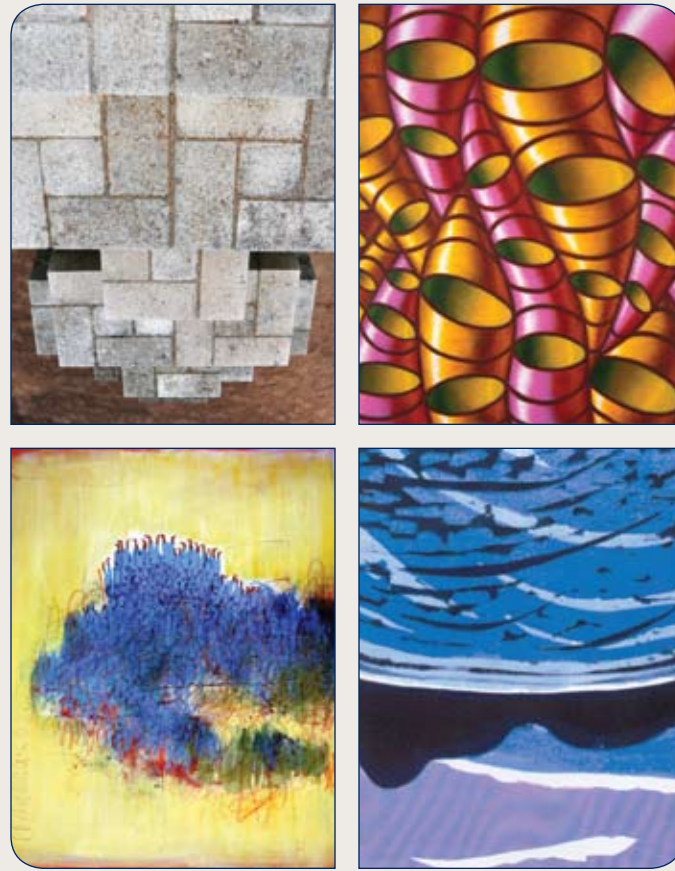


art@umuc
FALL 2009

News and perspectives
for friends of the arts

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ARTS PROGRAMS UPDATES

Get the latest updates on
the UMUC Arts Program. Visit
www.umuc.edu/art/newsonline

On cover (clockwise from left): 1 Bobby Donovan, *Lakeside*, woodcut, 12 x 12" 2 Francks François Décéus, *Pilgrimage #23*, 2007, mixed media on canvas, 32 x 40" 3 Craig Colony, *Colony*, 2009, acrylic on canvas, 36 x 36" 4 Neal K. Hill, view from the top of Sol LeWitt pyramid

GREETINGS from the President

Dear Friend,

As president of University of Maryland University College (UMUC), I am always delighted to have the opportunity to promote UMUC's mission—to offer top-quality educational opportunities to adult students in Maryland, the nation, and the world. Many of you have heard me say that the Arts Program continuously provides unique opportunities for lifelong learning, and this season has been no different.

I am especially proud that we have once again been able to showcase Maryland's contemporary art teachers and teaching artists in the *Maryland Artist/Teacher Institute (MATI) 2009 Exhibition*. Exhibitions like *MATI* serve as a reminder that whether we take courses or not, we all have the opportunity to be students, no matter whose works we view or the context in which we view them. I envision this type of cooperation between UMUC and the community continuing so that together we may bring art into more and more lives.

Finally, if you haven't become a Friend of the Arts yet, please consider doing so. The Friends of the Arts program provides a unique opportunity for individuals with a shared interest in art to explore that interest in an academic setting. UMUC has especially impressive fall and spring seasons planned, and I hope to see you at one of our upcoming exhibition openings. Thank you for your continued support.

Sincerely,

Susan C. Aldridge

Susan C. Aldridge, PhD
President, University of Maryland University College



TISHA PHOTOGRAPHY

GREETINGS from the Chair

Dear Friend,

The UMUC Arts Program is busy working to bring a rich variety of new art exhibitions to the community this academic year. Our first exhibition of the season will give you a look at the type of intriguing relationship that can form between two artists and their art. *With These Hands: The Sculptures of Sy Gresser and Bill Taylor* showcases hand carvings that reflect Gresser and Taylor's half-century of friendship and artistic expression.

In January we will launch *Mind, Body, and Spirit: Celebrating Regional Women Artists*, an exhibition designed to give viewers an expansive look at the types of works female artists from our area are creating and to examine these works in a greater context.

This March, in the same vein as last year's highly successful *Color in Freedom* symposium, UMUC and the David C. Driskell Center for the Study of Visual Arts and Culture of African Americans and the African Diaspora will feature *Autobiography/Performance/Identity: A Symposium of African American and African Diasporan Women in the Visual Arts*. A two-day educational symposium will complement the art exhibition.

I'm sure we will see you at one or all of our upcoming events. In the meantime, be sure to visit www.umuc.edu/art for the most up-to-date information about the Arts Program and our exhibitions. Thank you for supporting the arts.

Sincerely,

Sharon Smith Holston

Sharon Smith Holston
Chair, Art Advisory Board, University of Maryland University College



TISHA PHOTOGRAPHY

PRESORTED
FIRST CLASS
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In Search of Bobby Donovan

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF ARTS PROGRAM AT UMUC,
ARTIST, ART HISTORIAN, EDUCATOR, AND ART ACTIVIST

This article grew out of a visit to the rolling hills of Frederick, Maryland. I participated in a figure drawing class at the Hyattstown Mill Arts Project in Little Bennett Regional Park in an old mill and the miller's house, where the Saturday informal art class was held. In charge was Bobby Donovan, assistant director of UMUC's Arts Program, who sketched along with the rest of us from a live model. Some in the class were accomplished artists; a few of us, more like amateurs.

After the class, at my earlier request, Bobby showed me around in his home and studio a few miles away. The sprawling modern house has an enormous separate studio that overlooks part of some 20 acres of land that Bobby and his lovely wife Cyndi, a health care professional and a fine artist herself, call "The Farm." Here, as I understood, Bobby has a long-term plan to establish a vineyard, starting this year with 500 or so saplings on the grassy hill adjacent to his studio. We had a delicious lunch in the house, which has a wraparound porch that overlooks the woods, where on summer days and

evenings the birds chirp, the crickets sing, and the tree toads let out deep, throaty sounds.

Recently I asked Bobby to let me follow up on that visit in March with another discussion, in the form of an interview. I was let into so much of Bobby's life and art that very few are privileged to know, even here at UMUC. I thought I should share some of the information with others.

EA: Bobby, tell me about yourself. Where are you coming from artistically and intellectually? What I have seen in your studio put me totally at awe. You are at the peak of your career as an artist. How did this happen?

BD: I was always involved with art, even as a child. I was raised outside of Boston, so it was Boston's Museum of Fine Arts where I first learned about art firsthand. I admired first the art of John Singleton Copley—I was fascinated by his fully realistic style. I also came to admire the wonderful van Goghs and Gauguins in the

collection. At the Gardner Museum, there is a fantastic Titian—*The Rape of Europa*—that is still one of my favorite paintings. As a teenager, I studied through books the art of Leonardo, Michelangelo, and Raphael, and I began to realize that art can be more than skillful realism. I discovered the psychological and symbolic elements that permeate all good art. I studied Frans Hals and John Singer Sargent for their manipulation of the brush and the Nabis member Pierre Bonnard for his technical proficiency with color and light. When I came to Washington, I was captivated by the Bonnards at the Phillips and Matisse's *Studio, Quai St. Michel* is an absolutely beautiful painting.

I am fond of Marsden Hartley, whose Mount Katahdin in the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., moves me every time I see it. My primary interest, however, was German expressionism. I took from the German artists their intensity of form and color as well as their emotional involvement with their subjects, all for expressive purposes. These artists had their minds, hearts, and the world at their core.

I went to art school. I received my BFA from a small art college in New Bedford, Massachusetts, the Swain School of Design, which at that time was the second oldest art school in the United States. Since then it has been absorbed by the University of Massachusetts. The college only had 200 pupils, and as you can imagine we students had great personal relationships and interaction with our professors. Actually, I had started out as an English major at the University of Massachusetts at South Dartmouth before attending Swain. I always had an interest in literature and felt that it would be better if I expanded my education to something outside of my intended discipline. It took me a year and a half to realize I would be better served studying in art school. Swain had some wonderful English teachers. I studied with the grandson

of Joyce Kilmer—not to say that Joyce Kilmer is our best American poet.

After my BFA, I came to Washington, D.C., and began my master's program at American University. A wonderful advisor in painting, Helen Herzberg, was really helpful to me. I knew after two years, though, that the arts program was not that I wanted. German expressionism was not appreciated. I found the program very narrowly focused on rather conservative painters. In the meantime, I rented a studio in the city and was active in the art community. Soon I met Jacob Kainen, who was a very well-known and well-respected artist and curator formerly with the Smithsonian's old Division of Graphic Arts at the U. S. National Museum and later curator at the Smithsonian American Art Museum (then the National Museum of American Art). He was instrumental in developing their 20th century print collection. Our close relationship lasted for 21 years, until his death in 2001. I was deeply inspired by his clean, "soft-edge" minimalist color field paintings. He, of course, never considered himself a color field artist. Jacob was a strong influence on me. He had the most perceptive and expansive intellect. I went through other influences as I developed my own style: Willem de Kooning and Arshile Gorky, both of whom Jacob was friends with, and certainly Picasso, to mention a few.

EA: Bobby, you are not only a painter but a printmaker and sculptor. Is working with any one medium more important than the other?

BD: They are on the same level of importance. While I cannot "put down" a painting, I can work on printmaking, woodcuts, in small amounts of time with some interruptions.

EA: How about sculpture?

BD: I did a lot of environmental sculpture in the 1980s and early 1990s. I built sculptures in remote areas, experimenting with the landscape. I wanted to take sculpture out from the gallery context into the landscape. I considered that if my sculptures were not vandalized then I was successful. It meant that the few people who may have encountered them didn't interpret them as art, but rather thought they had a practical perhaps scientific purpose. And it was fine if no one saw them and they simply decom-

posed out there. I create art not to pursue fame or even financial gain necessarily, but rather to enjoy the act of creation. I want my daughter Carrie to remember that her father set an example by pursuing what was important to him.

EA: Bobby, you are so involved with art advocacy and building relationships between your community and the larger art world out there. You obviously must have explored these interests in your years in Washington, D.C. I witnessed some of your action through the Hyattstown Mill Arts Project. What is the Arts Project?

BD: I started art advocacy as soon as I got to Washington in 1978. In the 1980s with other artists we organized exhibitions, some that went abroad. A fine colleague, Kathy Keeler, was instrumental in this activity. To date, I have organized as many as 60 shows. I also brought together a salon of artists and writers in the early '90s after I moved to Frederick. We met together monthly for approximately 12 years. I always felt that collective sharing is very important, that it has a human element to it. It is the shared experience of art that gives us common understanding and nurtures us spiritually.

I direct the Hyattstown Mill Arts Project, which was established in 1999 as a community-based, nonprofit cultural arts organization. We operate a gallery space and performance center for literary and musical events in the actual mill, a two-story structure, through spring into fall. We pause for the winter, since the place is without heat. We hold Saturday art classes and other events year-round in the miller's house, of which Cyndi and I are caretakers. Our community outreach involves several different directions. We have collaborated with the Arc of Montgomery County, an organization that has supported people with developmental disabilities and their families since 1958. Also we work with the Red Wiggler Community Farm, giving disabled adults a chance for exercising their creativity in a directed way with various activities. The Arts Project has numerous events such as exhibitions, literary events, poetry readings, musical events, film, and an annual road show to exhibit sculpture.

EA: I understand that the Arts Project is under the supervision and directive of the Montgomery County, Maryland, Government and the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning

Commission. Are you holding any county-related office that helps you in your advocacy?

BD: No. However, I am involved in art advocacy within the county. I recently served as chair of the art education committee for the Arts and Humanities Council of Montgomery County. I have been on the council's board of directors for five years. The folks at the council are absolutely dedicated to the arts in the county, as they contribute to a quality of life to county citizens. Art education is, of course, key to any advocacy effort, particularly in the current economic situation, where it is tempting to cut budgets. It is important for all of us to recognize what a gift and what learning tools the arts are. There are so many skills the arts provide young people—critical thinking, problem solving, social interaction, and a sense of self-worth and accomplishment. My daughter grew up with music, attended an arts magnet high school, and is now a musician. What a wonderful thing for her and for all of us!

EA: Thank you very much for the soulful conversation and above all for having me as a guest at the Hyattstown Mill Arts Project and inspiring me to pick up the charcoal again. I am happy to say, I joined as a member. I also want to thank you for defining so eloquently what art advocacy means through letting me in on your own actions.

Let me close with an excerpt from a letter the president of the UMUC Art Advisory Board sent to all members some time ago. I believe it reflects Bobby's role not only in the Maryland Sister States Program, which it addresses, but also his role in the greater UMUC art community. The letter included a quote from June 2007 by Richard A. Mosher, chair of the executive committee of the Kanagawa Prefecture. Mosher said, "Central to all [making the exhibition with all its complex components possible] is the role of Mr. Robert Donovan. Without his expertise and capacity for collaboration, leadership, and action, we never would have been able to see the achievement already accomplished and progress toward the completion of the project."

■ By Eva J. Allen, PhD, collegiate professor of art history and Art Advisory Board member, University of Maryland University College



Bobby Donovan, *Underwater Subdivions*, 1990, wood and aluminum, 12' x 3,960'

Francks
François
Décéus



An Artist
in Two Worlds



Francks François Décéus (born in Port-au-Prince, Haiti) has developed a style of painting that has matured to become a unique and detailed expression of his complicated personality and what he deems important about the world that he lives in. There is a consistency of purpose in his palette in concert with a sophisticated balancing act that he performs with grace and ease in wedding the figurative elements with abstract points of departure. "Stylistically his work incorporates many of the influences and aesthetic forms of the '40s and '50s visual artists like William Johnson and Jacob Lawrence, and unconsciously reverberates with some of the artistic strains of his native Haiti. His modernist style combines figurative, abstract, and layered elements and relies heavily on a simplification of form and function ... Décéus's work would be characterized by his semiotic economy, his minimalist use of imagery and his deliberately limited palette range within series of work," according to an article produced by the Avisca Fine Art Gallery.

His current series, *Pilgrimage from Scattered Points*, is a perfect example of his forging a new path of creativity and subject matter. His new focus involves migrations and pilgrimages of people of the African diaspora, which have certain signature guideposts in history that Décéus references in this series. This body of work acknowledges the Middle Passage (which originally created the African diaspora), the "Great Migration" of the African American from the American south to the north during the 1920s and 1930s, to directly engaging the issues of our new global world order, one that includes the Obama presidency. Décéus is also concerned with viewing the world as an interconnected village of people who are continually on the move and unencumbered by country

affiliations. Originally hailing from Haiti at the age of 11, Décéus is an American transplant who has made his home in Brooklyn, New York. Thus, he is intimately familiar with the idea of having to learn and experience a new society, one that can be at once exhilarating and daunting. Like many of his contemporary art colleagues such as African British artists Chris Ofili and Yinka Shonibare and African American painter Kehinde Wiley, Décéus seeks to go beyond race and fixed location and to unite the global community through art, politics, and cultural conversations in order to challenge viewers to a broader examination of humanity through prisms including history, humor, irony, fantasy, and sometimes stark honesty.

In works such as *Pilgrimage #23* (2007), the viewer is confronted with a blue abstract mass of color that slowly and deliberately begins to manifest itself into singular human forms that explains that this moving mass is composed of individuals on a pilgrimage with a purpose. Is this mass movement related to the recent overwhelming acknowledgement of Barack Obama's presidential win? Perhaps these figures are standing strong in their conviction to make the world a fairer and more just place to exist in peace and prosperity.

Francks Décéus's respect for art history and the foremost Modernists coexists with an iconoclastic irreverence fueled by his omnivorous visual appetite, which is stimulated equally by "high" art and popular culture. In *Invisible Man #4* (2008), Décéus has chosen to reference one of the seminal texts in African American literature, *Invisible Man* (1952) by Ralph Ellison. His version shows us the dark basement illuminated with different light sources and shows a small group of people fully consumed by the

energy source, stolen from the electric company. These lights have seemingly hypnotized them as though they were moths to a flame. The lights serve to illuminate not only the characters' underground dwelling, but also the truth of their existence. Ellison explains that, "Light confirms [their] reality, gives birth to [their] form . . . Without light [they are] not only invisible but formless as well; and to be unaware of one's form is to live a death . . . The truth is the light and light is the truth." The collage is set against a black background, which enhances the immediacy of the viewer participation. One might say that in this work the artist is attempting to make sense out of these lives, experiences, and positions in American society.

In 1998, Francks Décéus was profiled in the historic publication *International Review of African American Art* as "one of the leading young modern painters of his generation." He was also featured in the book *100 New York Painters* by Cynthia M. Dantzie and Quinn Eli's book *African-American Wisdom* in 2003. In addition to these publications, Décéus has appeared in numerous magazines and news articles including Leslie Lockhart's "Haitian Refugee" article in *Upscale Magazine* (August 2004) and Alice Richardson's "Wheelbarrow People is a Recollection of His Childhood" article in the *New York Amsterdam News* (April 1997). Francks Francios Décéus has many solo and group exhibitions to his credit such as the Salina Gallery in New York, Tilford Art Group in California, Macoda Museum in New York, Brooklyn Museum of Art in New York, The National Civil Rights Museum in Tennessee, and Aljira Center for Contemporary Art in New Jersey.

■ By Terrell Tilford, scholar, and Melvin A. Marshall, art historian

A VISIT TO FUNDACIÓN MONTENMEDIO ARTE CONTEMPORÁNEO, Cádiz, Spain

On a beautiful spring day in southern Spain, I brought one of my UMUC art classes from the Rota Naval Base to the Fundación Montenmedio Arte Contemporáneo (NMAC) sculpture park. I had learned of the NMAC Foundation from my wife, who had brought her Department of Defense Dependents Schools (DODDS) elementary school class to the foundation's learning center for a workshop and tour of the artworks. Tucked away in the rolling hills of southwest-

ern Spain, NMAC is a hidden treasure chest of contemporary, conceptually based art. Founded by Jimena Blazquez Abascal on a generous tract of land donated by her family, NMAC is devoted to providing the resources to sponsor projects by both established and emerging contemporary artists. The foundation's mission is to provide a setting where artists and the public can reflect on and communicate about the interrelationships of people of diverse cultures within the context

of the site-specific environment of the foundation's land. Situated near the Atlantic Ocean, the Mediterranean Sea, and the continent of Africa, in pristine coastal chaparral, the center is in a unique position to encourage and engage artists and the public in environmentally and socially conscious dialogue. Between the workshops, guided tours, musical performances, openings, and the expanding collection of more than 40 works, the center is truly accomplishing its goals. *Continued...*

Did YOU KNOW?

LITTLE-KNOWN FACTS ABOUT ARTISTS WITH WORKS EXHIBITED AT UMUC By Linda Derrick

Did you know painter Simon Gouverneur was inspired by his study of the lusona mathematical design drawings of the Tchokwe people of northern Angola? *Ars Combinatoria*, Gouverneur's colorfully rhythmic painting, is on display on the second floor of the Inn and Conference Center.

Did you know exhibiting artist Susan Percy worked as a labor organizer with César Chávez's United Farm Workers Union in the 1970s to create a series of woodcuts and linocuts to illustrate their publications and tracts? Percy's pastel drawings are on display at the Inn and Conference Center.

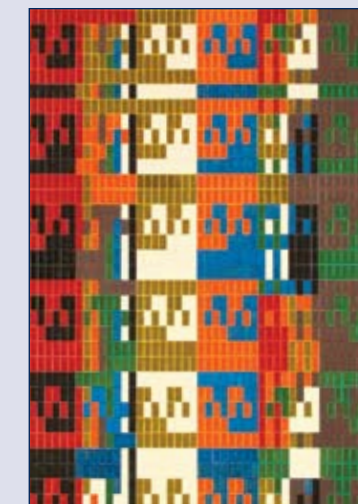
Did you know Patrick Craig's painting *Pharaohs Key* was exhibited in Moscow's Tretykov Museum? *Pharaohs Key* is installed in the main stairwell of the Student and Faculty Services Center.

Did you know photographer Don Kneessi played football for the Rochester Institute of Technology Tigers? UMUC owns a number of Kneessi's photographic prints, including *The Kruzanshtern* from his tall ships series. *The Kruzanshtern* sails the walls of the Inn and Conference Center's East corridor.

Did you know artist Trace Miller once worked as a flight attendant? Miller's large painting *Moving Away* is on display in the west lobby of the Inn and Conference Center.

Did you know sculptor Chris Gardner constructed a 25-foot steel sculpture titled *Celebration* for the town of Little Falls, New York? Chris's *Breaking the Mold*, a large, steel, red and black sculpture, is on permanent display in the Mt. Claire courtyard.

Did you know it was a meeting with Herman Maril that inspired Ruth Baer Levy to begin painting? Levy's painting *The Escalator* is on display in the main concourse of the Inn and Conference Center.



Left: Simon Gouverneur, *Ars Combinatoria*, 1984, oil on canvas, 80¼ x 42½"; Right: Susan Percy, *Boycott Lettuce*, 1972, linocut, 5 x 7"



Begona Rey of NMAC leads a discussion with UMUC students in Gunilla Bandolin's amphitheater. Photography: Neal K. Hill

After completing a course of study in art history at the American University of Paris, Blazquez Abascal continued her work in fine art by working for the Picasso Museum in Paris and with international art consultant Marc Blondeau. Wishing to create a center of her own, she continued her studies with a self-generated world tour of sculpture gardens, including the Wanås Foundation in Sweden, Fondation Maeght in France, Kanazawa Kenrokuen Garden in Japan and Storm King Art Center in New York. In 2000, she opened her foundation in Cádiz, Spain.

The foundation's international committee decides which artists and works are to be added to the collection. One of the cornerstone projects is a large-scale sculpture by the late American artist

Sol LeWitt. Known as one of the founders of conceptual art, LeWitt's contribution to the garden is a pyramid constructed of cement blocks that echo the signature cubic forms of his paintings and drawings. The structure is designed in symmetrical zigzag patterns that are reminiscent of Mayan temples and Sumerian Ziggurats. One can climb the work and gain a view of the surrounding land from an elevated altitude, which may provide a new perspective for the adventurous.

One of the other works popular with the group of visiting students I escorted to the park was the white, cement amphitheater created by Gunilla Bandolin of Stockholm. This work invites the audience to become part of it by sitting within its well of light and sound. Nature is all around you, and a view of the sky is present within the central reflecting pool. One can reflect upon ancient civilizations, the surrounding villages, the sky above, or the members of the immediate group sharing the experience. Cultural, environmental, and historical elements intermingle, providing sources for interpersonal and intrapersonal dialogue.

The foundation's most recent project is a sky space by James Turrell. If you are not familiar with Turrell's work, I highly recommend you take a look. His work will change you. He brings the light of our universe to within our grasp. The project will open May 30, 2010, and will be open to the public for generations to come.

■ By Richard C. Gruetter, collegiate professor of art and art history, University of Maryland University College

UPCOMING EVENTS

WITH THESE HANDS: THE SCULPTURES OF SY GRESSER AND BILL TAYLOR

Tuesday, September 15–
Tuesday, December 15, 2009

MIND, BODY, AND SPIRIT: CELEBRATING REGIONAL WOMEN ARTISTS

Monday, January 18–
Sunday, March 14, 2010

Opening Reception:

Sunday, January 31, 2010
3–5 p.m.
Arts Program Gallery

AUTOBIOGRAPHY/PERFORMANCE/IDENTITY: A SYMPOSIUM OF AFRICAN AMERICAN AND AFRICAN DIASPORAN WOMEN IN THE VISUAL ARTS

Friday–Saturday, March 5–6, 2010

The David C. Driskell Center for the Study of Visual Arts and Culture of African Americans and the African Diaspora

CELEBRATING A LEGACY: HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE DORIS PATZ COLLECTION OF MARYLAND ARTISTS

Thursday, March 25–
Sunday, May 2, 2010

Opening Reception:

Sunday, April 4, 2010
3–5 p.m.
Arts Program Gallery

2010 FACULTY ART INVITATIONAL EXHIBITION

Monday, May 10–
Sunday, June 20, 2010

Reception:

Thursday, May 27, 2010
6–8 p.m.
Arts Program Gallery

UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND UNIVERSITY COLLEGE ARTS PROGRAM MISSION STATEMENT

The Arts Program at University of Maryland University College (UMUC) creates an environment in which its diverse constituents, including members of the university community and the general public, can study and learn about art by directly experiencing it. The Arts Program seeks to promote the university's core values and to provide educational opportunities for lifelong learning. From the research and study of works of art to the teaching applications of each of our exhibitions, the Arts Program will play an increasing role in academic life at the university. With a regional and national focus, the Arts Program is dedicated to the acquisition, preservation, study, exhibition, and interpretation of works of art of the highest quality in a variety of media that represent its constituents and to continuing its historic dedication to Maryland and Asian art.



BECOME A FRIEND OF THE ARTS AT UMUC

Art enthusiasts in the University of Maryland University College (UMUC) community help make UMUC's visual arts exhibitions, educational lectures, book signings, symposiums, and meet-the-artist receptions possible. Through the Friends of the Arts program, our biggest supporters enjoy a variety of benefits as a thank you for helping UMUC's art program become one of the most recognized in Maryland.

Simply commit to making an annual contribution at one of the following levels and you can join our growing list of friends. To join, visit www.umuc.edu/art and click on "Join the Friends of the Arts Program," call 240-684-5100, or complete and return the registration form below.

Associate (less than \$35)

Name recognition in the arts newsletter, invitation to exhibit openings

Friend – (\$35–\$99)

Above benefits, plus 10 percent discount on specialty items produced by the Arts Program, 10 percent discount on tickets to nonfundraising events, Arts Program lapel pin

Bronze-Level Friend (\$100–\$249)

Above benefits, plus autographed poster from the collection

Silver-Level Friend (\$250–\$499)

Above benefits, plus name recognition on the donor's wall in the Arts Program Gallery

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Above benefits, plus full-color art catalog from a major UMUC art exhibition

Platinum-Level Friend (\$1,000–\$2,499)

Above benefits, plus VIP invitation to dinner with the guest artist and the university president, 10 percent discount on breakfast or lunch and 15 percent discount on dinner at the Marriott Garden Restaurant at the UMUC Inn and Conference Center

Citrine-Level Friend (\$2,500–\$4,999)

Above benefits, plus corporate name and logo listing on UMUC Arts Program Web page, name and logo listing on all printed materials for exhibitions and public relations materials for the season

Sapphire-Level Friend (\$5,000 and more)

Above benefits, plus a corporate art exhibition by a local artist coordinated by UMUC (Special requirements apply; see www.umuc.edu/art for details.)

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