

## A note from Virginia Shore, Artistic Director of Visual Arts for Halcyon's By The People

"By the People", Halcyon's inaugural arts and dialogue festival, is a celebration of the power of creativity and diversity. In creating environments for conversation, it aims to transcend the politics of today, allowing strange bedfellows to find common ground in shared experiences bridging the divides that often separate. It is a festival of the people, by the people and for the people, uniting and transforming through the arts.

"By the People", includes five venues across the District in five wards: the Washington National Cathedral, the Smithsonian Institution Arts and Industries Building, THEARC, the historic Parks at Walter Reed, and Union Market. These venues have inspired a collection of exceptional artists, the majority of whom are from DC, VA and MD, as well as several internationally based artists. These incredible talents have embraced the opportunity to create work in response to the inspiring and often complicated sites. Their works transform these historic spaces, sacred spaces, vacant spaces, and art-ready spaces, ultimately heightening our awareness of their significance.

At the National Cathedral: Imran Qureshi splashed the main entry steps and grounds with color, creating tributaries infused with flora referencing Pakistani miniature paintings that symbolize transition, life, and renewal. In the crypt, Rebecca Clark's prophetic Anthropocene period "Book of Hours" uses the medieval concept of a devotional book to highlight the impact of human activity on climate and the environment. Chloe Bensahel's installation of a hanging shirt with the embroidered words "REBEU" and "FEUJ", French slang for "Arabs and Jews", focuses our attention on the power of labels in defining ethnicity and identity. Stephen Hayes has created eight busts of himself as a child, each foretelling the challenges a young black man faces in society today. Nick Cave's video self-portrait dramatizes the impact of faith, love and loss and the cycle of renewal.

At Union Market: The drawings and video projection of Avish Khebrehzadeh titled "Where do we come from? Where are we going?" reference universal questions of future and purpose. Kristin Adair highlights the need for reform in the criminal justice system by illuminating the often circuitous destiny of those who leave prison without support or guidance on how to re-enter society. Liliane Tomasko's new series of lyrical abstractions on bedsheets reconnects her to her first muse, the bed, as potent signifier of female generative power and private interior place. Chloe Bensahel's textiles provoke questions about the biblical passages of racial and ethnic hatred and genocide. Ryan and Hays Holladay's meditative music and **sound** installation interacts and responds to the physical space with hundreds of unique, non-repeating, geotagged segments of **sounds**. Rebecca Clark's drawings and banners are reflective portraits of the wildlife facing extinction through human action; a memento mori to awaken our consciousness and remind us that we cannot live separate from nature.

At the Smithsonian Art and Industry Building; Jenny Sabin's monumental fabric installation encompasses the huge space. At over 90 feet long, it engulfs us as we permeate it, touch it, become absorbed by it, changing our perspective on light and environment as it transforms over the day. Maya's evolving, interactive installation of tie-dyed paper moves with the viewer as it undulates through the space creating landscapes of spectacular and joyous color. Dan Steinhilber's "Interactive Mobile Sites" 7 15' plastic bubble forms allow us to enter the sculpture to become part of the work. While your body remains outside the bubble, your head has a new, communal experience. In this space, part disengaged with the outside world you engage with the strangers inside this shared new bubble world. Rachel Schmidt's "Picnic" provides a space

to sit and ponder under her living, breathing bulbous, bountiful, suspended cloud above. Projections add another element and give life to the cumulus static cloud atop. Georgia Saxelby's "To Future Women" archive invites viewers to write a letter to women in 20 years while reflecting on the unique view overlooking the National Archives and the National Mall. Each of these artists in their own way creates transformative landscapes and/or cosmic spaces highlighting environmental concerns and demonstrating the possibilities of creating with recycled materials.

At THEARC: Nick Cave's "Drive By" video extends across the black box. His powerful fleeting exposures capture our attention, highlighting issues of anonymity and inattention. Nathaniel Brodie, Kerell Partee and Kaliq Crosby have created graffiti shoes and clothing which viewers are encouraged to wear while dancing, transforming both audience and art in the collaboration. Antonius Bui's intricate paper portraits highlight racial and sexual diversity and identity. Stephen Hayes woven works convey iconic images of conflicting experiences; from the assertive power of a Black Stallion to the struggle of black men marching in a civil rights protest with signs asserting "I AM MAN".

At the Historic Walter Reed Hospital: Nekisha Durrett's installation extends across the pathways in all directions encompassing the walkways used for wheelchair-bound vets returning from war. A quote from James Baldwin's "Heaven Lasts Forever" repeats as a mantra over the now purple pathways. Engraved in relief in the grass, Baldwin's words "AWW Lawd" emerge as monumental letters in a carpet. Michael Bowles' stoic figure stands wrapped in fabric, enigmatic, mummified, upright surrounded by sea and sky. Heidi Trepanier's use of bright neon color reflects the light and obscures our vision creating a magical fountain from one that was in a state of disrepair. With the assistance of two veterans (Names ) vibrant life has emerged from the decay. Jefferson Pinder, artist and Marine veteran has created a performance piece, collaborating with Dupont Brass. Pinder captures the experience of life and loss from celebrated hero to victim and forgotten man. Stacey Cantrell and the community of tree bombers creates a forest of color using the blues and greens of the nurses' uniforms as homage to the nurses who served at Walter Reed over the years.

This remarkable group of artists has created and modified these unique environments and spaces for observation and conversation. Contemplation, reflection, and experiencing beauty can stimulate our senses and lead to an elevated state of consciousness and wellbeing. The subjects are intentionally urgent and challenging but each of these artist inspires us through the transformative beauty of their work. We are drawn in, made open to thought and experience that can lay the foundation for change. There is nothing more powerful than changing our minds and acknowledging the need for change. Even the smallest change in perspective can change a life.