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# Artistry, Culture, and Society: Latine Artists of Minnesota

May 2022



Hispanic Advocacy and Community Empowerment through Research



<sup>1</sup> All artwork was submitted by participating artists with their consent to present it in the final report. Initials are used to protect anonymity.

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# About Hispanic Advocacy and Community Empowerment through Research (HACER)

HACER's mission is to provide the Minnesota Latino community the ability to create and control information about itself in order to affect critical institutional decision-making and public policy. General support for HACER has been provided by Minnesota-based philanthropic organizations and the Minnesota Council of Nonprofits.

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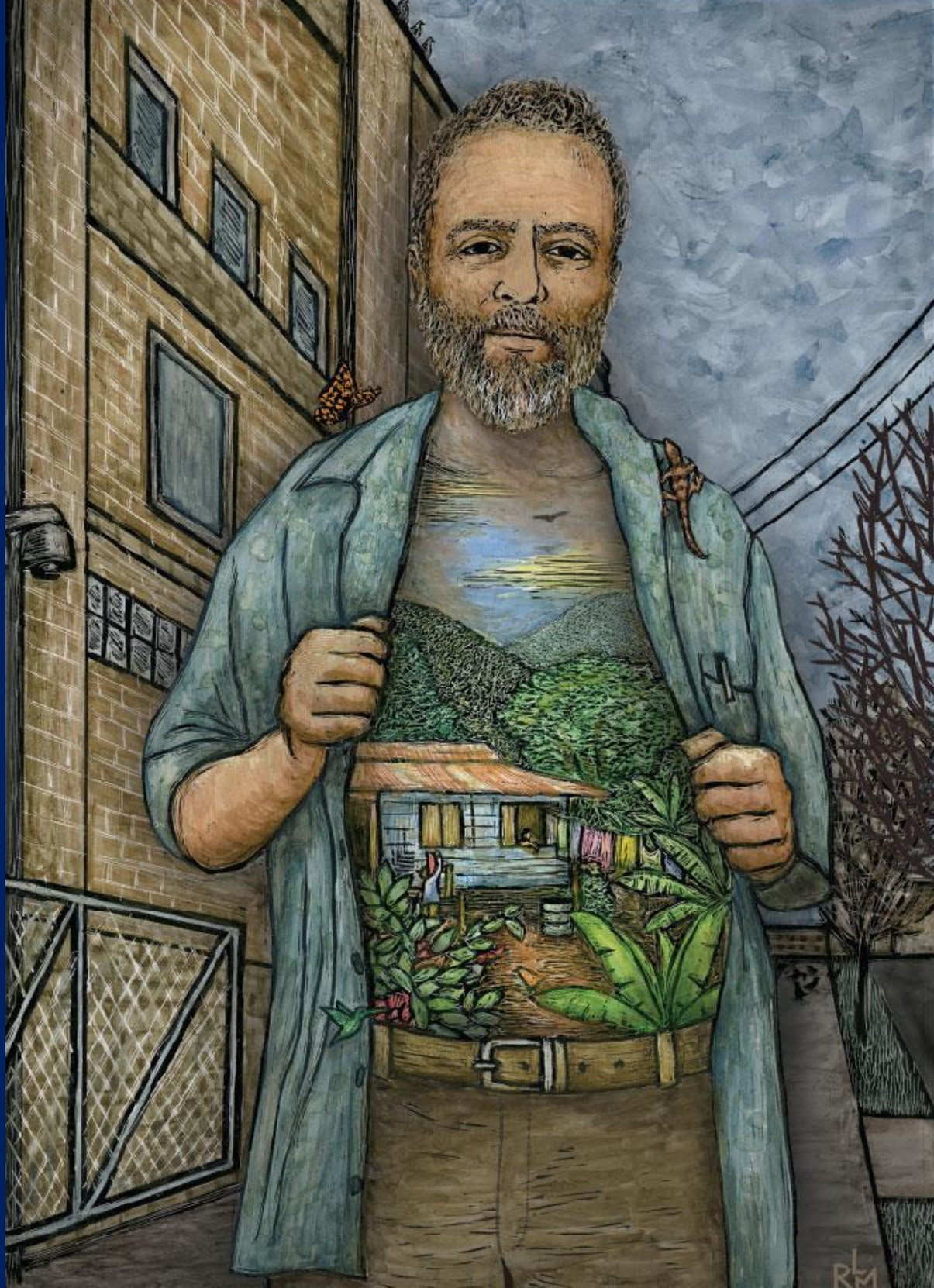
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# Executive Summary

## Background

The Minnesota State Arts Board is a state agency that stimulates and encourages the creation, performance, and appreciation of the arts in the state. The State Arts Board is separately comprised of 11 regional arts councils that help serve specific groups of counties to provide more targeted aid to artistic communities. In 2021, the Minnesota State Arts Board funded Hispanic Advocacy and Community Empowerment through Research (HACER) to collect information about creative activities that Latine<sup>2</sup> communities of artists engage in within Minnesota, looking to identify challenges and opportunities for improvement. The Latine Artists of Minnesota project lead by HACER focuses on increasing Latine creative activity in Minnesota by gathering information on the barriers, goals, and motivations of Latine artists engaged in the process of artistic creation.

## Methods

HACER conducted three focus groups and 10 in-depth interviews with Latine artists and arts professionals to gain insights into the barriers, motivations, and goals of artists around Minnesota. Participants ranged in ages, backgrounds, geographies, genders, and practices. They were recruited through social media, contact with community leaders, contact with arts organizations, and through a snowball method of recruitment that relies upon referrals from colleagues and peers of the initial participants. This method of recruitment means that each participant was asked to spread the word and recommend other participants to the project. The focus groups sessions were conducted in English and Spanish over Zoom and gathered broad themes, issues, and perspectives that Latine artists share. The in-depth interviews were also over Zoom and centered common themes of Latinidad and artistic practice, barriers to artistic practice, and potential solutions. All the in-depth interviews were hosted in English.

## Findings

### Focus groups

Nineteen individuals participated in the virtual focus groups sessions; of all the participants, 12 (63%) stated that their job relates to their artistic practice, while seven (37%) stated that their job was separate from their artistic practice. Focus group session participants shared various issues that were important to them as Latine artists, including:

- The need for more Latine specific spaces and grants that would bolster community amongst Latine artists
- The need for mentorship and sustained financial and educational support to address barriers for consistent artistic practice
- The inaccessibility of educational and funding resources due to documentation status, language barriers, time consuming and rigorous grants applications, and lack of representation within selection committees and arts boards

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<sup>2</sup> The “e” at the end of Latine is used in place of the masculine “o” to recognize the fluidity of gender that exists beyond the gender binary inherent within the Spanish language.



## In-Depth Interviews

Ten individuals participated in the virtual in-depth interviews; of all the participants, eight (80%) stated that their job relates to their artistic practice, while two (20%) stated that their job was separate from their artistic practice. In-depth interview participants shared various issues that were important to them as Latine artists, including:

- Communicational barriers that made applying to funding and educational opportunities, writing artist statements, and effectively representing themselves more difficult
- Underrepresentation of Latine people in artistic spaces such as galleries and funding bodies
- The difficulty of maintaining one's livelihood while pursuing the arts
- The lack of knowledge of funding and educational opportunities that they may apply to
- The difficulty of accessing resources for their artistic practice outside of the metro area

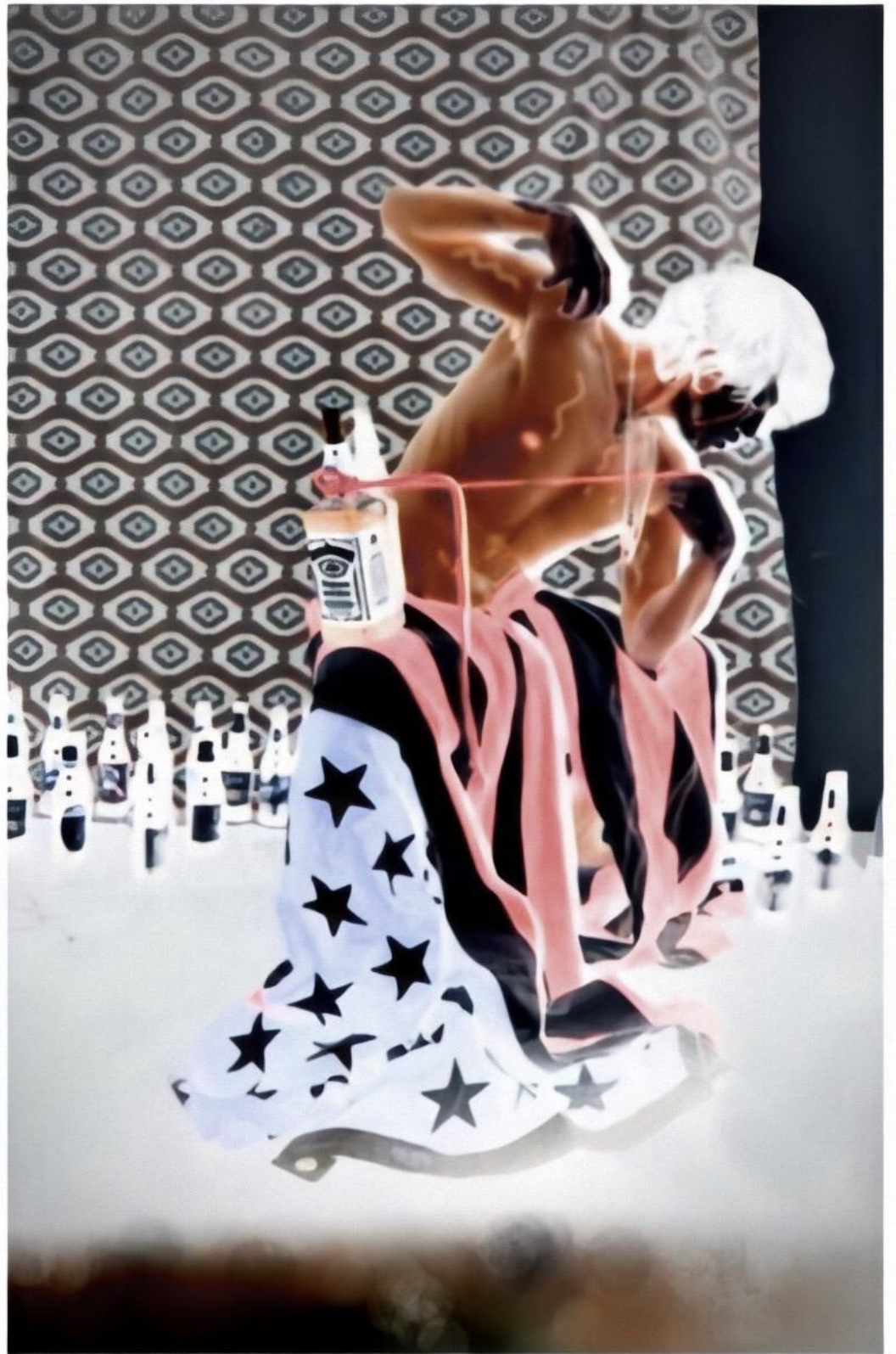
## Recommendations

Participants from both the focus group sessions and the in-depth interview provided several solutions and recommendations for the challenges and barriers that they had come to face to face with. These solutions included:

- For funding bodies to intentionally support communities of Latine artists or host events that bring Latine artists together
- Less rigorous application and selection processes for Latine artists to include those without documentation, English as a first language, and informal arts education
- Offer feedback for rejections to allow artists to learn about the granting process
- More intentional outreach of resources to Latine artists of all backgrounds
- Less restrictive funding opportunities that allow for artists to maintain their livelihood while practicing their art

## Conclusions

The Latine Artists of Minnesota research initiative sought to uncover the goals, motivations, and barriers experiences by artists across the state with the goal of generating knowledge that would increase creative activity amongst these artists. If used strategically, the insights gathered from the participants in this project may aid in supporting and facilitating the artistic participation of Latine artists in Minnesota. As a limitation of this research, there was less participation of artists living outside of the metro area than hoped for.



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# Background

The Minnesota State Arts Board is a state agency that stimulates and encourages the creation, performance, and appreciation of the arts in the state of Minnesota. The overarching State Arts Board is separately comprised of 11 regional arts councils that help serve specific groups of counties to provide more targeted aid to artistic communities. As a state agency, the Minnesota States Arts Board and their subsequent regional arts councils collaborate to distribute arts and cultural heritage funds that are grounded in the principles of: accountability and stewardship, statewide approach, transparency and public involvement, demographic and geographic fairness, comprehensive funding, sustainability funding, and anticipatory and flexible funding. For over a century, the Minnesota State Arts Board has dedicated itself to fulfilling these goals.<sup>3</sup> In 2021, the Minnesota State Arts Board provided funding to Hispanic Advocacy and Community Empowerment through Research (HACER) to collect information about creative activities that Latine communities engage with in Minnesota, looking to identify challenges and opportunities they encounter<sup>4</sup>.

The Latine artists of Minnesota project is a research initiative lead by HACER that focuses on increasing Latine creative activity in Minnesota by identifying the barriers, goals, and motivations of Latines engaged in the process of artistic creation. The goal of this project was to “assess the major difficulties this community has to overcome, and to inform about how to facilitate access to resources and support that could incentivize their creative work, and possible display and further distribution of it.”<sup>5</sup> Throughout the past year, individuals engaged in the process of artistic creation, including artists, community leaders, arts business owners, and arts program volunteers, have participated in this project through the project’s advisory committee, focus group sessions, or in-depth interviews.

The impetus for this project comes from prior research and observations made by Latine artists and academics that have identified social and institutional barriers that prevent Latine communities from being able to engage with the arts in an inclusive and sustainable way. As identified by professor of anthropology and author, Arlene Dávila, when reflecting on the art holdings of the Smithsonian American Art Museum in Washington, DC, “The museum lacked works by foundational figures; entire groups like Dominican Americans were missing, as were genres like abstract art; and with a collection dominated by colonial and folk art and work by Mexican Americans...”<sup>6</sup> In this way, institutionally, and more broadly, Latine artists have been excluded from representation in canonically European exhibitions of art in many of the U.S.’s most prominent museums. This exclusion becomes starker when juxtaposed with the ever-growing population of Latine residents in the U.S. In this same vein, research from Tufts University on the expression of Latine artwork in a town in Massachusetts, identified the ways in which racial and ethnic politics, immigration pressures, stereotypical expectations, and lack of education/resources, all serve as pervasive barriers that impact Latine artists around the United States in varying forms<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> About the Arts Board: Vision, Guiding Principles, Goals and Key Strategies, n.d.<sup>3</sup> About the Arts Board: Vision, Guiding Principles, Goals and Key Strategies, n.d.

<sup>4</sup> Latine Artists of Minnesota Project Description, 2021

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> Davila, “Critics and the Slippery Terrain of Latinx Art”.<sup>6</sup> Davila, “Critics and the Slippery Terrain of Latinx Art”.

<sup>7</sup> Mitarotondo, “Bridges and Barriers”.

# Methods

As a means of investigating the barriers, motivations, and goals of Latine artists around Minnesota, Hispanic Advocacy and Community Empowerment through Research (HACER) hosted an advisory committee, three focus groups and 10 in-depth interviews with Latine artists and arts professionals of a broad range of ages, backgrounds, geographies, genders, and practices. Participants for each phase of this project were recruited through social media, specific outreach to artistic communities, arts leaders, arts organizations, and through a snowball method of recruitment. Through this method of recruitment, each participant was asked to spread the word and recommend other participants to the project.

Advisory committee sessions were conducted through Zoom on weekday evenings and were conducted in English. For each session, an agenda was created to summarize the progress of the project and outline discussion questions for the committee to aid the progress of the project. The advisory committee was committed to assisting the project by aiding in recruitment of participants of diverse backgrounds and providing constructive feedback of research methodologies and results of focus groups and in-depth interviews.

Three focus groups sessions were conducted through Zoom on weekday evenings. Two of the focus group sessions were conducted in English and one was conducted in Spanish. The facilitation guide used for these sessions was developed by the HACER research team with input from the advisory committee. To ascertain the barriers, motivations, and goals of the participating artists, the facilitation guide included questions that focused on the inspirations for their work, their access to resources, and challenges they've faced. The goal of the focus group sessions was to gather broad themes, issues, and perspectives that Latine artists share. These broad themes were used to help develop the in-depth interview protocol.

Ten in-depth interview sessions were conducted through Zoom at the availability of the participant and the researcher. All 10 of the in-depth interviews were conducted in English. The in-depth interview sessions followed a semi-structured interview format such that the trajectory of the conversation varied from conversation to conversation while still following a set of questions generated with the information gathered from the focus group sessions. The in-depth interview protocol centered around three common themes: Latinidad & artistic practice, barriers to artistic practice, and potential solutions.

The focus group and in-depth interview sessions conducted over Zoom were recorded with the consent of the participants and a transcript of each was generated using NVivo software. The transcripts and notes from each session were analyzed qualitatively in their original language using NVivo software.



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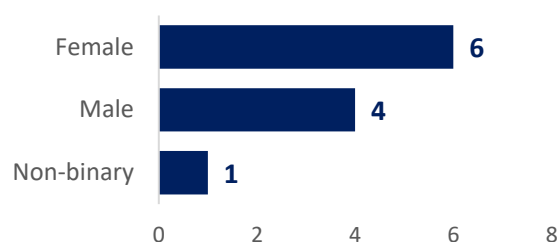
# Findings

## Steering Committee

### Participant Demographics

Eleven individuals participated in the 3 steering committee sessions held throughout the course of the project. Steering committee attendance ranged from six members to nine members. The steering committee consisted of six (55%) females, four (36%) males, and one (9%) non-binary member, for a total of 11 participants. The steering committee hosted many bilingual members, and each identified as Latine. Each steering committee meeting was hosted in English. The members of the steering committee varied in their relation to the arts and were specifically chosen for their connection to artistic communities, unique perspectives and backgrounds, academic connection with the arts, and commitment to the arts. Taken altogether, members of the committee represented many sectors of the arts. Members participated in museum studies, design and branding, painting, acting, theater, opera singing, activism, filmmaking, and media studies.

Steering committee gender distribution (N= 11)

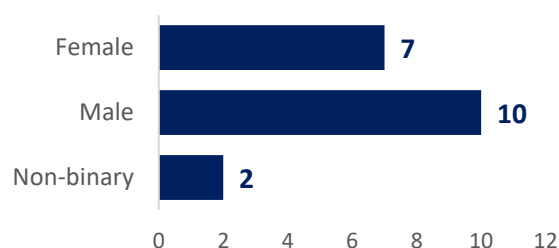


## Focus groups

### Participant Demographics

Nineteen individuals in all participated in the virtual focus groups. Focus group attendance ranged from four participants to seven participants. The focus groups consisted of seven (37%) females, 10 (53%) males, and two (11%) non-binary participants. Twelve participants stated that their job related to their artistic practice, while seven participants stated that their job was separate from their practice. Seven of the participants self-reported that they preferred Spanish over English, and 12 participants reported that they preferred English over Spanish. One of the focus groups was conducted in Spanish and two were conducted in English.

Focus group participant gender distribution (N= 19)



The participants' age spanned a large range with the youngest participant being between the ages of 18-24 and the oldest being over the age of 65. Nine out of 19 (47%) of the participants were between the ages of 25-34. Participants identified as Ecuadorian, Columbia, Mexican, Puerto Rican, Salvadorian, and Venezuelan, with some identifying as Hispanic, Jewish, Mixteco, Yaqui, and/or Latine. Nine out of 19 (47%) of the participants identified as having lineage from communities or indigenous cultures in Mexico.

The artist practices of the participants varied widely with some overlap. Their practices included: poetry, photography/videography, printmaking, theater, dance, community art, textiles, and graphic design. Six out of the 19 (32%) participants identified as photographers, videographers, or video editors. Many participants elaborated in the focus group conversations that while their artwork may fit a certain

category, much of their artistic expression surpasses the boundaries of these categories. Additionally, 10 out of 19 (53%) of the participants lived outside of St. Paul/Minneapolis while the remainder lived either in St. Paul or Minneapolis.

### Inspirations and motivations to pursue artistic practice

Participants began the focus group sessions by elaborating upon their preferred form of artistic expression and whether they identified with the label of artist. Six participants of the focus group sessions stated that they self-identified with the label of artists. These participants acknowledged certain caveats to this however, such that many felt as though it was a label they had to earn or embrace in the face of self-doubt, gate-keeping, and other barriers. Some participants struggled with the term artist as they felt they did not deserve to use the term due to either a lack of a consistent artistic practice or a lack of formal arts education. This form of imposter syndrome was mentioned several times throughout the focus group sessions as a struggle faced throughout one's artistic career. In this same vein, certain participants explained how they viewed the term artist to only apply to people who practice a certain form of art and that their different practice and different form of education did not allow them the title of artist.

Participants elaborated upon the inspiration for their artistic practice and the motivation they had to continue to pursue art. For both categories, artists varied widely in their inspirations and motivations, however, there was some overlap. Four participants described that their inspiration for their art was their cultural upbringing and felt as though their ancestral roots or their Latine backgrounds served as the basis of many artistic pieces. Many wished to connect more with their cultural roots, while others hoped to define and explore their identity and/or capture their cultural heritage. In addition to this, several participants outlined the importance of social and political justice in their artistic creations such as they were motivated to tell the stories of those who are undocumented or suffering from political and social violence. Other participants stated that education, mental health struggles, self-exploration, and more served as their primary sources of motivation and inspiration.

***"[I consider] artist as my primary self-identifier. I was raised in a culture that didn't value any form of artistic expression, especially something that was not religious. And when I was able to finally jettison out of that world, my support group that I had built my family, my real family, were all artists."***

***"I also didn't study art, and I had a lot of friends that studied art, and I feel like they had these classes with big conversations about what it means to be an artist, and they felt like since I wasn't in those conversations, I don't deserve to use the term, but that's really not true."***

***"Situations of social injustice and discussing the world as it is and the world as we would like it to be."***

***"Where I draw a lot of inspiration for my work is from my parents, my grandparents, my great grandparents and so on. From the Mexica side or from the Aztec side, we come from Mexico City ... And I would argue that indigenous people are one of the first abstract artists. So, I draw a lot of inspiration from that..."***

***"There's really no community or someone here that... does the same things as I do. So, I have had to make those, those spaces for other people who like to do that type of work as an artist..."***

## Access to Resources for Artistic Practice

When asked about having access to resources that enable their artistic practice, the conversation was dominated by either the lack of access to creative spaces for Latine artists and barriers that made access to funding and educational resources difficult.

A vast majority of participants identified either a lack or absence of spaces that encouraged creativity, whether it be through community or organizational support, or through support from other artist spaces. Participants who had not found spaces that encouraged their creative practice described having to go through the process of creating a space for themselves or their community. Participants identified that it was important for them to find support from other Latine artists or community members and that it is more difficult to feel welcome in spaces that were not intentionally by or for Latine artists. This creates a barrier for Latine artists to equally participate in their artistic practice as their white counterparts might. Additionally, a lack of community for Latine artists means a lack of mentorship for up-and-coming artists that are newly coming face to face with the struggles of pursuing the arts. One participant described having to repeatedly ask for support or guidance as a Latine artist and that oftentimes, they felt abandoned by those who said they would help. Importantly, participants that held other marginalized identities, such as identifying as transgender, struggled even more to find spaces with peers that shared their experiences and identities. A few participants described having found some spaces that they felt welcome in that provided structural support for their practice and pursuits as artists. Only one participant stated that they had found spaces that continuously support their practice.

In terms of access to funding and educational resources, the vast majority of artists who participated in the focus group sessions expressed feeling like various funding opportunities were either unknown to them or inaccessible for them. While there were a handful of participants that expressed having had access to adequate resources, conversation surrounding the accessibility to funding and educational resources was dominated by the many barriers and shortcomings of funding processes. Specifically, participants highlighted how the grant application process in Minnesota felt difficult or inaccessible, specifically for those who spoke English as a second language or who had not had to advocate for themselves as artists before. Many felt as though there was a secret language to grant applications

***“You know, like with these fashion shows, and just in general as an artist, I feel like oftentimes I have to always try to gather people that want to help me. But then like, they abandoned me, or they jumped ship. And that’s not a good feeling. And sometimes I’m like, is it because I’m trans? Is it because I’m a Latina? I don’t know what it is...”***

***“It is difficult to connect to resources. And even when you get there, the hardest thing is always getting your foot in the door. And there’s so much generational knowledge and verbiage and even the likely concept of how to use and leverage money and grant funds that comes with some people in the state, and I feel like in the Latinx community, a lot of us are starting from like no resources, from no understanding of like what an art museum does compared to what an art gallery does versus like what non-profits do.”***

***“It’s like I feel like there’s a hidden trap and I don’t know what the point is.”***



that they were not privy to as Latine artists, which caused them to face constant rejections. In this way, participants felt as though these grants were thus not made for them or meant to be accessed by them. Rejections were particularly frustrating as many also described receiving little to no feedback on their application which perpetuated the feeling of exclusivity around funding and educational resources. To a large portion of the participants, these resources did not just *feel* inaccessible, they were also unable to apply for funding or educational opportunities as many required proof of citizenship or permanent residency. This requirement meant that Latine artists in Minnesota who did not yet have documentation were restricted from receiving support for their artistic practice.

The artists that were able to apply for available resources lamented the fact that scarce funding for projects and certain artistic mediums fostered a culture of competition and gate-keeping that perpetuated divides within artistic communities. One participant had grown frustrated with the fact that they saw the same established artists receiving grants every year. Lastly, a small, but important, subset of the participants had never considered applying to funding or educational opportunities because they did not know they were available or because they did not think their artistic practices would justify receiving funding.

### Challenges as an Artist

As a part of the focus group sessions, participants were asked about the challenges they had had throughout their artistic careers and whether the identities they held contributed to these challenges. In response to this question, participants brought forward various challenges that had caused them difficulty. While there were many, important challenges discussed, the most ubiquitous challenge that artists across focus groups had experienced was either systemic or interpersonal racism and discrimination. These experiences often went hand in hand with the participants' artistic practice as they were overlooked for opportunities to practice their art, viewed as mere immigrants and not as artists, undervalued as artists, and had to work harder than their non-Latine counterparts. A common theme that arose in these conversations was the idea that Latine artists had to labor far harder than their white counterparts to, generally, achieve far less. At times, participants described a pressure to explain their Latinidad and leverage their cultural background to gain access to certain resources. This form of tokenization forces Latine artists to reduce themselves to their cultural backgrounds rather than be valued for their ability/potential as artists. Participants discussed the importance of autonomy when producing art about their cultural backgrounds such that they felt that art that explores or discusses their identity as Latine artists must be done on their own accord and not at the request of others.

***“I think you guys can back me up on this is all we really want is a livable wage that's going to allow us to be justified for all the hard work that we do. It's kind of like that concept. One step for a white man is five steps for a person of color and like that is so hard is true.”***

***“So, I feel like for me, it's hard to do events sometimes because I feel like everyone wants me to share my story and to talk about what is it about being trans, being Latina? And then oftentimes they're like, oh, we can't afford you. We don't want to pay you, but we'll put your photo on our website. And it's kind of like, ok, well, first of all, you are sort of invalidating me by just using my photo.”***

## Interviews

### Participant Demographics

Ten individuals participated in the virtual in-depth interviews. Of the interview participants, four (40%) self-identified as females and six (60%) self-identified as males. Eight participants stated that their job relates to their artistic practice, while two participants stated that their job is separate from their practice. Two of the participants self-reported that they preferred Spanish over English, and eight participants reported that they preferred English over Spanish.

The participants' age spanned a large range with the youngest participant being between the ages of 18-24 and the oldest being over the age of 65. Three out of 10 (30%) of the participants were between the ages of 25-34 and three out of 10 (30%) of participants were between the ages of 35-44. Participants identified as Mexican, Puerto Rican, Salvadorian, and Venezuelan, with some identifying as Indigenous to the Americas, Jewish, and Spanish. Five out of 10 (50%) of the participants identified as having lineage from communities or indigenous cultures in Mexico.

The artist practices of the participants varied widely with very little overlap. Their practices included:

- curation
- painting
- fiber arts
- installation work
- photography/videography
- puppetry
- visual design
- poetry



Two out of the 10 (20%) participants identified as interdisciplinary artists. Many participants elaborated in the in-depth interviews that while their artwork may fit a certain category, much of their artistic expression surpasses the boundaries of these categories. Additionally, only one out of 10 of our participants lived outside of St. Paul while the remainder lived either in St. Paul or Minneapolis.

### Latinidad and Artistic Practice

Participants began their in-depth interviews by elaborating on their preferred mode of artistic expression and the extent to which they identified with the label of artist. In contrast with the focus group participants, most of the in-depth interview participants self-identified as artists as many viewed the arts as something that was integrated in all aspects of life. In this way, they did not feel as though their self-identification with the term artist was contingent upon their artistic production.

***“The way that I understood art and culture was something that was not separate from daily life, from public life, like art and culture were infused in everything from health to education and just, you know, your way of being a human in the world.”***

While many considered themselves artists, others expressed a certain conflict with the label as they either had to overcome self-doubt or grapple with the idea that all artists must have a formal arts education. None of the in-depth interview participants stated that they did not identify with the label of artist.

The motivation participants had to pursue art were diverse as there was very little overlap in responses. One participant stated that they were motivated to pursue art to tell stories of their culture and their experiences. Another explained how art was a way for them to process and retaliate against various forms of oppression. In both ways, art was a natural response to something external, or rather, a way through which to communicate and understand their lived experiences. Of the overlap that did exist in their responses, many participants stated that their motivation to pursue the arts was to make it more accessible, whether it be through making art that is financially accessible or by using their success as artists to mentor and help other artists of color.

Lastly, as a way of understanding how Latinidad and artistic practice are intertwined, participants were asked whether their art was perceived through a Latine lens and whether this was something they intended or not. Around half of the participants stated that they felt as though their art was not perceived through a Latine lens and that this is what they had intended, such that the content of their work was not strictly about Latinidad or their culture. Many stated that they did feel that their work was perceived through a Latine lens and that this was intended this to be the case as the content of their work closely related to their culture and Latinidad. In instances where participants' art was perceived through a Latine lens when they did not intend for it to be so, artists expressed feeling stereotyped or tokenized. This was particularly true when artists were showcasing their art in predominantly white or academic spaces.

### Barriers to Artistic Practice

When responding to the barriers and challenges that come with being a Latine artists, participants responded to questions about the challenges of being an artist, their access to resources that support their art, and barriers that impede their artistic practice.

***“So, a big part of who I am is my culture and my stories. So, a lot of my work is about that, and it is also not just— has not just become about my own personal experience, it should definitely shift to like the community experience, the community that's similar to me, you know, like the Latine community, and it has become something very important for me to do a representation through my art.”***

***“I've always drawn what's important to me. When I was four, that was chickens. When I was eight, it was pirates. And now it's resilience in the face of oppression. There was never a transitory moment where I said I'm going to do political art.”***

***“What I mean by that is that I can reproduce my art to make it more accessible. And this is this whole idea of how do I make it more accessible for all, right, so target designs for all here I am trying too hard for all that is, instead of being so expensive that I never understood why art was so expensive.”***

***“I think that in my case, I think it's perceived more as a universal thing. Yeah, I don't think it has a Latino branding stamp exclusively.”***



Regarding the challenges that accompany being an artist, nearly every participant responded with a number of unique answers, with some overlap. Artists spoke of having communicational barriers when having to represent themselves through writing in English, which for many was a second language. These communication barriers made both applying to funding and educational opportunities and writing statements to market or represent oneself more difficult. As with the focus group session participants, two in-depth interview participants shared that they have often felt isolated as Latines throughout their artistic career and that people of their cultures and backgrounds were underrepresented. Of the diverse array of responses we received, a common thread was the challenge of maintaining one's livelihood while practicing and pursuing the arts. For some, this was a challenge that they were able to overcome, such as one participant who learned a different editing software so that they could cancel their expensive subscription to the Adobe suite. For others however, they were not able to overcome this hurdle and had to dedicate themselves to a full-time job that did not allow for an artistic practice on the side. Along this theme, numerous participants expressed that it was challenging to have to dedicate time and resources upfront to practice one's art with little to no guarantee that it would be received well.

When asked about access to resources that enable their artistic practice, participants tended to gravitate to the availability of financial resources. Due to the large number of funding bodies and the social change that took place after the death of George Floyd, many participants expressed that they had accessed funding resources at different points throughout their artistic careers. As a result, these participants felt as though funding resources for the arts in the state of Minnesota were accessible. One participant who was very familiar with the state of arts funding in Minnesota agreed that there were many grants available to artists and

added that, while there were many resources, Latine communities had a hard time being chosen for those awards. Another participant added their geographic context and identified that it was harder to access resources outside of the metro area as they perceived the Twin Cities to be the hub for arts. For the participants that felt as though resources were not available to them, the majority expressed that they were not even aware that there were funding resources available. In both the focus group sessions and the in-depth interviews, this was common feedback from immigrants who were used to different

***"I'll say this, I guess I don't like it when it comes from a white institution or center, because like then it just... that's tokenizing like they just want us in these spaces for them, not for us."***

***"Like, it's really nice that it's appreciated the Latin art here, but on the other side, in the dark side of that, I understand, and I've had some conversations with friends as well that is hard to be like, trying to sell your art because you are Latino."***

***"I think that's the first thing that we lack, Latinos. We're not good at expressing ourselves in writing, specifically in English. So that by itself, it's hard for us to describe what we're doing or where we want to go."***

***"And you know, you need to cut back on some things. So right now, I had to learn a whole another software of video editing that's free, just so I can keep making my videos. And I cut my subscription to a \$10 a month one that covers my photography. And it's all about finding those creative ways of saving."***

structures of funding and government. A number of participants learned during their interview that there were resources available to them that they could apply for. Regarding accessibility, it was shared that resources were harder to access when not offered bilingually and when not allowed to apply in one's native language. Accessibility and barriers went hand in hand for the last theme identified in responses as participants shared the difficulty they had applying to educational and financial resources with mixed immigration status. These participants found many resources to be wholly inaccessible as they required permanent residence or citizenship.

To end this section of questioning, participants shared the barriers that often impeded their artistic practice. Many participants pointed to things they had already discussed as challenges. However, several participants pointed to a larger barrier that made resources, arts spaces, and artistic communication inaccessible which was interpersonal and systemic racism. In the face of language barriers, financial struggles, issues with immigration, and more, the in-depth interview participants outlined the ways in which making art was a privilege that was scarcely afforded to Latine artists. As identified by one participant, this racism may take the form of colorism as lighter skinned or mixed Latine artists were perceived to be awarded funding more often. On a more individual level, Latine artists dealt with a level of interpersonal racism such as the aforementioned stereotyping of Latine art and the expectation of professionalism.

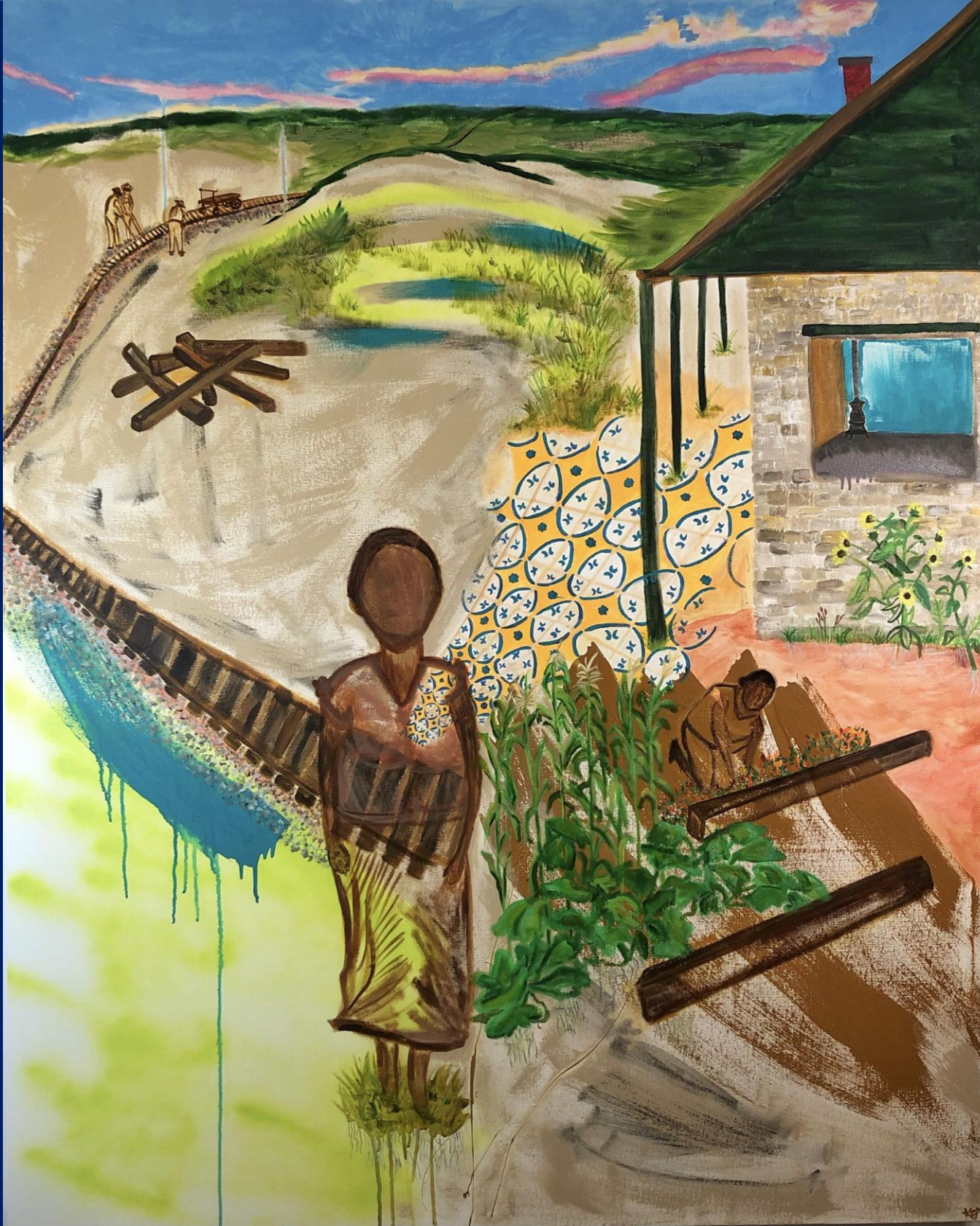
***“So, Minnesota is so rich with resources. It is incredible, to me, as somebody who is, or was a transplant because of the legacy amendment, the tax, the amount of sort of like philanthropic giving that is there. I think that there is an incredible amount of resources, but I think that Latine communities, artists, have a hard time being chosen for those awards.”***

***“I just feel like us as Latinos, we're just not targeted in these things sometimes or we also have our own stigmas of like I don't have money, but there's also nobody there to teach us that, hey, if you don't have money, you can do all these things and still get those opportunities or got education.”***

***“It's just that the systems that we're trying to make our daily lives from are not built for us. They're not...you know, we have to both make the work and like, hack the system at the same time. And so, I see that I see that happening a lot. I mean, you know, it can kind of like sap your sort of desire to make art to get up in the morning, too.”***

***“I think though, like, the sort of, the Afro-Latino or like mixed race, like, African American or people who are like more brown indigenous, like there's less representation of those folks. There's less, the artists that I see who have gotten awards are like in spaces or in curators' ears definitely tend to be Latinos who are lighter skinned or who are like mixed, you know, like white, European American.”***





Created by: KCF



# Recommendations

## Focus Groups

### Solutions and Recommendations

Hidden within each point brought up by the participants in our focus group sessions are solutions and recommendations for change as they outlined the lived experiences of being Latine artists. However, when asked specifically for solutions and recommendations they may offer, participants brought forth a variety of changes that could be made by funding and educational bodies and recommendations for programs and activities that would benefit Latine artists. Amongst all the points made, the most recurring one was the suggestion that **funding bodies should intentionally support or have events that bring Latine artists together and give them an opportunity to express their art on their terms.** This recommendation addresses many of the access issues and challenges that hinder Latine artists. In addition, this would address the reality that communities of Latine artists can be few and far between which severs the possibility of mentorship and makes artistic spaces feel less relatable and inviting. Events or spaces created that intentionally foster mentorship and that provide consistent, structural support, would also help foster a sustainable community for Latine artists.

As far as the funding process goes, participants recommended that **grants be less rigorous in both their application process and their selection process.** In particular, participants identified that funding bodies may say they want Latines to apply but will then only allow for Latines that have higher education, social security numbers, or proof of permanent residency. Funding that is specifically made for Latine artists of all backgrounds, that do not require one to speak of their Latinidad or to create based on their backgrounds, would be a way to address these accessibility issues. Additionally, excessively lengthy, or rigorous application processes disproportionately impact marginalized artists who must work harder than their white counterparts to achieve the same amounts. In this same way, applications that are judged by the quality of one's English or one's ability to use academic, jargon-y language to describe their art or their intentions, disproportionately prevents non-native speakers and those of varying educational backgrounds from gaining access to financial resources. Feedback for rejections would also help artists

*“A kind of residence for workshops is what I see as the spaces that artists need the most, or even more so I feel that artists need a space where they can leave their home.”*

*“I think that more community shows so people can meet other artists more and make those connections and without necessarily having to be like, big capital a, you know, artist who's been in gallery shows for four decades. And maybe those exist, and if they do, better communication about it because I don't know about them.”*

*“I applied three times already, and they always come up with the same excuse , but I put that aside. For people when they say, we want Latinos, but they want Latinos with a higher education with a Social Security; we need somebody that is going to follow the rules so if you don't follow the rules like you are out of the question.”*



of varying abilities learn from their failures so that they may have better chances to be awarded resources down the line.

Lastly, participants highlighted how it would **be helpful to have shared community resources outside of academia** so that the barrier to entry for more expensive artistic practices such as photography and videography was lower.

## Interviews

### Solutions and Recommendations

As with the focus group session participants, there were many nested solutions and recommendations identified within the comments made regarding the lived experiences of being Latine artists. As another similarity, many in-depth interview participants advocated for similar changes to funding and educational bodies as a means of addressing the challenges and barriers that accompany being Latine artists. **The most ubiquitous recommendation was for more intentional outreach for Latine artists across the whole state of all backgrounds, such that undocumented people, people living in rural areas, and people who are not connected to grander artistic communities, may have the knowledge and resources necessary to survive and thrive as an artist.** This would additionally aid in increasing representation of Latine artists across many spheres. Another way of achieving this is ensuring that councils, boards, and decision-making committees have Latine artists who know firsthand the needs of other artists and the general barriers that impacts many of our participants.

**Participants spoke to the need to have more spaces and community gatherings that are made intentionally for Latine artists to help give artists access to often restrictive spaces and to help build community for Latine artists.**

Some participants pointed out the need for a Latine focused museum or gallery that would highlight the work of Latine artists of all mediums and training.

***“But their avenues of reaching the community, especially certain pockets of the community, are outdated ... I’ll reach the homeboys, I’ll reach the convicts, I’ll reach the addicts, I’ll reach the poor people. But I reached them in a way that’s authentic and that’s genuine. That feels accessible and relatable. You know, it doesn’t feel like, oh, just a post on our website or a post on our social media. So hopefully you get it. You see it. Whatever, you know, you find the right avenues to actually share this information and these resources with strategic community partners, right? Community partners and community influencers, that I feel is the ticket to getting more.”***

In regard to educational and funding opportunities, participants shared the need for Latine specific funding that allows artists to solely focus on their art insofar that the requirements for spending should be less restrictive so that artists may have more autonomy over how to spend money that is awarded. Funding for basic living needs would also help encourage one's creative activity as much as a project-specific grant because the artist would then be able to focus more on their artistic practice rather than a full-time job, upcoming payments, or financial insecurity. Additionally, participants identified the need for skill building, educational resources that address the barriers that exist for Latine artists. For example, participants said it would be helpful to have classes for how to apply to grants, how to market oneself, and how to use more complicated editing programs.

*“It’s like, how can we encourage young people to go into themselves and think about their own relationship to art, their own relationship to figuring out, well, given what I know about my community, what are some ways in which art can happen in this community? My art can happen and be supported. I think that’s a good point. I think venues for mentorship, for passing on the intergenerational knowledge would be really good, especially if we can find people who are mentors and not just veterans.”*

*“Why not creating, you know, why not creating programs for Latinos specifically as well in those schools with extracurricular activities on, hey, this is how you can improve your art in terms not of dictating qualities of your art, but the financial side of it. Like this is how you write an artist statement. This is how you can curate your work. This is how you can put things into projects and make your work have more sense together. It’s those kinds of things that I would say can be fixed and can be worked on.”*

# Conclusions

The experiences of Latine artists were as diverse as the mediums and artwork of each participant. With this being said, however, there were many shared sentiments and perspectives amongst artists as they reflected on their identities, motivations, challenges, and hardships. It is through identifying these differences and similarities that information and knowledge can be generated. Throughout the course of the Latine Artists of Minnesota project, the information gathered, and the knowledge generated by this analysis may be used strategically to increase creative activity among Latine artists throughout the state of Minnesota. This can be done through addressing the challenges, barriers, and recommendations made by project participants to increase accessibility and activity. The state of the arts amongst Latines living in Minnesota is vibrant and full of potential. With the proper resources and support, these communities may continue to flourish.

As an acknowledgement of limitations of this research initiative, there was less participation of Latine artists that live in rural areas of Minnesota than hoped for. Despite effort and outreach to community organizations outside of the Twin Cities, it was more difficult to recruit participants than anticipated. Two large factors that played into this were: discriminatory notions of what constitutes art and shortcomings of the snowball method of recruitment.

While investigating the state of Latine art in Minnesota, a common theme was that Latine immigrants are rarely granted the privilege to identify themselves as artist as they are cordoned off by discriminatory labels such as manual laborer or worker. Without a degree, resume, or experience that is commonly valued in U.S. contexts, these individuals are brushed over for opportunities to practice their art. With this limiting definition of artist in mind, our outreach may not have been intentional enough to reach communities of artists that have faced this form of discrimination.

Additionally, due to the high concentration of artists in the Twin Cities and the high level of involvement of these artists, the snowball method of recruitment utilized for this project meant that artists in the metro area were represented more than artists from rural areas. The shortcomings of this method of recruitment are noted and point to a need to be more intentional with reaching harder to reach communities.



Created by: LS



# Appendices

## Appendix 1. Focus Group Protocol

Facilitator –

Notetaker –

### Introduction

Facilitator: Hello everyone and thank you for coming today. My name is Nicolas Diaz de Leon/Rodolfo Gutierrez, and I am a Research Associate at HACER. I will be moderating this conversation today and will be leading with questions to learn more about your experiences as artistically engaged Latines in Minnesota. On this call, we also have Nico, who is going to be our **NOTETAKER** with us today to assist me and take notes during our discussion. I appreciate all of you taking the time to be here today and for your willingness to share your experiences. Our hope is that by the end of this conversation, we will develop a clearer idea of the experiences of Latine artists in Minnesota today. Through these questions I will highlight themes such as the barriers you experience in your endeavors, your motivators to pursue the arts, the ideas you may have to reform art spaces and so on. This project is funded by the Arts Board of Minnesota to outline what it means to be an artistically engaged Latine in Minnesota and to investigate how these artists, such as yourselves, may be best supported. Before we continue, we have two forms that we would like you to fill out. The first is a consent form that outlines the project where you will be able to officially agree to participate. Also, the information we gather in this form is necessary to compensate each of you for your participation. The second is a demographic form to gather more information on each of you. This form will not have your name attached to it.

While I will be asking questions today to address these topics during our time together, I would like this to be an open conversation. This is a safe space where there are no right or wrong answers. Our only goal is to understand how you experience your practice and your life, so all information, all opinions, all questions and so on are valuable and valid. Feel free to talk amongst each other and follow up on others' points, however, please do be respectful of everyone's point of view. If the conversation deviates too far off track, I may step in to get us back on track. Lastly, if we are spending too much time on one question, I may interrupt to make sure that your voices are heard for all questions we have prepared today.

I would also like to inform you that this conversation will be recorded for notetaking purposes. While **NOTETAKER** does a great job of taking notes, they are not able to get all the details in real time. Recording helps us ensure that we get the best details and that we accurately understand and report what you share. I can promise you that no names will be used in any final reporting or shared by me outside this conversation. Your identities are confidential. I ask that you all do the same; whatever is mentioned during this conversation should stay within this room and no names or identifying information should be repeated. To preserve that anonymity, you may also keep your camera turned off during the session if you would like and you may also change your screen name to something different, such as "Participant 5". Lastly, this recording will be saved on a password protected computer and will only be shared with the researchers working on this project at HACER. Information gathered in this project will also be visible to our funders at the Arts Board of Minnesota. Additionally, the final report created for this project may be made public but will not contain any identifiable information. If anyone does not feel comfortable with us recording this session, we will make do with the notes that we are able to take. This will not in any way affect your relationship with any organization involved in this project or any of its members.

As we get ready to start, I ask that you please mute yourselves if you are not already. If you need to take a step out to make a call, to use the restroom, or to address something at home, that is totally fine. As I mentioned, this is just a conversation, so please make yourselves comfortable.

I will give everyone a second to mute their mics or to turn off your cameras or change your names if you would like. I will begin recording now.

### Facilitator Questions

1. If you could each, please introduce yourselves, I will pick based on how you appear on my Zoom screen. Please start by saying your name and what your favorite way to express yourself creatively is. Additionally, tell us how you feel about the term artist, do you feel like it is a label that you identify with?
2. Thank you all for those introductions. I would like to start this conversation by asking: From where do you draw your inspirations for your creative work? What motivates you to participate in artistic spaces?
  - a. *Probe:* What are common themes within your art? Do these themes reflect the things that encourage you to express yourself artistically?
  - b. *Probe:* What drives you to continue your artistic practice?
  - c. *Probe:* Conversely, what gets in the way?
3. Have you found spaces that encourage your creativity within your communities? If so, are these spaces specific to Latine artists? This does not have to be a school or artistic collective, this can also include in your family, community centers, and other places of community.
  - a. *Probe:* Are there other Latine artists in your communities?
  - b. *Probe:* Do you feel supported as an artist in your communities?
  - c. *Probe:* Do you ever feel discouraged within your community? If so, in what way?
4. In your experiences, have you found that there are enough resources in the form of education or financial assistance for you to your art?
  - a. *Probe:* Have you ever been limited by a lack of resources, knowledge or by financial constraints in your artistic practice?
  - b. *Probe:* Do you know of any places where you may find this type of support?
5. What challenges have you had as an artist? Has your identity, such as your latinidad, race, gender, for example, played a role in these challenges? Has your location played a role in these challenges?
  - a. *Probe:* More generally, what are some obstacles that you have had been faced with as a Latine in Minnesota?
  - b. *Probe:* Do you view your identity as impacting your creative expression? In what ways?
6. What are some potential solutions that would help address the challenges you have faced?
  - a. *Probe:* Considering the challenges and barriers you all identified, what changes could be made in your communities, in artistic spaces, and so on to address these challenges?
  - b. *Probe:* What are things that you wish you had as an artistically engaged Latine in Minnesota?
7. How would you like to see Latines be represented in the art world?
  - a. *Probe:* In what artistic spaces would you like there to be more Latines present?
  - b. *Probe:* How do you see Latines currently represented in the art world?
8. What are some notable successes that you have had in your time as a creative individual?
  - a. *Probe:* What are some goals you would like to achieve?

- b. *Probe*: Have you felt like you have grown in your trade? How did you do this?
- 9. What goals do you have for yourself for the future as an artist?
  - a. *Probe*: What role do you see art having in your future?
  - b. *Probe*: What is your biggest goal as an artist?
- 10. Are there any additional comments or information about your experience as an artist or creative individual that you would like to add?

Thank you for your participation in this conversation, we are glad to hear your perspective and your experiences. If you have any questions after this meeting, you are more than welcome to email either Rodolfo or Nicolas. Additionally, if you have peers that are Latine artists who you think may be interested in participating in this project, feel free to give them Nico's contact information at [Nicolas@hacer-mn.org](mailto:Nicolas@hacer-mn.org). You will be receiving your visa gift card for \$50 to your house via mail within three weeks.

## Appendix 2. In-Depth Interview Protocol

Facilitator –

Notetaker –

### Introduction

Facilitator: Hello, I'd like to start by thanking you for your interest in this project, we look forward to hearing about your experiences. My name is Nicolas Diaz de Leon/Rodolfo Gutierrez, and I am a Research Associate at HACER. I will be facilitating this interview today and will be leading with questions to learn more about your experiences as an artistically engaged Latine in Minnesota. On this call, we also have **NOTETAKER**, who is going to be our notetaker to assist me and take notes during our conversation. Our hope is that by the end of this conversation, we will develop a clearer idea of how your experiences as an artist and as a Latine in Minnesota interplay with each other. Through these questions I will highlight themes such as the barriers you may experience in your endeavors, your motivators to pursue the arts, the ideas you may have to reform art spaces and so on. This project is funded by the Arts Board of Minnesota to outline what it means to be an artistically engaged Latine in Minnesota and to investigate how these artists, such as yourselves, may be best supported. Before we continue, we have two forms that we would like you to fill out. The first is a consent form that outlines the project where you will be able to officially agree to participate. Also, the information we gather in this form is necessary to compensate you for your participation. The second is a demographic form to gather more information on your background. This form will not have your name attached to it so this information will be anonymous.

While I will be asking questions today to address these topics during our time together, I would like this to be an open conversation. This is a safe space where there are no right or wrong answers. Our only goal is to understand how you experience your practice and your life, so all information, all opinions, all questions and so on are valuable and valid.

I would also like to inform you that this conversation will be recorded for notetaking purposes. Recording helps us ensure that we get the best details and that we accurately understand and report what you share. I can promise you that no names will be used in any final reporting or shared by me outside this conversation. Your identity is confidential. Lastly, this recording will be saved on a password protected computer and will only be shared with the researchers working on this project at HACER. Information gathered in this project will also be visible to our funders at the Arts Board of Minnesota. Additionally, the final report created for this project may be made public but will not contain any identifiable information. If anyone does not feel comfortable with us recording this session, we will make do with the notes that we are able to take. This will not in any way affect your relationship with any organization involved in this project or any of its members.

### Facilitator Questions

#### Introductions & Background

1. I would like to begin with some introductions – if you could please, introduce yourself with your full name and your favorite way to express yourself creatively. Additionally, tell us how you feel about the term artist, and whether you identify with that label.
2. Taking a bit of a step back, could you share with us when you realized you first became interested in the arts? And also, when you decided to pursue it in a more serious way?
  - a. Follow-up to identify the timeline of events of their experience as an artist



3. Could you also introduce to us how you relate to the arts today? For example, are you engaged in the arts as a part of your job, as your full-time job, as a hobby, etc.?

#### Latinidad & Artistic Practice

4. In your artistic practice or pursuits today, do you find that your culture plays a role in the kind of art you create?
  - a. If you are in any artistic communities or collectives, are your peers of a similar background? Are these Latine spaces?
5. While presenting your art to the outside world, whether that be through grant applications, shows, artistic communities, etc., do you feel as though your art is perceived through a Latine lens?
6. What challenges have you had as an artist? Has your identify, such as your Latinidad, race, geography, or gender, played a role in these challenges?

#### Barriers to Artistic Practice

7. In your experience, have you found that there are enough resources in the form of education or financial assistance for you or your art?
  - a. Have you ever applied for financial assistance, grants, or other forms of resources to help you create your art?
  - b. If you have applied for financial assistance, how was that experience?
8. Have you felt supported as an artist throughout your career?
9. What do you view as the largest barriers to your artistic pursuits or practice?
  - a. Do you feel as though your Latinidad informs these barriers?
10. Homing in on the intersection between artistic practice and Latinidad, have you felt represented within arts communities in your city or the state of Minnesota?

#### Looking Forward

11. What are some potential solutions that you believe would help address the challenges you have faced?
  - a. What kinds of changes would best serve you, specifically, based on your experiences?
12. How would you like to see Latines be represented in the art world?
13. Are there any additional comments or information about your experiences as an artist or creative individual that you would like to add?

Thank you for your participation in this conversation, we are glad to hear your perspective and your experiences. If you have any questions after this meeting, you are more than welcome to email either Rodolfo or Nicolas. Additionally, if you have peers that are Latine artists who you think may be interested in participating in this project, feel free to give them Nico's contact information at [Nicolas@hacer-mn.org](mailto:Nicolas@hacer-mn.org). You will be receiving your compensation of \$100 to either your email or house depending on if you prefer check or gift card.

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