

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**Arts Council of the Valley Announces**  
***Mealy-mouth Dexterity* Installation**  
**at Smith House Galleries**

HARRISONBURG, VA – Arts Council of the Valley (ACV) has dedicated itself to providing memorable arts experiences in its Smith House Galleries. And the exhibition opening Oct 5, 5-8 pm) definitely promises to deliver on memorability.

Installed over the course of several days, *Mealy-mouth Dexterity* combines the talents and artist visions of R. Mertens and John Ros, who rely on collaborative decisions made in the gallery during installation.

“This show is about process,” Ros explained, “something gallery visitors don’t usually get to see. After the initial installation,” Ros noted, “we will continue to develop the piece on a weekly basis. Each new reaction or encounter to the place, the piece and each other will lead us to new depths within the possibilities of the space and the installation.”

This exhibition provides plenty of opportunities to interact with the artists - and to see how they are constantly transforming the space. All events take place at Smith House Galleries.

- Opening Reception during First Fridays Downtown, Oct 5, 5-8 pm
- Artist Hours: John Ros, Friday, Oct 12, 10 am-12 pm
- Artist Lecture: John Ros, Friday, Oct 12, 5:15 pm
- Mid-Exhibition Party, Friday Oct 19, 5-8 pm
- Artists Hours: R. Mertens and John Ros, Saturday, Oct 20, 12-2 pm
- Artist Talk: R. Mertens, Saturday, Oct 20, 12 pm
- Artist Hours: John Ros, Tuesday, Oct 23, 9-11 am

Both the Opening Reception and Mid-Exhibition Party are sponsored by Donald Albright and Earlyynn Miller. Union Bank is the Lead Sponsor for ACV’s First Fridays Downtown.

Mertens' focus comprises mixed media fiber works often accompanied with sound. Ros’s mixed media, site-responsive installations deal specifically with place. Together, they create a unique viewing experience that specifically relates to the Smith House. After the opening, the installation will continue to evolve on a weekly basis as they further develop the piece and invite viewers back to experience the changes.

Mertens is an amateur historian, internet theorist, and film fanatic, who holds a BFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, and an MFA from the University of Oregon. His interests connect spiritualism, occult, conspiracies and scientific visual language. He also moonlights as an artist, curator and educator. His work revolves around the intersections between technology, religion, science and myth. These pieces combine new media with traditional fiber art skills and culminate in performances, installations and powered sculptures. Mertens has previously been the director and founder of the Modular Project Space artist residency in Virginia, the 543 Artist Residency and Le Toilette Gallery in Oregon and the Weaving Room Recording Studio in Chicago IL. Currently, he is the director of the Fiber Art Department and an assistant faculty member at James Madison University and co-owner of Toothmark Studios.

Ros is an artist, professor, curator and activist who currently lives and works in New York City and Harrisonburg. He obtained an MFA from Brooklyn College, City University of New York, and a BFA from the State University of New York (SUNY) at Binghamton. An Assistant Professor of Art at James Madison University's School of Art, Design, and Art History, where he also serves as the Director and Chief Curator of the Duke Hall Gallery of Fine Art, John has taught at the City Literary Institute (London, UK), Brooklyn College, SUNY Binghamton and the National Academy of Art. In 2015 John founded studioELL, an alternative, transient and hybrid space for higher education in the studio arts, where he is currently the Director and teaches a variety of courses. He currently serves as a Board Member of Harrisonburg Downtown Renaissance.

The Smith House Galleries are open Monday-Friday (9 am-5 pm) and Saturday (10 am-2 pm).

For more information, visit [valleyarts.org](http://valleyarts.org), or email [firstfridaysdowntown@gmail.com](mailto:firstfridaysdowntown@gmail.com)

### **About Arts Council of the Valley**

Arts Council of the Valley (ACV) was founded in 2000 as a 501(c)3 nonprofit dedicated to promoting and providing memorable Arts experiences in the city of Harrisonburg and Rockingham County. Since its establishment, ACV has grown into a multi-faceted community organization that fosters innovative partnerships among area businesses, civic organizations, schools, and artists. Today, ACV manages the Court Square Theater and Smith House Galleries, supports childhood learning by way of the Any Given Child Shenandoah Valley initiative, funds local art projects through its Advancing the Arts grant program, and coordinates monthly First Fridays Downtown community gatherings. To learn more, visit [www.valleyarts.org/](http://www.valleyarts.org/).

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