

Acadiana Center for the Arts awards \$50,000 to local artists



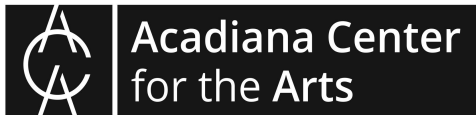
ArtSpark



LAFAYETTE, LA - Friday March 29, 2024 - At an event last night, nine Acadiana artists were announced as the 2024 cohort for Acadiana Center for the Arts individual artist funding program, ArtSpark.

This year, the ArtSpark program expanded with additional support from Lafayette Economic Development Authority (LEDA) and with new support from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). A total of \$50,000 was available for distribution, doubled from 2023, for the support of artists, musicians and other creative entrepreneurs in the advancement of their careers via project based or professional development opportunities.

“Acadiana is marked by incredible talent in art, music, and every creative field, but those industries need investment to grow”, says AcA Executive Director, Samuel Oliver. “The ArtSpark grants help grow local creative careers—from the emerging artist to the mature creative professional. AcA is



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Rachel Adams, Marketing Manager

<rachel@acadianacenterforthearts.org>

Phone: 337-233-7060

thrilled to support these nine creatives in 2024 thanks to our partnership with LEDA and the National Endowment for the Arts.”

Artists submit a project proposal and budget through an open application, and an independent panel (made up of artists, business professionals, educators, and diverse community members) reviews them and makes recommendations for how the available funding should be awarded in order to make the greatest impact. The panelists this year were:

- Daniela Mattes, a Saint Martinville resident with a background in Theatre, Literature and Music and a current Cité des Arts board member.
- Joe Dupree-Anderson, the former Chief of Minority Affairs at Lafayette Consolidated Government and current podcast host.
- Victoria-Kathryn Woods, a current University of Louisiana at Lafayette graduate student with a Bachelor’s of Science in Biology and a minor in Black and African Diaspora Studies.
- John “Alex” McBride, a Church Point resident and an Assistant Professor of Dance with a background in arts administration and development.
- Rachel Nederveld, a former recipient of ArtSpark and media producer.
- Katherine Nebel, Opportunity Machine’s Development Manager and LEDA’s representative.

Mandi Mitchell, LEDA President and CEO said that “LEDA is happy to continue the organization’s support of ArtSpark, the AcA, and a diverse cast of local artists. Acadiana’s vibrant arts community continues to be a cornerstone of the region’s quality of life and of the regional economy. Each artist, musician, filmmaker, sculptor, photographer, and maker is a small business that adds to our rich cultural economy.”

The recipients include two emerging artists, three mid-career artists and four mature artists in a variety of disciplines. Nhi Nho, an emerging artist will be creating 3 needle felt sculptures that represent his battle with identity as a trans man and second generation Vietnamese immigrant. One of the mid-career artists includes Milton Arcenaux, a local photographer and Creole culture advocate who will be creating the second edition of his Creole Culture Project coffee table book honoring Creole community members from Louisiana's Acadiana's 8-Parish Region. Denise Gallagher, an ArtSpark awardee from 2019, has again been awarded and will this cycle be adapting her children’s book *A Tip Tap Tale* into a musical theatre production.

A full list of recipients and details of their projects can be found below.

The 2024 ArtSpark recipients and their projects:

(Also: [Recipient Headshots](#))

Early Career Artists (5 years or less of documented experience)

Martha Garner

Martha’s project will be the creation of ten surrealist collages showing threats to the Louisiana environment and its future. Each collage will be accompanied by a title card with a brief explanation of the threat and a QR code leading to potential solutions. These collages will be visually striking and create interest around climate change and preserving the



**Acadiana Center
for the Arts**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Rachel Adams, Marketing Manager

<rachel@acadianacenterforthearts.org>

Phone: 337-233-7060

environment.

Email: mgarner70506@gmail.com

Nhi Ngo

Nhi will create three large needle felt sculptures to be displayed in an exhibit. The artist will have an immersive gallery experience that invites visitors to engage not only visually but also through touch. By encouraging tactile exploration, the exhibit would foster a deeper connection between the audience and the artwork.

Email: nhiyngo@gmail.com

Mid-Career Artists (5-15 years of documented experience)

Anne Bujold

Anne is creating a site-specific work for this year's Art and Nature Halloween Festival that combines metal sculpture and native plants that responds to the needs of bees. Working with UL Biology graduate student Kimberly Hamm, the artist has identified a selection of native flowers and the bees that rely on them. Hamm's work entails creating garden sites which attract pollinators. This installation is a circle with a 10 feet diameter, cultivated with plants chosen for their importance to specific bee populations. These plants include, but are not limited to, rattlesnake master, swamp rose mallow, bee balm, compass plant, rosinweed, yellow coneflower, blanketflower, and ashy sunflower. We have selected these to attract specific bees including the hibiscus bee, leaf cutter bee, Eastern bumble bee, two-spotted longhorn bee, sweat bee, Eastern carpenter bee, and the American bumble bee. Planting intentionally, the composition will create a seasonal ebb and flow, creating an annual "clock," although many of these plants will flower throughout the summer months.

Email: annebujold@gmail.com

Abigail Waters

Abigail will use funding for the post-production of a 15-min experimental short film *Until the Real Thing Comes Along...* which includes working with a local editor, sound designer and colorist to complete and screen in the community. This short was devised as a narrative-clown piece which explores "love" in its many forms by addressing a concept gleaned from the artist's buffon studies in French physical theater: "things coming together and things coming apart".

Email: abbywatersproduction@gmail.com

Milton Arceneaux

Milton will be producing the Creole Culture Project's second exhibition featuring impactful black and white fine art photographs of 20 distinguished Honorees from Louisiana's Acadiana's 8-Parish Region. Additionally, the exhibit includes five vibrant fine art portraits in color capturing the essence of Black Masking Indians of Louisiana in regalia. This visual celebration is immortalized in a 12X16 Coffee Table Book.

Email: milton@creoleculture.com

Mature Career Artists (more than 15 years of documented experience)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Rachel Adams, Marketing Manager

<rachel@acadianacenterforthearts.org>

Phone: 337-233-7060

Denise Gallagher

Denise will be producing a children's musical based on her picture book, "A Tip Tap Tale". The ArtSpark The grant, will be used to write a theatrical adaptation of the book that includes songs and lyrics, working with a musician to compose music and work with Wonderland Performing Arts to host a FREE 4-day workshop for 15 children ages 8-12, where they will bring "A Tip Tap Tale" from page to stage. The workshop will culminate in a thirty-minute musical performance, FREE to the public.

Email: denise@denisegallagher.com

Bryant Benoit

Bryant will create a series of contemporary black art portraits of influential leaders and pioneers in the Black culture. These new paintings will have different color palettes and more monotone backgrounds, which is a contrast from his current body of work. Bryant will stretch his skills and growth with painting and collaging faces/figures.

Email: benoitgallery@yahoo.com

Jessalyn Newton

Circa 1994, Breaux Bridge High Cheerleaders post banners on a wall in downtown Breaux Bridge, LA, announcing Football glory with whimsically illustrated banners of battling mascots. The issue of managing the 'birthday wall', includes challenges such as cleaning older signs, removing tape residue, and establishing organization. Addressing these concerns through the beautification of the space is imperative. The solution involves creating a 1500-square-foot interactive mural showcasing the community's collaborative evolution in message-sharing. Drawing inspiration from three decades of connecting with the community through this beloved wall, the mural design represents the next phase in its evolution, incorporating elements of spoken and written languages for an inclusive representation of the community.

Email: jessnewtonartist@gmail.com

Yeon Choi

This project will bring to life a 5-6 minute animated film titled "Memories of the Little Pond." Through digital animation, it serves as a poignant reflection on the pain and sorrow endured by those who lost family members and homes during the Korean War. The narrative unfolds through the perspective of a little girl who not only loses her close friend but also her childlike imagination in the aftermath of the war. The metaphorical significance of the little pond extends to encompass the village, homes, and the essence of happiness for its inhabitants.

Email: yeonchoiart@gmail.com

About Acadiana Center for the Arts (AcA)

As the community leader in arts and culture, AcA serves to bring elevating arts experiences to the people of Acadiana through many approaches including holding public concerts, presenting art exhibitions, providing grants to artists and cultural organizations, and bringing artists into schools across the region. AcA brings equitable access to the arts through year-round education and outreach activities and aims to build a more sustainable cultural ecosystem for future generations in Acadiana.