

Knoxville Public Library Announces Winners of 2022 Art Project; Reception December 8

In January of 2022, the Knoxville Public Library put out a call for midwest-based artists to submit proposals for commissioned pieces, and dubbed it the KPL 2022 Art Project. This project was the most recent and most ambitious leg of the KPL's ongoing Public Art @ the Library program.

Established in 2019, the art program aims to establish the library as a center for culture, art, and gathering in the community. Past projects have included offering classes led by local artist-in-residence, Amy Uthus; commissioning a mural for the children's storytime room from local artist Kim DeSocio; and creating a gallery space devoted to showcasing the work of local artists. The library has hosted successful exhibitions and receptions for several area artists: Brady VanderHart (paintings and drawings); Patsy Murphy (quilts and paintings); Denise Walters-McNally (paintings); Denis Johansen (wood carvings); and Earl "Eddie" Pearson (collages).

It has been an honor to highlight the depth and breadth of talent that lies close to home; we have discovered that the well is deep, and that our community has strong interest, enthusiasm, and appreciation for the arts. Indeed, that was evident when Knoxville residents cast more than 5000 votes in the Iowa Economic Development Authority's contest #IowansUnite CommUNITY Pride, securing the win for a custom mural designed by Iowa artist Ben Schuh. The vibrant mural has become a point of pride to residents and a must-see for visitors.

After spending time in Knoxville, Ben Schuh reached out to the Knoxville Public Library with an idea to establish the library (and more broadly, Knoxville) as a repository for great and innovative art that would attract visitors from across the state and beyond. Thus began the 2022 Art Project contest. The call for proposals went out to colleges, the Iowa Arts Council, and media outlets, asking for proposals for large-scale pieces that would match the beauty of the library's renovated space, and which would convey the individual artist's conception of the theme "Community." From the two dozen impressive proposals received, the library narrowed down the selection to eight semi-finalists, and finally four winners. Those pieces have now been completed, and are ready for permanent installation.

On December 8, 2022, the library invites the public to a reception to meet the four winning artists and view these pieces for the very first time:

Chad Elliott will present his painting "Community Tree." Chad is a musician and artist based out of Lamoni, Iowa. His goal is to "create music and art that inspires, uplifts and moves his audience emotionally by relating life experiences through dream-like imagery." Chad is a graduate of Graceland University, and has completed graduate credits from the University of Montana in Missoula. He's won numerous awards, has been commissioned to paint large-scale murals for several communities, and has served as an artist in residence for TreeBed Design in Vallejo, California and Arts on Grand in Spencer, Iowa. Chad is in great demand across the country to participate in art exhibits and musical festivals; we're pleased to be able to secure a spot on his schedule for this reception.

<https://www.chadelliott.net/art.html>

Emily Lupita Plum-Güçlü is an American-Latina artist, illustrator, and writer who graduated from Central College with her BA and Iowa State University with her MFA. She paints from her experience in different cultures, including her own Mexican-American and Welsh heritage, as well as her roots in rural Iowa. She has traveled extensively and internationally, which is reflected in her work. Emily has received many awards for her projects, including an Artist Community Gathering Grant from the BeWildReWildFund at Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation for her most recent book *I Believe in Seeds: Affirmations for Rewilding*. For the Knoxville Public Library, Emily created the painting “Three Friends.” She is currently based out of Turkey; she’s provided a video introduction for the KPL reception on December 8.

<https://emilylupita.com/>

Joseph S. Plum is a poet and artist who lives off-the-grid in rural Iowa. He’s published nine books, and performs his spoken poetry in several states. Joe’s writing and artwork are intertwined: he works in acrylic with multimedia elements, incorporating vague images, figures, and words. He describes himself as painting his dreams, and believes that in his paintings, “we may see ourselves reflected back from a distance, like blackbirds through standing trees”. He recently collaborated with his daughter, Emily Lupita, on the *I Believe in Seeds* title for the Iowa National Heritage Foundation. For the Knoxville Public Library, Joe created the painting “Blink”; he’ll be performing accompanying poetry at the reception.

<https://emilylupita.com/joeplum/>

Jill Wells graduated from Drake University with her MFA and is now based out of Des Moines. Her award-winning artwork investigates race, history, stereotype, and accessibility issues. She seeks to provide solutions to make art accessible, producing multimedia, interactive works that engage, educate, and challenge her audience. Among her many awards and appointments are: Harkin Institute Fellow; Mandela Washington Fellowship Coach; the Iowa Arts Council Resilience Artist Grant for Artist X Advocacy Mentorship Program; and the inaugural fellow for Artist INC. Iowa Fellowship. Jill frequently travels for exhibitions (including to Belfast, Ireland), is in high demand to create commissioned pieces, and has a full schedule of talks and lectures. She has been in the press repeatedly for her ground-breaking work. On December 8, Jill will unveil her 6-piece artwork “Freedom to Read Statement, Braille Series.”

<https://www.jillwellsart.com/>

Reception Information:

Location: Knoxville Public Library, 213 E. Montgomery Street Knoxville, IA.

5:00 pm: open house with live music and light refreshments

5:30 pm: artist presentations

6:30 pm: open house resumes

rsvp appreciated: email knoxlib@knoxville.lib.ia.us OR call 641-828-0585