

ARTS UNITED

FALL 2023



ARTS UNITED

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 South Fulton Institute
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A Play Reading Series
BEYOND THE PAGE



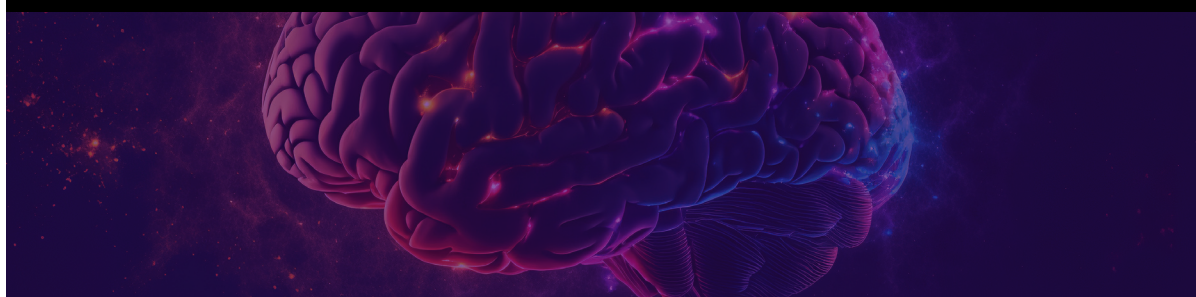
NATIVE GARDENS

BY **KAREN ZACARÍAS** DIRECTED BY **JENNIFER BAUER-LYONS**
SEPT 22-30, 2023



The MOUNTAINTOP

BY **KATORI HALL** DIRECTED BY **JADE LAMBERT-SMITH**
NOV 3-12, 2023



SMART PEOPLE

BY **LYDIA R. DIAMOND**
MAR 15-23, 2024

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Courageous Conversations:

EMPOWERING THE SOUTH FULTON COMMUNITY THROUGH ART

BY MADELINE LIVINGSTON

In the modern, digital-driven era, the power of community, conversation, and connectivity is more critical than ever. Recognizing this, the South Fulton Institute has introduced an innovative program called Courageous Conversations. Specifically designed to uplift and empower the underserved community of South Fulton County, Courageous Conversations harnesses the power of art as an instrument for social change, personal expression, and community cohesion.

Courageous Conversations comprises five distinct but interrelated programs—Connect, Filmer, Exchange, Reflect, and Spark—each targeting a unique facet of community and engagement. Collectively, they aim to make the arts accessible, meaningful, and impactful for every resident of South Fulton County. “I designed Courageous Conversations as a gift to the South Fulton County Community: it is an opportunity to celebrate artists and engage and connect with the community while advocating for more resources to be dedicated to all art forms.” Jennifer Bauer-Lyons, SFI Executive Director.

The cornerstone of Courageous Conversations is Connect, a program designed to foster community bonds through theater Play Readings. Audience members are a part of a performance that strips away theatrical elements to bring communities together through dynamic discussions. Professional actors read the script of a play that examines topics that are relevant to the community. We then invite the community to participate by listening to the



American Son Playreading. (From L to R) Dr. Tiffany Russell, Lee Osorio, Zachary Tormey, Madeline Livingston, Tai Bennett, & Jade Lambert-Smith.

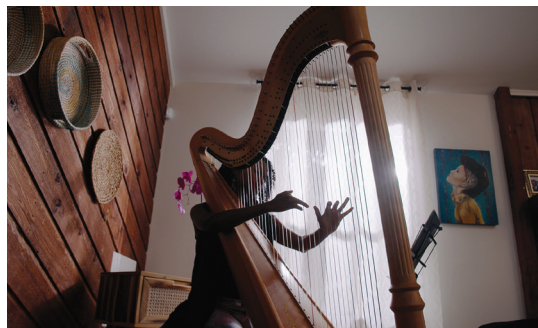
show and discussing the play with a subject matter expert facilitating the conversation creating a space for open dialogue about the themes and issues addressed in the play. This participatory structure encourages thoughtful interaction, empathy, and collective problem-solving.



Marquee at the Plaza Theatre for SFI's 2023 Filmer Premiere

Filmer has been one of our most impactful and engaging programs. It brings to life the untapped creative energy of emerging and established filmmakers by pairing them with artists from all over South Fulton County. The end products become the artists' collateral, an essential part of a creative professional's toolkit for success. The documentary, either about their person or process, gives them

a chance to speak about their work and leaves them with a solid asset to use in their future. Independent filmmakers benefit as well when paired with more established artists, giving them access to a subject they otherwise may never have had—all because of the engagement of South Fulton Institute. In 2023, we are working with five filmmakers and seven subjects. Ethan Payne will work with Soul Food Cypher and Art in the Paint; Dr. Arshley Emile will film artist Miriam Robinson and Executive Director Stephanie Owens of



Filmer's "Wave of Sound" harpist Angelica Hairston

NBAF; Ebony Blanding will film Cellist Jenn Cornell; Jonathan Banks will film Reentry Arts Connection as they work to lower southern

recidivism rates with art; and finally Will Feagins Jr. will film a visual and oral story of how graffiti writing in Atlanta began with Antar K. Fierce. These films not only highlight local filmmakers, but also local artists.

Exchange is designed to break down barriers and build bridges through shared artistic experiences. This innovative program welcomes artists and community members to come together, share their stories, and engage in meaningful dialogues. Exchange serves as a communal platform where art becomes the universal language, connecting individuals regardless of their background or experience. From captivating performances to interactive workshops and engaging artist talks, each event cultivates a dynamic atmosphere of learning, appreciation, and community bonding.

Reflect is a new program dedicated to nurturing new literary works at every stage of their development. By championing aspiring authors and offering essential guidance, we aim to cultivate a vibrant literary scene that reflects the community's values and aspirations. With private readings, feedback sessions, and captivating public readings and book launchings, this initiative will empower aspiring children's authors and enrich our society through the magic of storytelling.

Finally, “Spark,” is a riveting podcast dedicated to interviewing artists and arts leaders within our vibrant community. Each episode delves into the lives of these creatives, exploring their inspirations, their challenges, and their impact. You'll hear personal stories, artistic journeys, and unique perspectives that will ignite your own creativity. From musicians, to quilters, to poets, “Spark” brings the art scene to your ears, transforming your daily commute into a private art tour.



Quilter OV Brantley [Co-Founder of Atlanta Quilt Festival] at her Quilt Exhibit, Red & White Quilts.



Performing one of his pieces, Spoken word artist Adan Bean.

Courageous Conversations is more than a program; it's a movement aiming to employ the transformative power of art to effect positive, enduring change in the South Fulton community. By providing a platform for creative expression and dialogue, it empowers individuals, strengthens community bonds, and fosters an inclusive and understanding culture. The South Fulton Institute believes that everyone has a story to tell and a perspective to share. Through Courageous Conversations, they ensure that every voice has the chance to be heard.

ACADEMY THEATRE

BY MADELINE LIVINGSTON

Established in 1956, the Academy Theatre is a venerable institution in the American theatre landscape. As Atlanta's oldest theatrical organization, the Academy has been instrumental in the cultivation of talent that has transformed the performing arts landscape, most notably the Tony Award-winning director, Kenny Leon. Hapeville, Georgia now plays host to this magnificent theatre, representing a new chapter for the Academy while ensuring its legacy remains intact. This relocation isn't just about a change in address; it is a testament to the Academy's unwavering commitment to keeping history alive, particularly in the realm of theatre.

Historical theatres are more than bricks and mortar; they are living repositories of memories, stories, and cultural milestones. The walls of these establishments have absorbed the echo of countless lines, emotions, and applause, silently witnessing the evolution of both the art and its society. In safeguarding these venues, we ensure that the narratives of past generations remain accessible and that the continuum of artistic heritage remains unbroken.

But why is preserving these historical sites so paramount? Firstly, it's about building community. **Historical theatres like the Academy provide a communal space where shared experiences are crafted.** They are places where people gather, not just as passive audiences, but as active participants in a shared cultural event. The laughter, the tears, and the collective gasps during a performance foster a sense of unity, drawing communities closer.

Furthermore, **these theatres serve as landmarks, both architecturally and culturally.** Their distinct designs often reflect the architectural aesthetics of their time, making them visual treats for those interested in architectural history. Culturally, they stand as reminders of an era gone by, of artists long passed, and of stories that shaped generations. They are bridges that connect the modern world with its roots.

The importance of these theatres extends beyond the arts. **They play a pivotal role in local economies, drawing visitors and patrons, which in turn supports local businesses and fosters economic growth.** Thus, their survival and maintenance have a cascading effect on community well-being, from fostering a sense of identity to sustaining economic vitality.

The Academy Theatre's relocation to Hapeville is a shining example of this interplay between preservation and community building. By keeping the doors of this venerable institution open,

THE CORNERSTONE OF COMMUNITY AND PRESERVATION IN HAPEVILLE

Hapeville not only has a venue for outstanding performances but also a community hub, where citizens can congregate, share, and celebrate the magic of theatre.

As the Academy Theatre stands tall in Hapeville, it serves as a powerful reminder of why we must champion the preservation of historical theatres. These venues, with their rich tapestries of memories, stories, and cultural significance, are essential in binding communities together, reminding us of our shared history, and propelling us into a future enriched by the tales of our past.



Outside of Academy Theatre in downtown Hapeville, GA

THE LIVING TAPESTRY OF COMMUNITY AND ART

BY MADELINE LIVINGSTON

Community gardens are more than just cultivated plots of land; they emerge as dynamic art pieces that reflect the essence and vitality of a community. At their core, these gardens represent an intersection of nature and culture, offering a canvas upon which communities can paint their intricate stories, rich histories, experiences, and collective aspirations. Their role is twofold. Aesthetically, they uplift urban spaces, converting neglected corners into verdant oases. Socially, they act as melting pots where people from diverse backgrounds converge, share, and grow.

The beauty of a community garden is its ability to foster relationships. As neighbors come together, hands deep in soil, they're not just planting seeds for flora, but also for lasting connections and friendships. The mutual efforts spent in weeding, watering, and watching the fruits of their labor flourish become metaphors for community

building. The garden, in turn, becomes a shared space of pride, love, and continuous learning.

Taking this concept a step further is Black Art In America, a burgeoning art gallery nestled in East Point. This gallery doesn't just confine art within four walls. Instead, it expands its reach into the outdoors, creating an inclusive space where nature, art, and community blend seamlessly. Visitors to this garden are treated to an immersive artistic experience, where the tranquility of plants melds with evocative art pieces and sculptures. Each element, be it the rustling of leaves or the silent gaze of a statue, tells a story.

In essence, Black Art In America is not just a gallery; it's a testament to the harmonious relationship that can exist between nature, art, and community. It champions the idea that art is not passive; it's interactive, alive, and evolving. A visit to this splendid space offers individuals an enriching opportunity to witness a symphony of community spirit, artistic expression, and nature's embrace. I wholeheartedly encourage everyone to explore, engage with, and be inspired by this living tapestry of art and community.

Visit their website to shop art, support, and learn more:

www.blackartinamerica.com



Garden Art Space at Black Art In America



ROOTED IN BLACK ARTS LEGACY, ARTSXCHANGE BLOOMS IN EAST POINT

BY ANGELA OLIVER

A walk through the ArtsXchange is a feast for the senses. Vibrant artworks adorn the walls of the Jack Sinclair Gallery. The joyful giggles of children float around the click-clack of tap shoes running down the hall. Soul music crackles from Jim Alexander's record player, filling the building with rhythm and warmth. It's a fusion of the arts as unique and diverse as the people who create them. For 39 years, the ArtsXchange has been a gathering place for artists of all disciplines, and where the community can experience the arts through classes, festivals, performances, and free gallery exhibits. It empowers artists, social justice activists and creative entrepreneurs to engage communities with innovative artistic learning experiences and cultural exchange.

Since opening in East Point in 2018, the ArtsXchange has worked to deepen its roots and grow partnerships in its new neighborhood after 34 years in Grant Park. It is continuing Phase 2 of the Fresh Oasis Community Garden, offering garden beds for individuals and families amid a food desert, related classes, and composting, all as a small part of the city of East Point's inaugural urban agriculture plan. It is re-energizing its youth outreach and

And it remains true to its beginnings in art for the people's sake.

Executive Director Alice Lovelace co-founded The Arts Exchange (incorporated as the Southeast Community Cultural Center) in 1983 with activist, poet and WRFG founding member Ebon Dooley.

"We always viewed art as an integral component of culture and of the struggle for social and economic justice," she said. "Art can articulate these issues and allow us to unpack and simplify what they mean."

Dooley died in 2006, but his legacy carries on in the organization's Ebon Dooley Arts & Social Justice Awards, which honors those who merge arts and activism to advance the liberation of the people. Past winners include activist, actress and daughter of Hosea Williams, Elizabeth Omilami; jazz singer and Black Voters Matter co-founder Latosha Brown; the late storyteller and puppeteer Akbar Imhotep, and several others. The sixth annual event will be on Dec. 2.

The pair of friends molded the Arts Exchange into a staple of Atlanta's Black arts scene, and a grassroots institution that supports generations of artists while making art accessible to marginalized communities.

Now housed on nearly 4 acres, the Black-owned facility of 21,000 square feet—Jere A. Wells Elementary and Romar Academy before renovations—boasts the Paul Robeson Theater, a black box with proscenium stage; the Ebon Dooley Community Studio; a prep kitchen; and the Charles "Jikki" Riley Memorial Library (named for Lovelace's husband, a poet and musician). These are also affordable event rental spaces.



Board member Joyce Shepard and MC Kiplyn Primus of WCLK look on as muralist and art teacher Ashley Dopson, along with her daughter, accepts the Jack Sinclair Visual Artist Award during the fifth annual Ebon Dooley Arts & Social Justice Awards, Dec. 3, 2022.



ArtsXchange Executive Director Alice Lovelace, prolific photographer Jim Alexander, and leading architect Oscar Harris speak to a group of AUC students on their visit to the gallery to view Harris' Jazz & Spirituality exhibit. Sept. 2022.



And the backbone of the ArtsXchange is its 16 artist studios. It has been a launching pad for sought-after artists like Kevin Cole and Charmaine Minniefield. Currently, the artists range from photographers and muralists to a national slam poetry champion, djembe drummer, dance company, textile artist, and even a Kemeti yogi.

The past has a strong presence in the building. The organization never forgets its roots.

A cherished centerpiece photo of Nanette and Romare Bearden laughing as they descend the Neighborhood Arts Center steps hangs in the main hall. Further down are snapshots of life at the NAC, which the ArtsXchange sprang from after a fire in the 1980s.

Staying connected to the past helps the ArtsXchange embrace the future as the year includes partnerships with emerging youth programs that explore the relationship between art and digital technology.

Since its move and name change—the "X" represents a point of creative exchange with infinite possibilities—the ArtsXchange has grown to become the largest and most diverse arts services provider in South Fulton County.

As the ArtsXchange works to enrich the East Point community, it uses the arts as a keen tool in trying to solve society's most urgent problems.

So goes the motto of Lovelace, "Now is the time. Art is the way." —



Surrounded by family and friends, Kamille Mayes reacts after her video installation, "Overwhelmed," was announced as second place winner for the juried exhibition, Climate Change: Final Warning. Jack Sinclair Gallery, July 15, 2023.

THE HEALING PALETTE: HOW THE ARTS CONTRIBUTE TO SUSTAINING MENTAL HEALTH

BY MADELINE LIVINGSTON

Artistic expression, in its many forms, has long been recognized as a profound means of communication and emotion. However, the transformative power of the arts extends well beyond creating and appreciating beautiful works. Increasingly, evidence points to the significant role the arts can play in sustaining mental health and fostering psychological resilience. From visual arts to music, dance, and literature, engaging with the arts can serve as an essential tool in maintaining mental well-being.

Mental health challenges are complex, multifaceted issues, often requiring a holistic approach to wellness. Artistic engagement, both active and passive, can provide a unique, multidimensional pathway to emotional healing and mental health maintenance. **The cathartic process of creating art allows for the externalization of emotions, providing a safe medium through which individuals can explore and express feelings that may otherwise remain suppressed or unarticulated. This expression can foster self-awareness, promote emotional release, and reduce stress.**

For example, consider the process of painting or drawing. **These activities demand mindfulness, keeping us anchored in the present moment.** This focus on the here and now is a critical aspect of many forms of meditation, a practice known for stress-reducing benefits. Furthermore, creating visual art can provide a non-verbal channel of communication, allowing individuals to express complex emotions or experiences that words may not fully capture.



Students during art class at Bear Creek Middle School

Music, another vibrant aspect of the arts, also holds profound emotional resonance. **Listening to music can impact our mood, energize us, or provide comfort in challenging times.** Making music, whether by playing an instrument, singing, or participating in a drum circle, is an active engagement that can provide emotional release and enhance cognitive functions. Literature and writing, too, serve as powerful tools in sustaining mental health. **Reading literature can increase empathy, provide comfort through identification, and offer insights**



Students performing at a community concert for Challenge the Stats

into the human experience.

Writing, including journaling or crafting poetry, helps individuals articulate thoughts and feelings, bringing clarity and aiding in emotional regulation.

Dance and theater are dynamic, physical forms of artistic expression that not only boost mood through movement but also enhance self-confidence and social connections. Participating in dance or drama activities often involves collaboration, which can nurture a sense of belonging and help combat feelings of isolation, a major factor in many mental health issues.



A member of Soul Food Cypher during a spoken word presentation

Lastly, it's important to highlight the role of arts in therapy. **Art therapy is an established psychological discipline that uses the creative process to help individuals explore self-expression and, in doing so, address psychological, emotional, and developmental challenges.** Art therapists are trained professionals who can guide individuals through this process in a supportive environment, using arts as a vehicle for healing and understanding.

In conclusion, the arts' role in sustaining mental health is increasingly recognized and valued. Artistic engagement can offer emotional release, foster self-expression, promote mindfulness, enhance social connections, and serve as a profound tool in therapeutic contexts. As we continue to grapple with societal mental health challenges, it's clear that the arts aren't just a 'nice-to-have'; they're an essential part of the solution.

CALENDAR LISTINGS FALL 2023

ACADEMY THEATRE

www.academytheatre.org

EVERY SUNDAY 6:30-8:30 PM • ACADEMY THEATRE'S DIAMOND STAGE
SUNDAY VARIETY SERIES

SEPT 17 • 6:30-8:30 PM

CANYON LADIES PLAY THE MUSIC OF THE WOMEN OF LAUREL CANYON

Come and join us for an evening of our tribute to the amazing Ladies of the Laurel Canyon scene. Joni Mitchell, Carole King, Linda Ronstradt, Emmylou Harris, Bonnie Raitt, Judy Collins, Mamas & Papas, Jackie Deshannon and more! Enjoy singing along and dancing to these wonderful songs.

NOV 5, 6:30 PM - NOV 7, 8:30 PM

FRANK IS BACK AT THE ACADEMY

DEC 15, 7:30 PM • DEC 16, 2:30 PM

DEC 16, 7:30 • DEC 17, 2:30 PM

DEC 22, 7:30 PM • DEC 23, 2:30 PM

Cinderella: A Holiday Panto

Come laugh with *Cinderella*, the first Panto presented in Atlanta. It's a Celtic holiday tradition in which your favorite Aris actors make fun of our contemporary culture Python style with dancing horses, Men playing women, Women getting the best of them, pop songs you'll know, and it all ends well! Jon Ammerman directs this fantastic fun night of foibles!

SOUTH FULTON INSTITUTE

www.southfultoninstitute.org

SEPT 22-30 @ 7:30 PM • VARIOUS LOCATIONS

FREE READING • CONNECT: A PLAY READING SERIES

***Native Gardens* by Karen Zacarias • Directed by Jennifer Bauer-Lyons**

You can't choose your neighbors. In this brilliant new comedy, cultures and gardens clash, turning well-intentioned neighbors into feuding enemies. Pablo, a rising attorney, and doctoral candidate Tania, his very pregnant wife, have just purchased a home next to Frank and Virginia, a well-established D.C. couple with a prize-worthy English garden. But an impending barbeque for Pablo's colleagues and a delicate disagreement over a long-standing fence line soon spirals into an all-out border dispute, exposing both couples' notions of race, taste, class and privilege. Join us for this free reading.

OCT 19 • 7:30- 9:30 PM • GALLERY 992

Ignite: A Night of Spoken Word

Experience a night where words come alive, emotions resonate, and stories unfold. Join us for an enchanting evening of spoken word, featuring a diverse lineup of gifted artists ready to captivate your heart and stir your soul. Don't miss this celebration of voice, expression, and the magic of the spoken word.

NOV 3-11 @ 7:30 PM • VARIOUS LOCATIONS

FREE READING • CONNECT: A PLAY READING SERIES

***The Mountaintop* by Katori Hall • Directed by Jade Lambert-Smith**

The night before his assassination, Martin Luther King, Jr. returns to the Lorraine Hotel after delivering his last impassioned speech, I've Been to the Mountaintop. A mysterious maid delivers his room service, though she seems to have more on her agenda than a simple meal. As their conversation progresses, true intentions come to light in a story written to humanize Dr. King, to help us understand that you don't have to be superhuman to be a hero.

ARTSXCHANGE

www.artsxchange.org

SEPT 2-OCT 28 • OPENING RECEPTION ON SEPT 2, 6 PM

THE HAUNTS OF BLACK KIRBY: WORKS FROM THE DAWN OF AFROFUTURISM

An art gallery featuring artists Black Kirby-Stacey Robinson-John Jennings

SEPT 8 • OCT 13 • NOV 10 • DEC 8

XCHANGE OPEN MIC

Hosted by Theresa Davis with feature poets.

SEPT 9 • OCT 14 • NOV 11 • DEC 9 • 2-3 PM

SATURDAY WRITERS WORKSHOP - \$5

Featuring guest facilitators.

SEPT 13, 6-8 PM

PROCREATE COMMUNITY CLASS

Learn the basics and explore new techniques with Procreate. Bring your iPad, iPhone or any tablet and learn how to create on a digital platform. Tracey Murrell, visual artist. Ages 14 and up.

SEPT 16, 1-3 PM

INTRODUCTION TO COMIC BOOK ILLUSTRATION [YOUTH]

Taught by Marcus Williams, visual artist. Ages 10 & up

SEPT 24 • OCT 29 • 2-3 PM • **THE POWER OF WORDS AUTHORS PANEL**

Stream on YouTube Live and Facebook Live.

SEPT 27 • **EKPHRASTIC POETRY WORKSHOPS IN THE GALLERY**

An ekphrastic poem is a vivid description of a work of art, narrating and reflecting on the "action" of a painting. ArtsXchange Wednesday Writers Workshop with Theresa Davis, teaching artist.

SEPT 27 • OCT 25 • NOV 22 • 7-8 PM

WEDNESDAY WRITER'S WORKSHOP WITH THERESA DAVIS - \$5

SEPT 30, 7 PM • **AFROFUTURISM PANEL DISCUSSION**

Discussing its relevance in today's environment and the path forward for artists. Panelists: Visual artists Tracy Murrell, rEN Dillard, MarcusWilliams and curator Clinton Fluker

OCT 7, 1 PM • **INTERMEDIATE ILLUSTRATION CLASS FOR ADULTS**

Taught by Marcus Williams, visual artist. Ages 16+

OCT 11, 6 PM • **SKETCHING COMMUNITY CLASS**

Experience the process of creating a piece of Afrofuturistic artwork with rEN Dillard, Ages 21+.

OCT 14, 4 PM • **CREATIVE FEEDBACK & CAREER LAB**

For projects in progress. Led by Marcus Williams, rEN Dillard, and Tracey Murrell. All Ages.

OCT 14, 7 PM-12 AM • **UNMASK THE FUTURE COSPLAY PARTY & FUNDRAISER** - \$60

[Sponsorships available]

OCT 25, 7 PM

EKPHRASTIC POETRY WORKSHOPS IN THE GALLERY

An ekphrastic poem is a vivid description of a work of art, narrating and reflecting on the "action" of a painting. Part of the Wednesday Writers Workshop with Theresa Davis, teaching artist.

NOV 11-DEC 15

ON THE TIP OF MY TONGUE: A YOUTHFUL EXHIBIT

A mixed media exhibit in partnership with visual arts coordinators at Fulton County, and City of Atlanta school systems.

**ARTS
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