



Press Release

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

San Francisco – The Center for Cultural Innovation (CCI) today announced eight new grantees of the Investing in Artists program. Awards of \$8,250 each were granted for Artistic Innovation projects proposed by performing and media artists in the San Francisco Bay Area. The program is made possible with support from The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.

First launched in 2007, Investing in Artists supports artists who are creating new work that pushes the envelope of their creative process, explores new artistic collaborations, and/or supports artistic growth and experimentation that extends the boundaries of their art-making.

Out of 124 eligible applications, the eight Investing in Artists grantees are (project discipline and count of residence noted in parentheses):

Tierra Allen (Media/Alameda County) to support *The Real Work*, a podcast miniseries that weaves together interviews, music, and storytelling to explore transformative justice as a tool for preventing, addressing, and healing from sexual and identity-based harm in Bay Area art-making communities.

Sheher Azaad (Music/Contra Costa County) to support *Be-Sur*, an experimental album that centers women's authentic voices in a fast emerging, new age contemporary genre of South Asian music.

Byb Chanel Bibene (Dance/Alameda County) to support *Religion Kitendi-Dress Code*, a dance project that dives into the portrayals of "Congolese sapeurs," a group of dandy men and women who strive to survive hardship and social and political challenges through feeling good in their attire.

Cat Brooks (Theater/Oakland) to support *I Am She*, a living, performed history by and for Oakland women that, in pursuit of justice for Black women everywhere, creates a record of the ongoing, patriarchal, racialized violence against and criminalization of Black, female bodies from the 1600s to the present day, so that it is no longer living in the shadows.

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Eric Garcia (Dance Film/San Francisco County) to support *Up on High*, a contemporary dance film series collaboratively devised by a multi-generational ensemble of QTBIPOC drag artists that interrogates notions of queer legacy and our role as future ancestors for next generations.

Corinne Manabat Cueva (Film/Alameda County) to support *A Million Kisses from Lolo* (“Lolo” means grandfather in Tagalog), a personal documentary/hybrid piece about the artist's grandfather—a Filipino WWII veteran who wrote a screenplay about his wartime experiences—that explores the themes of creative legacy, generational trauma, loss, and resilience.

Kirthi Nath (Film/Alameda County) to support *Paramita*, a poetic personal documentary bearing testament to the story of Prajna Paramita Choudhury, a first-generation South Asian American queer woman, as she comes out to her family and steps onto a spiritual journey that embodies Buddhist liberation practices, earth-based mysticism, and connection to nature as a pathway for collective healing.

Nadhi Thekkek (Dance/ Contra Costa County) to support *Rogue Gestures/Foreign Bodies*, a Bharatanatyam dance production that interrogates the agency of South Asian women who immigrated to the U.S. since the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act.

“Investing in Artists’ 2021 grantees represent a breadth of performing and media arts genres and cross-disciplinary work that lift up exciting ways in which artists are both stretching their creative practice and reckoning with inequities within the status quo,” says CCI Program Director, Laura Poppiti. “These artists bolster the Bay Area’s identity as a stronghold of artistic and cultural innovation, experimentation, and expression, and we are honored to support them.”

The 2021 Investing in Artists program awarded \$66,000 in project support grants. This is the first round of the program’s new, three-year grant cycle. The new cycle was marked by significant updates: the number of awards available for each round increased from six to eight; the maximum award amount increased from \$8,000 to \$8,250; and we are rotating Bay Area counties that are eligible for support. For the 2021 application round, artists residing in Alameda, Contra Costa, and San Francisco counties were eligible to apply. The 2022 round will make eligible applicants residing in Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, and San Mateo counties, and the 2023 round will make eligible applicants residing in Marin, Napa, Solano, and Sonoma counties. In so doing, CCI will target resources more intentionally to all ten Bay Area counties.

A group of panelists reflecting a diverse range of knowledge and perspectives assisted CCI in reviewing the Investing in Artists applications, including: Natalia Ivanova Mount (cultural leader, curator, published author, and Executive Director of Pro Arts Gallery & COMMONS), Destiny Muhammad (recording/performing artist, band leader, composer, and producer), Bhumi B Patel (artist/activist and Artistic Director of pateldanceworks), and Sapana Sakya (documentary film producer and director, and Talent Development & Special Projects Manager at the Center for Asian American Media).

About the Center for Cultural Innovation (CCI)

The Center for Cultural Innovation was founded in 2001 as a California 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation. Our 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.

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