



MINNESOTA
MUSEUM of
AMERICAN ART

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Media contact:

Susannah Schouweiler
sschouweiler@mmaa.org
(651) 204-0700

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www.mmaa.org/media.



Minnesota Museum of American Art presents a group exhibition of local and national work, selected by a diverse array of guest curators inspired by the question: Who are “we the people”?

August 17–October 29, 2017

Minnesota Museum of American Art | The Historic Pioneer Endicott

141 E. 4th Street, St. Paul, MN (entrance at the corner of 4th and Robert Streets)

St. Paul, MN, July 13, 2017—Minnesota Museum of American Art (the M) presents *We the People*, inviting four guest curators to select work by prominent local and national artists that sheds light on the complexities of contemporary American experience. This exhibition continues the M’s engagement with critical issues about American art which began two years ago with the show *American Art: It’s Complicated*.

“We the people,” the opening words of the U.S. Constitution, serves as a national slogan and a rallying cry. But who constitutes the “we” in that formative phrase? More to the point, which people and whose stories *aren’t* represented in the language of national unity?

In response to those questions, Christopher Harrison (independent curator and artist), Johnnay Leenay (Minnesota Museum of American Art), Mary Anne Quiroz (Indigenous Roots Cultural Center), and Maggie Thompson (Two Rivers Art Gallery) present artworks with disparate cultural points of view. Artists include Star Wallowing Bull, Zackary Drucker, Rico Gatson, Susan Hauptman, Nooshin Hakim Javadi, Steve Ozone, and others.

Curator Johnnay Leenay says, “I am positive that each person you ask would define ‘America’ differently. My American experience has been a queer experience, and I know that that identity makes me interact with questions of national identity in a different way.” She goes on: “This exhibition reflects the interpretations of four individuals from four different backgrounds, offering four different definitions of what it means to be American which, when combined, tell a more holistic story of ‘we the people.’”

We the People includes more than 35 pieces in all media—including photography, painting, sculpture, textiles, video, and sound installation. A number of these works point to narratives of LGBTQIA identity and experience, while other works highlight perspectives of indigenous artists and artists of color. During this time of division, the curators’ selections offer a more expansive, inclusive understanding of who we are as a nation, making visible both the fault lines and points of confluence running through our collective body politic.

Visit the exhibition page on the M's website for more information:

www.mmaa.org/wethepeople.



About the guest curators:

Christopher E. Harrison is a fine artist, graphic designer, museum educator, and independent curator based in the Twin Cities. His politically and socially engaged paintings are made with natural materials, and focus on creating greater curiosity and respect for the physical world. Harrison received his BFA in 1987 from Columbus College of Art and Design in Columbus, OH, and he is an MFA candidate at Art Academy University, San Francisco.

Johnnay Leenay is a community organizer, independent curator, and the Minnesota Museum of American Art's first Diversity in the Arts fellow. She has a BA in Communications and Journalism and Justice and Peace Studies from the University of St. Thomas.

Mary Anne Quiroz was born in the Philippines and immigrated to the United States in 1989. She is an artist, organizer, and community engagement coordinator based in St. Paul. She is cofounder of Kalpulli Yaocenoxtli, a traditional Mexican Aztec dance and drum group. Quiroz is also cofounder of Indigenous Roots Cultural Arts Center, a collective of artists and organizations dedicated to building, supporting, and cultivating opportunities for Indigenous peoples and communities of color through cultural arts and activism.

Maggie Thompson, a member of the Fond Du Lac Band of Ojibwe, is a textile artist, designer, and founder of Makwa Studio in Minneapolis. She is also the gallery manager at Two Rivers Art Gallery: an active space for the Native community to build relationships and to collaborate, strengthening Native art and artistic voices within the Twin Cities. She received her BFA in Textiles at the Rhode Island School of Design in 2013.

Image credits (L to R): Susan Hauptman, *Untitled Self-Portrait*, 1997. Charcoal and pastel on paper, 58.75 x 48.5 in. Coll. Minnesota Museum of American Art.

Star Wallowing Bull, *New Age Fancy Dancer*, 2016. Acrylic on canvas, 48 x 36 in. Courtesy Bockley Gallery.

Bobby Rogers, *Spirit of Eve*, 2012. Archival pigment print, 48 x 36 in. Courtesy the artist.

Key dates:

Press Preview

Thursday, August 17

10 – 11:30 a.m.

Curators will be present and available for interviews. Refreshments will be served.

We the People | August 17 – October 29, 2017

Minnesota Museum of American Art, the Historic Pioneer Endicott, 141 E. 4th Street, St. Paul

Exhibition hours: Thursday & Friday, 11 a.m. – 6 p.m.; Saturday & Sunday, 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Exhibition-related programming:

(All events will be held on-site at the M unless otherwise noted)

- ***We the People*: Opening Events**

Opening reception: Thursday, August 17, 7 – 9 p.m.

Admission is free and open to the public. A cash bar will be available, with chef-made snacks by CRAVE and tunes spun by DJ Bianca Pettis. A **members-only preview** will precede the public opening reception, with a special event for members of the museum from 5:30 – 7 p.m.

- ***Project 42* Performance and Discussion**

Sunday, August 27, 7 p.m.

Mixed Blood Theatre | 1501 S. 4th Street, Minneapolis MN

Twin Cities-based performance artist Marcel Michelle-Mobama and 20% Theatre Company are collaborating with *We the People*-featured artist Jono Vaughan and curator Johnnay Leenay for an artistic response honoring the memory of transgender people in the U.S. killed in violence.

- ***We the People* Curators in Conversation**

Tuesday, September 12, 6 – 8 p.m.

A moderated panel discussion with *We the People* guest curators and artist and curator Dyani White Hawk.

- **Family Day: When Our Stories Dance Together**

Sunday, September 17, 1 – 4 p.m.

A day of family-friendly art-making and performance at the M, in partnership with Hmong Museum, Indigenous Roots Cultural Center, St. Paul Public Library, and artists Vanghoua Anthony Vue and Ryan Stopera. Family Day activities will build from the multiple stories held within the exhibition *We the People* and the murals from the Saint Paul Murals Project.

- **Conversation: Deana Haggag of United States Artists (U.S.A.)**

Wednesday, October 18, 7 p.m.

Ordway Center for Performing Arts | 345 Washington Street, St. Paul, MN

Tickets: \$10 (\$8 for artists, students, and seniors)

Deana Haggag, CEO and President of U.S.A. (a Chicago-based, philanthropic nonprofit), is an advocate for artists, passionate about creative workers' ability to illuminate the shifting landscape of American identity, while making space for experiences and viewpoints that run counter to the mainstream. On October 18, the M presents an evening of Haggag in conversation with artists from the Twin Cities, moments of live performance, and time for talking informally about this thing we refer to as American art. This will be a ticketed event.

- **The M After Hours: Closing Time**

Friday, October 27, 6 – 9 p.m.

After the close of *We the People*, the gallery will be closed for several months for construction, in preparation for the grand opening of a new, expanded museum in spring 2018. Help us shut the joint down with a bang!

(Ongoing) Materials Lab: Front-Yard Democracy

Engage in a little front-yard democracy: create a yard sign with your best slogan for who we are as a nation. (Activity inspired by the team of All Are Welcome Here.)

(Ongoing) Response Wall: “We the People ...”

Try your hand at refreshing the opening lines of the U.S. Constitution: How would you complete the phrase, “We the People ...”? Share your declarations on the M’s response wall, and pick up a copy of the U.S. Constitution, courtesy of the [American Civil Liberties Union of Minnesota](http://www.aclu.org).

About the Minnesota Museum of American Art

The Minnesota Museum of American Art (the M) is one of the oldest visual arts organizations in Minnesota, with roots stretching back to the 19th century. Based in St. Paul, the M currently holds more than 4,500 artworks that showcase the unique voices of American artists, guided by the belief that art should reflect the constantly shifting landscape that defines the American experience. With a flagship gallery in the Historic Pioneer Endicott building on the edge of St. Paul’s Lowertown neighborhood, as well as traveling shows which introduce American art and artists to audiences around the state, region, and country at large, the M is home to an array of responsive exhibitions and programming that connect diverse audiences with artwork, subjects, and issues that are both relevant and widely engaging. For more information, visit www.mmaa.org.

This exhibition and its accompanying programs are made possible by the voters of Minnesota through a Minnesota State Arts Board Operating Support grant and an Arts Access grant, thanks to a legislative appropriation from the arts and cultural heritage fund. Thanks also to Target, and to the ACLU of Minnesota for supporting the Response Wall.



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