

NC Arts Council Offers Portraits in Resilience Featuring Anna Bryant

This article was written by Andie Freeman, from the April 2025 NC Art Matters. In an effort to participate in the North Carolina Arts Council’s strategic planning goal #3: Promote the Arts through Partnerships and Marketing, we are including this article.

Portraits in Resilience: Anna Bryant

Last fall, Hurricane Helene brought devastation to western North Carolina, threatening the state’s culture and economy. Artists affected by the damage are reflecting on their experiences and finding ways to support one another and the community at large as they find their way forward. Art Matters is shining a light on some of these artists. Meet Anna Bryant, the subject of our first profile in a series we’ve titled “Portraits in Resilience.”

Anna states that she is a “printmaker and muralist with a practice deeply rooted in telling a story about community, healing, and the ties that bind us. I use the symbolic beauty and movement of the human form as a recurring motif to explore connection, resilience, and the interwoven nature of individual and collective experiences.” Her work simplifies the human form, capturing the essence of an experience and tapping into emotional connections to draw the viewer into the scene. “These themes have always been central to my work, but after everything that’s happened in the past year, they feel more relevant than ever,” Anna says. “Whether through large-scale public murals that become part of a community’s shared space or more intimate pieces in my personal portfolio, I want my work to serve as a reminder of our collective strength and how art has the power to connect us.”



Anna Bryant working in her studio. Photo credit: John DuPre, courtesy of Anna Bryant.

Before Helene, Anna was an active organizer and member of a thriving print-making community at Asheville Print Studio + Gallery. The studio was in the River Arts District, and it was destroyed. The building, which provided space for artists, was not the only loss. All the equipment and materials and the work of more than 40 artists were also swept away. The loss changed everything for Anna. Her creative practice was uprooted, and the collaborative community that had been at the heart of the studio was dismantled.

Western North Carolina’s creative community is strong, and Anna has found support through a local artist cohort focused on recovery and rebuilding. “I’m excited to see what new connections and opportunities will arise from that experience,” Anna said. “Amid all this loss, I’ve also experienced an incredible outpouring of support from fellow artists, my community, and organizations that truly understand how vital the arts are to this region. We are so fortunate to live in a place where creativity is valued and nurtured, and that support has kept me motivated to keep pushing forward.”

Over the past six months, she has channeled her energy into creating, despite the loss of a dedicated studio. She has done this by focusing on murals, which allow her to create without a studio, and on finding a new space for the future. Her recent murals can be viewed at the Asheville Tanger Outlets and at the French Broad River Academy. She has more mural projects scheduled for later this year.



Anna Bryant in her studio. Photo credit: John DuPre, courtesy of Anna Bryant.

Artists find a way, and Anna is no exception. She is working with her business partner, Denise Markbreit, to open a new studio, Print House, in downtown Asheville. This space will do more than offer Anna and Denise a new place to create. It will serve also as a hub for creative collaboration and as an educational center, where local, regional, and national artists will offer classes and workshops. Print House will have a public grand opening on May 17. For the month of April, Anna is in residence at Vermont Studio Center, allowing her the time and space to create new work and reflect on the events of the past year.

When asked how the effects of the storm will shape her work, Anna explained, “Everything I create now carries a deeper sense of purpose. I have a deeper understanding of the power that art has to shape and strengthen communities. I’ve witnessed firsthand the tenacity of our region, and my journey of rebuilding is just one of many. It’s truly inspiring to see resilience all around me.”

She continued, “In western North Carolina and the broader Appalachian region, craft traditions are deeply woven into the fabric of daily life, and I’m committed to celebrating and contributing to that rich artistic heritage. I hope my work serves as an ongoing reminder of our resilience, long after the storm. It’s an honor to play a small role in strengthening connections



Anna Bryant painting the mural at French Broad River Academy in Asheville. Photo credit: Conner Tennesen, courtesy of Anna Bryant.

and bringing art and beauty back into our community—whether through public art that becomes part of the landscape or the personal work I contribute to a larger collective story.”

Art Matters is our monthly multi-media newsletter that features profiles on artists, arts industry news, must-see North Carolina arts events, and information about our grants and programs. For further information visit (ncarts.org).

Groewood Village in Asheville, NC, Offers Bi-Annual Studio Tour - May 31 & June 1, 2025

Groewood Village in Asheville, NC, will offer its Bi-Annual Groewood Village Studio Tour, on May 31 and June 1, 2025, from noon to 5pm each day. May 31 & June 1 (12 - 5 PM)

During this event, the resident artists at Groewood Village will open up their studios to the public, allowing visitors to gain insight into their creative process and view their most recent works. This is a free, self-guided, explore-at-your-own-pace tour.

Additionally, these creatives will have pieces available for purchase at the adjacent Groewood Gallery, which is offering a 10% discount on nearly all items and complimentary libations from Metro Wines.



Metalsmith Tom Reardon

Groewood Village features eight working artist studios and a yoga studio, housed in a historic building originally constructed for the weaving operations of Biltmore Industries. Once a key player in the Appalachian Craft Revival of the early 20th century, Biltmore Industries was renowned for producing the celebrated Biltmore Handwoven Homespun. Today, these same workshops are alive with creativity, as resident artists craft jewelry, pottery, sculpture, and more, honoring the legacy of craftsmanship that began here over a century ago.

Resident artists include: Chris Abell

American Folk Art in Asheville, NC, Offers Annual Face Jug Show

The American Folk Art in Asheville, NC, will present its *13th Annual Face Jug Show*, on view from May 7 - 28, 2025. A reception will be held on May 9, from 5-8pm.

It’s the most wonderful time of the year! Join us as we dedicate the month of May to the weirdly wonderful face jug tradition. Not for the faint of heart, these culturally iconic vessels are often strange, sometimes spooky, and always full of personality. Now in its thirteenth year, our Annual Face Jug Show introduces a storied pottery tradition to a new audience each year, while also reconnecting our most loyal collectors.



Work by Stephen H. Arrison

The face jug began to appear in these parts in the very early 1800s. In those days, self-sufficiency ruled and handmade, locally-crafted clayware was common. Our regional soils contain all the elements needed to make hardy clay and our forests plenty of wood for the fueling of kilns. Over the years, popularity of these face vessels has waxed and waned, but the tradition has managed to survive and even thrive. Today, face jugs are an eagerly sought after & widely collected part of



Glass sculpture by Carl Powell

(wooden flutes and whistles), Rick Ekerd (blown glass), Melissa Engler & Graeme Priddle (sculptural wood art), Lisa Gluckin (ceramic art), Carl Powell (glass sculpture), Helen Purdum (ceramic art), Tom Reardon & Kathleen Doyle (jewelry), and Brent Skidmore (fine furniture & sculptural wood art).

The artist studios are located in the same building as the Biltmore Industries Homespun Museum, directly next door to Groewood Gallery. Free parking is available on-site.

The second weekend of the Bi-Annual Groewood Village Studio Tour will take place on Sept. 13 & 14, 2025.

Groewood Village is a privately owned historic Asheville destination located adjacent to the Omni Grove Park Inn. This site once housed the weaving and woodworking operations of Biltmore Industries, an Arts and Crafts enterprise co-founded by Edith Vanderbilt. Today, the 11-acre property - listed on the National Register of Historic Places - is home to Groewood Gallery, working artist studios, the Estes-Winn Antique Car Museum, and the Biltmore Industries Homespun Museum.

For further information check our NC Commercial Gallery listings or visit (groewood.com).



Work by Michael Gates

our mountain heritage. Wood-fired kilns remain the popular favorite, but there are some who experiment with gas- or electric-fired kilns, either for convenience, curiosity, or to achieve bright colors.

At the heart of our *Annual Face Jug Show* are traditional creators like legacy potter Wayne Hewell, a 5th generation farmer and face jug maker in the mountains of Georgia. Furtive sideways glances, cigars smoked all the way down to the end, corn-cob stoppers from his own farm, and twisting, pointed ears are the defining characteristics of Wayne’s work and lend a humor to his face jugs that is absolutely charming.

But what would a show celebrating the Face Jug be without variety? One of the greats in that department is local Asheville potter Mike Ball, who combines sacred geometric patterning with a unique and wonderful madness that is all his own. Mike’s creativity and sculptural abilities lead to some incredibly striking pieces, and compelled him to pioneer his infamous and much-collected eyeball jugs.

The 14 potters will be featured in the continued on Page 29

The deadline each month to submit articles, photos and ads is the 24th of the month prior to the next issue. This will be May 24th, at 5pm, for the June 2025 issue and June 24, at 5pm for the July 2025 issue. After that, it’s too late unless your exhibit runs into the next month. But don’t wait for the last minute - send your info now. And where do you send that info? E-mail to (info@carolinaarts.com).