

SETTING THE STAGE

A Selected Chronology of the Nashville Art World, 1949–2001

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Nashville is and always has been a uniquely diverse and creative city—a market town in rural surroundings with an economy based in traditional mercantilism and manufacturing combined with modern banking and insurance. During the 1980s and 1990s, the rise of corporate healthcare and a burgeoning entertainment economy grown from humble country music roots changed Nashville into a city on the rise. This chronology is a tribute to those who helped make the New Nashville a welcoming place for artists. Supporters and promoters of this culture include a disproportionate number of women who led organizations, opened exhibition spaces, and gathered public support for the arts in the decades leading up to the opening of the Frist Art Museum in 2001.



FIGURE 8.1. Portrait of Pearl Creswell. Carl Van Vechten Gallery, Fisk University, 1957.

- 1949** Georgia O’Keeffe donated a portion of the Alfred Stieglitz Collection to Fisk University. University President Charles S. Johnson appointed Pearl Creswell curator of the newly founded **Carl Van Vechten Gallery**, a role she filled until her retirement in 1990.
- 1950** The first organizational meeting of a professional art guild happened at Vanderbilt University. Of twenty-six charter members of the **Nashville Artist Guild**, twelve were women, including Louise LeQuire. Over the seventy-five years of its history, the Nashville Artist Guild has had forty-seven woman presidents.
- 1972** The first **Centennial Park Crafts Fair** was produced by the Tennessee Association of Craft Artists (Alice Merritt became its first paid director in 1989). Nancy Saturn bought the Craft Cranny on Bandywood Drive, later transforming it into the **American Artisan Gallery** in 1981. Lucienne Reed became a codirector of the Craft Cranny (the American Artisan Gallery), a position she would hold until 1998.
- 1974** The **Vanderbilt Sarratt Student Center** opened. The first director of Sarratt Gallery, located in the public lobby, was Jane Ann Dill.
- 1976** Barbara Chazen, director of corporate public affairs at **Commerce Union Bank**, began to provide corporate support for Nashville arts organizations. By the mid-1980s, the bank was hosting local contemporary art exhibitions in their public lobby downtown. Nancy Saturn started what became the **American Artisan Festival**, which brought national attention to both Nashville and the artisan craft movement. **Martin Wiley Gallery** was opened by Terry Martin and Wiley Eugene (Gene) Sizemore at 2122 Acklen Avenue, with fine art prints from Brooke Alexander, Marian Goodman Gallery, and Parasol Press. Lois Riggins advised on craft artists shown at the gallery.
- 1978** **Cumberland Art Conservation Center** was founded by art conservator Cynthia Kelsey Stow; Dee Minault became a partner in 1983. Wesley Paine was appointed as director of the **Parthenon**.

1980 **Cumberland Gallery** opened on Bandywood Drive in Green Hills. Originally owned by Susan O'Neill, Susan Hammond, and Carol Stein, the gallery first exhibited works on paper.

1981 **Nashville Parks and Recreation** board member Anne Roos raised funds for and oversaw the production and installation of *Sea Serpent* at Fannie Mae Dees Park by Pedro Silva and community volunteers. **The Studio/L'Atelier** was opened on Acklen Avenue by Danièle Folon and Noëlle Rigsby. By 1989, the gallery had moved to Bandywood Drive in Green Hills and been renamed the **Folon-Rigsby Gallery**. The **Tennessee State Museum** expanded, moving from the War Memorial Building to the lower levels of the Tennessee Performing Arts Center; Lois Riggins was named its director. Art conservator Shelley Reisman Paine had been overseeing the removal of the state's collection to the new location since 1979.

1982 Anne Brown was named the director of the **Metro Nashville Arts Commission (MNAC)**. Ann R. Williams opened **Ann Kidwell and Associates**, a framer and gallery on West End Avenue; renamed **AKA Gallery** after its move to Twelfth Avenue South, it eventually became a contemporary art venue before closing in 1995.

1984 Victoria Boone was appointed director of visual arts and craft media at the **Tennessee Arts Commission**. JoEl Logiudice transformed **Sarratt Art Gallery** into a contemporary art space—solo shows during her tenure (1984–2001) included presentations of the work of Susan Bryant, Sherri Warner Hunter, Sue Mulcahy, and Adrienne Outlaw.

1985 **Cumberland Gallery**, now co-owned by Carol Stein and Caroline Boyd Stevens, moved to a modern building designed by architect Robert Anderson on Hillsboro Circle in Green Hills; solo exhibitions in the 1980s featured work by *In Her Place* artists Jane Braddock, Lanie Gannon, Carol Mode, and Marilyn Murphy. MNAC commissioner Alice Zimmerman and Nancy Saturn opened **Zimmerman Saturn Gallery** in the downtown historic district. Zimmerman also founded the



FIGURE 8.2. Cumberland Art Gallery opening (left to right: Susan O'Neill, Susan Hammond, and Carol Stein), 1980.

downtown **Summer Lights Festival** with Anne Brown. Celia Walker was hired to curate Hospital Corporation of America's corporate collection, and Yvonne Boyer was hired as the curator for Northern Telecom. Vanderbilt University Medical Center had also begun acquiring art in the 1980s. All boosted the Nashville art economy by purchasing from local artists.

1987 Carlton Wilkinson opened **In the Gallery** in a historic building on Jefferson Street in North Nashville and later founded the not-for-profit **Nashville African American Artists Association (N4Art)** with Barbara Bullock, Lynn Norris, and Walter Whitmore. **Arts in the Airport**, a program that oversees site-specific installations, temporary exhibitions, and a permanent art collection at the Nashville International Airport, was founded under the direction of MNAC and overseen by its visual arts director Susan Knowles.

1988 **Vanderbilt Art Gallery** interim director Christine Kreyling curated *4 x 4: Jane Braddock, JoEl Logiudice, Carol Mode, Marilyn Murphy*. **An Artrageous Evening**, an art party benefiting Nashville agencies providing direct services to people with AIDS and their loved ones, was spearheaded by the American Artisan Gallery, Cumberland Gallery, Metro Arts Commission Gallery, and Zimmerman Saturn Gallery—all run by women. The event continued for years as a fundraiser for Nashville Cares under the auspices of the Nashville Association of Art Dealers, which comprised *Finer Things Gallery*, directed by Kim Brooks; *In the Gallery*,

directed by Carlton Wilkinson; and *Midtown Gallery*, directed by Ron York.

1989 The Cheekwood Museum of Art (now Cheekwood Estate & Gardens) presented *Harlem Renaissance: The Art of Black America*, organized by the Studio Museum of Harlem. Kevin Grogan, director of the Cheekwood Museum of Art, coordinated a citywide collaboration with the Nashville Chapter of the Links, Incorporated. At the invitation of Alice Zimmerman, New York gallerist Bernice Steinbaum facilitated exhibitions at local galleries that presented works by Emma Amos, Camille Billops, and Faith Ringgold.



FIGURE 8.3. Zimmerman-Saturn art gallery, 131 Second Avenue North, 1985. Built in 1892, this handsome five-story brick structure was renovated by architect Earl Swensson.

The Sinking Creek Independent Film Festival moved from Greeneville, Tennessee, to Vanderbilt's Sarratt Student Center. Meryl Truett succeeded founder Mary Jane Coleman as its executive director, and the festival grew expansively under her leadership. Its name was changed to the Nashville Independent Film Festival in 1998.

1990 Belmont University's Leu Gallery director Elena Graves hosted Kit Reuther for her first solo exhibition. Over the next few years, the Leu Gallery exhibited the work of Lanie Gannon, Donna Glassford, Linda Marks, and Meryl Truett.

1991 Visual Arts Alliance of Nashville (VAAN), a not-for-profit arts group, secured and renovated the Alamo storefront at Fourth Avenue and Broadway; VAAN's founding officers were Susan Knowles, Andrée LeQuire, Linda Marks, and Sue Mulcahy. **Untitled: Uncensored Art for Unlimited Audiences** began producing large, all-inclusive, often one-night-only shows at various temporary venues.

1992 Kristi Hargrove was hired as an adjunct instructor at the **Watkins Institute** on Church Street. Hargrove is now a faculty member of the Watkins College of Art at Belmont University.

1993 Tennessee: From the Mountains to the Mississippi opened at the **National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington, DC**; it was organized by project curator Susan Knowles and project director Celia Walker, with invited juror Eleanor Heartney. Nashville artists included were Armanda Balsamo, Barbara Bullock, Annie Freeman, and Margaret Krakowiak. A related show with thirty finalists was presented at the **Tennessee State Museum**; in addition to the artists shown in Washington, DC, it included Nashville artists Lanie Gannon, Sherri Warner Hunter, Renée LaRose, Marilyn Murphy, and Kathryn Schoepflin.



FIGURE 8.4. Left to right: Viola Marietha Wood, Tennessee State University president Fred Humphries, Dolores Ashley Harris, and Earl J. Hooks at TSU, 1985. Harris (a textiles instructor) and Wood (a ceramic sculptor who had studied under Hooks at Pisk University) were longtime art faculty members at TSU.

1994 Zeitzgeist Gallery opened in Cummins Station, a 1907 warehouse repurposed by architect Manuel Zeitlin; founder Janice Zeitlin was joined in 1996 by curator Lain York. In September, Zeitzgeist Gallery presented a solo show of Lanie Gannon's work.

1996 Anne Brown opened **The Arts Company** gallery on Fifth Avenue North. Curator Terri Smith began the popular **Temporary Contemporary series** at **Cheekwood Estate & Gardens**, a series of solo shows presented in the upper-level hallway of the museum; the series later moved to a dedicated gallery space, converted from horse stables, in 1998. Exhibitions included a posthumous tribute to Barbara Bullock and installations by Alicia Henry, Carrie McGee, and Donna Tauscher.

1997 Ruby Green, an artist studio and gallery space created by Chris Campbell, opened on Fifth Avenue South. In 2005, Ruby Green became Nashville's first recipient of a Warhol Foundation grant.

1998 Fugitive Art Center was founded on Martin Street in Wedgewood-Houston by Bryan Hunter and Greg Pond; board members included Carol Mode, Lesley Patterson-Marx, Donna Tauscher, and Iwonka Waskowski. Adrienne Outlaw became the first art feature producer for **Nashville Public Radio**.

1999 Watkins College of Art moved to a temporary location in One Hundred Oaks Mall before relocating to Metro Center in 2002; **Zeitzgeist Gallery** moved to Hillsboro Village. **Nashville Cultural Arts Project** (whose not-for-profit designation was later passed on to **Nashville Area Arts / Seed Space**) sponsored the **Outta Site** lecture series featuring architects, designers, and artists at the Neuhoff complex in Germantown. Founders included Mel Chin, Stephen McRedmond, Anita McRedmond Sheridan, and Helen Nagge.

2001 Plowhaus Artists' Cooperative was opened in East Nashville by Franee Lee, Lesley Patterson-Marx, and J. D. Wilkes.

April 8, 2001: The Frist Art Museum opened on Broadway in the city's former postal headquarters.

Through these decades, the following art writers promoted local galleries, museums, and artists.

1950s–90s *Nashville Banner's* Louise LeQuire, Corinne Franklin, Julie Pursell, Susan Quick, Kittler Zibart, and Beth Monin

1960s–90s *The Tennessean's* Clara Hieronymus and Alan Bostick

1990s *Nashville Scene's* John Bridges, Susan Knowles, Christine Kreyling, David Ribar, and David Maddox