The end of 2023 marked a special milestone in the legacy of Open AIR, our first five years! From the sparkle of an idea to a full-fledged, robust organization serving Western Montana and beyond, it has been humbling to watch the overwhelming support come from our community and individuals like you to champion creativity, community, and collaboration.

Last year, as part of our anniversary, we sat down with important stakeholders, like our site partners and artists, to learn about the impact of our work from their perspective.

Here are my five favorite reasons folks love our work and think we are here to stay:

1. We provide valuable opportunities and exposure for artists with diverse art styles, mediums, and practices—particularly for more ‘unsung’ disciplines and less-known artists.
2. Flexibility and openness are incorporated into Open AIR’s innate structure. We focus on collaboration and diversity without bureaucratic constraints.
3. We are committed to making art accessible and available to everyone.
4. We pay great attention to logistical details in all of our program planning.
5. Our positive relationship-building supports the potential for long-term partnerships, promoting sustainability and growth.

On a personal note, my husband and I brought a child into the world in the summer of 2023. In the midst of an often bewildering world, I am grateful to know our son will be offered refuge in the arts through Open AIR—emboldened, expanded, and nourished by the conversations between the arts, environment, culture, history, creativity, and one another.

Thank you for supporting the arts and a brighter, more creative tomorrow. Please join us this year for many more compelling and inspired happenings with Open AIR.

In gratitude,

Stoney Samsoe
co-founder, Executive Director
Open AIR

Our first 5 years in review

Delivering on our Mission and Vision

- To enrich communities by connecting people with creativity and place.
- To strengthen the creative capacity and wellbeing of Montana through arts-based cross-sector collaborations.

In our first 5 years we have...

- Provided over $100k in direct financial support to artists
- Raised over $800k to support the arts & arts programming
- Placed over 100 artists in unique month-long residency opportunities
- Offered over 168 free public programs
- Engaged thousands of communities members
- Incubated initiatives centering Indigenous Artists
- Hosted over a dozen art exhibitions showcasing hundreds of artists’ work to thousands of people
- Worked with dozens of community partners to support artists

Creativity, Connection, Collaboration.
All residencies are free of charge to artists and we award stipends to every participating Artist-in-Residence.

"My Open AIR experience was a time for free and deep exploration without the usual constraints of my daily practice. It allowed me to experiment in ways I hadn’t before, opening up new avenues for my work."

- Justine Lai (Queens, NY)
  @ the Missoula Public Library
“Partnering with Open AIR has been great because it’s expanding our community and also how we think about the world.”

- Tom Bansak, Associate Director, Flathead Lake Biological Station

“The lookout’s not-so-easily-accessible location allowed for a natural flow between daily living and creating without typical distractions. The space and time away from familiar routines and environments allowed for a shift in attention and redirection of energy back into my own making practice.”

- Erin DiGiovanni, Castle Butte Lookout in partnership with the Selway Bitterroot Frank Church Foundation
Exhibitions
Collaborations brought contemporary art to audiences around Montana.
Exhibition partners included: [Images of logos for galleries and museums]

Online Events
Indigenous Initiatives
Led by Open AIR’s Indigenous Leadership Committee with a focus on Indigenous artists and community-building.

Workshops
Artist led + designed Workshops: Bookmaking, Drawing, Laser Cutting, Wearable Art, Quilt Care + 376 Attendees (all ages) @ 9 different sites

Presentations
Public Presentations:
Free to the public
At over 2 dozen sites

Online Catalog
We record all of our Residency and Indigenous Art, Indigenous Minds presentations and post online. Scan the QR code to Subscribe & watch:
In the Fall of 2023, visual artists Delia Touche & Brandon Reintjes, and writer Melissa Kwasny set out for a two-week residency at American Prairie, a vast prairie outside of Lewistown, MT. For the first half of their journey, they stayed in a yurt in a cottonwood grove on the PN. They then migrated to the The Enrico Science and Education Center at Sun Prairie to observe the Bison and learn more about the research that takes place at American Prairie.

“My experience at American Prairie was more than time set aside for writing. It was art camp and field school and research institute. It was like living in one’s own private nature preserve. It was magical and bewildering. Bewildering, because how does one understand and respond deeply to a place...?”

- Melissa Kwasny, American Prairie
Significant support for Open AIR is generated through partnerships. This means we do more with 'less,' prioritize supporting artists, and ensure your donations go the distance!
Open AIR Artists in-Residence

Sage Friss
Ryn Stafford
Cameron Decker
Aspen Decker

Shelby Baldridge
Michelle Boulé
Justine Lai
BT Livermore

Erin Digiovanni
Brooklyn Draper
Beth Godley
Nancy Fitch
Kerri Rosenstein

Sarah Jones
rocki Swiderski
Nicole Banowetz
Melissa Kwasny
Lauren Boilini
Jasmine Gutbrod
Hannah Allen
Delia Touche
Charlie Dov Schon
Brandon Reintjes

Jurors
Julia Galloway
Anne Holub
John Knight
Kailyn McCord
Carrie Richer
Sigrid Sheie
Taylor Stein
Christina Tripp
Janaina Vieira-Marques

Board of Directors
Addie Palin (Board Chair)
Carl John McKay (Treasurer)
Sally Jo Beck (Secretary)
Katie Van Dorn
Liz Dye
Anne McNallen
Sami Stanley
Janel Woodworth
Amy Sings In The Timber
Carrie Richer (Artist Rep)
Michelle Boulé
Rick Legon
Mitchell McCabe

Founding Members
Kevin Bateman
Urban Bear Don’t Walk
Dana Boussard
Sunni & Merrill Bradshaw
H. Rafael Chacón & Andrew Laue
Hadley & John Ferguson
Reagyn Germer & Monte Mills
Jana Hood
Jen Leutzinger
Barbara Liss
Sandra Marker
Carl John McKay
Leah & Sam Ore
Addie Palin & Jason Sloat
Dawn & Tim Payne
Celeste Payne
Nicole Rush
Bill & Barb Samsoe
Stoney & Erik Samsoe
Sandy Sheppard
Amy Sings In The Timber

Luminary Sponsors
Blackfoot Communications
Bare Bait Dance

Staff

Stoney Samsoe
Kelli Sinner
Kaisha Gerhardt
Sasha Bell
Erika Fredrickson
Eileen Rafferty

Other Community Partners
Emlen Evolutionary Biology Lab
Philip Wright Zoological Museum
UM School of Visual and Media Arts
Westside Theatre

Thank You

Laura Grace Barrett Family Foundation
The National Endowment for the Arts
Patt and Terry Payne
The Llewellyn Foundation

2023

Thank You
"It was such a rewarding partnership to work with Open AIR and a joy to host artists on this vast and inspiring landscape. It was a joy to share its beauty, wildlife, and culture with them, & see them engage with this place through their observant, absorbent, creative thinking and processes."

- Corrie Williamson
Senior Outreach Manager, American Prairie

‘Adopt an artist’ by sponsoring one of our residency sites through Friends of Open AIR!

**Perks include** personal pairing, special events, making a significant impact in the lives and practices of artists, and more.

Learn more and Register: [openairmt.org/friends](http://openairmt.org/friends)