



GOVERNOR'S
AWARDS

FOR THE ARTS
HUMANITIES





2019 GOVERNOR'S AWARDS



WELCOME

Karen Paty, Executive Director, Georgia Council for the Arts
Laura McCarty, President, Georgia Humanities

ILLUSTRATIONS OF IMPACT AND PRESENTATION OF AWARDS

REMARKS

Governor Brian Kemp
Pat Wilson, Commissioner, Department of Economic Development

BENEDICTION

Chelsea Rathburn, Georgia Poet Laureate



Georgia Council for the Arts (GCA) is a division of the Georgia Department of Economic Development whose mission is to cultivate the growth of vibrant, thriving Georgia communities through the arts. GCA provides grant funding, programs and services statewide that support the vital arts industry, preserve the state's cultural heritage, increase tourism and nurture strong communities. Funding for Georgia Council for the Arts is provided by appropriations from the Georgia General Assembly and the National Endowment for the Arts.



Georgia Humanities promotes and preserves the stories and cultural legacies of the state's people — from the past to the present and into the future — to enrich their lives and strengthen their communities. An informed and educated Georgia understands historical and cultural trends, respects the life of the mind, utilizes critical thinking in decision-making, and promotes mutual respect and civility. Funding for Georgia Humanities is provided by the Georgia General Assembly, the National Endowment for the Humanities, foundations, donors, and partners.

2019 AWARD RECIPIENTS



Lucinda W. Bannen

Atlanta

Visual arts and philanthropy

Lucinda W. Bannen picked up a camera for the first time in the 1970s, and she went on to change the face of the arts community in Georgia as a photographer, collector, and philanthropist. In 1973, with thirteen other artists, Bannen founded Nexus, the first photography gallery in Atlanta to showcase the work of emerging photographers. Now known as Atlanta Contemporary, it has become one of the Southeast's leading contemporary arts centers. Bannen was also among the group of photographers that in 1999 established Atlanta

Celebrates Photography (ACP), a cornerstone of the Atlanta arts community. ACP cultivates photography and young photographers in Atlanta, and represents the largest annual photography festival in the United States.

With a vision to create a world-class collection of photographs that would provide Atlanta's residents with an inspirational resource, Bannen is also the curator and benefactor of the Bannen Collection of Photography at the High Museum of Art, which holds more than 650 photographs. The collection has made the High one of the nation's premier collecting institutions for contemporary photography. The Lucinda Weil Bannen Photography Gallery opened at the High Museum in 2014.

Bannen's work has been recognized internationally, and her photographs can be found in numerous public collections, including the Museum of Modern Art, New York; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Pushkin Museum, Moscow, Russia; Smithsonian, Washington, D.C.; High Museum of Art, Atlanta; Museum of Contemporary Art of Georgia, Atlanta; and Morris Museum of Art, Augusta. Bannen's work is the subject of seven books to date, three of which she has co-authored. The most recent, *Gathered* (2018), includes photographs of unique objects she has acquired over the last 60 years.

Honored by Judy Morris Lampert, Photographer



Common Good Atlanta Greater Atlanta Region Humanities education

Common Good Atlanta provides college courses to incarcerated people, with the belief that higher education can restore dignity and reconnect people to their own humanity, and further, can help people develop a deeper understanding of both themselves and the societal forces at work around them. Founded in 2008 by Dr. Sarah Higinbotham and Bill Taft, Common Good has enabled more than 100 volunteer professors from Georgia universities to provide more than 4,000 hours of college-level humanities instruction inside state prisons in Buford, Forsyth, and Hartwell. Courses on literature, history, art, philosophy, and writing take place inside Georgia's prisons five days a week, and the incarcerated students' essays, artwork, and poetry have been displayed at Atlanta galleries, Emory University Law School, and Georgia Tech, and are permanently archived in Emory's Woodruff Library. More than 200 men and women have completed a course through Common Good Atlanta, which to date has offered more than 35 full-semester courses. To support formerly incarcerated men and women who now seek a springboard to college, Common Good recently opened a classroom in downtown Atlanta.

Courses offered by Common Good also connect Georgia's gifted college students with Georgia's marginalized citizens. Undergraduates from Georgia Tech, Emory, Georgia State, Kennesaw State, Spelman, Morehouse, and Clark Atlanta have all participated in humanities classes with incarcerated students, which has allowed both groups to engage in discussion and learn from one another.

In recognition of the value of programming developed by Common Good, the Georgia Department of Corrections recognized Higinbotham and Taft as "Georgia Department of Corrections Volunteers of the Year" in 2016.

Honored by Tariq Baiyina, Alumnus and Common Good Atlanta Board Member



Hermina Glass-Hill

Kennesaw, Midway

Humanities and historic preservation

Hermina Glass-Hill's career as a public historian, writer, and artist spans more than 25 years, and she has contributed to African American cultural education through performance art, multimedia presentations, oral histories, and publications. She has demonstrated her commitment to uplifting, sharing, and preserving African American culture across the state, as she draws on African American history in Georgia to tell new stories.

While associate director of the Center for the Study of the Civil War Era at Kennesaw State University (2008–12), Glass-Hill collaborated with the National Park Service and Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park to facilitate symposia that highlighted counter-narratives for the Civil War Sesquicentennial. She also served as the principal ethnographic researcher of a report on African American attitudes toward the Civil War, “The War of Jubilee: Tell Our Story and We Will Come” (2011), which continues to be a highly acclaimed publication of the National Park Service. Glass-Hill's work influenced Civil War parks beyond Kennesaw Mountain and provided important data on how to engage African American communities effectively.

Glass-Hill is also recognized as a champion of cultural and environmental sustainability among the Geechee communities in coastal Georgia. In 2016 she founded, and now directs, the Susie King Taylor Women's Institute and Ecology Center in Midway (Liberty County). The Center honors the life and story of Susie King Taylor, an African American nineteenth-century educator and author who was born into slavery in Liberty County. To engage elementary school audiences on the importance of history, Glass-Hill wrote and illustrated a children's book, *Happy Birthday, Susie!*, about Taylor, which she reads at elementary schools across coastal Georgia.

Glass-Hill has also been recognized by the NAACP and the National Center for Civil and Human Rights, and she received the NAACP E. B. Cooper Educational Leadership Award for her ten-part writing series *A Long Road to Liberty*. She holds degrees from Spelman College and Georgia State University.

Honored by Michelle M. Ruff, Associate Corporate Counsel, Amrock Inc.



Christopher Johnson Cuthbert, Columbus

Visual arts and education

Christopher Johnson is a regionally celebrated and recognized visual artist whose public murals have brought renewed interest to an array of Georgia communities. Johnson's murals blend subjects drawn from local history and celebrate unique and significant contributions that southwest Georgia has made to American culture and history. From his most recent five-story-tall mural in downtown Columbus featuring suffragette Lenora Starling, to his murals in Magnolia Alley in Cuthbert featuring Roosevelt Grier and Larry

Holmes, Johnson has sparked discussions about the ways Georgia's communities think about their own identities and about the contributions Georgians continue to make to the country.

Some of Johnson's public murals across Georgia include: "Lady Columbus," on Heritage Tower in Columbus; "Grown in Georgia," at Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College in Tifton; "Dairy Queen," in Dawson; Lincoln Elementary Magnet School in Albany; Magnolia Alley, in Cuthbert; "Where the Wild Things Are," at Chattahoochee Valley Public Library in Columbus; "Everybody Loves Arlington," in Arlington; and the grain bin mural series in Shellman.

Johnson is the arts festival coordinator for the Arts Around the Square Arts Festival, held annually in historic downtown Cuthbert, and he also serves as an assistant professor of visual art, the director of the Visual Arts Program, and the Fine Arts Coordinator at Andrew College in Cuthbert. He is the recipient of the 2016 Capital Art Exhibit Artist of the Year from the Georgia Art Education Association, and the 2019 John H. Woodall Excellence in Teaching Award from Andrew College.

Honored by Dr. Linda Buchanan, President, Andrew College



MADISON-MORGAN CONSERVANCY

PROTECTING FARMS, FORESTS, AND
FRONT PORCHES FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

Madison-Morgan Conservancy Madison, Morgan County Humanities and historic preservation

For nearly two decades, the Madison-Morgan Conservancy has been working to conserve and protect historic, natural, and agricultural resources in Morgan County with the ultimate goal of preserving the county's quality of life and sense of place. The Conservancy accomplishes this work by building strong partnerships, educating the public and local decision makers, identifying and documenting threatened resources, and utilizing innovative tools to protect those resources.

The Madison-Morgan Conservancy, the state's first countywide conservancy, has protected more than 4,300 acres of land, including wildlife habitats, farmland, and historic landscapes through voluntarily donated conservation easements by private landowners in Morgan County. The Conservancy created Georgia's first agritourism trail, *FARMeander*, which invites visitors to explore area farms, markets, festivals, and inns that celebrate the agrarian heritage of the region. The Conservancy's *Greenprint Guide* serves as an inventory of significant and threatened resources in Morgan County, each of which was identified through public-input meetings and surveys. It is the first guide in the state to record resources on a countywide scale, and it has helped the community make informed decisions about how to grow while preserving its character.

A highlight is the Conservancy's recently developed tool, the Endangered Properties Revolving Fund (EPRF). This unique program allows the organization to act quickly to protect significant historic structures, cultural landscapes, and open space that are threatened by development, decay, and/or neglect. For instance, the EPRF helped the Conservancy save the historic Foster-Thomason-Miller House in downtown Madison, a structure listed on the National Register of Historic Places and vacant for 20 years. The EPRF program has received recognition from the National Trust for Historic Preservation for its innovative approach to saving historical and cultural resources, and has been cited as a model program for other Georgia communities.

To develop and sustain a culture of heritage conservation in Morgan County, the Junior Conservancy program engages high school students in conservation work in the county, where participants create and execute their own conservation-related programming throughout the school year.

Honored by Wayne Vason, Retired Partner, Troutman Sanders



Jessye Norman School of the Arts Augusta, Richmond County

Arts education

The Jessye Norman School of the Arts (JNSA) has impacted the lives of thousands of children and families in the greater Augusta area over the last 16 years. The school offers a comprehensive, tuition-free after-school arts program for students of limited resources to develop and nurture their artistic and creative talents. JNSA students consistently outperform their peers academically, and all JNSA students graduate high school in a county with graduation rates of less than 80 percent.

More than 115 students are accepted into the program each year, and students from Title I schools are the target attendees. In the after-school program, both middle- and high school students receive guided access to academic support tools and free fine arts instruction, including opportunities for advanced-level studies in dance, drama, music, art, and creative writing. The school recently opened the Walton Oaks Adventure Center in the Walton Oaks mixed-income housing community in Augusta, where K–5 students are engaged in dance, puppetry, and visual arts. The JNSA also offers summer camps for students and programs for homeschooled students.

The school also supports arts programming for the community by hosting a variety of public arts programs, like the Summer Sidewalk Music Series, and by serving as home to the Ann and Ellis Johnson Gallery of Art, where professional and student gallery shows are on display. A special feature is a community garden on the property, which serves as an education tool for the school's garden club. In 2019 the JNSA received the Kath Girdler Engler Award for Public Art for the "Painted Piano Project," in which vividly painted pianos were placed in public spaces and passersby were encouraged to play the instruments.

The namesake and initial benefactor of the school is the late Jessye Norman (1945–2019), an internationally acclaimed opera singer and native of Augusta. She was one of the most decorated American singers, and the school was founded as a response to Norman's belief that given the opportunity to explore the arts, students will perform better in their other studies and become more involved citizens.

Honored by Kimberly Hayes and her son, Baker Rouseau, Jessye Norman School Parent and Student



**Kathy Prescott
and Grady Thrasher**
Athens, Atlanta
Arts and humanities philanthropy

Kathy Prescott and Grady Thrasher have shaped the arts and humanities communities in Athens for 15 years, focusing on projects, programs, and organizations that promote literacy, art-making, and youth development. They

have been actively engaged in philanthropy and improving the quality of life in their community as well, with a focus on the arts, education, and social progress.

Their philanthropic leadership has been transformative to the Georgia Museum of Art and the University of Georgia through significant contributions to fund the construction of the University of Georgia's new Lamar Dodd School of Art and the expansion of the Georgia Museum of Art. Prescott has served on the Georgia Museum of Art's Board of Advisors since 2001, and her leadership helped secure the match for the Museum's Challenge Grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the largest ever awarded in Georgia, which launched the museum's Study Centers in the Humanities.

In 2016 Prescott and Thrasher created the Aralee Strange Fund for Art and Poetry, principally administered by the Georgia Museum of Art. The endowment supports both academic and public programs that include partnerships with the University of Georgia's College of Education. Summer programs combine art and poetry to benefit local K–8 children from low-income communities, while serving as an experiential learning experience for UGA students. The endowment also supports scholarly lectures, and the programs further strengthen the ability of future Georgia teachers to use the visual arts and the written and spoken word in their classrooms.

Prescott and Thrasher have supported organizations across their community through sponsoring student literacy efforts, funding student scholarships, and supporting the visual and performing arts in the Athens community and beyond. In 2014 they endowed the Prescott-Thrasher Promise Scholarship at Georgia Tech to benefit students from low-income Georgia families.

They have also lent their own talents to their community—Prescott's art has been featured in exhibitions at local arts institutions and organizations, and Thrasher is the author of three children's books. Thrasher was named the Georgia Children's Book Author of the Year by the Georgia Writers Association in 2008 and 2011. Together, they have also directed three documentary films on events originating in Athens, with the assistance of filmmaker Matt DeGennaro. Shown in Athens periodically as a public service and to foster community awareness and engagement, the films include *World's Smallest Airport*, *Life the Griot*, and *Athens in Our Lifetimes—Recalling the Evolution of Our Town over the Past Six Decades*.

Honored by Dr. William Eiland, Director, Georgia Museum of Art



Rick McKnight
Columbus, Muscogee County
Arts education and arts advocacy

Rick McKnight has served and supported Columbus' arts and education communities through his programmatic, philanthropic, and fundraising efforts and initiatives. Those efforts include an annual Teachers Institute for the Muscogee County School District that has provided instruction for teachers on how to use the arts across curriculum. As the founding chair of the Columbus Cultural Arts Alliance, McKnight partnered with city and community leadership to designate a portion of the lodging tax for arts initiatives that contribute to

tourism and economic development; more than \$2 million has been directed to local arts agencies in Columbus as a result.

McKnight was part of a five-person team that conceptualized, planned, built, and funded the RiverCenter for the Performing Arts in Columbus. He currently serves as the education program manager for the RiverCenter's ArtsREACH Program, its first educational program. In his role in ArtsREACH, McKnight created the RiverCenter on the Road program, which brings assembly shows to schools, and more than 27,000 Muscogee County School District students were reached in one school year alone. McKnight also developed RiverCenter Residencies, which brings Master Artists-in-Residence to every Muscogee County elementary school for a week; the program is expanding to the county's middle schools. He also founded RiverCenter Readers to connect community volunteers with third-grade classes. The successful reading program has helped students achieve notable gains on reading assessments.

Since 2015, McKnight has served as the chair of the Voices of the Valley Children's Chorus, which today includes three choirs and more than 70 children, and recently embarked on a European tour. McKnight's civic leadership also includes service to a variety of nonprofit organizations, including the Columbus Symphony Orchestra and the Youth Orchestra of Greater Columbus, among others.

Honored by Dr. David F. Lewis, Superintendent, Muscogee County School District



MERCER UNIVERSITY PRESS

Mercer University Press

Macon

Humanities

Mercer University Press, founded in 1979, is a nonprofit book publisher whose mission is to support the work of Mercer University by making the results of scholarly investigation and literary excellence available to the worldwide community. Based at Mercer University in Macon, the Press has published more than 1,500 books in its 40 years. Its publications have been of academic and general interest, and the majority of its published works relate to Georgia and to the South, especially southern history, civil rights, the Civil War, food, music, and sports.

Publishing 35 to 40 titles annually, the Press serves as a cultural resource, making available published volumes that have added knowledge and understanding on a variety of topics in Georgia's culture and history. The Press seeks to publish works that not only inform readers of history, literature, and other humanities disciplines but also promote increased regional understanding, disintegrate racial and gender barriers, and contribute knowledge.

The Press has also published fiction, poetry, and creative nonfiction, including works of such well-known writers as James Dickey, Terry Kay, and Ferrol Sams. It has also preserved the work of Georgia's various political leaders, including Zell Miller, Andrew Young, and Jimmy Carter, among others, and has published numerous first-time authors. The Press sponsors the Mercer University Press Book Awards each year, including the Adrienne Bond Award for Poetry, the Will D. Campbell Award for Creative Nonfiction, and the Ferrol Sams Award for Fiction.

Honored by Dr. Carolyn Curry, Historian and Mercer University Press Author



Angelica Hairston

Atlanta

Music and arts leadership

Angelica Hairston is an accomplished harpist who has performed on renowned national and international stages, including with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, the Nashville Symphony Orchestra, and the Daytona Solisti Chamber Orchestra. Hairston has made it a priority in her career to expose marginalized communities to classical music. Since 2015, she has served as artistic director of the Urban Youth Harp Ensemble, an organization that provides students with the opportunity to take free before- and after-school music lessons on the

harp, an instrument that is cost-prohibitive for many families. In this role, Hairston has created and implemented support and retention methods for at-risk youth and families through mentorship programs.

In 2016 she founded the organization Challenge the Stats, a concert series dedicated to empowering high-caliber artists of color, and designed to initiate dialogue about diversity, inclusion, and equity, both on and off the concert stage. The concert series has continually reached new audiences and provided a platform for emerging African American and Latinx artists.

Hairston received an Alumni Arts Leadership Grant from National Public Radio's *From the Top* to host the 2018 Challenge the Stats concert series and discussion in Atlanta. The event engaged audiences on the topic of homelessness and featured emerging classical artists from across Georgia. She continues to develop outreach efforts through satellite performances, designed to reach audiences unable to travel to the Challenge the Stats performance venues. She has partnered with the Atlanta Opera to perform an original work for harp and voice at the Auburn Avenue Research Library in Atlanta, and she has held learning workshops at the National Center for Civil and Human Rights in Atlanta, Bethune Cookman University in Florida, and Clarke County High School in Athens. She believes one important factor in her success is her six-year participation as a youth in the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra's Talent Development Program.

Honored by Jabari Freeman, Urban Youth Harp Ensemble Member, performing Deborah Henson Conant's Baroque Flamenco

2019 GOVERNOR'S AWARDS FOR THE ARTS & HUMANITIES



The Governor's Awards honor outstanding individuals and organizations that have made significant contributions to Georgia's civic and cultural vitality through excellence and service to the arts and humanities. Presented by the Office of the Governor in partnership with Georgia Council for the Arts and Georgia Humanities, the Governor's Awards recognize the value of the arts and humanities in the creation of a thriving economy and their contributions to education, innovation, growth, and quality of life. The Governor's Awards pay tribute to the most distinguished citizens and organizations that have demonstrated a lifetime commitment to work in these fields.

ABOUT THE ARTWORK



The 2019 award was created by Athens artist Cecel Allee. A native of Apalachicola, Florida, Allee is a self-taught artist and a 1990 graduate of the Terry College of Business at the University of Georgia. Allee began painting after undergoing an aortic repair surgery in 1995, which left her with a damaged vocal cord and unable to speak for almost two years.

Early in her new career, Allee primarily painted on found objects. As demand for her artwork grew, she began building and painting on wooden box frames. Soon, she found herself spending more time in the studio, painting and learning, than in flea markets and "junk holes," rummaging for objects on which to paint. All of her paintings are original and are never reproduced in any form. Allee relies on her business background to market and promote her paintings, which can be found hanging in homes and businesses across the country.





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Sharing stories that move us and make us