



Inclusive Arts Vermont (formerly VSA Vermont) has been approved for \$20,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. The Arts Projects award will support [“Masked,” a touring showcase of artwork by Vermont visual artists with disabilities](#) and the accompanying artist talks and specialized gallery tours for people with visual disabilities or memory loss.

“Masked” explores the literal and metaphoric symbolism of masks as interpreted by the selected artists. The 4th biennial exhibition of its kind presented by Inclusive Arts Vermont, the exhibition explores the following questions: How does the concept of masking resonate for individuals with disabilities? How has the global pandemic uniquely impacted the disability community? As we emerge from this period of isolation, how have the tangible and conceptual definitions of “mask” and “masking” evolved? The show will explore the title theme both as a literal reflection of our current global crisis and a metaphoric reflection of the ways societal norms and self-protection draw people with disabilities inward, masking truth, identity, and the authentic self.



MASKED

Inclusive Arts Vermont’s project is among the more than 1,100 projects across America totaling nearly \$27 million that were selected during this second round of Grants for Arts Projects fiscal year 2021 funding. This round of Grants for Arts Projects funding is supporting 14 organization in Vermont with \$1,102,740 in funds.

“As the country and the arts sector begin to imagine returning to a post-pandemic world, the National Endowment for the Arts is proud to announce funding that will help arts organizations such as Inclusive Arts Vermont reengage fully with partners and audiences,” said NEA Acting Chairman Ann Eilers. “Although the arts have sustained many during the pandemic, the chance to gather with one another and share arts experiences is its own necessity and pleasure.”

“We are honored to receive this support from the National Endowment for the Arts,” said Inclusive Arts Vermont’s Executive Director, Katie Miller. “Our exhibitions are more than the viewing of the art. We work with venues to ensure maximum accessibility for people with disabilities. This includes some well-known and newer features, such as verbal description, specialized tours, and tactile representations. Getting in the door is important, sure, and accessibility goes far beyond the physical space. Our exhibitions serve as an experiential opportunity for both education and advocacy on the importance of radical inclusion.”

The adjudicated exhibition will launch in January 2022 and tour a variety of traditional and non-traditional venues throughout the state. In response to new pandemic adaptations, and to expand the impact within our rural state, the show will also be available digitally. Inclusive Arts Vermont will offer gallery tours uniquely designed for individuals with low vision, blindness, and memory loss, and will build on the success of 2020/21's digital artists talks, connecting artists with community members to discuss creativity, identity, and artistic process. The show also includes a full audio tour with verbal descriptions of all works, 3D representations, tactile elements, braille, and so much more.

Artist Jean Cherouney shared that [ANEW, the 2020-21 exhibition](#), supported her and her creativity during the pandemic. She said, "there is an art to making what we love and need to share. Being represented in the exhibition brings me joy. This exhibition is more than a mere expression; it is creating community and connection. Isolation and challenge increased during this time, but this exhibition created an ongoing dialogue about process and creativity and embracing our true creative selves as we pushed together through isolation."

Artist Karen J. Lloyd has exhibited in all three of Inclusive Arts Vermont's prior exhibitions. She feels similarly to Cherouney, adding that the opportunity impacts both her art and her understanding of self. "The exhibit opened the door for me to more deeply explore how challenges (and overcoming or thriving despite them) can lead to unexpected, beautiful creation. It has been incredibly validating and inspiring to be part of this artistic community where I feel welcome to come as I am: the sense that I am 'enough' even if I am weathering storms of limiting illness, and that if anything those aspects add to my voice as an artist."

A call for artists will be announced in August, via the organization's website, and distributed widely. All artists with disabilities that are Vermont residents are encouraged to apply. Alternative application formats and assistance are available by contacting the organization.

The mission of Inclusive Arts Vermont is to use the magic of the arts to engage the capabilities and enhance the confidence of children and adults with disabilities. They do this through education, exhibition, and capacity building programs for teachers, students, artists, and organizations. To find out more about Inclusive Arts Vermont, visit www.inclusiveartsvermont.org. And to take the audio tour of "ANEW," the current exhibition and to find out more about "Masked," please visit www.inclusiveartsvermont.org/community/exhibitions/.

For more information on the projects included in the Arts Endowment grant announcement, visit arts.gov/news.

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