

2020
ANNUAL
REPORT





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executive director
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deputy director
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Hi Friend,

I hope this finds you and your family safe and healthy. This time last year we were in the beginnings of quarantine, hopeful it might last a few months. Now that COVID-19 has been a household word for 16 months now, it seems like there may be some light at the end of the tunnel. But even though we may begin seeing audiences and patrons return to the arts, it's hard to imagine that the arts will ever really be the same again – hopefully, for the better.

Each year I say to the Amplify staff that this will be the year where we don't make any drastic changes. And usually by mid-April, I end up breaking that promise. 2020 was obviously no exception. When COVID-19 reared its head and we went into quarantine, board and staff examined every program and procedure to ensure we had the resources to carry out our mission. We increased the amount of grants awarded, we facilitated difficult conversations, we reaffirmed our commitment to equity and justice, and we doubled down on our commitment to local artists.

2020 proved more than ever how essential our mission is to the Omaha community. 257 artists received \$75,000 in support from Amplify Arts in 2020. Those artists were able to maintain some level of normalcy during difficult times, when the future of their creative practices were uncertain. We also led a group of 30 arts and culture organizations to realize a more unified, innovative, and progressive sector, ensuring artists are able to live, work, and play in Omaha for years to come.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andy". The signature is stylized and cursive.

Andy Saladino, Executive Director

OUR

MISSION:



**TO PROMOTE UNITY, INNOVATION, AND
PROGRESS IN THE ARTS TO BUILD STRONG
AND VIBRANT COMMUNITIES.**

WHY?

The importance of artists and the arts more broadly to our collective experience of 2020 (and our recovery) cannot be overstated. Just over a year ago, we were asked to stay at home in order to keep ourselves, our loved ones, and our community safe. Like never before, entire communities, workplaces, and friendships were moved online. As always, artists adapted in order to bring beauty to an otherwise unbearable and distressing time. Theatre-makers and musicians reimaged virtual performances, visual artists found new ways to bring us into the making process, and arts educators hosted classes over Zoom for artists of all ages.

Artists, organizers, and activists also used their work to confront racism and amplify calls for justice after the murders of George Floyd, James Scurlock, Breonna Taylor, and too many others. The essential role that artists played throughout 2020 brought energy and light to an otherwise dark time. The arts will continue to be instrumental in our

collective work towards justice and healing, and we must support artists every step of the way.

HOW?

We take a two-pronged approach to fulfilling our mission. We recognize that artists need direct aid as well as support, inspiration, and a sense of community from the greater arts and cultural sector in order to build and maintain a successful and fulfilling practice. Our Artists Grants program distributes direct financial awards to artists to support their practices and projects while providing emerging artists with time and space to hone their professional skills. ArtStock unites the arts sector for collective change, and Alternate Currents explores where the arts intersect with pressing issues that impact the local creative landscape such as climate justice and institutional responsibility. Our programs engage both individuals and systems to reinforce artists' skills and support them on their journey to success.

2020 HIGHLIGHTS

6 Hosted 6 Alternate Currents panel discussions focusing on the intersection of the arts and climate justice

On the cover: Launched ArtStock to catalyze collective action in the arts sector

31 Showcased the work of 31 emerging artists through Generator Grant exhibitions

Below: Hostile Terrain 94 Nebraska – an exhibit about the humanitarian crisis at the US-Mexico border and how it connects with Nebraska stories and communities, presented in partnership with the Office of Latino/Latin American Studies (OLLAS) at the University of Nebraska-Omaha.



Above: SISSI - March 2020: Jared Packard, Jared Brown, Jared Buckheister, J. Michael Ford, Walker Green, Dawuane Lamont Hayes, and Matt Morris



26 Served 257 artists and held 26 public programs

Awarded \$75,000 in Grants to 84 local artists

84

Above: Zoom screenshot of the panel discussion The Labor of Care with panelists Sarah Rowe, Alajia McKizia, and Cait Caughey with moderator Lillian Snortland



Artist: Jair Rodriguez, Photo: Drew Davis

2020 ARTIST GRANTS



ARTIST SUPPORT GRANTS:

◀ Brenton Gomez aka Conny Franko (Artist Support Grant)

"I THINK THAT WE HAVE IT ALL HERE, AND IF WE HAVE THE OPPORTUNITIES AND CONTINUE TO PUSH WHAT WE'RE DOING INDEPENDENTLY AND PROMOTE THAT KIND OF CULTURE (INDEPENDENT ARTISTS), THERE'S A BEAUTIFUL FUTURE TO BE HAD HERE, AND I SEE IT ALREADY IN A LOT OF SPACES AND I'M EXCITED TO SEE WHAT IT BECOMES"

◀ Lauren Simpson (Drew Billings Artist Support Grant)

Steve Tamayo (Indigenous American Artist Support Grant)

GENERATOR GRANTS:

◀ @viral_re_collection, Esau Betancourt and Abby Fogle

Tigerbeetle, Wintercreeper,
Corson Androski

SISSI, Jared Packard

A Memory Held In You,
Allegra Hangen and Alex Jacobsen

Above/Below, Nick Clark and Anne Dovali

Ebb, Flow, 2020 Alternate Currents Working Group

MICRO GRANTS:

a.j.k. o'donnell

Aaron Derell

Alex Jacobsen

Aly Peeler Kavanaugh

Ameen Wahba

Ang Bennett

Anthony T. Peña

Carrie Nath

Celeste Butler

Edem Soul Music

Ella Weber

HIATUS Healing Collective

Ian Aeillo

Jair Rodriguez

Jordan Willis

JR Dawson

Kathryn Schroeder

MaKayla Harrison

Malaz Lain

Malva Gillespie

Marcey Yates

Maritza Estrada

Michael Griffin

Michaela Wolf

MJ Peters

Molly Toberer

Nasty Artist Collective

Nathaniel Ruleaux

Patty Talbert

"I THINK PARTICULARLY NOW, IN A TIME WHERE PEOPLE MAYBE FEEL MORE VULNERABLE, ART CAN PROVIDE SOME COMFORT AND SOLACE AND SELF REFLECTION FOR HOW PEOPLE WANT TO LIVE THEIR LIVES."

TOTAL NUMBERS OF ARTISTS SUPPORTED:

257



Rachel Ziegler

Reagan D. Pufall

Reggie Clark

RIKÉ

Ryan Menchaca

Sarah Hummel Jones

Sarah Parys

Tiana Conyers



ALTERNATE CURRENTS

The first full year of the [Alternate Currents](#) program explored the intersection of arts and culture and climate justice. Through the blog, bimonthly panel discussions, and working group, Alternate Currents makes space for conversation, ideation, and action around national and international discussions in the arts, and uplifts cross-sector dialogue and artist-driven community change.

QUICK LOOK:

BLOG:

- 24 BLOG POSTS
- 15 GUEST CONTRIBUTORS
- 1,023 BLOG VISITORS

PANELS:

- 6 PANEL DISCUSSIONS (5 VIRTUAL)
- 22 PANELISTS
- 256 ATTENDEES

WORKING GROUP

The Alternate Currents Working Group is a cohort of 10 artists and culture workers who meet monthly over the course of a year to develop project-based work in response to the central theme of Alternate Currents for that year.

The \$5,000 Alternate Currents Grant is awarded to group members each year to execute projects, and members work collectively to determine distribution of grant funds.

2020 WORKING GROUP MEMBERS:

Corson Androski, Travis Apel, Erin Foley, Dawaune Lamont Hayes, Rynn Kerkhove, Alex O'Hanlon, Sarah Rowe, Angie Seykora, Molly Toberer, and Michaela Wolf

PANEL DISCUSSIONS

Jan 24th - *Ethics & Sustainability*

Apr 7th - *Institutional Responsibility & Carbon Neutrality*

May 29th - *Rural Networks*

Aug 20th - *Environmental Justice*

Oct 8th - *The Labor of Care*

Nov 19th - *Discussion with the Alternate Currents Working Group*



Ebb, Flow, 2020 Alternate Currents Working Group Exhibition



After many years of planning we launched ArtStock in the fall of 2020. ArtStock is a coalition of diverse representatives of the arts community that are working to build a stronger sector from within. Modeled after the Collective Impact framework, we use a democratic and action-oriented process to create a vision for the future, gather data on opportunities and challenges, and coordinate teams to carry out projects and strategies to make the vision a reality.

In November 2020 we produced a report titled [Foundations for Building a Vibrant Omaha Metro Arts Community](#) in partnership with consultancy firm [The Improve Group](#). Through a variety of methods like focus groups and surveys, we asked folks what they want to see happening in the arts in 3 years. This report provides the ArtStock cohort with a strong base for prioritizing projects and strategies to pursue moving forward.

Amplify’s mission is and always has been about uplifting individual artists, because we believe they are essential to a strong and thriving arts community. And strong arts communities make for stronger cities. However, after 12 years we realized that we couldn’t enact bold change without addressing the systems preventing artists from greater success. We have been successful at helping artists at a micro level, but a macro approach is essential to truly achieving our mission. This is where [ArtStock](#) comes in!

The heart of ArtStock is the people coming together to make it happen. The cohort works together to realize the vision set forth by the arts community, while also serving as ambassadors to engage the wider community in the process. The 2020/2021 cohort is made up of over 40 individuals from two distinct groups: representatives from 30 metro-area arts & culture organizations and 10 [Culture Work Fellows](#):

2020/2021 CULTURE WORK FELLOWS

Ang Bennett
 Esau Betancourt
 Ryan Boyland
 Pamela Conyers-Hinson
 Sara Jacobson
 Maher Jafari
 Nate Ruleaux
 Fran Sillau
 Brandi Smith
 Ameen Wahba

College
 Joslyn Art Museum
 Joslyn Castle
 KANEKO
 Maha Festival
 Nebraska Shakespeare Festival
 Nebraska Writers Collective
 Omaha Academy of Ballet
 Omaha Area Youth Orchestra
 Omaha Community Playhouse

2020/2021 MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

African Culture Connection
 American Midwest Ballet
 Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts
 BFF Omaha
 Bluebarn Theatre
 The Durham Museum
 El Museo Latino
 Film Streams
 Great Plains Black History Museum
 The Arts Center at Iowa Western Community

Omaha Conservatory of Music
 Omaha Girls Rock
 Omaha Performing Arts
 Omaha Symphony
 Opera Omaha
 OutrSpaces
 Pottawattamie Arts, Culture, and Entertainment
 Rabble Mill
 The Rose Theater
 The Union for Contemporary Art
 Why Arts

COVID-19 RESPONSE

In mid-March we closed down our office and Generator Space, and our team transitioned to working from home. We worked quickly to find accessible virtual solutions for our programming, and how best to support local artists, who were feeling the financial strains of canceled exhibitions, performances, and contracts. After shuffling some things around in the budget, and receiving generous donations from our supporters, we were able to double the amount of Micro Grants we awarded in 2020. We also worked with our partners in ArtStock and at Mid-America Arts Alliance to provide resources and information to the community about the arts sector, like the website Virtual Arts Omaha, and a series of COVID-19 Artist Impact surveys.

"HONESTLY THIS WAS A GOD SEND TO RECEIVE THIS GRANT IN 2020. TO PUT IT BLUNTLY, I LOST SO MUCH INCOME THIS YEAR FROM SHOWS, WEDDINGS, SMALL TOURS, AND RESIDENCIES CANCELED. I WAS ABLE TO SHARE WITH QUITE A FEW OTHER MUSICIANS AND ARTISTS WHO HAVE BEEN HURTING THROUGH COVID TO APPLY FOR THE GRANTS THEMSELVES. IT'S BEEN WONDERFUL HAVING AN ORGANIZATION WHO CARES ABOUT HELPING THE CREATIVE COMMUNITY GROW AND PROSPER."

- Aly Peeler Kavanaugh,
Micro Grant Recipient 2020



COMMITMENT TO EQUITY AND JUSTICE

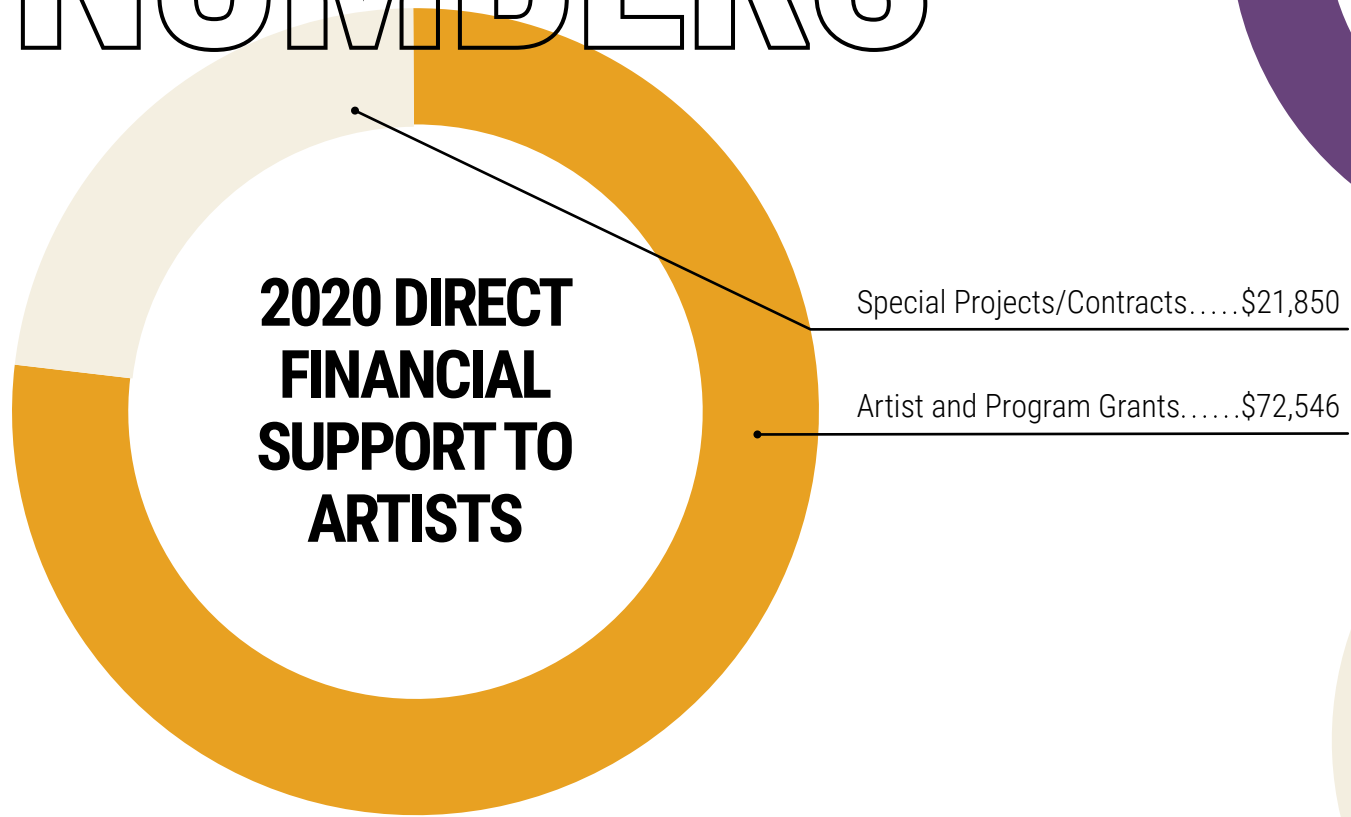
On June 5, 2020, we shared our statement in support of Black Lives Matter, our commitments to action, and how we will work to do better. We laid out a series of actions around organization operations, grantmaking, and our role in the larger arts community. [You can read our full statement here.](#)

Since sharing our commitments in June, we have:

- Adopted a new Vendor and Purchasing Policy that prioritizes local businesses that are women, BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, person of color), disabled, and/or LGBTQIA2S+ -owned.
- Hosted a community conversation with former and prospective grant applicants on creating a more equitable application process
- Increased grant awards to BIPOC artists by 5% (from 47% to 52% of total awards)
- Translated grant applications in Spanish and American Sign Language
- Designated two annual grants of \$5,000 each for a Black American and Indigenous American artist

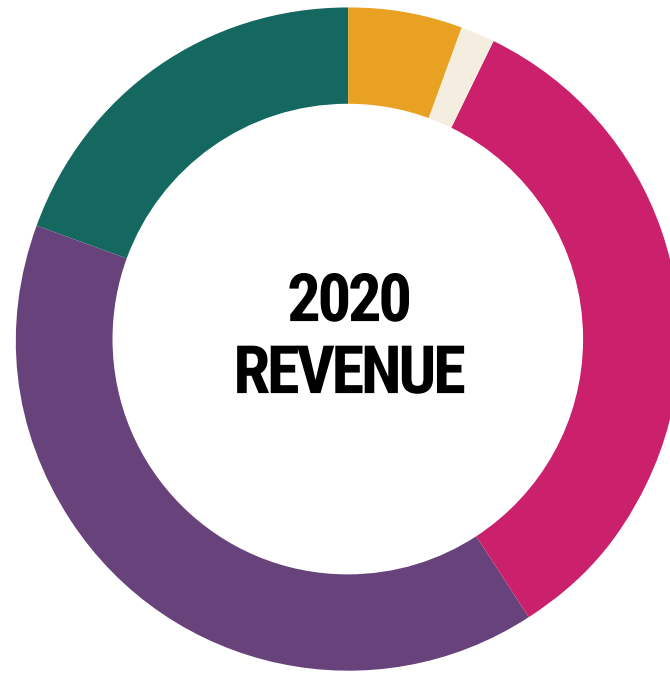


THE NUMBERS

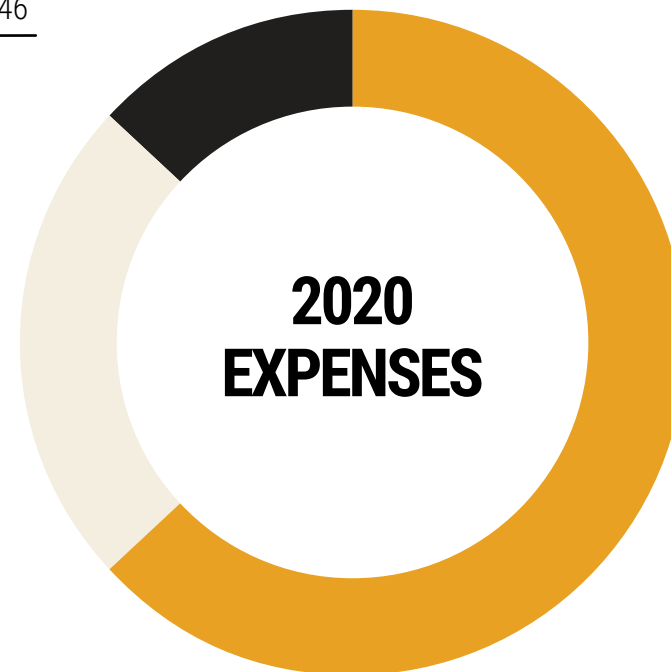


TOTAL MONEY GIVEN TO ARTISTS:

\$94,396



Individuals	\$28,013
Corporations	\$8,750
Foundations	\$170,000
Government	\$199,464
(including COVID relief funding)	
Program Fees and Contracts	\$97,449
Total Revenue:	\$503,676



Programs	\$231,087
Management.....	\$87,277
Fundraising.....	\$47,321
Total Expenses:	\$365,868

HOW TO SUPPORT LOCAL ARTISTS

- Buy art from local, living artists
- Buy tickets for local, live performances
- Promote local artists on social media
- Attend open studios, gallery openings, and art walks
- Give gifts from local artists and makers

HOW TO SUPPORT AMPLIFY ARTS

➤ **DONATE**
become a monthly supporter

➤ **PARTNER**
let's work together

➤ **SHARE**
find us on social media



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