FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
August 16, 2018

vsa
presents

detour

Visual Art Exhibition featuring
15 Emerging Artists with Disabilities to Tour Nationally,
September 2017–November 2019

(WASHINGTON)—VSA, the Kennedy Center’s international organization on arts and disability, will present artwork by 15 emerging young artists with disabilities, ages 18 to 25, in a traveling exhibition. Titled Detour, this year-long national tour kicks off in Washington, D.C. at the Rayburn House Office Building on September 5, 2018, and is presented through generous support from Volkswagen Group of America.

The 2018 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 from around the U.S. This year’s theme, around which the artists were challenged to create work, was to embrace life’s detours, to seize and explore the spontaneous forays off the beaten path, to consider what’s possible, and to celebrate the marvelous and unexpected. The winners, selected from a pool of hundreds of applicants, were chosen based on the quality of their work, artistic proficiency, and enlightening or compelling interpretations of the theme.

“These young artists have embraced life’s detours. Their work makes visible what is often overlooked and challenges us to see the world from a different point of view, and through their personal lens,” said Betty Siegel, Director of VSA and Accessibility of the Kennedy Center. “We look forward to seeing the impact these 15 young artists and their work will have on invoking unity and inclusivity across the nation. We thank Volkswagen Group of America for their continued support in making this possible.”

2018 marks the 17th year of the program in which VSA’s Emerging Artists Competition challenges young artists with disabilities to demonstrate their talents and skills across visual arts genres. The winners receive a total of $60,000 in cash awards as well as national recognition via the exhibition, which will travel to museums and galleries as part of a one year national tour. As part of their award package, the winners also receive all-expense paid travel to Washington, D.C. for three days of educational events and seminars September 5–7, 2018, including a reception at the Rayburn House Office Building on September 5, 2018. Over the three days, the artists will convene at the Kennedy Center for a series of professional development workshops, which will provide skill-building and practical knowledge-sharing opportunities to support career growth. Volkswagen Group of America has supported the program through funds and board support since 2002. Additionally, the company will display the art in its Herndon, Virginia headquarters for employees and visitors to view as part of the national tour.

“The VSA Emerging Young Artists Program shines a light on an incredible group of young talent, and we are delighted to continue to support their work.” said David
Geanacopoulos, Senior Executive Vice President for Public Affairs and Policy of Volkswagen Group of America. “The program is a testament to the ability of the arts to encourage accessibility and inclusion, principles that Volkswagen Group of America strives to uphold throughout the entire organization. I am personally inspired by these emerging artists, and looking forward to once again sharing their work with everyone at our headquarters.”

Tyler Williams, age 22, of Trenton, New Jersey won the $20,000 Grand Prize for Untitled (#1), a photograph. In his documentary-style portraits, Williams creates a space for black people with multiple identities to choose for themselves how they want to be heard and represented, as he himself finds a place within his work to do the same. His work often incorporates illustration, text, and audio elements, which he uses to enhance the connection between the audience and the artwork. Williams, who has attention deficit disorder, attends Parsons, The New School in New York City, where he is earning a bachelor’s degree in Fine Art Photography.

Hannah Werchan, age 22, of Denton, Texas won the $10,000 First Prize for Growth, an oil painting on canvas. Werchan uses interspersed colors, impressionistic brush strokes, and compelling narratives in her paintings to convey the experiences of living with the connective tissue disorder, Stickler syndrome. Her piece, Growth, depicts the decision to overcome life’s obstacles, to grow rather than to succumb. Werchan finds art, specifically painting, to be a powerful and dynamic medium to highlight the physical characteristics and symptoms surrounding her disorder. Werchan attends Texas Woman’s University in Denton, Texas, where she is pursuing a Bachelor of Fine Art with a concentration in Painting and Drawing.

Yasmine C. Iskander, age 21, of McLean, Virginia took the $6,000 Second Prize for Dragon, an acrylic painting on canvas. Iskander’s work captures the vibrancy of life, and acts as a fundamental way for her to express her journey as a person with a developmental disability and a complex medical history. The Dragon is a manifestation of the strength, vibrancy, and movement she has found following her
latest open-heart surgery. Iskander has received painting instruction and mentoring at the Institute for the Arts (Fairfax County Public Schools), The Community Mentoring Program sponsored by the Arlington Artist Alliance, and the Torpedo Factory in Alexandria, Virginia.

The following artists will receive an Award of Excellence in the amount of $2,000:

- Coco Allred, Seattle, Washington, age 19
- Xichao (Carol) Cao, Great Neck, New York, age 24
- Chance DeVille, Lake Charles, Louisiana, age 23
- Joshua Dixon, Chicago, Illinois, age 19
- Thomas Haley, Davis, California, age 23
- Kip Henderson, La Mirada, California, age 21
- Kat Katz, New York, New York, age 23
- Sarah McDaniel, Newport News, Virginia, age 25
- Kyah Probst, St. Louis, Missouri, age 18
- Leonafire (Alejandra Suarez), Miami, Florida, age 23
- Oaklee Thiele, Springfield, Illinois, age 19
- Jade Warner, Denver, Colorado, age 24

The winners were selected by a jury of noted art professionals, including photographer Caleb Charland; Makeba Dixon-Hill, Curator of Education at Spelman College Museum; animator and documentary filmmaker Dustin Grella; Elizabeth Guffrey, author and professor of Art and Design History at State University of New York, Purchase; Justus Harris, artist, educator, and 2018-2019 Kennedy Center Citizen Artist; Xang Mimi Ho, fashion photographer and professor of Art at George Mason University; visual artist and independent curator, Jackie Milad; Tracey Salaway, professor at Gallaudet University; artist and educator, Gordon Sasaki; and Annette Wehrhahn, founding member and director of Soloway Gallery.

The 2018 VSA Emerging Young Artist Competition is part of The Human Journey, the Kennedy Center’s season-long investigation of who we are as a people that examines art and creativity through the lenses of migration, environment, discovery, identity, citizenship, and legacy.
IMAGES:
https://spaces.hightail.com/receive/WxtvPSZKDI

FUNDING CREDITS:
The VSA Emerging Young Artists Program is sponsored by Volkswagen Group of America, Inc.

ABOUT THE OFFICE OF VSA AND ACCESSIBILITY AT THE KENNEDY CENTER
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 VSA and Accessibility, 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 arts and special education initiatives; accessibility services for patrons and visitors with disabilities; professional development for educators and cultural administrators; and career opportunities in the arts for people with disabilities. For more information, please visit http://education.kennedy-center.org/education/#Access.

ABOUT EDUCATION AT THE KENNEDY CENTER
The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts is the national champion for arts learning and creativity. Committed to increasing opportunities for all people to participate in, learn about, and understand the arts, the Center offers programs and events that strive to reflect the nation and its communities, and that are accessible and inclusive for all. From the Center’s stages to classrooms and communities across the country, to online resources accessible nearly anywhere, the Center serves the burgeoning artist, the curious explorer, the student (of any age), the teacher and teaching artist—any person interested in arts learning and utilizing the arts for positive change.

As an essential component of the living memorial to President Kennedy, the Center’s Education programs utilize the arts to embrace the ideals of service, justice, freedom, courage, and gratitude, and cultivate the Citizen Artists in all the people we serve. For more information, please visit kennedy-center.org/education/.

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