



U N I O N
H A L L
A R T S

UNION HALL ARTS RESIDENCY

DETROIT, MICHIGAN

August 10 – September 7, 2026

*Sponsored by the UNITE HERE Education and Support Fund (501c3)
in partnership with Talking Dolls Studio.*



WE'RE UNLEASHING THE WORKING-CLASS CREATIVITY DESPERATELY NEEDED FOR OUR TIMES.

Every successful movement for lasting social change requires arts and culture. Artists give us joy and life in dark times, cutting through the noise and fostering the creative thinking that allows us to imagine a better future. So much of the most enduring and popular forms of art and culture have come from working-class communities. Detroit's autoworkers made Motown. Spirituals sustained the Montgomery Bus Boycott. Quilters unveiled the truth about HIV/AIDS.

THIS SUMMER, WE'RE IGNITING A NEW WAVE OF ART THROUGH THE LABOR MOVEMENT.

We are tapping into the countless numbers of artists among us and thinking broadly about where creativity lives. We will bring new voices and established artists together to make art for our movement and become the labor arts leaders for our time.

IT'S BEEN DECADES SINCE THE LABOR MOVEMENT HAS CENTERED THE ARTS, BUT THE NEXT BEST TIME IS NOW.

Authoritarian regimes past and present—and the ruling classes that support them—have understood the power of culture to keep workers divided and distracted, using art and new technologies to create mass appeal for anti-worker politics.

BUT WORKERS CREATE A BETTER WORLD.

Unions keep us connected and keep us human, mobilizing worker power so that people can lead full, healthy lives with time to do the things we love. Culture is how people make life livable, creating joy in otherwise oppressive systems. Art is how we survive and thrive. We are making space to create again.

JOIN US!

“While I have a deep love for coffee, my true passion lies in art. Despite my supervisors initially discouraging me from sketching during work, I couldn’t resist the challenge and started using coffee cups as my canvas. The clients were amazed by my artwork, and it even got displayed at my station. I realized that my art could also be my voice.”

Gordon Osborne, a barista in NYC, draws Black history on the coffee cups at work with the same ink pens customers use to sign receipts.





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A PILOT IN DETROIT

The UNITE HERE Education and Support Fund (UHESF) is investing in the latent creativity that exists within unions and adjacent working-class communities.

This summer, we're teaming up with Talking Dolls Studio to pilot a Detroit-based art residency for **4-6 aspiring artists** who are rank-and-file union members. This pilot prioritizes non-professional artists but is also open to cultural workers who can demonstrate an interest or intention for creative practice beyond the scope of their primary employment.

This pilot requires a **four-week union leave of absence** to provide union members time to develop their voice and creativity. We are offering a stipend to participants to make that time away from work financially feasible. The residency will build leadership by nurturing the imagination and confidence of rank-and-file members while fostering connections across union affiliation and social difference.

RE-IGNITING IMAGINATION AND SHARING SKILLS

The residency will support knowledge exchange among participants with emerging creative practices: training, skill-building, presentations, demos, workshops, prototyping/testing, creative/artistic exploration, curriculum training, studio time, studio visits, field trips, discipline/medium exploration (music/sound, recording, clay, printmaking, multi-media installation, performance, writing, fiber, video/photography, carpentry, publication, metal work, mural making, etc.), feedback/critique, exhibiting.

Participants will:

- Move between the practical and the imaginative
- Build community and shared strategies with fellow members from a range of unions
- Receive hands-on studio training and experiential learning
- Gain exposure to historical approaches, contemporary strategies and novel creative ideas among the participants
- Learn individual and collective creative practices informed by the values and history of the union movement
- Use skills and discoveries to share in the field to aid active and future campaigns

Participants will be paired with mentors from within the movement and adjacent artist communities to maximize support and solidarity.

COMPENSATION

Participants will receive a \$4,000 stipend. This is a full-time commitment, requiring a leave of absence from work for the duration of the residency. Please contact your union for questions about union leave options and protocols.

NOMINATION AND SELECTION PROCESS

Participating unions are encouraged to nominate members for consideration. The Union Hall Residency Committee will choose candidates with a goal of creating a cohesive cohort that represents a diverse set of voices within labor.

EXPECTATIONS

- Participants are expected to participate in all aspects of the program. This is a full-time, in-person commitment to your craft and creativity, requiring you to be in Detroit and on a leave of absence from work for the duration of the residency, so you can be a part of daily studio time, workshops, field trips, and other activities.
- Participants must adhere to a code of conduct that is consistent with our union values of solidarity.

ELIGIBILITY

Candidates must be:

- a union member in good standing or part of an active non-union organizing drive
- 21 years old with a valid driver's license
- have a sponsoring union that will handle employer and travel arrangements (if applicable)

You do not have to be a “professional” artist to apply, but you **MUST** be able to demonstrate through application materials (photos, video, audio or written material) a creative passion, emerging practice or existing body of work that you hope to further explore through the residency.

HOW TO APPLY

- Apply at UnionHallArts.org. Applicants must submit a personal video or written statement, plus ten images of their work.
- Sponsoring unions are required to submit a form on behalf of their candidate, sharing any special artistic or leadership skills the candidate has demonstrated, and how the candidate would contribute to the program. Visit UnionHallArts.org to complete the Sponsoring Union Form on behalf of your candidate.

BECOME A MENTOR OR TRAINER

We are building a community of artists who will support emerging voices in our movement and each other. In that spirit, we seek established creatives and arts educators interested in mentoring artists in residence and/or leading workshops and trainings.

Please contact the UNITE HERE Education and Support Fund at info@uhesf.org for more information.



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