



Royal Oak  
**COMMISSION  
FOR THE ARTS**

**2024 Annual**  
*Report*



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# Mission

The primary goal of the **Royal Oak Commission for the Arts** is to encourage and promote arts and culture in the community. The City of Royal Oak recognizes the importance of arts and culture to a vibrant, healthy, and sustainable community. The city strives to promote and encourage arts and culture through the public and private display of art.

## Commission for the Arts Members

Jason Gittinger, Chair

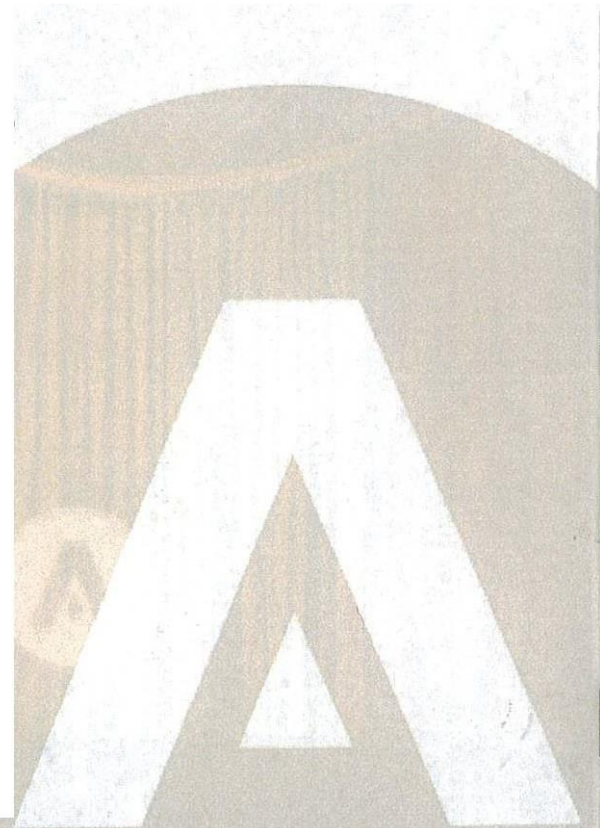
Alesha Beistline

Denise Reske

Jodie Ellison

Laura Bonnell

Commissioner Macey



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# With Special Thanks

## Funding Partners

Royal Oak City Commission  
Royal Oak Downtown Development Authority

## 2024 Art Explored Artists

**The many volunteers who made items for Share the Warmth.**

**Contributors to our Artist Laureate's (Roberta Brown) Poetry Book:** Alayna Brasch, Susan Barkman, Jason Gittinger, Jodie Ellison, Melanie Macey, Alesha Beistline, Laura Bonnell, Denise Reske, Corinne Elizabeth, Sandra Doran, Kay Dobie, Lin Parr, Brenda Hayes, Fran Lewis, Judith Ralston Ellison, Kristin Bartley Lenz

**Piano Painters:** Raquel Kraniak, Natalie Forsyth, Felix Aguirre, Emily Almas, Grace Almas, Emily Chafetz, Mark Chafetz, Teresa Butler, Sylvia Heidtman, Nora Hussmann, Asia Toney, Lucia Flores, Andrew Schalm, Abreyana Walters, Santiago Aguirre, Brady Schalm, Terri Koster, Jazzy Gittinger, Liesel Beausoleil, Tavi Beausoleil, Elisse Beausoleil, Anabella Dimic, Dominic Dimic, Kristina Dimic, Henry Beistline, Liana Beistline, Giovanna Beistline, Wendy Beistline, Alesha Beistline, Craig Viant, Emily Liu, William Viant, Elenor Viant, Adam George, Oliver George, Amy Bartley, Finn Bartley, Aiden Bartley, Tiffany Belzar, Cassie Belzar, Audrey Lance, Frankie Smith, Steven Smith, Evan Smith

**City Staff:** Susan Barkman, Alayna Brasch, Daniel Hill, Judy Davids

**Moving Company:** Professional Movers

**Project Logistics & Management:** The Detroit School of Rock & Pop Music

**Promotional Support:** Royal Oak Chamber of Commerce (Shelly Kemp), Royal Oak Schools (Mary Beth Fitzpatrick)

**Piano Site Contacts:** Craig Mangold (Holiday Market), Jason Gittinger (Detroit School of Rock & Pop Music), Anthony Yezbick (526 Main Dueling Piano Bar), Blaine Tillander (Granite Networks), Tony Maisano (Guitar HiFi), Lori London (Write Impressions), Shelly Mazur (Royal Oak Farmer's Market), Henry Ford Building (Centennial Commons)

**Piano Tuner:** Kerry Lundquist



## Letter from the Chair

### Commission for the Arts Members

Jason Gittinger, Chair  
Alesha Beistline  
Denise Reske  
Jodie Ellison  
Laura Bonnell  
Commissioner Macey

#### The Honorable Mayor Fournier and Members of the City Commission:

As Chair of the Royal Oak Commission for the Arts (ROCFA), I am pleased to present our Annual Report for 2024. This document outlines our accomplishments and extends our appreciation to those instrumental in our success.

We begin by acknowledging the invaluable contributions of our volunteers and community partners. Their enthusiasm and dedication have been pivotal in nurturing our city's artistic community, and for this, we offer our deepest thanks.

This year has marked a significant period of growth for the arts in Royal Oak. We've introduced six innovative "Art Explored" installations, added four new murals to our urban landscape, and decorated the city with eight artistically painted pianos. These projects have not only beautified our city but have also served as dynamic stages for local artists to shine and the community to gather and enjoy.

Our Artist Laureate, Roberta Brown, has been instrumental in fostering literary arts this year, organizing numerous poetry events that have resonated deeply with our community. Her work is leading to the publication of a book of poetry written by Royal Oak residents, which we eagerly anticipate.

We are also proud to announce the completion of the Elizabeth Hamer bronze sculpture, now gracing Hamer Finch Wilkins Park. This piece not only commemorates a local icon but also enhances our public art collection.

Looking forward, we are enthusiastic about continuing our journey to make the arts an integral part of everyday life in Royal Oak. Our commitment to accessibility and inclusivity in the arts remains steadfast, aiming to cultivate a city where creativity is both celebrated and nurtured.

We appreciate the continued support from the Mayor, City Commission, and City Staff which has been crucial to our achievements this year. We look forward to deepening our collaboration to ensure Royal Oak's cultural landscape continues to flourish.

Thank you for your continued support. We are excited about the future and dedicated to enhancing the cultural richness of our community.

Sincerely,  
Jason Gittinger, Chair





Goals  
2024

## The Commission for the Arts worked on three primary goals in 2024.

- ① Actively seek ideas and participation from all segments of the community, encouraging dialogue and working in partnerships with artists, local businesses, creative professionals, and arts organizations.
- ② Provide opportunities to artists of all racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds, disabilities, and other diverse groups.
- ③ Strive for artistic excellence in artwork, and art experiences that enhance the community and public spaces throughout the City.

# Art Explored

The Art Explored Program allows community members to submit original artwork. Once submitted, the Commission for the Arts undergoes a selection process to decide which pieces will be publicly displayed in Royal Oak. This is a unique program that enables the city to highlight artistic talent from everyday individuals.



**Artist:** Mark Beltchenko

**Piece:** Eyes Closed Shut

**Location:** Paruch Park



Artist: Karen Hain

Piece: Soft But Bold 11

Location: 2nd Floor Vestibule, City Hall



Artist: Jim Wolnosky

Piece: This Time The Dream's On Me

Location: 4th Street

Second Piece: Swingin' Machines

Location: Hallway of 2nd Floor City Ha



**Artist:** Ammy Amorette Spencer

**Piece:** Barcoser III

**Location:** Salter Center



**Artist:** Forrest Miller

**Piece:** If They Can Smile, You Should Too

**Location:** Royal Oak Public Library

## *Share the Warmth*

Share the Warmth combines textile arts with offering a helping hand to our unhoused, and low-income neighbors. Volunteers knit hats, mittens, gloves, scarves, and other cold weather necessities throughout the year and the Commission for the Arts puts them on display at the library. Items are available for anyone who needs them on the outside of the building. The items displayed are displayed along the 11 Mile Road entrance. In the past, about 170 items were taken throughout the winter.





## Artist Laureate

The Royal Oak Artist Laureate program is designed to recognize and acknowledge the artistic contributions of experienced individual artists, to provide a year of exposure for the selected artist to share their talent with the community, and to encourage and nurture the arts and creative culture in the city. The appointment of the Artist Laureate is considered a civic appointment and one of honor.

Applicants must be a current resident of Royal Oak, an experienced artist, and maybe from any artistic discipline. Each Artist Laureate has a specific project pre-approved by the Commission for the Arts that they will complete by the end of the year-long appointment.

This year's Artist Laureate is long-time Royal Oak resident and designer, Godofredo Gannod. He is committed to the arts in many ways, such as through sculpting, prototype design and graphic design. Mr. Gannod has a BFA from College for Creative Studies in which he was trained as a figure sculptor, and he has extensive experience working with and fabricating props for film sets.

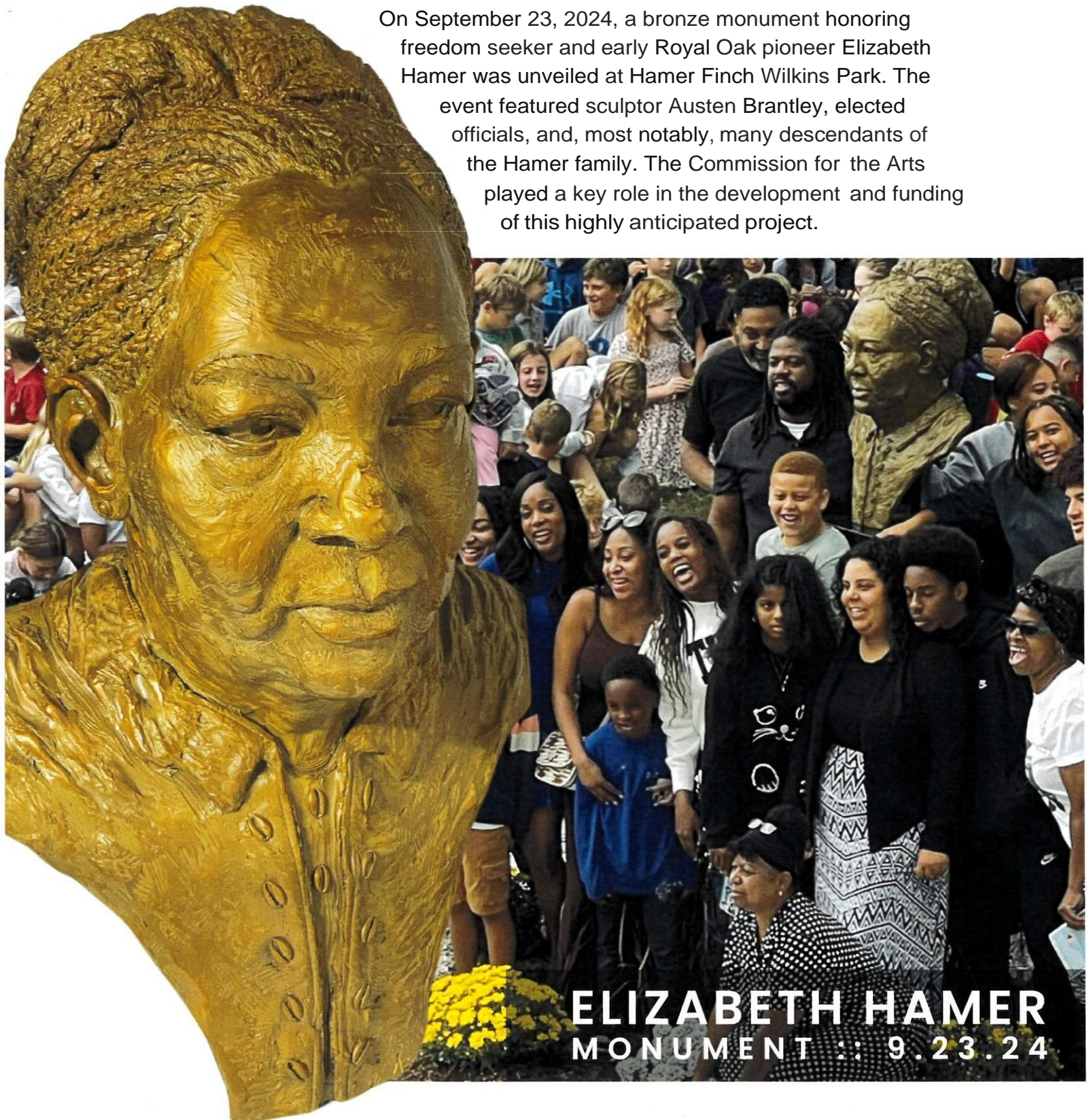
Mr. Gannod's Artist Laureate project will be a part of his Specimen Series, a large-scale sculpture made of steel and aluminum. As of now, his idea is to have the sculpture depict oak leaves as wings, and it will be placed in one of our parks.





# Collaboration: Giving Back

On September 23, 2024, a bronze monument honoring freedom seeker and early Royal Oak pioneer Elizabeth Hamer was unveiled at Hamer Finch Wilkins Park. The event featured sculptor Austen Brantley, elected officials, and, most notably, many descendants of the Hamer family. The Commission for the Arts played a key role in the development and funding of this highly anticipated project.





## New Murals



### RC Cars

Rick Williams

4817 Fernlee Ave



### Cacao Tree Mural

Amadeus Roy

204 W 4th St





### **Noir Leather Mural**

Sean Graham

124 W 4th St



### **Ohana Wealth Advisory Mural**

Adrenaline Murals

3315 N Campbell Rd



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