Art Elevates the Everyday

On behalf of the Wiregrass Museum of Art, our board and staff extend our appreciation and gratitude for your support. During this challenging year, WMA has remained committed to creating vibrant art experiences, opportunities for cultural sharing, and rich resources for lifelong learning through the visual arts for residents and students in the Wiregrass and beyond. Your support provided WMA with the ability to adapt its programs, exhibitions, special projects, and offerings in unusual circumstances to meet the needs of its community.

The FY 2020 Annual Report summarizes the museum’s work from October 2019 to September 2020, and we encourage you to learn more about WMA’s role and work in our community from this report and on our website. Here, you’ll read about a year’s worth of innovative artist residencies and exhibitions, preK-12 education and community-centered partnerships and collaborations, the important work of caring for our collections, and more.

WMA continues to transform our region — we are resilient, relevant, and essential to our Wiregrass neighbors — and we are strengthened through your support. We will continue to fulfill our mission and inspire creativity and innovation in everyday life in 2021 and beyond. Thank you for being part of WMA.

Dana-Marie Lemmer
Executive Director and Curator

Mike Owen
President, Board of Trustees
WMA BY THE NUMBERS

45
VISUAL ARTISTS SUPPORTED

10
EXHIBITIONS

16
GRANTS AWARDED

5,100+
PARTICIPANTS IN VIRTUAL PROGRAMS

5
AWARDS FROM SOUTHEASTERN MUSEUMS CONFERENCE

9,592
SOCIAL MEDIA FOLLOWERS

2
ARTIST RESIDENCIES

1
NEW DIGITAL APP LAUNCH

3,600
DCS & SUMMER OUTREACH ART KITS DISTRIBUTED THROUGH EDUCATION PARTNERS
At WMA, the visual arts offer diverse channels for Wiregrass residents to experience and understand the complex stories of the South. Because artists are central to this work, WMA prioritizes creative and financial support for artists to create engaging exhibitions and public programs that connect residents directly to the art of our time. This year’s annual schedule of temporary exhibitions included *Synchronized Swimmers*, a continuation of a years-long collaboration with Wiregrass area artist Jenny Fine. The immersive art experience created through this exhibition drew large crowds from across the Southeast to its opening night and throughout the run of the exhibition, and offered area residents the opportunity to see innovative contemporary work that reflected the familiar physical and cultural landscape of the region. The launch of *Synchronized Swimmers* coincided with the launch of WMA’s free digital app, a new, customized tool that widens the museum’s ability to engage visitors with extended interpretive components, like audio tours, videos, and extra features triggered by beacon technology as guests walk through the galleries. This technology project was made possible with a grant from Wiregrass Foundation.

This year, WMA continued in its commitment to support artists from across the Southeast, including area artists like Ozark, Alabama-based artist Beverly West Leach with her exhibition of recent works, *Telling on Myself* and *Graceville*, Florida-based photographer Sean Crutchfield in his first museum exhibition, *As We Are*. Visitors to both exhibitions could dive deep into the artists’ processes, inspirations, and stories through audio tours on WMA’s free digital app.

In January and February, WMA began to implement preventative health measures during large gatherings like Art After Hours, to combat the regular flu season and as a safeguard against COVID-19. In March, the museum responded to the pandemic by closing temporarily. As staff and board members transitioned their work to virtual formats, we quickly adapted normal operations to respond to the needs of our community. For the 2020 exhibition schedule, this meant the postponement of two long-anticipated exhibitions, *Path of Entry* and *Between Heaven and Earth*. *Path of Entry*, a group exhibition featuring the work of Bethany Johnson, Chintia Kirana, Hyomin Kwon, Joe Ren, Laura Lucia Sanz Giraldo, and Karen Stentaford, is guest curated by Chintia Kirana, a multidisciplinary artist and art activist, in partnership with Expose Art. *Between Heaven and Earth* is an exhibition of Kirana’s own work, an exploration of duality, an accumulation of time passed, and a poetic representation of words unspoken. Both exhibitions will be featured at WMA in the future.

As the COVID-19 pandemic brought new limitations to travel and in-person museum visits, it also created an environment in which artists could reach wider audiences through WMA’s online presence. We prioritized support for artists in a challenging time, and transitioned plans for the museum’s biennial to move from a traditional exhibition to a virtual platform. *B20: Wiregrass Biennial* became WMA’s first virtual exhibition, featuring 39 artists from 11 states from the Southeast. Support for artists was crucial during the pandemic response because of limited opportunities for employment and exhibitions; WMA maintained community engagement with the exhibition through online voting, artist social media takeovers, blog interviews, and artist talks and demonstrations at House Party for Art, WMA’s virtual art and music festival.

Before the necessary pivot to a virtual platform, WMA had already planned and implemented major changes to its biennial by eliminating artist application fees and increasing the number of awards. By removing an economic barrier to participation for artists, we experienced an increase in artist interest, the number and quality of applications, and saw more recently graduated and emerging artists represented in the selections. WMA added the Alabama Artist prize, and two additional People’s Choice awards, with support from the Alabama State Council on the Arts. A total of six artists received awards for their work: The Judge’s Prize - Lauren O’Connor-Korb (Athens, Georgia), The Alabama Prize - Jasper Lee (Birmingham, Alabama), The People’s Choice Award - Lilian Garcia-Roig (Tallahassee, Florida), and Two People’s Choice runners-up, Kelly Boehmer (Poozer, Georgia) and Leah Hamel (Hoover, Alabama).

In addition to temporary exhibitions, support for artists this year included two short-term residencies for emerging artists in Alabama, continuing WMA’s practice of creating platforms for artist residencies since 2014. In March, Alabama artist Lily Reeves launched *Spirit Kin*, a visual story project focusing on biodiversity, non-human histories, and transcendent spiritual experiences. Working from physical sites in Birmingham, Alabama, Reeves’ short-term residency transitioned into a virtual format, due to COVID-19 restrictions; over 10,000 people engaged with Lily’s virtual residency through social media, raising the artist’s visibility in the Wiregrass and across the U.S.

Artist-in-residence Sydney Foster returned to the Wiregrass to create images and document stories as she traveled through the region. Her ongoing partnership with WMA elevates the story we tell of the Wiregrass through photography, and Foster’s contributions to community engagement include a wide spectrum of interaction, from walks in area neighborhoods to social media takeovers. Residencies at WMA show residents the value of the role, work, and impact of artists within our communities, from the creation of new work that reflects the character of our people, to partnerships with area initiatives that improve everyday life. WMA’s successes over the years in short-term artist residencies pave the way for sustainable programs at WMA that can offer long-term opportunities for artists in the Southeast and across the U.S to live and work in the Wiregrass.
A YEAR OF ART / B20 WINNERS

Selections from the Permanent Collection
Ongoing

Semiotic Compass
Ongoing

wolf-light separating gold from gravel: new encaustic works on paper by zdenko krtic
October 18 - December 21, 2019

Frank Stella: Prints From the Permanent Collection
October 18 - December 14, 2019

Synchronized Swimmers
Jenny Finé • January 17 - February 22, 2020

Telling On Myself - recent works by Beverly West Leach
January 17 - December 31, 2020

Youth Art Month
March 3-28, 2020

Helen Keller Art Show of Alabama - 2020
April 1 - May 16, 2020

As We Are: Photography by Sean Crutchfield
June 17 - December 31, 2020

B20: Wiregrass Biennial
July 17 - September 26, 2020

CARING FOR WMA’S COLLECTIONS

Objects in WMA’s care, including those in the Permanent and Education Collections, as well as objects on long-term loan, total almost 1,100, and provide inspiration for ongoing exhibitions, which rotate regularly in the museum’s designated galleries. This year, WMA expanded the use of its Permanent Collection exhibitions during COVID-19, creating spaces for area visitors to enjoy art safely and reconnect with pieces that are familiar and comforting. Through a public feedback survey, WMA selected artwork for exhibition that would reflect themes that our area audience communicated would evoke a sense of peace and self-reflection.

WMA puts great priority on the safekeeping and care of its collections, and continues its essential, ongoing work in collections care. Objects are held in the public’s trust, with WMA as a steward to ensure these artworks are accessible for generations to come. A grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities was awarded in August 2020 from the Preservation Assistance Grants program. This funding will help support WMA’s efforts in collections care by providing needed supplies for environmental monitoring and preservation, to be used in the museum’s art vault, storage and preparation areas, and throughout the galleries.

NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES

This grant builds on WMA’s ongoing work to safeguard objects in its care, including recent digitization projects, and the museum’s participation in the 2019 Collections Assessment for Preservation Program with the Foundation for Advancement in Conservation, which provided the museum with comprehensive assessments of its collections and facilities. Collections care projects like these exemplify the careful stewardship needed to achieve other major institutional goals, including national accreditation through the American Alliance of Museums. National accreditation is a self-study, peer-based review of operations and impact, and strengthens museums’ credibility and ability to serve their communities.

Interested in learning more about WMA’s work in preservation and care of its collections? Reach out to Dana-Marie Lemmer, Executive Director and Curator, to request a copy of the 2019 Collections Assessment for Preservation Report.
WMA encourages lifelong learning, for students of all ages and backgrounds. We worked at the beginning of the 2020-21 school year to engage students in the museum’s spaces through field trips, workshops and classes, and to instill in them both a love for learning and self-expression through art, and -- importantly -- a sense of belonging and civic pride for their museum. Partnerships with Dothan City Schools and local youth organizations help WMA reach wide student audiences, creating a collaborative educational environment at the museum.

In September, we launched a new digital resource for educators, The Educator’s Lair, an ongoing series of videos, art projects and demonstrations, and tips and tricks to help educators teach the arts and integrate them into multiple disciplines. To date, WMA has created over 40 entries in-house, which are available at wiregrassmuseum.org/educators-lair/, at no cost for teachers, administrators, parents, and those curious about arts education.

In partnership with Dothan City Schools, WMA provided significant support as an educational resource for area students and educators. Students from Hidden Lake Primary School and Beverlye Intermediate School, the two schools in the Dothan City Schools system designated as A+ Arts schools, made weekly visits to the museum for gallery tours and instruction in the museum’s studio. These repeat visits encouraged a sense of belonging at the museum for participating students, and increased their technical knowledge of the visual arts, which complemented their schools’ focus on interdisciplinary learning in the arts. This partnership also provided professional development workshops for teachers from these schools, to increase their arts integration skills and help them become more familiar with WMA’s resources, including a curriculum of lesson plans based on objects in WMA’s Permanent Collection.

Out of the (Art) Box, an art installation competition for teams of high school students from around the Wiregrass, provided opportunities for teens to create art in a collaborative environment. With guidance from artist mentors, and tools, supplies, workspace, and time in the museum’s galleries, students created thematic art installations that stretched their creativity. Students were able to experiment with large-scale projects, innovating new ways to express their ideas, not only through the art they created, but through written artist statements, and within constructive team consultations through critiques from artist mentors and a judge. Installations were exhibited during Youth Art Month in March.

Through WMA’s temporary closure, beginning in March, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we remained committed to providing high-quality art experiences for families and students. WMA’s long-running program, First Saturday Family Day transitioned to a virtual format, using art from temporary and virtual exhibitions to inspire at-home scavenger hunts, hands-on artmaking, and discussions about art in everyday life.

Also during this time, WMA realized the great need for a sense of continuity in education for area students, educators, and families, as schools were deeply affected by closures. We quickly pivoted our regular programming to provide a variety of available resources, including free, online lessons with interdisciplinary themes for all grade levels, social media art challenges, and scavenger hunts for families to do together.

Within our partnership with Dothan City Schools, WMA created art kits, including plentiful supplies, printed lessons and instructions for additional online resources, and gave them to preK-6 students through the meal distribution program in April and May 2020. These kits served a dual purpose: to provide continuity in arts education for students during a year in which events, programs, and school as they know it was majorly disrupted, and to provide students with a healthy outlet for creative self-expression, which alleviates stress, builds critical thinking, and encourages collaboration. These skills help students cultivate and practice resiliency and utilize artmaking as a positive mental health exercise during challenging times.

**2,900 ART KITS**
provided to preK-6 Dothan City Schools students during school closures
WMA’s annual summer art camp outreach program also had to adapt to limited meeting sizes, and strategized new ways of providing rich art experiences for area students over the summer break. With a grant from Wiregrass Foundation, WMA expanded its original plan and gave students and residents 700 high-quality art kits through existing and new partnerships. This project strengthened relationships between partner organizations and WMA; we adapted our ideas and operations to continue to provide needed resources for disadvantaged students and their families. WMA also increased its institutional knowledge of the essential role of art and specifically, our museum, in relation to the social and educational needs of the Wiregrass community in unprecedented situations.
SOCIAL CONNECTION

At WMA, art brings people of all ages, genders, races, abilities, and backgrounds together. Exhibitions, programs, and events inspire cultural sharing and civic dialogue, which strengthens the social fabric of the Wiregrass by encouraging complex conversations and working together to understand different perspectives.

Third Thursday programs like Write Night and Art After Hours offered after hours experiences that encouraged people to come together around art, and provided opportunities for residents to learn directly from artists, who tell the complex stories of the South. As WMA worked to provide social connection through its temporary closure and safe reopening, we adapted to new platforms and created innovative ways that people could share in the experience of art. In place of the museum’s annual member party, One Night Only, came a virtual event in May by the same name. This free, live video experience showcased the museum’s artists in residence, upcoming exhibitions, first-person stories from board members and museum supporters, and informed the Wiregrass community about the work that the museum was doing across the Southeast in 2020. During its member drive and One Night Only event promotions, WMA contributed 10% of proceeds from membership funds toward Wiregrass 2-1-1’s efforts to direct area residents to needed social service resources.

Through the museum’s safe reopening in June, WMA continued to prioritize accessible formats for its events and programs. Yard Party for Art, the museum’s annual art and music festival, was postponed to 2021, with House Party for Art as its virtual alternative. At housepartyforart.com and on the museum’s app, WMA hosted a virtual art, music, and tech festival at no cost for viewers. This event, on social media platforms and video channels during August 13-15, featured recognized musicians, artists, and spoken word performers from across the Southeast through live performances of original work. B20: Wiregrass Biennial exhibiting artists invited viewers to live chats for ‘artist hangout’ sessions, live studio tours, and art demonstrations during House Party for Art, drawing viewers from Alabama, Arkansas, Arizona, California, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, District of Columbia, and North Carolina.

In all, over 5,100 people total took part in B20: Wiregrass Biennial, One Night Only, House Party for Art, and adapted virtual programs like First Saturday Family Day, and The Art of Yoga.

HOUSE PARTY FOR ART HAD:

2,751 VIEWS
13 PERFORMANCES
16 ARTISTS SUPPORTED
Support from the Wiregrass community and stakeholders across the Southeast is essential to the work that we do at WMA, from funding, to volunteers, to Board leadership and more. In all these areas, we prioritize sustainability and strategic planning guides this work, and allows WMA to center its decision-making around a resilient mission.

WMA’s online presence was of particular importance this year, as physical distancing required museums to innovate and adapt traditional in-person formats to provide for the health and safety of their communities. This year, WMA communicated its social impact through the museum’s blog, #wmaINSPIRED, referencing nationwide trends and research in the arts, and how WMA carries out this work regionally. This blog is a rich resource of artist interviews, arts advocacy, staff and visitor stories, and accounts of the museum’s role in preK-12 education and community-centered programs. We work to build the museum’s case for support through diligent evaluation of programs to gather community feedback, and share the positive impacts that WMA creates every day here in the Wiregrass for diverse audiences.

This fall, WMA was recognized by Southeastern Museums Conference with five awards, including a Silver award for its new digital app, Gold and Silver awards for digital marketing and a screen-printed poster for Yard Party for Art 2019, a Bronze award for its FY19 Annual Report, and an Honorable Mention for media production of One Night Only 2020. These competitive, peer-reviewed awards validate WMA’s work to offer its residents innovative ways to experience the visual arts. Diverse, sustainable funding was crucial to WMA’s ability to be responsive to the needs of its community this year. Support from The City of Dothan, corporate and individual memberships and donations, combined with foundation grants and multi-year giving agreements created a foundation for the museum to provide high-quality programs and resources in answer to the great need for education tools and social connection during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Operational support is also appreciated from other major partners: Michelin Charity Golf Tournament, The Daniel Foundation of Alabama, Houston County Commission, and Visit Dothan. WMA works to secure sustainable, multi-year agreements with foundations and grant-makers in order to have a measure of income predictability, and we give our thanks to these who believe in the transformative power of art for our Wiregrass community.

MORE INFO
For detailed information from WMA’s annual financial statements, visit wiregrassmuseum.org/about. The annual audit will be published in early Spring 2021.

WMA’S IMPACT

Income and Other Support
Earned Income $18,659.22
Contributed Income $603,564.05
Restricted (Endowment) $50,000.00
Total Income $672,223.27
Operating Expenses $550,110.00
Other Income $6,867.25
Net Income $78,980.52

FY20 FINANCIAL INFORMATION
THE YEAR AHEAD

In the coming year, we understand our community’s needs will be changing, from impacts to education and gatherings from the COVID-19 pandemic, to an evolving social culture that is more aware and proactive in the fight for racial justice. WMA will respond to the needs of our community first by listening, and using a community-informed approach, rather than a top-down mandate that assumes needs and priorities. WMA sees the visual arts as an opportunity to serve our community and meet essential needs in education, social cohesion, and cultural growth.

As we move into 2021, WMA will continue its commitment to continued creative and financial support for artists through exhibitions, residencies, and special projects remains strong. Over the last six years, our short-term artist residency program has produced closer community connection with artists while strengthening their ability to grow in their studio practice and career advancement. We will build on this work by studying and planning for how our museum can build sustainable, long-term programs that draw artists from across the U.S., and will serve as WMA is a springboard for creativity, and we anticipate the prospective opportunity to expand this program with enthusiasm.

Education programs and resources to support lifelong learning through the visual arts will remain a priority, and we will prioritize the availability of these offerings in both virtual and in-person formats in the coming year. Intentional and thoughtfully planned shifts in programs like Out of the (Art) Box will respond to the changing needs of our students and residents, and will provide innovative and excellent learning experiences.

Though our work begins with listening, WMA will take an active approach to planning for a changing future. In 2021, we will continue to accomplish goals and objectives set out in our current Strategic Plan, and will work to become better informed about how our work contributes to the Wiregrass region and beyond. Professional development and training will center on building greater cultural equity, with a focus on diversity, access, and inclusion.

As we plan for the years ahead, we look forward to new opportunities to make a greater impact in the Wiregrass. WMA has been grateful to participate in active conversation and planning as part of Transformation Through the Arts, a Wiregrass Foundation initiative, over the last two years to offer its perspective on transformative community growth through the arts. We invite our supporters to consider how WMA has faced the challenges and triumphs of the past year -- thriving through a temporary closure and safe reopening, adapting programs, events, and exhibitions to virtual formats, and innovating new ways to be a strong partner in preK-12 education -- and see the need for sustainable growth. Our institutional strength lies partly in the fact that we keep the public top of mind in all decision making, and can adapt quickly and with a deep understanding of the community we are a part of. We will take those skills into the next phase of our work, and will continue to provide inspiration for our neighbors.

Finally, we look to next year with a focused thought: Art elevates the everyday. We encourage our supporters and the broader community to consider how WMA has faced the challenges and triumphs of the past year -- thriving through a temporary closure and safe reopening, adapting programs, events, and exhibitions to virtual formats, and innovating new ways to be a strong partner in preK-12 education -- and see the need for sustainable growth. Our institutional strength lies partly in the fact that we keep the public top of mind in all decision making, and can adapt quickly and with a deep understanding of the community we are a part of. We will take those skills into the next phase of our work, and will continue to provide inspiration for our neighbors.

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**Donations to the General Endowment**
Anonymous - $50,000

**Donations to the Annual Fund**

**Gifts of $1,000+**
Susan and Leslie Blumberg  
Pat and John Flowers  
Jane Williams  
Wiregrass Foundation

**Gifts of $500-$999**
Brenda and R. Jerry Fincher  
Rhonda and Ben Harrison  
Julia and Dan Johnson  
Sharla Jones  
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**Gifts of $250-$499**
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Julia Walden  
Martha Webber  
Laurn Wheelock  
Jennifer and Judd Williams  
Malissa and Ted Williams  
Debra and Walter Young
GRANT AWARDS AND FOUNDATION SUPPORT

- Alabama Arts License Tag Fund - $3,500 for youth art education programs
- Alabama State Council on the Arts - $21,200 in project grants including Synchronized Swimmers exhibition, Out of the (Art) Box program, artist residencies, and B2O: Wiregrass Biennial exhibition; $10,000 toward operational support from CARES funding
- The Caring Foundation (Blue Cross Blue Shield of Alabama) - $2,000 for Youth Art Month
- The Daniel Foundation of Alabama - $35,000 for operational support
- Visit Dothan - $4,000 to support an area attraction
- Michelin Charity Golf Tournament - $74,500 for operational support
- Publix Super Markets Charities - $1,000 for Youth Art Month
- State of Alabama CARES Nonprofit Grant - $15,000 for operational support
- Southeast Alabama Community Foundation - $2,500 for First Saturday Family Day and adapted virtual programs
- Walmart Foundation - $250 for First Saturday Family Day
- Wells Fargo Foundation - $5,000 for virtual offerings and educational programs in response to COVID-19
- Wiregrass Foundation - $9,420 for summer outreach programs

MISSION + VISION

The Wiregrass Museum of Art inspires a lifelong appreciation for the visual arts by providing innovative educational programs that engage diverse audiences through the collection and exhibition of quality works.

As a cultural anchor, the Wiregrass Museum of Art inspires creativity to enhance the everyday lives of its community and leads the regional conversation on the importance of the arts.

CORE VALUES

Power of Art / Inspiration / Creativity
We believe in the transformative experience of art and are dedicated to providing our audience with exceptional experiences of direct contact with unique objects and works of art through access to our collections and diverse exhibition schedule. These works of art are at the core of the museum’s identity.

Integrity
We believe that we are accountable for the care and preservation of the collections and all objects entrusted to us. We stand for our values in making difficult decisions and will maintain accountability to our donors through good stewardship of donations and generous giving.

Excellence and Leadership/Professionalism
We believe in treating all visitors and colleagues with respect and will strive for best practices in all we do. Creative expression is central to how we plan, teach, and face adversity.

Excellence in Education
We believe in a welcoming environment for all to learn. We will provide life-changing educational experiences through research and direct interactions with visual art. We will encourage lifelong learning and a diverse student body to express new and challenging ideas at every age.

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Art elevates the everyday.