



Symposium Presenters

Pre-recorded Opening Remarks:



Dr. Maria Rosario Jackson
Chair, National Endowment for the Arts

For more than 25 years, Dr. Maria Rosario Jackson's work has focused on understanding and elevating arts, culture, and design as critical elements of healthy communities. Her work blends social science and arts- and humanities-based approaches to comprehensive community revitalization, systems change, the dynamics of race and ethnicity, and the roles of arts and culture in communities. In January 2022, Dr.

Jackson became the 13th chair of the National Endowment for the Arts, the first African American and Mexican American woman in that position. Previously, she served on the National Council on the Arts, to which she was appointed in 2012 by President Barack Obama. In her long career in strategic planning, policy research and evaluation with philanthropy, government, and nonprofit organizations, she has served as an advisor on philanthropic programs and investments at national, regional, and local foundations, as well as in advisory and leadership positions with arts, cultural, and equity foundations and organizations. For almost ten years, she also served as a senior advisor for Arts and Culture and Strategic Learning, Research and Evaluation at the Kresge Foundation. Dr. Jackson is currently on leave from Arizona State University, where she is a tenured Institute Professor in the Herberger Institute for Design and the Arts. In that role, she has led the Studio for Creativity, Place and Equitable Communities and held an appointment in the Watts College of Public Service and Community Solutions (2017-2022).

Session 1: Designing for Participation: Creative Campus Voting Project



Stephanie Rowden
Sound Artist
Associate Professor of Studio Art, University of Michigan

Stephanie Rowden is a sound artist whose work encompasses projects for radio, podcast, installation and participatory public art. Drawn to the magnetic qualities of sound and story, her experimental audio documentaries and essays explore human motivations and inter-relationships. Recent projects include a series of audio tours — from a curatorial installation and audio essay about the impulse to collect (for the Berman Museum at Ursinus College) to a guided audio walk inspired by a story by Jorge Luis Borges (through the labyrinthine U-M Hatcher Graduate Library.) Most recently, Rowden's interest in student-centered civic engagement has sparked the [Creative Campus Voting Project](#), a research initiative she leads with Stamps colleague Hannah Smotrich. Their ongoing project is focused on creative interventions — online, in public spaces, on campus and in the classroom — that support peer-to-peer interactions to enliven college-age voter participation.



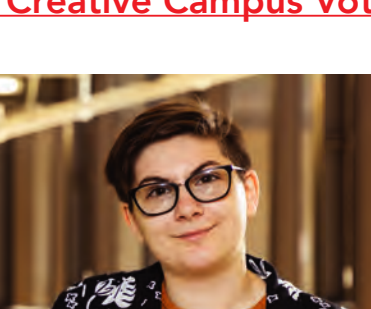
Hannah Smotrich
Visual Communications Designer
Associate Professor of Design, University of Michigan

Smotrich is a visual communication designer whose research explores how design can make the possibilities for change visible, accessible, and actionable. She collaborates with experts across a broad range of fields — public policy, history, law, cultural anthropology, medicine, business — as well as with creative colleagues on projects designed to improve outcomes for individuals and communities. [Creative Campus Voting Project](#), an initiative she co-leads with Stephanie Rowden, investigates how creative interventions — online, on campus and in the classroom — can catalyze peer-to-peer interactions that increase college-age voting. [Toward Thriving](#), a project she co-leads with Stephanie Tharp, is designing and testing the efficacy of a positive psychology intervention for chronic pain patients.

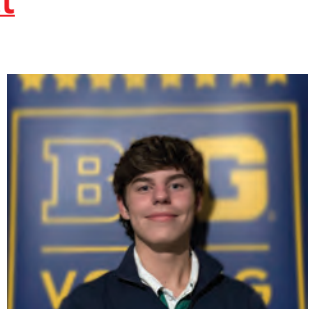
University of Michigan Students Creative Campus Voting Project



Madeline Shepherd
U-M Stamps School
BFA '22

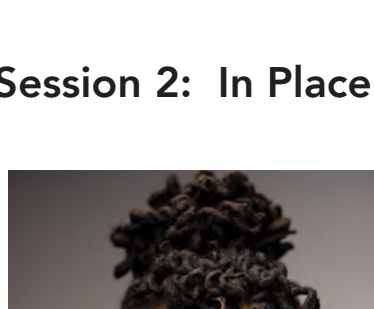


Ren Strawn
U-M Stamps School
BFA '23



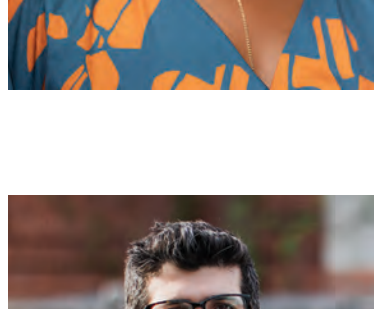
Ben Leavitt
U-M LSA, '24
History & French

Session 2: In Place: Artists and Designers as Catalysts and Accomplices



Melani N. Douglass
Conceptual Artist, Curator
Founder, Family Arts Museum

Socially engaged artist and curator Douglass is the founder of the award winning [Family Arts Museum](#) - a migratory institution focused on the celebration of family as fine art, home as curated space, and community as gallery. Melani's art and life practice is rooted in rituals of healing informed by ancestral technology and communal connections. Melani was recently named East of the River Artist in Residence and a Roots to Sky Fellow as a part of the Humanities in Place initiative of the Mellon Foundation. Her work has been highlighted by the New York Times, Atlas Obscura, Shondaland, Bmore Art, American Museum Alliance Magazine, Artnet, and National Geographic.



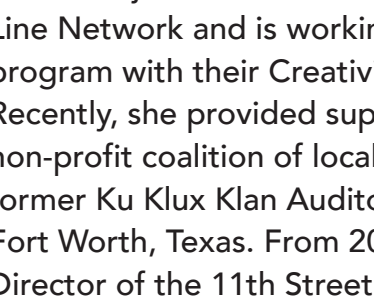
Omar Hakeem, AIA
Architect, Founder and Principal, [To Be Done Studio](#)

Omar Hakeem, AIA, is an architect working in the DC area and nationally to bring greater social and environmental equality through thoughtful design and planning. His firm [To Be Done Studio](#) is focused on geographical, social cultural frontiers and works to address the systemic poverty, health issues that plague these communities. Through these efforts he has completed award winning affordable housing, rapid response disaster housing prototypes, urban bike and pedestrian infrastructure, regional drainage improvements and community based rural planning initiatives. He currently leads the design efforts for the Citizens Institute on Rural Design, an initiative of the National Endowment for the Arts. Omar has been recognized as a Grist 50 "Fixer", an annual list of emerging leaders from across the U.S. who are working on fresh, real-world solutions to our world's biggest climate challenges. In addition to his professional practice he sits on the American Institute of Architect's Strategic Council and Climate Action and Design Excellence Committee.



Irfana Jetha Noorani
Cultural Organizer, Artist, Producer, Administrator

Irfana Jetha Noorani (she/her/hers), is based in Washington, D.C. She leads a cultural consulting practice that supports neighborhoods, public spaces, cultural organizations, and philanthropic institutions with equitable planning processes and programming that center people of color and justice-based outcomes in their work. She currently serves as a Senior Fellow to the High Line Network and is working as a Project Consultant with the Ford Foundation to launch a global program with their Creativity & Free Expression and Civic Engagement & Government teams. Recently, she provided support and project leadership to Transform 1012 N. Main Street, a non-profit coalition of local arts, grassroots, and service organizations working in Fort Worth, Texas. From 2014-2020, Irfana served as a founding staff member and the Deputy Director of the 11th Street Bridge Park, where she led the Bridge Park's cultural programming and investments, collaborating with local stakeholders to develop cultural strategies, and plan community-driven programs and placekeeping initiatives in adjoining neighborhoods.



Amy Shimshon-Santo
Poet, Dancer, Urban Planner
2023 Visiting Artist, UMD Creative Placemaking Minor

Dr. Amy Shimshon-Santo is a writer, teacher, and catalyst who believes that creativity is a powerful tool for personal and social transformation. Her creative and community work nourish inclusive and social ecologies for planetary justice. She has been nominated for an Emmy award, three Pushcart Prizes in poetry and creative nonfiction, a Rainbow Reads Award, and was a finalist for the Nightboat Book Poetry Prize. Her teaching career has spanned research universities, community centers, K-12 schools, arts organizations, and spaces of incarceration. Recent poetry books include: *Catastrophic Molting*, Flower Press 2022; *Even the Milky Way is Undocumented*, Unsolicited Press, 2020; *Empty Bowls of Sky*, Placeholder Press, 2020.



Jen Hughes
Senior Advisor to the Chair on Partnerships, Expansion, & Innovation, National Endowment for the Arts

As senior advisor to the chair for partnerships, expansion, and innovation for the National Endowment for the Arts, Jen Hughes is responsible for supporting the chair's strategic vision by advancing partnerships with federal agencies and philanthropy to extend the mission and reach of the NEA. In this position, she will assist the chair in the development and implementation of key programmatic priorities that elevate the role of arts, culture, and design in advancing the well-being of communities and individuals.

Session 3: Placekeeping + Placemaking: Artists and Designers as Catalysts



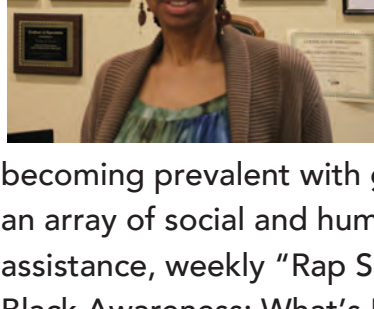
Scott Kratz
Senior Vice President, Building Bridges Across the River
Director, [11th Street Bridge Park](#)

For the last ten years, Scott has been working with the Ward 8 based non-profit [Building Bridges Across the River](#) and the Washington D.C. city government to transform an old freeway bridge into a park above the Anacostia River. The old 11th Street Bridge that connect Capitol Hill with communities east of the river have reached the end of their lifespan, Scott is working with the community to use the base of one of the bridges to create a one of a kind civic space supporting active recreation, environmental education and the arts.



Brenda H. Jones
Founder, Parklands Community Center, Ward 8
Currently a Community Advocate

Founded in 1980, the grassroots organization, Parklands Community Center's (PCC) mission was to enhance the quality of life for "at-risk" residents living in DC, particularly Ward 8. In the mid-70's violence was becoming prevalent in the hands of young residents. To meet our goals, PCC conducted an array of social and human services and programs – ranging from after-school homework assistance, weekly "Rap Sessions" (divided by age groups) that included, Health and Hygiene; Black Awareness; What's Happening in the Community, etc. pool and ping-pong tables, baseball team, yearly seasonal activities, workforce development programs for adults/parents to become self-sufficient; field trips for the whole family, parenting workshops, workforce development, etc. After 35 years of servicing residents with great success, and the lack of consistent funding, PCC closed its doors in 2015. Brenda H. Jones, is a tireless, caring community advocate and resident of Congress Heights. She is a member of the Congress Heights Civic Association and has served on the St. Elizabeth Advisory Commission and Martha's Table Community Advisory Council and many more Board, Commissions, etc. She's been recognized by the two Mayors, DC City Council on several occasions, community groups and businesses. A native Washingtonian, Brenda raised two sons and has two granddaughters.



Vaughn Perry
Director, [SkylandWorkforce Center](#)
[Building Bridges Across the River](#)

Vaughn Perry is the Director of the Skyland Workforce Center, a project of [Building Bridges Across the River](#), where he manages a partnership of nonprofit organizations that provide employment services for local residents. Most recently he was the Director of Equity for the 11th St Bridge Park advancing the organization's efforts towards the recognition and removal of systemic barriers to fair and just distribution of resources, access and opportunity, starting with issues of race. Vaughn's research interests focus on ecojustice. He has published research on engagement and green job/skill development. An "almost" DC native, Vaughn has been a long-term resident and homeowner in Ward 8. Vaughn's research interests focus on ecojustice pedagogies, community engagement and green job/skill development. Vaughn holds a bachelor's degree in IT from Strayer University and a master's degree in Project Management from George Washington University.