

**Artists Reflect on Importance of Financial and Programmatic Support
In New Book from Joan Mitchell Foundation, Celebrating 25 Years of Giving**

**Book to be Accompanied by Exhibition of Portraits
Highlighting Joan Mitchell Foundation's Community of Artists**

**On View December 6, 2018 through May 31, 2019
Opening Reception December 6, 6:00-8:00 PM**

New York--September 27, 2018--Over the last 25 years, the Joan Mitchell Foundation has awarded grants to more than 1,000 artists, totaling over \$15 million in direct, unrestricted funding. Hundreds more artists have been supported through \$8 million in grants given to arts organizations nationwide, as well as through the Foundation's education programming, free online services, and residency opportunities at the Joan Mitchell Center in New Orleans. To celebrate the work and achievements of its artist community and to examine the impact of its initiatives, the Foundation will release a book and open a companion exhibition, both titled *Widening Circles: Portraits from the Joan Mitchell Foundation Artist Community at 25 Years*, this December. Featuring anecdotes and testimonials by 25 artists, the book captures the real-life experiences of working artists and shares their perspectives on the importance of ongoing support for art and artists. Developed over the course of 2018, each impact statement is accompanied by a large-scale, color portrait of the artist, captured by photographer Reginald Eldridge, Jr., who traveled from Alaska to New York and many places in between to engage with the featured artists in their studios and hometowns.

The exhibition, presented at the Joan Mitchell Foundation's headquarters at 137 W. 25th Street, will feature all 25 of Eldridge's portraits. A gallery guide that includes the artists' impact statements will be available as part of the exhibition experience. Together, the exhibition and book shed light on the diversity of Joan Mitchell Foundation's community, with artists ranging widely in age, background, and location, as well as in the breadth of their creative practices and personal and professional experiences. At the same time, their voices make tangible the realities and business of being an artist. They underscore the importance of financial stability to artistic innovation and the need for and nature of meaningful funding.

The idea for the *Widening Circles* project came from a desire to illustrate the impact of artist Joan Mitchell's vision to support artists directly and immediately through grants and programs, and to celebrate the artists the Foundation has had privilege to intersect with the during the past 25 years. Mitchell's wishes—as set out by her in her will—were to establish a Foundation that would “aid and assist” a wide spectrum of artists in a manner that nurtures their work and supports their livelihoods. *Widening Circles* serves as a testament to Mitchell's pioneering

notion of generosity and steadfast belief in the creation of a community of support that provides resources for artists to have time and space to think, create, and innovate. The artists' impact statements, which form the core of *Widening Circles*, also help to illuminate how the Foundation can continue to fulfill and enhance its mission in the current philanthropic and cultural landscape.

“Joan Mitchell found inspiration and solace in poetry throughout her life, so it is felt fitting to turn to a poet that she read often in her youth—Rainer Maria Rilke—in naming this book and the accompanying exhibition. And the idea of ‘widening circles’ is also particularly apt, as we look at how many artists have been engaged and supported through Joan’s foresight and spirit of generosity, and how many other lives and voices their work has in turn enriched and inspired,” said Christa Blatchford, CEO of the Joan Mitchell Foundation. “As the Foundation reaches its 25th anniversary, it is important to reflect on and celebrate the achievements of our community, and it is equally essential that we, as a Foundation, continue to refine our support for artists, especially in a moment in which artists have such a critical role to play in fostering dialogue and understanding.”

The exhibition will be on view from December 6, 2018 through May 31, 2019, with public hours Tuesdays through Fridays from 12-3pm. The book will be available in print format at the Joan Mitchell Foundation headquarters and will also be made available digitally on the Foundation’s website. After the New York showing concludes in May, the portrait exhibition will travel to the Joan Mitchell Center in New Orleans.

On the following pages is a selection of excerpts from *Widening Circles: Portraits from the Joan Mitchell Foundation Artist Community at 25 Years*.

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“...Thanks to the Foundation’s archival support [through the Creating a Living Legacy (CALL) initiative], forty years of complex output were lifted out of inadequate documentation and given a chance at critical assessment.

I have had the luck to meet once and [be] supported twice by Joan Mitchell. I was nurtured by an award 20 years ago and later assisted in archiving my efforts, documenting the work created by that first support. Joan Mitchell certainly captured light in her art, and her thoughtful legacy created the capacity for another type of illumination to be placed on the works of future generations of artists...”

- Mel Chin, Durham, North Carolina



“It was 2014 and I had just completed three shows in six months. I was exhausted, my work was slipping conceptually, and I was extremely disheartened at the thought of continuing to earn a living in ways that didn’t feel right. I received the call about being awarded the Joan Mitchell Foundation Painters & Sculptors Grant at the exact perfect moment.

I decided to use my award to work at a more deliberate pace, allowing my practice to morph from process- to research-based projects, shifting my focus back to reading, inquiry, and experimentation. The grant gave me breathing room desperately needed at that stage of my career, allowing me to move forward with renewed pride, sensitivity, and fresh perspective: freedom. ...”

- Sarah Wagner, Detroit, Michigan



“I am grateful to the Joan Mitchell Foundation for its support and guidance at critical junctures in my creative practice. My 2014 Painters & Sculptors Grant and 2017 residency in New Orleans nurtured the development of my paintings, enabling me to sustain and centralize my artistic projects. ...

The resources I received from the Foundation as an emerging artist provided time and space integral to the expansion of my ideas into the body of work that continues to grow with me through today.”

- Amy Sherald, Baltimore, Maryland



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“...For years, I half-joked that I would be offered a show at MoMA before I showed in Portland. Regional discrimination is less prevalent now, but is still challenging for artists living far from a cultural center. Joan Mitchell Foundation is helping level the field. The grant [I received in 2011] raised my profile in the region. In 2015, I had my first show in Portland and gained representation at Upfor. The gallery support, like the Foundation's support, is significant, ongoing, and can't be overstated.

The Painters & Sculptors Grant goes beyond financial assistance and recognition. The award is validating and gives me faith in the system. Here's a painter, quietly working in the Willamette Valley, noticed by a major New York art foundation. ...”

- Julie Green, Corvallis, Oregon



“The Joan Mitchell Foundation Painters & Sculptors Grant that I received in 2017 is allowing me the freedom to research, experiment, and grow my work unencumbered with financial constraints. It is providing resources to professionally document and catalogue over twenty years of work as an artist and to comprehensively redesign my website.

With the Foundation's support, I have been fortunate to work on several projects that have brought me abroad to foster dialogue by curating public lectures and panel discussions. These conversations give voice to First Peoples' concerns in the Arctic, voices that historically have been stifled. In addition to speaking about my own concerns, I strive to elevate the work of other Indigenous artists, activists and culture bearers by inviting them to exhibit, share their projects and take part in conversations related to social justice, the commodification of Indigenous cultures, global warming and other current debates. This award is allowing me to advance this discourse on a larger global and national scale. ...”

- Sonya Kelliher-Combs, Anchorage, Alaska



“In 2012, my late mother’s house in the Rockaway, Queens, was badly impacted by Superstorm Sandy, as were most houses in the area. We lost all electricity and heating systems to the flood and stayed in the cold and dark for several days. The basement, where I had my painting studio, was completely destroyed, with water up to the ceiling. ...

What happened to me and my studio during [Hurricane] Sandy seems now, with the perspective of time, to have had a purpose. Applying for the Joan Mitchell Foundation Emergency Grant was a great opportunity for me to get my life as an artist together. When I got the grant...I decided not to invest the grant money in the renovation of my basement painting studio but to instead buy a good computer, a professional camera, and a hard drive. We all know that electronic equipment is quite expensive, and saving to get it takes a lot of time, especially for an emerging artist without gallery representation like myself. Thanks to the support from the Joan Mitchell Foundation, it all became suddenly easier and within my reach.

...I have learned in my new American life, as a first-generation immigrant to the US, to always be flexible and to try to turn any inconvenience you might encounter into something positive. As it happens, this is also the only way for visual artists to survive in NYC, really.”

- Wojciech Gilewicz, Queens, NY



About Joan Mitchell Foundation:

The Joan Mitchell Foundation celebrates the life of abstract artist Joan Mitchell by expanding awareness of her pioneering work and fulfilling her wish to support and provide opportunities for visual artists. Through grants, residencies, and related initiatives, the Foundation advances the work of today’s artists and amplifies their essential contributions to communities around the world.

As the chief steward of Joan Mitchell’s legacy, the Foundation manages a collection of Mitchell’s artwork and archives containing her personal papers, photographs, and ephemera. The Foundation provides loans of Mitchell artworks from its collection to museums, academic institutions, and other non-profit arts spaces. Foundation staff are dedicated to assisting researchers and sharing information about the Foundation’s artwork and archival collections in order to further scholarship and broad appreciation for Mitchell’s life and work. The Foundation is also supporting the Joan Mitchell Catalogue Raisonné, established in 2015, which is

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currently researching Mitchell's paintings in order to produce a scholarly, multi-volume book documenting all of the artist's known painted work.

Fulfilling Mitchell's mandate to "aid and assist" living artists, over the past 25 years the Foundation has evolved a range of initiatives that directly support visual artists at varying stages of their careers. The Foundation's grant programs include the annual Painters & Sculptors Grants, which provide 25 artists with unrestricted funds of \$25,000, and Emergency Grants of up to \$6,000 for disaster recovery. The New Orleans-based Joan Mitchell Center hosts residencies for national and local artists, as well as artist talks, open studio events, and other public programs that encourage dialogue and exchange with the local community. The Creating a Living Legacy (CALL) initiative provides free and essential resources to help artists of all ages organize, document, and manage their artworks and careers. Together, these programs, along with additional professional support services, actively engage with working artists as they develop and expand their practices.

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For more information, please contact:
Sascha Freudenheim / Alina Sumajin
PAVE Communications & Consulting
917-544-6057 / 646-369-2050
sascha@paveconsult.com / alina@paveconsult.com

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