



# Dane County/Kassel, Germany Exchange Interviews

**EUARCA + 2017**

Brenda Baker

## **Brenda Baker on how attending EUARCA+ 2017 inspired her to co-found the Women Artists Forward Fund:**

Wisconsin has slowly taken the last rung... we are 50th in the country for arts funding. Knowing that, I went to Kassel the same year that I launched the Women Artists Forward Fund. I'd just sort of been kicking around the idea for it... and it was super helpful for me to talk with other artists at EUARCA about arts funding and what I could do. I got lots of inspiration and support. From that experience, and also the primary inspiration of the Forward statue on the Capitol lawn, the Women Artists Forward Fund was created and has raised over \$700,000. We give away two \$10,000 grants to Dane County women artists every year. It's been really great in how it has helped spawn other things in the arts community.



## **How have you brought this experience to your community?**

At the Madison Children's Museum we hire artists for every project, because we're helping build a creative economy. I'm hiring people locally... When you look at the ripple effects of these kinds of opportunities, they're really big. We're creating jobs for artists.



## **Why do you think this cultural exchange experience is important?**

You want creative people in your community. You want a community that supports the arts, innovation, and creativity. If you're last on the ladder for those things, people don't move here. You wouldn't move to Dane County to be an artist if people didn't support the arts and foster a creative economy there. When you think about quality of life, you think about the schools, music, museums, parks; these are all things that contribute to a vital place to live.

## **Why were you interested in going to Kassel?**

As a visual artist, I wanted to strengthen my skills and do an exhibition. I mean, Documenta is kind of outstanding. It's one of the largest art opportunities in Europe. It was the whole idea of networking with other people and meeting artists from around the world. It's just like in any field. When you're trying to learn and grow you don't isolate yourself. It's really important to exchange ideas with others.

## **What did you learn when you went to Kassel?**

In terms of specifics, it was just about how this is an idea I have, how does that manifest itself where I live? It's important for artists to be exposed to intercultural exchanges. When you have artists sharing ideas, it helps build your own community.

**Kassel-Dane Sister County Taskforce**