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ArtBoost Dallas 2025: Groundbreaking Conference Empowers North Texas Artists to Create Sustainable Careers While Driving Social Change

Two-day event features keynote by acclaimed artist Melarie Odelusi and industry experts from diverse artistic mediums – including visual arts, music, design, theater, dance and literary arts

NORTH TEXAS—June 23, 2025 – Business Council for the Arts (BCA) in partnership with Southern Methodist University (SMU) announce the third annual ArtBoost arts entrepreneurship conference, a dynamic two-day event created to address the needs of local artists June 27-28, 2025, at SMU.

This year's theme "Create, Transform, Thrive," explores how the arts serve as a powerful catalyst for social impact, empowering artists to build sustainable careers while creating meaningful change in their communities. Through expert-led sessions, interactive workshops, and hands-on activities, participants will master financial planning, branding strategies, and entrepreneurial skills crucial for creative success while discovering how to leverage art for social innovation and community impact.

Event Details:

- **When:** June 27-28, 2025
- **Where:** SMU Owens Art Center, Dallas
- **Registration:** <https://ntbca.org/artboosttickets>
- **Cost:** \$40

For more information about ArtBoost Dallas 2025, visit <https://ntbca.org/art-boost-2025/> or contact Marissa Heyl at mheyhl@smu.edu.

ArtBoost will feature keynote speaker Melarie Odelusi, an acclaimed Dallas-Fort Worth visual artist, illustrator, and creative entrepreneur whose signature style has earned collaborations with Michelle Obama and prestigious brands including Disney Plus, Martha Stewart Living, and Laura Mercier.

Industry expert Christian Chavarría, a seasoned music producer with 30+ years of experience whose work has been featured on Netflix, MTV, Hulu, and used by major brands like Kim Kardashian's SKIMS and Nordstrom, will lead sessions on pricing and monetization. Other notable speakers include Kristina Kirkenaer-Hart, Director of Cultural Tourism and the Dallas Music Office at Visit Dallas; Mindy Byrd, Fashion Editorial Photographer who has produced images for clients such as Nike, Neiman Marcus, and InStyle Magazine; Editor Blake Atwood, whose clients include New York Times bestselling authors such as Jefferson Fisher and James Clear; and Merrick Porcheddu, Co-Founder of Artist Uprising Studios with clients including IBM, Coca-Cola, and Adobe.

A highlight of the conference will be the inaugural Arts & Social Impact Awards, recognizing categories of artists who use their creative practices as vehicles for transformation. The SMU Impact Lab will partner with The United Way and Arts Mission Oak Cliff to honor changemakers who demonstrate that creative expression drives real-world solutions—from neighborhood revitalization to social justice advocacy. Award recipients will receive monetary support to amplify their transformative work and inspire others to harness creativity as a force for positive change.

About the Partners: ArtBoost Dallas is presented through a collaboration between Business Council for the Arts and Southern Methodist University, with significant support provided from the SMU Meadows School of the Arts as a key partner and underwriter. The SMU Meadows School of the Arts, renowned for its comprehensive programs spanning music, theatre, dance, and visual arts, brings decades of expertise in nurturing creative talent and fostering artistic innovation. In addition, this is the first year that the conference has added a significant media partner, joining forces with Arts Access, an arts journalism initiative by KERA and *The Dallas Morning News* expanding arts coverage in North Texas through the lens of equity and access.

This partnership demonstrates a unified commitment to supporting the creative economy and artistic innovation in North Texas, bridging academic excellence with real-world professional development for working artists. A complete list of partners includes:

- Business Council for the Arts
- SMU Meadows School of the Arts
- SMU Impact Lab

- KERA and *The Dallas Morning News* (Arts Access)
- Dallas Office of Arts and Culture
- SMU Spears Institute
- Arthouse Dallas
- SMU Office of Engaged Learning
- Dallas College
- University of North Texas

“This conference marks an unprecedented collaboration between leading media outlets and educational institutions to confront the real-world challenges artists face,” said Jill VanGorden, COO and Head of Programs at Business Council for the Arts. “The sessions are designed to address critical needs in the creative community—from legal rights and marketing to sustainable business practices. It’s inspiring to see how an idea that originated in one of BCA’s Leadership Arts Institute classes just four years ago has evolved into a stand-alone program embraced by the wider community.”

Additional Notable Speakers at ArtBoost:

- Dawn Waters Baker – Landscape Painter Represented by Galleries Nationwide
- Christian Chavarría – Artist Development at The Creatives Factory
- Caroline Cole – Acting coach and Voice Over Artist
- Charlie DeBolt – Talent Buyer at Spune
- Amber Helt – Professional Editor and Author
- Amy Kelly – Publisher of Lone Star Literary Magazine and Podcast Host
- Julia Hosch – Cultural Programs Manager, City of Dallas
- Kyle Hobratschk – Founder & Director, 100 West – Corsicana Artist and Writer Residency
- Rachel Stas, CPA – Founder of RST Firm, CPA and Financial Expert

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