

KFW Announces 2024 Artist Enrichment Grants

Press Release written by Ellen Birkett Morris

The Kentucky Foundation for Women awarded 32 Artist Enrichment grants totaling \$147,525 to Kentucky feminist artists and arts organizations committed to creating positive social change throughout the state.

KFW's Artist Enrichment grants provide opportunities for feminist artists and arts organizations to develop new skills and share art that advances social justice in Kentucky. Applicants may request funds to participate in artist residencies, explore new areas or techniques, and/or build a body of work.

Arts-based organizations and artists at all stages of their careers who demonstrate artistic skill and an understanding of the power of feminist art to enact social change were welcome to apply. The grant program drew 67 applications from throughout the state.

The Artist Enrichment grants awarded in Kentucky went to a diverse group of artists working in a variety of disciplines across the state. Their projects address vital concerns and highlight the contributions of women, femme, and nonbinary people to Kentucky's rich artistic and cultural heritage. They included projects exploring feminist herstory, cultural expression, antiracism, representation within BIPOC and AAPI communities, women's health, issues facing the LGBTQIA+ community, and ecofeminism. By developing their craft, strengthening their voices, and building community, these grantees are at the forefront of positive social change that will better the lives of all Kentuckians.

"Artist enrichment grants help seed the careers of Kentucky artists as they develop projects that are personally meaningfully and socially relevant. These artists are enhancing their skills to develop work that offers new perspectives and approaches to issues important in Kentucky and beyond," said Sharon LaRue, executive director of the Kentucky Foundation for Women.

A complete list of statewide grants follows. Here is a sampling of Kentucky artists/organizations that received funding:

Chaney Williams, Elizabethtown, \$5,000 to expand her skills and knowledge with textile arts to make "Remembering: A Homecoming into the Body" a series of altar cloths and garments that will visually represent the themes of ancestral grief/joy, spiritual ecology, and exploration of her ancestral lineage as a descendant of both enslaved people and colonizers. Through the fiber interpretations of her memoir this project will promote social change by raising awareness of racial justice, environmental justice, and intersectional feminism.

Zysede West (they/them), Bowling Green, \$4,998 to further develop an ongoing photographic project, Queer Solace, which documents queer and trans people through portraiture in their

chosen places of safety and solitude across Kentucky. This project will enhance their portfolio and skills as a disabled, queer portrait photographer while strengthening the queer community and their relationship with non-queer people in Kentucky while raising awareness of violence against the LGBTQ+ community in Southern and rural communities.

Feral Fagiola, Louisville, \$5,000 to develop a new method for printing images on silicone and latex sheets, and use this technique in combination with her large-scale welded steel sculptures to interrogate structures of power, desire, and bodily autonomy, themes central to feminist discourse. By situating and photographing these works in nontraditional industrial contexts, her project aims to transform these spaces into sites of feminist resistance and incite social change through unexpected encounters and experiences.

Leah Raidt (they/she), Louisville, \$3,500 to support research and development on a project that explores Thomas Merton's epiphanies of "the feminine" or "Holy Wisdom" contextualized with LGBTQ+ and women's history. Grant funds will be used to support multiple writing and spiritual retreats, the printing/binding of a poetry chapbook, and cover poetry submission fees. Working on this project will develop their voice and presence as a writer and creative-spiritual leader for the LGBTQ+ community.

Lakshmi Sriraman (she/her) Lexington, \$9,000 to attend a month-long immersive learning experience in Tamil Nadu, India, where she will study traditional South Indian art forms Therukoothu (dance-theater), Silambam (martial arts), and Parai (percussion) under master artists. Additionally, she will explore contemporary Tamil activist theater techniques to enhance her feminist social change efforts, and learn to integrate these practices into her art, allowing her to develop dynamic approaches to storytelling and activism.

KFW will provide applications and guidelines for its next grant cycle **in early February**. The Kentucky Foundation for Women is a private foundation formed in 1985 by Louisville writer Sallie Bingham. Its mission is to promote positive social change by supporting varied feminist expression in the arts.

KFW Executive Director Sharon LaRue and selected grant recipients are available for interviews/appearances. Contact Ms. LaRue for further information and to schedule interviews. A complete list of the grants awarded statewide broken down by congressional districts follows.

KFW offers workshops for those interested in learning more on [Saturday, January 25th at 10:00am](#) or [Wednesday, January 29th at 5:30pm](#), via Zoom.

Artist Enrichment Grant 2024

Literary Arts

Beth Howard (she/her) Lexington, \$7,500 to fund a year of revision, research, and retreat in order to support the last phase of writing her memoir, *Rednecks for Black Lives*, which will be published in Fall 2025 by Haymarket Books, and is a working-class feminist story chronicling her childhood in rural Eastern Kentucky and her antiracist leadership transformation. This grant will allow her to hire an editor, complete an in-depth research project for the book, and pay the fees and travel costs for a writing residency, so that her book makes a powerful debut.

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Lucy Oquaye (she/her) Lexington, \$2,380 to support a writing retreat in order to work on her memoir, which addresses cycles of intimate partner violence, recovery, birth and motherhood. The funds will allow her time and space away from her caretaking duties so that she can focus on her journey as a survivor and grow her ability to use her experience and her research as she writes her manuscript.

Sarah Baird (she/her) Lexington, \$1,500 to collect oral histories from rural Kentucky mothers, midwives, reproductive justice advocates, and birthing practitioners to spotlight Kentucky's current crisis surrounding maternal health deserts. These narratives will be woven together as part of a public-facing digital installation to shine a light on the social change needed to move maternal health and wellness forward.

Media Arts

Zysede West (they/them), Bowling Green, \$4,998 to further develop an ongoing photographic project, *Queer Solace*, which documents queer and trans people through portraiture in their chosen places of safety and solitude across Kentucky. This project will enhance their portfolio and skills as a disabled, queer portrait photographer while strengthening the queer community and their relationship with non-queer people in Kentucky while raising awareness of violence against the LGBTQ+ community in Southern and rural communities.

Virginia Lee Alcott (she/her), Glasgow, \$5,000 to create a series of photographs and poetry woven together to express the impact of violence against women which will be called "Gourd Dancers Circle the Earth". Creating this body of work will help further several decades of her work as a feminist artist for social justice. The project will culminate in presentations/poetry

readings at two rural domestic violence shelters in Kentucky that engage residents and staff in discussions of feminism, empowerment and pathways to social change.

Tywanna Nicole (They/Them), Lexington, \$3,900 to create a trailer for a documentary centering their own healing journey as a nonbinary Black queer feminist artist, storyteller, author, and content creator. The purpose of this film and the 14-week program within the film is to share the story of how a childhood memory of jumping rope became a portal to body reclamation, self-love, recovery, and a fierce commitment to helping others one jump at a time.

Melinda Beck (she/her), Louisville, \$2,792 to produce an episodic audio drama centered on women and queer customers in a bookshop as they navigate grief, escapism, and daily struggles. She will build a collaborative project with other artists addressing these issues to highlight regional talent.

Erica Chambers (she/her), Berea, \$2,500 to create a collection of portraits featuring female farmers throughout Appalachia, titled "Dirt Pearls", which aims to raise awareness of the diversity of women who contribute to our regional agricultural, sustainability, and food justice practices through imagery and story collecting. This collection will allow her to expand her work creating representation for female farmers in a way that empowers herself and her community.

Performing Arts

Lakshmi Sriraman (she/her) Lexington, \$9,000 to attend a month-long immersive learning experience in Tamil Nadu, India, where she will study traditional South Indian art forms Therukoothu (dance-theater), Silambam (martial arts), and Parai (percussion) under master artists. Additionally, she will explore contemporary Tamil activist theater techniques to enhance her feminist social change efforts, and learn to integrate these practices into her art, allowing her to develop dynamic approaches to storytelling and activism.

Leah Bomar (she/her) Louisville, \$4,400 to further her personal development by continuing to tell her story in a vulnerable way through the writing, editing, and publication of her second memoir in the GlitterBomb series, 'Fat Bomb'. Through this process, she will create discussion opportunities for women to overcome body dysmorphia, disordered eating, and to disentangle themselves from patriarchal expectations, while also highlighting the lack of access to healthcare services in Kentucky.

Sonya Hensley (she/her) Louisville, \$5,000 for a One-Woman Show including original music compositions, fashion, art, spoken word and poetry that share the journey of a Black woman from Paducah, Kentucky who has beat the odds in the entertainment industry and has reemerged at over 50 years of age. The show will share stories of empowerment and artistry, incorporate

knowledge she gained from mentors who helped her navigate the often sexist and misogynistic entertainment industry, and will push her own artistic boundaries.

Megan Massie (she/her) Louisville, \$1,500 to stage the Kentucky premiere production of the one woman play *Grounded*, which seeks to illuminate the physical and mental toll of drone warfare on military personnel and their families. Performing and producing the play will allow her to strengthen her skills as a theatrical producer in uplifting feminist voices onstage and creating community connections for positive change, while deepening her understanding of these issues, and honing of her craft as an actress.

Sistah LaLa (she/her), Berea, \$3,555 to create a performing arts body of work entitled, "Songs My Gram-mamma Taught Me", using music and spoken word to recount stories shared by elder women used to educate younger generations of women in ways of knowing. The songs shared will expand her musical knowledge of her own culture and the cultures of 6 other women, while the spoken word pieces, conceived directly from interviews, will enhance her creative writing and storytelling skills for future live performances that will eventually culminate into a one woman show.

Visual Arts

Canyon Bowden (she/her), Paducah, \$4,891 to attend two fiber workshops that will further develop her skills and allow her to create a new body of work that synergizes historically domestic forms with nontraditional materials. This new body of work will center the coexistence of the mundane with the magical in motherhood and explore the feminist desire for an identity untethered from the value of one's domestic labor while utilizing techniques with deep roots in Kentucky such as weaving, basket making, and quilting.

Chaney Williams, Elizabethtown, \$5,000 to expand her skills and knowledge with textile arts to make "Remembering: A Homecoming into the Body" a series of altar cloths and garments that will visually represent the themes of ancestral grief/joy, spiritual ecology, and exploration of her ancestral lineage as a descendant of both enslaved people and colonizers. Through the fiber interpretations of her memoir this project will promote social change by raising awareness of racial justice, environmental justice, and intersectional feminism.

Marilee Salvator (she/they) Bowling Green, \$5,000 to support the creation and dissemination of an innovative ecofeminist-based body of work utilizing printmaking, installation, and sculpture. Through this process, she will deepen her understanding of feminism and its relationship to nature, strengthen their artistic practice, and create a profound impact on viewers, fostering a richer comprehension of feminist principles and social change.

Molly Otremba (she/her), Louisville, \$4,958 to create sculptures that visually combine ceramic insects and household furniture to represent the invasion of a neurodegenerative disease that silently takes hold of her family. Pairing domestic figures and the “creepy-crawlies,” will spark conversation surrounding images of an unsettled home and the role of women; not only in the thematic scene of the sculptures, but as a woman artist taking up space in male-dominated studios.

Ceirra Evans (she/her), Louisville, \$2,405 to create a body of work for a confirmed show at Institute 193 that illustrates rural Kentucky people’s rituals and rites surrounding climate change with an emphasis on matriarchal voices. The body of work will be used to raise awareness of climate change's impact on rural practices and provide representation for rural communities.

Skylar Davis (she/her) and Faulkner Morgan Archive, of Lancaster, now Louisville, \$5,000 to create a visual and auditory installation titled "We Exist," featuring photographs and videos of LGBTQ+ Kentuckians throughout the state, highlighting their diverse experiences. This project will preserve their stories through the [Faulkner Morgan Archive](#), ensuring their voices are heard and remembered for generations to come.

Claire Krüeger (she/her), Louisville, \$5,000 to develop geology and botany themed fiber-based pieces for her first solo art show in March 2025 at Grady Goods Gallery. She is also creating a companion publication with knitting patterns for regional floral, geological motifs and plant dye recipes. This will be the first body of work directly connecting her teaching/research to her personal creative practice and engagement with the land.

Feral Fagiola, Louisville, \$5,000 to develop a new method for printing images on silicone and latex sheets, and use this technique in combination with her large-scale welded steel sculptures to interrogate structures of power, desire, and bodily autonomy, themes central to feminist discourse. By situating and photographing these works in nontraditional industrial contexts, her project aims to transform these spaces into sites of feminist resistance and incite social change through unexpected encounters and experiences.

Sarah Josephine Pennington (she/her), Louisville, \$1,500 to create a multidisciplinary body of work informed by feminist principles and her own lived experience as a queer, disabled Appalachian woman. The project will serve as her first solo art show, to be presented following the release of her first chapbook, "where the bluegrass grows, June 1916". This chapbook is a docupoetic work, created partially from erasure, inspired by local newspaper articles from the month of her Mamaw's birth.

Bugz Fraugg (she/they/it), Berea, \$4,557 to develop their practice and palette as a wild-craft pigment maker focused on using colors harvested from the KY area. They will utilize variety of different practices for producing pigments and explore techniques for exterior grade fresco

painting. These pigments will be used to illustrate a graphic novel that explores a mythological fable of our time designed to create social change.

Whitney Withington, Big Hill, \$4,000 to attend a bookmaking workshop to increase her personal expression, experiment with new artistic mediums and gain skills to create multiple covers and an artist book. She will share samples of her work with feminist artists to receive feedback on how effective the book's imagery and narrative creates transformative social change. Upon completion of the artist book, she will have an art show featuring her hand made books.

Colleen Merrill (she/her), Lexington, \$5,000 to develop her 'Day in & Day Out Project' to expand upon her current collection of fiber-based abstract sculptures, create a digital storytelling archive, and teach a cumulative artmaking workshop. The project will enhance her skills as a textile and teaching artist, while introducing a new challenge of using digital storytelling and archiving to further her research in scrutinizing historic notions of morality and gender ideas within the family and home, while promoting the use of a sustainable artmaking materials.

Christine Kuhn (she/her), Sprout Studios, Lexington, \$5,000 to fund artist labor and partial materials to create a series of sculptures of diverse women from Lexington's first 250 years as a city. These portraits will be the first artworks to honor and educate others about their achievements and will be her first solo sculptural exhibit, serving as the foundational work for a career expansion from public art muralist to public art sculptor.

Erin R. Miller (she/her), Berea, \$5,943 to be used for three weeks of research in the United Kingdom and the Gaelic diaspora in the Eastern United States for a continued body of work investigating both the feminist power and historic misogyny of [cryptozoology](#) and its influence on our contemporary interpretation of intersectional feminism. This research will allow her to build on a body of work started in 2022 that includes multimedia drawings and weavings, and with funding will include additional visual work, writing, and audio recordings.