



Featured Artists and Schedule Announced for 29th Annual Art & Soul program and April 11 showcase in partnership with Madam Walker Legacy Center

Media assets available [here](#)

Indianapolis (January 22, 2025) - [Indy Arts Council](#) announces the full schedule and the 2025 Featured Artists as part of this year's Art & Soul, its largest public program that has helped advance the careers of Black artists in Indianapolis since 1996. A new collaboration between Indy Arts Council and [Madam Walker Legacy Center](#) will offer a larger stage and introduce a broader audience to the 2025 [Art & Soul program](#) and its four Featured Artists. New this year, the Art & Soul Featured Artist Showcase, titled "soul • real • ism", will debut at the Madam Walker Legacy Center on April 11, 2025. Art & Soul is supported annually by Lilly Endowment Inc.

"I am honored to support the creativity of these four remarkable artists," said Mariah Ivey, a proud Art & Soul alumna and Program Manager at the Madam Walker Legacy Center. "Now more than ever, we need art, and the voices and stories of the artists who create it. This program and the upcoming showcase will not only highlight their talent, but also offer our community a chance to connect, gain insight, and leave truly inspired."

2025 ART & SOUL FEATURED ARTISTS

For nearly 30 years, Art & Soul has helped launch the careers of emerging Black artists in central Indiana. Four Featured Artists are selected annually for their exemplary contributions to the creative community. In addition, the Featured Artists receive year-long career development support.

Indy Arts Council received a record 87 applications for 2025 Featured Artists. Applications were reviewed and selected by a panel of Black community arts leaders, Indy Arts Council, and Madam Walker Legacy Center, who sought candidates with exceptional talent and commitment to their creative career. The 2025 Featured Artists are:

- **Akili Ni Mali - Recording Artist & Actor**

Akili Ni Mali is an independent recording artist, born in California and raised in Indianapolis. With a sound blend of R&B, soul, jazz, and pop, some of her musical influences are Jazmine Sullivan, Rachelle Farrelle, Sadé, and India Arie. She released her EP *Breathe* in 2020, along with singles "Good Life" (2020), "Right" (2021), "Sold" (2022), "Lana Del Rey" (2023) and "9-5" (2024), and her latest EP *Changes* (2024). Akili is also a professional actor with representation out of Chicago.

- **Brandon Lott - Recording Artist**

Brandon is a versatile and seasoned recording artist specializing in vocal performance, songwriting, and multi-instrumental production. He began his career in 2014 as a music intern at the Harrison Center while attending Herron High School. In 2022, Brandon signed with 199X Sound, an independently-run artist management company based in LA. His work blends R&B and neo soul with global influences, aiming to inspire listeners to explore their inner selves and question the mysteries of existence.

- **Kierra Ready - Visual Artist & Illustrator**

Kierra is a multidisciplinary artist whose work is deeply rooted in community and culture. She creates art that sparks conversations, encourages unity, and invites people to experience the beauty of diversity. With a strong passion for storytelling through visual media, Kierra strives to uplift and inspire through every project, connecting people through creativity and shared experiences. Past exhibitions include Phoenix Theatre: *Taking Up Space*, Indy Black Expo: *Art Speaks*, Storefront Indy: *Fine Chic*, and Re:Public: *Beautiful Things Grow Here*.

- **Monique Burts - Wearable Artist**

Monique Burts is a wearable artist who uses storytelling and performance art to bring her sculptures to life through various unconventional materials. She received her Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in sculpture from Herron School of Art + Design. Monique draws much of her inspiration from the possibilities that appear when perspective is altered. Her artistry is also shaped by her culture and lived experiences as a Black woman. She has exhibited at various Indianapolis galleries and venues including the Phoenix Theatre Cultural Centre, The Vogue Theatre, and the Indy 500 Snakepit Ball.

ART & SOUL 2025 EVENTS AND PROGRAMMING

Art & Soul 2025 will shift to a year-round celebration centered on the Featured Artists, with a variety of events leading up to the Featured Artist Showcase. These include public events that celebrate visual art, music, dance, and literature.

- March 23, 3-4 p.m. | **Art & Soul Sundays series kickoff** at the Indianapolis Arts garden (more dates to be announced)
- April 4, 6-9 p.m. | **Kierra Ready: From the Inside Out – An Art & Soul Exhibition** First Friday opening at Gallery 924 (exhibition runs through May 22)
- April 11, 6-8 p.m. | **soul • real • ism – A Featured Artist Showcase** at Madam Walker Legacy Center
- Full 2025 Art & Soul program and event details: indyarts.org/programs/art-soul

ART & SOUL ACTIVATION GRANTS

Arts and culture nonprofit organizations received Art & Soul Activation Grants to offer public events spotlighting the four Featured Artists. Nine organizations were awarded between \$1,000 and \$2,000 to compensate the artists for events and experiences in the community that also support the artist's career goals. For information on each organization's event, timing, and participating artists, visit indyarts.org/programs/art-soul as scheduling continues to be confirmed.

- [Arts for Lawrence](#)
- [Big Car Collaborative](#)
- [Brick Street Poetry](#)
- [Harrison Center](#)
- [Indy Dance Council](#)
- [Indy Juneteenth](#)
- [Madam Walker Legacy Center](#)
- [The Cabaret](#)
- [Touba Gardens](#)

CONNECT WITH ART & SOUL

Please follow @ArtsCouncilIndy, @WalkerTheatre and #ArtSoulIndy on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn to join the celebration. For more information, visit indyarts.org/programs/art-soul.

About Indy Arts Council

[Indy Arts Council](#) is central Indiana's leading arts advocacy and services agency. Their mission is to champion arts and culture. Indy Arts Council believes every resident should experience arts and culture in a way that nourishes and inspires them. This vision of a creative life for all is central to the work they do to support artists, arts organizations, and the community.

About Madam Walker Legacy Center

The [Madam Walker Legacy Center](#) represents a significant piece of the nation's history. It is located in the Madam C.J. Walker Building, which was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1991 and placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1980. It remains a beacon of pride, hope and the beauty that lies in diversity, ensuring that the significance of Madam C.J. Walker, Indiana Avenue and African-American cultural arts are not forgotten.

###