

## Community Arts Leaders in Baltimore

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Maryland Institute College of Art

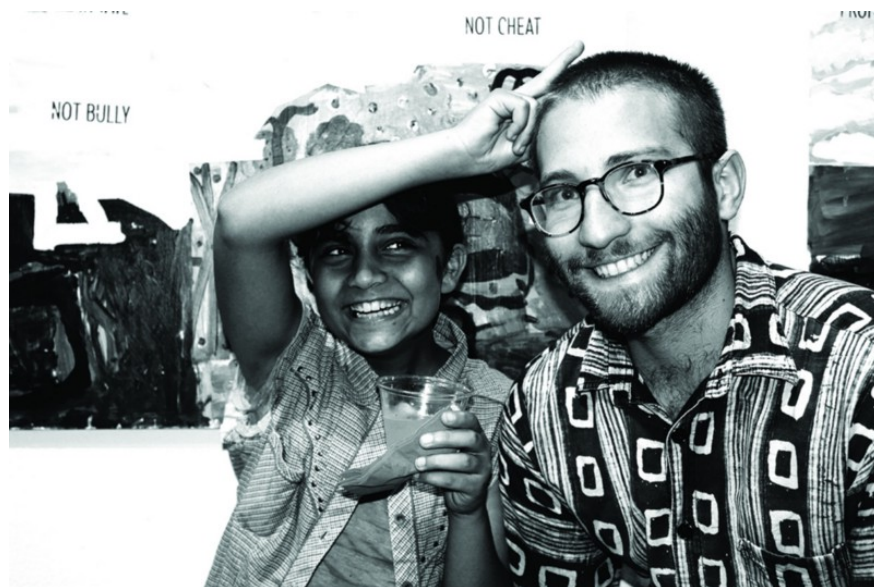
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MICA Community Arts students and alumni are making an impact on the ground through collaborations with Baltimore communities.

**Ben Hamburger** '17 worked as community arts facilitator for the Baltimore City Community College Refugee Youth Project (RYP). He led workshops and organized exhibitions with 30 newly arrived refugees from Eritrea, Iraq, Myanmar, Nepal and South Sudan. His goal was to get the participants—ages 7 to 15—to think deeply about cultural identity and home through art.



BEN HAMBURGER '17, BALTIMORE CITY COMMUNITY COLLEGE REFUGEE YOUTH PROJECT

“I wanted to inspire a sense of belonging, and get them to recognize their dual identities as assets,” said the 28 year old, who has worked with communities in Thailand, India and Bolivia. Considering the

nation's current political climate, he used the idea of sanctuary to support and encourage the refugees, and to bridge cultural boundaries.

Following the RYP's success, Hamburger recently shined a spotlight on change in South and Middle East Baltimore through a collection of portraits and audio narratives.

Through the Creative Alliance, **Linnea Poole** '18 and **Maria Gabriela Aldana** '06 also work with neighborhoods in East Baltimore, beyond the organization's primary stakeholders in Patterson Park and Highlandtown.



LINNEA POOLE '18, NEIGHBORHOODS IN EAST BALTIMORE

Poole coordinates an after-school dance program, “Creative Rhythms,” which she and Aldana started. It serves 60 students—the youngest 4 and the oldest 15—most of them African American from East Baltimore. “I wanted to give back to the community I grew up in,” said Poole, who spent her formative years in that part of town. Cooperating with schools and parents, the mother of a 4 year old wants her students to feel empowered and hopeful. “Dance lifts the spirit no matter what color you are,” she underlined.

Aldana co-founded the anti-racism task force, “Neighborhood Voices,” and collaborates with artists, scholars and organizations, such as Baltimore Racial Justice Action and Banner Neighborhoods, to produce a workshop series recognizing Baltimore activists and artists against racism. “A collaborative approach results in stronger relationships and honest conversations about how best to serve our communities,” she says.

“We can then be intentional about getting diverse groups of people in the same room and allowing them to share their stories.”

**Moira Fratantuono** ’10 and **David Sloan** ’08 focus on imparting knowledge and building skill sets for their audiences. Through Wide Angle Youth Media (WAYM), they work with middle and high schools and grassroots organizations, as well as Enoch Pratt library branches, to provide media education to about 450 Baltimore youths (ages 10 to 24) each year. The aim is to enable them to tell their own stories and become engaged with their communities.

“Everyone has a story to tell, but not every community has access to the tools to do so,” Fratantuono said. “We address that opportunity divide, break down barriers and enable our students to shape their own narratives.” She added that WAYM strives to become a presence in the community instead of just being an outsider.

Sloan oversees WAYM’s workforce development program. He said even though it is tremendously rewarding to help students make personal work, many of them are hungry to find ways to turn their interest in media into a career. “I think individuals and organizations working in community arts should consider how they can help participants build specific, marketable skills, in addition to their artistic and social aims.”



TANYA GARCIA '14, WIDE ANGLE YOUTH MEDIA

**Tanya Garcia '14**, who works part time at WAYM and also collaborated on other community projects around the city, said her work creates space for dialogue around identity and social difference. “It takes patience, building of long-term relationships, humility and always-on listening,” she said of the key ingredients of successful collaborations.

In 2015, Garcia curated the traveling exhibit, “Después de la Frontera” (After the Border), working with eight artists to honor the stories of

unaccompanied immigrants who fled El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras for new lives in the U.S. “I believe part of my responsibility as an artist is to educate and provide space for others to share their stories and build narratives,” she added.

