Rivers of the World - USA

New Orleans - 2014
Ron Bechet

Ron Bechet is a visual artist who works in the traditional mediums of drawing and painting. Bechet was born in and currently lives and works in New Orleans. He completed his BFA at University of New Orleans in Louisiana, and received an MFA from Yale University School of Art in New Haven, Connecticut. Xavier University of Louisiana Department of Art has enlisted him as Chairman for over a decade, and, in addition, Bechet has served as Acting Chairman for the Department of Fine Arts & Philosophy at Southern University at New Orleans for many years.

Bechet's work has been exhibited nationally and internationally, culminating in a solo show in the summer of 2015 at the Acadiana Art Center in Lafayette, Louisiana called "Sense of Place" in which he examined the visual culture of the African Diaspora. He has collaborated in pieces and exhibitions with John Scott, with whom he shared studio space for many years.

His work has been included in an exhibition curated by Edward Lucie-Smith in London, England in 1996 called "The Louisiana Story-The Next Generation", the imago mundi catalogue for the "Reparation: Contemporary Artists from New Orleans" exhibition, and the P.3 + McKenna Museum of African American Art site exhibition in New Orleans.
Most recently, his work was exhibited at the Ogden Museum of Southern Art in New Orleans in the "Tina Freeman: Artist Spaces" show.

The natural world figures heavily in Bechet's practice, and his show "Back to Nature" at the Robert Bruno Gallery New Orleans in 2005 showcased his boundary pushing stylized and colorful landscapes. "Lush, expressive Louisiana landscapes" were depicted on large scale canvases in his show at the Palma Gallery in New Orleans in 2005. Bechet's work can be found in the collections of the New Orleans Museum of Art, The Pennsylvania College of Art and Design Museum, The Tulane School of Law, and the Ogden Museum of Southern Art in New Orleans, LA. His work was featured in an exhibition called Crevasse 22 in conjunction with Prospect.3 in early 2015.

He is also involved in community outreach as one of the founding members of the Porch Cultural Arts Organization, and as a co-director of the Home New Orleans Project.

Ron is Director of the Art Department at Xavier University. He has been a mentor to young artists for more than two decades, and has somehow found time to be an important voice at the tables of many New Orleans arts associations and to make beautiful art.
The Mississippi River is one of the world’s major river systems in size, habitat diversity and biological productivity. It is the third longest river in North America, flowing 2,350 miles from its source at Lake Itasca through the center of the continental United States to the Gulf of Mexico. When compared to other world rivers, the Mississippi-Missouri River combination ranks fourth in length (3,710 miles) following the Nile (4,160 miles), the Amazon (4,000 miles), and the Yangtze Rivers (3,964 miles).
New Orleans was catastrophically affected when the levee system failed during Hurricane Katrina. By the time the hurricane approached the city at the end of August 2005, most residents had evacuated. As the hurricane passed through the Gulf Coast region, the city's federal flood protection system failed, resulting in the worst civil engineering disaster in American history. Floodwalls and levees constructed by the United States Army Corps of Engineers failed below design specifications and 80% of the city flooded. Tens of thousands of residents who had remained in the city were rescued or otherwise made their way to shelters of last resort at the Louisiana Superdome or the New Orleans Memorial Convention Center. More than 1,500 people were recorded as having died in Louisiana, and others are still unaccounted for.
Alice M Harte Charter School was partnered with Wisdom School in LB Haringey

This school was destroyed during Katrina in 2005 and is currently being re-built. Staff and pupils work in shipping containers with all the school offices and admin carried out on desks in the school corridors. They have the least in terms of facilities and will need support. Will also need art supplies. Harry Cass is the art teacher.
Harry Cass (2014)
River City

Using a diverse range of media, the students created individual pieces depicting well-known symbols, events and themes that bring life to New Orleans’ vibrant city culture. Once completed, the students arranged the images in a collage using Photoshop, unifying the themes in a tapestry that tells the city's cultural story.

Why you are interested in taking part in Rivers of the World?

We at Harte are always seeking to expand our students’ exposure to the world around them. Although they are academically diverse, many have never left New Orleans. This project can give them a closer look at other cultures and better ideas about how far they may go. It has the potential to be a very rewarding experience. The rich culture of New Orleans has always been a part of our curriculum. From the poetry of Langston Hughes (I’ve Known Rivers) to the history of the very first Mardi Gras, the Mississippi River has been a part of it all. Incorporating the art project into the curriculum will not be difficult. The students can depict a river barge full of grain in a painting and describe the selling price per pound of the cargo, while discussing the history of the port of New Orleans. The teachers involved have already made a preliminary list of cross-curricular projects to complement the ‘Rivers’ project.
YAYA Inc was partnered with Welling School in LB Bexley
YAYA is a specialist art school, teaching students how art can be used as a profession. They operate as an after school facility and have about 90 drop-in students. They are open from 4pm to 7pm (9pm on Fridays). They discussed involving all of their pupils and completing 3 RoTW artworks. Teachers Ron & Jordan. They will look at raising sponsorship to allow their pupils to travel to London to see the exhibition.
STUDIO PROJECTS

Artist Meeting 2nd Fri, Jan 8th
- Welcome Back Party
- March 1 Day Ladder Design
- YAVA College Night 1st Fri, Jan 4th
- Annual Closing Gala, Apr 7th
- YAVA, Gallery, Scholarship
- Window Film: Power of Yaya
- YAVA Spring Writing Scholarship
- YAVA Alumni Brunch 1st Sat, Mar 23rd
- Friday Night @ NOVA 1st Sat, Mar 23rd
- CAFE Benefit: Power of Yaya
- Re-entry of the World Thanes Festival
- Graphic Design workshop 1st Sat, May 25th

NOTES

- Art Market - Jan 4th, Feb 8th, March 22nd
- Family Day @ YAVA
- Easter Day - April 12th
- Mother's Day - May 10th

COMMISSIONS

- John Piper, Banke Kuku - Kikuyu
- Piebald on this Street
- Sonya Kay, Kai, Fish, Paper - Ron
- Sensibility, the Wolf - Ron
- John Wolfe, Blanchard, Johnson - Ron
- Chasity Land, Johnson - Ron
- Commission on Our Home
YAYA’s mission is to empower creative young people to become successful adults. They provide educational experiences in the arts and entrepreneurship to New Orleans-area children and youth, fostering and supporting their individual ambitions.
Rontherin Ratliff and Cameron Jordan (2014)
Working River

The students explored the Port of New Orleans’ historic impact and benefit on the Mississippi River. The students used ink illustration, collage and Photoshop to depict working Old Man River as a product of nature, industry, and manual labour.

Why you are interested in taking part in Rivers of the World?

YAYA is interested in partnering with the “Rivers of The World” to foster new international relationships and collaborations for the YAYA artists. To continue to support the artists’ professional and personal growth. The collaborations will provide each artist with the skills to collaborate as teams with an International school, plan and research design concepts, and design the collaborative ideas into one cohesive digital image for large scale image. YAYA would produce images that would depict how the “Rivers” impact in the city of New Orleans - economically and culturally.
Aubedon Charter School

Aubedon Charter School was partnered with Whitefield School in LB Barnet

Aubedon is an old school with good art facilities. It is named after artist John James Aubedon, a natural history artist who they will base their project around. Elise is the Art Teacher, Desmond is the Assistant.
Elise Vandergriff
(2014)
Polluted River

The students celebrated the Mississippi River Delta and its estuaries through beautiful birds and fish shown in the state tree, the bald cypress. The birds and fish were made from paper and clay. Students wanted everyone to see what could disappear without our conscious efforts to stop pollution.
The NET Charter High School was partnered with Harris Academy. Based in the Treme district, the NET School was badly hit by Katrina. It teaches children (16 to 21 year olds) who have slipped through the net and have often dropped out of school at a young age and are now trying to re-enter the education system. Many of their students have been through teenage pregnancy, they have a high homeless quotient and most students are from highly challenged environments. They have no formal art teaching. They hope to involve 12 students in RoTW over 6 Friday sessions of 2 hours each.
Augustus Jenkins  
(2014)  
Resourceful River

Using the Ideation Process, students concluded that a resourceful river is both a gift, in that it makes life sustainable, and a curse that can challenge life as we know it. Collectively, students decided to create a collograph that focused on both the positive and negative aspects of a resourceful river.

Why you are interested in taking part in Rivers of the World?

The NET offers its students the opportunity to participate in experiential learning through an internship program. Internships allow students to gain hands on, professional experience in career areas of their choice. The NET is not a technical program, so our goal is not to push students into a particular profession. We want our students to explore all of their interests. Many students are artists, but only view it as a hobby. The NET believes that the opportunity to work with a professional artist in creating a piece of art for Rivers of the World can help to change their views on what it means to have a career and be passionate about their work.
New Orleans Centre for Creative Arts was partnered with Frances Bardsley Academy for Girls in LB Havering.

NOCCA is a ‘Fame Academy’ for art in secondary schools with incredible facilities. Michelle is Photography Teacher, Mary Jean is Print-Making. They hope to involve 24 pupils aged 15-17 years old. There is no need for an external professional artist to support this facility.
Mary Jane Parker and Michel Varisco (2014) Resourceful River

The pupils explored the Mississippi River from historical, cultural, social justice and environmental perspectives. They went on excursions to shoot and collect imagery on indigenous/invasive plants and animals and used both printmaking and photo techniques.

Why you are interested in taking part in Rivers of the World?

Our school is on the Mississippi River. The river defines our city, both geographically and culturally. The students who come to NOCCA enjoy working on projects that deal with issues that are important to our culture and quality of life. This project will be a wonderful theme for our students who live in a city that is nicknamed “The Crescent City.”
Some details are still being worked out but we plan to work with one of our science teachers who is studying the river. He has been taking samples of the river for his research. He will talk to our students about some of his findings. We also plan to take a field trip on a riverboat to get the students out of the river physically. The students will create artwork in both screen printing and photography.
Benjamin Franklin School was partnered with Ricards Lodge High School a girls’ school in Wimbledon in LB Merton. Benjamin Franklin is a high achieving school with excellent facilities. Enthusiastic staff and pupils and a great music department. They are planning a river trip to investigate water samples. They will integrate the project into art and social studies. They want to involve up to 24 students aged between 13 to 14. They will also present an exhibition in the school of all work created at Benjamin Franklin, including the preparatory work. A visit for staff and pupils to London has been arranged.
John is Geography Teacher, Natalie Rhinehart is Art Teacher. Ron Ayo will support as Professional Artist.
Ron Ayo (2014)
River Culture

Spray-paint stencilling is commonly seen along the Mississippi River in modern-day New Orleans. Students used cultural symbols to create stencils and spray-painted images, which were made into a Photoshop collage.

Why you are interested in taking part in Rivers of the World?

Rivers of the world sounds like an excellent opportunity for our school to expand our international partnership exchange. We pride ourselves on being a very diverse school and representational of the great diversity of the city of New Orleans. Considering our relationship with the Mississippi River to our city’s culture and history, we would offer a great perspective on this project.
John McDonogh High School was partnered with Sion Manning School, a Roman Catholic girls' school in Ladbrooke Grove in LB Kensington & Chelsea.

This is a very under-resourced and large school. It is a low achieving school but has a great brass music department and they plan a steel pan project with their partner school. Philip is the Art Teacher. He hopes to involve 17-18 14/15 year old students.

He will need support.
Philip Spence (2014)  
River Culture

The students used an etymology of New Orleans references to illustrate the city’s unique culture and ethnology. The acrylic landscape serves as a background to celebrate unique references commonly observed in neighbourhoods along the river and throughout the city.

Why you are interested in taking part in Rivers of the World?

The Mississippi River has helped shape New Orleans both literally and figuratively, however its presence in today’s high tech landscape is easily relegated to that of a parking lot for the shipping and oil industries. Large sections of the Mississippi are cut off from the public. The historic and scientific details of the river are not common knowledge to many young New Orleanians. Rivers of the World would provide a catalyst for JMHS participants to explore the value of a River in close proximity to an urban center. This comparison of the New Orleans’ Mississippi and London’s Thames would hopefully inspire a younger generation of NOLA resident to preserve and better showcase the Mississippi river as well as the fragile eco system of the South Louisiana region.
Coghill Academy / International High School of New Orleans was partnered with Rooks Heath High School in South Harrow in LB Harrow
Lauren Godo (2014)
River of Life

The students looked at how the river has shaped their community for centuries. The artwork is based on the idea that the river has collected so much on its way down to New Orleans and that all this combines and flourishes and forms a melting pot of culture and identity.
Jeanne Nathan & Bob Tannen
Creative Alliance of New Orleans' mission is to provide training, education, and information for creative artists, cultural producers and the community.

Despite a lively art scene in the metro area, purchases of visual arts do not reflect the quality and output of work here. CANO is addressing this gap with a program aimed at helping residents and visitors alike to experience private art collections in the homes of residents, as well as work in studios and galleries, to better understand the accessibility and affordability of art.

CANO supports and presents the work of creative artists in underserved communities
Dorian Bennett, President of Sotheby's International Realty New Orleans & avid art collector
Creative Alliance New Orleans' Bal Des Artistes is a Bohemian themed Carnival gala. It includes the work of artists, artisans and manufacturers in a 'Design Salon'.
Second line is a tradition in brass band parades in New Orleans. The "main line" or "first line" is the main section of the parade. Those who follow the brass band just to enjoy the music are called the "second line." The second line's style of traditional dance, in which participants walk and sometimes twirl a parasol or handkerchief in the air, is called "second lining." It has been called "the quintessential New Orleans art form. Additional second lines, large or small, may be held for any event which people think merits hiring a parading band for such a style of celebration, including weddings and opening businesses. [from Wikipedia]
Bruce Davenport, Jr. was born in 1972 at Charity Hospital and grew up in the Lafitte Housing Projects in the 6th Ward. With the encouragement of his grandparents who raised him, he began to draw at the age of five as a means to entertain himself and document the world around him. Throughout his schooling, particularly at Joseph S. Clark, he was exposed to and intrigued by the junior high and high school marching band culture – a culture that is integral to New Orleans. Following Hurricane Katrina and the devastation to New Orleans and its schools, Davenport, Jr. felt compelled to honor the past glory of this unique band culture and celebrate those who are able to continue it. In his words, “The marching bands are a passion to me. I love the history and culture... My work serves as an illustrative reminder of an activity that not only encourages creative thought processing but also engages youth with the community and with each other. Using photographic documentation of these bands in action, I recreate their vibrant pageantry... hopefully leaving behind a sacred reminder of a vibrant part of my hometown’s identity.”
I WANT TO LEAVE A MARK ON N.C.A.A. LIKE KATRINA DID.

SAY NO TO CRACK IS WACK.

I'M ONLY AS GOOD AS I WANT TO BE.

I'M THAT GREAT.

B.A.D.
New Orleans artist Christopher Porche West’s Insider Art and Insider Art
These photos depict Mardi Gras Indian from a series of images by New Orleans artist and photographer Christopher Porche West.
The Mississippi River causes massive pollution of the Gulf of Mexico. The pollution is so bad that the area surrounding the mouth of the Mississippi River is known as a Dead Zone. When the pollutants from the river reach the ocean they cause an algae bloom, which deprives the water of oxygen and kills off all of the living organisms, giving it the name dead zone. Of course, the Deepwater Horizon oil spill isn’t doing anything to help those living organisms either.
“Aaron (above right) did an excellent job in both securing the schools and the artist support structure. Creative Alliance, with Jeanne and Alphonse and Ron Bechet as lead artist, are an immensely reassuring structure for the project. Particularly so given the wide range of schools selected: a drop-in after school art facility, the state’s best art college, two challenging Katrina-affected schools in the process of being re-located, one of the state’s most high achieving schools and a facility for students who have dropped out of the standard schooling system.” ~ Adrian Evans, Director, Thames Festival