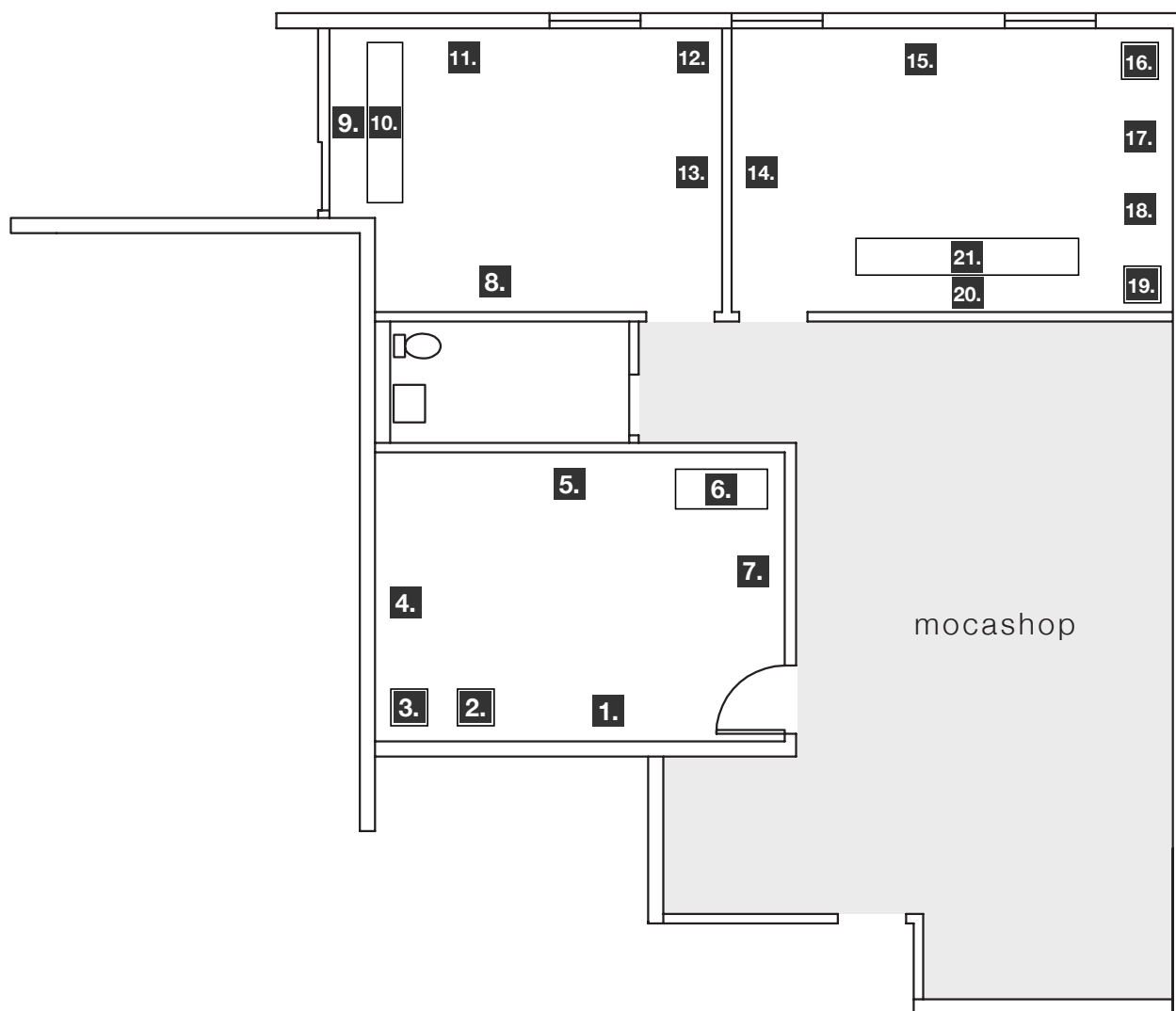


# NORTH GALLERIES

## SELECTIONS FROM THE ARTS FOR ALL ARCHIVE

*For All*



- 1. Kevin Charles Judith** (10) works on paper
- 2. Stacy Stokes** (1) ceramic
- 3. Brent Quihuis** (1), **Jon Green** (1) ceramics
- 4. Steven Scott** (1) work on paper
- 5. Brenda Lewis** (10) works on paper
- 6. Brenda Lewis** (4) ceramics (below art on wall)
- 7. Brooke Foster** (4) works on paper
- 8. Janet Morgan** (3) works on paper
- 9. Bryan Briggs, Michelle Buscemi, Antonio Childress, Thomas Stone, Anne Reber, Stephanie Lopez, Alex Marquez, Nick Waldron, Brooke Foster, Arts For All Staff** (1) collaborative painting
- 10. Left to right: Olga Michaels** (1), **Brian Mondeau** (1), **Vanessa Graves** (1), **Michelle Buscemi** (1), **Brian Mondeau** (1), **Brenda Lewis** (3) ceramics (below art on wall)
- 11. Jason Baker** (4) works on paper
- 12. Megan Froehling** (1) work on paper
- 13. Julio Cocio** (5) works on paper
- 14. Colin Whetsel** (18) works on paper
- 15. Colin Whetsel** (11) works on paper
- 16. Colin Whetsel** (2) ceramics
- 17. Stephanie Lopez** (2) works on paper
- 18. Steven Fimbres** (2) works on paper
- 19. Stacy Stokes** (1) ceramic
- 20. Alex Marquez, Nick Waldron, Stephanie Lopez, Thomas Stone, Arts For All Staff** (1) collaborative painting
- 21. Left to right: Steven Fimbres** (1), **Christian Pereida** (1), **Antonio Childress** (1), **Stacy Stokes** (1), **Brenda Lewis** (2), **Kevin Charles Judith** (1), **Jon Green** (1) ceramics (below art on wall)

The artists in **For All** are: Jason Baker (born 1965), Bryan Briggs (born 1990), Michelle Buscemi (born 1981), Antonio Childress (born 1995), Julio Cocio (born 1977), Steven Fimbres (born 1993), Megan Froehling (born 1977), Brooke Foster (born 1981), Vanessa Graves (born 1968), Jon Green (born 1978), Kevin Charles Judith (born 1979), Brenda Lewis (born 1957), Stephanie Lopez (born 1984), Alex Marquez (born 1990), Olga Michaels (born 1984), Brian Mondeau (born 1978), Janet Morgan (born 1958), Christian Pereida (born 1993), Brent Quihuis (born 1971), Anne Reber (born 1955), Steven Scott, (born 1982), Stacy Stokes (born 1969), Thomas Stone (born 1987), Nick Waldron (born 1994), Colin Whetsel (born 1984), and the Arts for All, Inc. staff. All artists live and work in Tucson.

# Curator's Essay

## **NORTH GALLERIES**

### **For All Selections from the Arts For All Archive**

**13 February – 29 May 2016**

*For All* brings together drawings, ceramics, and collaborative paintings made during the past five years, chosen from the collection of Arts for All Inc., a Tucson non-profit founded in 1979 providing quality art focus for adults with disabilities. Arts for All, Inc. furnishes extremely valuable therapeutic support and vocational training, and this exhibition emphasizes myriad resourceful and powerful drawing styles and exceptionally expressive and beautiful ceramics, in which boisterous figuration and rough materiality mix with refined aptitude. A provocation to the perversion of assigning objective values to art, *For All* is a showcase for contemporary artists whose backgrounds are undoubtedly integral though in the end wholly irrelevant to their distinctive output.

That said, it would be disingenuous to avoid being forthright. This work is produced by people with disabilities, covering the full spectrum of what that term entails. Inseparable from the artists' biographies, it is part of who they are, but on the other hand, and crucially, not who they are entirely. There is "difference," but isn't that true of everyone? It's a matter of degrees and acceptance of a full scope of differentiation. Ironically the widely held view of "difference" being basic to art making is established and often extravagantly romanticized, but dissimilarity beyond entrenched societal standards tends to make the public uncomfortable. That is unfair, at the very least, seeing as this contrast is often a major factor in art's ineffable, intangible magic, that it is strange, alien, and surprising while concurrently universal in its appeal. That's the splendor of creative communication, from one person of difference to another, in an arena that offers alternatives to the dispiriting confines of what is "normal." Because of this art is great, unusual, evocative, inspirational, intriguing, and a thousand other adjectives.

The effusions of the not seen, the rejected, shunned, and ignored are repeatedly applauded at arm's-length, or even more vexingly, only after the subject of that veneration has conveniently died. There is talent here, for lack of a better word, in spades, making a reckoning in the now critical. This survey mines the gray zone between outsider genius and insider professionalism and it must be stated that these are not "outsiders" or "naïve" in the sense championed by Jean Dubuffet with his definition of Art Brut as the province of the untrained and isolated, or Hans Prinzhorn's collection of the art of the mentally ill, to cite two well known historical conceptions. The twenty-five people comprising this selection are certainly not immune to external influences, cultural and otherwise, and benefit from working with other artists, i.e. the center's staff. Following a long tradition of adventurous and discerning mavens appreciating what doesn't come from the usual channels, rigid categorization has lessened, and the so-called "art world" has slowly been coming around. Germane examples, which *For All* is only one part of a continuum, include "The Encyclopedic Palace" at the 2013 Venice Biennale, as well the interest in Oakland's Creative Growth, Chicago's Project Onwards, and other such programs, including, of course, Arts for All, Inc.

Do those with disabilities deserve special treatment? The sheltering impulse, with its good intentions, does a disservice to the artist and to some extent abnegates their humanity. The trickiness of attention to this art is a road to life, to its vagaries, to the real world, to being different but the same as everyone else. What matters is that seen through a multiplicity of formal and conceptual criteria, the best work here is absolutely no different from the best anywhere, and a bracing antidote to the over-determined and opportunistically contrived. If more space were available a detailed examination and celebration of all twenty-five artists, of their styles in clay, pen, ink, and paint on paper would be possible. Rhapsodizing would be appropriate. In lieu of that, one can only implore visitors to take it all in, the variety, the skill, flair, the psychological acuity, the aesthetic panache, enjoy it, and hope that an ancillary outcome is a changing, or at least challenging of, ingrained perceptions regarding these artworks' creators and their achievements.