

The Ion Launches New Art Display Supporting Houston Artists

The rotating window displays celebrate the building's history and mission to draw in community

HOUSTON - March 31, 2022 - [The Ion](#), Houston's innovation hub, has finalized its first window displays created by prominent local artists [Preston Gaines](#) and [Lina Dib](#). The installations, commissioned by The Ion and [Ion District](#), are now available for the public to view for free for the next six months as part of the Ion District's ongoing art rotation program. The art displays are a visual expression of the intersection of art and innovation and are a reflection of The Ion and Ion District's effort to support local talent.

The Ion and the Ion District Art Advisory Council selected the two artists' installations after reviewing 60-plus submissions from local artists this past Fall with the support of public art consultant [Piper Faust](#). Called "The Eye On Art Program," the installations are meant to be an adaptive reuse of the beloved Sears building on which The Ion was built. The display windows are a unique opportunity to reimagine Sears' store windows and build on the collective memory of the space's past, present, and future. Strategically placed, as the entry points and eyes of the building, the two highly visible display windows facing Fannin and Main Streets serve as beacons to draw the community in.

"As the center for Houston's innovation ecosystem, The Ion recognizes the importance of cross disciplinary connections creating and fostering innovation," explained Jan E. Odegard, Executive Director of The Ion. "Creative expression and ideation is an essential part of The Ion's bigger picture and mission. The Ion is committed to creating opportunities for Houston-based artists, like Preston and Lina, and looks forward to giving local artists and makers long-term platforms to create, innovate, and collaborate."

About The Art:

Lina Dib's "Self-Portrait in the Garden" is an over-the-top kitsch environment that includes plants, astro-turf, pink flamingos, and bright screens. Initially the images on the screens are of greenery, the sea, and the sky, but as viewers move, they scrub the images of nature to reveal reflections of their own presence. When viewers stop moving, nature slowly takes over again. This uncanny window installation entices visitors to question the boundaries they draw between categories, such as the natural and the artificial, and to playfully engage in conversation with its surroundings and others.

Preston Gaines' "Fantasy Landscape" consists of numerous, interconnected panels that provide visitors with a mind-bending, multi-sensory journey. Filled with explosive color, mysterious pre-recorded sounds, the Fantasy Landscape supplies a look into a hypothetical future and a new way of viewing objects in nature and their role in human life. Each color is intended to connect to various areas of the human body and affect individuals differently emotionally, physically, and mentally. This combination of sensory stimuli forms an experience that is both meditative and dissociative, creating a space for the eyes, ears, mind, and body to explore. The outcome is a living, blooming floral paradise whose beauty flourishes when visitors engage with it: an ever-changing landscape, always different, a reflection of the personality of viewers themselves.

“As Houston, its neighborhoods, and the world-at-large open its doors again, a connector such as The Ion, is the perfect space to open up an installation of this scale,” explained Faust. “The Eye on Art Program isn’t simply art on a wall but installations that aim to entice, engage, and invite people into The Ion so they know it is a place where they can become part of a community, The Ion community.”

About The Artists:

Preston Gaines and Lina Dib are Houston-based artists and educators. Trained in architecture and anthropology, respectively, both artists used interactive technology, motion, and touch to create their installations at The Ion. The juxtaposition of Dib and Gaines’ natural plants versus fabricated reality symbolize the individuality of innovation The Ion celebrates.

Gaines is an architect, artist, and industrial designer that manifests the hidden properties of nature through the use of technology, with the intention of learning and re-establishing our connection to the Earth. His immersive botanical installations and furniture designs raise fundamental questions about collective experience and imagine radical possibilities for the future of art and design.

Dib is a multidisciplinary artist and anthropologist. Her installations and compositions range from the experimental to the ethnographic and investigate socio-technical and ecological change. Her work has been supported by the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Canada’s Social Science and Humanities Research Council, the Union of Concerned Scientists, AMIDA’s European training program, and the City of Houston among others.

The rotating art exhibition will open applications for its Fall 2022 exhibition later this Spring. Applications will be open to all artists and artist-teams over 18 years of age residing and working the Greater Houston Area. The Ion and Ion District are committed to providing opportunities that advance Houston’s economy by not only seeking to involve local businesses, but also those who are racially and ethnically underrepresented. Creatives and artists are a vital part of this complete community, and it is The Ion and Ion District's goal to foster inclusivity and diversity with all its partners. For preliminary information on the Spring 2022 application process, artists can contact Piper Faust at piper@piperfaustpublicart.com.

About The Ion: The Ion anchors a 16-acre innovation district, the epicenter for Houston's innovation ecosystem, as an inclusive, dynamic, vibrant, and dense hub focusing on quality collaborations between entrepreneurs, incubators, accelerators, corporations, academics, and the Houston community. The 266,000-square-foot building accommodates multiple uses, including class-A office space, shared workspace, prototyping and maker resources, event space, classrooms, food and beverage offerings, as well as indoor/outdoor communal areas with shared amenities. For more information, please visit ionhouston.com.

About Ion District: The Ion District is an intentionally accessible, walkable and integrated urban community. It spans 12 city blocks (16 acres) in Houston’s Midtown, where people, ideas, and businesses thrive. Initiated by Rice University, the Ion District energizes a more sustainable, resilient, and inclusive future. At actively programmed events and spontaneous everyday moments, the Ion District invites

residents, startups, corporate, academic, and civic leaders to unite, explore, and create opportunity together. For more information, visit <https://iondistrict.com>.