

# Akron artists

## Blending creativity with business know-how

Artists make up about 1.4 percent of the U.S. labor market and by their nature, possess an innate entrepreneurial spirit.



**DEBORAH D. HOOVER**

President and CEO

The Burton D. Morgan Foundation

Deborah is committed to building the capacity of Northeast Ohio's entrepreneurial ecosystem.

(330) 655-1630  
[dhooover@bdmorganfdn.org](mailto:dhooover@bdmorganfdn.org)  
[www.bdmorganfdn.org](http://www.bdmorganfdn.org)

While vision and bold creativity are huge factors in artistic success, the development of hardcore entrepreneurial skills can bolster raw creative talent in ways that will help sustain the careers of enterprising painters, jewelers and sculptors over the long haul.

For aspiring artists in Akron, the city has become a hotbed of activity offering an array of opportunities for those seeking to beef up their business skills and expand their reach.

Akron Art Museum has served as a unifying force in building awareness of the strategic connection between the arts and entrepreneurship. The museum staged a series of Community Conversations in 2014, with one laser focused on Art & Entrepreneurship. This conversation inspired an exploration between the audience and panelists, including Anthony Margida, CEO of the Akron Global Business Accelerator, about how the creative process might generate works of art that solve societal problems or lead to new inventions.

Mark Masuoka, director of Akron Art Museum, observes a “groundswell of interest in the connection between arts and entrepreneurship and I want to see this movement drive real change in Akron.” He sees the museum as a key player in inspiring change, including promotion of the museum building as a blended space for museum and creative activities. Masuoka remarked, for example, that the concept of Akron’s popular Crafty Mart not only “draws out the secret creative lives” of its vendors, but also serves as a way to

promote downtown activity and attract first-time museum goers to experience the breadth of the museum’s exhibitions.

Crafty Mart, Akron’s longest running and largest market for handmade goods, is one of several organizations in Akron offering educational opportunities to artists and artisans. Crafty Mart, which acts as an incubator and advocate for creative businesses, is working with the Accelerator’s Bit Factory to host workshops that educate artist entrepreneurs on business tools to improve their outcomes. Similarly, Summit Artspace sponsors the Artist as an Entrepreneur Institute offering sessions geared for artists in need of skills required to build a sustainable creative business. Summit Artspace decided to tackle this challenge because they believe that “creative professionals are redefining what it means to be an artist — they are taking action, building networks, investing in neighborhoods and sparking excitement in the city.”

Downtown Akron Partnership is also playing an important role by organizing the annual Akron Art Prize and helping to promote the work of emerging artists in the community. Through this event, artists receive guidance on ways “to accelerate their entrepreneurial path” and market their works. Suzie Graham, president of DAP, says that “this event helps grow awareness and ownership of our Downtown Historic Arts District and deepens the community’s connection to the artists whose presence and efforts provide the city its sense of self and place.” Helping Akron’s artist entrepreneurs develop skills and fresh outlets is a strategic investment in the vibrancy and future of the city. ●