Just like others, those of us at LRMA are looking forward to the rest of 2021 with excitement and, hopefully, a return to a safe routine of activities. With all of its craziness, 2020 brought some memorable moments to the Museum.

First, we held an online auction in early December in place of our annual gala. We were humbled with the amount of interest and support in the three-day virtual event which included gourmet dinners to-go. Under the leadership of Chairmen Nancy and Bob Billingsley and Auction Chairmen Jade and Lew Yoder and Hilary and Michael Burroughs, the auction exceeded our wildest dreams and raised more than $129,000 for the education and exhibition programs of the Museum! I hope you will note the list of auction donors on page 11 of this newsletter.

If 2020 taught us anything, it is that we all must learn to operate in a virtual world. For us at LRMA, that meant creating an online exhibition to mark and understand what the year meant to us. Seeing 2020: Creativity During COVID-19 was a virtual exhibition (see page 6) with works submitted by 19 artists from Mississippi and the southeast region. All of our experiences are different, and this particular exhibition allowed us to see a variety of works and meanings.

If you drove by the Museum at some point in 2020, you likely encountered a major street project undertaken by the City of Laurel along 5th Avenue. There hasn’t been so much excitement since the original wooden street bricks were installed in 1900! We are pleased that the new street paving, new curbing, and upgraded street lights are complete and ready for your next visit to LRMA.

As we look to 2021, we welcome two new exhibitions. Home//Work is an installation by Kristen Tordella-Williams of Millsaps College. This immersive experience is located in our lower level galleries and explores our history with timber and education, among other things. We were pleased to have local artist Michael Ross curate Identity and Response: Works by African American Artists in our Sanderson Gallery. Ross selected works by Black artists from our collection interspersed with work by him and his circle of artist friends. Digital resources and programs for both exhibitions can be found on the Museum’s website.

I am not yet sure if normal is a word that we will be able to use for 2021, but the Museum’s hope is that we return to a familiar routine of education programs, studio classes, and events in the coming months of summer. This hope includes a return to our core mission of outreach programs and education with lectures, gallery talks, and tours. That mission has been our purpose for 98 years, and I have no doubt that this year will again provide memorable moments.

— George Bassi
Artist Kristen Tordella-Williams views time as a layered spiraling continuum. The themes in her body of artwork revolve around the past’s impact on our present, as well as labor, both personal and communal. After exploring the Museum’s archives, its art collection, and its history, Tordella-Williams has created an exhibition that explores Laurel’s lumber industry and the work and domestic lives of those who supported it. The artist was inspired by images from the Museum’s archives that illustrate the lumber camps and railroad cars in which families lived and that would be transported from one camp to another. The common experience of most workers’ domestic lives was inextricably intertwined with their work lives, which parallels the current situation of many during the pandemic.

Tordella-Williams installed the exhibition galleries in two sections. One section reflects the natural world and the impact of the lumber industry has had on it. Visitors are immersed in a forest of tree stumps, built of handmade paper and lit from within. These are surrounded by woodblock prints that depict archival text and images of Laurel and the lumber industry. A series of resin-encased insects from the artist’s collection are flanked by two encaustic panels from the Museum’s permanent collection painted by Betsy Eby.
The other section features items installed in a domestic environment that includes mirrored columns surrounded by a salon-style hanging of fine art featuring workers and nature. Interspersed with the Museum’s objects, burnt books are hung on the walls. These books not only reference the fires that plagued the sawmills, but also the challenges that have been historically imposed on our educational system in the past and present during the current pandemic. Between the two galleries, a television displays the Laurel Living Archive, a special website produced in conjunction with the exhibition (www.laurellivingarchive.cloud). It features submissions from our community of imagery, text, and video that explain how our home and work lives collide and what our experiences have been during the pandemic.

Tordella-Williams earned a bachelor of fine arts from the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth and a master of fine arts from Alfred University in New York. She has exhibited nationally and internationally and has been an artist in residence at Salem Art Works, the Visitor Center Artist Camp, and Franconia Sculpture Park. She teaches drawing, digital arts, sculpture, performance art, and papermaking and is an associate professor of studio art at Millsaps College.
Identity and Response
Works by African American Artists
curated by Michael Ross

ON VIEW THROUGH JUNE 27, 2021 SANDESON GALLERY

For centuries, Black American artists have been creating visual expressions and responses to the physical environments around them and the environments of their own imaginations. There is very little agreement about what constitutes a shared Black American identity or a shared Black American artistic aesthetic. Nevertheless, there is a shared African American history that influences and tells the stories of the lives of Black people; that history tells much about the story of Mississippi, the entire Southeastern United States, and North America as a whole.

In the year of 2020, we witnessed national and international recognition of the heartbreak, disappointment, and anger expressed by many people with regards to our country’s blind spots in our quest for, and commitment to, racial equality.

For this exhibition, I have been afforded the opportunity to gather and interpret art works created by Black artists over a span of more than 80 years that are included in the permanent collection of the Lauren Rogers Museum of Art. In addition, this exhibition includes works of my own, as well as some from my personal collection of works by other Black artists.

— Michael Ross, guest curator

Michael Ross (American, born 1962), House Friends #6, 2016, mixed media on paper, courtesy of the artist

Lauren Rogers Museum purchase, 2017.13


In September, the Lauren Rogers Museum of Art invited artists from our community to submit works for our Seeing 20/20: Creativity during COVID online exhibition. A truly contemporary exhibition, Seeing 20/20 sought art produced since March 2020 that represented a diverse array of perspectives, ideas, and reflections upon the past six months of our lives. A total of 50 works were submitted by 19 artists from Mississippi and the southeast region.

In many ways, our shared worlds and individual existences changed dramatically in the first half of 2020. This virtual exhibition showcases how artists – student, amateur and expert – have engaged with and considered this novel moment in time.
Fish attributes her fascination with light and intense color to having grown up amid the dazzling brightness and vibrant tropical colors of Bermuda. An artistic family also contributed to Fish’s early interest in art: her grandfather was Clark Voorhees, the American Impressionist; her mother and uncle were sculptors; and her father occasionally taught art history. She attended Smith College, where she received a bachelor of arts, before earning a master’s degree of fine art from Yale University in 1963.

After graduation, Fish moved to New York City. Her paintings from the late 60s and early 70s are studies of transparent objects in which she begins her life-long exploration of the nature and substance of light. From the beginning, Fish adapted commonplace objects to her painterly concerns, insisting that the subject matter – enlarged glasses, fruits covered in supermarket cellophane, and glass containers filled with liquids – was relatively unimportant. She sees the obvious subject matter, the story line, as the shallowest level of a painting. For Fish, meaning comes from the tone, the gesture, color, light, scale, and composition.

During the 1970s, Fish gradually opened up the backgrounds of her paintings and introduced more color and complexity. Since 1978, she has spent half the year in New York and half in the Green Mountains of Vermont. The shift to Vermont coincided with the incorporation of still life, human figures, and landscape into increasingly complex scenes in which color, light, and shadow are masterfully handled.

Her recent paintings show that light and color, volume and surface, scale, gesture, and the flow of paint across her canvas are what continue to absorb and fascinate her today.

Janet Fish’s work is found in the permanent collections of many museums including the Art Institute of Chicago, Dallas Museum of Fine Arts, Kansas City Art Institute, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York and Yale University, among many others.

The Museum recently added a work by an American artist whose fine art pieces draw from the traditions of functional objects and their makers. Preston Singletary’s work unites European glass blowing techniques with themes and forms from his northwest Native heritage. In his beautiful basket forms, such as the Museum’s new acquisition Salmon/Yellow Tlingit Basket, he references the spruce root baskets produced by the Tlingit of southeast Alaska. An excellent example of the tradition is the Museum’s Gathering Basket with “Shaman’s Hat” Pattern with its stepped geometric decoration produced with false embroidery, in which bleached, and often dyed, grass is wrapped around the weft. Singletary mimics this aesthetic by sandblasting Tlingit motifs, such as the Raven-tail design seen here, into the surface of the multi-colored glass. Raven is a magical creature and the keeper of secrets who taught humanity how to build a canoe when the world was flooding, offering hope for survival. The intense color palette and enlarged size of Salmon/Yellow Tlingit Basket showcase Singletary’s contemporary approach to the ancestral form.

Now recognized internationally, Singletary’s artworks are included in museum collections such as The British Museum (London, UK), Museum of Fine Arts (Boston, MA), Seattle Art Museum (Seattle WA), Corning Museum of Glass (Corning, NY), Mint Museum of Art and Design (Charlotte, NC), Heard Museum (Phoenix, AZ), and the Smithsonian Institution (Washington, DC).

Singletary maintains an active schedule by teaching, lecturing, and exhibiting internationally. In 2009, the Museum of Glass in Tacoma, WA, launched a major mid-career survey of his work, entitled “Preston Singletary: Echoes, Fire, and Shadows.” In 2018, he launched a new traveling exhibition with the Museum of Glass, titled “Raven and the Box of Daylight,” which will push the boundaries of glass as a medium for storytelling.
EDUCATION

ART at home

Monthly · February – May

Mark your calendars – ART@Home is back! Stop by the Museum for a grab-and-go art activity inspired by our exhibitions and collections. Each FREE kit includes all the instructions and supplies needed for a fun, family art experience! New kits will be debuted the first Friday of each month and available at the front desk while supplies last.

Paint Days

Tuesdays · March and April
10:00 a.m. – noon

Join us on the front lawn of the Museum to paint a landscape en plein air. Artists of all skill levels are encouraged to pack their paints, set up their easels, and spread out to safely let their creativity flow!

Wheel Throwing: One-on-One Sessions

Saturday · February 27
$35 · register at www.bullfrogpotteryms.com/book-online

Have you always wanted to learn the basics of wheel throwing? Or have you missed working with clay during the pandemic? Well, you’re in luck! LRMA is partnering with Bullfrog Pottery to offer personalized introductory sessions. Work one-on-one with potter Jeremy Brooke to throw a piece on the wheel. It will then be trimmed, fired and glazed and ready for pick-up within a few short weeks!

Artful YOGA

Wednesdays · April 7, 14, 21 and 28
9:00 a.m. · FREE

Join us for a yoga class on the Museum’s historic grounds and engage in a practice that focuses on relaxation, balance, and strength. Ann Barrow, a certified yoga instructor, will lead each drop-in class. Participants are encouraged to wear comfortable clothing and bring their own yoga mat. Beginners encouraged and no registration required!

ATTENTION TEACHERS!

CLASSROOM ART KITS

Can’t bring your students to the Museum for a tour? Let LRMA send a FREE custom-designed all-inclusive art kit to your classroom! Each activity relates directly to the Museum’s permanent collections and exhibitions and includes step-by-step instructions, resource guides, and individually packed art materials for up to 30 students – everything you need for a creative class project! Visit the Education page of our website to learn more and request a kit or email hsteinwinder@lrma.org.

DIGITAL RESOURCES ONLINE

New to the Museum’s YouTube channel is a series of interviews with LRMA curator Kristen Miller Zohn and artists from current exhibitions, and also features some recent acquisitions. The videos are a great way to learn more about the artists’ work and career.

LRMA Education Programs are supported in part by The Essmueller Company Education Endowment Fund.
The Museum partners with several community groups in our area. For more than ten years, LRMA has been involved in the Outdoor Classroom Garden on Queensburg Avenue near Oak Park Elementary School. LRMA education staff and interns have not only painted fences and yard art throughout the garden but also created a sculpture.

The garden is the vision of Doncella Milton who works tirelessly to care for the space and plan programs, including “Arts Day in the Garden,” held semi-annually in the fall and spring. The Museum provides hands-on art activities at each event.

“Anything you can teach in an indoor classroom can be taught outdoors,” says Milton. “I am passionate about gardening, art, and reading and feel that great things come from kids who read, plant, and grow.”

In 2020, Milton’s plan for the garden expanded with phase two. The Literacy Garden was added with a library, La Maison des Livres, as the heart. According to Milton, “The Literacy Garden is designed to promote literacy within the community by providing students with a place to read in a relaxing, safe atmosphere. A place where seeds are planted, and young readers grow.”

“The goal of this new addition is to provide a place where children can read during school, after school, and on weekends. Aesthetically, it will provide a magical and inviting appearance, located directly behind the Outdoor Classroom Garden,” Milton stated.

A major attraction in the new Literacy Garden is a mural on the west side of the small library building. Milton shared her vision for the library mural with LRMA Education Outreach Coordinator Kelly Rosa who transformed Milton’s vision into a work of art. “Watching Kelly Rosa work was like watching a movie unfold,” Milton says. “It was amazing. The end result is breathtaking.” The design includes multi-cultural children reading books Milton selected.

Over the course of three months in fall 2020, Rosa designed, drew, outlined, and painted the mural with the help of LRMA intern Shelby Welborn. According to Rosa, “I enjoy all of our community partnerships and especially this one with the Outdoor Classroom Garden. I am always happy to help organizations and share the visual arts with those in our area.”

The Literacy Garden, and its new library, are a welcome addition to the Queensburg neighborhood. It is open by appointment and during special events in the Outdoor Classroom Garden. Rosa and the Museum are pleased to play a small part in its mission of expanding the educational opportunities of children in our community.

If your organization has a need for a special art project, please contact Rosa at the Museum at krosa@LRMA.org or 601-649-6374 to see if we can assist.
The Lauren Rogers Museum of Art provides exposure to the visual arts through focused collections, diversified exhibitions, and educational programs; encourages awareness of the aesthetic and cultural values of the visual arts; and seeks to enhance the quality of life in Laurel and Jones County, the state of Mississippi, and the Southern region.

LRMA is a private, non-profit organization operating for the benefit of the public.

HOURS OF OPERATION:
Tues-Sat, 10 a.m. - 4:45 p.m.
Closed Mondays

ADMISSION IS FREE.

LRMA is supported by Memberships, Donations, The Eastman Memorial Foundation, Jones County, Laurel Arts League, Mississippi Arts Commission and The National Endowment for the Arts. This publication is funded in part by a grant from The Mississippi Arts Commission and The National Endowment for the Arts.

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If you have questions concerning the deductible limits of your Museum contributions for IRS purposes including fund-raising events (i.e. Gala), please call the Museum Office.

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Collections Committee chair Bette Green with the new acquisition of a Janet Fish painting.

North Jones Elementary fourth grade students participated in a Christmas activity.

Artist Wyatt Waters provided a watercolor demonstration on the LRMA front lawn in November.

Outreach Coordinator Kelly Rosa visited Laurel Christian School Kindergarten in the fall.

Cory Vanlandingham of the Pine Belt Fine Arts Cooperative demonstrated on the front lawn in October.

Follow LRMA on Facebook at Lauren Rogers Museum of Art and Twitter @LaurenRogersMoA.

Send your email address to info@LRMA.org if you would like to receive membership e-blasts with updates on events and art classes.

UPCOMING EXHIBITIONS

Seven Masters:
20th Century Japanese Woodblock Prints
May 18 – August 8, 2021

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