



# ANNUAL REPORT

2021 - 2022



# the pandemic did not stop us from creating something good

GRIOT ARTS INC.

## As we reflect on our last year, two aspects come to mind:

Griot has never faced more tumultuous times than what we have come through during the COVID-19 pandemic, and we have never been more hopeful for the future than we are right now.

During the last year, Griot hit its tenth anniversary. Combined with reflecting on the previous decade and the intentional slowing of our programming, we have taken this last year to refocus our work and put in place the foundations and building blocks we need to serve our community best.

As we look to the future, our reimagined programming, our new facilities, and our greater community, we are both inspired and humbled to be in such an incredible place. We look forward to sharing with you in the report what took place this last year and what we are working to build for the future.

## Table of Contents

- Vision + Mission
- Letters From Our Leaders
- Meet The Team
- 2021-22 Highlights & Success
- The Year By The Numbers
- Thank You to our Supporters
- Looking Ahead



# We Are...

## creatives

THAT USE THE ARTS AS AN ENTRY  
TO CONNECT OUR COMMUNITY

## cultivators

WE CREATE A SPACE WHERE PEOPLE CAN  
THRIVE

## change-makers

BY BRINGING THE CHANGE WE SEEK

## restorative

USING COMMUNITY FEEDBACK TO FOSTER  
A SENSE OF BELONGING

## collaborative

WE BELIEVE THAT OUR COMMUNITY  
CAN AND WILL FLOURISH WHEN WE ALL  
WORK TOGETHER

## Our Mission

Griot Arts Inc. empowers young people in Clarksdale, Mississippi to create positive change in their lives and community by providing access to opportunities in the arts, education, and workforce development.



# Board President

"we strive  
toward the  
hope that  
we have  
glimpsed"

CALI NOLAND



**Cali**

Griot Arts Inc. Founder & Artist

Eleven years ago, I was an idealistic 23-year-old with big plans to transform Clarksdale with love, hope, and beauty. As we began that first year with 12 students in the (then) YoungLife gym on Anderson Blvd, I totally underestimated the amount of struggle it would be, and the depths of joy I would experience in the midst of the struggle. So many beautiful souls have come along to partner and lead in this journey over the years, and my heart has so much gratitude for all of you. There have been so many ways that we have been shocked by what God has done, and the latest is that he has brought a professional dancer who has danced all over the world to be the Executive Director of Griot. "Humbled" and "grateful" are the only words I have to respond to. The most amazing part of having Rebekah as our leader is her incredible heart for the community, the arts, and people.

The most precious and holy thing in our community is the people who are made in the image of God, "Imago Dei." At Griot, we have always worked to help uncover the God-given brilliance that exists in each child or adult that walks through our doors. The arts have a unique ability to do this, as we know that one of the most compelling aspects of God is his mind-blowing artistry that brought this achingly beautiful world into being. As bearers of this image, we all have the ability to connect with the Creator by reflecting his image through our creativity.

Lofty though it is, my dream has been that through Griot, the people in our community who feel the most hopeless and the most distant from this possibility would be able to glimpse this beauty, and they would feel and know their infinite worth and potential as "God's masterpiece, created in Christ Jesus to do good works."

In the midst of a broken world, we strive toward the hope that we have glimpsed, and we continue to try to do good and to "create some good" (our motto from the beginning). We know it is hard, and we have witnessed much of the pain in our community, but we do not lose heart. We press on in hope, love, and joyful expectation of the things to come.

# Executive Director

It is a sweltering hot Sunday morning amid Summer. My legs dangled as I sat in the pews of my grandmother's local church. Bell Grove Baptist Church stood tall in my memories though it was a quaint structure in the Brickyards of Clarksdale, Mississippi. I sat in my ivory tulle dress, itchy white stockings, ruffled socks, and milky white half-inch wedged shoes. An enormous mirror stood towering behind the church choir. At the end of the sermon, my Great-grandpa stands up and belts a non-rhythmic tune in a raw unfinished voice, "I love the lord, he heard my cry, I love the lord he heard my cry..."

Soon, everyone joins in. In an instant, I'm teleported through the invisible expanse of time; the words come to life. Embodied in the words are directions, both connecting and guiding me to a deeper purpose. Much later in life, I discovered this chant-like tune was a type of field holler, and unbeknownst to my grandfather, he was a Griot.

In my career as a dancer, I've had the opportunity to perform on stage with renowned dance companies, toured in multiple countries, danced with the Metropolitan Opera, and choreographed for Aloe Blacc at the Super Bowl. However, the passion brewing deep within me needed a way of escape. In hopes of finding it, I dived into nonprofit administration.

As a community coordinator for Refuge Coffee Co, I led neighborhood outreach programs to welcome refugees to Atlanta's Sweet Auburn Community. As project director for Aspire Africa, I spearheaded the organizational operations in Rwanda and the United States. I provided escape assistance for sex-trafficked women and children, and emergency support for those in need while serving as the program director for Atlanta Guardian, a mobile crisis support program for individuals facing homelessness.

The term Sankofa means "go back to the past and bring forward that which is useful." I realized throughout my diverse career paths that the voice of my great-grandfather at Bellgrove Baptist Church echoed through the chambers of my soul. I had to practice Sankofa; I had to go back to the past and bring it forward. That is the power of a Griot. They inspire us by sharing age-old stories that connect us to the past and push us forward into the future.

**"creativity  
has the  
incredible  
ability to  
transform  
anyone into  
a Griot"**

REBEKAH PLEASANT-  
PATTERSON



**Rebekah**  
Griot Arts Inc. Executive Director

# Rebekah's Vision

"as a leader,  
I am  
committed to  
creating  
spaces in  
places where  
people can  
thrive"

REBEKAH PLEASANT-PATTERSON

Creativity has the incredible ability to transform anyone into a poet, musician, storyteller - a Griot. I am excited and honored to lead the fantastic team at Griot Arts. I'm investing time and energy into learning about Clarksdale's diverse communities, structures, systems, and needs. As a leader, I am committed to creating spaces in places where people can thrive. I stand with the Griot Arts board, staff, and supporters to continue empowering young individuals of Clarksdale, Mississippi, and to create positive change in their lives and the community by providing access to arts, education, and workforce development opportunities in a Christ-centered environment.

My passion and enthusiasm are by no means accompanied by the notion of believing I can take on this immeasurable task alone. Our team is committed to the success of our programs, and we are asking for your support and participation.

**If you are interested in partnering with Griot Arts to continue the communal impact we are making, please contact me via phone or email at [rebekah@griotarts.org](mailto:rebekah@griotarts.org) or 404-353-8716**



# New Team Members



**"I have always  
been in step with  
both education and  
dance"**

JAVETTE WHITE

## **JAVETTE WHITE - DIRECTOR OF DANCE AND MOVEMENT**

As a native of Cleveland, MS, Javette began her dance education at Lynn Pace Dance School at age four. She continued her dance aspirations as a member and senior captain of the Golden Dolls Majorette Squad at East Side High School, as a Delta Dancer at Mississippi Delta Community College, and as captain and co-captain of the Delta Belles at Delta State University before graduating. She was the artistic director and choreographer for the Jazzy Divas Dance Studio, where they performed at community events and competitions all across Mississippi and other states. A teacher in both academics and in the arts, Javette has dedicated her time to bettering the lives and dance dreams of young people, Through the Delta Arts Alliance in Cleveland, Mississippi, and the Griot Arts after-school program in Clarksdale, Mississippi.

## **ANTRIS PERKINS - MERAKI BUSINESS MANAGER**

Antris Perkins is a native of Clarksdale, MS. She is currently the Business Manager for Meraki Roasting Co. Antris obtained a Bachelor of Arts degree from The University of Mississippi in Psychology and a Master of Education degree from Delta State University in Clinical Mental Health Counseling. She holds two professional credentials as a Nationally Certified Counselor (NCC) and a Clinical Mental Health Therapist (CMHT). Prior to working for Meraki Roasting, Antris was an Alcohol and Addictions Therapist for Region One Mental Health. Before obtaining a master's degree, Antris was the Executive Assistant for The City of Truth for several years. Her life's motto is to be the change you desire to see in the world. She prides herself on helping others and making a positive impact on everyone she encounters.

**"be the change  
you desire to see  
in the world"**

ANTRIS PERKINS



# Board of Directors

---

## OFFICERS

**CALI NOLAND, PRESIDENT**

Artist, Founder

**LEONETTE HENDERSON, VICE PRESIDENT**

The Aspen Institute

**JULIAN GALLO, TREASURER**

E. & J. Gallo Winery

**BRENDA LUCKETT, SECRETARY**

North MS Civil Rights Museum

## MEMBERS

**MARY MARTHA BOBO**

**ERICA CLAYTON**

**BILL GRESHAM**

**LIBERTY LEE**

**HATTIE SHIVERS**

# Team Members

---

**REBEKAH PLEASANT - PATTERSON\*\*\***

Executive Director

**CASANDRA BANKS**

Education Coordinator

**ANNA CARSON TYNER**

Programs Coordinator

**BEN LEWIS**

Deputy Director

**JAVETTE WHITE\*\*\***

Director of Dance & Movement

**ANTRIS PERKINS\*\*\***

Meraki Business Manager

**\*\*\* We've added new team members to help us lead the charge**

---



# Programmatic Success

## BUILDING YOUTH CONFIDENCE



### WALNEIKA AND AYANNA COLLEGE SEND OFF

**We held a college send-off party in August for our team members, Walneika Holmes and Ayanna Williams.**

Ayanna is currently enrolled at The University of Southern Mississippi with hopes of being admitted into the Pre-Nursing program in the spring. Walneika is enrolled at Jarvis Christian College with hopes of becoming a coach. Ayanna and Walneika developed a close bond through the Meraki Program and are now best friends.

Before joining the program Ayanna would talk about how shy and timid she was, but once she completed it she was comfortable with holding conversations with the customers and her personality blossomed. Walneika was provided with additional support and encouragement while being a team member, and she learned soft skills that could benefit her as a productive college student, athlete, and coach.



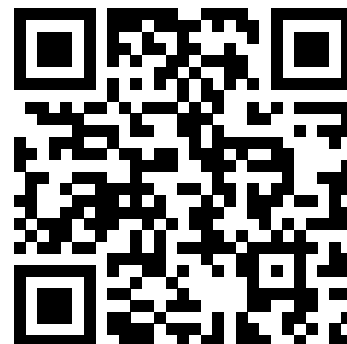
## PROMOTING FROM OUR COMMUNITY

### DELTA KNIGHTS

---

When Alonzo and Markus joined Meraki's program, they told the team about their dream to help the community. It was through their network and career development opportunity, the Delta Knights were founded. The Delta Knights are a group of gamers who were inspired to use the tools offered by the gaming industry to aid others, with a focus on their local area. While helping to give jobs and possible career opportunities for young people in the neighborhood, they want to assist them to acquire skills like teamwork, planning, critical thinking, problem-solving, and budgeting. They plan board and video game fundraisers for charitable groups in order to do this.

**If you would like to learn more about Delta Nights, scan the QR code below.**



# NEW CLASSES TO PROMOTE CREATIVITY & WELLNESS

## 2021 Fall Classes

Fall 2021 marked a return to fully in-person programming. Programs such as our Open Mic Nights let students share the skills they were learning in class with their loved ones and community members.

**GUITAR**

**THEATER**

**MACRAME**

**MEDITATIVE DRAWING**

## 2022 Summer Classes

Summer 2022 allowed us to reach new students with a diverse offering of art, dance, and STEM workshops. Our workshop blocks allowed us to engage with students, new and old, and help them discover new passions throughout the summer months.

**CLAY SCULPTURE**

**POTTERY**

**WATERCOLOR**

**ANIMATION**

**FUSED GLASS**

**PAINT POURING**

**PARTNER DANCE**

**DANCE YOGA**



# \$121,335

Total Donations Raised  
from Individual Donors

## EVENTS FOR A GOOD CAUSE



### Community Visioning Sessions

Our Griot team places a great deal of importance on plans and programs not being created in a vacuum but rather with input from the community through a thorough engagement process. In order to do this, Griot organized vision meetings during the previous year to gather opinions, anecdotes, and other perspectives from community stakeholders.

### Community Events

The physical places that serve the public's requirements are a crucial component of the community, and we believe that they have an impact on human well-being. Several community organizations, including the Mississippi Delta Equitable Education Project, StoryWorks, the UPC Quality of Life Committee, Divine Branches, Open Mic Nights, and others, used our Meraki space throughout the year.



### Stary Night; New Years' Eve Annual Fundraiser

This year, instead of our annual Fall Feast fundraiser, we hosted a New Year's Eve celebration. We were humbled by the level of support we received from our numerous sponsors and were able to raise \$46,917 from this event alone. We are grateful to our generous supporters. On March 23, 2023, a Spring Feast will be held as part of our annual fundraiser.

# Business Success

## MERAKI COFFEE

### PROMOTING FROM WITHIN OUR MERAKI TRAINING PROGRAM

Eugene was a member of Meraki's second cohort in August of 2017. When he was younger, Eugene wanted to be an alchemist, and the day he realized that coffee roasting was a type of alchemy was when his passion for coffee began to grow. He attended roasting school and participated in several online roasting workshops over the last two years. Eugene meticulously and passionately crafts our roasts every day. He has been eager to develop new flavor profiles since taking over as lead roaster.



### RECORD-BREAKING EVENT: THE JUKE JOINT FESTIVAL WAS A HUGE SUCCESS FOR THE COFFEE SHOP THIS YEAR

This year's festival was one of the largest in its history. Due to the increase in participation, we were able to reach record numbers in revenue this year with a 30% increase. We are looking forward to being a part of the festivities next year.



# THE GRIOT EXPANSION

## EXPANSION OVERVIEW

Already impacting the lives of over 1,300 students, Griot is currently operating at its maximum physical capacity within its current location of 5,000 square feet. Despite the proven interest and growing demand within the community, Griot will have limited outreach potential for arts and economic impact without more space. In 2020, Griot Arts was deeded 32,000 square feet of historic infrastructure within downtown Clarksdale, which began the plans for a new Griot Arts Center.

This Griot expansion will provide more space for arts programming, education and research, creative business incubation, performances, lectures, and films, inspiring tomorrow's creative influencers and providing an opportunity to build community. The central location will allow residents of all socio-economic backgrounds to access this programming. With your generous support, Griot's expansion can become a reality, shining the unifying light of creativity in a region that desperately needs reinvigoration.

### Construction Costs

FLOOR	AREA	PROJECTED CONSTRUCTION BUDGET
FIRST FLOOR	17,128 SF	\$5,502,712
MEZZANINE	2,680 SF	\$861,003
SECOND FLOOR	9,680 SF	\$3,109,893
THIRD FLOOR	12,365 SF	\$3,972,503
FOURTH FLOOR	10,332 SF	\$3,319,539
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>52,185 SF</b>	<b>\$16,765,650</b>

### Project Costs

ITEM	PROJECTED BUDGET
CONSTRUCTION BUDGET	\$16,765,650
FURNITURE, FIXTURES, & EQUIPMENT BUDGET	\$3,000,000
SOFT COSTS (DESIGN FEES)*	\$1,123,500
PROPERTY ACQUISITION	\$150,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$21,039,150</b>

### Funding Model



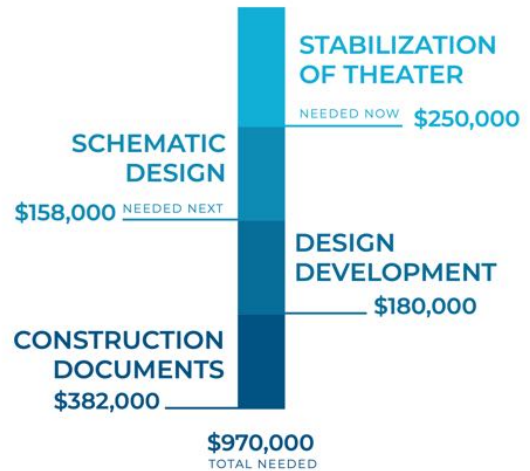
## GRIOT EXPANSION PROGRESS

This past summer, Griot diligently planned how to restore, renovate, and transform these locations to once again act as a beacon of arts and culture for the community.

Due to a lack of funding, only the early stages of design have been completed, accounting for roughly 5% of the total project.

We hope to raise \$250,000 for immediate funding to be used for the stabilization of the theater and to prevent further deterioration while we continue working on the larger project.

PHASE 1 PROJECT & FUNDING TIMELINE



FOLLOW THE PROCESS ON OUR WEBSITE



# 21-22 NUMBERS

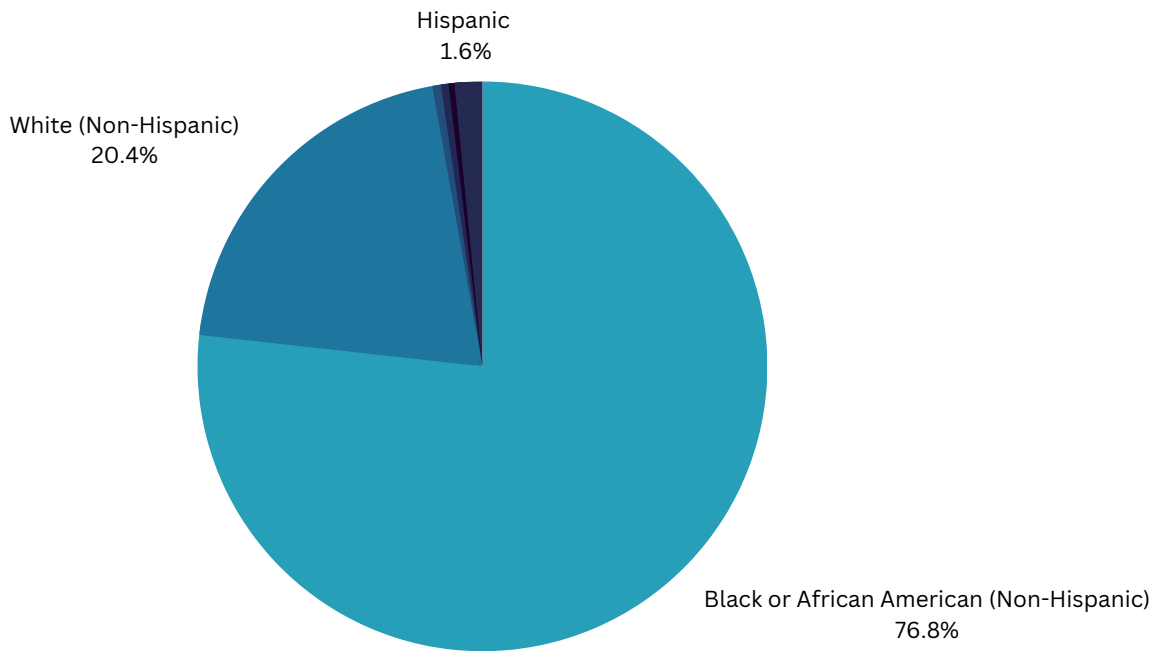
## OUR COMMUNITY

### COAHOMA COUNTY

**35**  
Median Age

**\$29,121**  
Median Household  
Income

**23,255**  
Population





# OUR IMPACT ON THE COMMUNITY

## PARTICIPATION & SUPPORT

242

**Creative Opportunities**  
Individual Class Days

2,882

**Customers Served**  
Meraki Coffee

15,658

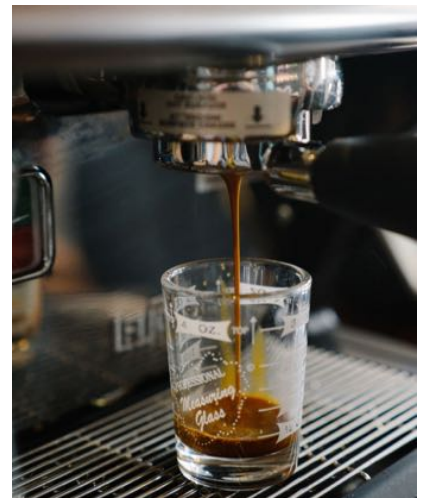
**Cups Served**  
Meraki Coffee

4,267

**Bags Purchased**  
Meraki Roasted Coffee Beans

3,631

**Pounds of Green Coffee Roasted**  
Meraki Roasted Coffee Beans



## 2021-2022 FINANCIAL SUMMARY

### SNAPSHOT OF OUR FINANCES OVER THE PAST TWO YEARS

Account	Previous Year (2020-2021)	Last Year (2021-2022)
<b>Revenue</b>		
Grants	\$183,970.37	\$389,096.35
Donations	\$130,984.62	\$121,335.29
Arts Tution	\$875.00	\$1,974.00
Meraki	\$157,511.08	\$195,767.85
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$473,341.07</b>	<b>\$708,173.49</b>
<b>Expenses</b>		
Cafe	\$113,441.90	\$140,918.10
Meraki Stipends	\$58,233.19	\$57,448.47
Staff Development	\$11,474.90	\$9,403.23
Fundraising Costs	\$6,490.36	\$5,117.85
Program Costs	\$175,553.84	\$170,626.20
Administrative	\$113,988.61	\$183,121.19
Facilities	\$62,649.12	\$58,003.80
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$541,831.92</b>	<b>\$624,638.84</b>
<b>Reserve Balance</b>	<b>\$161,784.80</b>	<b>\$90,421.43</b>

*Note: Our administrative expenses was a higher percentage this year because we paid \$22,000 for a two year audit. During the COVID-19 pandemic, we saw a reduction in contributions, could not conduct in-person programming and had to cancel numerous events. Our reserves allowed us to sustain our organization through significant increases in operating expenses and reductions in operating revenues.*

# THANK YOU

---

## DONORS & FRIENDS OF GRIOT

### PARTNERSHIPS

STORYWORKS THEATER  
DELTA ARTS ALLIANCE  
STARS IN MOTION  
DELTA YOGA COLLECTIVE

### ALTRUISTS

MATT & KRISTEN TOOMBS  
KATHERINE PUCKETT  
JODIE & WILLIS FRAZER  
ROB & ANNA TYNER  
PATRICK & CHANDA PEAY  
RYAN & LESLIE DEAN  
JOHNNY & CYNDI LARSON  
JEAN & JOHN DUFF  
JACK & MARY MARTHA BOBO  
EMILY COOPER  
BO & MARY CRUMPTON  
BILL & EDNA GLEASON  
WALTON FAMILY FOUNDATION  
ST. GEORGE EPISCOPAL CHURCH  
FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH  
COMMUNITY FOUNDATION OF  
NORTHWEST MS  
COMMUNITY FOUNDATION OF EAST  
CENTRAL ILLINOIS  
CLARKSDALE BAPTIST CHURCH



---

**Want to join this list? Scan QR Code to donate to Griot Arts**



# GOALS FOR 22-23

- 01. Improve Communication**

To strengthen our connections with individuals through our communications channels, we intend to raise awareness of our programs through social media, newsletters, and our website.
- 02. Increase Community Engagement**

With our programming, we hope to empower our community to work together to solve challenges and create change.
- 03. Increase Program Registrations & Participants**

Our goal is to have 100 students registered Educational programs and 50% retention rate for our Bridge (Education Services).





CREATE SOME GOOD

278 SUNFLOWER AVE, CLARKSDALE, MS 38614