

MEDIA RELEASE

University Galleries of Illinois State University is pleased to present *Jess T. Dugan: I want you to know my story* from August 17 through October 16, 2022. All events are free and open to the public.

I want you to know my story presents recent photographs from St. Louis-based artist [Jess T. Dugan's](#) ongoing *Every Breath We Drew* series. The artist writes, "My creative practice centers around an exploration of identity – particularly gender and sexuality – through photographic portraiture. Drawing from my experience as a queer, non-binary person, my work is motivated by an existential need to understand and express myself and to connect with others." The exhibition title is excerpted from a creative text Dugan wrote to accompany these photographs in their newest book, *Look at me like you love me*, self-described as a "visual poem." Additional passages from the book are installed throughout the exhibition as a poetic current flowing under the works.

Although Dugan began their *Every Breath We Drew* series in 2011, this exhibition focuses on photographs made since 2019, particularly those created since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Citing a period of "heightened self-reflection" during the pandemic, Dugan told a *PhotoVogue* interviewer that they were "thinking about what is lost when we're not in relationships with other people personally or communally." Through still lifes, portraits of individuals and couples, and self-portraits, the artist addresses relationships, connection, love, loss, aging, and more. In *Red tulips*, a white bottle filled with eight unopened flowers sits atop a solitary wooden table. Sunlight from a nearby window rakes across and creates a shadowy ghost of the cut flowers. For *Collin at sunset*—which was also on view at University Galleries during the summer for the Teen Art Group-curated exhibition, [In Living Color](#)—one of Dugan's frequent collaborators looks directly at the camera while casually reclining in a lush field of violets. Meanwhile, in *Self-portrait (mirror)*, the artist faces a mirror while turned away from the viewer. Their iris-tattooed arms are folded overhead, obscuring part of their reflection. The works share aspects of Dugan's story while remaining open enough for interpreting collective experiences of connection.

I want to tell you my story is the focus of multiple educational programs. Jess T. Dugan will give a public artist lecture and meet with students. University Galleries' staff will lead professional development workshops for educators and art-making workshops for ISU students, families, K-12 students, and community members. University Galleries continues collaborating with the Children's Discovery Museum for Art Around You, a series of virtual exhibition tours and workshops for children ages 7 through 10. Free virtual and in-person curator-led tours are available by appointment for the duration of the exhibition. Milner Library has compiled a reading list inspired by Dugan's work.

Jess T. Dugan: I want you to know my story is organized by [Kendra Paitz](#), University Galleries' director and chief curator. This exhibition and programming are supported by University Galleries' grants from the Illinois Arts Council Agency and the Alice and Fannie Fell Trust.

Artist biography

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Jess T. Dugan's work is included in the collections of the National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.; International Center of Photography, New York City; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; St. Louis Art Museum, St. Louis; Museum of Contemporary Photography, Chicago; Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.; Minneapolis Institute of Art, Minneapolis; George Eastman Museum, Rochester, New York; Harvard Art Museums, Cambridge, Massachusetts; Joan Flasch Artists' Book Collection, School of the Art Institute of Chicago; and Leslie-Lohman Museum of Art, New York City, among others. Their work has been exhibited at National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.; International Center of Photography, New York City; Block Museum of Art at Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois; Museum of Contemporary Photography, Chicago; and Smith College Museum of Art, Northampton, Massachusetts, among others. Their work is the subject of monographs published by MACK, Kehrer Verlag, and Daylight Books, and has been included in exhibition catalogues published by the Library of Congress, Thames & Hudson, Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery, University of North Carolina Press, Light Work, and Radius Books.

Dugan has received an ICP Infinity Award, a Pollock-Krasner Foundation grant, and was selected as an LGBT Artist Champion of Change by the White House. Dugan has also done editorial work for *The New York Times*, *ACLU Magazine*, *Time*, *The Guardian*, and *The New York Times Magazine*. They are a co-founder of the Strange Fire Collective, which highlights work made by women, people of color, and LGBTQ artists. Dugan received their MFA in Photography from Columbia College, Chicago; MLA in Museum Studies from Harvard University; and BFA in Photography from the Massachusetts College of Art and Design. Dugan's work is represented by ClampArt, New York City, and Turner Carroll Gallery, Santa Fe.

Events and programming

All events are free and open to the public.

- Friday, September 2, from 6:00 to 7:30 p.m.
All-ages artmaking workshop. Materials and instruction provided by University Galleries' staff. [Registration](#) required. Registration will close once capacity is reached.
- Saturday, September 10, from noon to 1:30 p.m.
All-ages artmaking workshop. Materials and instruction provided by University Galleries' staff. [Registration](#) required. Registration will close once capacity is reached.
- Friday, September 16, from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m.
Educator workshop. Experience the exhibition and develop lesson plans. Materials and instruction provided by University Galleries' staff. [Registration](#) required. Registration will close once capacity is reached.
- Tuesday, September 27 at noon
Artist lecture by Jess T. Dugan
- Tuesday, September 27, from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m.

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Artist reception with Jess T. Dugan

- Friday, September 30
Family Weekend exhibition tours from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m.
- Saturday, October 1, from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
Extended exhibition hours for Family Weekend
- Saturday, October 1 at 1 p.m.
Tour and Workshop: Art Around You. Co-presented with the Children's Discovery Museum.
Register at childrensdiscoverymuseum.net
- Field trip program, curator-led tours, and workshops available by appointment throughout the exhibition. Reimbursements are available for K-12 schools or community organizations to offset the costs of transportation. Please contact University Galleries at gallery@ilstu.edu or (309) 438-5487 to schedule an appointment.

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—the first hour is free, as well as any time after 5:01 p.m.

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