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‘Reflections: Portraits and Self-Portraits from NIAD Art Center’ opens Sept. 5 at SSU Art Gallery

ROHNERT PARK, Calif. – The University Art Gallery at Sonoma State University will open the school year with “Reflections: Portraits and Self-Portraits from NIAD Art Center,” on view from Sept. 5 to Oct. 20, 2024.

Since 1982, [NIAD](#) has worked with artists with intellectual and developmental disabilities, their families, and care providers in Richmond and in Contra Costa and Alameda counties to amplify inclusion in the contemporary art world.

“This is the first time we have partnered with NIAD to feature their artists, and we are honored to have this opportunity to highlight the remarkable and ground-breaking work of this organization and its artists,” said Claudia Molloy, University Art Gallery Director of Operations.

“Reflections” is curated by NIAD’s Executive Director, Amanda Eicher, and NIAD board member Jay Youngdahl. Each piece of NIAD art tells an individual story from the perspective of an artist with disabilities, Eicher said.

“These stories include decades-long contemporary art practices – works shown in exhibitions from museums and galleries in the Bay Area to major institutions nationwide and internationally, and life experiences that include some of the defining moments in disability history,” she said. “The work of NIAD’s artists truly redefines contemporary art by centering disability voices and engaging curators like Jay and myself to present these stories in new ways.”

Artist Felicia Griffin is now in her 39th year at NIAD, and her painting, “The Moon” exemplifies a motif she has woven into her practice throughout her tenure at NIAD. “The circle is inside of me, a square, too. I see it in the world, too,” Griffin said.

Julio Del Rio began making art at NIAD at the age of 19, encouraged by his neighbor, close friend, and fellow NIAD artist Luis Estrada. Estrada is a wrestling fan who frequently draws and sculpts his favorite wrestlers, John Cena and Nicky Bella. Del Rio’s subject matter tends more towards abstraction, pre-Columbian sculptures, and the natural world. He said that what he enjoys most about NIAD is the earthy smell of clay in the ceramics studio.

The exhibition opens Thursday, Sept. 5, with a reception in the University Gallery from 4 to 6 p.m. An Artist/Curator Talk will be from 4 to 5 p.m. Thursday, October 3. Both events and the exhibition are free and open to the public.

The University Art Gallery is on the SSU campus at 1801 East Cotati Avenue, Rohnert Park, and is open from noon to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday.