

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Kelly Strayhorn Theater Presents: *Neighbor to Neighbor*

A Visual Art Exhibition Organized in Collaboration with BOOM Concepts

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MEDIA CONTACT

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EAST LIBERTY, PA — Kelly Strayhorn Theater presents *Neighbor to Neighbor*, a visual art exhibition held in the historic KST lobby from Saturday, February 11 through Saturday, May 27, 2023. The opening will be held on Saturday, February 11 from 6:00pm to 8:00pm. Presented in collaboration with **BOOM Concepts**, *Neighbor to Neighbor* challenges viewers to consider the possibilities around equitable, active neighboring. The participating artists, **Takara Canty**, **Sophia Fang**, **atiya jones**, **Maggie Negrete**, **Jameelah Platt**, and **Danielle Robinson**, have created a beautiful community landscape by bringing together works that visualize ideas around active neighboring. The works are inspired by the KST space, the institution, the building, the neighborhood, the city of Pittsburgh, and the neighbors all around us. Bringing together a diverse range of visual strategies, *Neighbor to Neighbor* includes text, collage, portrait, dynamic pattern, and abstract mapping styles.

Neighbor to Neighbor considers the fact that all people are neighbors in the sense that everyone **exists and grows nearby, adjacent, and close to each other** — ideally thriving in the world together. It is impossible not to engage in the identity or act of the neighbor if you are existing here, now, in this world. In another, more literal and localized sense, “neighbors” are the participants in the ecosystem that is the neighborhood. The goal of a neighborhood (to reach a positive and healthy state) relies on the collective ability and intention of each person within it — the health of the neighborhood is a reflection of each neighbor’s ability to empathize with,

engage, and help each other. Encouraging the existence and growth of the other — your neighbor — and understanding how that encouragement can bring benefit back to the individual, is the keystone of an equitable neighborhood: It is the conviction that we can all grow together, with each other, without holding each other back.

“I believe equitable, active neighboring is creating space to have all take part in business, social, and entertainment aspects of community. **Acknowledging people's basic rights to impact and help shape what is happening in a neighborhood**, and setting up scaffolded opportunities for that to happen. For individuals and organizations alike, it is **simple acts of kindness and leadership** that encourage a positive and improved quality of life.”

— DS Kinsel, BOOM Concepts

This exhibition occurs at a vital moment in the story of KST's neighborhood, East Liberty, whose “health” is too-often measured along the lonely axis of economic growth. What happens when we check-up on our neighborhood from a different perspective? When we ask: Do I know my neighbors' names? How do I extend care to them? How can we better rely on each other? — the answers reveal a far more complete picture of a community's health than the number of new developments or hip restaurants along the main street. So, what can we each do to build stronger, more equitable neighborhoods?

“Day to day, this means a variety of actions and engagements that always consist of somebody sacrificing or donating knowledge, time, or money. It looks as simple as free tax services, shoveling snow for neighbors, childcare scholarships, youth sports coaches, businesses hosting community celebrations, mutual aid initiatives, clean green spaces, and contracting local creative talent across expertise.”

— DS Kinsel, BOOM Concepts

For full season details, KST COVID policy updates, and tickets, go to kelly-strayhorn.org.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Takara Canty is a classically trained visual artist from Garfield Heights in Pittsburgh PA. From adolescence the artist has been creating and collaborating. Canty's art is largely inspired by prominent artists like Frida Kahlo. Canty studied studio art in college, but working in traditional studio art class environments shrank her potential. Just a few credits shy of graduation, Canty decided to drop out and pursue art *her way*. For ten years, Canty has taught at-risk children in the Homewood, Hill District, Garfield, and Braddock neighborhoods where she workshops, tags, and paints. The artist has curated adult painting classes, painted murals, installed mosaic pieces on buildings all while raising her kids. Canty has worked with nationally known artists including George Gist, Therman Statman and James Simon, and has exhibited with Boom Gallery in Pittsburgh, PA.

Sophia Fang is a startup marketer by trade, a creative dabbler by nature, and a social impact creator by purpose—all towards the artist's personal mission to build vibrancy in her community.

With a passion for empowering local entrepreneurs, makers, and creators, Fang is an MBA candidate at Stanford Graduate School of Business as a ROMBA Fellow, a Commissioner on the Seattle Arts Commission, and a Venture For America alumni fellow. The artist finds joy in beautifying public spaces in her Seattle hometown and the Rust Belt. As an artist, she has always wondered what it means to exist — in relationship to the self, to others, and to the spaces and communities that we claim and claim us. Her murals combine whimsy and community joy to celebrate small businesses, immigrant placemaking, and food diasporas. Her work is represented at love, Pittsburgh, Heinz History Center Museum Shop, Adda Coffee & Tea, or her online shop. Fang graduated in 2018 from Pomona College, where she double majored in Economics & Digital Media Studies.

atiya jones is a multidisciplinary artist exploring themes of human connection, gentrification, migration and isolation. Visually, she depicts the effects of accumulative action/community through her WildLines. jones utilizes her artwork and any subsequent press to create and hold discourse centering her Black experience as an artist, woman, transplant, and wanderer. The artist is also CEO of TWELVE\TWENTY STUDIO, est. 2017. Jones believes that art is and should be everywhere, and she used this impetus to offer affordable work. jones's sites have included Crown Barbershop, Fieldwork Gallery, The Carnegie Museum of Art in the group show, *Locally Sourced*, Trace Brewery, Tryp Hotel and Knotzland. Clients include Pantene Pro-V and Head & Shoulders, Old Blood Noise Endeavors, and restaurants The Vandal and Speedy Romeo (NY). jones hails from Brooklyn, NY and has been a Pittsburgh resident and artistic community contributor since 2016. Jones has participated in residencies in Rochester, NY, Grand Rapids, MI and Pittsburgh, PA.

Maggie Lynn Negrete is a storyteller specializing in illustration, zines and educating all ages about ecosystems from gardens to astrology. Negrete is the Art Director for Women in Sound and is a member of the #notwhite Collective. Negrete's visual art focuses on hand lettering, portraiture, technical illustrations and radial designs for freelance clientele and for individual merchandise under the brand La Mama Magia. Negrete is a Pittsburgh resident and Vassar college alumni with over ten years of experience teaching in out of school settings. Her work explores femininity, community, and the occult with aesthetics influenced by 19/20th century illustration, psychedelia and a heritage of printers.

A proud Pittsburgh native, **Jameelah Platt** trained in Fine Art at the University of Art in Philadelphia Pa. Platt's work seeks out the anecdotes and fables of people of color, to reanimate the familiar narratives we are told and experience as children. Her goal is to to translate the nostalgic moments that we can mutually acknowledge and embrace as a community through the language of gestures and movement with the human figure. Her studio practice is driven by her interest in the art of story-telling, color, art history, assemblage and the decorative adornment of objects, spaces and people. She is currently a member of The **Coloured Section Artist Collective** and an artist in residence with the **BrewHouse Association's** Distillery Emerging artist Residency.

Danielle Robinson is a Pittsburgh-based artist who graduated from CAPA, and attended both Columbus College of Art and Design and The Art Institute of Pittsburgh. A resident of Garfield,

Robinson often collaborates with other local artists and musicians. Her main subjects are Black women and animals, rendered as goddesses, beasts, and super heroes. Her work takes graffiti with art deco and African art as its origin points, which she combines towards innovative new styles.

ABOUT BOOM CONCEPTS

BOOM Concepts is a creative hub dedicated to the advancement of Black, Brown, queer and femme artists. BOOM Concepts is located in Pittsburgh and since 2014 has curated 50 exhibitions on-site, paid out over \$100k in artists fees and produced 200+ events across the country. BOOM Concepts serves as a space for field building, knowledge sharing, mentorship, and storytelling. In its 9th year, BOOM Concepts continues to work with creatives to find innovative strategies around entrepreneurship and artistic practice. In 2021, BOOM Concepts was selected to represent Pittsburgh for the Google Arts & Culture platform and was identified as an American Cultural Treasure through The Heinz Endowments and The Ford Foundation.

ABOUT THE CURATOR

DS Kinsel is an award winning creative entrepreneur and cultural agitator. He expresses his creativity through the mediums of painting, printmaking, collage, installation, curating, performance and public art. Kinsel's work puts focus on themes of space keeping, urban tradition, hip-hop, informalism and cultural re-appropriation. A former AmeriCorps Public Ally member, D.S. has also been recognized as an Awardee of the Pittsburgh Courier Fab 40, Pittsburgh Magazine PUMP 40 Under 40, Pgh Tech Council Creative of The Year, the Pittsburgh Post Gazette's "Top Ten People To Meet in 2016" and the Incline's "Who's Next" for 2018. D.S. has served as a board member of Pittsburgh Center for Creative REuse and the Black Transformative Arts Network. Kinsel currently serves on the advisory board for Shady Lane School, PearlArts Studios, and the Artist Communities Alliance.

ABOUT KELLY STRAYHORN THEATER

Named after 20th century entertainment legends **Gene Kelly** and **Billy Strayhorn**, both natives of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, **Kelly Strayhorn Theater** (KST) is reflective of the passion that its founders had for the arts. Today, Kelly Strayhorn Theater carries on the legacy of its founders by fostering bold and innovative artistry with a global perspective. **KST celebrates diversity in voice, thought, and expression**, and upholds a firm commitment to inclusion. Furthermore, KST provides a safe and welcome space for dialogue and artistic expression for all who enter.

Kelly Strayhorn Theater has a dynamic footprint in Pittsburgh, with two venues running along Penn Avenue. **KST's Alloy Studios** is a cultural hub in the heart of East Liberty, and the historic **Kelly Strayhorn Theater** is located in the thriving business district. More than 20 years after the founding of the theater, **KST continues to use its broad reach to impact the contemporary arts and the community.**