

Open House

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Price (left): "Your art is equally valid." Courtesy of Vision & Verve

For the better part of the past decade, artist Natalie Price has sought practical solutions to basic problems that emerging artists like herself face. Finding opportunities to show and sell art outside of vendor-based market events was a lingering obstacle for her and her friends, she said.

"I'm introverted," she said. "I don't like having to explain to a drunk person what this really important piece [that I'm selling] means to me."

In late 2018, Price quit her job as a hairdresser and founded House of Iconoclasts with the mission of carving out opportunities for artists of all backgrounds to show and sell work. Her first event, *Fuck Your Art Degree*, drew more than 500 attendees and showcased 83 artists at Shipping and Receiving Bar last March. Later that year, HOI put on another art/music show, *Rebel Rebel*, that raised more than \$6,000 in art sales for painters and photographers, many of whom had never shown work before.

With the help of several steadfast volunteers, HOI had shown that it could plan and execute large events that generated new audiences for Fort Worth's art scene. Leadership at the Fort Worth Community Arts Center recently took notice. Last December, HOI was named the resident arts group in Art Aid, a FWCAC program that was pioneered in 2018 by former FWCAC Exhibitions Manager Jonathan Levy and the artist-driven nonprofit Art Tooth, of which I'm a member.

Giovanni Valderas took Levy's position last November. The idea behind the residency program is still evolving, he said.

"One of the best things about this program is that it is so new," he said. "We can create anything. The [gist of] our first meeting was that I'm giving them an opportunity."

That opportunity, he said, includes free use of FWCAC's gallery spaces. HOI will also have access to storage space and the use of meeting rooms to plan out the year. While the final dates haven't been settled on yet, Price — who was joined that day by HOI member and "hype beast" Jessica Beatty and HOI marketing director Wesley Kirk — said the rest of the

year will include a “queer show” in FWCAC’s vault gallery in June, the third iteration of Art Aid in July, a kid-friendly show in August, an all-female witch-themed show in September, unspecified gallery shows in October and November, and a large group show in December.

In past years, Art Aid has focused on providing advice and guest speakers for professional and working amateur artists. Kirkland said this year will be different.

“When I went to Art Aid, it was perfect for me,” he said. “The programs taught me how to be more professional, which is great. With our mission of empowering outsider artists, we want to shift it down a few gears. We will host a panel on how to throw your own art shows and host workshops on how to prepare art for showing in a gallery” for the first time.

Inclusivity is a big part of HOI’s mission, Price said.

“Our application process [to be in shows] does not require a resume or cover letter or credentials,” she said. “You just send us details about your artwork. Whether you have an MFA or you started making art the other day, your art is equally valid.”

Although the name initially drew jeers from some in the local art community, *Fuck Your Art Degree* set the tone for what HOI is about, Price continued. A lot of artists are unsure about showing work just because they don’t have a college degree or MFA.

Beatty said HOI’s irreverent language and punk aesthetic are a signal to the “marginalized artists” in our community who may feel too intimidated to participate in shows or workshops.

“Being a liaison [for those folks] is very important to us,” she said. “Once people see our aesthetic and hear about us, it perks up their ears. They tell their friends, and we can then provide them a platform.”

HOI is hosting a monthly artist mixer/figurative drawing session at The Moon: Bar & Live Music. On the second Wednesday of the month, Artsy Fartsy Party will be a communal gathering space where local creatives can mingle and work on whatever project they want. The members of HOI are already making plans for the second *Fuck Your Art Degree* show later this spring.

Valderas, who still lives in Dallas, said this home city experienced a reinvigorated contemporary art scene several years ago. Without institutional help, those DIY movements (like the one HOI and other artist collectives are starting) can falter or even fail.

“These artists are thinking about how to attract younger people to exhibitions,” he said. “The younger generations are samplers [of culture]. They want to be enlightened and also to have an experience. It is refreshing to have a group like this that is breaking stereotypes.

The art world is partly built on exclusivity, and that's intimidating to people. When I see a group like this that is doing the right things, they need to be empowered."