

40

HERE WITH ARTISTS

artist
TRUST

SINCE 1986



Anne Focke
Artist Trust Co-Founder
Photo: Brad Curran



Thatcher Bailey, David Mendoza, and Anne Focke work out figures for Artist Trust.
Seattle Post-Intelligencer, 1986

Artist Trust 40th Anniversary Report

40 Years of Supporting Washington State Artists

Awesome! / gu sGáawaa

Anne Focke, Artist Trust Co-Founder

It started in 1981 as a small artist grant program at a Seattle artist space. It gave a total of about \$10,000 to artists in each of three years. With grand aspirations, it spun off in 1984 to become its own independent statewide entity.

Through 1985 and 1986, a passionate cadre of artists and artist advocates dedicated themselves to making it real. They engaged and listened to artists, traveled the state, raised money, and surveyed state residents' relationships with artists and the feasibility of raising funds for them. They researched what others around the country were doing, wrote and rewrote program plans, budgets, and mission statements. They raised more money and opened an office. Twenty people from across the state stepped up to serve on the board. They set the launch date on October 16, 1986. But they didn't have a name.

Finally, just four months before launch, co-directors David Mendoza and I sent the board a memo titled "Identity Crisis." We wrote, "It is becoming awkward to move ahead without a name." We'd been using placeholders. Until we had the right name, we used nondescript, clumsy ones that wouldn't stick. Our letterhead read: "Toward a Foundation for Artists, Washington State."

June 5 was our deadline. Board and staff gathered in a small meeting room. Suggestions came rapidly. David offered names using Native languages, such as Alik (Salish for "creative activity"), gu sGáawaa (a Haida term that we understood to mean amaze, fill with awe), and Chinook (from the Chehalis for a warm wind in the Cascades). Also suggested were options with the acronym A.R.T – Artist Resource Team, Artist Resource Trust, and Artist Resource Tribe. Among many possibilities were Art Work, Evergreen, A Trust for Washington Artists, Soul Support, and Jimi Hendrix Foundation. At the end of an afternoon of deliberation, as we wondered what to do with all the names on the blackboard, someone called out, "Artist Trust." We added, "A Resource for Washington," and the brainstorming was over. We knew it was just right.

When you look at the facts and stories packed into this 40th anniversary volume and consider where Artist Trust started and what its future looks like now, I'm sure that you will exclaim, as I do . . .

gu sGáawaa

From the Artist Trust Team

Forty years of Artist Trust is forty years of building something that didn't exist before: a statewide community rooted in artists, sustained by artists, and shaped by artists' lived experience.

Over four decades, thousands of artists have come through our literal and figurative doors. They have received support, yes—but they have also shaped this organization in return. Artist Trust exists because artists believed it should.

As we mark this milestone, we do so with a clear understanding: while our history is something to honor, our most important work is happening right now.

In the past year alone, we granted \$335,500 directly to 94 artists and supported thousands more across Washington State through professional development and resources. Our team traveled the state—from Olympia to Pasco, from Leavenworth to Walla Walla—witnessing firsthand the depth, diversity, and creativity of artists in every region. These communities are not abstract to us; they are relationships we have built over time.

What we see is this: when artists are supported, communities become more connected, more expressive, and more resilient.

We are living in a moment that asks a great deal of all of us. In that context, Artist Trust's role is both simple and urgent—to invest in artists with trust, care, and a deep commitment to equity.

This report reflects where we have been, what this work makes possible, and what comes next.

Artist Trust's role is both simple and urgent—to invest in artists with trust, care, and a deep commitment to equity.

40 Years.

Over \$15 Million Invested in Thousands of Artists.

Programs and support reaching all 39 counties of Washington State.



Shruti Ghatak
GAP 2025

The last conversation
Terracotta mounted on wood, 16 x 12 inches, 2025
Photo: Shruti Ghatak

Artist Trust at 40: Investing in Washington Artists

Since 1986, Artist Trust has invested more than \$15 million directly in Washington State artists across all creative disciplines through grants, fellowships, and professional development programs.

Today, we strive to support artists in all 39 counties of Washington State, ensuring that geography, identity, and career stage are not barriers to opportunity.

Across 40 years, this work shows that when artists are trusted and resourced, they strengthen communities and expand what is possible across Washington State.

Background: **Consuelo Soto Murphy**
SOLA 2025
Red Mountain
Acrylic on canvas, 40 x 30 inches, 2025
Photo: Chad Murphy

- **1986–2000**

A Foundation of Trust

Artist Trust was founded in 1986 with a simple commitment: direct support for artists. We launched the Artist Trust Fellowship Awards in 1987 and Grants for Artist Projects (GAP) in 1988, establishing the foundation of our grantmaking. Soon after, we expanded our work beyond funding to include professional development programs that support artists in building sustainable creative careers.

- **2001–2009**

Building Roots & Responding to Need

In 2001, Artist Trust put down permanent roots by purchasing our Seattle office and establishing an endowment to support long-term grantmaking.

That same year, we established the Twining Humber Award, which has since provided more than \$150,000 in unrestricted support to women visual artists age 60 and older. In response to the Nisqually earthquake, we also launched Artists' Quake Aid (AQUA), providing emergency relief to artists impacted by the disaster.

- **2010–2018**

Expanding Opportunity & Defining Values

Artist Trust deepened its investment in artists as leaders with the launch of the Arts Innovator Awards in 2010, made possible through generous support from The Dale & Leslie Chihuly Foundation.

In 2012, we co-founded Artists Up to expand access to resources for underrepresented artists and strengthen career pathways through professional development.

In 2016, Artist Trust published its Racial Equity Framework, marking a major organizational commitment to equity and shaping how we make decisions and design programs.

In 2018, we expanded dedicated support for Native artists through the creation of the Vadon Foundation Fellowship.

- **2019–2021**

Centering Equity & Community

Artist Trust deepened its investment in artists historically excluded from funding through programs such as the SOLA Awards. During this period, Artist Trust expanded its organizational commitment to racial equity and accountability, and built stronger relationships with artists across Washington State.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, we distributed more than \$1 million in emergency relief to hundreds of artists across Washington State, reinforcing our commitment to rapid, direct support in moments of crisis.

- **2022–Present**

Scaling Impact & Expanding Equity

In 2022, Artist Trust received the largest contribution in our history, a \$500,000 gift that established the Greg Kucera and Larry Yocom Fellowship and the Fellowship for Black Artists.

This period marked a significant expansion of equity-centered support, including new fellowships for Trans* and Indigiqueer artists in partnership with the Lillian Miller Educational Foundation. We also invested \$300,000 through the Artist Trust Endurance Grants to support artists experiencing emergency need.

In 2023, Artist Trust reopened our renovated Seattle office as a space for connection, learning, and community.

In 2025, we formalized our Geographic Equity Statement, strengthening our commitment to serving artists across all regions of Washington State.

- **The Next 40 Years**

Looking Ahead

As Artist Trust celebrates 40 years, we are building on a long legacy of direct investment in artists and expanding support across Washington State. We continue to grow our investment in artists by launching the Marjorie Levy Memorial Fellowship, increasing Grants for Artist Projects to \$2,500, and awarding 16 Fellowships in 2026 alone.

We remain grounded in a simple belief: Washington State thrives when our artists thrive.

Jim Olson**Artist Trust Co-Founder
Board Member 1987–1989**

“I was part of the founding board of Artist Trust, brought in during those early days when it was still just an idea and we were trying to raise the initial funds to get it off the ground. What drew me in was a deep belief in artists—the idea that they deserve trust, support, and a structure that helps them sustain their work. Over the years, I’ve stayed committed because artists contribute so much to our culture and our understanding of the world, yet often do so without the security other professions provide. Supporting them feels essential. It’s a way of recognizing the tremendous gift they give and ensuring that creativity continues to thrive.”

**Stephanie Ellis-Smith****Board Member 2002–2003, 2013–2018**

“Artist Trust has always felt unique to me. I was drawn early on to the idea of actually trusting artists, of putting power and resources directly in their hands. It’s an organization created by artists for artists, one that evolves as their needs change. What’s so meaningful is not just the grants for projects, but the understanding that support can clear the path for art to be made at all. Sometimes that means taking care of life so artists can focus on their work. In a world that can feel uncertain or overwhelming, we turn to the arts, and having an organization like Artist Trust, still here after 40 years, supporting that creative lifeline, is an incredible gift.”

**Shari Behnke****Board Member 1998–2004**

“Our systems aren’t really set up to sustain artists, so organizations like Artist Trust help fill that gap. Without that support, I think our society would falter. Artists help us see the world, understand what’s happening around us, and experience everything from comfort to challenge. Creativity is fundamental to being human, and every person has it in some form. If we don’t nurture that, we risk losing something vital. Supporting artists isn’t optional, it’s necessary for a healthy, vibrant world.”

**Joseph Sunga****Board Member 2021–Present**

“I love what Artist Trust does to support artists, especially in a place where it can be hard to grow and sustain a creative life. What stands out to me is that it treats artists as whole people, recognizing their creativity, their needs, and their potential as leaders in the community. Whether it’s funding, workshops, or simply giving artists a platform, it helps unlock opportunities that can completely change someone’s path. Sometimes all it takes is a small grant or a bit of guidance to start something that grows into much more. And when you see that impact across communities throughout Washington State, it really reinforces how important that support system is.”

Eddie Adams**Board Member 2001–2006**

“Artist Trust began as artists coming together to meet the needs of their own community, and what’s remarkable is how it continues to evolve as those needs change. It remains responsive, supporting artists across the entire state with everything from grants and workshops to career guidance and collaboration. What stands out most to me is that it truly puts the artist at the center, recognizing that art is an expression of individual people, and that none of it exists without them. That philosophy shapes everything they do. There’s also a willingness to take risks, to try new ideas, which keeps the organization dynamic and relevant. That spirit is a powerful and lasting legacy.”

**Anthony White****Board Member 2026
Fellowship Award 2020**

“To me, Artist Trust is this rock, this lifeline—the support system and network for artists who live and work in Washington State. It’s an honor to be on the Board of Trustees, especially as a working artist myself, making sure that this organization that I fully believe in, continues to support artists working in the area.

Artist Trust is an organization that I trust, one that has supported me in the past and continues to do so in meaningful ways. And it’s a community of people who share similar beliefs and interests, and who genuinely want the best for Washington State artists. That kind of consistent support and shared commitment is what makes it so important.”





Yongqi Tang
Eros/Thanatos: Death and the Maiden
 Oil on Canvas, 106 x 158 inches, 2023
 Image Courtesy of T293 Gallery
 Photo: Daniele Molajoli

2025 Grants for Artists

Funding for artists is essential to building healthy careers. Through our funding programs, artists receive crucial support to pursue their work, contribute to our cultural landscape, and sustain their livelihoods. Our funding opportunities foster innovation, creativity, and artistic excellence, ensuring that artists from all backgrounds and Washington State geographies have the resources they need to thrive.

Artist Trust Fellowship Awards

Artist Trust Fellowship Awards are merit-based awards of \$10,000 providing support to Washington State artists of exceptional talent and ability.

Recipients: Diamond Beverly-Porter* (Whitman County), Douglas Burgess**** (Pierce County), Campana (King County), Hanna Eady (Kitsap County), Mehrdad Gholami (Whatcom County), Stefan Gonzales*** (King County), Stephanie Anne Johnson (Pierce County), Natalie Krick (King County), Ernest Langston (King County), Ellaina Lewis (King County), Mana Mehrabian (Whitman County), Tamiko Nimura (Pierce County), Troy Osaki (King County), Yongqi Tang** (King County), Tracey Wong (King County)

Panelists: June T. Sanders (Whitman County), Nia-Amina Minor (King County), Ricardo de la Torre (Pierce County), Lila Thomas (King County), Christina Vega (Pierce County)

***Artist Trust Fellowship for Black Artists recipient**
Made possible by Greg Kucera and Larry Yocom

****Greg Kucera and Larry Yocom Fellowship recipient**
Made possible by Greg Kucera and Larry Yocom

*****The Lillian Miller Foundation Fellowship for Trans* and Indigiqueer Artists**
Made possible by the Lillian Miller Educational Foundation

******Vadon Foundation Fellowship Award for Native Artists**
Made possible by the Vadon Foundation



"I am deeply grateful for this award. It means that I can financially contribute to supporting my family, which is no small thing for a writer. But it also means that I can partner meaningfully with community, people, places, and nonprofits to bring my forthcoming memoir, *A PLACE FOR WHAT WE LOSE*, to its core audiences. Under a federal administration determined to erase the history of Japanese American wartime incarceration in order to repeat it, this support for me and my work is a powerful message of resistance."

–**Tamiko Nimura (Literary, Pierce County)**



"I'm very grateful for this award, which allows me to expand my practice and continue sharing my work. In this time of uncertainty, this support encourages, motivates, and empowers me, and I'm excited to express and share this energy through my practice."

–**Mana Mehrabian (Visual, Whitman County)**

The Arts Innovator Award

The Arts Innovator Award are two \$25,000 awards funded by The Dale and Leslie Chihuly Foundation recognizing artists who are originating new work, experimenting with new ideas, and pushing the boundaries in their fields.

Recipients: Joseph James (n8vboy) (Yakima County) and Mikaela Shafer (Thurston County)

Finalists: Stephen Anunson (King County), Jill Louise Busby (Thurston County), Megan Griffiths (King County), Jesse Higman (King County), Katherine Paul (Skagit County), Olivia Stephens (King County)

Panelists: Robert Campbell (King County), Perri Lynch Howard (Okanogan County), Sasha LaPointe (Pierce County), Jacqueline Wilson (Whitman County)



"For a long time, I've been creating from a place of instinct, culture, and resilience—often with limited resources, often feeling unseen. So to be recognized like this... I feel seen. I feel heard. I feel lifted. This isn't just a moment for me, it's a moment for where I come from. For my community. For the stories I carry into every piece of music I make. Winning this award tells me I'm on the right path, and that I don't have to change who I am to be valued as an artist."

–**Joseph James (Performing, Yakima County)**

Joseph James (n8vboy)

Joseph James is a musician based on the Yakama Reservation who creates work under the name n8vboy. His work challenges the conventions of electronic dance music, taking an experimental approach that combines electronic beats and traditional instruments, vocals, and sounds reflective of his Indigenous identity. Entirely self-taught, James has built his career from the ground up—producing, mixing, promoting, and performing his own work while staying deeply connected to his community.

Mikaela Shafer

Mikaela Shafer is a visual artist and poet living in Olympia. Working in painting, textile, sewing, and collage, she often incorporates natural materials like kombucha leather and seaweed. Her work is guided by memory and emotion, and is often created in the outdoors, where she will set up a small generator and sew on her paintings, creating layered abstractions in direct conversation with the land she descends from. Her work continues to serve as a bridge between personal, cultural, and collective healing.



Mikaela Shafer
 Plein air sewing artwork in Seaview, WA, 2023
 Photo: Fennel Overstreet



The Twining Humber and SOLA Awards

The Twining Humber Award for Lifetime Artistic Achievement is a \$10,000 award recognizing a Washington State female artist, age 60 or over, endowed by the late Yvonne Twining Humber.

Recipient: Keiko Hara (Walla Walla County)

The Support Old Lady Artists Awards (SOLA) are five unrestricted awards of \$5,000 founded by artist Ginny Ruffner to honor and reward women artists over the age of 60 for their energy, vision, persistence, and dedication to maintaining creative momentum over the long haul.

Recipients: Caryn Friedlander (Whatcom County), Jeanne K. Simmons (Jefferson County), Consuelo Soto Murphy (Benton County), Cynthia Toops (King County), Karen Willenbrink-Johnsen (Skagit County)

Panelists: Cynthia Masterson (King County), MalPina Chan (Thurston County), Mary Farrell (Spokane County)



“How extraordinary (and necessary) it is to celebrate mature women who have dedicated their lives to making the world a better place through art. I am elated to receive this award! What an honor it is to be counted among this exceptional group of women. I feel acknowledged, supported, and buoyed to engage in my work with renewed vigor and anticipation.”

–**Caryn Friedlander (Whatcom County)**



“This grant will make it possible to work on a new set of twelve large scale mokuhanga I have been planning for quite some time. It would not be possible to create these prints without the use of large, high quality, handmade washi from Japan. This paper is becoming much harder to find and quite expensive. If it were not for your support I would be unable to continue this project.”

–**Keiko Hara (Walla Walla County)**

Above: **Cynthia Toops**
Devil May Care
Polymer clay, silver (Nancy Bonnema), 4.2 x 2.2 x 0.25 inches, 2018
Photo: Doug Yapple

Grants for Artist Projects

Grants for Artist Projects (GAP) are unrestricted project-based grants of \$1,500 for artists working in all disciplines across Washington State.

Recipients: Nikita Ares (King County), Sofya Belinskaya (King County), Andre Bouchard (Thurston County), Luke Brown (King County), Molly Burke (King County), Court Burrow (King County), Vania C. Bynum (King County), Alizée Castel (King County), Ling Chun (Snohomish County), Miguel del Aguila (King County), Oliver Dickson (Thurston County), Maia Erickson (Mason County), Sheila Evans (Spokane County), Marika Francisco (King County), Kathy Fridstein (Jefferson County), Shruti Ghatak (King County), Salenna Green (King County), Erin Guinup (Pierce County), Elyse Hauser (King County), J. Henry (King County), Angie Hinojos (King County), Tobi Iverson-Halliday (Pierce County), Michito Iwata (King County), Nikki Jabbora-Barber (King County), Madison Judkins (Thurston County), Arlo Sage King (King County), Aidan Lancaster (Kittitas County), Ryana Lawson (King County), Renzi Li & Tianxing Yan (Snohomish County), Esther Lin (King County), Asenath Lizárraga (Thurston County), Deborah Lloyd (King County), Stacy Lovejoy (King County), Alexa Luborsky (King County), Adrienne Mackey (King County), Jamie Maschler & Gabriel Hall-Rodrigues (King County), Mel McCarthy (King County), Ryan Allen McDonald (King County), Jake Morgan-Scharhon (Whatcom County), Ruby Hansen Murray (Wahkiakum County), Yoshi Nakagawa (Pierce County), Wendy Oleson (Walla Walla County), Yaminee Patel (King County), Malia Peoples (King County), Michael James Peterson (King County), Zach Powers (Pierce County), Ali Victoria Pressler (King County), E.R. Saba (King County), Twyla Sampaco (King County), Heidi Seaborn (King County), Deborah Chava Singer (Clark County), Jay Stoneking (King County), Tien Taylor (Thurston County), hannah ramone (King County), Taylor Roseweeds (Whitman County), Titus Ross (Pierce County), Raya Tuffaha (King County), Naomi Wachira (Yakima County), Haines Whitacre (King County), Jeremy Whittington (Spokane County), Laura C. Wright (King County), Judith Yeo (King County), Zona Zanjeros & Justin Lazar (Thurston County), Shuxuan Zhou (King County), Clara Zornado (King County)

Panelists: Diamond Beverly-Porter (Whitman County), Laura Luna Castillo (King County), Aimee Chou (Snohomish County), CarliAnn Forthun-Bruner (Spokane County), Laura Gunnip (Okanagan County), Michael Hong (King County), Derek Nunn (Pierce County), Paige Pettibon (Pierce County), Armin Tolentino (Clark County), Leah Hampton (Whitman County), Juan Carlos Reyes (King County), JR Rhodes (King County)



Ryana Lawson
A Narrow Fellow in the Grass
Terracotta, glaze, 36 x 14 inches, 2025



“With public arts funding increasingly under threat in the United States, support from Artist Trust feels especially significant. I’m accepting this award with profound gratitude and commitment to honor the investment in my work.”

–**Wendy Oleson (Literary, Walla Walla County)**

2025 Supporters

We are grateful to the many individuals, businesses, and philanthropic partners that lent us their support in 2025, just a portion of whom are listed here. Their incredible generosity inspires us and fuels us forward.

We are especially grateful to founding donors Nancy and Ellsworth C. “Buster” Alvord, along with Jim Olson and Thatcher Bailey. We are honored to be supported today by three generations of the Alvord family, and the many individuals who continue to sustain Artist Trust.

\$50,000+

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\$500 - \$999

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Thank you to our 2025 Program and Funding Partners. We are humbled to have had the opportunity to support artists alongside you.

Program Partners

Actualize AiR, ArtsWA, 4Culture, City of Auburn, City of Tacoma Office of Arts and Cultural Vitality, The Dale & Leslie Chihuly Foundation, City of Seattle Office of Arts and Culture, Centrum, Cultural and Holistic Empowerment Experience (CHEE), Future Arts, Gage Academy of Art, Greg Kucera and Larry Yocom, Inspire Washington, Lillian Miller Educational Foundation, Mezcla Collective, Seattle Art Fair, Seattle Composers Alliance, Seattle University, SOLA Seattle, Shunpike, Spokane Arts, Spokane Public Library, Tacoma Public Library, Third Place Technologies, University of Washington, US Department of State Art In Embassies Program, US Ambassador Roger Nyhus, The Vadon Foundation, Washington State University, Yakima Arts Commission, Yakima Valley Museum

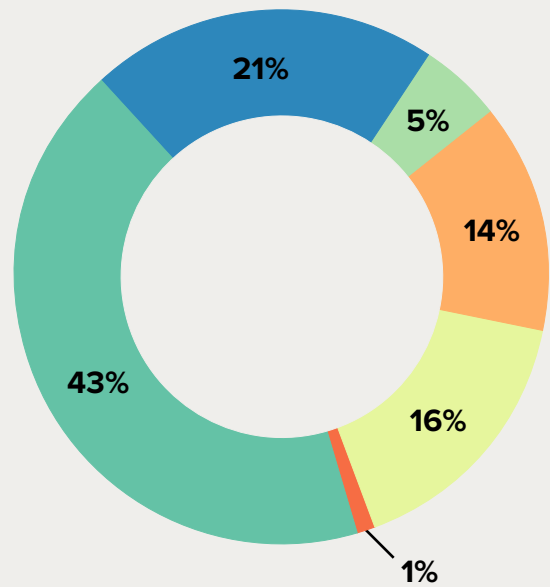
Funding Partners



2025 Financial Highlights

In 2025, our community’s generosity helped Artist Trust raise just over \$2.1 million in total support. Individuals once again played a leading role, contributing more than \$900,000, or 43% of all support, alongside meaningful investments from foundations, government partners, corporations, and special events that together strengthened our work and long-term stability.

We directed over 54% of total expenses, or more than \$760,000, to artist grants and support programs, ensuring resources reached artists across Washington State. With expenses totaling \$1.4 million, we closed the year with a strong operating surplus, further strengthening our financial sustainability and allowing us to enter 2026 with core grants funded and a deep sense of gratitude for the partners and donors who continue to believe in artists and their impact.



Income

- Individuals ... \$901,057
- Foundations ... \$443,638
- Corporate ... \$115,437
- Government ... \$293,134
- Special Events* ... \$331,226
- Other** ... \$19,014

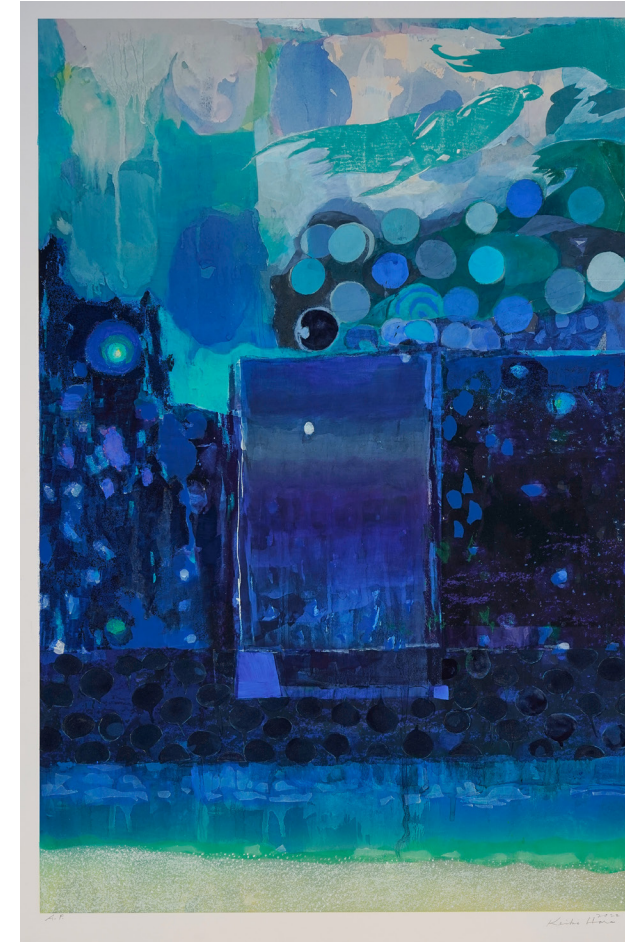
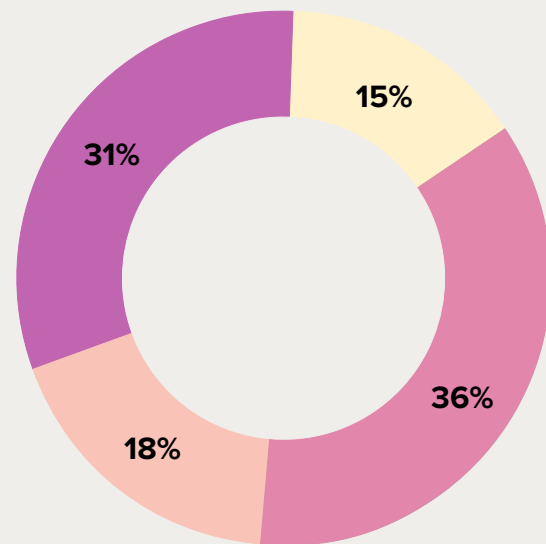
*Net of \$145,032 direct donor benefit
 **includes program and in-kind income

Total Income: \$2,103,506

Expenses

- Artist Grants ... \$512,461
- Artist Support Programs ... \$248,991
- Fundraising and Special Events ... \$432,867
- Management & General ... \$211,583

Total Expenses: \$1,405,902



Cover artwork

Keiko Hara

Twining Humber Award 2025
Verse • Space and Sea
 Mixed media print with digital, silkscreen, stencil and woodcut, 45.5 x 31 inches
 Printed with Susan Goldman Lily Press, 2022
 Photo: Colby Kuschatka

Based in Walla Walla, Washington, Keiko Hara works across media including painting, printmaking, glass, and installation. Her work has been featured in over 50 solo exhibitions nationwide, as well as in group shows across the U.S., Europe, and Japan. Her pieces are included in the collections of the National Gallery of Art and other major institutions.

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- Anthony White

Artist Trust Staff

- Lydia Boss | Program Director
- Taylor Callaway | Operations Coordinator
- Naomi Day | Program Coordinator
- Justine Deacon | Annual Giving & Events Director
- Kristina Goetz | Executive Director
- Gemma Grace | Finance & Operations Director
- Maya Stone | Development Coordinator
- Anna Teiche | Program Manager