

OREGON ARTSWATCH



Annual report 2021-2022



NOTES FROM THE EXECUTIVE TEAM

I appreciate everyone who has been part of our ArtsWatch community in the past year, whether you have read us, written for us, supported us, placed sponsorships, shared our work, or allowed us to tell your stories. We humbly do this work for the community, and it means the world to us when the community loves us back.

My, how we've grown, just in the last year alone. Our readership grew 51.4% last fiscal year over the year before, almost perfectly aligning with the 51.5% increase in the number of stories that we published, an astonishing 691, a new record for us.

In 2021, we celebrated 10 years of publishing stories about life and culture in Oregon. We've grown from the little online arts journal that could, with only a few writers, into a network of 65 contributors and 7 editors. We have much more work to do, building our base of writers across the state and finding those golden story nuggets worth telling the world.

I love the scrawled notes that come with checks in the mail. They're almost always on small scraps of paper, which delights me no end. I'm constantly reminded of how far we've come and where we still need to go with one of my favorite notes, pinned on the bulletin board near my desk: "I can't believe how OAW has grown. Soon it will be an EMPIRE!"

In this report, you will see what we accomplished in the past year, how many people we reached, the impact that we made, and how we served you, our community. Thank you for making it possible!

With deep respect and gratitude,

Laura Grimes
Executive Director
laura@orartswatch.org

Looking back on the past year I'm gratefully astonished by the things ArtsWatch has accomplished. Our writers, photographers, and editors have scrambled to keep on top of big cultural changes. We've tracked the path of a continuing pandemic that's had a huge effect on how arts groups present their work, how they return to live performances, even how or whether they survive. We've told the stories of how artists are responding to the social disruptions of sweeping political and environmental upheavals.

We've spotlighted the shift to a new generation of leaders and a new crop of spaces in Oregon arts, from Portland Opera and the Oregon Symphony to Beaverton's new Patricia Reser Center for the Arts and the expansion of Broadway Rose Theatre in Tigard. We've chronicled the work of Oregon's important contemporary Indigenous artists, and the growth of The Soul Restoration Center, a home for Black culture in Portland, begun by musician Darrell Grant and nurtured by writer, performer, and activist Dr. S. Renee Mitchell. We've celebrated the return of large outdoor cultural gatherings, from the Waterfront Blues Festival to Ten Tiny Dances to the Beaverton Night Market.

Our writers and photographers have visited artists in their studios, interviewed authors and filmmakers

and actors and musicians, written in depth about important new works including Damien Geter's *An African American Requiem*. We've covered a proliferation of street art and outdoor murals, and the disappearance of public statues in downtown Portland. We've gone into galleries and dance studios and rehearsal halls from the Willamette Valley to the Coast to Southern Oregon to a burgeoning Shakespeare festival in the small town of Elgin in Eastern Oregon. And we've kept our eyes on the challenges and triumphs of the big mainstream companies even as we've sought out fresh new voices and listened to what they have to say.

Looking ahead, we want to continue our push to expand our coverage around the state, in part through our series on cultural hubs - those places, often in rural towns and smaller cities, that serve as vital cultural attractors for their communities.

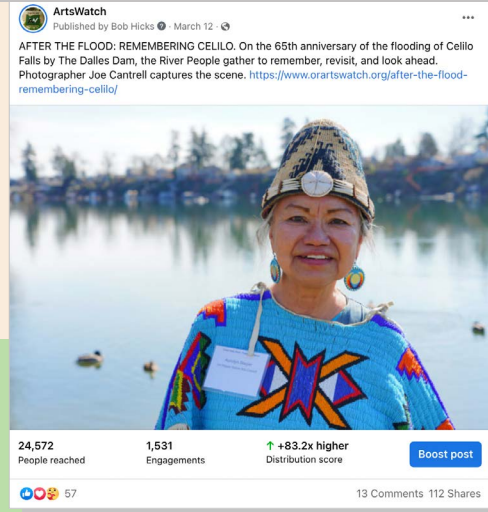
All of this is made possible by the generous support of foundations, governmental agencies, and individual donors, without whose aid we couldn't exist. You are our partners. You make it happen. We can't thank you enough.

Bob Hicks
Senior Editor
bob@artswatch.org

OUR REACH

- **691 stories** published, a 51.5% increase year over year
- **272,553 users**, a 51.4% increase year over year
- **529,787 page views**
- **4.54 million Google impressions**
- **125 community partners and sponsors**, a 25% increase year over last year

A story posted on social media about a gathering to commemorate the 65th flooding of Celilo Falls reached **24,572 people** as it attracted a groundswell of interest and was picked up around the country. Remarkable photos and reporting are by Joe Cantrell, with a story by Bob Hicks.



WE'VE GROWN!

- We now have an operations manager who oversees our technical work and successfully launched our new website design.
- Tiffany Sullivan of Blue Sprocket Brokerage capably took over as sponsorship manager in July 2021. She has been solidly rebuilding the program after we gave away free sponsorships during the pandemic. Reach her at bluesprocketbrokerage@gmail.com.

GIFT TO THE COMMUNITY

In December 2021, we finished our 20-month program to give away free sponsorships to cultural nonprofits in Oregon and Southwest Washington as a way of keeping up their visibility and giving back to our community in its time of need.

- **\$360,000** value given away in free sponsorships
- **80 organizations** benefited
- **47 organizations** were new to our sponsorship program

INDIGENOUS HISTORY & RESILIENCE

Writer **Steph Littlebird**, an enrolled member of the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, finished a **10-part series** that showcases the history and resiliency of Oregon's First Peoples. The series focuses on different aspects of Oregon's contemporary Tribal culture and explores how traditional ways of life have continued forward throughout colonization and settlement. **Joe Cantrell**, Cherokee, provided photos.

- Four stories were selected as the common reading assignment for 700 incoming students at Lewis & Clark College, and Littlebird was invited to talk on campus.
- An interview on OPB's Think Out Loud talked about what Indigenous resilience means in Oregon.
- A feature produced by The Oregon Community Foundation discussed the importance of visibility.
- The story about Greg Archuleta and Lifeways was reprinted in *CONDITIONS*, a collaborative publication of The Center for Art Research at the University of Oregon and The Ford Family Foundation Visual Arts Program. The publication also reprinted Luiza Lukova's review about the exhibit *Nobody's Fool* at Carnation Contemporary.



Steph Littlebird, the Confederated Tribes of Grande Ronde



Two canoes in front of a panoramic image of the Willamette Valley. Chachalu Museum and Cultural Center. Photograph by Joe Cantrell.

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

- **YachatsNews:** We are thrilled to establish a new content-sharing partnership with this first-rate coastal publication that's filling a critical need in a news desert.
- **Oregon State University:** Thanks to faculty members, we now engage young writers in Corvallis. We get interesting stories with fresh perspectives from an area that we previously had slim coverage, and students get the opportunity to work with experienced editors, build professional portfolios, and earn pay.



Restoring the Soul: A center for Black life

Bobby Bermea | June 24, 2022

The Soul Restoration Center, begun by Darrell Grant and carried forward by Dr. S. Renee Mitchell, revives a key cultural space for Black Portlanders.

EXPANDED COVERAGE

- **Bobby Bermea:** A new regular column frequently gives voice to the Black community and provides an inside look at how artists work.
- **Choral coverage:** Daryl Browne's popular stories attracted more than 8,000 views.
- **Oregon Cultural Hubs:** A new series examines how cultural centers fill a vital role in communities, and examines how they uniquely serve and reflect their audiences. Thank you to the Roundhouse Foundation for helping to get this project off the ground.

TECH IMPROVEMENTS

We invested in new technical infrastructure that's more responsive on all devices and vastly improves the reader experience.

- New site design
- Bigger and faster server capacity
- More software
- New sponsorship system

ARTS EDUCATION

We continued to produce deeply reported stories about how creativity helps young people learn and think. This is an ongoing focus area, thanks to support from the Oregon Community Foundation.



Art Conspiracy gives youth in rural Yamhill, Polk counties a deep dive into the arts

David Bates | August 3, 2022

The nonprofit offers two-week immersive classes in everything from print-making to Ghanaian drumming to performing in a Shakespearean play.



Rising in Beaverton: West Gate

Brian Libby | September 8, 2021

The Patricia Reser Center for the Arts, due to open in March 2022, gives Beaverton a stage and sense of place.

TOP STORY

A story about the new Patricia Reser Center for the Arts in Beaverton, published September 8, 2021, by our architecture expert and board member Brian Libby, was our most-read story last fiscal year, attracting 8,588 readers.

I always learn so much from OAW that is not available anywhere else. I have the greatest respect for your writers and critics.

— A donor

OUR SPONSORS

Thank you to all of our funders who made our work possible.

Individual Donations: Led by continuing generous support from arts advocate Ronni Lacroute, we raised a record amount, 19% more than our previous record.

