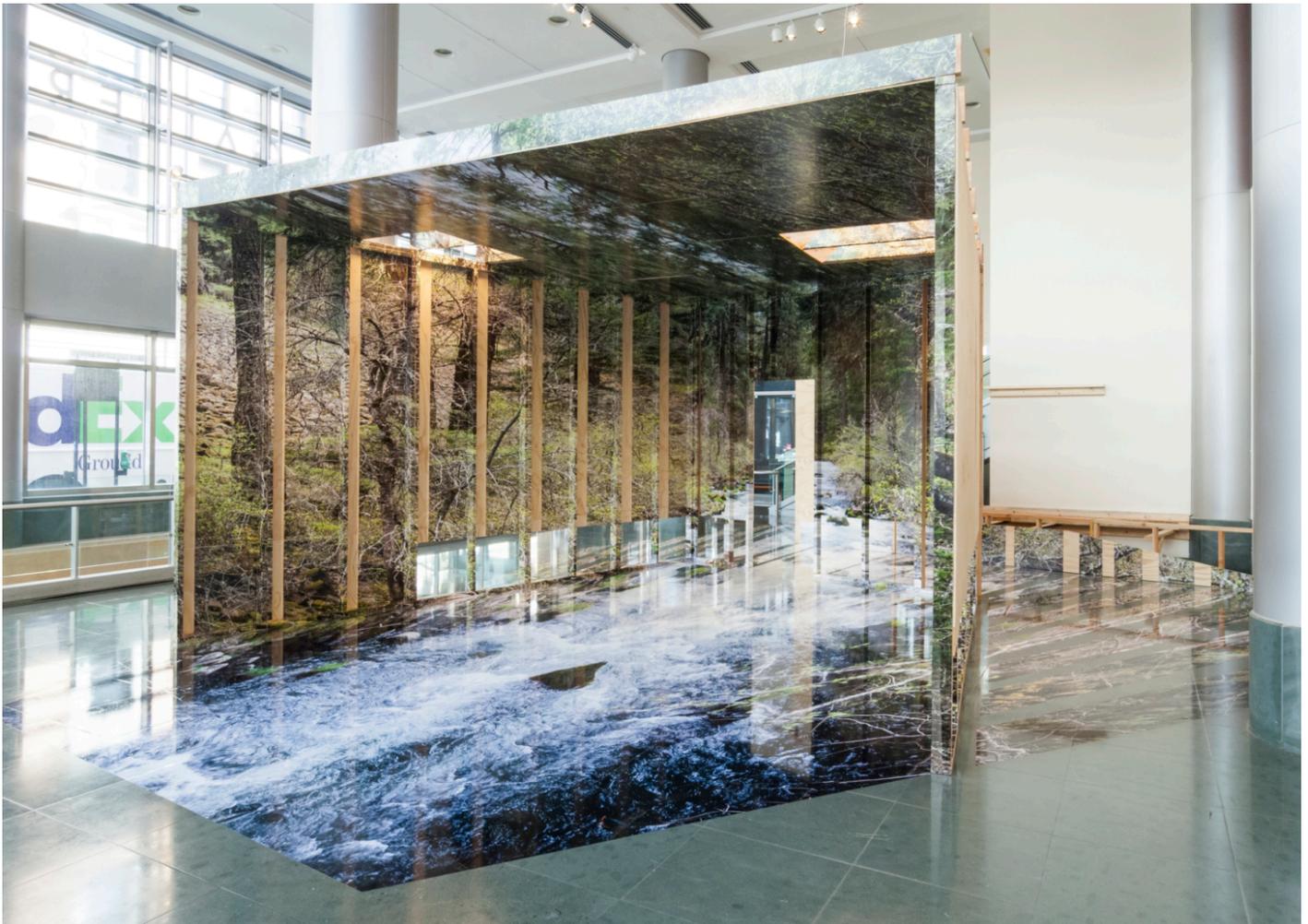


HYPERALLERGIC

FotoFocus Cancels 2020 Biennial, Donates Budget to Midwestern Arts Organizations

By foregoing its biennial this year, the Cincinnati-based nonprofit will be able to provide \$800,000 in unrestricted grants to its more than 100 participants and collaborators.

[Valentina Di Liscia](#) April 28, 2020



Chris Engman's site-specific installation for the 2018 FotoFocus Biennial, "Containment" (photo by Tony Walsh, courtesy of FotoFocus)

FotoFocus, the Cincinnati-based nonprofit that hosts the largest photography biennial in the US, has pledged the entire budget of its canceled 2020 event to help support the arts in the Midwest. By foregoing the FotoFocus Biennial this year, formerly scheduled to open in October, the organization will be able to provide \$800,000 in unrestricted, immediate grants to its more than 100 participants and collaborators.

The \$800,000 pledge includes all grants originally slated for participants to produce biennial programming as well as an additional 10% boost to each grant in honor of FotoFocus's 10th anniversary.

Among those benefitted by the initiative are major institutions in the Midwest, such as the Columbus Museum of Art; the Cincinnati Art Museum; and the Carnegie in Covington, Kentucky. But smaller arts venues in the region will also get a piece of the pie, including Art Beyond Boundaries, a gallery for artists with disabilities in Cincinnati, and the Contemporary Dayton. Additionally, a total of 15 academic institutions will receive funding totaling more than \$177,000.

Grantmaking organizations have had to adapt rapidly to sudden and critical shifts in funding priorities since the outbreak of the coronavirus. Artists who were applying for project-based grants or residencies just a few months back are now scurrying to fill out unemployment applications and emergency relief opportunities to help cover basic expenses, including food and housing. According to one survey by Americans for the Arts and Artist Relief, 95% of artists in the US have lost income due to the crisis.

FotoFocus is joining major arts funders — such as the Warhol Foundation, which is distributing existing aid directly to artists via its Regional Re-Granting Program — in acknowledging the sector's current needs, and creatively rerouting funding help meet them.

“FotoFocus, since its founding in 2010, has been about collaboration and dialogue. We are concentrating now on the reality of the current economic climate and its impact on artists, museums, galleries, and non-profit arts centers,” Mary Ellen Goeke, FotoFocus's executive director, told Hyperallergic.

“This public health crisis is impacting our ability to plan and therefore make sound decisions about what we have planned for October,” added Goeke. “Will our artists be able to travel? Will our audience be able to congregate? And will our catalogue and printed materials have an impact on our community? There are many unknowns, and we believe that supporting our art community outweighs any of our previous concerns.”

The next FotoFocus biennial will take place in October 2022.