



**For Immediate Release**

May 20, 2021

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## **A Studio in the Woods to receive \$75,000 Our Town Grant from the National Endowment for the Arts**

**NEW ORLEANS, LA** – A Studio in the Woods has been approved for a \$75,000 Our Town grant to support *Searching for the Ghosts of the Gulf*, a collaborative project with artist and biologist Brandon Ballengée and the Plaquemines Parish Government. This is one of [63 grants nationwide](#) that the agency has approved in this category to support projects that integrate arts, culture, and design activities into efforts that strengthen communities by advancing local economic, physical, and/or social outcomes; ultimately laying the groundwork for sustainable systems change.

“As the country and the arts sector begin to work towards a post-pandemic world, the National Endowment for the Arts is proud to announce this Our Town funding. These awards will support cross-sector partnerships such as the one led by A Studio in the Woods that demonstrate the power of the arts to help communities create a better future for themselves.” said NEA Acting Chairman Ann Eilers.

*Searching for Ghosts of the Gulf* will bring artist, biologist and educator Brandon Ballengée to A Studio in the Woods for a community-based residency with at risk Plaquemines Parish coastal communities. Through participatory art and science, this project will explore missing Gulf of Mexico fish species with youth, fisherman, and community members that are themselves endangered. The project will culminate in 2023 with “Fishstock,” a festival dedicated to those species not seen since the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill.

“We are thrilled to be partnering with Brandon Ballengée and the Plaquemines Parish Government to bring dynamic, accessible, and *fun* programming about environmental change to our neighbors in Plaquemines Parish,” A Studio in the Woods Managing Director Ama Rogan remarked, “We hope this project sparks new understandings, conversations, and bonds in our communities.”

“It is always exciting when Plaquemines Parish can partner with outside organizations to bring grant money into our parish. This project in particular will help us to expand our coastal resilience, which as we know is one of the most important and pressing issues we face,” said Plaquemines Parish President Kirk M. Lepine.

Ballengée states, “Together we will build resilience for coastal populations using citizen driven art/science research while taking collaborative actions towards a collective future survival.”

**A Studio in the Woods**, a program of Tulane University's ByWater Institute, fosters creative responses to the challenges of our time by providing retreat to artists, scholars, and the public in our protected forest on the Mississippi River. The Studio focuses on interrelated areas of programming, including residencies for artists and scholars, forest restoration, and science-inspired art engagement for children and adults. For more information visit: [www.astudiointhewoods.org](http://www.astudiointhewoods.org).

**Brandon Ballengée** is a visual artist, biologist, and environmental activist based in Arnaudville, Louisiana, who creates artwork inspired from his ecological field and laboratory research. Through research, he focuses on the impact of the Anthropocene on human and non-human communities, and his artistic practice combines participatory science programs with poetic interpretations of extinct or deformed animals due to human impact. <https://brandonballengee.com/>

The mission of the **Plaquemines Parish Government** is to provide high quality, efficient services to sustain and enhance the quality of life for all residents of Plaquemines Parish. <https://www.plaqueminesparish.com/>

For more information on the projects included in the Arts Endowment grant announcement, visit <https://www.arts.gov/about/news>.

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