen Maybee works in both digital and traditional forms, including illustration, painting, and design. In their digital art, they freely experiment with the canvas, playing with placement and scale. For example, *Doodle Diaries* is a series of densely-placed monochromatic drawings, reminiscent of a coloring book, where viewers can zoom into the detailed elements. Austen's traditional work showcases the organic and singular nature of illustration and painting. For example, in their painting: *Kitten Dreams*, soft shading and layers of colorful oil paint evoke the warm fuzzy sensation of holding a kitten. Austen finds physical work particularly rewarding because there is only one copy. Austen is a high school senior in Boulder, Colorado, and spends their time fostering kittens and going on walks when they're not drawing. Austen plans to make art into their full time career after attending art college.

ARTIST STATEMENT

My piece *Kitten Dreams* was one of my first oil paintings. I was inspired by my foster kittens and how I watched them become more adept at socializing and less fearful of humans. It depicts a version of me with two of my favorite foster kittens, 'Mikey' and 'Sugarplum.' My artistic process was to apply my digital rendering techniques using oil painting. As I worked on the piece, it took a lot of experimentation and revisions to render the image I had envisioned.

HEADSHOT PHOTO BY JENNY MAYBEE





Death, Brother of Sleep (2024)
glazed ceramic (30" x 14" x 18")



Cathleen Luo

NEW YORK, NY • AGE 24

Cathleen “Cat” Luo (they/them) graduated from Columbia University with a Bachelor’s in Visual Arts and Creative Writing and is a Museum Educator at the Solomon R.

Guggenheim Museum and the Metropolitan Museum of Art. They have exhibited in group shows at Field Projects, The Metropolitan Museum of Art’s staff show, Bethany Arts Community, and FABnyc. Luo was awarded the Asian American Arts Alliance’s What Can We Do grant to carry out community art programming in Manhattan’s Chinatown during Asian American Heritage Month as a way to share their practice and serve the public. They have also received The Color Network’s Studio Grant, CERF+’s Get Ready Grant, SICK Magazine’s Microgrant for Disabled Sculptors in 2023, and is currently in the Powerhouse Artist Subsidy Program. They have been interviewed for Ratrock Magazine and featured in publications including The Columbia Review and SICK Magazine.

ARTIST STATEMENT

As a sculptor and educator, I explore themes of modern spirituality. I reappropriate surrealist techniques to reclaim the term “queer” by distorting my figures beyond anatomical accuracy to question how a body is a container for complicated histories and contemplation. Drawing on Chinese Buddhist iconography, my meditative pieces unite my communities through their installation presence in my curated people-centered performances. My work delves into the term “alien” which is legally defined as individuals who are not citizens: foreign(ed) bodies. Beyond a personal exploration of my experiences of alienation from society and self, my work validates marginalized experiences and works toward collective healing. By embracing the aesthetic of the uncanny/unheimlich, my art creates a space that honors Otherness. Clay empowers me to work with my hands as a person with a visual disability. My sculptures are experienced through touch, and I often host touch tours of my pieces, inspired by my work as an educator for The Metropolitan Museum of Art’s Access Programs where I teach Seeing Through Drawing. My art process aims to represent a psychological truth for people like myself; my figures are in process, balancing precariously, deeply human, yet aware of their eternal performance in stillness.

HEADSHOT PHOTO BY ROMMEL NUNEZ



Manic Mama Mia! (2025)
acrylic gouache and PLA filament on cardboard (38" x 46" x 4")



CJ Hutchings

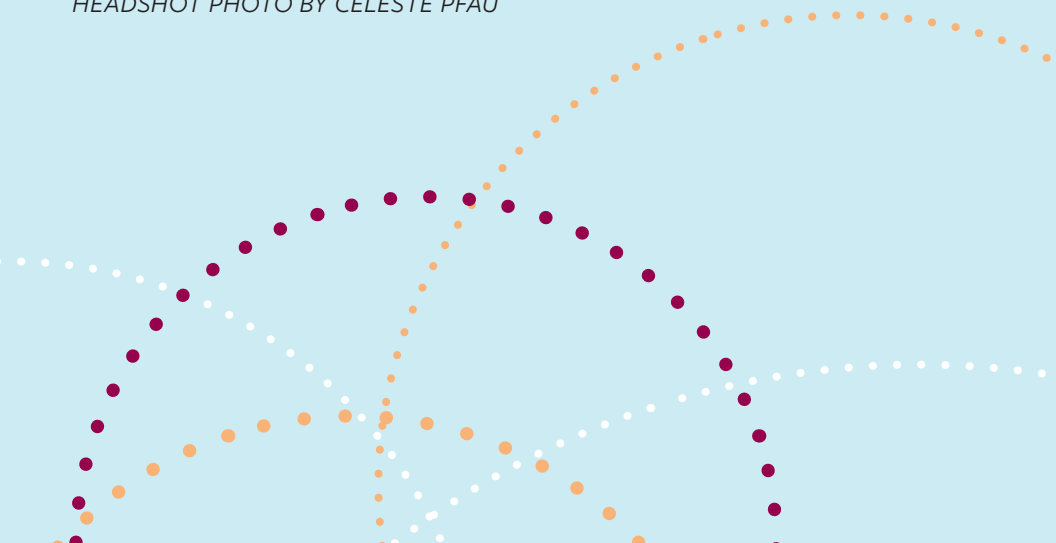
BIRMINGHAM, AL · AGE 17

Catherine “CJ” Hutchings is a mixed media visual artist dedicated to promoting neurodiversity awareness through their energetic, cartoonish rabbit characters. The experience of living with ASD, ADHD, and GAD has fueled CJ’s passion to make autobiographical portrayals of their own struggles for over five years. As they graduate from the Visual Arts program at the Alabama School of Fine Arts in Birmingham, AL, CJ aspires to continue their current work whilst pursuing further education in neurological differences to simultaneously support their community and develop a deeper self-understanding.

ARTIST STATEMENT

There is no way I can describe my perspective without my neurodivergence. Autism Spectrum Disorder, ADHD and Generalized Anxiety Disorder are fundamental and permanent parts of my identity. I struggle to communicate my true perspective to others, which has led me to use “rabbit-like” characters to represent my complex experience. Through layered, life-size cardboard illustrations adapted from quick, fervent doodles enhanced with vibrant painted colors and sketchy detailing, I confront misconceptions of neurodivergent people and inspire others like me to reflect on their own challenges.

HEADSHOT PHOTO BY CELESTE PFAU





Legacy of A.G. Bell (2023)
photography (16" x 16" x .1")



Delia Preston

MADISON, NJ • AGE 21

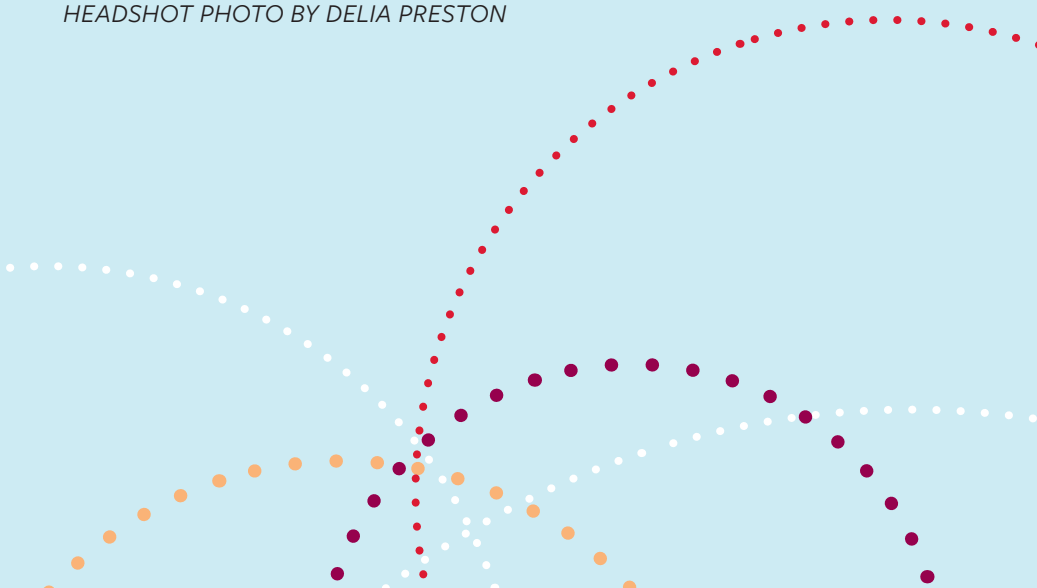
Delia Preston (she/they) is an interdisciplinary artist with a focus in painting and photography. Her work is heavily influenced by her Deaf experiences and education in disability

theory and history. Having grown up in a primarily hearing world with little representation, her pieces prioritize and center D/deaf and disabled subjects. By doing so, she hopes to engage audiences in conversation about D/deafness and disability. Delia is currently completing a BA in Studio Art at Kenyon College in Gambier, Ohio. When not there, she is home with her family and two dogs in Madison, New Jersey.

ARTIST STATEMENT

Legacy of A.G. Bell confronts the impact of eugenics on the Deaf community, especially how this history led to the development of hearing devices intended to “cure” deafness. I photograph my friend, Amé, another Deaf person, and center her agency in determining how deafness and hearing devices are perceived. Overlaying her face is a projection of Alexander Graham Bell’s “Upon the Formation of a Deaf Variety of the Human Race,” a text detailing the threats of deafness to humanity and how to eliminate deafness. Despite these threats, D/deaf people still thrive in a world that prefers to erase deafness.

HEADSHOT PHOTO BY DELIA PRESTON





He Can Fly (2023)
acrylic on canvas (48" x 54" x 2")



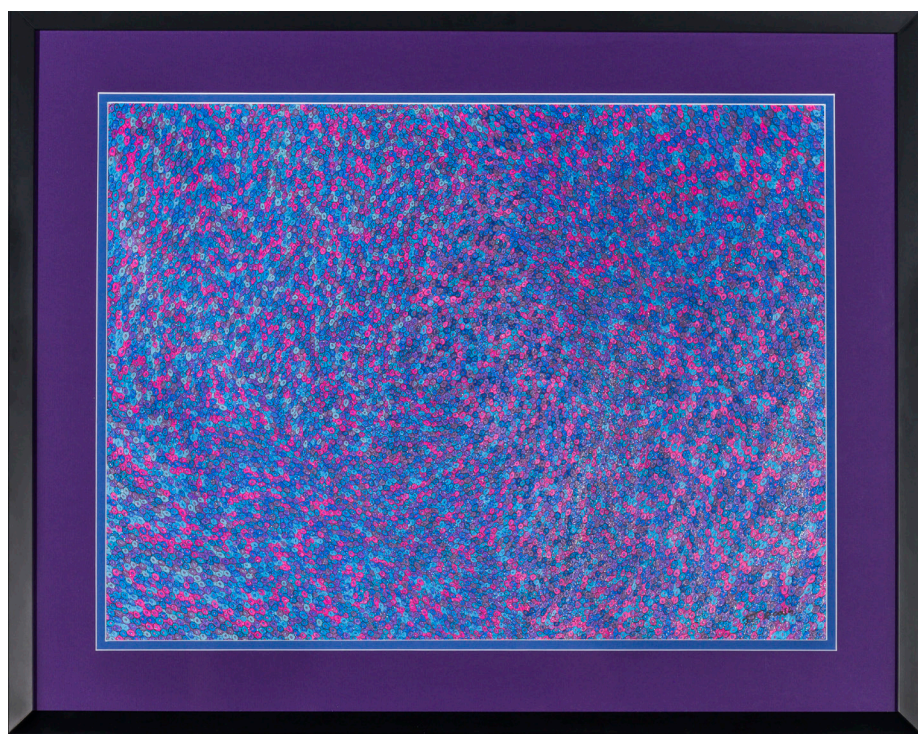
Ellery Thompson

LOUISVILLE, KY • AGE 25

Ellery Tye Thompson is a painter born and raised in Louisville, Kentucky. Her work examines questions of uncertainty and the fluidity of absence and presence. In 2021, she received a degree in Art and Art History with a minor in Interdisciplinary Writing from Occidental College. In 2024, she graduated with a Master's in painting from the LeRoy E. Hoffberger School of Painting at Maryland Institute College of Art. Her work has been exhibited in Baltimore, Maryland; Louisville, Kentucky; and Los Angeles, California. In November of 2024, she attended a residency at Vermont Studio Center. Her work has been published in *New American Painting's* MFA issue 171 and *Friend of the Artist* volume 19. She currently lives and works in Louisville, Kentucky. www.ellerythompson.com

ARTIST STATEMENT

Chronic disease and disability create a flickering state of being. I want to use this state, like John Keats' concept of Negative Capability, to dwell fully within uncertainty. Within all my paintings, ambiguity and fragility are situated within the figures and the world surrounding them. My figures exist like nosebleeds or tears, exiting their bodies and pushing into and out of their environment in ways they shouldn't. Figurines, dolls, and toys become objects for meaning and narrative to be placed on. Sickness creates a need for fiction, a need to explore other worlds during the time when it's impossible to be fully present in the everyday world. These objects waver between their dime-store cheapness and the sentimental attachment and meaning that can be projected onto them. The figurines hesitate between motion and stillness; they feel moveable but not necessarily mobile. Animation of the inanimate questions formation, the process of something coming into being, and the ability for something to be altered or tainted before it's fully formed. Within these spaces, toys and animals intermix with themes of athletics and exercise. I'm exploring how motion and stillness disrupt and transcend our perception of time, how athletes need to care for their bodies, mimicking the relationship sick people have to theirs, and the role observation and stillness have in watching sports. The way we use our bodies in daily life, the way our bodies allow themselves to be used, alters our experience of time and motion.



Proliferation (2024)
pen on paper (18" x 24" x 1")



Joseph Roach

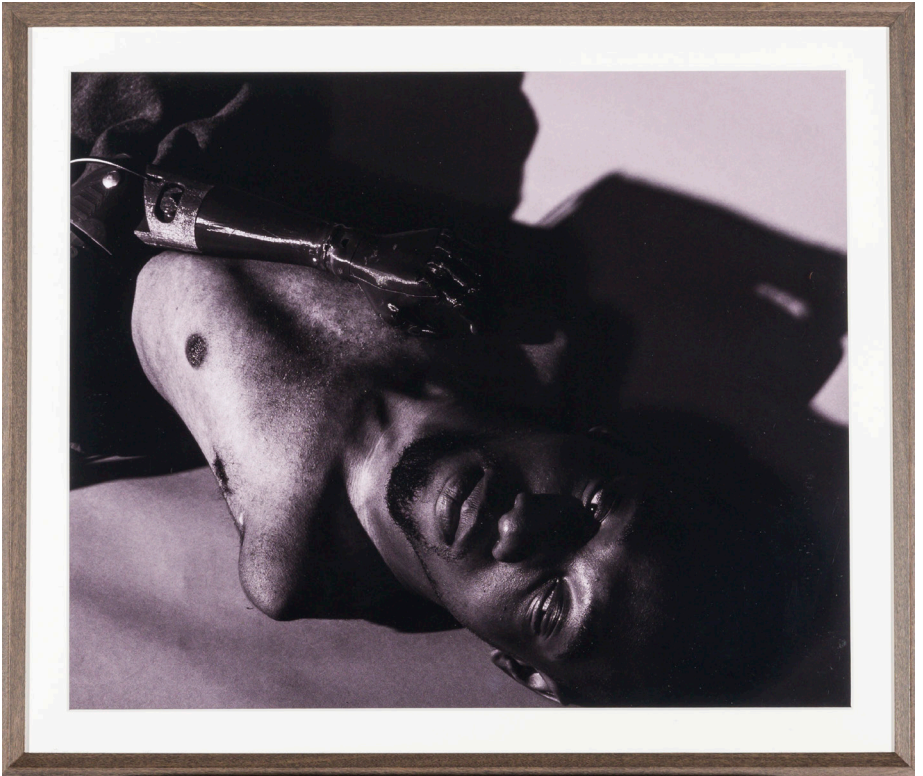
MANHEIM, PA • AGE 21

Joseph Roach is a self-taught abstract artist from Lancaster, Pennsylvania. Known for bold pen and ink pieces where every line is precise, purposeful, and inspired by nature, he sees the world in vivid shapes and colors. Diagnosed with autism at a young age, Joseph was a bright spark in a system that couldn't see his light. Art tells his story. Joseph has exhibited at the Pennsylvania Capitol, raised funds for the Eagles Autism Foundation and other charities, and built a résumé that reflects both grit and grace. Now, as he writes his memoir, "Finding Joseph's Many Colors," he continues proving his disability is his ability. Follow Joseph Roach on Facebook.

ARTIST STATEMENT

My colorful, precise, and detailed pen-on-paper art is a testament to a journey that has never been easy. From the moment I was overlooked in school—my potential ignored, my needs unmet—I was placed in the background. But every piece of my art tells a different story. It reflects the resilience, strength, and power I always had within me, despite the lack of support to help me fully evolve into who I am today. Through my award-winning art, I refuse to let past rejection or low expectations define me. I've learned this: it's not enough to just look back. I refuse to stay stuck in the past. Instead, I've chosen to create beauty from my pain, to turn that struggle into purpose. That's what sets a life of mediocrity apart from a life of meaning. I don't just choose a life with purpose—I create it. One pen stroke, one story, one dream at a time. I am Significantly Joe. I am Joseph James Roach. I am different, and I embrace that difference. I move in a world of shapes and colors. I see things through a unique lens—and that is my gift. To those who feel overlooked, to parents and caregivers of children with special needs: walk this journey with me. Let's refuse to let a lack of understanding silence us. Together, we can be the beautiful, powerful individuals we were always meant to be.

HEADSHOT PHOTO BY MARY ELLEN WRIGHT



Reconstructed Presence (2024)
digital photography (20" x 30" x 1")



Kendrell Daniels

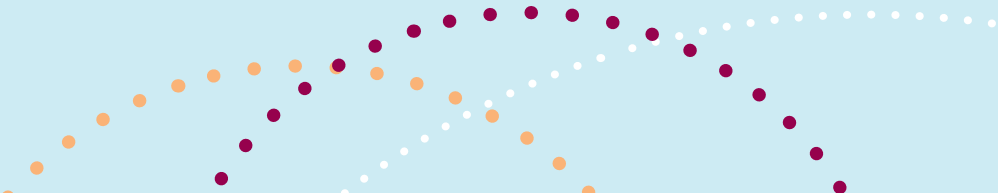
STARKVILLE, MS • AGE 25

Kendrell Daniels is a multidisciplinary artist who explores identity, resilience, and accessibility through photography, video, and painting. He combines technical innovation with emotional depth, creating self-portraits, documentary images, and expressive visual narratives that challenge societal perceptions and invite more inclusive ways of seeing. Daniels photographs using a custom-mounted camera on his wheelchair and paints using his feet, integrating his physical perspective into both his process and vision. His subject matter ranges from intimate, personal work to broader social themes and sports photography. He earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Photography from Mississippi State University, with minors in Film Studies and Art History, and is based in Starkville, Mississippi.

ARTIST STATEMENT

My work is rooted in storytelling—emotional, honest, and deeply felt. Whether through photography, video, or painting, I create images that reflect healing, resilience, and identity. I am drawn to moments carrying emotional weight—quiet expressions, physical tension, spiritual symbols—and I use my work to create space for those feelings to be seen. Born without arms, I photograph using a camera mounted to my wheelchair and paint with my feet, developing methods that give me full control over my creative process. These adaptations help form my independence, which allows me to create on my terms. I believe art is a way to reflect what's often unspoken and to make space for truth, both mine and others. I'm not interested in perfection or performance. I'm interested in honesty. Through my exploration, I hope to open a window into deeper emotional landscapes and invite viewers to slow down, reflect, and feel.

HEADSHOT PHOTO BY KENDRELL DANIELS





Garden Oasis II (2024)
acrylic on canvas (36" x 36" x 1.5")



Luke Cooper

BLACKCLICK, OH · AGE 19

Luke's work has been featured in several prominent exhibitions including the Cincinnati Museum of Art, Massillon Art Museum, Springfield Art Museum, and Franklin Park

Conservatory Art Gallery. With a mature colour palette, Luke's painting style is versatile and sophisticated, rendered with a calm resolve, and an ease that belies his busy life as both artist and college student. "Art has become my sanctuary and means of self-expression, enabling me to communicate complex emotions that are sometimes difficult to articulate. The ability to hyperfocus while creating has been invaluable in capturing the intricate details within my work."

ARTIST STATEMENT

My creative inspiration is drawn from a variety of sources, including humor, moments of epiphany, self-reflection, architecture, and nature. Whenever something captivates my attention, I capture it through photography and later reinterpret it on canvas. Painting is often accompanied by listening to informative podcasts, which further fuels my creative process. I am particularly influenced by Impressionism, a movement that encourages viewers to appreciate both the overall composition and intricate details. This influence is evident in my "Garden" series, where finger-tapped textures and blended colors create vibrant, organic landscapes. I am naturally drawn to shapes, curves, and fluid forms, which also manifest in my self-portraits.

HEADSHOT PHOTO BY KENT SMITH PHOTOGRAPHY





My Body is Going Away (2025)
undyed cotton on oak dowel (45" x 23.5" x 3")



Madi Snow-Gould

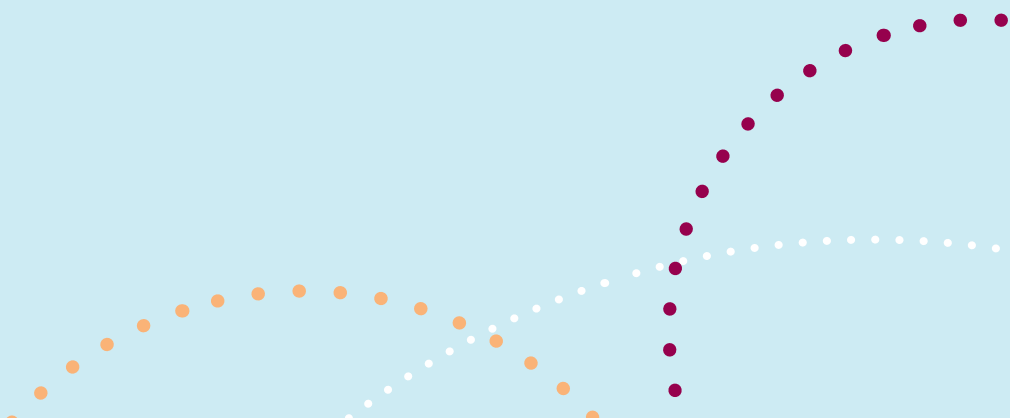
WACO, TX • AGE 25

Madi Snow-Gould (she/her) is a fiber artist living in Waco, Texas. Disabled by several chronic illnesses, Madi picked up weaving six years ago to pass her time in bed and found a deep love for the medium. She studied social work at Baylor University and is self-taught in her artistic practice. Her work is characterized by bright color, maximalist texture, thoughtfully sourced materials, and aesthetic abundance. Snow-Gould is a proud disabled woman, and the transformative liberation of her experiences in community with other disabled people is the engine of her life and art. When she's not getting weird with yarn, Madi works part-time doing research for the Baylor Collaborative on Faith and Disability. You can view her work on Instagram @confetti.weaves, or online at confettiweaves.com.

ARTIST STATEMENT

My artistic tastes have been primarily shaped by my experience with chronic pain. I think absurd goodness brings balance against the absurdity of unresolvable pain, and I pursue that in color, texture, and material choice. Many people have only learned to conceptualize disability as a kind of flat tragedy, when of course it is so much more. I know the landscape of disability to be lush with resilience, joy, community, and possibility. With that in mind, I engage dimension and bright color to explore a complex, countercultural vision of disability. My work is an invitation to disabled people to celebrate their particularity, and a challenge to nondisabled people to reimagine what they believe about different bodies.

HEADSHOT PHOTO BY MADI SNOW-GOULD





DADA (2024)
digital

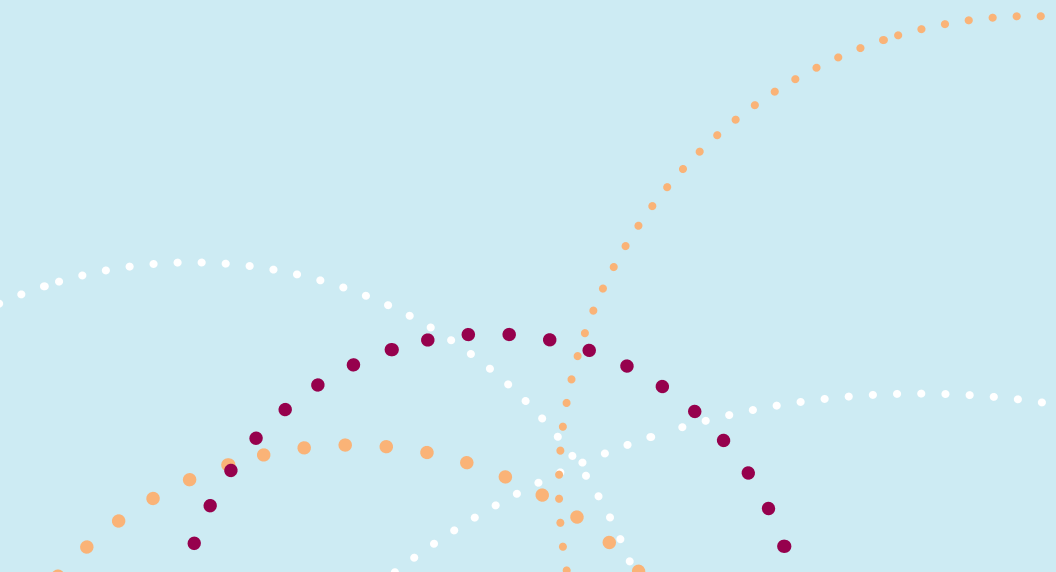
Nana-Tawi Bey

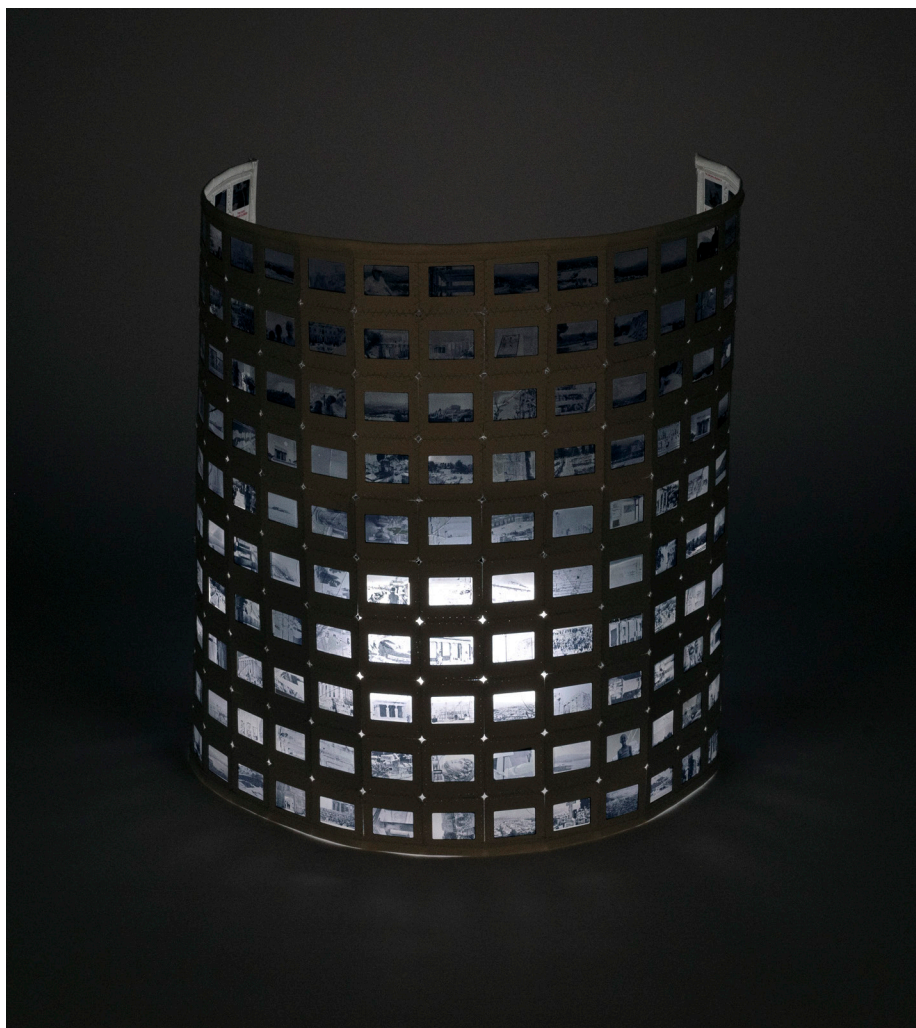
BOWIE, MD • AGE 22

Nana-Tawi (he/she) is a 22-year-old, disabled, Black lesbian. Their art practice primarily consists of digital animation and illustration, as those are the mediums more accessible to them. Their endeavors feature a creative entrepreneurial fellowship at Maryland Institute College of Art, an officer of Student Animators for Inclusion, and exhibition of their artworks in “Unmasked,” a disabled art showcase. They also have in previous years had their work showcased in the District of Columbia Public Library’s, “Know Your Power,” social justice focused art contest.

ARTIST STATEMENT

Maryland based animator, illustrator, and sequential artist Nana-Tawi, is heavily inspired by the magical realism that we lose sight of as adults. Their work is heavily influenced by classic emotionally driven narrative animations such as *The Lion King*, they also draw inspiration from the warm, textured colors, magic that mists the air, and wonder provided by older animation like *Kipper the Dog*. They create because it allows them to romanticize the little things in life, and channel their perspective of disability into something that resonates with others, so they can feel a little less alone. Nana-Tawi believes there’s magic everywhere, animation just makes it easier to see!





Δεν μπορώ να σε κρατήσω ζεστό (2024)
film slides, cotton (24" x 12" x 12")



Rebecca Panos

CHICAGO, IL • AGE 23

Rebecca Panos is an artist based in Chicago, Illinois. Her meticulously crafted pieces serve as reflections of the contemporary discord within her fragmented queer identity, bridging tradition with the contemporary. Panos was recently named a Fulbright Semi-Finalist for open research in Greece (2025-26).

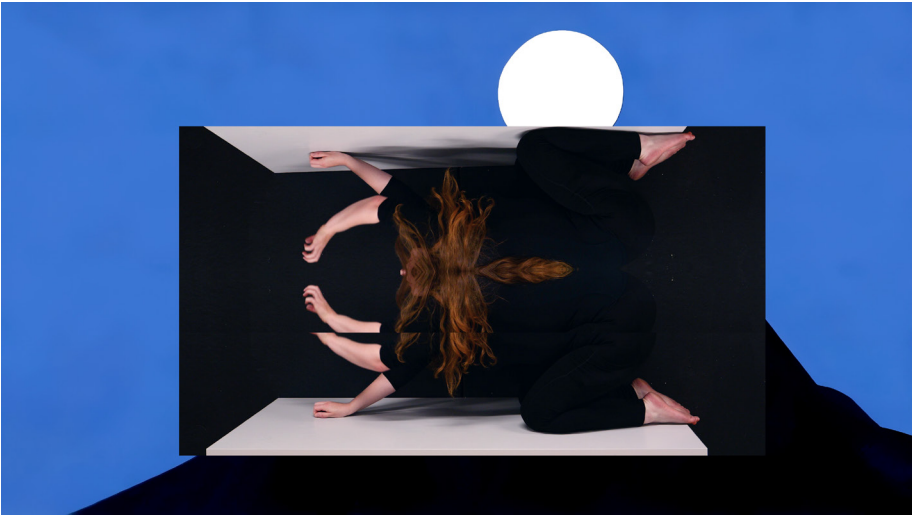
Recent exhibitions include: *Landscapes of Ornamentation*, Curated by Marie Catalano, Broadway Windows at NYU, NYC (2024); *Hos-pes*, Curated by Lila Nazemian, Commons & Rosenberg Gallery, NYC (2024); *Traces: Archive as Practice*, Curated by NYU VAA, Commons Gallery, NYC; *Queer Knowing* Curated by Blair Simmons at All Street Gallery, NYC (2023); *To Darken, Lightly*, Curated by Audra Lambert at LIC-A Art Space, Long Island City, New York (2023); *Transversal: Where We Come From and Where We Are Going* 80WSE Gallery, NYC (2023).

ARTIST STATEMENT

In my practice, I delve into the rich tapestry of narrative—unraveling threads of ancestry, identity, and the stories woven between individuals. Rooted in the historically significant materials and mediums tied to domesticity and matrilineality, I merge the practical and the artistic. Weaving, sewing, and crocheting, skills passed down through my Greek lineage, serve as both mediums of creation and vessels for narratives.

The concept of “home” reverberates throughout my work, whether anchored in a site or network, connecting the tangible with the intangible moments that shape an individual’s life. Whether exploring the complexities of emotional labor, translating people’s experiences into tangible artifacts, or delving into the nuances of personal and shared histories, my work aims to make every moment equally impactful.

In my practice, duration is not merely a measure of time, but a reflective process. Through oral histories and fragmented self-narratives, I strive to capture life as a series of attempts—the intricacies, vulnerabilities, and the threads that bind us all together. My work becomes a diary of sorts, a first-person narrative that speaks to the labor of relationships present and passed down, echoes and imprints.



Simulacra Goose (2025)
digital



Schuyler Dragoo

BROOKLINE, MA • AGE 23

Schuyler Dragoo is a Boston-based interdisciplinary artist working in experimental new media. Her research-driven practice explores how understanding is shaped through attempts at connection—especially across species boundaries, digital systems, and the edges of human perception. She composes original fiddle music and works across painting, sculpture, performance, and digital media to stage layered encounters with the unfamiliar. Her neurodivergent perspective shapes a practice attuned to complexity, care, and connection—inviting speculative empathy and new ways of relating across difference. She hopes her practice cultivates a way of being and witnessing with others—human and more-than-human—that begins in curiosity and leads not to answers, but to deeper forms of care and relation. Schuyler holds an MFA from the School of Museum of Fine Arts at Tufts University and is pursuing an MA in Psychology at CCSU. She can be reached at schuylerdragoo.com.

ARTIST STATEMENT

My work begins in the space between recognition and misrecognition—between gesture and meaning, movement and memory. I am drawn to the moment where something starts to take shape but resists full comprehension. Mimicry becomes a way of staying with that resistance—not to master it, but to be changed by proximity. I treat mimicry as a speculative practice: a method of relation rather than replication. It allows me to move alongside unfamiliar rhythms—those of geese, machines, bodies, or objects—not to become the same, but to become with. Co-presence becomes a form of relational research. As a neurodivergent artist, I move through systems that weren't built for how I sense or make meaning. I linger in ambiguity and prioritize curiosity over clarity. My mimicry becomes a way of asking: What if this is something I haven't learned how to see yet? I believe in forms of care that arise from slowness, from not-knowing, from sustained attention. To witness is already to be in relation. And sometimes, a gesture—imprecise, absurd, unfinished—is enough to begin.

HEADSHOT PHOTO BY DARCEY STONE



Orange Peonies (2023)
watercolor (14.5" x 10")



Leaves (2023)
watercolor (14.5" x 10")



Sophia Pineda

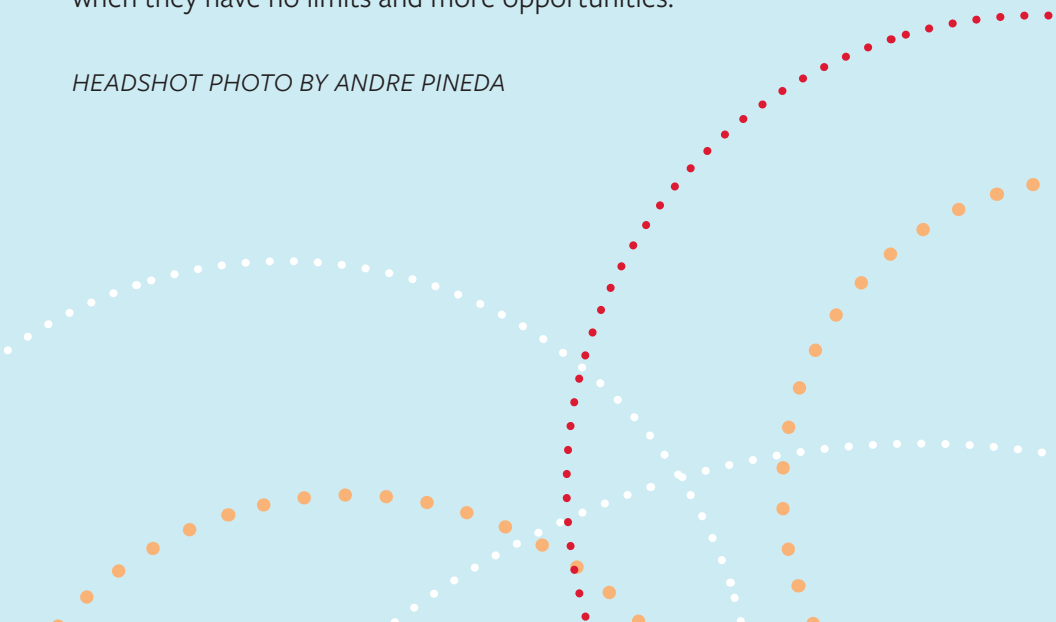
FREDERICKSBURG, VA • AGE 21

Sophia Pineda is a 21-year-old woman with Down syndrome who lives life out loud and in vibrant color. She has studied Chinese brushstroke and Sumi-e watercolor painting for several years. More recently, she's begun to explore acrylic painting, pottery, and collages—as well as helping to create murals in her community. Sophia's paintings have been displayed at the Chinese American Museum D.C. and the Artists4ERA campaign. She's been the featured solo artist for shows at Capitol One headquarters, Children's National Medical Center, the Pozez Jewish Community Center, the Fredericksburg Area Museum, and a forthcoming exhibit at the Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden.

ARTIST STATEMENT

When asked to discuss her art, Sophia says, “Art makes me happy. I like feeling professional, proud, strong, and confident when I make art.” She sees the world as “full of wonderful and happy surprises.” In her view, “Art can show people how to be strong and how to treat others. Art can show you how to love.” She wants people to make friends with her art. Sophia takes pride in showing the greater world that people with an intellectual disability contribute a lot to their communities and can do great things when they have no limits and more opportunities.

HEADSHOT PHOTO BY ANDRE PINEDA



Jury Panel



Sara Greenberger Rafferty lives and works in Brooklyn, NY.

Taking inspiration from expanded photography practices, she creates wall work, sculpture, and exhibitions. She's also into comedy. In her career she has mounted over twenty solo exhibitions at museums and galleries around the world. Her most recent institutional solo exhibition, Forum 85, was presented at the Carnegie Museum of Art at the end of 2021. In 2014 she was included in the Whitney Biennial, and her first solo exhibition was presented at MOMA/PS1 in New York in early 2006. Her work is included in the collections of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, NY; the Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY; the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY; the Yale University Art Museum, New Haven, CT; the New Britain Museum of American Art, New Britain, CT; the Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, PA; the University of Chicago Booth School of Business, Chicago, IL; and the Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth, Hanover, NH and dozens of private collections. She is currently Professor and Ruth Stanton Chair of Art and Art History at Hunter College, CUNY in Manhattan. Studio Visit, Rafferty's experimental monograph, was published by Inventory Press in fall 2022. She is working on a book of texts, ICONOGRAPHY for publication.



Esther Grisham Grimm's career-long work in the arts encompasses museum and arts education, administration, and philanthropy. For 23 years,

she served as the Executive Director of 3Arts, a nonprofit grantmaking and arts ser-

vice organization that supports artists in the six-county Chicago metropolitan area, with a focus on women artists, artists of color, and Deaf and disabled artists. Prior to that, she was the Associate Director of Marwen and the Assistant Director of Museum Education at The Art Institute of Chicago. She is a writer and editor, flute player, equine therapy volunteer, and a leadership coach for National Arts Strategies. She serves on Chicago's Cultural Advisory Council and as Co-Chair of the American Friends of the Vienna Museum Board of Directors. In 2020, she was presented with the Diversity Award from the College Art Association. In 2017, she received the Kathryn V. Lamkey Spirit of Diversity Award from the Equal Employment Opportunity Committee of Actors' Equity Association. She also received the Wren Award in honor of women in theater from Rivendell Theatre Ensemble and the Women Who Make a Difference Award from Lakeside Bank.



Xang Mimi Ho is a fashion photographer in the Virginia area as well as an adjunct professor at George Mason University. Ho received her Bachelor of Fine

Art from George Mason University, Fairfax, Virginia, and her Master of Fine Art from the Maryland Institute College of Arts, Baltimore, Maryland. Her artwork explores themes of identity and social issues. Ho is a 2005 VSA Emerging Young Artists Program First Place winner, and participated in the 2015 EYA retrospective exhibit Focus Forward at the Kennedy Center. She is a practicing fashion photographer, and her photographs are included in two published books; "Portrait from The Pike": A Celebration of Community and "Living Diversity": The Columbia Pike Documentary Project."



Quána Madison is a multi-disciplinary African-American Queer artist with disabilities, a healing arts facilitator, and a well-being advocate. She dived

into the world of arts and wellness topics to support her holistic well-being journey, after a life-changing near-death experience from cancer previvor treatments and the sudden onset of chronic illnesses. Madison has lived with chronic pain since childhood. Madison strives to inspire, educate, empower, and uplift people through her artwork, consulting services, and community engagement. She collaborates with Habitat for Humanity, the National Pain Advocacy Center, the National Institutes of Health - HEAL Initiative, Colorado Artists in Recovery, and LBGTQIA+ organizations. A New York University and Colorado College graduate, Madison holds an MA in Education and a BA in Philosophy. More information is available at quanamadison.com and linktr.ee/quanamadison. Instagram: @quana.madison. LinkedIn: [linkedin.com/in/quanamadison](https://www.linkedin.com/in/quanamadison). TikTok: @iamquanamadison. Youtube: @lamquanamadison. Twitter/X: @quanamadison. Bluesky: @quanamadison.bsky.social.



Zesty Meyers was born in Providence, RI in 1969. In 1990, Meyers formed the radical installation and performance art group the B Team, which later

included future R & Company co-founder Evan Snyderman. Upon moving to New York in 1995, Meyers expanded the B Team into one of the first non-profit arts organizations comprised of visual artists who combined installation and performance art with molten glass as their primary medium. The B Team integrated craft, fine art and performance in groundbreaking ways and served as an inspiration for a deeper interaction and dialogue between art forms. In 1997, Meyers and Snyderman founded the gallery R 20th Century, now R & Company. Over the last 25 years, R & Company has established itself as one of the most prominent and groundbreaking design galleries in the world, presenting both

historical and contemporary programs. By providing archival, publication, and museum relations services, R & Company has reignited interest in now-iconic designers Wendell Castle, Greta Magnusson Grossman, Verner Panton, Sergio Rodrigues, Studio 65, and Joaquim Tenreiro, to name a few, as well as propelled the careers of Rogan Gregory, The Haas Brothers, Katie Stout, David Wiseman, and Jeff Zimmerman. In 2024, Meyers was one of the authors for the R & Company publications “Objects: USA 2024” and “Jeff Zimmerman: Glass, Light, Space”, further cementing his pivotal role in contemporary design discourse. R & Company is committed to expanding design holdings within encyclopedic and contemporary museum collections across the globe. Meyers and Snyderman’s vision and passion for expanding the audience for collectible design has driven the creation of a robust market and shaped the dialogue and study of design. R & Company continues to serve as a critical platform for experiencing 20th and 21st-century objects and for discovering innovative, rare, and significant design.



Visual artist **Gordon Sasaki**’s work blends traditional techniques with contemporary ideas of identity and culture. Combining an

unexpected use of images and materials, his mixed and multi-media works purposefully cross over traditional categorical boundaries to create possibilities and inclusion. His work is exhibited internationally and is held in many corporate and private collections. A wheelchair user due to an automobile accident, Sasaki brings a unique combination of personal insight and academic training to his work with disabled and underserved populations. He is a dedicated proponent for the inclusion of the arts as a life tool, invaluable to everyone and relevant to all aspects of daily life. Implementing his ideas through his studio practice as well as teaching in universities, museums, schools and private institutions. He has helped establish the Wynn Newhouse Awards since its founding in 2006, an awards programs supporting artists with disabilities through grants and exhibition opportunities.



Access/VSA The Kennedy Center

A Jean Kennedy Smith Arts and Disability Program

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

Aya Aljamili, Administrative & Grants Manager

Stephanie Litvak, Manager, Access/VSA Programs

Jessica Swanson, Manager, Accessibility

Wynsor Taylor, Access/VSA Programmer

Emily Maddox, Assistant Manager, Accessibility

Sarah Schoenfelder, Assistant Manager, Accessibility



Sara Kuba, Coordinator, Accessibility

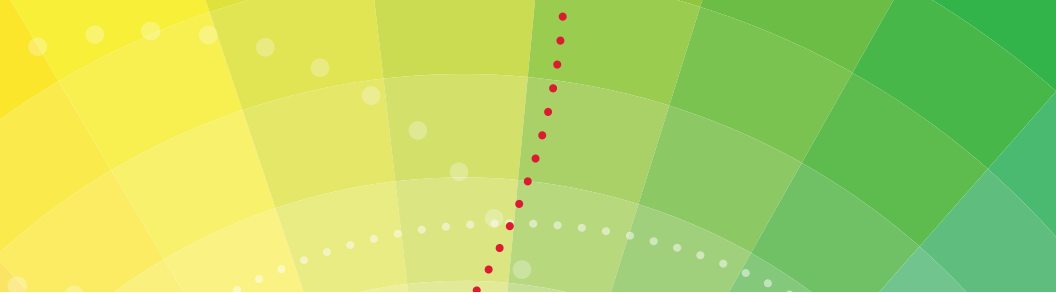




The Kennedy Center

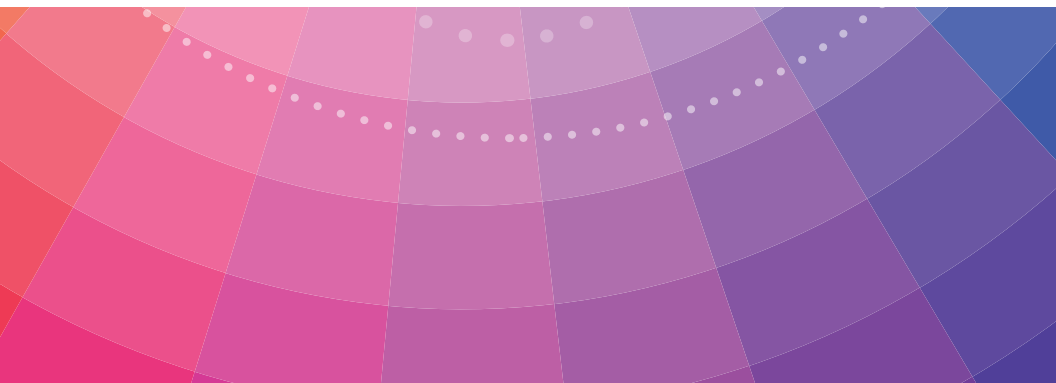
For more than 50 years, the Kennedy Center has brought equitable and accessible arts education to students across the country. This work is achieved through a vast ecosystem of over 40 educational initiatives, each designed to meet the unique needs of the students and communities they serve, focusing 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.

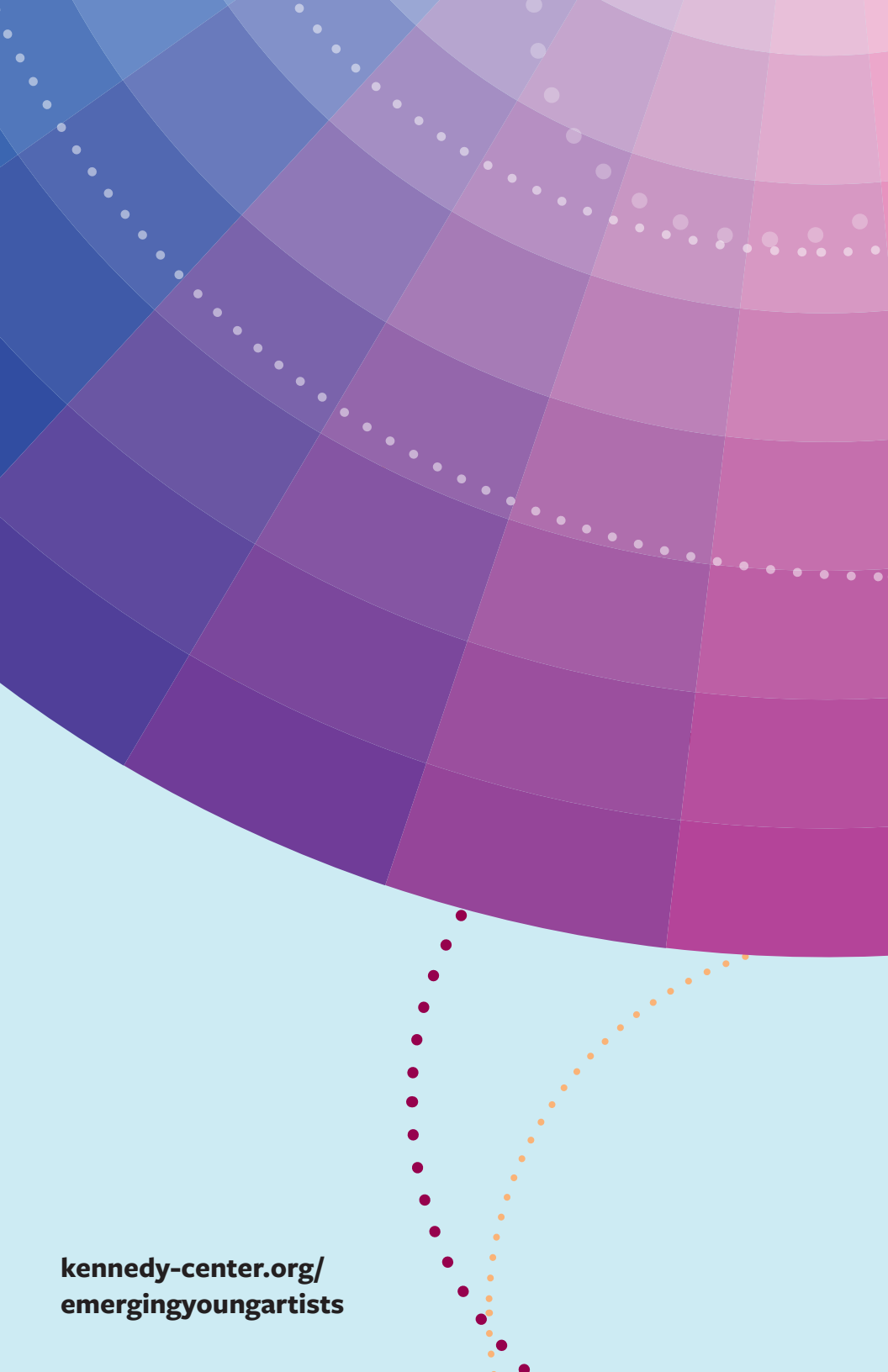




As the Center looks to the next 50 years, arts education will remain a priority. Named as a pillar in the Center's recently unveiled strategic plan, powerful education will play a pivotal role in the Center's work moving forward. Over the next five years the Center will focus on two main priorities: 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](https://www.kennedy-center.org/education).





[kennedy-center.org/
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