

IT COMES IN WAVES

living with Long COVID in Colorado

ART EXHIBITION

November 7 - December 30
The People's Building
9995 E Colfax

visit
www.stitchingthesituation.org
for more information

First Friday Happy Hour
Nov 7 & Dec 5, 5-7 pm

Show reception
Dec 10, 5-8 pm

Community stitching sessions
@ Aurora MLK Library, TBD

with thanks to our sponsors:



Long COVID continues to affect hundreds of thousands of Coloradans, though the pandemic is no longer in an emergency state and most people consider it “over.” The artwork and stories in this exhibition share a range of experiences, from chronic migraines and fatigue to debilitating symptoms that render sufferers bed ridden for days, weeks, sometimes months. Some have recovered, others have not yet found lasting relief. While Colorado institutions like the Anschutz School of Medicine and Jewish National Health’s Long COVID clinics are at the forefront of providing care and conducting crucial research, knowledge about post-COVID conditions and access to care is limited. This exhibition aims to bring both the lived experiences of Long COVID and the resources available locally to the public’s attention.

“It Comes in Waves” is supported by an INSITE Fund grant through the RedLine Contemporary Art Center, a regranting institution for the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts. Artist Heather Schulte received this award to further her project, *Stitching the Situation*, a community led non-profit documenting and memorializing experiences of COVID-19 through collective embroidery. This funding facilitated expanded accessibility by commissioning interviews and writing submissions by folks living with Long COVID, and hired incarcerated artists to illustrate them. These illustrations and images of the artwork in the exhibition will become patterns incorporated into the larger embroidery project.

A digital version of the exhibition will be hosted on our website at www.stitchingthesituation.org/en/it-comes-in-waves, with full transcripts of interviews and writings provided by our story tellers alongside a resource page with links to local and national information about Long COVID research and treatment.

CONTRIBUTORS:

Karen Breunig

I have been painting since I was a child, for over 50 years. I have painted through many challenges, long covid being one of the toughest. It is what connects me to who I am, so I'm sure I'll keep it up until I can no longer hold a brush.

Hector Castillo

Castillo is a self-taught artist from Huntington Beach, California. As a child, he first learned to make art by sketching freeze frames of his favorite cartoons. As a teenager, he experimented with Chicano art, calligraphy, and graffiti.

Castillo began working seriously in acrylic and oil in his mid-twenties while incarcerated in the Colorado Department of Corrections. His paintings have been featured in numerous exhibitions, including shows at the McNichols Building in Denver; the Marion Gallery at SUNY Fredonia; the Museum of Art Fort Collins; the Colorado State Capitol; and the Boulder Public Library.

Through his artwork, Hector hopes to inspire viewers—especially those unfamiliar with the prison system—to become more confident, goal-driven, and imaginative. He also strives to advocate for meaningful prison and justice system reform. He wants people to see that an artist in prison can still contribute beauty, truth, and transformation to the world.

Lucy Chester

Lucy Chester, Associate Professor of History and International Affairs at CU Boulder, is the author of *Borders and Conflict in South Asia: The Radcliffe Boundary Commission and the Partition of Punjab* (Manchester UP, 2009)

Karin Dove

Karin Dove is a visual artist and patient advocate who lives in Berkeley, California. When she became chronically ill, she turned her focus to art as a way to express herself, continue to develop her skills, and find stability amid uncertainty. Her life is currently governed by the need for rest and energy conservation, but when able, she works in a variety of mediums, including paper making, embroidery, cyanotype, watercolor, and collage. These activities, accomplished a few minutes at a time over weeks and months, bring her joy and purpose.

Barbara Gould Barbara was a Social Worker for 37 years and is now retired. She lives with her husband in Boulder, CO. Barbara has 2 children, and 3 grandchildren.

Sally Hartshorn Sally is a retired RN whose experience with Long COVID is reflected in her art. Her art has been in many exhibits in Colorado. After 69 years of excellent health and a full, active life, everything changed when Sally contracted COVID in February 2023. She experienced an unexpected loss of both mental and physical function and felt abandoned by a medical system that had few answers.

After 80 hours of hyperbaric oxygen therapy, she made a full recovery. The experience transformed her life and her art. She began pouring her frustration, fear, and joy into her work—fearless and unrestrained. That healing process led her to organize a national art exhibit by and for those living with Long COVID, giving others a chance to share their stories through their art. As an artist and retired RN, Sally is committed to continue advocating for people who still suffer from Long COVID.

Riccardo Kirven Kirven grew up on the south side of Colorado Springs, where he made art and played sports to stay out of trouble. Kirven taught himself to draw comic book characters and animals. He was invited to Bemis Art School for Children twice, and excelled in art classes from K-12. He went to college for art and music production. He stopped creating for nearly two decades, until he rediscovered his love for art in prison. Kirven is inspired to create art about the social, political, and economic injustices inflicted by America's government on Aboriginal, Indigenous, and poor people. He wants to raise awareness about the racial supremacy ideology that's alive in this country and around the world. Expressing how he feels through his art helps Kirven work through his feelings and relieve stress. He hopes to touch others with his artwork, and to inspire change in both people's perspectives, and the world.

Douglas Lehman Lehman is a self-taught artist who learned to draw while serving time in solitary confinement in the Colorado Department of Corrections. After his release in 2014, he attended the Art Institute of Colorado for a year for graphic design.

Now back in prison, Lehman works primarily in pencil, colored pencil, and ballpoint pen, due to the relative availability of these materials in confinement. His art is dark, gritty, provocative, and packed with detailed imagery and hidden messages. He often pairs his renderings with poems to take viewers and readers on an emotional journey into his creative soul. Lehman hopes that through his art, he can remain connected to his own humanity, and challenge others' ideas of what art can be, say, and achieve.

Sonny Lee Lee is a self-taught artist who works across many mediums—graphite pencil, ink, paint, and sculpture—depending on the message he wishes to convey. He's drawn to realism and fantasy, and uses his art to inspire and uplift others; to offer motivation and meaning. Painting gives Lee a sense of purpose. It helps him stay focused on his personal goals. Outside of his artwork, Lee is currently working toward a degree in psychology. His dream is to one day reunite with his family and make a positive impact in the community. He hopes viewers can observe this spirit in his artwork.

Michaela Martinez Michaela Martinez is a Long COVID sufferer and the cofounder of the Long COVID Information, Discussion, and Support Group, where she advocates for awareness, connection, credible information sharing and healing through shared experience. A devoted mother of two boys and a Master's in Health Care Administration student graduating in February 2026, Michaela brings both personal and professional insight to her work. With 19 years in her healthcare system, she continues to champion compassionate care and education for those navigating chronic illness.

Teague McDaniel McDaniel (he/they) is an artist and curator who grew up in and is based in the Denver Metro area. McDaniel's current roles include acting as the Founder and Curator at Creative Integration Initiative (CII), adjunct professor in the Department of Art at MSU Denver, and practicing artist. Their art practice is media agnostic and frequently traverses installation, performance, social practice, and printmaking. Teague approaches their artistic practice through their lens as a white, trans, autistic/ADHD, disabled, Buddhist, single parent. They hold an MA in Art from Colorado Western University where they studied exhibition design, art business, and curation, and BA in Studio Art with a self designed minor in curatorial studies from MSU Denver.

Venture Merz

Merz (he/they) is an interdisciplinary artist, Buddhist, and trans parent based in Niwot, Colorado. His practice collapses boundaries between meditation, life, and art through practices like throwing clay, printmaking, collage, and poetry.

Emerson Morris

Morris is a disability advocate and poet, recently transplanted from Missouri to Colorado. He recently completed an MFA in Creative Writing and Poetry at the University of Missouri-Saint Louis, and has published multiple pieces on the realities of living as a disabled queer person in the rural Midwest.

Beth Meier Beth Meier is a Fort Collins-based podcast host and disability advocate who believes that memes are tiny prayers. When spoons allow, she produces A Friend for the Long Haul, hoping to create community and connection for people living with Long COVID, ME/CFS, chronic illness, and disability. She is a mother of four children, some of whom are navigating their own disabilities. Beth works in disability employment. Fall is her favorite season, and her favorite Dolly Parton song is "Light of a Clear Blue Morning."

Carol Rathe

Carol Rathe is a former minister in a mystical Christian spiritual group. She is also the retired owner of a talent agency specializing in voiceover artists from around the world. She has been living with Long Covid off and on since early in the pandemic.

Mario Rios

Rios was born and raised on the west and north sides of Denver, where he's been drawing since he could pick up a crayon. He's self-taught, with a curious and creative mind. Rios tries to capture the world around him—from cartoons to cars, to the realities of incarceration and mental illness. Through Impact Arts and other organizations, Rios has been honored to participate in exhibitions that explore prison spaces and the people within, including shows at SUNY Fredonia, the Museum of Art Fort Collins, the Colorado State Capitol, and a mural project in Denver's RiNo Art District. Rio's Chicano culture, lived experience, and mental health journey inspires much of his work. Art helps him survive; it lifts him out of difficult conditions and allows him to express who he is, and who he's becoming. Rios hopes people see his art and understand that, even with a painful past, he's still human, still growing, and still striving to leave a legacy of change.

Frances Rossi

Frances Rossi directed multiple choirs at her Catholic Church in Denver until she got Long COVID in early 2020. Through treatment and participating in research trials she has regained her ability to sing, though with thoughtful pacing. She is both a participant in and advocate for Long COVID treatment and research.

Nalani Saeks Saeks, 25, is a poet who has channeled her experience with Long COVID into her creative work. An honors graduate of Colorado State University, Nalani was on a path to a graduate program in Marriage and Family Therapy after two years spent traveling and working with children as a nanny and para-educator. Her promising future, however, was put on indefinite hold in May 2024, when she fell ill with Long COVID and

became bed-bound. Since then, poetry has become a vital tool for expressing her complex emotions as she continues to work to heal.

Heather Schulte

Heather Schulte is an interdisciplinary artist based in Colorado. Her work combines handmade textile materials and techniques with digital fabrication and design processes, analyzing the intersection of personal and public forms of language and communication. Supported by numerous grants and private donations, her community-based projects include *Stitching the Situation*, a collectively embroidered tapestry documenting experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic (now a 501c3), and The Denver Principles Flagpole Project, in collaboration with PLWHIV and the CO Health Network. In 2022 she received an Arts and Creative Placemaking award from the University of Florida Center for Arts & Medicine.

Dani Sellmar

Dani Sellmer has suffered from Long Covid for 3 years and is the parent of a child with Long Covid. She is the cofounder of Mask Bloc Denver, an organization that supplies free masks, Covid rapid tests, and information and resources on airborne diseases and clean air. She is the mother of four children and enjoys riding horses and hobby farming.

AnaKacia Shifflet AnaKacia Shifflet is a talented Colorado gown designer based in Rye, Colorado, and is considered a rising star in wedding couture. She started her company, Averil Marie Collections, in 2015 and had been growing rapidly with her designs reaching several western states. Her work typically featured mix and match pieces, a customizable line, and custom gowns. She contracted COVID at the beginning of the pandemic, and now is coping with “long haul” syndrome. Due to her prolonged illness, her business has been put on hold, instead she focuses her attention and energy on her health, her family, and advocating for others. Her passion for art and design continues to aid her through her many symptoms and have helped her find purpose, and connect with others going through similar challenges. You can connect with AnaKacia through the following:

Instagram: @averilmarie and @anakacia_marie

TikTok: @anakaciamarie

E-mail: Ashifflet@averilmarie.com

Website: www.averilmarie.com

YouTube: @amstudio3760

Sophia Sophia prefers to remain anonymous to preserve their privacy.

Many, MANY thanks to our partners that made this exhibition possible:

-The People’s Building and Aaron Vega in particular

-RedLine Contemporary Art Center

-The INSITE Fund

-The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts

-Impact Arts, and co-founder, Sarah McKenzie

-Numerous individuals who have generously donated their time, skills, and financial resources to *Stitching the Situation* as we work together to document the ongoing effects of COVID-19.

Please reach out to Heather Schulte with any questions or comments via director@stitchingthesituation.org

We welcome you to join us in our work by:

- sharing your COVID experience
- illustrating a story
- volunteering to stitch
- donating financial or material resources
- hosting a stitching workshop

Learn more at www.stitchingthesituation.org
Follow along on Instagram @stitchingthesituation

