

Jury Members

Kevin Hart, owner of Hart & Cru, is an experienced sommelier and dedicated student of the vine. Kevin worked the floor at Boca for seven years, eventually becoming sommelier and general manager. Alongside Chef David Falk, he developed his palate for pairing food and wine. Kevin deepened his knowledge of French wines while working with Mobil Four-Star Chef Jean-Robert de Cavel. His stint as sommelier at Pigall's, impressed upon him the importance of classic styles in the kitchen and bottle. After years in the restaurant world, Kevin felt the time was right to take his career to the next level, and in 2012, he teamed up with his mentor, Gordon Hue, to grow wineCRAFT, an importing-distributing company based in Cincinnati. With the knowledge and connections gained from wineCRAFT, Kevin returned to the then-expanded Boca Restaurant Group as Beverage Director. Here, he reconnected to his deep love of hospitality and serving people. In 2015, Kevin's entrepreneurial spirit moved front and center, and he launched HART & CRU to focus on wine education, product selection, and market expansion for an array of corporate clients. Over the past five years, the business has grown to service a growing number of wine enthusiasts, private clients, and daily drinkers.

John Hinger is principal and owner of Quince & Quinn / Bolce Interior, an interior design and lifestyle store located in Cincinnati. John was influenced early on by his mother, a gardener, chef, and chief creative officer of the family and his father, a builder and architect. He began designing flowers at the age of 12 for the county fair and took home Best in Show. After moving to Cincinnati and working at the family business, The Plant & Flower Market, John graduated from the University of Cincinnati. He was hired at Flowers of the Meadow for his floral abilities and visual merchandising skills and cultivated a following for weddings and parties. Later he worked as a design assistant at Bolce Interior. While continuing to do floral events in San Francisco, New York, and Charleston, John set his sights on opening a home décor store, Quince & Quinn. He has also styled and produced events for the Cincinnati Flower Show, Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, Cincinnati Art Museum, Cincinnati Ballet, and the Taft Museum of Art. Currently focusing on his interior design business, John still works with various arts organizations and his clients to create one of a kind florals for celebrations and memorable occasions throughout the city.

Christopher Griffin, also known as Plant Kween, is a Brooklyn-based educator, author of YOU GROW, GURL! Plant Kween's Lush Guide to Growing your Garden, and gardener with a collection of more than 200 green plants (also known as "green gurls,") in their apartment. Born and raised in West Philadelphia, Christopher grew up visiting local nurseries with their grandmother, which inspired their plant parenting journey. As an educator, Christopher started their Instagram account - @plantkween- in 2016 as a way to share the many lessons, lush adventures, and simple joys that come with being a plant parent. Their social media presence has been rooted in a journey of self-care, sharing joy, and community building all through the wonders of those green little creatures we call plants.

Teruko Nesbitt is Cultural Program Coordinator of the Japan American Society of Greater Cincinnati and a certified teacher of the Sogetsu School of Ikebana. Teruko was born and raised in Japan and has been living in Cincinnati since 1997, where she has been engaged in a wide variety of work related to Japanese language, culture, and business. She holds a BA in English and American Literature from Kobe Kaisei College, an MBA in International Business from Xavier University, and a Post-Baccalaureate Paralegal Certificate from the University of Cincinnati. In addition to her degrees, Teruko has also studied at the Simul Academy International in Osaka, the Monterey Institute of International Studies, the Inter Osaka Language School, and the School for International Training, Vermont. She has worked for many years as an interpreter and Japanese language instructor. Teruko holds licenses as a Sogetsu Ikebana (Japanese flower arrangement) Certified Instructor, and as a Japanese Calligraphy Kana 3-Dan. In addition, she received a Urasenke Tea Ceremony Beginner Accreditation in 2018 and continues to actively study that art. Teruko currently represents the Cincinnati area for Japan Intercultural Consulting, headquartered in Chicago, and helps Japan-related businesses be more successful in their cross-cultural interactions and business dealings.

Michael Thompson is an interdisciplinary artist, designer, ethnographer, and poet. Michael takes on the role of artist as archivist, collecting things, spaces, and histories to add to his work and life. His practice focuses on human ecology and nuance, and he utilizes both ancient and contemporary mediums to develop woven and multi-experiential works of art. Michael has been awarded the Ohio Arts Council Individual Excellence Award, two ArtsWave Grants, the Cincinnati Art Club Award, and The Carl B. Westmoreland Fellowship for his work, "Sanctuaries." He is a TEDx Speaker, Artist-in-Residence Emeritus at the Cincinnati Art Museum, Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati Shakespeare Company, and Cincinnati Chamber Orchestra. Michael was also a BLINK 2022 muralist and winner of the largest Secret Walls Battle in history.-