

[https://www.tribstar.com/features/valley-life-everything-i-do-is-art-tanmaya-bingham-leads-isu-galleries/article\\_8d8c8682-65fb-11ed-af92-0b1b5a363b2d.html](https://www.tribstar.com/features/valley-life-everything-i-do-is-art-tanmaya-bingham-leads-isu-galleries/article_8d8c8682-65fb-11ed-af92-0b1b5a363b2d.html)

TOPICAL

## Valley Life: 'Everything I do is art' — Tanmaya Bingham leads ISU galleries

By Mark Bennett | Tribune-Star  
Nov 26, 2022



Artist Tanmaya Bingham, galleries director at Indiana State University, poses with her multi-panel art piece in Turman. Tribune-Star/Mark Bennett



Something inspirational happened to Tanmaya Bingham just before she moved across the country to become the galleries director and an art instructor at Indiana State University this fall in Terre Haute.

Bingham discarded hundreds of pounds of her artwork, with the help of a friend. Not all of it, but a significant amount from an artistic career that began in the 1990s, from crafting her own art to curating, managing, mentoring and teaching while based in multiple states and countries.

“It was humbling to throw away that amount of artwork,” Bingham said last week in her sunlit ISU office, adjacent to the university’s Turman Art Gallery inside the Landini Center for Performing and Fine Arts.

She paid attention to what was being tossed, and the volume of it.

“I think of it as a delusion — in a good way,” Bingham said. “You have that dream to be an artist or to be in a gallery, and you keep getting smashed down, but you keep going.”

Indeed, Bingham has kept going. Her bold, bright paintings — with realistic, figurative images placed in surrealistic settings — continue to earn awards at showings around the country and globe. In the past year, those included awards from the Roq La Rue Gallery in Seattle and the San Diego Museum of Art, and as a finalist for the prestigious Bennett Prize for women painters.

She clearly impressed Seattle’s Roq La Rue Gallery. According to the gallery’s description, “Using multiple design styles within each piece, her work looks collaged, or digitally created, but it is all hand-drawn and painted. Her technical prowess and eye for composition creates an almost musical harmony out of what seems initially to be disjointed imagery.”

After arriving in Terre Haute to join the ISU Department of Art and Design this fall, Bingham included her “Purple Angels” hexptych — a six-panel, 25-foot-wide piece, created with colored pencil, water-based paint and glitter — in the faculty exhibition from Oct. 3 to Nov. 4.

“Purple Angels” features women and girls in dramatic scenes, including Michelle Obama and Kamala Harris watching the clash of JFK’s Lincoln limo and the “General Lee” Dodge Charger. The painting frees the two women to observe and discuss the collision — exemplifying the extreme political divide in America — without being overshadowed by male political figures (represented by one dog). It captures the “socio-political mess that we have ourselves in right now,” Bingham said.

The purple element represents a hoped-for compromise, between red and blue America. “Perhaps that’s me just being optimistic,” she said, with a grin.

As an artist and ISU galleries director and instructor, Bingham has the goal “to do things that are relevant.” An important expression of that quest will come in early 2023 through the collaborative “Public Blackness” exhibition at all three ISU galleries — Turman Gallery, Yang University Art Gallery and Bare-Montgomery Gallery. The exhibit will include digital video and virtual-reality works, photography, two-dimensional historical works and contemporary works by various contributors including an interactive mural by students, a play and music.

“Public Blackness” is intended to increase awareness of ongoing and often unresolved local and national racial issues and “to transform unconscious biases we have, especially here in Terre Haute,” Bingham said.

“It’s a conversation that needs to happen and issues that are still relevant,” she added.

She’s collaborating on the project with Adeyemi Doss, ISU assistant professor of sociology. “He brings an amazing amount of knowledge about these experiences,” Bingham said.

It began with a conversation on campus between Bingham and Doss about his work and field of expertise. He teaches an innovative roster of courses, including a class on hip-hop music and social justice, and another on the history and political background of graffiti art. The latter includes a student crafted mural of graffiti art at the ISU Art Annex. That talk led to plans for an expansion of Doss' instruction and studies, as well as his photographic images — the “Public Blackness” exhibit.

“I wanted to examine this whole idea of how blackness is seen in public, and how black people navigate this,” Doss said Monday.

“The exhibit is going to create conversations that aren't easy to have,” he added.

Nonetheless, those talks are important and can affect even more people, Doss explained. “I just want individuals who come in and look at this art to have these conversations with their loved ones and their friends.”

Bingham “is definitely providing the space for this exhibit to come about,” Doss said. “She's excited and I'm excited.”

The potential impact of the “Public Blackness” exhibit energizes her. “Even if we only have a few people who switch ‘on’ from it, I think we'll have done a great job,” Bingham said.

The power of art to challenge thinking has been part of Bingham's life since her childhood in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Her mother was an artist and entrepreneur, while her father worked as an in-house counsel (an “art lawyer,” as Bingham puts it) for a large gallery in Santa Fe. Together, her parents collected art, too. Bingham's aunt, Mary Kramer, is the former executive director of Wabash Valley Art Spaces, and Bingham's great-aunt worked in the National Gallery.

As a teenager, she studied under a “tough-love” Yale professor who started a graduate school of art in Santa Fe — a “very valuable experience.” Later she earned degrees at Antioch University in California and Australia National University in Canberra, before continued studies in Italy, Paris, France and London.

“I was always privileged to have art around me,” said Bingham, now 44.

“Everything I do is art. I make it. I show it to other people. I mentor in it,” she added. “I’ve done a good job, I guess, in planning it out that way.”

Likewise, she wants to expose students at ISU to art and its related careers. The role at Indiana State appealed to Bingham because of the university’s reputation as a destination for first-generation college students.

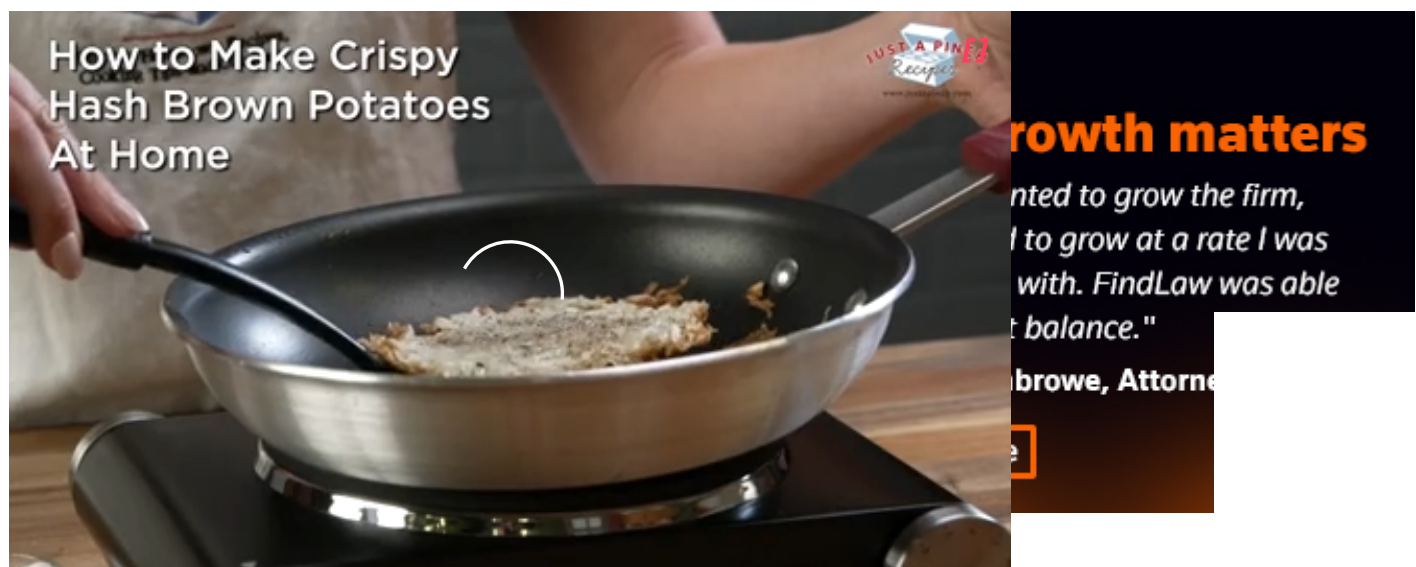
“This was a huge motivation for me, and to engage students in something maybe they’ve not experienced,” Bingham said.

---

Mark Bennett can be reached at 812-231-4377 or [mark.bennett@tribstar.com](mailto:mark.bennett@tribstar.com).

---

## Trending Video





SPONSORED CONTENT

The 4 Dumbest Things We Keep Spending Too Much Money On

By The Penny Hoarder

Conversation

FOLLOW

LOG IN | SIGN UP

Join the conversation

ALL COMMENTS -1

newest

🔔

ACTIVE CONVERSATIONS

State has no objection to Tanoos' conviction being...


5

Letter: GOP agenda? Investigations

3

Powered by viafoura



ISU Surplus Website & Sales				NA Support Group				Classic Karaoke at The Verve Nightclub				Early Worship			
ISU Facilities Management...				First Congregational Church o...				The Verve				First Congregational Churc			
	SAT	SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU		
	26	27	28	29	30	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8		

Mark Bennett

Mark Bennett has reported and analyzed news from the Wabash Valley and beyond since Larry Bird wore Sycamore blue. That role with the Tribune-Star has taken him from Rome to Alaska and many points in between, but Terre Haute suits him best.

