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## **Open For Interpretation Teaching Artists Announced**

**Historic Brownington Village, Vermont**—The Old Stone House Museum & Historic Village has announced the artists selected to participate in its *Open for Interpretation* project. They are: Alessandra Nichols, Isadora Snapp, William Tulp and Misuk Weaver.

This public arts project began engaging community members and animating the museum's Alexander Twilight Educational Trail in Fall 2021. The one-mile outdoor walking trail, established in 2020 with funding from the State of Vermont's Forests, Parks and Recreation and named for the 19th century African American educator, Alexander Lucius Twilight, interprets elements of the natural and human world. It encircles the 60 acre property of the Old Stone House Museum & Historic Village, leading through pasture, forest and the historic village. The trail provides a place to hike, snowshoe or cross country ski all year round.

Students from Brownington Central School's 7th and 8th grades recently visited the museum to learn about the history of Orleans County, including Mr. Twilight's legacy and importance to the institution. Students explored the natural and built environment of the museum's 60-acre campus and considered what kind of art might complement or recontextualize this backdrop.

Students reviewed artists' applications and chose the artists whose work they felt would express Brownington's history and offer engaging classes to local students. Finally, a team from the museum's staff that included professional portrait artist Katie Runde—whose depiction of Mr. Twilight will grace the halls of the Vermont State House next year—weighed in to make the final choice of four artists.

These artists will spend the winter and spring researching and developing their own work which will be celebrated at the museum during summer 2022. The artists will also spend the coming months working with local students to teach them about public art interpretation during their teaching residencies at the museum. Details on each artist can be found below, along with their image.

Funding for this project was made possible by a Northern Forest Destination Development Initiative grant from the Northeastern Vermont Development Association, Northern Forest Center and Northern Border Regional Commission.



Alessandra Nichols was born in 1954 in Bridgeport, Connecticut, Paugussett Tribe land, to an Italian mother and an Anglo-American father. She is an experienced visual artist and activist, as well as a self-trained auto mechanic, house painter and clay plaster artisan. Featured in most of Nichols' work is her unique ability to repurpose discarded materials in order to create structure, texture, color, pattern and motion. She says of her work, "These pieces are small acts of faith. They emerge from my compassion for the preciousness of life, and they balance between decay and integration."

Her ethos and range of skills shine through place-based installations such as compost sculptures, which complement and subsequently *become* their surrounding environment, and habitable structures made from found objects and local materials. She has lived and worked around the globe, in Italy, New York City, England, Germany and India; now based in Vermont's Northeast Kingdom, land of the Abenaki people, she is continually building what is not only one of her longest running installations but also the place she calls home.



Isadora Snapp is a passionate teacher, choreographer, and mover. She is intrigued by how dance can inform and influence our relationship with our bodies for the better. While her work spans a range of mediums and genres, the through line is an investigation of self and how we interact with the world. Snapp is a native Vermonter and grew up dancing at Contemporary Dance and Fitness Studio in Montpelier, Vermont under the direction of Lorraine Neal. She has had the opportunity to study with many teachers in ballet, modern, and jazz dance.

As a Vermont dancer, Snapp has been very fortunate to work with many talented local artists. Currently, Snapp teaches at the same studio she began dancing in: CD&FS. Over the past ten years her teaching style has evolved and developed to support the various genres of classes she teaches. Snapp is also co-director of Teen Jazz, the studio's audition-only teen performing group, and director of the studio's Junior Company. She resides in Barre with her husband, 3 kids, and 2 fluffy cats.



William Tulp's love of art started at an early age. He spent many of his early years drawing and painting and outside in nature. Through the years he has developed an art style that deals with realistic and abstract visions of the natural world of people, animals, plants, and their organic environment. Bill has been an art and environmental educator for most of his life. He has taught in public and private schools, art centers and as an adjunct professor. He has a specialty in visual storytelling, drawing comics and graphic stories. He has taught classes in making comics and visual storytelling to students ranging from elementary school to college. He has had a number of gallery showings of his personal work and in group shows around the country. He is a published illustrator and graphic storyteller. In addition, he has created large murals and play backdrops: on his own and in collaboration with his wife and with students. He lives and works in St. Johnsbury, Vermont.



Misuk P. Weaver constructs three-dimensional multi-media artworks from discarded materials by rejecting the societally manufactured label of "trash." Elevating the essence of found materials as an opportunity for legitimacy, the artist integrates formal techniques to transform and generate new vernacular and perceptions. Through the metamorphosis Misuk endeavors to validate the object's existence.

A first-generation Korean-American immigrant laboring to remove the ingrained restraints of cultural gender roles and informed by the experience of poverty during her formative years, Misuk embraces scarcity as a motivator for creativity and communication. Equipped with a bachelor's in art and psychology and a master's in business, the artist approaches each artwork through the lens of art history, perception, environment, and economics to bring context to, educate, and challenge perceptions.

Misuk is a licensed art educator that champions the power of education and mentorship. She most recently led the establishment of educational digital content for the Shelburne Museum in Shelburne, Vermont. Within a year she oversaw the creation of twelve online exhibitions and the Museum from Home initiative.



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### **About Alexander Lucius Twilight**

Born on September 23, 1795 Alexander Lucius Twilight graduated from Middlebury College in 1823, becoming the first African American graduate of any United States college or university. In 1829 he was hired to be principal of the Orleans County Grammar School and was minister to the Brownington Congregational Church. In 1836 he was elected to the Vermont House of Representatives, becoming the first African American to serve in a state legislature. Under his leadership, the Orleans County Grammar School thrived as a co-educational institution attracting both boys and girls from throughout New England who came from as far away as Boston and Montreal. Between 1834 and 1836 Mr. Twilight designed and built a four story granite dormitory, which he called Athenian Hall.

Mr. Twilight's father Ichabod was born in Boston in July 1765. Both he and Mr. Twilight's mother Mary were free and mixed race, most likely of African slaves and English colonists. Ichabod served in the Revolutionary War in a New Hampshire regiment and later moved with his family to Vermont where he and his wife were listed as "the first negroes to settle in Corinth" where they bought property, moving from Bradford on November 28, 1798.

Typical for children of his class, Alexander began working for a neighboring farmer when he was only eight. Reading and studying mathematics while performing farm labor, he was able to enroll in the Randolph Orange County Grammar School in 1815 at the age of 20. He enrolled in Middlebury College in 1821, graduating as the first known African American to receive a degree from any institution of higher learning in America in 1823.

In 1826, Mr. Twilight married Mercy Ladd Merrill from Unity, New Hampshire and taught in both New York and Vermont before assuming his position as principal at the Orleans County Grammar School. In addition to acting as minister for the Brownington Congregational Church, he led worship services and delivered sermons in numerous other churches. In 1847, he relocated to Quebec where he taught briefly. However, without his leadership the Orleans County Grammar School experienced declining enrollment. He was persuaded to return to Brownington where he resumed duties as both teacher and pastor. In 1855 Mr. Twilight suffered a stroke and retired. He died on June 19, 1857 and is buried along with his wife Mercy in the Brownington Congregational Church Cemetery.

### **About the Old Stone House Museum & Historic Village**

Listed in the National Register of Historic Places, the Old Stone House Museum & Historic Village was established by the Orleans County Historical Society and has



been operating as a museum since 1926. It has now grown from one building to become an impressive historic site with seven restored buildings and three neighboring structures, all dating from the early 1800s. Dedicated to its mission to preserve, educate and inspire, the museum annually attracts nearly 10,000 visitors from across the country and abroad.

Education has long been a cornerstone of activity in Brownington, Vermont. The former granite dormitory is not the only historic building at the museum to tell the story of progressive education and diversity. Alexander Lucius Twilight's 1830 Federal style home houses his books and letters, along with letters from his students, in an archival vault. Further up the hill an 1831 Federal-style Hall House stands as a testament to Samuel Reed Hall, a recognized pioneer in progressive education. Hall founded America's first teacher training college in 1823 in Concord, Vermont, invented the chalkboard, and published the first teacher-training textbook in 1829.

Through unique educational programs that use select items from its permanent collection as teaching tools, the Old Stone House Museum & Historic Village embraces hands-on, experiential learning as a way of connecting individuals to a way of life that still has much to teach us. Notable past activities have included a barn raising with area vocational students and a tree trimming and replanting project that was incorporated into the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade science curriculum at the Brownington Elementary School. A thriving adult education program teaches such traditional crafts as blacksmithing, rug hooking, stone wall building, and tree pruning. Spring and Fall Field Days for area schools, as well as its summer "Time Travelers Day Camp" emphasizes hands-on craft activities, theatre, and the scientific exploration of the garden and grounds.

The Old Stone House Museum & Historic Village is located in the Brownington Historic District just off Hinman Settler's Road in Vermont's scenic Northeast Kingdom. The museum is open Mid-May to Mid-October 11:00-4:00 PM on Wednesdays through Sundays. For more information, call (802)754-2022 or visit [www.OldStoneHouseMuseum.org](http://www.OldStoneHouseMuseum.org).