

# 'Expanding my understanding'

Bruce Museum's artist-in-residence program a 'homecoming' for Kimberly Klauss

By Bekah Wright  
CORRESPONDENT

For Kimberly Klauss, being named the Bruce Museum's inaugural artist-in-residence in November was a homecoming.

"I grew up in Stamford, so it's a return home," said the artist who had been living in Munich, Germany.

Familial responsibilities had seen Klauss visiting Connecticut more frequently. "I'd been coming back for longer periods of time and was looking for a way to make my art and be here."

About that time, the Bruce's announcement of the residency hit her inbox. She hastily applied, learned she'd been chosen, then, 10 days later, boarded a plane for Greenwich. She began the nine-month residency, which is supported by Art Bridges, on Nov. 20.

A news release from the museum states, "Klauss was selected... for her innovative approach to painting and her demonstrated commitment to combining art and science within her artistic practice." The statement is a hat tip to her design and mechanical engineering background.

In Munich, her time was divided between working on art in her studio and teaching engineering students design, information visualization and color theory. She sees crossovers in the methodologies of art and engineering.

"You start with an open question and are trying to get to something you can't see, that doesn't exist yet," she said.

There's a bit of science in her artistic approach, too. "The way I use the oil paint is a little trick of alchemy," she said. "Usually, oil paint is put on additively with layers building up. I deal with paint through a lot of erasing



Kimberly Klauss is the Bruce Museum's first artist-in-residence.

Courtesy of Kimberly Klauss

and taking away."

One focus for Klauss during the residency will be "responding" to the works "Collage X Landscape" by George Morrison and "DNA: Sepia V" by McArthur Binion (both on loan from Art Bridges' permanent collection). What does this mean?

"I'm to look at, digest, understand and analyze those pieces and their themes, then make works in relationship to them," she said. "Sort of casting a net around their artistic practice to see if I can also be in that net."

This includes investigating, indexing, mapping and... dancing. "[Morrison and Binion] have a strict visual vocabulary in the way that they work, distilling the essence of something," she explained. This process, she said, is like "dancing with the other works," something that excites her. "Both artists work in abstraction, which I have not. Looking at their work is expanding my understanding of my own craft."

What's shaken out for her so far in this exploration? "Turning my eyes and mind to these two pieces is activating all of these things in my art that were there before, but are now expressing themselves in different ways," she continued. "There's a rejuvenation, a new curiosity and excitement about making. I think that's what a residency does. It kind of pressure-cooks your craft."

Looking back at her life in Munich, Klauss said, "My practice had been suffering from isolation. Now, I'm excited not only about being back home, but of being onsite in the museum, with people and as a part of a 'whole.' I've been homesick for a long time, so the whole experience is very nourishing. I'm seeing evidence of a re-rooting in myself and my work. A homecoming."

# Feeling jazzed

Connecticut's Nicole Zuraitis talks first Grammy win, giving back to community

By Andrew DaRosa  
STAFF WRITER

On Feb. 4, Waterbury native Nicole Zuraitis added "Grammy winner" to her long list of accomplishments.

The 39-year-old, West Haven resident had been nominated once before for a Grammy, but during the the award shows' pre-telecast ceremony, Zuraitis took home the award for "Best Jazz Vocal Album" with her album, "How Love Begins."

"I'm so moved by this recognition," Zuraitis said during her acceptance speech. "This, my dear friends, is for all of us that persist and endure, and sing our hearts out in the back of a noisy bar hoping someone will hear us."

Almost two weeks later, Zuraitis still can't believe that she took home a Grammy.

"I don't think it's sunk in yet, truly, because I'm a working musician," Zuraitis said in a phone interview with Hearst Connecticut. "The day after I won, I went straight to work and did educational workshops in Palm Desert, California."

"How Love Begins," her sixth album as a leader, released last summer. The album was co-produced by Grammy award-winning jazz bassist and composer Christian McBride, who worked on her with the album since 2021. Zuraitis said the album was a grassroots effort as it was not released by a big recording label and many deals for the album fell through.

"I had to make every decision on the fly on my own. Not only did I write all of the music, I also produced it, arranged it, managed it, business planned it and social media planned it," Zuraitis said. "I wore every single hat and I'm not even a hat person."

Zuraitis credited her local community and fanbase for stepping up to support the



Frederic J. Brown/AFP via Getty Images

Vocalist Nicole Zuraitis in the press room with the Grammy for Best Jazz Vocal Album for "How Love Begins" during the 66th Annual Grammy Awards at the Crypto.com Arena in Los Angeles on Feb. 4.

album, whether by buying concert tickets or posting about her music on social media. She added that her local community, particularly when she was younger, turned her onto the jazz tradition and into the musician she is today.

A graduate of Holy Cross High School in Waterbury, Zuraitis found her footing in

the jazz world when she started attending Litchfield Jazz Camp at the age of 12. She is now a vocal teacher for the camp.

To give back to her local community, Zuraitis has undertaken a plethora of philanthropic work which includes hosting a benefit concert for Long Island Sound, advocating

for mental health organizations and even rescuing dogs from kill shelters.

"My goal in life is to get to the point where I'm not making microcosmic donations to these organizations; that I can actually make music that makes a bigger difference and also brings together communities," Zuraitis said. "That's

always been a big part of my purpose."

Refusing to stand still, Zuraitis said she is already working on her next album as well as curating a living jazz songbook. She will also be touring in the area this summer as well as appearing on the her husband Dan Pugach's upcoming album.