



2022 AWARDEE BIOS

Debra Brehmer | Arts Writing

Debra Brehmer is the owner and director of Portrait Society Gallery of Contemporary Art (PSG) in Milwaukee, where she also manages its related nonprofit, On the Wing. Her numerous roles in the art world encompass writing, curating, and teaching. From 1986 to 1995, she edited and published *Art Muscle*, a bi-monthly art magazine circulated in Wisconsin and sold on national newsstands. She taught art history as an adjunct professor for ten years at the Milwaukee Institute of Art & Design prior to opening the gallery. Brehmer is currently a regular contributor to the national art publication *Hyperallergic*, where she often writes about women artists. Her essay about Edouard Manet's model Victorine Meurent is included in the anthology *Fierce: Essays by and About Dauntless Women* (2018).

Brehmer has also written many catalogue essays for museum and gallery exhibitions. In recent years, she has been working on a series of essays about well-known historical works of art and their contemporary value. She is also currently editing the catalogue for *Art Against the Odds: Wisconsin Prison Art*, an exhibition scheduled to be presented by On the Wing in January 2023 at the Milwaukee Institute of Art & Design.

Jack Damer | Legacy Award

A leading figure in University of Wisconsin–Madison's nationally recognized printmaking program for many years, Jack Damer has artwork in museum and private collections around the world. He taught printmaking and drawing at UW–Madison with a particular focus on lithography, and has conducted workshops and participated in artist residencies around the country and internationally. While Damer is known primarily as a master lithographer, his work encompasses almost every print process as well as drawing, collage, and constructions made from his own prints and found objects. His awards include a National Endowment for the Arts grant and a MacDowell Fellowship, and he was the lithography director for the American Pavilion at the 1970 Venice Biennale.

John Michael Kohler Art Preserve | Exhibition or Institution

The Art Preserve is an experimental space holding the John Michael Kohler Arts Center's world-renowned collection of more than 30 artist-built environments. It showcases the Arts Center's dedication to this genre and embodies the collective passion, knowledge, and dedication of the staff and many collaborators who have overseen decades of exhibitions, programming, research, and conservation related to this multifaceted field of art-making.

In contrast to traditional modes of creating exhibitions, the Art Preserve was conceived as an open-ended series of responses to the Kohler's unique and expansive collection. It commissions artists,



scholars, and conservators to reflect on the holdings. As a platform for experimentation, the Art Preserve aims to examine the assumptions that typically dictate museum practices and the authority of the “institutional voice.”

The art environments on view at the Art Preserve are grouped according to three concepts. Each of the three floors presents a story about the work it contains—the place it was made, the nature of the environment itself, a mystery yet to be solved. Visitors can view much of the museum work that ordinarily takes place behind the scenes.

Amy Horst, the newly appointed director of the John Michael Kohler Arts Center, is accepting the award on behalf of the Art Preserve. Formerly the associate director, she worked alongside former Arts Center Director Ruth DeYoung Kohler II in the development of the Art Preserve. Horst led the curatorial and exhibition teams to bring the project to fruition.

Frank Juárez | Educator (K-12)

Frank Juárez is an award-winning art educator, artist, author, publisher, and former gallery director. Juárez brings two decades of art education and arts management experience organizing local and regional art exhibitions, community art events, and facilitating professional development workshops for artists. He is actively involved in the Wisconsin Art Education Association and the National Art Education Association. He has presented numerous lectures at local universities, colleges, galleries, and artist groups on Professional Practices for Artists: Business of Art. He is the founder of two projects focused on contemporary art and art education: the Midwest Artist Studios and the 365 Artists 365 Days Project.

Juárez was awarded the 2015 Wisconsin Art Education Association Teacher of the Year. In 2016, he was awarded the 2016 National Art Education Association Wisconsin Art Educator of the Year. In 2018, he was elected to serve on the National Art Education Foundation Board of Trustees and received the 2018 Herb Kohl Educational Foundation Teacher Fellows Award. In 2019, he was named National Secondary Art Educator of the Year. Juárez is the art department chair at Sheboygan North High School, contributing editor of *School Arts Magazine*, and publisher of *Artdose Magazine*.

Rae Minoka Skenandore (Yehsani>saks) | Emerging Artist

Rae Minoka Skenandore is an enrolled member of the Oneida Nation in Wisconsin. She is a latecomer to the art of basketry, having discovered her skills and passion for basket making only in 2017. Skenandore makes baskets in both traditional and contemporary styles using both traditional and contemporary materials. After taking her first basket class through the Oneida Arts program, she joined the Oneida Basket Guild, Twatashe> nutslu=nihe> (All of Us Make Baskets) and later the Wolf River Basket Guild. She works diligently to broaden her knowledge and understanding of all the techniques and styles used by weavers, and applies her knowledge to the development of her own artistic style.



Freida High Wasikhongo Tesfagiorgis | Legacy Award

Freida High Wasikhongo Tesfagiorgis is an artist, an art historian, and an educator. Her artworks span painting, printmaking, pastels, and artists books. Common to them all is figuration and a commitment to history, culture, and symbolism. Above all, Tesfagiorgis is an activist and a devoted academic. She earned degrees from Graceland College (AA), Northern Illinois University (BS), University of Wisconsin–Madison (MA, MFA), and the University of Chicago (PhD). She has dedicated her career to learning about and passing on through her art and her teaching, informed knowledge of African and African American art and feminism. Her work and her voice have been cited in numerous publications, including Lisa Farrington, *Creating Their Own Images: The History of African American Women Artists* (2005) and Julie Bucknor Armstrong, *Mary Turner and the Memory of Lynching* (2011), who notes her coining of the term “Afrofemcentrism.”

Tesfagiorgis introduced African American art history into the University of Wisconsin–Madison’s curriculum in the early 1970s. She co-built courses, degrees, and certificates in Afro-American Studies, later Visual Culture Studies, at UW–Madison, and taught in the departments of Afro-American Studies and Art and the African Studies Program from 1972 to 2012, expanding to Gender & Women’s Studies and cross-listing with Art History. She has exhibited her work and lectured nationally and internationally, produced influential publications, and served on numerous art boards and professional committees. Among her many awards are UW-Madison Vilas Award, Chancellor’s Award in the Creative Arts, Chancellor’s Distinguished Teaching Award, Evjue-Bascom Professorship, Emerita Professorship, Governor’s Art Award, William S. Noland Award, and the James A. Porter Lifetime Achievement Award, Howard University (2021). She is a founding member of the Planning Committee and the Board of the Bronzeville Center for the Arts that is underway in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Leslie Vansen | Educator (College or University)

Professor Emerita Leslie Vansen taught at the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee’s Peck School of the Arts in the Department of Art and Design from 1978 to 2020. She served some years as department chair and as acting dean. During her tenure, she was responsible for courses at all levels from the undergraduate foundation year lecture and studio courses, to advanced BFA courses, through graduate level independent study, thesis advising, and seminars. Her own work, related to her teaching, is focused primarily on painting on canvas, paperboard, and paper; an ongoing drawing practice; and explorations into video animation in collaboration with the school’s dance and music faculty. Vansen’s works are in major regional and national public collections as well as private and corporate collections.

A retrospective of Vansen’s studio production is scheduled for September 2022 at UWM’s Kenilworth Square East galleries. More than fifty of her former students will contribute work to a concurrent companion exhibition honoring her teaching. The participating alumni are all professional artists and many are teaching faculty members with a wide range of expertise and experience.



Karin Wolf | Community Arts Advocate

Karin Wolf is an arts project manager, researcher, writer, educational program developer, cultural planner, and art consultant. She is currently the Arts Program Administrator for the City of Madison Department of Planning and Community and Economic Development. She is responsible for staffing the Madison Arts Commission and managing the arts grants, gallery spaces, and public art initiatives for the City of Madison.

Wolf previously served as the Special Programs Coordinator at the Milwaukee Institute of Art & Design, where she created award-winning programs for educators and K–16 students in art, design, and technology. She has worked as a docent, educational assistant, and teacher at the Madison Museum of Contemporary Art. She has a MS in Curriculum and Instruction from the University of Wisconsin–Madison and undergraduate degrees in History, History of Cultures, and Afro-American History. Her work with many community organizations involves establishing exhibitions, film programs, temporary art, and permanent public sculpture projects, and placemaking.