



Priya Frank, Chair
Seattle Art Museum

Sharon Nyree Williams,
Vice-Chair
Central District Forum for Arts &
Ideas

Juan Alonso-Rodriguez
Artist

Cassie Chinn
Wing Luke Museum

Dawn Chirwa
Philanthropy Northwest

Jonathan Cunningham
Seattle Foundation

Steve Galatro
Pratt Fine Arts Center

Ashraf Hasham
The Vera Project

Jescelle Major
Berk Consulting

Dr. Quinton Morris
Seattle University

Chieko Phillips
4Culture

Nilofer Rajpurkar
Microsoft

Sarah Wilke
Meany Center for the Performing
Arts

June 1, 2019

Mayor Jenny A. Durkan
City of Seattle
600 Fourth Avenue, 7th Floor
Seattle, WA 98104

Dear Mayor Durkan,

In accordance with City of Seattle Ordinance 123460, on behalf of the Seattle Arts Commission (SAC), I am hereby submitting an outline of priorities for funds allocated for use by the Office of Arts and Culture in support of new and existing initiatives during budget year 2020. A copy of this letter and the attached work plan are also being submitted to the Seattle City Council.

Our role as the Seattle Arts Commission is to be connectors and liaisons between the arts community and the city, to advocate for resources and support for the arts community, and to support the Office of Arts & Culture's priorities. We thank Randy Engstrom and the ARTS staff for their inspiring leadership in Seattle and beyond. As the Seattle Arts Commission, we support the ARTS office's approach to center racial equity in arts education, funding processes, cultural space practices, and public art.

This is an exciting year for the ARTS office and SAC with the opening of ARTS at King Street Station and its inaugural exhibition, *yəhawʷ*, which has brought more than 5,000 people to the space since its opening and affirmed the City's commitment to honoring Indigenous artists, communities and legacies. This, as well as the Hello | Goodbye: Viaduct Arts Festival that celebrated the new tunnel and the historic viaduct are prime examples of **how the arts are an activation tool to bridge divides across sectors and allow us to center humanity.** Through strategic partnerships we have collaborated with community organizations, city departments and creatives to honor Seattle's history, address the shifting cultural landscape, and develop ways to recognize how arts and culture are a central component to a healthy and thriving community.

The Commission's committees, which are staffed by both commissioners and community leaders, are guided by keeping community accessibility and need at the core. Building on the strength of these committees and their substantial outcomes, we would like to advocate for increased investments, which could come by examining the elimination of admissions tax exemption for men's professional sports. A new, unrestricted funding



source for art and culture, could have a dramatic impact in our ability to build and expand our racial equity goals and outcomes.

Over the last year, the Facilities and Equitable Development (FED) Committee launched BASE (Build Art Space Equitably), a new program to provide training and networking opportunities for a cadre of leaders of color in cultural space development; guided changes to the Cultural Facilities Fund to center equitable development and amplify anti-displacement efforts; and developed plans for sustainable, equitable structural change through the creation of a Cultural Space Agency. With completion of the initial study, "Structure for Stability," the upcoming year is pivotal with much needed support to determine the details for implementation of the Cultural Space Agency, drafting the governing legislation, and continuing the RET process, ensuring community-led values, priorities and ownership are embedded in the Cultural Space Agency from its beginning.

The Public Art Advisory Committee would like to advocate for greater equity in the public art program by broadening the vision to include public art and culture, inclusive of various artistic disciplines and cultural expressions beyond visual art. We also seek to offer public art boot camp annually to expand and diversify the pool of readied public artists; develop public art projects in communities that receive fewer capital investments from the City, resulting in lower 1% for art investments; and conduct a racial equity toolkit process to find out how communities of color experience public art, how they would like to see public art in the future, and develop a plan to produce such experiences as part of an expanded public art and culture portfolio.

The formation of the Cultural Investments Committee (CIC) over the last year has provided advisory and moral support to the Cultural Partnerships team as well as the broader ARTS office. In partnership with staff, we have increased our focus on outcome-driven work, and incorporated the use of data to demonstrate progress on racial equity and inclusion goals. Additional funding would allow the team to further pursue our racial equity commitments, resulting in increasing funding applicants from diverse backgrounds and increased competitiveness for funding resources – a situation that doesn't always benefit those who have historically had the least access.

In addition, the commission is collectively and actively focused on the Creative Economy work, which asks how the city can grow, support, and retain creatives while minimizing disparities and inequity within the creative economy. As the eyes and the ears in the arts and culture community, the commission can connect our collective networks to real conversations and recommendations for City interventions that support economic opportunity, affordability and racial equity within the region's creative industries.

Using racial equity as the lens through which we lead, the Seattle Arts Commission puts forward our top priorities for the 2020 budget as follows:

- **Improving City Processes:** applying an equity lens to programs relating to arts education, funding structures, cultural space practices, and public art



- Creative Economy: advocating for artists to be able to work, live and thrive in Seattle
- Cultural Space: jump starting the Cultural Space Agency development process with designated staff to ensure its future success.

The arts community is the heart of this city. Together, we must continue to invest in the heart and soul of this city to honor the legacies of the people who came before us, and pave the way for people from many communities and viewpoints feel like Seattle has a place for them. What an opportunity we have to change the face, experiences, and perspectives representing the field, as well as the perception of those who come and visit. Together we believe that the arts are a tool that bridges the divide.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Priya Frank". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Priya Frank, Chair
Seattle Arts Commission