

Birds Benches



Michele McCormick

Avian Wildlife Photographer

Artist Ambassador - Phase One

I feel a dynamic connection with the world around me – there is beauty and energy everywhere. As a person for whom communication is a dominant personality trait, I find the desire to share that vision is irrepressible, and photography is my ideal mechanism. I have focused on capturing impactful moments through photography for years, but the advent of COVID gave me new direction. Unable to travel or engage in other photographic opportunities, I looked at my world more closely.

While I have always enjoyed photographing winter migratory birds, in the past I viewed that as a seasonal opportunity. COVID forced me to look for new inspiration, and I realized this region is home to wonderful birds throughout the year. Some are based here, some come for specific seasons, some stop over on migratory routes to other destinations. Once I began exploring the avian world in depth – I was hooked.

In October of 2021 I began to create a Daily Avian Image and short blog which now has more than 400 subscribers. My objects are to entertain, to inform, and to encourage an appreciation that cultivates support for conservation. Selfishly speaking, avian photography combines so many of my pleasures.

I explore our region and other places around the world seeking birds and working to capture moments that are emotionally evocative. Through the tragedy of a pandemic, I have energized my artistic life in a direction I expect will persist for years to come.





Matthew Flores

Mosaics + Ceramic Tiles

Artist Ambassador - Phase One

I am a ceramic artist whose journey originally began exploring ceramics as a way to create an authentic and unique backdrop to showcase my food and photography.

What started as a visual extension of those passions quickly evolved into a deeper, more robust ceramic practice. Through clay and glaze, I explore texture, color, and form to tell stories—often in unexpected ways. What I strive for in my work is to touch on human emotion and to find the intersection where social responsibility and purpose meets creativity. At the heart of my practice is the process itself. I find beauty in the transformation that occurs when heat meets clay. I forage for much of my own material, formulate my own glazes, and find creative ways to apply and combine them to unlimited results.

Additionally, I enjoy experimenting with alternative firing methods such as wood, pit, and raku firing, among others. Every piece I create carries a technique, a concept, and a personal story. Sharing these stories allows me to place my work in a broader social context. My journey as a ceramic artist began with my love of food and photography and has since evolved into a conscious social practice where I am now able to work directly with communities to create works of public art, collaborate with other artists, and use my art to bring attention to issues I care deeply about.





Heather Hogan

Mix-Media Assemblage

Artist Ambassador - Phase One

I'm a Sacramento-based artist, professor, and designer who blends old and new media into vibrant, layered work. I love mixing analog collage, digital design, and quirky upcycled materials—and I often invite the community to take part in the creative process.

My work explores themes of place, persistence, and the evolving roles of women. Lately, I've been especially interested in how shared symbols—like birds—can help us connect to public space and to one another. I've turned community stories and ideas into bold, place-proud visuals that appear on magazine covers, murals, bike trails, and gallery walls across California.

Birds often show up in my work as both visual motifs and metaphors. Their resourcefulness, strange habits, and migratory journeys make them fascinating to observe—and deeply relatable. I'm drawn to the idea that noticing birds helps us notice our environment, our neighbors, and our own resilience.

In addition to public art, I lead workshops that combine artmaking with storytelling, always centered on curiosity and connection. I teach design and modern making at Sacramento City College, where I guide students through creative prototyping, collaboration, and iteration.

Whether I'm printing, painting, sewing, or installing, my practice is about joyful experimentation, thoughtful engagement, and building something meaningful with others. I see public art as an opportunity to pause, reflect, and imagine what's possible in the spaces we share.





Shonna McDaniels

Quilting + Mixed Media

Artist Ambassador - Phase One

It is my belief that our memories and experiences are directly responsible for who we become. What we are exposed to, what we read, the toys we play with as children, what we view... I attribute this thought to my deep-seated desire to make sure I'm sending a clear message (with my work) and that the message I am sending is "saying something" important; because if I believe we are shaped by our memories, as an artist, I must also believe that I too play a small part in shaping and shifting the views of anyone who comes in contact with my life's work.

The primary theme that drives my art practice today is celebrating the beauty of the Black woman. I've always been devoted to creating portraits that are inspired by the Black woman's joy, hope, love, dignity, strength, and essence of her soul. I work with layers of African textiles, collage paper, design patterns, symbols, and vibrant skin tones.

Each layer serves its very own meaningful purpose. It is my hope that with each theme I explore and with each portrait I create, something vital is etched into the memory of the viewer and deep dialogue and conversations are created.



Ene Ostersaas-Constable

Ecological + Interactive Art

Artist Ambassador - Phase One



I am passionate about creating engaging artwork that enriches public green spaces, connecting people to place, to each other, and to nature, fostering community environmental stewardship. For over 20 years, I have worked as partner with my husband in the artist duo of WOWHAUS, creating ecologically-oriented artworks nationwide, working with an array of public parks, wilderness areas, botanical gardens, and green spaces.

Collaboration with ecologists, landscape architects and educators has informed my art practice, deepening my understanding of the vital role birds play within local ecosystems. I am eager to contribute via engaging, accessible artwork that delights and engages the public. I create beautifully crafted, enduring sculptures that invite hands-on, multisensory engagement. I use a collaborative, highly site-responsive design process, integrating artwork within the environs to create immersive, interactive art experiences that engage and inform the public. My clients include Green Bay Botanical Garden, COPIA Kids Garden, Edible Schoolyard Project, Peralta Hacienda Historical Park, San Francisco Parks Department, Charlotte Rail Trail and Emeryville Greenway. Leveraging expertise in an array of highly durable exterior grade materials including stone, bronze, GFRC, stainless steel, mosaic and more, I create memorable art experiences that invite engagement on a human scale, sparking moments of discovery and joy as people interact with the artwork and the nature all around them.

Collaboration and community engagement are essential to my practice; I spearhead community engagement in the work of WOWHAUS and am excited that Community Engagement is part of your vision for this project. I enjoy including diverse community members of all ages in my creative process, inviting engagement and dialogue.





Zoe Dufour

Sculptor

Artist Fabricator - Phase Two

Sculpting gives me a dynamic framework to engage with the world. My practice is a conscious study of nature, people, and animals, born of affinity, love, and curiosity. This study allows me to become more aware of my perceptions and biases so I can better understand our world as it exists, in consensual reality.

I am fascinated by the intersection of how we see ourselves, and how others see us, and how we experience the world. Sculpture is my medium for exploring that liminal space between our individual perceptions. I love sculpture, because it engages us in the dimensions of depth, the dimension we actively inhabit.

When we reach for a cup of coffee or look to see a mountain in the distance, walk through the woods, or move in relationship to a sculptural work of art, we are experiencing fields of depth. A sculpture inhabits the same planes of space we do, which makes sculpture so impactful.

My work is centered on naturalistic form, and the dialog that is created when we engage in art with physical presence. Nature-based forms are deeply ingrained in our subconscious communication, a visual language we engage in that inhabits the space before articulable thought.

In my work I question where our perceptions overlap, creating intersubjective or sharable "truths". I want to create artistic objects of service, that we respond to both consciously and unconsciously. The beauty of "truth" being a qualitative relationship to experience. Sculpture to me, is a vehicle for connection and shared humanity.





Jodi Connelly

Site-Based Research Artist

Artist Fabricator - Phase Two

My art practice is rooted in site-specific, research-based explorations that examine the impact of industrialization on our environment, intersections between native and nonnative ecologies, and the embodied experience of moving through different geographies. The work is research based, both in historical context and material process. I work directly on the land to collect clay, soil, or charred trees from wildfires for use in installations, photography, drawing, and sculpture. This labor of walking across terrain to gather materials also helps me create intimacy with the land I study.

I then employ these materials evoke a sense of place- to engage the viewer in an experience of the landscape. Working intimately with the land has informed my artistic vision by illuminating the complex political and ecological systems at play in the era of the Anthropocene. By placing ecological issues in an artistic context, my work functions as a call to for environmental stewardship.

For Embodied Terrains, I collected clay and soil from places I have lived in California, orienting them in a vertical format to be in relationship with the viewer's body as they move through the space. Fractured River is a carved drywall map of the Yuba Goldfields, formed by toxic mining tailings that flooded the Sacramento Valley and transformed its topography in the early part of the 20th century. I have also researched clay soils as material for rammed earth construction and printed a manual on how to build garden beds with this material to share with the community.





Wes Horn

Ceramic Mosaic Artist
Artist Fabricator - Phase Two

As a Central Valley based sculptor and fabricator, I am deeply inspired by the natural environment and the community stories that shape our shared spaces. The Birds and Benches project presents an exciting opportunity to create public artworks that reflect both the physical beauty of Sacramento's ecosystems and the everyday experiences of its people—something that has long been a central focus of my artistic practice.

My work explores the relationship between form, function, and storytelling. I specialize in metalwork that integrates symbolic and organic shapes—often drawing from nature, folklore, and urban textures. With Birds and Benches, I see a unique opportunity to bring these themes together through sculptural benches and bird-focused artwork that are not only visually engaging but also offer meaningful, interactive experiences for community members.

Throughout my career, I've prioritized accessibility and public engagement and a community build model. Whether creating steel sculptures that mirror native flora and fauna or reimagining functional objects as narrative vessels, I aim to make art that feels rooted in its place and resonates with and engages a diverse audiences. This project's emphasis on functional artworks and bird imagery directly aligns with my strengths and interests.





Nicole Rathburn

Sculptor

Artist Fabricator - Phase Two

My artistic practice is an opportunity to make connections, building bridges between person and place by drawing the viewer out of the internal fog and diverting their attention to the unobserved. I hope for my artwork to encourage these connections, contributing to a sense of place. Visually I am often interested in enlarging small patterns and subtle movements found in nature, using these textures to evoke a sense of compassion.

I am driven to create public art because I believe it connects us to our environment and each other. I hope to spread waves of kindness and joy through my work by putting into physical form the feeling and sensation of what even the smallest moment of understanding between living creatures can be. I hope interactions between the public and my work will resonate emotionally, enriching their day as they carry the experience forward.

In addition to my own practice, I have fifteen years of experience in bronze casting and fabrication and co-own an art bronze foundry in Tacoma. My skills as a foundry artisan have given me a solid foundation for creating durable and low-maintenance public artwork, and I have created and installed several permanent and temporary outdoor pieces throughout the Pacific Northwest. When creating site-specific work, I feel technical aspects can influence my practice as much as the conceptual. I enjoy leaning into my knowledge of fabrication and long-lasting materials to design pieces that can safely withstand public interaction while accentuating their surroundings, turning sites into memorable destinations.





Mandy Palasik

Architect

Artist Fabricator - Phase Two

As a site-responsive artist with an architectural background, my work integrates placemaking with interactive elements to activate space, foster connection, and enhance the user experience. I'm passionate about creating art that brings people together—transforming familiar environments into meaningful, inclusive experiences that resonate on both personal and collective levels.

Each project begins with a deep investigation into the historical, cultural, and environmental context of a place. Through observation, dialogue, and community engagement, I uncover narratives that shape the conceptual framework for the work. I see my role as both artist and facilitator—translating stories and voices into three-dimensional spatial experiences that reflect and elevate the communities they serve.

My creative practice is evolving and experimental, often blurring the line between architecture, art, and design. It spans a broad spectrum—from temporary to permanent, aesthetic to functional—tailored to each site's conditions, goals, and identities. No two pieces are the same; every project is an authentic response to its unique context. Unbound by a single medium or style, I draw upon architectural tools such as geometry, light, color, texture, transparency, and scale to shape immersive environments that invite interaction and reflection. When appropriate, I integrate functional elements—such as seating, shade, or circulation pathways—to further enhance engagement.

With over fifteen years of experience as a licensed architect and project manager, I bring both creative vision and technical rigor to my work. My goal is to design experiences that inspire curiosity, foster connection, and cultivate a lasting sense of place.





Eyob Weldmariam

Sculptor

Artist Fabricator - Phase Two

I grew up in East Africa, Ethiopia, and I was surrounded by wild life and nature. I started to like art at a very young age. I received multiple Art Awards throughout my school years. I had a burning desire to conserve wildlife so I decided to take a leap of faith and started to make sculptures, which were published in public parks and including the residential Palace in Addis Ababa. I believe that “where nature is, there is life.”

I became one of the youngest Sculptor in Ethiopia. I knew I needed to live out my passion and continue my calling to create sculptures. So, I moved to Sacramento, California five years ago because my art teachers and mentors encouraged me saying, California is the state of Art and Culture.

I create animal sculptures because I believe that it's our responsibility to conserve nature and inspire the next generation. I specialize in making external and internal sculptures out of clay, fiberglass, metal and galvanized wire. Sculpting is not only my livelihood but my dream and passion. I hope to serve our community by helping with wild life conservation and climate change.

I truly believe that art can connect the community with nature because we can't live without it. I know that art has the power to unite everyone no matter the race, age, culture or background. I hope to get an opportunity to inspire others with my sculptures and to create a gathering space this beautiful state, California.





Thomas Ramey

Sculptor

Artist Fabricator - Phase Two

My sculptural work is shaped by a powerful synthesis of industrial craftsmanship, geometric design, and a search for emotional resonance. With over 25 years of experience, I strive to bring precision and balance to the chaos of raw material, forging order and beauty from industrial remnants. My early immersion in engineering and fabrication deeply informs my philosophy and approach to art.

I favor mild steel as my primary medium, drawn to its malleability and expressive potential. I approach each piece with obsessive attention to detail, texture, and structural integrity, often creating large-scale installations that stand over 16 feet tall and weigh thousands of pounds. My process is both meditative and exacting, reflecting my belief that the act of making—shaping, welding, and refining—can channel both personal history and universal emotion.

A central concept in my art is the interplay between geometric order and organic spontaneity. I see my work as “rooted in balanced perspectives,” seeking a natural flow that emerges from the “organized chaos” inherent in geometric forms. This tension is palpable in my sculptures, which are clean yet complex, engineered yet alive with kinetic energy. Through my work, I invite viewers to contemplate the fragments of their own imagination, blurring the boundaries between function and form, material and metaphor.

My DIY ethos and experience curating independent art shows and collaborating with architects and designers have reinforced my commitment to community and creative freedom. I view art as a means of transformation—both of material and of self—where every project is an opportunity to push boundaries and discover new possibilities.



Liv Losee-Unger

Muralist

Artist Fabricator - Phase Two



My name is Liv Losee-Unger, and I'm a muralist working under the name ORLUarts. I specialize in vibrant, large-scale artworks that celebrate community, honor the environment, and inspire joy. I've been painting murals professionally since 2018 and launched my solo mural business in 2021. Since then, I've completed over fifty major public artworks in America and abroad, in partnership with businesses, cities, nonprofits, and advocacy organizations. I bring extensive experience managing complex projects, collaborating with multiple stakeholders, and creating monumental artworks that reflect diverse community voices and approach to art.

Community collaboration is at the heart of my practice. I've led unique projects like an eight-month mural workshop with incarcerated individuals at California State Prison Solano, taught environmental advocacy through art with students and community members, and partnered with organizations like Habitat for Humanity to bring art into underserved neighborhoods. I am confident in my ability to create imagery that is sensitive to the culture of the communities in which the artworks live, and my design flexibility is evident in my diverse portfolio. I've begun to explore sculpture, illustration, and printmaking, expanding my portfolio to a wider range of styles and mediums. I am extremely passionate about this work: being a public artist means more to me than just painting walls; it's about storytelling, connecting with people, and infusing positive vibes into the spaces I work on. Thank you for considering my work.





Arteclettica

Sculptor Team

Artist Fabricator - Phase Two

We embrace the idea of complementarity of the Arts. The uniqueness of a piece of art, stimulus of imagination and creativity, enriches our existence. We strive towards a global art, respectful of the past, projected to the future, thought out from the smallest detail. We endeavor to honor our surroundings and all people, our environment, creating something not anonymous, taking inspiration from the site, stories, nature, people and events.

What really interests us about this project in particular is having the opportunity to integrate our artwork into a park setting providing a welcoming spot for its visitors to absorb the beauty of their natural surroundings. We believe that we can learn a lot by observing birds, and other creatures in movement, hopefully feeling a sense of connection and a desire to protect our amazing environment.

We are dreamers and we would like to share a vision where planners, engineers, architects, artists, designers, landscapers, restorers would collaborate in harmony working together like an orchestra to create an amazing, timeless, beautiful environment where we all can live and prosper in peace.





Ember de Boer

Sculptor + Creative Strategist

Engagement Manager

De Boer received her B.F.A. in Sculpture and Philosophy from California State University- Sacramento, an A.A. in Visual Arts from Johnson County Community College, and began her education at Kansas City Art Institute in 2014 in the PCAL program. She has been included in dozens of group shows across Northern California to the Midwest, and received features from ABC10, KCRA, Solving Sacramento, SNR, State Hornet, the Sacramento Bee, and Parabola Magazine.

De Boer’s public art projects include “Checkmate” in collaboration with the Johnson County Community College Center for Sustainability; her work has been on view since 2018. The recently completed “Zine Dispenser”, 2024 featuring a visual media and interactive communication campaign in partnership with the California Arts Council and City of Sacramento, exhibited at the Robert T. Matsui Gallery. And, , de Boer’s installation “Bicameral Ether” a textural immersive landscape featured in the now demolished PAC-SAT building as a part of the Coordinates Exhibition, 2022.

An award-winning multidisciplinary artist, de Boer is in the collections of Robert T. Matsui Gallery, Johnson County Community College, and Applied Materials. A 2025 Creative Growth Fellow, a year long fellowship by the City of Sacramento, a 2023 California Creative Corps Fellow an Artist in Residence in Government program provided by the California Arts Council. And an Artist in Residence two consecutive years in a row, for a month-long collaborative performance and choreography project with Capitol Dance Project created by the local Sacramento Ballet. Most recently, part of her curatorial debut, “/Altered/ State” 2025, was a multidisciplinary group show of 10 regional and international artists, this exhibition was featured by Solving Sacramento, and SNR.

With a diverse background as a business owner, a non-profit founder of Community Shop Class, an arts administrator for organizations like City of Sacramento and Friends of Sacramento Arts, and many years in fabrication and skilled trades, de Boer has expanded the boundaries of artists’ role and challenged the function of living artists through her cross-sector work and collaborations.





Alice Aida Ayers

Artist Mentor

Aida is an interdisciplinary artist and arts educator whose career spans over three decades across the Americas, Africa, and Europe. She holds a Bachelor of Arts and a Master's degree in Art Education, and her professional journey has included residencies in theatre, visual arts, and art therapy, as well as roles as an adjunct professor.

Since 1989, Ayers has been a dedicated teaching artist, completing residencies in more than 300 schools, colleges, community centers, and libraries. She has designed and led art programs, art therapy initiatives, and restorative practices for diverse audiences, while also collaborating with government agencies to organize community events such as art camps, mural projects, and cultural exchanges.

For the past six years, Ayers has focused her practice on working with incarcerated men and women, as well as women in recovery and re-entry programs. In both the studio and classroom, she encourages students to question assumptions, examine their relationships to ideas, and connect insights to broader cultural and societal contexts.

Ayers' personal artwork in textile arts explores spirituality, tradition, and belief systems drawn from African and American cultures. She works with ethnic, hand-dyed, and repurposed fabrics, found objects, and collected artifacts, using layering and hand-stitching to create rich textures that reimagine the practices of her childhood through a contemporary lens.

In addition to her visual arts practice, Ayers is the author of three books: *It's Me I'm Running From*, *Tomorrow's Garden*, and *Lead with Love*. Her work as an artist, educator, and author reflects a lifelong commitment to cultural exploration, creative expression, and community transformation.





Ronnie Frostad

Bronze Foundry Owner + Sculptor

Artist Mentor



Ronnie Frostad was born in Los Angeles, California but grew up in the Sacramento, California area. Her childhood was surrounded by a world of art, as her mother was a prolific 2-dimensional artist. Ronnie showed an early natural gift for art and developed her own techniques of painting, sculpting in clay, and calligraphy. She won art contests and designed the cover of her high school yearbooks in her junior and senior years.

Following graduation from high school, she felt the necessity to study for a career that was more secure than that of art, although she still maintained her love of art. She earned a degree as a registered dental assistant in 1978 from Sacramento City College and worked in this field for 5-years. This field allowed her to earn a living, but she knew this was not her calling, and she decided to pursue a career in art, wherever that path would lead her.

Ronnie studied art at American River College and the University of Davis with a strong interest in sculpting. Following her studies, she became manager of a small bronze art foundry in Shingle Springs, California then mid-town Sacramento. She decided to open her own foundry in Rocklin, California in 1998, and soon the foundry produced a number of large-size sculptures by various artists. After 5-years in this facility, the need for a larger foundry became evident, and she moved the foundry to the recently-closed McClellan Air Force Base in Sacramento. This was a 28,000 square-foot foundry that allowed the construction of many monumental-size sculptures including the largest standing lion in the world. However, the growth of McClellan businesses surrounding this foundry did not allow movement of large sculptures out of the foundry, so she moved to her present location in North Natomas, Sacramento in 2015. This foundry is state-of-the-art with an attached art gallery.

Ronnie is the only woman in the United States who owns and operates a foundry on a daily basis. However, besides casting sculptures for other artists, she has continued to sculpt and paint. She has completed and installed many of her own commissioned sculptures including a recently-completed 9-foot "Iron Man" sculpture in Los Angeles, California and a 15-foot "Virgin Mary" sculpture in Mount Shasta, California. She has also taught a semester sculpting class for Consumnes River College, numerous lectures on foundry techniques, and week-end workshops.



Larry Meeks

Public Artist + Sculptor

Artist Mentor

We embrace the idea of complementarity of the Arts. The uniqueness of a piece of art, stimulus of imagination and creativity, enriches our existence. We strive towards a global art, respectful of the past, projected to the future, thought out from the smallest detail. We endeavor to honor our Reverend Larry Meeks is pastor of Williams Memorial Church of God In Christ, Sacramento's mother church. He has a Bachelor of Science degree (B.S.); a Master of Arts in Public Administration (M.P.A.), a Master of Arts Degree in Psychology (M.A.); and two Honorary Doctorate Degrees (Divinity and Humanities).

He was a Nationally Syndicated Columnist over 20 years. During that time, he wrote 1,000 plus columns that were widely read around the world. He covered such diverse issues such as rearing families, race relations, religion, and how to survive in a troubled world.

Larry Meeks was a college professor for the Los Rios Community College District. He taught psychology. He was a consultant and instructor for Sacramento County teaching "Life Skills and Turing Your Life Around" to convicted drug abusers.

Larry Meeks is the Former Director of Health for the State of California. He was appointed to that position by Governor George Deukmejian and served in that capacity for nine years. Larry Meeks served 13 years on Sacramento's Natomas Unified School Board. In 2021 the Natomas Unified School Board named the Larry G. Meeks Academy in his honor. The city also honored his contributions by memorializing his hard work by naming a street after him. Larry Meeks is a Marriage Family and Child Counselor. He has succeeded in changing many lives for the better. He does this God given work free of charge for the members of his congregation.

Larry Meeks is a renowned metal artist, creating both public and private works of art. He has 49 artworks gracing the public landscape in Sacramento. His works can be found at the State Capitol, the Federal Building, City/County Parks, Public Transit Station, Urban Gardens, and many private collections.





Terrence Martin

Artist Mentor

I am a fulltime metal sculpture artist and native of California. The road I traveled to becoming a sculpture artist was not straightforward. I found my early career in Cardiac Surgery to be unfulfilling, so I changed course and pursued my passion for creating metal artwork. I have now been practicing this craft for over 20yrs. I have designed, developed and installed artwork in multiple states and all over Northern California.

I have created both large and small scale sculptures in many unique and popular locations. My work can be seen at Hard Rock Hotel and Casino, The Rose Bowl Hall of Fame Museum, Golden One Arena, North Natomas Aquatic Center and many commercial and public works projects. I am always striving to create artwork that is one of a kind and appealing to both young and old and is inclusive of all ethnicities. Picking elements from the earth, nature, and history.

The images are at once recognizable and tangible objects that appeal to our targeted audience. We try to capture their movement in metal, for a timeless voice that resonates with the spirit of today, tomorrow and in the end, with all people.

