



high art fridays:  
the global artplace

# HAF connects

the  
sustainable  
art of  
plastics





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**High Art Fridays**

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High Art Fridays (HAF) is an eclectic assembly of international artists working in a wide range of materials and iconographic ideas. They are brought together in an inclusive network whose genesis came from multimedia artist Ron Shelton. One common attribute in the body of work presented here is authenticity. Regardless of the content or materials, technique takes a back seat to message, idea, and expression.

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**Cover image:**

Patrick Tagoe-Turkson, Ghana: "hat of pretense," plastic, wire 25" x 9" x 9"

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**Where does all the plastic waste end up? After plastics goes on its journey of being produced, used and tossed away by humans, it eventually comes back to us.**

Meng-Hsuan Wu  
United States



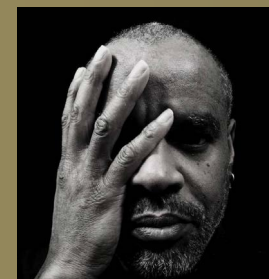


Ron Shelton, "porcupine" (inside view), plastic, wire; 25" x 14" x 13"

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# Foreword:



With funding from The Cleveland Foundation and The Ohio Arts Council, High Art Fridays (HAF) has engaged artists from local, national, and international communities to join in this movement of using discarded plastic to create "Art Hats." HAF collaborated with The Visit Arts Collective, a northeast Ohio artists group whose aim is to show, engage, and create a path to discover art. These hand-woven wire cones were

sent across the globe for artists to embellish with plastics that plague their communities; this project is called HAF Connects, connecting artists around the world through a common problem that threatens the survival of life on earth.

For the past few years, I have devoted my energy to bringing artists from all over the world together under the auspices of a common disregard for conventional aesthetics and production outside the domain of mainstream culture. In the midst of this, HAF has broadened the awareness of the "plastic problem" plaguing our planet. I have acknowledged how hyper-consumerism has permeated our culture, which has fueled the plastic epidemic. The HAF Connects artists explored this phenomenon by adopting responsibility for this issue by transforming plastic materials into art objects, collecting and hoarding scraps of discarded plastic fragments for this purpose. Much like the way a quilt maker uses scraps of discarded or leftover fabric to create a beautiful tapestry.

The inspiration for this project began during my ten-week art residency through a Cleveland-based arts facility, Art House Inc. Twenty third graders from Dennison Elementary School in Cleveland learned about the dangers of plastics while creating whimsical wire-frame structures embellished with this material.

**Ron Shelton**  
Curator & Publisher  
United States

# Introduction:

**Plastic. It's everywhere. Just look around your home, your car, and your school and office and you will find plastic.**

Plastic has many properties that make it useful for a variety of different purposes. It is lightweight, strong, waterproof and inexpensive. For these reasons, plastic offers us many benefits in healthcare, technology, transportation, and food preservation. There is however, a cost to these benefits, and that cost is the impact on our environment, our wildlife, and our own health from plastic pollution.

It can be said that there is no "away" for plastic trash. This is true because although plastic breaks down when exposed to the sun, it does not completely degrade but instead breaks down into smaller and smaller pieces. It is not known exactly how long it takes for a piece of plastic to completely degrade, but it is estimated to be hundreds of years.

Much of the plastic waste that is not disposed of in a landfill, recycled or found as litter in our streets, eventually accumulates in our waters that ultimately connect to our oceans. Bits of plastic can be found throughout the ocean: floating on the surface, mixed into the water column, and embedded in the sediments at the bottom.

Our plastic trash does not just impact us, but it also impacts wildlife. Hundreds of wildlife species, along the entire food chain, have been impacted by plastic trash. Wildlife can become entangled in plastic and/or plastic may be eaten by animals when they mistake it for food.

There are several actions that we can all take to reduce the amount of plastic pollution in our environment.

- Educate your friends and family about the impact of plastic pollution and ways they can act.
- Limit your use of single-use disposable plastic, like grocery bags, cups and utensils.
- Lead by example by using reusable bags, cups, straws, and utensils.
- Reduce the amount of plastic packaging you purchase.
- Demand manufacturers reduce plastic packaging in their products.
- Recycle when you can, but remember to reduce and reuse first.

In this publication you will find beautiful and creative examples of how you can reuse and upcycle the plastic found in your home. At the end of the book, you will find resources to learn more. Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle, but always Rethink what you do first.

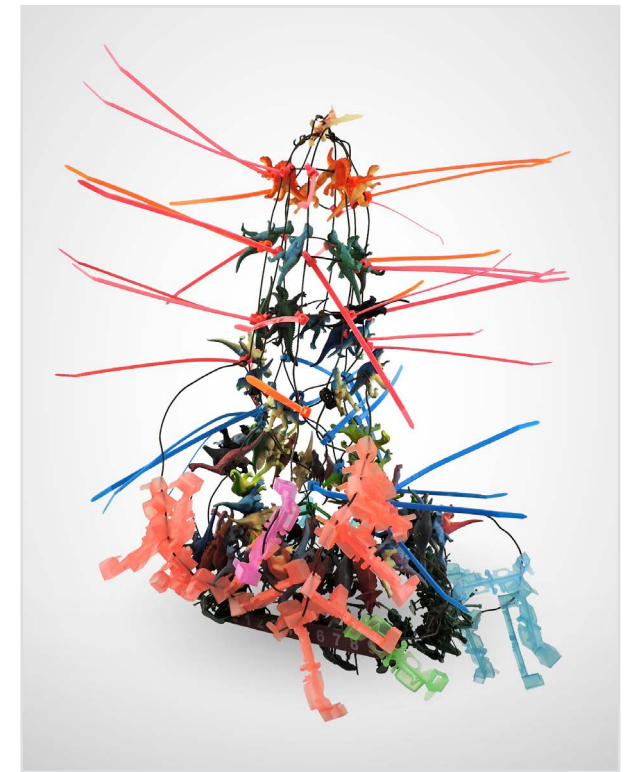
**Cathi Lehn, Ph.D.**

City of Cleveland  
Mayor's Office of Sustainability

# Featured Artists:

Researchers from the Medical University of Vienna and the Environment Agency Austria studied the diets and stool samples of eight participants from across the globe. Some amount of microplastics was present in the feces of every single one. For the past four years, HAF has taken a close look at what artists are saying about the dangerous conditions to our land and waters globally. The plastic trash into art project is an ongoing study. HAF Connects will hopefully begin a dialogue of how we, as a global community, overuse this material.

These artists have scavenged beaches, personal waste, and dumpsters collectively to hoard and transform every plastic bag, bottle, jug, carton, and label. They were cataloged and inventoried by color, thickness, and shape into sustainable works of plastic art. It is our goal that HAF Connects continues to grow locally, nationally, and globally to transform how we manage and use plastic.

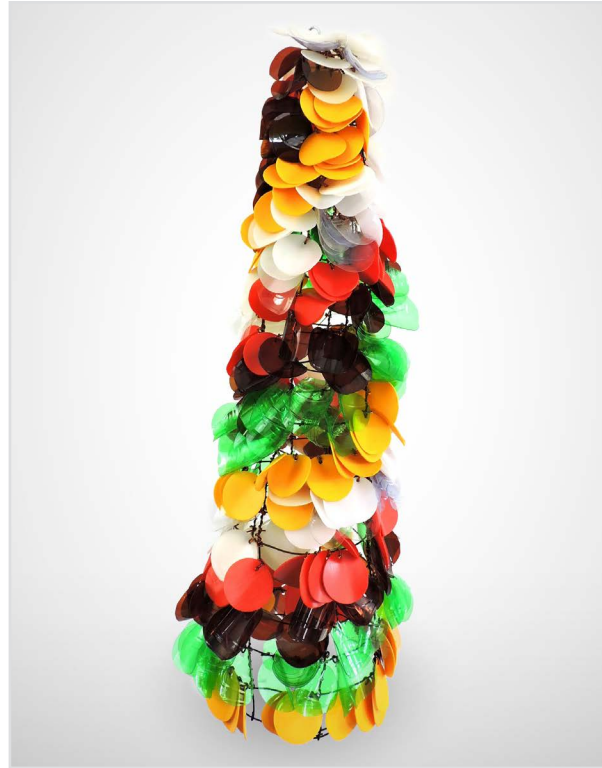


## Chester Hopkins-Bey *United States*

Growing up in Cleveland, Ohio, plastic has always been in my life, to the point where I could almost not imagine my life without it. It has made life convenient for the consumer and is so integral to our daily lives that we take its usefulness for granted. But unfortunately, it's at the expense of the planet's health. The carbon footprint of myself alone has me wondering what I can do to reduce it. In conjunction with the HAF Connects project, I will do this by taking plastic that I repurpose, using old toys, discarded and found plastic pieces that I come across in daily life, and affixing them to a wireframe. In doing this, I am looking at my carbon footprint and documenting my steps through this current pandemic, hoping that my fellow artists and I can offer a glimpse of hope in a time of need.

**Description of artwork**

"tar blood coronation," plastic, wire; 20" x 15" x 15"

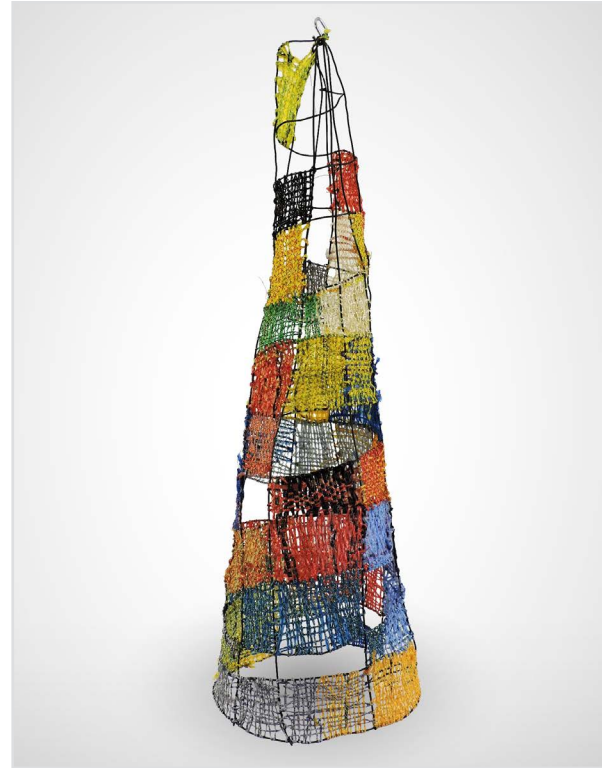


## Thomas Bruce

Ghana

In this hat art project, I deem it essential to educate the public on how to convert waste plastic materials into beautiful hats titled "Hope for the Hopeless." I obtained plastic materials from restaurants, fuel filling stations, riverbanks, and beaches. I then cleaned the plastic materials and cut them into round elements and perforated. The plastic items were sorted and organized in a spiral and asymmetrical manner using copper rings. The arrangement presents movement and energy. The finished hat ascribes life for the abandoned. Because plastics are not biodegradable when left in and mixed with soil, this negatively affects its fertility and consequently has an impact on the growth of plants. Sometimes, animals that feed on the environment accidentally ingest some plastics which adversely affect their lives.

**Description of artwork**  
"hope for the hopeless," plastic, wire; 25" x 9" x 9"



## Taeyoun Kim

South Korea

For this project, I made the hat by weaving thin strips of plastic that have each been applied with a serge stitch to develop the plastic yarn. The yarn is made of waste plastic bags. I then weave the yarn into the wire hat frames. It was fascinating and enjoyable work. This project is not just a hat made of trash. A loose wireframe met various materials and was born into multiple hats, bringing together the thoughts and minds of artists around the world for this project. This project will hopefully reach the audience and move their beliefs and intentions about plastic waste. I believe that this hat project will serve as a bridge between life and art, environment and art, artists and artists, regions and regions, and the present and the future.

**Description of artwork**  
"plastic bag hat," plastic, wire; 25" x 9" x 9"

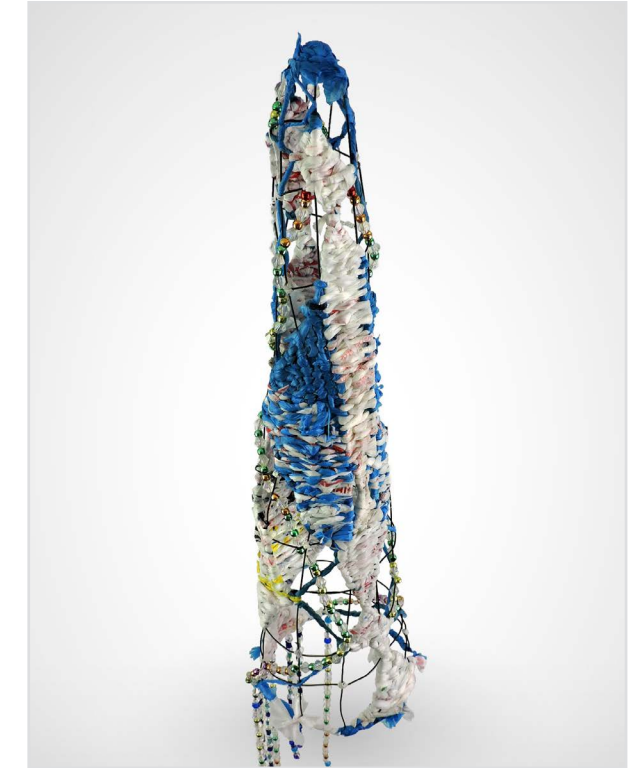


## Cynthia Minet

United States

The sculpture is made from cut-up recycled detergent bottles and other plastics that I've gathered. I have been working with these types of materials for the past decade, mostly making life-size animals entitled "Unsustainable Creatures." While making this new human form from plastic, I was thinking about how most of us place our conveniences above the needs of the planet, as we continue to use plastic without considering the ecological repercussions. In my construction process, I wove some strips of plastics in and out of the twisted wire grid and fashioned the human features out of cut-up detergent bottles. I used discarded contact lens cases for the eyes and used hot glue, push-in rivets, wire, and zip-ties to connect the parts to the wire form. As I worked, I noticed that the headdress and the curved neck reminded me of the famous statue of the Egyptian queen, Nefertiti.

**Description of artwork**  
"my nefertiti" plastic, wire; 25" x 9" x 9"



## Kole Robinson-Brooks

United States

When approaching this project, my first thought was of the annoyance of plastic bags all over the world. Here in Cleveland, Ohio our problem with plastic bags is that they end up in our sewers and trees. They also clog the freshwater intake valve systems in our only freshwater Lake located in Cleveland, Ohio. I decided to focus on plastic grocery bags. My inspiration is called "Ade" in the Yoruba language. An Ade is a king's crown, which is cone-shaped, like the frame we are using for this project. In my culture, one's head is also considered a crown. I am weaving and twist-braiding my grocery bags onto the frame. I adorned the hat with other types of plastics such as pieces of hard alcohol bottles which have been consumed during COVID-19 this year, and plastic beads.

**Description of artwork**  
"ade," plastic, wire; 26" x 9" x 9"

# Special Recognition:

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## In Greater Cleveland, Ohio, Art House's Urban Bright supports, enriches, and deepens the visual arts curriculum in schools.

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Working with children this year has been an exhilarating experience for Ron Shelton. Their inventive and sincere way of processing information is in keeping with his creative practice. In his recent ten-week residency with twenty third graders from Dennison Elementary School, Cleveland Ohio, Ron provided information and hope within an art-making format that encouraged dialogue, problem-solving skills, and critical thinking.

With the help of renowned artist, Patrick Turkson of Ghana, the class looked at the environmental effects of plastic disposal and learned about how some contemporary artists use this as a political, environmental, and aesthetic focus in their work.

The ten-week Urban Bright Project was designed for the children to create wire-framed cone hats embellished with plastic fragments. Using the disposable plastic materials they talked about in class, Ron also covered several of the 6-foot tables with plastic sheets for the students to doodle on. Then, through painting, drawing, and assemblage, the children made hats and plastic "fabric" that delighted them as wearable art objects and vehicles for self-expression. The interchange among

the students and artists in this residency created an atmosphere of inclusion, self-esteem, purpose, in addressing contemporary environmental issues.

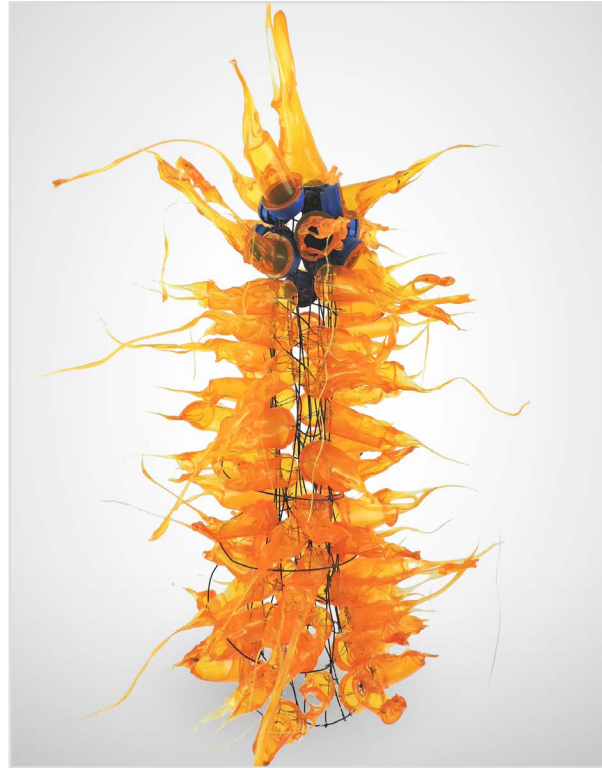
Ideas like recycling, and human resilience in the face of a global problem, build self-confidence and optimism among the students: Dixandel (age, 9): "The one thing I learned in art class is that you can reuse plastic and make something into art"; Angel (age, 9): "Plastic can be hurtful to nature because if the animals eat plastic they can get sick or they can die"; Janiyah (age, 8): "I've learned that recycling can help the ocean because some people throw plastic into the ocean and that can hurt animals", and from Angelo (age, 9): "I learned that you can reuse plastic. I love art because we get to make stuff out of plastic and metal. My favorite part of the class was making the hats".

Over the last decade and a half, arts education has been quietly disappearing from school curriculums across the nation due to budget cuts and shifting priorities; Art House seeks to bridge the gap between the desire for robust arts education programming and the reality of public funding through the Urban Bright Arts-In-Education program.

### Featured Child Artists:

- Brooklyn, age 9 (top-left)
- Angel, age 9 (top-right)
- Angelo, age 9 (bottom-left)
- Deriona, age 8 (bottom-right)





## Ron Shelton

*United States*

I have embellished my featured HAF Connects Art Hat with over sixty plastic amber medicine bottles. The medical industry frequently uses plastics, which has steadily increased over the last decade. Sterile plastic packaging and plastic medical disposables, in particular, have contributed to keeping the rates low. The amber plastic pill bottles I have used in my Art Hat is to illustrate the medical industries' dependency on plastics. Two small holes were drilled into the bottle openings then string with wire. I then melted each bottle with a high powered heat gun into a variety of organically shaped forms, each resembling flames of fire. Thus the name "plastic fire" was assigned. These medicine bottles are one example of how plastics serve the health and medical industries, but we ultimately pay the price from these conveniences as they hurt our environment, wildlife, and our bodies.

**Description of artwork**

"plastic fire," plastic, wire; 30" x 14" x 14"



## Charmaine Spencer

*United States*

The material I incorporated in this project is Styrofoam; I would usually never use this material. When used with food products, especially when heated, Styrofoam releases toxic chemicals into the food, causing contamination, which can be hazardous to your health. Also, when exposed to sunlight, Styrofoam creates harmful air pollutants that contaminate landfills and deplete the ozone layer. My landlord had a mountain of this stuff, and he did not feel comfortable throwing it in the trash. This project with HAF Connect came about creating Art Hats from unsustainable material. First, I made the wire form from the traffic cone. Then I used the vertical wire and strung the Styrofoam and wove it through the vertical wire. After the Styrofoam was in position, I began to wrap the black wire around pieces of the Styrofoam for contrast. I built the wire string of the Styrofoam around the cone, which got smaller in size as it traveled up the cone.

**Description of artwork**

"untitled," styrofoam, wire; 26" x 20" x 20"



## Patrick Tagoe-Turkson

*Ghana*

I live in Takoradi, a fishing community in western Ghana. I created this green hat from plastic net debris and ropes from my newly discovered "plastic mine beach" to reflect on the hypocrisy of the majority of the world population in the fight against plastic waste and pollution. In recent times, fishermen have complained about low catch due to many factors, a vital one being ocean plastics. They have been catching more plastic than fish. The existing beach environment in my community is littered with drift plastic fishing nets, ropes, and clothes. Little did I know, thousands of tons of drift deposits of these materials have colonized a beach close to my backyard. Arguably, this debris might be coming from the same fishermen who have been complaining about the effects of ocean plastic on their trade.

**Description of artwork**

"hat of pretense," plastic, wire; 25" x 9" x 9"



## Gina Washington

*United States*

I am consciously collecting, transforming, and rendering, like art, my personal need to hear; my families need to consume bottled water and a child's need to consume candy. The water bottle tops represent our global need for clean drinking water, the negative effects of bottled water, and the pollution that exist in all of our waterways. This project is about need, waste, and those daily rituals many people perform without thought. I know plastic is recyclable. I know my hearing aid batteries are recyclable as well. Each one takes work to accomplish the task of zero waste. Every three days I have to change the batteries in my hearing aids; hearing is essential for me, but there are other rituals, personal and otherwise, that have to be transformed to heal the Earth. HAF connects is a liberating way to make beautiful the ugly side of tiny little things that pile up daily to a million little things

**Description of artwork**

"tiny little things," plastic, wire; 25" x 9" x 9"



## Lolita Wilson

*United States*

By repurposing the cigarette butts/filters into the Art Hat would be considered quite ironic. As I begin this process, I discover this bad behavior against “our earth.” This platform will continue to be a catalyst to my consciousness and will drive me to a better attitude towards how to treat “our earth” with smoking and the disposal of my cigarette butts. However, through companies like TerraCycle, using a cigarette butt recycling program, individuals and organizations can place the cigarette butt receptacles in high-traffic areas, collect the waste and ship it for recycling. Once collected, the cigarettes and packaging are separated by composition and melted into hard plastic that can be remolded to make new recycled industrial products, such as plastic pallets.

**Description of artwork**  
 “budding into the ethers,” cigarette filters, plastic, wire;  
 25" x 9" x 9"

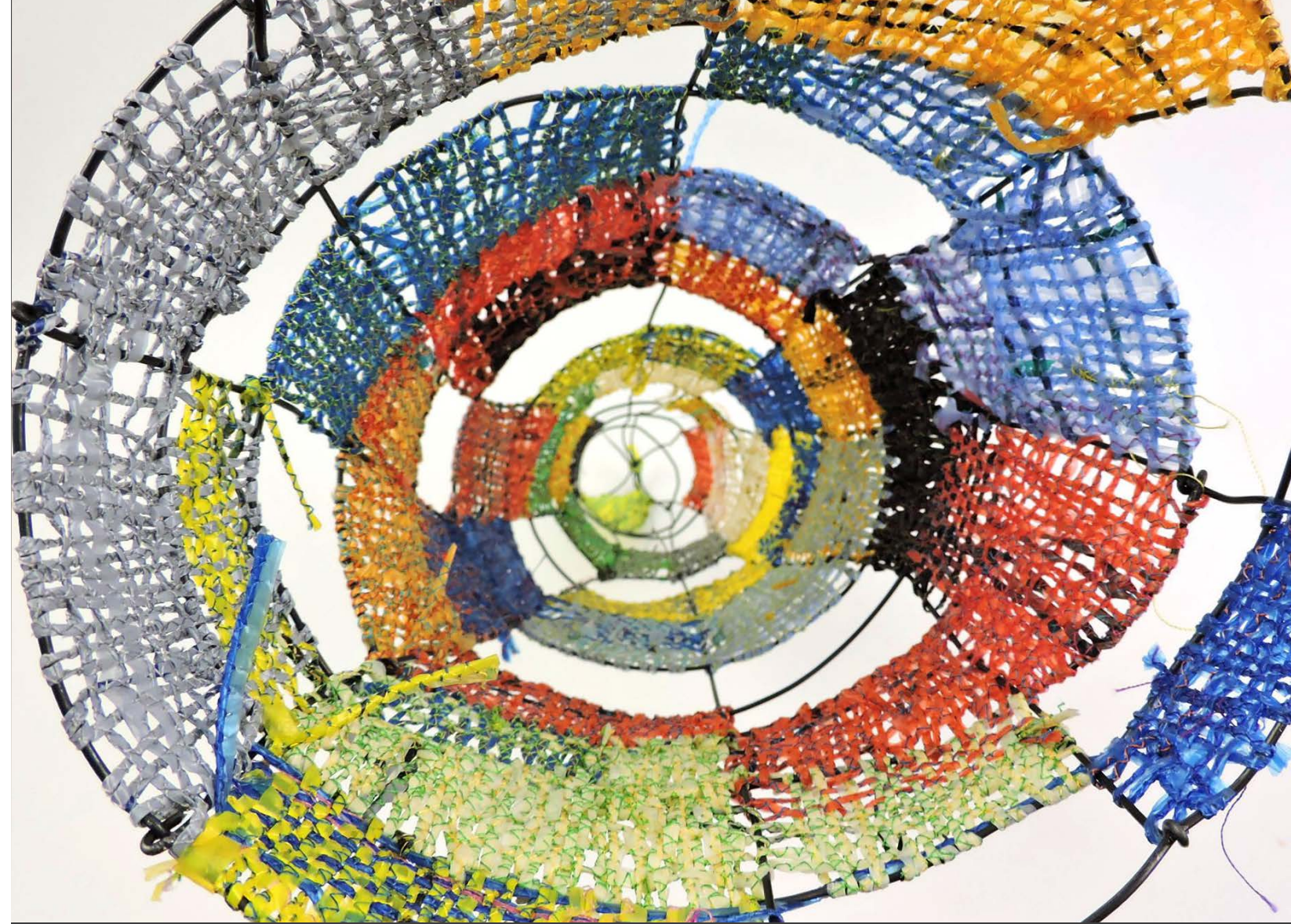


## Meng-Hsuan Wu

*United States*

After plastic goes on its journey of being produced, used, and tossed away by humans. It eventually comes back to “us.” In this hat sculpture, I wanted to create an image of a sea creature—the fish. The connection between different animals implies that all life on earth is linked and related to each other. In this piece, the CD disks are cut into small pieces as the shape of fish scales. Even though CDs are made of highly valuable recyclable materials like polycarbonate plastic and aluminum, they can’t be easily recycled because they’re made of mixed materials that are difficult to separate for recycling. I selected old CD disks as the main plastic material because of their unsustainable feature and their reflective surface. Their mirror-like surface reflects the images of all surroundings. It’s like our living condition, which reflects our behavior towards all types of ecosystems on earth.

**Description of artwork**  
 “coexistence,” plastic CD’s, wire; 26" x 9" x 9"



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**I believe that this hat project will serve as a bridge between life and art, environment and art, artists and artists, regions and regions, and furthermore, the present and the future.**

Taeyoun Kim  
 South Korea

”

Taeyoun Kim “plastic bag hat” (inside view),  
 plastic, wire; 25" x 9" x 9"





Ron Shelton "plastic fire" (inside view), plastic, wire; 30" x 14" x 14"

# Artist Biographies:

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**Learn more about the collection of artists featured in this year's catalog.**

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## **Chester Hopkins-Bey (pg. 7)**

Chester Hopkins-Bey specializes in conceptual art and graphic communication. He works in a variety of mediums, including painting and sculpture, making use of found objects. Hopkins-Bey describes his art method as "multicultural patchwork," as ongoing engagement with individual people and the world as a whole facilitates his creative process. Themes explored in Hopkins-Bey's work often revolve around the human expression. He uses art as a therapeutic and healing practice promoting personal growth.

## **Thomas Bruce (pg. 8)**

Thomas Bruce earned degrees in Metal Product Design from the College of Art, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology in Kumasi, Ghana. He works as an artist and teacher in Takoradi, Ghana. With little more than a knife and a pair of pliers, Bruce constructs narratives around humanity's contribution to the rapidly deteriorating environment, incorporating found plastics and metals as his primary materials. Since graduating in 2000, Bruce has practiced professionally and taught as a senior staff member at Takoradi Technical University, Takoradi, Ghana.

## **Taeyoun Kim (pg. 8)**

Tae-youn Kim, Korea, has exhibited her art internationally. Kim has recently been producing her type of textile materials by spinning plastic yarn, an essential element in her work, and using weaving and sewing techniques. She converts various materials found in our daily lives, including newspaper, packing materials made of paper or non-woven fabric, timeworn tape measures, ripped balloons, and adhesive tape, into yarn. She discovered, in the process, the enormous potential of vinyl and plastic materials as a textile material. Kim collects such plastic waste to produce yarn and textiles; the inspiration from the change in the material property leads to the creation of work.

## **Cynthia Minet (pg. 9)**

Cynthia Minet is a Los Angeles-based visual artist and art professor at Moorpark College. She works with post-consumer plastics, discarded materials, and light, to construct illuminated sculptures and installations. Minet has shown extensively in museums in the USA, including the Anchorage Museum, Alaska, the CDC Museum, Atlanta; the USC Fisher Museum, Los Angeles; UC Riverside's Culver Center for the Arts, and the International Museum of Art and Science, McAllen, TX. Minet's most recent museum exhibition was a solo show at the Craft Contemporary Museum in Los Angeles (2019-2020). Her latest solo show, Urgent Matter, in Los Angeles, was the LA Weekly's Pick of the Week in January 2020.

## **Kole Robinson-Brooks (pg. 9)**

Kole Robinson-Brooks comes from a family of art-making people from which she has developed a great admiration of the creativity as an essential part of the human experience. Robinson-Brooks graduated from Cleveland Institute of Art with a BFA, and earned an associates degree in graphic design from Cuyahoga Community College. Throughout her career, she has experimented with many art-making techniques. Experimenting with light and forms are of particular interest to her, but her primary mediums include ceramics, fiber, and photography.

# Artist Biographies:

## **Charmaine Spencer (pg. 12)**

Charmaine Spencer is owner and curator of Studio 302 of the 78th Street Studios complex, in Cleveland Ohio. Still Point Gallery currently represents Charmaine. Her work has been exhibited at the Sculpture Center, Cleveland State University Gallery, the Maltz Museum, and other locations. In 2020 Charmaine was awarded the Ohio Arts Council ADAP Grant and in 2018 the CAN Triennial Prize. Her corporate commissions include an 18 x 18' site-specific installation on permanent exhibition at the new Hilton downtown, a site-specific installation at The Cleveland Museum of Natural History and works at The Cleveland Clinic Hospital.

## **Patrick Tagoe-Turkson, (pg. 13)**

Patrick Tagoe-Turkson's work is as vibrant in color as it is robust in meaning. It rejects the concept of art for art's sake, seeking instead to reclaim, transform, and repair. He confronts deep ideas, including identity, memory, and waste, and in doing so, demonstrates the role of an artist and the impact art can have on a community. He earned an MFA in Painting from the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology in Kumasi, Ghana. Found objects, particular plastics, represent a major component in his creative process. He incorporates the materials in various mediums, including drawings, paintings, and installations. His dedication to environmental consciousness led him to participate in the Gauging Nature Art Biennale in South Korea, among other international exhibitions. Currently, he serves as a Senior Lecturer at Takoradi Technical University in Ghana.

## **Gina Washington (pg. 13)**

Gina Washington, born and raised in Cleveland earned her MFA in Photography. She has exhibited her work nationally and internationally, winning awards for portraiture. She is the creator of Mateza Gallery LLC on Etsy, founder of the Black Female Artist Collective and co-founder of the Visit Arts Collective, alongside fellow artists: Chester Hopkins-Bey, Kole Robinson-Brooks, and Lolita Wilson. The collective facilitates experiential exhibitions, installations, and educational programs, incorporating music, poetry, dance and visual arts to explore the black experience.

## **Lolita Wilson (pg. 14)**

Lolita Wilson graduated from Cuyahoga Community College, with a concentration on Computer Animation, Painting, and Art History. In 1994, Wilson began her painting series, "All Shades of the Blues," which she later entered in The Cleveland Clinic Employee's Art Expo in 2000-2005. Wilson has been an active member of The Visit Arts Collective for over ten years. The organization is responsible for exhibiting site installations throughout Northeast Ohio. Wilson is currently working on a documentary that focuses on the art scene in Cleveland, now in post-production.

## **Meng-Hsuan Wu (pg.14)**

Meng-Hsuan Wu, born in Taiwan is a Cleveland-based artist. She has exhibited internationally, including the Dorsky Gallery Curatorial Programs in NY (2010); the Juming Museum in Taiwan (2011); and the YARDS Projects Art Gallery in Ohio (2019). For Wu, art offers a way to explore a variety of themes: life and existence; the relationship between time, space, and place; and community engagement. To explore these themes, she combines different artistic methods, most notably, site-specific interactive performance and time-based video installations.

# Recycling Resources:

**Algalita Marine Research Foundation**  
[algalita.org](http://algalita.org)

**Beyond Plastics**  
[beyondplastics.org](http://beyondplastics.org)

**BreakFreeFromPlastic**  
[breakfreefromplastic.org](http://breakfreefromplastic.org)

**BrightMark**  
[brightmark.com](http://brightmark.com)

**Bye Bye Plastic Bags**  
[byebyeplasticbags.org](http://byebyeplasticbags.org)

**U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)**  
[epa.gov/recycle/recycling-basics](http://epa.gov/recycle/recycling-basics)  
[epa.gov/trash-free-waters](http://epa.gov/trash-free-waters)

**National Geographic's Planet or Plastic**  
[nationalgeographic.com/environment/planetorplastic](http://nationalgeographic.com/environment/planetorplastic)

**MarineDebris.info**  
[octogroup.org](http://octogroup.org)  
[marinedebris.openchannels.org/top-lists/marine-debris](http://marinedebris.openchannels.org/top-lists/marine-debris)

**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association (NOAA) Marine Debris Program**  
[marinedebris.noaa.gov](http://marinedebris.noaa.gov)

**Oceanic Global**  
[oceanic.global](http://oceanic.global)

**Plastic Free July**  
[plasticfreejuly.org](http://plasticfreejuly.org)

**Plastic Global Law and Policy**  
[ciel.org/issue/plastic-global-law-policy](http://ciel.org/issue/plastic-global-law-policy)

**Plastics Policy Inventory**  
[bit.ly/PlasticsPolicyInventory](http://bit.ly/PlasticsPolicyInventory)

**Story of Stuff**  
[storyofstuff.org](http://storyofstuff.org)

**Story of Plastic**  
[storyofplastic.org](http://storyofplastic.org)

**Surfrider Foundation**  
[surfrider.org](http://surfrider.org)

**The 5 Gyres Institute**  
[5gyres.org](http://5gyres.org)

**The United Nations**  
[un.org/pga/73/plastics](http://un.org/pga/73/plastics)

**United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme | Marine Plastic Litter and Microplastics**  
[wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/28471/Englishpdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y](http://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/28471/Englishpdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y)

**World Wildlife Fund**  
[worldwildlife.org/magazine/issues/fall-2019/articles/plastic-in-the-ocean](http://worldwildlife.org/magazine/issues/fall-2019/articles/plastic-in-the-ocean)



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