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MULTIMEDIA ARTIST JAMES WILLIAMS II WINS \$30,000 SONDHEIM PRIZE

See his work at the Walters Art Museum in the Sondheim Finalists' Exhibition through September 18

The Baltimore Office of Promotion & The Arts (BOPA) proudly announces the winner of the 17th annual **Janet & Walter Sondheim Art Prize**. This year's prize is sponsored in part by **M&T Bank**. In addition to their contribution to the \$30,000 prize, M&T is also generously funding the two residencies, the three **M&T \$2,500 Finalist Awards**, and the **M&T \$500 Semifinalist Honorarium** for each of the 10 remaining semifinalists. We also want to acknowledge the invaluable support of the **Maryland State Arts Council**. The total Sondheim prize package this year is \$55,000 in fellowships and awards to individual artists in the Baltimore region.

Please join us in congratulating Baltimore-based multimedia artist **James Williams II** as the recipient of this year's \$30,000 prize. Williams is a curator and interdisciplinary artist whose work encompasses painting, sculpture, and photography. He focuses on topics of social and cultural identity in the United States tied together by self-portraiture and narration. His most recent project was curating the show, *Future Planets*, at Longwood Center for the Visual Arts — an exhibition featuring the creativity of young artists ranging from ages 3–15 years old alongside their creative and established parents.

Williams is the recipient of the MFA Joan Mitchell Foundation award, the Bromo Seltzer Fellowship, and has served as artist-in-residence at School 33 in Baltimore, Maryland. Williams, originally from Upstate New York, received his master's degree from the Mount Royal School of Art program at Maryland Institute College Art (MICA). He currently teaches at MICA.

The recipient of the six-week residency at **Civitella Ranieri**, an American artists' community located at a 15th-century castle in the Umbria region of Italy, is fiber artist **Megan Koeppel**. Koppel earned her BFA from MICA in 2018, where she studied fine art and curatorial practices. Her naturally dyed soft sculptures have been exhibited at galleries, museums, and art fairs in the DMV area and her home state of Wisconsin. She currently works as the Exhibition Programming Coordinator at VisArts in Rockville, Maryland.

Finally, **Maren Henson** has been awarded the six-month residency at the **Bromo Seltzer Arts Tower**. Henson uses videos, drawings, and sound installations to reexamine the role of conspiracy and how it has shaped American culture. Her work is a fascinating discussion of how cultural narratives are manipulated and controlled. Henson received her Master of Fine Art degree in the Mount Royal School of Art at MICA in 2017. She has exhibited her work in New York, Boston, Los Angeles, Maryland, Texas, and Puerto Rico.

These three finalists also had the opportunity to collaborate with the world-class curatorial staff at the **Walters Art Museum** to produce the **Sondheim Finalists' Exhibition**, which is on view at the Walters **through September 18, 2022**. At this evening's opening reception, Arts Council Director Jocquelyn Downs remarked, "I

am so excited that we're able to meet in person this year to celebrate some of this region's talented visual artists. The finalists have produced such amazing and thought-provoking work. I expect to see great things from all of them for years to come.”

The purpose of the Sondheim Art Prize, and the finalists’ exhibition, is to assist in furthering the careers of visual artists or visual artist collaborators living and working in the greater Baltimore region. The prize is named in honor of **Janet & Walter Sondheim**, both of whom were instrumental in furthering arts & culture in Baltimore City. **Janet Sondheim** danced with the pioneering Denishawn Dancers, a legendary dance troupe founded by Ruth St. Denis and Ted Shawn. **Walter Sondheim, Jr.** was one of Baltimore’s most important civic leaders for over 50 years. He was deeply involved in the development of Charles Center and the Inner Harbor and continued to be civically active until his death in 2007, serving as the senior advisor to the Greater Baltimore Committee.

The 17th annual Janet & Walter Sondheim Art Prize is produced by The Baltimore Office of Promotion & The Arts in partnership with the Walters Art Museum. Learn more about the Sondheim Art Prize by visiting <https://promotionandarts.org/arts-council/janet-walter-sondheim-art-prize> and following BOPA on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram: @promoandarts.

About The Baltimore Office of Promotion & The Arts (BOPA)

The Baltimore Office of Promotion & The Arts (BOPA) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, which serves as Baltimore City’s arts council, events center, and film office. By providing funding and support to artists, arts programs, and organizations across the city, and by producing large-scale events such as Artscape, Baltimore Book Festival, and Light City, BOPA’s goal is to make Baltimore a more vibrant and creative city.

About the Walters Art Museum

The Walters Art Museum is a cultural hub in the heart of Baltimore, located in the city’s Mount Vernon neighborhood. The museum’s collection spans more than seven millennia, from 5000 BCE to the 21st century, and encompasses 36,000 objects from around the world. Walking through the museum’s historic buildings, visitors encounter a stunning panorama of thousands of years of art, from romantic 19th-century images of French gardens to mesmerizing Ethiopian icons, richly illuminated Qur’ans and Gospel books, ancient roman sarcophagi, and serene images of the Buddha. Since its founding, the Walters’ mission has been to bring art and people together to create a place where people of every background can be touched by art. As part of this commitment, admission to the museum and special exhibitions is always free.

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