

Mission | Vision | Anti-Racism and Equity Commitments

SMUSH Gallery

This is a living document, and it was last revised August 14, 2020. We welcome your thoughts and questions at hello@smushgallery.com, and we're grateful for your contributions.

Mission - Equitably advance vibrant, accessible, high-quality, and thought-provoking art and culture experiences within our Jersey City community.

Vision - Inspire and connect artists and community across discipline, culture, and experience for a brighter and more compassionate world.

Anti-Racism and Equity Commitments

SMUSH Gallery recognizes racial disparities in America and is rededicating itself to an ongoing process of anti-racist work and equitable practices.

Racism is present throughout our institutions and communities. We operate at the intersection of art and community work in a rapidly-gentrifying neighborhood, and we have long been concerned about how racism and inequity have plagued these sectors and spaces. We have worked to cultivate a community, physical space, and virtual platform that is inclusive by seeking and amplifying artists of color and LGBTQ+, female, and local artists, and to be a place where people can interact in a way that is respectful, life-affirming and anti-oppressive. We are sensitive to the ways specific groups of people, and especially BIPOC and LGBTQ+ people, have and continue to be disenfranchised and marginalized (based closely on text from The Listings Project, see *Diamond*).

We understand "anti-racism" to be a *collection of antiracist policies that lead to racial equity and are substantiated by anti-racist ideas* (Kendi 20), "equity" to mean *fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement for all people, while at the same time striving to identify and eliminate barriers that have prevented the full participation of some groups* (Kapila, et al.), "actionable" to mean *tasks we can accomplish in the near term (ie the next 3 months)*, and "BIPOC" to mean *Black, Indigenous, and People of Color* (The BIPOC Project).

We commit to:

1. Initiate dialog about actionable anti-racism and equity with our contributors (our staff, presenting artists, volunteers, and interns), and develop an equity statement to which all future contributors will be required to agree (see *Equity and Inclusion* for a reference sample).
2. Seek BIPOC advisors for dialog about actionable anti-racism and equity practices, and move toward a financial reality that enables compensation for their time.
3. Implement recommended changes for anti-racism and equity whenever possible and, when not possible, share rationale to the best of our ability.
4. Strongly and explicitly encourage disenfranchised and marginalized voices, and especially BIPOC and LGBTQ+ artists, to apply for opportunities at SMUSH, as well as developing our reach to these artists.
5. Increase access by admitting BIPOC and LGBTQ+ identifying artists into programs first, especially when programs have a limited number of presenting opportunities, and increase visibility by featuring BIPOC and LGBTQ+ identifying artists in our outgoing media as often as possible.
6. Expand our engagement with, and contributions to, our neighborhood by forming and deepening supportive relationships with our neighbors, neighboring businesses, and nearby community organizations.
7. Revisit and revise these commitments to ensure they are guiding us toward the equitable, anti-racist work we strive to do.

Finances

We recognize that un- and under-paid labor reinforces systems of oppression, that we exist in a society that habitually under-resources art and artists, and that we are not yet where we want to be financially. At present, all of our administrative work is conducted on a volunteer or work-trade basis. Our presenting artists are not always compensated, and when they are, they are compensated with a percentage of revenue that is rarely commensurate with the full scope of their work. For more information about our financial reality and goals, please see below.

SMUSH Gallery is a young, grassroots arts and community organization. It is a mission-driven single-member LLC, so organized to allow for maximum operating agility. We are wary of the burdens, restrictions, and embedded costs of organizing as a non-profit, and we are wary of participation in, and potential complicity with, the non-profit-industrial complex. We are curious about our ability to leverage our specific opportunities and resources, coupled with the agility of a SMLLC, to pursue our mission and vision, uphold our anti-racism and equity commitments, and deeply benefit both our geographic community and our community of artists. We have formulated and shared a transparent financial plan as a means of illuminating our priorities, attracting like-minded financial support, and, most importantly, strengthening community trust.

Owner/Artistic Director Katelyn Halpern has made a personal commitment to sustain SMUSH Gallery by guaranteeing operating costs (specifically the costs of rent, insurance, utilities, and basic supplies [ex. printer ink and paper, soap, toilet paper, paper towels, cleaning supplies, web hosting]), to the extent that they are not covered by gallery revenue.

Gallery revenue includes earned income, grants, and contributions. We use “contributions” instead of “donations” to avoid the misconceptions that we are a non-profit and that money given to SMUSH Gallery is tax-deductible: it is not.

Gallery revenue (for the purposes of the following to include earned income, grants, and contributions /less percentage payouts for artists/organizers, which will remain consistent with our current practice) will be distributed/spent according to the following priorities/goal stages:

1st Goal Stage: Cover 100% of operating costs (rent, insurance, utilities, basic supplies, legal fees, repairs, basic advertising, and anything else paid for from opening to present, August 2020), an average of \$2,035/mo based on 2019.

2nd Goal Stage: Once operating costs are covered, revenue over operating costs (ROOC) will be split in the following ways:

- 50% of ROOC will be saved to create a buffer for future operating costs, up to a cap of 3 months' projected operating costs (\$2,035/mo based on 2019 average; cap of \$6,105 plus adjustments for projected increases, such as an anticipated rent increase in August 2021)
- 40% of ROOC will be used to fund gallery programs and projects. Programs and projects may include improvements to the gallery space, equipment, or soft assets (ex. improving stage lighting, a rebranding effort); funding a gallery-driven program (ex. Art on Toast and related merchandise); providing a stipend or commission to an artist or community group working through/presenting with the gallery; funding a budget for an artist/curator-driven program (ex. iiiiiinches by Myssi Robinson and affiliated planned events); or other work not here described that aligns with our mission, vision, and anti-racist and equity commitments. We will prioritize projects and programs that promote anti-racism and equity, specifically by funding stipends, commissions, and project proposals by local artists, curators, activists, organizers, and community groups, and especially those led by and working extensively with BIPOC, LGBTQ+, female, disabled, and long-term residents of Jersey City; we will prioritize projects with leadership and participation from people whose claimed identities intersect with more than one of the groups listed above.
- 10% of ROOC will be used to pay down the gallery's debt to the owner.

3rd Goal Stage: Once the gallery establishes a 3 month buffer for future operating costs, ROOC will be split in the following ways:

- 40% of ROOC will be used to fund gallery projects and programs, as described above.

- 40% of ROOC will be used to compensate the work of running the gallery. This percentage will be split as needed between the owner/artistic director and any staff/contractors.
 - The owner/artistic director will cap her “owner’s draw” or distribution at \$50,000/yr.
 - Staff/contractors will be hired or provided stipends as necessary and possible, and will be brought on in line with our anti-racism and equity commitments. Stipends and wages to staff/contractors will be offered only after funds have been accumulated or revenue is predictable enough to sustain employment/contracts.
 - Depending on business needs, the full 40% may go to staff/contractors; may be distributed entirely to the owner/artistic director; or may be divided amongst the owner, staff, and contractors at appropriate percentages and/or amounts.
 - If the owner/artistic director determines that it is a greater benefit to divert all or part of this percentage to funding gallery projects and programs, she may do so.
- 20% of ROOC will be used to pay down the gallery’s debt to the owner.
 - If the owner/artistic director determines that it is a greater benefit to divert all or part of this percentage to funding gallery projects and programs, or compensating the work of running the gallery, she may do so.

4th Goal Stage: Once the gallery has paid down its debt to the owner and the 3 month operating costs buffer remains in tact, ROOC will be split in the following ways:

- 40% of ROOC will be used to fund gallery projects and programs, as described above.
- 40% of ROOC will be used to compensate the work of running the gallery, as described above.
- 10% of ROOC will be used to fund local initiatives not directly related to gallery operations/donate to local organizations and projects.
- 10% of ROOC will be saved for initiatives that are not yet imagined. These funds will be used to further creative and community work in line with our mission.

Sources

The BIPOC Project. The BIPOC Project, thebipocproject.org. Accessed 14 Aug. 2020.

Diamond, Stephanie. “June 11: Facilitating Housing Justice.” *In It Together* email newsletter, 11 Jun. 2020, The Listings Project, <https://email.listingsproject.com/t/d-AB6F9D6D697312952540EF23F30FEDED>. Accessed 14 Aug. 2020.

“Equity and Inclusion.” *The Listings Project*. The Listings Project, https://www.listingsproject.com/equity-inclusion?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=InItTogether_10th_edition&utm_content=InItTogether_10th_edition+CID_168c9de1e1b0c0c6da27536cdb815656&utm_source=campaign_monitor&utm_term=Equity%20and%20Inclusion%20statement. Accessed 14 Aug. 2020.

Kapila, Monisha, et al. *Why Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Matter*. Independent Sector, independentsector.org/resource/why-diversity-equity-and-inclusion-matter/. Accessed 14 Aug. 2020.

Kendi, Ibram X. *How to Be an Antiracist*. New York, One World, 2019.