

# collaborative

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# 40 CREATIVES UNDER

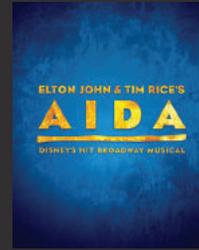
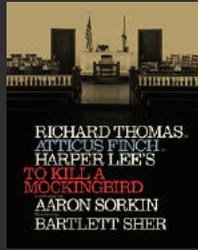


AARON MOORE, CASEY POLOMAINE, TONY IADICCO, PATRICK HARRIS, MADISON LAVALLEE, JAYANA LAFONTAINE,  
COURTNEY GUTTENBERG, VACEIA PAYNE, KIM NEATON, ANNA PILOT, JOEY BERBEN, JINAH KIM

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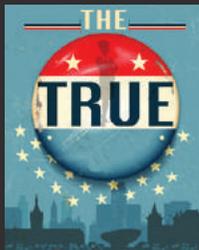
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**ON THE COVER:** Creatives Under 40 nominees (L-R) Vaceia Payne, Madison LaVallee, Joey Berben, Aaron Moore and Tony Iadaccico. Photo: Jamel Mosely

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THE collaborative

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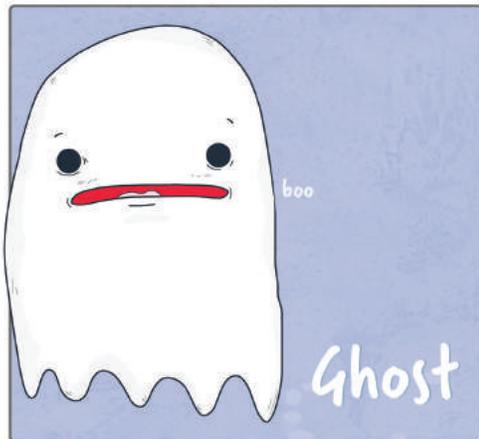
**COLLABCAST EPISODES YOU MAY HAVE MISSED**

In the latest episodes of the CollabCast, we catch up with Creative Under 40 nominee, dancer and choreographer Anna Pillot about ongoing her collaborative projects, her new excursions into the world of visual arts and film as well as the turmoil of coronavirus and its effects on the local arts scene. Stay tuned to our social media sites for more clips featuring the rest of this year’s Creatives Under 40.

**TOP VIDEOS THIS MONTH**

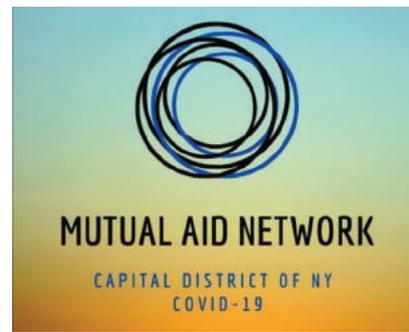
1. Three Songs with...Blue Ranger
2. Three Songs with...Joan Kelsey’s Silver Lining
3. Three Songs with...Olivia Quillio
4. 24-Hour Drone Series Promo
5. Three Songs with...Brule County Bad Boys

## Creepiest Things on Earth:



© TrashKid Art

Comic illustrated by Jade Warrick [TrashKid Art]



## IN REVIEW

Coronavirus (COVID-19) has already led to the kind of drastic impacts in our lives that most of us never dreamed of. As of writing this on March 16, Gov. Andrew Cuomo had ordered restaurants, bars and casinos closed and banned gatherings of 50 people or more. Most of the major Capital Region arts institutions have closed their doors temporarily during this time of crisis.

Rather than listing all of the impacted venues here we suggest you visit the website of any event you may have tickets to or are considering attending before you leave the house.

Many arts organizations are encouraging patrons to donate their refunds on canceled performances to help keep the institutions going while their doors are closed.

Artists, musicians, actors, creatives, freelancers and gig workers have already been hit very hard by the cancellations caused by the Coronavirus pandemic. We encourage you to visit [collaborativemagazine.org](http://collaborativemagazine.org) to stay up-to-date on local efforts to support these individuals.

If you are one of these individuals, we've included a number of resources here in hopes that you can find some assistance and support during these unprecedented times.

One invaluable source of aggregated information is [covid19freelanceartistresource.wordpress.com](http://covid19freelanceartistresource.wordpress.com). There you will find information on emergency funding, help for small businesses, tips on maintaining your mental health during times of crisis, best practices for online teaching and opportunities for temporary or remote work.

If your job is secure during these times and you are a patron of the arts here are a few ways you can help:

**Stay at home. Don't attend large gatherings.**

**Support local restaurants by ordering out or picking up.**

**Commission local artists and photographers.**

**Purchase music either digitally or physically online.**

**Take online classes from local yogis, activists, poets, authors, musicians etc.**

**Purchase gift cards or subscriptions to local arts institutions.**

**Visit our Facebook page: [facebook.com/thecollaborativemag](https://facebook.com/thecollaborativemag) to be connected to those who need assistance, as well as the newly developed mutual aid network at [bit.ly/cdnysignup](https://bit.ly/cdnysignup).**

## Stay Connected

Some local arts organizations haven't let the COVID-19 stop them from entertaining the masses. MOPCO theater in Schenectady is sharing their performances on YouTube. Visit their Facebook page for more information. Meanwhile legendary folk venue Caffe Lena, which has already been offering performances on YouTube, has begun going live on Facebook and sharing performances "Stay Home Sessions" on their channel. As of writing, scheduled guests included Kevin Mckrell, Joan Kelsey's Silver Lining, and Warden & Co.

## Open call: Teaching Artists Workshop at Art Omi in Ghent

The Art Omi Teaching Artist Workshop invites 20 teaching artists to participate in a three-day intensive for those who are interested in building their skills as arts educators, deepening pedagogical knowledge, making meaningful connections and developing ideas with others in their field. The program includes three nights accommodation in a private or shared room at Art Omi, and all meals. Participants are responsible for their own transportation and must stay for the full workshop. The Art Omi Teaching Artist Workshop is free of charge. Applications are open through May 1 at [artomi.submittable.com/submit](http://artomi.submittable.com/submit) with a \$25 fee. CV, artist statement, teaching philosophy, sample of personal work or link to website, sample of student work and two professional references are required. The 2020 workshop applicants will be notified May 15. For more information, visit [artomi.org/education/teaching-artists-workshop](http://artomi.org/education/teaching-artists-workshop).

## Call for art: Art on the Rail Trail

Art on the Rail Trail (ART) seeks artists interested in developing an original public artwork along the Rail Trail, located between the intersection of Voorheesville Avenue and the Albany County Rail Trail Pavilion located at the intersection of Main and Grove Street in Voorheesville. The ART committee envisions a temporary installation (summer through fall 2020) that will incorporate the natural and built environment. All artists are encouraged to apply, but specifically those who work in public art. Preference will be given to Capital Region artists and those from the surrounding area. Proposals that have multiple installations along the space, encouraging people to walk along the trail to explore and enjoy the art are also preferred. Fabric installations are preferred, but projects that utilize other materials will also be considered. Applications are due by April 15. The anticipated installation date is July 2020. For more information on the Call for Proposals visit: [mohawkhudson.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Call-for-Public-Art-Proposal-ART-Voorheesville-2020.pdf](http://mohawkhudson.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Call-for-Public-Art-Proposal-ART-Voorheesville-2020.pdf)

## Call for art: Two new shows at the National Bottle Museum in Ballston Spa

The second annual “Family Showcase” is open to groups of two or more members of any family who creates visual art of any medium and subject matter. Last year’s show featured six families and 15 artists. All art must be delivered to The National Bottle Museum by April 18, 4 PM. Entry fee is \$30 per family, 2-10 pieces, with a 25 percent commission on sales. The works will be on display April 25 - May 23.

“Art of The Bottle III” is open to any artist whose art is either made from bottles or depicts bottles in the art. This show coincides with the 41st Annual Saratoga Bottle Show. All art must be delivered to The National Bottle Museum on or before the entry deadline of May 30, 4 PM. Entry fee is \$20 for up to four pieces with a 25 percent commission on sales. The works will be on display June 4-27.

Both wall and floor display art may be submitted but art must follow the guidelines of the show. All submitted art must have the artist’s name, title, medium and price attached. Entry forms are available at the museum and via email.

## The R Gallery at Arlene’s Artist Materials in Albany accepting art on a rolling basis

The art space’s main level gallery is accepting pieces by emerging and established artists, working in any media, who would like to exhibit contemporary artworks with an emphasis on technical execution for the 2021 season. The aim is to showcase serious, thought-provoking and impactful work while highlighting craftsmanship and technique. Interested artists must submit via [form.jotform.com/91345654319158](http://form.jotform.com/91345654319158) and follow the guidelines: pieces must be no larger than 40"x60" and must be ready for exhibition (framed and ready to hang). Artists are encouraged to make their works for sale and should note that Arlene’s takes a 40 percent commission with a cap of \$4,000. For questions and more information, contact Andrew, gallery director and curator, at [arlenesartist@gmail.com](mailto:arlenesartist@gmail.com).

## Applications open for the new Arlene’s Artist in Residence program in Albany

Arlene’s Artist Materials has recently launched a local residency program and seeks “committed, community-minded artists working in book arts, painting, printmaking and/or sculpture” October 2020-August 2021. Applications are due April 25 via [form.jotform.com/81646442274156](http://form.jotform.com/81646442274156) and will be juried by an advisory committee focusing on quality of work and an “expressed desire to be part of our community.” The accepted artist-in-residence will be notified by June 4. For more details on the submission process and full guidelines, visit [arlenesartist.wixsite.com/rgalleryatarlenes/residences](http://arlenesartist.wixsite.com/rgalleryatarlenes/residences).

## Upstate Independent Filmmakers Network open to new members

The Albany-based Upstate Independent Filmmakers Network invites actors, filmmakers and other media artists in Upstate New York, Massachusetts, Vermont and Connecticut. The group meets monthly (first Tuesdays, 6:30-9 PM) at WAMC The Linda in Albany to network, showcase member films and present educational talks. This year, as they celebrate 25 years, UIFN is focused on outreach for actors and acting organizations to link with the dozens of UIFN writers, directors, producers and technicians looking for talent for their next project. For more information, visit [ui-fn.com](http://ui-fn.com).

## Albany Barn and Electric City Barn in Schenectady are hiring

The creative workspaces in Albany and Schenectady seek to fill multiple Event Ambassador roles in both locations. Individuals will work as needed on a flexible schedule (primarily nights and weekends) to staff events between both Barns, including but not limited to visual art exhibitions, theatrical and musical performances, film screenings and meet-ups. Customer service experience is preferred. Applicants must be comfortable working independently, being on your feet and engaging in low-impact physical activities. Experience and comfort in any of the following areas is desirable, but not required: basic computer knowledge (Microsoft & Google Suites) and A/V knowledge (projector, lighting and sound system use). Interested parties should submit a resume to Casey at [gallery@albanybarn.org](mailto:gallery@albanybarn.org) using the subject line “Event Ambassador Application.” Applications will be accepted until all positions are filled.



# EDITOR'S PICKS UPCOMING EVENTS

## festivals of the month

### 72ND ANNUAL ALBANY TULIP FEST

Over 100,000 blooming tulips surround this annual festival featuring a musical lineup from the local scene and beyond (not announced at the time of publication), local makers and great food and drink.  
@ Washington Park, Albany | May 9-10

### ST. SOPHIA GREEK FESTIVAL

Dance all day to live Greek music featuring traditional dancers, explore "E Kouzina," the new casual dining room featuring homemade, authentic Greek entrees as well as several food and pastry, souvenir and jewelry tables.  
@ St. Sophia Greek Orthodox Church, Albany | May 14-17

### 11TH ANNUAL SARATOGA BREWFEST

More than 100 craft brewers join this massive food and drink festival featuring live music and games.  
@ Saratoga County Fairgrounds and Expo Center | May 16

### ULTIMATE ELVIS ANNUAL FESTIVAL

This year's festival will feature some of the top performers in the world performing in three headline shows: Uncovered (May 28), At The Hop pt. 2 (May 29), and Images of the King Concert (May 30). Plus, enjoy after hours parties around town, a 9 AM Saturday parade and more.  
@ Lake George Forum and Village | May 27-31, 8 PM

### MOUNTAIN JAM

Headliners include Trey Anastasio Band, Gov't Mule, The Head and The Heart, Brandi Carlile, Grace Potter and a special 80th birthday celebration for Levon Helm.  
@ Bethel Woods Center for the Arts | May 29-31

## I IO can't miss May events

### THE MOTH: TRUE STORIES TOLD LIVE

Featuring true stories, told live and without notes, The Moth celebrates the ability of stories to honor both the diversity and commonality of human experience, and to satisfy a vital human need for connection. It seeks to present recognized storytellers among established and emerging writers, performers and artists and to encourage storytelling among communities whose stories often go untold.  
@ Troy Savings Bank Music Hall | May 8, 8 PM

### 5TH ANNUAL BASILICA FARM AND FLEA SPRING MARKET

Support local artisans sharing their vintage, handmade and sustainably farmed items. Over 100 local and independent vendors take part in this market designed to support and elevate the Hudson Valley's creative economy.  
@ Basilica Hudson | May 9-10, 10 AM

### PRESERVATIONFEST

A concert to benefit Adirondack Mountain Club and Saratoga PLAN featuring Sean Rowe, And The Kids and Sun Parade. Raffle for items donated from local businesses: \$1 for 1 raffle ticket, \$5 for 10.  
@ Putnam Place, Saratoga | May 9, 8 PM | \$20

### ELLEN SINOPOLI DANCE COMPANY

Ellen Sinopoli's company of compelling, athletic and versatile dancers will perform a program of diverse, innovative works accompanied by live music by cellist Ashley Bathgate and The Capital Trio, ensemble in residence at UAlbany.  
@ The Egg Performing Arts Center, Albany | May 9, 8 PM

### IRON CHEF 2020

Local chefs will compete for the title of champion—based on audience votes—in this Open Door Mission-hosted fundraiser for the vulnerable communities of Glens Falls.  
@ The Queensbury Hotel, Glens Falls | May 14, 6 PM

### 'THE STORY OF PLASTIC' SCREENING AND DISCUSSION

In this documentary, striking footage from three continents illustrates the ongoing climate catastrophe and the global movement rising in response. Filmmaker Deia Schlosberg will attend the film as well as a 4 PM workshop and 6 PM discussion and meal with Judith Enck of Beyond Plastics.  
@ The Sanctuary for Independent Media, Troy | May 15, 7 PM

### SCHENECTADY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA: 86TH SEASON FINALE

Pianist Philip Edward Fisher will perform Rachmaninoff's "Piano Concerto #1" and The Octavo Singers, under the direction of Curtis Funk, will accompany the orchestra for Beethoven's Ninth and more. A 2 PM pre-concert talk will take place in the Fenimore Gallery.  
@ Proctors, Schenectady | May 17, 3 PM

### DARE TO BE HUMAN: A STORYTELLING SHOW

"Dare to be Human" podcast hosts Kat Koppett and Alex Timmis host this showcase exploring the human condition through tales of vulnerability, courage, crazy risks and wacky mistakes submitted by storytellers including Robin Gelfenbien, Richard Lovrich, Joey Novick and Kelli Dunham.  
@ Mopco Improv Theatre, Schenectady | May 29, 8 PM

### BATTLE OF THE BANDS

Local bands and solo performers have a shot at a \$1,500 cash prize and featured photo in Jay St. Pub's Hall of Fame when they enter. The Battle will take place in an outdoor festival featuring local beer, wine and spirit vendors. To sign up, email Sarah at sarah@jaystpub.com or message the venue at facebook.com/jaystpub.  
@ Jay St. Pub, Schenectady | May 30

### BIRD FLIGHT SERIES: PATRICK BARTLEY QUINTET

Hudson Hall and Catskill Jazz Factory celebrate the music of Charlie "Bird" Parker led by a musicians at the forefront of the contemporary jazz scene. Grammy-nominated saxophonist, composer and bandleader Patrick Bartley Jr. will recreate the frenetic energy of Bird's most iconic performances.  
@ Hudson Hall at the Historic Hudson Opera House | May 30, 7 PM

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# 40 CREATIVES UNDER



Creatives Under 40: (L-R) Patrick Harris, Kim Neaton, Vaceia Payne, Madison LaVallee, Joey Berben, Aaron Moore, Tony Iadaccio, Courtney Guttenberg and Casey Polomaine. All photos in this feature by Jamel Moseley.

It was raining and we were on the rooftop, but no one seemed to mind. They wandered about the roof's edge at Collectiveeffort's 415 River St. headquarters in Troy, taking in the view of the Green Island Bridge, the mighty Hudson river and Albany's skyline in the distance.

They all had other things on their mind. Signs were plastered everywhere warning not to touch your face, to wash your hands. To practice social distancing. And yet, our 2020 class of Creatives Under 40 were all interested in learning more about each other, and even if they already knew each other. Relationships we're furthered, plans made.

Fashion designer Vaceia Payne chatted with Aaron Moore. Show promoter Kim Neaton (self deprecatingly describing herself as a "music fan") commiserated with Joey Berben of Berben and Wolff's and graphic designer Courtney Guttenberg of Nullvoid apparel.

With the rain pouring down they gathered together in a lineup not dissimilar from something out of a superhero movie. They looked proud, energized and undaunted by the mass of dark clouds hanging in the distance.

# Joey Berben



“”

**I do it all because I love it. It's not like I set out to be doing something every minute. It just happens.**

Joey Berben isn't exactly an easy guy to peg. At first glance he might look like just the successful entrepreneur behind the celebrated vegan eatery Berben and Wolff's Vegan Delicatessen in Albany. But Berben isn't your stereotypical entrepreneur. With years dedicated to the punk scene, time invested in multiple bands including his current surf rock project The Jagaloons and his punk/hardcore group Aggressive Response, Berben represents an amalgamation of interests, lifestyles and creative pursuits.

His creativity as a chef birthed a number of celebrated recipes including seitan wings, BBQ pulled jackfruit and the Big Max (a massive vegan version of a McDonald's Big Mac). His dedication to the local punk scene has kept venues full and given a generation or two a place to discover bands. His latest endeavor, the booking collective Crisis Isolation, in conjunction with a number of local scene veterans, looks to bring the kinds of touring punk, hardcore and metal bands you might normally have to travel to Boston or New York City to see to Capital Region stages and pair them with local talent.

How does Berben balance his multiple pursuits—days at the restaurant and nights on stage? He doesn't really think about it. It just is. "This is just who I am," he says. "I do it all because I love it. It's not like I set out to be doing something every minute. It just happens."

The menu at Berben and Wolff's has earned praise from across the culinary world—vegan and non-vegan alike. Their products appear at several local restaurants and their wholesale business for meat substitute products has grown by leaps and bounds.

Berben recalls offering to take over the lease from the former occupant of their current Lark Street location and being caught off guard when they accepted. "We didn't have anything. We weren't ready at all. But we got ready," he says.

Last August, Berben and Wolff's opened their second location at 156 Fourth St. in Troy.

It speaks to the fact that many local vegans swear by the place, as do many prominent touring musicians who stop there for a bite. So do a host of non-vegans who eat at the restaurant because it offers tasty food.

"I don't think people really think about it too much," says Berben referring to the vegan label. "So much of this is mainstream now, with the Impossible Burger, people are just coming here because they like how our food tastes." ■

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### DEFINITIVE DVORAK

Stabat Mater  
Symphonic Variations

Saturday, April 25, 2020 7:30 PM  
St. John the Evangelist Church, Schenectady

### BEETHOVEN'S NINTH

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Sunday, May 17, 2020 3 PM  
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# Jinah Kim



Photo: Kiki Vassilakis

After less than three years Sunhee's Farm and Kitchen feels like a linchpin of the community. With a home in a masterfully refurbished former Irish bar on Ferry Street in Troy, Jinah Kim and her mother and father have made quick-serve Korean not only successful but a model others seek to replicate across the region.

The food is great, but it isn't the sole reason Sunhee's stands out from a crowd of new hip, forward-thinking restaurants that have opened in the region in the same time frame. Kim's commitment to serving and fostering the immigrant community shines as the kind of altruism that can lift an entire community. But don't tell her that.

"I really just view it as a partnership," she says. "It's not altruism. It's really this is who we are and it's not that we're trying to like, do good work as much as it is just embedded into our identity."

“”

**To really empower people, sometimes I also have to let go of my own control and understand that I'm not the key factor in all of this.**

Sunhee's employs several recent immigrants, offers English and Korean language classes and teaches Kimchi making. They own two downtown Troy buildings, where they produce kimchi.

Kim, who moved to the region with her family when she was 3, has followed a path dedicated to helping other immigrants. In 2012 she graduated from Boston College with a degree in international relations. From there she worked for Catholic Charities Community Services resettlement office in New York City, then returned to the area to work for the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants.

The restaurant grew naturally from the important role food plays in her family—sharing a meal with her parents quietly, the feeling of being home and loved. She wanted the entire community to experience that.

"I've been thinking about hospitality itself a lot lately," says Kim. "It comes from the Greek word xenia and xenia talks about generosity and courtesy for those who are far from home. We're not inventing something new or trying to revolutionize the industry, we're just going back to what hospitality means and reaching people who are far from home."

As much as Sunhee's is derived from that ethos, Kim understands that her plans mean less than simply being able to serve people as they need to be served. "To really empower people sometimes I also have to let go of my own control and understand that I'm not the key factor in all of this," she says. Rather than trying to employ 50 people, she's happy making sure the 15 people on her staff get better training and feel like they belong.

Kim isn't the kind of person to rest on her laurels, but she isn't itching to expand Sunhee's in the traditional sense. She recently took the law school admission test and plans to go to law school. She wants to provide legal services to the local immigrant community and advocate for them.

"I talk more about expanding vertically," she says. "What that looks like is tapping into different areas of service. We want to incorporate legal services because we feel like the demand is there. It's really a supply and demand kind of situation." ■

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Patrick Harris is tired. He rocks pensively, a cap on his head, denim jacket pulled tight. Over the last month he and his team at Collectiveeffort, a coworking space and creative agency in Troy, have moved from a soft opening to a strikingly well-attended grand opening.

He spent the last years grinding gigs, socking away cash to open the coworking space and, perhaps most important, founding and hosting the massively influential Power Breakfast, establishing a space for creatives of all backgrounds to seek advice and receive support.

Jamel Mosely (a member of 2019's Creatives Under 40 class), Harris' friend and business partner, is omnipresent in the local creative scene and, almost by default, the face of the organization. Harris' force isn't immediately obvious. His thoughtfulness and retiring demeanor belie the constant strategizing and intense focus under the surface.

Harris simmers, ponders, agonizes, calculates until his point emerges concise, sculpted, pointed.

Harris has other opportunities. He could have the big money gigs at tech firms or established creative agencies in a major metropolis, but he's found no satisfaction there. He's always seen himself moving to Philadelphia. Instead, he puts everything in Troy and the Capital Region. And at this point, he looks exhausted.

# Patrick Harris

Why? Why focus all that energy here?

"No one else would do it," he says calmly, referring to providing creatives of all backgrounds a space where they feel comfortable. "Everyone deserves a chance. Just being black and super oppressed for forever and having very little to work with—no one should have to deal with this. So I was like 'All right, if I'm trying to be real about myself, who I am and just history—if no one else is going to do anything about it, I'm going to figure out how to deal with some of this problem.'"

Harris adjusts his cap and puts his hands on his lap. His entire form appears to pull inward.

"To be real, how is anyone going to survive if we don't have the ability to figure a thing out? Not everyone has that opportunity to land an awesome job they deserve and if they don't they should have another option," he says.

"Everyone should have the ability to work comfortably in a place that does not make them feel like they should not exist."

Collectiveeffort's team works in fields including videography, graphic design, photography, sound recording and social strategies. Harris, like Mosely, attended Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, an engineering school in Troy. How and why did he make the transition?

"I just really enjoy watching people do a thing and realizing 'Oh, that's a thing that I'm not really good at. And I wish I was because, if I was, I could do this thing,'" says Harris.

"It's been really good for me going from engineering in college where you are sitting down and doing math to all of a sudden I have a camera in my hand and [I'm] learning how to do design and all that kind of stuff. I'm very tactile and hands on. I like being able to create and Collectiveeffort is an environment where anyone is able to do that."

Introductions to prolific, talented and noteworthy creatives like musicians Taina Asili and Gaetano Vaccaro, Leah Penniman of Soul Fire Farms and Branda Miller of the Sanctuary for Independent Media helped Harris realize the area's creative potential.

The first time he visited Soul Fire Farms, he was told he was going to see a yurt. "The sun is going down and we're trekking through the woods," he recalls. "I walk up to the yurt and



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**Everyone should have the ability to work comfortably in a place that does not make them feel like they should not exist.**

there is Taina and she's practicing a flamenco dance and Gaetano is there playing guitar. It was literally the coolest thing that's happened in my entire life.”

Harris says the excitement around Collectiveeffort's opening is wonderful, but the grind continues for his team. “The team as a whole has had to make a lot of sacrifices, pass on other opportunities,” he says. “And now people are getting married, having kids and things like that. But when I look back and realize how far we've come. from literally working out of our kitchens to, ‘Oh snap we've got like 5,000 square feet to play with.’ It is pretty awesome.”

Perhaps the moment everything paid off, at least emotionally, was when Harris' parents came to the opening.

“There are times where I'm like, ‘Oh shit, I'm a couple days late on a car payment. Hey guys, can you help me out for a second?’” he says. “For them to see what it's all been for, all the struggles, it mattered. And they were overwhelmed by how many people say, ‘Here's a thing that I created’ and they were able to have a good time. Yeah, it sort of registered a bit that day.”

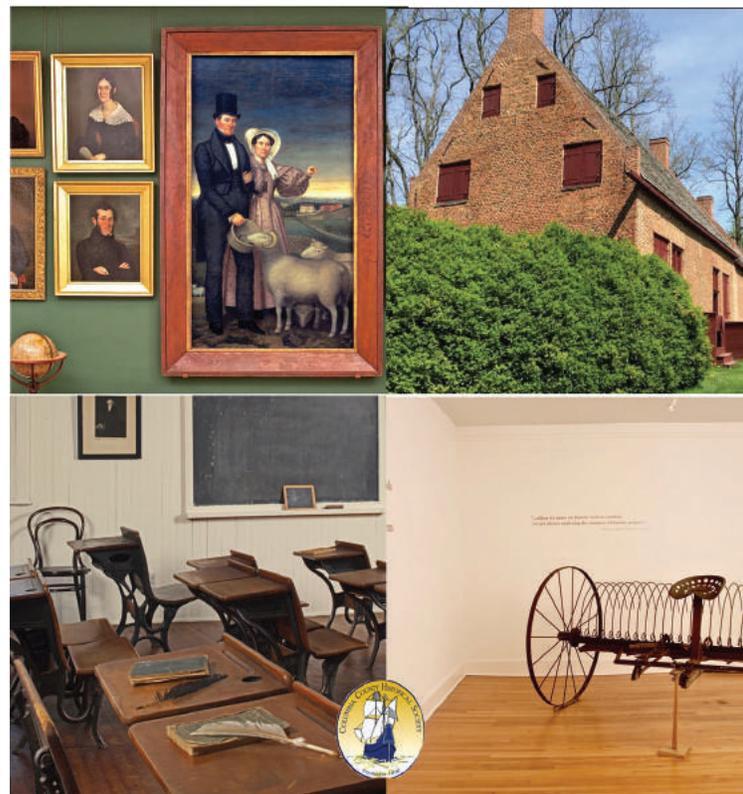
A day after our interview it's clear that Harris has still been pondering “Why this? Why here?” He sends a message.

“I've always been afraid to make things, whether it be from lack of resources to lack of support or confidence, or that what I had to say via the work was even worth saying to begin with,” he shares. “So when thinking about my answer to you about how people deserve a chance to live on their own terms in the world (as a reflection/statement about the boundaries/roadblocks set against us), it's equally about creating a place where we don't have to be afraid of ourselves/myself anymore.” ■

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# Tony Iadicicco



Hope and excitement surrounded the opening of Albany Center Gallery's new space in downtown Albany in January 2017, but it's unlikely more than one person imagined the kind of impact the gallery would have in the region in the next three years. That person is Tony Iadicicco of Albany Center Gallery.

"When I interviewed for the job they asked 'What would you do?' I was like, 'We should move, we should go outside of our wall and into the community,'" says Iadicicco. "And that was just coming from a background of not having a degree or any kind of certificates. I knew that there were more people outside the gallery than inside the space."

Through a partnership with Albany Barn and the Albany Parking Authority, Iadicicco and the gallery launched Capital Walls, funding mural installations at Albany properties. Iadicicco also brought pop-up murals to events around the region; created dance and artmaking collaborations; and heightened the power of public art in the region.

Iadicicco wouldn't tell you that, because he's humble. He repeatedly cites his lack of college degree, his role as a facilitator instead of the focal point, but the artists he has empowered sing his praises. They nominated him to be honored in our Creatives Under 40 issue.

"You can't do less to be relevant," Iadicicco says. "So we just have to keep doing more. We've expanded the programs, the outreach, the efforts. In addition to the gallery shows we started to do even more outdoor pop-up exhibits. I suppose it was all designed, but it came to be because our blanket goal was to do more everywhere. Having said that, there needs to be more art, there needs to be more access and with everything we've done, it's still not even enough."

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**Instead of showing it to get exposure, or because it might sell, we're saying you should be paid for this. These opportunities we create need to be win, win, win.**

That constant drive to do more, to pay more artists for more projects makes Iadicicco stand out, sometimes looking as if he's operating on borrowed time.

"Art can save lives and art saved my life," Iadicicco says. He mentions a car accident he was involved in during his time as a student at Sage College. He was leaving a fundraiser for the Sage College basketball team at Crossgates mall when it happened. "That changed my life forever. After the accident I couldn't sit in classes, but I was in college for art. And it felt like I just needed to use the time I have to make art."

Relocating to Florida, Iadicicco quickly faced another reminder of his mortality and the impermanence of material goods. Florida was ravaged by hurricanes in 2003 and 2004 and Iadicicco lost everything. So he returned to the Capital Region. "It really taught me not to take things for granted—not caring about what shoes or clothes I had," he says.

Back in Schenectady, Iadicicco made the resolution that he'd have an art show, do community projects and get a job in the arts. He launched a series of pop-up shows parallel to the defunct Art Night. Those shows created a network of artists and musicians. From there, Iadicicco began volunteering at Albany Center Gallery, became creative director and then executive director.

While Iadicicco is working to push more art, he isn't asking artists to do it for free. He's going to the mat to make sure artists' work is valued.

Along with Capital Walls, Iadicicco has started an art rental program with the nonprofit Capital District Physicians' Health Plan so that artists make money to have their work shown and possibly purchased.

"Instead of showing it to get exposure, or because it might sell, we're saying you should be paid for this," he says. "These opportunities we create need to be win, win, win."

Introducing more incentive for artists also builds community interest to create art and have work seen. Iadicicco wants local government and corporations to understand that art has real value and that paying artists will lead to a more vibrant city where artists might be able to afford to live.

"If you value art, the artist can live here, can pay rent, go to your coffee shop or buy a house," he says. "All you have to do is pay them." ■



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# Kim Neaton

Guthrie Bell Production marketing/promoting assistant Kim Neaton has been frequenting shows in the Albany area and beyond—from beloved local haunts like Valentines to Saratoga Winners—since she was 15 years old. From a young age, she aimed for a job that revolved around going to concerts.

After graduating college, Neaton worked summer music festivals here and there, including Hunter's Mountain Jam and Ghent's The Big Up (where in 2011 she met Guthrie Bell head Greg Bell.) In 2013 she landed a DJ job at the Vermont-based alternative radio station WEQX, where she became a local celebrity for running the music show "EQX-posure" for five years.

"Being a big fan of music has helped me get to where I am. Just caring," she says. "Being someone that was friends with bands, who was going to shows a few times a week, bands saw me as someone that was a friend and a fan, but then, someone that could help them, too."

Neaton says her time at WEQX was an unexpected career opportunity, but one that paid off in terms of connecting her to a wealth of music industry and band connections.

"I was terrified of the radio," she says. "I always liked live music better."

Her role promoting local up-and-coming bands on the air—as well as the radio-sponsored shows around the area—helped solidify Neaton as a reliable source for the Capital Region music scene. She became a beacon for people seeking music industry advice and, generally, just good taste.

"For every show they [WEQX] were like, 'Who's the local band that should open it?' And I got to have so many good bands play in front of people on stages like The Hollow. As someone that cared about it, I just thought, 'What do I want to share with everybody? I think they'll appreciate what's actually good.'"

Neaton shares one story about 2014's Albany street festival Pearlpalooza featuring Tennessee-based band Royal Bangs ("Which had one of my favorite albums of 2013," she says.)

"They were like, 'Why are we going to play this festival? We've never been there.' But they drove all the way up just to play in the rain and everyone knew, like all the words to at least

two or three of their songs. They were just like, 'What is this?' They weren't a major label band or anything, but that's just the power of finding good stuff and sharing it with people, getting it to the right ears."

That's something Neaton wants to see happen more: putting emerging bands—and those who have flown under the radar for too long—in front of large audiences. And she is always looking.

"I go to so many different things. When I go to a show I have a blast, but I analyze everything. Who's there? Why are they there? How are they interacting with the crowd? I'm really thoughtful about that."

After leaving the radio station in 2017, Neaton began working for Guthrie Bell Productions, the Capital Region booking and promotion organization that has been booking indie, alternative and jam acts for 27 years. After a short stint as marketing manager at Vermont's Higher Ground Music in 2018, Neaton returned to Guthrie Bell in late 2019.

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How are they interacting  
with the crowd?**

Neaton would like to focus on elevating local talent on more mainstream shows, a long-standing goal of Guthrie Bell, as well as blending more genres, finding new spaces for performances and creating a community focus around performances.

She hopes to continue growing the reliable, strong music community Bell has built.

“It’s important to find new bands all the time. We’ll book a band at The Hollow for the first time, well knowing that only 50 people are going to go and he’s gonna lose a few hundred bucks,” she says. “But that’s what you have to do to keep the community and build it up. It’s just staying true to stuff that you love and being real about it. It’s important that when a band comes to Albany they know it’s me and Greg, and they feel like they have a relationship with us.”

Eastbound Jesus drummer/vocalist Carl Anderson is a fan. “I’ve always thought Kim stood out as a supporter of the local music in our area,” he says. Neaton is also a publicist for the Greenwich-based folk rock band and helps organize their annual September music festival, Eastbound Throwdown in Salem.

Anderson says Neaton’s drive and passion for the acts and venues of the local music scene is exactly what they need to help the community thrive.

“She’s young and creative and will be around for many years helping to get bands on stage and crowds in front of them,” he says. “Kim has definitely helped the Throwdown grow. She is the one constantly in contact with fans and attendees through the various social media outlets everyone uses...She is always a level head and one of our core planners and coordinators for the festival.”

Between the established following Guthrie Bell Productions has built for the past few decades and the sharp and searching ears the promotion organization has gained with Neaton, she hopes to use the knowledge from her experience in Burlington and in the radio world to set a standard for high-quality music and to put Albany on the map.

“I think that’s my number one thing I want to try to do here—there’s such a gap. I’ll go to the city, Boston or Burlington to see shows, but we’re right in the middle. I want to make bands not pop over us all the time.” ■

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A photograph of an audience seated at tables with blue tablecloths, looking towards the stage during an event. The text 'Eddies Hall of Fame inducts 6 at UPH' is overlaid on the bottom half of the image.

# Eddies Hall of Fame inducts 6 at UPH

A full house came out March 9 to celebrate six inductees into the Capital Region Thomas Edison Music Hall of Fame. The celebration was the first dinner show held at the renovated Universal Preservation Hall in Saratoga, which reopened just 10 days earlier.

Photos: Kate Penn

## STAFF REPORTS

“This is a humbling time for me, that I lived to see it,” Earl Thorpe said of his induction March 9 into the Capital Region Thomas Edison (the Eddies) Music Hall of Fame at Universal Preservation Hall in Saratoga Springs. Thorpe, 82, was the only of three living members of a 1950s and early '60s Albany doo-wop group, The Fidelities, able to attend.

The irony to Thorpe’s statement was there was no “it” before Monday night. The first regional music awards show was just 11 months ago on the MainStage at Proctors. Two individuals were honored then – among individuals, groups and venues in 37 other categories – as the first inductees. But the recent Eddies Hall of Fame induction ceremony was the first held separately from the Eddies Music Awards, and a physical space dedicated to memorializing the local music scene was unveiled for the first time that night.

Although the event is in its early days, you couldn’t tell from the honorees that the celebration wasn’t a more established, time-honored affair. Thorpe’s statement was one of many that demonstrated nominees and their representatives were moved by the celebration.

In addition to The Fidelities, 2020 inductees included John Sykes, Lena Spencer, Hal Ketchum, The Accents and Blotto.

The Eddies Music Awards and the Eddies Music Hall of Fame are initiatives of Proctors Collaborative, which opened UPH – fresh off a \$13.5 million renovation – just 11 days earlier. What follows is a recap of the evening.

## THE RINGLEADERS

Sal Prizio and Jim Murphy, co-founders of the regional Eddies Music Awards and the Hall of Fame, opened the show. Loosely quoting Neil Young from his 2012 autobiography, “Waging Heavy Peace,” Murphy described Young’s enthusiasm for an induction ceremony at the other Rock and Roll Hall of Fame – the one in Cleveland. “It was their – their being the artists – chance to say what they thought, their moment to be heard, and to be real,” he said. “Tonight, we’re giving the Class of 2020 – and in some cases, their representatives – the opportunity to say what they think. This is their moment to heard. And to be real.”

Prizio introduced emcee local singer-songwriter, band leader and comedian Erin Harkes, who guided the rest of the program. Harkes emceed the 2019 Eddies Music Awards and was an Eddies Music Award nominee in 2019 and is again in 2020.

## THE TIES THAT BIND

Harkes noted several threads that connect this year’s class: “John was a co-founder of MTV. And which act performed on the very first day of MTV? None other than another 2020 Eddies Hall of Fame inductee, Blotto. And tonight, we honor Lena, founder of the most celebrated folk coffee house in America. And who got his start on that stage? Future Grand Ole Opry member Hal Ketchum, another inductee who performed at open mic nights there early in his career.”



Earl Thorpe (above) accepted his Eddies Hall of Fame award on behalf of The Fidelitys, a 1950s Albany doo-wop group. Members of Blotto (at right) pose in front of their Hall of Fame plaque at Universal Preservation Hall.



## THE FIDELTYS

Thorpe spoke of racism the all black, five-member group endured touring the country. Assembled in 1956 after Thorpe relocated to Albany from Jacksonville, the group achieved much success in the late 1950s, performing at legendary theatres including the Apollo in Harlem, alongside some of the biggest names of the day. They appeared numerous times on TV's "American Bandstand" and a single, "The Things I Love," reached the Billboard pop chart.

The band leader also described the cyclical nature of the music business. "It happened so fast," he said. "It's a wheel. You come up the cycle, you got a major hit. You might go back down that wheel, but then you can go back to the top of the wheel. But once it starts, remember who you are and what you're doing."

## JOHN SYKES

Sykes, president of Entertainment Enterprises for iHeart Media, recently took over as chair of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in Cleveland, succeeding Rolling Stone founder Jann Wenner. He was previously an executive at VH1, Chrysalis Records, EMI Music Publishing, and Infinity Broadcasting Corporation. The Schenectady native created the VH1 Save the Music Foundation, which has raised over \$50 million to rebuild music education programs in public schools. He also co-produced "The Concert for New York City" – a 9/11 benefit at Madison Square Garden – and the "12-12-12: The Concert for Sandy Relief."

Sykes shared memories of growing up locally, crediting an audience member for a summer internship at Saratoga Performing Arts Center. "I wore it like a badge," he said, doing everything from putting away folding chairs to driving celebrity musicians such as James Taylor.

"It changed my life because I got close to artists that I saw only on an album cover," he added. "It's why I wanted to do music for everybody in this room, which makes me so proud that Jim (Murphy) and Phillip (Morris, Proctors Collaborative CEO) have included me here today. Because music tells a story of culture and it's an intimate snapshot of human emotions, politics and relationships. Everyone has that song that defines a part of their life, that evokes emotion. And most of all, we all know that those who are in the business or are an artist, music helps you escape and lets you dream of where you might be."

The future MTV co-founder's "dream" began when he came home from school one day to find a cable box with 30 television channels. "My greatest interest was the fact that most of these TV channels were blank and there was snow on them," he recalled. "And I'm saying to myself, 'Why can't there be channels for concerts?' Because I loved concerts." An idea was born.

## BLOTTO

In a video introducing the band, Bill Polchinski (aka Broadway Blotto) shared, "People characterized us as new wave and then you know, we added like this whole layer of stupid on top of everything else and that that made us different. No one was quite as stupid as we were."

Polchinski, along with Bowtie Blotto (Paul Jossman), Sergeant Blotto (the late Greg Haymes) Lee Harvey Blotto (Paul Rapp) and Cheese Blotto (the late Keith Stephenson), developed a significant fan base touring the Northeast. Not only did "I Wanna Be A Lifeguard" play on MTV's first day on the air, it and other Blotto videos aired regularly. "Lifeguard" also, appropriately, became the elite Jones Beach lifeguards' theme song, and several Blotto classics were heard on Dr. Demento, a national radio show.

Drummer Rapp reminisced, "If you told me that a goofy song about wanting to be a lifeguard (would be a hit) and that I'd still be referred to as Lee Harvey Blotto 40 years later ... that's kind of ridiculous. But thanks. Thanks to John Sykes for whoever you hired that called up ... and said, 'I heard 'Lifeguard' is a video. Can we have it and play it?'"

## HAL KETCHUM

Ketchum spent nearly 20 years as a carpenter and furniture builder before getting his break in the music business. He found success after leaving his hometown of Greenwich in Washington County for Austin, Texas, and later Nashville, TN. There he quickly established himself as a country music star with no less than 17 hits on the Billboard country charts, including three that reached No. 2. He was inducted into the Grand Ole Opry in 1994.

"I wish (Hal) could have been here to accept this," said Frank Ketchum, who shared that his brother has Alzheimer's and cannot travel. "I know that he would have given a very entertaining acceptance speech. Hal has the passion for the written word and the stories they tell. He's a gifted writer and vocalist and he loved conveying those stories intimately with live audiences across the country. His performances will be missed, but his music and stories will live on."

## LENA NARGI SPENCER

The daughter of Italian immigrants, Spencer, in her mid-30s, made her way with her new husband Bill to Saratoga Springs to find a space for a coffeehouse as "a means to make money." Lena Spencer's passion was for jazz and swing, not folk. But folk coffeehouses were the rage and after six months spending weekends renovating a dilapidated second-floor space, they opened Caffè Lena in 1960; Bob Dylan, Arlo Guthrie, Don McLean and many other storied musicians performed there.

Joe Deuel, a longtime Caffè Lena soundman, accepted the award on Spencer's behalf; she died in 1989. He said the seemingly fragile venture endured despite many challenges.

"I think when Lena and Bill started the cafe, they really thought they were going to work in folk music for a couple of years, make enough money to go to Europe and pursue their art there," he said. "It didn't quite work out that way."

Lena "really didn't know anything about folk music. She managed to learn by focusing on getting really good at (it), and her husband left her after a couple of years and she just doggedly pursued the place ... It's truly amazing to me that the cafe is still there after 60 years, considering especially (that) the place didn't make a dime for the first 58 years. I really do not know how that happened."

The founder "richly deserves" the honor, he continued, adding this "never-ending stream of volunteers are just as important as Lena and all of us who work and run it."

### THE ACCENTS

Benny Cannavo put together the group with Peter Rizzo, Vince Siciliano and Carmen Filanova almost a decade after leaving Italy in 1949, primarily playing Italian weddings and gatherings. Benny has retired, but sons Frank and Joe keep the beat 62 years and some 40 band members later. They are nominated for a 2020 Eddies Music Award in the Party Cover Band of the Year category.

"This is a great honor and we appreciate and love all the support you've given us throughout the years," said Joe Cannavo. "And hopefully we can continue it for a little while longer. I just want to add that it's truly humbling to even be honored with who was (also inducted) tonight. It's just, you know, they're legends. They really are. And we're just happy to be a part of it."

### 2019 INDUCTEES

Also recognized during the ceremony were the Class of 2019: folk musician and educator Ruth Pelham and Celtic singer-songwriter Kevin McKrell.

### THE MUSIC

Musical performances reflected the careers of four nominees. PJ Duo performed Blotto's "I Wanna Be a Lifeguard" and the Buggles' "Video Killed the Radio Star" (the first video played on Sykes' MTV). Harkes and Bob Buckley performed Ketchum's "Past the Point of Rescue" and Bob Dylan's "It's Alright, Ma (I'm Only Bleeding)" (Dylan played Caffè Lena).

### BUILDING THE FUTURE

Rachel Hamlin of Proctors Collaborative told the audience UPH is asking the music community to share memorabilia – tickets, posters, albums, photos and musical instruments – which will be temporarily displayed at Proctors and later brought to a permanent exhibition at the Hall.



Schenectady native John Sykes (top photo) has had quite a music career since co-founding MTV. Jesse Hyatt and PJ Ferguson of the PJ Duo perform (middle). Hall of Fame co-founder and The Collaborative publisher Jim Murphy (bottom) unveils the Hall of Fame wall at Universal Preservation Hall.

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**I want to create an event where each designer has their own model so the hair & makeup is significant to the collection and the garment that the designer creates. Full picture.**

# Vaceia Payne

Albany-based fashion designer Vaceia Payne was nominated for her work ethic, creativity and dedication to her craft.

The freelance designer creates beautiful, Afrocentric pieces as part of her goal to create 54 unique collections based on each country in Africa.

“Africa is painted in such a negative light, so when I do my research on these countries, I research everything from the people to the tribes—and not just the tribe that everybody has heard about, but tribes that are hidden really deep in the mountains or way deep in the desert or somewhere people don’t really get to interact with them. I research their flowers or birds, everything that you could possibly know about the country,” Payne explained to *The Collaborative* last year.

So far, she has completed a collection dedicated to the cultures of Ghana, Morocco and Congo—a line of eight pieces she premiered at a highlight of her growing career, February’s New York Fashion Week.

“For the Congo collection, I did the research the same way that I did my other collections, but for this one I stuck with one particular thing—the work of Congolese painter Marcel Gotene,” she explains. “His paintings have a lot of abstract shapes and show off the female body. I wanted to include a lot of those elements into my designs. The colors that I use for the garments are those of the Congo flag as well as those that he uses in his paintings.”

While showcasing the Congo line in New York City, Payne was also approached for an exciting opportunity. She will premiere a new line at Dubai Fashion Week in September.

“I was so happy that I didn’t feel emotion,” Payne laughs. “When she [show organizer Deshai Williams] told me after the show, it solidified it for me that she had seen my clothes in person and wants me to be in Dubai.”

Payne will also organize her first fashion show in the Capital Region. Slated for the end of August, the small show will feature five designers with their own models, hair and makeup teams.

“In my experience as a designer, a lot of times when fashion shows are put together designers have to share the models,” she notes. “I want to create an event where each designer has their own model so the hair and makeup is significant to the collection and the garment that the designer creates. Full picture.”

Payne hopes her efforts—and those of her colleagues in the fashion scene putting on small, independent shows and large scale productions such as *Stitched*—will continue to grow fashion culture in the region. She hopes Albany will soon have its own fashion week.

“I would say definitely not the same weekend as New York Fashion Week because a lot of models and designers here are down there for that, but we should be bringing more people here,” she says. ■

# Courtney Guttenberg

Schenectady street apparel designer Courtney Guttenberg loves all things “dark and weird.” It’s what has driven the self-taught Amsterdam native to create her funny, playful, hip and often creepy graphic designs for her clothing line nullvoid since founding the business in 2017.

Started to “combat the boredom of [Guttenberg’s] increasingly depressing 9-to-5 (and as a sequel to a failed college startup),” nullvoid has become a force that uplifts other up-and-coming graphic designers through collaborative collections as well as a source to educate and uplift communities in need of arts resources and a place to share their voice.

Guttenberg is also the founder of Hex Collective, an international arts collective with members from New York, Los Angeles and the United Kingdom who share ideas, projects and events. Through this, she hosts a poetry night and various arts-related events at Storied Coffee in Scotia.

Heavily influenced by skate, hardcore, rap and alternative scenes, Guttenberg has been itching to design clothing for the ever-evolving counterculture movement since she was a kid. But she never knew where to start. While studying communications in college, she decided to shift her senior year, teaching herself design through YouTube and making mock tees on Spreadshirt.

She began freelancing graphic design work out of college for “fast money” to build her skills and make some cash while working a 9-to-5 (as she still does today) and didn’t think she would have time to build a business of her own. But the work ethic was there.

Now, Guttenberg drops a new nullvoid collection every third Friday, and she’s hard at work on a line of tote bags, given New York’s new statewide ban on plastic bags.

“Even if I’m just relaxing, I’m like, ‘You could be making 15 designs right now. I have all these ideas,’ she says. “It’s the balance of creative pressure. I’m always afraid that if I’ve got all these ideas now, when’s it gonna stop? So I have to try to keep my brain as on point as possible—always



looking at new stuff, always trying to find the next thing...I have every single thing being released through the end of 2020 planned out because that’s how I operate.”

Rachel Rice, who assists Guttenberg in pop-ups and community events and has acted as an “ambassador” or influencer for the brand since its inception, admired the designer’s work on social media even before she started making clothing. Rice is one of the many friends, family, coworkers and skaters who were given shirts to introduce to the world, spreading the brand by word of mouth.

“At the time I had a sizable Instagram following. I got the word out because people everywhere were like, ‘Where did you get that shirt?’ And when I say everywhere, I mean in public walking around on the street, on Instagram, Reddit, Twitter,” Rice says.

Her favorite aspect of nullvoid is that the streetwear brand strays from the style of stamped-branding “spewed out over and over with a hefty price tag” she’s seen in big names like Supreme or Vape.

“There’s no set theme,” she says. “What’s cool about nullvoid is that there’s something for everybody in this reasonable price range that’s accessible to everyone.”

That’s also how she feels about Guttenberg’s collaborations, where she’s trying to push the creativity of any artist who wants to be involved. “Forever dark, forever weird; but if you’re not dark or weird, you’re still in,” Rice says.

Nullvoid is currently sharing a “creative experiment” with Acrylic Matter apparel called “With Zero Faith.” In July, Guttenberg will release a collaboration with local glitch artist Michael Michael.

Guttenberg says she is inspired not only by the brands of skate culture she grew up studying, but the typography of Jenny Holzer, “’90s ennui”—driving her April release “Apathy”—or the bright colors and ironically terrible typography of trashy 2000s reality television and the chaotic, intricately designed world of graffiti and street art.

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**It's the balance of creative pressure. I'm always afraid that if I've got all these ideas now, when's it gonna stop?**

Guttenberg also draws from her immediate surroundings. She recalls one shirt design based on the Albany signs representing condemned buildings, which had particularly called to her.

“That’s something I saw a lot in Amsterdam. Condemned signs and buildings, so many buildings that are destroyed and old, full of broken windows. For some reason that’s always attracted me,” she says, adding that her years growing up in Amsterdam play into her work ethic.

“I’d love to find a way to create more creative outlets [through nullvoid] for kids and teenagers who don’t have it,” she says. “I would love to give back to that community because it is up and coming. To get in there and say, ‘Hey, I’m from here too and I’m doing something cool,’ I think that would be good.”

Rice admires the number of events—including collaborative photoshoots with Schenectady area artists and her poetry, collaging and other designated nights at Storied Coffee—that Guttenberg organizes to involve people in her creative work.

Rice celebrates Guttenberg’s summer 2019 involvement with The Palace Theatre Block Party, in which she saw the designer work to engage with the local kids through hands-on activities like a collaborative chalk wall and painting tables—ways that she feels helped promote the mission of Guttenberg’s brand.

“Nullvoid is this collective of artists who work in different media that is really trying to build relationships within the community with really different types of people. I always let people know nullvoid is for everyone. It’s marketed to the ‘forever weirdos,’ but it’s all-inclusive.”

Between growing the brand of nullvoid and the artistic mission of Hexcollective, Guttenberg hopes to stay busy for a while.

“I want to be able to get one or two gallery shows or exhibitions done in a year, or art-themed parties where people can come out, get involved and feel accepted,” she says. “By the end of 2020, I want nullvoid to be my full-time job. I would love to be at every event possible, maybe have a storefront at some point. It was actually my goal, in the next 15 years, to get on an ‘under 40’ list, so now I’m like, ‘OK, now what do I do next?’” ■



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# Madison LaVallee

“I’m interested in not doing anything the right way,” says Madison LaVallee.

The Schenectady native was nominated for her accomplishments in the local arts scene, including her own sculptural work and curating roles as chair of the exhibition committee at Collar Works in Troy. LaVallee has also curated such shows as Opalka Gallery’s recent “In-Faux-Structure” as well as “Nasty Women of the North” and “The Pothole Project” through Collar Works.

“She’s the kind of artist we’re lucky to have in this region—seeking out diverse, collaborative opportunities...all in the name of helping to create a more cooperative, just and engaging environment for artists in our region,” said nominator Amy Griffin, exhibitions and marketing manager at Albany’s Opalka Gallery.

“I’m not interested in just hiding away in my studio making work and applying to shows,” LaVallee says. “That’s definitely a part of my practice, but the other part I also really enjoy is creating more community and more spac-

es for other artists to show their work. It’s important to me to bridge the gap between emerging artists and more established artists—also just creatively—for people to try new things and show them weird, strange art that wouldn’t normally be shown at more commercial-based galleries.”

LaVallee hopes to continue challenging viewers and artists by curating more politically focused shows, ones that “people find hard to talk about.” She said she feels lucky to be a part of the exhibition committee at Collar Works, which is mostly run by volunteers, where they have the freedom to do daring work without the “pressure” of donor influences.

“She brings fresh perspective, a generous attitude, a supportive, inclusive sensibility and a challenging, provoking energy,” says Jenny Kemp, who co-chairs the Collar Works exhibitions committee with LaVallee.

Kemp says they see their role as co-chairs as ensuring all members of the community have a voice, and LaVallee is a big part of working to make sure a diverse set of work and perspectives are presented in each exhibit.

The artist is also co-coordinator of The Feminist Art Project’s Upstate New York chapter, as part of the international collaborative initiative celebrating the aesthetic, intellectual and political impact of women in the visual arts throughout history. The project is a “strategic intervention against the ongoing erasure of women from the cultural record.”

Former studiomate and Feminist Art Project co-coordinator Claire Sherwood, who also co-curated “Nasty Women of the North” with LaVallee, says she hasn’t met many other artists who exhibit LaVallee’s “overarching vision and collaborative nature.”

Although the Feminist Art Project has mostly splintered and is undergoing a transition period, Sherwood says she is happy about the work she and LaVallee did in the last year or so. “Nasty Women of the North” raised over \$10,000 for Planned Parenthood.

Even in her role as an educator, LaVallee says, “There is a little bit of a feminist agenda there. Being a woman, and a woman professor, teaching sculpture, showing people how to use power tools and stuff—that still feels like it’s not the norm for a lot of my students.”

LaVallee is a part-time adjunct instructor at UAlbany, where she has taught a variety of sculpture classes, and at Hudson Valley Community College, where she teaches drawing. She has also taught classes and kids camps at the Arts Center of the Capital Region and a variety of art workshops and classes at Troy's Roarke Center.

"I feel like to be an artist in this contemporary world, you can't just do one thing," LaVallee says. "I'm not interested in just making the same kind of sculptures my whole life. I'm interested in my work growing, and for my work to grow, it's important that I'm out in the world."

Sherwood and Kemp say more artists who take on the plethora of artistic and community leadership roles should be celebrated.

"Artists mainly work solo and really push their work to get it out there," Sherwood says. "To be able to step back and get involved with the community and be a leader is important. The fact that she is able to do this without having a full-time position is tricky. It's tricky to find the time [LaVallee] does to teach at three schools, procure work and still find the time to lead projects that benefit the community."

LaVallee sees her drive to keep pushing the boundaries of how much art can be produced, shared and used to promote audience awareness as part of her role as an artist—a role she finds difficult to describe.

“”

**I'm interested in my work growing, and for my work to grow, it's important that I'm out in the world.**

"When I talk to any kind of emerging artists they're like, 'How do you get into the art world?' It's such a tough thing to navigate because there's no right answer. You don't have to make a living off of your work; that's not what it means to be a successful artist. I think it's just redefining what success as an artist means to you. In my opinion, it doesn't matter if you have a day job in the arts or not, as long as you're just keeping that creative energy flowing, and a part of your daily life. No matter how many different hats I wear, I feel like any form of making work should be celebrated." ■

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# Jayana LaFountaine

For Troy-based photographer Jayana LaFountaine, the camera is a saving grace. The 25-year-old remembers the tumultuous events of 2017 that made her pick it up again after falling in love with the art form of photography in her teens. It wasn't easy, but it's one of the driving forces that pushed her to become the successful businesswoman she is today.

She had just left an abusive relationship and hadn't touched her camera in two years. Encouraged by friends, she began shooting local events to get back in the game.

"I didn't necessarily believe in myself because the shots weren't like what my work is today," she says. "I didn't know if it was even worth it. But it's always been my passion. I started taking pictures again at Power Hours or Power Breakfast—just things around the community because I've never actually been in an actual community before," she says.

After working photo jobs at a mall photography studio and local car dealership—where she says she experienced mistreatment and disrespect before being fired—she found herself without a job, but not without that passion.

She briefly cried it out, then got to work. Collectiveeffort's Patrick Harris helped her assess her financial situation—what she needed to survive and how a business plan could help.

"The very next day, I think I had maybe \$200 in my bank account, so I was like, 'You know what? I'm not crying today,'" LaFountaine says. "I had a letter board and I wrote '@jayanalaphotos on Instagram' and put it in my window in downtown Troy and I said, 'You know what? I work for myself.'"

Three years later, LaFountaine has built a booming business through Jayana LaFotos, creating infant, newborn and family portraits; adorable toddler painting sessions; moving birthing sessions—which she shoots as part of her other passion project, doula work—and community event photoshoots. Several members of the arts community nominated the artist for this feature for her drive, creativity and entrepreneurial spirit.

“”  
**Art is so  
freakin'  
powerful.**



“I definitely did struggle, though,” she says. “At one point, I literally only made \$500, and that’s my rent. I’m also blessed that that’s my rent and I have a studio space in my apartment. So if in the beginning of the month somebody gave me an extra \$20, I would buy ramen. People would be like, ‘Oh, how are you losing weight? And I would say, ‘I’m an entrepreneur.’”

In addition to the financial struggle, she had the extra hurdle of being a young, black woman entering a freelance market dominated by experienced older men. (More of a nuisance to the powerful energy of LaFountaine than a real roadblock—but a needless one, nonetheless.)

“Once a guy tried to hire me and the contract just looked really weird and bogus,” she says. “I always, always triple-check everything myself and then I send it to Jamel [Mosely] and Patrick. This guy was trying to give me just the smallest amount of money because I am who I am. He was like, ‘Well, honey, this is how it works.’ I said, ‘I don’t like pet names so don’t do that. My name is Jayana. Also, this is insufficient.’”

She laughs. “It was a struggle, but it wasn’t anything that I wasn’t prepared for. Working for myself is worth it because I was tired of the bosses and people being obsessed with titles, being power hungry and power tripping on everything and anything.”

LaFountaine is completely self- (and YouTube) taught, but she didn’t build her business alone. She credits Harris and Mosely as key players in her success.

“They’re two out of a handful of people who really pushed me to be who I’m supposed to be,” she says. “They’d say, ‘Here’s what you can do for marketing,’ and I would send them little flyers I would make on camera and they’d say, ‘Nope, that’s ugly’ and I would just go back and do it over and over.”

LaFountaine advises entrepreneurs to be open to all opportunities and find ways to invest in your work around the clock—that is, until you have the delicious freedom to say, “No.”

“I would just do my best and be who I am,” she says. “Then people started referring me to other folks who are good. It was just having my camera on me at all times. I was saying ‘yes’ to almost everything, even if I had no knowledge on how to shoot a particular group of people.”

In addition to running her business, LaFountaine teaches after-school digital media classes to middle school kids at Proctors in Schenectady, pop-up workshops at Youth FX in Albany and a Friday enrichment program at Philip Schuyler Achievement Academy, an Albany elementary school.

“Art is so freakin’ powerful,” LaFountaine says. “I definitely want to continue to teach the youth out here because that’s also how I really got into photography.”

LaFountaine was given a camera through the Boys and Girls Club’s photography club at age 13 and asked to tell a story with it. She was hooked.

“I took a picture of a red Solo cup in the middle of my street like, ‘This is my reality, there’s trash literally everywhere.’ It was just letting people see my everyday life and realizing I can tell my story without speaking, really, which was a big deal for me.”

Looking ahead, LaFountaine aims to improve her skills in birth and newborn to 1-year-old photography, her main focus since the start. She wants to learn more about the business end of her work: educating herself on residual income, finding online teaching opportunities, building more effective youth workshops and, most important, monetizing her intellectual property. She has big plans to expand and share her work with the world.

“I need to make myself uncomfortable before I get too comfortable, ‘cause there’s nothing I hate more than being stagnant,” she says. “No matter how good my work looks, I know that I’m just doing the bare minimum.” ■

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# Anna Pillot

Green Island-based dancer, choreographer and trapeze artist Anna Pillot has kept herself busy in the local dance and visual arts scene of the Capital Region since moving here in 2012. Pillot has been a member of Albany's Maude Baum & Co. Dance Theatre since 2014 and teaching dance at Union College since 2015. Pillot "is passionate about the creation of opportunities within the Albany dance community," says nominator Sandra Santana.

Pillot has opened doors for up-and-coming choreographers and dancers as artistic director of Albany dance company People Who Move (founded in 2019) and founder of the regional Emerging Choreographers Project (ECP) (established in 2017), which will celebrate its fourth showcase in July.

"Anna is an insanely kind soul," Santana says. "Selfless is a great word to scratch the surface of who she is. She believes in opportunity for all and gives every bit of herself to ensure this is a reality for others."

Pillot remains focused on developing ECP, which she says will be mostly curated by invitation, celebrating the choreographers who have shown work since year one, who will showcase how their work has developed. The project will also be extended to make room for more of the choreographers' ideas. The project, which previously has been funded by arts grants, will be funded entirely by supporter donations this year.

Tony Iadicicco of Albany Center Gallery, where ECP first took off, was excited to take on the project to highlight new forms of creativity in the region. He notes the way that the dancers were able to use the challenging layout of the gallery to push boundaries with their choreography.

"The first year, it really knocked the roof off the building," he says. "It was well attended and had a good response as another creative way to bring people into the space, to not only provide an opportunity for new performances but also to bring in dialogue and critique at the end. [The audience] gets to interact with the performers."

Iadicicco adds that he has been happy to see the program grow from its limited space and single-day showing to a multiple-day showcase. He hopes to see people like Pillot going out of their way to program opportunities for new, interactive works of art in the area.



"In terms of getting good energy going for people to gather and appreciate and highlight up-and-coming performers or people who may not have had the opportunity to do performances like this—all of this exploration of creativity is her seeing the need for it and filling the gap," he says.

When it comes to People Who Move, Pillot says it will be focused on a work-in-progress idea she hopes will become a "dance for camera" piece that addresses the catastrophic effects of climate change. In an upcoming spring trip completing the Camino de Santiago (for a second time)—the cross-continental pilgrimage leading to the shrine of Santiago de Compostela in Spain—the artist will interview passers-by about their experiences with climate change for a more global perspective for the choreography project. She plans to show the work-in-progress during the July ECP production at Cohoes Music Hall.

“”

## **I've been choosing my creativity more versus having my artistic stuff be a supporting role in life. It's feeling more fulfilling again...**

Pillot says she is focused on developing her creative abilities after spending the past few years as a producer, working primarily behind the scenes. While she is glad to be continuing her major projects, she hopes to continue on the personal growth of her artistic ability and to see how she can develop new projects without an annual deadline.

“I feel like it's a reawakening of my own creativity,” she says. “[People Who Move] was a lot of work because I was also producing it, so it kind of took the joy out of the performance a little bit. ... Since the back half of 2019 to now, I've been choosing my creativity more versus having my artistic stuff be a supporting role in life. It's feeling more fulfilling again—filling me up more, whereas for a while I felt pretty drained.”

Pillot recently took part in a new dance-visual arts project for Albany Wine and Dine for the Arts in partnership with Albany Center Gallery and eba, the multi-disciplinary, nonprofit arts organization led by choreographer Maude Baum. Pillot fell in love with the method immediately.

“We were in full paint suits, covered, and I just really loved considering if, while I'm moving: ‘Am I moving in order to create this painting? Am I painting or am I dancing? Is the paint the result of my movement? Or is my movement resulting from the paint?’ I'm like, ‘Oh my God, I found out how I can be a visual artist,’ and that's so exciting,” she says. “I want to collaborate more on that this spring. I'd love to somehow end up with an installation somewhere.”

Iadacico says the pieces were auctioned off at the event as movable mural pieces and will soon be on display at the Albany Parking Authority and that he and Pillot have discussed working on similar projects in the future.

“It's fortunate that we work well together and really support each other's creativity,” he says. “It would be cool to make projects like this happen on something like a monthly basis, but I know how much work goes into it. But it's a special experience and really different for creatives and dancers for sure.”

Pillot says collaborating with the arts community is her main priority and that she's also happy to have seen the dance community continue to collaborate within itself and expand over the past few years. She has started taking heels classes at Troy Dance Factory, and has seen members of Ellen Sinopoli Dance Company, Inspirational Movement Dance in Glenmont—and even as far as Boston Conservatory—participate in ECP.

“It's really cool to see a little bit more of the dance scene,” she says. “I don't know if my eyes are being open to it more or there is more. I think both. But it's really in letting yourself be open to collaboration and connecting with people.”

She notes that her works, and those of her dance colleagues, don't happen without challenges and hiccups.

“We do need space and money and support. If anyone just gave us a couple thousand dollars, we can do a lot with that. We're pretty frugal,” she says, laughing. “A little bit goes a long way but I think overall it's a pretty determined community.”

At the end of 2020, Pillot will take a hiatus to pursue her MFA and grow her work in choreography and trapeze art. She has been inspired by her new steps into multidisciplinary arts exploration and is excited to further develop and integrate them into her choreography.

“I'm curious what it would look like to bring my work into a gallery setting—what if I have this painting up or if I have a dance film—what other ways can I blend disciplines and use other media?” Pillot muses. “That's where I'm at, personally, and artistically, which is really exciting. I just feel like everything's working out. So I'm just gonna keep going.” ■

# Aaron Moore



From age 7 to 18, Aaron Moore constantly heard, “If you like acting and being a black actor, you’re going to have to try just as much if not harder than anybody else to get the roles that you want. You have to be the best you can be physically, mentally, spiritually and emotionally. And if you’re not there, don’t even try.”

Moore’s aunt—Wanda Webster, a director, author, writer, costume designer and singer—brought Moore to theaters, workshops, protests and performances. It became clear that Moore was interested in performing, and she was going to make sure he was ready.

“She was saying that all the time, it would get on my nerves and she would make me practice acting the way other people would have their kids practice instruments. She had a stand with a bunch of scripts and notes and she’d make me perform for an hour a day,” recalls Moore.

Moore was soon acting in his aunt’s local productions. While he longed to be outside playing with other kids, he also yearned to perform for an audience. So he kept at it.

At Albany High School, Moore studied acting under Ward Dales and Gregory Marsh. He pursued his passion at SUNY Potsdam, focusing on theater education and African American theater. He continued working with various troupes and schools. Eventually he decided to try to make it in New York City. It’s not that he was unsuccessful. He landed gigs on Showtime, NBC and The History Channel, but they weren’t satisfying.

“I did the whole 5 a.m. get up, make my way to an audition with a hundred other people,” he says. “And I sat there and waited for them to ask me to play up the line, to make it more hokey, to hear them ask ‘Can you make it blacker?’

“It wasn’t that I couldn’t do it,” he continues. “It wasn’t that I was scared to do it. I wasn’t nervous. I just had to have an epiphany and I was like, ‘You know something? I’m better than this. I know I’m better than this and I’d rather create something. A friend of mine said, ‘Well, Aaron, do you want to act or become famous?’ I said, ‘Well, it’s a pretty good question.’ I couldn’t answer them. It finally came to me and I said, ‘You know, I think I just want to create. I don’t want to act. I don’t want to be famous. I want to create.’”

Moore returned home and has since become a major advocate for black roles in local theater. Through his teaching organization Acting with Aaron, he offers instruction and produces shows. He recently staged a reading of his own work.

Creation has become a major part of Moore’s life in Albany, but his classes empower people without visions of Broadway to gain confidence, improve public speaking and, in some cases, confront their demons.

In a class at Root3d in Albany, Moore uses acting techniques to allow participants to let off stress and confront deep-rooted emotional issues.

“A lot of what I do there is about how we deal with stress from different points of our life,” he explains. “How do we work on karma from different parts of our past or current trauma? How do we change how we act in different types of relationships?”

While the classes demand bravery from participants, they also require Moore to adapt to each individual and their concerns.

“”

**A friend of mine said, 'Well, Aaron, do you want to act or become famous?' I said, 'Well, it's a pretty good question.... You know, I think I just want to create.'**

As part of the cast of “Whitewashed: the racism project,” Moore has drawn theatergoers to venues across the region to take in a work that forces them to consider the impacts of racism in an emotional and unfiltered fashion. He recently decided to step aside from his role to give other black actors a chance at the part.

Behind the scenes, Moore continues to push local theaters to cast black actors beyond Black History Month and traditional or stereotypical black roles.

It seems like a burden he's carried since a very young age. And what a burden it must be.

“I wouldn't say it's a burden,” says Moore immediately. “I would say it's a rage at this point where all I want to do is just fluidly perform the way white actors can. And I can't do that. Chris Rock had a real great quote that I'm going to paraphrase: He said that white actors can just act, but black actors are treated as the leader of their entire race while acting. That stuck with me a lot.”

At this point “I know I have the talent,” he says. “I know because I've worked at it all my life and I just really want the ability to say, ‘Oh, this show's happening or I want to do that.’ And not being able to do those shows or have people who look like me, it's really unfortunate and it's the truth but it's something I'm trying to change through Acting with Aaron.”

Moore says he will continue to agitate behind the scenes and publicly to get local theaters to make more and better opportunities or black actors. He does that out of principle, but also because he's pained to see so much obvious talent pushed out of the area.

“The raw talent and skilled talent looks like this,” Moore says, spreading his hands wide. “And the room for that talent is this small,” he says, moving his hands together.

“I know all these talented black actors who have left the area, or they have simply given up on acting because no one makes room for them. And that is where the rage comes from.” ■



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# Casey Polomaine

Casey Polomaine spent six years working at a credit union until she finally had enough. She took a leap of faith and started her own theater troupe to pursue what she fell in love with in high school. There weren't any theater jobs in the area when she graduated college and she'd fallen into a rut, but she wasn't going to waste more time. She and her friend Aaron Holbriiter set about forming Creative License to put on works that they felt are underrepresented.

"Creative License needed space so I met Kristen Holler (executive director) at Albany Barn and she helped us, supported us when we had no money," Polomaine says. "She understood what we wanted to bring to life."

Polomaine told Holler she so appreciated the mission of the Barn—a sustainable creative arts incubator and community arts center—that if there ever was an open position, she'd love to be considered. Two months after she quit the credit union, Holler let her know there was an open position.

“”  
**I know what it's like to want to do good work but need to make money. You need to survive. It can be soul crushing.**

"This really gave me the perspective of being in the shoes of the people we help at the Albany Barn," Polomaine says. "The Barn was there for me and now I go to work there every day and I'm surrounded by creativity."

As director of programming and residencies at Albany Barn, Polomaine guides artists through the residency application process; and helps them arrange events, screenings, galleries and public productions. She also helps artists examine how their art can be most impactful and how to monetize it.

"I know what it's like to want to do good work but need to make money," she says. "You need to survive. It can be soul crushing. So, I'm extremely excited to help others figure out how to do what they love."

In addition to working with creatives at the Barn, Polomaine sees a renaissance in local theater and the creative arts in general. "There are more and more companies popping up trying to do their own thing," she says. "Everybody has an idea and they are no longer too scared to do it because they don't have a lot of money."

Polomaine attributes that willingness to take risks to the proliferation of places like the Barn and coworking spaces. "These spaces allow people to feel safe and secure in taking these risks and knowing there are people there doing the same who care about you," she says. "These are people who are emptying their bank accounts to take a risk." ■

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**JEREMY KIRACOFE** artist  
**STUDY IN 4 PARTS (NO. II)**  
2019

Poplar, colored acrylic, roof tar, nail,  
Balancing Bird, fabric, shards of ceramic  
sculpture, black walnut dyed cotton string,  
woven string, knit yarn panels, antique  
buttons, cast plaster, expanding foam,  
steel, knit yarn baby sock. 13 x 13 x 78”  
courtesy of the artist

**collaborative**  
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**THE ARTIST:** Woodstock-based artist Jeremy Kiracofe is a multimedia artist and curator whose work focuses on “communal identity vs. personal identity vs. location identity, communication and exchange.” According to the artist, his main concern is “making something interesting and confusing visually and conceptually.”

**THE WORK:** Kiracofe says this sculpture, as part of its series, is “specifically fabricated around a spooky, cozy sort of nostalgia.”

“Study in 4 Parts (No. II)’ is a part of a continuous series of mixed media inquiries in how the coalescence of four seemingly disparate sections can inform a one another to create a unified body,” he says, “Each segment is a world in the universe of the work as a whole. In each of these ‘parts,’ materials / processes and symbology are principal. What can handknit yarn paired with a cold, hard block of cast plaster invoke?”

See more of Kiracofe’s work at [jeremykiracofe.com](http://jeremykiracofe.com) and [@jeremy.kiracofe](https://www.instagram.com/jeremy.kiracofe) on Instagram.

*In this column, artist Jade Warrick / TrashKid Art illustrates and interviews local makers and artists making a difference in the community.*

# The business of building people up

## Who is Collectiveeffort?

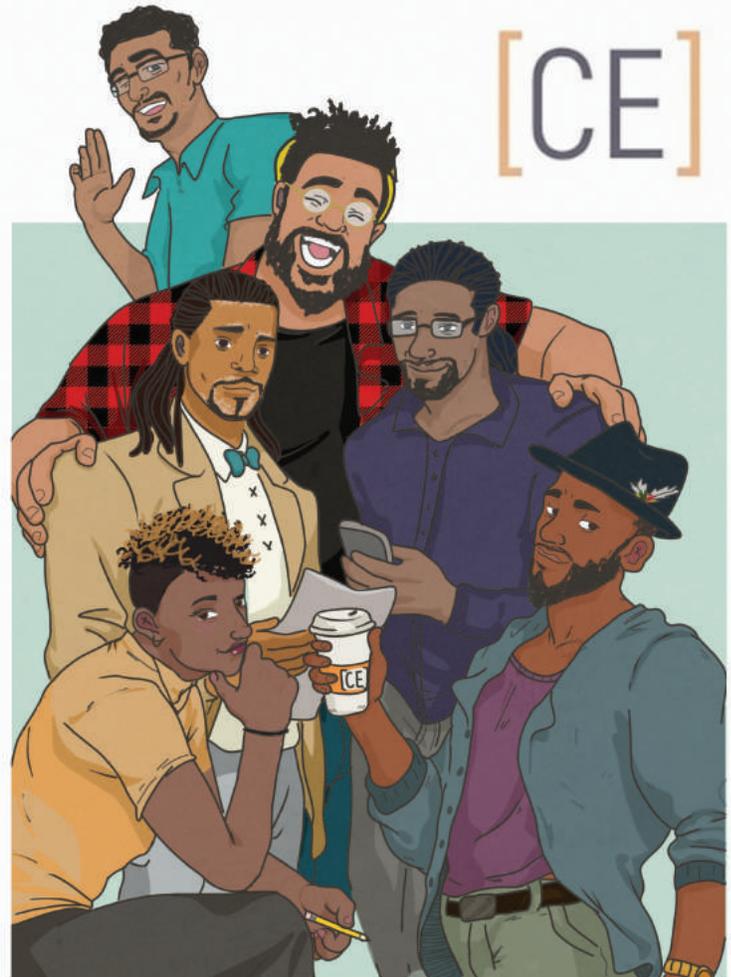
The creative path can often be a lonely one, but it doesn't have to be, Collectiveeffort is here as a guide.

The creative agency, whose focus is in building and bridging communities, aims to build a creative ecosystem designed to produce talent and sustainable projects. The organization intends to develop pathways for communities to empower themselves while also stimulating the growth of the creative economy. Founded by local creatives/entrepreneurs, Patrick Harris, Jamel Mosely, DeSean Moore, Jessica Wayde (who is now retired from CE to focus on academic studies), Roberta Singleton, and Dan Lyles; Collectiveeffort (CE) was born in 2017.

Currently Patrick Harris, a Creative Under 40 nominee (pg. 10), is the head organizer of the show.

“We started having work sessions in each other’s kitchens/living rooms/backyards/stoops. That later became Power Breakfast Club. During those work sessions, Jamel, DeSean and I were talking about fusing our companies together. Power Breakfast Club, becoming a force, created an opportunity to add a community development piece to our marketing and media work as well as more team members. I pitched the idea to everyone in an empty/vacant building in downtown Troy that we used to DJ parties in, which started our year-long journey to find space for us and the community we were serving. Now we’re here,” he says of their journey.

As with most businesses developed and run by people of color (POC), there is a common struggle of having to prove your validity before you get the chance to prove your concept. This was a challenge CE faced when they first began. It took “calling out a room full of ‘money people’ at a diversity & inclusion forum about the lack of access and funding opportunities for POC in the creative/entrepreneurial communities” to even have their voices heard, Patrick Harris notes, adding that people’s reaction to seeing black people with space has been both entertaining and humbling.



“Entertaining because some people I’ve encountered question the hell out of us, which is hilarious and infuriating. Humbling because a lot of folks are having their first experience feeling comfortable being themselves in a professional public setting for the first time. I also love having more opportunities to build some of the larger creative ideas I have because of the different talents and tools being around.”

I ask Harris, “At the end of the day, what keeps you motivated?”

“Part of my motivation is because I know no one else is going to do this work. The other part of it is that we make cool shit and I love that.”



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