

STOCKTON

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DISTINCTIVE STOCKTON PEOPLE

Stockton's faculty, staff and alumni are leaders in their fields.

Jedediah Morfit, associate professor of Art, teaches, inspires and helps shape the face of Atlantic City.



Q&A with Tom Ballance '80

The Borgata president talks Stockton and the future of Atlantic City.

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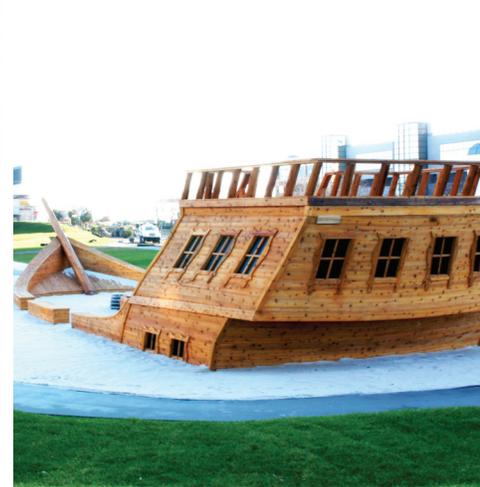
STOCKTON EDUCATOR

Helps Shape the Face of AC

by Maryjane Briant



[Click to follow the process of Morfit's world as it evolves](#)



Images courtesy: Fung Collaboratives

Stockton's Jedediah Morfit found that when one door closed, a huge gate opened. The associate professor of Art in the School of Arts and Humanities was initially commissioned by Fung Collaboratives and the Atlantic City Alliance (ACA) to produce outdoor sculptures on a site fronting the Atlantic City Boardwalk.

That location fell through, but his project just got bigger.

As of this July Fourth weekend, Morfit's sculpture of a woman will become a gate to the Pinnacle site where the old Sands casino once stood. The seven-acre block at 1700 Pacific Avenue is bordered by Indiana Avenue, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard and the Boardwalk and will be home to public art installations by a number of artists.

Morfit is still producing sculpted aluminum chairs and benches with an environmental theme as originally planned. His installation is part of ArtLantic, a project of Fung Collaboratives in partnership with the Atlantic City Alliance and the Casino Reinvestment Development Authority (CRDA.)

Project Director Layman Lee of Fung Collaboratives called their work "public art interventions" and said they may install art on the facades of buildings as well as on open land. Morfit's work is part of the 2013 project, which also includes new installations by Robert Lach and "land artist" Peter Hutchinson, who at 83 is doing his largest "thrown rope" piece.

Hutchinson throws a rope, and

"I'm tremendously excited to be part of this project. Fung Collaboratives and the Atlantic City Alliance have given me the opportunity to create new work in a new medium and a new genre."

**—Jedediah Morfit,
Stockton associate professor of Art**



where it lands, he places boulders, hedges and other plants. The installation grows in the shape of the thrown rope, said Lee.

Robert Lach's *Refuge Nest Colony* is a series of fiberglass "refuge nests" which will glow at night. They are large enough for an adult or two children to settle into. Lach hopes people will be inspired to contemplate home and community and think about nature while cradled in the nests, Lee said. In addition, works by

artists Kiki Smith, Robert Barry, Ilya and Emilia Kabakov and John Roloff were installed on the site in 2012.

So Morfit is in good company.

When the site changed earlier this year, there was time to regroup. Morfit said curator Lance Fung saw his sculpture of a woman and "was intrigued. 'How could we use that?' Lance asked." Now the sculpture, called *Mama's in the Arbor*, will become the gate to the Pinnacle site, which will be closed at night, Morfit said.

"The back of the gate will be a metal sheet with a drawing on it and on the front will be the lady with a painted metal sheet behind her and perforated stars" cut through to allow in light, Morfit explained.

"The drawing on back is a woodland motif," explained Lee. "It echoes what's going on in her dress."

Morfit calls his series of chairs and benches, *The Flood Suite*. The sculpted chair backs look "flooded" with the miscellaneous stuff of human life (shoes, lighters, stereos, lawn sprinklers, etc.) as well as seagulls, people and dead fish, he explained. "This disorderly motif is, of course, inspired by Hurricane Sandy, as well by the images of upheaval and confusion that have become familiar sights in the wake of the latest hurricane, flood, tornado and tsunami," Morfit said.

The sculptures "are in the form of kitschy garden furniture with associations of idealized recreation, but then I fill it with these kinds of images.... There's a discrepancy between form and content," Morfit explained.

One of Morfit's sculpted aluminum



[Click to find out more about the ArtLantic project](#)

chairs and a bench will be installed by July 4, along with the gate. Other sets of chairs will be added later, he said.

Morfit's sculptures start as urethane foam coated with Castiline, a modeling material. Molds are then made of the chairs, which ultimately are cast into aluminum heavy enough to withstand the elements.

"My hope is that these chairs and love-seat will encourage people to sit and enjoy the day, the park, and the shore with their friends and loved ones, while reflecting our new relationship to the natural world; a relationship that necessarily includes our memories of recent disasters, and the anticipation of the continued upheaval and dislocation to come," Morfit said.

Morfit, 39, has been teaching art at Stockton for seven years. His art work has been exhibited in New York, New England, Maryland, Georgia and throughout Pennsylvania and New Jersey.

The Artlantic installation promises to introduce Morfit's work to an even wider audience.

Lance Fung, of Fung Collaboratives, who is curator of Artlantic, says "The role of curator can be quite intoxicating but in most cases it is a daunting process."

"It was clear to me that rather than merely creating a series of art exhibitions between 2012-2016, I also wanted to create the much-needed public spaces in Atlantic City as the end result of each exhibition," Fung said.

Fung, who prefers curating group exhibitions, said he "can still remember seeing the work of Jed Morfit on my first visit to the Noyes Museum of Stockton College last May." He said Morfit's work stood out in a show by various local artists.

"The biggest surprise which was engrained in my mind was Jed's work," Fung said, but he didn't know who the artist was.

"It was not until my search for artists

for the second Artlantic exhibitions that I finally learned the name of Jed Morfit," Fung continued. "Through the extensive review process, it was clear to me that Jed's studio practice was extraordinary."

"Not only is his work meticulously made, and by his own hand, which is a rare situation these days, the artworks are visually stunning and conceptually challenging," Fung said. "This cohesion is one that is rarely achieved. Even more surprising, the artist himself is educated, humble, and just plain nice."

"Working with Jed to realize his first public work of art has been a joy," Fung said.

"I know Jed's work will stand up against these (other artists) as a strong and unique voice while adding to the overall experience and vision," Fung said.

"I see a very promising future for Jed that brings the soul and spirit of a local artist to an international audience." 