

Felicia Cooper

Puppeteer, Educator, Community Artist

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Residencies and Selected Performances

Winterthur Museum, Winterthur DE — *Maker Creator Fellow*

Summer 2021

Using Winterthur's extensive archives, I researched, designed, fabricated and performed a toy theater show based on the work of female illustrators at the turn of the century.

ISH, University of Connecticut — *Director, Designer, Producer*

Spring 2021

Created in completion of an MFA degree in Puppetry Arts, this is a one-woman tourable show for children using object performance and shadow puppetry. It is designed to be performed in outdoor community spaces.

Redwing Blackbird Theater, Rosendale, NY — *Artist in Residence*

Summer, 2020

During an online residency in cohort with other artists, I explored movement and body as landscape in a shadow puppet and movement piece based on 15th century timepieces and the work of William Benjamin.

New Hazlett Theater, Pittsburgh, PA — *Community Supported Artist*

Fall, 2018

Supported by the Heinz Small Arts Endowment, I created a full-length children's puppet show called *Porto Domi* in collaboration with Action Housing's residents about the concept of home.

folkLAB, Pittsburgh, PA — *Inaugural Resident Artist*

Summer, 2018

Using repurposed materials, this was *The Ironweed Tales*, an evening-length performance using tabletop puppetry to illustrate the history of the Appalachian women who fought mountaintop removal in West Virginia.

Pittsburgh Center for the Arts, Pittsburgh, PA — *Resident Teaching Artist*

Fall, Spring, Summer 2018

Through the Center's Artists in Schools and Communities program, supported by the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, I taught illustration to young men convicted as adults at the Allegheny County Jail. I then taught puppetry and sculpture at a summer program with Pittsburgh Public Schools for students new to the country.

PearlArts Studio, Pittsburgh, PA — *Artist in Residence*

Summer, 2017

This was a six-week movement residency where I studied the expression of gesture and verbiage in Greek mythology, resulting in a three-person marionette show called *Hope Rises*.

Artist Statement

Deeply rooted in community, my work seeks to honor our shared imagination and curiosity through accessible object performance, movement, and puppetry. This art form invites us to come together to create the worlds we hope to inhabit. I am inspired by our collective need for understanding and joy. My work often uses found objects, cardboard, and fiddly technical assemblages to illustrate complex subjects and honor the inanimate.

Accolades

Frank Ballard Memorial Scholarship, 2020

Marks Family Endowment Grant, 2020

Heinz Endowments, 2018

Institute of Museum and Library Services Grant (MAKeshop outreach projects with the Children's Museum of Pittsburgh) 2016-2018

Project Stream Grant, Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, 2016, 2018

Pittsburgh Puppetry Guild Fiscal Sponsorship, 2018

Kebony Wood Carving Competition, International Finalist 2017

SLAM PERFORMANCES

Black Cherry Virtual Slam, May 2020

Coney Island Puppets Come Home, July 2020

UConn Puppet Slam, 2018-2021

Pittsburgh Puppet Slam, 2016-2018

Boom! Jam! Puppet Slam!, 2020

SKILLS

Directing, Community Engagement, Education and Reality Pedagogy, Producing, Fundraising, Communications Coordination, Performance, Fabrication

Children's Museum of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, PA — Artist in Residence

Summer, 2015, Summer, 2017

In 2015, I developed pedagogy and workshops surrounding puppet building processes and the six simple machines in collaboration with MAKEshop PGH. In 2017, I performed a summer series of one-woman shows based on local folk tales.

Prometheus Bound: A Puppet Tragedy, Pittsburgh, PA — Director

Fall, 2016

Supported by a grant from the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts and the Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council, this was a show with large puppets, with a focus on adult audiences with autism and special needs.

The Girl Who Swallowed the Sun, East Coast Tour — Director, Producer, Performer

Fall, 2016

Independent tour of a solo children's puppet show made entirely of repurposed materials to libraries, children's museums, independent bookstores, shelters, and art galleries in several east coast cities.

Education and Festivals

University of Connecticut, Storrs, CT — MFA

August 2018 - May 2021

In my time at UConn, I worked as a Learning Community Innovation Zone Maker Fellow as well as a Graduate Assistant at the Ballard Institute and Museum of Puppetry. I organized the first-ever Women in Making Forum, and helped facilitate a forum on Women in Puppetry. I also applied for and received emergency grant funding from the Connecticut Arts Council to continue online, accessible puppet-making workshops through the COVID-19 Pandemic, increasing our community engagement by 35% in the year 2020. Additionally, my work led to a multi-year partnership with the Collaboratorium on Student Health and Wellness, resulting in bilingual puppetry workshops on mental health strategies for young children.

Acheson Walsh Studios, New York City — apprenticeship

June 2019 - August 2019

As a fabricator, I worked extensively with various types of foam to pattern, cut, and glue large-scale puppets for the touring versions of several Eric Carle plays. I also created Baubles for the Lincoln Center Christmas show, and was privy to planning and prototype phases for other projects.

Reimagining Intimacy for the Post-Modern, University of Greenwich, London, UK — Guest Performer

December 2020

In an online performance, I explored Jane Bennet's *Thing Theory* as applied object performance in a group of people from around the world.

National Puppetry Conference, Eugene O'Neill Theater Center — *participant*

Summer 2017, Summer 2018, Summer 2020

At this conference, over the years, I attended a movement and materials performance intensive study with Alice Gottschalk, performed a 14-person marionette and dance show with Ronnie Burkett, and held a mini-residency in object performance.

Bread and Puppet Theater, Glover, VT — *apprentice*

Summer 2015, Summer 2019

As an apprentice and later as a volunteer, I worked with Bread and Puppet to create large-scale outdoor and indoor performances with masks, puppets, and political messaging, attended by thousands of people over the course of the summer.

Lectures and Artist Talks

Arts in Activism at the UConn Women's Center — *Panelist*

February 2021

Virtual Puppetry Residency at Pittsburgh Center for the Arts — *Artist Talk*

November 2020

Object Ontology at the UConn Humanities Symposium — *Presenter*

February 2020

Technology and Puppetry at the National Puppetry Festival — *Panelist*

July 2019

Women in Puppetry at the Ballard Institute and Museum of Puppetry — *Facilitator*

February 2019

Diversity in Making at the Detroit Maker's Faire — *Presenter*

July 2016