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GREATER BALTIMORE CULTURAL ALLIANCE AWARDS SECOND ROUND OF RUBYS GRANTS TO AREA ARTISTS

Baltimore, October 1, 2014 – The Greater Baltimore Cultural Alliance (GBCA) is pleased to announce the eight artists selected for the second round of Rubys Artist Project Grants. Grants from \$4,000 to \$10,000 were made to support artists that reflect a diversity of talent and creativity for projects including fiction, poetry, experimental prose, drawing, installation, and two art books.

The 2014 Rubys grantees in Literary and Visual Arts are:

Amy Bernstein, Baltimore: to support *Work Force*, a one-act comedy featuring a cast mainly of adults with disabilities and which addresses the shared struggles to find place and purpose in life. A pre-show panel discussion will highlight the challenges and preconceptions facing artists labeled as disabled.

Amanda Burnham, Baltimore: to support *RFP*, a “living drawing” installation and subsequent art book that will be designed in dialogue with Baltimoreans responses when asked to describe their visions, ambitions, and ideas for the city’s future.

Zoe Charlton, Baltimore: to support *Cultural Currency: Tourists, Trophies, and Tokens*, a series of large-scale figure drawings that will contribute to discussions of blackness/otherness by a strategic shift in subject matter in which White women and men are depicted adorned with objects representing their exoticized relationships with ethnicity.

Lola Pierson, Baltimore: to support *A Day by Yourself*, a collection of twelve short stories that embrace action, tone, and other theatrical elements as expressed through language. The structure of the work will be cumulative rather than a linear narrative, and will present a series of literary snapshots, constructing a whole that is more than the sum of its parts.

Rebekah Remington, Catonsville: to support the completion of *Sliced Bread and Wine*, a book-length manuscript of meditative lyric poems that explores the fraught intersections of mothering, consumer culture, and the redemptive act of making.

Gregg Wilhelm, Baltimore: to support the completion of *Backbeat the Waves*, a novel set in 1977 in Patapsco City, in which an ailing one-armed cousin from Appalachia upends the world of a teenaged protagonist. Also supported is a related city-wide literary geo-caching campaign and public lecture.

Melissa Wyse, Baltimore: to support *Moon Over Sand Island*, a collection of short fiction set during World War II and linked by its characters’ complex relationships with wartime Hawaii. The stories delve into the experiences of lei sellers, soldiers, civil servants, and pineapple plantation workers who wrestle with ties of nationality, gender, and ethnic identity.

Lu Zhang, Baltimore: to support *I Spent a Year with The George Peabody Library*, a site-specific book that documents the artist’s exploration of the Library’s archives and which will reside in its permanent collection and be part of an accompanying exhibition.

All of the artist projects begin immediately or are already underway and they will be developed over the course of the next 12 months. Each project includes opportunities for public engagement such as an exhibition, reading, or panel discussion. Information on attending a public component of a project will be announced here: <http://baltimoreculture.org/programs/rubys>

“GBCA is thrilled to welcome its second class of Rubys grantees. All of the artists selected reflect the Baltimore region’s rich creative exploration,” says Jeannie Howe, executive director of the Greater Baltimore Cultural Alliance. “GBCA is grateful to the jurors and to the Robert W. Deutsch Foundation for their support. We can’t wait to see the final manuscripts and artwork as well as experience the impact of the Rubys on the artists and the community.”

The 2014 Rubys jury panels for the Literary and Visual Arts were comprised of the following noted professionals:

- Sheri Booker, author, poet, 2014 NAACP Image Award Winner for outstanding literary work by a debut author
- Kriston Capps, staff writer, the Atlantic, art critic and contributor, Washington Post and Washington City Paper
- Jennifer Frias, associate curator, Sweeney Art Gallery at UC Riverside, cofounder, Sixpack Projects
- Imtiaz Hafiz, curator, Art in Embassies, U.S. Department of State
- Saralyn Reece Hardy, director, Spencer Art Museum, University of Kansas
- Reggie Harris, poet, 2012 winner of Cave Canem Northwestern University Press Poetry Prize, manager, Poetry in the Branches, Poet’s House, NYC
- Simone Jacobson, writer, poet, co-Director, DC Asian American & Pacific Islander Literary Arts & Performance Poetry Festival, commissioner, DC Mayor's Commission on Asian & Pacific Islander Affairs
- Amy Eva Raehse, executive director and curator, Goya Contemporary
- Ira Silverberg, former director of literature, National Endowment for the Arts
- Megan Storey, editor, Tin House Books, copy editor, *Tin House* magazine

The Rubys Artist Project Grant program was established by GBCA in 2013 to support the region’s gems - the local creative community of performing, visual, media and literary artists. Created with the vision and initial funding from the Robert W. Deutsch Foundation, the Rubys provide meaningful support directly to artists. The Rubys also usher in a new era of arts grantmaking in Baltimore by offering citizen-philanthropists and foundations the opportunity to fund individual artists. The Rubys were inspired in part by Ruby Lerner, the visionary founder and leader of Creative Capital in New York City.

The Greater Baltimore Cultural Alliance (GBCA) nurtures and promotes a vibrant, diverse, and sustainable arts and cultural community essential to the region’s quality of life. GBCA aims to promote the region’s creative sector and significantly increase artists’ and organizations’ capacity to do great work.

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Amy Bernstein's varied writing portfolio includes playwriting, award-winning journalism, a novel for young adults, executive speechwriting, and helping the U.S. government to communicate with the world. Whether writing creative fiction or nonfiction, Amy's goal is the same: tell compelling stories that resonate.

About the project

Work Force is a one-act comedy featuring a cast mainly of adults with disabilities and which addresses the shared struggles to find place and purpose in life. A pre-show panel discussion will highlight the challenges and preconceptions facing artists labeled as disabled.



Amanda Burnham's drawings and installations address her fascination with cities as organisms. Her work has been exhibited widely; selected venues include the Delaware Center for Contemporary Art, the Aldrich Museum of Art, and the Urban Institute of Contemporary Art. She has been the recipient of Individual Artist Awards from the Maryland State Arts Council, a Sondheim Prize semifinalist, and has been invited to be an Artist in Residence at the Embassy of Foreign Artists (Geneva, Switzerland) in 2015. She is currently an associate professor at Towson University.

About the project

The physical fate of cities is often shaped by politicians and developers. *RFP* takes inspiration in visions for the future of our city described, instead, by its residents. Centering around a "living drawing" to be unveiled in January 2015 and a subsequent artist book, *RFP* will involve multipronged community conversation in its formation through workshops, creative interventions, social media, and other.



Zoë Charlton received her MFA degree from the University of Texas at Austin. Charlton has had residencies at the Skowhegan School of Painting and at The Creative Alliance in Baltimore. Her work has been included in national and international exhibitions including the Contemporary Art Museum (Houston, TX), the Studio Museum of Harlem, and Haas & Fischer Gallery (Zurich, Switzerland); and is a recipient of a Pollock-Krasner grant. Charlton is on the faculty at American University in Washington, DC. She is represented by ConnerSmith, Washington D.C.

About the project

Cultural Currency: Tourists, Trophies, and Tokens contributes to discussions of blackness/otherness through a simple, yet strategic shift in subject. Instead of representing Black bodies juxtaposed with cultural and economic signifiers, Charlton will draw images of White women and men adorned with objects representing their exoticized relationships with ethnicity.



Lola B. Pierson is a writer, playwright, and director who lives and makes work in Baltimore. She is a co-founding artistic director of The Acme Corporation and holds a B.A. from Bard College in Human Rights and Playwriting and an M.F.A. in theatre from Towson University.

About the project

A Day By Yourself will be a collection of twelve short stories that embrace action, tone, and other theatrical elements as expressed through language. The structure of the work will be cumulative rather than relying on a linear narrative, and will present a series of literary snapshots, constructing a whole that is more than the sum of its parts.



Rebekah Remington's poetry has appear in *AGNI online*, *Hayden's Ferry Review*, *The Missouri Review*, *Ninth Letter*, *Rattle*, *Smartish Pace*, and elsewhere. Her chapbook *Asphalt* was selected by Marie Howe for CityLit Press's Clarinda Harriss Poetry Award. She is a recipient of three Maryland State Arts Council Individual Artist Awards.

About the project

Sliced Bread and Wine is a book-length manuscript of meditative lyric poems that explores the fraught intersections of mothering, consumer culture, and the redemptive act of making.



Gregg Wilhelm is the founder and executive director of CityLit Project, a Baltimore-based literary arts organization. He earned an M.A. in Theology from St. Mary's Seminary and University and an M.F.A. in Creative Writing from the University of Tampa.

About the project

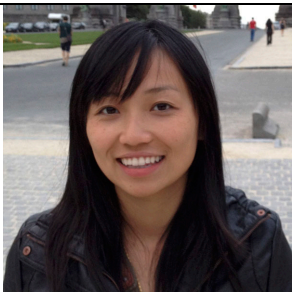
Backbeat the Waves takes place in the summer of 1977 in Patapsco City, an immensely liberating stand-in for Baltimore, when an ailing one-armed cousin from Appalachia upends the world of the teenaged protagonist. The novel explores moments when people exist between things: city and country, adolescence and adulthood, male and female, perseverance and mortality. This grant supports the manuscript's completion, a city-wide literary geo-caching campaign, and a public reading.



Melissa Wyse's work has appeared in publications including *Shenandoah*, *Urbanite*, and *decomp*. She was a resident at the MacDowell Colony and received her MFA from American University. She serves as the Director of Development and Community Engagement at the Howard County Arts Council.

About the project

Moon Over Sand Island is a collection of short fiction set during World War II and linked by its characters' complex and often contradictory relationships with wartime Hawaii. These stories delve into the limitations and opportunities experienced by lei sellers, soldiers, civil servants, and sugar and pineapple plantation workers in an environment charged with the threat of violence and the complicated ties of nationality, gender, and ethnic identity.



Lu Zhang is an interdisciplinary artist based in Baltimore. Zhang received her MFA from the Frank Mohr Institute in the Netherlands and her BFA from Maryland Institute College of Art. Zhang has exhibited her work in the US and abroad and is a recipient of a Maryland State Arts Council Individual Artist Award and the Trawick Prize Young Artist Award.

About the project

I Spent a Year with The George Peabody Library is a site-specific book that documents the artist's exploration of the Library's archives and which will reside in its permanent collection and be part of an accompanying exhibition.