



# Hey, we need to talk!

Created by

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Visiting Artist for Art & Civic Engagement

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**You are entering a social sculpture—  
an artwork that becomes complete when  
human connections happen.**

**You complete the artwork!**



In a deeply divided country, one of the greatest and hardest acts of civic engagement is talking to people who don't share our beliefs. But that's exactly what we need to do if we want to solve the problems our country faces and if we want to create a society in which everyone flourishes. Strengthening our social bonds happens when we begin to care about each other again. That begins with a conversation.

This gallery space has been transformed into a social sculpture that invites folks to pause and engage in honest, courageous, common sense conversations about civic responsibility and national identity. It was inspired by U-M Professor Jenna Bednar, who proposes four pillars of flourishing: community, sustainability, dignity, and beauty.



The artworks have been selected from UMMA's collection to prompt conversations about American identity and the four pillars of flourishing. The wallpaper, designed by Detroit artist Louise Jones (née Chen), illustrates all of the state flowers—a metaphor for flourishing and a symbol of our national unity.

*Hey, We Need To Talk!* is a part of VOTE2024 at UMMA. Lead support is provided by the Institute of Museum and Library Services.



You may bring  
food and beverages  
into this artwork and  
break bread together.  
***But please don't take  
any of it into the rest  
of the museum!***

**Take a moment to pause.**

**Sit down for a minute or two.**

**Reflect on the artworks.**

**Take a long, slow look at each one.**

What do you see?

What does each one make you feel?

What does each one make you think?  
*(It doesn't matter what the art world thinks!)*

**Consider:**

Who am I? As an American?  
A community member? A friend?  
A family member?

What do I care about?

How do I imagine my community  
flourishing?

**Share your thoughts with someone.**

*(Don't worry, we're all here to learn  
and share with one another!)*

Start with hello (and maybe a  
friendly smile).

Ask, "What do you think?"  
"Why do you think that?"

Share with respect, honesty,  
and curiosity.

You may not agree, but hopefully  
you'll understand each other a  
little more!



**Beauty**

Share a story about  
a time when you  
felt transformed by  
something beautiful



**Community**

Share a story about a  
time when you felt a  
sense of belonging



**Sustainability**

Share a story about a  
memorable outdoor  
experience



**Dignity**

Share a story about a  
time when you witnessed  
or experienced an act  
of dignity



**American Identity**

What does it mean to  
be American?



## What does it mean to be American?

Answer the prompt in the space above.  
Tear out the card.  
Put it in the photo album.  
Read what other people have said!

**About the artist** Philippa Pham Hughes, Visiting Artist for Art & Civic Engagement at UMMA, is a social practice artist, cultural strategist, and curator developing relational and creative experiences aimed at strengthening democracy and repairing the social fabric of our country one creative conversation at a time. She draws from the arts and humanities to design spaces for honest conversations across political, social, and cultural differences, guided by an aesthetic of care and delight in fostering joy, human interaction, reflection, and flourishing. In *Hey, We Need to Talk!*, she aims to strengthen democracy through art-driven dialogues. She invites visitors to contemplate through conversation what it means to flourish—both as individuals and as a community—and to envision a society in which we all flourish.



## Common Sense Diner

*Join us for intimate meals in the gallery*



Throughout the exhibition, we will host a small group of people each week to talk about what it means to be American and how we will create a flourishing society for all Americans.



**To make a reservation,  
scan this QR code or visit  
[heyweneedtotalk.com](http://heyweneedtotalk.com)**



Please make this  
gallery guide your own!  
Color in the flowers.  
Bring it home! Keep  
the conversation  
going there!