

Indy Arts Council announces the 2025 DeHaan Artist of Distinction Award Winners

IMAGES FOR MEDIA

Indianapolis (January 13, 2026) – The Indy Arts Council, with generous support from Christel DeHaan, has named four Indiana artists as recipients of the 2025 DeHaan Artist of Distinction Award. Each artist receives up to \$10,000 to pursue ambitious, boundary-pushing projects that expand their creative practice. A panel of visual art professionals selected Aaron S. Coleman, Eli Craven, Bryn Jackson, and Emily Clark Zarse. Their work will be presented in a special exhibition at Gallery 924.

“The Indy Arts Council and Christel DeHaan launched this program in 2017 to give Indiana-based artists the freedom to take creative risks,” said Judith B. Thomas, President & CEO of the Indy Arts Council. “This year’s artists are exploring familial connections through found objects, immersive installations, ecological and sculptural systems, and human-machine collaboration. Each is pushing the field of contemporary visual arts in exciting directions.”

Meet the 2025 DeHaan Artists of Distinction

Aaron S. Coleman is a multi-disciplinary artist and Associate Professor holding the Kenneth E. Tyler Endowed Chair at Herron School of Art and Design, Indianapolis. He earned his MFA from Northern Illinois University in 2013. Aaron’s work in printmaking, sculpture, and installation has been recognized with the 2021 Black Box Press Foundation Art as Activism Grant, the New Voices Fellowship from the International Print Center New York, and multiple Joan Mitchell Foundation Fellowship nominations. A co-founder of the Sienna Collective, Aaron has presented over 50 public lectures, led national workshops, and is a contributing author to the forthcoming *Routledge Handbook on Critical Arts-Based Research*. He enjoys cultivating rare African orchids, is a husband, and a dog lover.

Eli Craven is a lens-based artist based in Lafayette, Indiana. Craven’s research resides in the critical investigation of the image and its relationship to ideologies of sexuality, desire, and death. He holds an MFA in photography from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and an undergraduate degree in photography from Boise State University. His work is exhibited nationally and internationally, most recently at Kant Gallery, Copenhagen; KlompChing Gallery, Brooklyn; and at Blue Sky, Oregon Center for the Photographic Arts, in Portland. Select clients include *Corriere della Sera*, Gestalten publishers, Penguin Random House, and the Paris National Opera. He is currently an associate professor of photography at Purdue University.

Bryn Jackson is an Indianapolis-based artist, curator, and cultural advisor whose practice centers on ecological justice and institutional accountability, using nature to explore histories and foster connectivity. Working across sculpture, photography, time-based media, community engagement, and habitat design, he creates projects that promote environmental restoration and collective healing. Bryn earned a BFA from NYU Tisch and an MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. His work is nationally recognized and supported by organizations including the Indy Arts Council, Lilly Endowment, Arts Midwest, and the National Endowment for the Arts. A 2023 Power Plant Grant

recipient, he is a Long-Term Artist Resident at CAMi, serves on multiple boards including the Eiteljorg Museum, and was an inaugural member of the Professional Alliance for Curators of Color.

Emily Clark Zarse is an artist based in Bloomington, Indiana, working with textile-based sculpture, installation, and textile paintings. Using dyed silk, stitching, binding, and repair, she creates wall-based and suspended works that explore how softness can hold weight, examining intersections of gender, caregiving labor, and architecture as bodies and materials register pressure, maintenance, and collapse over time. Zarse holds a BA from Cornell University, an MFA in Fibers, and an MA in Curatorship from Indiana University Bloomington. Her work has been exhibited nationally and internationally, with recent exhibitions including *Creative ReProduction* at the Waldron Arts Center and *Uncanny* at IU Kokomo Art Gallery. Alongside her studio practice, she develops curatorial and archival projects grounded in feminist methods and sensory interpretation. Her work has been supported by Indiana University fellowships and a Bloomington Arts Commission Emerging Artist Grant.

Applications are now open for the [2026 DeHaan Artist of Distinction Awards](#). They will be reviewed in two rounds (due May 3 and October 18). Applicants may apply in either or both rounds.

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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.