



NATIONAL MEDAL OF ARTS | NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK

**FOR MORE INFORMATION AND PHOTOS CONTACT:**

Kendall Lockhart, Public Relations & Communications Coordinator

[pr@jacobspillow.org](mailto:pr@jacobspillow.org)

**Jacob's Pillow Announces  
Indigenous Art and Design Collaborators  
on the Reimagined Doris Duke Theatre**

**Commissioned artist Brenda Mallory will contribute interior artwork  
to the new performance venue, scheduled to open in 2025 at Jacob's Pillow**

**Misty Cook, Kathi Arnold, and Andre StrongBearHeart Gaines Jr.  
will provide design leadership on the outdoor fire pit and garden  
as part of a holistic design for the project**

September 18, 2024 (BECKET, Mass.)—Following a months-long nationwide selection process, Jacob's Pillow is proud to announce partnerships with four Indigenous artists and designers who will lead the creation of visual art and landscape design elements for the Doris Duke Theatre—a bold and flexible new building on Jacob's Pillow's campus in the Berkshires that is currently under construction and anticipated to open in 2025.

The selection of Indigenous artists occurred through an open call with a jury that included Pamela Tatge (Executive and Artistic Director of Jacob's Pillow), Francine Houben (Creative Director and Founding Partner at lead architect Mecanoo), Stockbridge-Munsee musician/storyteller Shawn L. Stevens, and artist and creative consultant Jeffrey Gibson.

Cherokee Nation artist Brenda Mallory will contribute a commissioned work of visual art that brings a contemporary Indigenous voice to the entrance lobby, to be displayed publicly during the theater's opening years. Stockbridge-Munsee members Misty Cook and Kathi Arnold will lead the development of a garden along the east side of the building. Andre StrongBearHeart Gaines Jr., Creative Director of the Nipmuc-led organization No Loose Braids, will lead the

development of an exterior fire pit area for gatherings and celebrations, connected to the garden.

Engagement with Indigenous people is an important part of Jacob's Pillow's efforts to decolonize the organization, integrate Indigenous perspectives, and connect with the multiple histories of the land to which Jacob's Pillow and its annual summer Dance Festival has drawn visitors from around the world for the last 92 seasons. Collaboration with Indigenous artists, and incorporating traditional cultural practices into the site design, has provided an opportunity to emphasize Indigenous ways of engaging with the immediate environment. Guided by lead architect Mecanoo and U.S.-based local architects and landscape architect, Marvel, in collaboration with technical theater consultant Charcoalblue and renowned artist, MacArthur Fellow Jeffrey Gibson, the design of the new Doris Duke Theatre embraces Jacob's Pillow's diverse history to create an accessible and inclusive space for dance, dialogue, collaboration, and education. The original Doris Duke Theatre was destroyed by fire in November of 2020.

"Jacob's Pillow exists on the ancestral homelands of the Mohican people, who were forced from here and who currently reside in Wisconsin, where they are known as the Stockbridge-Munsee community," said Tatge. "It is important to recognize and collaborate with those on whose land we dance, land which gives us our quintessential identity. "

Tatge explained that the vision of these commissions is "to weave Indigenous culture into the fabric of the Doris Duke Theatre through artwork and a holistic collaboration on landscape design, providing an opportunity for us to strengthen relationships with Indigenous artists and continue our standing relationships with Indigenous nations in our region and across Turtle Island. Our goal is to make Jacob's Pillow a welcoming home to the peoples of this region, past and present."

Jeffrey Gibson, a member of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians and of Cherokee descent, is serving as a consultant on the building's relationship to the site and Indigenous design values. Gibson has participated in regular design sessions and has helped steward stakeholder engagement with Indigenous community members to seek feedback on the evolving design.

"The current design takes into account important Indigenous values and supports multiple kinds of performances that can engage the inside and the outside of the building in traditional and more intimate performances," Gibson said in a 2023 interview. "Certain Indigenous materials, patterns, and processes will be reflected in the interior and exterior ... It's been great working with Jacob's Pillow and Mecanoo to develop the new Doris Duke Theatre."

### **Brenda Mallory Hears the Hum of History in Wax**

Indigenous artist Brenda Mallory, a citizen of the Cherokee Nation who resides in Portland, Oregon, has been commissioned to create a visual art installation that will be a focal point in the lobby of the Doris Duke Theatre. Mallory's work addresses ideas of disruption, repair, and interconnections of systems within nature and humanity. She accomplishes this through the use of texture, abstraction, and materials such as beeswax and reclaimed cloth scraps to emphasize reuse and sustainability.

The installation to be created will center on the theme of seven generations, as seven is a symbolic number in Cherokee cosmology. The piece will incorporate waxed cloth in seven shades of red. The beeswax used for her work will be sourced from Massachusetts, to honor the Stockbridge-Munsee community.

"This commission means a lot to me, as the story of tribes of this area who were removed from their homelands is also the story of the Cherokee," said Mallory, during a site visit at Jacob's Pillow in July. "My granny was a land allottee in Oklahoma, whose relatives were moved from the southeastern United States. Acknowledging these common histories is important to me, and this project also feels meaningful for Jacob's Pillow. I see that this work is really coming from the heart."

### **Misty Cook and Kathi Arnold Feel Tradition Within New Growth**

The Stockbridge-Munsee Band of the Mohican Nation, who reside in Wisconsin, are the Indigenous group native to the land on which Jacob's Pillow is founded. As Stockbridge-Munsee members, Misty Cook and Kathi Arnold have been commissioned to collaborate on a garden that will complement the firepit and help frame the Doris Duke Theatre. Cook and Arnold's garden concept draws from powerful Indigenous inspirations: the powwow circle and other symbolism meaningful to the Stockbridge-Munsee community.

Misty Cook is the author of the book *Medicine Generations* and works with the natural medicines of the Mohican tribe. Cook is designing a gathering place at the center of the garden that will emulate a Native American powwow circle, with space for dances and ceremonies at the center as well as seating situated around the circle. This gathering place will be framed by medicinal plants such as red raspberry, blackberry, black cherry, and sumac.

"This is such an amazing place for dancers," said Cook, "so I started thinking about dancing and the Native American part of it: our homelands, the medicines, and that this will be a garden. I was thinking about integrating dancing into this garden too, because it's such a big part of Jacob's Pillow. I started drawing the garden out and creating a setting where people can gather."

Kathi Arnold is an advocate for environmental stewardship, through her work as an analytical chemist and volunteer. She will focus on designing the area surrounding the central circle, which will symbolize the many trails that the Mohican people traveled after seven forced removals from the land they inhabited. “The Stockbridge-Munsee’s journey west through a series of forced removals is not unique to our tribe, and that will be reflected in the design along with the message of hope, strength and endurance,” Arnold said.”

Arnold added that every plant in the garden will be native to western Massachusetts, and several that are identified as traditional medicines also grow around Bowler, Wisconsin. Seeds and plantings will be sourced locally, as well as from the Stockbridge-Munsee reservation, further strengthening the connection between the Stockbridge-Munsee community in Wisconsin and their homelands in the Berkshires. Medicinal plants native to the land will be planted along a series of pathways alongside the eastern side of the Doris Duke Theatre.

### **Andre StrongBearHeart Gaines Jr. Sees a Circle of Gathering**

Indigenous artist Andre StrongBearHeart Gaines Jr., a citizen of the Nipmuc tribe—who are native to what is now known as Massachusetts as well as parts of Connecticut and Rhode Island—will create a permanent fire pit, to anchor the outdoor space at the new Doris Duke Theatre. Gaines Jr. is also Creative Director of the local Nipmuc-led organization No Loose Braids, and serves as a cultural steward for his people, focusing on culture revitalization and preservation through traditional practice, experiential learning, knowledge sharing, and art.

The area of Gaines Jr.'s commissioned fire pit will connect to the garden, as well as extend into the adjacent forest land in hopes of creating an environment that feels like stepping into a homesite which can be used for gathering and teaching. The site of the finished project will emphasize the relationship between the water, fire, and medicines, teaching about reciprocity with the land.

“As a guest on these lands right now, even as an Indigenous person, it is an honor for me to come and do this work here in relation to the Stockbridge-Munsee,” he said. “This is Stockbridge-Munsee territory right here. Being able to do work together here with a garden and a fire pit is really so important, because what’s going to happen after this is put together could be huge for relationship-building.”

### **About the Reimagined Doris Duke Theatre and *Dance Unleashed***

The new Doris Duke Theatre will maintain the intimacy of the original Studio/Theatre while incorporating a digital backbone. The ability for the facility to adapt to different programmatic needs as well as future technical upgrades will be key to the theater's purpose as a makerspace and digital lab, and will ensure long-term resiliency and growth.

Indigenous design principles and values have been incorporated in all stages of planning and design for the new theater. In addition to the commissions by Indigenous artists who will contribute visual art and landscape design, the new theater is shaped by sustainable initiatives—including a green roof, energy efficient design, and rainwater collection and reuse—that are incorporated throughout the building.

The new theater will be technologically equipped to ensure that the creative appetites of artists will be served in the decades to come. This includes powerful and intuitive network-based, installed systems to enable flexible deployment of production-specific equipment. In addition to summer Festival performances, the new building is designed with a year-round community focus and ease of use for special events. Safety, comfort, and accessibility will be improved for audiences, artists, and staff.

Provided that fundraising targets are met, the new Doris Duke Theatre is anticipated to open in 2025. Jacob's Pillow has launched its most ambitious campaign to date, known as *Dance Unleashed*, to create the conditions and support structures for such a future-leaning theater and makerspace with optimal conditions for dance creation and presentation, expanded access, and the incubation of new works at the intersection of dance and technology. To learn more about this campaign, visit [jacobspillow.org/duke](https://jacobspillow.org/duke).

In addition to the landmark naming gift of \$10 million from the Doris Duke Foundation in November 2022, Jacob's Pillow has received leadership support from the Knight Foundation to support digital implementation, as well as generous commitments from Barbara and Amos Hostetter, the Barr Foundation, Sarah Arison and the Arison Arts Foundation, and the Massachusetts Cultural Facilities Fund which supported the pre-schematic design phase of the project. The campaign goal is approximately \$35 million which is inclusive of construction of the new Doris Duke Theatre and related capital improvements to the Pillow's campus, as well as the establishment of an endowment fund which will help support the aims and operations of the new theater.

### **About Jacob's Pillow**

Jacob's Pillow is a National Historic Landmark, recipient of the National Medal of Arts, and home to America's longest-running international dance festival, which celebrated its 92nd

season in Summer 2024. Jacob's Pillow acknowledges that it rests on the ancestral homelands of the Muh-he-con-ne-ok or Mohican people. We pay honor and respect to their ancestors and elders past and present as we commit to building a more inclusive and equitable space for all. In addition, we acknowledge the Nipmuc, the Wampanoag and other tribal nations who also made their homes in what is now known as Massachusetts.

Founded by Ted Shawn in 1933, each Festival includes national and international dance companies and free and ticketed performances, talks, tours, classes, exhibits, events, and community programs. The School at Jacob's Pillow, a prestigious professional dance training center, advances the careers of the upcoming generation of performers and choreographers; during the Festival, 100 international dancers evolve as artists in ballet, choreography, contemporary, musical theatre, tap, and other genres, and year round, artist faculty and accomplished alumni nurture younger dancers in a series of Jacob's Pillow 360 workshops and intensives offered in partnership with leading dance institutions worldwide. The Pillow also provides professional advancement opportunities across disciplines of arts administration, design, video, and production through seasonal internships and a year-round Administrative Fellows program. Through its community engagement programs, the Pillow serves as a partner and active citizen in its local community. The Pillow's extensive Archives, open year-round to the public and highlighted online at [danceinteractive.jacobspillow.org](http://danceinteractive.jacobspillow.org), chronicle more than a century of dance in photographs, programs, books, costumes, audiotapes, and videos.

Notable artists who have created or premiered dances at the Pillow include choreographers Antony Tudor, Agnes de Mille, Alvin Ailey, Donald McKayle, Kevin McKenzie, Twyla Tharp, Ralph Lemon, Susan Marshall, Trisha Brown, Ronald K. Brown, Wally Cardona, Andrea Miller, and Trey McIntyre; performed by artists such as Mikhail Baryshnikov, Carmen de Lavallade, Mark Morris, Dame Margot Fonteyn, Edward Villella, Rasta Thomas, and hundreds of others. On March 2, 2011, President Barack Obama honored Jacob's Pillow with a National Medal of Arts, the highest arts award given by the United States Government, making the Pillow the first dance presenting organization to receive this prestigious award. The Pillow's Executive and Artistic Director since 2016 is Pamela Tatge. For more information, visit [www.jacobspillow.org](http://www.jacobspillow.org).

**Lead support for Doris Duke Theatre is provided by the Doris Duke Foundation**



## About the Doris Duke Foundation

The mission of the Doris Duke Foundation (DDF) is to build a more creative, equitable and sustainable future by investing in artists and the performing arts, environmental conservation, medical research, child well-being and greater mutual understanding among diverse communities. DDF focuses its support to the performing arts on contemporary dance, jazz and theater artists, and the organizations that nurture, present and produce them. Visit [www.dorisduke.org](http://www.dorisduke.org) to learn more.

Additional major support for the Doris Duke Theatre provided by the Arison Arts Foundation, Barr Foundation, the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, the Massachusetts Cultural Facilities Fund, a program of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, administered through a collaborative arrangement between MassDevelopment and the Mass Cultural Council, and the Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism.

