

Art & Creativity



AMIDA CARE

celebrating the power of art
to inspire, heal, and mobilize



HEALING AND MOBILIZING THROUGH **ART** & **CREATIVITY**

A MESSAGE FROM DOUG WIRTH
AMIDA CARE PRESIDENT & CEO

Since the beginning of time, human beings have used the arts – painting, music, dance, and other creative forms – as a means of self-expression. For those living with HIV and AIDS, the arts have been key to wellness and, often, even survival. In observance of World AIDS Day, Amida Care is celebrating the healing and mobilizing power of art.

Art and creativity have been an important element from the very beginning of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, as both a source of inspiration and a place where we have brought our pain, our anger, and our fear. Art is such an expansive place, it can hold us in our completeness as human beings – including the art that celebrates our sexuality – pushing the world to understand that gender is not a binary, fixed reality.

Since its start, Amida Care has included programs that stress creativity, launching a calendar featuring member



art in 2006. Soon after I began working for the plan, I spoke with a member who shared with me his discovery of art and the artist in himself. It saved his life and helped him find his own sacredness, and in discovering that, he decided that he wanted to live. I realized that life was about more than managing a medical condition. It's finding your gift, your talent, your contribution, and telling your story. Our Annual Calendar Contest has been held since 2011, with Amida Care's Member Advisory Council choosing the winners and honorable mentions from as many as 100 entries.

One of the fundamental sacred powers of art and creativity is to communicate a message, to inspire people's hearts and move people to action. From the early days of the AIDS epidemic, art was used to express solidarity, beginning with the powerful image of a pink triangle against a black background with the words "Silence = Death," used by the organization ACT UP in the late 1980s. The artist Keith Haring incorporated the design

into several of his own paintings to denounce homophobia and raise awareness of the AIDS epidemic. Perhaps the best-known symbol of AIDS awareness is the simple red ribbon launched by arts organization Visual AIDS in 1991.

Another form of creative expression during the epidemic's early days, ball culture and competitive voguing was a crucial outlet for black and Latinx members of the LGBTQ community. These events showed the creativity, spirit, and resilience of people who were being discriminated against and held back. They found ways to have a voice and to be celebrated.

Though we've made progress in many ways, there's still more to do. In a world that is becoming less tolerant and less celebratory, we are going to need art and creativity to help sustain us and inspire us to be vocal and take action, in the service of ourselves and our brothers and sisters. We need to be the hope and the change that we seek.

ON KEYBOARD,

Keith HAYWOOD

An accomplished pianist and an Amida Care member since 2008, Keith Haywood has been tickling the ivories for most of his 61 years. These days, he “follows his bliss” by spending countless hours playing a silent keyboard with headphones on, so only he can hear.

When Keith was growing up in Brooklyn in the 1960s, his first piano truly was silent. For a full year, every day after school, Keith obeyed his father's orders to “practice” piano by striking keys made of cardboard laid out on the floor. The eldest son of strict immigrants from Barbados, Keith grew to hate the piano until one day, at age 13, he got a chance to play his grandmother's baby grand.

“Something clicked. My mental block was lifted, and I realized that I had a gift and could play by ear,” Keith remembers. In fact, despite his strict early music studies, Keith now prefers playing by ear and improvising his own compositions, and his latest goal is to record some of his own music.

“The piano is like an addiction to me! I can't get enough of it,” Keith says. He plays as a church organist and sometimes gets work playing for weddings. Friends call him “Liberace.”

When Keith's beloved father turned 85 in July, Keith helped celebrate that milestone birthday by playing a duet with his youngest brother, Curtis, a professional jazz saxophonist. Without a single rehearsal, they pulled off what Keith describes as a “perfect” rendition of the song *The Greatest Love of All*.

“I REALIZED
THAT I HAD A
GIFT AND COULD
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Keith Haywood

WE ARE BLACK TRANS MEDIA



BLACK TRANS MEDIA was founded in Brooklyn in 2013, following the violent killing in Harlem of Islan Nettles, a transgender woman.

Community-driven and black trans-led, BLACK TRANS MEDIA was launched by Sasha Alexander, who co-directs it with Olympia Perez Alexander. The organization is committed to shifting and reframing the value and worth of black trans people by addressing the intersections of racism and transphobia through media arts organizing, education, and community building.

Some current advocacy efforts center on what we face every day, supporting black trans communities to document and organize around violence, discrimination, criminalization, racism, and housing instability. We work as the people directly impacted by the conditions we are subjected to.

Black, Trans, and Healthy

Many of our community leaders are people living with HIV, and as a community, we are vulnerable to the AIDS epidemic because we are both black and trans. This year we are

working on narrative shifts related to our healthcare, interviewing black trans organizers and activists on issues related to HIV. Our work seeks to address the experiences, visions, and strategies of black transgender and gender nonconforming (TGNC) folks committed to ending the epidemic.

Through Our Lens

Art has always been a way we make sense of the world, a way to heal, educate, and empower self and community. The video camera has literally been a tool helping us document and resist the harassment and violence we face every day – and a way to resist the lens that is usually pointed at us without our consent.

Our work has been to create spaces for our experiences to be shared, acknowledged, and uplifted – and to “be the ones we’ve been waiting for,” as June Jordan said.

The work of Black Trans Media can be found online at www.blacktransmedia.org and on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube.

Excerpt from poem “35” by Sasha Alexander*

*35's the average age
Based on the rate of violence
For a black trans women's life.
I'm scared we only have a few
years left*

*The threat is real
Everyday
faced on train
in stores at work and on every block*

*Yet we have the power to change this
we have the power to stop.*

*35 is just a moment
Welcome 45 55 65 75 85 95
Now do the math...
(pause listen to our ancestors)
In the 35 seconds that just passed
We can transform the way we treat
black trans women.*

And I'll be proud if you ask

How old are you?

* Sasha Alexander (founder and co-director of BLACK TRANS MEDIA) wrote and filmed “35” in 2015. Video viewable online: www.tinyurl.com/35bySasha.



PAUL ROWLEY

ART & ACTIVISM

Growing up in Catholic Ireland in the 1980s, an island of two TV channels, no divorce or condoms and zero queer culture anywhere, there was little way for a young gay boy to blossom. Yet somehow, years later, I am living in Brooklyn, directing films. Who knew?

In the summer of 1993, I arrived in New York, where “over 10% of the population is gay.” I felt so alive. I saw two artists’ work that pushed me down the path to where I am now: Derek Jarman’s super-8 films and David Wojnarowicz’s collages in a Soho gallery. With these queens to inspire me, that artistic fizz finally began to escape.

Those inspirations moved me to make my own documentaries, collaborative film projects, photography, and activism. I’m here now to make work that inspires others, to change the channel, and to pay

homage to the beauties that we lost who never got to see what we have seen.

I really feel it is important to reflect on the history of our struggle, from gay liberation through the horrors of the epidemic to the victories around marriage equality, the recent backlash of homophobic politicians, and the continued struggle for LGBTQ rights internationally.



PAUL ROWLEY is a visual artist and award-winning filmmaker with more than 40 shorts, features, documentaries, and experimental films to his credit. One of his latest works, *THE RED TREE*, which premiered at Lincoln Center, was awarded Best Short Documentary by the Verona International Film Festival in September. The videographer for the activist group GAYS AGAINST GUNS (GAG), founded after the 2016 massacre at Pulse nightclub, Paul is making a documentary on GAG for release next year. To learn more: www.stillfilms.org.

Paul's latest collaborative public commission, *Local Time*, is a 60-screen permanent installation at Los Angeles International Airport.



KRISTOFER ECKELHOFF

OPERA SINGER
VOICE COACH
TRANSGENDER MAN

"I have always been passionate about music and teaching, but everything changed when I transitioned. I sang professionally for years and suddenly had no voice, and no one seemed to know how to navigate that. Developing my own methodology helped me work through my vocal transition and enables me to give back to my community."

FINDING A NEW VOICE

I grew up in the South (Arkansas), in the buckle of the Bible Belt. The church sent me to "reparative therapy" in my early 20s, and that led me down the path of drug and alcohol addiction. Once I accepted that it was okay to be queer, I was able to get sober. I worked hard to make something of myself, and I made it to NYC.

Moving to NYC forced me to figure myself out, which included being trans. Things are happening faster than I was prepared to handle, but I'm thrilled that so many TGNC folks have been able to benefit from my work on transgender vocal pedagogy. Many of us are told that we have to choose between our voice and our transition, and that simply isn't true.

Music saved my life so many times. It helps me communicate when I feel like I can't and helps me express emotions when I feel vulnerable. Music has strengthened me through the power of connection and communication.

GIVING BACK: VOICE COACHING FOR TRANSGENDER SINGERS

It has been incredibly rewarding to help other transgender singers find their voices. Many of us transmasculine folks are told that we won't be able to sing again. Transfeminine singers are often told that they can't sing alto or soprano, and nonbinary folks are often completely neglected because singing classifications (and roles) are so gendered. Working with other artists has helped me cope with the emotional challenges of taking a break from singing to allow time for my voice to adjust. Seeing the looks of hope on their faces when I tell them that they can indeed sing motivates me to keep developing my methods and continuing to offer lessons at an affordable price. They all have such unique, wonderful voices, and we've been able to create spaces where we can perform, practice, and support each other.

View Kristofer's work here:

www.transvoicestudio.com and www.theprofhoff.com.

MEME MCCARTHER



... through her voice

“I love to sing and find it easy to reach people emotionally with whatever feeling I am pouring out. Now that I’m older, I feel strong, passionate, and committed to my music.”

MEME MCCARTHER is a gifted singer/pianist who often wows onlookers at Housing Works’ Willoughby office. She simply sits down at the keyboard and accompanies herself while pounding out one of her own compositions on the spot.

“Music comes to me very deeply. I hear it in my mind. Then I can just play it and sing along. Making up a song comes very easily to me,” Meme says about her approach to songwriting. “My voice is always in key, and when it comes to sharing emotion, I take my time and deliberate, so the story is shared with love.”

A native of Austin, Texas, Meme learned to sing and play at a young age by watching her great-uncle perform, then joining the church choir herself. She learned how to control her tone and performed gospel music, sometimes as a soloist, also appearing in a high school musical.

“For me, music is all about a family-based partnership, working with a group of people,” she says. “I don’t try to figure it out. I feel something, and I share a message through my voice.”

Meme’s creative dreams were dashed when she left home as a teenager, as she was coming to terms with her identity as a transgender woman. At 15, she moved to Florida and was homeless for many years, struggling with substance use and contracting HIV.

Since moving here in September with her husband of three years, Meme feels renewed hope about developing herself as a musician. She wants to join a welcoming church choir and take her music as far as she can go.



Lavish CREATIONS James Montas

ALL FOR A GOOD CAUSE

Since 2013, James Montas has been working for Amida Care, New York State's largest nonprofit special needs plan, serving nearly 7,000 members – many of whom are HIV-positive. While serving in his current role as Member Services Call Center Manager, James has also been developing his creative gifts.

"For the past two years, I've been designing and doing décors for Amida Care's annual fundraiser. My first year, I created a winter-wonderland theme, using plain white paper to create snowflakes. Last year, I used a floral theme and even used flowers to decorate the holiday trees."

CREATIVITY AND ACCEPTANCE

"Back home in the Philippines, I hid my creative talent for a very long time, as my dad did not accept me for who I am. For him, fashion, designing, and any form of the arts were gay. Then I joined a national 'Dress Up Your Troll' contest on TV, and I won first place for my entry 'CindeTrolla,' based on Cinderella. After my work was featured on national TV, my dad eventually accepted and embraced me for who I am. Since he has embraced me, I have become more creative because I feel more freedom to express myself in the way I want people to see and appreciate me."

LET'S PARTY

"My father has been telling his friends what I am capable of when it comes to designs and decorations. I have developed themes and designed the décor for baby showers, holiday parties, and all sorts of special occasions. I want to do more of that."

To see more of James' designs, check out his Instagram feed: [@jsm_lavishcreation](https://www.instagram.com/jsm_lavishcreation).

Luis Carle



"Crowbar," 1994



"Lady Bunny," 2018

The photographer Luis Carle is a survivor of a time in New York City when the LGBTQ community was exploding with artistic creativity, but also struggling with the first outbreak of AIDS.

Born in Puerto Rico, Luis came to New York City in 1984 to study at the Parsons School of Design and immediately became part of a group of young artists, activists, musicians, and dancers who were just beginning their careers. He began photographing a vibrant scene that included LGBTQ parties, performances, rallies, and marches. "I documented a period when a lot of very interesting people were doing exciting things," he says. "My work opens the conversation for the people who passed away, a reminder of our history."

As an important representation of a unique era, Carle's photographs have been shown in museums in New York, Puerto Rico, and abroad. One of his images, featuring

transgender icon and activist Sylvia Rivera, was acquired by the Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery in 2015, the first picture of a trans American to be added to the collection.

Carle continues to document the LGBTQ scene, as he did with this year's Wigstock, creating a bridge that spans decades.

"I want to follow up on what these people are doing," he says. "I have pictures of Lady Bunny at 50 and when she was 19."

His work will undoubtedly be in demand and on display in 2019 as local museums are currently planning exhibitions to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall riots. There are also plans for June's Pride Parade to be a particularly big one, and Luis will be there to capture it. "I always bring my camera to these events," he says. "I always keep documenting."

You can see Luis Carle's photographs at www.luiscarle.com.

Capturing a Community Over Time



"Respect Trans," Sylvia Rivera with Julia Murray and Christina Hayworth, 2000

CONDOM CREATIVITY PROMOTES SAFE SEX

ONE®, a company that produces condoms and other sexual health products, has given artists a unique platform for over 10 years with its ONE® Design Contest. The company embraces the idea that colorful artwork on condom packaging encourages conversation and helps break down biases regarding sexual health education. ONE's condom-wrapper design contest is held four times a year with 10 winners receiving a cash prize, a year's supply of condoms featuring their art, and a 5,000-condom donation to their health organization of choice.

Anyone with an original design is welcome to submit a photograph,

painting, illustration, or other work incorporating the ONE logo. The submissions are reviewed by a panel of judges, then voted on by the public. The resulting ONE® Contest Collection includes hundreds of vibrant and imaginative winning designs.

ONE also offers several other collections, including the MSM Collection and Urban Collection, featuring artists from around the world. The company works closely with customers, communities, health professionals, and partners, including DIFFA (Design Industries Foundation Fighting AIDS), with sale proceeds financing local outreach programs.

For the ONE® Makes a DIFFerence campaign, professional and student artists created auctioned artworks later used for condom designs. The ONE® Lust for Life campaign involved New York City street artists who repurposed traffic STOP signs into artworks that were auctioned to benefit Lifebeat: Music Fights HIV/AIDS and used to inspire condom wrappers, t-shirts, and educational materials.

ONE believes in making safe sex more fun by encouraging their customers' creativity. Check out their condom-wrapper designs and other products at www.onecondoms.com.

The company embraces the idea that colorful artwork on condom packaging encourages conversation and helps break down biases regarding sexual health education.





U=U

STARS IN

Animated

VIDEO CAMPAIGN

BRUCE RICHMAN, founding director of Prevention Access and the award-winning **Undetectable=Untransmittable** campaign, recently faced a creative challenge: how to spread the hopeful U=U message worldwide through a riveting, eye-catching social media campaign. In this way, people everywhere would learn about the scientific finding that those with an undetectable viral load cannot transmit HIV to their sexual partners.

Diagnosed with HIV 15 years ago, Bruce had known that U=U since 2012. Now he and his organization needed to come up with an imaginative way to get this information out across the globe.

Ultimately, with a flash of inspiration, they devised the innovative approach of collaborating with four gifted animation artists in Colombia, South America. With this artistic partnership, the Positive Series project was born. From the beginning, Bruce knew that the “finished product had to be gorgeous.”

The design team created original artwork that translated the candid, real-life stories of four individuals living with HIV into animated videos that convey their “experiences of love, struggle, doubt, happiness, and strength.” By late September, four dramatic, strikingly beautiful videos – DEE, KALEB, KATIE, and FERNANDO – were up on the website (www.positiveseries.org), ready for downloading, viewing, and sharing on social media in English, with subtitles in Spanish, French, Chinese, and Tagalog.

Posters that capture the essence and “look” of each video are also available online, ready to be customized by organizations around the world. In this way, the artistic power of these videos can be harnessed to educate clients and raise public awareness about the benefits of becoming and staying undetectable, staying healthy, and stopping new transmissions of HIV.

Inspiration Orlando

HEALING A
COMMUNITY
THROUGH

Art and Education



In the wake of the June 2016 tragedy at Pulse nightclub in Orlando, Florida, local educator Chimene Hurst and artist Michael Pilato devised a way to turn the stories of pain, loss, and heroism into something inspirational and healing.

Michael, a globally recognized muralist, enlisted his painting partner Yuriy Karabash to create a giant mural capturing the essence of Pulse victims, survivors, and community leaders. A work-in-progress, the mural was unveiled at Pulse exactly one year after the tragedy, providing a much-needed outlet for family, friends, and community.

The project, Inspiration Orlando, encompasses not only artwork like the Pulse mural, but an educational curriculum that focuses on love, unity, and inclusion.

In late 2017, the mural was moved to Thornton Park, after which it was displayed at the U.S. Conference on AIDS, also in Orlando.

It will next travel to San Juan, Puerto Rico, before permanent relocation in Orlando. According to Chimene, the current mural "represents the first year of the healing journey." The artists plan to add a children's section and "the mural will become taller and wider, as we hear more stories." Also in development is an Augmented Reality app through which viewers can interact with the mural using a smartphone or tablet.

Other murals in the works include an activism-themed collaboration with local middle school students and Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School (Parkland, Florida) survivors, inspired by the late activist Billy Manes.

Inspiration Orlando's educational curriculum, currently a pilot program for kindergarten through fifth grade, focuses on resilience after tragedy, while also stressing acceptance and tolerance.

For more information, go to www.inspirationorlando.com.



THE PROJECT, INSPIRATION ORLANDO, ENCOMPASSES NOT ONLY ARTWORK LIKE THE PULSE MURAL, BUT AN EDUCATIONAL CURRICULUM THAT FOCUSES ON LOVE, UNITY, AND INCLUSION.





THAT BROTHER CAN KNIT

&

WRITE!

Journey to Self-love

As a Black gay man, I was taught not to talk about my feelings. I was supposed to take the abuse heaped on me by Black preachers rabidly denouncing my "lifestyle," homophobic relatives shaming me for being a "sissy;" and the larger gay world ostracizing me because I am the color of dark, velvety-smooth chocolate. Through writing, I can describe the cultural taboos I defy and the feelings that arise. Writing allows me to talk about being the ultimate outsider and what it means to live in that place of rejection. I can still find love for myself, learn how to not take on the self-hate personally, and quickly move on to my blessings.

Black Men and HIV

I had unprotected sex a couple of times before I came out to my parents and accepted myself as a gay man. I put my life at risk because I bought into the social conditioning that my life was worthless. Thus, every time I speak and write authentically about defying social conventions and family traditions and loving myself unconditionally, I am removing the conditions that allow HIV/AIDS to persist, especially among gay black men.

New Horizons

Writing is my breath, my life. As the years pass, I've been letting go of who I thought I needed to be and embracing who I truly am and loving that self through my writing. My hopeful vision is that as I allow myself to accept the gifts and invitations to write that the Universe offers, I can become the international storyteller and writer I dream about being.

WALLACE BASS BOYD

Writer; Author of self-published memoir entitled: *That Brother Can Knit! A Creative Memoir by a Gay Black Man from Alabama* (available at www.lulu.com).

"KNITTING IS A WAY TO RELAX MY BODY AND FOCUS MY MIND FOR WRITING. INDEED, THE MORE CHALLENGING THE 'WRITING' PROBLEM, THE MORE COMPLEX MY KNITTING BECOMES."

THERESE

R. RODRIGUEZ



THERESE R. RODRIGUEZ savors her creative outlet as a poet, in addition to the decades she has spent helping New Yorkers living with or affected by HIV/AIDS. As CEO of Apicha (formerly Asian & Pacific Islander Coalition on HIV/AIDS), Therese led its evolution from AIDS service organization to community health center.

Calling herself a "shamelessly proud lesbian and Filipina-American immigrant woman of color," Therese writes in English, which "solidifies the United States as my home," she says. Her work with Apicha often surfaces in her writing. "I hope to be a voice for those unable to speak for themselves. Art is not only about self-awareness... It opens our eyes and makes us more aware of the vulnerabilities, inequality, and oppression – all that demeans and dehumanizes many," Therese says.

Here are some lines from Therese's poem about her organization, Apicha:

Apicha. Definitely not built by slaves.

*Built by immigrants and their children,
dreamers...*

*Civil rights fighters, descendants of former
slaves*

Built by everyone free to dream

Apicha, risen from the barrenness of "other"

*A curve bent towards justice, freedom
and inclusion*

It has thrived

Let's keep it going. It must survive!



Photo by Susan Ruel

BOULDERS & RAINBOWS

ANTHONY GOICOLEA

A sculpture commissioned by Gov. Andrew Cuomo and designed by Brooklyn artist Anthony Goicolea to honor the LGBTQ community was unveiled in Hudson River Park in June, within view of the Christopher Street Pier and the Statue of Liberty.

Anthony, an internationally recognized Cuban-American artist who grew up in Georgia, says his piece was inspired by memories of the community spirit that he sensed in this waterfront area when he moved to NYC as a young gay man. Before being decimated by the

AIDS epidemic and transformed by real estate development, the neighborhood had long been a mecca for the LGBTQ community. "A place that celebrates diversity is needed and welcome right now, and sends a powerful message," Anthony says.

Six of the nine boulders that form the sculpture are split, then bonded together with prismatic glass that forms rainbows as light strikes it. "Traditionally, glass is something delicate and fragile, but here it is used to make the boulders stronger. Holding them together are the conditions

for a rainbow...not unlike the community they represent," Anthony says.

The largest bisected stone contains what Anthony calls the work's "inner voice," inscribed with two quotations from the late LGBTQ activist and author Audre Lorde:

"Without community there is no liberation...but community must not mean a shedding of our differences..."

"DIFFERENCE IS THAT RAW AND POWERFUL CONNECTION FROM WHICH OUR PERSONAL POWER IS FORGED." Audre Lorde

... AND THE REST OF US WERE CHANGED

NEW YORK CITY AIDS MEMORIAL

Unveiled on World AIDS Day two years ago, the New York City AIDS Memorial is our first public monument to commemorate the more than 100,000 New Yorkers who have lost their lives to HIV/AIDS. The memorial and small park surrounding it in Greenwich Village also honor the efforts of caregivers and activists who continue to battle the epidemic.

Brooklyn-based Studio a+1 architects competed with 500 others worldwide and were selected to design the monument, located on a triangular traffic island in the West Village. Composed of several different kinds of triangles, the 18-foot steel canopy covers some 1,600 square feet.

Internationally known visual artist Jenny Holzer also contributed to the monument design. "Some died, and the rest of us were changed," she said, about surviving the epidemic and designing this memorial.

Granite panels at the base of the monument are engraved with excerpts from the 1855 poem "Song of Myself," by legendary LGBTQ poet Walt Whitman (1819–1892):

*"I bequeath myself to the dirt to
grow from the grass I love,*

*If you want me again look for
me under your boot-soles.*

*You will hardly know who I am
or what I mean,*

*But I shall be good health to
you nevertheless,*

And filter and fibre your blood.

*Failing to fetch me at first
keep encouraged,
Missing me one place search another,
I stop somewhere waiting for you..."*

For more information, visit www.nycaidsmemorial.org.





R O M A N O

Music means everything to me. Ever since I was a child going to a church filled with music, I have been surrounded by music. Music is my passion – I love performing, and being on stage is the only place where I feel normal.

I'm still establishing my music career. I go to open mic nights and participate in shows across New York City as a way to get exposure, build a fan base, and do what I love, which is singing for an audience. It's important to have that immediate feedback from the spectators, and it's very inspiring.

I performed at the Amateur Night at the Apollo on four different occasions. I won first place during my first appearance when I was 16 years old. I also sang at the Sugar Bar, The Delancey, and the Cove, to name a few. I hosted a few shows and have been featured on other artists' music projects. It's all very exciting to me.

Performing is thrilling, but performing for a cause is truly empowering. I'm very involved with my LGBTQ community as an activist, aka artist/activist. I'm a Board Member for Amida Care, where I am a fierce advocate for the health plan's members. If I can have anything in life, I would love to be a professional recording artist healing the world through music and art.

"PERFORMING FOR A CAUSE IS TRULY EMPOWERING. I'M VERY INVOLVED WITH MY LGBTQ COMMUNITY AS AN ARTIVIST, AKA ARTIST/ACTIVIST."

ROMANO IVORY



DOMINIQUE *Packson* IS ELEKTRAFYING

SHE IS SETTING THE WORLD ON FIRE THESE DAYS AS A RISING STAR TELEVISION ACTRESS, MODEL (ITALIAN VOGUE AND NY FASHION WEEK), AUTHOR, AND ACTIVIST FOR TRANSGENDER RIGHTS.

Dominique recently wrapped up filming her second season playing Elektra, the fierce transgender mother of the ballroom House of Abundance on POSE, a popular FX television mini-series. The show evokes the ballroom subculture and emerging HIV/AIDS epidemic of 1980s New York. Previously, Dominique appeared on "Strut," a 2016 reality show hosted by Whoopi Goldberg on the Oxygen network.

Growing up on Trinidad's sister island of Tobago, Dominique was obsessed with performance and dance. Facing discrimination as a transgender teenager, she fled to the United States. In her memoir published in 2014, Dominique wrote that a ballroom scene friend may have saved her life by warning her about HIV.

Dominique, a long-time LGBTQ youth and AIDS activist with Bronx-based Destination Tomorrow and other community groups, was among the groundbreaking entertainers who helped introduce HIV testing into uptown ballroom and nightclub events almost 15 years ago.

This fall, Dominique served as the emcee at Community Healthcare Network's 2018 Conference on Transgender Health. For the past two years, she has been on the Community Health Program Board at the Montefiore South Bronx Healthcare Clinic.

"It's time we realize that we can be productive members of society," Dominique says of her transgender community.



Visual AIDS

“BECAUSE AIDS IS NOT OVER”

Visual AIDS is a New York–based arts organization that “utilizes art to fight AIDS by provoking dialogue, supporting HIV-positive artists, and preserving a legacy... because AIDS is not over.” Founded in 1988 during the early years of the AIDS crisis, Visual AIDS marks its 30th anniversary in 2018.

Visual AIDS “preserves an archival, visual record of the work of artists with HIV.” They help support artists living with HIV/AIDS and raise funds for the creation of new art works. To learn more: www.visualaids.org.



THE RED RIBBON PROJECT

In 1991, a group of artists from the Visual AIDS Artists' Caucus came together to develop a meaningful symbol that showed support and compassion for those with AIDS and their caregivers.

The Red Ribbon project was born, with the color red chosen for its connection to blood, passion, anger, and love. The ribbon format was selected because it was easy to recreate and wear. The original instructions were: “Cut the red ribbon in a 6-inch length, then fold at the top into an inverted ‘V’ shape. Use a safety pin to attach to clothing.”

Thousands of red ribbons were created at “ribbon bees” or gatherings of Artists' Caucus members, friends, and supporters. Visual AIDS partnered with Broadway Cares and Equity Fights AIDS in June 1991 to adorn guests and presenters at the 45th annual Tony Awards. Actor Jeremy Irons was one of the first to wear the iconic symbol.

The red ribbon quickly became renowned as an international symbol of AIDS awareness. It led the way for many other color ribbons and awareness projects. Unlike some other commercial marketing campaigns, the red ribbon evolved as an artist/activist project and was never copyrighted in the United States.

In 1993, the United States Postal Service issued a 29¢ Red Ribbon stamp. In 2015, the Red Ribbon became part of the permanent collection at the Museum of Modern Art.

THE HEALING POWER OF

creativity



by Donna Alulema, ATR-BC, LCAT

My work as an art therapist for the past eight years has been impacted by the HIV/AIDS epidemic. I work with different age groups and populations – including people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHIV), through Harlem United and Amida Care Live Your Life special events.

I encourage my clients who are PLWHIV to channel their creativity on issues personal to them, such as their diagnosis, stigma, family concerns, substance use, or any other challenges.

Art therapy provides all people, including PLWHIV, with a safe space to explore their emotions, work on their self-esteem, manage addictions, relieve stress and symptoms of anxiety and depression, and cope with physical illnesses. Some, like me, come from immigrant families, so themes such as immigration, equality, and other current affairs can play a role in our artwork.

At recent Artist in Me events that I facilitated for Amida Care, members were able to develop their inner artists.

Some came in with ideas and hit the canvases running. Others needed some support and direction. Either way, they enjoyed themselves, laughing, sharing, supporting one another, and letting their inner artists shine.

The arts are a powerful way for human beings to communicate, so it makes sense that the creative arts have been a part of every era in human history. Art can unite, inform, and bring forth changes not only in communities but in the individual artist, as well.

ART TRANSCENDS ALL LANGUAGES AND HAS THE ABILITY
TO GIVE EVERYONE A VOICE AND A PLATFORM TO EXPRESS THEMSELVES.

ACROLLAGE

Rodriguez Calero



Rodriguez Calero successfully combines her knowledge of mediums, evolving them into another dimension of quality and visual sensibility and expression, which in turn produces a striking and thought-provoking impression.

Her signature style in painting – unique, distinct and innovative, not only technically, but also in the scope of her subject matter and the depth

of her vision – has been termed ACROLLAGE.

Rodriguez Calero has received other awards, honors, and fellowships from the New Jersey State Council on the Arts, Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, and the New York Foundation for the Arts. She was given residencies from The New York State Council on the Arts, and the National Endowment for the Arts.



“My conceptual images are symbolic and have a language and reason, which is impelling and are reflective observations of complex moments, exploring the themes of mysticism, sexuality, politics and social customs. These personal and provocative images from archetypal narratives create a new reality and project a universal message that is a testament and homage to the continuous struggle of the LGBTQ community’s journey.”

CARLOS N. MOLINA

PAPER ARTIST

Art as a Spiritual Path

After participating in an LGBTQ spiritual retreat focused on identity, healing and spiritual practice, I realized that my aptitude was to create. I believe that we are created in the image of God, the Creator. When one is creating, one is expressing and experiencing that likeness at a very profound and powerful level. From that state, one can gain access to great wisdom and spiritual power.

Paper Is My Passion

I have been using paper to create art from an early age. It wasn't until I made a collection of paper shoes, about 12 years ago, that it really took off. Those shoes created artistic opportunities for me. It led to larger and diverse projects, including the Lord and Taylor holiday windows, prototypes for Chanel, appearances on HGTV, published books, and artwork produced for three women's clinics.

You Are Closer to Heaven in High Heels

I like the idea of shoes as a symbol of my spiritual path; not only because it celebrates my self-identity as a gay man, but it also illustrates the eternal ambivalence of being grounded in the world and having higher spiritual aspirations.

"I LIKE THE
IDEA OF SHOES
AS A SYMBOL OF MY
SPIRITUAL PATH."



For more of Carlos N. Molina's paper sculptures,
visit www.carlosNmolina.com.



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Art is my happy place. It's peace and security. It grounds me. As a social worker and activist, I am frequently focused on the well-being of others. Creating art is a way to create space for myself and to center on my own needs. It's an act of self-love and compassion.

Art is also a place I go to make mistakes and forgive myself. To acknowledge that there is no "perfect". That the last line I drew is actually fine, and that I am enough just the way I am. Messy can be okay! I am trying to be less rigid in my illustration process and let go of perfectionism. It's definitely an ongoing practice in self-compassion.

AFFIRMATIONS WITH A TWIST

My creative expression is always changing. Now I am creating more inclusive affirmations using calligraphy. I want to see affirmations for people adopting children or recovering from trauma. I want to celebrate queer milestones, affirm genders, and uplift marginalized voices.

There is a wealth of experiences that go beyond the traditional Hallmark storytelling: man-woman, cute babies, and condolences. There is a beautiful and diverse spectrum of lived experiences and struggles that deserve recognition.

Is your HIV viral load suppressed? I am proud of you! Did you sit with me after the election to remind me I'm not alone? I appreciate you!

I am currently working on creating more inclusive, non-binary affirmations, and launching "The Crafty Queer" (www.thecraftyqueer.com), a website to host all my adventures in art, activism and healing, from hand-poked tattoos to life-affirming apparel.



Follow me on social media, Instagram: [@CraftsAndTats](https://www.instagram.com/CraftsAndTats)
Facebook Page: [The Crafty Queer](https://www.facebook.com/TheCraftyQueer)

ART CALENDAR

Since 2011, Amida Care has been holding an annual Art Calendar Contest to shine a light on the power of creativity to heal and mobilize all people – including those living with HIV. This competition has become one of the organization's greatest hits, with members sending in as many as 100 entries.

Judges from Amida Care's Member Advisory Council select 14 winning entries and seven "honorable mentions" that best represent life, healing, and the health plan's mission.

The glossy wall calendar also features inspirational quotations promoting health





and wellness, which helps build awareness of Amida Care and its talented members. Paintings that have won the contests throughout the years deck the halls and reception area of Amida Care's office in Manhattan.

"I HAVE BEEN DOING ARTWORK SINCE I WAS IN THIRD GRADE, THANKS TO A GREAT TEACHER. PAINTING BRINGS ME HAPPINESS AND COMFORT AND KEEPS ME MOTIVATED. PEOPLE CALL ME THE FLOWER GIRL BECAUSE I OFTEN PAINT FLOWERS. LIKE AMIDA CARE, FLOWERS ARE ABOUT GROWING AND LIVING. THEY MEAN LIFE TO ME."

Michele M.

"I STARTED PAINTING WHEN I JOINED AMIDA CARE FOR THE VERY FIRST ART CALENDAR CONTEST. I WON FOR MY PICTURE OF ORCA WHALES. I FINALLY FOUND MY PASSION IN LIFE!"

Jimmy W.





“PAINTING IS MY PASSION AND MY THERAPY. I ENJOY IT, AND I WANT TO SHARE MY GOOD MESSAGES WITH ANYONE WHO MIGHT BE WAITING SOMEWHERE AND SEE MY ARTWORK ON A WALL. THIS CONTEST HAS OPENED DOORS AND HELPED ME MEET PEOPLE. IT HAS GIVEN ME HAPPINESS.” – Ricardo C.

AMIDA CARE'S ANNUAL

ART CALENDAR



30 ART & CREATIVITY





“YOU CAN’T USE UP CREATIVITY. THE MORE YOU USE, THE MORE YOU HAVE.” MAYA ANGELOU



“ART IS FOR HEALING OURSELVES, AND EVERYBODY NEEDS THEIR OWN PERSONAL ART TO HEAL UP THEIR PROBLEMS.” LINDA RONSTADT