

LOVE THY NEIGHBOR

A Community Celebration of Fashion and Art

The Gallery at City Hall

25 Dorrance Street, Providence, RI

March 20, 2025 – May 12, 2025

Opening Reception March 20, 2025 from 4:30–7:30 PM

Curatorial Statement

"Love Thy Neighbor" is a vibrant community celebration of peace, love, and culture, manifested by Maria Grace. Everything was made by Maria as well as artists and designers she admires. Infused with joy, expression, and culture "Love Thy Neighbor" is a commitment to sharing passion and honoring community.

Maria's fashion designs and event productions burst with style that is grounded in rigor. So too is her ability to galvanize community, which is why we opened the exhibit with a one-of-a-kind fashion show produced by Maria on March 20. From models to singers to balloon artists and more, Maria opens all the doors so that everyone can celebrate.

Most people who come to City Hall are not there for an art show. They come to pay a tax bill or attend a City Council meeting, get a marriage license or attend a training. What a perfect time to encounter the community celebration of "Love Thy Neighbor." We hope that spending time with this vibrant collection of fashion and design made by Providence artists helps people in whatever they're pursuing.

Maria Grace strongly believes that by sharing this platform with her fellow Talented Artists, they become a team of collaborators, showing that "Through Unity Together We Rise!"

"Love Thy Neighbor" features Special Guest Refurbished Fashion Designers Kathy Sanchez and S. Kai Cameron and opening night performer Ms. Alisha A. Pina whose album is released on March 15, 2025.

FEATURED ARTISTS

Maria Grace
Miss Kai Cameron
Kathy Sanchez

PROJECT PARTNERS



Providence Housing Authority was established in 1939 to provide affordable, clean and decent public housing. Today the PHA administers 2,606 public housing units that house over 5,500 residents designated as elderly/disabled, family, and scattered sites developments. Additionally, it oversees the administration of 2,700 Section 8 tenant based and project-based vouchers that allow low-income families to rent in the private market.

The PHA's devotion to provide housing and services to those in need is persistent, enduring, and innovative. The agency's commitment to be a better neighbor, to actively pursue ways to improve the health and safety of our residents, to strategically align visions with our community partners and to help people grow has never waned.



City of Providence Department of Arts, Culture and Tourism ensures the continued development of a vibrant and creative city by integrating arts and culture into community life while showcasing Providence as an international cultural destination. ACT commissions public art and produces public programming in all 25 of the City's neighborhoods, facilitates education partnerships in schools and libraries, and produces multiple flagship festivals, an annual arts and humanities lecture, and other dynamic public programs while stewarding a small portfolio of grants.

BIOS

Curator and Artist Maria Grace

My Name is Maria Mendez aka Maria Grace, a resident of Chad Brown and the Providence Housing Authority. I was raised in Boston Massachusetts, from the age of 6 years old. My mother Maria Adela Rosa, noticed that at a very young age, both my brother and I show creativity and enrolled us to the Elma Lewis School of Fine Arts. The school, based in Roxbury provided classes in a variety of artistic, social, and cultural topics, including art, dance, drama, music and costuming. I took a variety of different classes: African dancing, Drama, Opera vocal lessons, violin and costuming until the age 14.

My love for fashion started way before that. My whole family is very fashion oriented. We all share fashion, cooking & dancing. My grandfather, Mr. Agustin Rosa was a strong influence on me and was the foundation of my family. He made sure that all the family would get together and utilize our creativity -- especially the youngins. Within our get-togethers we would have Friday Night Show -- night Parties of cooking, dancing, entertainment and fashion within the family.

I remember how my Community families of all ethnic backgrounds and races would help one another, even though at the time there was a lot of racism. I wasn't just raised by Parents and family. I was raised by the whole Jamaica Plain community. Everybody had their hands in disciplining us and keeping us safe and guarded the best way they know how for all of the children.

My baby-sitter, Ms. Sara she would sew for a living. She did not allow us to watch TV. She would have me sew all kinds of stuff. At the time I hated it! I wanted to be outside playing with the rest of the kids, but I am forever grateful that I learned those things that have been very useful to me today.

At the age of 10 we moved 10 blocks down. My best friend's parents were about to lose their home because they could not afford to pay the mortgage. I remember the adult neighbors would sit down on each other's porches to share their stories while they watched us play. On that day I remember watching my friend and her parents cry. I believe it awakened a part of me. I believe that God Almighty utilized me and my talent to help, so I came up with a solution to do a community fundraising block party.

We all got together. I organized our first tent party. We got the teachers, students, police officers who used to walk the block, and community corner store owners. Everybody started donating food and hosting bake sales. Kevin White from the Mayor's office helped by blocking off the streets & giving us police to make sure we were all safe. From that first event my brother became a DJ and I became the Entertainment Event planner & fashion Coordinator.

As I got older and into my high school years, I started to develop a sense for producing directing entertainment & fashion show at Madison Park High School, where we also were taught music, drama, and sewing among the academic courses.

I lost all interest once my grandfather passed away in 1979. I would do small community things until the age of 30. That's when my health issues started to take over. In the last year I've re-emerged and found new collaborations with my community, hosting fashion shows and events in Providence.

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Featured Artist S. Kai Cameron

Upon retirement from the Providence Public School District as an Administrator for twenty-plus years, S. Kai Cameron has served for nearly eight years as the Co-Director/Coordinator for the Langston Hughes Community Poetry Reading Committee (LHPRC), which in 2019 was the recipient of the distinguished RISCA Expansion Arts program. Notably, prior to her involvement with LHPRC, Kai has been an advocate for Rhode Island's high-risk youth and their families as a classroom teacher, program developer, project manager and community engagement activist primarily in the City of Providence. Her experience covered working with small community-based non-profits to major institutions. Prior to her public education career, she led a number of projects designed to enhance the education of children and to empower their families to become education advocates on their behalf.

Kai received a number of local, state and national awards including the US Housing and Development (HUD) Minority Fellowship, and the Student of the Year Award (1997) from the RI Chapter of the American Planning Association. Additionally, she participated as a community volunteer and/or board member in numerous associations, such as Violet's Village, Neighbors 4 Revitalization, The Steelyard, YouthBuild, RI Coalition of Black Women, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and Racial Environmental Justice Committee (REJC).

A native Rhode Islander, Kai received her BA in Elementary Education from Rhode Island College and holds a MA in Community Planning for social policy development from the University of Rhode Island. She is also sole proprietor of an entrepreneurial fashion design business, called "Kai's Kloset". Deliberately created as a social enterprise, her business was developed to provide one-of-a-kind eco-friendly clothing that is fashionable to the community at-large, but in particular to BIPOC womxn. Kai's Kloset is currently in the process of rebranding as Kai's Kloset Kustom Kreations to focus not only on fashion but creative collaboration among BIPOC womxn.

Featured Artist Kathy Sanchez

I am 24 years old and from Providence. It's crazy how I live in such a small state yet I have a big big dream that I would like to share, bring my community with me and give back. That's what I've always said and stand on.

Believe it or not I use to be the most shy person ever. I didn't talk, or look at people, or smile. As the years have gone by, I've blossomed into this beautiful flower who shares love and positivity. I went to The Met High School where I discovered my passion for modeling and fashion designing. I went to my first audition for modeling with Toni and Guy in 2018 and fell in love with walking the runway.

In 2017 I began an internship with a local fashion designer Martha Jackson who taught me to sew and model her work. I modeled for RI fashion week in 2019. After I graduated high school I took a break from modeling and designing and instead focused on school and studied business administration. When I noticed myself missing photoshoots and runways, my partner motivated me to take pictures and start my portfolio on Instagram. I would think of different ideas for pictures and get it done! After that, I felt motivated to apply to a local agency, ModelNextUp401. A 5-week program where they had us do photoshoots and runway classes and at the end we did a fashion show celebration for the models who graduated.

I've met amazing people throughout my journey who have the same passion as me and have given me tips that I will cherish and pass to another generation who has the same dream as me.

WORKS ON DISPLAY

Maria Grace



S. Kai Cameron



Kathy Sanchez

