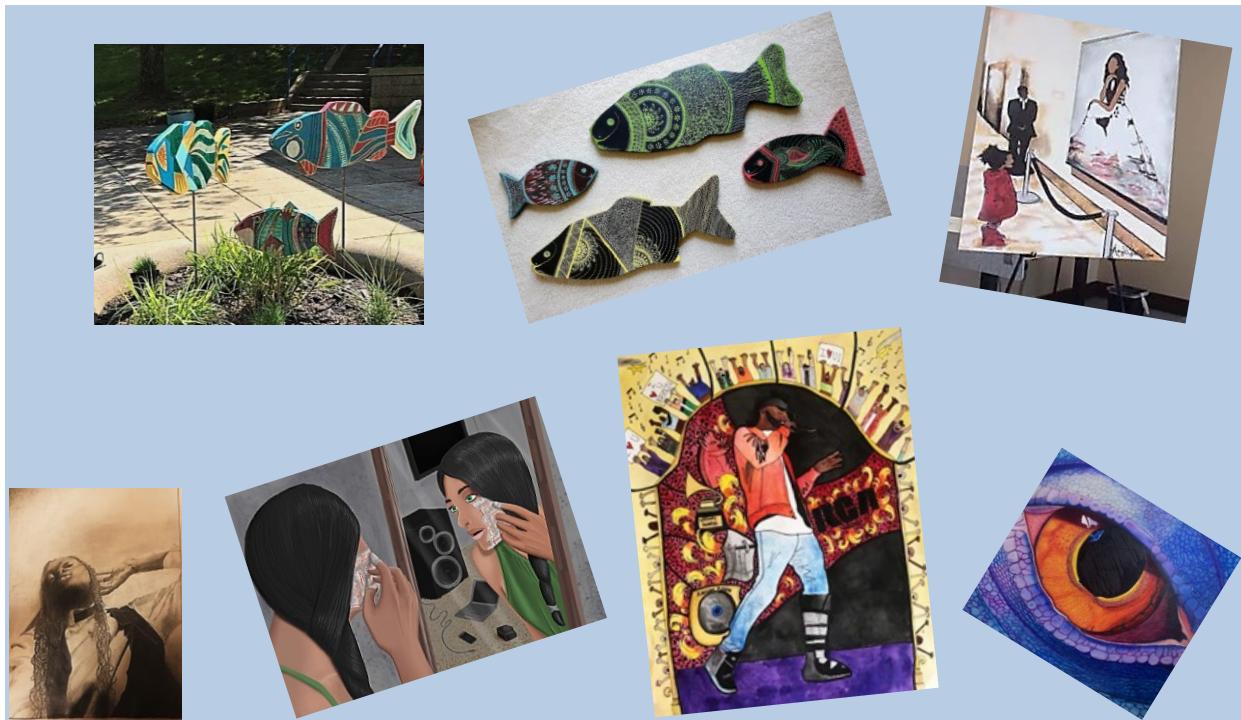


CITY OF LAUREL ARTS COUNCIL



The Year in Review: January - December 2021

City of Laurel Arts Council Annual Report



Who We Are

In 2017 Laurel's Mayor and City Council established a **City of Laurel Arts Council (LAC)** to encourage and invest in visual and performing arts and arts education. After a public call for applicants, the City appointed 11 residents to 2- and 3-year terms on the all-volunteer council. Our first meeting was in October, 2017. Our liaison to city government is the Director of the Department of Parks & Recreation, aided by staff of the Department of Economic & Community Development. For more information about us and for past annual reports, please see <https://www.cityoflaurel.org/boards/commissions/laurel-arts-council> .

Vision To create a vibrant arts community that enriches the lives of those who live or work in Laurel and those who visit.

Mission To encourage the growth of the arts to benefit all people in the City, to organize the display of art in public places throughout the City, to provide diverse and engaging arts programming, and to increase advocacy and opportunities for local artists and arts organizations.

Goals To advocate for the arts and develop arts programs, outreach, and partnerships that:

- Cultivate participation in the arts across ages, races, cultures, and other facets of Laurel's diversity.
- Promote artistic expression and achievement in all forms of visual and performing arts.
- Support life-long learning through the arts, particularly in arts education for young people.
- Ensure that the arts are accessible to every resident.

Approach To develop arts programs and events by building partnerships with government, business, education, community organizations, and residents within and outside the City.

- **Work within Laurel** to build on existing resources to develop exhibits and events. Coordinate with the City's planned events, commercial development, and use of open spaces. Draw on the unique features of Laurel as a source for art themes and inspiration: The City's extraordinary diversity, its deep historical roots, and its landscape of river, lakes, parks, and preserves.
- **Reach outside Laurel** to arts organizations in neighboring cities to exchange ideas and coordinate schedules for events. Seek support from arts sponsors in Prince George's County and the State of Maryland. Draw on national resources, for example, those offered by Americans for the Arts.

Meetings The Laurel Arts Council meets the second Tuesday evening of each month. During the coronavirus pandemic, we meet virtually through the City's online meeting platforms. Otherwise, we meet at the Laurel Municipal Center, 8103 Sandy Spring Road, Laurel, MD 20707. The public is welcome to attend. For information about meetings or related matters, please call the Department of Parks & Recreation at 301-725-7800 or email parks@laurel.md.us .

What We Accomplished in 2021

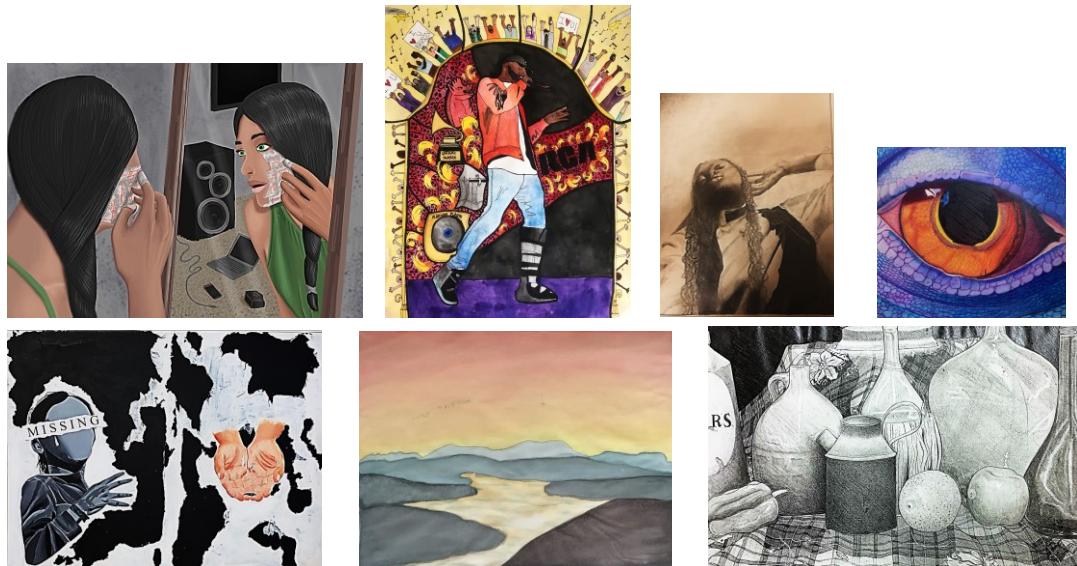
As the coronavirus pandemic continued in 2021, the LAC met on line and carried out most projects virtually or outdoors. Among these projects were school collaborations, a special Juneteenth exhibit, a public art environmental installation, and extensive work with county arts organizations.

We Organized and Promoted School Arts Projects

As part of our commitment to arts education, we continued to collaborate with local schools..

- **Virtual Art Gallery - Laurel High School (May, 2021)** We traditionally mount public exhibits of artwork by Laurel students to shine a light on their talents. In 2021, we exhibited the art on line. Working with Laurel High School's Visual Arts Department, we set up a virtual gallery on Facebook of students' paintings and drawings selected by their art teachers. This gallery was widely shared by the City of Laurel and other organizations.

Impact: The artwork received abundant likes and shares, helped raise community awareness of the vision and accomplishments of Laurel High School students, and gave participating young artists a sense of pride.



Selections from Laurel High School 2021 virtual art gallery, from Laurel Arts Council Facebook.

- **Laurel High School Arts Week (November 17, 2021)** We attended Gallery Night, a virtual presentation of instrumental and choral music, dance, and drama performed by Laurel High students as part of the school's Arts Week. We used social media to promote the event community wide.
- **St. Vincent Pallotti High School Holiday Sing (December, 2021)** We helped to publicize and attended Pallotti High's virtual presentation of holiday song by choral students.

We Engaged the Community through Public Art Projects

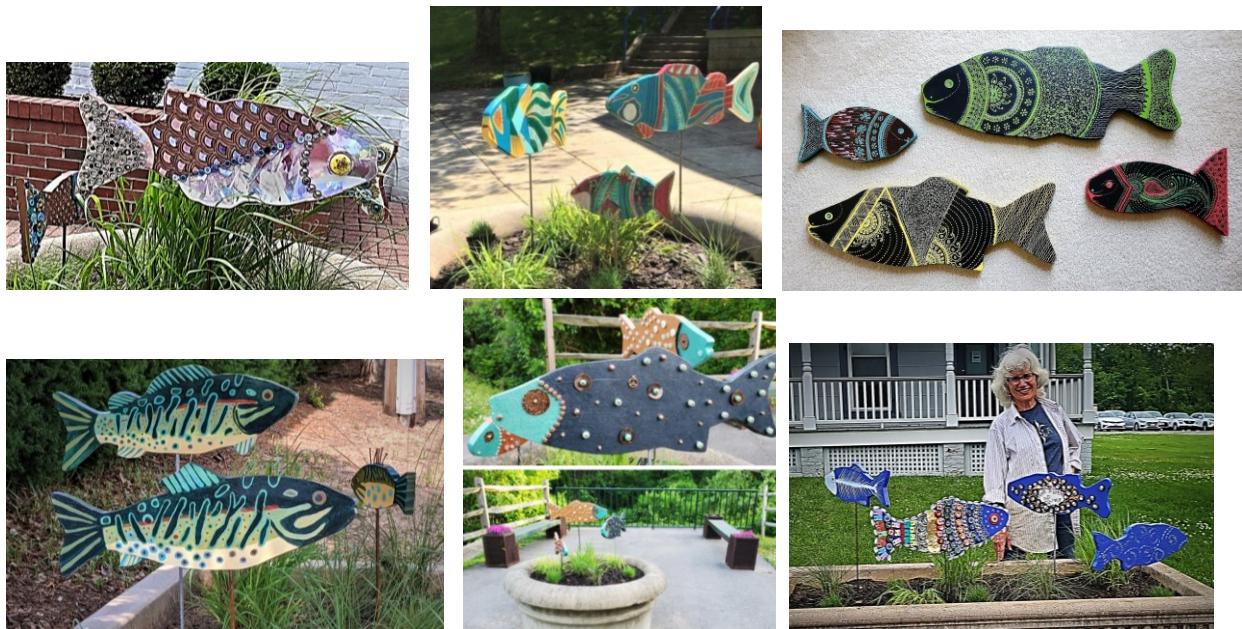
- **City of Laurel Juneteenth Celebration (June 19, 2021)** We organized a Juneteenth-themed exhibit of artwork by local artists to complement the City's first celebration of the Juneteenth holiday, held in the Municipal Center. Our curatorial statement, entitled "The Emancipation of Black Images," tied the art on display to themes of Black struggle, hope, and transcendence:



Selections from 2021 Juneteenth Art Exhibit at Municipal Center, Curated by the Laurel Arts Council.

- **Planter Project (March-June, 2021)** Laurel for the Patuxent (L4P), a local environmental action group focused on sustainability, initiated a joint project with us to call attention to the Patuxent River watershed and the need to safeguard its water and its plant and animal life. In a months-long, multi-phase project, volunteers filled the 10 sidewalk planters along Main Street with soil and planted pollinator-sustaining native grasses. In each planter they anchored metal poles to support fish sculptures. To fashion the sculptures, volunteers cut fish shapes from wood and gave these to local artists to paint and decorate according to each artist's individual style. The finished fish forms were placed in the Main Street planters to create a temporary (2-year) art installation to delight and inform passersby.

Impact: The planter project became a front page story in the *Laurel Leader* <https://www.baltimoresun.com/maryland/laurel/cng-ll-fish-project-20210701-awj6bz2o5ctjdwmegxtfuubda-story.html> and was featured on Laurel TV's Community Spotlight: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1ko1u9XxPtA>. The project became a story about the city and how its environmental and arts communities came together in a public art project that helps revitalize city spaces, attract people to Main Street, and convey the urgent reminder to protect our river and our pollinators.



Sample of fish art from Laurel artists installed in Main Street planters, with project leader from L4P, Cheryl Dyer (bottom right).

We Connected with the Prince George's Arts & Humanities Council (PGAHC)

- **Prince George's County Cultural Arts Study** We participated in this year-long study to develop strategies and recommendations for integrating cultural arts activities into the County's economic development and land use planning. LAC members took part in all five workshops and focus groups over the course of 2021.
Impact: Our feedback is now helping to inform how the Prince George's County Department of Planning, together with PGAHC, shapes the cultural and economic landscape of our region through place-making art and events around the county.
- **Provided arts expertise to PGAHC (May-August, 2021)** LAC members were invited to serve on evaluation panels for submissions for county arts grants. Two LAC members participated in the selection panels for Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 grants, including grants to individual artists and grants to arts education organizations.
- **Sought and won a Public Art Planning Grant for Laurel** The LAC was awarded \$5,000 for public art planning based on our proposal to PGAHC's FY 2022 public art grants competition. Awarded in October, 2021, the grant supports creation of a plan for public art in the city. Included are funds for a part-time public art consultant, a position we advertised through arts departments at local universities. After convening a panel of LAC members to evaluate applicants, we selected a community arts expert with a Master of Fine Arts, who joined us in December, 2021.

Our Financial Report

Most of our 2021 activities took place online using available social media and City platforms. Our expenditures were for materials for the planter project: metal rods, concrete, soil, native plants, and wood for fashioning fish forms. The total of these expenses was \$4,092.

We are grateful to the City of Laurel, the Department of Parks & Recreation, the Department of Economic & Community Development, the City Council and the Mayor for supporting and guiding us throughout the challenges of the continuing pandemic. And we thank the people of Laurel for valuing us and for finding insight and joy through the arts.