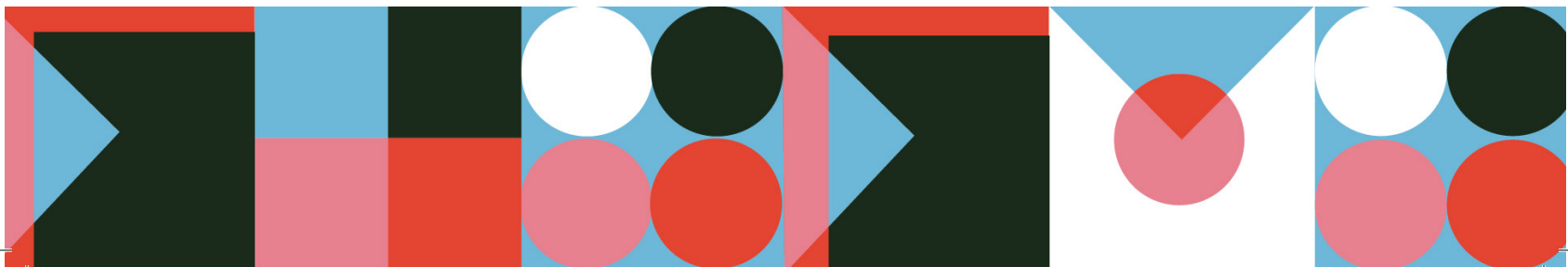


MISSISSIPPI
ARTS COMMISSION

State Arts Conference

October 15-16, 2025

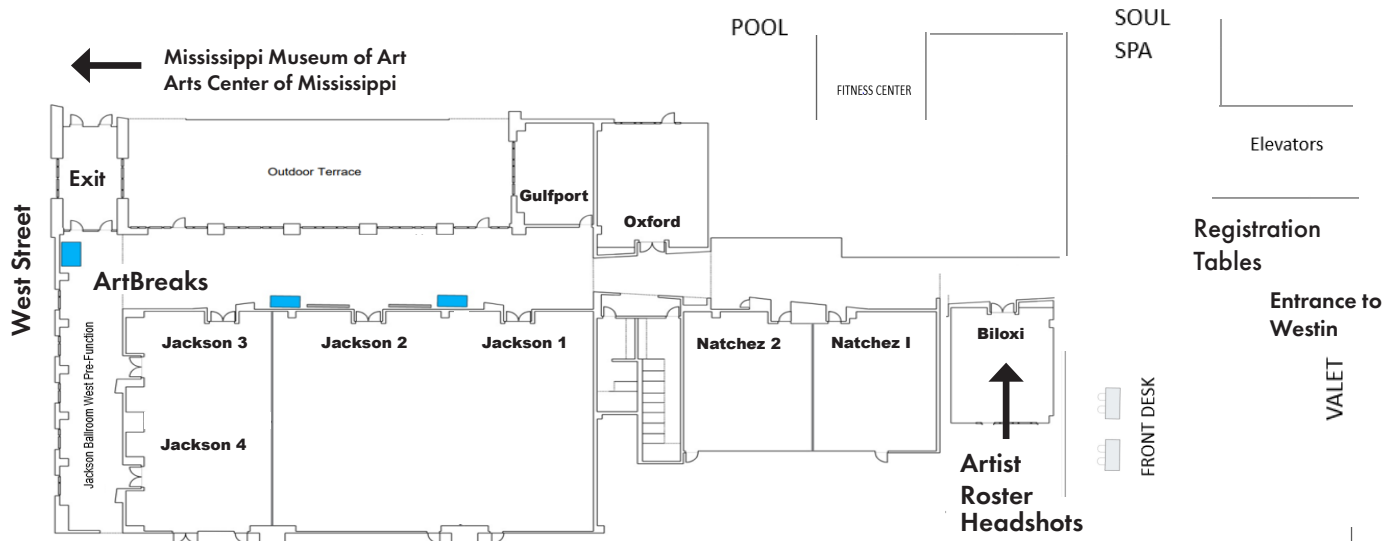
PRESENTED BY **THE WESTIN**
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Thank You To Our Partners



THE WESTIN JACKSON MEETING ROOM AND LOBBY FLOOR PLAN



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State Arts Conference

PRESENTED BY **THE WESTIN**
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Estelle
Southern Table

WELCOME

Office of the Mayor
John Horhn, Mayor



219 South President Street
Post Office Box 17
Jackson, Mississippi 39205-0017
Telephone: 601-960-1084
Facsimile: 601-960-2193

October 15, 2025

Dear Artists, Creative Professionals, and Lovers of the Arts:

On behalf of the City of Jackson, it is my distinct honor and pleasure to welcome you to the 2025 Mississippi State Arts Conference. We are thrilled to host this vibrant gathering of creative minds in the heart of our culturally rich city.

Jackson is proud to be a city where history, expression, and innovation flourish side by side. This year's conference offers a unique opportunity for artists, performers, educators, and advocates from every corner of Mississippi to connect, learn, and be inspired. As you engage in workshops and explore new technologies, I encourage you to let the spirit of creativity guide your experience.

Our city is deeply committed to supporting the arts as a cornerstone of community, education, and economic development. We are excited to welcome the distinguished presenters leading insightful sessions, from creative youth engagement and innovative funding pathways, to the integration of technology and the arts, storytelling in media, and nurturing inclusive, accessible spaces for all. Jackson's own vibrant arts community is rooted in the diversity of people and traditions that make our city special, and I hope you will enjoy not just the conference, but the music, food, and history that surround you.

I want to extend my sincere appreciation to the Mississippi Arts Commission and its partners for bringing this important event to our city, and to all of you for sharing your gifts and passions with our community.

Thank you for being here. On behalf of all Jacksonians, welcome, and enjoy the 2025 Mississippi State Arts Conference!

Sincerely,



John A. Horhn, Mayor
City of Jackson, Mississippi

State Arts Conference



David Lewis
Mississippi Arts
Commission
Executive Director

Welcome to the 2025 State Arts Conference in Jackson, MS! We are pleased to return once again to The Westin Jackson for another wonderful year of networking, inspiration, and professional development. You'll see a few themes throughout our conference that were developed alongside MAC's companion programs and grant offerings. We are excited to continue our partnership with the America250 Mississippi Commission to celebrate America's Semiquincentennial! We are also diving in with our first year offering the Public Art in Community Grant. This year, we are also developing a health and arts initiative called Across the Table. We hope you will explore the sessions related to these themes, as well as our other topics, this year.

A heartfelt thank you to our partners, panelists, presenters, commissioners, and staff for making this year's conference so compelling. Thank YOU for being here and contributing to our creative environment.

We hope you will join us in Jackson again in a few weeks for the National Folk Festival in downtown Jackson from November 7-9!

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 15

9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Free Pre-Conference for Teaching Artists - Natchez 1

Performance to Purpose: From Showing Off to Showing Up for Students

Amanda Koonlaba

Visual Artist, Mississippi Whole Schools, Teaching Artist Coordinator

Erin Mulligan

Mississippi Whole Schools, Professional Development Coordinator



Explore how teaching artists move beyond performing for an audience to creating meaningful, standards-aligned learning experiences that truly impact students. This interactive session invites reflection, sharing, and connection to build a community focused on authentic arts integration and student-centered teaching.

This free pre-conference workshop is for those interested in becoming Teaching Artists or working in the general classroom. It is ideal for both emerging and established teaching artists who want to enhance their professional practice, forge strong partnerships with schools, and explore new opportunities for growth. This workshop is limited to 40 participants and free to those who register in advance.

1:00 p.m.

Registration

2:00 p.m.

OPENING SESSION: Sister Cities International

Jackson 1 & 2

Ricki Garret, President & CEO of Sister Cities International



Ricki Garret is the President and CEO of Sister Cities International, a nonpartisan 501(c)(3) nonprofit that serves as the national membership organization for individual sister cities, counties, and states across the United States. This network of tens of thousands of citizen diplomats and volunteers in over 400 member communities has over 1,800 partnerships in more than 140 countries. Garret will talk about the partnerships Sister Cities International has around the world and the impact of their educational and cultural exchanges. She will also touch on economic development projects that have developed as a result of these partnerships that support the arts.

State Arts Conference

ArtBreak | Marta Szlubowska

3:00 – 3:15 p.m.

Praised for her “warm lyricism and flawless technique” by *Le soir* (Belgium) and for her “gripping performance of music by Grazyna Bacewicz” by *The Washington Post*, Polish-American violinist Marta Szlubowska is a sought-after soloist, chamber musician, teacher, and concertmaster. Her concerts have taken her to over 15 countries throughout Europe and the Americas. She is the former Concertmaster and Soloist of the Mississippi Symphony Orchestra in Jackson, MS (2005-2022). She is also a recipient of the prestigious Artist Fellowship and Project Grants from the Mississippi Arts Commission, the state’s arts agency. Marta loves to share her passion for music with all audiences and believes that music and art not only teach us many skills, but also enrich and change our lives for the better.



3:15 p.m. - Networking Break Outs - The Westin Jackson

Meet us in Jackson 1 & 2 at 3:15 PM to find out which group you’ll want to connect with. This year we will break out into groups to discuss topics such as advocacy, arts integration, public art, health and art, and America250. These sessions will take place at The Westin Jackson.

5:00-6:30 p.m.

“City with Soul” Welcome Reception

The Arts Center of Mississippi

Join us for a welcome reception hosted by Visit Jackson at the Arts Center of Mississippi. We will be joined by leadership from the City of Jackson, who will share valuable insights about the arts and culture scene within the city. We hope you will come to network and enjoy an evening filled with creative discussions.

7:30 p.m. Screening of MPB’s Medgar Evers Documentary “Everlasting” - Jackson 1 & 2

EVERLASTING: Life and Legacy of Medgar Evers - An MPB Original Production honoring the life, work, and impact of one of Mississippi’s most courageous voices. This powerful two-hour documentary features interviews with Evers’ family, colleagues, and historians. Everlasting offers a moving, personal look at his legacy in the fight for civil rights.

State Arts Conference

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 16

8:30 a.m.

Registration

9:00 - 9:15 a.m.

Welcome

David Lewis, Executive Director, Mississippi Arts Commission



Taiwo Gaynor

Taiwo Gaynor, Chief Content Officer
Mississippi Public Broadcasting (MPB)

KEYNOTE | 9:15 – 10:00 a.m.
Jackson 1 & 2

Taiwo Gaynor is Chief Content Officer at Mississippi Public Broadcasting (MPB), where he directs communications, operations, and content strategy across television, radio, news, and digital platforms. With more than 20 years of experience in media and production, his work has earned numerous regional and national awards, including Southeast Emmy, Edward R. Murrow, NETA, and Telly Awards. Gaynor is committed to creative storytelling that highlights Mississippi's heritage, uplifts unsung voices, and connects communities through media.

10:00 - 10:15 a.m.

Announcements

ArtBreak 1 | DJ Java

10:15 – 10:30 a.m.

Java Chatman, better known as DJ Java, is a seasoned radio host and DJ with nearly two decades of experience in the industry. His work has been featured on Mississippi Public Broadcasting and other radio stations, where he blends music, culture, and conversation to engage diverse audiences. Recognized for his energetic presence and smooth delivery, Java has built a reputation as both a trusted voice on the air and a crowd-moving DJ at live events. Whether behind the mic or the turntables, he connects people through rhythm, storytelling, and a deep passion for sound.



MISSISSIPPI
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State Arts Conference
October 15-16, 2025

PRESENTED BY **THE WESTIN**
JACKSON

State Arts Conference

10:30 – 11:45 a.m.
Break Out 1



America250 Grants- Jackson 1 & 2

Presenters:

Dr. Stuart Rockoff, *Executive Director, the Mississippi Humanities Council*

David Lewis, *Executive Director, Mississippi Arts Commission*

As Mississippi prepares to mark the 250th anniversary of the United States in 2026, the America250 Mississippi Grants Program invites communities across the state to take part in this historic commemoration. Established by the Mississippi250 Commemoration Commission, this program aims to empower local organizations to honor their unique histories, foster a deeper understanding of Mississippi's vital role in the American story, and inspire meaningful engagement with our shared heritage. Come hear how these grants can help your community create lasting legacies that will help future generations of Mississippians appreciate and celebrate the rich and diverse tapestry of our state's past.



A Prescription for Art? Yes Please! - Jackson 3 & 4

Presenter: Adrienne Hundley, *Head of Community Strategy, Art Pharmacy*

Join us for a conversation on the intersection of Art & Health. Adrienne Hundley, Head of Community Strategy for Art Pharmacy, will lead the discussion and present on the groundbreaking work of social prescribing - a practice connecting people to arts and culture activities to support mental and physical health. Based in Atlanta, Georgia, Art Pharmacy currently works in Arizona, California, Massachusetts, New York, and North Carolina with the goal of expanding to all 50 states. Together, we will frame the work of the Mississippi arts community through the lens of arts & health and link it to the wider national conversation.



Finding Creative Inspiration In Nature - Natchez 1

Presenters:

Robert Poore, *Landscape Architect, Native Habitats*

Robin Whitfield, *Visual Artist & Executive Director, Friends of Chakchiuma Swamp*

This session brings together two creative voices—landscape architect & ecological designer Robert Poore, and watercolor painter & naturalist Robin Whitfield. United by their belief, "everything is connected", they explore how time in nature informs their practice and vision. Through story and reflection, they will invite participants to see how the patterns and processes of wild places inspire both art and design—revealing an exquisite order.



Igniting the Future - Natchez 2

Presenters:

Chelsea Young, *Executive Director, Musical Expressions Experience*

Heather Lacoste, *Education Director, The MAX*

Rebekah Pleasant-Patterson, *Executive Director, Griot Arts Inc.*

Moderator: Stephen Brown, *Owner & Founder, Briarwood Arts Center*



Is your organization looking for innovative ways to engage young people? Join us for a panel discussion with arts professionals who are intentional and devoted to meeting the ever-evolving needs of tomorrow's artists, audiences, and art patrons. Bring your burning questions and biggest challenges!



A Poetry Reading and Workshop - Oxford

Presenter: Ann Fisher-Wirth, *Mississippi's Poet Laureate*

Join Mississippi's Poet Laureate, Ann Fisher-Wirth, for a workshop and reading in the Art Garden at the Mississippi Museum of Art. Participants are invited to reflect on and write about their experience with some aspect of place, and their interrelationship with the other-than-human world. Ann Fisher-Wirth will give a short reading and then offer a writing prompt that will allow participants to write in the form of prose poetry or a brief memoir. There will be time for discussion at the end of the session.

State Arts Conference



11:45 a.m - 1:15 pm - Lunch on your own around town

ArtBreak 2 | Delta Krauts

1:00 – 1:15 p.m.

Delta Krauts is a seven member traditional professional German Band. Members are longtime, well-known Mississippi professional musicians. The group first came together in October 2011 to meet the German music needs of a local Eurofest organizer. Delta Krauts presents traditional German Band music for all of its performances and has a large repertoire of authentic German/Austrian music, including for Alphorn. Members of Delta Krauts are Bob Davidson (Trumpet), Anne Berthold (Trumpet, Flugelhorn, Alphorn), David Battaglia (Saxophone), Jeff Callaway (Trombone), Jason Harrell (Tuba), Sherwood "Bud" Berthold (Drums), and Tony Santangelo (Accordion).



1:15 – 2:30 p.m.
Break Out 2



Behind the Build: How Three BFA Projects Took Shape - Jackson 1 & 2

Carlton Turner, Co-Director, Mississippi Center for Cultural Production

Emily Havens, Executive Director, GRAMMY Museum Mississippi

Sherri Lipscomb, Center Stage Biloxi, Board of Directors, Secretary

Moderator: Lauren Rhoades, Deputy Director, Mississippi Arts Commission

What is it like to complete a Building Fund for the Arts (BFA) grant project? This panel features three grantees discussing their experiences with the process. Projects discussed will range from full renovations to ADA improvements and permanent exhibits. Topics will range from planning and fundraising to partnerships and dealing with challenges. If you're considering applying for a BFA grant, this panel is an excellent opportunity to gather ideas and ask questions.



Mississippi Residencies - Jackson 3 & 4

Presenters:

Mary Wise Conaway, Greenfield Farm Writers Residency at the University of Mississippi

Andrew Rendon, The Del Rendon Foundation

Joe MacGown, Director of the MacGown Art Retreat and Studio (MARS)

Keena Graham, Superintendent, Medgar and Myrlie Evers Home National Monument

Moderator: Saint Allen Austin, Project Director, Sipp Culture

Are you an artist who dreams of having the much-needed time and support you need to create? Look no further than your home state. Representatives from residency programs throughout Mississippi will share the benefits of their programs and how to navigate the application process.



Creating Unique Spaces with Your Digital Art - Natchez 1

Presenter: Wade Acuff, Digital Arts

In today's creative landscape, digital art is more than just pixels on a screen. It is a dynamic way to connect with audiences, build communities, and expand artistic practice beyond traditional boundaries. This session explores how artists can break into the world of digital art by using interactive online platforms and digital tools for creation and engagement. Participants will gain insights into online platforms, strategies for showcasing work digitally, and methods for fostering authentic interaction with viewers in collaborative online spaces. Whether you're new to digital art or looking to strengthen your online presence, this session offers practical approaches to reaching wider audiences and deepening creative connections in the digital age.

State Arts Conference

1:15 – 2:30 p.m.

Break Out 2

Continued



Creating Outdoor Events with Accessibility in Mind - Natchez 2

Presenters:

Adrianna Smith, POWER Program Coordinator LIFE of Mississippi

Herbert Humphrey, ADA Coordinator, City of Jackson

Moderator: Victoria Meek, Arts Industry Director, Accessibility Coordinator

Whether an outdoor event lasts a few hours or a few days, most organizers want the same thing: for people to come, enjoy themselves, and come back, ideally, with more people! Considering visitors with disabilities is both a means to achieve this and a necessity for public events such as concerts, markets, festivals, and the like. This panel consists of leaders working to expand access for Mississippians with disabilities. Through a guided conversation, they'll share insights on creating a positive experience for all visitors, from arrival and moving through the space to fully participating in the event.



Budget Workshop - Oxford

Presenters:

Dawn Buck, New Stage Theatre

Nicole Smith, Special Events, Mississippi Museum of Natural Science

Designed to support MAC grant applicants, this session will provide essential tips and tricks for crafting strong, accurate budgets that align with MAC budget form requirements. Learn how to effectively document expenses, clarify matching funds, and avoid common pitfalls in the grant budget process. Whether you're applying for general operating support or a specific arts project, this workshop will help ensure your budget is accurate, which will strengthen your application. Ideal for new and returning grantees, the session includes practical tools and examples as well as strategies for tackling budgets for grants and foundations outside of MAC.

ArtBreak 3 | Keith Johnson

2:30 – 2:45 p.m.

Keith is an accomplished guitarist, vocalist, harmonica player, and songwriter. He has amassed a songwriting catalog, with multiple songs released on his debut album, "Come to Mississippi." Keith is in the process of carrying on and upholding a family legacy in the entertainment industry as he is the great-nephew of blues icon Muddy Waters. He is also the grandson of the late Texcellar Fields, a gospel singer and radio host. He was born in Glen Allen, Mississippi, a small town in the heartland of the Mississippi Delta. Keith graduated from Delta State University in Cleveland, Mississippi, where he earned a Bachelor of Science in Audio Engineering and a Master of Business Administration in Human Resource Management.



State Arts Conference

2:45 – 4:00 p.m.
Break Out 3

Beyond the Mural - Jackson 1

Presenters:

Julian Rankin, *Walter Anderson Museum of Art / Plowshare Creative*

Earl Dismuke, *Artist / Plowshare Creative*



Public artworks give dimension to our world. They can be landmarks, guideposts, gathering places, and teaching tools. Creating them can also be complicated, especially with large-scale sculptures that may contain thousands of pounds of steel, glass, and concrete. Through a series of real-world case studies, this session charts the public art life cycle through fundraising and community-engaged design to engineering, fabrication, and installation. Learn how to assemble a team of creators and fabricators and how to navigate complexities of public funding, public input, and industrial-grade logistics. Visualize how the stories in your own communities can be amplified through installations that support tourism, economic development, and mission-based impact.



Building Sustainable and Ethical AI Policies for the Arts - Jackson 3 & 4

Presenter: Kollin Napier, *Director, Mississippi Artificial Intelligence Network (MAIN)*

AI is showing up everywhere, including the arts, and it's bringing both exciting possibilities and big questions. In this session, led by the Mississippi Artificial Intelligence Network (MAIN), we'll talk about how arts organizations can approach AI in a way that's creative, sustainable, and ethical. We'll cover how AI can help spark new ideas, make work easier, and connect with audiences in fresh ways, while also making sure issues like bias, transparency, and data use are handled responsibly. You'll walk away with ideas and a simple framework for shaping AI policies that fit your mission, your values, and the community you serve.



From Vision to Funding: Turning Bold Ideas into Funded Projects - Natchez 2

Presenter:

Dr. Tonja Murphy, *Community Engagement Director, Mississippi Book Festival*

Strong grant applications require more than passion; they demand a clearly communicated pathway to achieving goals. This session is designed for artists, program managers, and nonprofit leaders who are seeking funding to start, sustain, or expand their projects. Participants will learn how to translate program ideas into compelling narratives, demonstrate impact, and align proposals with funder priorities. By the end of the session, you will have practical strategies and insights to strengthen your grant applications and increase your chances of securing support.



All Day Thursday | Artist Roster Headshots with Jesse Johnson - Biloxi

Advanced sign up required!

The Mississippi Arts Commission has engaged a professional photographer to provide artists with either new headshots or photos of up to three completed works for their portfolio. Each artist participating reserved a 15-minute timeslot in the weeks leading up to the conference. This photo session is free for participants, but registration for this session is required in advance.



Scan this QR Code for a direct link to State Arts Conference Program updates, around town information, and more!

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Westin's Wireless Network:

Westin-Meetings

PW: gowestin123

State Arts Conference

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Ocean Springs

Julie Shepherd
McComb

Jamie Lincoln Ward
Madison

Schedule at a Glance

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 15

- 9:00 a.m. - Noon **Free Pre-Conference - Performance to Purpose: From Showing Off to Showing Up for Students**
Natchez 1
- 1:00 p.m. **Registration**
- 2:00 p.m. **Sister Cities International**
Jackson 1 & 2
- 3:00 - 3:15 p.m. **ArtBreak**
Marta Szlubowska
- 3:15 p.m. **Networking Break Outs**
The Westin Jackson
- 5:00 - 6:30 p.m. **"City with Soul" Welcome Reception**
Arts Center of Mississippi
- 7:30 p.m. **Screening of MPB's Medgar Evers Documentary "Everlasting"**
Jackson 1 & 2

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 16

- 8:30 a.m. **Registration**
- 9:00 - 9:15 a.m. **Welcome - David Lewis**
- 9:15 - 10:00 a.m. **Keynote - Taiwo Gaynor**
Jackson 1 & 2
- 10:00 - 10:15 a.m. **Announcements - David Lewis**
- 10:15 - 10:30 a.m. **ArtBreak 1**
DJ Java
- 10:30 - 11:45 a.m. **Break Out 1**
 - America250 Grants
Jackson 1 & 2
 - Art Prescriptions
Jackson 3 & 4
 - Finding Creative Inspiration in Nature
Natchez 1
 - Igniting the Future
Natchez 2
 - A Poetry Reading & Workshop
Oxford

- 11:45 a.m. - 1:15 p.m. **Lunch on Your Own Around Town**
- 1:00 - 1:15 p.m. **ArtBreak 2**
Delta Krauts
- 1:15 - 2:30 p.m. **Break Out 2**
 - Behind the Build: How Three BFA Projects Took Shape
Jackson 1 & 2
 - Mississippi Residencies
Jackson 3 & 4
 - Creating Unique Spaces with Your Digital Art
Natchez 1
 - Creating Outdoor Events with Accessibility in Mind
Natchez 2
 - Budget Workshop
Oxford
- 2:30 - 2:45 p.m. **ArtBreak 3**
Keith Johnson
- 2:45 - 4:00 p.m. **Break Out 3**
 - Beyond the Mural
Jackson 1
 - Building Sustainable and Ethical AI Policies for the Arts
Jackson 3 & 4
 - From Vision to Funding: Turning Bold Ideas into Funded Projects
Natchez 2

All Day Thursday Event:

Artist Roster Headshots with Jesse Johnson
Advanced sign up required!

Note: City names reflect room names - not cities for locations
All sessions are subject to change.

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