



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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**\$60K Awarded to Baltimore Artists
Through Grit Fund Grants**

Baltimore, MD: The Peale, Baltimore's Community Museum, has announced the winners of the 2026 Grit Fund Awards. This cycle, Grit Fund received **52** eligible applications, amounting to **\$492,680** in funding requests. The total budget for this cycle was \$60,000. With this, Grit Fund's Jury Panel selected **8** innovative, community-based arts projects to support this year. Project awards range from **\$10,000** to **\$5000**. **In total, \$60,000 has been awarded to creative visionaries and culture keepers with support from the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts.**

"Baltimore's creative community constantly inspires. This year's grant recipients include projects that create intentional space for tradition-based textile arts, provide a platform for films created by queer filmmakers, and explore the cultural impact of artificial intelligence. Baltimore creatives use their practice to raise awareness of social issues and uplift the communities they live in," says Krista D. Green, Program Officer of Grit Fund at the Peale, "People across the city will have the chance to see the exhibitions, watch performances, and participate in the amazing activities produced by these projects."

Since 2015, Baltimore's artists have found support for their projects through Grit Fund. Ranging from out-of-school time programs that connect our youth to STEAM opportunities, and art-meets-journalism projects that communicate hidden stories of Black Baltimore, to community festivals that recapture and remind us of the strength of our city's diversity, Grit Fund has been a dynamic, accessible, and much-needed funding source in Baltimore City.

The 2026 Grit Fund Award recipients are:

\$10,000 Arit Etukudo

I used to breathe fire, you know? - is an immersive multidisciplinary installation exhibition that explores grief, loss, memory, and ancestral archiving. The project features a multidisciplinary exhibition, a performance film installation - by the same name, creative workshops, and a communal archival photo project. This work experiments with

both materiality and form as it fragments and deconstructs the metaphysical and ancestral identities in order to birth it into the physical world. Constructed as a multi-sensory environment - where viewers engage with sound, moving image, and spatialized prose - the work dissolves linear perception, and allows witnesses to holistically connect with the work. Instagram: [@Arit Emmanuela](#), Website: www.AritEmmanuela.com

\$10,000 Homie House Press

Homie House Press is a sisterhood, an evolving plan, and a sci-fi sequence where historically underrepresented folx are equipped with the tools to create + publish in the photobook medium. Photography in the book form matters. Representation for underrepresented communities through our lived experience is power. Taking narratives out of the digital realm and translating them as tangible and accessible art is power. Archiving them as an art book for us, by us, and about us is power. Books carry our stories and our stories are the entire fabric of humanity. If books are knowledge and photography is testimony, then this is about all of us and our interconnected agency. The truth is, our stories will save us. Instagram: @homiehousepress, Website: <http://adrianastories.com/homiehousepress>

\$10,000 K'aree Cherokaree Tsalagi

Tsalagi Textiles Studio: Indigenous Textile Space for Craft - Tsalagi Textiles Studio: Indigenous Textile Space for Craft is about the preservation and continuation of the textile arts communities within Baltimore City. Tsalagi Textiles Studio: Indigenous Textile Space for Craft will be the founding space of textile arts for Craft education centered around traditional folk art based practices such as Sewing, Weaving and Textile Design. These forms of practice are essential to the environment to preserve cultural heritage and autonomy of black indigenous queer communities. Tsalagi Textiles Studio envision a world where Sewing, Weaving and Textile design is not only a timeless skill but also a pathway to creativity, self-sufficiency, and community. Tsalagi Textiles Studio: Indigenous Textile Space for Craft will produce a installation named "Craftivism: Sewing In Resilience" an introductory Exhibition to launch the project space in partnership with local maker space Station North Tool Library. Instagram: @tsalagitextilesstudio

\$ 7,500 PRESTON "PJ" BOYD

CLOSE THAT BACK DOOR - *Close That Back Door* began as a feeling long before it evolved into an idea for an art installation. It first lived in conversations between my collaborator and me about home, family, and loss—about the neighborhoods that raised us, and the doors we’ve watched close behind, or on, the people we love. The project now takes shape as a series of handcrafted tufted rugs, doormats, and a companion short film, all intended to live within a gallery or museum space.

The title draws inspiration from the colloquialism “being back-doored,” which in sub-popular culture refers to being betrayed or set up by a close friend or known associate. I reinterpreted the phrase, transforming it into a message of empowerment. In this project, *Close That Back Door* speaks to eliminating self-betrayal and placing responsibility for personal accountability and growth in one’s own hands. The goal is for the phrase to serve as a call to action for the broader community—to encourage individuals not only to strive to be better for themselves, but also to extend that effort toward others, ultimately contributing to a healthier, more supportive environment for everyone. Instagram: @chrmmfilmworks

\$ 7,500 Tahir Hemphill

Playtest: Data, Memory, and Community - is a collaborative, public-facing visual arts project that explores how artificial intelligence, language, and community memory intersect. The project uses creative workshops, live performance, and interactive installation to help Baltimore residents understand how emerging technologies shape representation, authorship, and identity.

Playtest centers visual art as both medium and method. The project includes three interconnected components: **Prompt Battle** — Live Public Event; **NO CAP** — Interactive Installation; **Data + Memory Workshops** — Participatory Community Sessions.

Website: <https://www.rapresearchlab.com/>

\$ 5,000 Nicoletta Daríta de la Brown

While Washer Woman Was Here - *Washer Woman Was Here* is a sculptural installation and performance activation centered on a human-scale structure that functions as a sanctuary space for ritual, care, and collective release.

The structure is filled with warm light, hanging cloth, wash basins, and simple domestic materials. Inside, I perform the role of the Washer Woman—slowly washing garments as an embodied ritual of care. Visitors are invited to enter the structure one at a time and offer a garment, or select a cloth from a communal rack, to be “washed of worry.” Afterward, the cloth is hung inside the structure, slowly transforming the space into a record of collective participation. Instagram: @nicoletta.darita | @xoxo.nicoletta; Website: www.nicoletta.love

\$ 5,000 Maria Gabriela Aldana

Surviving the Key Bridge - The Surviving the Key Bridge project follows up on the impact of our work more than two years after the collapse. While the Echoes from the Key Bridge project focused on the longshoreman, Scott Ambrose, Surviving the Key Bridge looks at families who are in worse situations than before. The intended outcome of Surviving the Key Bridge is calling out that Latin Americans are suffering not just from being invisible workers but also being racially profiled by our federal administration. The project will serve as a security hub for families to share their opinions, their grief, their frustrations, and act as a vessel to document and increase awareness of their needs. The platform we create will be reproduced in various universities, churches, non-profits, and government events to promote immigrant advocacy and solidarity. <https://artofsolidarity.org/page/1-Aldana%20Biography.html>

\$ 5,000 Sideworld

Filth Fest - Filth Fest is a large film, media, and art festival showcasing bold, provocative, and exciting films created by queer filmmakers that are normally rejected from film festivals. We hope for this event to become the start of an annual day-long festival taking place in Baltimore that's centered around a curated selection of films created solely by queer filmmakers, and also featuring surprise performances, live music, and art workshops. Instagram: @sideworld.video, Website: <https://sideworld.neocities.org/>

About the Jury

Ebony Evans is a musician, performing artist, arts educator, chief curator, small business owner and passionate activist. By exploring the intersections of race, gender and body politics, Ebony's work confronts the marginalization and disparagement of Black womxn and femmes while challenging the insidious culture of white supremacy. She has emerged as a prominent leader in rallies, organizing, and protests that align with the Say Her Name movement. Ebony earned a bachelor's degree in Urban Arts Theater from Coppin State University, where she was honored with awards for outstanding achievement in performance. With over a decade of teaching experience, she has developed arts programs, summer camps, workshops, and classes for intergenerational audiences. As a teaching artist, she successfully curated an African Folklore program at Creative Alliance, which emphasized the significance of connecting youth to their cultural identity, enhancing their performance skills, and discovering their purpose. In 2025, she was selected for the CAELII Leadership Transformation Cohort by the National Guild for Community Arts Education. Ebony's impactful work has been featured in various media outlets, including WYPR, Mic, Black Child Journal, The Baltimore Sun, The Baltimore Beat, Baltimore Magazine, Bmore Art, and more.

M. Neva Hoffman – My relationship to arts and culture in Baltimore is rooted in my work in museum leadership at the Jewish Museum of Maryland, where I serve as the Culture + Change Director. The Museum functions as both a history museum and an arts institution, and one of the most gratifying parts of my role has been supporting the intentional integration of artists into a museum setting. Working at that intersection has shaped how I think about arts and culture as living, growing work connected to people and process.

In my current position, I oversee our public art initiatives as well as public programs and visitor services. While I am capable of hands-on project work, much of my role focuses on leadership and support. I spend a lot of my energy helping translate vision into reality, thinking through how ideas move from concept to execution. That work has given me a strong understanding of what it takes to carry out public-facing cultural projects, including how timelines, budgets, collaborators, and sites interact, and how important it is that scale and scope remain realistic and achievable.

I have lived and worked in Baltimore City for the past five years, and one of the things I value most about the city is the density and richness of arts and culture. There is an incredible amount of artistry here, and a seriousness of purpose among artists who are often working with limited resources but deep commitment to this shared place. In that context, the Grit Fund's work feels meaningful and critical. Supporting collaborative, artist-led, public-facing projects is a direct investment in what already makes Baltimore a cultural center, while also thinking expansively about what is possible.

Lou Joseph is an artist and arts administrator based in Baltimore, Maryland. He is currently the Arts, Culture and Events Coordinator at Baltimore County Recreation and Parks department. Born in Youngstown, Ohio in 1975, he graduated from Ohio Wesleyan University with a BFA in painting in 1998 and received an MFA in printmaking from Indiana University in 2004. He continues an active studio practice, primarily working on painting and long-term collaborative projects, and has exhibited work in New York, Chicago, Venice, Berlin among others. From 2012 to 2022 he directed the Institute of Contemporary Art Baltimore, an artist-run nomadic art space, staging 36 large scale solo artists exhibitions, along with professional practice

programming. He lives with his family in the city of Baltimore.

Elizabeth Spavento is a curator, arts administrator and artist born and raised in Buffalo, NY. She has over 14 years of hands-on experience overseeing large- and small-scale curatorial programs in a variety of settings. She was named one of eighteen 2023-24 Creative Corps Fellows with the California Arts Council and the 18th Street Arts Center in Los Angeles, for which she received \$110,000 in funding for curatorial projects, the largest individual artist grants to be given out in the state of California. In Portland, Maine, she ran a statewide artist grant program as part of the Andy Warhol Foundation's regranting network and a residency program that highlighted the contributions of gender- and racially diverse artists.

From 2021-22, she served as the Executive Director for the Arts Council of Kern, in Bakersfield, CA, the county's leading arts and culture organization. There, she provided leadership for programs including the Arts in Corrections and Community Grants Programs.

As an artist, Spavento organized multiple exhibitions and published many texts between 2016-25 as Co-Founder and Co-Director of the curatorial collective, *Border Patrol*, including collaborating with residents of Bakersfield's Mesa Verde ICE Processing center. She is a recipient of an Ellis-Beauregard Foundation Project Grant and a three-time recipient of an Alliance for California Traditional Arts Living Cultures Grant; and she has been awarded residencies with Iris Project (Los Angeles, CA); ACRE (Steuben, WI); and the Centre for the Study of Substructured Loss (London, England). She has lectured about curatorial practice and artist-centered systems at institutions such as Alfred State University, the Maine College of Art, the Portland Museum of Art, and Henry Art Gallery. Spavento also served as a juror and panelist for the Brink Award, Creative Time and Charlotte Street, among others.

About the Andy Warhol Foundation

The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts Regional Regranting Program aims to support vibrant, under-the-radar artistic activity by partnering with leading cultural institutions in communities across the country. The program allows the Foundation to support informal, non-incorporated artist collectives and to support their alternative gathering spaces, publications, websites, events, and other projects. For more information about the Andy Warhol Foundation visit its website: <https://warholfoundation.org/>

About the Peale

The Peale is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt, non-profit corporation established to restore the historic Peale Museum building as a center to celebrate the unique history of Baltimore, its people, and places. By creating a more inclusive cultural record of the city, the Peale aims to help people everywhere see Baltimore in a new light. For more about the Peale, visit its website: www.thepeale.org