

**Knoxville Museum of Art  
2023 Fiscal Year  
Annual Report**

The 2023 fiscal year (July 1, 2022-June 30, 2023) was probably the first since the onset of the pandemic in the spring of 2020 that COVID had little impact on KMA operations. The museum welcomed 55,462 visitors in FY2023, a substantial increase over the 46,124 visitors recorded in FY2022, and the best attendance since FY2019, when we welcomed just under 70,000 visitors. Social media engagement grew even faster, from the already-elevated level reached during the pandemic, when the museum dramatically increased its digital content and social media presence: engagements with the KMA's various digital platforms--knoxart.org, email, Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, etc.--grew from approximately 818,00 in FY2022 to more than 1,375,000 in FY2023.

FY2023 turned out to be an exceptionally rich year for special exhibitions, as we pulled from the reserve of important projects that had stacked up because of pandemic disruptions. The fiscal year opened with the final weeks of [\*Women Artists: Highlights from the Hunter Museum of American Art\*](#), the last of a series of collection exhibitions exchanged with sister art museums in Chattanooga and Asheville. A related [companion exhibition](#) of women artists from the KMA collection was on view through August 14. As part of this innovative inter-museum exchange, in the winter and spring of 2023 we shared with the Hunter an [exhibition](#) drawn from the KMA's rich holdings of works by Knoxville native Beauford Delaney. A version of this show had previously gone to the Asheville Art Museum.

The first big special exhibition of the new season, [\*Radcliffe Bailey: Passages\*](#), opened in late August. More than 300 people attended preview events, with the artist present at both, and at least 500 visitors over the first weekend. The crowds and the energy were amazing. Bridging continents and cultural contexts, Radcliffe Bailey's compelling narratives interweave individual experience and personal history within the collective trajectory of the African diaspora. Ancestral memory and cultural identity fuel his artistic practice. He is singularly gifted with the ability to present profound and difficult concepts in an appealing and engaging way. The KMA was proud to acquire its first major work by this important Atlanta-based artist in the spring of 2023 thanks to the generosity of the [KMA Collectors Circle](#).

The seventeenth annual [\*East Tennessee Regional Student Art Exhibition\*](#) opened the day after Thanksgiving. This year, 277 works were selected out of 757 artworks submitted. Students whose work made the cut—and the bar is high—celebrated with hundreds of friends, family, and teachers at a festive reception and awards ceremony on December 7, with welcoming remarks by Knox County Schools Superintendent Jon Ryzewick. [\*Landfall Press: Five Decades of Printmaking\*](#) opened on December 16. The KMA was one of a handful of venues nationally to host this important exhibition celebrating the history of Landfall Press, one of America's leading printmaking workshops. Landfall operated out of Chicago for thirty-five years and, in 2004, relocated to Santa Fe, where it continues to serve new generations of artists. The featured selection of approximately 40 prints represents the broad spectrum of distinguished artists—

including Terry Allen, Judy Chicago, Christo, Sol Lewitt, Jiha Moon, Nicky Nodjoumi, Claes Oldenburg, Ed Paschke, Martin Puryear, Nusra Qureshi, Pat Steir, Kara Walker, and William T. Wiley--who have collaborated with Landfall, and the dynamic range of innovative printmaking approaches for which the legendary workshop is known.

[RE-PAIR](#), the KMA's (awesome) contribution to the first-ever statewide Tennessee Triennial, opened on January 27, the official kickoff of the Triennial for entire state. The Tennessee Triennial, a project of Tri-Star Arts, was conceived as a unified multi-site, multi-city exhibition to promote contemporary visual art as a tool to foster constructive dialogue across communities, the state, the country, and internationally. Like most of the exhibitions on the KMA's calendar, the Tennessee Triennial was postponed several years by pandemic disruptions. The 2023 theme and core concept of the Triennial, "RE-PAIR," was set forth by Consulting Curator María Magdalena Campos-Pons as the guiding concept for all exhibiting venues. The KMA's exhibition presented works emphasizing the transformative power of art to propose new solutions to recent global discord, featuring a thought-provoking selection of objects created by a diverse, intergenerational slate of 13 international artists from across the U.S., many of them represented in the KMA collection: Willie Cole, Bessie Harvey, Lonnie Holley, Katie Hargrave & Meredith Laura Lynn, Kahlil Robert Irving, Suzanne Jackson, Mary Laube, Annabeth Marks, Rosemary Mayer, Althea Murphy-Price, Betye Saar, and Faith Wilding.

In early May, the second and third floor of the Clayton Building closed for several weeks to begin the process of dismantling [Higher Ground: A Century of the Visual Arts in East Tennessee](#). The KMA's flagship permanent installation, first installed on the third floor in 2008, is being reimagined, expanded, and moved to galleries under renovation on the second floor flanking the main entry lobby. The third-floor galleries reopened in mid-June with the first of a series of gorgeous [video installations](#) and an updated edition of *Currents: Recent Works from East Tennessee and Beyond*. The opening of the new *Higher Ground* is scheduled for early November 2023.

Making the visual arts accessible to all via robust educational programming is a key institutional priority of the KMA, and the active schedule of education programs for [children, families](#), and [adults](#) was back to full strength in FY2023. Summer Art Academy was at capacity after several years of pandemic-imposed restrictions, with nearly 400 young people enjoying classes in a variety of 2-D and 3-D media. Expenses were covered by scholarships for approximately 10% of those students. The Creative Corner, the KMA's hands-on gallery for kids and families, reopened in summer 2022 after a long pandemic-mandated closure. It's been nice to see that colorful space filled with activity and noise again! The Martin Studios were busy much of the year, with a full schedule of sold-out art classes. In FY2023, nearly 10,000 K-12 students visited the museum for docent-led tours, Family Fun Days, and Summer Art Academy. (A comparison with FY2022, when total K-12 attendance for these programs was 3,400, indicates the degree to which audience engagement numbers have continued to recover.) The portfolio of off-site programs for young people included "Meet the Master," which places certified art teachers in classrooms at no expense to participating schools, and "ART2GO" suitcases for use by classroom teachers. On-site, in addition to twice-yearly Family Fun Days and Summer Art Academy, the museum offered docent-led school tours, and Second Sunday art activities for

young visitors and their families. Programming for adult audiences included “Dine & Discover,” a popular lunchtime series, and “Cocktails & Conversation,” an informal evening of learning in a social setting. Volunteer docents offer monthly “Second Sunday” public tours and (after specialized training) workshops for early-stage Alzheimer’s patients by arrangement with local memory care facilities. “Alive After 5” resumed a full season (December-August) of Friday night live music after a long pandemic interruption. The popular music series is under the direction of Brian Clay, a performer and impresario who has put together an exceptional series of performances, each one unique.

In September the Tennessee Arts Commission, in Knoxville for its quarterly meeting, visited for a special presentation by Bernard E. and Barbara W. Curator Stephen Wicks and KMA trustees Derek Spratley and Steve Smith about the community-wide effort to reclaim Beauford Delaney’s rich legacy for his hometown. It’s an exciting saga. Derek Spratley, as the court-appointed executor of the Delaney estate, has been indispensable to the formation of the KMA’s Delaney collection, now the largest of any public institution in the world. University of Tennessee Dean of Libraries Steve Smith facilitated UT’s acquisition of the artist’s papers, where they will be accessible to all. KMA trustee and Beck Cultural Exchange Center Executive Director Renee Kesler was out of town, but the Commission also heard about plans to renovate and repurpose the Delaney family home as the Delaney Museum at Beck. We were proud to share this great Tennessee story with the Tennessee Arts Commission. And on a related note: the University of Tennessee Libraries received funding from the Henry Luce Foundation (an underwriter of the new *Higher Ground* installation) for a two-year position to interpret the Beauford Delaney papers housed there and to facilitate collaborative projects with the KMA, the Beck Cultural Exchange Center, and other community partners.

Other highlights of the 2023 fiscal year:

- [Art House](#), the KMA’s under-fifty auxiliary membership group, offered a full schedule of sold-out educational and social events. This group has been tremendously successful in engaging the next generation of cultural leadership for Knoxville and the KMA.
- Holiday Homes Tour 2022 was the most successful in the 28-year history of this beloved December event. Tickets sold out online in 26 minutes! Congrats to the [KMA Guild](#) on the success of this much-anticipated event.
- [L’Amour du Vin](#) (early March) was a huge success! We’re thankful to the trustees who sponsored the event and donated and purchased fantastic auction lots, and to event chairs June & Rob Heller for their great work.
- Also in March, the City of Knoxville unveiled the beautifully renovated and expanded [Fort Kid](#) playground directly across the street from the museum.
- Stephen Wicks presented a talk (via Zoom) on March 29 to the prestigious Institut Giacometti, Paris, on connections between Giacometti and our own Beauford Delaney.

- The annual Volunteer Recognition Reception in April honored the hundreds of vital volunteers whose thousands of donated hours make the KMA run. We are thankful for the commitment and generous spirit they bring to their service!
- The [KMA Collectors Circle](#) enjoyed a fantastic trip to Cincinnati in April, with several days of meaningful art experience at museums and private collections.
- In April, the [KMA Guild](#) once again brought in dozens of plein-air artists to paint at various locations in and around Knoxville, culminating with a reception and sale at the KMA. Artists on Location has grown into a big fundraiser and great way to connect artists and buyers.
- The fourteenth Sarah Jane Hardrath Kramer Lecture on May 4 with internationally renowned artist Willie Cole was perhaps the best ever in this important series, now in its fourteenth year. The KMA's Willie Cole, acquired just a few years ago, was featured in the recent Tennessee Triennial exhibition *RE-PAIR*.
- Kick-Off to Summer on May 12 was awesome! The success of this and other fundraising events and generous giving by many of you left us in great financial shape at the end of the fiscal year.

Taylor Broyles joined the KMA staff in August to assume the new position of fundraising events manager to provide additional administrative and operational support for L'Amour du Vin and Kick-Off to Summer. In November, Susan Creswell retired as museum shop manager in November, after nearly two decades of service. Susan built the KMA Shop into a valuable visitor amenity that offers the opportunity to acquire quality work by local and regional artists. Vicki Wyrick, an artist with years of retail experience, is ideally qualified to carry on that tradition.

In May I announced my retirement, effective December 31, 2023. After seventeen years—I started as executive director in August 2006—I am sad to leave a job and an organization I love, but I feel good about what's been accomplished in my time here. Thanks to the support and commitment of an exceptional staff, dedicated volunteers, generous donors, and engaged members, things at the KMA are in very good shape. I plan to stay in Knoxville, a community I've become very attached to, and look forward to exploring new interests. A national search for my successor, chaired by longtime KMA trustee Steve Bailey, is underway.

As of July 1, chair-elect Taylor Wortham replaces Julia Bentley as KMA board chair. One of this organization's great strengths over the years has been the quality and commitment of its volunteer leadership, and that tradition continues stronger than ever.

**David Butler, Executive Director**

**FY 2023 At A Glance**

Total number of visitors 55,462  
Membership retention rate 80%  
Number of membership households 1,397  
Private gifts \$771,138  
Earned income \$271,052  
Endowment corpus \$6,621,849  
Total operating revenue \$2,706,035  
Total operating expenses \$2,476,435

# KNOXVILLE MUSEUM OF ART ANNUAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Gifts of \$1,000 and above received between July 1, 2022 and June 30, 2023

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