



**A Federal Job in the Arts:
CETA and Philadelphia in the 1970s**

**August 3 – October 2, 2026
Creative Philadelphia Art Gallery at City Hall
Room 116**

**In partnership with
The CETA Arts Legacy Project**

curated by Virginia Maksymowicz and Blaise Tobia

[<https://www.creativephl.org/exhibition/a-federal-job-in-the-arts-ceta-and-philadelphia-in-the-1970s/>](https://www.creativephl.org/exhibition/a-federal-job-in-the-arts-ceta-and-philadelphia-in-the-1970s/)

Art in City Hall

Art in City Hall, a program of the City's Office of Arts, Culture, and the Creative Economy (OACCE), transforms Philadelphia's City Hall into a platform for the arts. It provides an opportunity for Philadelphia's diverse cultural organizations to utilize the visual arts to amplify community voices, foster healing and community dialogue in the most important civic building in the city – The People's Building. The program is committed to presenting a wide range of ideas and artistic explorations to showcase the important role the arts play in our communities.

This history exhibition, "A Federal Job in the Arts: CETA and Philadelphia in the 1970s," is produced in partnership with the CETA Arts Legacy Project, a national organization dedicated to preserving the history of the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) and recognizing its impact on the arts nationwide.

The show features documentary photographs, posters and vintage ephemera illustrating how artists, arts organizations and a variety of community organizations benefited from this program. It focuses upon Philadelphia, highlighting projects like Visual Arts in Public Service (VAPS) run by the Brandywine Print Workshop, which placed working artists in institutions throughout the city.

It also includes original artwork by former CETA artists, some who worked in Philadelphia, some who worked regionally, and some who worked in other locations, but who now live in Philadelphia. Among the local artists featured, either through actual artworks or photographic documentation, are: Roland Ayers, Charles Bernstein, Joan Myers Brown, Willie Cole, Barbara Bullock, Jerry DiFalco, Terry Fox, Kenley Gardner, Jane Golden, Cathy Hopkins, Joan Kerr, Virginia Maksymowicz, Rebecca Rose Metzger, Claire Owen, James Phillips, Laurence Salzmänn, Simone Spicer, Merián Soto, Blaise Tobia, David Tothoro, Richard Watson, and Michael Williamson.

About the Curators

Blaise Tobia and Virginia Maksymowicz were both employed by the Cultural Council Foundation CETA Artists Project in New York City, which ran from 1978 to 1980. The first year, Blaise was a photographer on the project's documentation unit; the second year, he was part of the community artists pool. Virginia spent two years in the artists pool. After CETA, they went on to become exhibiting artists, worked for a variety of nonprofit arts organizations, and eventually became college professors. Blaise is Professor Emeritus at Drexel University in Philadelphia. Virginia is Professor Emerita at Franklin & Marshall College in Lancaster, PA.

About the CETA Arts Legacy Project

The CETA Arts Legacy Project began as a small group of artists who had been part of the Cultural Council Foundation CETA Artists Project in NYC in 1978-80. In retrospect, we recognized the importance of CETA as a model for government support of artist employment in community service. We also saw knowledge of the CETA Arts programs slipping from history.

From 2011 to 2019 we focused primarily on researching and gathering documentation of the CCF Project and getting word out to the public through a website, scholarly presentations and articles. Through our research we gained a greater appreciation of the national scope of CETA's support of artist employment. By 2020, with the added impetus of the great damage done to the cultural economy by the Covid pandemic, we expanded our efforts to a national scope and have now assembled a broad coalition.

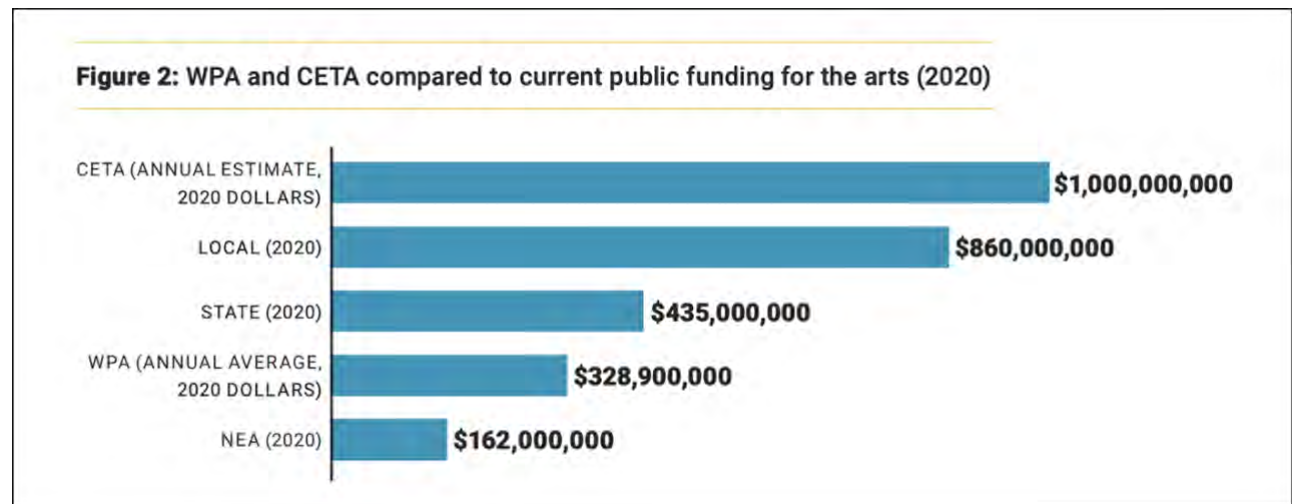
In 2017, CETA Arts legacy efforts gained a partner in NYC's City Lore Gallery, which has lent staff, space and other resources in support of the project and has acted as a kind of institutional home. Molly Garfinkel, Managing Director of City Lore, has been its primary liaison to the legacy project. City Lore was joined by Jodi Waynberg, Executive Director of the Artists Alliance, to produce the exhibition "Art/Work," shown at City Lore and Cuchifritos galleries during the winter of 2021/22. In 2023 we gained an additional partner in Mary Okin, Assistant Director of Living New Deal, an organization dedicated to the legacy of the New Deal that now recognizes its relationship to CETA. Most recently, we've been able to collaborate with Margaret Winslow, Chief Curator and Curator of Contemporary Art and Dorothy Fisher, Lynn Herrick Sharp Curatorial Fellow, at the Delaware Art Museum. In April of 2026, they opened an exhibition about the WPA and CETA, called "Citizen Artist," which included an analysis of the impact CETA's support of the arts had on communities in Wilmington, DE.

Curators' Statement

We hope that this exhibition, which focuses upon CETA's impact on the arts in Philadelphia, within a national context, will bring attention to this almost forgotten part of cultural history.

The number of artists employed under CETA was on a par with the well-known arts projects funded by the WPA, yet few are aware of how significantly this program impacted artists, communities and the trajectory of artistic practice in the United States.

It is estimated that at its height, CETA paid more than \$200 million a year to individual artists, arts organizations, and their community partners, the equivalent of more than \$1 billion per year in 2020 – far more than the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). This chart from the *Creative Strategist Program Evaluation*, by the Los Angeles County Arts & Culture Office (2021), shows how much money CETA pumped into the cultural sector.



This infusion of funds enabled artists to work in neighborhood settings, making it possible for underserved communities to encounter both art and artists. In addition, the financial support helped many artists to go onto significant careers. Beneficiaries included visual artists Dawoud Bey, Ursula von Rydingsvard, Mierle Laderman Ukeles, Willie Cole and Fred Wilson; poets Bob Holman, Charles Bernstein and Norman Pritchard; members of the Alvin Ailey dance company; actors and playwrights like August Wilson; and musicians like Julius Eastman.

Murals such as *The Great Wall of Los Angeles* and those of Chicago's Hubbard Street corridor were supported by CETA funds. So were nonprofit artist-run spaces like Real Art Ways, the Chicago Artists Coalition, Women's Studio Workshop, Hallwalls, Randolph Street Gallery, the Painted Bride, Penumbra Theater, and People's Light and Theater. Large institutions like the Chicago Art Institute, the Philadelphia Museum of Art and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, along with smaller ones like the Studio Museum of Harlem and the Museum of the American Indian had CETA funding.

There are many lessons to be learned, which can serve as models moving forward.

Background

WPA and CETA: Jobs for Artists



WPA mural being painted by Marion Greenwood in 1940
Federal Art Project, for the Red Hook Houses (NY). Photo by Sam Shalat.



CETA mural being painted by Alan Samalin in 1978
CCF Artists Project, for the Queens Hall of Science. Photo by Blaise Tobia.

By the early 1970s the United States was having its most severe economic crisis since the Great Depression. High unemployment (around 9%) accompanied a high and stubborn inflation rate (reaching 12% per year). A growing consensus arose that governmental intervention was needed. This took the form of the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA), which received bipartisan support and was signed into law by President Richard Nixon in 1973. CETA was inspired by prior job programs like the WPA, but there were major differences. Unlike the WPA, which was highly centralized, CETA was decentralized. Money was given to states in block grants that were then distributed to “prime sponsors” such as local governments, large nongovernmental organizations, even Indian tribes.

At first, CETA was primarily oriented towards training rather than jobs. But, as unemployment continued to worsen, a new program (Title VI) was added. It was intended to give jobs to skilled workers in high-unemployment fields. This set the stage for the hiring of artists and other arts professionals on CETA lines.

Most people are familiar with the arts programs of the New Deal such the post office murals and the WPA’s easel painting section (that gave artists like Jackson Pollock work early in their careers). But initially, the New Deal did not include artists. It was three people close to Franklin D. Roosevelt: George Biddle, Henry Hopkins and Eleanor Roosevelt, who made the case for artist jobs. Hopkins famously said: ‘Hell, they’ve got to eat just like other people!’ Similarly, it wasn’t originally envisioned that artists would qualify for CETA.

But, in 1974, John Kreidler, an intern at the San Francisco Arts Commission who was familiar with the program, convinced the city that it would be legitimate to use CETA funds to pay artists in community service. By 1975 San Francisco had more than 100 artists in CETA positions; other California cities soon followed suit. During the period 1977-1980, artists and arts organizations in Philadelphia received significant support from the Federal Government through the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA), which was the largest program of its type since the Works Progress Administration (WPA) of the 1930s.

Overall, CETA employed about 1.5 million people nationally and provided job training for another five million. Among those who qualified for CETA-funded jobs were 30,000 artists and arts professionals who would otherwise have been unemployed.

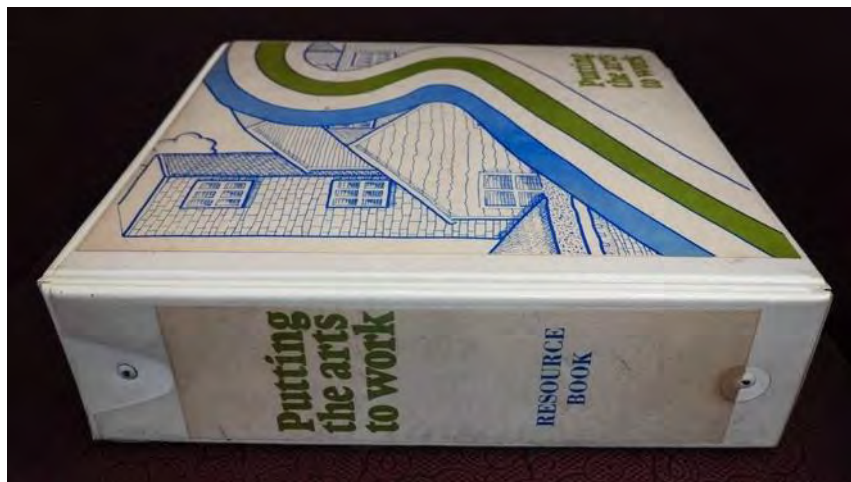
CETA arts programs sprung up across the country and two of them were located in Philadelphia. One of these was the Visual Artists in Public Service program, run by the Brandywine Graphic Workshop under Allan and Anne Edmunds. Over two years it placed nearly 100 artists in community centers throughout Philadelphia. They worked half-time in these assignments and half-time in their studios, with the intention that they would become more employable in the private sector due to this experience. Many did go on to successful careers.

The other component of CETA in Philadelphia was funding the salaries of both artists and staff members at approximately twenty arts nonprofits. Organizations like the Painted Bride Art Center, which had been operating with a volunteer staff, were able to hire their first paid administrators. Performance groups like Philadanco and the People's Light and Theater Company were able to pay some of their performers. This period of funding helped to stabilize and even enlarge these organizations to prepare them to flourish in a post-CETA world. Consequently, almost all of these groups are still active and contributing to the cultural life of Philadelphia.

CETA Arts Across the U.S.

It is partially due to its decentralization that CETA is not as well-known as the WPA, which was centrally administered from Washington DC. Additionally, the art programs of the WPA were highly visible since they were used to promote FDR's social recovery agenda.

However, CETA's block-grant structure enabled communities across the country to design their own arts programs based on local needs and aspirations. As knowledge spread about using CETA to employ artists, localities around the U.S. implemented their own projects. The Dept. of Labor, which administered CETA, was wary of using CETA funds to hire artists, but the success of the programs eventually brought about its support. In fact, the Asst. Secretary of Labor, Ernest Green, became a fan of CETA Arts and even organized a series of "Putting the Arts to Work" conferences.



Between 1975 and 1977, Washington DC, Dallas, New Haven, Atlanta, Chicago and Los Angeles, along with smaller cities, implemented CETA arts projects. Dallas and Chicago centered their efforts on Artists-in-Residence projects.



New Haven: CETA Murals Program
Mural "Togetherness" painted in 1976 by participants in the CETA Youth Summer Program under the leadership of artist Terry Lennox.

Arts DC focused on preparing its artists for private sector employment. L.A. had a variety of approaches including the support of inner-city performance arts through Brockman Gallery Productions. It also employed mural artists and young painting assistants through the Social and Public Art Resource Center (SPARC), whose major project was the creation of the gigantic Great Wall of Los Angeles under the direction of artist Judy Baca.



CETA and the Great Wall of Los Angeles

The longest - and possibly the best-known - mural in the world received major support from CETA for the first phase of its production. In 1976, Judith F. (Judy) Baca, director of SPARC (the Social and Public Art Resource Center), was able to hire ten artists, five art historians and 80 young people referred by the L.A. Criminal Justice Department to create the first 1000 feet of the mural. In the summer of 1978 another 350 feet of mural was added. Post-CETA, work on the mural has continued and it is now more than a half-mile long.

In 1978, New York City began employing more than 500 CETA artists – across disciplines – who worked in five large projects. The largest of these, with 300 artists, was managed by the Cultural Council Foundation (CCF). Another 100+ individuals and small groups were employed directly by borough president offices. The CCF CETA project, in particular, was aware of the need to document its efforts and incorporated a seven-member “documentation unit” to provide articles and photographs to the press and for the historical record.



NYC Cultural Council Foundation CETA Arts Project: “Sweet 14”

Performance of Ellsworth Ausby's multi-disciplinary work in Union Square in August, 1978.
Blaise Tobia was a member of the CCF project's documentation unit. (photo © 1978 Blaise Tobia)



NYC Cultural Council Foundation CETA Arts Project: Mural for the World Trade Center

Project artist Cynthia Mailman was given the assignment to create a mural for the PATH transit terminal in the WTC.
“Commuter Landscape” was installed in 1979, high over the entrance escalators, and remained in place until the 1983 bombing of the WTC destroyed it.
The photographer, Stanford Golub, was also a CCF project artist. (photo © 1979 Stanford Golub)

Philadelphia: Visual Artists in Public Service

In 1976, Anne Edmunds, then associated with the Philadelphia Print Club, was invited by Pennsylvania's Secretary of Administration, James N. Wade, to create a CETA-funded artists project in Philadelphia. She teamed up with her husband Allan Edmunds to run the program under the auspices of the Brandywine Graphic Workshop. They named the program "Visual Artists in Public Service" (VAPS) and hired its first 18-artist contingent in the fall of 1977. They recruited "neighborhood partners" for the project: community agencies and organizations that would sponsor the VAPS artists in doing workshops, after-school activities, and programs for youth and for seniors. In the fall of 1978, they increased the VAPS contingent to about 40 artists, keeping on some of the first group. In all, Brandywine received CETA funding for VAPS for two years; after that it continued the program with private funding.

The VAPS artists were well integrated in terms of race, gender, and even age. In fact, one artist, John Queen, was old enough to have been part of the Federal Artist Project forty years earlier. While the artists had to meet CETA's criteria for economic need, they also had to prove their professional capabilities and their ability to serve in community education settings.



VAPS Artists 1978

Standing, left to right: Bob Thompson, John Queen, David Goerk, David Tothoro, Phil Harris, Bill Ruffin, Leon Wisdom, Kenley Gardner, Cathy Hopkins, Bill Blanco
Seated, left to right: John Cooper, Roland Ayers, Susanne Leibgatt, Anthony Goodwin, Claire Owen, Barbara Bullock, Joan Guerin, Cranston Walker
courtesy of the Brandywine Workshop & Archives

Included among the neighborhood partners were the Philadelphia Museum of Art's Department of Community Programs and Fleisher Art Memorial, the Afro-American Historical and Cultural Museum, the Museum of American Jewish History, the Atwater Kent Museum, the Balch Institute, the Janes Memorial Education Center, the Lee Cultural Center, and numerous Girls' and Boys' Clubs and recreation centers.

Many who participated in VAPS went on to notable careers, such as Roland Ayers, Barbara Bullock, Vince DiPersio, Claire Owen, Laurence Salzmman, Richard Watson and Michael Williamson.

Philadelphia: Arts Nonprofits

In 1975, People's Light and Theater Company asked Chester County to dedicate CETA money for two positions, a full-time artistic director and a costume designer, and became the first arts organization in Pennsylvania to receive CETA funds. Over the next five years, CETA provided a significant portion of PTLC's operating budget, with as many as 16 positions.



People's Light and Theater Company

People's Light and Theater Company got its first two CETA lines in 1975, for a full-time artistic director and a costumer. In 1976 it got additional CETA lines, specifically in children's theater. By 1977, PLTC had been awarded 16 CETA lines of varying duration, and CETA funding continued through 1981.

In 1976 PLTC converted a stone barn in Yellow Springs into a 200-seat theater.

In 1977, with the support of the Commonwealth, more than 20 arts nonprofits in the Philadelphia area received CETA funding. The Painted Bride, at the time a small volunteer-staffed gallery and performance space on South Street, was able to hire its first paid staff in the form of six half-time administrators for 18 months. This allowed the Bride to professionalize, especially in the area of fundraising. Just two years after CETA, it had greatly expanded its programming and moved into the iconic space on Vine Street that it occupied for 40 years.



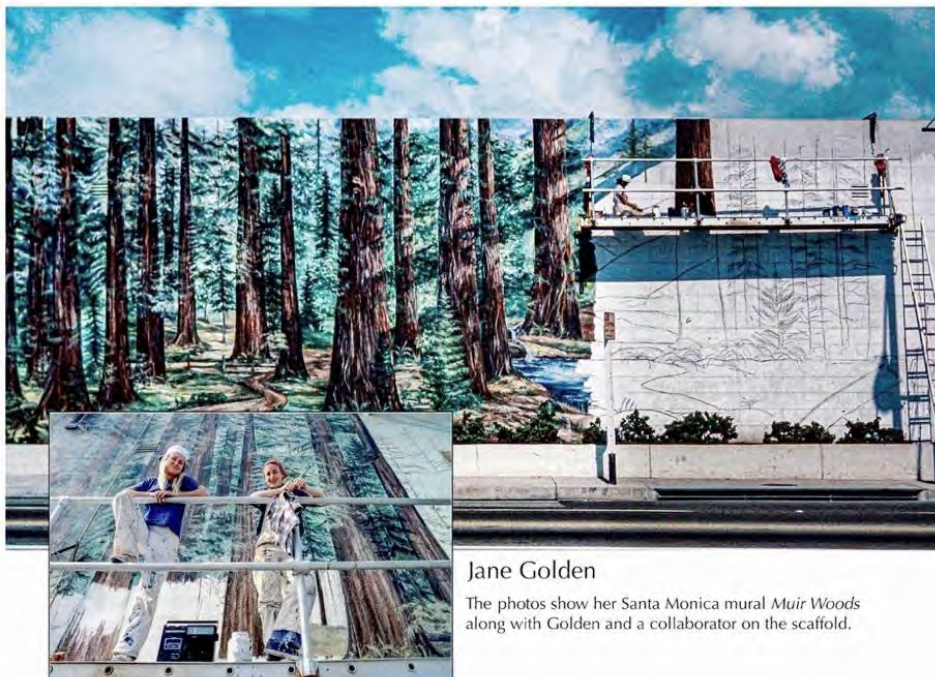
Painted Bride Art Center on South Street 1975

The Joan Kerr Dance Company and Philadanco received funding to pay many of their young dancers. Bucks County Community College received money to staff its new public art initiative, the Artmobile. WUHY, which later became WHY, hired Charles Hardy to do interviews and produce segments for a new radio program, "Fresh Air."

A major beneficiary of CETA was the Philadelphia Museum of Art, which used its funding to hire museum guards and support staff. This was made necessary by major cutbacks by the city. The PMA received CETA funding for five years. In 1980, PMA Director Jean Sutherland Boggs wrote to the federal Institute of Museum Services stating that the expected end of the CETA program would result in the loss of 38 positions at the museum, forcing it to cut back to five days per week. Almost all of the arts nonprofits that received CETA funding in the 1970s remain active today, thanks to the key role it played in the organizations' formative stages. CETA had a major and lasting impact upon the cultural life of the Philadelphia area, yet it is virtually unknown.

Artists Who Started in CETA

Some Philadelphia artists received CETA employment outside of the VAPS program. One was dancer Terry Fox (long-term director of Philadelphia Dance Projects) who taught three dance workshops for young people under the Brandywine Workshop. Visual artist Jerry DiFalco, a painter and printmaker, directed an arts program at the Rutgers University Women's Center in Camden, where he was born. A number of artists who have made their careers in the Philadelphia area were CETA artists in other parts of the country before moving here. Jane Golden, the long-term director of Mural Arts Philadelphia, learned how to paint murals during a CETA job in Los Angeles.



Jane Golden

The photos show her Santa Monica mural *Muir Woods* along with Golden and a collaborator on the scaffold.

Mixed-media sculptor Simone Spicer was hired under CETA as an assistant in the art department of a high school in Massachusetts. Because of what she learned on the job, she was accepted by Maine's Portland School of Art. Poet Charles Bernstein was an artist-administrator in the CCF CETA project in NYC before coming to Philadelphia to teach at the University of Pennsylvania. Merián Soto was a dancer for CCF CETA before coming to teach at Temple University.

Sculptor Virginia Maksymowicz and photographer Blaise Tobia, the curators of this exhibition and the coordinators of the national CETA Arts Legacy Project, also worked in the CCF CETA project before coming here. Maksymowicz taught part-time at St. Joseph's University, Drexel and the Moore College of Art, before becoming a professor at Franklin & Marshall College. Tobia taught at Drexel University, where he was the first program director of Photography.

Overall, many artists who worked for CETA early in their careers went on to wide recognition. Among them are photographer Dawoud Bey, a MacArthur recipient; sculptors Ursula Von Rydingsvard, Senga Nengudi and Maren Hassinger; dancer Blondell Cummings and composer Julius Eastman. Poet Bob Holman (a master of the Poetry Slam) worked for the CCF project. Actors Peter Coyote (most famous as the narrator of Ken Burns' films) and Robert Irwin (Tony award winner) both performed in the CETA-funded Pickle Family Circus in San Francisco.



Q. Why is knowing about CETA's support of the arts important?

A. Because its success can be used as a model going forward.

- It was bipartisan and a collaboration between public and private entities.
- It was a jobs program for all workers, not a grant program designed just for artists.
- It taught artists how to search out funding through unconventional sources.
- It helped low-income cultural workers survive, build their skills, and use their creativity in support of local communities.
- It supported artists to work in schools, hospitals, libraries, prisons, community centers and public spaces, increasing access to and participation in arts and culture.
- It especially helped women artists and artists of color, as well as underserved populations in both urban and rural areas.
- It fostered a sense of comradery, rather than competition, among artists.
- It helped create and stabilize arts institutions (big and small) and community organizations, many of which continue today.
- It energized urban neighborhoods and small towns, and developed local economies.
- It opened doors to professional opportunities and lasting careers for many of the participants.

The NYC Department of Cultural Affairs used CETA as a case study in its cultural plan. Privately funded programs, like Creatives Rebuild New York and Artists at Work, used CETA as a model. Public and mixed initiatives such as the California Creative Corps and Springboard for the Arts in Minnesota, also looked to CETA for guidance.

Unlike those who worked in the WPA, many CETA participants are still alive today, ready and willing to offer their perspectives on how to support the cultural sector in the 21st Century.

As the late Ted Berger, former Director of the NY Foundation for the Arts and one of the designers of the CCF CETA Artist Project, argued: "We should not have to reinvent the wheel every time there is a disaster, natural or economic. We have to think long-term and in more systemic ways."

SELECTION OF ARTISTS FEATURED IN EXHIBITION

Original Artworks —

Roland Ayers was a community artist in 1977-79 in the VAPS program, with placements at the Taller Puertorriqueño, Afro American Historical Museum and The Philadelphia Company.

His working with the Brandywine Workshop during CETA resulted in a continuing relationship with their print studio, where he produced many posters and fine-art prints such as the one shown here.



Passage, offset lithograph, 1987
courtesy Brandywine Workshop and Archives

In 1978, during his CETA employment, the Afro American Museum featured Ayers' pen-and-ink works in a solo show, "Roland Ayers: A Personal Construct." According to an article in *Wikipedia*, he is quoted as saying that his drawings represented a "journey of mind/body/soul that traveled over parts of three continents and explored many aspects of inner time and space"

He went on to direct of Allens Lane Art Center and to teach at his alma mater the Philadelphia College of Art. Many Philadelphians also knew him as manager of the Free Library's used bookstore until his death in 2014.

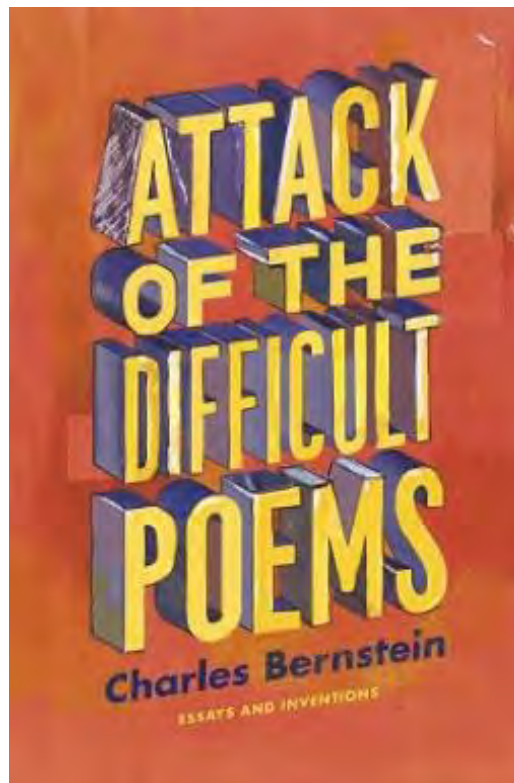
In 2021, the Woodmere Museum honored Ayers with a retrospective, "Calligraphy of Dreams." The print on display in "A Federal Job for Artists," which was produced at the Brandywine Workshop, had been included in the Woodmere show.

[<https://woodmeremuseum.org/exhibitions/roland-ayers-calligraphy-of-dreams>](https://woodmeremuseum.org/exhibitions/roland-ayers-calligraphy-of-dreams)

Charles Bernstein was a poet and administrator in New York City's Cultural Council Foundation CETA Artists Project, which ran from 1978-80. In his position as Associate Project Director for Job Development, he helped artists in all fields achieve very specific goals in their careers, whether it was seeking attention for their art, selling their work, writing grants, or publishing books. He counseled artists interested in finding jobs in teaching or commercial design, or in finding well-paying jobs having nothing to do with art.

During that time, he was also an active poet, publishing the collections *Controlling Interests*, *Poetic Justice*, and *Shade*.

He went on to teach on the university level, eventually taking a position in 2003 at the University of Pennsylvania, where he is currently Professor Emeritus of English and Comparative Literature. The book on display is one of his many publications.



Attack of the Difficult Poems: Essays and Inventions
University of Chicago Press, 2011

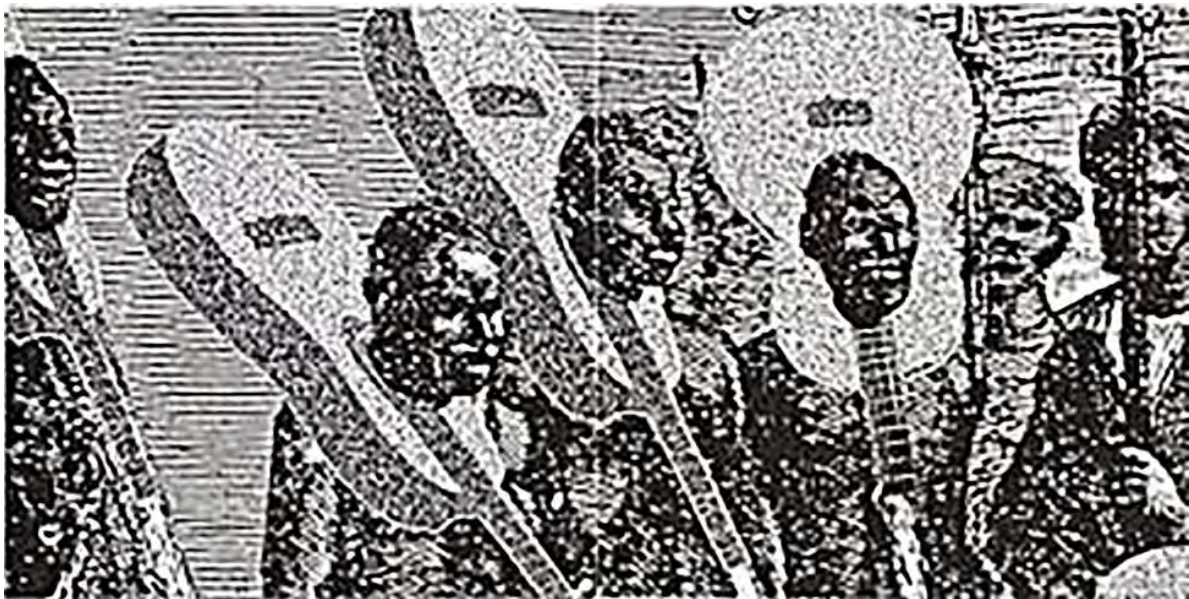
In an interview with the Poetry Foundation, Bernstein said that he thinks of his books as “being something like group shows. When you go into an art gallery you often see that the artist has tried to create a body of work in which all the individual pieces appear similar to one another. I always want to do the opposite, to try to create a set of works that are different from one another, keeping in mind that such difference allows for other connections. Ironically, at least in my work, when the overt form or style or rhetoric is different, the connection of one poem to another is intensified.”

[<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/charles-bernstein#tab-poems>](https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/charles-bernstein#tab-poems)

Willie Cole, a native of Somerville, New Jersey, worked in two independent CETA positions: as an artist in residence in the Theater Department of the University of Delaware and as a graphic designer for Queens Borough Hall in NYC.

At UDel, he was initially hired to work as an actor with children in conjunction with the Stepping Stone Theatre Company. However, once they discovered that he was a visual artist, his job quickly morphed into designing posters and graphics. Sometime afterwards, he moved to New York where, in the state unemployment office, he saw an ad for a graphic designer in Queens Borough Hall. He got this new CETA job and eventually landed a position with National Slide Makers, an offshoot of IBM that was at the forefront of developing digital imaging capabilities.

He studied at the Boston University's School of Fine Arts, the Art Students League and the School of Visual Arts, where he earned a BFA. He has a strong connection to Philadelphia. In-between his two CETA positions he freelanced as a graphic designer in the city, commuting daily from south Jersey. He maintains a professional connection with the Brandywine Workshop. The print exhibited in this show was recently produced there.



3 or 4 Shades of the Blues, woodcut, 2025
courtesy Brandywine Workshop and Archives

Although Cole still lives in New Jersey, he can be considered a “northeast corridor” artist.

He has exhibited at MoMA and the James Gallery at CUNY in New York, and in museums in Florida, Wyoming, New Jersey, Ohio, Tennessee, Alabama and more.

Cole is known as a versatile, conceptually oriented artist and for his use of “upcycled” materials. He calls himself “a sculptor, printer, designer, perceptual engineer, and visual artist.” In a 2013 interview with Souleo for *Hyperallergic*, he describes his approach to artmaking in these words: “The objects that I use, I see as them finding me, more so than me finding them and looking for an object. I see an object and suddenly I recognize what I can do with the object . . . I say that I can make anything out of everything and everything out of anything. I challenge myself to do that.”

Virginia Maksymowicz was an artist in the New York City Cultural Council Foundation CETA Artists Project (1978-79). She worked in community assignments in all five boroughs of the city. She painted murals, taught in after-school programs, curated shows, made sculptures and, with a group of 10 CETA artists, transformed an old school building in Brooklyn into BACA Downtown, an arts center.

The CCF CETA artists worked four days per week in community settings and one day in their studios. The drawing in this exhibition was made during studio time. When the CCF administrators visited the artists' studios, they would stamp the 2-D works on the backs.



Skeleton and Artifacts: Meditation on the Transience of Possessions
one of three panels, graphite on vellum, 1980

THIS ART WORK WAS CREATED IN 1978
UNDER A PROGRAM OPERATED BY THE
CULTURAL COUNCIL FOUNDATION WITH
FUNDS PROVIDED BY THE NEW YORK
CITY DEPARTMENT OF EMPLOYMENT
UNDER CETA TITLE VI

Maksymowicz went on to become a mixed-media installation artist and a college professor. She has exhibited at the Franklin Furnace, Alternative Museum, Elizabeth Foundation and Grey Gallery in NYC, and locally at the Michener and Woodmere museums and Rowan University.

Her artwork in recent years has followed a complex journey through architecture and figurative elements. She's interested in the metaphorical implications of the female body, especially when tied to place: buildings, fountains and other structures. She often focuses upon feminist issues and the circumstances of a range of women, both in past history and in current times.

Jerry DiFalco, a painter and printmaker, directed a CETA arts program at the Rutgers University Women's Center in Camden. As director of their nursery school, he designed a method to teach all subjects to the children via the visual arts. His CETA job was one of many of its type in New Jersey. Besides Camden, there were CETA artists in New Brunswick, Passaic, Paramus, Jersey City and other parts of the state.

DiFalco was born and raised in Camden. He earned a BA in Fine Art from Rutgers University, and an MS in arts administration from Drexel University. He moved to Philadelphia in the early 1970s, after having lived in San Diego, New York and Madrid, Spain.

In 2009 he began working at the Fleisher Art Memorial as a printshop monitor and artists' mentor. He was inspired by a wide range of disciplines: architecture, history, religion, folklore, ancient culture, mysticism, archaeology, the cinema and mythology. His work invited the viewer to see beyond the ordinary into the extraordinary via scenes and objects from day-to-day experience. To that end, he traveled the world, photographing and sketching all that he saw, bringing it back to his modest apartment-studio on Cherry Street.

The etching in this exhibition was pulled at the Fleisher.

Jerry died in Philadelphia in 2021.



The Dance from the 7th Seal, etching, 2019

A prolific artist, his work has been shown in venues worldwide. His awards include The City of Philadelphia Award in Arts & Culture (2007); a Pollock-Krasner grant (2002); and two individual art grants from the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts (1987 and 1992).

He was also a long-time member of the DaVinci Art Alliance, which presented a memorial exhibition, "Visual Poetry: Jerry DiFalco, a Life in Art," in 2024.

<https://www.saatchiart.com/account/artworks/17140>

Rebecca Rose Metzger was a community artist in 1978-79 in the Visual Artists in Public Service (VAPS) program administered by the Brandywine Graphic Workshop. Her assignments included teaching workshops at the Community Education Center on Lancaster Avenue. Parts of a mural she created there during her assignment still exist.

Rose is a fourth-generation artist who is following in her family's footsteps in using art to connect with the Mantua/Powelton neighborhood community. With a BFA degree in art and a BS in education, she strives to capture the stories and hopes of neighborhoods like Mantua and Powelton Village. She coordinated the Neighborhood Time Exchange, connecting local organizations with artists, and curating exhibits at Drexel Dornsife Center on Spring Garden Street.

She has produced notable public artworks such as the bronze bust of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. at the triangle intersection of Lancaster Avenue and 40th Street. She made these two paintings, which are in the exhibit, during her time as a CETA artist.



Powelton Village Snow #1
oil on canvas, 1978



Powelton Village Snow #2
oil on canvas, 1978

[<https://rebecca-rose.wixsite.com/rosebridge>](https://rebecca-rose.wixsite.com/rosebridge)

Claire Owen, a painter, book-artist and poet, was a community artist in 1977-79 in Brandywine's VAPS program. She worked with senior citizens at the Mann Recreation Center and with children at West Philadelphia High School, where she conducted a bookbinding workshop.

After graduate study in illustration at the Rochester Institute of Technology, Owen established Turtle Island Press for the production of limited- edition visual artist's books. These editions are represented by library and museum collections throughout the country, including the Library of Congress, The National Gallery, Princeton University, Yale University, Harvard University and The Victoria and Albert Museum.

She retired from teaching at the Tyler School of Art and is currently working as docent at the Rosenbach Museum and Library.



The Serpent's Ear, one-of a kind book work,
linen over board with decorative paper and snakeskin, 2011

In her bookwork, Owen is primarily interested in developing a narrative, using the book in its traditional craft form, including hand printing and hand binding.

In her painting she maintains an interest in narrative, exploring cautionary tales once told to children, now carried forward in the fairy tales of children's literature. These tales, she believes, have settled into our collective imagination, remaining with us as adults.

James Phillips was a community artist in 1977-79 in Brandywine's VAPS program.

After CETA he taught at a variety of institutions around the country including the Maryland Institute, U.C. Berkeley, Hampton University and, currently, Howard University. The print on display was produced at the Brandywine Workshop.

Phillips was born in New York and later spent his adolescent-to-adulthood years in Philadelphia, PA. He began his studies in art at the Fleisher Art Memorial, the Lee Cultural Center and the Philadelphia College of Art. He obtained his MFA in 1998 from the Maryland Institute College of Art in Baltimore, Maryland.



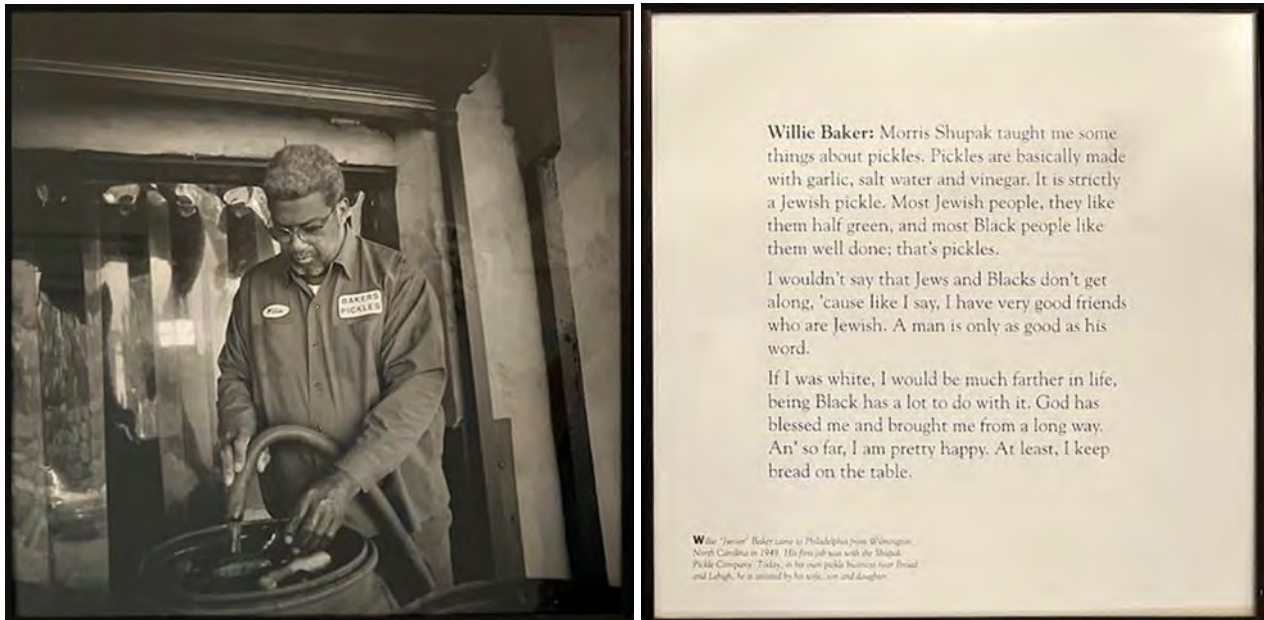
Untitled II, offset lithograph, 1994
courtesy Brandywine Workshop and Archives

Phillips is an Associate Professor in the Department of Arts at Howard University. The college's website says that his art, "draws his audience into both the spiritual and political realm of his work, emphasizing an integral part of African and African-American tradition and culture through his use of icons and color. His art speaks of African mythology and storytelling as evidenced in African-American quilting – whose patterns and designs are deeply rooted in Africa."

<https://profiles.howard.edu/james-phillips>

Laurence Salzmänn was a community artist in 1979 in Brandywine's VAPS program, assigned to the Museum of American Jewish History. In that capacity, he was responsible for photo documentation of the museum's activities and its collection. He was also charged with preparing a slide tape (an old media format that combined a 35mm photo slide projector with a synchronized audio cassette), "Integration and Identity: American Jewish Life in Historical Perspective."

That placement inspired him to later create his series "Face to Face: Encounters Between Jews and Blacks," which includes the portrait and narrative pair exhibited in this show:



Willie Baker, silver print photographs, 1995

A native of Philadelphia, Salzmänn has worked as a photographer/filmmaker since the early 1960's. As his website states, his projects document the lives of little-known groups in America and abroad, ranging from occupants of single room occupancy hotels in New York City to transhumant shepherds in Transylvania, residents of a Mexican village, and Philadelphia Mummers.

In his own words, Salzmänn is a "particular kind of documentary photographer: not the sort who thinks himself to be some kind of value-neutral observer, not the kind who esteems himself as an outside expert or purveyor-from-above, also not the kind who understands himself to be a romantic adventurer. Rather he is the kind of documentary photographer who sets out to learn from and not just about those he photographs, and who is genuinely humble toward his tasks as an artist - humble in the beginning and more humble at the end of a project. He stands not over his subjects but resolutely in their midst."

[<https://www.laurencesalzmänn.com/>](https://www.laurencesalzmänn.com/)

Simone Spicer was a CETA artist in Haverhill, MA. Her position as a teachers' assistant in the Art Department of the local high school set the course for a continuing career.

Spicer was only 17 years old when she was hired under CETA. She organized and ordered paper and drawing supplies for the storeroom. She pugged clay in the ceramics classroom. She mixed chemicals for the photography darkroom, accompanied the students on a field trip to Faneuil Hall in Boston. She was even asked to give a lecture about art history to a drawing class.

Not only did she gain valuable job experience, but the faculty mentored her in how to put a portfolio together and matte her drawings professionally; they even gave her a zippered portfolio case!

Her CETA placement resulted in her being accepted into and graduating from the Portland School of Art. She went on to earn an MFA from the University of North Carolina, Greensboro, and to being awarded a full scholarship to The Skowhegan School of Painting.

She settled in Philadelphia and quickly became an active member of the local arts community, exhibiting at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the Independence Seaport Museum, the Woodmere Museum, and the Philadelphia International Airport.

Her mixed-media artworks often utilize trash and post-consumer materials to address social and environmental concerns. Compassion for humanity and wanting to be a voice against social and environmental injustices dictate the themes of her sculptures. However, the deepest motivation for her work is a personal and mysterious desire to connect with her own aliveness, and experience the range of emotions and energy patterns that arise during the process of creating



The Immigrants
painted corrugated and paper
mâché, 1996 (repainted 2026)

[<https://www.simonespicer.com/>](https://www.simonespicer.com/)

Blaise Tobia was a documentary unit photographer in 1978 – and a community artist in 1979 – for the NYC Cultural Council Foundation CETA Artists Project. As a Doc Unit photographer, he covered artists at work in their studios, exhibitions, concerts and dance performances, special events, and CCF personnel. These photos became part of a historical archive and were also used in various publications for P.R. purposes. In 1979, he was assigned to the Richmond Hill Historical Society to document the historic houses of the neighborhood. (They are still using his photos on their website.) He was also assigned to the High Rock Park nature center and to the Start 5 residential reform school. Seventy of his vintage prints from 1978 are now part of the Photo Collection of the New York Public Library and others are in the Museum of the City of New York. Two of his photos – of a CETA dance performance – were included in the exhibition “Edges of Ailey” at the Whitney Museum of American Art.



Historic House, Richmond Hill, Queens, NY
archival inkjet print from 1979
negative



Students at Start 5
residential school, Staten Island, NY
archival inkjet print from 1979
negative

Post-CETA, he worked as a part-time college teacher and as a photo documentor of artworks for artists and museums until, in 1985, he was hired full-time by Drexel University and moved to Philadelphia. He became the first program director of Photography and also contributed to a new major in Digital Media, finally becoming part of the Art & Art History Department.

He has maintained an active career as an exhibiting photographer, with solo and significant curated thematic exhibitions ranging from local to international. During the past ten years, as a professor emeritus, he has also dedicated his efforts to his neighborhood civic association (serving as president and board member), to serving the America-Italy Society as a board member, and to the CETA Arts Legacy Project, which he coordinates with his wife and artistic partner, Virginia Maksymowicz.

[<https://www.blaisetobia.com/home>](https://www.blaisetobia.com/home)

Richard Watson was a community artist in the VAPS program in 1977-79, shortly after he had completed, with Walter Edmonds, a series of murals at the Church of the Advocate on 18th and Diamond Streets. His CETA-funded assignments were with organizations such as the Wharton Center, which provided social, recreational and community services to the population of North Philadelphia. He then continued in the VAPS program after it no longer received CETA funding, notably working on a series of four murals for the Cobbs Creek Library (now renamed the Blanche A. Nixon Library).

Watson's art is multi-faceted, encompassing painting, collage, design, songwriting and performing. He has exhibited in venues such as the Portland Art Museum, Wadsworth Atheneum, Hampton University and Lehigh University.



So to Speak, mixed media collage, 2023

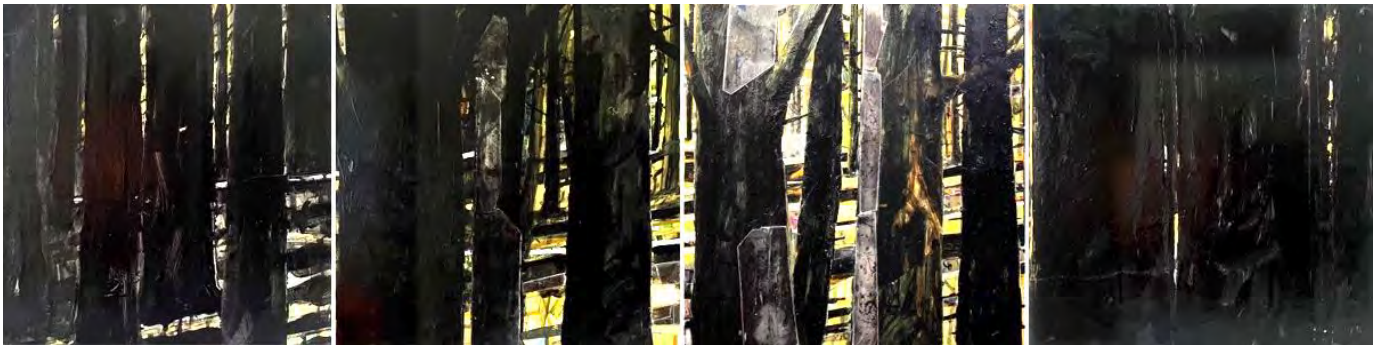
He has worked as an adjunct instructor at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts and has participated on a variety of professional arts panels, juries and advisory boards.

In 1986, he joined the staff of the African American Museum, eventually becoming its curator of exhibitions and artist in residence. In 2022, the museum honored his many years of service by awarding him a solo show, "Portals + Revelations," which highlighted the extraordinary range of his work.

[<https://www.watsonartforyou.com>](https://www.watsonartforyou.com)

Michael Williamson was a community artist in 1978-79 in the VAPS program. Among his assignments were the Old Pine Community Center, an organization that supports children and families, and builds community engagement, and the Frankford Boys & Girls Club, which offers after-school and youth development programs.

Williamson, a Mount Airy native, is a painter who earned a BA at Yale and an MFA at Bard College. He studied abroad in the Temple Rome program. He went on to develop a career as both an exhibiting artist, and an engaged educator, teaching art and art history at independent schools such as Germantown Friends, the George School and the Baldwin School. In 2020, he began as a senior instructor in Adult Education at The Barnes Foundation, and in 2025 he stepped in as Interim Executive Director of the Allens Lane Art Center.



Interval 1-2-3-4, acrylic and mixed media, 2022

He has exhibited in many venues in the Philadelphia area, including the Main Line Art Center, Imperfect Gallery, Stockton University and, most recently, the Fairmount Water works. He maintains a studio at Firehouse Arts in Germantown.

In Williamson's own words about his painting, "It is through the lens of memory and feeling that these landscapes emerge. These paintings, their light, color, and tactile surfaces are more about feeling, memory, dream, remembrance, and forgetting."

[<https://www.williamson-art.com>](https://www.williamson-art.com)

Artwork Documentation —

Barbara Bullock was a community artist in the VAPS program in 1977-79 before going on to a successful career as a mixed-media fine artist.

She had assignments at the R.W. Brown Center and the Nicetown Girls Club.

In the catalogue for “We Speak: Black Artists in Philadelphia, 1920s-1970s,” a show in 2016 at the Woodmere Art Museum, Bullock described her CETA

experience: “We worked at a few community centers - the R. W. Brown Community Center in North Philadelphia, John Gloucester House in South Philadelphia, and the Boys and Girls Clubs . . . The CETA program was always about more than just teaching students. They talked to you, and you became involved in their lives. So many things go on in the lives of children - some good, some not so good. Their lives can be hard. You just worried about them.”

She remains active, having mounted a solo show at the Woodmere Art Museum in 2023. She is shown here in her studio in 2024, at the age of 86. She is represented in this exhibition by one of her students’ works.



photo: *Chestnut Hill Local*

<https://woodmeremuseum.org/exhibitions/barbara-bullock>

Vince DiPersio was a community artist in the VAPS program in 1978-79 before going on to a successful West-Coast career as a filmmaker.

A consummate storyteller, DiPersio describes his CETA experience and how it impacted his life this way: "CETA was great! It came at a time when I was recently out of the Army. I had just graduated from Goddard College, was getting out of a busted teenage marriage, and at my low point financially. Then Thora [Jacobson] and Penny [Balkin Bach] hit me up with this offer out of the blue: filmmaker in residence at the Philadelphia Art Museum, a position I was no more qualified for than I'd be for playing goalie in the World Cup. But it was the break and encouragement I needed when I needed it most. The rest is history: 3 Oscar nominations; a handful of Emmies; festival awards from around the world. That program gave me the push."

At the PMA, his "special assignments" included evaluation, inventory, reorganization and recommendations for sale and repair of media equipment; organization of existing program material (including editing of raw tapes), introduction and dissemination of a list of material available for viewing at the museum; design and production of new videotape programs for the Department of Community Programs, including documentation of Brandywine's CETA-funded VAPS program.

As part of community outreach, he also offered a filmmaking workshop at Olney High School.

A comprehensive list of DiPersio's film accomplishments can be found on TMDB (The Movie Database).



<https://www.themoviedb.org/person/941086-vince-dipersio?language=en-US>

Terry Fox, a dancer and choreographer, remembers working, in 1977-78, in CETA-funded jobs administered by the Brandywine Graphic Workshop (separate from their VAPS program). She had three different assignments over 12 months: a group of students at Eakins House; another at the Lutheran Settlement House; and another from the Philadelphia Tutorial Project

At Eakins House she taught dance to Latino youth. As described by Stephan Salisbury in a 2021 *Inquirer* article, Fox remembered that at the beginning of her eight-week class, the mostly high school students didn't even want to take their shoes off before class, the floor was rough and splintery, and in the summer it was sweltering. Fox persevered. She got the floor sanded.

She would take the class out to different sites to see dancers and films of contemporary dance.

She goes on to say that a new "implementation of a CETA-like program would benefit both artists and communities." She adds, "I don't think artists are more special than any other kind of worker. Everyone needs a livable wage."



Jeff Cain, musician; Terry Fox, dancer
photo by Helen Jones, 1977

Fox also served as an Artist Curator at the Painted Bride Art Center, where she founded the "Dance With The Bride" series. She was the Managing/Artistic Director of the Danspace Project in New York City 1984-1989. She has served on numerous boards and review panels. Since 1993 she has been the director of Philadelphia Dance Projects. She is on the Faculty in the Theatre & Dance Department at Rowan University, teaching in the Arts Administration Master's Program. She has also taught as a guest instructor in the Dance Department of the Boyer College of Music and Dance at Temple University.

<https://thinkingdance.net/articles/tag/terry-fox/>

Kenley Gardner was an artist in the VAPS program in 1977-79 and served as its primary documentary photographer. Most of the Brandywine VAPS photos archived at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania were made by him. He died in 2010.



First meeting of VAPS staff in November 1977
photo by Kenley A. Gardner, courtesy of Anne and Allan Edmunds

He was known for his work in the Black Arts Movement in the mid-20th Century, and for his album cover photography, especially for MFSB's, *Summertime*.

In 1978, Gardner had a solo exhibition, "A Photographic Essay," at the Samuel S. Fleisher Art Memorial. He also gained recognition as a contributor to *The Black Photographers Annual*, along with respected artists Roy DeCarava and James Van Der Zee.

Cathy Hopkins was a community artist in the VAPS program in 1977-78 before going on to a successful career as a sculptor. Her placements included the Fleisher Art Memorial and the Albert Einstein Medical Center, both of which influenced her development as an artist. Cathy continued at Fleisher, teaching sculpture there for over four decades. She also taught at the Wayne Art Center and Perkins Center for the Arts.

The stone sculpture depicted here, *Tribute to Nursing*, was commissioned for the Philadelphia Presbyterian Hospital in 1989. Hopkins died in 2023.



Tribute to Nursing, Penn Presbyterian Hospital, bronze, 1989
photo by Blaise Tobia, 2026

Hopkins grew up in Morristown, N.J., and graduated from Bryn Mawr with a BA in Philosophy in 1969. She trained at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, working in a variety of materials including bronze, clay, and polyester resin. Her prolific output included everything from large sculptures for public commissions and the Mummers Parade to commemorative coins for the Franklin Mint.

In her obituary on the Fleisher Memorial website, it says, “Cathy also taught martial arts classes for decades, speaking of how karate informed her sculpture practice, and vice versa: ‘Sculpture, karate, they’re all about forms in space. And there’s a need to keep practicing, perfecting. It’s a process.’”

<https://www.inquirer.com/obituaries/cathy-hopkins-obituary-philadelphia-sculptor-fleisher-art-20231128.html>

Merián Soto was a CETA artist in the New York City Cultural Council Foundation CETA Artists Project. She had a variety of placements ranging from public performances with dance companies such as Linda Tarnay/ Rachel Lampert, and Elaine Summers, to teaching assignments through the Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Association.



Merian Soto in 2015; photo by Ryan Collerd

As described in an interview with dance historian Dr. Colleen Hooper, Soto's being part of CETA "strengthened [her] identity as a dancer." Her first year was very "artist centered," working with the dance companies and choreographing her own pieces. She credits the summer of 1978, when she performed with Summer, as changing the direction of her career. Her teaching assignments in 1979, where she worked with mostly Afro-American students, honed her instructional skills. This led to a career in education, in public school settings like New York's Lincoln Center Institute, and on the university level. In 1999, she began teaching at Temple University in Philadelphia, where she created an improvisational methodology that is now practiced widely by choreographers.

Soto has received many grants and awards including a New York Dance and Performance Award (2000); a Pew Fellowship in the Arts (2015); a Leeway Foundation Transformation Award (2016), and a Guggenheim Fellowship (2025)

Soto is Curator of the Temple University Institute of Dance Scholarship's Reflection /Response Choreographic Commission.

[<http://www.meriansoto.com/>](http://www.meriansoto.com/)

David Tothero was a community artist in the VAPS program in 1977-79 before going on to a successful career as a graphic designer, teacher and sculptor.

One of his placements was at the Philadelphia Museum of Art in the Department of Community Programs under the director, Penny Balkin Bach (who went on to become the head of the Association for Public Art, formerly the Fairmont Park Art Association). He was hired as a graphic designer to create brochures, posters, etc. for nonprofit dance groups, plays, exhibitions, etc.

His second placement was at the Museum of American Jewish History, which was then located on Fourth Street. Tothero was hired to help create the exhibition, "Living on the Land," curated by Ann Rothberg. His job included creating the brochure, poster and captions.

Tothero described his experience, "The important part about the CETA program was that it gave me the opportunity to create a portfolio of printed work. This helped me start my own freelance graphic design business, and to teach graphic design and production at Moore College of Art. The arrival of computer graphics influenced me to change direction and transition into sculpting."

The metal sculpture depicted, *Bonsai*, was dedicated in 2023 for Palumbo Park, adjacent to the Fleisher Art Memorial.



Bonsai, steel, 2023 (photo by Blaise Tobia, 2026)

FOR FURTHER READING

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<https://drive.google.com/file/d/18zobl2JbeAl9iGLgaXTUA_LbnlkarLFB/view>

Visit the CETA Arts Legacy Project <<https://ceta-arts.com/>>.