AMOS PAUL KENNEDY JR.

*Passin’ on to others* is a new multi-site project produced by Kennedy Jr. in collaboration with barbershops and salons around Richmond. Over many months, these business owners gathered words and phrases, proverbs and aphorisms from their patrons and stylists and passed them on to Kennedy, Jr. He typeset and produced hundred of letterpress prints, combining their words with bright color and pattern. The resulting prints then formed a large installation at the ICA and ten smaller installations in downtown Richmond and the Jackson Ward, Northside, and Southside neighborhoods.

The installations at the barbershops and salons consist of proverbs and aphorisms generated at each business by its owner, stylists, and patrons. The ICA’s installation presents submissions from all the participants, along with the artist’s own words.

The project creates a bridge to the ICA’s neighbors while honoring barbershops and salons as historic cornerstones for communities, conversation, and entrepreneurship. It acknowledges the integral role that barbershops and salons have played in communities, particularly African American communities since the turn of the 19th century. These sites function as spaces for social refuge, political mobilization and action, and the passing down of knowledge from generation-to-generation. Together these installations, produced from the words of Richmond citizens, reflect the strength, love, and resilience within these historic spaces.
Printing allows for declarations to be distributed to the masses. Declarations are about the redistribution of power.  
—Amos Paul Kennedy Jr.

WHAT MOTIVATES YOU AS AN ARTIST?  
Paying my monthly bills

PLEASE SHARE A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE WORK YOU'RE SHOWING IN DECLARATION.  
A bunch of 6 x 8 inch chipboard cards with the wisdom of the communities printed on them. All the text is hand set metal and wood type printed by the letterpress method.

DO YOU BELIEVE ART HAS SOCIALLY TRANSFORMATIVE POWER?  
Creating is a transformative power. The results of creating are also transformative. The questions is the impact of the transformation...is it truly progress?

Installation view, Passin’ on to others, Institute for Contemporary Art, Richmond, Virginia, 2018. Photo: Terry Brown
Ray’s Ultimate Hair Designs
215 West Brookland Park Blvd
Richmond, VA 23222

Trent’s Beauty and Barber Shop
19 Brookland Park Blvd
Richmond, VA 23222

Silk Salon
1657 West Broad Street #1A
Richmond, VA 23230

Unleashed The Salon
11 East Grace Street
Richmond, VA 23219

Classic Creations
731 West Marshall Street
Richmond, VA 23220

Genesis Barber Shop
200 East Grace Street
Richmond, VA 23219

Parlor Salon
115 West Broad Street
Richmond, VA 23220

Canvas The Salon
212 E Clay Street #1C
Richmond, VA 23219

Taylor’s Barber Shop
11 East Broad Street
Richmond, VA 23219

Haywood’s Hair Images
2201 Semmes Avenue
Richmond, VA 23225
B. 1950, Lafayette, Louisiana; Lives in Detroit, Michigan

Kennedy is a self-proclaimed "humble Negro printer" whose letterpress work represents the messages and identities of African-Americans whose "words… have largely been excluded from fine print." He uses traditional letterpress techniques to create richly colored, hand-pulled prints that often incorporate messages and aphorisms that spur conversation about race and class. Through his fine, layered printing of simple text using traditional letterpress technique, Kennedy's work encourages reflection on historical and current African-American identities and overlap between the struggles of the Civil Rights movement and contemporary needs for bold action to pursue social justice.

Kennedy received a BA in Mathematics from Grambling State University in Louisiana and his MFA in Graphic Design from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. His recent awards include a Joyce Award (2016–17), and in 2015 United States Artists named him the USA Glasgow Fellow.