



155 Gibbs Street, Rockville, MD 20850, 301-315-8200, www.visartscenter.org

Gallery Hours: Wednesday, Thursday 12 - 4 PM, Friday 12 - 8 PM, Saturday & Sunday 12 - 4 PM

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HIDDEN & POLITICAL HISTORIES OF SPORTS IN NEW EXHIBITION AT VISARTS

POWER FORWARD

Curated by Astria Suparak

Kaplan Gallery, VisArts

May 23 - July 1, 2018

bit.ly/powerforward_visarts

PRESS IMAGES & CREDITS: http://bit.ly/powerforward_visarts_press



Image: Still from *Gymnasts* by Macon Reed, featuring Kim Randall, HD video, sound, 6 min, 2014. Courtesy of the artist.

Reception: Friday, June 1, 7 - 9pm

Event: Sports GIF Contest, Sports Poetry Reading, *INCITE Sports* book launch

Monday, June 4, 6:30pm, at Finnegan's Wake Irish Pub, Rockville Town Square

Discussion: *Sports and Politics*, with Special Guests to be announced

Saturday, June 23, 4 - 5:30pm at VisArts, Kaplan Gallery, 2nd floor

Film Screening: *A Beautiful Game*

Wednesday, June 27, 9 - 10:30pm, on the Rooftop at VisArts (in case of rain: Buchanan Room)

Exhibition and events are free and open the public. Sports-themed cocktails and food will be available.

Rockville, MD -- VisArts presents *Power Forward*, a group exhibition of artists who **draw upon the hidden and political histories of sports to open up analyses of the social world.**

"Sports are not a refuge from the 'real world.' Sports have been and always are political," writes Astria Suparak, the curator of *Power Forward*. "Who gets to play? Who is penalized for what? Which stadiums are built? Where? And with whose money? Eminent domain, organized labor, drug and gender testing, commercial sponsorships, tax breaks, bribery, and abuse scandals are just some of the ways power is flexed daily within what has been called a secular religion and a proxy war."

Contemporary artists from the U.S., Canada, China, and Lebanon delve into the worlds of football, basketball, soccer, gymnastics, hockey, tennis, and golf—from the heights of the Olympics down to college teams and more intimate arenas such as cramped apartments. The exhibiting artists are Haig Aivazian, Cara Erskine, Karen Kraven, Nicolas Lampert, Cait McKinney & Hazel Meyer, Gao Mingyan, Ayanah Moor, Macon Reed, and Zhang Qing. Their subjects and inspirations include Washington's NFL and NBA teams, Brittney Griner, Magic Johnson, Simone Biles, Nadia Comăneci, and Billie Jean King.

The title of the exhibition, *Power Forward*, refers to a position in basketball that emphasizes a combination of strength and skill. Traditionally, it has been the domain of lumbering, back-to-the-basket scorers and stout rebounders. But over the past decade it's evolved into a role that requires increased quickness, defensive versatility, and outside shooting skills. In like manner, **many of the artists in *Power Forward* are versatile in sports—as current or former athletes, as serious fans, and as makers inspired by athletics.** The title also references the Black Panthers slogan, "All Power To The People" and the desire for shifts in the balance of power.

The exhibition includes a series of events including:

- A **rooftop film screening** of short works that remediate sports history from fan perspectives with glee and irreverence (*A Beautiful Game*, Wednesday, June 27, 9-10:30pm, on the Rooftop at VisArts [in case of rain: Buchanan Room] with a popcorn bar).
- A **discussion on sports and politics** with local experts (Saturday, June 23, 4-5:30pm at VisArts, Kaplan Gallery, 2nd floor). Topics may include recent protests, the realities and repercussions for athletes (both on and off-field), the exploitative treatment of Washington's NFL cheerleaders, and other timely and local issues.
- A **contest for the "Sports G.G.O.A.T. (Greatest GIF of All Time),"** to be decided by the audience in a NCAA bracket-style tournament, with prizes. The event will also include readings of poetry made from re-edited television interviews of athletes (a project of writers Pasha Malla and Jeff Parker), and will serve as the Rockville launch of the *Sports* issue of *INCITE Journal of Experimental Media* (Monday, June 4, 6:30pm, at Finnegan's Wake Irish Pub, Rockville Town Square).

To participate, the public is invited to submit a favorite sports GIF, original or found, by May 30th.
Instructions at: bit.ly/sports-gif-contest

- Sports-themed cocktails and non-alcoholic beverages will be available at all events.

Power Forward is curated by the 2018 VisArts Mentoring Curator Astria Suparak of Oakland, California, with the assistance of 2018 VisArts Emerging Curator Anthony Stepter. Generous funding for *Power Forward* has been provided by the Windgate Charitable Trust.

ABOUT THE CURATOR:

Astria Suparak has curated exhibitions, screenings, live music events and performances for art spaces, film festivals, and academic venues internationally, including PS1, Eyebeam Art+Technology Center, Museo Rufino Tamayo (Mexico City), and the Liverpool Biennial 2004, as well as for non-art spaces such as roller-skating rinks, elementary schools, sports bars, rock clubs, and ferries.

She co-edited the latest issue of *INCITE Journal of Experimental Media*, titled *Sports*, which is accompanied by a series of exhibitions and events throughout 2018 at locations including the Wexner Center, the Gene Siskel Film Center, and Yerba Buena Center for the Arts. Previous exhibitions she's curated include *Keep It Slick: Infiltrating Capitalism with The Yes Men*, the first survey of the internationally renowned culture-jamming group; *Whatever It Takes: Steelers Fan Collections, Rituals, and Obsessions*, which explored sports fanaticism as a significant form of cultural production; and *Alien She*, a traveling exhibition on the lasting impact of the global punk feminist movement Riot Grrrl.

ABOUT THE VISARTS MENTORING & EMERGING CURATOR PROGRAM:

VisArts annually selects a Mentoring Curator to guide its *VisArts Emerging Curator Program*. This program provides emerging curators with practical, hands-on experience at a community arts organization. It is designed to support diverse exhibitions presenting a broad spectrum of ideas and curatorial approaches. In addition, it enhances the VisArts exhibition experience by developing educational opportunities, public programming and opportunities for community engagement through expanded use of interactive interpretive media in its gallery program. This is the first year that VisArts selected a Mentoring Curator from outside of the D.C. area, recognizing the importance of including curatorial voices beyond the region.

PUBLIC EVENTS:

Exhibition and events are free and open the public. Sports-themed cocktails, non-alcoholic beverages, and food will be available at all events.

May 23 - July 1, 2018:

Exhibition on view at Kaplan Gallery, VisArts, 2nd floor.

Friday, June 1, 7 - 9pm:

Reception at VisArts. bit.ly/pwr-fwd-fb

Monday, June 4, 6:30pm:

Greatest Sports GIFs of All Time Contest, Sports Poetry Reading, *INCITE Sports* book launch, at Finnegan's Wake Irish Pub, Rockville Town Square.

Special guests will read SportsTalk poetry by: John Amaechi, Larry Bird, Jason Collins, Darryl Dawkins, Mark Gonzales, Kwame Harris, Martina Navratilova, Ronda Rousey, Sheryl Swoopes, Serena Williams, Venus Williams, Zinedine Zidane (from a project edited by writers Pasha Malla and Jeff Parker)

To participate, submit your favorite sports GIF, original or found, by May 30th. Instructions at:

bit.ly/sports-gif-contest

Saturday, June 23, 4 - 5:30pm:

Sports and Politics discussion, with Special Guests to be announced, at VisArts, Kaplan Gallery, 2nd floor.

Free and open to the public. Kindly RSVP to reserve a seat: <https://www.visartscenter.org/more/event/discussion-sports-and-politics/>

A discussion on sports and politics among local experts (to be announced), which may touch on recent protests, the realities and repercussions for athletes (both on and off-field), the exploitative treatment of Washington's NFL cheerleaders, and other timely and local issues.

Power Forward curator Astria Suparak will tip off the program with an illustrated preview of *INCITE Journal's* newest issue, *Sports*. Edited by Suparak and Brett Kashmere, the book surveys the intersections of sports, political discourse, popular culture, experimental media, and performance.

Wednesday, June 27, 9 - 10:30pm:

A Beautiful Game film screening, on the Rooftop at VisArts (in case of rain: Buchanan Room). Sports-themed cocktails and a popcorn bar available for purchase. More info: <https://www.visartscenter.org/more/event/a-beautiful-game/>

Artists: Alethea Arnaquq-Baril, James Blagden, Miguel Calderón, Anil Dash, Kevin Jerome Everson, Ana Hušman, Paper Rad, Pied la Biche, Lisa Young. Curated by Astria Suparak and Brett Kashmere.

About VisArts: Located in the heart of Rockville, Maryland, VisArts is a hub for the visual arts that engages nearly 30,000 visitors annually through gallery exhibitions, education programs, a studio artist program, and events. Founded in 1987, VisArts is committed to our mission of transforming individuals and communities through the visual arts.

VisArts is located three blocks from the Rockville Metro station at 155 Gibbs Street, Rockville, Maryland. For information, please visit www.visartscenter.org or call 301-315-8200.

VisArts Gallery Hours:

Wednesday & Thursday: 12 – 4 PM

Friday: 12 – 8 PM

Saturday & Sunday: 12 – 4 PM

Exhibitions are always free and open to the public.

For information, images or to arrange an interview or preview of the exhibition, please contact Susan Main at (301) 315-8200 ext. 110 or smain@visartscenter.org

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