

THE ARTSPACE

QUARTERLY

NEW ORLEANS EDITION



JOURNEY HOME

PROFILE: Journey Allen

by Dana Mattice

ourney Allen was incredibly excited about the concept of an Artspace community taking root in Tremé, and was expecting pandemonium for the first lease-up opportunity for the Bell Artspace Campus over Easter weekend. She waited in a borrowed vehicle, overnight in the pouring rain, to be first in line to put in an application. In a stroke of serendipity, she was contacted on her birthday with news that an apartment was available. She scheduled to tour it the very next day, and while walking through it, the property manager asked

her when she wanted to move. "Tonight," she responded, and with her two sons, she settled in that same evening.

The family had been living, secretly, in Allen's art studio in New Orleans. She encountered challenges maintaining both an apartment and studio simultaneously, and was put in the unenviable situation of being forced to choose between the two rents. She said it was "astounding" to return to New Orleans from Houston

FULL ARTICLE ON PAGE 6>

PROGRAM NEWS



SPECIAL FEATURE

RECAP: BELL ARTSPACE CAMPUS GRAND OPENING PROFILE

REINVENTING THEMSELVES, AGAIN

For International Artist Couple, the Third Time's a Charm

by Dana Mattice



eronica Casares Lee and her husband, Patrick Lee, moved three times in three years since arriving in New Orleans.

Coming from Mexico, where the two full-time artists had lived for the last decade, the transition was jarring. In Pátzcuaro, a city founded in the 1320s by the indigenous Purépecha people, they'd built a house and a studio, and planted trees. It was both a picturesque and affordable place, but after 10 years abroad, they missed America.

A visit to New Orleans left a lasting impression. "It's a beautiful city, so my husband and I were both inspired to live here as artists," Veronica said. "It has a romantic history. There's something about it—the magic. Everyone kind of knows it."

The first small, shotgun home that they lived at, however, was a disaster; and Veronica was initially very depressed. They paid \$1,000 per month in rent for a place in terrible condition, with gas leaks and other issues, as well as incredibly high utility fees. The couple moved after just seven months, but had to pay even more for the next place, which also had steep utility bills and a difficult landlord. A rented shed, which they paid \$300 per month for, was utilized as an art studio. Other artists in the area typically paid \$1,800 per month in rent for similar shotgun homes, and told them that \$1,100 per month was cheap, and that they were lucky. They didn't feel that way.

With the expensive cost of living, Patrick had to churn out heart ornaments to sell at the outdoor market—things that were guaranteed to sell, and which would allow them to support their children. "It's a struggle when you have two kids, and you're both artists," Veronica explained.

This was not the first time that the Lees had been compelled to mass produce work. Before Mexico, in the early days of their relationship and careers, the couple had lived in New York City. Veronica was born in Mexico, partially raised in Texas, and had landed in the Big Apple to attend Pratt Institute (ranked by U.S. News as one of the top 15 places to attend art school). Patrick was born in Malaysia, but had lived in New York City since he was three years old. He wasn't an art student, but exhibited raw artistic talentmost likely inherited from his artist father, who had also studied art at Pratt. The young couple got married and started a family, with Patrick employed at Citi Bank while making art on the side, and Veronica working full-time as an artist. Eventually, the two saved enough money for Patrick to leave the corporate world behind, and for the past 18 years, they have both earned their livelihoods as visual artists.



Above: Veronica paints a ceramic figure; Below: Patrick Lee and Veronica Casares Lee

"Even though we were making a living off of our art, when you have kids, it's so much work to have a good quality of life," Veronica said. "After a while in New York we were making a lot of commercial stuff, and you feel a little dead. You're just creating the same thing over and over—but we couldn't really stop doing that kind of work."

Their inauspicious beginnings in New Orleans echoed the lifestyle they had been ensnared within in New York City, but the Bell Artspace Campus has been a major turning point. Veronica said that their two sons are now in high school and elementary school, and that Artspace is closer to both schools, as well as to the clay studio (which they must maintain, because of the kilns). Her son has a friend downstairs, and the boys play with each other while the parents take turns managing daycare. Another artist recently hosted a party, where the couple discovered even more of a sense of community.

Further, with the less expensive rent, Patrick no longer has to churn out ornaments to sell at the outdoor market. These days, he spends more quality time creating in the studio, challenging himself as an artist with his unique, time-intensive sculptures. Likewise, Veronica also focuses on the things that inspire her, and is currently working on three huge canvases under the tall ceilings at the Artspace apartment, finding inspiration in Tremé. "The neighborhoods are really beautiful, and have a rich history," she said. "The architecture is inspiring. Some of the houses are really old and covered by vines and flowers—it's just wild. For me, that's like-wow, the history that went into that! I take photographs and paint what I see, that moves me."

The couple next hopes to begin approaching galleries. "We have only been here three years and have moved three times—it's been hard," she explained. The multiple moves distracted from their artistic practice, but things are shifting now.

"We're so happy, and feel so blessed," Veronica said. "This is the first time that I feel like we're being appreciated for being artists. I was starting to get a little grumpy," she adds, with a laugh. "I'm in my 40s and I'm like, man, we're like free entertainment when we're at the art shows. People see the work and like it, but they don't realize that we have to live off of it. Being at Artspace makes me love New Orleans even more."





There's something about [New Orleans]
—the magic. Everyone kind of knows it.



Top: Patrick working on a ceramic piece. Middle: the Lee family. Below, left: Veronica painting ceramics; Below, right: Patrick with his artworks on display at Bell Artspace Campus. All photos by Dominique McClellan.





On the Scene is a recurring feature where Artspace affiliated artists, project partners, and community members share their stories in their own words.

In Saved by the Bell: NOLA Edition, Huffington post contributor and Bell Artspace Campus resident Nicolas Aziz shares a story of how a cosmic friendship galvanized the progression of his artistic development.

by Nicolas Aziz

"Mardi Gras Magic" is a concept that is ingrained into the psyche of anyone who has had the opportunity to experience the annual celebration. This "magic" tends to encompass numerous events or experiences that illustrate the extraordinary nature of our humanity, and that particular season. In 2015, during my second Mardi Gras back in New Orleans as an adult, my magic would include the beginning of a relationship with someone who would become one of my best friends on earth.

The Thursday before Mardi Gras day, my friend brought me to an artist's home in the French Quarter, as she thought we should meet. My friend told me a bit about this artist, and said that she met her a few months back, after the artist won an art competition sponsored by Bombay Sapphire. I certainly wasn't ready for what was to come once I arrived at the house.

I walked in and was immediately greeted to the left by the artist's studio. The first thing that I remember seeing was 10 to 15 life-size KKK dolls.

Then I turned my head and saw a light piece that said "White Privilege," with "white" spelled backwards and upside down. All of the work in the room spoke *directly* to me in a way that I had not been spoken to before by contemporary art—at least that up close and personal. I of course was familiar with notable black artists, but this moment truly opened up a new world for me.

One of my immediate thoughts, as a result of these intense feelings, was "who is this dope-ass black woman making this dope-ass art?" While I was given some background about this artist, neither her race, nor the topics addressed in her work were provided in advance, which made the experience that much more memorable.

After walking around the studio and engaging with the pieces, I walked upstairs to meet the artist, and was greeted by her with an abundance of love and enthusiasm. There she was—the artist who I knew as Ti-Rock—standing with her arms open with some of the most energy I had seen in a while. Even with all of this love and energy,

however, Ti-Rock did not fit the description of what my brain had made her out to be.

Instead of a "dope-ass black woman," Ti-Rock was a dope-ass, middle-aged, gay, white woman. My shock from this realization was complemented by an intense interest and curiosity. My innate openness allowed me to learn more about this energetic spirit that I had assumed was a black woman. We would go on to establish a very quick and deep connection that evening and set the foundation for a very strong bond.

In 2015, I curated my first exhibition and began to explore the many ideas that I had been keeping in my head and on random notepads. Eventually, I became more comfortable with these ideas and began to share them with artists who I admired and respected. Naturally, Ti was one of the first people that I shared them with—and I'll never forget meeting with her to share a jumbled google doc with all of these random ideas. She seemed to be in awe and I recall her passionately saying, "I can help you with these!" That simple offer meant so much to me - especially as I was in the infancy stages of becoming comfortable with my creativity.

I could tell from that moment that our relationship took on a different layer. Ti was seeing things in me that I was not even seeing in myself yet— and as a result now saw me as not only a dear friend, but a potential collaborator. From this point forward, art began to dominate our conversations, and she was the first person that I was able to talk to in this way. These conversa-

tions eventually led to an offer from Ti that would change everything.

After winning Jonathan Ferrara Gallery's No Dead Artists competition in 2016, Ti was awarded the opportunity to have a solo exhibition there. During her process of conceptualizing pieces for the exhibition, she told me about a live performance version of Rodin's The Thinker that she wanted to include. The piece and its performer would illustrate the antithesis of the Eurocentric foundations that much of our world is built upon, and propose a new representation for intellectualism in the 21st century. Upon explaining the concept for the piece, she said that she had only one person in mind to embody "21st century thought"— and that person was me.

While I humbly accepted the offer, after getting over my initial shock, I was still unaware of the offer's magnitude. The depth of this commitment would become clearer once she began moving forward with plans for the exhibition. As we continued to meet and discuss plans, I began to realize that this was not just going to be "one of the pieces," but it was the piece of the show. This would become even more explicit as she chose the piece to be on the exhibition's invitations and promotional materials.

The piece, titled *Gazing*, debuted on the first day of the exhibition, July 26, 2017, and I would go on to perform it three hours per day, through August 26. Opening night was on arguably New Orleans' biggest annual night for art, White Linen Night, and it was undoubtedly the most unique experience of my life. I had the opportunity to observe and learn so much during my time atop the nine-foot plinth, and wrote about my experience for the Huffington Post.

The rest of the year felt like somewhat of a dream, as I would go on to be a part of five different projects for Prospect.4, three of which were exhibitions that I curated. I also contributed to another one of Ti's pieces, performed on the now vacant P.G.T. Beauregard plinth. We traveled together to Art Basel Miami, where I performed *Gazing* for four consecutive days. Amidst all of these accomplishments and artistic affirmations, 2017 was still the most frightening year of my life.

I was fired from my "real job" in February of that year, after less than six true months with the organization. They were a "social justice consultancy" start-up that essentially began in August 2016 with the hiring of me and three other employees; by March 2017, myself and these other three employees were all gone. I had never "failed" in this manner, and it forced me to explore and trust myself in a completely different way. Thankfully, I had friends who understood where my heart was, and could support me during this very integral period of my life.

In April 2017, I was on a chain email forwarded by a former colleague about an info session for a new residential building for artists:



One of my best friends, who changed my life when I met her three years ago, and then again last year when I needed it most, is now my neighbor.

Bell Artspace Campus. After a somewhat lengthy application process, I was granted an interview in December that I had to participate in over the phone from Miami, the evening before my first performance at Art Basel. Describing myself and my portfolio to the committee was an extremely cathartic experience, as I had rarely taken the opportunity to reflect on my work and the year that I had. Hearing their appreciation of my work, and my acceptance into the Artspace community was so fulfilling. I was immediately brought to tears after I hung up the phone. I moved in on January 22, 2018, as the first resident in the St. Joseph building.

After less than six weeks in the building, I received an email requesting recommendations for seven apartments that were still available. Just like my ideas nearly three years ago, Ti was one of the first people that I shared this with. She was coincidentally in a transitional period and needed housing options, so the opportunity arose at a perfect time. About a month later, she moved in. Now she is about 35 feet from my doorstep; I couldn't be happier.

One of my best friends, who changed my life when I met her three years ago, and then again last year when I needed it most, is now my neighbor. In addition to living in this beautiful and diverse new community, I now get to share

it with her. Whether it's looking outside my window and seeing her sitting outside, or walking to my car and bumping into her coming back, I now have the beauty of constantly feeling abundant love and support. This Artspace experience is the manifestation of last year in so many ways, and I am so grateful to everyone at or associated with the organization for providing me and my friend with this opportunity. I truly look forward to evolving in this community, with one of my best friends right down the hall as I do it.

Nicolas Aziz is a writer, curator, and performance artist who resides in the Bell Artspace Campus in New Orleans, LA.



RECAP: BELL ARTSPACE CAMPUS GRAND OPENING

On Thursday, April 19, hundreds of people gathered at the Bell Artspace Campus for a dynamic day of celebration, fun and food. The festivities marked the culmination of the ten-year long development process to renovate the former Bell School in Tremé, and transform it into affordable housing for artists, community culture bearers, and their families.

The day began with opening remarks from local leaders, residents, and project partners. The opening program also featured artbursts performed by Sunni Patterson, Fredrick Dellahoussaye, and Kelly Harris-DeBerry, curated by Stephanie McKee of Junebug Productions.

Remarks were followed by a second line parade led by the Free Agents Brass Band. Mardi Gras Indians from the Washitaw Nation, and Creole Wild West tribes masked among the parade-goers. Attendees enjoyed free food and snoballs from local food trucks. Art exhibitions curated by Derrick Hemphill, Joseph Moran, Don Marshall, and Ron Bechet were held throughout the campus. Live art was featured on the campus lawn by puppeteer Sierra Kay, muralist Kentrice Schexnayder,

stilt-walker Shaka Zulu, and conceptual artist Ti-rock Moore with performance artist Nicolas Aziz. Throughout the day, event-goers enjoyed live music by the Free Agents Brass Band, Make Music NOLA, Opera Creole, Roots of Music, Nkiruka Drum and Dance Ensemble, The Adøni, and Buddah Bedowin. To see more photos from the Bell Grand Opening, visit the Bell Artspace Campus Facebook page.





















Shaka Zulu and Naimah Zulu stilt-walking in the Second Line





Sunni Patterson performing an opening poem

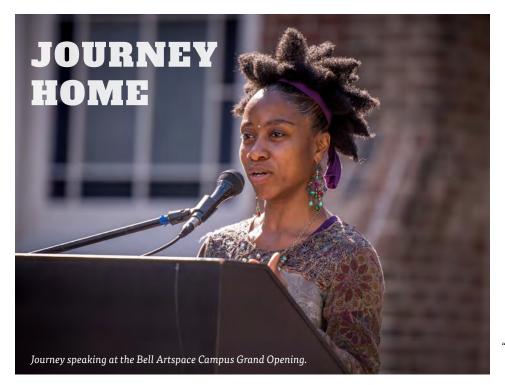












"because things cost way more." Giving up the studio would also mean losing her livelihood, which wasn't a real choice at all. She figured she could always find another apartment, but because she "couldn't handle the financial weight of it," she elected to let the apartment go. Her studio space isn't zoned as residential, and doesn't have a full bathroom, kitchen, or bedrooms. The family lived there for four months, throughout the summer. At Bell Artspace, she is relieved that her sons-now tall young men at 18 and 19 years old—can each have their own bedroom again. She is excited to engage them in a creative atmosphere, because she knows first-hand the impact that it can have on a life. A New Orleans native displaced by Hurricane Katrina, Allen had landed in Houston from 2005-13, and has incredibly fond memories of her time at Project Row Houses in the heart of Houston's Third Ward neighborhood. A community designed by MacArthur Genius Fellow Rick Lowe, Project Row Houses encompasses nearly 50 buildings spanning 10 blocks, fulfilling its mission to transform community through the celebration of art and African American history and culture. Lowe has said that the project is an intersection of art, historic preservation, affordable housing, community relations, and human empowerment.

"Part of me wanting to be at Artspace so badly really is the fact that my guys and I—our family—

were cultivated at an Artspace-type environment," Allen said. She was an after-school instructor at Project Row Houses and made a special connection with two boys, then ages eight and 10, who became her sons. She said that it was "a wonderful environment, where I was able to engage my sons in all types of things, including youth programming. It was a very creative atmosphere, and I wanted us to be engaged in that way again. At Artspace, I expect to be around other creatives, and see people creating all the time... This is rebuilding that arts-based community for me." The nascent family was separated in 2013 when she moved back to New Orleans, but she was able to bring the boys to live with her in 2015.

Today, living in the Bell Artspace Campus, Allen is fulfilling her dream of nurturing her family within an art environment—and by all accounts, she seems to be thriving. She talks about how Artspace is at the center of everything, as she rides her bicycle in a triangle—"a triad of my life"—from Bell, located near the neighborhood where she grew up; to her art studio, in the heart of her old neighborhood, where she teaches art classes; to a school where she started teaching within the past year. She received a New Orleans Jazz & Heritage grant to fund the creation of a children's book that she is authoring and is illustrating; and was also awarded a Platforms grant in support of innovative ideas, allowing

her to launch a summer art camp May 21 to June 15 for teenagers. The camp, titled "The ART of Community," will lead 11 to 16-year-old youth through morning affirmations, cooking classes, entrepreneurship training, tours to connect with local business owners, and an Art and About series to make art at museums, artists' studios, and other creative spaces. It will culminate in a business pitch competition, in partnership with the Urban League and Fund 17. Allen views this multi-pronged camp as an engagement tool to involve the teens in social practice art, which she talks passionately about.

Not everyone knows this as her primary artistic interest, though. Her vibrant paintings celebrating New Orleans jazz, created with a signature pattern of abstract design influenced by her mentor, artist Charles Washington, are one of the most visible aspects of her artistic practice. She is a drummer, her father was in a band, and some of her family are Mardi Gras Indians, so she "couldn't help but be connected" to music culture. She also holds painting sessions and exhibits at her studio space, which she refers to as a "social venue." The paintings are "how people recognize me as a creator," she said. "It's what people know." But art is about so much more for her.

"I use art as a tool to captivate people and draw them in, so that I can continue to build community, particularly with young people," Allen said. She explained how Rick Lowe used to annoy her when he would refer to her as part of his art. "Stop calling me a part of your art. I'm a human being. But as I got older and continued to engage, I saw a social change that takes place. You see people's lives evolve, and how art impacts their lives. And if they didn't have that interaction with art, they wouldn't have changed in that same way—at least not at that time in their lives. So I can appreciate how community can build art and art, in turn, can build community." This concept is the basis of "The ART of Community" camp.

Even more than being known for her own work, though, Allen likes to be known as "that artist who works with kids," because that's what she loves to do. Talking more about the camp, she adds that the "kids will be very tired, I will be very tired ... They will be so exposed." She will be doing exactly what she loves to do the most.

"You know how they say luck turns? I don't really believe in luck," she said, "but I'm hoping that that's what this is!"

I use art as a tool to captivate people and draw them in, so that I can continue to build community, particularly with young people



Artspace Projects is excited to announce the Rafala Green Fellowship Program, made possible with funding from the Ford Foundation. The purpose of this diversity fellowship program is to promote equity and inclusion for people of color and Indigenous people in the real estate and arts-based community development fields.

Rafala Green fellows will work full-time at the Artspace headquarters in Minneapolis, MN and support current projects in the Artspace development pipeline, gain access to national leaders in the field, and expand their network in a series of professional development activities. **Learn more at artspace.org.**

IMMERSION: TWIN CITIES PROGRAM

Artspace Consulting is pleased to announce the participants of Artspace Immersion's Twin Cities 2018—2019 cohort. The Immersion program is designed to build organizational capacity for arts and cultural nonprofits to create and maintain affordable space for their programming.

After piloting the program in Detroit, Michigan in 2015—2016, Artspace refined the curriculum, which includes monthly sessions with a mix of speakers, activities, facilitated discussions, group presentations, and independent work time. Artspace will work with each organization independently to provide one-on-one technical as-

sistance consulting. Participants will build skills, strengthen networks, and receive technical assistance to advance their space-related initiative.

The ten selected Minneapolis and Saint Paul arts organizations are in various stages of facility planning and have dedicated a three-person leadership team to participate in the 18-month program: Chicago Avenue Fire Arts Center; Electric Machete; FilmNorth; Public Functionary; FOCI—Minnesota Center for Glass Arts (MCGA); HUGE Improv Theater; Playwrights' Center; Saint Paul Ballet / Element Gym; Threads Dance Project; Youth Performance Company.

The Twin Cities cohort kicked off in February 2018 with its first workshop and will continue through June 2019. During this time, the participants will be immersed into Artspace's mission-driven, artist-led process and connects them with other local experts in the field.

This program, including the Detroit pilot and the forthcoming Memphis cohort, were made possible with funding and support from The Kresge Foundation. To learn more about the Immersion program, contact Anna Growcott at anna.growcott@artspace.org.

ART BRIDGE 2018: A TALE OF TWO TRICKSTERS

The fifth season of Artspace's Art Bridge program culminated in an experimental performance, "A Tale of Two Tricksters," April 14, following a year of in-depth distance collaboration between the Alaska Native Heritage Center in Alaska and the Pregones /Puerto Rican Traveling Theater in New York. Through video exchanges and inperson interactions, the two groups bridged the geographic distance to remix cultural elements and create a new, shared expression. The event showcased creation myths from both cultures while utilizing the Alaskan Raven and Puerto Rican Vijugante as guides—both "trickster" characters that do things the wrong way to teach us what is actually right. Each organization performed in front of a live audience, while interacting with each other in real time via projected sounds and images. The entire event was also live streamed.

The program was made possible by the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA).





Left: photo provided by Pregones/Puerto Rican Traveling Theater Right: photo provided by Alaska Native Heritage Center

HASTINGS GRAND OPENING



On Thursday, May 3, Artspace staff, Hastings resident artists, and community and financing partners celebrated the grand opening of Hastings River Lofts. Highlights of the event included a unique chance to tour artist live/work studios, and an exhibition on view at the community gallery, showcasing work by the artist residents. Live performances and aerosol art projects led by Juxtaposition Arts were enjoyed by all who attended.

UPCOMING EVENTS

May 11 2018 Artists for Housing Hope Artspace Everett Lofts, WA

August 9 2018 10th Anniversary Celebration Artspace Franklin Arts Center, MN

June 11 2018 Trinidad Groundbreaking Trinidad Artspace, CO

May X 2018 Jazz on the Ave Dearborn Artspace Lofts, MI



FEATURED ARTISTS

Journey Allen
Journey Home

To learn more about Journey Allen:

Go to artistjourneyallen.com

Follow @ajagallerystudio on Instagram

Visit her space at <u>1474 North Broad St</u>, <u>New Orleans</u>, <u>LA 70119</u>

Patrick & Veronica Lee Reinventing Themselves, Again

To view more of Patrick Lee's work, including works for sale, visit:

studioleep.com

Ti-Rock Moore & Nicolas AzizSaved by the Bell: NOLA Edition

See more of Ti-Rock Moore's work at: tirockmoore.org

Follow Ti-Rock on Instagram:
@ti-rock-moore

Read more articles by Nicolas Aziz at: huffingtonpost.com

Follow Nicolas on Instagram:
onload

NOW LEASING

SOUTH MAIN ARTSPACE LOFTS

Artspace is currently accepting applications for our new project in Tennessee: South Main Artspace Lofts. Located in Memphis' South Main Historic Arts District, the property is located near boutiques, coffee shops, galleries, and restaurants, as well as noteworthy attractions like the National Civil Rights Museum. If you're an artist or creative who is looking to live in a creative community with amenities that complement an artist lifestyle, this could be the perfect place for you. artspace.org/memphis

MESA ARTSPACE LOFTS

Join us at the Volstead December 12, 2017 at 7:00 p.m. for our third and final information session before applications are released on January 5, 2018! Mesa Artspace Lofts is the new, affordable live/work housing development for artists and their families in Arizona. Located in downtown Mesa on Hibbert, south of Main, the property is conveniently located near the light rail, the Mesa Arts Center, and more. These live/work lofts will provide critical affordable housing for creatives in dynamic downtown Mesa. artspace.org/mesa

QUARTERLY

ARTSPACE QUARTERLY SUMMER 2018:

OUT THERE:

RURAL & SMALL TOWN EDITION

OUT AUGUST 2018