

Visiting Artist **Stacey Robinson** Collaborates in Multiple Media

Stacey Robinson was a featured artist at the UT School of Art during September and October 2023. He participated in multiple exhibitions in collaboration with the Ewing Gallery and the Downtown Gallery. He was a visiting artist for the school and community, sharing his skills as DJ with 90.3 The Rock, leading a gallery meditation along with Joycesonia Lawson, presenting an artist lecture, leading a community/world building workshop in collaboration with The Bottom, a Knoxville community center, and joining in a reception for the October 2023 First Friday celebration.

Robinson was born in Albany, New York, and is an associate professor of graphic design at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. The influence of science fiction, Black liberation politics, and comic books fuel his multimedia practice.

Visitors to Robinson's Ewing Gallery exhibition, titled *Audacious Black Freedom Dreams*, enjoyed being surrounded by seven seven-foot banners that were created using digital collage. These images mimic the kind of concepts portrayed in the audio samplings of hip-hop musical productions. This installation was created by BLACKMAU, a collaborative duo of Kamau "DJ KamauMau" Grantham, psychologist, and Stacey "Black Star" Robinson.

Their BLACKMAU moniker and work express imaginings that merge ideas of liberated Black futures, ideas of agency, sovereignty dystopia, and escape that are communicated well through digital collage aesthetics, house music, and animation. Visitors were encouraged to read, meditate, or respond to BLACKMAU's installation by creating their own works of art at stations in the gallery.

At the Downtown Gallery, Robinson offered a solo exhibition titled, *Black Utopias: Black Distractions + Disruptions in Time Space*. This project looks at systems of oppression and resistance through black and white logo designs and illustrations that use the emptiness of white gallery walls as the backdrop for extracting black resistance commentary, that mash up references from pop culture, music, and Black history.

While in Knoxville, Robinson not only encouraged the art students at the UT School of Art but met with students outside the visual arts disciplines, engaged with over 200 high school students, and collaborated with community members, embracing discourse and inspiring new creators.

"As a curator within an academic setting, I look to encourage new viewers, makers, and supporters of the arts, to shape and form the next generation of art world activists in whatever role they may take," said Julie Lohnes, director/curator of the School of Art Galleries and Collections. "We seek to do this by selecting engaging and democratic exhibition and programming experiences by collaborating with artists that make transdisciplinary connections through the consideration of historical, political, and cultural topics, with a focus on underrepresented and underserved communities. Stacey Robinson's collaborative project, BLACKMAU, and his individual artwork, imagine a new world through an Afrofuturist lens with references to comic books, science fiction, graphic design, and hip-hop sampling, creating a future where Black communities have freedom and agency beyond contemporary and historical legacies of racism, power, and surveillance."





MODESTA GOROL & JAN KOZLOWSKI: Resident Artists from Wrocław, Poland

Modesta Gorol and **Jan Kozlowski** were resident artists at the UT School of Art during the month of September 2023. They are the latest artists in an exchange program between the School of Art and the Eugeniusz Geppert Academy of Art and Design in Wrocław, Poland. The exchange, which has been running for more than 15 years, allows two students from each program to spend a month as Artists-in-Residence at the other institution. Through this arrangement two UT graduate students spend four weeks in Wrocław each May and June, and two Geppert Academy students come to Knoxville each September. In spring 2023, UT Knoxville MFA graduates Haley Takahashi and Zoe Brester-Pennings spent a month in Wrocław.

Gorol and Kozlowski presented *The Journey into Microscopic Realms and Imagined Landscapes*, an exhibition of their work at Gallery 1010 (in the Emporium Building, 100 South Gay Street, Knoxville) on September 22 and 23.

Gorol is a graphic artist based in Wrocław, Poland, where she is currently pursuing an MA in graphic arts at the Geppert Academy. In addition to being a visual artist, Gorol is also a pianist, having received her master's degree in piano performance from the K. Lipiński Academy of Music in Wrocław. This background equips her with a unique perspective that she brings to her art.

As an artist, she primarily uses traditional techniques, such as etching, aquatint, and linocut, and she also sometimes likes to combine them with watercolor painting.

"Through my art, I am telling a story that transports the viewer into the world of my imagination," said Gorol. "I am inspired by nature, but my artistic decisions are not bound by the limitations of reality. Anything can happen on a white piece of paper, and I relish the challenge of filling it with ideas."

Kozlowski was born in 1998 in Wrocław and is currently a graduate student studying at the Geppert Academy, creating linocuts in intaglio studio under Przemysław Tyszkiewicz and Agata Gertchen. In 2023 his work was included in the 15th Gielniak Graphic Arts Competition.

"My projects mostly oscillate in the range of abstract art," said Kozlowski. "This could be a real-life image which is rendered to a state of being unrecognizable through abstract manipulations. While based in linocut methods, my approach is informed by Brett Weston's photographic works, which often shift between representation and abstraction. My use of linocut departs from the common look of the medium, seeking to create softer effects through the use of detailed textures, to create compositions with minute, stone-like textures."



ERICKA WALKER

MFA Alumna Receives 2023 Alumni Promise Award

Printmaking alumna **Ericka Walker** (MFA '10) received the College of Arts and Sciences 2023 Alumni of Promise Award on September 29, 2023. Walker, who attended UT after completing her undergraduate degree from the University of Wisconsin–Madison, lives in Nova Scotia, Canada, where she is an associate professor at NSCAD University. The Alumni Promise Award recognizes alumni who have demonstrated distinctive achievement in a career, civic involvement, or both. This award is presented to acknowledge alumni who are making a mark early on in their career.

Walker's work was included as part of the recent exhibition at the Knoxville Museum of Art *Landfall Press: Five Decades of Printmaking*, December 16, 2022–April 30, 2023. Some members of our campus community may also be familiar with her exhibition *The Great Experiment*. A series of large prints was exhibited in the Printmaking Showcase Gallery at UT last Spring. Additionally, her work was selected by Sarah Suzuki, curator at the Museum of Modern Art, for our alumni exhibition in the Ewing Gallery of Art and Architecture as part of the SGC International Conference, held at UT Knoxville in 2015.

Walker is one of the most important young artists working with print media today. Last year, she was voted by the membership of SGC International to receive their Mid-Career Artist Award. Based on her close examination of American and Canadian colonialism, Walker's art draws on the vernacular histories of the early and mid-20th century posters to interrogate mythologies that have resulted in the systematic oppression of marginalized and underrepresented people. Raised in rural Wisconsin, her art is also concerned with agriculture and our relationship with the land.

In addition to her work as a printmaker, Walker extends her commitment to a publicly engaged practice through the painting of large-scale murals, which is a natural extension of her work as a printmaker.



Zoe Brester-Pennings, 2023 MFA printmaking graduate, is the recipient of the University of Wisconsin-Parkside (UWP) Artist-in-Residence (AIR) position in printmaking. This position began in fall 2023 and runs through the spring 2024 semester.

The residency will give Brester-Pennings full access to the academic/professional printmaking studio in UWP's Rita Tallent Picken Regional Center for the Arts and Humanities. The studio features up-to-date ventilation and equipment for artists creating prints through a variety of methods including lithography, linocuts, woodcuts, letterpress, monoprint, screen printing, and intaglio. The goal of the residency is to support early-career artists and to provide first-rate facilities and instruction for the art-making communities of southeast Wisconsin.

With the support of the Betsy Worden Printmaking Award, Brester-Pennings had the recent opportunity to travel to Wroclaw, Poland, to participate in an exchange with the Fine Arts Academy. During her residency, she and fellow printmaker Haley Takahashi were in a two-person exhibition entitled, Paper View. In addition to the exhibition, Brester-Pennings had the opportunity to travel, view an abundance of art, and even create an edition of risographs.



Danqi Cai [dan-CHI Tsai] is a spring 2023 graduate of the UT School of Art MFA program. The program is proud to announce that she was appointed as Assistant Professor of Foundations at the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville, Arkansas. She began in the fall of 2023.

In addition to the news of her appointment, Cai has been selected for inclusion in a biennial exhibition showcasing artists in the midsouth. She is among 35 artists selected for the 2023 Irene Rosenzweig Biennial Juried Exhibition, organized by the Arts & Science Center for Southeast Arkansas (ASC). The exhibition opened in July, 2023, at ASC, in Pine Bluff, Arkansas, with an awards reception and continued through mid-October. Cai's work is titled "The Atomic Boy."

Cai is a native of Shenzhen, China, a large city in the vicinity of Hong Kong. This city is located in a sub-tropical zone, so she never saw snow until coming to the United States to study at Rocky Top.

"To me, the appeal of UT was its interdisciplinary emphasis," said Cai. "I felt supported here to cultivate the time-based aspects of my work. When I chose a grad school, I looked at the reputation of the program in preparing students for careers in teaching. UT gave me the opportunity to be the instructor of record, giving me great experience to build my skills in pedagogy. In addition, I was able to participate in a pilot MFA professional practice seminar. It helped to demystify the academic job market. We worked through mock applications, teaching statements, interviews, and job talks. I felt fortunate to be able to go through this process. The mentorship from many faculty members was invaluable."



Emily Roca Rice of Chattanooga, Tennessee, is a 2023 MFA graduate who studied studio art with a concentration in painting and drawing. She is one of eleven UT students and graduates who were selected for the 2023-2024 Fulbright student awards. This award allowed her to study and conduct research abroad.

Inspired by family heritage and a previous artist residency in Honduras, Roca Rice is investigating recurring motifs, visual storytelling and sustainable ways of making art in the country while maintaining a studio practice and working with local contemporary artists.

"One of my long-term goals is to create a bridge and eventual artist exchange between Southeastern Appalachia and Honduras—two regions of the world with rich histories of traditional craft," said Roca Rice.

ABIGAIL HEDLEY

MFA Student Receives International Sculpture Center's 2023 Award

Abigail Hedley of Knoxville, Tennessee, has been awarded the prestigious International Sculpture Center's Outstanding Student Achievement in Contemporary Sculpture Award for 2023. Hedley is an MFA student at UT School of Art.

The International Sculpture Center (ISC) established the annual Outstanding Student Achievement in Contemporary Sculpture Award program in 1994 to recognize young sculptors and to encourage their continued commitment to the field. It was also designed to draw attention to the sculpture programs of the participating universities, colleges, and art schools. The award program boasts an exceptional number of participating institutions, including 94 universities, colleges, and art school sculpture programs for a nominated total of 182 students.



Judges deliberated over 646 images of sculptural works to select 10 award recipients; their work was featured in the January/February 2024 issue of the ISC's award-winning publication *Sculpture* as well as on the center's website at sculpture.org/page/studentawards. Recipients will also participate in a future group exhibition.

"I am incredibly honored to hear I am one of the students awarded the Outstanding Student Achievement Award in contemporary sculpture, amongst other incredibly talented artists," said Hedley. "Ever since starting my career in sculpture, I found myself looking towards ISC and *Sculpture* magazine for inspiration, insight, and understanding of what a contemporary career in sculpture could look like. The work chosen to be represented, "Pressure," is a piece near to my heart and represents the unseen underlying struggles of what it means to be a body working in labor. A deeply embedded sore that eventually rises to the surface."

JERED SPRECHER:
Academy of Rome

Jered Sprecher, professor in the UT Knoxville School of Art, spent June and July 2023 in Italy, as a UT Affiliated Fellow at the American Academy in Rome. While at the academy, Sprecher spent time visiting historical examples of Roman painting and sculpture that featured decorative motifs drawn from nature. The Ad Gallinas Albas Garden Frescoes and the carvings on the Ara Pacis were a few highlights from his time in Rome. During his fellowship, Sprecher began work on a new series of paintings fusing decorative images of flowers that are infused with the look and feel of digital technology.

The American Academy in Rome hosts recipients of affiliated fellowships awarded by educational and cultural organizations around the world. Affiliated fellows add to the diversity of the academy's artistic and scholarly community, and these fellowships are coordinated by the organizations for which they are named.

This prestigious academy supports innovative artists, writers, and scholars living and working together in a dynamic international community. There, artists from many disciplines are given time to pursue their work in an atmosphere conducive to intellectual and artistic freedom and interdisciplinary exchange. Since 1894, the academy has provided something unique: a chance for artists and scholars to spend significant time working in one of the oldest, most cosmopolitan cities in the world. The richness of Rome's artistic and cultural legacy and its power to stimulate creative thinking served as the initial impetus for the academy's founding. Today, this tradition lives on, transformed by the dynamism of the academy's constantly evolving community.

Sprecher is a nationally and internationally exhibiting artist. He has been faculty in the UT School of Art since 2005, teaching undergraduate and graduate painting and drawing.

 @jeredsprecher
jeredsprecher.com



ELAINE MCMILLION SHELDON'S
King Coal a
New York Times Critics Pick

Elaine McMillion Sheldon's most recent film has been named a Critics Pick by the *New York Times*. Sheldon is an assistant professor in the cinema studies program in the School of Art.

The film, described as "a lyrical tapestry of a place and people," meditates on the complex history and future of the coal industry, the communities it has shaped, and the myths it has created. The Oscar-nominated filmmaker "reshapes the boundaries of documentary filmmaking in a spectacularly beautiful and deeply moving immersion into Central Appalachia where coal is not just a resource, but a way of life."

Sheldon's film premiered at the Sundance Film Festival and began a theatrical tour in New York City that will continue through the spring of 2024. Next on Sheldon's film calendar is to direct a feature narrative that looks at the life of Mary Harris Jones—the indomitable labor figure known to history as Mother Jones.

kingcoalfilm.com



HEATHER COKER HAWKINS

Assistant Professor of cinema studies and time-based art, Hawkins brings her experience in film production and choreography to students.



MAURICE MOORE

Assistant Professor of painting and drawing, Moore recently completed a PhD in performance studies from the University of California, Davis.



JANELLE VANDERKELEN

Assistant Professor of time-based art, VanderKelen co-directs the foundations curriculum and teaches in cinema studies, video art, and foundations programs.

SCHOOL OF ART

1715 Volunteer Blvd.
Knoxville, TN 37996



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