

## ***The Big Show 2025, titled *Between Lines and Faces****

**Curatorial Statement** by juror Dr. Phillip A. Townsend

On view June 6 - August 2, 2025 at Lawndale Art & Performance Center

*“Between Lines and Faces* explores the intersection of three seemingly disparate elements: text, portraiture, and the mundane. When woven together, these themes reveal profound insights into the human condition and the society we inhabit. By examining how we represent ourselves and others, both in words and imagery, we invite reflection on the complexities of identity, the banality of everyday life, and the unnoticed beauty in the ordinary.

“Portraiture has long been a tool for capturing the essence of an individual. However, this exhibition looks beyond the idealized or heroic portrayals that have historically dominated the genre. Instead, we focus on how portraiture can illuminate life’s quiet, often overlooked moments. Through subtle expressions, gestures, and settings, these works suggest that there is much to be revealed in what might initially seem inconsequential. What can we understand about a person through the way they stand, the objects that surround them, or even the empty spaces they inhabit? When placed in the context of the everyday, portraiture invites us to reconsider how we construct identity in relation to the mundane.

“The inclusion of text further complicates and enriches the reading of these works. Text, whether it’s handwritten, printed, or integrated into the composition, acts as a counterpoint to the visual. It allows us to witness a deeper layer of communication—offering fragments of thought, fleeting observations, or even the poetic renderings of life’s smallest details. The written word anchors the portrait in the quotidian, revealing how language both shapes and reflects our daily experiences.

“The mundane—those small, repetitive, and often dismissed details of our daily routines—serves as the connective tissue that binds these elements. It is in the mundane where we often find the most telling aspects of our society. Our interactions with others, the environments we occupy, and the fleeting moments we forget to notice all contribute to a larger social narrative. By centering the mundane, this exhibition asks: what do we learn about ourselves and others when we stop and look closely at the details we often ignore? How do these overlooked fragments speak to the greater social and cultural currents that define us?

“This exhibition is not merely about what we see on the surface, but about the deeper stories that lie beneath: the inner worlds of individuals, the small gestures of daily life, and the language we use to express and understand them. Together, these works reveal how portraiture, text, and the mundane form a rich tapestry that reflects the complexity of contemporary society—where every expression, every written word, and every moment is both ordinary and extraordinary in its own right.

*“Between Lines and Faces* invites you to pause, observe, and reflect on the everyday. For it is in these moments, and in the subtle overlap of these three elements, that we find both the essence of individual lives and the larger story of our collective existence.”

— Dr. Phillip A. Townsend, Curator of Art at the Art Galleries at Black Studies at the University of Texas at Austin