



Press Release

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Contact: Lauren Bailey
(213) 687-8577
grants@cciarts.org
www.cciarts.org

Center for Cultural Innovation (CCI) Announces Recipients of the Spinal Cord Injury (SCI) Artist-Innovator Fund

Los Angeles – With support from the **Craig H. Neilsen Foundation**, the Center for Cultural Innovation (CCI) today announced the **Spinal Cord Injury (SCI) Artist-Innovator Fund's** 2023 grantees.

This is the third round of the **SCI Artist-Innovator Fund**, which was first offered in 2019 and has since awarded \$150,000 to 20 grantees with SCI. We are pleased to share that the 2023 funding round increased the total award amount to \$8,500 from \$7,500. In addition, CCI partnered with the **Minneapolis College of Art & Design's (MCAD) Creative Entrepreneurship** program to provide SCI Artist-Innovator Fund grantees with opportunities to test their ideas, build their networks, and seek guidance from practitioners and peers through individual and group online coaching sessions and project presentations.

For the 2023 round, the Fund awarded \$85,000 total in grants of \$8,500 each to ten individual artist-entrepreneurs with spinal cord injuries who are inspired to innovate by opportunity-based entrepreneurship. CCI recognizes that having an underserved perspective, living with challenging circumstances, and applying creative practice can yield important solutions for not only the innovator but for the benefit of society. This opportunity recognizes that the combination of SCI populations, craftsmanship, creative practice, and positive social impact can yield powerful results.

Out of 35 applicants from across the country, the ten selected are:

Tameka Citchen-Spruce (*Redford, MI*): To support a digital docuseries that will feature six Black women with disabilities taking their city by storm.

Nathan Copeland (*Dunbar, PA*): To support the development and proliferation of brain-computer interface (BCI) artistry, using innovative technology to create and showcase digital art.

Erin Field (*Gainesville, FL*): To support the development of the 10% App, a social networking app for the disability community.

Shawn Fluke (*Rancho Cucamonga, CA*): To support the production of Live To Roll's LIVE streams, podcasts, website, and video editing.

LOS ANGELES
244 S. San Pedro Street
Suite 401
Los Angeles, CA 90012
P: 213.687.8577

BAY AREA
1446 Market Street
San Francisco, CA 94102
P: 415.288.0530

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Mark Fuglevand (*Lakewood, CA*): To support the production and commercialization of a urinary catheter clamp for independent use by individuals with limited hand function who perform daily clean intermittent catheterization.

Wes Holloway (*Washington, D.C.*): To support the development, creation, and distribution of "home(sick)," a series of art zines that are community-driven and self-published.

Carrie Kaufman (*Chicago, IL*): To support [newly] disabled individuals in finding affirming, radical information about sexuality, using art and writing by disabled people to provide education and support.

Erik Kondo (*Lexington, MA*): To support the creation of two Workshops in Nigeria and Zimbabwe that will build affordable and functional wheelchairs and be owned and operated by individuals with spinal cord injury.

Vanessa Osman (*Vacaville, CA*): To support post-production of the pilot series VANCAR, based on a near-future world of mostly para- and quadriplegics.

Andrew Reid (*Los Angeles, CA*): To support the proof of concept for the short film IRON LUNG.

The SCI Artist-Innovator Fund celebrates the SCI experience as one that can impact one's life positively and helps cultivate creativity and problem-solving. The program's support is meant to boost confidence and nudge someone to move forward with an idea or project that can change their career and impact their communities. CCI Deputy Director Laura Poppiti said, "This was a banner year for the SCI Artist-Innovator Fund—through the support of the Craig Neilsen Foundation and our partnership with MCAD, grantees were afforded increased funding and the opportunity to build their entrepreneurial knowledge and networks. We're excited to follow the work of the 2023 grantees—both their funded projects and their larger trajectories as artist-innovators."

A panel of distinguished experts assisted CCI in reviewing the SCI Artist-Innovator Fund applications, including:

Richard Bell believes nothing happens by accident. Not even his use of charcoal as a rudimentary medium of choice. There is much more to Richard Bell than his spinal cord injury, which he suffered as a result of the motor vehicle accident in 2002. Although this tragic event left him a quadriplegic, it also resulted in him being an accomplished artist. The transformation from Charcoal to paint was encouraged by his late and great uncle, Raymond Howell, who began mentoring Richard in 1996. His uncle taught him everything from priming canvas to building stretchers, mixing colors, and making frames. During his recovery, Richard began to experiment with applying his subjects to canvas in different ways. In a short time, Richard had enough work to start entering into shows. He won his first award at the Beverly Hills artSHOW in 2016.

Dr. Olaf Kuhlke is currently Professor and Chair of Creative Entrepreneurship at the Minneapolis College of Art and Design. From 2018 to 2021, he was the Principal Investigator for a National Science Foundation project entitled "Developing and Testing and Incubator for Digital Entrepreneurship in Remote Communities," in which he built a digital arts entrepreneurship education program in collaboration with Athabascan tribal communities in central Alaska as well as Nunavut, Canada. Recently, he developed a remote learning program entitled "Our People, Our Climate," which taught photography, documentary filmmaking, and climate change visualization to Inuit youth on Baffin Island, Canada.

Reveca Torres is the founder of BACKBONES, a nonprofit that helps people with spinal cord injury or disease (SCI/D) and their families connect with their communities. She is co-director of ReelAbilities Film Festival Chicago and has curated touring photography and art exhibitions that showcase the work of people with disabilities and bring awareness to disability rights. Reveca has received numerous accolades, including Fellowships with Vermont Studio Center, Santa Fe Art Institute, Kartemquin Films Diverse Voices in Docs program, Hulu+Kartemquin Accelerator Program, and 3Arts. In 2020, she was awarded the Craig Neilsen Visionary Award for her art and advocacy work. Reveca uses painting, illustration, photography, film, movement, and other media as a form of expression and a tool for advocacy and social justice.

For more information about the **SCI Artist-Innovator Fund**, please visit cciarts.org.

About Center for Cultural Innovation (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. For more information, please visit cciarts.org.

About the Craig H. Neilsen Foundation

The Craig H. Neilsen Foundation’s funding is dedicated to supporting both programs and scientific research to improve the quality of life for those affected by and living with spinal cord injury. For more information, please visit chnfoundation.org.

About Minneapolis College of Art & Design (MCAD)

Minneapolis College of Art & Design (MCAD) provides a transformative education within a community of support for creative students of all backgrounds to work, collaborate, and lead with confidence in a dynamic, interconnected world. For more information, please visit mcad.edu.

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