

## ARTS

# Savannah artists finding big ways in small places to stage exhibitions

**Beth Logan** For the Savannah Morning News

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In a city that's overrun by the development of new hotels and university residences, it often feels there is little room for working artists to find affordable living, studio and exhibition space. Following the demise of several local galleries, I wrote a [year-end column](#) in December 2022 expressing worry and frustration about Savannah's art scene: feelings that precipitated my involvement with [Arts Southeast](#), a nonprofit striving to make Savannah a destination for art and culture through creative, inclusive programming and through uplifting emerging and established artists. Today, at the end of 2025, I am excited and heartened by the resilience of our art community and want to share some recent additions to Savannah's cultural landscape.

In September, I wrote about local artist and arts advocate Phil Musen and his tiny (and cute) [Cute Tomatoes Gallery](#) which opened this May in the Starland/Thomas Square neighborhood at 218 East 41<sup>st</sup> Street.

Another artist advocate is curator Lisa Jaye Young, whose first Savannah show was at Laney Contemporary in 2019, and who will curate an as-yet untitled group show at Arts Southeast in July. Since the early 1990s Jaye Young has collaborated with curators in Pittsburgh, Berlin, and New York City, and says, "Before I began my graduate degree, I was part of a founding team for Deitch Projects in NYC in 1996 and was a campus art gallery

director while teaching contemporary art and photo history for a few years on Long Island. I've always had in mind to have 'a room of one's own' like a postage-stamp-sized storefront for salon-style ideation, short-term exhibitions, or even performances and readings by artists and authors to complement my commitment to higher education in the classroom and in my writing.”

**Arts & Culture:** [Savannah artist steps into limelight with #art912 exhibition at Jepson](#)

## New art spaces and studios popping up around Savannah

To that end, she *recently founded* **Pocket Space**, a small, portable, project space modeled on Stieglitz's NYC Little Galleries in the early 20th century. “The concept is a roving arts project with a mission to foster informal and experimental works with accessibility for collecting, artist support, and as an extension of Savannah's expanding web of creative communities while linking to wider international dialog.”

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Pocket Space is hosted by **Norwood Gallery**, a freshly opened artist-run endeavor created by internationally acclaimed ceramicist and mixed media installation artist [Sharon Norwood](#) at 2014 Delesseps Ave. The project's inaugural exhibition was a show of drawings and sculptures by Susan Falls, Liz Sargent and Sharon Norwood. Its second show, *Word of Mouth: A Celebration of December* opened on Dec. 11 and runs through January. *Word of Mouth* features work by 19 (!) stellar Savannah-based female artists, including Jennifer Mack Watkins, Tobia Makover, Deb Oden, Sarah Cherry and Betsy Cain. (Text 912-344-0251 for gallery hours or to make an appointment to see the show.)

Next up is **Camaleon**, located in the fabulous red brick building at 307 Stiles Ave. and Louisville Road. Sometimes-home to African American photographer Emerson Matable, he recently renovated the second floor

creating a huge open space serving as a multidisciplinary exhibition and performance venue where “experimentation meets community.”

I met with Alex Mendi, a native of Guatemala, an Arts Southeast intern, and a recent SCAD photography graduate who is charged with directing and promoting Camaleon. Mendi officially opened the space by curating an impressive one-night group show on Nov. 15. While the pay-to-play model is not ideal (if you blink, you miss it), she is excited by the possibility of offering longer-term exhibitions, artist talks, workshops and screenings to “foster meaningful collaboration.” Her vision is that “with accessible pricing, flexible rentals, and full commitment to artistic growth, Camaleon [can serve] as a both a launching pad and a landing stage—a place to meet, make and evolve.”

Mendi, young and intelligent with an engineering and business background, is viewing the next year as “an extension of my time at SCAD. It’s so exciting to have this opportunity; I feel like I have tapped into a gold mine.”

A similar concept is playing out at the newly opened **Midtown Arthouse** in a former Roto-Rooter building owned by the vibrant retired businesswoman-turned-artist Sherry Daniel. She, and self-described “positive energy artist” Joanne Morton, originally met through local marketing maven Marjorie Young and joined forces this year to transform the former plumbing offices and surrounding lots into a community gallery and creative space hosting exhibitions, vendor markets, private parties, workshops, book launches, small concerts, and demonstrations. Find Midtown Arthouse at 2016 E. Broad, and reach out if you would like to offer a class or rent one of their permanent gallery spaces. Be warned, the proprietors only want to collaborate with positive folks “with tender hearts” who share their passion for “building community and creating a safe space in these chaotic times.”

Finally, I am a little late to visit **Blue Boy Art Gallery**, which opened 18 months ago in a transformed carport in the backyard of curator Phillip McClure's midtown home. A freelance graphic designer and a University of Georgia Lamar Dodd School of Art graduate, McClure says, "When I was in school, I feel like it was this exciting time in the southeast where art spaces were popping up in strange places like basements and spare rooms. I think about Howard Finster's **Paradise Garden** and about **Pasaquan** and feel there are domestic art spaces that are quintessentially southern. Blue Boy is a response to the mentality of making it work in whatever space you have available to you."

He continues, "The first year of programming was largely friends from [art] school, but this year I've met a lot of people through studio visits." We discuss the distances involved for making studio visits in the south, compared to many curators who will only visit studios around LA or NYC. Today, McClure is an exciting, legitimate gallerist with two recent measures of success: writer Noah Reyes [reviewed his last show](#), "Rustle" for the Atlanta-based, nonprofit magazine of contemporary art criticism, *Burnaway*; and McClure has forged a business partnership with the curators behind New York-based Curmudgeon, Living Skin, and Service to create a second space called **Nine**. Nine opened in October in the basement of a Buddhist temple at 9 Monroe St. in Manhattan's Chinatown. Restaurant basements and converted carports "are weirdly more common than people outside of the art world might think," he says, "And within the art world, there is a lot of interest. I am exclusively working with very emerging artists." He goes on, "In wanting to be in service of artists, I recognize it can be very difficult for them to break into the gallery scene in NYC." In January, he will curate a three-week show there that will then travel to Savannah.

Savannahians can catch Blue Boy's current show *Dust in an Oyster Shell*, which opened on Dec. 5, by reaching out to McClure via Instagram (or email [writetoblueboy@gmail.com](mailto:writetoblueboy@gmail.com)) to make an appointment. The show is installed through Jan. 15, 2026, and features Gabrielle Constantine from Philadelphia and Brendan Shea from

Maine. McClure describes Shea as a “painter’s painter who is going in a new direction with this body of work by painting on cedar board and then meticulously carving into the surface and inserting little figurines and objects. Gaby is a sculptor who is working with found, disregarded, domestic objects who is similarly cutting into these things and nestling dioramas within them. They are both thinking about the effort it takes to carve out a place for yourself as queer artists—the added effort that takes—while also thinking about how everyday objects help define a person’s identity.”

In other Savannah arts news, Russian-born artist Tatyana Sukhanova has opened the spacious **Tianova Gallery** at 53 Montgomery St. to showcase her paintings, which she describes as “bridging three visual languages: [self-created] Strialism, Cubism, and Spatial Realism.”

Restaurateur and business maven Elle Tran has opened the curated “cultural salon” **North of Forsyth Antiques & Design** on the corner of Jones and Bull Streets, where local favorite **Bellamy Murphy** displays her vintage collectables, stationary, tea towels, and, of course, her incredibly popular artwork.

Lastly, Kevin Ryan and Meredith Sutton, the entrepreneurial proprietors of **Service Brewing Co.**, have opened beautifully appointed, juried art spaces—lovingly designed by jeweler Sutton—next door to the brewery at 570 Indian St. and aptly named **Brewside Artist Studios**.

*Cute Tomatoes Gallery is on Instagram @cute\_tomatoes\_gallery; Pocket Space is @pocketspace.ljy; Norwood Gallery is @norwood\_gallery; Camaleon is @camaleon\_xpo and at [camaleon-xpo.com](http://camaleon-xpo.com); Midtown Arthouse is @midtownarthousesav and at [midtownarthouse.com](http://midtownarthouse.com); Blue Boy Gallery is @blueboy.space; Tianova Gallery is @tianova\_art and [www.tianovafineart.com](http://www.tianovafineart.com); Bellamy Murphy is @bellamyart and [bellamyart.com](http://bellamyart.com); and Brewside Artist Studios is @brewside.artist.studios.*