

PHOENIX



IMAGINE • CREATE • REALIZE

MSAAA NEWSLETTER

JASMINE MURRAY

*Discover
what beauty
really is with
Miss Mississippi

Learn what being
an artist and entrepreneur
is all about with

LORRIN WEBB

CATCH UP:
See what our alumni
are up to and
the work they are producing

Editor's Note

We are proud to present the first ever edition of *The Phoenix Quarterly* as our official quarterly MSAAA newsletter!

When I paused and took notice of what was happening in my former MSA classmates' lives, I realized that MSA alumni needed a more specific way to support and encourage each other; therefore,

I concluded that having a newsletter would provide us with that opportunity. Our alumni community is so unique, and in order for it to keep growing we have to support MSA together.

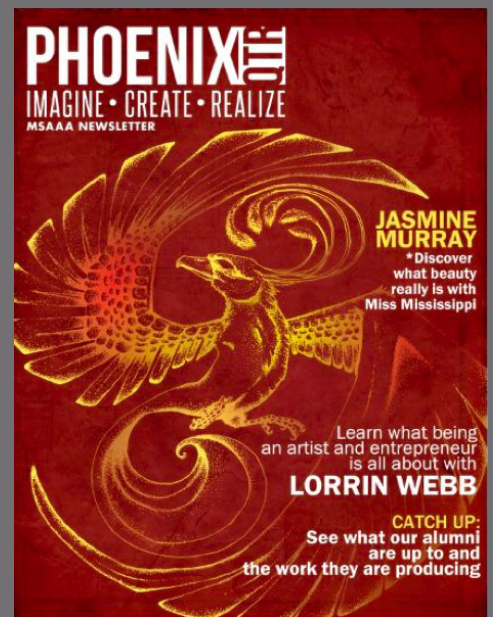
We are excited and optimistic about being able to reach out to you. From this edition onwards we are hoping to provide members of MSAAA with more content, valuable insights, and great opportunities to share in order to keep MSA alumni excited about the future and involved in our mission: to reach out and give back. Therefore, I'd like to officially request you - our alumni - to contribute your very own content to the upcoming editions of the magazine and help us to be a continued success. MSAAA is our brand and our future, so let's see what we can do!



Lauren Leslie on behalf of the editorial staff



Do you want to be a contributor? Please send your submission to msartsalumni@gmail.com for approval.



1ST EDITION

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Dear Fellow Alumni,

I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart for the outpouring of support and involvement we've received over the last few months.

As a result, we've been able to complete our first edition of *The Phoenix Quarterly* and have begun compiling an alumni database to hopefully reach every one of you more completely in the near future. We will be welcoming the Class of 2005 back to campus this spring to celebrate their ten year reunion. Most of all, we look forward to the unification of our alumni into a strong and supportive organization that can do far more to help each other together than we could apart.

As we are an ongoing and blossoming effort, we welcome your continued involvement. As we aim to do everything we can to provide for both our alumni and our alma mater, we welcome volunteers of all disciplines and years to join us in our journey. To those who are already on board, I thank you for your dedication and look forward to working with you to meet the goals we set for ourselves in the future.

May your flame always burn bright,

Hallie Waldrep
Alumni Association President

Justin A Lofton
Vice President

Clinton Davis
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Austin Williams
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Kristen Shi
Visual Rep

Kristen Mercedes' Perry
Vocal Rep

Claire Campbell
Theatre Rep

Jay Marion
Dance Rep

Ashlyn Brooke Ervin
Literary Rep

BEHIND THE PAGEANT WITH JASMINE MURRAY

by Erin Lowrey

It was never about the crown. Jasmine Murray, Mississippi School of the Arts 2010 graduate, competed in pageants all her life, but she emphasized that the glitz and glam of the pageant scene was not at all the reason behind her passion.

Jasmine's breakthrough moment was at the age of 15, when she won Miss Mississippi Outstanding Teen. "My sister did Miss Mississippi twice, and what girl doesn't dream to be Miss America one day?" said Jasmine.

Jasmine recently won Miss Mississippi over the summer of 2014 and landed a spot in the top ten of Miss America. She said the experiences she has had so far in her reign have been life changing. "Miss America allows me to give back, because it's not about you," said Jasmine. "I have visited, gosh, at least over a thousand schools promoting my platform, '13 Going On 30.'" Her platform inspires young women to embrace their age, and not attempt to grow up too quickly.

Jasmine said her favorite experience so far has been visiting sick children at Blair E. Batson Hospital. "You know, it's just amazing to be able to spend a day visiting kids and brightening their day when you know they are sick and hurting," Jasmine said. "They are so excited to see you, and it is such a blessing to be able to be a small part in helping them heal."

Jasmine was a student of the vocal discipline while at MSA. During her junior year, she competed in American Idol and made the top 13. Jasmine said that her experiences at MSA have been lessons she takes with her throughout life today. "MSA really allowed me to have confidence and explore my vocal talent," said Jasmine. "I made lifelong friends and felt part of a family, and family is extremely important to me."

Jasmine said she also felt blessed to be surrounded by people with similar talents and passion. "When you have that support system, those people who challenge you and make you want to be a better performer, you grow. You become better, and that is what MSA did for me."

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NOT ABOUT YOU.”





ALUMNI HIGHLIGHTS

JORDAN OLIVERA

WESLEY SPEED

SAM DAMARE'

BRITTANY WOMACK

by Erin Lowrey

Jordan Olivera



Jordan Olivera attended MSA as part of the inaugural class of 2005 as a student of the visual arts discipline. Aspiring to teach history, he later became a secondary education student at Northwest Community College and worked at a local police department as a dispatcher for seven years while drawing and painting from time to time. He also enjoyed teaching local art classes. However, the best part of his journey so far has been in 2012 when he married his wife Sarah Olivera, who became an American citizen from Canada after nearly a year of waiting for immigration approval. Unfortunately, in 2014, Jordan went to the doctor with stomach pains and was later diagnosed with colon cancer at age 27. Facing six

months of chemo treatment after his surgery on October 20, 2014, he is currently fighting the pain in an effort to have a cancer-free recovery. You can support Jordan in his struggle by donating to his GoFundMe account at

You can support Jordan in his struggle by donating to his GoFundMe account at <http://www.gofundme.com/cy93zg> to help fund his medical expenses.

Wesley Speed



After MSA, Wesley attended USM where he met the love of his life, JT, and has been on countless adventures ever since. He currently lives in Los Angeles where he is an aspiring actor and is in the process of writing his first novel with assistance from MSA alumna, Hollie Hinton, 2006. When he is not pursuing acting or working on his novel, he is playing with his dogs, Burrito and Mac, and his cat Lancelot. He is currently in school finishing up his bachelors in English literature and looks forward to what the future holds.

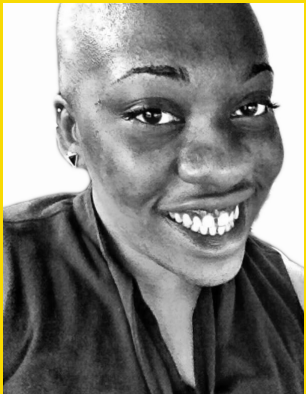
Sam Damare'



After graduating MSA in 2008, Sam continued his theater and dance education at the University of Mississippi. While at Ole Miss, Sam earned a Lincoln Center nomination for his role as William Barfee in the "25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee." While performing in other collegiate performances, Sam was also an active member of the professional dance company, Hinge. After graduating in 2012 with a BFA in musical theatre, Sam spent a year in New York City, to continue his arts education at various dance schools and cabarets, and performed on stages across the country. Recently, Sam accepted a position as Associate Artistic Director of Thingamajig Theater Company in Pagosa Springs, Colorado. He

will be with Thingamajig until September of 2015, performing and creating with an insightful and creative team.

Brittany Womack



Brittany was thrilled to become a part of Mississippi School of the Arts first-ever Literary Arts discipline, which they later called "The First Chapter." In September 2013, Brittany was diagnosed with systemic lupus erythematosus, an autoimmune disease in which the body's immune system mistakenly attacks healthy tissue. In January 2014, she began chemotherapy in an attempt to put the lupus in remission but later stopped after her first stage ended due to lack of help from her health insurance. As of now, she attends the University of Southern Mississippi part-time in order to focus mainly on her health, and she is currently set to graduate in May 2015 with a Bachelors of Arts degree in English with an

emphasis in creative writing. As graduation approaches, she is excited to start the process of writing a personal memoir about living with lupus and acknowledging the fight for finding a cure. She is grateful to MSA for the chance to relive situations in her life through writing and for the opportunity to share her talents with other students who shared the same aspirations and supported her, which gave her the ability to be who she is today. "I had the pleasure of being amongst those who have supported my journey. They have encouraged me, prayed for me, and let me know that I am not alone in my fight."

*Want to be featured in the Highlights section of our next edition of The Phoenix Quarterly?
Please email Lauren Leslie at msartsalumni@gmail.com with the subject line: Highlights.*

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

LORRIN WEBB

Interview by Lauren Leslie



After graduating as a student of the visual arts discipline at Mississippi School of the Arts (MSA) in 2006, Lorrin Webb became a massage therapist and Reiki practitioner. She holds a bachelor's degree in graphic design from Mississippi State University (MSU) and has been featured in *HOW Magazine*. Lorrin is the Creative Connections Officer at Mississippi Modern Productions and also serves as chair of Mississippi Mural Collective, an organization she created which has helped bring muralists such as Michael Roy (Opie) to Mississippi. Lorrin lives in her Volkswagen camper van, traveling to various places, but currently calls Starkville, MS home.

As visual artists there's always some sort of constant obsession that consciously or subconsciously influences our work and becomes a reflection of self. How does your work/designs reflect who you are?

Nowadays it is increasingly difficult to be original as an artist, and drawing from nature is the best way for me to never run out of material to draw from. I am most at peace and alive in the belly of the forest, so this has always been my primary source of inspiration artistically.

What/who are some of your influences?

I am influenced by a number of different folks, in different ways, but as I said before, nature is the greatest inspiration to me. I am totally in love with Active Culture Family out of California, and plan to organize a similar artist collective here in Mississippi.

Not only are you an artist, but you're also an entrepreneur with your own small business called Wanderite. How long have you been operating Wanderite?

I began Wanderite in 2013, during my thesis semester in graphic

design at MSU. Starting Wanderite was my way of getting my own work out of my head and into my professional portfolio. I always knew I would do my own thing as an artist, so it was just a great time for me to start.

I think it's empowering for others to see that they too can be successful and happy just by being themselves and taking a little initiative. What gave you the confidence or the idea to start your own business?

I have definitely always been an entrepreneur at heart. I love the hustle, and I love being able to do exactly what I want and love to do. I made the decision to make Wanderite eco-friendly and sweatshop-free because I wanted to create (wearable) art that is responsibly made and completely guilt-free. I've done so much research on modern day manufacturing and it is highly unethical. I absolutely did not want to feed that market...

When most people think of a businessperson and an artist, they think of two very different people. How do you manage being both an artist and entrepreneur?

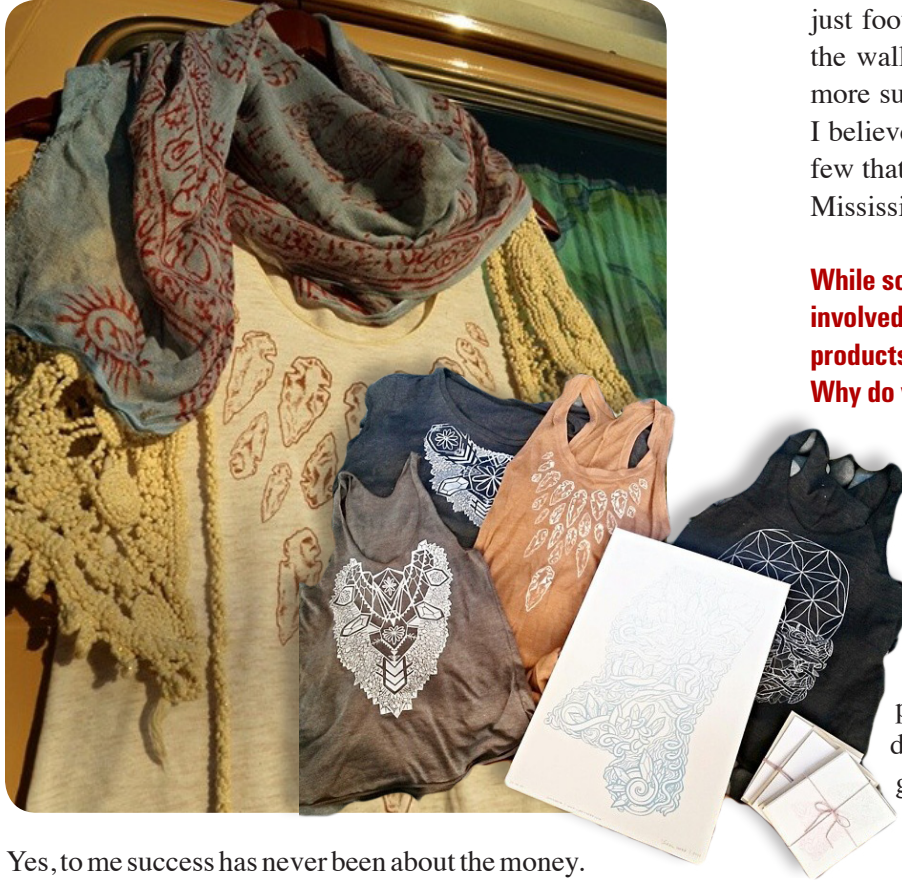
It is an interesting and difficult balance to strike between being an artist and an entrepreneur. It would take too long to go into all of the challenges it brings...A lot of the administrative busy work of constant contact with people, ordering supplies, taxes and all

that jazz is rather unexciting. I think that aspect of owning your own business, as an artist, is where a lot of folks could get burned out. It is definitely a lot of work and a struggle to stay on top of everything at times, but for the most part I have

“YOUR NETWORK IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN ANY AMOUNT OF EDUCATION OR MONEY YOU MAY HAVE AS AN ARTIST, BECAUSE WE RELY ON OTHERS TO APPRECIATE AND SUPPORT OUR WORK.”

to pinch myself because I am doing exactly what I want to be doing and it is just surreal. It is almost comical to me how much fun it is to vend, and how wonderful it is to talk with people about my work.

I think one reason why your brand Wanderite is so successful is because it isn't about the products; instead, it's about what inspires the products and the art. To put it simply, your brand is a reflection of you, which makes me interested in how you would define success?



Yes, to me success has never been about the money. Success to me is defined by the quality of my life and the wonderful people I share it with. I feel successful in that I have chosen to use eco-conscious and ethically manufactured materials in the creation of my artwork. I decided to start small and grow slowly if I have to. I just could not compromise there, and that is a huge success to me.

Aside from Wanderite, part of your success has been in organizing a mural campaign for Starkville's Cotton District, and you are even bringing in another MSA alumni, correct?

Yes, there has been a lot of excitement and we've garnered a lot of support so far. I just knew I'd be in Starkville, MS for another year after graduating, so I just started digging to figure out how to make a bunch of high caliber murals happen in town. It has been way easier to do than I thought, thankfully. I literally just walked into city hall and asked the city planner.

I had recently been nominated for the position of Chair of Art in Public Places, a branch of the Starkville Area Arts Council. That position made it easier for me to explain to folks what I was trying to do, gave me more legitimacy if you will. I began working directly with business owners, namely the Camp family with Cotton District apartments.

What is the objective behind this project?

The objective is simply to get people looking at more art, to promote creativity, to proclaim to this college town (and Mississippi as a whole) that there's more to this place than just football, and most importantly to give Mississippi artists the wall space to create something amazing. Mississippi has more super-talented artists than anywhere else I've been, and I believe it should be shared with the community, not just the few that go to a gallery on occasion. I would love to see all of Mississippi as having top-notch open-air galleries eventually.

While some artists are reclusive and off the radar, you seem very involved in your community even when it's not about selling your products, which I think contributes to a good part of your success. Why do you think community is so important to being an artist?

I can't stress enough how important it is to get involved in your community as an artist. Your network is more important than any amount of education or money you may have as an artist, because we rely on others to appreciate and support our work. I have come to see Mississippi as a blank canvas, and we are the generation that is poised and ready to remake this place over in our own creative image. If you want to do something like paint a mural or create a sculpture garden in a vacant lot, find out who you may need to talk to and what permission you need and just go for it! It is important to be honest about what you can accomplish, and to do what you say you are going to do. If you can do that and find the right people to support you, some amazing things can be accomplished.

MSA isn't just a school for high school students; it's an amazing experience for young individuals pursuing the arts. How has attending MSA played a role in your success today?

There are so many ways that MSA changed my life, I could write a book about it. We acquired a college-level art education in high school, and for Mississippi that is a beautiful thing. I needed it so much at that time in my life because I have always done life differently than most folks, and MSA gave me the opportunity to fully be myself and express myself in all my weird hippie rainbow glory. My life would be completely different than it is now, and I am incredibly grateful for everyone that was a part of my experience there.

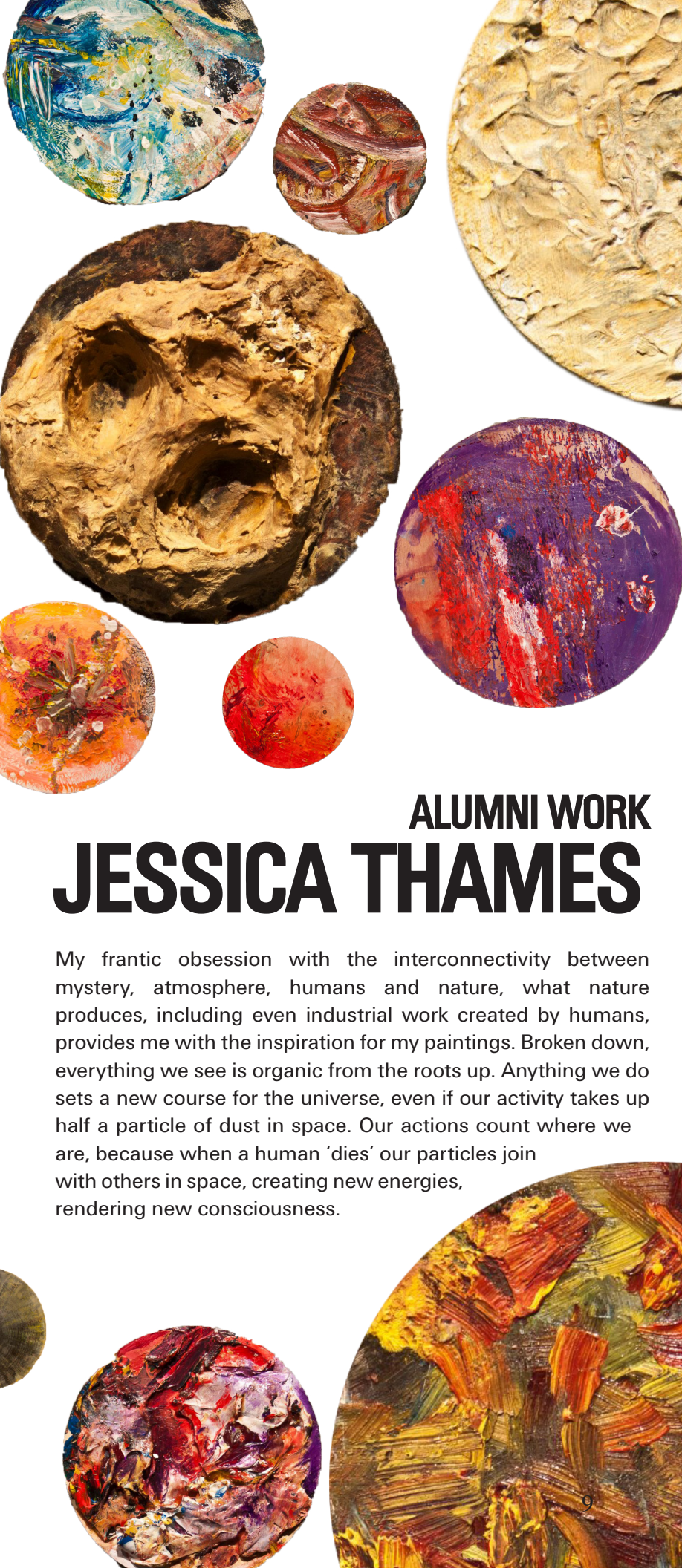
ALUMNI WORK JARREN KING

Buy a Solar Eclipse

Meteors and summer nights,
Let it radiate with fireflies.
Winter's grace with fall's intent,
I'm flooded with malcontent.
It's pulsing louder every step,
He's bleeding with every bead of sweat.
It makes them hypnotize,
Let them brood and contrive.
Engineers on the wall,
There's a ripple in the waterfall.
She's screaming out to the sea,
In search of something that's not me.
Someone could breathe aloud,
And make the world hit the ground.

Hooks and a gentle breeze,
It makes everything seem at ease.
I'll hold my hand high,
To see if it can reach the sky.
Cotton candy and bittersweet,
A dirty secret you cannot keep.
Meant to write down in books,
Signatures and back alley crooks.
Men don't seem to realize,
Everything they want to despise.
It's in the mirror in front of them,
Watch them sink or watch them swim.
Northern lights and southern charm,
I'll give you cause to alarm.

Head over hills or feet down under,
Listen to the rumbling thunder.
Take a second glance back at home,
Then on this dusty road do you roam.
Cheers and jeers of my friends,
Wash away their deadly sins.
It'll rape another nation,
Mimic another seven day creation.
High hopes and higher minds,
They would leave everything behind.
Technology and misery,
Both swirled together along with me.
Come along for the ride,
You wish back then I would have died.



ALUMNI WORK JESSICA THAMES

My frantic obsession with the interconnectivity between mystery, atmosphere, humans and nature, what nature produces, including even industrial work created by humans, provides me with the inspiration for my paintings. Broken down, everything we see is organic from the roots up. Anything we do sets a new course for the universe, even if our activity takes up half a particle of dust in space. Our actions count where we are, because when a human 'dies' our particles join with others in space, creating new energies, rendering new consciousness.

GET READY FOR THE FIRST EVER MSA

10 YEAR REUNION

May 15th & 16th

Honoring the classes of 2005 & 2006

Updates coming soon

SUPPORT MSA RENOVATIONS AND

BUY A COMMEMORATIVE BRICK

By purchasing an engraved brick you are given the means by which to become a lasting part of the Mississippi School of the Arts. Each newly engraved brick will be placed in the walkway of the Lampton Auditorium at MSA. You will also be contributing to further improvements to the campus and facilities here at MSA. Please email msartsalumni@gmail.com with the subject line "Brick" if you are interested in receiving a copy of the form to fill out upon purchase.

- 8x8 granite custom paver is \$500.
- 8X8 Brick is \$250
- 4X8 Brick is \$100

If you want to view the brochure please visit
<http://imgur.com/a/buG4C>





MSAAA

MISSISSIPPI SCHOOL OF THE ARTS ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

**We are proud to have such success
with the first edition of the alumni newsletter!
Without your input and contributions,
it wouldn't have been possible.
The Phoenix Quarterly is made by the alumni
for the alumni, so if you have any art work,
written content, or suggestions
please reach out to our newsletter committee
by emailing us at msartsalumni@gmail.com.**

Thanks for reading and be sure to share!

