

Annual Report 2019 - 2020



Letter from our Executive Director

February 2021

While this letter summarizes fiscal year 2020 (August 1, 2019-July 31, 2020), at this point it is difficult to separate it from calendar year 2020—a year of crises, division, anxiety, action, and ultimately hope and resilience.

In so many ways, the past fiscal year was one of two distinct parts—one that exceeded all expectations and another that forced us to confront unprecedented circumstances in the museum world. Before the pandemic forced cultural institutions to shut down in March, The Delaware Contemporary, with a new professional team in place, launched several initiatives across our programmatic spectrum and was on target to increase: attendance numbers, online engagement, memberships, numbers of new exhibiting artists, event rentals, and store revenue. These accomplishments are significant and a testament to the hard work of our entire Delaware Contemporary community.

Fiscal year 2020 began with the West Street Art Festival, an event that met its goal to bring new families to our Riverfront Wilmington community, established partnerships with neighbors—the Delaware Children’s Museum, the Delaware Theatre Company—and broaden economic activity for neighborhood businesses – what a fantastic, and highly successful pilot program. As part of the festival, we invited families into the museum’s new dedicated space for activity and interpretation to put their mark on the wall with paint. This permanent space now houses tools, activities and an area for contemplation on the issues and ideas found in our exhibition galleries throughout the year.

The Delaware Contemporary in collaboration with our partners, New Castle County Vo- Tech School District and Freire Charter School, continued to be a leader in the field of arts education for teens. This year, special funding enabled us to launch our Creatives-in-Residence program that brought established creative industry professionals together with emerging creative professional (teens) to provide career-building skills and learn from each other about how valuable the arts can be in shaping our collective world. In December 2019, we held our first Teen Takeover – a teen produced party and art exhibition in TDC’s galleries. And, while schools and museums closed for the end of the academic year, our museum educators continued to connect weekly with program participants to share concerns and process ideas through art.

Officers

Karen Lines, Chair
Meagan McDonald, Vice Chair
Marla Norton, Secretary
Louis M. Pacelli, CPA, Treasurer

Board of Directors

Jennifer Borders
Sandra Borrer
Cheryl Heiks
Berta Borgenicht Kerr
Pam Price
Lou Rosenberg
Patrick Toman
Paul Voss
George Watson

Emeritus Board

Lynn Herrick Sharp
Richard Vague

Executive Director

Leslie Shaffer



Partnerships are at the center of The Delaware Contemporary's mission to ensure equity and access for youth and help us share the transformative power of the visual arts. Working with Brandywine School District, the Latin American Community Center, Las Americas Aspira Academy and Avon Grove School District, TDC shared exhibition, artmaking process, and access to living working artists for over 600 children from pre-K to grade 4. On the other end of the education spectrum, our ongoing partnership with the University of Delaware brought visibility to the work of graduating students as emerging arts professionals—both visual artists and practicing curators. Curatorial Fellows Kate Testa and Sam Whalen curated *You Can't Make It Without Ever Even Trying* and *Spill Over* (respectively), bringing new light to an “old” subject—craft as fine art.

One of the most significant accomplishments of the year was the commissioning of artist Shawn Baron Pinckney to make a new body of work in conjunction with the centennial of the women's suffrage movement of 1920. Intended as an exhibition, public program and fashion experience in April, *Art & Couture* was realized as a documentary-style experience postponed due to COVID and released in October of 2020.

In Exhibitions, we anchored the year with remarkable solo exhibitions by artists Margo Allman, Theresa Chromati, Constance Cone, Jim Condron, Clay Dunkin, Haeley Kyong, Erica Loustau, artist No. 223, Mary Putnam, Amie Potsic, John Singletary, Peter Wayne Lewis, Ellen Priest and Cheryl Warrick. Exciting group exhibitions introduced new issues through our China Initiative in *Amphibian Relationships* and *Mind the Gap*. Our Hennessey Project Space and Draper Experiment expanded our program for installation artists with the work of Chris Andricola and Jacob Foster, Jacintha Clark, and Natalie Hutchings. Bringing the reality of a COVID-shuttered environment for artists to light, *From Chaos to Order* and *Unshuttered* pushed forward the ways today's working artists expressed their adaptation and frustration through new work as seen through a new studio—home.

Artists are at the heart of The Delaware Contemporary. Launched in January 2020, our Art Fitness Series provides tools for emerging artists; the “workouts” have included “Preparing Your Work for Presentation” and “Taxes for Artists”. Our Project C Series is an online space that offers a behind the scenes look at the artistic practice of our Studios@ and exhibiting artists through videos interviews, images of artwork, texts and educational activities. This year TDC produced two new Project C episodes featuring the practice of Seonglan Kim Boyce and Shawn Baron Pinckney.

We ended the year marked by a significant and long-term shift in our efforts to reach audiences outside of our gallery spaces. In June 2020, we launched The Platform Gallery by employing the facades that flank the Riverfront neighborhood on one side and the very busy Amtrak train track

Officers

Karen Lines, Chair
Meagan McDonald, Vice Chair
Marla Norton, Secretary
Louis M. Pacelli, CPA, Treasurer

Board of Directors

Jennifer Borders
Sandra Borrer
Cheryl Heiks
Berta Borgenicht Kerr
Pam Price
Lou Rosenberg
Patrick Toman
Paul Voss
George Watson

Emeritus Board

Lynn Herrick Sharp
Richard Vague

Executive Director

Leslie Shaffer

on the other to connect contemporary art with hundreds of people each day. The inaugural project, planned in conjunction with the celebration of the 100th centennial of the women's right to vote, featured three enormous and thought-provoking images produced by artist Theresa Chromati. At the time when museums in Delaware were all closed to the public, TDC took the leap to be the first in our area to present a project through a Drive Thru experience.

The past twelve months have challenged us all to reconsider how we have traditionally connected with friends, neighbors, colleagues and family. This report is a testament to the ways in which The Delaware Contemporary serves as a liaison between the artists of today, our community, and the important exchange between them. The Delaware Contemporary is a place that takes risks, pushes boundaries and confronts a wide range of issues and difficult subjects, all while creating important art experiences and opportunities in fresh and new ways for our community and beyond.

Accessibility is at the heart of The Delaware Contemporary's core values; as such, we have demonstrated success for creating a diversity of opportunities for a diversity of people. We are modifying current projects to accommodate more access by more individuals and shifting priorities to be more inclusive across the institution.

In 2021, our goal is to increase opportunity across the institution—opportunity for emerging artists to grow their portfolio; opportunity for established artists to increase visibility; opportunity for emerging professionals to gain valuable career experience; opportunity for youth and teens to develop lifelong skills and social experience through mentorship; opportunity for new voices to be integral in programs through advisory groups; and, opportunity for a more diverse audience to participate in the exchange of ideas and issues that are relevant to us all.

A sincere thank you to the entire Delaware Contemporary family for their time, generosity, and commitment to supporting contemporary art and artists of today.



Leslie Shaffer
Executive Director

Officers

Karen Lines, Chair
Meagan McDonald, Vice Chair
Marla Norton, Secretary
Louis M. Pacelli, CPA, Treasurer

Board of Directors

Jennifer Borders
Sandra Borrer
Cheryl Heiks
Berta Borgenicht Kerr
Pam Price
Lou Rosenberg
Patrick Toman
Paul Voss
George Watson

Emeritus Board

Lynn Herrick Sharp
Richard Vague

Executive Director

Leslie Shaffer