



Arts and Humanities Committee 2022-2023 Annual Report



TAKOMA PARK
ARTS



“I felt that you treated us like royalty. Thank you for caring so much about the work that artists are doing.”

- Debra Ambush, artist in *My Soul Opened Up* exhibition

“I had a tremendously positive experience screening my film in the *Takoma Park Arts* series. The city staff were professional, helpful, and supportive. I’m grateful there is this type of local community support for the arts.”

- Joel Gershon, director of *Cirque du Cambodia* documentary

“City arts grants have provided vital support for the Takoma ARTery in our mission to promote more than 300 local artists through our art exhibitions, online artist directory, and public events.”

- Takoma ARTery Co-Founder Eleanor Landstreet

TAKOMA PARK ARTS AND HUMANITIES COMMITTEE

2022-23 ANNUAL REPORT

The arts and humanities highlight our creativity and diversity while binding together our healthy and vibrant community. Our artists, authors, musicians, poets, and filmmakers inspire and entertain, inform and educate, and represent the creative spirit of Takoma Park and reflect our well-known reputation as an arts-friendly city.

The City of Takoma Park's [Takoma Park Arts series](#) resumed in-person events over the past year with free poetry readings, film screenings, and art exhibitions at the Takoma Park Community Center. More performances will be scheduled this fall with concerts, dance, theater, and stand-up comedy. The *Takoma Park Arts* series is one of the most comprehensive arts programs in the D.C. area, and videos of our events have been viewed more than 80,000 times on our [YouTube channel](#), attracting an international audience to our small city.

Recent art exhibitions have included Renee Lachman's *Unsung Heroes* series featuring paintings and charcoal drawings of hard-working city employees. The *My Soul Opened Up* exhibition highlighted the work of three Black female artists, and *Transformation(s)* showcased the powerful potential of paper as an expressive medium.

Takoma Park Poet Laureate Taylor Johnson served as emcee at poetry readings where poets from the D.C. area shared their moving and deeply personal verse. The *Poetry of Struggle and Solidarity* reading included a video of a Ukrainian poet in Kiev reading his poetry about the devastation caused by the ongoing war in his country.

The Arts and Humanities Committee and the Arts and Humanities Division organized a wide range of public art projects, including a sidewalk poetry program, a Free Little Art Gallery offering free art supplies, colorful vinyl wraps on five new bus shelters, and a custom-designed cargo trike that will be used at future pop-up arts events.

Arts and Humanities Coordinator Brendan Smith secured more than \$17,000 in grant funds from the Maryland State Arts Council to supplement city funding this year. The Takoma ARTery arts group also received its third city grant to support their work to promote local artists and their small businesses.

The Arts and Humanities Committee is grateful for the work we've accomplished in partnership with the City Council, city staff, and the wider arts community. We're excited about the future and many new opportunities to continue Takoma Park's longstanding support for the arts.

- Arts and Humanities Committee Chair John W. Warren

Takoma Park Arts and Humanities Committee

John W. Warren (Chair)	Jose Luis Diaz
Leslie Sapp (Vice Chair)	Rick Henry
Ramon Sola (Secretary)	Taylor Johnson
	Linette Lander

Arts and Humanities Division Staff

Arts and Humanities Coordinator Brendan Smith
Arts and Humanities Intern Jessica Padilla

Artwork on preceding page: Portrait of Crossing Guard Harriet Saxton-Alston by Renee Lachman

ART EXHIBITIONS

Art exhibitions in the Takoma Park Community Center shared the creativity and diversity of artists from across the D.C. area. Three Black female artists examined their collective history in the *My Soul Opened Up* exhibition. The *Environment(s)* exhibition explored nature and urban themes. Two photographers and a mixed-media artist shared artwork that was inspired by Sligo Creek in the *Celebrating Sligo Creek* exhibition.



FILM SCREENINGS

Our film screening series showcased the talents of local filmmakers, including a Shorts Night, the *Cirque du Cambodia* documentary about two Cambodian circus performers, and a documentary celebrating the work of the Rhizome DC arts center. Future screenings will explore politics, a D.C. dance company, and the struggles of a garbage truck driver in Mongolia torn between his rural home and his distant job.

POETRY READINGS

Takoma Park Poet Laureate Taylor Johnson served as emcee at poetry readings where poets shared work exploring subjects ranging from deeply personal to global perspectives. The readings featured various themes, including the *Healing Power of Poetry*, *Struggles for Solidarity*, and *Poetry Without Borders*. The *Weaving Words/Bordando Palabras* reading highlighted the work of five bilingual poets who read their poems in Spanish and English.

PUBLIC ART PROJECTS

City staff and the Arts and Humanities Committee organized public art projects across Takoma Park to share art in its many forms with local residents and visitors. Public art takes art out of museums and galleries into the streets to meet people where they live and work.

BUS SHELTER WRAPS



Vinyl wraps were installed on five new bus shelters to enliven community spaces and encourage public transportation as part of the City's Public Art Works initiative. One design immerses bus riders in Takoma Park's first and only coral reef with sea turtles and colorful tropical fish. The second design features artwork and performers from the *Takoma Park Arts* series to help promote future arts events at the Takoma Park Community Center.

FREE LITTLE ART GALLERY

The Arts and Humanities Division partnered with the Operation ARTS Foundation to create Takoma Park's first Free Little Art Gallery that was installed at 7667 Maple Avenue. In a concept similar to little libraries, people of all ages can use free art supplies to make art to leave in the little gallery or take art home that they like. The design celebrates the local Ethiopian community with paintings of traditional Ethiopian reed bowls, burlap sections representing Ethiopia's coffee traditions, and a font inspired by the Amharic language.



SIDEWALK POETRY

More than 125 local residents ranging from 6 years old to seniors entered their original poems in our sidewalk poetry contest. A committee of local poets chose 10 children and 10 adults as winners, who received a \$100 prize and a chance to have their poem stamped in a local sidewalk. Ten of the 20 poems have been stamped in sidewalks so far, and an [online map](#) connects the poems in a 5-mile route to encourage walking and biking. More poems will be stamped during future sidewalk construction and repairs.



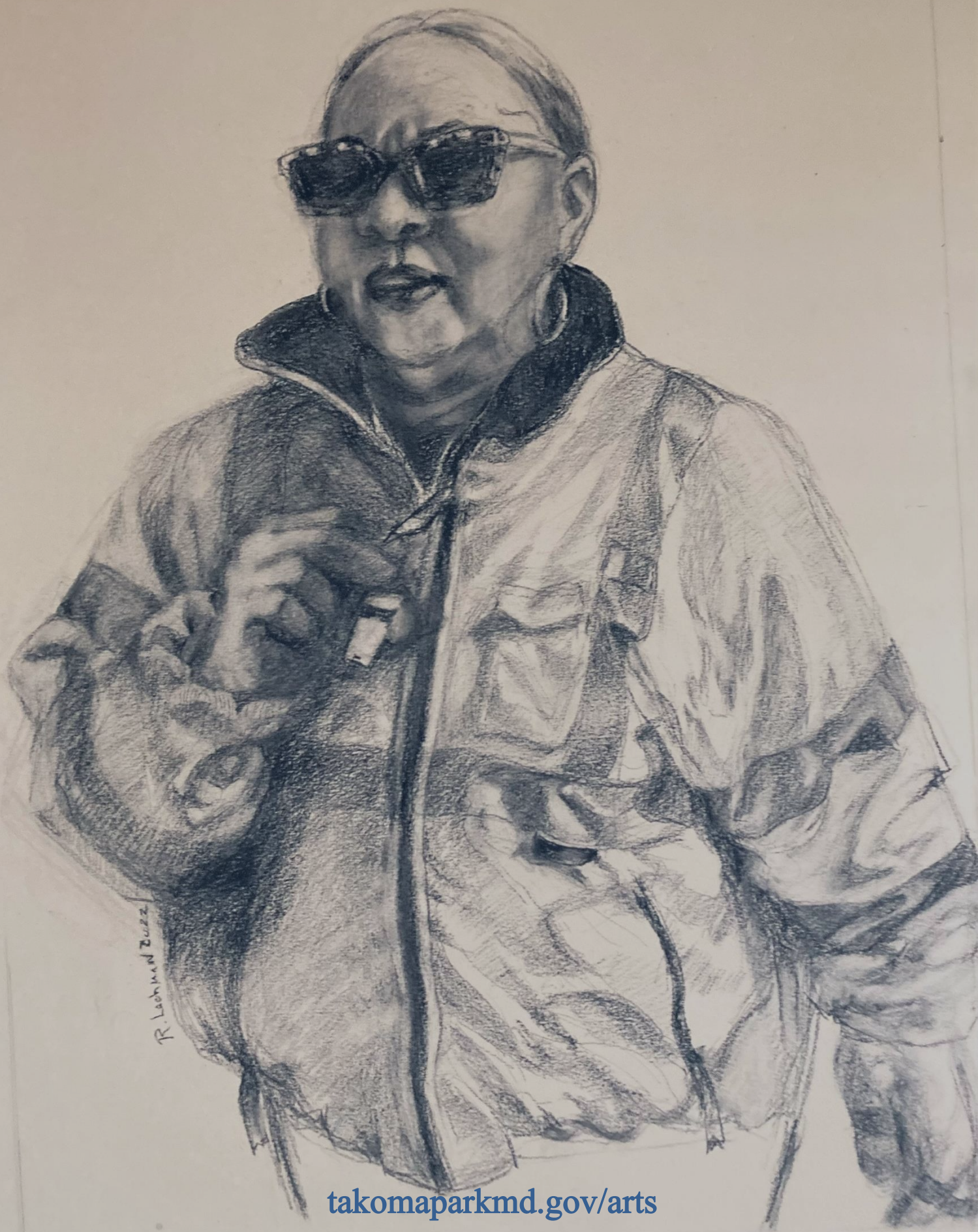
POP-UP EVENTS TRIKE

An electric cargo trike with a custom-designed vinyl wrap and large umbrella will be used at pop-up events to bring fun art projects to city residents in their neighborhoods. The trike is part of an effort to provide more equitable access to the arts by holding events in locations across the city. Projects are being planned at the Crossroads Farmers Market and other locations in Takoma Park.

UNSUNG HEROES EXHIBITION

Local artist Renee Lachman was commissioned to create a new series of work that celebrates dedicated city employees, including trash collectors, librarians, and crossing guards. Many of these workers risked their health and safety to provide critical services during the pandemic. The paintings and charcoal drawings were featured in an exhibition in 2022 at the Takoma Park Community Center.





R. Lachman Buzz