Lauren Cross
Artist and Professor at the University of North Texas

Lauren Cross is a visionary filmmaker, teacher, curator, and interdisciplinary artist. But perhaps her most important role is that of community leader. Partnering with Fort Worth museums and artist collectives, Cross helps to push the creative community forward through projects that facilitate artistic expression. She’s part of the Carter Community Artist Initiative at the Amon Carter Museum, which connects diverse audiences with the collection and provides pathways into the art world for students. As a senior lecturer at UNT, she knows how valuable this real-world guidance can be. “The most important idea I teach is that with your own creativity and entrepreneurship you can be part of the creative community.”

Jessica Christopherson
Visit Fort Worth + Fort Worth Film Commission

Jessica Christopherson is spreading the message about the city’s expanding creative culture far and wide, attracting visitors and filmmakers alike. Christopherson is the head of the Fort Worth Film Commission and the assistant director of marketing at Visit Fort Worth, the hospitality bureau for tourists and conventions. Since the Film Commission was established in 2011, she has worked tirelessly to advance Fort Worth’s presence in the movie industry — and it’s starting to pay off. “There is a really exciting energy in the city right now, and travelers and filmmakers are taking note.”

Heather Laminack
Ferrier Custom Homes

In a land of “Bigger is Better,” Heather Laminack of Ferrier Custom Homes has become a strong advocate of sustainability and energy efficiency. Founded in 1984, Ferrier Custom Homes has been ahead of the curve since the beginning by preaching the importance of smaller and well-thought-out homes. If you have ever driven where Mercantile Street meets Byers Avenue, you may be familiar with one of their projects — two small homes with a thoughtful, minimalist style designed by Daniel Van Kooten. Heather is also the first female president of the Greater Fort Worth Builders Association. “GWBA was nothing but encouraging and supportive,” Laminack says. “They recognize that it is very important to our industry to help equip young women with resources to bridge the gap, so they can see that these careers aren’t gender-specific.” Heather recalls growing up helping with her small family business and noticing there weren’t any female architects, much less tradespeople. As a mother of two young sons, she hopes to be an example for her boys to crush gender norms in her field. “Feeling like the tide is changing, and I could be more excited to be a part of that change,” she says.

Josie Villa-Singleton
Eat This Fort Worth Food Tours

To truly understand the soul of a city, you have to taste it — and in Fort Worth, that means tacos and margaritas, brisket and beer. Explore hidden-pen taquerias and real-big-thing hangouts on a foodie adventure with Josie Villa-Singleton, who introduced Eat This Fort Worth Food Tours this spring. Designed for locals and travelers alike, the bus tours deliver a lively, off-the-beaten-path experience of the city. “We have an amazing food culture here,” Villa-Singleton says. “I love many weekends doing research for my taco tour and eating at dozens of taquerias, and I still haven’t even scratched the surface.” A first-generation American and Fort Worth native, her advice to aspiring entrepreneurs in the city is to reach out and network. “Fort Worth has a spirit of collaboration, and I have found the community here to be supportive of each other, especially the food community. Up next? Singleton is partnering with Visit Fort Worth for a barbecue and brew tour with more themed excursions arriving this fall. “It brings me great joy to show some of my favorite places in our city and tell the stories of what makes them special.”