



SITKA CENTER FOR ART AND ECOLOGY

5-Year Impact Report

2020-2024

Michael Wimberly
2021 Winter Keynote
Drumming: An Extension of Language



Lee van der Voo

2020 Fall Keynote and Reading

As the World Burns

AS THE WORLD BURNS

THE NEW GENERATION OF
ACTIVISTS
AND THE LANDMARK
LEGAL FIGHT AGAINST
CLIMATE CHANGE

LEE VAN DER VOO

Table of Contents

05

Place

06

Vision

08

Progress

09

K-8 Create

12

Residencies



16

Workshops

17

Ecology

18

Nature Preserve

20

Exhibits

21

Keynotes

Sense of Place

Land Acknowledgement

The Sitka Center for Art and Ecology resides on the unceded traditional lands of the Nestucca Tillamook and Salmon River Tillamook peoples whose living ancestors are members of the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde and the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians. We grieve the trespasses of history as we recognize how colonial violence inflicts great cultural and ecological harm on this land and its people.

Caring for and about this land is central to Sitka's mission. We are learning from the model of ecological sustainability offered by those who have lived here since time immemorial and who continue to watch over the land and waters of the Pacific Northwest. We pay tribute to present-day Native communities by listening and welcoming exchange and by helping to build an inclusive ecological community through our programs.

There is much to learn. We encourage you to visit the tribal education centers open to the public and learn more at grandronde.org and ctsi.nsn.us.

Our Ecosystem

Sitka is located within the Cascade Head Scenic Research Area and UNESCO Cascade Head Biosphere Reserve. It neighbors the Cascade Head Experimental Forest and feeds into the retored Salmon River Estuary and Cascade Head Marine Reserve.

In addition to our public campus, Sitka stewards a private 80-acre Cascade Head nature preserve including built environments, managed coastal prairie and Sitka spruce forest.



2021 Highlight: Sitka purchased Estuary House, a one-bedroom cabin in the Cascade Head Ranch neighborhood, to host visiting guest speakers, returning residents and K-8 Create teaching artists.

Art + Ecology Vision

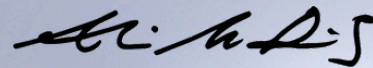
For over 50 years, Sitka has worked at the intersection of art and ecology through programs that deepen our relationship with the natural world. Today, however, the planet we now share with nature and each other is in cultural and ecological crisis.

Climate change threatens to devastate people and lead to plant and wildlife mass extinctions. Social injustices and economic inequities that deny access to the arts, sciences and nature to all but a privileged few persist. Lives and livelihoods in the arts continue to be impacted by the pandemic. Young people are inheriting a world of wicked problems.

The need to imagine new ways to see, interpret and inhabit the natural world together and uplift the next generation is paramount.

Essential to this creative endeavor is collaboration among voices from the broadest possible spectrum of backgrounds and experiences, and the inclusion of those who have historically been excluded from and underrepresented by art and ecology institutions, platforms and funding. Also essential is the voice of the land itself, listening to those species and ecosystems most at risk with greatest urgency.

As Sitka reflects on the past five years and looks forward to the next 50, we envision next generation-serving programs, supporting the work of creators on the frontiers of change and inviting people of all ages and backgrounds to engage and help bring a better world into being.



Alison Dennis
Executive Director





Sitka 2022 Summer Enrichment Program photography workshop with guest artist Mike Vos

"Many of my students face poverty. Sitka's K-8 Create program gives them an opportunity to express themselves and their lives that they do not receive in the 'main' classroom. I have seen some of my most at-risk students thrive when art takes place."

Misty Wharton, Superintendent
Nestucca Valley School District

Our Progress

Unlike many organizations that had to make cuts due to the COVID-19 pandemic's arrival in 2019, Sitka continued operations and grew.

With mission- and need-driven program expansion over the past five years, the projected audience Sitka will serve in 2025 and beyond will be over 130% larger than at the start of the pandemic. 100% of this growth is attributable to deliberate efforts to reach underserved audiences with art and nature access including rural coastal kids.

2020–2024 Progress Highlights

- **Launched and grew the Sitka Youth Program** to provide free art and nature education to 5,000 rural Oregon coast kids in schools with limited or no art programs of their own.
- **Doubled and diversified our Residency Program** to serve more -- and more diverse -- practitioners. Grew BIPOC/LGBTQ+/Disability representation from 22% in 2020 to over 75% in 2021–2024.
- **Grew low-income, rural representation to >80%** in our combined adult and youth workshop audience.
- **Demonstrated pandemic resilience and leveraged programmatic disruption to innovate**, launching new youth, ecology and online programs and growing our total audience served by 130%.

130%

Audience growth, from 3,900 in 2019 to 9,000 in 2024

Progress through Collaboration

- **Hosted the first six IPKA Fellows in residence**, in partnership with the Grand Ronde's Indigenous Place Keeping Artist Fellowship Program
- **Invited artist Intisar Abioto** to guest curate three two-week-long collaborative residencies for Black artists as part of Abioto's Black Art/Ists of Portland project.
- **Adopted mile 247 of the Oregon coast** through the Oregon Shores CoastWatch program to help monitor the shoreline and contribute to citizen science projects.
- **Appointed three fellowships** for professional artists in printmaking, music and literary arts to help grow the reach of Sitka Residencies into new artist communities.
- **Brought our annual Art Invitational to Oregon Contemporary** in north Portland's Kenton neighborhood to reach and serve an economically, racially and age-diverse audience.
- **Piloted K–8 Create innovations with our flagship school, Nestucca K–8** and grew our reach into Lincoln County.

K-8 Create

Need

Most public schools in Sitka’s rural Oregon coast community serve economically disadvantaged families and do not have the resources to offer art programs as part of the curriculum. 95% of kids in our local community qualify for free or reduced meals through their schools based on federal guidelines.

Sitka has long desired to offer free art and ecology youth programming on par with the quality of our workshops for adult learners as a way to give back and make a local difference. Sitka’s campus, however, was not designed to safely host kids and is located in a serene and protected coastal forest neighborhood that school buses may not safely access.

Impact

Sitka has since grown the Youth Program by 900%, from serving 500 K-6th grade kids and two schools in 2020 to over 5,000 Pre-K-8th grade kids across three coastal counties, nine public school districts and seventeen schools 2024 (all Title 1). By rising to meet this need and preserving and strengthening a beloved local program, over 5,000 kids have access to free fine art education and supplies.

Solution

In 2019, Sitka joined forces with Community Arts Project (CAP), a small, 30-year-old nonprofit that provided monthly art literacy and art-making lessons through two local elementary schools. Due to staffing and pandemic challenges, CAP was struggling. Rather than start a new program that would compete with CAP for resources, Sitka reached out to CAP’s board and offered the solution of Sitka taking on stewardship of CAP’s programs and using Sitka’s greater administrative capacity to fund and grow the program to serve more kids and schools. A transfer of assets was completed in 2020 and the program was saved.

Thank you to Schwabe, Williamson and Wyatt for providing pro bono legal assistance to execute the transfer of assets and save this vital program.

5,000

Pre-K to 8th
grade kids
served in 2024

900%

Program
growth since
2020 launch

95%

Participating kids who
qualify for free or reduced
meals at school

In the summer following the 2020 Echo Mountain Complex Fire, Sitka K-8 Create Summer kids went on a field trip to collect charcoal from burn sites in their local community and then worked with landscape artist Dana Halbert to sketch images of the forest.



Mentoring the Next Generation

A strength of Sitka's Youth Program is our ability to foster cultural exchange between the professional artists and scientists we host and coastal kids and classrooms.

Example: In 2022, Cartoonist and author Jonathan Case led an environmental cartooning series at Nestuca K-8 School. Case's accomplishments include drawing Batman '66 and Superman '66 for DC Comics. His most recent graphic novel, *Little Monarchs*, tells the story of a 10-year-old girl, her biologist guardian and their crucial mission to save humanity from extinction after a sun shift has wiped out nearly all mammal life on earth. Case grew up locally and attended Nestucca K-8 as a child.



Above: Detail from *Little Monarchs*, by Jonathan Case
Below: 2022 Sitka Youth Program Environmental Cartooning workshop

Residencies

Need

Prior to 2018, Sitka's Residency Program typically hosted between 12 to 20 practitioners in residence from across the arts and sciences per year. Historically, a strong priority was given to applicants who could stay for a full 3.5 month long residency. This unintentionally resulted in residency cohorts that were majority white and financially secure – people with the means to take 3.5 months off from their lives without suffering financial or familial setbacks.

A 2019 review of past BIPOC /LGBTQ+ residency applications and exit interviews revealed that residency duration length and scheduling inflexibility were top barriers to program participation.

BIPOC / LGBTQ+/ Disabled Community Representation

2020 54%

2021 63%

2022 77%

2023 81%

2024 82%

Solution

Informed by our equity commitment and these findings, Sitka now offers residencies from two weeks to three months in duration.

Sitka also changed the language we use to advertise the program from four Western, academic disciplines (art, music, writing and ecology) to more interdisciplinary and contemporary fields (such as environmental filmmaking and journalism, climate science and ocean health and a broad range of science-informed and social justice-inspired art practices).

Impact

These two changes dramatically increased the diversity, quality and volume of the applicant pool. Diversity among invited residents grew from 22% BIPOC / LGBTQ+ /Working with a Disability in 2019 to over 80% in 2024.

Since Sitka's residency program runs for seven full months of the year (October–April), this means that Sitka's campus and nature preserve now serve a majority BIPOC/LGBTQ+/Disability audience.

More information about Sitka's recent past residents and how to apply for a residency at Sitka is available at sitkacenter.org.



Artists at Sea

In 2022, Sitka hosted two musicians as part of the Artist at Sea Program, a collaboration with Hatfield Marine Science Center through which artists go out to sea for two weeks at a time aboard working research vessels to open-endedly explore ways to translate and connect non-scientists with the importance of ocean science and ocean health.

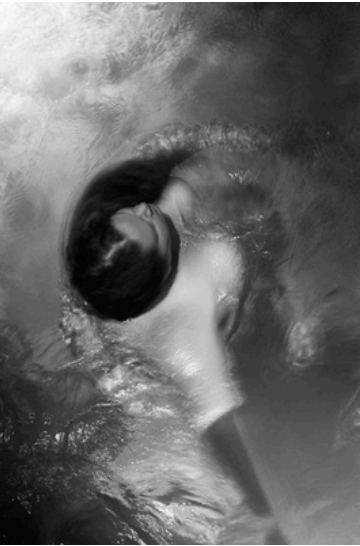
Caine Casket (above) is a recording artist from New Jersey whose marine-inspired work sonically explores everything from the wobbling oscillations of endangered jellyfish to bioluminescent plankton and algae.

Sirintip (right) is an experimental, trilingual singer musician and composer in both the pop and jazz worlds. Her 2022 album, *Carbon*, is based on the causes and effects of climate change.



Residency Collaborations

Blue Sky Photography



2021 Blue Sky Photography Resident Brittany Adams

Established in 2018, the Blue Sky Photography Residency at Sitka is awarded annually to two photographers from Blue Sky Photography Gallery's photographic artist community.

This program is funded in part through the generous support of the Kinsman Foundation.

Grand Ronde IPKA Fellows



2022 IPKA Fellow, artist, writer and drag clown Anthony Hudson /Carla Rossi (Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, Siletz)

Established in 2022, artists awarded fellowships through the Grand Ronde's Indigenous Place Keeping Artist program are also offered residency stays at Sitka.

IPKA Fellows receive up to \$20,000 during their fellowship year through this Grand Ronde program.

Printmaking Residency



2022 Jordan Schnitzer Printmaking Resident Avantika Bawa

Established in 2002 and now in its 22nd year, the Jordan Schnitzer Printmaking Residency invites established artists with little or no printmaking experience to work with renowned printmaker Julia D'Amario to produce a series of copper plate prints.

The printmaking residency is funded through the generous support of Jordan Schnitzer.

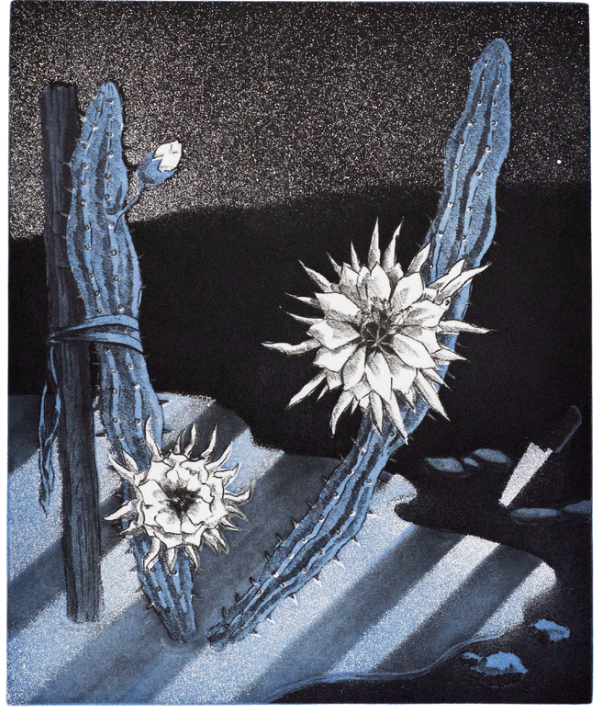
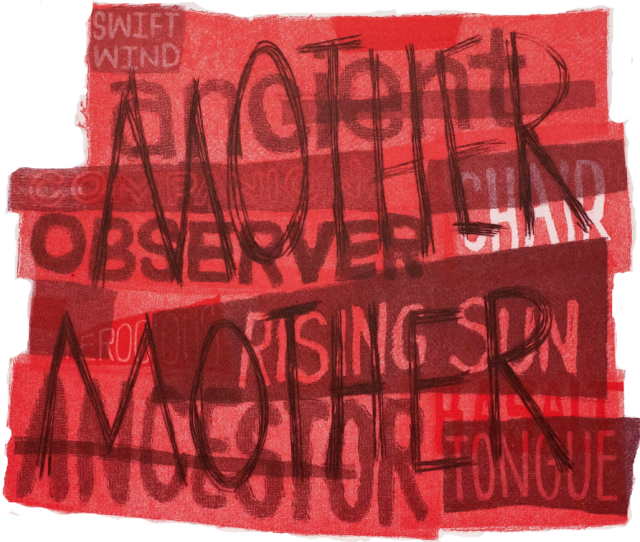
Black Artists Collaborative



2022-23 Guest curator and 2023-2024 Fellow Intisar Abioto

In 2022, Sitka hosted the first collaborative residencies guest curated by Intisar Abioto as part of her Black Art/Ists project. These collaborations helped inform the Portland Art Museum's 2023-2024 *Black Artists of Oregon* exhibition, also guest curated by Abioto.

This program is generously funded through the Ford Family Foundation and the Roundhouse Foundation.



50th Anniversary Folio

In 2020, Sitka produced a folio of prints commemorating our 50th Anniversary and celebrating the 20th anniversary of the Jordan Schnitzer Printmaking Program. Nine program alumni returned to work with Program Director Julia D'Amario to create the folio. In 2021, the prints were exhibited at Waterstone Gallery in Portland and the Chessman Gallery in Lincoln City. In 2022, they were exhibited at Oregon Contemporary as part of the 29th annual Sitka Art Invitational.

Artists clockwise from upper left: Marie Watt, Heather Watkins, Ryan Pierce and Patti Warashina

Workshops

Pandemic Resilience

2020

Originally on pace to be Sitka's best attended workshop season ever based on early registration, the full 2020 workshop season was cancelled due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

2021

Following state and national public health guidelines, Sitka offered a 50% capacity workshop season to allow for physical distancing and experimented with online and hybrid workshops.

2022

Sitka offered a full season of 100 workshops between May and October. While early registration was record-breaking, due to the arrival of the Omicron variant, Sitka ultimately experienced a >30% cancellation rate due to the pandemic.

2023 and 2024

The 2023 and 2024 workshop seasons were record-breaking, with our highest-ever workshop enrollment and organizational membership at an all-time high.

Table loom weaving workshop with Monica Setziol-Phillips, 2022



Coastal Ecology

Mile 247

In 2022, Sitka adopted mile 247 of the Oregon Coast through Oregon Shores' CoastWatch Program. Neighbors and guests staying in residence at Sitka are now able to contribute to citizen science-informed shoreline, marine debris and sea star health monitoring projects.

The 2023 and 2024 Sitka Workshop Residency seasons featured free opportunities for the public to participate.

The CoastWatch Program was conceived by past Oregon Shores board member and Executive Director Phillip Johnson in 1992 while in residence at Sitka. "To know what was going on along all 362 miles of the Oregon coast, you'd have to have someone watching every mile," Johnson reflected while hiking on Cascade Head during his Sitka residency. *What if someone really did adopt each mile of shoreline and serve as its guardian?* CoastWatch was born.



CoastWatch Program Director Jesse Jones leading a 2022 shoreline monitoring training for Sitka community members

Nature Preserve

Vision

In 2017, with the hard work and generous support of many, Sitka purchased an 80-acre Cascade Head site and residence, located just one mile from the Center's public campus in one of the most beautiful and protected places on the Oregon coast. Once home to a timber company, this private site, with stunning ocean views and surrounded on all sides by US Forest Service land within the Cascade Head Scenic Research Area, is now in Sitka's care.

Sitka's nature preserve is envisioned as a place to integrate art and ecology collaborations and residencies, all with immersive access to the site's meadows, creeks, pond and forest.

In addition to Sitka's guests, the preserve provides habitat for Roosevelt elk, black-tailed deer, cougar and black bear.

Use

Sitka hosted our 100th artist in residence at the preserve in 2024.

Feedback from artists, writers, musicians, ecologists, educators and interdisciplinary creatives who stay and work in residence at the preserve is helping to inform long-term planning, stewardship and access.

Over 100 Sitka workshop participants have taken field trips to the site to reflect and deepen their relationship with the Cascade Head ecosystem and the natural world.

Sitka has also hosted public tours and visiting groups at the preserve including members of the the Oregon Audubon Society, Oregon Native Plant Society and Oregon Botanical Artists Society, among others.

Oregon Native Plant Society preserve tour



Artist-in-Residence Naoe Suzuki at the preserve





Globally, nationally, and climatically, this is a time of conflict and challenge; my time at Sitka has given me an opportunity to recognize and reflect on interconnectedness, organic communities, and healthy co-dependence. Artists are so often under-supported and over-extended, and my time at Sitka has allowed me to connect and create.

~Nina Elder, resident 2016, 2020

Exhibits

Art Invitational

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 28th annual Sitka Art Invitational was postponed in 2020 and held in 2021. After a one-year hiatus, Sitka a record-breaking year for art sales, generating much needed income for working artists during the pandemic.

In 2022, Sitka moved the Invitational to Oregon Contemporary in North Portland's vibrant and Kenton neighborhood and eliminated the entry fee to make the exhibit more accessible and family-friendly.

The 30th Sitka Art Invitational took place in October 2024 and was Sitka's highest earning sale in the event's history, generating over \$145,000 through art sales, exhibit sponsorships and donations. A record-breaking 72% of participating artists sold work and 45% of all exhibited art sold.

Pop-up Exhibits

50th Anniversary Sitka Commemorative Print Portfolio

- January 2021, Waterstone Gallery, Portland, Oregon
- September 2021, Chessman Gallery, Lincoln City, Oregon
- 2022-2023, Sitka Center Tiny Stairwell Gallery, Otis, Oregon

Jordan Schinter Printmaking Residency Collection Retrospective

- May 2022, Sitka Center, Otis, Oregon
- November-December 2022, jdc Fine Art, Salishan Marketplace, Gleneden Beach, Oregon; generously sponsored by Rosanne and Greg Burton

Sitka Center Tiny Stairwell Gallery

- 2023: In Memoriam: Prints by Larry Thomas
- 2024: Solo Exhibition, Monica Setziol-Phillips



Keynotes

Fall 2020 **Lee Van der Voo**
As the World Burns: The New Generation of Activists and the Landmark Fight Against Climate Change

Winter 2020 **Christina Burke**
Indigenous Indigenous Histories: Community and Environmental Health in Lakota Winter Counts

Winter 2021 **Michael Wimberly**
Drumming: An Extension of Language

Spring 2022 **Ian van Coller**
Naturalists of the Long Now

Winter 2022 **Lydia Conklin**
Rainbow Rainbow

Spring 2023 **Walter Kitindu**
Process and Possibility

Winter 2023 **Cristina Eisenberg**
A Seventh Generation Approach to Restoring Climate Resiliency to Pacific Northwest Forests

Spring 2024 **Erica Berry**
Circling the Wolf

Coming in Spring 2025
US Poet Laureate Ada Limón



"Mayflies and Caddisflies on the Gallatin River" by Ian van Coller and Jenny McCarthy



Thank you for helping spark
the next 50 years of
curiosity and creativity
on the Oregon coast.

Sitka Center for Art and Ecology
35565 Sitka Drive
Otis, Oregon, 97368
541-994-5485
sitkacenter.org
info@sitkacenter.org
501(c)(3) Tax ID #23-7087718