



CATALYST

2024 GRANTEES + GIVING CIRCLE RECIPIENTS

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ABOUT CCI

Center for Cultural Innovation (CCI) was founded in 2001 as a California 501(c)3 nonprofit corporation. Its mission is to support individuals in the arts—artists, culture bearers, and creative entrepreneurs—to realize greater self-determination so as to unfetter their productivity, free expression, and social impact, which contributes to shaping our collective national identity in ways that reflect the diversity of society.

In addition, by acting as a cross-sector incubator with an informed point of view, CCI advances efforts to improve conditions for artists and all those who share artists' conditions of low wages, high debt, and too-few assets.

For more information about CCI, visit cciarts.org.

ABOUT CALI CATALYST

CALI Catalyst provides unrestricted grants of up to \$7,5000, an increase from previous cycles, to California changemakers who are shifting the arts and culture sector in ways that tangibly give underrepresented voices more power and influence.

In 2021, CCI launched the California Art Leadership Investments (CALI) Catalyst grant program, which supports artists and arts workers who are on the frontlines of effecting greater inclusion, access, diversity, and equity in the arts and culture sector. Through bold actions, these individuals are tangibly helping underrepresented communities—including Black, Indigenous, people of color, LGBTQIA+, and people with disabilities—gain more influence and power in the arts and culture sector. We consider these bold actions to be “change-making” because they are visibly moving the needle for underrepresented communities to have more influence and power at an industry-wide level.



ABOUT THE GIVING CIRCLE

The CALI Catalyst Giving Circle was created as a one-time, participatory regranting initiative to extend the impact of the CALI Catalyst program and deepen peer-to-peer recognition within the arts and culture field. In April 2025, current CALI Catalyst grantees came together for two facilitated sessions to review nominations and collectively select 12 artists and cultural workers from across California to receive \$1,000 unrestricted awards. Grounded in the values of creativity, justice, and community power, the process emphasized shared leadership, transparency, and trust—allowing grantees to uplift peers who are making powerful contributions to cultural equity and community-rooted change.

The CALI Catalyst grant program is made possible with support from:

**THE WILLIAM AND FLORA
HEWLETT FOUNDATION**

CALI CATALYST 2024 GRANTEES

The CALI Catalyst program awarded 12 grants in its fourth cycle of funding. Grants were made to California artists and cultural workers who applied as individuals or teams.

INDIVIDUAL GRANTEES

Ashara Ekundayo (Alameda County)

Ashara founded Artist As First Responder to honor artists as essential to social and cultural healing. Based in East Oakland, the platform produces site-specific installations, ceremonies, and publications like AfroPortals that center Black cultural memory. Ashara's changemaking work creates sacred and public spaces for grief, joy, and intergenerational wisdom in communities impacted by displacement and violence.

Michelle Glass (Kern County)

Michelle launched ADELANTE Art Studio in Arvin by transforming a vacant senior center into a vibrant cultural arts hub for BIPOC and LGBTQIA elders and youth. Through storytelling, environmental justice, and fiber arts workshops, the studio reconnects community members with land and culture. Michelle's work fosters healing, resilience, and belonging in one of California's most underserved regions.

jeremy de'jon guyton (Los Angeles County)

jeremy launched a.l.t.//home in South Central Los Angeles, a creative residency and archive that reimagines his late grandmother's home as a site for healing, rest, and cultural expression. This space supports Black, queer artists with housing, artistic incubation, and care-based community. jeremy's work strengthens intergenerational memory and cultural preservation in a neighborhood undergoing gentrification and the erasure of Black history.

Zakiya Harris "Sh8peshifter" (Alameda County)

Zakiya founded Sh8peshift Society Collective, a lead steward of BlacSpace Cooperative that builds infrastructure for self-determined arts practices, mutual aid, and cultural permanence. Through her work, which includes convenings like the Cultural Reforestation design sprint, low-cost workshops, and solar-powered concerts, she is advancing joy, equity, and sustainability in Black arts communities.

INDIVIDUAL GRANTEES

Alicia Rojas (Orange County)

Alicia leads preservation efforts for historic Chicano and Mexican murals in Santa Ana, protecting the cultural legacy of Latinx communities in Orange County. Alicia started this work to safeguard endangered public artworks by artists such as Emigdio Vasquez and Sergio O'Cadiz Moctezuma. Through policy advocacy, mapping, and restoration, her efforts empower communities to reclaim public space and ensure their stories remain visible for future generations.

Tatiana Vahan (Los Angeles County)

Tatiana is the founder of the Los Angeles Artist Census (LAAC), a grassroots initiative that documents the economic and social conditions of artists across LA, with a focus on underrepresented communities. Through data collection, storytelling, and resource sharing, LAAC builds collective power to advocate for more equitable cultural policy. Tatiana's changemaking work illuminates disparities and amplifies artists' voices in civic decision-making.

Peter Wu+ (Los Angeles County)

Peter launched EPOCH, a virtual artist-run exhibition space created in response to the pandemic's disruption of traditional galleries. EPOCH offers experimental curatorial platforms for artists often excluded from institutional spaces. By expanding access to digital tools and rethinking online engagement, Peter's work supports independent creators in building sustainable visibility and connection.

TEAM GRANTEES

**Leila Weefur +
Bay Area Artists Against Genocide (B.A.A.A.G) Collective
(Alameda County)**

B.A.A.A.G. is a collective of eight artists who intervened in the Bay Area Now 9 exhibition at Yerba Buena Center for the Arts to protest censorship and institutional silence around the genocide in Gaza. Through coordinated public action—including modifying their own artworks, releasing open letters, and calling for a boycott—the collective halted business as usual, sparked national conversation, and catalyzed leadership change at YBCA. B.A.A.A.G.'s changemaking advances artistic freedom, collective action, and resistance to censorship in cultural spaces.

Personal Space (Solano County)

Team Members: Lisa Rybovich Cralle, Leah Tumerman, Besma Khalaf, Crystal Dawana, Lemia Bodden, Jessalyn Aaland, Clarke Selman, Chris Thorson, Nima Thapa, and Reniel del Rosario

Personal Space is an artist-run project and exhibition space in Vallejo dedicated to uplifting under-recognized and emerging artists within an anti-capitalist model. Founded in 2023, the space fosters community connection through accessible exhibitions and public programs. Personal Space offers inclusive opportunities for creative expression in one of the country's most diverse cities, building cultural infrastructure that centers care and equity.

TEAM GRANTEES

School of Ecocene (Contra Costa County)

Team Members: Sarita Doe, Queen Hollins, Johanna Iraheta, j.nyla ink mcneill, Jenny Montalvo, Chayo Luis, Dongyi Wu

The School of Ecocene is a DIY PhD program that supports artists seeking alternatives to institutional education through Earth-centered, community-based learning. The initiative encourages sustainable creative practices grounded in ecological responsibility and collective study. Through immersive workshops and peer mentorship, the program helps artists build resilient knowledge systems that respond to today's interconnected crises.

Solstice Theatre IE (Riverside County)

Current and Past Team Members: Nicole Dumaguindin, Veronica Brooks, Darby Osnaya, Edi Zermeño, Sarah Jane Randall, Najayra Valdovinos Soto

Solstice Theatre IE is a performance ensemble that celebrates local storytelling through multilingual new play festivals aligned with the solstices. By integrating shadow puppetry, ritual, and interactive elements, the team uplifts narratives of land, diaspora, and environmental care. Their work increases visibility for Inland Empire communities and expands access to transformative, culturally grounded performance.

TEAM GRANTEES

Your Neighborhood Museum (Los Angeles County)

Team Members: Lylliam Posadas, Jennifer Kim

Your Neighborhood Museum (YNM) is a community-rooted nonprofit that supports cultural heritage preservation and repatriation led by and for BIPOC communities. YNM started as a mutual aid initiative and now offers services like archiving, conservation, and training outside traditional museum structures. Programs like the CARE Fellowship and community-led workshops empower cultural practitioners to reclaim, care for, and celebrate their heritage on their own terms.

CALI CATALYST 2024 GIVING CIRCLE RECIPIENTS

The CALI Catalyst 2024 Grantee Cohort selected 12 recipients to receive a one-time grant of \$1,000 each.

GIVING CIRCLE RECIPIENTS

Olivia Alatorre “Vivy” (Los Angeles County)

Vivy is a Pomona-based disabled Mexican American artist who creates colorful, whimsical work ranging from paintings to piñatas. Through joyful imagery, she brings brightness and healing to her community, using her practice to uplift others and advocate for inclusion and visibility in creative spaces.

Myisha Arellano (Los Angeles County)

Myisha is a Los Angeles-based public artist and painter whose murals reflect deep community engagement. A migrant from Mexico City, her work bridges natural imagery and political themes, often in collaboration with local organizations, creating vibrant, transformative public art rooted in storytelling, equity, and cultural pride.

Olivia Chumacero (Tulare County)

"i could not grasp time
porous were my hands
fluid was its hold
+++
'we are nature , of nature, with nature' – o.c."

Nat Decker (Los Angeles County)

Nat is a digital media, sculpture, and performance artist whose work expands disability aesthetics through references to assistive technology and liberatory networks. Based in the U.S., they challenge dominant narratives about disability and embodiment. Nat’s work has been exhibited internationally and supported by Eyebeam, NEW INC, and Coaxial.

GIVING CIRCLE RECIPIENTS

Ocean Escalanti (Alameda County)

Ocean is an Indigenous visual artist and educator based in Oakland. Through teaching, zine-making, and natural dye practices, she centers accessibility, environmental awareness, and cultural storytelling. Her work with NIAD Art Center and Max's Garage Press supports artists with disabilities and preserves plant-based knowledge across urban landscapes.

Max Gibson (Alameda County)

Max is a creative strategist and experiential producer from Oakland. Through Wine & Bowties, he curates immersive art and culture experiences that celebrate community and creativity. His work connects local narratives to global audiences, centering empowerment, aesthetics, and collective joy across platforms and spaces.

Aziza Love (Los Angeles County)

Aziza is a multidisciplinary artist and Grammy-winning musician blending jazz, hip-hop, film, and movement. Based in California, she creates immersive performances that center healing, joy, and transformation. Aziza's art reflects her commitment to social change, spiritual growth, and building meaningful connections across communities.

Jenny Lynn "Steady Jenny" (Orange County)

Steady Jenny is a Los Angeles-based documentarian and visual storyteller with over 25 years of experience. Through photography and film, she amplifies BIPOC voices and underrepresented social justice issues, combining art, activism, and digital strategy to illuminate community power and preserve collective memory.

GIVING CIRCLE RECIPIENTS

Courtney Desiree Morris (Alameda County)

Courtney is a visual and performance artist whose work spans photography, video, and installation. Based in Berkeley, she explores ancestral memory, ecology, and Black place-making through a diasporic lens, weaving ritual aesthetics into powerful reflections on identity, land, and spiritual belonging.

Lorene Sisquoc (Riverside County)

Lorene (Fort Sill Apache/Cahuilla) is a cultural educator and tradition keeper. As the longtime curator of Sherman Indian Museum, she has taught Native American basketry and history for decades. She mentors youth and serves as an elder/scholar-in-residence, preserving and sharing Indigenous knowledge across generations and institutions.

Cedric Tai (Los Angeles County)

Cedric is a multidisciplinary artist and educator in Los Angeles whose conceptual practice explores neurodivergence, labor, and queer liberation. Collaborating with scholars, collectives, and therapists, they co-create accessible resources while experimenting with performance, sculpture, and dialogue to challenge norms and imagine more inclusive futures.



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