

# SUSQUEHANNA ART MUSEUM

AT THE MARTY AND TOM PHILIPS FAMILY ART CENTER

## VanGo!



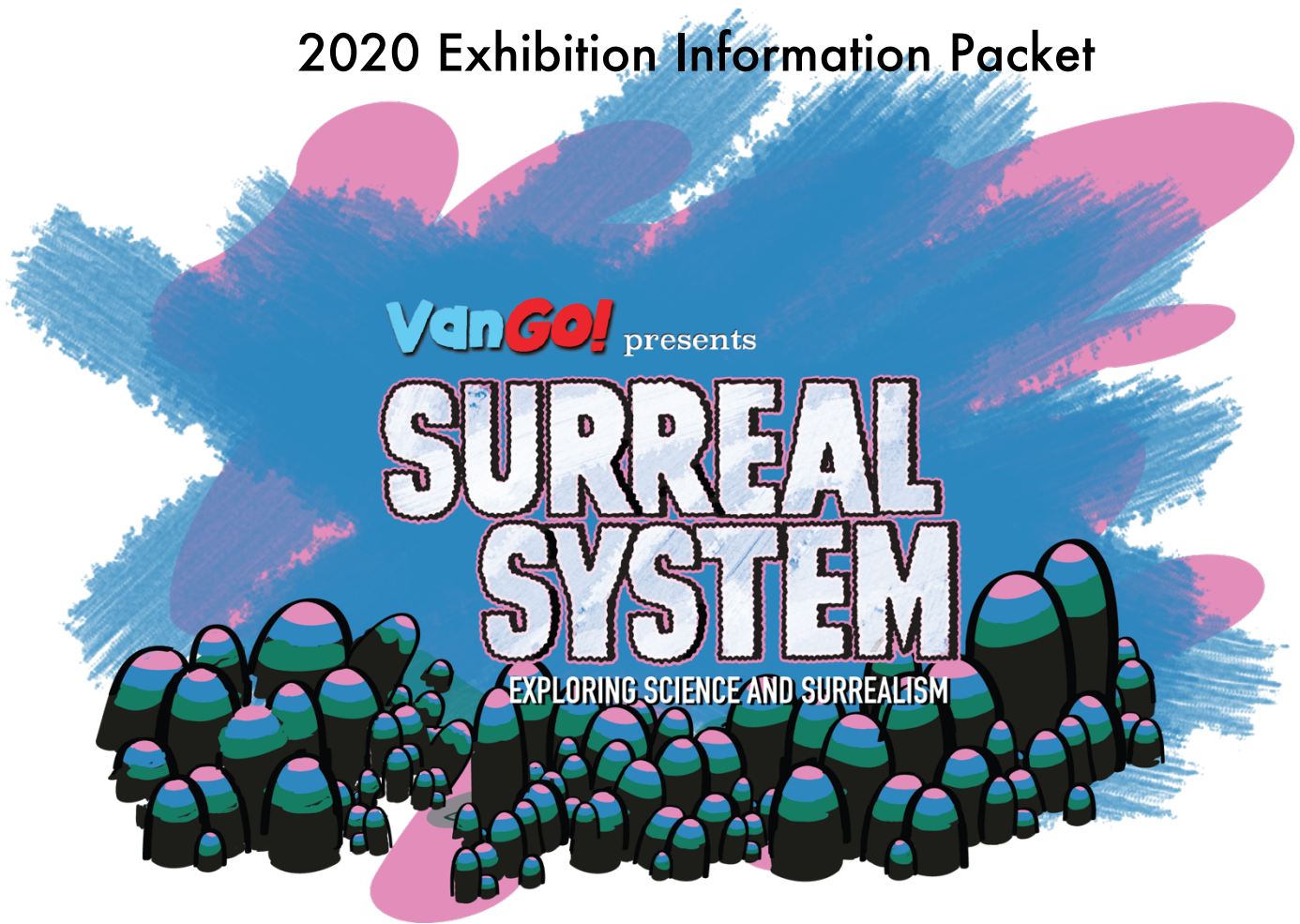
**Ross Tyger**

Director of the  
**VanGo! Museum on Wheels**

To schedule a visit, email  
[Rtyger@SusquehannaArtMuseum.org](mailto:Rtyger@SusquehannaArtMuseum.org)

**Made possible with support from the Patricia L. Murray Fund,  
a fund of the Greater Harrisburg Foundation,  
a regional foundation of The Foundation for Enhancing Communities.**

# 2020 Exhibition Information Packet



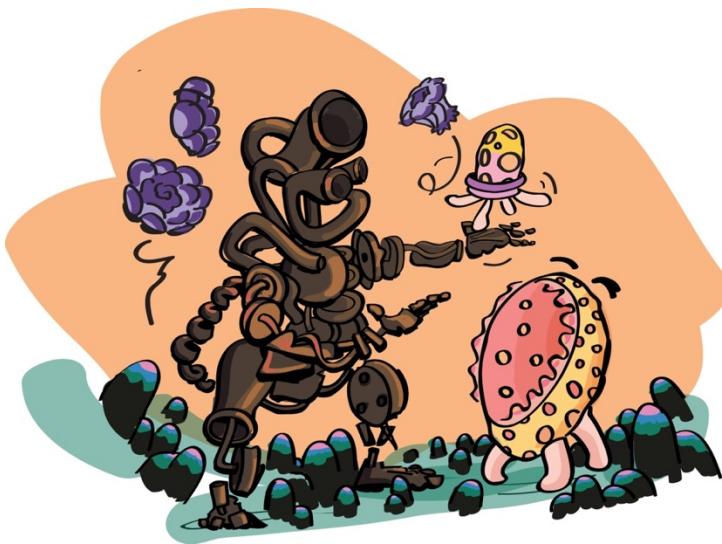
*Featuring artworks by*

**Dana Lynn Harper  
Alex McLeod  
Jackson O'Brasky**

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# 1. Exhibition Information

“The VanGo has been inhabited by an army of imaginary organisms. Scientists believe they have escaped from the dreams of three artists. It’s time to investigate!”



***Surreal System*** features artworks which blur the lines between art and science. The artists featured in the show are inspired by various aspects of biology, like life cycles and evolution. To the same degree, these artists are inspired by dreams and fantasy.

This powerful combination allows students to view works of art using the tools and vocabulary they have

learned in science class, especially scientific inquiry as it is defined in the Academic Standards for Science and Technology by the Pennsylvania Department of Education. The show also explores content relevant to standards in Biological Sciences (3.1) and Physical Sciences (3.2).

Visitors will also learn about one of the most important modern art movements: surrealism. Surrealism was developed in the early twentieth century by artists and writers who believed that subconscious thought processes like dreams were the key to understanding human behavior. The artwork in ***Surreal System*** contains many make-believe symbols and organisms. They may resemble things you have seen before, but with an added twist. Art experts and casual viewers alike love surrealism for this tension between reality and fantasy.

Beginning in March 2020, this exhibition will travel to schools and events throughout the region onboard the VanGo! Museum on Wheels.

## 2. Dana Lynn Harper

Dana Lynn Harper is an artist residing in Columbus, Ohio who uses overpowering color and enticing textures to transport viewers to a realm of warm feelings and childhood fantasy. She works with forms and colors from cartoons, coral reefs, and microscopic organisms. Dana uses extremely simple materials, like flagging tape, and transforms them with unconventional techniques.



Dana Lynn Harper  
*Dancing Microbes*,  
2017  
Acrylic on clay  
Varying Sizes

This series of ceramics sculptures is inspired by microbes, or microscopic organisms which are key to maintaining life on earth. Bacteria, viruses, fungi, and algae are examples of microbes. They are too small to see with the naked eye. Microbes are central to nearly all Earthly processes, like decomposition, climate change, and disease. Dana's sculpture is a colorful reimagining of microbes as Pokémon-like companions. Each has a unique identity, however, they have family resemblances. There are five *Dancing Microbes* in the *Surreal System*.



*Sponge Mouth*, 2017  
Acrylic on clay  
18" x 10" x 9"

"What may first appear to be fearsome teeth on *Sponge Mouth* are actually harmless ocular nerves."





*Shell Mouth, 2017*

Acrylic on clay

9" x 8" x 8"

**"*Shell Mouth* is a master predator. It often hides in a parade of nubbins until an unsuspecting sponge draws near."**



*Dancing Orb, 2017*

Acrylic on clay

14" x 10" x 10"

**"Dancing orbs are protected by flexible exo-skeletons which bend and shake. They are hyper sensitive to vibration."**



*Sunset Spongetop, 2018*

Acrylic on clay

12" x 8" x 8"

**"Named for the brilliant colors on its sponge head, *Sunset Spongetop* is also known for its fruity smell."**



*Tri Berry Sponge, 2017*

Acrylic on clay

7" x 7" x 7"

**"This close relative to *Sunset Spongetop* has grown three sponge heads, instead of one. Exotic sponges such as *Tri Berry Sponge* are highly coveted by poachers."**



*Diatoms*, 2017  
Polymer clay  
Various sizes

“Scientists were shocked by the variety of diatoms inhabiting the *Surreal System*. They captured a sample in this display case for further study.”

Diatoms are a type of phytoplankton found in any environment that contains water. They use photosynthesis to create energy. Diatoms are surrounded by a cell wall which has a property known as structural coloration, which means that their surfaces are so fine that they interfere with visible light, reflecting multiple colors at once. A common example of structural coloration is a peacock feather. Because of their structural coloration, diatoms have been nicknamed “jewels of the sea”.



Onboard the *VanGo*, visitors may view these tiny sculptures through a magnifying glass.

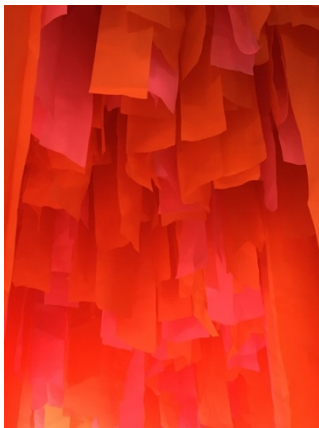




(Note: This image is from a prior installation. *Bloom Bloom* will be appear differently onboard the VanGo.)

*Bloom Bloom*, 2013-2019  
Flagging Tape and chicken wire

**“This wavy mass of pink and orange feelers seems to be attracted to sunlight.”**



*Bloom Bloom* is an atmospheric installation piece built with deceptively simple materials: just flagging tape and chicken wire. It is a cocoon-like mass that hangs from the ceiling, engulfing the gallery and surrounding viewers. The bright pink and orange colors are fun, warm and comforting. Dana has created numerous versions of *Bloom Bloom* in different galleries and spaces. In *Surreal System*, *Bloom Bloom* behaves like a distinct ecosystem. Other artworks with similar colors are placed within its tendrils as if they are adapting and camouflaging to a shelter.



(Note: This image is from a prior installation. *Bloom Bloom* will be appear differently onboard the VanGo.)

*Nubbin Parade*, 2014  
Acrylic on clay

**“We suspect the nubbins are multiplying. Although they are quite small at the moment, scientists believe they could grow to the size of a small human.”**

*Nubbin Parade* is a site-specific sculpture composed of hundreds of tiny, hand-painted clay pieces. Dana painstakingly places each one. They resemble spores or barnacles or some sort of multiplying organism. Each visitor sees something different. Like *Bloom Bloom*, *Nubbin Parade* acts as a habitat for other creatures in the *Surreal System*.





### 3. Alex McLeod

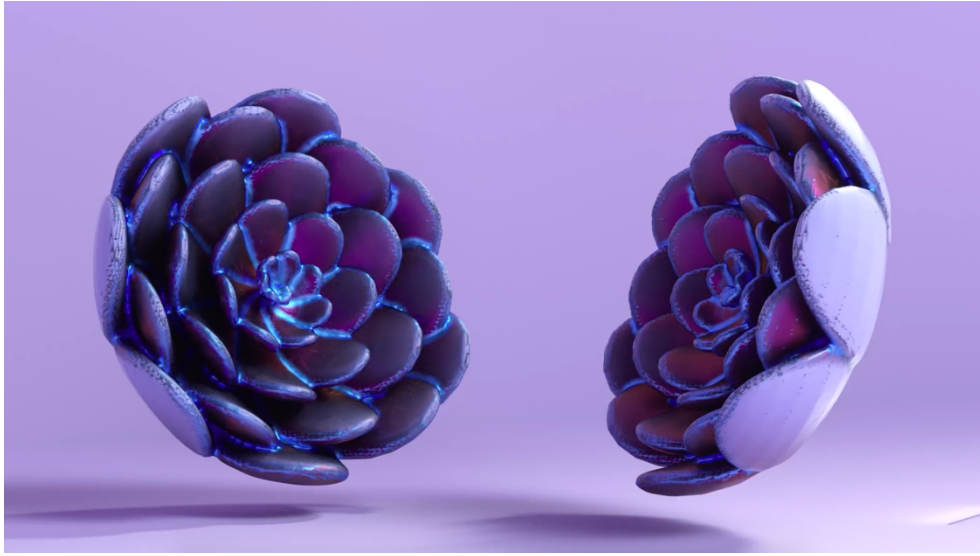
Alex McLeod is an artist who creates 3D digital animation. He lives in Toronto, Ontario. He is particularly interested in simulating sentience and transformation. He renders and animates his creations using 3D modeling software, not unlike the tools used by video game developers. His subject matter is inspired by cellular structure and properties of matter.



An installation of Alex's animations at Postmasters Gallery (New York City, 2018)

*"Mutating into themselves, these looping videos exist in the liminal space between sculpture and sentience."* – Alex McLeod

Alex thinks of his 3D animations as being part sculpture due to the process of 3D modeling. He builds his forms and animates them in a 3D modeling program and then he exports them as video files to be displayed on television screens. They loop infinitely, giving the impression that the strange blobs and creatures in the videos are living organisms. Adding to the illusion, many of these organisms are engaged in cycles of transformation. Many of their object labels in *Surreal System* allude to the forces triggering the transformations.



Alex McLeod  
*Purple Flowers*  
(Still), 2019  
3D Animation

“Purple flowers in *Surreal System* are always found in pairs. If a pair is separated, the flowers instantly stop blooming.”

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Alex McLeod  
*Pink Convergent*,  
2018 (Still)  
3D Animation

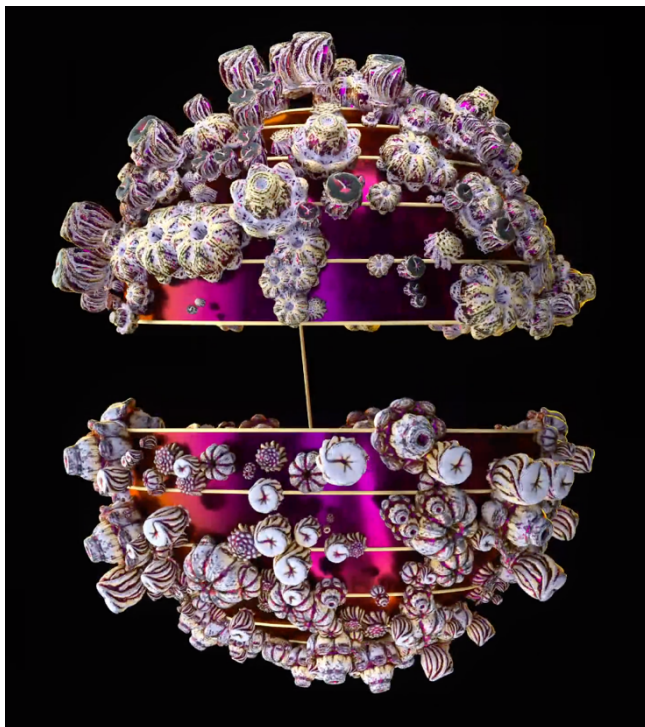
“*Pink Convergent* is an unstable liquid with magnetic properties. It is also an important food source for many of the organisms in *Surreal System*.”



Alex McLeod  
*Small Forest* (Still)  
 2019  
 3D Animation

“These shiny balloon sacs have a lifespan of nearly 300 years. They are at their largest at birth, and then they shrink.”

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Alex McLeod  
*Split World*, 2019 (Still)  
 3D Animation

“*Pink Convergent* is an unstable with magnetic properties. It is also an important food source for many of the organisms in *Surreal System*.”



Alex McLeod  
*Untitled (Still)*,  
2016  
3D Animation

**“Scientists are studying this unknown spore-like creature living amongst the Bloom Bloom tendrils. Have the discovered a new species?”**



## 4. Jackson O'Brasky



An installation of Jackson's paintings at Sargent's Daughters Gallery (New York City, 2019).

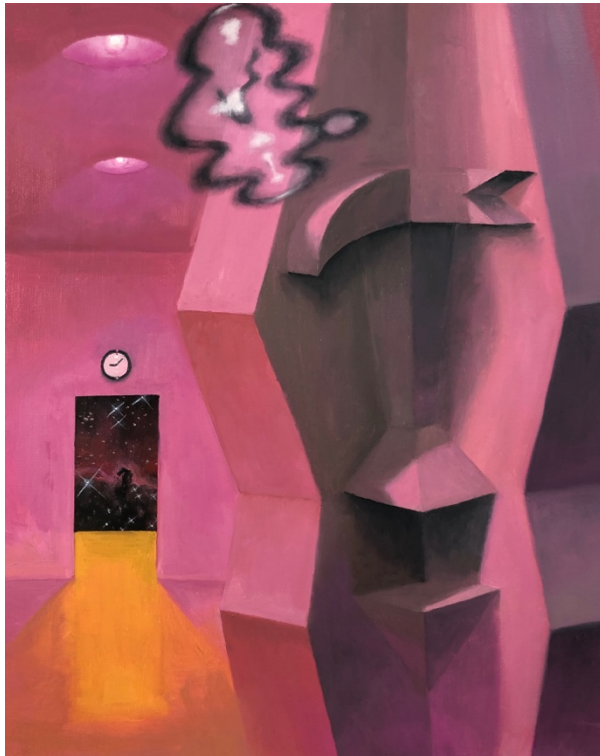
Jackson O'Brasky, based in Queens, New York is a painter who creates surreal, symbolic visions of the future. He is particularly interested in the future of technology and the environment. He uses traditional painting techniques and color palettes similar to those used by surrealist painters like Dali and Ernst. His poetic titles are key to understanding the obscure themes and symbols in his work.



Jackson O'Brasky  
*My Best Friend*, 2019  
 Oil on canvas

“According to Jackson, the stone figure symbolizes a cell phone. The title is meant to remind of us of our friends. Are your closest friends human?”  
 Are they even alive?

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Jackson O'Brasky  
*Wild Horses*, 2019  
 Oil on canvas

“The wavy ghost of a clock shows us that time is drifting away. It looks like the melting timepiece in Salvador Dalí’s *Persistence of Memory*.”



Jackson O'Brasky  
*Left Hand with Broken Arrow*, 2019  
Oil on canvas

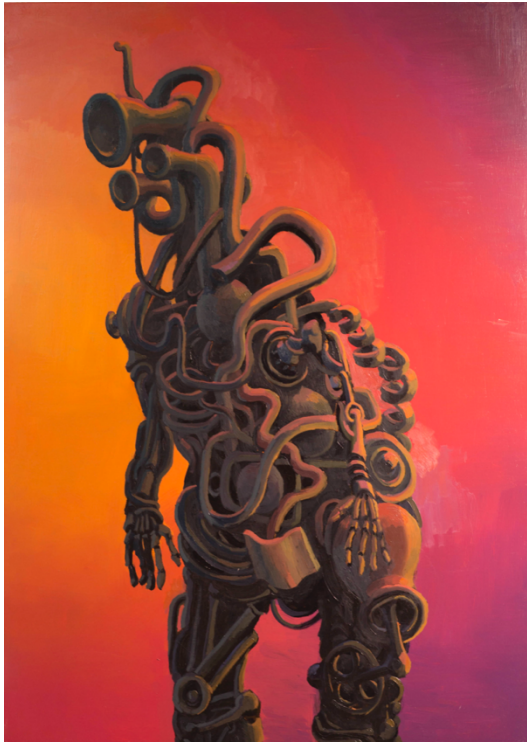
“The painting is named after a hand, but it only barely looks like one. If you had to make your own, what would it be?”



Jackson O'Brasky  
*Dusk, and the Loons Were Calling*, 2019  
Oil on canvas

“Loons are waterfowl known for their loud, wolf-like call. Jackson wants you to imagine their sound as you gaze across the lake.”





Jackson O'Brasky  
*The Marine*, 2015  
Oil on canvas  
36" x 48"

***"The Marine is a cyborg with a body that contains both organic and inorganic parts. It has befriended many of the sponges in the *Surreal System*."***



## 5. Virtual Reality Information

Virtual reality is an exciting tool that immerses viewers in a 360 degree image-viewing experience. Onboard the VanGo, we will be presenting two virtual reality experiences which both contain bioluminescence.



Bioluminescence is light emitted by living things created by chemical reactions. The first experience is an artwork inspired by bioluminescence by Dutch artist Rein Bijlsma. The second is a 360 degree image of glowing termite mounds in Brazil.



Rein Bijlsma  
*Glow in the Dark*  
3D 360 Degree animation

**“Use these goggles to view nightvision footage of a colony of dancing night orbs. They create their own light, an effect called bioluminescence.”**



**“Use the Virtual Reality headset to take a trip to Erasmus Park in Brazil, one of the best places on Earth to see bioluminescence. The pointy structures around the field are termite mounds, which are also home to several other species, like the glowing *Pyrophorus* beetle larvae.”**

## 6. Music Information



Onboard the VanGo, visitors will be treated to experimental synthesizer music by musician and composer Mort Garson. The album is called *Mother Earth's Plantasia: Warm Earth Music for Plants...and the People Who Love Them*. The album is inspired by ideas from the best-selling book *The Secret Life of*

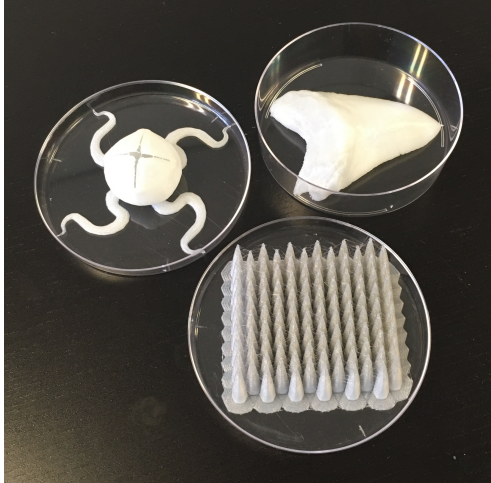
*Plants* (1973) by Peter Tompkins and Christopher Bird, in which the authors claimed that plants not only loved music, but under the right conditions would grow faster with the help of music. The album had very limited distribution until the 2010's. It became a cult hit with the help of internet streaming.

*Surreal System* is a multi-sensory, atmospheric art exhibition and this album lends to the dreamy atmosphere. This themed music is more than a soundtrack for the exhibition, however. In fact, it is as much a part of the exhibition as the sculptures and paintings 'inhabiting' the VanGo. Perhaps the imaginary organisms are drawn to the music, or maybe they are growing or changing with the music.



## 7. Hands-On Activity

### Mystery Creature Kit



Students will be creating their own creatures to add to the *Surreal System*, inspired by a collection of clues contained in petri dishes. The clues include outlandish, 3D printed alien eggs, spiky dragon skin, colorful hair samples, and gruesome teeth. Students will base the characteristics of their surreal creature on the clues in their Mystery Creature Kit. Each kit has a unique mixture of clues, so the students will envision a variety of creatures.

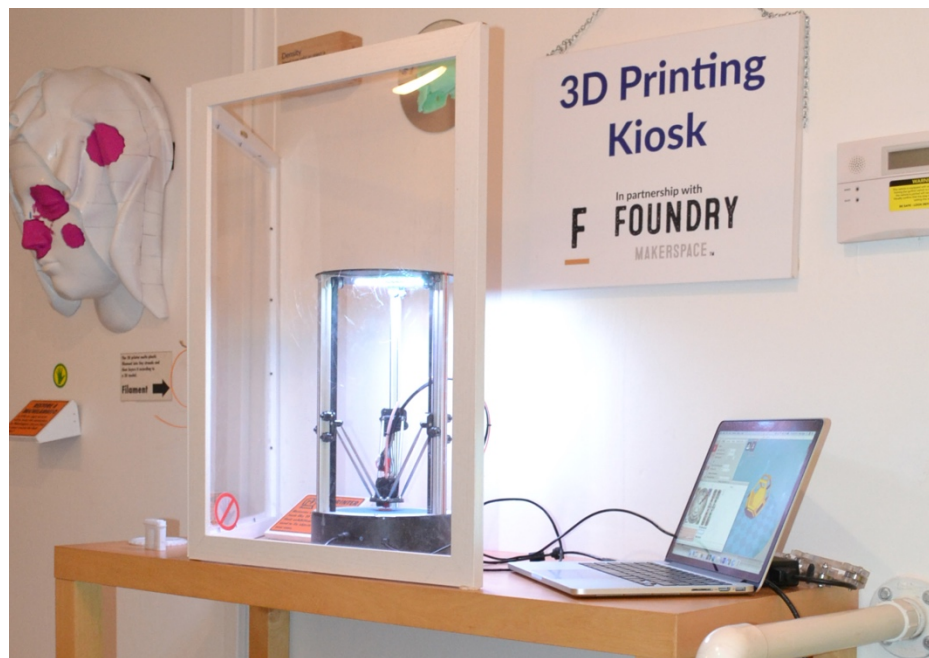


## 3D Printing Kiosk

### Sponsored by The Foundry Makerspace



For the fourth year in a row, the VanGo will be featuring the 3D Kiosk sponsored by The Foundry Makerspace. A DeltaGo 3D printer will be demonstrating 3D printing, while a variety of 3D printed objects will demonstrate design concepts, like scale, symmetry, and density. 3D printing is used by museums to create reproductions of artworks. Museums also use 3D scanning to preserve historical objects.



The Foundry Makerspace, located in Harrisburg, builds the capacity of schools for 21st Century life and work. The Foundry places Maker Fellows in schools to assist teachers, coaches and students as they engage interest-based S.T.E.A.M. projects within a makerspace.