

**vanessa
german**

**Breathe from
the Diaphragm:
our eyes are in
our lungs.**

September 2 - November 1, 2025



Breathe from the Diaphragm: our eyes are in our lungs offers respite from the volatility and injustice of today's world with work that focuses on selflessness, love, and the alignment of heart and mind. Pulling from precolonial and African diasporic traditions, particularly those of her ancestral Kongolese lineage in Central Africa, german's anthropomorphic sculptures employ mineral crystals, beads, glass, and many found objects that allude to the symbolism of *Nkisi N'kondi*, or Power Figures, which are believed to be spiritually charged figures used for healing, protection, and justice. The blue accents in the exhibition complement the healing energies of the work with its chromatic link to water.

As the artist reflects: *"There is something magnificent and perfect about water. We can access what's within us to heal from the physical, spiritual, and intellectual harm of an unjust world."* Blue becomes a symbol not only of life but of the boundless inner reservoirs of resilience and restoration. Echoed in the title for this exhibition is the practice of deep diaphragmatic breathing, a meditative act and metaphor for grounding and release. This physical focus mirrors the broader spiritual journey the work invites: a return to the self, to ancestral wisdom, and to a holistic sense of being. *Breathe from the Diaphragm* becomes a space of quiet resistance and a site where art, spirit, and breath unite.



Photo credit: Charlie Rubin

vanessa german is a citizen artist working in sculpture, performance, and communal ritual to cultivate spiritual models for transforming human experience. Her sculptures are as much defined by their tangible elements as their transcendental properties, a combination which the artist describes as the ingredients of her work. Since the early 2010s, she has assembled ritualistic structures known as power figures using glass, beads, gemstones, nails, wood, and other objects. Whether mineral crystals originating in the earth millennia ago, or cobalt blue bottles resembling those used in bottle tree traditions for generations, every object chosen by german channels frequencies that span its entire existence. Guided by her own creativity, imagination, and curiosity, german follows her intuition about the capacity for objects to tell stories, creating sculptures that resonate deeply with those who encounter them.

After many years running a community studio, garden, outdoor theater, and artist residency called ARHouse in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, german (born 1976) now lives in Asheville, North Carolina. She has received numerous honors, including the Joyce Foundation Fellowship, Heinz Award for the Arts, Don Tyson Prize from the Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Jacob Lawrence Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters and the Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation Grant. Her solo and two-person exhibitions include at the NSU Art Museum, Logan Center for the Arts at the University of Chicago, Mulvane Art Museum, Mt. Holyoke College Art Museum, The Frick Pittsburgh, Fralin Museum of Art at the University of Virginia, Flint Institute of Arts, Figge Art Museum, among many other. Her work is in the collections of the Ackland Art Museum, Akron Art Museum, Carnegie Museum of Art, Crocker Art Museum, Denver Art Museum, Everson Museum of Art, Figge Art Museum, Flint Institute of Arts, High Museum of Art, Atlanta, Montclair Art Museum, Chicago Museum of Contemporary Art, Nelson-Atkins Museum of Contemporary Art, Pérez Art Museum Miami, Speed Art Museum, Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, and Wichita Art Museum among others. She has been represented by Kasmin Gallery since 2021.

EXHIBITION CHECKLIST

1. *Mama's Boy, 2024*

Standing in the doorway watching her get dressed, the scent of her freshly bathed brown skin, love, heat, tenderness, desire, rose quartz, a healing frequency in the shape of a steel drum, the steel drum, found polyester quilt, beaded glass trim, wood, a heart stone, plaster, plaster gauze, just wanting to go at it soft in the world, gold swan planter. 70 x 28 x 34 inches

2. *WE HONOR THE CYCLE OF CYCLE, 2022*

Mixed media assemblage
27 x 21 x 13.5 inches

3. *GRACE, 2022*

Mixed media assemblage
24 x 18 x 13.75 inches

4. *FREEDOM IN THE SOUL, 2022*

Mixed media assemblage
30.5 x 21.5 x 13 inches

5. *Can I Love You Without Capitalism? How?, 2019*

Mixed-media assemblage
59 x 67.5 x 26 inches

6. *CLASSIC, or, ACIM lesson #9: I see nothing as it is now., 2025*

She is a blues in drip and light. She is giving obviousness. She is: wood, plaster, plaster gauze, a pause, a hinterland adventure into her own wilderness, she is giving perspective and consternation as medicine. She is giving old car text ornament; labor and grease, engine and exhaust. She is giving combustion and relief. She is given rhinestone and chain. She is giving gold-filled. She is given precious little dainty ceramic baby and monkey band dupe. She is giving fragility. She is giving the miseries of luxury at doll scale. She is grounded in her sacral chakra. She has no need to spaceship to mars. She bites and offers prescriptive accountability in the divine nature of mutuality as a threshold of understanding. She is lapis, glass beaded trim and sodalite, she is sapphire and aragonite. She is spray paint and intentional damage to the aesthetic narrative of perfection as luminous existence, titanium coated quartz, doll parts, the blues and the drip of it, the tension of greed and how not even greed can stave off death, might as well fly. 37.5 x 11.5 x 11 inches

7. *Grief Monster Realness/trying to keep up, or, ACIM Lesson 25: I do not know what anything is for., 2025*

Not-gold things & the weight of it all, the extraction and mining of _____, and then there is the dance of the heart, grace, precious porcelain things, how it feels to be alive, the experience of being alive, the aliveness of knowing that you are alive and that you will not be so forever, wood, plaster, plaster gauze, watches that make it look like you keep time while you are being kept by time, the hero's journey, a song that makes your heart beat fast enough to make it feel like nothing can touch you, spray paint, love, the circle.

36.5 x 20.5 x 14 inches

1.



2.



3.



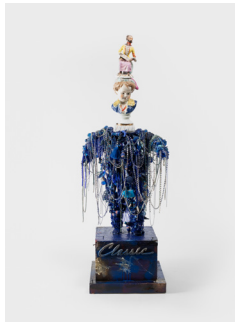
4.



5.



6.



7.



Artworks and images courtesy of the Artist and Kasmin, New York

8. *Patriot Blue Spray Paint and the Siddhi of Power through Loneliness and Grief, or, ACIM lesson #13: A meaningless world engenders fear., 2025*

She is wood, wire, hair grease, an easy weight loss alternative to sweat. She is holy and divine. She is beaded blue glass trim in 4 different colors and lengths. She complicates the narrative of human trafficking in the historical appreciation of the confederate flag and the idea of going backwards as going forward. she is wire and black plaster figurine sitting on toilet scribed with the text: BILLY CAN'T. She is patriot blue spraypaint, beads, buttons, rhinestone trims, and the appearance of aged surface inside the ideas of going backwards as going forward. She shines and the light is a way forward.
36 x 22 x 14 inches

9. *Marshmallows, or, ACIM lesson # 27: above all else I want to see, 2025*

White things; cups, beads, rhinestones, clear quartz, doll parts, wood, plaster, plaster gauze, wire, twine, porcelain figurines, the falling, the bouncing, the weight of it all offering you release into your own wilderness, how the dive bar in M's basement is a secret hideout, laughing, resurrection, dancing instead of _____, non-compliance as self-expression, clear quartz points, hope as a matter of creativity, jewelry bits, silver plated chain, beaded glass trim, coming undone, being whole the whole time and somehow being convinced against this, the truth is always the truth.
36.5 x 21.5 x 14.5 inches

10. *THE HERO, 2022*

Found chair from the Grove Park Inn, wood, black pigment, metallic paint, love, heat, the ingenuity that houselessness demands, mirror box, foam, wire, plaster, plaster gauze, astroturf, quilts, blankets, blankets, blankets, blankets, blankets, blankets, quilts, quilts, quilts, blankets, blankets, blankets, pillows, pillows, pillows, pillows, pillows, blankets, blankets, blankets, pillows, pillows, pillows, the gold is the soul is the gold is the soul.
73 x 49 x 46.75 inches

11. *JUICY, 2024*

Plaster, styrofoam, gauze, wood, wood glue, jade, glass beads as gold grill, adornment as signifier, rose quartz as eternal love and consummate forgiveness, folk art bottle cap chain, a dream dreaming itself long after the dreamer has dreamt it. A miracle.
22 x 12 x 16 inches

12. *sorrow monster: the heart is open and the eyes leak, 2024*

Rose quartz, we are nature, jade, being is knowledge, pyrite, wood, plaster, wood glue, gauze, for how looking at the world sometimes calls on all the love in the universe
21.75 x 12 x 10.5 inches

13. *HEART OVERHEAD, 2024*

Wood, plaster, plaster gauze, a living return to the presence of the human heart in everyday movement, sorrow, grief, open joy, the meanness of feeling alone and not being alone, the meanness of feeling powerless in the face of great and gleeful destruction, teaching model of anatomical human heart, rose quartz as the loving power of the universe that has so thoughtfully formed the cells of our bodies and the natural reality to which we claim, for but a short time, home. Love, emotion, magic, a miracle.
39 x 21 x 16 inches

8.



9.



10.



11.



12.



13.



ROWAN UNIVERSITY ART GALLERY & MUSEUM

Rowan University Art Gallery & Museum serves as a vibrant cultural destination for South Jersey, the Rowan community, and surrounding region. We are committed to cultivating an inclusive, accessible, and just environment that encourages dialogue and collaboration between exhibiting artists, students, faculty, and the general public through the presentation of interdisciplinary art exhibitions, artist talks and other public programming. Our mission is to present diverse forms of contemporary art by professional artists with content that is thought provoking, relevant, and timely. With our exhibitions and programming, we seek to engender curiosity and a passion for contemporary art, enrich the quality of life for area residents, and create a welcoming and inclusive cultural destination at Rowan University.

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Information
rowan.edu/artgallery
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Gallery Hours
Mon-Fri, 10:00 - 5:00 PM
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