

## Utah Visual Arts Fellowship Juror Statement 2022

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The Utah visual Arts Fellowship is a dynamic opportunity for Utah-based artists to have unrestricted financial support toward their professional careers. During the time spent reviewing the applications, I closely considered the criteria through which I was meant to identify six artists for whom this Fellowship would be best suited at this point in their career. Now, this decision was not an easy one. At one point, I returned to Utah Arts, advocating for more awardees this season, as I was finding it quite difficult to narrow down to just six winners. Noting that this was not feasible, I returned to the finalist pool, and selected 6 artists. But I could have easily selected twenty awardees.

Through the jurying process, multiple themes began to emerge, that I relied upon as cornerstones, or guideposts, toward my understanding of the key issues, concerns, and areas of interest for this region of the country. In many of the entries, there was a particular interest in maintaining ancestral knowledge, and how the support of this award would allow for an artist to pass it down to future generations. Alongside an interest in ecology, the landscape, and the environment, different forms of knowledge production there was also an interest in a rejection of institutionalized structures that have until very recently set the tone for who is allowed within, and who is outside of, the discourse on contemporary art. As a curator and writer who is deeply respectful of and informed by many different forms of knowledge, I found it crucial to align my decisions with that approach.

The work of Katherine Poleviyaoma is a great example of the intention around knowledge sharing and the care of traditions that have been passed down through families. According to the State of Utah Alice Merrill Horne Art Collection website, Poleviyaoma is maintaining Indigenous pottery traditions learned while growing up in New Mexico's Acoma Pueblo,<sup>1</sup> passing it down to future generations. For others, like Jorge Rojas, leaning into their practices means a departure from the traditions of the museological system, and into a space of a full-time, independent artistic practice.

The choice to depart from the comfort of a full-time education position within a museum is a difficult and daring decision, and an artist's practice needs crucial support at these critical moments. Kalani Tonga Tukuafu's practice exemplifies a critical moment, expressly stating in her application how her practice supported her family during a moment where they needed a lot of care, exemplifying a career that shows others what support means in a crucial time in their lives. Supporting those that support others is how communities get stronger. It is in these moments that artists can be our greatest advocates, and the work of photographer Fazilat Soukhakian displays that advocacy in action, by using her practice to tirelessly fight for visibility of marginalized communities that face discrimination.

As a society, we are facing a critical moment in climate and environmental care. Artists can sometimes provide solutions within their practices, that afford, develop, and create a different approach to environmental concerns. Both Carol Sogard and Anna Evans are using the space of

their studios to rethink everyday materials sourced from the environment. Sogard couples her design background with an approach

<sup>1</sup>“Artist: Katherine Poleviyaoma,” State of Utah Alice Merrill Horne Art Collection, [https://utahdcc.secure.force.com/public/PtiArtifacts?field=artApp\\_Artist\\_c&value=a0j70000000C7kTAAS\\_&heading=Katherine%20Poleviyaoma](https://utahdcc.secure.force.com/public/PtiArtifacts?field=artApp_Artist_c&value=a0j70000000C7kTAAS_&heading=Katherine%20Poleviyaoma). Accessed April 22, 2022.

to environmentalism that reuses plastics and other man-made waste, developing everyday items that are a solution to landfills and pollution. Evans, on the other hand, ethically forges and sources materials from the region, creating systems and workshops that provide solutions to everyday living in communities she volunteers with.

I am grateful to have had the opportunity to spend time considering the extremely talented practices of artists working in the Mountain West Subregion, who applied to the Utah Visual Arts Fellowship. I do hope the program remains a strong one for artist in the region to rely upon for support. Thank you for sharing your practices and communities with me.