



Dear Friends of Wake the Arts,

The semester is over and summer is just around the corner, but you still have time to see the **2026 Annual Student Art Exhibition** at Hanes Art Gallery through May 18. This year we received over 160 submissions, and our studio art faculty had the difficult task of narrowing down the selection to around 85 artworks. This exhibition is a long-running tradition (51 years!) and showcases our students' technique, imagination, and depth in artmaking. Special congratulations to the following students who won awards for their submitted artworks: Emily Bullock, Ruby Butterfield, Clara Frye, Katie Pike-Werle, Julietta Medina Rojas, Teresea Tuong, and Quincy Williams.

Running concurrently to the juried student show, seniors **Mercer Fustes**, **Makenzie Lawson**, **Sarah Marks**, and **Blair Newsome** successfully achieved honors in studio art, presenting solo thesis exhibitions at Hanes Art Gallery in Scales and stArt Gallery in Reynolda Village.

From the breadth of these five student exhibitions, we purchased 11 new works for the **John P. Anderson Collection of Student Art**, which you can see displayed in buildings all around campus. Artworks by Mercer Fustes, Jane Hochman, Makenzie Lawson, Sarah Marks, Blair Newsome, Bennett Pascal, Laurel Pawlik, Julian Silverman, Annabeth Stancil, Hank Thompson, and Isabella Yochum have joined the student art collection, which has grown to

nearly 500 works in total.

I feel so fortunate to be back at Wake as Acquavella Director of University Art Galleries & Collections, closing out my first year here. My favorite experiences so far have been teaching class sessions in Hanes Art Gallery and Benson University Center using some of the very same artworks from the **Mark H. Reece Collection of Student-Acquired Contemporary Art** that inspired me as a student.

Have a wonderful summer, and I look forward to welcoming you back to our gallery spaces and art collections this fall!

Sincerely,

**Laura Minton**

Acquavella Director of University Art Galleries  
& Collections  
Wake Forest University



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## What's Happening



## Wake the Arts celebrates the class of 2026

Wake the Arts is shining a spotlight on some of our extraordinary 2026 graduates. There are so many incredible members of our arts community in the Class of 2026, and this is our attempt to highlight some of them. What makes a successful Wake Forest graduate? We think the Arts are the secret ingredient — whether a student’s major was Psychology or Studio Art, Mathematics or Music, Biology or Theatre — these students make us proud and are destined for greatness.

[Read more](#)

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## Looking back on a powerful Spring Semester

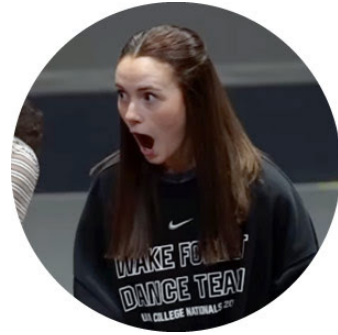
We’re looking back on a semester packed with arts and connection. From our **Arts, Healthcare and Humanities Symposium** to international visiting artists and phenomenal performances, exhibitions and festivals, the arts at Wake Forest are always finding new ways to create community and foster creativity.

[Read more](#)

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## Dance Company gets a surprise

A surprise for our senior dancers! What they thought was a mandatory meeting turned into an invitation to start Commencement morning with breakfast with Misty Copeland. Legendary ballet dancer, author, and philanthropist Misty Copeland will deliver the 2026 commencement address at Wake Forest University on Monday, May 18.



[Read more](#)

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## Art Historian Jay Curley takes a walk with Susan Wentte

President Susan R. Wentte walks and talks with art history professor Jay Curley about how the study of art is at the center of many different disciplines. From how the brain makes meaning of art, to the benefits of sustained looking, the importance of visual literacy skills and art analysis, his students learn how art is integrated into the human experience.

[Watch the video](#)

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## **Botanical Bridges: Observation and Invention**

Inspired by the Wake Forest University Herbarium and its intriguing collection of plant specimens, Professor Lydia Smith's students created and personally framed each of the twenty-four watercolor and colored pencil drawings in the 'Botanical Bridges-Observation and Invention' exhibition at the ZSR Library. Through a Wake The Arts grant-funded initiative, the works are on view now at **The Bridge** through Spring 2027. This project was funded by the Wake the Arts Center.

[Read more](#)

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## **Students become partners, not just volunteers, at Generations Center**

A semester rich with monthly visits to the Williams Center has culminated in this capstone project for an Academic Community Engagement (ACE) first-year seminar called "Creative Care: Empathy and the Benefits of Community Engagement." The 16 students have spent their time studying the neuroscience behind the benefits of engaging in the arts for people living with dementia. Through "empathy adventures" that mimic some of the symptoms of dementia, they have experienced in some small way the lives of the people they're serving at the center.



[Read more](#) and [watch the video](#)

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## **Theatre Professor Leah Roy will be inaugural Faculty-in-Residence at Wake's Center for the Advancement of Teaching**

Wake Forest's Center for the Advancement of Teaching has announced that Leah

Roy, Teaching Professor of Performance in the Department of Theatre and Dance, will be the inaugural **Faculty in Residence Program**. Leah brings an extraordinary depth of experience to this role — years in the classroom, sustained engagement with CAT programs, and significant university leadership including work on the Experiential Learning QEP Steering Committee, the College Committee on Academic Planning, and as Associate Chair of Theatre and Dance. She'll be contributing across all areas of CAT work, with a particular focus on models of assessment in the arts and the integration of experiential learning in the arts and humanities.



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**Allison Orr ('93) receives a Doris Duke Foundation 2026 Artist Award Supporting the Labor of Making Art**

Allison Orr ('93) is a choreographer and founder of Forklift Danceworks who transforms everyday labor into “ethnographic choreography.” Drawing on her background in anthropology and social work, she creates large-scale dances featuring community members and workers. In 2019, she directed “**From the Ground Up**,” a major collaboration funded by the NEA, IPLACe and Campus Services on Hearn Plaza showcasing the craft and labor of over 70 WFU Facilities workers.



[Read more](#)

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**Alumni spotlight: Jason Najjar ('24)**

"I have found the perfect intersection between my passion for art history and my study of economics. Developing my network (while at Wake and after graduation) is ultimately what led to my first hire." Learn about Jason's career as an art underwriter in New York.



[Read more](#)

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## A painting for a basketball legend

The Wake Forest University Face to Face Speaker Forum brought Earvin “Magic” Johnson to the LJVM Coliseum for a moderated conversation with Jay Bilas. Wake Forest University Studio Art major and Presidential Scholar Kyan Patel ('27) presented Magic with a portrait he painted of him.



[Read more](#)

## 30th Anniversary performance of *Since Dawn* (A Tone Poem for Narrator, Chorus and Orchestra based on Maya Angelou's *On the Pulse of Morning*)

Saturday, May 30, 7:30 p.m.

[Reynolds Auditorium](#)



*“Lift up your hearts.  
Each new hour holds new chances  
For a new beginning.”*

Composer-in-Residence and Professor of Music Emeritus Dan Locklair's *Since Dawn (A Tone Poem for Narrator, Chorus and Orchestra based on Maya Angelou's On the Pulse of Morning)* will be performed by the Winston-Salem Symphony and Symphony Chorus, with the choir led by Christopher Gilliam. A commission from WFU for the *Wake Forest Year of the Arts* in 1996, Maya Angelou narrated the World Premiere of the piece at a Winston-Salem Symphony concert in Wait Chapel launching the Year of the Arts.

Angelou's poetry will soon be featured in song again next March, as soprano **Angela Brown** performs Richard Danielpour's "A Woman's Life" and Nkeiru Okoye's "When the Caged Bird Sings."

[Concert details](#)

[Recording of premiere](#)



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