

MURALS of **NORTH NASHVILLE NOW**

Exhibition on view in the
Conte Community Arts Gallery
August 10, 2019–January 5, 2020

Frist Art Museum

919 Broadway, Nashville, TN 37203
FristArtMuseum.org #TheFrist #NorthNashNow

Participating artists

Nuveen Barwari
Omari Booker
LeXander Bryant
Brandon Donahue
Marlos E'van
Courtney Adair Johnson
Elisheba Israel Mrozik
Norf Art Collective
XPayne

Organized by the Frist Art Museum

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COVER: Norf Art Collective. *Forever*, 2019. Acrylic spray paint, acrylic, and oil on panel, 96 x 144 in. Courtesy of the artists. © Norf Art Collective. Photo: LeXander Bryant
INTERIOR: Elisheba Israel Mrozik. *Unmask 'Em*, 2019. Acrylic on panel, 96 x 144 in. Courtesy of the artist. © Elisheba Israel Mrozik. Photo: LeXander Bryant



A vibrant street art scene has emerged throughout Nashville in recent years alongside its rapid expansion. Today, murals can be seen on walls in The Nations, the Gulch, Nolensville Road, and many other places. Those found in North Nashville, a historically African American neighborhood, stand out because they are typically made by artists with strong ties to the area and because they visually express its unique character. The imagery reflects persistent problems impacting the community, such as displacement, gun violence, and incarceration, as well as positive elements like thriving black-owned businesses, a revitalized art scene, strong local activist organizations, and valuable educational institutions.

For insights into this important part of our city, the Frist Art Museum asked a selection of young artists—many mentored by Tennessee State University professors Sam Dunson, Carlyle Johnson, and Michael McBride, and Michael “Ol Skool” Mucker, James Threaskill, and Thaxton Waters—to offer their perspectives on the multifaceted position of North Nashville now. Norf Art Collective represents the children featured earlier in their celebrated Clarksville Pike mural, *Family Matters*, as maturing individuals rising above negative situations and making plans for a healthy future, with education, community, and clean natural resources as necessary building blocks. Omari Booker highlights the legacy of “redlining,” a discriminatory lending and investment policy promoted by banks and the Federal Housing Administration, and the gentrification caused by the current residential

construction boom. Photographer and graphic designer LeXander Bryant combines text and images to create overt propaganda meant to re-brainwash viewers with messages like “We Want You” that elevate the value of black lives and widen awareness of job opportunities. Brandon Donahue commemorates local victims of violence by forming a memorial wall on which the name of each person killed in 2018 and early 2019 is airbrushed. Elisheba Israel Mrozik focuses on the strength of women as they navigate an environment filled with systemic inequities, incomplete histories, and racially motivated violence. XPayne’s mural depicts a young superhero attempting to slay the dragon of greed, guided by the wisdom of a stoic elder dressed as Batman. Finally, at the McGruder Family Resource Center, artists Courtney Adair Johnson, Marlos E’van, and Nuveen Barwari worked with participants in Opportunity NOW and Oasis Center’s International Teen Outreach Program to make a collaborative mural that includes parts of Nashville’s past, present, and future.

North Nashville Now seeks to shine a light on this culturally and historically rich yet often underserved part of the city. The project also explores the role of the arts in urban redevelopment and in the expression of community identities, further testifying that art can be found all around us, not just inside museums and galleries.

Katie Delmez, curator