

CREATIVITY CONNECTS

To listen and share resources. That's the mission of the Arts Commission's annual "Arts Iditarod" winter tour. This year we hosted meetings in Augusta, Bangor, Belfast, Portland, Presque Isle, Winter Harbor, and York, extending two national conversations, gathering success stories and challenges, and offering professional development opportunities.

Creativity not only connects artists, arts organizations, and arts educators to each other, but also cross-sector to our wider communities. What affects your ability to create work and to contribute to your communities? What type of changes have impacted your communities over the last 10 years? The National Endowment for the Arts' (NEA) 2016 special national project, *Creativity Connects*, sought to capture responses to these and to other questions, and to identify the "bright spots" where arts and non-arts collaborators are working together to further common goals. During the Iditarod tour, we



extended these questions to Maine. You confirmed that there are many "bright spots" here! And that the fast-paced advance of technology and social media--the connections and opportunities they offer--loom large for our rural state. Spotty cellular phone service, large gaps in high speed

internet, and lack of public transportation also maintain rural isolation, socioeconomic divides, and Maine's historic North-South division.

The second national conversation featured in this year's Iditarod asked: what does creating cultural equity mean in Maine, the whitest and oldest state in the nation? We first initiated this dialogue in October at the Maine International Conference on the Arts, where keynote speaker, poet and Bates College administrator Crystal Williams defined cultural equity as "full participation." The Commission currently works toward cultural equity with programs including Traditional and Folk Arts, as well as Apprenticeships, which provide support for underserved communities--including Maine's Native Americans--to fully participate in the state's cultural life.

We wrapped up each gathering by sharing resources. How's your grant writing? What's the status

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From Our Executive Director



Dear Friends & Colleagues,
So much has been accomplished here at the Maine Arts Commission. Over the past six months we:

- moved forward with ArtsEngageME, our 501c3 support organization, to achieve IRS designation by

the end of 2017;

- worked with the State legislature and the Governor to pass LD996 which reduces the size of the Commission to no more than 15 members, making it more efficient and effective for us to conduct business;
- completed the Arts Iditarod with more than 145 people attending;
- completed the first state-wide Americans for the Arts Arts & Economic Prosperity study, results to come;
- collaborated with NEFA to launch the first Creative Worker survey of its kind;
- reviewed more than 184 grant applications with the help of 37 panelists from across the state, and 50 applicants attending the reviews;
- provided information to the field, as it has become available, on the future of the National Endowment for the Arts. We are thankful to our Congressional delegation for working on our behalf to increase the NEA's budget in the FY 17 omnibus bill.

AND: we recently completed the Arts Education

Census of our State. With 95% of the schools in Maine responding to our survey, we have lots of data to sort through and analyze. The Census was just one of the objectives laid out in our Cultural Plan to complete. I have always believed that a strong and excellent arts education should be an essential component of every child's education. The critical thinking skills, problem solving abilities and poise that is developed through participating in the arts are 21st century skills critical to expanding the creative economy of the future. With expanded funding as proposed in our FY18 and FY19 budgets, we hope to implement programs that will help us achieve the goals identified in the Arts Education Census Report. *You can find the complete report on our website at http://bit.do/Maine_Arts_Ed_Census.*



Our 2017 Arts Iditarod in Presque Isle in February.

Thanks again for your service and support for the arts in Maine.

Best,

Julie A. Richard, *Executive Director*

OUR VISION

Increase the impact of arts and culture on Maine's livability, vitality and prosperity.

Commission Members

Charles Stanhope (Southwest Harbor)

Kate Beever (Ocean Park)

Paul Benjamin (Rockland)

Rick Fournier (Bangor)

Suzanne Grover (Norway)

Jonathan B. Huntington (Wayne)

Rowan Morse (Falmouth)

Cynthia Murray-Beliveau (Hallowell)

Cynthia Orcutt (Kingfield)

Laurence Rubinstein (Scarborough)

POETRY OUT LOUD

When Gabrielle Cooper recited the last words of her selected poem, she looked out at the crowd and felt proud of all she had accomplished.

The Maine Poetry Out Loud 2017 champion smiled confidently, poised in the spotlight in Washington, D.C.

“Once I had made it to the national level,” Gabrielle said, “I felt like I had done my absolute best and was just focused on having fun.”

As a senior graduating from Gardiner Area High School, Gabrielle stood amongst some of the country’s brightest high school students, all taking part in the celebration of great poetry and performance.

“They were all so kind, so funny, and had a zest for life,” Gabrielle said of her fellow student reciters. “It was exciting to hear about life in different states.”

Following three impressive poetry recitations, Gabrielle finished in the top bracket of the Northeast and East Central semifinals. She did not garner enough points to advance to the final round.

During her stay in Washington D.C., Gabrielle also took in some of the sights. She visited the National Museum of African American History and Culture, and met with Maine Senators Susan Collins and Angus King, as well as Representative Chellie Pingree.

Through the rigorous preparation to perfect her poetic pinache, Gabrielle said she appreciated all the support and advice she got from her teachers and mentors along the way.

Her word of advice to prospective Poetry Out Loud competitors: choose poems one can connect to. But most importantly, she said, “make sure you can have fun with it!”

Gabrielle will be attending Dartmouth College next fall.



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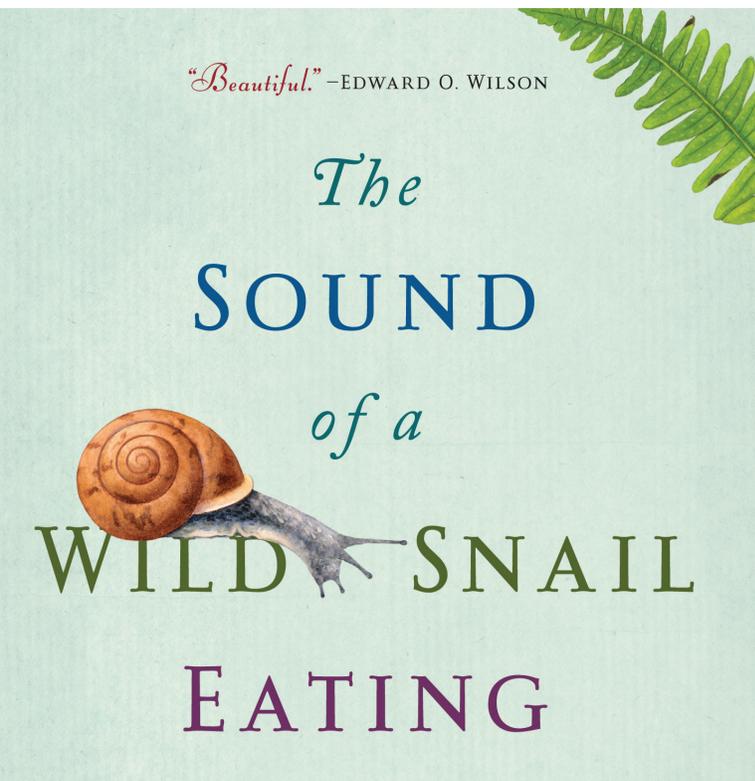
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Seven of Maine's Best Artists

Meet the 2017 Maine Artist Fellowship Award Winners



Elisabeth Tova Bailey, Literary Arts

Elisabeth's story started the night a tiny forest snail took up residence on her bedside nightstand. Intrigued by the snail's peculiar behavior, Elisabeth soon found herself drawn into the snail's micro world as it set off on nightly explorations. "The Sound of a Wild Snail Eating" recounts the author's year-long observations, documenting the snail's daily life in curious detail. Her story reaches an international audience of all ages and crosses many sectors, finding a place in fields such as natural history and medical humanities. "Every creature on earth, when examined closely, leads a fascinating and full life," Elisabeth said. "In some respects the lives of the smaller and short lived creatures are even more intense, more crammed with plot, than our longer human lives."

◀ Elisabeth Tova Bailey examines the largeness of life on the smallest of scales.

Susan Bickford, Media Arts

Susan practices and exhibits her work in many mediums. She finds inspiration from interactions with nature at her home in midcoast Maine. From May to November Susan kayaks the coastal waterways in search of deeper, meaningful connections to the natural world. In 2015, Susan initiated an artist retreat, "(stillness)." This ongoing program invites visual, performance and media artists to immerse themselves in a collaborative, in-the-moment exploration and improvisation with nature. "The idea is that we try not to impose our various art forms on the moment," Susan said, "But instead, try to listen and be lead to action by the natural world." Susan's most recent work features projected video/animation/sound for interactive installation and theatre.

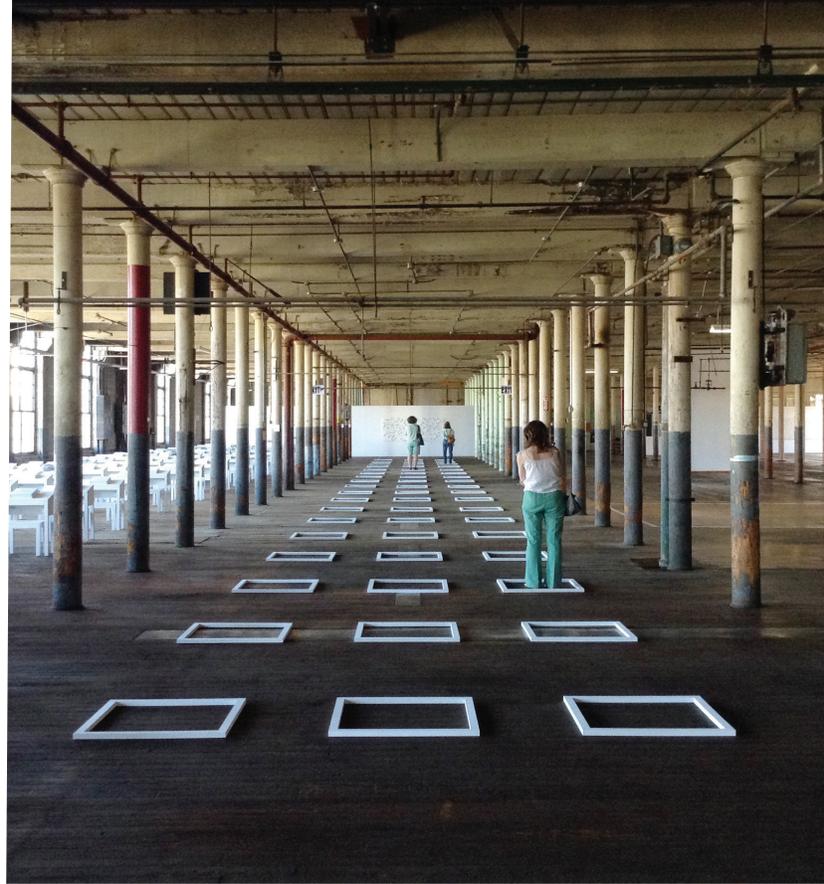
Watch Susan Bickford's work at www.susanbickfordinteractive.com ▶



Amy Stacey Curtis, Visual Arts

In 1998, Amy embarked on what would be an 18-year commitment to installation art: nine solo biennial exhibits between 2000 and 2016. Her workspaces include 81 large-in-scope, interactive works, averaging 25,000 square feet inside nine abandoned mills throughout Maine. She said her goals for each exhibit are to re-energize, and to draw needed attention to, Maine's historic sites. "I make work so the audience could not only touch but also manipulate, propel, transform my work," Amy said. "Without the audience's effect, my work would be unfinished, static."

*Amy Stacey Curtis's installation in the Bates Mill, Lewiston. ►
See more at www.amystaceycurtis.com*



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Sara Juli, Performing Arts

Sara's introspective, autobiographical solo performances fuse movement, text, song, voice, gesture and audience participation to acknowledge the gravity of her own personal struggles—as well as to simultaneously laugh at their underlying reality. In her newest work, "Tense Vagina: An Actual Diagnosis," Sara uses humor and pathos to explore the post partum physical challenges, and the joys, of giving birth. In sharing her stories, she hopes others will understand an aspect of her personal turmoil and relate it to their own. "Tense Vagina" has been presented in performance venues nationwide and to sold-out shows around the world. Since moving to Portland, Sara has settled in with the Maine dance community where she continues to "anchor and grow her artistry."

Watch excerpts of Sara Juli's work at www.sarajuli.com ►



Michaela Stone, Craft

"Growing up in Maine has had a lasting impact on my work," Michaela said recently in regard to her high design work in fine furniture craft, one in which she often pushes the medium's historical functionality into the arena of performance. She notes that a life spent living by the forest and ocean easily lent itself to an affinity for life sciences. Stone has attended workshops at nationally renowned schools

such as Penland, Haystack, and the Center for Furniture Craftsmanship, and worked under Maine's master furniture maker Brian Reid. "Nature has been a steadfast source of inspiration in my work," she said. "I strive to make pieces which balance conceptual exploration with technical skill, hoping to discover a concurrence of theory and performance."

◀ More of Michaela's work can be discovered at www.michaelacstone.com



Visit the Theriault's website
www.ilovesnowshoes.com

Edmond Theriault, Traditional Arts

Edmond picked up the art of snowshoe making to provide for his wife and 11 children through the long winters in northern Maine. A master craftsman, he first learned the rudiments of design many years ago from older snowshoe makers who practiced traditional methods passed down from Native and Acadian cultures. "The only materials these first snowshoe makers could use were wood and rawhide," he said, explaining his 45 years of creating snowshoes from the traditional wood of black

ash trees and woven rawhide. "This is still the best and the most traditional method." For the past two decades Edmond has worked alongside his son Brian, continuing to make hundreds of snowshoes: keeping the family trade, as well as a Maine tradition, alive.



Shanna Wheelock, Belvedere Handcraft

"I moved to this remote fishing village when the last working factory had just ceased operation," Shanna, a Maine native, says, explaining her connection with abandoned spaces. "Economic collapse and despair emanated throughout. Stories of nostalgia told of the "olden days" when wealth was as fluid as the tides." As a potter working in the remote fishing village of Lubec, the nation's easternmost port, she draws from an affinity for things ancient as well as for the inner workings of dilapidated factory buildings. Shanna's most recent series, "Water, Wind & Time," focuses on the deterioration of the local sardine industry. Her pieces are showcased in prominent collections including the University of Maine at Machias and the Tides Institute Museum of Art. She is the owner of Cobscook Pottery and Fiber Art in Lubec.

◀ View Shanna's work at www.shannawheelock.com

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and how does that impact your community? Do you know how to do the "data dance," incorporating compelling data points into your stories to enhance their impact and your mission?

Did you miss this exciting regional tour? Want to add to these conversations? Follow us on Facebook and Twitter @MaineArts, sign up for our e-newsletters, and keep an eye out for the 2017-18 tour schedule, to be announced this fall. We don't want to miss you again!

CREATIVITY CONNECTS

If you missed our 2017 Arts Iditarod, follow these links to some of the tour's content

Five Year Cultural Plan

<https://mainearts.maine.gov/Pages/General/Cultural-Plan>

Grant Programs & Deadlines

<https://mainearts.maine.gov/Pages/Funding/Grants-Home>

Arts Education Census Summary Report

<https://mainearts.maine.gov/Pages/Programs/Arts-Education-Census>

Create Your Own Cultural Data Profile

<http://www.culturaldata.org/what-we-do/for-arts-cultural-organizations/>

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

JULY - AUGUST

Art In the Capitol
featuring Spindleworks

JULY 21

Maine Film Festival Forum
Waterville

AUGUST 1-3

Arts Education
Summer Institute
Thomas College

AUGUST 3-4

Art & Land Conservation
Symposium, Colby College
Museum of Art, Waterville



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Stuart Kestenbaum was appointed Maine's fifth Poet Laureate in March 2016 and is serving a five year term. He is the author of four books of poetry.

Prayer for Mistakes

The last mistake you made
is not the end of the world,
the end of the world will be
much bigger than that,
much larger than you
and the last nightmares you had,
much bigger than your impossible
to-do list

or any aches and pains that might be
sending signals to your brain.
So your brain can take a break
worrying about the end of things
and get started on now,
which is always the time
to get started on now,

always the beginning that is
whispering to you
with love and pity,
whispering for you
to almost hear.

from *Only Now* (Deerbrook Editions,
Cumberland, Maine 2014)

**Poems from Here on Maine Public
Tune in each Friday as Stuart selects a
poem by a Maine or regional poet and
shares with us how language has the
power to move and surprise us.**