

Knight Foundation grants \$2.5M to arts in Detroit



Mark Stryker, Detroit Free Press Staff Writer 8:35 p.m. EDT October 6, 2014



(Photo: Nick Cave, Jack Shainman Gallery)

Body Rhythm Dance Theatre, a Detroit small Detroit dance company, has never received a grant of any kind during its 10-year lifespan – until today.

The company has been awarded \$30,000 in the Knight Arts Challenge to create a piece of musical theater celebrating the legacy of the Black Bottom neighborhood and Paradise Valley, the cultural center of the African-American community in Detroit from the 1920s through the '50s.

"This gives us the opportunity to entertain and educate the community," said Shirley Bryant, artistic director of Body Rhythm. "Our kids don't know anything about Black Bottom, and even some of the adults I'm bringing on board don't either."

The Miami-based John S. and James L. Knight Foundation announced today nearly \$2.5 million in grants to 58 local organizations and artists working in Detroit. While some of the recipients are large institutions like the Detroit Symphony Orchestra and Cranbrook Art Museum, most winners have lower profiles and include grassroots groups like Body Rhythm, off-the-beaten-track artists and non-traditional arts groups or businesses working at the intersection of culture and neighborhood revitalization.

So, for example, winners included Jacobs Street, a small real estate development company in Detroit, which received \$100,000 to turn abandoned property in Detroit's North End into an outdoor theater and cultural hub. Artist Andrew Krieger received \$30,000 to create a bicycle-mounted wooden theater, based on a Japanese tradition, in which which performers use paper art to tell stories.

The democratic sweep of the grants is part of the Knight Foundation's deliberate strategy to reach deeper into the community to fund projects that otherwise might get overlooked. The only requirements of the unusually streamlined application process were that the projects be about the arts and take place in Detroit. Otherwise, anything goes, though recipients must raise matching funds equal to the Knight pledge within a year.

"We want the contest to go deep into neighborhoods all across Detroit, and we want the winners to look like the community," said Dennis Scholl, Knight Foundation vice president for arts. "We think philanthropic funding should go to anybody with a great art idea. We tried to eliminate the barriers to entry."

The awards come in the second round of the Knight Foundation's three-year, \$9 million challenge-grant program in Detroit. The program is part of the foundation's broader 2012 investment of more than \$19 million in Detroit arts and culture. Fifty-six winners were awarded \$2.1 million in last year's first round of the challenge. About 80% have reached their matches. Scholl said the foundation is working with the rest to help them get to the finish line, including identifying partners, crowd-funding assistance and the like.

As a commercial enterprise, Jacobs Street is the kind of business that ordinarily would not be in line for foundation money, but the company's mission includes a public service ethos, and it already owns a community-minded gallery, the Untitled Bottega, on East Baltimore between Brush and John R.

"The grand vision is that on this block you'll have a creative campus — an art gallery, the new outdoor theater space and, eventually, artist lofts and studios," said Jacobs Street partner James Feagin. "We're trying to create a space for emerging artists and young artists of color in the city who still have challenges in terms of connecting with the larger community of artists and the city."

On the other extreme, Knight Foundation funding of \$150,000 will go to the Cranbrook Art Museum to bring one of the country's leading contemporary artists, Nick Cave, to Detroit for a series of performances in 2015 around the city. Cave, a fabric sculptor, performance artist and graduate of the Cranbrook Academy of Art in 1989, is best known for his mixed-media soundsuits — wearable costumes that connect the dots between fashion design, sculpture and body art.

"Our goal is to penetrate and saturate areas in the community, to build camaraderie and to build awareness of culture," said Cave, who added that he'll be working with local dancers and musicians. "I'm amazed when communities don't even realize who they have in their own cities."

"It's important to make people feel they matter and create opportunities for talent to be shared and be validated. We really want to make an imprint and leave an impression."

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Detroit 2014 Knight Arts Challenge Winners

Descriptions provided by Knight Foundation

■6th Street Dance Studio/WholeProject

"Real-Time Free-styling" for Urban Dancers in Miami + Detroit

Award: \$28,000

To build connections between the urban dance communities in Miami and Detroit through master classes in each city and via video conferencing, anchored by Hardcore Detroit and Miami's 6th Street Dance Studio/Whole Project

■∞ mile (infinite mile)

Online Journal Facilitates Critical Discourse on Local Arts and Culture

Award: \$20,000

To foster artistic discourse in Detroit through a monthly, online art journal that produces reviews, interviews, articles and artist projects

■A Host of People

Community Gardens Become Theater Stages

Award: \$20,000

To celebrate the do-it-yourself movement in both food and the arts by creating a site-responsive theater piece performed in community gardens

■Dabls MBAD African Bead Museum

New Building, Programming for African Bead Museum

Award: \$100,000

To enhance an educational center for African culture by creating and renovating an exhibition and programming space for the African Bead Museum

■Allied Media Projects

Music Becomes A Focus of Allied Media Conference

Award: \$40,000

To expand the annual Allied Media Conference to include a full music showcase, further exploring the intersection of art and social change

■Andrew Krieger

Japanese-inspired "Kamishibai Man" Will Pedal Theater Around Detroit

Award: \$30,000

To weave art into people's everyday lives by creating "Kamishibai Man," a bicycle-mounted wooden theater — based on a Japanese tradition — where performers use paper art to tell serial stories

■ApeTechnology

Robots Transform Performance of Ancient Hindu Poem

Award: \$15,000

To create a post-industrial homage to the Javanese tradition of shadow puppetry through a modern performance with towering, robotic puppets and gongs

■ARTLAB J

Detroit Dance City Festival Plans Expansion

Award: \$100,000

To support Detroit Dance City Festival, a three-day celebration that provides an opportunity for local and national artists to present their work and strengthen ties in Detroit's dance community

■Detroiters Learn the Art and Culture of Mexico's La Huasteca

Recipient: Ballet Folklorico Moyocoyani Izel

Award: \$35,000

To share the traditional dances of Mexico's La Huasteca region by partnering with a local dance group and professionals in Mexico to teach the art to Detroiters

■Biba Bell

Dance and Classic Architecture Meet in Intimate Apartment Performance

Award: \$7,000

To invite the public to experience both dance and classic architecture by producing "It Never Really Happened," an intimate performance inside an apartment in the 1950s Detroit high-rise designed by Mies van der Rohe

■Body Rhythm Dance Theatre

Musical Piece Celebrates Legacy of the Black Bottom Neighborhood and Paradise Valley

Award: \$30,000

To celebrate Detroit's former Black Bottom and Paradise Valley neighborhoods by creating a musical dedicated to its legacy.

■Broadside Press

Historic Collection of African-American Authors to be Digitized

Award: \$20,000

To celebrate the 50th anniversary of Broadside Press, a Detroit-based publisher for many leading African-American writers, by helping digitize its works

■Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History

Drum Summit Will Connect Detroiters of Different Backgrounds

Award: \$70,000

To showcase how unique and connected global cultures are by hosting Call of the Drum: A Drum Summit, featuring percussionists from around the world

■CLAVE

Mosaic Mural Planned for Springwell Viaduct

Award: \$12,000

To honor the spirit of Southwest Detroit by creating "Inspiración," a mosaic mural in the Springwells viaduct, one of the area's main arteries

■CMAP (Carrie Morris Arts Production)

Living Room Series Showcases Contemporary Puppet Works By and About Detroiters

Award: \$35,000

To present the Living Room Series, contemporary puppet performances that challenge the perception that art exists only for specific spaces

■Corktown Cinema L3C

Corktown Cinema Aims to be Neighborhood Space

Award: \$50,000

To expand the Detroit's cinematic landscape by featuring local and international film and art otherwise not represented in the region

■Cranbrook Art Museum

Performance Artist Nick Cave Presents the "Biggest, Baddest Performance of All Time!"

Award: \$150,000

To mount performance artist Nick Cave's "Biggest, Baddest Performance of All Time!" a series of spectacles around the city

■Detroit Digital Stewards

Detroiters Stories Told in Digital Radio Series

\$60,000

To tell the story of Detroit's neighborhoods through sound by creating "Detroit Music Box," a suite of digital radio shows produced by the people who live there

■Detroit Drumline Academy

Drumline Veterans Give Back to Local Students

Award: \$30,000

To build on a strong history of Detroit percussionists by having former drummers from Detroit-area schools teach and mentor middle and high school students

■Detroit Fiber Works

Fiber Arts Festival Planned for Avenue of Fashion

Award; \$20,000

To promote fiber arts and the Avenue of Fashion by hosting free fiber art workshops for children, teens and adults

■Detroit Film Labs

Training Targets First-Time Filmmakers

Award: \$60,000

To foster storytelling in Detroit by offering a series of workshops to first-time filmmakers in underrepresented communities

■ Detroit Future Schools

"Data Murals" Help Students Visualize Neighborhood Stories

Award: \$40,000

To use the arts to help youth tell their neighborhood stories by having them conduct research about their communities and convey their findings through "Data Murals"

■Detroit Symphony Orchestra

Jazz Festival Explores Renewal in New Orleans and Detroit

Award: \$75,000

To explore the role of art in shaping the history, recovery and resurgence of a city through a cultural exchange between Detroit and New Orleans

■DIRT TECH RECK

Video Series Helps Musicians Learn from Music Greats

Award: \$20,000

To continue Detroit's musical legacy by creating a video series that explores the creative processes that drives Detroit's musicians

■DittoDitto

Small Publishing House Expands Mission

Award: \$20,000

To foster a dialogue around the arts and arts books by supporting a small publishing house and store focused on literary and visual arts books

■Garage Cultural

Latino Students to Create Original Play

Award: \$20,000

To engage Latino youth in the theater arts through a bilingual performing arts program in southwest Detroit

■InsideOut Literary Arts Project

"Dancing Through the Night" Pays Homage to Detroit's Post-Motown Sound

Award: \$100,000

To host a techno-poetry performance, led by poet Nandi Comer, exploring the history of Detroit DJs and their contribution to contemporary music

■JacobsStreet/The Untitled Bottega

Vacant Property Becomes Creative Campus for Artists

Award: \$100,000

To transform an abandoned property near a North End art gallery into an outdoor theater and cultural hub meant to strengthen a neighborhood through the arts

■Kremena Todorova and Kurt Gohde

Committed to Detroit? There's a Tattoo for That

Award: \$29,000

To promote civic pride via The Detroit Tattoo Project, where a local poet is commissioned to create a piece about the city which is then divided and drawn for use on free tattoos that, when reassembled, reveal graphic elements containing a secret image

■Leith Campbell

Sundial Will Reinterpret John Cage's Work

Award: \$6,000

To use the slow cadence of a captured sunbeam to set the pace of an electronic interpretation of composer John Cage's 'As Slow as Possible.'

■Literary Detroit

Series Asks Community to Co-Create Poetry

Award: \$5,000

To further build the literary community via a monthly series where poet and audience co-create works

■Lo & Behold!

Sound Series Explores Detroit's "World Music"

Award: \$7,000

To explore the array of cultures and music in Hamtramck by conducting "field recordings" of local music — for example, a Bangladeshi street fair or a gospel trio — presented with minimal editing

■Matrix Theatre Company

Theatre Company Tells Detroit Stories Through New Bilingual Production

Award: \$30,000

To commission a well-known bilingual playwright to work with the city's Latino community in developing a new piece

■McEwen Studio & HOWDOYOUSAYYAMINAFRICAN?

"Opera House" Engages Community to Blur Art and Building

Award: \$10,000

To re-design an existing vacant house as an opera and performance space, in which community members collaborate with visiting artists

■Michelle Andonian

"Hope Dies Last" Tells Story of Armenian Genocide

Award: \$50,000

To mark the 100th anniversary of the Armenian genocide through a book of photographs and a performance entitled "Hope Dies Last"

■Michigan Underground Group

Underground Music Gets Public Platform

Award: \$5,000

To build the city's underground music scene by documenting Detroit's unconventional music

■Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit

Salon-Style Exhibition Debuts at MOCAD

Award: \$30,000

To host international guest curator Jens Hoffmann to create a salon-style exhibition exploring a cross-section of Detroit 's visual arts for the past 15 years

■Nate Young

"Trip Metal Fest" Showcases Electronic Music

Award: \$10,000

To bring local and international musicians together by presenting The Trip Metal Fest, a festival featuring electronic music in all its forms

■New Music Detroit

"Strange Beautiful Music" Concert Expands

Award: \$15,000

To spotlight challenging new music from the late 20th century through today during "Strange Beautiful Music," a daylong marathon concert

■Piper Carter

Impact of Women in Hip-Hop Explored, Reimagined

Award: \$40,000

To explore the role and impact of women in hip-hop through a gathering of leading figures in Detroit's digital media, art, dance and performance communities

■Ponyride

Ponyride Expands Artist-in-Residence Program

Award: \$20,000

To further Detroit as a center for art and design by expanding a visiting artist-in-residence program dedicated to producing art in and for Detroit

■Popp's Packing

Families Wanted for New "Momm & Popp" Artist Residency Program

Award: \$23,000

To support the expansion of Popp's Packing's unique artist residency program, which caters to national and international artists with children, providing a holistic space in which artists with families can create

■Power House Productions

Banglatown Block Party Celebrates Role of Arts in Neighborhoods

Award: \$250,000

To celebrate the role of art in developing and inspiring neighborhoods through a series of programs leading up to a community-wide block party in Banglatown

■RecoveryPark

Blues Jam Session to Find Permanent Home

Award: \$40,000

To support a new home for John's Carpet House, a weekly blues jam session founded by drummer John Estes

■rootoftwo

"Whithervanes" Reflect Fear in News Stories

Award: \$30,000

To explore how fear is used in contemporary media by creating do-it-yourself kits for making dynamic sculptures to reflect the prevalence of fear-related keywords in news stories

■Rowe Niodior African Dance Company

African Culture Explored in Four-Day Conference

Award: \$20,000

To create community through a four-day festival exploring how West and Central African groups use music and dance to celebrate their culture

■Sidewalk Festival of Performing Arts

Sidewalk Festival Expands to New Locations

Award: \$35,000

To expand an outdoor celebration of performance and installation art to neighborhoods across the city

■ The Hinterlands

Performance Series Looks at Detroit's Radical Past

Award: \$30,000

To explore Detroit's 20th century history of radical art and politics through The Radicalization Process, a yearlong performance series built on interviews, artifacts and historic footage

■The N'Namdi Center for Contemporary Art

Creative Incubator Coming to Grand River

Award: \$60,000

To strengthen creative businesses by creating Quarter Pop on Grand River, an arts incubator that provides access to new skills and storefront spaces

■The Raiz Up

Series Uses Hip-Hop to Spark Conversations

Award: \$25,000

To use hip-hop to spark conversations about the city's cultural heritage and social issues through Paint my Roots, or Pinta mis Raices, a series of concerts, workshops and collaborative murals

■Gratiot & Riopelle

Detroit's Historic Signs to be Preserved

Award: \$5,000

To preserve Detroit's historic signs by documenting the typography around the city via photography and making them into useable, digital typefaces for local business and letterpress use

■Trinosophes

Commissioning Program Cultivates New Works

Award: \$10,000

To create a commissioning program that will fund new works in music and the visual arts and award a prize to an artist for their contribution to Detroit's culture

■Penny W. Stamps School of Art & Design at the University of Michigan

Maker Space Coming to Brightmoor

Award: \$100,000

To expand Brightmoor's community of makers by repurposing a building into the Brightmoor Maker Space where neighbors can share and develop creative skills

■WDET

Pop-Up Storytelling Installations Tell Neighborhood Narratives

Award: \$60,000

To bring the stories of Detroit's ethnic communities to life by partnering with artists and galleries on pop-up installations featuring photography and audio storytelling

■What Pipeline

Art Book Series Explores Detroit Artists

Award: \$15,000

To expand the narrative of the city's creative talent by publishing a series of art books on Detroit-based artists

■Write a House

Program Offers Homes to Authors

Award: \$100,000

To bring new vitality to the literary arts in Detroit by expanding Write a House, which awards renovated homes to writers based on the quality of their work

■Young Nation

Art-Filled Plaza Coming to Southwest Detroit

Award: \$75,000

To create a neighborhood gathering place by engaging local artists, youth and residents in Southwest Detroit in designing and building an art-filled public plaza

■YoYo School of Hip Hop

Summer Hip Hop Program Expands

Award: \$40,000

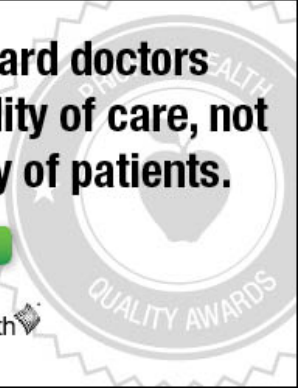
To use hip-hop to teach students about technology, physical fitness, career goals and communication skills through a summer camp

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