



AKUMAL ARTS FESTIVAL & RESIDENCY PRODUCTION STAFF

Jennifer Smith - CEO Tortuga Escondida / Executive Producer

With the purchase of Turtle Bay Café and Bakery, Jennifer and Bart Smith launched a restaurant and community hub that has nourished thousands of residents of and visitors to Akumal since 2003. In 2015, Smith built Tortuga Escondida Residency Center. Operational since 2016, the facility accommodates various types of arts and science residencies as well as wellness retreats.

Her leadership of the Akumal Arts Festival & Residency is a capstone of nearly 20 years of community and civic engagement. Among her philanthropic initiatives are: organizing regular spay/neuter clinics in Akumal Pueblo, spearheading ongoing animal rescue efforts, hosting annual fundraisers for Akumal's Red Cross ambulance, and funding public lighting for safety and clean-up efforts.

Marti Johnston, M.F.A. - Tortuga Escondida Residency Center Director / Co-Producer

Marti's history within the arts, making dances, performing, producing, presenting, fundraising, educating and managing goes back to the late 1980's in the San Francisco Bay Area. As key staff with the Dry Creek Arts Fellowship in Flagstaff, Arizona, she was instrumental in the planning, development and presenting of *Trappings of the American West*, an annual fine art exhibition with community programming that included over 100 artists from around the USA.

First arriving in Akumal in 2008, Johnston served as general manager of Yoga en Akumal, where she taught, built collaborative community relationships, and expanded the studio into a thriving year-round cornerstone for locals and visitors. Returning to Akumal in 2017, her work is to catalyze positive change through the arts and science in our community.

Jake Klone - Akumal Arts Festival Artist Director / Curator

As the festival's artist director, Jake Klone coordinates the artists and sponsors and will be a participating artist in the weekend's events.

He is a well-established graffiti/street artist from Leeds, England. Before moving to Akumal in 2015, Klone developed street art murals in his hometown and facilitated numerous youth workshops for organizations such as the London 2012 Olympics, Tour de France, NHS Mental Health, the Leeds City Museum, Leeds Art Gallery and the Rugby League World Cup in 2013. Check out his work here [KLONISM](#)

Erin Ko - Tortuga Escondida Creative Director / Co-Producer

Erin is a mixed media artist and independent curator based in New York. She is a co-producer of the Akumal Arts Festival [instagram.com/akumalartsfestival/](https://www.instagram.com/akumalartsfestival/), www.tortuga-escondida.com/festival-residency Ko's interests lie in collapsing the past and the present, discovering the subtle through the gross, and uniting things which don't necessarily belong together, ideally with an edge of humor.



Rena Gray - Curator and Co-Producer

A native New Yorker who attended LaGuardia High School of the Performing Arts (“the Fame high-school”), Gray has been around and working with creatives all her life. She has always had an acute awareness of the street art of the day and its development over time. As a street art photographer([instagram.com/walkinggirlnyc](https://www.instagram.com/walkinggirlnyc)) she is immersed in the culture and community of the medium. As a curator, she looks to bring the streets indoors and explore the art beyond the walls.

Iran Beltran - Co-Founder / Community Partner

A native born and raised Akumalian, Iran has always been in community service. During his term as the mayor, (*Delegado*) of Akumal he was integral to the creation and implementation of the inaugural Akumal Arts Festival.

Kaori Sueki - Community Partner / Organizer, Akumal Children's Art Installation

As Volunteer Director of the Hekab be Library her focus is on daily creative classes for Akumal children. Working with 50 children they are learning new techniques, improving their skills, and addressing values to be respectful, honest, independent, creative and full of love to others and nature. She teaches English at the Inter De La Riviera Tulum and Montessori elementary school in Akumal. Kaori has an art teacher degree and studied design administration at the University of Japan. She spent two years in Nicaragua teaching arts classes to elementary schools and embroidery to women. She designed and conducted an interactive training for teachers on methods to create fun art classes.

Ernestina Ramírez Vital - Community Partner for Education and Outreach

Senora Tina currently serves as Director of Transform Educando Akumal, educational institution where various sports, academic and cultural activities take place. She is a member of the Pobladores de Akumal association with the position of Vice President.

Previously, she was a social worker for 15 years in the DIF of Costa Rica, Sinaloa state, where she held various activities such as cooking classes, school breakfasts, talks to youth about addiction, visits to secondary activities Adults seniors. After moving to Veracruz she continued to develop the same social activities. She belonged to the Lions Club of Costa Rica, Sinaloa and is Top Master of Public Speaking in Veracruz. She currently belongs to the "Settlers of Akumal" association with the position of Vice President.

Brad Ford / Owley - Videographer

Hoot! Owley is a full-time videographer and curator based in Brooklyn, NY. He flies the globe capturing the process of artistic creation through his own adept vision and visualizations from artists themselves. Owley was the first videographer for Akumal Arts Festival and will be returning to AAF in 2019 with a full team of videographers to capture the beautiful creations and events of the festival.

Scott Brown - Photographer

A longtime local of Akumal, Scott will be returning to cover the amazing works of the artists Akumal Arts Festival this year, sharing his photos of these talented artists and their work on social media [@scottbrownphoto](https://www.instagram.com/scottbrownphoto)