



Announcing Ruth Foundation for the Arts

*Inspired by the legacy of the Late Ruth DeYoung Kohler II, Foundation Launches
With an Initial \$1.25 Million in Grants to Cultural Organizations*

Milwaukee, WI — June 30, 2022 — Today, the **Ruth Foundation for the Arts (Ruth Arts)** is pleased to mark its debut in the landscape of arts philanthropy with the announcement of its inaugural grantmaking cycle. The new foundation is supported by a bequest from the late **Ruth DeYoung Kohler II**, and expects to award grants totaling more than **\$17 million** annually.

The first class of Ruth Arts grantees — an initial round of funding that precedes the regular giving cycles that the organization will embark upon later this year — includes 78 nonprofit arts organizations that have been awarded a total of **\$1.25 million** in funding. These individual grants range from **\$10,000 to \$50,000** each.

The Foundation is led by Executive Director **Karen Patterson**, who was most recently Director of Exhibitions at The Fabric Workshop and Museum and Senior Curator at the John Michael Kohler Arts Center, alongside Program Director **Kim Nguyen**, former Curator and Head of Programs at CCA Wattis Institute. Under their leadership, the grantmaker will seek to explore new possibilities in arts philanthropy that safeguard creativity and take a people-centric approach.

“I am honored to continue Ruth’s exceptional legacy in such an impactful way,” said **Patterson**. “She has shown us that a thriving art community requires support for the entire ecosystem: from exhibition spaces, to festivals, to archives, to art environments, to residencies, and to school programs. We are truly a multidimensional field. We rely on one another. And none of these things would be possible without artists.”

Built from the inspiration and bequest of **Ruth DeYoung Kohler II**, a lifelong advocate for the midwest’s artistic community, Ruth Arts embraces the ethos of the region while operating at a national scale. The organizations funded in this initial round of grantmaking come from 29 states and range widely in size. In keeping with the spirit of Ruth Arts, which places a particular emphasis on the support of creativity in all its forms, with a focus on the unconventional and exciting, grantees were not confined to particular fields or genres of work, and span a broad spectrum of culture-making.

Ruth Arts launches with a unique artist-driven nomination process for this initial round of grants, which was guided by a group of nearly 50 artists. These artists, drawn from across the country and at all stages of their careers, were asked to propose organizations they felt had deeply influenced

their own engagement with art, presented visionary community programming, and connected deeply with artists' processes. The grantees were then drawn from these nominations.

The artists who participated in the process include: Sarah Braman, Nikesha Breeze, Mel Chin, Andrea Chung, Jennifer Ling Datchuk, Nicholas Galanin, Kati Gegenheimer, Michelle Grabner, Trenton Doyle Hancock, Heather Hart, Dyani White Hawk, Kahlil Robert Irving, Roberto Lugo, Guadalupe Maravilla, Woody De Othello, Ebony G. Patterson, Gala Porras-Kim, Tammie Rubin, Rose B. Simpson, Jaune Quick-to-See Smith, Lisa Stone, Alison Elizabeth Taylor, Mark Thomas Gibson, Nari Ward, Didier William, Saya Woolfalk, and Samira Yamin. Others chose to remain anonymous.

While grants will remain on an invitation-only basis for a twice-annual cycle as the foundation grows and develops, Ruth Arts will continue to work with artists to guide and inform its programming, and will host their artist nominating processes on a regular basis.

These leaders and visionaries across the arts, alongside Ruth Arts' Board of Trustees—composed of some of Kohler's beloved friends and advisors—serve to navigate Ruth Arts through the evolving arts philanthropy landscape while keeping the organization anchored in its values and origins.

"I was really excited when Karen asked me to nominate an organization," said artist Rose B. Simpson. "I felt that the power dynamics around institutions could change, that support could come from real experiences and community dedication rather than big talk and hierarchies."

In addition to its grantmaking, Ruth Arts also plans to pilot several important partnerships in the coming years, including establishing an artist advisory committee, a Visiting Artists program for art schools, a fellowship program for artists, and research grants for cultural workers.

The Inaugural Ruth Foundation for the Arts Grantees are:

- **Afro Charities**
Baltimore, MD
- **Alas De Agua Art Collective**
Santa Fe, NM
- **Alice Austen House Museum**
Staten Island, NY
- **All My Relations Arts**
Minneapolis, MN
- **Alternate Roots**
Atlanta, GA
- **Amargosa Opera House**
Death Valley, CA
- **Appalshop**
Whitesburg, KY
- **Art Omi**
Ghent, NY
- **Arts @ Large**
Milwaukee, WI
- **Arts of Life**
Chicago, IL
- **Ballet X**
Philadelphia, PA
- **Baxter Street Camera Club**
New York, NY
- **Bemis Center For Contemporary Arts**
Omaha, NE
- **Benny Andrews Estate**
Brooklyn, NY
- **Black Cube Nomadic Museum**
Denver, CO
- **Black Lunch Table**
Chicago, IL
- **BlackStar Projects**
Philadelphia, PA
- **Brooklyn Rail**
Brooklyn, NY
- **CAM Summer Fellowship**
Memphis, TN

- **Center for Contemporary Arts**
Santa Fe, NM
- **Charlotte Street Foundation**
Kansas City, MO
- **Children's Museum of the Arts New York**
New York, NY
- **Coleman Center for the Arts**
York, AL
- **Contemporary Art Library**
Los Angeles, CA
- **Cousin Collective**
United States
- **Creative Growth**
Oakland, CA
- **Experimental Sound Studio**
Chicago, IL
- **First Light Alaska**
Anchorage, AK
- **First Peoples Fund**
Rapid City, SD
- **Fusebox Festival**
Austin, TX
- **Greetings from South-Central**
Los Angeles, CA
- **Griot Museum of Black History**
Saint Louis, MO
- **GYOPO**
Los Angeles, CA
- **Haystack Mountain School of Craft**
Deer Isle, ME
- **Headlands Center for the Arts**
Sausalito, CA
- **Independent Curators International**
New York, NY
- **Institute 193**
Lexington, KY
- **International Print Center New York**
New York, NY
- **Leap Arts in Education**
San Francisco, CA
- **Leather Archive and Museum**
Chicago IL
- **Locust Projects**
Miami, FL
- **Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions (LACE)**
Los Angeles, CA
- **Los Angeles Visual Arts (LAVA)**
Los Angeles, CA
- **Lump Gallery**
Raleigh, NC
- **MARSH STL**
Saint Louis, MO
- **Materials for the Arts**
Long Island City, NY
- **Midway Contemporary Art**
Minneapolis, MN
- **Milwaukee Film**
Milwaukee, WI
- **Museum of Jurassic Technology**
Los Angeles, CA
- **Pearl Fryar Topiary Garden**
Bishopville, SC
- **Penumbra Foundation**
New York, NY
- **People's Kitchen Collective**
Oakland, CA
- **Pike School of Art**
McComb, MS
- **Poeh Center and Museum**
Pojoaque Pueblo, NM
- **Project for Empty Space**
Newark, NJ
- **Project Row Houses**
Houston, TX
- **Real Art Ways**
Hartford, CT
- **Real Time and Space**
Oakland, CA
- **Rivers Institute**
New Orleans, LA
- **S.O.U.R.C.E. Studio**
Burnsville, NC
- **Sala Diaz**
San Antonio, TX
- **Seattle Asian American Film Festival**
Seattle, WA
- **Side Street Projects**
Pasadena, CA
- **Skowhegan School of Painting & Sculpture**
Skowhegan, ME
- **Smack Mellon**
Brooklyn, NY
- **Storefront for Art and Architecture**
New York, NY
- **Taller Puertorriqueño**
Philadelphia, PA

- **Tamir Rice Foundation**
Cleveland, OH
- **The Black School**
New Orleans, LA
- **The Children's Art Carnival**
New York, NY
- **The Clay Studio**
Philadelphia, PA
- **The Heidelberg Project**
Detroit, MI
- **The Laundromat Project**
Brooklyn, NY
- **Twelve Gates**
Philadelphia, PA
- **Voces Ciudadanas**
Brooklyn, NY
- **White Columns**
New York, NY
- **Women Studio Workshop**
Rosendale, NY
- **Yaddo**
Saratoga Springs, NY

The Foundation plans to continue providing support for organizations in the arts with invitation-based awards in two cycles each year. The next cycles of Ruth Arts' grants will be announced later this year, and will total approximately \$17 million, reflecting the expected annual valuation of grants moving forward.

ABOUT THE RUTH FOUNDATION FOR THE ARTS

The Ruth Foundation for the Arts (Ruth Arts) is a new grantmaker based in the Midwest and dedicated to meeting the evolving needs and lived experiences of artists, communities, and arts organizations. Based in Milwaukee and national in scope, the Foundation reflects the culture and spirit of the Midwest, which long inspired its namesake and benefactor Ruth DeYoung Kohler II. A responsive and adventurous new force in the realm of arts philanthropy, the Foundation which was founded in 2022 distributed its first grants in 2022, providing 78 arts organizations with \$1.25 million to date.

ABOUT RUTH DEYOUNG KOHLER II

A lifetime supporter of the arts, Ruth DeYoung Kohler II (1941-2020) was deeply committed to artists and consequently, broke down hierarchies and categories within the art world to center artists, support communities, and engage with overlooked art forms. She made significant contributions to the arts across the U.S., including serving as Chairman and member of the Wisconsin Arts Board, acting as a National Endowment for the Arts Visual Artists Organization panel member and past site evaluator, as founder of the Preservation Committee of Kohler Foundation, Inc., and Director of the John Michael Kohler Arts Center for more than forty years.

Among the many awards and honors Ruth received are the Governor's Award for the Arts, Wisconsin; Visionary Award, American Craft Museum; Visionary Leadership Award, Center for Intuitive and Outside Art; Visionary Lifetime Achievement Award, Museum of Art and Design; and honorary doctorates from various institutions of higher learning.

She believed passionately that the arts reveal who we are as a people: past, present and future. She promoted equitable and inclusive access to the arts in her local community, her home state of Wisconsin, and on national and international levels.

ABOUT KAREN PATTERSON

Karen Patterson is the Executive Director of the Ruth Foundation for the Arts. She brings more than fifteen years of museum and curatorial experience to help shape the foundation as an equitable and

inspiring connection between artists and communities. Karen is devoted to providing artists with unhindered space for creative expression and believes in the people who work to make that happen. Her leadership style is founded on the belief that imagination, experimentation, and cross-disciplinary conversations lead to new paradigms.

She has previously served as Curator and Director of Exhibitions at The Fabric Workshop and Museum; Senior Curator at the John Michael Kohler Arts Center; Curatorial Assistant of the Roger Brown Study Collection at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago; and has led large-scale projects and public art programs around the United States and abroad.

ABOUT KIM NGUYEN

Kim Nguyen is the Program Director of the Ruth Foundation for the Arts. She previously served as Curator and Head of Programs at CCA Wattis Institute in San Francisco, and prior to that held the role of Director and Curator at Artspeak in Vancouver, Canada. She has presented exhibitions, projects, and publications with a wide range of artists, including recent projects with Maia Cruz Palileo, Jeffrey Gibson, Josh Faught, Cinthia Marcelle, Hồng- n Trương, Abbas Akhavan, Akosua Adoma Owusu, and Trinh T. Minh-ha.

Her writing has appeared in exhibition catalogs and periodicals nationally and internationally, and she has written texts on Divya Mehra, Alex Da Corte, and Ken Lum, among others. She is the co-editor of the anthology, *Why Are They So Afraid of the Lotus?* (Sternberg Press, 2021). Nguyen is the recipient of the Hnatyshyn Foundation Award for Emerging Curators in Contemporary Canadian Art and the Joan Lowndes Award from the Canada Council for the Arts for excellence in critical and curatorial writing.

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