

For Immediate Release

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24 Arizona artists awarded Research & Development Grants

Today the Arizona Commission on the Arts, an agency of the State of Arizona, announced the 24 recipients of Research & Development (R&D) Grants for 2021. Awarded through a competitive application and review process, these \$5,000 grants support Arizona artists as they work to advance their artistic practice, expand their creative horizons, and deepen the impact of their work.

Grantees represent a variety of artistic disciplines and reside in communities throughout the state.

The following artists were awarded 2021 Research & Development Grants. (For artist bios, project descriptions, and additional information, click a name below. To view the complete list, [click here](#))

[Dexter L. Booth](#) (Phoenix)

[Jacqueline Chanda](#) (Tucson)

[Craig Cully and Kelly Leslie](#) (Tucson)

[Coley Curry](#) (Tucson)

[Diana Marie Delgado](#) (Tucson)

[Stacey Gordon](#) (Phoenix)

[Ryan Greene](#) (Phoenix)

[Tiffany Hawk](#) (Tucson)

[Dominique Holley](#) (Litchfield Park)

[Rob Jameson](#) (Mayer)

[Sharayah \(Shay\) Jimenez](#) (Tucson)

[Maximiliano Larrea](#) (Tucson)

[Mary Lucking](#) (Phoenix)

[Tim "Tucson Tim" Madril](#) (Tucson)

[Amanda Meeks](#) (Tucson)

[MEGHANDIEGO](#) (Phoenix)

[Karen Odden](#) (Scottsdale)

[Nicole L. Olson](#) (Phoenix)

[Penelope Starr](#) (Tucson)

[Cynthia Stokes](#) (Tucson)

[Deswood Tillman](#) (Chandler)

[Vo Vera](#) (Sedona)

[Ashley White](#) (Tucson)

[Kristian Williams](#) (Tempe)

In addition to the R&D Grants, the Arts Commission presented the Bill Desmond Writing Award, which offers funding in the amount of \$1,000 to an excellent nonfiction writer, to **Tiffany Hawk**. The recipient is selected from the pool of applicants for Research and Development Grants and a single applicant may be awarded both. The award was established by Kathleen Desmond in honor of her late husband, Bill Desmond, a reporter, editor, and nonfiction writer.

2021 Research and Development Grant Review Panel

Applications were reviewed by an independent panel of Arizona artists and arts professionals.

- Amy Dunn (Tucson) – Artist
- Bijoyini Chatterjee (Bisbee) – Artist & Founder of Onrica Productions
- Mel Dominguez (Tucson) – Artist

- Lawrence Lenhart (Flagstaff) – Artists & Lecturer at Northern Arizona University
- Antoinette Cauley (Phoenix) – Artist
- Roman Orona (Chandler) – Artist & Founder of iamHUMAN Media
- Amanda Mollindo (Phoenix) – Artist & Marketing Coordinator at the Center for Entrepreneurial Innovation
- Geneah Berrian (Yuma) – Artist & Founder of EVE Events Group
- Elizabeth Guzman (Phoenix) – Artist & Instructor at Arizona School for the Arts
- Delisa Myles (Prescott) – Artist

After reviewing and scoring applications individually, the panelists convened for a public meeting at the Arts Commission’s office in downtown Phoenix to discuss top-scoring applications and make recommendations for funding. Rachel Frazier Johnson, a Governor-appointed Commissioner of the Arizona Commission on the Arts, acted as the panel chair, overseeing the process without participating in the review.

At their quarterly board meeting on March 25, 2021, the Arts Commission’s board of commissioners approved the panel’s recommendations for funding.

The Arts Commission’s grant funding is provided by the State of Arizona and funding awarded through a competitive annual process by the National Endowment for the Arts.

2022 Research & Development Grant Application Now Open

The Arizona Commission on the Arts will begin accepting applications the 2022 funding period on Wednesday, May 12, 2021. Artists interested in applying can learn more at <https://azarts.gov/grant/artist-research-and-development/>.

2021 Research & Development Grant Recipients

Biographies and project descriptions for each grantee can be found below. High-resolution artist photos can be found at https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1btXCMcCLJbZ5nV-7gjojkcV_SpBtXtC1?usp=sharing.

Dexter L. Booth, Phoenix (He/Him/His)

Photo credit: Allison Waltz

Project

Dexter L. Booth’s grant will support the writing of a new collection of poems inspired by the story of an 1803 slave ship revolt after which 75 Nigerians chose to drown rather than be captured and enslaved.

Artist Biography

Dexter L. Booth is the author of *Scratching the Ghost* (Graywolf Press, 2013), which won the 2012 Cave Canem Poetry Prize, as well the collection *Abracadabra, Sunshine* (Red Hen Press, 2021), and the chapbook *Rhapsody* (Upper Rubber Boot Books, 2019). His poems have been included in numerous anthologies, including *The Best American Poetry 2015*, *The Burden of Light: Poems on Illness and Loss*, *The Golden Shovel Anthology* honoring Gwendolyn Brooks, and *Furious Flower: Seeding the Future of*

African American Poetry, and Plume Poetry 9. Booth holds a Ph.D. in Creative Writing from the University of Southern California.

Jacqueline Chanda, Tucson (She/Her/Hers)

Artist Website: www.jacquelinechanda.com

Project

Jacqueline Chanda's grant will support research that will inform the artist's next series of paintings exploring the lives and culture of Appalachian African Americans from South Central West Virginia.

Artist Biography

At some point in life every artist gets the call. For Jacqueline Chanda, that call came as a young child. During high school, art kept Chanda centered. She took as many art classes as she could. She won scholarships to the Art Center in Los Angeles and eventually attended UCLA where she majored in painting and drawing. Upon finishing her undergrad studies, she traveled to Paris, France where she studied art at the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux Arts, the Académie de Port Royal and the Sorbonne University.

After 28 years of teaching and doing research in art education pedagogical practices at several universities, we find her doing what she always wanted to do, paint full time.

Chanda's art awards include: 1st place and the West Valley Art Museum Award, in a state wide juried competition, 2nd and 3rd place in two national juried competitions, and a crystal merit award in an international online competition. She and her work have been featured in the Arizona Daily Star, the Sonoran Arts Network, art review, Lovin' Life After 50 magazine, the Tubac Gallery guide, the Tucson/Marana Daily News. In addition, she has appeared on PBS Television "Spot on the Arts" and KGUN 9 T.V.

Craig Cully and Kelly Leslie, Tucson

Artist Website: <https://www.craigcully.com/>

Photo credit: Craig Cully and Kelly Leslie

Project

Craig Cully and Kelly Leslie's grant will support community engagement activities that will inform the creation of a series of paintings.

Artist Biography

Craig Cully grew up in the suburbs of Philadelphia where some of his earliest influences come from the area's long-standing tradition of realist painters. He graduated with a BFA degree from Temple University's Tyler School of Art and earned an MFA from The University of Arizona.

Cully's work has been featured in gallery and museum exhibitions throughout the United States and in Mexico. His work is part of the permanent collection of The Boise Museum of Art, The Tucson Museum of Art, The University of Arizona Museum of Art, the University of Sciences and Arts of Oklahoma, and the Museum of Art at Texas Tech University. Currently, his work is represented by the Etherton Gallery in Tucson, AZ, and the Projects Gallery in Miami, FL.

Cully is an Associate Professor of Painting and Drawing at New Mexico State University.

Kelly Leslie received her MFA from the University of Arizona in Visual Communication and her BFA from the Tyler School of Art, in Philadelphia. She has held tenure-track positions at the University of Hartford and Texas Tech University and is currently an Associate Professor of Art at the University of Arizona. Her work includes artist books, digital prints and various digital fabrication methods and has been exhibited in China, Japan, Australia and Germany. She has collaborated with artist Alice Briggs and author Charles Bowden in designing “Dreamland: The way out of Juarez”, UT Press.

Coley Curry, Tucson (She/Her/Hers)

Artist Website: <https://www.cocurry.net/>

Photo credit: Aaron Poston

Project

Coley Curry’s grant will fund the acquisition of technology the artist will use in the creation and documentation of her own dance work and that of her dance community.

Artist Biography

Coley Curry is a Filipinx dance artist, filmmaker, storyteller and facilitator. Born in Chicago, IL and currently living in Arizona, she recently received her MFA in dance from Arizona State University, where she earned the FWA Distinguished Graduate Student Award. Coley is currently a faculty associate at Chandler Gilbert Community College, meanwhile continuing her artistic explorations.

In her movement research she aims to create spaces for community building, healing, storytelling, movement explorations, and taking ownership of cultural narratives.

Diana Marie Delgado, Tucson (She/Her/Hers)

Artist Website: <https://www.dianamariedelgado.com/>

Photo credit: Felicia Zamora

Project

Diana Marie Delgado’s grant will fund research that will inform the writing of prose poems about the Spanish conquest of the Aztec Empire.

Artist Biography

Diana Marie Delgado’s debut poetry collection, *Tracing the Horse* (BOA, 2019), was a New York Times Noteworthy Pick. The book follows the coming-of-age of a young Mexican-American woman trying to make sense of who she is amidst a family and community weighted by violence and addiction. Delgado, the first in her family to graduate high school and attend college, transferred from Mt. San Antonio community college to the University of California, Riverside. She possesses a Master of Fine Arts from Columbia University and her selected honors and awards include grants and fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, Hedgebrook, Breadloaf, and a James D. Phelan Award. Her poetry chapbook, *Late-Night Talks with Men I Think I Trust*, was the 2018 Center for Book Arts winner. She has published poetry in *Ploughshares*, *Ninth Letter*, *New York Times Magazine*, *Colorado Review* and *Tin House*. She has extensive experience working both in and with communities of color, after spending more than a decade working and writing in New York City. She is currently the Literary Director of the University of Arizona Poetry Center and lives in Tucson, Arizona.

Stacey Gordon, Phoenix (She/Her/Hers)

Artist Website: www.puppetpie.com

Photo credit: Mirelle Inglefield

Project

Stacey Gordon's grant will support the development of a mobile puppet stage and youth education/art center.

Artist Biography

Stacey Gordon is a puppeteer from Phoenix, Az. She operates Puppet Pie, an art studio in the heart of Phoenix, and has the honor of performing one of Sesame Street's newest friends, Julia, a curious 4-year-old Muppet with autism.

In addition to her work on Sesame Street, she also teaches puppetry to a neurodiverse audience at Puppet Pie and at libraries and schools around Phoenix. Puppet Pie's mission is to use puppetry to empower people of all ages to explore the world around them through the lens of creativity. This is accomplished through: performance workshops that allow people to use puppetry as means of exploring different communication techniques; puppet-building workshops that introduce STEAM concepts to kids and adults in easily digestible ways; open-ended puppetry workshops that allow space for creative problem solving.

Stacey also serves on the board of directors for the Puppeteers of America, and has delivered keynote speeches promoting diversity, kindness, and the arts at various events around Phoenix, including most recently at the Az Department of Education's ESSA conference, and for the Maricopa County Library District.

Ryan Greene, Phoenix (He/Him/His)

Artist Website: www.fiiikbooks.org

Project

Ryan Greene's grant will support the development of a pop-up open-air bookmaking studio.

Artist Biography

Ryan Greene first learned to make books in backyards and at kitchen tables with Giancarlo Huapaya and Maggie Messerschmidt in 2017. Since 2018 he has facilitated community-based bookmaking workshops for the Cardboard House Press Cartonera Collective at Palabras Bilingual Bookstore. In 2019, he instigated a Phoenix-based, Phoenix-focused publishing project called F*%K IF I KNOW//BOOKS, where he is a co-conspirator with Mary Hope Whitehead Lee and Claudia Nuñez de Ibieta. Starting in early 2021, he and his friend J Gan began co-scheming a press/archive/playspace/celebration called no.good.home which is in its early stages of life ... just toddling.

Ryan's bookmaking is deeply influenced by the ethics and practice of DIY/DIT [self-]publishers, zinesters, [post-]cartonera presses, language justice/accessible arts collectives, pop-up/toy makers, and cultural workers including: Mary Hope Whitehead Lee, Nicole Cecilia Delgado [La Impresora, Atarraya Cartonera, etc.], Yaxkin Melchy [Cactus del Viento, 2.0.1.3. Editorial, Salario Mínimo, etc.], Amber McCrary [Abalone Mountain Press], Jen/Eleana Hofer & JD Pleucker [Antena Aire], Clottee Hammons [Emancipation Arts], Fuentes Rojas, Jocelyn Samayoa, Prickly Pear Printing, Noa/h Fields & Stefania Gomez [De.composition],

David Buuck [Tripwire], Kate Schapira [Climate Anxiety Counseling], Matthew Reinhart, Arvind Gupta [Toys from Trash], etc. etc.

Tiffany Hawk, Tucson (She/Her/Hers)

Artist Website: <http://www.tiffanyhawk.com/>

Photo credit: Jacquelynn Buck

Project

Tiffany Hawk's grant will support the collection and publication of writings on culturally responsible travel writing by diverse writers.

Artist Biography

Tiffany Hawk is the Editorial Director of Undomesticated magazine, which is dedicated to rethinking travel writing and to amplifying the voices of women living boldly in the world. She previously served as the travel editor of Maggie-award winning Coast magazine and is the author of Love Me Anyway, a darkly funny novel about coming-of-age at 35,000 feet. Her stories have also appeared in such places as The New York Times, The Los Angeles Times, GQ, National Geographic Traveler, StoryQuarterly, and NPR's "All Things Considered." She has taught writing at Rutgers University and Arizona State University and is now a private writing coach and editor living in Tucson.

Dominique Holley, Litchfield Park (He/Him/His)

Artist Website: <https://www.instagram.com/bassisking/>

Photo credit: Idara Ekpoh (@ohyeahitsidy)

Project

Dominique Holley's grant will support research that will inform the development of Blurred Lines, a project that blends traditional techniques of western art music with those of African American musical traditions.

Artist Biography

Dominique can regularly be seen performing with the Driftwood Quintet, of which he is the founder and artistic director, to promote the visibility of chamber music in his community. Dominique believes that chamber music can be an efficient medium not only for entertainment but for community enrichment and social discussion as well.

Outside of his work with Driftwood, Dominique has performed as principal clarinetist of the AZ Promusica Chorale and Orchestra and bass clarinetist of the Tempe Symphonic Winds. He is also currently a member of the indie folk-blues band The Paper Hats and a member of the Phoenix-based Open Score Ensemble under the direction of Jacob Adler which most recently performed Philip Glass's opera "Einstein on the Beach" at the Phoenix Art Museum.

As an educator Dominique aims to bring the joy of music to underprivileged youth whether it's through private lessons, educational outreach programming with the Driftwood Quintet, or his past work with the non-profit organization Harmony Project Phoenix.

Dominique attended Arizona State University where he studied clarinet performance with Drs. Robert Spring and Joshua Gardner as well as jazz studies with Bryon Ruth and Michael Kocour. He has also

studied privately with members of Chicago-based Fifth House Ensemble as well as Phoenix Symphony principal clarinetist Alex Laing and bass clarinetist Steve Hanusofski.

Rob Jameson, Mayer (He/Him/His)

Artist Website: <https://aio-tea.com/>

Photo credit: Jessica Jameson

Project

Rob Jameson's grant will support his ongoing exploration of multi-sensory and 360 degree immersive art installations.

Artist Biography

Rob Jameson is an award-winning technologist, entrepreneur, and artist. For the last 7 years, Rob has overseen technology for an experimental micro-city called Arcosanti in Arizona. Rob has built many custom immersive systems in the architecture here, which has allowed him to pursue multi-sensory immersions as a career and creative outlet.

Rob loves to blend technology with community and art endeavors. He has won multiple grants, co-founded 2 cooperatives, and been funded in 2 startups. Rob has done pioneering studies in the intersection of art, technology, and community, co-led 3 large-scale art installations, and has won 2 national filmmaking competitions. Rob is passionate about using technology and collective imagination to help groups access a state called "Deep Play".

Sharayah (Shay) Jimenez, Tucson (She/Her/Hers)

Artist Website: www.cuadro.design

Photo credit: Sharayah Jimenez

Project

Shay Jimenez's grant will support the development of an interdisciplinary public art project created in collaboration with the residents of some of Tucson's historic barrios.

Artist Biography

Sharayah Jimenez is a 5th generation Tucsonense. She graduated from the University of Arizona's College of Architecture, Planning and Landscape Architecture in 2009. She has spent a decade working in the architecture industry and brings experience in affordable housing development, historic preservation, public art and community planning with a focus on desert dwelling. She is the Principal Designer and founder of CUADRO and established the firm in order to explore sustainable solutions for the rapidly growing housing market in the American Southwest which contains some of the world's most unique and fragile ecosystems. Shay is an active member of the local Tucson community and contributes regularly to her neighborhood association and is a member of both the City of Tucson and Pima County's housing commissions. Her artistic practice is centered on identity, and her personal work often explores the intersectionalities of Chicanx culture with housing and barrio culture. Her work as a community planner also seeks to strengthen existing neighborhood identities and to find ways to celebrate them within public art.

Maximiliano Larrea, Tucson (He/Him/His)

Artist Website: www.maxilarrea.com

Photo credit: Teresa Tam

Project

Maximiliano Larrea's grant will support work on a book of tango guitar arrangements for beginning and intermediate guitarists and associated community outreach events.

Artist Biography

Maxi Larrea is a guitarist, arranger, composer, and music educator from Rosario, Argentina. A specialist in Argentine popular music, he studied tango and folk guitar under renowned Argentine guitarist Juan Falú, and trained in tango arranging and composition from Diego Schissi, Nicolas Ledesma, and Gabriel Senanes. In Argentina, Larrea directed and performed in both traditional and contemporary tango and folk music groups including Cuartero Revirado, Quinteto Negro La Boca (Sony Argentina), Quinteto Clandestino, and Aires Trío. He has performed multiple times at the World Tango Championships in Buenos Aires, was a competition finalist at the Pre-Cosquin Folklore Festival in Cordoba, Argentina, and has participated in international tours in Europe, Canada, and Mexico. In 2015 he moved to the United States where he has been composing, teaching and performing as a soloist and with tango bands across the country. After spending 2018 and 2019 in San Francisco, he recently relocated to Tucson, Arizona. His first solo album of original tango and folk guitar compositions, "Donde Termina el Río/Where the River Ends," has been recently released.

Mary Lucking, Phoenix (She/Her/Hers)

Artist Website: www.marylucking.com

Photo credit: Bill King

Project

Mary Lucking's grant will support the artist's ongoing experimentation with cloisonné, an ancient technique for decorating metalwork objects.

Artist Biography

Mary Lucking creates artworks that help people explore and understand the environments and communities where they live. Her work ranges from large-scale, permanent artworks to temporary interactive installations, and include art incorporated into walking and biking trails, transit stations, college campuses, and neighborhood parks.

Her work is in the permanent public art collections of the cities across the US. In Arizona, they include projects at the Mesa Drive and Indian School light rail stations, the Arizona Science Center, Tempe and Tucson streetcars stations, and Papago Park. Three of her projects have received Americans for the Arts Public Art Network Year in Review awards.

Mary holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Architecture from Wellesley College and a Master of Fine Arts in Art and Technology from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. A long-time Arizona resident, she graduated from Central High School in Phoenix, and has also lived in Tucson and Douglas. She currently lives and works in Phoenix, AZ.

Tim "Tucson Tim" Madril, Tucson (He/Him/His)

Artist Website: <https://www.instagram.com/tucson.tim/>

Project

"Tucson Tim" Madril's grant will support work related to the production of a documentary about the history of Arizona's hip-hop community.

Artist Biography

Timothy Hashke Madril, is an Indigenous and Mexican American Artist. Born and raised in the sun city valley of Tucson, AZ. 'Tucson Tim' has spent his years as an active researcher, student, contributor and educator within the Arizona Hip Hop Community. This culture has been foundational to his beliefs and how he interacts in his community.

Presently residing in Phoenix, AZ, 'Tucson Tim' attended Arizona State University as a Film production major in the Herberger School of Film, Dance & Theatre. Through a multi-faceted lens, Tim's work as an artist is demonstrated through dance, music, photography, film, organizing and event production.

As a founding member of The Arizona Hip Hop Alliance, he continues to explore the history, design, sustainability, and community of Hip Hop culture.

Amanda Meeks, Tucson (They/Them/Their)

Artist Website: www.amandameeks.com

Project

Amanda Meeks's grant will support their ongoing effort to create and distribute zine-making kits as part of a communal independent publishing and exchange program.

Artist Biography

Amanda Meeks is an interdisciplinary maker, artist, and librarian living in Tucson, AZ. Their work takes on various forms including zines, artist books, pins, painting, collage, letterpress, and a participatory social art practice. Their current Tucson-specific project, Outspokin' & Bookish, is part pop-up feminist zine/art object collection and part playful, mobile (via bicycle) maker space focused on print media, which has evolved into a regional zine collective and exchange open to all during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Outspokin' & Bookish mission includes cultivating social connectedness, sense of belonging, celebration of difference, and pride of place through sharing DIY publishing and print media-making practices and tools.

MEGHANDIEGO, Phoenix

Artist Website: meghandiego.com

Project

Meghan Ruel and Diego Miranda, who perform as MEGHANDIEGO, will use their grant to support the continued development of an experimental, multi-discipline online concert series.

Artist Biography

Meghan Ruel and Diego Miranda are a violin-guitar duo who pack a punch with a range of repertoire and diverse collaborative skills. From standard classical repertoire to unique arrangements integrating electronic elements, MEGHANDIEGO are shining a new light on duo repertoire. Their recitals and educational programs have been featured at Arts at Nativity, West Valley Arts, Durango Bach Festival,

Arizona State University, ProMusica Arizona and Southwest Arts. Both graduated from Arizona State University with their Master of Music in Performance and are teaching artists in Phoenix. Diego leads the music program at Pan American Charter School and Meghan heads the string program at Arizona Christian University. They also co-teach for programs including Harmony Project PHX and the Phoenix Conservatory of Music. They will be participating in the 2021 Tafelmusik Summer Baroque Institute and the Dorothy Delay Pedagogy Symposium at Juilliard.

Karen Odden, Scottsdale (She/Her/Hers)

Artist Website: <https://www.karenodden.com>

Photo credit: Tina Celle

Project

Karen Odden’s grant will support work on the development of a guide for aspiring first-time novelists.

Artist Biography

Karen Odden earned her Ph.D. in English literature from New York University and subsequently taught Victorian literature at UW-Milwaukee. She has contributed essays to numerous books, written introductions for novels by Dickens and Trollope for Barnes & Noble, and edited for the academic journal Victorian Literature and Culture (Cambridge UP). She regularly presents at libraries, book clubs, and bookstores in the Phoenix area, and the idea for the book “Where I Writefully Live: The Craft of Writing and the Practice of Authorship” evolved after meeting emerging writers at Bouchercon and other conferences. She mentors writers through Mystery Writers of America, and she has given presentations on craft at the ASU Desert Nights, Rising Stars conference and to writers’ groups including the AZ Historical Novel Society, Sisters in Crime, and Writers Connection.

Karen’s historical mysteries are all set in 1870s London. A Lady in the Smoke (2015, Random House/Alibi) was a USA Today bestseller; her second and third novels, A Dangerous Duet and A Trace of Deceit (2018 and 2019, William Morrow) have won awards for historical fiction and mystery. Her next book, forthcoming from Crooked Lane in November 2021, is Down a Dark River, concerning a Scotland Yard inspector from seedy Whitechapel who investigates the murders of dead women sent floating in boats down the Thames. In 2002, she and her family moved to Arizona, where she became an avid desert hiker and adopted her ridiculously cute rescue beagle Rosy. You can reach her at www.karenodden.com.

Nicole L. Olson, Phoenix (She/Her/Hers)

Photo credit: Frauke Wohlers

Project

Nicole L. Olson’s grant will support work on an experimental dance film that will employ projection mapping technology.

Artist Biography

After training at Milwaukee Ballet School and graduating with a BFA in Dance from University of WI - Stevens Point, Nicole L Olson worked with Kirby Reed (Chicago), Bauer Contemporary Ballet (Milwaukee), and Emergence Dance Theatre (Chicago).

In Arizona, she danced with the Phoenix Opera, Liliana Gomez, Diane McNeal Hunt, and Dulce Dance, and was Guest Artist/Soloist with Center Dance Ensemble for 8 years. Currently, she is the Assistant Director of Scorpius Dance Theatre and Artistic Director of NicoleOlson | MovementChaos.

Olson has presented her own work nationally in such venues as the Kennedy Center (DC), Ruth Page Performing Arts (Chicago), and the TBA Festival (Portland, OR). Her choreography has also been seen in the Phoenix Theatre Company's "Evita" and "Once", and Stray Cat Theatre's "Heathers" and "Silence! The Musical".

Nicole has been presenting site-specific work in alternative performance spaces since 2015; creating dance for Phoenix Art Museum, Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art (SMOCA), and {9}The Gallery. In past years, she produced five evening length pieces for the internationally-awarded Canal Convergence in 2018 and '19, presented by Scottsdale Public Art.

Olson was awarded the 2016 Phoenix Mayor's Arts Award for Dance, and was selected as Phoenix New Times' "Best Dancer, 2016" for their annual "Best Of Phoenix" and their "100 Creatives" for 2016. In 2018, she was recognized by Phoenix New Times' "Best Of 2018" for her work with Patricia Sannit (Best Collaboration). Most recently, Nicole was awarded 2nd Place for Artlink's 20th Annual Juried Exhibition in 2020.

Vo Vera, Sedona (He/Him/His)

Artist Website: www.vospacevera.com/

Photo credit: Charles Ruscher

Project

Vo Vera's grant will support research and experimentation with wearable light technology, projection mapping, and illusory movement.

Artist Biography

Vo Vera has spent the last two decades identifying as a Bboy and dancer, having received formal dance training and several degrees from Arizona State University. Instructor, choreographer, competitor, performance artist, poet and photographer, his pursuit of so many avenues speak to the devotion of his creative engine. He has choreographed for and performed with professional groups including, Jacob Jonas The Company, EPIK Dance Company, and The Sacred G's. Vo and his choreographed works have been on platforms including the NBA pregame show and the NBA halftime show. Dance credits include Red Bull, Microsoft, PayPal, Budweiser, Phillip Morris, Yahoo!, and JanSport. As an educator, he has served as Faculty Associate at ASU, and as Faculty Adjunct at five Maricopa Community Colleges.

Over the years his movement artistry has been informed by Breaking, Yoga, Hand Balance, Experimental, and other street dance styles. They kneaded into a diverse practice, leading to the cross-pollination of something unique: A style unlike any other, and fresh presentation of creative, dynamic, intentional multidisciplinary performance art.

Vo Vera is in the process of creating a poetry book that speaks to his life's journey from injury to recovery, overcoming a motorcycle accident that handicapped him and damaged his spine in 2019. Vo is currently developing a movement technique that he calls Framing, and he is collaborating on several

multimedia and performance arts projects and grant ventures. In the fall of 2021, he begins graduate school at ASU to obtain an MFA in Dance.

Penelope Starr, Tucson (She/Her/Hers)

Artist website: www.penelopestarr.com

Photo credit: Silvia Kolchens

Project

Penelope Starr's grant will support the final stages of preparing her latest book for publication.

Artist Biography

Penelope Starr founded Odyssey Storytelling in Tucson, AZ, in 2004. Her book, *The Radical Act of Community Storytelling: Empowering Voices in Uncensored Events*, is part memoir, part how-to, and part advocacy for the democratic structure of community storytelling. She is currently finishing a novel about women who live on lesbian land.

Her stories have been published in *Four Chambers Press*, *Southwest Folklife's Continuum*, *Real Women Write*, *FST! Anthology*, and *SandScript*. Her blog, *Telling Stories*, ran in the *Tucson Citizen* from 2009-2012. She has told and read her stories in such diverse places as *Antigone Books*, Tucson; *Lit Lounge* at the *Scottsdale Center for the Arts*; *FST! (Female Storytellers)* in Tucson; *Global Arts Gallery* in Patagonia, Arizona; *The Golden Notebook* in Woodstock, NY; the *Contemporary Jewish Museum* in San Francisco and *Odyssey Storytelling* in Tucson.

Penelope's workshop offerings include *Storytelling for Writers*, *Bibliobiography*, and *SoulCollage®* for *Writers and Other Creatives*. You can see what she is up to at penelopestarr.com.

Cynthia Stokes, Tucson (She/Her/Hers)

Artist Website: www.cynthiastokes.com

Photo credit: C. Stokes jpeg photographer Stacey McKenzie, Cynthia-Stokes...Kristian Jaime

Project

Cynthia Stokes's grant will support the development of an immersive virtual reality production of Dominick Argento's short opera *The Andrée Expedition*.

Artist Biography

American stage and opera director Cynthia Stokes' professional career is devoted to creating provocative and thrilling productions across America. Recent productions include: *Midsummer Night's Dream* (Mendelssohn) with conductor Michael Francis for the Florida Orchestra, the premiere of her new libretto and staging for *Thamos, King of Egypt* (Mozart, Philipp) for San Diego's *Mainly Mozart Festival*. Directing highlights include: *Silent Night* for Piedmont Opera; *The Rape of Lucretia* for UA's Opera Workshop; *Le nozze di Figaro* for San Antonio Opera, *Roméo et Juliette* for San Diego Opera; *Pagliacci* for Opera San Jose; *Madama Butterfly* for Opera Company of Philadelphia; *Homies and Popz* (tour) for Los Angeles Opera; *Margaret Garner* for Cincinnati Opera and Opera Carolina. She has been a member of the directing staff for Dallas Opera, Michigan Opera Theater, The Florentine Opera, Opera Pacific, and Glimmerglass Opera.

Ms. Stokes has created site-specific opera installations throughout North America including: *La hija de Rappaccini* staged in a public slot canyon lobby on the campus of the University of Arizona. Her opera

company SD City Opera produced Queen of Carthage, adapted from Purcell's Dido and Aeneas which was set overlooking the Pacific Ocean. Her production of The Andrée Expedition with international baritone, Michael Chioldi premiered in an abandoned marble quarry in Vermont.

Recent funding for Ms. Stokes includes The Arizona Commission on the Arts; UA Provosts Initiatives Grant; and a Qualcomm Ideas Grant. She holds an M.F.A. in Directing from UC San Diego. She is the head of Opera Theater at UA.

Deswood Tillman, Chandler (He/Him/His)

Artist Website: <http://deztillman.com/>

Photo credit: Daveed Benito

Project

Deswood Tillman's grant will support a new collaboration with Navajo Nation poet laureate, Dr. Laura Tohe, combining his instrumental compositions with her spoken-word poetry.

Artist Biography

Deswood Tillman is a singer, songwriter, and music producer with a passion for creating art that enriches the soul. Also known as Dez, he is the founder of the band Guitarzan. Over the past ten years of his career he has performed internationally representing Native-American culture and has recorded in the studio with many notable artists of various genres.

He has earned a bachelor's degree in interdisciplinary studies in Mathematics and Music from Arizona State University.

Deswood Tillman is of Dine' (Navajo) and Anglo heritage. Since 2011 he has been using his talents to engage in charitable work to benefit Native-American communities with the Native-rock group Clandestine.

Dez also owns and manages a private recording studio, known as Sonic Alchemy Studios, where he has produced music for television, movies, and other artists.

As an artist and academic Dez continues to be an outspoken voice in his community raising awareness to critical issues and critical thinking. When he is not busy in the studio or being a strong voice in his community, you can find him raising the vibes with his guitar around the valley for public and private events.

Ashley White, Tucson (She/Her/Hers)

Artist Website: <http://modernaquarian.com>

Photo credit: Jackie Tran

Project

Ashley White's grant will the continued development of her work in gilded signage, a technique that combines the use of gold leaf, abalone shell, and acid etching.

Artist Biography

Ashley White is a commercial artist based in Tucson, Arizona. She specializes in custom designed murals, hand painted and gilded signs, and lettering design under the business name, Modern Aquarian. Ashley enjoys the challenge of creating a branded visual environment that is both functional and visually

interesting. Since 2013, she has helped hundreds of businesses and individuals incorporate art into commercial and residential spaces.

Kristian Williams, Tempe (He/Him/His)

Photo credit: Ardy Reapz (illustrator)

Project

Kristian Williams's grant will support work on his digital graphic web-series, an afro-indigenous science fiction epic called IndigoShado.

Artist Biography

Kristian Williams is a screenwriter, music producer, and creative director whose works primarily focus on imperial functions and colonial mechanisms both domestically and internationally. Originally from Northern California, he moved to Phoenix in 2013 where he earned a B.A. in Interdisciplinary Arts & Performance from Arizona State University (2017). He then furthered his research at ASU and obtained his M.A. in Interdisciplinary Studies in December of 2020. This is where he further married his thoughts on critical theory and his artistic practice. Since then, Kristian's primary goal has been to integrate and contextualize the methods of development and modes of delivery from different disciplines for the purpose of telling a centralized narrative throughout numerous mediums, accumulating into the "IndigoShado" series.

About the Arizona Commission on the Arts

One of 56 state and jurisdictional arts agencies across the United States, the Arizona Commission on the Arts is a 54-year-old agency of the State of Arizona and a leading force in the creative and professional development of Arizona's arts sector. Through robust programs, research initiatives, and strategic grantmaking, the Arts Commission catalyzes arts-based partnerships that strengthen Arizona communities through the arts.

We imagine an Arizona where everyone can participate in and experience the arts.

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For more information on the Arizona Commission on the Arts, visit www.azarts.gov or contact Steve Wilcox, Communications Director, Arizona Commission on the Arts, at (602) 771-6536 or swilcox@azarts.gov.

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Images available upon request.

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