



MINNESOTA
MUSEUM of
AMERICAN ART

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Saint Paul Murals Project

Minnesota Museum of American Art commissions three new murals in honor of the city's Hmong community, to be celebrated with a pair of public events: a block party on 4th Street on Sept. 28 and a community gathering at Hmong Village on Sept. 29.

Mural locations:

The Historic Pioneer Endicott | 141 E. 4th Street, St. Paul

Jackson Street Parking Ramp | 345 Jackson Street, St. Paul

Hmong Village | 1001 Johnson Parkway, St. Paul

St. Paul, MN, September 8, 2017—Minnesota Museum of American Art (the M) has commissioned guest artist Vanghoua Anthony Vue (Brisbane, Australia) and four local artist-partners to create three new murals commemorating the Hmong diaspora. Murals will appear on the 4th Street façade of the Jackson Street Parking ramp and in the windows of the Historic Pioneer Endicott, which is home to the Minnesota Museum of American Art, and on the front entrance to Eastside St. Paul's Hmong Village.

The murals follow an intensive month of workshops and conversations the M and Vue held this past spring with local Hmong organizational partners and elders, families, and artists from the Hmong community. Vue returns to St. Paul for

the month of September to create the commissioned murals with local artists Xee Reiter, Christina Vang, Melissa Vang, and Shoua Yang.

The M's Saint Paul Murals Project began with a grant from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, as part of its Knight Arts Challenge, through which the foundation aims to fund the best ideas for engaging and enriching St. Paul through the arts. Additional support has been provided by the Saint Paul Foundation and Lowertown Future Fund, the City of St. Paul's Neighborhood STAR program, PAK Properties, Minnesota State Arts Board, and partnering organizations like Hmong Museum, Studia H, Center for Hmong Arts and Talent, and Hmong Village.

The mural at Hmong Village will bring together vibrantly painted, geometric designs influenced by Hmong batik aesthetics and textiles with portraits of people from the local and global Hmong communities who hold particular meaning for Vue and his local artist collaborators. Additionally, the M's 4th Street windows, located within the Historic Pioneer Endicott, will be the site for a temporary tape installation created by Vue that will involve drawing, mapping, and documentation of the artist's experiences with several sites of significance to St. Paul's Hmong community. The third mural site, the Jackson Street parking ramp, will be transformed by Vue and his team of local artists with artworks based on individual stories and symbolism, laid against an abstraction inspired by Hmong story cloths.

Kristin Makhholm, Executive Director of Minnesota Museum of American Art, says: "This is more than just a public art project. It's about more than our museum commissioning new murals for the city. The Saint Paul Murals Project brings together people from the far reaches of the Hmong diaspora for conversation and creative exchange. Vue's interactions and conversations with our city's Hmong community this past spring, including Hmong artists, families, and elders, instill in the resulting murals the richness of that global Hmong heritage, rooted in the strength of Vue's local, one-on-one connections and creative collaboration."

KEY DATES:

Block Party – Saint Paul Murals Project Happy Hour

Thursday, September 28, 5 – 7 p.m., *Free Event*

On 4th Street, between Jackson and Robert Streets | St. Paul, MN

A happy-hour block party featuring live music by Realtree, games and art-making activities at Springboard for the Arts' SPARKit trailer, Public Art Saint Paul's Utopian Podium, and food and drink by Twin Cities Pita and 12welve Eyes Brewing.

Community Unveiling – Saint Paul Murals Project

Friday, September 29, 4 – 6 p.m., *Free Event*

Hmong Village | 1001 Johnson Parkway | St. Paul, MN

This family-friendly ribbon-cutting celebrates both the new mural at Hmong Village and the M's partners in the city's Hmong community, whose contributions helped make this expression of creativity and culture possible. Mingle with the M's lead mural artist, Vanghoua Anthony Vue, and his partnering local artists, and then explore the rich abundance of food, drink, and shopping at this Eastside cultural hub.

ONLINE: Visit the M's website for more information: www.mmaa.org/saintpaulmuralprojects.

CONTACT: Susannah Schouweiler, sschouweiler@mmaa.org (651-204-0700), for interviews and for best times to photograph or record video of the murals in progress. Representatives of the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation are also available for interviews about the importance of this and other projects awarded grants through its Knight Arts Challenge in St. Paul.



About the mural artists:

Vanghoua Anthony Vue is a multidisciplinary artist whose current practice recontextualizes his Hmong heritage within his Australian upbringing and experience, through a postcolonial and critical, arts-based lens and approach. Often employing strategies of mistranslation, subversion, humor, satire, and absurdity, Vue's work engages with questions of cultural and national identity, place, history, cultural "traditions" and craft, high art and artefact. He is currently undertaking his PhD at the Queensland College of Art in Brisbane, Australia.

Xee Reiter began her infatuation with art in grade school and it has since remained an intrinsic part of her creative life. Her eclectic style ranges from lettering and calligraphy to line illustrations and painting, using various mediums. As a first generation Hmong American, her cultural roots can be found in some of her work. She teaches art to youth at the local school and does henna body art at different festivals throughout the metro. Reiter lives in Saint Paul with her husband, three kids, and two small turtles.

Christina Vang is an art director, graphic designer, and multidisciplinary artist based in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Vang's work is evocative of her experience as a Hmong American woman and tends to be surreal and whimsical in nature. Many of her projects explore human relationships, cultural identity, and reference childhood.

Melissa Vang is a visual artist, photographer, and production/stage manager. She received her Bachelor of Arts from the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities, with a focus on photography, printmaking, and book arts. Her photography was most recently showcased in two exhibitions at *In Progress: NEXUS: Honoring the Self-Taught Photographic Artist* (2016) and *Hmong Tattoo* (2017). Her current photography project, *F R I D G E S*, involves taking portraits of Hmong refrigerators and freezers from all over the world and collecting stories of food, culture, identity, and family. A work from this series was part of the 40th Anniversary *We Are Hmong* exhibit at the Minnesota History Center.

Shoua Yang's work is both a reflection of his experience in the United States as an Asian American and a preservation of the Hmong heritage. Yang uses his art to bring to light American social issues and experiences from the vantage of a refugee.

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 Saint 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 Saint 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.

Saint Paul Mural Projects are made possible, in part, by a grant from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, with additional support from the City of Saint Paul, Lowertown Future Fund, Saint Paul Neighborhood STAR program, PAK Properties, Hmong Museum, Center for Hmong Arts and Talent, Wet Paint, Griffith University, Sherwin Williams, Hmong Village, Studia H, and Public Art Saint Paul.

The M's exhibitions and 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.

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