

## Artists Selected Metro Arts 'Learning Lab' Artist Training Program

May 16, 2016

## New Professional Development Opportunity Will Lead To Artist-Driven Neighborhood Projects

NASHVILLE, Tenn., May, 16, 2016 – The Metropolitan Nashville Arts Commission today announced the inaugural class of artists who will participate in its new Learning Lab program, a professional development opportunity for artists to train in civic, public, social and placemaking practices, which will activate neighborhoods through art.

The class includes 25 Nashville artists, representing 14 different Metro Council districts and 17 different zip codes, who were selected through a competitive application process to serve as the first class of the Learning Lab. The artists who complete the program will be eligible for up to \$5,000 of funding for the development and installation of a temporary neighborhood-based public art work in Nashville/Davidson County, said Caroline Vincent, director of public art for Metro Arts.

The 2016 Learning Lab class includes: Rebekah Alexander, Julia Whitney Brown, Kimberly Brown, Lexander V. Bryant, Michael Cooper, Tinsley Anne Dempsey, Jake Elliot, Michael Ewing, David Hellams, Robbie Lynn Hunsinger, Elisheba Israel, Jay Jenkins, Courtney Adair Johnson, Megan Kelley, Ariel Lavery, Jessika Malone, Bryce McCloud, Robin Paris, Xavier Payne, Elizabeth Sanford, Tara Thompson, Vadis Turner, Elizabeth Williams, Herb Williams and Tom Williams.

“What an impressive group of artists who are committed to want to strengthening our community by bringing art into more aspects of daily life,” said Mayor Megan Barry. “I want to commend these local artists and the Metro Arts Commission for all they are doing to make Nashville a better place for all.”

Primary funding for the Learning Lab comes through a \$75,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) “Our Town” funding program. NEA’s “Our Town” funds supports creative placemaking projects that help transform communities with the arts at their core.

Nashville Mayor Megan Barry has included an additional \$50,000 for temporary public art artworks in the city’s proposed fiscal year 2017 budget.

“We are grateful to Mayor Barry for including an additional \$50,000 in our budget that will allow us to leverage the NEA grant funding to support arts activation in even more neighborhoods throughout the community and offer greater opportunities for local, emerging artists,” said Jennifer Cole, executive director of Metro Arts.

Cole said the goal with the Learning Lab is to educate and train artists on the fundamentals and best practices of community-based art. She said the Learning Lab will be held from June through October and will cover a variety of topics including community engagement, placemaking and public art project management.

The curriculum is designed and will be presented by national arts leader and artist Michael Rohd of the Center for Performance and Civic Practice, the Arts and Business Council of Greater Nashville and local subject matter experts.

“With this program, we will build a broader capacity for artists and for our community, and with this additional investment by the city of Nashville and our mayor, we are ready to go to work and look forward to announcing these innovative artist-driven projects later this fall,” said Cole.

The Metropolitan Nashville Arts Commission, a commission of the Metropolitan Nashville Government, drives a more equitable and vibrant community through the arts. Metro Arts receives operational support from the Tennessee Arts Commission, and additional information is available online at Arts Nashville.

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