



The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage 2023 Grantees

Media Contact: Megan Wendell, 267.350.4961,
mwendell@pewcenterarts.org

PROJECT GRANTS

Each amount listed below represents project funding plus an additional 20% in unrestricted, general operating support.

The Academy of Natural Sciences of Drexel University

The Botany of Nations: Re-collecting the Lewis and Clark Herbarium with Indigenous Perspectives
\$360,500

A new exhibition revisits the 200-plus carefully preserved North American plant specimens collected during the 1804-06 Lewis and Clark expedition. Designed in collaboration with Indigenous community advisors, the project counters narratives of colonial “discovery” and offers historical and contemporary perspectives on Indigenous culture and botanical scientific contributions. A film and interactive digital displays accompany the exhibition’s exploration of heritage plant cultivation, biodiversity, and environmental justice.

Ars Nova Workshop

ReSounding
\$240,500

A world premiere interdisciplinary performance celebrates the lineage and culture of jazz in Philadelphia. Tenor saxophonist and Pew Fellow [Odean Pope](#) collaborates with his student-turned-colleague, saxophonist Immanuel Wilkins, to compose an evening-length piece that situates jazz and its improvisational spirit as a critical element of American cultural production. Based on a poem by writer Herman Beavers dedicated to Pope, the work also features theater artist and Pew Fellow [Jennifer Kidwell](#) and a performance space designed by artist Lauren Halsey.

Arthur Ross Gallery at the University of Pennsylvania

Barbara Earl Thomas: The Illuminated Body

\$240,500

The first exhibition in Philadelphia of Seattle-based visual artist Barbara Earl Thomas presents works that address racial inequity in portraiture and depict Black subjects in moments of joy and creativity across class lines. The show includes cut-paper portraits, glass vessels, an immersive installation, and a new collaborative sound piece featuring a poem by Thomas and composition by cellist Seth Parker Woods.

Bowerbird

Radical Other

\$120,500

A multi-day festival illuminates the work of avant-garde composer Lucia Dlugoszewski (1925–2000), who composed more than 150 pieces in her lifetime, invented dozens of instruments, and worked in other disciplines such as poetry, dance, and film. Informed by research from the newly available Dlugoszewski archive at the Library of Congress, the retrospective includes works spanning the composer’s career, including performances by dancers from the Erick Hawkins Dance Company—with whom Dlugoszewski collaborated for decades—and a variety of contemporary music ensembles.

Brandywine Workshop and Archives

PrintLab

\$360,500

A creative residency supports eight artists in the exploration of emerging printmaking techniques and related technologies, culminating in a curated exhibition at both the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts and Brandywine Workshop. Resident artists expand their practices and experiment with scale, materials, and tools like 3D printers and laser cutters. An illustrated catalogue along with virtual and in-person programming illuminate the artists’ creative processes from conception through final production.

Christ Church Preservation Trust

On Buried Ground

\$300,500

A performance and exhibition reveal the histories of enslaved and freed people of African descent in Philadelphia during the American colonial era. Dance artist Shayla-Vie Jenkins and playwright Angela Bey develop an evening of theatrical storytelling, informed by archival records and new scholarship, along with an exhibition of artifacts, an interactive story map, and a series of public discussions featuring historians, artists, and archivists.

The Clay Studio

Clay as Care (working title)

\$354,500

The relationship between ceramic art and health is examined through an exhibition, scientific research, a publication, and public programs. The project considers ways in which care manifests in ceramic art and how viewing art and working with clay can promote personal and communal health. The exhibition features artists whose practices address healing, rest, and resilience, including Jennifer Ling Datchuk, Pew Fellow [Adebunmi Gbadebo](#), and Ehren Tool.

The College of Physicians of Philadelphia

Postmortem: Mütter Museum

\$285,500

An audience-centered project explores complex questions around respect, consent, and ethics related to the Mütter Museum's interpretation and display of human remains. Through a variety of public discussions, focus groups, and interviews, the museum gathers direct feedback from museum visitors and community members—in addition to guidance from experts in areas such as public health, medical history, and race and disability studies—to consider its future interpretative and exhibition practices.

Drexel University

Reshaping Historical Narratives through the Atwater Kent Collection

\$360,500

A diverse group of storytellers investigate artifacts from the Atwater Kent Collection (formerly housed at the now-closed Philadelphia History Museum) to unearth overlooked arcs of Philadelphia history. In collaboration with Drexel University, First Person Arts, and WHYY, the storytellers craft narratives based on their discoveries, contributing to a podcast series and an exhibition of artifacts dating from the past three centuries.

Independence Seaport Museum

Breaking Uncommon Ground on the Delaware River

\$240,500

An oral history project collects the personal narratives of Black Philadelphians who have worked or lived along the Delaware River waterfront. Stories are presented in a reinstallation of the museum's exhibition *Tides of Freedom: The African Presence on the Delaware River* and in a permanent public archive, offering perspectives on organized labor, the impact of highway construction on waterfront neighborhoods, and the role of Black women in waterfront culture and work.

Inis Nua Theatre Company

The Playboy of the Western World: a new adaptation

\$204,500

A modern adaptation reframes John Millington Synge's famous 1907 play to confront contemporary issues such as immigration, cultural assimilation, and celebrity worship. Written by Nigerian Irish playwright Bisi Adigun and Irish writer Roddy Doyle and directed by Kathryn MacMillan, the production maintains Synge's satire on Irish identity and patriarchy while it centers on a Nigerian asylum seeker in present-day Dublin and explores a changing, multicultural Ireland.

Intercultural Journeys

Eight Eight Time

\$120,500

Four composer-pianists translate community memories into a 12-movement suite written for an ensemble of four pianos as well as solo performances. Kendrah Butler-Waters, Terry Klinefelter, Suzzette Ortiz, and Pew Fellow Sumi Tonooka gather groups who are reflective of their own experiences—from Black, Latino, Asian, and neurodiverse communities—to share seminal life moments such as birth, parenting, caregiving, and generational passing. These stories inform the compositions as well as a spoken narrative developed by Pew Fellow, poet, and curator [Yolanda Wisher](#).

James A. Michener Art Museum

Behind These Walls: Reckoning with Incarceration

\$184,580

The Michener commissions multidisciplinary artist Jackie Sumell to develop a "Solitary Garden" as part of a project that recognizes the museum building's original function as the Bucks County Prison. Designed in correspondence with a currently incarcerated person, Sumell's garden bed installation is the same size and blueprint as many prison cells. Additionally, the museum works with an advisory committee of local community members to consider the history of its site, mass incarceration, and public monuments.

Moore College of Art & Design

Michelle Lopez: Pandemonium

\$360,500

Presented concurrently at The Galleries at Moore and the Franklin Institute's Fels Planetarium, a multimedia installation by artist Michelle Lopez immerses audiences in a contemplation of meteorological and human-created disasters. Both locations feature versions of the project's

titular work, a VR sculpture of violent tornadoes and constellations of cell phone lights, along with an exhibition of Lopez's recent work on view at Moore.

Painted Bride

Blood Baby

\$180,500

Immersive dance performances and multimedia installations contemplate family, parenting, and sexuality from a queer and gender-expansive perspective. Created by Pew Fellow [Meg Foley](#) and developed through convenings with queer parents, the project encourages active participation from audiences through immersive and interactive performances and a hands-on installation of materials used during the artistic development process. Sculpture and installation works are developed by artists Rabbit aL Friedrich, Pew Fellow [Jesse Harrod](#), and Carmichael Jones.

Penn Live Arts

Rennie Harris in Residence

\$360,500

During a three-year residency, choreographer and Pew Fellow Rennie Harris creates and presents new hip-hop dance works along with a retrospective of his established repertory, confronting ongoing and pressing social issues like gun violence. The residency offers Harris—a Philadelphia native and internationally known artist—the opportunity to reconnect with the communities who influenced his artistic vision. Rennie Harris Puremovement company members also participate in programs at public high schools each year of the residency.

People's Light

The Woman Question

\$360,500

A new play examines gendered healthcare disparities and bodily autonomy through both historical and contemporary lenses. The creative team, which includes playwright Suli Holum and director Melissa Kievman, sources historical records from the Women's Medical College of Pennsylvania, held in the Drexel University Legacy Archive. The stories of women who led the charge for women's health and reproductive freedom 150 years ago are interwoven with the experiences of 21st-century women who are medical students, doctors, nurses, and patients.

Philadelphia Theatre Company

Night Side Songs

\$360,500

A new iteration of a one-act musical incorporates local stories to address the experiences of caretaking, illness, and mortality. Audience members participate in a sing-along score and are seated in-the-round alongside the show's cast and musicians. Written by the musical's original creators, Daniel Lazour and Patrick Lazour, and directed by Taibi Magar, the newly revised work is performed at PTC and at caregiving sites around Philadelphia.

Pig Iron Theatre Company

Franklin's Key

\$360,500

An alternative history of science unfolds in a physical-theater work set in a world where Ben Franklin's inventions have been hidden underneath Philadelphia's landmarks for centuries. Featuring live Foley sound effects, the family-friendly play follows the adventures of two teenagers who unlock a series of puzzles to discover Franklin's secret experiments. The creative team includes Pew Fellow Dan Rothenberg who co-writes and directs the piece, co-writer Robert Quillen Camp, and New Zealand composer Rosie Langabeer.

The Philip and Muriel Berman Museum of Art

Enrique Bostelmann: Apertures and Borderscapes

\$245,900

A multifaceted retrospective of Mexican photographer Enrique Bostelmann (1939–2003) blends the artist's experimental work with new interviews with his family, collaborators, and art historians to create an exhibition, bilingual documentary, and publication. Featuring images from throughout Bostelmann's four-decade career, the project examines how his work negotiates and transgresses boundaries across cultures, countries, and genres.

RAIR

Fellowship with Guadalupe Maravilla

\$120,500

In a yearlong residency project with RAIR, interdisciplinary artist Guadalupe Maravilla develops new site-specific works to activate RAIR's Superfund site, a once-contaminated parcel of land. Maravilla's practice considers issues of migration, identity, trauma, and healing through the use of found and discarded objects. The artist's plans for the site include a series of sound baths, a temporary earth work in the site's six acres of grass, and sculptural shrines.

Science History Institute

Let's Do Lunch! The History and Science of Food in US Schools

\$289,820

An exhibition examines the history of the US School Lunch Program and considers the influences of science and technology on conversations about state welfare, food quality, and childhood health. The project includes interactive digital installations, animated projections, and immersive spaces recalling the school lunch experience, farms, laboratories, and kitchens, along with a space guest-curated by Rebel Ventures, a Philadelphia high school student-led healthy food business.

Taller Puertorriqueño

Tramando

\$360,500

Textile workshops led by designers from Guatemala and Puerto Rico instruct teen and adult Fairhill and Kensington residents on weaving methods, natural dye techniques, and lace traditions, culminating in a collaborative fabric sculpture and a photography exhibition documenting the project. Community residents receive hands-on training to design, fabricate, and market their own textile work, exploring how collective artmaking can support cultural preservation for diasporic communities.

Theatre Horizon

Fault Lines

\$350,900

A new comedic musical interrogates cultural narratives about Korean transnational adoption, assimilation, and code-switching. Amanda Morton leads the work's development, drawing from her own life experiences as an adopted Korean American child raised by white parents, as well as from the stories of other adoptees. Morton co-creates the production with director and writer Matthew Decker, composer Josh Titora, and theater deviser Brenson Thomas.

Thomas Jefferson University

Convalescence

\$360,500

A large-scale multimedia installation built on Jefferson's medical campus by visual artist and Pew Fellow [Pepón Osorio](#) is rooted in the artist's personal experience of cancer diagnosis and treatment. Developed through public programs taking place across Philadelphia, the resulting exhibition is sited within Jefferson's colleges of nursing and population health in Center City. The project highlights systemic health and health care inequities in the US and includes stories from other Philadelphians of color who have lived through or are currently experiencing life-threatening illnesses.

University of the Arts

Raw Material: The Art and Life of Susan Kleckner

\$356,900

A retrospective exhibition of the work of Susan Kleckner (1941–2010) at Lightbox Film Center is the first major survey of the artist's photography, film, video, performance, and visual art pieces. Comprising more than 100 artworks, film screenings, a scholarly monograph, and a restaging of one of Kleckner's performance pieces, the project highlights issues central to the artist's practice, including social and political activism, feminism, and queer rights.

William Way LGBT Community Center

The Kiyoshi Project

\$360,500

A documentary by Pew Fellow Glenn Holsten and a series of public programs chronicle the life of author and activist Kiyoshi Kuromiya, drawn in part from archives housed at William Way. As a Japanese American born in an incarceration camp, Kuromiya was a tireless human rights advocate throughout his life who demonstrated with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., co-founded the Gay Liberation Front–Philadelphia, and participated in numerous anti-war, civil rights, and gay liberation movements.

Woodmere Art Museum

Syd Carpenter: Planting in Place, Time, and Memory

\$300,500

A multi-site retrospective for ceramic artist and Pew Fellow Syd Carpenter spans her five-decade career with a comprehensive exhibition at Woodmere Art Museum along with installations at the Maguire Art Museum at Saint Joseph's University and the Berman Museum of Art at Ursinus College. The exhibition centers on four themes in Carpenter's work: historical Black American land practices, farming iconography, clay as a metaphor for collective memory, and a broader mutually supportive community of Black women ceramic artists.

PEW FELLOWSHIPS

Each Pew Fellow receives an unrestricted \$75,000 award.

Candice Iloh, Author

“A driving force of my work is saying the things Black youth feel they cannot say, or fear they are not supposed to say.”

Iloh captures the “nuance of young Black life” in coming-of-age novels and poetry, influenced as much by a lineage of Black queer writers as by the hundreds of high school students the artist has taught. Their work includes the novel *Every Body Looking* (a National Book Award finalist) and the forthcoming *Salt The Water* (Penguin Random House).

Vernon Jordan, III, Writer, poet, and filmmaker

“I’m curious about presenting film as Black poetics: using film to strike at feelings in the bones and the politics of the blood, the big gestures and the small touch.”

Jordan’s films expand upon Black and queer life and culture, community, memory, and spirituality. The self-described “visual lyricist” merges visual, musical, and poetic languages in work that includes the short film *One Magenta Afternoon*, which uses jazz music as a bridge for its characters to connect with the spirit world. Their music video *Ode to Philly* features poet and Pew Fellow Ursula Rucker.

Carmen Maria Machado, Writer

“To me, writing is both a practice of synthesizing human experience through language and interrogating the role of that synthesis in the experience of being alive.”

Machado’s diverse published works include the memoir *In the Dream House*, as well as the graphic novel *The Low, Low Woods* and the horror/sci-fi story collection *Her Body and Other Parties*, which was a National Book Award finalist. Blending realism with the surreal and the speculative, her writing encompasses a range of topics, including queer women’s experiences, true crime, domestic violence, and eroticism.

Shehrezad Maher, Filmmaker

“Through the documenting or fictionalizing of the lives of Pakistanis and our diaspora, my work is restless for new ways to examine the risks of repressing personal and collective traumas and histories.”

Maher’s films center South Asian characters, intersecting documentary and creative storytelling and drawing from interdisciplinary influences including visual arts, theater, and music. Her work reflects on memory, dreams, and intergenerational “familial alienation and trauma” in stories of Karachi ambulance drivers, a first-generation Pakistani American caring for his frail grandmother, and a family grappling with loss.

Darius Clark Monroe, Filmmaker

“Human behavior continues to motivate my artistic practice...The mystery that hides behind the pupils of the eyes is what continues to inspire me.”

Monroe’s documentary and fictional films surface intimate, interior lives and under-acknowledged histories. His works include *Racquet*, a four-part meditation on tennis players; *Black 14*, a short documentary about college athletes who protested against racial injustice in 1969 Wyoming; and the autobiographical documentary feature *Evolution of a Criminal*, which examines the aftereffects of a bank robbery.

Vitche-Boul Ra, Performance artist

“My primary artistic concerns are world building, autonomy, and individual sovereignty—specifically through a Black American lens.”

Ra draws from Black American popular culture and dance languages, DIY/punk approaches, gaming culture, and stage practices “concerning form and beauty.” Experienced as live performance, installation, or on a screen, Ra’s work rejects realism for theatricality, hyper-performativity, myth making, and play to interrogate and blur lines between persona and authentic self.

Samantha Rise, Songwriter and performer

“The majority of my artistic practice is dedicated to helping communities re-embody music as their birthright and art as a vehicle for igniting individual and collective power.”

Influenced by folk, jazz, blues, and Americana genres, Rise connects art and activism in performances and songs concerned with social justice, joy, and community. From traditional performance venues to community gatherings and demonstrations, Rise performs as a soloist, with musical collaborators, and as part of experimental theater and cabaret projects.

Karen Smith, Musician

“My drum is a spiritual connection to the African ancestors and to the world around me... I create spaces where other artists can join in a spirit of trust and improvisation.”

Smith is a percussionist who captures “the rhythm of a place and the cadences of people” in performances with a wide range of artists, including two music collectives she founded: Weez the Peoples and Sistahs Laying Down Hands. Smith’s creative practice extends to poetry, theater, teaching, and a healing circle project she calls “spiritual atmospheric cleansing,” featuring percussion, song, and storytelling.

Kristen Neville Taylor, Visual artist

“My practice makes the stories we tell about nature visible and shows the consequences of living within the realities they shape.”

Taylor’s installations combine drawing, sculpture, and glass to engage with environmental concerns. Often using familiar household supplies like aluminum foil and plaster, her work considers the cultural history of everyday materials, prompting questions of daily consumption and its effects on the climate and imagining resilient and sustainable futures.

Sumi Tonooka, Composer and musician

“The roots of my work lie in the rich soil of jazz and classical traditions in my hometown of Philadelphia.”

Tonooka’s compositions for orchestras, jazz ensembles, film, and dance are shaped by her more than forty years as a jazz performer and improviser. Beginning her career as a pianist—a practice that continues today—Tonooka approaches her work with a jazz artist’s affinity for experimentation and an interest in fusing genres and cultural influences, including her own Japanese heritage.

Armando Veve, Visual artist

“My work continues a tradition that dates back to the earliest cave paintings and illuminated manuscripts: making pictures that distill the beauty, absurdity, and horrors of being alive.”

Veve’s illustrations depict uncanny juxtapositions, whimsical storytelling, and commentary on contemporary and historical subjects. His vividly detailed compositions—a Sonoran Desert toad applying lipstick, absurd furniture designs, a reinterpretation of an Aesop fable—have been printed in numerous national publications, exhibited in galleries, and installed in subway stations and other public settings.

Phillip B. Williams, Writer

"I see my work as a bridge between the living and the ancestral realms, working through elegies, ancestral worship, divination, mythography, and grief of daily losses."

Williams' poems explore Black surrealism, folklore, and spirituality. Using lyrical, narrative, and dramatic poetic forms, he writes about loneliness, desire, doubt, memory, and "the borderline between beauty and tragedy." His publications include two books of poetry, *Mutiny* (an American Book Award winner) and *Thief in the Interior*, several chapbooks, and a forthcoming debut novel, *Ours* (Penguin Random House).

Media Contact

Megan Wendell

267.350.4961

mwendell@pewcenterarts.org