

HMD'S THE BRIDGE PROJECT ANNOUNCES THE LAUNCH OF ITS INAUGURAL ARTIST COUNCIL



Clockwise from top left: Rashida Chase, Audrey Johnson, Dazaun Soleyn and Javier Stell-Frésquez.

bridgeproject.art

SAN FRANCISCO, CA, November 19, 2021 – HMD's The Bridge Project is proud to announce the launch of its inaugural **Artist Council**, a key part in the organization's transition to distributed leadership and an integral expression of its core value of artists as visionary agents of social change. With a tenure lasting one year, the inaugural Artist Council includes **Rashida Chase, Audrey Johnson, Dazaun Soleyn** and **Javier Stell-Frésquez**.

The Artist Council provides a collaborative structure inviting new perspectives, experimental practices, cross-disciplinary projects and new audiences to The Bridge Project's existing work. Over the next year, the Council will curate and produce a series of events of flexible scope. Approximately one third of The Bridge Project's annual budget will be allocated in support of the Council's vision.

"I'm deeply looking forward to coming together with Rashida, Dazaun and Javier to build programming that reflects the artistic spaces we crave and desire in the Bay Area," said Johnson. "In my own practice, I value work that centers embodied experience – be it through movement, song, collective emotion, transformation or memory. I'm excited to move towards joy as a curatorial approach, just as I value and imagine that the work and programming we curate will also hold space for all that can be alongside joy: presence, hope, grief, quiet, rage, pleasure, power. The public can look forward to programming that responds to the needs and desires of the artists working and living in the Bay Area."

Bridge Project Co-Directors **Cherie Hill**, **Hope Mohr** and **Karla Quintero** selected the members of the Council's inaugural cohort with an eye toward furthering the work of building equity – racial, cultural and aesthetic. The Bridge Project believes artists play a critical role in creating an equitable and just society. At the same time, core to its practice is dance, and preference was given to artists engaged directly or indirectly with movement-based art.

Unlike many other advisory bodies in the arts, The Bridge Project's Artist Council is central to the organization as a whole. Council members are paid an hourly wage equal to staff members. Moreover, their work is not limited to Council activities. Council members are encouraged to take part in all areas of The Bridge Project by participating in governance, being in conversation with staff around values, and helping to guide the organization's direction.

"We launched this experiment because we are interested in developing new approaches to curation," said Quintero. "We're interested in being in conversation with artists who share our curiosity, but who may not necessarily share our backgrounds."

"One goal of the Council is to provide curatorial opportunities to artists who may not have been afforded that opportunity before," said Mohr. "The crux of the Council is an invitation to experimentation, and we want to uplift people and voices that The Bridge Project hasn't centered before."

"Sharing curation with four BIPOC members from our arts community feels refreshing," said Hill. "I am excited to see how this Artist Council evolves in the areas of relationship-building, equitable art offerings and our ongoing structural commitment to distributed leadership."

"For us, distributed leadership does not only mean democratizing staff power but giving power to people in the greater community," added Mohr. "For us, distributing leadership means looking outward as well as inward. In that way our model is responsive to the context we're operating in. The Artist Council, as part of HMD's model of distributed leadership, represents the future of cultural organizations committed to giving artists a seat at the table."

For more information visit bridgeproject.art/artist-council.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Rashida Chase is an Oakland native, a vocalist, and a culture and wellness advocate who strives to create experiences that soothe, heal and inspire. A proud advocate for Oakland artists, Rashida worked with local activists to increase cultural funding and reinstate the Cultural Affairs Commission, and she is the Director of AMP Oakland, a piloted busker series in downtown Oakland showcasing more than 170 performances and over 300 artists. Chase believes in the importance of creating pathways for emerging artists, and she is excited to be on the Advisory Board for her alma mater, Skyline High School's Visual and Performing Arts Academy as well as Oakland Youth Chorus's Alumni Task Force. She is also a community partner with School Partners USA, a Thrive Collective initiative. In 2019, Chase founded Liberated Culture, a cultural enterprise that supports local artists, works to repair intergenerational gaps and uplifts the authentic culture of Oakland.

Audrey Johnson is a queer, Black, mixed-race movement artist with roots in Detroit and Plymouth, Michigan, currently rooting in Oakland, CA. Emerging from a lineage of queer Black feminist praxis, Johnson's work explores Black and queer time travel, joy and resilience through the mediums of body, land and story. Her performance work has been presented at FRESH Festival (San Francisco), The Arab American National Museum (Dearborn, MI), Sidewalk Arts Festival (Detroit, MI), FROLIC Queering Dance Festival and 2727 California Street (Berkeley, CA). She has collaborated and performed with artists such as Jennifer Harge (Detroit), Biba Bell (Detroit), Gerald Casel (San Francisco), and Stephanie Hewett (Oakland). She is a co-founding member of Collective Sweat Detroit, an organization holding space for dance in Detroit, and she holds a BFA in Dance with honors from Wayne State University.

Dazaun Soleyn, artistic director of dazaun.dance, graduated as the University of South Florida's Outstanding Graduate with a BFA in Modern Dance Performance and Choreography. Upon graduation, Soleyn was accepted as a trainee at the Alonzo King LINES Ballet Training Program (LBTP). With the aim of creating holistic art that illuminates the dynamic fullness of soul, Soleyn has been sharing work in the Bay Area since fall 2014. His teaching credits include the Alonzo King LINES Ballet Training Program, University of South Florida, Cal-State University East Bay, Alonzo King LINES Ballet BFA Program, Dance Mission Theater and ODC Commons. Currently, Soleyn is an Adjunct Professor at the University of San Francisco Performing Arts and Social Justice Program, a certified Gyrotonic Instructor, Level 2 Reiki Practitioner and Energy Worker. He is also a candidate for a Master's in Architecture Degree at California College of the Arts.

Javier Stell-Frésquez (Piru & Tigua, two-spirit, mixed race, Xicanx; originally from El Paso, Texas) serves Indigenous communities of the Bay Area with the Bay Area American Indian Two-Spirits (BAAIT-S) Powwow. She received a B.S. in Environmental Science with honors in Chican@ Studies from Stanford University. With lifelong experience in many dance forms and performance art, she has competed in the voguing House Ballroom Scene. His current multimedia performance projects include *Chaac & Yum*, a Two-Spirit Dance Project, and *Mother the Verb*. As the San Francisco region's California Arts Council Arts Administrator of Color Fellow, she works closely with Anne Huang at World Arts West to produce panels at national arts conferences including APAP. In partnership with Counterpulse and BAAIT-S, she co-

produces and co-curates the *Weaving Spirits Festival of Two-Spirit Performance*. More information at weavingspirits.com.

ABOUT HMD'S THE BRIDGE PROJECT

The Bridge Project, a program of HMD, creates and supports equity-driven live art that builds community and centers artists as agents of change. The Bridge Project, co-directed by Cherie Hill, Hope Mohr and Karla Quintero, consists of the following programs: a Community Engagement Residency, a Multidisciplinary Performance Series, a Teaching Artist Series and a Public Dialogue Series. "Creating spaces for debate, dissent, connection and collaboration, The Bridge Project offers a model for how to build arts community" (Jack Halberstam). More information at bridgeproject.art.