



THE BARNES FOUNDATION



BARNES WEST

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

BARNES WEST ANNOUNCES ARTISTS SELECTED FOR SECOND ANNUAL EVERYDAY PLACES ARTIST PARTNERSHIPS

*Seven West Philadelphia-based artists to create participatory activations
engaging local businesses & community members*

Philadelphia, PA, May 16, 2022—The Barnes Foundation and People’s Emergency Center (PEC), through their collaborative initiative **Barnes West**, have announced seven West Philadelphia-based social-impact artists who have been selected to participate in the second annual Everyday Places Artist Partnerships initiative: **Nikki Brake-Sillá, Shanina Dionna, Gigi McGraw, Ansumane Silla, Jaime Wiesner & Joanna Booth, and Yidan Zeng.**

Barnes West is supported by a grant from the William Penn Foundation. The Barnes Foundation’s community engagement programs are made possible, in part, by generous support from the Stavros Niarchos Foundation (SNF) and the William Penn Foundation.

Barnes West conceived Everyday Places Artist Partnerships in 2021 to provide West Philadelphia residents with spaces to engage with multidisciplinary artistic projects that offer inspiration and promote hope and healing. This year’s cohort of artists will partner with “everyday” locations in the neighborhood—including public parks, civic centers, and community organizations—to build interactive, participatory projects that engage with the business or site and residents. The projects began rolling out last month and will continue through September. A launch party is scheduled for Wednesday, May 18, at 5:30 pm at Imperial Caribbean & Seafood for community members to meet the artists and learn more about their projects.

Everyday Places Artist Partnerships include:

Nikki Brake-Sillá: Unlocking Your Inner Playwright

(April through September at Drexel University’s Dornsife Center for Neighborhood Partnerships, and select dates via Zoom)

- Brake-Sillá will offer free playwriting workshops for community members that reflect on questions of gender, feminism, and heteronormativity. These workshops will complement one of Brake-Sillá’s own productions exploring the same themes, scheduled to be presented in June.

Shanina Dionna: Expressive Arts Healing Sessions

(April through June at Malcolm X Park and Urban Art Gallery)

- Dionna will lead expressive healing arts sessions at Malcolm X Park and at Urban Art Gallery on the 52nd Street corridor. Participants will create artistic work that reflects on their relationship to the self, healing, and mental wellness. Sessions will open and close with a meditation practice and feature fine art and movement.

Yidan Zeng: Community Quilt & Fabric Dyeing

(May through July at University Square Complex, with Golden Dragon and Sankofa Community Farm)

- Zeng will lead community quilting and dyeing sessions at University Square Complex, in collaboration with Sankofa Community Farm and Golden Dragon restaurant. Zeng will facilitate hand-dyeing sessions of fabric swatches from food scraps, working with participants to design and create patches for a community quilt. Conversations will focus on how we build positive relationships with our neighbors, with an explicit invitation for historical tensions between Black and AAPI communities to inform the work.

Ansumane Silla: African Dance Classes with Live Drumming & Singing

(June through August at Clark Park)

- Silla will offer free drumming and dancing sessions in Clark Park throughout the summer. These sessions will emphasize the ways in which music and movement have a positive impact on our mental health and wellness, hope, and healing.

Gigi McGraw: CommuniTree Archival Project

(July through September at New Africa Center)

- McGraw will create a community archival piece with New Africa Center's network, building a papier-mâché tree, titled the "CommuniTree," that participants will decorate with leaves that respond to questions about gentrification, history, and community. The piece will be accompanied by a gallery of neighborhood photographs and videos of interviews with participants.

Jaime Wiesner & Joanna Booth: Screen-Printing for Youth

(May through August at Mantua Civic Association)

- For the only Everyday Places Artist Partnerships project specifically designed for youth participants, creative partners Wiesner & Booth will work at the Mantua Civic Association to create a community quilt reflecting on the themes of caring for community. The quilt will be composed of cloth panels, decorated and printed on by youth participants. Printing blocks will be constructed by youth participants out of found objects and materials.

Details about projects and locations are available at pec-cares.org/barneswest.

"Barnes West and Everyday Places Artist Partnerships provide opportunities for creativity and expression to thrive within the fabric of our everyday lives. We are honored that this project will be receiving the 2022 Arts & Business Council Award, a testament to the work of West Philadelphia social-impact artists, residents, and civic and business leaders," says Barbara Wong, Barnes Director of Community Engagement. "Our collaboration with PEC on Barnes West and the Everyday Places Artist Partnerships initiative builds on the Barnes Foundation's historical ties to West Philadelphia, where Dr. Barnes first introduced his method of art appreciation as a vehicle for critical thinking and civic engagement to his integrated factory workforce. This year, as we celebrate the Barnes's centennial, we're thrilled to continue this initiative with seven remarkable artists working in a variety of media—from dance and theater to playwriting and printmaking—and looking forward to the community's response to their diverse participatory activations promoting health and healing."

"PEC looks forward to building on the success of Everyday Places Artists Partnerships last year and seeing how the artists and partner sites work together to create more opportunities for

people to exchange ideas, build understanding, have fun, and strengthen relationships,” says Kathy Desmond, President of People’s Emergency Center.

The artists were selected by the Barnes West leadership team and participating neighborhood sites. Each artist will receive a stipend and an Art for All Community Pass, which provides one year of unlimited admission to the Barnes for up to four people.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Shanina Dionna

[Dionna](#) is a visual and performing artist, nonprofit educator, mental health advocate, and a certified Person-Centered Expressive Arts Therapy facilitator. In 2020, *Philadelphia Magazine* recognized her as “[a] Philly artist creating positive spaces for mental health conversations.” Her creative practice is informed by personal experiences through medical diagnoses, hospitalization, therapy treatments, self-care practices, and an exploration of holistic measures for cognitive, behavioral, and psychological healing. Since 2012, her arts advocacy has helped bridge the gap between local wellness institutions and marginalized communities throughout the Greater Philadelphia area.

Nikki Brake-Sillá

A playwright and filmmaker, [Brake-Sillá](#) is the founder of DrAW (Dramatists at War) and an inaugural member of Jouska PlayWorks. Her recent full-length plays include *ReWombed*, commissioned by EST/Sloan Commission and *Trouble of the World*, which was a finalist for the Terrance McNally Award and a semi-finalist for Princess Grace, O’Neill, Bay Area Playwrights Festival). Her full-length narrative, *A Weathering*, was a semi-finalist at Middlebury Scriptlab and second round selection at Sundance Narrative Lab. *L&D*, a one-hour pilot was a 2021 semi-finalist (The Orchard Project and Middlebury TV Scriptlab). Brake-Sillá received her BA from the University of Pennsylvania and her MFA from the City College of New York. She is a member of the Dramatists Guild and Directors Gathering.

Gigi McGraw

[McGraw](#) is a social-practice artist, actress, and writer who coined the term PhilHERstorian to describe her invested interest in the cultural and historical preservation of Philadelphia. She is the founder and curator of POMON (*Philadelphia Online Museum of Neighborhoods*), which will celebrate a virtual grand opening in February 2023, and earned her master’s degree in theater from Villanova University. McGraw is fascinated with the life stories of individuals and is inspired by projects such as the Federal Writers’ Project of the 1930s, which recorded the narratives of the formerly enslaved. She is also an advocate for hyperlocal history projects. McGraw documents life through recorded testimony, exhibits, prints, and creative missions locally and abroad.

Anssumane Silla

Since arriving in Philadelphia in 2008, [Silla](#) has toured the United States performing as a dancer and drummer with the Voices of Africa Drum Ensemble. He has been a featured artist for the Pennsylvania Humanities Council’s *Humanities on the Road* initiative, choreographer for the Kùlú Mèlè African Dance Ensemble, recipient of “Best in Philly” Dance Class 2012, and a two-time awardee of the Folk Art PA grant. He choreographed the showcase production for ArtWell’s Gala 2015, which was attended by director Spike Lee and poet laureate Sonia Sanchez. In addition to teaching both contemporary and traditional dance styles from Guinea Bissau—including Bijagos, Balanta, Fula, and Manjaco—he teaches a range of other West African dance styles across Philadelphia.

Jaime Wiesner & Joanna Booth

[Jaime Wiesner](#) is a queer Korean American artist based in West Philadelphia. She has been an assistant muralist with Mural Arts Philadelphia for the past three years and has worked on projects across Philadelphia. In addition to painting, she creates prints and rugs and continues to experiment with new mediums. Her work is concerned with found objects, combining industrial and organic forms, and playing with the viewer's sense of scale as a way of world-building, highlighting beauty in forms of decay, and thinking through her own biracial and queer identities.

[Joanna Booth](#) is a Black queer artist based and raised in Philadelphia. Primarily working in woodcut printmaking, Booth investigates the personal represented by portraiture, places, objects, and specific social interactions. Through this work, she aims to create dialogue within her communities about pressing social issues and family lineages. Currently, she works at Second State Press, a communal printmaking studio, as a program coordinator and at the Fabric Workshop and Museum as a visitor services assistant. Most recently, Booth has been working with themes inspired by her loved ones and Philadelphia's unique architectural landscape.

Yidan Zeng

[Zeng](#) (曾一丹) is an intimacy investigator currently wandering/wondering through Philadelphia. Stitching together participatory performance and textiles, she weaves webs with no center. Her works spiral through relationships of the self, other, and the greater world, delighting in moments of intentional contact. She works primarily with food waste dyes, found natural materials, and discarded objects, practicing the transformative magic of turning detritus into portals for connection. Zeng has been a Textile Arts Center artist-in-residence (2020), Create Change Fellow with The Laundromat Project (2018), visiting glass artist at the University of Hawai'i in Mānoa (2018), and recipient of the Queens Arts Intervention Grant (2019). She's performed in Sibiu, Romania; Miami; Providence, Rhode Island; and on and off the streets of New York City. Yidan received her BA and BFA from the Brown-RISD Dual Degree Program, studying computer science and glass.

ABOUT BARNES WEST

Barnes West has been serving West Philadelphia with artistic programming and opportunities since 2018. Barnes West is designed to enrich lives and communities through shared art experiences and access. The Barnes Foundation and Peoples Emergency Center jointly present multifaceted arts programming—building upon PEC's LoLa 38 creative placemaking initiative and the Barnes's community engagement work to connect art in service to communities where they are. This collaboration brings West Philadelphia residents, business owners, and artists together in celebrating culture, creativity, and community voice—highlighting lifelong appreciation of, and participation in, the arts and cultural life of our city.

SPONSORS

Barnes West is supported by a grant from the William Penn Foundation.

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ABOUT THE BARNES FOUNDATION

The Barnes Foundation is a nonprofit cultural and educational institution that shares its unparalleled art collection with the public, organizes special exhibitions, and presents

programming that fosters new ways of thinking about human creativity. The Barnes collection is displayed in ensembles that integrate art and objects from across cultures and time periods, overturning traditional hierarchies and revealing universal elements of human expression. Home to one of the world’s finest collections of impressionist, post-impressionist, and modern paintings—including the largest groups of paintings by Pierre-Auguste Renoir and Paul Cézanne in existence—the Barnes brings together renowned canvases by Henri Matisse, Pablo Picasso, Amedeo Modigliani, and Vincent van Gogh, alongside African, Asian, ancient, medieval, and Native American art as well as metalwork, furniture, and decorative art.

The Barnes Foundation was established by Dr. Albert C. Barnes in 1922 to “promote the advancement of education and the appreciation of the fine arts and horticulture.” A visionary collector and pioneering educator, Dr. Barnes was also a fierce advocate for the civil rights of African Americans, women, and the economically marginalized. Committed to racial equality and social justice, he established a scholarship program to support young Black artists, writers, and musicians who wanted to further their education. Dr. Barnes was deeply interested in African American culture and became actively involved in the Harlem Renaissance, during which he collaborated with philosopher Alain Locke and Charles S. Johnson, the scholar and activist, to promote awareness of the artistic value of African art.

Since moving to Philadelphia in 2012, the Barnes Foundation has expanded its commitment to diversity, inclusion, and social justice, teaching visual literacy in groundbreaking ways; investing in original scholarship relating to its collection; and enhancing accessibility throughout every facet of its programs.

The Barnes Foundation is situated in Lenapehoking, the ancestral homeland of the Lenape people. *Read our [Land Acknowledgment](#).*

Hours and ticket prices are listed on our [website](#).

ABOUT PEOPLE’S EMERGENCY CENTER

People’s Emergency Center (PEC) is located in West Philadelphia. PEC’s mission is to nurture families, strengthen neighborhoods and drive change. For families, children, and youth experiencing homelessness, PEC offers more than 235 affordable housing units, job training, parenting and early childhood education, financial education and planning, and life skills and technology classes. PEC programs respond to community needs and build on neighborhood assets to help bridge the digital divide, expand mixed-income housing opportunities, stimulate economic growth, create wealth, and improve the quality of life for all West Philadelphia residents. Visit pec.cares.org.

PEC’s [LoLa 38 creative placemaking initiative](#) has served to activate transitional spaces and celebrate the living history of the neighborhoods surrounding Lower Lancaster Avenue in West Philadelphia since 2016.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION

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