

NEWS



ArtistRelief.org
support for artists affected by COVID-19

Courtesy of Artist Relief.
April 08, 2020 at 10:00am

COVID-19 RELIEF FUND TO GIVE \$10 MILLION TO ARTISTS

A coalition of more than twenty national arts funders has launched an emergency relief fund that will provide millions of dollars to artists struggling financially in the wake of the COVID-19 outbreak in the United States, which has more than 400,000 confirmed cases of the virus. The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation kick-started the initiative with a \$5 million gift that was matched by the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, the Ford

Foundation, the Mike Kelley Foundation for the Arts, and the Willem de Kooning Foundation, among other charitable organizations.

Called the Artist Relief fund, the grant program will operate for at least six months, possibly longer depending on the impact of the pandemic. In its first round of grants, 2,000 applicants will receive \$5,000 in unrestricted relief. Cultural producers living in all fifty states, territories, and tribal nations are eligible. Since there are more than 2.5 million artists working in the US, according to a 2019 study by the National Endowment for the Arts, the coalition will continue to fundraise and will strive to surpass the initial \$10 million contribution to the fund.

“In hard times like these, we turn to the arts to illuminate and help us make meaning and find connection, said Elizabeth Alexander, the president of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. “Without immediate intervention, individual artists and the arts ecosystem of which they are the foundation could sustain irreparable damage. As artists confront these new fiscal realities, we are proud to support this vital effort to address artists’ urgent needs. We call on others to join us in supporting artists so they may continue to be our lights, chroniclers, and connectors throughout this crisis and beyond.”

In addition to administering grants, the initiative will also conduct the COVID-19 Impact Survey for Artists and Creative Workers. Developed by Americans for the Arts, the survey will collect information from cultural producers and use that data to better understanding the immediate and longterm needs of artists. To learn of other resources available, artists can visit the website of coalition member Creative Capital, which is maintaining a database of organizations and other programs offering relief to artists based in the US.

Responding to the Artist Relief fund, composer, performer, and interdisciplinary artist Meredith Monk, a recipient of numerous awards from the various coalition partners, said: “Art is an antidote. We need its power of healing in our world right now. These seem like impossible times, and they would be, if it weren’t for artists and those who support them.”

Grant applications can be submitted on artistrelief.org.

The full list of funders is as follows:

7|G Foundation

Adolph and Esther Gottlieb Foundation

Amazon Literary Partnership The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation

The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts

Arison Arts Foundation

Doris Duke Charitable Foundation

Emily Hall Tremain Foundation

Ford Foundation

Helen Frankenthaler Foundation COVID-19 Relief Effort

Jerome Foundation

Joan Mitchell Foundation

Kraus Family Foundation

LeRoy Neiman and Janet Byrne Neiman Foundation

Metabolic Studio

Mike Kelley Foundation for the Arts

Pritzker Pucker Family Foundation

Richard Salomon Family Foundation

Robert Rauschenberg Foundation

The Sue Hostetler and Beau Wrigley Family Foundation

Teiger Foundation

The Wallace Foundation

The Willem de Kooning Foundation

ALL IMAGES

The Cultural World Is Ailing. That's Why 23 Arts Groups Have United to Give \$5,000 to 100 Artists Every Week Until September

The presidents of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and Arison Arts Foundation explain why they helped create a new \$10 million relief effort for artists.

Elizabeth Alexander (<https://news.artnet.com/about/elizabeth-alexander-1404>) & Sarah Arison (<https://news.artnet.com/about/sarah-arison-1407>), April 8, 2020



The funders behind Artist Relief coordinating their \$10 million effort over Zoom. Photo: Artist Relief.

The coronavirus crisis is attacking every part of our society and of ourselves: our personal and public health, our families and schools, our businesses and communities, our local and global economies.

It's also attacking the people who connect us to our humanity: our artists.

Over the past few weeks, as the COVID-19 pandemic began sweeping across the United States, tens of thousands of artists have watched their income evaporate as performance spaces shutter indefinitely, events are cancelled, and studios and museums are closed. Simultaneously, for too many artists, their supplemental streams of income, including second, third, and fourth jobs—teaching gigs and conferences, service industry jobs, and more—have also dried up. The result is a sudden cliff of precarity.



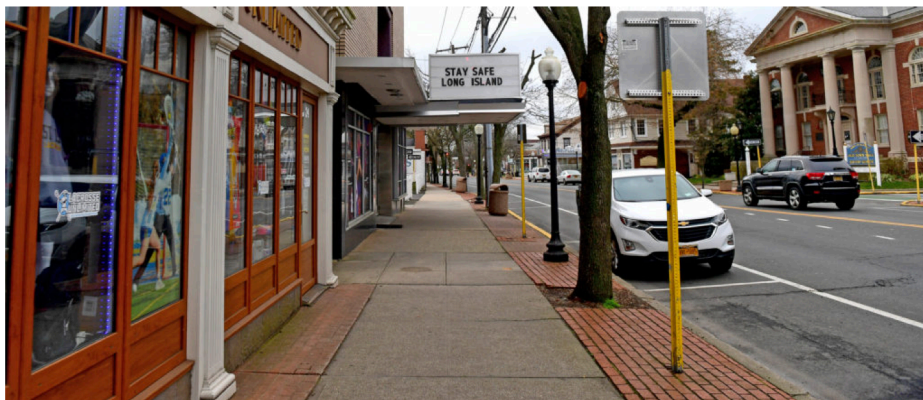
Left, Elizabeth Alexander of the Mellon Foundation. © Djeneba Aduayom. Right, Sarah Arison of the Arison Arts Foundation. Photo by Nick Garcia, courtesy of National YoungArts Foundation.

In turn, philanthropy has stepped in, developing rapid response funds across the country and extending grants to organizations that serve communities on the front lines. And yet, when it comes to the arts, we’ve only focused on half of the problem. In these first few weeks, the attention paid to the arts has been primarily focused on organizations and institutions—not the people whose work breathes life and energy and inspiration into them.

No one would deny the role these cultural institutions play in our society, or how they have been and will be devastated by this crisis. We must continue to support them. But more than any one organization, individual artists themselves are the bedrock of the arts ecosystem in America, and need our help before they hit rock bottom.

Right now, we must attend to the individuals—the musicians, playwrights, painters, poets, sculptors, dancers, filmmakers, novelists, and more—who often operate outside of institutions. Indeed, for many artists, this independence gives them the necessary freedom to pursue their vision and creative practice with integrity.

We have heard from countless artists who have watched a year of gigs fall like dominoes into the unknowable future. Book launch tours have been cancelled, keeping artists from the ability to sell work they may have been developing for years. Jazz musicians who tour ten months out of the year struggle to imagine the how and when of being back on the road and meeting their audiences in intimate spaces. Many visual artists are not allowed to enter their studios, nor dancers, their rehearsal spaces. Artists who work collaboratively can no longer do so.



A theater marquee reading “Stay Safe Long Island” in Babylon, New York on March 19, 2020. (Photo by Thomas A. Ferrara/Newsday RM via Getty Images)

Many gig-dependent artists tell us that they cannot pay their rent and are struggling to feed their families. As with others among us, some will fall ill themselves or be called into care of others. The resultant lost income is a present state of emergency for creative communities that, while unusually hardy, are in this period extremely fragile.

Some organizations have already recognized this challenge, and are stepping up to help. For example, in New York City, Ars Nova cancelled the remainder of its scheduled theater season while committing to pay all the artists (<https://arsnovanyc.com/a-note-about-the-coronavirus>) who had been scheduled to perform, as well as crew members. Bandcamp recently made news for waiving its fees (<https://www.npr.org/2020/03/18/817740137/bandcamp-will-forfeit-its-share-of-sales-this-friday>) for a day to help boost the incomes of musicians who use its platform. Others have put together resources and online trainings to help artists navigate their new financial reality, including access to unemployment benefits offered by the government. But we can and must do even more.

We understand the challenges artists face in this moment, and also their essential role in any thriving society. That's why the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and the Arison Arts Foundation have joined with over a dozen arts funders to create Artist Relief, a \$10 million national fund to support individual artists.

Artist Relief—a coalition organized by Academy of American Poets, Artadia, Creative Capital, Foundation for Contemporary Arts, MAP Fund, National YoungArts Foundation, and United States Artists—will make 100 grants of \$5,000 each to individual artists every week between now and September. These funds are intended to be used flexibly by the artists who receive them to meet their most pressing financial needs and to enable their continued creative practice.

To be clear: Whether or not artists produce new work during this crisis is beside the point. While some have pointed to Shakespeare's *King Lear* and other iconic art produced during previous pandemics as inspiration, our support for them is not conditional or contingent; it is an investment in the future of these artists and in our country's arts ecosystem.



The closed Metropolitan Museum of Art on April 1, 2020 in New York City. (Photo by Spencer Platt/Getty Images)

There's no question that for decades to come, these artists will be the chroniclers, interpreters, and illuminators helping us process and understand the implications of this unique moment in history we are living together. They will teach us and inspire us, as so many already have. Shouldn't we do everything we can to see them through to the other side, to support them as their work supports us now?

In dark times, artists do more than provide light; they create it and sustain it. They help us see and understand what makes us human in the face of fear and uncertainty. They give us the words and songs and dances and images with which to mourn and exalt. Rather than give antidotes or easy solutions, artists illuminate the path forward and over and through life's most challenging moments.

We, of course, don't have easy solutions either. The funds we have gathered are not nearly enough to help every artist in America, but we hope this Artist Relief Fund will serve as a model and clarion call to others.

As James Baldwin once put it, “You think your pain and your heartbreak are unprecedented in the history of the world, but then you read. It was Dostoevsky and Dickens who taught me the things that tormented me most were the very things that connected me with all the people who were alive, or who ever had been alive.” The same could be said of music and poetry, theater and dance, of visual art and artists of all kinds—all these gifts we cannot take for granted.

As we turn to art for solace and strength, let us not forget the people who make that art possible. We share a responsibility to offer them the same relief and refuge they offer us all.

Elizabeth Alexander is President of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. Sarah Arison is President of Arison Arts Foundation and Chair of the Board of the National YoungArts Foundation.

Artist Relief launches today with a \$5 million seed gift from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, to match an initial \$5 million from the following foundations: 7|G Foundation, Adolph and Esther Gottlieb Foundation, Amazon Literary Partnership, The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Arison Arts Foundation, Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, Emily Hall Tremain Foundation, Ford Foundation, Helen Frankenthaler Foundation COVID-19 Relief Effort, Jerome Foundation, Joan Mitchell Foundation, Kraus Family Foundation, LeRoy Neiman and Janet Byrne Neiman Foundation, Metabolic Studio, Mike Kelley Foundation for the Arts, Pritzker Pucker Family Foundation, Richard Salomon Family Foundation, Robert Rauschenberg Foundation, The Sue Hostetler and Beau Wrigley Family Foundation, Teiger Foundation, The Wallace Foundation, and The Willem de Kooning Foundation.

Artists can apply at www.artistrelief.org (<https://www.artistrelief.org>). Artists demonstrating the most severe financial need will be prioritized, with an emphasis on funding widely across disciplines and geographies.

Artist Relief

About Resources Donate FAQ

Apply

To support artists during the COVID-19 crisis, a coalition of national arts grantmakers have come together to create an emergency initiative to offer financial and informational resources to artists across the United States.

Artist Relief will distribute \$5,000 grants to artists facing dire financial emergencies due to COVID-19; serve as an
The Artist Relief fund website.



Wednesday, April 8

Nonprofit Coalition Launches \$10 M. Artist Relief Fund

A group of seven nonprofit grant-making organizations have created **Artist Relief**, a fund to provide unrestricted grants of \$5,000 directly to artists impacted by the coronavirus. Artists over 21 year old who have worked primarily anywhere in the United States (including territories and Tribal Nations) over the past two years in any discipline are eligible to apply, and the fund will prioritize those with the most need. (Grants will be given to artists regardless of citizenship status, so long as they can receive taxable income.) So far, the group—which includes Artadia, Creative Capital, Foundation for Contemporary Arts, and United States Artists—has raised \$10 million from numerous foundations, including \$5 million from the Mellon Foundation. In a statement, artist and Artadia board member Nick Cave said, “The economic security of most artists is already so precarious, and this crisis could have an irrevocable toll on our community. There needs to be immediate intervention.” More information on how to apply can be found [here](#). —
Maximiliano Durón

National YoungArts Foundation Launches Emergency Microgrant Program

The Miami-based **National YoungArts Foundation** said it would create an emergency microgrant program to give **\$1,000 unrestricted grants** to its more than 20,000 alumni whose work spans 10 different visual and performing arts disciplines. Over the next three months, between April and June, the foundation will distribute \$250,000 in three cycles, which will be based on a lottery system for all applications received for the grants. Since 1981, National YoungArts has given \$10,000 to high school students between the ages of 15 and 18. The foundation also is a participant in the **Artist Relief** fund. In a statement, Sarah Arison, the foundation’s chair, said, “National YoungArts Foundation’s mission is to provide accomplished young artists with creative and professional development opportunities throughout their careers. In the face of this unprecedented economic crisis and as one of the country’s largest funders of individual artists, YoungArts is doing all that it can to support artists—past and present award winners included—across the country.”

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Art Begins With Artists, and We Need to Help Them Now

BY **JOEL WACHS**

April 13, 2020 10:30am



The creators of the Artist Relief fund.
COURTESY ARTIST RELIEF

We are in the throes of a dramatic realignment of life as we know it. As we struggle to orient ourselves in relation to a global pandemic, as we feel it reverberate through all areas of daily existence, we do know one thing for certain: it is having a particularly devastating impact on the lives of artists. In the early days of the Covid-19 outbreak, two developments paved the way for very tough times: the experience economy was canceled, and cultural institutions were shuttered. Suddenly, there were no more exhibition openings, performances, or concerts; no touring programs, no lectures. While it

has saved countless lives, social distancing has put the arts—at least as we traditionally experience them—on hold.

Artists who are able to monetize their practice saw their contracts, work opportunities, and paychecks vanish. Those who work other jobs to support their art—often in the service industry, retail, or an art-adjacent field—were similarly out of work. The nexus of these two things makes it near impossible for any artist to survive.

For arts philanthropists to help, we must adapt to the urgency the situation demands. We must reconsider how we do business, in real time, and be prepared for that to continue to change. In order to do so, we must create a nimble, responsive network of grassroots organizations attuned to the needs of their constituencies. By combining these efforts and scaling up, we can help artists nationwide.

That's why the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts has embarked on several simultaneous efforts to provide emergency relief to artists. It has mobilized its Regional Re-granting network to make emergency grants in 16 cities across the country, and it has dedicated support to both the Foundation for Contemporary Arts' Emergency Grant Covid-19 Fund and to Artist Relief, a new coalition of national grant-makers offering emergency resources to artists in need. As an artist-endowed foundation, we know that the arts begin with artists themselves. And if we don't work fast to protect them by pooling resources, it will be too late.

The economic fallout of Covid-19 has been unprecedented. Everything stopped overnight, and it's unclear how long the closures will last. And while the CARES Act extended unemployment benefits to 1099 freelancers, the rollout has been spotty at best. One thing is for certain: a dire situation worsens with each passing day.

Artist Relief developed as a coalition because no one organization could go it alone. The Academy of American Poets, Artadia, Creative Capital, the Foundation for Contemporary Arts, MAP Fund, the National YoungArts Foundation, and United States Artists understand that to mount a national, multi-disciplinary relief campaign at the level of urgency that this situation demands requires grassroots responsiveness and the ability to adjust course. We're grateful to them for this foresight, and are excited to see the outpouring of support from across the philanthropic community. We're particularly grateful to see this generous support—from the artist endowed foundations especially—doubled by a \$5 million contribution from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

The initial \$10 million fund will be enough to fund 100 artists per week from now through September. That is roughly 2,000 artists. While valiant, that effort will only help a mere fraction of the community—a recent survey by the National Endowment for the Arts found that there are 2.5 million artists living and working in the United States.

The task at hand is emergency relief—to help as many artists as possible, as quickly as we can. That is why the \$10 million fund is only the beginning. As the effort grows, we hope to fund far more than the initial 2,000. I’m calling on my colleagues in philanthropy to join in this effort, to consider each artist as the namesake of a future foundation, and to stake our own livelihoods—as well as the country’s cultural wellbeing—on the ability of each and every artist to secure food, housing, medicine, and childcare.

Throughout history, artists have helped us through dark times. They’re our soothsayers, our guides, our organizers, and our truth-tellers. But how can they be any of these things if they’re not alive and well? It’s our job to ensure that they’re taken care of, so that we come out of this the way we went in: together. We hope you’ll join us.

Please go to [**artistrelief.org**](https://www.artistrelief.org/) ([**https://www.artistrelief.org/**](https://www.artistrelief.org/)) for more information.

[**Joel Wachs**](https://www.artnews.com/t/joel-wachs/) ([**https://www.artnews.com/t/joel-wachs/**](https://www.artnews.com/t/joel-wachs/)) is president of the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts.

Arts organizations launched a \$10-million relief fund for artists affected by COVID-19.



Representatives of participating arts organizations discuss the Artist Relief fund in a Zoom call. Photo courtesy Artist Relief.

Seven U.S. art grantmakers—including the Academy of American Poets, Artadia, Creative Capital, Foundation for Contemporary Arts (FCA), MAP Fund, National YoungArts Foundation, and United States Artists—are launching a national emergency relief fund for artists affected by the COVID-19 crisis. Beginning today, the Artist Relief fund will distribute unrestricted grants of \$5,000 on a continuing basis over the next six months.

According to *The Art Newspaper*, the Artist Relief grants are intended to supplement other forms of funding, including the recently introduced federal stimulus plan and regional emergency relief. The grant is open to professional artists living in the U.S. and is not limited to any one artistic discipline; applicants must be able to indicate their financial need due to COVID-19. Grantees will be decided on each week, and funds will be dispersed within two weeks from the selections. The Artist Relief fund website features a list of resources to provide additional advocacy and financial support for artists.

Stacy Stark from FCA said in a statement quoted by *The Art Newspaper*: “My hope is that major philanthropies will maybe shift more of their funds toward basic operational costs—as this crisis has proved, [...] nothing is more important than that and, historically, that’s an area of funding less of interest to donors.” FCA, founded by John Cage and Jasper Johns, provides grants to artists working in performance.

The coalition of art organizations raised \$5 million in initial funding since they came together three weeks ago to conceive the initiative. *The Art Newspaper* reports that the original \$5 million was matched by seed capital from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. Tax-deductible donations can be made on the Artist Relief fund website through September, with all of the donations going directly to the relief fund.

Daria Harper

Apr 8, 2020 at 11:53am, via [The Art Newspaper](#)

2,848 views | Apr 8, 2020, 10:22am EDT

Artist Relief Will Reward \$5,000 Grants To Artists Facing Financial Emergencies Due To Covid-19



Ann Binlot Contributor ⓘ
ForbesLife
I bring creativity and culture from around the globe to you.



The Artist Relief coalition will provide \$5,000 grants to artists in financial difficulties due to ... [+]
 COURTESY ARTIST RELIEF

The global outbreak of Covid-19 left the art world, like many other industries, in a state of shock, leaving galleries unable to hold exhibitions to sustain their businesses and artists, closing museums, and the cancellation of myriad art fairs. [Academy of American Poets](#), [Artadia](#), [Creative Capital](#), [Foundation for Contemporary Arts](#), [MAP Fund](#), [National YoungArts Foundation](#), and [United States Artists](#) joined forces to form a coalition of national arts grantmakers to benefit Artist Relief, a fund that will provide rapid, unrestricted \$5,000 relief grants to artists who are facing financial emergencies due to the impact of coronavirus. It will also serve as an informational resource, and co-launch the Covid-19 Impact Survey for Artists and Creative Workers, which was designed by research partner Americans for the Arts to investigate the future needs of artists.

The grants—which are \$5,000—are available for practicing artists who live in all 50 states, territories, and Tribal Nations, working in any discipline. Applicants need to be 21 or older and able to receive taxable income in the United States, and have lived in the country for the last two years. Unfortunately, Artist Relief is aware that it will not be able to fund every

applicant due to the demand. Applications will be assessed for eligibility and need by cultural nonprofits which will assist in the determination and selection process. The application for the grants opens today at artistrelief.org.

The fund will launch with an initial \$5 million in seed funding from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, matching an initial \$5 million in funding from 7|G Foundation, Adolph and Esther Gottlieb Foundation, Amazon Literary Partnership, The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Arison Arts Foundation, Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, Emily Hall Tremaine Foundation, Ford Foundation, Helen Frankenthaler Foundation COVID-19 Relief Effort, Jerome Foundation, Joan Mitchell Foundation, Kraus Family Foundation, LeRoy Neiman and Janet Byrne Neiman Foundation, Metabolic Studio, Mike Kelley Foundation for the Arts, Pritzker Pucker Family Foundation, Richard Salomon Family Foundation, Robert Rauschenberg Foundation, The Sue Hostetler and Beau Wrigley Family Foundation, Teiger Foundation, The Wallace Foundation, and The Willem de Kooning Foundation. The fund will continue to accept donations, which are 100 percent tax deductible at artistrelief.org.

“In hard times like these, we turn to the arts to illuminate and help us make meaning and find connection. Without immediate intervention, individual artists and the arts ecosystem of which they are the foundation could sustain irreparable damage,” noted Elizabeth Alexander, President of The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and a poet and memoirist. “As artists confront these new fiscal realities, we are proud to support this vital effort to address artists’ urgent needs. We call on others to join us in supporting artists so

they may continue to be our lights, chroniclers, and connectors throughout this crisis and beyond.”

“Now is the time for institutions to come together, each bringing its own strengths, to support the country’s artistic communities in the challenging months that lie ahead. We hope this coalition will directly impact artists who have lost income sources and opportunities and are in dire need,” added Sarah Arison, Board Chair, National YoungArts Foundation.

“As a foundation that was established by one of the most recognized artists of the 20th century, the Warhol Foundation is committed to directing its resources towards the many artists, recognized and unrecognized, facing financial hardship at this time. We are proud to be a part of the group of prominent funders and artist-endowed foundations supporting Artist Relief’s efforts to address the needs of the nation’s artists in this moment of crisis,” said Joel Wachs, President of The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts.

NEWS

Art Funders Join Forces to Distribute \$10 Million to Individual Artists

Organizations including the Joan Mitchell Foundation and the Ford Foundation came together to match \$5 million in seed funding from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, and will distribute \$5,000 unrestricted grants.

Valentina Di Liscia April 8, 2020



A view from one of Artist Relief's many Zoom conferences over the past few weeks (courtesy of Artist Relief)

One lesson the ongoing coronavirus pandemic has already taught us is about the power of collective action. Examples of mutual aid in the arts community over the last few weeks abound, from museums donating art handling supplies to hospitals to galleries uniting in support of rent freezes. Further illustrating strength in numbers, seven

major arts funders have banded together to create the first multi-disciplinary and direct-to-artist relief fund in the US.

Raising a total of \$10 million in just over 10 days, the Academy of American Poets, Artadia, Creative Capital, Foundation for Contemporary Arts, MAP Fund, National YoungArts Foundation, and United States Artists will distribute the funds to artists in the form of unrestricted, \$5,000 grants.

“Being able to work in partnership with cultural leaders toward the shared goal of helping artists and writers in need has been uplifting,” Jennifer Benka, president and executive director of the Academy of American Poets and Poets.org, told

Hyperallergic. “It’s been a powerful and hope-giving reminder of what we can build when we come together.”

An initial \$5 million in seed funding from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation was matched by organizations dedicated to supporting artists across all sectors. Donors to the fund run the gamut from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, known for its grants in the performance arts, to prominent funders of both arts and human rights causes, like the Ford Foundation.

“A crisis of this magnitude doesn’t observe the boundaries of genre,” said Creative Capital president and executive director Suzy Delvalle. “Visual artists, performers, filmmakers, writers, musicians — all sorts of artists are facing tremendous challenges right now, so it is vital that we provide support regardless of discipline.”

Artist Relief’s website, artistrelief.org, will also host a survey about the pandemic’s economic impact on the cultural sphere, designed by Americans for the Arts. That data is sorely needed to substantiate requests for aid and grasp the scope of the financial fallout.

With its cross-disciplinary and collaborative nature, the relief fund traverses the sometimes ossified borders erected between the arts. The hope is that it will also serve as a call to action, paving the way for other specialized organizations to come together.

“This is no time for predictions, but there’s no question that this model of setting aside institutional boundaries and philanthropic partiality — which may have their uses under certain circumstances — is the only way we’ll survive,” said Moira Brennan, executive director of the Multi-Arts Production (MAP) Fund.

But Artist Relief, she says, is only a start. The public health crisis has thrown economic disparities in the arts into sharp relief, pointing to a larger lack of sustainability in the industry.

“What’s true for individual artists is also true for arts educators, creative producers, curators, editors, and a long list of others. The infrastructure of the cultural sector rests on the personal devotion of its workers, and that doesn’t pay the rent,” added Brennan.

“Crises always reveal our interdependence. And I think we’d be wise to let that revelation lead all our relief and recovery efforts moving forward.”

Professional artists of any discipline living in the 50 US states, territories, and Tribal Nations are eligible to apply (undocumented artists can apply if they possess an ITIN number). Applicants must be 21 or older, and priority will be given to those experiencing severe financial hardship.

You can apply for a grant or make a tax-deductible donation to the fund at artistrelief.org.

Additional contributors to the fund include the 7G Foundation, Adolph and Esther Gottlieb Foundation, Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Arison Arts Foundation, Emily Hall Tremain Foundation, Helen Frankenthaler Foundation COVID-19 Relief Effort, Jerome Foundation, Joan Mitchell Foundation, Kraus Family Foundation, LeRoy Neiman and Janet Byrne Neiman Foundation, Mike Kelley Foundation for the Arts, Pritzker Pucker Family Foundation, Richard Salomon Family Foundation, Robert Rauschenberg Foundation, Sue Hostetler and Beau Wrigley Family Foundation, Teiger Foundation, Wallace Foundation, and Willem de Kooning Foundation.

ENTERTAINMENT & ARTS

Give \$5,000 to 100 artists. Repeat. That's the goal of the new Artist Relief Fund



Organizers of the newly created Artist Relief Fund participate in a Zoom call to coordinate efforts. (Artist Relief Fund)

By JESSICA GELT
STAFF WRITER

APRIL 8, 2020 | 7 AM

A \$10-million campaign to help artists in dire financial need during the coronavirus pandemic has been organized by seven national grant-making organizations that have banded together to create the Artist Relief Fund.

The fund, which launched Wednesday, is open to artists working across all disciplines. It provides money for immediate needs such as food, housing, medical costs and childcare. The initial goal is to give 100 artists each \$5,000, and to repeat that process to new recipients every week, through Sept. 1. Organizers hope to raise more money to expand the program further.

“Artists are uniquely threatened,” said Carolyn Ramo, executive director of Artadia, which provides unrestricted merit-based grants to visual artists. “They are gig workers who often have no benefits and no labor rights.”

Along with Artadia, the grant-making organizations in the group are: the Academy of American Poets; Creative Capital, which provides awards to artists in dozens of disciplines; the Foundation for Contemporary Arts, which awards for innovation in performing and visual arts; the MAP Fund, supporting contemporary artists whose work challenges canon and convention; United States Artists, which provides unrestricted fellowships; and the National YoungArts Foundation, which identifies and supports the creative and professional development of youth in visual, literary and performing arts.

That all seven organizations work on a national level is crucial to the success and reach of the fund, said Ramo, adding that the group aims to work in tandem with [regional relief funds](#) to reach as many artists in need as possible.

“We are nimble in shifting course as the needs of the country and the artists change,” Ramo said.

The group, she said, has been working around the clock to raise money, hitting the \$10-million mark in less than three weeks. It did so thanks to a \$5-million matching donation from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation that helped to elicit substantial donations from L.A.’s Mike Kelley Foundation for the Arts, the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation and the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation, among others.

Ramo said the organization will try to distribute unrestricted funds quickly across disciplines and geographies, paying close attention to vulnerable populations and keeping track of where virus hot spots are — and might soon move.

Applicants must demonstrate that they are professional artists via a website, professional CV or similar means, and they must submit an explanation with the specifics of their financial needs. The fund will use readers from its grant-making organizations to make sure that the process is as fair as possible. Artists who don’t qualify for a specific round of grants can apply for the next round. Priority is given to those demonstrating immediate, dire need.

The fund aims to get money to selected artists within a week of their application, which can be found at artistrelief.org.

The group is also maintaining an online database of resources to support the professional, social and mental well-being of artists. It will administer a survey, designed by research partner Americans for the Arts, to better understand the immediate and long-term needs of the community.

Jennifer Benka, president and executive director of the Academy of American Poets, said that when her organization began thinking of the best way to help during the coronavirus crisis, it found that a partnership made more sense than a solo effort.

“To come together with other leaders for the greater good has been uplifting in this moment when we’re all isolated in our own homes and the future of arts and cultural organizations, as well as the lives of individual artists and writers are in jeopardy,” Benka said. “We know there’s an emergency need among the people that we regularly serve, so we all decided to rally.”

Benka said that New York City alone has more than [50,000 working artists](#) and that in the United States, the number surpasses 2.5 million.

“\$10 million is an awesome number, but it’s not enough,” Benka said. “We will need much more funding than that. We very much hope that once the fund is public, more people will be inspired to contribute.”

She stressed that in this dark time, people are relying on artists and writers for [solace and comfort](#) more than ever. Traffic at poets.org, with its rich database of poems and poets, is up more than 30% since the coronavirus crisis erupted in the U.S., she said, and the number of subscribers to the site’s “Poem a Day” feature has doubled to 4,000.

“We are facing an unknown,” Benka said. “And all we can do in this moment is work as hard as we can to do what we can.”

For Artists in Need, a New Coalition Brings \$11.6 Million in Speedy Relief

It's only a bridge, groups warn. A survey shows nearly 62 percent of artists responding have become fully unemployed because of the pandemic.

By Jillian Steinhauser

May 4, 2020

Anne Finger is a writer of fiction and nonfiction who, like many others in her field, can't rely on income from her creative work alone. A polio survivor and wheelchair user, Ms. Finger bought her loft in Oakland, Calif., 22 years ago with the idea that it would serve as a steady financial source. She rents out the space for photo and video shoots and also began listing her son's former bedroom on Airbnb once he moved out.

"My idea was that my loft was going to support me for the rest of my life," she said.

The arrival of Covid-19 disrupted that plan. All her rental activity has stopped, and even if it were to start up again soon, Ms. Finger, 68, who recently battled pneumonia, would not feel comfortable letting anyone into her home.

"I'm high risk, so I'm kind of imagining that I'm going to be sheltering in place for a long time," said the writer, who has spent decades fighting for disability rights. "I want to keep doing my art for another 20 years if I possibly can. So I really want to stay alive."

A few weeks ago, Ms. Finger received some much-needed good news. She was one of 100 recipients of the first round of \$5,000 grants from Artist Relief, a new initiative dedicated to helping artists who are facing urgent financial circumstances as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. She "wept with joy" when she got it, she said.

Artist Relief, which will continue distributing grants every week through September, is a coalition comprising seven core partners, including the Academy of American Poets, Creative Capital, and United States Artists. It's one of many emergency efforts that have sprung up across the country to help creative workers in the wake of Covid-19, by organizations large and small and by groups practicing mutual aid. But the speed and scale of Artist Relief's endeavor, raising \$11.6 million so far and drawing support from the likes of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the Ford Foundation and the Sundance Institute, are notable. They also speak to the severity and scope of the crisis.

"We're reading everything from elders who can't afford their insulin, mothers who are skipping meals to feed their kids, artists who are sick and live alone and have Covid-19 and don't have any cash flow to get things delivered to them," said Deana Haggag, the president and chief executive of United States Artists. She was speaking about the flood of applications that Artist Relief has received — 55,000 in the first two weeks of the initiative.



Roberto Lugo working on "Street Shrine 1: A Notorious Story" (2019). The artist Roberto Lugo sold his home to accept a fellowship in Rome — and quickly found himself homeless. He received a grant from Artist Relief. Neal Santos, via Wexler Gallery

Just how dire the situation is for artists has been revealed by an impact survey conducted by the coalition with Americans for the Arts, a national arts advocacy organization. Of the 19,068 creative workers surveyed (as of this writing), 95 percent reported a loss of income from their creative practice, while nearly 62 percent said they had become fully unemployed because of the pandemic. A little over half said they did not have any savings, and 80 percent said they did not yet have a plan to financially recover from the effects of the crisis. (The results are updated in real time online.)

The grim findings echo and amplify those of other, smaller surveys. In one conducted by the Mid-America Arts Alliance in March (with artists in Arkansas, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, Oklahoma and Texas), 60 percent of respondents said their savings would sustain them for one month or less. In another survey by Dance/NYC of dance workers living mostly in the New York/New Jersey metropolitan area, three-quarters of respondents reported needing help with mortgage payments or rent.

“There’s no immediate relief that’s going to work,” Ms. Haggag said. “Even if we had a billion dollars, it’s not going to solve this problem. For us it’s a bridge: Can we buy as many people as much time as we possibly can?”

Roberto Lugo was supposed to be abroad for at least six months. A winner of the prestigious Rome Prize in design from the American Academy in Rome, Mr. Lugo makes sculptural pottery painted with elaborate images of people of color, from political revolutionaries like Angela Davis to cultural figures like the rapper Notorious B.I.G.

Mr. Lugo sold his home in Philadelphia to take the fellowship, expecting that he and his wife, along with their two children, would move when they returned. In Italy, he planned to undertake an ambitious project: creating an updated version of Napoleon’s porcelain dinner set that would draw on his past as a graffiti artist.

But Mr. Lugo was there only a month when the pandemic cut his residency short. “I had to immediately leave everything” — right down to his paint brushes, he said.

Rushing back to the United States in mid-March, they had nowhere permanent to shelter in place. In mid-April, he learned that he was getting an Artist Relief grant.

“I feel like what it’s doing is liberating me emotionally to feel like I have a place to start over again,” he said. “When you’re going through all these things, without the acknowledgment of support,” he added, “then you feel lost and down.”

For weeks, Mr. Lugo moved between rentals with no access to a potter’s wheel or a kiln, though he continued to work however he could, molding cups out of clay. Now settled near his studio in Philadelphia, he has applied for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) but has yet to receive anything. Ms. Finger, who feels fortunate that she can write at home, has tried to apply several times, but thus far the online system hasn’t functioned properly.

Still, the fact that both artists are eligible for such benefits represents a new, positive development. The Artist Relief Covid-19 Impact Survey asks respondents to rank the programs and opportunities that would be most helpful to sustaining their creativity during the crisis. No. 1 on the list is unemployment insurance — something that has long been unavailable for artists who are self-employed, independent contractors making money through an assortment of temporary positions, projects and sales. The \$2 trillion coronavirus relief package that created the PUA program, known as the CARES Act, changed that.

Kim Brandt performing at Chinati Foundation, Marfa, Texas, in 2019. Her Artist Relief grant has been a lifeline both financially and emotionally. Sarah Vasquez

Freelancers have long gotten by without many standard labor protections and with sporadic income that's often spread across different fields. Those conditions make it harder to find stability now. Art Handler magazine conducted a survey of art workers soon after Covid-19 hit the United States and found that freelancers were already faring worse than their salaried counterparts. Artists are no exception.

Before she learned that she, too, was a grant recipient, the choreographer Kim Brandt watched the different aspects of her professional life swiftly shut down within a week. "Everything stopped all at once," she said. For Ms. Brandt, that "everything" included a large commission she'd been rehearsing as well as her part-time job as a studio assistant to a sculptor. She'd made a video for an exhibition at a nonprofit arts space in Brooklyn, where she lives, that closed early. Future projects and opportunities she'd been discussing were shelved indefinitely.

"What's been very hard to accept is that my whole life is unrecognizable to me now," said Ms. Brandt. "Taking dance class, going to museums, having rehearsal, working in the studio — my normal, everyday activities that I love to do but also make a living off, none of it's available." She noted that social distancing is especially hostile to creating dance. "By nature what we do involves being in a room together. And the fact that we can't do that, it's sad at best."

For Ms. Brandt, the Artist Relief grant has been a lifeline both financially and emotionally. But in looking at the bigger picture of recovery, she emphasized the need for universal measures and programs to come from the government. "I think the things that would support artists are the things that would support everyone: a living wage, Medicare for all, and affordable housing," she said.

Ms. Haggag noted that there's one question she heard a lot when she was launching the fund: "Why are you fighting this hard to help artists when so many people are suffering?" To her, it reflects a lack of understanding of the material realities of artists' lives — that they, too, are a labor force, and need help to survive just like anyone else. The answer, she said, is self-evident: "Artists are also people who are suffering."

Artists and Fashion Designers Can Apply for \$5,000 Grants From Artists Relief Fund

With the average artist, painter, sculptor or illustrator earning \$58,370 annually, many artists are seeking financial assistance due to the shutdown.

By [Rosemary Feitelberg](#) on April 8, 2020



📷 Artists of all disciplines are eligible for the grants.
Courtesy Photo

IN NEED OF RELIEF: The financial destruction from the pandemic reaches far and wide, and artists are about to get a lifeline, thanks to an effort led by a coalition of art funders called the Artist Relief Fund.

After 10 days of fundraising, a group of seven art funds have drummed up \$5 million that will be distributed directly to artists — including fashion designers — via unrestricted \$5,000 grants. Over the weekend, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation offered a matching grant of \$5 million.

The Artist Relief Fund initiative goes live today. Professional artists who live in the U.S. and can show financial need are invited to apply.

Artist Relief consists of the Academy of American Poets, Artadia, Creative Capital, Foundation for Contemporary Arts, MAP Fund, the National YoungArts Foundation and United States Artists. Additional contributions are also being sought from organizations and individuals.

With museums and galleries around the world temporarily shuttered for the foreseeable future, many artists, especially those based in major metropolitan cities, are scraping to get by. The average annual salary for fine artists including painters, sculptors and illustrators is \$58,370, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Despite the financial strains that some may artists be facing, many are using innovative ways to reach their audiences at home. Just as institutions like the [Metropolitan Museum of Art](#), the Brooklyn Museum of Art and the Cooper Hewitt Smithsonian National Design Museum are offering virtual tours and at-home activities, the [Paris](#) Opera and Ballet and other groups are streaming free performances. New York City Ballet's principal dancer Tiler Peck is offering daily online ballet classes and British designer Tom Dixon has launched the #TOMorrowChannel. More amateur tutorials can be found via Skype and FaceTime.

However enticing art is as a medium, it is also an industry in its own right. U.S. museums employ 350,000 people directly and generate \$50 billion in revenue including in stimulus to surrounding businesses, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Struggling artists can find a list of advocacy and informational resources on the site, and participate in a data-driven survey to help track the effects of the COVID-19 crisis on the artist community.