

# The Healing Nature of Art

BY JULIA TILFORD

Artists selected for this year's A&H Museums Artists-in-Action program will continue into 2020-21.



Artist-in-Action Matthew Mosher

When the COVID-19 pandemic caused a national and worldwide economic shutdown earlier this year, the Art & History Museum — Maitland (A&H) was just one of the many places affected. Fortunately, one of their legacy artist programs managed to continue despite the shutdown.

As part of the museum's Artists-in-Action program, six local artists are chosen each year after a rigorous application process. The art center's residency programs, which date as far back as 1938, normally allow for the artists to work in a studio space on campus where visitors can observe their work. However, with stay-at-home orders and the necessary push for social distancing, this year's program took a different turn.

Education Manager Danielle Sibley says the artists normally have the option to reapply for a second term

during the summer, but this year, due to the extended closure of the campus preventing them from using their studio space, they have all been automatically accepted for their follow-up term.

"Bringing this group back on without the full selection committee is a big change to our program, but we know COVID-19 has affected all of our artists," Sibley says.

A&H plans to kick off the artists' second year with an exhibition opening on Oct. 7 and running to Jan. 17. What's more, at least two of this year's artists will be featured in *Looking In*, a virtual social media series created by Chief Preparator and former Artist-in-Action Dan Hess.

The artists-in-action for this two-year period are an exciting group. Known as Macramé Momma, Victoria



ROBERTO GONZALEZ (3)

Artist-in-Action Victoria Walsh, aka Macramé Momma

Walsh is a community artist who has worked with the museum on multiple past projects. In fact, her parents were even married at the Maitland Art Center. As such, she feels “very lucky to have such a beautiful, symbiotic relationship with A&H.”

Another nontraditional artist, Matthew Mosher creates multimedia interactive works that respond to viewers. For Mosher, having this space is a “unique opportunity,” as most museums only display completed pieces, “which often masks the messy process” of artistic creation.

Other current artists-in-action include Jacob Reyes, Nicholas Kalemba, Ericka Sobrack and Wanda Raimundi-Ortiz.

For A&H, a time that should have been all about inviting visitors onto their campus to see their artists hard at work has been turned upside down by the pandemic. Still, the pursuit of artistic endeavor must continue, especially during times like these.

“It’s so peaceful and inspiring,” says Sibley, “to witness the creation and growth of another artist or to learn how to create a piece of art for oneself.”

For Director of Experiences Randall Webster, art is “a wonderful part of the healing process” that reminds us “life will go on.”

For more information, visit [artandhistory.org](http://artandhistory.org).

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Artist-in-Action Nicholas Kalemba