

triCityNews

MONMOUTH'S NEWS & ARTS WEEKLY

**ONE OF
ASBURY'S
BEST
ARTS
EVENTS
REOPENS**



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EMERGING ARTISTS TO BEACH
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ONE OF ASBURY'S BEST ARTS EVENTS REOPENS



Previous Siren Arts performance on the Asbury Park beach.

D.C. CULTURAL POWERHOUSE BRINGS EMERGING ARTISTS TO BEACH AND HOTEL ROOF

ASBURY PARK — As we chronicle the reopening of major cultural organizations and events in our area, it provides a remarkable narrative of the power of what's been built here in the triCity region of eastern Monmouth.

For we have become a suburban area like no other. A place where the creative and alternative are ascendant. A place as happening as any happening medium-sized city.

This is a regional play. It's happening all over eastern Monmouth. Still, our beloved little city of Asbury Park has always been — and remains to this day — the biggest catalyst for our region's transformation. There's almost a mystical attraction to Asbury, which attracts cultural talent and leadership from far beyond our borders.

Perfect example is Victoria Reis, who grew up just outside Asbury Park. She made her name as an arts leader in Washington, D.C. as the co-founder and current Executive Director of Transformer, a non-profit art space that's hosted hundreds of exhibits since 2002. Transformer is a cultural powerhouse in our nation's capitol.

Reis and Transformer are frequent presences in the Washington, DC media. A March article in the Washington Post described her role in the city's arts scene.

"(Transformer) is a platform to promote emerging visual artists," Reis told

the Post. "We knew that we wanted to support D.C. artists, but that we also wanted to present them in tandem with their peers nationally and internationally."

"We work in partnership with a lot of cultural institutions and artists, and what started out as a DIY kind of project in many ways still has that operational aesthetic," Reis told the paper, which noted that she splits her time between D.C. and Asbury Park. "We're very nimble in what we do, but we are also now a professionalized organization with a board of 15 arts leaders in the D.C. community."

And that time Reis spends up here — she and her husband (Bad Religion guitarist Brian Baker) have a home in Neptune — is where we come in. For this newspaper has been one of the biggest cheerleader for Reis's project in our city, which starts its fifth year this week.

It's a project of Transformer in Asbury Park called Siren Arts, which features emerging artists along the corridor from Washington, D.C. to New York. Reis brings all her credibility and connections to this project, which has drawn tremendous talent — and equally tremendous accolades — from those who've attended the Asbury Park Siren Arts events. This is the fifth year. Last year was virtual.

Siren Arts will bring five emerging artists to our city for a three day mi-

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cro-residency. Starting this week for five weeks, each artist will give a public artist talk on Wednesdays at The Asbury hotel's Salvation rooftop space at 6 pm and a performance at 7 pm Thursdays on the Second Avenue beach. It's all free!

Here's the schedule of dates for the public artist talks on Wednesday and performances on Thursday:

July 21 - 22: JungWoong Kim & Germaine Ingram (Philadelphia, PA)
 July 28 - 29: Armando Lopez-Bircann (Washington, DC)
 August 4 - 5: Monica Jahan Bose (Washington, DC)
 August 11 - 12: Jaime Sunwoo & Johnnie Cruise Mercer (Brooklyn, NY)
 August 18 - 19: Eli Barak (Baltimore, MD)

Visit transformerdc.org for full performance descriptions and artist bios. (Click on the Siren Arts icon on the homepage.) For the 7 pm beach performances, attendees are asked to arrive by 6:45 at the Second Avenue beach with beach chairs or towels for seating. Performances will last about 30-40 minutes. In case of rain, the performances will take place in the Casino breezeway.

"Transformer's goal with Siren Arts is to empower the participating artists and inspire audiences in both reflection and positive action around ocean conservation, and its implications in all other parts of our lives, while introducing new and best practices within contemporary art," said Reis.

Siren Arts seeks to both celebrate the ocean and bring awareness to the intersectional effects of climate change, including immigration issues, land back, racial and social justice, ecological impact, and more.

This year's Siren Arts series is entitled "Ripple" and features "a stellar line up of artists in their creation and presentation of experimental performance art works that address human and environmental interconnectedness," Reis said.

Informed and inspired by the sea, and how it moves us physically, spiritually, and emotionally, the "Ripple" artists explore themes of communication, environmental consciousness, climate justice, and more through music, dance, ritual, sound, and visual art components.

In highlighting artists living within the northeast corridor of DC to NYC, Transformer's Siren Arts program provides urban-based artists an opportunity to enjoy creative time at the beach, and to expand and present their work to new audiences.

Asbury Park's rich cultural history and centralized location within the northeast shoreline provide fertile context for Siren Arts artists to question and create. It's great for the artists, and as they go forth and make names for themselves, they'll always remember Asbury Park — and likely come back, maybe some for good.

The following are brief descriptions of each performance:

(July 22) Through improvised dance and vocalization, and engagement with manipulable structures created by sculptor Kris Rumman, JungWoong Kim, accompanied by Germaine Ingram, channels the emotional weight and sense of urgency bound up in the inevitable dominance of nature in the face of mankind's greed, indifference and hubris. Employing ritual, movement, and song drawn from Kim's immersion in the aesthetics of Korean Shamanism, and Ingram's praxis steeped in Afro-diasporic literary and performance traditions, the piece speaks to the imminence of collective disaster if we fail to exercise collective will and human capacity for humility, preservation and restoration.

(July 29) As Arma.Dura, the artist will reflect on the impacts of tourism and climate change on seashores. A focus on current narratives around coral restoration and the ways we can contribute to these efforts. The performance will include wearables and artworks made of calcium carbonate, a chemical derived from seashells.

(August 5) In Offering, Bangladeshi-American artist Monica Jahan Bose draws on rituals using water, turmeric, salt, and saris to speak to climate change, rising waters, and salt incursion into agricultural soil. Offering is part of her ongoing climate justice art project Storytelling with Saris (started in 2012), which collaborates with women from her ancestral island village and people in the US.

(August 12) In Communication Waves, artists Jaime Sunwoo and Johnnie Cruise Mercer reflect on the ocean as a means of communication. By examining the history of messages in bottles, Jaime and Johnnie invite the audience to reflect on life, death, love, and loss.

(August 19) Coming to Terms with the Sea is a spiritual journey that passes environmental consciousness from father to son. Through play, movement, sound, installation and live performance, Eli Barak and his son will conduct a healing ritual. The piece is based on his performance series New Clothing, and is dedicated to themes of displacement and diaspora. Camouflaged, the Baraks will initiate a personal dialogue with the ocean. This performance is an offering, a cry but also the hope to heal the sea.



Previous Siren Arts performance on the Asbury Park beach.