



# ASIAN ARTS INITIATIVE

1219 VINE STREET \* PHILADELPHIA, PA 19107 \* (215) 557-0455



Kelly Tsai, performer, Artists Exchange mini-festival,  
Asian Arts Initiative, Dec. 6-7

**Press Contact:**  
Canary Promotion | Office: 215-690-4065

Carolyn Huckabay,  
[carolyn@canarypromo.com](mailto:carolyn@canarypromo.com)

High-resolution images available  
upon request and online at:  
[www.canarypromo.com/asianarts](http://www.canarypromo.com/asianarts)  
Website: [www.asianartsinitiative.org](http://www.asianartsinitiative.org)

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **Asian Arts Initiative a National Hub of Culture and Community**

*December programming, from a mini-festival of Asian American performance to a neighborhood arts crawl, cements the Initiative's role as a cultural anchor*

PHILADELPHIA — **Asian Arts Initiative** is abuzz with activity throughout the month of December. From presenting a mini-festival of innovative Asian American performance to introducing the National Performance Network to the vibrancy of Chinatown North with a neighborhood arts crawl, the organization is underscoring its mission to create community through art as it cements its role as a cultural anchor.

Created to support and engage Asian American artists as they explore issues within their communities, Asian Arts Initiative's annual **Artists Exchange** (AX) allows solo artists to collaborate in a supportive environment. This year, AX features *Home, Far and Near* (**Dec. 6-7, 7:30 p.m.**), a two-day mini-festival of work by up-and-coming and established Asian American performers, including spoken-word poet **Kelly Tsai** (pictured above), movement artist **Soomi Kim**, filmmaker **Anula Shetty** and more. (*Detailed descriptions of the Artists Exchange performances follow below.*)

Coinciding with the National Performance Network (NPN) and Visual Artists Network (VAN) Annual Meeting co-hosted by Asian Arts Initiative and the Painted Bride Arts Center, a **Chinatown North Arts Crawl** (**Dec. 14, 6-9 p.m.**) will highlight the unique and varied spaces in the neighborhood's emerging arts community. The Arts Crawl starts at Asian Arts Initiative and will bring visitors to VOX Populi, The Fabric Workshop and Museum, Trestle Inn, Space 1026, Underground Arts and more.

As part of the NPN Annual Meeting, the Visual Artists Network will present a group exhibition showcasing artwork around the theme of "community engagement." The **VAN Exhibition** (Dec. 13,

2012-Feb. 1, 2013), presented in Asian Arts Initiative's first-floor gallery space, features the work of local and nationally known visual artists, including Philadelphia's **Benjamin Volta** and **Colette Fu**.

Meanwhile, on the Asian Arts Initiative's second floor, local artist Theodore A. Harris has curated the exhibition ***Shut Your Trap!!: A Study on Authority in Art*** (through Feb. 27, 2013), a multimedia group show that raises questions about authority in art and dissent against slavery, war, the death penalty and more.

"These programs are symbolic of the role we want to play as a hub for diverse activity and dialogue in our neighborhood," says executive director **Gayle Isa**. "Asian Arts Initiative is thrilled that the National Performance Network chose Philadelphia for its Annual Meeting this year, and we look forward to the opportunity to put Chinatown North in the national spotlight."

Information about each of Asian Arts Initiative's exciting December programs follows below; for artist bios and additional details, visit [asianartsinitiative.org](http://asianartsinitiative.org).

## **Schedule of Events at Asian Arts Initiative**

### **Public Exhibitions:**

#### ***Shut Your Trap!***

On view through February 27, 2013  
Studio B, Second Floor

#### ***VAN Exhibition***

December 14, 2012, to February 1, 2013  
Gallery, First Floor

### **Events + Performances:**

#### ***Home, Far and Near: Artists Exchange Mini-Festival***

Thu.-Fri., Dec. 6-7, 7:30 p.m.  
\$15 general admission

#### ***First Friday Reception: Shut Your Trap!***

Fri., Dec. 7, 6-9 p.m.

#### ***Asian Arts Initiative Gallery Reception and Open House***

Fri., Dec. 14, 6-9 p.m.

#### ***Chinatown North Arts Crawl***

Fri., Dec. 14, 6-9 p.m. (Meet at Asian Arts Initiative)

Asian Arts Initiative  
1219 Vine St.  
Philadelphia, PA 19107  
[www.asianartsinitiative.org](http://www.asianartsinitiative.org)  
215-557-4055

Gallery hours: Tuesday-Friday, noon-6 p.m.

## **About the *Home, Near and Far* Artists Exchange**

Asian Arts Initiative's annual **Artists Exchange** (AX) kicks off with ***Home, Near and Far***, a mini-festival of innovative Asian American performance art. Created in 2002 to support and engage Asian American artists as they explore issues within their communities, the Artists Exchange allows for solo artists to collaborate in a supportive environment. Through a series of local site visits, discussion forums, workshops, peer-to-peer presentations and public performances, the weeklong program seeks to support new performance art inspired by this open exchange of ideas. Public showcase performances will be held **Thursday and Friday, December 6 and 7, at 7:30 p.m.** AX is supported in part by grants from the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Performance Network's Performance Residency Program and Community Fund. Participating artists include:

- **Sun Mee Chomet**, actor/dancer/playwright: *How to Be a Korean Woman*, a play about the political ramifications of international adoption;
- **Kennedy Kabasares**, aerial artist/actor/writer, and **Traci Kato Kiriyama**, performing artist/arts educator: *Pull: Tales of Obsession*, a multidisciplinary piece on mother-daughter relationships that fuses monologues, recorded interviews and static trapeze;
- **Soomi Kim**, movement artist: *Chang(e)*, a hybrid dance work based on the life and work of the artist, known for setting herself on fire and dancing in protest of political apathy at University of Pennsylvania;
- **Anula Shetty**, filmmaker: *Cosmic Egg*, a media-based performance piece about surrogacy and fertility issues in India;
- **Kelly Tsai**, spoken word poet/playwright/filmmaker: *Formosa*, a solo spoken word "choreo-show" exploring "beauty, culture, labor, body and Barbie"; and
- **Gein Wong**, spoken word poet/playwright: *Hiding Words (for you)*, blending theater, poetry, hip-hop, Western and Chinese classical music, dance and visual art to tell the story of a secret language created in the year 400 A.D.

## **About the Chinatown North Arts Crawl**

As part of this year's National Performance Network Annual Meeting, hosted in Philadelphia by Asian Arts Initiative and the Painted Bride Art Center, the **Chinatown North Arts Crawl** will take place on **Friday, Dec. 14, 6-9 p.m.** Starting at the VAN exhibition at Asian Arts Initiative with live music by **Alo Brasil** and culminating with the Philadelphia-produced "Live and Local" performances (**Germaine Ingram/Bobby Zankel, Kun Yang Lin/Dancers, Miller Rothlein, Nichole Canuso, Raphael Xavier, Martha Graham Cracker** and more) at Underground Arts (1200 Callowhill St., 8:30 and 9:30 p.m.), the open house/walking tour will wind through the neighborhood, highlighting the unique and varied spaces in this emerging arts community. Additional stops on the tour include:

- **Asian Arts Initiative, 1219 Vine St.;**
- **Art Spaces @ 319 N. 11th Street:** Grizzly Grizzly, Marginal Utility, Napoleon Gallery, PRACTICE, Tiger Strikes Asteroid and VOX Populi;

- **More neighborhood art spaces:** The Action Mill, Fabric Workshop and Museum and Space 1026;
- **Local restaurant:** The Trestle Inn, offering drink specials.

### **About the VAN Exhibition**

Modeled after National Performance Network's (NPN) performing arts showcase, the Visual Artists Network (VAN) will exhibit the work of visual artists during the NPN Annual Meeting in Philadelphia. Artists' work will be shown in a group exhibition at Asian Arts Initiative during the conference and beyond (**Dec. 13, 2012, to Feb. 1, 2013**). An overarching theme of "Community Engagement" is being used to focus the exhibition. Four artists have been selected to exhibit their work in the gallery space, including:

- **Leticia Bajuyo**, Madison, IN, multimedia installation
- **Colette Fu**, Philadelphia, paper engine/photography
- **Kenyatta A.C. Hinkle**, Los Angeles, multimedia installation
- **Benjamin Volta**, Philadelphia, printmaking

### **About the *Shut Your Trap!!* Exhibition**

In collaboration with the Institute for Advanced Study in Black Aesthetics, Asian Arts Initiative presents the exhibition ***Shut Your Trap!!: A Study on Authority in Art***. The multimedia group show, on display **through February 27, 2013**, in the second-floor gallery space, raises questions about authority in art and dissent against slavery, war, the death penalty and more. Participating artists include:

- **Theodore A. Harris**, exhibition curator, author and "truthoscopic collagist"
- **Manuel Acevedo**, photographer and flip-book animator
- **Kien Nguyen**, muralist and teaching artist
- **Glynnis Reed**, mixed-media artist
- **Keir Johnston and Ernel Martinez**, Amber Design Collective, Roots mural designers

### **About Asian Arts Initiative**

Asian Arts Initiative is a community-based arts center in Philadelphia that engages artists and everyday people to create art that explores the diverse experiences of Asian Americans, addresses our social context, and imagines and effects positive community change. Recently relocated due to the expansion of the Pennsylvania Convention Center, Asian Arts Initiative is now in a new home at 1219 Vine Street, where we are contributing to the revitalization of Vine Street and Chinatown North. For more information, please call 215-557-0455 or visit [asianartsinitiative.org](http://asianartsinitiative.org).

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**To request photos, interviews and more information, please contact:**  
 Canary Promotion, 215-690-4065  
 Carolyn Huckabay, [carolyn@canarypromo.com](mailto:carolyn@canarypromo.com)