

Excellence in the Arts : Entry # 218

Is your organization a 501(c)3 nonprofit?

Yes

According to your 501(c)3 letter, in what town is your official office located?

Hartford

Where will your project be performed or exhibited?

Hartford

Will this activity occur after February 1, 2023?

Yes

Are you a recent grantee?

No

Organization Name

Real Art Ways, Inc.

Organization's IRS Tax ID #

060958072

Principal Contact Name

Will K. Wilkins

Title

Executive Director

Email

wwilkins@realartways.org

Phone

(860) 232-1006

Address

56 Arbor Street
Hartford, Connecticut 06106
United States
[Map It](#)

Website

<https://www.realartways.org/>

Amount requested this application

\$30,000.00

What is the organization's mission/vision statement?

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Mission: Real Art Ways is an alternative, multidisciplinary arts organization that presents and supports contemporary artists and their work, facilitates the creation of new work, and creatively engages and builds audiences and communities.

Provide a brief history of your organization and its activities.

Real Art Ways was founded by a group of artists in 1975. Located in downtown Hartford in 3 separate locations, Real Art Ways moved to Parkville in 1989.

Real Art Ways has a national reputation, including support over the years from the Andy Warhol, Ford, Rockefeller, MacArthur, Wallace, Rauschenberg, and Joan Mitchell foundations; as well as government sources including the National Endowment for the Arts and the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

In a typical year we serve between 50,000 (on-site) and 90,000 people (including off-site art projects), of all backgrounds and ages.

Programming includes:

Visual Arts: Solo exhibitions, group shows, commissioned public art projects, artist talks, and more.

Film: Independent and international films, director talks, premieres of local films.

Live Arts: Concerts, performances, readings, dance, and experimental work.

Social Events: Our monthly social event has contributed to the vibrancy of our region for 20 years. A range of events, many collaborations with community organizations, take place all year.

Education:

- Film Field Trips: More than 3,000 students per year visit to watch films, including documentaries on the civil rights movement, with facilitated discussions exploring relevant themes.
- Park Art: Free-of-charge art-making workshops 5 days a week for 8 weeks each summer, led by practicing artists, for children who live in our immediate neighborhood.
- Real Apprentices: We employ 6 high school students annually in paid positions. They are valued staff members who gain first-hand experience working in a professional environment.
- Eye on Video: Teens and young adults learn the basics of filmmaking in an intensive, summer-long program.

In December of 2021, Real Art Ways purchased 56 Arbor Street, creating a permanent home and setting the stage for a future expansion of our operations and programs.

Describe the demographics of your audience/people served by your activities.

We serve a wide range of people, young and old, suburb and city, LGBTQIA+, often from varied economic and cultural backgrounds. Real Art Ways' audiences reflect the demographics of the greater Hartford region: approximately 68% White, 13% Latino, 11% African-American or West Indian, 8% identified in varied other ways. Our education programs lean more towards participation by children of color; our monthly social events are a wonderful array of humanity.

Describe your organization's governance.

The Board of Trustees meets bi-monthly; committee meetings take place bi-monthly in the alternate months. Our Board of Trustees meeting attendance rate is 88%. Committees are Governance, Fundraising and Finance. All board members serve on a committee. Since last applying we have welcomed two new board members.

Describe the diversity of your board.

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Real Art Ways' board, 9 in total, is majority people of color, including Yedalis Ruiz, Ph.D., born in Puerto Rico, graduate of Hartford High; artist Olu Oguibe, born and raised in Nigeria (Igbo); Paul Mounds, African American, is a retired administrator at MCC; artist Victor Pacheco is Puerto Rican, and grew up in Hartford; Enid Rey is Puerto Rican, CEO & President of BRAVE Consulting and grew up in Hartford. The board includes 4 women and 5 men, with varied backgrounds and experiences.

What percentage of your board makes personal financial contributions to your organization?

100% of our board members make financial contributions to our organization on an annual basis.

Project Name

Real Art Awards 2022

Is this project related to the Visual Arts?

Yes

Will the artists associated with this project be financially compensated?

Yes

Project Description

Since 2003, we have held 16 regional open calls for emerging artists. There is no charge for artists to apply.

Artists this year were chosen from 330 entries, coming from NY, NJ, MA, CT, RI, NH, ME and VT, by a jury of three: two guest jurors – artist Carlos Motta and curator Yona Backer - and Will K. Wilkins.

Real Art Award winners are:

Mark Bhen Alan, Steven Baboun, Simon Benjamin, Romina Chuls, Adrian Martinez Chavez, Ying Ye

These artists come respectively from Filipino, Haitian-Syrian, Jamaican, Peruvian, Mexican, and Chinese backgrounds. Two artists (Adrian Martinez Chavez and Ying Ye) are graduates of the Hartford Art School. Adrian's family, who are the subject of his photographs, run the restaurant Monte Alban on Farmington Avenue.

Artists each receive a cash award, a solo exhibition, documentation, publication with essay, the opportunity for a gallery talk, and our full support in generating attention and attendance.

Total estimated project budget

\$80,500.00

Project start/opening

11/18/2022

Project end/closing

11/16/2023

Project venue

Real Art Ways

Project town

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Hartford, CT

Admission fees, attendance, and activity details

Visiting Real Art Ways' galleries is always free for the public. Currently we are open five days a week to the public, with staff on site 7 days a week. If we do get visitors on the days we are closed to the public (Mondays and Tuesdays) staff will welcome them to our space to view any current exhibitions.

How do you intend to promote/market this project?

We promote using our weekly e-news (10,286 subscribers), Facebook (17,508 followers), Twitter (7,979 followers), Instagram (7,275 followers), and through our website. In addition to sending out press releases, we connect with various local and regional media outlets (such as NPR, the Hartford Courant, Art New England) and national online and print publications (including Hyperallergic, Artforum, and Bomb Magazine) to inform and bring awareness about the awards and exhibitions.

How is your organization going to use Roberts funding?

Our request will match a \$30,000 award from the National Endowment for the Arts, and will go towards artist fees, essayist fees, documentation, and other exhibition costs.

How will Roberts support be recognized?

We are grateful for Roberts Foundation support. We will recognize the Roberts Foundation in: printed materials, press releases, programs, and posters that are displayed in our space and throughout the community, our weekly e-news, a pre-cinema slideshow, our donor board located in our lobby, our website, and via social media (Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram).

What is your organization's definition of artistic excellence?

Artistic quality and excellence are inherently subjective matters. Real Art Ways' definition of artistic excellence is best understood within the context of the organization's commitment to supporting living artists and the presentation of innovative work that engages in the aesthetic issues of the day. Excellence in an organization such as ours is in part a result of not playing it safe. Real Art Ways is actively engaged in supporting new ideas and fostering creation. Understanding an artist's work within a broader national and international context is also a core element in our assessment of excellence.

Real Art Ways' artistic excellence is reflected in this: Since 1975, Real Art Ways has presented a remarkable number of MacArthur 'genius grant' awardees, (40) including Pepón Osorio, Iñigo Manglano-Ovalle, Mark Bradford, Anthony Braxton, Ornette Coleman, Nicole Eisenman, Josiah McElheny, Trevor Paglen, Tyshawn Sorey, Cecil Taylor, Camille Utterbach, Carrie Mae Weems, and Julie Ault.

How does this project align with that definition, and how does it advance your mission?

Real Art Ways' Real Art Awards is a manifestation of our definition of artistic excellence. We have a history of showing artists early in their practice who go on to significant careers. As an example, Kehinde Wiley, who was commissioned in 2018 to create the official portrait of President Obama, had his first solo exhibition at Real Art Ways in 2002-3.

In the history of our juried open call, many artists have gone on to receive various accolades and opportunities, and have created lasting impact in their communities. Kate Gilmore, (chosen in 2004) was included in the 2010 Whitney Biennial. Eric Gottesman (chosen in 2010) co-founded For Freedoms, a civic engagement arts organization creating nationwide campaigns. Heidi Lau (chosen in 2014) has received residencies and exhibitions from many organizations, including the Joan Mitchell Foundation, Bronx Museum, and BRIC Arts Media. These are just a few examples of what previous open call artists have done after working with Real Art Ways.

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How will your audience and the community benefit from this project?

Real Art Awards beneficiaries include emerging artists throughout the region, who receive a no-cost opportunity to have their work seen and considered; the selected artists, who receive exhibition experience, exposure and publication; visitors to Real Art Ways' physical space, website, social networking sites, and students. We connect artists in various ways, when appropriate, to our education programs. For example, artists may conduct basic workshops for Park Art for young kids, or speak with classes on Film Field Trip visits. Artists also receive the opportunity for public programs, such as talks, performances, and collaborations with local groups. These opportunities allow artists and audiences to connect in and out of the gallery setting. The chosen artists are diverse, both through racial and gender identities, as well as in artistic practice. As such, our audience is empowered to find representation in these exhibitions as well as encounter new cultures and artistic expressions.

How will this project be evaluated?

We use quantitative and qualitative analyses to assess programmatic effectiveness. For example, we send surveys to exhibited artists to determine what we do well, what we could improve, and any other gaps we may be unaware of. We track audience attendance for events, digital and in-person, so we may survey them as well. We are especially interested in understanding how accessible our programming is in terms of our website and the information presented alongside exhibitions. Our goal is to make contemporary art (which can sometimes seem intimidating) accessible and welcoming.

Emerging artists from previous programs have returned to Real Art Ways in a variety of contexts, whether exhibiting, jurying another round, or serving as an essayist. For instance, this year's juror Carlos Motta was selected in an open call from 14 years ago. We work to give our artists a positive experience, allowing them to leave with tangible knowledge to grow in their careers.

Cover letter

- [RealArtWaysCoverLetter.pdf](#)

Board list

- [2022RealArtWaysBoardMembers.pdf](#)

IRS 501(c)3 determination letter

- [Real-Art-Ways-501c3.pdf](#)

Financial statement

- [Audited-Financial-Statements.pdf](#)

Last year operational budget

- [Real-Art-Ways-Budget-FY21.pdf](#)

Current year operational budget

- [RAWFY22-Budget.pdf](#)

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Balance sheet

- [June-22-Bal-Sheet-RAW.pdf](#)

Project budget

- [Real-Art-Awards-Roberts-Project-Budget-2022.pdf](#)

Does your organization produce an annual report?

No

Has your organization adopted a strategic plan?

Yes

Strategic plan

- [Strategic-Plan-Executive-Summary.pdf](#)

Does your organization have a formal policy or organizational commitment to ensure that visual artists are financially compensated?

Yes

Visual Artist Compensation Policy

- [Exhibition-Solo-Artist-Agreement.pdf](#)

Other materials?

- [Roberts_Images_2022_small.pdf](#)

Have you contacted the Executive Director by email or phone to discuss this proposal?

Yes

Is your cover letter signed by your senior executive? on your letterhead? with your official office address?

Yes