



### ***Being Forward* Art Installation & Women Artists Forward Fund**

*Madison artists Brenda Baker & Bird Ross are embarking on an ambitious art installation, web site, and funding campaign to create a sustainable arts endowment for women artists at Madison Community Foundation. Our hope is that you will partner with us to make this important and necessary vision a reality for our community.*

#### **Project Summary**

Madison artists Bird Ross and Brenda Baker have big plans to celebrate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the State Capitol. Together with women across the community they'll create *Being Forward*, a dynamic and multi-faceted art installation at multiple venues and on the web, as well as the ***Women Artists Forward Fund*** a sustainable endowment fund for women visual artists held at Madison Community Foundation (MCF). *Being Forward* celebrates the amazing artistic, cultural and philanthropic legacy of the beloved sculptural icon Forward who has leaned forward at the foot of our State's capitol building for more than 100 years. Through their installations of over 100 women artists and supporters, Ross and Baker will unearth Forward's unique story and bring it forward into the future, creating a richer sense of community among contemporary women artists and arts supporters in Madison, and a lasting endowment that will support the next generations of women artists in our community.

#### **Our Inspiration**

*Being Forward* is inspired by the history of *Forward*, Madison's first piece of public art, created in 1893 by Jean Pond Miner when she was 28 year old and fully funded by a group of generous, forward thinking Madison women. Ms. Miner originally created *Forward* for the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, where she was one of two Wisconsin women invited to participate in the Wisconsin Pavilion, in most prestigious global art exhibition of the time. Together women from Madison and Janesville raised \$6,000, the equivalent of \$155,500 in today's dollars, to support Ms. Miner's tremendous opportunity and *Forward's* eventual casting in copper, before it found its permanent home at the base of Wisconsin State Capital. In 1995, when (*Ms.*) *Forward* was in dire need of restoration and her future in peril, it was again women who came together to fund her overhaul, restoration and recasting in bronze. *Ms. Forward* remains an enduring legacy of Wisconsin's place at the forefront of women's suffrage, and a promising symbol for us and for women in our community.

#### **Bringing Forward's Story and Legacy Forward**

With the help of Madison's community of women artists, philanthropists, business leaders and women's organizations and their supporters, Baker and Ross will create a photo based art installation grounded in *Forward's* history, including photos of 100 diverse, contemporary women in the arts in Madison, along with tales of amazing generosity of women supporting women, past and present. Their installation is part of the *Capital at 100* exhibit at Overture Center November 4, 2017 through January 14, 2018, which highlights the hidden histories of the Capitol building and its grounds. After the initial installation, the images will be shown in other exhibits and will be presented in a website that will serve as an on going exhibition space as well as a place to encourage support of the arts endowment campaign (***Women Artist's Forward Fund***) held at MCF. The \$300,000 sustainable endowment, ***Women Artists Forward Fund*** is meant to support diverse women visual artists of all ages in the Madison area forever. By way of annual unrestricted grants, this fund will fuel the creative potential of our community and retain the pool of creative talent in the Madison area.

## **The Need in Our Community**

Artists provide important civic assets to society and their creative capital is the very bedrock of a creative, thriving community. As John Olin said in 1911, “art is not only the flowering of civilization, it is also its seed.” Yet, over 100 years later, funding to support artists in Madison is in short supply.

Wisconsin is currently ranked 48<sup>th</sup> in the country for arts funding, with just 13 cents per capita going to support the arts. Neighboring Minnesota is first in the country with \$6.36 per capita dedicated to the arts. In Madison, the Madison Arts Commission and Dane Arts combined yearly grant funds are \$300,000, given out almost entirely to arts organizations, with less than 4% of those grants going to individual artists in 2016, in small grants ranging from \$500-\$1,500. The Wisconsin Arts Board discontinued its grants to individual artists in 2011. Beginning in the 1970’s, Madison Community Foundation (MCF), Madison Arts Commission and Dane County Cultural Affairs Commission offered the prestigious Creative Artists Fellowship awarded annually to outstanding Madison artists. Both Baker & Ross received this award in separate years, which had enormous impact on their respective careers. This award was discontinued nearly ten years ago marking the beginning of the slow erosion of funding for individual artists and arts organizations by state and local arts agencies.

Gender disparity in the arts compounds the situation for women artists. Despite the fact that 65-75% of MFA candidates in this country are women, women artists are largely underrepresented in permanent collections of major museums (3-5% of total works are by women), only 27% of solo exhibitions in major museums are by women artists, and only 2 women made the top 100 list of artists by income nationally in recent reports. Not only do women suffer because of the continuing problems of gender bias in the arts, but culture is deprived of the full vision and creativity of women artists and is poorer as a result.

*Being Forward* and the ***Women Artists Forward Fund*** address both the unique challenges facing women artists and the insufficient resources dedicated to supporting their work.

## **Our Neighboring Cities Offer Examples of What Could Be**

Neighboring communities in Milwaukee, Chicago and Minneapolis offer exciting examples of innovative arts funds for individual artists, with each community providing grants to retain their creative talent. The Greater Milwaukee Foundation provides \$70,000 in grants funding for five individual artists yearly through the Mary K. Nohl Foundation; the City of Chicago awards over 100 individual artist grants annually, with 123 grants going to individual artists in 2014 in the amount of \$5,000 each; and the Minnesota Arts Board granted 72 awards to visual artists alone in 2017, totaling \$693,329, or an average of \$9,629 per grant. These funds are *in addition* to support from many outstanding local foundations that support individual artists in each community. These are opportunities, which do not currently exist in Madison.

Nationally there is a growing movement to support women artists with unrestricted grants to encourage their work. From the Room of One’s Own Foundation, to Anonymous Was A Woman, to state or city based grant programs like the Kentucky Foundation for Women or the Leeway Foundation in Philadelphia, women are standing up to support one another’s creative pursuits.

## **Where Your Gifts Will Go**

Gifts to the ***Women Artists Forward Fund*** will be held in trust at Madison Community Foundation, where 100% of your gift will go toward the endowment fund. With the earnings from the endowment, the fund will make annual grants for both established and emerging women artists in Madison, including those from diverse and underserved populations who have been under-represented by arts opportunities in the past. After the first three years of the Fund’s creation we anticipate offering one grant for \$10,000 to an established female artist and one grant of \$5,000 to an emerging female artist. Eventually we hope to provide funding for two \$10,000 and two \$5,000 grants distributed annually. A grant making council will be established with at least three to five diverse women artists, philanthropists, and community members from all sectors of our community, who will develop funding criteria, oversee processes and select recipients. During the first 3 years as the fund matures, we anticipate gifting \$5,000 per year to one artist each year in order to activate the fund immediately.

## Our Advisory Board

We're fortunate to have expert guidance from the best of the best as we work toward establishing our endowment and reaching our goal. Our advisory panel includes:

- Jane Coleman, former Executive Director of Madison Community and founder of MCF's Fund for Women
- Camille Haney, retired public relations professional (Haney Group), and co-chair of 1996 Friends of Forward fundraising campaign
- Chele Isaac, Madison-based video and installation artist, member, UW-Art Department Board of Visitors
- Peter Lundberg, owner, Janus Galleries, art collector and capital campaign expert
- Toni Sikes, Co-founder and CEO of CODAworx and leading expert on art marketing and connecting artists with opportunities; chair of the Wisconsin Technology Council
- Martha Taylor, VP of Development, UW Foundation; co-founder, UW Foundation's Women's Philanthropy Council

## Who We Are

Brenda Baker and Bird Ross are Madison artists who show their artwork locally, nationally and internationally, using their artistic practice to bring awareness to issues that are important to them. Their work sheds light on important topics, leading to conversation and eventually, change. Previous collaborations include *Pedestrian Art for Democracy*, *Lake Line* and *Studio Relay*, and tackle issues around voting, the environment, and collaboration. These projects have strengthened their art practice and their resolve toward a more responsible and proactive approach to art and activism. Baker and Ross both graduated from the University of Wisconsin Madison with MFA's in painting and sculpture in the early 1990's. They have been collaborating on artwork since 2004.



Brenda Baker, "Seed Pod," buckthorn & honeysuckle  
[www.brendaleighbaker.com](http://www.brendaleighbaker.com)  
[brendaleighbaker@gmail.com](mailto:brendaleighbaker@gmail.com) (608)-628-5830



Bird Ross, "Red," fabric & thread  
[www.birdross.com](http://www.birdross.com)  
[birdross123@gmail.com](mailto:birdross123@gmail.com) (608)-345-6553

## Making an Impact on Community Need

*Women Artists Forward Fund* will become a significant source of support to keep creative talent engaged in the Madison community. The new endowment will also have ripple effects, altering the course for generations of women artists, increasing the connectivity, vibrancy, and health of our community in the process.

**Together we can build a lasting legacy for women visual artists in Madison, to support, encourage and endorse their creative potential as they enhance the quality of our lives here in the Madison community.**