



CONSENT CALENDAR
September 30, 2025

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council
From: Councilmember Shoshana O'Keefe (Author), Mayor Adena Ishii (Co-Sponsor)
Subject: Berkeley Art Center's Fall 2025 Community Dinner: Relinquishment of Budget Office Funds

RECOMMENDATION

Adopt a resolution approving the expenditure of an amount not to exceed \$500 per Councilmember – including \$500 from Councilmember O'Keefe and \$250 from Mayor Ishii – to the Berkeley Art Center (BAC), a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, for their Fall 2025 Community Dinner, a fundraiser to support BAC's artistic and cultural programming, and to welcome BAC's new Executive Director, Gisela Insuaste, with funds relinquished to the City's general fund for this purpose from the discretionary Council office budgets of Councilmember O'Keefe and Mayor Ishii, and from any other Councilmembers who would like to contribute.

The event will take place on Thursday, October 16, 2025 at 6:00pm at the Berkeley Art Center.

BACKGROUND

Since 1967, the Berkeley Art Center has been a cornerstone of the Bay Area's vibrant arts community. Designed by Bay Area modernist architect Robert Ratcliff and built by the Rotary Club as a gift to the City, BAC was run by the Parks and Recreation Department for many years until it became a private nonprofit in the late 1970s. Under the leadership of visionary directors and curators, BAC established itself over the years as a destination for experimental contemporary art by Bay Area artists, featuring a diverse range of voices, materials, artistic styles, and social commentary. BAC has exhibited work by important local figures such as Robert Bechtle, Enrique Chagoya, Bill Fontana, Taraneh Hemami, Mildred Howard, Hung Liu, Jim Melchert, Chiura Obata, Sonya Rapoport, Katherine Sherwood, Peter Voulkos, and Carrie Mae Weems, among many others.

Nestled in Live Oak Park, BAC offers an intimate platform for the public to engage with work by emerging and established contemporary artists, and champions artists and curators who are Black, Indigenous, POC, queer and trans, formerly incarcerated, and living with disabilities. Many Bay Area artists credit early BAC exhibitions as pivotal in their career development. BAC supports sustainability in the arts by compensating artists at competitive rates. Its programs include exhibitions, workshops, artist-conceived events, artist talks, curatorial walkthroughs, community dinners, and partnerships with community organizations.

With an annual budget of approximately \$300,000, BAC relies on a combination of City funding, private donations, grants, memberships, and special events to fund its operations and programs. Like many non-profit arts organizations in the Bay Area impacted by increasing expenses and reduced funding, BAC experienced challenges that led to changes in leadership, staff, and revenues. With the City's support, the Board of Directors addressed these issues by securing funding for current financial stability, streamlining administrative procedures and expenses, maintaining scheduled exhibitions, and hiring a gallery manager and new executive director.

Gisele Insuaste, an Oakland-based Latine artist with 20 years of experience in arts programming, most recently served as the education and public programs director at Kala Art Institute in Berkeley. Insuaste has taken the helm of this organization deeply rooted in Berkeley's cultural fabric, and has already begun to cultivate donor relationships, establish dynamic partnerships, and strengthen BAC's position as a hub for creativity, equity, and community engagement.

BAC's Fall 2025 Community Dinner features an inclusive gathering on the Live Oak Park bridge, under a canopy of redwoods, where two rich culinary traditions meet at one table. This multi-course, family-style dinner will offer a blend of Filipino cooking and Ethiopian cuisine. Shared platters, passed from hand to hand, offer a celebration of connection, where flavors, cultures, and community intertwine in collective support and recognition of the critical role of art and artists in Berkeley and beyond. Funds raised from this event will directly go towards paying local artists, curators, and arts educators equitably for their labor and participation in BAC exhibitions and public programs in 2025-2026, including the Day of the Dead/Día de Muertos community workshop in late October.

The event will take place on Thursday, October 16, 2025 at 6:00pm at the Berkeley Art Center. For more information visit: <https://www.berkeleyartcenter.org/events>

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

No environmental impacts.

FISCAL IMPACTS

Up to \$4,500 from Councilmembers' discretionary budgets.

CONTACT

Councilmember Shoshana O'Keefe, 510-981-7150

RESOLUTION #####-N.S.

AUTHORIZING THE EXPENDITURE OF SURPLUS FUNDS FROM THE OFFICE EXPENSE
ACCOUNTS OF THE MAYOR AND COUNCILMEMBERS FOR A GRANT TO PROVIDE
SUPPORT FOR A MUNICIPAL PUBLIC PURPOSE

WHEREAS, the Berkeley Art Center (BAC) is a nonprofit organization and a hub for artistic exploration and community building that champions Bay Area artists and curators; and

WHEREAS, since 1967, the BAC has established itself as a destination for experimental contemporary art by Bay Area artists, featuring a diverse range of voices, materials, artistic styles, and social commentary; and

WHEREAS, many artists credit early BAC exhibitions as pivotal in their career development, and BAC supports sustainability in the arts by working to address pay disparities among artists and curators of underrepresented communities, particularly in the Bay Area; and

WHEREAS, the Berkeley Arts Center serves Berkeley and the larger Bay Area through its programming which includes exhibitions, workshops, artist-conceived events, artist talks, curatorial walkthroughs, community dinners, and partnerships with community organizations.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Council of the City of Berkeley that funds relinquished by the Mayor and Councilmembers from their Council office budget, up to \$500 per office – including \$500 from Councilmember O’Keefe and \$250 from Mayor Ishii – shall be granted to the Berkeley Arts Center to support their Fall 2025 Community Dinner.

