



Press Release

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Center for Cultural Innovation Grants Artistic Innovation Awards to Bay Area Performing and Media Artists

San Francisco – The Center for Cultural Innovation (CCI) today announced six new grantees of the *Investing in Artists* program. Awards of \$8,000 each were granted for Artistic Innovation projects proposed by performing and media artists to create new work that pushes the envelope of their creative process. The program is made possible with support from The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.

The *Investing in Artists* grants program is designed to support diverse working artists in the 11 counties surrounding the San Francisco Bay Area. Grant funds support awardees in pursuing new collaborations, creative growth, and artistic experimentation that extends the boundaries of their art-making.

Out of 368 applicants, the six *Investing in Artists* grantees are:

Maddy Clifford (Music) to support "Wild Seed," an innovative visual hip-hop album that pays homage to Black women hip-hop artists and Science Fiction writer, Octavia E. Butler.

Kat Cole (Dance) to support "QUAKE," an immersive movement-based performance about mental health through the perspective of artists from across the Asian American community.

Marga Gomez (Theatre) to support the development and production of "Imaginary Friends" a radio play about childhood.

Robert Moses (Dance) to support the creation of "Untitled," a solo work of self-preservation and exhaustion that looks at the independent life and penalties that emerge when an African American walks away from the terms of societal acceptance.

Vanessa Sanchez (Dance) to support the development of "Ghostly Labor," a dance performance that brings together Tap dance, Son Jarocho, and Afro-Caribbean rhythms to explore the history of exploitation of female labor in the US-Mexico borderlands.

Leila Weefur (Media) to support "PLAY/PREY," a four-channel video installation and publication series that explores the complexities of playful impulses, innocence, and the underlying violence implicated in harmless fun while analyzing the structures and rules imposed on Black frivolity and sexuality from childhood to adulthood.

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“This year’s grant cycle was not business as usual. Despite a pandemic, unprecedented wildfires, economic recession, and a nationwide fight for racial justice, we received a record number of applications, demonstrating both the Bay Area artistic community’s resilience and its drive to innovate in the face of so many challenges. We are therefore especially thrilled to support this year’s *Investing in Artists* grantees and the projects they are pursuing which push the boundaries of their art-making and explore themes of critical importance,” says CCI Grants Program Director, Laura Poppiti. “These artists bolster the Bay Area’s identity as a stronghold of creative innovation, artistic experimentation, and cultural expression.”

In response to the very different circumstances that 2020 presented, CCI adjusted the program’s eligibility criteria, allowable expenses, and project scope. In order to make space for first-time grantees, previous *Investing in Artists—Artistic Innovation* grantees were not eligible to apply to this round. To free up funding constraints, the full grant award could be directed to the artists’ time as opposed to previous cycles that limited it to 50% of the award. Finally, with so many artists transitioning to online platforms, we advised that projects still needed to demonstrate catalyzing artistic (not just presentation or business) practices. This directive was meant to strengthen proposals and their demonstration of funding coming at a critical juncture.

The 2020 *Investing in Artists* program granted \$48,000. This is the third cycle of a three-year granting program that originally began in 2007 to enhance the working lives and strengthen the creative support system for California working artists. A new three-year cycle will commence in 2021.

A group of panelists reflecting a diverse range of knowledge and perspectives assisted CCI in reviewing the *Investing in Artists* applications, including: Jenay “ShinobiJaxx” Anolin of Mix’d Ingrdnts Dance Company, Jennifer Crystal Chien of Re-Present Media, Thomas Robert Simpson of AfroSolo Arts Festival, and Wisa Uemura of San Jose Taiko.

About the Center for Cultural Innovation (CCI)

The Center for Cultural Innovation was founded in 2001 as a California 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation. Its mission is to promote knowledge sharing, networking, and financial independence for individuals in the arts by providing business training, grants, and incubating innovative projects that create new program knowledge, tools and practices for artists in the field, and conditions that contribute to realizing financial self-determination. For more information, please visit www.cciarts.org.

About The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation

The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation helps people build measurably better lives, concentrating its resources on activities in education, the environment, global development and population, performing arts, and philanthropy, as well as grants to support disadvantaged communities in the San Francisco Bay Area. For more information, please visit www.hewlett.org.

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