

---

# OPEN CALL: PORTALS

---

## A Student Guide to Art & Storytelling

---

***Welcome to Open Call: Portals!***

This exhibition features 12 emerging NYC-based artists exploring powerful themes like migration, spirituality, memory, mythology, and personal and collective history. Each artist opens a “portal” through their work, inviting us to think about the past, imagine new futures, and connect with experiences beyond our own. Use this guide to look closely, ask big questions, and consider how you might tell your own story through art.

**What stories do we carry?**

**How do we honor where we come from?**

**What does change look like—for us, our families, and our communities?**

---

### What You'll Explore

---

- How artists use art to spark change
  - How to find meaning and intention in artwork
  - How to reflect your own story through art
  - How to imagine new futures
-

---

## **Zain Alam, *Meter & Light: Night***

---

A video and sound artwork that explores memory, prayer, and family stories using images, music, and poetry

Zain Alam is a musician and artist who combines stories from his family with old poems and spiritual music. His work is inspired by Islamic traditions and memories passed down through time. This piece loops over and over, like a song or a prayer, to help us think about who we are and where we come from.

### **Look Closer**

- What kinds of images, words, or sounds stand out to you?
- How does the repetition affect the way you experience the piece?
- What stories might be hidden in a family archive?

### **Think About It**

Imagine you're creating a memory archive for your own family. What would you include? A sound? A photograph? A specific story?

---

## **AYDO, *Border Ecologies***

---

A video and ceramic installation that investigates the beauty of the natural world and the ways that we create and uphold borders on these lands

AYDO is an artist who uses materials from nature and everyday life to make art that feels like a ritual or a story from long ago. They build sculptures and performances that connect to their ancestors and ask us to think about history, healing, and who gets remembered.

### **Look Closer**

- What do you notice about the materials used?
- How do ritual and sculpture come together in this work?
- Why might an artist want to mix the spiritual with the everyday?

---

## Think About It

What borders are you aware of in New York City – between neighborhoods, boroughs, or blocks? How can you tell where one place ends and another begins?

---

## Mel Corchado, *\$TICKY \$IN\$*

---

A collection of clothing made out of sugar that explores how sugar's history connects to identity, fashion, and how land and people have been treated unfairly.

Mel Corchado is a fashion designer and artist from Brooklyn with Puerto Rican roots. She uses fashion to question unfair systems and imagine better ones. Her work includes reusing clothes, doing deep research, and working with others to make fashion that teaches and brings people together.

## Look Closer

- What materials and textures do you notice in the artist's sugar clothes?
- How does the artist use clothing to tell a story from history?
- What feelings or ideas do the clothes remind you of?

## Think About It

If you could design clothes to share something about your culture or community, what would they look like? What would you make them out of?

---

## Marwa Eltahir, *99 Names: My Liberation Is Tied to Yours*

---

An artwork with sounds and images that explores ritual, connection, and memories from Afro-Arab communities.

Marwa Eltahir is a Sudanese artist who started a creative space for trans and queer African artists. She works with writing, pictures, and performances to share memories and stories from the past and present. Her art often asks: What is important for us to remember?

---

---

## Look Closer

- What colors and sounds do you notice?
- How does the art show feelings like sadness and connection?
- What shapes or images feel important?

## Think About It

What rituals are a part of your life? What do you do every day, week, month, or year, and why?

---

## Patricia Encarnación, *Tropical Limerence*

---

An installation of video, performance, and ceramics that looks at love, power, and how people from different parts of the world are treated

Patricia Encarnación is an artist from the Dominican Republic. She uses art to explore who she is, her culture, and how the past affects today. Her work shows the beauty of the Caribbean and asks big questions about how people are seen and treated.

## Look Closer

- What do the colors and shapes make you feel?
- How do the videos or clay pieces help tell the story?
- How are people or places shown in the artwork?

## Think About It

What cultures (other than your own) are you drawn to, and why? What are the first images or impressions you remember seeing or learning about those cultures?

---

## Laurena Finéus, *Together, we could have made Mountains / Ansanm nou ka fè Mòn*

---

A group of painted and sewn artworks that tell stories from Haitian immigrants in Brooklyn about dreams, sacrifices, and healing.

---

---

Laurena Finéus is a Haitian-Canadian artist who paints and sews to show the journeys of Black folks. Her art is full of symbols and stories, helping people imagine a better future and remember where they come from.

### **Look Closer**

- What do you notice in the paintings and fabrics?
- How do the colors and textures evoke feelings or memories?
- What stories or communities are being shared?

### **Think About It**

If you wanted to start a new community, where would you go and what would you carry with you?

---

### **Lily Honglei, *KITES: A Poem by an Immigrant***

---

A series of paintings inspired by Chinese kites that tell stories of moving to a new country and starting a new life.

Lily Honglei is a team of artists from China who now live in Queens, NYC. Their work connects Chinese traditions with everyday life as immigrants in America. Their paintings use symbols and gentle colors to tell personal and community stories.

### **Look Closer**

- What do you see in the shapes, patterns, or movement of the kites?
- How does the artwork mix old traditions with new experiences?
- What do the pictures say about life in an immigrant family?

### **Think About It**

If you painted pictures that told the story of your neighborhood, what symbols or images would you use? Who would you include?

---

## **Tyson Houseman, *The Six Seasons***

---

A performance and video with music and singing in the Plains Cree language, sharing Indigenous teachings and relationships with nature.

Tyson Houseman is an artist from the Plains Cree Nation. He creates videos, puppets, and sound pieces that connect to land, ancestors, and time. His art feels like a ceremony and invites people to listen and learn.

### **Look Closer**

- What sounds and rhythms do you hear?
- How do the images and music work together?
- What words would you use to describe the video, music, and materials?

### **Think About It**

What is it like to listen to a language that you don't understand? Does the music give you any clues to what the meaning might be?

---

## **Jarrett Key, *Hair Painting No. 40 (in three parts)***

---

A performance where the artist paints using their hair to honor their grandmother and family history.

Jarrett Key is an artist from Alabama who now lives in Brooklyn. They use their own body in art to explore family, memory, and identity. Their paintings and performances celebrate where they come from and the people who raised them.

### **Look Closer**

- What do you notice about the way the painting was made?
- What does using hair as a paintbrush add to the artwork?
- What memories or feelings do you think this work carries?

---

### Think About It

If you made art honoring someone in your family, who would you honor and what would you make?

---

### Chelsea Odufu, *Gold with a Mind of Its Own*

---

A video artwork that uses dance to tell the story of how the gold trade affected people in Côte d'Ivoire, Africa.

Chelsea Odufu is an artist who mixes art and activism. She uses dance, movement, and stories to help people feel the impact of history and injustice. Her work shines light on hidden stories and brings emotions to the surface.

### Look Closer

- How would you describe the movement that you see in the video?
- How does dance help tell the story?
- What parts of history does the artwork help you learn about?

### Think About It

If you could tell a whole story using only movement, where would you begin? With a gesture? A rhythm?

---

### Victor “Marka27” Quiñonez, *Elevar La Cultura NYC*

---

A large sculpture shaped like a Mayan pyramid, made from coolers, fabrics, and sacred items, celebrating immigrant street vendors.

Marka27 is an artist who mixes street art with ancient traditions. He makes powerful art using everyday things to show the strength and beauty of immigrant communities. His work helps people see how important and spiritual daily life can be.

---

---

### Look Closer

- What materials in the sculpture surprise you?
- How does this piece celebrate culture and people?
- What does the shape or structure remind you of?

### Think About It

If you made a monument built out of objects that represented your home or community, what objects would you choose and why?

---

### Yelaine Rodriguez and Luis Vasquez La Roche, *Residence Time / The Sea Is History*

---

A sculpture that looks like an ancient ruin, reimagining a historic site in Ghana to reflect on memory and identity.

Yelaine Rodriguez and Luis Vasquez La Roche are artists who work together to explore Black identity and history. Their art honors ancestors and reclaims painful stories by turning them into powerful, meaningful spaces.

### Look Closer

- What parts of the sculpture feel old or spiritual?
- How do texture, shape, and space make you feel something?
- What emotions does this “ruin” give you? What do you think the artists want you to feel?

### Think About It

What does the image of a door or portal make you think of? What could it represent?