

# AUTUMN 2020

**W**e've arrived in fall 2020 already, and it has been a tumultuous, humbling, stressful, and motivating (pick your favorite!) year. Our community has faced a lot of challenges, and through your generous partnership and support we have been able to put more resources directly into artists' hands. We've always known it to be true, but it has been more apparent than ever this year: Artists are magical and how would we ever survive without them? They invite us into critical conversations with their work and activism around injustices, and provide us necessary ways of connection when isolation is prescribed. Again, thank you for your continued support, and for letting us share a closer look at what your support has allowed us to achieve so far in 2020.

## WHAT'S BEEN GOING ON?

**\$30,000 has been awarded to local artists so far this year.**

Three Artist Support Grants, 20 Micro Grants, and 4 Generator Grants. We have doubled the total amount we will award in Micro Grants this year, to support more artists whose practices have been affected by the pandemic.

Although our gallery on Vinton Street has seen fewer visitors than usual, Generator Space has been nonetheless filled with engaging exhibitions that we've been able to share virtually and by appointment. Visit the [Generator Grants page](#) on our website to view photos and videos of: **Tigerbeetle, Wintercreeper**, curated by Corson Androski; **SISSI**, curated by Jared Packard; **A Memory Held in You**, curated by Allegra Hangen and Alex Jacobsen; and **Above / Below**, curated by Nick Clark and Anne Dovali.

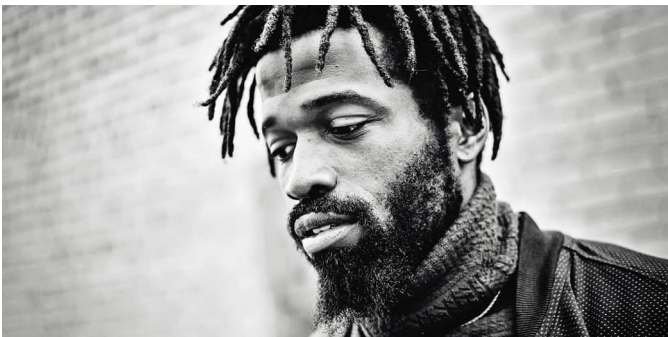
We launched the Alternate Currents program last summer to explore issues in and around the arts that have an impact at the local level. **Our 2020 Alternate Currents theme is focused on the intersection of arts and culture and climate justice.** We've held four panel discussions so far this year (some virtual) and have published 16 blog posts, with interviews and essays from local and regional artists. Read an excerpt from our May 18, 2020 interview with our 2020 Indigenous American Artist Support Grant recipient, Steve Tamayo on page 4 of this newsletter. Please join us in these critical conversations by adding your voice in the comments section of the blog, and joining us for a virtual panel. [Learn more here!](#)

## WHAT ARE WE LOOKING FORWARD TO?

In the last half of 2020 we are thrilled to finally kick off our work bringing the entire arts sector together to create systemic change and build a better sector from within. Our work on the micro level (supporting artists directly with grant dollars and education) can only go so far unless some changes are made on the macro level. **Amplify Arts is the new project lead for a collaborative initiative called ArtStock, supported by the Peter Kiewit Foundation.** ArtStock brings together folks from across the cultural and creative sector to work collaboratively on projects and initiatives that will make our arts community stronger. **We will also be welcoming the first class of [Culture Work Fellows](#) into the ArtStock cohort this fall.** These 10 individuals will bring the artist perspective into a room which up until this point has been exclusively filled with representatives of arts organizations. We're partnering with research and evaluation firm The Improve Group out of Saint Paul, MN to help us gather data that will help inform ArtStock's work. We'll be releasing that report later this fall!



*Opening Reception photo from Tigerbeetle, Wintercreeper, curated by Corson Androski. January 2020.*



## MICRO GRANT INTERVIEW: MARCEY YATES

Earlier this spring we sat down for some video interviews with recent grant recipients. Below is an excerpt from our interview with Micro Grant recipient Marcey Yates, who received \$500 to support activities at Culxr House. Yates, originally from Omaha, is a producer, songwriter, professional audio engineer, and the founder of the creative hub, Culxr House. Yates attended UNO and graduated from the Conservatory School of Recording Arts in Tempe, Arizona. Yates, when not working on music or at the Culxr House, spends time with his 3 kids Grayson, Raleigh and Jazzie. The interview has been edited for length and clarity. To view the whole interview visit our [YouTube](#) page.

### What sets Omaha's creative community apart?

There's opportunity to be a creative, to own your creativity on your own terms. I like the fact that the opportunity exists here. You have a chance to make an impact almost immediately. If you're doing it right. And I feel like that... you go somewhere else, to LA, New York, it may take you a bit longer to even scratch the surface just in their local community. We have to invest in it you know. We think about it long term if we want to have that longevity, if we want to have that recognition that we claim that we should have. But we have to do those things, we have to set that up. So it's definitely, you know, an investment in all generations and supporting them.

### How does direct financial support expand opportunities for artists in Omaha?

So that's one of the reasons why I started the Culxr House was to be able to be a resource. So it's like, whatever resources I have, I'm able to share. So, you know, if I'm able to get direct financial support then that allows me to be able to not charge these artists for resources. It keeps the resources affordable for them. These artists need things like supplies, they need things like USB drives, and they need studio time. They need consultation. So the trickle down effect is like that, you know. If I'm able to secure funds then I'm able to share more resources and more time with others.

[Click here](#) to check out Marcey's website. [Click here](#) to learn more about Culxr House.



*Micro grant recipient Marcey Yates, founder of the creative hub, Culxr House.*



## GENERATOR GRANT: CURATOR REFLECTION

Our most recent Generator Grant exhibition **Above/Below**, curated by **Nick Clark** and **Anne Dovali**, investigates the ethereal's relationship to the concrete. Examining the representational and material weight of ground and sky, both artists embrace painting's potential to reorient phenomenological responses to standing squarely in the middle. In *Above*, Dovali's airy renderings of cloud formations confront Clark's imposing simulations of massive concrete pads *Below*. Both artists' affinity for found materials as substrate (Dovali's semi-transparent pocket-sized pieces of glass and Clark's repurposed segments of cardboard) underscores the transience of being caught in-between. In-between time, in-between place, in-between being, become a shared state and a universal frame of reference for transformation and renewal.

We asked curator Anne Dovali to reflect on the exhibition:

**Above/Below investigates the phenomena of being in between. Can you elaborate on you and Nick's choice of that conceptual framework for this show? Especially considering current events around racial justice and public health, and the social and cultural shifts we're feeling.**

The concept of in between initially pointed toward the transitional space both Nick and I recognized in our studio practices and resulting artwork. Being painters who were previously exploring narrative themes, our pivot toward subjects that did not explicitly tell a story was an unexpected act of synchronicity—neither of us being aware the other was creating this type of work so heavily. *Above / Below* coincided with a



*From In Between, the public program led by Anne and Nick in conjunction with Above/Below. Participants were led through a kite-making and kite-flying workshop.*

global pandemic, monumental uprising against systemic racism ingrained in America since its founding, and an election year—situating us all in a place of in between. While the show was a celebration of the artist's journey—listening, learning, growing, evolving, creating—it is now also an extension of the individual and collective journeys we are living. The elemental qualities of the show (earth, air, light, water, wind, etc.) remind us there are interconnected unseen forces constantly at work. We do not operate outside these forces but are a force ourselves. Staring at the ground beneath your feet or the sky above you isn't a passive act of mindlessness but an act of meditating on the world in which we live, taking the time to realize our next move.

**What are your reflections after the show has ended (on collaboration, theme, impact, generator grant process, etc.)?**

Collaborating with Nick Clark on *Above / Below* gave us an opportunity to relive the old days, but with a bit more experience under our belts. Nick and I met while students at the University of Nebraska at Omaha, and because we both pursued a Bachelors of Fine Art in painting, we pulled many all-nighters in the studio preparing for critiques and later our thesis shows. The fact that two years later our art-making trajectories synced, leading Nick to apply for the Generator Grant, reminded us we weren't alone in our struggle to evolve as artists. The subsequent show, and the historical time in which it is situated, will be remembered by me as an invitation for others to evolve with us—not just creatively—but socially, culturally, and emotionally. I hope all those who have experienced the show feel the same.



Steve Tamayo speaking at an anti-KXL rally in 2014.

## FROM THE ALTERNATE CURRENTS BLOG:

*The Alternate Currents blog is a go-to online resource linking readers to topical articles, interviews, and critical writing that forefront national and international discussions related to artist-led policy platforms, cross-sector partnerships, and artist-driven community change.*

*This excerpt is from our May 18, 2020 interview with 2020 Indigenous American Artist Support Grant recipient, Steve Tamayo:*

Being the cultural specialist for the NICE program, the Native Indigenous Centered Education, this is what my job entails: explaining the symbology of the plains and the tribes within, specifically the four tribes of Nebraska. Once you get into how complex our societies and our clanship are—the symbology, the color concepts, and numerology, the ten different regions; when I talk about moccasins, what region am I speaking of—this gets really complicated. To be able to be adjunct at UNO and to teach at Metropolitan Community College, it’s amazing for me to be able to pass on this information because I love studio art classes. I love hands-on and the only way to truly understand this way of being is just to get your hands dirty. There’s a lot of people that are well-read but what’s that book gonna do when you have a live Buffalo in front of you, you know what I mean? How do you process it and how do you tan the hide and make the bones into the tools and games and everything that you need. This is what I’ve been able to bring to the table.

During my little quarantine time period right now, the best way for me to spend my time here is on documentation and to create as much as possible. It’ll benefit many generations down the road with our technology that we have access to today. I have access to the Joslyn [Art] Museum now because

of Annika [Johnson, Associate Curator of Native American Art at the Joslyn Art Museum], who is a gift to all of us in the city. I’m really happy that she’s here. The first thing I told her, or asked her, is if I could get into the vault, because I was trying to get into the vault for the last 25 years, and she’s like, “Sure!” So she opened it up, not only to me but to my students as well, because I want them to see the technique that was utilized back in the day and what’s different and to look at the materials because it all has a story. This is, for us, you know incorporating our creation stories and all of our stories of our designs and color concepts, it’s more meaningful. For our kids to see works of even their relatives, great-grandparents, great-great-great-grandparents, I’m just like “this is amazing.”

[Read or listen to the full interview here.](#)

**Steve Tamayo** draws upon his family history as a member of the Sicangu Lakota tribe. His fine arts education (BFA from Sinte Gleska University), along with his cultural upbringing, have shaped him as an artist, historian, storyteller and dancer. Steve provides activities during his residencies that include art and regalia making, drumming, powwow dance demonstrations and lectures on the history, symbolism and meaning behind the Native customs and traditions.

Tamayo has exhibited at The National Museum of the American Indian, in Washington, DC, The Kaneko in Omaha, NE, The Great Plains Museum in Lincoln, NE, RNG Gallery in Council Bluffs, IA. His most recent work included painting buffalo robes and set design for Willie Nelson and Neil Young on the occasion of their concert for Bold Nebraska in Neligh, NE.

# OUR COVID-19 RESPONSE

In mid-March we closed down our office and Generator Space, and our team transitioned to working from home, working quickly to find virtual solutions for our programming, and thinking about how we could best support local artists, who were feeling the financial strains of cancelled exhibitions, performances, and contracts. We quickly came to the conclusion that direct financial support would be the most impactful. After shuffling some things around in the budget, and receiving generous donations from our supporters, we were able to double the amount of Micro Grants we would award this year. The total Micro Grants fund grew from \$10,000 to \$20,000. We are proud and humbled by the support from our community that allowed us to not only increase our grantmaking, but continue to honor contracts with artists for programming this year.

We worked with the ArtStock cohort to launch [Virtual Arts Omaha](#), a site with virtual events, performances, classes, fundraisers, tours, and more, hosted by individual artists, arts nonprofits, art businesses, and venues across the city, so the community could stay safely engaged with the arts during the pandemic.

This spring we partnered with Mid-America Arts Alliance to distribute a survey measuring the impacts of COVID-19 on individual artists across Arkansas, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, Oklahoma, and Texas. The results were unsurprising, but nonetheless distressing. The results of that survey indicated that 75% of Nebraska artists have lost wages/earnings (In the first three weeks of quarantine, 52% lost between \$500 and \$5,000). 86% of respondents said their emergency savings would sustain them for three months or less. We will continue to find impactful and innovative ways to support our local artists.

Finally, we will continue to put the safety of our community first, keeping strict safety measures in place until health experts tell us otherwise. #MaskUp



## OUR COMMITMENTS TO EQUITY AND JUSTICE

On June 5, 2020, we shared our statement in support of Black Lives Matter, our commitments to action, and how we will work to do better. We laid out a series of actions around organization operations, grantmaking, and our role in the larger arts community. [You can read our full statement here.](#) Since sharing our commitments in June, we have taken action in the following ways:

Created a new Vendor and Purchasing Policy, which was approved by our Board of Directors on July 17, 2020. Our purchases reflect our values, and as a 501c3 nonprofit we have an obligation to our donors, supporters, and community to be transparent. This policy lays out guidelines for contracting and purchasing, and solidifies a priority focus on local businesses that are women, BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, person of color), disabled, and/or LGBTQIA2S+ -owned.

Held a community conversation on July 23, 2020 about our grant application processes, where we shared demographic data of grant applicants and recipients from the past four years of our grants program, and got feedback from past and future applicants regarding ways our application process and grants program overall could be more accessible, inclusive, and equitable. We are taking that feedback, as well as knowledge from other regional grantmakers in the arts, to refine and restructure pieces of our grants program as we look towards 2021.



## WAYS TO SUPPORT AMPLIFY ARTS

- Make a **one-time** or **monthly gift**
- Ask your employer if they have a **matching gift program**
- **Add your voice** to the discussion on social media

◀ *ArtStock meeting at the Barbara Weitz Community Engagement Center on the UNO campus, January 2020*

## WAYS TO SUPPORT LOCAL ARTISTS

- **Buy art** from local, living artists
- **Buy tickets** for local, live performances (Lots of these happening online these days!)
- **Promote** local artists on social media
- **Attend open studios**, gallery openings, and art walks (mask up, or check these out virtually!)
- **Give gifts** from local artists and makers



▲ *Photo credit: Debra S. Kaplan*



[Subscribe to our emails](#)

**AMPLIFYARTS**