

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Awards SEED Grants to Appalachia-
Based Arts Innovators Campbell Culture Coalition, Carpetbag
Theater, EpiCentre Arts, and Handbarrow**



Campbell Culture Coalition student-artists pose with their Elk Tile Mural, now mounted in local courthouse. Photo: Peter C. Koczera

New York, NY (August 23, 2016) – Today the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation announced the twelve recipients of its 2016 SEED grants. Four arts organizations from the Appalachian region were selected for their pioneering work and their appetite for risk: Campbell Culture Coalition, Carpetbag Theater, EpiCentre Arts, and Handbarrow.

“Artists and cultural leaders need support that gives them the freedom to experiment, to fail forward, and ultimately to create new models,” said Risë Wilson, director of philanthropy for the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation.



“None of our SEED grantees operate in the status quo and the Rauschenberg Foundation is pleased to help them push creative boundaries and test new ideas.”

Building on Robert Rauschenberg’s legacy as an artist who was unafraid of risk—pushing the boundaries of his medium and working across disciplines long before it was standard practice—the SEED program celebrates innovation. Searching for groundbreaking, often artist-led organizations that take risks in their artistic and/or administrative practices, the SEED grant program provides a combination of risk capital and technical assistance over three years. Grantees are nominated to receive this support by local leaders familiar with their contributions.

Campbell Culture Coalition, Carpetbag Theater, EpiCentre Arts, and Handbarrow will each receive \$35,000 over three years as well as opportunities for professional development and network building. They will also participate in a national gathering of all current and past SEED grantees at the Rauschenberg Residency in Captiva, Florida for a week-long conference.

This announcement marks the program’s expansion to three new areas: Appalachia (Eastern Kentucky, Tennessee), Houston, and Santa Fe, as well as ongoing support to cultural organizations in Detroit and New Orleans. To date, the Foundation has awarded SEED grants to 48 projects in 13 cities/regions across the United States, including: Atlanta, Boise, Buffalo, Cleveland, Kansas City, Phoenix, Portland, and Providence.

“Since we started the SEED program three years ago, we have seen how each grantee organization has been able to leverage our support to take bigger risks, expand their work, and establish new relationships,” said Christy MacLear, CEO of the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation. “What began as a pilot program to fund a few grassroots arts organizations has grown to reinforce



the idea that art transcends geographic boundaries and should be supported no matter which corner of the country.”

Other recipients of the 2016 SEED grants are: Alabama Song, Antena, Blights Out, Complex Movements, Fringe Society, New Orleans Black Mardi Gras Indian Cooperative, Pelican Bomb, and Sustainable Native Communities Collaborative.

Learn more about the SEED program here:

<http://www.rauschenbergfoundation.org/grants/art-grants/seed>

About the Appalachia Grantees

Campbell Culture Coalition / LaFollette, TN

The Campbell Culture Coalition produces and presents mission-driven arts and cultural programs and events in the heart of Southern Appalachia. Judi Jennings, formerly of the Kentucky Women’s Foundation praised the Coalition for their longstanding Louie Blue Festival, which reflects “the diversity of the Appalachian region and how it is varied artistically, racially, and geographically.” <http://campbellculturecoalition.org/>

Carpetbag Theater / Knoxville, TN

Rooted in the traditions and aesthetic of the African American community, Carpetbag Theatre creates and tours original works, along with story-based plays with music, all developed in an ensemble process. “Carpetbag work creates compassionate spaces in which community stories are brought forth in new ways,” explained Nick Szuberla of Working Narratives. Szuberla nominated Carpetbag for support citing their “role of mentor and incubator for dozens and dozens of artists across form and medium.”

<http://www.carpetbagtheatre.org/>



EpiCentre Arts / Ermine, KY

EpiCentre Arts is a visual arts organization that operates as one-part artists' support group, one-part artist cooperative, and one-part community arts organization. Judi Jennings nominated the group to receive SEED support, describing EpiCentre artists as "all highly skilled, locally grounded, forward thinking, and committed to artmaking that advances positive social change in Appalachia and beyond." <https://www.facebook.com/EpicentreArtsEKY/>

Handbarrow / Whitesburg, KY

Handbarrow is an artist collective based in the Kentucky coal-fields that tells the stories of contemporary Central Appalachia in a variety of media. "Handbarrow offers a third-wave of artistic practice and production in the region," said Szuberla. "Their collective vision utilizes the power of cultural expression, old and new."

###

About the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation

The Robert Rauschenberg Foundation fosters the legacy of the life, artistic practice, and activist philosophy of one of the most important artists of the 20th century. Through exhibitions, scholarship, grants, and a residency program, the Foundation furthers Rauschenberg's belief that art can change the world, while ensuring that his singular achievements and contributions continue to have global impact and resonance with contemporary artists.

<http://www.rauschenbergfoundation.org/>

Media contact:

FITZ & CO, Liza Eliano, Leliano@fitzandco.com 646-589-0921