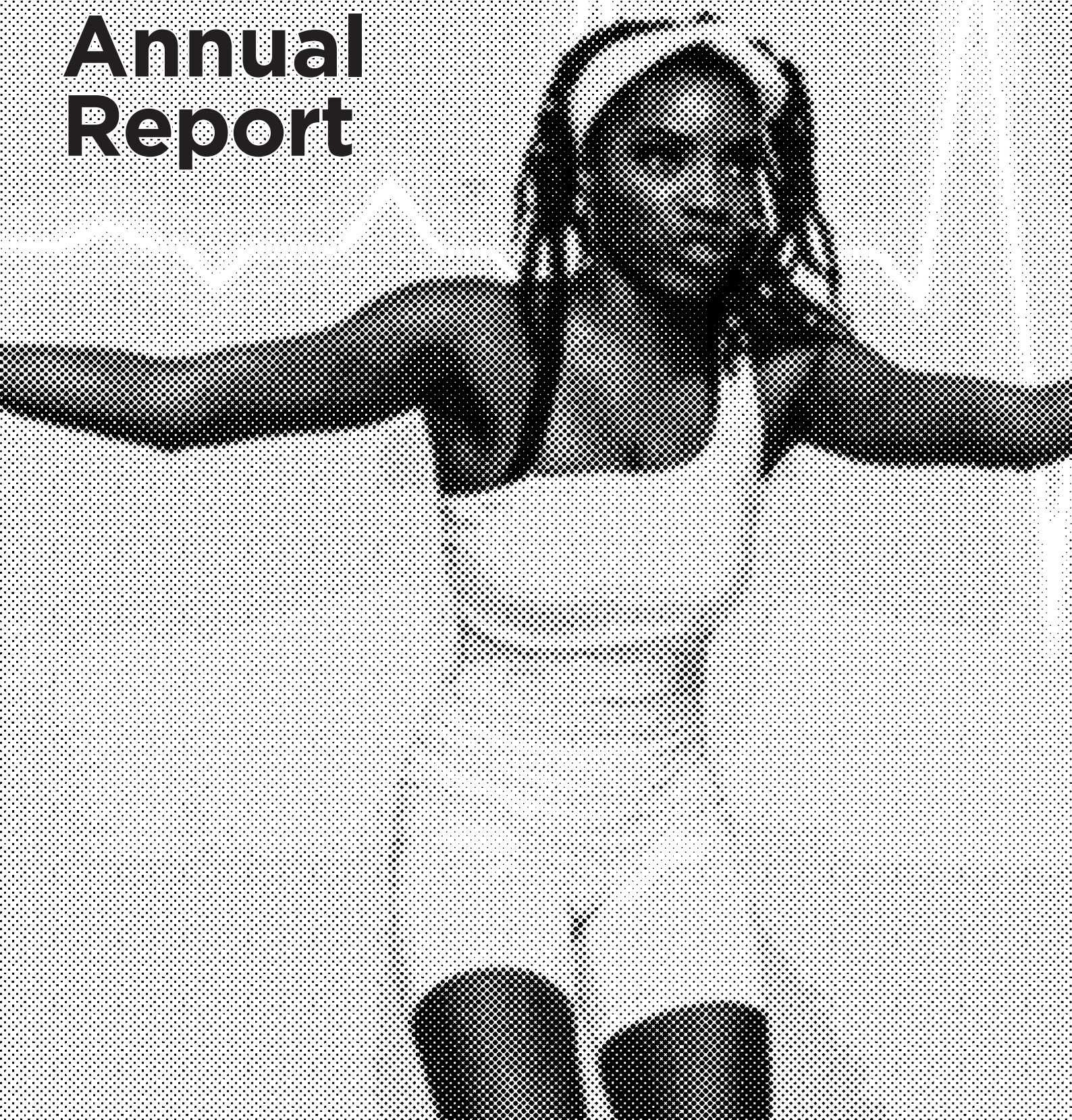




Spark creativity. Spark potential.

# 2020 Annual Report



# 2020



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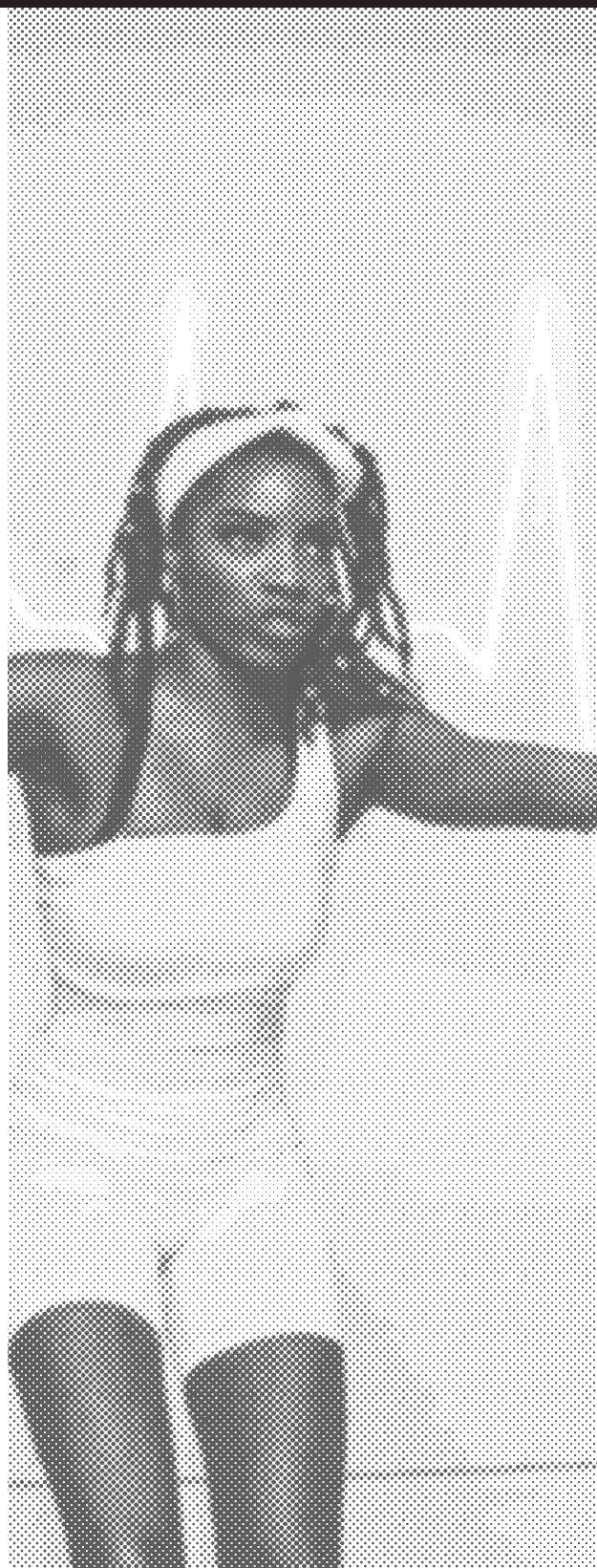
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# Table of Contents

<b>About Us &amp; Welcome</b>	02
<b>A word from our AD</b>	04
<b>Financials</b>	06
<b>Artist Spotlight: Dominic Justina</b>	08
<b>Program Highlights</b>	10
<b>NExT Black Mentorship Program</b>	12
<b>Strategic Focus</b>	14
<b>Supporters</b>	16



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# 25 years of VIBE

## VIBE Arts for Children and Youth



### About VIBE

VIBE Arts operates at the intersection of arts and belonging. We know that not everyone has access to the arts; this is felt especially by people who live outside of the urban core. Members of equity-seeking groups including newcomer Canadians, racialized young people, Indigenous youth, the LGBTQ+ community and individuals living in poverty face complex barriers. VIBE works directly within these communities to involve thousands of people each year in free arts experiences.

We bring young people together to collaborate in safe and accessible spaces and tap into the creative potential that lies in every corner of our province. VIBE programs develop life-long skills, nurture community connections and spark creativity. Together, we work to realize a future where every young person is equipped to contribute creatively to society.

### MISSION

To work collaboratively with partners in under-resourced communities to create a lasting impact on the lives of young people through arts education programming.

### VISION

Vibrant communities where young people express themselves artistically and use their creativity and leadership to engage fully in community.

### Stay in touch

@vibeartsto  
vibearts.ca





# Welcome to our 2020 Annual Report

2020 was one of the most challenging years of my professional life. On March 13th, members of our team headed home, unaware that for the remainder of the year, we would not return to 401 Richmond as a whole. I remember sitting in my apartment, staring at the television, wondering what was next for VIBE. I watched the recap video of our NEXt exhibition that took place just 2 weeks before the lockdown, and was brought to tears by the reality that we may have to close our doors, and stop doing the work we love: supporting artists to achieve their dreams.

It took a day of sitting in it, feeling it and processing it. The next day, we hopped on our very first Zoom call. The energy of our team was bright, funny and motivated. They had ideas for how our work could pivot, and passion to make it happen.

There was lots of stress behind those first few meetings, as we watched

other organizations let people go, cease operations and shut down for good.

It was in these beginning weeks when I read a quote that continues to inspire me today. This same quote has been plastered on the front page of our website since April:

**“These challenging times call for a move in energy away from desperation and defeat and towards a passion for the communities we were formed to serve.”**

That is exactly what our team did. We shifted our energy into online programs, creative fundraising and supporting one another to build a new VIBE Arts. Though this VIBE may be one that doesn't go downtown and meet at an office everyday, it still provides arts education and artist mentorship to those who need it most.

Like many Canadians, we were shocked and rattled by the police brutality

that unfolded on our screens this summer. As a group, we took the time to process and provide space for conversations and emotions. We were reminded, again and again, why working to provide meaningful platforms to those who are silenced must continue.

We don't know what our future brings, but we know what it needs. It needs creative leaders and thinkers from all walks of life. It needs people who have the lived experience to share it through art and words. It needs young people who can confront injustice, break down barriers and who have support from individuals and organizations that can mobilize them towards a brighter, more equitable, more creative future.

**Katie Hutchinson,**  
Executive Director

# BE

# A word from our Artistic Director

2020 – for many, a year requiring serious tunnel vision, with a focus on growth and new opportunities. For VIBE, 2020 allowed us to continue to celebrate the diversity in our province by closing the gaps and removing the barriers that many members of our marginalized communities face. Little did we know that as a result of this pandemic, the world would come to a stand-still, leaving us to re-evaluate how we live, do business, and ultimately consider what is truly important.

As COVID-19 persisted, we saw companies and organizations around us having to shift or shut down; all the while, people turned to artists for entertainment and to pass the time. As an organization, we knew we had entered a time when our artists and communities would need us most. VIBE has been fortunate enough to innovate the ways that we deliver our programming, by pivoting to virtual performances, arts programming and online professional development. In these endeavours, we have noticed a significant climb in participation.

Then, we were hit with a second pandemic: the repeated injustices to the Black and Indigenous communities, which has been going on for years, but became impossible to ignore during lockdown.

Pain was felt in every aspect of our organization, from our artists and staff, right up to the board. Some could identify and relate, and others provided support and created space. This terrible time allowed VIBE to step up and work even harder to amplify the voices of the unheard.

This series of events inspired us to make an adjustment to our annual organization-wide anti-oppression training. We shifted to include anti-racism and courageous conversations to widen our depth and understanding. We welcomed and empowered each other to share meaningful lived experiences. Anti-racism is something that will ALWAYS be on our agenda when it comes to strategic planning, and we will continue to work to create a shared understanding of the barriers our artists endure.

I want to personally thank everyone in our VIBE family who trusted us with the shift in how we've delivered programs, workshops and created space during these unprecedented times. The feedback we've received from artists, participants and community partners has been positive and encouraging. To our supporters, thank you for believing in us, and our communities, when we needed it most. Our new partnerships and the



generous donations we have received will continue to inspire our artists and remind them that resilience alongside creative leadership is an effective way to make change.

In 2021, expect to see anti-oppression and anti-racism remain at the forefront of the work that we do. That will never change!!! VIBE will continue to be resilient in a time which demands a new normal. We will take our learnings and use them to broaden our reach with arts programming across our audience. We will continue to create new, intentional partnerships with an emphasis on diversity, inclusion and equity.

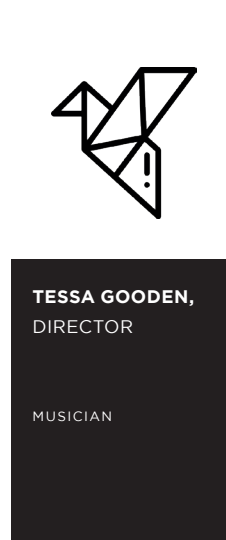
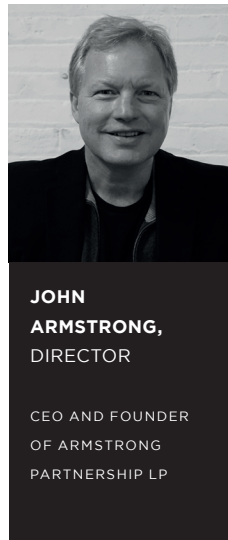
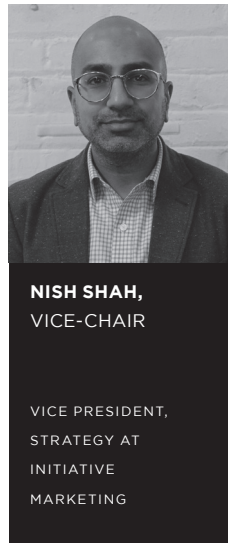
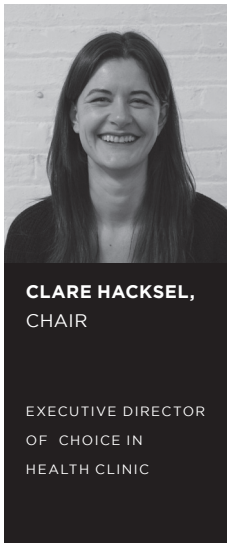
A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Onika".

**Onika Powell,**  
Artistic Director

# Board of Directors

The VIBE Arts Board of Directors fundraise, advise, govern, oversee policy and strategic direction and assist with the leadership and promotion of VIBE Arts.

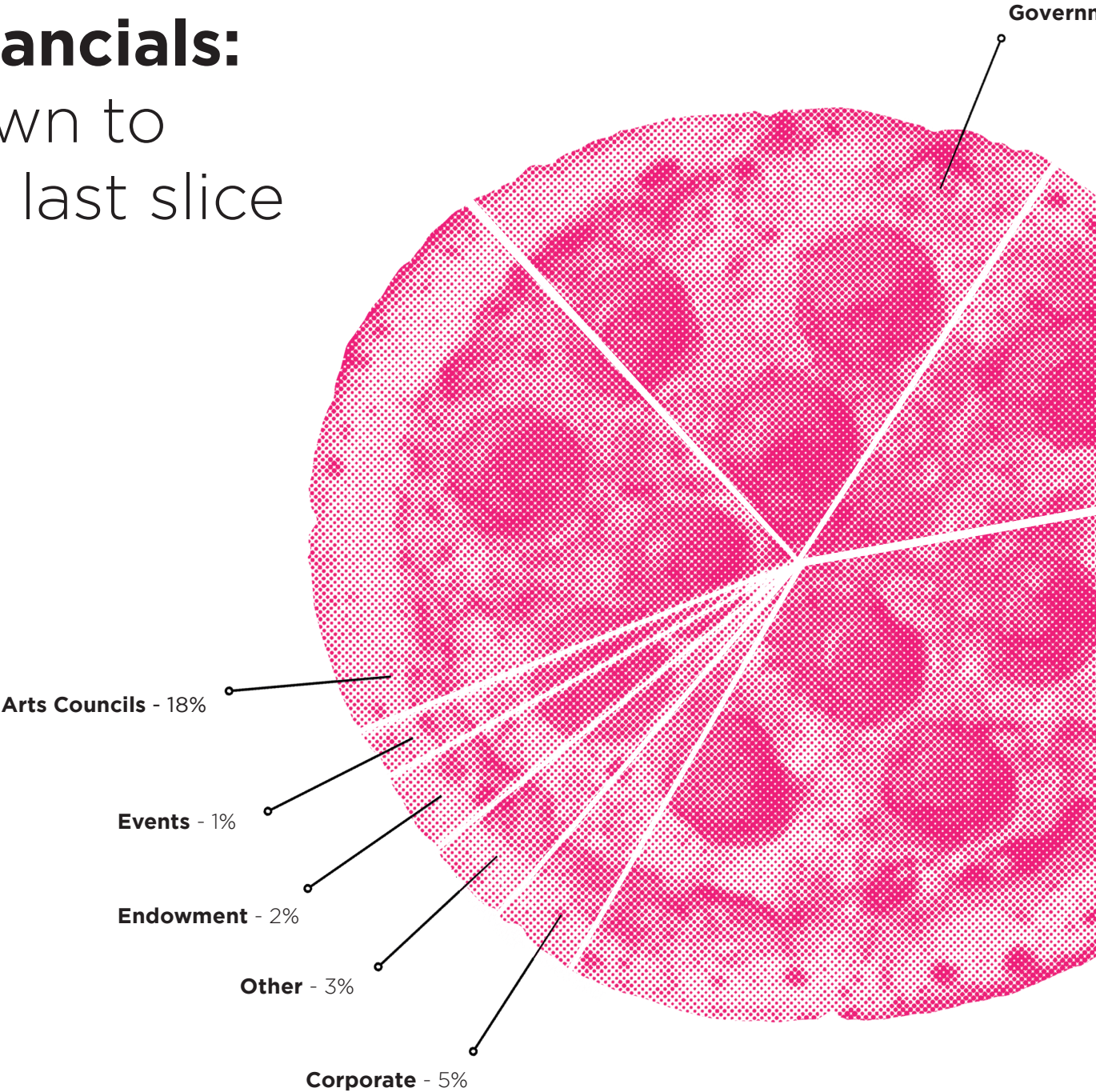
Each board member brings unique experience to assist VIBE in achieving our goals.





# Financials:

Down to  
the last slice



**4,300+**

**Participants in  
live programming**

**2,100+**

**Online content views**

**510**

**Workshops**

Since the onset of COVID-19, VIBE has pivoted to engage people of all ages through direct-to-community digital programming

ment - 21%

## Every bite counts

Individual Donors are more important than ever before. Having individuals who support and invest in our mission helps VIBE create a foundation for the future of our organization.

Become an Arts Advocate – a committed monthly donor who champions our work. Receive exclusive news and event invites!  
[vibearts.ca/donate](https://vibearts.ca/donate)

Individual - 15%

Foundations - 35%

### Thank you to our Arts Advocates:

Katie Saunoris  
Ann Jansen  
Colleen Hayman  
Tessa Giro-Gooden  
John Armstrong  
Lianne Doucet  
Clare Hacksel

### Thank you to our outstanding supporters:

Christopher Southam  
Danny Cappe  
Serena Richardson  
Rob Lebi  
Kathryn Royer

# 100+

**Artists engaged**

This year, we onboarded new artists and welcomed

# 50+

**Community Partners**

We've worked with over 50 community partners, with 20 receiving high-quality digital programming

**Before COVID-19, VIBE was poised to have its biggest year of programming yet.**

Despite having to cancel and postpone many of our programs, we remain proud of the impact we achieved in 2020.



# Artist Spotlight:

## Dominic Justina

Acrylic po  
Photo cou



Dominic Justina and Kofi Frempong, VIBE Artists, at the 2020 NExT Exhibition at Fort York National Historic Site.

**VIBE:** Tell us about yourself!

**DJ:** My name is Dominic Justina. I was born in Kingston, Jamaica to a musician father and a spiritual master for a mother. My parents came from humble beginnings and transformed their lives for me and my siblings.

My journey has led me to live in New York, where I was fortunate enough to join a modern contemporary dance group. An early introduction to dance and art classes nurtured my passion for creating. I have since found my newest home in Toronto.

I have an analytical mind and a natural impulse to create using

different mediums. My skills are primarily self-taught and I have my own approach to art.

**I believe that we all have massive creative potential, and that inspiration can always be found inwards.**

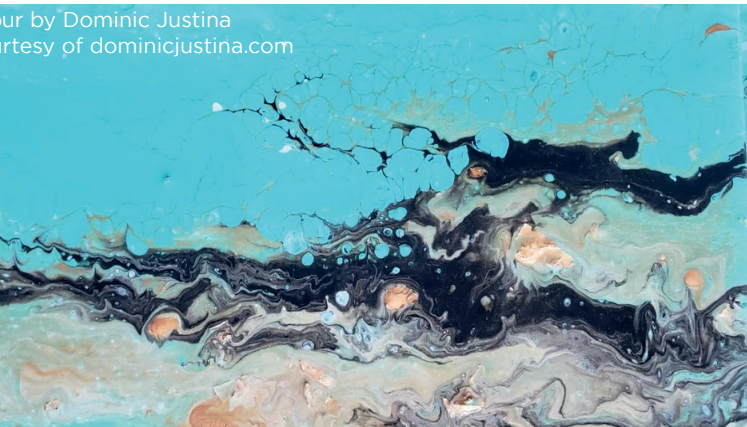
**VIBE:** When did you join the VIBE roster of Emerging Artists?

**DJ:** I joined in fall of 2018. Coming in, I didn't know exactly what to expect, but entered with an open mind, excited to meet other artists. I learned about VIBE from a dear friend and mentor, Kofi Frempong, who is an established artist on the VIBE roster. I only expected to

meet new artists and build my network, but VIBE turned out to be much more than that. The financial support, mentorship, work experience, community engagement and emotional resources provided at VIBE have made it much easier for me to create and explore other elements of my artistic career.

**VIBE:** In your own words, how would you best describe VIBE's NExT Program?

**DJ:** The NExT program reawakened my drive to create during a tough time in my life. It allowed me to re-introduced me to myself.



By removing barriers, like the ability to afford quality materials, and providing equitable representation and mentorship, NExT made a positive impact on my art career. I have since created a website and sold my first two pieces. NExT was a great catalyst for this.

**VIBE:** What other programs or projects have you been involved with while being part of the VIBE roster?

**DJ:** I've started a podcast project called Life on Hifi exploring our potential to create. My dream is to use my voice as a platform to generate a sense of belonging and community for artists.

**VIBE:** What importance has arts education had on your life, and why is it particularly important to the communities we serve?

**DJ:** Arts education is important for the communities we serve because a lot of the time, society enforces the idea that art isn't a serious career. This can be very discouraging for creatives, but increasing access to the arts through dedicated educators can help change these ideas.



**“The resources provided at VIBE have made it much easier for me to create and explore other elements of my artistic career.,,”**

**- Dominic Justina**

**VIBE:** Is there anything that you would like to say to an artist or VIBE supporter who is reading this?

**DJ:** To artists: If you want to change the circumstances of yourself or others, you must first start by nurturing a mindset that accepts the need for growth and the willingness to ask for help.

**To supporters: you are on the right side of history, my friend. Thank you for supporting VIBE Arts, and for supporting the artist community.**

**dominicjustina.com | @dominicthecreator**





# Program Highlights:

## Cultural Hotspot

### Amplify Mural

VIBE's **first ever** physically-distanced online, collaborative mural program!



**Antibes Community Centre,**  
North York

1

Deaf and hard of hearing participants from Bob Rumball's Digital Deaf Camp added sensory details to wood cutouts.



2

Each cutout was hand-painted by local North York youth participants in an digital program, before being installed to the exterior walls of the Antibes Community Centre in November 2020.



In winter 2020, VIBE Arts received funding to deliver on a community-engaged mural in North York, primarily engaging differently-abled youth community members. With the sudden onset of COVID-19, the initial plans for this project were halted. As a result, VIBE worked with partners to implement a digital version of this program that not only engaged the intended population, but also expanded to reach two additional youth groups. The program resulted in a high-quality, permanent mural that will animate a corner of the North York community for years to come.

The project began with a partnership with Bob Rumballs' Camp for the Deaf to deliver an

8-week program, where deaf and hard of hearing children designed a mural in collaboration with professional mural artist, Rob Matejka. With the use of an interpreter alongside the artist, the result was a landscape of ASL-inspired imagery which was later cut out of wood to create a tangible representation of the students' imagining.

These shapes were then contactlessly delivered to youth who access the CNIB's services. CNIB participants connected with the lead artist over Zoom to develop relief and tactile pieces to connect and adhere to the cutouts, including braille and sensory designs. The cutouts were then redistributed to local youth in North York who then worked with

Rob to bring their pieces to life through paint and visual imagery. Meeting through Zoom broke down barriers for those who might have been limited by transportation, mobility or disability and allowed fulsome participation.

The mural was installed at Antibes Community Centre in November 2020 and a celebratory virtual mural unveiling is scheduled for Spring 2021.

**The Amplify Mural is a signature project of the Cultural Hotspot, produced in partnership with the City of Toronto.**



# NExT

## Black Youth Mentorship Program

NExT is VIBE Arts' two-year Black Youth Mentorship Program. NExT - short for Network and Explore Together - is intended to build, connect, and strengthen networks of Black artists throughout the GTA.

The program was developed, with barriers in mind, to increase visibility of Black Youth Artists in public Canadian exhibitions. Throughout the program, members of the cohort receive multiple one-on-one mentorship opportunities and access to valuable programs and opportunities.

NExT creates a shared understanding and space to overcome the barriers faced by upcoming artists in pursuit of artistic success.

The NExT Program is made possible by Canadian Heritage's Community Support, Multiculturalism, and Anti-Racism Initiatives (CSMARI) Program.



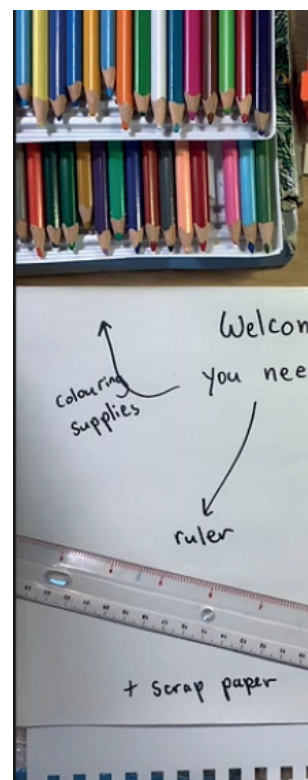
I have chosen to  
mentor because I value Love  
and I am contributing to Love  
This makes me feel beautiful

**In 2020**, VIBE restructured the NExT program based on feedback, as well as the needs expressed by our artists.

The program was divided into two phases: The first open to the general public, resulting in the onboarding of 33 young Black Artists, and providing them with four professional development workshops. Phase 2 of the program allowed 12 finalists to receive additional professional development workshops, 1:1 mentorship and a paid opportunity to create artwork to be exhibited in 2021.



Rapper and NExT Artist, syc...  
event at Fort York National



Supplies set up f a VIBE Blo...  
an octopus, both by artist M



# VIBE Bloom



Danie performs poetry at the NEXt Exhibition at the Historic Site on March 5th, 2020.

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit in March of 2020, VIBE was able to adopt new ways of working to ensure continuity of programming to our communities. VIBE's small staff team was able to transition to an online model within weeks, providing the same high-quality programming we've always achieved, and continuing to fulfill the mission of providing under-served communities with access to arts programming, at a time when many were experiencing social isolation and mental health challenges.

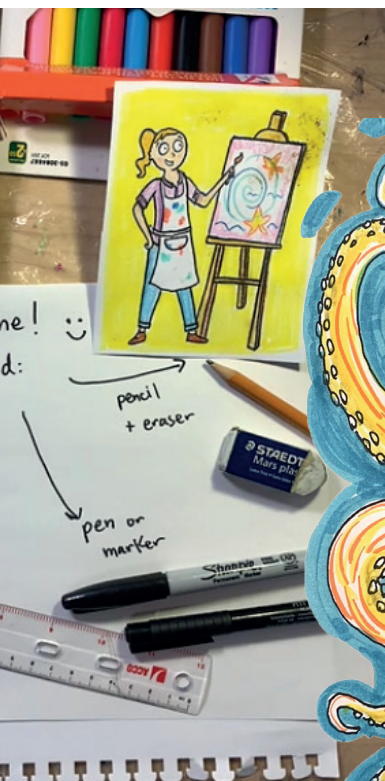
## Program Model

VIBE Bloom was a weekly online art lesson available to anyone interested in engaging creatively. To increase accessibility, this program was designed to use materials that can be commonly found in the home.

Each month, a new artist was hired to plan and deliver weekly sessions online, via Zoom.

From April until November 2020, VIBE Bloom engaged over 850 participants, allowing VIBE to employ 5 artists with predictable income, and resulted in the creation of 31 art projects.

Due to its success, VIBE Bloom began a partnership with RBC in July 2020 to further extend the program.



Art session, alongside Mirka Loiselle.



See the works of art created in VIBE Bloom by checking out **#VIBEBloom** on social media.



# Strategic Focus 20



**Resiliency**



**Partnership**



**Celebrating  
Lived  
Experience  
through  
Art Projects**



## VIBE's Commitment to Anti-Racism

In 2020, VIBE dedicated our work to Anti-Racism initiatives. With the repeated injustices that have happened to the BIPOC community during these unprecedented times, we know that moving forward into 2021, this focus cannot change. We have seen the increased focus and understanding of police violence against Black communities, the mistreatment of Indigenous communities and the disproportionate impact that COVID-19 has had on BIPOC folx. In 2021, it is essential that we give members of these communities platforms to be central in the conversation and design of what the future must look like.



### 01. Resiliency

VIBE will continue to find ways, both digitally and traditionally, to meet the creative needs of Ontario's marginalized people. We have begun and will continue to evolve our internal systems to ensure seamless delivery of programming and set VIBE up for another 25 years of providing arts education and creative mentorship to those who need it most. This includes providing equipment and access to those who need it to participate and benefit from our programs.

### 02. Partnership

The arts community has taken a hit from the impact of COVID-19, leaving many artists and arts organizations under-supported to continue their work. We are finding alternative ways to support our artists and the communities we serve, including new collaborations and partnerships. We will partner with organizations and companies outside of our network to build meaningful relationships that not only provide financial support, but also create pathways for communities to grow and artists to develop both their artistic and business skills.

### 03. Celebrating Lived Experience through Art Projects

For too many years, we have been introduced to communities and cultures through the lens of the oppressor. History is being forgotten and culture is being appropriated. VIBE is committed to diversifying the voices at the table and using art as a medium to share history, traditions and lived experiences. Often, we speak about the beauty of our multicultural city, but in reality, cultural celebrations are scarcely observed. Celebration of heritage is a life-long experience, and should be demonstrated across our city year-round.



# Supporters



Bunny Boy by TIMMY  
Artwork created in VIBE Arts' NExT Program

# Thank you

to our donors, funders, sponsors, volunteers, community and corporate partners for their continued, meaningful support.



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