

COMMUNITY HEALING THROUGH ART

A FINAL REPORT

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CITY OF PORTLAND

Introduction

Over the last two years, Portlanders have endured the COVID-19 pandemic, political discord around necessary racial reckoning work, extreme climate disasters like wildfires and ice storms, and other drastic changes to daily life. In these historic times of heightened emotional exhaustion and grief, local artists are still showing up in many ways, creating art that is evocative, grounded, and often represent new methods of communication in isolating times.

In the spring of 2021, the City of Portland invested \$150,000 from multiple bureaus in a Community Healing through Art Initiative. An additional \$90,000 was raised from other sources, including the Oregon Community Foundation and the James F. and Marion L. Miller Foundation, for a total budget of \$240,000.

Led by the City's former creative laureate, Subashini Ganesan-Forbes, this arts-focused, community-informed project was designed to leverage the power of arts and culture to support grieving and healing throughout Portland's diverse communities. Among our centering principles:

- Acknowledging that our survival depends on intertwined communities of cultural organizers, artists, and activists creating and sharing space, resources and mutual aid.
- Recognizing and respectfully amplifying the myriad ways that we grieve, mourn, and heal as a community.
- Creating meaningful intersections between art-makers and cultural organizers so that artistic and communal resiliency is highlighted.

In addition, a partnership with the Office of Community and Civic Life focused on art-inspired projects that allow neighbors to address grief and healing so that Portlanders can feel connected and safe.

Overall, the Community Healing through Art project provided funding to 16 artists and 33 organizations – including nonprofit entities, LLCs and collectives. Participating artists received between \$1,000 and \$5,000 each. Participating organizations received between \$500 and \$10,000 each. The Regional Arts & Culture Council served as our fiscal agent.

A full list of participating artists and organizations, and the programs they produced, are included in this report. Most programs were available to the general public, serving an estimated 5,000 Portlanders. Some of the funded projects were more private in nature, including a filmmaking workshop for youth impacted by gun violence, and a drumming circle to support healing in Indigenous communities.

We remain grateful to City Council and participating bureaus for their recognition of the power of art to help our community mourn, reflect, and heal.

Budget Summary

We acknowledge and appreciate the generous support of our funding partners!



Total revenue: \$239,959.70

- City of Portland general fund, \$100,000
- City of Portland – City Arts Program, \$20,000
- City of Portland – Office of Community and Civic Life, \$20,000
- City of Portland – Emergency Coordination Center, \$10,000
- Oregon Community Foundation, \$25,000
- James F. & Marion L. Miller Foundation, \$25,000
- City of Portland – City Arts Program redeployment of leftover CARES money, \$39,959.70

Total expenses: \$ 239,950.38

- Grants for artists and arts organizations, \$202,950.38 (84.5%)
- Professional services/project coordination, \$23,000 (9.5%)
- RACC fiscal agent services, \$10,000 (4%)
- Stipends for artists as grant review panelists, \$4,000 (2%)

Special thanks to the Regional Arts & Culture Council for serving as our fiscal agent for this project.

Program activities: grant recipients

The following is a list of activities that were funded through a competitive grant application process. Some events, as noted, have been postponed to 2022 due to concerns related to the Delta and Omicron variants.

(*) denotes grants awarded in partnership the Office of Community and Civic Life, Community Safety program to support healing events with a community safety component.

***Black & Beyond the Binary Collective** presented a Night Out for Safety and Liberation, centering people who have experienced state violence, and memorial Art Project for Aja Raquell Rhone-Spears.

Akela Jaffi and the **Black Sun Collective** will present Black Arts Summer Showcase (BASS), a two-day mini music festival with food, vendors and a panel discussion with Black creatives. (Postponed to 2022.)

The Center for the Study and Preservation of Palestine presented Palestine through the Senses, three events engaging the community in collective grieving, healing and empowerment. Each event addressed a different sensory aspect of Palestinian culture: sound art, visual art, and engaging with the land through nourishment.



Color Outside the Lines presented the Belonging Series, bringing together an array of BIPOC artists and underserved youth and other community members to collaboratively create eight murals on the East side of the Willamette River. A series of workshops encouraged conversations about belonging and healing.

East Portland Collective will present Graves into Gardens, a community grieving and healing project in Lents to create a more permanent community art mural in memory of Robert Delgado, one of Lents' houseless neighbors. (Postponed to 2022.)

Eliot Neighborhood Association received financial support to restart Dawson Park Concerts for the Historic Albina community. The Eliot Neighborhood has been particularly affected by gentrification and ongoing racial disparities, and this concert series provided an opportunity to bring the community together again positively.

***Friendly House** collaborated with the Portland Native Community, Laura Campos, and a.c.ramírez de arellano to present REMEMBERING, with intergenerational activities such as weaving, storytelling, music, children's activities, and food.

Friends of Noise planned "Rose City Rising Vigil" – seven candlelight vigils in parks across the City, culminating in a larger vigil at Pioneer Courthouse Square. These vigils acknowledge the emotional toll of the loss of life due to the pandemic and other causes.

Darrell Grant created the “Soul Restoration Project,” using art to transform and embody spaces. The intention is to activate cultural activity in a space that is underutilized in the Black community and bring an artistic lens to the process of healing and transformation.

Ariel Hernandez will present Black Feast, an event founded and curated by two Black queer artists, where guests and artists come together to share an intimate and sensory four-course meal, and experience poets, musicians and artists of many mediums. (Postponed to 2022.)

Historic Parkrose presented End Gun Violence, a partnership with Outside the Frame to provide film workshops for youth in Parkrose, ages 14-20, to unpack how gun violence has affected themselves, their families, their friends and their district.

***I AM M.O.R.E.** presented a creative-making, anti-violence and community-healing project, making culturally relevant and spiritually infused quilts to connect Black youth to Black elders.

Independent Publishing Resource Center presented “Poetry as Prompt,” a joint collaborative poem garland. Intisar Abioto, Stephanie Adams-Santos, jay dodd, Catie Hannigan, and Coleman Stevenson contributed first lines of poems reflecting on the grief and healing of the past year, and community members were invited to add to the poems.

Joe Kye will present KIMJANG! Nourish Your Soul, an afternoon of communal healing and refueling for Asian American creatives. Chef Han Ly Hwang of Kim Jong Grillin will produce a communal Korean BBQ meal, and guests will make kimchi to take home. Dedicated to Matt Choi, the late owner of Choi’s Kimchi, a Portland-based Kimchi company. Matt passed away unexpectedly and tragically in October 2020. (Postponed to 2022.)

a movement for Black art was “a gathering and diasporic repast” on May 30th – an intimate gathering at Peninsula Park to memorialize the Black lives lost to violence and to celebrate Black art and artists.

Portland in Color curated and published a multimedia interview series showcasing three BIPOC artists — their artwork, process and shifts spurred by the pandemic. Audio was captured for transcription purposes and archival material.

Portland Playhouse presented Joy (Comes) in the Mourning, a series of free, in-person and virtual interactive experiences exploring and celebrating the rituals of loss and grief – through performances, art installations, workshops and discussions in North Portland.

Salomee Soaug conceived “Expression Against Oppression x Save Art Space billboard project” – bringing eight billboards to neighborhoods around Portland, fully designed by BIPOC artists and raising awareness about the fight for more justice and equality.



IPRC's "Poetry as Prompt"

Theater Diaspora worked with Asian American and Pacific Islanders that identify as queer, trans or LGBTQI+ in writing workshops that culminate with a short digital performance of these written pieces accompanied by photography and artwork.

***Jason Umtuch** purchased drums and presented Indigenous Healing Drum Circle, a bonding project for all ages, backgrounds, genders, abilities, incomes, and housing status.

Unit Souzou presented RHYTHM PROJECT: Walking to the Heartbeat, a collaboration with APANO, artist Horatio Law, and filmmaker Dawn Jones Redstone. This series of healing and processing experiences acknowledged pedestrian safety in the Jade District.

Uwu Collective will present UwUnoco Flo, an all-day multidisciplinary art event for Queer, Trans, Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (QTBIPOC) and Trans/Gender non-conforming people, featuring visual art, communal dance, and nature to help community members process grief and serve as catalysts to

individual and communal healing. (Postponed to 2022.)

Vanport Mosaic hosted “We the People,” part of the 6th Vanport Mosaic Festival in June. This festival provides opportunities to remember, repair, reclaim and re-imagine our collective story.

***We All Rise** organized Alberta Street Market, August 28-29, featuring Wonderful, Virginia Marting, Radiantbling, Beautiful Me Skincare, Sofia Fabrics and Crafts, Hat wigs, True Melanin PDX, Mildren's Sweet Treetts, PDXurbangardens and other local retailers. The market aims to mourn and celebrate the talent and expression that is no longer part of the NE neighborhood.

YGB Portland will produce BIPOC Ritual Time Capsule, inviting community members to commune and pick up time capsule kits that they could take home and share with friends and family. These kits, including various pieces of art and media, will guide folks to slow down and make space for reflection, healing, and grief. (Postponed to 2022.)

Demographics

Eighty-eight percent of the program participants listed above completed a demographics survey, and their responses reflect some of the diversity we sought to achieve through this initiative.

Race and Ethnicity:

- 5% of program participants identify as American Indian or Alaska Native
- 23% identify as Asian
- 27% identify as Black or African American
- 9% identify as Latinx or Hispanic
- 5% identify as Middle Eastern or North African
- 9% identify as White
- 22% identify as multiracial or other

Other Identities:

- 41% identify as members of the LGBTQIA community
- 36% identify with having or living with a disability
- 27% identify as an immigrant or refugee

Program Activities: Curated Events

The following community events were curated and produced by Subashini Ganesan-Forbes.

See Me. iAm. HEAR: A Creative Activation of Youth Voices of Color was designed to empower young people, who collaborated and co-led this one-day street party that took place on July 31, 2021, in front of the Portland Art Museum. Creative experiences included poetry, journaling, print-making, podcast and DJ workshops, open mic, DJ-ing and free ice cream from collaborators including the Portland Art Museum, Independent Publishing Resource Center, I am M.O.R.E. (Dr. S. Renee Mitchell), The Numberz.fm, NAYA Many Nations Academy, Belise Nishiwme (2019 Poetry Out Loud Oregon Champion), N M Bodecker Foundation, and A Beat Happening.



Photos courtesy of Portland Art Museum

Ten Tiny Community Healing Dances®. On September 12, 2021, artists took turns performing on the Ten Tiny Dances 4x4-foot stage, their performance evoking a response to recorded narratives from residents of Portland's Lents neighborhood. Original choreography by Anis Mojgani (Oregon Poet Laureate), Makino Hayashi, sophia tweed ahmad, Viva La Free, Shaun Keylock, Malik Delgado, Sweta Ravisankar, Jamie Minkus, Adrian Lobo, and Crystal Sasaki.



Photos by Stephanie Yao Long

(Curated events, continued...)

Soup and Tea - Supporting Community Healing through Art in Houseless Communities. Ridhi D’Cruz, Sia Hanna, and Andrea Celeste Macias are herbalists, thoughtful community place-makers, and facilitators of conversations. From November 21, 2021 through January 22, 2022, they provided food, hot tea, opportunities for conversation, art kits, healing salves, and plants (seeds and/or starters) at C3PO and Hygiene4All.

Program Activities: Events Still to Come

The following events are still to come, including some events originally planned to take place in 2021 but were postponed due to concerns about the Delta and Omicron variants.

- **APANO will present HUG (Heal * Unite * Gather)**, a Resilience Series Resource Fair and re-opening celebration of Orchards 82nd and the APANO community space after two years of COVID closure to the public. This event will feature speakers, presenting on BIPOC healing, grief, and resilience, music, dance, and poetry performances and reflection and story sharing participatory art. There will be food and a resource fair at this 4 hour celebration and the simple, but powerful, goal is for community members to safely reconnect in person and be surrounded by multiple levels of joyful healing experiences.
- **Morpheus Youth Project** artists Carlos Chavez and Jesus Torralba will produce an anti-violence / Latinx cultural mural for the Cully neighborhood. Meso-American imagery will invoke the cultural connections and the awakening that is necessary for the survival of our young Latinx community members. Young artist and previous Cully resident Jose Ruiz will assist in the production of the mural and with recruiting local youth to assist; Indigenous leaders Rodolfo Serna (The Redstone Collective) and Aaron Weldon will help bless the mural when it is completed.
- Some of the grant-funded events listed on pages 4-6 were postponed to 2022, including **BASS—Black Arts Summer Showcase, UwUnoco Flo, Graves into Gardens, KIMJANG! Nourish Your Soul, BIPOC Ritual Time Capsule, and Black Feast.** Watch portland.gov/omf/cityarts for rescheduling information.

Contact

For more information about the Community Healing through Art initiative, contact Jeff Hawthorne, City Arts Program Manger, jeff.hawthorne@portlandoregon.gov.