

Dec 28, 2023

Friends,

We are swimming in a sea of metrics. (*Throughout 2023, The Lab has presented 48 programs featuring 114 artists, providing approximately \$100,000 in direct support for artists, and you can donate here.*)

At the core of this accounting is the implication that more is more, that there are numbers to be maximized and that these numbers reflect the success of an arts organization. We have employed metaphors, such as a “box with money in it,” or “wealth transfer engine,” which emphasize the metric of artist fees, because a focus on artist compensation has been an essential corrective to a culture of austerity and exploitation. Yet, I guarantee that an organization such as the The Lab has an annual artist budget smaller than, say, the Greek Theater—or even, for that matter, a certain current show at SFMOMA.

I humbly offer my own metaphor: the compost pile. The compost pile offers its own set of metrics. pH, a measure of the acidity or alkalinity of the soil, is not something to minimize or maximize but to balance. This requires paying attention to the soil—how it smells, how dry it is, whether there are bits that have not yet broken down—and at times aerating (or, “turning”) the compost to increase oxygen flow for the microbial forms performing decomposition. The compost pile is a collaboration among life-forms, an interplay of digestive and entropic processes that generates fertile soil for growth.

What might the compost pile teach us?

As a longtime fan and new Director of The Lab since this past July, I am struck with the interplay among disciplines, formal and social concerns, and modes of exhibition and performance that The Lab has for so long been a home to. The strength of The Lab lies in its openness to artists’ needs, and its ability to engage an audience that is interested in both ideas and material across many forms. The Lab’s community, with all due credit to Gertrude Stein’s *Composition As Explanation*, is “very nearly certain that something that is interesting is interesting them.”

And yet, a necessary part of the process of artistic composition is of course decomposition. The Lab is a site not just for the unitary creation of new work, but for the intersection and

exchange of ideas, and for radical forms of collaboration among artists, audiences, and our institution. As spaces for engagement disappear across the city, The Lab strives for toward constant experimentation and regeneration.

The Lab is also taking on a bit of extra space as part of our first long-term lease. Among a few practical reasons are that the space in question is immediately adjacent to The Lab, with zero sound isolation between rooms, and we already use it for equipment storage and an artist green room. But we're also taking on this space, in part, because in San Francisco finding space for creative work does not come easily. We hope this expansion will allow The Lab to host an ever-evolving diversity of projects across two rooms, and to provide a site for exchange and conversation that is generative of new work.

This year, Asher Hartman and his Gawdafful National Theater built a rundown apartment in the middle of The Lab; Kali Malone immersed a standing-room audience in sound with eight speakers; Jasmine Zhang amplified crushing pieces of sugar with a vintage sewing machine; Blood Is Here resonated and shook the walls of The Lab with their voices and bodies. We collaborated with The Wattis Institute to present Raven Chacon and Marshall Trammell for Drum Listens to Heart, Small Press Traffic for readings by Alice Notley and Robert Glück, Light Field and SFEMF for their annual festivals, presented discussions with Mackenzie Wark and Mindy Seu, and over a dozen events in response to our Call for Proposals.

The strength of The Lab is reflected in these individual projects on their own, but it is also in how they all happen under one roof. Institutional funders of The Lab might support “contemporary visual arts,” or “contemporary concert music,” or poetry, dance, theater, or community projects, but the power of our organization lies in the disciplinary intersection and interplay, in the decomposition of ideas that provides nutrients for new growth.

This would not be possible without the support of individuals. As members, ticket buyers, and donors, individuals account for approximately 45% of The Lab's operating budget. This allows us to take risks on work that doesn't fit in any one box, and provides baseline support that allows us to pursue major funding from institutional funders. Individual support is the reason for the diversity of work we present.

Please donate today to support The Lab. In addition to donating online or by mail, you can also find us on most company matching platforms such as Benevity and Bright Funds under our TIN 94-2952488. Thank you for your ongoing support of The Lab.

With gratitude,

Andrew C. Smith
Executive Director

2023 by the numbers

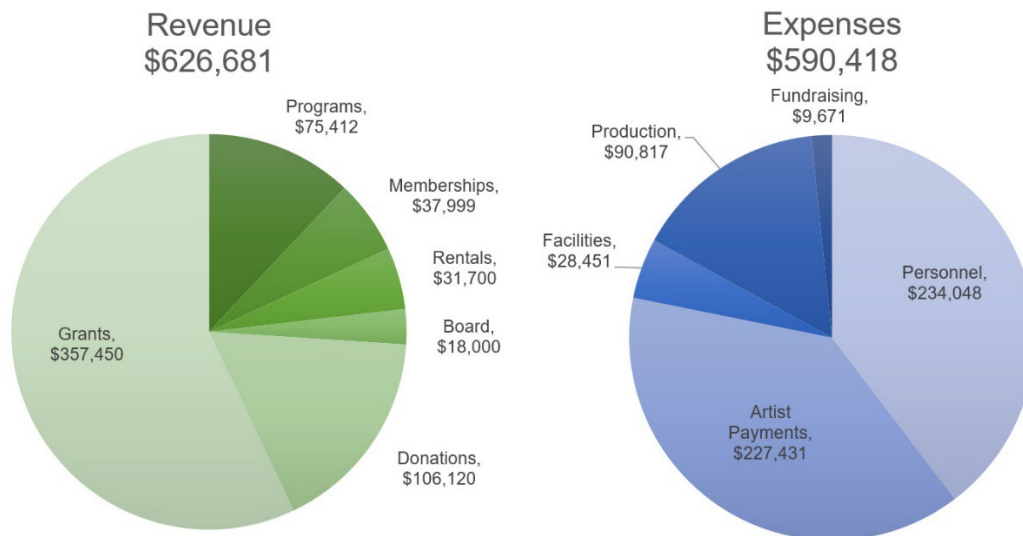
Artists: 115

Performances: 48

Members: 450

Audiences: 2,469

2023 Finances (Fiscal Year, Ending June 30, 2023)



2023 Programming

Jan 1, 2023: Ikue Mori, William Winant, Valentina Magaletti, and NOMON

Feb 1, 2023 – Jun 30, 2023: Indira Allegra

Feb 25, 2023: Raven Chacon and Music Research Strategies

Mar 12, 2023: The Nature Book / City of Nature: Tom Comitta and Kota Ezawa

Mar 30, 2023 – Apr 2, 2023: Light Field Film Festival

Apr 6, 2023: Caterina Barbieri

Apr 7, 2023 – Apr 8, 2023: Kali Malone

Apr 15, 2023: Writing on Raving: Zoë Beery, Geoffrey Mak, and Mckenzie Wark

May 6, 2023: Bill Orcutt Guitar Quartet

May 7, 2023: The Shape of Minds to Come: John Duncan, Schneider TM, Scot Jenerik, Chandra Shukla, Thomas Dimuzio

May 18, 2023 – May 20, 2023: Asher Hartman: It's Better to Start Out Ugly

May 27, 2023: Karl Evangelista's "Bukas"

Jun 2, 2023: SF Cinematheque / It Don't Look Like Rain: Recent Films by Simon Liu

Jun 17, 2023: Cyberfeminism Index

Jun 23, 2023: Stefan Tiefengraber and Lime Rickey International

Jul 14, 2023: Zekarias Musele Thompson: Possible Dialogues Vol. 1

Jul 16, 2023: Jasmine Zhang: Some Historical Whisper

Aug 25, 2023: Neutral Attunement

Aug 31, 2023: Ellen Arkbro + Sally Decker

Sep 2, 2023: Blood Is Here

Sep 15, 2023 – Sep 17, 2023: San Francisco Electronic Music Festival

Sep 23, 2023: Sounds of Slowing Down

Sep 29, 2023: Jordan Glenn's BEAK + Sudhu Tewari

Sep 30, 2023 – Oct 12, 2023: SELJAM

Oct 5, 2023: MSHR: *Mesh Manifold*

Oct 20, 2023: TAK Ensemble

Oct 27, 2023: Loscil & Lawrence English + Briana Marela

Nov 6, 2023: Alice Notley

Nov 7, 2023: Pamela Sneed + Alexander Hernandez

Nov 9, 2023 – Nov 11, 2023: Mills After Mills: Three Days of Crazy Love

Nov 16, 2023: Laurel Halo + Joel St. Julien

Nov 17, 2023: Robert Glück

Nov 18, 2023: Jack Callahan & Jeff Witscher + DROUGHT SPA

Dec 8, 2023: JJJJJJerome Ellis + Agnes Martian

Dec 9, 2023: Matt Robideaux: Prepared Guitar Ensemble

Dec 15, 2023: Francois J. Bonnet & Stephen O'Malley + Andy Guthrie

Dec 16, 2023: Yarn/Wire, Ben Vida & Nina Dante: The Beat My Head Hit + Charles Curtis & Dafne Vicente-Sandoval

Dec 17, 2023: Charles Curtis & Dafne Vicente-Sandoval perform Alvin Lucier