

The Accomplished Arts Apprentices (AAA) Program:

Progress Report, December 2022

Mission and Purpose

The mission of the Accomplished Arts Apprentices (AAA) program is to increase equity and inclusion in the arts, creative, and preservation trades. AAA pursues this goal by providing creative and hands-on access to rewarding and stable careers through a non-traditional apprenticeship program sponsored by The Peale, Baltimore's Community Museum, with specific focus on apprentices from Baltimore's marginalized communities.

As the number of skilled workers in the construction trades has plummeted in recent years, the shortage of skilled preservation artisans has continued to grow. According to the Associated General Contractors of America (AGC), 81% of construction firms are reporting difficulty in filling salaried and hourly craft positions in the United States. In addition, the general trades workforce is both aging and not adequately representative of the U.S. population. The changing demographics of the American workforce pose opportunities as well as challenges for the preservation of the nation's historic structures and cultural heritage; AAA seeks to be a forerunning in beginning to address the gap.



Origins of the AAA Program

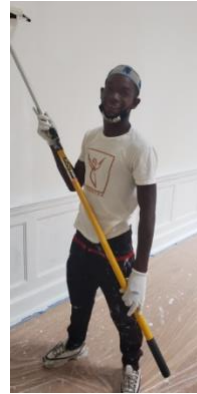
Shauntee Daniels, now Executive Director of the Baltimore National Heritage Area, sowed the seed of The Peale's historic preservation apprenticeship program in 2017 by alerting the then Executive Director of The Peale, Dr. Nancy Proctor, to the shortage of young people coming into the historic preservation trades, particularly from communities of color. At the time, The Peale was embarking on renovations of its 1814 building, the first purpose-built museum in the U.S., with plans to serve as a teaching museum and laboratory for innovation in cultural practice. The idea of working with young people from



Baltimore, a majority African American city with a rich and diverse history and cultural heritage, to save the Peale Museum building while helping train a more diverse workforce in the field, was in perfect alignment with The Peale's mission and strategic goals. Towards this end, Daniels facilitated two engagements with the National Trust's Hands on Preservation Experience (HOPE) Crew program in the summers of 2018 and 2019. Students from Morgan State University's School of Architecture learned under the mentorship of David Gibney, historic preservation trades artisan, to help restore elements of The Peale's garden and interior.

The Accomplished Arts Apprentices: Progress Report, December 2022

In the summer of 2020, The Peale's Chief Curator, Jeffrey Kent, proposed hiring apprentices to help install the exhibition, **Kim Rice: Inheritance**, which Kent curated. Working with The Tenderbridge, a local non-profit that supports at-risk youth, Kent recruited two apprentices from east Baltimore who had been part of the film project, **By Any Means Necessary: Stories of Survival**, produced by the Baltimore National Heritage Area. The apprentices had been supporting themselves by squeegeeing, but in the summer of 2020 they were able to earn \$20/hour while learning gallery preparation, exhibition installation, and art handling skills from Kent. This summer experience served as a pilot and proof-of-concept for the launch of the AAA program as an annual educational program.



AAA: The Inaugural Year

Building on this proof-of-concept project, and in response to the demand from those apprentices and others in their community, The Peale launched the AAA program in the fall of 2021. Four apprentices, including one from the summer 2020 pilot, participated in the inaugural year of the program, which was funded by grants from the Baltimore National Heritage Area, TransAmerica Foundation, the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), Preservation Maryland, and individual donors.

The AAA program aims to increase equity and inclusion in the arts, museums, and preservation trades by providing vocational training for young people from Baltimore's disinvested communities who have been hit hardest by the pandemic and its economic fallout. Through a curriculum they help create, apprentices receive hands-on training in exhibition installation, art handling, historic preservation, and related trades, as well as greater involvement in and appreciation of the arts lifelong. The program teaches professional as well as life skills that will be useful to any future employment the apprentices may pursue, including how to identify and secure fulfilling lifetime work opportunities. Importantly for people from economic disadvantage, the trades skills being taught in this program lead to well-paid, meaningful careers that don't require the up-front investment of a college degree but are both financially and creatively rewarding, helping strengthen and preserve communities and their cultural heritage.



With direction from The Tenderbridge, The Peale recruited four young men from east Baltimore to participate in the inaugural AAA cohort. In a 36 week program run from October 2021 to July 14, 2022, the apprentices installed exhibitions both at The Peale and elsewhere for leading Baltimore-based artists including Chris Wilson, Derrick Adams/The Last Resort Artist Retreat, Jerrell Gibbs, Kim Rice, and Kumasi J. Barnett.

The project paid the apprentices \$20.00 per hour for 3 days totaling in 15 hours plus \$20.00 a day each for lunch. When these young men began the project, none were vaccinated. So, first they were instructed on the pros and cons of getting the Covid-19 vaccine, which was followed by all four getting fully vaccinated. Next, the apprentices were introduced to a bank manager to set up personal bank accounts for their direct deposits to start them on the path to financial literacy, while excluding their need for check cashing joints.

Using The Peale as the laboratory, the cohort learned skills such as wall preparation, paint and repair for exhibitions, standards in the industry of art handling and installations, basics in screen printing,

The Accomplished Arts Apprentices: Progress Report, December 2022

installation of museum lighting and how to properly light artwork on display. They learned safety within the work space and proper uses of power tools including how to use a measuring tape, saws, drills, screw and nail guns, power-sanders and more. They also practiced art packaging, including building museum quality crates for shipping fine art, how to make pedestals for sculptures, how to measure and stretch art canvases as well as how to do produce a business plan.

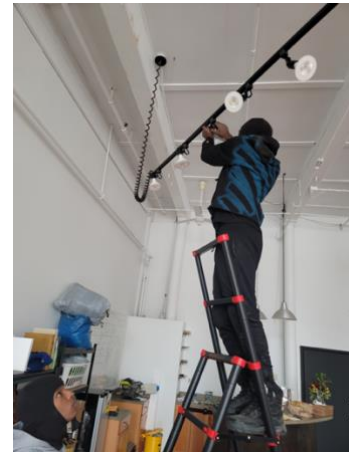


Of the original four apprentices, two – Jay' Quan Washington (20) and Tavon Philips (21), completed the program. The program culminated in a celebration and exhibition of their learnings from the program, held at The Peale on July 14, 2022. In the final months of the program, the apprentices also developed a business plan around the art-related skills they have learned from Kent and others during the program. Drawing on their entrepreneurial talents and skills developed from their years of “hustling” to survive in one of the most

underserved communities of Baltimore, Washington and Philips formed an LLC, the A.P. Art Squad, to provide support services for artists, galleries, and museums. They are currently employed at The Peale, helping as exhibition preparators and gallery attendants. They will also help instruct the second cohort of apprentices 2022-2023.

“Jay and I have been in the apprenticeship program at The Peale Museum and have gotten to build a lot of different art related things as well as doing installations and de-installation of exhibits. We both play ice hockey with the Baltimore Banners and that is how we got picked for the apprenticeship program. We are starting a business called A.P. Art Squad, to do support services for artists, galleries, and museums. Right now we’re just trying to figure out what kind of things would be most helpful for different customers. We see the business as being part of a team helping the artist with things they don’t like doing.”

– **Tavon Phillips, AAA graduate 2022**



AAA Year Two

A major \$250,000, 3-year grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) has been secured to help continue the Accomplished Arts Apprenticeship program through 2025. This is a matching grant, requiring another \$250,000 in non-federal funding to be secured. So far, we have secured all but \$9,500 of the required match for FY23 thanks to support from the Mayor and City Council of Baltimore via the Baltimore National Heritage Area, and a \$25,000 grant from TransAmerica Foundation. Fundraising continues to meet the IMLS grant and

The Accomplished Arts Apprentices: Progress Report, December 2022

program requirements, and also to expand participation to include more paid hours of instruction for the apprentices. Currently they are still paid \$20/hour for 15 hours/week of instruction, as last year.

These grants and the support of individuals have enabled us to expand the program to 5 apprentices this year, and add a teaching assistant as well as a dedicated Apprentice Services Support professional to provide wrap-around services and ongoing monitoring and evaluation help for the program. Mike Crawford has joined the team as program manager, and The Peale's Board President, William Chickering, volunteers to manage the curriculum scheduling. Jeffrey Kent and David Gibney continue to lead instruction in exhibition preparation and historic preservation, respectively. This year's cohort of apprentices are all in their 20s and includes returning citizens as well as un- and under-employed young people. They were recruited during a recruiting fair at The Peale on October 20th, which drew wide interest in the program from supporters and participants across the city.

Since beginning the program on November 1, the apprentices have installed three exhibitions at The Peale and begun learning specialist historic preservation skills. They are scheduled to install at three more exhibitions at The Peale in 2023 so far, and to help renovate First and Franklin Church. They also assist with set-up for programs at The Peale on occasion, and will be building pedestals and other furniture for the museum.



Jamar Willoughby, Johnnie Tuffer, Bishear Allen, Kendal Washington, Jamel Bell (teaching assistant), and Nikkia Harris at The Peale with a Día de los Muertos installation by artist Frida Larios in the museum's garden.