



2023 RUBYS  
AWARDEES



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **ROBERT W. DEUTSCH FOUNDATION ANNOUNCES THE 2023 RUBYS ARTIST GRANTEES**

Baltimore, MD July 14, 2023 – The Robert W. Deutsch Foundation is pleased to announce the artists selected as recipients of the 2023 Rubys Artist Grants. Initially launched in 2013 by the Robert W. Deutsch Foundation, the Rubys supports artists in Baltimore City and Baltimore County working in Literary, Performing, Media and Visual arts. In this cycle, the grant will provide over \$250,000 to 18 new projects across the four disciplines, as well as introducing new areas of funding, alumni grants and microgrants. This year’s projects exemplify the program’s values of experimentation, risk-taking, and creative innovation.

The 2023 Rubys Artist Awardees are:



**Abigail Lucien** - to support *Mood Come Alive*, which centers around sculptural poetics to create scaled recreations of Sans-Souci Palace and imagine a speculative future for the Republic of Haïti.



**Alejandra Nunez** - to support *Memory Mist*, a series of improvised sound pieces that uses distorted samples, instruments and DJ equipment to explore and reimagine dance music for a meditative listening experience.



**Aliana Grace Bailey** - to support *Soft Gather*, an installation series of healing spaces using fiber and color theory, where Black communities and individuals can comfortably gather, reflect, rest, and build relationships.



**Ami Dang** - to support *Bhai Vir Singh’s Lost Melodies*, a song cycle and installation featuring lyrics and music compositions from Kambdi Kalai, a poetry collection by Vir Singh (the artist’s great, great grandfather) with original musical arrangements for sitar, voice, harmonium, dilruba, tabla, and electronics.





**Cheyenne Givens** - to support *Vacants*, an episodic series depicting a poetic portrait of a seemingly decaying West Baltimore.

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**Colette Krogol & Matt Reeves** - to support *A&I*, a new performer and AI (Artificial Intelligence) operated dance and multimedia performance that uses smart home technology on a theatrical scale. Once complete they will present *A&I* with their company, Orange Grove Dance.

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**Diana Wharton-Senaar** - to support *Carry On*, a new American musical that tells the story of tribulations and triumphs for a group of senior living facility residents at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

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**Elena Volkova** - to support *Faces: Ukrainian Portraits*, a participatory arts project using a historic photographic process to create a visual archive that bears witness to the Ukrainian women and children displaced by war.

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**Jalynn Harris** - to support *Oh, Baltimore!*, a collection of poems using the site of Druid Hill Park and the artist's embodied experiences as a Baltimore native as the central subjects, in order to create art that redresses the narrative of a city wrecked by negative representation in the media.

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**Jimmy Joe Roche** - to support *A Complete History of the Known Universe*, an experimental, narrative feature film about a group of eccentric drifters gathered on the fringes of society, planning for the end of the world.

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**Jung Yun** - to support her third novel, tentatively titled *WAKE*, which follows three groups of passengers on a cruise to Bermuda shortly after 9/11.

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**Laura Laing** - to support *Three: A Memoir*, a fractured, non-chronological exploration of coming-of-age and coming-out memoir told through the lens of mathematical proof and structure.



**Laura Wexler** - to support **American Love Story**, a docu-play created from the verbatim transcript of an infamous 1925 trial in which a husband seeks to annul his marriage, claiming his wife defrauded him by failing to divulge her "Colored blood."

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**Lawrence Burney** - to support **Revisiting Ramona**, the feature-length documentary debut by the artist, writer and journalist about the East Baltimore neighborhood of his youth.

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**Marnie Ellen Hertzler** - to support *ETERNITY ONE*, a feature-length film that imagines possible futures for a young girl and her small crabbing community on an island in the Chesapeake Bay as they face the immediate effects of the climate crisis.

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**Nate Larson** - to support *El Puente: On Juvenile Incarceration in Argentina*, an empathetic documentary project using photography, oral history interviews, and direct collaboration to honor and empower incarcerated youth in Argentina.

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**NIA JUNE** - to support *What Goes Down When You Love Somebody*, a visual poem and three-part episodic series illustrating milestones of Black love. It follows one family's evolution through the decades with each episode set in the seventies, eighties, and nineties, all against the tapestry of a Baltimore row home.

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**Zara Kahan** - to support *Come Into My Arms*, a film which follows a Filipino-American archivist on a quest to uncover the origins of a mysterious film, leading her to confront her repressed emotions over her abusive mother's death while a dashing ghost from her homeland haunts her.

The jury also selected two additional, outstanding projects to receive the Rubys Micro-Grants and access to the Rubys artist services:

**Aditya Desai** - to support *Bombay, Oregon*, a novel manuscript following two branches of a working class Gujarati American family across generations as they mourn loss and survive economic precarity.

**S. M. Prescott** - to support *Already, Not Yet*, a collaborative audio book of liturgies for trans lives and subsequent installation.

Now in its tenth year, the Rubys Artist Grant Program has established itself as a vital opportunity for artists in the Baltimore region. The Rubys provide direct funding to individual artists, prioritizing new artistic endeavors, and the belief that artists should be paid for all parts of their creative work, not only for the final outcome.

Past recipients of the Rubys have achieved critical acclaim and received fellowships from prestigious institutions such as the Guggenheim Foundation, United States Artists, and Halcyon Arts Lab. They have also showcased their projects at renowned venues like the Maryland Film Festival, the Hirshhorn Museum, and the Baltimore Museum of Art. The Rubys Artist Grant Program draws inspiration from the work of Creative Capital in New York City and is named in honor of its visionary founder, Ruby Lerner.

In its new phase, the Rubys Artist Grants, as part of the broader arts and culture grantmaking strategy of the Robert W. Deutsch Foundation, aims to deepen its impact by providing more grants to a wider range of projects. Additionally, the grant program will provide professional development opportunities, network building, artist services and technical assistance for awardees. The Rubys will partner with several Deutsch Foundation projects, such as Open Works, Motor House, BmoreArt, and Connect + Collect, to outfit awardees, when relevant to their work, with access to tools, technologies, equipment, performance, and event space, exposure, and dialogue. By supporting future projects holistically, the Rubys aim to support Baltimore's creative community to enable artists to continue to have sustainable and successful careers.

The 2023 Rubys cycle introduces a new alumni grant program and recognizes a new, innovative project by former Rubys recipients. This grant kicks off what will be an annual commitment of this kind, available to former recipients of the Rubys Artist Grants. The Rubys, which up until this point has allowed re-application by former grantees, will, in 2024 and onward, be a one-time award. Alumni will have the opportunity to apply to one larger project grant, and smaller, professional development grants through the Rubys Alumni network. Look out for more information about this program toward the end of 2023.

This year's alumni recipient is a collaboration between former Rubys grant recipients, **Angela N. Carroll** and **Kibibi Ajanku**: *Sankofa Dance Theater: 30 Years of Music Movement and Folkways*, a limited-edition coffee table book, reviews the work of Sankofa Dance Theater as a cultural ambassador that bridged communities between Baltimore and West Africa. This is the first publication to illuminate Black dance's history in Baltimore.

The 2023 Rubys jury panels for visual, media, performance, and literary arts were comprised of the following esteemed professionals, many of whom will serve as mentors to the awardees this year:



**Ajay Kurian** - Kurian was born in Baltimore, Maryland and lives and works in Brooklyn, New York. He is an artist, writer, and educator. He is represented by 47 Canal and Sies+Höke. He is the founder of NewCrits, a global platform for virtual studio visits.

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**Allie Linn** - Curator, artist, writer, and arts administrator motivated by collaborative institution-building, site-responsive practices, and crowd-sourced archives. They currently work as Initiatives Manager at United States Artists, where they collaborate on several arts fellowship programs and oversee Shift Space, an online publication reflecting on the field of art and technology. They have previously served as Curator-in-Residence of Gormley Gallery at Notre Dame of Maryland University; Studio Coordinator of Facebook's Analog Research Lab; Co-organizer of the Publications and Multiples Fair; and Co-founder of the Artist-Run Art Fair and Spiral Bound Book Fair, in addition to positions at the Baltimore Museum of Art, The Contemporary, and Recess in Brooklyn.

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**Amber Esseiva** - curator of the Institute of Contemporary Art at Virginia Commonwealth University and Curator at Large for the Studio Museum in Harlem.

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**Gee Wesley** - Wesley is an arts organizer born in Monrovia, Liberia, and based in New York where he works as a Curatorial Assistant in the Department of Media and Performance at the Museum of Modern Art. Prior to joining MoMA, Wesley held roles as Program Director at Recess (Brooklyn, NY), Curatorial Fellow at SculptureCenter (Queens, NY), Curatorial Fellow at the Institute of Contemporary Art (Philadelphia, PA), visiting instructor at Bard College (Annandale-on-Hudson, NY), and adjunct faculty in the Curatorial Practice MFA at the Maryland Institute College of Art (Baltimore, MD). Wesley is a co-founder and board member of Ulises, a nonprofit art bookshop based in Philadelphia. His work explores the relationship between publics and publications and how independent arts initiatives incubate new modes of curatorial and artistic practice. Wesley received his M.A. from the Center for Curatorial Studies, at Bard College.





**Koa Beck** - the author of the acclaimed nonfiction book *White Feminism: From the Suffragettes to Influencers and Who They Leave Behind*. She is a recipient of both the Joan Shorenstein Fellowship at the Harvard Kennedy School and the Alan Jutzi Fellowship at The Huntington.

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**Martha Joseph** - is a curator and writer specializing in performance and sonic practice. At the Museum of Modern Art, she is part of the curatorial team for The Marie-Josée and Henry Kravis Studio, MoMA's space for performance and time-based art. Martha's writing has appeared in publications by the Whitney Museum of American Art and MoMA as well as Flash Art and Frieze Magazine. Before joining MoMA she worked at The Whitney and The Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art (MASS MoCA). She received her Masters degree in the History of Art from Williams College; a Bachelor of Arts in Art History from Oberlin College; and a Bachelor of Music in Vocal Performance from Oberlin Conservatory.

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**Meghan Gordon** - is the Director of OCHI, a contemporary art gallery with locations in Los Angeles, California and Sun Valley, Idaho. She also serves as the Vice Chair of the Board of Directors of Project X Foundation for Art and Criticism, the publisher of X-TRA. Gordon's writing and curatorial work celebrates the intersections of labor, language, love, and pleasure, while her gallery and administrative work focuses on storytelling, mentorship, and sustainable practices.

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**Josef Palermo** - From 2016 to 2020, Josef Palermo was appointed to the DC Commission on the Arts & Humanities, where he worked to advance the interests of independent artists and small arts organizations in Washington, DC. Prior to his service in public arts administration and cultural policymaking, Josef established a career leading collaborative community-based arts projects for diverse audiences through experiential exhibitions. A second-generation "mixed" American born to biracial and multi-ethnic parents, Josef seeks to amplify underrepresented identities in all aspects of the art world.

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**Lex Brown** - Lex Brown is a multimedia artist who uses poetry and science-fiction to create existential narratives about the Information Age. Working fluidly between installation, film, live performance, painting, and sculpture her work contemplates spiritual experience through humor and satire. Brown has performed and exhibited work at the MIT List Center, New Museum, the High Line, the International Center of Photography, and The Kitchen. Her films have been presented at e-flux Screening Room, New York; Transmediale, Berlin; and the East End Film Festival, London. Brown received her undergraduate degree from Princeton University and an MFA from Yale. She was a 2021 United States Artist Fellow.



**Penny Lane** - has been making award-winning, innovative nonfiction films for over a decade. This includes six features – most recently Confessions of a Good Samaritan, premiering at SXSW 2023 – and over a dozen short films. A 2020 Guggenheim Fellow, Lane has also received grants and awards from the Sundance Film Festival, Cinereach, Creative Capital, Chicken & Egg Pictures, Tribeca Film Institute, Wexner Center for the Arts and many others.

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**Sarah Melendez** - Sarah Meléndez is a cultural manager specializing in multidisciplinary programming, artist development, and cultural exchange. She is currently the music curator at Ballroom Marfa where she has worked closely with contemporary artists and musicians on commissioned projects, exhibitions, performances, and residencies over the past eight years. Her curatorial approach focuses on cross-cultural exchange and experimental practices at the intersection of art and music.

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**Stephanie Barber** - Stephanie Barber is a writer and artist who has created a poetic, conceptual and philosophical body of work in a variety of media. Often literary/visual hybrids, these works dissolve boundaries between narrative, essay and dialectic. Her work considers the basic philosophical questions of human existence (its morbidity, profundity and banality) with play and humor. Stephanie is currently the program head of Film and Digital Cinema at Moore College in Philadelphia, PA

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The Rubys Artist Grants were established in 2013 to support the local artistic community of performing, visual, media and literary artists through meaningful, direct project support. The Rubys were inspired by Ruby Lerner, the visionary founder of Creative Capital in New York City.

**ROBERT W.**  
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The Robert W. Deutsch Foundation invests in innovative people, programs and ideas that promote arts and culture, economic and community development, and social justice, with a primary focus on the City of Baltimore. [www.rwdfoundation.org](http://www.rwdfoundation.org)

For more information on the Rubys Artist Grant Program, please visit: <https://www.rwdfoundation.org/rubys>

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