

Arts and Outreach Coordinator Report
by Kyma Lassiter
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Since January 2021, Arts and Outreach Coordinator, Kyma Lassiter has worked toward accomplishing the goals and priorities set within the Arts Engagement Plan presented during the last meeting of the NC African American Heritage Commission (AAHC). The following report will list in detail the current programming efforts, accomplished goals, and next steps that will be implemented throughout the next quarter.

Current Programming

Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) Professional Development Workshop: The AAHC supported the North Carolina Arts Council, Strategic Planning Partners, and The McColl Center in planning and implementing this two-part virtual workshop series which focused on the needs of working artists and artists of color. The workshop series took place during two weekends in July 2021 and offered skills and strategies to build careers and navigate the business of being an artist. It also was an opportunity for artists from all disciplines to take stock of their current situation, identify immediate challenges and work with professionals in the field to maximize their potential to achieve their short and long-term career goals. The AAHC will also provide funding to Strategic Planning Partners to conduct follow-up sessions with workshop participants.

Transforming Lives Through Arts: Innovation Mentorship Program at the North Carolina Museum of Art: The AAHC will be partnering with the North Carolina Museum of Art (NCMA) and the Boys & Girls Club of North Carolina to create and launch a new signature arts outreach program focusing on middle school students to inspire the next generation of artists and museum workers. By focusing this program on middle school students, it has the potential to make a critical impact during a formative developmental age. This program will be designed to feature a series of six-week artists residencies in the clubs that bring artists, art materials, and arts integrated lesson plans into after school programs in rural communities east of Highway I-95. It will also support diverse artists, tapping into community-based artists who practice in different media and are at varying stages of their development. This paid opportunity to interact within their local communities offers artists a reciprocal empowerment opportunity to grow and impact change. This partnership will be a three-year initiative where the AAHC will contribute by aiding in identifying African American teaching artists and additional contacts throughout Eastern North Carolina for programming space and after-school programs that tailor to the needs of African American youth.

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Goals Achieved

AAHC Arts Newsletter: During the Spring of 2021, the AAHC initiated a call for sign-ups for our new AAHC Arts Newsletter. Through social media posts, listings in our general newsletter, and with marketing assistance from the North Carolina Arts Council we obtained over fifty registrations from local artists and arts organizations. As a thank you to those who registered, the AAHC offered a special giveaway of artist care packages filled with tailored supplies for visual and literary artists. The AAHC Arts Newsletter will be distributed monthly, and the first newsletter installment was issued in July of 2021.

Website Development: During the Summer of 2021, Naja Robinson, a recent graduate of Elizabeth City State University was hired as a summer intern through the department's HBCU/MIHE Internship Program. Naja was selected from a pool of candidates for our "Highlighting the Contributions of African American Artists and Creatives" initiative. With Naja is currently working to develop a digital space on the AAHC website which will feature iconic African American artists and creatives from North Carolina. Future work on the website will consist of a local artist directory, upcoming arts related events, funding opportunities, and additional artist resources.

Cultivating Relationships: During the Spring of 2021, Kyma Lassiter connected leaders and curators of multiple arts and cultural institutions across the state of North Carolina. Through virtual meetings, new relationships developed and were strengthened with the following institutions and cultural organizations:

- Harvey B. Gantt Center for African Arts + Culture
- Elsewhere Museum
- Delta Arts Center
- TAB Arts Non-Profit
- Piedmont Blues Association
- Triad Cultural Arts Center
- McColl Center
- Black Artistic Voices of Greensboro

Future meetings will be set during the next quarter to connect with the following arts institutions and cultural organizations:

- YMI Cultural Center
- Oliver Nestus Freeman Roundhouse Museum
- Kinston Music Park/Community for the Arts



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Commissioner Engagement and Outreach: During the Spring of 2021, Kyma Lassiter held individual meetings with AAHC Commissioners to obtain information on organizations and local artists to connect and build relationships with the AAHC. Commissioner recommendations led to increasing the network of local arts organizations and artists to our work and plans on increasing our arts engagement efforts.

AAHC Arts Engagement: Next Steps

1. Continue work towards developing a digital space on the AAHC website for artists and creatives that include a local artist directory, funding resources, and additional artists resources. (November 2021)
2. Schedule site visits to (3) arts institutions and cultural centers throughout the state within the next quarter. (November 2021)
3. Create detailed outline of Phase 2 of Arts Engagement Plan (September 2021)