

JEN LEWIN / OPENING EXHIBITIONS AT OKLAHOMA CONTEMPORARY / AT WORK: KRISTA TIPPETT / SPRING 2020

ARTDESK

CONTEMPORARY ARTS, PERFORMANCE, AND THOUGHT

NOW OPEN

An exterior aluminum “fin” at
Oklahoma Contemporary Arts Center

ArtDesk is a free quarterly magazine published by Kirkpatrick Foundation.

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DAY GLOW

JEN LEWIN'S INTERACTIVE INSTALLATION INVITES
EXPLORATION, PARTICIPATION, AND BEST OF ALL, PLAY

BY RYAN STEADMAN

JEN LEWIN
Aqueous (2017)

AS ONE OF the greatest painting teachers of the modern era, Hans Hofmann taught his students that, “In nature, light creates the color. In the picture, color creates the light.” If he were alive today, Hofmann surely would have marveled at how Jen Lewin masters both tools with her interactive public artworks. *Aqueous*—a massive public sculpture coming to Oklahoma City’s Campbell Art Park in April as part of Oklahoma Contemporary Arts Center’s big debut—reflects the natural light of its surroundings during the day but also blooms with illuminated color at night.

Lewin’s artwork fits in perfectly with the art center’s inaugural exhibition of artists who work with light, featured in *Bright Golden Haze*. That theme was, in turn, inspired by architect Rand El-

liott’s new arts center building, dubbed “Folding Light” because of the way it captures the ever-changing light of the Oklahoma sky. It’s a trait that the building will share with this latest rendition of *Aqueous*—an artwork that was first shown at Burning Man in Black Rock City, Nevada, in 2017.

The artwork itself is a wondrous marriage of artistic and technical mastery, consisting of 10,000 square feet of dichroic panels that gracefully spread across the landscape in meandering patterns. During the day, *Aqueous*’ surface partially reflects the sky in beautiful blues and pinks that shift and fade with the changing light as you wander around it.

For many artists, a glittering monument with miraculously changeable surfaces would be

accomplishment enough. But *Aqueous*’ relationship to sunlight is only half of the artwork. That’s because each panel is also wired with colored lights that transform, pulsate, or harmonize when touched, so when the sun goes down, *Aqueous* is programmed to become a reciprocal dance between an artwork and its viewers—all thanks to Lewin’s elaborately coded software.

“Making the software is like being a ballerina,” says Lewin, who, like her mother, studied dance before discovering visual art. “There’s a lot behind the scenes and a lot of different steps that need to be mastered, but it looks effortless and simple to an audience.” Once she’s finished with *Aqueous*’ intricate coding and custom wiring—which she specially redesigns for each new format and location—

wonderful things happen. If a viewer taps on a single platform at night lights spiral or slash outward from where they stand. But if they run or walk across *Aqueous*, a trail of blinking lights follows them. Lewin says there are “Easter eggs in there too,” meaning that some very specific touches can set off colorful explosions across the entire platform.

To make these simple, playful interactions, it takes an enormous amount of advanced tech work from Lewin and her team. But that work doesn’t end in her studio. “I am always at the installation, and I tune and change it by watching the people, environments, colors, and vibe of the community,” Lewin says. “[Different] areas produce different types of interactions. There are months or years of guessing, but when you take [*Aqueous*] into the world,



Jen Lewin’s *Aqueous* at the 2017 Burning Man event in Black Rock City, Nevada



Georgetown Park in Washington DC

it really comes to life with everyone there. It's very much a living, breathing sculpture that's always changing and in a relationship with the community.”

Unsurprisingly, this is the exact type of forward-thinking, egalitarian art experience that Oklahoma City's newest cultural institution wants to be known for hosting. “We are looking to expand our audience so that everyone feels like Oklahoma Contemporary Arts Center is *their* arts center,” says Jennifer Scanlan, the curatorial and exhibitions director at Oklahoma Contemporary. She clarified this statement by saying that even though the arts center's exhibitions are completely free, people without much art experience sometimes hesitate to walk through the doors. But, she adds, artworks like *Aqueous* are different.

“Offering a unique art experience that's outdoors in a public space invites the public to experience art without any barriers—real or perceived,” Scanlan says. “Jen Lewin's *Aqueous* allows people to engage with the art, participate in it, and have fun with it.”

Lewin studied movement, science, engineering, and computer coding as well as fine art, providing the artist with plenty of tools to start thinking differently about the art she was producing.

“After school, I began to feel like there was more room for participation with tech art,” Lewin says, “and I wanted people to move around my art. I also liked the performance aspect, as if [the viewers] were actors, and the show only happens when the audience is there. I loved this relationship I created by

using tech as a medium.”

A graduate of the University of Colorado Boulder, Lewin has already moved thousands of viewers with her technology in a way that a static painting never could.

“Her art taps into the growing trend of participatory culture, in which people don't simply want to look at public art; they want to be part of the art, activate it, and make it come to life,” says Jack Becker, the founder of Forecast Public Art in Minnesota. He adds that Lewin's art “rewards repeated visits, compels people to take selfies, and fosters social cohesion,”—feats nearly as impressive as Lewin's mastery of light.

Aqueous exhibits at Oklahoma Contemporary in Campbell Art Park April 24–June 14, 2020.

► oklahomacontemporary.org

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“PEOPLE DON'T SIMPLY
WANT TO LOOK AT PUBLIC
ART; THEY WANT TO BE
PART OF THE ART, ACTIVATE
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LIFE.”



Descanso Gardens in Los Angeles, California



Black Rock City, Nevada

SPRING 2020 Necessities

WHAT TO SEE, WHAT TO READ, AND WHAT'S HAPPENING WHERE



OKLA

Ed Ruscha's distinctive art that responds to icons of Americana like gas stations and swimming pools has been exhibited in museums around the world, but this is his first major solo exhibition in his home state. *OKLA* is a survey of the artist's sixty-year career that has encompassed text-based paintings, prints, books, photography, film, and graphic design. It all began when an eighteen-year-old Ruscha drove from Oklahoma to Los Angeles and became a pivotal member of the California scene, always instilling his interest in road culture and the West into his work (and even adding a few tornadoes). Throughout his influential practice, from his 1960s word paintings to his 2005 Venice Biennale installation meditating on urban progress, the iconography of the American vernacular has been at the forefront of his tireless innovation. *OKLA* opens September 2020 at Oklahoma Contemporary Arts Center.—ALLISON MEIER
► oklahomaccontemporary.org

ED RUSCHA
Oklahoma E (1962)

Ed Ruscha 1962



BRIGHT GOLDEN HAZE
Throughout Oklahoma Contemporary

EXHIBITION

Whether roaring thunderstorms or cavernous blue skies, Oklahoma is a changing place of weather and light. Bringing together local, national, and international artists, this inaugural exhibition in the new Oklahoma Contemporary building—itsself designed to visually morph with the altering conditions of the skies—surveys how artists have engaged with themes of light and space. Borrowing its name from the opening exaltation of Rodgers and Hammerstein’s musical *Oklahoma!*, *Bright Golden Haze* spans traditional landscape painting and immersive installations. Olafur Eliasson’s *Black Glass Eclipse* uses gold light to cancel other colors, while Oklahoma artist Yatika Fields’ newly commissioned painting interprets landscapes in kaleidoscopic colors. The exhibition will evolve throughout its run, adding complementary pieces like a poetic sculptural installation by Robert Montgomery, and expand throughout Oklahoma City, where partners including the Myriad Botanical Gardens, Oklahoma City Ballet, and Scissortail Park will host responsive programming on the inspirational qualities of light. *March 13–August 10, 2020*

SHADOW ON THE GLARE
Main Building / Third-Floor Gallery

EXHIBITION

“There falls a final shadow on the glare, / A stillness on the dark, erratic air,” Oklahoma Centennial State Poet Laureate and Pulitzer Prize winner N. Scott Momaday wrote in his poem *Plainview: I*. Concurrent with the light and place-focused *Bright Golden Haze*, this exhibition evokes Momaday’s words in its consideration of these themes in the landscapes of Oklahoma. The exhibition inaugurates Oklahoma Contemporary’s third-floor gallery which will be dedicated to Oklahoma’s art, with this exhibition concentrating on photography and film. Work by M.J. Alexander, Marjorie Bontemps, Sam Charboneau, Marcella Ernest, Keli Mashburn, Nosamyrage, Billy Palumbo, Ryan RedCorn, and Josh Tonsfeldt represents the diverse ways artists are engaging with the unique character of the local topography. *March 13–July 6, 2020*



ARCHITECTURAL TOUR WITH RAND ELLIOTT
Herman and LaDonna Meinders Main Lobby

TOUR

The firm of Rand Elliott Architects has designed some of the most dynamic buildings of modern Oklahoma, from the radiant Chesapeake Boathouse that became an icon of

the revitalized Oklahoma River to the playful POPS Arcadia on Route 66 that celebrates roadside attractions with its own oversized soda bottle. Visitors will hear from Elliott himself as he leads a tour through his design for the new home of Oklahoma Contemporary. Through 54,000 square-feet on four floors that include galleries, a theater, a café, and studios, Elliott envisioned this complex as a cultural destination. *Thursdays, March 26 and April 9, 2020, 7:30–8:30 pm*

THURSDAY NIGHT LATE:
Contemporary Cocktails
Main Building

EVENT

Oklahoma Contemporary is open three extra hours on Thursdays and on select evenings visitors can socialize over drinks inspired by the art. For each Contemporary Cocktails event, different local mixologists are invited to concoct libations that interpret the current exhibitions

HAPPENINGS
AT OKLAHOMA CONTEMPORARY | BY ALLISON MEIER

into drinks. The special evening hours feature programs, performances, and other creative encounters, with rotating DJs and sunset-watching on the terrace complementing the late-night happenings, ideal for mingling with fellow art lovers or catching up with a friend. *Thursdays, through July 16, 2020, 6–9 pm*

VETERANS INITIATIVE
The Studios

CLASSES

The Veterans Initiative at Oklahoma Contemporary fosters the coping skills and self-esteem benefits of a creative practice. Its classes led by artists and university faculty are organized specifically for military veterans. These sessions include in-depth experiences such as a ten-week ceramics class introducing techniques including wheel throwing and glazing, as well as shorter offerings like a one-day workshop on antler knives as a way to learn high-carbon steel tool making and blade and edge shaping. These courses emphasize the joy of learning and community building as participants make original works of art. *Spring Session: March 30–June 6; Summer Session: June 29–September 5, 2020*

STAR PARTY
Lawn of the Main Building

EVENT

To quote Oklahoma rock band the Flaming Lips, “Do you realize we’re floating in space?” Discover where we are in the universe with the Oklahoma City Astronomy Club. The club’s crew of volunteers will act as your guides to the galaxy with a gathering of telescopes set up on the lawn of Oklahoma Contemporary. Weather permitting, this Star Party will introduce visitors to planets, constellations, and other celestial features, so you’ll never look at the night sky the same way again. *Thursday, April 2, 2020, 7–9 pm*

PANEL DISCUSSION: *Illuminating Perspectives*
Main Building / Te Ata Theater

CONVERSATION

Native artists featured in *Bright Golden Haze* and *Shadow on the Glare* will join this panel discussion delving into their work, with painter and muralist Yatika Fields who is inspired by both street art and traditions of landscape paintings; artist and activist Marianne Nicolson who draws on her extensive historical research to examine contemporary ideas around cultural knowledge and revitalization; and graphic designer and photographer Ryan RedCorn whose practice includes an indigenous-owned clothing brand. With moderation by Dr. Heather Ahtone, senior curator at the First Americans Museum, the panelists will collectively consider how light and space are explored in their work and offer their insights on these themes from an indigenous perspective. *Thursday, April 30, 2020, 6–7 pm*

TEEN NIGHT
Throughout Oklahoma Contemporary

EVENT

Organized by teens for teens, this special event transforms Oklahoma Contemporary into a participatory celebration of creativity. Along with the late hours to explore the current exhibitions are activities like art-making in the studios, music, performances, photo booths, gallery talks, and fashion shows. The experience draws on Oklahoma Contemporary’s year-round programming for high school students, including the Oklahoma Contemporary Teen Arts Council and classes in the Studio School on everything from wheel throwing to DJing. *Saturday, May 2, 2020*

FILM SCREENING: *Sunday Matinee | Art21*
Main Building / Te Ata Theater

EXHIBITION

Get a rare glimpse inside the artist’s studio with this series of shorts curated from the Peabody Award-winning *Art in the Twenty-First Century (Art21)*. Happening on the last Sunday of each month, the thirty-minute screenings concentrate on artists featured in *Bright Golden Haze* and creators working in related media. They include James Turrell on how he utilizes light and space to communicate beyond words; Vija Celmins on her meticulous drawings of waves, stars, and other details of nature; and Carrie Mae Weems on how she uses her photographic series to examine stereotypes and the subjectivity of the camera. Each screening transports viewers inside the lives of leading artists as they discuss their practices. *Sundays through July 26, 2020 at 2pm, 3pm, and 4 pm*

CREATIVE LECTURE: *Seth Riskin*
Main Building / Te Ata Theater

EVENT

This will not be an ordinary artist talk as Seth Riskin transforms the Te Ata Theater into an experimental space of science and art. As both an artist who explores the fusion of light effects and movement and the manager of the MIT Museum Studio and Compton Gallery, Riskin is deeply embedded in how light is involved in the human experience. In this performative lecture, he will discuss and demonstrate the science of vision and the connection between neuroscience and art, with the work of *Bright Golden Haze* as context. *Thursday, June 4, 2020, 6–7 pm*

STUDIO SCHOOL CLASSES
The Studios

CLASSES

Located in a former warehouse situated alongside the main building of Oklahoma

Contemporary, the Studios host year-round classes and workshops for teens and adults. Whether you’re an art aficionado looking for a new creative outlet or a professional seeking to improve your skills, these experiences led by art educators and university faculty cover a range of media. For the inaugural spring session, they include the flagship programs for ceramics and fiber arts which are taught in new facilities with state-of-the-art equipment (such as the state’s only community salt-soda kiln). Courses on painting, printmaking, drawing, digital media, and photography are also available, as well as sculpture and fabrication. Courses on “Soulful Awareness”—aimed at investigating the mind-body connection to encourage real-world change—and “Soundpainting”—the use of sign language for live composing—offer more unconventional artistic explorations. *Spring Session, March 30–June 6, 2020*

SECOND SATURDAYS
Throughout Oklahoma Contemporary

EXHIBITION

In April, drop by Oklahoma Contemporary each second Saturday of the month for an eclectic afternoon of art for all ages. Programming can involve engaging art talks in the gallery and story-time with special guests, or pop-up performances and art-making in a drop-in studio. Visitors ages four to twelve are invited to pick up an Art Pack full of gallery-suitable drawing materials and other activities to make their own work amid the current exhibitions. No registration is required, attendees can choose to join in whatever fits their schedules and interests. *Beginning in April 2020*

DAILY PUBLIC TOURS
Throughout Oklahoma Contemporary

TOUR

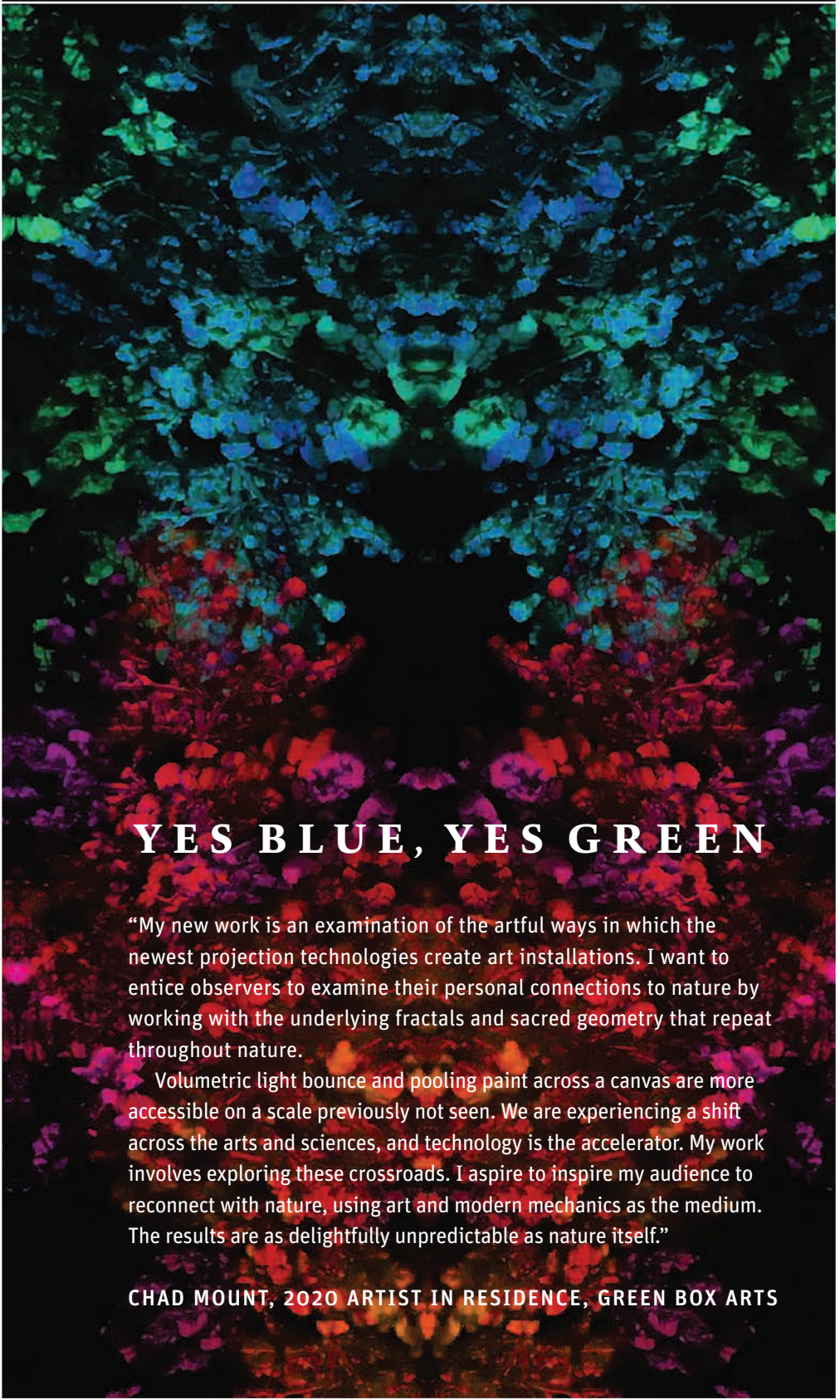
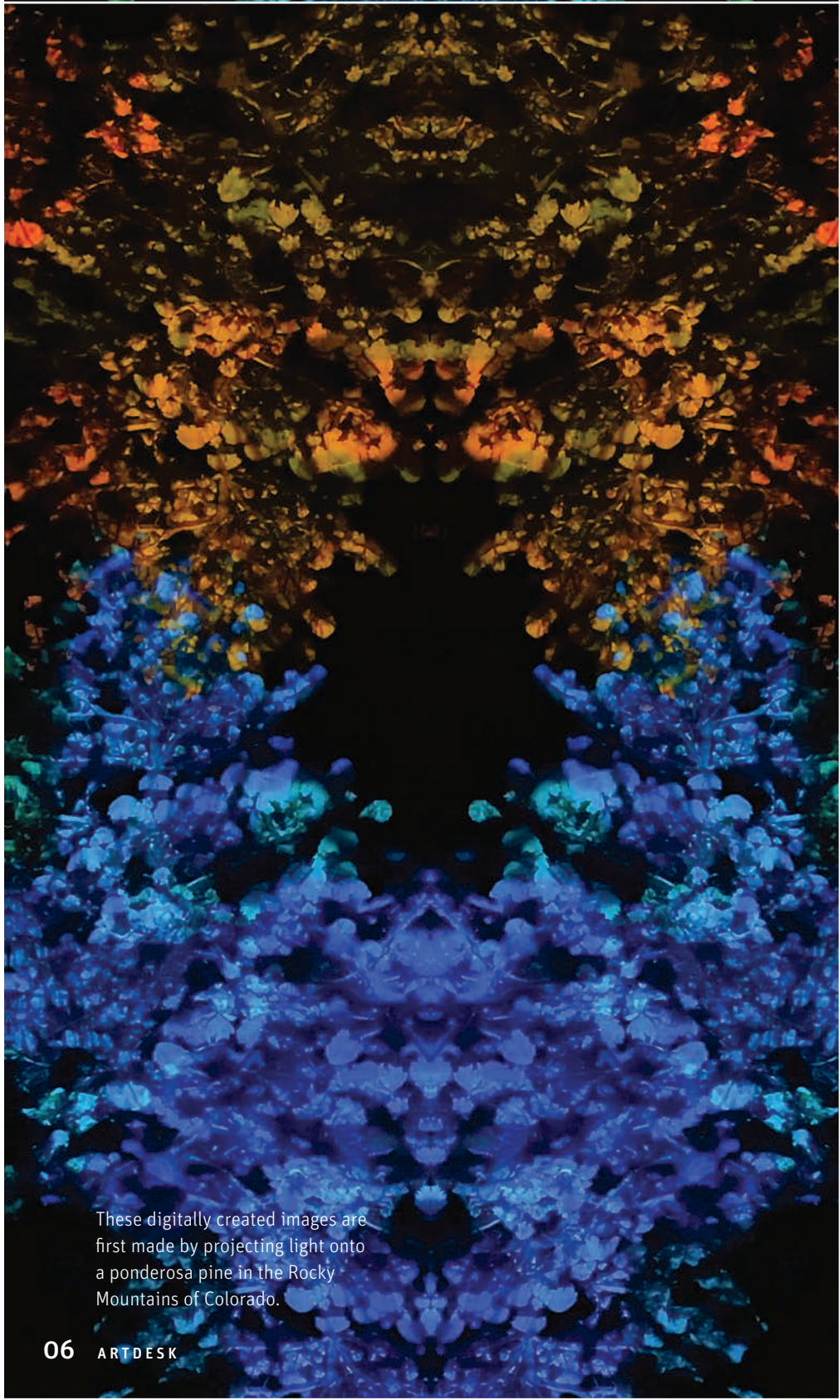
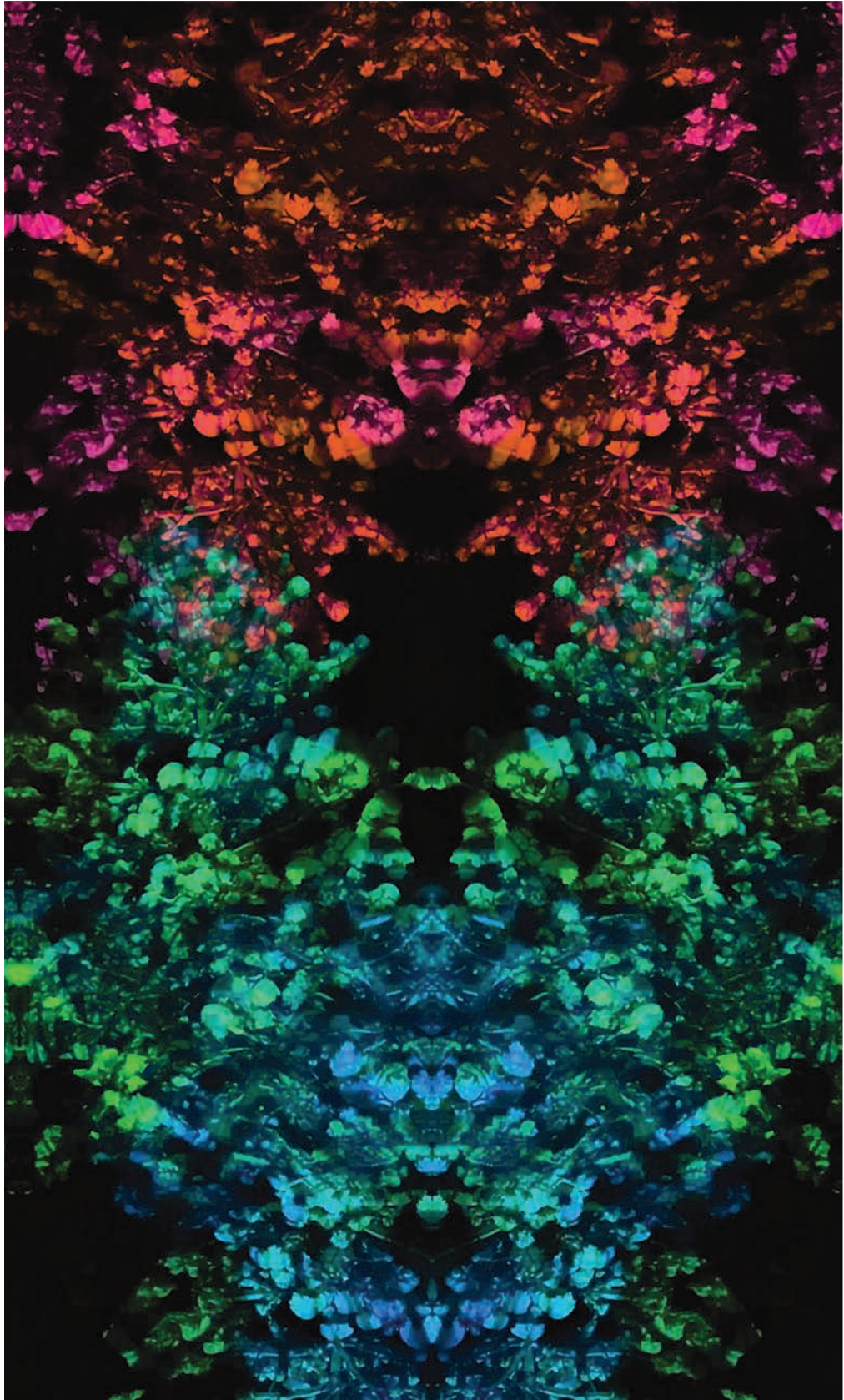
Meet in the lobby for these free daily explorations of Oklahoma Contemporary that provide an intimate look at its art and architecture. Led by a knowledgeable Gallery Guide, the tours are inclusive and conversational and aimed at sparking visitor curiosity about what’s happening in the galleries, classrooms, and other hubs. Talking with these experts on what excites them about the building and its programming is a perfect introduction to the new location or a way for regulars to discover fresh ways of experiencing the space. *Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays at 12:30 pm; Saturdays at 11 am and 2 pm; Sundays at 2 pm*

ARTIST TALK: *Abelardo Morell*
Main Building / Te Ata Theater

CONVERSATION

In 1991, Abelardo Morell blocked out the light from his living room with black plastic and cut a small hole in it to let in the light, making a camera obscura that projected the houses and trees across the street into this domestic space. Over the following decades, he developed this technique of bringing the outside into the inside, photographing the results in long exposures that captured the surreal scenes. One of these works—*Camera Obscura: View of Times Square in Hotel Room*—is included in *Bright Golden Haze*. In this artist talk, timed with National Photography Month, the Boston-based artist will share his process that employs a historic technique to create strikingly new visions of the world. *Thursday, May 14, 2020, 6–7 pm*





These digitally created images are first made by projecting light onto a ponderosa pine in the Rocky Mountains of Colorado.

YES BLUE, YES GREEN

“My new work is an examination of the artful ways in which the newest projection technologies create art installations. I want to entice observers to examine their personal connections to nature by working with the underlying fractals and sacred geometry that repeat throughout nature.

Volumetric light bounce and pooling paint across a canvas are more accessible on a scale previously not seen. We are experiencing a shift across the arts and sciences, and technology is the accelerator. My work involves exploring these crossroads. I aspire to inspire my audience to reconnect with nature, using art and modern mechanics as the medium. The results are as delightfully unpredictable as nature itself.”

CHAD MOUNT, 2020 ARTIST IN RESIDENCE, GREEN BOX ARTS

STORE

Top Shop

Curated just as smartly as its surrounding exhibitions, the gift shop at Oklahoma Contemporary has unique finds from functional to indulgent. Many items are designed by local makers especially for Shop Contemporary.

GO-BAGS ▼

Steady Bags, made by Oklahoma City-based designer Bryan Couchman, are belt bags, bike bags, and wallets for the outdoors and the indoors.



◀ APOTHECARY

Solare, an Oklahoma City-based shop has their own high-end line of calming home and nourishing body products.



GLASSWARE ▶

Tulsa born, Los Angeles-based **Cedric Mitchell** makes glass tumblers with a nice weight and clean lines, a modern way to enjoy an old fashioned.



◀ BUILDING BLOCKS

These playful—but chic!—magnetic blocks from **Tegu** are well within everyone's play-grade.



WOODWORKS ▶

Jake Fowler Designs, based in Tulsa, makes one of a kind, hand-crafted wooden cutting boards and serving pieces.



◀ PAPER GOODS

Risography specialists and zine publishers, Oklahoma City's **Metaflop** prints custom-made notebooks, collectibles, and playing cards.

▶ READING MATERIAL

Oklahoma City-based book publisher **Penny Candy Books** has a wide array of children's books that can be easily judged by their cover.



B R I G H T G O L D E N H A Z E

REFLECTIONS

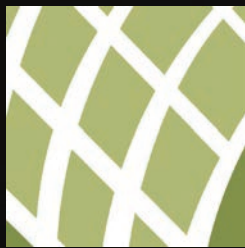
In a show of solidarity, thirteen organizations are coming together for the first time in history to support the 2020 opening of Oklahoma Contemporary Arts Center. One of the leading philanthropies providing support to nonprofit organizations in Oklahoma, **KIRKPATRICK FAMILY FUND** has funded a series of grants to produce these exhibitions and programs related to *Bright Golden Haze*. Oklahoma Contemporary's inaugural exhibition examines the role of light as a medium for contemporary artists. *Reflections* will interpret this framework in a myriad of ways.



Arts Council Oklahoma City
April 9, May 14, June 18, July 9, August 13
 Inspired by Oklahoma Contemporary's inaugural exhibition, *Bright Golden Haze*, Arts Council Oklahoma City's Spotlight Concert series will celebrate the "bright future" of Oklahoma City's entertainment community with unforgettable live performances from April through August.



deadCenter Film
June 13; various tour dates
 DeadCenter Film will partner with twenty high schools and technology centers in towns across Oklahoma to capture on film the most beautiful light in each town at different times of day. DeadCenter will screen the combined footage, projected onto the new Oklahoma City Convention Center, on June 13 during the 2020 DeadCenter Film Festival. The video will tour the towns of each participating school in the fall, where it will be projected onto a building of their choice. After the tour, the video will be released online.



Myriad Botanical Gardens
May 21–June 30 | Meinders Garden
July 1–September 1 | Prairie Garden
 Oklahoma artist Nathan Pratt's installation will transform Myriad Gardens with nature's most nostalgic glow—

fireflies. This public art installation will tap into the innocence of childhood, allowing visitors of all ages to experience the magic of the summers of youth.

The installation will evoke summer evenings when the world starts to change, lit by the flickering glow of fireflies. The mixed-media pieces will be illuminated with pulsing LED lights, constructed to complement nature during the day and illuminate the Gardens at night.



National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum
March 14–September 30
 The National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum will present works by artists from around the world and Oklahoma, each providing a unique perspective on how environment, identity and perception are shaped through the medium of light. The installation will consist of a series of murals by artist John Salame applied directly to the large windows of the museum's main entrance and gallery hall, depicting diverse landscapes of Oklahoma. These murals, commissioned by a local artist, will literally bring in the "bright golden haze" from the opening line of Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Oklahoma!* by using the sun itself as a medium.



Oklahoma City Ballet
 Oklahoma City Ballet will present an original ballet inspired by *Bright Golden Haze*. Trainee program coordinator and recently retired professional dancer Amanda Herd-Popejoy will choreograph a premiere work with eight to fifteen members of the trainee program at Oklahoma City Ballet's Yvonne Chouteau

School. Popejoy will incorporate light into the dancers' costumes and ideally perform outside in a relatively dark space. All performances, which are planned for multiple locations in April and May, will be free to the public.



Oklahoma City Museum of Art
March 19–August 16
 The Oklahoma City Museum of Art will present its own satellite exhibition, *The Art of Light*. Inspired by the exploration of light as a tool to create space, *The Art of Light* seeks to communicate the unique visual experiences provided by different forms of light when they are employed to achieve artistic ends. The centerpiece of this exhibition is Barbara Astman's *Present Tense*, comprised of a set of flashlights whose lenses are masked by pictures of faces. The work projects floating, smiling faces onto darkened surfaces. Additionally, the Museum will present *Laser Drawing* by Forrest Myers and *Balthazar* by Stanley Landsman. *Laser Drawing*, the first laser artwork ever created, was originally installed at the nightclub Max's Kansas City in New York. *Present Tense* and *Laser Drawing* have never been shown at the museum.



Oklahoma City University School of Visual Arts
May 11–July 2
 This summer, the Oklahoma City University School of Visual Arts will display Olafur Eliasson's *Shadow Projection Lamp* at the Nona Jean Hulsey Gallery inside the Norick Art Center on campus. An art educator will help students interpret the projection lamp and encourage

children to create original artworks inspired by it. Students will learn about monochromatic color and discuss the use of light and dark in Eliasson's work. They will then explore the concentric circle and symmetrical shapes, possibly using them in their own artwork.



Oklahoma History Center
June 15–August 15
 The Friends of the Oklahoma History Center and the OHC exhibit team will create an outdoor installation to complement *Bright Golden Haze*. An interactive fabric maze, up to 600 linear feet of bright yellow fabric, will snake in and around a grassy area of the OHC grounds. Visitors will find three interactives: Two will emulate a candle carousel highlighting images from the opening song from *Oklahoma!* such as "cattle standin' like statues" and "corn as high as an elephant's eye." The largest interactive will be a zoetrope, creating the illusion of movement through a rapid succession of static images that relate to the musical.



Science Museum Oklahoma
May 1–September 1
 Science Museum Oklahoma's *Prismatic Projections* coincides with *Bright Golden Haze*. This kaleidoscopic new experience takes a scientific approach to interpreting the beautiful colors we see in the sunrise. The foundation of the experience involves capturing light and diffracting it onto a "canvas" for guests to investigate the resulting colorful spectrum. These rainbows of light are our guide for

explaining the rich gold, orange and red tones in our unique Oklahoma sunrises—a beautiful "bright golden haze."



Scissortail Community Development Corporation and the Oklahoma Latino Cultural Center
 Sparks fly as Kandy-painted and chromed-out lowriders scrape through the streets. In the wake of collective marginalization during the so-called "Zoot Suit Riots" of the 1940s, Mexican Americans responded by creating new ways of positively expressing themselves: Enter the lowrider. At its core, the art of lowriders embody a lifestyle focused on a sense of hope for the future—a bright and golden future, exemplified by the chrome and gold adorning the cars. This photography exhibition and related programming will examine the multifaceted ways in which lowrider culture leverages light and highly reflective surfaces to give visual voice to the Mexican American experience.



Scissortail Park
March 13–August 14
The Unexpected Us is a collaboration between Scissortail Park and artists Denise Duong and Gabriel Friedman. The installation will explore the magic of transformation, featuring a massive woven willow stick "hut" in the shape of a bird, with a golden pulsating light suspended within a willow orb at the center. The installation will include a single entrance to the center, where a secondary woven willow sphere containing a golden LED light will be programmed to pulsate at the speed of a gentle heartbeat. The structure will be built upon a

semi-circular foundation of laminated, rot-resistant cedar lumber.



SixTwelve
March 13–August 14
 Artists Nathan Hendrix and Stephen Tyler's low-voltage lighting installation will represent the colors of the Oklahoma sunset. A grid-work of steel cable will attach at multiple anchor points on top of the west face of the SixTwelve building, spanning the adjacent lawn and terminating on steel poles along the existing fence line. The grid will incorporate pixel-controlled LEDs, programmed with static looks for special events or a mapped video display. At dusk, the work will emulate the colors and patterns of the surrounding sky as the sun sets and night takes hold.



University of Central Oklahoma
April 2–August 27 | Melton Gallery
 The Melton Gallery at UCO plans a multifaceted installation to engage with the themes of light, space, identity, and perception explored in *Bright Golden Haze*. The installation will include a light sculpture by Olafur Eliasson, a sound composition by Dr. Christina Giacona and Patrick Conlon, and a short non-narrative film by Kato Buss. Eliasson's *1m3 Light* features twenty-four halogen bulbs positioned to delineate one cubic meter of light in a dark room filled with fog. The thirty-minute, surround sound experience will be played on a loop, and the cinematic element will enhance the viewer's experience on how identity and perception are shaped through the medium of light.

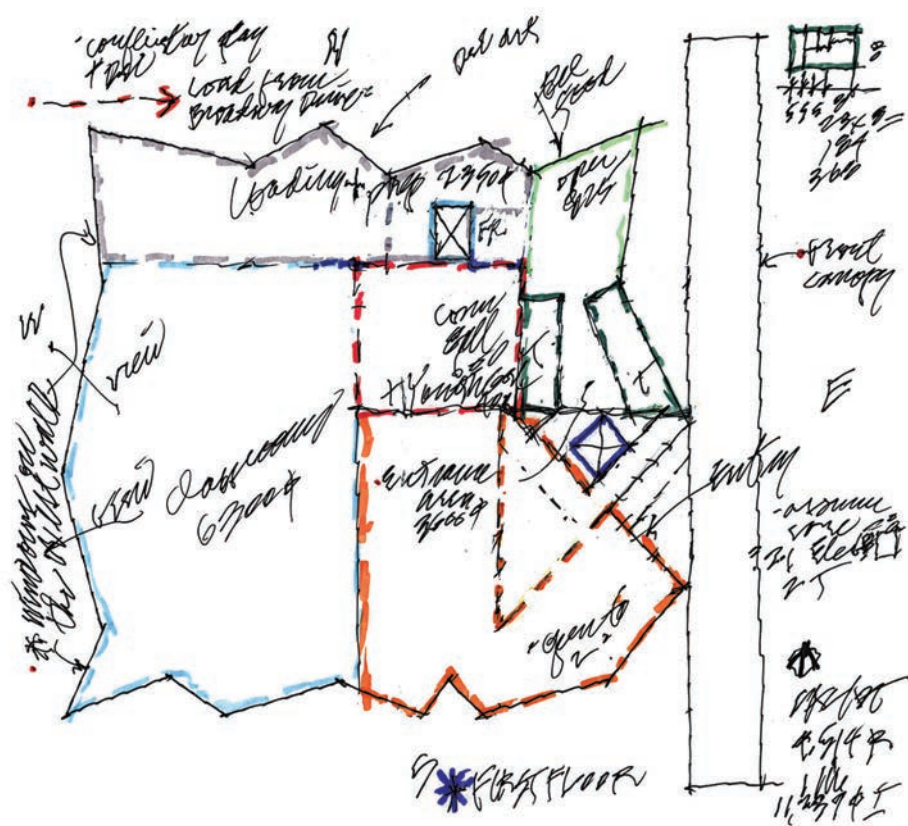


OLAFUR ELIASSON
1m3 light (1999)

DEDICATED SPACE

The Educational Philosophy of Oklahoma Contemporary

By JEREMIAH MATTHEW DAVIS



What is art? What is education? To what extent can art and education converge to create an organizing philosophy for a cultural institution? The pursuit of these questions has propelled Oklahoma Contemporary's growth since its founding in 1989 as City Arts Center.

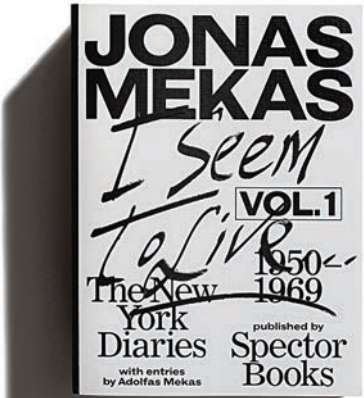
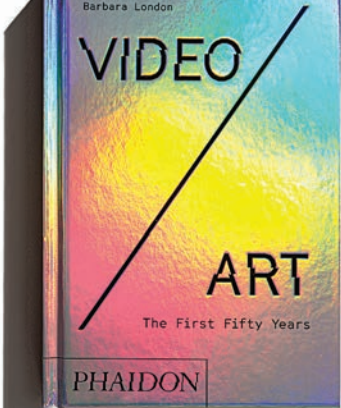
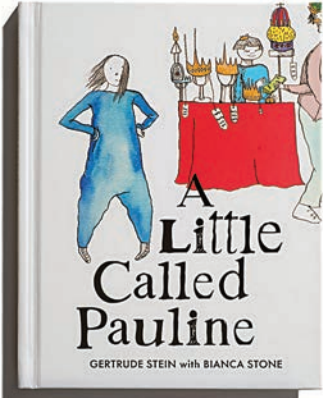
We believe in the potential for the works we present to inspire our visitors to engage more deeply with the ideas, materials, and influences behind the art on view. This belief motivates us to infuse education into our curatorial and program planning, integrating art objects and performances with their respective potential to share and generate knowledge. Rather than confining education to a classroom, we create the conditions for the learning process to happen throughout the arts center's many spaces.

What are some of these spaces? To name but a few, we have dedicated studios for early childhood education, digital

◀ A sketch of Oklahoma Contemporary Arts Center by architect Rand Elliott

The BOOK NOOK

Rounding up some newly



media, ceramics, sculpture, and dance. Our Learning Gallery gives visitors the opportunity to access different points of entry for the artworks on view by getting hands-on with special creative activities or by engaging with interactive displays. Our theater, creative lounge, and outdoor spaces offer further ways to learn through artist talks, panel discussions, and documentary screenings.

During Camp Contemporary, a program of week-long camps for ages four through twelve during school breaks, these spaces are active with young people learning and creating in a variety of media, from painting and installation art to digital illustration and theater.

The kids aren't the only ones who get to take advantage of these amazing new studios. On March 30, 2020, Oklahoma Contemporary will launch Studio School, the arts center's new home for year-round classes and workshops across disciplines

for teens and adults. While classes have always been offered at Oklahoma Contemporary, our new building and adjacent renovated warehouse space support our goal to meet rising demand for innovative workshops and sequential art courses by quadrupling the number of classes we could previously offer—to fifty—for the spring session.

Adrienne Lalli Hills, associate director of Studio School, sums up our philosophy succinctly.

“Studio School seeks to nurture and strengthen Oklahoma’s creative community through rigorous yet inviting classes and dynamic workshops while providing employment and professional development opportunities for artists,” she says.

Like the generation of knowledge, the creation of art is cumulative. Contemporary art exists in three periods at once: Its impulse is rooted in works

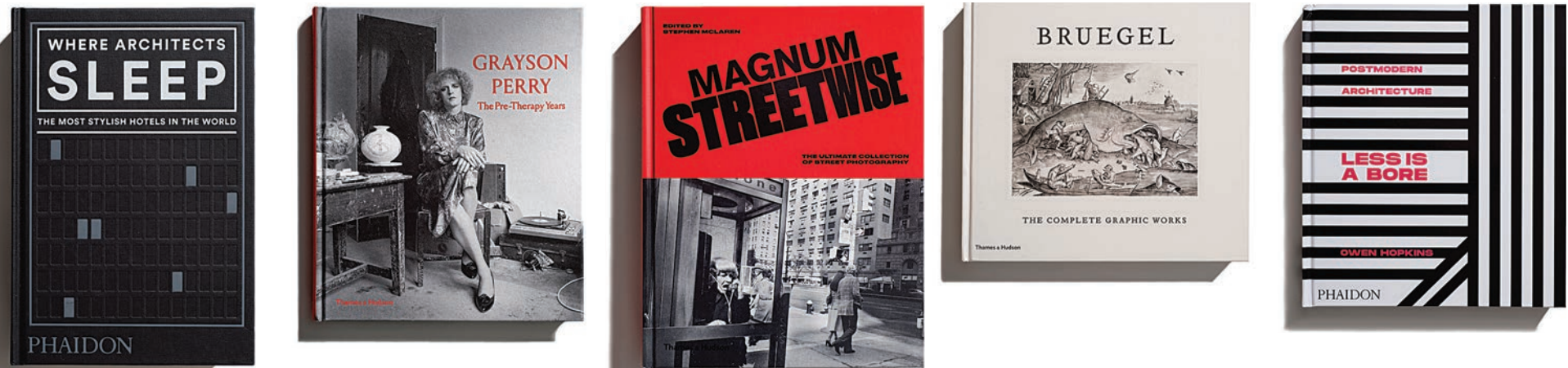
and artists of the past. It is created in the present, but it prefigures what the future will bring. As such, contemporary art has the potential to link the knowledge of the past to the new ideas of the future through creation in the present. Through our exhibitions, performances, and education initiatives, Oklahoma Contemporary can be a creative catalyst for our visitors, students, and instructors for years to come.

Reflecting on this future potential, Hills offers the perfect summation: “We hope to provide a vibrant profile of high-caliber classes that support interdisciplinary inquiry in all visual and performing arts. Not an artist? No problem. From teens to arts enthusiasts to established artists and makers, everyone is welcome.”

Jeremiah Matthew Davis is the artistic director of Oklahoma Contemporary Arts Center.

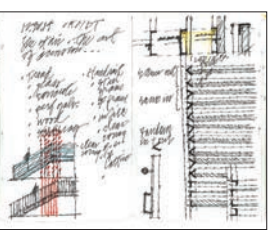
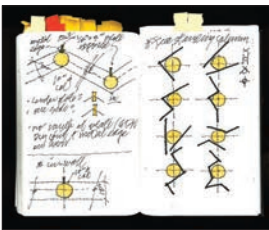
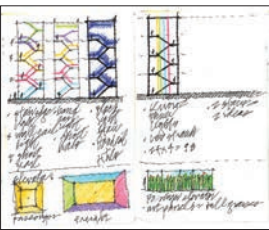
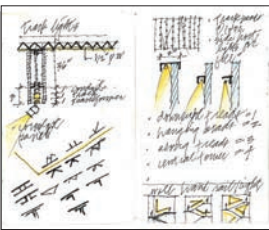
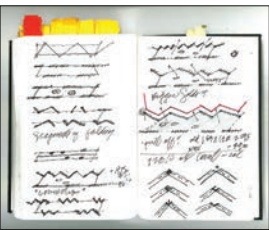
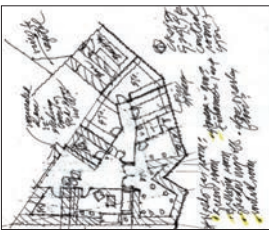
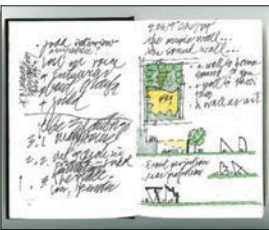
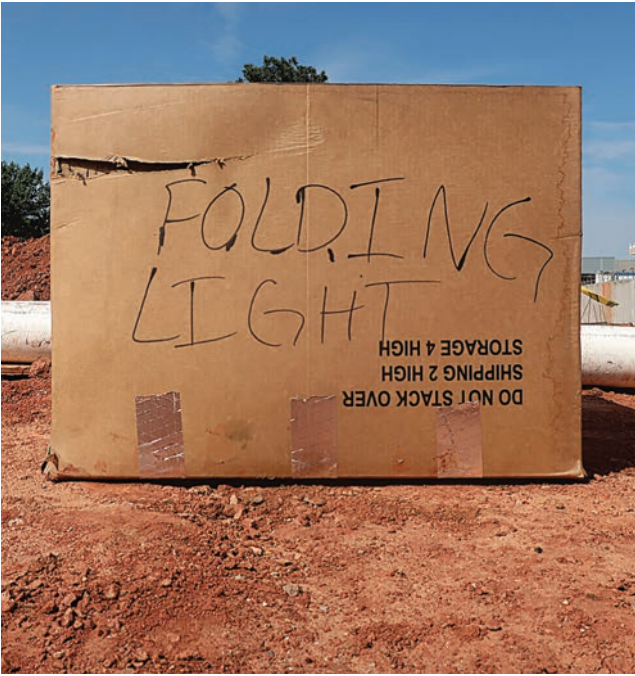
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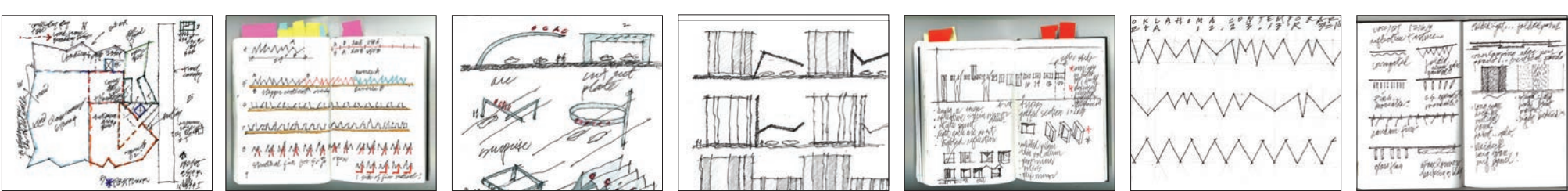
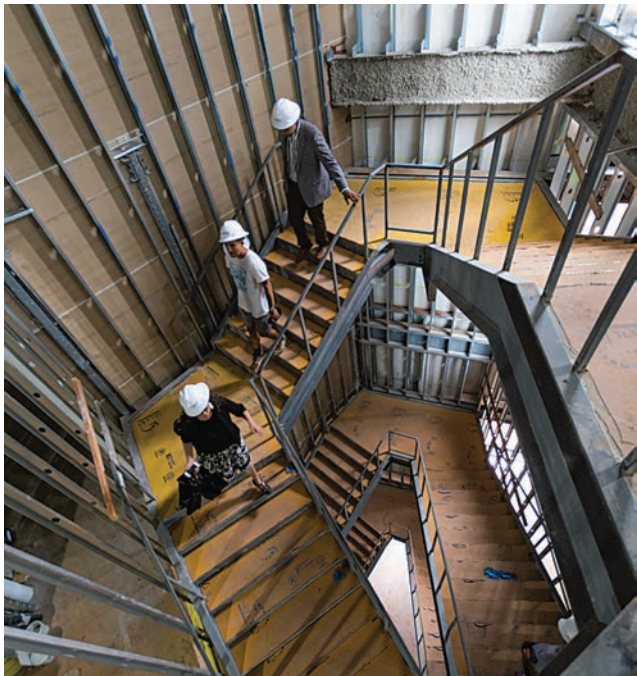
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Start With A Sketch

BUILDING DESIGN BY RAND ELLIOTT ARCHITECTS





ARCHITECT RAND ELLIOTT

PRAIRIE POETICS

ONE OF THE MOST striking buildings designed by Rand Elliott Architects is, prosaically, a car park. Except the point is that Chesapeake Car Park Two (originally One), part of the Chesapeake Energy Corporation campus in Oklahoma City, is anything but common. Each floor is painted and lit in a primary color, using the simple device of T8 fluorescent tubes and theatrical gels.

There is a Dan Flavin flavor to those colored fluorescent tubes. Here is a highly practical, economical solution to way finding (color sears itself on the memory in a way that numbers do not), that managed to transform what is a habitually soul-sapping space into something bordering on an art installation. Rand Elliott performed a similar sorcery with the Underground, originally a disorientating and dystopian pedestrian tunnel system in downtown Oklahoma City. Lighting is always a fundamental element in his thinking.

“I think of light as a material, no different from paint, concrete, wood, or brick,” Elliott says. “We begin the project by asking the question, ‘Where is the light coming from?’ From there we consider orientation, materials, glass placement, and the poetics, looking for a timeless concept that will embody its purpose.”

That’s the essence of Elliott’s creative approach right there—the juxtaposition of practicality and poetry. Tellingly, his starting point is art; sketches and poetry comprise his word paintings. “My approach to architecture and to lighting and all things design-related often begins with a poetic gesture about what is the purpose. What are we doing? Why?,” Elliott says. “It’s a process I’ve developed over the past several decades to envision a project in words before it’s ever drawn or created. It’s called word painting. Word paintings for me are this gesture, a description of what I’m looking for, what I’m about to do.”

“The work [of Rand Elliott Architects] reflects a process that is inclusive, bringing the users’ needs to the foreground, balanced with an exquisite control of the technique of social interaction and a rigorous theoretical basis for design,” Neil Frankel, award-winning Chicago architect and furniture designer, has said.



PHOTOGRAPH BY JEANETTE ELLIOTT

Elliott’s most recent project, the lyrical Oklahoma Contemporary Arts Center, known as Folding Light, epitomizes its philosophy. An exhibition and educational hub, the four-story building has 8,000 square feet of galleries for visual art, a flexible theater space seating nearly 200 people, a dance studio, and nine classrooms. It will be open to everyone, and free of charge, to promote public access for art and education. It will be a landmark building.

“Rand was given this commission because, as a long-time trustee of our arts center, he was distinctly capable of decoding our needs for the future,” says the arts center’s founder, Christian Keesee. “It’s not in our mission to engage an architect to make an expensive building. He gave us something the whole city can be proud of, and he exceeded our expectations on a number of fronts—not least of which is coming in on budget and on time, except for a few weather delays.”

The arts center is rooted in its context. The building has a reflective facade that mirrors Oklahoma’s constantly changing weather conditions. Comprised of custom-fabricated, extruded aluminum fins that extend from the ground to the top of the building, this luminous element allows the building to become part of the landscape, merging with the urban backdrop and reflecting the local context and character.

“Three things set the tone for the project—place, purpose, and poetics,” Elliott says. “The inspiration comes from our place.” He is part historian, sometimes literally referencing the past. The darkened brick detail on the exterior columns of the Parkridge Professional Center in Lawton, Oklahoma, allude to the prairie fires during the land rush. Oklahoma has a rich history, he says, an ancient landscape and a proud Native American culture, which encompassed the Dust Bowl in the 1930s, and the vicissitudes of the energy business. “My goal is to find something ethereal, lasting, and timeless that makes this place so special.”

Regarding his concept for Oklahoma Contemporary, he says, “My focus turned to our big skies. The horizon is always visible and makes our sunrises and sunsets an uplifting experience. So, this building is inspired by our light—the light of our sky. We have created a building whose skin reacts to the ever-changing color of the sky. I saw it today. It was orange and blue. The description ‘Folding Light’ is a response to this experience. We designed the skin from extruded aluminum panels at various angles that capture, hold,

reflect, and redirect the light as it moves through the sky.”

A 2006 inductee into the Interior Design Hall of Fame, Elliott is insistent on choreographing both interior and exterior. They form a creative composite. At the arts center the exterior walls fold as they wrap the interior space. “That is reflected directly on the interior. In the gallery space, this folding form creates different sizes of walls to accommodate different sizes of artwork. The art fits its place,” he says. “This is a building for art where people come to visit it.”

Elliott wants the building “to create opportunities for discovery, inspiration, and to place you in an environment where you see things and experience things that remain with you,” he says. “This is an educational facility, and the building is filled with details that help those who enter better understand space, volume, proportion, scale, constructibility, and interaction. This is a space made for children and adults to learn about the world around them.”

Artistic director Jeremiah Davis captures the essence of working alongside Rand. “First and foremost, he is an artist and his medium is architecture,” says Davis. “His deep knowledge of the organization and its history provided excellent fodder for the design process. I would articulate the challenge and describe our vision. Invariably, Rand would respond by providing a design solution that not only solved the problem but produced a stronger architectural statement.”

That car park, and a second one, won several lighting and architectural awards. Since founding the practice in 1976, Rand Elliott and his team have received 362 awards at the local, national, and international level, including ten National AIA Honor Awards. It is the only architectural firm in the history of Oklahoma to win a National AIA Honor Award, and it is the eighth most recognized firm since the inception of the AIA awards program in 1949. The best award though, Elliott says, “is a client who believes that we solved their problem, met the budget and time schedule, and made their job or life better.”

His clients are long term—80 percent of the practice’s work is repeat business. That has been creatively liberating, he says. “We are inspired by our clients,” Elliott says. “Their requests range from the outrageous to the sublime. We like that. It allows us to grow as we solve new problems and create new opportunities. We don’t see our work as experimental, but instead a response to conditions right in front of us.”

Elliott is also collegiate and keen to emphasize that Oklahoma Contemporary, as with every project, is a team effort for which many individuals can take credit. “We work as a seamless force together in every way to create a timeless place,” he says. “We believe that the essence of architecture comes in the form where a million details make the building.” X

BY JILL ENTWISTLE



Kirkpatrick Oil Company in Hennessey, Oklahoma



POPS 66 in Arcadia, Oklahoma



Chesapeake Boathouse in Oklahoma City



Chesapeake Car Park Three on the Chesapeake Energy campus in Oklahoma City



Red PrimeSteak in Oklahoma City



Oklahoma Contemporary Arts Center in Oklahoma City



Detail of the exterior paneling of Oklahoma Contemporary Arts Center in Oklahoma City



PLICO building in Oklahoma City



Omari Wiles in the rotunda of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York

On Fire

LES
BALLET
AFRIK
AT THE
GUGGENHEIM

STRIKE A POSE. **OMARI WILSON** brings his unique AfrikFusion style to the Guggenheim’s theater, marrying traditional African dance with modern styles of house dance that dominate the club scene, and voguing made famous by New York City’s drag balls. Wilson, the founder of Les Ballet Afrik talks with dance editor **LARRY KEIGWIN** about the upcoming performance and this subculture of contemporary dance.

Larry Keigwin: I loved your show at the Guggenheim for their Works & Process performance series. You were—for lack of better words—engaging us in downtown club life, vogue, and ball life. Can you speak to the challenges and what excited you about working specifically in a museum space?

Omari Wiles: The challenge was trying to keep the audience engaged with the dancers and the choreography without having to be center stage all the time. I wanted to make sure I used the space as if it was a club and not a theater. Club life is about the movement in the space you’re in. When you’re at a club, you’re looking in every direction.

LK: You could totally feel the energy. It was as if you were at a highly choreographed and well-staged ball. Now you’re building a full show that will be at the Guggenheim at the end of March, New York is Burning. Can you speak to the inspiration?

OW: I started off in ballroom in 2004. I saw so many different men of color expressing themselves in masculine and feminine ways and being celebrated, where for me it was really difficult to express myself that way coming from the African dance community. In [the documentary] *Paris is Burning* (1990), Pepper LaBeija is this male figure but also this motherly figure within ballroom—her energy, her voice, and the way she commanded the room. I was, like, oh, wow. I want to be able to express myself in this way. Everything *Paris is Burning* showed me—from the clothing to the personalities and the way I saw black men, gay black men, and Latino men carrying themselves



with a sense of regalness. Although their struggles might have been facing them before they got through that door, they might be facing them after they leave that ball. At the time of the ball, they were the celebrities, and that has inspired me throughout my career.

My mom and my dad come from Senegal and owned their own African dance company. I wanted to create my own name, and being a part of ballroom really inspired me to do that because although you’re a part of a house, you are expressing your own creativity, your own individuality. I feel like through *New York is Burning*, I’m hoping to guide the audience. It’s not just voguing. There are a lot of struggles in these people’s everyday lives so to be able to even create what they create—it becomes their outlet.

Creating this show and titling it *New York is Burning* felt like I’m paying homage to the New York ballroom underground world. This show is a way to educate the communities around me, to hopefully inspire them to want to become allies of this community, and to help build it—not just take from it. To really notice this is a culture and these people, these kids, these members, these houses, they need not only your support, but your understanding and respect. I used to be told, “Oh, you’re a voguer? You’re not a dancer. What kind of technique do you have?” They didn’t know I came from a family of dancers.

LK: I think dance can teach people a lot about discipline and presentation. I love the term “vogue femme.” I studied that for a very short time because I choreographed the revival of *Rent* off-Broadway, and I made Angel into a vogue femme character. I studied briefly with Willi Ninja. I had a memorable time in the studio with him. Was he part of your ballroom experience?

OW: I had the honor of witnessing

him perform on stage, and it was amazing to see this man’s storytelling. And his excellence. It made me carry myself a different way. I’m not just this little black boy from Africa, or I’m not this little black boy from Bed-Stuy, Brooklyn. I have much more potential as long as I want it to be there. I can’t sit around, and Willi Ninja didn’t sit around. He got up and he did what he needed to do, you know, to tell a story, and I think that was so inspirational. Vogue femme really spoke to me because I was so closed in about my feminine side and my sexuality that when I saw black and Latino gay men voguing in that way and still be a man—it was really inspirational. I went to the clubs. I went to this club called the Karate Club in Harlem. I went to little house clubs with house music, where you saw everyone. You saw the whackers, the breakers, the hip-hop dancers, the voguers. It was everyone all together and that was really interesting.

LK: What an outlet. I love that. And I’m sure the club no longer exists.

OW: That’s the only problem about New York. New York is literally burning down our clubs, our night life. I feel like a couple of clubs are closing at 2 a.m. now, you know. Like in LA and all these other states. The vogue scene is losing these spaces.

LK: Just as it’s getting warmed up.

OW: Shows like *Pose*, and *Legendary* that’s coming to HBO, and *RuPaul’s Drag Race*, all these places of progress. This show means a lot, and it means a lot to be doing it at the Guggenheim because, again, the Guggenheim is a huge deal, and the company being one year old, it’s a big deal for us, but it’s a big deal for me. It’s a really big deal to bring awareness to this community. We’re not looking for support—we’re looking for respect, and that starts at the littlest things.

LK: I love that it isn’t in a typical ball space. The Guggenheim is such a great place to let the audience dive in. I want to say thank you and wish you so much good luck, and I look forward to seeing the show. **X**

New York is Burning will be performed by Les Ballet Afrik at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York City on March 29 and 30, 2020.



ArtSociety

SEEN + SCENE



Winter Ball

A breathtaking view from the Breakers! That was the theme for the 2020 Winter Ball, an evening reminiscent of **Newport, Rhode Island**, and all of its grand vacation “cottages.” Cocktails preceded a formal dinner at the Oklahoma City Golf and Country Club on January 25, 2020. The club’s space was filled with towering floral arrangements and seascapes and a variety of topiaries to transport partygoers to the Atlantic coastline. With music by **Souled Out Orchestra**, the 400 black-tie ball attendees enjoyed a dinner by award-winning chef **Marc Guizol**. Organized by Winter Ball chairwoman **Karen Browne** and co-chair **Connell Branan**, this year’s beneficiary is Oklahoma Contemporary Arts Center. ▶ **Oklahoma City**



WHITE HORSE MEMORIES

This page, clockwise from left: **Sally Lenz**, **Sody Clements**, and **Marilyn Meade**; **Bob** and **Karen Browne**, chairwoman of the event; **Connell** and **Cliff Branan**; **Jeff** and **Sally Starling**; the **Regency Room** in the **Oklahoma City Golf and Country Club** was transformed into the **White Horse Tavern**—the oldest operating restaurant in the United States; **Jeri** and **Jerome Holmes**

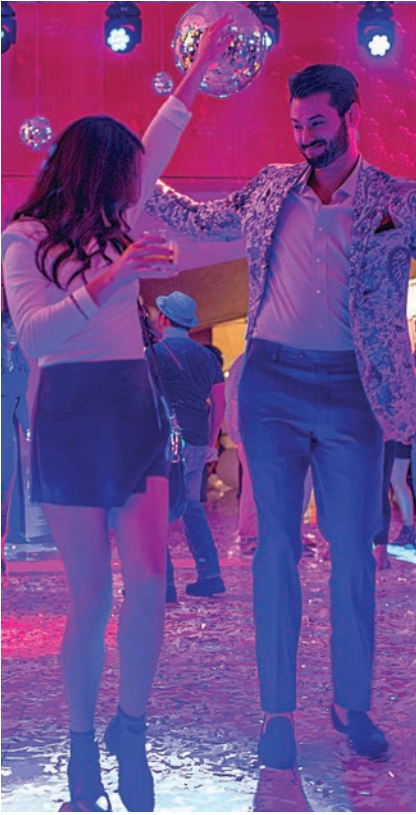


THE OCEAN STATE

This page, clockwise from left: **Seyan Hefner, Joan Frates, Sherrie Kite, Susan Parker, and Lela Sullivan; Eddie Walker and Tim Fields; Connell Branam, Molly Furman, Seyan Hefner, Sally Starling, Kathy Brown, Leigh Bentley, Christine Browne, Casey Williams, Joan Frates, Carol Joullian, Sody Clements, Kathy Walker, Sally Lenz, Susan McPherson, Lela Sullivan, Marilyn Meade, Karen Browne, Sherrie Kite, and Susan Parker; Mick and Terri Cornett; Rand and Jeanette Elliott; Leigh and Nick Bentley**

Warhol and the West

Warhol and the West opened January 31 at the National Cowboy Museum in Oklahoma City, marking the first retrospective dedicated to Andy Warhol's Western themes. Viewers gathered on February 15 for the Factory Party, a reference to Warhol's New York City studio. Attendees channeled eclectic pop culture imagery and color in their attire, while bringing a local Oklahoma flair. ► **Oklahoma City**



F R I E N D S

Actor, writer, and ▶ director **Griffin Dunne** (*After Hours*, *An American Werewolf in London*, and *Goliath*) and New York-based contemporary painter and Enid, Oklahoma native **John Newsom** at the opening of *Think in Pictures*, held at AMELCHENKO. ▶ **New York**



◀ From left, ballet dancer **Julio Bragado-Young**, *ArtDesk* photographer **Erin Baiano**, dancer **Jorge Español**, and principal dancer for the New York City Ballet **Gonzalo Garcia**. ▶ **New York**



Exhibition co-curator ▶ **Carmen Amengual**, Norman, Oklahoma native **Ravi Rajan**, **Karen Hillenburg** and co-curator **Michael Ned Holte** at **50+50: A Creative Century from Chouinard to CalArts** opening at REDCAT. ▶ **Los Angeles**



◀ A view of **50+50: A Creative Century** from Chouinard to CalArts opening. ▶ **Los Angeles**



Friends and collaborators ▶ for more than twenty-five years (and partners in the building of Oklahoma Contemporary Arts Center) **Rand Elliott** and **Christian Keesee**, in Marfa, Texas, circa 2014



Contributors



CHAD MOUNT creates contemporary works, often employing animation or digital media to produce glitchy-but-cool projections and ethereal patterns. Mount's work *Stirring while purring the currents do go...* was featured in the Spring 2018 issue of *ArtDesk* as the inside cover art. Mount is an Oklahoma City-based artist and technologist, believing that the relationship between the two makes for more compelling public art.



LOUISA McCUNE is the executive director of Kirkpatrick Foundation and editor in chief of *ArtDesk*. She is an Enid, Oklahoma, native and has worked in publishing and philanthropy for more than two decades. As co-founder of the magazine, McCune has led its editorial direction from the beginning, practicing a "think global, act local" attitude and prioritizing "art for everyone." She is also the 2020 president for Animal Grantmakers.



LARRY KEIGWIN is the founder of the New York-based contemporary dance company **KEIGWIN + COMPANY**, co-founder and dance editor for *ArtDesk*, and co-founder of Green Box Arts. He leads conversations with the most exciting choreographers and performers for each issue of the magazine. Since 2003, his company has performed internationally, making appearances at the American Dance Festival and DanceMotion USA, and he is at work on his first dance film called *Bolero Seniors*.

A R T D E S K

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ArtDesk is a free, quarterly magazine published by Kirkpatrick Foundation.





Krista Tippett's broadcast legacy began with her upbringing in Shawnee, Oklahoma. You may know her from *On Being*, a National Public Radio program she launched in 2003 that explores humanity, morality, and spirituality. Tippett was awarded a National Humanities Medal in 2014, the Peabody Award in 2007, and earned a spot on the *New York Times* bestseller list for *Becoming Wise: An Inquiry into the Mystery and Art of Living*. Tippett's voice carries well past NPR's channels and continues to challenge our notions of what it means to be a good listener.

PRESS PAUSE

When we moved out of cubicle-land and into the light-filled studio/work/public event space we designed and created for ourselves, I had the usual desk installed in my office. But this felt wrong. My working style—like the nature of the work I do—is fluid and conversational. So the desk went away, and what I have is a gathering space with a coffee table that holds what my desk would hold. It's often much messier than today. Books tend to pile up until they topple. I prefer to write and think curled on my sofa, with an open space around me. And I'm always happy if a few of my colleagues are sitting across from me or reclining on pillows around the walls.

KRISTA TIPPETT

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