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Oregon Community Foundation Invests \$1 Million in Thought-Provoking Arts and Culture Projects Through 2024 Creative Heights Initiative

Projects Celebrate Bold Creativity, Elevate Cultural Voices and Examine Deep Challenges

PORTLAND, Ore. – A puppet musical about AI. Textile sculptures inspired by Taiwan’s past. Monuments and programs to honor Lane County’s historic Black neighborhood. These are just some of the 14 thought-provoking Oregon arts and culture projects that make up the newest recipients of Oregon Community Foundation’s annual Creative Heights grants.

OCF announced today it will invest more than \$1 million in projects that celebrate bold creativity, elevate cultural voices and examine some of the deep challenges facing Oregonians. The initiative is made possible by a generous gift from the estate of Fred W. Fields, with additional funds in 2024 from the Wieden Family Foundation. Grants that range from \$15,000 to \$100,000 are designed to encourage projects that stretch the creative capacity of artists and culture bearers.

For example, in the southern Oregon town of Talent, the nonprofit **Puppeteers for Fears** will use its grant to stage a feature-length sci-fi musical comedy exploring the implications of AI in an immersive multimedia stage setting, performed by a team of puppeteers with live electronic music from a full band.

“We started Puppeteers for Fears with cardboard, duct tape and a stubborn refusal to let that limit the scope of our creative ambitions,” said Artistic and Executive Director Josh Gross. “This grant will make it possible for us to fully bring those ambitions to life on stage.”

“We’re incredibly proud to announce this group of 2024 Creative Heights awards. These projects are driven by boundless creativity and represent a mind-boggling cross-section of artistic talent across Oregon,” said Jerry Tischleder, Senior Program Officer, Arts and

Culture, Oregon Community Foundation. “We’re humbled by the hundreds of artists who submitted proposals to share their gifts with broader communities. There is an incredible wealth of creative talent percolating across the state.”

Other grantees include:

Black Cultural Initiative for three permanent monuments to acknowledge and honor the erased and neglected history of Lane County's first Black neighborhood and its remaining survivors.

In a statement, the Black Cultural Initiative shared, “There is a place where art and history meet today's reality. It is in that space the Black Cultural Initiative aims to create a tangible narrative and permanent works of art that acknowledge the truth of where we have been - and honors those whose suffering paved the way for our progress, growth and greatness.”

Fuchsia Lin for “Perched on the Summit of Jade Mountain,” a series of textile art sculptures inspired by Taiwan's past, present and future; to be worn and performed in by Taiwanese American dancers and performers in a short docufiction film.

“I'm so thrilled to receive the resources to take my work to the next level by exploring 3D printing technology to incorporate into my textiles and costume work,” said Fuchsia Lin. “Combining this new development with the subject matter of my Taiwanese culture is something I'm eager to dive into - I see this work with costume and film really elevating Taiwanese American voices to national recognition.”

Bruce Burris to curate, exhibit and archive personal narratives from former residents of Fairview Training Center, an Oregon institutional-residential facility that supported children and adults diagnosed with neurological differences.

“Mention Fairview Training Center and you will get a wide range of reactions,” said Burris. “The mission of this project is to broaden the archive of Fairview-related stories collected previously to include those who may have seemed on the margins 20+ years ago such as caregivers, friends, residents and families when the institution closed while using an interdisciplinary approach to collecting and sharing stories.”

Portland Hip-Hop artist **Quincy Davis** to produce an original Hip-Hop album shedding light on issues young people face, especially mental health, with teaching and mentorship to incorporate youth participants into the creative process.

“I'm grateful for this opportunity, supporting our ability to focus deeply on the work we're called to do,” said Quincy Davis, Artist, Music Producer and Creative Director. “Creating music with lyricism, sharing about our journey of mental-health and sobriety, offering vital truths that may provide a light through the dark times. And also, supporting our work to offer a safe, creative community space for youth to share their voice, receive positive reflection, and recognize themselves as valuable members of our community.”

Taravat Talepasand and Christopher Whyte, both faculty members at Portland State University's College of the Arts, to create a multidisciplinary, multimedia concert and exhibit of new musical and visual works by Iranian and Iranian-American women that supports women's basic human rights and freedom.

"We are so overjoyed for the support of With Her Own Wings from the Oregon Community Foundation Creative Heights initiative! At this crucial moment in time when gender apartheid has taken hold around the world, we are grateful for this tremendous support which enables us to highlight the voices of Iranian and Iranian-American women, among a group of brilliant artist-collaborators, and create a truly collaborative project which brings attention to and works to overcome the erosion of women's rights in Iran and around the world. Zan-Zendegi-Azadi (which translates as Women, Life, Freedom)."

The Weary Woman Support Group and Sunshine Band (Vaughn Kimmons)

to develop an improvisation-based performance and album created by a collective of intergenerational Black Femme musicians, culminating in an album release event featuring performances from the collective.

"This funding is an investment in the well-being of Black women artists," said Vaughn Kimmons. "My desire is that more Black women artists will be funded for their labor because we've become accustomed to being "everybody's everything" but nothing to ourselves."

Anis Mojjani to create and install "poetry objects" around the state of Oregon, using a combination of telephone/phonebooths, newspaper boxes and sandwich boards to deliver poems to the public.

"There's no way I would be able to explore the possibility of this project without funding like the Creative Heights grant, but in addition to this, and probably more important, that funding like this exists allows for artists like myself to take borders off from around our limitations and start to more radically envision what imaginative possibilities can become tangible, and in receiving a grant like this, not only delivers funding but also a validation to the imaginings and creative pursuits of artists across Oregon."

Tucker Maxon School for The Harmony in Hands project, three visual, tactile and auditory mural installations that celebrate ability-diversity and unity with an accessible, engaging, inclusive and interactive experience for deaf and hard of hearing children.

"We are incredibly honored to receive this grant and deeply grateful that it will enable us to bring our vision for the multi-artist 'Harmony in Hands' project with Tucker Maxon School to life in an interactive experience," said Julia Alexis Hunkler Creative Lead and Muralist. "This support is a powerful step toward celebrating inclusivity through creativity within our community, and we are thrilled for the challenge and creativity ahead!"

Find a full list of the new Creative Heights grantees [here](#).

About Creative Heights

OCF's Creative Heights initiative provides opportunities for artists and culture bearers to stretch their creative capacity, share new works and test new ideas. The initiative has invested roughly \$1 million per year since 2014, encompassing 137 projects across a range of visual art, dance, folk and traditional arts, film/video/media, literary arts, museum exhibitions, humanities projects, music, theater and performance arts, history and heritage projects, and multidisciplinary artistic works.

About Oregon Community Foundation

Since 1973, **Oregon Community Foundation** has worked to improve the lives of all Oregonians through the power of philanthropy. In partnership with donors and volunteers, OCF strengthens communities in every county in Oregon through grantmaking, scholarships and research. In 2023, OCF distributed \$225 million in grants and scholarships. Individuals, families, businesses and organizations can work with OCF to create charitable funds to support causes important to them. To learn more, please visit oregoncf.org.

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