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# ERICA

WORDS BY  
**CORY CATHCART**

PHOTOGRAPHED BY  
**ESTHER BOSTON**

**REGION 7**  
INDIANAPOLIS

Chromatic Collective is an art gallery, supply store, and communal space in Broad Ripple that focuses mainly on graffiti. **ERICA PARKER** opened Chromatic with her fiancé, Rafael Caro, with the goals of helping educate the public on the difference between vandalism and graffiti and giving established and emerging artists alike a place to practice and share their work.

"Part of the mission is to be available to emerging artists and help them navigate this world," says Parker.

Parker is an artist who is enthusiastic about entrepreneurship and providing a space for artists in Indianapolis. She knows there is talent in the city and wants to show the world what kind of people are here and what they care about. Art is the medium for that. Indianapolis is home to a

great number of artists specializing in painting, illustration, and graffiti. Chromatic is an entity that cherishes artists and wants to see them succeed.

"What I hope that we're doing right now is inspiring other groups to do the same thing," she says.

Parker and Caro, along with a small team of artists, run Chromatic. They play host to art shows, organize Graffiti Jams, and sell niche art supplies for graffiti painting. On special weekends, they host live painting, graffiti art shows, and live music featuring local DJs.

"It's like our clubhouse."

After attending Herron School of Art and Design at IUPUI and studying different mediums, Parker partook in the Indiana Arts Commission On-Ramp Program. This is where she learned how to take all of

her knowledge and passion and transform it into a tangible business with a clear mission.

"I learned a lot about how to organize that [entrepreneurial] spirit in a way that makes sense to myself and to people outside the art world."

Indianapolis could be a place where multiple organizations and entities are working together to uplift the art community. Parker is dedicated to promoting this idea and educating on the beautiful art form that graffiti is. Indianapolis has many blank walls, and Parker believes they should be covered with graffiti. It shows travelers and bypassers what Indianapolis is made of. "Indy is going to be painted one wall at a time, there's enough room for everybody," she says.



# REBECCA

WORDS BY **TERRI PROCOPIO** PHOTOGRAPHED BY **A.S. TOLD BY REGION 3**, FORT WAYNE

After growing up in rural Indiana, illustrator and painter **REBECCA STOCKERT** finds a deep connection with nature. "There's kind of a storytelling aspect in nature - the countryside, the woods, and the animals," she says. "I find something spiritual about nature in the Midwest." That connection with nature is combined with a deep appreciation of Gene Stratton-Porter. Stockert is inspired by the native Hoosier's writings and philosophies, which is reflected in her own art.

Following an art degree in ceramics from the University of St. Francis, she went on to complete a master of arts in painting with a concentration in printmaking. Stockert's art career began in the not-for-profit world, where she served as a gallery director and ran educational programs for Artlink in Fort Wayne. She then taught art history at Ivy Tech and is now the director of retail operations for Women of the World.

In 2017, she launched her own business, Cat People Press, creating greeting cards, stickers, and magnets targeted to feline lovers. The most popular is the Pop Cat

collection, which includes a series of famous paintings with cats, such as the Mona Lisa with cats, Van Gogh, Frieda Kahlo, and Picasso. "My work is influenced by pop culture and it's very rich in color," she says. "We're so inundated by marketing and that really impacts my work visually. My work is quirky and also has some dark humor to it."

One of Stockert's artist residencies was in Rome City, Indiana, at a Gene Stratton-Porter historic home. Her admiration for Stratton-Porter served as the basis for her project through the On-Ramp program. Since 2017, she has been making watercolor illustrations based on the author's poems. The idea was to create a book proposal to submit to publishers. She found that the greatest aspects of the program were the connections that were made. "With classes like that, the best things you can take away from them are the relationships," she says. "There were about 30 people in my cohort, and getting to know them, the people in the Indiana Arts Commission, and other artists around the state was a great way to build relationships with people and network."

Stockert hopes other artists will explore On-Ramp. "I encourage everyone to go through the On-Ramp program," she says. "I love the Indiana Arts Commission. They do great work for artists in the state and they've been offering really useful, hands-on programs."

**"I FIND SOMETHING SPIRITUAL ABOUT NATURE IN THE MIDWEST."**



WORDS BY  
**EMILY WRAY**

PHOTOGRAPHED BY  
**A.S. TOLD BY: AR**

**REGION 3,**  
INDIANAPOLIS

The modern artist will certainly encounter roadblocks that separate them from the pursuit of art as a full-time job, and **EMILY GUERRERO** has had her fair share of bumps on that path. Yet, it's hard to see Guerrero as anything but a professional artist after encountering her colorful visual works or one of her live storytelling presentations, all celebrating her elders and cultural traditions. Her artistry comes from decades of hard work and from dedicating her life to sharing the stories of the Mexica, the indigenous group who served as the rulers of the Aztec in the Valley of Mexico. As a descendant of the Mexica, this is her life's mission, one that she's held within for as long as she can remember.

Guerrero grew up in Chicago and was able to spend time as a young adult visiting the Art Institute of Chicago. She was immersed in incredible visual works, but noted an absence of a certain type of artistic perspective. "I was seeing European art,

early American art and everybody but what looked like me," Guerrero explains. "So I kept looking for that part of the arts and realized that I had to become it." She was accepted into Columbia School of the Arts to pursue further training in her field. But because her family was unable to financially support her in this endeavor, she wasn't able to attend. This didn't stop Guerrero. She devoted her time to research and storytelling in other forms. She volunteered at schools, museums, and community centers as a diversity and inclusiveness social advocate and helped to organize local events celebrating Latinx art and traditions. Coming back to art was always a goal of hers, and today she pursues it full-time. The folk artist has created ofrendas for businesses and community centers in Fort Wayne, where she currently resides. She continues to present local workshops and events celebrating the traditions of her elders through her business, Mexica Arts.

As an artist who has dedicated her life to connecting her community with resources and programming, Guerrero has felt served by the On-Ramp program in a similar way. She met face-to-face with a circle of creators from across the state of Indiana and was reassured that, in the often-solitary career of an artist, there were many other Hoosiers experiencing the same ups and downs that she was. "The program is an opportunity to immerse ourselves in the language of who we are with others like us, so we realize that we're not alone in that arena," she muses.



# KENYA

WORDS BY **TERRI PROCOPIO** PHOTOGRAPHED BY **ESTHER BOSTON** **REGION 4**, WEST LAFAYETTE

Growing up on a farm, **KENYA FERRAND-OTT** has always had a strong bond with animals. "People think animals aren't like us, and they don't have their own culture," she says. "But the society is there. It's just different." Her connection with animals is reflected in her paintings and drawings, where she uses her talent as an artist to raise awareness of zoos and wildlife.

After graduating from Murray State University, Ferrand-Ott started her career as a graphic designer. In 2008, when companies consolidated graphic design and copywriting departments, job hunting became more of a challenge for someone with dyslexia. "It's hard for me to express myself in a way everyone else does. I may spell things incorrectly, and people don't take me seriously until they see my paintings and drawings. Growing up on a farm, it's easier for me to express myself through body language."

Her love of animals and interest in their behavior led her to research scientific papers on LGBTQ in wildlife. "It is found in nature,"

she says. "That's coming from someone who has spent a lot of time around animals." She took part in a Pride event at the Athens Gallery in Crawfordsville. She designed t-shirts with the aim of raising animal awareness, promoting the support of zoos and focusing on human rights issues.

One of Ferrand-Ott's paintings is currently on display at the Indiana Courthouse, and she is completing pet portraits and coloring pages with a percentage of sales being donated to animal shelters. Feeling that animals helped her when she was young, she is encouraging others to enjoy nature and wildlife.

With the goal of painting and illustrating full-time, Ferrand-Ott found the biggest asset of the On-Ramp program was the ability to interact and connect with other artists - especially from a business perspective. "College taught me how to paint, but it didn't teach me the business-side of being an artist," she says. "Bringing in working artists to talk to and brainstorm with was invaluable."

**"COLLEGE TAUGHT ME HOW TO PAINT, BUT IT DIDN'T TEACH ME THE BUSINESS-SIDE OF BEING AN ARTIST."**



SAM LOVE  
1  
GARYAREA.WORDPRESS.COM

# FALL

WORDS BY  
**TERRI PROCOPIO**

PHOTOGRAPHED BY  
**WHITNEY  
SPRINGFIELD**

**REGION 1,  
GARY**

A strong civic culture that can be overlooked – that is how community-organizer **SAM LOVE** describes Gary, Indiana. The passion he has for the city has grown into several arts-based undertakings, including a series of community poetry projects. “We found all these historic poems in the archives from pretty much every period in the city’s history and I thought, let’s get these out there,” he says. Love then utilized a technique called exquisite corpse to help create a collective poem, which was then stenciled and spray painted on various buildings across the city.

Beginning his professional career in teaching, Love was a history instructor at a Chicago college for fifteen years. Today, he combines his historical knowledge with writing skills to produce narrative nonfiction works about the Calumet region. He also inspires local poets and considers the art form a good way for people to articulate and express

themselves. “We led a group of kids on a downtown walk and collected lines of poems from them that were really good,” he says. “Over the weekend, we put the entire poem on an old, abandoned building across the street from their school. We didn’t tell the kids and when they came to school on Monday, we took pictures of them getting off the bus and seeing their poem. That was really awesome.”

Love continues to be involved with the On-Ramp program, now coaching fellows through their projects, including working with a participant on an Indiana Humanities Council-sponsored video called Calumet: The Region’s River. The program helped him to learn more about the comprehensive business aspect of his work and to develop a strategy. “On-Ramp opened my eyes to so many things and better opportunities have come my way. I’ve been more assertive about grabbing some things and saying no to others.”

Because of the program, Love was more prepared for times of uncertainty. “When COVID hit, I really do believe what I learned through On-Ramp helped me pause, collect, and think about the next steps,” he says. “They did a survey of participants, and we felt we fared better during this time because of the strategies we learned. I’m glad there are more of us at this level who now have this shared language and approach so we can hopefully get more work done.”



# IDRIS

WORDS BY  
**TERRI PROCOPIO**

PHOTOGRAPHED BY  
**A.S. TOLD BY: FULL  
CIRCLE MEDIA**

**REGION 2, GOSHEN**

Words and music are how Nigerian-born singer/songwriter **IDRIS BUSARI** found his voice. "I turned my poetry into songs, which came naturally to me and never stopped," he says. "I thought the words could be felt, like they jumped out at me and wanted a voice of their own."

Busari creates music in the style of Afrofusion, which combines African elements such as language, drums and instruments under the name Omogo Reloaded. After studying broadcasting and public relations at Goshen College, he released his first album, Afrofusion Volume 1, in 2008.

For his latest release, Afrofusion Volume 3, Busari returned to his homeland of Nigeria to set up a studio at his father's house, where he worked with a producer and a team of individuals. Concentrating on the theme of fatherhood, Busari's most recent video project focused on this topic. "A lot of musicians, writers and artists talk emotionally and passionately about motherhood, but fewer works are dedicated to the subject of fatherhood," he says. Busari collaborated with local businesses in the area to create the video, where he hopes to infuse a sense of community.

The theme of community continues to flow through the project Busari is undertaking in the On-Ramp program. He is working on creating two musical videos incorporating the South Bend/Elkhart area while collaborating with local creative professionals.

For Busari, On-Ramp helped him uncover a unique value proposition in order to effectively communicate his work. "Because of the skills I learned through On-Ramp, I now say my name is Idris, and I infuse richness into spaces and media," he says. "The program helped me to articulate my project goal, which is to create two video projects that will also help to boost my brand."

Busari also hopes to transition his work into larger messaging. "My overall global goal is to bring visibility to people of color doing art because art from people of color is not really mainstream. My On-Ramp project will help me to achieve not only my creative goal, but also my global goal of bringing visibility to artists of color."





# SUNDAY

WORDS BY **DAWN OLSEN** PHOTOGRAPHED BY  
A.S. TOLD BY: **FULL CIRCLE MEDIA REGION 2, GOSHEN**

The metalwork on [SUNDAY MAHAJA'S](#) Instagram (@mahaja\_arts) will transfix you. There are yard sculptures—including a “squirrel king” that doubles as a bird feeder—as well as intricate hibiscus trees and a sculpture inspired by the iconic photograph *Raising the Flag on Iwo Jima*. And then, there are the sandhill cranes. The birds’ wings are spread wide, as if preparing for flight, and the feathers look like, well, feathers. (And also knives.) “They’re actually made from metal used to make RVs,” says Mahaja, who lives in Goshen, Indiana and works at Goshen Community Schools. “We have a lot of RV factories here, so I was able to scrap these tiny strips and use them for the feathers.”

Mahaja, who was born and raised in Nigeria, came to Goshen to play college basketball. His initial plan was to play professional basketball and use his art—mostly painting at the time—as a fallback plan. But during his senior year, Mahaja attended an art fair where there was a bicycle sculpture. “When I saw people’s reaction to it and how they were talking about it, I was like, ‘I want to do this.’” After his own senior show and being accepted into a show at the Midwest Museum of American Art, Mahaja realized that sculpture, not painting, was “coming for him.” One of his latest projects is a family of giraffes, the largest of which is eight feet tall. It’s a piece he made for the 2021 ArtPrize, a renowned international art competition in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Like his other pieces, Mahaja created the giraffes in his garage using materials from local scrap yards. He often displays completed projects in his yard, which attracts attention—and potential clients. That’s what’s nice about outdoor sculptures—they serve as a form of advertisement. “To be successful in any form of art, you need to advertise,” says Mahaja. “I’ve tried to spend some time taking photos and uploading them, but I am behind on my website.”

Although Mahaja could update it himself, he’s considering hiring others to do the work he doesn’t have the capacity to complete. The realization that it’s okay to ask for assistance came from On-Ramp, an Indiana Arts Commission-run program that teaches entrepreneurship to artists. The program also encouraged Mahaja to reconsider his pricing and how to quantify the time he spends on a project. About finding—and accepting—his value as an artist.

Mahaja ultimately wants to become a full-time artist, a regional art advocate. “I want to be big,” he says, laughing. And with a piece at this year’s ArtPrize, he may be well on his way.

**“WE HAVE A LOT OF RV FACTORIES HERE, SO I WAS ABLE TO SCRAP THESE TINY STRIPS AND USE THEM FOR THE FEATHERS.”**



# TAHJ

WORDS BY **EMILY WRAY**  
PHOTOGRAPHED BY **KRISTEN TRIPLETT**  
REGION 12, NEW ALBANY



In an industry that calls for constant reinvention, **TAHJ MULLINS** is always searching for the next project to add to his increasingly innovative portfolio. The August On-Ramp participant is as multifaceted as they come; he's an illustrator, animator, and published author, amongst other titles. The self-starter and accomplished creator takes each opportunity to expand his collection of work - something he's been doing since the beginning of his career.

The artist's origins are found in his childhood in southern Indiana and his visits with family there. "I lived with my grandmother, and we would go to my great-grandmother's house all the time and see the trains pass by," Mullins explains. "They would have graffiti on them, and that was the first thing that I saw that blew my mind as a kid." From there, he discovered the world of animation and became fascinated with cartoons and comic books. Mullins found success in high school with a handful of art competitions and scholarships, but felt called to a different field entirely - music. As a singer-songwriter, he created original cover art for his releases, and turned back to these designs when he decided to step back from music. Armed with an old iPad, Mullins began producing album art for friends and connections through the music industry, a pursuit that soon became a full-time job. Since then, the artist has collaborated with record labels like Sony Music and Cinematic Music Group to produce cover designs for up-and-comers in

the industry. You'll even find his work with animation in a three-part short film series for R&B artist Marzz, detailing her coming-out story and its effect on relationships with her family. Outside of music, Mullins is the author and illustrator of *There's a Moose on the Loose!*, a children's book published in 2020. The artist hopes to create an accompanying animation series for Azul, the titular blue moose. As his reach grows, Mullins is on the lookout for opportunities to expand his prowess in business and professional matters for upcoming projects.

That's where the On-Ramp program comes into play. With access to new resources, guest speakers, and the opportunity to experience new artistic perspectives across the board, the program is essential to the creative economy for Hoosier artists throughout the state. For an artist of Mullins's caliber, the decision to attend was a no-brainer. For him, the chance to develop relationships with creators from varied fields across Indiana in a dedicated setting is invaluable. "I like to be around other artists that see things from a different view," he divulges. "That's going to help me sharpen my sword, insofar as how I view things."

To keep up with this artist's ever-expanding portfolio, check out his Instagram (@wizardof\_art). For those interested in finding a copy of *There's a Moose on the Loose!*, you can find a section dedicated to Mullins and his stories at The New Albany Sugar Shoppe.

**"I LIKE TO BE AROUND OTHER ARTISTS THAT SEE THINGS FROM A DIFFERENT VIEW."**



# LEANN PRICE

WORDS BY  
**DAWN OLSEN**

PHOTOGRAPHED BY  
**AMY ELISABETH SPASOFF**

**REGION 9,**  
AURORA

Growing up, ceramicist **LEANN PRICE** attended art fairs with her mother, a professional artist who specialized in textiles. At one such fair, Price—who was eight years old at the time—watched a potter work on his craft.

And that was it. She knew what she wanted to do.

Price signed up for classes at the Indianapolis Art Center and, once she got to Broad Ripple High School, took ceramic classes. In college, she studied art therapy and ceramics. “With my mother being an artist and my dad an amateur photographer, I always had access to art. But here in Lawrenceburg, a lot of people don’t have that same access, especially once they graduate high school.”

Lawrenceburg, a 5,000-person town in southeastern Indiana, boasts a new civic park and historic downtown. But Price believes there’s something missing—access to public art.

Price, who recently retired from her job as a

school counselor, makes functional pieces such as dinnerware, platters, vases, and urns. She also flirts with crocheting and jewelry making, and she started creating totem garden sculptures and hand-painted tilework about a year ago. Post-retirement, Price planned to fulfill her childhood dream of becoming a full-time potter. But after attending both a community-focused arts conference and On-Ramp, the creative entrepreneur course through the Indiana Arts Commission, her goals shifted significantly.

“The whole On-Ramp experience was incredible, but what really impacted me was the artists who came in and did panel discussions,” says Price. “They started talking about public artwork, and I decided I wanted to try to do something like that in Lawrenceburg.”

Price contacted Tisha Linzy, the program director for the Dearborn County Jail Chemical Addictions Program (JCAP). Through early intervention and

treatment, JCAP helps change the lives of people who have struggled with chemical dependency. But once someone is released, there’s a sense of shame that may get in the way of recovery. That’s why Linzy, for a long time, had wanted to use art as a therapeutic process. Price suggested making a clay totem, for which each JCAP alumnus could create a piece or part. “I think they were surprised by what they could do,” she says. “Some of them had never touched clay before. It gave them a sense of confidence.”

When the completed totem was unveiled in June 2021 at the Lawrenceburg Main Library, JCAP alumni were blown away by the support they received from the community.

“I feel very strongly that every human has creative potential,” says Price. “For a lot of people, that potential is never tapped. Sometimes, the process of creating art is just as, or more important, than the final product.”



**"MY  
DRIVING  
FORCE—  
TO MAKE  
PEOPLE  
HAPPY."**

WORDS BY  
**TERRI PROCOPIO**

PHOTOGRAPHED BY  
**ELESE BALES**

**REGION 5  
ANDERSON**

As the artist behind the syndicated comic *Rosebuds*, **DEE PARSON** hopes to evoke a sense of enjoyment and ease through the characters he creates. This mission began when he was young and shared a drawing with a classmate. "I drew a comic that made a friend laugh so hard he fell out of his chair with tears running down his face," he says. "The thing that really struck me at the time was I made someone happy by doing something I like to do. That has been my driving force—to make people happy."

Growing up in the only Black family in Elwood, Indiana, Parsons faced segregation and bullying and took an interest in comics as an outlet. Today, his work appears in newspapers and magazines, and he had a museum exhibit for *Life with Kurami*, a comic about a single mother facing self-doubt and anxiety in raising her infant daughter. Other

projects include *Pen and Ink* about two artist sisters and *Rosebuds*, which focuses on sisters Rosa, Maria, and Marcella. He uses parts of his own life as influences for his work, including creating female characters. "My dad died when I was young, and I was raised by my mom with two sisters. It made it a lot easier to work from that perspective—the more sentimental and emotional side—because I've been raised around that sort of energy."

Through his comics, Parsons wants readers to sit back, enjoy the characters, follow their adventures, and not worry about the outside world and all its stresses. "I see myself as a rest stop," he says. "My comics allow you to take a deep breath, rest a bit, and enjoy what you're reading. When you see my comics or illustrations, you know you're going to get a sense of warmth and comfort."

Previously, Parsons had not had a feeling of community with other artists, but On-Ramp exposed him to a diverse group of creatives that exists across the state. In addition, he had the opportunity to interact and communicate with other businesses. Since On-Ramp, *Rosebuds* moved into syndication, and he has worked with a merchandising company to produce *Plush Maria* based on one of his characters. "On-Ramp allowed me to figure out what I want to do and how to do it," he says. "My comics are the forefront of my work, but being able to do other freelance work has allowed me to grow my resume and build my brand."



# KP

WORDS BY EUAN MAKEPEACE PHOTOGRAPHED BY ESTHER BOSTON REGION 8, BLOOMINGTON

## “ON-RAMP LAYS IT ALL OUT FOR YOU, ENCOURAGING YOU TO BE AN ARTIST WHILE ALSO BEING IN THE BUSINESS OF WHAT’S BEST FOR YOU.”

Giving up a salaried position in corporate America and pursuing a creative passion is a leap some people only dream of. But that is exactly what **KORIE PICKETT—OR KP** as she is more affectionately known—did in 2018 when she launched *Queen Spirit Magazine*.

“There are so many rules and barriers that I’d end up getting frustrated,” said KP. “That’s when I started building the magazine digitally to give myself a space to play. I didn’t have to ask for permission; I could just do it.”

KP started *Queen Spirit Magazine* intent on showcasing her aptitude for photography, design, and writing. With each release, she noticed a growing support for the online magazine and decided to publish in print in 2019.

“It was a lot of networking to see if it made sense with the vision I had. It was really difficult,” said KP. “But the more that I poured myself into it, and the more that I printed, the more support that followed.”

Motivated to expand the mission of *Queen Spirit Magazine* beyond a vessel to showcase her own talent, KP began accepting submissions from other creatives. As a result, *Queen Spirit Magazine* became about community—providing a platform for other creatives.

“I’m very community-centered,” said KP. “Anything that involves community I just pour myself into. I find that’s where every opportunity flows from.”

It was while driving her friend, entertainer and member of the 2019 cohort Sanovia Garrett to On-Ramp that KP first learned about the initiative. After some consideration, she decided it sounded like what she needed to develop her vision and applied to be a member in 2020.

“I recommend [On-Ramp] to everyone,” said KP. “As creatives, we need resources, and we don’t always realize they are readily available. On-Ramp lays it all out for you, encouraging you to be an artist while

also being in the business of what’s best for you.”

Following On-Ramp, KP put *Queen Spirit Magazine* on hiatus, turning her full attention to writing her new book. Due to be published in June 2022, the book is set to exhibit a collection of KP’s freewriting.

“I am using my On-Ramp fellowship to publish my own book of poetry,” said KP. “My goal is to use the revenue from the book sales and move it back into the zine.”

Outside of writing her book while the magazine is on a pause, KP is working on securing the future of the publication. She has already established Queen Spirit Inc., a not-for-profit, determined to compensate future contributors to *Queen Spirit Magazine*.

“The biggest goal is that there will be a team,” said KP. “My hopes are that I will be able to pay contributors to be a part of this process and make sure they can live sustainable lives.”



SARAH WOLFE  
10  
SAYING WHAT NO ONE IS THINKING

# SARAH

WORDS BY **EMILY WRAY**  
PHOTOGRAPHED BY **ANNA POWELL DENTON**  
REGION 10, VINCENNES

If anyone could argue that art finds roots in matters of the heart, **SARAH WOLFE** could do it with ease.

The visual artist contemplates the external anxieties that weigh on her and her viewers with eye-catching and incredibly detailed paintings and sculptures. She often features anatomical structures with vivid colors and distinct silhouettes. Her poignant collection draws the admirer in and gives them room for reflection – an act that Wolfe was called to when she began to consider returning to art after years in the tourism industry.

Art has always been Wolfe's first draw, and she traces her interest back to her childhood in rural America. "So many of [my] sculptural pieces refer back to my childhood on a farm, where you'd collect baskets of cicada shells or gather big

branches and leaves," the artist muses. "We'd do these things as children, and we don't really know why." Wolfe carried this habit on through private art lessons as a child, and pursued post-secondary education at Savannah College of Art and Design, but stepped back from professional artistic pursuits to embrace a more stable career in tourism. The mother of two owned and ran a farm-to-table restaurant in Princeton, Indiana, and hung her art there on occasion. But, she effectively put art on the back burner for a while until she felt called to return to more fulfilling work. She took the leap and had her first solo show in 2015.

Wolfe attended On-Ramp this past May, and relished in the opportunity to experience a community of artists after a particularly isolating year. "The chance

to connect with other artists who were at so many stages of life and from so many different disciplines was like coming up from underwater," she explains. The creation of an accessible and financially viable program is something to celebrate, and Wolfe took full advantage to build relationships with some of the most talented artists Indiana has to offer. She'll even be showcasing her work among a group of other participants in the program in early 2022 with the Arts Council of Southwestern Indiana.

In addition to this upcoming group show, Wolfe's most recent solo show, *Saying What No One is Thinking*, began in early August and will run through the end of September in Vincennes.

**"THE CHANCE TO CONNECT WITH OTHER ARTISTS WHO WERE AT SO MANY STAGES OF LIFE AND FROM SO MANY DIFFERENT DISCIPLINES WAS LIKE COMING UP FROM UNDERWATER."**



# EVREN



WORDS BY  
**CORY CATHCART**

PHOTOGRAPHED BY  
**ESTHER BOSTON**

**REGION 7,**  
INDIANAPOLIS

**EVREN WILDER ELLIOT** is a creative entrepreneur who combines theatre, movement exercise, and situations of oppression to help organizations and individuals face difficult situations in a confident way. They host workshops that are inspired by Augusto Boal's Theatre of The Oppressed to help trans folks be empowered in their bodies and to help organizations handle difficult problems surrounding diversity and inclusion.

"I work to challenge communities to seek solutions, as well as their personhood, through imaginative play," says Elliott.

Elliott incorporates yoga in the workshops to help participants get comfortable and safe in their bodies. From start to finish, their work consists of helping people face hard situations that induce anxiety and fear in a safe space. The workshops are intended to teach through play and exercise. The audience gets involved through Elliott's role as

"The Joker," which is when they directly ask the audience questions about the conflict.

"The goal is that we come up with many solutions, then it ends with no specific conclusion because we want people to leave feeling activated about finding a solution."

All that is needed for them to create a learning atmosphere are bodies and space. They host workshops at a few different locations. One being Caliban, a co-op through Irvington Vinyl and Books that is home to many creatives with an entrepreneurial spirit.

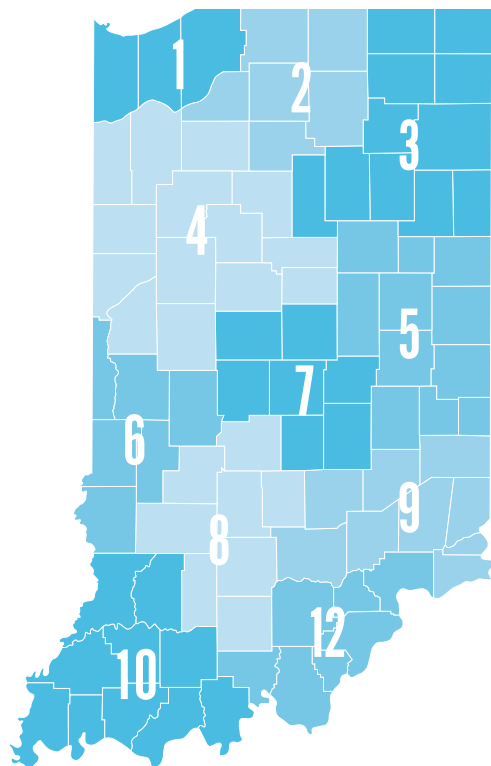
"All of the work exists in the body. People are inherently playful and curious. All the tools are already there for me to delve into and to use with folks," Elliott says.

Identifying their creative self as "artistically minded and problem solving focused," Elliott said the fiscal side of things was originally something

they didn't necessarily want to think about. With the Indiana Arts Commission On-Ramp Program, they were able to look at the fiscal side of the work with ease. The On-Ramp program helped them look at money in a way that "feels more empowering than burdensome."

After traveling to different cities learning Boal's Theatre of The Oppressed, their goal for the future is focused on sustainability of the work in Indianapolis. Elliott wants to provide others who are passionate about this work in Indianapolis and surrounding areas with the tools and knowledge to form a network in the city. Theatre of The Oppressed hosts international conferences all over the country. Elliott would love to see Indianapolis play host to this event, so anyone interested in this work can look close to home to find it.

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