

WINTER



Spring 2021

Alkebulan Hiii Sciience of
Civilization
BY: CEDRIC UMOJA

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Left: William Pope. *The Great White Way, 22 miles, 9 years, 1 street* (detail), 2001-2002. Digital video, Ed. 1/5. Lower right: Infante, Francisco, born 1943. *Artefact, From the Series, Play of Gestures* (detail) 1977, printed 1989. Cibachrome. 20 x 24 inches. Collection of Neil K. Rector

The Imaginative Worlds of M.C. Escher

February 6 – June 6, 2021

Images by Escher include subjects like infinite staircases, tessellating birds changing into fish and back again, and two hands drawing each other. See works spanning his entire career from his earliest print to his final masterpiece. Collection of Paul and Anna Belinda Firos, Athens, Greece.

The Ironic Curtain: Art from the Soviet Underground

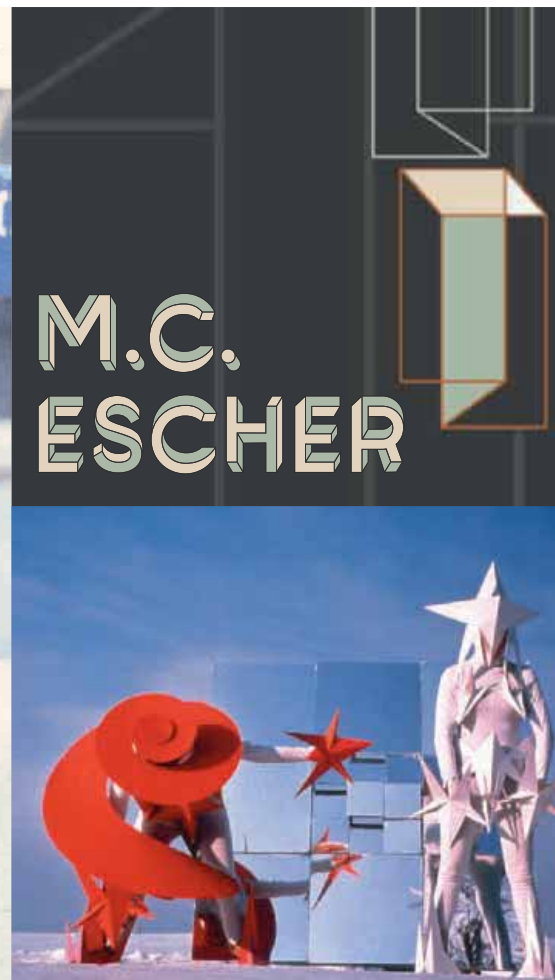
July 3 – September 12, 2021

The Ironic Curtain features artists who worked under political repression in the decades just before the fall of the Soviet Union. The results are wild and darkly witty. The CMA organized this exhibition from the premier Neil K. Rector Collection.

30 Americans

October 9, 2021 – January 17, 2022

30 Americans features an incredible “Who’s Who” list from among the most acclaimed Black artists of our time, including Nick Cave, Glenn Ligon, Lorna Simpson, Mickalene Thomas, and Kehinde Wiley. Organized by the Rubell Museum.





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FEATURE / IJA CHARLES



ON THE COVER
Alkebulan Hiii Sciience
of Civilization (Cedric Umoja)

52 JASPER - ARTISTS OF THE YEAR

CONTRIBUTORS

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Cait Patel · Kevin Kyzer · Matthew O'Leary · Len Lawson
Andrew Caldwell · Will South · Ann-Chadwell Humphries · Rebekah Rice
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JASPER IS

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JASPER ONLINE

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Back in 2011, my dear friends Cindi Boiter and Bob Jolley struggled with the decision whether to start this magazine after its predecessor (a trailblazing fine arts publication they had personally underwritten to keep solvent) was compromised by the illicit actions of a partner they no longer trusted.

I remember sitting at their kitchen table as they painstakingly weighed the odds that a seasoned writer and a busy physician could launch their own venture with no formal business background in publishing. It would take a sizable chunk of their own money to get it started while they tried to build an advertising base. They'd have to ask people to work without compensation at first. Would folks be willing? I could feel their apprehension about the risky unknown at a time when print publications were disappearing all over the country. And they wanted to keep this publication free. Crazy. Right?

Well that first issue of Jasper came out in the fall of that year, with David Yaghjian's artwork on the cover and a provocative centerfold featuring Michael Krajewski, as well as compelling content about dance, music, theatre, and more. Its very existence was made possible by a determined group of people willing to give of themselves because they shared Cindi and Bob's passion and fervent belief that a publication promoting the arts was not an indulgence but an absolute necessity to preserve and grow the culture of our city.

I'm proud to have been a member of that inaugural team, serving as associate editor. I witnessed the many hours of hard work and behind-the-scenes sacrifice it took to produce just one issue of Jasper. It didn't make money. It never has. Hoping to simply break even, Cindi and Bob repeatedly laid out thousands of dollars of their own money to keep it afloat. Volunteers contributed content, sold ads in a post-recession economy, and lugged boxes of the heavy magazines to local museums, shops, cafes, and bars. Generous benefactors also supported the magazine through The Jasper Guild.

Ten years later, Jasper is still publishing, now under the auspices of The Jasper Project. Cindi and Bob have humbly expanded their support for the arts by establishing Muddy Ford Press to provide book-publishing opportunities for up-and-coming artists. The results have been stunning.

My job situation, and life in general, took me to the Upstate a few years back, and I've continued to follow the magazine, visit Columbia, and contribute an article occasionally when invited. After a long absence, I am delighted to come back on board again as associate editor.

I wanted to tell this story because not enough people know the level of commitment and pure grit that Cindi and Bob — and members of their immediate and extended family — demonstrated for years to make all of this happen. So many artists have benefitted from it, myself included. I am tremendously proud to be involved and grateful to know them.

From that long-ago evening at a kitchen table in Chapin until today, I witnessed it all.

Kristine Hartvigsen
Associate Editor



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*Jasper// as in Johns, the abstract expressionist, neo-Dadaist artist
 as in Sergeant, the Revolutionary War hero
 as in Mineral, the spotted or speckled stone
 as in Magazine, the Word on Columbia Arts*

SPRING 2021 / VOLUME 009 / ISSUE 001

“The Jasper Project fully supports Black Lives Matter and their efforts to end the systemic racism that has been visible and invisible in all areas of our country’s economic, educational, public safety, military, political, and arts systems throughout its history.

Since its beginning, The Jasper Project has strived to give audience to artists of color throughout the communities of Columbia. But we haven’t done enough.

In the coming months, The Jasper Project board of directors will be implementing a program that emphasizes amplifying these voices of artists of color and is piloted by artists of color.

Projects implemented by The Jasper Project such as The Supper Table, Fall Lines, Jasper Magazine, and 2nd Act Film Project have made strong efforts to actively search for and present artists of color who have been creating work that calls for recognition.

But now is the time to listen.

By the end of the year The Jasper Project will create an ad hoc group comprised solely of artists of color whose mission will be to introduce us to those young creative voices in communities around Columbia that we have not heard. And in turn, The Jasper Project will make efforts to give a stage to these artists and listen, watch, read, and sing and dance with them.”

-June 13, 2020

Dear Readers,

In the summer of 2020, the Jasper Project issued the statement on the opposite page and made the ensuing commitment.

I wanted to let you know that we have kept our word by inviting more than a dozen highly accomplished artists of color from the SC Midlands to take positions on what we have temporarily called the Black Artists Matter Council. We did not ask these already busy and committed artists to do the work for us, but rather to help us do our work better and, if they are so inclined, to join us in our mission as members of the Jasper Project board of directors.

We specifically asked these generous artists if they would, “regularly send names and contact information for artists of color from the SC Midlands who [they] would like to see Jasper profile both in print and online ... Later, when the pandemic lifts, we will ask the council to gather ... for more extensive discussion.”

I’m happy to report that Jasper has enthusiastically responded to the recommendations our council members have shared by interviewing and writing about the artists whose names have been suggested. Evidence of this may be seen by visiting the Jasper Project blog at JasperProject.org and searching for “BLACK ARTISTS MATTER” in the subject prompt, as well as by paging through the issue of Jasper magazine that you hold in your hands.

But, of course, there is still so much more to do. And we’re ready to do it.

One of the projects we are currently developing is an annual poetry chapbook for SC artists of color under the direction of poet and council member, Len Lawson. There are many more projects in the planning stages that you’ll be hearing about in the weeks and months to come.

Make no mistake, I am not tooting Jasper’s horn for doing something we should have done better from the beginning.

But on a personal note, I can report that my life has been enhanced by the knowledge I have already gleaned from the artists we have covered since last summer. Bringing the work of more artists of color into my own art world has caused a paradigm shift for me. My life has already been vastly enriched and I find myself hungry to learn more and excited to share this knowledge with you via the Jasper Project.

For that and so much more I thank and honor the following artists who have so humbly and generously shared the wealth of their wisdom with me and the Jasper Project: Josetra Baxter, Michaela Pilar Brown, Marcum Core, Jemimah Ekah, Mahkia Greene, Autumn Hill Ingrassia, Preach Jacobs, Len Lawson, Darion McCloud, Katrina Blanding Price, Thomas Washington, and Ebony Wilson.

Take care,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Cindi', with a stylized, flowing script.

Cindi

THE
JASPER GUILD

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FIND YOUR SUPER POWERS.

JASPER GUILD

JASPERPROJECT.ORG

“You have a chance to become a part of something much bigger than yourself.” --Charles Xavier

There is much joy in doing the work that Jasper does. Which is why we do it. Which is also why we quote people like the fictional character Charles Xavier. That, and we just don't take ourselves that seriously. How could we? We are surrounded by everyday superheroes and supersheroes who give their lives, or a portion of their lives, to making the world be more and mean more through their art.

If all the Jasper Project can do is offer a pat on the back or a dollar here or there to help buy supplies, or maybe organize a bare-bones event to help celebrate art – ART – the essence of our HUMANITY – then, yay. Our day just got better.

Make your day better by visiting JasperProject.org and joining the Jasper Guild like these everyday superhumans below. There is a super power in all of us. Let's help each other find it.

You're Invited to Become Part of the New Jasper Guild!

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working artists only please

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Two tickets to ALL 2021 - 2022 Signature Jasper events

Seeing Vincent

an essay by Will South



Our eyes are magical. Small, round, and watery nerve-filled windows out onto space, they operate in tandem with our bodies to organize the maze of experience around us. We call what we see “reality,” and what we see constantly changes with ever-shifting light.

Helping others to see art has been my vocation for well over thirty years. Images are right there in front of us, and yet they are not. A painting of an empty field topped with a simple blue sky is easily passed by. My job has been to get museum visitors to stop and meditate upon that empty field.

Looking is not enough. One must listen to a painting. Hear the silence of that empty sky, hear the gentle rush of a breeze through the wind-bent wheat. Hear the dashes of cadmium-red roses singing at the crest of the hill, next to emerald trees that very nearly dance beneath the fast-moving clouds. This is an efflorescent world, a world in motion, a world to explore, a world you are woven into with myriad colored thread. Yes, our eyes are evolutionary miracles, yet an experience of anything

requires our entire being—our ability to touch, smell, feel, remember, and imagine.

Even without eyes, art may speak to you. The last exhibition tour of my career was shared with just one person, the Midlands-area poet Ann Chadwell Humphries. Ann is blind. And as we walked through Van Gogh and His Inspirations for nearly two hours, focused on the dozen works by Vincent, sensation and emotion roiled inside her—I felt her trembling thoughts through her hands that held on to me among the crowds.

Ann had written me a gentle email, asking if I remembered her. Of course, poets guide my life, I reminded her. Was there, she asked, any tactile part of the show—things she might touch? No, I slowly replied with an instant sense of failure: my show was not fully accessible. I rallied quickly: Ann, might I walk you through the exhibition as my guest? She did not wish for special treatment, I gathered, but by the next day decided to accept the invitation, happily.

It occurred to me that in over thirty years of public

speaking, I had never given a tour to the blind. As I was leaving my position as Columbia Museum of Art Chief Curator, my last tour would be a first. Another first was that I had exactly no idea what I would say.

Once in front of the first Van Gogh, our journey designed itself. Ann moved her hands over my arm and asked how far we were from the surface that Vincent had created. I took one hand and stretched it to the edge of the frame. Nearby security guards looked on, as did a wall of people behind us, suddenly still and staring at the sight of us. I then moved both of her hands to indicate how wide the painting is, and then again for how high.

“Now, tell me what is there,” she said ever so softly. This, I knew, was the challenge of a lifetime. One I had not seen coming. What is there, in a landscape by Van Gogh? Did I even really know?

I started with telling Ann that this painting is more traditional and conservative than the more famous late paintings like *Starry Night* and *Wheatfield with Crows*. This painting begins in the foreground with a field of hyacinth moving in carefully measured geometric rows of blue, yellow, white, and red. None of these colors, though, are really just that—each is shot through with the rich sepia-colored earth below making the blue slouch toward a tender blue-violet; the reds vacillated between a ruddy carmine and a warm pink; the yellows wished to be gold, but settled for a muted ochre. The white rows of flowers were the brightest part of the canvas, shimmering like low cotton. In these colors, you felt the soil between your fingers.

In this expansive foreground of flowers was a tiny figure near the middle-ground of the painting. He is walking through the rows, clearly the gardener focused on his work. He is alone, but with purpose, and that purpose is his garden. This is not a person you could speak to in this moment—he is busy, and far from you. Fate has made him a stranger.

Behind him is a row of buildings, tobacco-juice brown under a sky filled with tawny clouds. Naked trees line the space between the buildings, leafless and cold. The time could be late autumn, perhaps the last of the blooming season.

The air feels cold in this image, the clouds heavy, the buildings mute behind the colored field. In this overwhelming quiet place, work goes on. The sky is changing. The colors strain to be bolder but are not. Though, they take on vibrancy by contrast with the

limp, dark brown sienna trees and housetops. The scene at first blush is picture-perfect and postcard worthy, but as we stand there, and as we converse—me describing, she asking questions—we both see this is a picture busy becoming tomorrow. The work will get done, the flowers will fade, the clouds will disperse. Take this all in, now.

Ann asks me how wide the brush strokes seem to be. Perhaps an eighth inch flat-tipped brush I guess, with a softer and somewhat larger brush evident in the sky. And the weight of his hand? Confident and fluid in the sky, I tell her. Precise and pushing the hyacinth bulbs into place, giving each an equal hand. The trees are fragile, the buildings thick and ordinary. Each character in this play has his and her own costume, Vincent knows that. The well-ordered garden, so well maintained and attractive, is at odds with the random clouds that say nature is untamed. The garden and the sky stay in their own realms.

Visitors to the show gather around us. They see she is blind. They listen to us, and their eyes flicker back and forth between us and the Van Gogh landscape. Three small girls stare, in awe. “He is helping her see,” their mother whispers. I want to say that it is clearly the other way around, but do not. People are taking pictures of us—we’ll be on Instagram within moments. What are these visitors seeing?

That looking takes a life, a full life. It takes having been places, having loved others. It takes desire, it takes regret and failure. It takes finding words that only barely scratch the surface of what you so desperately need to say. It takes sleep and dreams and waking up in an equally dreamlike world. They are watching a blind poet see, and it is something so dramatic, so utterly unexpected, as if a purple cow had just run through the gallery.

A woman embraces Ann and tells her of a blind relative. This visitor says to me that my description of the painting made it come alive right in front of her. She tingled. Another man says that he can’t see like us. Why not? You are working on seeing right now, I tell him. I’m so glad, and hope you come to every show. He will, he says. His life has been transformed right then and there.

Ann is happy. I am not only happy, but honored. I came to help a poet to see a painter, and it was I who had his eyes opened wide.

Will South is the former chief curator for the Columbia Museum of Art.



"Now, tell me what is there."

'The Last Day of the Van Gogh Exhibit, a sestina

~after Will South, Curator

By Ann-Chadwell Humphries

His first tour of this kind, we match strides
as if old friends meeting at last. We brush
through the final day's crowd rendering
a mild wake past patrons in slow motion.
One landscape opens to us, my hand
on Will's hand, his gestures as wild as the painting,

Flower Beds in Holland, an early painting
finding its way. Mid-ground, a gardener strides
among beds of hyacinths; he lifts his hand
to his breast pocket for pipe tobacco. Brush
strokes throb with untamed emotion.
Flat-iron clouds roil across the rendering.

Will paints the air with his words, rendering
a crowd with cameras who joins us for each painting.
Stretching our hands in sweeping motions
he shows me the size of each canvas. Fat black swipes
fly as crows; green lines trim a goatee while Brush
tips feather reflections with the surest of hands.

A woman whispers to her children, "She's tracing his hand-
writing" (designed to touch), rendering
the name, Vincent, tangible. Primal Brush
marks dignify the subject of this painting,
a peasant woman in profile, her face wiped
with age, her hair cropped in one coarse motion.

Linseed and oil scent frenzied motions
of desperation in the artist's hand,
his self-portrait evidence of strife.
Bullets blaze from his blue eyes, rendering
us immobile in the presence of this painting,
our feet weighted where he wielded his brush,

all his work as intimate as the brush
of a kiss resplendent with emotion.
To think I almost missed these paintings,
relinquished my right to be there. My hand
on Will's arm triggered a self-reckoning
that aspirations need not be denied.

These paintings, a stark reminder to brush
aside cruel, self-limiting notions
rendering faith in oneself renewed first-hand.

Art and Digital Accessibility: From Physical Spaces to the Digital World

By Rebekah Rice

In the accompanying article (page 10) we read of the excitement and appreciation former CMA chief curator Will South afforded visually challenged museum patron Ann Humphries via his enhanced tour of the museum's recently completed Van Gogh exhibit. It's a beautiful story about people many of us know, and it serves to make all of us more sensitive to issues of accessibility. Those of us who are sighted can casually read the article either in print or online without a second thought. The reality is that most of Jasper's readers won't have another thought about this article.

I am not among those readers. As a UX designer/developer and accessibility expert at user experience strategy firm, Truematter, Ann's story is something I think about every day. It is my job to do so, as I make web sites and applications digitally accessible to those with disabilities, but as a visual artist and musician myself I recognize how important services like code-based alternatives to text and 3D printing in paintings can be.

Will and Ann's success story made Van Gogh's works more accessible to Ann. He helped her see and interpret the paintings in a way that made them come alive for her. Digital accessibility is very similar. If a reader can't see the images in a social media post, they need this information presented in a way that makes the image available to them. If using a mouse isn't an option, then a user needs to be able to navigate a site or app without it. In an ideal world technology would support all means of accessing information automatically, but

this isn't always the case. We, people like myself who work in this field, build and manipulate technology to make this happen.

Technology is so integrated into our lives that not being able to use it simply is no longer an option—and the law agrees. (In October of 2019, the Supreme Court upheld the Ninth Circuit's decision in *Robles v. Domino's Pizza*, setting a new precedent. The Americans with Disabilities Act applies to not only places of public accommodation, but digital services too.)

When a web site or application is digitally accessible it's not likely something everyone will see or notice. It's not like a wheelchair ramp or braille in an elevator. If you use assistive technology like a screen reader or TAP (technologically adaptive program) device, it's obvious. It's things like being able to turn captions on when watching a video in a loud room or increasing a page's text size so it's easier to read. Often whether we notice it or not, digital accessibility makes technology easier to use, so we all benefit from it.

Technology has made art, literature, and music more user-friendly to people in general. We can experience all these advancements from almost anywhere we like on a device that fits in our pocket. Ann was able to physically go to the museum and thankfully there was someone there to accommodate her specific needs. (It should also be noted that CMA offers multimedia guides and TAP tours regularly.) Her lack of sight wasn't a barrier to that experience. I just want the same thing to be true of the digital world and will continue working toward making that happen.

Rebekah Rice is a visual artist, musician, UX designer/developer and accessibility expert at user experience strategy firm truematter in Columbia, SC, as well as a member of the Jasper Project's board of directors.



All his work as intimate as the brush of a kiss resplendent with emotion.



Reinvention within the Sounds of Silence: A Year in COVID-19 with the South Carolina Philharmonic

By Christina Xan

Music is a pervasive form of storytelling that, while often played solo, hinges on community. Orchestras plant their roots within this sense of community, both in the stage itself and in the audiences they perform for. But what happens when the ability for togetherness is stripped away? This is the question that the South Carolina Philharmonic has been responding to for the past 12 months.

The South Carolina Philharmonic was founded in 1964, starting small at the Dreher High School Auditorium before moving to the Township Auditorium and then finally the Koger Center, where they currently perform. Rhonda Hunsinger, Executive Director of the Philharmonic for almost 20 years, describes it as “a group of individuals in our city that said, ‘We need an orchestra.’ And they tried and tried until they figured out how to do it.”

Over the past 50 years, the Philharmonic has grown, now possessing a core group of over 200 musicians

with a typical season that runs from early Fall to late Spring and features programming filled to the brim with classical and modern music alike. Pieces are selected by the group’s Music Director, Morihiko Nakahara, who has been with the orchestra since 2008. “To me, the biggest part of our history was bringing Morihiko on,” Hunsinger says, “His role and his engagement and involvement through this pandemic is why we’re still here.”

Nakahara treats the selection of music for each season somewhat like a painting, where each year is a portion of the picture, and each performance is a brush stroke. He has seasons planned out years in advance, and as does the visual artist, sees the entire picture and how each stroke comes together. Unlike a painting, however, curating a symphonic experience means that each brushstroke has multiple moving parts—the musicians. “Morihiko brought so much energy, vibrancy, and passion for the music that transcends just the cultural aspect,” says Kristin Morris, Marketing and Communications Director. “Just absolutely a deep, deep knowledge and love of classical music, and love of performers and musicians as well.”

With musicians and audience members in mind, Nakahara creates a blend of what he calls the “standard repertoire” of masterpieces by composers like Bach, Mozart, and Beethoven that “impact and inspire us still today” with modern composers that “serve as a powerful witness” of the world we live currently in. Nakahara creates music for those who love orchestral music and those who have never experienced it.

There is no way to overstate the effects of the recent pandemic on arts organizations, but for a nonprofit organization like the Philharmonic that relies fully on sponsorships, donors, and ticket sales, a year under the restraints of the coronavirus can mean unrecoverable loss.

The last concert the Philharmonic performed before the pandemic was in March 2020, a performance they decided to livestream. “It was a completely empty concert hall, which was an incredibly surreal experience,” Morris recalls, “It was emotional and beautiful, especially knowing now how long it would be until we were together again.” Hunsinger recalls that the team kept thinking it would be just one more week – until it wasn’t. Everything halted. The brush strokes stopped.

The 2020 season ended early, and over the course of the summer, the board of the Philharmonic had to reevaluate how to have an orchestra with no audience and no guarantee musicians could be on stage together. Nakahara began thinking of alternate techniques for his sonic painting, sourcing musical scores that only required strings and allowed people to be safely spaced apart. The directors gained advice from healthcare professionals to ensure they knew how to keep both musicians and audiences safe.

Then, in Fall 2020, they reinstated programming at outdoor venues like Saluda Shoals Park, the Hunter-Gatherer Hanger, the Hampton-Preston Mansion, and Segra Park. Their first time coming back together for an in-person show at their typical venue occurred just a few months ago in January.

The Koger Center has about 2200 seats, but the maximum seats they could sell and maintain social distancing was 425. Before rehearsal, all musicians had to test negative for COVID, and regardless, everyone had their temperature taken when they walked in the door.

“It’s mind-blowing what a strange new beast this is,” Hunsinger says. “You have to wonder about aerosol transmission and what happens when you blow a trumpet or play on a flute.”

The production manager set up rehearsal with a 6-foot stick, and everyone was required to wear a mask for the entire rehearsal and concert unless they were a wind player.

The average number of musicians on stage during a typical performance is 75-80 musicians with a max of around 150; under the pandemic, the max is 60.

Throughout all this, the musicians have stayed dedicated and creative, even using puppy pads to catch the condensation from wind instruments. “The innovations that musicians have come up with are ingenious,” Morris says, “and I think that so much of that has to do with the fact that our musicians miss performing for audiences so much.”

This desire to reach audiences has been a major factor behind providing livestreams for each concert. The Philharmonic was committed to streaming concerts for people who were not going to be able to leave their homes, and they were committed to it being affordable. “We don’t believe that classical music, or any art in

general, should just be available to wealthy people who can afford an exorbitant ticket price,” Morris says.

Fortunately, love has been given to the Philharmonic as people realize that music, like any art, is needed now more than ever. Through outdoor and virtual shows, the Philharmonic has been able to stay afloat, but it hasn’t been easy. In fact, they have realized a significant loss of income. Logistically, ticket sales, which account for a third of the orchestra’s income, are down 75%.

Beyond the practical endeavor of safely reaching an audience, Nakahara says that these changes have also affected the way the musicians make music, which he says, “relies so heavily on subtle non-verbal communication, whether seeing each other’s facial expressions or the simple act of breathing together.” To compensate, the musicians are increasingly physical in their performances, and Nakahara himself uses larger gestures when conducting.

These changes will impact the organization for some time to come. “I don’t think we’re going to be what we were ever. And maybe that’s a good thing,” Hunsinger says. “We’re reinventing ourselves, and making ourselves much more; we’ve been forced to find ways to become more accessible, and that’s really wonderful.” Morris echoes this and shares that it’s important to look at the opportunities that the pandemic has provided. Doing an outdoor concert series, for example, where people can bring their kids, their dogs, their neighbor, and experience music in a more casual environment is a fresh way to welcome newcomers to orchestra music. Offering a virtual show ensures far more people can see and hear the talent of the Philharmonic.

Regardless of in-person or virtual, in a building or on a lawn, witnessing an orchestra is like being inside a painting, swinging on each stroke and pressing fingers into the textures. The Philharmonic has been dedicated to crafting this unique experience for over 50 years. “In some ways all of these obstacles can have a lasting positive impact on our music making when things are back to ‘normal,’” Nakahara remarks. “If we can create cohesive musical statements despite our obstacles, imagine what else we can do.”

Christina Xan is a writer and academician at USC and a member of the Jasper Project board of directors.

Photo courtesy of SC Philharmonic.



Photo by Crush Rush

What we do is important [...] what we do filters into other industries and to actually stand up and have people take notice that we are valuable, productive citizens and a driving force in the economy. That's the goal.

INTERVIEW: Filmmaker Ebony Wilson Talks with Dr. Thaddeus Jones

Jasper asked one of our colleagues and 2nd Act Film Project alums to take on the task of introducing the new leadership at the Nickelodeon Theatre to our readers. Here's filmmaker Ebony Wilson's interview with Dr. Thaddeus Jones, a native of Hampton, SC and the Nick's new director of programming.

Ebony:

Thank you for sitting in with me for a little film discussion. You recently took the position as director of programming at the Nickelodeon Theater. Congratulations. I just have a couple of questions for you from the community. Number one, why did you seek out your current job at the Nickelodeon?

Thaddeus:

I did not seek out this current position. Well, that's a long story. When I was at USC, I entered a film competition or tried to enter a film competition at the Nickelodeon that was just starting out at the time. I believe it was what became Indie Grits, and I didn't get in. I didn't get much feedback. And so, the next year I entered again, and [again] I didn't get in. Then I said, well, maybe it's just a bad film, but something in me, wouldn't let it go. And so, I talked to a mentor of mine, Susan Hogue, and she looked at our film and she was like, no, this is a good film.

She helped us out and we submitted again, and it didn't get in again. I was done with this. But she [suggested we] send it to a couple of other places. One of those was for new filmmakers in New York and [my film] got in, and then another one was in LA and it got in there, too. And so, I was just kinda like, Hmm, this is weird. I'm competing in my own town and I can't get an audience, but I can get an audience in New York and I can get an audience in California. And that kind of stuck with me.

When a board member told me that there was going to be an opening at the Nick for this position, I really didn't think I had a chance to get it. I'm very outspoken and I'm always gonna speak my mind, regardless of what people think. But I threw my hat in the ring anyway thinking that if there was ever a time, I was going to take a job, it was going to be this job. And it was going to be to champion local filmmakers and the film community here because that's the gap that I always saw. This wasn't being supposed to be such a so long story. But that's how, that's why.

Ebony:

How do you currently see the Nickelodeon's place in the Columbia creative community?

Thaddeus:

I would say we are rebuilding [and] rebranding. One of the things that I equate it to is food. Have you ever been to a place and it doesn't look exactly like the place you might want to eat? It doesn't necessarily look good, but then you get your plate and you're like, wow, this little greasy spoon is putting out some really good food. And then there's some other places that you go and you're like, man, this looks fantastic. And you get your plate. And you're like, this is disgusting.

Currently I think that what we have going on is the taste and the look don't match. We are an independent art house theater. But up until recently, we weren't really supporting the local artist. I mean, don't get me wrong. There are some things that we had going on as far as fellowships and things of that nature that were somewhat supportive. But I don't know when the last time [was that] an artist felt comfortable in approaching the Nickelodeon to show their film. It made no sense to me to be the only art house theater in the state and not support local film.

And so, it goes back to the look and the taste. We look good, but how do we taste [to] the filmmakers when they see us? One of the things that I really wanted to do coming in, and I was very open about this, is change the taste of us to the local artists. And that means talking to local artists about showing their films and being a part of the culture here. I think we've got a lot of work to do because there's been so much said about the culture of the Nickelodeon and the Columbia Film Society, the culture of Indie Grits, and how it all operates.

I think that my mandate is to come from an authentic place of bridging the gaps for the talent here and just to be able to weigh in on and say, you know, either we're going to stand up and take a strong position about what we believe or we're not; and there's no in-between. Make the changes that need to be made to invite the community in and have the discussions that need to be had. Or you're going to hide and you're going to be inauthentic and you're going to look good, but you're going to sound and taste like crap to everybody. And I'm not about tasting like crap to anybody.

Ebony:

Yeah. We're not about that. We like our stuff to look, sound, and taste good. It's funny, because, as a filmmaker myself, I was trying to remember who the last local filmmaker was I can recall having their film accepted or even viewed at the Nickelodeon. I can only think of one.



Ebony Wilson is an award-winning actress, director, and filmmaker from Columbia, SC. Since 2012, she has written, directed, produced, and edited her own original works, most notably the award winning 2017 feature, "2025: Prelude to Infusco". She owns and operates the independent production company, Midnight Crow Productions.

Thaddeus:

There's been some work through the fellowships, but every artist doesn't get into the fellowship [program]. What's the route for those [who don't]? I'm talking about art as a community. Just because it doesn't sit well with your particular pallet doesn't necessarily mean that there's not an audience for it. And to sit back in judgment of folks, I think, is just one of the worst things you can do, especially when you're talking about art, because art is the gateway to conversation. Whether you like it, dislike it, think it needs to be a different way. Let's talk about it. That's how I look at art.

Ebony:

Do you think that maybe [it] just wasn't the goal of the Nick to be a community theater house?

Thaddeus:

Absolutely. I think people define community differently. And if it's not on your radar, if that's not what you think of as community, then it often goes unnoticed, unwanted, untouched, uninvited, right? When we talk about being inclusive, we have to think in the broader sense and not just in art. All people tend to want to lean on what they're comfortable with. Growth happens in the spaces where you're uncomfortable, not in the places where you feel the most comfortable, but with places where you're challenged. And if you aren't willing to be challenged, your organization is not going to grow.

If you're going to hang on to the status quo, of course, that's where you're going to end up. I don't think it was necessarily a thought that, Hey, we're not going to include these people. I think it was more of a thought of this is where we're comfortable and you know, why rock the boat? And when you're a part of the in-crowd and somebody else is trying to get into the boat, you know, it's like, man, how many people can we take into the boat? You gotta find your own boat. Looking at it from that perspective just limits the amount of impact you're able to make.

Let's build a bigger boat, you know, and while we're floating, you know, bring that table over here and turn it up and let's tie it onto this boat. And let's make a bigger platform for it.

Ebony:

Jack is on here too, let's not leave him freezing.

Thaddeus:

Why is Jack in the water? There was so much room on that plank of wood, and she was calling out to him, Jack, Jack, don't leave Jack. Hey, if you had let Jack on the wood, he'd be right here with you. So ...

Ebony:

It's hard to teach an old dog new tricks. Every company, at some point, has to revisit their [business] model.

Thaddeus:

You have to have the ears on to listen to your people when they're telling you this isn't working.

I grew up Black in the South. This is not a new feeling for me. I just felt the Nick was a place that I thought would be more inclusive and more welcoming.

Ebony:

Well, now that you're here, what are your current thoughts on how the Nickelodeon can better reach out to Columbia's indie film community?

Thaddeus:

We're moving forward in a way that I think is going to be good. One of the things that we're trying to do is to partner with local filmmakers to give them access as far as virtual screenings, because that's what we're doing right now. That should roll out within the next month or so. One of the things that I'm going to do is to definitely be in support of any other organization that is trying to make movies here. I was a member of the CFS prior to coming to the Nick. I'm going to continue to be a supportive member of the CFS.

I want to invite our local artists in, once we are back open, to show their films, to figure out a way that we can help them get a platform to get more eyeballs on their films. I just don't think that there's a reason why local filmmakers should not be able to find some kind of a screening opportunity in the [local] art house theater. There's just no excuse for that, in my opinion. And I think that we should also be pushing the agenda of helping to educate folks who want to be filmmakers about not just the art of filmmaking, but the business of filmmaking, because, honestly, filmmaking is an expensive hobby.

If you are in it and treating it as a business, as a content creator, then that is a whole different mentality. And we should be fostering that. And we should be fostering that with the upstate, with the low country and [bringing] different organizations together. We can become the hub for resources for independent filmmakers in the state.

Ebony:

[What are your] immediate goals for the Nickelodeon?

Thaddeus:

I do have a couple of things that I'm trying to do. One of them, I can't really let out the bag just yet, but we are working on something we're calling a Filmmakers' Focus, which will have some workshops, possibly some guest filmmakers from around the state. We're also partnering with Doko film festival, which is geared toward high school students and young filmmakers. I have a film camp that I put together with my company and we are working to expand that throughout the state. My immediate goal is to try and help spread filmmaking throughout the state, to help increase media literacy, and to just become that hub that people can turn to for information on filmmaking.

Ebony:

Do you think that Indie Grits will [stick with] its previous model?

Thaddeus:

I am looking at changing the model, honestly. I think the scope was beyond what it should have been. We are a theater. I want to partner with other organizations so that we can stay in our lane and do what we are charged to do. That doesn't mean we have to be the bearer of every form of media.

Ebony:

Did you have any last thoughts on anything that maybe led up to the change in leadership at the Nickelodeon?

Thaddeus:

I can't really speak to what led up to it because I wasn't there. But what I can say is that most of these folks are really trying to figure out how to be better. When you're trying to change, you need the room and space to be able to [do so]. You need to be able to have that conversation about what

we feel is wrong or what the community feels is wrong. And you need to have that in an open and honest way. If you just want to crucify people, then change never comes.

It takes time to change, but also it takes being held accountable and being held accountable is not a bad thing.

While we may not create the best taste in people's mouths right now, all we can do is continue to work at tasting better. And eventually people will know us for the taste that we have cultivated versus what it used to be. So that's where we're headed.

Ebony:

I visited here many times, but I do not recognize the menu.

Thaddeus:

There you go. That's exactly right.

Ebony:

One final question for you personally. While you're here, what is the biggest change that you want to see happen under your direction?

Thaddeus:

I have a heart. I'm a filmmaker at the core. And my heart is for South Carolina filmmakers not to be Hollywood or anything else, but to create our own ecosystem of filmmakers within the state. We have to understand that [filmmaking] is not a glorified hobby; that what we do is important; that what we do filters into other industries and to actually stand up and have people take notice that we are valuable, productive citizens and a driving force in the economy. That's the goal.

Ebony:

Well, I'm happy you're here. And I'm happy to know you. Thank you.

Thaddeus:

I'm happy to be known and I feel honored that anybody would want to get a couple minutes of me talking.

(This interview has been edited for length and ease of reading.)



They didn't eat the cowards, fragments from a season in Brazil

An essay by Ed Madden

for Augusto, Fabio, & Laura

There were three square decanters behind the counter at the Bar do Professor in Itaparica. Each glass box had a small spigot and a murky bottom. There was cachacas com canela, with cinnamon. It tasted like Christmas, I said, as we passed it around, thinking of mulled wines and spiced punches, the holiday only a few weeks away. There was a sweet one, cachacas com anis, anise. And there was a bitter one, dark herbs clouding up the bottom of the jar—milome, mil homens, a liana.

Three choices for the four of us, part of a small cohort of artists in residency at Instituto Sacatar, on the island of Itaparica in Bahia, Brazil. I chose the doce, the sweet. The cramped bar was crowded with stackable chairs and tables, bright orange and red. It was hot. We sat outside around a red table, blocking the sidewalk, only a few feet from taxis rattling by. James, a small wiry man with a big smile, brought a small glass for each of us. He also brought a big bottle of beer to share—Schin, Bohemia, Itapaiva—and plastic cups. Someone bought a small container of the canela for the house for the holidays. For two weeks the recycled plastic bottle glowed on the long prep table in the kitchen, a small simmer of gold light between bowls of banana and carima, bright yellow maracujá going brown.

We went back to the Bar do Professor for pre-dinner drinks on Christmas Eve. Along the way we passed the local Christmas display. For a few days it was just a stack of green tires in graduated sizes to suggest the shape of a Christmas tree, then some bright yellow flowers, then the full seizure-inducing battery of flashing white lights. It was tacky and it was gorgeous. Beside it there was a cloth banner of Mary and Joseph. Someone pointed out that both Mary and Joseph were very white. No one around us is, someone else said, and they weren't either. I ordered the milome, the bitter.

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Someone had recommended a new restaurant in Gamboa for their arrox com polvo, rice with octopus. On the way there with Augusto and Fabio, we stopped at a gift bazaar. It was the Sunday before Christmas. Augusto and Fabio are old friends, and there was a kindness to them, a warmth, and I was glad to be included. They bantered constantly, a kind of conversation I associate with older gay men I know, rich with cultural reference, wit, affection, and entendre, moving rapidly through registers and laughter. We walked through tables of old books, religious trinkets, ridiculous crafts made of beer bottle caps.

I took a photo of a calendar—12 clothespins labeled for the months, clipped to three dangling lengths of rope—useless unless you just needed a way to collect bits of paper in monthly batches, maybe an old way of doing things. During the residency, I thought and wrote about time—how we measure time, about the vast sweep of tides beyond my studio and the clocks of the birds, the small green parrots that quibbled under my window every afternoon, their wings a flash of blue, the small owl that flew by at dusk, the steady march

of days that was this short residency. I thought about the clocks embedded in our flesh. I sent the photo to Laura, the painter from São Paulo. Laura and I talked almost every day about our work, about time and how we measure and experience time.

Every day I walked the beach, collecting things, at first just shells, small broken pieces of tile, azulejos, but as the residency passed, my collecting became more indiscriminate, erratic—I was like a magpie drawn to bright things. I picked up plastic objects, not sure what I would do with them, though they slowly started to show up in the little mosaics I assembled every morning in my studio to get my day going—a clothespin, an orange monkey, a small car, a small green vial that Marcelo told me was likely used for cocaine. One morning I found a branch of an artificial Christmas tree on the beach, a doll's hand, and a pink straw shaped like a penis. I later learned that the doll was likely not a child's toy but an offering to Yemanjá, spirit of the ocean, the straw a favor from a hen party.

~

I was too early and too late. Chiquinho pulled his taxi off the old dirt road from Mocambo, past a line of ruined buildings with no roofs, green shutters still hanging akimbo on a few windows, past a field of tall metal posts that marked the outline of old processing sheds, coming finally to a stop in a dusty clearing, an old diesel pump in the middle of it all. After Christmas, I had asked Chiquinho to take me to an abandoned mango plantation. Around us were hundreds of mango trees, heavy with green fruit. We saw a line of large jambo trees on the east side of the clearing, the ground beneath them littered with fallen fruit. It was morning still, but the sun was brutal hot. The shade beneath the trees smelled of roses and rot. Chiquinho took a long stick to knock down some of the remaining fruit to take back to the house, and I filled one of the shoulder bags I'd brought with me.

I avoided the large ant mounds, but I was unable to avoid the carrapicho seeds that affixed themselves to my jeans, shoes, socks, sleeves. We found only five ripe mangos, yellow and sticky. We found six limes. We put these in another shoulder bag. Chiquinho pulled a tamarind pod off a tree, showed me how to crack it open, use my teeth to scrape out the stringy, tangy pulp, spit out the seeds. I took photos of the ruins. In what looked like an old industrial sink at the back of the processing sheds, there was a wooden box painted blue. I imagined a shipment of yellow mangos in boxes

the color of sky. As we drove back toward Itaparica, bags of fruit in the back seat, Chiquinho pointed out his mother's house in Mocambo, the field where he had played futbol.

We were almost too late and a little too early. The clock of the jambo said: last week. The clock of the mangos said: maybe next. I left what fruit I had in a couple of big bowls in the institute's big kitchen, went to change my clothes. I tried to remove all of the little sticky seeds of the carrapicho—called amor seco, dry love, or moedinhas-teimosas, stubborn pennies. But I would find them for weeks, on a shoulder bag or my laptop sleeve, in the closet on laundered clothes, on espadrilles I hadn't worn to the forest. For weeks my shoulder bag smelled of jambo. Every time I took out my laptop or that big guide to birds of Brazil, I got a whiff of that grandmotherly perfume. I went back to the kitchen and washed and cut the brightest of the yellow mangos, the skin sticky with oozing syrup. It was the sweetest thing I have ever eaten.

~

On the porch of the restaurant, someone said there had been cases of chikungunya in Gamboa recently, and I was glad we were sitting outside on a very breezy porch, glad that I had put on mosquito lotion before we left. I asked Fabio if he had been to Bar do Professor in Itaparica. I told him about the three kinds of cachacas, the cinnamon, the anise, the bitter herb with a name I couldn't remember. He said that in some bars in Bahia, there are bottles of cachacas in which there are scorpions or snakes. He said they think you drink the creature's power, or maybe you become immune to the poison. I imagined ordering cachacas not by the sweet or bitter, but by the animal floating inside.

Augusto kept joking about Fabio's vegetarianism, said Fabio himself should be barbecued. They laughed, then Augusto turned serious, told me that the original inhabitants of Itaparica, the indigenous Tupinambás, were said to be anthropophagous, cannibals. But they didn't hunt people for food, he explained, it was a ritual. They thought you absorbed the qualities of the person you ate.

They didn't eat the cowards, Augusto said.

It's like the snakes in the cachacas, said Fabio. It is the same thing.

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On the Saturday before Christmas, there was a party at the house, the residents and staff together—dinner, drumming and singing on the beach just outside the gate. Everyone was a little drunk, on the drink, the sun, the holiday joy. Charles and Pitu asked us, the foreigners, for a song, and France-Luce started singing "Single Ladies." Pitu sang along, but it was not clear at all that he knew what he is singing. Reginaldo started a song in which they called each of the women in the artist cohort to dance, one after another, Marina, Ana, Laura, France-Luce. Then they called me—oh Edjy, oh Edjy. (I loved how they said my name, the d like a j and then that soft vowel at the end.) France-Luce laughed: "When else are you going to have a bunch of Brazilian men singing your name? You have to dance!" So I did.

When I later looked up milhomes online, I learned that the roots have long been used in South America for digestive ailments and as a diuretic, as well as for fever, syphilis, ulcers, and snakebite. Possibly carcinogenic and definitely nephrotoxic, it is not available as an herbal supplement in some countries.

At our Christmas dinner I wore a red and green African shirt. Laura had decorated the room in tropical splendor, flowers and giant banana leaves. I fell asleep in a chair on the porch as Laura was reading our tarot cards. My card, a mosaic of a face with pieces missing, was an answer to my unstated question, something about finding wholeness in broken things.

From November 2019 to mid-January 2020, Ed Madden spent two months as a resident artist fellow at the Instituto Sacatar in Itaparica, Bahia, Brazil. The Sacatar Foundation (sacatar.org) offers residency fellowships to artists from all nations, working in any artistic discipline, in order to promote intercultural understanding and global interconnectedness. Madden was one of 22 artists from 14 countries selected for the 2019 residencies. He is working on a collection of essays based on this experience.

Photo credit:
Ana Dévora
www.Anadevora.com

Keith Tolen

By Cindi Boiter
Photos by Crush Rush

Artist Keith Tolen is a gentleman and a gentle man.

He is the kind of person who makes you feel better about the state of humanity after talking with him. He makes you feel honored to be his friend.

An art educator at Camden Middle School for 30 years, Tolen has retired now and spends his days enjoying his family, taking part in projects that seem to pop up more often than he expected they would, and, thankfully, still creating art.

Having recently closed an exhibition at the Bassett Gallery, part of the Arts Center of Kershaw County, and created a mural on the Free Times building on Gervais Street, Tolen is now serving as a 2021 fellow with an Indie Grits Lab project on the meaning of home, partnering with the Columbia Housing Authority.

Tolen clearly doesn't grasp what the word "retired" means.

His Bassett Gallery show, "Through it All, I RISE," inspired by the Maya Angelou poem, started out as something completely different from how it ended. "My inspiration for that show evolved over the three months I had to plan for it," the artist says. "Because the show was in Camden, initially I wanted it to be a little bit more historical where it would tie in outstanding African Americans from that area. Camden, like so many places in our area, has a very rich, almost untold history for African Americans. In Camden, the Black

connection to the horse races has always been a story that I wanted to explore in my artwork."

"I started the pieces," Tolen says, "but they did not get completed. Then the story for the show began to take on its own connective theme. I noticed as I brought the pieces together common ideas were revealed in the artwork that I was selecting. Many of the pieces that would end up in the exhibition highlighted emotional tension through the use of lines shapes or color focusing on the human face. I felt that the face was sharing the message to me and in some ways acting as a mask to control individual feelings. Some of the pieces on the surface appeared solemn and serious but bright colors were used to highlight, even alter the mood of the piece."

"The signature piece that was featured on the exhibit poster was of a male in profile resembling a mug shot," Tolen says. "But the pigment of the skin was colored in the tones of blue and blue violet and placed against an orange sky, looking in my opinion, hopeful and transforming the entire mood of the image."

"So, I saw in the show multiple stories, and even incorporated actual masks in several of the works, and the dominate story still connected the work and the emphasis on hope," he says.

"It was a very colorful visual story. I felt transformed walking into the gallery seeing the artwork that was once in my brain, now filling the space of the gallery. It was an eerie, but also magical feeling," Tolen confesses.

A student of the renowned South Carolina artist, Leo Twiggs, when Tolen attended South Carolina State College, now University, in the 1970s, the influence of Twiggs can still be recognized in Tolen's art.

"Dr. Twiggs was the number one key to me being an art education major," Tolen says. Other faculty members who Tolen credits with influencing his style and capabilities are Dr. James McFadden and Dr. Terry Hunter. With typical humility, Tolen says he also looks to the great artists of the Harlem Renaissance for inspiration, particularly Charlotte-born Romare Bearden, though Tolen is less abstract than Bearden was.

The artist's diversity in theory and method are best expressed in another project from 2020, a larger-than-life-sized mural titled, Catch the Wave.



**“Life changes. Ideas change.
We will always need artists
to help us make sense of the
changes.”**





“That was an experience that really transformed and inspired me as an artist. It all started with the research,” Tolen says. “The mural was created to feature the Historic Waverly community here in Columbia. The rich history of the community could not possibly be told on a single wall, so the challenge was a bit intimidating at first. I think much of the project started to come together after I started meeting members of the community. I am a doodler--if there is such an individual. I like to scribble and just make marks. Inspired by the information about the community along with hearing stories from the community members, the community itself inspired the elements of the mural. During one of the community meetings the idea was shared about the importance of creating a continuum linking the past and present with the future. It was as if the history of the community came alive and spoke for itself to join the process, catch up, and catch the ‘Wave,’” Tolen says.

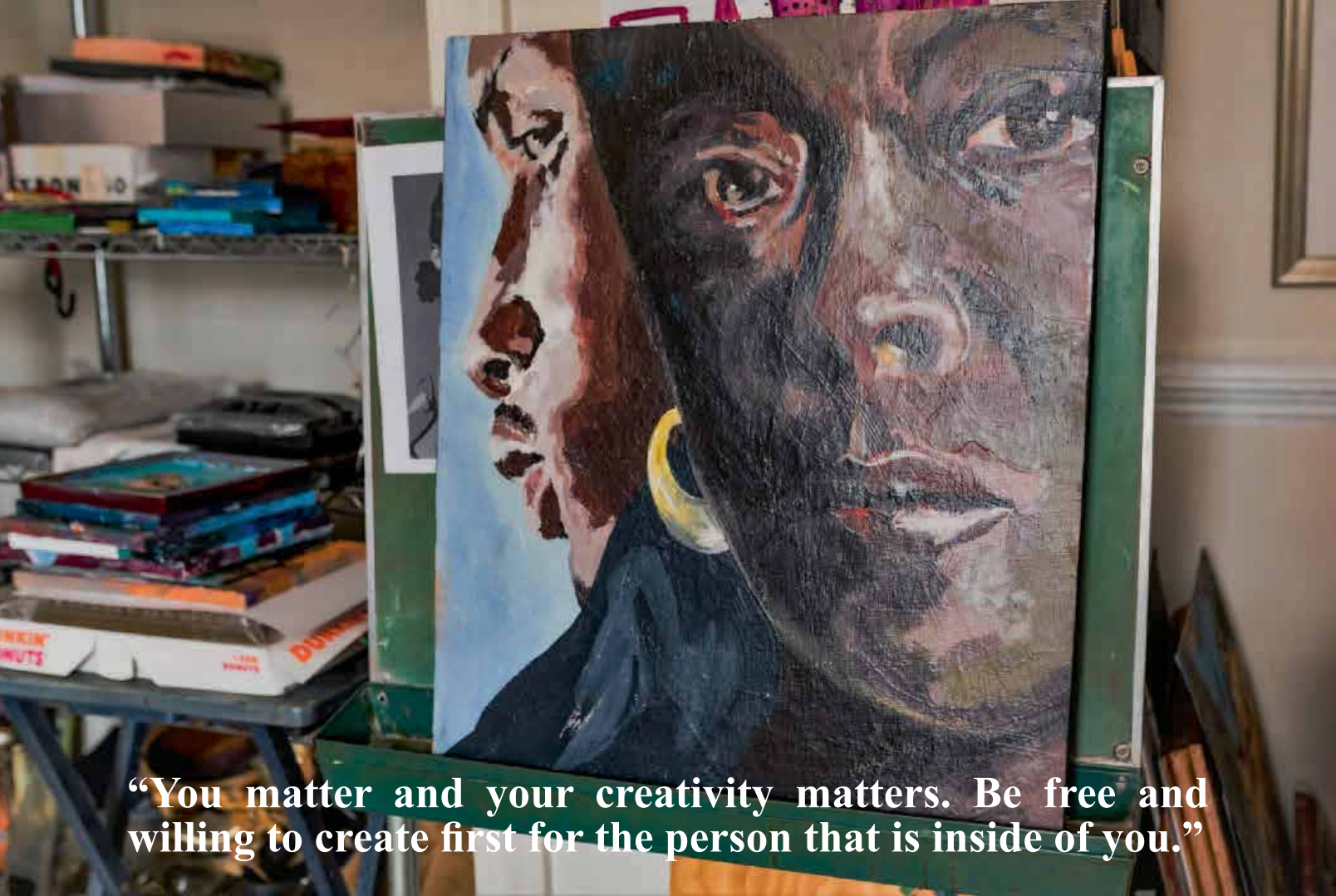
This sentiment became not only the title but the inspiration for the mural.

“The wave is a power symbol because water has many

meanings”, Tolen continues. “In water lies many elements of life, including the fact that humans are surrounded by water at birth, so water and the wave become the birthing mechanism for this story, and it can also be considered a universal symbol for life. As the water rolls across the space the next major symbols are the three faces,” the artist says, describing the mural. “One of the faces represents the light that is important in life and creation, the second face works to extend the wave, and the third face forms the community. The three-faces act in unity but have different roles.”

“In the middle of the design, the symbols become more specific to the location of the community and also act to begin to define the impact that the community has had both past and present. Finally, the symbols, along with the wave, morph into the residential area highlighted by a variety of images. As we go from its conception to its role today, we invite the viewer to “catch the Wave” and become a part of the great things that are associated with this community.”

Tolen has previously created murals in Columbia’s historic Vista area as well as at Riverbanks Zoo.

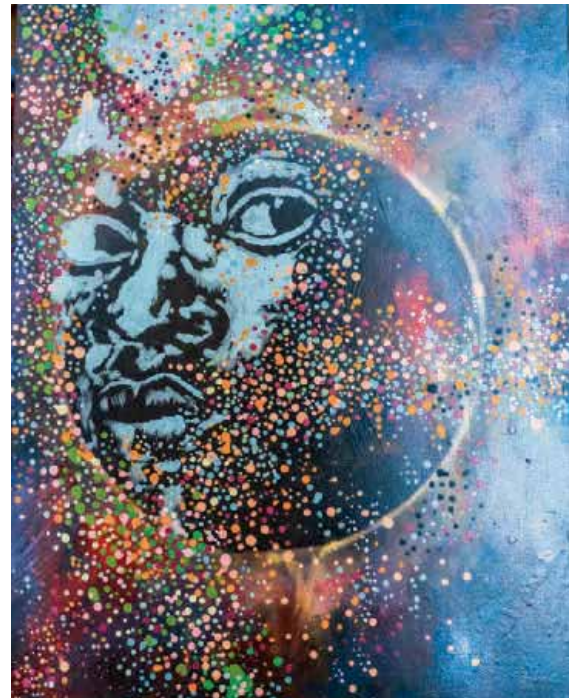


“You matter and your creativity matters. Be free and willing to create first for the person that is inside of you.”

Next up for the artist is a fellowship with the Columbia Film Society and Indie Grits Lab in which he and five other fellows partner with the Columbia Housing Authority and the residents of Latimore Manor to explore the meaning of home.

The educator in the artist is still powerful as Tolen takes the opportunity to share his own life experiences with younger artists, reminding them that, “You matter and your creativity matters. Be free and willing to create first for the person that is inside of you.”

“Create for yourself first,” he repeats emphatically. “Trust the hard work that you put into the process. Develop a team of folks that you a enjoy working with and support each other. You will always be needed. Life changes. Ideas change. We will always need artists to help us make sense of the changes. Finally, share the process and share the journey. It makes the ride even more enjoyable.”





Pandemic Resilience – Midlands Theatres Respond to COVID-19

By Shannon Ivey

For the Midlands area, theatre and the performing arts are an entertainment staple. From the nomadic art heroes of NiA Company to one of America’s oldest community theatres in Town Theatre, we watch with anticipation as our theatres navigate the COVID-19 generated CDC guidelines and fiscal concerns which will allow them to return to the stage and do what they do best – entertain us.

But in the meantime, as theatres struggle to stay both afloat and at the ready to tread the boards again as soon as the pandemic lifts, we have the privilege of witnessing great creative and entrepreneurial leaps of innovation at a pace that is awe-inspiring.

Jasper was curious about how our theatres are faring and what their administration and staff have learned from this unique closed-due-to-pandemic experience so far. To that end, we asked four local theatre professionals five specific questions including: What has surprised and continues to surprise you about the theatre/pandemic relationship? We know you’ve made many adaptations in how you operate your theatre—what shifts will you keep once COVID is in the rear view? What aspects of pre-COVID theatre were lost that you are okay with letting go? What important qualities did the pandemic bring to light in you and others? And what will you do first when this is all over?

We began our discussion with Darion McCloud, Creative Director and founder of the NiA Company, a long-time itinerant theatre troupe that calls Columbia home, presenting theatre, and more, for both children and adults. Pleased with their foray into virtual modes of presentation, McCloud plans on keeping “the expansion of performance to online venues,” when the pandemic has cleared, but notes that he has also developed “a deeper appreciation for what, how and why we do what we do.”

“We lost time,” McCloud says. “Basically at least a year at present. Time to reflect but also time we weren’t able to make things. And time to be together. But again, the grind had kind of clouded some of the appreciation for and of each other and what we do.”

McCloud has plans for expressing this appreciation, physically and theatrically. “One of the first things I’m going to do is hug,” he says. Hugs for everybody! And give our city/town/audience a performance they won’t soon forget!”

Like McCloud, Chad Henderson, Producing Artistic Director of Trustus Theatre is enthusiastic about returning to the stage and says that he is emerging “reaffirmed that Trustus is important to the community we serve. Since we closed in March 2020, we’ve created various virtual works and kept the theatre operating.”

How does a large theatre stay open in the pandemic? Henderson says, “We couldn’t have imagined doing that without the support of our community of donors and artists. Our contributors have allowed us to pay the bills while we’ve been unable to produce ticketed

works (which usually accounts for up to 75% of our operating budget). Our community of artists have offered their creativity, their energy, and their talent – and they’ve done this in a volunteer capacity. It’s clear that Trustus remains on people’s minds and hearts, and that means so much.”

Henderson expects that he and his staff will apply the lessons they’ve learned to more online broadcasting once they’ve returned to normal.

“When it comes to non-licensed works, broadcasting films of performances may become a great new way to connect to our community and offer more access to the performing arts,” he says. “I also think that we may find ourselves using digital meeting platforms (Zoom, Microsoft Teams), more frequently in the future for production meetings and the like. We’ve realized that creativity can be stirred and nurtured just as easily over a digital platform, and these technologies might make it easier to have increased participation when schedules/locations can become obstacles.”

Henderson says he’s happy to let go of “the non-stop grind of producing and knowing that you have to plan years in advance. Things are urgent and stressful still, but the daily roller coaster is a different ride when you’re not producing three shows at any given time.”

“Now, do I yearn for that volume of work again? Absolutely!” he admits. “However, I think we can imagine new ways to work that will give us more time to facilitate self-care, contemplation, and evaluation.”

Many have noticed Trustus leadership’s rededication to issues of equity at the theatre. “Before the pandemic we had already worked with groups like “Race to the Table SC” and were planning on viewing our work through a new lens as we were producing Fairview.” Fairview is a groundbreaking play about race, written by Jackie Sibblies Drury, that won the 2019 Pulitzer



Prize for drama and was next up on the Trustus schedule for spring 2020.

“The pandemic may have postponed that production, but it gave us more time to form our Equity Task Force, a committee chaired by Terrance Henderson,” the director explains. “By evaluating our organization, and taking cues from We See You, White American Theatre, we’re constructing new standards that will lead our work and focus our view through an equitable lens.”

When asked about our community, Henderson adds, “I’ve witnessed a brazen willingness for more artists to do something for the first time. It’s been a bit like being in the Wild West, but people have had a willingness to wrestle their discomfort in the name of creation – and that’s pretty extraordinary. It’s inspiring.”

You can’t blame Henderson for longing to be back together with his staff and fellow actors and creatives. “I’m absolutely tired of it,” he says. “Theatre in a virtual format is closer to film or video blogging to me. Theatre, to me, is at its best when a group of people share their humanity and vulnerability in a room. That’s such a special thing, and it can’t be replicated in a virtual playing space.”

Henderson gives us the inside scoop on upcoming programming. “We’ve already made a commitment to produce Lady Day at Emerson’s Bar and Grill upon reopening for live performance. After that, we want to produce Heroes of the Fourth Turning and bring back the shows that were postponed or cancelled from our 35th Season.”

Director and Performing Artist Frank Thompson has been pleasantly surprised by the enthusiasm with which so many people have embraced cyber-theatre. “I’ve directed and/or performed in a cabaret show, Henry IV, Part 2, a Halloween variety show, and The Importance of Being Earnest, and am currently directing Tartuffe. It’s an unusual hybrid of stage and film acting, but great fun.” Thompson says he was surprised and a bit disappointed by a few groups that have pushed ahead with live performances.

Like many artists, learning virtual skills has held great value for Thompson. “I think we’ve tapped into a great tool for maximizing time efficiency that will effectively translate into a post-COVID theatre experience. Things like table work, character discussion and development, and notes can be done virtually.”

Thompson goes on to say that his biggest virtual learning curve has been overcoming his technophobia. “Being forced by circumstances to at least make friends with Zoom and similar platforms will hopefully help me grow as a director,” he says. “Once we’re back in the theatre, I plan to learn more about how the lighting, sound, and other tech elements actually work instead of relying totally on the designers to make all the calls ... I think that will make me a more effective communicator and collaborator.”

Kristin Cobb, Executive Director of Harbison Theatre at Midlands Technical College has noticed that changing expectations daily is a new norm. “I think every day there are surprises,” she says. “We are trying to navigate a safe reopening, with no real firm knowledge of how the next few months will work. I remember being hopeful in March of last year that we might come back in June,” she says, before finally accepting that 2021 was the earliest anyone could expect to do anything full throttle. (Full disclosure: Cobb is the vice president of the Jasper Project board of directors.)

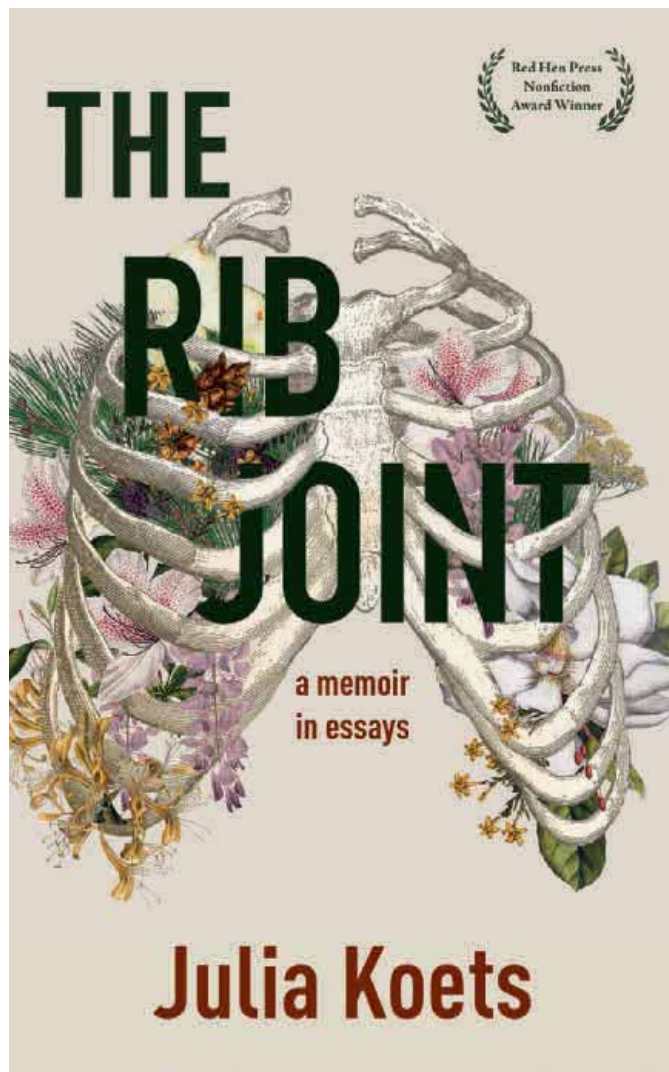
These sorts of surprises don’t slow her down, though. “I have tried to embrace the surprises and the ever-changing schedule and feel fortunate that the majority of the arts presenters are all in this together on some level. The camaraderie with other arts management friends has been a true gift. The willingness to work together, share information, lend an ear. That has been a wonderful surprise.”

The pandemic shift led to some innovative successes in Harbison’s season. “Our parking lot drive-in concert was a real success, and I think we may keep some type of outdoor concert format moving forward,” Cobb says. “We had launched an event last summer, Harbison Heat, and I think we can revisit that plan and make a go of something fun and outside the box.”

Cobb says she has witnessed colleagues and associates learning to be more flexible. “This business has lots of stressors, even if it’s lots of fun. I think we are all letting go a bit on some level ... Sometimes, going with the flow is a real positive in this business.”

Much like McCloud, Cobb has a wish when it’s safe: hugs. “I can’t wait to hug our patrons again and hear the laughter and applause.”

Shannon Ivey MFA, AEA is a Midlands storyteller, coach, and Founder of the #whatsheisaidproject.



The Rib Joint: A Memoir in Essays by Julia Koets

Reviewed by Kevin C. Kyzer

The latest work by South Carolinian Julia Koets, *The Rib Joint* (Red Hen Press, 2019), conveys her experience as a gay woman growing up in South Carolina. Koets is a Summerville native and earned her B.A. at Presbyterian College and M.F.A. in poetry from the UofSC. This is her first prose publication, but her skill at adapting poetic devices to prose, playing with form, and moving seamlessly between different variations and themes make this memoir as satisfying as reading an epic poem.

Stories about coming out of the closet are invaluable as profiles in courage and adversity. Early in her story, Koets focuses on the way “[c]oming out is not a one-

time act. We come out to every new friend, every new neighbor, every new acquaintance.” Koets describes the anxieties, hopes, disappointments, and heartaches she experienced coming out—repeatedly—to family members, friends, crushes, and people she interacted with in a cultural environment in the American South steeped in religious traditions that too often make coming out a painful, and even dangerous, proposition. Because coming out is always a repeated process, Koets’s story is a collage of many stories that all interconnect.

Koets describes the romances that have been part of her sexual identity, from childhood crushes to college relationships maintained in secret, and finally to her current partner with whom she shares an open relationship. Her story reveals both the excitement of hopes fulfilled and the pain of betrayal from women she fell in love with. She describes the prejudice she witnessed among friends, family of friends, the church, and in larger society. She takes time to chronicle the love and support she has received as well, including her immediate family.

Koets alternates form regularly, making the structure of the text just as diverse as the changes she has undergone. Most chapters are written in standard paragraph form with direct narration. Other segments involve series of brief vignettes that all connect on a common theme and connect to her larger life story. Five of these chapters are “Variations” on five different words in which she explores the multiple meanings each word takes on in different contexts, such as “drive,” “falling,” and “grit.” Keeping with the trend of alternating form, these vignettes are delivered in first, second, and third person voice, providing variety in perspective as well. Since the structure is built around themes, it does not remain bound to chronology and instead moves between episodes of different stages of her life. In this manner the memoir is a loyal reflection of the way memories of a lifetime of exist simultaneously in the mind, some of them standing out more prominently than others, regardless of when they occurred.

The memoir is equally emotionally moving and intellectually fascinating. Koets illustrates the connections she built—and lost—with family, friends, and partners by making comparisons to phenomena in disparate fields of study, including ancient history and mythology, contemporary biography, etymology, biology, horticulture, zoology, pop culture, and more. The strategy is most prominently exemplified in the title, which refers simultaneously to human anatomy

and a barbecue restaurant where she once waited tables with a former partner. To see an example of how Koets interweaves history and culture into her story, read the chapter “How to Ignite,” which was posted online by The Journal literary magazine: thejournalmag.org/archives/12916.

Koets makes connections among these multifarious concepts in order to explain life in the closet. At one point she links the anatomical traits of an octopus with the need to keep her desires and relationships a secret from others. She later connects her experiences to a lesser-known DC Comic hero called the Gay Ghost, which moves into a discussion of “specter” and how that connects with the concept of sexuality as a “spectrum.” The memoir resists engaging in information overload, though. Koets intermittently makes allusions and connections at specific moments to help the reader better understand the events of her life without embellishing.

After graduating from USC, Koets moved to California for a period and subsequently earned a PhD. in literature and creative writing from the University of Cincinnati. The final chapter of *The Rib Joint* focuses on the theme of leaving, providing a series of vignettes that describe what the act of moving away from home requires physically, emotionally, and psychologically. Koets is presently Visiting Assistant Professor of creative nonfiction at the University of South Florida.

Kevin C. Kyzer grew up in Lexington, currently lives in Rosewood, and works in downtown Columbia.



The Supper Table
Kershaw County Fine
Arts Center
June-September 2021



IJA CHARLES

Columbia, SC's Ija Charles is hot!

*By Cindi Boiter
Photos by Crush Rush*

No, we're not talking about her appearance, though Charles is a lovely young woman. We're talking about the professional rocket this talented visual artist is riding and how its trajectory doesn't appear to have downward motion anywhere in its sights.

Not only is Charles busy with performances at Columbia's new Main Street multi-sensory art experience, Immersion, where her art climbs the walls of a designated space in which patrons can hang out and luxuriate in the colors and intense emotional engagement it engenders, she seems to be fielding invitations on a regular basis from national venues—think the National Football League—to showcase her work and her message.

The 23-year-old Columbia native and graduate of Westwood High School is a self-taught artist with what can only be described as a natural gift for creating contemporary paintings and murals reflecting a vision most viewers would assume to have come from a much more technically experienced artist.

But it is the freshness of her color palette combined with the accessibility and often poignant optimism of her work that makes it so appealing.

Charles says she has been painting for about 6 years, having “first got my hands-on paint my senior year of high school.”

While acrylic is her medium of choice she enjoys experimenting in oil and other mediums as she grows as an artist, citing the artist and athlete Jon Moody as an influence “because I love his use of color along with his hustle to succeed.”

Charles also shares a connection with Moody as they both identify New Orleans as home, at least part time for Charles, via her extended family. “I call myself a Nola Cola because both sides of my family are from Louisiana and South Carolina and, though I spent most of my life growing up here in SC, I've lived back and forth between the states.”

Fully grounded in both state cultures made Charles a particularly eligible candidate for Charleston's prestigious 1858 Prize for Contemporary Southern Art

awarded to resident artists from one of a dozen Southern states by the Gibbes Museum of Art. “I applied with all the artwork I had at that time and it was a joyful day to have been told my work was that excellent that it deserved the prize,” the young artist says.

Though her work is bright and exciting as it bathes the eye with color and the beautifully rich faces of primarily Black subjects, there is nothing unrealistic about her subject matter. Her work demands the viewer look more closely to better grasp the artist’s message.

One of the driving forces behind Charles’ subject matter is her own personal response to disturbing social issues. The acceleration of the Black Lives Matter movement in the spring and summer of 2020 was particularly incentivizing for Charles, the results of which garnered national attention.

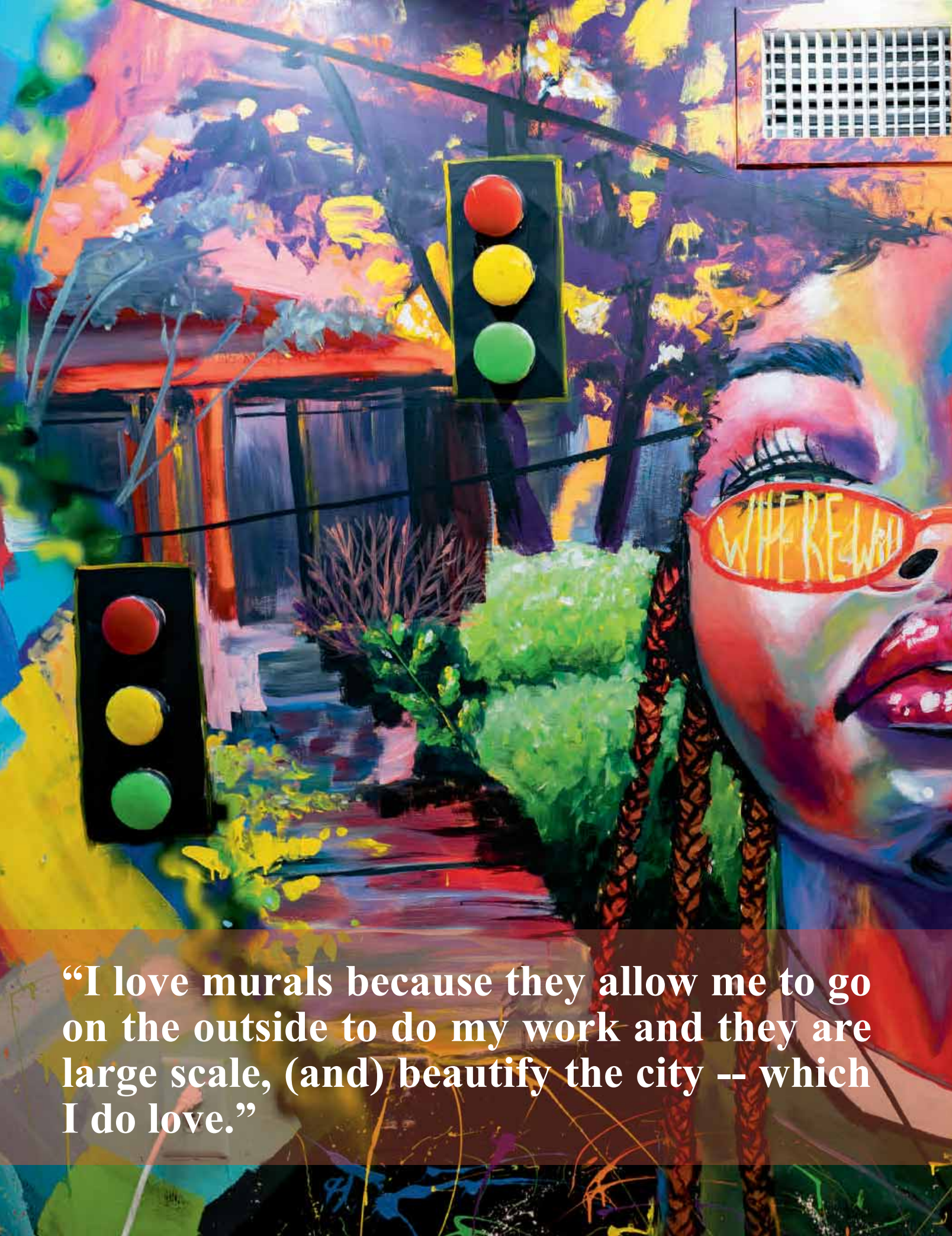
“After hearing George Floyd’s little girl Gigi say, ‘Daddy changed the world’ it brought me to tears,”

she says. “So, in honor of the unwanted sacrifice of her father, George Floyd,” Charles created the Daddy Changed the World painting based on a photograph of 6-year-old Gianna Floyd sitting on the shoulders of her father’s friend, professional athlete Stephen Jackson, after her father’s death. George Floyd was murdered by police officers on May 25, 2020 in downtown Minneapolis. When the Floyd family learned of the painting at their home in Houston, they contacted Charles with the request to purchase it.

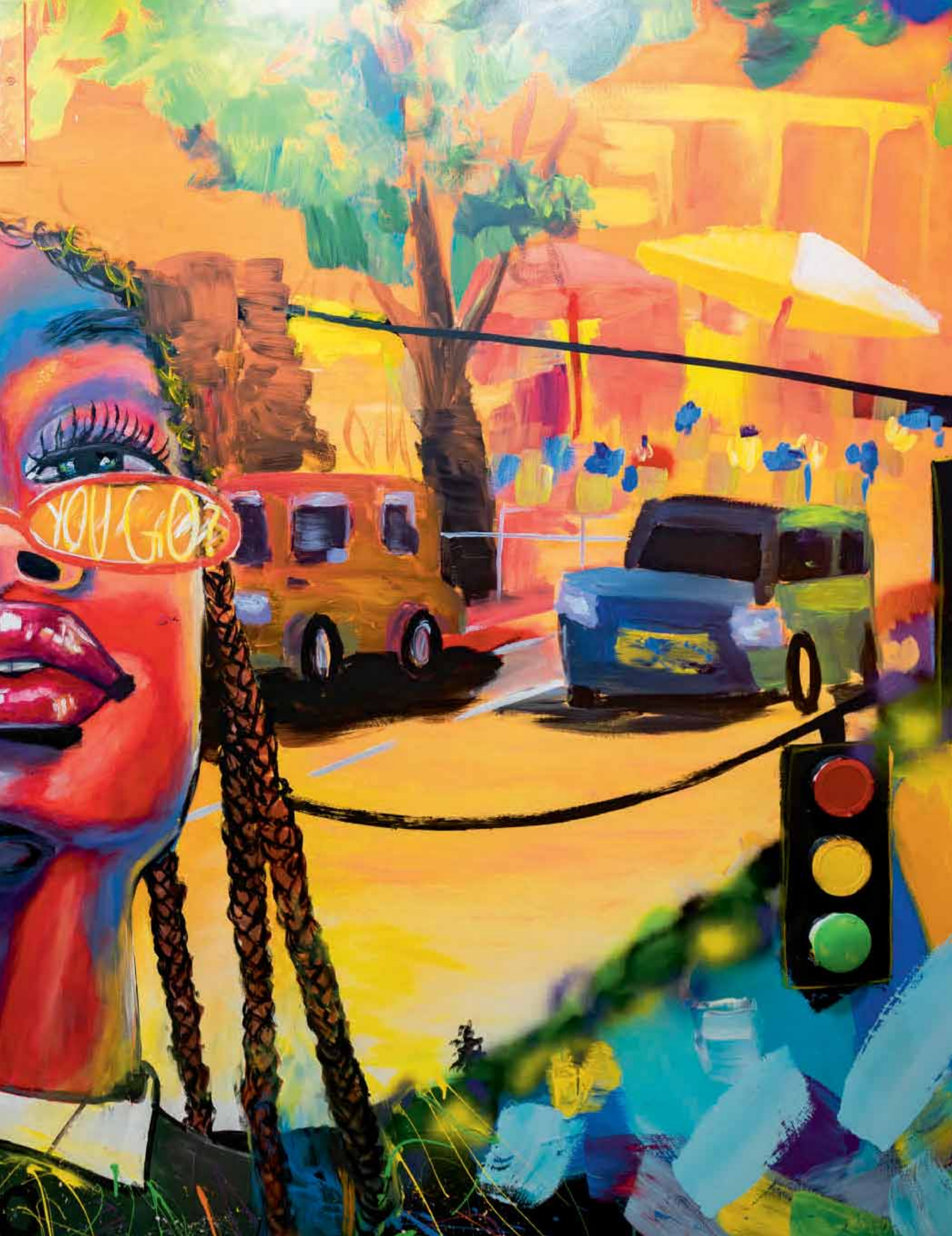
The Black Lives Matter movement has served to inspire the artist in her creation of murals throughout the Midlands.

“My first mural for South Carolina was in West Columbia ... and I have created six here thus far,” Charles says, adding her appreciation to Mayor Elise Partin who first identified one of the artist’s canvas paintings that she hoped to have recreated in the mural format. According to Charles, Partin “gave me the





“I love murals because they allow me to go on the outside to do my work and they are large scale, (and) beautify the city -- which I do love.”





opportunity to not only create this beautiful mural but also allowing me the opportunity to fall in love with Cayce and its residents.” The mural, titled Cayce Wonders, is located by the Riverwalk entrance on Railroad Avenue.

Richland Library and One Columbia for Art and Culture also partnered together to commission the artist to create additional murals for the downtown area, including one on the side of the library building itself called, “Leap” which is there alongside Dogon Krigga’s “Synapse.” Another mural themed around Black Wall Street was just unveiled earlier in May.

“I love murals because they allow me to go on the outside to do my work and they are large scale, Charles says, adding that there’s also the bonus that her work helps “beautify the city -- which I do love.”

One of the most exciting episodes in Charles’ career has been being selected by the NFL as one of 17 artists whose work would be featured around the field during

Super Bowl LV. NFL Artist Replay is “an initiative to amplify the work and voices of BIPOC artists around the world,” according to the organization’s website. “I was given week two of the football season to find anything on or off the field that inspired me to create a painting, then another week to come up with a concept to implement it into art.”

Charles’ painting features a football field with two small, yet larger-than-life) children looking up from the field with images from the BLM struggle in their heads. One of the children holds a football with the names Breonna Taylor and George Floyd signed on the ball.

The amount of art Charles has created over the past few years is rivaled in escalation only by the talent demonstrated in her work. With an enviable work ethic and the vast subject matter available to this talented young artist, we look forward to being proud of what she puts into the world for many years to come.





Party Hard – A “Love Letter to Our Hometown”

By Wade Sellers and Kristine Hartvigsen

Although 28-year-old William Nicholas Clay never went to film school, he cut his creative teeth in the gritty pool rooms and dives that inject so much flavor into his latest project, *Party Hard*. Set in Columbia, SC, the film traverses a night-long bender that leaves three buddies examining the relative inertia in their lives. It ironically mirrors the real-life crossroads that challenged Clay and co-writer Stephen Canada. *Party Hard* is their first feature film.

“I was like, dude, we’re at this point where we’re not getting any younger and we’ve spent all this time making all these connections and getting to know people,” Clay says.

Having spent many a late night out in various watering holes and concert venues around Columbia, he liked the idea of telling a story of such a night as it unfolds. The film was shot over a couple of weeks in 2018.

“I wanted to tell a story about this moment of time where everything is moving at lightning speed as you try and navigate who you are and what you ultimately want to become,” Clay says. “We ran into every single problem any filmmaker could imagine, and we were constantly re-writing because of these problems,” Clay explains. “Our shooting days became this strange fever dream as we just went with the flow of where the movie decided to take us.”

Nearly five years in the making and delayed by COVID-19, *Party Hard* finally had its premiere September 22, 2020, at the Monetta “Big Mo” Drive-In.

Jasper film editor and owner of Coal Powered Filmworks in Columbia, Wade Sellers sat down with Clay (Nick to his friends) and lead actor Hunter Bolton to talk about the making of *Party Hard*. Here are some excerpts:

Wade:

So, Nick, I did get a John Cassavetes vibe from *Party Hard*. Was that intentional?

Nick:

I didn't want to get tied down to a specific genre. I'm primarily interested in people and characters who aren't necessarily "good." I like moral ambiguity. ... Hunter's character, Chandler, is a lot like this because he's acting out in a selfish way because of something he messed up and eventually knows he has to deal with. I just like the outcasts, rebels, and rock-n-rollers on the fringes of society. So for *Party Hard*, John Cassavetes was a huge inspiration. A lot of his work was about trying to find that emotional, human truth within the performances. He didn't care about how everything looked exactly, as long as what he got was real. And that's what we were after, too.



I think we've all felt like we're just stuck. The movie takes place over one night, looking into these guys' lives and not giving you any definitive answer. But it's something that a lot of people can relate to.

Wade:

Describe what it was like casting your film.

Nick:

Because it was such a low-budget thing and no one knew who we were, we were having trouble casting a lot of the roles. So if we weren't able to fill a role, we had to axe it or combine it with another. ... The original draft was supposed to follow the three guys, and they end up intersecting with these two girls towards the end. But since we couldn't find two leading ladies, Amy Brower combined those roles to play Lily.

Hunter:

Amy is one of those people who, everything she works on, it's immediately better for her presence.

Wade:

Hunter, how did you get ready to approach your character?

Hunter:

Well, I asked Nick how flexible the dialogue was, because some of the scenes were very dialogue-heavy. ... The whole movie is just conversations that happen in different locations, so I wondered how adaptable the dialogue was going to be. I came from a background of theater. I did theater forever — student films, improv, and sketch comedy. So I'm very on-your-feet and in-the-moment. I like to run with whatever comes. So, that played a lot into it.



Wade:

Were you protective of the script, or did you let the actors play around with a scene?

Nick:

I would say 80% or even 85% of the script that Stephen and I wrote is verbatim. We would start shooting a sequence by the book until everyone got comfortable enough to start giving input or wanting to try things. And we were flexible enough to do that because it was very important.

Wade:

Hunter, did the night shooting start to get to you after a while?

Hunter:

I've worked in bars for a long time, so that wasn't a huge adjustment. But while we were in those bars, we would get engrossed in the bar culture, and we're filming these party scenes where sometimes we were actually drinking. So that could catch up to you doing that all night into the next morning and then having to do it again the next day.

Wade:

Even though Cassavetes' stuff was incredibly rehearsed, it looked improvised. Did you play around with that with different actors?

Nick:

Brian Forbes, who I worked with at the time in Charleston, jumped at the role of Jules, and I'm really glad he did, because he made the character something different than what was originally written. He gave Jules this vulnerability.

Wade:

Talk about the collaboration between everyone involved in this film.

Nick:

We all have worked service industry at some point, and everyone can easily identify with it. I mean, we literally had a crew of six or seven people, and we were all rotating jobs like you saw in the credits.

Hunter:

There's definitely something about working on a micro-budgeted indie film where you know everybody's got to do more than just the job that they got hired to do. ... From the first time I read



the script, I thought, this is very honest. This is very real. ... Everybody had to wear all the hats, because we believed in it and we had to get it done.

Wade:

After you finished the film, there were some allegations against a cast member that affected your film directly, and you had to address that. What was the discussion, and how did you address it?

Nick:

We had just finished our final cut, and the sound mix and mastering was almost done. Then that ended up happening with one of our male cast members (accused of sexual misconduct). I was just so disgusted by it. He played a supporting role throughout the movie. You first see him five minutes into it. I knew that if I was feeling this way, then those people who had told their stories were definitely going to feel some type of way. So we actually re-shot his opening scene and cut out as much of his stuff as we could.

Wade:

Hunter, what did you really get out of the whole experience?

Hunter:

I mean, honestly, from day one, I was excited because Columbia is my hometown, too. So it was an excuse to go back. To be able to work there in my chosen field was a pretty incredible feeling. ... I love how much the film highlights Columbia. It's a love letter to our hometown.

Wade:

Why did you choose to have your premiere at the Big Mo Drive-In?

Nick:

So, we originally had talked about doing it at the Nick down on Main, and then COVID hit. For months, people kept asking, "Have you tried the drive-in?" ... So I did an online poll through our social media, and there was overwhelming support. I thought, okay, then let me just shoot the Big Mo people message. We actually bonded really well with them. They're the sweetest couple who owns it, and they let us pretty much just do whatever.

Wade:

What's next for you?

Nick:

I'm actually shooting a music video for local band E.Z. Shakes in April. ... I still don't know what film I'd like to make next. One idea is a crime film in the style of Elmore Leonard and Shane Black. This is something I'm developing with Hunter as well as wanting to set it and shoot it in Columbia. Between these, I've got a novel I'm planning, too.

Party Hard is being distributed through Indie Rights Movies and is available on various streaming services and Blu-ray/DVD.



PROFILE: Suzanna Pavlovksy and Ensemble Eclectica

By Cait Patel

For Dr. Suzanna Pavlovsky, her most recent passion project, Ensemble Eclectica is an exercise in bringing many forms of art together into one performance that stimulates all the senses at once. An interdisciplinary endeavor that seeks to unite everything from storytelling and orchestral music to dance performance and live painting, (usually including dinner and drink, as well), Ensemble Eclectica allows artists to work together to present their talents to the public in a whole new format. As Pavlovsky says, “We are better when we are together.” With a small board of directors, she has successfully brought together artists from across the Midlands to collaborate and do something that has rarely been done before. After three successful yearly performances, she says she now has artists from as far away as Augusta, GA approaching her to become a part of this project.

Born in Uzbekistan, Pavlovksy studied at the Chamza Music College before moving to Israel in 1990 where she earned a bachelor’s degree in Orchestral Conducting from Tel-Aviv University on her way to Toronto to work as an Associate Conductor in Residence for the Etobicoke Philharmonic Orchestra. Continuing her education, she earned a master’s degree in Orchestral Conducting from Michigan State University as well as a Master’s in Music Theory from Eastman School of Music in Rochester, NY. The musician and conductor finally landed in Columbia, SC where she earned a Doctoral degree in Orchestral Conducting from the University of South Carolina. Pavlovsky now calls Columbia home and lives here with her family. She has since pioneered two projects for the local arts community—Ensemble Eclectica and the Palmetto Chamber Orchestra.

“Yes, we do exist, yes we are many,” Pavlovsky exclaims in regard to being a female conductor. In a profession that has historically been dominated by males, it can be more difficult for a woman to break through and be recognized. However, there are many more today than in previous generations. As of 2018, among the top 100 conductors in the world, only five were women. Although that number grew from 1 to



5 between the years of 2013 and 2018, one can only hope to see more women emerge in the classical music arena.

Pavlovsky says that while this seems disappointing, the numbers don’t account for the large number of talented but unrecognized women conducting around the world. She says there is even a Facebook group where women in the classical music industry from all over the globe share support for one another. She states that women in this industry often are “underrated and in the shadows” but that doesn’t stop them from working hard to shatter stereotypes.

Pavlovsky’s tenacity and hard work are paying off with projects like Ensemble Eclectica, where she seeks to provide exposure for other female artists, composers, and musicians. She is attempting to bring recognition to those in the arts community while they are living, which is not the norm, as she feels it should be. Too many artists go unnoticed, and she wants those people to get exposure and the joy of sharing their work with others while they are still with us.

How was Ensemble Eclectica formed?

With the concept of Ensemble Eclectica firmly in her mind, Pavlovsky set about recruiting people for the project. The most enthusiastic supporters and volunteers came from the U of SC staff. Three artists in particular: Richard Maltz, Sonia Jacobsen, and Dick Goodwin, all volunteered pieces they had written to be played in the first performance. The entire first crew was voluntary and helped get EE off the ground running. Pavlovsky turned the project into a non-profit organization so that she could keep giving more to the Columbia arts community.

The first performance, Ensemble Eclectica Premiere! Dinner Theater, in the fall of 2017 was a huge success. With a fifteen-piece orchestra, dancers, a media producer, and local musical talent, Ensemble Eclectica was established.

The second performance, We Could Have Danced All Night, showcased 10 local dancers: Richard Durlach, Breedlove, Jim Williamson, Zan, Zenaida, Ken Broom, Melissa Bartlett, Robert Moran, Charlene Rackley, and Johnny Cockerel.

In year three, music and food from around the world were showcased in a performance entitled Around the World in 80 Minutes. Music from Spain, Italy, Israel, and Argentina was played while attendees enjoyed food samplings, wine, and a mosaic of art styles.

Dick Goodwin, a legendary local musician who has been with EE since the first performance, says Pavlovsky approached him and asked for advice and help on EE. He was impressed with her ability to organize and clarify her own mission. She had a different approach than other musical groups, he felt. Professor Goodwin agreed to work with Pavlovsky and write music for EE. Goodwin says he has thoroughly enjoyed working with Pavlovsky on Ensemble Eclectica and that it's been a great opportunity for artistic freelancers and musicians to work together on something outside of the strictly classical realm. It has attracted many artists due to its incorporation of dance and other art forms. "People judge music by sight," he says, and Pavlovsky has an awareness of the visual aspect of performance. Goodwin feels her approach sets her apart from others and he is excited to continue contributing to EE.

Pavlovsky is changing the face of our local arts community with this project and getting people out of their comfort zone to do something different.

She is working hard to "make our culture richer and more inclusive." It is exciting to see something new happening in the midlands artistic scene and one can hope that her project will continue to grow and allow more and more artists to participate.

While Ensemble Eclectica fell victim to the same pandemic restraints as all performing arts organizations in 2020, canceling their annual event, Pavlovsky has plans to stage the ensemble's spectacular Symphony of Life in fall 2021 and hopes everyone will keep their fingers crossed that she'll be able to follow through.

To donate or become a sponsor for EE see their website, ensembleeclectica.org. Every bit goes back into supporting your local arts community. You can also sign up to be notified regarding upcoming performances and find them on Facebook.

Photo courtesy of the artist.



MUSIC EDITOR

Are you or someone you know savvy enough to be Jasper's new Music Editor?

Musts:

- Be on top of the SC Midlands music scene.
- Already have or be excited about establishing contacts in all music genres.
- Write at least as well, if not better, than a college freshman. (We have editors.)
- Be willing to buy into the somewhat socialistic experiment that is the Jasper Project. (Translation: Work for pennies, a happy heart, and a whole lot of "Atta Boys/Atta Girls!")

Interested? Hit us up.
editor@JasperColumbia.com.

The Tiny Gallery Series

By Christina Xan and Cindi Boiter

No one is saying art should not be expensive. Most artists spend hours, days, and even months creating their work, using materials that they fund themselves. Their time and talent, not to mention their years of training and practice, go into weaving tales no one else can tell exactly like they can.

In many ways, this is priceless.

For the art patron, wandering through a gallery can be an unparalleled experience, as well. Gallery goers love taking the time to meander through a space, vulnerable to the next image that speaks to them, capturing their attention, begging to become the newest part of the patron's collection.

But the reality is that price points and patrons don't always match. And, for the extensive collector, wall space eventually runs out. That's why, since 2018, Jasper's Tiny Gallery Series has allowed artists the opportunity to show a selection of their smaller pieces of art at affordable prices that are attractive to both beginning collectors and arts patrons with smaller budgets or smaller spaces to fill with art.

Jasper has long subscribed to the belief that art should be accessible to everyone. To that end, pieces in the Tiny Gallery Series are always created to be priced under \$250 and sized at smaller than 15" x 15". And because Jasper is an artists-first organization with little overhead costs, we can take a modest 25% commission for facilitating the sale.

Creating smaller sized pieces can also provide a unique opportunity for artists. Christopher Lane, who usually paints large-format pieces, says that going small opens new avenues for themes and ideas he had never considered before; Jennifer Hill used Tiny Gallery as the impetus to try a new art form, felt dolls; and K. Wayne Thornley experimented for a larger upcoming show in an actual gallery.

Jasper started the Tiny Gallery Series in October 2018 in our small studio space at the former Tapp's Arts Center with Keith Tolen as the featured artist. COVID-19 precautions created the need for us to move the project online mid-2020. As of this writing, 100

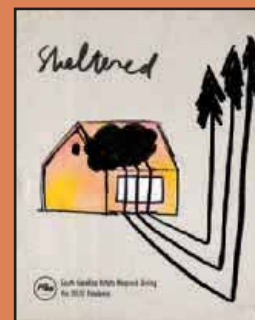
pieces have sold with 21 artists having been featured. Artists scheduled for the remainder of 2021 include Ginny Merett, B.A. Hohman, Ron Hagell, Ashley Bennett, Bohumila Augustinova, Renee Roullier, and Lori Isom. The year will be rounded out by a holiday show featuring pieces by a variety of artists.

While Tiny Gallery art may not be viewable in person, the benefit is that the gallery is virtually open 24/7. Support your local artists and the area's only arts magazine by checking out the Tiny Gallery Series' art and artists at JasperProject.org.

Check out
the Tiny Gallery Series
at
JasperProject.org

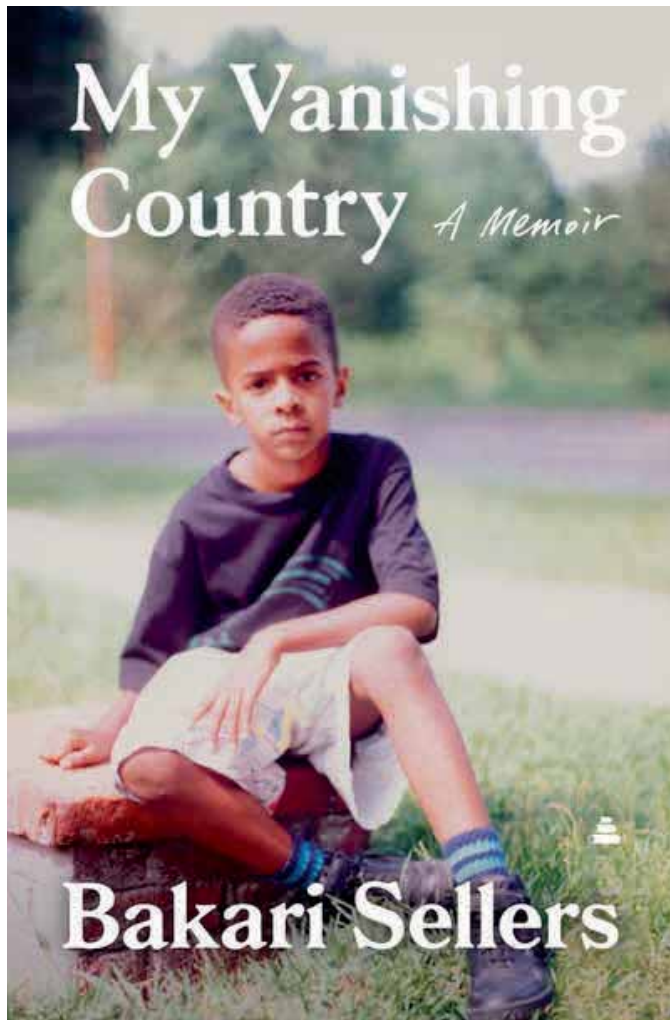


Also from Jasper: *Sheltered*



In this collection of visual and literary art, a selection of South Carolina Midlands-area artists both process and respond to the personal, social, and artistic challenges they faced during the mandatory quarantine resulting from COVID-19.

Available on Amazon.



REVIEW: Bakari Sellers' *My Vanishing Country*-A Memoir

By Preach Jacobs

Growing up my father and I used to bump heads. When I was younger, I didn't realize his strict ways, although not the best explained, were out of a fear that so many black fathers knew: He was raising a black boy into becoming a black man. As I got older, he would open more about his battles with rural life and extreme poverty, the impact that emotionally scarred him for years. I'm sure those emotions are just as inherited as my last name and good looks.

I reflect on these things while reading *My Vanishing*

Country, a memoir by Bakari Sellers, the lawyer, former member of SC State Legislature, CNN contributor, a Denmark, South Carolina native and son of Civil Rights Legend, Cleveland Sellers.

During the Civil Rights Movement, Cleveland Sellers became involved with SNCC and helped organize a protest that was later coined the Orangeburg Massacre, a shooting at South Carolina State University that ended with three students being killed by state troopers, with Sellers getting shot in the shoulder in the process. Cleveland Sellers was jailed (and later pardoned) for the incident. Bakari talks in his book about every anniversary, when he and his father would return to SC State to remember lives lost on that day. Bakari would describe crying right alongside his father at these events, and you realize that Bakari's involvement in the movement was non-negotiable.

One of the more important things about reading this memoir, is the relatability for me. When looking at people that are involved politically, people tend to assume that young is a liability. Even looking at the 2020 Presidential Election, we still ended up with two old ass white men that will be 74 and 77 respectfully.

Bakari is a year younger than me, giving me great inspiration and motivation as I feel like I haven't done nearly enough. He touched on his historical win as the youngest African American elected official at 22.

He also talks in depth about his motivations for getting into politics. He hits on the "Corridor of Shame" term for neglected schools in rural South Carolina. He says in a chapter titled 'Black and Forgotten',

"When I say that Denmark is part of the forgotten South, I mean that the simple dignities we all expect as humans, such as clean water, a community hospital, and more than one grocery store are ignored."

I think of my father reading these sentences as he told me about how he had to pick cotton (a nickel for a day's work) and at times picking rotten vegetables from a trough that was intended for hogs. If you could get a rotten cucumber and cut off the rotting brown, it was a good day.

Sellers' references to his experiences hit close to home with how race plays in the south to the emotional toll African-Americans experience over the Confederate flag and how those things are interwoven in our daily lives noting that Calhoun Street in front of Mother

Emanuel in Charleston is named after John C. Calhoun, an ex-vice president under John Quincy Adams that was “an unrepentant slave owner who vigorously defended slavery--which is why he was nicknamed “John C. kill a coon.”

He goes in depth about his personal and heartbreaking experiences with the incident coined as Charleston 9 as Dylan Roof, a white supremacist, murdered 9 people at Mother Emanuel, including a member of the South Carolina Senate, Clementa C. Pickney. He was also Sellers’ friend, as he talks about his last meeting with Pinckney at a church fish fry. Sellers stressed with a campaign for Lieutenant Governor inspired Pinckney to give sage advice: “Leaders like us, we have to keep going.”

Admittedly the portions about the Charleston 9 were difficult to read. It reminded me of the hectic times in Columbia, that led to the hatred spewed that led to the eventual taking down of the Confederate flag, and also made it clear that issues with race are still real. I can’t help but think of the endless Black men killed by cops because they are suspected of being dangerous, but Roof was known to have killed 9 people, was approached by cops without any aggression and even given a Burger King meal after the fact.

The subjects of race, poverty, law enforcement, health care all play a part in something undeniable: It’s up to individuals to do their parts. As a younger black man, with dreads and a dashiki, I used to underestimate the power of the ballot. Now, I’m convinced of its power and think it’s literally a matter of life and death.

Sellers included an excerpt from a history book his father read in middle school:

“There were more Negroes than whites in the state. The Negroes were uneducated, they had no knowledge of government, they did not know how to make a living without the supervision of the white man, they were so accustomed to being taken care of that they had no idea how to behave under freedom ... There were so many more Negroes than whites that they would have been in control if they had been allowed to vote ... Regulations were made to prevent Negroes from voting. To this day, South Carolina is a white man’s government.”

I think about my father again while reading these excerpts. My Pops is around Cleveland Sellers’ age and grew up in rural South Carolina, too. My dad could have read from this exact history book. How does that not create anxiety? Or rage? And when you become a parent, paralyzing fear that is misunderstood as strict parenting? This memoir touched me because I could see myself in this story and I realized that my story matters. My feelings are valid. I sent a DM to Sellers telling him that his book gave me emotions from anger to a Kerry-Washington-face level of crying. More importantly the book is a mirror for all of us. In the words of James Baldwin, “God gave Noah the rainbow sign.

No more water, the fire next time.”



Fall Lines

2021 CALL for SUBMISSIONS

Fall Lines – a literary convergence is a literary journal presented by The Jasper Project in partnership with Richland Library and One Columbia for Arts and History.

Fall Lines will accept submissions of previously unpublished poetry, essays, short fiction, and flash fiction from April 1, 2021 through June 30, 2021. While the editors of *Fall Lines* hope to attract the work of writers and poets from the Carolinas and the Southeastern US, acceptance of work is not dependent upon residence. Publication in *Fall Lines* will be determined by a panel of judges and accepted authors (ONLY) will be notified by September 30, 2021, with a publication date in October. Two \$250 cash prizes, sponsored by the Richland Library Friends and Foundation, will be awarded: The Saluda River Prize for Poetry and the Broad River Prize for Prose.

DOUBLE ISSUE: Due to restrictions surrounding COVID-19, the 2020 issue of *Fall Lines* will be published in conjunction with the 2021 issue as a **DOUBLE** issue. Two unique sets of poetry and prose and two sets of winners will be bound together in **ONE BOOK** and celebrated with **ONE Launch and Reading Celebration** at a TBA date in October. Both 2020 and 2021 prizes will be presented at the October 2021 launch event.

POETRY: Up to five poems may be submitted with each submitted as an individual **WORD FILE**.

- Include one cover sheet for up to five poems. Submit poetry and cover sheet to FallLines@JasperProject.org with the word **POETRY** in the subject line.

PROSE: Up to five prose entries may be submitted with each submitted as an individual **WORD FILE**.

- Include one cover sheet for up to five prose submissions. Submit prose submissions and cover sheet to FallLines@JasperProject.org with the word **PROSE** in the subject line.

COVER SHEET should include your name, the titles of your submissions, your email address, and mailing address. Authors' names should not appear on the submission. Do **NOT** send bios. **ALL ENTRIES SHOULD BE TITLED.**

There is no fee to enter, but submissions that fail to follow the above instructions will be disqualified without review. Simultaneous submissions will not be considered. Failure to disclose simultaneous submissions will result in a lack of eligibility in any future Jasper Project publications.

The Columbia Fall Line is a natural junction, along which the Congaree River falls and rapids form, running parallel to the east coast of the country between the resilient rocks of the Appalachians and the softer, more gentle coastal plain.



Dictionary

Poetry by Andrew Caldwell

bathroom *noun*

bath·room | \ 'bath-,rüm rüm, 'bäth-\

A decision to make. Which one is safest? Can I get arrested here? What am I wearing? How many people are around? How long am I gonna take? How fast can I leave? A gamble where the stakes are my life.

binder *noun*

bind·er | \ 'bīn-dər \

The fabric that squeezes my chest flat, the only thing that can fight the discomfort. Bruises and broken ribs, a reasonable risk to hold in the hurt.

dysphoria *noun*

dys·pho·ria | \ dis-'fōr-ē-ə \

The urge to dig my chest out of my body, to tear the gazes away from my skin, to rip cotton from my bones.

gender *noun*

gen·der | \ 'jen-dər \

What people expect me to prove to them, what I'm hyper aware of when I walk into a room, what my therapist had to evaluate to prove to my health insurance that I know who I am.

heat *noun*

\ 'hēt \

The sensation that restricts how many layers I can hide myself in, how long I can wait until I have to take a break from my binder. Awkward swim shirts and the uncomfortable sensation of breathing past thick fabric.

name *noun*

\ 'nām \

1. Dead name - The thing I hide on my ID, the word I hope a substitute never utters. Dead only because it haunts.
2. Real name - The one thing I can hold on to. The last line of defense.

pronoun *noun*

pro·noun | \ 'prō-,naʊn \

The most dangerous of weapons. The confused stuttering of classmates. The thing I cannot afford for teachers to misuse. The thing that everyone assumes.

transgender *adjective*

trans·gen·der | \ tran(t)s-'jen-dər , tranz-\

Half of myself and the community to which I belong. What I hold most pride in, and what puts me in the most danger. Where I hold my strength. Where I hold my fear.

transition *noun*

tran·si·tion | \ tran(t)-'si-shən , tran-'zi-, chiefly British tran(t)-'si-zhən\

My lifeline. The dissipating fear of mirrors. The long, awkward, and totally-worth-the-voice-cracks process of a second puberty. The settling of my voice.

Andrew Caldwell is a 17-year-old high school senior from Chapin, South Carolina. He is an avid writer and advocate for LGBT issues. This is his first publication.

Wednesday (an excerpt)

Poetry by Matthew O'Leary

At the Waffle House by the highway, the waitresses ask families and regulars if they're prepared for the storm. The gas station next door has turned off the sign for unleaded. Diesel is apparently still available. When my waitress comes over and refills my mug, I thank her before taking a sip and quietly returning to my sexting. That night, I'll once again be pulled into a conversation with my still-wife. Her father has decided that their family will sit out the storm. I shrug my shoulders for the hundredth time today. While I think of something to say, dozens of Haitians drown beneath debris. These screams are in French, and they get quieter all the time.

Matthew O'Leary is a graduate of Presbyterian College. His first chapbook, Symptoms of a Teratoma, was released in 2017 by Muddy Ford Press. Wednesday is an excerpt from a larger as of yet unpublished collection. You can find him on his website matthewoleary.wordpress.com. He lives in Columbia, and spends way too much on coffee.



Historically Complex Podcast Uncovers Layers at SC State House Monuments

Photos by Brian Harmon

What do the monuments represent? How can we know? “Historically Complex,” a podcast series by Historic Columbia, dives into the layered history of the South Carolina State House grounds.

Guided by host Dr. Lydia Mattice Brandt, an associate professor of architectural history and art history at the University of South Carolina and author of *The South Carolina State House Grounds: A Guidebook* (available now at The Gift Shop at Robert Mills), this series is designed to be played in the car, house, or, ideally, while walking the State House grounds.

As Brandt positions each monument in its historical moment, the podcast helps listeners understand the motivation behind the development of key structures featured on the State House grounds. What did these monuments mean to those who selected, commissioned, made, funded, and supported them?

Current “Historically Complex” episodes, available to stream or download on most podcast services, are 8-14 minutes in length with the following focuses:

- **Episode 1** presents an overview of the State House grounds, asking what purposes the grounds serve and for whom. Brandt introduces the overall intent of the podcast: to understand what monuments

mean through an analysis of the monument and an examination of the history of those who built and paid for them.

- **Episode 2** examines the origins of the State House between the 18th century and the Civil War. Brandt sheds light on the first statue on the grounds – the George Washington Monument – and the ways in which South Carolina politicians used the State House and art to argue for the righteousness of slavery.
- **Episode 3** discusses the construction of the State House in the 1850s. Brandt contextualizes the building — and the sculptures by Henry Kirke Brown on the north side of the building — with the politics of the era.
- **Episode 4** focuses on Reconstruction Era South Carolina following the end of the Civil War. This episode includes a look into the Confederate Monument and the construction of narratives of white supremacy, including the Benjamin Ryan Tillman Monument.

This podcast series continues Historic Columbia’s efforts to drive conversations about the grounds and how historic places are interpreted in the community. While the podcast doesn’t take a position on what listeners should think or what should happen to the monuments themselves, it does take the view that monuments often tell us more about the moment in which they were erected than the historical person or moment that they commemorate.

Get started with the podcast at HistoricColumbia.org/Podcast and then take the full monuments tour through HistoricColumbia.org/Monuments.

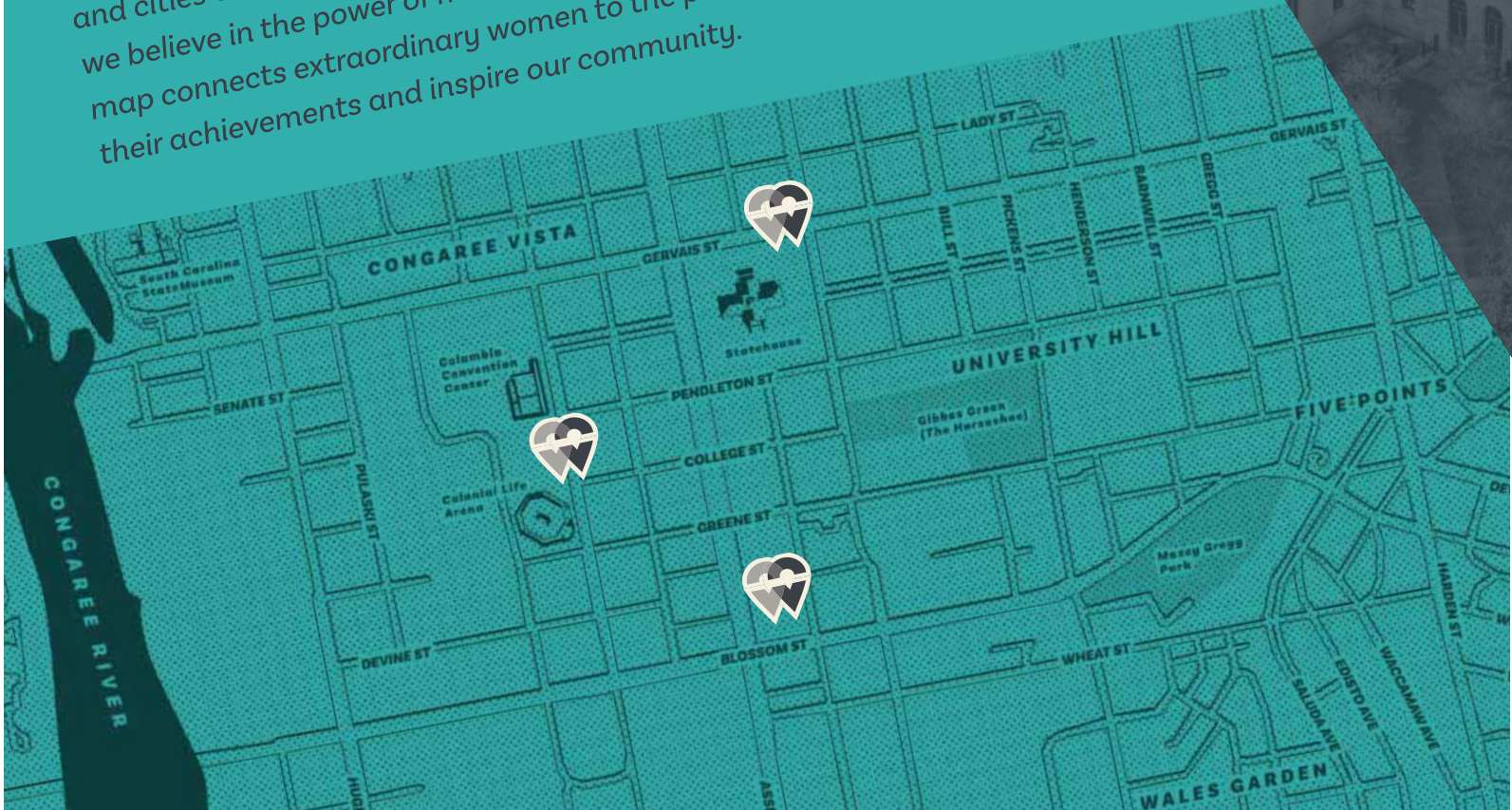


Dr. Lydia Brandt

Columbia
City of Women

PUTTING WOMEN ON THE MAP

Only a small percentage of streets, monuments, and landmarks in Columbia, and cities everywhere, are named for women. We've come together because we believe in the power of moving through a city that recognizes women. Our map connects extraordinary women to the places we know and love to honor their achievements and inspire our community.



Visit columbiacityofwomen.com to learn more and support our efforts to celebrate women and engage our community.

An Initiative by:



Our Sponsors:



CENTRAL CAROLINA
Community
Foundation



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FOUNDATION



We Are Columbia



Finally, Jasper Artists of the Year!

By Cindi Boiter

Photos by Kevin Kyzer

To say that the forward progress of an artist is inconsistent, in any discipline, is an understatement. There is an ebb and flow to inspiration, recognition, and mastery that can rarely be explained; the cause unattributable. Sometimes we suffer for years on end balancing on a torturous tightrope stretched between despair and elation just hoping to get that break, that pat on the back, that communication from the universe that the work into which we pour our souls is, at a minimum, seen, and even better, appreciated.

That's why, soon after we started Jasper Magazine, we also began to award Artist of the Year awards. Certainly, there are artists who have built esteemed reputations over the years and cultivated impressive bodies of work as their careers have grown. But accolades can be few and far between for the emerging and mid-career artist, as they can be even for artists with established careers, no matter the discipline. And in a world that too often assesses value in units of measurement based on dollars and cents rather than cultural contributions, moments of beauty, and expressions of humanity, Jasper is honored to play some small role in recognizing and reminding us all that the world is a better place and our lives are noticeably enhanced when the artists in our communities experience successes, when they grow and accomplish, when they have very good years.

To determine who our candidates for Jasper Artists of the Year should be we ask you, our readers, to nominate the artists you know and are proud of for their accomplishments. We then take your nominations to panels of experts in the artistic fields (theatre, dance, music, literature, media and visual arts) and ask them to use their expertise to winnow down the nominations to three finalists in each field. Then it's all you as you cast your ballots for the winners.

In the spring of 2020, the staff of *Jasper Magazine* was in the middle of preparing the contents for what would be the 38th issue of our magazine, scheduled to release in a matter of weeks. In that early 2020 issue we would be celebrating the winners of the 2019 Jasper Artists of the Year awards. However, given that an important part of our magazine releases has traditionally been the gathering of community members to celebrate the subjects of the publication, we opted to postpone the release until we could safely gather again.

You know what happened next. Month after month passed until, ultimately, we acknowledged the one-year anniversary of a COVID-19 pandemic-induced quarantine, but no new magazine.

It is with this caveat in mind that, finally, we present to you our most recent Jasper Artists of the Year.

On January 31st, 2020, we announced the results of your voting. Jasper's Artists of the Year!

Visual Arts – Michael Krajewski



As a long-time friend of Jasper—holding the honor of being our first ever centerfold subject and the only one thus far to pose completely nude, save for the paint on his body and a carefully placed artist's palette, it is surprising that 2019 was the first year Krajewski made it to the finals for Jasper Artist of the Year in Visual Arts. But it was a busy year for the artist indeed. Krajewski participated in Collectively Supported Art (CSA) #2 at F.O.M.: a sold-out live painting show, as well as presenting live painting at the State Street Art Crawl in West Columbia and at Columbia Green. He

designed the official 2019 Kinetic Derby Day poster art and created the cover art for the book, *What's Left Between Us* by Gina Heron. He designed and created the art for Black Rooster (permanent art installation filling restaurant walls); designed and created art for drums at West Columbia Interactive Art Park; and worked on the art and props for *The Muse* which was the winner of the Audience Award at the 2019 2nd Act Film Project). He created art for Columbia City Ballet ballet shoe art, Time for Art (COR), and served as an art teacher for summer camps and adult classes at Columbia Art Center. His shows included (Private show) 701 Lofts with Preach Jacobs, Jasper Street Gallery at the Meridian Building, Motor Supply, Jasper Tiny Art Gallery, Southern Exposure Series at UofSC, Anastasia and Friends, and Figure Out.

Theatre – Brittany Hammock



Theatre artist Brittany Hammock may have had, in 2019, just the first of many good years to come if her recent performance in 2020's production of *A Streetcar Named Desire* at Trustus Theatre is any indication of the wave she is riding. (Full disclosure: *Streetcar* was directed by Jasper's new theatre editor, Patrick Michael Kelley, though he did not take this position until after the JAYs were announced.) Hammock was a Featured Performer in Trustus Theatre's *Love is Love Cabaret*, she portrayed the alluring 1920s Golf Pro, Jordan Baker, in *The Great Gatsby* at Trustus Theatre, the villainous high school Queen Bee, Heather Chandler, in *Heathers* the musical at Trustus, and Amy, the neurotic bride-to-be, in *Company*, the musical also at Trustus.

Music – Kristen Harris



A whirlwind of talent, Kristen Harris shares her gifts via a plethora of outlets that include performing, teaching, and collaboration. In addition to being the South Carolina State Fiddle Champion for 2019, Harris's performances include the Jam Room Music Festival, the Freeway Music Festival, Arts & Draughts, Southeast Regional Folk Alliance, all with Boomtown Trio. She performed at The Mothlight and at the Crow and Quill, and Sierra Nevada Brewing, all in Asheville, NC, and at Prohibition in Charleston with Resonant Rogues; as well as at Haynes Auditorium with Blue Iguanas bluegrass band; at Saluda Shoals Park Jazz Series, and Cola Jazz Fest with Flat Out Strangers; at the Papa Jazz Session for SceneSC and at the White Mule with Dirty Gone Dolas and at St. Pat's in Five Points with Boomtown Waifs. She hosted the "Raucous Square Dance" (Columbia, SC) in January 2019, played at the First Baptist Christmas Pageant, and toured the United Kingdom with The Resonant Rogues from Asheville, including 24 performances throughout England, Scotland, and Wales in July 2019. Her recordings include pieces with the Resonant Rogues, Kelley McLachlan, and Boomtown Trio. Harris is a Violin teacher at Suzuki Academy of Columbia, Midlands Arts Conservatory, and Freeway Music, a Masterclass Clinician at Suzuki Association of SC Festival, and an adjudicator for SC Music Educators' Association Orchestra Concert Performance.

Literary Arts – Ray McManus



Professor Ray McManus knows that the third time can be a charm when you're competing for Jasper Artist of the Year and he took home the prize this year. No stranger to prizes and accolades, McManus's recent publications include "Where Bullies Come From" Fall Lines V, Fall 2019, "Angels Already Know" Binder Summer 2019, "Past the Banks" (Essay) Gather at the River: Twenty-Five Authors on Fishing, Anthology, Hub City Press, May 2019, "Diehards," "Manifest Destiny," "Caveman Bias," "How to Forget a Nation," "We Had Lots of Specimens, but We Ate Them," and "Undertow" Open-Eyed and Full Throated: Irish American Poetry. Ireland: Arlen House Press, Spring 2019. "Homo Habitus" and "In the Museum of Men and Machines" SC Review, Fall 2018, and "Smoke Signals," "When the Men are Talking," "Finding Teeth in the Yard," "Jacking," "Pioneer Diorama" Talking River, Fall 2018. He has also served as Writer in Residence at the Columbia Museum of Art creating programs such as the Write-Around Series, With Nothing to Hide: Four Writers Responding to Renée Cox and Imogen Cunningham, Tender Savages: The Masculine Construction of Jackson Pollock's Destruction, Stretching the Frame: Unconventional Ekphrastic Poetry Writing Workshop, and the Poet's Summit. McManus also serves as the Chair, Board of Governors, South Carolina Academy of Authors and (full disclosure) serves as a contributing editor to Jasper Magazine.

Media Arts – Lynn Cornfoot



Videographer and producer at SC ETV, Lynn Cornfoot has been a visual storyteller for over 30 years, responsible for the broadcast and web distribution of the following segments for the News Magazine show Palmetto Scene: 10.28.19 - A Spooky Good Time at Deceased Farms; 10.16.19 - The SC State Fair's Ride of Your Life Scholarship; 8.20.19 - Goat Yoga: From Om to Awe!; 2.19.19 - A Gentleman's Ride; 11.15.18 - Comedian Ian Aber; and, 10.23.18 - Chocolatier Providing Free Lunches, and more. Cornfoot was also a videographer/crew member on Betsy Newman's Emmy Award winning documentary Charlie's Place, as well as other SCETV shows throughout the year. She is currently with Beryl Dakers and Betsy Newman on SCETV's "Sisterhood," a three-part mini-series on the SC Woman's Suffrage movement and can be seen roaming the streets of Charleston, SC running camera on the upcoming reality TV show "How She Rolls" featuring Carrie Morey, creator of Callie's Biscuits.

Jasper Artists of the Year finalists for 2019 included the following individuals—in theatre, Kevin Bush, Len Mann Marini, and Brittany Hammock; in music, Robert Gardiner, Katie Leitner, and Kristen Harris; in literary arts, Jon Tuttle, Hope Clark, and Ray McManus; in visual arts, Christopher Lane, Michael Krajewski, and Olga Yukhno; and for the first time, this year we acknowledged the growing community of independent filmmakers in our area and, after opening up this category our finalists were David Axe, Lynn Cornfoot, and Robbie Robertson.

Announcing Jasper Writes: a new feature on the Jasper Project website

Jasper is excited to announce a new weekly feature on the Jasper Project website beginning this month -- Jasper Writes

The Jasper Project invites SC writers and writers with a connection to SC to submit poetry and prose for publication on the Jasper Project website.

Submission Guidelines:

- No previously published work. Submissions should be unpublished.
- Please submit in a WORD doc in a standard 12-point font.
- Poetry should not exceed 4 pages.
- Prose should not exceed 2000 words.
- There is no fee for submission,
- No simultaneous submissions. We promise to reply promptly! Also, please wait two months before submitting again.
- Please also include a short bio (no more than 100 words) with your submission.
- Send to JasperProjectColumbia@gmail.com

Jasper holds first serial rights for work we publish. Upon publication, all rights revert to the author, though we request the option to reprint in other formats (such as an anthology) with your permission. Please cite Jasper Writes if your work is published elsewhere in the future.

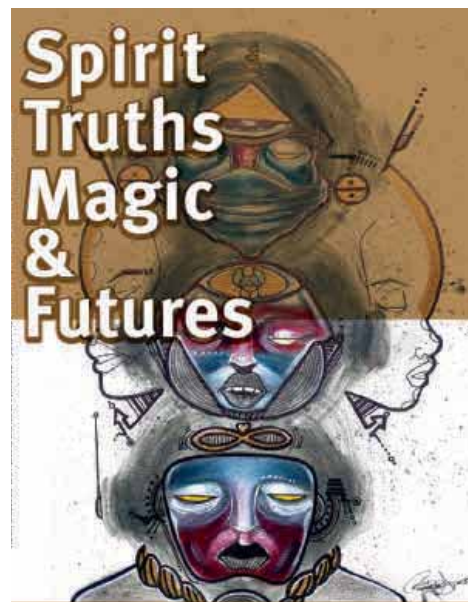
REVIEW - Spirit, Truth Magic & Futures by Cedric Umoja

By Len Lawson

Visual artist Cedric Umoja is no stranger to South Carolina with exhibitions and murals in the state since 2009. But his new book *Spirit Truth Magic & Futures* brings the dimension of the page to his aesthetic with sketches and drawings over the last ten years. Exploring themes of hip hop, Afrofuturism, and African art, Umoja reveals more of his coming-of-age with this latest project including brief vignettes about the upbringing of a black artist in an America not designed to fully appreciate black art, black manhood, or black life.

Born in San Francisco, Umoja migrated back east after high school, developing a passion for hip hop and comic book culture, both of which take shape in his art. After attending the Art Institute of Atlanta, he became an apprentice of Tony Cacalano, a Yale graduate and teaching artist whose paintings have appeared in popular TV sitcoms and dramas since 1993. Studying under Cacalano, Umoja developed his own aesthetic combined with his interests in Afrofuturism, a philosophy and culture based in representation for people of African descent in science fiction, fantasy, and technology. His art channels these elements into a message of preservation, survival, and triumph for African Americans while complicating the narrative of black men as criminals and underachievers.

In *Spirit Truth Magic & Futures*, Umoja demonstrates profiles of blackness in futuristic spaces unimpaired by yet interrogating the construct of race. Elements of early hip hop culture exist in these profiles such as gold chains, turntables, and Kangos while endeavoring to the future with celestial imagery and space attire. The totem imagery in the drawings traces back to African culture, used to elicit the intimacy of humanity with nature, yet in the drawings these totems



depict the imperative of survival for black people in America. Also, binary images of dual profiles speak to not only closeness but also unity and perseverance beyond present threats of white supremacy, systemic oppression, and uncertain death.

In the piece “23 Million miles”, Umoja explains in the book that the mural represented community (p. 23). The drawing of three profiles surrounded by symbols of nature fosters a sense of inhabiting and reclaiming community spaces. He explains, “...as cities grow, develop, and change, erasure occurs” (p. 23). A second “23 Million miles” drawing shows three additional profiles in tribal markings and accessories reminiscent of Gullah/Geechie culture based off the coasts of South Carolina and Georgia (p. 51).

Umoja’s work also features the significance of black women to Afrofuturistic and African diasporic culture. A particular drawing includes a black woman figure sitting above a cosmic, planetary being arrayed with a



large afro and six arms holding images of success such as books signifying education and a home signifying financial stability (p. 55). Despite usually blending into the background or supporting the black male figure in hip hop and overall African American culture, Umoja promotes in his art an African diasporic man-woman dynamic where authority is shared. The black family dynamic also resonates through drawings with images of children under the guise of elders.

A signature drawing in Umoja’s catalogue is “Ode to the Lost Tribes” depicting a male figure holding a home in his right palm while in a body of water surrounded by clouds and wearing a sweatshirt displaying the word Lost (p. 69). The concept comes out of Umoja’s youth on the West Coast as a member of the renowned Five Percent Nation of Gods and Earths (also known as Five Percenters) who believe that black people represent a “Lost Tribe” stranded in North America. He explains, “This idea stuck with me over the years as the concept of home seemed to be a constant and troubling issue for Black people in America” (p. 68). In the drawing, Umoja responds again to the theme of erasure. Whereas the extended palm in previous sketches signified possession, here the figure’s extended palm depicts the elusive wealth and financial stability embodying the privileges of not only home ownership but indigenous

land to call one’s own. The ideals of hip hop and Afrofuturism at their bases seek that same reclamation of place and home for the African diaspora historically pillaged and manipulated from them.

Cedric Umoja brings his perfected craft to the page in *Spirit Truth Magic & Futures* from years of service in South Carolina rural and metro communities. A decade of visual art from this local talent has sustained these communities with an appreciation for black visual artists, and it is now at hand with this collection of representative work.

Len Lawson is the author of Chime (Get Fresh Books, 2019) and the chapbook Before the Night Wakes You (Finishing Line Press, 2017). He is also co-editor of Hand in Hand: Poets Respond to Race (Muddy Ford Press, 2017) and The Future of Black: Afrofuturism and Black Comics Poetry (Blair Press, forthcoming 2021). He received the Palm Beach Poetry Festival Langston Hughes Fellowship and others including from Callaloo, Vermont Studio Center, Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, and Obsidian Foundation UK. Len is also a Ph.D. candidate in English Literature and Criticism at Indiana University of Pennsylvania.

Photo courtesy of the author.



The Death of Theatre Has Been Greatly Exaggerated

By Patrick Michael Kelly

While the COVID-19 pandemic has put theater as many of us know it on pause, an art form that has been around for over 2500 years and has survived a plague or two during that time knows a thing or two about being adaptable. Much was said in the early days of the pandemic about how Shakespeare wrote *King Lear* and *Macbeth* during lockdown - no pressure. Surely some great writers and works will come out of the forced stoppage of 2020 and 2021, but theatermakers have been busy all these past months despite being unable to create and perform in-person.

Virtual theater has emerged as a viable alternative to the stage. Enterprising theater artists have taken to multiple online platforms to create innovative and engaging work that can be consumed from the comfort of your couch. Filmed performances - once mainly reserved for PBS' *American Playhouse* or *Great Performances* or your family's archives - are now plentiful and slickly produced, with offerings from theaters ranging from Broadway to small professional and community theaters. For every *Hamilton* on Disney+, there's a *Heroes of the Fourth Turning* from Philadelphia's *Wilma Theater* or a *Cheap Date* from New York's *SOCIETY*. These methods of delivery also allow for greater access to the performing arts, and that is a wonderful thing. Theaters are always looking for ways to get more butts in seats, but the circumstances of the pandemic allow them to meet people where they are.

But can any of this actually be classified as theater? In his essential work *The Empty Space*, Peter Brook posits that there are three basic requirements for an act of theater to occur: a space, a person in the space, and an observer to witness the person in the space. By that definition, virtual theater fits the bill. We have a space - even if it is a Zoom room - and in it a person or five, and hopefully somebody out there watching. Filmed performances check those boxes too.

No matter how entertaining and inventive it is, theater on a screen cannot measure up to a living, breathing performance. The impact cannot be matched without being in the room where it happens. The power of the shared space between actor and audience is palpable - it's why you can feel exhausted or exultant or both after an evening at the theater.

Watching a play in a theater is not a passive act - you are an active participant in the art that is being made, a collaborator in the work. Live performance requires an investment in you beyond the price of admission. Your attention is commanded because there are real people up there, and they can see you. You are accountable to each other; that's validating and a little scary. Watching from the safety of your home is a lot easier; we can let ourselves off the hook because there's no one else there to hold us accountable.

The pause has also provided organizations extra time to stop making excuses and act on implementing equity into their operations. Thanks to the efforts of groups like *We See You*, *White American Theater*, *Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion* isn't just on the table, it is the table. Since the introduction of the demands and principles laid out by *WSYWAT*, (*We See You White American Theatre*) over one hundred producers of professional theater have issued apologies, amended missions, and put plans into action to make their organizations anti-racist and equitable. *BIPOC* artists have long been exploited by the majority white institutions of American theater, and the work of *WSYWAT* and other initiatives is finally cracking the oppressive glass ceiling.

The economic fallout caused by the pandemic has also brought light to how essential the arts are to the economy. The organization *Be an Arts Hero* touts the arts as having generated \$877 billion in revenue in the 2019/2020 fiscal year, adding 4.5% to the GDP, with an estimated export value of \$72.6 billion and an annual growth rate of 4.16% - nearly double that of the US's own economy. In short: don't believe what your parents told you; there's big money in the arts. And these figures don't factor in the businesses that benefit directly from arts work - hotels, restaurants, transportation services, etc. The arts are a driving force in local economies across the country.

One way to elevate the value of the arts is to make them free and easy to access. Diversity, equity, and inclusion in arts organizations can all be achieved by focusing on accessibility; by bringing the art to the people,

rather than the people to the art. Instead of thinking about ways to get butts in seats, focus more on meeting people where they live. Bring your work to them. Better yet: create it with them. Better still: teach them how to create it for themselves. The way forward for the arts is to engage with the general public in a radical way: up close and personal in the places they call home, spaces that are personal to them. Once you're there, ask them about the things that matter most; learn about their lives, their dreams, their struggles. Share the power of creating and storytelling with them. Give them the tools to tell their own stories.

The result would be a massive proliferation of artwork and working artists, and a deeper valuing of art in the lives of those that took part: a sort of Public Renaissance. Speaking of the Public, their groundbreaking Public Works program aims to build community through theater, both in the experience of it and the creation of it. They create opportunities for communities to see and discuss theater, and then enmesh professional artists with community members to create large-scale participatory spectacles that are inspiring and revelatory. It's art stripped of ego and pretension, filled with joy, and a celebration of the community and the individual. Many theaters are already bringing bold and engaging work directly into

their communities and striving to give equal access to all. Providing people with an opportunity to create and connect is an investment that pays off every time. We may never see another Federal Theatre Project, but arts organizations don't have to wait for a government windfall to make championing their own communities a priority. There's no better time than a pandemic to start making plans.

The last year has been dark for theaters, but the light is warming again. This pause provided an opportunity to tear down broken systems and begin building better ones, and to think more nimbly about how to engage ourselves and our audiences with our work. Through the great efforts of many brave trailblazers, the theater continues to reinvent itself as the most human art form, by the people and for the people, so that it will not perish from the earth. The death of theater has been greatly exaggerated for nearly a century now, anyway, but the theater has no other choice but to make itself absolutely vital, and from the looks of things, the future is bright.

Patrick Michael Kelly is the theatre editor for Jasper Magazine. Photo courtesy of the author.

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PROFILE: Cait Maloney - Whimsy, Humor, Honesty, and a side of Mac and Cheese

By *Laura Garner Hine*

Cait Maloney is a visual artist who finds artistry and creativity in a myriad of things. Whether it's a funny anecdote, travels, adventure, or food, this illustrator's style and methodology is as multifaceted as her inspirations.

Maloney has also always loved to draw. Growing up in Central New York on Lake Ontario, Maloney lived in a small town, where her closest friends were at least a 7-minute drive away. Being one of four siblings, with three of them brothers, the artist recalls how they could always be found outside, spending hours during the winter building forts, tunneling through snowbanks, sledding, and waging snowball fights. These wintry memories were balanced with sunny ones, filled by countless hours in the woods, building detailed forts, and catching crayfish. This

kind of balance is a pattern she has maintained throughout her life, and it's evident in her creative process.

Although her hometown had its charms, Maloney knew she wanted to get a taste of the outside world. While attending Syracuse University and majoring in Illustration, she hungrily learned different processes and mediums. But the impetus to draw was stronger than anything else, and it was through her exposure to these other media that she says, "I found how to marry up everything that I liked about everything and make it into its own unique style."

Maloney maintained that same balance during her college years, but refined her work ethic, as well. "I think working while at school was really big because I learned how to have a driven work ethic," though the artist candidly admits to still procrastinating on occasion.

After graduation, Maloney realized it was time to spread her wings and experience life outside of New York state. Although her initial plan was to transition to Charlotte, Cait found a job with a brand management firm in Columbia in 2008. She continued to further her education

outside of the academic realm through real life experience. Through this firm, Maloney learned a whole new facet of illustration, working and designing through digital formats and platforms, something that was skimmed over during her undergraduate studies due to its nascency. Through this new knowledge and medium, Cait further developed her own personal style and process.

When asked what her most used medium is and why, her response is, “The computer, because it’s heavy on client work obviously and then, I didn’t really want to mess with paints ever.” This is where her marriage of styles comes into play. Maloney inks line work in black and white, creating compositions by hand on a physical surface. She then scans the images into a program such as photoshop, where she next implements color. “I’m obsessed with color...,” she says.

Her original copies are works on paper, but the beauty of Maloney’s work is that it can be reproduced on a variety of surfaces. From stickers to pins, from bags to woodblocks, Maloney’s work is versatile.

There is a bit of irony then, that an artist who colors digitally, and remarks that she cannot get paint brushes to do what she wants, has such a striking mural located across from the front doors of Motor Supply in the Vista. When asked about this, she laughs, and then begins to tell the story of how the mural came fruition.

“I did an online interview with one of those print shop vendors that I work with and one of the questions was what’s your dream job? First answer was to brand a mac and cheese restaurant, imagine all the interior graphics and the full menu that you could play with?! And then the second thing was to do a really ‘bitchin’ mural.” I guess it goes back to admiring graffiti artists. I don’t do that; I didn’t even know what I was doing when I did it. And then, someone I knew read that interview and had the means to make it happen.”

Armed with a patron and a little trepidation, Maloney did her research and executed the mural with not only a tenacious rise to the challenge, but also with the help of local artists and a bevy of supporters. Maloney says “... anyone I asked was super willing to divulge any of their secrets, pouring out their heart, and I was super appreciative because those are people who have been there and done that.”

Since the mural was commissioned by the Vista Guild, Cait knew she had to create a theme involving aspects of the area. “I wanted to do something simple and striking and colorful obviously, so I tried to think of ways that I



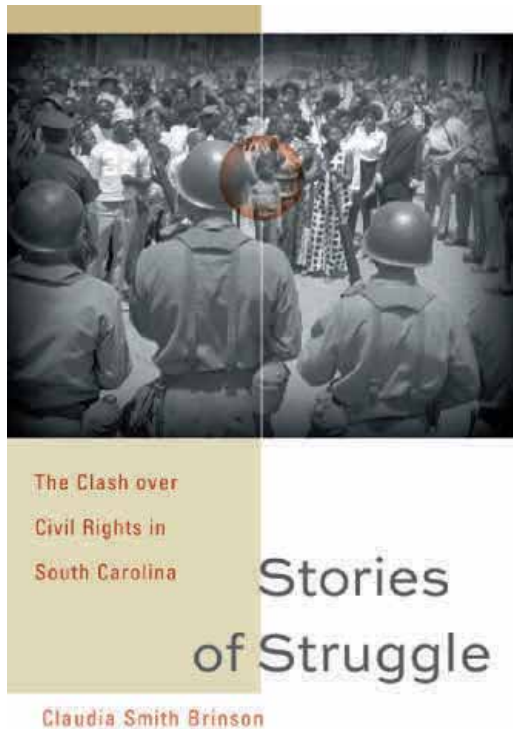
could abstract things about the vista and put it into one image. And so all of the textures and elements and designs that are coming out of Lady Vista’s hair kind of represent things about the Vista, historical aspects like the textile mills, music, food, overall energy,” she explains.

And of course, there is an ode to macaroni in the mural, an intentional halo in the upper part of the composition.

With touches of whimsy, food, humor, and honesty, this beloved mural has an appeal to many and is a striking addition to the culture of Columbia, a pattern and balance that Maloney has encountered in her work, and from her clients. She finds a balance between client work and personal work, but always finds that when her process is true and honest and is the thing that inspires her the most that that is what results in her best work. “That’s another thing that I’m really big on is the idea behind stuff, sometimes it is like I just feel like drawing a hot dog. It’s an experience.”

Readers can find information on Maloney’s work on her website caitmaloney.com or her Instagram @caitmacncheese.

Laura Garner Hine is the visual arts editor for Jasper Magazine. Photo courtesy of the artist.



Claudia Smith Brinson's *Stories of Struggle: The Clash over Civil Rights in South Carolina*

By Cindi Boiter

Journalist and educator Claudia Smith Brinson's 2020 book, *Stories of Struggle: The Clash over Civil Rights in South Carolina* (USC Press) is a study in extremes.

In this meticulously researched book, Brinson exposes the reader to a continuum of human behaviors as she explores more than twenty years in the fight for civil rights in South Carolina. A fight that, in far too many ways, continues even to this day. From desperation to inspiration, we learn firsthand stories of the best and the worst of South Carolina history and, at once, equally experience pride and humiliation at being a child of this enigmatic state.

The overarching story is as simple as the implications are complex: Black activist South Carolinians wanted to realize their complete rights as citizens of the state while white supremacist South Carolinians wanted to

stop them from doing so. It is the well-told accounts of the individuals involved in this mission that compel the reader to turn the page.

Brinson divides the book into five chapters, each with a central person or series of events as the terminal root from which she branches out an abundance of carefully sorted and richly told details.

For example, while chapter one introduces the reader to Columbia resident and Army veteran Reverend James Miles Hinton, Jr., who ran a successful insurance company out of Augusta and served as president of the SC Conference of Branches of the NAACP, it is the story of how Hinton grew those offices that captivates. Hinton's story takes us through self-styled legal battles, burned crosses, horrific bouts of police brutality—one of which resulted in the blinding of one of Hinton's colleagues—homicide, and lynching, including Hinton's own lynching in 1949 which he not only survived, but walked away from, catching a bus home.

But it is Hinton's story that sets the stage for the second chapter in which the details of the case of *Briggs v. Elliott* are so carefully excavated and the personal side of the case reminds the reader of the real people behind the names of the children and adults involved. More than twenty additional families joined Harry and Eliza Briggs in their demand for a simple school bus to transport their children to their schools, but Clarendon County school superintendent R.M. Elliott vehemently refused. *Briggs v. Elliott* became the first case tried of the five cases that would comprise *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*, ultimately and ostensibly ending segregation in public schools in the United States. Brinson's expansion on the fears and sacrifices that were part of this historic struggle leave the reader in awe of the multiplicity of heroes involved.

The third and fourth chapters of *Stories of Struggle* focus attention on events leading up to and culminating in the civil disobedience of the 1960s, following the example set by the Reverend Cecil Augustus Ivory, a minister in the Presbyterian Church USA and the president of the Rock Hill branch of the NAACP until his untimely death in 1961.

Brinson breaks down the individual stories of the '60s sit-ins as they spread throughout the state, leading to the first Freedom Rides which would ultimately end segregation in interstate travel. Equally as interesting,

though demoralizing as a reflection of humanity, the author covers in detail the opposition to the movement and the tactics white supremacists were willing to employ.

The final chapter of the book takes a detailed look at the Charleston Hospital Strike of 1969, the workers involved, and the events leading up to it. The two-month long strike protesting the unfair treatment of hospital workers of color resulted in charging almost 40 instances of civil rights violations against the hospital, now the Medical University of South Carolina, and resolutions involving pay, treatment, and hiring.

The story of how the book came into being is fascinating, as well. Brinson worked as a journalist in the state for thirty years, during which time she sought out news items to report on that covered issues of racial equality. Starting in 2003, the journalist began actively interviewing subjects for the book, ultimately accumulating 150 interviews with Black activists, their families, and friends, with the plan of collecting these untold stories in this very volume. A consummate researcher, Brinson includes a lengthy bibliography and a hefty 56 pages of extended notes.

Most importantly, *Stories of Struggle* is filled with honesty—something that is too often lacking in southern histories that disingenuously present a regionwide personality of gentility and kindness. The stories are

heartbreaking and frustrating, representing the greatest extremes of evil and charity and reminding the reader of how low humanity can stoop in preservation of a self-serving status quo, and how high we can reach when the stakes are the full expression of one's rights as a citizen of a country supposedly founded on the equal rights of all its members.

Not for the faint of heart, except that the people who don't want to know what happened during the Jim Crow South in their home state of South Carolina are exactly the ones who most should read, *Stories of Struggle: The Clash over Civil Rights in South Carolina*. It will change the way you see your state and compel you to question the legacy South Carolinians realize to this day.

A nighttime photograph of the 701 Whaley building, a historic brick structure with a prominent corner entrance. The building is illuminated, and the number '701' is visible on the corner. Palm trees and other landscaping are in the foreground. The sky is dark blue.

“There is no power for change greater than a community discovering what it cares about.”

-Margaret J. Wheatley

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Photo credit: Clark Barry Photography

Words of Wisdom from Jasper's Latest 2nd Act Film Project Winners

By Cindi Boiter

For more than six years now the Jasper Project has invited SC area filmmakers, as well as film-curious artists from other disciplines, to join us in the yearly creation of 10 unique films under the auspices of the 2nd Act Film Project. The only project or festival of its kind and the brain-child of *Jasper Magazine* film editor and board president, Wade Sellers, the 2nd Act Film Project is unique in that it asks potential filmmakers to enjoin the process of filmmaking in a somewhat awkward and unexpected way – by writing the second act in a screenplay that already has the first and third acts written, and then filming the entire screenplay and creating a film that is no more than six minutes in length. Artists are given no set cues, no genders, no time or season or places in history. And the results have been innovative, surprising, and sometimes staggeringly bizarre. But in almost all cases, the results have been excellent.

In 2019 our filmmaker roster was comprised of several established filmmakers, like David Axe who's recent works *The Theta Girl* (written and co-produced by Chris Bickel), *Shed*, and *Lecton* have gained national attention and multimedia journalist and television producer Ian O'Briant, as well as William Woody, Daniel Colella, Taiyen Stevenson, Amy Brower, Silas James Rowland, Jennifer Baxley, Henry Coonrod, and Sean Parsons. Their films were all screened at the 2nd Act Film Project at Trustus Theatre on October 30, 2019 where each audience member and each filmmaker, including those from previous years, were allocated one vote.

The winner of the Audience Award was Amy Brower for her film, *The Muse*, and the winner of the Filmmakers' Award was Silas James Rowland for his film *Dolor*.

Jasper reached out to Brower and Rowland with a bank of questions that we hope might be not only informative to our readers but also helpful for filmmakers and potential 2nd Act Film Project participants. Here's what we learned.

Tell Jasper's readers about your background prior to entering the 2nd Act Film Project.

Amy Brower:

Acting was my entry into the film world. I discovered that side of myself in college when I accepted an acting scholarship and switched majors altogether. After getting my BA I worked in marketing for a local tv affiliate and part of my job was writing and producing commercials for my local clients. When I made the move to freelance, I had the opportunity to work as an actor and producer on commercial and indie projects and get back to my theatre roots. The last 5 years I've been working primarily on commercial sets and short films, doing everything from production management to art department.

Silas James Rowland:

My filmmaking career began in 2009 when I was in 8th grade. The experience started as a kid with a camera and a skateboard, and from there I began to edit the ridiculous videos we captured into short films. Chris Garris, the production sound mixer on the film (and only other crew member) was my best friend in high school so I was always dragging him in on projects. He took a 4-year hiatus from the industry and roughly around the time that we reunited, we got accepted into this film festival. Prior to doing the film *Dolor*, I had just taken a trip to Scotland to film a feature length documentary.



What made you decide to enter last year?

Brower:

I worked on two 2nd act films the last two years (*Overture* and *Shine*), so I was familiar with the concept and the timeline. This past year I was asked by some amazing story tellers to direct their script. I was eager to work with them, so I said yes. Ultimately, it didn't work out with scheduling for us to work together, so I had to make the decision to either drop the project or write it myself.

Rowland:

I've always been fascinated with working under deadlines and guidelines, so I saw this as an opportunity to challenge myself as well as attend a kickass festival with other filmmakers close to home.

What was the concept of your film and how did you operationalize it?

Brower:

The Muse is a simple celebration of the artist's journey and the connections that bring color into our life. Ultimately, it's a love story that could exist in any time or place

We chose costumes and props that did not indicate a specific time period. The characters are unnamed (Boy, Girl, etc.) and their spoken dialogue is kept to a minimum. We shot in color and edited to black in white for most of the film, and then at the end, with the help of a little movie magic, we animate the screen with color as the artist and muse meet for the first time.

Rowland: *Dolor* picks up after the tragic disappearance of a 10-year-old kid who's assumed to have been mauled to death by a bear. The story follows a pair of fathers, one who adopted the young boy and essentially raised him since birth, then, the other who's actually the blood father that's never been around. The story explores elements of fatherhood while tapping into emotions of guilt, revenge, and tragedy.

I wanted this film to be minimal as possible so that I could maintain quality control in the short amount of time that we had to produce it. Small cast, few locations, and a skeleton crew.

What was your greatest challenge in creating this film and how did you problem solve that challenge?

Brower:

Since the story takes place in a singular location, I knew I had to get it right. I must have scouted five or six shops before I was directed to State Street Trading Co. I walked in and was met by Lainie Lewis, the owner and curator... After five minutes she graciously agreed to let us film there for 2 and half days. It was a huge gift.

Rowland:

Initially we wanted to shoot this film in one day. The day of shooting, Chris and I had just come off a job and had been awake for over 52 hours. About halfway through our shoot we called it quits to do pickups another day so that we wouldn't jeopardize the film and lose our sanity. The problem was solved by not being too hard on ourselves about what we weren't able to achieve in one day and coordinating an additional day - even though our lead actor had to travel.

Who worked on the film with you and what did they do?

Brower:

Hugo Guzman was my Director of Photography. He immediately connected with the script and was 100% invested in the story from day one. Taylor James and Barry Wheeler ran audio and griped. Kristy Leigh Hall was our costume designer and our production assistants were Jordan Bristow and Sarah Hilton. Michael Krajewski, Ellory Scott, Mitch Santiago, and Henry were our on-screen talent.

Rowland:

Chris Garris was Production Sound Mixer as well as moral support. He held the boom and kept me awake on our first day. Couldn't have done it without my wingman.

Tell us about the equipment you used - did you have this on hand, or did you have to borrow it?

Brower:

My crew was able to provide most of their own equipment. We borrowed a gimbal from Wade (Sellers) on day two of shooting (thanks Wade!) which made all the difference in the world for this one very important tracking shot.



Silas James Rowland



Amy Brower

Rowland:

Most of everything we used was self-provided by our studio GVLmedia. For camera we used the Canon C100 MK2 with some L-Series Canon Glass. Sound was captured on the Fostex Recorder & Sennheiser Shotgun Mic provided by Dean Ferreira at Third Mind Films.

I chose this camera instead of renting one because I know it better than I know myself and that just made our production/post-production workflow much faster.

How did you grow as an artist from your participation in 2nd Act Film Project?

Brower:

This was my first time directing and producing something I wrote, so the whole thing felt like a test in self-trust. It felt intensely personal--more than I expected. I think the part of me that grew the most during the process was learning to trust my own voice.

Rowland:

First and foremost, I got to meet an actor named Jeff Benninghofen who is one of the greatest on-screen performers I've ever worked with. Working with him I think encouraged me to be a bit more delicate with my films rather than compromising, like I've done a million times in the past. If it wasn't for this festival, this story wouldn't have been created and

neither would the newfound relationships with the actors that participated.

What would your advice be to filmmakers and other artists who are considering applying to participate in the 2021 2nd Act Film Project?

Brower:

If it sounds fun and at least a little bit scary, do it. Know what your resources are and who your people are. And then just go for it. You'll grow as an artist, connect with your local film community, and hopefully make something you'll be excited to share with people.

Rowland:

Don't go with the first idea that comes to mind. Make a list of the top three to five concepts and go spend the rest of the day occupying yourself. For me I was on vacation in Florida when I wrote *Dolor*, and out of all the ideas I jotted down, it was the one churning in my head all day. I knew when I came back to that list, *Dolor* was the story that was going to be the easiest one to write.

That being said - don't waste brain power trying to make one thing work when you haven't allowed your mind to explore.

2nd Act Film Project 2021

Call for Entries Now Open!
\$2500 in prize money
enter online at secondactfilmproject.com

The Jasper Project is excited to announce that the call for entries for the 2021 2nd Act Film Project is open. The 2nd Act Film Project was founded as a platform for diverse and creative voices in our community to be heard. The past year has quieted a lot of these voices and they are ready to express the new ideas that have been cultivated from a year spent in partial isolation.

The 2nd Act Film Project is a unique take on the film project. Presented by The Jasper Project, its mission is to encourage and promote the growth of independent filmmaking in South Carolina.

10 filmmakers are chosen to participate. There is no cost for a filmmaker to enter. A panel of arts and filmmaking professionals will choose the current year's participating filmmakers.

This year three prizes will be awarded.

- The Audience Award will be given to the film the audience recognizes as the most outstanding film of those screened during the festival. \$1000 will be awarded to the 2021 2nd Act Film Project Audience Award Winner.
- The 2nd Act Filmmakers' trophy will be awarded to the film that current and past participating filmmakers select as the best film. This award will come with a \$500 cash prize.
- The Jasper Project's Producer award will be awarded to one filmmaker selected by The Jasper Project Board of Directors who, over the course of the next year, will work in partnership with Jasper Magazine Film Editor, Wade Sellers, to produce and create a short film which will be screened at the following year's festival. This award comes with a \$1000 cash prize.

Entries are open to any South Carolina resident. Entering filmmakers must provide links to previous work.

Entries close September 10th and filmmakers can enter at www.secondactfilmproject.com.

New Cooks in the Jasper Kitchen

For ten years now, *Jasper Magazine* has come to you via the talent and diligence of a remarkable staff of volunteers who I am proud to call colleagues. Over the years our team has stayed pretty static with only a few folks coming and going—August Krickle was our original theatre editor, followed by Frank Thompson; and Chris Robinson was the first to take the position of visual artist editor, followed by Kara Gunter.

With the departure of our founding art director, Heyward Sims, Brian Harmon joined the staff and, while no one can fill Heyward's innovative shoes, Brian is making himself at home and doing an exceptional job of developing his own design style.

Kyle Petersen cycled off the staff in 2019 to spend more time with Sarge, the new addition to his (and our, as Kyle is my son-in-law) family. Kyle came to Jasper as the founding music editor and soon moved up to assistant editor and so much more. Every time I find myself missing Kyle's input, I need only look at a photo of Sara James to know he made the right decision.

Similarly, Forrest Clonts came to Jasper as the founding photo editor, bringing with him an exquisite style of photography and photo editing. Forrest stuck with us through his new marriage and the birth of two adorable daughters, not to mention the growth of his own photography career. We knew we'd lose him eventually, but we're still sad to see him go.

Luckily, this issue of Jasper sees the return of an old friend as well as some new talent to fill our pages. Kristine Hartvigsen, our original associate editor, is back on the book and we can look forward to seeing more of her writing in issues to come. We're delighted to welcome Laura Garner Hine into the position of visual arts editor and Patrick Michael Kelly as theatre editor. Thankfully, Wade Sellers is staying put not only as film editor but as the president of the Jasper Project board of directors, and Ed Madden, who has been with us from before the beginning, will continue as our poetry editor.

On behalf of all of us at Jasper Magazine, thank you to these editors, new and old, and to all our writers and photographers who continue to bring you the best and most dedicated coverage of all things art in the Midlands. It is a pleasure being part of this team.

Cindi Boiter
Editor-in-chief



Patrick Michael Kelly
Theatre Editor

Patrick Michael Kelly is a serious actor. Never mind his impressive credentials, which include an MFA in acting from New York University/Tisch School of the Arts and improv training with The Second City in Chicago. Never mind his incredible range of talent that extends into directing and producing. Kelly is serious about all proficiencies related to the theater stage, whether it's acting on it or creating magic from behind the hand-built scenery.

He is, perhaps, most serious about the consciousness-raising call to action that truly great theater can deliver. He believes theater — whether employing tragedy or comedy — can be a vehicle to create awareness of social, historical, ethical, or political issues, and can express through performance complex concepts what may not be communicated through conventional channels.

“Theater is an incredibly community-centered artform. It's meant to be experienced by an audience,” Kelly says. “Theater education is important to building someone up as an individual and building confidence. ... I am really interested in that kind of work, making theater for specific communities. I want to be able to say, ‘we listened to you, and we made this for you.’”

A Columbia native, Kelly joined the Trustus Theatre Apprentice Company and attended the South Carolina Governor's School for the Arts and Humanities as a teenager. After earning his bachelor's in theatre from the University of South Carolina, Kelly moved to Chicago to continue his training. From there, he relocated to New York City, where he got his MFA, joined Actor's Equity, and gained professional acting experience.

The proud poppa of daughter, Helena, family eventually brought Kelly back home to the Midlands where, in 2017, Patrick produced The Jasper Project's "Syzygy: Solar Eclipse Plays" to excellent reviews. He is excited about joining *Jasper Magazine* as theatre editor.

by Kristine Hartvigsen

Brian Harmon
Art Director



Brian Harmon has always called Lexington home. After earning his bachelor's from Wofford College, he moved to Portland and worked on a boat, then to Switzerland for a job as adventure sports photographer, then Taiwan, where he taught English. The next stop was New Zealand, where he lived for five years, building a successful creative design business and a not so successful TV production company. The reality show he wrote and produced never made it to Chinese TV as planned, so he came back to South Carolina.

"I was fortunate my whole life to be dragged around the world by my parents," he says. "We went to Africa and Europe a few times. It instilled a wanderlust in me."

Harmon returned to the Columbia area to earn his master's in media arts from the UofSC in 2010. He and his wife, Rachel, are the parents of a young daughter,

Sylvia. Harmon grew up on the same property in Lexington where his parents still reside and where he and Rachel ultimately built their own home.

Harmon recalls taking notice of *Jasper Magazine* after picking up a copy of the January/February 2013 issue. The haunting black-and-white cover photo, captured in a distinctive style, hit him squarely in the gut.

"There was a kind retrospective on Toby Morriss, a photographer and USC professor who died in a motorcycle crash. He was a close friend of mine," Harmon explains. "That is when the magazine really caught my eye. Later I got to know the people involved in publishing it, and I was hooked."

Joining the Jasper team was an easy choice but serving as art director carries some pressure to maintain the visual quality of the magazine. Harmon knows former design editor W. Heyward Sims.

"Of course, I'm apprehensive about replacing Heyward," Harmon says. "He is an incredibly talented designer. All I can do is the best I can in his shadow."

by Kristine Hartvigsen

Laura Garner Hine
Visual Arts Editor



Laura Garner Hine is joining the Jasper team as the magazine's new Visual Arts Editor. Hine is a multimedia artist and art restorationist, raised in Columbia, SC. She uses her love of oils to create all things odd, strange, old, beautiful, and insignificant.

Laura completed an undergraduate program in Studio Art with an emphasis in Painting and a minor in Art History at the University of South Carolina in 2011 before moving to Groningen, the Netherlands, where

she studied until 2013. Continuing her education, Laura pursued a master's program in the Conservation and Restoration of Easel Paintings and Frames in Florence, Italy and currently works as a conservator with ReNewell Fine Art Conservation. As a working visual artist, Laura has participated in many exhibitions, both solo and group. But her newest project is a beautiful baby girl named Josie, with eyes as big as her mom's and as smile just as bright.

In her own words, "To be joining the team of *Jasper Magazine* is not only wonderfully exciting, but it's an incredible honor. I am humbled to know and share a driven passion with so many talented individuals, and I am most looking forward to advocating and sharing those talents and phenomenal human beings with our community at large through this brilliant platform and organization.

by Christina Xan

Kristine Hartvigsen
Associate Editor



Kristine Hartvigsen and I have spent almost the entirety of our friendship writing with and for each other. We first met when I pitched a story to her on Columbia's art power couples for a Valentine's issue when she was editor of *The State's* lifestyle magazines. That story featured, among others, Christian Thee and the late Bruce Bahr and ruffled more than a few feathers because we wrote about a non-heteronormative couple. Kristine went to the mat for me, and we have been dear friends ever since.

A self-professed Army brat with all the loose ends that entails, Kristine spent her formative years moving between San Francisco, where she was born, and military bases in Germany. She ended up at Fort Jackson and Spring Valley High School and went on to the UofSC for her undergrad degree in education before pursuing her master's degree in journalism there.

Kristine has worked in communication, often as a writer and editor, most of her adult life. Her career began as the director of communications for the Southern Institute on Children and Families before leading her to the SC Chamber of Commerce and, ultimately to the McClatchy Corporation where she served as editor-in-chief of two of the organization's Midlands-based lifestyle magazines. A victim of the print-is-dead wave that washed over *The State*, her job there was phased out. Gigs with the Nature Conservancy and freelancing led Kristine to Piedmont Technical college where she currently handles marketing and communications.

Though Kristine is the consummate newspaper woman she has so much more in her toolbox. Highly skilled in creative non-fiction, Kristine is also a working poet. Her book, *To the Wren Nesting* was published in 2012 and she is a frequent contributor to *Fall Lines-a literary convergence*. She was a two-time finalist in the SC Poetry Initiative, and she contributed essays and poetry to *A Sense of the Midlands*, *Limelight*, volumes 1 and 2, and was one of 12 selected SC writers to participate in the Jasper Project's *Supper Table* project last year, penning an essay about SC's trailblazing star athlete, Althea Gibson in the commemorative publication, *Setting the Supper Table*.

Kristine was a founding member of the staff of *Jasper Magazine* when we launched this venture in September 2011. The value of her contributions of literature, support, and expertise has always and continues to be immeasurable.

by Cindi Boiter





COMING SOON

SHOW: LADY DAY AT EMERSON'S BAR & GRILL by LANIE ROBERTSON
STARRING KATRINA GARVIN as BILLIE HOLIDAY | DIRECTED BY JOCELYN SANDERS
PHOTO ILLUSTRATION: GEORGE FULTON STUDIOS
COSTUME: ABIGAIL McNEELY & TERRANCE HENDERSON | HAIR: ROY BRASLEY
INFO & TICKETS: WWW.TRUSTUS.ORG



Black Lives Matter.



Art by Ija Charles