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Georgia Southern Alumna Designs 2016 Governor's Award for the Arts & Humanities

October 24, 2016



Georgia Southern University alumna Shaunté Francois was selected to design the 2016 Governor's Award for the Arts & Humanities. Francois, a jewelry and small metals artist, graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Arts (3D Studio Arts) in 2015.

Presented by the Office of Governor Nathan Deal in partnership with the Georgia Council for the Arts and Georgia Humanities, the Governor's Awards for the Arts and Humanities honor the outstanding individuals and organizations making significant contributions to Georgia's civic and cultural vitality through excellence and service to the arts and humanities. A ceremony honoring the recipients was held at the Capitol Building in Atlanta on Oct. 5. This year's recipients include former first lady of Georgia Betty Foy Sanders, an accomplished artist, advocate for the advancement of the arts and art education, and namesake of the University's Betty Foy Sanders Department of Art (BFSDoArt).

"It is such an honor to be chosen to design and create the 13 awards. It was an overwhelming, but wonderful experience," said Francois. "My favorite part of anything I design is when my sketch comes to life; when the metal forms are cut out, and I can really see what the piece will look like. I am grateful for the mentorship I received from Christina Lemon and the assistance from many others in the BFSDoArt. At the ceremony, I loved watching the recipients receive their awards, and Betty Foy Sanders being one of them made it even more special."

The awards were each handcrafted using copper and bronze metal, and mounted on mahogany wood bases. The lotus flower, representing the power and beauty of nature, symbolically rises above the stylized city silhouette. It represents both the natural world and expanding cities and development.

Completing the complex, intricate work was a collaborative effort between Francois and the Betty Foy Sanders Department of Art (BFSDoArt). Francois worked with jewelry and small metals Professor Christina Lemon and Art Facilities technician Jason McCoy, as well as Madeline Shelor and other advanced small metals students to assemble the awards.

"The opportunity for BFSDoArt students and faculty to collaborate and create the 2016 Governor's awards for the Arts and Humanities is indicative of the design expertise and professional quality of the undergraduate programs offered at Georgia Southern University," said department Chair Robert Farber. "The project provided jewelry and small metals students with a client-based experience that required creative problem solving, collaboration and adherence to a strict project deadline. What a wonderful real world experience for our students and faculty."

“This project highlights the importance of 3D art forms and the development of skills that make such works possible. It combined many skills students develop in the 3D program, including small metals, metalsmithing, woodworking, and applied finishing techniques,” said Lemon. “I’m so proud of my students. It is such an honor to work with alumna Shaunté Francois and current student Madeline Shelor on this project and to highlight the talents of these two amazing students and represent our department and University at this prestigious event.”

Francois is from Stone Mountain, Georgia. Her interest in jewelry began when she enrolled in a beading class in her hometown at the age of 10. She currently works as a production assistant for jewelry designs at Mickey Lynn, Inc., in Atlanta. Her metal work has been featured in Georgia Southern’s literary magazine Miscellany, the Betty Foy Sanders Department of Art’s undergraduate juried exhibition, and at the Averitt Center for the Arts in Statesboro, Georgia.

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