

Student Service Fee FY23 Request Questionnaire, Blaffer Art Museum, Kathrine G. McGovern College of the Arts

- 1. Please provide a one-page executive summary of your questionnaire responses. This summary should include, in brief terms: your unit's mission, how you accomplish your unit's mission, and a justification of your unit's student fee allocation in terms of benefits for students.**

The mission of the Blaffer Art Museum at the University of Houston is to create meaningful experiences with contemporary art that ignites curiosity, challenges pre-conceptions, and expands ways of seeing and thinking to nourish the human spirit and inspire empathy, understanding, and engagement with the world today. As a non-collecting museum that strives to be timely and topical, the Blaffer presents a continually changing schedule of exhibitions, performances, publications, public programs, and opportunities for learning that promote a relationship to contemporary art and the creative experience. The Blaffer serves the university community by



cultivating partnerships with academic and non-academic units to offer UH students the unique platform for learning, making, networking, and career-building. Throughout the pandemic the Blaffer has retained an active program and expanded its online activities (and archives) to offer additional avenues of engagement. In September 2020, the museum was re-opened to the public and continued its exhibition programming, including the two marquee student exhibitions in Spring 2021. At the same time, the museum launched a new initiative offering public programs and resources through a rich virtual platform including a new (and continually archived) YouTube channel, Zoom, social media, and a revamped website. By FY23, this robust platform will become increasingly hybridized as we weave together in-person and online activities, and realize opportunities to integrate and connect UH students from a multitude of disciplines.

To benefit the UH student population, the Blaffer Art Museum accomplishes the following:

- Presents nationally recognized exhibitions and programs (on par with CAMH and the Menil) that consistently integrate student participation, activation, and interpretation.
- Showcases UH student art in the *UH School of Art Annual Student Exhibition* and *UH School of Art Master of Fine Arts Thesis Exhibition*, both developed and presented in collaboration with students and faculty.
- Produces lively, collaborative programming for, and by students through the Blaffer Art Museum Student Association (BAMSA), established in 2005.
- Develops virtual and/or on-site interdisciplinary programs such as *Convergence Research*, *Studio Sessions*, and *Blaffer Art and Design (B.A.D.) 2.0*, that support and promote student creative production in a public arena.

- Hosts a successful academic internship program where both undergraduate and graduate students receive course credit while learning important professional skills.
- Designs special opportunities for students to engage with museum professionals and exhibiting artists via class visits, critiques, and academic assignments.
- Organizes free public lectures and presentations that bring world-renowned artists, scholars, and arts professionals to campus and to classrooms.
- Provides free docent guided tours of exhibitions for UH classes and groups often led by our advanced undergraduate and graduate students in art, art history, and arts education.

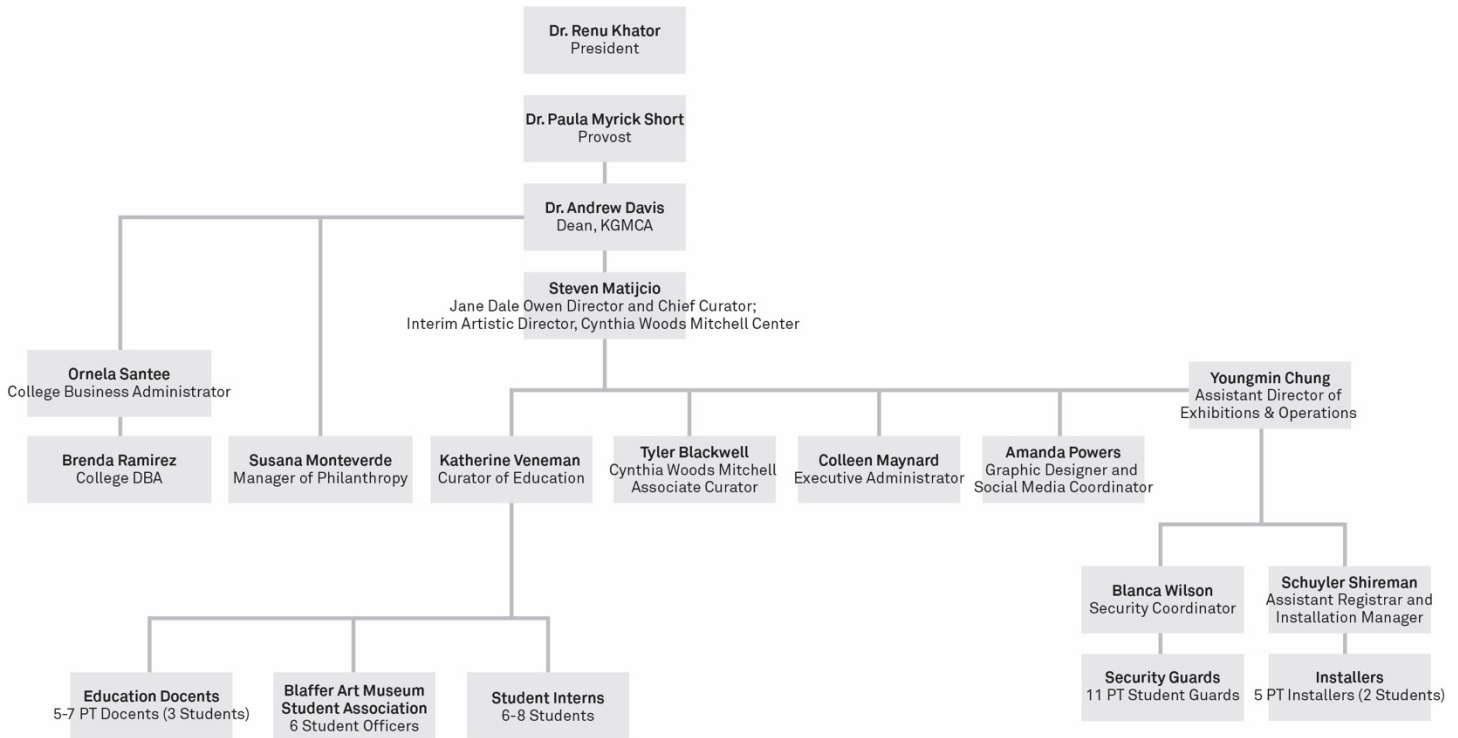
SFAC funds support the most significant and long-standing services the Blaffer provides to the UH student community: the School of Art's *Annual Student Exhibition* and *Master of Fine Arts Thesis Exhibition*. Each year the Blaffer hosts these expansive exhibitions (and accompanying events, including student artist talks) to gather students, friends, family, and our campus community to celebrate the next generation of rising stars. Since the reputation of the UH School of Arts graduates is local and national in scope, these high-profile exhibitions generate some of the Blaffer's largest audiences year after year. After the Blaffer was unable to present these exhibitions in Spring 2020 due to the campus closure, the museum resumed both virtual and in-person presentations in FY21. These presentations were among the most highly attended in 2021, and have benefitted from more adaptable approaches to exhibition installation as well as expanded audiences for public programs via digital platforms.

In addition to the student exhibitions, an important facet of the museum's service to the University student population is to present programs designed specifically for students. The Blaffer Art Museum Student Association (BAMSA) is a student-led organization established in 2005 that creates career-building opportunities for students and makes substantial contributions to the UH campus, the museum, and Houston communities. Their annual Red/Block bash creates a hub for student organizations to meet and share their missions with the larger student population, and the BAMSA Biennial invites students from all disciplines to present their art in a public forum. The Blaffer Art and Design (B.A.D) 2.0 program further extends these efforts, providing the resources and stewardship for students in Industrial Design, Graphic Design and the School of Art to conceive, produce, and sell original objects at the Museum.

The *Convergence Research* program is co-produced by the Blaffer and Cynthia Woods Mitchell Center for the Arts to promote experimental inter-disciplinary performances by current and recently graduated UH students that spans theatre, music, dance, spoken word, and visual art. Our ongoing *Studio Sessions* program also puts innovative art-making into the hands of students, fashioning a space where exhibition-related activities promote a deeper understanding of exhibitions on display. The Blaffer will launch the "Business of Art" program in 2022 as well, bringing together students in Business, Entrepreneurship and Art via guest-speaker led dialogues that explore the evolving terrain of making a living in art.

The Blaffer Art Museum respectfully requests \$21,500 in base support to fund the annual student exhibitions, the Blaffer Art Museum Student Association (BAMSA), and other associated student-related programming.

2. Please provide an organization chart of your unit. Large units may need to have an overview chart and more specific charts for each program. Where you have multiple staff in the same position, note this on your chart. Student employees should be cited on the chart and identified as students.



In addition to nine full-time staff members, the museum works closely with a number of faculty and staff in the Kathrine G. McGovern College of the Arts. Additionally, Blaffer currently engages approx. 30 students per year as docents, installation crew members, interns, BAMSA officers, and museum attendants/guards. Student employees and volunteers provide invaluable assistance in connecting the Blaffer with the University community and gain employment and/or professional development experience.

3. List your unit's strategic initiatives and action steps identified for the 2020-21 academic year and cite the specific Division of Student Affairs and Enrollment Services (DSAES) Strategic Initiatives and University of Houston Strategic Goals to which they relate (links below). Please comment on your success in achieving these strategic initiatives/action steps. If a strategic initiative/action step changed during the year, please note this and explain. Also, list any new strategic initiatives/action steps, the rationale for the addition, and comment on your success in achieving these items.

In FY21, SFAC funding enabled the Blaffer to sustain its essential role as a key educational campus resource as the museum re-opened after a temporary closure from mid-March through August of 2020. We take pride in showcasing and building the creative capabilities of students, and the museum prioritizes both UH Goals as well as Division of Student Affairs and Enrollment Services Strategies. The Blaffer's key objectives (outlined below) align especially well with UH Goal One, **Student Success** (Provide a Top Tier, Inclusive Educational Experience to All); Goal Two, **National Competitiveness** (Build a Research Powerhouse that Impacts our Region & the World); and Goal Three, **Social Responsibility** (support freedom of expression and diversity of views). The Blaffer's four goals listed below also align with DSAES's strategies to "develop competencies, and personal growth" and to "Expand diverse experiences on exploration and education while identifying and meeting the needs of our student population through supportive, inclusive, environments."

The Blaffer accomplished its goals to develop opportunities for student exhibitions and engagement; build partnerships within UH and the Houston community; and produce an international program of contemporary art, through a variety of means that will be elaborated below. In response to the challenges presented by COVID-19, the Blaffer set a new goal to make its exhibitions and programs accessible virtually – launching an expanded platform that featured virtual public programs and social media to enhance the museum's in-person exhibitions and to better connect with our student audiences.

FY 2021 Goals and Outcomes:

- A) Developed opportunities for student exhibitions and engagement** (Aligned with UH Goal 1, Student Success. And Goal Three, Social Responsibility; as well as DSAES initiative to "develop competencies, and personal growth" and to "expand diverse experiences on exploration and education while identifying and meeting the needs of our student population through supportive, inclusive, environments").

With the Blaffer's sustained, and somewhat expanded operations during FY21, the marquee **UH Master of Fine Arts Thesis Exhibition** and the **UH School of Art Student Exhibition** were once again held in person after a hiatus in FY20. Both exhibitions were accompanied by well-attended public programs that included online artist talks and performances, and the MFA exhibition was bolstered by a full color exhibition catalog produced in tandem with the School of Art. This year an intern from the UH Art History program also conducted online studio visits with a number of the exhibiting students, and wrote insightful interpretive labels for the MFA show. The processes used to install these exhibitions in a professional manner were nimbly adapted to COVID-19 safety protocols, and these practices will inform upcoming exhibitions as well. In the case of the MFA exhibition, each student's experience became more individualized, with artists working one-on-one with professional staff members to realize their respective installations. Many students noted that they benefited professionally from these changes and hope they will continue in the future.

The Blaffer continued to sponsor and mentor the **Blaffer Art Museum Student Association (BAMSA)** in what has become a mutually beneficial partnership. In FY21, BAMSA remained active hosting two virtual exhibitions featured on the museum's website which spotlighted artworks in a variety of media including video, photo, and painting. The spring exhibition was also accompanied by artist talks, which drew a very supportive and enthusiastic audience. They also continued the "BAMSA Speaks" series, which connects current and past members with local artists to discuss topical issues and network; this year's edition featured a roundtable discussion on Art and Activism that included artist and professor Fran-

cesca Fuchs. In addition to BAMSA, the Blaffer sponsored four virtual **Internships**, providing both graduate and undergraduate students with opportunities for academic and professional development. This year's interns authored creative art-making activities that audiences could conduct at home, as well as research into how Blaffer public programs and advertising can best reach the UH student population.

B) Developed opportunities for engagement with the museum through community and campus partnerships

including: (Aligned with UH Goal 1, Student Success. And Goal Three, Social Responsibility; as well as DSAES initiative to “develop competencies, and personal growth” and to “expand diverse experiences on exploration and education while identifying and meeting the needs of our student population through supportive, inclusive, environments”):

- **Exhibited art outside the museum.** To increase student awareness and engagement with exhibitions, the Blaffer continued its outreach initiative to extend these activities and installations beyond the Museum and across the UH campus. In Fall 2020, this goal was successfully accomplished in the exhibition *Stephanie Syjuco: The Visible Invisible* which located rousing public installations by Syjuco in the Anderson Library (adjacent to the Honors College) and the Gerald D. Hines College of Architecture and Design. This expanded exhibition also included video and projections from the artist's *Public Public Address* series in the UH Student Center on view through the 2021 spring semester: <http://publicpublicaddress.com/>
- **Accomplished 24 public and educational programs** offered virtually and in-person (on a limited basis). Approximately half of these programs were designed with partners, which included the UH School of Art, Cynthia Woods Mitchell Center for the Arts, Honors College, and the Valenti School of Communications. Off-campus partners included The Holocaust Museum Houston, Asia Society Texas Center, Texas Southern University, and the Houston Center for Contemporary Craft. Talks and performances broadcast via Zoom and YouTube offered the opportunity for organizational collaborations with peers and the opportunity to reach audiences across the globe. The Blaffer also produced 10 original artist Interviews, an online visual essay conducted by a pair of Houston artists on the Blaffer Instagram page, and the newly re-vamped website hosted premiere programs such as My Virtual Blaffer – which allowed artists to insert their works into installation photos of the museum and imagine hypothetical shows – as well as two exhibitions designed by BAMSA.
- **Reached out to HISD schools, community groups as well as UH units** to develop a virtual tour program that engaged 450 students and community members through 24 tours.

C) Produced a national and international exhibition program and created learning opportunities for students and the public. (UH Goal Two, National Competitiveness, UH Goal One, Student Success):

In addition to realizing a series of previously planned exhibitions, the Blaffer adapted its calendar to generate new exhibitions in response to current events – prioritizing timely Houston perspectives in exhibitions like *Carriers: The Body as a Site of Danger and Desire*, and just prior to FY21, the Phillip Pyle II-Jamal Cyrus collaboration *If not Now, When?!*. In the summer of 2021 the mid-career survey exhibition of Houston-based artist and UH alum Jamal Cyrus, titled *The End of My*

Beginning, was organized in partnership with the University Museum at Texas Southern University, fulfilling **Goal 2** of partnership.

The 2020-2021 exhibition program included the following presentations:

Rodney McMillian: *Historically Hostile*

September 1—27, 2020

South Carolina-born, Los Angeles-based artist Rodney McMillian creates installations, videos, and performances that explore how the accumulated ideologies, myths, and monsters of American history shape our sense of place. Through his performative reinterpretations of political texts, historical events, oral histories, and popular culture, McMillian confronts the social and economic legacies of race-driven actions and oppression. By deconstructing and re-staging these diverse narratives of power, violence, and possibility, McMillian offers an alternative reality while also illuminating the power of people to affect change and transform the future.

Stephanie Syjuco: *The Visible Invisible*

October 17, 2020—January 10, 2021

Stephanie Syjuco's work confronts the media-driven ways in which models of citizenry, immigration, and identity are dramatically evolving in the United States. The Philippines-born, San Francisco-based artist's insights were all the more relevant in the lead-up to one of the most intense and existential elections of our time. This exhibition focused on Syjuco's examination of supposedly "neutral" colors and patterns and their embedded politics. Looking to supposedly benign applications of gray, white, black, and chromakey green, she mines the abuses and projections that color provides within the escalating negotiation of belonging. The Blaffer also presented installations and participatory works by Syjuco across the University, bringing a series of flags representing invented shadow nations to the M.D. Anderson Library, and a curtain questioning the legibility of citizenship to the atrium of the College of Architecture and Design. We also commissioned and presented the new participatory artwork *Public_Public_Address* at the UH Student Center.

Simon Fujiwara: *Hope House*

October 31, 2020—March 13, 2021

British-Japanese artist Simon Fujiwara regularly investigates themes of popular desire such as tourist attractions, celebrities, "edutainment," and mass media. In this seductive, if no less fraught arena, his work reveals the paradox of our simultaneous quest for fantasy and authenticity in the culture we consume. *Hope House* is a continuing exhibition built on several years of close study into the cultural legacy of Anne Frank: a young Jewish girl who was persecuted and murdered by the Nazi regime, and who became famous for the diary she wrote whilst in hiding during WWII. Since 2017, Fujiwara has been rebuilding replicas of the Anne Frank House in Amsterdam as a provocative site to present his research into popular culture. Expanding on the concept of a 'museum within a museum', Fujiwara presented a new collection of objects that question the implicit economies and compromises of goodness, charity, and hope.

Carriers: The Body as a Site of Danger and Desire

January 23 – March 13, 2021

In the strangely unnerving and isolating circumstances of a global pandemic, many people covet the human contact – physically, socially, culturally – that most of us take for granted. And yet with the distanced conditions that covid-19 has brought to bear upon a global population, we know that bodies and breath are the primary carriers of a life-threatening disease. The human body becomes an ambivalent nexus here, coveted as a site of comfort and sanctuary, while simultaneously being feared as the incubator and disseminator of demise. To consider this conflicted terrain from an especially immediate perspective, *Carriers* will survey the body as paradox through the work of 15 diverse Houston-based artists including UH professor Michael Ray Charles, and UH MFA student Violette Bule. Rather than dwelling upon this incredibly weighted subject or furthering the fatigue we are all feeling, this exhibition offered a space of catharsis, hope, and reflection.

Hostile Terrain 94/Detention Nation

April 17—May 16, 2021

The Sin Huellas Artist Collective is composed of Mexican, Latinx, and American artists and activists (including UH faculty and students) formed to explore issues of detention, deportation, and borders in the US. In partnership with the UH Department of Comparative Cultural Studies (CCS), Public Art of the University of Houston System, and Sin Huellas, the Blaffer presented the art installations *Hostile Terrain 94* and *Detention Nation*. The former is a participatory art project sponsored and organized by the Undocumented Migration Project comprised of over 3,200 handwritten toe tags representing migrants who have died trying to cross the Sonoran Desert of Arizona between the mid-1990s and 2019. These tags are geolocated on a wall map of the desert, showing the exact locations where remains were found. The sister work, *Detention Nation* is a multi-media installation that consists of video, audio, detainee letters, cyanotype body prints, and plaster body casts huddled in Mylar emergency blankets. For this presentation it was re-designed as a website that includes updated information about youth incarceration and family separations.

Cynthia Woods Mitchell Center for the Arts 2020-2021 Artists-in-Residence Spotlight

April 17—25, 2021

In the tumultuous time of the here and now, the Blaffer is pleased to present a reflection, and extension, of the generative work conducted by a trio of artists invited to the University of Houston by the Cynthia Woods Mitchell Center for the Arts. Since its inception in 2005, the CWMCA has welcomed pioneering interdisciplinary artists on a yearly basis to conceive projects that connect signature elements of their research and practice with students, faculty, and community organizations. In the 2020-2021 season, via a combination of virtual conferencing, in-person visits, collaboration, adaptation, and improvisation, artists Brandon Ballengée, Marisa Morán Jahn, and Shaun Leonardo have produced projects that we hope will have a lasting impact on the campus, community, and city.

A Time for Action

May 23—June 5, 2021

A Time for Action is a multi-disciplinary festival confronting urgent political circumstances with an expansive performative language. It is an experimental micro-festival running for six nights at the Blaffer Art Museum between May 23—June 5, 2021 and sponsored by the Cynthia Woods Mitchell Center for the Arts. This survey of performance across dance, theatre, music, spoken word, visual art, and trans-disciplinarity is organized by six intrepid guest curators: **Aisha Tida Abbassi, Outspoken Bean, Rivkah French, Julia Barbosa Landois, Jake Sandridge, and Sixto Wagan**. It featured a number of UH students in both production and performance roles, and took place across the Blaffer, the School of Art Courtyard, and Dudley Recital Hall.

Jamal Cyrus: *The End of My Beginning*

June 5 – September 26, 2021

As a singular artist and steadfast mentor, Jamal Cyrus and his influence reverberate throughout his native city of Houston. And while he has participated in a number of biennials, Cyrus' work has not yet had the platform to be comprehensively celebrated on a national scale. The Blaffer addressed this overdue need and partnered with Texas Southern University to present Cyrus's first museum survey and catalog. As both a graduate of UH and a professor at TSU, Cyrus and his work brought together the two major universities located in Houston's predominantly African American Third Ward to co-present an exhibition for the first time. *The End of My Beginning* spanned 15 formative years of Cyrus's practice from 2005-2020, and the show will travel to Los Angeles, California and Jackson, Mississippi in 2022.

Martine Gutierrez: *Radiant Cut*

June 26—October 24, 2021

Martine Gutierrez is a chameleon-like artist whose photos, performances, and videos deconstruct glittery conventions of fashion, beauty, advertising and glamour. She instigates a similar re-invention of gender, race, and identity – translating her Mayan heritage and Guatemalan-American ethnicity into an evocative platform to (re)discover, embellish, and amplify bodies “outside of the binary.” Inspired by ancient Aztec deities that embody historical models of duality and gender-fluidity, Gutierrez explains, “My authenticity has never been to exist singularly, whether in regard to my gender, my ethnicity, or sexual orientation. My truth thrives in the gray area...” Within this amorphous arena of self-exploration, the artist explores the ways in which sexuality and style are constructed and propagated in popular media – from clothing lines and cosmetics to perfume, haute couture, and music videos.

Jagdeep Raina: *Bonds*

June 26—October 24, 2021

Sikh-Canadian artist Jagdeep Raina illustrates and re-imagines stories and scenes from across the Kashmiri and Punjabi diasporas. Through drawings, writings, paintings, weavings, and videos, Raina examines diverse histories of transnational migration and mobility and their effects on contemporary life. The artist often draws upon anecdotal histories as well as personal and public archives as source material for his figurative works—blending familial narratives with historical accounts to illuminate the socioeconomic and political structures that have shaped South Asian communities in both his native Canada and across the globe. In this process, Raina works to complicate and upend monolithic perceptions of

these richly varied diasporas. The exhibition marks Raina's first solo museum presentation in the United States, featuring a selection of artworks made over the last six years.

D) *New Goal: Increase Accessibility Through Virtual Resources for Learning* (UH Goal 1, Student Success)

This goal grew out of a need to stay active during the physical closure of the UH campus, and help promote creative outlets to the UH community during the pandemic. These goals were accomplished via Zoom and the Blaffer's newly launched YouTube channel, which provided access to public programs, virtual museum tours, exhibition-related art making activities people could practice from home, and artist interviews. In addition to hosting new content, the YouTube Channel—launched on August 1, 2020—serves as an archive for past resources such as artist and curator interviews, installation photos, and archival materials. The Blaffer also produced 10 new videos that featured artist Interviews, which collected about 420 views. Additionally, the Blaffer's website hosted new virtual resources such as My Virtual Blaffer and two exhibitions designed by BAMSA, and subscriptions to our social media channels have grown significantly over the past 16 months. Between Sept. 2020 - August 31, 2021, the Blaffer enjoyed a 67% increase in social media followers from the previous year, for a total of 1,992 new users. Since April 2020, overall online audience (including visitors to website and social media) is comprised of approximately 35-45% local, with the remaining percentages comprised of visitors from other Texas cities, the greater United States, and European and Asian nations. The Blaffer website (with approximately 75,000 pageviews and 27,000 visitors) and our two most active social media platforms (with approximately 750,000 combined impressions) show that digital audiences are growing and mostly new (87% of web visitors), and they frequently engage with photographic/video content that relates to museum exhibitions and programs featuring Houston artists.

4. Please discuss the means that you are utilizing to evaluate both your success in achieving the aforementioned strategic initiatives and/or action steps and their importance as compared to others that you might pursue. Where data exists, discuss the number of people served by each of your programs and any assessment measures and/or learning outcomes used to evaluate program success.

Unlike many peer museums in both Texas and across the country, the Blaffer met the challenges of COVID-19 by safely offering (limited) admission to in-person exhibitions throughout FY21. Due in large part to the reduction of the campus audience, the general museum attendance in FY21 was down from the recent average of 10,515 to 5,324 guests. During this same time period, however, the level of online engagement rose dramatically as the Blaffer introduced innovative new virtual exhibition tour alongside an array of public programs and performances. A total of 24 public and education programs reached almost 3000 viewers via Zoom and YouTube. Additionally, 12 Virtual Tour Groups (with 23 classes) and one in person group engaged about 480 people, and 10 new videos have engaged about 420 through YouTube. We view this development as an opportunity to devise future hybrid strategies that maximize accessibility for all visitors. Currently, in-person public programs have resumed in unison with virtual formats, allowing visitors to take advantage of multiple platforms to deepen learning opportunities on campus and beyond.

With the re-opening of in-person instruction at UH this past Fall, museum attendance in September 2021 has seen an increase of 350% in comparison to September 2020, from 262 to 1178 guests. Additionally, this figure was almost 15% greater than the pre-pandemic September average (1,010) from past years, indicating pent-up demand. 63% of these

attendees were UH affiliated, suggesting that the Blaffer is well underway of meeting the FY20 level of 84% UH affiliated guests. Additionally, in September 2021, the public and educational programming attendance total is 375, comprising almost one third of total museum attendance and underscoring the value of opportunities for engagement.

Looking ahead, the Blaffer will use this data to address and maximize current attendance trends. We expect in-person attendance to rise in FY22 and for FY23, and have set an attendance goal of a 15% increase from the 2019 figure. Until the recent COVID-19-related closure, the Blaffer's in-person attendance had been on the rise, with a nearly 57% increase from FY18 to FY19 that continued in spring 2020. The 2019 *School of Art Masters of Fine Arts Thesis Exhibition* and the *Annual School of Art Exhibition* brought more than 2,250 guests to the museum in just 24 days, the highest volume of museum visitation that year. With public programs offered virtually in FY21, student exhibitions were attended by 818 museumgoers, 65% of whom were UH affiliated. The MFA exhibition boasted a series of virtual artist talks which attracted 137 viewers for the live-stream, and have subsequently been viewed by 281 additional guests, raising the total to 368. This is a significant increase over the reach of the previous in-person talks, attended by approx. 100 in total.

In-person exhibitions were complemented by 24 public and educational programs in FY21, and this volume has resulted in an important goal to prioritize accessibility to in-person programming in the future. Of the almost 3,000 engagements with online public and educational offerings, 1,070 participated live on Zoom, while an additional audience engaged synchronously and asynchronously on the Blaffer's YouTube page. To break this down, 13 virtual public programs reached 550 live audience members as well as 2,600 asynchronous viewers, with 10 education programs reaching an additional 357. Furthermore, 24 virtual guided tours resulted in about 450 students, UH, and community groups engaging in inquiry-based discussions led by pairs of experienced museum docents. A series of 10 original artist interviews, conducted on the occasion of the *Carriers* group show, garnering approximately 420 views. Finally, the YouTube channel's archive was enhanced by the inclusion of previously produced videos including artist and curator interview, installation photos, and other exhibition related footage. The Blaffer recognizes the high educational value of these resources to students, scholars, and the public and we have made access a priority moving forward.

A robust social media platform supports both the exhibition and educational programs at the Blaffer. In FY21, analytics showed that Instagram gained a total of almost 2,000 new followers, which is a 67% increase from the year before (FY2020 showed 1,194 new followers) and there were almost 17,000 contact interactions. Twitter garnered more than 80,000 impressions and nearly 100 mentions. Within this larger aggregate, we were happy to see that student-related social media projects on Instagram totaled about 1000 content interactions. To highlight a successful engagement, a June 30 post on Martine Gutierrez's *Demons* series was our most liked / engaged post (out of non-sponsored posts on Instagram), with 223 likes, 43 shares, 19 saves, and 2 comments (187 total interactions). This post reached 2,128 accounts. <https://www.instagram.com/p/CQwKKjYJgM/>. Finally, In Fiscal Year 2021 our website gained over 75,000 page views from 27,000 visitors. This represents an average of 6,000 each month, and an increase of 107% from August 2020.

Tracking in-person attendance is traditionally the most quantifiable means to measure the Blaffer's audience reach. With the Blaffer's expanded emphasis on virtual programming this past 16 months, additional metrics will be added including subscribers and views on YouTube, Instagram, Facebook and Twitter. Museum attendance is calculated by a twofold system: Visitors are registered upon entry into the museum through a sticker and/or clicker, and the data is collected in a simple spreadsheet. This system is also employed during outdoor events, off-site lectures, and large-scale

openings. By always being free of charge, and prioritizing friendly, down-to-earth interactions with our guests, the Blaffer cultivates return visits and ongoing patronage. Students often make repeat visits within a short period of time to coincide with class assignments or public programming. Attendance data is gathered into a comprehensive master spreadsheet that delineates programming and daily attendance into categories such as tours, off-site events, and student organization events. These monthly spreadsheets are organized by fiscal year (and fiscal quarters), which makes it possible to review how many people were in attendance for a category in any given week, month, quarter and/or year.

Additionally, the education staff regularly consults security and visitor relations staff to ensure accurate counts at public and education programs. The practice of verified documentation and analysis of visitor attendance at the Blaffer is similar to comparable state institutions such as the Blanton Museum at UT and the University Museum at Texas Southern University.

- 5. Please discuss any budget or organizational changes experienced since your last (2021) SFAC request, their impact on your programs, and your reason for implementing them. SFAC recognizes that some programs did not receive the funds that they requested, that some programs were impacted by additional expenses after the conclusion of the budget cycle, and that some programs may be ahead of or behind their self-generated income projections.**

As an organization the Blaffer has remained stable and active through the global turbulence of the Covid-19 pandemic, and have not eliminated or reduced any staff positions. When staff members were forced to work from home during the early stages of the pandemic, those in security and visitor services pivoted creatively and resourcefully into the Education dept to collaborate on the production of unique art-making videos. The 2020 editions of the UH MFA and School of Art exhibitions had to be cancelled due to the pandemic, but they returned successfully in 2021 with an assortment of new features and practices that we will carry forward into the future. The Blaffer's Studio Sessions program went online while coursework was exclusively virtual, and has occupied a hybrid format since Sept. 2021. The largest changes we experienced have been in the Blaffer Art and Design (BAD) program, which had to be postponed due to a lack of access to fabrication facilities on and off campus since mid-March 2020. The Blaffer nevertheless intends to move this program forward in 2021, but since many of the students whose design objects were selected have now graduated, we will need to do so in a modified format. BAD will restart in full in Fall 2022, and in the interim, the Blaffer will work with a handful of previously selected students, along with a new class in Graphic Design, to produce objects that we hope to launch in the Summer of 2022.

- 6. If your unit concluded FY2020 with a Student Service Fee (SSF) Fund 3 addition to the SSF Reserve in excess of \$5,000, please describe the conditions which caused the addition and provide a line-item identification of the budgetary source(s) of the addition (i.e. lapsed salary, conference travel, etc.).**

Not Applicable.

- 7. Please list your 2022-2023 strategic initiatives and action steps in priority order and cite the specific Division of Student Affairs and Enrollment Services Values and University of Houston Strategic Goals to which they relate. Larger units may wish to group responses by subprogram. Under each strategic initiative, please state**

the specific action steps (programs, activities, services, policies/procedures, etc.) that you intend to implement to accomplish your stated initiative.

In FY23, the Blaffer will continue to practice both UH Goals and DSAES strategies. As a hub between UH and the City of Houston, the Blaffer lives as both an incubator and intersection between students and cultural professionals – providing opportunities for mentorship, collaboration, and the practice of real-world creativity in support of UH’s Goal 1, Student Success (Provide a Top Tier Inclusive Educational Experience to All). Funding from SFAC allows us to build partnerships and advance the artistic skills in students that are increasingly coveted in a 21st century workplace. At the same time, all museum programs focused upon students— exhibitions, BAMSA, internships, etc. — directly address the Division of Student Affairs and Enrollment Services goal to “develop competencies, and personal growth” and to “Expand diverse experiences on exploration and education while identifying and meeting the needs of our student population through supportive, inclusive, environments.” Additionally, the Blaffer contributes to UH’s Goal Two, National Competitiveness, with its nationally recognized exhibition program – connecting the student community with nationally and internationally recognized artists in a substantive Blaffer originates between 6-10 exhibitions and programs that have a national and international profile, contributing to broadly recognized research in the art museum field and the production of original publications and digital resources.

A) Develop opportunities for student exhibitions, engagement, and learning. (Aligned with UH Goal 1, Student Success. And Goal Three, Social Responsibility; as well as DSAES initiative to “develop competencies, and personal growth” and to “expand diverse experiences on exploration and education while identifying and meeting the needs of our student population through supportive, inclusive, environments”). This initiative will be accomplished through the following:

- a. Realize two spring student exhibitions, the ***UH School of Art Annual MFA Thesis Exhibition*** and the ***UH School of Art Annual School of Art Student Exhibition***.
- b. Sponsor and mentor the **Blaffer Art Museum Student Association (BAMSA)** and its programs.
- c. Prioritize **student-focused programs**:
 - i. Strengthen **Convergence Research**, a creative, cross-disciplinary laboratory.
 - ii. Re-design **Studio Sessions**, a series of free events offering students guided exhibition tours and hands-on art making activities, in a welcoming, creative environment.
 - iii. Grow **Blaffer Art & Design (B.A.D.) 2.0.**, in partnership with students and faculty in Graphic Design (School of Art) and Industrial Design (Gerald D. Hines College of Architecture), where students design and produce objects/products that are displayed and sold at the museum.
 - iv. Continue the “Business of Art” program that congregates students in Art, Business and Entrepreneurship to find common ground by way of shared topics and guest speakers
- d. Steward **Internships** for both undergraduate and graduate students with academic and professional knowledge and skills.
- e. Work with students at the Bauer School of Business to conduct a yearly analysis of the Blaffer Communications strategy, which encompasses the website, social media, and physical advertising
- f. Provide professional experience to student **docents, art installers, and gallery attendants**.

The greatest portion of SFAC funding enables the Blaffer to realize the *UH School of Art Master of Fine Arts Thesis Exhibition* and *UH School of Art Annual Student Exhibition*. These high-profile student-centered exhibitions give students the experience and prestige of exhibiting in a museum setting while being introduced to the Houston art community and beyond. They jointly feature more than 100 School of Art students in Graphic Design, Interdisciplinary Practice and Emerging Forms, Painting, Photography, Printmaking, and Sculpture. SFAC funds are also employed to produce an exhibition catalog for the MFA show, which provides participating students with a dynamic document of the experience, and a legacy object that can circulate in the Houston art community. In 2022 and 2023, the Blaffer aims to grow the visibility of both the MFA and School of Art shows with hybridized public programs and expanded interpretive strategies, including interpretive wall labels and audio guide interviews with the artists.

In addition to displaying student work in the Blaffer, student artists in the *Master of Fine Arts Thesis Exhibition* develop professional skillsets by learning best practices for exhibiting their work in a museum setting. Students work extensively with museum staff while conceptualizing and realizing their thesis projects, gaining experience that prepares them to operate in galleries and museums in the future. Our Artist Talk program provides students with the added opportunity to hone their critical thinking, communication, and presentation skills by discussing their work publicly. The talks are also archived on YouTube, which can continue to help raise the artist's professional profile. Several works from both exhibitions have been acquired by UH as well, and are proudly displayed in the University's Student Center.

SFAC funds provide crucial support for the **Blaffer Art Museum Student Association (BAMSA)**, a student-led organization that cultivates a cross-disciplinary community amongst students and presents art and performance across the campus. BAMSA's mission is to *"foster a welcoming community for all students with a passion for the arts. BAMSA uplifts and educates its members by building strong connections within the larger university and local Houston community."* Using the museum as a catalyst, BAMSA members generate peer-to-peer excitement around exhibitions, events, and educational programming, and have exclusive opportunities to interact with professional visiting artists. In so doing, BAMSA creates, implements, and sustains new endeavors in collaboration with its members, peer organizations, faculty, and staff. Participation in BAMSA also offers students the opportunity to learn professional skills such as project management and budgeting, event planning, recruitment, and communications. BAMSA fosters opportunities for student collaboration across campus, including far-reaching programs like the Red Block Bash and the UH Biannual Art Exhibition. Produced, executed, and marketed by the students, these events showcase students' accomplishments in the visual and performing arts and promote dialogue between students in an inclusive and welcome forum. In FY23, BAMSA will continue to orchestrate student-focused programs with the added benefit of expanded digital platforms through the Blaffer.

Additionally, the Blaffer offers ongoing professional development via training to **museum docents, interns, and education assistants** as well as to **installation crew members** and **gallery attendants/security staff**. In FY23, both in-person and virtual tours will be provided to university classes as well as K-12 students and community groups. In FY22 the Blaffer began to partner with the UH Art History Dept to offer Curatorial masterclasses to graduate students that offer in-depth perspective into the organization and presentation of exhibitions, and we hope to extend this program into FY23. The Blaffer will also continue to teach students through academically rigorous and experiential internships at the undergraduate and graduate level, as well as an ongoing collaboration with the Arts Leadership program at UH. Mentored by museum staff in the education and curatorial departments, students complete individual and collaborative pro-

jects related to exhibitions and programs. Furthermore, many students studying in arts-related fields receive professional training as members of the exhibition installation crew. Students serve as gallery attendants/security too, utilizing front line communication skills to interact with the public while maintaining important museum safety policies.

B) Goal 2: Develop national and international exhibition programs and create complementary learning opportunities for students. (UH Goal 2: National Competitiveness).

The Blaffer will continue to develop innovative exhibitions of contemporary art that connect students and the UH campus community with a larger socio-political discourse and the global arts community. Additionally, the museum plans to increase the impact of exhibitions on campus by expanding and enriching campus partnerships to develop cross-disciplinary programs. UH students will be woven into the architecture of these efforts and will be activated as participants in shows that consistently celebrate ethnic diversity and culture-sharing. This initiative will be accomplished through the following exhibitions:

Molly Zuckerman-Hartung: *Comic Relief*

October 31, 2021—March 13, 2022

Organized by: Associate Curator Tyler Blackwell

Comic Relief is the first major museum survey devoted to the iconoclastic American artist, writer, professor, and former Riot Grrrl. Featuring over 100 artworks made across the past 20 years, this exhibition celebrates multiple dimensions of Zuckerman-Hartung's punk-influenced aesthetic—tracing an expansive practice that spans assemblage, paintings and sculptures, drawings and prints, photographs, and writing. Her densely cobbled objects evocatively draw on references to feminist theory, pop culture, literature, psychoanalysis, art history, current events, comedy, and her own life. With a slapstick style of humor and radical self-awareness, Zuckerman-Hartung's work creates a unique lexicon for illuminating the motley dimensions of our psycho-social landscapes.

Caroline Mesquita: *Noctambules*

November 13, 2021—March 13, 2022

Organized by: Director & Chief Curator Steven Matijcio

Mesquita is one of the most intriguing young sculptors working in France today, and the Blaffer is excited to present her first solo museum exhibition in the United States. A jubilant disquiet presides over Mesquita's sculptural work, which navigates the increasing intimacy between man and machine. Her combinatory practice marries the physicality of altered, oxidized, and painted copper and cut paper with theatrical playfulness and socio-cultural meditation. Mesquita's ensuing experiments in metallurgy and materiality result in life-size figures interacting with one another in carnivalesque vignettes that slide between baroque ballet and melancholic parade. For this exhibition, she will produce a newly commissioned, site-specific installation at the Blaffer Art Museum.

Maryam Jafri: *A Broad and Narrow Point*

November 13, 2021—January 9, 2022

Organized by: Director & Chief Curator Steven Matijcio

Artist Maryam Jafri is known for her wry explorations of the alternative economies that circulate within the branding of products and people. Her exhibition at the Blaffer will address pointed cultural questions around the relationship between identity, authenticity, and commerce. Her newest series, *Everyday Model*, illuminates the chameleon-esque fluidity of commercial actors and how the spokesmodel mutates according to campaign and context. In combination with two previous artworks, *Home Office* and *Hi Maryam*, the exhibition will also delve into how therapy has become imbued with celebrity aesthetics. The added presentation of work from Jafri's *Disappearance Online* and *Getty vs Ghana* series will navigate the politics of visibility within an archival context.

Maya Stovall

February 4 – March 13, 2022

Organized by: Director & Chief Curator Steven Matijcio

In collaboration with the Cynthia Woods Mitchell Center for the Arts, the Blaffer will support a new performance-based work and exhibition by American artist, choreographer, professor, and anthropologist Maya Stovall. She is highly regarded for her unconventional amalgams of dance, urbanism, and choreography, as evidenced by her celebrated work *Liquor Store Theatre*—in which she organized performances in front of Detroit strip malls as a vessel to conduct interviews with residents. In Houston, Stovall will congregate a cross-disciplinary working group of students, faculty, and families to build a community-driven project that explores micro-histories of Houston and the present state of voting rights in Texas.

Hugh Hayden: *Boogey Men*

June 11 – August 21, 2022

Organized by: ICA Miami and curated by Alex Gartenfeld, Artistic Director

Boogey Men features a suite of monumental new works by the Dallas-born, New York-based artist Hugh Hayden. Renowned for his virtuosic use of wood materials, Hayden examines the Black American experience by delving into complex personal and political themes. For the artwork *Hues*, the artist sourced the state trees from each of the fifty states and collaged them onto a map of the United States. In *Roots*, he fashions a gargantuan skeletal figure made of bald cypress trees inundated with bifurcating branches. In so doing, Hayden crafts surreal metaphors for American social institutions and identity, as well as our relationship with the natural world.

Monira Al Qadiri: *Detritus*

June 25 – October 9, 2022

Organized by: Associate Curator Tyler Blackwell

In partnership with the Cynthia Woods Mitchell Center, the Blaffer will commission Berlin-based artist Monira Al Qadiri to create a new exhibition of surrealist videos and sculptures exploring the petro-cultures shared between the Texas Gulf Coast and the Persian Gulf. Considered one of the most important artists to emerge from this region in recent years, she came of age during the rapid transformation of her native Kuwait—from its status as one of the world's oldest civilizations, through its dominance of the oil industry, to its current role as a battleground in geopolitics. Al Qadiri's

work serves as a seismograph for this world, examining the corruption and flux caused by competing ideas of prosperity, religion, and globalization.

Phillip Pyle II

August 2022

Organized by: Director & Chief Curator Steven Matijcio

As the fall semester kicks off at UH in 2022, Houston-based artist and current UH MFA student Phillip Pyle II will orchestrate a satirical marketing campaign that mines the quirks and curiosities of the University's history. Pyle is a puckish yet pointed graphic designer whose work marries the bombast of advertising and the irreverence of culture jamming with the poetry of art-making. Mining imagery from consumer culture and contemporary advertising to historical imagery and hip-hop, he builds a complex vision that derives from a comedic foundation and incisive wit. His guerilla campaign at UH will circulate across posters, billboards, lawn signs, YouTube, Instagram, and a plethora of other PR vehicles – embedding quizzical moments into otherwise familiar media.

C) Goal 3: Present Public and educational programs targeted to the university community (UH Goal 1, UH Goal 2)

For each upcoming exhibition the museum will position visiting artists and scholars as resources for students, and will orchestrate student-driven public programs, class visits, and workshops. Students, faculty, and community members gain access to leading practitioners in the fields of art, art history, and other disciplines that actively contribute to the contemporary cultural landscape. Free and informative public programs expand the horizon of intellectual engagement for students, and expose them to new ways of thinking, making, and navigating an increasingly broad ethnic diaspora around the world.

D) Goal 4: Increase Accessibility of Programs and Campus Presence. (UH Goal 1, Student Success; UH Goal Three, Social Responsibility)

The Blaffer plans to increase accessibility and expand the reach of museum programs through two strategies: developing partnerships (campus and community) and investing in virtual resources.

- a. Strengthen new digital resources of selected programs such as Virtual Guided Tours.
- b. Add virtual components to in-person student-oriented programs such as the BAMSA Biannual Art Exhibition.
- c. Build partnership with UH Public Art Collection to conduct joint outreach efforts to school communities and the UH student populations.
- d. Hold public programs such as Studio Sessions in other campus locations.

8. Recognizing that the potential to generate additional Student Service Fee income for FY2023 base funding is extremely limited and recognizing that it is likely that some units will not be allocated for the new base

budget and/or one-time funds requested. Please provide a narrative of how your unit would accommodate a reduction of 5% in your total FY20232 base Student Service Fee budget request and provide a line-item explanation of where budgetary cuts would be made.

In FY23, the Blaffer anticipates spending approximately \$15,000 on the two on-site student exhibitions, \$4,000 for BAMSA programming, and \$2,500 on other student-related programming such as Convergence Research and the Business of Art. We are not requesting a Base Augmentation this year, but the Blaffer is still planning to expand its student-oriented programming on a long-term basis with the re-introduction of Blaffer Art and Design (B.A.D.) and expanded online resources and virtual tours. The current budget covers fixed costs essential to the installation and promotion of the shows and programs, including wall painting, construction, furniture for the display of artwork, catalog printing, as well as publicity costs. Dedicated funds for student-centric programs are critical to the larger funding portfolio of the Blaffer, which spans a spectrum of grants, foundations, individual patrons, and endowments.

If there were a 5% budget reduction to our base fee of \$21,500, the reduced amount of \$1,075 could—with difficulty—be absorbed in the installation costs of the two student exhibitions. This will be a challenge because all costs incurred with these exhibitions are fixed expenses including building and painting walls, constructing exhibition display furniture, and purchasing the miscellaneous hardware required to present the work. The Blaffer could downsize these shows by re-allocating the modestly sized Saleri Gallery (located on the Museum's 2nd Floor) as storage space for an upcoming exhibition. This accommodation would reduce installation costs, but also the amount of artwork on display.

- 9. What are the other possible sources of funding available to your unit and what efforts are being made to access them (e.g. grants, donations, etc.)? If you receive funds from other sources, please briefly describe the source, purpose, and duration of the funding and report the amounts received in the appropriate rows/columns on the SFAC Spreadsheet.**

The Blaffer raises all funds needed to produce exhibitions, performances, educational programs, and publications. University support is limited to facility operations and partial salary and benefit support. As such, the Blaffer actively works to gather outside resources such as grants from public agencies, private foundations, and individual supporters to continue operations and present our ambitious program. In the past two years these sources have included the National Endowment for the Arts, the Ford Foundation, and the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts. These funds are systematically pursued throughout the year via grant applications, direct mail campaigns, and with the support of our Advisory Board and colleagues in the KGMCA. However, these funds are often marked as restricted use for exhibitions and are unavailable for student exhibitions and programs. External funding from charitable foundations for exhibitions of student work is not available either. SFAC funding is the only resource devoted specifically to UH student programming and exhibitions. The Blaffer staff prioritizes the importance of the School of Art's student exhibitions and is committed to providing a professional level of service and expertise. There is a significant amount of time and effort spent to achieve the high standard of presentation expected. The museum is truly appreciative of the support from the Student Fees Advisory Committee, which is a vital resource in the presentation of these two exhibitions, BAMSA, and student-related activities.

- 10. Please describe any services that are similar to yours and/or any overlap between your unit and any other**

unit(s) providing services to students and the rationale for the overlap.

The Blaffer Art Museum is the only professional art museum on the main campus at the University of Houston and is open to all without an admission fee. We present innovative exhibitions of contemporary art and educational programs that are relevant and intellectually stimulating to the university community. By curating a program that brings together national and international artists with the work of UH students, the Blaffer creates a vital bridge that is unique to this campus and a catalyst for future success. The Blaffer works in a dedicated manner to provide high quality programs for the entire student body, from student social events to working with professors incorporating museum exhibitions into their respective syllabi. The Blaffer regularly collaborates with other UH units to create or enhance programs for maximum impact on campus. Past academic collaborators have included: College of Engineering, School of Art, School of Theatre and Dance, The Cynthia Woods Mitchell Center for the Arts, as well as various departments in the College of Education, College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences, College of Natural Sciences and Mathematics, the Honors College, the Hilton College, and the Bauer College of Business. Recent or current non-academic collaborators have included the UH Public Art Collection, Jenkins Art and Architecture Library, UH Libraries (Special Collections), Office of Human Relations Work/Life and POWER UP programs, the Student Center, and Student Program Board.

Energized by new leadership, the Blaffer has taken on an expanded role in the Kathrine G. McGovern College of the Arts (KGMCA) and, by extension, in student life. With new programming directions, the Blaffer will work to align its exhibitions and interpretive programs with the units in the KGMCA and with diverse fields of learning. BAMSA will continue to grow in its role in the campus community, cultivating innovative programs and enriching the arts amongst students. We are proud of our place as an educational and socio-cultural resource for all UH students, connecting the student community to exhibitions at the vanguard of artistic innovation. The Blaffer is thrilled to act as a means for curriculum enhancement, to showcase student exhibitions and artistic accomplishments, and to inspire creative practice in today's world.