



THE RESOURCE AND PUBLIC FORUM FOR ARTISTS WHO EXPLORE AND EXPERIMENT

ART AS INFRASTRUCTURE:
EXPERIMENTATION WITH IMPACT

ANNUAL REPORT 2025



Everlasting Plastics: Ang Li, *Externalities*. (photo by Jacob Koestler 2025)

LETTER FROM LEADERSHIP

2025 marked a year of transition, growth, and deepened impact for SPACES.

Midway through the year, we initiated a strategic planning process, informed by organizational growth, leadership transition, and the expanding scope of our programs. Implementation is set to occur from 2026 - 2029.

As an organization rooted in experimentation, we embraced change as both a responsibility and an opportunity: to strengthen our infrastructure, clarify our curatorial vision, and continue centering artists and communities in everything we do.

This year, SPACES presented projects that moved beyond the gallery and into farms, neighborhoods, and public discourse—demonstrating how art can operate as a form of infrastructure that sustains relationships, advances ecological care, and creates space for collective learning.

Alongside this work, we invested in organizational capacity by welcoming new staff and

board members, launching new systems to streamline operations, and expanding our residency and grant making programs. These efforts position SPACES for stronger sustainability.

In December, I stepped into the role of Executive Director after serving as Director of Operations, an appointment that reflects continuity, shared stewardship, and trust across the organization.

I am deeply grateful to our artists, partners, funders, board, and community for their collaboration during this pivotal year.

Together, we continue to affirm that experimental art is not peripheral—it is essential.

PITA BROOKS

Executive Director

To Those Who Nourish,
Cooking Sections
Climavore working group:
Yellow House Cheese, LLC,
Seville, OH

MISSION: SPACES is a resource and public forum for artists who explore and experiment. Since 1978, we have commissioned and presented ambitious projects by artists at all stages of their careers, using contemporary art as a catalyst for learning, dialogue, and civic imagination.



BY THE NUMBERS – 2025

George Harb and Leila Khoury, *A Single Word*, 2025. Photo courtesy of the artist

TOTAL PARTICIPANTS/GUESTS: 3,161

CULTURAL PRODUCERS SUPPORTED:

(residencies, grants, exhibitions, consignment, and

60 employment)

- 28% identified as Black or African American
- 7% identified as Hispanic or Latine
- 5% identified as multiracial
- 3% identified as Asian
- 30% represented LGBTQ+ communities

Demographic data is self-reported and reflects artists and creatives supported by SPACES in 2025

EXHIBITIONS AND RESIDENCIES

5 on-site exhibitions

1 Artist-in-Residence project

1 fiscally sponsored project

PUBLIC PROGRAMS AND EVENTS:

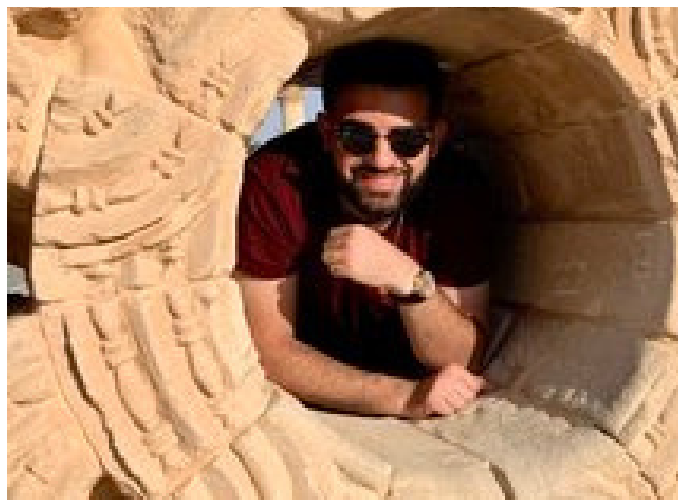
16 on-site programs [openings, community festivals, workshops, lectures, and film screening]

3 off-site programs with Cooking Sections

8 off-site, Satellite-funded exhibitions and projects supported by Andy Warhol Foundation for Visual Arts

PUBLICATIONS:

Everlasting Plastics Catalogue



George Harb courtesy of the artist

DIRECT ARTIST FUNDING:

\$160,012

FISCALLY SPONSORED

PROJECT FUNDING:

\$4,000

COMMUNITY PROGRAM PARTNERS:

Cleveland Institute of Art, Cleveland Print Room, Cleveland Public Library, The Greater Cleveland Habitat for Humanity ReStore, Cleveland, Morgan Conservatory, MSU Broad Art Museum, Praxis Fiber Workshop, Quest for the Fest, Sculpture Center, and Zygote Press.

ORGANIZATIONAL GROWTH



Everlasting Plastics: Ang Li, *Externalities*. Photo by Jacob Koestler 2025

2025 was a year of significant internal development for SPACES:

- Appointment of **Pita Brooks, Executive Director**
- Hiring of **Thea Spittle, Curatorial Coordinator**
- Expansion of Gallery and Visitor Services staff
- Addition of **four new Board Members**
- Engagement of a high school intern, Claire Pirnat
- Implementation of a **new CRM and financial software system**
- Launch of **ECHO Application**, a new Artist-in-Residence program for 2027
- Partnership with **Osgood Group to develop a strategic plan**

These investments strengthen SPACES' ability to support artists, steward resources responsibly, and plan for long-term sustainability.

SPACES is actively strengthening its organizational capacity to better serve artists and the community. We are investing in robust systems, including a new CRM and financial software (MonkeyPod) to streamline operations, improve reporting, and ensure financial transparency. Our staff are being trained to maximize these tools, allowing us to manage exhibitions, events, and artist residencies more efficiently. Additionally, we are expanding our programming infrastructure, hosting multiple Artists in Residence, curated exhibitions, and community-centered events, to increase both our artistic output and community engagement. These efforts ensure that SPACES can sustainably grow, attract new audiences, and provide meaningful opportunities for artists at all levels.

ARTISTS IN RESIDENCE

A SINGLE WORD

George Harb and Leila Khoury

In summer 2025, SPACES presented *A Single Word*, a gallery-wide immersive installation developed through a residency by artists George Harb and Leila Khoury. Drawing from Harb's extensive family archives, the exhibition traced Palestinian joy, dignity, and resilience across generations through photographs, restored home videos, and ephemera spanning 1900–1990.

The artists transformed the gallery into an intimate, contemplative environment, featuring a recreated Palestinian reading room and spaces for reflection and learning. By centering joy and continuity rather than trauma, *A Single Word* offered audiences a deeply human experience rooted in cultural preservation and storytelling.

The exhibition was supported by the Greater Cleveland Habitat for Humanity ReStore, whose mission-driven focus on sustainability and community aligned closely with the project's values. SPACES also partnered with the Cleveland Public Library to host a community archiving

conversation with Jon Skrtic. In this interactive session, participants explored lessons from preserving local histories and received practical guidance on documenting their own community's stories.



Photos by Amber Ford





PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

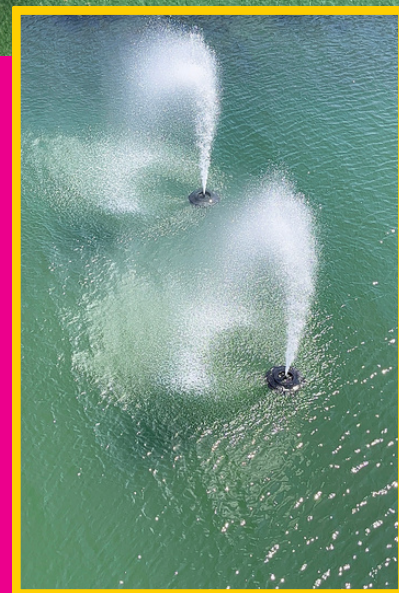
TO THOSE WHO NOURISH

To Those Who Nourish is a three-year environmental and socially engaged art project developed with UK-based artist duo Cooking Sections (Daniel Fernández Pascual and Alon Schwabe). Launched during the 2022 FRONT International Triennial, the project began with the installation of two symbolic oxygenating fountains on Lake Erie, calling attention to phosphorus pollution at its source.

In its final phase in 2025, SPACES led a community-centered initiative focused on sustainable agriculture and waterway health. Over the course of three years we facilitated 12 Climavore workshops and farm visits with six regional partners—Chateau Hough, City Fresh, Yellow House Cheese and Meats, Living City Farms, Vel’s Purple Oasis, and Hood Honey—each representing distinct practices within the Great Lakes basin.

In January, SPACES partnered with the MSU Broad Art Museum for a weekend symposium connected to *Farmland: Food, Justice, and Sovereignty*, bringing farmers, artists, and audiences together through presentations, panels, and a public artist talk to extend the project’s regional impact.

The project concluded with a final exhibition at SPACES (June 27–August 17, 2025), a public expo with the Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District, and a closing workshop at Vel’s Purple Oasis. A five-minute documentary highlighting the full arc of the project is available [online](#).



One unexpected and meaningful moment occurred during the final community event, when a participating farmer shared concerns about algae buildup in their pond. Cooking Sections gifted the oxygenating fountains originally installed during FRONT, offering a direct solution and exemplifying the project’s ethos of care and reciprocity.



EVERLASTING PLASTICS

Everlasting Plastics is a research-driven exhibition and publication project examining the environmental, economic, and cultural afterlives of plastic waste. Developed through SPACES' longstanding commitment to experimentation and public learning, the project brings together artists, researchers, and community partners to explore how plastic circulates through ecosystems, labor systems, and everyday life—and what responsibility we hold for its persistence.

The 2025 presentation at SPACES marked a homecoming for the project. Originally selected by the U.S. Department of State for the 2023 Venice Biennale of Architecture, *Everlasting Plastics* went on to be presented at the Carnegie Museum of Art before returning to SPACES for its final exhibition. This full-circle trajectory reflects both the project's international relevance and SPACES' role as a generative site where ambitious, research-based work is developed and sustained.

Opening in fall 2025 and remaining on view into early 2026, the exhibition extended SPACES' engagement with ecological inquiry while inviting visitors into critical reflection rather than prescriptive solutions. Through material research, speculative design, and artistic investigation, *Everlasting Plastics* framed environmental complexity as something to be examined collectively and over time.

The project was accompanied by the *Everlasting Plastics* catalog, a publication that expands the exhibition's impact beyond the gallery through essays, artist contributions, and documentation. Together, the exhibition and publication function as long-term resources for educators, artists, and environmental advocates.

ARTISTS

Simon Anton
Xavi Aguirre
Ang Li
Norman Teague
Lauren Yeager

CO-CURATED

Tizziana Baldenebro
Lauren Leving

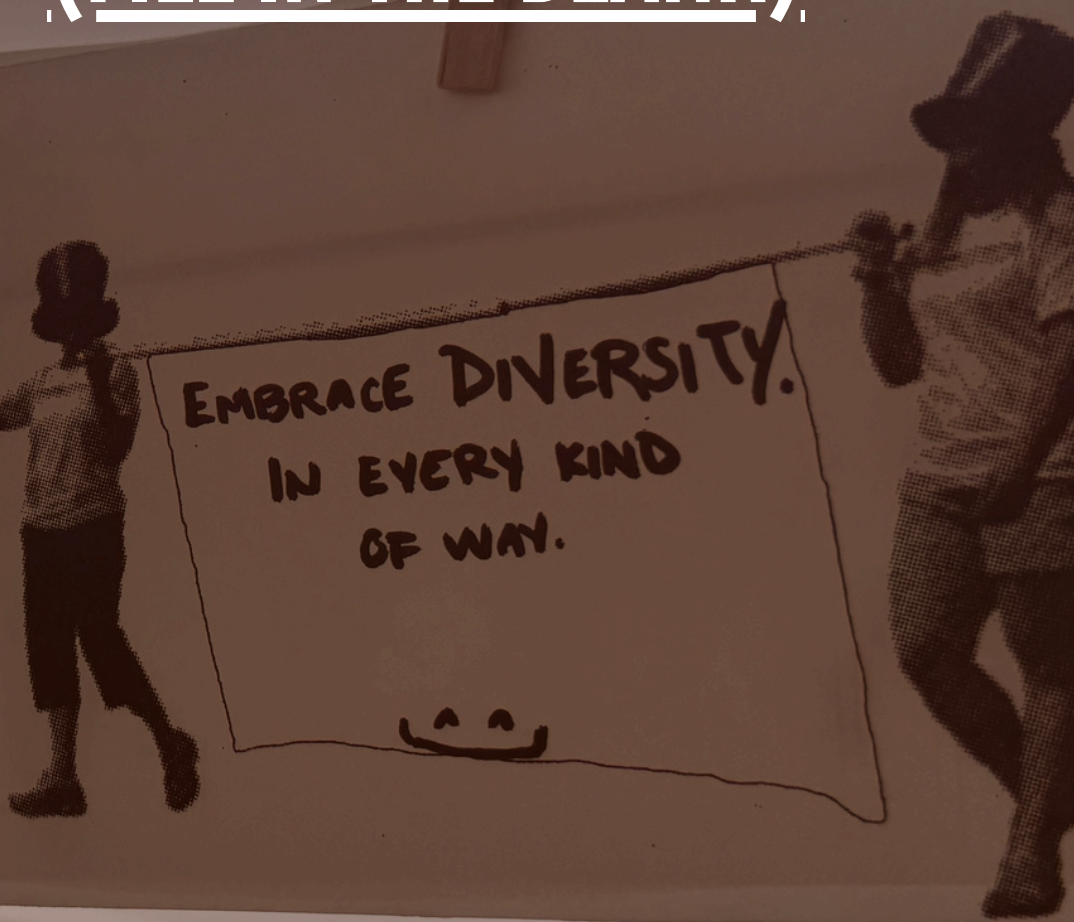
CURATORIAL COORDINATOR

Thea Spittle

Everlasting Plastics reflects SPACES' belief that art can operate as infrastructure—supporting learning, discourse, and collective responsibility across institutions, geographies, and time.



QUEST FOR THE FEST: I STAND FOR (FILL IN THE BLANK)



**FISCALLY SPONSORED
ARTIST-LED
COMMUNITY PROJECT**





I STAND FOR ____ FEST

Over the weekend of August 23–24, 2025, SPACES partnered with the artist collective Quest for the Fest to present *I Stand For ____ Fest*, a two-day, artist-led gathering that demonstrated how art can function as social infrastructure—creating the conditions for connection, exchange, and collective authorship. The festival welcomed **263 visitors, 189 artists, and 11 volunteers**, transforming SPACES into a site of sustained participation rather than passive attendance.

The program featured hands-on workshops, live performances, participatory installations, a community conversation corner, and a portrait project in which seven artists created approximately 70 portraits in just a few hours. Visitors spent extended periods engaging across multiple activities, and many first-time attendees expressed intentions to return, evidence of the festival's ability to cultivate long-term relationships rather than one-time encounters.

Throughout the weekend, SPACES and Quest for the Fest embraced experimentation as a responsive practice. Flexible, real-time adjustments, such as extending highly attended sessions and reconfiguring spaces, prioritized accessibility and participant care.

These adaptive strategies underscore SPACES' approach to art as infrastructure: not as a fixed program, but as a living framework that evolves in response to artists and communities, generating meaningful impact through presence, responsiveness, and shared ownership.

COMMUNITY CORNER

General Visitor Feedback

“I am so glad SPACES is around—you are doing amazing work.”

“This visitor’s experience was gold standard.”

Everlasting Plastics

“Amazing commentary on the depressing reality of how much waste is in the world.”

Artist and Curatorial Feedback

“The SPACES staff, especially the current team, have been incredibly supportive, kind, and encouraging throughout. While our collaboration on this project was somewhat tangential, I’m truly grateful for the chance to work with them and hope to build on that relationship in the future.”

“I want to see more support for risky, experimental work, the kind that isn’t safe or donor-friendly but pushes the conversation forward.”

“This grant provided critical support that allowed me to bring a deeply meaningful, community-centered program to life, one that not only reflects my curatorial values but also fosters cultural exchange, intergenerational learning, and regional connection.”

PRESS

Plastics have an ‘Everlasting’ impact on environment, psyche in sobering SPACES art exhibition, Peter Chakerian for Cleveland Plain Dealer

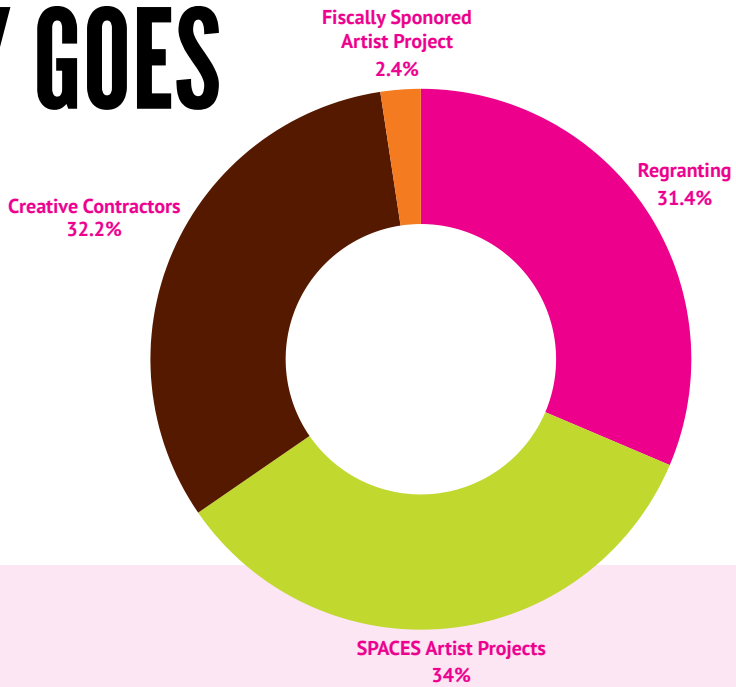
Confronting Our Wastescapes: Everlasting Plastics in Cleveland, Rebekah Utian for Can Journal

Curator Corner: Longevity Monument by Lauren Yeager, Rebecca Meiser for Canvas

WHERE THE MONEY GOES

OVER \$164,000
PAID DIRECTLY TO ARTISTS

BREAK DOWN OF ARTIST FUNDING



INCOME

Revenue Source	Amount	% of Total Revenue
Grants and Contributions	\$616,715	94.60%
In-Kind Contributions	\$25,656	3.90%
Special Events + Other Income	\$9,260	1.00%

Total Operating Revenue: \$651,631

EXPENSES

	Amount	% of Total Expenses
Administration: Office Supplies, Technology, Professional Services, Communications	\$208,408	34.68%
Artist Honoraria, Creative Contractors, Regranting, Fiscally Sponsored Projects	\$164,012	27.29%
Staff Salaries + Payroll Expenses	\$161,463	26.86%
Direct Program Expenses: Exhibition and Production, Artist Travel, Marketing and Promotion	\$39,065	6.50%
Occupancy + Insurance	\$28,061	4.67%

Total Operating Expenses: \$601,009

THANK YOU TO OUR 2025 FUNDERS + COMMUNITY PARTNERS

BOARD OF DIRECTORS: Dolores Garcia – Board President, David Tarditi – Treasurer, Ellen Rudolph – Secretary, Anna Arnold, Gulnar Feerasta, Sam Hubish, Tricia Kachmyers, Lisa Kurzner, Emily Liebert, Angelica Pozo, Maribel Pumarejo, Danté Rodriguez, Kristin M. Rogers, Priyanka Darina Sehgal

FOUNDATION and GOVERNMENT FUNDERS: The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, The Cleveland Foundation, Cuyahoga Arts and Culture, The Cyrus Eaton Foundation, The Flagstar Foundation, The George Gund Foundation, Joseph and Florence Mandel Foundation – Beyer Family Fund, The Nord Family Foundation, Ohio Arts Council, The Teiger Foundation, United States Artists

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COMMUNITY SUPPORTERS: CBIZ Human Capital Management, Cleveland Institute of Art, Cleveland Print Room, Cleveland Public Library, FORM, The Greater Cleveland Habitat for Humanity ReStore, MSU Broad Art Museum, Morgan Conservatory, No Exit, Praxis Fiber Workshop, The Sculpture Center, Quest for the Fest, Vedda Printing+, John C. Williams AIA

Everlasting Plastics: Lauren Yeager, Installation image (photo by Jacob Koestler 2025)

