



ARTSGEORGIA
STATE OF THE ARTS™

STATE OF THE ARTS

Volume 3 Edition 3 Summer 2015

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ArtsGeorgia celebrates our fifth anniversary with two articles about exciting examples of investing in individual artists.

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MOCA GA: WORKING ARTIST PROJECT

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FALL ISSUE 2015

Evolution & Survival: our fall issue will include a story of a venerable organization adapting to changing times. We will present a history of losses and challenges within Georgia's landscape of arts advocacy.



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The Museum of Contemporary Art of Georgia's Working Artist Project:

ENCOURAGING INDIVIDUAL ARTISTS FOR THE COMMUNITY GOOD



Installation view of EK Huckaby's Working Artist Project Exhibition, Anhydjinic Molassicism

The summer of 2015 marks an exciting anniversary for one of Georgia's own arts organizations. Almost 15 years ago, artist and art consultant Annette Cone-Skelton began working in her pool house office with a collection of 250 works of art in storage donated by CGR Advisors and substantial seed money from David Golden to start MOCA GA, The Museum of Contemporary Art of Georgia. Starting with not much more than a dream and fierce tenacity, MOCA GA has grown into an organization that supports local artists and educates the public on the wonderful talent in our own backyard. Since its founding in August 2000, the mission of The Museum of Contemporary Art of Georgia has been to showcase the work of artists living in our state.

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The Museum of Contemporary Art of Georgia's Working Artist Project:

ENCOURAGING INDIVIDUAL ARTISTS FOR THE COMMUNITY GOOD

Working Artist Project Fellow, Katherine Taylor, conducting an artist talk in the MOCA GA Galleries.



At a time when no other organizations were collecting solely Georgia artists and very few were exhibiting their work, MOCA GA not only aimed to be an effective platform to support the careers of Georgia artists, but has also made an effort to engage dynamically the local arts community and to preserve the history of the arts in Georgia.

Since the early days in the pool house, the Museum's permanent collection has grown from 250 works of various mediums by over 100 Georgia artists to contain over 1,000 pieces. In 15 short years, MOCA GA has held countless exhibitions and programs to foster interactions between Georgia artists and the community. MOCA GA offers a unique experience for visitors — because the Museum focuses on contemporary art, often visitors find the artists wandering the galleries or at opening events. The public can directly interact with the living artists whose work is on the walls! A few such

cases are exhibitions such as GATHERED, a show curated by Georgia artists to exhibit the work of nearly 80 artists from across the state, and the *Off the Wall Pin-Up Show + Sale* that happens annually and allows any artist to hang work for sale on MOCA GA walls, as long as it can be hung with four push pins. However, MOCA GA's "crown jewel" is the Working Artist Project, an awards program designed to support artists of the metro Atlanta area and to promote the city as a thriving arts center.

In 2007, the Working Artist Project (WAP) began as an initiative to display the best and brightest artists in Atlanta and to promote the city as a viable option for artists to live and work. It was conceived by MOCA GA Director Annette Cone-Skelton in 2006 to, as she stated, "encourage successful, working artists to view Atlanta as a place where they could lay down roots. Atlanta has a thriving arts community and the Working Artist Project was our way

to encourage artists to stay in Georgia instead of moving to the larger arts centers of Los Angeles or New York." The project was made possible by the Charles Loidans Foundation that, in 2006, called for proposals from various non-profits across the city for an award of \$300,000. The challenge was to create a program that expanded the mission of the organization and connected with the community at large. Trustees of the foundation recognized that the concept behind the Working Artist Project would do exactly that and awarded MOCA GA \$200,000 to fund the first two years of the project. Following the resounding success of WAP, the Loidans Foundation has continued this \$100,000 contribution each year since. Additional support from the National Endowment for the Arts and BINDERS has strengthened the program even further.

Working Artist Project Alumni:

Larry Walker (2007/2008)
 Don Cooper (2007/2008)
 Danielle Roney (2007/2008)
 Matt Haffner (2008/2009)
 Marcia R. Cohen (2008/2009)
 Maria Artemis (2008/2009)
 Xie Caomin (2010/2011)
 Micah Stansell (2010/2011)
 Katherine Mitchell (2010/2011)
 Gregor Turk (2011/2012)
 Martha Whittington (2011/2012)
 Brian Dettmer (2011/2012)
 Jiha Moon (2012/2013)
 Katherine Taylor (2012/2013)
 Shara Hughes (2012/2013)
 Scott Ingram (2013/2014)
 E.K. Huckaby (2013/2014)
 Fahamu Pecou (2013/2014)
 Jonathan Bouknight (2014/2015)
 Sheila Pree Bright (2014/2015)
 Sarah Emerson (2014/2015)



Don Cooper, Working Artist Project Fellow, during his artist talk.

WAP is structured as a year-long program where three artists are chosen each year and awarded a \$15,000 stipend, a paid studio apprentice, a full-color exhibition catalog, a \$1,000 account at Binders art supply, a solo exhibition at MOCA GA, and one work is accessioned into the Museum's collection. The grant is awarded based on artistic merit, professionalism of the artist, and the proven ability to complete the project. The artists spend a full year in the studio creating a new body of work for the exhibition that will then be exhibited in MOCA GA's large gallery space. Each year a different guest curator from a major museum reviews the submissions and then travels to Atlanta to conduct seven to eight studio visits before selecting the three finalists. The guest curator not only acts as an external, unbiased moderator of the submissions but they also give these Georgia artists national exposure. Past WAP alumni have the opportunity each year to meet the

guest curator to continue increasing their national visibility even after their exhibition. By inviting guest curators, the project promotes Georgia as a booming arts community and introduces our artists into the national artistic conversation. Recent curators include Franklin Sirmans, Curator of Contemporary art at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Julie Rodrigues Widholm, Associate Curator at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago, and Siri Engberg, Curator at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis.

The studio apprentice portion of the Working Artist Project is MOCA GA's way of engaging emerging artists in the community through the WAP program. It is not only beneficial to the WAP artist, but is also an excellent opportunity for the apprentices themselves who gain mentorship from an established artist and paid studio hours. Selected apprentices are typically graduate students or emerg-

ing artists from the area and at the end of the program they are given a small group exhibition at MOCA GA to increase their visibility in the artistic community. Apprentices are chosen in collaboration between the WAP artist and MOCA GA in an attempt to find an emerging artist who would work best with the recipient and could gain the most from such an opportunity. Danny Sanzone, who served as Scott Ingram's apprentice in 2014 voiced his excitement for the program during a current exhibition of WAP apprentices. Sanzone felt, "Serving as an apprentice not only inspired me to work on bigger and better personal projects, but Scott Ingram has become a true guide for establishing myself as an artist in Atlanta. I can't say 'thank you' enough to MOCA GA."



EK Huckaby, Annette Cone-Skelton, Scott Ingram, Howard Krinsky (of Binders) and Fahamu Pecou during the presentation of \$1,000 checks from Binders Art Supply and Framing. These checks provided each artist with a \$1,000 art supply credit during the course of the project.



Outside of the financial benefits of the WAP award, Director Annette Cone-Skelton cites the challenge of creating a museum exhibition as another benefit for the winning artists. Cone-Skelton stated, “The program encourages artists to experiment, to dream bigger, and to create an exhibition or a body of work that goes beyond anything they have done before — normally both in quality and scale.” The structure of the program gives the winners significant artistic freedom through the use of museum space, funding, and working with an assistant. For many artists, the financial burden of creating work and holding a solo exhibition would be an obstacle; the WAP award gives artists the resources to tackle that challenge. Many artists stated that the stipend was an incredibly useful supplement to their income and allowed them to focus funds solely on art-related materials which they believe greatly improved their quality of work. Several former WAP artists also mentioned that hosting a solo exhibition positively impacted their art career in a significant manner. Artists gain recognition locally as well as on an international scale.

2010/2011 WAP recipient Xie Caomin noted, “The WAP has tremendously helped my art career. After my WAP exhibition I received six group exhibition invitations and have had three solo exhibitions internationally. My works have now been collected by the High Museum of Atlanta and HOW Museum in Shanghai.” Many artists also believe that they were able to personally grow as artists in addition to gaining commercial success. Fahamu Pecou, who held his WAP exhibition last winter, affirmed, “The program allowed me to think through and develop a body of work that would allow me to experiment with form and presentation.” Pecou continued, “(WAP) functions as a cocoon, transforming burgeoning artists from emerging into professionals and in turn re-invests in

Atlanta’s creative economy by providing a necessary channel for sustaining and supporting local artists.” Pecou is not the only artist who recognizes the benefit WAP brings to the Atlanta arts community. Xie Caomin insightfully commented, “The MOCA GA Working Artist Project is the most important event in the Atlanta art scene right now.” The success and impact of WAP has also been noted by MOCA GA’s guest curators. 2012/2013 curator Julie Rodrigues Widholm from the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago stated, “As my host, MOCA GA was highly organized and professional but more importantly their mission to support Georgia artists is critical to the growth and sustainability of an arts community in cities such as Atlanta and its environs.” The Working Artist Project continues to be a successful and sought-after program in the Atlanta area receiving 70 to 80 submissions from metro Atlanta artists every summer when the Call for Submissions opens. Last year’s Working Artist Project recipients will begin exhibiting this July and will display an extensive range of work with a broad assortment of media. The first WAP exhibition of the 2015/2016 season will be the work of film and mixed media artist Jonathan Bouknight opening July 18th, followed by the photography of Sheila Pree Bright opening September 26th, and the season will be capped by the paintings and installations of Sarah Emerson opening on December 12th and on view through February 6th 2016. Applications for the next round of the Working Artist Project will be accepted through **June 28th, 2015**, and the winners will be announced by guest curator Rujeko Hockley, Assistant Curator of Contemporary Art at the Brooklyn Museum, on July 19th at MOCA GA. We expect the competition to be fierce and the resulting exhibitions to continue to push boundaries. Mark your calendars and join us for an exhibition in the fall!



Working Artist Project Fellows alongside Annette Cone-Skelton, Bob Edge, Trustee of the Loridan Foundation, and Franklin Sirmins, Guest Curator from the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.



WAP Fellows: Larry Walker, Matt Haffner, Don Cooper, Danielle Roney, Micah Stansell, Gregor Turk, Xie Caomin, Martha Whittington, Maria Artemis, Katherine Mitchell, Marcia Cohen and Brian Dettmer.



*Annette Cone-Skelton, artist Larry Walker, and guests at the first Working Artist Project exhibition, *Surface, Spirit Voices and Other Secrets: The Wall Series in Transition* in 2008.*



Sarah Emerson, Sheila Pree Bright, and Jonathan Bouknight with visiting curator Siri Engberg from the Walker Art Center. They were the winners of the 2014/2015 Working Artist Project and will begin exhibition at MOCA GA in

WonderRoot's Walthall Artist Fellowship Program:

ENVISIONING A SUSTAINABLE CREATIVE LANDSCAPE



BRANDON C. JONES

Program Manager for Public Art, Arts for Activism, and Professional Development

Since its launch in 2012, WonderRoot's Walthall Artist Fellowship has been dedicated to empowering Atlanta-based artists to achieve optimum social impact with their crafts. "It's about how to take artists from working 40 to 50 hours a week in a coffee shop, valeting cars, bartending, or whatever their day jobs may be, to transitioning into being full-time working artists," explains Chris Appleton, WonderRoot's Executive Director. "I strongly feel the crux of the program is to imbue local artists with a sense of possibility – both practical and creative."

Atlanta is full of talented artists — people who make excellent work, have demonstrated success, and show great promise. Yet many artists — confident in enacting the role of arts practitioner — sit insecurely stifled when it comes to good business practices.

In 2012, we saw the need for professional development programming for the Atlanta arts community. While historically artists' educational backgrounds succeed in equip-

ping them with technical skills, there are often deficiencies in how artists are instructed to navigate the pragmatisms of careers.

As a result, WonderRoot wanted to be as responsive to the community as possible in developing its program. The team conducted numerous surveys and interviews with local artists and impactful arts organizations including Creative Capital and the New York Foundation for the Arts (NYFA) to identify critical concerns which could enable the professional advancement of artists and build a sustainable arts ecosystem in Atlanta. Of the responses collected, five key needs stood out: cultivation of a peer network; access to knowledge, skills, and tools for a professional practice; access to key decision-makers; exhibition opportunities; and time for retreat and reflection. With the five areas of interest identified, the framework for the Walthall Artist Fellowship was developed.

Now as we prepare for the fourth cycle, the Walthall Fellowship runs quite smoothly. After a rigorous application process, 12 creatives are selected for the year-long fellowships. These artists participate in a series of symposia led by distinguished arts leaders

who focus on the intricacies of careers in the arts, join monthly peer-led roundtable discussions centered on topics critical to their creative practices, receive one-on-one mentorships with established artists, go on a five-day residency on Ossabaw Island, and exhibit new work in a group exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary Art of Georgia (MOCA GA).

We are intentional in shaping the fellowship's symposia and guest speakers around topics such as grants writing, marketing, gallery representation, financial strategies, proposal construction, and contractual/legal negotiation. We often find that educational opportunities complement or stand in for conventional academic prototypes. Walthall equips artists with the professional tools, connections, and opportunities to take their careers to the next level.

Beyond developing professional skills, the Walthall Fellowship engenders a spirit of community between artists. "The artists form a support structure that encourages deeper dialogues about the intersection of the profession and craft, the space where art touches your life," says Maggie Ginestra, WonderRoot's former Creative Director.

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“I feel a deep sense of home when I think back on the year,” stated Erin Palovick, 2014-2015 Walthall Fellow. “The conversations with the greater Atlanta art community at large have been irreplaceable; I have gained new family in the other fellows.”

As Walthall’s Program Manager, I am continuously seeking to assemble a class of cohorts who are diversely represented in all facets – from race and nationality to formal training, style of artistry, and perspective. This diversity enriches the peer-led round table discussions and co-teaching environment that is the fellowship’s foundation. The bond cultivated by each year’s cohorts bridges communities and creates the professional camaraderie vital to maintaining resilience as an artist.

Across all professional sectors, accessibility is key when negotiating the potential for success. Within the arts, access to proficient training programs, leading artistic stakeholders, and supplemental resources are enormously influential for cultivating sustainable careers. The importance of building relationships and creating access across the spectrum cannot be over emphasized. I share Chris Appleton’s candor when

he states, “No matter how talented you are, no matter how many good friends you have, at the end of the day if you want to get in to galleries, exhibit in a museum, get a grant, there are a key few people making those decisions.” I stress to artists the significance of the being mindful of the names associated with their favorite artistic programing or exhibitions. Familiarity with the work carries little weight professionally if one is not also knowledgeable about who curated it, provided funding, and how it influences the community at large.

Because WonderRoot is an arts organization that works to improve the cultural and social landscape of Atlanta through creative initiatives and community partnerships, we place emphasis on the relationship between art and social change. By creating a stronger arts ecology through programs like the Walthall Artist Fellowship we hope to contribute to Atlanta’s multi-textured social climate by encouraging local artists to remain active and engaged in their communities through the arts.

“The expanded resources and opportunities facilitated through the program have been integral to my development as a professional, giving me a new jumping off point for engaging my goals and my community,” summarized Mary Grace Phillips, 2014-15 Walthall Fellow.

The fellowship concludes with a group exhibition at a museum, a capstone opportunity to show a year’s worth of work and learning. As we were exploring potential partnership opportunities to provide visceral learning experiences for the fellows, MOCA GA was perfectly aligned.

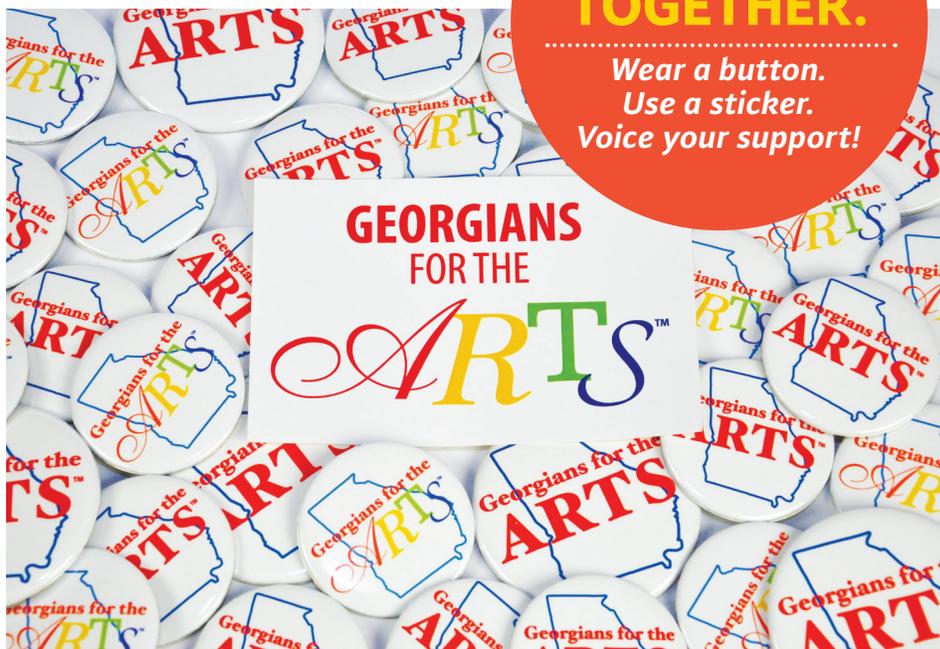
The 2014-2015 Walthall Artist Fellows will be exhibiting their artwork at the Museum of Contemporary Art of Georgia (MOCA GA) from July 18 – September 12, 2015. The opening reception is on Thursday, July 16th from 6:30-8:00p.m.

GEORGIANS FOR THE ARTS

Welcome to ArtsGeorgia's new public awareness and advocacy campaign to support an increase in state funding for the arts and arts education.

Make a statement that you are one of the many *Georgians for the Arts* who want our state government to invest in the arts and in arts education. Working together is the best way to get Georgia out of dead last place in arts spending in the U.S. Now just six cents per person per year. We can do better. Contact us for *Georgians for the Arts* buttons and stickers:

artsga@artsgeorgia.net



To participate in the *Georgians for the Arts* campaign, we ask you to take the following actions:



Visit the ArtsGeorgia website where you can:

Read about the Georgians for the Arts campaign



Subscribe to our State of the Arts eNewsletter



Other ways you can support the Georgians for the Arts campaign:

Like ArtsGeorgia on Facebook for updates and calls to action



Follow ArtsGeorgia on Twitter as we build the campaign



Tell friends about the campaign & share your buttons and stickers

ArtsGeorgia is fighting for the arts and arts education to achieve these primary goals:

Unite support for the arts & arts education in a campaign appealing to all



Restore annual state arts funding to \$5.2 Million Dollars in FY2017



Increase annual state arts funding to \$1.00 per capita by FY2020



Invest state funding in arts education for every child from K-12

Will you help us accomplish these goals? Wear your button, use your sticker, join the Georgians for the Arts campaign and speak out. You can support the campaign by joining ArtsGeorgia as a member, or you can make a tax deductible donation via PayPal on our website. Your donations are dedicated to the campaign.



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ArtsGeorgia, Inc.
P O Box 220
Lithia Springs, GA 30122

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Jim Demmers
John Eaton
Bill Gignilliat
Laura Lieberman
Chea Prince



The *M*useum of Contemporary
Art of Georgia



Larry Walker WAP Exhibition, 2008

CONTACT INFORMATION

ArtsGeorgia, Inc.
P.O. Box 220
Lithia Springs, Georgia 30122

e. artsga@artsgeorgia.net
p. 404.310.8727
artsgeorgia.net



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MOCA GA

75 Bennett Street, Atlanta, GA 30309

\$8 general admission, \$5 Students and Seniors

Visit www.mocaga.org for more information

Exhibition Openings in July!

July 18th *Portalism*: new moves by the 2014/15 WonderRoot Walthall Artist Fellows

July 19th Working Artist Project Exhibition, Jonathan Bouknight

July 31st: Georgia's State Art Collection and MOCA GA Collection Exhibition