



M E R G E

 **Access/VSA**
The Kennedy Center

VOLKSWAGEN
GROUP OF AMERICA

A Jean Kennedy Smith Arts and Disability Program

Artwork photography by Margot Schulman

Alternative formats of this publication are available on request.



Contents

About MERGE.....	4
About VSA Emerging Young Artists Program.....	5
Panteha Abareshi.....	7
Joshua Ben-Dylan.....	9
Mike Cannata.....	11
Miranda Chao.....	13
MJ Cooper.....	15
Sky Dai.....	17
James de Guzman Lee.....	19
Moriah Faith.....	21
Maiya Lea Hartman.....	23
Dominic Killiany.....	25
Taylor Koedyker.....	27
May Ling Kopecky.....	29
Maya Milton.....	31
Mia Neill.....	33
Jasina Yu.....	35
Jury Panel.....	36-37

About MERGE

The 2021 VSA Emerging Young Artists Competition, a Jean Kennedy Smith Arts and Disability Program of the Kennedy Center, drew submissions from talented young artists with disabilities, ages 16-25, from around the United States. This year's theme, MERGE, explores uniting paths and asks what we can learn when it all comes together. The call invited artists to consider the intersections and combinations of their creative process and disability identity. In art, the juxtaposition of ideas can blur distinctions or reveal something new.

“These young artists challenge us to see the world through their lived experiences with disabilities. Their work sparks dialogue and examination of who we are and, hopefully, will ignite understanding around creative and identity,” said Betty Siegel, Kennedy Center, Director of Accessibility and VSA. “We thank Volkswagen Group of America for their 20 years of support. We look forward to seeing the impact these 15 young artists and their work will have on bringing us all together.”

“Volkswagen Group's steadfast support of the VSA Emerging Young Artists Program over the past 20 years has helped emerging artists with disabilities build the foundation for successful careers. This year's exhibition theme, MERGE, brings together a cross-cutting group of artists working across media, merging 2D and 3D forms, and creating exciting juxtapositions.” said Anna Schneider, Senior Vice President, Industry-Government Relations for Volkswagen Group of America. “These artists invite us all to consider what new ideas might emerge from blending perspectives. I am both proud and excited to see their award-winning work and for the opportunities the national tour will create for each artist and their career.”

After an extended delay due to the pandemic, we are thrilled to debut the exhibition at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. Listed ages for artists are as of June 1, 2022.

About VSA Emerging Young Artists Program

Since 2002, the Kennedy Center and Volkswagen Group of America have teamed up for the VSA Emerging Young Artists Program, a Jean Kennedy Smith Arts and Disability Program, to recognize and showcase the work of emerging young artists living with disabilities in the United States. This collaboration creates opportunities for these artists at a critical time when many are making the life-defining choice to pursue arts-based careers. The Kennedy Center and Volkswagen are committed to investing in the future of young artists living with disabilities.

Every year, hundreds of emerging young artists living with disabilities compete to be included in a curated exhibition, formed around a unique theme. After a rigorous adjudication process, 15 artists are selected to showcase their work and receive: 1) a \$20,000 grand prize, a \$10,000 first prize award, a \$6,000 second prize award, and twelve \$2,000 awards of excellence; 2) professional development workshops with unique networking opportunities; and 3) the opportunity to have their work displayed in an exhibition that opens in Washington, D.C. and tours for one year around the United States.

[kennedy-center.org/emergingyoungartists](https://www.kennedy-center.org/emergingyoungartists)

Panteha Abareshi

Los Angeles, California · Age 22

First Prize

Panteha Abareshi's work is rooted in their existence as a chronically ill/disabled body with multiple medical illnesses and resulting disabilities, at the root of which is sickle zero beta thalassemia, a genetic blood disorder that causes debilitating pain and bodily deterioration that increase with age.

Abareshi's work examines the complexities of living within a body that is highly monitored, constantly examined, and made to feel like a specimen. The radicalized abjectification of their corporeal form allows for an examination of its deterioration and its connection to universal feelings of fragility, fear, pain and mortality. Their body serves as both medium and message, and Abareshi plays with representations that are both recognizable and unrecognizable as human forms. The body is abstracted as its "meaning" is incessantly re-contextualized, deconstructed and refabricated. Abareshi's work also speaks to the ableism that is pervasive in language, behavior and media, delving into the many representations of the sick and disabled body.

Abareshi is completing a degree in intermedia from the University of Southern California, after which they plan to pursue a Master of Fine Arts and attend the Whitney Museum of American Art Independent Study Program. panteha.com



Methods of Care for the Precarious Body, 2021
Analog video, digital video, performance, Kodak carousel

Joshua Ben-Dylan

New York, New York · Age 24

Award of Excellence

Joshua “Shuah” Ben-Dylan is an artist exploring emotions and moments that are seldom communicated. Working within the mediums of photography, visual art, poetry, film and music, their art reflects the hyperculture nature of society with a constant inundation of information that distorts and warps the senses. They draw heavily from transcendentalism, mythology and pioneers in the field of color, seeking to push art to the extreme and hoping to uncover something new. *Crossing Brooklyn* is a meditation on the 21st-century man, splicing the old world of religious practice with today’s metropolitan landscape. Ben-Dylan’s artistic practice derives from an acute sensitivity to the world due to bipolar disorder; everything around them is heightened to extremes. Using hypercolor, an artistic style they developed, to blend their vision of the world with a fantasy of what it could be, they hope to share something previously unseen.

Ben-Dylan holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts in film from Purchase College. They are currently creating a fourth poetry book and an experimental feature film, as well as their next photo series. joshuabendylan.com



Shuah

Crossing Brooklyn, 2020
35mm film photograph (26.5” x 35” x 0.875”)



Untitled, 2019

Ceramics, glaze, steel, enamel paint, metal hose clamps (47" x 42" x 45")

Mike Cannata

Geneva, Illinois · Age 25

Award of Excellence

Mike Cannata's art explores what it is like to be a physically and mentally hyperactive individual by investigating movement and stillness. Studying sensations and emotions through making, meditating, skateboarding and dancing, he experiences a sense of reprieve from the busyness of an overactive mind with attention deficit disorder. Adrenaline-inducing activities slow time and focus him, telling mind and body that what is happening in the moment is important and that he is alive. Moments of stillness in meditation supply a similar awareness of the sensations and emotions of body and mind. Cannata further explores these observations through his sculptural installations, which embody the duality of activity and quiet that inhabit the same space. The toggling between stillness and stir activates attentional awareness, creating a serene state in which to process and think.

A multimedia artist working in metal, glass, paint, ceramics and found materials, Cannata received a Bachelor of Fine Arts from the New York State School of Ceramics at Alfred University. He is currently a long-term resident at the Morean Center for Clay in St. Petersburg, Florida. mikecannata.com

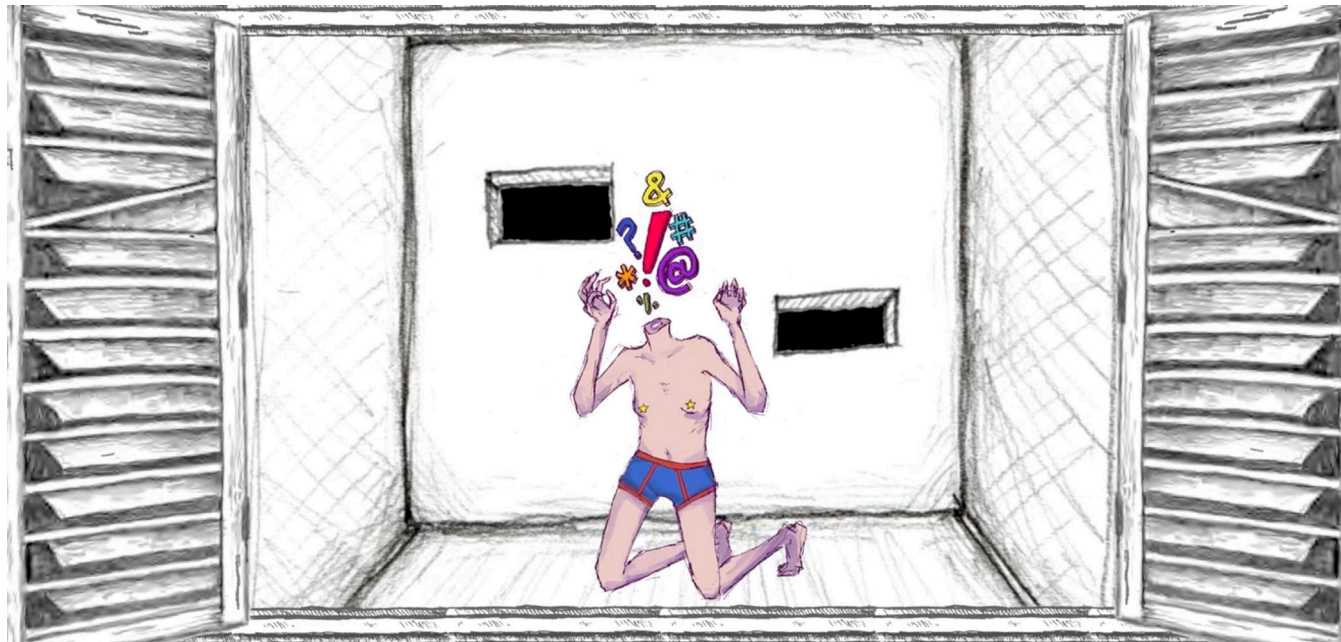
Miranda Chao

Seattle, Washington · Age 26

Award of Excellence

Miranda Chao is fascinated by the psychological and the surreal at the intersection of cute and creepy. Through illustration and animation, they seek to express a deluge of emotions and satisfy an urge to communicate and connect with others. In *Twenty of You*, Chao explores their experience with borderline personality disorder and bipolar disorder to visualize mental states during a time of extreme fluctuation. Chao's work cycles through 20 different depictions of these states, viewed through a window in the same way one might see themselves in a dream. It is about depression and mania, dissociation and comforts of reality, and searches for a point of resonance between the viewer and the art.

Chao graduated from Brown University with a degree in computer science and visual arts. They are currently working on creating games and thinking about what will come next. mirandachao.com



Twenty of You, 2018
Animation and collage

MJ Cooper

Backlick, Ohio · Age 18

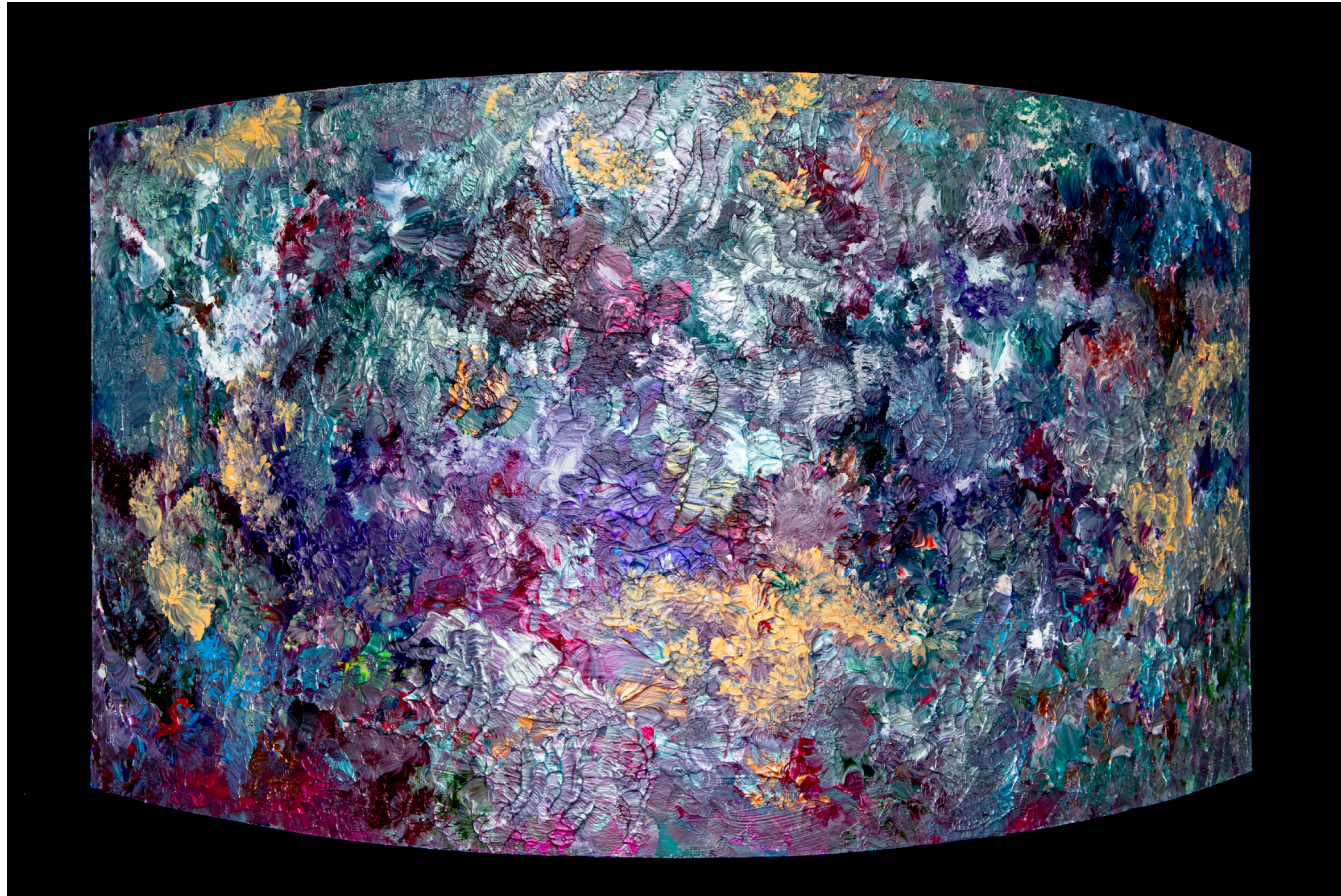
Award of Excellence

Many of MJ Cooper's paintings are created after a time of meditation. Her acrylic paintings on canvas with vibrant colors and textures offer a therapeutic mechanism as she lives with chronic vestibular migraines, functional neurological disorder, cognitive impairment, photophobia, and sound sensitivity. Cooper finds inspiration in the perseverance, strength and vivid artistry of Yayoi Kusama and the colorful, abstract and textured paintings of Jackson Pollock.

The award-winning painting entitled *Curved Enthusiasm* is about how life can be full of promise, destiny, joy, and hopes that can be taken away in a heartbeat. With every mishap, misfortune or mistake, our enthusiasm may change course or destination.

Cooper wants to travel abroad and study art in college after a gap year. Her dream is for her paintings to be in museums, galleries and homes all around the world.

artlifting.com/collections/mj-cooper



Curved Enthusiasm, 2020

Acrylic painting on curved, double-sided canvas (24.5" x 48" x 12")

Sky Dai

Nomadic, but currently in Columbus, Ohio
and Asheville, North Carolina · Age 25

Award of Excellence

Inspired by how traumatic stress causes the brain to collage fragments of memory, Sky Dai distorts perspectives and figures in their paintings to process and rewrite their past in a whimsical world where harsh memories become less distressing.

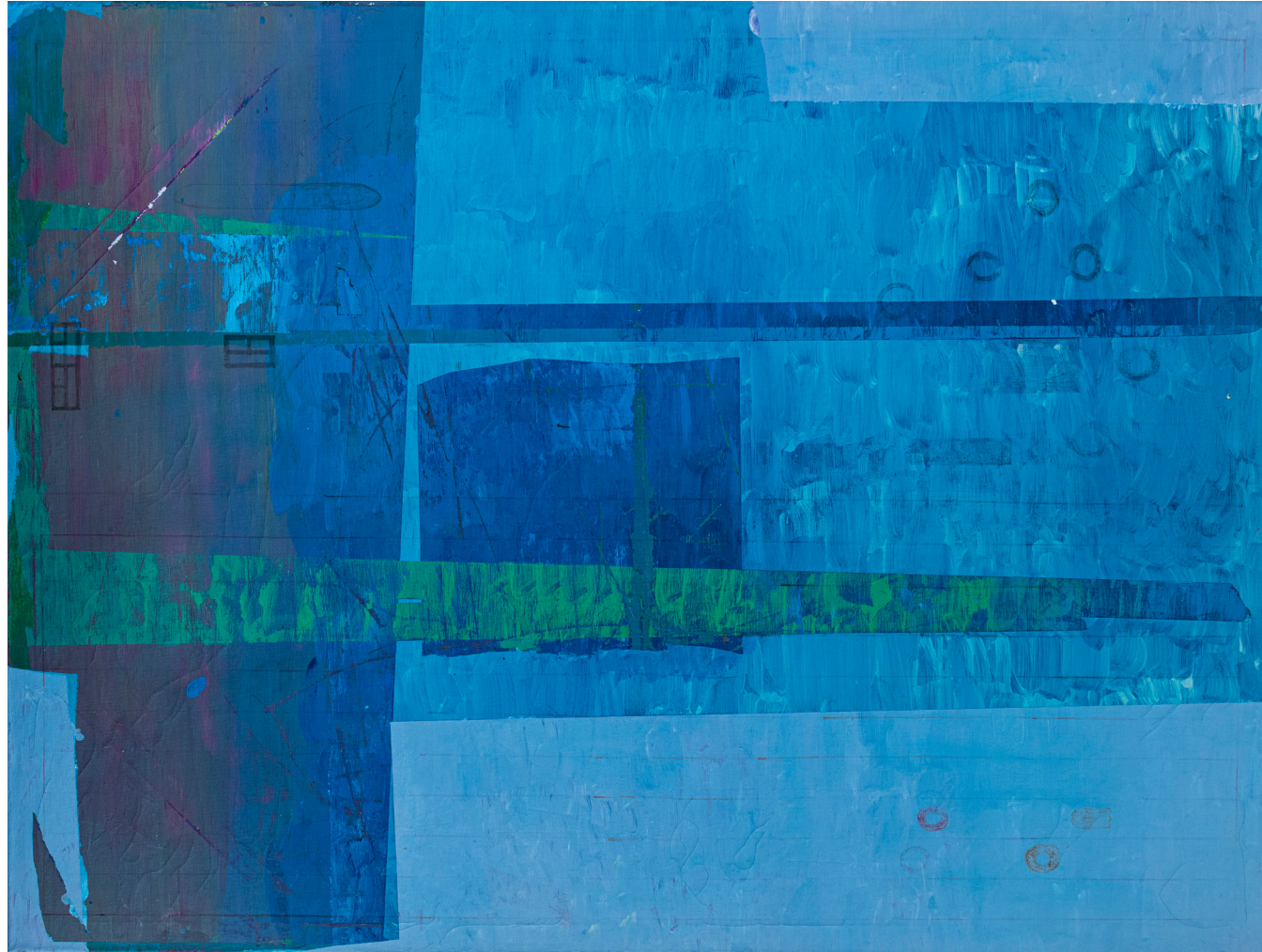
Their multi-figurative, surreal oil paintings document journeys through the astral plane, traumatic memories, queer relationships and living as a dissociative identity system. Having multiple consciousnesses (or personalities) allows Dai to observe from multiple perspectives at once and create art as a team of identities with varying degrees of artistic skill, styles and ideas.

In *Dysfunctional Family Portrait*, Dai painted themselves leaning over their family of origin's kitchen table, pointing to an escape route map. The piece was painted a year after fleeing their family after a series of altercations and abuse left them homeless.

Dai received a Bachelor of Fine Arts in fine arts and creative writing at Columbus College of Art and Design and has attended and taught at School of the Alternative in Black Mountain, North Carolina. skydai.squarespace.com



Dysfunctional Family Portrait, 2018
Oil and pastel on canvas (41" x 69" x 1.5")



Pandemic Blue 1, 2020
Acrylic on canvas with markers (36" x 48" x 0.875")

James de Guzman Lee

Hillsborough, California · Age 18

Award of Excellence

James de Guzman Lee expresses himself primarily through painting, drawing, and creating miniature furniture.

When COVID-19 shut down his school and forced everyone to shelter in place, de Guzman Lee turned to art, painting for hours every day. *Pandemic 1* is the first in a series of more than 30 paintings executed over the first few months of the pandemic. It was selected by the de Young Museum's curatorial board in its prestigious Open Call and was exhibited at the de Young Open in 2020. The rest of the Pandemic series was auctioned in support of the Oak Hill School for children with autism.

de Guzman Lee's work reflects his mastery of color and his fascination with swimming pools and the ocean. After painting many layers of overlapping acrylic color, he will finish off his paintings with marker drawings of swimming pool lanes and circles representing boats and lifesavers. This is his personal iconography and his main channel for sharing his unique view of the world. jameseyart.com



Tough Love, 2020
Oil on canvas (30" x 24" x 1.5")

Moriah Faith

Black Forest, Colorado · Age 23

Grand Prize

Moriah Faith's painting process is deeply intertwined with her life experience as a young disabled woman. She found relief and solace in painting as a child when she began experiencing chronic pancreatitis and chronic pain syndrome. The solitude of chronic illness led to severe mental health issues and feelings of defectiveness and worthlessness. Following physical deterioration and numerous operations, Faith recalls no longer recognizing the person looking back at her in the mirror.

That mirror became the inspiration for *Tough Love*. Reducing her form to nothing but color and value forced Faith to stop criticizing her body for the things that it wasn't while coming to terms with its strength. By shifting her energy from destruction to creation, she fell in love with life again.

Faith is currently working on a series of large-scale paintings depicting figures in interior spaces and works as an art facilitator for fellow disabled artist Jessica Vohs, with whom she led a community-based mural project aiming to reconnect people with disabilities after the COVID-19 pandemic. Faith plans to pursue solo exhibitions and graduate school in the future. moriahfaith.com



Trepidation, 2020
Acrylic and mixed media on canvas (36.25" x 36" x 1.75")

Maiya Lea Hartman

Minneapolis, Minnesota · Age 25

Award of Excellence

Maiya Lea Hartman's work draws from memories and moments that examine identity, emotional expression and the body through their lens as a queer Black person. Their experience with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder has made communication a challenge, and painting is their non-verbal channel for expressing thoughts, experiences and deep-rooted emotions. Their practice is intimate, touching on personal memories and moments through family portraits and self-portraiture, recontextualized by placing figures in undefined landscapes and allowing body language and facial expressions to communicate messages.

Trepidation, a self-portrait that highlights Hartman's feelings of anticipation and fear that something bad will happen, was completed following the murder of George Floyd and the subsequent uprising in Minneapolis. The painting also reflects the active retraumatization of Black people and the constant fear for the safety of one's family, friends and self.

Hartman has found additional expression and healing through public art, creating many murals in collaboration with the collective Creatives After Curfew, where they can reflect the stories of BIPOC communities and envision futures rooted in justice and liberation. They are a current artist-in-residence with the African American Museum and Gallery in North Minneapolis. maiyaleaartist.com



Purple Lights of the City
Acrylic on canvas (36" x 12" x 0.75")

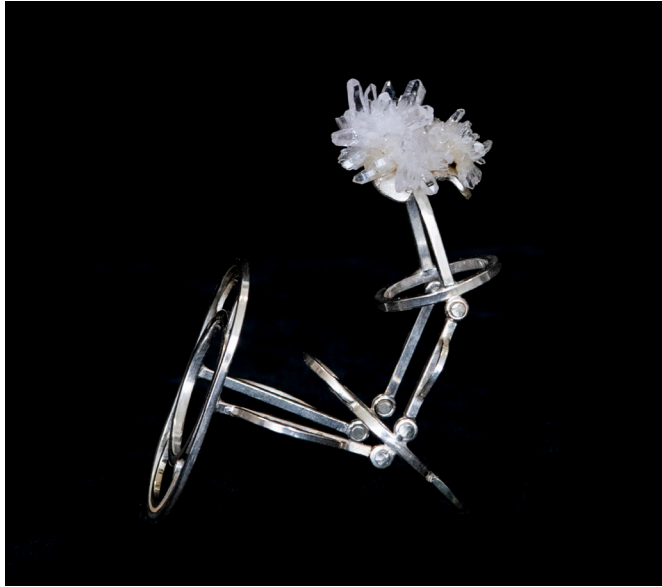
Dominic Killiany

Watertown, Massachusetts · Age 24

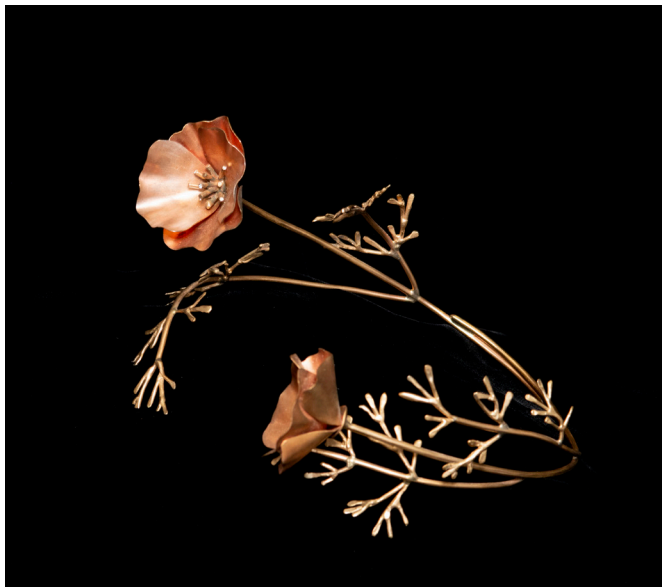
Award of Excellence

Dominic Killiany's work reflects his view of and means of connecting with the world as a person with autism. While structured schedules create definition and security for Killiany, sketching and painting provide an outlet for relaxation and creativity, particularly in applying paint to a canvas. He describes his sketches as puzzle pieces, unique in shape, pattern and color, that create a complete, beautiful whole when assembled. Color reflects emotion, and Killiany's bold, bright, colorful work reflects his happiest state—when he is painting.

Killiany had his first exhibition in 2014 at the Watertown Public Library. In 2017, he had a solo exhibition at the Landau Gallery in Belmont, Massachusetts, was invited to exhibit at the Open Door Gallery at the Worcester Art Museum in 2018, and has been published in Studio Visit Magazine. In 2019, his art was selected for a new, state-of-the-art playground in Cambridge. He is a graduate of Boston Higashi, a private learning center in Randolph, Massachusetts, for young adults with autism. dominiccreations.com



Magic Touch
Sterling silver, quartz crystal
(3" x 1.5" x 0.5")



Poppy Pleasures
Bronze and copper with
cubic zirconia stones
(8" x 6.5" x 6.5")

Taylor Koedyker

La Verne, California · Age 28

Award of Excellence

Taylor Koedyker's works aim to promote an appreciation for our natural world, highlighting our physical connections to the earth while acknowledging humanity's growing disconnect to it. Using our relationship with our bodies as a parallel to our treatment of the planet, she sees her disability as a way to connect with our universal afflictions and provides great strength and empathy.

The stones used in Koedyker's art are practical and symbolic, grown of the earth but each unique, and strong and beautiful despite fractures.

Magic Touch is a healing ritual tool with an apparatus contingent on the joints for its function. The creation of this piece represents a close connection between her artistic practice and the rheumatoid arthritis that affects her joints. Following her diagnosis, Koedyker recognized the potential impact on her artistic passion and career and the need to be respectful and aware of her body and health. Like her body, the tool slowly degrades with every ritual, so each use must be intentional.

Poppy Pleasures was inspired by a poem Koedyker wrote about people crushing natural poppy fields in California for photo opts. koedykercrafted.com



Welcome Back, 2019
Acrylic and ink on panel
(8" x 10" x 0.75")



Double Vision, 2021
Acrylic on canvas (14" x 11" x 1.5")

May Ling Kopecky

Plymouth, Minnesota · Age 27

Second Prize

May Ling Kopecky's work is influenced by her experiences with pediatric-onset multiple sclerosis (MS). She experienced her first clear MS symptoms when she was 13 and was diagnosed at 15. Due to her young age and the "invisible" nature of MS, Kopecky was often met with skepticism while talking about her illness, prompting her to begin creating artwork about MS.

Paintings like *Welcome Back* document her personal relationship with medical spaces and share how places once perceived as frightening can grow to feel familiar. Kopecky is also working on a series of paintings, including *Double Vision*, that visualize how she sees the world while suffering from various MS symptoms. Her goal is to spread MS awareness through her work and advocate for those with invisible illnesses.

Kopecky received a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from the University of Minnesota Twin Cities and is currently pursuing a Master of Fine Arts at the Minneapolis College of Art and Design. maylingkopecky.com



The Light Within
Mixed media (24" x 19")

Maya Milton

Seattle, Washington · Age 27

Award of Excellence

Maya Milton creates art that largely focuses on self-love after feeling like an outsider for most of her life. Her disability motivates her to create artwork that focuses on building bridges between different kinds of people. She is currently a multimedia artist who focuses on empowering women of color, especially Black women, to be comfortable and confident in their own skin.

The *Light Within* speaks directly to connections to self and to self-love. The woman in the piece holds her own light as she recognizes and realizes her own power. She draws energy from herself and holds her inner light in her hand.

Milton's artwork helps her feel connected to people who are like and unlike her. Her artwork has been exhibited at the M. Rosetta Hunter Art Gallery, Nepantla Cultural Arts Gallery, Center on Contemporary Art, and others. Her work is on display at the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation Discovery Center, and she was nominated by the Foundation as a "Changemaker." She is a grantee of the Jordan Schnitzer Black Lives Matter Artist Grant and is a Neddy at Cornish Finalist. 21entities.com

September Neill

Sandy, Utah · Age 19

Award of Excellence

Having experienced pain and betrayal at a young age, September Neill lived in environments where alcoholism and drug addiction were commonplace. They joined Alcoholics Anonymous at age 15, sobering up and finding belonging and meaning through their teachers and school community.

During the COVID shutdown, art served as a lifeline, offering an outlet to channel their loneliness and internal chaos. They says that, while some may see vulgarity, monsters or demons in their art, it reflects their pain, struggles and insecurities, as well as their happiness, victories and power.

With art as their outlet, Neill now shares their experiences with others and helps them know they aren't alone. They aim to show others that art is not just one thing—it is fed by who you are, what you have experienced, and how you get through each day.



I Have Always Been Within You
Paper, pencil, Sharpie markers
(19.75" x 16.75" x 0.875")



Grims Cleansing
Paper, pencil, Sharpie markers
(19.75" x 16.75" x 0.875")



When I Think

Insulation spray foam, pastel, Bristol board, LED lights, nuts (40" x 41" x 6")

Jasina Yu

Lexington, Massachusetts · Age 17

Award of Excellence

As a ninth grader, Jasina Yu was a nationally ranked ping-pong player who was struck by a drunk driver while driving home from practice in 2016. She sustained a traumatic brain injury and an injury to her right optic nerve that will never recover. Following three major brain surgeries and two weeks in a coma, she was transferred to a rehabilitation center, where she had to relearn normal functions such as eating, talking, reading and writing.

Following her accident, Yu was unable to open her right eye for months, but with the help of her occupational therapist, is now able to slowly open it again. To this day, her right eye still does not move properly. While she is no longer able to compete as a ping-pong player due to impaired coordination, she has begun to view art as her vocation and seeks to pursue it professionally.

Jury Panel



Madelyn Covey is a Richmond, CA based artist who works primarily in figurative painting and drawing, with a focus on pop culture and fandom. She received her MFA from Mills College in 2012. Madelyn has worked as the youth program coordinator and as a painting/drawing instructor at Creative Growth Art Center in Oakland, CA, since 2012. Founded in 1974, Creative Growth is an art studio and gallery that serves over 140 artists with developmental disabilities. Work made by Creative Growth artists has been acquired by prominent collections worldwide, including MoMA, SFMOMA, and the Smithsonian. Madelyn also enjoys playing ukulele and thinking about Star Trek too much. madelyncovey.com



My name is **Darryl DeAngelo Terrell**, I'm a Detroit Based artist who primarily works within lens based media (i.e. Photography, Video), performance, and writing. I am also a Curator, DJ, Organizer, and Educator. I received my Master of Fine Art from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, where I studied with Xaviera Simmons, Ayanah Moor, Roberto Sifuentes. I work under the philosophy of F.U.B.U (This Shit Is For Us*). I'm always thinking about how my work can aid to a larger conversation about blackness, and its many intersectionalities. My work explores the displacement of black and brown people, femme identity, and strength, the black family structure, sexuality, gender, safe spaces for all black bodies, and personal stories, all while keeping in mind the accessibility of art.



Makeba Dixon-Hill's professional service centers the ways gatekeepers define community support and how they advocate for themselves. Prior to arriving at the Spelman College Museum of Fine Art as Curator of Education and then its Interim Director, she held positions at museums throughout the nation. Her work brings the vision and mission of the institution to life by curating programming and engagement experiences that scaffold the institution's world-class exhibitions and special projects. Makeba conducts workforce development research within the arts sector and has served on several advisory boards and review committees while lecturing in formal and non-traditional academic and healing spaces. She is also a voice over artist, yoga instructor, and writer working on her second book.



Xang Mimi Ho is a fashion photographer in Virginia area as well as an adjunct professor at George Mason University. Ho received her Bachelor of Fine Art from George Mason University, Fairfax, Virginia, and her Master of Fine Art from the Maryland Institute College of Arts, Baltimore,



Maryland. Her artwork explores themes of identity and social issues. Ho is a 2005 VSA Emerging Young Artists Program First Place winner, and participated in the 2015 EYA retrospective exhibit Focus Forward at the Kennedy Center. She is a practicing fashion photographer, and her photographs are included in two published books; "Portrait from The Pike": A Celebration of Community and "Living Diversity": The Columbia Pike Documentary Project."

Tabitha Jacques is the director of the Joseph F. and Helen C. Dyer Arts Center, located in Lyndon Baines Johnson Hall, National Technical Institute for the Deaf, Rochester Institute of Technology. Jacques, from Baton Rouge, LA, formerly worked as assistive communication technology program manager at the Office of Deaf and Hard of Hearing in Washington state, and as an admissions counselor at Gallaudet University. Prior to that, she worked as an exhibit curator for the Gallaudet University Museum Project and as an adjunct professor. She was also special projects coordinator for the National Postal Museum at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. She earned a Master of Arts in art history and museum studies from Georgetown University. In 2018, Jacques was selected as a 2018 Forty Under 40 honoree by the Rochester Business Journal. She is also an accomplished lecturer.



Visual artist **Gordon Sasaki's** work blends unconventional techniques with contemporary ideas of identity and culture. Combining an unexpected use of images and materials, his work purposefully crosses over traditional categorical boundaries to create possibilities and inclusion. Recipient of numerous awards, his work is exhibited internationally and is held in museums, corporate, and private collections.



Jen White-Johnson is a Afro-Latina, disabled artist, designer, educator, and activist, whose visual work explores the intersection of content and caregiving with an emphasis on redesigning ableist visual culture. As an artist-educator with Graves disease and ADHD, her heart-centered and electric approach to disability advocacy bolsters these movements with invaluable currencies: powerful, dynamic art and media that all at once educates, bridges divergent worlds, and builds a future that mirrors her Autistic son's experience. Her activist work has been featured in *The Washington Post*, *New York Times*, *AfroPunk*, *Google Stories*, and is permanently archived in Libraries at The Metropolitan Museum of Art and the National Museum of Women in the Arts. She's worked within disability advocacy initiatives presenting at companies like Converse, Twitter, Amazon, Nike, Today at Apple, *Crip Camp: The Official Virtual Experience*, and in 2020 she was selected as an honoree on the 2020 Diversability's D-30 Disability Impact List. Jen holds an MFA in Graphic Design from the Maryland Institute College of Art and a BA in Visual Arts from University of Maryland Baltimore County.



The Kennedy Center has been at the forefront of making the performing arts accessible to persons with disabilities. Serving the international disability and arts community, the **Office of Accessibility and VSA**, a Jean Kennedy Smith Arts and Disability program, provides opportunities for people with disabilities of all ages across the globe to learn through, participate in, and enjoy the arts. The Office focuses its efforts on cultural access for patrons and visitors with disabilities; arts and special education initiatives; professional development for educators and cultural administrators; and career opportunities in the arts for people with disabilities. For more information, please visit [kennedy-center.org/vsa](https://www.kennedy-center.org/vsa).



Volkswagen Group of America, Inc. is a wholly owned subsidiary of Volkswagen AG, one of the world's leading automobile manufacturers and the largest carmaker in Europe. It operates a manufacturing plant in Chattanooga, Tennessee and houses the U.S. operations of a worldwide family of distinguished and exciting brands including Audi, Bentley, Bugatti, Lamborghini and Volkswagen, as well as VW Credit, Inc.

Founded in 1955, the company's headquarters are in Herndon, VA, Volkswagen Group of America brings vehicles to the U.S. that marry the science of engineering and the art of styling, with the goal of offering attractive, safe, and eco-conscious automobiles that are competitive and set world standards in their respective classes. The company has approximately 8,500 employees in the United States and sells its vehicles through a 1,000-strong dealer network.



The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts sets a national standard for arts learning. Working through model programs and a nationwide network of partners, the nation's cultural center harnesses the power of the arts to address education challenges, accelerate best practices, and uplift citizen artists. Across all its programs, the Kennedy Center is committed to increasing accessible, inclusive opportunities for people of all ages and backgrounds to participate in, learn about, and learn through the arts. *New York Times* best-selling author and illustrator Mo Willems serves as the Center's first-ever Education Artist-in-Residence. Throughout his two-year residency, Willems will invite kids and former kids into the creative process with original productions and hands-on, interactive moments. On September 7, 2019, the Kennedy Center opened the REACH, an immersive arts and learning center with significant space and programming for arts education.

As an essential component of the living memorial to President Kennedy, the Center's Education programs utilize the arts to embrace President Kennedy's ideals of service, justice, freedom, courage, and gratitude. By cultivating the citizen artist in everyone, the Kennedy Center brings the arts and creativity to the center of our lives. For more information, please visit [kennedy-center.org/education/](https://www.kennedy-center.org/education/).

Office of Accessibility and VSA staff who contributed to the 2021 VSA Emerging Young Artists program include:

Betty Siegel, Director, *Office of Accessibility and VSA*
Stephanie Litvak, *Manager, VSA Programs*
Jessica Swanson, *Manager, Accessibility*
Wynsor Taylor, *VSA Programmer*
Emily Maddox, *Coordinator, Accessibility*
Tyler French, *Consultant, Emerging Young Artists Program*



**The
Kennedy
Center**

David M. Rubenstein
Chairman

Deborah F. Rutter
President

Jordan LaSalle
Vice President, Education

Betty Siegel
Director, Accessibility and VSA