Russell County Community-Art Collaborations

This exhibition documents community art collaboration projects created by Auburn students and Russell County residents. For a Special Topics course on community-based art, developed for Auburn University, students produced project proposals, including budgets for funding and traveled to Russell County to meet residents with whom they worked. Russell County is part the Black Belt, and is mostly made up of small communities facing the challenges of rural decline, an under-financed education system, and high unemployment.

Students went into Russell County communities to explore and practice relational art-making with the goal of developing understanding of Russell County, and to work closely with the community to design and help make the artworks. The students, in collaboration with senior citizens, church groups, school children, and Hurtsboro’s business district, facilitated projects that expressed and strengthened community identity. There are 9 projects in all, including a laser light event, an outdoor ceramic mural for the Hurtsboro Library, paintings by several children’s groups, and “interview portraits” of seniors. The works and documentation of community projects were also exhibited in Hurtsboro.

Suzanne Hagood, Visiting Professor of Art

Participating students:
Katie Calhoun, Allison Cleveland, Brandon Dean, Mandi Foran, Christopher Garrison, Ashley Hollis, Greg Leuch, Katei Royster, Cody Scott, Lea Thornton, Brodie Whetsone, Raven Wilson.

Russell County Collaborators include:
Woodland Baptist Church, Phenix City, Russell County High School, Russell County Elementary School, Russell County Extension Office - 4H group, Blessed John XXIII Center, The Hurtsboro: Arts Association, Volunteer Fire Department, Business District, Community Prayer Group, Senior’s Center, and Library, and Cheryl Mann-Harding.