Annual Resident Artists' Exhibition 2020
The Banana Factory Arts Center is ArtsQuest's hub of visual arts and education programming, serving as a convening space for the community to create and appreciate the arts. Visitors to the Banana Factory are encouraged to experience art through exhibitions, classes, tours and events. The arts center, however, is more than just a collection of galleries and classrooms - it is an ecosystem of creativity and collaboration fueled by a community of Resident Artists.

The Resident Artists are teachers, entrepreneurs, mentors, innovators and community leaders. Their individual talents are nurtured in this unique environment through peer-to-peer feedback and support. Their work, from conception to exhibition, is represented at the Banana Factory.

The ArtsQuest Annual Resident Exhibition showcases the tremendous work of these talented individuals. The pieces in this exhibition speak to the breadth of talent in the Banana Factory, as well as the diversity. A variety of styles, materials and presentations are on view. We ask you to experience the works in this exhibition through observation and reflection, encourage you to purchase original works of art for your own collection and we invite you to engage in a dialogue with the artists in their studios.
When people see my work, I hope they are moved by the subject matter. But it is just as important that they discover how intricate, beautiful, and sturdy sculpture made from recycled materials can be.

I create cast paper sculpture entirely from post consumer pulp which is pressed into molds made from my original art.

It’s my small way of keeping the earth green by producing green art. Who knows, if more of us thought about ways of turning garbage into gold, waste into wonder, trash into treasure, it might not be such a bad thing. Mother Nature would certainly approve.

**ARTIST STATEMENT:**

*Virginia Abbot*

*Studio 337*

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*Influencers*

Turquoise & brass pendent

*Aurora*

Grape agate & sterling silver
All the stories about the universe - the stars, the void, other dimensions, other worlds, black holes, galaxies - the distance of light I have searched for some way that I might see it all. How, in this short life, can I travel throughout this huge and limitless universe? I close my eyes. I dive within. I realize that the inner space is deep and infinite. There, inside, I travel. My artwork presents views I have captured in my travels through cities that I have built in the cavities of my brain. It is the dialogue between these two limitless universes, one within and one without. It is the dialogue between Matter and the Void.

ARTIST STATEMENT:
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My latest body of personal work focuses on the idea of artist as myth maker and weaves in a series of sub-themes that flow throughout the show. Over the years of creating imagery I have become fascinated with religious iconography due to it’s close ties to art history. I had a moment of realization early in my experience as an artist when I discovered Joseph Campbell and his gathering of associations of all the world religions. It was in this moment when I made the connection of artist as myth makers and being conscience of the power of an image.

I like to work on several pieces in unison jumping one to another. I have an interest in getting lost in the process and finding a space to disconnect from the world for a moment. When I’m creating I’m connected to another dimension of endless rhythm. It forces me to live in the moment and make decisions free of judgment.

My paintings have multiple layers and experience with texture. I have been working with subjects such as reality vs. fantasy, human relationships, nature, social commentary, and excessive culture. I’m never at a loss for material in the this crazy world we live in. All of my pieces have two things in common, story telling and surface alteration. The narrative is usually loose allowing me flexibility to improv and layer random images that may or may not relate to the main narrative. I’m always experimenting with new medium applications or discovering new ways of removing medium. Drips, scrapes, sanding, scratching, cutting, rubbing, and layering have all become part of my work. These elements give my paintings a sense of history.

“To have a sacred place is an absolute necessity for anybody today. You must have a room or a certain hour of the day or so, where you do not know who your friends are, you don’t know what you owe anybody or what they owe you. This is a place where you can simply experience and bring forth what you are and what you might be.” (Joseph Campbell)
Valerie Breaux Haaf
Studio 351

ARTIST STATEMENT:
My work is inspired by materials such as metals, stones, and various found objects. I am challenged by Nature and its never ending diversity as a subject matter. I continue to explore the techniques and methods I love which are mixed media, sculpture, jewelry, and printmaking.
What happens when we over-aestheticize our scientific pursuits?

What happens when we over-analyze our artistic creations?

For several years I have been exploring these questions. I believe art can be an investigation, like a form of research. In a body of work titled “Dr. Armbruster Laboratories,” I have been studying “Drips,” mostly the painted, marbled, or molten glass varieties, through the voice of the fictitious character Dr. Armbruster. The resultant products of my studies display moments of my investigation: framing and highlighting key drip forms, reproducing and overprinting fragments. Printmaking, in these works, is used to break down the drip as a subject. The artworks are intended to be an abstract critique of the relationship between Art and Science, while celebrating the ornamented spectacles and exhilarating spirit that can thrive that this intersection.
Swiss Blue Topaz Cocktail Ring
Recycled gold, sterling silver & Swiss blue topaz.

Artist Statement: Metal is my muse.
ARTIST STATEMENT:

Kim is an accomplished artist in many mediums. She is a graduate of the School of Visual Arts in NYC. Her vibrant watercolor paintings of children make her an appealing choice for portraiture. She is also a Muralist and Mosaic Artist. Her murals can be seen in several locations in Downtown Easton including the Crayola Factory store, North Bank Street, Cherubina Ristorante, The Easton Pez dispenser museum, The Weller Center for Health Education, and The Anatomy Academy, and a faux reflection of the National Building on Northampton Street.

In addition to the murals in the downtown area many businesses and private residences have commissioned Kim to paint murals. She has also participated in several group murals, which include public school installations done in mosaic, headed up by Tomas Wolff, and a community mural to promote building community in the downtown Easton area. She won the prestigious Northampton County 250th Anniversary art contest for her 4’x4’ mosaic entry entitled “Northampton County, our place in the world”. Her winning piece is on display in the lobby of the Northampton county courthouse. She now partners with several other professional artists for larger projects. Donna Thatcher, Jenny Legget, and Janet Hodick have all collaborated with Kim. Some of the above murals were done primarily with Donna Thatcher. Together they also restored two painted ceilings in an historic building located at 64 N 4th Street.

*The Houseplant*

Glass mosaic, 42” x 48”
ARTIST STATEMENT:

In my creative work, I fracture cultural constructs such as gender, beauty, and the body politic to expose, examine, and critique their social and historical assumptions. For some time fairy tales and fantasy have inspired my imagination and curiosity about their effects on women’s roles and the construction of their identities. I also create and infiltrate the spaces between the dyad and its effects on gender, perceived beauty, and the body politic.

Assuming the physical body a cultural material, I perform it in ways that offer seeing and thinking about its identity construction differently. Doing so, enables the viewer to experience and empathize with identity politics through my actions, objects, and drawings.

My process of making art emerges from complex and contradictory circumstances, materials, and objects, and their multiple encounters. My live performances and sculptural works often lead to the creation of supplementary drawings, installations, and videos, to constitute a complex body of work. My purpose in doing so is to explore and experiment with ways that various mediums can inform each other and from which new concepts can emerge. Working in this manner enables a perpetual state of alteration and transformation. At the intersections of these various mediums, I am able to create work that infiltrates and disrupts the cultural constructs of gender, beauty and the body politic found in fairy tales and fantasy.
2000, the millennial year, held many unexpected changes for me, including the beginning of an artistic adventure that I am still on. My creative endeavors began later in my life. After being diagnosed with cancer and the cascading events that followed, I had an unexpected self-realization about the direction my life was taking. And with a little help and support from my friends, and an experienced mentor, I began an odyssey that has taken many different directions, but still continues to this day, as an artist.

My printwork series is a quest to find a certain nostalgia for the past in old, worn and decaying photographs. These old photos, that I base my monotypes from, are always unattributed as to source. So I create my own visual re-imagining of the original and create a new narrative through my unique print process. I feel that I am breathing new life into a heretofore forgotten past and creating a new story to carry on.

With my photography, as in all of my art, I find the old, the broken, the forgotten, the decaying process of nature to be the most interesting and the most beautiful. Perhaps a flower’s bloom is not nature at it’s finest, for there is also beauty in it’s decay as well. There is splendor within the flower’s wilting blooms, within the seeds, pods, and leaves all in their unique stages of decomposition. Without the decay of one year, there would be no fresh beauty in the next.

After seeing a mandala created and then destroyed, I envisioned creating still life’s using mostly objects from natures, photographing the pieces, then returning the pieces back to nature. This is how my series of photographs and monotypes “Beautiful Decay” was created. In the past year I have concentrated on my photography but have created these images in my now recognizable and innovate style. I use a painterly palate of tones, textures and colors in my photography to bring out the essence in nature’s life cycle.

Each still life is carefully arranged in natural sunlight, using rotting boards and rusting metals as a backdrop, then photographing, rearranging, and photographing again many times until just the right essence of nature’s character is captured. And then it is sent back to the earth to feed the insects, birds and next year’s growth.

My artwork has been in shows and galleries from New York to Los Angeles, including recent solo exhibitions at both Lafayette College and Penn State University, as well as taking 2nd place out of 1,800 artists in Juxtapose magazine’s worldwide competition. My monotypes are in the permanent collection of City Center Allentown Corporation.
Al Johnson

Artist Statement:
Al Johnson, illustrator, fine artist, educator, and mentor has developed an artistic style that captures the classical, weaves it with the contemporary to create bodies of work that exemplify his individual style. Spiritually connected to his work, his mix of color and shapes through abstract expressionism allows the viewer to interpret what they see and feel. His passion is to inspire.

Crystal Woods
Oil on canvas
As a self-taught painter, it is important to ‘lose myself in my work’ and just paint it all out. I prefer to paint in Alla Prima in oil but to employ depth-enhancing glazing techniques when working in acrylics. I prefer subjects that are ordinary yet beautiful, simple yet complicated. Macro-focused paintings are my favorite; zoom in on many everyday objects and they suddenly become something else entirely, especially in paint once the colors are exaggerated and manipulated. I hope that my work reminds viewers of why they love art in the first place — for the beauty, the singularity, and the authenticity of it. In the end, I simply choose to work hard and remain as prolific as possible at my easel. Every path to artistic success is different and I’ve chosen to forge my own – by not thinking so much, and just painting.
My art is a lens through which to investigate who we are and how we came to be. Using drawing, painting, and photo-based digital construction, my works are intended as conceptual models for investigate the nature, structure, and evolution of identity construction and its relationship to a wider consciousness. They osculate between willful determinism and happenstance using chance operations and geometric abstraction to construct an elegant whole from the fragments, complications, and incongruity of lived experience.

ARTIST STATEMENT:

Navigational Anomalies
Acrylic on wood, 13" x 23.5"
ARTIST STATEMENT:

I am inspired by the world around me. Soft light through the trees, a warm sunrise over the ocean, the flight of a hummingbird.

When I picked up a camera in the early 1980’s while still in high school, I realized what I was meant to do with my life and how to unleash my ever growing curiosity and creativity. I approach taking images and capturing light with the same passion no matter what the subject. Those special moments at sunrise and sunset on the beach are one of my most favorite parts of being an artist. There is a peace at these times of day that envelope me in comfort.

As a young photographer, I was influenced by Joel Meyerowitz. His images of Cape Cod shot in the 70’s were a constant motivator.

As I grow with my art I have discovered joy in composite photography and digital painting. Competing with this type of work as proven very rewarding both as an artist and an international photographic competitor.
My life path began as a child artist in Pittsburgh where I began drawing and stitching under the influence of my primary school art teacher and early mentor, Joan Veleff, who also awakened a desire to teach. (I noticed that she enjoyed travel and studio time in the summer and was not dependent on the financial support of a husband.) Under her direction, my artistic talent developed... a lucky thing because it was difficult for me to grasp the basics of reading, numbers, and sports; my understanding of the world around me was entirely comprehended through visuals and drawing. (I did learn to read but I still don’t understand sports)

I am currently a full-time studio artist residing in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania with a Master of Fine Arts degree in Fiber Arts from Kent State University in Ohio. I was Professor of Art and Head of the Fibers Program at Kutztown University from 1992-2011, and I have also taught at several other universities around the country.

Travel has always been a source of inspiration, particularly the color and architectural details in Venice, Moroccan tile patterns, Antonio Gaudi’s architecture in Barcelona, and mysterious sites like Machu Picchu and the Grand Canyon. My background in weaving and embroidery informs my love of detailed repeat patterns, and obsessive sewing machine stitching is prominent in my work because empty space makes me nervous. I work intuitively, without preliminary sketches, and routinely cut apart completed work to redevelop the forms. Designing my own fabric is more personal than using commercial fabric, so I design with dye, batik, paint, and digital printing, and enjoy deconstructing familiar images and text so that they can be “read,” but not logically, and abstracting familiar or provocative images. In my work there is always a plethora of detail to enjoy and study.

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**Barbara Schulman**

**Studio 250**

**Everything You Think We Are, We Are**

Mixed media quilt, 37" x 37"
My work is inspired by a long tradition of vessel making. I love the feel and smell of clay. I enjoy working with my hands. With the abundance of new technology in our lives, fewer and fewer people “make”. I make things.

Forming a pot on the wheel magically transforms the clay. There is intimacy, establishing a dialogue through touch, an intense and physical involvement. My work includes raku and stoneware pottery. The vessel becomes a three-dimensional canvas, designed and glazed with a process that is exacting and time-intensive.

Mathematics and art have a long historical relationship. Geometric constructions define nature and the universe. Guided by mathematics, I play with line, circle, and triangle. I use the tools of geometry - ruler, compass, and protractor - to mark off segments. I construct and integrate graphic elements and use patterned motifs to cover the surface of the vessel.

The drama and immediacy of raku contrasts sharply with the effort employed to create each pot. Carefully planned divisions of space are subjected to the heat of the kiln and uncertainty of the firing. The element of surprise, the “happy” accident, and sometimes outright failure are all part of the quest to create something of beauty.
ARTIST STATEMENT:

I use abstract painting to explore complex and indefinite moral positions and to tell inscrutable stories.

I begin with simple sketches that over time become stylized, coalescing into calligraphic forms contributing to an intricate yet dense topography of layered line work, paint, and collage. Most of my works comprise larger series, which illustrate a theme or communicate visual narratives using a consistent set of patterns, colors and other ephemera that are always placed in a specific order. My sequential process is not unlike comic book art, where individual works can be both edited and hermetic while parts of a larger story. Although private narratives are essential to my creative process, I use them only to the end of producing works that move the viewer to impose his or her own personal experience into them, making for a reception that is as varied and complex as the viewers themselves.

I aim in my work to create an orderly-but-exotic universe that invites play by the viewer by simultaneously including familiar and appropriated imagery and then eluding precise or didactic storytelling. My pieces often begin with a set of compositional rules that change over the life of a series as I respond to the materials, initial, guiding narrative, and the development of my mark making. My goal in changing elements in a series is to toy with, or even to thwart, the viewer’s expectations in order to spark inquiry into the role that memory plays as ballast for visual understanding.

Timmy’s Porch Petunias No. 3
Acrylic, 16” x 48”
Painting begins with my daily search for the subtle beauty that the world offers. And when I find that subtle beauty, my passion to paint kicks in. For where words fail, colors and brush strokes satisfy my desire to tell how I see the interplay of light and shadow in a fleeting moment. I like how Henry Ward Beecher sums it up: “Every artist dips his brush in his own soul, and paints his own nature into his pictures.”

Some days painting allows my spirit to wander and explore my innermost being. Other days painting engages my rational side with careful planning and design based upon radiating lines and the Golden Section. I am inclined to simplify objective reality with straight lines and arcs. To reduce nature and urban scenes to more basic shapes and lines is to seek a subtle sophistication that I find in cubist art. Paul Cezanne sums it up so eloquently: I seek “to treat nature by the cylinder, the sphere, the cone.” For example, a tree trunk may be conceived of as a cylinder, an apple or orange a sphere. As a result, when I look at a cityscape I thrill at viewing everything through a geometric lens. When I look across a river at the green hillsides, I see gentle arcs that connect one set of trees to the next. Paradoxically, my vision is amplified as I simplify. Thus, I long to represent these fresh visions through drawing and painting.

My challenge is to continue the artists’ conversation of what makes painting more than just painting; in sum, what distinctive contribution will I make to the world of art.

David Sommers
STUDIO 255

ARTIST STATEMENT:

Diana
Oil on canvas, 14” x 20” (includes frame)
There is a beauty to the passage of time and the effects it has on objects and people. Timeworn textures, a face with a story to tell, the patina of life are all things I like to portray. The passage of time is something we all have to deal with. I almost always paint these objects and people in a strong, raking sunlight with elongated shadows, which results in what I refer to as a 'special visual moment,' a moment when the ordinary is elevated to something memorable.
Bruce Ward
Studio 350

ARTIST STATEMENT:

Bruce has been a resident artist at The Banana Factory arts enclave in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania since 2000. Bruce holds a degree in Video and Radio Production, and has studied Photography as well. He has produced several award-winning shows, incorporating still images in his productions. As his passion for recording places, people, and events has grown, he has continued to sharpen and expand upon his skills and techniques. Bruce has taught Video Media Arts, Photography, Darkroom and Digital Photography as well as Photoshop classes at The Banana Factory. He also is a substitute instructor at the Bethlehem Area Vo Tech and a museum teacher at Historic Bethlehem. Bruce has won several awards for his photography including a First Place and Best in Show in the South Side Photo Competition, and had images in the State Museum in Harrisburg.

Bruce first became interested in photography in grade school with a Sun Developing Kit and experimented with light sensitive papers and impressed images. Soon after, he started using a camera to record things that captured his imagination.

From 1973 until its iron gates closed, Bruce worked at Bethlehem Steel. During the last years of the local company’s presence in the Valley, Bruce shot many dramatic images throughout the Bethlehem plant. Many of these images were viewed at local businesses and galleries. Bruce also had shows with Edward A Leskin, MFA, and Clarence Snyder, renowned Bethlehem Steel photographer. Some of these images were also seen in Bruce’s several videos on working in the Bethlehem plant. “A View from Inside” details what it was like to work in the demanding and often dangerous mills, foundries, and furnaces.

It is with this background that Bruce’s fascination with the form and shape of architectural imagery, either natural or man made, came about. “Form and shape are constantly changing, but a picture captures the image as ‘memory’ for a moment”. Bruce likes the challenge of using available light, believing that these images come closer to a sense of order and oneness. Still life and landscape images also are favorites, while the video aspects tend to be used much more to evoke emotional responses.

Bruce has also been a part of “The Art of the State” in the State Museum in Harrisburg in 2012 and 2013, and also did the video component of “The Steel Way of Life” exhibit at the Johann Sebastian Goundie House for the Historic Bethlehem Partnership.
ARTIST STATEMENT:

I am inspired by complex dynamics and relationships within individuals and groups. Working on copper sheet, my compositions remain anchored in representational figure painting juxtaposed by abstraction. The metal substrate and paint work in concert to communicate layers or levels of reality: one that is easily perceived and directly in front of us and one that can be felt and is dynamic or changing. To explore the connective nature of our experience, I make visual comparisons between the figure and systems in nature. I find that studying the ways in which nature is connected informs the ways I create atmosphere within and around my subjects. The ensuing work is an exploration of our relationships to one another and our fundamental connection with the environment.

ARTIST STATEMENT:

The art I make is simply my means of reciprocating the joy and beauty I am continually blessed to experience. It is birthed from the desire to both show gratitude and share those things in my life that fascinate me, amaze me, comfort me, and sustain me. It’s a celebration of a faith, a heritage, a people, and a home from which I have grown and continue to draw nourishment. Through the colors of my culture, the textures of our homes, and the stories of my faith, I create work with a personal vocabulary that describes my personal experience. I work with both paint and clay, allowing the artistic and material histories of Latin American and African cultures to inspire the language with which I speak. My contemplations and explorations remain the same whether I am working in paint or ceramic. My strategies are consistent. I find those things in the world that excite me and resonate in me and use that inspiration to create beautiful objects with which I can give thanks and glory to God. My paintings are often narrative or allegorical, reflecting on subjects of faith, culture, community, and family. Built up with layers of acrylic paint, the pieces are vibrant in color and texture, yet they maintain a sense of serenity with a hint of the sacred. Much like the stained glass in a church, they invite contemplation and spiritual reflection. The ceramic work is a fusion of traditional materials and contemporary exploration. The vessels function in the same way the figures do in the paintings. They are the metaphor for humanity, the body and the spirit. Naked or adorned, broken or whole, empty or full—these vessels explore humanity’s beauty and imperfection, its fragility and strength, its humility and its pride. They reveal the will and hand of the maker in the same way that creation reveals the will and hand of the Creator.
Using oil paint gives me better control of the finality of the piece, and by default allows for great mishaps. I don’t want total control of the medium just enough to get a three dimensional message across on a two dimensional surface. A transcending moment fostering enjoyment. I would never want to be completely convinced with what I’m doing with the paint; otherwise there would be nothing left for me to look forward to...

I always try to use a palette that best communicates depth in a painting, never using the same color in both the background and foreground. Combined with the importance I find in facial reaction or the gesture of the body I hope to create a final picture of stopped motion that I can see in rewind and fast forward through my minds eye.

This is achieved through a 3 stage process. Within the past year I have taken to including a finished abstract under painting or (landscape). The second stage consists of an intentional rough overcoat of human form and gesture while continually deciding which forms and colors will show through. The third stage begins to give clarity to the figure in the painting. The last stage will take weeks if not months of deliberation as I work on at least 3-4 pieces at a time.

Expressed with subtlety through layers of paint and color, a sort of shyness helps us to see the main character revealed in the painting as a hero. Discernible to the viewer, the figure becomes the most complicated machine on the planet. From the reaction, expressions, and movements it is possible to understand their physical and emotional destination. The viewer is tempted to look more than once, recognizing something new with each glimpse. A story for their creative fantasy is conceived."

Painters Francis Bacon, Vachagan Narazyan, Wayne Thiebaud, and Richard Diebenkorn are the most influential to my paintings and process. A Life in college athletics and my time spent living and working in the great American cities of Seattle, Denver, and New Orleans combine to influence the action and color palette I use in my work today.
Ramon Peralta
Studio 244

ARTIST STATEMENT:
PRECISELY COLORS, LIGHT AND FORM
By Alexis Mendoza

Ramon Peralta is a sort of restless machine who loves to dig in the unfathomable labyrinths of the soul. With sharp sensitivity and a singular sense of creation, his work becomes a fertile landscape for the imagination and scrutiny. Such is the sense that animates this current body of work in which storytelling and delirium go hand in hand. In this series the artist’s creations come from the establish relationship with paper as a material, one of tools the artist use in initial process of creation. A compendium of recent works that envisions new lines of exploration, images of sophisticated brush lines turned into characters who trap all sorts of mysteries in their imaginary forest. The strength of color and the sensibility of strokes create a movement that does not exclude the spectator, but includes him, inviting him to activate his visual and emotional perception. Referring, in this case, to a fine art language that attracts both the linear writing as well as the speed with which color changes its attire, its meaning, growing dim and firing up equally whether the image be a character, or vegetation, or fields. His work as a result brings the viewer to a place of hope, rhythm, smile, remembrance or surprise.

Peralta’s proposal draws from the deep well of magic and realism. Both descriptions reveal essential attributes of an artistic personality that regards his artistic endeavor as creator; the right cauldron in which paper are transformed into alive character. On the other hand, there is something very special in the artist’s canvases that transport us through time in an unsurpassed way. While there are indeed surrealist elements in his work, such as psychic automatism and chance, that act as integral components and nourish the creative process, we also cannot deny a realist undercurrent and an attraction to history that inspires and is the cornerstone of Ramon Peralta’s proposal.

Alexis Mendoza is an artist, writer, critic and curator from Cuba. Presently he live and work in New York City.

Olaf Staroryupinski
Studio 233

ARTIST STATEMENT:
I often describe myself as “visually preoccupied.” I am endlessly fascinated by form, shape, color, texture, shadow...all of the things that make up our visual perception of the world. I have a background in lighting design, and am self taught in both film and digital photography, and in post processing techniques. I find inspiration in all forms of art, be it painting, sculpture, dance, theatre, film, music, the written word, as well as the world around me. My professional work is primarily commission based; portraits, life-style, editorial, commercial, food and architectural. Personal work is usually anything that catches my eye, but tends towards figure work, landscape and abstract.