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# Creating Cultural Connections: A Renaissance in Midtown Between 1900 and 1983

Susan Tindall

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CREATING CULTURAL CONNECTIONS:  
*A RENAISSANCE IN MIDTOWN BETWEEN 1900 AND 1983*

by

SUSAN PRYOR TINDALL

Under the Direction of John McMillian, PhD

ABSTRACT

This dissertation documents a time between 1960 and 1983 in Midtown when a complex set of social, political, and cultural forces merged to challenge the dominance of elite groups of businessmen and arts patrons who had dominated growth and development there since the early 1920s. I argue that interaction among these disparate groups affected the character of Midtown, making the community a more vibrant, inclusive, and interesting place to live and do business. After experiencing softer and less militant approaches to *resistance*, members of the Atlanta Arts

Alliance adopted fresh approaches to the meaning of “Art,” and ways that creativity became more representative of the multicultural Atlanta community. Many members shifted away from positions of cultural exclusivity into a realm that appealed to a more diverse population.

INDEX WORDS: Midtown, Counterculture, Woodruff, Shaw, Wittow, Mayor Jackson

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SUSAN PRYOR TINDALL

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2017

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2017

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## **DEDICATION**

I would like to thank my family for their support throughout the writing of this dissertation. Our sons; Harry, Tom, Bob and Bill along with grandsons; Brady and Cot, all mean more to their father, Harry Tindall and to me than we can ever express. My special thanks go to Tom and Lorna Pryor. Without their participation, this dissertation could not have been written.

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**LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

<b>AEDC</b>	<b>Atlanta Economic Development Corporation</b>
<b>AMT</b>	<b>Atlanta Municipal Theater</b>
<b>ASO</b>	<b>Atlanta Symphony Orchestra</b>
<b>BAM</b>	<b>Black Arts Movement</b>
<b>BCA</b>	<b>Bureau of Cultural Affairs, City of Atlanta</b>
<b>FCAC</b>	<b>Fulton County Arts Council</b>
<b>NEA</b>	<b>National Endowment of the Arts</b>

## INTRODUCTION

The year 1960 marked a transitional time in Atlanta's history when the population had grown as much in the previous ten years as it had in all of its previous history, businesses in Atlanta doubled, with a revenue growth of \$60 million. The city had solidified its dominant position as the commercial hub of the South at a time when the Sunbelt cities were coming into their own.<sup>1</sup> Representatives of thriving companies from this country and around the world landed at Atlanta's airport, the tenth busiest in this country, ready to conduct business and attend conventions. The skyline soared, as skyscrapers throughout the downtown area reflected the physical grandeur of the other buildings in their own beautiful mirrored windows. The Atlanta Braves, along with the Atlanta Hawks and other major-league professional sports teams, entertained local citizens and those who came to Atlanta for various meetings and other activities.<sup>2</sup>

Recognizing the power of landscaped streets to enhance Atlanta's beauty, city architects designed and built plazas and parks through-out the area.<sup>3</sup> Atlanta planners initiated an elaborate expressway system that threaded its way out in all directions from the center of the city to accommodate those who lived in the rapidly expanding suburbs.

As the city continued to grow and prosper, business leaders such as Robert Woodruff, business leader and head of the Coca-Cola Company, recognized that Midtown, an underdeveloped community located between down-town Atlanta and an upscale residential neighborhood known as Buckhead, was ripe for development, and had the potential to provide

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<sup>1</sup> Raymond A. Mohl, Ed. *The Making of Urban America*, 2<sup>nd</sup>. Edition (Lanham: SR Books, 1997), 220 -227.

<sup>2</sup> Ivan Allen, Jr. with Paul Hemphill. *Mayor: Notes on the Sixties* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1971), 145-148.

<sup>3</sup> Ida Louise Huxtable. *Atlanta Journal* May 5, 1974. Ms. Huxtable, architectural critic, wrote for the *New York Times*.

space for a much-needed cultural center designed to entertain the people of Atlanta as well as visitors to the city.<sup>4</sup>

This dissertation examines Midtown's "coming of age" during the time between 1960 and 1983, when significant cultural and political changes – and exchanges – took place. A complex set of political, cultural, and social forces merged in that community that challenged the dominance of an elite group of businessmen and arts patrons who had dominated growth and development there since the early 1920s.<sup>5</sup> The purpose of the research is to establish connections between those forces that led to productive, if not always harmonious, interactions between racial, cultural, and political communities in Midtown – and elsewhere – during those seminal years. I argue that by connecting the threads of commonality of these disparate groups, both the challenging forces and some members of the dominant elite, the evidence portrayed herein demonstrates that historic transformations with cultural and social restructuring took place in Midtown, making the community a more vibrant, racially diverse, inclusive, and interesting place to live and do business.

An intergenerational disconnect occurred in Midtown and elsewhere around the country during the 1960s and 1970s, as those in the younger group, many of them members of the counterculture, rallied for newer and more meaningful social values. Historian Thomas Bender explained that the new social history is usually accompanied by radical politics.<sup>6</sup> These young agitators protested against many issues such as the war in Vietnam, and racial and sexual discrimination, while also demanding freedom to use mind-altering drugs and to experience

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<sup>4</sup> For the purposes of this dissertation, Midtown is defined as the area east of West Peachtree Street, including Piedmont Park, and the area west from there, north of 10th street, and south of the Brookwood Railway Station. Peachtree Street, a main artery that bi-sects Midtown, is a ridge line that projects Midtown above the surrounding area. See Map at the end of the Introduction.

<sup>5</sup> Floyd Hunter. *Community Power Structure: A Study of Decision Makers* (Garden City: Doubleday & Company, Ind, 1933).

<sup>6</sup> Thomas Bender. *Making History Whole Again*

sexual liberation. (It should be noted that this study is not meant to romanticize or demonize members of any of the groups, but simply to recognize that the interaction between the elements brought about substantive change.)

The battle that took place in Midtown was not unlike those urban historian Janet Abu-Lughod studied and wrote about during the 1960s and 1970s in cities around the country such as New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles. Sub-groups with varying lifestyles, class interests, goals, and ideologies struggled with ‘outside’ interests such as members of local city governments, developers, and also one another, for turf and also ways to get their voices heard. Abu-Lughod’s conclusions offer great insight into the processes of urban change in contemporary times and also the general framework of earlier cultural and economic growth in cities such as Atlanta. She wrote:

Although growth may appear chaotically unplanned, it has been created, and is continually being re-created by collectives of social actors engaged in complex dances of successive and symbiotic interactions.<sup>7</sup>

Atlanta’s hippie community, like similar areas in other large American cities, represented a group of young people seeking to disengage from mainstream society, and “to find alternative modes of living.”<sup>8</sup> The term “hip” used throughout this study implies cultural attitudes of those who felt “enlightened and in touch with popular dissent.”<sup>9</sup> Members of the movement frequently used the term ‘underground’ to describe themselves, which also reflected the way the rest of

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<sup>7</sup> Janet Abu-Lughod. *From Urban Village to East Village: The Battle for New York’s Lower East Side* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1994), 5

<sup>8</sup> James L. Spates, “Structures and Trends in Value Systems in the ‘Hip’ Underground Contra-Cultures and the American Middle Class, 1957-59, 1967-69” (Ph.D. Dissertation, Boston University Graduate School, 1971).

<sup>9</sup> Stuart Henderson. *Making the Scene: Yorkville and Hip Toronto in the 1960s* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2011), 13-14.

society thought of them. The complex nature of those who had been moving into Midtown since late 1966 meant that there were no clear definitions of members of the counterculture.<sup>10</sup>

In order to witness the activities in Midtown from the eye of the storm, Emory student, J. S. Haydock, went there to study – and then write about - this unique group of bohemian intellectuals. Having been influenced by Timothy Leary and Far Eastern religions, they had moved into the area seeking to find ‘spiritual fulfillment’ and self-actualization through transcendental meditation. Haydock captured the essence of the times by his own observations and by talking with some of the activists who explained that they “were searching for an escape from middle-class America. They wanted to experience a permissive atmosphere where they could use and enjoy psychedelic and hallucinogenic drugs free from restraints.”<sup>11</sup>

Others migrated to the area because they had heard that Midtown was the “place to be” that summer of 1968. However, many of them left when they became sick or hungry, and others left at the end of the summer when it was time for school to start. Some who remained became leaders in the communes and cooperatives that soon grew and expanded around 10<sup>th</sup> Street. Writers and photographers for the *Great Speckled Bird*, a well-respected underground newspaper with its offices located in Midtown, moved in to stay and “make a difference.” Between 1968 and 1976, they documented interactions of the counterculture while describing events in and around Piedmont Park and the Atlanta Memorial Arts Center. (Had these writers and reporters not done so, detailed information about certain aspects of this transitional period between 1960 and 1983, might not be available for historians and others interested in the growth and cultural development that took place in Midtown.) The *Bird* both reflected and influenced cultural,

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<sup>10</sup> J.S. Haydock. “Organized Participation in the Atlanta Hippie Community, 1971” (Unpublished M.A. Thesis, Emory University, 1971),

<sup>11</sup> J.H. Haydock. “Organized Participation in the Atlanta Hippie Community, 1971” (Unpublished M.A. Thesis, Emory University, 1971).

political, and racial transformations there, and contributed to the history of Atlanta.<sup>12</sup> (Material from the *Bird* is employed throughout the study, providing a unique and critical ‘on the scene’ perspective of the activities that took place in Midtown, along with the motives and aspirations of the different groups.)

Stephanie Coffin, a writer for the *Bird*, said that many creative people contributed to the newspaper and attracted readers by using vibrant neon colors to high-light provocative narratives in the paper. She explained, “Those who had been drawn to the *Bird* by the colors and narratives, would then read the more serious articles about the war in Vietnam, civil rights, the plight of domestic workers, and political agendas of the military-industrial complex.”<sup>13</sup> Actors also used Guerilla Theatre as a creative way to entertain and educate their audiences about issues they were concerned with. They would then write up the information and send it to the *Bird*. Creative writers also used innovative methods to expose readers to stories about the many pockets of poverty in Atlanta, and ways that developers in Midtown and elsewhere used the guise of ‘urban renewal’ to raze whole communities in order to make room for lucrative shopping malls and condominiums; leaving the people who lived in these areas homeless and destitute.

This research explores the value of [The Arts] in that urban landscape, and ways that creativity served as a means of educating people, as well as a catalyst for unification of the races in Atlanta. The study further examines threads of commonality among those who grasped the

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<sup>12</sup> *The Great Speckled Bird* hereafter will be referred to as *Bird* in the body of this dissertation, except for times when the whole name is called for, and GSB in the notes.

<sup>13</sup> Interview with Stephanie Coffin by this author. September 14, 2015



value of art and the creative spirit, which is the essence of *Verstehen*: moments when artists, poets, along with dramatists offer access to the place where “life embraces life.”<sup>14</sup>

The study begins with background material on cultural development in Midtown, and documents the struggles between those who fought to build and support a strong arts community in Midtown. These people had to make substantial changes in order for the city to transition into a robust and exciting place to live; one that people would want to visit and even consider moving to from other locations.

The lack of support from power brokers who had little sense of the importance of the arts for a community, meant that members of the Atlanta arts groups struggled to develop spaces for a museum, an art school, a concert hall, and theater.<sup>15</sup> Support from the creative activists, however, contributed to the efforts made by those in the arts community who had similar beliefs. For example, Frank Wittow, actor, director, and founder of Academy Theatre in the 1950s, carried on the tradition of the Atlanta Federal Theatre from the 1930s as he promoted social change through theatre-in-education. Theatre-goers had the opportunity to experience such volatile topics as racial issues and unrest in labor movements. Recognizing the restrictive nature of legalized segregation and the negative effect this system had on arts and culture in Atlanta,

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<sup>14</sup> Victor Turner. *From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play* (New York: Performing Arts Journal Publications, 1968), 13-15. *Verstehen* expresses imaginative understanding of events, whether in the past or in the present, that take place around us as interpreted through works of art; the basis for meaning from cultural performance and other explanations and explication for *life* itself. Through art there are affective ways of knowing that refute notions of creativity and cultural connections based solely on “cognitive structures.” The true poet, painter, or play-write must be truthful because artists have no motive for deceit or concealment; but strive to find the perfect expressive form for their experience. For further definitions of [The Arts] see: Thomas Hoving. *Making the Mummies Dance: Inside the Metropolitan Museum of Art* (New York: Touchstone, 1993.) See also: Christina F. Kreps. *Liberating Culture: Cross-cultural perspectives on museums, curation and heritage* (London: Routledge, 2003).

<sup>15</sup> For more information on the conflict between those devoted to developing an art community and the community power brokers determined to make money see: Floyd Hunter. *Community Power Succession: Atlanta's Policy Makers Revisited*. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1980). See also: Jon C. Teaford. *The Twentieth-Century American City* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993).

Wittow promoted plays that questioned assumptions concerning racism and sexism.<sup>16</sup> In doing so, his plays became vital components of pricking the community conscience in Atlanta.

Robert Shaw, an internationally renowned symphony conductor, had similar motivations when he came to Midtown in 1967 to lead the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra. Shaw reported that he was drawn to Atlanta “partly because of Martin Luther King, and also because Ralph McGill, liberal editor of the Atlanta Journal, lived here.”<sup>17</sup> Shaw challenged himself to revise the composition of orchestras in Atlanta to make it more representative of the population, and also to present music that was more inclusive and representative of the Atlanta community. He knew that the symphony needed to involve a more racially diverse group of people, not only those who played the instruments, but also those in leadership positions on the Symphony Board. Even though audiences in Atlanta did not always embrace Shaw’s practices, he imprinted his seal on the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, and his presence generated an enthusiasm that ignited the Midtown environment.<sup>18</sup>

Another person who exemplified the belief that through the arts a community could affect change included Gudmund Vigtel, who became director and curator of the High Museum in 1963. Having served as assistant director of the Corcoran Gallery in Washington, D.C., he brought with him a confident and upbeat attitude about Atlanta and its unlimited opportunities to develop as a major city in the South. “Vig,” as he came to be known to those involved in the Atlanta Arts Alliance, also recognized the importance of expanding and enlarging the art collections at the High Museum. He knew that those associated with the museum would have to

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<sup>16</sup> Richard Wynn Epting. “The Academy Theatre in Atlanta: The Making of a Professional Theatre,” (Thesis. The University of North Carolina, 1974).

<sup>17</sup> Rice ,Bradley Franklin Garrett, Virginia Hein, Eds. *Atlanta History: A Journal of Georgia and the South*, Spring-Summer 1994, Volume XXXVIII, Number 1-2, 67.

<sup>18</sup> Mrs. Sally McDaniel. Interview with this author. November 3, 2003.

become more inclusive by bringing in more African American and African exhibitions. The new director understood that this was not a condescending gesture to the black community, but rather a shift that would improve the quality of offerings by the museum. The fact that he had the support of such leaders in the Arts Alliance as Robert Woodruff meant that there had been a change and a softening of hard segregationist attitudes.<sup>19</sup>

Simultaneously, systems of racial subordination and discrimination in Atlanta came under attack by members of the black community who had been chipping away at Jim Crow laws that had prevailed in Atlanta and elsewhere under the aegis “separate but equal.”<sup>20</sup> This edict changed under the Civil Rights Acts of 1964, which made it illegal to segregate public accommodations: these laws opened doors literally and figuratively for members of the black and white communities to share ideas and to participate in integrated creative cultural exchanges.<sup>21</sup> Before 1964, both the predominately white Atlanta Arts Alliance and the Black Arts Movement (BAM) stood alone as separate entities, detached by the restrictions of legalized segregation. Where southern patterns of segregation had repressed social interaction in the past, some segments of both arts communities set the stage for cooperation between the races.<sup>22</sup>

Building of the Atlanta Memorial Arts Center located on Peachtree Street between 15th and 16th Streets in 1968, expressed a poignancy triggered by memories of the great loss Atlanta

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<sup>19</sup> Robert W. Woodruff. Letter to Gudmund Vigtel. October 22, 1970. Woodruff Collection. Box 11, Item 8. Robert Woodruff Library, Archives. Emory University. Woodruff wrote that he was encouraged by the report of “the growing use of the Arts Center . . . and hoped that the original objective of the Atlanta Arts Alliance will be achieved.” Also: Mrs. Wicke Chambers. Interview with this author. November 9, 2003.

<sup>20</sup> The Supreme Court mandated a system of ‘separate but equal’ in the *Plessy vs. Ferguson* decision of 1896.

<sup>21</sup> The Civil Rights Acts of 1964, contradicted Georgia’s laws concerning segregation, which gave some members of the white population in Atlanta a reason to cling to former patterns of separation and segregation. Those people fled to suburbs outside of the city and elsewhere to escape integrated schools and public establishments. See: Kevin M. Kruse. *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).

<sup>22</sup> Rachanice Tate “*Our Art Itself Was Our Activism.*” *Atlanta Neighborhood Arts Center 1987 – 1990*. (A Ph.D. Dissertation, Clark Atlanta University, 2012). There were interchanges between the communities that opened dialogue among the artists.

encountered in 1962 with the Orly plane crash in Paris that took the lives of 122 Atlantans who were active members of the arts community. Members of the white community power structure, a tightly-knit group of influential business leaders led by Robert Woodruff, worked with others in the Atlanta Arts Alliance to raise money and acquire land for a center that would commemorate the loss and would house the symphony, art school and two theaters, while also offering dance and opera companies places in which to perform.

The development of the Atlanta Memorial Arts Center, along with the surge of writers, artists, and intellectuals who swarmed into Midtown in the 1960s searching for new and more meaningful lifestyles and values, brought about a renaissance of sorts in Midtown. This research explores the interaction of the new arrivals in this social arena that altered the character of the whole community. These activities helped to pave the way for a more inclusive environment, which brought about the election of Maynard Jackson and the creativity he and his administration brought to the community.

Only a few years later, in 1973, Atlanta elected its first African American mayor, Maynard Jackson, who became known as the “Cultural Mayor” because of his support and promotion of the arts community. Before Jackson’s election, there was virtually no municipal support for the arts. There were no public grants or financial support for artists or members of arts groups, many of whom left Atlanta because of this lack of endorsement by the city.<sup>23</sup> This study documents activities in Midtown that connected art with politics, and also with the integrated cultural exchanges in both black and white communities.

For example, those members of the Atlanta Arts Alliance in charge of the Arts Festival, an annual event held in Piedmont Park that featured paintings by local artists, who had

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<sup>23</sup> GSB. April 22, 1974.

previously catered to whites, opened their arms to the predominately black Neighborhood Arts Center (NAC), inviting the group and others from the black community to participate in the activities in Piedmont Park.<sup>24</sup> Even though the concept of “Art for People’s Sake,” Molefi Asante’s representation of Afrocentricity, places people of African descent in the midst of a committed African center and away from Western ideas of “art for art’s sake,” the center’s presence added a creative spirit to the festival, and was “an extremely important and galvanizing project for all.”<sup>25</sup>

The election of Maynard Jackson in 1973, meant that his strong support of the arts and artists, contributed significantly to “Art in the Park” and “Playscapes”, a playground designed by world-renowned artist Isamu Noguchi.<sup>26</sup> Jackson’s commitment to the arts came naturally for him, as his family had provided exposure to the arts early in his life, and the research concludes that the mayor brought together and promoted the agendas of various culturally oriented groups from around the city.<sup>27</sup>

Jackson recognized the power of creative activities to educate as well as entertain children and adults of all races. For that reason his administration funded an Office of Cultural Affairs, the first one in the history of the city.<sup>28</sup> His administration also financially supported activities at the Atlanta Memorial Arts Center by ensuring that Atlanta Public School children

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<sup>24</sup> Rachanice Tate. “*Our Art Itself Was Our Activism*,” *Atlanta’s Neighborhood Arts Center, 1975-1990*. (A Dissertation, Clark Atlanta University, 2012), 279. The Neighborhood Arts Center (NAC), an art group more in tune with the Black Arts Movement (BAM), had strong support from the white community.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. Tate. 281.

<sup>26</sup> “Public invited to join Members of the ‘Art in the Park’ project in Two Week Long City Sculpture Celebration.” Release #108, April 20, 1976. Maynard Jackson, Mayoral Administrative Records. Series 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Terms, Box 25, Folder 9, Archives Research Center, Atlanta University Center, Robert Woodruff Library.

<sup>27</sup> Gary M. Pomerantz. *Where Peachtree Meets Sweet Auburn: A Saga of Race and Family* (New York: Penguin Books, 1996), There are references to the Jackson and Dobbs families and their involvement in the arts throughout the book.

<sup>28</sup> GSB. February 13, 1975.

had tickets to events there, and by providing transportation for the children from the schools to the center and back.

During that pivotal period between 1960 and 1983, opportunities for creative growth and development in Midtown grew, and this dissertation ties the successes in the cultural venue with greater economic change and progress for Atlanta. Local developer James Cushman built Colony Square, the first high-rise development in that area, located on the corner of Peachtree and 15th Street, across from the Atlanta Memorial Arts Center. Other developers continued the expansion with Class A office buildings, including One Atlantic Center (IBM Tower), AT&T's Promenade Complex, and Bellsouth's Campanile Building.<sup>29</sup> Success with the arts proceeded simultaneously with economic growth.

I argue that disparate social, cultural, racial, sexual, and political developments that emerged during the period between 1960 and 1983, did not do so in a vacuum: each was a product of simultaneous actions of others. Interaction took place between some members of the elite power brokers and the counterculture through dialogue that flowed between political and cultural arenas. There was also communication among parents who had teen-age children who were attracted to the "hippie" mentality of youthful nonconformity that spilled over into the Atlanta community. The contributions of these, and the seminal role they played in shaping the character of Midtown, determined the exuberant spirit of the community as we experience it today.

The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) also contributed to the success of the arts in Atlanta and in other locations by allotting Education grants of up to \$100,000 to state arts

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<sup>29</sup> "Economic Impact Study of the Nonprofit Arts and Cultural Organizations in Metropolitan Atlanta," (Atlanta Chamber of Commerce, City of Atlanta Bureau of Cultural Affairs, Fulton County Arts council, AT&T: September, 1992).

agencies, state departments of education, and other agencies responsible for arts education. The NEA contributed this money in order to assist with children in Atlanta schools who were experiencing desegregation. In the aftermath of court-ordered desegregation, those in charge of Special Arts Projects determined to see that classroom enrichment was not neglected at the very time when students and teachers needed that support the most. They sought to establish an environment wherein students, teachers, artists, and members of the community could communicate without racial and cultural barriers. Those working with Mayor Jackson's Administration took advantage of these opportunities by applying for grants to finance projects such as "Art in the Park."<sup>30</sup>

Maynard Jackson's contributions to the arts in Atlanta, and his making the arts accessible to all citizens - particularly the disadvantaged - are well-documented.<sup>31</sup> This research expands those studies further as it analyzes the enmeshment of the arts groups and Mayor Jackson's Administration in cultural and social dynamics meant to facilitate change in Atlanta. The building of a new museum in 1983, designed by well-respected architect Richard Meier, signaled another refinement in priorities among those involved in the arts community. Although controversial, the museum represents a definitive shift from the past. The architect insisted that the design was his and that there would be no interference by anyone, even those who paid for his services.

Meier's philosophical definition of the High Museum he envisioned for Midtown helps to illuminate for cultural and urban historians the blending of multiple diverse groups. He wrote that he "wanted to give Atlanta a building where the tensions would generate something new and

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<sup>30</sup> GSB. February 13, 1975.

<sup>31</sup> Maynard Jackson, Mayor Administrative Records. Series 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Terms, Box 25, Folder 9, Archives Research Center, Robert Woodruff Library, Atlanta University Center.

exciting, while it integrates the traditional . . . a style that is born out of culture, and yet is connected with the past.”<sup>32</sup>

This dissertation involves several areas of this researcher’s interests, education, and personal participation. As the first chairman of the Atlanta Children’s Theatre Guild in 1974, the researcher instigated membership development and expansion of the guild throughout the city. Members recognized that in order for Children’s Theatre to survive and thrive they needed to encourage communication with mothers from around the city. With that in mind this researcher contacted Mrs. Jondell Johnson, Executive Director of the Atlanta branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, for advice about contacting women in the black community who might want to be involved with the Atlanta Children’s Theatre Guild.

Mrs. Johnson set up regular Saturday morning meetings for us in the homes of women who would be interested in the Atlanta Children’s Theatre, and who might want to join the guild. Mrs. Wicke Chambers, (a member of the Atlanta Children’s Theatre Guild, and also president of the Junior Committee of the Women’s Arts Alliance), and this author, went from home to home every Saturday morning for over a month to have coffee and chat with prospective members. The women we met through those meetings recognized that the Atlanta Children’s Theatre Guild represented the entire Atlanta community, and that we had similar wishes for our children. We wanted to work in their behalf to ensure that their experiences with children’s theatre were positive ones. Those mothers then recruited other mothers in the community, which indicated that these meetings were successful. We welcomed many new members into the guild who brought with them vibrant energy and new ideas about ways to support Atlanta Children’s Theatre.

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<sup>32</sup> Richard Meier. *Pritzker Architecture Prize Laureate*, 1984. <http://www.pritzkerprize.com/meier.htm>, 5.



At this point in our work, we recognized that these efforts targeted upper-middle class women, and that mothers with children from poorer areas were excluded. In order to correct that situation, we then targeted children in the public schools to ensure that all children in Atlanta had the opportunity to experience Children's Theatre. Simultaneously, Mrs. Barbara Tregallas, a member of the Guild, contacted members of Mayor Jackson's administration to inquire about applying for grants that would finance the buying of tickets for the plays to be presented in the Alliance Theater, and also to pay for round trip busing for the children from the Atlanta Public Schools into the Atlanta Memorial Arts Center to see the plays.

Having graduated from Clark Atlanta University in 1994 with a Master's Degree in Social Work, this author is well-versed in Afrocentric Perspectives. As a student she learned the fundamentals of Afrocentricity as defined by Molefi Kete Asante, which posits a theory consisting of a number of interrelated parts, a concept that relates to the multi-faceted approach to this study of creative success in Midtown. Especially relevant is the example of working collectively for a common cause and the interconnectedness of all, a vital tenet of Afrocentricity.

While this author would never pretend to walk in another person's shoes, the experiences at Clark Atlanta University helped her to acquire a better understanding of the negative elements of a segregated city. The philosophy also offers an understanding of the ways that cultural oppression can be used to impose the assumed superiority of European American values, norms, and behaviors on other cultures in ways that marginalize and devalue them.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Molefi Kete Asante. *Afrocentricity, Kemet and Knowledge* (Trenton: African World Press, 1990). This discussion is not meant to portray a complete definition of the Afrocentric Perspective, but to *use* certain parts that directly relate to this study.

## 1.1 Chapter Organization

Chapter One sets the stage for Atlanta’s growth and development beginning in 1894 when Atlanta boosters, faced with a city immersed in a deep financial depression, worked together as a group to actively revitalize the city and stimulate the business sector in order to lift the community out of its financial doldrums.<sup>34</sup> Through a combination of bold determination and vigorous publicity, the Atlanta boosters, in 1894, presented the Cotton States and International Exposition in Midtown where Piedmont Park is located today.<sup>35</sup> The positive outcome supported the notion that the Atlanta boosters had to make more money to ensure that the good fortune would continue. They had not reached the comfort stage wherein they could rest on their laurels or even consider developing facilities for cultural events.<sup>36</sup>

Chapter Two examines the influence of established elite power brokers led by Robert Woodruff, and the motivations behind their interests in Midtown during the period between 1960 and 1983. Their systems of economic and political control had dominated unfettered in Atlanta since at least 1929, when Woodruff’s father, Ernest Woodruff, negotiated a bank merger that assured that the family and the Coca-Cola Company had the power and money needed to influence growth and development there. He determined that in order to become a world-class city, Atlanta should have a more substantive cultural base that included a museum like the ones he visited in Paris, London, Rome, and elsewhere.

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<sup>34</sup> Charles Rutheiser. *Imagineering Atlanta: the Politics of Place in the City of Dreams* (London: Verso, 1996), 4. Rutheiser compared the same practices of “Imagineering” city-building when, one-hundred years later, Atlanta boosters, hawking their city to the world for the 1996 centennial Olympic Games, pulled the same strings, while relying heavily on the promotional imagery of Atlanta as a “world-class city.”

<sup>35</sup> Walter G. Cooper. *Official History of Fulton County* (Fulton County History Commission, 1934), 79.

<sup>36</sup> Thomas Mann: *Buddenbrooks* (New York: Random House, 1993). The Atlanta white power elite conformed to the “*Buddenbrooks Dynamic*” during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Thomas Mann’s novel describes the progress of three generations in which the first sought money; the second, having the benefit of money, sought social and civic position; the third, born to comfort and family prestige, developed appreciation of music, art, and theatre.

Chapter Three discusses the *Great Speckled Bird*, a highly regarded underground paper, a resource to be used by historians who seek to have a better understanding of cultural and urban development in Midtown during the 1960s and 1970s. During these targeted years Atlanta became a gathering place and breeding ground for New Left activists who included students from Emory, Georgia State University and the University of Georgia; the population then expanded to include people from around the state and around the country who flocked to Atlanta for a multitude of reasons, including cheap rent, and close access to Piedmont Park, a gathering place for protests, concerts and rallies. The message of the *Bird* reflected its identification with youth culture, hallucinogenic drugs, and rock music, with varying degrees of intellectual concerns as they challenged the mercenary stance taken by elite white members of the business community. However, many times those who wrote for the *Bird* felt alienated from hippies and other street people who either ignored the paper's political message or openly challenged the editors for attempting to politicize hip culture.

Chapter Four explores the world of Frank Wittow who founded *Academy Theatre*, a creative and educational alternative theatre group dedicated to introducing creative ambiguity into the Atlanta community through theatre-in-education. Wittow and his group are important to this study because they were instrumental in bridging a wide gap between mainstream theatre and more provocative theatre by presenting informative material on subjects such as racism and sexism. Wittow, actor, writer, director, and producer, founded the first integrated professional theatre in the South during a period when Jim Crow laws were alive and well. His theatre drew from the education-in-theatre programs introduced in Atlanta in 1936 under the sponsorship of the Federal Theatre Project (Works Progress Administration) to focus attention on the needs of marginalized people who were under-served by the community. Wittow's theatre group, with its

inclusive ensemble productions and its model of artist-as-teacher in outreach programs that sent actors out into the community, significantly contributed to the cultural development of Atlanta.<sup>37</sup> The Georgia Commission on the Arts acknowledged this conclusion in 1967, when it credited Academy Theatre with having become a major influence for the spread of serious theatre in Atlanta.<sup>38</sup> Further, that same year the Atlanta Public Schools, Coca-Cola, and the Sears-Roebuck Foundation provided financial funding through grants for Academy Theatre's arts-in education program.<sup>39</sup>

Chapter Five discusses the election of Mayor Maynard Jackson in 1974 as the first African American to be elected to that office. From the beginning, Mayor Jackson supported the arts communities and he did more to facilitate a smooth transition between black and white communities, especially during his first and second administrations, than anyone had done before him from either community. He engaged in promoting cultural activities in Atlanta, and his administration worked to obtain federal funds for libraries, parks, and recreation and the arts in general.<sup>40</sup> Jackson considered his election a mandate for social reform, and committed himself to making Atlanta's political and economic life more inclusive. The two most difficult obstacles the new mayor faced had to do with "exaggerated expectations in the black community, and exaggerated fears in the white community."<sup>41</sup> While working with the white community in many promotional projects, he also initiated policies that allowed blacks and women to become involved in social and cultural affairs of Atlanta through a minority-participation requirement for city contracts and grants. Although these policies created problems with some members of the

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<sup>37</sup> Winston Grady-Willis. *Challenging U.S. Apartheid, Atlanta History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007).

<sup>38</sup> Comer Jennings. Interview with this author. December 3, 2003.

<sup>39</sup> GSB. February, 1970.

<sup>40</sup> GSB. "One Year Later: Maynard and the Arts." February 13, 1975.

<sup>41</sup> Gary M. Pomerantz. *Where Peachtree Meets Sweet Auburn: A Saga of Race and Family* (New York: Penguin Books, 1996), 427.

white community, Jackson understood that if he had been too conciliatory and less assertive, business leaders might have assumed that it was “business as usual.”

## 2 PRELUDE TO THE RENAISSANCE

The South in general was a backwater, and almost as  
'sterile artistically, intellectually, and culturally as the  
Sahara Desert.'

H. L. Mencken<sup>42</sup>

Mencken's caustic words quoted above – in a context specifically naming the state of Georgia and lamenting the lack of galleries showcasing pictures, artists giving exhibitions, and theaters offering decent plays – referred to the region along with others in the South, as “The Sahara of the Bozart.” Although dismissed by many patriotic Georgians who were offended by these charges, few could challenge the notion that in terms of high art there was a dearth of cultural attainment, since the arts were treated as poor step children by elite Georgians. This chapter is important to the argument made in this dissertation that decision-makers in Atlanta lacked enthusiasm for the arts, and that their influence prevailed in Atlanta until the 1960s, when a change of hearts and minds determined that the arts were of value and important for both business and the people in general.

It needn't have been that way. Cities such as New York, Washington D.C., Chicago and Boston understood early on that great cities needed cultural centers and had built wonderful museums that were erected before the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century; these institutions had long attracted people from all parts of the world. Those cities enjoyed histories of wealth created from

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<sup>42</sup> Michael Kammen. *American Culture American Tastes: Social Change in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century* (New York: Alfred A. Knoff, 1999), 159. Henry Louis Mencken, 1880 to 1956, wrote “The Sahara of the Bozart” in 1920, in which he used exaggerated terms to describe the South as a place where there was not a “single picture gallery worth going into, or a single orchestra capable of playing nine symphonies of Beethoven, or a single opera-house or a single theater devoted to decent plays.” Although his declarations were offensive to many in the South who denounced him as an uninformed wretch, his writing jolted members of a younger generation of Southerners into looking further into what he had to say; they found some truth in his indictment.

industrialization coupled with an intellectual tradition that encouraged an appreciation of the arts supported by the physical presence of great museums and cultural centers.

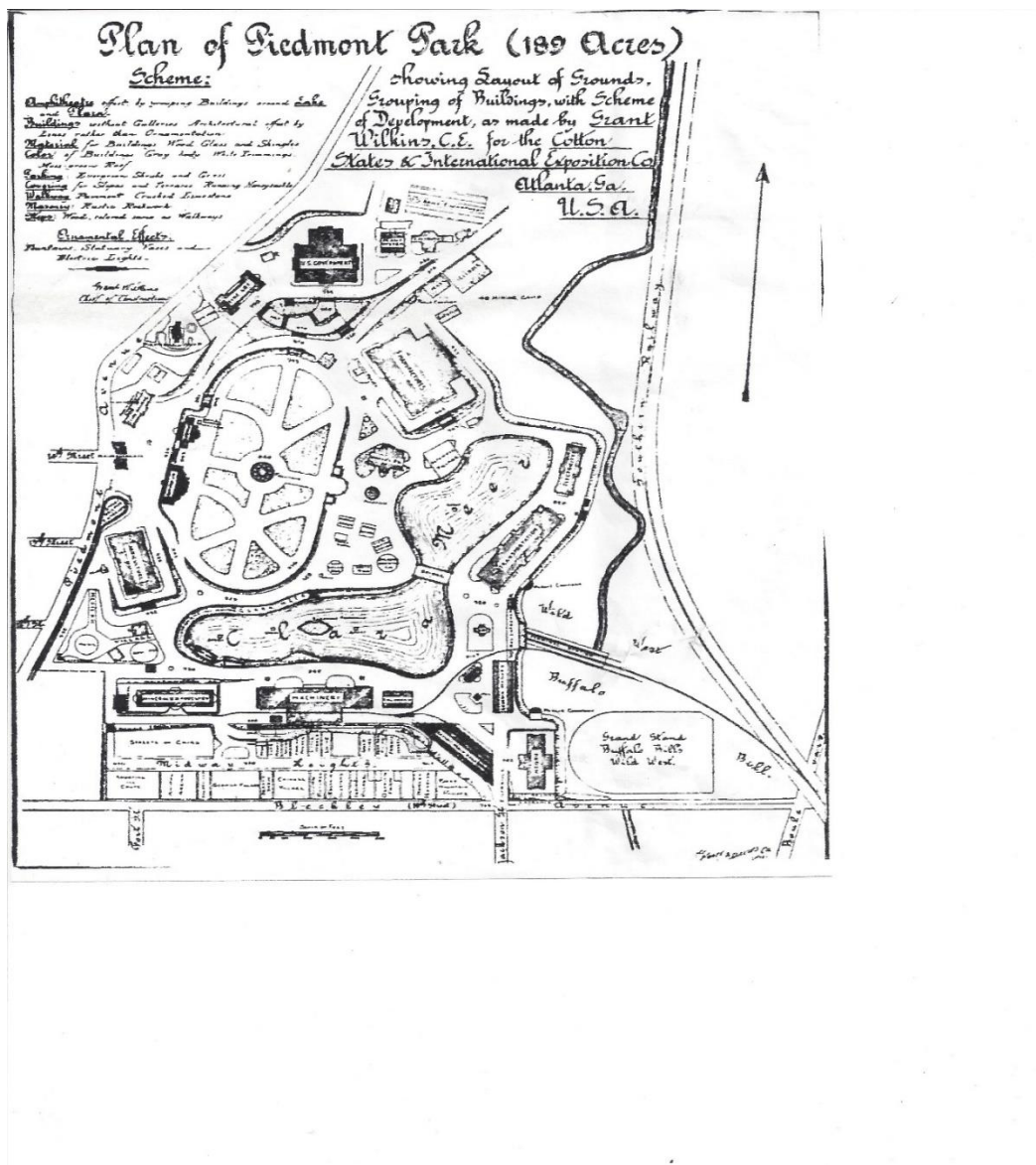


For example, Chicago saved this building from its World Fair Exposition, and the structure is still used as the Chicago Art Institute. Courtesy of the History Center.

Years of retarded growth and development in Atlanta meant that city leaders did not have the time nor the money to devote to what they considered frivolities. The men had to focus their attention on the basics, such as building new railroads to expand the frontiers of trade, while boosting industry. In 1895, those Atlanta boosters hosted the Cotton States and International Exposition in the area in Midtown where Piedmont Park is today: it was a huge success.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Walter Cooper. *The Official History of Fulton County* (Atlanta History Commission, 1934). 531.



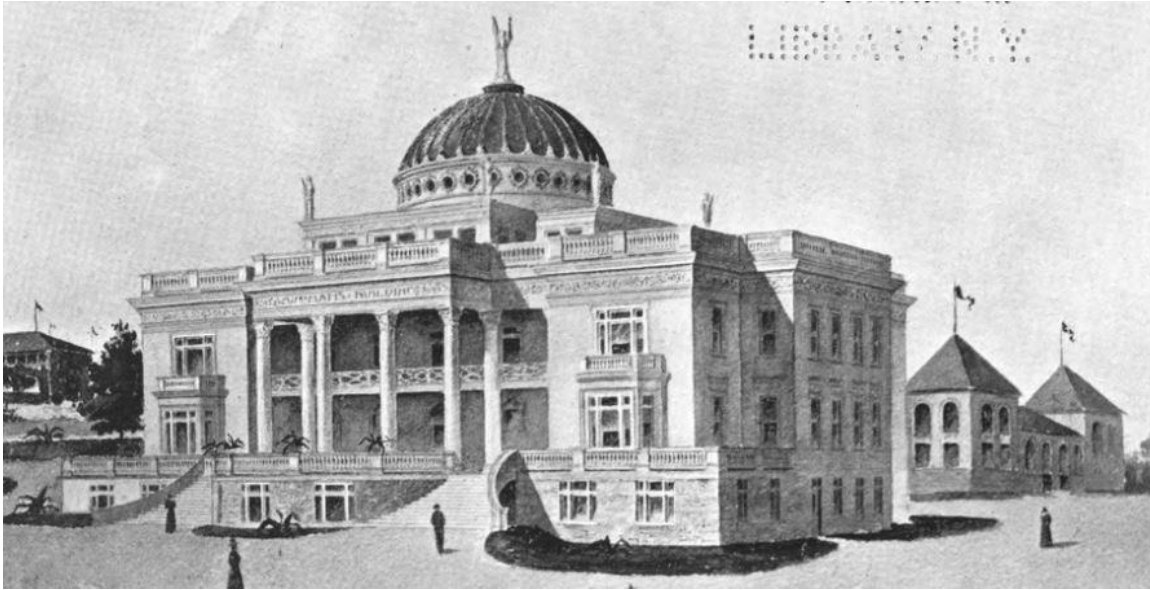
Map of Piedmont Park in 1898. Courtesy of the History Center.

The event galvanized the city's leadership and gave those men the confidence to launch a movement toward further economic development.<sup>44</sup> The people of Atlanta paid \$2 million for the celebration happened when the city had a population of only 108,644 people. Joint efforts of Atlanta business leaders along with money from the city and county helped finance the

<sup>44</sup> Don H. Doyle. *New Men, New Cities, New South: Atlanta, Nashville, Charleston, Mobile, 1860 – 1910* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 267.



Exposition that consisted of 6,000 exhibits.<sup>45</sup> According to historian Walter Cooper, “One of the most elegant buildings created for the event, designed by the well-known Atlanta architect W. T. Downing, would have made a wonderful museum for the city of Atlanta.”<sup>46</sup> (See Picture below)



The Downing Building before it was torn down. Courtesy of the History Center

Decision makers, however, allowed the Downing Art Building, the Electricity Building, and other beautiful buildings, erected for the Cotton States and International Exposition - all of which would have been welcomed for use by a fledgling arts community in the city - to be torn down after the celebration was over. People who lived in cities such as Chicago, St Louis and Nashville had transformed buildings used for such celebrations into permanent art institutions, and those in Savannah had transitioned a beautiful old building called the Owens Thomas House

<sup>45</sup> Walter Cooper. *The Official History of Fulton County* (Atlanta History Commission, 1934).

<sup>46</sup> Bruce Harvey. *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture*, Vol. 7, Exploring Every Landscapes (1977), Urban leaders in the late-nineteenth-century South used expositions to advertise their region as worthy of participating in American commercial life. They wanted to celebrate and create the kind of development and business culture that would give the South a secure position in the country's business community. The planners needed temporary structures that could provide large sheds to house exhibits they featured in the expositions.

into the oldest public art museum in the South.<sup>47</sup> Atlanta thus missed an opportunity to significantly expand its cultural facilities at the turn of the century, and there were few resources to develop the cultural sector. During the succeeding decades citizens who recognized those losses in Atlanta, acting through diverse social, economic, and political organizations worked together to begin to produce a cultural renaissance centered in Midtown.

The first organized effort to promote an interest in painting, sculpture and the graphic arts began in 1903 when a group of women met to discuss ways and means of establishing an art school and a museum for exhibits like those they had seen in other southern cities. In spite of the loss of the buildings that would have been perfect for their needs, Atlanta women worked tirelessly to carve out a cultural focus for their community.

Many of these women lived with their families in Ansley Park, a residential community designed by Edwin Ansley meant to appeal to Atlanta's most prominent citizens. Ansley adapted the suburban planning concepts and guidelines from those provided by Fredrick Law Olmsted, well-known city planner.<sup>48</sup>

The styles of residential architecture in Ansley Park represent designs from respected early 20<sup>th</sup> century Atlanta architects such as Philip Shutze and Neel Reid: from Italian Renaissance, Queen Anne, Tudor, and Colonial . The First Church of Christ Scientist, designed by Arthur Neal Robinson, completed in 1914, stands at the entrance to Ansley Park on 15<sup>th</sup> Street, opening from Peachtree Street. The Presbyterian Church, completed in 1919, is located on the corner of 16<sup>th</sup> Street and Peachtree, and The Temple, designed by Philip Shutze and Neel Reid, completed in 1931, is n Peachtree Street to the north of Ansley Park.

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<sup>47</sup> Walter Cooper. *The Official History of Fulton County* (Atlanta History Commission, 1934), 502.

<sup>48</sup> Rick Beard. "From Suburb to Defended Neighborhood Change in Atlanta's Inman Park and Ansley Park 1890 – 1980 (Ph.D. Dissertation: Emory University, 1981), 6 – 9.

Four social organizations can be found in and around Ansley Park. The Piedmont Driving Club was the first private club, and is located on Piedmont Avenue. The PDC, as it is commonly known by those who live in Atlanta, started as a private club where wealthy Atlanta men went to drive their horses. The club now has many of the amenities of an exclusive organization. The Ansley Golf Club date from 1912, when it began as a semi-public golf course, and then later converted to a club for members only. Two buildings located in Ansley Park house two

## 2.1 Organizing Atlanta Arts

Women who lived in Midtown in the early decades of the Twentieth Century promoted the arts by bringing lectures and exhibitions to Atlanta; recognizing that cultural facilities were solid business investments. They started by forming a chartered Atlanta Art Association, after which they rented a room, engaged a teacher, and registered students for classes. One year later they called a meeting to formally organize the Atlanta Art Association, and began by sponsoring two important art exhibits in Atlanta. Having no permanent home at that time the women held traveling exhibits around the city, and hung the art in vacant store buildings and club rooms.<sup>49</sup> This inauspicious beginning of the Atlanta Art Association in 1903 characterized the challenges these women faced with even the smallest successes, after which they humbled themselves by stressing that they were very serious about their projects and did not want to appear to be having too much fun. The members of the association wrote that the object of art *was not to give pleasure* but to express the highest spiritual realities.

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<sup>49</sup> Walter G. Cooper. *Official History of Fulton County* (Atlanta: History Commission, 1934), 523.

The work of an art association should be to prepare the way for art, to lay the foundation of art appreciation, to encourage the study of art, and general interest in it, and to cooperate with all social, industrial, educational, and commercial interests in the community.<sup>50</sup>

These energetic women wanted Atlanta to be counted as a city with people who knew the value of art, and appreciated having an art gallery and a museum.<sup>51</sup> They planned to provide funds that would be available for a building in Piedmont Park, and that the Park Committee of the City Council would vote for land to be set aside for an art museum, but that plan never came to fruition. They struggled to establish a center suitable for showcasing fine art, a symphony hall, an art school, a theatre group and an Atlanta-based opera.<sup>52</sup> Theatre development for this group focused primarily on Children's Theatre. A Theatre for adults developed independently of this nucleus of women and did not benefit from the same fund-raising efforts as the other divisions of the arts community until after 1969.

Atlanta needed an auditorium in order to attract conventions to the city. In 1905 the Chamber of Commerce formed a Committee on Auditorium Development and recommended that the city build an Auditorium at a cost of \$200 thousand. During Asa Griggs Candler's Administration, between 1908 and 1909, the Chamber of Commerce and the City Council started building the auditorium, an Armory that they completed in 1909. They celebrated the occasion

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid. Cooper, 521. In 1921 the Park Committee of the City Council voted to provide land for a museum site in Piedmont Park, which was never used.

<sup>52</sup> Carlyn Gaye Crannell, "The High Heritage," *Atlanta Historical Society Journal* (Winter 1979), 73.

by having a banquet to honor United States President-Elect William Howard Taft: they later named the banquet room “Taft Hall.”<sup>53</sup>

## 2.2 Members of the Upper-Class Must Have Music

In 1911, Atlanta elites presented their daughters to society through The Debutante Club, accompanied by a splendid dinner and dance with live music at the Piedmont Driving Club. The debutants later started their own club wherein they pursued charitable activities. In 1915, as the women continued with charity and community service, this group then evolved into the exclusive Atlanta Junior League.<sup>54</sup>

On September 22, 1915 thirty-five women associated with the Atlanta Music Festival Association organized the Atlanta Music Club as a choral group. They wanted to study music, sing together in groups, and also bring live opera featuring the world’s finest performers as economically as possible to Atlanta. The music group also sponsored annual performances of the Metropolitan Opera between 1913 and 1930, and these turned into the most notable social events in the city at that time. Mrs. Ann Uhry Abrams, a long-time active member of the music and art communities, wrote, “In 1920, the performances enhanced by the appearance of such stars as Enrico Caruso along with further glimpses of the artist during after-opera-parties at the exclusive Capital City Club became the most notable social affairs in the city for the white community.”<sup>55</sup> Enrico Caruso evidently enjoyed his stay in Atlanta according to the thank-you note he wrote to Mr. Keen, the manager of the Georgian Terrace Hotel on May 3, 1913. Caruso expressed his appreciation for the “good treatment we all had at the ‘Georgian Terrace.’ The food was

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<sup>53</sup> Walter G. Cooper. *Official History of Fulton County* (Atlanta: History Commission, 1934), 525.

<sup>54</sup> Dan Doyle. *New Men, New Cities, New South: Atlanta, Nashville, Charleston, Mobile, 1860-1910*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 267.

<sup>55</sup> Kuhn, Clifford, Harlon E. Joye & E. Bernard West. *Living Atlanta: An Oral History of the City, 1914-1948* (Atlanta: The Atlanta Historical Society and The University of Georgia Press, 1990),284. Also see: Ann Uhry Abrams. *Explosion at Orly: The Disaster that Transformed Atlanta*. (Atlanta: Avion Press, 2002.)

excellent, and the Hotel well conducted; everything that could be desired. Will be with you next year.”<sup>56</sup>

Metropolitan Opera returned every year until the Great Depression of the 1930’s when money to pay for opera in Atlanta could not be found. When the Metropolitan Opera finally returned to the city in April 1940, the Atlanta audience displayed more enthusiasm than ever.<sup>57</sup> According to Mrs. Abrams, the opera created an “oasis of culture in the otherwise dry and airy desert.” For some, it provided an opportunity to “see and be seen” in Atlanta Society, and to show off their fine clothes: white-jacketed tuxedos for men, and fabulous gowns for women. To add to the splendor, Marian Anderson, an African American, a contralto who was from Atlanta, sang in concert with the Philadelphia Symphony Orchestra in the Atlanta city municipal auditorium on May 5, 1940. The *Atlanta Constitution* reported the next day, “Not only does she possess a great God-given voice, but she has the soul of an artist.”<sup>58</sup>

### 2.3 The High Museum

In 1905, the women started the Atlanta Art Association and made plans to hold art exhibitions in buildings around Atlanta. In 1926, the women’s dreams of having a place to showcase fine art came true when Mrs. Joseph M. High, a widow of a prosperous merchant, donated the family home in an elite residential area on the corner of Peachtree and Fifteenth Streets for the High Museum. Thanks to her gift, the women had a place large enough for galleries, an art

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<sup>56</sup> *Atlanta Journal*. December 14, 1913.

<sup>57</sup> The city of Atlanta experienced harsh times during the Depression years, which, like most communities throughout the country, recorded high unemployment and soup lines. The city faced deficit spending and by 1934 the city had a deficit of over \$1 million. This information is important to the study of Atlanta because the Coca-Cola Company, with Robert Woodruff at the head, became involved in governmental affairs by advancing the city \$800 thousand.

<sup>58</sup> *Atlanta Constitution*. May 6, 1940. See also: Gary M. Pomerantz. *Where Peachtree Meets Sweet Auburn: A Saga of Race and Family* (New York: Penguin Books, 1997), 232. Segregated seating restricted blacks to the balcony in the auditorium. According to Ms. Anderson’s wishes, the workers for the auditorium split the seating right down the middle, blacks on one side, and whites on the other.

school and offices. The women raised enough money to renovate the High home, and willingly expended the effort because they knew that Atlanta had grown in terms of population and also in “importance, in wealth, and in a desire for things of beauty.”<sup>59</sup> That same year the High Museum hosted the city’s third Grand Central exhibition, and in 1927 opened a formal art school with competent art teachers and class-rooms in the upstairs area of the museum. The enthusiastic women added a sky-lit gallery along with a children’s section.<sup>60</sup>

#### **2.4 Limitations and Restrictions Crippled Creativity of the High Museum**

Although the High Museum and the activity it inspired provided a great impetus to “encourage and further the art spirit in the community,” much remained to be done. For example, twenty-six years later, when the Kress Foundation began parceling out portions of its priceless collection to cities around the country, the Foundation offered twenty-five Italian Renaissance paintings to Atlanta. The Atlanta Arts Association had to decline the offer because the bad physical condition of the High Museum left parts of the mansion in decay, and also the building lacked the necessary protection systems to protect the art such as air-conditioning and fire prevention. The physical limitations along with the restrictive nature of legalized segregation kept the High Museum creatively marginalized as well.<sup>61</sup>

Hale Woodruff, a black visual artist and teacher who had studied art in Paris and the south of France, taught students at Atlanta University on the Spelman campus from 1931 to 1943. While there he helped to establish the art departments at Spelman College and Atlanta University’s Laboratory High School.

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<sup>59</sup> Walter Cooper. *Official History of Fulton County* (Atlanta: History Commission, 1934), 546.

<sup>60</sup> Carlyn Gaye Crannell, “The High Heritage,” *Atlanta Historical Society Journal* (Winter 1979), 73.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.* Crannell, , 78. Samuel H. Kress created The Kress Foundation, the owner of five-and-dime stores located around the United States. Mr. Kress had invested in great Italian art, and wanted to share his art possessions with museums.

Woodruff commented that when he first arrived in Atlanta he wanted to know what was going on in the art world of this Southern city.

They told me that there was some kind of museum way out on Peachtree Street. I got on a streetcar and rode out there. In front of the imposing mansion there was a Negro janitor sweeping the sidewalk. I walked into the building. . . To the receptionist I said that I wanted to see the Director . . . She almost fainted, but I met the Director and we talked for about an hour. When I came out, the janitor said that he had been at this place for many years, and that I was the first black man beside him that's ever walked through that front door. I told him that I will not be the last.<sup>62</sup>

Woodruff often lectured at the High Museum, but when he took his art classes there to hear Grant Wood, a visiting lecturer, he and his students were denied admission into the building because of enforced segregation. Wood heard of that indignity, and called Woodruff to apologize: and later paid him a visit at Spelman.<sup>63</sup>

Atlanta's *branch* had the weeds of Jim Crow policies attempting to suffocate it; however, the actual practice was occasionally bent, or pruned, by some more liberal practitioners. The arts climate in the

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<sup>62</sup> Al Murray. *Hale Woodruff Oral History Interview Conducted by Al Murray*. <http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/oralhistories/transcripts/woodru68.htm>, 10.

<sup>63</sup> Donald F. Davis. "Hale Woodruff of Atlanta: Molder of Black Artists," *The Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 69, No. 3 / 4 (Summer – Autumn, 1984), 147-154.



South, and particularly Atlanta, was a garden in progress moving gradually toward integration.<sup>64</sup>

## 2.5 Theatre: Setting the Stage for Exciting and Provocative Productions

Individuals who were interested in theatre established an Atlanta Theatre Guild in 1936, which was meant to provide local and non-professional Little Theatre performances for people interested in acting, stage design, as well as technical or directorial work. In November of the same year the Atlanta Theatre Guild invited the Federal Theatre Project, a group dedicated to creating a national theatre in the United States, to join in an experiment in community co-operation. The Guild acted as sponsor for the Federal Theatre Project that made up a part of the Works Progress Administration as an agency of President Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal.<sup>65</sup>

The Great Depression prompted many radical efforts to dramatize the struggles of the working class. Labor dramas served many purposes: they interpreted the Labor Movement in ways that engaged understanding and sympathy from the general public. The plays also convinced potential labor organizers how they could use drama, art, and literature to persuade exploited laborers of the hopelessness of their current situation and the necessity of forming militant labor unions in order to better their lot.<sup>66</sup> Through use of labor drama, the Works Progress Administration also provided jobs for unemployed theatre professionals in useful projects and also offered planned theatrical programs to audiences who otherwise could not afford to have that experience.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Rachanice Tate. *"Our Art Itself Was Our Activism": Atlanta's Neighborhood Arts Center, 1975-1990*. (Dissertation. Clark Atlanta University, 2012), 64.

<sup>65</sup> Hallie Flanagan. *Arena: A History of the Federal Theatre* (New York: Benjamin Blom, Inc. 1965), 89.

<sup>66</sup> William H. Cobb, "Commonwealth College: A History," Thesis. University of Arkansas. 1960.

<sup>67</sup> Hallie Flanagan, "Excerpts from National Director's Report, January, 1939," *Federal Theatre, NARA*, Entry 920, Regional Publications Describing Federal Theatre Activities, 1936-39, Atlanta Historical Society. Box 357, "The Prompter," 1.

One of the first productions in Atlanta, and one of the most discussed plays of the 1930s was *Altars of Steel*, directed by Allen Lovejoy. The play created quite a stir, accompanied by heated debate, critical acclaim, and sold-out houses.<sup>68</sup> The play told of a period of violence, coercion, and physical battles between the United Steelworkers - the unions - and the steel companies, both entities vying for power and supremacy.

Those who saw the play described it as “beyond question the most impressive stage offering ever seen in Atlanta . . . as great a play ever written.” The *Atlanta Constitution* wrote that “the staging is so massive that it effectively creates the illusion you are in a great steel mill. . . the sound in the background suggests the roar of the blast furnaces.” However, the play represented liberal, left-wing ideology that challenged the social, political, and economic hegemony of the South where many people had deep-seeded suspicions of the federal government, and considered the play a dangerous intrusion.<sup>69</sup> Mildred Seydell of the *Atlanta Georgian* called the play “magnificent, gripping, perfectly cast . . . and as dangerous as *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*.”<sup>70</sup>

Experimental theatre, replete with propaganda, represented the essence of theatre-in-education, wherein drama, an art form, became a means of organizing workers and generating social change. The high cost of productions due to government regulations and the existence of a

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<sup>68</sup> R. Jones. *The Atlanta Constitution*, April 2, 1937, 11.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> M. Seydell. “*Altars of Steel* Aids the Cause of Communism with Tax Money,” *Atlanta Georgian*, April 6, 1937. (In an amusing rebuttal to Seydell’s commentary, *the Emory Wheel* referred to her as “Mildred (Self-Love) Seydell,” writing that her complaints about the production gave it a “four-star rating.” For a detailed discussion of media coverage of the production of *Altars of Steele* in Atlanta see Susan Duffy, *American Labor on Stage: Dramatic Interpretations of the Steel and Textile Industries in the 1930s* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1996), 96-101, and John Russell Poole, *The Federal Theatre Project in Georgia and Alabama: An Historical Analysis of Government Theatre in the Deep South* (Dissertation, University of Georgia, Athens, 1995), 80-88. Also see Hallie Flanagan Papers, History Center. Series V – Scrapbooks, “Federal Theatre in the South Scrapbook.” .

“union” stage also doomed the merger. Problems hindered the relationship, not the least of which included the requirement that local interests bow to the wishes of the Federal group.

The relationship between the Alliance Theatre and Federal Theatre lasted from November, 1936 to September 2, 1937, when Mrs. Mary Pritchard, Secretary of the Atlanta Theatre Guild, wrote to the members announcing that the Guild was “severing its affiliation with the Atlanta Federal Theatre, such action to be effective immediately.”<sup>71</sup> It was clear that the social elite in Atlanta preferred more romanticized plays and did not want to see or hear anything that exposed the drab existence and the harsh realities of the working class.<sup>72</sup>

By December 8, 1937, the Atlanta Theatre crowd returned to business as usual, going to the Woman’s Club on Peachtree Street to enjoy a non-confrontational, pleasant performance of “The Bishop Misbehaves,” the first production as an independent company after the theatre group severed the affiliation with Federal Theatre. It would be another nineteen years before Frank Wittow would attempt once again to introduce powerful thought-provoking theatre to Atlanta.

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<sup>71</sup> Atlanta History Center. Letter to members of the Atlanta Theatre Guild from Mrs. Mary Pritchard, Secretary of Executive Board. September 2, 1937. MSS 785, Box #1.

<sup>72</sup> Rose Knutu, “The Workers’ Play,” *Industrial Pioneer*, November 3, 1925, 26-27. Also see; Rose Knutti. “Knocking the ‘el Out of Glory,” *New York Times*, March 7, 1926.



Photograph of the Women's Club by author. August 14, 2014

The Alliance Theatre has had a long and interesting history, with its inception at a time when other large arts organizations started around the country. In fact, the theatre's genesis came about shortly after the start of the National Endowment for the Arts in 1965, when the NEA helped to “institutionalize” arts organizations.<sup>73</sup> The founding of the NEA signaled a conservative view of arts-funding wherein organizations would have to work for the money. The group evolved into

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<sup>73</sup> Nello McDaniel and George Thorn. *Work papers, Rethinking and Restructuring the Arts Organization*. Letter from the Executive Board: Atlanta Theatre Guild, September 2, 1937. New York: FEDAPT, 1990. For further information about the act of Congress that established the National Council on the Arts, and later the National Endowment for the Arts and Humanities, see: Patrick Hayes. *The Arts in America-Our New National Product: Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 405, Urban Change and the Planning Syndrome (Jan., 1973), 131-136.

a federal bureaucracy with a propensity for funding the larger, more established arts organizations. These groups structured themselves with traditional boards and management; their staffers also learned and practiced the new art of grant-writing.

The not-for-profit arts experiment, even as it evolved, became the standard and expected behavior for all arts organizations. To receive funding, an arts organization had to achieve a certain look and level of both artistic and organizational behavior, or at least the appearance of expected behavior. . . The standard became so defined ideologically that it became easier to understand who didn't qualify for funding and why, than who did.<sup>74</sup>

The Board of Trustees for the Atlanta Arts Alliance appointed an Alliance Theatre Board, which then formed the Alliance Theatre in 1969, to operate the new theatre organization the same way the symphony, the college of art, and the art museum organized. The Arts Alliance assumed the role of parent group that loosely controlled those four member organizations, and each organization had its own board with an executive committee.

## **2.6 Atlanta Symphony Orchestra**

The Atlanta Symphony Orchestra began because the people of Atlanta wanted to have more music in the high schools of Atlanta, more ensemble experiences for young musicians in Atlanta, and more opportunities for orchestral performances. In 1939, the Atlanta Public Schools' music supervisor Anne Grace Callaghan formed an orchestra called "In and Around Atlanta" made up of high-school students using instruments acquired with the help of the Atlanta Music Club and the Junior League. Both groups had ways to raise funds: the Nearly New Shop was but one of many. Members of both groups would take "last year's nearly new clothes" to a shop run by members of the Junior League where they were sold for a pittance.

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<sup>74</sup> Nellie McDaniel.. "The Arts Experiment" *Workpapers.1, Rethinking and Restructuring the Arts Organization*. New York: FEDAPT 1990.

A series of concerts followed, featuring the Moscow State Symphony Orchestra and the Vienna Boys' Choir. The Music Club also formed the Choral Guild, and in 1945 members of the Music Club founded the Atlanta Youth Orchestra. The same year the Atlanta Music Club made an impact by introducing the well-known pianist Leo Ornstein for its first concert season.

The Atlanta Youth Symphony Orchestra invited Henry Sopkin, a young conductor and educator, to conduct the Atlanta Youth Symphony Orchestra, and he did such an impressive job that the organization offered him a one-year contract to stay in Atlanta and continue his work. The group formulated a plan to start the Atlanta Youth Symphony Orchestra, after

which they presented it to the full membership of the Atlanta Music Club for formal consideration. The plan called for the establishment of an all-city youth orchestra augmented with available and interested adults to fill out several sections. The ensemble was to be rehearsed and prepared for two concert performances conducted by Sopkin during the 1944-45 season.

The Atlanta Constitution reported in 1944 that the Atlanta Youth Symphony constituted "the nucleus for a real Atlanta Symphony." Sopkin excelled in attracting talented young musicians to Atlanta by arranging jobs whereby they could supplement their incomes, which made possible an enlargement of the group to 50 players under part-time contracts.

By 1948 the American Symphony Orchestra classified the Atlanta Youth Symphony Orchestra as one of major importance in the United States. That same year the organization renamed itself "The Atlanta Symphony Orchestra," and held its first concert in the Atlanta Municipal Auditorium. Sopkin's popular programming captured the Atlanta music community in a way that allowed him to bring such stars as Jan Peerce, Isaac Stern, and Risë Stevens to the

city as guest performers. The size of the orchestra personnel, budget, and the varieties of performances grew, thanks to the support and leadership provided by local musicians, educators and the business community. The musical group presented a wide assortment of youth concerts, family concerts, and “Tiny Tots” concerts, as well as concerts with high school musicians

The years 1965 and 1966, although transitional ones for the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, were over-flowing with colorful and exciting events, and the Symphony did not disappoint with the choices for performances. On October 15 Symphony week opened with activities sponsored by the Women’s Committee in collaboration with the Junior Committee that not only raised money for the orchestra, but also made edible hats. “Serata di Gala di Richs” held at the Marriott Motor Hotel featured fashions provided by Rich’s Department Store, and a gourmet dinner, Italian wines and music by a symphonette, all for the price of \$100 per couple.

The subscription season opened on October 22, 1965 with Prokoviev’s “Concerto No. 3 for Piano and Orchestra.” For a December 2 performance, concerto in D Minor for Three Pianos and Orchestra, by J. S. Bach and Concerto in F Major for Three Pianos and Orchestra by Mozart. Two concerts were devoted to opera: Don Giovanni by Mozart, and then “The Death of the Bishop of Brindisi,” topped off with “Amahl and the Night Visitors.”

Lucien Oliver, now an Arts Alliance Vice Chairman, announced that Henry Sopkin would retire when his contract ran out the following April. Oliver gave no explanation for the change and praised Sopkin for having “founded the orchestra . . .and for giving the best years of his life to building the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra.” Although meant as a compliment, the comment implied that Sopkin’s “best years” had been behind him, and that the Alliance wanted someone who could take ASO to a “higher level.” The ASO made a concerted effort to accomplish this.

Although the developments included herein evidence the beginning of a renaissance in Atlanta, other important social and economic realities remained obscure and indefensible, along with most of the activities promoted by the arts community. Significant changes did not take place until the racial and political environment opened up new opportunities for further cultural growth.



### **3 BUILDING OF A RENAISSANCE: THE WHITE BUSINESS COMMUNITY AND THE ATLANTA MEMORIAL ARTS CENTER**

#### **3.1 The 1960's**

Atlanta in 1960 had evolved into a community where many white businessmen drove from their homes in Buckhead, the up-scale residential area, to offices in buildings such as the Candler Building, the Healey Building, and other office towers in the Central Business District. Midtown was an under-developed area they drove through to get to their offices with unimpressive three and four-story mom-and-pop retail stores with living quarters located on the floors above. A rejuvenated interest in close-in living and working areas, especially ones that connected the Central Business District to Buckhead in close proximity to Piedmont Park, made this area ripe for growth and development. This chapter explains how and why members of the business community, who had previously focused on making money and developing industry, shifted their attention to Midtown and the potential for building a cultural center in that area. This interest was not because the businessmen were particularly interested in advancing the art community, but they finally realized that in doing so Atlanta would acquire a bit of much-needed cultural polish. They also recognized what some women in the arts community had known for some time: this enhancement meant a successful business environment and the potential for cold hard cash.

Atlanta continued its role as Southern regional headquarters for corporate and governmental organizations, and the convention business continued to grow.<sup>75</sup> Visitors to the city hungered for the experience of big-city fun and excitement while visiting here rather than New York hand-me-downs such as “Oklahoma” and “Annie Get Your Gun.” Bus tours led by

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<sup>75</sup> Ivan Allen, Jr. with Paul Hemphill. *Mayor: Notes on the Sixties* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1971), 150-163.

attractive white women took visitors around the lovely winding Buckhead roads leading to exclusive neighborhoods with beautifully designed homes and gardens. These activities occupied wives and families of visiting businessmen during the day while the men attended meetings.<sup>76</sup>

Robert Woodruff, Chairman and CEO of the Coca-Cola Company, who possessed the largest personal fortune in the South, was the undisputed leader of the elite white business community in Atlanta. Because Woodruff used every means available to market Coca-Cola around the world, including promotion of foreign trade, he traveled to Europe and elsewhere to ensure that his product was of the highest quality and tasted the same in every location. While pursuing his business interests, Woodruff visited museums in Europe to experience fine art there, and in doing so he recognized that Atlanta lacked the cultural sophistication found in museums in Europe. Woodruff mentioned in private meetings that he wanted his foundation to do something significant to expand Atlanta's arts community, and he opted for a multi-million dollar performing arts center to be built in the Midtown area. "I'm not a patron of the arts," Woodruff remarked to a group of businessmen, "but we want Atlanta to be a well-rounded community."<sup>77</sup>

Furthermore, wealthy families such as the Woodruffs benefitted from changes implemented in tax laws by setting up foundations that channeled otherwise taxable income into philanthropic enterprises tax-free. They could help the poor, promote cultural activities, fund education and science, and control what happened in the cultural venue. These contributions

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<sup>76</sup> Charles Elliott. ' "Mr. Anonymous" *Robert Woodruff of Coca-Cola*' (Atlanta: Cherokee Publishing Company, 1982). 261.

<sup>77</sup> George Goodwin. Interview with this author. July 20, 2012. Goodwin was the Arts Alliance's first vice-chair for theatre.

meant that wealthy Americans could turn their money into “philanthropic engines powerful enough to influence the course of history.”<sup>78</sup>

Woodruff knew that publicity associated with substantial gifts to fund the Atlanta Arts Center and similar cultural projects would bring attention to the vast wealth connected to the Woodruff foundation: thus he insisted that donations by the foundation be given anonymously. But Woodruff’s “wise giving” had become a part of the American progressive tradition, philanthropy from a network of private foundations and community institutions played a substantial role in the growth of Atlanta.

Although Woodruff did not have the interest in music or other fine arts that his wife and many of his friends had, he realized that Atlanta lacked a focal point for the many organizations and people who were interested in art, music, drama, and other creative expressions. After pondering the idea for a period of time, Mr. Woodruff expressed an interest in developing an arts center in Midtown to complement Atlanta’s economic growth. As historian Floyd Hunter wrote, “It was well-known by those who lived in Atlanta that very few major community projects were executed in the city during the 1940s through the 1970s without Woodruff money, and that when Mr. Woodruff threw his support behind almost any undertaking, there was a good chance it would succeed.”<sup>79</sup>

Mrs. Sally McDaniel, who was a fund-raiser for the center, said, “Mr. Woodruff wanted urban development and the opportunities that would provide for business in Atlanta, and it was his insight that gave Atlanta an advantage over competing cities in the Southeast.” She

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<sup>78</sup> Oliver Zunz. *Philanthropy in America: A History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 294.

<sup>79</sup> Floyd Hunter. *Community Power Succession: Atlanta’s Policy-Makers Revisited*. ((Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1980), 261.

continued, “He was not all that interested in developing and preserving ‘high art’ or in promoting snob appeal. He just had the savvy to know what it took for a city to succeed.”<sup>80</sup>

The proposal to develop a performing arts center came as something of a shock to members of the arts community who had worked tirelessly for years to develop and promote the High Museum, Symphony, Theatre and the Atlanta School of Art on Peachtree Street; they had no idea that Woodruff had any interest in the arts. Woodruff’s focus on urban development meant that Atlanta had an opportunity to soar ahead of competing southern cities such as Birmingham, Nashville, and Dallas.<sup>81</sup>

Two strong camps developed within the arts community as members of the Atlanta Arts Association struggled to gain the upper hand in making decisions: James Carmichael, as president of the Association, challenged the other group led by Woodruff, Richard Rich, and Mayor Ivan Allen for civic support and funding. Although both groups desired to create a center to enhance both the cultural development and the economic growth of the city, their personalities and priorities differed, and tensions flared as they competed for financial support.<sup>82</sup>

Wanting to keep a low public profile, Woodruff enlisted the aid of Philip Weltner, a retired educator, to design the arts center.<sup>83</sup> Weltner had served as president of Oglethorpe University, and he introduced the idea that learning should include not just how to make a living, but also how to create a rewarding life.<sup>84</sup>

After visiting other cities representing the “Old World,” and studying performing arts centers in Europe, Weltner determined that Atlanta needed a performing arts center that would

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<sup>80</sup> Mrs. Sally McDaniel. Interview with author. November 18, 2003.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Charles Elliott. ‘ “Mr. Anonymous” Robert W. Woodruff of Coca-Cola’. (Atlanta: Cherokee Publishing Company. 1982), 261.

<sup>84</sup> Harold Martin. *Atlanta and Environs, Volume III*, 385.

house the Atlanta Symphony with a 2400-seat concert hall and with an open glass lobby. The hall would connect to a theater that could be used for plays, ballet and opera. Weltner drew up a grand design patterned on Copenhagen's Tivoli Gardens to be built in Piedmont Park in Midtown, chosen because of its central location and the because the park had plenty of room.<sup>85</sup> It included theaters, a symphony hall, fountains, formal gardens, outdoor cafes, a library for the fine arts, and would be called "Bois d'Atlanta." Although not included in the original design, Weltner considered the possibility of later adding a Crystal Palace, as well as a planetarium, along with headquarters for the Atlanta Historical Society.<sup>86</sup> The proposed art center would have extended the grandeur and recreational opportunities to members of the prestigious and exclusive Piedmont Driving Club perched on a hill overlooking the park property it had owned at one time.<sup>87</sup>

The Woodruff Foundation contributed \$4 million to finance the building contingent upon a donation by the city of land and money to make improvements. After multiple revisions in Weltner's plan, Woodruff was finally satisfied. He drove to the home of Ivan Allen, the mayor of Atlanta, to hand deliver the plan, along with his check for \$4 million to get the project started. Two more conditions had to be met as well: the Woodruff contribution had to be matched by three million dollars mentioned in connection with the project, and those people involved in the planning had to agree not to reveal the source of the donation.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Charles Elliott. "Mr. Anonymous" Robert W. Woodruff of *Coca Cola*. (Atlanta: Cherokee Publishing Company, 1982), 261.

<sup>86</sup> This information is important in order to understand the elite mentality that prevailed among those who were in control at that time.

<sup>87</sup> See Franklin Garret *The First Hundred Years: Piedmont Driving Club 1887-1987* (Atlanta: Perry Communications, Inc. 1987), 5. Franklin Garrett served as president of the Atlanta Historical Society, and published the first two volumes of *Atlanta and Environs*, a chronological compendium of facts and figures. His books are richly detailed and a source of information about local folklore and history. However, his writing focused largely on the descriptions of the activities of the city's white elite population.

<sup>88</sup> Robert Woodruff's Papers. Special Collections, Woodruff Library, Emory University RWP Box 21.

Ivan Allen, Jr. became Mayor of Atlanta in 1962 after a close race with segregationist Lester Maddox. Embedded racial issues remained long after the campaign that affected the proposed Piedmont Park performing arts center because both members of the black community as well as whites were suspicious of the underlying motivations. An \$80 million bond referendum was to be presented in August that would have financed schools, roads, sewers, a civic center and auditorium with the comparatively small amount, three million dollars, designated for the project “to turn Piedmont Park into the most beautiful in-town municipal park in the South.”<sup>89</sup>

The passage of Civil Rights legislation including the Civil Rights Act of 1964 made it illegal to segregate public accommodations, court mandates, sit-ins and protests of civil rights activists, plus the steadily rising political power of African Americans in Atlanta, racial tensions grew. Many blacks feared that the proposed Piedmont Park cultural project was another way for whites in Atlanta to spend money on segregated facilities that they would not be allowed to enjoy.<sup>90</sup> Conversely, members of the white neighborhood associations were concerned that this development would mean the integration of Piedmont Park.<sup>91</sup> Mayor Ivan Allen commented, “I was never far away from my next race issue.”<sup>92</sup> He felt that he had not communicated effectively with the voters and with the board of aldermen about the bond issue, and the great opportunity to beautify Piedmont Park.

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<sup>89</sup> Harold Martin. *Atlanta and Environs: A Chronicle of Its People and Events: Years of Change and Challenge, 1940-1976* (Athens and London: The University of Georgia Press, 1987), 341.

<sup>90</sup> M. Kent Jennings. *Community Influentials: The Elites of Atlanta* (New York, Glencoe, Toronto: The Free Press of Glencoe, a Division of the MacMillan Company, 1964), 130 – 154.

<sup>91</sup> Piedmont Park was segregated at that time, and Civil Rights issues were on the minds of many members of the black and white communities.

<sup>92</sup> Ivan Allen, with Paul Hemphill. *Mayor: Notes on the Sixties* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1971), 72. This defeat was considered a challenge to major institutional sources of decision-making about physical improvements in Atlanta. Although a new proposal passed in 1963, the lack of support from the black community was an important missing factor.

Members of the art community knew that Robert Woodruff was the “anonymous benefactor,” and they suspected that his project would drain financial and community support from their efforts to provide more facilities for art collections and exhibits at The Arts Center on Peachtree Street.<sup>93</sup> The media focused on the \$3 million contribution by the city and the controversial cultural center that had been proposed for Piedmont Park. For these and other less obvious reasons, the proposed bond issue was doomed. A wounded and mystified Robert Woodruff considered giving up the arts project altogether.

Mr. Woodruff’s reflections on whether he should continue to promote the arts in Atlanta were not separate from other developments in the Atlanta art world. Members of the Board of Trustees of the struggling Atlanta College of Art did not know whether the school could stay alive as a legitimate creative art institution, or whether their efforts to keep it running were worth it.<sup>94</sup> The Atlanta College of Art needed money to repair its facilities, but financial concerns of the museum came first. Even the museum was not overly endowed in comparison to museums in other cities. The trustees’ neglect of the art school threatened the school’s affiliation with the National Association of School of Art and Design as well as accreditation from regional accrediting bodies. Indeed, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) had to review the school sooner than had been expected in order to keep the school’s accreditation, and there was a possibility the Atlanta College of Art would lose its accreditation.

Problems arose among some members of the Art Association, such as Ivan Allen, Sr., the mayor’s father, who wanted to shut down the art school and concentrate funding on a more impressive museum. Others, like James Carmichael, president of the association, were

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> The benefits of the Art School were felt only indirectly in the community and it was constantly in competition with the more visible High Museum, Symphony, Theatre, and Ballet.

convinced that there was a need to keep the school a viable part of the art community.

Carmichael fought to keep the school and to support it financially. In doing so he was able to defeat the elder Allen, who referred to Carmichael as a “czar.”<sup>95</sup>

The solution came from an unexpected source. Mrs. Laura Dorsey, who had taken painting classes at the Art Institute since the 1940s, was elected to the Board of the Atlanta College of Art in 1960. Although the quality of education provided at that time was praiseworthy, and the community benefited by having the school, classes were taught in military surplus warehouse buildings from World War I with buckling floors and cracks in the walls. Mrs. Dorsey had enjoyed the creative atmosphere and resonated with the quirky nature of the art students, but she did not fit the caricature of an artist so focused on her work that she was oblivious to her surroundings. To the contrary, she found the facilities of the Institute unacceptable and determined to remedy the deficiency.<sup>96</sup>

Mrs. Dorsey attacked the problem head-on, and the transformations she made arguably changed the face of the art world in Atlanta.<sup>97</sup> Information about her involvement in this dire situation is important to the argument made in this dissertation because without her contributions Atlanta’s Art Association would have not survived. The city’s oldest art group was challenged to raise the quality of its offerings or accept the fact that it had become irrelevant in the community. She knew that the trustees would be forced to deal with the school’s future in a more direct and

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<sup>95</sup> Mrs. Sally McDaniel. Interview with this author. November 18, 2003.

<sup>96</sup> M. Kent Jennings. *Community Influentials: The Elites of Atlanta* (New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1964), 130 – 154. Jennings assessed the role of women in major community posts in Atlanta and concluded that there were few status-occupants, and where they did participate, it was in a supporting or auxiliary role; there were, however, many who worked in supporting roles. As a mover and a shaker, Laura Dorsey was an exception.

<sup>97</sup> Bradley R. Rice, Ed. Franklin M. Garrett, Editor Emeritus, and Virginia H. Hein, Associate Ed. Elizabeth Tucker, Ed. *Atlanta History; A Journal of Georgia and the South*. Spring - Summer 1994, Volume XXXVIII, Number 1-2. (Atlanta: Atlanta History Society), 51.



unequivocal manner than in the past: a thorough and objective study of its long-term needs was required for the school to survive.<sup>98</sup>

Mrs. Dorsey enjoyed an unpretentious but significant influence in the community, and her ability to persuade was notable. The Junior League of Atlanta and Virginia Campbell Courts, one of Atlanta's leading art patrons, provided money to pay for the chosen architectural consultants, the New York firm Engelhardt, Engelhardt & Leggett.<sup>99</sup> Mrs. Dorsey also collaborated with the president of Agnes Scott College, J. R. McCain, with whom she had worked during a time when a committee of educators discussed the possibility of making Atlanta a university center.<sup>100</sup>

Mrs. Dorsey's efforts produced results. A two-year review of the Atlanta Art Association by the Engelhardt group in March 1962 resulted in a 102-page document entitled "A Study of the Atlanta Art Association."<sup>101</sup> The study emphasized that the Art Association was run by volunteers whose management philosophy required spending the least amount of money.<sup>102</sup> Even though Atlanta had a few theaters, an art museum, and a ballet company that were well-respected, they were, nevertheless "small, amateurish money-starved operations held together by a coterie of enthusiastic (usually female) volunteers."<sup>103</sup> The Atlanta Arts Alliance Center on Peachtree Street, which housed the High Museum and the Atlanta Art School, actively sought support for further development so that it could attract more important art exhibits and provide

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Mrs. Virginia Courts was married to Richard Courts, founder of Courts and Company, a premier national Stock Brokerage Company which started in Atlanta.

<sup>100</sup> Thomas H. English, *Emory University, 1915-1965: A Semi-centennial History* (Atlanta: Emory University, 1966).

<sup>101</sup> Englehardt and Leggett paper. Atlanta History Society. MSS 664.

<sup>102</sup> "A Study of the Atlanta Art Association," Engelhardt, Engelhardt & Leggett, March 1962 (Courtesy of Laura Dorsey.)

<sup>103</sup> Ann Uhry Abrams. Explosion at Orly: The Disaster That Transformed Atlanta (Atlanta: Avion press, 2002), 4.

room for permanent art collections. However, gaps existed between vision and reality since the expansion required major donations, along with broad-based financial participation.

Although well-meaning, those who operated the Art Association were not up to the required task and were working against each other: they were people doing their imperfect best in performing their imperfect jobs. A fear of the new power prevailed.<sup>104</sup> The study concluded that the group would either improve or disappear from community life.<sup>105</sup> The unsparing and harsh critical analysis of the Art Association stunned many of its members and those who had been volunteering for many years. The study challenged the Art Association to raise the quality of its operation, to broaden its involvement in the community, and to turn itself over to professionals.<sup>106</sup>

Further evidence of the lack of support for the Art Association and the arts in general in Atlanta came when Mrs. Charlotte Ferst gave interviews for a series of articles in 1962 for the *Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, Arts and Music Section, covering aspects of buying art.<sup>107</sup> Mrs. Ferst was an active member of the arts community, and chairman of a membership development committee for the High Museum of Art. Stating that she thought people in Atlanta were insecure about their ideas on art and the lack of importance of the local art scene that comes from the leadership, Mrs. Ferst said that she and her husband had looked to the arts festivals in Piedmont Park during the early 1960s for prospective purchases, had studied art on their own and had bought paintings by local artists.<sup>108</sup> She admitted that because of provincial attitudes

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<sup>104</sup> Mrs. Charlotte Ferst. "The Members' Guild: The First Decade," February 18, 1962. MSS 664, Series II, Box 11, Folder 24.

<sup>105</sup> "A Study of the Atlanta Art Association," Engelhardt, Engelhardt & Leggett, March 1962.

<sup>106</sup> It was this part of the study, initiated by Laura Dorsey, wherein volunteers throughout the art community were replaced by professionals that forever changed the art community in Atlanta. Volunteers could then work in a supportive capacities.

<sup>107</sup> Mrs. Charles Ferst. "The Members' Guild: The First Decade," February 18, 1962. MSS 664, Series II, Box 11, Folder 23.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*

concerning artists and their art in Atlanta, paintings worth investing in could not be found here.<sup>109</sup>

### **3.2 The Orly Tragedy**

The need for change in the art community prompted Richard Rich, head of Atlanta's largest department store, to lead a fund-raising campaign that inspired leaders in the arts community to take a museum-supported trip to Europe in 1962. Only members of the Art Association and their families were invited to make the twenty-seven-day trip to Europe, which was scheduled for May 9 through June 3, 1962. The itinerary included Paris, London, Amsterdam, Lucerne, Venice, Florence, and Rome. Members were scheduled to "visit outstanding art centers and national landmarks, dine in quaint restaurants, and browse in shops and local markets." They were to return home by chartered plane to Atlanta on June 3, filled with exciting ideas about how Atlanta could improve and expand its arts community.

After what was described as an educational and spectacular experience by members of the excursion, a tragic plane crash at Orly Airport in Paris ended the lives of all 122 people aboard the plane, of which 106 were Atlanta's cultural leaders. One eyewitness, Milton Bevington, watched in horror as the plane crashed. Bevington had seen his wife and mother-in-law off and had planned to fly home on a later flight.

Atlanta Journal headlines reported, "114 Georgians Killed in Fiery Paris Jet Crash." The Air France plane, chartered for their return flight to Atlanta, had crashed while attempting to take off from Orly Field in Paris. Among those killed was Atlanta Journal writer Margaret Turner. The devastation for the families, the city and its arts community, was monumental. Laura

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<sup>109</sup> *Atlanta Journal, Arts and Music*: February 18, 1962. The interviewee wished to remain anonymous to protect his art collection from thieves

Dorsey's sister, Lydia Black, who had helped organize the trip, was among the victims. Mayor Ivan Allen wrote in his memoirs that this was the greatest loss the city had ever experienced. He ordered flags lowered to half-mast and declared a state of official mourning. "Just as Atlanta was hoping to build a great cultural center," he remarked wearily, "we have lost those who had given most towards the accomplishment of it."

The loss of so many cultural leaders served as a catalyst to unite surviving members of Atlanta's elite art community. The tragedy also inspired them to build a Memorial Arts Center in the memory of those who were killed. This decision signified a recovery, along with accelerated change in the city. Mrs. Ann Uhry Abrams wrote: "Atlanta did not just rise from the ashes of Orly, it soared, leaving it its wake little public memory of the 122 artists, art lovers, business executives, housewives, lawyers, and doctors who died in that crash."

### **3.3 A Fitting Response to the Tragedy at Orly**

Robert Woodruff became interested in helping to finance a permanent memorial, "a building or something else worthy of our dedication." He set about acquiring land around the High Museum because he knew that Midtown was ripe for expansion and that it was the right location. Mr. Woodruff discussed the issue with other community leaders such as James Carmichael and John Sibley, who, although they were not always of like minds, were close friends and Art Association Trustees. Mr. Woodruff's offer to contribute \$4 million for the development once again materialized, and the grant was to be matched by \$2 million capital funds to be raised from private sources subject to Mr. Woodruff's right to approve the design of the building.

The efforts of Mrs. Dorsey and James Carmichael had strengthened support for the art school, but the performing arts in Atlanta also needed some help. Dean Spencer wrote an article

in the prestigious Town and Country magazine entitled “Atlanta’s Cultural Binge” in which the author emphasized the deficiency of facilities of the Atlanta Symphony, Theatre Atlanta, and the Academy Theatre. At that time the Symphony was performing in the old city auditorium and the theatre groups in other borrowed facilities. In the article Spencer called Atlanta “the one major city in America that has orphaned its performing arts.” In June of 1963 Barbara Wyden wrote another article for Show magazine entitled “Atlanta,” in which she suggested that the city had no real theatre, no concert hall, no opera house, and an inadequate museum. This challenge stimulated the leadership of the Atlanta Art Association to remedy the situation by building not just an art school, but also a comprehensive arts center as a memorial to the victims of the Orly crash.

The leaders of the Atlanta Art Association joined forces with those of the Atlanta Symphony Guild, which was the governing body of the Atlanta Symphony, to secure funds for the building. Both groups continued to govern their respective arts groups as the creation of the Atlanta Arts Alliance took place behind the scenes. This was a natural partnership because both groups had shared many of the same members and some members had sat on both boards. Representatives of the boards of the Civic Ballet, Theatre Atlanta, and other arts groups also were included. James Carmichael and Richard Rich were key people in the formation of the Atlanta Arts Alliance. The charter for the Atlanta Arts Alliance was granted on August 2, 1963.

G. A. Brakeley & Company prepared a Fund-Raising Feasibility Report concerning the proposed Performing and Visual Arts Center and presented the report to a meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Atlanta Arts Alliance on Tuesday, October 22, 1963. Charles Thwaite, president of the Board, reported that the study of management and operating feasibility for the Arts Center was being conducted by Joseph Heyman, senior vice president of the Trust Company

of Georgia, which added a sense of financial stability to the undertaking. Even though such grants would not underwrite construction of the building itself, the money the grants provided could be credited to the overall goal of creating a comprehensive Atlanta Memorial Arts Center.

The persons attending the meeting included some of the most prominent businessmen in Atlanta. These men prepared “A Statement of the Case for The Atlanta Memorial Cultural Center” wherein they described what they proposed to do, where the money would come from, and what the priorities were. Group members acknowledged the loss of patrons and friends of art in the plane crash at Orly Field, June, 1962, and wrote that they had received money as gifts expressing sympathy from people all over the world. They wanted to use the funds to build a cultural center that would house the art school, concert hall, theater, museum, and a studio theater, and would be a permanent commemoration for the citizens they lost. Accordingly, the group of men formed the Atlanta Arts Alliance, and started by bringing the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra and the High Museum, along with the Atlanta School of Art, into the Alliance. This change required the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra to give up its former independent legal status and to perform at the will of the Atlanta Arts Alliance.

### **3.4 Atlanta Symphony Orchestra**

After having performed in the Atlanta Municipal Auditorium since 1944, members of the Atlanta Arts Alliance maintained that the group wanted to provide a real concert hall with proper acoustics that would serve as the home for the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra. Members of the Alliance hoped that the hall would ultimately be the setting for performances of a permanent ballet company and also the home for a permanent opera company. For a hall so splendid, the members of the Arts Alliance knew that they had made the right choice in Robert Shaw, world renowned conductor and director of *The Robert Shaw Choral*, to serve as the Music Director of

the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra. He started his tenure in the fall of 1967 when his contract with the Cleveland Orchestra expired. Shaw's appointment marked a new and more innovative direction for Atlanta and for the Atlanta Arts Alliance.

Robert Shaw arrived in Atlanta amidst a swirl of praise and accolades. He brought with him the reputation as the director of the Robert Shaw Chorale, with a history of spectacular performances in cities around the world. He presented his philosophy regarding the Arts, and some of his plans for future growth in a speech to members of the Atlanta Arts Alliance Board. He said, "The Arts are not a luxury, but a necessity. They bring sanity and wholeness, purpose, and perspective to a society, and they have the potential to create an understanding among people." He stressed that "the Arts are a true expression of the brotherhood of man, and an arts alliance can bind wounds of humanity, and even save a city."<sup>110</sup> He also brought "the most interesting and carefully thought-out plan for performances filled with crowd pleasers, supplemented with some surprises."<sup>111</sup>

From the beginning, Shaw captured the attention of the community through an expansion of various kinds of works such as those by Bach, Brahms, Beethoven, Stravinsky, and Mozart. Although Shaw did not want to become a proponent of an opera company, he felt responsible for producing opera in modified forms and so he included Mozart's "The Marriage of Figaro," Beethoven's "Fidelio," and Gershwin's "Porgy and Bess." Even in the Municipal Auditorium, Shaw's Atlanta Symphony Orchestra exceeded expectations with selections from well-known composers such as those just mentioned, along with Stravinsky, Ravel, and Tchaikovsky. Concert goers were ecstatic as they leaped to their feet after every performance while applauding

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<sup>110</sup> Atlanta Rotary Club Paper. March 11, 1968.

<sup>111</sup> Scott Cantrell. "Robert Shaw, a Professional's Amateur Spirit," *Symphony Magazine*. Feb/March, 1968.

the musicians. They had great expectations that performances would be even better in a new Symphony Hall.<sup>112</sup>

However, there were disappointed people when Shaw began offering works by 20<sup>th</sup> century composers, some of whom were, in the minds of Atlanta patrons, “absolutely absurd, experimental, unconventional, uncensored, inconceivable, unbearable anti-music.”<sup>113</sup> For example, a work by Edgar Varese featured “Chinese temple blocks, a slapstick, a siren, two sizes of rattles, antique cymbals, and a lion’s roar.” Although the orchestra sprinkled these modern works in with the beautiful old classics, the music grated on the nerves of people in the audience.<sup>114</sup>

Fewer people renewed subscriptions to the performances, and even those who bought tickets did not show up, which meant that there were empty seats, a first for the Atlanta Symphony. As money pressures built due to increases in the orchestra’s size, an expensive touring schedule, and slumping ticket sales, audiences became more and more disgruntled. The drop in audience size indicated that many viewers did not enjoy what they heard at least once in every concert.

Shaw did not back down.<sup>115</sup> He was acutely aware that education of the public was crucial to the success of a performing arts program. In order to build audiences and supporters for the future, developing enjoyment and appreciation of the arts in aesthetically sensitive young people was essential. Shaw therefore actively sought to motivate and encourage younger persons

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<sup>112</sup> Rice, Bradley, Franklin Garrett, and Virginia H. Hein. eds. *Atlanta History: A Journal of Georgia and the South*. Spring-Summer, 1994, Volume XXXVIII, 66.

<sup>113</sup> Ann Carter. “Anti-musical Music Proposed by Shaw” *Atlanta Journal* September 22, 1967.

<sup>114</sup> This information is vital to the research because it reflects interaction with activities by the counterculture on the streets in Midtown: Robert Shaw and the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra used the arts to challenge and expand the definition of creativity and culture.

<sup>115</sup> Chappell White. “Atlanta Symphony Stands at Crossroads. Which Way?” *Atlanta Constitution*. January 28, 1972.



in the Atlanta area to participate in the orchestral program. He strongly supported the performing arts programs in the Metropolitan Atlanta Boys' Clubs and the Northside High School for the Performing Arts. He was dedicated to diversity in the orchestra and the chorus, and also determined to have outreach programs that took both the orchestra and chorus out into the community. The Atlanta Symphony Orchestra participated in the Afro-American Music Workshop and Festival that was held in January of 1972 at Morehouse College. To celebrate the event Shaw conducted the first full production of the first surviving opera, "Treemonisha" written in 1911 by Scott Joplin, a black man.<sup>116</sup> An all-black cast performed the opera. *Newsweek* coverage included the following, "Scott Joplin . . . transformed the rigid ragtime form into a fluid vehicle of expression."<sup>117</sup>

As much as the Atlanta patrons and public respected Robert Shaw as an artist, and notwithstanding the enlightened perspective of many Atlantans, there were those who had trouble shaking off the shroud of racial and cultural orientation that prevailed. On the other hand, Ralph McGill, a prominent liberal newspaper editor, wrote about the situation from the perspective of the black community, and the difficulty for black composers and musicians in that environment:

At a time when the emphasis properly is, and has been, on the over-all problem of poverty, education and reading, sessions of the orchestra call attention to another long neglected need – the identification of talented persons and the opening of opportunity to them. Professional opportunities in music, have, until recent years, been mostly a monopoly of larger population areas where patrons of wealth and the dense populace combined to make

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<sup>116</sup> H. Schoenberg. *New York Times*, January 28, 1972.

<sup>117</sup> *Newsweek*, February 7, 1972.

orchestras, opera, and concert programs economically possible.<sup>118</sup>

Robert Shaw was not afraid to use his music and his position in the arts community to influence this situation.<sup>119</sup> He said, “What if an Arts Alliance were really an alliance of, by, and for the people – all of the people?”<sup>120</sup> Although Shaw never made a crusade out of promoting civil rights, he felt the need to bring the black community into the arts at all levels; as audiences, students, orchestra members, and also as members of the Symphony Board.<sup>121</sup> This belief in the worth of each individual regardless of race led him to encourage and help many black performers and composers. He was critical of the lack of black bankers, teachers, and college presidents on the Alliance Board.<sup>122</sup> His concern was that “although nominal desegregation of all music events had been accomplished, the large Negro community had taken little part in the central musical life of the community. A remedy to this situation, according to Shaw, would require “an active patient program of education and promotion. The arts are not a luxury, but a necessity. They create an understanding among people. We must give voice to the sound of our own time.”<sup>123</sup>

### 3.5 The Museum

Members of the Atlanta Arts Alliance knew that there was limited space available for the Museum exhibit area, and that many painting and sculpture exhibits bypassed Atlanta because of inadequate facilities.<sup>124</sup> The new building would provide an enlarged Museum exhibit area, and

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<sup>118</sup> R McGill. *The Atlanta Constitution*. March 12, 1972.

<sup>119</sup> Russell Mathis. “New Sounds of Music.” *Newsweek*, March 25, 1968.

<sup>120</sup> R. Mussulman. “Dear People . . . Robert Shaw” (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979), 206.

<sup>121</sup> *The Atlanta Constitution*. March 5, 1968. The terms “Negro” and “black” are used interchangeably by Shaw in his correspondence, conversations, and speeches.

<sup>123</sup> Atlanta History Center. Atlanta Symphony Orchestra Scrapbook. 1968 Season. March 1968.

<sup>124</sup> “What We Propose to Do: A Statement of the case for The Atlanta Memorial Cultural Center.” MSS 664, Box 21, Folder 10, Series II.

the members hoped that the building would be a place that would inspire creativity and achievement. Members of the Arts Alliance recognized that they needed a strong leader to unite and organize the Museum. They chose Gudmund Vigtel to be the director of the Museum because, as assistant director of the Corcoran Gallery in Washington D.C., Vigtel had a reputation for knowing how to run a museum and also for having sound artistic judgment.<sup>125</sup> He also had ties in Atlanta through the Art School that he had attended in 1949. Vig, as the new director of the Museum soon became known, quickly moved to enlist talented people to work with him to revitalize the museum.

Richard Rich, Chairman of the Board of Trustees, and James Carmichael described the way they and their arts groups envisioned the Center. It was to be built on the site of the present Art Association at Fifteenth and Peachtree Streets, with the addition of contiguous properties. The School of the Arts, the Symphony, and the Museums of the Art Association would become the first members with residence of the Center. The expanded Art School would grant degrees in all the professional forms of art expression. Associates would include certain non-profit organizations such as theater, ballet, choral groups, and festivals that would be considered for resident units of the Center at a later date.<sup>126</sup> A fund-raising goal of \$7 million was adopted as the minimum needed to build the Center. The Atlanta Arts Alliance received a challenge grant of \$4 million toward construction of the Center with the provision that a matching \$2 million was to be used for construction.

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<sup>125</sup> Rice, Bradley, Franklin Garrett and Virginia Hein, eds. *Atlanta History: A Journal of Georgia and the South*, Spring-Summer, 1994. Volume XXXVIII. Atlanta History Center. The High Museum came under attack because of lack of programming and disorganization. The High operated four separate, poorly coordinated museums.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.* It should be noted that theater was initially not included as a resident unit, which later became a reason why the theatrical group did not survive financially.

Mr. Woodruff had kept the High Museum arts project alive with the challenge grant. Carmichael, president of the Arts Alliance at the time, wrote to him, “Would to God that I had Churchill’s command of the English language so that I could adequately thank you on behalf of every citizen of Atlanta for the grant that will be used to erect the Memorial Arts Center for Atlanta.”<sup>127</sup> He added that the center would become “the mecca for all who were interested in the arts,” and that the Trustees of the Atlanta Arts Alliance were committed to raise the matching funds before June, 1965. <sup>128</sup>

On July 21, 1964, Ford Motor Company officials came to Atlanta to present a \$2 million contribution to the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra to be used as an endowment fund as well as for immediate expansion of the symphony’s season. This was the first large gift received from a national company with headquarters outside Atlanta. The vice president for civic and governmental affairs of Ford Motor Company made the presentation and said that the contribution was in appreciation of Atlanta’s cultural activities of long standing.<sup>129</sup>

With the necessary funding now in hand, members of the Arts Alliance set out to formulate their plan with a six-acre tract of land at Peachtree and Fifteenth Street, already partially occupied by the High Museum. The High Museum was located on the southeast corner of the property and was available for expansion, but additional lots would be required. (See plat above)

The Edgar Poe McBurney home at 1300 Peachtree Street, which had been held in trust for the Atlanta Arts Alliance by the Trust Company of Georgia, was the other major land acquisition. A ruling by Judge Verlyn Moore made it possible for the members of the Arts

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<sup>127</sup> Letter from James Carmichael to Robert Woodruff. March 10, 1964. MSS 576 Box 63:

<sup>128</sup> Atlanta Journal Constitution May 10, 1964.

<sup>129</sup> Anne Arrant McFarland. “The Atlanta Symphony Orchestra: The Sopkin Years (1945-1966).” Master’s Thesis, University of Georgia, 1976.

Alliance to circumvent parts of the McBurney will which gave the property to the High Museum to exhibit art materials. The judge entered an order stating that the “primary purposes” of the McBurney will “can best be accomplished by allowing the arts alliance to remove the three buildings that are located on the property, which will provide more room for the new cultural center.” The Thornton House, a Georgia home reconstructed on the High Museum property, also presented a problem, but Judge Verlyn Moore found that the house “had not attracted public interest and patronage . . . and was difficult to protect from casualties such as fire, theft, burglary, and vandalism.” The judge decreed that the state move the house to Stone Mountain and become the property of the state of Georgia.<sup>130</sup>

With the assemblage of land underway, a community campaign was launched to raise the \$2 million in addition to the \$4 million contributed by Robert Woodruff needed to fulfill the dream of a great cultural center. The city was divided into regions to facilitate the campaign for funds, and the campaign was well-organized. Region I encompassed the eastern section of the downtown Atlanta business community, Emory University, Ansley Park, East Lake, Druid Hills, Decatur, Clarkston, and Avondale Estates. Volunteers were to report to captains, captains to area chairmen, and area chairmen to the regional chairman.<sup>131</sup>

According to Mrs. Sally McDaniel, “Members of the power structure and their wives who organized the campaign held a “Left Bank” box supper at the Dinkler-Plaza Hotel on February 17, 1965, to launch the community drive.<sup>132</sup> They referred to each other as “Cultural Crusaders”

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<sup>130</sup> MSS Woodruff Collection. Box No. 17, Item No. 9. Records show that the Thornton House was built in Union Point almost 187 years before this time period in the 1960s, and was described as “the finest existing late Georgian house in this part of the state.” Members of the art association made this assessment when they purchased the house for \$2 thousand. The McBurney home was built around 1908 for E. P. McBurney, who was then secretary-manager of the Westview Cemetery Association. The way in which Judge Moore settled the problem by moving the house, is but one example of the power of those in control to facilitate change.

<sup>131</sup> Atlanta Historical Society. MSS 664. “Atlanta Memorial Cultural Center Campaign Area Boundaries” paper.

<sup>132</sup> K. Grayburn. February 17, 1965 “Left Bank Flavored Party to Kick Off \$1 million Drive for Cultural Center” *The Atlanta Constitution*, 6. Information concerning the organized campaign is discussed in the article.

and were invited to attend the function and submit questions.”<sup>133</sup> The Women’s Committee of the Arts Alliance organized the supper, and 2,000 volunteers attended. Joan Caulfield, a beautiful and well-known Hollywood actress appearing in a play in Atlanta at the time, was guest of honor at the event, evidence of the potential for Atlanta to become ‘major league.’<sup>134</sup>

Each of the volunteers received the names of five contacts and detailed instructions about how to proceed with the community drive for funds. They also received a five-page “Fact Sheet” that had the words “Atlanta Memorial Cultural Center” emblazoned across the top of the cover, which was the name members of the Alliance were calling the proposed center.<sup>135</sup> The community drive received strong media support. Money was slow in coming even with the hard work of the volunteers, and there was some doubt about whether the Atlanta community would provide support for the building. Further, there were serious objections to the word *culture* as written into the name of the arts center because of the elitist and exclusive associations with the word. Members of the board did not take action on this important issue until three years later, in late 1967, which was an indication of how out-of-touch were these men and women on the board of the Arts Alliance.<sup>136</sup>

The gift of \$1 million from the Callaway Foundation made it possible at long last for the Arts Alliance to announce to the anonymous donor of \$6.5 million, Mr. Woodruff, that the challenge grants had been met, and that the group could now proceed with the groundbreaking ceremonies. These were held on the Museum steps on June 3, 1966, the fourth anniversary of the Orly crash, in which Richard Rich, Chairman, the Building Committee, participated.<sup>137</sup> Dr.

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<sup>133</sup> Mrs. Sally McDaniel. Interview with this author. November 18, 2003.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid. Grayburn.

<sup>135</sup> Atlanta Historical Society, MSS 584.

<sup>136</sup> Doris Lockerman. “Cultural Center-A New Birth” *Atlanta Journal*. February 21, 1965.

<sup>137</sup> Alliance Notes. Atlanta Memorial Arts Center. The Woodruff Collection, Box # 17, Item 10. July 1966. Emory University Library, Special Collections.

Harry Fifield, Pastor of First Presbyterian Church, gave the invocation and the Brass Quintet of the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra provided music. Almost two hundred friends of the Alliance attended.<sup>138</sup>

The prospects for an Atlanta Memorial Arts Center generated enthusiasm among those involved in the art community as they recognized that something big was about to happen on the Atlanta arts scene. Joseph Amisano, an architect from Brazil, associated with the well-respected Albright and Toombs architectural firm, was commissioned to design the building, along with premier Atlanta architects Stevens and Wilkinson. Amisano started his design of the building with no knowledge that Robert Woodruff had the right to question the architect's design. The tight \$6 million required a "hard-nosed design, no frills." Richard Rich stated that the estimated cost of building the center would exceed \$8 million, but to soften the blow, he reported that the incomplete Lincoln Center in New York City had already cost \$160 million.<sup>139</sup>

The drawings indicated that the High Museum would remain intact, and would be part of the new building that would literally wrap around the High Museum. A large galleria would be added to the existing building to connect Symphony Hall, with nearly 1,900 seats, and the Alliance Theater with more than 800 seats; a smaller theater would be located on a lower level – the basement – for experimental theatre. The Art Institute was to be located on the top floor.<sup>140</sup>

After the design was completed Richard Rich went with two other men from the Atlanta Arts Alliance to the offices of Albright and Toombs located on Fairlie Street for the unveiling of the scale model of the building. Upon viewing the model, they quickly let the architect know

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<sup>138</sup>Ibid. Alliance Notes. Funds were still needed to provide parking, furnishings, equipment and appropriate landscaping.

<sup>139</sup> Rice, Bradley R., Ed., Franklin M. Garrett, Editor Emeritus, Virginia H. Hein, Associate Editor, *Atlanta History: A Journal of Georgia and The South*, (Spring-Summer, 1994, Volume XXXVIII Atlanta History Center; 1994), 23.

<sup>140</sup> Joseph Amisano. "Philosophy of Atlanta Memorial Cultural Center" (This narrative was inserted in the Memorial Arts Center grand opening press kit, Sept 1968), Woodruff Arts Center.

that the exterior design would be unacceptable to Mr. Woodruff, who had seen plans for the Atlanta-Fulton County Stadium and liked the exposed girders that looked like columns. The architects tried to explain the budget limitations, but to no avail. There had to be columns, even though they served no purpose other than satisfying Woodruff, who thought a museum should look like a football stadium.<sup>141</sup>

Unfortunately, the powerful men had taken control of the design of the building from the hands of the chosen architects. Mr. Amisano added lights to the top of the columns because he had designed major buildings in New York and knew that lights added creatively to the top of the columns would make them less stark.<sup>142</sup>

Initially, this inclusive visual and performing arts center was intended to house the High Museum, the Atlanta College of Art and the Atlanta Symphony. Three community theatres were vying for center stage in the early 1960s, but no decision had been made about which theatre group, if any, would have a permanent home at the center or whether ballet and opera would be included as a part of the organization.<sup>143</sup>

### **3.6 Theatre and the Arts Alliance**

George Goodwin, the Arts Alliance's first vice-chairman for theatre, was on the board of directors for Theatre Atlanta. He had wanted Theatre Atlanta to be in the new center.<sup>144</sup> "The Atlanta Theatre Guild, the Atlanta Civic Theatre, and The Playmakers were three community theatres that had merged in 1957, becoming Theatre Atlanta, the outstanding theatre in Atlanta of the pre-arts center period," according to Goodwin. However, he said that he did not anticipate

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<sup>141</sup> Virginia Rich Barnett. Interview with this author. November 3, 2003.

<sup>142</sup> Bradley R. Rice, Ed. Franklin M. Garrett, Editor Emeritus, Virginia H. Hein, Associate Editor, *Atlanta History: A Journal of Georgia and The South*, (Spring – Summer, 1994, Volume XXXVIII (Atlanta History Center: 1994), 23. Also: George Goodwin. Interview with this author. June 18, 2012.

<sup>143</sup> Robert Barnett. Interview with this author. November 3, 2003.

<sup>144</sup> George Goodwin. Interview by this author. June 18, 2012.



having problems with Theatre Atlanta's board members, the majority of whom did not want the group to be in the arts center. "They knew that the theatre would be in a subordinate position to others in the Center such as the Symphony, the Art School, and the Museum, and would lose its autonomy." The members voted not to even be considered.<sup>145</sup>

Simultaneously, Christopher Manos, an active theatre impresario, was general manager of Municipal Theatre, a group that presented the successful summer series "Theatre Under the Stars" at Chastain Park.<sup>146</sup> He had a solid reputation for presenting plays in Atlanta that had been successful in New York such as "Spider's Web" written by Agatha Christie.

Goodwin said, "It was clear from the beginning that the theatre did not have the backing of the Arts Alliance, as the group specified that whichever theatre group was chosen would be required to pay its own way and would not be a part of the Arts Alliance."<sup>147</sup> Manos offered the Alliance a three-year plan to perform professional theatre, ballet, and opera as part of its proposal. One of three courses of action would follow Municipal Theatre's second year in the center: a full merger of the theatre group with other groups in the Alliance, a continuation on a contractual basis, or an ending of the agreement after the third year, with the Municipal Theatre building its own theater during the third year. Members of the Arts Alliance agreed to this course of action.

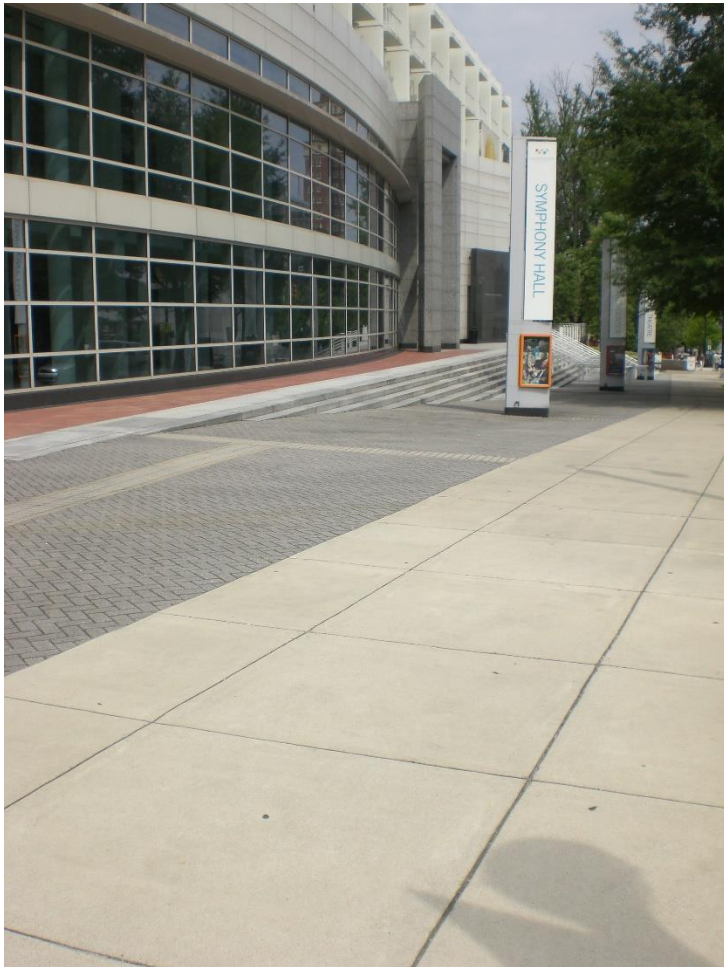
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<sup>145</sup>Ibid..

<sup>146</sup>J. Askins "40-week Season Proposed for New City Cultural Center." *The Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, 12.

<sup>147</sup>Ibid.

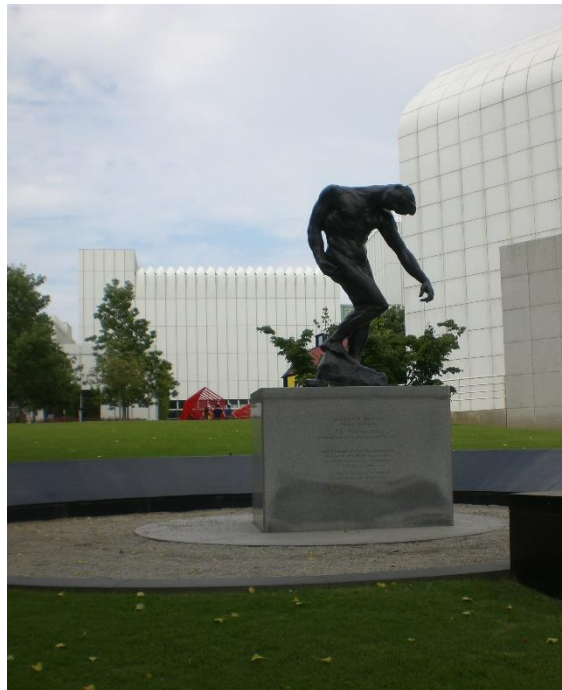
### 3.7 The Atlanta Memorial Arts Center



Photograph by author. August 14, 2014.

The Atlanta Memorial Arts Center opened with great fanfare in 1968. At the dedication, Richard Rich, president of the Atlanta Arts Alliance, praised the center, calling it “a temple of the Arts, not a place merely for entertainment or an icy repository of the arts accessible only to the affluent.” Mr. Rich continued, “It must involve the widest possible audience, hopefully the

entire community...to ensure that it will reach out to each of the arts groups, educating young persons and building future audiences for the future. We need the center for economic as well as cultural reasons.”<sup>148</sup> Ambassador and Madame Lucet from France were there to formally present the Rodin Statue, “L’Ombre” (The Shade) as a donation to commemorate the patrons who had died in the plane crash at Orly Airport in Paris.



Photograph by author. August 14, 2014

The Symphony gave its first performance in the Atlanta Memorial Arts Center in Symphony Hall on October 19, 1968, and soprano Mattiwilda Dobbs, Maynard Jackson’s aunt, was the featured attraction, along with the Symphony Chamber Chorus, and the Choral Guild. The performances were greeted with standing ovations! *Newsweek* described Symphony Hall as

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<sup>148</sup> RWW. Box 20, Speech by Richard H. Rich, October 5, 1968.

“the castle of culture on Peachtree Street that is 50 feet high, occupies four levels above the ground and one below.”

The main interest is in the Galleria, a great hall 52 feet wide, 232 feet long, with warm tan tones and deep red carpet that serves as a promenade for museum goers, and for the theater and concert crowds. . . Robert Shaw (who has gone out of his way to bring music to and receive it from Atlanta’s Negro population) said it best,” I believe the arts are the only hope for social sanity.”<sup>149</sup>

The Museum opened with an all-French program entitled “The Taste of Paris,” which exhibited French paintings and drawings including works by Cezanne, Manet, Monet, Renoir, and Picasso, among others. The audience was made up of a specially invited group of patrons, supporters and out-of-town guests.<sup>150</sup>

On October 29, 1968, the Atlanta Municipal Theater staged a dazzling event, the American premiere of *King Arthur*, a seventeenth century masque by John Dryden and Henry Purcell. Mrs. Martin Luther King, Jr., Marian Anderson, Dame Alicia Markova, and actress Patricia Neal, well-known celebrities, attended the performance. *King Arthur* produced a roar of applause and approval from the critics.<sup>151</sup> Directed by Christopher Manos, the extravaganza grabbed a lion’s share of grand opening publicity from the national press. Clive Barnes and

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<sup>149</sup> *Newsweek*. “Culture on Peachtree,” November 11, 1968.

<sup>150</sup> Chapel White, *The Atlanta Journal* October 20, 1968. Charles Towers welcomed the audience and introduced Henry Sopkin, former Conductor of the ASO, who received a standing ovation.

<sup>151</sup> The Associated Press. October 29, 1968. “Musical King Arthur Opens Tonight. *The Atlanta Constitution*, 14.

Harold Schonberg of the *New York Times* wrote reviews, as did Walter Terry of the *Saturday Review* and Tom Prideaux of *Life*. *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *Opera News* also sent reporters to the opening. The reviews were favorable; referring to the performance as “a spectacular event” and “Dazzling!” Diane Thomas of the *Atlanta Constitution* reported that *King Arthur* “delivered enough pomp and circumstance to last for many days to come.”<sup>152</sup>

In spite of the rave reviews, AMT projected a considerable deficit, which meant it would lose its lease with the Alliance, and for this reason the group applied to the Woodruff Foundation for an additional \$250 thousand dollar grant. Mr. Woodruff was amenable to the idea of supporting the theatre group if it were brought in as a full-fledged member under Alliance control. For once, the trustees of the Arts Alliance went against Mr. Woodruff. After “serious consideration of the problem,” the men determined that they did not want to be responsible for the theatre group, and that AMT, as a tenant, should delay a fundraising drive until the following year in order not to compete with the Alliance’s own campaign..<sup>153</sup>

Considering the dire financial straits, Manos might have thought earlier about not spending so much on the production of *King Arthur*, but instead the strapped theatre group proceeded at full throttle. It was the most proclaimed event on the Alliance schedule, and yet the performance had its detractors. Virginia and Bobby Barnett, two members of the Atlanta Ballet and leaders in the Arts Alliance, said, “The performance was stiff and contrived, and not well-received by the Atlanta audiences.”<sup>154</sup> Mary Nell Santacrose, a well-known actress who had

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<sup>152</sup> Diane Thomas. “Alliance Theater’s Opening a Stunner.” *Atlanta Constitution*, October 30, 1968.

<sup>153</sup> Minutes, Woodruff Arts Center. MSS. A lack of support for theatre was not new. During the time of Shakespeare theatre and stage productions were regarded as dangerous. The seductive nature of people dressed in costumes on-stage meant too much excitement which could spread new and dangerous ideas about the affairs of state, or to living persons in high places. See: Marjorie Garber. *Shakespeare After All* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2004), 23.

<sup>154</sup> Virginia Rich Barnett and her husband, Bobby Barnett were active in the Arts Community. Virginia’s father, Richard Rich, was President of Rich’s Department Store and was also an active member of the Arts Community.

been active in alternative theatre since the 1940s, attended the performance and reported that “it was like a sophisticated vaudeville show. There was a lot of action, but it did not move me, you know.”<sup>155</sup> *Newsweek* also quoted a prominent (unnamed) politician, “It’s wonderful, but I am bored to death.”

The metaphorical “morning after” left the elaborate white satin setting for *King Arthur* stained with a gush of crimson red ink; the debt was like the play, larger than life, and only two months later, in January 1969, AMT declared bankruptcy. Terry Kay, Amusement Editor for the *Atlanta Journal*, wrote, “AMT was a shattered dream.”<sup>156</sup> The purpose was to celebrate the opening of the Center and to honor Mr. Woodruff and other men who were key decision-makers in Atlanta. However, the unenthusiastic response to the Center by the people in Atlanta demonstrated that urban developments, especially when fueled by power and money, had the potential to be contrived and unimaginative.

Atlanta Municipal Theater had over-extended itself financially with resident professional companies in theatre, opera, and ballet.<sup>157</sup> The theatre group, operating as an independent tenant, had a three-year contract with the Arts Alliance to use the theater space in the Center, but the relationship between the two organizations was tenuous at best. The alliance agreed to review Atlanta Municipal Theater’s position every two years and possibly grant it membership in the Arts Alliance. But there was no denying that the Alliance built the Atlanta Memorial Arts Center for its three member groups: the Atlanta Symphony, the High Museum of Art, and the Atlanta School of Art.<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> Mary Nell Santacroce. *Newsweek* July 11, 1991.

<sup>156</sup> Terry Kay and Ann Carter, “What Happened to Municipal Theater?” *The Atlanta Journal*, January 15, 1969.

<sup>157</sup> Diane Stepp, “Municipal Theater Closing in Fund Crisis,” *Atlanta Constitution*, , January 15, 1969, 1.

<sup>158</sup> Marjorie Garber. *Shakespeare After All* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2004), 23 and 24. City officials did not like players and playhouses who saw all acting as a kind of falsehood or pretense. They considered theatre as an irresistible fascination and a danger, with common men playing the parts of kings and princes as a kind of class-jumping, dangerous to social mobility.

After the bankruptcy of the theatre in 1969, Robert Barnett said, “Because of the relationship with Atlanta Municipal Theater, the ballet company did not pursue fund-raising, which meant that funds were lacking. Later, the group launched a fund drive to raise money for the remainder of the season.”<sup>159</sup> Ms. Dorothy Alexander, founder of the Atlanta Ballet, which had operated as a non-profit organization before joining with Manos’ group and becoming a professional company, agreed that the Atlanta Ballet would fulfill its obligations. Alexander and a few members of the Ballet Guild quickly raised \$12 thousand dollars, which supplemented \$15 thousand offered by the Alliance board, to rescue the Atlanta Ballet from AMT’s fall. They promised a week-long run of *Sleeping Beauty* in March of 1969, and with the help of the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, which offered free use of its musicians and hall, the Atlanta Ballet fulfilled its commitment.<sup>160</sup>

The Atlanta Ballet, a group with a history that goes back almost as far as the Atlanta Music Club, and few others matched the staying power of the Atlanta Ballet. Dorothy Alexander started the Concert Dance Group that became the Atlanta Ballet in 1924, and until her death in 1986, she contributed to the cultural life in the city. In 1941 the group changed the name of the company to the Atlanta Civic Ballet, and then changed in the late 1960s to Atlanta Ballet.<sup>161</sup>

Notwithstanding the setbacks described above, many in the art community favored a single management for all performing disciplines.<sup>162</sup> Christopher Manos, general director of Atlanta Municipal Theater, had been restricted by members of the Arts Alliance from holding a fund raising drive to off-set any deficits that Atlanta Municipal Theater incurred, and thus AMT

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<sup>159</sup> Robert Barnett. Interview with this author. November 30, 2003.

<sup>160</sup> Dorothy Alexander urged the trustees to take the Atlanta Ballet in as a member of the Arts Alliance, but was unsuccessful, and so the group continued independently.

<sup>161</sup> Robert Barnett. Interview with this author. November 30, 2003.

<sup>162</sup> Terry Kay and Ann Carter. “What Happened to Municipal Theater?” *The Atlanta Journal*, January 15, 1968.

never really had a chance to present a premier production. Deficits began building almost immediately after Municipal began putting together an organization suitable for its program at the Arts Center.

Manos and the Municipal Theater were not the only ones who had financial problems. The Arts Alliance needed more funds almost immediately after the opening of the center in November to pay for electricity and other expenses to keep the building open and running, and the Alliance did not have money for Municipal Theater. As Charles Jagels, president of the Atlanta Arts Alliance, explained to others in the Alliance at a luncheon at the Capital City Club, “The high cost of operating the new facility – including air conditioning, lighting and cleaning is one of the penalties of our success, and we simply did not anticipate operating expenses to overwhelm the finances of the group.” The numbers shocked those elite white power brokers who ran businesses where making money was the primary objective: these men did not tolerate deficits.<sup>163</sup>

In order to understand the dynamics of the financial situation facing members of the Atlanta Arts Alliance it is important to establish the expenses of each group and to recognize that the Museum, Symphony and Art School had more support within the Arts Alliance than did the Theatre. The Atlanta Municipal Theatre, which had created an umbrella for Ballet and Opera, had the lowest operating expenses for the performing arts, \$152 thousand, but it also had the lowest operating income of \$20 thousand, costing the Alliance \$132 thousand. However, as the numbers confirm, the Museum, the Symphony and the Art School also drained the finances of the Alliance, with the Symphony as the most expensive to operate. The AMT had been permitted to fail because it did not belong to the Atlanta Arts Alliance. The Museum had support from a

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<sup>163</sup> Atlanta Arts Alliance Notes, 1969. Woodruff Arts Center Collection, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Emory University. Box 20, Item 8.



powerful guild that raised money to keep it going. The Art School had come into its own financially through the efforts of Laura Dorsey and James Carmichael, along with financial support of the Atlanta Arts Alliance.<sup>164</sup> However, the development of the building was hampered from the beginning because it was designed to entertain a small group of white socially elite people, which limited not only the realm of material presented but also the turnout of audiences.

Ada Huxtable, well-respected Pulitzer Prize winning Art and Architectural critic for the *New York Times*, wrote a scathing two-page review of the building in which she took the moneyed patrons to task for insisting on columns around the building when the architects did not include them in the design. She equated the controlling sponsorship “to a missed opportunity to express the beauty of our age.”<sup>165</sup> She added that the building had cost almost \$10 million to build, and referred to the expensive building as one where “there is a child-like confusion of the monument with the product; of the container with the contained, a place that lacked a certain spontaneity needed to unify the community.” Huxtable stated that she respected the “conscientious, intelligent, well-meaning people who had worked hard to make the dream of development of the Center come true. One simply questions the dream.”<sup>166</sup>

### **3.8 The Art and Architectural Critic Places Atlanta’s Dilemma in the National Context**

Huxtable had singled out the Atlanta Memorial Arts Center because it represented developments taking place around the country with similar plans. “The model photos and releases appear to be designed by a programmed computer that had designed them all, in which

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<sup>164</sup> James Carmichael. MSS 576 Box 49. Manuscripts, Archives, and Rare Book Library. Robert Woodruff Library. Emory University

<sup>165</sup> Ada Louise Huxtable. “All of the Arts but Architecture,” *New York Times*. October 13, 1968. This sound and plausible information is critical to the argument made in this dissertation that art communities needed more than money to promote a cultural community.

<sup>166</sup> Ada Louise Huxtable, “All of the Arts but Architecture” *New York Times*. (October 13, 1968).

they used what everyone else had used,” she wrote. “This is a guaranteed way of missing the grandeur of our times – bold, rough, and sometimes brutal . . . genuinely expressive of an age that is not smooth or classical at all. We live in a vital and troubled era.” The architecture critic took the moneyed patrons to the woodshed for meddling in the design of the building. Obviously aware of Robert Woodruff’s determination to have a colonnade around the building, she noted, “One donor refused to give up on an image of a football stadium.”

In her substantial article Huxtable suggested that art is based on creativity as she denounced the lack of understanding of the creative process that was expressed through compromises made in the design of the Center. Describing the building as a huge box, she said that the architecture should be titled, ‘Caricature Classicism’ or ‘Running Scared Modern.’ The only hope for creativity might be in the art school where they will probably attempt to “tear the carefully programmed place apart.”

### **3.9 Atlanta Music Critic, White Responds to Ada Huxtable’s Article**

Chappell White, music critic for the Atlanta Journal, shot back a rebuttal to Ms. Huxtable’s article. On the defensive, he wrote that although architecture was her field, Atlanta was his town, and notwithstanding that her report had raised some significant questions for leaders of Atlanta, she had a lack of understanding of why they built the Center. He argued, “It was built in response to four specific needs for the Atlanta community: a concert hall, a theater, additional museum space, and educational facilities for the art school. The Atlanta community needed the building even more, especially after the early 1960s, with the loss of so many members of the arts groups, and those in leadership positions had to focus the community’s interest with one massive frontal assault on the four problems.” White stressed that it would not have been less expensive to build four separate facilities.

White's article exposed some glaring problems embedded in the Atlanta Arts community, including the lack of physical places to perform and to house artistic activities. This meant that the city did not attract competent and imaginative professionals. He agreed with Ms. Huxtable that deficits would inevitably accompany the operation of the Center, but wrote, "Such deficits had always been with our community, and that they would not exhaust the resources of our city." White concluded on a positive note, stating that the arts had traditionally lagged behind economic progress, and that the Center had the potential to be a catalyst which would be "felt in activities far beyond its walls."<sup>167</sup>

White (and others), however, did not anticipate the financial problems that continued to plague the Atlanta Memorial Arts Center. Only two years later the Atlanta Memorial Arts Center was forced to operate on a limited basis due to lack of funding. They cut back activities, (according to the following schedule: Monday through Saturday 10:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M., Sunday from 12:00 noon to 5:00 P.M. and Thursday Evening 5:00 P.M. to 10:00 P. M.<sup>168</sup>) The members of the Arts Alliance made exceptions for the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra that performed at different times through the week, mostly on Friday and Saturday nights. The High Museum offered an exhibit of Lamar Dodd's "Retrospective Exhibition" and an American Silver Collection. The Junior Gallery provided "Shapes: Discovery and Adventure."

This financial dilemma forced members of the Atlanta Arts Alliance to call on others in the community to participate in fund-raising. This included Joe Heyman from the Trust Company of Georgia, who raised \$25 thousand, along with \$25 thousand from Sears and an equal amount

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<sup>167</sup> Chappell White. "Arts Center Fills Needs of Atlanta," *Atlanta Journal Constitution*, November 30, 1968, Entertainment Section, 3.

<sup>168</sup> Patricia A. McFate. "The effects of Inflation on the Arts" *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 456, (July, 1981), 70-87. Inflation affected Arts institutions in cities around the country because their essential expenses increased at a faster rate than inflation. At that time the country faced interest rates of 20% and a shortage of gasoline due to turmoil in the Middle East. Contributions from sources in the private sector had been generous for the years between 1955 and 1970, but slacked off during the weak economy after 1970.

from the First National Bank. These men soon raised the money needed to support the Atlanta Memorial Arts Center.

Ivan Allen, Jr. became chairman of the Arts Alliance in 1969, after which he enlisted the board's first black member, Dr. Benjamin Mays, president of the Atlanta Board of Education and former president of Morehouse College. Allen then asked Jenelsie Walden Holloway, artist and advocate for African American Art, to join with them. Later the Reverend Andrew Young, civil rights activist and future congressman, ambassador and Atlanta mayor, followed suit.

The arts continued to be in financial trouble and many in the arts community focused on inflation as the culprit.<sup>169</sup> Atlanta's situation reflected the state of the art world around the country because inflation harmed the arts; and further because a weak economy, harsh tax laws and lower stock and bond markets also effected nonprofit institutions.<sup>170</sup> Even with expanding audiences and larger more substantive contributions from those in the community accustomed to excellence in the arts, funding became more complicated. Financial equilibrium meant that for an institution to be stable it must have current and projected balanced budgets in which the purchasing power of the institution's endowment is preserved and the useful life of its physical assets maintained. For all of their problems, arts groups in Atlanta seemed remarkably resilient.

In 1969 the Atlanta the Arts Alliance expanded its membership and also enlarged the size of the Alliance Board to between eighty and ninety members. Financial support increased because each member of the board raised money, served on committees, advocated for the theatre by attending board meetings and also sold subscriptions to Main-stage productions.

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McFate served as deputy chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities, an independent federal agency, for three years.

<sup>170</sup> The Metropolitan Museum of Art experienced serious problems because the Museum could no longer afford the practice of returning funds to principal; the income was needed to operate the Museum. This information came from the "Report of the Vice President for Finance and Treasurer," *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Annual Report for the Year 1979-1980* (New York: Metropolitan Museum, 1980), 78.

Members also made “significant personal financial contributions” to the theatre.<sup>171</sup> A groundswell of successful younger and more enthusiastic members committed themselves to promoting serious theatre in Atlanta.

In 1970, the Atlanta Journal-Constitution confirmed that the Atlanta Memorial Arts Center was at last becoming a success; a place where people from all walks of life enjoyed spending time with their families and friends seeing the special exhibitions and permanent collection. Admitting that when the Center first opened, some Atlantans were concerned about how the huge building would be used and the ability of the art organizations to fill it with adequate programs.<sup>172</sup> A problem that had hampered the development of the Arts Community from the inception of the various groups such as the Museum, Symphony, Theatre, Opera, and Art School was the belief – or at least the illusion – that the building that housed the arts was a celebration of cultural virtues designed to entertain a relatively small, elite group of socially prominent members of the Atlanta community.

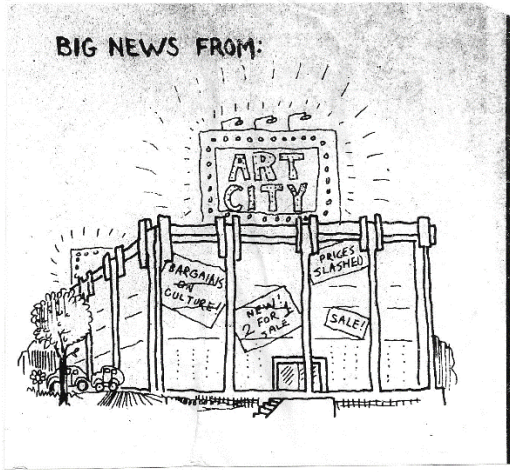
Members of the Atlanta Memorial Arts Center struggled to make the arts community in Midtown relevant and appealing to the people of Atlanta, as tensions built close by in Piedmont Park, where thousands of newcomers to the city gathered to simultaneously celebrate their freedom from mainstream America and protest against all that was wrong with the country. This drawing from the *Bird* depicts the way those in the counterculture viewed the Center.<sup>173</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> “Handbook for Members of the Board of Directors.” 1970. Alliance Theatre Company.

<sup>172</sup> Letter from Gudmund Vigtel to Robert Woodruff. October 20, 1970. MSS Woodruff Collection, Box n. 17. Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Robert Woodruff Library, Emory University.

<sup>173</sup> GSB. October 15, 1968.



## 4 THE RENAISSANCE IN MIDTOWN ROCKS

### 4.1 The Counterculture and the Underground Press

The *Great Speckled Bird*, a well-respected underground newspaper, came to life during the early spring of 1968 into a world of turmoil and disorder: a journalist's dream. As historian Laurence Leamer wrote, "It was no coincidence that the paper, an organic part of radical-youth culture, burst upon the scene in Midtown just as the hippie community exploded in Atlanta."<sup>174</sup> This group challenged the status quo there, becoming an integral part of the transition that took place in Midtown. The purpose of this chapter is to insert new and robust information into the narrative about the creative role that some members of the counterculture played in shaping the community by incorporating different stories and fresh interpretations of that era as recorded in the *Bird* and elsewhere. This chapter ties parts of the renaissance to the other creative components of this study. The cacophony in the street brought on by the thousands of newcomers pouring into Midtown resonated with the "anti-music" music Robert Shaw's Symphony Orchestra played that grated on the nerves of people in the audience. Like those making noise in the streets, Shaw did this in order to point out and make evident that changes had to be made. Frank Wittow, through his Academy Theatre, became the conscience of the community by addressing issues such as the need for racial and sexual equality, that were uncomfortable for those in the audience to hear. Gudmund Vigtel, curator for the High Museum, improved the quality of the exhibitions there by adding to the program work by African Americans and also artists from Africa.

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<sup>174</sup> Laurence Leamer. *The Paper Revolutionaries: The Rise of the Underground Press*. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972), 13.

This influx of people and activities into the area provided reporters for the *Bird* an abundance of material to record and print, while photographers for the paper quickly recognized the need to invest in wide-angle lens to capture the enormity of the bizarre happenings.<sup>175</sup> The upheaval involved a diverse group of New Left anti-imperialists known as “politicos,” many of them hard-core pacifists, draft resisters, progressive social workers, student activists and New Left anti-imperialists; some committed to revolutionary communist causes such as redistribution of wealth, privilege and power. Others in the crowd, considered “culture hippies,” came to Midtown to act out their grievances through spontaneous *Guerilla Theatre*. They wanted to “give peace a chance” while listening to good music, smoking pot, and socializing with those who had similar interests. Strong differences existed between the groups, but the physical closeness and fluidity of those who had been moving into Midtown since 1966, meant that they frequently interacted.<sup>176</sup>

This spontaneous grassroots movement by energetic young revolutionaries known as the counterculture, embraced anti-war activism, movements against sexual and racial discrimination, and contempt for authoritarianism in general; and this created havoc in Midtown. The spirited activities reverberated into surrounding areas and resonated with other New Left movements throughout the country and around the world.<sup>177</sup> Struggle and unrest among the thousands of young activists and members of the counterculture, referred to as longhairs, hippies, or bohemian

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<sup>175</sup> The *Great Speckled Bird*, referred to as *Bird* in the body of this chapter and GSB in the notes.

<sup>176</sup> John McMillian and Paul Buhle, eds. *The New Left Revisited* (Philadelphia; Temple University Press, 2003) McBride, “Death City Radicals: The Counterculture in Los Angeles.”

<sup>177</sup> The most notable cities where counter culture and political activism first emerged in this country were New York City’s Greenwich Village and the Haight-Asbury neighborhood in San Francisco.





Photograph taken by Bob Goodman, September 18, 1968

intellectuals who swarmed into the area, unlocked creative energy that had never been seen in Midtown before.<sup>178</sup>

The uprising meant so much to social activist Bob Goodman, a Harvard University history graduate student writing his doctoral dissertation at the time, that he dropped everything and went to Atlanta because what was happening there meant more than finishing his dissertation. “We knew that the best of the revolution . . . had little to do with geography. Being young, energetic and determined not to be programmed toward success, money, and war mattered,” Goodman said. “For those engaged, the activities of the counterculture seemed to be unprecedented in promise and problems.”<sup>179</sup> The picture he took shown above is the scene he saw when he made his way into Midtown.

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<sup>179</sup> Bob Goodman. Interview with this author. July 20, 2012. Goodman lives in Atlanta and continues to march and protest about this country’s involvement in wars around the world.

Against a back-drop of these tumultuous events and the birth of New Left activism bringing with it hope for political change, Emory student Gene Guerrero, along with other Emory students, focused their rage against the war in Vietnam in a weekly newsletter called *The Emory Herald Tribune*. The paper, a forerunner to the *Great Speckled Bird*, provided a conduit for airing opinions not usually found in mainstream newspapers such as the *Atlanta Journal* and the *Atlanta Constitution*. The creation of the *Bird* in early 1968, coincided with the escalation of the war in Vietnam, the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, and conflict over Civil Rights legislation. These diverse movements brought people from many different backgrounds as a part of the mass defection of American youth in the 1960s and 1970s. Other members of the *Bird* group included founding member Tom Coffin and Stephanie Coffin, graphic designer who designed the layout for the *Bird*. Howard Romaine, Jim Gwinn, Dottie Buono, Anne Mauney, Sue Thrasher, Ted Brodek, Bill Cutler and Steve Wise contributed articles and pictures to the *Bird*. Miller Francis wrote art and music reviews, while supporting the gay rights movement in Atlanta. Sally Gabb, co-founder of the Atlanta Lesbian Feminist Alliance (ALFA), became a part of the *Bird* family in 1969, saying that she joined because, “I like subversion. The world needs it, and I like doing it.”<sup>180</sup>

Sensing a need for a place where these writers and revolutionaries could meet and discuss world issues, Bruce Donnelly, a young Methodist minister, opened “The Twelfth Gate Coffee House,” a coffee house located in the basement of a building in Midtown called the “Catacombs.” These motley groups had heated debates about ways to challenge the status quo

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<sup>180</sup> Ken Wachsberger, with forewords by William Kunstler and Abe Peck. Ed. *Voices From the Underground – Volume I: Insider Histories of the Vietnam Era Underground Press* Tempe: Mica Press, 1984, 41.

about Cold War issues, taking breaks only to immerse themselves in tantalizing and provocative dialogues about free living, free love, and free drugs.<sup>181</sup>

According to historian Doug Rossinow, “These hippie intellectuals spoke endlessly about unrealized spiritual and ideological reforms and ways that they could change what they perceived to be a *shallow civilization*, devoid of feeling.” Rossinow also wrote, “Unlike previous cultural movements, this one included participants from privileged parts of society, many of whom had walked away from colleges and universities to join in a search for ‘authenticity.’”<sup>182</sup> Although members of the counterculture advocated Civil Rights legislation and considered that issue of prime importance, not many people from the black community participated in these protests and marches.

After lively discussions, the raucous groups then spilled out onto the heart of Midtown; Peachtree and 15th Streets, for activities known as “be-ins,” from which they progressed down 15th Street into nearby Piedmont Park.<sup>183</sup> The fluid nature of these groups meant that frequent traffic jams and congestion spread throughout Midtown as people driving in the area stopped to stare at the spirited youths dressed in colorful costumes. Longhairs and hippies meandered among the people and stopped cars, and shared joints with many of those who wanted to get in on the action.<sup>184</sup>

Hippies usually held their concerts and anti-war protests in Piedmont Park, where they attracted all sorts of people, including many from the straight community. Thus a diverse and spirited group of writers, musicians, actors, dancers, artists, photographers and intellectuals

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<sup>181</sup> GSB. August 16, 1969. Bruce Donnelly first opened the Twelfth Gate Coffee House, after which he and others opened a new and larger hippie coffee shop called the Fourteenth Gate.

<sup>182</sup> Doug Rossinow. *The Politics of Authenticity: Christianity, and the New Left in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 14.

<sup>183</sup> GSB. August 16, 1969.

<sup>184</sup> The terms “joint,” “roach” and others are used throughout this dissertation when referring to marijuana.

assembled to experience poetry, loud music, drugs, and each other. Activism and chaos during those times complemented reports of creative interaction between hippies and members of the arts community based in the Atlanta Memorial Arts Center, all of which left unmistakable footprints of the counterculture in Midtown.

Historian George Lipsitz noted, “Americans changed the way they thought about cultural values because of the dynamics of these groups and, in doing so, established a wide chasm between social conservatives on one side, and members of the New Left on the other. [Upheavals by the hippies appeared as metaphors for energy and change in Atlanta as written about in the *Bird*.]

The *Bird*, a paper that originally sold for 15c per copy, flourished amidst the turmoil taking place in Midtown with the influx of thousands of members of conservatives on one side and members of the New Left and the hippie counterculture on the other.” That was a time when the writers and editors set up printing presses in offices located in a building on 14th Street and Peachtree in Midtown.<sup>185</sup> They named the paper *Great Speckled Bird* when some of those

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involved heard the Reverend Pearly Brown sing an allegorical gospel song about “the truth winning out.” Inspiration came from the song Reverend Brown sang, and also from the Bible (Jeremiah 12:9), “Mine heritage is unto me as a Speckled Bird, the birds round about *are* against her,” a verse that speaks to those who left their homes to seek new ways in the world.<sup>186</sup>

From the beginning of the underground paper’s publication the writers and editors implemented ways to distinguish the *Bird* from mainstream media by using colorful photographs and graphic designs with neon blue, orange, lime green, and yellow psychedelic lettering to attract attention. The colors also enhanced riveting narratives of love-ins and other happenings that included folk-rock music festivals and flower power events, reflecting the colorful drug-induced play some members of the counterculture enjoyed. However, the playful style impacted cultural, political, and economic transformations, and renewed earlier visions of bohemian subcultures in large cities in America during the early part of the 20th century.<sup>187</sup>

*Bird* editors and writers often borrowed information and material concerning important events taking place around Atlanta and elsewhere, from other papers. For example, the *Bird*

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<sup>185</sup> *GSB*. October, 1976.

<sup>186</sup> *GSB*. Volume nine, number nine – last issue of the *Bird*. October 20, 1976. “The Atlanta Co-operative News Project” was the original name chosen for the underground paper.

<sup>187</sup> Stephanie Coffin. Interview with this author. July, 2014.

editors borrowed the review of a play from *Atlanta Voice* because they thought the article was important enough to warrant the coverage. It concerned a production of “The Black Flame,” a dramatic portrayal of the life and achievements of W.E.B. Dubois at the Penny Festival, located in the Magnolia Ballroom in Vine City, where admittance cost one penny. A. B. Spellman wrote and Bernice Reagon produced the play that recreated, through drama, song and dance, activities from Dubois’ childhood to his exile in Africa. A dramatic portrayal of the experience of the Black Man in America demonstrated that chasms can be crossed and ruptures can be healed through creativity of this sort. This was accomplished by “African Freedom Song, IKATI,” the soul of Africa, bridged by creative imagination the will-to-blackness by Spiritual possession. “The African past is not only remembered: in the music it has never been forgotten,” according to the review.<sup>188</sup>

Reviews such as this helped to unite members of the counterculture with those outside of the milieu who gathered in Midtown. Even when their protests centered on issues such as the war in Vietnam and civil rights, demonstrations by members of the counterculture also connected with international upheavals such as those taking place in “Communist Bloc” and “third world” countries.<sup>189</sup> The intensity of counterculture activities in 1968 created enough havoc in this country to motivate President Lyndon Johnson to order an investigation of the group by the

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<sup>188</sup> GSB. March 15, 1968. Stephen C. Henderson wrote this review featured in *Atlanta Voice*, March 10, 1968. Used by permission, and using the same emphasis on certain words such as “Black Man.” Information such as this would never be found in the mainstream media at that time. The borrowing of the review also demonstrates interaction between those who wrote for the *Bird* and members of the black community.

<sup>189</sup> A.O. Scott. “The Spirit of ’68 What Godard and His Fellow Revolutionaries Still Have to Tell Us” the *New York Times* “April 27, 2008. John Luc Godard and Francois Truffaut captured the insurgent revolutionary zeal of students and workers in Paris during political and social discontent there, noting that the riots, mass demonstrations, and work stoppages represented similar discontent elsewhere.

Central Intelligence Agency. Agents found that political disruption by restless youths to be a “world-wide phenomenon.”<sup>190</sup>

The same disruption prevailed in Midtown as evidenced by what happened one chilly night in September 1969. Tensions escalated and led to a confrontation between the Atlanta police and a group of young radicals, members of the counterculture who gathered around a pavilion in Piedmont Park waiting for free live concerts by Radar and Brick Wall. Writers for the *Bird* mingled in the area with other enthusiasts, all anticipating a repeat of the intensity of recent concerts, the most memorable one by the Grateful Dead in the spring of 1969. *Bird* writers recorded the events of this September evening and elicited affidavits from members of the counter culture (also known as “hippies” and “longhairs”) about police harassment on previous occasions.<sup>191</sup> The atmosphere remained tense and the battle that ensued between the police and members of the counter culture shocked all who were assembled there to enjoy the music as well as those who later read about it in the *Bird*.

In order to have a clearer understanding of what happened that day 45 years-ago, I asked Atlanta native George Nikas to meet with me at Piedmont Park to discuss those events. Nikas’ commentary on those events provides insight into the mindset of those gathered there because, as a part of the counter culture movement, he participated both as a “politico” who resisted the Vietnam War by resigning from the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) at Grady High School as a conscientious objector, and by leading workshops for nonviolence through the War Resisters’ League (WRL). The belief that the war was wrong, and that something must be done

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<sup>190</sup> Ronald Fraser, ed. *1968: A Student Generation in Revolt* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988), 49. The Vietnamese Tet offensive of April 1968 had dramatic political and inspirational impact on students everywhere. Those who fostered New Left ideology connected with the rhetoric between Civil Rights and the Vietnam War, and mobilized students in the United States and Western Europe. It should be noted that a significant amount of turmoil took place during a time when this country experienced unprecedented growth and prosperity, and that many protesting students came from middle and upper-class families.

<sup>191</sup> GSB. September 29, 1969.

to stop the carnage in Vietnam, motivated the teenager to become an active member of the protest.

He also participated as a “cultural hippie” by acting in *Gorilla Theatre* presentations. Nikas sold copies of the *Bird*, which he bought for 7 cents, and then sold for 15. As a teen-age member of the counter culture at that time, Nikas recalls that the crowd consisted mainly of those who wanted to enjoy the music and socialize. He explained that they were not there to protest the Vietnam War or anything else. He explained:

We just wanted to have a good time, smoke a little pot, and listen to music. I knew most of the people gathered here including members of the police department because I attended Grady High School located across the street from here, and I spent a lot of time in the area. Come on and I will show you the “hot spots.”<sup>192</sup>

Nikas took me on a stroll around the park, pointing out places where activities occurred that afternoon. “We congregated over there to hear the Allman Brothers,” he said, pointing to an open pavilion. The buzz around the park that night in September suggested that a few “narcs,” the name hippies used for plain-clothes police officers, lurked among the crowd looking for marijuana.

The peaceful tone of the evening suddenly changed as one of the policemen grabbed George Nikas, a teen-age member of the counterculture, and started shoving him out of the park. A tussle occurred as some of the hippies in the crowd tried to pull him back. Nikas shouted to the man who held him, “Show me your badge!” The man responded by pulling out a small revolver and shoving it against the back of Nikas’ head. The policeman then shouted to the

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<sup>192</sup> George Nikas. Interview with author. September 26, 2014.



crowd, “Get back or I will blow his brains out.” The crowd retreated, but followed at a distance as the man continued to shove Nikas up the steps and out of the park.<sup>193</sup>

Minutes later squad cars arrived on the scene and police wearing riot helmets and armed with shotguns and pistols scrambled out of the cars ready to arrest members of the crowd. Policemen immediately targeted Bill Fibbon, a *Bird* photographer who had captured the whole Nikas hassle with his camera. They apprehended him along with another *Bird* staff member, David Slier. A crowd of two or three hundred people surrounded the cars holding Fibbon, Slier, and Nikas shouting, “Pigs Out of the Park!” “Let Them Go!” “Let Our Brothers Go!” The grave nature of the situation began to sink in, “grinding against everything wonderful that they had experienced in the Park,” a *Bird* reporter later wrote. The police then attempted to close off exits to Piedmont Road. Steve Cole, announcer for Radar, one of the bands scheduled to have played that evening, pleaded with the officers to let him use his microphone to help quiet and calm the crowd.<sup>194</sup> One policeman, while unwrapping tear-gas canisters, responded, “Yeah, you go ahead and break up the crowd.” Almost immediately tear-gas canisters exploded and people scattered in all directions.

#### **4.2 Hosea Williams Explains Reasons for Police Intrusion**

Scenes like this, where police knocked to the ground predominately white, middle-class young men and women, gassed them, and then threw them into police vans before they took them to jail, had not occurred before in Piedmont Park. Hosea Williams of the Southern Christian Leadership Council arrived during the fray and reminded those who would listen, “What you have to understand is that black people have been experiencing this sort of physical

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<sup>193</sup> Ibid. Greg Gregory wrote, “Nikas, in the great tradition of Paul Revere had alerted members of the counterculture about the narcs plans to be in the park that night.”

<sup>194</sup> Brick Wall, the other band scheduled to play that day, had just started playing music.

and emotional abuse for a long time – and partly for the same reason: because we don't want to conform to the way of this sick, racist society in many ways controlled by the Ku Klux Klan. The reason they are brutalizing you is simple; you want to live your life your own way.”<sup>195</sup> William's comments indicate a sense of connectedness with some of the young members of the counterculture.

A scuffle erupted off to the side between three policemen and *Bird* staffer Becky Hamilton when they grabbed her and knocked her to the ground. One of the policemen stood over her and sprayed her face with mace. The police then grabbed Bob Goodman, a Harvard graduate who belonged to the *Bird* family, and threw him into a police vehicle along with *Bird* reporter Jim Gwin.<sup>196</sup> They sprayed Bob Malone with mace. Malone was another reporter for the *Bird*, and then they threw him in with the others. The police locked the doors and stuck a can of mace through the window and sprayed everyone in the wagon. Parked police cars sealed the drive coming into the park from Piedmont Road, and squads of policemen began to storm into Piedmont Park as people threw small rocks at them. Police frantically threw canisters of tear gas in all directions engulfing the area with fumes.<sup>197</sup>

The officer who had attacked Becky Hamilton pulled out a long-barreled silver pistol, aimed, and fired into the air. Fortunately he did not mean to injure or kill anyone, only to frighten those in the crowd, but the enormity of the situation became apparent to all involved. One woman, the wife of a professor at Georgia Tech, walked up at that time to check on her teen-age children who had gone to the park to hear the music. She witnessed what she described as a scene that “looked like World War II.” The lawyer hired by reporters for the *Bird* arrived on

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<sup>195</sup> GSB. August 11, 1969. The commentary concerning these events was written up in the *Bird*.

<sup>196</sup> Bob Goodman. Interview with this author in Atlanta. June 8, 2012. Goodman reported that he has experienced so many similar incidents with the police since then that they all run together in his memory.

<sup>197</sup> GSB. September 11, 1969.

the scene and persuaded the police to leave. When they drove away the police vans held twelve people.<sup>198</sup>

#### **4.3 This Incident as it Relates to the Volatile Times**

This traumatic occurrence transpired in Atlanta during a revolutionary time in this country when Americans found themselves awash in unanticipated conflict. The volatile atmosphere continued to escalate in the latter part of the 1960s when “culture wars” erupted and members of the counterculture challenged the fundamental values of white power brokers.

#### **4.4 Aha, so Feminism Played a Role in the Upheaval: Even if only Acknowledged by Women**

The editorial content of the *Bird* focused on radical international news, as members of the *Bird* family became increasingly more Marxist.<sup>199</sup> Feminism became a divisive and explosive force within the paper itself as women who wrote for the *Bird* were discontented with the subservient roles they played, such as secretaries, sex objects, house-keepers, or “dumb chicks.” Although feminism was not considered as a primary issue by some members of the counterculture, the women who worked for the *Bird* felt strongly that it should be addressed. They felt pressured to conform to images of the dutiful [subordinate] to the men who wrote for the *Bird* and the women recognized the cross-cultural connection between these women and middle-class women, both black and white, in Western societies. The intimate expressions of anguish by female members of the *Bird* family resonated with experiences of women from every

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<sup>198</sup> GSB. September 23, 1969.

<sup>199</sup> GSB. March 15, 1968.

class and walk of life, and with women around the world.<sup>200</sup> The groups of women discussed throughout this dissertation are those who, before now, had not decision makers.

As female reporters delved deeper into issues of sexism, they slowly and painfully forged a new sense of themselves. The worst part of the lonely transition came with the recognition by them of the internal enemy: each had pictured herself as the image of the “southern lady,” with all the implications of servility that kept them chained to the past. Historian Sara Evans wrote, “The process of breaking away from southern white society proved wrenching.”<sup>201</sup>

Serious issues such as gender dynamics grabbed the attention of reporters like Sally Gabb, a well-respected journalist even before she became a member of the *Bird* staff. The women’s movement, a personal one among those women who worked for the *Bird*, challenged the idea of women as subordinates of men and did, in fact, effect radical political and social changes in this country. Although Gabb did not wrangle with other *Bird* women for men, she understood the anguish of straight women who wrote for the paper and competed with each other for the men who worked around them.<sup>202</sup>

Both men and women wrote articles that sent implicit misogynist messages, one of which claimed that “many ‘movement women,’ in fact, identified as little more than camp followers of the sort that always tagged along after men who engaged in dangerous or glamorous callings.”<sup>203</sup> In fact, women instigated liberation caucuses, which enraged many of the men in the movement who accused the feminists of being childish and selfish for complaining about minor incidents,

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<sup>200</sup> Betty Freidan. *The Feminine Mystique*. (New York: Dell, 1963), 11. Through surveys, interviews, and observations Freidan designated a problem that prevailed with middle-class women who lived the “good life” and yet felt desperate and unfulfilled.

<sup>201</sup> Sara Evans. *Personal Politics; The Roots of Women’s Liberation in the Civil Rights Movement & the New Left* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 43.

<sup>202</sup> Ken Wachsberger. *Voices From the Underground – Volume I: Insider Histories of the Vietnam Era Underground Press*. (Tempe: Mica Press, 1984), 47.

<sup>203</sup> Irwin Unger, with Debi Unger. *The Movement: A History of the American New Left, 1959 to 1972* (1974), 29.

when many people around the world experienced far greater suffering and oppression. Some activists viewed individual groups and causes, such as those who advocated women's and gay rights, as impediments to larger causes like the people's revolution, civil rights causes, and the war in Vietnam.<sup>204</sup>

Becky Hamilton, *Bird* reporter, responded to this charge by writing, "When a Woman Can Do It," in which she iterated that "after working at the *Bird* all day, [we] went home to cook for our 'thinking' husbands and boyfriends, clean, become neurotic, and accept the blame for having that neurosis."<sup>205</sup> "Out of anger and alienation," Hamilton continued, "we decided to publish a 'women's issue' of the *Bird*. We would prove ourselves to the men . . . who allowed us to do so. However, few of us had the confidence to write, and we did not trust each other's motives or politics because we continued to compete among ourselves for the men who worked around us. We ended up in tears and engulfed in bitterness with an issue of the *Bird* we had fought to write, and were now too embarrassed to print or sell."<sup>206</sup>

It took time to recover and gain new insight into their predicament, but after the women lived through this experience of confusion, awkwardness, and honesty, they soon learned to exercise their power, work together to develop new content for the paper, and reevaluate their priorities toward the men they worked with. "We have changed," Hamilton wrote. "We are stronger and meaner and (finally) we can love."<sup>207</sup>

In working out their own problems, female reporters danced right into the heart of the feminist movement, and made up a local variant of the national story that crossed class and racial

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<sup>204</sup> David Farber. *The Age of Dreams: America in the 1960s* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1994), 162.

<sup>205</sup> GSB. October 11, 1970. Becky Hamilton, "Even a Woman Can Do It." This author can relate to the angst these women felt because the same dynamics dominated the lives of those who lived in main-stream Atlanta. The difference was that these women who wrote for the *Bird* took action and effected change, which came much later for others.

<sup>206</sup> GSB. October 11, 1970.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid.

boundaries. Shakespeare referred through-out his writing to these struggles written about in the *Bird* and elsewhere as “a play within a play,” a microcosm of the world outside the paper where women acted as secretaries, typing articles men wrote, and lived “in the shadows.”<sup>208</sup> Legitimacy meant having “powerful” men to support them as they fought with each other for jobs – and men.<sup>209</sup>

The new awareness of women’s existential issues framed a major development within the inner circle of the *Bird*, and reflected the discontent that many felt.<sup>210</sup> Those who worked for the *Bird* found common ground among themselves, and used their new-found energies to organize child centers, fight for the right to organize unions, and to advocate for abortion rights.<sup>211</sup> Later, female members of Students for Democratic Society spearheaded a new agenda for feminism, and that movement changed the internal workings of the *Bird* staff: Sue Thrasher, an activist for the Southern Student Organizing Committee and a writer and editor for the *Bird*, started an oral history project to document radical movements. She focused her attention on feminist consciousness-raising through Atlanta Women’s Liberation. Soon news copy in the paper reflected those changes, as reporters of both sexes typed their own stories. These very personal stories, and some others written for the *Bird*, resonated with many female readers outside the world of the underground paper.

The pen-work drawing that is featured below, portrays the idea that the queen with a gun, and the king with a rose that appeared in the *Bird* not only refers to the popular rock music

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<sup>208</sup> Margaret Garber. *Shakespeare After All* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2004), 176 and 496. In his writing Shakespeare frequently depicted “Plays – Within – Plays.” “Hamlet” and “A Midsummer Night’s Dream” are each a play-within-the-play.

<sup>209</sup> This author was familiar with *the world outside the paper*, the world wherein many women lived in a superficial world of gossip. To wit: there were few female doctors or lawyers during the 1960’s.

<sup>210</sup> See: Sara Evans. *Personal Politics: The Roots of Women’s Liberation in the Civil Rights Movement & The New Left* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979).

<sup>211</sup> *GSB*. March 19, 1973.

group, "Guns and Roses" but also describes the way women were rapidly dispelling sexist attitudes. They would no longer be wooed by a rose.



Courtesy of Georgia State University Library, Special Collections

As publishing of the *Bird* continued, the paper attracted those whose interests involved more than anti-war, anti-racist and feminist movements. The message of the *Bird* included its identification with youth culture, hallucinogenic drugs, rock music, Piedmont Park and “The Strip” on Peachtree Street where Atlanta’s long-hairs gathered. Reporters then moved closer to serious and tough investigative reporting by taking on subjects of local government and working conditions among laborers in Atlanta.<sup>212</sup> Articles in the paper supported the Black Panther party, the Vietnamese NLF, Cuba, and other national liberation and revolutionary socialist movements. It also included women’s and gay liberation movements, all of which made up part of the *Bird* that members of the counterculture hawked on the streets of Midtown every week-end.<sup>213</sup>

The local news collective analyzed government in Atlanta, and attempted to inform readers how powerless they were in shaping local policies. The editors designed the paper to provide insight into economic and political trends, and to keep the reading public updated on the war in Vietnam. The *Bird* also received stories from various news services such as Underground Press Syndicate, Liberation News Service, and Pacific News Service that provided material to underground papers. Less frequently the *Bird* accepted material from College Press Service, Community News Service, Dispatch News Service, Alternative Features, and a High School News Service. Articles in the *Bird* represented new and fresh material with topics of interest that appealed to a wide population of readers.

Rosemary Daniell’s powerful poetry on the horrors of the Vietnam War usually received pride of place in the *Bird*, and she contributed her work to the paper without expecting

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<sup>212</sup> GSB. March 1969. The city employees and garbage workers’ strike in the middle of March, 1969, brought hippies out to vote. These members of the counter culture supported the garbage strike because they wanted an alliance with the black community.

<sup>213</sup> Bob Goodman. Interview by this author. July 20, 2012.



compensation. Marilyn Hunt's "You Will See Me," a riveting poem complements a drawing in the *Bird* signed by an artist named "Hightower." One great work of art inspired another. His drawing, especially the muscle toning, reflects the influence of the Rodin Statue, "L'Ombre" (The Shade), that the French government presented to the Atlanta Arts Alliance in 1968 to commemorate the members of the art community who died in a plane crash at the Orly Airport in Paris in 1962.<sup>214</sup>

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<sup>214</sup> GSB. November 28, 1968.

## YOU WILL SEE ME

YOU  
*will see me*  
 standing here  
 outside the melting pot  
 NOW  
 glad  
 I was not melted  
     (though burned)  
 wondering how  
 I got melted? yellow  
 when the pot said  
 "white only"

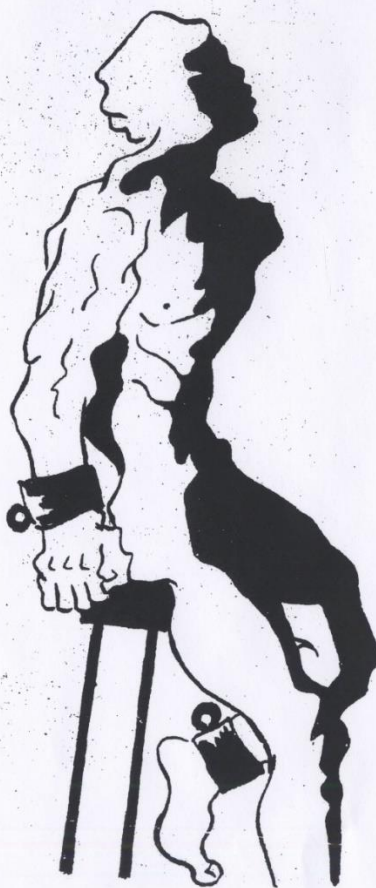
YOU  
 confused  
 my great grandma's cooking pot  
 with your melting pot  
 so my family tree  
 would burn  
 before I could grow  
 to be cooled by its shade.

heritage

YOU  
*will see me,*  
 not only my darkness  
 but the light  
 I bring.  
 that splendid horror  
 of light  
 that shall  
 forever darken  
 your melting pot  
 that I molded  
 and

YOU  
 now  
 burn in

—Marilyn Hunt  
 Spelman College



One issue of the *Bird* featured Howard Zinn, a well-known peace activist who had just returned from a trip to North Vietnam. He attended an all-day seminar on the war in Vietnam sponsored by Georgia State University and several other groups devoted to peace. Zinn spoke of the despondency of those involved in the peace movement because their efforts had not ended the war nor even changed minds in America about the serious nature of war. He reminded those gathered there that the Vietnamese had been victimized by the Nationalist Chinese who occupied North Vietnam after World War II, when the French occupied the southern part of the country.<sup>215</sup>

During the summer of 1969 the hippie population in the 10th Street area of Midtown swelled to somewhere between four and five thousand people, along with an equal number of students who frequented the area, some from Atlanta and others from around the state and elsewhere. Many came from middle-class American homes, and others represented liberation groups such as Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). Due to the influx into Midtown of longhairs and others, such as poor rural whites, homosexuals, prostitutes, and drug pushers, pandemonium followed, and residents who lived in the area and around Piedmont Park felt that just having them there interfered with the enjoyment of their homes and community. As hippie businesses such as bars, skin flicks, and go-go bars moved into the Tenth Street area, the small shops and food markets that long-time residents had frequented either closed or moved out to the suburbs. The transitioning of the neighborhood and the dynamics that accompanied the changes meant that Midtown residents blamed the hippies for their inconveniences.

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<sup>215</sup> Howard Zinn. *Vietnam: The Logic of Withdrawal* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967) Zinn taught at Spelman College in Atlanta from 1956 to 1963. During his years in the south he served as an advisor to the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). In February of 1968 he went with Father Daniel Berrigan to North Vietnam, where they retrieved three American airmen from the North Vietnamese in commemoration of the TET New Year.

Those businesses that chose to stay in Midtown felt abused by both the hippies and a city policy that banned all parking on Peachtree Street.<sup>216</sup> The hippie residents, for the most part, did not patronize what they considered to be capitalistic enterprises and tourist trade stores that appealed to “undesirables.” Members of the exclusive Piedmont Driving Club, located on contiguous property to the south of Piedmont Park, also felt that the comings and goings of the members of the counterculture hampered their freedom and the use of their recreation facilities.<sup>217</sup>

The “street people,” composed primarily of longhairs, became the most visible and increasingly unstable group, primarily due to the use of hard drugs. The news media in Atlanta, cognizant of heavy drug use in the Tenth Street area, ran a series of articles that portrayed the hippie community as perpetuating the presence of drugs in Midtown and warned of an eminent “drug crisis” if the city did not do something to curtail this problem.<sup>218</sup>

The *Bird* responded to the “crisis” with an article exposing the situation as more broad-based than had been acknowledged by legislative committees, academic conferences and service clubs. As long as members of those organizations targeted hippies and other marginalized groups to take the heat for the fantastic increase in drug use (such as marijuana, LSD, and other psycho-chemicals) an air of hypocrisy prevailed. When the problem expanded to include the son of John Steinbeck, the daughters of Senator George McGovern and Vice President Spiro Agnew and other young white middle-to-upper class people, the problem took on a different persona.<sup>219</sup>

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<sup>216</sup> This narrative reflects the views of John Spahr Haydock. *Organized Citizen Participation in The Atlanta Hippie Community* (Emory University: Unpublished Thesis: 1971), 33.

<sup>217</sup> Some Atlantans considered the Driving Club to be an exclusive private club in Atlanta.

<sup>218</sup> Harold Kennedy, “Drugsville is Right Here. . . And Pushers Thrive in it,” *Atlanta Constitution*, April 1, 1970.

<sup>219</sup> GSB. September 22, 1969.

Because drugs of various sorts continued to define hippiedom, it should be noted that as early as 1964 the National Institute of Mental Health, concerned about the increase in the number of people using illegal drugs, expanded research funding on the subject of drugs. According to the studies by the National Institute of Mental Health, members of the counterculture used the hallucinogen marijuana more than others. Use of the drug, also known as cannabis, had been declared illegal (unlawful) under the Federal Marijuana Tax Act of 1937, but since marijuana was not considered addictive at the time, members of the counterculture argued that it should not have been listed as a narcotic. Despite stringent laws against pot, also known as mary jane, the usage of illegal drugs continued to grow.<sup>220</sup>

By 1969, Atlanta's hippie community, like those in other cities around the country, became unmanageable, with a sense of crisis facing the entire Midtown community. Because of continued turmoil and escalating tensions between the police and hippies, several welfare agencies expressed an interest in the Peachtree-Tenth Street area.<sup>221</sup> They called upon agencies and community residents to meet and discuss possible interventions. The Community Council of Atlanta, Inc., a voluntary agency funded by United Appeal, took the lead in coordinating the efforts. The agency saw itself as an intermediary between the establishment and grass-roots insurgent groups. For this reason, Gene Guerrero, editor of the *Bird*, organized a meeting of businessmen, city officials, and members of the counterculture to discuss the problems that existed in the community. Out of this meeting came the Central City Alliance. Dan Sweat, assistant to then Mayor Ivan Allen, chose Duane Beck, the executive director of the community Council of Atlanta, and his group to investigate the problems in Midtown.<sup>222</sup>

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<sup>220</sup> GSB. April 15, 1970.

<sup>221</sup> GSB. Ibid.

<sup>222</sup> GSB. Ibid.

The Council's report written by Duane Beck and entitled the *Fourteenth Street Area: An Interim Study Made by Community Council of Atlanta Area, Inc.*, revealed some startling information. The 14-page report presented a sociological view that found the majority of the longhaired inhabitants to be highly intelligent young people who rejected old life-styles, and who were developing new ones.<sup>223</sup> The problems of the community, according to the report, consisted of selective and repressive law enforcement, harassment of the longhaired hippies by outsiders, job discrimination, ill-health, addiction to hard narcotics, lack of recreation and meeting facilities, and lack of trash and garbage collection.

The major problem, according to the 14-page report, had to do with the "breakdown in communication between hip and straight societies."<sup>224</sup> The report expressed concern that residents of the 14th Street area would become enraged if the police eased up the law-enforcement policies and that would lead to escalating hostilities and violence. On the other hand, those who wrote the report knew that some members of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) who had no interest in having a stable community organization, would take advantage of the precarious situation to advocate attacks on the police.<sup>225</sup>

Members of the counterculture responded to the Community Council Report by forming a Midtown Alliance that addressed issues of drug abuse and homelessness among the multitude of people who occupied the Midtown area. The Alliance actively worked to take responsibility for some of the problems that existed, and to continue to communicate with the straight world by offering to send speakers from the counterculture to neighborhood meetings in Midtown. These

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<sup>223</sup> "Peace-Loving Hippies Find Hard Time Here, Study Says," *Atlanta Journal*, October 2, 1969.

<sup>224</sup> GSB. October 6, 1969. Although reported on by the *Bird*, it must be remembered that the report came straight from the study by Duane Beck and his Community Council.

<sup>225</sup> John Spahr Haydock. *Organized Citizen Participation in The Atlanta Hippie Community* (Emory University Unpublished Thesis: 1971), 41.

speakers told members of the mainstream community about the hip world and its attempts to find jobs and housing for people in the area, and urged established community members to intervene in realistic ways.

The Midtown Alliance focused on drug rehabilitation as members of the counterculture acknowledged that the experiment in alternative lifestyles presented problems that should be addressed by members of the counter culture. The Alliance set up a hip community center and clinic at 1013 Juniper Street where a medical staff treated those who needed help, and provided two meals a day and breakfast for those who went to work early. In addition, the center helped members of the counterculture to search for jobs, and provided help with legal problems. The clinic offered the hips the one secure place in Atlanta where someone on a “trip” could go for help.<sup>226</sup>

Another resource came from activities taking place in the Atlanta Memorial Arts Center where members of the counter culture went for entertainment. Carl Ratcliff and his group of dancers offered performances on Monday nights, the normal dark nights of the Atlanta Arts Alliance, in the Studio Theater, also known as the Black-Box Theater, located on the lower level of the center.

When Ratcliff, well-known dancer and choreographer in Atlanta, danced he expressed himself as a free-flowing painter, dancing with “fluid movements,” running and leaping through the air with long-flowing colorful scarves fluttering behind him, much the way Isadora Dunkin had danced in the 1920s: both creative artists danced from their hearts. Waving his hands, Ratcliff portrayed the splashing of paint drops, perhaps reflecting the kaleidoscopic colors of the counter culture as they celebrated concerts in Piedmont Park. This creativity, of course, appealed

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<sup>226</sup> GSB. November 3, 1969.

to members of the counterculture in the audience. They jumped at the opportunity to participate. The dance group accommodated them by offering an interactive format in one sequence of the performance where the dancers encouraged audience participation.<sup>227</sup>

Mrs. Virginia Rich Barnett, a professional dancer and Ratcliff's dance partner, said, "The experiential nature of these modern dances connected to that of the creative mood of the younger and more radical members of the counterculture. They were our audience in the Studio Theater, and we offered that younger energetic group something healthy to cling to." She continued, "They were involved in a lot of unhealthy activities, certainly with drugs and the sexual revolution. Modern dance gave them the opportunity to experience social freedoms in a healthy environment. They, in turn, offered us the energy and creative spirit that encouraged experiential movement, where dance is unique." The inclusive nature of the counterculture resonated with the freedom of dance, and soon the word got around that these performances should not be missed. Those in the mainstream arts community, eager for creative entertainment, responded to the performances in droves.<sup>228</sup>

Rizzo, a reporter from the *Bird*, attended the performances and gave them strong thumbs-up, and referred to Carl Ratcliff as "a modern gem. . . right in the middle of the establishment's ballet."<sup>229</sup> George Beiswanger, who wrote for the *Atlanta Journal*, also gave the modern dance company rave reviews, which reflected his personal excitement because his wife danced and he had also studied dance and had the formal qualifications to critique performances.<sup>230</sup>

Whether dancing in the Studio Theater in the Atlanta Memorial Arts Center or gathering in Piedmont Park for a festival, the hippie colony in Atlanta continued to be a great attraction for

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<sup>227</sup> Robert Barnett. Interview with this author. November 2, 2003.

<sup>228</sup> Mrs. Virginia Rich Barnett. Interview by this author. November 2, 2003.

<sup>229</sup> GSB. November 3, 1969.

<sup>230</sup> George Beiswanger. *Atlanta Journal*. November 8, 1969.



long-haired, bearded young men and their long-skirted barefooted girl-friends. “Crashing,” the hippie word for bedding down, referred to “crash pads” where as many as 20 or more people slept in one apartment on newspapers or pallets.<sup>231</sup> Some of the hippies worked selling the *Bird* in order to survive, understanding that being hassled by the police came with that opportunity. However, others hanging around the streets in Midtown had the same experience. In spite of the aggravations, the reporters and editors for the *Bird* continued to write, publish, and expose the truth about political involvement in the problems in Midtown.

Research by members of the *Bird* concerning the slumlords in Atlanta hit a sensitive nerve with those associated with Mayor Sam Massell’s administration. One reporter wrote, “Whenever we write anything about the mayor of the city we get hassled even worse.” Police ticketed the longhairs for “violating pedestrian duties,” “obstructing traffic,” and “creating turmoil.” One judge who handed out fines admitted “the reason the police are there is to keep you people off the street.” By exposing the many business interests of those who were running the city, and explaining that, “slum-lording is a lucrative part of their business,” reporters for the *Bird* had, once again uncovered information that would never be found in mainstream media in Atlanta.<sup>232</sup>

Pictures from yearbooks dating from 1960 to 1973 representing colleges and high schools in Atlanta provided valuable evidence concerning changes that took place over those years. Photographs of students from the most prestigious public and private schools portrayed students gyrating to acid rock music wearing vintage clothes and sporting lots of long hair. These students also uninhibitedly spouted new words – many of them four-letter words. In effect, the

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<sup>231</sup> Doug Rossinow. *The Politics of Authenticity: Liberalism, Christianity, and the New Left in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 152.

<sup>232</sup> GSB. January, 1972.

‘Age of Aquarius’ had arrived in all parts of Atlanta, catching parents and school administrators alike off guard.

The older generation struggled to understand why their sweet, young, barefooted innocent looking, teen-age daughters, with long hair parted in the middle, wearing no underwear or make-up, chose to rebel. Rites of passage for their mothers and older sisters had included wearing red lipstick and rouge, perming their hair, and being corseted with bras and girdles. Words like “love,” “respect,” and “moral values” took on entirely new meanings, and the hidden messages and double meanings, including those the Beatles used in songs such as “What’s the New Mary Jane?” confused the adult generation even more.

In 1971 social historian James Spates, writing from the “eye of the storm,” questioned whether members of the counterculture facilitated any real changes during the 1960s that affected dominant cultural values.<sup>233</sup> Spates observed that literature concerning “hippies” suggested that the movement gave the appearance that it had arisen on the contemporary scene *de novo*. However, it actually represented the second phase of a well-established social upheaval started by the Beats in the 1950s. Spates wrote, “One group – the Hippies – seem to have vanished, but there have been few significant changes in the dominant culture’s values as a result of the Hippie movement.”<sup>234</sup> He also recognized that the massive rallies and marches staged by radical political groups in the 1960s were more complex than some observers had originally believed. Although accounts made it clear that members rejected dominant-culture values, there had been almost no attempt to associate the three phases [the Beats, the Hippies, and the hip] of

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<sup>233</sup> David Brown, ed. *The Hippies: Who They Are, Where They Are, Why They Act That Way, How They May Affect Our Society* (New York: Time Incorporated, 1967). Correspondents of *Time* explored the customs, language and philosophy of the hippie scene in 1967, relating stories from cities they covered for the magazine. They were shocked by the material they uncovered and were surprised at the remarkably consistent picture of hippies throughout the world.

<sup>234</sup> James L. Spates. *Structures and Trends in Value Systems in the “Hip” Underground: Contracultures and the American Middle Class, 1957-69*. (Unpublished Dissertation; 1971, Boston University Graduate School.)

the counterculture movement even though there was substantial evidence that they were linked socially and historically.<sup>235</sup>

Signs that some of the original “anything goes” bravado associated with rebellion was fading became evident when Bob Goodman, an early member of the *Bird* family and one who was fed up with the excesses taking place, wrote a scathing letter to the *Bird* referring to the “confused values” that characterized the “overripe Youth Culture (and its propaganda organs, such as the *Bird*).” Goodman’s letter was in response to an earlier review of *Hair* in which the author, Sunshine Bright, describes the play as “total irreverence . . . and the closest we’ll get to thumbing our noses at some of the hassles that dog us. It’s the cops, the government, bigotry, archaic sentiments on nudity, language, and drugs.” Goodman responded by writing, “It should be clear by this late date that the vision of *Hair*, based on individualism and self-indulgence, is not a vision of liberation, but just another manifestation of bourgeois decadence.” He ended the letter by writing,

SB smugly chided the “bevy of pamphleteers distributing Biblical quotations on nakedness outside the theater. True, these folks are misguided. But at least they have values they are willing to stand up for . . . Unfortunately neither the pamphleteers, *Hair*, nor *Bird* reviews like this one are very helpful to people struggling to build a new society free of exploitation, oppression, and alienation.”<sup>236</sup>

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<sup>235</sup> Joseph Adelson. “What Generation Gap?” *The New York Times*, January 18, 1970. Adelson, professor of psychology at the University of Michigan, and co-author of “The Adolescent Experience” wrote that a gap between the generations definitely existed, but was difficult to define.

<sup>236</sup> GSB. December 20, 1971. The article concerns a review of *Hair*, a play that epitomizes the essence of counter culture ‘hippie’ life with nudity and long hair.

#### 4.5 In Hindsight

David Farber wrote *The Age of Great Dreams: America in the 1960s* in 1994, when he had ample time to view the activities of that era in hindsight. He observed that those “unanchored activities,” settled some issues while unleashing others for many citizens who struggled to determine who “we” were then and what we have become. Farber’s conclusions are similar to those of Todd Gitlin, an active member and president of the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), and a professor of sociology at the University of California, Berkeley. Gitlin wrote *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage*, in 1987, and then wrote a revised edition in 1993. Gitlin, referred to the age as “a collage of fragments scooped together as if a whole decade took place in an instant.”<sup>237</sup>

Other scholars such as George Lipsitz recognized that a strong political and cultural force emerged in the 1960s that influenced popular culture. He credited those activists who fought for a more inclusive society, and argued that the counterculture helped to bring about more racially and culturally diverse communities in cities around the country.<sup>238</sup>

The *Great Speckled Bird* expanded its coverage around the city of Atlanta and then across Georgia as the paper united dissidents in that area of the southeast. The *Bird* also resonated with resistance underground newspapers elsewhere. One indication of the strength of the *Bird* was that the paper interacted with other members of the underground press through narratives about police brutality, Civil Rights, the Vietnam War, labor disputes, and gender issues. This interaction

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<sup>237</sup> GSB. December 20, 1971, 3.

<sup>238</sup> George Lipsitz. “Listen to Learn, and Learning to Listen: Popular Culture, Cultural Theory, and American Studies” *American Quarterly*, Vol. 42, No. 4 (December, 1990), 616.

resulted in a coalition of independent papers that became known as the Underground Press Syndicate (UPS).<sup>239</sup>

A schism within the *Bird* family erupted in the fall of 1972 over how the paper should cover the news and what direction the editorial content should take. Many staffers wanted to continue with the same diversified stories, while others sought to write less about local cultural issues and rock concerts, and focus on communist doctrine. With the interest in China at an all-time high, tensions in the weekly meetings of the *Bird* staff escalated more than ever. The rule was, “No vicious personal attacks.”<sup>240</sup>

Simultaneously *Creative Loafing*, a less radical alternative newspaper, became popular, lured readers, and competed with the *Bird* for ad revenues. Gene Guerrero, one of the founders of the *Bird*, said that other issues such as the ending of the Vietnam War, as well as the dissolution of the counterculture, also entered into reasons for the decline of the *Bird*. Thus, as Tom Coffin foretold, the *Bird* chirped, bitched, badgered, carped and cried its “honest and interesting journalism,” advocating political activism and subversive views during perhaps the most turbulent, transitional, creative period in Midtown history. With their stories and fantasies, those involved in writing, editing and publishing the *Great Speckled Bird* created a revolutionary medium extolling freedom of expression, personal creativity, and resistance to authoritarian dogma. In protesting Western “decadence,” racial and sexual discrimination, the *Bird* produced political, social and cultural restructuring in Midtown Atlanta.

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<sup>239</sup> Ken Wachsberger, with forwards by William Kunstler and Abe Peck. *Voices From the Underground – Volume I, Insider Histories of the Vietnam Era Underground Press* (Tempe: Mica Press, 1984), xix.

<sup>240</sup> Bob Goodman. Interview with this author. June 20, 2013.

July 27, 2017

## 5 THEATRE ARTS AND THE COUNTERCULTURE

### 5.1 The Play's the Thing

Historian Marjorie Garber wrote, “Every generation creates its own Shakespeare: Shakespeare the therapist, Shakespeare the philosopher, and Shakespeare the moralist and translator of cultural information”.<sup>241</sup> An in-depth study of the 60s and 70s in Midtown reveals that Frank Wittow fits the description for Shakespeare of this age through his work with Academy Theatre, where theatre became a vital component of the Atlanta community conscience. He chose to present material that communicated what he wanted to say rather than what people wanted to hear: to “challenge the intellect and prick the consciences of those sitting in the audience.”<sup>242</sup> Wittow also paved the way for a new appreciation of theatre among Atlantans, and the excitement associated with attending live performances.

This chapter about creative theatre is important because the narrative provides connections with the messages for change from other forces such as some energetic members of the counterculture in Midtown. Although not directly linked with counterculture activities in Midtown during the 60s and 70s, Wittow’s education-in-theatre probed the hearts and minds of audiences as methods of political activism with messages that resonated with the way ‘culture hippies’ used *guerilla theatre* to bring social commentaries to the attention of audiences everywhere. They considered society to be “morally bankrupt, racist, militaristic, and culturally stultifying.”<sup>243</sup> After reporters for the *Great Speckled Bird* attended performances at Academy

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<sup>241</sup> See: Marjorie Garber. *Shakespeare After All* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2004), 28-30.

<sup>242</sup> Terry Kaye. “An Interview with Wittow,” *The Atlanta Journal*, February 19, 1969.

<sup>243</sup> Michael William Doyle. “Staging the Revolution: *Guerrilla Theater* as a Countercultural Practice, 1965-1968” First published in *Imagine Nation: The American Counterculture of the 1960s and 1970s*, Routledge, 2002. The term ‘theater’ is also spelled theatre throughout research documents.

Theatre, they wrote reviews about what they had experienced. If the reviews were good, which they usually were, members of the counterculture flocked to the performances.<sup>244</sup>

Wittow personally directed his theatre company from its beginning in 1956, and shaped it into the best resident theatre company in Atlanta.<sup>245</sup> His education at Northwestern University, with majors in education and psychology, set the stage for his earning a Master of Arts degree in guidance and child psychology at Columbia University. He then took theatre courses that gave him the background and insight needed to use that forum as a creative expression of the times, and as an instrument to facilitate social change.

After being drafted into the army in 1954, Wittow was assigned to an induction station in Atlanta as a psychologist. While there, he built a financially stable company of professional actors by obtaining grants from government agencies and private sources such as the Rockefeller Foundation to pay expenses. This approach contrasted with the Atlanta Municipal Theatre and Theatre Atlanta that supported their companies with contributions from Atlanta's social and business elite, who then had control over the content of plays that were produced and shown.<sup>246</sup> Among five theatres established during the 1960s including the Pocket Theatre, Harlequin Playhouse, Theatre Atlanta and Municipal Theatre, only Academy Theatre managed to survive.<sup>247</sup> Wittow attributed the survival of the Academy Theatre to the group's desire to stimulate community involvement, and its ability to reveal and address the needs of the community.<sup>248</sup> Academy Theatre had a small but dedicated audience along with a loyal pool of

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<sup>244</sup> GSB. July 7, 1969.

<sup>245</sup> GSB. November 1969.

<sup>246</sup> Richard Wynn Epting. "The Academy Theatre: The Making of a Professional Theatre," Thesis. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1974. "Uproar In Atlanta: Theatre As Education," Academy Theatre Fact Sheet, 1968.

<sup>247</sup> GSB. July 7, 1969.

<sup>248</sup> "Deus Ex Academy Theatre." *Atlanta Magazine*, June, 1971.



talented actors willing to donate their services because they believed that through education-in-theatre they could make a difference in the way audiences perceived the world around them.

As actor, director, and producer of plays in Atlanta, Wittow founded the first integrated professional theatre in the South during a period when the restrictions of segregation, the Jim Crow laws, did not adequately describe the conditions of disenfranchisement, constraints, and violence that blacks living in Atlanta and elsewhere experienced. This situation lasted until well into the mid-1950s, when the United States Supreme Court reversed *Plessy vs. Ferguson*.<sup>249</sup>

Wittow and those who worked with him had been concerned with the problems of segregation, which was reflected in their choice of plays. For this reason Academy Theatre attracted members of the black community at a time when Jim Crow laws were alive and well. The Fox Theater still required blacks to use a side door entrance to the building, from which point they had to climb steps up to the segregated balcony to watch stage productions there. Furthermore, blacks were seldom seen sitting in integrated motion picture theaters in Atlanta. In 1963, Academy Theatre became the first professional theatre in Atlanta to cast blacks in traditionally white major roles. Some of the original plays presented focused on the black experience, which attracted black audiences, while many of the group's in-school programs reflected the need for desegregation.<sup>250</sup>

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<sup>249</sup> A United States Supreme Court decision in 1895 that ruled in favor of "separate but equal facilities" for blacks and whites, which heralded the beginning of Jim Crow laws.

<sup>250</sup> Here my thinking is influenced by Thomas P. Malone, M.D., Ph.D. Interview with this author. November 23, 1996. Thomas, P. Malone, practicing psychiatrist in Atlanta, knew the value of theatre-in-education as presented by Wittow's Academy Theatre, and attended those plays regularly. Dr. Malone explained to this author that an integrated system respecting the rights of all would be of great benefit to members of the white community, perhaps even more so than those of the black community. The pathology associated with a sense of entitlement, power, and privilege based on race limits a person's – and a community's – psychological growth and development. He explained further that a misdirected sense of "benevolent gift" of an integrated community, in which many people in Atlanta and elsewhere shrouded themselves, was not the answer either. From his conversations, it was clear that Dr. Malone had respect for Frank Wittow and the scope of his productions. He also stressed the difference they made for the city of Atlanta during those transitional stages of desegregation in the 60s and 70s.

Academy Theatre produced a series of theatre-in-education and experimental dramas that related back to 1936 when the Federal Theatre Project joined forces with Alliance Theatre Guild in Atlanta.<sup>251</sup> Turning away from the “bourgeois formula” that sought to romanticize working-class life and to portray relationships between labor and business as harmonious, though strained, Wittow chose to provide labor dramas steeped in propaganda that encompassed themes of working-class struggle, unionization, sexism, social class, solidarity, racism, and harsh working conditions.<sup>252</sup>

One such play, *Altars of Steel*, written by Thomas Hall-Rogers, a Birmingham author, portrayed a period of violence, coercion, and physical battles between the United Steelworkers and the steel companies around 1938, at a time when both groups were vying for power and supremacy. During that era, the country was struggling to pull itself out of the devastating Depression of 1929 by dramatizing the struggles of the working class. President Franklin D. Roosevelt addressed these issues in his Second Inaugural Address:

Here is the challenge to our democracy: in this nation I see tens of millions of its citizens – a substantial part of our whole population – who at this very moment are denied the greater part of what the very lowest standards of today call the necessities of life . . . I see millions denied education, recreation, and the opportunity to better their lot and the lot of their children – I see one-third of a nation ill-housed, ill-clad, ill-nourished . . . because the nation, seeing and understanding the injustice to it – proposes to paint it out.<sup>253</sup>

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<sup>251</sup> At that earlier time the combined theatre groups produced theatre based on liberal, left-wing ideology that did not appeal to Atlanta audiences, and resulted in the short-lived association between the two groups.

<sup>252</sup> Richard J. Altenbaugh. “Proletarian Drama: An Educational Tool of the American Labor College Movement. *Theatre Journal*, Vol 34, No. 2 Insurgency in American Theatre (May, 1982), 197 – 210. Altenbaugh’s article offers a comprehensive view of labor drama that exposed the harsh realities of working-class life.

<sup>253</sup> Hallie Flanagan. *Arena; The History of the Federal Theatre* (New York: Benjamin Blom, Inc., 1940), 153.

These powerful words by President Roosevelt expressed the essence of Wittow's Academy Theatre and Federal Theatre: the need to be concerned with the lives and economic conditions of marginalized people in this country. Both *Night Witch* and *Altars of Steel* portrayed the struggle of many people in this country to understand the social and economic turmoil around them, and how to address such issues in order to provide better lives for themselves and their families. Thus Wittow's Academy Theatre and the Federal Theatre established ties to the principles of Roosevelt's New Deal that would have supported education-through-theatre concerning labor problems.

*Mill Shadows: A Drama of Social Forces in Four Acts*, written by Tom Tippett, and based on the violent 1929 Marion, North Carolina, textile workers strike, combined the drama of a labor movement with an appeal to the heart as well as the intellect of audiences. It held up the mirror to social struggles of workers in the United States.<sup>254</sup> Although Tippett, an economics teacher, thought that drama should be used as propaganda – and also to entertain – he wrote that he had made no attempt to exaggerate the action in *Mill Shadows* for dramatic reasons, “I was on the scene of the *real* drama, and saw and heard much of what appears in the play; all of the characters are real.”<sup>255</sup> The play shared a common theme with *Altars of Steel* in that it revealed information about the struggles of a segment of the population about which most Americans knew very little. Particularly connected to *Altars of Steel*, *Mill Shadows* portrayed millwork and the paternalistic mill village system that involved informal negotiations between workers and owners, wherein employers controlled what they gave to the workers, and also what they could take away. Gender issues played an important role in the stories of the mill workers. While

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<sup>254</sup> Richard J. Altenbaugh. “Proletarian Drama: An Educational Tool of the American Labor College Movement,” *Theatre Journal*, Vol. 34, No. 2, Insurgency in American Theatre (May, 1982).

<sup>255</sup> Lee Papa, ed. *Staged Action: Six Plays from the American Workers' Theatre* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), 185.

getting a mill job improved their lives, and most of the workers took pride in their work, it meant taking a step towards dependency and powerlessness; they were considered “white trash” by themselves and others in the community. As women became more masculine through their struggles to survive, the men who worked in the mills felt emasculated by intrusive systems of supervision and control.<sup>256</sup>

Theatre Atlanta provided a creative voice through outreach programs that sent actors into the community. Original plays grew out of improvisations, games and exercises, and encouraged people in the audience to use their imaginations to create their own experiences. For instance, “Playground” was an original play that the acting company developed and referred to as ‘childhood remembered.’<sup>257</sup> Members of the audiences wrote their own scripts, and acted out the ways that they remembered their childhoods. This method proved to be a powerful way for them to recall the past, and gain insight into their own experiences.<sup>258</sup> All of the programs attempted to change social behavior and provide a process of meaningful self-discovery for audiences.

Academy Theatre prospered for a while, and the outlook was bright for the group as Wittow continued to challenge audiences to expand their intellectual horizons. However, it was clear that the Academy did not conform to comfortable middle-class theatre in which many Atlantans who attended the plays expected to be entertained by “warmed-over” Broadway shows, which meant that audience attendance dwindled.

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<sup>256</sup> Gary Fink. *Espionage, Labor Conflict and New South Industrial Relations* (Ithaca: ILR Press, 1993), 28.

<sup>257</sup> Richard Epting. *The Academy Theatre in Atlanta: The Making of a Professional Theatre*, Thesis, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1974.

<sup>258</sup> GSB. A Reporter for the *Bird* attended the play after which he wrote that the play appealed to the children in the audience, but that adults were not too impressed.

Simultaneously, while the Academy was trying to attract audiences, Wittow built an ensemble of actors and original plays for children through a separate entity, Academy Children's Theatre. Understanding the importance of developing audiences of young children, Wittow experimented by using audience participation that encouraging children to interact with actors on the stage. He also wanted to introduce Shakespeare to high-school students in Atlanta. By 1963, he had established liaisons with administrators in the Atlanta Public Schools, and had toured the schools with productions of *Hamlet* and *Taming of the Shrew*.

In 1966, members of the United States Office of Education approached Academy Theatre with a proposal to use Title III funds to make drama "a community resource"<sup>259</sup> in education. Title III money was devoted specifically to supplementing educational centers and services for the nation's various school systems, and included internship programs for teachers so that the material could be incorporated into the curriculum. During the first year the acting company worked on a program that it designed to provide ghetto children a means of self-expression through theatre. This plan complimented Wittow's ideas about ways to stimulate innovative and creative projects.<sup>260</sup>

Using Title III funds, Wittow developed plays and sent two teams of actors out into the schools to present them to the students. Each team presented a play on one day and then followed up with discussions after the play. The actors came back the next day for more intensive follow-up and involvement with the students in the classrooms. Two social psychologists from Georgia Mental Health Institute travelled with the tour teams and advised the

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<sup>259</sup> "Art and Education Coalesce," *Atlanta Constitution*. January 1, 1966.

<sup>260</sup> Richard Wynn Epting. "The Academy Theatre: The Making of a Professional Theatre," Thesis. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1974, 15.

actors on ways to work better with the students and teachers, which also helped the actors to learn more about drama and its place in the community.<sup>261</sup>

The program developed cooperatively with the Atlanta Public Schools gives students opportunities to participate across racial lines in investigations of community attitudes and feelings, and to learn to communicate their new understandings. Students are expected to create original plays for touring into neighborhood areas of Atlanta, and to find ways within their own school that would contribute to creating a better environment for learning . . . Students in the program contracted up to 15 hours of credit in English, Social Studies, and Physical Education through the Independent Studies program of the Atlanta Public Schools.<sup>262</sup>

The objectives for this program were to increase children's motivation to learn, while simultaneously decreasing fear and tensions in classrooms. This program encouraged students to express themselves and to communicate their own ideas. The purpose also included assisting teachers of "opposite" races to deal more effectively with problems of hostility, and to gain more confidence in themselves and reduce their tensions.<sup>263</sup>

School officials in Atlanta were pleased with the High School Tour Program. Dr. John Letson, Superintendent of the Atlanta Public Schools, praised the tour and commented on the way that the students responded to the actors and to the plays. According to Wittow, the same

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<sup>261</sup> Ibid. 29.

<sup>262</sup> Ibid. 33.

<sup>263</sup> In 1968, a teacher exchange program across racial boundaries in the Atlanta Public Schools initially created a sense of confusion for teachers and students.

intensity of interaction between actor and audience in the theater should happen between students and teachers in the classroom. Furthermore, Wittow hoped to enhance the theatre experience by developing playwrights and actors locally, and attracting audiences from a broad-based section of the city, thus cultivating the best artists from those communities.<sup>264</sup>

Although the extent of influence Wittow's theatre group wielded with its inclusive ensemble productions and its model of the artist-as-teacher cannot be assessed definitively, the group unquestionably contributed substantially to the cultural development of theatre-goers who lived in Atlanta.<sup>265</sup> The Georgia Commission on the Arts acknowledged in 1967 that Academy Theatre influenced the spread of serious theatre in the city.<sup>266</sup> The same year the Atlanta Public Schools, Coca-Cola, and the Sears-Roebuck Foundation provided financial support for Academy Theatre's arts-in-education program.<sup>267</sup>

With this reinforced financial and psychological backing, Wittow continued to challenge audiences. Reflecting female angst and the resurgence of the Feminist Movement of the 1960s, Wittow directed and acted in *The Homecoming*, a play focused on sex, violence, and long-standing resentments and tensions generated in family settings. The play uncovered weak links in the stability of "the family," a basic institution of Western culture, while it challenged dominant gender assumptions that prevailed in this country. Wittow's work paved the way for portraying and addressing even more controversial issues, such as homosexuality.<sup>268</sup>

Even though Frank Wittow and Academy Theatre did not produce "The Boys in the Band," the play with a gay theme opened in March, 1970, in the small studio theater referred to

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<sup>264</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>265</sup> Terry Kaye and members of mainstream news-media recognized the value that Frank Wittow's theatre brought to Atlanta, and that Academy Theatre successes meant more than money-making at the box-office.

<sup>266</sup> Comer Jennings, artist and member of the Atlanta Arts Alliance. Interview by this author, December 3, 2003.

<sup>267</sup> The fact that these groups underwrote programs established by Frank Wittow and Academy Theatre verified support for changes in philosophy and for inclusive ensemble productions.

<sup>268</sup> GSB.

as the Black Box Theater located on the lower level of the Atlanta Memorial Arts Center.<sup>269</sup> The play responded to the many complaints by residents who lived in homes around Piedmont Park about the long-haired hippies who had infiltrated the area, and it was no secret that many of those homeowners associated long hair on men as a sure sign of homosexuality. The timing of that production corresponded with articles written by reporters for the *Bird* about residents who said they wanted to “rid the park of undesirables.”<sup>270</sup>

Although “The Boys in the Band” had been a critical and financial success in New York City, Atlanta Arts Alliance leaders considered the play’s homosexual theme a disaster. As reported by Jon Jacobs of the *Bird*, the play almost did not survive the criticism. Writing about the “Kultural” community, Jacobs reported that people thought that if their sons were exposed to the play they would become homosexual. In response, they called WRNG radio, a right-wing call-in talk show and encouraged people to contact their Board of Aldermen to complain about the play. Due to the large response by those who called in the Board introduced a resolution that would cut off \$100,000 in city funds to the Atlanta Arts Alliance if the play went on.<sup>271</sup>

The members of the Atlanta Arts Alliance voted down the resolution, after which the Fulton County Commission issued a statement attacking the play’s “filthy” subject matter, and threatened to cut all of its \$60,000 funding if the Alliance did not cancel the play.<sup>272</sup> The Atlanta Arts Alliance leaders met and, after cutting several words and lines considered objectionable by them, announced, “The show will go on.”<sup>273</sup>

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<sup>269</sup> The Black Box Theater was also known as the *Alliance Studio Theatre*.

<sup>270</sup> GSB. February 1970.

<sup>271</sup> “Alliance Theatre Company” *Atlanta History: A Journal of Georgia and the South*. Spring – Summer 1994. Volume XXXVIII, 82.

<sup>272</sup> GSB. October 6, 1969, 15.

<sup>273</sup> *Ibid.*



Comer Jennings, a long-time resident of Atlanta, an artist and active member of the arts community, found himself in the midst of the turmoil. He said, “The play is only nominally about homosexuality. The relationships in the play are descriptions of the ways in which most of us, no matter what our sexual orientations are, ruin our lives.”<sup>274</sup> Jon Jacobs commented that Matt Crowley, the play’s author, had chosen to focus on the gay community because of the intense pressure from society on that group that intensifies their hang-ups.<sup>275</sup> Atlanta provided few safe havens for gays in 1970, and homosexual behavior in Georgia meant that violators could face prison sentences of up to 20 years.<sup>276</sup>

This issue became so explosive that two trustees - Richard Rich and William Bowdoin - considered abandoning theatre altogether because continuing the run of the *Boys in the Band* might threaten the success of the whole Atlanta Arts Alliance. George Goodwin, vice-chairman for Theatre at that time, over-ruled Rich and Bowdoin, and the play continued its two-week run in the Black Box Theater. The play then shifted to another small theater in Atlanta, the Pocket Theater, where it played to sold-out audiences, which indicated that patrons of theatre in Atlanta welcomed well-written and meaningful plays. The controversial play also heralded the continuation of well-written plays about the human condition. Goodwin and his Theatre Committee convinced the Arts Alliance to support theatre permanently even though there was no doubt that Atlanta audiences preferred musicals, contemporary drama; anything with Broadway and Hollywood stars in the casts.<sup>277</sup>

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<sup>274</sup> Comer Jennings, artist and member of the Atlanta Arts Alliance, Interview by this author, December 3, 2003.

<sup>275</sup> This author attended the play on opening night, and felt that even with many light and funny moments, the play projected a moving depiction of existential angst, and the loneliness of the human condition.

<sup>276</sup> The Georgia law was declared unconstitutional November 23, 1998, by the Georgia Supreme Court.

<sup>277</sup> George Goodwin. Interview by this author: June 18, 2012. For further historical perspective concerning the perceived dangers of Theatre See: Marjorie Garber. *Shakespeare After All* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2004), 24. Theatre during the time of Shakespeare was located on the margins of the city, and on the margins of society. Both secular and religious critics worried that there was a danger that representation in theatre would cross a boundary,

In 1976, the Alliance Theatre entertained audiences with *Come Back to the Five and Dime, Jimmy Dean, Jimmy Dean*, a play by Ed Graczyck, starring Fannie Flagg, which played to packed houses. The studio theater featured *Vanities*, and what started as a three-week run but, after playing to packed houses, extended to five months. The next year the Alliance Theatre Company snagged the world premier performance of Tennessee William's *Tiger's Tail*.<sup>278</sup>

Theatre performances continued at the Atlanta Arts Alliance (re-named Alliance Theatre Company) and one of the first plays the group presented in January of 1971, *The Night Thoreau Spent in Jail* generated tremendous support from the Atlanta community. The play reflected Transcendentalism and the philosophies of Henry David Thoreau, the 19th century author and poet-philosopher, and Ralph Waldo Emerson, intellectuals who both rejected many of the same oppressive establishment mandates and cultural values as did the counterculture in Midtown in the 60s and 70s. Thoreau wrote in 1849, "If the law is of such a nature that it requires you to be an agent of injustice to another, then I say, break the law." The play proved to be both a critical and a financial success, and Terry Kaye, reporter for the Atlanta Journal Constitution, suggested in his critical review that "the theatre group continue with plays like *Thoreau*."<sup>279</sup>

The *Bird* reported on plays and activities in Midtown. Reporters would attend plays and then critique them: a thumbs up meant that the Studio Theater would be packed with hippies eager to be entertained. Conversely, a thumbs down meant a play with a short run. The word spread rapidly and some main-stream members of the arts community who knew and appreciated good theatre responded by attending the plays after positive reviews in the *Bird*.

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and that fantasy would invade and influence life: political life, social life, and erotic life, along with the life of the mind.

<sup>278</sup> Rice, Bradley, Franklin Garrett, Virginia Hein, eds. *Atlanta History: A Journal of Georgia and The South*, Spring-Summer, 1994, Volume XXXVIII, 85.

<sup>279</sup> GSB, January, 1971.

For example, Rich Cluchey, a prisoner, wrote and produced *The Cage*, a play by “The Barbwire Theatre,” that presented it in the Black Box Theater of the Atlanta Memorial Arts Center. It depicted a prison cell where prisoners, real life ex-prisoners, revealed the horrors of being incarcerated. Morris Brown, theatre critic for the *Bird*, wrote a rave review in the *Bird*.<sup>280</sup> Members of the counterculture packed the theater, and because so many hippies had been arrested and had spent time in jail the subject matter appealed to them.<sup>281</sup> After the play, the cast members brought the audience into the act by discussing with them the reasons for incarceration of so many people, an experience that reflected Frank Wittow’s theatre-in-education.<sup>282</sup>

Similar issues were addressed through outreach programs such as Jomandi, founded in 1978, which grew to be Georgia’s largest African-American theater group.<sup>283</sup> Associated with Atlanta’s Learning Academies for students who had been removed from the general population, and were “one step from jail,” this theatre-in-education became an integral part of the NAC, Neighborhood Arts Center.

An energetic group of players from the University of Texas performed “Cultural Stomp,” a play that featured a live band, in the Studio Theater on September 6, 1969. “The crypt of the Mausoleum for the Arts” was swinging, according to Cliff Endres, reporter for the *Bird*. “It just might signal a rebirth of theatre for a culturally starved audience.” Pam Gwin, theatre critic for the *Bird*, wrote. Members of the counter culture responded to the Studio production by offering

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<sup>280</sup> GSB. November 3, 1969, 15.

<sup>281</sup> Bob Malone. GSB. September 29, 1969. The reporter wrote about police harassment of members of the counter culture wherein their apartments and automobiles were subjects of illegal searches; others who were arrested for violating ordinances such as “jaywalking.” Longhairs who were arrested often received extremely callous and sadistic treatment in jail.

<sup>282</sup> GSB. September 8, 1969.

<sup>283</sup> Rachanice Tate. “*Our Art Itself Was Our Activism*”: Atlanta’s Neighborhood Arts Center, 1975-1990 Dissertation. Clark Atlanta University, 2012. “‘Jo’ for Jones, ‘ma’ for mama, mother, ‘an’ for Andrea, and ‘di’ for Diana,” 159.

an imaginary theatre of its own entitled, “Guerrilla Theatre,” featuring *The Siege of Saigon* in Piedmont Park.”<sup>284</sup>

Earlier members of the counter culture, as written about in the *Great Speckled Bird*, had persistently questioned the assumptions of the economic, social, cultural and political power elite issues: Frank Wittow addressed many of the same matters through his education-in-theatre. In doing so, both groups facilitated a reevaluation and modification of entrenched notions concerning the relationships among and between the citizens of Atlanta, as they challenged the dominant theoretical framework surrounding the transition of white political power to the black community.<sup>285</sup>

The influenced social, cultural, and commercial tides that changed the face of Atlanta during the 60s and 70s, which related to the activities of the counterculture, as reflected in the creative productions presented by Frank Wittow and Academy Theatre was even more evident after many Atlantans embraced the election in 1973, of Maynard Jackson as the first African American Mayor in Atlanta.

Mrs. Charlotte Ferst, President of the Members’ Guild of the High Museum, forcefully advocated for reorganizing the art community and broadening the base of community support for the High Museum to a more racially and culturally inclusive group.<sup>286</sup> She worked tirelessly to facilitate change from a group of women with elite views of art and culture based on Euro-centric values, to a guild dedicated to recruiting those who had not participated in Museum activities before.<sup>287</sup>

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<sup>284</sup> “Alliance Theatre Company” *Atlanta History: A Journal of Georgia and the South*, Spring-Summer 1994, Volume XXXVIII, 82.

<sup>285</sup> Harry Holloway. *The Politics of the Southern Negro* (New York: Random House, 1969). Also see: Claude Sitton, “Atlanta Example: Good Sense and Dignity” *New York Times Magazine*, May 6, 1962.

<sup>286</sup> “Art Here Insecure, Patron Says.” *Atlanta Journal* June 25, 1967.

<sup>287</sup> Mrs. Charlotte Ferst. “The Members’ Guild: The First Decade.” May 11, 1976. Atlanta Historical Society. Woodruff Arts Center papers. MSS 664.

The proposal to commit High Museum Guild funds to the “Art in the Park” project produced a division between those who clung to times past in contrast to those who looked to the future and embraced change. Some Guild members objected to the project because doing so meant a reduction of funds previously allocated for acquisitions, future special exhibitions, and the Junior Gallery Exhibition. Members in favor of the proposed “Sculpture in the Park” exhibitions prevailed and made the decision to support the project, because (1) this exhibition represented the Guild project for the next two years, and (2) the “ ‘Sculpture in the Park’ – **Children’s Environment**” represented in a

## 6 MAYOR MAYNARD JACKSON: A RENAISSANCE IN ATLANTA

Maynard Jackson’s inauguration as the first African American mayor of Atlanta ushered in a new day for the burgeoning city. Exactly what his election meant for Atlanta with its Deep South tradition was unclear, but it most certainly signaled a new level of empowerment for the black community.<sup>288</sup> What effect would the new administration have on Atlanta’s thriving commercial sector? Concern spread among members of the business community that investment money might gravitate to the “golden crescent” areas outside the city limits along the northern portion of Atlanta’s perimeter highway. Furthermore, no one knew what impact the changes would have on the inner city and surrounding communities inside the perimeter.<sup>289</sup>

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<sup>288</sup> Raymond A. Mohl, ed. *The Making of Urban America* (Lanham: SR Books, 1997), 225. Atlanta’s election of Mayor Jackson resonated with the election of black mayors in cities throughout the nation after 1967, and established a precedent in which blacks occupied city halls in towns and cities where even twenty years earlier the election of black officials would have been unthinkable. The success of the Civil Rights Movement brought about significant change.

<sup>289</sup> Clarence N. Stone. “Partnership New South Style: Central Atlanta Process,” *Proceedings of the Academy of Political Science*. Vol. 36, No. 2, Public-Private Partnerships: Improving Urban Life (1986), 108.

Of particular interest to this study: what did this historic political event portend for the gentrification of Midtown and the future development of its growing cultural organizations and facilities in Atlanta? Would the election enhance or impede communication between members of the counter culture and art groups in Midtown? The pendulum could have swung either way because there had been little interaction between the black and white art communities, a dual cultural scene with segregated and exclusive art exhibitions. Would Mayor Jackson launch and support an integrated arts community with whites and blacks forging ways to enhance both communities?

Jackson's Inauguration on January 7, 1974, set a positive tone for those who hoped for reconciliation and creative interactions among the diverse groups. White and African-American members of the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra played the Fourth movement of Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony*, and the racially integrated three-hundred member choir drawn from the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra Chorus, Clark College, Georgia Tech University, Georgia State University, Morehouse College, Morris Brown College, and Spelman College sang the words to Schiller's *Ode to Joy*, which celebrates the brotherhood and unity of all mankind.<sup>290</sup> A highlight of the inauguration was the performance of a French aria, "Je Suis Titania," "A City Called Heaven," and "He's Got the Whole World in His Hands," performed by internationally acclaimed opera and concert singer, Mattiwilda Dobbs, who was Mayor Jackson's aunt.<sup>291</sup>

The culturally diverse musical performance reflected Mayor Jackson's engagement with the arts, one he came by naturally because of his family's long interest and involvement in

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<sup>290</sup> Earlene Decker. "The Contributions of Robert Shaw and the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra to the Educational and Cultural Climate of Atlanta," Dissertation, The University of Southern Mississippi, 1988. The designation African American, will be used when appropriate throughout this dissertation.

<sup>291</sup> Carl Van Vechten's "Portraits of Women," Yale University Exhibition. Mattiwilda Dobbs, Soprano; Mayor Maynard Jackson's aunt.

promoting cultural and academic activities of all kinds. The performances also matched Jackson's resolve to establish a biracial government and to reorganize city government with balanced appointments to city offices between the black and white communities.<sup>292</sup> In his Inaugural Address, Mayor Jackson spoke of working together to create opportunities for everyone, and to place a high priority on serving "the masses as well as the classes." With his wife Brunella, also known as "Bunnie," standing by his side, Mayor Jackson stressed the need for Atlanta to go beyond being a "city too busy to hate" and instead urged Atlantans to ask, "Are we a city too busy to love?" According to Jackson, he understood the implications of that question; Atlantans had to translate concern for others into actions that would bring about strong economic growth and prosperity for all, including young people and senior citizens in the community.<sup>293</sup> The new mayor called for the city "to unite under the banner of brotherhood, peace, prosperity, and love."<sup>294</sup>

The Mayor wanted to lead the people of Atlanta into an era of progress, and he knew that doing this meant an up-hill battle for him and his administration because at first some Atlantans would gain more than others. However, as the ideas started taking shape, it became apparent that large numbers of people would begin to benefit in significant ways. "We wanted fairness and an even-handed approach to solving problems." Jackson later said. "I wanted, fervently wanted, the business community to work hand-in-glove with me as we went through this transition."<sup>295</sup>

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<sup>292</sup> Raymond A. Mohl, Ed. *The Making of Urban America* (Lanham: SR Books, 1997), 265.

<sup>293</sup> First Inaugural Speech by Mayor Maynard Jackson. January 7, 1974. Maynard Jackson, Mayoral Administrative Records, Series 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Terms. Box 25, Folder 9. Archives Research Center, Robert Woodruff Library. Atlanta University Center.

<sup>294</sup> Gary M. Pomerantz. *Where Peachtree Meets Sweet Auburn: A Saga of Race and Family* (New York: Penguin Books, 1996), 414. Maynard Jackson's approach contrasted with his main opponent's divisive campaign. For that reason both the *Atlanta Constitution* and the *Atlanta Journal* backed Jackson in the election.

<sup>295</sup> Maynard Jackson. Interview with Jackie Shearer, conducted by Blackside, Inc. October 14, 1988. Washington University Libraries, Film and Media Archive, Henry Hampton Collection.

Jackson considered his election a mandate for social reform, and he committed himself from the beginning of his administration to making Atlanta a more inclusive city, both politically and economically. Fears by the white community that it would lose all control of power in Atlanta, coupled with exaggerated expectations in the black community and the anxieties in both, meant that Mayor Jackson had his work cut out for him.<sup>296</sup>

Previously, the black community had not been well-represented in agencies providing government benefits and services to the city; blacks had not held leadership positions on vital committees such as finance, ordinance, development and zoning. When Mayor Jackson took office, only zero-point-five percent of all the contracts in the city went to blacks. Furthermore, women had no positions as department heads. For this reason the Mayor suggested - strongly suggested - that businessmen implement affirmative action programs to provide opportunities for minority business organizations, and also to put women and members of minority groups on their boards. Conflicts arose over this issue together with the Mayor's attempts to expand his powers over redevelopment.<sup>297</sup>

In these early months, Mayor Jackson did not understand the importance of establishing personal relationships with members of the white business community, relationships built on trust, in order to accomplish what he set out to do.<sup>298</sup> By pressuring them, he only solidified their determination not to comply, and many members of the white business community approached the new mayor's programs with skepticism and doubt. Before this shift in power, whites had

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<sup>296</sup> Clarence Stone. "Partnership New South Style: Central Atlanta Progress," *Proceedings of the Academy of Political Science*, Vol. 36. No. 2, Public-Private Partnerships: Improving Urban Living (1985), 108.

<sup>297</sup> Clarence Stone. *Regime Politics: Governing Atlanta, 1946-1988* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1989), 86.

<sup>298</sup> Gary Pomerantz. *Where Peachtree Meets Sweet Auburn: A Saga of Race and Family* (New York; Penguin Books, 1996), 438. Jackson later commented that he naively thought that the issues would carry the day. Only later did he become aware that relationships should be established first, and that trust comes with getting to know one another.



assumed decision-making roles as their prerogative; they had been accustomed to giving instructions, not taking them. Conversely, an influential group of economically successful black businessmen felt more comfortable negotiating with members of the white power structure now that they did so on equal terms.<sup>299</sup> The abrupt transition to a majority black government coupled with the shift in racial balance, after the subordination of blacks by whites until 1973, meant that the white community would have severely scrutinized and criticized actions Mayor Jackson took no matter how he approached these issues. Had he been too eager to please, his actions might have been mistaken for weakness and timidity, and white leaders may have incorrectly assumed that it would be business as usual.<sup>300</sup> Friction was inevitable, and the potential for polarization was strong, but Atlanta's long tradition of biracial cooperation along with the desire for strong economic growth and development meant that an opportunity for cooperation existed. The black middle-class offered one part of the equation when they made moves to interact with white business and professional people about some civic concerns.

Central Atlanta Progress (CAP), an organization made up of around 200 major property owners in Atlanta's main business district, offered another part of the equation. The private and nonprofit organization would participate in developmental planning and execution of specific projects. The group needed a skilled and experienced person to run CAP, and for this reason the membership chose Dan Sweat, whose credentials included having served successfully as executive director of the Atlanta Regional Commission as well as helping to organize the Midtown Business Association, a group that promoted the interests of businesses, residents, and the arts community in the revived Midtown area of Atlanta. He was personable and energetic,

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<sup>299</sup> Clarence Stone. "Partnership New South Style: Central Atlanta Progress," *Proceedings of the Academy of Political Science*, Vol. 36. No. 2, Public-Private Partnerships: Improving Urban Living (1986), 110.

<sup>300</sup> Mack H. Jones. "Black Political Empowerment in Atlanta: Myth and Reality" *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 439, Urban Black Politics (Sept., 1978), 90-117.

and had the qualities needed to deal with a number of community organizations. He had served on the boards of several other organizations such as the Junior League of Atlanta and the International Downtown Association.

Sweat's appointment to head CAP coincided with the election of Maynard Jackson as Atlanta's first black mayor. Although their relationship was stormy at times, they worked well together on a number of projects, and Sweat helped to bridge the gap between the new black political power at City Hall and white downtown business establishments.<sup>301</sup>

Although both of the Atlanta newspapers, the *Atlanta Constitution* and the *Atlanta Journal*, had supported Jackson's election, they later accused him of being a racist, as did major figures in the business community. Richard Kattel, President of Citizens and Southern National Bank, said, "It's traumatic having the black community with the political strength, and the white community continuing to hold the purse strings." John Portman, an Atlanta developer, added, "The blacks are going to have to share their political power and the whites will need to give up some of their economic power."<sup>302</sup>

During the 1960s the city had become a center of commerce brimming with opportunity for Atlantans, including some members of the black community. Kattel and Portman implied by their statements that policies initiated by Mayor Jackson had put the brakes on Atlanta's incredible growth and development that took place in the 1960s.<sup>303</sup>

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<sup>301</sup> Dan Sweat. Interview by Cliff Kuhn and Shepard Barbash, January 8, 1997.

<sup>302</sup> Floyd Hunter. *Community Power Succession: Atlanta's Policy Makers Revisited* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1980).

<sup>303</sup> The *Atlanta Constitution*. "A City in Crisis" March 23, 1975. The paper ran a seven-part series in which the writer suggested that a version of Camelot had existed in the 1960s during which experienced leadership supported the city as a center for commerce and as a mecca for emerging blacks. The article stated that political power had shifted, resulting in a faded Camelot. Julian Bond. *Atlanta Journal* September 22, 1974 "Blacks Here Call Papers Inflammatory." State Senator Julian Bond responded to the articles by charging the Atlanta newspapers with continuously attacking Mayor Jackson, and creating fear among the citizens of Atlanta. The *Atlanta Voice*, a black weekly publication featured a story entitled, "Papers Harass Elected Black Officials." The article maintained that conflict of interest charges made against black officials had no supporting evidence. Further, for a clearer view of

Kattel and Portman, were partially correct. During the late 1960s the city of Atlanta had exploded, displaying new and exciting vertical and horizontal growth. [Indeed, some considered the ‘Camelot of the 60’s’ and the *hottest city* in the country that others envied.<sup>304</sup> The expanding skyline proclaimed an increase in downtown office space by as much as thirty percent in a single year, and first class hotel-room capacity, so critical to Atlanta’s lucrative convention business, doubled in eighteen months.<sup>305</sup>

In the late 1960s, during the city administration led by Mayor Sam Massell and Vice-Mayor Maynard Jackson, private developers created a new downtown area, high-lighted by the spectacular multimillion dollar Peachtree Center that featured a dazzling twenty-one story hotel designed by architect John Portman, outstripping new construction in other southern cities. The magnificent hotel had an open atrium with spaceship elevators, a lobby as high as the hotel, and a revolving blue dome with a restaurant on top that dominated the Atlanta skyline.<sup>306</sup> This expansion represented the work of a group of moneyed white bankers and merchants who controlled both City Hall and the business community at that time.

The traumatic loss of control and influence in City Hall by the white community generated a sense of uneasiness and friction between the groups.<sup>307</sup> The new black power structure in city government challenged white business leaders, who then felt that Mayor Jackson had weakened

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that situation it should be noted that Mayor Jackson’s ascendance into office had accompanied the most severe economic recession in the nation since the great depression, and that federal funding for domestic programs that had been forthcoming in the 1960s had been drastically cut in the 1970s. This reduction meant limited opportunities for black politicians such as Mayor Jackson to respond to the needs of his impoverished constituents and the citizens of Atlanta.

<sup>304</sup> Barbara L. Jackson. “Desegregation: Atlanta Style” *Theory into Practice*, Vol. 17, No. 1, Desegregation: Plans and Possibilities (Feb., 1978).

<sup>305</sup> Ivan Allen, Jr. with Paul Hemphill. *Mayor: Notes on the Sixties* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1971). 146-148.

<sup>306</sup> David R. Goldfield. *Cotton Fields and Skyscrapers: Southern City and Region* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), 156. An aside: This author took a visitor to the city to the restaurant for a late lunch.

<sup>307</sup> Barbara L. Jackson. “Desegregation: Atlanta Style” *Theory into Practice*, Vol. 17, No. 1, Desegregation: Plans and Possibilities (Feb., 1978).

the alliance between the black and white communities that had existed in the past. White business leaders thought that the mayor needed to restore the relationship in order to revitalize the downtown business community.<sup>308</sup>

Harold Brockey, Chairman of Rich's Department Store, sent a letter on behalf of the white business establishment to Mayor Jackson expressing fears by the businessmen of the increasing crime rate and the growing racial imbalance in the city's work force. Brockey also wrote that members of CAP, a group of businessmen committed to growth and development in the central city area, perceived the mayor to be anti-white and unavailable to them for discussions about important issues concerning Atlanta.<sup>309</sup>

Jackson responded to the letter sent by Brockey and to the criticism from other white business leaders, by initiating a series of "Pound-Cake Summit" meetings where he offered white community leaders the opportunity to exchange views with him and his staff without fear of being rebuffed.<sup>310</sup> Robert Holder, president of Holder Construction Company, attended the first meeting and left determined not to go back. He echoed the feeling of other businessmen who attended the meeting when he described the atmosphere as hostile and depressing. [Mayor Jackson had lectured them about the problems that existed, and his own feelings of insecurity in dealing with those problems.]<sup>311</sup> [ ]

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<sup>308</sup> Clarence Stone. "Regime Politics: Governing Atlanta, 1946-1988" (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1989), 87.

<sup>309</sup> Gary Pomerantz *Where Peachtree Meets Sweet Auburn: A Saga of Race and Family* (New York: Penguin Books, 1996), 437. Central Atlanta Progress, hereafter written as CAP, made up of Atlanta businessmen devoted to development in the downtown area of the city.

<sup>310</sup> Kenneth W. Goings and Raymond A. Mohl, Ed. *The New African American Urban History* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1996), 335. Further studies explaining the limitations on the power of the new black mayors in America include Mack H. Jones, "Black Political Empowerment in Atlanta: Myth and Reality," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 439 (September 1978), 90-117.

<sup>311</sup> Gary Pomerantz. *Where Peachtree Meets Sweet Auburn: A Saga of Race and Family* (New York: Penguin Books, 1996), 438.

Mayor Jackson's unsuccessful "Pound-Cake Summit" meetings contrasted with some substantial successes he had with his promised support of the arts. Almost a year and one-half after Jackson took office he restored his image in the eyes of many Atlantans who recognized the need to preserve historic buildings when he initiated a bold move to help stop the sale of the opulent Fox Theater located on the corner of Peachtree Street and Ponce de Leon in Midtown. Jackson knew that the destruction of the Fox Theater would be unacceptable to those Atlantans who understood the importance of the landmark building.<sup>312</sup> The Metropolitan Opera Company had found a home in the Fox when it made regular stops in Atlanta, and members of the opera company claimed that no other theater in the country could replicate the acoustics in the Fox.<sup>313</sup>

When it became known that Southern Bell planned to purchase and destroy the beautiful iconic building in order to create a new company headquarters building on the cleared property, strong and organized dissent arose from Atlantans who knew the historical value of the Fox Theater and objected to its destruction. This uproar represented the beginning of historic preservation in a "teardown" city. Public outcry in the news media made it impossible to destroy the building, and the pressure to save the Fox became so great that Jackson issued a statement saying that no demolition would take place without his specific orders. Rumors flew that he put the demolition permit in his back pocket so that it could not be found. Although Southern Bell might have overturned the orders by going to court and protesting the lack of due process, it wisely elected not to do so.<sup>314</sup>

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<sup>312</sup> Roberta Brandes Gratz. *The Living City* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989). Mayor Jackson saved the day, and saved the Fox for Atlanta. Without strong defenders, the Fox would have been torn down to make way for Southern Bell in the name of progress.

<sup>313</sup> Maynard Jackson. Interview with Jackie Sherer, conducted by Blackside, Inc. October 14, 1988, Washington University Libraries, Film and Media Archive, Henry Hampton Collection. The victory Mayor Jackson had by saving the Fox brought back bittersweet memories to him of Jim Crow laws that had kept blacks from entering the Fox Theater through the front door and offering them seats in what Jackson referred to as a "Buzzards' roost" at the top of a lot of stairs.

<sup>314</sup> GSB. "Save the Fox!" July 22, 1974.

Capitalizing on his recent favorable ratings, Jackson initiated a policy that allowed blacks and women to become involved in the social and cultural affairs of Atlanta through a minority-participation requirement for city contracts and grants.<sup>315</sup> He sought to obtain federal funds for libraries, parks and recreation, and the arts in general. Jackson also encouraged equal participation of blacks and whites in cultural activities and in the arts community. In an attempt to bridge the gap that had existed for so long between the black and white art communities, Mayor Jackson and his wife, along with Mr. and Mrs. Julian Bond, sponsored an exhibition at the High Museum featuring paintings by Ernie Barnes, a black artist from California, whose art acclaimed “the beauty of living in the ghetto,” and was so titled.<sup>316</sup>

Mayor Jackson created a municipal arts agency, entitled the Bureau of Cultural Affairs, the first of its kind for the city. This agency was funded and developed to bring the performing and visual arts into the lives of more Atlantans, and also to enhance the quality of life in the city.<sup>317</sup> He designated Michael Lomax, special assistant to Mayor Jackson, to head the agency, and established a Board of Trustees with Elliot Hass, well-known Atlanta businessman, as Chairman, and Mrs. Anna Illien as President (with Michael Lomax as Vice-President of Special Events) to ensure that the Arts Festivals, annual events that showcased the work of local artists, ran smoothly.<sup>318</sup> He appointed Mrs. Hope Moore as Commissioner of Parks and Recreation, a job that included promoting the Arts Festivals in Piedmont Park and attracting local and federal

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<sup>315</sup> Gary Pomerantz. *Where Peachtree Meets Sweet Auburn: A Saga of Race and Family* (New York: Penguin Books, 1997), 459.

<sup>316</sup> GSB. February 13, 1975. Julian Bond, civil rights activist, served in the Georgia Legislature for twenty-five years. He co-founded the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC).

<sup>317</sup> Mayor Maynard Jackson. *Welcome Remarks to National Council on the Arts*. September 17, 1976. Maynard Jackson Collection, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Terms, Archives Research Center. Atlanta University Center. Robert W. Woodruff Library.

<sup>318</sup> *Ibid.* Pomerantz, 407. Michael Lomax, Morehouse College professor, volunteered for Maynard Jackson’s campaign, and, with the help of his wife, Pearl, wrote Jackson’s position papers.

money to the city for libraries, parks and recreation.<sup>319</sup> Commissioner Moore soon discovered that, due to a recession, federal money that had poured into Atlanta and other cities during the 1960s had dried up due to a recession. Public funds for this purpose did not exist and the new Commissioner suggested that the facilities would have to procure outside financing.<sup>320</sup>

To address the problem of funding these and other projects, Mayor Jackson formed the Atlanta Economic Development Corporation (AEDC), a nonprofit corporation designed to bring private funds into the public sphere. Mayor Jackson also made it a point to communicate with Robert Woodruff, president of Coca-Cola Company and leader of both the business community, and the Atlanta Arts Alliance, and to establish a personal relationship with him through regular visits to Woodruff's office to report on the latest developments in the city. Jackson always enquired whether he could do something for Mr. Woodruff, to which the latter would reply, "No, you're doing a good job, keep it up. We appreciate you."<sup>321</sup> These sentiments by Woodruff assured Jackson that there would be cooperation and support for the Mayor's efforts to obtain private funding through the AEDC, and soon members of the High Museum of Art offered to collaborate with the city.

In 1973, the High Museum of Art, under director Gudmund Vigtel, exhibited *Highlights from the AU Collection of Afro-American Art* organized by Richard A. Long. In 1975, the museum had an exhibit of works by Benny Andrews, African-American artist from Georgia.<sup>322</sup>

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<sup>319</sup> Forty-three years of age, Hope Moore graduated from Vassar, served as Chairman of the Board of the Atlanta and Fair and Exposition Center at the Southeastern Fairgrounds, and also Chaired the Board of Literacy Action. Mrs. Moore served on the Boards of the Atlanta Arts Alliance, the Atlanta Symphony, the Atlanta Music Festival, and also as a member of the Women's Organization of the Symphony. She contributed as one of the two female members of the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce.

<sup>320</sup> GSB. February 13, 1975. Reporter Steve Seaberg, a member of the Mayor's Ad Hoc Committee, wrote about the Arts.

<sup>321</sup> Gary Pomerantz. *Where Peachtree Meets Sweet Auburn: A Saga of Race and Family* (New York: Penguin Books, 1997). 458.

<sup>322</sup> High Museum of Art. *Highlights from the AU Collection of Afro-American Art*. Atlanta: High Museum of Art, 1973. 40-41.

The “Urban Walls,” a project financed by matching grants from the National Endowment of the Arts (NEA), plus donations from local businesses, and corporations, paid artists \$1,000 each to paint the murals on specified walls around town. Unfortunately, according to visual artist Steve Seaberg, reporter for the *Bird*, none of the unpaid artists who had been painting murals all along were chosen to paint the new murals.<sup>323</sup> These seasoned artists, in collaboration with the Neighborhood Arts Center (NAC), had been painting themes they were passionate about such as *African Unity*, a mural located on the corner of Northside Drive and Mitchell Street, and the *Wall of Respect*, a multi-colored seven panel mural the artists painted in tribute to black history, past, present and future.<sup>324</sup>

Boisfeuillet Jones, Managing Director of the Joseph B. Whitehead Foundation, heard that the city was promoting “Art in the Park” for Piedmont Park, and he agreed to help provide funding with a grant of \$50 thousand.<sup>325</sup> The Whitehead Foundation chose to participate in this project because it had the potential to enrich the quality of Atlanta’s parks as a source of recreation and education for the people of Atlanta, and also because it enabled the High Museum of Art to serve a broader segment of the community.<sup>326</sup> Jones attached two conditions to the grant: he requested that there be no publicity about the source of the grant, and that the Mayor provide the Foundation with a report about the purpose of the expenditures for the upcoming

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<sup>323</sup> GSB. April 22, 1974.

<sup>324</sup> Rachanice Tate. “*Our Art Itself was Our Activism*”: *Atlanta’s Neighborhood Arts Center, 1975-1990*. (Dissertation: Clark Atlanta University, 2012), 204.

<sup>325</sup> Obituary. “Boisfeuillet Jones, 88, Educator and President of Philanthropies” *The New York Times*, July 20, 2001. Jones was president of the Emily and Ernest Woodruff Foundation and the Robert Woodruff Foundation from 1964 to 1988. Jones also served in President Lyndon Johnson’s administration on health policy. He became chairman of a national committee investigating the quality of medical research in 1959, and also was an assistant professor of political science, dean of administration and he wrote a comprehensive plan for the expansion of the JEMory Clinic and the development of schools of dentistry, medicine and nursing.

<sup>326</sup> Letter from Boisfeuillet Jones, Managing Director of the Joseph B. Whitehead Foundation to Mayor Maynard Jackson. December 20, 1974. Maynard Jackson Mayoral Administrative Records, 1<sup>st</sup> Term. Box 25, Folder 5 Archives Research Center, Atlanta University Center, Robert W. Woodruff Library. Communication between Mr. Jones and Mayor Jackson provides confirmation that communication and cooperation existed between the Arts Community and City Hall.



project in Piedmont Park by September 1, 1975. Mayor Jackson responded, promising to comply with both requests.<sup>327</sup>

Mayor Jackson formed an *ad hoc* Committee for the Arts, recruiting Atlantans from around the city such as Chris Manos, a leading figure in producing theatre, and also influential in bringing Broadway shows to Atlanta. Manos had support in the black community because he had provided financial backing for “Just Us Theatre,” as well resonating with an inclusive philosophy concerning theatre. He said, “Theatre is not that way and it ought not be that way in Atlanta.”<sup>328</sup> Chris Manos and his wife, Glenn Ryman Manos, were interested in the creative process. Manos held a lease on the Peachtree Playhouse and rented theater space to members of the black community so that they could present *Dr. B. S. Black*, written by Barbra and Carlton Molette and Charles Mann, which was the first black play presented on Peachtree Street.<sup>329</sup>

Nexus Contemporary Art Center, started in 1973, promoted the performing arts and provided the visual arts that are still displayed in the bathhouse located at Piedmont Park. This progressive group made up of a consortium of four groups included (1) Nexus, a photographic organization, (2) the Dance Unit, (3) IMAGE, Inc., a resource center for independent film and video artists, and (4) the Atlanta Art Workers Coalition (AAWC), now known as “The Atlanta Contemporary Arts Center.” The center quickly earned the respect of artists, government agencies, and art communities in Atlanta and elsewhere.<sup>330</sup>

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<sup>327</sup> Mayor Maynard Jackson’s response to the letter from Boisfeuillet Jones. January 2, 1975. The Mayor sent a copy to Gudmund Vigtel, Director of the High Museum, proving cooperation between Mayor Jackson representing the City and the Atlanta Arts Alliance. Maynard Jackson Mayoral Administrative Records, 1<sup>st</sup> Term, Box 25, Folder 5. Archives Research Center, Atlanta University Center, Robert Woodruff Library.

<sup>328</sup> Rachanice Tate. “*Our Art Itself Was Our Activism*” *Atlanta’s Neighborhood Arts Center, 1975-1990*. Ph.D. Dissertation, Clark Atlanta University, 2012, 78. Manos was referring to the way that black people had been treated.

<sup>329</sup> *Ibid.* 79.

<sup>330</sup> Rachanice Tate. “*Our Art Itself Was Our Activism*,” *Atlanta’s Neighborhood Arts Center, 1975-1990*. Ph.D. Dissertation, Clark Atlanta University, 2012, 278.

More exciting events happened after Mayor Jackson appointed Mrs. Pat Gann to coordinate the Arts Festivals in Piedmont Park, with a Board of Trustees led by Chairman James D. Dixon. Mrs. Gann had a keen sense about what needed to be done to make the festivals more interesting and inviting for a wide range of people, from art connoisseurs to those who simply wanted to walk through the park and enjoy what the artists had created. Having grown up in Washington, D.C. and experienced the excitement of cutting edge and experimental creativity, Mrs. Gann set her sights high for Atlanta. Her group of workers represented the entire community and they focused on supporting the artists and art groups to promote racially diverse artists and art exhibits as well as dance and theatre performances.<sup>331</sup>

Mrs. Gann explained that with the ground-swell of local support for the arts, Atlanta became more attractive to foundations in New York that had been providing significant funding for artists doing innovative work. “They were especially interested in providing support for creative development in the South, and so representatives of the foundations would fly to Atlanta from New York and Washington, D.C. They called us ‘the city of pretty tops’ because of the new buildings in Midtown.” She smiled and commented, “Those times don’t exist now, we just hit it at the right time.”<sup>332</sup>

The artists’ market, not a part of the risk-taking section of the festival, attracted the highest quality art possible from selected works to be shown. The market drew large crowds, and those artists who entered their paintings in the artists’ market were inspired to proceed further into the experimental visual arts section.<sup>333</sup> This arena presented outdoor art that appealed to

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<sup>331</sup> Mrs. Pat Gann. Interview with this author. November 18, 2003.

<sup>332</sup> Ibid. Gann.

<sup>333</sup> This system of designation for the different sections of the festival helped to educate and acclimate Atlantans to contemporary art at a time when many who lived in this city had never been exposed to this sort of creativity. Mrs. Ferst addressed this issue in 1967 when she said that Atlanta had very little to offer anyone who understood how to assess the values associated with art, an issue that is addressed in Chapter Two, and also in the Conclusion of this dissertation .

people of all levels of experience in the art world, and many of the market participants then progressed to museum-quality art.

Mrs. Gann worked with women involved in the High Museum, and together they implemented the framework for “Art in the Park.” The High Museum Members’ Guild co-sponsored the endeavor along with the National Endowment for the Arts, Nexus, the Junior League of Atlanta, the National Council of Jewish Women, and an anonymous foundation. A Community Advisory Committee served as a formal link between the project and the Atlanta community.<sup>334</sup>

According to Mrs. Gann, art exhibits at the High Museum typically represented safe and traditional art, showing “lots of Menabone Bird plates that members of conservative committees felt comfortable approving; the exhibits, however, included no contemporary art and were devoid of life and excitement.”<sup>335</sup> Mrs. Gann and others who promoted the arts in Atlanta recognized the need to invigorate and expand the art community.

That was the year, 1978, when the Neighborhood Arts Center (NAC), the black arts center dedicated to black cultural politics with the motto “Art for People’s Sake,” made a place for itself in the Arts Festival of Atlanta (AFA). Although given a less-than-desirable area, a little strip of land down by the lake to locate their exhibits, many participants worked to build the space into an unforgettable “African Village.” The workers made huts with African symbols and used a colorful tie-dyed parachute to display the artwork, accompanied by a concession stand where they sold African food. A stage was erected where African dance and music was performed with drummers playing and dancers dancing, all to the delight of the viewers.

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<sup>334</sup> Mrs. Pat Gann. Interview with this author. November 18, 2003. The diverse make-up of the groups involved with “Art in the Park” further demonstrates broad-based interaction between the City and the Arts community.

<sup>335</sup> Ibid. Gann.

“African Village” made a unique Afrocentric statement, which helped to bring people of color into the park.

Those who organized and participated in the Arts Festival of Atlanta had differing opinions about whether the festival was a success. Some critics found the Arts Festival lacking in quality, and also an event that did not offer black artists a place to adequately express their works. According to these critics, “it was place to sell food, but was not necessarily an exposure of our art.” In spite of the lukewarm press among those in the black arts community, the (NAC) had a huge booth every year after that.<sup>336</sup>

The Arts Festival Association of Atlanta, also known as Arts Festival of Atlanta, Inc., attracted a wide variety of members to the organization who could raise money for the group. Elliot Haas, well-known Atlanta businessman, served as Chairman of the Board, and Mrs. Anna Belle Illien, owner of an art gallery named Galerie Illien, filled the position of President. Gross receipts for the Arts Festival Association of Atlanta, Inc. during the week of May 12 to May 19, 1978, revealed that the Arts Festival attracted a significant number of viewers and people who wanted to buy from the artists.<sup>337</sup> Strong support throughout the Atlanta community helped to make Art in the Park successful.

In May, 1978, the Arts Festival netted \$55,300, after sales tax and expenses, and after the group paid \$42,200 to the artists. The Board of Trustees considered this significant, and represented community support for the artists and the Arts Festival. The Trustees had to hire a twenty-four hour guard service at a cost of \$1,050, in case there should be any disturbances in

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<sup>336</sup> Rachanice Tate. “*Our Art Itself Was Our Activism.*” *Atlanta’s Neighborhood Arts Center, 1975-1990*. Ph.D. Dissertation, Clark Atlanta University. 2012. 281-287, Michael Lomax said that he was not impressed, and thought that the Arts Festival was not very good.

<sup>337</sup> Arts Festival of Atlanta, Inc. Board of Trustees, 1974-75, “The Piedmont Festival.” Maynard Jackson Mayoral Administrative Records. 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Term. Box 25, Folder 9. Archives Research Center, Atlanta University Center, Robert W. Woodruff Library.

Piedmont Park. The group found it critical to document receipts and costs to prove that the Atlanta Arts Festival did not drain city funds and did, in fact, produce an income.<sup>338</sup>

As Mayor Jackson's Atlanta Economic Development Corporation gained traction, the organization attracted more concerned and gifted individuals from the arts community.

Mrs. Gann, along with Mrs. Frankie Coxe and Mrs. Beth Barnett, both leaders in the High Museum Guild, spearheaded the idea of a playground sculpture for Piedmont Park. They chose the centrally located Piedmont Park, because it had more pedestrian traffic than any other park in town.<sup>339</sup> The women then brought in the Atlanta Bicentennial Commission, whose members voted to sponsor the sculptural park, and the Beers Construction Company contracted to build the designs at cost.<sup>340</sup>

Mrs. Coxe and Mrs. Barnett took the plan to members of the High Museum Guild who served on the Advisory Planning Committee, which consisted of the most dedicated and influential women in the Atlanta Arts Alliance. When they presented the plan for the playground sculpture to the members, however, they encountered strong resistance and differences of opinion about how funds they had raised should be spent.<sup>341</sup> These women rejected the idea of the playground sculpture in Piedmont Park, because they hoped the Guild would use the money to sponsor a more Euro-centric Rembrandt exhibition in conjunction with the High Museum exhibition "Life in Holland in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century" coming in the spring of 1975.<sup>342</sup>

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<sup>338</sup> Maynard Jackson, Mayoral Administrative Records. Series 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Terms, Box 25, Folder 9, Archives Research Center, Robert Woodruff Library, Atlanta University Center.

<sup>339</sup> Lucy Justus. "Sculpture to Play On" *Atlanta Journal*. August 22, 1976.

<sup>340</sup> *Ibid.* Jackson.

<sup>341</sup> These included, among others: Mrs. C. Peter Siegenthaler (Ann), Mrs. Tench Coxe (Frankie), Mrs. Rhodes Perdue (Margaret), Mrs. James Kelly (Carolyn), Mrs. Allen McDaniel (Sally), Mrs. Jack Ashmore (Blythe), Mrs. James Summers, Mrs. Crawford Barnett (Beth) Mrs. Robert Wells (Jean), Mrs. C.V. Nalley, III (Rene).

<sup>342</sup> Minutes of the Advisory Planning Meeting, September 23, 1974, at the home of Mrs. Allen P. McDaniel. Atlanta Historical Society. Woodruff Arts Center papers. MSS 664.

sense an acquisition, a special exhibition, and a children's exhibition.<sup>343</sup>

Guild members thus chose to conform to a national trend away from cultural elitism, by making art more accessible to the public, which indicated that Atlanta was becoming less provincial and more inclusive. They also wanted to increase the use of Piedmont Park areas and facilities for art education. The federal government offered grants for special projects intended to strengthen arts enrichment programs and to help children develop an understanding of art and their own creative abilities by direct contact with musicians, architects, dancers, poets, painters, sculptors, photographers, actors, and other craftsmen.

The Guild commissioned American artist Isamu Noguchi, world renowned sculptor, to design and direct the building of a one-acre playground called " 'Playscapes,' the Noguchi Children's Play Environment in Piedmont Park." Noguchi designed a multi-unit play environment that included a natural amphitheater and interrelated play-shapes to inspire people of all ages to explore and interact with the different formations.<sup>344</sup> This playground - - with Tom Eason, Chief Designer and Engineer for the Atlanta Bureau of Parks and Recreation, as consultant to Mr. Noguchi and his associate, Shoji Sadao - - would be the first completed "Playscapes" playground in the United States.<sup>345</sup>

Noguchi believed that art should be a part of everyday life, not something that one starts at some appropriate time and then stops when the experience is over. Noguchi's philosophy blends with that of black art as being Art for People Sake, "a mutual dialog between the artist

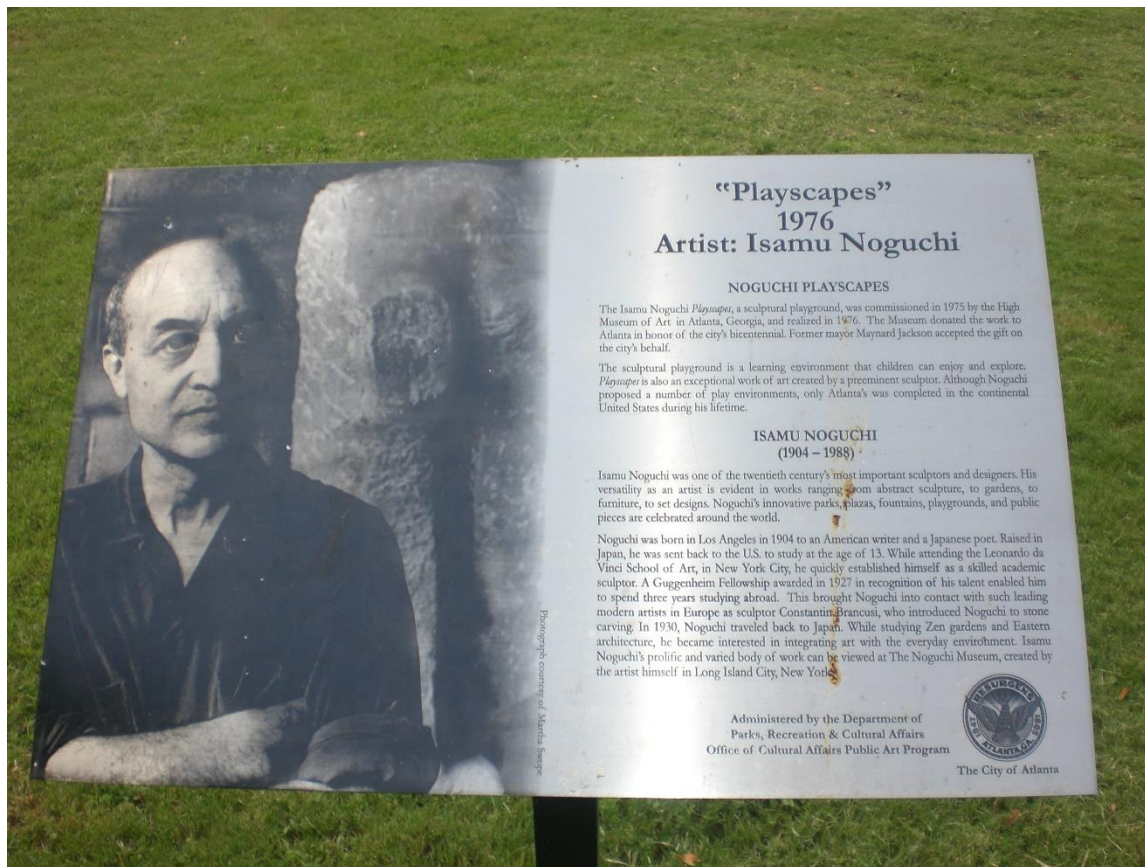
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<sup>343</sup> Minutes of the Meeting. Atlanta Historical Society. Woodruff Arts Center papers. MSS 664.

<sup>344</sup> MOMA, The Museum of Modern Art. "Isamu Noguchi: The Sculptor as Designer," The Museum of Modern Art, No. 4 (Autumn, 1977). Noguchi was born in this country of a Japanese father and a mother of Scots-Irish and American Indian descent.

<sup>345</sup> News Release "Children's Sculptural Playground in Piedmont Park, A Bicentennial Project for the City of Atlanta," November 21, 1975. Maynard Jackson, Mayoral Administrative Records. Series 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Terms, Box 25, Folder 9, Archives Research Center, Robert Woodruff Library, Atlanta University Center.

and his audience rather than the experience of the artist alone focused upon himself.”<sup>346</sup> He had designed sculptural environments such as the playground “Children’s Land” in Kyoto, Japan, and the sculpture gardens at UNESCO (United Nations Economic Scientific Cultural Organization) in Paris, IBM headquarters in New York, and Chase Manhattan Bank in New York, each of which draws the viewer into the activity of the art.



Photograph by author. August 15, 2014

<sup>346</sup> Rachanice Tate. “Our Art Itself Was Our Activism:” Atlanta’s Neighborhood Arts Center, 1975-1990. Dissertation. Clark Atlanta University, 2012, 13.

“Playscapes” became an endeavor for the four-part Bicentennial environmental improvement projects of the City of Atlanta and The High Museum of Art.<sup>347</sup> The estimated cost of the “Sculpture in the Park,” based on Isamu Noguchi’s proposal as artist, was \$125 thousand to \$150 thousand.

The new “Sculpture in the Park” opened on May 1, 1976 and became the ‘hub’ of “Art in the Park.” Mayor Jackson observed that the Noguchi ‘Playscapes,’ sponsored by many different groups including the city of Atlanta and The High Museum of Art, represented a Bicentennial gift to the citizens of Atlanta and would make the city a model of urban living for the nation. “We proved,” Mayor Jackson said, “that we have the will, creativity, and capacity to work together.”<sup>348</sup>

Jackson wrote a letter thanking Mr. Noguchi, saying that, “ ‘Playscapes’ has enriched the cultural life of our city, delighted our children, and brightened our lives in a vital and creative way.”<sup>349</sup> He thanked Noguchi for his willingness to work with members of the High Museum and “those of us within city government, and to share with us your vision, [which] certainly helped to make the dream of a place for children to play a reality.”

The High Museum became the first American museum to commission an artist to design a playground to be enjoyed and also to be used as a teaching tool for children’s art education programs. The Museum’s Department of Education opened a branch office in Piedmont Park where it conducted programs for Atlanta school children related to the playground: the actual

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<sup>347</sup> The endeavor also indicated a change in values by the city and by the people of Atlanta toward a more inclusive and playful approach to the world.

<sup>348</sup> Remarks by Mayor Maynard Jackson. “Art in the Park Opening” May 1, 1976. Speeches and Speaking Requests. Series 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Terms, box 9, Folder 13, Archives Research Center, Robert Woodruff Library, Atlanta University Center.

<sup>349</sup> Letter from Mayor Maynard Jackson to Mr. Isamu Noguchi. Copied : Ms. Pearl Cleage Lomax. October 11, 1976. Maynard Jackson, Mayoral Administrative Records. Series 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Terms, Box 25, Folder 9, Archives Research Center, Robert Woodruff Library, Atlanta University Center.



play environment made up only the tip of the iceberg for the project. This idea of a multi-purpose community arts center associated with Noguchi's "Playscapes" dove-tailed with the Mayor's Ad Hoc Committee's dedication to enhancing the arts.

Upper-elementary age children visited "Playscapes" and then participated in various projects relating to themes developed in a seven-part series called "Discovery." A darkroom facility located in the park close to "Playscapes" enabled the children to incorporate instruction in photography and "Adventures in Looking" into the experience. Further, the program required teachers to attend pre-series workshops especially designed to prepare them to help children have special creative and educational experiences. Other events and festivals involving performances of dance, theatre, and workshops for community groups enhanced the experience of "Playscapes."<sup>350</sup>

The *Atlanta Journal* and the *Atlanta Constitution* featured "Sculpture for Kids" in its Sunday combined Magazine section. (Lucy Justus wrote the article and William Winburn took pictures of children jumping, climbing, and swooping down a slide.) "Many people associate Playscapes with the expensive 'sculpture garden' Noguchi created at UNESCO in Paris and whose works are in major museums around the world," Ms. Justus wrote. She stressed that Noguchi, the 70-year-old artist, always believed that art should be part of everyday life and a part of the educational process.<sup>351</sup>

The \$150 thousand playground is like no other you have ever seen. A blue slide spirals around a pale blue cylindrical structure. Twin orange triangles support the swings, and there are three sets of play-cubes in bright blues and greens, and three multi-shaped jungle gyms for climbing, crawling and swinging by hands or feet. A big circular sandbox offers children the opportunity to build castles as they let the "soft white stuff" spill through their fingers and drift in the wind.

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<sup>350</sup> Mayor Maynard Jackson Administrative Records. 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Terms. Box 25, Folder 15. Archives Research Center, Robert Woodruff Library. Atlanta University Center.

<sup>351</sup> Lucy Justus. "Sculpture to Play On," *Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, August 22, 1976.

The Members Guild of the High Museum contributed more than money to the playground; they coordinated activities that led up to the opening of the playground, providing lectures, symposia, films, and the requisite benefit ball. They also organized weekly children's programs at a building designed as an extension center. At the dedication of "Playscapes," the members described the playground as "an affair of the heart of those of the Members' Guild."<sup>352</sup>

Beginning with the summer of 1976, the Department of Children's Education of the High Museum used the playground as a "branch office" for its outreach programs with Atlanta school children. All of the participating organizations worked together to incorporate a Parks Council, an independent nonprofit organization designed to encourage and facilitate private financial participation by individuals, groups, and the business community in tangible improvements of the city's parks. The council served as a liaison between concerned citizens and the Bureau of Parks and Recreation, and the council encouraged people to join from the community at large. "Art in the Park" served as a renewal of the excitement of outdoor space, the way that it is perceived, and as an attraction meant to awaken the citizens of Atlanta to the enormous needs of all the city parks: and transformed Piedmont Park.

The Atlanta playground attracted children from throughout the city. Even adults enjoyed the playground, including Gudmund Vigtel, director of the High Museum of Art, whom some members saw swooping down the blue spiral slide.

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<sup>352</sup> Charlotte Ferst. *The Members' Guild: The First Decade* May 11, 1976. Atlanta Historical Society. Woodruff Arts Center papers. MSS 664.



Photographs by author, August 15, 2014

Vigtel said, “We are always looking for ways to bring our activities outside the museum walls. This is certainly a going trend among museums.”<sup>353</sup> He wanted to have art in public

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<sup>353</sup> Lucy Justus. “Sculpture to Play On,” *Atlanta Journal*, August 22, 1976.

buildings such as schoolhouses, airports, and department stores so that people would not consider art remote and cold. “Our programs are for children, and for years now they will be provided on a regular basis almost all year round.” Vigtel wrote to Ms. Justus, thanking her for the cover story of the Atlanta Journal’s magazine section, saying that he liked the way her article communicated to the people of Atlanta the importance of community involvement, and the need for people to enjoy art on an informal basis in familiar surroundings like the Noguchi playground. Vigtel also commented favorably on the photographs of the children enjoying the playground taken by William Winburn.<sup>354</sup>

“Playscapes” had its detractors, however. Louis Joyner, Building Editor for Southern Living Magazine, wrote an article concerning the playground in which he referred disparagingly to the facility. He had spoken with a number of playground designers around the country who offered basic concepts of playground design meant to provide a wide variety of play possibilities, to provide multi-use structures that could be used in unlimited ways. He suggested the desirability of linking the various elements of “Playscapes” so that play could become a linear experience. Joiner stated that the Noguchi design seemed to ignore all of the concepts suggested by the other playground designers. He noted that despite its rather interesting sculptural elements, it consisted of the same traditional swing, slide, and see-saw; standard items for other playgrounds. Joiner further wrote that although the Noguchi design may be interesting as sculpture, he questioned its validity as a total play environment. His main concern focused on the

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<sup>354</sup> Mayor Maynard Jackson Administrative Records. 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Terms. Box 25, Folder 15. Archives Research Center, Robert Woodruff Library. Atlanta University Center. Gudmund Vigtel to Lucy Justice thanking her for the article. Vigtel also sent a copy to Pearl Lomax in the Mayor’s office, which also proves cooperation between the arts community at the Museum and the City. Maynard Jackson Mayoral Administrative Records, Series 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Terms, Box 25, Folder 9. Archives Research Center Atlanta University Center. Robert W. Woodruff Library.

design fee in excess of \$150 thousand that he thought would have been better used to build multiple playgrounds for children all over Atlanta.

Those involved in planning the Noguchi playground hoped that it would be a uniting factor for those who lived in and around Atlanta, and another way to stimulate more interaction among the people who frequented Piedmont Park.<sup>355</sup> Mrs. Pat Gann worked diligently to attract people from all over the City to enjoy the activities in the park. She encouraged artists from the black community to participate in the festivals, and also urged Atlanta artists to compete in the international art world, which attracted performances and artists to Atlanta from other countries.<sup>356</sup>

With the backing of Mayor Jackson, Mrs. Gann organized festivals for the in-town area of Atlanta that included performances by the Alliance Theatre and the Atlanta Ballet. The Atlanta Symphony performed in Piedmont Park on Sunday nights for those who wanted to enjoy music, good food, and each other's company in a relaxed and more informal setting than the more formal Symphony Hall.<sup>357</sup> Thus, through the joint efforts of those who worked for the city and those who supported the arts community, Midtown as a part of Atlanta transitioned into a more diverse and interesting place to live, to work, and to visit.

Mrs. Charlotte Ferst, president of the Arts Alliance Members Guild, and proud of her organization's cooperative participation with the city of Atlanta in these ventures, wrote a glowing report outlining the accomplishments of the Guild over the past ten years. On May 11, 1976 she commended the intense study and evaluation of the Arts Alliance that had been

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<sup>355</sup> Lucy Justice. "Sculpture to Play On," *Atlanta Journal* August 22, 1976.

<sup>356</sup> Mrs. Pat Gann. Interview with this author, November 5, 2003.

<sup>357</sup> This author attended performances by the Atlanta Symphony in Piedmont Park accompanied by her two youngest sons, who enjoy classical music today because of those outings. They could listen to the music while running around and have fun, all within my sight. They did not have to sit still.

commissioned by the Atlanta Art Association, a liaison between the High Museum of Art and the Atlanta School of Art. Mrs. Ferst referred to the tragic loss of many members of the Arts Community in the Orly Plane crash in 1962, and said that the tragedy had stimulated a surge of feeling and energy coupled with dreams and imagination as “a kind of renaissance with the concept of a broader accommodation of arts elements under one roof took shape.”<sup>358</sup> Mrs. Ferst commended the professionalism of those in the Arts Community who “quietly fused together the serious interests of many,” blending the talents of men and women while broadening community support and membership. Her words revealed a profound shift in attitudes and orientations that had evolved during this period among the Members Guild of the High Museum of Art.

In reflecting on the past, Mrs. Ferst acknowledged that the group had deemphasized fund-raising as major objective and had replaced it with a serious and scholarly pursuit of education.<sup>359</sup> In order to broaden the base of community support, the Guild adopted a crash program with roundtable discussions about how to achieve this goal. She commented on the “almost total absence of pettiness that had surrounded most endeavors in the past, and that the pettiness was replaced by a great surge of energy coupled with dreams for the future.”<sup>360</sup> Mrs. Ferst did not often express sentimentality, which made her words touchingly significant for that period in Atlanta’s history.<sup>361</sup>

In the spring of 1976 the city sponsored another Bicentennial project, including a City Sculpture Celebration in downtown Atlanta. The outdoor sculpture exhibition included works on loan from national collections and also works by local artists, including Curtis Patterson, George Beasley,

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<sup>358</sup> Mrs. Charlotte Ferst. Members’ Guild: The First Decade, May 11, 1976. Atlanta Historical Society. Woodruff Arts Center papers. MSS 664.

<sup>359</sup> It should be noted that even with the change in focus, the Members’ Guild had raised several million dollars for their projects, the newest of which was “Playscapes.”

<sup>360</sup> Atlanta Historical Society. Woodruff Arts Center papers. MSS 664.

<sup>361</sup> This author did not know Mrs. Ferst well, but she had a reputation for not mincing words.

and Scott Gilliam. The project demonstrated ways to enliven human spaces and enhance the urban environment by making the downtown area more interesting and attractive. John Portman chaired the activities, and Mrs. Margaret Perdue served as co-chairman of the City Sculpture Celebration, one part of the Art in the Park project. The broad-based sponsorship of the event included organizations such as the City of Atlanta, the High Museum of Art, and the National Endowment for the Arts, along with other arts groups, plus the Rich Foundation and Beers Construction Company.<sup>362</sup>

The City Sculpture Celebration involved eight Museum City Centers located at the Trust Company Bank, Peachtree Center, Georgia Plaza Park in the Garden Restaurant, Omni International Mall, Colony Square, Rich's on Broad Street, in the Magnolia Room Restaurant, Atlanta University in the Trevor Arnett Library, and Georgia State University. Volunteers provided information about the Sculpture Celebration, maps of the city's historic and



Sculpture located at SunTrust Bank (Formerly Trust Company of Georgia)

Photograph taken by author. August 12, 2014.

<sup>362</sup> “Public Invited to Join Members of the Art in the Park Project in Two Week Long City Sculpture Celebration.” Release #108, April 20, 1976. Maynard Jackson, Mayoral Administrative Records. Series 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Terms, Box 25, Folder 9, Archives Research Center, Robert Woodruff Library, Atlanta University Center.

Sculpture Celebration. The outdoor sculpture, contemporary sculpture, and a booking service for guided tours added another dimension to the designed to further improve the appearance of the city, intensified the beauty of Atlanta's changing urban environment. Mayor Jackson committed the resources needed to finance these 'celebrations,' and to revitalize the downtown area so that the citizens of Atlanta would want to come back and be involved in the activities there.<sup>363</sup> The cooperation and sponsorship by these powerful organizations proved that the mayor was on the right track: The High Museum of Art, chaired by John Portman along with Mrs. Margaret Perdue, sponsored the Sculpture Celebration along with the National Endowment for the Arts, Members Guild of the High Museum, Junior League of Atlanta, Atlanta chapter of the National of the National Council of Jewish Women, the Atlanta Bicentennial Commission, Rich's Foundation, Beers Construction Company, and an anonymous foundation. Mayor Jackson felt strongly about these programs: "Art is not a frill to be put on the back burner while the city deals with other problems."<sup>364</sup>

#### Mayor Maynard Jackson Testified about the "Renaissance in Atlanta"

In 1978 Mayor Jackson testified before the United States Senate Committee on Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs on behalf of The Livable Cities Act S.3210, and the Neighborhood Self-Help Development Act, S.3211. These two acts, part of President Jimmy Carter's urban policy initiatives, represented a strong effort on the part of the Federal Government to seek solutions to these

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<sup>363</sup> Rachanice Tate. "*Our Art Itself Was Our Activism:*" Atlanta's Neighborhood Arts Center, 1975-1990. Dissertation: Clark Atlanta University, 2012, 110.

<sup>364</sup> News Release #108 "Public Invited to Join Members of the Art in the Park Project in a Two Week Long City Sculpture Celebration." April 20, 1976. Maynard Jackson Mayoral Administration Records. 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Terms, Box 25, Folder 15. Archives Research Center, Atlanta University Center, Robert Woodruff Library.



programs of revitalization signaled a new movement beyond revitalization. Jackson cited three directives shared by the two acts.

- (1) The acts supported voluntary local efforts of communities, neighborhoods, and organizations.
  - (1) The programs encouraged development of a partnership of a partnership among the local, state, and Federal Government in cooperation with the private sector.
  - (2) These programs sought to discover new and successful models on which to base broader and bolder programs in the future.<sup>365</sup>

As Chairman of the Arts Task Force and National Commission on Neighborhoods, Jackson congratulated took on an even more important and significant role in the national sphere. He congratulated President Carter for his initiative, and said that the people of Atlanta felt that a new urban renaissance involving citizens of the city marked “a willingness to change,” a willingness to try different solutions. He noted that he had been fascinated by the “visionary thrust of the cultural activity in the city with artists that are teaching us and helping to prove that the cities can come alive again.”<sup>366</sup>

Referring to Atlanta’s artists as urban “pioneers,” Jackson observed that they were using old buildings that the Livable Cities Act had provided for living and working in the heart of the city, which represents the essence of The Livable Cities Act. The Mayor named three former school buildings located near the Central Business District that these artists and others were using for various cultural organizations:

- (1) The Atlanta Neighborhood Arts Center (NAC), Inc., serves as a strong arts and cultural outreach facility for the Atlanta community.

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<sup>365</sup> “Testimony of Maynard Jackson, Mayor of Atlanta, before the United States Senate, Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.” July 12, 1978. Maynard Jackson, Mayoral Administrative Records. Series 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Terms. Box 25, Folder 12, Archives Research Center, Robert Woodruff Library, Atlanta University Center.

<sup>366</sup> Ibid.

- (2) The Spring Street School now serves as the home of the Atlanta Ballet, the Vagabond Marionettes, and the Georgia Lyric Opera Company.
- (3) The Forrest Avenue Consortium, a multi-disciplinary association of alternative arts organizations.

He said that these projects displayed an initiative that cuts across economic and racial lines and those who designed these spaces used the arts to reach out to all citizens in Atlanta.

Through these activities the people involved, including those from city government and the private sector, built what Arts Alliance supporters referred to as “A Decade of Progress,” ten years that straddled the first and second Jackson Administrations, where the arts kept pace with the city’s growth. The Atlanta Memorial Arts Center prospered because of the cooperation between the city and the arts community, and in 1978 more than one million people attended events presented by the Symphony, Museum, Theater, Children’s Theatre, and Art School. Recognizing the need to build audiences for theatre, and viewers who enjoyed museum quality modern art, Gudmund Vigtel and other members of the Junior Activities Center at the Atlanta Memorial Arts Center actively sought to strengthen children’s programming.<sup>367</sup>

The doors of the Atlanta Memorial Arts Center welcomed excited children, driven there in yellow buses from their schools. The minute they entered the imposing structure the building came alive. The presence of the children, awed by the magnitude of the area inside, warmed the atmosphere. Before this time, the idea of children having fun and expressing their joy with squeals of delight in the Atlanta Memorial Arts Center had not been a priority of members of the Arts Alliance,

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<sup>367</sup> Mrs. Wicke Chambers. Interview with this author. November 3, 2003.

who expected children to quietly observe the activities taking place around them: to be seen and not heard.<sup>368</sup>

For many of these children, excursions of this sort, supported by the city of Atlanta, provided a first-time exposure to the arts, experiences they would never forget.<sup>369</sup> Half of the children took the trek up two floors to the High Museum's Junior Gallery where they saw exciting exhibits such as "Spaces and Illusions" which included pictures of themselves in distorted lenses and beams of light on a very large jar of multi-colored sour balls.<sup>370</sup> The other half of the group of children saw "The Stories of Hans Christian Andersen," a professional production by the Atlanta Children's Theatre. Then they changed places to experience what the other half had just seen. The children had so much fun that they later wrote as part of the school project that they wanted to go back to see the play and the High Museum's Junior Gallery again, and to take their parents.<sup>371</sup>

Always looking ahead, the pro-active Mayor Jackson took note of a surge of activities in Piedmont Park in 1982. The Mayor, along with Atlanta City Council President Marvin Arrington, council member Morris Finley, and members of the Human Resources Committee, including council members Barbara Asher and Buddy Fowlkes, recognized the need for plans for further development of Piedmont Park.<sup>372</sup> Department of Parks and Recreation Commissioner Geraldine Elder, after meeting

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<sup>368</sup> This author can attest to these events after observing the children, including my own, as they entered the imposing Atlanta Memorial Arts Center. These experiences by the children contrasted with those adults who attended performances in the Center in 1968 immediately after it opened.

<sup>369</sup> As an active member and first president of the Atlanta Children's Theatre Guild, this author and other members of the ACT Guild worked with the different community organizations and members of the Atlanta City Government to facilitate transportation from the schools to the Atlanta Memorial Arts Center, and worked with the city to acquire discounted ticket sales for the children. Everyone benefitted from this arrangement; ACT presented plays to full houses and steady incomes, and children had the opportunity to experience plays such as "The Stories of Hans Christian Anderson" presented by professional actors.

<sup>370</sup> Ibid. Mrs. Chambers

<sup>371</sup> Paula Crouch. "Something For Everybody" *The Atlanta Journal* November 24, 1979. This is an example of "audience building" for the future that Atlanta had not experienced before.

<sup>372</sup> Memorandum sent by Commissioner Geraldine Elder, Department of Parks and Recreation. An indication of the pressures Mayor Jackson experienced during that time is reflected in a hand-written note from the Office of the Mayor responding to the Memorandum sent by Commissioner Geraldine Elder, Department of Parks and

with consultants, sent the proposed Piedmont Park Master Plan to Mayor Jackson. “Just wanted you to know,” Elder wrote Mayor Jackson and the Council members, “that we are finally moving on this important project.”<sup>373</sup>

That same year, the Board of Trustees for the Arts Festivals met to discuss fundraising for the activities that would take place in Piedmont Park. They decided on a fashion show to be presented by the American College that would feature Travilla, most noted for designing clothes for Jacqueline Kennedy, Evita Peron, and Marilyn Monroe. Those spectacular outfits would be worn by professional models along with Travilla’s Spring Collection offered by Neiman Marcus and Isaacson; the stores would receive some exposure and the Arts Festivals would benefit financially. The group also co-sponsored a performance by Ella Fitzgerald at the Fox Theater. They planned to sell tickets for the events.<sup>374</sup>

Those who worked hard to raise money for these events gained inspiration from the knowledge that a flourishing arts community attracted new industry as well as foreign visitors and investors to Atlanta, which in turn produced jobs for those who lived in the city and also raised tax revenues. Provisions for the arts resulted in a solid investment with the potential for important outcomes. For example, the city’s reputation as a thriving arts center played a role in at least one large corporation’s decision to relocate in Atlanta. In 1979, Robert E. Flowerree, chairman and chief executive officer of

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Recreation. “Not one more piece of paper can be put on M. J.’s desk.” Maynard Jackson, Mayoral Administrative Records. Series 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Terms, Box 25. Folder 15. Archives Research Center, Robert Woodruff Library.

<sup>373</sup> Memorandum: Re: PIEDMONT PARK MASTER PLAN, sent to Mayor Maynard Jackson, President Marvin Arrington, Council member Morris Finley, Chairman of Human Resources Committee. All members, Human Resources Committee, Council member Barbara Asher and Council member Buddy Fowlkes from Geraldine H. Elder, Commissioner of Department of Parks and Recreation. November 16, 1971. Maynard Jackson, Mayoral Administrative Records. Series 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Terms, Box 25, Folder 15. Archives Research Center, Atlanta University Center, Robert Woodruff Library.

<sup>374</sup> Letter to Board Members of the Board of Trustees from James D. Dixon, Chairman concerning fund-raising for the Arts Festivals. July 10, 1981. Maynard Jackson, Mayoral Administrative Records. Series 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Terms. Box 25, Folder 13. Archives Research Center. Atlanta University Center, Robert W. Woodruff Library.

Georgia-Pacific said, “One of the many reasons we selected Atlanta for our new corporate headquarters is the contribution made by the arts to the quality of life in your city.”<sup>375</sup>

The city of Atlanta did not die, as Sam Massell, Maynard Jackson’s opponent in the 1973 campaign, predicted would happen if Jackson were elected mayor. Instead, Atlanta continued to grow and to prosper, solidifying its role as Capital of the Southeast and a 20<sup>th</sup> Century urban phenomenon.<sup>376</sup> Atlanta’s successes had staying power and the future appeared to be bright. It included the potential for Atlanta to become an African American center of worldwide importance. There also existed the possibility for the emergence of an enormously creative and influential base for growth and importance of Spanish-speaking cultures in the city.<sup>377</sup> The cultural base grew, making the city, and Midtown, more inclusive place to live and to visit.

Mayor Jackson took steps early in his administration to bring disparate groups together, and his efforts paid off. By March 1976, there was a groundswell of citizens who wanted to personally take part in the “process of city growth and development,” and to channel and recycle their energies to help make the city great. Those Atlantans anxious to get started covered a broad sampling of the community including ministers, educators, students and city leaders, both public and private. The group provided links between government, industry and citizens throughout the city to allow creative communication among the sectors. No other broad-based forum had existed in Atlanta in the past, and under the leadership of Mrs. Kay McKenzie, “Atlanta 2000” became a community effort that offered citizens the opportunity to establish goals for a greater Atlanta.<sup>378</sup>

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<sup>375</sup> Paula Crouch. “Memorial Arts Center For 10 Years Has Offered . . . Something for Everybody,” *The Atlanta Constitution* November 24, 1979.

<sup>376</sup> Ada Louise Huxtable. *Atlanta Constitution* .May 5, 1978.

<sup>377</sup> “Atlanta 2000” March 10, 1976. Maynard Jackson Mayoral Administrative Records. Series 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Terms, Box 3, Folder 1. Archives Research Center, Atlanta University Center, Robert W. Woodruff Library.

<sup>378</sup> Atlanta 2000.” Maynard Jackson Mayoral Administrative Records. Box 3, Folder 1, Archives Research Center, Atlanta University Center. Robert W. Woodruff Library. Mrs. McKenzie and her husband, Harold, had close ties with the Georgia Power Company. Mrs. Mckenzie’s father, Harlee Branch, was president of the Georgia Power

Mrs. McKenzie wrote, “For a long time I’ve been aware that there were a number of citizens who wanted to play a role in this community’s growth and development . . . They did not know what they could do to make their voices heard, or even where to start.” To begin, the members organized thirteen Task Forces to address issues of the future such as energy, technology, learning and education. They proved to be very important for the purposes of this study: the Task Force for the Arts.<sup>379</sup>

In 1978, just ten years after the development of the Atlanta Memorial Arts Center, the Arts community recognized the need for more space. Mr. Robert Woodruff came forward with a challenge gift of \$7 million, and this time he put no stipulations concerning approval of plans. By then an older and less controlling man, Mr. Woodruff instigated a campaign that demonstrated philanthropic maturity in Atlanta.

Members of the Arts community formed a task force, conducted studies, and then visited other museums around the country and in Europe before choosing an architect. The group held meetings wherein they discussed well-known architect Richard Meier. Some members of the Arts community had seen the museum Meier designed for the city of Barcelona, and knew that they wanted him to design the new one in Atlanta. The task force had only one request of the architect: they wanted a building that projected a “calm and harmonious environment.” Atlanta’s growth over the past few years seemed monumental, and the need for a museum that gave solace in the midst of urban growth became the *raison d’etre* for the new museum. The creative connection resulted in the unique white porcelain-enameled steel paneled building on the corner of Peachtree and Sixteenth Streets that

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Company, and Harold McKenzie served on the Board of Directors. This information illustrates another way in which Mayor Jackson cooperated with the business community.

<sup>379</sup> “Atlanta 2000.” Maynard Jackson Mayoral Administrative Records. Box 3, Folder 1, Archives Research Center, Atlanta University Center. Robert W. Woodruff Library.

represents the coming of age of a significant growth pattern in Midtown, as well as in Atlanta between 1960 and 1983.<sup>380</sup>

However, with all of Mayor Jackson's successes, especially during his first and second terms in office, his efforts generated concern from some members of the black community, along with those in the white community, who felt that Jackson spent too much tax money on the Woodruff Arts Center, in comparison with money going to arts in the black community. After Midtown was designated as an arts district, with public funding for three MARTA stops, increased investment potential arose for private funding. Criticism included the charge that uncurbed private developments drove out smaller "arts" groups, along with theaters and other important, but less financially attractive, activities. Intensified investment and development in Midtown undermined the mixed-use character of the area, according to those groups critical of money being spent there.<sup>381</sup>

Contrary to those criticisms, the Special Public Interest Districts created around MARTA stations required that there be mixed use development with a combination of commercial, office and housing.<sup>382</sup> Although these restrictions brought about further problems of their own, an assessment of the situation in Midtown between 1960 and 1973 determined that improvements such as cleaning up Midtown, opening up transportation facilities such as MARTA, and building a new art museum with public and private funding that enhanced Atlanta's status as a vibrant and viable community.

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<sup>380</sup> Mrs. Wicke Chambers. Interview with this author. November 5, 2003.

<sup>381</sup> Clarence N. Stone. *Regime Politics: Governing Atlanta: 1946 – 1988* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1989), 203.

<sup>382</sup> *Ibid.* Stone, 128.

## 7 CONCLUSION

People in Atlanta were insecure about their ideas on art. This led to a lack of interest, and the feeling that the local art scene was not important.

Mrs. Charlotte Ferst

February 18, 1962

*Atlanta Journal and Constitution*

[A] kind of renaissance occurred when an intense study and evaluation was commissioned by the Atlanta Art Association . . . A great need was felt to broaden the base of community support . . . it was an affair of the heart.

Mrs. Charlotte Ferst

May 11, 1976

The Members' Guild Report<sup>383</sup>

Mrs. Charlotte Ferst, and active member and president of the High Museum Members' Guild provided two descriptive narratives that *book-end* a period of tremendous change in Atlanta, that was broad-based in scope, and affected people of all persuasions.

Painting a picture of Midtown as an integral part of Atlanta during a transitional period between 1960 and 1983, requires large brushes and a wide canvas. A confluence of many variations of color, shade, tone and hue is revealed by properties covered in this research, which constitutes a broad range of perspectives upon which the narrative is built. Prior to 1960, the people who lived in Atlanta had struggled to develop a strong arts community that would pave the way for further expansion. Although developments described herein include evidence of a cultural awakening – a renaissance - in Atlanta, other important social and economic realities remained obscure and indefensible. Significant changes did not take place until the racial and political environment opened up new opportunities for

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<sup>383</sup> Mrs. Charlotte Ferst. Members' Guild: The First Decade. May 11, 1976. MSS 664, Series II, Box II, Folder 23. Atlanta Historical Society.



further cultural growth. It was the spontaneous interaction between the counterculture and some members of the Atlanta Arts Alliance, enmeshed with Supreme Court decisions mandating integrated facilities, which brought about an environment wherein the arts could flourish and grow.

The prospects for Atlanta to become a major transportation hub as well as an economic and industrial center were great after 1960; the city had grown in the previous ten years more than it had since its beginning. There were strong indications for economic growth since the resources, skilled labor, and recreational facilities located there all played a role in commercial, industrial, and sociological development with unlimited opportunities for many who lived in Atlanta.<sup>384</sup> Even with the prospects for further economic growth and success, the city had not found a cultural stage, a building to show-case the arts. This indicated a general lack of support for the arts.

Systems of racial subordination and discrimination that had kept Atlanta shackled to the past before 1960 came under attack by members of the black community as they chipped away at Jim Crow laws that had prevailed under the aegis of “separate but equal.” People living in a city steeped in segregationist dogma revisited those issues and changed thought patterns. The findings of this study address the question of what role the [A]rts played in the relatively smooth transition in Midtown during this time period.

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 provided that all individuals had the right to equal use of public facilities, which essentially undermined Jim Crow laws and customs and paved the way for transitioning. If, however, laws that mandated change including access to public places had been the only factor in the successful cultural interchanges in Midtown, then why didn’t the mandated laws prove to be more successful in other cities such as Memphis, Birmingham, and Little Rock?

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<sup>384</sup> MSS 576, James Carmichael’s papers, Box 633, Item 3. April 11, 1964. Robert Woodruff Library, Special Collections. Emory University. This information is part of a speech James Carmichael gave to students of Vanderbilt University.

Information gleaned throughout this research proves that the arts played a major role in that process in Atlanta.

One purpose of this study was to expand and illuminate historical information during that time when a complex set of harmonious historical forces merged to bring about change, which meant that the city of Atlanta became a more vibrant, inclusive, and interesting place to live and do business.

The research finds that the *Great Speckled Bird*, the well-respected underground newspaper put together by editors and writers who kept the printing presses running by recording events even during those volatile times, offers a lasting legacy of political, economic and social information, along with songs and images of the 1960s and 1970s; the unbridled idealism that prevailed is still present in our mind's eye. Copies of the *Bird* continue to offer valuable resources for historians and others who wish to have a clearer understanding of urban development in Midtown during that time period between 1960 and 1983, and they are now digitalized, and are housed in the archival section of the Georgia State University Library; they are relatively easy to access.

As written about in the *Bird*, the collision in Midtown introduced a certain creativity and spontaneity that enhanced the arts community and resonated with other artists such as Frank Wittow, founder of Academy Theatre, and promoter of education-in-theatre. Carrying on a tradition of the Federal Theatre located in Midtown in the 1930's, he and his group questioned assumptions of racism and sexism by presenting plays that became vital components of the community conscience in Atlanta. Robert Shaw, a unique pathfinder in Midtown, imprinted his seal on the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra as he sought to revise the make-up of the orchestra in ways that would reflect a more racially diverse group of musicians. He also wanted to change the way those who served on the Board of Directors for the symphony were chosen, so as to have a broader base of representation of the community.

Another person who believed that the arts could affect change included Gudmund Vigtel, who moved to Atlanta from Washington D. C. in 1963 to become director and curator of the High Museum, who brought with him a sense of what a museum should be. He understood that to be viable for the city, museum exhibitions had to be more representative of the people who lived here: this philosophy did not represent a condescending attitude, but one meant to improve the quality of what the museum had to offer. His stance garnered support from the highest echelon in the Atlanta Arts Alliance when Robert Woodruff wrote a letter to “Vig” telling him, “I am encouraged by the report from the Arts Center about the broad-based racial and cultural support we are getting.”<sup>385</sup> There were others who resonated with these ideas, but these three reflected the reality of Midtown.

Before Maynard Jackson became mayor, there was very little public support for the arts, but with Jackson’s election, diversity and creativity in Midtown surged. Artists had been leaving Atlanta because of a lack of community support for their work, and there were few public grants for artists - or art. The City did not buy art, and few performances of gallery showcases were funded by the City.<sup>386</sup>

Mayor Jackson spoke about the period between 1960 and 1983 in which he described a significant transition in Midtown that produced a much broader “base of community support” for the visual and performing arts in Atlanta, while simultaneously encouraging harmonious integration in the community. He stated that, “the arts served as a catalyst that unified the races in Atlanta.” The mayor testified that the people of Atlanta were experiencing a new urban *renaissance* that marked a “willingness to change, a willingness to try different solutions.”<sup>387</sup> He said that the artists “are teaching us and helping to prove that the cities can come alive again.” An “affair” of *many* “hearts,”

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<sup>385</sup> Robert W. Woodruff. Letter to Gudmund Vigtel. October 22, 1970. Woodruff collection. Box 11, Item 8. Robert Woodruff Livrary, Archives. Emory University.

<sup>386</sup> Rachanice Tate, “*Our Art Itself Was Our Activism*”: *Atlanta’s Neighborhood Arts Center, 1975-1990*. (A Dissertation, Clark Atlanta University, 2012), 251.

<sup>387</sup> Testimony of Mayor Maynard Jackson before the United States Senate Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs. July 12, 1978. Maynard Jackson, Mayoral Administrative Records. Series 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Term. Box 25, Folder 12. Archives Research Center, Robert woodruff Library, Atlanta University Center.

the Midtown Renaissance included artists, actors, musicians, social matrons and cultural patrons, hippies, intellectuals, writers, activists protesting racial and gender discrimination, business elites aware of the commercial implications of cultural facilities, politicians and city leaders for whom social and cultural conflicts were anything but academic issues – all of whom struggled to reconcile the blending of conflicting visions during those turbulent decades to produce a transformation of Midtown Atlanta.

Mayor Jackson was known as the “Cultural Mayor” thanks to his interest in the arts and the unifying factors that brought about a more racially diverse and vibrant community under his administrations. Jackson provided financial support for the arts in the city because he knew that they bolstered the economy and also enriched the quality of life for the people of Atlanta. He established a Task Force that studied problems relating to the community.

Mayor Jackson formed a Mayor’s Ad Hoc Committee for the Arts made up of such stalwarts as Robert Shaw, Director of Atlanta Symphony, along with Gudmund Vigtel, director of the High Museum of Art. Beginning recognition by Vig that if the museum hoped to become cosmopolitan it had to show, and embrace, artists of African descent. A shift in philosophy from the mercenary stance held by elite power brokers to a more inclusive one, a stance less focused on financial profits from the arts and more on the creative and inclusive nature of art itself encouraged a change.

In 1978, just ten years after the development of the Atlanta Arts Alliance the arts community recognized the need for more space. Mr. Woodruff came forward with a challenge gift of \$7,500,000. This time he put no stipulations concerning approval of plans. Although an older and less controlling man, Mr. Woodruff instigated a campaign that demonstrated philanthropic maturity in Atlanta. Broad-based financial support in the community supported the challenge grant.<sup>388</sup>

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<sup>388</sup> Mrs. Beth Barnett. Interview with this author. May 21, 2010. Mrs. Barnett, who worked with Mrs. Rhodes Purdue confirmed this information concerning the new museum designed by Richard Meier.

An indication that significant change had transpired in Midtown was the selection in 1990, of Kenny Leon, African American, as artistic director of the Alliance Theatre. He was young and had boundless energy and charisma: he was the highest-ranking black artist ever employed in any part of the Woodruff Arts Center.<sup>389</sup> Leon introduced black-themed works into the repertoire, and created a younger, more diverse – and loyal – audience for the Alliance Theatre. Significantly, in contrast to the furor that greeted *Boys in the Band* barely 20 years earlier, Leon’s presentation of the gay-themed play, *Falsettos*, scarcely caused a ripple. He realized that audiences were ready to consider hard questions, and in doing so, the Alliance Theatre became a force for change in Atlanta.

The many specific accounts and details presented in this dissertation developed the flow of the groups and their influences which, in blending, birthed a new Midtown, a star in Atlanta’s crown.

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<sup>389</sup> The Atlanta Memorial Arts Center changed its name to the Woodruff Arts Center in 1984.

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Maude. *Trojan Horse for the Poor*

R. Cobb *White Man's Burden*

Morris Brown. *Stomp*

Rizzo. *Dance*.

## APPENDIX

## In Memoriam

June 3, 1962 Orly, France

Ruby Mae Martin Adair	Forrest Cumming	Florette Cohen Patz
Dorothy M. Allen	Douglas H. Davis	Louis Patz
Tom Chris Allen	Mildred Hodges Dilts	Annette Snelson Payne
Henrietta Collier Ayer	Paul S. Doassans	Nancy Frederick Turner Pegram
Theodosia Lee Barnett	Mildred Gerson	Robert B. Pegram, Jr.
Paul G. Barnett	Saul Gerson	Mary Louise Martin Perkins
Anna Louise Earhart Barry	Grace Holding Glenn	Homer S. Prater, Jr.
Emma Lee Wade Bartholomai	E. Barron Glenn	Emily Webster Pruitt
Elizabeth Gloning Bealer	Beaty Henson	Raiford Moncrief Ragsdale
Sarah Baker Beattle	Mrs. William Inge Hill	Helen Camp Richardson
George A. Beattle	Cecilia Hollins	Dell White Rickey
Frances Haven Beers	Redfern Hollins	Louise Calhoun Robinson
Sara Lowe Latimer Benson	Mary Ansley Howland	Roby Robinson
Anne Black Berry	Mary Louise Bealer Humphreys	Rebecca Day Rooke
D. Randolph Berry	Julia Lowry Block Jones	William J. Rooke
Betsy Rickey Bevington	C. Baxter Jones	Mrs. William King Self
Mrs. W. Roy Bloder	Gladys Jones Kaye	Helen Clark Seydel
Dr. W. Roy Bloder	Arnold S. Kaye	Elsie Shaw
Lydia Whitner Black	Nell Hunnicutt Lanier	Charles A. Shaw
Elizabeth Anderson Blair	Thomas H. Lanier	Edith Jackson Sorrow
Katherine Caroline Bleckley	Charlotte Henderson Little	Ruby Wilder Robertson Stow
Mary M. Boon	Thomas G. Little	Bessie Pope Therrel
Dr. Harry M. Boon	Frances Stokes Longino	Allee Sutton Tidmore
Martha Pritchard Brandon	Louise Loomis	Margaret Turner
Morris Brandon, Jr.	Marghretta B. Luty	Louise Taylor Turner
May Brine	Mrs. Frank MacPherson	Robert Pale Turner
Dorothy Brine	Adelaid Porter McDonald	Lee MacPherson Virgin
Dolly Brooks	Dr. Allen P. McDonald	Ellen Michelson Wien
Mrs. Frederick W. Bull	Jane Sharp McLoughlin	Sidney A. Wien
Elizabeth Wilmot Bull	Dr. Christopher J. McLoughlin	Joan Wien
Frederick W. Bull, Jr.	Ruth McMillan	Rosalind J. Williams
Ellen Bull	Anne Garret Merritt	Lysie P. Williamson
Betsy Bull	Augusta Streyer Miller	Mrs. Walter E. Wilson, Jr.
Lucy Poe Candler	Lillie Lee Minier	Vasser Woolley
Elizabeth Ann Acree Cantey	Katherine Mitchell	Mrs. Sykes H. Young
Morgan S. Cantey	Ruth Morris	Sykes H. Young
Helen Lee Cartledge	Anna I. Mulcahy	
W. Andrew Cartledge	Elizabeth Carver Murphy	
William David Cogland	David J. Murphy	
Mrs. James R. Cowan	Robert S. Newcomb	
Janet Crimm	Margaret W. Nutting	
Reuben G. Crimm	Winifred Elizabeth Smith Paige	
Inez Parker Cumming	Del R. Paige	