

Up 86 Guest
Curator
Series

MOSS
ARTS
CENTER

Thursday, March 30-Friday, March 31, 2023, 8 PM

Rissi Palmer

Moss Arts Center
Cube



VIRGINIA
TECH

UP 86

Guest Curator Series

North Carolina artist Shirlette Ammons is serving as the Moss Arts Center's first independent guest performing arts curator. Ammons brings a new perspective to the center's lineup, creating a focus on Black Southern artists who effortlessly cross genres and revitalize time-honored music traditions.

Ammons reflects on her curation process and travels along Highway 86.

This trio of performances connects neighbors separated by winding roads.

The artists conjured over that three and a half hour drive extend vastly beyond this performance trilogy. But, in various ways, they are represented in the works of Sonny Miles, Rissi Palmer, and yours truly. Sonny, Rissi, and I are part of a regional music community with limbs that reach back and forth, across genre- and borderlines; down into the murk of Black Southernness; across time to invite new interpretations of old sounds and experiences; and out into a world where next door neighbors are divided by fields, and fences, and party lines.

In the planning stages of this series, I traveled to Virginia Tech twice, navigating remote stretches between Durham and Blacksburg, each trip made identical by shallow morning dew and provoking terrain. The landscape reminded me of the small eastern North Carolina plot that raised me, the rural swaths connecting beatdown bungalows, open pastures, and single-wides. I thought about the music that might waft through each kitchen, past walls of family portraits, and out flimsy screen doors. I began making a mental playlist of the songs that came to mind.

Curating this series has been an expansive experience for me. As participants, I hope you are inspired to spend more time getting to know your neighbors, their journeys, and the paths they pave.

Rissi Palmer

Biographies



RISSI PALMER

Rissi Palmer's gift lies in reaching across all musical boundaries. While Palmer made her mark in country music, she is equally at home in R&B, bringing the entire spectrum of popular music to bear on music she calls "Southern soul."

The daughter of Georgia natives, Palmer was born near Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and spent her adolescent years in St. Louis, Missouri. Raised in a musical family that loved both country and R&B, she was a part of a singing and dancing troupe sponsored by a local television station at age 16, and by the time she was 19 years old, she had already been offered her first publishing and label deal.

In 2007 she released her debut album, *Rissi Palmer*, charting singles *Country Girl*, *Hold on to Me*, and *No Air*. Since then, Palmer has independently released a Christmas single; her first children's album, *Best Day Ever*; and an EP titled *The Back Porch Sessions*. Her most recent album, *Revival*, was released in 2019 and has been critically hailed as her most personal and uplifting work to date.

A few highlights throughout her musical career include performances at the White House, New York's Lincoln Center, and multiple appearances on the Grand Ole Opry. She has toured extensively across the country,

This performance was programmed by Guest Curator Shirlette Ammons.

Biographies, continued

sharing stages with Taylor Swift, The Eagles, Chris Young, Charley Crockett, and many more. Palmer has also made numerous national appearances on *Oprah & Friends*, *CMT Insider*, CNN, CBS *This Morning*, *GMA*, *Entertainment Tonight*, and FOX Soul's *The Book of Sean* and has been featured in *Associated Press*, *Ebony*, *Essence*, *Huffington Post*, *New York Times*, *Newsweek*, NPR's *All Things Considered*, *PEOPLE*, *Rolling Stone*, *Wall Street Journal*, and *Washington Post*, to name a few.

As a passionate voice for country artists of color and those who have been marginalized in mainstream country music, Palmer launched her own radio show, *Color Me Country with Rissi Palmer*, on Apple Music Country. Since making its debut in August 2020, listeners have been treated to in-depth and riveting, often funny, yet very necessary conversations with Brittney Spencer, Cam, Chapel Hart, Crystal Shawanda, Maren Morris, Miko Marks, The War and Treaty, Darius Rucker and Mickey Guyton, and author/journalist Andrea Williams. Fans can tune in live to *Color Me Country with Rissi Palmer* every other Sunday on Apple Music Country.

In conjunction with her radio show, Palmer created the Color Me Country Artist Grant Fund, designed to support new country artists of color who are just beginning to build their music careers.

Palmer is also a special correspondent for CMT's *Hot 20 Countdown*. The weekly series airs Saturdays and Sundays on CMT and features chart-topping music videos, news stories, live performances, and candid interviews from country's biggest stars.

CHARLES NEWKIRK, *guitar*

Charles Newkirk is a Grammy-nominated guitarist, composer, and songwriter who has established a career as being one of the most versatile live entertainment providers. Newkirk grew up in Raleigh, North Carolina, listening to the sounds of gospel at his church. He would watch the excitement of the musicians as they played their hearts out. This sparked an appreciation for the emotion and sanctity of music. Though he did not play at the time, he would marvel at how the power of music could change one's mood. He began to try different instruments. It makes sense that he would choose to play guitar; his father also plays. There were three other guitarists in the church, all of them with different styles of play. One had a background in funk, another blues, and the other R&B. His father played old-time gospel. This gave him a great appreciation for different styles of music.

With plans to go to college and major in engineering, Newkirk made a change to pursue music. He proceeded to attend North Carolina Central University and graduated with a bachelor of music degree, with a concentration in jazz performance. Jazz was not his passion but was a great foundation to understand and learn any style of music. For over two decades, Newkirk has worked with various artists and cover bands, as well as give back to the church that inspired him musically.

This is Palmer's first performance at the Moss Arts Center.

Tell Us What You Think!

We'd love your feedback on this performance. If you complete the short survey, you can enter for a chance to win two tickets to Cécile McLorin Salvant on Saturday, April 29, 2023.



bit.ly/rissi-palmer-feedback

Engagement Events

THURSDAY, MARCH 30, 2023

RECORDING OF *COLOR ME COUNTRY* WITH RISSI PALMER

Palmer and guest Tony Jackson performed and had a conversation before a live audience for a taping of the artist's Apple Music radio show.

FRIDAY, MARCH 31, 2023

DISCUSSION WITH RISSI PALMER

Palmer spoke with Virginia Tech students about her path as a musician, foundation leader, and radio show host.

Special thanks to Black Cultural Center and Kimberly Clark-Shaw

Go Deeper

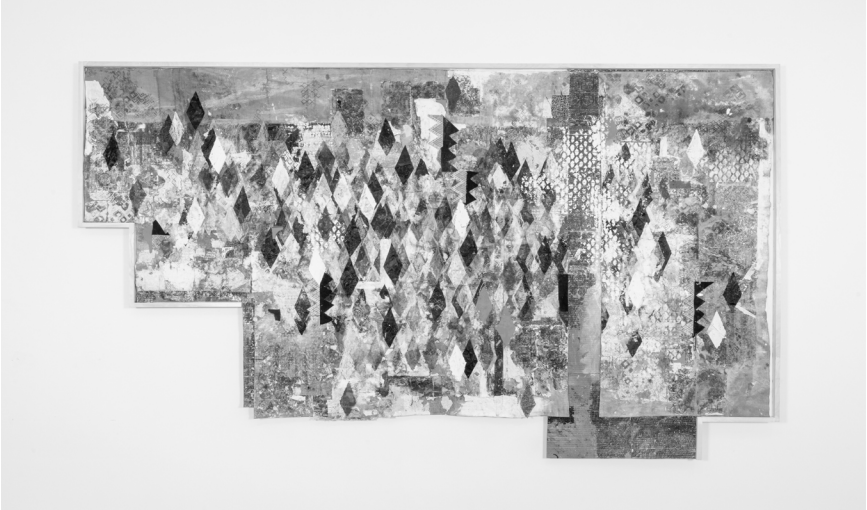
In an opinion piece for *TheGrio*, Rissi Palmer writes about systemic changes that the country music industry should implement to foster a more inclusive community. Palmer explains:

“The thing that we all love about country music is that it’s about the simple truths of life, the triumphs and failings that come from being human. Who can’t relate to that? As the saying goes, music is built on ‘three chords and the truth.’ That truth should include everyone.”

How have you seen country music change in your lifetime? What are present barriers and opportunities for making country music a more accessible and supportive space for people of color?

In the Galleries

Spring Exhibitions
Through Saturday, April 22



Anne Samat

Follow Your Heart Wholeheartedly 2

Ruth C. Horton Gallery

In her fiber-based reliefs, Malaysian artist Anne Samat meticulously juxtaposes beadwork and traditional South Asian weaving techniques with common items, a project that questions the boundaries of craft and art.

Yanira Collado

Zafa/ A Spellworking of Temporal Geometry

Miles C. Horton Jr. Gallery and Sherwood Payne Quillen

'71 Reception Gallery

In the face of inevitable change and displacement, memories find a home in the relic. Yanira Collado explores the ideas of migration, reliquary, and memory through construction and ritual.

▲ Yanira Collado, *Areíto #2*, 2020-2023, paper, carbon transfers, gel medium transfers, carbon paper, textile, paint, drywall compound, 65½ x 107 ½ inches, courtesy of the artist

K-12 Programs at the Moss



At the Moss Arts Center, we believe that arts experiences are a crucial part of a child's education. We've been dedicated to providing opportunities for children at no cost since we opened in 2013. A wide array of Moss programming and experiences to inspire, engage, and empower students of all ages and backgrounds. This season, we're offering five school-day matinee programs, in-school workshops and performances, and gallery tours with professional artists for learners of all ages. Learn more at bit.ly/moss-k12.

Did You Know?

The Moss Arts Center Ambassadors, a Virginia Tech student organization founded in 2015, is a group of dedicated student volunteers who work together to build arts connections across the Virginia Tech campuses. Each fall the Moss Arts Center Ambassadors recruit fellow student arts lovers to join the team.

Land Acknowledgement and Labor Recognition

Virginia Tech acknowledges that we live and work on the Tutelo/Monacan People's homeland and we recognize their continued relationships with their lands and waterways. We further acknowledge that legislation and practices like the Morrill Act (1862) enabled the commonwealth of Virginia to finance and found Virginia Tech through the forced removal of Native Nations from their lands, both locally and in western territories.

We understand that honoring Native Peoples without explicit material commitments falls short of our institutional responsibilities. Through sustained, transparent, and meaningful engagement with the Tutelo/Monacan Peoples and other Native Nations, we commit to changing the trajectory of Virginia Tech's history by increasing Indigenous student, staff, and faculty recruitment and retention, diversifying course offerings, and meeting the growing needs of all Virginia tribes and supporting their sovereignty.

We must also recognize that enslaved Black people generated revenue and resources used to establish Virginia Tech and were prohibited from attending until 1953. Through InclusiveVT, the institutional and individual commitment to *Ut Prosim* (That I May Serve) in the spirit of community, diversity, and excellence, we commit to advancing a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive community.

Health and Wellness

The Moss Arts Center adheres to the guidelines of the Virginia Department of Health and Virginia Tech in its operations, including protocols for distancing, face coverings, and cleaning and sanitation. Our status may change according to changes in university operating procedures. Find the most up to date information at artscenter.vt.edu/visit.

We ask patrons to do their part in keeping our community healthy. If you feel unwell, please stay home.

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 Mrs. Susan Wagner
Ms. Nicole L. Wagner
Ms. Anne M. Waldmiller
Eric P. Wales and Wendy L. Wales
Grayson Walker in Honor of
 Mary A. Walker
Hunter Walker
Dr. Charles O. Warren Jr. and
 Mrs. Nancy N. Warren
Mr. and Ms. William W. Watson
Kelly Watts
Christine Webb (ICAT)
Ms. Phoebe C. Weber
Ms. Laura J. Wedin in Memory of
 Donald A. Drapeau
Rhonda Whaling
Ms. Ashley N. White
Jay and Traci Whitlow
Ms. Holly Williams (ICAT)
Dr. Katherine E. Wilson
Mr. Claude L. Wimmer and
 Mrs. Carol M. Wimmer
Dr. Mary Leigh Wolfe
Taylor J. Woodson
Ms. Melissa Wyers (ICAT)

continued...

Special Thanks, continued

Mr. William H. Xie (ICAT)

Mrs. Jennifer L. Yancey (ICAT)

Ms. Lesley A. Yorke

Carter and Janet Younger

Ms. Megan C. Zalecki

Ms. Mary J. Zody

* deceased

Endowments

The Moss Arts Center extends its appreciation to those donors who have established endowments in support of the arts.

Charles and Dorothy Lambert Endowment for the Arts

Dave and Judie Reemsnyder Center for the Arts Excellence Fund

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Larry and Lindsey Bowman Center for the Arts Excellence Fund

Moss Arts Center Endowment, established by Edwin and Melinda Talley

Timothy and Michelle Bendel Center for the Arts Excellence Fund

UP 86

Guest Curator Series

A trio of spring performances curated by North Carolina artist Shirlette Ammons, who is serving as the Moss Arts Center's first independent guest performing arts curator. Ammons brings a new perspective to the center's lineup, creating a focus on Black Southern artists who effortlessly cross genres and revitalize time honored music traditions.

\$15 general admission; \$10 students with ID and youth 18 and under
All performances in the Cube



Thursday, March 30-Friday, March 31, 8 PM

Rissi Palmer

Rissi Palmer's gift lies in reaching across all musical boundaries. While Palmer made her mark in country music, she is equally at home in R&B.



Friday, April 7, 8 PM

Shirlette Ammons

Shirlette Ammons is an expressive poet, musician, emcee, and film creative whose highly collaborative work defies genre.



Friday, April 14, 8 PM

Sonny Miles

Citing gospel, funk, and neo-soul as his biggest influences, Sonny Miles fuses catchy, relatable lyrics with soulful compositions to create a unique sound.

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Sunday, April 23, 4 PM

Opera Roanoke and Blacksburg Master Chorale

Benjamin Britten's War Requiem

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HISTORIC SMITHFIELD

1 - 5:30 P.M.

(VIP EARLY ACCESS AT NOON)



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theatre that I lived.

- Oscar Wilde

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Saturday, April 29, 7:30 PM

Cécile McLorin Salvant

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YMCA at VIRGINIA TECH



HEALTHY KIDS DAY
April 29 | Free to the Public

Fun Run, The Y Fabulous 4Miler, field games, interactive performances, VT therapy Dogs, VT Police, MFRL Book Mobile, story time, healthy snacks, and so much more!

YMCA at VT Women's History Month

THEN: Lucy Lee Lancaster

Lucy was one of the first five women admitted to Virginia Tech in 1925. During many years of service, Lucy donated her time and talents to the Y and eventually donated her house, The Lancaster House which serves as the YMCA's headquarters!



NOW: International Women's Group

One of our longest running programs is the International Women's Group where newcomers and longtime residents meet weekly to foster friendships while engaging in different interesting activities. The YMCA at VT strives to serve and value all residents from all international backgrounds by providing a comfortable venues for cross cultural friendship, information, education, support and service.



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