



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE — WEDNESDAY JULY 5, 2017

OFFICIAL STATEMENT BY VOX POPULI REGARDING RECENT BUILDING FIRE AND ANNOUNCEMENT OF JURIED EXHIBITION

VOX XIII: Are 'Friends' Electric?
FRIDAY, JULY 14 — SUNDAY, AUGUST 20, 2017
990 SPRING GARDEN STREET
PHILADELPHIA, PA 19123

Summary:

After closing last week due to a building fire, Vox Populi is pleased to announce that it will temporarily re-open at 990 Spring Garden Street to present *VOX XIII: Are 'Friends' Electric?*, the thirteenth installment of its annual Juried Exhibition. A long-standing element of Vox Populi's celebrated exhibition program, this year's juried show will be on view from Friday, July 14 – Sunday, August 20.

In addition to *VOX XIII: Are 'Friends' Electric?*—and as a reflection of the resilience and cohesion that defines the artistic community of our building—a second space at 990 Spring Garden will feature the work of the galleries and studios of the 319 building. Throughout July and August, these two spaces will include exhibitions, performances, and other special events that would have otherwise been canceled or rescheduled due to the temporary closure of 319 N. 11th Street.

For further information, please see our extended statement below and visit our website, voxpopuligallery.org
For further inquiries, please contact communications@voxpopuligallery.org

Extended Statement:

Last Tuesday, a fire occurred at our 319 N. 11th Street location. While we are grateful that no one was injured, the fire has prompted the temporary closure of Vox Populi, as well as the dozens of galleries, artist studios, small business, and artisan spaces housed within the building. A number of competing accounts and narratives have emerged in the media, and we'd like to set the record straight by briefly addressing the incident and our plans. We also want to emphasize that contrary to some reports, we do not own 319; we are only one tenant. While we speak with authority and conviction about our own circumstance, Vox Populi cannot speak on behalf of the building's owner, nor on behalf of the many other tenants who have helped to create the vibrant arts scene that defines the spirit of the 319 building.

We'd like to talk briefly about three points: the incident, our immediate response, and our further plans.

First, to the incident:

Sometime early morning on Tuesday, a fire broke out on an adjacent floor in a rear stairwell. Another tenant alerted the fire department, who showed up within minutes. Insofar as these emergencies go, everything worked as planned: the 319 building features sprinklers, fire rated doors, and a fully functioning fire alarm. The majority of the building suffered only water and smoke related damage, but because the rear stairwell was destroyed, the building has no means of secondary egress and is unsafe for occupancy of any kind. As per L+I orders, the building is closed until further notice.

We expect a more detailed account of the fire and the timeline for the re-opening from the Philadelphia Fire Department, L+L, and the building owner. Statements from any other entities claiming to know more about the cause or nature of the fire, or the timeline for the building's repair or re-opening are neither authoritative nor fully informed. *Above all else, Vox Populi is committed to the safety and well-being of its members, its neighbors, and its diverse audience. We are grateful that no injuries occurred, and will only resume our activities at a time and space when it is deemed safe and appropriate to do so.*

Regarding our immediate plans:

Vox Populi remains committed to providing a crucial space in Philadelphia for presenting experimental, innovative, and critically acclaimed artwork. Over the past week, our exhibition and facilities teams have worked diligently to evaluate a number of locations throughout the city where we might immediately resume our activities. We are extremely pleased to announce that we will temporarily re-open on Friday, July 14th to present *VOX XIII: Are 'Friends' Electric?*, the thirteenth installment of our annual Juried Exhibition, at 990 Spring Garden Street. Additionally, an adjacent space will feature the work of the galleries and studios of the 319 building, including contributions by Marginal Utility, Practice Gallery, Napoleon, among others. Throughout July and August, these two spaces will include exhibitions, performances, and other special events. A detailed calendar and list of participants is forthcoming, but for now please note that along with the opening of Vox Populi's juried exhibition, this programming will feature:

- a round of opening receptions on Friday, July 14th
- a major First Friday event on Friday, August 4th, and
- a special event in late August, at a date to be determined in the near future.

We'll have more to share soon, but in the meantime, mark your calendars and come out for the kind of amazing programming you've come to know and love from Vox and its peers. We would especially like to thank Arts + Crafts Holdings for graciously making exhibition space available to Vox Populi and the occupants of the 319 Building during this transitional period.

Regarding broader circumstances and potentials:

In the hours after the fire, Vox Populi's members gathered with many co-tenants from the rest of our building. We are, above all else, extremely circumspect at this moment. Anyone familiar with the nature of independent art spaces can appreciate that this incident could have been much worse. To that end, we'd like to use this moment—and our upcoming temporary exhibition—as a platform for convening a series of critical conversations about the safety and cultural significance of art spaces in Philadelphia and elsewhere.

While it will be several weeks before Vox Populi can speak to our next steps, we can say with conviction that we intend to re-establish and maintain a physical and discursive space in our city for experimental and innovative arts, and are moved by the sense of solidarity and togetherness that has accompanied these past days. We are working swiftly and diligently to re-establish our programming as quickly as possible and will share this news with you as soon as we can.

Finally, we are touched by the outpouring of support and goodwill that has blossomed in the recent days. To our many donors, collaborators, peers, civic partners, and fellow travelers: Thank You. We are grateful for the many gestures of empathy and support have been coming from every direction. When the time is right, we will reach out to discuss our next steps with you.

In the meantime, check in with each other, keep your own spaces safe and thriving, be sure to visit us at our temporary location this summer. We look forward to seeing you soon and will be sharing more information about our programming in the very near future.

-Vox Populi
July 5, 2017

About Vox Populi

Founded in 1988, Vox Populi has functioned for nearly thirty years as a contemporary art space and artist collective that supports innovative and experimental work by emerging and established artists. Through a robust calendar of exhibitions, performances, lectures, and related events, Vox Populi has played a unique role in the cultural life of Philadelphia by bringing audiences a diverse range of programming and providing a supportive environment where artists can take risks and gain valuable professional experience. With a rotating membership and a commitment to working collectively, Vox Populi is a vital forum for the development and exchange of artistic ideas. Vox Populi's comprehensive exhibition schedule includes solo shows of member and guest artists, a curated video gallery, annual guest-curated shows, exchanges with peer organizations, and group shows that provide critical exposure for under-represented artists.

For further information, please see our extended statement below and visit www.voxpopuligallery.org
For further inquiries, please contact communications@voxpopuligallery.org