ARTISTS ELEVATED

AN ENDOWMENT CAMPAIGN TO UPLIFT INDIVIDUAL ARTISTS THROUGH INVESTMENT
Envision an **artist**

Envision an **artist’s work**

How does it make you **feel**? How does it help you **connect** to others and the world around you?

Artists are essential to our economy, our society and our daily lives. You may buy a concert ticket or purchase a book, but how the musician or writer — **the artist** — impacts your life goes beyond the initial experience. It stays with you. It is a challenge to quantify meaningful memories, but they matter.

Prior to the pandemic, Columbus’ creative economy was a $9 billion industry that employed nearly 61,000 people — rivaling the tourism and travel industry. In a few short months, billions of dollars vanished and so did employment opportunities. The pandemic has brought inequity to the forefront. Artists are central to that story, and their lack of stable funding is central to our campaign.

Now is the moment to reimagine how the creative sector is funded and how artists are supported.

Because throughout all of this, it is the artists who have helped us heal. They provide inspiration and hope and help us transcend barriers. Their work continues to encourage change and remind us of the best of humanity.

**They elevate our lives and now is the time to elevate theirs.**

The Greater Columbus Arts Council has launched **Artists Elevated — an endowment campaign to uplift individual artists through investment**.

We envision a thriving Columbus where the arts matter to all of us. The first step to realizing that vision is to invest in the individual artists that uplift our community in order to support their contributions to our shared experience. **And it begins with you.**

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Tom Katzenmeyer  
President and CEO  
Greater Columbus Arts Council
CAN INDIVIDUAL ARTISTS INFLUENCE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACROSS OUR COMMUNITY?

THEY ALREADY ARE.

AND WITH YOUR INVESTMENT, THEY CAN DO EVEN MORE.

Caroline “Inspires” Bennett
STORYTELLER, SPOKEN WORD ARTIST, AND VOCALIST

Photo by David Mason III
**WHY SUPPORT INDIVIDUAL ARTISTS?**

**Individual artists are at the heart of the creative economy.** Their remarkable impact is often overlooked, touching almost every sector from infrastructure to health and wellness.

**Prior to COVID-19, Ohio’s creative economy...**

- **$55 Billion** Contributed in economic output
- Directly supported over **329,000** jobs
- Generated **$18 billion** in payroll for creative workers

**Of $55 billion** in economic output statewide, Columbus’ creative economy generated **$12.2 billion** and supported more than **70,000** jobs totaling over **$4.1 billion** in payroll.

**Due to COVID-19...**

- Decreases in employment and economic output for creative industries were **four times** as large compared to the overall Ohio economy
- More than **41,000** jobs were lost in 2020
- **$13.1 million** in total loss of revenue for creative workers — a decline over **seven times** as large compared to the overall Ohio economy

It is artists’ constructive influence on the social development of our community that represents their most valuable and lasting contribution. The power of individual artists’ voices forces us to ask the hard questions, enables us to generate the ability to heal and to handle our grief, and engage in civil discourse while connecting us to a reality outside ourselves. It is because of these contributions that **investing in individual artists will fuel our economy and help us cultivate a more balanced society**.

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*Data provided by Bowling Green State University’s Center for Regional Development*
Elaine Richardson
“DR. E,” INSPIRATIONAL SOUL QUEEN AND COLUMBUS ARTIST

Artist and advocate Dr. E, the Inspirational Soul Queen, has a voice that resonates before she even sings a note.

That voice is her story: the improbable but true life of a sex trafficked teenager who recovered, earned a doctorate and became a university professor. The telling of that journey from seemingly insurmountable circumstances to the aspirational strata of academia and creative accomplishment.

As a vocalist, Dr. E evokes the tone and feel of Betty Wright and a Bluebelles-era Patti LaBelle. As a songwriter, she poetically delivers her own experiences in a genre-melding set of funk, soul and R&B tracks.

Songs for the Struggle
“I Didn’t Know”

I didn’t know what I was doing
throwing my life away
I didn’t know I what I was doing
wasting all those days
Doing cocaine thinking I was so strange
Not knowing who I was
Not knowing I was me.

I didn’t know what I was saying
cursing all God made
I didn’t know what I was saying
swearing my life away
Killing my spirit, I couldn’t feel it
Not knowing my worth

afraid of the light
Running on the dark streets
A girl of the night

Wasting all of my nights I coulda been home
I coulda been using my mind but I wasn’t strong
I coulda been feeding my brain making beautiful things
Wasting my life
Wasting my life
Wasting my life, my life
Wasting my life
"In the arts community I've been given the opportunity to collaborate and work alongside world-class artists as well as business partners around the city, at a relatively early point in my career. I'm not sure I could have had these opportunities in another city."
— AMANDA BETTIN, HORTICULTURE DESIGN

"20 years ago, I would not have considered Columbus to be an arts city. There were pockets of art, but it didn't feel like it was threaded throughout the city. Now it does, and it makes the city more interesting through different representation of artists' work. The arts add to the fabric of our community."
— JANELLE COLEMAN, PRESIDENT, AEP FOUNDATION AND VICE PRESIDENT, COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

"I wrote my first poem at age eight in Arabic. I believe that having this poetic soul within is what helped me learn English so quickly, because poetry is intuition. I felt the rhythm and meaning of the words before I learned their English translation, before I knew correct grammar, but once I filled the gaps and could use them in sentences, I did so very naturally."
— SARA ABOU RASHED, POET
“Having artists and creative people occupy a prominent role in the city and its culture makes it a more interesting place. Artists have a different perspective. Because Columbus is a heavily white-collar town, an ecosystem of artists creates vibrancy. They are part of the soul of a good community.”

— MICHAEL BONGIORNO, BOARD CHAIR, GCAC BOARD OF TRUSTEES, AND MANAGING PRINCIPAL & DESIGN DIRECTOR, AECOM

“I often find myself reflecting on the biggest questions in life. Making art might be my natural coping mechanism to dealing with the unanswerable questions that plague us humans.”

— ERIC RAUSCH, CERAMIST /SCULPTOR

“It’s not about being rich, it’s about having opportunities to pay your way. If an artist can showcase their art, have a platform, and be exposed, they are able to contribute to equity because they have an income stream and what they produce becomes valuable to people.”

— CURTIS J. MOODY, CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD, MOODY NOLAN
A REIMAGINED ENDOWMENT CAMPAIGN

You can influence individual artists lives, and the life of our community, through investment.

*Artists Elevated* recognizes individual artists for their contributions and creativity. The GCAC Community Endowment Fund, which resides at The Columbus Foundation, currently has a balance of nearly $1.7 million. We aren’t stopping there.

In November 2021, we announced the inaugural recipients of the *Artists Elevated* Awards (read their stories on page 11 and 13). Each recipient received a $20,000 unrestricted cash award intended to provide a more meaningful investment in moving them forward in their career. We hope to increase the number and size of the awards as we grow the endowment.

This is part of our long-term plan to diversify funding streams to sustain our work and the work of individual artists who play a critical role in our society and economy. In recent years, we have fueled more innovative artist opportunities than ever before, leading to more arts and cultural experiences in Columbus.

Just as an artist evolves their craft overtime, an endowment builds upon your investment in perpetuity. If artists are to provide their services for the improvement of social and economic development, they must be compensated and afforded the freedom to think, work and act on their creative insights.

The most valuable means of recognizing individual artists is by investing in their creativity and artistic vision.

*Artists Elevated* will not only provide direct support over time to uplift artists, but also the community. From social justice to corporate partnerships, individual artists stimulate conversation and encourage cultural exchange. By supporting individual artists, you are directly empowering our community, our
Columbus is fortunate to have a notable and substantial creative class — from prolific artists such as Aminah Brenda Lynn Robinson to voices on national platforms such as Nina West. Artists like these are the spirit and soul of our community.

Life is unpredictable. If 2020 taught me anything it is that life without the arts is devoid of meaning. As philanthropists and arts advocates, it is our responsibility to nurture artists and provide the support they need to flourish.

The *Artists Elevated* endowment campaign will ensure artists have a secure future and our collective community joy remains vibrant.

The arts have the ability to paint the world with inclusive brushstrokes — colors, traditions and meaningful words tied together with cultural threads.

Who are the best equipped to give us that world? Artists who live and work in Columbus.

The time is now to look toward the future and to embrace, and invest in, artists.

For me, gift planning will ensure that happens. I want to leave my children and grandchildren, neighbors and friends with a future that is overflowing with the arts.

I ask you to **join me** in making Columbus a city where all artists know they can thrive and create every day.
GCAC knows how to grow investments

We leverage public support with private donations. We mitigate risk by making strategic investments while maintaining cash reserves. We empower our community to uplift the arts and artists because their success is a driver of our economy.

As we continue to recover from the pandemic, GCAC’s budget has stabilized through a combination of revenue from the bed tax, ticket fees and Franklin County. While these funds are not back to pre-pandemic levels, the gradual return of events and travel has ensured that we have been able to reinvest back into the community, enabling us to support artists and arts organizations at historic levels. Additionally, the reserves we have accrued over the past eight years coupled with pandemic support through PPP loans has helped make these unprecedented funding levels possible.

We have been able to do this because of the generous investments of the Columbus community.
- Donors answered the call when we created a record-setting emergency fund for individual artists.
- Sponsors allowed us to keep their gifts even when events did not occur.
- Elected officials made significant investments even with competing pressures for public funds.
- Travelers and ticket buyers continued to visit Columbus as bed tax and ticket fee revenues were better than we predicted.

Through research and experience, it is proven that a thriving creative class bolsters social and economic development. Columbus is a vibrant example of how public and private investment in the arts can ensure sustainability and advance the greater good.
“The collaborative spirit of Columbus is one of the most unique aspects of its culture that I haven't found anywhere else.”

— CELESTE MALVAR-STEWART, FASHION AND FABRIC ARTIST
As a baby, Quianna, would lay on her back and click her feet to the beat of the music floating through the room. She was already connected to movement at a young age.

But her mom was uncertain if she would ever dance.

Quianna was born bow-legged. Without reconstructive surgery, she would never walk — let alone dance. Thankfully, she had the surgery, and has been moving across stages ever since.

**Because for Quianna, she needs dance to live.**

Her official start was in the children’s program at YWCA Columbus where she was trained in traditional African dance. Now, the program takes place at the historic Lincoln Theatre, where entire generations perform, from her daughter to nieces to cousins.

**Her love language is movement. Her passion is teaching. Her art is dance.**

During college, she didn’t major in dance because she knew it would always be a part of her life. Instead, she majored in audiology to help kids with disabilities tell their stories. While she loved her undergraduate experience, she eventually realized that for her, **when you put any profession up against dance, everything else will lose.**

But she wasn’t sure how to become a full-time artist, so she took a job as a corporate trainer for nearly a decade. She loved her work; she loved the people; but she was unsettled. She didn’t want this to be the end of her dance journey.

**She began to contemplate — how could she make her passion into a career?** If she was going to make the jump, now was the time.

Her aunt and mentor, Suzan Bradford, Executive Director of the Lincoln Theatre, asked Quianna to sit on a panel. She happened to sit next to a faculty member at The Ohio State University’s Department of Dance. The timing could not have been more perfect.

The faculty member told her about shifts in curriculum and department offerings of African dance, and Suzan encouraged her to apply to the Master of Fine Arts (MFA) program. She applied, but put it in distant memory.

**Then COVID hit. Her corporate job laid her off.**
Shortly after the lay-off, Ohio State came calling. Quianna received an acceptance letter to the MFA program paired with a full-ride scholarship. Little did she know that the energy she was putting into the universe would pay off.

Prior to the start of the program, she had time to simply be an artist. From teaching students at a Lincoln Theatre camp to working at BalletMet, Quianna took the opportunity to engage with the community. During the Black Lives Matter movement, she created and performed a piece called “She Stands” in front of the Arts Unites Cbus murals. It was a turning point for her and her art. Quianna’s name was floating through Columbus and beyond, just as the music that made her feet click as a newborn.

Her future in dance has more opportunities than she could have ever imagined.

As an MFA student, her research is bold. She seeks to understand how traditional African dance serves the African American community today. Music and dancing are integral parts of African society and are intertwined in teaching and promoting social values, celebrating special events and major life milestones, performing oral history and other recitations, and spiritual experiences. But, according to Quianna’s preliminary research, those aspects of dance are not being utilized in America.

When people garner connection, we see the greater good elevated. Through her work, Quianna is looking for answers. How can African dance serve African Americans to overcome the disparities they are facing?

Social justice work, healing, and reconnection are themes that emerge from her work. For her, there is also joy and Black excellence in it.

When she was nominated for the Artists Elevated Award, she hesitated to fill out the application because she never imagined she would be an awardee. But she felt a responsibility to honor the arts community.

That responsibility paid off. Only a few short months after receiving the award, she’s already put the $20,000 to work. She recently got back from Africa where she took dance classes and made connections.

It was an opportunity for her to understand her ancestry and become grounded on their soil. She felt a permanent connection that she had not felt the other two times she visited. Her wellbeing was fueled with the ability to do her own healing, find her own transformation, and lean into her growth. The fact that African dance provides the ability to create deeper connection with who her ancestors are is what grounds her.

Quianna knows that through her work, she will bring cultural experiences back to Columbus that will ignite changes in the community that she could not have done without this award.

Thirty years after her first on-stage appearance performance, Quianna has finally made art her career.
Her dream is to produce a full-length play based on Plato’s dialogues inspired by her studies.

Her dream is to start a production company called Walter Lane, named after her beloved dog who recently passed.

Her dream is fueled by her late husband, Chris, whose memory is a reminder for her to continue directing, producing, and giving back to the community.

The Artists Elevated Award is making her dreams come true.

Tay grew up in Columbus and took a traditional path in her education — undergraduate and master’s degrees focusing on philosophy and classics. The only theater training she had was her elementary school plays.

Looking for a volunteer outlet outside of her full-time job, Tay came across MadLab — a nonprofit that provides an artistic haven for the creation and experience of original works. MadLab needed help with backstage operations, which became her entry point into community theater.

From there the dominos started to fall. Although she was scared to death during an audition for a part in a play in the revered Theatre Roulette — a short-play festival — she landed the role. As soon as she got her first role, more roles came, and she started writing and directing. Soon, projects were piling up at her feet and she was completely energized.

But then, Tay was blanketed in heartache. Her husband Chris was tragically killed in an accident. As the artistic director of MadLab, Chris was her biggest cheerleader. As an artist himself, he encouraged her, pushed her out of her comfort zone, and most of all, loved her deeply.

2021 ARTISTS ELEVATED AWARD WINNER
TAY LANE
DIRECTOR, ACTOR, COLLABORATOR, AND ADVOCATE
After Chris’ passing, she knew she needed to keep working on her craft. Not only for him, but for herself too.

Her dreams started to feel like reality when her mentor and friend, Stephen Woosley, asked her to arrange directors and actors for two nights of shows through MadLab’s sister company, OG Production, as part of the West Grandview Fringe Festival. In the past, she had only been responsible for small shows — this was the first time she would oversee a larger production as part of a festival. It was the next step for her, and she was ready.

At the same time, her corporate job was taking a toll on her mental and physical health. Realizing she needed to leave, she started to apply for other corporate positions. With a single income, becoming a full-time artist did not feel like reality. But she ran the numbers and realized she had an opportunity, perhaps the exact opportunity she had been waiting for. She had enough stability to build a more creative and fulfilling life for herself.

She could take the chance. And she did.

When she was nominated for the Artists Elevated Award, Tay could not believe it. Her community could not believe the amount of the award. Christopher Lockheardt, a friend of hers and a national playwright remarked, “You can get that kind of money for being a creative genius?”

When she received the award, she was floored. This was a chance for her to use her talents to give back to the community as a director, writer, and theater advocate.

Tay is now a full-time artist who loves her work and loves developing people.

When she first meets with the cast as a director, she talks extensively about collaboration. She wants people to have every opportunity possible to bring everything they can to the production. The work she has done hasn’t just been about the work — it’s been about creating an experience for the audience, for the cast, for the backstage crew, for the community.

For Tay, it is important for people to walk away feeling something after a production. Her best times as a writer or director is when she feels an emotion from the audience, when she can sense it in the room. She fondly remembers a play when someone sitting in front of her reacted to a shocking scene by covering her face. As the director, she felt pride in having created that reaction.

Grief is no stranger to Tay, but her grief has fueled her dreams along with Chris, Walter, and the people that make up community theater.

Theater will always be her light in the darkness.
Artists are, and always will be, the first to answer the call.

Despite a global pandemic, an economic crisis, and social and racial injustice, artists are broadening understanding and inspiring new levels of connection.

By using their art form to articulate both suffering and joy, artists elevate and revel in our common humanity.

Mural artists include: Marcus William Billingsley, Hakim Callwood, Shelbi Toone, Lisa McLymont, Francesca Miller, and April Sunami

Mural located along Fifth Avenue | Photo by Michael Bongiorno
On Monday morning, June 1, 2020, GCAC, in partnership with CAPA, launched #ArtUnitesCbus — an initiative to pay Columbus-based visual artists to paint murals on plywood adhered to Columbus storefronts.

Just days earlier, George Floyd was murdered at the hands of Minneapolis police, resulting in a wave of protests throughout the country and in Columbus.

You see, these weren’t just any murals. They were filled with love and hope following the loss of life, and a cry for change for a better future.

Artists answered the call by giving our city a place to go — to understand, to grieve and to unite.

Late summer arrived and the murals were slowly taken down, but GCAC, CAPA and the artists of our community wanted to ensure the murals were preserved and the dialogue sustained.

Deliver Black Dreams, a campaign of, by, and for Black people, utilizes public art as a launch point for a sustained and future-oriented approach to achieving racial equity in Columbus.

“Deliver Black Dreams is more than a campaign. It is a commitment. It is about connecting cultural products such as public art to tangible systemic change that reimagines a world where all of us can thrive. Deliver Black Dreams is centered in a Black voice and affirms that Black Lives Matter AND if they do then we must make a commitment to Deliver Black Dreams.”

— MARSHALL SHORTS, CREATIVE DIRECTOR AND DESIGNER
"I am inspired by words. The foundation of each piece I create is the layering of words throughout each canvas. I feel that words of inspiration are the soul of my work. Words have power and my goal as an artist is to create art that evolves with each viewing. DREAMS LIVE. Hip hop is the soundtrack to my visual lyricism. Growing up in the ‘90s in what I refer to as the golden age of hip hop, I was drawn to the lyrical power of the culture. The poetry of hip hop seeped into my soul at an early age. The beats were amazing but the words resonated. Hip hop was food to my soul and to this day, informs my work as an artist."

— LANCE JOHNSON, PAINTER
**OUR MISSION** is to support and advance the arts and cultural fabric of Columbus.

**WE ENVISION** a thriving Columbus where the arts matter to all of us.

**OUR VALUES** are our core beliefs, guiding us in the work we do. The values that are fundamental to our work are:

**CULTURAL EQUITY**
Our transparent grantmaking elevates and supports a broad representation of artforms and artists.

**CULTURAL CAPITAL**
We are diligent stewards of the public and private support that drives our work.

**SUSTAINING EXCELLENCE**
We encourage excellence in the fields of the artists and arts organizations that we support, and in their fiscal and governance responsibilities.

**BUILDING COMMUNITY**
Our investments connect the people and places of Columbus.

**WELCOME ALL**
We promote art experiences for those living, working, learning, and visiting our city.

**INSPIRED ADVOCACY**
Communicating the impact of the arts is fundamental to the health and vitality of the creative community.

**ARTISTS ELEVATED**
To live in Columbus is to live among artists. Our cultural fabric is woven with stories of hustle and resilience, success and triumph. When sewn together, these individual threads create a rich and vibrant tapestry that is the story of our community. The cover page is compiled of photos representing the many artists and artforms within our community, provided courtesy of Greater Columbus Arts Council.

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