Center for Cultural Innovation

LOS ANGELES
244 S. San Pedro St
Suite 401
Los Angeles, CA 90012
P: 213.687.8577

BAY AREA
1446 Market St
San Francisco, CA 94102
P: 415.288.0530

CCIARTS.ORG | R2I-LAB.ORG | AMBITIO-US.ORG

Press Release

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Contact: Lauren Bailey
213.687.8577
info@cciarts.org
www.cciarts.org

Center for Cultural Innovation Awards Support to San José Creative Enterprises

San Francisco Bay Area – The Center for Cultural Innovation (CCI) today announced the nine grantees of the San José Creative Economy Fund. The Fund awards project grants to arts-, culture-, and creativity-based commercial businesses located in the City of San José that are involved in the production or distribution of the arts, including manufacturers, service providers, presenters, and designers, among others. Funding supports projects and activities aimed at building successful arts-, culture-, and creativity-based small businesses in San José.

For the 2026 grantmaking round, grants of up to $8,000 were awarded through a competitive grant application process that assessed proposals for their ability to contribute to the city's cultural vibrancy, demonstrate growth and project readiness, and ability to achieve greater financial resilience and economic impact (e.g., attracting visitors, generating sales tax, creating jobs) in the City of San José.

The San José Creative Economy Fund is an initiative of, and grants are made possible through, the City of San José Office of Cultural Affairs (OCA) as part of its Creative Entrepreneur Project (CEP). Administration of the Fund is provided by CCI.

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We are pleased to announce the following grantees who received a total of $60,000 in this funding round:

ABInk LLC – dba, zine.baby (Humanities/Literary Arts), $6,000: To support the launch of a tap-to-pay zine vending machine that sells small-format publications by San José artists. Funding will support refurbishment, electronics, Stripe integration, artist inventory, and project labor.

Current Tattooing (Folk/Traditional Arts; Social Practice), $6,750: To support the ability to curate, organize, host, and produce art gallery shows, events, and community gatherings.

DOCA UNIVERSE INC. (Multidisciplinary), $6,750: To support public art programs in San José, including Radiant Canvas and Doca Dream Lab. Funding will support artwork production, artist stipends, and implementation costs.

Jumbo Jibbles Sewing (Education), $6,750: To support studio retrofitting with proper furniture, lighting, and storage. Funding will also support the purchase of sewing machines for student instruction.

Lowrider Fever (Education), $6,750: To support the Lowrider History Museum in preserving and celebrating the innovation, artistry, and cultural impact of lowrider culture.

Messenger Events Corporation (Event Production), $6,750: To support Paseo Music Nights, a new community stage activation that expands Winter Wonderland. Funding enables hiring and working with local artists, musicians, and vendors.

PowerHouse San Jose (Media Arts), $6,750: To support improvements to outdoor event space and media production capabilities. Funding will support accessibility upgrades, site improvements, and equipment enhancements.

Steven Leon Rubalcaba Jr – dba, nizzotes (Visual Arts), $6,750: To support the purchase of woodworking and fabrication equipment, including a table saw, router, wood planer, sanders, soldering iron, clamps, chisels, and other hand tools.

Viet Steps LLC (Dance), $6,750: To support the expansion of dance programming, community performances, and increasing outreach efforts over a 12-month period.

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“San Jose’s diversity is one of our greatest strengths, and the arts help bring us together,” said San Jose Mayor Matt Mahan. “Through the Creative Economy Fund, we’re proud to support the local entrepreneurs and artists who share our many cultural traditions, celebrate our common values, and tell the stories that make San Jose unique.”

“San José’s creative economy thrives because of the innovative, culturally diverse businesses that bring new ideas and perspectives to our community,” said San José Director of Cultural Affairs Kerry Adams Hapner. “Through the 2026 Creative Economy Fund, we’re proud to invest in nine such businesses, supporting their growth and advancing the power of arts and culture to strengthen our economy and connect our communities.”

San José Office of Cultural Affairs Arts Industry Support Director Ron Muriera reflects on the impact of this program, saying, “The Creative Economy Fund is an investment in the people and businesses driving San José’s innovation and creativity. When we support these entrepreneurs, it helps sustain a dynamic cultural sector, creates opportunities for local businesses, and strengthens the economic vitality of our community.”

Applications to the San José Creative Economy Fund were evaluated by a three-person review panel that included **Kevin Combs,** projection artist and workshop facilitator; **Parul Wadhwa**, immersive and interactive media director; and **Preeti Vissa Kristipati**, Executive Director at the Abhinaya Dance Company.

“When we directly invest in the artists and creative entrepreneurs across our region, we better realize our mission of building more financially resilient and economically self-determined local creative ecosystems,” said Stephanie Imah, CCI’s Director of Artist Possibility Funds.

About San José Office of Cultural Affairs
The Office of Cultural Affairs is a division of the Office of Economic Development and Cultural Affairs (OEDCA) in the City Manager’s Office and is the City's lead for stewarding a vibrant arts sector. It fosters cultural development through cultural funding programs, cultural workforce development, cultural facilities, special event services, and public art. For more information, visit www.sanjoseculture.org.

About the Center for Cultural Innovation
The Center for Cultural Innovation (CCI) was founded in 2001 as a California 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation. Our mission is to shift cultural paradigms to catalyze better alternative solutions for creatives, culture bearers, creative entrepreneurs, and their communities. For more information about CCI, please visit www.cciarts.org.

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