

FUND YOUR *dream*

Navigate the world of art grants, fellowships, residencies, awards

by Jennie Johnston

Artists like you think big. Inspiration for big ideas can come from anywhere at any time, usually when you are working on another project. If you find yourself putting on the brakes because you don't have the money to make that special idea happen, read on for a breakdown of arts funding options and how to apply for a grant, fellowship, residency, or award to make your big idea a reality.

Note: Arts organizations vary in their definitions of terms. They often use the same descriptor interchangeably and a term can vary from one foundation or council to the next. Read the eligibility details carefully to make sure you are qualified to receive the award.

Artist Grants

Grants are most often awarded for specific projects with a set beginning and end date. They could be a community outreach project in your city to teach skills to a specific group, or a public-art piece displayed in a municipal building. The National Association for the Visual Arts in New South Wales, Australia, offers grants for many things, including putting on an exhibition at a specific venue, website creation, and publicity costs.

Grants have application processes that are created by the entity giving out the money. If awarded a grant, keep in mind you often need to keep a detailed financial record and make a final report to the awarding council or board.

Artist Residencies

An artist can experience a residency locally or travel to a specific location. Some art centers will host an artist visit for a few weeks to a month or sometimes a year. Artists can be offered a public studio space where they interact with visitors, and often are asked to present a workshop or give a lecture. The San Jose Museum of Quilts & Textiles in California offers a local program where

community members interact with an artist as that person works, or participate in a specific project that the artist has developed.

There are residencies set up to be communal retreats for artists from different genres to interact. Some of these opportunities require payment for your stay, while others offer to cover expenses for the artist. Textilsetur Íslands (which translates to Icelandic Textile Center) in Blönduós, Iceland, offers a shared studio space and living quarters for 650 euros per month. Many artists find community and expand their practice through these opportunities.

Fellowships

In some cases, fellowship is also used synonymously with residency and/or scholarship. For fellowships, be meticulous when reading requirements. According to Daniel Grant in *The Business of Being an Artist*: "Fellowships are the most sought-after form of artistic support, as they permit artists to pursue and enhance their careers without requiring artists to produce something in order to be paid." In short, this money is often given without strings attached or a final report required like a project grant.



Some fellowships require an artist to be nominated by a select group of people and from a certain geographic area. The MacArthur Fellows Program is available only to citizens or residents of the United States. Other fellowships are awarded via an application process, such as the Rasmuson Foundation. The Rasmuson award is only available to residents of Alaska. Recent recipients were SAQA/Alaska members Beth Blankenship and Maria Shell. (In addition to these two fellowship recipients, Amy Meissner was awarded a project grant.)

Research can be a part of some fellowships, allowing an artist to develop their career in a broader sense. Again, don't assume you do not qualify if you see an opportunity referred to as a fellowship. The Tulsa Artist Fellowship in Oklahoma was established by the George Kaiser Family Foundation. The fellowship offers free housing and studio space for artists to immerse themselves in the community. That sounds more like an artist residency, so you never know until you do your research if it might be the chance for you to broaden your work.

Awards

Arts councils often offer awards to artists during juried shows, and this money is given to the artist with no stipulation on how it is spent. The Salt Spring National Art Prize begins with a call for entries. Fifty artists are then chosen for an exhibition on Salt Spring Island in British Columbia, Canada, and awards are distributed in various amounts to a few exhibitors.

The Turner Prize (named for English painter J.M.W. Turner), offered through the Tate, a family of galleries in England, is a high profile award given to one artist from a list compiled by a chosen group each year. These artists receive praise for outstanding art contributions in Britain within the previous year.

Where to Find Opportunities

As you can see, there are numerous opportunities to win awards. As prestigious as the large awards sound on an artist's resume, you likely will see more positive results when you apply for other arts funding options.

So now that you have an idea of what the different opportunities are, where can you find them? There are many options. The always reliable Google search can show you many of them, but sorting through websites can be daunting. There are subscription services like Art Opportunities Monthly, which sorts through listings and assembles a list that is emailed to you each month. This is a paid service, and one-third of the listings are for artists located outside of the United States.

TransArtists is an organization run by DutchCulture out of the Netherlands. It compiles lists of international artist-in-residence opportunities. The New York Foundation for the Arts offers NYFA Source, a database of more than 12,000 awards, grants, and other opportunities for artists from the United States and all over the world. Another helpful source is CaFÉ™, produced by the Western States Arts Federation (WESTAF) based in

Denver, Colorado. This site allows you to create a profile, upload images, and submit your entry to venues throughout the United States.

If you have not done so yet, seek out your local arts council, association, or foundation. It is best to begin in your local community and research larger options with the goal to own a successful presence in the wider arts funding sphere.

Grant Writing

There is no guaranteed way to have an application accepted. As artists, we are intimate with our body of work. Being in such proximity to our ideas and their results means we often take for granted that others will see the genius in our big dreams. As Gigi Rosenberg stresses in her book, *The Artist's Guide to Grant Writing*, the key to getting others onto our side is to learn to write about these ideas clearly and succinctly so someone who may never have encountered an art quilt or your work will see its merit. Overwhelming as it may be, this process is the reality of being a working artist today. The truth is that talking and writing about our work is crucial. So rather than let intimidation paralyze you into not trying, take small steps toward building your skill set. There are many books available with tips and steps for learning to write grants, and if you prefer in-person instruction, there are also workshops and classes offered. Many artists also use a daily writing practice to help them get used to writing and to break down the process into manageable time periods.

Persistence is key

If we accept that our chosen vocation does not follow a straight path from A to B, we can gather strength from building our skills through trial and error. So, if at first your grant application is not accepted, try, try again.

There are important elements to remember when facing rejection, as writer

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Resources:

WEBSITES:

MacArthur Foundation
MacArthur Fellows Program
www.macfound.org/programs/fellows/

National Association for the Visual Arts
www.visualarts.net.au

San Jose Museum of Quilts & Textiles
www.sjqiltmuseum.org/artist-residency/

Textilsetur Íslands
www.textilsetur.com/residency

Rasmuson Foundation
www.rasmuson.org

Tulsa Artist Fellowship
www.tulsaartistfellowship.org

Salt Spring Art Prize
www.saltspringartprize.ca

Art Opportunities Monthly
www.artopportunitiesmonthly.com

DutchCulture
www.transartists.org

New York Foundation for the Arts
NYFA Source
www.nyfa.org

Western States Arts Federation
CaFÉ™
www.callforentry.org

BOOKS:

The Artist's Guide to Grant Writing
by Gigi Rosenberg

The Artist's Guide: How to Make a Living Doing What You Love
by Jackie Battenfield

The Business of Being an Artist
by Daniel Grant

2017 SAQA Benefit Auction

Bidders offer winning strategies for highly anticipated event

by Diane Howell

The 2017 SAQA Benefit Auction is here! From September 15 through October 8, bidders will vie for the 368 art quilts made and contributed by our members from around the globe. This year, 22 percent of the offerings are by first-time donors, expanding collectors' options.

Last year, the Benefit Auction raised just under \$80,000. How is it these 12 x 12-inch quilts are so enticing? How do bidders decide when to bid? In short, what is a bidder's goal? "WINNING!" says Nysha Nelson. "If I was supporting the organization I would donate, period. The goal of an auction is to have the winning bid."

That being absolutely true, participants know their donated quilts and bids support SAQA's exhibition and outreach programs. Since the SAQA Benefit Auction is a reverse auction—bidding starts high and drops as the days go by in each of three sections,



From top to bottom, 2017 SAQA Benefit Auction Quilts include *Ready to Fly* by Loreen Leedy and *Quilt Kitty* by Margaret Abramshe.



Left: *Horizon #1* by Marilyn Rembolt
Right: *A Little Break-Up* by Susan Lee

with the first bid declared the winner—the path to ownership would seem to be bid high and fast.

Nope.

Successful bidding involves advanced planning and consideration for budget, artists, and how a piece will fit in with the bidder's existing collection.

"I start checking out the artwork as soon as the team starts posting the entries," says Lisa Ellis, SAQA president. "There is a building sense of excitement as more and more images are added." Ellis then makes a list. "I think about the artworks from different points of view. Which pieces will look nice with others I have collected? What artists do I admire and would like to have a piece by them? Which work speaks to my soul based on the theme or composition?"

Selecting serious contenders is next. "I choose one to purchase on Diamond Day (September 15, when all quilts will be available for \$1,000; see sidebar on page 31 for details). Then, based on how much more I can spend, I do my best to

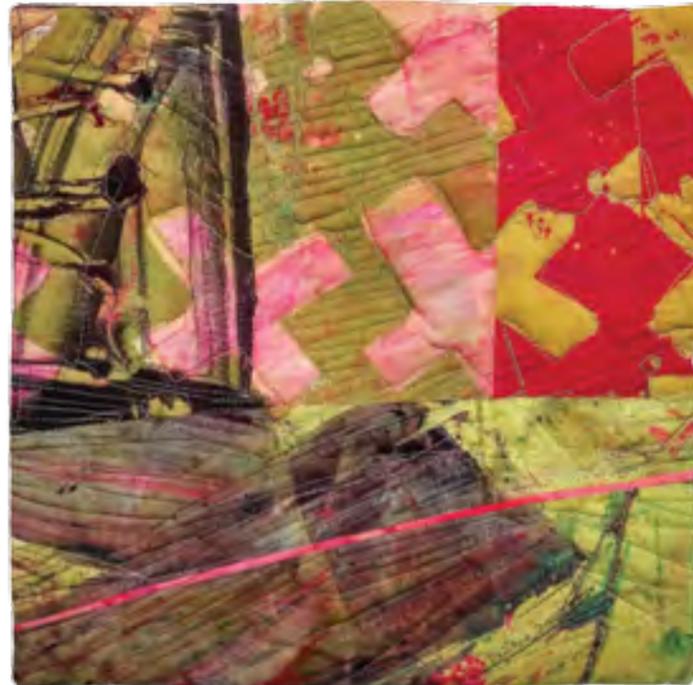
guess the days I need to enter my bid to get my favorites."

Collector Ralph James follows a similar path. "For the ones I really want, I know I have to get in early and win the auction. For some others, I am willing to take the chance someone will get in earlier in order to get it for a better price."

SAQA treasurer Marvin Fletcher employs a similar strategy. "I look over the pieces in the auction and decide which one I really want to have; that is the one I bid \$1,000 on. I have also compiled a list of ones I like and wait until the prices start to come down in the second or third day of the auction for that week. I then bid on them. My limits are one expensive piece and then a few pieces at a lower price. I also know I am helping SAQA, so I am willing to spend money for this cause. I appreciate the donations that artists have made for the organization."

Shirley Neary begins with five to 10 favorites. "Of those, I choose one or two to place

see "Benefit" on page 30



More art quilts available in the 2017 SAQA Benefit Auction are, from left to right, *Cobbles of Caserta* by Carol Leitch, *Little Heart 2* by Pat Pauly, *Modern Mini 2* by Jodi Scaltreto, and *Growing Season* by Lisa Jenni.

a top bid. If the artist is known to me, that's a little something extra; it is not the main reason for bidding," she says. The exception to that rule was the year she bid on Yvonne Porcella's *Celebrating 20*, which she selected because of the artist.

Meg Cox looks for major artists she wants to add to her collection while remembering one of her goals is to not go broke. "I generally try to add one of my favorites in each auction. I've managed to collect quilts by, among others, Susan Shie, Linda Colsh, Linda MacDonald, Susan Else, and Therese May. I usually look for a piece in their signature style, but never buy just for the name and style: I have to love the actual quilt."

In keeping with that rule, Cox also enjoys discovering new artists. "Some of my favorites are by makers

previously unknown to me—such as this funky, whimsical quilt called *Devil in a Blue Dress* by Mavis Leahy. I love everything about it."

Bidders are often also donors, and their strategy is two-pronged: to donate and to win. Susan Lapham joined SAQA in 2015 just before the Benefit Auction quilts were due. She didn't have time to submit a quilt then, but last year she had a quilt and a bidding strategy. "My overall goal was to use the Benefit Auction as a way to make a fairly substantial donation to SAQA. After deciding on that amount, I selected several quilts I would love to own. It didn't matter to me if I was the winning bidder on two quilts at a high dollar amount or 10 quilts at a lower winning bid," she says. "I put my choices in rank order by bidding section and then

waited—that was the hardest part! When the bidding opened for each section at each price, I had my online form ready to go. In the end, I was the winning bidder on four auction quilts."

All of this activity can mean a lot of traffic to saqa.com/auction. "If a lot means several times a day, then yes," says James. Nelson is more restrained, but when he can, he is at his computer five minutes prior to the opening or changing of the price, which occurs at 2 p.m. ET each day.

There are always some that get away. James maintains a good attitude about that fact. He notes, "Someone is happy with them and enjoying them every day, so it's okay."

Bidders also are ambassadors for art quilts. James enjoyed an entire year

of sharing the auction with others. In 2016, he made a mass purchase of all unsold quilts in the first section when the price dropped to \$100. "I think I ended up with 50 quilts. My plan was ... when anyone visited me in my office, they would see a wall with 25 small quilts hanging, still in the packaging. I would tell them the story of SAQA and the auction, and I would invite them to pick any of the quilts they wanted to give away to a friend or loved one or to hang in their office or home. When they picked one (always a hard choice) I would replace it with another quilt. I only have seven left, and there are many people who smile daily as they look at their small gift."

Diane Howell is editor of the SAQA Journal.

How the Benefit Auction works

The 2017 Benefit Auction runs September 15 through October 8. The auction kicks off at 2 p.m. ET on September 15 with Diamond Day bidding — an early-bird opportunity to purchase any of the 368 quilts for \$1,000.

The auction is divided into three weeklong sections, the first beginning on Monday, September 18. Each Monday a new section opens for bidding at \$750. The price is reduced each day until it reaches \$100 on Saturday.

Note: Once the auction starts, any piece in an upcoming section can be purchased at the Buy It Now price of \$1,000.

When a section closes, any remaining quilts are for sale in the SAQA store; they will be available through December 28. Quilts also will be available in the SAQA booth at International Quilt Festival/Houston November 2-5.

For full details, visit saqa.com/auction.

SAQA 2017 Benefit Auction Pricing Schedule

Every quilt is available for a Buy It Now purchase of \$1,000 for the duration of the auction, even if the section is not yet open for bidding. Prices change at 2 p.m. ET. No bids will be accepted between 1:45-2 p.m. ET.

	\$750	\$550	\$350	\$250	\$150	\$100
SECTION 1	Sept 18	Sept 19	Sept 20	Sept 21	Sept 22	Sept 23
SECTION 2	Sept 25	Sept 26	Sept 27	Sept 28	Sept 29	Sept 30
SECTION 3	Oct 2	Oct 3	Oct 4	Oct 5	Oct 6	Oct 7