Partnerships and Collaborations:
A Year of Deepening and Sustaining

Mid-America Arts Alliance (M-AAA) is an organization renewing its dedication to service and collaboration. In FY17, M-AAA focused on the depth and quality of experience for our State Arts Agency, funding, and program partners, to amplify our impact within this wonderful region of Arkansas, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, Oklahoma, and Texas.

Strengthening and expanding programs is at the heart of our commitment to deepening the constituent experience, and this year’s most notable program expansion was the acquisition of Artist INC. It joins our successful grant, exhibition touring, and professional development programs that benefit not only individual artists, but hundreds of arts organizations, exhibitors, and audiences across our region and beyond.

This year, we created and approved a strategic plan for FY18–20 outlining our mission, vision, and core values. We reaffirmed our commitment to supporting cultural expression in all its forms, sharing diverse cultures and traditions through our exhibition touring programs, supporting individual artists, and fostering thriving arts communities. We look forward to a future of continued growth and strength and it is our great passion to bring more art for more people every day alongside a dedicated team of board members, staff, and volunteers.

- Ed Clifford, Board Chairman, and
Todd Stein, CEO

OUR MISSION

Mid-America Arts Alliance strengthens and supports artists, cultural organizations, and communities throughout our region and beyond. We are especially committed to enriching the cultural life of underserved communities by providing high quality, meaningful, and accessible arts and culture programs and services.
Advocacy

In May, the US legislature approved the FY17 federal budget with slight increases in funding for the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities. This great success is due in no small part to the efforts of artists and constituents across our region, who called, emailed, sent letters, and showed up in both their state and national capitals to advocate on behalf of the arts.

To ensure access to arts for all through essential government funding, M-AAA staff members traveled to Washington, DC, and regional state capitals to speak to legislators about the importance of the arts and humanities for all citizens.

M-AAA also reached out to thousands of constituents to provide advocacy resources: how to find and contact elected officials, what to say, how to make your case, how to submit letters to the editor, petitions to sign, postcard templates, advocacy dos and don’ts, and facts vs fictions of government arts funding.

Cross-Sector Work

This year saw the roll-out of Creativity Connects: National Demonstration Grants, a special, one-time, cross-sector project. The program is a collaboration of the US Regional Arts Organizations, coordinated by M-AAA with support from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

The program is in honor of the fiftieth anniversary of the National Endowment for the Arts and builds on the work of the NEA’s Creativity Connects initiative. Six exceptional programs were awarded that highlight “arts and” cross-sector work, like the Judy Dworin Performance Project, which worked with incarcerated individuals to use the arts to heal and re-enter society.

“Arts and” shows the power of the arts in all facets of our lives: business/industry, military, education, environment, faith, finance, food, health, law, science, technology, and more. We look forward to a continuing commitment to cross-sector work in FY18.
We believe that the arts and humanities further understanding of diverse cultures and traditions. Traveling exhibitions from ExhibitsUSA and NEH on the Road are one way we serve communities that otherwise might not have access to the arts and humanities.

Bandits & Heroes, Poets & Saints: Popular Art of the Northeast of Brazil

Bandits & Heroes, Poets & Saints, an NEH on the Road exhibition, explores how the ancient cultures of Africa blended with indigenous and colonial Portuguese traditions to form the complex cultural mosaic of modern Brazil. Engaging photographs and works of popular art, including sculptures, paintings, prints, religious objects, toys, and booklets of poetry, draw visitors into the vibrant culture of the Northeast of Brazil and introduce the festivals, heroes, and spiritual traditions that give shape and meaning to the daily lives of the Nordestinos, common people of Brazil’s Northeast.

"One visitor...declared this exhibition was truly phenomenal. He came back three times. Congresswoman Chelley Pingree called to congratulate me on bringing this exhibition to Maine. The general consensus was that this Bandits & Heroes was a ‘tour de force’!"

Anne B. Zill
Director, University of New England Art Gallery
Portland, ME, April 2017
**Estamos Aquí** *(We Are Here)*

*Estamos Aquí* features contemporary serigraphs by forty artists using a specialized silkscreen print technique. Many of the artists are speaking from the Latino/Chicano perspective, and the resulting portfolio of prints expresses their celebrations, sorrows, challenges, popular culture, and personal experience. *Estamos Aquí* concluded its ExhibitsUSA tour this year, after a successful four years touring the US from New Jersey to Washington.

"Our gallery attendant reported that she had a large multi-generational (by appearance) family enter the gallery and spend time with the work. As they were leaving, the matriarch approached her and expressed her gratitude for the show. She was originally from Mexico and many members of her family were visiting from the country. She was so happy to see her culture reflected. The bilingual materials were just the biggest win! People came to our exhibition to improve their English. People came to improve their Spanish. People came because they knew that they would be able to understand/enjoy the materials. They came and were surprised to discover that yes, this show was for them.”

Yetunde Ogunfidodo  
Program Manager, Regional Arts Commission  
St. Louis, MO, April 2017

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**Cloth as Community: Hmong Textiles in America**

In this exhibition from ExhibitsUSA, Hmong textile production tells a story that reflects the radical upheaval in the external environment that Hmong refugees experienced. It tracks the evolution of Hmong textiles from ceremonial works to those created for commerce. The works show how the profound relevance of textiles as infrastructure in the Hmong social fabric has never been part of a fixed cultural tableau, even as the narrative is adapted to fit new realities.

"Many who came spent additional time after they had viewed the exhibit looking at the books and video. This was a huge step forward for this board to book an exhibit like this. The people who attended were so appreciative of the exhibit.”

Repha Buckman  
Board President, Studio 96 Community Center  
Sterling, KS, September 2016

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*Story Piece (Birds, Monkeys, Mongoose, and Deer)*, ca. 1990; cotton, 35 1/8 x 34 1/8 inches; Courtesy of private collection. Photo: E.G. Schempf.
From Palmer, Alaska to Melbourne, Florida, we’re providing more art for more people.

Want to see a full list of exhibitors, grant recipients, and participating organizations? Go to maaa.org/about
We believe that thriving arts communities contribute to prosperous, successful societies.

**Artist INC Locations:**

**Arkansas** Bentonville, Fayetteville, Springdale  
**Kansas** Lawrence, Topeka  
**Missouri** Kansas City, St. Joseph, Warrensburg  
**Nebraska** Omaha  
**Texas** Austin, Houston, Wichita Falls

**Served more than 800 artists in five states**

**Employed 69 artists in four states**

**Artist INC** programming provides artists with tailored small business development training, tools, resources, and information about opportunities for professional development and new business for their work.

**Artist INC Partners**

We are proud to partner with five organizations to provide Artist INC Live. Our thanks to the Dougherty Arts Center with the City of Austin, Texas; the Lawrence Arts Center in Kansas; the Omaha Creative Institute in Nebraska; Fresh Arts in Houston, Texas; and Arts Center of the Ozarks in Springdale, Arkansas. Artist INC programming is made possible through grants from the Windgate Charitable Foundation, Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation, and generous support from the regional creative and entrepreneur community, including the Muriel McBrien Kauffman Foundation, Hallmark Cards, the Kathleen Patton Westby Foundation, and founding partner, UMKC Innovation Center.

“**No other organization takes the time and devotion like they do to advocate for arts in regional areas. Their website lists loads of opportunities for artists and arts organizations that spans over several states! The staff is helpful and always accommodating. We would recommend M-AAA to anyone out there!**”

Eve Smith  
Director of Visual Arts  
Arts Center of the Ozarks, Springdale, AR
Artistic Innovations Grantee Calder Kamin

Texas artist Calder Kamin was the recipient of an Artistic Innovations grant for the debut of *Plastic Planet* and its associated Neocortex Classroom at Women and Their Work gallery in Austin, Texas. These works explore what the artist feels is our current environmental crisis by creating sculptures from reused plastic shopping bags.

After extensive media coverage and excellent turnout in Austin from arts audiences and students alike, *Plastic Planet* and the Neocortex Classroom traveled to Galveston Arts Center and later to the American Museum of Natural History in New York, where six thousand viewers visited.

In September 2017, Austin's PBS outlet KLRU aired a thirty-minute documentary about Kamin and her work as part of its *Arts in Context* series, now in its eighth year. Artistic Innovations awards artists and arts organizations with grants of up to $15,000 for the creation of a new work of art. They are funded by the National Endowment for the Arts and Windgate Charitable Foundation.
CHAT (Culture of Health–Advancing Together) was founded in 2015 with a desire to help immigrants and refugees acclimate to American culture through education, healthcare, and social services. CHAT was selected to participate in Houston ENGAGE, M-AAA’s capacity building program for small to midsize arts and culture organizations.

During CHAT’s participation in ENGAGE, they have grown tremendously—assembling a governing board; finding a new location for their offices and after-school arts programs; collaborating with their ENGAGE peers to enrich their programming and outreach; and they were awarded a grant from Menninger Foundation to serve refugee children in a Houston school. ENGAGE is generously funded by Houston Endowment.

Regional Touring Program Grantee Drury University

With help from a grant by our Regional Touring Program, Missouri’s Drury University created the multimedia project Life Interrupted: Art for Social Change. Life Interrupted explored the story of the WWII Japanese American Internment Camps and their connection to today’s conversations about immigration, fear, prejudice, and xenophobia.

It encompassed panel discussions, an interactive art installation, and a workshop and theatrical dance performance by the artists of CORE Performance Company of Houston. Event organizers reported that roundtable opportunities for audience members to share their responses to the work resonated strongly with the 516 attendees. “The events deeply impacted and touched our students, staff, faculty, and greater Springfield, Missouri community. Thank you M-AAA!” said artist and project creator Nancy Chikaraishi.

The Regional Touring Program, funded by the National Endowment for the Arts, underwrites fees for regional, nonprofit presenters that hire artists from within our region.

**Sources of Funding**

- **Federal Grants**: $1,213,250
- **Contributions**: $1,444,656
- **Contracted Services and Earned Income**: $1,272,992
- **Other**: $239,891

**Revenue**: $4,170,789

**Expense**: $4,168,418

**Change in Net Assets**: $2,371
More than just dollars...

1,558 Artists Served

78 ExhibitsUSA and NEH on the Road venues

467,673 Individuals Served

2,580 kids who got to try on aprons at Apron Strings in Duncan, Oklahoma

2,390 hands that clapped for the Dallas Children’s Theatre at Norfolk Arts Center in Norfolk, Nebraska

74.8 Percentage of exhibitions that traveled to communities with underserved populations

1 Strategic plan unanimously approved

1,458 Educational Programs

$1,025,355 in grants to artists and arts organizations

11 Working artists on staff

3,316 M-AAA Facebook followers
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The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation
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$50,000–$99,999
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To learn how you can help ensure more art for more people, please contact Jennifer Roe at 816-421-1388 x222 or jennifer@maaa.org.
The More Art for More People Giving Society honor roll recognizes individual members’ cumulative giving to M-AAA.

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Left: Irish artists The Young Folk perform for Live! in the Crossroads at M-AAA headquarters in Kansas City, Missouri, September 2016.

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Top to bottom: Laura Fry, curator of art at the Gilcrease Museum, tours M-AAA Directors through the collection in Tulsa, Oklahoma, in November 2016. Photo courtesy: Gilcrease Museum; Frank Uryasz, Ann Uryasz, Joan Horan, and Peter Jasso gather at the Kansas City Art Institute in Kansas City, Missouri, June 2017.
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Left to right: Staff gather for an annual holiday party in Kansas City, Missouri, December 2016; Staff install Water Bank Boogie by Nebraska artist Susan Knight at M-AAA headquarters in Kansas City, Missouri, April 2017.