



## **We Are Listening Individual Artist Awards Session**

[Play recording](#) (53 min)

Recording password:

QqaXGaB6

### **Notes**

#### **General**

- Grant amounts haven't changed since 1986, at least.
- Concept of looking at the size of grants in terms of their impact, \$5-\$10k can have greater impact
- Compared to other state arts councils, the overall amount of MSAC budget awarded to individuals is small. This should be examined.

#### **Categories**

- Question about the the difference between classical, non-classical, and world music categories - isn't this really about western vs. non-western. This needs to be questioned and examined.
- Jazz artists have a frustrating time trying to fit in, jazz thrown into non-classical with new music, hip-hop, etc. How can panelists be qualified to
- Suggestion for the addition of a performance art category
- Also, installation could be considered as an additional category.
- Slipping between categories is common.

#### **Eligibility**

- Clarification that even self-taught artists may apply to the program.
- Clarification that collaborative work is not currently accepted for work samples. This needs to be changed.
- Completed project restriction doesn't account for work that may be a project with multiple parts and not "finished" for many years. Are components of a larger project

- Artists want the opportunity to talk about work and process even though this could be identifying (e.g. a specific repertoire or process particular to an single artist)
- Not being able to provide an artist statement keeps the work to being reviewed in its proper context.
- The current application is product-driven not process-driven- it rewards the result, not the artistic process.

### **Adjudication**

- Observation that the list of awardees is city-centric and central region-centric. It's possible the adjudicators are biased toward more urban work than that of artists living in rural areas.

### **Artists as entrepreneurs**

- The program - unrestricted cash award - doesn't address this. Could the program connect winning artists to help build skills as entrepreneurs, (i.e. include a professional development component as part of award).
- Caution not to promote artists compromising vision for commerce - the term "entrepreneur" connotes compromise for some artists.
- Perhaps the application should include a statement with the artist's professional development goal(s).
- The exhibition component added this year really helps build the artist network. Could a performing artist element be added too? (A concert? A showcase?)

### **Creative Economy Connection**

- Current program does not make this connection, but it would be a good connection to make, the award to economic and quality of life benefits
- The arts in the state can be very localized - everyone would benefit from connections.

### **Honoring Regional Artists**

- It's a fact that high-quality artists are not being selected, perhaps because their art is more regional or rural in subject and style. Jurors perhaps don't understand or are not predisposed to reward it.
- There is fatigue in artists not selected for many years.
- Qualifications of jurors are sometimes disappointing, not knowing who they are is problematic for artists.
- What could a new model look like?
  - Institute a longer waiting period after being awarded.
  - Give more awards.
  - Select jurors from areas that represent the full cultural diversity in Maryland
  - Mentoring process among artists (winners/more experienced mentoring applicants)
  - Use jurors from outside of discipline to break down boundaries, silos.
- It would be interesting to look at who county arts councils are selecting

- hopefully counties get word out to expand application pool

### **Defining Artistic Excellence**

- Process vs. product question, for a lot of people context makes the work unique
  - Having context can help break down the urban/rural divide discussed earlier.
- An artist's background is also an important consideration.
- Jurors knowing an artist's process helps give clarity around evaluating excellence
- Definitions of what is in the academic sphere is changing, there is a big mixing
  - Definition changes over time.
  - Whose definition of excellence?
- Artistic impact is perhaps a better criterion - less hierarchical, more inclusive

### **Project-based awards vs. merit-based**

- Is a project more about recognizing process? Would awarding for projects bring us closer to recognizing process rather than product?
- Could collaborations be considered?
  - Could we change the wording from "Individual" to "Independent," meaning artists working outside of an institution, rather than artists working in isolation?
  - Consider collaborative work in addition to or in place of? Why not have both?

### **Question to the group: What do you understand as MAAF's role in the process?**

- Haven't heard of them
- They select the panelists
- They oversee the application process, they manage the portal. Didn't realize they were part of the panel selection process.

### **Award limits**

- More limitation is better

### **Ken's Model**

- Three tiers of awards, adjudicated by regional panels and perhaps a national panel for final tier
  - Artist Grants to large group ->
  - Regional Awards->
  - Statewide Awards
- Clarification that it is an additive award
- Question the purpose of bringing in an out-of-state panel?
- Panel composition - could it include Artists? Curators? Academicians?
  - Perhaps referred by CAC directors
- Desire to keep anonymity in the process

### **Other Program Enhancements - Artist Exchange Program/Networking/Mentorship/Coaching/Skill Share**

- Could there be a mentorship component to the program?
- Bring in for-profits as expertise - keep exploring (Root Studio - networking, collaboration, wellness)
- Artist and business collaboration - look to Maryland chambers of commerce for support
- Life coaches oriented to artists could be helpful once offering more than money
- Studio time
- Work with elder art to preserve legacy of artists who are passing - it's a shame when family members just trash the work of artists who pass on.
  - Create a treasury of md artists, legacy work
  - There is a general need to preserve work after artists pass.
  - We want their years of creativity honored.
- Skillshare system
  - Older artists work with younger artists in exchange - younger artists bring a knowledge of technology and older artists bring techniques from the past

### **Other**

- There is frustration among artists with different (and redundant) applications. Could there be a common application among the counties and state?
- In reference to self-taught artists
  - It's often difficult to figure out what will last. An artist could be working on work that might not be appreciated for a long time.
  - It's vitally important for artists to have the space for charting new territory.
- How do we work get art to places it isn't?

### **What worked/didn't about tonight**

- Once people know we're listening, attendance may improve
- Work with organizations to get the word out.
- Send minutes and share contacts

### **IAA Listening Session Email Feedback**

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I found the Meeting "We Are Listening" informative and raised many questions regarding the Awards.

If an awardee has been granted any award is there only 3 years before she/he can apply again. Being an artist full time without the attachment to an organization/institution is difficult and it would be nice to distribute these awards to other artists so that once you have received it that's it. The same artists receive it after every 3-5 years from my experience of viewing these grants. Some Foundations do not grant awards if you have received it before.

An established artist/craft person/maker has a stamp or certain style that is recognizable hence to the jurors who specialize in a certain discipline no matter what part of the country they

are from. The process rather than the Product is important. What make it excellent?

Collaboration with one more artist should be considered.

Independent - Work outside a larger institution.

A Category for Mixed Media Work.

Older Artist should be considered. Technology mentorship for older artists.

Awardees should not be considered for the Jury Process as in the past few years.

These are my thoughts and thank you for having this valuable event :We are Listening.

It is much appreciated as it helps to clarify points made by working Artists.

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...After the concert I asked if the state might consider changing its award system in regard to the visual arts, and suggested that there was a way to make the competition pay for itself.

As promised, I am including in this letter, information that might help in this regard. I finish the letter with a personal plea, to change the way you present the winners, to showcase the art for all Marylanders, and why this is so important for the support of all your artists.

I was introduced to the arts as a child and I have a lifelong appreciation of all the arts: musical, performance, literary, and visual. My skill and knowledge however is in the visual arts.

If you were to survey all the arts groups in the state, I believe you will find participation in the visual arts is the highest, and is growing. I've been a member of the Portrait Society of America for the past 14 years, and have seen its membership and participation in its annual conference grow year to year. And for the local arts groups that I am a member of in Charles, Calvert County, and St. Mary's, there is a constant influx of new artists.

I understand that part of the mission of the Maryland Arts Council is to reach more artists, and I believe there are many more visual artists that you can reach, if you change the way you structure your visual arts competitions. Currently your the award program does not take advantage of that. My suggestions to remedy this are below and I include in this letter, information and contact for two regional competitions, a national competition, and an international competition.

Visual arts come in a dizzying array of choices. Categorizing the visual arts into drawing, painting, sculpture and photography is not enough.

I am sure there are more, but this is the list I came up with:

oil	graphite	watercolor
acrylic	pen and ink	charcoal
collage	mixed media	pen and ink
pastels	textile	ceramics
clay sculpture	metal sculpture	stone sculpture
wood working	glass	negative printed photography
digital photography	mosaic	fine crafts,
gouache	encaustic	etc.

That being said, each competition can be broken down into much simpler terms. One example would be: 2-D, 3-D, and Photography. Pick a winner in each category, and then a best in show.

More commonly, competitions are multimedia (not broken down into categories) with awards for first, second, third, and honorable mentions. Usually the honorable mentions cover some of the 'categories' missed in the first three slots.

Examples of competitions available but not limited to artists in Maryland are:

The Art League of Virginia

International Artist Magazine

Annmarie Sculpture Garden and Arts Center

The Portrait Society of America

The Art League has monthly competitions. International Artist has six competitions a year, coinciding with their magazine publications. Annmarie Garden hosts many competitions, with numbers varying each year. The Portrait Society of America hosts one competition per year. All four take in entry fees.

The Art League accepts entries from members only. They post their competitions online for members to see, and starting in July, members may submit three (previously two) works for

entry. Only one work, if accepted, gets in the show. Each month there are one or two prize winners. Many of the prizes are endowments, with The Art League filling in for the months without a prize. A number of the endowments are specific, such as one for Abstract Work, one for Landscape, and one for Landscape in Watercolor, one for Sculpture, etc. Accepted entries are posted online, which includes winner interviews on their blog. While most of their exhibits are multi media, they have had exhibits that were specific, such as for abstract art; and they have an annual 'Shapes and 'Scapes (sculpture and landscape) exhibit.

Cash prizes are awarded at a monthly reception, but the larger benefit for the artists, is that all accepted entries are exhibited at The Art League Gallery in the Torpedo Factory in Alexandria Virginia. This gallery sees a high volume of visitors throughout the year, and an artist has a good chance of selling their work.

International Artist has a big advantage with its bi-monthly themed competitions because it uses its publication as their call-for-entry. In addition to giving out cash prizes, they publish the winning entries in their magazine, earning the winners broad international exposure.

International Artist publish their call-for-entries a year in advance, which gives artists time to paint to the theme. Their themes are:

Landscapes

Florals and Gardens

Abstract/Experimental

Seascapes, Rivers and Lakes

Favorite Subjects

Still Life

People and Figures

Wildlife

Annmarie Sculpture Garden and Arts Center has a variable number of themed exhibits per year with exhibits hanging as long as 6 months or as short as a weekend. As a Maryland artist, I have found this to be a great venue for my work, and I try to enter as many competitions as my work qualifies for. Awards can be just juror awards, or ranked, depending on the preference of the juror. Annmarie Garden hosts receptions open to the public, where the awards are announced. Accepted works are hung in a stunning venue that hosts many visitors, as Annmarie Garden offers a variety of programs that bring visitors in.

Originally the Portrait Society of America had a single competition in portraiture for their members. Interest in the Portrait Society of America member competitions increased to where they added more categories: Commissioned Portraits, Non-Commissioned Portraits, Still Life, Outside the box, and Self Portrait.

They also have an international portrait competition, open to all artists. The number of entries in that competition has doubled in the time I have been a member.

The award ceremony takes place at their annual conference, where finalists are given entry into the conference at no cost. The prizes are generous and winners in the members only competition are posted on their website with a write up in their newsletter. The grand prize winner in the international portrait competition receives a feature article in International Artist Magazine.

These are examples of competitions available to Maryland Artists, that might be inspiration for future Maryland Arts Council awards for visual arts.

Consider this for Maryland: have four competitions per year with the final competition that includes a grand prize. The winners (1st, 2nd and 3rd) of the first three competitions would be automatically entered (at no fee) as finalists into the main, fourth, grand prize competition. Charge a nominal entry fee for each entry that would support cash prizes.

Might the artwork be offered for display and sale with a reception for the winners? If there is enough buzz about the competition, a gallery might be happy to host such a thing, as it would bring in patrons to their location.

And while awards and prizes are nice for artist CV's, is there a way to publish the artworks—or at least the winners of the grand prize competition, in a regional publication? If the competition becomes big enough, you may attract the interest of such a publication.

My apologies if you already do any of these suggestions. I could not find this information on the Arts Council website. Your list of winning artists do not even show thumbnails of their winning works nor link to their websites. Where are your links to your facebook pages that show the work? Do the images on your facebook page even show the work? Do you have instagram or twitter accounts?

I need to let you know—most visual artists would rather have their work shown in a publication or other visual outlet, than their faces! They want people to see their work—to buy their work! That's what leaves an impression for a patron—not what the artist looks like. My personal opinion is that even a photo of the artist in front of their work is a distraction from the work. So when I say have a publication, or website, or other platform show the winners, I mean the work! And don't forget links to the artists websites.

Please look at the way International Artist showcases their winners at the front of their publication (link below). Not an artist's face in sight. This does not mean you can't post a group shot of all the winners with their awards—just make the focus the art.

This would apply to your other artists as well. Have a sampling of a reading, or a performance. Let the world out there see why the artists were chosen for these awards! An image of the artist accepting an award leaves no memory for a potential patron. But a fantastic piece of art, or a sample of a reading or performance, with a link to where they can experience the work in person...

Your online platforms should be a gateway for Marylanders to experience the arts!

Perhaps I am going a little overboard on this. There are some artists who would not want their art on the web, but I believe most artists feel the way I do. When my first award was published in our local paper, the only visual was a photo of my face, not the art. It was a missed opportunity for me.

I hope you find the information I have provided helpful. Thank you for considering more opportunities within the arts community.

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The "We Are Listening" session for Individual artist awards is full so I can't attend. I am glad you allow feedback, in this form as an alternative. The fact that it is full should be a message that there is a communication problem. Many artisans want to be heard. Another session should have been established. I hope a good follow up review of the session will be given in the newsletter along with a way to continue the dialog.

My concern is that I am a studio furniture designer/ maker/ artisan. I have submitted artwork for each year crafts or sculpture is allowed. It is very hard for a furniture maker to meet the criteria for submissions. 10 new pieces in three years maybe be accomplished if I had a subsidized income. But I work at my art full time and don't have the luxury of extra income or extra free time. Furniture making is an art form and a craft and is rarely seen in your awards granted.

Please help to make the awards more available to the crafts like mine.

Thank you. I look forward to hearing a review of the sessions.

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The musicians seem to have concerns about the many divisions of music or categories of music that they believe others do not understand. Making too many changes to accommodate one group could cause unnecessary changes in other groups.

The other concern I had involved the qualifications of those making the decisions. That seemed to be the same concern the musicians had. I do believe that everyone who creates something of quality should have a chance to win. In the final analyses, should you take into consideration the many awards that one or two people have won for their project and let that also be a criteria for winning? Or should a person who has something just as good or better, but has not won awards be selected. In the novel writing world, just because you are known, does not make you better. Judgement for writing should be on the characters, plot, scene and the elements of storytelling, not on someone's ideas of what he/she likes in a story.

Sorry, didn't mean to get carried away. Last night enabled me to trust those involved that they will take care in doing what they can to help facilitate the process and oversee the selection process so that it is as fair and honest as humanly possible.

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You say..."we are listening". Well here is what I have to say...  
I am 86 years and I do not feel that I am considered important  
or that my body of work that has covered important historical ,  
human events and esthetically are ART ...sculptures, paintings,  
documentaries, performance art, photography, poems and more...  
ONE Year As A volunteer In Service of America, teacher, mother,  
and active participant in raising funds for Women & Children are important any longer...

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Here's my feedback about the Individual Artists Awards and what visual artists in this state need.

1. A \$1,000 award in this current economy no longer makes sense. If you truly want to make a difference in artists' lives, give more \$3,000 awards instead. Or some \$2,000 awards.
2. If you want to help more artists than you can help by giving out Individual Artist Awards, there are two major areas in which our region is seriously deficient:
  - a. A lack of commercial galleries in which artists can sell their work, and lack of robust and professional art criticism that reaches a general public. I realize the Arts Council is there to distribute money to non-profit organizations, but is there a way to also encourage people to collect the work of Maryland artists? Or work with other state agencies as a form of economic development?
  - b. Since the Baltimore Sun has totally taken itself out of art reviewing since John Dorsey retired 20 years ago, I'm not hopeful that they'll ever be a venue for it again. They'll review theater and classical music, and that's it. The Washington Post will sometimes write online about exhibitions in the suburbs, but in general, Maryland artists might as well be invisible to a broader public. Bmore Art at least provides a gallery calendar, but its audience is people who already follow the

art scene, and skews young. Is there a way to establish and fund serious art writing? In doing so, you could also be supporting a deserving writer.

3. I am one of the artists whose work has been enlarged onto panels and hung in BWI Airport as part of a rotating exhibition program initiated by Mrs. Hogan. I can tell you that it was a great opportunity for me to get my work seen in a major public venue. I hope the program continues after November, and this time, would urge you to also include an honorarium for the artists. Perhaps this can be expanded into other high-visibility sites.

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I really like the idea of the tiered jurying system that starts with Maryland based jurors that you introduced around the 40 minute mark of the recording. Despite the concerns about nepotism expressed by a few people, I think in fact that my own visual arts panel experiences (School 33 gallery panel 4 years, Baltimore City artist grants 1 year, Montpelier Library Gallery season one year) is that if you pick jurors who are local, they may help solve the bias toward "urban" or "university" artists that some people raised, which I suspect doesn't have as much to do with either as with a bias toward art that's on trend with what's being shown in the art magazines. When you bring in people from the outside who are looking at images on a screen flash by at the rapid pace necessitated by a massive slide review, they will gravitate toward things that they readily understand, and likely, that's going to be what's on trend at the moment. If you break down the process so that one panel isn't going to sit through a mind-numbing number of slides, that's going to help address that. And also, it may bring art into the equation that wouldn't otherwise get through -- work that's more nuanced or personal, work that's not "art about art," or is less commercial. It would also introduce panelists to people within the state that they might otherwise not know about, and for curators, that's a plus. I ran the gallery at Goucher for 12 years, and always was scouting talent that hadn't been shown in Baltimore to present something unique, or to present alongside an artist with a following here. It benefits everyone. Then have the out of state panelists at the top level, which is also good, because it shows them what's going on here, and puts strong Maryland artists on their radar.

I like the idea of bringing back project-based grants. MSAC used to have them, as did Baltimore City. I got two small ones in the 1980s -- one to pay for models for a series of paintings I was working on, and one to help pay my babysitter so I could have more studio time. I also have noticed -- and I have no idea why -- that they are more likely to be equitably distributed to women than regular juried grants are. I suspect that when the process is included, we get taken more seriously. I've done much better with those than with the "non-project" kind.

I've already suggested in previous correspondence that you support some kind of regular critical publication. I still think that's hugely needed here.

I also said you need to support the development of galleries that sell artwork. We have way too few in this state, including in Baltimore City. I was glad to hear you seemed open to that in your response to the woman from Columbia, MD.

GBCA has done an excellent job of offering professional development opportunities to artists who get their grants. They offered one to Baker and Rubys Awards winners, i.e. mid-career artists at a certain level of accomplishment, that was excellent. A group of 8 of us spun off from that and have continued to meet. Ask Jeannie Howe about Artists U. Maybe that can be implemented outside the Baltimore metro area.

Thanks for taking a fresh look at the program! I liked what I was hearing.