

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact: Blake Wood, 217-206-8404

UIS Visual Arts Gallery partners with the Kidzeum to present “Bit by Bit: An Exhibition on Healing”

SPRINGFIELD – The University of Illinois Springfield Visual Arts Gallery is partnering with the Kidzeum of Health and Science, 412 E. Adams St., Springfield, to present “Bit by Bit,” an exhibition exploring the concept of healing through contemporary art. The exhibition will run from March 28 to May 11. Admission to the exhibition is included with Kidzeum entry.

Curated by the UIS Visual Arts Gallery, the exhibition at the Kidzeum features professional artists working in fiber, handmade paper, animation, sculpture, painting and installation to examine healing in its many forms—physical, emotional and social. A free public reception will open the exhibition from 5:30 to 8 p.m. on March 28.

Healing is a journey, one that happens “Bit by Bit.” This exhibition invites visitors to consider how we mend, recover and find resilience, both as individuals and as a community. The exhibit is thoughtfully designed for children and families, but its themes of recovery, care and renewal resonate equally with an adult audience. “Bit by Bit” is made possible through a community grant from The Community Foundation for the Land of Lincoln.

Art, healing and community

Art has long been recognized as a powerful tool for healing, from aiding personal recovery to helping communities process collective trauma. “Bit by Bit” acknowledges the deep need for healing in our communities, whether from personal struggles, health issues or injury, the lasting impact of the pandemic or the traumas that have shaped Springfield’s history.

Healing is not just an individual process; it is scientific, emotional and social. The Kidzeum, with its mission to nurture health and wellness, promote science education and foster environmental and global awareness, provides the perfect setting for an exhibition that engages

young minds with these themes. The exhibition will serve as a backdrop for Kidzeum’s STEAM programs, which integrate science, technology, engineering, art and mathematics, reinforcing how healing is studied, understood and practiced across disciplines. The UIS Visual Arts Gallery, which has a long history of facilitating contemporary art exhibitions that engage the community, is leading this collaborative effort to bridge art and science in an engaging, accessible way.

“Healing is complex and deeply personal, but it also happens in dialogue with those around us,” said Allison Lacher, director of the UIS Visual Arts Gallery. “Contemporary art is inherently interdisciplinary. It intersects with science, psychology, history and so many other fields. This exhibition considers what it means to process, reflect and move forward, while also encouraging visitors to see healing as something that can be explored through creativity and discovery.”

Exploring healing through contemporary art

The exhibition features a selection of works by artists whose practices engage directly with healing or explore themes that resonate with the process of recovery and resilience. Among the works on view:

Chicago-based artist Rita Grendze presents “Collective Comfort,” a fiber-based installation inviting direct interaction. Viewers are encouraged to touch, even hug, the cascading forms. This work emerged from Grendze’s reflections on distance, isolation and the need for comfort. She also presents “Seeds for Dreams,” a collection of pillow-like forms infused with lavender, a natural element known for its calming properties.

Tanya Gill, also based in Chicago, explores mending through “Broken Yet Whole,” a series of works incorporating darning, painting and reassembled objects. A stroke survivor, Gill’s own experience with physical trauma and neurological recovery informs her work, demonstrating that healing is an ongoing, nonlinear process. Through fractured yet repaired forms, her pieces visualize resilience and the beauty in imperfection.

Minneapolis-based artist Beth Barron presents works from her “Implosions” series, in which she transforms discarded adhesive bandages into intricate, meditative mandalas. Each used bandage represents a wound and, simultaneously, the process of healing. The unexpected beauty in these compositions reflects the physical and emotional layers of recovery. Mandalas, traditionally used for meditation, symbolize wholeness and transformation, further reinforcing themes of healing and renewal.

Exhibiting artists also include Betsy Dollar (Springfield), Janie Stamm (St. Louis), Selina Trepp (Chicago), Grant Benoit (St. Louis), Amanda Grieve (Edinburg), Shane Harris (Springfield), and artist seating by the UIS Art Students League.

A space for reflection and engagement

Located in Kidzeum’s newly renovated spaces, “Bit by Bit” will engage visitors through installations and interactive works that encourage reflection and participation. The two newly renovated spaces, made possible through an Illinois Department of Natural Resources Museum Capital Grant with the support of the City of Springfield, will become part of Kidzeum’s Center for STEAM education. The exhibition will serve as a catalyst for Kidzeum’s educational programs, creating opportunities for hands-on learning that connects science and art.

The exhibition’s themes align with contemporary conversations about mental health, self-care, community resilience and the importance of creative outlets in healing. While art cannot act as a substitute for medical care, its role in well-being and emotional processing is undeniable. Studies show that experiencing and creating art can reduce stress, improve mood and foster a sense of connection, all of which contribute to healing.

Why now? The importance of healing in our time

Healing is both timely and timeless. In the wake of personal, social and global challenges, now is the time to consider healing, teach healing and practice wellness. The exhibition invites visitors of all ages to think about healing as something we experience in mind, body and community.

Through themes of repair, endurance, transformation and resilience, “Bit by Bit” offers a space to reflect on where we’ve been, where we are and how we move forward, one step, one moment, one piece at a time. Whether through interactive installations or meditative compositions, “Bit by Bit” encourages visitors to consider healing in all its forms. We invite you to engage, reflect and explore how art can provide comfort, inspire resilience and foster connections--bit by bit.

“We’re so thrilled to partner with Allison on this exhibition,” said Leah Wilson, director of Kidzeum of Health and Science. “It’s a wonderful way to fully debut our beautifully renovated spaces to the public and provide an experience that is a little different from what you’d expect at a children’s museum.”

More information

For more information, visit [Kidzeum’s website](#) or the [UIS Visual Arts Gallery website](#). Follow us on social media for exhibition updates, artist features and special event announcements.

About the UIS Visual Arts Gallery

The UIS Visual Arts Gallery provides access to contemporary art, fostering a greater understanding of current artistic trends while supporting the vision and message of its exhibiting artists. Through exhibitions and programs, the gallery connects the Springfield community with works that engage social, cultural and interdisciplinary topics.

About the Kidzeum of Health and Science

Kidzeum is dedicated to promoting health, science education and environmental awareness through play-based learning. Designed for children and families, Kidzeum provides interactive experiences that foster curiosity and discovery, encouraging the next generation of scientists, artists and thinkers.

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