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Art and Soul

For decades, museum-quality pieces by well-known and emerging artists have graced college campuses throughout New York City. Many of our city's college campuses are homes to impressive art collections ranging from contemporary and modern to historical. Magnificent works grace the walls of college art museums. Sculptures sunbathe on campus lawns, and tantalizing textiles and decorative artwork adore the halls of academic buildings.

In Brooklyn, on the Kingsborough campus, art has real soul. From the moment you walk through our gate, you are greeted by a piece from famed artist Osamu Shimoda. But the works that will garner most of your attention are those of talented students, many whom have gone on to become widely known and respected, such as Bisa Butler, a fiber artist in Brooklyn known for her quilted portraits celebrating black life.

Students have long been exposed to and have created

interesting, challenging, and engaging art. Brian Edward Hack, Ph.D, director of the Kingsborough Art Museum (KAM) points out that university galleries are different from the local museums because the curators consider how an exhibit will both benefit and inspire student artists. KAM hosts six shows annually; a faculty show, a student show and local and international exhibits. A student awards ceremony is held in the spring. Many winners have gone on to have their works shown nationally and in major shows, including Antonio Pulgarin, a Colombian-American lens-based artist who utilizes photography, photographic collage, and mixed media in his practice; and Allen Pierre, a native of Haiti who cultivated a love for street photography, and for capturing moments of the City in black and white.

In photographs, KCC Professor Janice Mehlman, a prominent New York photographer, has witnessed students' emotions unfold in their portfolios. Although



A scene from the play *Pass Over* performed by KCC students.

Photo credit: "Stephen Huang & Tommy Mintz (Art 53, Photojournalism)"

everyone in her classes is given the same assignment, each picture is very individual. Professor Mehlman's spring class captured some amazing images on their cell phones during the COVID-19 pandemic. Some of the pic-

tures were so impressive, they were purchased by outside individuals and corporations.

And while cameras capture the world, our students captivate audiences with riveting performances in the KCC Playhouse. What the College strives for is for the theater experience to be community art. It's a place where students can come together and collaborate, express themselves and discover their voices and engage all members of the community.

Entering his 13th year at Kingsborough, Professor Ryan McKinney, MFA, MA, director of Theatre Arts Program, said he has found that theater is very often the catalyst that makes students want to stay in school. "They have found the thing that they are passionate about. They want to spend time working and learning their craft, and exploring how to be a theater artist and how to give back to their community in that way," he said.

The KCC Theatre Arts Program was awarded four

National Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival Awards this year for the production of *Pass Over* by Antoinette Nwandu. *Pass Over* is a student's commentary on black men searching for a world where they don't have to worry about police violence.

The experience of student artists, whether on stage, through a camera lens, sculpture or painting, is usually emotional. They're beginners revealing their inner most ideas and sometimes personal feelings through their work. As their creative visions become a reality on public display, the students come to realize that they are not alone in their thoughts. They have a community.

Dr. Claudia V. Schrader is president of Kingsborough Community College (KCC), a 72-acre academic oasis located in beautiful Manhattan Beach, Brooklyn. Kingsborough Community College is committed to enhancing learning opportunities for the Brooklyn community.