



OFFICE OF ARTS & CULTURE
SEATTLE

CAPACITY BUILDING FOR

RACIAL EQUITY in PUBLIC ART



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OFFICE OF ARTS & CULTURE
SEATTLE

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Vikram Madan, *Mini-Murals*,
photo credit Mark Woods

Cover image: detail from Kemba Opio's *Flavors of Us*, photo credit Mark Woods



Aramis Hamer, *For the Love of Music*, photo credit Sunny Martini

Public art tells the story of a city; through it we express our dreams and aspirations; it challenges where we are going and why we're going there. And sometimes it just provides visual or physical delight. The future of public art will be a lot like its past, except that it will look, sound, feel, and probably smell different—just as tomorrow we will be different from who we are today.

— RICHARD MCCOY, director of Landmark Columbus in Columbus, Indiana. *The Future History of Public Art*, the 17th symposium organized by the Western States Arts Federation (WESTAF)

Executive Summary

The Seattle Office of Arts & Culture (ARTS) was the second U.S. city to adopt a percent for art program in 1973. As the city has grown and expanded so too has the public art program and the Office itself. One current goal of the public art program is to address historic and current institutional racism, or at the very least the paucity of artists of color working in the public realm. Beyond fixing public education at its most basic level and addressing economic disparity there are steps that a local arts agency can take to train and help the next generation of public artists. We have been tackling this problem through capacity building.

In 2003 ARTS created our first public art training project known as the Emerging Public Artists Roster program, designed to introduce regional artists to the idea and practice of public art. In 2015 we transformed the program into Public Art Boot Camp, but this time the goal was to advance racial equity by centering artists of color and providing them the information and experience they needed to enter the niche world of public art.

ARTS staff focused the program on artists of color because public art and the art world overall are predominately white; in administration, policy, and art making. In order to advance racial equity in Seattle's public art program, we needed to provide training and opportunities to artists of color who otherwise aren't able to access the same knowledge and resources.

We conducted four Public Art Boot Camps from 2015 through 2018, training 162 artists, 81 of whom were of color. In addition to the training we also provided boot camp participants the opportunity to apply for a temporary art commission, giving these artists their first experience and commission in public art.

Since then, these artists have continued to produce work and expand the role of art, community, and identity in the public realm.



Erin Shigaki, *Never Again is Now*, photo credit Eugene Tagawa



Hanako O'Leary performs at *Against the Current*, *Hope Will Ebb and Flow*, photo credit Elena Chernock



Bayu Angermeyer, *Seeking Kindred Spirits*, photo by artist

The race problem in visual arts

In the art world the vast majority of artists, administrators, curators, writers, and commercial consumers are white. A number of factors contribute to this racial inequity including the high cost of fine arts degrees, lack of access to arts education and materials, and the lack of affordable rehearsal and living space. Traditionally only people with resources and money could succeed and create a thriving career in the arts. In the United States much of those resources and wealth are held by people who are white.

The visual art world in particular has been a club for the affluent, white and male, and while that may

of Museums." It is well worth reviewing in depth for what it says about the disgraceful state of diversity in the visual arts, but its thesis is really all summed up in the quote below. Artists of color have been overlooked and ignored by all professional avenues in the art world. A study compiled by data gurus BFAMFAPhD, an art group that produces art reports and teaching tools to advocate for cultural equity in the United States, reaffirms what many critics have postulated — American artists lack diversity of all kinds. As the Washington Post reported, BFAMFAPhD's research reveals that a majority, 77.6%, of artists making a living from their work are white.

"This analysis paints a troubling picture of the 'probable future' — a future in which, if trends continue in their current grooves, museum audiences are radically less diverse than the American public, and museums serve an ever-shrinking fragment of society."

— <http://www.blouinartinfo.com/news/story/840695/diversify-or-die-why-the-art-world-needs-to-keep-up-with-our>

have worked in the past it is proving unsustainable in today's economy. The Gallery system is struggling to stay afloat, and museums are desperately trying to figure out how to diversify.

In 2010, the Center for the Future of Museums (CFM) issued a report with a title at once anodyne and urgent: "Demographic Transformation and the Future

The study, titled "Artists Report Back," analyzed data for over 1.4 million working artists (as well as a group of two million art school graduates) across the United States using the Census Bureau's 2012 American Community Survey (ACS). The results show that nearly four out of five working artists are white. That leaves 7.5% of working artists identifying as black, 3.9% as Asian and 8.3% Latinx.

Whatever the form, public art instills meaning—a greater sense of identity and understandings of where we live, work, and visit—creating memorable experiences for all.

— Public art 101, Americans for the Arts.

The statistics for art school graduates are even bleaker. A solid 80.8% of this population is white, while 4.4% is Black, 7.0% is Asian and 5.7% is Latinx. Of art school graduates who make a living from their work, 83% are white. BFAMFAPhD compares these findings to the U.S. population at large, which is 63.2% white, 12.3% black, 5% Asian and 16.6% Latinx.

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/10/24/racial-diversity-in-art_n_6037792.html

This problem exists because of institutional and structural barriers that make it virtually impossible for artists of color to enter and thrive in the field.

Public art and racial equity

Public art began and continues to reflect our history, society, and place. Artists who created public works emphasized the dominant narratives and leaders of their times and in the United States that was a reflection and emphasis of white culture. The narratives and stories of Indigenous people, immigrants, African Americans and Black's were largely untold in the public realm. Works Progress Administration (WPA) artworks and artists like Jacob Lawrence—with *The Migration Series* (1941)—started to bring the plight of people of color to

the general consciousness, but the vast majority of public art, sanctioned and funded by taxpayer dollars, largely remained white, governed by white administrators with the artistic vision executed by white artists.

However, the premise that public art should express our community values means that artists and administrators need to nurture diverse voices outside of the current art world structure.

*What distinguishes public art is the unique association of how it is made, where it is, and what it means. Public art can express community values, enhance our environment, transform a landscape, heighten our awareness, or question our assumptions. Placed in public sites, this art is there for everyone, a form of collective community expression. Public art is a reflection of how we see the world - the artist's response to our time and place combined with our own sense of who we are... Public art is a part of our public history, part of our evolving culture and our collective memory. It reflects and reveals our society and adds meaning to our cities. As artists respond to our times, they reflect their inner vision to the outside world, and they create a chronicle of our public experience. Adapted from *Public Art in Philadelphia* by Penny Balkin Bach (Temple University Press, Philadelphia, 1992).*

<http://www.associationforpublicart.org/what-is-public-art/>



Hugo Moro, *Slippery*, photo by artist



Satpreet Kahlon, *The Five Pillars of White Supremacy*, photo by artist

A closer look at the Seattle Office of Art & Culture's Public Art program

ARTS' public art program specifies that 1% of eligible city capital improvement project funds be set aside for the commission, purchase, and installation of artworks in a variety of settings. The program integrates artworks and the ideas of artists into a variety of public arenas, advancing Seattle's reputation as a cultural center for innovation and creativity. By providing opportunities for individuals to encounter art in parks, libraries, community centers, on roadways, bridges and other public venues, we simultaneously enrich citizens' daily lives and give voice to artists. Taking a closer look at public art means identifying who is creating the artworks, whose voice is heard, what barriers exist to artists of color, and the increasingly diverse community it is made for.

The art world, public and private has and continues to have a very visual race problem. America is a racially diverse country, whose very fabric relies on the work and contributions of countless people, including people of color, immigrants and refugees. The artists that we commission to make artworks in our diverse communities need to represent that diversity.





Countless artists and artworks have contributed to the history of American public art, but the history behind the artworks isn't as well known. In Seattle the demographic data of commissioned artists only consists of age and gender, information on ethnicity wasn't collected. Seattle isn't alone; across the country demographic data about artists, including gender and race are hard to find and inconsistent. Anecdotal evidence of a field consisting of mostly white male public artists and a lack of hard data speaks to the pressing need to diversify the field.

When the City of Seattle introduced the Race and Social Justice Initiative (RSJI) in 2005, no U.S. city had ever undertaken an effort that focused explicitly on undoing institutional racism. RSJI began as the City's attempt to "get our own house in order" by focusing on internal programs and operations. In alignment with the City's RSJI program (<http://www.seattle.gov/civilrights/programs/race-and-social-justice-initiative>), ARTS is working to address and eliminate institutional racism in our programs including public art policies and practices.

Areas of opportunity: identifying and breaking down barriers

To make change, we have to acknowledge the problem. A tenet of racial equity trainings is to uncover and acknowledge the implicit biases that show up in us as individuals, our programs and policies. Creating a program that intentionally serves

artists from under-represented and under invested communities not only acknowledges historic and current inequities, it directly affects change.

One answer to addressing racial equity in the public art field is providing tools and opportunities to artists of color. This means taking stock in the process, looking for barriers in our public art programs and finding concrete ways to demystify the process for more artists.

"Boot Camp is a vital program that is very much needed to help artists break into public art. Not only is it very difficult to compete with established public art teams, but it is even more challenging for artists of color. The classic 'catch 22' for public art calls is that they require previous experience at a certain level, but there are very few opportunities to get the experience. So, it becomes an exclusive club that's difficult to 'infiltrate.' "

— David Francis, Public Art Coordinator, City of Shoreline

"Being a public artist is not like being a studio artist, it's also being a project manager, its being a collaborator, it's being adaptable and flexible and it's about responding to the needs of the community or a place, or a group of people that are going to spend their lives with your artwork."

— Kristin Wiegmann, independent art consultant and formerly of Forecast Public Art

Institutional barriers

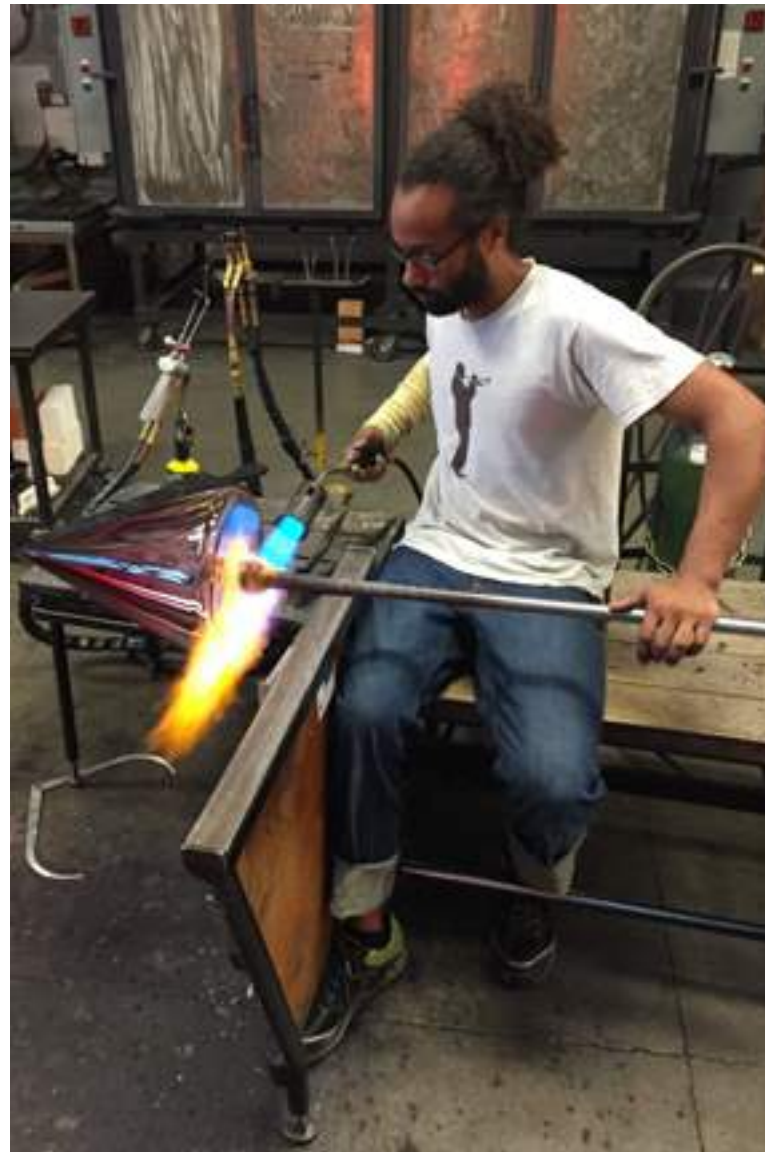
- **Previous experience:** A majority of permanent art projects require artists to have had prior experience making a permanent artwork and prior experience with a certain budget size. This process favors artists who have historically had access to the field and have more education and resources.
- **Project management skills:** For many commissions public artists need to be project managers as well as artists, requiring them to hire subcontractors and manage relationships between community, government and the funding partner. While this skill is important for a good public artist to have, it prioritizes artists with certain specialized knowledge over others.

Public art administrators have the opportunity to shift the field, changing how selection panels and artists are chosen, expanding the required artistic criteria, and creating a transparent process. While systemic change takes time, capacity building is something that can show almost immediate results. This is the case in ARTS Emerging Public Artist program and Public Art Boot Camp.

Capacity building as a way to increase racial equity

ARTS looks at capacity building as a wholistic process that should be imbedded into all areas of your program. This starts with the call for artists and providing a glossary for terms and providing application workshops that address how to

make a strong application. One of two topics we frequently cover are images and letter of interests. When artists are selected for an interview, project managers have been creating a short email with



Henry Jackson-Spieker working on Lattice, photo by artist



April Soeterman, *chimeforest*, photo credit Minh Carrico

reminders about the goals of the project so the artists are clear about what they are expected to address in their interview.

If your organization has resources, creating an in-depth program will benefit artists broadly in your community.

In 2003 ARTS invested in expanding the field of public artists. ARTS created the Emerging Public Artist Program, a competitive training program. Over 160 artists applied, and 27 artists from Washington state were selected. The program lasted six weeks and explored the business fundamentals of public art for artists. Enhancing the lessons were two all day

bus tours to see public art in Seattle, and meeting some of the artists on site to hear about their projects. This provided participants with context and valuable firsthand knowledge. The curriculum was based on key topics including: defining public art and how it differs from studio practice, answering public calls for artists, contract basics, working with architects and community stakeholders, concept and final proposals, approvals, design and fabrication issues, maintenance, insurance and more. Instructors ranged from experienced public artists, to commercial fabricators, public art program managers and arts administrative professionals. They were paid for their lesson preparations and presentations.

The program was designed to create a cohort, a built-in network for artists through communal dinners and tours. After the training was completed, participating artists were the only ones eligible to apply for temporary and permanent projects that included community centers and parks. Some of the artist presenters were selected to be mentors to help trouble shoot issues with individual artists' projects and we paid them on an hourly basis.

Fifteen of the 27 artists completed their first public artworks over the next few years. Some artists transitioned into the realm of public art as it became their passion and they completed more public artworks. For others, they realized the time, collaborations and skills required were better spent in studios or classrooms. All agreed that the knowledge and confidence gained through the Emerging Public Artist Roster program enhanced their careers in some way. From this 2003 class of emerging artists — we know that at least nine of 27 artists are actively creating public art today.

In 2015, in response to the need to increase artist of color participation on public art projects, we updated the emerging public artist program and

it transformed into the Public Art Boot Camp. The program was only open to artists who had not received a temporary or permanent public art commission over \$5,000 (an artwork that is created by an artist at the request of an entity: public agency, private business, corporation, or individual and that is/was displayed in a public location).

Public Art Boot Camp was designed after a cohort model program. Participants commit to two days of training that includes; presentations by working artists, mentor sessions with public art administrators, handouts, and homework for an opportunity for public art project. The opportunity is vitally important to the program because it takes the realm of theory into practice. It is also imperative to craft a culturally relevant and responsive curriculum. ARTS worked to hire presenters that were diverse in race, age, and sexual orientation. Being a cohort model, it is important to create space for networking and community building. The most consistent feedback we received from participants was that the most valuable part of the program was meeting and networking with other artists.

2017 Boot Camp, photo credit Sunny Martini



Here are a few tips to creating your own program:

- ▶ Allocate 6 -12 months to plan, which includes your application process, and planning with potential partners.
- ▶ Allocate budget for staff time and paying presenters.
- ▶ Presenters: be conscientious, inclusive and deliberate about who you invite as artist presenters: smart, clear, humorous, helpful, relatable, wide range of experience, age, race, sex, media, interests.
- ▶ Presenters should be artists of color whenever possible - people want to see others who look like them.
 - Give presenting artists an overview of your goals to expand the field for people of color (POC) artists and other underserved populations.
 - Pay everyone, keep a careful budget.
 - Be clear about expectations for everyone.
- ▶ Staff capacity: administratively - plan your time and triple it.
 - Create a curriculum binder.
- ▶ Incorporate interactive activities.
- ▶ Allow time for participants to relax during lunch and breaks.
- ▶ Include a public art tour.
- ▶ Homework - give a "real" public art project call to artists.
- ▶ Create a pipeline - If possible have opportunities for temporary art projects available for participants to apply immediately after completing Boot Camp. (We had 14 immediate opportunities).

"My training in the Public Art Bootcamp has been key to my winning three grants in the last year. One grant with King County/4Culture and two with Seattle Office of Art & Culture and Seattle Parks & Recreation. My first temporary public art installation 'Park Your Thoughts' will be at Ballard Commons in just a few weeks. Kudos to the Bootcamp program for strengthening my resumé and filling in all the gaps in my training that needed filling in order for me to advance my artist career to the next level. I refer often to the Bootcamp experience as a defining period in my career to set me on the course to success as an artist. I have building blocks today that I did not have before and the Public Art Bootcamp helped create those opportunities for me."

— Blanca Santander, artist

Changing the field

"Public art and the people who make it are translators of community needs, visions, and futures. If there's a possibility that the public can participate in art-making alongside an artist, that deepens the connection among art, people, and place, and that connectivity is transformational." — Maile Meyer, principal of Ho'omaika'i, a contemporary art curation and management organization based in Honolulu, and executive director of Pu'uhonua Society, a nonprofit that supports Native Hawaiian and Hawai'i-based artists and cultural practitioners.

Grantmakers in the Arts and Americans for the Arts have both recently released statements on cultural equity. These organizations are calling on the field nationally to address institutional and structural barriers to racial inequity in the arts. The art world is changing and trying to adapt to expanding demographics and social pressures. Museums are re-inventing themselves and more artists are being encouraged to engage with community.

While the art world tries to figure out how to be more equitable, public art can address social issues in a variety of ways. When art enters the public realm

public art administrators can challenge the concept of who art is for by saying that it is for everyone. Public artists who make art should represent the diversity of the residents and communities we serve. Training artists and personally investing in the sector strengthens municipal art programs and local arts communities.

Artists who participated in Public Art Boot Camp have now received commissions at other local agencies, therefore broadening the public art sector. Most importantly when diverse artists work in the public realm, people see themselves reflected in public space in a way that only commissioning artists of color can do. Artists of color have histories and a visual vernacular that is unique to their experience. Cities benefit from a richer visual environment by including everyone's narrative. The biggest gain is that culturally relevant art is meaningful to more people.

"I see more opportunities for growth for artists of color, and women in public art that I don't see in the commercial art world. I think it's partly because communities that want to have public art want to

have a diverse voice brought to the table. Artists of color represent part of our culture and our human experience that isn't visible and that's lacking in a lot of places so there's a lot of interest and I'm seeing more artists of color and women create whole careers in public art that I'm not seeing happen in the commercial art world." — Jack Becker, Forecast Public Art.

Now is the time to implement lasting and concrete solutions to address the visual arts world race problem. Investing in local artists and especially artists of color is one of the most effective ways to diversify the field. Capacity building can be as simple as offering detailed feedback to applicants, to providing implicit bias training to panelists and consciously engaging panelists of color, to running a two-day intensive training for emerging artists, and providing different types of artwork commissions to expand their reach in the public realm. Investing in artists can take on many different forms and funding limitations shouldn't be barriers from providing meaningful professional development.

2003 Emerging Public Artist Roster Program Participants

Shea Bajaj, Jenny Davidson, Jennifer Dixon, Sue Gundy, Richard Hutter, Mary Iverson, Max Keene, Susie Kozawa, Ela Lamblin, Cheryl Lawrence, Laurie LeClair, Perri (Lynch) Howard, Rachel Maxi, Nikki McClure, Squeak (Nik) Meisel, Julie Mihalisin, Phillip Walling, Scott Morgan, Rick Mullarky, Yuki Nakamura, Sheri Newbold, Shawn Nordfors, Aaron Power, Julia Ricketts, Ashley Thorner, Kristin Tollefson, Stewart Wong



Erin Genia, *Resilience*, photo by artist

Public Art Boot Camp Participants

2015

Kathryn Abarbanel, Erin Algiere, Alex Anderson, Bayu Angermeyer, Kari Boeskov, Monique Bridges, J. Adam Brinson, Jaq Chartier, Esther Ervin, Danielle Foushee, Eva Funderburgh, Amy Hamblin, Aramis Hamer, Louise Hankes, Kate Jessup, Satpreet Kahlon, Gabriel Marquez, Katie Miller, Naoko Morisawa, Hanoko O'Leary, Susan Palmer, Josh Peterson, Katherine Rhoads, Blanca Santander, Graham Schodda, Chris Shaw, Sonya Stockton, David Tapia, David Traylor, Jennifer Zwick

2016

Humaira Abid, Luke Armistead, Erika Bartlett, Laura Buchan, Minh Carrico, Karin Chickadel, Mujale Chrisebuka, Mary Clymer, Savvy Dani, Ruben David, Dakota Gearhart, Leah Gerrard, Patricia Graney, Edward Key, Melissa Koch, Linley Logan, Terrell Lozada, Ulises Mariscal, Steven Markussen, Loreen Matsushima, Angela Mele, Plamena Milusheva, Suzanne Morlock, Kemba Opio, Forrest Perrine, Angelina Samudre, Carolina Silva, Talia Silveri, Loree Spriggs, Junko Yamamoto

2017

Sofia Babaeva, Briar Bates, Cecily Bishop, Patrick Blanchard, Claire Brandt, Jasmine Brown, Susan Brown, Ryan Burns, Della Chen, Kalina Chung, Isobel Davis, Denise Emerson, Randi Ganulin, Tatiana Garmendia, Erin Genia, Meg Hartwig, Laura Heit, Henry Jackson-Spieker, Maria Jost, Jesse LeDoux, Paige Madden, Tia Matthies, Hugo Moro, Margot Myers, Akira Ohiso, Ian Page-Echols, Shawn Parks,

Maimoona Rahim, Amaranta Sandys, Dori Scherer, Priti Sherchan, Sara Snedeker, April Soetarman, Tara Tamaribuchi, Megan Treasure, Lisa Turner, Joe Wilkinson

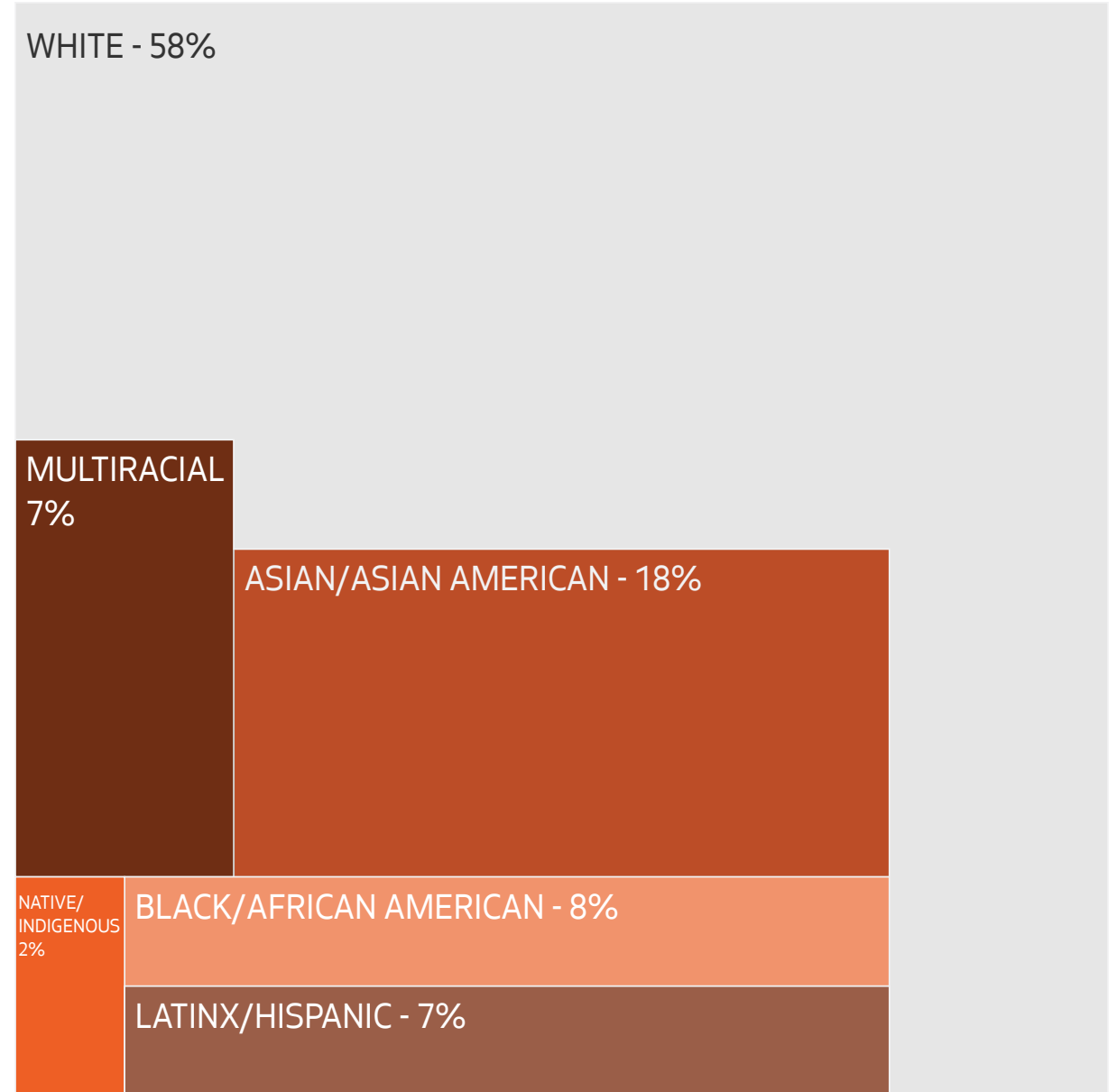
2018

Brenda Allen, Aubrey Birdwell, Lana Blinderman, Sean Carleton, BK Choi, Bo Choi, Karen de Luna, Noel de Sa e Silva, Cecelia DeLeon, Ezra Dickinson, Sarah Fetterman, Peggy Foy, Alan Fulle, Leah Hugon (Quire), Juliana Kang-Robinson, Karey Kessler, Todd Lawson, Fulgencio Lazo, Francesca Lohmann, Anna Macrae, Lin-Lin Mao, Shin Yu Pai, Yunhyun Park, Lawrence Pitre, Saiyare Refaei, Susan Ringstad-Emery, Grant Robinson, Fin'es Scott, Erin Shigaki, Rosa Silver, Ilvs Strauss, Miya Sukune, Shann Thomas, Markel Uriu, Sophia Wheelwright, Carol Williams, Lihong Yang, Angie Yusuf

Fulgencio Lazo, Mercado de Esperanzas, photo credit Alison Post



Institutional barriers take time to overcome: even with a focus on enrolling artists of color, they make up only 42% of all boot campers to date.



Of all participants, 26 declined to indicate their racial identification and are not included in the above visual.

About Seattle Office of Arts & Culture

The Seattle Office of Arts & Culture (ARTS) manages the city's public art program, cultural partnerships grant programs, the Langston Hughes Performing Arts Institute, and The Creative Advantage initiative in the effort to foster a city driven by creativity that provides the opportunity for everyone to engage in diverse arts and cultural experiences. In alignment with the City's Race and Social Justice Initiative, we work to eliminate institutional racism in our programs, policies and practices. The Office is supported by the 16-member Seattle Arts Commission, citizen volunteers appointed by the mayor and City Council.

Marcia Iwasaki, Public Art Project Manager

As a public art project manager for the Seattle Office of Arts & Culture (ARTS), Marcia oversees projects where artists and communities realize their artistic visions. For over two decades, she's managed projects for community centers, fire stations, city utilities, parks, transportation sites, artist residencies, temporary art, artist rosters and special projects. Marcia and colleague Elisheba Johnson, co-developed "Public Art Boot Camp," an intensive two-day training program designed to increase diversity in public art by providing artists from diverse backgrounds the information and opportunity to transition from studio to public art. Additionally, Marcia is on the team of ARTISTS UP, a collaborative effort between 4Culture and ARTS, which improves and expands capacity and networks for under-represented artists in all media, in the Puget Sound region.

Elisheba Johnson, Public Art Project Manager

Elisheba thinks of herself as a cross between a social practice artist and an arts administrator. Johnson, who has a BFA from Cornish College of the Arts, was the owner of Faire Gallery Café, a multi-use art space that held art exhibitions, music shows, poetry readings and creative gatherings. Since 2013 Johnson has been at the Seattle Office of Arts of Culture where she is

a public art project manager. In 2014, Elisheba co-wrote and published *The Adventures of Emery Jones: Boy Science Wonder* with her father Charles Johnson. The series now has two titles; *Bending Time* and *The Hard Problem*. Elisheba is also a founding member of COLLECT, a curated art tour to inspire a new generation of art collectors. Elisheba is currently a member of the Americans for the Arts Emerging Leaders Network advisory council.

Ruri Yampolsky, Public Art Program Director

Ruri oversees the Public Art program, working to integrate the ideas and work of artists into the public realm and large-scale, capital construction projects. With more than 25 years in the field, she has spent time focusing on expanding the public art experience, best practices for public art administration, developing policies, procedures and contracts, investigating issues of artists' rights, and coordinating the program's artwork conservation efforts. She has been a member of several interdepartmental teams addressing city-wide planning issues such as the Central Waterfront. She is also a registered architect with a Masters of Architecture from Columbia University, and earned her bachelor's in architecture with a minor in Latin from Barnard College.



Ulises Mariscal, *Greatness Starts Here*, photo credit Mark Woods



Jasmine Brown

Black Teen Wearing Hoodie

All Informational Resources provided to
the following: [unreadable] [unreadable]
[unreadable]

August 17, 2018

Jasmine Brown, Black Teen Wearing Hoodie,
photo credit Minh Carrico