

GREATER KANSAS CITY AREA COMMITTEE
NATIONAL MUSEUM OF WOMEN in the ARTS
NEWSLETTER
SUMMER 2022

Vol. 19 , No. 3

Jeanne Levy, editor

FROM THE CHAIR

This is an exciting summer season for us. The year 2022 marks the Greater Kansas City Area Committee's 20th Anniversary. Our group was formed under the leadership of Jeannette Nichols, who chaired the Committee for seven years. Through the dedicated work of members, the mission of the GKC-NMWA continues.

This is also the 6th Women to Watch exhibition in which the GKC-NMWA has participated. The theme of WTW 2024 is "A New World." We are ever so grateful to Sean O'Harrow, Erin Dzedzic and the Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art for hosting and curating this event for the third time, and embarking, with us, on this two-year process. The final exhibition will be held at the National Museum in Washington, D.C., in 2024. The artwork of the finalists of the National Museum's 30 committees will be reviewed for possible inclusion in NMWA's collection. — Chris LeBeau

MEET THE ARTISTS

The five artists who have been selected are a wonderfully diverse and very impressive group. Each has much to say on the subject of "A New World", and each does it eloquently.

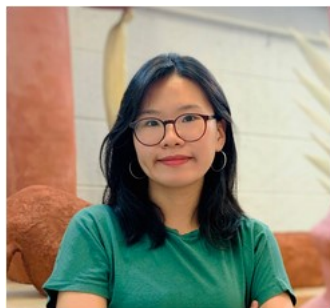
Bianca Fields earned her BFA from Cleveland Institute of Art in 2019. She now maintains a studio in Kansas City, Missouri, and exhibits her work internationally. In 2021, her art was included in exhibitions at Gallerie Drost in Paris and at another in Palma, Mallorca. Her works have also been showcased at the Armory Show in New York and Expo Chicago. In the winter of 2021,



BIANCA FIELDS—CONTINUED

Bianca was selected for the Plop Residency in London, 4-week opportunity to work with other internationally recognized artists. Of that experience, Bianca says, “Exploring and developing a new body of work in an international city really tested my ability to adapt and to produce something with limited resources, even if it was just an idea. This program certainly set me in the right gear for the projects I had/have to come in 2022.”

Bianca “creates paintings that survey and challenge the depiction of the 21st century Black female body in action. Re-examining and reflecting on beauty and identity, her manipulation of images of the monkey recalls both pop culture phenomenon and vintage cartoons, alongside her very own likeness and realm of cultural experience.”



SUN YOUNG PARK earned a BFA in Ceramics and Glass, and an MFA in Ceramics at Hongik University in Seoul, South Korea. She earned a second MFA at Southern Illinois University in 2021.

Since coming to Kansas City, she has been Artist in Residence at the Belger Arts Center, and also holds adjunct teaching positions at Johnson County Community College and Metropolitan Community College. She exhibits internationally, including exhibitions in China, France, South Korea, and in several of the United States.

Of her art, she says, “My visual language is crafted through processing and translating.... The time I spend making the work mirrors the time I spend processing and translating reality. I sew fabrics, hand-build clay, and draw. I use materials with significantly distinctive characteristics, such as clay, fabrics, wood, or metal. . . . The contrasting qualities in my artwork create visual language, I want the viewer to experience moments of duality for themselves.”



Fundamental Delicacy

Mona Cliff, an enrolled member of the A'aninin/Nakota Nations, earned her BFA in Printmaking from Cornish College of Arts in Seattle, Washington. Later, she attended Haskell Indian Nations University in Lawrence, Kansas, where she resides today. Her early interest in using beads and making traditional Native American regalia was encouraged by her grandmother from whom she learned about beading. She taught art classes and worked as Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Field Representative for Indigenous Communities for the Kansas Creative Arts Industry Commission.



Conjured Topography (2022)

In 2018, Mona decided to broaden her artistic career by pursuing fine and contemporary art. Using traditional Native crafting methods, such as seed bead embroidery and fabric appliqué, her work is an exploration of contemporary Native American identity and culture. Mona describes her approach: “Generational Knowledge connects me to my past, helping me find meaning in my presence as I look toward the future generations. I create

art through these traditional art practices, through meditation and spiritual imbuelement of the materials I use. Beadwork and fabric applique are the foundations of my practice, and I create from a place of intuition and exploration of my place, my identity, and lived experience.”

In addition to being selected for Women to Watch 2024, Mona recently created a site-specific installation for the newly renovated Kansas City Museum. She has also been selected to create a site-specific installation for the Kansas City International Airport.



BEV GEGEN studied painting at Maple Woods Community College, University of Missouri-Kansas City, and the Kansas City Art Institute, where she was especially influenced by Professors Wilbur Niewald and Michael Walling. She lives and works in her home studio in Kansas City, Missouri.

Bev “relies on her emotions and memories to create lyrical abstract paintings, inspired by her garden and the landscapes of places to which she has traveled.” The pandemic quietly influenced her works. With the advent of the COVID-19 vaccine, her paintings became more expressive and free-flowing. The impact of news reports and public outcry about social and racial justice helped her search for “new world” freedom in a series of expressionistic and color field paintings.

She has paintings in a number of corporate and public institutions. In Kansas City, they include the Stowers Institute, Raphael Hotel, and the Intercontinental Hotel. In Iowa, her paintings are in Mercy Medical and University of Iowa. Bev is represented by Eva Reynolds Gallery, Overland Park, Strecker-Nelson West Gallery, Manhattan, Kansas, and the Moberg Gallery in Des Moines, Iowa.



MELANIE JOHNSON earned an MFA in Painting at Indiana University. Now a Professor of Painting and Drawing at the University of Central Missouri, Melanie has also served as visiting professor, artist in residence and/or done research primarily in Italy, but also in most other countries in Europe. In the US, she has served in similar capacities in Missouri, Kansas, Washington, Pennsylvania and many other states. In short, Melanie has kept a very busy schedule of teaching, researching and presenting since she graduated. In 2014-2016 she was a Charlotte Street Foundation Studio Artist in Residence.



Of her art, Melanie says, “My drawings call the sensory and emotional connections inherent in my bonds with animals and the natural landscape, and the ways in which animals provide some of my earliest empathetic relationships and routine caregiving experiences. Examining these formative bonds has. . . made me increasingly aware of the existential parallels and patterns in human behavior. . . . I think about the relationship of time and narrative selection when making drawings. . . (which) serve simultaneously as narrative vehicles and as physical artifacts that reference the history of their own manifestation . . . the layering of marks over time and the indexical markmaking are active metaphors in my work. I want to be present. . . as both storyteller and protagonist.”

