



## BELLE FOUNDATION ANNOUNCES 2017 GRANTS

### **Ian Leonard** Education San José, California



Sing! Dance! Act! Have fun! If there's a teacher who embodies joy in his work, it's Ian Leonard. He loves theater and shares that passion with every student he interacts with — from CMT San Jose to Almaden Country Day School. He's been lauded by children, parents, peers and administrators for his ability to connect with children and make magic on the stage.

*“Being a teacher is hard to do but being a teacher who is adored and admired is even harder and yet Mr. Leonard does just that.”*



### **Elissa Levy** Mixed Media/Sculpture Brooklyn, New York

A native New Yorker, Elissa Levy crumples up newspapers, transforms books with flowers and seeks to find the duality in all things.

Although she works with ordinary materials — newspapers, magazines and books — she puts them together in extraordinary ways to create eye-catching pieces that give people pause and demand a closer look.

*“She's working with a lot of ideas, has loads of potential and her work catches your eye.”*

### **Gianfranco Paolozzi** Visual Arts Sunnyvale, California



Gianfranco Paolozzi has steadily been producing art over the past 50 years with visionary thinking of what art actually is as well as incredible talent with which he executes it. He sees his work as a constantly evolving journal of his life experience. He paints his canvasses, adds to them over and over through the course of their life and only

stops when someone buys it, then titles it the years it was created. Now in his 60s, he is more passionate, productive and living life with the creative spirit out front and in full force.

*“Gianfranco has for too long been ‘under the radar’ as being recognized as a great conceptual artist.”*

### **Denise Perreault** Art Activism Boulder, Colorado

When Denise Perreault, a textile artist, watched expensive bolts of fabric regularly dumped in the garbage, she realized she had to do something. Understanding the difficulty for retailers to get rid of old supplies she started Art Parts to help keep materials out of the landfill and provide discounted items to artists and teachers who could put them to good use. Those efforts seem to be working since nearly one-and-a-half tons of surplus materials are donated to the nonprofit creative reuse center every month.

*“I was so inspired to see someone take their love of art and the environment and build a store that creates a long life for things, large and small, and that's not only important, but magical.”*



### **Suhita Shirodkar** Visual Arts San José, California

Urban artist Suhita Shirodkar may live in Silicon Valley, but she travels the world and strives to sketch as much of it as possible. From San Miguel de Allende to Lisbon and San Francisco to Santa Fe, images of her journeys infuse her art, whether she is at home or abroad. She's a prolific sketcher who is constantly inspired by whatever is in front of her, whether it's a bustling zócalo, a group of sun-kissed surfers or an ancient building backlit by sunlight.



*“Her work is beautiful — very colorful, whimsical and full of wonder.”*

**Elisa Soliven**  
Mixed Media/Sculpture  
Brooklyn, New York

Elisa Soliven creates ceramic sculptures that are not recognizable and yet have a “particular style of quirky grace.” Her work has evolved over the years, from painting and using found objects into utilizing clay, which gives her process flexibility because of its durability and its limits. She’s transforming ceramic into interesting, touching and otherworldly sculptures.



*“It feels like she has an internal gauge that inspires her work — it’s truly from the heart. She’s doing her thing and I don’t know exactly what it is but I’m on board.”*

**Tricia Stackle**  
Sculpture  
Bow, Washington



*I like systems. They calm me.  
I like minimalism. It delights me.  
I like color. It energizes me.  
I like stitching. It grounds me.  
I like wool. It comforts me.  
I like quality. It reassures me.  
I like making things. It helps me understand the world.*

Tricia Stackle creates sculpture and drawings that balance cool geometric precision and order with the warmth of tactile fibers, textures, and colors. Her recent interactive sculpture blurs the line between art and furniture, which is minimalist in style, extremely tactile and thoughtfully designed.

*“Her artwork is evidence of a rigorous art practice. Her research, process and execution makes her stand out.”*

**COLLABORATIVE GRANT**



**Lauren Harris & Felicia Lobo**  
Theatre  
New York, New York

Lauren Harris and Felicia Lobo created a niche experiential theater company — Insomnium Theatre Co. — dedicated to the horror genre. Insomnium creates fun and freaky productions that invites audiences to confront their most horrifying nightmares and laugh in the face of their own mortality.

*“They are young, hungry and talented and want to do fresh, exciting things in theater.”*

The Belle Foundation for Cultural Development was established upon the belief that education, the arts and humanities are among the most vital elements of human civilization. The Belle Foundation acknowledges also that through the actions and achievements of individuals our culture not only continues to develop, but flourishes.

**Andrew Wilkie**  
Visual Arts  
Atascadero,  
California



Andrew Wilkie’s medium is unusual: coffee grounds. Inspired by artwork made with sand but wanting to do something different, he studied various coffee grounds and drying methods to perfect the consistency, texture and smell in his works, which are filled with images from nature and the human body. An educator by day and an artist by heart, this family man is grateful to combine so many of the things he loves about life together.

*“He has brought his passions — art, coffee, nature and the human body — together to create natural and interesting pieces of art.”*

**Wesley T. Wright**  
Sculpture  
Oakland, California

Absorbed by the grotesque and beautiful, Wesley T. Wright is known for his highly detailed and eccentric imagery. He is interested in the role of mythology in our daily lives, an idea evident in his sculpture, which features fantastical combinations of the spiritual and the mundane, frequently juxtaposing traditional representations with metaphoric ones.



*“I was mesmerized by his work — what struck me was the imagination behind it and the level of detail. Weird ... very bold.”*