



EKPHRASTACY

Artists Speak + Poets Respond

July 23rd

Michelle R. Smith

Tessa Roberts

Sam Oguntoyinbo

Marcia Camino

**WITH SPECIAL THANKS TO THE
Heights Writes Community Team:**

John Burroughs, Ray McNiece, Amy
Rosenbluth, Michelle R. Smith,
Catherine Wing

2175 Lee Road, Cleveland Heights, Ohio
(216) 371-3457

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ABOUT THE EXHIBITIONS

Beyond Perception

These works show how disability can shape artistic practice in concrete ways. The exhibition highlights different approaches to access, perception, and making, and encourages viewers to consider multiple ways of experiencing and understanding art.

Summary

- Beyond Perception features artists whose work is shaped by disability, chronic illness, and different ways of experiencing the world.
- The exhibition explores how disability can influence artistic process.

ABOUT THE EXHIBITIONS

Spotlight: Amelia Casiano

Amelia is a Cleveland artist. Her creative skills allowed her to look at the environmental subtleness in her work and cultural awareness that are in her own customs, while diversifying herself in the city. The focus of the various textures is to demonstrate a story, persistence, and dialogue through her style and technique along with the cultural background of her Puerto Rican roots.

Summary

- Amelia is a Cleveland artist whose work is inspired by her Puerto Rican heritage
- She uses color, texture, and mixed media to tell stories
- Her artwork explores culture, identity, and personal experiences.

[Explore the exhibitions](#)



Michelle R. Smith

Heights Poet Laureate

Michelle R. Smith is a writer, poet, educator, cultural facilitator, and native Clevelander. She is the 2025-2027 Heights Poet Laureate, Programming Director for Literary Cleveland, and author of the poetry collections *Ariel in Black* (2015) and *The Vagina Analogues* (2020). Her work has appeared in *The Normal School*, *The Gasconade Review*, *New Note Poetry*, *Merge Magazine*, and *io Literary Magazine*, among other publications. She is also the creator, co-producer, and director of *BLAX MUSEUM*, an annual February performance showcase for Northeast Ohio artists open to all forms and dedicated to honoring notable Black figures in American history and culture.

Summary

- Michelle R. Smith is the Heights Poet Laureate
- She is a writer, poet, educator, and cultural facilitator from Cleveland.



Sam Oguntinyinbo

Featured Poet

Sam Oguntinyinbo (he/him) is a Nigerian-American writer and spoken word poet from Solon, Ohio. He recently graduated with a B.A. in English from Yale University, where he was named a 2025 Yale College Poet and had his poems archived in the Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library. He has also been published in Mudfish Magazine and the Yale Literary Magazine.

Since returning to Northeast Ohio post-graduation, Sam has participated in local open mics and writing workshops from Human HeART Studios' HeART After Dark open mics to Story Wars, a monthly story-writing competition (that he won on his birthday!).

Summary

- Sam Oguntinyinbo is a Nigerian-American poet from Solon, Ohio.
- He participates in local open mics and writing workshops.



Tessa Roberts Featured Poet

Tessa Roberts is a poet, visual artist, and counselor-in-training from Northeast Ohio. She earned a B.A. in Creative Writing and Digital Arts from Malone University, graduating cum laude, and is currently pursuing an M.Ed. in Clinical Mental Health Counseling at Kent State University.

Her poetry is concerned with memory, longing, place, and the strange beauty of ordinary life. Often blending narrative observation with lyric reflection, her work explores relationships, grief, identity, and the ways people search for meaning in a rapidly changing world.

Summary

- Tessa Roberts is a poet and visual artist from Northeast Ohio.
- She writes about memory, longing, and more.

She is particularly interested in the tension between humor and heartbreak, finding both in overlooked moments and everyday encounters. Roberts is a three-time recipient of Malone University's Writers Prize for Poetry and has also been recognized with the Cinema Truth Award for her work in film. As a multidisciplinary artist working in painting, photography, digital media, and creative writing, she brings a visual sensibility to her poems, emphasizing image, atmosphere, and emotional texture.

When not writing, she works in marketing and nonprofit storytelling, studies counseling, and spends time with her black Labrador, Georgie. Her work reflects an enduring fascination with connection, imagination, and the stories people create to understand themselves and one another.

Summary

- Tessa also works in painting, photography and digital media.
- She is studying counseling at Kent State University.



Marcia Camino

Featured Poet

Marcia Camino holds a B.A. in English from Bowling Green State University and an M.F.A. in creative writing from the University of Alaska and lives in Berea, Ohio. She teaches yoga and aqua fitness, is a writing tutor and freelance writer and editor, and works as a book archivist. Marcia is a diarist since the age of ten and began writing poetry in college; she cites Bob Dylan as her first poetic influence. Music, dance, visual arts, yoga, mythology, spirituality, and her deep love of nature—particularly that found along the coast of Maine—inform her writings.

Summary

- Marcia Camino is a diarist and poet living in Berea, Ohio.
- She is influenced by music, dance, art, yoga, mythology, and nature.

She has published two poetry collections, *Darkness Echoing* and *Third Eye Obscura*, and her poems have appeared in *Literary Cleveland/The Cleveland Public Library's Neighborhood Voices Anthology*, *Prairie Margins*, *Permafrost*, *Blue Unicorn*, and *Thimble Literary Magazine*. Beyond poetry, Marcia is the author of two children's books, *Crayzee Aayzee: A Poetry Abecedarian*; and *Oomee Boomee, Space Yogi*, and in the non-fiction realm, she is the author of *The Pink Lotus Yoga Professional and Yoga Teacher Training Program Manual*. She is currently writing text for and designing 2-D art pieces inspired by a magical land she created years ago in honor of some of her favorite places in New England. An avid swimmer and a mermaid-in-training, she loves open water swimming and cold plunges. Marcia and her husband find happiness in road trips and can't wait to get their kicks on Route 66.

Summary

- She has two published poetry collections.
- Outside of writing, she loves swimming and roadtrips.



How to Follow Along

Each poem is written in response to an artwork in the gallery. The following is a list of the speaker order.

You will see:

Speaker Name

Poem title

The artwork that inspired it

A short visual description of the work.

PROGRAM

Arleigh Savage

Opening Remarks

Michelle R. Smith

Opening Remarks

Amelia Casiano

Artist Remarks

Sam Oguntinyinbo

"introduction"

After: *introduction* by Amelia Casiano



Portrait of a woman's head surrounded by flat organic shapes in pink and green and textured flowers

Michelle R. Smith

"magic"

After: *magic* by Amelia Casiano



Large abstract composition with layered lines and textures in blue, green, pink, and red.

PROGRAM

Marcia Camino

"Lines: A Haibun"

After: *Stretch* by Amelia Casiano

 Expressive blue, pink, red, and green lines surround a woman's head and fist in the lower right corner.

Kristi Copez

Artist Remarks

"fins"

After: *Ancestors (Acknowledge)* by
Kristi Copez

Michelle R. Smith

 Green ceramic bowl with a cluster of stonelike forms in the center. Radiating lines extend from the middle, surrounding the stones.

Céré Bellow

Artist Remarks

Sam Oguntinyinbo

"Story"

After: *Story* by Céré Bellow

 Heavily textured bronze and blue fields, the word "story" in black on lower right corner.

PROGRAM

Tessa Roberts

"Dreaming of springtime"

After: *Dreaming of Springtime* by
Céré Bellow



Hazy purple background with soft organic green shapes and raised white lines across composition.

Marcia Camino

"Raw Edges. Solid Cotton."

After: *Untitled* by Céré Bellow



Tapestry with raw white edges, image of leaves against purple, green, and blue background.

Megan Matko

Artist Remarks

Sam Oguntinyinbo

"i dont think we'll find a silver bullet"

After: *i don't think we'll find a silver bullet* by Meg Matko



Torso shaped white paper sculpture with red fabric strips embedded in and hanging from the surface.

PROGRAM

Tessa Roberts

"Vulture"

After: *try deep breathing (just here for the drugs)* by Meg Matko



White torso shaped sculpture with red fabric and plant material embedded in surface, handwriting along left side.

Michelle R. Smith

"sometimes..."

After: *Sometimes there's nothing at all* by Meg Matko



White torso shaped sculpture with red fabric and plant material embedded in surface, handwriting visible along left side.

Andrew Reach

Artist Remarks

Marcia Camino

"Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Sculpture"

After: *TELOFLUX* by Andrew Reach



Plastic sculpture made up of interconnected yellow, white, pink, and orange layers to form diamond shapes.

PROGRAM

Tessa Roberts

"We Revised the Sixth Day (Model Citizen)"

After: *MODEL CITIZEN* (Type 2026 05)

by Andrew Reach



Modular robot-like sculpture with eyes, nose, and mouth in red, blue, and yellow plastic on grey base.

Regina Dorfmeier

Artist Remarks

Sam Oguntinyinbo

"Macular Galactic Eye"

After: *Macular Galactic Eye* by

Regina Dorfmeier



Textured painting of bright red eye surrounded by stars and galaxies on purple background.

Michelle R. Smith

"floaters"

After: *Astral Fingerpainter* by

Regina Dorfmeier



Colorful painting of a girl in a blue dress surrounded by swirling stars and planets on a blue and purple background.

PROGRAM

Michelle R. Smith

"ego trippin'"

After: *Astral Dancer* by Regina Dorfmeier



Colorful painting of a person in a wheelchair wearing a pink dress, dancing with both arms raised, surrounded by star shapes on a pink and orange background.

Michelle R. Smith

Closing Remarks

COMING UP!

Sunday, August 9 | 2:00pm

*Brave New Voices: A Heights Poet Laureate
Community Engagement Project*

Heights Library-University Heights Branch
Hosted by Heights Poet Laureate Michelle
R. Smith, this event is an inspired space for
emerging youth, adult, and community
poets to share their original work.
Performances by Courtney L. Black,
Deborah Taddeo, and Rosie Warda followed
by an open mic for all ages.
(Free, RSVP requested)

Sunday, August 9 | 12:00pm

Cedar Fairmount Arts Festival

Stop by the Heights Arts table until
4:00pm for a family friendly craft activity!
(Free)

Friday, August 14 | 5:00pm

*Last Look: Closing Reception for
Beyond Perception and Spotlight:
Amelia Casiano*

Stop by the Heights Arts table until
4:00pm for a family friendly craft activity!
(Free, RSVP requested)

WAYS TO GET INVOLVED WITH HEIGHTS ARTS

VOLUNTEER FOR A HEIGHTS ARTS COMMUNITY TEAM

Heights Arts has a long history of inviting the community to share their passion and expertise to help the Organization develop and present its public programming. Three ongoing Volunteer Community Teams are charged with facilitating the strategies and action plans for Heights Arts core programming in the literary, musical, and visual arts disciplines. The purpose of Heights Arts' community teams is to expand community engagement in developing and presenting the programs of the organization and to tap the significant expertise that resides in our community. We invite poets, musicians, artists, and other members of the community to work with us to select and showcase the region's visual artists, poets, and musicians in our literary, musical, and exhibition programming.

To read more about our community teams and submit an application, visit us [HERE](#)

BECOME A HEIGHTS ARTS MEMBER

Now more than ever, we appreciate your consideration to give to Heights Arts by becoming a member. As a member of Heights Arts, you receive discounts, special invitations, members-only events, and perks from our community partners. Your membership is tax-deductible and you have the opportunity to say you are helping to support local artists, musicians, creative writers, and public art in the community. You'll have your finger on the pulse of all things Heights Arts.

Join us today! Membership information can be found on our website [HERE](#)

ROLLING CALL FOR POETS

If you are a poet in Northeast Ohio, we welcome your application to perform in future Heights Arts EKPHRASTACY Series. Cleveland-area writers are invited by the current Poet Laureate to view the installed artworks and respond with a poem.

[Click here to get started with your application](#)

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HEIGHTS **ARTS**

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