

PRESS RELEASE: January 13, 2020
Contact: Mason Kilpatrick
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For immediate release

KU SPENCER
MUSEUM OF ART
The University of Kansas

**CHARLOTTE
STREET
FOUNDATION**

Rocket Grants Coordinator Julia Cole Steps Down After 10 Years, Charlotte Street Foundation and Spencer Museum Bid a Grateful Farewell

KANSAS CITY, MO, January 13, 2020: After more than 10 years of service with the Charlotte Street Foundation, **Program Coordinator Julia Cole will be stepping down from her role on January 31, 2020.** Cole managed the Rocket Grants program which supports innovative, artist-driven projects outside of established art venues within the Kansas City area. Rocket Grants are funded by the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts and implemented by a partnership between Charlotte Street Foundation and the Spencer Museum of Art. A tireless and dedicated artist, Cole launched the program in 2009 and has sustained it with national and regional sensitivity.

“Julia’s passion for her work and artists has made the Rocket Grants an iconic program that has been a point of inspiration and support for so many brilliant projects,” said **Charlotte Street Executive/Artistic Director Amy Kligman.** “Charlotte Street is so grateful for her vision, dedication, and for ten incredible years of service.”



(Julia Cole and Saralyn Reece Hardy presenting Rocket Grants awards at the 2016 Rocket Grants Award Ceremony)

A farewell celebration for Julia Cole is set for 5:00-7:00 PM on Friday, January 24, 2020 at Maker Village KC (located at 606 E 31st St, Kansas City, MO 64109). Former Rocket Grants artists are invited to socialize and give thanks to Julia as her transition from the program concludes. The celebration is open to the public and snacks/drinks will be provided for those who attend. [You can RSVP for this social hour now.](#)



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Under Cole's leadership, **the program has awarded \$512,000 to more than 250 artists across 103 cross-disciplinary projects during its first 10 years.** In 2019, 11 artists received awards, totaling \$60,000. Of those awardees, nine received project awards of up to \$6,000, and two received research and development awards. Recipients are selected by a panel of national and regional jurors. When it began, the Rocket Grants program was only the third of its kind in the United States. Today, the Warhol Foundation supports more than 14 similar programs across the country.

"Julia has been a wonderful contributor to the foundation's Regional Regranting Initiative," said **Rachel Bers, Program Director at the Andy Warhol Foundation.** "Through her thoughtful, engaged work with the Rocket Grants, she helped to encourage and promote a vital strain of artistic activity in the Kansas City/Lawrence region. On top of that, her informal work as a mentor and role model for those running regranting programs in cities across the country has been invaluable; the foundation is indebted to her for her investment in the success of the larger initiative, her insight and her generosity."

"I continue to care deeply about the way in which art and artists contribute inspiration, fresh thinking and critical provocation to the building of an equitable, dynamic, sustainable, and more caring community. Over these years I have met so many wonderful people and learned so much, and I offer profound gratitude to all those who have been a part of this important work." said **Julia Cole regarding her experiences with Rocket Grants over the past decade.**

Cole continued to emphasize the importance of the program in Kansas City's arts scene, saying, "Rocket Grants have directly or indirectly involved hundreds of artists and many thousands of community members over the course of this decade. They have delighted, challenged, gone viral, uplifted, astonished and informed. They have also contributed to changing the face of the arts community in Kansas City and the surrounding region. I'm proud to have been part of all this, and look forward to seeing how the program will continue to evolve."

Cole has been a vocal advocate for the Rocket Grants program and worked diligently to build relationships with artists in the region. To that end, she held dozens of workshops and meetings with prospective Rocket Grants applicants, and focused on expanding the diversity of artists applying for and receiving these awards. For her, the program continues to redefine excellence in the arts and to recognize the contributions of artists of color in the Kansas City region. Broader diversity among Rocket Grants recipients remains a driving factor in the program, building inclusion beyond traditional art school graduates throughout the regional art community.

"Julia is a strong force for artist activists in the Kansas City community, and her contributions over the past decade have allowed the Rocket Grants program to thrive," said **Spencer Museum of Art Director Saralyn Reece Hardy.** "We are grateful for her abiding efforts to help artists find a voice in Kansas City and beyond."

Outside of her role with the Charlotte Street Foundation, Cole has also participated in the Kansas City art community with collaborative art commissions through Avenue of the Arts, the Kansas City One Percent for Art commission, and the Art in the Loop Foundation. She also taught at UMKC and KCAI, and served on the Mayor's Task Force for the Arts. As a co-founder



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of “Rad School,” an alternative educational program based in Kansas City, and “CounterAgency”, an opportunity for artists to contribute to rising communities, Cole continues to explore the role of the arts in civic engagement.

Charlotte Street Foundation is currently searching for a new, [full-time Grants and Awards Program Manager](#) who would not only oversee Charlotte Street’s prestigious Visual Artist and Generative Performing Artist Awards but also take over Julia’s role in coordinating the Rocket Grants program into the next decade.

ABOUT CHARLOTTE STREET

Charlotte Street identifies the needs and fuels the evolution of an ever-changing multidisciplinary arts ecosystem, acting as its primary provocateur. Charlotte Street cultivates the contemporary, the exceptional, and the unexpected in the practice of artists working in and engaging with the Kansas City art community. Since 1997, Charlotte Street has distributed over \$1.5 million in awards and grants to artists and their innovative projects, and connected individual artists to each other and to the greater Kansas City community. For more information about Charlotte Street, its awards, programs, and initiatives, visit www.charlottestreet.org.

ABOUT SPENCER MUSEUM OF ART

The Spencer Museum of Art, located on the University of Kansas Lawrence campus, explores the intersection of art, ideas, and experiences. With a diverse collection of more than 45,000 works, the Spencer is the only museum in Kansas with contemporary and historic artwork in all mediums from cultures across six continents. The Spencer Museum facilitates arts engagement and research through exhibitions, artist commissions and residencies, conferences, performances, lectures, children’s art activities, and arts and culture festivals. Admission to the Spencer Museum of Art is free. To learn more about the museum and its programs you can visit <http://www.spencerart.ku.edu/>.

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