

NEW WORKS BY CITIZEN ARTIST VANESSA GERMAN TO PREMIERE IN TOPEKA DURING MAY



Pictured: vanessa german, *Nancy Todd*, 2024
Photo by Jordan Whitten courtesy of vanessa german Studios

In commemoration of the 70th anniversary of the Brown v. Board case decision, internationally renowned citizen artist vanessa german will premiere new works that were co-created with Topeka community members.

Topeka, KS — ArtsConnect is excited to formally announce the premiere events related to new works by internationally renowned citizen artist **vanessa german**, who has been working in residence in Topeka over the course of the past year. The body of work she created alongside members of the community includes a touring museum of multimedia sculptures and a spoken word operetta that will be performed by a combined community choir with vanessa german and other special guests. Both are being presented to coincide with the 70th anniversary of the Brown v. Board case decision.

The touring installation, titled “[CRAVING LIGHT: The Museum of Love & Reckoning](#)” will premiere at the Mulvane Art Museum. The public is warmly invited to an opening reception at 6:30pm on May 16th, 2024 at the Mulvane’s Rita Bliff Gallery. “CRAVING LIGHT” will remain on exhibit there through mid-July. It will then travel to the Great Overland Station, where it will be on display through the end of 2024.

“CRAVING LIGHT” results from a year-long collaboration with Topeka residents. Community members shared their stories and belongings with german, which she used to create a new body of work that spans media from sculpture to collage to video. The installation considers the legacies of Brown v. Board, embodying stories from the lives of the case’s plaintiffs and others who were affected by its outcome. “CRAVING LIGHT” offers an opportunity for each of us to reckon with the past, transform our hearts, and work toward a better future.

The spoken word operetta, titled “[THE WAY OF LIGHT](#)” will premiere at White Concert Hall on Friday, May 24, 2024 at 8pm. Prior to the performance, ArtsConnect will host a public reception beginning **at 6:30pm**. The operetta will be followed by a talk-back discussion with members of the choir and german.

“THE WAY OF LIGHT” is a six-part, poetic, spoken word operetta that weaves together movement, collective voice, and ritual to raise the voices, lives and writings of Topeka residents. Exploring the idea of “the beloved community” as envisioned by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., “THE WAY OF LIGHT” is both a performance piece and a work of public art. The operetta was co-written by artists Angel Haze, August Mendoza and vanessa german. Its premiere performance will be recorded and submitted for consideration for a Grammy.

Underway since mid-2023, this project has received foundational support from the National Endowment for the Arts through the prestigious Our Town Grant Program and from Visit Topeka, Inc. Other supporters include Washburn University, the Mulvane Art Museum, Security Benefit, FHLBank Topeka, Bartlett & West Engineers, KTWU Public Television, the Brown v. Board National Historical Park, Don & Edie Snethen, the Kansas Creative Arts Industries Commission, and the Mid-America Arts Alliance.

For more information about this project, visit <http://www.artstopeka.org/loveandjustice>.

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About vanessa german

vanessa german (b. 1976, USA) is a multidisciplinary citizen artist working across sculpture, performance, communal rituals, immersive installation, and photography. The artist’s practice proposes new models for social healing, utilizing creativity and tenderness as vital forces to reckon with the historical and ongoing catastrophes of structural racism, white supremacy, heteropatriarchy, resource extraction, and misogynoir. Her work is held in private and public collections internationally, including the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City; the Wichita Art Museum; Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville; and the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford. Learn more at <https://www.kasmingallery.com/artist/vanessa-german>.

About ArtsConnect

As Topeka’s premier arts engagement organization, ArtsConnect promotes the arts through building community connections and broadening the understanding of how the arts enhance our quality of life. Learn more at <https://artstopeka.org/loveandjustice>.

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