

CITY OF LA CROSSE

ARTS BOARD ANNUAL GRANT PROGRAM REPORT

January 1 - December 31, 2024

LETTER FROM THE ARTS BOARD CHAIR

Dear La Crosse Community Members,

We've accomplished so much together in 2024, and I couldn't be prouder of what the City of La Crosse Arts Board has achieved. As Chair, I want to express my deepest thanks to everyone who contributed to our Annual Grant Program—artists, organizations, and my fellow board members—all of whom played a vital role in supporting La Crosse's vibrant arts community.

This year marked a significant transformation for the Arts Board. In 2024, we restructured our annual grant program into three tiers—Creative Development, Small Project, and Community Impact Grants—to better address the diverse needs of our arts community. We also implemented SlideRoom, a centralized application management system that streamlined the grant submission and review process to support this new structure. By requiring detailed project goals, budgets, and timelines, SlideRoom has allowed us to evaluate proposals more efficiently and ensure funding goes to projects that align with our mission. This year, we awarded 10 grants supporting a wide range of disciplines, including public art installations, theater productions, visual art exhibitions, and community engagement initiatives. These projects reflect the Arts Board's commitment to fostering inclusivity, cultural diversity, and accessibility.

In April 2023, the City of La Crosse created the part-time role of Arts Coordinator within the Parks, Recreation, and Forestry Department to champion the arts and strengthen community connections. Over the last year, Jacqueline Marcou, appointed to this position, has helped oversee the Annual Grant Program, facilitated communication between applicants, the Arts Board, and City Hall, and ensured timely grant payments. Her experience in city government and passion for arts advocacy have been invaluable.

I am incredibly grateful for the generous support from Mayor Mitch Reynolds' Office and the La Crosse City Council through ARPA funding and the \$10,000 recently granted to the Arts Board in the City's 2025 Operating Budget, which will allow us to expand our impact. Special thanks to Kate Kroll for organizing our meetings and to Jay Odegaard for his ongoing guidance and support.

Finally, I want to recognize the efforts of the Arts Board members, artists, community partners, and city officials who made this year's accomplishments possible. Together, we've created a strong foundation for the continued growth of the arts in La Crosse. Let's carry this momentum forward as we work to make our city a vibrant cultural hub in the Midwest.

With Thanks,



Zachary Stensen
Chair, City of La Crosse Arts Board

ANNUAL GRANT PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The City of La Crosse Arts Board's Annual Grant Program is dedicated to empowering individual artists and nonprofit organizations that contribute to the city's vibrant visual and performing arts scene. By funding diverse artistic activities and cultural programs, the Arts Board nurtures creativity, promotes inclusivity, and ensures an equitable geographic distribution of public art throughout the city. The program offers three types of grants—Creative Development, Small Project, and Community Impact Grants—and reviews grant applications quarterly, awarding multiple grants annually to support a wide range of artists and art forms that enrich the cultural fabric of La Crosse.

2024 GRANT RECIPIENTS

Below is a list of grant recipients and their project titles:

LUKE ACHTERBERG

Sculpture in Public Places
Creative Development Grant

**UNIVERSITY OF
WISCONSIN-LA CROSSE,
VISUAL & PERFORMING ARTS**

Music &...
Creative Development Grant

GREY AREA PRODUCTIONS

Small Mouth Sounds
Creative Development Grant

**HABITAT FOR HUMANITY OF THE
GREATER LA CROSSE REGION**

ReNew the Block Mural
Community Impact Grant

MARLIE VOIGT

Senior Art Exhibition
Small Project Grant

OLIVIA BULL

Altered Moments: Vegetated Metropolis
Small Project Grant

**DOWNTOWN
MAINSTREET, INC.**

Downtown Banner Project
Small Project Grant

WISCORPS, INC.

The Gallery at The Nature Place
Small Project Grant

**PUMP HOUSE
REGIONAL ARTS CENTER**

Artspire La Crosse
Community Impact Grant

**VITERBO UNIVERSITY
FINE ARTS CENTER**

Arts for Young America School Series
Creative Development Grant

PROJECT DESCRIPTIONS



Luke Achterberg, Sculpture in Public Places

LUKE ACHTERBERG SCULPTURE IN PUBLIC PLACES

GRANT TYPE Creative Development Grant

FUNDING AMOUNT: \$2,500

Luke Achterberg's project involved the placement of Incendiary, a large-scale steel sculpture in La Crosse's Burns Park for a one-year period. This vibrant, abstract sculpture was designed to create a dynamic relationship with its surroundings, inviting residents and visitors alike to experience contemporary art in an everyday landscape. The project democratized art and invited broad community participation in cultural appreciation by placing the sculpture in a highly visible location. This project aligns with the Arts Board's mission by making high-quality art accessible to the public. The sculpture contributed to the aesthetic enhancement of La Crosse's public spaces, creating opportunities for daily engagement with art. The focus on free and public access fosters art as an integral part of daily life and builds a sense of community through shared cultural experiences.



Uwl Visual & Performing Arts, Music &...

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-LA CROSSE VISUAL & PERFORMING ARTS MUSIC &...

GRANT TYPE Creative Development Grant

FUNDING AMOUNT: \$2,500

UWL's School of Visual & Performing Arts hosted an exhibition by composer and visual artist Mary Ellen Childs titled *Music &*. The exhibition, featured as part of the La Crosse New Music Festival, blended multiple senses through the use of sound, video, and scent, providing a deeply immersive experience for attendees. Free admission and public accessibility were central to the project's success, with the exhibition running at the UWL Art Gallery. *Music &* exemplified the Arts Board's commitment to fostering innovative, interdisciplinary art forms that push the boundaries of traditional artistic experiences. The project introduced the community to new and engaging ways to experience art while promoting inclusivity through free access. The multi-sensory nature of the exhibition also aligned with the Board's goal of encouraging new and diverse artistic approaches.

GREY AREA PRODUCTIONS SMALL MOUTH SOUNDS

GRANT TYPE Creative Development Grant

FUNDING AMOUNT: \$2,500

Small Mouth Sounds by Bess Wohl, staged by Grey Area Productions, told the story of six characters attending a silent retreat, exploring themes of communication and isolation. The production employed innovative techniques that focused on movement and non-verbal expression to engage the audience while offering pay-what-you-can performances to make the theater experience accessible to a broad audience. This project expanded the scope of theatrical expression in La Crosse through its non-verbal storytelling approach. The production created a thought-provoking and engaging experience for audiences, while the pay-what-you-can model promoted inclusivity. By ensuring financial accessibility for all attendees, *Small Mouth Sounds* aligned with the Arts Board's mission of fostering experimental and inclusive artistic work.

HABITAT FOR HUMANITY OF THE GREATER LA CROSSE REGION

RENEW THE BLOCK MURAL

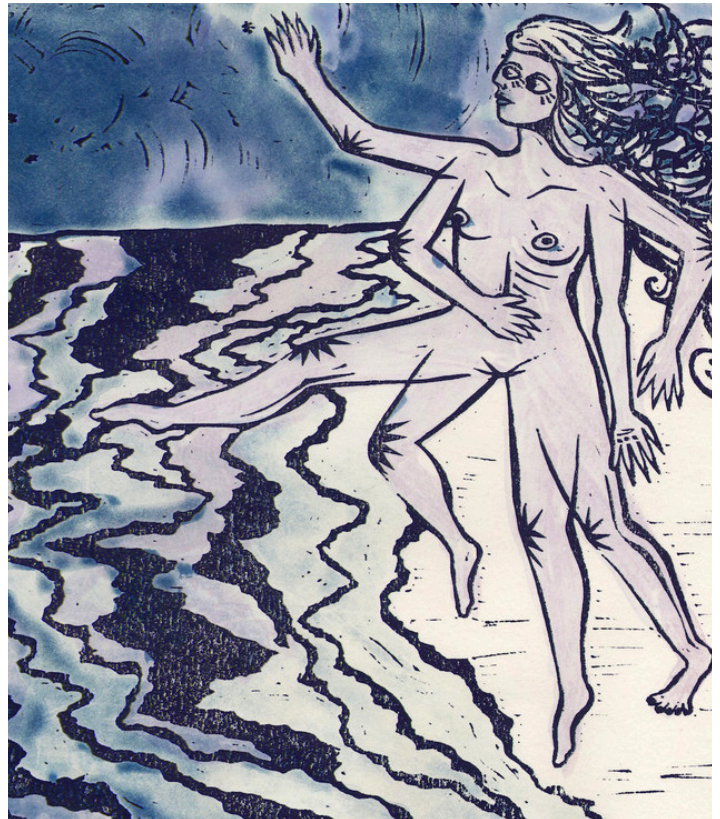
GRANT TYPE Community Impact Grant

FUNDING AMOUNT: \$12,000

As part of Habitat for Humanity's ReNew the Block initiative, a large-scale mural was created at Logan Middle School, painted by La Crosse-based artist Landon Sheely. The mural became a visual centerpiece of a broader revitalization effort, combining art with community development and education. Students were actively involved in the design and execution process, which helped instill pride in their school and foster a sense of ownership. ReNew the Block embodied the Arts Board's mission of using art as a means of community-building and neighborhood revitalization. By engaging students and local residents in the mural-making process and commissioning a local artist, the project promoted collaboration and strengthened community ties. The mural not only beautified the area but also demonstrated the transformative power of public art in fostering community pride and cohesion.



Landon Sheely, Renew The Block



Marlie Voigt, The Three Pillars of Love

MARLIE VOIGT SENIOR ART EXHIBITION

GRANT TYPE Small Project Grant

FUNDING AMOUNT: \$160

Marlie Voigt's senior art project explored the use of light reflections off CDs to create a visual music piece that symbolized balance and harmony. Voigt's installation, exhibited at UWL's Center for the Arts, drew inspiration from her personal experiences and themes of ancestral roots, inviting the audience to reflect on the intersections between music, light, and personal history. This project exemplified the Arts Board's goal of supporting emerging artists and fostering creative exploration. By providing a platform for young artists to present their work, the Arts Board encouraged artistic development and growth. The project also aligned with the Board's focus on promoting work that invites audiences to reflect on personal and collective histories.

OLIVIA BULL ALTERED MOMENTS: VEGETATED METROPOLIS

GRANT TYPE Small Project Grant

FUNDING AMOUNT: \$750

Olivia Bull's photographic series, exhibited at the Pump House Regional Arts Center, featured double- and triple-exposed images that combined elements of urban architecture with natural landscapes. The work invited viewers to rethink their relationship with urban and rural environments, blending the man-made and the organic in innovative ways. This project aligned with the Arts Board's mission by promoting artistic innovation and fostering environmental awareness. Bull's work encouraged the La Crosse community to engage with themes of sustainability and the natural world through a creative and unconventional medium, supporting the Arts Board's objective of using art to inspire conversations around environmental stewardship.



Olivia Bull, *Altered Moments: Vegetated Metropolis*



Downtown Mainstreet Inc., Downtown Banner Project

DOWNTOWN MAINSTREET, INC.

DOWNTOWN BANNER PROJECT

GRANT TYPE Small Project Grant

FUNDING AMOUNT: \$750

The Downtown Banner Project involved placing artist-designed banners on light poles throughout the downtown area. These banners celebrated La Crosse's rich cultural heritage and diverse history while adding visual interest to public spaces. Some of the banners also included wayfinding elements, enhancing the pedestrian experience and encouraging exploration of the downtown area. This project aligned with the Arts Board's mission by beautifying public spaces and promoting local art in a way that is accessible to all. The banners served not only as decorative elements but also as a celebration of La Crosse's cultural identity, enhancing the vibrancy of the downtown district and attracting both residents and visitors.



WisCorps, Inc., The Gallery at The Nature Place

WISCORPS, INC. THE GALLERY AT THE NATURE PLACE

GRANT TYPE Small Project Grant

FUNDING AMOUNT: \$750

WisCorps' The Gallery at The Nature Place provided a space for local artists to display nature-inspired artwork. The project included summer camps for children, where participants explored nature and created their own art pieces, which were later exhibited alongside professional artists' work. The gallery aimed to connect the community with nature through art. This project fit within the Arts Board's mission by fostering connections between art, nature, and the broader community. By hosting art exhibits alongside nature education programs, The Gallery provided a unique opportunity for residents of all ages to engage with both the natural environment and the creative process. The focus on environmental themes also supported the Board's goal of promoting sustainability and artistic innovation.

PUMP HOUSE REGIONAL ARTS CENTER

ARTSPIRE LA CROSSE

GRANT TYPE Community Impact Grant

FUNDING AMOUNT: \$12,500

Artspire La Crosse is the largest annual arts celebration in downtown La Crosse, produced by the Pump House Regional Arts Center. In 2024, the event moved to Riverside Park, where it received overwhelmingly positive feedback from artists, vendors, and attendees alike. Artspire featured family-friendly performances, music, interactive art experiences, and a well-organized event structure that made it a highlight for community members. The event was praised for its diverse offerings and welcoming environment, bringing together artists and art lovers from all walks of life. As part of the festival, winners of the Inspired by La Crosse public art competition were announced, showcasing local talent in a variety of mediums. The winning works are now on display at La Crosse City Hall. This project received praise for the way the move to Riverside Park allowed for better organization, more space, and greater engagement with attendees. Vendors noted that the park provided room for more interactive art opportunities, creating a family-friendly environment where art, music, and community blended seamlessly. Testimonials from artists and attendees emphasized the positive energy and the sense of community that Artspire fostered. This event continues to serve as a beacon of the thriving arts scene in La Crosse, and its success supported the Arts Board’s mission of creating inclusive and engaging cultural experiences.



Pump House Regional Arts Center, Artspire La Crosse

VITERBO UNIVERSITY FINE ARTS CENTER

ARTS FOR YOUNG AMERICA SCHOOL SERIES

GRANT TYPE Creative Development Grant

FUNDING AMOUNT: \$2,500

Viterbo University's Fine Arts Center has run the Arts for Young America School Series for over 27 years (I need to check this number), offering curriculum-based performances for Pre-K through 12th grade. The Mini Grant Support program provided financial assistance to educators, enabling students to attend these performances at reduced or no cost, depending on financial need. The 2024-2025 AYA Season included 11 performances and one week-long residency, featuring a wide variety of educational and cultural presentations, such as a Martin Luther King Jr. Day program and a Holocaust survivor speaker, alongside productions like Rumpelstiltskin and Goodnight Moon. This grant directly offsets ticket costs, improving access to the arts for high school students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. This project aligned with the Arts Board's mission by removing financial barriers to the arts, particularly for underserved schools in La Crosse and surrounding areas. The Mini Grant program provided students who might not otherwise have access to live performances with the opportunity to engage with professional theatre, dance, and music productions, enhancing their educational experiences. The grant's focus on supporting schools with high free and reduced lunch rates furthered the Arts Board's goal of ensuring that the arts are accessible to all, regardless of socioeconomic status.

CURRENT ARTS BOARD MEMBERS & STAFF



Eva Black
Creative Director at Afternoon Studio



Maureen Freedland
La Crosse County Board Rep.



Paige Manges
Manager at Central Conservation



Dillon McArdle, Vice Chair
Director of Viterbo University Fine Arts Center



Mark Neumann
City Council Rep.



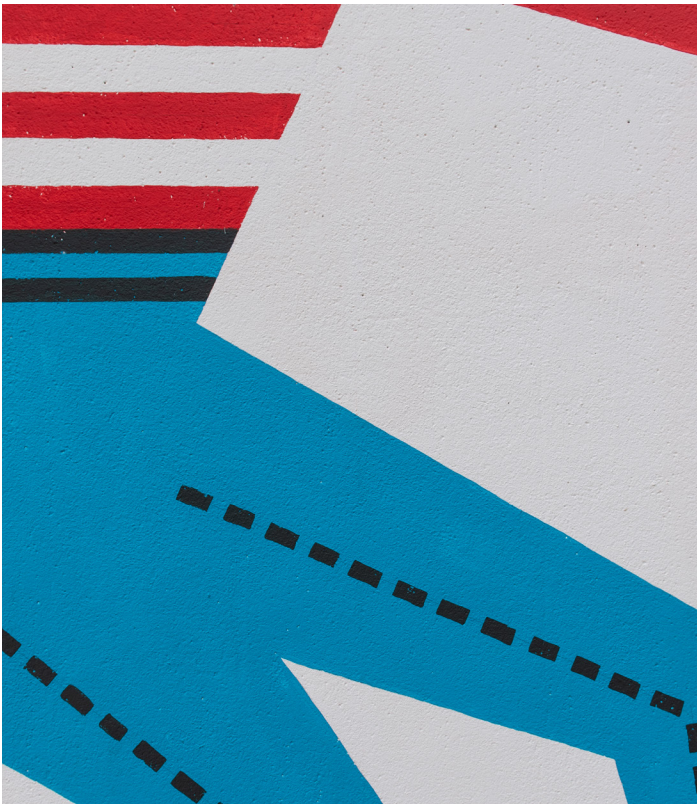
Zachary Stensen, Chair
Assistant Professor UW-La Crosse Art Department



Mary Cate Wesling
Artistic Operations at La Crosse Community Theater



Jacqueline Marcou
City of La Crosse Arts Coordinator



THANK YOU

The 2024 City of La Crosse Arts Board Annual Grant Program has enriched the cultural life of our city by supporting projects that align with our mission of inclusivity, innovation, and community engagement. Through these projects, we have promoted artistic growth, fostered public dialogue, and enhanced the quality of life for residents and visitors alike. We extend our deepest thanks to the La Crosse City Council, and the community members who submitted applications for their support in making this year's grant program a success. Your dedication to fostering creativity and cultural connection has strengthened the arts in La Crosse, and we look forward to continuing this important work in the years to come.

