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Arts & Business Council awards more than \$7,500 in cash and prizes at the 10th annual *Periscope Pitch + Artist Entrepreneur Showcase*

Artist entrepreneurs Bryson Finney, Gina Sicilia, Princella Smith, and Martha Morales Purucker receive top awards

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (September 14, 2023)—The [Arts & Business Council of Greater Nashville](#) is pleased to announce the winners of the 10th annual *Periscope Pitch + Artist Entrepreneur Showcase* held at OZ Arts Nashville on September 13. The event was the culmination of this year's [Periscope: Artist Entrepreneur Training](#), a year-long intensive business development curriculum and mentorship program for local artists of all disciplines.

The evening began with the *Artist Entrepreneur Showcase* in which artists displayed their work and creative business plans to the public. Attendees browsed artists' tables, engaged in conversation about their work, and networked with business leaders, community members, and fellow creative entrepreneurs, opening the door to future collaboration and support. Following the showcase, eight artists pitched their creative business plans live on stage in the *Periscope Pitch* hosted by **Tuwanda Coleman**, Emmy-Nominated Producer & Reporter at NewsChannel 5.

After a short video presentation featuring Periscope artist alumni from the classes of 2014 to the present, 2022 Periscope Alum and Buckingham Foundation Community Choice Award recipient **Ashley Hylbert** took to the stage to share her experience with the program.

"I was personally blown away by the caliber of speakers Periscope provided," said Hylbert. "Their wealth of knowledge and experience helped me to see the ways I could monetize my work."

Hylbert also celebrated the support system that Periscope provides for guiding her and pushing her to see new perspectives and insights about her business. She went on to describe the unyielding support of her program advisors and mentors, who tirelessly helped her prepare her pitch and made her feel empowered to achieve her dreams.

After each artist's pitch, a panel of four expert judges asked questions and provided feedback, scoring each of the pitches with regard to business acumen, artistic excellence, and overall presentation effectiveness. This year's panel included: **Adrianna Flax**, AM Flax Consulting; **Emmanuel LeGrair**, R.H. Boyd, and The Commonwealth; **Mia O. McNeal**, Country Music Association; and **Sam Davidson**, Nashville Entrepreneur Center. The audience also helped select the winners by voting digitally for both their favorite business pitch and their favorite showcase display. In the end, four artists were awarded more than \$7,500 in cash and prizes!

Bryson Finney (music) won the Piedmont Natural Gas Pitch Perfect Award, a prize of \$2,500 and the night's highest honor. A music educator, songwriter and composer, Bryson is the director of the **We Are Nashville Festival**, a choral & instrumental music festival for middle TN school-based music ensembles. The festival provides a rich musical experience for local students fostering opportunities for exposure, education and engagement with local Nashville-based artists and arts organizations. Its purpose is to amplify the value of music education through a dynamic, unifying and uplifting experience for Nashville-based student ensembles, local artists and arts organizations.

Gina Sicilia (culinary arts, music) achieved the Fifth Third Bank Excellence in Entrepreneurship Award, a \$2,000 prize. Gina is a life-long creative entrepreneur, singer-songwriter, and the creator of **Gina's Italian Cuisine**. Her culinary creations include pre-made Italian entrees and sauces prepared with simple, fresh, colorful ingredients with low-carb and keto options. She has found considerable success at farmers markets, pop-up/catering events.

[Princella Smith](#) (film/television, literary arts) received the Buckingham Foundation Community Choice Award for receiving the most audience votes in support of her business pitch, a \$1,500 prize. Princella is a Regional Emmy-nominated director, producer, author, and media personality. Princella is the writer and producer of an animated short film *Walk In The Light*. Rooted in the true-life experience of Raymond Washburn, a survivor and hero of the Oklahoma City Bombing, the story centers on his efforts to teach his eight-year-old granddaughter to embrace the part of her Native American Yuchi heritage that urges her to live for a purpose greater than herself by shining her light into the world.

[Martha Morales Purucker](#) (visual art/glass) earned the Southwest Airlines Best in Showcase Award, a \$1,500 prize, for her impactful display showcasing her creative business. Martha's display presented her collection of glass, kilnforming, mosaic, and sculpture. Martha creates custom art and commissioned pieces and is co-founder of **Nashville Glassworks**. The business serves as her studio, and also a paradise for glassworkers of all kinds, offering glass and supplies from around the world, as well as one-of-a-kind glassworking classes.

All four winners also received a round-trip flight voucher from Southwest Airlines to further their creative business.

The entire 2023 *Periscope: Artist Entrepreneur Training* cohort was honored at a graduation ceremony to close the event. They are (listed alphabetically by first name): [Alexa Lipman](#) (visual art), [Ariel Bui](#) (music), [Asia Pyron](#) (dance), [Beth Barnard](#) (visual art, sculpture), [Brooke Hoffert](#) (public art/creative placemaking, visual art, curatorial arts), [Cassy Laessig](#) (visual art), [Dalia Garcia](#) (visual art), [Darius Montgomery](#) (fashion, visual art), [Grace Chee](#) (visual art), [Kayleigh Walder](#) (public art, creative placemaking, visual art), [Kristin Wiens Keyes](#) (creative placemaking), [Leroy Ramon Dawson](#) (visual art), [Lisa Jennings](#) (visual art), [Renea Weston](#) (music), [Sam Drapeaux](#) (visual art), Sharita Henderson (visual art), [Stephanie Graves](#) (visual art), [Susan Thornton](#) (jewelry/metals), [Thalia "Muziqueen" Ewing](#) (music), [Tree Lily Butcher](#) (visual art), and [Yamil Conga](#) (music).

Periscope: Artist Entrepreneur Training provides a cohort of artists with the tools to see their artistic vision through an entrepreneurial lens including training, exchange, mentorship, and exposure opportunities like the *Periscope Pitch + Artist Entrepreneur Showcase*. Applications for the class of 2024 open in early January at abcnashville.org/periscope.

Periscope: Artist Entrepreneur Training is a program of the Arts & Business Council of Greater Nashville originally created in partnership with the Nashville Entrepreneur Center, Metro Arts: Nashville's Office of Arts + Culture, the Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce, and the Mayor's Office of Economic & Community Development. The Periscope is presented by Amazon, with program support provided by the Buckingham Foundation, Fifth Third Bank, Launch Foundation, Piedmont Natural Gas, Southwest Airlines, Bonnaroo Works Fund, Bradley Arant Boult Cummings, Core Fund, Tennessee Entertainment Commission, Studio Bank. Additional operating support for the Arts & Business Council is provided by the Tennessee Arts Commission, Metro Arts, Community Foundation of Middle Tennessee, Ingram Charities, Marlene and Spencer Hays Foundation, and the HCA Healthcare Foundation.

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About the Arts & Business Council

The Arts & Business Council of Greater Nashville is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit that leverages and unites the unique resources of the arts and business communities to create a thriving, sustainable creative culture in Nashville. We accomplish this through programs including Volunteer Lawyers & Professionals for the Arts, Periscope: Artist Entrepreneur Training, Creative Advantage, Fiscal Sponsorship, Education for the Creative Community, Creative Exchange and Arts Board Matching, among many other resources and opportunities. For more information, visit www.abcnashville.org or contact 615-460-8274.