

**UIC GALLERY 400 ANNUAL REPORT**

**2023**

**TWO YEARS OF ARTISTIC EXPLORATION  
& EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE**

**2024**

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# Diving Deep with Artists & Creating Connections

Dear UIC Gallery 400 Community,

On the occasion of UIC Gallery 400's first-ever annual report, we look back at the years 2023 and 2024. With this opportunity to reflect on all that we've accomplished, I'm thrilled to be reminded of our many activities, to be grateful for our growing number of visitors, and to share our impact on the UIC campus and the city of Chicago.

Our 2023 and 2024 exhibition program evidenced our mission as a contemporary art hub for social interaction, transformative experience, and multi-dimensional learning. In 2023, our first exhibition, *Reckless Rolodex*, took an inventive approach to consider the life of influential Chicago performance artist Lawrence Steger, who died in 1999 due to AIDS-related complications. Guest curators Matthew Ghoulis, Lin Hixson, and Caroline Picard invited ten artists—Barbara Kasten, Young Joon Kwak, Devin T. Mays, and Betsy Odom, among them—to present works that spanned various mediums and emotional registers to challenge the idea of a static self, much like Steger's own work. Accompanied by a suite of brilliant performances on the exhibition's central, Edie Fake-designed stage, the exhibition exemplified our commitment to multiple curatorial voices and exploring Chicago's under-told artistic histories.

In the summer of 2023, we presented multi-media artist and filmmaker, Derrick Woods-Morrow's *Gravity Pleasure Switchback*. While evoking a euphoric dream state and containing phrases and spaces inhabited by Black American Southerners, the exhibition remained grounded in exploring the body as a place of boundless possibility. Inspired by Christina Sharpe's

*In the Wake: On Blackness and Being*, the work similarly unearthed the complex relationship of public and private pleasure. The show exemplified our long history in commissioning new work for groundbreaking solo exhibitions and supporting artists at pivotal moments in their careers.

In alignment with our history of presenting artists' explorations of ecological concerns and our recent initiative to climate-adapt the gallery space, we presented the group exhibition *Earthly Visions: Inside the Climate Crisis*, which considered how we understand and respond to the climate crisis. Eight artists—Jeremy Bolen, Ursula Biemann, Theo Cuthand, Cydney Lewis, and Tomás Saraceno, among others—took artistic approaches such as humorous narrative strategies, minimalist indexing, documentary filmmaking, and material investigations to reveal new ways to understand our relationship to living in a climate emergency, caring for our environment, and grasping possible solutions.

We started 2024 with *Contemporary Ex-Votos: Devotion Beyond Medium*, the first exhibition to pair 19th- to 20th-century retablos from the New Mexico State University Art Museum's Permanent Art Collection (the largest collection of retablos in the US) with new works by contemporary Latinx artists. *Ex-Votos* (was also the first UIC Gallery 400 exhibition to expand into the Jane Adams Hull-House Museum. Curated by UIC Assistant Professor in Art of the Spanish Americas, Dr. Emmanuel Ortega, the exhibition demonstrated the important place retablos hold in the history of the Americas

It not only commissioned artists—Alberto Aguilar, Juan Molina Hernández, Yvette Mayorga, and Xochi Solis, among others—who illuminated current socio-political issues of class, race, and gender through artistic methodologies of resistance, but also incorporated UIC students' translations of the ex-voto texts and four new contemporary ex-votos documenting the gratitude of four UIC students.

Our Assistant Director, Denny Mwaura, curated the Summer 2024 group exhibition, *The Mask of Prosperity*, to consider how inheritance takes shape across multiple dimensions of our lives. Ten artists, including Sonya Clark, cameron clayborn, Eli Greene, and Carmen Winant, among others, presented richly varied reflections that interrogated how legacies linked to language, property, social movement, and moral principles intensify to build a prosperous life.

Rounding out 2024 and as the culmination of three years of research and community collaboration was the historical exhibition *Learning Together: Art Education and Community*, the first exhibition to center the progressive art pedagogy of a diverse group of Chicago artist educators from the mid-1960s through the 2010s. Highlighting the unique pedagogical practices of educators working across Chicago's diverse neighborhoods, *Learning Together* included artworks co-created by students and educators, sketchbooks, ephemera, images of public artworks in situ in and around K-12 schools, and teaching artists' artwork inspired by their work with Chicago's youth.

We supported multiple avenues for the art education community to come together in mutual support and to document its history. The exhibition

produced three publications: a compendium of art education unit plans by UIC art ed students; a compilation of over fifty different Art Education stories from artist educators from across Chicago; and the exhibition catalogue documenting the show, the process through which it took shape, and the oral histories that fed the exhibition research.

Across all these exhibitions, our programming included excellent performances, talks, workshops, screenings, and more. These accompanying programs continually expand our understanding of ideas, artists' communities, and practices in the exhibitions.

All our exhibitions have served as cross-disciplinary learning sites for undergraduate and graduate students. UIC courses such as World History of Art and the Built Environment have completed tailored assignments that engage students in close looking and object analysis. And, as always, graduate students from the UIC Art History and Museum and Exhibition Studies departments have worked in key roles on the gallery staff, bringing pre-graduate school experience and learning on the job in preparation for careers in the field.



UIC Gallery 400 staff, director Lorelei Stewart, and exhibition curator Emmanuel Ortega at the opening of the January 2024 exhibition *Contemporary Ex-Votos: Devotion Beyond Medium*. Photo by Natasha Moustache

We are grateful to the many supporters who have enabled the Gallery's work, including significantly the Terra Foundation for American Art, the Carl and Marilyn Thoma Foundation, and the Joyce Foundation.

The Terra Foundation supported not one, but two exhibitions, including the initial research for the implementation of *Learning Together: Art Education and Community*. Terra's instrumental support included funding multiple UIC Gallery 400 Exhibition Research and Community Engagement Fellow, as well as fostering connections between our work and that of our colleagues through its Art Design Chicago Learning Community. With combined support from the Terra Foundation and Thoma Foundation, we presented the Chicago debut of *Contemporary Ex-votos: Devotion Beyond Medium*. The Joyce Foundation, like Terra, supported one of our multiyear projects, Adela Goldbard's *Last Judgment/El juicio final*, with an additional grant that enabled us to publish the culminating catalogue, *El Rebelion en el otro México/Rebellion in an Other Mexico*

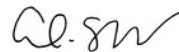
In November 2023, we celebrated UIC Gallery 400's 40th anniversary with our first benefit. The contributions of a noteworthy host committee, forty generous donating artists, and over one hundred lovely attendees was incredibly heartwarming and has proven instrumental.

These two years were also especially productive because we completed our first American Alliance of Museums/Institute for Museum and Library Services Museum Assessment. The assessment created key goals to move the gallery into our next dynamic chapter. Additionally, we are fortunate to partner with the School of Art & Art History director Ömür Harmansah and the Jane Addams Hull-House Museum on a climate adaptation planning grant supported by the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Richard H. Driehaus Foundation, and the Helen Frankenthaler Foundation.

As the contemporary art space of UIC situated in a building alongside UIC's brilliant art faculty and students, we demonstrate how critical artists and their work are to the vitality, well-being, and intellectual life of UIC and our beloved city, Chicago. We are grateful to everyone committed to us and to art and artists' ability to ignite curiosity, weave connections, and expand horizons.

We invite you to join us to support artists, spark imaginations, and connect our community.

In gratitude,



**Lorelei Stewart**

Director and Chief Curator

# Expanding Horizons

## About UIC Gallery 400

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UIC Gallery 400 is the contemporary art space of the University of Illinois Chicago. The Gallery supports contemporary art, architecture, and design through exhibitions, lectures, publications, and programs that prioritize interpretative reflection and critical inquiry.

UIC Gallery 400's mission is to be a contemporary art hub for social interaction, transformative experience, and multi-dimensional learning. Creating a place to connect, Gallery 400 actively positions its exhibitions and public programs as opportunities with which to build community and as avenues for learning in informal social settings.

Operating within the College of Architecture, Design, and the Arts at the University of Illinois Chicago—the largest university in Chicago and one of the most diverse in the US—Gallery 400 endeavors to make the arts and its practitioners accessible to a broad spectrum of the public and to cultivate a variety of cultural and intellectual perspectives.

UIC Gallery 400 is recognized for its support of the creation of new work, the diversity of its programs and participants, and the development of experimental models for multi-disciplinary exhibitions.



# Union of Talents

## Our Team & Partners

### Staff List

**Lorelei Stewart**, Director and Chief Curator

**Denny Mwaura**, Assistant Director and Curator

**Mary Kirk**, Business Administrative Associate

**Inés Arango-Guingue**, Learning Together Exhibitions Fellow (2024)

**Alan Medina**, Learning Together Public Engagement Fellow (2024)

**Jessica Hough**, Learning Together Exhibitions Fellow (2023)

**Colbie Symone Cook**, Communications (2023-24), Exhibitions (2024-25), Graduate Student Employee

**Ivanka Suska**, Programs and Engagement Graduate Student Employee (2024-25)

**Cory Williams**, Communications Graduate Student Employee (2024-25)

**Taylor Roberts**, Fundraising and Archives Graduate Assistant (2024-25)

**Ayrika Hall**, Exhibitions Graduate Student Employee (2023-24)

**Nora James**, Programs and Engagement Graduate Student Employee (2022-24)

**Rachel Dukes**, Communications (2022-23), Exhibitions (2023), Graduate Student Employee

**Magda Dumitrescu**, Communications Graduate Student Employee (2023-24)

**Julian Flannigan**, Communications Intern (2025)

**Regina Cuadra Martinez**, Programs Intern (2024-25)

**Mikey Troy**, Archives Intern (2024)

**Benson Benson**, Exhibitions Intern (2022-24)

**Alexee Aitken**, Programs Intern (2022-24)

**Aziza Muhammad**, Archives Intern (2022-24)

**Areiana Richards**, Design Intern (2023-24)

### Voices Advisory Committee

Professor Ömür Harmanşah, School of Art & Art History Director, 2023-24

Professor Hannah Higgins, School of Art & Art History faculty, 2023-25

Lisa Marie Malloy, School of Art & Art History MFA student, 2024-25

Professor Karyn Sandlos, School of Art & Art History faculty, 2024-25

Sam Schwindt, School of Art & Art History MFA student, 2023-24

Deborah Stratman, School of Art & Art History faculty, 2023-25

Zulkhairi Zulkiflee, School of Art & Art History MFA student, 2023-25

### Community and Campus Partners

Center for Native Futures

Chicago Arts Partnerships in Education (CAPE)

Chicago Collections Consortium

Freshwater Lab

Jane Addams Hull-House Museum

New Mexico State University Art Museum

Rebirth Garments

SkyART

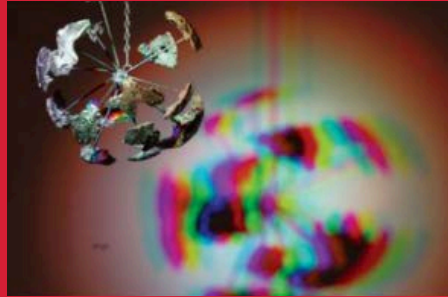
UIC Disability Cultural Center

UIC Gender and Women's Studies

UIC Rafael Cintrón Ortiz Latino Cultural Center

UIC Women's Leadership and Resource Center

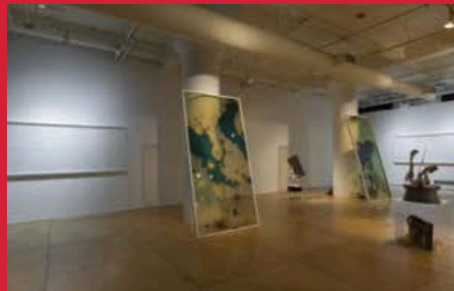
# 2023 EXHIBITIONS



*Reckless Rolodex*  
Curated by Matthew Goulish,  
Lin Hixson, and Caroline Picard  
Jan—Mar 2023



*Gravity Pleasure Switchback*  
Derrick Woods-Morrow  
Solo Exhibition  
May—Aug 2023



*Earthy Visions: Inside the  
Climate Crisis*  
Sept—Dec 2023



*a series of encounters:*  
2023 UIC MFA Thesis Show 1  
Curated by Dr. Lucy Mensah  
Mar—Apr 2023

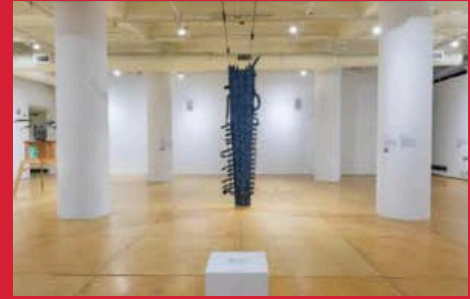


*CTRL + histories:*  
2023 UIC MFA Thesis Show 2  
Curated by Dr. Lucy Mensah  
April 2023

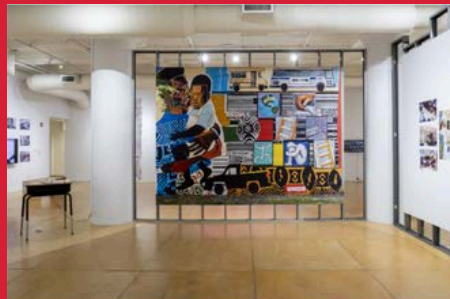
# 2024 EXHIBITIONS



*Contemporary Ex-Votos: Devotion Beyond Medium*  
Curated by Dr. Emmanuel Ortega  
Jan—Mar 2024



*The Mask of Prosperity*  
Curated by Denny Mwaura  
May—Aug 2024



*Learning Together: Art Education and Community*  
Curated by Inés Arango-Guingue, Denny Mwaura, and Lorelei Stewart  
Sept 2024—Mar 2025



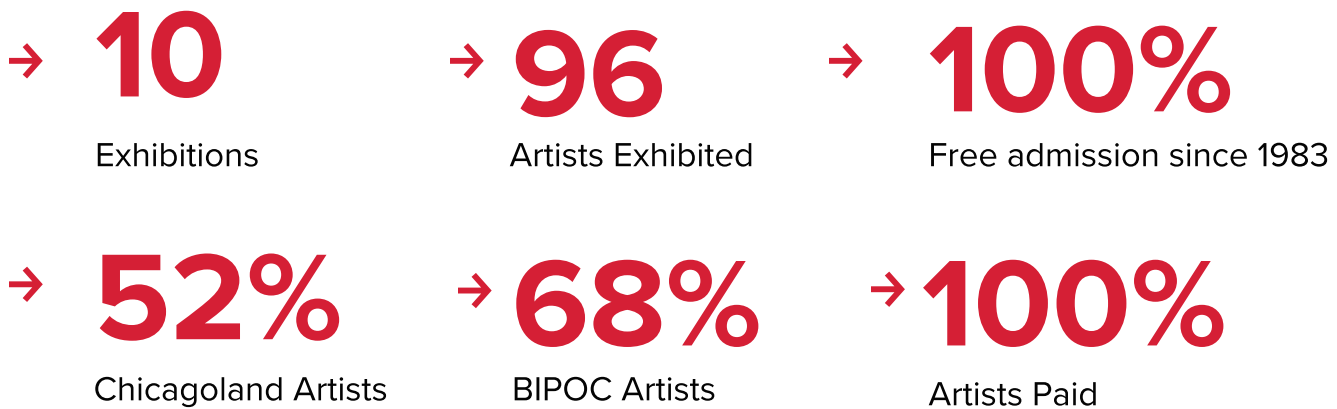
*Streetside: Art Powers: Tonika Johnson and Joe Nelson*  
Nov 2024—Apr 2025



*See Saw Seen: 2024 UIC MFA Thesis Show*  
Mar—Apr 2024

# 2023+2024

## Exhibitions & Artists



“The curatorial staff was highly professional, and my participation with Gallery 400 exceeded all expectations. and was one of my favorite shows in which I participated in 2023. Furthermore, the show was highly publicized which shows the dedication the staff has [shown towards] the exhibition and the artists. I look forward to upcoming exhibitions as it has always been a treat to visit.”

— **Cydney M. Lewis, exhibiting artist in *Earthy Visions: Inside the Climate Crisis, 2023***

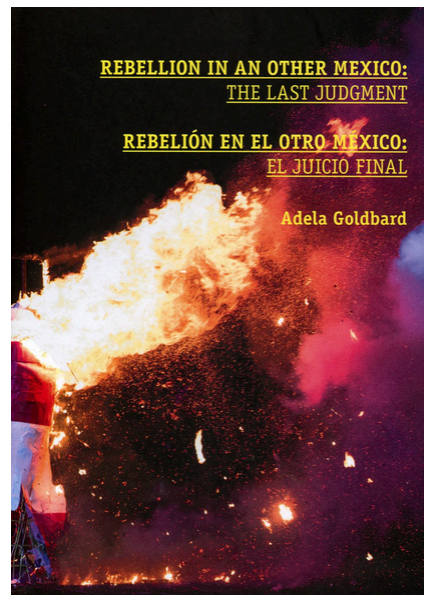
# Catalogue Highlight

## **Adela Goldbard: *Rebellion in an Other Mexico: The Last Judgment***

In March 2024, artist Adela Goldbard and residents and activists from Little Village/La Villita, Chicago's largest Mexican neighborhood, gathered for the release of her UIC Gallery 400 published book *Rebellion in an Other Mexico: The Last Judgment / Reblión en el otro México: el juicio final*.

Chronicling Goldbard's multi-stage, multidisciplinary UIC Gallery 400 project, *The Last Judgment/El juicio final*, the roughly 300-page catalogue, in English and Spanish with passages in Náhuatl language, centers in the cross-border, community interests, and struggles of residents in Little Village/La Villita. With beautiful color images, testimonials, process documentation, QR links to audio tracks, scholarly essays, reference texts, and an accompanying "unruly" guide to the neighborhood, the catalogue documents the project's development and presentation across 2019 and 2020, including the exhibition held at UIC Gallery 400 (Fall 2019) and the culminating filmed pyrotechnic performance (Fall 2020).

Adopting the name and structure of the first Western play performed in present-day Mexico, a play written as a religious tool of conquest, Goldbard's *The Last Judgment/El Juicio Final* evokes the spectacular character of that theater of evangelization but contests its colonizing spirit, transforming punishment into protest through processes of collective building, reenactment, and destruction.



The paired catalogue and guide are available for purchase at the gallery or on our website.

# Press Highlights

**“Chicago’s History of Radical Art Pedagogy” by Lori Waxman, [hyperallergic.com](https://hyperallergic.com), November 2024**

“Who is art really for? That’s the unspoken question at the heart of two inspiring exhibitions, each focused on the radical social and political possibilities of progressive art education in Chicago. ...[The] great need, then as now, is for the children of under-resourced city neighborhoods to be emboldened and enriched by all that art has to offer. How that happens is the subject of *Learning Together: Art Education and Community* at Gallery 400.”



Installation view of Yollocalli Arts Reach art and objects in *Learning Together: Art Education and Community*. Photo by Ji Yang



cameron clayborn, “homegrown #5,” 2022.  
Photo by Ji Yang

**“Solemn Promise: A Review of ‘The Mask of Prosperity’ at Gallery 400” by Frank Geiser, [Newcity](https://newcity.org), June 2024**

“I think focusing on the complexity of inheritance and the ideas surrounding it is a beautiful concept for an art show. Denny Mwaura, the Assistant Director of Gallery 400 and the Curator of *The Mask of Prosperity*, has put together a curatorial masterpiece: The exhibition feels cohesive and personal despite the wide array of mediums and practices used by artists within it....I appreciate [the] reminder that inheritance is a form of intergenerational communication: *The Mask of Prosperity* is a promise made in the world we create, not just the world we leave behind.”

# 2023+2024 PROGRAMS

# 2023+2024

## Attendance & Programs

→ **8,008**  
Attendance 2023 + 2024

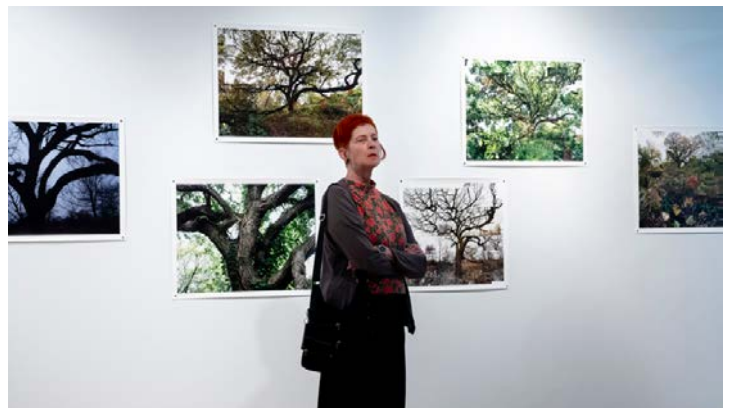
→ **5.5%**  
Increase in attendance  
between 2023 and 2024

→ **51**  
Programs

→ **2,518**  
Program Attendees



Documentation of *ATOM-r: I ♥ The Dead* 🐱 (*The Followspot*), 2023. Photo by Ji Yang



## VOICES: Aram Han Sifuentes March 9, 2023

Gallery 400's Voices Lecture Series is a premier forum in Chicago for discourse in the field of art. Artist and activist Aram Han Sifuentes' work confronts social and racial injustices, interweaving textiles, social practice, performance, and pedagogy to consider themes of immigration, labor, and protest. Many of her projects, such as the ongoing *Protest Banner Lending Library*, aim to make art more accessible to the disenfranchised, especially immigrants of color. Since 2016, Han Sifuentes has brought communities together to sew protest banners, creating a creative outlet of resistance for those who cannot attend protests for their own safety. UIC's Gender and Women's Studies program and the Women's Leadership and Resource Center partnered with UIC Gallery 400 to present this program.

# Program Highlights



Han Sifuentes collaborated with other designers and artists to create garments with protest slogans hidden inside the garments to protect the wearer. When the piece is activated, the garment can be untied to display a slogan.

## Chicago Underwater: The Impacts of Flooding, November 8, 2023



*Earthly Visions: Inside the Climate Crisis*, 2023 (installation view). Photo by Clare Britt

In the summer of 2023, heavy rainwater hit Chicago and led to unprecedented flooding, just one example of unusual and extreme weather underscoring the ongoing climate crisis. Not only does flooding contribute to the housing crisis and water access with deadly results, but its effect is concentrated in historically marginalized areas on the South and West sides. Policymaker Marcella Bondie Keenan, local activist Cheryl Watson, environmental artist Mechiya Jamison, and Freshwater Lab founder Rachel Havrelock addressed rampant flooding and sustainable solutions as part of the programming for *Earthly Visions: Inside the Climate Crisis*.

# Creating Connections

# LEARNING & COMMUNITY

# In-Gallery Learning

→ **1,608**

Total Tour Attendees

→ **68%**

Tours for UIC courses  
and groups

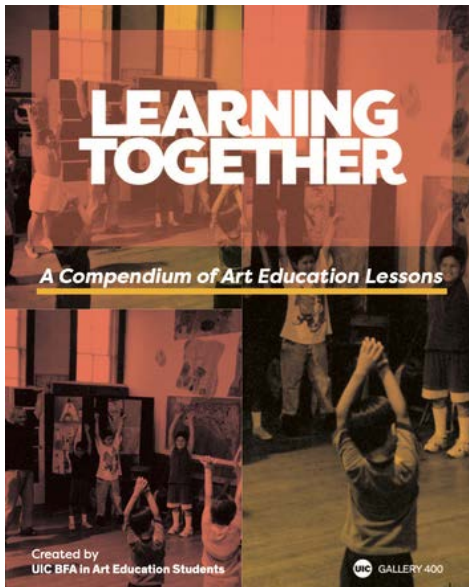


Katherine Simóne Reynolds, "Garter Belt", 2024.  
Photo by Ji Yang

"I enjoyed hearing the first-hand motivations of Assistant Director, Denny Mwaura as one of the curators and being able to engage in direct conversation with him while physically being in the space. I also enjoyed hearing the connections between different works across the gallery and how deeply rooted a lot of the contexts of these works are in relation to each other and Chicago/UIC/myself as a product of CPS."

— **UIC student and tour attendee for *Learning Together: Art Education and Community, 2024***

# Expanded Engagement



In Fall 2024, when we exhibited *Learning Together: Art Education and Community*, we proudly offered for free in the gallery a compendium of art education lessons created by nine of our very own UIC BFA Art Education students. A Gallery collaboration with UIC Assistant Professor William Estrada, the *Learning Together Compendium* documents work the students developed in a Fall 2023 course in response to the Gallery's exhibition research. The nine students studied and drew inspiration from the Gallery's *Learning Together* art educator oral history archive to build unit plans, the larger structures within which individual lesson plans are built. The compendium offers those unit and lesson plans as a resource for other educators.

"I find that *Learning Together* has been a wonderful invitation to the public to both witness the work on display, but also work through their art education experiences as interwoven through these Chicago histories. That is really important for me. I've had so many conversations with others, understanding within these historical views and context that there are layered histories that were happening at the same time, but also histories that influenced other things that preceded them. Those are the complexities we don't always hear, get to witness, or are just unaware of. Holding these stories in a public way allows these histories to be told to the public."

## William Estrada

UIC Clinical Assistant Professor of Art Education



*Learning Together* tour with Assistant Director, Denny Mwaura

# Learning on the Job



“Although I have some experience in gallery work, I have never formally worked in a programming capacity before. My time at Gallery 400 has not only shown me how rewarding this work is but how much I truly enjoy it. Part of that is not just the people we have invited to these programs and whom I have been able to collaborate with, but also the support I receive from my programs team, Denny, Lorelei, and our Engagement Fellow, Alan, and the rest of the team at the gallery. Their encouragement and collaboration have enabled me to perform at my best. This experience has allowed me to grow both personally and professionally, and I’m motivated to continue expanding on the work that we do.”

## **Ivanka Suska**

UIC Gallery 400 Programs and Engagement Graduate Student Employee



“Working at Gallery 400 has not only allowed me to see how generative and healing working with art and artists can be, but I feel supported academically and professionally by my supervisors and my peers. I’m grateful that I can take the time away if needed to prioritize school when the semester gets difficult, and I can also say that the work I’m doing at the gallery has identifiable rewards. Being able to interact with artists, gallerists, scholars within and outside of UIC has all been such a highlight of my time here. And Lorelei and Denny’s support has been the undercurrent of it all.”

## **Colbie Symone Cook**

UIC Gallery 400 Exhibitions Graduate Student Employee



Photos by Natasha Moustache

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# Advancing Our Work

## Many thanks to our donors and supporters



# 40TH ANNIVERSARY BENEFIT

Photos by Natasha Moustache

→ **\$44,690**

Raised

→ **101**

Attendees

→ **24**

Auction Purchases

→ **4**

Performances

On November 16, 2023, we celebrated our 40th anniversary with a gathering of artists, friends, funders, and community members from across Chicagoland. The event included an auction of works by previous UIC Gallery 400 artists and UIC MFA alumni. Through the support of 24 benefactors, over 100 attendees, and off-site auction bidders, the Gallery raised \$31,690.

Artists Tony Tasset and Jennifer Reeder hosted the evening, which featured short speeches by Dean Rebecca Rugg, Ömür Harmanşah, and Lorelei Stewart, and musical performances by DJ Dreea, Sara Condo, Aitis Band, and Spectralina. Making it all possible were the hardworking host committee, staff, and our friends!



# 2023+2024 Individual Supporters

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 Andrew Zago

\*indicates 40th Anniversary

# 2023+2024 Institutional Donors

Carl & Marilynn Thoma Foundation  
 Helen Frankenthaler Foundation  
 Illinois Arts Council  
 National Endowment for the Arts  
 Terra Foundation for American Art  
 The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts  
 The Richard H. Driehaus Foundation  
 The Joyce Foundation

**UIC** GALLERY 400

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 [gallery400@uic.edu](mailto:gallery400@uic.edu)

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