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Department of Juvenile Justice youth art to be featured at Weinberg/Newton Gallery

Chicago, IL- Artwork created by youth at Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice (IDJJ) facilities will be displayed this fall in an exhibition titled "[Can you see me?](#)". The exhibition opens with a reception on October 14 at 5:00 p.m. at the [Weinberg/Newton Gallery](#), located at 688 North Milwaukee Avenue in Chicago. The exhibition originated from [SkyART's Just-Us program](#), which provides weekly studio-style art therapy sessions for youth in IDJJ facilities.

"Can you see me" will be on display until December 17, and will highlight the humanity and potential of young people affected by the juvenile justice system. The goal of the project is to explore how art can be a tool of justice and healing.

IDJJ Director Heidi Mueller stated, "SkyART's 'Can You See Me' exhibit is so meaningful to us at IDJJ. Not only does the exhibit provide our talented kids the opportunity to display the art they've created to a wider audience, but it also allows the public a chance to see our kids the way we see them: as young people with potential and hope for a bright future. I am so grateful to SkyART for the work they do with our youth, and for organizing this exhibit and the events that go along with it."

Lt. Governor Juliana Stratton stated, "I commend the young artists directing their energy into powerful work, and the staff at SkyART who are helping our youth in IDJJ facilities be seen as their full authentic selves. The arts, and their ability to provide an outlet for often unheard voices to express themselves, are a powerful tool for healing. In Illinois, we build the pathways to uplift our young people and we shine a light on all that is possible when we act with empathy and understanding."

In addition to the exhibition, SkyART will host several panel discussions on various juvenile justice topics at the Weinberg/Newton Gallery. The panels will be held from 5:30-7:00 p.m. on November 4, 11, and 17. Jakki Alexander, Assistant Superintendent of Programs at IDJJ's youth facility in Warrenville, will participate in the November 4 panel. Other panelists include Ally Bain, Staff Attorney at ACLU of Illinois, Emony Tate, a community organizer and youth services provider with Blocks Together, Chicago, and Denzel Burke and Destine Phillips, co-founders of R.E.A.L Youth Initiative.

"Can you see me?" is curated by Devon VanHouten-Maldonado, SkyART's Director of Programs, and Kasia Houlihan, Director of the Weinberg/Newton Gallery. Van Houten-Maldonado stated, "We felt that it was important to share these works, but we didn't anticipate the amount of excitement this project would create. With so much support from other organizations, foundations, and individuals, the project came to life in a way that we hadn't even imagined."



Artwork created by youth at IDJJ facilities will also be included in two other local exhibits this fall. Details on additional locations can be found at canyouseeme.art.

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The [Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice \(IDJJ\)](#) was created by statute in 2006 with the mandate of safely housing and rehabilitating youth committed to its custody. The mission of IDJJ is to promote community safety and positive youth outcomes by building youth skills and strengthening families.