

PRESS RELEASE

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I AM . . . : Exploring What it Means to be a Vermont Artist

Montpelier – The Vermont Arts Council’s Spotlight Gallery presents *I AM . . .*, a multimedia exhibition that explores what it means to be a Vermont artist. The show culminates the first year of the *I am a Vermont Artist* e-newsletter series, which documents how artists' creative expressions reflect their experiences of ethnicity, gender identity, religion, disability, or age.

I AM . . . features the work of more than twenty artists and will include two-dimensional art as well as music and sound, spoken word, poetry, dance, and movement within a digital compilation. The exhibit will open Friday, November 8, with an artists’ reception from 5 to 7 p.m. and will run through December 20.

In describing the exhibit, co-curator Shanta Lee Gander explained, “The inspiration for these artists covers a broad range. For some, their muse dwells within their cultural lineage, heritage, and roots. This is highlighted by intricate textiles of Vera Longtoe Sheehan, who describes herself as an Abenaki culture bearer. For others, the act of bearing witness to ourselves or our current cultural moment takes center stage within a poem, song, or visual work. This exhibition fits within a national landscape that is seeking to inspire spaces to reach beyond the traditional comforts of how we see and experience art.”

I AM . . . Panel Discussion

Prior to the opening reception, a panel discussion will be held at 4 p.m. at the Vermont History Museum in Montpelier. The conversation, moderated by Shanta Lee Gander, will include: Christal Brown (dancer and choreographer), Toby MacNutt (disabled multidisciplinary artist, author, and teacher), Will Kasso Condry (mural artist, educator, and community organizer), and Vera Longtoe Sheehan (Abenaki culture bearer, master artist, educator, and activist). The panelists will explore the ways in which their own art forms and life experiences inform their work as Vermont artists.

Snelling Room
Vermont History Museum
109 State Street
Montpelier

Artists included in the exhibit

LN Bethea: poet

Larry Bissonnette: visual artist

Christal Brown: dancer and choreographer

François Clemmons: actor, singer, composer, playwright, author, and activist

Rajnii Eddins: spoken word poet, emcee, and teaching artist
Samirah Evans: singer and educator
William Forchion: performer, poet, filmmaker, and circus arts cultural exchange ambassador
Shanta Lee Gander: poet, writer, photographer, multi-faceted professional
Amy Hook-Therrien: visual artist
Will Kasso: mural artist, educator, and community organizer
DonnCherie McKenzie: Singer, songwriter, model, dancer, storyteller, costume enthusiast
Toby MacNutt: queer, nonbinary-trans, disabled multidisciplinary artist, author, and teacher
Mikahely: singer and songwriter
Misoo: visual artist
Muslim Girls Making Change: slam poets and performance artists
Toussaint St. Negritude: Afrofuturist/Oro-shamanic poet, bass clarinetist
Desmond Peeples: poet, writer, musician
Deidra Razzaque: artist, writer, workshop leader, intercultural coach
Vera Longtoe Sheehan: Abenaki culture bearer, master artist, educator, activist
Isadora Snapp: dancer, choreographer
Kaylynn Sullivan TwoTrees: artist, catalyst, guide
Cai Xi: painter, educator, Taiji master, chef, gallerist, curator
Sachiko Yoshida: visual artist

Photo caption: *Queen Mother*, 16"x20", by Will Kasso

About the *I am a Vermont Artist* series

This series explores how artists' creative expressions reflect their experiences of ethnicity, gender identity, religion, disability, or age. Covering all artistic disciplines, and a range of backgrounds—from New Americans to the state's first residents—the series aims to amplify voices that deepen our understanding of what it means to be a Vermont artist. [I am a Vermont Artist](#).

About the Spotlight Gallery

The Vermont Arts Council Spotlight Gallery is open to the public and located in the corridor and conference room of the offices at 136 State Street in Montpelier. There are times when the conference room is not available, but the corridor exhibit is always open during regular business hours, Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

About the Vermont Arts Council

The Vermont Arts Council envisions a Vermont where all people have access to the arts and creativity in their lives, education, and communities. Engagement with the arts transforms individuals, connects us more deeply to each other, energizes the economy, and sustains the vibrant cultural landscape that makes Vermont a great place to live. Since 1965, the Council has been the state's primary provider of funding, advocacy, and information for the arts in Vermont. www.vermontartscouncil.org.

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