

## Making Art, Creating Community: The Spirit Awards Honors Jason Weeks

Arts advocacy is a way of life for 2017 Spirit Awards honoree Jason Weeks. As the longtime Executive Director of the Cambridge Arts Council, Weeks spends his time making sure that artists have “opportunities for exposure, support, and professional development” and that Cambridge has a thriving visual and performing arts scene. His identification as an artist (he is a musician and singer), arts administrator, advocate, and community organizer influence everything he does.

Weeks championed Maud Morgan Arts early on because he says that Cambridge lacked an arts center that served both professional artists and beginners and was also open to the public. There were, and still are, excellent arts resources, but many of these require a connection to a university or an institution to gain access. “We needed an arts center for everyone else,” says Weeks. “This was a ridiculous gap to have in Cambridge.”



Honoree Jason Weeks

He cautions that even though MMA is firmly established, it is important that we recognize how ongoing engagement and support is critical to lasting success. The idea that “someone else will take care of it” is unsustainable for a community-based art center. MMA can only flourish when everyone participates - by taking a class or workshop, attending an artist talk and gallery exhibition, or by becoming a donor. He says that the presence of Maud Morgan Arts “speaks volumes about who we are as a city... Maud Morgan Arts is not just a place for and about artists and art-making. It is a place that represents and celebrates community.”

Weeks wants people from all neighborhoods in Cambridge and from cities and towns in the region to understand Maud Morgan Arts as “their” arts center. When newcomers visit or move to Cambridge, they should be met with the words: “Welcome to Cambridge and let me tell you about Maud Morgan Arts. This is an exciting and welcoming place for all to engage the arts!”



MMA drew visitors from throughout the region during Cambridge Open Studios



Making art with MMA at the Cambridge Arts River Festival

## Spirit Awards 2017

**Sunday, September 24**

6:30pm-9:30 pm

20 Sacramento Street  
Cambridge, MA

A celebration to support Maud Morgan Arts scholarships, programs, and partnerships.

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[www.MaudMorganArts.org](http://www.MaudMorganArts.org)

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Additional contributors to the Spirit Awards are listed on our website.

See our full catalogue at

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## Q&A with MMA Community Members



*Ceramics teacher Zachary Mickelson has taught at Maud Morgan Arts for about five years now, spreading his love of clay*

*and the arts to our community.*

### What is your favorite thing about teaching art classes?

For younger kids, I just love their openness to new experiences...the class I lead is often their first time touching clay or exploring the world of sculpture and construction. For [older] students, I really love to see a person begin to establish the arts as a thing that they... are pursuing on their own.

Adults are a bit different for me...I have begun to think of those groups as more of a collaborative creative group. Although I still do make them listen to me and laugh at my jokes.

### What is your favorite thing about working at MMA?

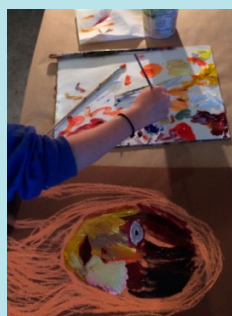
Amazing staff and support...What sets Maud Morgan Arts apart is the level of dedication the staff all have to not only education, but also to supporting each other and the employees.

### Why do you think it's important for people of all ages to participate in the arts?

The relationship one has with art provides an ever-retreating horizon of goals, achievement, and self-reflection. I feel that for anyone, at any age, finding an engaging creative pursuit that will expand in relation to your investment is good.

### What do you hope your students to take away from your classes?

I hope they have fun, primarily...I try to provide an environment that lets art do great things for them.



*Paula Bronzoni-Gray's family has been part of the Maud Morgan Arts community for the past three years. Her oldest daughter started thanks to a teacher*

*who referred her to apply for an MMA scholarship, then her two other children joined as well.*

### What inspired your children's interest in the arts?

My grandmother is originally from Japan and she had to migrate to Brazil after the war. She was a painter, and I believe my [daughter] Lara got it from her.

### What classes have your children taken at MMA? What impact have these experiences had?

Lara took the drawing, painting and ceramic classes. All the pictures I have throughout the house are hers and by my other two children. Last spring, Lara was offered her first job [at MMA],

which will be part of her story forever. Bela, my 6-year-old daughter, goes once a week on Wednesdays, and it gives her a sense of value. She feels proud, and there is a shelf in my living room packed with her ceramic work.

I'm very thankful for the opportunity [MMA] gave my family. Otherwise, we would not be able to afford it. [My daughter] [can] develop her abilities and learn. Attending your school only reinforced the idea that she is into art. It's not some temporary hobby.

### Support from the community helps us provide scholarships and programming. What would you tell people to encourage them to support MMA?

[We are] a low-income immigrant family that, thanks to your generosity, can enjoy the refreshing water of education and arts like any other family with no distinction. The way Haley and [the MMA] staff has treated our family is worthy of praise! We all feel appreciated, valued and respected. [MMA] is not only a source of education and art but also humanity and kindness.

## Appearing in the Chandler Gallery



Bill Flynn, *Haptic Happens*

### Legends of the Gallery

Two legendary teachers brought their work to the Chandler Gallery this spring. **Bill Flynn's** ripped and folded drawings enticed viewers to "mentally try to follow the folds," while **Gerry Bergstein**



Gerry Bergstein, *Vermont Vanitas*

blurred the lines between photography, painting and collage with pieces that Bergstein described as "deliberately inclusive of the high, the low, the horrific and the hilarious, the true and the false."

## Turning Good Will into Good Action: How Outreach Benefits Students

Generous donors have a huge impact on our ability to grant scholarships to MMA students who need financial assistance. However, it's not enough to open our doors and expect these students to come rushing in. To address this issue, MMA has spent the past few years creating an outreach initiative. By developing strategic collaborations with different local organizations, such as schools and community networks, we have increased access to arts education for many more underserved students.

For example, MMA has partnered with the Agenda for Children's Middle School Network (MSN) to address barriers that typically prevent students from participating in the arts. MSN aims to increase equity in and access to out-of-school time options for Cambridge Public School students.

"Many young people hear about opportunities, but don't take advantage of them because they assume that it's not possible for them, that they will cost too much money, that it will be too hard to get in," says MSN Coordinator Annie Leavitt.

Leavitt also emphasizes relationships, as these play a role in a child's access to the arts.

"For information to flow from person to person, there have to be relationships...thus we spend a lot of time trying to build relationships across programs, across schools, and between programs and schools."

Because of our partnership with MSN, MMA can tap into pre-existing connections to encourage participation. Leavitt explains that sometimes a simple personal invitation from a mentor can convince a student to take an art class.

However, when a student wants to take a class, there can



Students used LEGO bricks to design the future of Cambridge as part of a Cambridge Science Festival workshop hosted by MMA

be barriers related to transportation, language, cultural understanding, and finances. Maud Morgan Arts can't tackle these alone. Through collaborations with entities like Agenda for Children's MSN, we can begin addressing these issues and working towards solutions. Together, we can help more students access the arts.

"It takes persistence," says Khari Milner, the Co-Director of Agenda for Children. "It takes a lot of work to turn good will into good action."

The hard work is worth it because, says Leavitt, MMA has the opportunity to welcome "many young people whose creativity... talent and ... perspective would have been entirely missing from the community of... Maud Morgan Arts."



SWS '17 winner Aja Johnson and her daughter with juror Howard Yezerski and his wife

### Small Works Salon 2017

Juror and noted gallery owner Howard Yezerski was drawn to pieces that were both beautiful and edgy. The sculptures, paintings, prints, photographs and collages that he selected showed "a strong personal voice." Aja Johnson's "Meth Wrestling" won First Prize.



Seija Halva, *Bed, Barn and Sauna*

### Community Artist Spotlight Space

Our new Community Artist Spotlight Space at Maud Morgan Arts allows us to highlight the work of artists who are living and working in our community. This spring we featured acrylic paintings of artist Seija Halva's childhood home in rural Finland, and watercolors by Brenda S. Engels depicting still lifes, landscapes and ocean scenes.

### Upcoming Shows

#### Spirit Awards 2017 Installation

Juried by Annette Lemieux  
September 17-October 20, 2017  
Opening Reception at the Spirit Awards  
September 24, 6:30-9:30pm

#### Susan Sherman

Community Artist Spotlight Space  
October 3-November 3, 2017

#### Aja Johnson

Winner of Small Works Salon 2017  
November 6-December 1, 2017

#### Drawn from Within

All staff and faculty exhibition  
December 11, 2017-January 5, 2018



Dear Friend,

It is powerful to see the impact of the arts extend beyond the studio and into the community. As the Director of MMA, I strive to build a positive, creative environment that nurtures every student's artistic aspirations. I would like to share an adult student's experience.

A few years ago, Cicely Carew took her first printmaking class at MMA where she explored a variety of techniques that allowed her to learn several new skills. In the company of her peers, her confidence grew as she developed a voice in her work, created a website, and set out to pursue a career in the arts. Cicely continued to receive mentorship from her instructor to gain insight as she began to participate in art markets and open studios, and she has now been selected for upcoming exhibitions and community-supported arts programs.

The arts have the capacity to challenge, enrich and cultivate people of all abilities. Every student has different reasons for coming to MMA, and we strive to support their goals. Gaining

fine and gross motor skills, centering a pot on the wheel, and mastering viscosity of printing inks are all opportunities for creative self-expression that allow us to make sense of the world in which we live.

Whether you are a student, parent, artist, donor, or art appreciator, your involvement is the cornerstone of our creative arts community. I thank you for your support of Maud Morgan Arts as we continue to connect individuals to accessible, quality arts education.

Sincerely,  
Haley MacKeil  
Director  
Maud Morgan Arts



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