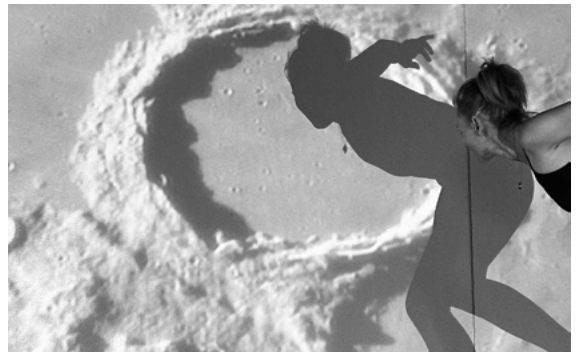


2024-25 Integrative Arts Research Fellowship Final TRIF Report

SUBMITTED BY ELLEN MCMAHON, JUNE 20, 2025



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The Arizona Institute for Resilience granted the College of Fine Arts, Arts Research Office (ARO) \$50K to support the 2024-2025 [Integrative Arts Research Fellowship](#). The goal of the program was to assist faculty to scale up and seek external funding for projects-in-progress that utilize arts research to foster individual, cultural, and social resilience. Audrey Molloy, a professional development consultant and MA student of Art History, worked with College of Fine Arts ADR McMahon to research and identify external funding for the cohort of fellows and coordinate the spring Arts Research Gathering.

Steven Gray, an MFA student in the School of Art worked with McMahon to conduct research and read relevant scholarship concerning: arts research methods, definitions, and approaches; supported the coordination of the Spring Arts Research Gathering; and is producing a video documentation of Integrative Arts Research Fellow projects.

Funding also supported \$1.5K stipends for all nine fellows and additional, competitive seed funding to catalyze project development. All of the projects continue to demonstrate and clarify the capacity of arts research to integrate into a wide range of knowledge domains, connect disciplines, and engage students with regional communities.

Supported Fellows and Project:

- Nicole Antebi (School of Art), *Science-in-Motion | Wonder Studio at B2*
- Sarah Lisette Chiesa, (School of Dance), *Energetic Presence of the Moving Body Left in Space*
- Sara Fraker, (School of Music), *Watershed Soundscape: Building Community Through Music, Art and Watershed Science*
- Liz George, (School of Dance), *Imagination 1: All Artist Simulated Moon Mission*
- Jennie Gubner, (School of Music and Head of Graduate Interdisciplinary Program in Applied Intercultural Arts Research), *La Peña del SurCo* and the *Music and Health Story Lab*
- Gabriela Ocadiz, (School of Music), *Decolonizing and Indigenizing pedagogy through Waila Music Workshop with Gertie Lopez*
- Cynthia Stokes, (School of Music), *Hearing the Invisible, Listening to the Brain*
- Trent Williams, (School of Dance), *Against the Grain: Black Experience in the Barbershop*

Notable Accomplishments (Q3)

The single most exceptional accomplishment of this program is the engagement of these Integrative Arts Research projects across the University and with diverse Southern Arizona communities.

Community Partnerships

Each of the nine Integrative Arts Research fellows engaged numerous students and at least one key community partner through their project, including Arizona Theatre Company, Borderlands Restoration Network, Empire Ranch, Gertie and the T.O. Boyz, Patagonia Opera House, Teatro Dignidad, The Loft Cinema, Tohono O'odham Community College, Tucson Symphony Orchestra, and Watershed Management Group Living Lab.

Helping Communities Thrive through Cultural Practices (direct benefits)

Community members participating in [La Peña del SurCo](#) celebrated folk music traditions from Argentina, Chile and across Latin America, while building community through intimate, acoustic, and participatory musical practices on a monthly basis (ongoing). This community-music project gathers over 100 intergenerational community members at each event from 10+ Latin American countries (500+ participants in FY25) (Jennie Gubner)

[Watershed Soundscape: Building Community Through Music, Art and Watershed](#)

[Science](#) in partnership with the San Xavier Department of Natural Resources, hosted a songwriting workshop for O'odham youth which encouraged cultural expression and environmental education, bridging traditional knowledge and contemporary music-making in a way that resonates with younger generations. (Sara Fraker)

[Waila Music Workshop with Gertie Lopez](#) applies decolonizing and Indigenizing pedagogy through community music practices that integrate multiple art forms, "to explore how cultural and pedagogical practices can foster sustainable, community-based cultural resilience." (Gabriela Ocadiz)

Cross University Impact

"[Hearing the Invisible](#)" is part of an ongoing collaboration between Opera Theater at the School of Music and the College of Medicine, which draws from a trans-disciplinary investigation of sounds which emanate from healthy and diseased brains on a cellular level. (Cynthia Stokes)

The ongoing "[Wonder Studio](#)" project provides opportunities for students to engage with Biosphere 2 through microscopy, animation, photography, and video production. This creates unique student workforce development experiences across creative arts, science, engineering, marketing, and technology disciplines. (Nicole Antebi)

Unique Support Provided by the U of A to Increase Visibility and External Fundability (Q4)

Collaborative and Transdisciplinary Approaches

All projects involved multidisciplinary teams that utilized collaborative and transdisciplinary approaches enabled by the rich ecosystem of the R1 university.

Amplification of impact through Communications and Engagement Opportunities

- Workshops: Numerous workshops were hosted in all projects, including: "[Stop-motion Animation Workshop](#)" for Diana Liverman Environmental Scholars at Biosphere 2 Planning Center; and "[Waila Music Workshop with Gertie Lopez](#)" for School of Music students.
- Events: Public events were integral to most projects including: "[Hearing the Invisible](#)," an interdisciplinary showcase combining art, music, and science to explore how turning brain waves into music might be able to help screen for diseases and conditions, such as Alzheimer's disease or chronic pain; a community performance by Gertie and the T.O. Boyz at the School of Music; and, "[The Energetic Presence of the Moving Body Left In Space](#)", a public mindfulness and movement workshop at Steinfeld Warehouse. More than 6,000 people attended a recent

performance at Reid Park of Sara Fraker's AIR supported project, "[*Watershed Soundscape: Building Community Through Music, Art and Watershed Science*](#)."

- Web Presence: All projects will be included in the [*Integrative Arts Research Project Archive*](#) on the CFA website, and many are finishing up their own comprehensive websites. The "[*The Music & Health Story Lab*](#)" in progress will be a public-facing website and community health resource to promote intercultural dialogue about how music promotes health and wellbeing in our communities. (Jennie Gubner)
- Press: "[*Imagination 1: All Artist Simulated Moon Mission*](#)" garnered international press including a feature story by one of the crew published in [*Esquire UK*](#). (Elizabeth George)

Operational Challenges and New Directions in Response (Q5)

The following are comments and requests from project leads.

Interdisciplinary Collaboration as a Funding Solution

- What is the applicability of arts-based research to other research domains and vice versa (especially in the context of new federal funding constraints)?
- How to expand funding opportunities to incorporate a variety of collaborators that would bring a wider set of skills and technologies into performative artistic expressions.

University Support: Limitations & Status

- How to maintain a rigorous arts-based research practice in the midst of current limits being placed on free speech and advocacy.
- How to create a sustainable model (without dependence on internal funding) for continuation and build-out of our arts-integrated research?

Writing & Publishing Resources

- How to write competitive grant proposals for practice-based arts research when the outcomes most frequently emerge through the process of creating?

Arts Research Definitions & Role(s)

- How is arts research different from scientific research? In what contexts do they address different kinds of questions while sharing common interests in the unknown?
- What role does arts-based research play in shifting museum authority? Traditionally, museums have been seen as knowledge institutions with curators as gatekeepers. Does arts-based research help decentralize this authority by prioritizing lived experience, creative interpretation, and community voices?
- How do we define success in both practice-based and arts-based research?
- How can arts research challenge dominant epistemologies while still maintaining methodological rigor? Specifically, how can researchers navigate the tension between artistic intuition and the expectations of empirical research frameworks?

Grant Funding Resources & Support

- Identification of large-scale extramural opportunities from foundations and private partnerships.
- Funding resources, collaborative partnering resources, both internal and external to the University, and especially when approaching industries for in-kind participation.

- Sustained financial support from the University would help to ensure I can continue to work in an ethical and mutually beneficial relationship with my community partners.

University Community-Building

- Developing relationships across disciplines and departments, with an understanding of faculty research interests and problems as a pathway to identifying prospective co-PI's.

Scholarship Context-Building

- Engaging with practitioners who have experience in arts research to refine methodologies and ensure work remains impactful and ethical.
- Guidance for producing peer-review articles in terms of arts research.

Enabled Individuals (Q6)

This project engaged two graduate students enrolled in the College of Fine Arts:

- Audrey Molloy, a professional development consultant and an MA student of Art History.
- Steven Gray, a visual artist and a MFA student of Art.
- All projects had direct benefits to students, including students enrolled in Cynthia Stokes course who worked on the "*Hearing the Invisible*" exhibition (20 students) and *Waila Music Workshop with Gertie Lopez* (50 students).

Publications (7/1/24-6/30/25) (Q7)

Research in the arts and humanities is particularly impactful in the social sphere, because of the wide range of ways it is published (made public) from the scholarly to the performative. See examples in answer to Q3 and Q4.

Positive impact, Arizona Specific (Q8) and on the University and Regions We Serve (Q9)

- Each of the nine projects initiated through the Integrative Arts Research fellowship project engaged in creative, transdisciplinary approaches to respond to issues facing Southern Arizona and identify solutions to enhance community resilience.
- *La Peña del SurCo* facilitates culturally diverse forms of participatory music making as a vehicle for intergenerational community building and health promotion.
- *Imagination 1* connects students to interdisciplinary collaboration through experiential opportunities with the unique facility, Biosphere 2 Center for Human Space Exploration, and the Poetry Center.
- *Waila Music Workshop with Gertie Lopez* applies decolonizing and Indigenizing pedagogy through community music practices that integrate multiple art forms, "to explore how cultural and pedagogical practices can foster sustainable, community-based cultural resilience."
- *Hearing the Invisible* is part of an ongoing collaboration between Opera Theater at the School of Music and the College of Medicine, which draws from a trans-disciplinary investigation of sounds which emanate from healthy and diseased brains on a cellular level.
- *Watershed Soundscape* convenes a collective of University researchers, nonprofits, Indigenous voices, school communities, musicians, and visual artists to explore stewardship of land and water in the Santa Cruz River Watershed. This fusion of

environmental science with sensory experiences promotes educational outreach grounded in Tucson's unique sense of place.

- The series of public workshops offered through *Energetic Presence of the Moving Body Left in Space* utilized eastern and western embodiment practices to provide a place for Tucson residents to enliven their sensing body.
- The ongoing *Wonder Studio* project provides opportunities for students to engage with Biosphere 2 through microscopy, animation, photography, and video production. This creates unique student workforce development experiences across creative arts, science, engineering, marketing, and technology disciplines.

Quotes (Q10)

"I have cherished this opportunity as it gave me funding to be able to do early workshop work of my project, connect with colleagues on the creative research path, and give me direct support to brainstorm fundraising. Challenges to funding remain but the support system is strong. The meetings with fellows have been meaningful and moving. During difficult times, community is always a refuge," (Elaine Romero)

"The [Arts Research Gathering] caused me to reflect on arts research itself—in terms of how "creative" practice fits within the larger UA models of research—and to be amazed by the breadth and depth of what other faculty in the CFA are doing. Given the usually hectic pace of the semester, such a chance to reflect, and think about research—one's own and others—was refreshing and inspiring," (Anonymous Post-Survey Quote, Arts Research Gathering, Spring 2025)

"The IAR Fellowship vitally impacted my research in numerous ways. The consultation in planning and creating a sustainable funding model was critical in how we positioned the Wonder Studio. The stipend was used to offset the per diem cost and checked luggage when traveling to NASA's Scientific Visualization Studio, RISD's Nature Lab, and Caltech's Data to Discovery Studio. The additional expenses were not covered under the Arts Research and Resilience grant and represented a hardship cutting into our base salary. The stipend was critical for us in offsetting those added expenditures." (Nicole Antebi)

"The fellowship helped me think how my research in Houston focused on barbershop culture in the Black community can be applied to local Tucson barber shops. The fellowship stipend funded my trips to Houston, Texas, to conduct interviews with my grandmother, Bobbie E. Moore about her experiences as a black female barber in all black male space. I will be applying for internal grants next year and this summer, I will be conducting more interviews in Houston, Texas, with grandmother as well as traveling to Kigali, Rwanda, to conduct more interviews." (Trent Williams)