

US foundations back new charity handing out grants to artists

The United States artists fund fills the vacuum created after the government suspended the National Endowment for the Arts in the '90s

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Four US foundations have contributed \$20m to fund a new charity that will provide \$50,000 grants to at least 50 American artists a year. Ford Foundation has provided the lead gift of \$15m, and the Rockefeller, Prudential and Rasmuson foundations have together contributed \$5m to launch the New York-based United States Artists (USA) fund. The initiative was created in response to a 2003 study by the Urban Institute, a policy research organisation that found “support for individual artists remains underdeveloped and underfinanced”.

Fellowships are available to visual artists, architects, performing artists, and writers who are citizens or legal residents of the US. The first round of grants, totalling \$2.5m, will be announced on 4 December.

The new programme fills the vacuum left when, in 1996 in the wake of the so-called “culture wars” of the late 1980s and 1990s, the federal government abolished the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) grants to individual artists (except writers, jazz and folk artists).

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