



For Immediate Release

Salem, Oregon – February 3, 2026

Contact: Contact: Liora Sponko, 971-345-1641, Liora.SPONKO@biz.oregon.gov

29 Oregon artists receive Career Opportunity Program grant awards

Salem, Oregon – In the first round of FY2026 Career Opportunity Program grant awards, the Oregon Arts Commission and The Ford Family Foundation have awarded \$92,278 to 29 artists for career development projects.

The awards include \$43,842 from the Oregon Arts Commission for all artistic disciplines and \$48,436 in supplemental funding for 14 established Oregon visual artists, visual arts writers and curators of visual arts through a partnership with The Ford Family Foundation's Visual Arts Program. Individual grants range from \$363 to \$8,000.

Career Opportunity grants support individual Oregon artists by enabling them to take advantage of timely opportunities that enhance their artistic careers. Most grants support the artists' participation in residencies, exhibitions or performance opportunities.

"The Career Opportunity Grant provides unique experiences that can truly propel an artist's career—offering chances for learning, connection and professional growth," said Arts Commissioner Jenny Stadler, who led one of two review panels. "It's always inspiring to see the incredible work of artists across the state."

The Ford Family Foundation funds are available to established Oregon visual artists who are producing new work in the fields of contemporary art and craft.

"Artists are anchors of Oregon towns and cities," said Kara Carlisle, president and CEO of The Ford Family Foundation. "By investing in artists' research, training, dedicated work time and new exhibition opportunities, we're not just amplifying their careers, we're reinforcing the cultural fabric of our communities. We're proud to join the Arts Commission in this shared commitment to impact."

FY2026 Career Opportunity Program round one grant award recipients are:

Elizabeth Arzani, Portland

Oregon Arts Commission, \$2,000

The Ford Family Foundation, \$3,000

To support a solo exhibition at Pendleton Center for the Arts Gallery for the month of June in 2026.

Christian Orellana Bauer, Portland

Oregon Arts Commission, \$2,000

To support travel and/or required fees to participate in a residency at the Vermont Studio Center (VSC) in December of 2025 in Johnson, Vermont.

Heather Lee Birdsong, Portland

Oregon Arts Commission, \$2,000

The Ford Family Foundation, \$2,500

To support framing and labor expenses for an exhibition in March 2026 at Russo Lee Gallery in Portland, which will be her first solo exhibition at a commercial gallery.

Kathleen Caprario, Springfield

The Ford Family Foundation, \$363

To support her participation in the exhibition, "Spaciousness of Change," at Scalehouse Gallery in Bend, Oregon, July 3, 2026 - August 28, 2026.

Jennie Castle, Albany

Oregon Arts Commission, \$2,000

The Ford Family Foundation, \$3,000

To support a 2026 Art/Sci Awarded Residency at PLAYA in Summer Lake, Oregon. Specific dates have not yet been announced, but all possible dates fall within the opportunity grant window.

Nicholas Christopher, Beaverton

Oregon Arts Commission, \$2,000

To support Christopher's securing an original audio composition by Don Flores and compensating a group of Street Style Dancers from all over the Pacific Northwest to share a unique style of Waving & Popping, in collaboration with Congruency Dance Collective.

Twig Cosby, Portland

Oregon Arts Commission, \$1,354

To support Cosby's career development and art practice as a wood-fire ceramic artist in a year-long, live-in residency at Pleasant Hill Pottery in Lane County beginning October 2025. Cosby will focus on material research to develop form and surface.

Lori Damiano, Portland

Oregon Arts Commission, \$793

To support Damiano's artist residency at the Praxis Digital Weaving Lab in Cleveland, Ohio, from February 3-15, 2026. Damiano will be accessing a TC2 digital jacquard loom for the first time.

Leah Denny, Beavercreek

Oregon Arts Commission, \$2,000

The Ford Family Foundation, \$1,680

To support a solo exhibit of Denny's sculptural work at the Alexander Gallery of Clackamas Community College during the dates of March 31, 2026 through April 30, 2026.

Michelle Diaz, Albany

Oregon Arts Commission, \$2,000

To support travel expenses for attending the Superstars Writing Seminars in Colorado and the Life, The Universe & Everything (LTUE) symposium in Utah, both held in February 2026, to enhance Diaz's writing education and connect with industry professionals.

Liza Faktor, Portland

The Ford Family Foundation, \$3,000

To support Faktor's attendance of "Roots Assembly: Forests, Rewilding and Ways of Being," a curatorial program examining the vital role of forest ecosystems and rewilding in preventing climate collapse.

Marcus Fischer, Portland

Oregon Arts Commission, \$2,000

The Ford Family Foundation, \$4,893

To support the first exhibition of Fischer's work at NOON Projects in Los Angeles, California, from April to late May, 2026.

Sylvia Friday, Alsea

Oregon Arts Commission, \$2,000

To support Friday's career as a traditional willow basket maker and educator. Friday will travel to Europe in Autumn 2026, to study with master weavers in Poland, England and Germany.

Ebony Frison, Portland

Oregon Arts Commission, \$2,000

The Ford Family Foundation, \$5,000

To support the creation of new work for the 2026 Oregon Biennial, drawing from Frison's personal archive, family's archive and the Forgotten Frontlines archive, using photogravure, painting and prose as primary mediums.

Suzanne Haag, Eugene

Oregon Arts Commission, \$2,000

To support Haag's participation in Positioning Ballet Foundation's International Forum for Future Artistic Leaders in Ballet/Dance held November 7-9, 2025, in Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

Allie Hankins, Portland

Oregon Arts Commission \$1,148

To support the performing of an excerpt of Hankins' solo "By My Own Hand, Part 4: MELODY," in April 2026 at Judson Memorial Church as part of the long-running Movement Research series.

Sabina Haque, Portland

Oregon Arts Commission, \$2,000

The Ford Family Foundation, \$5,000

To support participation in PLAYA's inaugural Wildfire + Water: Artists and Scientists Adapting to Change Residency, a year-long, artist-led program in Lake County, Oregon, culminating in an art exhibit addressing urgent environmental issues.

Stephen Hayes, Portland

The Ford Family Foundation, \$3,000

To support Hayes' inclusion in the 2026 Oregon Contemporary Artist's Biennial exhibition, which will run from April 1, 2026 through July 5, 2026 and be presented at OX-Oregon Contemporary Institution.

Misael Hernandez, Springfield
Oregon Arts Commission, \$2,000

To support Hernandez's participation in Anderson Ranch's Artist-in-Residence Program taking place February 4 through March 11, 2026.

Leslie Hickey, Portland
Oregon Arts Commission, \$1,740

To support the remainder of Hickey's fellowship at the New York Public Library's Picture Collection, with the term ending on March 31, 2026.

Conrad Kaczor, Portland
Oregon Arts Commission, \$2,000

To support Kaczor's GlogauAIR artist residency in Berlin, Germany, in winter 2026, where he will create and share an interdisciplinary artwork internationally and return to Portland to present the finished work with a public engagement component.

Kristan Kennedy, Portland
Oregon Arts Commission, \$2,000
The Ford Family Foundation, \$6,000

To support expenses related to an exhibition opportunity at NOON Projects in Los Angeles, California, opening in April 2026. The exhibition is a two-person show featuring Kennedy's work alongside that of Marcus Fischer.

Rainen Knecht, Portland
Oregon Arts Commission, \$2,000
The Ford Family Foundation, \$5,000

To support the production of paintings with artist-made frames and the costs associated with travel in order to attend the opening of Knecht's first out-of-state solo exhibition in eight years, this spring in San Francisco.

Horatio Law, Portland
The Ford Family Foundation, \$3,000

To support the creation of "John Day Tango: An Oregon Love Story," a multimedia project that involves shadow-play, video projection and live performance, to be exhibited at the Portland Chinatown Museum from April-July, 2026.

Astra Lincoln, Portland
Oregon Arts Commission, \$1,500

To support Lincoln's participation in the competitive, invite-only Centrum Artist in Residency Program in January, 2026.

Edward Lopez, Ashland
Oregon Arts Commission, \$2,000

To support a three-month residency in Sevilla, Spain, in early 2026 to study cante jondo at the Fundación Cristina Heeren, expanding Lopez's vocal artistry while weaving his professional practice with the deep currents of his Andalusian heritage.

John Niekrasz, Portland
Oregon Arts Commission, \$2,000

To support the travel, lodging and technical assistance necessary for the exhibition of Niekrasz's new 45-minute sound-art composition for Elastic Arts Foundation's 16-channel sound system in Chicago, Illinois, in May 2026.

Keith Van Norman, Corvallis

Oregon Arts Commission, \$1,307

To support a meaningful step in Van Norman's career, he will moderate a panel discussion, display his print "Rhapsody in Gray" and conduct a printmaking demonstration. Van Norman will also network with research, industry and community leaders at the State of the Coast Conference in November 2025.

Emily Wilson, Gardiner

The Ford Family Foundation, \$3,000

To support attending and exhibiting at the 2026 National Council on Education for the Ceramic Arts (NCECA) Conference in Detroit, where Wilson will mentor artists, sustain professional relationships and expand gallery representation.

###

The Oregon Arts Commission provides leadership, funding and arts programs through its grants, special initiatives and services. Nine commissioners, appointed by the governor, determine arts needs and establish policies for public support of the arts. The Arts Commission became part of Business Oregon (formerly Oregon Economic and Community Development Department) in 1993, in recognition of the expanding role the arts play in the broader social, economic and educational arenas of Oregon communities. In 2003, the Oregon Legislature moved the operations of the Oregon Cultural Trust to the Arts Commission, streamlining operations and making use of the Commission's expertise in grantmaking, arts and cultural information and community cultural development.

The Arts Commission is supported with general funds appropriated by the Oregon Legislature and with federal funds from the National Endowment for the Arts, as well as funds from the Oregon Cultural Trust. More information about the Oregon Arts Commission is available online at: www.oregonartscommission.org.