



PUBLIC ARTS COMMITTEE REPORT

Carla Sims, Committee Chair

November 17, 2025

PUBLIC ARTS DEPARTMENT OVERVIEW:

The Public Arts Team (PAT) continues work to wrap up projects and grants lines from FY25 while onboarding new FY26 grantees. The PAT is close to finalizing the 2026 Public Arts Work Plan and continues efforts around the mapping project. The updates that follow reflect the department's deep work with grantees, our continued attention to recurring programs, and some exciting progress around new work areas and initiatives.

FY26 Art Bank Grant Program (ABP)

On Friday, October 17, 2025, 68 award decisions and 54 finalist decline notifications were released. The PAT has moved forward with the work of processing grant paperwork and creating debrief documents. By the end of the calendar year, debriefs will be created and shared with applicants who request them.

DC Art Now 2025, an exhibition featuring 57 works by Art Bank finalists at CAH's 200 I (Eye) Street Gallery, opened on September 11, 2025. Since its debut, the exhibition has continued to receive strong public support. In October, students from Montgomery College and Alexandria Public Schools visited the gallery. CAH will host three artist talks in the gallery before the exhibition closes in December, as follows:

October 30, 2025, 6 pm – 7:30 pm: Immigrant Artists in the DMV

November 18, 2025, 6 pm – 7:30 pm: Artist talk in partnership with Umbrella Art Fair

December 11, 2025: 6 pm – 7:30 pm: Emerging Women Artists in the DMV

FY26 Art Exhibition (Curatorial) Grant Program (AEG)

Two AEG applications have been awarded grants for the FY26 grant cycle, as follows:

Inside Out: Dignity and the Art of Seeing, Curators: Emma Pearce and Vikki Tobak

January 15 – March 6, 2026

Inside Out: Dignity and the Art of Seeing features never-before-seen works by women and historic images from Lorton Prison and DC Jail. This collection emerges from the transformative 1980's DCCA "Arts in Prison" initiative. The exhibition features powerful self-portraits and intimate scenes of daily life: friendships forged in the dorms, moments of solitude in the gym, and cherished personal artifacts that tell stories of hope and resilience.



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Finders Keepers, Curators: Ira Tattelman and Kanchan Balse

April 3 – May 22, 2026

Finders Keepers is an art exhibition celebrating the work of 15 local artists. During April, Earth Day Month 2026, the CAH gallery will contain artist-made, found-object pieces that turn ‘trash’ into ‘art’. Using items usually thrown away, the artists take discarded materials from the waste stream and re-make them, creating work that centers on humanity, interconnection, and responsibility.

The PAT has moved forward with the work of processing grant paperwork and creating debrief documents.

FY26 Juried Exhibition Grant Program (JEG)

On October 20, 2025, the PAT launched the Request for Applications (RFA) for *Rip! Tear! Collage as Critique*, an FY26 Juried Exhibition Grant Program (JEG) show slated for summer 2026. This RFA calls on DC area artists who use collage not only as a visual technique, but also as a metaphor for cultural, political, ecological, and personal investigation and critique.

In a time when our nation—and the social fabric of the District—is experiencing deep division, fragmentation, and transformation, collage emerges as a democratic form through which artists can explore stories of rupture, repair, and reassembly.

The PAT hosted two applicant workshops in November, and one more workshop is scheduled later this month. Grant applications close on December 1, 2025.

FY25 Public Art Building Communities Grant Program (PABC)

On October 8, 2025, FY25 grantee Logan Circle Community Association hosted a dedication event featuring artist Victor Ekpuk in conversation with art historian Dr. Steven Nelson. The discussion explored Ekpuk’s artistic process and public art.



Victor Ekpuk and Dr. Steven Nelson, *The Dancer* | Goethe-Institut Washington



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FY26 Public Art Building Communities Grant Program (PABC)

The onboarding process has begun for Hamiltonian Artists, Shani Shih, and the NoMa BID for the FY26 Public Art Building Communities (PABC) Grant Program.

FY25 Color the Curb: School Safety Grant Program

FY25 grantees have completed their mural projects, adding new public art in their respective communities. The projects include: Ashley Jaye Williams for Columbia Heights Education Campus, Nia Calhoun Keturah for Champlain Street NW, and Tammy Barnes for 13th and C Street NE.

Planning is underway for the FY26 Color the Curb: School Safety Grant Program. This includes the evaluation and selection of new sites, including a high school for the first time. The RFA will be released on November 17, 2025, inviting artists to submit applications.

FY26 Fresh Paint DC: CAH Mural Program

Introducing *Fresh Paint DC: CAH Mural Program* for FY26! It is CAH's own mural program, focused on providing grants to local mural artists to create exterior murals throughout DC. Partnerships are currently being developed with the Downtown BID, H Street Main Street, and Uptown Main Street. These efforts are part of CAH's broader work with agency colleagues at the Department of Small and Local Business Development (DSLBD) and the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development (DMPED) to identify wall sites for this pilot year.

The goal of the program is to grow year after year by creating learning opportunities for emerging artists, enlivening communities, and addressing the gap left by the lack of mural funding in recent years. The RFA is scheduled to be released on Monday, December 1, 2025. There are three or four potential sites being considered for the program.

Collections Management

Installs for the Loan Program have resumed, as the PAT manages a list of 30 active requests. Recently, staff welcomed representatives from the offices of Councilmember Frumin, the Department of Human Services, the Mayor's Office of Returning Citizens, and the Commission on Judicial Disabilities and Tenure for artwork selections.

The PAT is also working on an assessment and repair to a sculpture that was damaged onsite at Nationals Park by a mobile crane that was performing work at the stadium. CAH is coordinating with the Nationals, and the crane company has agreed to file an insurance claim to support the repair of the artwork.

The PAT is also meeting with DC Public Library to coordinate the installation of additional artworks at the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library. This initiative includes select neighborhood branch libraries and supports the goal of reaching broader and more diverse audiences.



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Submittable Software System

Submittable is the new grantmaking software currently being piloted through two programs: Color the Curb: School Safety Program Grant (launching soon) and Fresh Paint DC: CAH Mural Program (early December). These pilots were selected to test the system's functionality with smaller applicant pools. Paired with Smartsheet project management software, Submittable enables a fully paperless process, enhancing both internal efficiency and the applicant experience.

Although external beta testing was not possible prior to contract execution, the Submittable team has been highly responsive. All new applications will transition to Submittable.