



### Southampton Village and Acclaimed Local Artist James Ding Install Hugs & Kisses at Southampton Arts Center in honor of Valentine's Day

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: February 12, 2024; Southampton, New York: Southampton Village plays Cupid this year, delivering an original artistic expression of love in the “heart” of downtown, in celebration of Valentine’s Day.

Artist James Ding’s philosophy that “love is just as important as air, food and water,” made it easy for Mayor Bill Manger to say yes to the North Sea Resident and sculptor’s offer to install his XOXO Hugs and Kisses Sculpture on the grounds of the Southampton Arts Center. The art piece will debut on the 13<sup>th</sup> and remain up for several weeks.

Ding is an artist who taught industrial arts in Connecticut, where he discovered a love of screen printing. He moved to Southampton to start a silkscreen printing business and found a new passion, as well as a new community which he grew to love. He eventually sold the apparel printing business and focused his driving energy into conceiving and creating large sculptures. Calling *this* his “new love in life,” Ding’s art is autobiographical. His message? Love.

His XOXO Hugs and Kisses sculpture is part of his *Inspired by Love* series and is designed for the community to interact with.

“I’ve been a working artist my whole life. Over forty years ago, I fell in love with Southampton,” he said. “I am very appreciative that Mayor Bill Manger recognized that my ‘XOXO Hugs and Kisses Sculpture’ would be good for the community. I am grateful to be able to contribute and be part of the village and community that I have loved from the start.”

The impressive sculpture stands 6-feet by 6 feet and will be lit up at night as well as viewable by day for what is hoped to be many Instagram-able moments for residents and visitors celebrating love in all forms.

“Any time we can encourage folks to enjoy our beautiful downtown is an opportunity we cannot pass up,” said Mayor Bill Manger. “When James suggested this, I just had to say yes. What better way of celebrating our beautiful village than with a message of love?”

Christina Strassfield, Executive Director of the Southampton Arts Center agreed. “We are delighted to share this Valentine and the sentiment behind it with all who pass the Southampton Arts Center,” she said.

The Southampton Arts Center, situated at 25 Jobs Lane in the heart of Southampton Village on three beautiful park-like grounds, is open year-round. Their mission is building community through the arts. They have four galleries, a multi-use theater, an art studio, an outdoor summer stage, and a Sculpture Garden. They present and produce inspiring, inclusive, socially and regionally relevant programs across all disciplines: Visual Arts, Theater, Music, Film Literature, Dance, and Wellness. They welcome connecting and collaborating with the diverse East End Community and beyond.



For more information, please visit: [www.southamptonvillage.org](http://www.southamptonvillage.org)  
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