

RxART CULTURED

Thelma Golden and Nina Chanel Abney Celebrate the Artist's RxART Project at The Rockaway Hotel + Spa

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By Chloe Gorman



Nina Chanel Abney and Thelma Golden. Photo courtesy BFA

Cultured, Michi Jigarjian, and RxART gathered a crowd of art lovers at The Rockaway Hotel + Spa on September 16 for celebratory cocktails and a conversation honoring artist Nina Chanel Abney's newly finished installation for the pediatric wing at Elmhurst Hospital in Queens, New York.

On the evening of September 16, a joyful crowd of artists, art aficionados, and patrons mingled at the indoor-outdoor rooftop of the Rockaway Hotel + Spa in Queens, New York, ready to toast to New York-based artist Nina Chanel Abney. Michi Jigarjian, RxART, and Cultured joined forces on that last Friday night of summer to host the celebration in honor of Abney's inspiring work at the Pediatric Ambulatory Clinic at NYC Health + Hospitals/Elmhurst in Elmhurst, Queens. While spicy margaritas and palomas were shaken behind the bar and hors d'oeuvres from The Cradle—a Rockaway local favorite for West African cuisine—were passed by servers, anticipation built for the evening's main event, a conversation between Abney and Thelma Golden, director and chief curator of The Studio Museum in Harlem, about the artist's symbolic work and recent public art projects.

Arriving at the hotel via ferry, subway, or taxis, guests were greeted by Abney's vibrant graphics—a selection of images from her RxART project adorn the windowed façade of The Rockaway Hotel + Spa and will remain on view through the fall. RxART partnered with designers from Ralph Appelbaum Associates to transform Abney's spirited artwork into wallcoverings and vinyl stickers for both Elmhurst Hospital and the hotel. On the roof of the hotel, the atmosphere buzzed as guests including Derrick Adams, Joeonna Bellorado-Samuels, Diane Brown, Atiya Butler, Nina Faustine, Laini Madhubuti, Michelle Trotter, Megan Skidmore, Jasmine Wah, and Warren Winegar socialized over cocktails and light bites. When Golden and Abney took to the stage, the audience was rapt in attention as the pair discussed the RxART project's significance in Abney's body of work, as well as her mantra to make art available to all through public commissions.

With its community-driven and arts-focused initiatives, the Rockaway Hotel + Spa proved to be the perfect venue to host the celebration with Cultured, Michi Jigarjian, and RxART, a mission-based arts initiative that helps heal and uplift children through the power of visual art. Artists are offered an honorarium for their work, but the meaningful projects come at no cost to the hospitals, and help to foster a joyous and restorative environment.

With the support of patrons Glori Cohen and Agnes Gund, the RxART project at Elmhurst Hospital was made possible. Much of Abney's work highlights representation in contemporary culture, and Elmhurst, Queens is the most ethnically diverse community in the world. Drawing on the artist's artistic language of abstraction and color, the installation is an inclusive reflection of its community, and provides the children and families the powerful emotional support that art can bring.