



FLINT INSTITUTE OF ARTS

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Hagerman Foundation, FIA Bring Pittsburgh Artist To Flint For Community Workshops**

Flint, MI – Through funding provided by the Hagerman Foundation, and in cooperation with the Flint Institute of Arts, The Chosen Few Arts Council, and the Boys and Girls Club of Greater Flint, Pittsburgh-based visual and performance artist Vanessa German is conducting workshops this week at the historic Berston Field House with Flint area students through Thursday, July 26, 2018.

Drawing on her experience living in Pittsburgh's Homewood neighborhood, German sees herself as a citizen artist and activist. Her work is a response to the ricochet of systemic, institutionalized racism, violence, and brutality facing her community. In January 2019, the Flint Institute of Arts will open an exhibition featuring German's mixed-media sculptures. These workshops serve to introduce the artist to the Flint community and familiarize the Flint community with her, creating a sense of ownership in what will be on view next year. The exhibition will incorporate what she terms "power figures," which are rooted in spirituality and ritual, most notably the central African tradition of *nkisi nkondi* or *minkisi* figures, characterized by protrusions of nails, signifying awakening and healing. German believes in the transformative power of love and art to heal: "I grieve and I create. I reach out to my human family and I make it my business to FEEL, to HEAR, to WITNESS, and to continue on in my life and in my creativity, as I find the truest love and the truest healing in the active act of Making Art and being with Art, and Seeing and being inspired. I believe in the power of art, and I believe in the power of Love, and I do not necessarily have to distinguish between the two."

When she creates her work, she is actively involved with the community, whether using found objects or involving youth and adults in actually making parts of her sculptures. Her FIA exhibition will reflect her Flint experiences, and be informed by her interactions with the community. It is central to the FIA's mission to provide programs that connect the museum with its community, so that individuals see the FIA as "their" museum, the museum of the city. The FIA believes these community-centered workshops will engage citizens that do not normally utilize the museum and its resources, breaking down barriers and involving the individuals in the process of art-making and bringing art to our city. Through the timeless themes of our shared humanity, the FIA hopes the Greater Flint community will be empowered by her message of using art to deal with difficult issues in life and the sense of ownership and anticipation the exhibition will create.

Vanessa German is available for interviews through Thursday, July 26. All interested media, please contact Chene Koppitz at 810.237.7387 or [ckoppitz@umich.edu](mailto:ckoppitz@umich.edu).

### **ABOUT VANESSA GERMAN**

Vanessa German is a multi-disciplinary artist based in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. She is founder of Love Front Porch and ARTHouse, a community arts initiative for the children of her historic Homewood neighborhood. Her work is in private and public collections including the Flint Institute of Arts, Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, The Progressive Art Collection, David C. Driskell Center for the Study of the Visual Arts and Culture of African Americans and the African Diaspora, Snite Museum of Art, among others. German's fine art work has been exhibited widely, most recently at Spelman College Museum of Fine Art, Atlanta, GA; the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, CT; the Studio

Museum, Harlem, NY; and the Ringling Museum of Art, Sarasota, FL. Her work has been featured on *CBS Sunday Morning*, NPR's "All Things Considered" and in *The Huffington Post*, *O Magazine*, and *Essence Magazine*.

#### **ABOUT THE FLINT INSTITUTE OF ARTS**

Established in 1928 by local citizens, the Flint Institute of Arts was founded as both a museum and an art school. In 1957, the FIA moved to its current location to the Flint Cultural Center Campus. The FIA is the second largest art museum in Michigan and the fifth largest museum art school in the country. The FIA has an active program of special exhibitions, often drawing from its stellar permanent collection of approximately 8,000 works representing a wide range of cultures and media, spanning five millennia. The FIA Art School offers year-round art instruction, seven days a week, to its currently enrolled 1,700 students. Since its founding, the FIA has served an important role in the life of the Flint community and, today, continues to play a major role in the growth and revitalization of the city of Flint. The FIA's collection galleries are open to the general public seven days a week with every Saturday free of charge, thanks to Huntington Bank. The FIA's mission is to "advance the understanding and appreciation of art for all through collections, exhibitions, and educational programs."

#### **ABOUT THE HAGERMAN FOUNDATION**

The Hagerman Foundation was established in the summer of 2014 with one passion in mind — to brighten and improve the lives of future generations. The Hagerman's core values of family, community, and education create the Foundation's framework of giving. The Hagerman Foundation looks forward to building a legacy of hope for generations to come by supporting organizations that promote education, life skills, entrepreneurship, ministry, counseling, and the arts in surrounding communities.