



ARTS SERVICES INITIATIVE OF WESTERN NEW YORK, INC. 2019 ANNUAL REPORT



ASI ENVISIONS A REGION WHERE INCLUSIVE CREATIVE COMMUNITIES ARE VALUED AND VISIBLE, AND WHERE ARTISTS AND ARTS ORGANIZATIONS HAVE ACCESS TO THE RESOURCES NEEDED TO ADVANCE AND THRIVE.

**FUNDING. LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES.
ACCESS TO THE ARTS.**

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LETTER FROM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR JEN SWAN



Photo: Elaine Stickney

2019 brought many positive and significant changes for Team ASI! I'm proud that we've expanded our programs, services, staff, and office space to help us continue empowering Western New York's artists and arts organizations with the tools required to sustain a creative life.

We kicked off the year when we relocated our office from Downtown Buffalo's Cobblestone District to the Tri-Main Center in North Buffalo, a hub for nonprofit offices, artist studios, and small art galleries. This has allowed us

to develop critical and creative partnerships with several individuals and groups—from sourcing new sponsorships to collaborating on professional development seminars. Most notably, we partnered with nearly a dozen local businesses and nonprofit organizations when we presented Western New York's inaugural Creative Professionals Exchange, a two-day mini conference administrated by the region's many arts leaders, which we hosted throughout the Tri-Main Center last October.

Our professional development series wasn't the only program that grew last year: our Financial Services, Arts Access, and various granting programs also expanded. ASI's fiscal sponsorees grew to 14, and bookkeeping clients to 15; Arts Access participating organizations grew from 27 to 50—nearly double; and our granted total grew from \$188,500 to \$198,870.

2019 also saw the kickoff of a formal rebrand for our organization. Our goal for this process is to ensure we are doing everything we can to connect with the region's artists and arts organizations so that we can fulfill our mission of supporting them on their paths toward career development, financial sustainability, and artistic success. To further improve these outreach efforts, we also invested in the creation of a new staff position: the Communications and Development Manager. Stay tuned for the rollout of our rebrand in 2020!

As always, thank you to our supporters, partners, and volunteers who have strengthened our ambitions to serve the Western New York arts and cultural sector. As we approach our tenth anniversary, we know we have an important year ahead of us; we would not be able to face its many promises and challenges without your time and support. Because of your continued commitment, ASI has continued to serve even more artists, arts organizations, and diverse audiences as the nexus of "where the arts meet business."

STRENGTHENING THE ARTS AND CULTURAL SECTOR THROUGH **FUNDING**

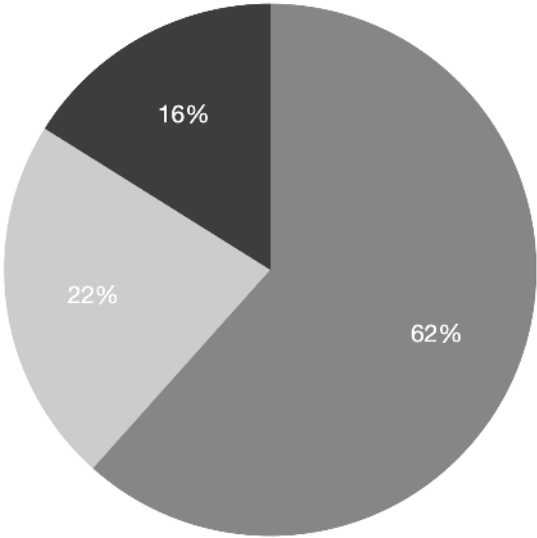
2019 IN REVIEW

In 2019, ASI distributed \$198,870 of funding to Western New York’s independent artists and arts and cultural organizations. We administered:

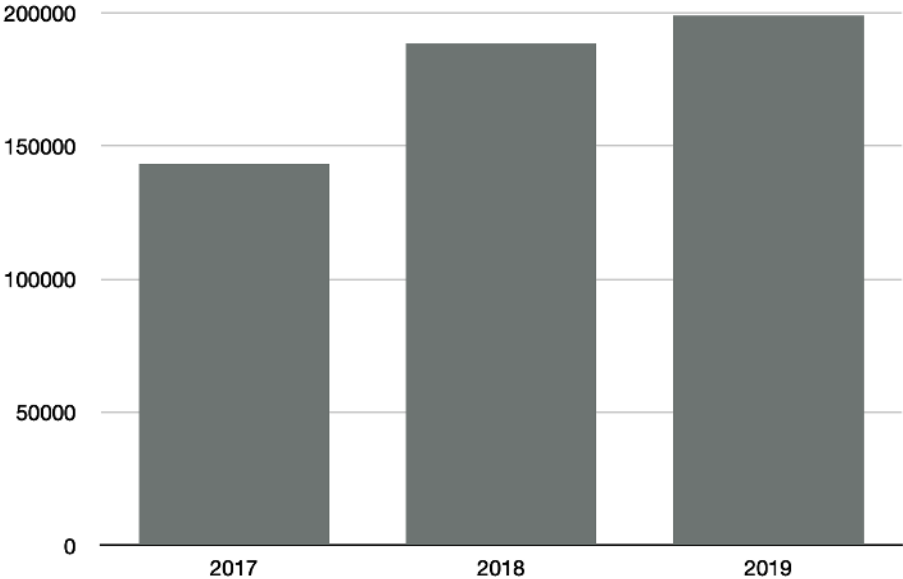
- \$122,500 in DEC Grants
- \$44,370 through our Global Warming Art Project
- \$32,000 through Give for Greatness

Every year, the total amount of funding we distribute to critical art projects and organizations increases, ensuring the strength and continued growth of our region’s creative industry.

● DEC Grants ● Global Warming Art Project ● Give for Greatness



■ Funding Distributed



EMPOWERING ARTISTS AND ORGANIZATIONS WITH **LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES**

ASI is committed to the professional and organizational growth of Western New York's artists and arts organizations. Through our professional development series, we offer complimentary and interactive workshops spanning budgeting, marketing, governance, and more. We work hard to ensure that seminars are timely, effective, and valuable for any individual or group, regardless of the present challenges of one's organization or stage of one's career.

2019 WORKSHOPS

- DEC Grant Workshops: Buffalo, Niagara Falls, North Tonawanda, and Springville
- Nonprofit Financial Statements 101 with The Bonadio Group
- NYSCA-A.R.T./New York Creative Opportunity Fund Info Session
- Advocacy and the 2020 Erie County Arts Funding Budget Process
- Tips and Tricks to Navigating Your Taxes
- 60+ one-on-one consultations for artists and organizations

PLUS... **THE 2019 CREATIVE PROFESSIONALS EXCHANGE**

NEW IN 2019!

In the fall of 2019, we presented Western New York's inaugural Creative Professionals Exchange, a two-day mini conference administered by the region's leading changemakers in the arts. With topics spanning exhibition etiquette, the rise of public art, and ways for artists to make a living, we designed these professional development seminars for arts administrators, cultural leaders, community activists, and artists of all disciplines interested in making art their full-time focus.



SESSIONS + PANELS

- In Public: The Rise of Western New York's Murals and More
- Exhibition Etiquette for Visual Artists
- Publishing Etiquette for Poets and Writers
- To Be or Not to Be a Nonprofit
- 10 Reasons to Call Your Nonprofit Attorney
- Working Artist's Guide to Marketing
- Branding Checklist for Creative Organizations
- Art Means Business: ASI Resources for Artists
- Art Work: Becoming a Full-Time Artist
- The Arts Mean Business: ASI Resources for Arts Organizations
- Building Community Power Through the Arts



Photo: Ally Spangr Photography

BREAKING BARRIERS AND BUILDING COMMUNITIES THROUGH ACCESS TO THE ARTS

Our Arts Access program breaks the barriers facing low-income residents of Erie and Niagara Counties when accessing the arts, which are often costs, transportation, and knowledge of events. Arts Access partners with local theaters, galleries, and other arts and cultural organizations to offer free or reduced-cost admission.

In 2019, we provided Arts Access passes to 1,221 Western New Yorkers. We also partnered with 50 organizations—nearly double 2018’s count at 27—to work toward ensuring that our region’s thriving arts culture is accessible to everyone.



50 galleries, theaters, and other cultural organizations participated in 2019

1221 Western New York residents served in 2019

2019 ARTS ACCESS PARTNERS

- Albright Knox Art Northland
- Alleyway Theatre
- Aquarium of Niagara
- Artpark & Company, Inc
- Brazen-Faced Varlets
- Buffalo Arts Studio
- Buffalo and Erie County Botanical Gardens
- Buffalo Choral Arts Society
- Buffalo Gay Mens Chorus
- Buffalo History Museum
- Buffalo International Film Festival
- Buffalo Museum of Science
- Buffalo Philharmonic Chorus
- Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra
- Burchfield Penney Art Center
- Carnegie Art Center
- CSz Buffalo
- Community Music School
- Explore and More - The Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Children’s Museum
- Explore Buffalo
- Frank Lloyd Wright Darwin Martin House
- Freudig Singers of Western New York
- Graycliff Conservancy
- Herschell Carrousel Factory Museum
- Historic Palace Theater (lockport)
- Irish Classical Theatre Co.
- Jewish Repertory Theatre
- Just Buffalo Literary Center
- Kavinoky Theatre
- Kenan Center
- Lancaster Opera House
- Music is Art
- MusicalFare Theatre
- Neglia Ballet Artists
- Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Center
- Nickel City Opera
- O’Connell & Company
- Paul Robeson Theatre at the African American Cultural Center
- Peach Mag
- Road Less Traveled Productions
- Squeaky Wheel Film & Media Art Center
- Subversive Theatre
- The Big Easy in Buffalo
- The Friends of Vienna
- Theatre of Youth
- Torn Space
- Trinity Episcopal Church: Fresh Voices Speaker Series
- Ujima Company
- WNY Book Arts Center
- Young Audiences of WNY

PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT: **SPARK AWARDS** CELEBRATING THOSE WHO IGNITE ARTS AND CULTURE

2019 WINNERS

Muhammad Zaman
Artist of the Year

Julia Bottoms
Artist of the Year Finalist

Caitlin Cass
Artist of the Year Finalist

Buffalo Sugar City
Arts Organization of the Year

Road Less Traveled Productions
Arts Organization of the Year Finalist

National Comedy Center
Arts Organization of the Year Finalist

Craig Centrie
Lifetime Achievement

Rob Lynch
Trailblazer of the Arts

Annette Daniels Taylor: Heritage Walk: Traveling Buffalo's Underground Railroad Seminar and Workshop
DEC Program of the Year

Aimee M. Levesque, PhD
Rising Star

John McKendry
Supporter of the Cultural Sector

Clyde Terry
Unsung Hero

Sam Savarino
Arts Integration

The Spark Awards is our annual awards ceremony honoring outstanding individuals and organizations in the Western New York arts community. We celebrated our sixth annual Spark Awards on Wednesday, May 22 at Hotel Henry.



Photos by Alana Adetola Arts Photography and Onion Studio, Inc.

PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT: GLOBAL WARMING ART PROJECT



Photo: Buffalo Youth Media Institute student Zaire Goodman poses in front of a green screen with teaching artist Jesse Deganis Librera at Buffalo Center for Arts & Technology.

THE YOUTH MOVEMENT TO TACKLE THE CLIMATE CRISIS IS RIGHT HERE IN BUFFALO

2019 marked the end of the first full year of funding through ASI's Global Warming Art Project, a granting program with support from Ben Perrone and the "Environment Maze" individual donors that funds art projects addressing the rising dangers of global climate change. We caught up with grantee Buffalo Youth Media Institute, a collaboration between Squeaky Wheel Film & Media Art Center and Buffalo Center for Arts & Technology, to discuss their 2019 project, *1988*.

It's 2019: All communications, media channels, and consumer products are controlled by one corporate behemoth, and reality is comprised of nothing more than a nonstop stream of television programming. Fortunately for the world as we know it, a group of courageous young activists decide to break through the noise and fight back.

Or at least that's the premise of *1988*, the dystopian short film produced by the young filmmakers and media artists of the Buffalo Youth Media Institute (BYMI), an afterschool program for Buffalo Public and Charter High School students administered by Squeaky Wheel Film & Media Art Center and the Buffalo Center for Arts & Technology. With more than 20 minutes of top-quality satirical skits and

sobering interviews, *1988* places the BYMI students among the young people around the world who are organizing to tackle the complicated and urgent crisis of global climate change.

“I realized while working on the film that not a lot of people care about global warming,” said Zaire Goodman, a freshman digital film major at Villa Maria College and longtime student of BYMI. “Some won’t even acknowledge that it’s a thing. It’s not okay.”

The film was supported by the Global Warming Art Project, a granting program funded by Ben Perrone and administered by ASI that awards between \$1,000 and \$10,000 to Western New York artists and arts organizations whose work addresses the rising dangers of climate change. BYMI was one of six recipients to receive funding during the program’s pilot year, joining local artists Dorothea Braemer, Chantal Calato, Timothy Fredrichs, Judith Goldman, and Anna Scime.

“The program speaks to our ever-evolving commitment to finding the resources needed to support Western New York’s thriving creative community,” said ASI Executive Director Jen Swan.

In this case, the resources came from local artists Ben Perrone and Hugh Levick who had been raising money for an art project that ultimately could not be realized due to the challenge of locating a suitable space for installation. Perrone and Levick raised approximately \$70,000 in donations for “Environment Maze,” a fund which has been repurposed to create ASI’s Global Warming Art Project Fund.

“Their decision to repurpose the funds is indicative of the way Western New York’s arts and cultural sector functions,” Swan said. “We’re an ecosystem; we work together and support one another.”

Mirroring our sector’s spirit of teamwork is Goodman and the young filmmakers and teaching artists of BYMI. He comments that one of his favorite parts of working on *1988* was learning not only about the climate crisis but also about the individual ways every person has a skill or talent to contribute. “It was interesting to see a group of people and figure out who can fill what role and who’s good at what,” he said. And although he contributed his talent for screenwriting and camerawork to the production of *1988*, he also enjoyed stepping into a role as mentor to some of the program’s newer students.

This power of learning together was not exclusive to BYMI’s students. “I was learning about the climate crisis right along with them,” said Jesse Deganis Librera, the lead teaching artist at Squeaky Wheel who oversaw the production of *1988*. “To fulfill the teacher’s role, I had to know what I was talking about, so I ended doing a lot of research into the science behind the climate crisis. It was a real learning experience for me.”



BYMI is entering its fifteenth year. During its six-week intensive summer course out of which *1988* came, BYMI students creatively explore different social and cultural issues and exhibit their final work at the Burchfield Penney Art Center. “This program is important because we get to come in and express ourselves and talk about topics that people often don’t care enough about,” Goodman said.

Looking forward, Goodman wants *1988* to expose more people to the urgency of the climate crisis, and hopes everyone knows that, as in the production of the film, everyone has a skill to contribute. “I hope that our film makes more people want to help out in whatever way they can,” he said.

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*In memory of Dr. William Africano

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