

MEDIA RELEASE  
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**Art AIDS America Closing Celebration and Conversations about Inclusion**

**(Tacoma, WA) –** On Sunday, January 10, [Tacoma Art Museum](http://www.tacomaartmuseum.org/exhibit/northwest-cowboys-art/details/) will host [*It’s a Wrap!*](http://www.tacomaartmuseum.org/event/wrap-art-aids-america-free-closing-party/)*,* a closing celebration for the exhibition [*Art AIDS America*,](http://www.tacomaartmuseum.org/exhibit/aaa/) with free admission and art-making from 10 am to 5 pm and performances from 12 to 4 pm. Artists from the collective [*Gran Fury*](http://www.queerculturalcenter.org/Pages/GranFury/GFGllry.html)will present a talk at 3 pm, a ticketed event (expected to sell out, advance tickets recommended via the events calendar on TAM’s website or <http://granfury.bpt.me/>).

The closing celebration comes during a time of ongoing conversations between TAM, [Tacoma Action Collective](https://www.facebook.com/TacomaActionCollective/) (TAC), and other local organizations regarding diversity and inclusion in *Art AIDS America* and among the museum’s staff, board, and committees. TAM spoke at the [Black Collective](http://www.thenewstribune.com/news/local/news-columns-blogs/matt-driscoll/article53024840.html?sp-tk=5F4DED107C086F3BFD059FC8F15B0F4229DF84FBFAF6C0CE9B540DB9EF290BE3521D468D9905BE5FB3237DACF376345E9E709F834FC9181A7A8BD41CDD930867FDF284BE76B8D9FF8161C552716) on December 19, and artist/activist Chris Jordan joined the dialogue, providing an opportunity to talk about the December 17 peaceful protest by TAC at the museum. On December 30, TAM’s senior staff, executive director, and board president met with three members of TAC and Jordan for a conversation that achieved agreement on actions that TAM and TAC will undertake together to address the number of Black artists represented in the exhibition *Art AIDS America* and the broader challenges of inclusion in museums.

“Our meeting was an opportunity for all to be heard and better understood. We are grateful to TAC for their insight and sharing their personal experiences of bias and racism. TAM has already begun conversations with our partners for the exhibition’s tour about the concerns raised by TAC and Jordan. We are proud of what *Art AIDS America* has accomplished, and we support further inclusion of Black artists in programming and in the exhibition for the national tour,” says Stephanie Stebich, Executive Director of Tacoma Art Museum.

Rock Hushka, Chief Curator at TAM and co-curator of *Art AIDS America* adds, “One of the intentions of the exhibition is to honor loss, and we hope that our actions going forward can convey our empathy toward all lives lost to HIV/AIDS. This is a challenging exhibition in many ways; it emphasizes that HIV/AIDS is still with us and has forever changed the arc of American art-making. It is an exhibition with impactful works by artists whose backgrounds and life experiences vary widely. We recognize that the exhibition does not wholly reflect the extent of the impact of HIV/AIDS in all communities, particularly among Black Americans. We will continue to join in and learn from the conversations that this exhibition sparks.”

TAC has offered to be a resource for TAM to better engage the Black community in the life of the museum, and to help TAM in developing its advisory board for the exhibition *30 Americans,* a traveling exhibition that features contemporary Black artists, opening at TAM in September 2016. TAC is considering facilitating a panel discussion at TAM during *It’s a Wrap!* on Sunday.

Highlights of [*It’s a Wrap!*](http://www.tacomaartmuseum.org/event/wrap-art-aids-america-free-closing-party/) include:

* 12 – 4 pm:
  + *Booths and Art Making* with [Rainbow Center](http://www.rainbowcntr.org/), [Oasis Youth Center](http://www.oasisyouthcenter.org/), and [Pierce County AIDS Foundation](http://www.piercecountyaids.org/) (PCAF).
  + *Art and Activism Activity* in the TAM Studio, inspired by Gran Fury’s iconic work *Silence = Death.*
  + *Struggle + Strength* community art show in Cheney Classroom, organized by Tacoma Art Walk and featuring local artists’ responses to *Art AIDS America.*
  + [*Cornish College of the Arts’ Condom Packaging Project*](http://www.thedieline.com/blog/2013/4/15/student-spotlight-cornish-college-of-the-arts-condom-packagi.html) on display; a student project to update condom packaging based on current design trends.
  + *Make Your Own Accessories* inspired by [The Condom Project,](http://www.thecondomproject.org/homepage.html) whose goal it is to de-stigmatize condom usage.
* 1 – 1:30 pm:
  + *Getting to Zero* video and talk presented by Lea Mann of [Lelavision](http://www.lelavision.com/). The *Getting to Zero* project addresses the spike in HIV infections in youth and the disproportionate number of cases among African Americans. Lelavision is a Seattle-based touring company that has coined and perfected its own genre of performance, Physical Music. Their original performances cross the boundaries of race, education, language, religion, economic background, gender, and age.
  + *Spoken word* by [Charhys Bailey](https://www.linkedin.com/in/charhysbailey). Bailey is a Black, queer and gender non-conforming writer, filmmaker, and teaching artist from Tacoma who has worked with culturally and economically marginalized youth from diverse backgrounds for 13 years.
  + Safe Together, an **original composition by** [Jason Staczek](http://staczek.net/) **for *Getting to Zero*, performed by**[Shaunyce Omar Sims](http://seattleunity.org/event/guest-music-shaunyce-omar-sims/) and Friends. Seattle native Shaunyce’s performing career spans over 26 years. She holds a B.A degree in Theatre Arts from Southern University, is currently performing in the mystery shows aboard The Royal Argosy Boat cruises in Seattle, and sings jazz and soul around Washington State.
* 1:30 pm: Allergic to You performed by dancer Joel Meyers with choreographer [Kate Monthy](https://www.facebook.com/kate.monthy/about) and music by [Portland Cello Project](https://portlandcelloproject.com/). The performance was accepted into [Struggle + Strength](http://www.tacomaartmuseum.org/event/struggle-strength-opening-party/), a community show that asked local artists to create art in response to Art AIDS America, on view in TAM’s Cheney classroom.
* 2 pm: *Condom Couture Fashion Show and Competition*, emceed by Mulan Rouge, former empress of the Imperial Sovereign Court of Tacoma. Each team was given 1,000 condoms to create garments.
* 3 pm: *Artist Talk with Gran Fury* (ticketed, $5 member/student, $10 non-member).

Stebich believes the inclusion work TAM is undertaking can have a national impact. She is on the board of the American Alliance of Museums and a member of the American Association of Museum Directors, both national organizations that are working toward greater inclusion and diversity. In its December 30 press release, TAC shared, “We are very grateful for the time and effort that the Tacoma Art Museum has dedicated to our community, and we are proud that they are setting an example for museums nation-wide.”

The museum will redouble its ongoing efforts toward inclusion, which has been a focus in TAM’s work since Stebich came on board 11 years ago. TAM’s Deputy Director Teresa Macaluso prioritized an organizational development initiative that will continue for the next two years. The resulting plan will thoughtfully and thoroughly addresses diversity, equity, inclusion, and institutional culture. TAM will continue to engage with TAC, community leaders, and advocates in this endeavor.

TAM efforts toward inclusion and increased access include ensuring that exhibitions represent multiple ethnicities, viewpoints, and marginalized groups; establishing arts education programming in underrepresented communities; partnering with diverse local organizations to develop events and programs; and offering free museum access. In 2015, 49% of all visitors attended free of charge through Free Third Thursday, Art Access passes distributed through Pierce County libraries, bimonthly Free Community Festivals, Blue Star Museums for military communities, and other corporate supported free access programs such as Bank of America’s Museums On Us.

For more information about the *It’s a Wrap!* free closing celebration on Sunday, January 10, see [www.TacomaArtMuseum/events](http://www.TacomaArtMuseum/events).

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**About Tacoma Art Museum**Celebrating 80 years,Tacoma Art Museum has become an anchor in the city’s downtown and a gathering space for connecting people through art. TAM’s collection contains more than 4,500 works, with an emphasis on the art and artists of the Northwest and broader western region. The collection includes the world’s largest retrospective museum collection of glass art by Tacoma native Dale Chihuly on continued view; the world’s largest collection of jewelry by Northwest artists; key holdings in 19th century European and 20th century American art; and one of the finest collections of Japanese woodblock prints on the West Coast. TAM recently welcomed a promised gift of 295 works of western American art in the Haub Family Collection, one of the premier collections in the nation and the first major museum collection of western American art in the Northwest.

**HOURS** – Tuesdays–Sundays 10 am–5 pm. **Free Third Thursday 5 pm-8 pm.**   
**ADMISSION** – Adult $14; Student age 6-17, Military, Senior (65+) $12; Family $35 (2 adults and up to 4 children under 18).   
Children 5 and under free. Members always free.  
**CONTACT** – 253-272-4258, <http://www.TacomaArtMuseum.org>