

Gay Bechtelheimer

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Born in Shreveport, Louisiana, Bechtelheimer received her degree in Art Education from Louisiana Tech University and now resides in El Dorado, AR. She works in pastels, watercolor, acrylic and mixed media. She states, "I have a visual, cerebral, and emotional connection with what captivates my attention, what I want to express, be it commonplace or sublime. My art reflects what I have been looking at and thinking about. Her work is characterized by brilliant color, dramatic contrast, and distinct mood.

COMMUNITY PROJECTS

Project Name: [Warner Brown Art Public Art Re-Installation](#)

Dates: 2020-2023

Collaborations: The Share Foundation, Murphy Arts District, South Arkansas Historical Preservation Society, South Arkansas College

Locations: Various public access locations in El Dorado, Arkansas: MAD Amphitheater, MAD front lawn, pocket park next to Rialto Theater, and the South Arkansas Historical Preservation Society Museum lawn

Project Cost: \$165,000

Funded By: The Share Foundation

Target Audience: South Arkansas residents and those visiting

Cost to Audience: Free for public viewing

Purpose: Saving art of historical significance from the old Warner Brown Hospital, whose original intent was to provide history of South Arkansas as well as bring mental health and wellness through visually aesthetic art.

Description: In 2023, I completed a three-year public art project between Murphy Arts District and the SHARE Foundation. The monumental sculpture relief series, *Arkansas History*, created for the community in 1982 by Tony

Sheets and Richard E. Ellis for exterior of the now unused Warner Brown Hospital was removed, restored, moved, and reinstalled on the campus of Murphy Arts District.

- Advocated for relocation of the sculptures
- Created painted renderings of the sculptures
- Made 3-D models of proposed relocations.
- Collaborated and planned with Nabholz, the construction company, and their engineer:
- Soil studies
- Engineering studies of steel supports for structures
- Coordinated all participating parties
- Sited the sculpture relocations
- Brought one of the artists to the dedication
- Researched the historical information that is now provided to the public

Project Name: [Warner Brown Art Concept Pieces Relocation Project](#)

Project Spin-Off: Warner Brown Art Public Art Re-Installation

Dates: 2022-2023

Collaborations: South Arkansas College, El Dorado Conference Center, & The Share Foundation

Location: The El Dorado Conference Center

Target Audience: South Arkansas residents and those visiting

Cost to Audience: FREE for public viewing

Purpose: A yearlong project which began with advocacy for the relocation of the *Arkansas History* concept pieces which were created prior to the monumental reliefs to a more visible location and greater public accessibility.

Description: The relocation of the *Arkansas History* concept pieces which were created prior to the monumental reliefs from the back of the South Arkansas College Library to the main hallway of the El Dorado Conference Center and is also a main building used by students at South Arkansas College to provide a more visible location and greater public accessibility.

Other Warner Brown Art Public Art Re-Installation Project Spin-Offs

Upcoming Warner Brown Hospital Exhibit (To Be Named)

- See Initiated Exhibits.

Relocation of The Share Foundation Warner Brown Art Collection

- In August 2023, asked by the Share Foundation to assess their art collection from Warner Brown Hospital with the goal of finding placement in public spaces in the community. Project in progress.

Opening of The South Arkansas Gallery Collective

- The South Arkansas Gallery Collective is a partnership of the El Dorado Conference Center, the SouthArk Foundation, South Arkansas Arts Center, and South Arkansas Historical Preservation Society. Rotating exhibits will be held in the hallways of The El Dorado Conference Center. The first exhibitions were watercolor artists from Gay Bechtelhiemer's UAMS - AHEC funded Senior Art Program and programming from the South Arkansas Historical Preservation Society. Also, on permanent display are the concept pieces from the Warner Brown Hospital.

Project Name: ["AstroZone: An Interactive Art Experience"](#)

["AstroZone: An Interactive Art Experience"](#)

Dates: [2019 – 2020; show dates February 1 – April 4, 2020](#)

Collaborations: A partnership of the Murphy Arts District & Crystal Bridges

Location: First Financial Hall of the Murphy Arts District

Funded By: [Murphy Arts District](#)

Target Audience: South Arkansas residents and those visiting El Dorado, as well as area South Arkansas school students

Cost to Audience: Free for public viewing

Purpose: To bring an interactive art exhibition of artist Claire Helen Ashley whose works have been featured nationally and internationally to the residents of South Arkansas.

Description: Collaborated with Murphy Arts District and Crystal Bridges Museum of Art to bring Crystal Bridges FIRST traveling exhibition, The AstroZone by Claire Helen Ashley, to El Dorado. Through her persuasion, the exhibition was free to all who attended. She visited all public and private schools including Universities in the region to provide information about the exhibition and designed all programming with public and private schools (all grades) and Universities (Southern Arkansas University and Louisiana Tech University) throughout South Arkansas. This programming provided a unique on-site opportunity for **all** K-12 students to apply literacy and/or art standards to their experience inside the AstroZone. She arranged an artist workshop for students at the participating Universities and then arranged for the students to attend the exhibition in El Dorado. She also reached out to group homes for their residents to experience the AstroZone.

- The exhibition filled the MAD First Financial Music Hall and presented the Chicago-based artist Claire Helen Ashley’s immense inflatable interactive floor to ceiling pieces.
- A free and open to the public special presentation with the artist Claire Helen Ashley was held in October 2019 which included special live performances with performance artists.
- Educational programming was developed with the Arkansas Curriculum Framework in mind and presented to all students that visited the exhibit.
- Over 5,500 people attended the AstroZone exhibit:
 - AstroZone attendance, not including the school field trips, was 3,368 people who viewed the exhibit.
 - Approximately 2,200 students from the following schools attending the interactive exhibit as well as received educational programming that correlated with the exhibit: El Dorado, Smackover, Camden, Magnolia, Hampton, Crosset, Hamburg, Hermitage, Parker's Chapel, Harmony Grove, West Side, Home School Consortium - El Dorado, The South Central Educational Cooperative - Camden, and Ruston, LA.
 - In addition, we had several Day Cares and Kindergartens and residents from Group Homes attend.

“It’s a natural fit for Crystal Bridges and Murphy Arts District to work together, as we each are focused on offering our communities access to the arts,” says Rod Bigelow, executive director and chief diversity and inclusion officer for the museum. “Through conversations with (the MAD) team, we felt Crystal Bridges’ expertise in visual arts could complement Murphy Arts District’s expertise in performing arts, broadening the range of arts experiences available in our state and throughout our region.”

Project Name: [Murphy Arts District "Ask the Artist" Series](#)

[Ask the Artist](#)

Project Spin-Off: "AstroZone: An Interactive Art Experience"

Dates: 2020 - Still Available Online

Collaborations: Murphy Arts District

Location: Virtual

Funded By: Murphy Arts District

Target Audience: Adults of South Arkansas affected by the pandemic

Cost to Audience: FREE to all with access to the internet

Purpose: These virtual artist talks were created to help provide a visual, cerebral, and emotional connection through art to adults via the virtual talks during the pandemic.

Description: Gay Bechtelheimer visits with visual artists, musicians, filmmakers, and more on our Ask the Artist Series. Viewer submitted questions.

Artists interviewed:

- [Qui Nguyen- Playwright & Screenwriter](#)
- [Bespoke Works, LLC – Film Production Company](#)
- [Trey Johnson – Musician](#)
- [Kevin Haynie - Curator of Collections & Exhibitions](#)
- [Rodney Block - Musician](#)
- [Claire Helen Ashley – Installation Artist](#)
- [Todd Flanagan – Dance Educator](#)
- [Big Piph – Hip Hop Artist & Speaker](#)

Project Name: [MAD Art with Gay](#)

Project Spin-Off: "AstroZone: An Interactive Art Experience"

Dates: 2020 - Still Available Online

Collaborations: Murphy Arts District, Arkansas Humanities Council, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the United States Congress.

Location: Virtual

Funded By: Murphy Arts District & partially funded by a grant from the Arkansas Humanities Council, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the United States Congress.

Target Audience: Children of South Arkansas affected by the pandemic

Cost to Audience: FREE to all with access to the internet

Purpose: These virtual artist workshops were created to help provide a visual, cerebral, and emotional connection through art to children via the virtual workshops during the pandemic.

Description: With each virtual workshop, a story about a particular artist or scientist is presented and then the program focuses on creating artwork inspired by the artist or story.

Season 1 Virtual Workshops

- [A Tree is Nice](#)
- [Hello Sun](#)
- [AstroZone](#)
- [Claude Monet](#)
- [From Here to Infinity](#) – artist Yayoi Kusama
- [Art from Her Heart](#) - folk artist Clementine Hunter
- [Henri Rousseau](#)
- [Dancing Through Fields of Color](#) – modern artist Helen Frankenthaler
- [Through Georgia's Eyes](#) – artist Georgia O'Keeffe
- [The Noisy Paintbox](#) - artist Wassily Kandinsky
- [Matisse's Garden](#) - artist Henri Matisse
- [Vincent's Colors](#) – artist Vincent Van Gogh

Season 2 Virtual Workshops

- [Sunday With Seurat](#) - artist, Georges Seurat
- [Mary Blair](#) - Walt Disney artist Mary Blair

- [Astronomy](#) - Maria Mitchell, America's first professional female astronomer
 - [Antsy Ansel](#) - landscape artist Ansel Adams
 - [The Curious Garden](#)
 - [Gee's Bend](#) - Quiltmakers - the women of Gee's Bend
 - [Romare Bearden](#) - artist Romare Bearden
 - [Zaha Hadid](#) - Architect Zaha Hadid
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Project Name: "[An Hour for the Arts](#)" Lecture Series with Gay Bechtelheimer

Dates: 2020 – Ongoing

Collaborations: South Arkansas Arts Center

Location: South Arkansas Arts Center

Project Cost: \$400 per lecture

Funded By: Private sponsors

Target Audience: Open to All / Seniors

Cost to Audience: FREE and open to the public

Purpose: A long held wish to bring art appreciation experiences to the South Arkansas arts center and all South Arkansas residents was realized with the pandemic closure of all programs at the South Arkansas Arts Center, I created "An Hour for the Arts", a lecture series which continues. Patrons have had the opportunity to broaden their perspectives through discussions. This event was originally created during the pandemic when the bans were lifting to gather safely while going on a healing journey through the arts. At the time it was the only Covid programming the South Arkansas Arts Center was able to offer. It continues to bring the arts to the delta region of South Arkansas and is open for all and free.

Description: An entertaining dive into the context, characters, and culture of a variety of art movements while presenting informative art history discussions. The event is free of charge and is presented with open seating. This is an ongoing project.

- 2020 - a six-part lecture series, ["The New York School"](#)
 - "Events and Influencers" - August 13

- "First Generation/Abstract Expressionists" - September 3
- "Color Field" - September 24
- "Richard Diebenkorn" - October 15
- "Second Generation" - November 12
- "Ninth Street Women" - December 3
- 2021
 - ["Gustav Klimt and the Vienna Secessionists"](#) - September 9
 - ["John Singer Sargent"](#) - October 14
 - ["Pop Art"](#) - November 11
- 2022
 - ["The Sacred"](#) - September 8
 - ["The Profane"](#) - December 1
- 2023
 - ["Winslow Homer"](#) - featuring an original Winslow Homer painting on view - January 19
- Unsure Year?
 - ["Modern Art: Not in America!"](#) - April 13
 - "The New York School" - December 3, 2022

Project Name: Art Trips with Gay

Dates: 2022 – On going

Collaborations: South Arkansas Arts Center

Locations: Crystal Bridges, Bentonville, AR; Fabric Artist Rebecca Vizard’s Studio, St. Joe, LA; Walter Anderson Museum & Ohr O’Keefle Museum, Ocean Springs, MS; upcoming: Isabella Stewart Gardener Museum, Boston Museum of Art & Harvard’s art museums, Boston, MA.

Project Cost: Each trip varies

Funded By: Patrons themselves

Target Audience: Seniors

Cost to Audience: Cost of trip

Purpose: To share art experiences with those in the region which might not do so otherwise.

Description: I initiated, (volunteer) beginning in 2022, art excursions for SAAC patrons. Patrons have traveled to the studio of Rebecca Vizard, a textile artist in St. Joe, La, Crystal Bridges Museum of Art, the Ohr O’Keeffe Museum and the Walter Anderson Museum of Art in Ocean Springs, Mississippi. I will escort a group of 26 South Arkansas Arts Center patrons to Boston, MA, in April 2024.

Project Name: UAMS - AHEC Senior Art Program

Dates: 2003 - present

Collaborations: Originally funded by UAMS – AHEC grant

Location: South Arkansas Arts Center & South Arkansas College

Target Audience: Seniors and at-risk adults

Cost to Audience: Nominal Fee; Free on need basis.

Purpose: To create a program for art education/appreciation classes for Senior citizens, which over time included at-risk adults.

Description: Received a grant from UAMS - AHEC in 2003 in which I created a program for art education/appreciation classes for Senior citizens. The class proved so successful that it still meets weekly and younger adults have joined the class as well.

- Weekly watercolor class for adults focusing on seniors and at-risk adults.
- Planned and curated numerous exhibitions for this group.

Project Name: Beautification Project: Northwest Elementary Main Entrance and Outdoor Classroom

Dates: 2018-2019

Collaborations: Northwest Elementary School & El Dorado Educational Foundation

Location: Northwest Elementary School, El Dorado, AR

Funded By: El Dorado Educational Foundation Grant

Target Audience: All students at Northwest Elementary

Cost to Audience: FREE

Purpose: To instill in educators and students that schools can be aesthetically inspiring, and we all have a role to play in enhancing each other's lives.

Description: Provided opportunities for every student attending Northwest Elementary school to work together to implement an outdoor learning space for the school and to revitalize the entrance to the school. Both areas were enhanced by mosaics created by every child in the school, including every student in the inclusive special education class.

INITIATED EXHIBITIONS

Public art exhibitions which I initiated and curated
for the residents of South Arkansas

Exhibit Name: Warner Brown Hospital Exhibit (To be named)

Dates: March 2024

Collaborations: The Merkle Family, The Share Foundation, the South Arkansas Historical Preservation Society, and the South Arkansas Arts Center

Location: South Arkansas Arts Center

Target Audience: Residents of South Arkansas

Cost to Audience: FREE for public viewing

Purpose: To bring together the disseminated art in private and public collections from the old Warner Brown Hospital to give the residents of South Arkansas an opportunity to view the historical art pieces.

Description: Curating a show of art which originally hung in the old Warner Brown hospital through collaborations with the Merkle Family, The Share Foundation, and the South Arkansas Historical Preservation Society to secure the art to be shown at the South Arkansas Arts Center in the Merkle Gallery in March of 2024.

Exhibit Name: [Wayne Wharton Retrospective](#)

Dates: 2020

Collaborations: The Wharton Family & South Arkansas Arts Center

Location: South Arkansas Arts Center

Target Audience: Residents of South Arkansas

Cost to Audience: FREE for public viewing

Purpose: Via a retrospective show, a celebration of the legacy of one of the most respected founders of the South Arkansas Arts Center, the late watercolorist Wayne Wharton.

Description: In the retrospective exhibit, Richard Wharton, son of the late Wayne Wharton, and I assembled a group of works from private and family collections of one of the most respected founders of the South Arkansas Arts Center, the late watercolorist Wayne Wharton, including watercolors, pencil, and charcoal sketches, and one wood carving. One painting, "Smokey Mountains", was donated to SAAC's permanent collection at the close of the exhibit, and twenty pieces were selected by the Wharton family to be offered for sale. All proceeds from artwork sold benefited the South Arkansas Arts Center.

Exhibit Name: [Contemporary Folk Art: Four Decades of Creativity: My Way](#)

Dates: 2015

Collaborations: Hearne Fine Art in Little Rock & the South Arkansas Arts Center

Location: South Arkansas Arts Center

Funded by: South Arkansas Arts Center

Target Audience: Residents of South Arkansas

Cost to Audience: FREE for public viewing

Purpose: Collaborating with Arkansas African-Gallery Owner [Garbo Hearne](#) to bring and exhibition of regional artists to the South Arkansas Arts Center.

Description: *Contemporary Folk Art: Four Decades of Creativity: My Way* explores four decades of creativity by five self-taught artists. These artists were chosen because of their signature approaches to creating art. They all share a passion, sincerity, and belief that their talent is a gift from the Creator. The exhibition was purposefully set by placement to show the timeline of history through the eyes of artisans spanning across four generations. The exhibition also included dance and visual art workshops presented by artists from Hearne Fine Art.

Exhibit Name: [Carroll Cloar's Arkansas](#)

Dates: 2014

Collaborations: [Greg Thompson](#) of Little Rock, [Memphis Brooks Museum of Art](#), Memphis State University Archives, El Dorado School District, Private Collectors & the South Arkansas Arts Center

Location: South Arkansas Arts Center

Project Cost: \$50,000

Funded by: Sponsor Martha Murphy, in honor of her mother Johnie Walker Murphy

Target Audience: Residents of South Arkansas

Cost to Audience: FREE for public viewing

Purpose: Curate an exhibit of nationally and internationally known American painter Carroll Cloar for the residents of South Arkansas.

Description: An exhibition of never-made-public-before art by the legendary Arkansas artist Carroll Cloar. Cloar's works can be seen in the Memphis Brooks Museum of Art, the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, as well as many other famous art museums.

- Co-curator along with Greg Thompson of Little Rock.
- The exhibit featured 22 paintings, 10 drawings and two lithographs.
- At center stage of the exhibit was Cloar's best-known work, *Children Pursued by Hostile Butterflies*.

- The exhibition also collaborated with the El Dorado Schools to bring students to the South Arkansas Arts center and participate in classroom activities to further enrich the students in the arts.
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Project Name: [*Crossing the Salt Line, Walter Anderson Exhibit*](#)

Dates: 2004 - 2005

Collaborations: Family of [Walter Anderson](#), Private Collectors, South Arkansas Arts Center,

Location: South Arkansas Arts Center

Project Cost: \$25,000

Funded By:

Target Audience: Residents of South Arkansas

Cost to Audience: All FREE for public viewing including the exhibit, daily talks, and opera; except the ticketed black-tie event

Purpose: Curate an exhibit of nationally known American artist Walter Anderson for the residents of South Arkansas. In addition to the exhibit, curate a week dedicated to the arts featuring also art talks, opera, music and dance all free for the residents of South Arkansas.

Description: The "Walter Anderson Week" held at the South Arkansas Art Center galleries featured "Crossing the Salt Line into the World of Walter Anderson," an exhibit of Anderson watercolors, woodblock prints and ceramics on loan by private collectors. The exhibit also featured an exact replica of "The Little Room," a room in Anderson's home whose entire surface he painted with birds, insects, fish, flowers, and trees. The replica was on loan from the Walter Anderson Museum of Art in Ocean Springs and the Ogden Museum of Southern Art in New Orleans. Special events were held daily during the exhibit's run, including talks by Walter Anderson Museum curator Dr. Patricia Pinson, Anderson's daughter, Mary Anderson Pickard, and Anderson

enthusiast Redding S. Sugg Jr. An opera based on Anderson’s book, “Robinson, the Pleasant History of an Unusual Cat,” was performed twice daily at the Arts Center, and a black-tie event featuring operatic singing, music and dance was held in conjunction with the exhibit.

- Procured funding for the exhibition and all events
- Located, curated, and displayed artwork
- Designed education component for schools
- Partnered in additional programming (opera, ballet)
- Also, collaborated with the El Dorado Schools to bring students to the South Arkansas Arts center and participate in classroom activities to further enrich the students in the arts.

ORGANIZATIONS & AFFILIATIONS

- Arkansas Arts Council, appointed by Governor Mike Beebe
 - Member, 2011-2017
 - Chair of Council, 2015-2017
- Mid- America Arts Alliance, Board member, 2015-2017
- Murphy Arts District, Board member, 2017-2019
- South Arkansas Arts Center Board of Directors, three terms
 - Board President, 2006-2007
 - Have taught numerous workshops in pastel, watercolor, and collage at SAAC, including an upcoming Beginning Watercolor Class in October 2023.
 - Have taught a studio class for Senior Citizens at SAAC since 2003 and is ongoing.
- Arkansas Artist Registry

HONORS & AWARDS

- Elected to the Arkansas Women’s Forum & International Women’s Forum membership, 2017
- El Dorado School District Education Excellence Awards Finalist, 2012
- El Dorado School District Teacher of the Year, 2014

Publications

- Women Make Arkansas: Conversations with 50 Creatives by Erin Wood; published 2019; featured artist pages 45-47.

ARTIST

Representation

- Champagnolle Design in El Dorado
- Greg Thompson Fine Art in the Argenta Arts District in North Little Rock

Exhibitions

- [*Expansion Diffusion*](#), South Arkansas Arts Center, April 8 -29, 2022
- [*Painting with Paper, the Homage Series*](#), South Arkansas Arts Center, 2020
- [*Recent Works*](#), South Arkansas Arts Center, May 3 - June 29, 2018
- *40 Days in the Delta*, Snyder Museum in Bastrop, LA, March 1-31, 2017
- [*Collective*](#), Brinson Gallery at the Southern Arkansas University, 2017
- [*Trio*](#), Delta Arts Center Arkansas, 2016
- *Horizon Line*, South Arkansas Arts Center, 2012
- *Two Women Two Views*, South Arkansas Arts Center, 2006
- *Sweet Inspiration*, South Arkansas Arts Center, 2000

Provided personal artwork to be used as a vehicle for fundraising

- Rockefeller Cancer Center
- UAMS Medical Center
- South Arkansas Arts Center

Art in Corporate Collections of Note - Her work can be found in both corporate and private collections throughout the country.

- The UAMS Winthrop P. Rockefeller Cancer Institute
- UAMS Reynolds Center on Aging in Little Rock, AR
- Alice-Sidney Oil Company
- South Arkansas Orthopedics
- The Murphy Arts District in El Dorado, AR
- The permanent collection of the South Arkansas Arts Center

EDUCATOR

Career

- Educational Director, Murphy Arts District, El Dorado, AR, 2019-2020
- 1st -4th Art Educator, Northwest Elementary, El Dorado, AR, 2003-2019
- Private Business Owner, El Dorado, AR, 1999-2003
- Art Appreciation Instructor, South Arkansas Community College, El Dorado, AR 1985-1995 (Summer Program)
- 10th -12th Art Educator, El Dorado High School, El Dorado, AR, 1989-1998
- 7th – 9th Art Educator, Rogers Jr. High School, El Dorado, AR, 1980-1989
- K-12th Art Educator, River Oaks School, Monroe, LA, 1976-1978

EDUCATION

- Personal study at Anderson Ranch Arts Center in Aspen Colorado, a week each summer from 2011-2022
- B.E. Art Education, Cum Laude, Louisiana Tech University, 1973