

# Craft Futures Fund

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es, disbursing over \$300,000 to more than 600 artists. The strong community response and backing from significant organizations underscore the essential role of the region's vibrant craft sector.

In its initial phase, the Craft Futures Fund reached \$876,000 through grassroots donations and major gifts. The rapid increase to over \$1.2 million demonstrates a powerful commitment from supporters who value craft's cultural and economic importance in Western North Carolina. Funds are being disbursed immediately to help artists recover and rebuild their creative livelihoods.

"Western North Carolina has long been a haven for craft artists, and the level of support we have seen reflects just how valued this community is," said Stephanie Moore, Executive Director of the Center for Craft. "Reaching over \$1.2 million enables us to strengthen our efforts and provide a solid foundation for both immediate relief and longer-term recovery."

The Center for Craft extends our deep gratitude to the Windgate Foundation, Community Foundation of Western North Carolina, the Maxwell | Hanrahan Foundation, CERF+, Bresler Family Foundation, the Thomas S. Kenan Institute for the Arts, and many individual donors who have come forward to support our community in this time of need.

## A Region Rich in Craft Heritage Faces Major Losses

Hurricane Helene dealt a severe blow to Western North Carolina's craft sector. The impact extends beyond Asheville, reaching smaller yet equally vibrant creative communities across 29 counties, including Spruce Pine, Burnsville, Marshall, and Chimney Rock. These regions, where craft is woven deeply into the cultural and economic fabric, have experienced significant losses, with studios, galleries, and artist spaces damaged or destroyed. Many of these communities depend heavily on the craft sector to attract tourism and sustain local businesses, making the damage economically devastating.

The destruction of infrastructure, loss of irreplaceable artwork and tools, and displacement of artists have created an immediate crisis for a sector that has long been central to the region's identity and economy. Western North Carolina's creative sector is a cultural pillar and a significant economic force, employing nearly 16,000 people and generating over \$782 million in sales annually.

## Expanding Relief Through a Multi-Phase Approach

# Holiday Shopping with Heart: Help WNC Artists Rebuild Through Art - Dec. 14 & 15, 2024

Hurricane Helene devastated Western North Carolina's vibrant arts community, flooding studios, destroying artwork, and damaging essential supplies on Sept. 27, 2024. Now, local artists are uniting to rebuild through the "Come Hell or High Water Studio Tour" - a grassroots effort transforming holiday shopping into a lifeline for recovery.

"This storm wiped out decades of work for many of us - studios, supplies, equipment, entire collections," says Kelsey Schissel, a West Asheville potter who opened her studio to displaced artists and spearheaded the initiative. "The holiday season is critical for our livelihoods. This tour isn't just about sales; it's about rebuilding, reimagining, and reviving our art scene."

The initiative invites art lovers nationwide to shop online now and encourages Southeast residents to attend the studio tour in person, Dec. 14-15, 2024. Visitors can find unique handcrafted pottery, fine art paintings, artisan jewelry, textile arts, mixed media, woodwork, and more - all created by



River Arts District in Asheville after flooding after Hurricane Helene, photo by David Huff Creative

The Center for Craft is collaborating with key partners to identify artists and expedite funding to those in greatest need of support, including Village Potters Clay Center, Southern Equality Studios, Treats Studios, and Marshall High Studios.

The first phase of WNC Emergency Relief provided one-time, unrestricted \$500 grants to craft artists facing immediate challenges and is open until November 17. The Center will soon launch higher-level grants to help the regional craft community recover.

## How to Support the Craft Futures Fund

The Center for Craft continues to seek donations to sustain these relief and recovery efforts. Every contribution, large or small, helps support artists as they rebuild their lives and creative practices. The ongoing support of donors is crucial to preserving the region's artistic talent, which has fostered generations of cultural heritage.

"We invite everyone who values the spirit of craft and the resilience of our artists to join us in this effort," Moore said. "Every donation is a step toward helping Western North Carolina's craft artists recover and thrive again."

Founded in 1996, the Center for Craft's mission is to resource, catalyze, and amplify how and why craft matters. As a 501(c)3 national nonprofit that increases access to craft by empowering and resourcing artists, organizations, and communities through grants, fellowships and programs that bring people together. The Center is widely acknowledged as one of the most influential organizations working on behalf of craft in the United States.

## Learn More and Make a Difference

For information on applying for a grant from the Craft Futures Fund or to donate, please visit our website at ([www.centerforcraft.org](http://www.centerforcraft.org)). Your support is crucial in helping Western North Carolina's artists recover, rebuild, and continue their important contributions to our cultural sector.

WNC artists determined to rebuild.

## A Holiday Destination with Purpose

While Asheville and nearby communities continue to recover from Hurricane Helene, significant progress has been made, with many roads and bridges repaired and the drinking water is safe again. Visitors to the studio tour can experience the region's resilient spirit through its rich artistic heritage, complemented by award-winning restaurants, breweries, live music, and welcoming accommodations.

"Every purchase makes a difference," Schissel emphasizes. "When you shop local, you're supporting artists' recovery and helping preserve Western North Carolina's legacy as a cultural hub."

## Why It Matters

Western North Carolina has long been a haven for artists, celebrated for tradi-

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## Inspired by Nature: A Discussion on Art and Environmental Activism

Together, Saluda artist **Dale McEntire**, Asheville artist **William Henry Price**, Rutherford County sculptor **Michael Sherrill**, and **Katie Breckheimer**, environmental activist, will join the panel to share how their art can engage viewers with environmental issues.

**FREE EVENT**  
**DECEMBER 8, 2024 at 2:30pm**

**upstairs** [artspace].org

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