

MARYLAND HISTORY AND CULTURE NEWS

/// FALL 2023 ///

JIM HENSON: A MARYLAND ICON THEN AND NOW

EXPLORING THE MILLER HISTORY FUND

ELIZABETH TALFORD SCOTT AND THE CRAZY QUILT TRADITION

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MARYLAND HISTORY AND CULTURE NEWS

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ABOUT THE COVER

This newly acquired quilt exists as the first quilt in our world-renowned collection attributed to a Black artist. Photograph Courtesy of Goya Contemporary. *Abstract #1, Elizabeth Talford Scott (1916-2011), 1983*

FROM THE PRESIDENT



OUR CAMPUS IS ALIVE WITH ACTIVITY Nurturing a vibrant, dynamic, and welcoming space is one of the Maryland Center for History and Culture's (MCHC) primary goals outlined in the newly released 5-year strategic plan: *Our History. Our Moment. Our Future.* Creating opportunities for our neighbors, supporters, and community to convene and connect will continue to guide our work. As we approach the 250th anniversary of the birth of the United States in 2026 and the opportunity it brings for public history, we recognize that balance between education, access, and sustainability is crucial in moving our organization forward. You can read more about the 2023–2028 strategic plan and vision for the future on our website.

School groups, from elementary to postsecondary, are returning at pre-pandemic levels for onsite educational programs, the Library is humming with researchers, and our galleries are full with visitors. We are also energized by the ability to reconnect in person with peers. We recently hosted colleagues from numerous cultural organizations for tours of *The Jim Henson Exhibition: Imagination Unlimited*, which continues to draw record visitors.

Over the past six months I have spent time traveling throughout the state— Eastern Shore, Western Maryland, Southern Maryland— to connect with partners and learn more about shared challenges and opportunities in the history and heritage field. I am always impressed by the innovations advanced by Maryland's greater public history sector. Our small state commemorates its immense history thanks to a network of dedicated leaders and culture workers who share and preserve diverse stories every day. We look forward to connecting with more of our partners, members, and visitors during this season of learning and discovery.

In the pages of this issue, you will learn more about our many efforts to activate our vast collections, engage with partners and community members, and bring history to life for all Marylanders. With new leadership from John Banes as our Board Chair and Catherine Rogers Arthur returning as Vice President of Collections & Chief Curator, exciting and innovative projects will be underway over the next year. We hope that you will join us on this collective journey and find your path to the past. There are so many ways to engage with MCHC and the dynamic history of our state.

A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads "Katie Caljean". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized 'i' at the end.

KATIE CALJEAN,
PRESIDENT & CEO



◀ Image of one of the two Ship Caulkers houses on the 600 block of South Wolfe Street, courtesy of the Friends of the Ship Caulkers' Houses by Sarah Groesbeck, 2023.

MILLER HISTORY FUND

SUPPORTING LOCAL LEADERS IN HISTORIC STEWARDSHIP

By David Belew, Vice President of External Affairs

Many community history groups trace their origins back to the 1960s and '70s when suburbanization and urban renewal efforts threatened working-class, historic neighborhoods throughout the country. Where some government officials and developers saw aging infrastructure calling to be demolished and paved over, residents and advocates saw an irreplaceable connection to the past. Luckily, the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) passed in 1966, establishing the National Register of Historic Places and compelling federal agencies to assess the preservation impact of projects. NHPA gave communities a new tool to fight back. Some residents of threatened communities formed new historical societies and nonprofits, and successfully pushed against development projects.

A generation later, some of these groups are still operating and evolving with the times thanks to a cadre of committed volunteers. Established at the Maryland Center for History and Culture (MCHC) in 2019, the Thomas V. "Mike" Miller History Fund

is designed to support these community-driven history organizations that use people power and limited resources to make a big impact. The fifth annual grant cycle of the Miller History Fund is open through December 8 and the team at MCHC is busy leading workshops, fielding applicants' questions, and recruiting experts to serve as reviewers. This newest round of successful applicants will bring total funding to \$1M serving over 50 unique organizations. As we approach this milestone, we took this opportunity to reconnect with two grantee organizations, **Historic Takoma** and the **Society for the Preservation of Federal Hill and Fell's Point**, who trace their origins back to that cultural moment of the NHPA when neighbors came together to save historic neighborhoods.

HISTORIC TAKOMA

Takoma Park is known for its local shopping district and politically engaged citizenry conveniently located by a Washington, D.C. metro subway stop. Straddling the boundary between Washington,

D.C., and Montgomery County, the community is anything but divided thanks to the work of Historic Takoma. In the 1970s, the group and others successfully stopped construction of North Central Freeway set to run through an historic main street and eclectic mix of Victorian and Craftsman style homes. When Historic Takoma soon merged with their local historical society, their mission expanded to preserve moveable heritage and stories as well as the built environment. In 2022, after several facility moves, their archival collections were in need of rehousing, processing, and other work needed to make them more accessible to the public. A \$20,000 grant from the Miller History Fund is supporting this important behind-the-scenes work. We spoke with Archives Manager Jim Douglas about the impact of this project and the future of the collection at Historic Takoma.

Douglas shared that "history is made daily, so the things that are happening today we try to

document so we can learn from our successes in the future." Historic Takoma is a multifaceted organization that leads walking tours and lectures in addition to operating a public reading room. Their Miller History Fund grant will allow them to expand this reading room from reference materials to research with their special collections. Douglas believes that Historic Takoma's collecting activities help the organization advance a more diverse and expansive focus: "We want to document the entire community, not just the late 19th and early 20th century buildings ... Our community is changing a lot with new immigrant communities and age groups. We want to share what 21st century Takoma Park is like." The collection stewarded at Historic Takoma includes everything from the records of neighborhood associations to a growing library of local event t-shirts. While, as Douglas shares, "dealing with archives is unending," we look forward to seeing expanded access to



▲ Photo looking at the inside of the Historic Takoma building, courtesy of Historic Takoma by Jim Douglas, 2023.

Historic Takoma's special collections as a result of their grant. Located at 7328 Carroll Avenue in Takoma Park in an historic building, their reading room and research services are currently open by appointment and from 1 to 4 pm on the first and third Sundays of every month. Visit historictakoma.org to access their online catalog and discover the array of objects, archival materials, and other resources they steward.

SOCIETY FOR THE PRESERVATION OF FELL'S POINT AND FEDERAL HILL

The all-volunteer Society for the Preservation of Federal Hill and Fell's Point (the Preservation Society) and their partner, the Friends of the Ship Caulkers' Houses, are also using their Miller History Fund grant to preserve and promote local history. Known today for historic charm, night life, and dining, the Baltimore waterfront neighborhoods of Fell's Point and Federal Hill were once considered in decline and prime for urban renewal. Founded in 1967, the Preservation Society successfully prevented planned highways and preserved these now bustling communities. They continue their mission today through advocacy, public programs, and production of the annual Fell's Point Fun Festival.

Their grant and partnership with the more recently established Friends of the Ship Caulkers' Houses represent the group's latest efforts to preserve the area's iconic maritime heritage. Funding supported the development of a new website promoting their work to reveal deep and diverse history packed into just a few hundred square feet at 612 and 614 S. Wolfe Street. These humble structures date to circa 1798 and were valued as rare wooden houses from the earliest days of Baltimore when the Preservation Society acquired and saved these homes from collapse in 2005. Substantial work remained to preserve the homes and uncover their stories. While the Preservation Society retains ownership of the homes, the Friends of the Ship Caulkers' Houses are advancing exciting restoration and research projects that drastically expand our understanding of early Fell's Point. Beyond their architectural rarity, these structures have historical significance as housing for the Black-led Ship Caulkers industry

in 1800s' Fell's Point. Over several decades, the ship caulkers' monopoly on their industry created political and economic power for the city's African American community and famously fostered a young Frederick Douglass before he fled to freedom.

As we spoke with Sarah Groesbeck, who serves on the boards of both the Preservation Society and the Friends Group, the exterior phase of the Ship Caulkers' Houses restoration was well underway with photographs of a new roof driving excitement on social media. Groesbeck shared how reaching this turning point has helped build awareness in the community. "Posting [the new roof] and seeing the reactions on social media was awesome because we are super excited to get to this point ... stabilization is kind of like when you're cleaning your house and everything explodes before it gets put back together. [Showing] this work, a lot of people finally realized what's happening here."

The friends group is taking painstaking efforts to meet high preservation standards and retain as much of the structure's original fabric as possible, but Groesbeck shared that the intent is not to be a "don't touch type of house museum ... particularly in the back yard [we want to] open that up to community groups and form partnerships with other organizations." Utilizing local archives and other repositories, Groesbeck and the Friends Group are particularly interested in building our understanding of Black ship caulkers who may have lived in the structures and comprised this community—building a richer understanding of this dynamic industry that goes beyond the well-known story of Frederick Douglass. Readers can learn more about this exciting work at the Miller History Fund-supported website shipcaulkers.org or on Instagram and Facebook at [@shipcaulkershouses](https://www.instagram.com/shipcaulkershouses).

These two Miller History Fund grantees show how positively our attitudes toward cultural heritage can change over time. Two historic neighborhoods identified as disposable and slated for the wrecking ball have since become among the most vibrant and economically successful in the state. Whether a collection of festival t-shirts or humble working-class housing, the stories these pieces of history convey are priceless. We are all grateful to the hundreds of volunteers that work to preserve our irreplaceable history for the future. ▲

In the last grant cycle, the Miller History Fund refined its funding criteria to support organizations that steward historical collections such as archives and objects. Congratulations to our most recent round of award winners!

ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY

» **The Lost Towns Project - LTP**—With a commitment to increasing public knowledge of 13,000 years of Native American Heritage, The Lost Towns Project will use their grant towards expanding public access to authentic artifacts and academic discoveries at and around Jug Bay Wetlands Sanctuary—an Anne Arundel County Public Park.

BALTIMORE CITY

» **African American Fire Fighters Historical Society (AAFHS)**—With their grant, the African American Fire Fighters Historical Society plans to transform a 20-year abandoned, 115-year-old firehouse in East Baltimore into The International Black Fire Fighter Museum & Safety Education Center. This organization works to fill the void of valuable contributions from African Americans in fire service history.

» **Mid-Atlantic Regional Moving Image Archive (MARMIA)**—With the help of a professional consultant, the Mid-Atlantic regional Moving Image Archive will conduct an equity audit and receive recommendations for MARMIA's governance to align with its mission and values.

» **Pennsylvania Avenue Black Arts and Entertainment District**—The Black Arts District established The Historical Photography Project (HPP), an initiative tackling the historical disinvestments that have worsened the loss of cultural memory of historic sites for communities in West Baltimore. They will optimize funding to sustain their organizational values by increasing public engagement to prevent the further loss of Black cultural memories.

HARFORD COUNTY

» **Hosana Community House**—With the help of the Miller History Fund, Hosana Community House Inc. will revitalize their organizational goals for programmatic growth and sustainability. Using public programs, exhibitions and related research, site tours and other historic and cultural events, the organization will facilitate sustainable and prolonged community engagement.

MONTGOMERY COUNTY

» **Bethesda Historical Society**—Through optimizing its digital processes, the Bethesda Historical Society (BHS) will improve cataloging, digitization, preservation, and its exhibited collection of Bethesda artifacts. BHS is eager to properly preserve thousands of items in its collection for continued enjoyment and education.

» **Sandy Spring Museum**—By establishing an Equity in Metadata strategy, Sandy Spring Museum will address historical inequities in their cataloging practices.

» **Montgomery History**—By digitizing thousands of property insurance policies from the records of Mutual Fire Insurance Company of Montgomery County between 1848 and 1925, Montgomery History will solidify some of the only written evidence of physical infrastructure and personal property from the time. These records have the potential to provide unique historical context from which archaeologists, genealogists, historians, and preservationists can understand the physical landscape during this time.

PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY

» **Riversdale Historical Society**—Through digitization of the papers and letters of Rosalie Stier Calvert, George Calvert, and Charles Benedict Calvert, The Riversdale Historical Society will secure primary source documents for Rosalie's earliest letters in 1803 to the death of Charles Benedict Calvert in 1864. These papers serve as the primary source documents for the interpretation, exhibitions, tours, and educational programs for children and adults in Riversdale.

» **Friends of Greenbelt Theatre Inc.**—With the help of their grant, the Friends of Old Greenbelt Theatre Inc. will properly store their 16mm film collection, incorporating a digital transfer station to stabilize the collection. Additionally, the organization will develop educational field trips for local school children, mobile classroom visits with the 16mm projector and films from its archive, and public events connecting some of the rarer films back with the communities from which they originated.

MATERIAL AND MEMORIES:

ELIZABETH TALFORD SCOTT AND THE CRAZY QUILT TRADITION

By Catherine Rogers Arthur, Vice President of Collections & Chief Curator

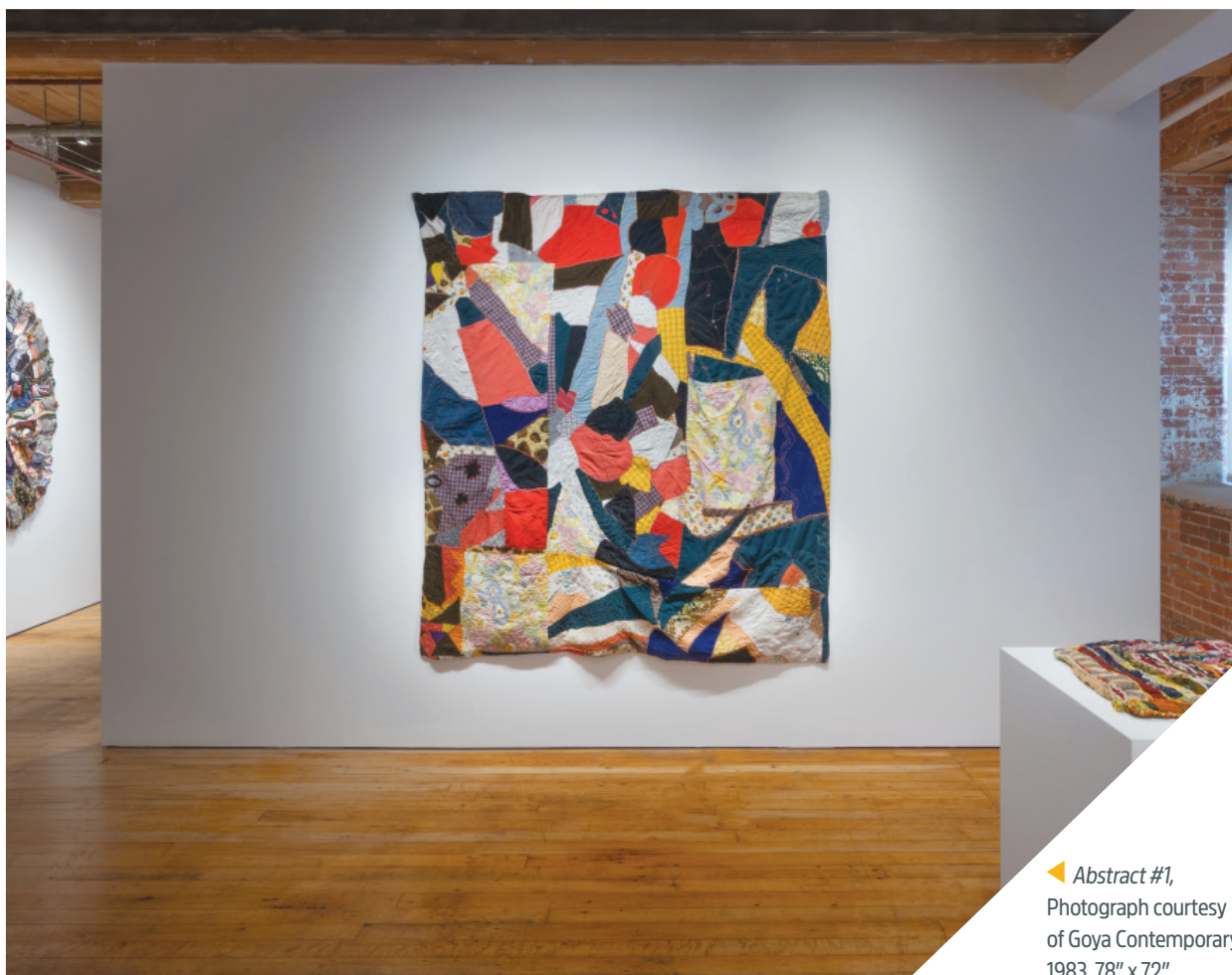
The Maryland Center for History and Culture (MCHC) is proud to be a community partner site for the Baltimore Museum of Art's (BMA) twenty-fifth-anniversary retrospective of *Eyewinkers, Tumbleturds, and Candlebugs: The Art of Elizabeth Talford Scott*.

In 1998, the Maryland Institute College of Art's (MICA) inaugural Exhibition Development Seminar (EDS) organized a landmark exhibition of Elizabeth Talford Scott's vibrant mixed-media fiber works. This fall, the BMA is partnering with MICA and the Estate of Elizabeth Talford Scott at Goya Contemporary to build upon that legacy with an exhibition guest-curated by MICA Curator-in-Residence Emeritus George Cisle in dialogue

with a new generation of EDS students. Cisle has deep connections to MCHC, going back to 1993 when, as Director of The Contemporary, he partnered with installation artist Fred Wilson and the Maryland Historical Society for the pivotal *Mining the Museum*.

At the time of the first Scott retrospective, Nancy Davis, Deputy Director of Collections and Interpretation at MCHC, contributed an essay to the original catalog, relating the work of Talford Scott to a then recently purchased Kaleidoscope Quilt (1996.39.5), circa 1839, associated with the Ellicott family.

For the 2023-24 class, EDS students led by instructor Deyane Moses will organize



◀ *Abstract #1*,
Photograph courtesy
of Goya Contemporary.
1983, 78" x 72"



▲ Crazy Quilt, Olivia Hardesty Kirk Conkling (1850-1934), c. 1884. Gift of Mrs. May Conkling Radoff, Maryland Center for History and Culture, 1987.110.3

The Elizabeth Talford Scott Community Celebration with presentations at eight institutions across Baltimore City, including MCHC, Cryor Art Gallery at Coppin State University, Johns Hopkins University, MICA, James E. Lewis Museum of Art (JELMA) at Morgan State University, The Peale, Reginald F. Lewis Museum of Maryland African American History and Culture, and the Walters Art Museum. These presentations will be on view from February through May 2024. Normally open only to MICA students, this year's EDS cohort will also include students from Morgan State, Coppin State, and Johns Hopkins Universities.

After an early-semester tour of venues, students selected a community partner site to work with to develop their exhibition, learn about care, handling, and installation, writing interpretive text, and helping plan public programs and publicity. MCHC is hosting three students: Nathan Hrdlicka and Izabela Cookson from MICA, and Phoebe More from Johns Hopkins University.

Talford Scott (1916-2011) was born near Chester, South Carolina, on the land her parents worked as sharecroppers, and where her grandparents were previously enslaved. The sixth of fourteen children who lived on the Blackstalk Plantation, young Elizabeth was trained by family members to repurpose scrapped materials into usable resources in the interest of basic survival needs. Quilting was a familiar part of the Black American experience, especially in the South. It was a keystone for innovation, upcycling, expression, and for passing historical narratives from one generation to the next. Talford Scott honed those quilting skills at a young age, though her invention within the medium would develop over many years, moving away from domestic function into improvisational, sculptural wall hangings that live squarely within the vernacular of fine art.

Migrating to Baltimore in the early 1940s, Talford Scott and her partner, Charlie Scott Jr., welcomed into the world their daughter, the celebrated artist and MacArthur fellow Dr. Joyce J. Scott. During this period, Talford Scott worked in food services, as a hired caregiver for other people's children, and as a single mother caring for her own child. With limited time in her demanding work schedule,

she took a hiatus from quilting, and it was not until her daughter was self-sufficient in the 1970s that the artist returned to her creative practice with dedication, vigor, and potency. Developing techniques that acknowledged her family history yet moved beyond, Talford Scott began to innovate, creating fiber works that incorporated stones, buttons, shells, bones, sequence, beads, knotted material, glass, and other unconventional objects amassed in bright, bold, and lively compositions that boast heavily layered surfaces of organic, unstructured shapes rich in detail.

Eyewinkers, Tumbleturds, and Candlebugs: The Art of Elizabeth Talford Scott, open from November 12, 2023 to April 28, 2024 at the BMA, will feature twenty works by the artist that bridge the gap between fine art and craft.

“

[QUILTING] ... WAS
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NARRATIVES FROM ONE
GENERATION TO THE NEXT.

”

The work selected for MCHC, and entitled *Abstract #1*, resonates with the historic crazy quilts in the collection, most of which date to the 1880s. Crazy quilts are characterized by irregular shapes and sizes of fabric that are sewn together and often embellished with embroidery and top stitching. The importance of *Abstract #1* led to the purchase of the quilt for MCHC's permanent collection. It is the first quilt in our collection documented to a Black artist. The students will work with our collection to relate it to the crazy quilt tradition and will be making their own quilt squares as part of the community initiative. ▲



▲ Students of MICA's Exhibition Development Seminar analyze *Abstract #1*, by Elizabeth Talford Scott, under the supervision of VP of Collections and Chief Curator, Catherine Rogers Arthur. Photograph by Leslie Eames for the Maryland Center for History and Culture (MCHC), 2023

Of this quilt, she said:

We had

**A material which was called
butcher's cloth**

**And that was what they
packed food in. Flour. Corn.**

Sugar. Anything.

**This is a family quilt, all
something from the family.**

**Everything that I didn't
want to throw out I saved a
piece of it.**

**These are the things that
Joyce used to drag around**

With her doll.

**OPEN FEBRUARY 1, 2024 –
FEBRUARY 1, 2025**

**MATERIALS AND MEMORIES:
ELIZABETH TALFORD SCOTT AND
THE CRAZY QUILT TRADITION**, in
partnership with MICA's Exhibition
Development Seminar and the African
American Quilters of Baltimore.

IN THE ORIGINAL 1998 RETROSPECTIVE, SCOTT COMPOSED POEMS TO ACCOMPANY MANY OF THE WORKS.

This poem and this quilt form are firmly attached to the idea of objects telling family stories. Not only is this central to MCHC's focus from its origin to the present day, but it is also relatable to modern-day visitors. Just as quilting is often an intergenerational art, so too is this initiative pairing undergraduate students with experienced museum staff, and connecting to community groups such as the African American Quilters of Baltimore (AAQB). In partnership with AAQB, MCHC will offer a Quilt Challenge open to members of AAQB, where participants will make a 24"x24" quilt that responds to Talford Scott's *Abstract #1*.

Talford Scott and the historic quilt makers share the creative aspect of being made from the artist's "fabric stash," drawing from textiles from family members' clothes, home furnishing textiles like curtains or upholstery, and are less likely to incorporate fabrics purchased specifically for the purpose of designing a quilt. The quilts are exciting combinations of both everyday fabrics like cottons and wools, and fancy fabrics like silk satins and velvets. Some of the crazy quilt type are made up of irregular shapes forming the entire quilt, as in Talford Scott's example. Others are abstracted within the design framework of regular squares. Most are then embellished with decorative and colorful stitching, ribbons, buttons, and beads.

Material and Memories: Elizabeth Talford Scott and the Crazy Quilt Tradition opens on February 1, 2024. Watch our website and social media for more information throughout the fall as we introduce our student curators, work with them to develop programs, and authentically deepen community partnerships. ▲



THE JIM HENSON EXHIBITION

PUPPETRY PARTNERSHIPS

By Margot Kopera, Director of Learning and Interpretation

The Jim Henson Exhibition: Imagination Unlimited has provided the Maryland Center for History and Culture (MCHC) a unique opportunity to work with artists and puppeteers to develop programs and deepen community partnerships.

Beyond fostering dynamic performing arts relationships, the exhibition has granted us opportunities to explore themes outside of our traditional narratives. This exploration led to expansive growth in professional development opportunities for our community, and MCHC staff has carved pathways in incorporating performing arts experiences into our programming. We are deeply grateful for the following puppet partners who helped us celebrate Jim Henson's legacy in Maryland.

Images in this article are provided courtesy of individual partners and people represented.



CHRISTINA P. DAY

Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA) fiber faculty and dyer, Christina P. Day's art practice recontextualizes roles related to material lifespan: designer, fabricator, owner, maintainer. Her improvisational building language stems from textile design strategy and is focused on the conversation surrounding material as content.



KATHERINE FAHEY

Baltimore artist Katherine Fahey is a storyteller, puppeteer, and papercut artist who has made Crankies for 10 years. Crankies, a type of paper puppetry using a cranking motion to reveal images. Frequently in performance with Katherine is her partner, puppeteer, Foley artist, craftsman, and visionary artist in his own right, Dan Van Allen.



MAISIE O'BRIEN AND GEORGIA BEATTY

Maisie O'Brien is a Philadelphia, Pennsylvania-based shade puppetry artist. Georgia Beatty is a songwriter and fiddler, focused on cycle, lineage, and healing through cultural transmission.



▶ **MAURA DWYER**

Maura Dwyer is a Baltimore artist and educator. She is founder of Spectrum of Murals, where vibrant, collaged, visual stories are weaved together.



▶ **LIZ DOWNING**

Emma Elizabeth 'Liz' Downing creates aural images as companions to visual symbols, marrying art and sound with inspiring collaborations.



▶ **BEECH TREE PUPPETS**

Beech Tree Puppets brings meaningful stories with sensory-friendly and artful performances over the greater DC region.



▶ **BLUE SKY PUPPETS**

Blue Sky Puppet Theatre is a professional touring children's and family theater located in the Baltimore, Washington area.



▶ **PETER MACKENNAN**

Peter Mackennan is a puppeteer and visual artist widely known for his work with Jim Henson's production teams.



▶ **POLLY SMITH**

Polly Smith has worked for the Jim Henson Company since she was brought on board to help create costumes for *The Muppet Show* in 1978.



▶ **VALESKA POPULOH**

Valeska Maria Populoh works as an artist, educator, and cultural organizer in her adopted hometown of Baltimore, Maryland. Populoh embraces a wide array of tactics, from puppetry to participatory performance. Populoh's work is motivated by an interest in healing and repair in our relationships to each other and to the natural world.



▶ **LINDSEY "Z" BRIGGS**

Lindsey "Z" Briggs is a professional puppeteer and co-artistic director of WonderSpark Puppets, empowering professionals and parents to learn how to use puppetry when working with neurodiverse populations. Briggs has created the program "Making Connections through Puppetry" with the Jim Henson Foundation.



▲ **DR. SCHROEDER CHERRY**

Schroeder Cherry is an award-winning Maryland-based painter and puppeteer whose art for decades has captured everyday scenes of African diaspora life.



▲ **CRAIG SHEMIN**

Craig Shemin began his career at The Jim Henson Company—then known as Henson Associates—where he wrote television scripts, books, computer games, trading cards, and more.



▲ **MICHAEL LAMSON**

Michael Lamson is the Executive Director of Black Cherry Puppet Theater, a nonprofit association of artists and performers in Baltimore.



▲ **DREW BARKER**

Drew Barker serves as the liaison to the School of Theatre, Dance, & Performance Studies at UMD, connecting students and faculty to library resources that will support their artist-scholar success.



▲ **BONNIE ERICKSON**

Bonnie Erickson began her television career working with Jim Henson first as a costume designer and then as Design Director for The Jim Henson Company where she created characters for many Muppet television specials and series. Erickson is the creator of Miss Piggy and stylist for the Muppets.



▲ **CALISTA HENDRICKSON**

After starting her career working in theatrical costume shops, Calista Hendrickson began designing costumes for Jim Henson's characters in 1977.



▲ **DANNY AND STEFANI LABRECQUE**

Through *Danny Joe's Tree House*, Danny and Stefani LaBrecque work to embody the beloved form of retro children's TV classics while responding to the social-emotional needs of today's families, all from their home in Baltimore.



▲ **LEONARD JR. AND JINKIE CORBIN**

Ebony Sunshine Puppets is a volunteer-run charity community and faith-based organization dedicated to generating and enriching cultural, social, academic, artistic, musical, sports & recreational, business, and personal awareness for young people.



▲ **BALTIMORE ROCK OPERA SOCIETY (BROS)**

The Baltimore Rock Opera Society is a passionate community of artists who create unforgettable experiences through live original rock theater.



COURTESY OF THE JIM HENSON COMPANY

JIM HENSON

A MARYLAND ICON THEN AND NOW

By Karen Falk, Archives Director for The Jim Henson Company

Jim Henson (1936-1990) spent his formative years in Maryland, attending Northwestern High School in Hyattsville and the University of Maryland. His student experience set the foundation for his development as an artist and entrepreneur, enabling him to launch a television career on local airwaves that would influence the medium and inspire young innovators for decades to come.

In high school, Henson's wide-ranging curiosity and expansive imagination found an outlet in student publications and backstage design projects, modeling creativity and thoughtful ingenuity among his peers. When he enrolled at University of Maryland in 1954, Henson's nascent career in television led him to focus on coursework and campus activities that would help develop

his craft and his entrepreneurship, alongside like-minded collaborators.

Henson followed an ambitious curriculum, beginning with a puppetry class where the television work he had started just a few months before made him the most experienced in the room. He organized two groups of classmates, one using hand puppets and the other marionettes, and helped them to develop their shows. According to classmate Jane Nebel who became Henson's first performing partner and then his wife, "the whole group, including Jim, were new at puppetry, but Jim took over the class. He just looked at the situation and looked at what he thought needed to be done and he'd just do it."

The University's theater department became a second home for Henson. He served as publicity

▲ The Henson family in 1977 (left to right: Cheryl, Jane, Brian, Jim, Heather, John, Lisa), Photo by Nancy Moran

▶ Jim Henson at Northwestern High School, c. 1954

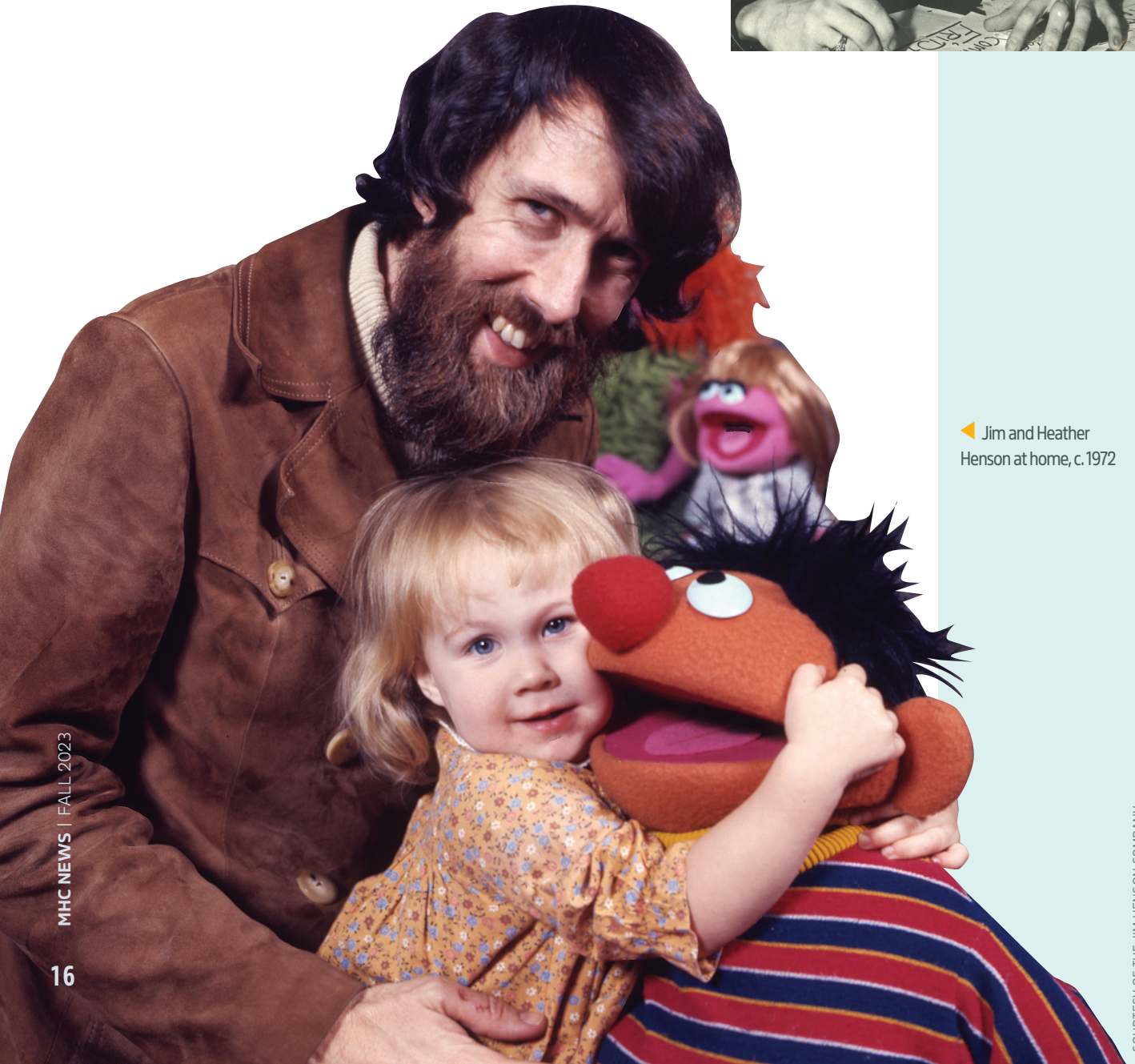


COURTESY OF THE JIM HENSON COMPANY

“

JIM HENSON'S SENSE OF OPTIMISM AND THE INHERENT JOY FOUND IN HIS WORK CONTINUE TO RESONATE.

”



▶ Jim and Heather Henson at home, c. 1972

COURTESY OF THE JIM HENSON COMPANY

manager for many student productions, designing posters, programs, and other marketing materials. Recognizing that other student groups had graphic design needs, Henson commandeered studio space in the student union and advertised his services as a poster maker. He received commissions for all types of events including campus election campaigns, coffee hours, dances, and concerts, in addition to several album covers for student music groups. Henson's business acumen, honed during his time on campus, combined with his artistic training, ultimately resulted in the creation of a thriving and enduring company of artists and performers that still entertains and challenges audiences to this day.

Thanks in large part to the efforts of Jane Henson and the Henson family, Jim Henson's legacy endures and continues to encourage new generations of artists, puppeteers, filmmakers,



COURTESY OF THE JIM HENSON COMPANY

▲ Jim displaying his work at an art show in Baltimore, 1958

▼ Jim and Sam on the street near his parents' house in University Park, 1956

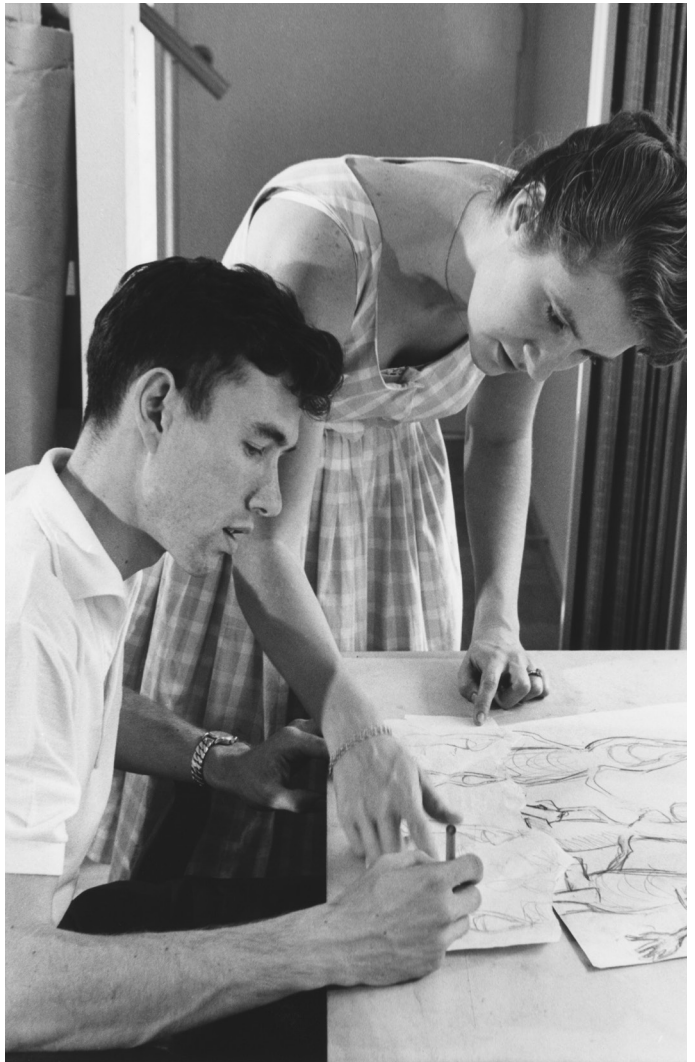


COURTESY OF THE JIM HENSON COMPANY

and innovators. Students at Northwestern High School can enroll in The Jim Henson Visual and Performing Arts Academy, focusing on programs supported by the Jane Henson Foundation, including puppetry workshops, musical performances, and scholarships. Students at the University of Maryland have access to Henson-related programs and recharge with visits to the Jim Henson statue on campus.

Jim Henson's sense of optimism and the inherent joy found in his work continue to resonate. Those messages are amplified by people working to expand his worlds in new productions: The Jim Henson Company, Sesame Workshop, and the Muppets Studio at Disney. In addition, the Henson family members help inspire creators of all ages through The Jim Henson Legacy, The Jim Henson Foundation, The Jane Henson Foundation, and the Green Feather Foundation. ▲

▶ Jim and Jane Henson at work in their Bethesda home studio in 1959. Photo ©Jack L. Hiller



COURTESY OF THE JIM HENSON COMPANY



◀ Jim and Heather Henson with Doozers from *Fraggle Rock*, 1980s

COURTESY OF THE JIM HENSON COMPANY

NEWLY ACQUIRED

By Catherine Rogers Arthur, Vice President of Collections & Chief Curator

As the oldest cultural institution in the state, the Maryland Center for History and Culture (MCHC) has been collecting art and artifacts since its inception in 1844. With over 350,000 items in the Museum collection, important objects with compelling stories continue to add to the depth and breadth of our stories and help the collection become more representative of all Marylanders, past and present.

Objects are continually sought to expand our collections. Here are a few highlights from our recent acquisitions.

Learn more about donating to our collection at mdhistory.org/donate/item-donations.



◀ **Pierhead Portrait of the USS Constellation, signed “Nicola Fondo pinsi,” c. 1862–1863. Maryland Center for History and Culture, 2023.11.1**

Shown in Naples Bay, Italy, with Mt. Vesuvius in the background during the American Civil War, the *USS Constellation* (1854) was the last all-sail ship built by the US Navy. Constructed at Gosport Navy Yard in Virginia, the ship saw service to intercept slave ships as part of the African Squadron showing the flag in the Mediterranean, and serving as a training vessel, among other non-combat roles.

USS Constellation was dispatched to the Mediterranean in March of 1862, where it spent the next two years patrolling the waters in search of Confederate raiders attempting to attack union merchant ships. The vessel left the region in 1864, allowing us to date this work to 1862–1863.

The vessel’s Maryland connection is a modern myth, which grew in the mid-20th century, based on the idea that the ship was a “rebuild” of the *USF Constellation* (1797) which was built in Baltimore. The ship has become a Baltimore icon due to its mistaken identity and its prominent placement in the harbor since 1955.

► ***Peaches*, oil portrait signed by Thomas Cromwell Corner (1865-1882). Maryland Center for History and Culture, 2023.13**

This portrait was likely painted in New York where Corner was studying at the Art Students League of New York before leaving for Europe in 1888. The sitter's clothing confirms the 1880s date. Her true identity is unknown, but the back of the frame bears labels identifying the subject (or perhaps another painting previously in the frame) as "Peaches." The frame identifies the New York framer, as well as tracing some of the earlier owners including Mary Buchanan Coale Redwood (Mrs. Francis Tazewell Redwood, 1861-1940), who gave it to the Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA). Hopefully, further research may help uncover additional details of Peaches' intersection with the school or with Corner, whether as a model for students or as someone Corner sought out to paint.

A prolific Baltimore artist, Corner is known for his highly skilled portraiture, usually of prominent men, and for his beautiful still lifes. MCHC is home to over a dozen of his portraits, many drawings and watercolor sketches, and even two still life paintings of actual peaches. Mrs. Buchanan, the one-time owner, commissioned Corner to paint a posthumous portrait of her son, Lieutenant George Buchanan Redwood, who was the first Maryland officer to be killed in action during World War I. German Street was renamed Redwood Street in his honor. His portrait is also in MCHC's collection MS 3023: George Buchanan Redwood Notebooks.



◀ **Thomas Swann Esq., Baltimore, Master Thomas Swann, and Mrs. Thomas Swann (Elizabeth Gilmore Sherlock), silhouette by August Edourart (1788-1861), 1840. Maryland Center for History and Culture, 2023.17.1 Gift of the Roberts Family in honor of Clinton Daly, Chairman of the Board of Trustees, 2020-2023**

Swann was Director & President of the B&O Railroad Company between 1844 and 1853, and served as Mayor of Baltimore 1853-1856; later serving as Governor of Maryland in 1866.

As Mayor, he is credited with the acquisition of property for Druid Hill Park, and reorganization of the fire department with the introduction of steam fire engines and paid firemen in place of volunteers. He was instrumental in the introduction of the police and fire alarm telegraph system and the improvement of the city's water facilities.



◀ Image of a group tour exploring the Silver Collection with Catherine Rogers Arthur. Photo by Leslie Eames for the Maryland Center for History and Culture, 2023

THE SILVER COLLECTION

By Catherine Rogers Arthur, Vice President of Collections & Chief Curator

The Silver Collection at the Maryland Center for History and Culture (MCHC) includes over 4,000 pieces of holloware and flatware representing the work of Maryland silversmiths from the colonial era throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, as well as Maryland-owned examples of English and French silver.

Though silver objects have frequently been included in exhibitions, this is the largest collection MCHC has brought together for permanent display since the 1983 exhibition *Silver in Maryland*. Major themes include silver forms, styles, families, craftsmen, and categories such as tea wares, ecclesiastical, and Judaica. It also highlights the Kirk Collection, examining the work of silversmith Samuel Kirk and his descendants.

Made possible through the generous support of the Richard C. von Hess Foundation, the Research Room provides a dedicated and secure space for scholarly and educational access to the collection. This transparent room offers a collections researching and study space with a glimpse into the work of the Museum within limited conservation and collections processing work, as well as research activities.

This important study space was conceived and curated by former MCHC President & CEO Mark Letzer, a noted scholar of Maryland silver. His 2006 exhibition and accompanying book, *A Gardener's Tale: The 18th-Century World of Annapolis Silversmith William Faris* brought to life the world of this craftsman, clockmaker, gardener, and tavernkeeper through his diary, kept between January 1, 1792, and his death in 1804. ▲

MEET THE STAFF

CATHERINE ROGERS ARTHUR COMES HOME TO MCHC

By Audrey Weiss, Director of Marketing & Communications

Catherine Rogers Arthur found her passion for museum collections at the Maryland Center for History and Culture (MCHC), previously the Maryland Historical Society (MdHS) in 1988. Today, after over three decades in historic preservation, she returns to the institution with big dreams for the collection that established her as a curator.

It all began when Arthur first met Dr. Gregory Weidman, a fellow Hollins College alumna, at an interview night held here in Baltimore. Weidman, then the MdHS Curator of Furniture, talked about her exciting work with the collections and exhibitions. That fortuitous meeting opened Arthur's eyes to a broader understanding of the study of art history and a future career direction. She attended Hollins College, taking classes from the same professor Weidman had for American Art, American Furniture, and American Architecture. As a result, Arthur sought out a January-term internship with Weidman during her sophomore year of college.

Her first day on the job, working alongside other staff, she had the opportunity to condition report and pack paintings from the exhibition *Joshua Johnson: Freeman and Early American Portrait Painter* for travel to the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Center in Colonial Williamsburg, Virginia. "I couldn't believe they actually let me touch the paintings," she said. During her internship, she conducted research on a dining table thought to have belonged to Thomas Jefferson and being sold at auction, cataloged new furniture acquisitions, and wrote exhibition labels for a small exhibition at the MdHS Antique Show. The internship experience confirmed her desire to pursue a museum career.

After college, having maintained contact with staff, Arthur was first hired as Assistant Maritime Curator, and also worked in a variety of roles (many simultaneously) including Curatorial Assistant, Registrarial Assistant, and Photo Services



PHOTO BY LESLIE EAMES FOR THE MARYLAND CENTER FOR HISTORY AND CULTURE, 2023

Assistant, working on exhibitions such as *Mining the Museum, Classical Maryland 1815-1845, Baltimore Album Quilts*, and *You Make History*, celebrating the institution's 150th examining what should be collected from the present day for future generations. Leaving the museum to complete her education in the University of Delaware's Winterthur Program in American Material Culture was bittersweet. Arthur knew that the job she was leaving was one she'd be happy to have after completing her masters' degree. "Ever since I left, I've dreamt of coming back."

After serving as Director & Senior Curator of Homewood Museum (JHU), and as Director & Curator of the state-owned art collection with the Maryland State Archives, Arthur returned this spring to the newly-branded institution as the Vice President of Collections and Chief Curator to jump right in to the greatly expanded collection that inspired her career path. With the opening of the traveling show *The Jim Henson Exhibition: Imagination Unlimited*, in addition to the changes in leadership, Catherine says she is thrilled to enter this exciting era. "Each of my experiences worked to grow my skills and knowledge in such a way that I'm really ready to be back." ▲

L HISTORY MINGLE

IG COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

anti, Vice President of Education and Engagement

g the *Passion and Purpose: Voices of Maryland's Civil Rights Activists* exhibition was not only important in relating historical content to the present, but also in strengthening the connections between present participants still living in Baltimore and their ancestors. Throughout the course of the exhibition and writing, Maryland Center for History and Culture (MCHC) staff spoke directly with many of the individuals whose oral history interviews are preserved in the Library's collections. For those no longer living, their stories were being better archived and shared with the community. The Oral History Mingle was held in April 2023 to provide a platform for momentum in community engagement and dialogue with leaders of the movement. Retired Judge Wanda Keys Heard (ret.), MCHC Board of Trustees moderated the event, masterfully facilitating a live dialogue. The panel included Judge Robert M. Bell, Leo Burroughs (ret.) and Senator Michael Mitchell who shared their experiences and the impact of civil rights work in Maryland. Judge Bell was still in high school when he and other members of the Dunbar staged a sit-in at Hooper's in Baltimore. He revealed how that experience helped forge his path to a legal career and his work on social justice. The event was a dialogue, an engaged group of panelists, community members, and museum veterans of the movement participated in a lively discussion that brought an oral conversation to the exhibition's gallery. Several speakers had deep experience in community activism, having been active in the world as teenagers and upholding a commitment to social activism throughout their lives.



▲ Top: Deyane Moses and others attend the Oral History Mingle. Bottom: Panelists Leo Burroughs and retired Judge Robert M. Bell sit with the panel moderator, retired Judge Wanda Keys Heard, MCHC Trustee.

We look forward to many more opportunities for collaborators and visitors to engage in dialogue in the *Passion & Purpose* gallery, which will be a community engagement resource for years to come.

The Passion and Purpose: Voices of Maryland's Civil Rights Activists exhibition is on long-term view. Visitors to MCHC can come to learn more about the many fascinating contributions of Marylanders during regular Museum hours. The public can also access oral history interviews online through the Digital Collections Portal (mdhistory.org/digital-resource/) and in person at the Library. ▲

IN DIALOGUE

WITH JOHN BANES

By Audrey Weiss, Director of Marketing & Communications

John Banes is the current Chair of the Board of Trustees at the Maryland Center for History and Culture (MCHC), and has served as a Trustee since 2019. John is senior counsel at the New York law firm of Davis Polk & Wardwell LLP, where he was a corporate partner from 1999 to 2021. Raised in Baltimore, he spent more than 20 years working in London, where he advised corporations and financial institutions across Europe. John graduated from Princeton University with an AB degree in history and studied medieval history as a Mellon Fellow at Columbia University. He received his law degree from Yale Law School and after law school was a law clerk to U.S. District Judge J. Frederick Motz in Baltimore. John also serves on the advisory council to the Medieval Studies Program at Princeton.

What are some of the skills and knowledge you offer as Board Chair?

I spent my career as a corporate lawyer and have extensive experience advising corporate boards. That experience should help me to frame issues and set priorities for the Board and staff, guide their decision making and build consensus. Before becoming Board Chair, I served as First Vice Chair. I also chaired the Governance Committee and co-chaired the working group that updated our strategic plan.

What does “historical stewardship” mean to you?

For MCHC, I think that historical stewardship means caring for and cultivating the evidence and resources in our collection so that people—Marylanders and others—can understand and interpret Maryland’s past in ways that are meaningful to them. The past is a place of discovery and adventure—strange but also familiar—that can tell us important things about ourselves. Understanding the past requires both analytical rigor and imagination. As an institution, our mission is to ignite and enable that engagement with our past.



PHOTO BY LESLIE EAMES FOR THE MARYLAND CENTER FOR HISTORY AND CULTURE, 2023

What are your goals for MCHC during your term?

There is so much that MCHC can do to realize its potential. Now that we have emerged from the pandemic, we need to engage (and re-engage) with more people and show them what MCHC offers. *The Jim Henson Exhibition: Imagination Unlimited* has been a great opportunity to introduce MCHC to a new audience. We need to continue to be creative in making our amazing collection accessible, exciting and relevant to all of the state’s people.



EXPLORE OUR VISION FOR THE FUTURE:
Read the 2023-2028 Strategic Plan: *Our History. Our Moment. Our Future* for a look at MCHC’s goals for the next five years.
mdhistory.org/about/our-history-our-moment-our-future/ ▲



◀ Portrait of Sarah Ramsay Barnes, unknown photographer, sixth-plate daguerreotype, c. 1840. Maryland Center for History and Culture, H. Furlong Baldwin Library, Cased Photograph Collection, CSPH 004

OLD FACES, NEW STORIES: DISCOVERING THE SECRETS BEHIND THE DAGUERREOTYPE COLLECTION

By Mallory Harwerth, Special Collections Archivist

Daguerreotypes were the earliest form of photography available to the public, gaining popularity in the 1840s through the 1860s. Housed in the Maryland Center for History and Culture (MCHC) collection are some of 19th-century Baltimore's best-known names and faces, such as Judge Robert Gilmore IV, who served on the Supreme Bench of Baltimore; Enoch Pratt, founder of the Enoch Pratt Free Library system; and Jérôme Napoléon Bonaparte, son of the short-lived union between Baltimore socialite Elizabeth Patterson and Emperor Napoléon's brother Jérôme. However, there are also images of lesser-known individuals, men that did not own companies or build public careers, as well as women and children hidden behind the names of their husbands and fathers.

I spent several weeks packing up the daguerreotype collection to undergo treatment offsite at the Conservation Center for Art & Historic Artifacts in Philadelphia, and was enthralled by the faces that gazed back at me. Despite nearly 200 years between us, they seemed so real—as if I could speak to them. I

wondered what their lives were like, and if they were really all that different from mine.

MCHC's Senior Reference Librarian Francis P. O'Neill researched these lesser-known portrait sitters and filled in their genealogical histories. Their stories came to life as he gathered information from all of the resources available in our Library, including books, census records, city directories, and newspapers. For about 150 identified individuals, we now have added birth and death dates, marriages, children, and much more.

One image was originally labeled as "Mrs. Robert Barnes," with no additional information on the woman photographed. After the research period, we were able to reveal the sitter as Sarah Ramsay Barnes, daughter of Joseph Ramsay of Fell's Point. She was a mother of two and died in 1877 at the age of 59. Many other women similarly had their records enhanced, enabling us to find out more about their history.

Sometimes research yielded new identifications. For instance, one portrait was previously identified as "Mrs. William Bose Dobbin," or Anne Elizabeth Dorsey (1829–1855). Given the age of the portrait

sitter and the resemblance to a painted miniature of Rebecca Pue Dorsey (1812–1884), William Bose Dobbin’s mother, the identification was changed.

The collection returned to MCHC fully conserved in December 2022, along with new photography of all of the daguerreotypes taken before, during, and after treatment. In organizing these images in the Digital Collections, I included all of the new research and enhanced records.

Despite the success of this work, many individuals pictured in the newly conserved daguerreotypes remain unknown, the physical records and the knowledge of their identity lost to time. A portrait of a young man, circa 1855, was originally donated as part of a collection of photographs related to the Smith and Hickman families, which suggests he may have been a relation. This young man could have been anyone—a farmer, a businessman, a soldier—it’s unclear. His story remains to be discovered.



TO EXPLORE THE DAGUERRETYPE COLLECTION and perhaps make a discovery of your own, visit the Digital Collections portal at mdhistory.org/digital-collections. ▲



▲ Portrait of Rebecca Pue Dobbin, unknown photographer, sixth-plate daguerreotype, undated. Maryland Center for History and Culture, H. Furlong Baldwin Library, Cased Photograph Collection, CSPH 041

SAVE AMERICA’S TREASURES

IN AUGUST 2020, MCHC was awarded a federal Save America’s Treasures grant in the amount of \$120,875 to support the conservation of 290 daguerreotypes from the Cased Photographs Collection at H. Furlong Baldwin Library. The Conservation Center for Art & Historic Artifacts in Philadelphia performed conservation treatment over a period of two years, reducing dust particles, surface soil, and washing the glass plates. Images of the daguerreotypes were recorded throughout every stage of conservation, and all images of their completed state are now available on our Digital Collections portal. ▲



▲ Portrait of a young man, unidentified photographer, sixth-plate daguerreotype, c. 1855. Maryland Center for History and Culture, H. Furlong Baldwin Library, Cased Photograph Collection, CSPH 612



◀ View of a researcher at work in the H. Furlong Baldwin Library's Main Reading Room, circa 2018. Photo by Side A Photography for the Maryland Center for History and Culture (MCHC)

SPOTLIGHT: FALL IS FOR FELLOWSHIPS

By Martina Kado, Vice President of Research & France-Merrick Director of The H. Furlong Baldwin Library

THE CALL FOR APPLICATIONS IS OPEN FOR MCHC'S 2024-25 RESEARCH FELLOWSHIPS

Whether you are working on your next book, finishing a degree, or looking for support for your research project on Maryland history, the Maryland Center for History and Culture (MCHC) and the collections within the H. Furlong Baldwin Library have no less than 7 million items to capture your attention.

MCHC's Library offers two fellowship opportunities for the 2024-25 academic year. Our flagship Lord Baltimore Fellowship supports research on all periods and aspects of Maryland's social, political, and cultural history. Our new program, the Ashby M. Larmore Fellowship, focuses on the genealogical and historical knowledge related to the Eastern Shore of Maryland. It was established to honor the late Mr. Ashby Morton Larmore's dedication to continual learning through primary source study.

We at MCHC see research fellowships as collaborative projects in which fellows dive into our collections, produce content for our Library's

Underbelly blog, and deliver public programs. We also encourage fellows to submit articles to the *Maryland Historical Magazine*, our semiannual historical journal. At the same time, the fellows' findings help us gain a better understanding of our own collections, enabling us to enrich our catalog records and finding aids for future researchers.

Our recent fellows have explored diverse topics such as the social and economic aspects of Baltimore's sesquicentennial celebration, industrialization and ecology in the Patapsco River Valley, and the life and work of Harry Sythe Cummings, Baltimore's first Black city councilman. We look forward to receiving new applications to accelerate MCHC into the next chapter of discovery at the H. Furlong Baldwin Library.



Find out more about our fellowships and how to apply: mdhistory.org/library/fellowships-prizes/ ▲



MARYLAND CENTER FOR HISTORY AND CULTURE

HONORING OUR DONORS

JULY 1, 2021–JUNE 30, 2022

DEAR FRIENDS,

The FY 2022 and FY 2023 annual reports are enclosed in this issue of *Maryland History and Culture News*. Over these past two years, the Maryland Center for History and Culture (MCHC) did not just persevere through a pandemic, we thrived and exceeded our fundraising goals on the *Shaping the Future of History* campaign. As we steadily implement campaign projects that elevate our collections care and create new pathways for public engagement, maintaining a strong Annual Fund remains more important than ever. We are grateful to our community of members, trustees, foundations, and government funders that show their support for the MCHC mission through a charitable contribution. MCHC staff are available and eager to learn more about your relationship with MCHC and discuss gift plans. Our work is only possible together.

KATIE CALJEAN,
PRESIDENT & CEO

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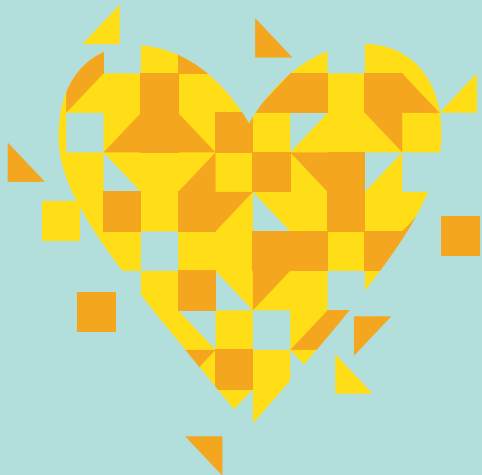
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OUR MISSION

The Maryland Center for History and Culture collects, preserves, and interprets the history, art, and culture of Maryland. By exploring multiple perspectives and sharing national stories through the lens of Maryland, MCHC inspires critical thinking, creativity, and community.

OUR CORE VALUES

Understanding history and culture is integral to MCHC's fulfillment of its mission. Our core values of Community, Authenticity, Dialogue, and Discovery help frame our activities and realize the potential of history and culture as a positive force for Marylanders and all the people we serve.

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