



ARTISTS' ADAPTABILITY CIRCLES ANNOUNCES 2023 ARTIST CIRCLE AWARDEES

Bay Area funding and leadership development collaborative announces cohort of artist circles creatively addressing issues arising in their lives and communities.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

San Francisco, CA (February 3, 2023) - The Artists' Adaptability Circles (AAC) is a community-driven granting and leadership development program designed to put Bay Area artists, culture bearers and arts workers to work. Following a successful beta round, the initiative is now thrilled to announce its 2023 cohort of Bay Area artist circles centering mutual aid to creatively address issues arising in their lives and communities.

Guided by a lead artist, each circle self-identifies an issue area and then receives stipends, training and \$10,000. This year, the collaborative selected three new circles of community-based artists:



Elizabeth Jiménez Montelongo (Santa Clara) and her circle (Adriana Garcia, Josiah Luis Alderete and Laura Diaz) are exploring and expanding opportunities for under-served communities of color in the Bay Area to create, present, publish, experience, and engage with multi-disciplinary creative works that inspire conversation on important issues and celebrate shared culture with an emphasis on supporting women of color and Indigenous people whose heritage is rooted in areas that are now Mexico, Central America, the Caribbean, and South America.



Tossie Long (San Francisco) and her circle (Crystal Sanders-Alvarado, Jamil Nichols, Maria Judice and Miles Lassi) are amplifying Black voices and Black sounds of San Francisco.



Xtal Azul (Oakland) and their circle (Edgar Fabián Frías, M. Zamora, Ruth Villasenor and Tlahuizpapalotl Fabian) are (re)establishing spaces/systems of support and mutual aid for Indigenous artists (specifically 2 Spirit and Indigequer artists, cultural bearers and practitioners) for visioning individual and collective projects that decolonize creative practice, sexuality and gender expression, and support the sovereignty of their work, shared cosmologies, and embodied spirituality.

“Art is not just a reflection of life, but a tool for shaping it” says sound artist, founder of Red Clay Art Haus and AAC lead artist Tossie Long. “Being a part of the Artists’ Adaptability Circles circle means being a part of a community that values using art as a tool for fostering communal transformation, promoting radical self care, and revolutionizing the value and importance of the creative process. Red Clay Sound Haus is proud to be a part of the AAC movement that embraces art not just as a form of expression, but a form of revolution; a revolutionary process for making a difference, inspiring social impact and shaping the future of the Bay Area.”

Additionally, three beta round lead artists and one full circle will continue on with the community-based collaborative, including:



Co-leads **Alma Leppla** and **Tricia Rainwater** (San Francisco) are addressing the gap in resources and representation for BIPOC queer and gender-expansive artists.



Chris Evans (Oakland) and her circle (Keisha Turner, Sheila Russell, Tobe Melora Correal and Yvette Phillips Aldama) are addressing the health, wellness and deep self care of a small cohort of Black women in Oakland cultivating balance, financial sustainability, thriving and joy.



Héctor Lugo (Oakland) is creating open and accessible physical and social spaces for Afro-Latin music and dance jams in collaboration with a bilingual education public school in Oakland.

The program began its development in June 2020 with deep, sustained conversation among Bay Area arts leaders responding to artists' needs during the peak of the Covid pandemic. Through consensus-based decision making, the initiative's goal is to empower Bay Area artists, culture bearers and arts workers to grow their skills and capacity and to dream past their current realities. The AAC also creates a shared learning environment for historically under-resourced artists, culture bearers and arts workers (specifically, Black, Indigenous and People of Color, LGBTQIA2S+ people, individuals with disabilities, and other historically under-resourced communities) to come together.

Different from traditional grant programs, artists participating in AAC did not need to have an actionable grant plan submitted at the time of their selection. Nor does the initiative expect specific outcomes of these circles. Instead, participants are paid stipends to meet together and to attend cohort development sessions centering curriculum developed by Emerging Arts Professionals San Francisco / Bay Area and individuals participating in their fellowship program.

“In a socio-economic environment that forces artists to constantly seek new opportunities, we tend to extend ourselves in every possible direction in order to sustain our practice and safeguard our livelihood” says musician and educator Héctor Lugo. After participating in the program's beta round, Lugo began to shift how he approached his community-based work. “The Artists' Adaptability Circles program provided

resources and support that allowed me to slow down a bit and consider my practice and its role in my life and my communities' lives in a holistic way. It also introduced me to a wonderful group of artists and thinkers who have helped expand my understanding of what art in community can be.”

Following a robust engagement period focused on togetherness and sustainability, artist circles are provided with \$10,000 in flexible funding to create some small action toward addressing their issue area. While there is no outcome expected of this funding, artists are instructed to use this time and support to center their own and their communities' needs. Which could result in support for: retreats to rest, deepen relationships or plan future actions; programmatic activities like publications, events, residencies and workshops; increased individual artist stipends; or supporting basic needs for the circles' participating artists (like rent, transportation, childcare, etc.).

Central to the program's design and implementation is mutual aid. AAC co-creator and EAP Director Rhiannon Evans MacFadyen says “Mutual aid is the foundation of community care and has a deep history in BIPOC and under-served communities. It moves us toward equity by allowing diverse groups of people to provide for each other - from each according to their ability, to each according to their need - moving us from a singular, scarcity mindset to that of a vibrant, resourced ecosystem.”

Utilizing a distributed leadership and funding model, the AAC initiative is a collaboration between Diamond Wave, Emerging Arts Professionals San Francisco Bay Area, La Peña Cultural Center, Movimiento de Arts y Cultura de Latino Americana, SOMArts Cultural Center and funding partners The San Francisco Foundation, Castellano Family Foundation, Phyllis C. Wattis Foundation, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Zellerbach Family Foundation, Walter & Elise Haas Fund.

Please see below for individual lead artist biographies.

Cohort and individual promotional images can be accessed at:

<https://bit.ly/AACArtists23>

For more information, visit:

www.diamond-wave.org

www.emergingsf.org

Artists' Adaptability Circles



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Lead Artist Biographies (alphabetical by last name)

[Xtal Azul](#) (they/she) is a queer xicanx interdisciplinary artist, writer, educator, and brujx plant-magic maker, whose work centers themes of queerness, neurodivergence, ritual, and the body. They founded Queer Youth Arts, a youth mentoring arts project, for the 2014 National Queer Arts Festival. From 2014-2019, Azul co-organized the beloved Magic Makers: Queer Art, Craft, and Healing Fair in Oakland. Azul's poems were published in QTPOCALYPSE (2021), an art zine and survival guide. Their work, *Aqui 'stoy*, was part of the 30th Annual Juried Exhibition, *Interconnected*, at Southern Exposure gallery in San Francisco (2021). They were also the lead artist for the Bay Area American Indian Two Spirit drum multimedia installation, *Calling Us Home/Regresa*, in the *Dreams Emerging, Beyond Resilience: Dia de Los Muertos* exhibition at Somarts in San Francisco (2021). Most recently, Azul co-curated the National Queer Arts Festival's visual art exhibition of *Vaz A Ver/You Will See* (2022).

[Chris Evans](#) (she/her) is an interdisciplinary artist trained in music and dance who creates immersive, interactive work with the goal of cultivating sacred spaces for communal listening, healing, and transformation. While much of her work and collaborations are with and for Black women in Oakland, she bridges many communities through her collaborations and the audiences she reaches. She directs the Reconstruction Study Project and Reconstructing Imagination Residency, co-founded Idora Park Project Space, is a member of House Full of Black Women and Black and

White Projects collectives. She served on the City of Berkeley's Civic Arts Grant panels from 2018-2020, co-led a grant writing workshop for grant applicants in 2020, and served on the Dancer's Group grant panel in 2019. She is a certified Pilates Instructor, Yamuna Body Rolling practitioner, and Level 2 Talawa Technique practitioner, a technique that centers Africanist movement technologies, and the founder of Deep Breath Pilates.

[Elizabeth Jiménez Montelongo](#) (**she/her**) is a poet, visual artist, and facilitator. Elizabeth's art is featured in exhibitions across the United States and her poems are published widely in anthologies and journals. Her work is informed by her Indigenous ancestry, Mesoamerican philosophy and art, Mexican culture, Chicano history, and her experiences as a woman. She facilitates visual arts workshops and poetry workshops for universities and non-profits. In 2021, Elizabeth served as Creative Ambassador of the San José Office of Cultural Affairs, received a Cultura Power Mini-Grant from MACLA, and was awarded an Honorable Mention from the Santa Clara Cultural Commission and the Triton Museum. Her solo exhibition opens at Centro de Artes (San Antonio, Texas) in 2022. She earned a BFA in Art and a BA in French from San José State University. She is a Board Member of Poetry Center San José and is the founder of La Raíz Magazine.

[Alma Leppla](#) (**they/them**) is a queer Latine multidisciplinary artist and educator whose work seeks to build community through the exploration of intersectional identities. Leppla received a Masters of Arts in Art Education from the Maryland Institute College of Art. They have shown work nationally and internationally through solo exhibitions, group shows, and artist residencies. They have served as an arts facilitator and educator, working with schools, community organizations and institutions since 2008.

Nicknamed "Bone Rattler," [Tossie Long](#) (**she/her**) is a 2nd generation San Franciscan made from the red clay of Mississippi. Tossie works at the intersections of public art, music, culture and sociopolitical edges spanning from rock and roll vocals, afro-futuristic productions to immersive design experiences. A Grammy Nominated and 3x Izzie award winner, Tossie is a multi-hyphenate poly-creative and co-founder of Bakanal de Afrique, an Afro Urban festival, serving 800+ global Black and African descent artists since its founding in 2010. A practitioner of ceremonial music from around the world, Tossie traced the migration of Vodou studying the music and culture throughout Benin, Ayiti, Nigeria, Brazil, Cuba, and New Orleans.

[Hector Lugo](#) (**he/him**) is a percussionist, singer, songwriter, producer, and educator. A native of Puerto Rico, he has performed and recorded with a variety of prominent artist in the Bay Area's Latin, Jazz, and Afro-Caribbean music scenes – including Louis

Romero and Grupo Mazacote, the Larry Vuckovich Jazz-Latin Quartet, Jackeline Rago and the Venezuelan Music Project, Bobby Céspedes and Conjunto Céspedes, John Santos and the Machete Ensemble, as well as internationally artists such as salsa great Pete “El Conde” Rodríguez, the Veracruz based Son Jarocho ensemble Mono Blanco, the late great Puerto Rican percussionist Luis Chichito Cepeda, Modesto Cepeda, and the Los Cepeda Folkloric Ensemble from Puerto Rico.

[Tricia Rainwater](#) (**she/her**) is a mixed race Choctaw Indigiqueer multimedia artist based on Ramaytush Ohlone land. Her work has been featured nationally and internationally through group shows and artist features. In her work Tricia focuses on creating pathways to a resilient and hopeful future by centering healing and process. Tricia’s work ranges from self portraiture to large sculptural installations. She is a recent recipient of the SF Artists Grant through the SF Arts Commission