

MEDIA RELEASE

Exhibition

University Galleries of Illinois State University is pleased to present *Making Our Space: Members of the Peoria Guild of Black Artists* from June 1 through August 1, 2021. In accordance with public health guidance, attendance will be kept under 25 at all times and visitors must book an appointment. Please see additional information below.

Participating artists: Kevin J. Bradford, Krystopher Dudley Brown, Alexa Cary, Kameron Hoover, David L. Jennings, Chantell Marlow, Alexander Martin, Erick Minnis, Morgan Mullen, Hannah Offutt, Brenda Pagan, Rose de Peoria, Kayla Thomas, and Quinton Thomas.

Making Our Space: Members of the Peoria Guild of Black Artists is a group exhibition featuring fourteen members of the ever-expanding Peoria-based artists guild, often referred to as PGOBA. The artist collective was organized in June 2020 following the murder of George Floyd—and in response to nationwide uprisings and the Black Lives Matter movement—to focus on celebrating and uplifting the voices of Black artists in Peoria, Illinois. This exhibition explores Black identity, Black joy, and Black community through painting, drawing, graphic design, illustration, printmaking, photography, video, performance, and poetry.

In addition to the individual works by participating artists, two major collaborations will be featured: *Poets of the Peoria Guild of Black Artists* and *Collective Subconscious*. *Poets of the Peoria Guild of Black Artists*, a spoken-word poetry video featuring PGOBA poets Krystopher Dudley Brown, David L. Jennings, Hannah Offutt, Brenda Pagan, and Rose de Peoria, will be on view in the exhibition and available online. Produced by videographer Kayla Thomas and co-directed by Brown, Jennings, and Thomas, the video is set in Brenda Pagan's home, the location of many PGOBA meetings. The poets perform a selection of original poems, each within a different room of the 1859 Italianate house. Notebooks, journals, and scraps of paper with preliminary verses will be displayed near the video. *Collective Subconscious* is a large-scale diptych painting of PGOBA members in various yoga poses while motifs of the cosmos weave in, out, and around the figures, representing the community they made and found with one another. Imagery in the painting stems from PGOBA's collaboration with Soulside Healing Arts, a non-profit community-based yoga studio that partnered with members to focus on Black wellness.

The exhibition will also premiere *Carving Our Space: New Kids on the Block*, a year-long remote print collaboration organized by Normal Editions, a non-profit print research facility founded in 1976 within the Wonsook Kim School of Art. Through this project, PGOBA artists—many having never made a print before—partnered with Normal Editions printmakers to create an edition of woodcut prints. Each PGOBA artist carved a woodblock image which was then printed in an edition of identical impressions by the collaborating printer(s). Two exciting Normal Editions milestones were reached during this project: Alexander Martin being the 150th artist to collaborate on a project and Quinton Thomas's edition being the 300th project in the forty-five years of creating works collaboratively with guest artists.

The portfolio consists of ten prints and one video performance. A series of recorded artist talks, produced in conjunction with this collaboration, will be released online during the exhibition. Participating PGOBA artists are: Kevin J. Bradford, Alexa Cary, Kameron Hoover, Chantell Marlow, Alexander Martin, Erick Minnis, Morgan Mullen, Hannah Offutt, Brenda Pagan, and Quinton Thomas. Normal Editions team members this year include: Veda Rives Aukerman, Interim Director and Master Printer; Morgan Price, Associate Professor of Art; Sarah Smelser, Professor of Art; Nicole Arnold, MFA student; Jess Dowell, BFA student; Peyton Fitzgerald, MFA student; and Erika Shiba, MFA student.

Early Career Black Artists, a virtual panel discussion, will feature founding members of the Peoria Guild of Black Artists: Alexander Martin, Morgan Mullen, and Brenda Pagan. This panel will highlight entrepreneurial endeavors, studio practices, artwork sales, teaching experiences, and community outreach, as well as the motivation for starting the guild. Aaron Caldwell, an artist, educator, and graduate assistant at University Galleries, will moderate this conversation.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: May 18, 2021

Making Our Space: Members of the Peoria Guild of Black Artists is organized by Jessica Bingham, University Galleries' curator. The exhibition and programming are sponsored in part by grants from the Illinois Arts Council Agency and Alice and Fannie Fell Trust—awarded to both University Galleries and Normal Editions.

Events and programming

- Virtual exhibition tours are available for classes, community groups, and individuals by appointment. Contact galleries@illinoisstate.edu or (309) 438-5487 to schedule.
- Recorded artist talks produced by Normal Editions will be released online throughout the exhibition and announced via University Galleries' Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter accounts.
- Early Career Black Artists, a virtual panel discussion, will be announced via University Galleries' Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter accounts.
- *Poets of the Peoria Guild of Black Artists*, a spoken word poetry video, will be released online and announced via University Galleries' Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter accounts.
- Educator resources, activities for children and youth, and art lesson videos will be available on the exhibition web page.
- An exhibition video tour will be available in July via University Galleries' [Vimeo](#).

Coronavirus (COVID-19) response

Please note the following updates as University Galleries reopens to the public.

- In accordance with Restore Illinois guidelines, attendance will be kept under 25 at all times.
- University Galleries remains free and open to the public, but visitors must book an appointment through the Bookings link on University Galleries' [website](#).
- Visitors to University Galleries will be required to wear a face covering and practice physical distancing.
- University Galleries' main entrance will function as the "in-door" and the emergency exit in our east gallery will function as the "out-door" to reduce congestion in the entry vestibule and lobby.
- Hand sanitizer stations, physical distancing decals, and directional arrows will be located throughout the gallery spaces.
- There will be additional cleaning of high-contact points and restrooms.

For information on Illinois State University's Coronavirus (COVID-19) response, please see coronavirus.illinoisstate.edu/.

University Galleries

University Galleries, a unit in the [Wonsook Kim College of Fine Arts](#), is located at 11 Uptown Circle, Suite 103, at the corner of Beaufort and Broadway streets. Parking is available in the Uptown Station parking deck located directly above University Galleries.

You can find [University Galleries](#) on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [Twitter](#), and sign up to receive email updates through the [newsletter](#). Please contact galleries@illinoisstate.edu or call (309) 438-5487 if you need to arrange an accommodation to participate in any events related to these exhibitions.