

ARTnews

SculptureCenter Receives \$1 M. Endowment Gift for Acclaimed Commissioning Series

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Jordan Loeppky-Kolesnik's *Parasympathetic Fever Dream* (2023) was a recent "In Practice" exhibition at SculptureCenter. PHOTO CHARLES BENTON/COURTESY THE ARTIST

SculptureCenter, the nearly hundred-year-old, medium-focused arts center in Queens, has received a donation of \$1 million to establish an endowment fund to be used for commissioning new work by emerging artists. The gift comes from Elaine Graham Weitzen Foundation for Fine Arts, named for the late New York art dealer who was a longtime patron of the organization.

To be called the Elaine Graham Weitzen Commissioning Fund for Emerging Artists, the donation will go toward supporting the SculptureCenter's acclaimed "In Practice"

initiative, an open-call program established in 2003 to give rising artists the funds to produce new work for their first New York institutional show.

The program receives some 1,200 applications each year. Past artists who have received support through “In Practice” include Simone Leigh, Korakrit Arunanondchai, Samara Golden, Natalie Ball, Brendan Fernandes, Madeline Hollander, Hugh Hayden, Candice Lin, Lotus L. Kang, Lucy Raven, Rachel Rose, Xaviera Simmons, P. Staff, WangShui, and Carmen Winant, among many others.

The first cohort to receive support through the Graham Weitzen Foundation’s gift is the 2024 one, which was announced in March. Those five artists and one duo are Tony Chrenka, Anita Esfandiari, Phoebe Collings-James, Bastien Gachet, Covey Gong, and Zishi Han & Wei Yang.

In an email to *ARTnews*, SculptureCenter director Sohrab Mohebbi said, “The Elaine Graham Weitzen Commissioning Fund for Emerging Artists not only marks an unprecedented milestone for SculptureCenter’s ongoing efforts in providing an institutional platform to emerging artists, it also guarantees the perpetuity of our beloved In Practice Open Call program, a decades-long initiative that puts artists at early stages of their careers front and center.”

Graham Weitzen, who began collecting in the 1950s and worked as a private dealer, was also a major philanthropist. She served on SculptureCenter’s board from 1987 until her death in 2017. Shortly after her passing, her estate formed the foundation “to continue her legacy and celebrate her unparalleled commitment to artistic production,” Mohebbi said. Additionally, she was critical in supporting the organization’s move to the Long Island City neighborhood of Queens in the early 2000s, as well as its expansion in 2014, with the lobby being named in her honor.

The foundation also lent support to the 2023 “In Practice” cohort, as well as giving the organization general operating funds. The new fund, he said, “will significantly contribute to the way our institution supports new ideas and artistic research, allowing us to explore new territories in contemporary sculpture while pushing the boundaries of sculpture-based artistic production.”

Mohebbi added, “Gifts of this size are the most impactful, particularly for organizations of our size, because they allow us to continue the institutional risk-taking, openness, and nimbleness necessary for artists without extensive support networks to push the field forward.”