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Maine College of Art & Design

522 Congress St
Portland, ME 04101
1.800.639.4808
meca.edu / info@meca.edu

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Letter from President Laura Freid

Dear Readers,

During the past month I have found myself thinking deeply about ways that art and artists help us make sense of an ever-evolving world. I feel fortunate to spend my days surrounded by people who are capturing, situating, and reflecting on the events and issues of our time. They are the documentarians, interpreters, storytellers, and alchemists who notice and call attention to the details that shape our experiences and provide new ways to examine the events that define our era.

In the following pages you'll find interviews and articles that shine a light on artists, writers, curators, students, and educators engaged in creative practices and pedagogies that have the power to not only help us make sense of the world but to change it as well. They do this through a search for deep understanding of the topics and ideas that drive their work. They engage with their communities through imagining and iterating, and they approach their practices and vocations from a place of curiosity and resolve.

This issue begins with writer and alumna Jenna Crowder in conversation with Iris Williamson, Maine College of Art & Design's Director of Exhibitions. The two discuss ways that art and artists can critique the structures and institutions that shape their opportunities, while simultaneously creating new approaches to research, practice, and community building. Writer, podcaster, and educator Zahir Janmohamed discusses his approach to writing and teaching, emphasizing the importance of specificity in creative work in order to authentically connect with an audience. The magazine also includes several alumni profiles that highlight the varied methods artists use to develop their practices, resiliently respond to challenges, and ultimately enrich our lives and experiences.

Amidst climate change, political upheaval, war, and strife, artists hold a mirror up to us, often illuminating what might at first be hidden. MECA&D senior Jaden Kyung-Moon Bausch, a painting major, unexpectedly uses her landscapes and still life to explore themes of economics, markets, and the American dream. Her goal is to bridge the gap between creativity and financial empowerment. She is already implementing her philosophy

Photo by Nicole Wolf

by using the proceeds of her art to support the MECA&D Artists of Promise Scholarship. Dylan Hausthor '15, in turn, reflects on ways their work challenges traditional notions of fact and fiction, blending mysticism and parafiction to explore deeper cultural truths. They also argue that as a photographer, the lens shouldn't be seen as an impartial recorder of reality, rather, it shapes and distorts perceptions in ways that can have powerful, even dangerous, consequences.

Art has a unique power to reflect shared feelings, experiences, and ideas. While art can't stop wars or societal unrest, it can shift people's thinking and ultimately inspire them to change. Many of us may not recall the news headlines from our childhoods, but we remember the art and music that captured defining moments in time. Ultimately, artists who define an era also transcend it. They allow us to revisit and engage with past experiences and emotions from a new perspective, inspiring us to re-imagine and work toward a better future.

I am grateful that within our community, we have the power to create meaningful art and design that speaks to our shared experiences. We also have the responsibility to provide an educational space where the next generation of creatives feel seen and understood. Even as we face uncertainty about the future, we can continue to offer space for connection, growth, and mutual support. I hope you enjoy this issue of MECA&D's & Magazine and encourage you to write back to us with your thoughts and reflections.

Sincerely,



Dr. Laura Freid
President, Maine College of Art & Design

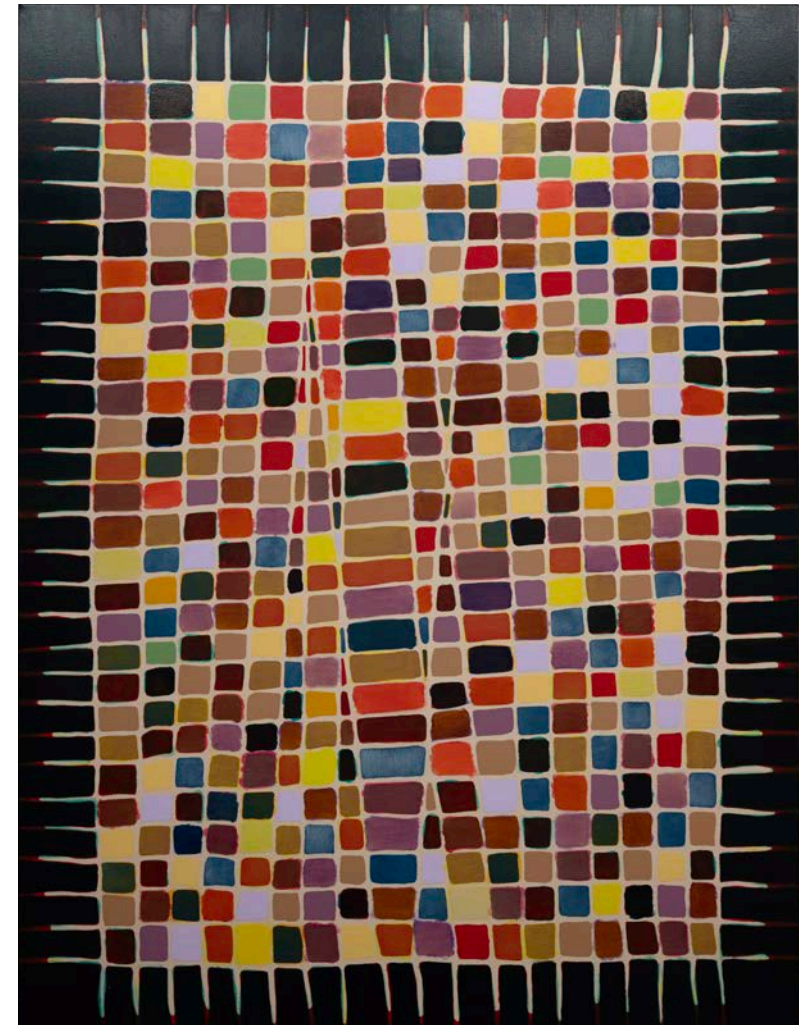


Photo by Annabelle Collette '22

Artist Highlight

Sean Roarty '25

Screen

2024

seanroartyartist.com



Photo by Joel Tsui '16, Salt '17, MFA '19

Objects as Storytellers

By Katie Irwin, Salt '23

Maya Tihtiyas Attean '23 on the importance of history and place

We arrive outside of SPACE Gallery one Thursday morning in September, and Attean excitedly greets us and brings us up the stairs to her studio space. White walls are lined with a gallery of black and white photographs spotlighted by the sunlight. Her work blends natural reality with a mysticism that creates spaciousness for imagination. Much of her photography is centered around landscape and portraiture. The black and white brings forward the textures of the subjects being photographed—the roughness of tree bark, an unfurling fern, the movement of a flame, a body under the sun. Without color, everything becomes vivid and visceral.

She describes her style as “ethereal and a little bit...I want it to be unnerving, almost.” The way she processes her photos, she doesn’t want them to look perfect. She prefers nontraditional statements of printing and using light to reveal certain objects. That way, she can focus on the composition rather than balancing the colors.

“I think color is great, too, when you want to use it. But I just have always liked the feeling of black and white, I guess. And printing in the darkroom was a big part of my process, and that’s all black and white, you know?”

As an evolving artist, experimentation is an unfolding process. “To be honest, I’ve been taking photos since I was a kid. In middle school, it was just something I always liked to do. I thought it was really cool to be able to capture a moment that would never be replicated again. But as I got more into photography, what I really liked about it is that it’s a medium to express my own reality. And I love the fact that you can alter reality, so nothing is what it seems in a photo.”

Attean originally moved from her home on the Penobscot Reservation to Port-



Photo by Cat Crandall Duffy



Maya Tihtiyas Attean '23
muskkrat
 silver gelatin print
 2024

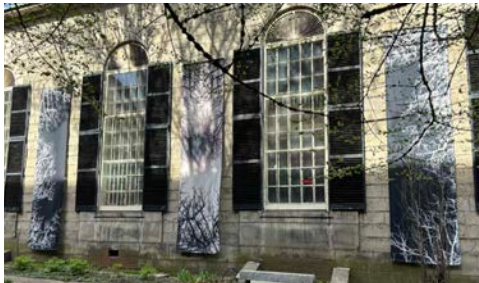


Maya Tihtiyas Attean '23
Mikwidahamin/Portal
 installation
 2024

Photo by Joel Tsui '16, Salt '17, MFA '19

land to attend Southern Maine Community College and study communications and new media. There, a passion for her craft was reignited after taking a photography course.

“When I was in my early twenties, I worked as a model for a while, and that’s actually kind of what got me back into it—I always took photos of my friends casually, but I wasn’t seriously looking into the art of photography until I started seeing all these different processes. I started working with photographers who use large format cameras or did tintypes. And that really ignited my interest in it again. There are many photographers I met along the way who helped me out, would give me cameras, or supported me, giving feedback. I feel like a lot of my interest in photography was inspired by my own self. It sounds silly, but just my own way of wanting to explore my identity.”



*Roots of Resilience:
Echoes of Connection,
installation, 2024*

Eventually, this led to her enrolling at Maine College of Art & Design. “I was [thinking], I could just study photography and it was kind of a revolutionary thought to me, to be honest, because it hadn’t occurred to me that I could go to school just for that, you know?”

She studied photography at the College for two years and said she “learned so much about how to be a photographer and an artist in general and formed a lot of great connections. I feel it definitely shaped what I’m doing today. I’m grateful for the time that I spent [at the College].”

Since graduating from Maine College of Art & Design, she’s flourished as an artist, with work included in exhibitions at the Portland Museum of Art and the Institute of Contemporary Art at MECA&D. What’s more, she’s found community in the city with fellow Indigenous creatives through collaborative work with organizations like Wabanaki REACH, which are focused on the self-determination of Wabanaki people through education, truth-telling, restorative justice, and restorative practices in Wabanaki and Maine communities. These community connections have proven essential to navigating different worlds and spaces—a theme that has become ever-present in much of Attean’s work. “As a white-passing Indigenous person who lives in a white city away from my reservation, I think my work has developed into seeing how I fit within these different colonized and decolonized worlds and trying to create a reality within that.”

These days, Attean is stepping into her authority as an artist. That looks like more space to experiment, installations to create, and opportunities to share stories—both her own and those of Wabanaki history. It began with an installation as part of RE:Site 2024 at SPACE Gallery and was called *Roots of Resilience: Echoes of Connection*.

“I was given the opportunity to talk about a lesser-known history of Portland and I chose to talk about the First Parish Church, whose pastor, the Reverend Thomas Smith, was also the leader of a hunting party based on the Spencer Phipps bounty proclamation, which gave money to people who killed and brought scalps of Wabanaki people.” Attean



Basketry supplies
hanging from Attean’s
studio ceiling

Photo by Cat Crandall Duffy



Photo by Cat Crandall Duffy

created an activation outside of the Church using her own photographs printed on fabric hung against the walls outside. The activation included audio which was sourced from old video recordings she found while digitizing files for her mom. “I found a video of [my mom] interviewing Penobscot and Passamaquoddy children from the ’90s, and these kids had such profound things to say and talked about being Wabanaki and what culture means to them, and what [their] struggles

are. And I used that along with some chants as an audio piece that went with the fabrication.”

Since that installation, she’s had more opportunities flow her way. She worked closely with Iris Williamson, Director of the ICA at MECA&D, on her work in the exhibit *Objects*

and Power. Of the experience and her work with Williamson, Attean said, “I think Iris is really trying to restructure that power balance within the museums and how we view Indigenous people. So it was really nice to be told, ‘Do whatever you want. You can curate something, make something.’ Iris said, ‘You can do whatever you want in the front room,’ which is unheard of.”

The front gallery featured Attean’s work, which combined a photo installation blended with a natural object sculpture. “All of the materials I used in the sculpture are sourced from Sipayik, where my grandmother and my mom are from. It’s based on this fishing weir that I remember seeing as a child. It reminds me of my grandfather, who I never met. He would work on these fishing weirs out there, and it was his way of sustaining life and living.”

“My piece specifically talked about how objects tell stories and take on lives



Photo by Cat Crandall Duffy



Maya Tihtiyas Attean '23
Tamtamsisok
 silver gelatin print
 2024

“My piece specifically talked about how objects tell stories and take on lives of their own after they leave us, and how sometimes even possessing an object can’t really possess the cultural significance that comes with it.”

of their own after they leave us, and how sometimes even possessing an object can’t really possess the cultural significance that comes with it.”

Attean is also part of a group show, *As We Are*, at the Portland Museum of Art curated by Sayantan Mukhopadhyay, and featuring artists who have connections to Maine. Her work includes photos from the series, *Does the Land Remember*, which delves into, as she describes, “colonization and our connection to it, how we view the land in a colonized and decolonized mindset, but also how I fit in with that world.”

When asked about what’s next for her, she is percolating with ideas, “I want to go to grad school to concentrate on my own work without expectation, which sounds silly, but I really feel like I have much to learn about my own way of working and what I want out of my own art.”

It’s clear that Maya will continue to experiment with her artistic expression as she navigates how to share ancestral stories and investigates the spaces in which those stories are told.

“Knowing a history of: ‘Who lived there? What was this area used for? Did anything happen here?’ That’s important to me.”

&

@mayatihtiyasart
 mayatihtiyas.com

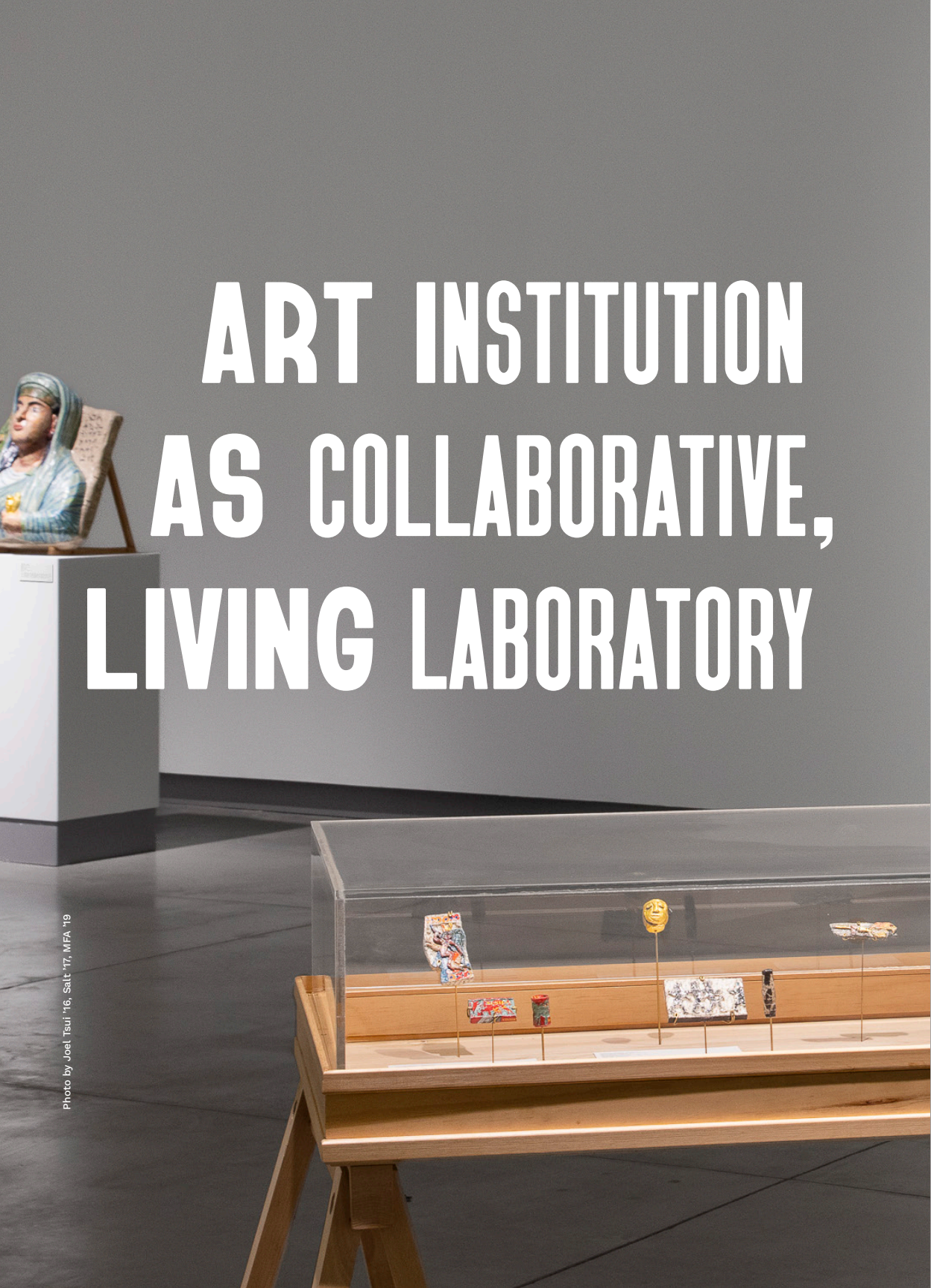


Artist Highlight
 Ryer Spann '26
Home to a Gnome or Two
 archival ink print
 8" x 10"
 2024
 @kingraat



Photo by Bailey Conant '24

Artist Highlight
 Lucas Cadena '24
Matador Shirt, Jacket, Pant
 broadcloth, canvas, mason
 twill, neoprene, poplin
 2024
 @_w.ke



ART INSTITUTION AS COLLABORATIVE, LIVING LABORATORY

Photo by Joel Tsui '16, Salt '17, MFA '19

By Jenna Crowder '09

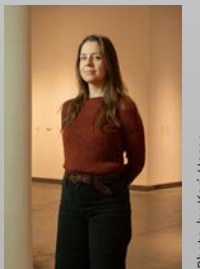
An Interview with Iris Williamson

Iris Williamson, Director of the Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA) at Maine College of Art & Design, curates with a philosophy of collaboration. Housed as the ICA within an art college, Williamson finds immense potential and reward in working with fellow faculty and staff as well as students, creating a welcoming atmosphere that also challenges the typical hierarchies found within art institutions. In the fall of 2024, the ICA hosted *Objects and Power*, an exhibition in which Williamson and 10 artists with widely varying practices considered questions around the responsibilities of collecting, such as: *How do collecting institutions decide which objects have value? What does the display of certain objects tell us about people and culture? Why do museums collect stolen or contested objects, and why haven't many of these objects been repatriated?*

The show made visible the systems and hierarchies inherent in the foundations of an art institution. While the ICA is not a

collecting museum with objects of its own, Williamson insists there's still a responsibility to make visible these inherited, and often unjust, systems of power. Bringing a benevolent trickster approach to turning institutional scripts on their heads, Williamson invited the artists in *Objects and Power* to co-create a show that investigates and reimagines the role of the collecting institution. Leveraging the ICA's position within Maine College of Art & Design, Williamson also collaborated with students and faculty to lead talks and create responsive exhibitions, making space for co-leadership, alternative approaches to learning, and expanded agency and ownership within the galleries. The discussion as follows took place in September 2024.

Left: *Objects and Power* installation view with work by Michael Rakowitz and William Villalongo



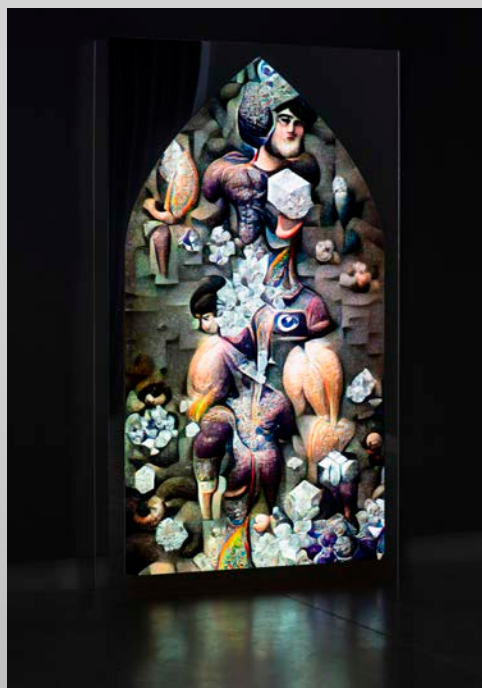
Director of the Institute of Contemporary Art at Maine College of Art & Design Iris Williamson

Photo by Karl Herer



THE LUNDER GALLERY

Objects and Power
installation view
with work by
Samuel Levi Jones,
Nyeema Morgan,
and Michael Rakowitz



Morehshin Allahyari
ماه طلعت *Moon-faced*
2022

JC: Can you tell us a little bit about how you think about organizing exhibitions?

IW: I came into curating and working in arts administration having started out as an artist, as a painter. My first project, called Dugg Dugg, was an artist-run space in an 8,000-square-foot cotton mill in Charlotte, North Carolina, and it came out of community struggle during the recession. It felt like a really powerful moment for artists to come together and create something out of that pressure.

I was thinking about the power of art and what art can do and how it can work in the world, and how it can reflect what's happening in the world. Of course, we don't want these things to happen, but it is a special thing to be able to respond to really difficult moments. Art can be a vehicle to

build communities, communicate ideas, to make changes, to create new things out of that. That moment shifted me from wanting to make art to wanting to make spaces and work collaboratively.

Later, I was working and living in New York during Occupy Wall Street, which was another moment to see this kind of work happen differently. I was seeing communities working together and creating art spaces; it helped me see the art world not strictly for the market's sake, but how art functions in the context of the world. I began to think about the structures and the organizations and the many different factors that are connected to art, and I really think philosophically about exhibitions through that lens, still.

My [graduate] thesis work was around behavior and the art world, thinking about connections, about shame and shameless self-promotion. It was about the idea of being really brazen in the art world and about showing how much behavior matters in navigating the systems of the art world. Then when the [2016] election happened soon after, I was offered a space to start my own gallery. I was reluctant for many reasons; part of it was feeling like art didn't matter [at that time]. I was with community, we all cared about art, people were working hard to move us forward, and it didn't work. It felt like the bottom had dropped out. I had a moment of thinking, what do we do now? What do I do? What's the next step? The gallery had to be built around thinking about systems. The gallery itself became the art: I built a space that used the language of capitalism—the language of the structure we're within—to support our community, to do projects that were more challenging and different than what we would typically need to do to support a gallery.

We came up with the idea of an alternative business model of a shareholder program, and we sold shares of the gallery for \$100 each to friends, professors, and artists—people who were not the wealthiest people but who really loved art. A hundred dollars is still too much for some people, but we were better able to feel like the owners were our community. And then people would get, as shareholders, to see our financial reports, they would get packets of art and printed material and ephemera, they would be invited to special events, and they would get dividends based on our sales. These were small amounts, but it was a practice of showing what sharing the structures could look like, thinking about how big organizations operate, and then trying to mimic them on micro levels. I thought about the gallery as a net: we can't fix the structure, but we can make the holes in the net a little wider to allow for some destabilization and to invite more people in.



Samuel Levi Jones
The Library of Alexandria
2023

JC: How do you think about the ICA as a venue for these ideas through *Objects and Power*, an exhibition about the ways we look at, understand, and relate to objects?

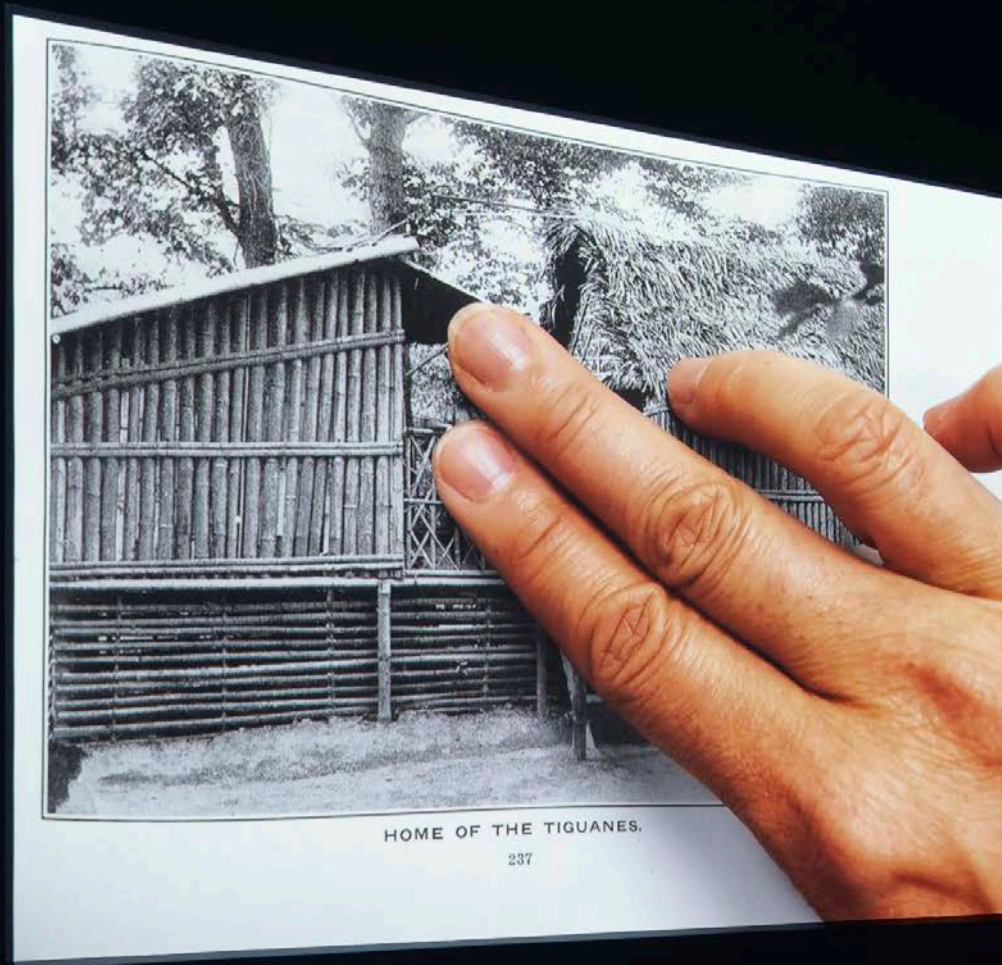


Gala Porras-Kim
Leaving the institution through cremation is easier than as a result of a deaccession policy
2021

IW: I'm thinking about the structures and the environments that we're in and creating structures that play with those ideas. We are not immune from these critiques and challenges. And as artists, how can art influence the structure? Does it mean that as soon as you have some power you fall in line with the structure or are you thinking of new ways to maybe create new systems that benefit more people and support more people?

Thinking specifically about the ICA, a lot of what we do is about education. I'm a big proponent of exhibition spaces being a living laboratory. I think about students in the classroom: they're working with materials, and they want to see people working with materials out in the world—what are those artists doing with them? It helps you imagine, it helps you feel something and see how the work you're doing in the studio can connect with the world. I'm a big fan of





Stephanie Syjuco
Block Out the Sun
2021

academic museums and galleries for that reason, and that's where the ICA shines.

The ICA can also be so collaborative within the curriculum of the school. Part of that is developing connections and strong bonds within faculty and staff and among the students. And, of course, we're for the public, too! We can bring in people working with materials, and it's also about seeing people who are working with ideas. Especially when you're in a certain region, it's so important to see artists who can connect you to different places. That's been crucial. We've been able to collaborate with classes, think through programming, and, for this exhibition, we switched some of the hierarchies in the space.

There are curated artists who are thinking about the structure of the museum, and institutional critiques. There are questions about how historically some museums have stolen objects, how museums display objects ethically, or who is telling the story. Which stories have been forgotten or lost, and which need to be told? Museums are not neutral—we're all connected to objects and histories—so it's encouraging a realm of critique that can help you understand that when you see an object in a museum, there's a history there. That you can understand something about the world through its placement in that space. There are also questions around design: how does the way things are displayed give more value to one object and not another? Why do we choose to value one object and not another? There are also questions of how the body is represented through objects, with thinking about the objective and the subjective and how ideas about people have been understood historically through the ways they've been represented in museums or in the archives. This exhibition

doesn't solve the problems, but it is a way of reflecting.

One of the questions in the exhibition is about systems and gatekeeping. Having a space makes me ask: who are the communities here in Maine, and what are the stories that need to be told? It makes sense to work with Indigenous people in this region and to be able to bring in someone with whom we have a relationship through the school. What's the story that should be told here in this place? We invited Maya Tihtiyas Attean '23 with the prompt to do whatever she wanted—it could be anything. She decided to do an installation that's part of her own work of telling family stories and the history of making in her family. So that's one way of thinking about hierarchies and positionality: who gets to make these things? We have a mixture of visiting artists, talks, and a panel discussion with people who are experts in museums and collections.

Hopefully, we're creating an environment where people are coming together. And, in that space, the idea is to equip students to be able to question the systems that they're in, and then, as they grow in their careers, as artists, when they see these things in the world, they can recognize those systems and have an empowered and more thoughtful response about what they do in these situations, how they navigate these things. For us, it's really about education. No matter what they do in the creative fields, it's all connected. Hierarchy shows up, it's everywhere, so how are you going to think about decision-making as you navigate that?

JC: Shifting those systems requires a lot of trust.

“I WAS THINKING ABOUT THE POWER OF ART AND WHAT ART CAN DO AND HOW IT CAN WORK IN THE WORLD, AND HOW IT CAN REFLECT WHAT’S HAPPENING IN THE WORLD. OF COURSE, WE DON’T WANT THESE THINGS TO HAPPEN, BUT IT IS A SPECIAL THING TO BE ABLE TO RESPOND TO REALLY DIFFICULT MOMENTS. ART CAN BE A VEHICLE TO BUILD COMMUNITIES, COMMUNICATE IDEAS, TO MAKE CHANGES, TO CREATE NEW THINGS OUT OF THAT. THAT MOMENT SHIFTED ME FROM WANTING TO MAKE ART TO WANTING TO MAKE SPACES AND WORK COLLABORATIVELY.”

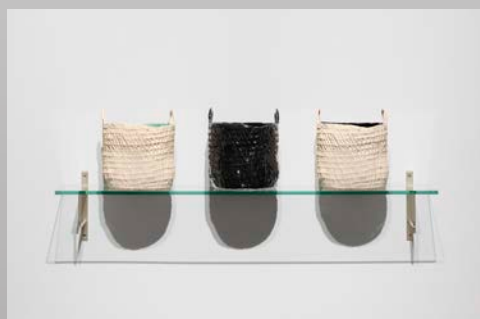
IW: And it is totally imperfect, but trust is the inherent element.

JC: As you were putting the show together, which features a powerhouse roster of artists, how were you thinking about which artists you wanted to be in conversation with? And how were you thinking about how those artists’ work might speak with one another?

IW: I read and think about this topic a lot, so in a way, I have had an eye out for artists who address these issues in their work for a while. Since I have learned a lot from their work over the years, it made sense to ask artists that I already admire such as Sara Siestreem (Hanis Coos) and Stephanie Syjuco.

Over the last year, I’ve spent a lot of time researching additional artists, writers, and community members who deal with these themes to help build out this exhibition. I have also had research and logistical support from our summer curatorial intern Lyra Miller ’26 and our ICA team members Sarah Sawtelle ’19 and Caroline Kouba ’22, and have had many conversations about the topic with artists, curators, faculty, administrators, and community members. I wanted to make sure there were a variety of angles into this conversation, representing perspec-

tives on the theme from other parts of the world. But of course, this exhibition could be done a hundred different ways and tell a hundred different stories—I would hope that people come to the table with their own stories, too. I am so thankful to all of the artists



and collaborators who have agreed to be part of this exhibition, and I hope that these works will open up a deeper dialogue in our community about our relationship with art and objects.

JC: Toward the beginning of our conversation we talked about the idea of sometimes feeling like art doesn’t matter, especially in moments where we feel powerless and don’t know what to do. The practices of these art-

Sara Siestreem
(Hanis Coos)
*this clam basket stops
pipelines, 2022*
darth, 2023
patent-leather, 2023

Photo by Joel Tsui '16, Salt '17, MFA '19



William Villalongo
A Dance for Dave
2023

Photo by Joel Tsui '16, Salt '17, MFA '19

ists are research-based, material-based, and process-based, and it seems like this is what we do. We actually have to make art that can get us toward the world that we want to see and the world that we want to be in. I would not prescribe this as an imperative to all art—I don’t think all art needs to do that—but I think it’s exciting when it can, and that there are artists working against despair and immobility when we need it most.

IW: These actions might even be in very small ways, but sometimes all we have are these small ways to take what we have and then try to do the best that we can. That’s what I see in the job of curating, of caring for, in the responsibility for spaces. It’s a big responsibility to be able to use these public spaces, talk about ideas, and be thoughtful and expansive rather than inward and reductive about these ideas. It’s a big job that doesn’t come from me alone: it’s about being able to be collaborative, it’s about the community around me, and making connections with people who know more than me. It’s being able to give resources and bring people in as much as we can.

JC: The way you’re bringing people and artists into this space feels collaborative, as if you, the artists, and the students are all collaborating together with the space to create this show, instead of serving one singular or monolithic vision. It’s sprawling, expansive, polyvocal. I think it’s a combination of your philosophy of curating and the specific ways these artists are working—you’re coming together to shift the space, and that nuance feels really important.

IW: I want people to feel like they belong in this space. I want the students to feel like it’s theirs and that they can feel empowered in that space. Hopefully, that’s the energy that comes through. I really think that it’s about constantly opening up, being curious, being in a position of openness—even if it can’t happen in every single moment in practice—and to really continue that effort.



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Artist Spotlight:
Wills Phillips '25
Fan Art
vellum, fan, steel wire,
hot glue, super glue,
tape
dimensions variable
2024
@itchyfingersmake

Fan Art focuses on the community surrounding the music of the Grateful Dead. These are people I've traveled across America with. The fan's movement illustrates the universal pulse moving us. Our bodies undulate, rotate, shake in diversified unison. *Fan Art* celebrates this space, while flattening and estranging it.



Photo by Karl Herer

Collapsing the

Distance

A conversation with Zahir Janmohamed on the art of specificity in storytelling

Zahir Janmohamed leads the Writing Track at the Salt Institute for Documentary Studies at Maine College of Art & Design. He is also Assistant Professor of English at Bowdoin College and co-founder of the James Beard Award-nominated podcast, *The Racist Sandwich*. The podcast, which explores the intersection of food, race, gender, and class, was selected as one of the best 100 podcasts by *Vulture*, and in 2020, *Esquire UK* named it one of the best podcasts. He has received fellowships from MacDowell, Tin House, the Arab American National Museum, Mesa Refuge, the Djerassi Resident Arts Program, the Norman Mailer Center, and the San Francisco Writers' Grotto, and his articles have appeared in publications, including *The New York Times*, *Foreign Policy*, *Guernica*, *The Washington Post*, and online at CNN and NPR.

Drawn to the program because of Salt's reputation, Janmohamed shared, "I had heard of Salt long before moving to Maine—it has a storied history and there

aren't many other places in the country like it."

KI: I want to start by asking you about your writing and creative practices because you've dabbled with so many different mediums and forms of storytelling. What's your creative practice like at the moment?

ZJ: My training is in fiction, but I find that working in different forms helps inform how I think about the other genres. Right now I'm primarily focused on nonfiction—I'm writing a nonfiction book about India to blend memoir and reporting. And that's sort of my favorite genre to read and to write. I read a lot of novels, but I really love where the personal essay intersects with the world. That's one of my favorite subjects to teach as



Photography by Cat Crandall Duffy



well as to read; the idea about how can we, ourselves, illuminate the world.

KI: Are there any memoirs that are inspiring your work or that you're inspired by?

ZJ: In terms of memoirs, my favorite is by Casey Lehman, who wrote a book called *Heavy*. I think with a memoir unless you're fully vulnerable, then the reader will not trust you. I think fake vulnerability is worse than [none]—I'd rather you be absent than present a fake vulnerability. Fake vulnerability is like the CEO of a major company talking about 'when I was 28 and I didn't pass the bar one time.' It's like, 'Oh, sorry to hear. You're doing okay. You're the CEO of a company.' You know what I mean? It's like that fake vulnerability—it's so safely in the past and you have so clearly overcome that obstacle.

KI: What does that look like in the context of your writing and working on your own nonfiction memoir?

ZJ: So, without getting too into the weeds, I was in India during an episode of violence in 2002, an episode of anti-Muslim violence. I was in my 20s. I witnessed this violence. I worked in the camps and then I dedicated my life to human rights work for about 10 years.

I worked in [Washington] DC, in the United States Congress, and for Amnesty International. When I became a writer, I was interested in the subject of aftermath. Which is to say, I think, the very nature of human rights work and even policy work, as you're dealing with the immediate aftermath of the violence. Who did it? Who was at fault? I became much more interested in what happens 5, 10, 20, even 30 or 40 years after an episode of violence.

So that's what I try to focus on. I'm trying to mine my own experiences of aftermath. You know, why is it that there are some experiences in my life that I can forget and there are other experiences that I can't? And the older I get, the more I'm trying to be compassionate with myself about the human

mind; it's confusing. I genuinely don't know why some things slide in my mind and other things just stick. And I think for me, writing is also an act of compassion—to say that I think memory can be a thing of beauty.

KI: That's a cool synthesis—memoir is both feeling and experience and making sense of those things. How do you go about teaching or bringing out in your students the idea that the personal can illuminate something complex?

ZJ: So the way I think about this is, imagine, let's say you are going on a date or you're going to meet a friend, a new person for coffee, right? It's either a date or just a friend's meeting. And you say to them, 'Hey what kind of movies do you like?' And the other person says, 'I like good movies.' I'm like, 'Okay, what kind of books do you like?' and they say, 'I like interesting books.' That person, by being abstract, is keeping you at an arm's distance. You know, if someone says, 'What kind of food do you like?' 'Well, as long as it's really tasty, I like it.' There's no way or entry point into that conversation. But if someone says, 'I really love Ethiopian food, and I do not like Indian food,' it's very specific. I'm going to react to that. I'm like, 'Well, I'm Indian. Why don't you like Indian food?' And even though I may not agree with that opinion, it gives something to have a conversation.

So I always tell my students that when you're writing a piece, you want to be as specific as possible because specificity is the way into another person's life.

I think often we're not specific because we just assume the other person knows. And that's where writing becomes this almost artificial exercise. You do have to paint a world all over again—what we want as writers is to collapse the distance. Because

I think writing is about a transfer of energy. I want a story to sort of make me [feel] like, 'Oh, I've never seen that before.' To a newness, an ambiguity, it's an uncomfortableness. And I think that's what a good piece of art should strive for. It should get under our skin.

KI: What are you looking forward to with teaching writing students, but in the context of documentary?

ZJ: I think the fun thing about teaching at Salt, is A) the students are older and B) the focus on documentary is so interesting. First, the older part: students have often lived more and they've gone about the world. I've had students who are former lawyers, who are teachers, who've maybe been married once or twice. Maybe their kids have grown up. So they have a sense of who they are in the world a little bit. And they generally have an abundance to write about. They just have to figure out how to carve their story.

But then the second [part] is that with documentary, we are all better served if there are more people documenting the world. Especially in Maine, where I think Maine is such a writer's dream, or storyteller's dream because it's so underreported. So if you're in Maine and you have access to a certain community or certain story, I want to hear that.

KI: In the context of students writing and doing documentary work, how do you think about the ethics of telling or sharing other people's stories?

ZJ: So, I guess, for me, it's a question of, we don't interrogate the 'why' enough, the 'why' a person is telling a story. I think what happens when you go to a workshop is a student turns something in and we treat this piece of

"I always tell my students that when you're writing a piece, you want to be as specific as possible because specificity is the way into another person's life."

paper as if it's everything. And I think sometimes it's useful to put the piece of paper aside. And say, 'Okay, we will get to this. I promise you, but let's talk about you. Why are you telling the story? What are you thinking about? What are some of your anxieties, and workshop that. And then once you workshop that, then let's bring the piece of story back together.'

I think that as storytellers, we should be expansive. We should go outside our comfort zones, but then we have to ask, what do we know? And then to acknowledge when you're doing the story, is there something that I missed? What am I not getting right?

Because I think that's when we acknowledge our subjectivity.

KI: How do you navigate AI and ChatGPT in the context of writing?

ZJ: So I often use this exercise in class where I teach personal essay writing and I'll be teaching it at Salt as well. I bring in an essay and I say, 'Hey, this is from a former student. And it's an essay about why he went to Paris and he didn't like it. He gave me permission to share it. What do you all think of it?' And then I like to hear their critique. And then later I reveal that it's ChatGPT. And generally what I find students will say is that it's generic. The reason why they don't like Paris is, you know, it's crowded, the pollution, the food wasn't that good. Whereas I had a student of mine say she didn't like Paris because she has knee problems and there were too

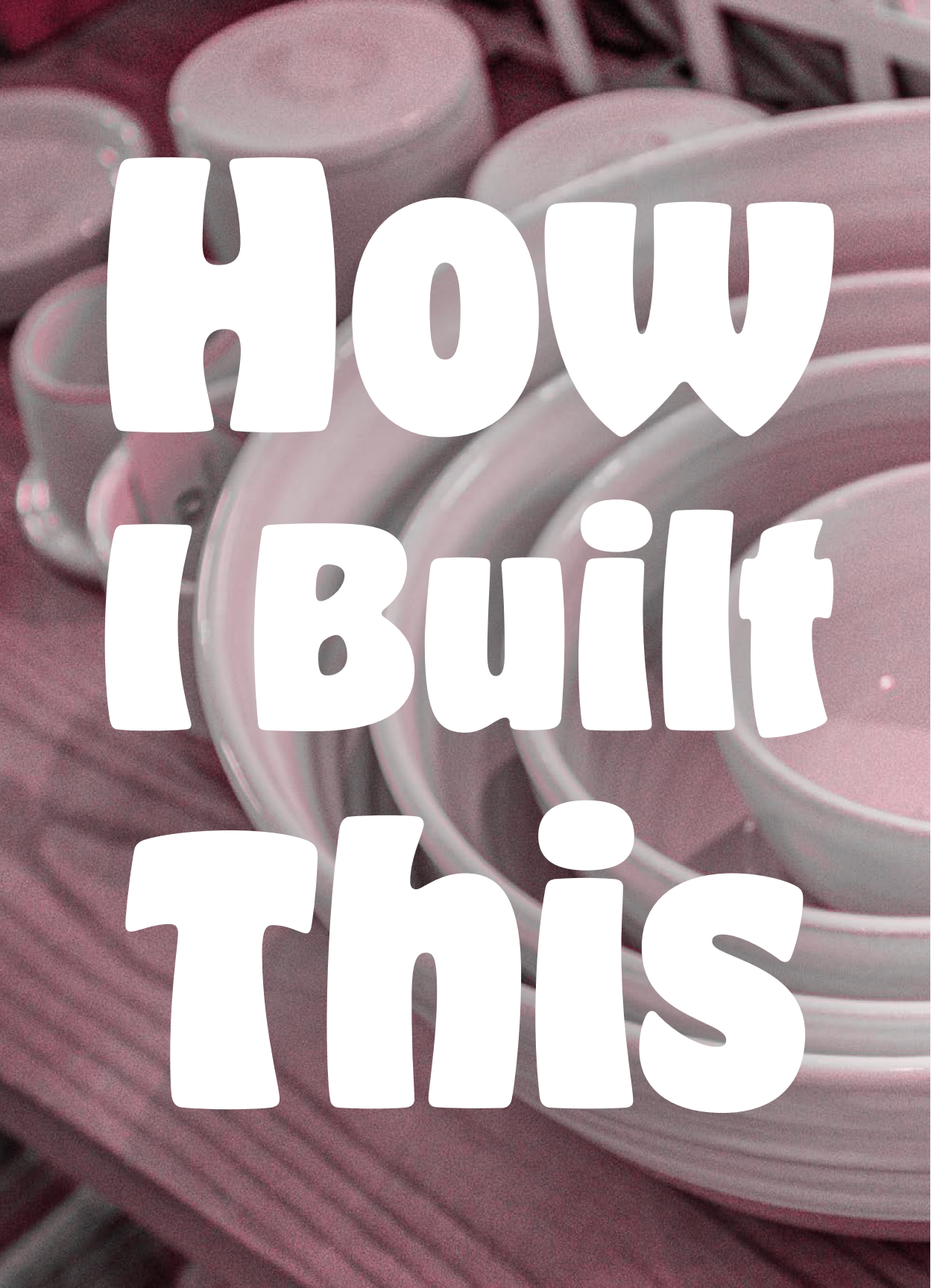
many stairs to walk up. So that's much more specific, and it tells me who this person is as a writer. So I think, instead of pretending that ChatGPT doesn't exist, let's actually bring it into the classroom.

Now, if I ask ChatGPT to write an essay about Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness, it might do a really good job. And that's scary. But I think a good piece of writing, and what I hope we do at Salt, has some specificity to it. So, if you and I are walking down a street in Portland, Maine, and I say, 'All right, I want you to observe five things.' And, let's say, I also observe five things. I guarantee you that we'll have different things that we observe. You might see a New Hampshire license plate. You might see that fan that I got for my apartment. Or you might see, I don't know, whatever you're into at the time. And so I think that what we observe tells us who we are as people. But ChatGPT doesn't work that way.


@zahirj
theracistsandwichpodcast.com



Artist Spotlight:
Winslow Loves You!
Nothin that Happens
is Anythin I Could
Imagine
hand-made paper,
Joomchi, silkscreen
2024
@forestspiritss



How I Built This

By Claire Brassil

James Zilian '99 on the power of perseverance and mentorship

The journey from an art school student to a successful business leader requires a blend of passion, persistence, and a healthy dose of resourcefulness. Like many creative entrepreneurs, Farmhouse Pottery Founder James Zilian's story encompasses moments of deep insight and inspiration as well as doubts, failures, and the resilience to reimagine. He established his studio pottery and home goods business in 2012 and has developed a national following of patrons who appreciate handmade, heirloom quality pieces. The brand now reaches thousands of customers, is carried by major retailers like Nordstrom and West Elm, and exceeds \$10 million in sales annually.

"Farmhouse Pottery represents a mature version of me as a craftsman, artist, designer, merchant, and marketer," Zilian shares. "I've worn many hats in order to get to this point."

From an early age, Zilian recognized his artistic and entrepreneurial leanings.

After beginning his undergraduate career at Colby-Sawyer College, he transferred to Maine College of Art (now Maine College of Art & Design) to pursue a course of study rooted in creative practice. While his BFA degree has served his business in myriad ways, the guidance he received from the College faculty remains front of mind. "My teachers were truly my mentors," he recalls. "[Former Ceramics Program Chair] Mark Johnson really encouraged me, especially at times when I was afraid or needed a push to level up. Having a mentor who shows you how to stick with it in order to get through difficult stretches is so valuable. Once you make it through the slog, you get to the good part."

After graduating, Zilian spent several years honing his craft and teaching ceramics part-time. His initial business venture began with a ceramic bakeware line followed by a line of ceramic lighting, which he modeled and slip cast himself. The lighting designs

Photography by Claire Brassil



James Zilian '99
working in his
Woodstock, VT studio



garnered accolades and media attention, leading to an invitation to work with well-known designer Simon Pearce, who Zilian considers another significant mentor.

"Simon exemplified how to meld creative practice with a meaningful livelihood," he shares. "My parents were supportive, but they didn't have an arts background and could not always relate to what I was doing. It was through mentors like Mark and Simon that I gained practical insights and direction."

After several years working with Pearce and moonlighting making prototypes for what would become Farmhouse Pottery, Zilian decided to strike out on his own once again. "Farmhouse is my third rodeo at running a business. In earlier instances, I learned so much—through practice, and perhaps more importantly, through failure. There's a lot of trial and error. I had to be willing to adapt and bounce back, but every failure fueled my progress."

For Zilian, the third time at creating a business truly was the charm. Today Farmhouse Pottery is nationally known for its

signature line of handmade ceramic tableware, instantly recognizable by its unglazed footings and maker's mark of laurel leaves. The brand also features rustic artisanal home goods made by craftspeople from New England and beyond. At Farmhouse's flagship store in Woodstock, Vermont, abundant tables and shelves overflow with nested mixing bowls and generously sized mugs, cozy fisherman sweaters, and pine-scented candles. Beyond a wall of interior windows, studio potters perch on their seats, leaning over their wheels as they coax new soup bowls, honey pots, and cookie jars from hunks of raw clay.

"Our focus is on creating fewer, better pieces rather than scaling up production in a way that compromises our craftsmanship," Zilian explains. "It's a delicate balance between growing the business and staying true to our core principles."

Zilian's thriving business model also provides sustainable jobs for skilled craftspeople. All of the pottery is handmade in the Woodstock studio. Throughout each jump in

scale, he has prioritized supporting his team of talented makers who receive living wages and benefits—a rarity in the world of production pottery.

"We've expanded and incorporated more artisans into our process than I ever anticipated," reflects Zilian. "Even as we grow, we're dedicated to keeping our handmade techniques intact."

Over the years, a handful of Maine College of Art & Design alums have joined the ranks of Farmhouse potters, including studio potter Zane Tillinghast '16, who has worked at Farmhouse Pottery since 2019.

"Working at Farmhouse has fostered my growth as a potter and as a professional," Tillinghast notes. "I get to do what I love, plus the community of people here is exceptional and so supportive."

Zilian enjoys hiring MECA&D alums as both interns and long-term employees. "They embody a spirit of innovation and a hardiness that comes with hunkering down to make work during cold New England winters!"

Now that he's gained wisdom and

experience running a creative business, Zilian is keen to explore ways to mentor the next generation of artist-entrepreneurs. "Finding someone you respect and admire early on can be incredibly powerful," he emphasized. "Now



Farmhouse Pottery
studio potter, Zane
Tillinghast '16

that I'm a bit older, I can share my knowledge that comes with experience, and hopefully pass along some of what mentors have shared with me. Whether you're a fine artist, jeweler, or potter, having a mentor who understands your craft can provide invaluable guidance. This mentor doesn't

necessarily need to be in the same field, but should embody qualities and aesthetics that inspire you."

Zilian clearly revels in inspirational ideating, with his sights set on Farmhouse Pottery's next chapter. The studio and storefront, which once housed a Bible bindery, can accommodate ample growth and iteration (opening a café is one idea he's considering), and unlimited online opportunities continue to take shape. As Zilian reflects on the origins of his business and the vision for the future, it's clear that Farmhouse Pottery will continue to evolve. From his early art school days absorbing all that Maine College of Art & Design had to offer to running a successful and growing brand, Zilian's professional journey exemplifies the power of following one's creative instincts, seeking guidance from mentors, and the rewards that come from perseverance.



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@farmhousepottery
farmhousepottery.com



Artist Highlight
 Ryer Spann '26
Marry My Atomic Prince
 archival ink print
 20" x 28"
 2024
 @kingraat



Artist Highlight
 Francy Hinds '25
Your Head
 clay, aluminum foil, paper
 mache, plaster, acrylic,
 plastic, wire, on panel
 3' x 3'
 2024
 @rough.n3ck

A WATERSHED MOMENT



By Claire Brassil

Ceramic artists reflect on the profound impact and influence of creative community

In the fall of 2005, artist Patrick Coughlin arrived in Edgecomb, Maine, ready to tackle a monumental project: spending the winter creating 500 earthenware plates to be sold at Watershed Center for the Ceramic Arts' 2006 Salad Days summer celebration and fundraiser. He settled into the Center's rustic campus nestled alongside an organic farm, joined by a hardy group of seven other resident artists with plans and projects of their own. Together, they braved Maine's wintry bluster, living in shared rooms, cooking communal meals over a temperamental stove, and working in a cavernous building that once housed chickens and hosted contra dances.

When the snow receded, Patrick had completed hundreds of plates and formed lifelong friendships with his fellow artists. The experience shaped his professional trajectory, and Watershed became a second home to which he has returned throughout his career.

Now an Associate Professor and Ceramics Program Chair at Maine College of Art & Design, Coughlin has fostered a strong connection between Watershed and the College, creating abundant opportunities for his students to advance their work and grow their creative networks. This past spring, Coughlin's atmospheric kiln firing class culminated in a wood firing at Watershed. Students participated in every step of the process, from planning how to load their pieces and arrange the shelves for optimal stability to tending the fire as they fed logs into the belly of Watershed's catenary arch kiln. For 48 hours, students worked in shifts to raise the kiln's interior temperature to over 2200 degrees Fahrenheit. A week later, they

Left: Emmett Jorgensen '24, *Spotting Pots and Battered Pansies*, 2024



Associate Professor and Ceramics Program Chair, Patrick Coughlin, in the Ceramics studio at the College

Photo by Kari Herer

Photography by Claire Brassil

unbricked the kiln's doors with bated breath, revealing the results of their successful firing.

"Watershed provides access to types of kilns and firings beyond what we can offer on an urban campus," Coughlin shared. "This firing broadened students' perspectives and skills. Seeing what's possible at Watershed also helps them consider what their future studio environment they want to be in, and how they want to exist as artists."

Two recent Ceramics alums, Emmett Jorgensen '24 and Olivia Propeck '24, had the chance to connect with more than 100 artists



Taking Shape
Installation view
with work by Halle
Vishlitzky '25, Mickey
Cunningham '25, and
Hannah Trip '25

at Watershed this past summer. They secured coveted positions on Watershed's seasonal staff team, spending 19 weeks living and working at the Center's 54-acre campus while helping to run the summer residency program.

"The resident artists have been incredibly open," Propeck said. "It's made me reflect on how I want my ceramic work to evolve. Some blur the line between their professional and personal lives, others travel frequently, and some focus on connecting to the clay community. There are so many ways to approach it, and no single right way."

A long-standing collaboration between Watershed and the College enables one MECA&D student to participate in a residency session each summer with support from the Patti Sandberg '02 Memorial Award, which has been funded by Patti's mother, Kathleen McKennon. Through this partnership, a MECA&D student spends two weeks living and working in Watershed's close-knit community that fuels their passion for clay. Resident artists informally learn from one another throughout each session, both in the studio and over shared meals. They form close bonds that often lead to professional opportunities, from group shows and studio rentals to graduate school assistantships and job offers.

"When young artists build community at a place like Watershed, it sets them up for long-term success," Coughlin said. "By meeting so many artists, our students create connections that lead to meaningful opportunities that shape their futures."

Coughlin works magic behind the scenes to create abundant opportunities for students. When Watershed's gallery schedule was open this past spring, he enlisted Bessa Smith '25 and Roenick Goldman '25 to organize and curate *Taking Shape*, a group exhibition featuring work by MECA&D students and faculty.

"Ro and Bess really took the lead on every aspect of the exhibition process," he said. "With Watershed's residency and



Seraphina Helen
Gillman '25, *Doom &
Indulgence*
2024



Abigail Garthwaite '25,
Untitled
2024



Emmett Jorgensen '24
and Olivia Propeck '24
at Watershed Center
for the Ceramic Arts

2024 Salad Days fundraiser coinciding with *Taking Shape*'s closing reception, the show was seen by artists from all over the country, MFA program directors, collectors, and gallerists."

The MECA&D-Watershed pipeline runs both ways, with additional Ceramics faculty also sharing deep connections to Watershed, including 1998 Salad Days Artist and Assistant Professor Kari Radasch '97 and former Watershed Executive Director and Adjunct Instructor Tyler Gulden. This symbiotic

relationship is set to grow stronger as the College and Watershed deepen their partnership. Plans are underway to bring more nationally known guest artists to both Watershed and the College for talks, studio visits, and workshops, and to establish a MECA&D/Watershed studio internship.

"Studio assisting at Watershed during a guest artist workshop would be a highlight for our students," Coughlin said. "I'm excited for them to experience Watershed—both through our partnerships and on their own terms. Our students have earned this access through their MECA&D education. The programs and curriculum we offer prepare them to thrive at this internationally recognized residency, where they can succeed as creative individuals contributing to the broader ceramics community."

Nearly two decades after Coughlin's season of plate-making at Watershed, MECA&D Ceramics alum Emily Armstrong '15 arrived in Edgecomb in the fall of 2024 to begin her work as the 2025 Salad Days Artist. Although Watershed's facilities are now newer and shinier, the Center's ethos of celebrating creative practice and community remains

constant.

This shared commitment to fostering creativity and building community is a cornerstone of both the College and Watershed. At MECA&D, the emphasis on hands-on learning, collaboration, and mentorship mirrors the environment at Watershed, where artists come together to explore their craft in a supportive and communal setting. Both institutions value the importance of creating spaces where artists can push boundaries, share knowledge, and form lasting connections. As the partnership strengthens, the College and Watershed will undoubtedly enrich the experiences of students and professional artists alike, reinforcing a shared vision of artistic growth and creative community.

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@watershedceramics
watershedceramics.org



cerata virens '25,
Alien (eternal internal parabola) (scream impossible in this emptiness) (confusion of raw desperation's beauty) (futility of birthing an absence) (distance before them unbreachable)
2024



Julie Cunningham '00,
Cream and Sugar Set with Stand
2024



Olivia Propeck '24,
Laundry room
2024



Photo by Kari Herer

"When young artists build community at a place like Watershed, it sets them up for long-term success. By meeting so many artists, our students create connections that lead to meaningful opportunities that shape their futures."



Artist Highlight
Noah Demeis '25
The Cathedral of Junk
colored inks on bristol
42 x 69"
2024
[@noahdemeis_art](#)

angels, birth,
rainbows, boats,
and more...

By Jenna Crowder '09

A glimpse into the mind of Dylan Hausthor '15

The year 2024 was remarkable for photographer Dylan Hausthor '15. In April, Hausthor was named a 2024 Guggenheim Fellow, an award that recognizes both past creative achievements as well as future promise. They then spent the summer at the prestigious artist residency, Skowhegan School of Painting & Sculpture, and are included in the Portland Museum of Art exhibition, *As We Are*, which brings together the work of 14 emerging artists with ties to Maine, and runs through April 27, 2025. In November, Hausthor's debut monograph, *what the rain will bring*, was published by TBW Books with a release at the annual Paris Photo Fair.

The book, which Hausthor had worked on for years, drips with mysticism, ritual, and the hauntings of natural and unnatural worlds. Questions of how we create stories abound in images that conjure ectoplasm and cults, plagues, and rituals. The photographs play with time: as contemporary photographs, they feel as if they could be pulled from archives or that they document a place

out of time. *what the rain will bring* marks time for Hausthor, too, as what they call a “pretty firm door-slam on a chapter that I have a lot of gratitude for.” It's a chapter that, with the accolades of a Guggenheim, a Skowhegan residency, and a museum show, could be characterized by exploration and dedicated practice to photography and research.

This year, Hausthor said, has “been such a whirlwind, I feel like my eyelids have been thrown open this year. Things that once made me comfortable are feeling uneasy and ideas that once seemed opaque have begun to feel accessible.” I asked them about their time at Skowhegan, a residency with a reputation for being so utterly transformative it verges on cliché. But it turns out it's true. “Skowhegan was particularly mind-altering,” said Hausthor. “I went to that program with a practice that felt firm, but the preciousness of that became clear to me after just a few weeks in that environment. It led me to a surprising reintegration of my art practice and my daily life. I didn't realize how those





two things had started parting in the last few years.”

On the cusp of a new chapter, how is this reintegration manifesting? “I’m still unsure exactly how what felt like a pretty tectonic shift is affecting what sort of work I need to put out into the world,” they said. But they are working on a new book, about “a group of people that have started their own post-Judeo Christian commune. They worship angels and drink Monster Energy.”

So much of Hausthor’s work reflects their thinking around the way we tell stories which in turn create culture. They find compelling ways of blurring lines between fact and fiction, and in a world where this approach could be wielded for more nefarious purposes—the spread of deliberate misinformation, the rise of the deepfake, for example—the way Hausthor uses hybrid, parafictional, and/or mystical processes points us instead toward deeper cultural truths that merit further investigation.

When asked about this, they recounted hours spent this summer “walking and foraging in the central Maine woods and reading about different cultural uses of farming narratives and survival plant identification.” On one hand, Hausthor “was learning so much, but would then return home, fill up my truck with oil, read about a genocide on my phone, drink beer, talk about art with my new friends and sit with my forest bounty. It

felt like two entirely separated interactions with the landscape, one of consumption and one of understanding, but neither of cultivation.” Elaborating on this idea, they spoke to a greater need for reciprocity, of being. They realized that their “knowledge of every edible leaf, medicinal mushroom, and root tea started feeling just as greedy and selfish as the Miller High Life and gasoline. I still wonder why we feel that it is important to know the names of flowers to fully reckon with their wonder.”

Hausthor pushed back gently on even the binary of fact and fiction. “I don’t believe in a truthful reality, subjective or objective. I barely even believe in experiential truth.” They explained that their interest in lens-based mediums stems from the lens’ “inherent refusal to deal exclusively with reality.”



And when we assume that the lens, perhaps like a gun, works of its own agency, we’re fundamentally misunderstanding the nature of the machine. “The horror that people have conjured in the history of the world in the name of objective truth scares me more than anything. My forced and unwilling compliance in the genocides that are happening right now under the guise of preserving and stealing senses of sovereignty that shouldn’t exist doesn’t feel that dissimilar to the danger that I think cameras are able to wield.”

I think Hausthor is speaking to the agency of the artist and the accountability

they have to their work. They share with me an anecdote: “There is this woman I know who lives a few hours north. She owns some goats and exclusively feeds them individual

my studio, why my dog sometimes smiles, the fact that the sun can never see the shadows it casts, videos recorded onto audio cassettes, what my friends who I haven’t seen



green leaves, mostly oak. I was photographing her recently, and over a glass of some of the best goat milk I’ve ever had, she described to me a daydream of a world in which the only thing that people had full faith in was their own imagination. That’s the type of mystic and hybrid truth that I look for in my work.”

A question I love to ask artists and students is about what’s inspiring them. I always want to know what kinds of questions are haunting them or won’t leave them alone? Hausthor, now, is thinking about “angels, birth, rainbows, boats, ticks, aged cheese, why some animals don’t like swimming, pop country hits, locked differentials, mud, sauerkraut, what happens inside of eggs, clouds, what spiders do under the snow, brooms made with straw, nutritional yeast, the monarch caterpillar I’m trying to save in

for a while are up to, why hiding things feels good, why showing things feels good, why finding things feels good, why losing things feels good, and apples.” In other words, the mundane and the sublime, the nuances that make up the material of our lives.

When I asked Hausthor how people might follow their work, I smiled at their answer: “Send me a letter!” they said. “I’ll answer.” A writing prompt. A connection and a request for manifestation sent through time and space. Letter writing, too, can be a mystical practice.



534 Congress Street,
Suite 314, Portland, Maine,
04101

Artist Spotlight:
Jakob Flores Figueroa '26
Jaguar Warrior
Photoshop
2023
@splitznico



Collaborative Magic

By Jenna Crowder '09

Makena Schwab '24 on the cooperative practice of animation

The characters in recent alum Makena Schwab's '24 stop-motion animated films are yearning, curious, and adventurous souls—much like Schwab herself. In *Trek* (2023), two strangers wandering through the forest exchange simple, yet beautiful, acts of kindness. Phoebe, the intrepid butterfly hunter who is the protagonist in *BullSpider* (2024), finds herself lured into a spider's labyrinth to wondrous and hilariously macabre ends. Both *Trek* and *BullSpider* are collaborative endeavors in stop-motion animation—primarily with Sophie Erickson '24 and Charlotte Hardy '24, Makena's partners in the indie animation collective Story Sparrow—and they shine with precision and heart.

JC: Makena, you just graduated! How are you feeling, and how has the transition to being an alumni been so far?

MS: I'm feeling great! When I received my BFA in Animation & Game Art in 2024, I immediately applied for Coven of the Arts, which is an intensive animation background design course taught by the artist M. Cody Wiley who's done a lot of work in television. It was an amazing class and a privilege to participate—I highly recommend it to any aspiring background artists out there who may be reading this! Part of my mindset leaving college has been to find ways to keep enriching my growth as an artist. I'm the kind of person who loves going from project to project while steadily working on my art, so I'm very happy I've been able to find ways to do that so far.

JC: What are you working on artistically these days?



Photo by Karl Herer



Story Sparrow
frame from *Trek*
short film
2023

MS: I've been spending time wrapping up a variety of projects from my

senior year. The biggest one is *Pine: A Story of Loss*, created and developed by Tom Booth and Najati Imam from Made Up Games, an indie games studio in Brooklyn, New York. *Pine* follows the story and struggle of a woodworker after losing his wife. It's a 2D visual narrative single-serving game focused on telling a beautiful, emotional tale. I'm honored that I got to work with such a wonderful team on this project. *Pine* launched in December 2024 and is available to play on Steam, Switch, iOS, and Android.

Networking has also been a really big part of my post-grad life. Talking with so many unique individuals in all aspects of the animation field has brought me to a whole new level of excitement for what we do, and it's definitely stirred the artistic juices. So many new ideas for personal projects have erupted from these conversations, and I'm looking forward to spending time developing and exploring them!

"Animation is the closest thing we have to magic."

JC: Animation is often a collaborative pursuit. Is that something you're naturally drawn toward? And what have you learned through

the process of collaboration, whether artistically, socially, and/or personally?

MS: I love to tell people that I think of the animation industry as this big powerful machine. A machine like this needs every smaller cog and gear to function properly, and I've spent these last four years discovering just how truly rewarding it is to have a position within it. Being a small part of something so much bigger than myself is the most fulfilling course I could take in my life.

I believe collaboration is key to not only making the animated shows and movies we all love but to life. I want to be constantly learning and growing alongside others who also want to share something special with the world. To me, animation is the closest thing we have to magic: we're creating worlds, developing relatable characters, and conveying



personal or even universal messages through this storytelling medium. I'm living proof of how it can change the course of a person's life. I loved how animation could make me feel—so much so that I decided I didn't want to do anything else with my life. Creating magic is a task for an army of artists, and by joining our collaborative experiences and skills we can create things that will stick with people forever. Like, how cool is that!?

On the topic of collaboration: during my time at Maine College of Art & Design working alongside my partners in Story Sparrow on projects such as *Trek*, *BullSpider*,



Story Sparrow
frame from *BullSpider*,
short film
2024

and more was one of the best experiences of my years at the College. Each of these projects allowed us to work with so many other talented artists from all different backgrounds and majors—we were able to do things we couldn't have done by ourselves. So thank you to everyone who has ever been a part of that experience; we wouldn't have been able to bring our visions to life without you!

JC: You've mentioned being inspired to take on new projects. Can you tell us about your plans?

MS: Getting to work with Made Up Games on *Pine* was such a fun and positive time—I would love to work with them again! I love working freelance as a generalist on a variety of projects, but my ultimate goal would be to work in the TV animation industry as a background designer/painter. To further that goal, I attended Lightbox Expo in Pasadena to net-

work with professionals in the field. I've also started working at a local Maine animation studio called Puckerbrush Animation, run by Hanji Chang, Adjunct Instructor in the Animation & Game Art program.

Alongside that, I have the honor of assisting Lauren Duda during her Background Design class at MECA&D. Lauren is an amazing Adjunct Instructor in the Animation & Game Art program who's in the field I'd like to go into—I really got into background design when she started teaching at MECA&D, and I'm incredibly excited to be able to help others learn this craft as well!

&
@graviteeowl_studios
@storysparrowcollab
makenaschwab.com



Artist Spotlight:
Molly Lawrence '26
Boston Fellow Awards
Branding System
digital
2024
@factoryhens

Photography by Sophia Li



Economics, the American Dream, Landscapes, and Still Life

By Leah Brooks

Jaden Kyung-Moon Bauch '25 on art and finance

Jaden Kyung-Moon Bauch '25 is a senior Painting major at Maine College of Art & Design. Her work predominantly explores themes of economics, markets, and the American dream, expressed through landscape and still life.

In addition to her artistic pursuits, Bauch is passionate about financial planning, particularly for artists and creative individuals. She has passed the Series 65 exam, which qualifies individuals to promote investor and general financial advice to clients, and is currently employed in the finance industry. Bauch is working to become a Certified Financial Planner (CFP) to provide specialized financial guidance to artists, helping them achieve their financial goals and sustain their creative practices.

Her dual expertise in finance and art informs her unique approach to painting, blending her understanding of financial systems with her artistic practice. Bauch's

ultimate goal is to bridge the gap between creative fields and financial empowerment.

Bauch has been recognized through several accolades, including the Elizabeth Greenshields Foundation Grant, the Albert K Murray Fine Arts Educational Grant, and the Anna Orbeton Endowed Scholarship.

LB: What sparked your interest in painting, and what influenced your decision to study at Maine College of Art & Design?

JB: From an early age, I've always been interested in drawing and painting. I took art classes and did arts and crafts as many children do, but I never felt my life would be dedicated to art in the way it is now. My decision to attend Maine College of Art & Design



Photography Courtesy of Jaden Kyung-Moon Bauch '25



Artful Investments:
Supporting the
Artist of Promise
Scholarship Fund
installation view
in the Front Lobby
Window at Maine
College of Art &
Design, 2024

was largely influenced by a recommendation from my high school art teacher. Initially, I pursued a major in Illustration, but I quickly found myself drawn to the hands-on, immersive experience of painting, which felt like a more natural fit for my creative expression.

LB: Who or what would you cite as your biggest influences?

JB: I believe in the saying, “You are the combination of the five people you spend the most time with,” and this rings true for me. My peers constantly inspire me with their creativity and dedication. I’m also deeply influenced by young women who are passionate about entrepreneurship and personal growth, such as Simiran Kaur, Tam Kaur, and Hannah Cole. Additionally, the educators who have guided me—Painting Program Chair, Philip Brou and Marta Haydym-Silver, CFP®—have made a significant impact, generously offering their time and expertise to support my development.

LB: How does your background as a South Korean immigrant influence your perspective on the American Dream? How is this reflected in your paintings?

JB: In the past, my identity as a South Korean immigrant was central to my artistic practice, often reflecting on those experiences as I aspired to become a business owner. However, with my current focus on empowering artists to take control of their financial future, I think about the American Dream in relation to financial freedom. The idea that everyone, including artists, can attain their own version of financial success.

LB: How has receiving a grant from the Elizabeth Greenshields Foundation impacted your practice?



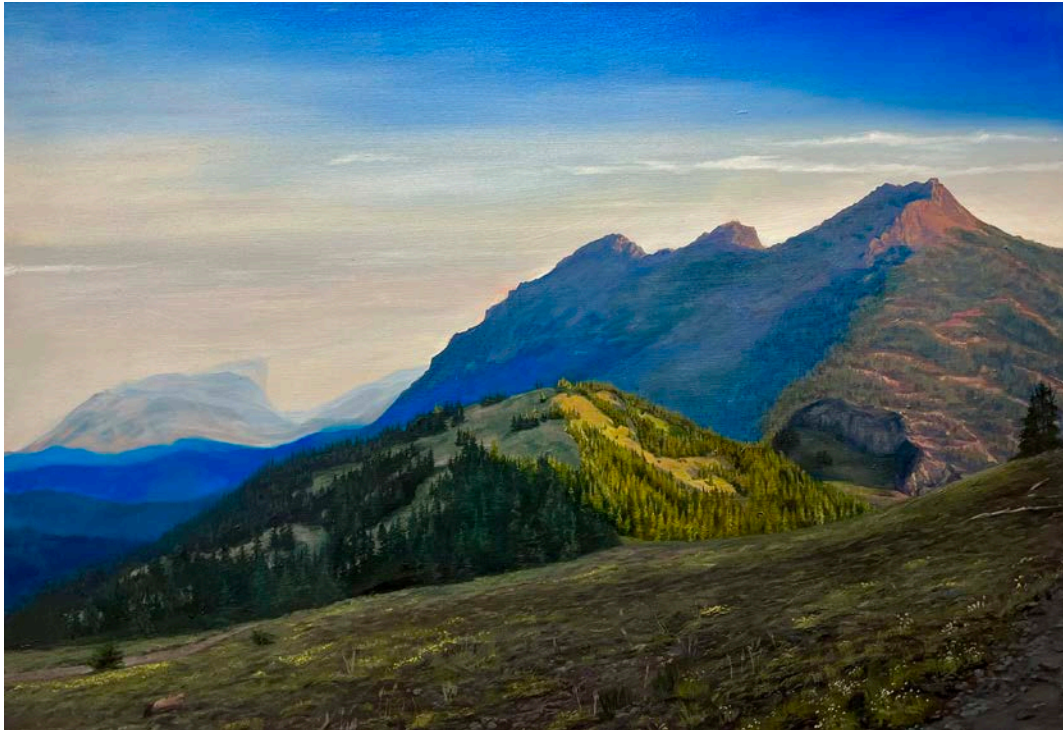
Jaden Kyung-Moon
Bauch '25
Broad Market
ETFs 2023
oil on Canvas
20" x 28"
2024

JB: Receiving the Elizabeth Greenshields Foundation Grant has had a profound impact on my artistic journey.

The grant has significantly eased the financial burden of my education, allowing me to fully immerse myself in my studio practice without the constant worry of tuition costs. It has given me the freedom to explore my artistic vision with greater depth and creativity, while also enabling me to pursue other financial goals, such as investing in better materials and planning for my future as a professional artist.

LB: In what ways do your dual pursuits in art and finance complement each other, and how do you envision integrating these fields in your future career?

JB: I want my work as both an artist and a financial professional to challenge the outdated notion of the “starving artist” and encourage a reimagining of the artist’s role—not as an outsider to the financial system, but as someone empowered to navigate it with



Jaden Kyung-Moon
Bauch '25
*Green Stocks and
ETFs 2019-2024*
oil on Canvas
36" x 50"
2024

confidence. I envision a future where artists are not only creators but also financially empowered individuals who thrive

in both their artistic and financial lives. By bridging the gap between art and finance, we can help redefine success for creatives and support each other in achieving both our creative and financial goals.

My long-term vision is to establish a financial services firm dedicated to serving artists and creative professionals. Initially, my focus was solely on financial planning, but as I've grown in my studies, I've come to understand that true financial well-being encompasses much more. I aim to offer services like business planning, tax assistance, and other essential financial tools to help artists achieve holistic success.

LB: As you work towards finishing your education at Maine College of Art & Design and becoming a Certified Financial Planner, what advice would you give to other aspiring artists and creatives in terms of financial planning?

JB: When financial professionals offer bite-sized advice, it often focuses on practical steps like "pay yourself first," "open a Roth IRA," or "use a high-yield savings account." While these are important, I believe what's often overlooked is mindset, which I see as the foundation of the personal finance pyramid. So, if I were to offer advice to aspiring artists and creatives, my first tip would be to stop doubting yourself. Self-belief is crucial. Second, invest in yourself more than the average person. If you're constantly thinking that no one will buy your art or that you're

bad with money, you'll unconsciously create those outcomes. Think differently, invest in your growth, and have confidence in your abilities.

I hope that my initiatives as an artist and a financial professional spark curiosity and inspire a deeper understanding of how these systems can coexist, offering a new and more hopeful discussion about money in creative fields.

LB: How has Maine College of Art & Design prepared you for entering the professional world as an artist?

JB: Maine College of Art & Design has encouraged me to take initiative and seek out resources on my own, which I believe is key to success as a creative professional. I've realized that much of what drives success—whether through internships, independent studies, networking, or meeting with working artists—goes beyond the classroom and isn't required for graduation, but often serves as a catalyst for professional growth. Simply attending classes, completing assignments, and following the typical college routine wouldn't have led me to where I am today. It's the extra effort, the willingness to pursue opportunities, and the proactive mindset that have made all the difference in preparing me for the professional world.

LB: Can you talk about your recent project, Artful Investments: Supporting the Artist of Promise Scholarship Fund? What inspired you and how is it going?

JB: While I enjoy exploring the intersection of finance and art conceptually in my studio practice, I wanted to create something more practical and impactful—something that could make a real-world difference. That's

what inspired Artful Investments: Supporting the Artist of Promise Scholarship Fund, an initiative that bridges art and financial empowerment. The project features over 500 original 4" x 6" watercolor paintings, each priced at \$10, with all proceeds going to the Artist of Promise Scholarship Fund at the College.



Jaden Kyung-Moon
Bauch '25
*Oil and Gas Stocks
2019-2024*
oil on Canvas
20" x 28"
2024

I drew inspiration from Theaster Gates's project, where he created marble bank bonds, sold them for \$5,000 each, raised a million dollars, and used the funds to transform an art space. My goal with Artful Investments is to make a similar, albeit smaller, impact within my community. So far, the project has been incredibly successful. I've learned so much—not just as an artist, but as a future financial planner working with creatives. It's opened up countless opportunities and valuable connections, giving me insights into both the art and finance worlds that will shape my future career.

&

@moonjadenart
moonjadenart.com

Artist Spotlight:
Autumn Noel '25
Orange World
mixed media
2024
@autumnotic

Pushing the boundaries of stop motion animation, Noel explores immersive installation, transforming traditionally 2D experiences into 4D experiences.



ARTISTS AT WORK

49 Oak

As a flexible, experimental space, 49 Oak presents student work and hosts activities tied to classroom projects, from pop-up shops to exhibitions. Administered by Artists at Work with faculty support, students learn how to curate, install, promote, document, sell, and staff exhibitions. During summer months, programming focuses on work created by the College's alumni network.



Photo by Annabelle Collette '22

49 Oak during the opening reception of Co-Lab

Exhibitions at 49 Oak in 2024

Holiday Design Store featured handmade ceramics, including mugs, ornaments, dinnerware, and more for sale. All products were designed by students in Clay to Commerce, a ceramics class that dives deep into the methods and practices of ceramic artists who are looking to bring their products to market.

Co-Lab, a two-part installation by Junior Seminar students showcased the collaborations between students in the fine arts and crafts departments.

Familiar Faces, an exhibition by Jo Ophardt '25 and Wills Phillips '25, early career artists who spent the past three years learning and developing work alongside one another. Often drawing from similar sources of music, experience, hopes, and embodiment, their work expresses the complexities of life in modern America through distinct expressions in paint and mixed media. Jo Ophardt paints from pop culture to reflect the dissonance between everyday life and transcendent experiences while Wills Phillips uses a broad array of natural and artificial materials, often scavenged, to create awkward and precarious objects and bodies that invite the viewer in.

R&R's Super Shopping Center, a pop-up shop run by Rachel Gloria Adams '14 and Ryan Adams, along with their family members.

Merch Table, a pop-up sale presented by students enrolled in a class with the same name. This multi-media exhibition and sale was the culmination of a Printmaking elective designed and taught by Professor Adriane Herman. *Merch Table* featured fine art prints, t-shirts, hats, home decor items, jewelry, stickers, keychains, patches, and more created by BFA students.

House of Pansies, an exhibition of ceramic work by seniors Olivia Propeck '24 and Emmett Jorgensen '24. In this exhibition, the artists delved into the nuanced exploration of modern Queerness through the versatile medium of clay.

Valentines' Pop-up, organized by the Illustration department, featured work by students and alumni and offered members of the public a chance to buy unique artwork directly from the artists themselves.



Photos by Karl Herer

Holiday Design Store at 49 Oak



Photo by Annabelle Collette '22

Opening Reception for House of Pansies

Residencies

More information
about Grants &
Residencies:



Kreh Mellick '05
Sun + Hare
gouache and
cut paper,
12" x 15"
2020

Pace House Residency In 2007, American artist Stephen Pace (1918–2010) bequeathed his summer home in Stonington, Maine for use by Maine College of Art & Design as a residency and gallery, to ensure its continued use as an artistic haven. After spending the majority of 2023 completing much needed renovations, the College was delighted to welcome three alumni residents in 2024. Residents included Peter Wallis '06, Dana Bell MFA '06, and Kreh Mellick '05, each of whom received the Mid-Career Artist stipend of \$1,000 as a recognition of excellence in their field.

Jenny Family Residency In 2008, Barbara Rita Jenny MFA '02 and her family donated the use of her family's summer home in New Edinburgh, Nova Scotia with the intention of creating a unique artist residency program that is inclusive of artist's partners and families. In 2024 residents included Kristina Buckley '15, Montana vanDujin '23, Nick Vyssotsky MFA '21, and Justine Lasdin MAT '19 (with Tamara Jones and Liz Hoag).

Monson Arts is an artists' residency and art center in Monson, Maine featuring month-long residencies throughout the year, shorter intensive workshops, and educational partnerships with local secondary schools. One alumni applicant is selected through a juried process to attend the Monson Arts Residency for two or four weeks and is awarded a stipend. The resident in 2024 was Brendan Shea '18.

MASS MoCA fellowships are offered annually to BIPOC alumni, one for an MFA alum and for a BFA alum. The fellowships fund all residency fees for alumni that have been accepted into the Mass MoCA artist residency program for up to two weeks in residence. Anoushe Shojae-Chaghorvand MFA '19 was selected as this year's recipient of the MFA fellowship.

Grants & Fellowships

Epic Grants from Canopy Portland Waterfront support Maine College of Art & Design alumni who make a positive impact on Portland through their work. The Epic Grant of \$2,500 supports creative activities that contribute to the culture of the city. This year's winner was Hope Drenning '24, who activated the hotel with a hand painted mural.

The Above and Beyond Grant helps currently enrolled BFA, MFA, and MAT students access structured opportunities and experiences that take them above and beyond our classrooms and facilities. Students learn basic grant writing skills to fund activities such as conferences, workshops, or professional events. Awardees this past year included Wills Phillips '25 for glassblowing classes, Ryan Swedenborg MFA '25 to take a sculpture class at Penland, and Kaylee Nadeau '25 to take wood classes at Anderson Ranch.



Photo by Annabelle Collette '22

Belvedere Fund for professional development in the field of crafts at Maine College of Art & Design was established in 2008 in memory of Deborah Pulliam of Castine, Maine, and is available to all alumni who received a BFA degree from the College within the last 10 years. In 2024 five alumni were given grants. The alumni included Naomi Russo '19, Liz Long '14, MAT '17, Katie Rose Champlin '21, Allie Stack '17, and Bryan Hansen '18.

Hope Drenning '24
painting a mural in
Canopy by Hilton
Portland Waterfront

The Nature Conservancy of Maine Fellowships The College partners with the Nature Conservancy of Maine on two fellowships for recent alumni.

The Salt Fellowship provides a recent graduate with a paid, year-long documentary storytelling fellowship. The fellow travels throughout the state to tell the stories of the conservation efforts of the organization, using photography, writing, and video.

The Illustration Fellowship provides a recent graduate from the Illustration program with a summer-long assignment to create original drawings for use in the organization's annual report. This year's fellow was Bella David '24.

The Pickwick Fellowship provides a recent graduate with a year of studio access at Pickwick Independent Press, operated by alum Pilar Nadal, MFA '13. In exchange, the fellow assists the College's Marketing department with a customized print project.



Photos by Kari Herer

Portfolio Day

Portfolio Day is an ongoing annual collaboration between Maine College of Art & Design's Artists at Work program, American Institute of Graphic Arts Maine, and Maine Ad + Design. The event offers students the chance to share their portfolios with a broad spectrum of professionals ranging from creative directors, to independent artists, local publishers and in-house teams.



As We Are
installation view
with work by Oscar
Chacon MFA '20 and
Elana Adler, Adjunct
Instructor & Studio
Technician for Textile
& Fashion Design



As We Are
Rachel Gloria Adams '15
Quilted fabric, 60" x 80"
© 2015 Rachel Gloria Adams



Photo by Kari Herer

As We Are
installation view
with work by Rachel
Gloria Adams '15,
Maya Tihtiyas
Attean '23 (member
of the Penobscot
Nation), Meg Hahn '17,
Tessa Greene O'Brien
MFA '16, and Jay Stern

ALUMNI NOTES

Group Exhibitions



Ashley Page '20
Janus (From the
Carrier Bag Series)
single use plastic
containers, ash,
plaster, gauze, and
steel wire
2022

On view through April 2025 at the Portland Museum of Art, *As We Are* is an exhibition featuring work by BFA and MFA alumni: Rachel Gloria Adams '15; Maya Tihtiyas Attean '23 (member of the Penobscot Nation); Oscar Chacon MFA '20; James Parker Foley MFA '20; Meg Hahn '17; Dylan Hausthor '15, Adjunct Assistant Professor of Photography; Tessa Greene O'Brien MFA '16; Brian Smith MFA '20; and Anna Valenti MFA '20.

Bronwen O'Wrill '19, Ashley Page '20, Veronica Perez MFA '16, Celeste Roberge '79, and Naomi David Russo '19 were featured in the exhibition *Life Forms Gather*, on display from November 23, 2024, to January 11, 2025, at Speedwell Contemporary in Portland, ME.

Bachelor of Fine Arts

ANIMATION & GAME ART

Adam deGrandis '05 released a game, *Ash & Adam's GOBSMACKED*, on Steam and on Itch.io. Devin Harrington '16 and Briana Kenney '18 assisted.

Tyler Croteau '21 animated a sequel to his thesis project, titled *Dreamscape Renaissance*, which was accepted into eight film festivals, in which it was a finalist in one category and a nominee in two others.

Rita Brederson '24 recently started freelance work for Noio Games for their game *Garbage Country*. Rita joined the team to help create 3D pixel art assets for the game's environment.

Phoenix Stroh '24 has started freelance work with Draknek & Friends on a currently private game project to explore the Godot game engine. Phoenix joined the team as a technical artist, making 3D models, vfx, and shaders, implementing assets into the game, doing some light scripting for visuals, and acting as a consultant for the project.



Sydney Berkeley '22
Hob and the Miaousprits
low fire clay, underglaze,
wool roving, pom pom
9" x 11" x 17.75"
2022

Rita Brederson '24, Deana Chefchis '25, Violet Dykhoff '24, Julia Moses '25, Phoenix Stroh '24, and Miles Walker '24 published a collaborative game, *You Must Mop* on Steam. The game was officially released on October 11, 2024.

CERAMICS

Adam Chau '10 curated a group exhibition at Arts Westchester in White Plains, NY, titled *Crossing Borders*, featuring the work of Edwige Charlot '10.

Emily Armstrong '15 was selected to be the 2025 Salad Days Artist-in-Residence at Watershed Center for the Ceramic Arts in Newcastle, ME.

Dominique Ostuni '17 had a solo exhibition, *I've Been Thinking About What You Said*, at Dowling Walsh in Rockland, ME.

Sydney Berkeley '22 was featured in a two-person exhibition titled *A Place of Whim and Wonder* at Overture Center for the Arts in Madison, WI.

GRAPHIC DESIGN

Kiana Thayer '20 had a solo exhibition at 82 Parris titled *Rolling Coal* in Portland, ME.

ILLUSTRATION

Sophie Cangelosi '16 was featured in *Picnic in the Garden* at Page Gallery in Camden, ME.

Kate Gardiner '20 illustrated a new children's book written by Randall de Sève titled *Sometimes We Fall*.

METALSMITHING & JEWELRY

Heidi Lowe '99 was profiled in *CanvasRebel Magazine*. She owns and operates the Heidi Lowe Gallery, where she teaches, makes jewelry, and showcases works by herself and other artists.

Addison de Lisle '11 is one of the 2025 Maine Artist Fellowship Award recipients, receiving a \$5,000 unrestricted award from the Maine Arts Commission in recognition of his exceptional contributions to his craft. He also received a Belvedere Grant from Maine College of Art & Design in 2019.

PAINTING

William Manning '58 had a solo exhibition at Cove Street Arts titled *Life Line* in Portland, ME.

Anne Ireland '94 was featured in *Still Moments*, a two-person exhibition with Liz Hoag at Moss Galleries in Portland, ME.

Maya Kuvaja '97 was selected to have her artwork featured on the 2024 Common Ground Country Fair poster for an annual event hosted by the Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association in Unity, ME.

Lisa Dombek '98 had a solo exhibition at the Press Hotel in Portland, ME, titled *Shift + Flow*.

Mai Snow '13 had their first, self-titled solo exhibition in Texas at Northern-Southern and co-created Shed~Shows, a DIY art garage, both in Austin.

Hannah Parrett '17 had a solo show, *Wooden Glove*, in the main space of Ortega Y Gasset Projects in NYC and has an upcoming solo exhibition, *(grass crunching)*, at Weston Art Gallery in Cincinnati, OH.

Daniela Flint '18 was invited by the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, TX, to give a lecture related to the museum's "Drawing from the Collection" series.

olivier '19, had a solo show, *Bibliographical, nonsense #3: Paratextual Messages of the (UF)Os*, at Comfort Station, Chicago; they have also had work featured in *Recognize That Your Name is Already On Every Place That You Put Your Feet* at Patient Info (Chicago); and *State Fair* at Pop Gun Art Gallery and Weatherproof Art Gallery (NYC). They have also delivered performative lectures *The Unreliable Narrator: I prefer not to be named* at the Chinese American Museum of Chicago; and *Would a Melancholic Time Traveler Time Travel?: A Study on Nostalgia and Melancholy Differences* at Neighborhood Spaces in Portland, ME.

Sidney Sanchez '22 was selected for inclusion in the exhibition *Flowers from Yesterday* at Fortunehouse Art Center in Chicago.

Portland Properties LLC commissioned Hope Drenning '23 to complete a mural in downtown Portland, ME, titled *Life in the Big City*.

Fran Woolson '25 and Jaden Kyung-Moon Bauch '25 were awarded Elizabeth Greenshields Foundation Grants.

PHOTOGRAPHY

Jessica Trudeau '03 received a Victor Thomas Jacoby Award of \$10,000 from the Humboldt Area Foundation and Wild Rivers Community Foundation (HAF+WRCF).

Pia Paulina Guilmoth '15 was announced as one of the 2024 Creator Labs Photo Fund recipients, presented by Aperture and Google's Creator Labs.

Dylan Hausthor '15 was awarded a 2024 Guggenheim Fellowship and attended Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in the summer of 2024.

PRINTMAKING

Martha Miller '06 presented a retrospective of her work at The University of Maine Farmington Art Gallery.



Sophie Cangelosi '16
Quarry Diver
acrylic on panel
48" x 48"



Dominique Ostuni '17
XL Chandelier
cone five porcelain,
twenty-two karat gold
luster, underglaze,
ceramic glaze, pine
wood, brass plated
hooks, stainless steel
coated chain, zinc
clips
118" x 36"
2024



Jess Jeffries '15
Remembrance
mixed media on
canvas, maple
float frame
16" x 20"
2024

Edwige Charlot '10 was featured in an exhibition titled *Homeisland, Home is Land* with Noël Puélló at the AS220 Project Space in Providence, RI.

Rachel Gloria Adams '15 had a solo exhibition at Dowling Walsh in Rockland, ME, titled *Tidal Bloom*.

Jess Jeffries '15 had work featured in *Garden Party* at Dryden Gallery in North Providence, RI.

Arikah Lynne '22 completed the Tamarind Printer Training Program at the Tamarind Institute in Albuquerque, NM, and joined the professional workshop team as an apprentice to the Tamarind Master Printer.

SCULPTURE

Shannon Rose Riley '95 released a publication as part of Routledge's new series, *Studies in Theatre, Ecology, and Performance*, entitled *Geographies of Us: Ecosomatic Essays and Practice Pages*.

Sculptor and furniture designer **Vivian Beer '00**, known for her large-scale public installations like *Woven Together* in Portsmouth, NH, was featured on Radio Maine with Dr. Lisa Belisle.

Master of Arts in Teaching

Coreysha Stone MAT '18 received the Maine Art Education Association's Art Teacher of the Year Award, Middle School Level.

Sophie Olmsted MAT '20 taught a Junior Seminar: Fine Art Topics session at Maine College of Art & Design this fall.

Maine Art Education Association recognized **Philippa Adam MAT '21** with the 2024 New to the Profession Art Educator of the Year award.

Rachel Carswell MAT '23 was honored as the 2023 Preservice Art Educator of the Year at the Maine Art Education Association's Spring Conference at the University of Maine.

Master of Fine Arts

Joanne Steinhardt MFA '02 had an exhibition, *Endless Second Chances*, at El Barrio's ArtSpace in New York City.

Barak Olins MFA '04 won the James Beard Award for Outstanding Bakery for his Portland, ME-based eatery, ZUbakery.

Kate Holcomb Hale MFA '07 had a solo exhibition, *lean, Stand, collapse*, at the Danforth Art Museum in Framingham, MA.

Michel Droge MFA '10 participated in an untitled group exhibition with the Schmidt Ocean Institute in partnership with *Nautilus* magazine, UNESCO, and the Phillip and Patricia Frost Museum of Science at Art Basel, Miami Beach, FL.

Jose Rodriguez, Jr. MFA '17 had a solo exhibition, *Art in the Age of Fatalism*, at Chocolate Church Arts in Bath, ME.

Evelyn Wong MFA '19 was awarded a mini grant from Maine Humanities Council for her Lunar New Year 2024 project that took place in Waterville, ME.

Will Jacks MFA '20, Assistant Professor of Art & Design at Troy University, received a fellowship and a \$5,000 grant from the Alabama State Council on the Arts.

Brian Smith MFA '20 was awarded a Lunder Institute Fellowship through Colby College in Waterville, ME.

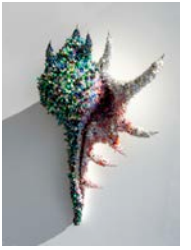
Adam Powers MFA '21 had a solo exhibition, *On Peninsula*, at the Maine Jewish Museum in Portland, ME.

Deborah Santoro MFA '21 had work selected as Best in Show for the exhibition *Pulp* in *Juniper Rag's* April edition.

Johab Silva MFA '22 had a solo exhibition, *Tales of the New World*, at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Arlington, VA.

Grace Hager '15, MFA '23 was selected for a residency and exhibition at Wassaic Project in NY, and a residency at the Vermont Studio Center in Johnson, VT. They received Best in Show at an exhibition at Pamplémousse Gallery in Richmond, VA, and are the 2024/25 Ceramic Alumni Exchange-Resident at Maine College of Art & Design. They also received a project grant from The Puffin Foundation for upcoming work in late 2024 and 2025.

Drew Eastwood MFA '24 and Alyssa Schadhauser opened Easthaus, an artist-run contemporary apartment art gallery in Portland, ME. The inaugural exhibition, *Seeing Through a Window*, included the work of Jenna Girolamo MFA '25.



Brian Smith MFA '20
Gay Bar
vintage glass, plastic,
and stone beads,
chatons, gemstones,
foam, adhesive,
pigment
2.5" x 2" x 10"
2024

Salt Institute of Documentary Studies

Natalie Gregory, Salt '20, founded Audio Monuments, a company that makes audio keepsakes for families.

Hannah Aliza Goldman, Salt '22 has been working for Citizen Racecar, creating podcasts with middle schoolers in the Bronx and Brooklyn, and is currently the producer of an oral history project for the Communications Workers of America.

Emily Reeves, Salt '22 has a new podcast, *Violence Week*, that was a featured pick on Apple Podcasts.

Jacqui Fulton, Salt '23 is building off reporting that began at Salt, turning it into a narrative series for the production company Novel.

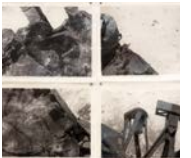
Anna McClain, Salt '23 launched the third season of *A Little Green*, a podcast series about climate resilience efforts in New York, and is producing a forthcoming music documentary series with Talkhouse and iHeart.

Anja Nillsson, Salt '23 pitched, reported, and produced an episode about Maya farms in Nebraska for *Feet in 2 Worlds*.

Catherine Nouhan, Salt '23 won a Bronze Award from the New York Festivals Radio Awards for *Diggin for Blue Gold*, a documentary she created at Salt.

Santiago Tijerina, Salt '23 received the Emerging Maine Filmmaker Award for his documentary, *Courts of Belonging*, highlighting the futsal community in Kennedy Park in Portland, ME.

Anisa Vietze, Salt '23 had a story featured on NPR about the Valentine's Day Bandit based on her reporting at Salt.



Deborah Santoro MFA '21
Perseverance (detail)
silkscreen and aluminum
leaf on kozo
2023

In Memoriam

HEATHER HAGLE MFA '03

STEPHEN HALPERT

BOB JENKINS

PETER SIMENSKY

JOAN FOWLER SMITH HON. DFA '01

Photo by Linda Hagle



IN MEMORIAM

Heather Hagle MFA '03

BELOVED SANTA ROSA ART TEACHER

Heather Marie Hagle was born on December 12, 1972, and passed away at the age of 50 on August 24, 2023, after complications from pancreatitis. She was born to Linda and Charles Hagle in Santa Rosa, California, and was a lifelong Santa Rosa resident. She graduated from Santa Rosa High School and went on to graduate with a double major in fine art and photography from San Francisco State University. She earned her Master of Fine Arts degree from Maine College of Art & Design in 2003 with a specialty in oil painting. She returned to Santa Rosa and earned her art education credential at Sonoma State University before beginning her teaching career. She taught art at Ridgway High School, a continuation school for students who have struggled in a traditional high school setting, where her mother was a longtime teacher.

She was a flamboyant, extraordinary, and passionate artist and teacher blessed with an innate knack for motivating her students to create superior work. "Hagle," as she was known, loved teaching and her students. Her own art studio was always filled with projects in various sizes and levels of completion. Her easel and walls were always covered with finished and unfinished oil paintings. She maintained a studio at Backstreet Galleries in the South of A arts district in Santa Rosa. She met her husband Scott Biswell in 2011 and they married in 2017.

Heather's classroom became a hub of creativity where students were often working on different projects. A 2023 article published in *The Press Democrat*, Santa Rosa's local paper, described the powerful impact she had on her students. Former student Marissa Freeman

said, "She saw the full potential in everyone, even when they didn't. It went so beyond artwork and so beyond schooling—it was mental health, it was being an advocate for yourself, being able to make boundaries for yourself, being able to go out into the real world and be confident." Marissa went on to graduate from high school a semester early and was named Ridgway's student of the year in 2014. At the award ceremony at City Hall, Hagle gave her a tiara and told her to act as if she were wearing it, always, even when she was not. "She meant the world to me," Marissa said, who went on to earn a degree in psychology from Sonoma State University.

"She would get amazing results from kids who said they didn't know how, or didn't know anything about art, and couldn't do it," her mother Linda said. "But within a few words, she would have kids working hard on something."

Heather is credited with motivating many students to finish high school, many of whom continued to stay in touch and visit her. "She has always been the brightest star to her family and friends and leaves a huge hole in her mother's heart," her obituary read.

Heather was preceded in death by her father, Charles Hagle, and is survived by her loving husband Scott Biswell; mother Linda Hagle; Linda's husband Paul Quistgard; her Aunt Judy and Uncle Ron Collier; brother Thomas Hagle and his children; plus many, many other relatives, friends, fellow teachers, and students.

IN MEMORIAM



Jan Pieter van Voorst
van Beest,
Portrait of Steve,
Inkjet print,
8" x 10", 2023

Steve Halpert

LONGTIME EDUCATOR, ART COLLECTOR, AND CINEPHILE

Long-time Maine College of Art & Design faculty member Stephen Karl Halpert, 91, passed away from complications of pancreatic cancer on July 13, 2024. He was born on May 24, 1933 in Waterbury, Connecticut, and moved to Portland in 1936, where he lived the rest of his life.

Steve cherished his childhood summers at Camp Brunonia in Casco, Maine, and at Brandy Pond in Naples, Maine. As the captain of the Deering High School track team, he excelled in sprints and hurdles, graduating in 1951. After graduating from Brown University with a BA in English in 1955, he pursued his passion for film at Harvard, where he earned his MA. Following his service in the U.S. Air Force, Steve and his wife Judy relocated with their two young children to Rome, Italy, where Steve focused on his writing. Upon returning to Portland, he taught at Deering High School and worked as a reporter for the Portland Press Herald.

In addition to his dedication to all things film, Steve was also fully dedicated to higher education in Maine, chairing the English Department at Westbrook Junior College (now, the University of New England) for over 50 years, and teaching at the University of Maine. He spent 45 years teaching English and Film Studies at Portland School of Art (now Maine College of Art & Design) until his retirement in 2018.

While at Westbrook (UNE), he started showcasing works by local and renowned photographers. This endeavor eventually led to the establishment of the Stephen K.

Halpert Collection of Photography at the UNE Art Gallery in 2016. Director Hilary Irons called Steve "one of Maine's most influential collectors and curators." Notably, at 90, he curated three significant photography exhibitions.

In 1979, Steve and Judy acquired The Movies on Exchange, a beloved spot for watching arthouse and repertory films until 2009. They also owned and operated the Custom Shop, a custom drapery business founded in 1935 by the Halpert family. Steve was involved in various organizations such as the NAACP, Baxter Society, Torch Club, Jazz at the Movies, and book clubs. He also served as a trustee of the Tidebrook Preserve in Freeport.

Known for his kindness and integrity, Steve was passionate about jazz, movies, and baseball, particularly the Detroit Tigers. Even when diagnosed with pancreatic cancer shortly before his passing, with good humor Steve quoted Ernest Hemingway: "The world is a fine place ... and I hate very much to leave it."

Steve is survived by his wife of 68 years, Judith Ann Venner; his sister, Joanna Kraus of Irvine, California; children Karl (Claudette) of Taos, New Mexico and Naples, Maine; Gretchen (Ron Faris) of Portland, Maine; Kate Lowry of Falmouth, Maine; and Jacob (Stacy Mitchell) of Portland, Maine; as well as several grandchildren, great-grandchildren, nieces, nephews, cousins, and dear friends.



Robert "Bob" Jenkins

BELOVED LONGTIME FACULTY MEMBER

Beloved faculty member Robert (Bob) Harry Jenkins, of

Jay, Maine, passed away on January 29, 2024, at the age of 76 at Maine Medical Center in Portland, Maine, with family by his side, following a short but hard-fought battle with liver disease. Bob grew up in Falmouth with his parents and grandparents, attended Falmouth schools, and earned his BS in Math and his MS in Education at the University of Southern Maine.

Bob had a passion for baseball, playing APBA baseball for most of his life, and loved to attend Sea Dogs games. He also loved music and played in bands in his younger life; later in life, he made great friends in a band from the Skowhegan area. Bob built model trains and loved to travel by train; he intensely disliked flying when a train ride could get him to the same destination.

He was dedicated to mathematics education throughout his entire life. For years he was a middle and high school teacher of math, physics, and biology. He co-developed and co-taught a four-course graduate-level series in educational math leadership at the University of Maine at Farmington, where he was also an adjunct faculty member. He worked as an independent consultant on curriculum, instruction, and assessment; and authored three math instruction books. Along the way, he was a past finalist for the Maine Math Teacher Award, recipient of a Portland Public Schools Superintendent Award, and a charter member and two-term president of the Maine Curriculum Leaders Association.

Bob taught at Maine College of Art & Design for 35 years as an Adjunct Associate Professor of Academic Studies, primarily in mathematics, but also in the Art Education Program. Bob was bright, funny, kind, and inspired by imaginative ways to entice students toward curiosity and surprise. He thrived on creating new courses specifically for art and design college students, standouts of which include: Intuitive Physics; The Physics of Sound (which culminated in a concert played on instruments imagined and fashioned by students in the course); The Art in Geometry; Trigonometry; from Triangles to Heartbeats; Zero to Infinity; and Transformational Dimensions. Bob truly loved teaching and truly loved his students.

One annual event that was well known to the College's community was his Spring Mathematical Enterprises class when he would invite staff to jury student presentations created in partnership with local nonprofits, such as Maine Audubon. Besides teaching students invaluable professional development skills, the partners received the benefit of influential creative visions and ideas.

Bob is survived by his second wife, Gloria; his two daughters, Judi Jenkins of Phoenix, Arizona, and Kathy Lavoie of Winston-Salem, North Carolina; treasured in-laws; six grandchildren; a great-grandchild; and many other relatives and friends. At Maine College of Art & Design, he is remembered by his colleagues for his humor and compassion, big voice and big beard, classy suspenders, and a contagious spirit that will live on in all of us.



Peter Simensky

RENOWNED TRANSDISCIPLINARY ARTIST

Peter Simensky, a renowned transdisciplinary artist, educator, community builder, activist, and vibrant human, passed away at the age of 48 in December of 2023. Peter was born on June 1, 1975, grew up in Cape Elizabeth, Maine, and was a core faculty member in MECA&D's MFA Program from the Fall of 2009 through the Spring of 2014, where he was remembered as a unique teacher and mentor, always supporting and elevating other artists and creators, while continuing to deepen his own art practice.

Peter loved exploration in nature, from kayaking the islands of Southern Maine as a child, to studying Buddhist art in Nepal while at UC Berkeley, where he earned a degree in Art Practice and Art History in 1999. He loved vibrant cities, food and dancing; playing with the children in his life; joining social justice movements for liberation; and he also made space to sit in reflection. After Berkeley, Peter became a carpenter and then got his MA at CUNY's Hunter College.

Most recently Simensky was an Assistant Professor and chaired the MFA Fine Arts program at California College of the Arts (CCA). Prior to this he was Chair of MFA in Visual Studies at Pacific Northwest College of Art in Portland, Oregon, leading school programs to Mexico City and Oaxaca, among other innovative collaborations. His work delved into the multifaceted essence of art objects, exploring the value and the volatility of objects through sculpture, print, video, and sound, among other mediums. He lived in New York City and the Bay Area, while Portland, Oregon, and Portland, Maine, continued to be places of home.

In a tribute published in *Art in America*, Dena Beard wrote, "Simensky was the rare artist-teacher who took a stance, who didn't shy away from hard conversations, and was also endlessly kind, advocating for his students at every turn. Over time, he started using pyrite ("fool's gold") as a conduit in radio sculptures, live audio sets, performances, and workshops that engaged topics from the political to the financial.... As friends, Simensky and I often discussed ways to liberate the imagination from the suffocating enclosure of capitalism, and tried to carve out time for spaces of meaning. In Peter's case, this often meant meditating with the churning surf; conviviality with friends, children, and elders; learning through play; unlearning through art; and deep, deep listening."

Peter's journey was one marked by joyful creative exploration, intellectual depth, and an unwavering commitment to pushing the boundaries of contemporary art and education; his vibrant contributions to the art world were far-reaching and influential. His work has been featured in solo exhibitions at the Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego; the Portland Institute for Contemporary Art; Museum 52; 500m Museum, Sapporo, Japan; and Project Row Houses, Houston. Simensky's performances and installations have been featured at the Geffen Contemporary at MOCA, The Swiss Institute, Wattis Institute, the ICA San Francisco, and more. He received numerous awards including: a Warhol Foundation Precipice Grant; a New York Foundation for the Arts Fellowship, and residencies at MacDowell and Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture. More of his work can be seen at [instagram.com/petersimensky](https://www.instagram.com/petersimensky).



Photo Courtesy of Sherri Fowler-Nagle

Joan Fowler Smith

HON. DFA '01 & FORMER MECA&D VICE PRESIDENT

Joan L. (Varner) Fowler Smith passed away on May 14, 2024

at the age of 88, in Peabody, Massachusetts. Born in 1936, Joan was a loving wife and devoted partner of the late Duncan Smith, who passed away in 2017 after a long career in the museum and design professions around Boston and New England. Together, they relished various art and cultural institutions within New England and all over the world. Traveling to the coast of Maine or on a trip to Hong Kong, they were always together, enjoying life. For many years, the Smiths summered on Deer Isle, Maine, where Duncan was involved with the Haystack Mountain School of Crafts.

Joan studied business at Becker College and earned her Master of Education at Antioch College. She worked at Boston University, the Museum of Transportation in Boston, and the Educational Arts Association in Cambridge before joining Maine College of Art & Design. Joan was an integral part of the College for 15 years, serving as Vice President of Advancement and VP for Administration and Finance, and ending as Executive Vice President and Treasurer. At the College, Joan coordinated the renovation of the 150,000 square-foot former Porteous Building into a vertical campus and oversaw all business functions at the College. During her tenure, the College expanded enrollment, grew to national prominence, and nearly tripled its physical campus. Current Executive Vice President Beth Elicker said, "She was a natural leader who was a great partner to Roger Gilmore, President Emeritus of MECA&D." Joan received an Honorary Degree from the College in 2001.

Upon her and her husband's retirement to Massachusetts, her daughter, Sherri Fowler-Nagle, donated the funds to launch the Joan Fowler Smith and Duncan Smith Endowed Scholarship, in honor of Joan's great contributions to the school.

When she lived in Portland, Joan was very active in the community; she was a founding member of the Portland Arts and Cultural Alliance (now called Creative Portland); and was instrumental in the formation of the Portland Downtown Arts District. Shortly after her retirement from Maine College of Art & Design, she served as an Interim President of Montserrat College of Art in Beverly, Massachusetts, for one year.

Joan is survived by her children, Sherri Fowler-Nagle of Rowley, Massachusetts; Kevin Fowler and his wife, Mary, of Barnstable Village, Massachusetts; her step-children, Pi Smith of Thetford, Vermont; Cary Hunter of Port Townsend, Washington; and Alexandra Smith of Cape Elizabeth, Maine; as well as grandchildren and great-grandchildren.



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For more information, please contact Annie Wadleigh at awadleigh@meca.edu or 207-699-5015.

The Philip K. Stevens, Jr. 91 Endowed Scholarship Fund

Phil Stevens was born on May 26, 1946, and was killed in a tragic accident after being struck by a car on August 27, 2021, at age 75. Thanks to his generosity, this endowed scholarship fund for talented and deserving Painting students was recently established at Maine College of Art & Design through a planned gift that was included in his will. The award will be managed by the Development Team through recommendations from the faculty and become available after a year-long period of investment.

Phil grew up a city boy in Michigan. His mother, who made art, enrolled him in art classes and took him to museums. After being drafted into the army, he was fortunate to be sent to Germany, where he was able to reconnect with the art world by visiting many museums. After graduating with a BA and an MBA with Distinction from the University of Michigan, he moved to Maine, where he worked as an accountant. He began taking classes at Maine College of Art & Design (then Portland School of Art), where he subsequently enrolled, graduating with a BFA in Painting with Honors. In 1987, while still a student, Phil began working in MECA&D's Business Services Department. After graduation, he was hired and served in multiple roles, ultimately retiring from his position as Director of Business Services in 2017, although he continued to work part-time at MECA&D until 2020. Throughout his career, Phil was active in the Maine arts community and was a longtime member of the Peregrine Press printmaking cooperative in Portland, as well as the Monotype Guild of New England. His work is included in the collections of the Portland Museum of Art, Bowdoin College, Farnsworth Museum, University of New England, among other places. Phil is deeply missed by the our community; this scholarship is a wonderful way to celebrate Phil's legacy while benefiting the next generation of artists and designers.





Annual Report Of Giving

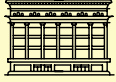
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Thanks to our strong community of supporters, the College continues to thrive. We are deeply grateful to all of our donors for their vital contributions to our mission to educate artists and designers for life; embolden a diverse group of creative thinkers to ask questions and solve problems; and activate students of all pursuits to make art, make an impact, and inspire change. Add your name to our growing list of donors, including alumni, friends, foundations, and others by making your gift at meca.edu/giving.

Photo by Claire Brassil



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Several additional donors have made their planned gift intentions known but prefer to remain anonymous.

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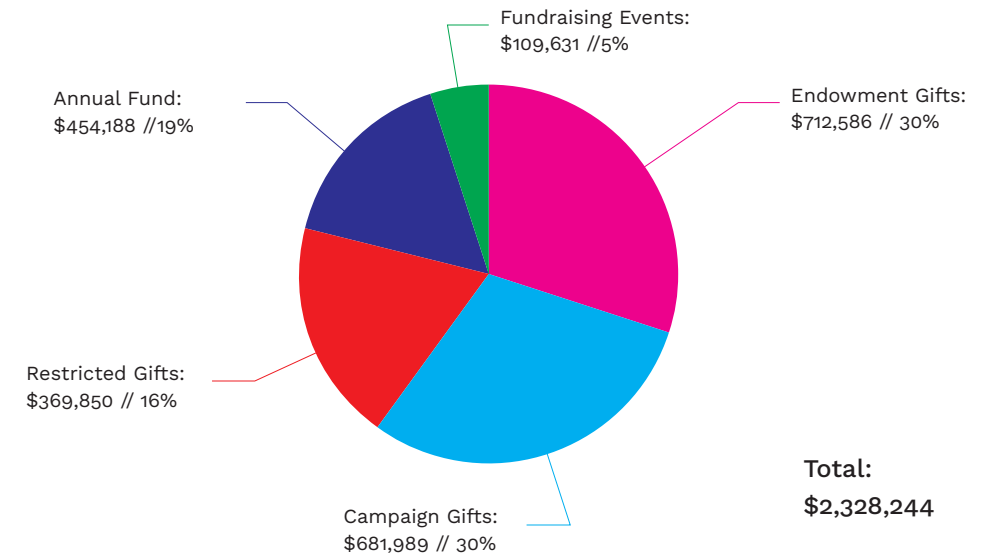
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Maine College of Art & Design
522 Congress St., Portland, ME 04101
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