

Office of Creative Propulsion | 2025-2026

ANNUAL REPORT



Office of Creative Propulsion (OCP), James Madison University

The Office of Creative Propulsion (OCP), an administrative unit of the College of Visual and Performing Arts (CVPA) at James Madison University, includes the Madison Art Collection (MAC).

Executive Director: Kathryn Nusa Logan
Director of the MAC: Virginia Soenksen

The Arts at 131 W. Grace Street
131 W. Grace Street
Harrisonburg, VA 22807
(540) 568-5656 // (540) 568-2661
<https://www.jmu.edu/arts/ocp/index.shtml>
ocp@jmu.edu // madisonart@jmu.edu

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REPORTS FROM THE DIRECTORS

Dear Friends, Colleagues, Students, and Community Partners,

As we reflect on the past year, I am grateful for the creativity, collaboration, and generosity that continue to define the work of the Office of Creative Propulsion. Due to incredible collaborative efforts, we greatly advanced our integrative arts mission, bridging disciplines, connecting the university with the broader community, and creating opportunities for meaningful collaboration through the arts.

Throughout the year, we have remained committed to building connections across boundaries. We have supported faculty and students engaged in interdisciplinary creative work, fostered new partnerships



Kathryn Logan,
Executive Director, Office
of Creative Propulsion



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Propulsion

across James Madison University, and helped create spaces where artists, scholars, and community members can learn from one another. Through these efforts, we continue to demonstrate the power of the arts to inspire innovation, strengthen community, and address complex challenges.

One of the most rewarding aspects of our work is extending the reach of the arts beyond traditional settings. Through initiatives such as ArtsMobile, we brought creative experiences directly into community spaces, making the arts more accessible and inviting participation from audiences of all ages and backgrounds. Likewise, the Centering the Arts Podcast has continued to highlight the remarkable work of students, faculty, staff, and artists across the College of Visual and Performing Arts, helping them share their stories with a

broader audience.

This year also reinforced the importance of collaboration as a catalyst for transformation. By supporting integrative arts projects, cross-disciplinary research, collaborative course development, and creative partnerships, we have helped cultivate new ideas and new ways of working together. These efforts exemplify our commitment to serving as a connector, advocate, and resource for those seeking to explore the intersections of art, scholarship, and community impact.

The accomplishments highlighted throughout this report are the result of many dedicated individuals. I am deeply grateful to our faculty, staff, students, alumni, donors, and community partners whose vision and enthusiasm make this work possible. Your commitment to creativity, collaboration, and civic enga-

gement continues to shape a vibrant future for the arts at JMU and throughout our region.

I remain inspired by the possibilities that emerge when people come together across disciplines and experiences. We will continue to champion the arts as a force for connection, innovation, well-being, education, and community development. Together, we are building a culture where creative practice sparks new ideas, strengthens relationships, and creates lasting impact.

Kathryn Nusa Logan,
Executive Director, OCP,
James Madison University

Dear friends,

This has been a landmark year for the Madison Art Collection. The academic year 2025 -2026 was not simply a year of transition; it was a year of momentum, reinvention and extraordinary institutional growth. With the move to 131 W. Grace, MAC entered a new chapter as a more visible, accessible, student-centered academic museum – one positioned to serve JMU, Harrisonburg, and Shenandoah Valley with greater energy and purpose than ever before.

This year, we laid the groundwork for MAC's future while continuing to fulfill the essential work of museum stewardship. Staff, students, faculty, and partners helped transform new spaces into functioning museum environments. This is essential yet often unseen work that strengthens collections care and documentation, prepares galleries for public use, and builds the systems need-



Virginia 'Ginny' Soenksen,
Director, Madison Art
Collection



ed for long-term sustainability. Behind every action was the shared desire to create a stronger institutional foundation.

The opening exhibitions at The Arts at 131 W Grace, *Artist (R)evolutions* and *Weaving Clouds: Textiles of Central Asia*, offered an exciting first glimpse of what this new chapter can become. Together, they welcomed 462 visitors, a meaningful increase over MAC's previous location and a powerful sign of what greater access and visibility can make possible.

These exhibitions also demonstrated the heart of MAC's mission: placing students at the center of museum work. Student curators, researchers, interns, and assistants contributed to exhibitions, collections care, archival research, interpretation, digital initiatives, and public engagement, gaining professional experience

that will shape their futures long after they leave JMU.

MAC also moved boldly into new areas of innovation. Acceptance into the Bloomberg Connects cohort will allow us to expand digital access to exhibitions, collections, audio, video, and student-curated content at no cost to the institution. Planning for a mission-aligned museum store at 131 W. Grace is creating new opportunities for student entrepreneurship, creative enterprise, and visitor engagement. Meanwhile, grant proposals and interdisciplinary research initiatives are positioning MAC collections and archives as platforms for emerging work in AI, digital humanities, and cultural heritage.

None of this progress happens in isolation. This year's accomplishments reflect deep collaboration between JMU, CVPA, OCP, Academic Affairs, Division of Philanthropy and Enga-

gement, Research and Economic Development Initiatives, Facilities Management, Procurement, JMU Legal, faculty partners, student workers, donors, alumni, and community organizations. They also reflect the generosity and vision of those who believe that university museums can be engines of learning, creativity, leadership, public access, and regional vitality.

As we look ahead, MAC is moving from possibility into presence. The work of this year has strengthened our collections, expanded our public reach, advanced student learning, and positioned the museum for national professional recognition through preparation for accreditation through the American Alliance of Museums (AAM). Most importantly, it has affirmed MAC's role as a place where objects become opportunities: opportunities for stu-

dents to lead, for faculty to teach, for communities to gather, for donors to invest in lasting impact, and for JMU to demonstrate the power of the arts in public life. This combined support allows us to care for the collection objects responsibly, create meaningful learning experiences, welcome new audiences, and imagine a more ambitious future for MAC.

Thank you for being part of this remarkable year. The foundation has been built, the doors are opening wider, and MAC's next chapter is already underway.

With gratitude,

Virginia Soenksen,
Director, MAC,
James Madison University



View of *Weaving Clouds*, the Madison Art Collection's inaugural exhibition at The Arts at 131.

GRAND OPENING: The Arts at 131 W. Grace St.

After months of anticipation, planning, and moving, the MAC and OCP were united under one roof at our new building: The Arts at 131. We kicked off the spring semester with a Grand Opening, where donors, administrators, faculty and community members were invited to preview the inaugural exhibitions, tour the building, and celebrate this monumental step for the arts at JMU.



MAC team at the end of a successful opening night (From left: Madison De Sarno, Anna Keath Smith, Maddie Amme, Charlie Filiatrault, Lauryn Hedelund, Josh Vasely, Juliette Thomas, Virginia Soenksen, Dr. Maria Harvey and Dr. Jason Forsyth.)

During the Grand Opening, the newly converted Whitesel building showcased different projects across OCP. A slideshow in the Flex Space showed past interdisciplinary collaborations and work from CVPA, while in the MAC workroom, student assistant, Juliette Thomas ('27) presented a curated selection of the MAC's ancient Greek and Roman coins with the help of Dr. Jason Forsyth (Engineering), Curator of Coins at MAC. James Ogden (Theater), Curator of the Lisanby Archive, showed selected set drawings by Charles Lisanby, an American production designer.



Dr. Forsyth and Juliette Thomas show some highlights from the MAC collection to Tim Miller, Dean of Students.



Guests at the Grand Opening mingle in front of Robert Shetterly's *Grace Lee Boggs*, on loan from Americans Who Tell the Truth.



Executive Director of OCP, Kathryn Nusa Logan gives the opening speech at The Arts at 131 W Grace Grand Opening.



JMU's jazz trio play at the Grand Opening as guests arrive.



Guests gather to celebrate the inauguration of the new space together.

EXHIBITIONS

Weaving Clouds: Textiles of Central Asia



The Madison Art Collection's inaugural exhibition, *Weaving Clouds: Textiles of Central Asia* (Feb. 10 - April 24, 2026), has been long in the making, with students first beginning work in Spring 2023. The exhibition brought together textiles and jewelry from Central Asia and the Indian Ocean to showcase the movement, appropriation, and translation of materials, designs, and aesthetics across trade routes. The show focused on brightly colored kaftans

made of silk ikat, a weaving technique where threads are dyed before they are woven. This creates ikat's characteristic blurriness, which gives the fabric its Persian name: abr (ابر), cloud. In this land united both by the Persian language and by the Silk Road, Tajiks, Uzbeks, Jews, Afghans, Kazakhs, Uyghurs, Russians and other peoples of central Asia wore these spectacular garments in a myriad of different ways.



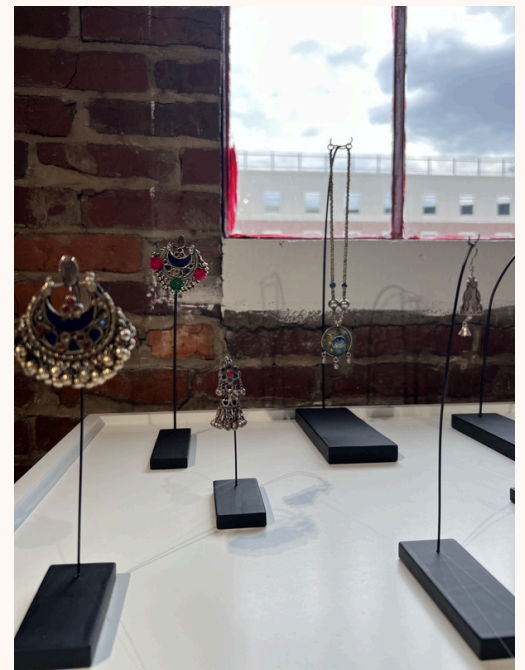
MAC student assistants, Madison DeSarno and Anna Keath Smith, hard at work installing *Weaving Clouds*.



Director Ginny Soenksen and student curator Anna Keath Smith in conversation with donor Jeffrey Krauss and partner at the opening of *Weaving Clouds*.



MAC student assistant, Maiya Correa, making trousers for a mannequin display for *Weaving Clouds*.



These pieces of jewelry from the Indian Ocean share several similarities—such as the use of silver and red gemstones and a preference for symmetry—with pieces from Central Asia. While textiles and dyes traveled along the Silk Road, jewelry tended to move on maritime routes.

We thank Jeffrey Krauss for donating the kaftans to the MAC in 2019 and for attending the Grand Opening.



A detail from one of the kaftans, showing the velvet ikat exterior, ikat silk trim and Russian cotton lining. (MAC 2019.1.2)

Student Curator: Anna Keath Smith '25; Research and Text: Brandon Kurtz '24, Russell McCawley '24, Lily Parker '23; Graphic Designer: Lily Taylor '25; Exhibition Designers: Taylor DeJesus '25, Mari Khayat '25, Lauren Lewis '23, Lilly Mamon '24, Sam Strain '25; Media: Deanna DiSpirito '23, Riley Mercado '27, Alice Milea-Ciobanu '26, Teagan Sloan '26; Merchandise Design: Ryan Michalowicz '26; Installation: Madeline (Maddie) Amme '28, Anna Anderson '26, Madison DeSarno '26, Matthew Epstein '26, Charlie Filiatrault '26, Lauryn Hedelund '27, Juliette Thomas '27, Annabel Thrush '26, Josh Vasely '26.

Artist (R)evolutions

One of the advantages of our new Flex Space is that it doubles as a second exhibition space. In the first half of the spring semester, Josh Vasely ('26, student intern) curated *Artist (R)evolutions*, which loosely engaged with the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. The works on display, many overtly political (cartoons, campaign posters, posters made for the WW2 Office of War Information),

demonstrated ideas of civil liberties, artist rights and the propagandization of fine art.

The exhibition also included a portrait of American activist Grace Lee Boggs, on loan from *Americans Who Tell The Truth*, as part of an ongoing collaboration with the Office of Creative Propulsion, and works by Robert Rauschenberg, on occasion of his centennial.



Viewers looking at Lichtenstein's *Jobs...not cheese!* on display at *Artist (R)evolutions*.



Rauschenberg's *Artist's Rights Today* on view in the Flex Space during the Grand Opening.

PROGRAMMING

Imagining America Open Fora

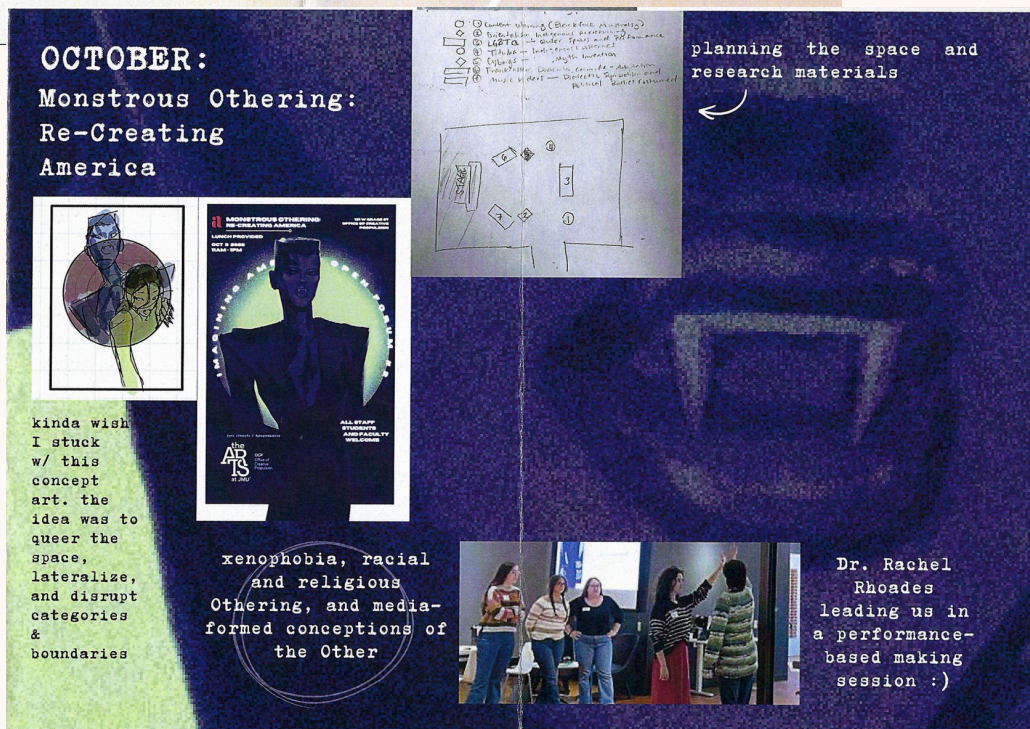
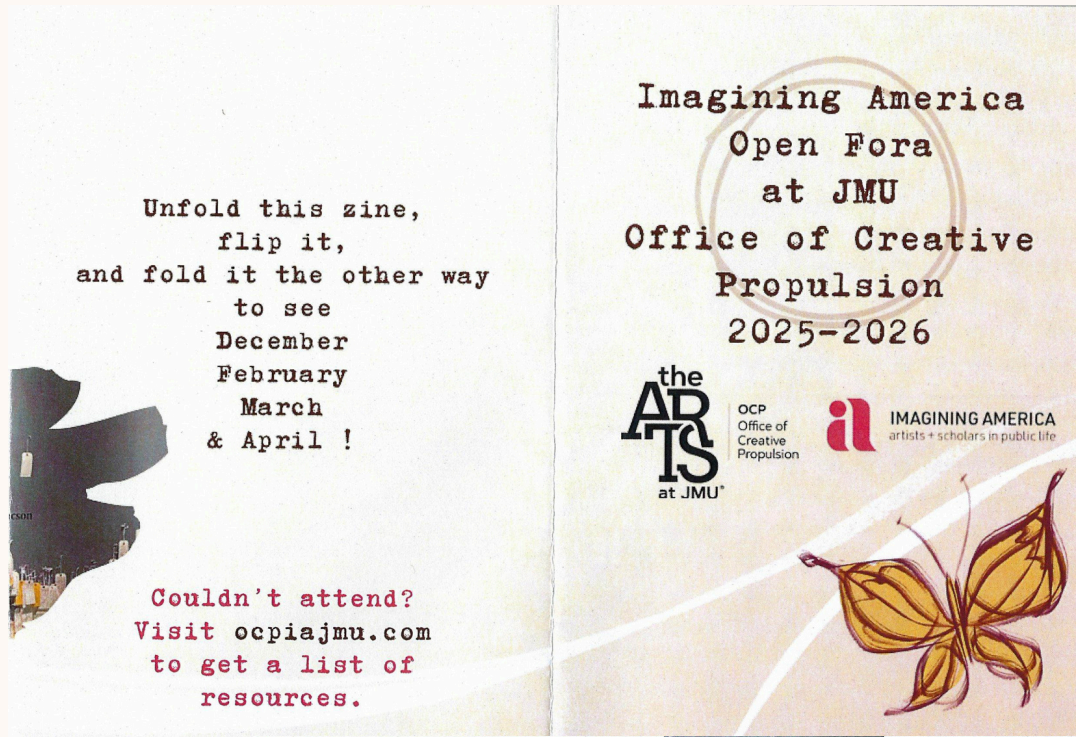


The Office of Creative Propulsion's graduate student assistant Jana Liberato (MA, English, '26) was instrumental in organising this year's edition of the Imagining America (IA) Open Fora. Imagining America is a national network, dedicated to imagining, studying and enacting a more just and liberatory 'America' and world. At JMU, OCP organizes open fora on dedicated topics, centered in the arts and design.

Above: Students, faculty and staff participate in December 11, 2025's Imagining America Open Forum, under festive lights. Below: OCP's graduate student assistant, Jana Liberato, setting up for September's Open Forum



As part of her graduate assistantship, Jana created an Imagining America zine, documenting each Open Fora she organized.



Hostile Terrain

In the Fall, the Arts at 131 hosted *Hostile Terrain 94*, a participatory art installation created by the Undocumented Migration Project at UCLA and brought to JMU by Dr. Daniel J. Beers, Associate Professor of Justice Studies. The installation, which is composed of over 4,200 hand-written toe tags representing the recovered bodies of migrants who have died trying to cross the Sonoran deserts since the mid-1990s, was slowly filled out by hundreds of students, professors and staff. Our November Forum was dedicated to *Hostile Terrain*,

with Daniel Beers as the guest speaker.



Executive Director of OCP, Kathryn Nusa Logan, and Associate Director of the MAC, Maria Harvey, fill in toe tags with the information provided by the Undocumented Migration Project (UCLA).



Professor Daniel J. Beers presenting at November's Imagining America Open Forum.



Close up of the filled in tags, each one documenting a person's name, age, sex, the cause of death and location where the body was found. Photo courtesy of the Undocumented Migration Project.



Faculty, staff and students listening, reading and discussing the material provided at the Imagining America Open Fora.

ArtsMobile

This year Presidential Engagement Fellow, Maria Carpinelli (Musical Theater, '25), managed the events on the JMU Arts-Mobile, a mobile arts site that allows OCP and its partners to bring arts and design workshops, performances, and exhibitions to non-traditional spaces. Thanks to a busy combination of writing, creating, and facilitating programming, coordinating and instructing volunteers, and putting together new programming, materials, and documentation, Maria doubled the number of ArtsMobile off-campus engagements!



Presidential Engagement Fellow for the Office of Creative Propulsion Maria Carpinelli ready to load the ArtsMobile.



The Overtones, JMU's award-winning a cappella group, relaxing before their performance on October 11, 2025.



The ArtsMobile at downtown Harrisonburg Downtown Renaissance's Skeleton Fest, on October 25, 2025.

First Fridays of the Valley

OCP is proud to participate in First Fridays of the Valley, a monthly event organized by Arts Council of the Valley to connect residents and visitors with local art and artists. OCP manages two First Friday locations, one at The Arts at 131 and the other at the Harrisonburg Innovation Hub in downtown.



A busy First Fridays of the Valley at The Hub.



Flier for *Forms to Faces*, the December workshop and exhibition at the Hub.

During this year's First Fridays, the Hub hosted four different events and exhibitions: *The Invisible Threads* in June, a virtual reality dance pop-up in October, *Concentration* in November, and *Forms to Faces* in December. *Weaving Clouds: Textiles of Central Asia* and *Artist (R)evolutions* were open at The Arts at 131.

Preview Event: Re-Imagining New Dance Festival

Organized by Integrative Arts Fellow Tara Burns (Assistant Professor of Dance and Technology), students performed in a DIY trial run for New Dance Festival (September 2026). The event will feature company members from Adele Myers and Dancers performing excerpts from *A World Gone Fabulous*, alongside JMU students dancing to choreography from Cecilia Benitez's new work, *Traces*, with projection, light, sound, and a VR installation.



Dancers performing at the
DIY preview performance

CLASSES

Since the IART prefix was created at the end of 2024, we have seen four Integrative Arts Courses successfully take place, three of them in the 2025-2026 academic year. Integrative Arts Courses are multidisciplinary, research-based arts courses that are taught by two or more faculty in different disciplines. We are thrilled that IART classes are taking off and are looking forward to the courses to come!

Movement, Motion Capture, & Machines (Spring 2026):

An Integrative Arts Course co-developed by Prof. Tara Lee Burns (Dance) and Dr. Jason Forsyth (Engineering) for Spring 2026 was taught in the Flex Space at the Arts at 131 W Grace Street. It explored human-computer interaction through dance and motion data culminating in a six-week lecture demonstration where students took the helm to create an interactive and audience participatory performance in May 2026, also in the Flex space.



Machines, Motion Capture, & Movement students perform in the end-of-semester showcase and guide audience participation.



Students and faculty bow at the end of their Machines, Motion Capture & Movement class showing.

Integrative Arts Fellowships

For the second year in a row, OCP ran its Integrative Arts Fellowship program, which supports scholars and artists in creating interdisciplinary work that centers the arts and design. Through this program, we foster collaboration across disciplines by providing financial awards, dedicated space, and guidance to help bring innovative, integrative arts projects to life.

The IART Fellowship is open to both CVPA faculty and students, and it encourages ongoing research, exploration, and creative growth, advancing our shared commitment to the arts as a powerful means of interdisciplinary inquiry and expression.

2025-26 Fellows

"In 2025-2026, as an Integrative Arts Faculty Fellow, I developed 传/Chuán (Passing On), an ever-evolving, hand-coded (Three.js) publishing engine that bridges digital, spatial web environments with the permanent materiality of the artist book.

My work included presenting *Breath of Lineage* at the Office of Creative Propulsion's Flex Space in April, where I utilized creative coding to transform the gallery into a polyphonic space



Feixue Mei
Assistant Professor of
Graphic Design

that metabolized participant inputs into hand-coded poems. This methodology further evolved with Volume 1 of the project, which debuted at the 2026 LA Art Book Fair.”



Tara Lee Burns Assistant Professor of Dance and Technology

“This fellowship year is anchored by the launch of Impact Space, a new mobile hub for performance, technology, and collaborative research, and by the continued development of *A World Gone Fabulous* VR – a

virtual reality environment combining motion capture, movement instigation, and immersive environments. Together, these initiatives investigate technology through the lens of dance, using the body as the site of inquiry, and expanding access to both movement and digital spaces across platforms including live performance, projection, and VR.

This work crosses boundaries between dance, engineering, computer science, and digital media, and between the university and professional arts organizations. Impact Space serves as a technology hub for this integration, while courses like *Machines, Motion Capture, & Movement and Dance* and *VR Repertory* model how choreographic and engineering methodologies can inform one another. The *AWGF VR* project bridges live performance and immersive digital environments, challenging assumptions about how technology shapes move

ment, perception, and access. Feminist and gender theories, phenomenology, and improvisational choreographic strategies ground the work conceptually, ensuring that technological exploration remains tethered to embodied, humanistic inquiry.

Fellowship support has been instrumental in framing these interconnected projects as a cohesive research trajectory, and in identifying conference presentation and grant opportunities that situate this work

within broader inter-disciplinary conversations about technology, embodiment, and live art. This fellowship has also supported the reimagining of the New Dance Festival (traditionally performed on the Forbes mainstage) as a platform and site of iteration bringing valuable feedback and feedback structures, collaborators, and questions to hold the work both accountable and provide an opportunity for iterative work, risk, and experimentation.”

Class Visits



MAC student assistant and lead student curator for *Weaving Clouds*, Anna Keath Smith, giving a tour of the exhibition.

The MAC was able to share our achievements and showcase elements of the collection at many events. Two History courses (HIST369: Greek History, 3000 BC-AD 267, and HIST650: Seminar in World History), two sections of HUM252: Japanese Culture and Introduction to Museum Studies (ARTH94) visited and discovered the collection.



MAC Associate Director, Dr. Maria Harvey, showing Dr. Sarah Brook's ARTH394: Introduction to Museum Studies class the new storage space.



Ben Shahn, Detail of *Nicola Sacco's Mother and Father*, from *The Passion of Sacco and Vanzetti*, 1931-32, Watercolor and gouache on paper, Gift of Michael Berg, MAC 2026.1.8.

GIFTS AND ACQUISITIONS

The MAC thanks Michael Berg, Waltraut Hargreaves, Jeff and Lynn Lang, and our anonymous donors for helping the collection grow this year. Ms Hargreaves generously donated multiple kimonos, haoris (jackets worn over a kimono) and koinobori (carp streamers). We included one of the items (a child's kimono, probably worn by a young girl for Shichi-Go-San, a Japanese rite of passage for three and seven year old girls and five year old boys) in *Weaving Clouds*, as an example of Japanese ikat. Amongst other items, Michael Berg donated Ben Shahn's important *Nicola Sacco's Mother and Father*, from *The Passion of Sacco and Vanzetti* series (1931-32). The watercolor and gouache painting was recently on display at *Ben Shahn: On Nonconformity* (The Jewish Museum,

NYC), guest curated by Dr. Laura Katzman, Professor of Art History. Finally, an anonymous donor and Farhad Aspy Fatakia from the Ancient Numismatic Society of Washington, D.C. made it possible to reacquire a hemidrachm of Argos (85-50 BC), which had belonged to the Drs. John and Bessie Sawhill collection until it was sold at auction in 1979. Like other coins in the MAC, this one had belonged to President John Quincy Adams (1767 - 1848).



Detail of the child's kimono, showing the ikat or kasuri pattern. (MAC 2025.3.2)



The retrieval of the hemidrachm was made possible by archival work carried out by Dr. Jason Forsyth and graduate student Jenna Harper (MA in Public History, '27). Here, the slips, photographs, and handwritten tags that allowed them to reconstruct the coin's journey.



Detail of Sharon Larkin's *Listening for the Heartbeat of the Sea*, 1999, Oil on canvas, Gift of Jeff and Lynn Lang, MAC 2026.1.1.

OUTREACH

Sparks Symposium

In February, the Office of Creative Propulsion organized the 2026 Sparks Research Symposium, a showcase of CVPA faculty and student research, scholarship and artistic growth in celebration of Dr. Sparks' commitment to student and faculty scholarship.



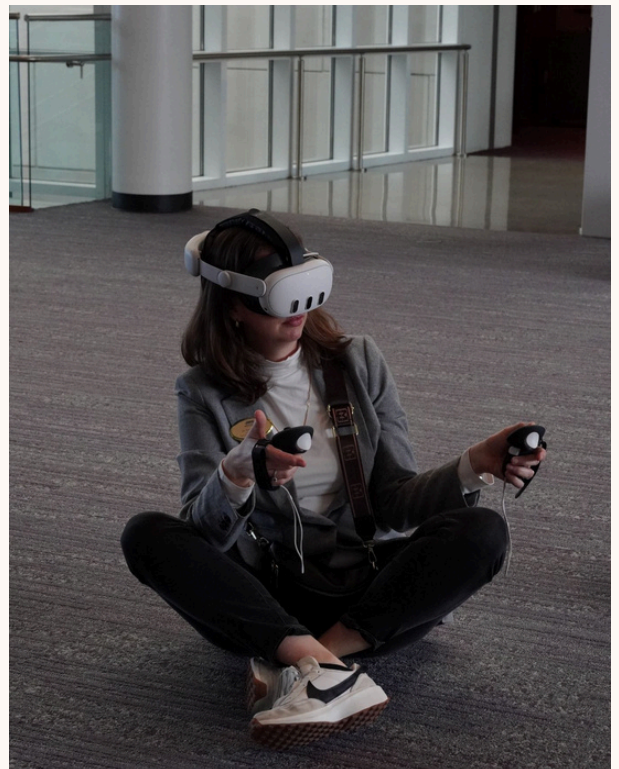
Provost Bob Kolvoord exploring faculty and students projects at the Sparks Symposium.



MAC Director, Ginny Soenksen presenting her research on Japanese textiles, *Fashioning the Future*.



Visiting Professor of Theatre studies, Dr Mona Merhi, presenting her research *Turkish Coffee*—a solo performance in the making.



Trying out the immersive movement experience, part of Assistant Professor of Dance and Technology Tara Lee Burns and X-Labs Technology Assistant Diego Navia's research, *Gone Fabulous VR*.

Podcast

Through conversations with JMU faculty, staff, students, administrators, and associated community members, our *Centering the Arts* Podcast highlights the creative processes, partnerships, and ideas that shape contemporary artistic work. Featured guests have included arts and design faculty, participants in the Integrative Arts Faculty Cohort, and student hosts who bring their own voices and perspectives to the series. In the academic year 2025-26, we published nine podcast episodes, most of which were student-produced.



JMU Students Caleb Harris, Andrew George, and Matt Donohue discuss Harrisonburg music festivals on Episode 25 of *Centering the Arts*.

Eunoia

On September 9, 2025, we hosted the multi-media staged reading of Jean-Paul Sartre's *No Exit* (1944), a collaboration between community-based Eunoia Theatre and JMU's Department of Philosophy and Religion.



A scene from *No Exit*, performed at The Arts at 131 on September 9, 2025.

Rehousing and Digitization

The Madison Art Collection's move from Festival Conference and Student Center to The Arts at 131 included moving significant portions of the collection. It was a busy year filled with packing, unpacking and rehousing, and making sure we are ready for the academic year 2026/27.

Right: Student assistant Juliette Thomas packing objects in our old Festival storeroom. Below: A newly-filled drawer in our new storeroom.





With all the objects moved from Festival and into our new store room, MAC Director Ginny Soenksen and student assistant Juliette Thomas pose in jubilation.



"It was a long process, but it was so interesting to go through our entire collection and see what hidden treasures we have!"
– Juliette Thomas, '27



MAC intern Lauryn Hedelund hanging framed works on our new painting racks.



The ever-growing pile of boxes that amassed throughout the unpacking process.



Our larger objects waiting to be assigned a space in the new store-room.



Student assistant Anna Keath Smith unpacking jewelry that had been carefully pinned into place for the move.



Nomos of Taras, Calabria, 380-345 BCE, Silver, Gift of Drs John and Bessie Sawhill, 2024.2.16.

RESEARCH PROJECTS SPOTLIGHT

Numismatic Collection

Given the long timespan over which the collection was assembled, the Sawhill Coin Collection inevitably has rich connections with other notable numismatic holdings. Through archival analysis, four coins were identified as coming from the President John Quincy Adams and Descendants collection, assembled by the presidential family over the 19th century and later sold at auction (1972). This archival analysis was supported by Jenna Harper's digitization efforts on the Sawhill paper archives.

The MAC was also able to reacquire at auction one of Sawhill's former coins, sold in 1979. This hemidrachm of Argos had also been in the Adams collection, but passed through the BCD Collection, one of the

greatest assemblies of Greek coins to date, before returning home to James Madison University in Spring 2026.

In collaboration with the Madison Accelerator Laboratory, medical X-ray imaging was used to authenticate coins in the collection using a non-destructive technique based on differences in X-ray absorption between silver and copper. Six coins were examined: among the findings, a didrachm of Cales and a denarius of Augustus were confirmed as *fourrées* (copper-core forgeries with silver casing), corroborating prior visual analysis by professional grading companies.

Novel methods in artificial intelligence and machine learn-

ing were also applied to challenges within the collection. The COIN Research Group, directed by Drs. Nathan Sprague (Computer Science) and Jason Forsyth, and supported by Trevor Schonbrun (Engineering '27) and Shree Aire (Computer Science '26), utilized deep learning methods to identify coin pairs to recover a coin's provenance history in various catalogs and auctions. Their work was presented at the Virginia Academy of Science, Engineering, and Medicine AI Summit and the ACM Capitol Region Celebration of Women in Computing. The paper "Metric Learning for Ancient Coin Identification," has been accepted for publication (International Conference on Machine Learning and Applications). As part of this work, First-Year Research Experience (FYRE) student Quinnie Li (Engineering '29) created the publicly available Sawhill Dataset – a computer vision resource comprising c. 3,700 image extracts from 210

ancient coins showing each under various lighting conditions and capture angles. This dataset is the first publicly available dataset devoted to coin instance recognition and automatic provenance recovery.

During the summer of 2026, Juliette Thomas started her senior capstone research where she will combine geology and numismatics. Her goal is to identify the elemental makeup of metals found in Classical coins to determine the provenance of those metals. Juliette used Scanning Electron Microscopy (SEM), Energy Dispersive Spectroscopy (EDS), and X-Ray Fluorescence (XRF) testing to determine the elemental makeup of the coins. Juliette will then analyze geological data from probable mining areas to look for elemental similarities in the hopes of identifying the region where the metal for each coin was likely mined. The information that Juliette will collect through her research is valuable

when describing the historical background of Classical coinage. The results will be added to the Madison Art Collection's coin database and included in coin exhibits coming in the next 1-2 years.



Dr Eric Pyle, Professor, Geoscience Education, and MAC student assistant Juliette Thomas look at imaging of Classical coinage.

Madison Art Collection

2021.3.62:

Intern Charlie Filiatrault (English '26) researched an album folio, dating the miniature to the seventeenth century and attributing it to the Rajput-Mughal cultural context. She believes the excerpt of the Qur'an glued to the back to be south Asian, although the combination of miniature, odd (upside-down) frame and Qur'an page suggests the folio was made especially for the tourist market. Mughal album folios never use Qur'an pages, instead pairing miniatures with either relevant existing poems or new ones made to accompany the image.



MAC intern Charlie Filiatrault explains her research method, which included examining the folio under an ultraviolet light.

76.1.758:

During rehousing, an alabaster head came to our attention. We reattributed it to the Middle Ages. It was an opportunity for intern Annabel Thrush (History, '26) to learn basic principles of non-destructive preservation of objects along the way!

MAC intern Annabel Thrush poses with the alabaster head after cleaning one side.

Conferences and presentations

MAC intern Josh Vasely (Art History, '26) presented posters about his exhibition *Artist (R)evolutions*, at the Virginia Association of Museums (March 15, 2026) and at JMU's Art History Forum.



Student assistant Anna Keath Smith (Art History, '25) presented her Honors Capstone Thesis on the Renaissance artist Domenico Ghirlandaio's frescoes of the Beata Fina of San Gimignano. Her research will be published in the Stanford Undergraduate Research Journal (Fall 2026).



Lisanby Archive

During the summer of 2026, Jenna Harper undertook an extensive reorganization of the Lisanby collection, cataloguing show ephemera and personal documents. She also digitally documented a vast portion of the collection to assist in future accessibility of the archive. The ephemera resulting from Lisanby's prolific career is now significantly easier to navigate, particularly for future interns and archivists working in the MAC.



A view of The Arts at 131's conference room which was used to sort through the tremendous amount of ephemera from Lisanby's multi-decade career.

FORTHCOMING

IART 411E/511E: Sustainable Cities

Our newest IART class, Sustainable Cities, is open for enrolment for the Fall, co-taught by Prof Traci Wile (Architectural Design) and Dr. Rob Alexander (Political Science).

SUSTAINABLE CITIES

Are you interested in architecture and its role in shaping our cities? Do you like learning from others?

The best ideas come from many voices at the table. **We invite you to bring yours** to unpack how sustainability, design, culture, policy, and people intersect.

OPEN TO ALL MAJORS!!

Courses: IART 411E / 511E
Class day: M/W
Class time: 9:35-10:50 am
Class location: OCP at 131 Grace St

COME CURIOUS, COLLABORATE WITH OTHERS, AND LEAVE WITH A RICHER UNDERSTANDING OF OUR BUILT ENVIRONMENT.

New Dance Festival: Off-Site and Rewired

On September 11 & 12, 2026 The Arts at 131 will host the New Dance Festival, featuring company members and choreography from Miami-based nationally re-cognized dance theater company, Adele Myers and Dancers (AMD) performing excerpts from *A World Gone Fabulous*, alongside JMU students dancing to choreography developed by AMD company member and emerging choreographer Cecilia Benitez's newest work, *Traces!*

OUR ALUMNI

OCP and MAC staff would like to congratulate our graduated interns who have been accepted into jobs, graduate programs, and internships this year.

ANNA KEATH SMITH

Anna Keath graduated from James Madison University in December 2025 with a degree in Art History and minor in Studio Art. In the fall she will start her Master's in Art History at Syracuse University, where she is a recipient of the Florence-Weller Fellowship. AK is enrolled in the Florence Program in Italian Renaissance Art and will continue the research that she started in her capstone project at JMU, study-



ing depictions of disability and healing in the art of medieval and Renaissance Italy. While she was at the MAC, AK curated *Weaving Clouds: Textiles of Central Asia*, which taught her about the many elements that go into an exhibition. By working closely with the directors in this role, she was able to improve her object-based research and writing skills, which she will continue to use in the next stage of her education and later on, as she hopes to continue working in a museum setting.



JULIANNE WHITE

Julianne graduated from James Madison University in 2024 with degrees in Anthropology and Art History before earning an M.A. in Anthropology from the University of Virginia in 2025. She is currently an Archaeological Collections Technician with North Carolina's Office of State Archaeology Conservation Lab, where she assists with the preservation and documentation of North Carolina's

archaeological resources from their arrival at the lab for conservation through their final transfer to museums and state repositories after conservation. Julianne's work primarily supports the Queen Anne's Revenge/La Concorde Shipwreck Project, which is focused on the excavation, conservation, and research of artifacts recovered from the Queen Anne's Revenge, Blackbeard's flagship. During her time at the Madison Art Collection, she gained experience in environmental monitoring, artifact photography, condition assessments, and collections database management-skills that continue to support her work in archaeological collections care today.

OUR TEAM

Staff



**Kathryn Nusa
Logan**
Executive Director
of the Office of
Creative
Propulsion



**Ginny
Soenksen**
Director of the
Madison Art
Collection



Dr. Maria Harvey
Associate Director
of the Madison
Art Collection



Alison Trocchia
Operations and
Engagement
Coordinator, Office
of Creative
Propulsion



Dr. Jason Forsyth
Curator of Coins



James Ogden
Curator of the
Charles Lisanby
Archive

OCP Graduate Assistants & Fellows



Maria Carpinelli
Presidential
Engagement Fellow
James Madison
University, B.A. in
Musical Theatre
Class of 2025



Shkurte Gashi
Graduate Assistant
Master of Music in
Piano Performance,
Class of 2026



Jana Liberato
Graduate Assistant
Master of Arts in
English
Class of 2026

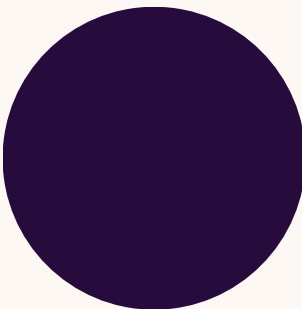
OCP Interns



Lelia Duhe
Graphic Design
Class of 2027



Nicholas Ferreira
Musical Theater and
Finance
Class of 2028



Devin White
Music Industry
Class of 2029

MAC Student Assistants



Maiya Correa
Studio Art
Class of 2025



Madison DeSarno
History
Class of 2026



Anna Keath Smith
Art History
Class of 2025

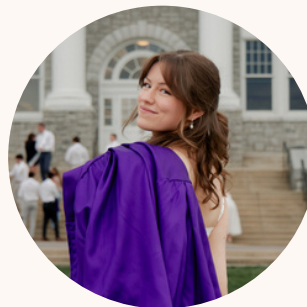


Juliette Thomas
Earth Science
Class of 2026

MAC Interns



Maddie Amme
Art History
Class of 2027



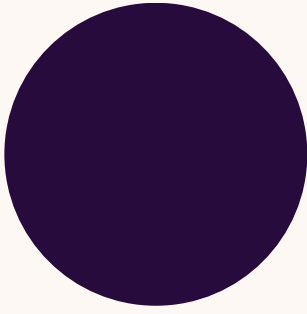
Anna Anderson
History
Class of 2026



Matthew Epstein
Computer Science
and History
Class of 2026



Charlie Filiatrault
English
Class of 2026



Zoe Ginsburg



Jenna Harper
MA in Public History
Class of 2027



Lauryn Hedelund
Art History
Class of 2027



Annabel Thrush
History
Class of 2026



Josh Vasely
Art History
Class of 2026



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Office of
Creative
Propulsion



CONTACT

OFFICE OF CREATIVE PROPULSION
THE ARTS AT 131 W. GRACE STREET
131 W. GRACE STREET
HARRISONBURG, VA 22807
(540) 568 5656
WWW.JMU.EDU/ARTS/OCP
OCP@JMU.EDU
MADISONART@JMU.EDU
