

A Blade of Grass Announces Lu Zhang as Executive Director



Lu Zhang, Executive Director of A Blade of Grass. Photo credit: Elena Volkova.

New York, NY — May 31, 2023 — **A Blade of Grass** is pleased to announce and welcome **Lu Zhang** as the organization's new **Executive Director**. Zhang will officially assume the position on June 20, 2023.

"I'm thrilled to join A Blade of Grass and continue its legacy for nurturing the arts through socially engaged and thought-provoking work," said **Lu Zhang**. "A core tenet of the organization is the focus on centering artists in dialogue with its mission and practice. I feel especially connected to the foundation of this work, and I look forward to working alongside the artist and arts worker-led board and staff to re-establish the organization as a leading resource and support system for socially engaged artists across the country."

Zhang currently serves as the Initiatives Director of **United States Artists (USA)**, a national arts funding organization headquartered in Chicago, where she launched a department dedicated to expanding holistic support for artists and their communities. Prior to joining USA, Zhang was Deputy Director of **The Contemporary**, a nomadic, non-collecting art museum in Baltimore, Maryland, where she provided strategic and operational oversight, and led resource initiatives for local artists.

In addition to her leadership roles, Zhang has spent her career building services for artists across the country through careful listening, deep research, and community building. Her extensive work across the arts and philanthropic sectors has helped mount national acclaim for initiatives like [Artist Relief](#) and [Ford Foundation and Mellon Foundation's Disability Futures](#).

“Lu has spent her career devoted to centering artists, and, in her work across initiatives like Disability Futures, she is reshaping the next generation of arts through a social lens,” said **Margaret Morton, Ford Foundation’s Director of Creativity and Free Expression**. “She is an active collaborator, participant, and thought leader for the creative sector, and we look forward to her bringing an informed advocacy and passion to this new role.”

A Blade of Grass is a hub for socially engaged artists and the evolution of their practices. As Executive Director, Zhang will not only rebuild the organization, but will also create much needed space for these artists by supplying them with resources and the opportunity to connect to each other, enabling the expansion and response to current and future social and political conditions. Alongside the organization’s artist and arts worker board of directors—Brett Cook, Michael Premo, Michael Quattrone, Gregory Sale, ashley sparks, and Diya Vij—she will spearhead much needed advocacy of socially engaged work, a severely underfunded inter/discipline, through collaborations and partnerships with other arts, social justice, and community leaders.

“As an artist and arts worker herself, Lu considers artists first and leads from the belief that artists are essential to societal transformation,” said **A Blade of Grass’s Board of Directors in a statement**. “Among her many skills is her capacity for deep listening and her commitment to learning and growth. Both growing her understanding of specific community needs and the systems that impact those communities. Her creative leadership and willingness to imagine new structures and systems in partnership with artists make her an excellent match for where we are as a board and organization right now.”

“Much like A Blade of Grass, artists, social justice, and community are at the center of Lu’s value system, adding to the list of reasons that she is the ideal candidate to lead this organization into the future,” added **Interim Director Suzy Delvalle**. “I look forward to seeing the direction that Lu takes this work and how its indelible mission continues to unfold.”

About A Blade of Grass

Since its founding in 2011, ABOG has provided resources to artists who serve as innovative conduits for social change and foster dialogue around the importance of art to civic life. ABOG stands firm in the idea that creativity and art can be a shared resource that concretely and positively changes lives. Our high-profile, nationally recognized fellowship has become a key career milestone for US-based socially engaged artists working across the country and abroad.

In 2021, ABOG began a restructuring process to explore new organizational models of support for socially engaged artists. As part of this process, ABOG’s founders passed on the governance of the organization to artists and arts workers with a significant stake in socially

engaged art. Our board is comprised of practitioners with a particularly deep commitment to socially engaged art, social justice and equity. They also have the practical skills and experience necessary for the effective stewardship of an arts nonprofit. Each board member receives an honorarium for their service as we believe that paying a professional board increases the accountability and proximity of that board to the communities it serves.

Today, ABOG is in an exciting position to evaluate and respond to current challenges and opportunities, and with new leadership emerge as a strong and values-driven organization—a leading artist-governed national funder for ambitious socially engaged art projects.

About Lu Zhang

Lu Zhang is an artist and arts administrator. In her role as Initiatives Director of United States Artists (USA), a national arts funding organization headquartered in Chicago, Lu launched Initiatives, a department dedicated to expanding holistic support for artists and their communities. In partnership with foundation leaders, Initiatives conducts research, shares learnings with the field, and increases direct support to individual artists across discipline and geography. Key programs include Disability Futures, a fund to increase the visibility of disabled creative practitioners, and Artist Relief, a \$23.4 million emergency initiative to support artists facing dire financial circumstances due to COVID-19.

Prior to joining USA, Lu was Deputy Director of The Contemporary, a nomadic, non-collecting art museum in Baltimore, Maryland, where she provided strategic and operational oversight, and led resource initiatives for local artists.

As an artist, Lu creates projects that take various forms—including books, drawings, installations, interventions, and an institute. She has collaborated with Press Press to produce publications and the George Peabody Library to launch a studio residency program. Lu is the founder of the Institute for Expanded Research which activates sites and leverages resources to produce and present projects in collaboration with artists. Lu received her MFA from the Frank Mohr Institute in the Netherlands and her BFA from the Maryland Institute College of Art in Baltimore.