

# 30 Years of Étant donnés

## An Exploration of the Impact of Villa Albertine's Flagship Visual Arts Program

By Julia Halperin



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Cover Image: Mohamed Bourouissa: *Urban Riders*, 2017, Installation. The Barnes Foundation.  
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# Foreword

**By Mohamed Bouabdallah**  
**Cultural Counselor of France and Director of Villa Albertine**

The visual arts have long been at the heart of the cultural dialogue between France and the United States.

From the start of the 20th century, American collectors began to passionately engage with French art, marking one of the most significant shifts in the art market at the time. Initially drawn to the works of Old Masters and Impressionists, American interest broadened following the pivotal 1913 Armory Show in New York. The most talked-about painting of the exhibition, *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2* by Marcel Duchamp, deconstructed the human form into abstract shapes and caused quite a stir. Described by one critic as “*an explosion in a shingle factory*,” this piece challenged traditional perceptions of art, signaling a moment when the United States would embrace new, modernist perspectives from France.

The French influence on US soil extended beyond private collections. In the early part of the century, many American artists and architects, such as Welles Bosworth, Whitney Warren, and Arthur Brown, trained at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris, and American writers and patrons, including William Faulkner, Ernest Hemingway, Claude McKay, and Peggy Guggenheim found a creative refuge on the Left Bank in Paris. These connections spurred a rich cultural interdependency that would evolve throughout subsequent decades.

The postwar years, particularly through the migration of artists from Europe to the U.S., reinforced New York’s ascendancy, creating both a rivalry and a renewed dialogue across the Atlantic. A turning point came in 1964, when American artist Robert Rauschenberg was awarded the Grand Prize at the Venice Biennale, cementing New York’s place as the new hub for modern and contemporary art.

Since the 1960s—and more assertively beginning in the 1980s—France began to re-invest heavily in contemporary creation, developing a cultural policy that positioned the country as a center for artistic innovation and exchange. Eager to regain its central position on the global arts stage, France sought to become a beacon for emerging talents, supporting *avant-garde* artists from the earliest stages of their careers and nurturing them through a robust network of museums, art centers, and residencies.

This commitment to contemporary art laid the groundwork for further transatlantic cooperation. By the 1990s, American audiences showed increasing curiosity about French visual art across periods and French institutions recognized the United States' influence on the art world. This led the Cultural Services of the French Embassy and its partners to launch a new program, named after Marcel Duchamp's eponymous work: *Étant donnés*. Created to foster a continuous and reciprocal exchange between French and American artists, *Étant donnés* is a testament to France's commitment to supporting the French-American connections in an ever-evolving cultural landscape.

This report, authored by Julia Halperin, celebrates 30 years of exhibitions and collaborations made possible by *Étant donnés*. More than 700 artists, 50 curators and over 350 projects in more than 200 institutions across 87 cities have been supported by *Étant donnés*.

These are more than initiatives; they are part of a strategic vision aimed at keeping the French-American relationship flourishing and ensuring that artistic exchanges between our two countries remain as vibrant today as they were a century ago.

## Preface

**By the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs,  
the Ministry of Culture and Institut français**

Through its cultural services at embassies worldwide, the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs implements a cultural diplomacy aimed at fostering relationships between the creative and artistic communities in France and abroad, in close cooperation with the Ministry of Culture and the Institut français.

Together, these two ministries and the Institut français have identified the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, and China as priority countries for contemporary visual arts. As a result, the cultural services of the embassies in these countries are part of a network that receives enhanced support to develop their actions in the visual arts field, through both financial and human resources specifically dedicated to it.

The *Étant Donnés* program is part of this network, alongside other cultural initiatives developed by Villa Albertine and the broader French diplomatic network of cultural cooperation.

# Note to the Reader

## 1. Context of the Study

This online publication presents the first comprehensive case study that brings together all the institutions, artists, and curators who benefited from the Etant donnés program from 1994 to 2023.

As a joint initiative of Villa Albertine - The French Institute for Culture and Education - and Albertine Foundation, this study aims to provide a deeper understanding of the impact of this key program, which has facilitated artistic exchanges between France and the United States for over three decades.

We enlisted American art journalist Julia Halperin to conduct and write this longitudinal study, combining both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies, developed collaboratively.

The initial work, based on both print and digital archives, to create a comprehensive database, was carried out internally starting in Spring 2023. This was then expanded and refined under Julia Halperin's guidance from May to July 2024.

The data analysis, interviews, and writing took place from March to November 2024.

## 2. Scope and Limitations of the Study

The analysis and interpretation focus on American institutions that have received grants, French artists involved in Etant donnés projects in the United States, and American curators who conducted research residencies in France.

This approach does not address the impact of the program on projects by American artists in French institutions. Similarly, the many residencies within institutions such as PS1, Triangle, ISCP, and others, supported by Etant donnés until 2021, are not specifically covered, as Villa Albertine has since shifted to a more transdisciplinary model of exploratory residencies.

It's also important to note that the Etant donnés grants do not fully encompass the French Embassy's cultural services actions in the field of visual arts. Each year, numerous other visual arts initiatives are developed beside the scope of Etant donnés, often funded by the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs. Additionally, public-private partnerships have expanded

certain initiatives beyond the annual grant program. This includes the CPGA-Etant donnés Prize at Art Basel Miami Beach, as well as workshops, research grants, and exhibitions funded by the FORD Foundation in collaboration with French institutions like INHA, ANDEA, Ateliers Medicis, and Centre Pompidou.

In summary, this study and its accompanying database offer a snapshot of current knowledge regarding the program and its impact. Its rigorous methodology and unique findings can now be used in three ways:

- As a series of expert analyses to stimulate discussion on how to best support artistic exchanges and suggest potential future directions.
- As a reliable database open for further analysis.
- As a model for other studies examining different programs in various contexts.

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# Chapter I

## An Overview of Étant donnés at 30

↑ Thomas Hirschhorn: *World Airport*, 2000. The Renaissance Society at the University of Chicago.  
Photo : Tom Van Eynde © 2025 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris

In the second half of the 19th century, John Singer Sargent, Mary Cassatt, and other American artists in search of instruction and inspiration traveled to Paris, where they met pioneers of Impressionism like Edgar Degas and Claude Monet. These trans-Atlantic encounters—French experimentation intermingling with American individualism—transformed and enriched art history.

Étant donnés Contemporary Art was founded in 1994 with a mission to preserve and expand on this long tradition of cultural and artistic exchange between the United States and France. Taking its name from the famous artwork by Marcel Duchamp, the France-born artist who moved to the United States and inspired generations of contemporary artists around the globe, Étant donnés seeks to strengthen the ties between these two artistic communities. It also supports the belief, articulated by Duchamp, that “all in all, the creative act is not performed by the artist alone.”

In its first 30 years, Étant donnés has distributed \$4 million to more than 350 artistic projects in France and the United States. The fund has a track record of elevating emerging talents, supporting new developments in the work of established artists, and fostering a transatlantic network of curators from France and the United States. Through its programs, Étant donnés aims to seed bold experimentation

across artistic disciplines and facilitate expression enriched by cross-fertilization.

Étant donnés was founded by Villa Albertine (formerly known as the Cultural Services of the French Embassy), Albertine Foundation (formerly known as FACE Foundation), Institut français (formerly known as the Association Française d'Action Artistique), and the Délégation aux Arts Plastiques (DAP) of the French Ministry of Culture and Communication. The program is the first of its kind and inspired similar initiatives in the fields of dance, theater, and music.

Étant donnés has supported exhibitions in most major American art institutions, including the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York, the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, the Art Institute of Chicago, and the Wexner Art Center in Ohio. It has also bolstered programming at smaller nonprofits, alternative spaces, and university museums such as Artists Space and the Swiss Institute in New York, the Columbus College of Art and Design in Ohio, and the MIT List Visual Arts Center in Massachusetts. In previous years, Étant donnés also supported exhibitions of work by American artists in France, funding organizations including the Palais de Tokyo in Paris, the Musée des Beaux-Arts de Nantes, and several FRACs (Fonds Régional d'Art Contemporain).

French or France-based artists introduced to American audiences through exhibitions supported by Étant donnés over the past three decades include Chantal Akerman, Kader Attia, Pierre Huyghe, Huang Yong Ping, Chris Marker, Philippe Parreno, and many more.

This publication will explore highlights from the first 30 years of Étant donnés, evaluate its impact on the work of curators, artists, and institutions in France and the United States, and explore how it might evolve and respond to the needs of the field over the next 30 years. The data in this report covers grants made from the fund's inception in 1994 through the end of 2023.

# Étant donnés: By the Numbers

**30 years** supporting the visual arts and cultural exchange between France and the United States

**708 artists** supported (512 French, 196 American)

**366 projects** supported (64 in France, 302 in the United States)

**219 cultural organizations** supported

Projects funded in **87 cities** across the United States and France

**\$11,620** spent, on average, per grant

More than **60 artists** shown in the U.S. for the very first time by Étant donnés-funded projects

**\$142,663** spent, on average, each year on artistic projects

**50 curators** given fellowships

**\$4 million** spent to fund exhibitions and other cultural programs in France and the United States since 1994

# Key Grant Programs of Étant donnés

## Artistic Grants

Étant donnés Contemporary Art offers grants to American non-profit institutions that organize exhibitions, installations, or research projects featuring French or France-based visual artists. The program seeks to support French contemporary artists who have rarely, if ever, been shown in the United States. Prizing collaboration and artistic experimentation, the committee gives priority to coproductions, new commissions, and projects developed across several American cities or in partnership with French institutions. Grants range from \$1,000 to \$30,000.

**Eligibility Requirements for Artistic Grants:** Projects must relate to the visual arts in the broadest sense (painting, sculpture, and photography are eligible, as are performance art, video, installation, digital art, and multimedia work). Solo and group exhibitions, symposiums, and research initiatives will be considered. At least one artist involved in the project must be of French nationality or have lived in France for more than five years. Grants may not exceed 50% of the overall project budget.

## Curatorial Fellowships

Étant donnés offers grants to American curators who seek to conduct or deepen their research of contemporary art in France. The fellowships aim to expand the professional networks of American curators, encourage in-depth exploration of French cultural resources, and provide a forum for the exchange of ideas among artists, art professionals, and institutions. In addition to providing grants of up to \$3,000 to support the cost of travel, Étant donnés facilitates introductions to French cultural institutions and relevant experts in France. The committee gives priority to curators who plan to present their research in the U.S. through an exhibition, publication, lecture, or screening.

**Eligibility Requirements for Curatorial Fellowships:** Curatorial applicants must be U.S. citizens or legal residents of the United States for at least five years who have worked in the field of contemporary art for at least three years. They must submit a clearly defined research project involving a French partner organization or individual and be able to travel to France within 15 months of receiving the grant.

# The Selection Process: Behind the Scenes

A rotating committee of key leaders in the visual arts from France and the United States meets annually to determine the winners of artistic project grants and curatorial fellowships. The committee comprises independent American and French contemporary art professionals as well as an artist who has previously received a grant. Committee members typically serve two-year terms.

The selection process begins with a program officer's review of all applications. Those that meet the eligibility requirements are distributed to the artistic committee, which ranks the projects according to their relevance to Étant donnés' mission and criteria. The committee members then come together for a formal meeting to discuss the merits of each project and determine their priorities for funding. After Étant donnés staff finalizes the distribution of funds, the artistic committee and the board of Villa Albertine validate the selections and the winners are notified.

Past and present members of the artistic committee include Laura Hoptman, Eungie Joo, Brett Littman, Helen Molesworth, Ann Philbin, Didier Semin, Robert Storr, Marcia Tucker, Philippe Vergne, and Hamza Walker. Non-voting members of the jury include the Cultural Counselor of France and representatives from the French Ministry of Culture and Communication, the Institut français, and the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

# Important Moments in the History of Étant donnés

► **1994** Étant donnés is established. The program is facilitated by the FACE (French-American Cultural Exchange) Foundation. In its first year, the fund makes grants to 11 institutions presenting work by French artists, including the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, the High Museum of Art in Atlanta, and Artists Space, Inc. in New York. ► **1999** Étant donnés organizes “Cote Ouest: A Season of French Contemporary Art,” an ambitious series of exhibitions at more than 20 museums, universities, alternative spaces, and commercial galleries along the West Coast. A sister program to Étant donné, FACE Contemporary Theater, forms to support French-American collaborations in theater, circus, and puppetry. ► **2004** Another new program, Jazz and New Music, is formed under the Étant donnés banner to support collaborations between French and American artists and ensembles in the fields of jazz and contemporary music. ► **2008** Étant donnés launches a curatorial fellowship to support American curators traveling to France to conduct research on contemporary art. ► **2011** Étant donnés shifts attention away from funding exhibitions of American artists in France to increase its support of French artists in the United States. ► **2012** “Ceci n’est pas,” a five-month series of more than 30 exhibitions and events in Los Angeles, highlights the cultural connections and historical exchange among French and California artists. ► **2014** “ART²,” a month-long visual arts festival focused on the most pressing issues in the contemporary art world, is held in New York. More than 35 exhibitions, performances, talks, workshops, and events take place at 20 venues. ► **2014–2015** The Étant donnés fund pauses its activities due to a lack of funding. ► **2016** The program relaunches with a focus on exhibitions, curatorial grants, and residencies. ► **2019** In addition to Étant donnés’ ongoing grants for nonprofit organizations, the inaugural Étant donnés Prize, a \$15,000 award supporting excellence in cultural production and promoting international visibility of the French art scene, is awarded to the Paris-based Canadian-born artist Kapwani Kiwanga at the Armory Show. ► **2021** Villa Albertine, a new model for cultural services in the United States, launches. Villa Albertine assumes management of the interdisciplinary residency program (approximately 60 thinkers and artists per year) under this new umbrella while continuing to support visual art projects and curatorial fellowships. ► **2023** Villa Albertine’s support of American curators through \$3,000 travel grants grows through a partnership with Independent Curators International (ICI), a New York-based organization dedicated to supporting curators around the globe... ► **2024** The FACE Foundation becomes known as the Albertine Foundation. Étant donnés resumes issuing grants to American artists showing in France.

# Public and Private Support Coming Together

Since its inception, Étant donnés has been made possible by a combination of public and private funds through the support of the Albertine Foundation (formerly known as the FACE Foundation). This unique ability to draw on both sources for a unified mission has allowed supporters to achieve more together than they could independently. The ratio of public and private funding has fluctuated significantly over the years; at its peak in 2009, public funds accounted for nearly 75% of the initiative's total budget. Two years later, in 2011, that share dropped to 12%, the lowest in the program's 30-year history. Over the past six years, the balance has stabilized, with public funding now averaging 60% of the total budget and private funding covering the remaining 40%. The program has benefited from longstanding public and non-profit organization support, including contributions from the French Institute, the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and ADAGP.

Among private donors, one of the largest was the Florence Gould Foundation, an American non-profit devoted to French-American exchange and friendship, which supported Étant donnés from 1994 to 2020. Early private supporters, mobilized through the Albertine Foundation, included Chanel, the Ford Foundation, and the Helen Frankenthaler Foundation, whose contributions played a pivotal role in shaping the program.

Beginning in 2024, AXA became the exclusive corporate supporter of Étant donnés, reinforcing its mission and ensuring its continued impact in the years to come.



# Chapter II

## Program Highlights

↑ Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster : *Chronotopes & dioramas*, 2009, Installation view. Dia at the Hispanic Society, New York City, Dia Art Foundation.  
Photo: Cathy Carver © 2025 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris

In its 30-year history, Étant donnés has supported 366 exhibitions, performances, and artistic initiatives to promote cultural exchange between France and the United States. The majority of supported projects (83%) featured the work of French artists on view in the U.S.; the remainder (17%) supported American artists whose work was on view in France. (The program stopped supporting the latter in 2011 but resumed doing so in 2024.)

Placing independent French and American arts professionals in dialogue to select projects to receive a mix of public and private funding—without an official vote from French government officials—was “a bold experiment,” said Antoine Vigne, who served as a visual arts program officer for Étant donnés from 1999 to 2003.

Fueled by this experimental spirit, Étant donnés funded critical early exhibitions of work by now-established French artists including Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster and Zineb Sedira. It has also ensured that French artists were present in era-defining group exhibitions, like “Do It” (1997), “Let’s Entertain” (2000), and “WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution” (2006).

Over the years, Étant donnés has supported artists working in a range of media, with a strong emphasis on interdisciplinary practices and difficult-to-classify



work not consistently supported or easily packaged by the international art market. (Fifty percent of Étant donnés projects involved multimedia work, or work that encompasses more than one medium; an additional 25% had an installation component.) The supported artists represent a broad swathe of geographies, from French natives to artists born or based in the French Caribbean, to those part of the African diaspora, to expatriates living in France.

Here are 10 particularly influential exhibitions supported by Étant donnés during the fund's first three decades. Together, they illustrate the far-reaching impact of French artists in the United States and their role in shaping art history in real time.

# Bordering on Fiction: Chantal Akerman's *D'Est*

**Opened** 1995

**Curators** Kathy Halbreich, Bruce Jenkins,  
Catherine David, Michael Tarantino

**Grant Recipient** Walker Art Center

**Venues** Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; Galerie Nationale  
du Jeu de Paume, Paris; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art;  
the Jewish Museum, New York; Société des Expositions du  
Palais des Beaux Arts de Bruxelles; Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg;  
IVAM Centre del Carme, Valencia

**Artist Recipient** Chantal Akerman

The Belgian-born, France-based artist Chantal Akerman made her name internationally as an avant-garde filmmaker. But her first video installation presented in a museum context repositioned her as a multifaceted multimedia artist who used film to tell stories not only rooted in the passage of time, but also in the fullness of three-dimensional space.

The installation developed by Akerman and the Walker Art Center consisted of three parts. The first was *D'Est*, a 107-minute long film based on the artist's travels through Germany, Poland, and Russia between 1991 and 1993, after the fall of the Berlin Wall. (The film was acquired by the museum and shown in the Carnegie International that same year.) The second gallery presented 24 video monitors playing looping clips from the film, which allowed viewers to experience Akerman's craft as well as her narrative. The third gallery displayed a nighttime street scene on a single monitor while a recording of Akerman reading Hebrew prayers and English notes piped through the space.

As the artist (and fellow Étant donnés grant recipient) Christian Boltanski wrote in a review of the project, "Chantal Akerman is a woman who is compelled to make the dead speak and she does it through art." After the exhibition—which Étant donnés funded with a \$20,000 grant—Akerman went on to have a robust career showing her work in a visual arts context. She began working with Marian Goodman Gallery in 2003 and had three more major American museum exhibitions, including one that traveled to six institutions around the country, before her death in 2015.

# Do It

**Opened** 1997

**Curator** Hans Ulrich Obrist

**Grant Recipient** Independent Curators International

**Venues** 25 institutions in cities across North America including the Palo Alto Cultural Center in California, the Cranbrook Art Museum in Michigan, and the Boulder Museum of Contemporary Art in Colorado

**Artist Recipients** Michel Blazy, Christian Boltanski, Paul-Armand Gette, Liam Gillick, Marie-Ange Guilleminot, Fabrice Hybert, Bertrand Lavier, Chris Marker, and Annette Messager

What began as a thought experiment among the Swiss curator Hans Ulrich Obrist and the French artists Christian Boltanski and Bertrand Lavier around a table at Cafe Select in Paris has grown into the longest-running “exhibition in progress” in history.

“Do It” comprises a flexible set of instructions, or “scores,” written by artists; they coalesce into an exhibition when they are interpreted or acted out by the audience. Instructions range from how to use a rotating disc to determine the price of an artwork, by fellow Étant donnés grant recipient Huang Yong Ping, to how to make a wish, by Yoko Ono. The project was inspired by Fluxus, a movement in the 1960s and ‘70s to test the limits of art by distilling it down to simple instructions or actions. “Do It” also spoke to the growing interest at the time in relational aesthetics, a term coined by French art critic Nicolas Bourriaud to describe art that relies on human interaction.

The iteration of “Do It” funded by Étant donnés (with a \$5,000 grant) is one of the most ambitious in the peripatetic project’s history. Independent Curators International collaborated with Obrist to develop a North American version of “Do It” that took place over more than three years in 25 cities including Boise, Idaho, Palo Alto, California, Memphis, Tennessee, and Regina, Saskatchewan.

# Let's Entertain

**Opened** 2000

**Curator** Philippe Vergne

**Grant Recipient** Walker Art Center

**Venues** Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; Portland Art Museum; Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Pompidou, Paris; Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg; Museo Rufino Tamayo, Mexico City; Miami Art Museum

**Artist Recipients** Pierre Huyghe, Philippe Parreno, Alexandre Perigot, Mathieu Briand, Malachi Farrell

The sprawling exhibition “Let’s Entertain,” which included work by 80 artists from 18 countries (five were French), articulated how artists were responding to an increasingly entertainment-oriented, spectacle-seeking, and celebrity-obsessed culture. Étant donnés provided \$30,000 to the show over three years. “It was really the moment when contemporary art started to become mainstream,” the participating artist Mathieu Briand said in an interview.

Briand’s contribution to the exhibition was an interactive work that outfitted visitors in projector goggles and backpack transmitters, allowing them to see themselves from the outside. “It was my first real show,” Briand recalled. “I was not prepared at all.” (Through the experience, Briand met Eungie Joo, a curatorial assistant at the Walker; she went on to present his first solo exhibition at REDCAT in Los Angeles in 2006, which was also supported by Étant donnés.) Another highlight was Philippe Parreno’s “Speech Bubbles,” a series of cartoon-like three dimensional speech bubbles placed on the gallery ceiling.

The show attracted attention as the first major exhibition organized by former Étant donnés jury member Philippe Vergne after he became director of the Walker Art Center. (He previously served as director of the Museum of Contemporary Art Marseille.) “Let’s Entertain” has been cited as a keen expression of the state of culture at the end of the ‘90s economic boom and the dawn of the internet age. In a review published in *New York Arts Magazine*, critic Horace Brockington described the exhibition as “important, thought provoking, informative, and diverging.”

# No Ghost Just A Shell

**Opened** 2002

**Curator** Benjamin Weil

**Grant Recipient** San Francisco Museum  
of Modern Art (SFMOMA)

**Venues** SFMOMA, San Francisco; Kunsthalle, Zurich;  
the Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven;  
Institute of Visual Culture, Cambridge

**Artist Recipients** Pierre Huyghe and Phillippe Parreno

“No Ghost Just A Shell,” to which Étant donnés granted \$10,000, marked the culmination of a conceptual art project that Pierre Huyghe and Phillippe Parreno began in 1999. The duo bought the rights to a manga character named Annlee from a Japanese company that specializes in producing virtual “actors.” Having “rescued” Annlee from a violent death (or, at the very least, a non-speaking background part in a video game), Huyghe and Parreno invited a handful of their peers to interpret her likeness however they wished. They asked artists ranging from Dominique Gonzalez Foerster to Pierre Joseph to “do all that you can so that this character lives different stories and experiences.”

The SFMOMA exhibition was Annlee’s final chapter as a digital tool for artistic experimentation. At the show’s end, Annlee was “buried” in a coffin created in the gallery by the artist Joe Scanlan. In the legal realm, through a contract on view at the museum, the artists returned Annlee’s copyright back to her. The project has remained an influential exercise in collaboration, collective ownership, the interrogation of copyright, and the intersection of conceptual and digital art. “The details of Ann’s liberation offer a charming plunge into the French semiotic imagination,” the critic Philip Nobel wrote in *Artforum*.

# Looking Both Ways: Art of the Contemporary African Diaspora

**Opened** 2003

**Curator** Laurie Ann Farrell

**Grant Recipient** Museum for African Art

**Venue** Museum for African Art, New York

**Artist Recipients** Hassan Musa and Zineb Sedira

Coming out of an era when the New York art world was largely disinterested in issues of ethnic diversity, identity, and politics, this exhibition—organized by the curator Laurie Ann Farrell—went against the grain. It presented work by a dozen African Diasporic artists and explored how their relationships with their countries of origin, as well as their countries of residence, informed their work. Étant donnés supported the participation of two French artists with a \$10,000 grant.

The artists—Sudan-born, France-based Hassan Musa and Zineb Sedira, an artist of Algerian descent who was born in Paris—had little exposure in the U.S. prior to the exhibition. Sedira (who represented France at the 2022 Venice Biennale) presented a multi-channel video documenting a flight from her home in London to Algeria. Musa’s collaged paintings spliced together images from art history with the figure of Saartjie Baartman, the South African woman who was enslaved, taken to Europe, and presented to audiences as the “Hottentot Venus” in the early 19th century.

The show asked potent questions about how artists engage with their own histories and multinational and multiethnic identities—questions that would be subject to deeper inquiry by museums over the next two decades. “The Museum for Africa Art has done the right thing in presenting this show and particularly in producing a catalog with a wealth of new information,” the critic Holland Cotter wrote of the show in the *New York Times*. “But something more searching, incisive and expectation-rattling is needed to deal with the difficult questions it raises. And so the beat goes on.”

# Black President: The Art and Legacy of Fela Anikulapo-Kuti

**Opened** 2003

**Curator** Trevor Schoonmaker

**Grant Recipient** New Museum of Contemporary Art

**Venues** New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York; Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco; the Barbican, London; Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati

**Artist Recipients** Bili Bidjocka, Pascale Marthine Tayou, Christophe Nanga-Oly

The exhibition “Black President: The Art and Legacy of Fela Anikulapo-Kuti” was, in some ways, the first of its kind. The show, which Étant donnés supported with a \$15,000 grant, explored the cultural influence of Fela (1938-1997), an activist, musician, and Nigerian leader who developed the musical genre Afrobeat. The exhibition’s curator, Trevor Schoonmaker, told the story of this elusive and controversial figure through music (which was pumped through the galleries and presented at dedicated listening stations) as well as documentary photography and new work by 34 international artists of African descent.

The show combined art and music, as well as cultural history, in ways that were new to American audiences. Not every critic was a fan of the novel approach. *Nka: Journal of Contemporary African Art* described the show as “incoherent” and *Frieze* asserted that it sometimes stumbled “into territory beyond its mandate.” But everyone seemed to agree that the show was impossible to ignore: nearly every major art publication reviewed it. Work by the Paris-based Cameroonian artist Christophe Nanga-Oly and the Cameroonian artist Pascale Marthine Tayou were singled out by several critics. Holland Cotter described the latter’s contribution as “a jubilant, street-level paean to Afrobeat, forthright and exhilarating.”

# WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution

**Opened** 2006

**Curator** Connie Butler

**Grant Recipient** Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles

**Venues** Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington, DC; MoMA PS1, New York; Vancouver Art Gallery, Vancouver

**Artist Recipients** Niki de Saint Phalle, Lea Lublin, Annette Messager, Orlan, Gina Pane, Nil Yalter, Elaine Sturtevant

“Feminist art history may come to be defined as the era before and after WACK!” the art critic Wendy Vogel wrote in *e-flux* in 2021. The ambitious exhibition brought together work dating from 1965 to 1980 by more than 120 female artists and collectives from around the globe. The show spanned fiber art, ceramics, video, painting, and performance; it aimed, as the curator Connie Butler wrote in the catalogue, to “make the case that feminism’s impact on art of the 1970s constitutes the most influential international ‘movement’ of any during the postwar period—in spite or perhaps because of the fact that it never cohered, formally or critically, into a movement.”

The strength and diversity of the work on view made female artists’ exclusion from art-historical narratives of the era’s avant-garde untenable. It also served to inform future exhibitions that filled in the show’s blind spots, such as “We Wanted a Revolution: Black Radical Women, 1965–85” at the Brooklyn Museum and “Radical Women: Latin American Art, 1960–1985” at the Hammer Museum in 2017.

Among those given a prominent platform in “WACK!” were the French performance artist Orlan, who underwent cosmetic surgeries to critique female beauty standards, and the American-born, Paris-based Sturtevant, who appropriated the work of her fellow artists to needle the notion of male genius. Notably, the show underscored French artists’ role in pushing the discipline of performance art forward through the work of not only Orlan but also Gina Pane, Niki de Saint Phalle, Lea Lublin, and Nil Yalter. Étant donnés awarded “WACK!” a \$30,000 grant.

# Dominique Gonzalez Foerster: chronotopes & dioramas

**Opened** 2009

**Curator** Lynne Cooke

**Grant Recipient** Dia Art Foundation

**Venue** Hispanic Society of America, New York

**Artist Recipient** Dominique Gonzalez Foerster

The Strasbourg-born artist Dominique Gonzalez Foerster has spent her career asking questions about how we perceive our surroundings, record our histories, and inhabit space. Although she had built up a considerable international following in the first two decades of her career, this exhibition marked her first major solo museum exhibition in the United States. Supported with a \$25,000 grant from Étant donnés, it raised her profile in the country considerably. In 2014, five years after this exhibition, Gonzalez Foerster began working with the prominent New York gallery 303.

In an unusual institutional collaboration, the Dia Art Foundation commissioned Gonzalez Foerster to create new installations in an off-site gallery at the Hispanic Society of America on West 155th Street in upper Manhattan. The artist collaborated with designers from the American Museum of Natural History to create three theatrical dioramas that offered visions of a dystopian future irrevocably shaped by climate change. A tropical forest, desert tundra, and ocean floor were each populated by architectural ruins and paperback books of literature and poetry. The science fiction and fantasy tomes scattered throughout the installation “remind us,” the critic Eleanor Heartney wrote for *Art in America*, “that books can act as imaginative triggers, and one almost feels that the surrounding environments have simply materialized out of the very volumes they contain.”

# Mohamed Bourouissa: Urban Riders

**Opened** 2017

**Curator** Sylvie Patry

**Grant Recipient** Barnes Foundation

**Venues** Barnes Foundation, Philadelphia;

Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam;

Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris, Paris

**Artist Recipient** Mohamed Bourouissa

Few projects embody the manifold potential of cultural exchange between France and the United States better than “Urban Riders,” the first major exhibition of the French-Algerian artist Mohamed Bourouissa at an American museum. Étant donnés funded the show with a \$30,000 grant.

Bourouissa first made his name chronicling his friends and neighbors in Paris’s banlieues. The Barnes exhibition revolved around a body of work the artist began in 2014, when he relocated to a gentrifying Philadelphia neighborhood for eight months to chronicle the Fletcher Street Urban Riding Club, a nonprofit founded by Black American cowboys nearly a century ago.

As the critic Francesco Urbano Ragazzi wrote in *Mousse* magazine, Bourouissa is “part of a realist tradition that spans from August Sander to Gustave Courbet.” Unlike many of his predecessors, however, Bourouissa considers empowering his subjects as key to his process. In Philadelphia, he worked with Fletcher’s community to stage and document “Horse Day,” an elaborate pageant-meets-rodeo.

The resulting films, photographs, and drawings expanded Bourouissa’s geographical aperture but retained his commitment to capturing the individual stories within systematically marginalized communities. Notably, Étant donnés supported Bourouissa even before he had had a major solo presentation at a French museum. The year after its debut in Philadelphia, “Urban Riders” traveled to the Musée d’Art moderne de la Ville de Paris.

# Forecast Form: Art in the Caribbean Diaspora, 1990s–Today

**Opened** 2022

**Curator** Carla Acevedo-Yates

**Grant Recipient** Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago

**Venue** Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago;

Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston;

Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego

**Artist Recipient** Julien Creuzet

The exhibition “Forecast Form: Art in the Caribbean Diaspora, 1990s–Today” pushed against many of the tropes commonly associated with geographical group shows. Rather than attempting to do the impossible and offer a comprehensive sweep of a broad region, the curator Carla Acevedo-Yates focused on the work of 37 artists, including some who challenged traditional interpretations of the very geographical scope laid out in the title. (One featured artist, for example, was from the Philippines.) As the critic Daniel R. Quiles wrote in *Artforum*, the show served as “a larger deconstruction of the Caribbean as a bounded geopolitical or market category.”

Acevedo-Yates said in an interview that the Martinican-French writer and theorist Édouard Glissant’s theory of “opacity”—the inherent unknowability of the “other”—was formative for her curatorial concept. Among the works featured was *Crossroads*, 2022, a video by the Martinican-French fast-rising star Julien Creuzet that captured a dancing figure adorned with feathers, fruits, ship debris, and viruses—an expression of the overlapping impacts of oral history, land use, spiritual tradition, trade, and colonialism on the region. A year and a half later, Creuzet represented France at the 2024 Venice Biennale.

The \$5,000 grant from Étant donnés funded the shipping of Creuzet’s work (an area that Acevedo-Yates said has become increasingly expensive in the wake of the pandemic; she estimates that the shipping “probably cost more than the grant”). She notes that there are many other artists from the region who also deserve exposure. “There’s so much less attention given to the French-speaking Caribbean in the US,” Acevedo-Yates said. “There is a lot of misinformation and so much more to dig into.”



# Chapter III

## Case Studies

↑ “Orisons” by Marguerite Humeau, 2023, curated and produced by Black Cube, A Nomadic Art Museum.  
Photography by Julia Andréone and Florine Bonaventure. Images are courtesy of the artist and Black Cube Nomadic Art Museum.

What is the true impact of a grant from Étant donnés? This chapter aims to answer that question through case studies of four initiatives supported by the fund: a special project, a curatorial fellowship, a touring exhibition, and an artistic project. Spanning 1999 to 2023, these endeavors illustrate the range of programs supported by Étant donnés. By delving deeper into their individual stories, we can chart a clearer path forward and understand the many ripple effects of Étant donnés support, including some that only become clear years after the grant money is spent.

# Case Study 1: The Special Project

## Cote Ouest

The most ambitious and expansive project facilitated by Étant donnés in its 30-year history is “Cote Ouest: A Season of French Contemporary Art.” The program—deemed “the biggest initiative to date to promote foreign art in the United States” by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs—subsidized a slate of French contemporary art exhibitions at more than 20 museums, universities, alternative spaces, and commercial galleries up and down the West Coast in 1999. The goal was to raise the profile of French contemporary art in the US at a time when German and British artists were perceived to be gaining more traction in the international art market and American institutions.

“For a long time, one of the ways France has achieved its cultural ambition is to create seasons,” said Antoine Vigne, the former Étant donnés visual arts program officer, in an interview. In other words, France developed a strategy of partnering with other countries to present a variety of programming on a particular art form in a condensed period of time to maximize impact. “That model applied here—it was a moment of exchange,” Vigne explained. “It was also the biggest project they had ever done.”

The strategy paid off. Cote Ouest received more preview publicity than the exhibition “Premises: Invested Spaces in Visual Arts, Architecture and Design from France, 1958–1998” at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum the previous fall, according to a letter from the program’s press representative. (This is particularly notable because the art press was, and remains, highly concentrated in New York.)

Étant donnés and its partners offered venues participating in Cote Ouest operational and financial support at key moments. Perhaps most crucially, at the program’s inception, West Coast curators and dealers were invited to visit Paris to tour museums, galleries, and artist studios on subsidized trips. It was unusual for a government to offer foreign curators so much support and access with no control over the outcome—or even a guarantee that they would produce anything at all. The approach proved to be a model for how to engage regional arts communities (as opposed to a more diffuse nationwide strategy).

Thomas Collins, then an associate curator at the Henry Art Gallery of the University of Washington, visited about 18 studios, 10

art centers, and several galleries on a week-and-a-half trip to Paris in fall 1998, according to the *New York Times*. Collins went on to organize the exhibition “Gilles Barbier: Clones,” the artist’s first in the United States, at the Seattle institution under the auspices of Cote Ouest. The show, which introduced the artist’s lifelike wax self-portraits to an American audience, received a \$5,000 grant from Étant donnés.

Among the most influential exhibitions in Cote Ouest’s lineup was Jean-Michel Othoniel’s solo show “Trésor” at the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts in San Francisco. Twenty-one years later, in 2020, Othoniel’s monumental work *La Rose des Vents*, a looping sculptural form made from aluminum and gold leaf modeled on a compass rose, was installed permanently in Golden Gate Park, an enduring monument to the ties between Paris and San Francisco. Othoniel visited the park on his first trip to San Francisco for the Yerba Buena exhibition.

Other frequently cited Cote Ouest exhibitions supported by Étant donnés include Bertrand Lavier’s “Walt Disney Productions” at the Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego, which introduced one of the artist’s best-known series, based on abstracted forms of Mickey and Minnie Mouse, to an international audience. Also of note was the American debut of the French photographer Stéphane Couturier at the San Francisco alternative space Camerawork.

Cote Ouest facilitated connections between French artists and West Coast schools and artist communities. As part of the program, around 20 French artists traveled to the region for residencies, to oversee the installation of their work, or to participate in public programs. The California College of Arts and Crafts, for example, invited five French contemporary artists and four French craft artisans to stay in the Bay Area and participate in a semester-long college course on textiles.

Cote Ouest—which was supported not only by Étant donnés but also Association Française d’Action Artistique (now Institut Français), the French Embassy in the United States, the Broad Art Foundation, and other entities—reportedly cost around \$1 million to produce (or \$1.9 million in 2024 dollars, accounting for inflation). Étant donnés helped museums find American corporate and foundation sponsors, facilitated travel between France and the United States, and funded a number of exhibitions directly. Between 1998 and 1999, Étant donnés supported 15 projects on the West Coast (13 in California, one in Oregon, and one in Washington). This represented more than double the

number of West Coast projects the organization had supported in its first four years combined.

Cote Ouest may have had an even broader legacy if organizers had extended the program's timeline. Several curators, including those at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles, said they were unable to develop new programming within the time frame specified by Cote Ouest. Curators were invited to travel to Paris roughly one year before the program began, but most large museums set their exhibition calendars at least three years in advance.

Although Cote Ouest focused Étant donnés's resources on the West Coast, the fund did not radically increase its spending on exhibitions during that time. In 1998, the program dedicated \$163,520 to exhibition funding; in 1999, that number was \$141,500. The average amount of funding offered annually, across Étant donnés' 30-year history, is \$142,663. This shows that strategic emphasis on a particular region can make an impact even without the dedication of additional funds.

## Case Study 2: The Curatorial Fellow

**Dean Daderko**

In the early 2000s, the curator Dean Daderko came across Lea Vergine's book *Body Art and Performance* and was struck by its cover image. The photograph depicts a woman holding her arm over her eyes to reveal tender flesh marked by two long, parallel cuts. The blood on her forearm is beginning to harden. "Who is this person, and why do I not know what their work is?" Daderko recalled asking.

These questions would set the curator on a transformative journey that began with a fellowship from Étant donnés in 2008 and culminated with the exhibition "Parallel Practices: Joan Jonas & Gina Pane" at the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston (CAMH) in 2013. More than 15 years later, the fellowship continues to inform Daderko's work.

The artist featured on the cover of *Body Art and Performance* was Pane (1939–1990), a key member of the French Body Art movement in the 1970s as well as an important figure in the international avant-garde who influenced Marina Abramovic and other

contemporary performance artists. When Daderko began their research, Pane had never had a survey exhibition at an American museum and had been the subject of only one commercial gallery show in the U.S. (in 1991). Most of the materials related to the artist's life and oeuvre were not accessible online. "The more I found out about the work, the more intrigued I became," Daderko said. "I also realized there was only so far I was going to go without actually getting to France."

Daderko won the Étant donnés fellowship in 2008 and traveled to Paris, where they took a desk in a small office at the Centre Pompidou. The curator examined not only exhibition reviews and archival images, but also little-seen recordings of performances in the museum's collection. Daderko met weekly with Anne Marchand, the executor of Pane's estate and her longtime partner. "There were a lot of ways in which having support through Étant donnés really opened doors," Daderko said. By staying with friends of friends, the curator was able to stretch the \$3,000 grant to fund the majority of a four-month trip.

The resulting exhibition, "Parallel Practices: Joan Jonas & Gina Pane," was innovative in both content and form. It marked the first comprehensive presentation of Pane's work in the U.S., according to the museum. Daderko showed the work of Pane alongside Jonas, who was better known to American audiences. Born around the same time, the two artists pioneered influential bodies of performance and multimedia art in very different contexts.

Pushing against the structure of a traditional two-person exhibition, Daderko avoided drawing direct comparisons between the artists. Instead, the curator developed an unusual format: two solo shows presented alongside each other. The approach was informed by the time Daderko spent with Merchand, who was staunchly against her late partner being presented in a political or expressly feminist context. "Rather than trying to enforce a particular kind of narrative," Daderko said, they chose to "invite these folks to show up as they are and try to tell the story as they told it."

Daderko's gambit was successful. A critic for the Texas-based art publication *Glasstire* wrote that the curatorial concept echoed the artists' own philosophies, "in which layering, circularity, repetition, and musicality, as well as indeterminacy, take precedence over dominant constructions of meaning."

After its run in Houston in 2013, "Parallel Practices" traveled to the Henry Art Gallery in Seattle. In 2014, CAM Houston published a book on the show, which included newly commissioned essays

about Pane's work and the first English translation of the artist's influential 1974 essay, "Lettre à un(e) inconnu(e)" ("Letter to a Stranger"). A PDF of the catalogue remains available for free online.

Daderko is still active in Pane scholarship today. In addition to staying in touch with Merchand, the curator recently wrote an essay for a forthcoming book on the artist and is in conversation with Mennour Galerie, which represents the Pane estate, about upcoming projects and conservation initiatives.

Daderko won a second curatorial fellowship from Étant donnés in 2020 to examine the work of the French surrealist photographer Claude Cahun and the Moroccan-French contemporary artist Bouchra Khalili. An exhibition drawing on that research is in development at the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis, where Daderko became chief curator in 2023. "When I get invested in an artist's work in this way, I'm there for the long haul," Daderko said.

## Case Study 3: The Touring Exhibition

### **"Dust Specks on the Sea: Contemporary Sculpture from the French Caribbean and Haiti" (2018–2024)**

**Venues** Hunter East Harlem Gallery, New York; Little Haiti Cultural Center, Miami; 516 ARTS, Albuquerque; San Francisco Art Institute, San Francisco; Villa du Parc, Annemasse, France; La Ferme du Buisson, Noisiel, France; Fræme at Friche la Belle de Mai, Marseille, France

As Jason Farago wrote in his review of the influential exhibition "Dust Specks on the Sea" for the *New York Times* in 2019, it is rare "to see shows with a real local focus on places beyond the executive suite's gaze." This show, which has been supported both formally and informally by Étant donnés during its six-year tour, shines a welcome light on the work of more than 20 contemporary artists from Guadeloupe, Martinique, French Guiana, and Haiti—regions that have been scarcely examined by major art institutions in the United States.

Anne-Claire Duprat, a Villa Albertine program officer for visual arts, architecture, and design from 2017 to 2022, helped plant the seed for the exhibition. She encouraged the curator Arden Sherman, who had a long track record of working with artists

from the Caribbean, to consider a specific focus on the French Caribbean. The resulting show, organized by Sherman for the Hunter East Harlem Gallery, traveled throughout the United States and France for five years, with stops in Miami, Albuquerque, San Francisco, New York, Annemasse, Noisel, Marseille, and Brest. “I call it the little show that could,” Sherman said.

The exhibition takes its title from a statement made by French President Charles de Gaulle after an official visit to Martinique, Guadeloupe, and French Guiana in 1964. From his position in an airplane high above, de Gaulle described the islands as “dust specks on the sea.” The exhibition sought to challenge this hierarchical perspective and offer a glimpse of the diversity of creative expression in the region, with an emphasis on sculpture. As Sherman wrote, the exhibition and its artworks come out of a gray area that is “not completely Caribbean, not completely European, and not completely independent.”

The show introduced artists who had had virtually no previous exposure in the United States, like the multimedia artists Yoan Sorin and Louisa Marajo (the latter was later included in an exhibition at the Pérez Art Museum Miami). It also boosted the profiles of those who had had limited exposure, like Raphaël Barontini, an artist who combines photography, silkscreens, painting, and digital prints to create theatrical tableaux. Following Barontini’s inclusion in “Dust Specks” (as well as a solo show at the Savannah College of Art and Design also supported by Étant donnés), the artist secured representation by the gallery Mariane Ibrahim in 2019 and had a solo exhibition at the Currier Museum of Art in 2024. He was also selected as one of Villa Albertine’s artists in residence in New Orleans. “I’m happy to see his career moving so fast,” Sherman said.

Some ripple effects happened behind the scenes. After working with the artist Alex Burke on the exhibition, Sherman introduced him to his first gallery, Loeve&Co in Paris. The artist, who makes dolls made out of recycled fabrics, had his first solo show there in spring 2024.

In France, where “Dust Specks on the Sea” had a second life after its U.S. tour, the show has “been embraced in this way that I couldn’t imagine,” Sherman said. Anne-Claire Duprat and Olivier Le Falher, Villa Albertine’s current program officer for visual arts, architecture, and design, introduced Sherman to French venues and helped support the show’s travel. The Étant donnés team, Sherman said, is “instrumental in this show being where it is.”

# Case Study 4: The Land Artwork

**Marguerite Humeau, *Orisons*, 2023**

**Venue** San Luis Valley, Colorado,  
with Black Cube Nomadic Art Museum

During the pandemic lockdown, the French-born, London-based artist Marguerite Humeau read an article about the drought plaguing the San Luis Valley in Colorado. The wheels immediately began to turn in her mind. The artist is best known for working with scientists to reanimate extinct species and imagine alternative ecosystems. (One of her best-known works recreates the voice box of Lucy, the 3.2 million-year-old skeleton discovered in Ethiopia in the 1970s.)

What if, Humeau wondered, she could bring her interests in science, speculative fiction, and spirituality to a larger and more expansive setting? “I had been through a series of solo shows in large institutions and I was keen to see how my work would react to being outside,” Humeau said in an interview. “What happens when I create a mythological ecosystem that is connected to a real ecosystem?”

She connected with Black Cube, a Colorado-based non-profit nomadic art museum that produces site-specific contemporary art in public spaces. Together, they hatched a plan to develop a work of land art on an unfarmable plot of land in a climate—the San Luis Valley—that was growing more extreme and inhospitable by the year.

The resulting result, *Orisons* (meaning “prayers”), was a 160-acre landscape on which Humeau installed more than 80 small, kinetic sculptures that were animated by the wind. Also situated in the expanse were hammock-like sculptures referencing the outstretched wings of local Sandhill Cranes and hundreds of adobe blocks that functioned as benches created in partnership with a local architect.

The project was a milestone for Humeau. It was her first earthwork, her largest project to date, and her first exhibition in the United States outside of New York City. It was also, according to its organizers, one of the largest land artworks created by a female artist ever. Étant donnés was among the project’s earliest funders, committing \$30,000 in 2021—before Humeau had even traveled to Colorado for a site visit.

That money, along with other grants secured over the next two years, supported research and development, production, shipping, travel, and other expenses. But funding secured early in the process from an influential organization like Étant donnés played a special role, according to the artist. “To have the support of an institution like Villa Albertine—it builds trust,” Humeau said. “Suddenly you have other people who feel like, ‘Ah, OK, we should do this.’ You have a ripple effect.” This is particularly important, she noted, for projects operating outside of the boundaries of a traditional institution or exhibition.

The project evolved considerably from the initial proposal. At first, Humeau wanted to develop a massive crop circle through regenerative farming. But experts she consulted feared that plan would disturb the topsoil and make the region vulnerable to harmful dust storms. “I can’t really remember all the ideas I developed—maybe 20 or 30,” Humeau said.

Finally, one morning, she had an epiphany. “Why have I been trying so much to transform the land so drastically?” she asked herself. What if, instead, the land became the artwork and *Orisons* became about “igniting a place that had nothing to do with art to become part of an art project”?

To develop the final version of *Orisons*, Humeau collaborated with local farmers, ornithologists, Indigenous communities, and clairvoyants who specialize in reading the landscape. (The kinetic sculptures were placed like acupuncture needles in areas that Humeau gathered had experienced acute pain.) The artist was pleasantly surprised by funders’ willingness to adapt as the project changed shape. “I felt really supported throughout,” she said. “The end result was more nuanced and more open. It’s more an invitation to think and observe.”

In part because of its novel format outside the white cube, *Orisons* received more coverage than most major museum shows do. It earned a two-page spread in the *New York Times* as well as extensive reports in *Art in America*, the *Art Newspaper*, *Condé Nast Traveler*, the *Colorado Sun*, *Air Mail*, and many others. It also sparked a larger conversation about a new generation of artists who are approaching land art—a form traditionally associated with cowboy-hat wearing, macho artists—with a lighter touch and a greater interest in sustainability and community engagement.

For her part, Humeau considers the work as an invitation “away from constant new production” and toward “working with what we already have and designating places or objects to become

part of artworks for a little while.” It has inspired her to do additional research into soil for future projects as well as to engage more deeply with local communities where she works. The project, she says, “was transformative for how I live in the world and how I live as an artist.”

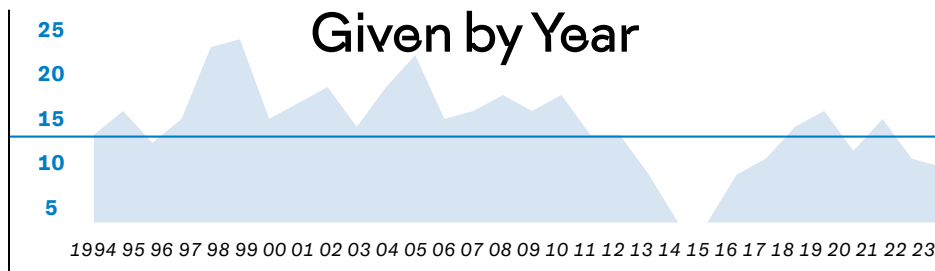


# Chapter IV

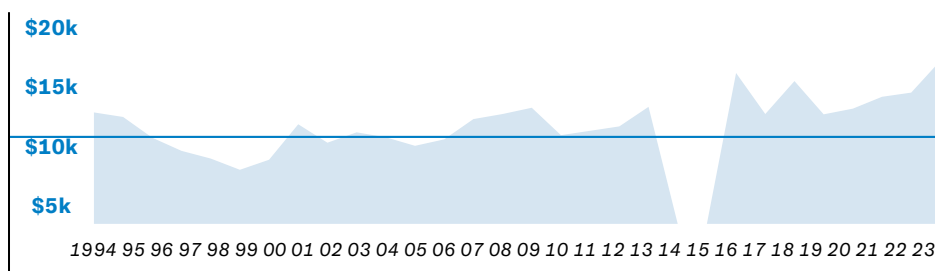
## Data Analysis

Over its 30-year history, Étant donnés's reach has been broad. The fund has helped 708 artists present work and conduct research at 219 cultural organizations in 87 cities across France and the United States. It has also provided travel fellowships to 50 U.S.-based curators to deepen their research on French art in France. The charts and data visualizations in this chapter offer a clearer picture of the scope and evolution of Étant donnés's activities and also reveal where it has opportunities to grow.

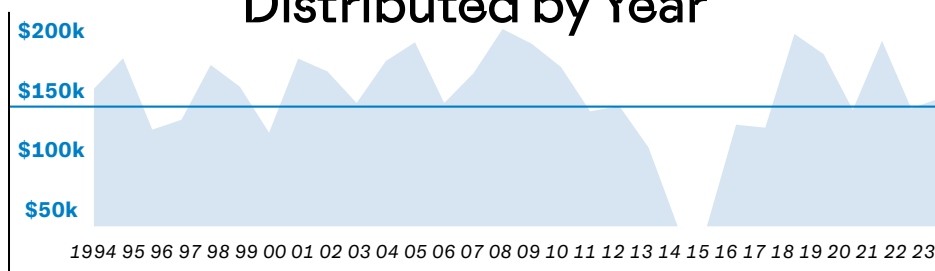
## Total Number of Grants Given by Year



## Average Grant Size by Year (\$)



## Total Amount of Funding Distributed by Year



The size of the grants provided by Étant donnés has fluctuated over the years depending on the number of projects supported and the total amount of money allocated by the organization. Its activities were suspended for two years—in 2014 and 2015—due to lack of funds. The program resumed full operations under new guidelines in 2016 after l’Institut Français restored support. The Étant donnés artistic committee, in consultation with Villa Albertine, decides each year based on the needs of the applicants exactly how many projects to fund and at what level. Over time, the fund has moved in the direction of offering slightly fewer grants of slightly higher sums. Over its 30-year history, the fund has supported an average of 13 projects per year, with an average grant size of \$11,620. Since 2016, it has supported an average of 10 projects per year with an average grant of just under \$15,000.

# Most Frequently Supported Institutions

Étant donnés has supported a wide range of institutions, from contemporary art centers in New Orleans and Cincinnati to art schools in Chicago and San Francisco. Of the 219 organizations that received funding in the program's first three decades, 74—around a third—were funded more than once. The 19 most frequently supported organizations (defined as those that received four or more grants) accounted for 44% of all supported projects. This top-heavy trend is likely due in part to increased awareness of the grant and application process among previous winners, making them more likely to reapply.

The list makes clear that Étant donnés consistently supports midsize institutions with a national profile. The fund is just as likely to support non-collecting institutions as collecting institutions (nine of the most frequently supported organizations have collections; 10 do not). The most consistently supported organization by far is Artists Space, the nonprofit, non-collecting art gallery in New York's SoHo neighborhood, which received its first grant in 1994. In a testament to the shifting nature of the American arts ecosystem, two of the most frequently supported institutions no longer exist: the alternative art space Art in General closed amid the pandemic in 2020 and the San Francisco Art Institute filed for bankruptcy and shuttered in 2022.

30 Years of Étant donnés

<b>Artists Space</b> New York, New York	11
<b>MoMA PS1</b> Long Island City, New York	
<b>Art in General</b> New York, New York	07
<b>Institute of Contemporary Art Boston</b> Boston, Massachusetts	
<b>Dia Art Foundation</b> New York, New York	05
<b>International Center of Photography</b> New York	
<b>Walker Art Centre</b> Minneapolis, Minnesota	
04	<b>CAPC Musée d'art contemporain de Bordeaux</b> Bordeaux, France
	<b>Contemporary Arts Center Cincinnati</b> Cincinnati, Ohio
	<b>Contemporary Arts Center New Orleans</b> New Orleans, Louisiana
	<b>Creative Time</b> New York, New York
	<b>Domaine de Kerguehennec</b> Bignan, France
	<b>Institute of Visual Arts, University of Wisconsin</b> Madison, Wisconsin
	<b>Le Consortium (Le Coin du Miroir association)</b> Dijon, France
	<b>Museum of Contemporary Art Los Angeles</b> Los Angeles, California
	<b>Performa</b> New York, New York
	<b>Renaissance Society, the University of Chicago</b> Chicago, Illinois
	<b>San Francisco Art Institute</b> San Francisco, California
	<b>SITE Santa Fe</b> Santa Fe, New Mexico

# Most Frequently Supported Artists

Of the 512 French artists supported by Étant donnés, 379 were supported once; 69 were supported twice; 33 were supported three times; 13 were supported four times; and 17 were supported five times or more. Those 17 artists listed here were featured in more than 30% of all supported projects.

The most frequently supported artist is also perhaps the most famous contemporary French artist working today: Pierre Huyghe. Huyghe, who is known for creating haunting videos and installations that explore our relationship to nature, the body, and technology, has been a consistent presence in the international art scene over the past three decades. In 1998 alone, he appeared in six U.S. shows supported by Étant donnés: two solo exhibitions and four group shows.

The top-heavy distribution of Étant donnés grants echoes the dynamics of the art market, in which 20 artists account for more than a quarter of all global auction sales. Notably, however, the top 17 artists supported by Étant donnés create primarily multimedia and installation art, which is less frequently supported by the art market than painting and sculpture and therefore tends to rely more heavily on public, institutional, and foundation funding. In fact, while eight of the artists on this list (including Huyghe) are represented by international blue-chip galleries that have a presence in the U.S., eight have no current gallery representation in the country whatsoever. (One artist, Chris Marker, is represented by a midsize American gallery, Peter Blum.)

These findings illustrate that while Étant donnés has concentrated a significant portion of its grants among a relatively small group of artists, it has also played a key role in supporting the work of those who might not otherwise receive regular exposure in the country through commercial gallery exhibitions and art fairs.

**Pierre Huyghe** *b. 1962*



**Philippe Parreno** *b. 1964*



**Marie-Ange Guilleminot** *b. 1960*



**Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster** *b. 1965*



**Matthieu Laurette** *b. 1970*



**Sophie Calle** *b. 1953*



**Annette Messager** *b. 1943*



**Claude Closky** *b. 1963*



**Bertrand Lavier** *b. 1949*



**Christian Boltanski** *1944–2021*



**Sarkis** *b. 1938*



**Chris Marker** *1921–2012*



**Mathieu Briand** *b. 1972*



**Mathieu Mercier** *b. 1970*



**Anri Sala** *b. 1974*



**Yto Barrada** *b. 1971*



**Didier Fiúza Faustino** *b. 1968*



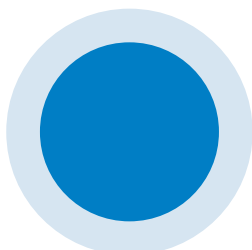
\*Note: Six projects did not have media recorded because they were research residencies

# Supported Projects by Medium

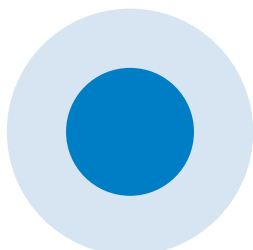
The majority of the projects supported by Étant donnés (52%) focused on multimedia work. The second most popular medium was installation (26%). Single-medium projects were far less frequently funded: photography comprised 5.5% of projects, new media (including video and digital media) comprised 4%, and sculpture comprised 3%. Notably, painting—by far the most popular medium in the art market as well as the predominant medium in American museum collections—is among the least frequently supported by the fund, representing just 1.6% of projects.

Étant donnés has supported multimedia and installation consistently over the course of its history. It has funded at least one and as many as 11 multimedia projects each year. By contrast, the fund supported only one photography project in the past decade; the medium appeared more consistently during the fund's first 20 years. Similarly, new media work was more frequently supported early in the fund's history; it has supported only two new media projects in the past decade.

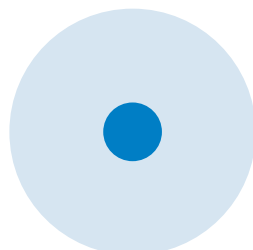
The program's strong emphasis on multimedia and installation speaks to the interests of French artists, who have a long history of interdisciplinary and conceptual engagement and whose work often combines elements of sculpture, photography, poetry, research, sound, video, and/or painting. In fact, none of the 17 artists most frequently supported by Étant donnés is a painter. Only one artist in the top 20—Fabrice Hybert, who appears at number 19— would likely consider painting his primary medium.



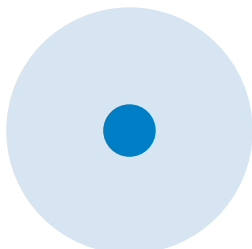
**186**  
**Multimedia**



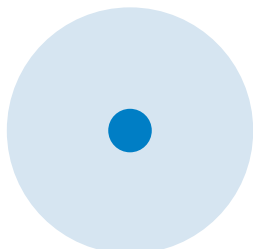
**95**  
**Installation**



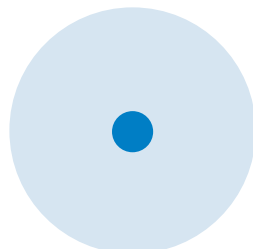
**20**  
**Photography**



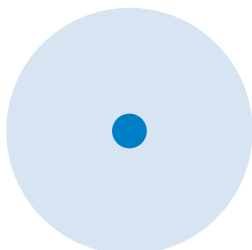
**16**  
**New Media**



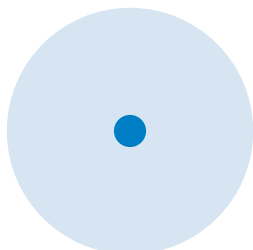
**11**  
**Sculpture**



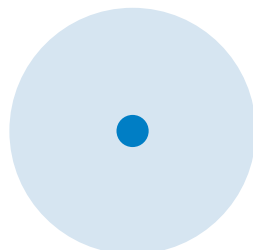
**10**  
**Art Publication**



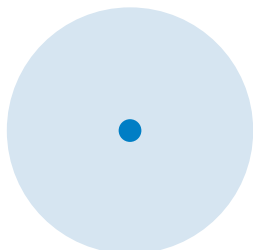
**7**  
**Performance**



**6**  
**Other**



**6**  
**Painting**



**3**  
**Design**

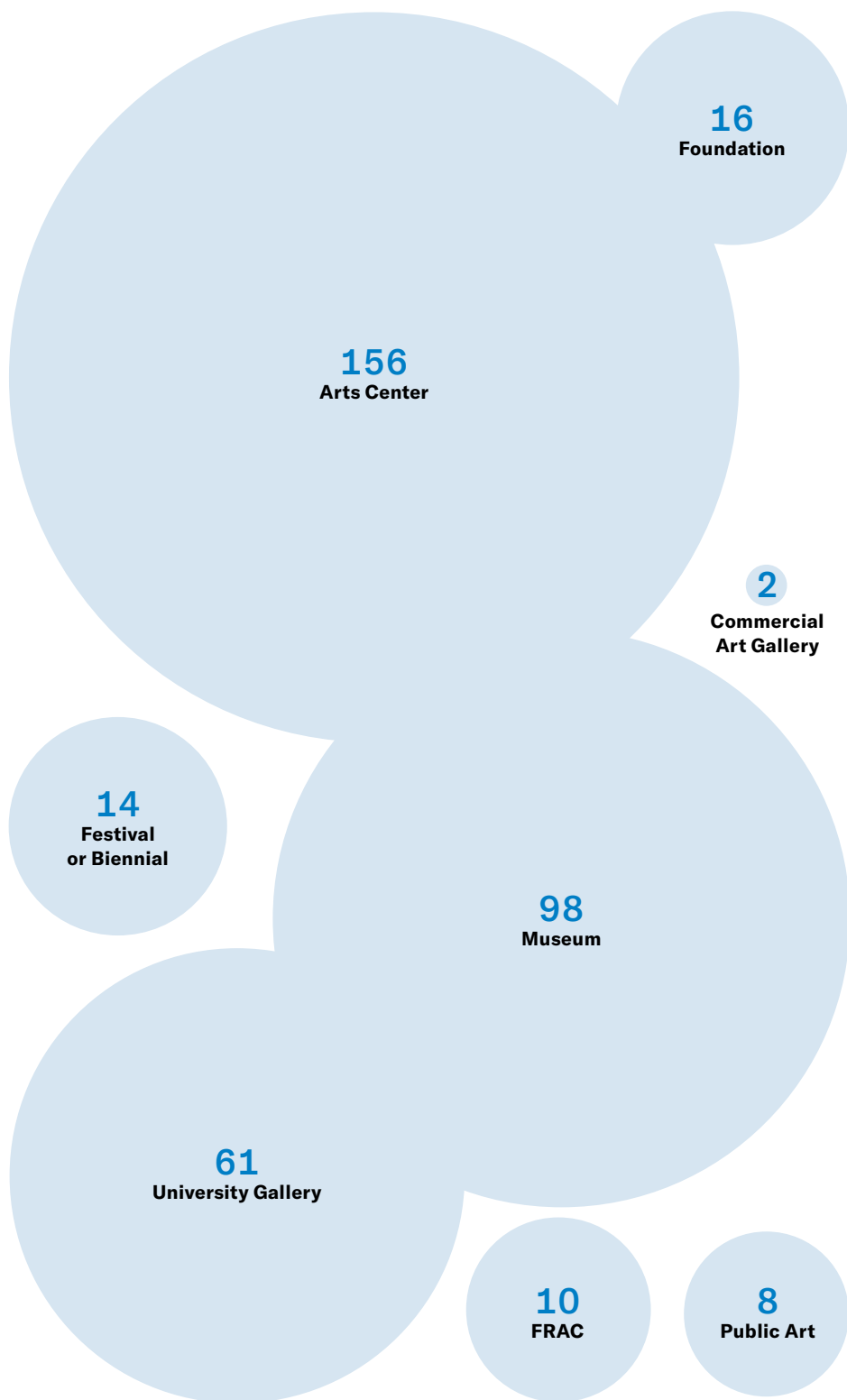
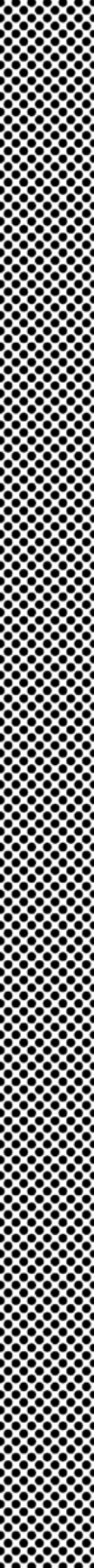
Total 360 Projects

\*Note: Six projects did not have media recorded because they were research residencies

# Projects by Type of Host Institution

Art centers—defined primarily as non-collecting art institutions—comprise 40% of the host institutions for Étant donnés-supported projects. The next most popular institution type is museums (defined as collecting art institutions), which hosted 27% of the supported projects. In third place is university galleries (arts venues affiliated with a college or university), which hosted 17% of supported projects.

Étant donnés stopped accepting applications from French art centers, museums, and FRACs (regional public contemporary art collections in France) between 2011 and 2023, when it shifted its focus to funding projects by French artists organized by U.S.-based institutions. Festivals and biennials became more popular venues after 2008, while public art organizations were more frequently supported in the first decade of Étant donnés's history. This shift echoes the rising popularity of the biennial as a format in the 2010s. Furthermore, prominent public art organizations and frequent grantees Creative Time and the Public Art Fund worked more frequently with French artists in the 1990s and early 2000s than they have in more recent years.

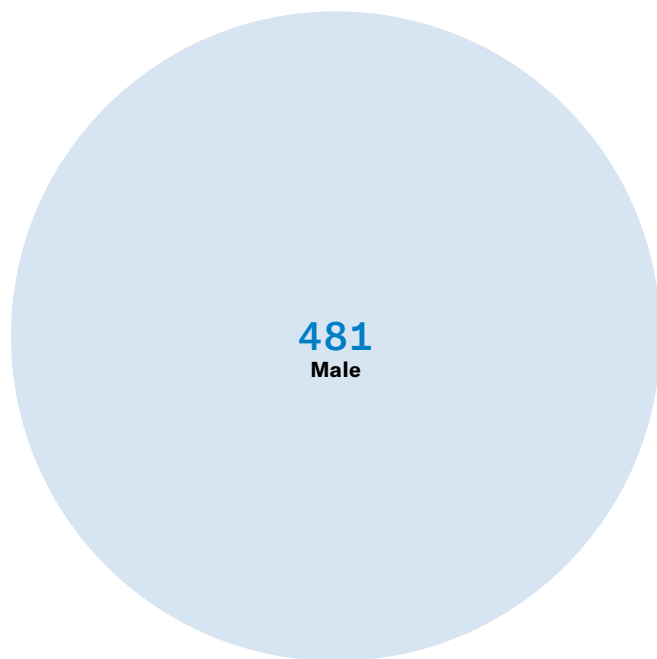


# Supported Artists by Gender

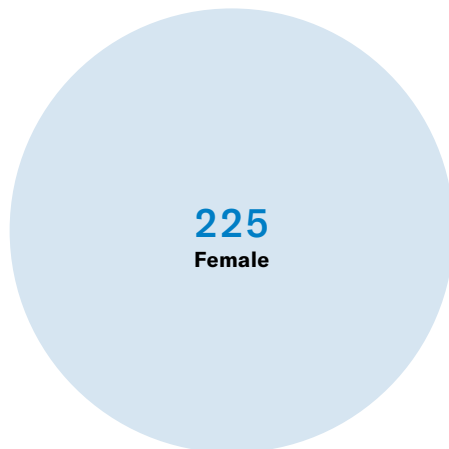
Étant donnés has supported around twice as many male artists as female artists over the course of its history. Thirty-two percent of the artists who have received grants since 1994 were female; 68% were male. The fund has supported two nonbinary artists, equivalent to 0.3% of the total. (Globally, 1% of adults describe themselves as transgender, nonbinary, or gender-fluid, according to the World Economic Forum.)

Men were significantly more likely to receive multiple grants from the fund. Of the 17 artists who received five or more grants, 12—just over 70%—were men. A similar trend holds among the 132 artists who received more than one grant. Eighty-nine, or approximately two-thirds of the group, were men.

The tide began to turn around five years ago, however. In 2019, 19 women and 16 men received grants. Since then, the support has been more equally distributed. The cohort of artists supported each year has reached, exceeded, or been close to parity every year since 2019.



**481**  
Male



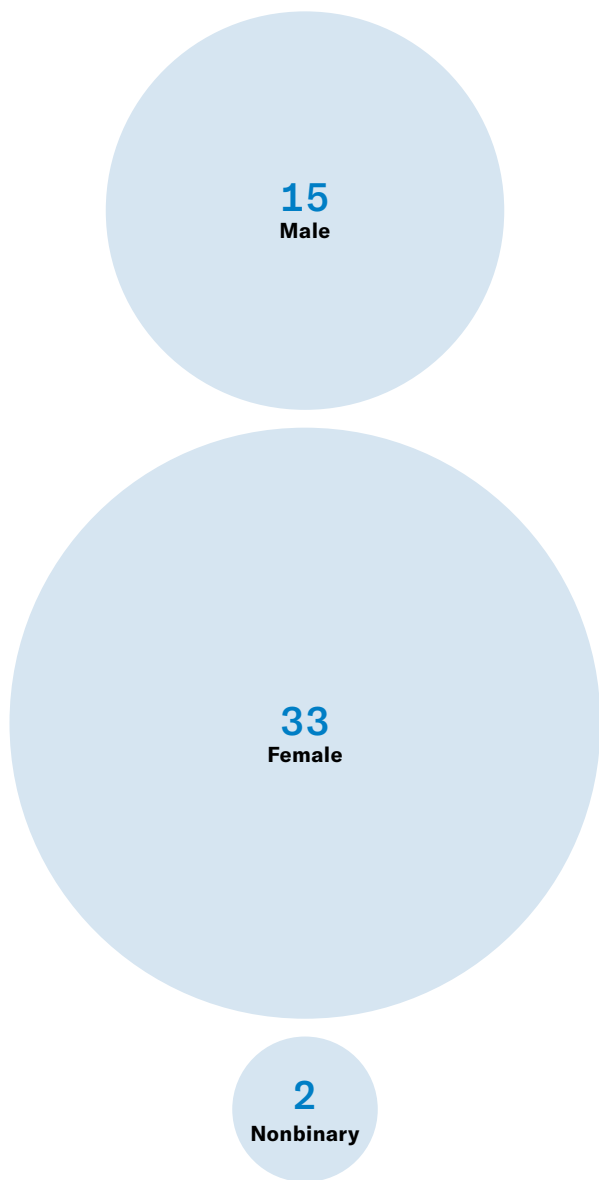
**225**  
Female

**2**  
Nonbinary

# Curatorial Fellows by Gender

The gender representation among curatorial fellows is markedly different from that of supported artists. On average, female curators outnumber male curators more than two to one. Over the fellowship's history, it has supported 66% female curators, 30% male curators, and 4% nonbinary curators. This ratio reflects broader trends in the field. According to the 2022 Art Museum Staff Demographic Survey,

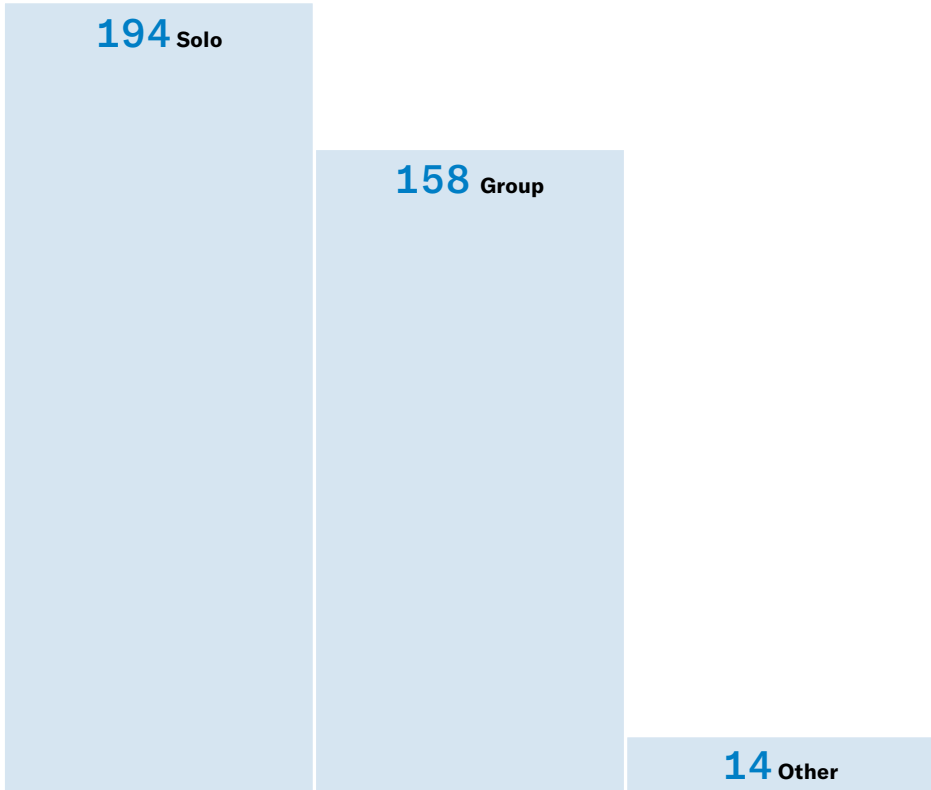
intellectual museum leadership in North America— which includes curators—is 75% female. (It should be noted that the sample size of 50 curatorial fellows is considerably smaller than that of the supported artists. The one curator who received two fellowships, Dean Daderko, was counted twice.) Female curators outnumbered male curators in 10 of the fellowship's 14 years.



Total 50

\*Note: Individuals are counted each time they receive a grant, including those who received multiple grants.

# Solo vs. Group Shows



Total 366

\*Note: "Other" refers to residencies or other alternative programming that does not fit these categories.

Étant donné qu'Étant donné a été un soutien significatif à la fois des présentations solo et des expositions de groupe qui mettent en avant au moins un artiste français. Les deux formats servent des objectifs stratégiques différents. Le premier présente un artiste à un public de manière approfondie, permettant aux spectateurs de découvrir son travail ou d'engager avec une nouvelle direction dans sa pratique. Le second présente un spectre plus large d'artistes français,

permet aux artistes français d'être considérés dans le contexte des mouvements artistiques globaux, et/ou permet au public d'entrer en contact avec des artistes français débutants qui peuvent ne pas avoir un corpus de travail suffisant pour justifier une exposition solo à grande échelle. Les expositions solo représentent 53% des projets soutenus; les expositions de groupe représentent 43%. Les 4% restants des projets sont des résidences ou d'autres formes de programmation alternative qui ne correspondent pas à ces catégories.

# US Projects by City

Étant donnés has supported projects organized by institutions in 87 different cities across the U.S. and France. The 57 cities in the U.S. include large metropolitan areas like New York and Los Angeles as well as smaller cities and suburban areas like Valencia, California; East Lansing, Michigan; Omaha, Nebraska; and Waltham, Massachusetts. The fund also supported institutions in 30 cities across France, from Paris to Rochechouart. (Étant donnés stopped supporting projects in France from 2011 to 2023 to focus its activities on the U.S.) In addition to the city of the organizing institution, the fund has also tracked the closest consulate to each project in the U.S., which offers an alternative lens through which to examine geographic distribution.

In both cases, one can see that the projects supported by Étant donnés have largely clung to the coasts of the United States. Nearly half (48%) of the supported U.S. projects were on the East Coast; almost a quarter (21%) were on the West Coast. Less than one-third (31%) were in the middle or the south of the country. New York is by far the most popular city, with 36% of projects in the United States. This is perhaps unsurprising since New York also has the largest share of art institutions in the country, accounting for 26% of arts institutions nationwide, according to a 2022 report from UBS and the economist Clare McAndrew. Notably, institutions in New York mounted 36% of all exhibitions in the U.S. between 2017 and 2021— the same proportion of projects supported by Étant donnés in New York.

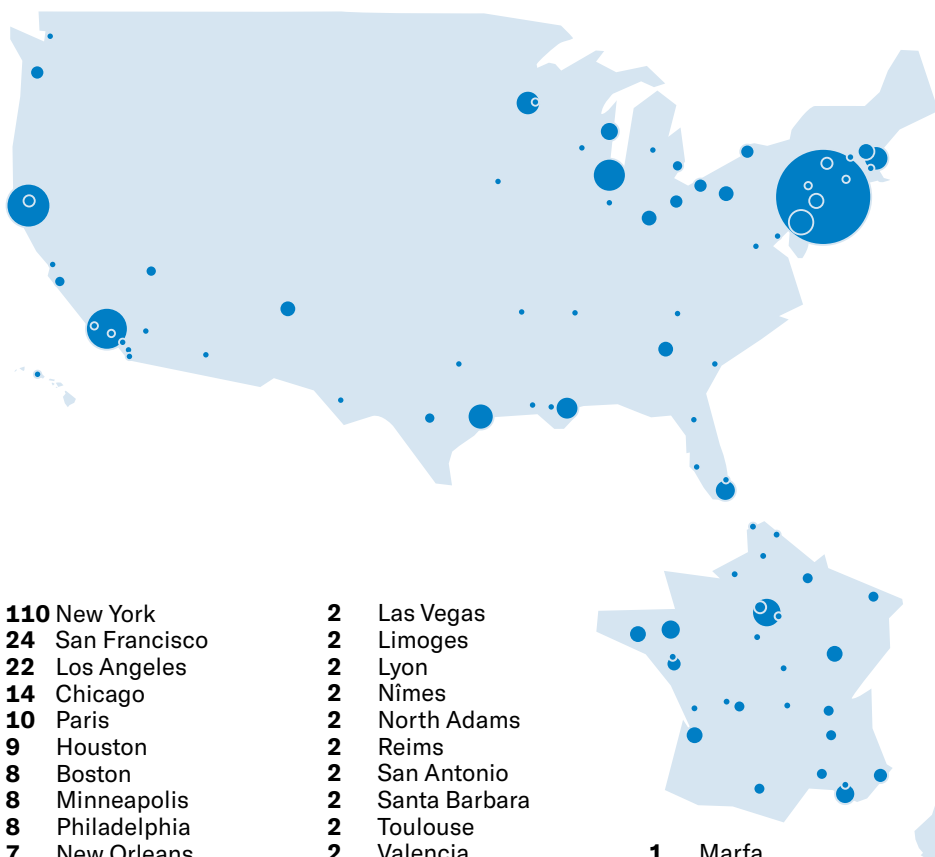
San Francisco and Los Angeles are a distant second and third to New York, accounting for 8% and 7% of supported projects respectively. The UBS survey found that San Francisco accounted for 4% of all exhibitions nationwide between 2017 and 2021 (a slightly smaller share than it does in Étant donnés' portfolio) and L.A. accounted for 7% (nearly equivalent to its share in Étant donnés' portfolio).

# Curatorial Fellows by City

New York		11
Los Angeles		4
Houston		3
2	Irvine	
	Miami	
	Milwaukee	
	Minneapolis	
	Portland	
	Saint Louis	
	San Francisco	
1	Atlanta	
	Austin	
	Bellevue	
	Boston	
	Cambridge	
	Columbus	
	Dallas	
	East Lansing	
	Fort Lauderdale	
	Hoboken	
	Madison	
	North Adams	
	Philadelphia	
	Riverside	
	San Antonio	
	Santa Barbara	
	Washington, DC	
	West Hollywood	

\*Note: This refers to where curators were based at the time of their grant application

# Creative Grants by City



**110** New York  
**24** San Francisco  
**22** Los Angeles  
**14** Chicago  
**10** Paris  
**9** Houston  
**8** Boston  
**8** Minneapolis  
**8** Philadelphia  
**7** New Orleans  
**6** Miami  
**5** Marseille  
**5** Milwaukee  
**5** Rennes  
**4** Atlanta  
**4** Bignan  
**4** Bordeaux  
**4** Cambridge  
**4** Cincinnati  
**4** Dijon  
**4** Pittsburgh  
**4** Santa Fe  
**3** Buffalo  
**3** Cleveland  
**3** Columbus  
**3** Nantes  
**3** Nice  
**3** Portland  
**3** Ridgefield  
**2** Berkeley  
**2** Chatou  
**2** Delme  
**2** Detroit

**2** Las Vegas  
**2** Limoges  
**2** Lyon  
**2** Nîmes  
**2** North Adams  
**2** Reims  
**2** San Antonio  
**2** Santa Barbara  
**2** Toulouse  
**2** Valencia  
**1** Aix en Provence  
**1** Amherst  
**1** Amiens  
**1** Asheville  
**1** Baton Rouge  
**1** Boca Raton  
**1** Calais  
**1** Carquefou  
**1** Chaillieux  
**1** Champaign  
**1** Dallas  
**1** East Lansing  
**1** Englewood  
**1** Gainesville  
**1** Harrison  
**1** Harrisonburg  
**1** Hartford  
**1** Honolulu  
**1** Irvine  
**1** La Jolla  
**1** Lafayette  
**1** Long Beach  
**1** Madison

**1** Marfa  
**1** Memphis  
**1** Middletown  
**1** Omaha  
**1** Orléans  
**1** Pontault-Combault  
**1** Pougues-Les-Eaux  
**1** Rochechouart  
**1** Saint Paul  
**1** San Diego  
**1** Santa Cruz  
**1** Santa Monica  
**1** Savannah  
**1** Seattle  
**1** Sotteville-Les-Rouen  
**1** Thiers  
**1** Tourcoing  
**1** Tucson  
**1** Waltham  
**1** Washington  
**1** Yucca Valley

Total 366



# Chapter V

## Impact Analysis

↑ Louisa Marajo : BoMb – de cendres s'élevant dans l'art d'aimer la Vie – cette fleur, ce cocotier chaotique  
© 2025 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris

There is no one way to measure the impact of a grant. Arts funding can serve as a springboard for artistic innovation, interpersonal connection, professional development, and community engagement. What's clear is that the impact—especially in the case of *Étant donnés*—is not isolated to one constituency. While the artist who is the subject of the grant may be at the center, the influence extends much further outward: to the institution that receives the funding, the curators who organize the project and/or receive a curatorial fellowship, and the public that encounters all of the work that results. As Alaina Claire Feldman, an *Étant donnés* grantee and the curator and director of the Mishkin Gallery at Baruch College, City University of New York, said: “I’ve had students come in and change their majors because of what they saw here... [you’re] changing the course of someone’s life.”

This chapter will examine the impact of *Étant donnés* grants from the perspective of the artist, the institution, and the curator.

# Impact for Artists

Étant donnés seeks to support French contemporary artists who have rarely, if ever, been shown in the United States. According to our analysis, the fund has helped realize the first U.S. exhibitions of 61 French artists. These American debuts (which include both solo and group shows) comprised 17% of all Étant donnés-funded artistic projects. More broadly, almost 40% of all funded projects represented a first of some kind for an artist—whether it was their first solo exhibition in the U.S., their first monograph, their first major performance in the U.S., their first exhibition in New York, their first show on the West Coast, or another significant distinction.

## Grants build confidence in a curator's approach.

— Carla Acevedo-Yates,  
curator, the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, and Étant donnés grantee

The role of Étant donnés is especially important because French contemporary artists remain relatively underexposed in the United States. According to a 2023 report from *Le Quotidien de l'Art* and Wondeur AI, French artists comprise just 1% of all artists exhibited in the country (compared with 77% American, 4% German, and 4% British.)

### A Chain of Support

Several of the artists who made their U.S. debuts with Étant donnés have gone on to become prominent figures on the international art-world stage. These include Thomas Hirschhorn (whose first U.S. exhibition was in 1998), Barthélémy Toguo (who first showed in the U.S. in 2000), Tatiana Trouvé (2007), and Guillaume Leblon (2007). Notably, all four of these artists were funded by Étant donnés more than once, showing not only that the fund sustained relationships with them over time but also that they sustained relationships with American curators, audiences, and institutions. Étant donnés also funded the first French exhibitions of prominent American artists including Lynn Herschman Leeson (2004), John Giorno (2004), Ann Craven (2008), and Sterling Ruby (2011).

Several artist recipients of Étant donnés grants noted that the introductions, connections, and networking that developed from the projects were as important as the projects themselves. They expressed a desire for the fund to offer more focused career

development support in the future. “The experience was really great,” the artist Guillaume Leblon said in an interview. “But it’s building up a relationship which was even more important.”

Leblon’s career in the U.S. began when, during a residency in New York in 2008, France’s cultural attaché took him on the road to visit art centers across the country. During a stop in Chicago, Leblon—whose sculptures use materials like zinc, stone, and water to examine our relationship with architecture and landscape—met the artist and curator Michelle Grabner.

## What Villa Albertine does for artists is so invaluable.

Amy O’Neill, artist and Étant donnés grantee

That marked the beginning of a fruitful collaboration. Grabner invited Leblon to develop a site-specific project at the experimental art space she co-founded, the Poor Farm, in 2011. Étant donnés supported Leblon’s residency and resulting exhibition with a \$10,000 grant. The project, which involved installing soil-encrusted concrete cubes in the gallery, was praised by *Artforum* as “the work that best epitomizes the ethos of the Poor Farm.” Grabner also included Leblon’s work in the FRONT Triennial she co-organized in Cleveland in 2018. (Étant donnés supported the triennial with a \$15,000 grant.) Having sensed a growing interest in his work in the U.S., Leblon and his family moved to New York in 2015.

### The Market Gap

There remains a gap between French artists’ presence in American art institutions and their presence in the American art market. Nearly one-third (32%) of French artists who received Étant donnés grants have never had a commercial exhibition or presentation in the U.S., according to our research. Meanwhile, 31% of grantee artists had shown with an American gallery before they received the grant for the first time.

Eighty-eight artists from the French art scene—17% of the total—had their first commercial gallery exhibition in the U.S. after they were awarded a grant by Étant donnés. (An additional seven artists participated in an art fair with an American commercial gallery after their first grant, but have not yet appeared in a solo or group gallery show.) It is impossible to determine with certainty whether the grant, or even the exhibition it supported, played a role in an artist securing an American gallery exhibition. But the

trend shows that Étant donnés supported a significant number of artists before the commercial art world did, and helped to increase exposure and awareness of their work in the U.S.

### Collaboration on the Ground

In interviews, several artists said that they took advantage of the time they spent abroad to collaborate with local experts, artisans, and residents in the development of new work. Virgile Ittah, one half of the Berlin, Paris, and Tokyo-based art collective Ittah Yoda, traveled to Massachusetts and Connecticut to collect mica and semi-precious minerals that the duo transformed into pigments for their first U.S. exhibition at Foreign & Domestic in New York in 2022. The artist Liv Schulman worked with amateur actors in Boise, Idaho, to create a film, *The New Inflation*, as part of her project with the Bemis Center for Contemporary Art. “All of them were teaching me how it is to be alive as middle-class people in the United States,” Schulman said. “I’m still in touch with the actors. It’s a good memory for all of us.”

The American artist Amy O’Neill created a monumental sculpture of an old woman’s shoe inspired by the English nursery rhyme, *There Was an Old Woman Who Lived in a Shoe*, for the festival Le Printemps de Septembre in Toulouse in 2009. (The exhibition received a \$20,000 grant from Étant donnés.) O’Neill collaborated with opera prop designers outside Paris to help develop the fantastical, larger-than-life sculpture. “Working with French craftspeople is such a win-win because the quality is so high,” O’Neill said. “As a young artist starting out, that [support] was invaluable to the type of work I do, which is difficult to put a value on.”

The connections artists made as part of their grant-supported projects wove their way into the fabric of their work, and sometimes even their lives, creating enduring bonds between French and American creatives of all stripes.

## Impact for Institutions

The impact of Étant donnés grants on institutions that receive them is shaped by many factors, including the size of the grant, the size of the institution, and the nature of the project. But some themes have emerged across institutions through interviews with stakeholders in the museum world. Many praise the Étant donnés eligibility criteria, which enables the fund to be strategic about what it supports. They also note that the grant’s impact has been curtailed by rising production costs and ballooning budgets.

## Wise Criteria

The eligibility requirements for Étant donnés grants have helped the fund maintain relevance and sustain impact over time, according to curators and museum leaders. The fact that institutions apply on behalf of artists to support shows that are already on the schedule ensures that the money has real-world impact in a relatively short time frame. It also confers agency on the institutions, who are deeply invested in the success of each project. Mary Ceruti, the director of the Walker Art Center, which has received five grants from Étant donnés since the fund's inception, first became aware of the program when she led SculptureCenter in Long Island City. "When you're looking to fund projects, Étant donnés always came up," she said. "The fact that there were funds specifically dedicated to U.S. institutions made everyone aware. As a curator, you're not programming French artists because there's funding available, [but] you are hoping you can align every once and a while."

Ceruti also noted that the expansive definition Étant donnés offers for what it means to be a "French artist" (to qualify for the grant, an artist must be of French nationality or have lived in France for more than five years) is important to the program's success and impact. Many artists who were based in, but not born in, France have received influential grants, including Chantal Akerman, Sheila Hicks, Barthélémy Toguo, and Huang Yong Ping. "As we become more migratory, to not be as strict about that nationalism is increasingly important," Ceruti said.

Having support through  
Étant donnés really  
opened doors. —Dean Daderko, chief curator,  
Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis, and Étant donnés curatorial fellow

## Strategic Acquisitions

Some institutions ended up acquiring work from Étant donnés-funded shows, which extended and expanded the impact of the grants. Amy O'Neill's sculpture *Old Woman's Shoe*, which was produced and exhibited in Toulouse with support from Étant donnés, was later acquired by France's national collections and has been on view multiple times across the country. In conjunction with the 1995 exhibition "Bordering on Fiction: Chantal

Akerman's D'Est," the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis acquired the 25-channel video installation at the center of the show. "The fact that that work is represented in the U.S., both in collections and programming, is significant," Ceruti said.

### Rising Budgets

Over time, the number of applications Étant donnés has received for exhibition support has decreased, from an average of 30 in its early years to 21 over the past five years. Experts said this decrease might be due to a number of factors. Crucially, the program initially launched two calls for applications per year and later went down to one. Other reasons may include shifting curatorial and institutional priorities, changing timelines for exhibition fundraising, confusion about the distinction between the residency and exhibition funding opportunities, and the cost-benefit of spending time applying for smaller grants while production costs are rising precipitously.

Indeed, the impact of Étant donnés grants on institutions has been limited by the skyrocketing costs of producing exhibitions and other artistic projects in the U.S. While Étant donnés grants have modestly grown in size over the past three decades, they have not kept pace with inflation and rising exhibition budgets. Between 1994 and 2023, the average budget for an Étant donnés-funded project grew 169% (from \$44,638 to \$120,000). The average size of an Étant donnés grant, meanwhile, grew 46% over that same period (from \$12,682 to \$18,571).

Carla Acevedo-Yates, a curator at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, who organized the Étant donnés-funded exhibition "Forecast Form: Art in the Caribbean Diaspora, 1990s-To-day," said in an interview that rising production costs have a direct impact on the show that audiences end up seeing. She estimated that the fee to ship French artist Julien Creuzet's work to the museum was more than the \$5,000 grant she received from Étant donnés. To keep costs down, she ended up choosing an older work that was already in the U.S. rather than selecting something new from the artist's studio outside Paris. "I need to be very conscientious about not being over budget when museums are contracting economically," Acevedo-Yates said.

Étant donnés has developed a model that ensures museums are committed to the success of their projects, but its future strategy may need to factor in the mounting costs of exhibition production.

# Impact for Curators

Étant donnés has awarded 50 fellowships to curators across the United States since the program's inception in 2006. It has supported curators based in 28 different cities, from Saint Louis, Missouri, to San Antonio, Texas, to Santa Barbara, California. Twenty-two percent of the recipients were based in New York, 8% were in Los Angeles, and 6% were in Houston. In total, the fund has spent \$137,000 on curatorial fellowships over the past 17 years. The average grant is \$3,000 and is intended to be put toward curatorial research in France. Trips have ranged in length from a few days to a few months.

I wouldn't have been able to  
do the work  
that I do without  
the support of the  
French Cultural Services.

Arden Sherman, senior curator of contemporary art,  
Norton Museum of Art, and Étant donnés grantee

The program has also served as a case study for effective partnerships. Seeking to expand its applicant pool, Étant donnés teamed up with Independent Curators International in 2023. In the wake of that collaboration, the curatorial fellowship saw a significant increase in applications, from an average of six (between 2016 and 2022) to 16 (in 2023).

## A Long Tail

A wide variety of projects have been enriched by these trips, although they often take years to come to fruition and sometimes evolve considerably in form or subject matter from their original concept. In 2016, the MASS MoCA curator Denise Markonish won a fellowship to research the French artist Laurent Grasso, who creates installations, sculptures, and other works that examine science, natural phenomena, and perception. More than half a decade later, she co-wrote the artist's latest monograph, published by Rizzoli in February 2024. *Laurent Grasso: Time Travel* focuses on the artist's work as it relates to the theme of time, including his "Studies into the Past" series, which he creates using historically accurate techniques.

The curator Dean Daderko secured a grant in 2020 to travel to Paris, Nantes, Saint-Malo, and the island of Jersey to research an exhibition about how artists' political affiliations inform their work. The curator was initially interested in the multidisciplinary Moroccan-French contemporary artist Bouchra Khalili and the French surrealist photographer Claude Cahun. Although Khalili had moved to the U.S. between the time that Daderko secured the grant and traveled abroad (several earlier attempts were delayed by the pandemic), the trip remained extremely influential.

In Jersey, where Cahun and her partner Marcel Moore moved during World War II and engaged in undercover Nazi resistance, Daderko recalled being “a little brazen—I just walked up and knocked on the door” of the house the couple once shared. Daderko then went around back and snuck into the garden to take a few photos. “Many of the images that Cahun and Moore took of each other were in that garden,” Daderko said. “That was a pretty incredible experience.”

An exhibition of Cahun's work is now in development at the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis, where Daderko became chief curator in 2023. “It takes what I was thinking would be part of a bigger group exhibition and reframes it for Moore and Cahun,” Daderko said. “It seems really important to be able to do that now, especially being in a state [Missouri] where all these legislative issues are coming up opposing self-determination for LGBTQIA identities.”

### Mission Alignment

A number of the projects that came out of the curatorial fellowships ended up furthering Étant donnés's mission of supporting artists who had not had significant exposure in the U.S. With support from Étant donnés, the curators Kerry Brougher and Philippe Vergne traveled to France in 2007 to research the first major retrospective of the work of Yves Klein in the U.S. in nearly 30 years. The show they co-organized traveled to the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in Washington, DC, in 2010 and the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis in 2011. As the art historian Nuit Banai wrote in *Artforum* at the time, “The curators... had a monumental task: that of critically examining Klein's aesthetic identity from a contemporary perspective while introducing the artist to a public largely unfamiliar with his practice.”

The curator Ruba Katrib used the Étant donnés fellowship in 2009 to develop “Economies,” the first comprehensive U.S. exhibition of the Paris-based collective Claire Fontaine. The show

was held at the Museum of Contemporary Art, North Miami, in 2010. Fontaine, whose work explores questions of value, communication, and cultural difference, has gone on to have three additional solo exhibitions at American art institutions. Their work was also included in and inspired the title of the 2024 Venice Biennale, “Foreigners Everywhere.”

Finally, after the curator Leigh Arnold encountered the work of the artist Anne Le Troter during a curatorial fellowship in France in 2016, she organized the artist’s first U.S. commission—and her first work in the English language—at the Nasher Sculpture Center in Dallas in 2019. The sound installation, titled *The Four Fs: Family, Finance, Faith, and Friends*, is a compilation of hundreds of audio samples from interviews with employees of and donors to an American sperm bank. (Le Troter came up with the idea while flying from France to Dallas for a site visit; on the flight, she was seated next to a person who worked for a fertility clinic.)

For Arnold, the curatorial fellowship—and the show that resulted—were significant and inextricably linked. “It was the first show [at the Nasher] that was pitched by me, organized by me,” she said. “That trained me to understand that to be a curator doesn’t mean just picking objects and putting them on view. It means supporting the artists you are working with in a real way.”

### Compounding Impact

Several curators who received fellowships went on to organize exhibitions that were also supported by Étant donnés, compounding the fellowship’s impact. Natasha Marie Llorens secured a grant from the fund in 2018 to travel to France to research contemporary art from Algeria and its diaspora. The resulting exhibition, “Waiting for Omar Gatlatto” at the Wallach Art Gallery at Columbia University, received a \$15,000 artistic project grant the following year.

Similarly, David Familian received a curatorial fellowship to research the pioneering Hungary-born French digital artist Vera Molnár in 2019. “Vera Molnár: Variations”—the artist’s first U.S. retrospective—later received a \$20,000 artistic project grant from the Étant donnés fund. The exhibition opened at the Beall Center for Art + Technology in Irvine, California in 2022.

Beyond curatorial research grants, artistic production grants can also have an important impact on a curator’s career and scholarly trajectory. Funding from Étant donnés can galvanize internal support for a project that might not otherwise be a priority. “Insti-

tutions listen to granters,” said the curator Carla Acevedo-Yates, who organized the 2022 exhibition “Forecast Form: Art in the Caribbean Diaspora, 1990s–Today” at the MCA Chicago. “I work with a lot of under-acknowledged Caribbean artists who haven’t shown in institutions. [Grant support] helps move this work through the institution.”

To have the support of  
an institution like  
Villa Albertine,  
suddenly you have other  
people who feel like,  
‘Ah, OK, we should  
do this.’  
You have a ripple effect.

Marguerite Humeau, artist and Étant donnés grantee

With even relatively small amounts of funding, Étant donnés has managed to move the needle in art history, setting curators on a path toward deeper engagement with the work of French and French diasporic artists.




# Chapter VI

## Wider Context and Opportunities

↑ Raphaël Barontini : The Golden March, Installation view, SCAD Museum of Art  
© 2025 Raphaël Barontini / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris

The art world is very different today than it was when *Étant donnés* was conceived in 1994. By almost every measure, the cultural sphere has grown significantly since then: there are more artists, more galleries, more biennials, more institutions, and more collectors active worldwide today than there were 30 years ago. In the mid-1990s, art fairs were just beginning to multiply; there were fewer than 100 such events in operation. By 2023, the number of art fairs worldwide had ballooned to 359, according to the Art Basel and UBS Art Market Report. Today, the art industry is more international, more professionalized, and more around-the-clock than ever before.

The dawn of the internet age and the proliferation of remote work in the wake of the pandemic also changed the way the industry operates. Today's curators are more likely to encounter the work of an unfamiliar artist on Instagram than in the pages of an art magazine—or even in person. Travel budgets for curators, writers, and other cultural practitioners have diminished, according to sources interviewed for this report, while the attention and resources lavished upon the art market have grown. Juries for awards and fellowships, including that of *Étant donnés*, now regularly convene on Zoom rather than in person. All of these changes facilitate faster and broader connections among geographically diverse stakeholders—and make it more challenging to foster connections that are intimate, deep, and long-lasting.



This chapter explores how the art world has evolved—since Étant donnés began and especially over the past few years—by examining three key areas: the French art market, the jury process for awards and grants, and the most urgent needs of the art sector. By laying out the most important changes in the field and exploring how they relate to Étant donnés, the fund can ensure it is continually evolving to meet the moment and expand its impact in the decades to come.

# The French Art Market

The art system is propped up by three pillars: institutional support (from museums, art centers, and nonprofits), private support (from galleries and collectors), and public support (from governments and other public institutions). All three pillars are key to the longevity of an artist's career and the health of local and national art scenes. Although Étant donnés operates between the institutional and public sectors, its activities can have a ripple effect on the private sector; at the same time, its strategies must be informed by the realities of the market.

Sometimes, the relationship between a project supported by Étant donnés and an artist's commercial success is concrete and direct. After working with the French artist Alex Burke on the Étant donnés-funded exhibition "Dust Specks in the Sea," the curator Arden Sherman introduced Burke to his first gallery, Loeve&Co in Paris. The artist had his first solo show there in spring 2024.

Other times, the chain of events is longer or more difficult to trace. Three years after Leigh Arnold, the Nasher Art Center curator, traveled to France as part of the Étant donnés curatorial fellowship, she organized an exhibition of the work of the multimedia artist Anne Le Troter, whom she discovered on the trip. When the art dealer Frank Elbaz saw the show, it was the final push he needed to represent her, according to Arnold. Le Troter had her first show with the gallery in Paris in 2023.

In recent years, Villa Albertine has cultivated ties with commercial galleries outside of the Étant donnés grant program as well. The Étant donnés Prize, which launched during the Armory Show in 2019, became the annual CPGA-Étant donnés Prize at Art Basel Miami Beach in 2022. It awards \$15,000 to a gallery presenting the work of an artist from the French art scene at the fair. (The prize money is split between the artist and the gallery.) Villa Albertine also regularly promotes American gallery exhibitions of French artists to its audience and facilitates partnerships between galleries and artists participating in its residency program. In 2024, Villa Albertine arranged a program of gallery tours and studio visits of French artists during the Armory Show.

As Étant donnés enters its fourth decade, the French art market is undergoing significant changes: it has grown considerably in size, especially in recent years, and become more attractive to international businesses and clients. This evolution may inform how French artists are supported, discovered, and received both at home and abroad—an essential part of the mission of Étant donnés.

## A Market Growth Spurt in France

In 2021, France's auction sales jumped 88% year over year, to a record high of \$1.2 billion, according to the Artnet Intelligence Report. Experts attribute this windfall to multiple factors. The broader market recovered from pandemic lockdowns during this period (albeit at a slower rate than France). The country also benefited from diminished commercial activity in the United Kingdom after the implementation of Brexit in 2020, which made it more complicated to buy and sell art in Britain.

Commercial galleries have flocked to Paris over the past five years. A range of international dealerships, from blue-chip heavyweights like David Zwirner, Hauser & Wirth, and White Cube, to midsize outfits like Mendes Wood DM, Friedman Benda, and Esther Schipper, opened in Paris between 2019 and 2024. Dealers cited as draws the rich and sophisticated local collector base and top-quality museums and private collections (particularly the Fondation Louis Vuitton and Bourse de Commerce - Pinault Collection). Brexit was also a factor. "Brexit changes the game," David Zwirner told the *Financial Times* in 2019. "My London gallery will be a British gallery, not a European one. I am European and I would like a European gallery, too."

Art fairs have also played an important role in France's market ascent. Nine percent of all art fairs in 2023 were held in France (behind only the U.K., with 22%, and the U.S., with 25%), according to the Art Basel and UBS Art Market Report. The arrival of Art Basel to Paris in October 2022 brought market activity and buzz in France to a new high. The excitement continued this year, when the fair moved to the newly renovated Grand Palais, which afforded larger booths and a 25% increase in the number of exhibitors.

## Commercial Contraction Worldwide

From 2023 to 2024, the art market contracted internationally, but the decline did not erase all the growth the French trade had experienced in 2021 and 2022. French dealers reported an average decline in sales of 3% in 2023, according to the Art Basel and UBS Art Market Report. Still, 90% of French respondents said sales remained above 2019 levels. Auction revenue in France, meanwhile, fell just below 2019 levels, but remained higher than it had been every other year since at least 2013, according to the Artnet Intelligence Report.

Despite the broader market downturn, auction houses are continuing to invest in France. Last year, around as many lots were

sold at auction in France as in the U.K. (each accounted for around 10% of total global auction sales). In October, Sotheby's relocated its Paris headquarters to the grand former home of Galerie Bernheim-Jeune. Its new French flagship extends across 10,800 square feet, a 30% increase from the size of its previous home.

France's government has also developed policies to encourage market activity in the country. Some art professionals were anxious about how the government would choose to implement the E.U. Directive 2022/542, which goes into effect in 2025 and aims to bring VAT regimes across the continent into closer alignment. The government opted to maintain a reduced VAT rate of 5.5% for imported works of art and to extend that rate to the majority of eligible transactions on artworks in France. The move is expected to make France an even more attractive place to do business for international dealers and collectors.

### **French Artists' Place in the Market**

It remains to be seen just how much France's growing position as a market center will affect the financial prospects of French contemporary artists directly. To be sure, international collectors, curators, and other art professionals are more likely to encounter the work of French artists in France than if they were doing business in any other country. But as the 2023 report from *Le Quotidien de l'Art* and *Wondeur AI* found, French galleries and institutions are less supportive of their national scene than peer nations. French galleries show 54% French artists, whereas U.K. galleries show 62% British artists, German galleries show 72% German artists, and American galleries—the most protectionist of them all—show 81% American artists. Plus, what distinguishes French contemporary art is its complexity, unruliness, and unwillingness to fit into the kind of neat boxes favored by the market.

"French artists don't necessarily serve a market—where Germans do, British do," said the curator Arden Sherman in an interview. "The work is messy, conceptual, and doesn't necessarily package up nicely or cleanly. That is complicated for a global marketplace. And we are so market-driven—we are so obsessed with the market."

Only one artist from France or its diaspora, the American-Ivorian painter Aboudia, has appeared on the Artnet Intelligence Report's list of top-selling ultra-contemporary artists (defined as artists born after 1974) at auction since 2020. French artists are more prominent top sellers in the postwar sectors: Chinese-French painters Chu Teh-Chun and Zao Wou-Ki, for example, were among the top 10 best-selling postwar artists in

2021. French artists including Claude Monet and Paul Cézanne are also, unsurprisingly, consistent high-performers in the Impressionist and Modern category.

Notably, the French artists who appear most frequently and perform best at auction are painters, whereas Étant donnés has focused its support on multimedia artists. (None of the 17 artists most frequently supported by Étant donnés is a painter.) Curators and artists say entities like Étant donnés serve as a powerful bulwark against the contemporary art market's tendency toward homogeneity—in terms of style, medium, and substance. “The market will always support the painters,” said Mary Ceruti, the director of the Walker Art Center. “Focusing on things that are not so part of the market helps seed different kinds of practices that need more international support.”

There is potential to capitalize on the increased presence of art-industry participants in France by exposing them to a broader swathe of artists than those most frequently rewarded by the art-market ecosystem. In this way, the support provided by Étant donnés to artists whose work defies easy market categorization boosts not only French artists, but the quality and complexity of contemporary art discourse worldwide.

# Jury Processes

Grant-giving arts organizations often rely on a rotating cast of experts to review applications and select the most compelling projects for funding (see full list in annex). The jury process facilitated by Étant donnés, like those of most of its peers, has evolved considerably over the past three decades. In the program's early years, jury members would travel to France for several days to discuss and debate the applications in person. During the pandemic, nearly all juries shifted to virtual meetings. Étant donnés, like most of its peers, retained this format after lockdowns were lifted.

The shift to virtual meetings has lowered the costs associated with the jury and made it easier for committee members with busy schedules to participate. It has also helped ensure geographic diversity in the jury. Nevertheless, there are trade-offs: virtual meetings also make it more difficult for artistic committee members to form long-lasting connections with one another, according to those interviewed.

As the Étant donnés jury process has evolved, it continues to adhere to many of the industry's best practices. Below, we lay out those best practices based on interviews with industry stakeholders and a survey of the field. We also illustrate how the best practices align with Étant donnés's own process.

## **Clear Eligibility Criteria to Filter Applications**

Effective selection processes begin with concise and clear eligibility criteria made visible to all prospective applicants. Criteria should be quantifiable where possible, any terminology should be defined, and language should be consistent across all published materials. The first layer of the selection process involves filtering applications that do not meet the eligibility criteria.

In the case of Étant donnés, eligibility criteria in recent years is as follows: Projects must relate to the visual arts in the broadest sense (painting, sculpture, and photography are eligible, as are performance art, video, installation, digital art, and multimedia work). Solo and group exhibitions, symposiums, and research initiatives will be considered. At least one artist involved in the project must be of French nationality or have lived in France for more than five years. Grants may not exceed 50% of the overall project budget. Industry stakeholders have praised the criteria's clarity as well as its expansive definition of "visual arts" and "French artists."

## Precise Criteria and Overall Objectives for Evaluating Applications

Juries should be given not only a clear rubric with which to evaluate proposals, but also an understanding of the organization's underlying priorities and broader mission. In other words, jury members should be told not only *what* they are looking for in applications, but also *how* to measure it and *why* it is important.

Some organizations, like the Tieger Foundation, which supports contemporary visual art curators in the United States, and the VIA Art Fund, which supports the production of public art worldwide, measure the strength of applications based on how closely they align with their organization's foundational objectives. VIA Art Fund notes on both its website and its applications that proposals will be evaluated according to how well the projects exemplify the organization's three core values: artistic production, thought leadership, and public engagement.

In the case of Étant donnés, prospective applicants and jury members are told that the program seeks to support French contemporary artists who have rarely, if ever, been shown in the United States. They are also told that the committee gives priority to coproductions, new commissions, and projects developed across several American cities or in partnership with French institutions. These priorities can be distilled into three core values: new audiences, institutional collaboration, and artistic experimentation. These tenets can be used to evaluate applications for both artistic projects and curatorial fellowships. All three underpin the program's overall mission to facilitate cultural and artistic exchange between the United States and France.

## Consistent Application Materials

To enable informed decision-making, jury members said that they liked to have access to a project summary, imagery of work by the artists, and budgetary details for the project. (Étant donnés always compiles and distributes this information to its artistic committee members.) Imagery is a particularly important component because it enables jury members to familiarize themselves with the work of artists they may not already know, modulating for the tendency to fall back on or prioritize already-familiar names.

Some juries, including that of the Villa Albertine residency program, also ask artists to submit videos of themselves, offering another entry point for evaluators and providing applicants

who are not skilled writers an alternative way to communicate. Jury members say that regardless of what kind of materials are requested, it is important for the materials to be consistent across all applicants in order to ensure fairness in the evaluation process.

Some organizations—especially those that provide larger grants—require finalists to make an in-person or virtual presentation to jury members. It has also become increasingly common for funders that ask artists to commit significant time and resources to their applications to provide an honorarium to each finalist not chosen as an awardee. (Organizations that do so include Artadia and the Trellis Art Fund.) There remains no expectation in the field for funders to provide honoraria to cultural organizations that apply for funding on behalf of artists. Jury members, however, should always be paid for their time, as they are by Étant donnés.

### **Ranked Voting Rather Than Approval Voting**

Former Étant donnés artistic committee members and other experienced jury members interviewed for this report said that ranking was their preferred way to evaluate applications ahead of a formal discussion. Unlike a more restrictive and binary up-or-down vote, ranked voting allows jury members to judge how closely each application meets the criteria and aligns with the organization's broader goals and values. Some juries, including that of Étant donnés, ask members to provide multiple rankings for one project (individual rankings for several different criteria) rather than an overall project ranking. A program officer then tallies up these scores to create a list of finalists that jury members discuss in their meetings.

### **Built-in Flexibility**

While it is critical for organizations to have clear criteria for applicants and to articulate the key values that underpin the selection process, jury members said it is also important to remain flexible so that funders could respond to the field's evolving needs and the particularities of each year's applicant pool. This flexibility is built into the Étant donnés jury process in multiple ways. Artistic committee members can opt to fulfill an applicant's request for funding fully or partially; they can also adjust the number of projects funded each year. The final decision on the precise distribution of funds—how much money is given and to how many projects—is finalized by Étant donnés staff based on the recommendations of the artistic committee.

## Conclusion

Although the Étant donnés jury process has changed over the past 30 years, many key components—including the filtering by a program officer, the ranking by the artistic committee, and an active, rich discussion among jury participants—have remained consistent. Arden Sherman, who served on the jury in 2020, said she “loved” the process and found it “really easy.” Alaina Claire Feldman, another grantee and former jury member, praised the format for its ability to foster “constructive arguments.” To improve the process further, she suggested the discussion be broken into two sessions so there is more time to reflect before the committee offers its final recommendations.

Looking ahead, Étant donnés can build on the strength of its jury process by monitoring the industry’s evolving best practices and clearly articulating the key values that drive the artistic committee’s selection: new audiences, institutional collaboration, and artistic experimentation.

# Industry Needs

The state of arts funding in the United States has changed significantly over the past 30 years. Public arts funding has diminished, costs of operation have increased, and private donors are experiencing growing demands for their capital outside the cultural sector. All the while, a new generation of philanthropists is preparing to inherit trillions of dollars in what is known as the Great Wealth Transfer—and they have different priorities for giving than their parents did.

In this section, we explore the biggest changes that have taken place in the realms of public and private arts funding over the course of the 30-year history of Étant donnés. We also lay out five key areas that Étant donnés stakeholders have identified as important to support in order to ensure the continued vibrancy of the cultural ecosystem for decades to come.

## Public Arts Funding in the United States

Étant donnés was founded during a moment of economic prosperity in the United States. Due to a combination of political changes and economic turbulence, public arts funding in the country has diminished significantly in the decades since. The National Endowment for the Arts, the U.S. government agency dedicated to supporting excellence across artistic disciplines, had a budget of \$207 million in 2024, compared with \$170.2 million in 1994. Accounting for inflation, the NEA's 1994 budget is equivalent to \$361.3 million—42% *more* than it is in 2024.

State arts agencies, which promote the arts locally and strive to reduce barriers to cultural participation, have also seen their resources shrink, according to a report released by the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies. Accounting for inflation, the combined budgets of all 50 state arts agencies was \$740.9 million in 2024, down 5% from 2001, the most recent year for which information is available.

There are also more museums competing for funding than there were 30 years ago. In the mid-1990s, the Institute of Museum and Library Services estimated there were 17,500 museums in the United States (defined broadly to include museums of all disciplines as well as botanical gardens, planetariums, children's museums, and zoos). By the 2020s, that number had nearly doubled, to 33,000.

These trends suggest that the role of an organization like Étant donnés—which represents an alliance between public French

organizations and private donors in France and the United States—is even more vital now than it was three decades ago.

### Private Arts Funding in the United States

While public arts funding in the United States has experienced a relatively steady decline over the past 30 years, private arts funding has been more volatile. After a growth spurt in the 1990s and 2000s, private contributions slowed in the 2010s and are reaching a critical inflection point in the 2020s.

Unlike many European countries, America relies heavily on private funding to support the arts. Contributions from private donors typically account for the largest share of museums' operating revenue (around 40%, on average, in 2016), according to the American Alliance of Museums.

For decades, private donors fueled extensive growth of museum collections and buildings, as well as the construction of numerous new concert halls, theaters, and other cultural institutions. Individual contributions to the arts reached \$16 billion in 2014, up from \$10.6 billion in 2000, according to a 2018 report from GIA Research. (After inflation, this represented a 10% gain.) Foundation giving was relatively stagnant: it reached \$4.9 billion in 2014, up from \$3.7 billion in 2000—which, accounting for inflation, actually represents a 3% decline. Corporations, meanwhile, offered significant support to the arts in the 1990s but sharply diminished their contributions in the new millennium. Corporate arts funding fell by half between 2000 and 2010.

Today, the cultural sector is preoccupied by what has become known as the Great Wealth Transfer: the period between now and 2045 when, according to the investment bank UBS, more than 1,000 baby-boomer billionaires are expected to pass \$5.2 trillion to their children. The interests and goals of these millennial and Gen Z donors will change the face of American philanthropy. According to a 2023 survey from CCS Fundraising, while arts and culture is second on a list of baby boomers' giving priorities, it does not even make the top three for Gen X, millennials, or Gen Z.

Instead, next-gen donors want to tackle big global issues, from climate change to racial justice. Younger philanthropists who want to support the arts because of their ability to strengthen social cohesion, improve health outcomes, and encourage critical thinking, are more likely to seek out small organizations where their money can make a bigger impact. These donors are

considerably more interested in investing in people and ideas than in objects and buildings.

At a moment when corporate support continues to wane and pressing global and hyperlocal issues are competing with the arts for the attention of individual donors and foundations, Étant donnés stands out for its consistent support of the contemporary visual arts. The fund also has the opportunity to engage rising donors by highlighting its work with change-making curators and artists as well as the way its support connects these figures to local, sometimes underserved communities.

## Areas of Support

Against this backdrop, it is clear that the funding provided by Étant donnés has never been more necessary. Here, we take a holistic look at the museum sector to identify the most pressing needs and potential opportunities for supporting the American arts ecosystem and facilitating cultural exchange between the U.S. and France. These priorities are based on interviews with more than 15 museum professionals, artists, and alumni of the Étant donnés program. Some are currently served by Étant donnés; others may be served by Étant donnés in the future.

### 1. Exhibitions

Exhibitions have been, and remain, essential to supporting artists, advancing their practices, and accelerating their careers. They also expose audiences to new ideas, fresh talent, and unfamiliar histories. “From the artist’s perspective, the exhibition can be more valuable than an acquisition,” noted Mary Ceruti of the Walker Art Center. As we have seen in earlier chapters, exhibitions can also have substantial ripple effects—they lead curators to discover new artists, change the course of an artist’s practice, cement a connection to a collector or gallerist, and even alter the course of art history itself. The costs of producing exhibitions have risen at the same time that arts funding has been in decline, making a sustained commitment to this area all the more essential.

### 2. Publications

Several people interviewed mentioned that publications remain an under-funded and important area for both artists and institutions. “It can have an impact for an artist’s future—books are this tangible thing that people dust off and refer to,” said Leigh Arnold of the Nasher Sculpture Center, adding that not producing a publication for the show she curated of the work of French artist Anne Le Troter was “a huge regret.” Arnold noted that books and publications—which can cost between \$10,000

and \$50,000 to produce—are especially important for emerging artists who may not have had their work memorialized in this way before. The same can be said of artists who have received little previous exposure in the United States and have not had their work analyzed or discussed by scholars in English.

### 3. Public Programs

Stakeholders identified public programming as an area where a relatively small amount of money—say, \$2,000 to \$5,000—can have an outsize impact. “So much publicity goes into an artist talk,” said Arden Sherman of the Norton Museum of Art. “We have a 210-seat auditorium and every time we have a big-name speaker, it’s completely full.” Public programs also have an enduring life as recorded videos online, where researchers and members of the public can encounter them at any time in the future.

### 4. Curatorial Research

Research travel budgets for curators have diminished over the past 30 years, according to people interviewed, but seeing art in person and examining archives in the flesh is no less essential to the curatorial process than they were when Étant donnés was founded in 1994. On-the-ground curatorial research is especially important for projects relating to artistic periods or bodies of work that have not been well documented or photographed; whose relevant archives have not been digitized; or that have been minimally written about in English.

### 5. Art Criticism

Art criticism is another underfunded area where a minimal amount of money—\$1,000 to \$10,000—could have a large impact. English-language criticism helps curators, art dealers, and other art-world participants in the United States better understand what is happening in foreign art scenes. It also ensures a robust public discussion about complex contemporary art that may not be easily digested by the art market. “Criticism needs to happen for art to flourish,” said Leigh Arnold. A future program under the Étant donnés umbrella could fund American writers to travel to review exhibitions of French artists on view in the United States or to visit and write about artists in France.



# Chapter VII

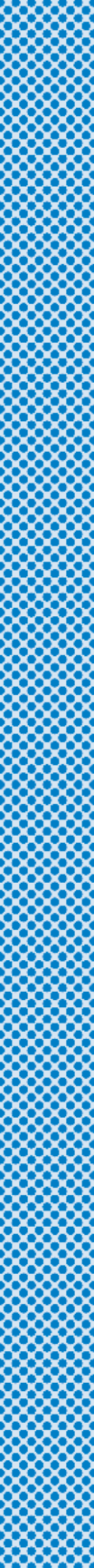
## Looking Back and Looking Ahead

↑ Laure Prouvost : Above Front Tears Nest in South, Installation view. Moody Center for the Arts.  
Photo by Anthony Rathbun © 2025 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / DACS, London

Étant donnés began as a bold experiment and has evolved into an influential, widely recognized initiative to support Franco-American cultural exchange. It is defined by its unique funding structure (a mix of French public money, private foundation funds, and individual support) and its independent jury process (featuring a rotating cast of French and American arts professionals). Above all, it stands out in the field for its commitment to supporting French artists at important inflection points in their careers and exposing American audiences to the breadth of artistic experimentation taking place in the country and across its diaspora.

The first of its kind, Étant donnés is one of French Cultural Services' longest-running and best-known programs in the U.S.; it inspired similar initiatives in the fields of dance, music, and theater, as well as many strong programs led by French Cultural Services in other countries (Germany and the U.K., among others). Against the backdrop of dwindling public and private arts funding in the U.S., the singularity and consistency of its commitment is all the more significant.

Over the course of its 30-year history, the program has proven to be responsive to changing economic conditions and shifting strategic priorities. Between 2011 and 2023, it consolidated its attention on French artists showing in the U.S., allowing it to ex-

A vertical decorative element on the left side of the page, consisting of a blue background with a white dot pattern.

pand its influence in the country. In 2021, Villa Albertine established a new interdisciplinary residency program, expanding its support as artists increasingly work in a variety of disciplines and creating new opportunities for cross-fertilization with the core Étant donnés program. In 2023, it partnered with Independent Curators International to successfully expand the audience for its curatorial fellowships.

This chapter offers key takeaways from the first three decades of Étant donnés and preliminary suggestions for how the program might evolve in the decades to come.

# Key Takeaways

## A Model Process

The structure of Étant donnés has helped the fund maintain relevance and sustain impact. The fact that institutions apply on behalf of artists to support shows that are already on the schedule ensures that the funding has real-world impact in a relatively short time frame. It also confers agency on the institutions, who are deeply invested in the success of each project. The eligibility requirements are clear, concise, and flexible enough to accommodate a wide range of artists with different kinds of connections to France. Former artistic committee members say the jury process is productive and educational. The essential role that Étant donnés program officers play in the fund's success is also clear. Several grantees said that they would not have applied had they not been sought out or encouraged to do so by the staff.

## Celebrating the Diversity of French Artistry

Étant donnés has maintained its relevance by funding artists from a broad swath of geographies: French natives, artists born or based in the French Caribbean, artists who are part of the Francophone African diaspora, and expatriates living in France. In recent years, the fund has supported particularly important and celebrated research on and exhibitions of French Caribbean artists, who remain underrepresented in American museums. Over the past five years, Étant donnés has also achieved gender parity in its artistic project grants (although it supported significantly more male artists than female artists in its first 25 years). The fund has also played an important role in introducing French artists to American audiences and supporting them at critical junctures in their careers. Almost 40% of the funded projects represented a first of some kind for an artist, whether it was their first solo exhibition in the U.S., their first monograph, their first major performance in the U.S., or another significant distinction.

## Investing in Institutions and Artists Long-Term

While Étant donnés has emphasized supporting artists at critical moments in their careers, its most sustained, long-term support has been focused on a relatively small group of artists and institutions. This approach cultivates deeper engagement with some grantees but also has the potential to limit the program's impact by keeping its resources clustered within a narrow population. Consider that less than 9% of all supported organizations in the U.S. and France accounted for 44% of all grant-winning projects,

while 3% of all supported French artists were featured in more than 30% of all winning projects.

### **Investing in Artistic Excellence Outside the Art Market**

One of the most important legacies of Étant donnés is its support of artists who operate across disciplines and whose work is not easily palatable or packaged for the international art market. In its first three decades, the majority of supported projects (52%) focused on multimedia work; the second most popular medium was installation (26%). Furthermore, nearly one-third (32%) of French artists who received Étant donnés grants had never had a commercial exhibition or presentation in the U.S., while 88 French artists—17% of the total—had their first commercial gallery exhibition in the U.S. after they were awarded a grant by Étant donnés. It is clear that Étant donnés has supported a significant number of artists who had yet to—or have never been—fully embraced by the commercial art world. In this way, the fund supports not only the work of innovative French artists, but also enriches the quality and complexity of contemporary art discourse in the U.S. and around the globe.

### **Fostering Career-Changing Connection and Collaboration**

Étant donnés not only facilitates the development of new exhibitions and curatorial research, but it also fosters relationships that can change the course of grantees' lives and careers. Almost every grant recipient interviewed for this report recounted meeting a curator, artist, or colleague during their work on an Étant donnés-funded project who became an ongoing collaborator or opened the door to new opportunities. The impact of an Étant donnés grant is multiplied when a show travels to another institution or an exhibited artwork enters a museum collection. Meanwhile, artists strengthen their understanding of and ties to the U.S. when they produce new work on the ground and in collaboration with local artisans and creatives. These kinds of connections are difficult to quantify, but they endure long after an exhibition closes.

### **Possible Evolutions**

Over the years, Étant donnés has proven itself adept at responding to the needs of artists and institutions. In the future, it is sure to be reshaped by transformations in the art ecosystem that are impossible to predict today. Even now, there are many different directions the program could take to address the sector's evolving needs. Here are several ways forward that may warrant consideration,

informed by the dozens of interviews and data analysis that make up this report.

### **Consider Geographic Diversity**

Étant donnés has a strong track record of funding institutions of different types, from art centers and collecting museums to university galleries and biennials. It could distinguish itself even further—and potentially attract new supporters—by strengthening its relationships with curators and institutions beyond the coastal United States. In its first 30 years, less than one third of projects funded by Étant donnés in the U.S. were located in the American Midwest, Northwest, Southwest, or South. The fund supported nearly as many projects in New York City as it did in these four regions combined. To be sure, these geographic trends reflect the distribution of cultural institutions in the U.S. Étant donnés also relies on American institutions to develop the projects for which they apply, so its influence on the geographic distribution of recipients is limited. Yet there is potential to cultivate increased awareness of the program in non-coastal regions in an effort to grow its nationwide impact and to attract foundations and other supporters with regionally focused missions.

### **Pay Attention to “Firsts”**

One of Étant donnés’s top priorities is to support French contemporary artists who have rarely, if ever, been shown in the United States. The data show that the fund could be more effective in this regard. Three percent of all supported French artists were featured in more than 30% of projects. While 40% of the funded projects represented a first of some kind for an artist, American debuts (including both solo and group shows) comprised only 17% of the fund’s portfolio.

Among possible evolutions, Étant donnés might consider adding a new cycle for smaller grants designed to support organizations with narrower timelines. If Étant donnés reserved a portion of its grant budget for grants of between \$4,000 and \$10,000 designated specifically for smaller institutions, it could serve a new constituency that is often engaged with emerging artists who have rarely, if ever, shown in the U.S. This also creates an opportunity for Étant donnés to offer fewer grants of larger sums in its traditional grant cycle, which would help relieve some of the pressure created by ballooning production costs.

Other considerations that could be taken into account in the future include: clarifying messaging around key values and programs;

building cohesion within the Étant donnés grantee community; considering multiple application timelines, grant sizes, and jury sessions; and developing a sustained focus on specific audiences or organizations, such as college galleries and museums.

However Étant donnés evolves, it is likely to continue to distinguish itself based on the strength of its public and private support, its sterling reputation among American and French professionals and artists, and its common objectives shared with other key Villa Albertine initiatives. At a moment when the cultural ecosystem has never felt more uncertain, Étant donnés offers a source of stability and vision for artists and curators seeking to bring us closer to one another through cultural dialogue and artistic exchange.



↑ Julien Creuzet, *Algorithm ocean true blood moves* (2023), choreography Ana Pl. A Performa Commission with the Hartwig Art Foundation for Performa 2023.  
Photography by Maria Baranova.

# Appendix

# Juries Over the Years

## 1994 – 1996

**François Barré** – President, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris **Marie-Claude Beaud** – Executive Director, American Center; Director, Fondation Musée d'Art Moderne Grand Duc Jean **Bernard Blistène** – Director of the Museums of Marseille; General Inspector, Délégation aux arts plastiques **Eleanor Heartney** – Art Critic **Mary Jane** – Independent Curator, Chicago **Werner H. Kramarsky** – Collector **Armelle Leturcq** – Editor-in-Chief, Crash Magazine **Alfred Pacquement** – Director, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris **Rosalie Solow** – Professor of Fine Arts, NYU Institute of Fine Arts, New York **Terrie Sultan** – Curator, Corcoran Gallery, Washington **Marcia Tucker** – Director, New Museum, New York

## 1997 – 1999

**Elizabeth Brown** – Curator, University Art Museum, Santa Barbara and Henry Art Gallery, Seattle **Sophie Duplaix** – Curator, Centre Georges Pompidou and Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris **Sophie Duplaix** – Professor, ENSBA, Paris, replacing Didier Semin, Curator, MNAM **Dana Friis-Hansen** – Curator, Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston; Ernest C. Butler Executive, Austin Museum of Art **Lynn Gumpert** – Director, Grey Art Gallery, New York **Denise Miller** – Director, Museum of Photography, Chicago **Frédéric Paul** – Director, FRAC Limousin, Domaine de Kerguéhennec **Ann Philbin** – Editor-in-Chief, Crash Magazine; Director, UCLA Hammer Museum **Raphael Rubinstein** – Associate Editor, Art in America **Aline Pujo** – Curator, MAMVP; Curator, Collection Neuflyze Vie/ABN AMRO **Germain Viatte** – Director, Musée du Quai Branly Project (under development at this time), Paris

## 2000 – 2002

**Amada Cruz** – Director for Curatorial Studies Museum; Executive Director, Artadia, The Fund for Art and Dialogue **Nathalie Ergino** – Director, FRAC Champagne-Ardenne; Director, Institut d'Art Contemporain, Villeurbanne **Jane Farver** – Director, MIT Visual Arts Center, Cambridge **Terry R. Myers** – Art Critic and Curator **Paul-Hervé Parsy** – Chief Curator, MAMC, Strasbourg; Curator, Château d'Oiron **Frank Perrin** – Director of Editorial Content, Crash Magazine **Ron Platt** – Curator of Exhibitions, Weatherspoon Art Gallery, Greensboro; Curator of Exhibitions, University of North Carolina **Lawrence Rinder** – Curator of Contemporary Art, Whitney Museum, New York; Dean, Graduate Studies, California College of the Arts, San Francisco **Philippe Vergne** – Curator of Visual Arts, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis

## 2003 – 2005

**Bill Arning** – Curator, MIT List Visual Arts Center, Cambridge **Nicholas Baume** – Chief Curator, Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston **Connie Butler** – Curator, MOCA, Los Angeles **Laurence Gateau** – Director, FRAC Pays de la Loire, Carquefou **Eungie Joo** – Gallery Director and Curator, The Gallery at Roy and Edna

Disney/CalArts Theater, Los Angeles **Armelle Leturcq** – Art Critic, Crash Magazine, Paris **Christine Macel** – Curator of Contemporary Art, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris **Eric Mangion** – Director, FRAC PACA, Marseille **Hamza Walker** – Director of Education, Renaissance Society, Chicago **Benjamin Weil** – Independent Curator, New York

## 2006 – 2008

**Ian Berry** – Associate Director and Curator, The Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery, Skidmore College **Valerie Cassel Oliver** – Curator, Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston **Russell Ferguson** – Professor and Chair, Department of Art, UCLA School of the Arts and Architecture; Adjunct Curator, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles **François Quintin** – Director, Galerie Xippas, Paris **Emmanuelle Lequeux** – Journalist, Le Monde; Beaux-Arts Magazine **Helen Molesworth** – Curator of Contemporary Art, Harvard University Art Museums, The Fogg **Ingrid Schaffner** – Senior Curator, Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania **Debra Singer** – Executive Director, The Kitchen, New York **Christine Van Assche** – Curator, Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Pompidou, Paris **Marc-Olivier Wahler** – Director, Palais de Tokyo, Paris

## 2009 – 2010

**Xavier Douroux** – Co-Director, Le Consortium, Dijon **Matthew Drutt** – Executive Director, ArtPace, San Antonio **Jennifer Gross** – Seymour H. Knox Jr. Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art, Yale University Art Gallery **Laura Hoptman** – Senior Curator, New Museum, New York **Charlotte Laubard** – Director, CAPC Musée d'Art Contemporain de Bordeaux

## 2016

**Florence Derieux** – Curator of American Art, Centre Pompidou Foundation, New York & Paris **Xavier Douroux** – Co-Director, Le Consortium, Dijon **Russell Ferguson** – Professor, UCLA School of the Arts, Los Angeles **Brett Littman** – Executive Director, The Drawing Center, New York

## 2017

**Naomi Beckwith** – Curator, Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago **Jenny Jasky** – Director and Curator, The Artist's Institute, New York **Camille Morineau** – Director of Exhibitions and Collections, Monnaie de Paris **Annabelle Ténéze** – Director, Les Abattoirs, Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain - FRAC Occitanie Toulouse **Adam Weinberg** – Alice Pratt Brown Director, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York

## 2018

**Naomi Beckwith** – Curator, Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago **César Garcia** – Director and Curator, The Mistake Room, Los Angeles **Camille Morineau** – Director of Exhibitions and Collections, Monnaie de Paris **Annabelle Ténéze**

– Director, Les Abattoirs, Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain - FRAC Occitanie Toulouse **Adam Weinberg** – Alice Pratt Brown Director, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York

## 2019

**Naomi Beckwith** – Curator, Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago **Camille Morineau** – Director of Exhibitions and Collections, Monnaie de Paris **Anna-belle Ténéze** – Director, Les Abattoirs, Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain - FRAC Occitanie Toulouse **Adam Weinberg** – Alice Pratt Brown Director, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York

## 2020

**Paula Aisemberg** – President, Trampoline; Artistic Director and Deputy Director, Emerige Foundation, Paris **Hendrik Folkerts** – Curator, Department of Modern and Contemporary Art, Art Institute of Chicago **César Garcia** – Director and Curator, The Mistake Room, Los Angeles **Jamillah James** – Curator, Institute of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles **Emma Lavigne** – President, Palais de Tokyo, Paris

## 2021

**Paula Aisemberg** – Artistic Director, Emerige Foundation; President, Trampoline, Paris **Alaina Claire Feldman** – Director and Curator, Mishkin Gallery, New York **Hendrik Folkerts** – Curator, Department of Modern and Contemporary Art, Art Institute of Chicago **Jamillah James** – Curator, Institute of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Curator, New Museum's 2021 Triennial **Emma Lavigne** – President, Palais de Tokyo, Paris

## 2022

**Paula Aisemberg** – Artistic Director, Emerige Foundation; President, Trampoline, Paris **Alaina Claire Feldman** – Director and Curator, Mishkin Gallery, New York **Rita Gonzales** – Head of Contemporary Art and Curator, Los Angeles County Museum of Art **Jo-ey Tang** – Director, Kadist San Francisco **Liv Schulman** – Artist

## 2023

**Cindy Burlingham** – Deputy Director of Cultural Affairs, UCLA Hammer Museum **Fanny Gonella** – Director, Regional Fund for Contemporary Art, FRAC Lorraine, Metz) **Michele Magéma** – Artist and Visiting Professor, University of Québec in Montréal **Sohrab Mohebbi** – Former Curator of the 58th Carnegie International; Director, Sculpture Center, Long Island City **Jo-ey Tang** – Director, Kadist San Francisco **Antonia Scintilla** – Director, Pernod Ricard Foundation, Paris

# Participating Artists

## 1994

Martine Aballéa, Chantal Akerman, Shuji Ariyoshi, Vincent Beaurin, Stéphane Blanquet, Pakito Bolino, Christian Boltanski, Véronique Boudier, Captain Cavern, Olivia Clavel, Hervé Di Rosa, Pascal Doury, Li Edelkoort, Anders Edström, Touhami Ennadre, Jean René de Fleurieu, Ami Garmon, Vidya Gastaldon, Jochen Gerz, Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster, Yves Grenet, Robert Grosvenor, Marie-Ange Guilleminot, Med Hajlani, Markus Hansen, Bernard Joisten, Anne Marie Jugnet, Philippe Lagautrière, Bertrand Lavier, Ange Leccia, Claude Lévêque, Mirka Lugosi, Martin Margiela, Matthew McCaslin, Jean-Luc Mylayne, Jacques Nicolaou, Bernard Pagès, Loulou Picasso, Valérie Pigato, Jacques Pyon, Bruno Richard, François Roche, El Rotringo, Nancy Rubins, Romain Slocombe, Frank Stella, Jessica Stockholder, Jean-Luc Vilmouth, Viktor & Rolf, Caroline Wedier, Huang Yong Ping, Y5P5.

## 1995

Joël Bartoloméo, Nadia Benchallal, Samta Benyahia, Christian Boltanski, Frédéric Bouché, Rebecca Bournigault, Sophie Calle, Claude Closky, Pascal Convert, Frédéric Coupet, Jean-Claude Couteau, John Currin, Raymond Depardon, Bernard Faucon, Carolyne Feyt, Pierre et Gilles, Gladys, Jean-François Joly, Valérie Jouve, Mi-Hyun Kim, Marc Le Mené, Philippe Mairesse, Dolorès Marat, Chris Marker, Sarah Moon, Jean-Luc Moulène, Antoni Muntadas, Marie-

Paule Nègre, Jean Nouvel, Rainer Oldendorf, Jean-Michel Othoniel, Marc Pataut, Romain Pellas, Lise Sarfati, Sarkis, Allan Sekula, Jeanloup Sieff, Christine Spengler, Keiichi Tahara, Diana Thater.

## 1996

Martine Aballéa, Jérôme Basserode, Enki Bilal, Sylvie Blocher, Michèle Blondel, David Boeno, Christian Boltanski, François Bouillon, Pat Bruder, Frédéric Bruly Bouabré, Bernard Calet, Sophie Calle, Bernadette Chéné, Jean Clareboudt, Frédéric Coupet, Stephen Dean, Hugues Decointet, Anne Deleporte, Tom Drahos, Alain Fleisher, Roland Flexner, Eric Fonteneau, Jochen Gerz, Yannick Gonzalez, Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster, Anne Marie Jugnet, Musée Khômbol, Véronique Legendre, François Martin, Pierre Mercier, Annette Messenger, Joachim Moga-rra, Tania Mouraud, Brigitte Nahon, Jean Michel Othoniel, Yan Pei-Ming, Françoise Quardon, Michel Salsmann, Sarkis, Pierrick Sorin, Tony Soulié, Michel Verjux, Jacques Vieille.

## 1997

Martine Aballéa, Jean Aubert, Isabelle Auricoste, Jean Baudrillard, Michel Blazy, Christian Boltanski, Magali Claude, Paul-Armand Gette, Liam Gillick, Marie-Ange Guilleminot, Fabrice Hyber, Bertrand Ivanoff, Jean-Paul Jungmann, Bertrand Lavier, Chris Marker, Annette Messenger, Lucy Orta, Tony Oursler, Claude Parent, Philippe Parreno, Sophie Ristelhueber, Antoine Stinco, Hubert Tonka, Paul Virilio

## 1998

Absalon, Vito Acconci, Dennis Adam, William Anastasi, Carl Andre, Eve Aschheim, Jo Baer, Jill Baroff, John Barry, Andrea Blum, Mel Bochner, Christian Boltanski, Jennifer Bornstein, Rebecca Bournigault, Celeste Boursier-Mougenot, George Bures Miller, Geneviève Cadieux, John Cage, Sophie Calle, Janet Cardiff, Lovett/Codagnone, Renee Cox, Elena del Rivero, Olivier Dollinger, Edy Ferguson, Dan Flavin, Anna Gaskell, Jochen Gerz, Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster, Robert Grosvenor, Marie-Ange Guilleminot, Nancy Haynes, Eva Hesse, Gary Hill, Thomas Hirschhorn, Roni Horn, Pierre Huyghe, Fabrice Hyber, David Jeffrey, Jasper Johns, Paul Johnson, Bill Jones, Donald Judd, Ellsworth Kelly, Patrick Killoran, David Paul Larsy, Matthieu Laurette, Ange Leccia, Ann Ledy, Sol LeWitt, Shu-Min Lin, Sharon Loudon, Laurent Malone, Robert Mangold, Brice Marden, Matt Mareello, Agnes Martin, Robert Morris, Mark Morrisroe, Bruce Nauman, Barnett Newman, Catherine Opie, Denis Oppenheim, Sylvia Plimack Mangold, Cercle Ramo Nash, Robert Rauschenberg, Erwin Redl, Ad Reinhardt, Hunter Reynolds, Georges Rousse, Jean-Jacques Rullier, Robert Ryman, Erik Samakh, Fred Sandback, Peter Sarkisian, Carole Seborovski, Richard Serra, Marie Sester, Joel Shapiro, Mark Sheinkman, Robert Smithson, Peter Soriano, Sara Sosnowy, Serge Spitzer, Steven Steinman, Frank Stella, Philippe Thomas, Moniek Toebosch, Andrew Topolski, Richard Tuttle, Cy Twombly, Ted Victoria, Jean-Luc Vilmouth, Joan Waltemath, Lawrence Weiner, Christopher Wilmarth, Joan Witek, Chen Zhen.

## 1999

Gilles Barbier, Robert Blake, Mathieu Briand, Alain Bublex, Robert Cahen, Pierre Carré, Stéphane Couturier, Johan Creten, Malachi Farrell, Philippe Favier, Robbert Flick, Nicolas Floc'h, Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster, Valéry Grancher, Marie-Ange Guilleminot, Thomas Hirschhorn, Pierre Huyghe, Fabrice Hyber, Bertrand Lavier, Ange Leccia, Claude Lévêque, Annette Messenger, Tania Mouraud, Frédéric Ollereau, Jean-Michel Othoniel, Philippe Parreno, Alexandre Perigot, Pierre et Gilles, Bernard Quesniaux, Sylvie Reno, Allen Ruppersberg, Marie Sester, Chen Zhen.

## 2000

Polly Apfelbaum, Gilles Barbier, Sadie Benning, André Bloc, Mel Bochner, Christian Bonnefoi, Louise Bourgeois, Alain Bublex, Daniel Buren, Sophie Calle, Jean-Louis Chanéac, Larry Clark, Henry Darger, Roy DeCarava, Olivier Dollinger, Jeanne Dunning, Keith Edmier, David Georges Emmerich, Yona Friedman, Carlos Ginzburg, Robert Gober, Nan Goldin, Mark Gonzalez, Dan Graham, Toni Grand, Renée Green, Garry Gross, David Hammons, Lyle Ashton Harris, Pascal Hausermann, Joël Hubaut, Cameron Jamie, Koo Jeong A, Mike Kelley, Karen Kilimnik, Harmony Korine, Bertrand Lamarche, Matthieu Laurette, Bertrand Lavier, Saverio Lucariello, Miltos Manetas, Larry Mantello, Paul McCarthy, Mathieu Mercier, Tania Mouraud, Senga Nengudi, Stefan Nikolaev, Daniel Oates, Lorraine O'Grady, Kristin Oppenheim, Tony Oursler, Claude Parent, Michel Parmentier, Adrian Piper, Ricardo Porro, Adrian Qezari, Hugues Reip, Julia

Rometti, Aura Rosenberg, Guy Rot-  
tier, Ionel Schein, Julia Scher, Collier  
Schorr, Gemma Shedden, Cindy Sher-  
man, Lorna Simpson, Antoine Stinco,  
Georges Tony Stoll, Pierre Szekely,  
Eric Frost Tabuchi, Leslie Thornton,  
Barthélémy Toguo, Andy Warhol, Car-  
rie Mae Weems, Lawrence Weiner.

### 2001

Adel Abdessemed, Michel Auder,  
Michel Blazy, Louise Bourgeois,  
Mathieu Briand, Daniel Buren,  
Claude Closky, Didier Fiúza Faus-  
tino, Nan Goldin, Dominique Gonza-  
lez-Foerster, Valéry Grancher, Marine  
Hugonnier, Pierre Huyghe, Yves Klein,  
Matthieu Laurette, Ange Leccia,  
Claude Lévêque, Otobong Nkanga,  
Roman Opalka, Philippe Parreno,  
Alexandre Perigot, Sophie Ristelhue-  
ber, Anri Sala, Bojan Šarčević, Bar-  
thélémy Toguo, James Wines.

### 2002

Virginie Barré, Philippe Blanc, Olivier  
Blanckart, Sylvie Blocher, Anne-Syl-  
vie Bruel, Jean-François Brun, Alain  
Bublex, Buy-Sellf, Gilles Clément,  
Claude Closky, Michel Corajoud,  
Claire Corajoud, Christine Dalnoky,  
Joe Davis, Brice Dellsperger, Chris-  
tophe Delmar, Michel Desvigne,  
Touhami Ennadre, George Gessert,  
Jean-Luc Godard, Raymond Hains,  
Pierre Huyghe, Jacques Julien, Edu-  
ardo Kac, Majida Khattari, Rachel  
Khedoori, Jaron Lanier, Matthieu  
Laurette, Alexandre Lenoir, Chris  
Marker, Hassan Musa, Melik Oha-  
nian, Jacqueline Osty, Bruno Peinado,  
Michel Péna, Christine Péna, Allain  
Provost, Alain Richert, Anri Sala,  
Zineb Sedira, Bruno Serralongue,  
Catherine Sullivan, Gilles Tiberghien,

Laurence Vacherot, Jean-Luc Verna,  
Gilles Vexlard, David Vincent.

### 2003

Richard Artschwager, Gilles Bar-  
bier, Bili Bidjocka, Ronan Bouroul-  
lec, Erwan Bouroullec, Li Edelkoort,  
Rainer Ganahl, Marie-Ange Guillemi-  
not, Pierre Huyghe, Dominique Jakob,  
Anne-Françoise Jumeau, Yves Klein,  
Brendan MacFarlane, Martin Mar-  
giela, Emmanuelle Marin, Christophe  
Nanga-Oly, Jean-Michel Othoniel,  
Louis Paillard, Keith Sanborn, Pas-  
cale Marthine Tayou, David Trottin.

### 2004

Aziz + Cucher, Vadim Bernard, Oliv-  
ier Blanckart, Alain Bublex, Daniel  
Buren, Grégory Chatonsky, Karen  
Dermineur, Marika Dermineur, Jason  
Dodge, Reynald Drouhin, John Giorno,  
Jason Glasser, Laurent Grasso, Ann  
Hamilton, Lynn Hershman Leeson,  
Thomas Hirschhorn, Paul Johnson,  
Maja Korac, Julie Morel, Amy O'Neill,  
Seth Price, Allen Ruppersberg, Anri  
Sala, Bojan Šarčević, Michael Sellam,  
Xavier Veilhan, Jean-Luc Verna, Pae  
White, Huang Yong Ping.

### 2005

Azzedine Alaïa, Eric Alix, Michel  
Auder, Maja Bajević, John Baldes-  
sari, Yto Barrada, Mathieu Briand,  
Denis Brun, Matali Crasset, Wang Du,  
Malachi Farrell, Jean-Paul Gaultier,  
Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster, Mark  
Handforth, Pierre Huyghe, Domi-  
nique Jakob, Joan Jonas, Christian  
Lacroix, Milosh Luczynski, Brendan  
MacFarlane, Laurent Mignonneau,  
Laurent Montaron, Mrzyk & Moriceau,  
Jean Nouvel, Bruno Peinado, François  
Roche, Martha Rosler, Richard Tuttle.

## 2006

Chantal Akerman, Samta Benyahia, Nicolas Bralet, Bernard Brunon, Mircea Cantor, Stéphane Couturier, Cyrille Cramésnil de Laleu, Niki de Saint Phalle, Stephen Dean, Yannick Demmerle, Bettina Funcke, Jean-Luc Godard, Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster, Wade Guyton, Clarisse Hahn, Marine Hugonnier, Pierre Huyghe, Bill Jacobson, Jérôme Joy, Thierry Kuntzel, Matthieu Laurette, Joseph Logan, Lea Lublin, Chris Marker, Annette Messenger, Orlan, Gina Pane, Philippe Parreno, Seth Price, Martial Raysse, Sophie Ristelhueber, Esther Salmona, Sarkis, Zineb Sedira, Peter Sinclair, Elaine Sturtevant, Lydwine Van der Hulst, Nil Yalter.

## 2007

Adel Abdessemed, Saâdane Afif, Wilfrid Almendra, Kader Attia, Karina Bisch, Mel Bochner, Jugnet + Clairet, Marcelline Delbecq, Brice Dellsperger, Daniel Dewar & Grégory Gicquel, Nicole Eisenman, Richard Fauguet, Didier Fiúza Faustino, Harrell Fletcher, Claire Fontaine, Aurélien Froment, Loris Gréaud, Pierre Huyghe, Vincent Lamouroux, Guillaume Leblon, Zoe Leonard, Anthony McCall, Mathieu Mercier, Annette Messenger, Mrzyk & Moriceau, Olivier Mosset, Melik Ohanian, Philippe Perrot, Christine Rebet, Samon Takahashi, Tatiana Trouvé, Morgane Tschember, Fabien Verschaere, Brian Wilson.

## 2008

Adel Abdessemed, Saâdane Afif, Julien Audebert, Jules de Balincourt, Davide Balula, Chris Beas, Christophe Berdaguer, Walead Beshty, Jennifer Boysen, Mark Bradford,

Sophie Calle, Mircea Cantor, Christophe Chassol, Liz Craft, Ann Craven, François Curlet, Marcelline Delbecq, Los Super Elegantes, Didier Fiúza Faustino, Claire Fontaine, Aurélien Froment, Fabien Giraud, Gustavo Godoy, Amy Granat, Katie Grinnan, Raymond Hains, HeHe, Fabrice Hyber, Valérie Jouve, Farrah Karapetian, Antal Lakner, Stéphane Magnin, Christian Marclay, Mathieu Mercier, Pentti Monkkonen, Laurent Montaron, Miguel Nelson, Lucy Orta, Marie Péjus, Yvonne Rainer, Hugues Reip, Lili Reynaud-Dewar, Sterling Ruby, Amy Sarkisian, William Scott, Franck Scurti, Raphaël Siboni, Kristina Solomoukha, Caecilia Tripp, Jacques Villeglé, Ulla von Brandenburg, Eric Wesley, Mario Ybarra Jr.

## 2009

Saâdane Afif, Kader Attia, Yto Barrada, Valérie Belin, Lynda Benglis, Patrick Bernier, Céleste Boursier-Mougenot, Thomas Boutoux, Marc Camille Chaimowicz, Guy de Cointet, Harrell Fletcher, Claire Fontaine, Cyprien Gaillard, Boris Gobille, Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster, Loris Gréaud, Paul Laffoley, Benoît Maire, Olive Martin, Amy O'Neill, Philippe Parreno, Dominique Petitgand, François Piron, Tobias Putrih, Bojan Šarčević, Yann Sérandour, Bruno Serralongue, Jim Shaw, Benjamin Thorel.

## 2010

Scoli Acosta, Reverend Ethan Acres, Larry Bell, Katinka Bock, Céleste Boursier-Mougenot, Sophie Calle, Triple Canopy, Larry Clark, Robert Delpire, Damien Deroubaix, Mounir Fatmi, Edward Fella, Ellie Ga, Laurent

Grasso, Sumi Ink Club, Koo Jeong A, Martin Kersels, Guillaume Leblon, Allan McCollum, Trevor Paglen, Michael Portnoy, Christine Rebet, Carson Salter, Catherine Sullivan.

### **2011**

Xavier Antin, Mathis Collins, Guy de Cointet, Roe Ethridge, Claire Fontaine, Louise Hervé, Pierre Huyghe, Dean Inkster, Marc Latamie, Bertrand Lavier, Pierre Leguillon, Chloé Maillet, Aurélien Mole, Laurent Montaron, Jean-Luc Moulène, Sébastien Pluot, Sterling Ruby, Bruno Serralongue, Ben Vautier, Raphaël Zarka.

### **2012**

Michael Asher, Christophe Berdaguer, Julien Bismuth, Sophie Bonnet-Pourpet, Céleste Boursier-Mougenot, Christophe Boutin, Castillo/Corrales, Isabelle Cornaro, Marie de Brugerolle, Guy de Cointet, Niki de Saint Phalle, Gérard Deschamps, François Dufrêne, Jean Fautrier, Didier Fiúza Faustino, Yona Friedman, Raymond Hains, Camille Henrot, Yves Klein, Vincent Lamouroux, Guillaume Leblon, Seulgi Lee, Pierre Leguillon, Claude Parent, Marie Péjus, Jimmy Robert, Mélanie Scarciglia, Benjamin Seror, Alexandre Singh, Oscar Tuazon, Lucille Uhlich, Jacques Villeglé.

### **2013**

Thomas Boutoux, Grégory Castéra, Anna Colin, David Douard, Patricia Falguières, Guillaume Fayard, Tristan Garcia, Mark Geffriaud, Fabien Giraud, Pierre Huyghe, Janette Laverrière, Sylvère Lotringer, Patrice Maniglier, Jean Painlevé, François Piron, Jean-Daniel Pollet, Laure Prouvost,

Esther Salmona, Raphaël Siboni, Ida Soulard, Sandra Terdjman, Benjamin Thorel, Oscar Tuazon.

### **2016**

Neïl Beloufa, Mohamed Bourouissa, Pierre Guyotat, Kapwani Kiwanga, Pierre Leguillon, Mélanie Matranga, Jean-Luc Moulène. Lili Reynaud-Dewar.

### **2017**

Tarek Atoui, Kader Attia, Fayçal Baghriche, Thibault Brunet, Marc Camille Chaimowicz, Isabelle Cornaro, Latifa Echakhch, Kapwani Kiwanga, Mathieu Kleyebe Abonnenc, Lucy Orta, Philippe Rahm, Elsa Sahal, Anne-Marie Schneider, Laure Tixier.

### **2018**

André-Pierre Arnal, Michel Blazy, Thomas Boutoux, Pierre Buraglio, Boris Chouvellon, Daniel Dezeuze, Arnaud Dezoteux, Noël Dolla, Cyprien Gaillard, Sheila Hicks, Kapwani Kiwanga, Guillaume Leblon, Pierre Paulin, SMITH, Tatiana Trouvé, Ulla von Brandenburg.

### **2019**

Marie Angeletti, Franck Apertet, Louisa Babari, Fayçal Baghriche, Raphaël Barontini, Yto Barrada, Téo Betin, Halida Boughriet, Huguette Caland, Valérie Chartrain, Sylvain Couzinet-Jacques, Nicolas Daubanes, Dorothée Dupuis, Hakima El Djoudi, Karim Ghelloussi, Pierre Guyotat, Tarik Kiswanson, Caroline Mesquita, Myriam Mihindou, Yazid Oulab, Jean-Michel Pancin, Mathieu Pernot, Émilie Pitoiset, Catherine Poncin, Dania Reymond, Lili Reynaud-Dewar, Till Roeskens, Sara Sadik, Liv

Schulman, Massinissa Selmani,  
Djamel Tatah, Sergio Verastegui,  
Annie Vignier, Laure Vigna.

Voleau, Clémence de La Tour du Pin,  
Ethel Lilienfeld, Sarah Maldoror,  
Laure Prouvost, Jennifer Teets.

## **2020**

Théodora Barat, Raphaël Barontini,  
Eva Barto, Sylvia Berté, Julie Bes-  
sard, Hervé Beuze, Karina Bisch,  
Jean-François Boclé, Louise Bour-  
geois, Alex Burke, Gaëlle Choisne,  
Vladimir Cybil Charlier, Ronald  
Cyrille, Jean-Charles de Quillacq,  
Jean-Ulrick Désert, Kenny Duncan,  
Edouard Duval-Carrié, Adler Guerrier,  
Jean-Marc Hunt, Fabiola Jean-Louis,  
Mathieu Kleyebe Abonnenc, Natha-  
lie Leroy-Fiévée, Audry Liseron-Mon-  
fils, Michèle Magma, Louisa Marajo,  
Caroline Mesquita, Annette Mes-  
sager, Vera Molnár, Ricardo Ozi-  
er-Lafontaine, Jérémie Paul, Marielle  
Plaisir, Michelle Lisa Polissaint,  
Tabita Rezaire, Simon Ripoll-Hurier,  
Yoan Sorin, Kira Tippenhauer.

## **2021**

Etel Adnan, Marie Angeletti, Iván  
Argote, Marcos Avila Forero, Alex  
Ayed, Maxime Berthou, Elsa Brès,  
Ali Cherri, Gaëlle Choisne, Jacques  
Cousteau, Julien Creuzet, Margue-  
rite Humeau, Emeric Lhuisset, Paul  
Maheke, Chris Marker, Clémence  
de Montgolfier, Alice Notley, Josèfa  
Ntjam, Ezra Teboul, Ittiah Yoda.

## **2022**

Marcos Avila Forero, Julian Charrière,  
Julien Creuzet, Sara Favriau, Gwladys  
Gambie, William Klein, Jérémie Priam,  
Tabita Rezaire, Thu Van Tran.

## **2023**

Bianca Bondi, Julien Creuzet, Fouad  
Elkoury, Hervé Guibert, Karla Hiraldo

# Granted Institutions

## France

● ACAPACA at the Fondation Vasarely ● Bétonsalon - Centre d'Art et de Recherche ● CAPC, Musée d'Art Contemporain de Bordeaux ● Carré d'Art - Musée d'art contemporain de Nîmes ● Centre d'Art Contemporain, Synagogue de Delme, La Salle de Bains ● Centre National de l'Estampe et de l'Art Imprimé ● Centre Photographique d'Ile-de-France ● CRDC/ Centre de Recherche et de Développement Culturel de Nantes ● Domaine de Kerguehenec ● Établissement Public du Parc et de la Grande Halle de La Villette ● FRAC Centre - Val de Loire ● FRAC Champagne-Ardenne ● FRAC des Pays de la Loire ● FRAC Haute Normandie ● FRAC île-de-France, Le Plateau ● FRAC Limousin ● FRAC Picardie ● Fotokino ● La Criée - Centre d'Art Contemporain ● La Maison Rouge, Fondation Antoine de Galbert ● La Salle de Bains ● Le Channel ● Le Consortium (Le Coin du Miroir association) ● Le Creux de l'Enfer ● Le Fresnoy ● Le Lieu Unique ● Le Printemps de Septembre ● L'Observatoire ● Maison d'art Contemporain de Chailloux ● Musée d'art moderne de la ville de Paris ● Musée d'Application ● Musée départemental d'art contemporain de Rochechouart ● Musée National d'Art Moderne - Centre Georges Pompidou ● Musée des Beaux-Arts de Nantes ● MST Métiers de l'Exposition, Université Rennes 2 ● Palais de Tokyo ● Parc Saint-Léger Centre d'Art Contemporain ● Sextant et Plus ● Synagogue de Delme ● Triangle France ● Villa Arson

## United States

**California** ● 18th Street Arts Center ● Aurora Picture Show ● Beall Center for Art and Technology ● Berkeley Art Museum ● California College of Arts & Crafts ● California Institute of the Arts ● Camerawork ● Capp Street Project ● Cartoon Art Museum ● CCAC Institute at the California College of Arts and Crafts ● E.A.R.T.H Lab - University of California ● Hammer Museum at UCLA ● JAUS ● Kadist ● LAXART ● Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions ● Los Angeles County Museum of Art ● Los Angeles Contemporary Archive ● MAK Center for the Art and Architecture ● Museum of Contemporary Art Los Angeles ● Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego ● Museum of Photographic Arts (San Diego) ● New Langton Arts ● Praz-Delavallade ● San Francisco Art Institute ● Santa Barbara Contemporary Arts Forum ● Santa Barbara Museum of Art ● Santa Monica Museum of Art ● Santa Monica Arts Foundation ● SFMOMA (San Francisco Museum of Modern Art) ● Show Gallery ● The Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis ● The Museum of Public Fiction/Human Resources ● University Art Museum and Pacific Film Archives Berkeley (UAM/PFA) ● University Art Museum, California State University Long Beach ● UCLA Fowler Museum ● Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts, California College of the Arts ● Yerba Buena Center for the Arts ● Yucca Valley Material Lab, FLAX LA **Connecticut** ● The Aldrich Contemporary Art

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Text: Julia Halperin  
Project management: Diane Josse, Cultural Attaché,  
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Olivier Le Falher, Program Officer for Visual Arts  
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## About the Author

Julia Halperin is an arts and culture journalist, editor, and co-founder of the Burns Halperin Report, the largest report of its kind tracking equity and representation in the art world. She is a contributor to the *New York Times*, *the Financial Times*, and *W magazine*, among other publications. She also serves as editor at large of *CULTURED* magazine and a contributing editor to *The Art Newspaper*, where she writes a monthly column about changes and challenges in American art museums. From 2017 to 2022, she was executive editor of Artnet News.

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## About Villa Albertine, The French Institute for Culture and Education

Villa Albertine strengthens ties between the US, France, and the French-speaking world by connecting people and institutions in the spheres of culture and education. In the arts sphere, we encourage collaboration among French and US-based organizations and provide creators and thought leaders with residencies, grants, and connections to audiences so they can explore and share new insights into society's pressing issues. In the field of education, we craft projects and programs aimed at making French language and culture accessible to all US audiences, support partnerships between French and American higher education and research institutions and expand opportunities for students to study and complete internships in France.

With offices in 10 major US cities, Villa Albertine is headquartered in New York's historic Payne Whitney mansion, home to Albertine, our bookshop and nexus for French-American intellectual exchange.



### **Albertine Foundation**

Previously known as FACE Foundation, Albertine Foundation is an American nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting French-American relations through innovative cultural and educational projects. In close partnership with Villa Albertine, The French Institute for Culture and Education, Albertine Foundation promotes artistic, literary, and educational exchange and collaboration between creative professionals from both countries thanks to corporate, foundation, and individual support.

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## Institut français



The Institut français is responsible for France's international cultural program. Supervised by both the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs and by the Ministry of Culture, it promotes French culture abroad through cultural exchange initiatives. Operating in a space where the arts, intellectual exchange, cultural and social innovation, and linguistic partnerships interact and intersect, it is also responsible for promoting the French language and the sharing of works, artists, and ideas all over the world. The Institut français is one of Villa Albertine's main French partners.

## Ministry of Culture



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The French Ministry of Culture aims to make the major works of humanity— and especially those of France— accessible to the largest number of people possible. As such, it maintains a policy of conservation, of protection, and of development of all components of French cultural heritage. It promotes the creation of works of art and of the mind, and the development of art practices

and education. It further contributes to cultural initiatives outside of France, and to initiatives relating to the establishment of French cultural programs throughout the world.

### **French Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs**

The Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs works to represent, defend and promote the interests of France and French nationals in all areas in foreign countries and international organizations.



### **ADAGP**

Founded by artists in 1953, the ADAGP represents 170,000 authors worldwide, in all disciplines of visual art, including painting, sculpture, photography, design, graphic novels, street art, video art, digital art, architecture and more... At the heart of an international network of 50 partner organisations, the ADAGP collects and distributes royalties, protects artists and fights to improve authors' rights. Today, it is the world's top society of authors in the visual arts. Eager to place creativity at the heart of the world, the ADAGP encourages the creative scene by initiating and/or financially supporting projects to highlight visual arts and promote them on a national and international scale.

## **Cultural Partners**



### **Independent Curators International (ICI)**

Independent Curators International (ICI) supports curators to help create stronger art communities through experimentation, collaboration, and international engagement.

Curators are arts community leaders and organizers who champion artistic practice; build essential infrastructures and institutions; and generate public engagement with art. We work with art spaces in the US and around the world to present exhibitions and public programs for broad audiences; and professional development initiatives for curators.

Our collaborative programs connect curators, artists, and audiences from across social, political, and cultural borders. They form an international framework for sharing knowledge and resources — promoting cultural exchange, access to art, and public awareness for the curator's role.

ICI is a member of Coalition of Small Arts NYC (CoSA NYC).

Villa Albertine  
The French Institute for Culture and Education  
972 Fifth Avenue  
New York, NY 10075

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