In 2017, The Union engaged over **10,000 community members** in our programs & projects... more than twice the number of people we were able to serve in our first five years combined.

When I started The Union for Contemporary Art in 2011, I couldn’t possibly imagine that the plan I was setting into motion from my kitchen table would one day connect 10,000 people with the arts. But then, 2017 was a year of seeing the impossible made possible for The Union—a brilliant new facility to house our programs, a full staff of committed, passionate advocates, the capacity to create opportunities for thousands of people to learn, connect, create, and celebrate the arts in North Omaha.

After two years of planning and renovation, we celebrated the opening of our new facility in the historic Blue Lion Center in January 2017. Our new home at North 24th and Lake allowed The Union to become the organization I dreamed it could be and has afforded us the capacity to truly serve our mission. Thanks to the overwhelming generosity of our donors, we’ve been able to sustain our growth—expanding our programs and staff to meet the needs of the communities we serve.

The year was filled with many incredible milestones for our organization: the launch of our Performing Arts Collective, which provided opportunities for 26 Black actors in our community to share their talents; the completion of a new three-year strategic plan; expansion of our support to local artists through our fellowship program; and a commitment to pay every artist working to support our mission—whether they are teaching the youth we serve or exhibiting their work in our gallery.

I am so sincerely grateful to everyone who helped make 2017 one of the most amazing years ever for The Union and those we serve... thank you for your unwavering belief in our mission, for your support of our work, and commitment to making the arts accessible to everyone in our city.

My best to you,

Brigitte McQueen Shew
Executive Director
I cannot say enough positive things about the Art Club at The Union. Both of my children have attended since it began and I have seen their artistic and social skills grow as they are surrounded by a variety of wonderful children from all different walks of life.”

— Theresa Lankford, Art Club Parent
With the opening of our facility in the Blue Lion, our exhibition program found its first permanent home for the Wanda D. Ewing Gallery, allowing for greater community access to the arts and elevating regional and national connectivity. Our inaugural season of five exhibitions showcased the diversity of work being made by local, regional and national artists, bringing over 2,000 people to North 24th Street to celebrate the arts and accomplishments of our creative community.

EXHIBITION SERIES
Alexandria Smith \ Try a Little Tenderness
Angie Seykora \ Part to Part
Jordan Weber, Lachelle Workman + Zora Murff \ Where We Land
Nancy Friedemann-Sanchez \ Chapter 5: River
2017 Union Fellows Exhibition
A new addition to The Union's program line-up in 2017, The Union’s Performing Arts Collective creates opportunities for actors of color and showcases the talents of Black playwrights. Nearly **600 people** attended our performances and labs in 2017, helping us to connect our community with relevant and diverse narratives about the Black experience.

**2017 SEASON**

*The Divine Order of Becoming* by Carla Stillwell  
Cast: TammyRa + Dani Cleveland  
Asst Director: Nik Whitcomb  
Stage Manager: Dorreitte Jordan  
Lighting Designer: Homero Vela

*Smart People* by Lydia R. Diamond  
Cast: Eric Lawson, Nick Zadina, Eliza Barr, Cecilia Poon & Simon A Lovell  
Director: Nik Whitcomb

*Ladv the CVS is Burning* by Carla Stillwell  
Music Director: Eric Jordon

*Unfinished Women* by Aishah Rahman  
Cast: Alexander Bridgman, Rusheaa Smith Turner, Eliza Barr, Shane Adams, Giovanni Jones, Shanae Adams, Karlee Currin, Shomari Higgins, Anthony D Holmes & Dani Smith  
Musician: Ramell Ruffin

*Bourbon At The Border* by Pearl Cleage  
Cast: Dani Cleveland, LaQuanna Billingsley, Kabin Thomas & Anthony Holmes  
Assistant Director: Andre McGraw  
Assistant Stage Manager: Precious Young  
Resident Lighting & Scenic Designer: Homero Vela  
Graphic Designer: Alexander Bridgman
In 2017, nearly **150 local artists** became active members of the Co-Op, utilizing our state-of-the-art equipment and studio spaces for ceramics, print, darkroom, fiber arts, digital design and woodworking to strengthen their creative practice. The Union also hosted nearly **100 workshops** last year, covering everything from darkroom basics to chine-colle printing, and provided over **400 community members** with hands-on access to the arts.

“**The Co-Op is an arts community without the restrictions of a formal classroom setting or the hierarchy of the university. Artists with masters degrees are practicing right next to people who have just started making things. This is so valuable and liberating.**”

— Sara Adkisson Joyner, Co-Op Member
To date, our Fellowship program has strengthened the creative practice of **39 local artists** by providing them with free studio space, financial support and access to professional development and mentorship opportunities. In 2017, we received nearly **60 applications** for our 2018 cohort—more than double the amount we’ve ever received.

**2017 FELLOWSHIP COHORT**
- Celeste Butler \ fiber arts
- Samone Davis \ fashion design
- Slowed Soul (Noah Sterba & Jeff Sedrel) \ multi-media
- Jamie Danielle Hardy \ multi-media
- Edem Kegey \ music composition & performance
Income & Expenditures

CONTRIBUTED SUPPORT

- Foundations: $557,131
- Individuals: $253,145
- Corporations: $22,550
- Government Grants: $19,980

TOTAL: $852,806

EARNED REVENUE

- Membership Dues: $14,912
- Workshop Fees: $9,216
- Rental Fees: $8,763
- Ticket Sales: $964
- Product Sales: $402

TOTAL: $34,257

EXPENDITURES

- General Programs & Projects: $546,680
- General Operating & Administration: $296,553
- Professional Development & Strategic Planning: $36,000
- Fundraising: $7,829

TOTAL INCOME: $887,062
TOTAL EXPENSES: $887,062
The staff and board of The Union would like to thank founding board members Mary Zicafoose & Kate Cavanaugh for their incredible years of service.
Supporters & Friends

Our work is made possible through the generosity of hundreds of incredible people who believe that the arts are vital to our community. We would be nothing without your support of our mission ... thank you!

$20,000+
Richard Brooke Foundation
Fund for Omaha:
- Omaha Community Foundation
Peter Kiewit Foundation
Lozier Foundation
National Endowment for the Arts
The Sherwood Foundation
Fred & Eve Simon Charitable Foundation
Paul & Annette Smith
Drew & Meredith Weitz
Katie Weitz
Weitz Family Foundation

$19,999 to $10,000
Lincoln Financial Foundation, Inc.
Bill & Ruth Scott
Turnback Tax Grant: City of Omaha

$9,999 to $2,500
Dan McCarthy
Nebraska Arts Council
Sarah Lopez
Tom McGowan
Todd & Betiana Simon
Kathryn Simpson
Roger & Kate Weitz
Woodman of the World Life Insurance Society

$2,499 to $1,000
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Alexandra Grant
Amy Nelson
Murray & Shares Newman
Wells Fargo Foundation
Watie White

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Anonymous
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Bill Hoover
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Brigitte McQueen Shew & Tim Shew
Reagan Pufall
Kenley & Jara Sturdivant-Wilson
Mary & Kirby Zicafoose

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Sandra Bruns
Eri Chihal
Curb Appeal Salon
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$249 to $100
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