

Annual Report 2024





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Co-Founders' Message:

Dear Friends and Supporters,

2024 was a year of transformation: of communities, of young artists, and of Artolution itself.

Across refugee camps, underserved neighborhoods, and crisis-affected regions, we saw the power of art to ignite change. Walls became canvases of hope, local artists led movements of resilience, and youth who had never held a paintbrush or performed in public found their voices through murals, performance, and storytelling.

None of this would have been possible without you. Artolution thrives because of a global movement. Because individuals, organizations, and entire communities believe in the transformative impact of art. Every brushstroke, every dance, every mural is a reflection of that belief.

In our recent Virtual Bridges workshop, one of our teenage South Sudanese participants who lives in Bidibidi Refugee Settlement in Uganda stated that:

"Each moment of virtual connections with other teams in the world is a lesson in itself and a seed of hope and friendship."

She and her peers had been collaborating on murals that inspired hope for their future and digital design workshops that provided them job skills to support their livelihoods. They met virtually with refugee youth in the Czech Republic and Indonesia, and worked on 3D artworks together in Virtual Reality – an innovative way to engage vulnerable youth and support their mental health.

This past year, our team grew, our impact deepened, and we secured a landmark five-year grant that will allow us to scale our programs to new heights. 2025 is set to be our most ambitious year yet—with groundbreaking projects already underway, including immersive AR & VR storytelling, large-scale community murals, and expanded refugee-led arts initiatives.

This work is urgent. This work is necessary. And together, we will keep pushing forward—because in every community we serve, we see the same truth: creativity brings resilience and art brings healing.

With gratitude and commitment,

Joel Bergner & Dr. Max Frieder, Ed.D

Co-Founders, Artolution







Who We Are

Our work is guided by values of sustainability, creativity, inclusion, and community leadership.



Our Mission

To strengthen and transform communities through collaborative art-making by amplifying the voices of those most affected by crisis, displacement, and social marginalization.



Our Vision

A world where communities facing adversity are empowered to shape their own narratives, foster inclusion, and build resilience through the power of art.



Why Artolution Matters

From the Rohingya refugee camps to South Bronx housing developments, Artolution's programs are rooted in co-creation.

We don't simply make art – **we facilitate ownership of it.** Whether in a trauma-informed mural session or a cutting-edge VR storytelling workshop, our goal remains the same: to help communities heal, connect, and lead through creativity.

“
When I was painting,
I was not thinking about
problems at home. I
was just **focused** and
happy.

-Female student
Participant from Bidibidi Refugee Settlement,
Uganda.

”

2024 At a Glance

A snapshot of where we worked, who we reached, and what we built

In 2024, Artolution deepened its global work through bold artistic programming, community-led initiatives, and inclusive education efforts. From public school classrooms in Jordan to refugee settlements in Uganda, and public housing communities in New York City, this year marked a step forward in both scale and impact.

Where We Worked

- Our core programming continued in: **Uganda, Jordan, Colombia, Bangladesh, Lebanon, and the United States**
- Additional projects launched in **Kenya, Ukraine, Myanmar, Indonesia, Czech Republic**, and beyond
- Key partnerships with **UNHCR, IOM, Medair, Snapchat, the German agency GIZ** and local institutions were strengthened

Programs in Progress

- We co-created community murals, performances, sculptures and digital storytelling sessions across all of our locations, globally.
- Local teaching artists led workshops using the arts for inclusion and healing.
- Our Virtual Bridges program expanded to new countries, connecting youth through immersive, collaborative art experiences, including Augmented Reality and Virtual Reality.



Our Impact

Artolution catalyzes the resilience of our participants through collaborative interdisciplinary art, training and employing local artists to expand educational programming in crisis-affected areas. Our approach strengthens communities and enhances our participants' skills and confidence, while promoting peaceful coexistence and co-creation for a brighter future.

Estimated
75,000 People
experienced Artolution
projects globally in 2024.

60%
female participants,
highlighting strong gender
inclusion across programs.

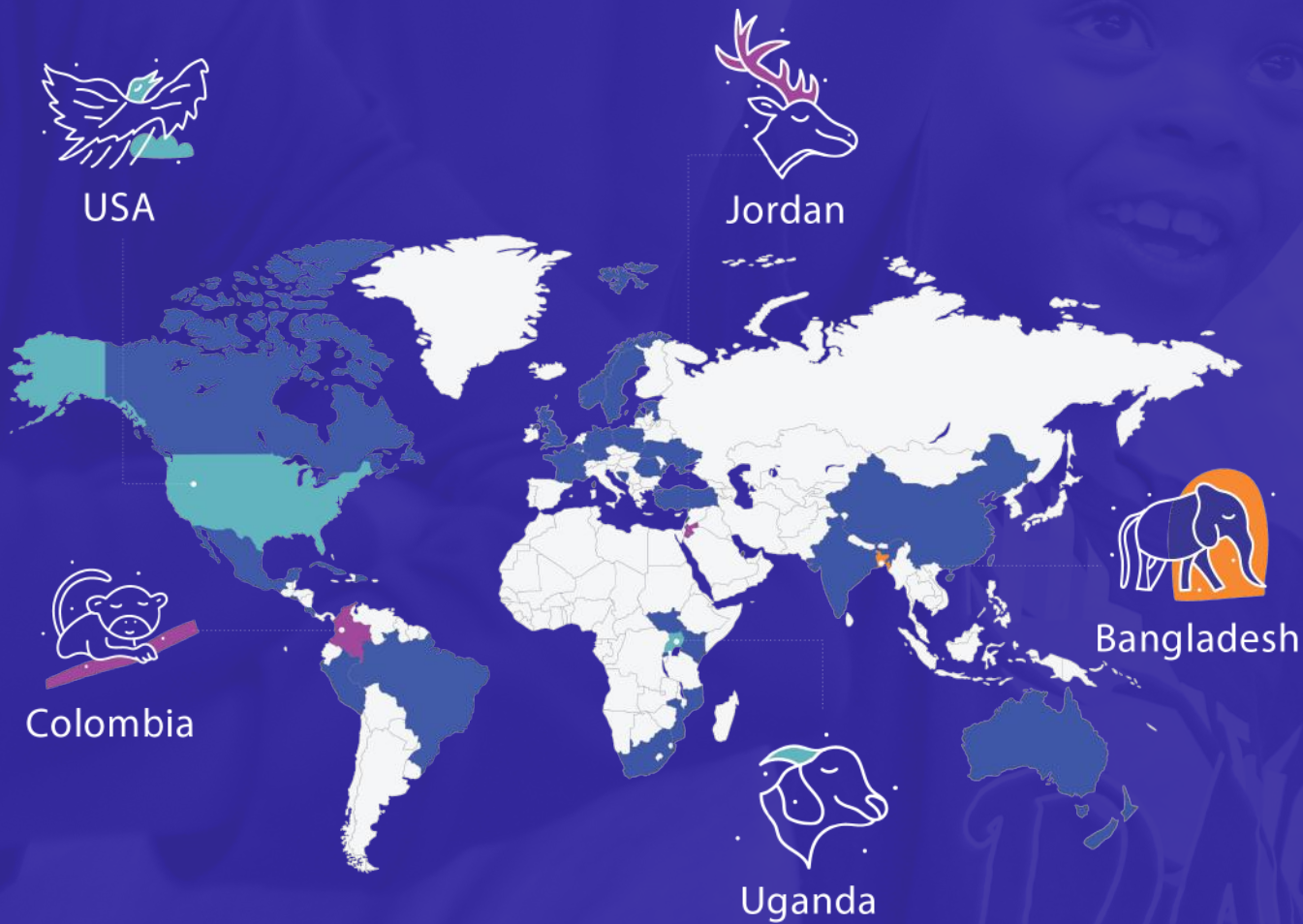
4,264
Direct participants
involved

Programs were led by over
100
community artists globally



Our goal is to
grow the number of
vulnerable community
participants we impact
by **10%** each year.

Where Artolution Projects Have Taken Place



After experiencing Artolution programing, participants reported:

100%
of youth in **Uganda's** arts program
showed improvement on the
Flourishing Scale – a measure of
purpose, optimism, social
connection, and self-esteem.

70%
of **students in Jordan**
felt more connected to
their peers and teachers.

67%
of youth in **Uganda**
improved their **conflict
resolution** skills after
participating in Artolution
programs.

92%
of participants in **Colombia**
showed improved
socio-emotional capacities.

The impact of Artolution programming is measured by comparing pre and post-project surveys that ask participants questions about various aspects of their wellbeing, mental health, relationships and social behaviours.



Our Pillars

How our values guide action, healing, and transformation

Artolution’s global work is grounded in four interconnected pillars. These principles shape every workshop, mural, and collaboration, ensuring that creativity is not just expressive, but purposeful. In 2024, each pillar took shape through programs designed and led by the communities we serve.

Mental Health



We create trauma-informed spaces where youth and communities can process emotions, build resilience, and reconnect with joy.

In **Jordan**, students participating in community art programs reported a stronger sense of belonging and connection to their schools and peers – even after just a few days of collaborative creative expression.

Social Inclusion



Our projects celebrate diversity – bringing together youth from different backgrounds, abilities, and experiences.

In the **USA**, young people collaborated on murals that honored cultural identity, language, and accessibility. These inclusive projects created spaces for visibility, belonging, and shared community pride.

Livelihoods



We train and employ local artists as facilitators, leaders, and community educators.

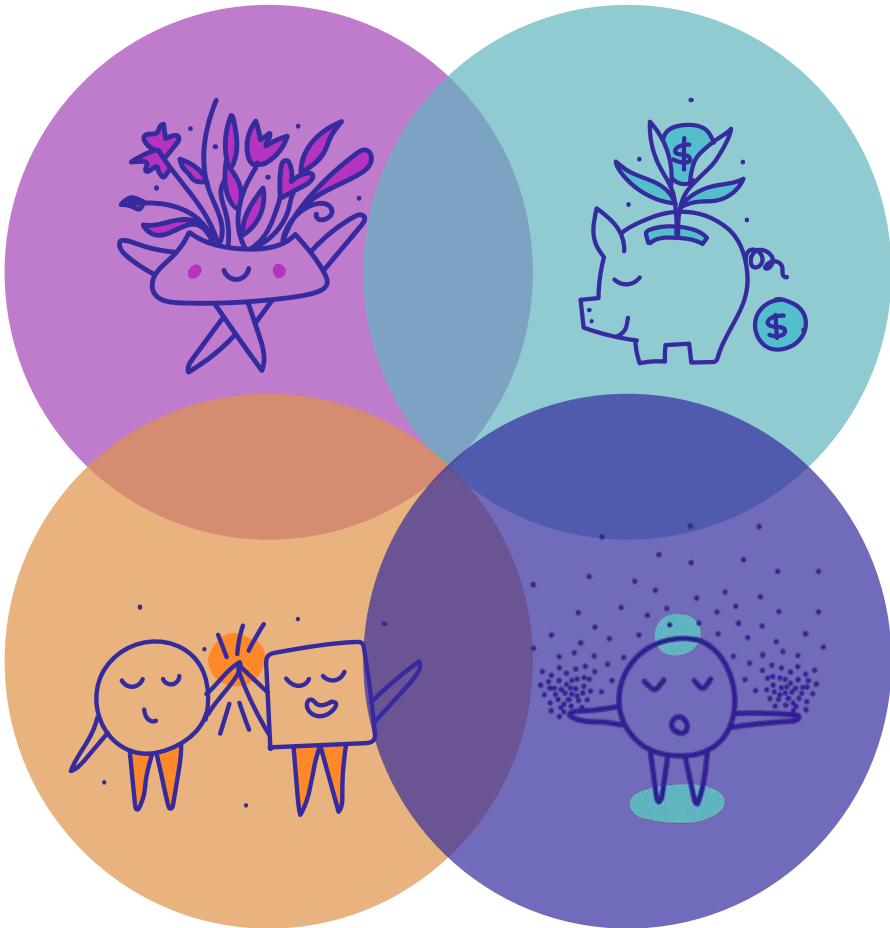
In **Uganda, Bangladesh, and Colombia**, certified teaching artists led programs and mentored new artists, developing job skills in digital design, mural creation, and storytelling. These roles provided income, built leadership pathways, and strengthened local ownership of every project.

Awareness



Our collaborative art-making captures the crises experienced by participants and encourages communities to bear witness to urgent social issues.

In **Bangladesh**, youth-led murals explored environmental challenges and identity, sparking dialogue and civic pride. The result: not only walls filled with color, but spaces filled with voice.



Field Spotlights:

Artolution programs continue to expand throughout Africa, Asia, Europe and the Americas. These two initiatives capture our global approach.

Jordan

Inclusion Through Collaborative Art-Making, Led from Within

In Jordan, 2024 marked a major step forward in Artolution's efforts to make education more inclusive, creative, and community-driven. At the heart of it was the launch of the **Arts-Based Inclusive Education Program**, a collaboration with **GIZ** and the **Ministry of Education** that reached **60 public schools** across six regions. Through murals, theater, stop-motion animation and digital storytelling, more than **1,500 students** explored what it means to belong, and teachers received hands-on training to carry that spirit of inclusion forward in their classrooms.

But this was just one part of the story.

Throughout the year, our local artist teams worked across the country, from urban centers to refugee camps, leading workshops focused on **gender equity, disability inclusion, and emotional expression**. Women in our arts-livelihoods program turned creativity into opportunity. Syrian and Jordanian youth co-created murals that fostered mutual understanding. In every space, art became a tool for healing, self-expression, and empowerment.

"This initiative equips students not just with skills but with voice, visibility, and the ability to reimagine their place in society."
— Ayat Asa'ad, Jordan Program Manager



United States

Creating Space for Youth Voice and Public Belonging

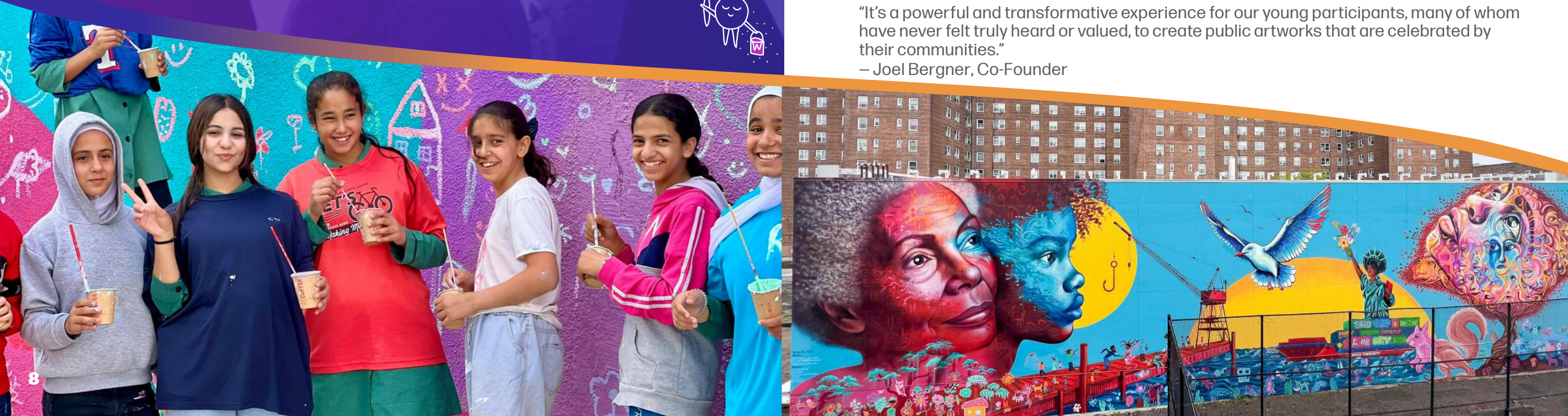
Across the U.S., Artolution's 2024 work focused on the power of art-making to build connection, celebrate identity, and amplify local stories. From Brooklyn to Providence to Middletown, young people, families, and artists came together to transform walls into reflections of their communities and themselves.

In **Red Hook, Brooklyn**, teens from a public housing community neighboring an affluent area designed a mural that reflected their hopes, challenges, and pride. The project helped bridge two communities, transformed a shared park, and created a space where everyone feels seen. Through workshops they shaped the story and artwork, and the mural was brought to life with augmented reality, training youth in creative tech skills with Snapchat, NYCHA, and the Public Housing Community Fund, with each participant keeping a laptop to continue learning.

Other Communities:

- In **Middletown, Connecticut**, youth revitalized a public building through collaborative mural-making, reclaiming a space for creativity and pride.
- In **Providence, Rhode Island**, a multicultural mural program brought together youth from four communities, creating a platform for storytelling and collaboration across cultures.
- In **Washington, DC and New York City**, Artolution hosted public events and workshops that invited neighbors, teachers, and students to co-create artwork that sparked joy and dialogue.

"It's a powerful and transformative experience for our young participants, many of whom have never felt truly heard or valued, to create public artworks that are celebrated by their communities."
— Joel Bergner, Co-Founder



Teaching Artist Spotlights

The heart of Artolution lives in the hands of those who lead it.

Sameer's journey with Artolution began not with a paintbrush, but with a question: "What if art could be a language for those who've been silenced?" Since 2018, he has led programs across Jordan, from refugee camps and public schools to remote communities, always with a deep, steady belief in the power of listening first.

A Syrian artist now based in Azraq Refugee Camp, Sameer brings a deep personal understanding of displacement, loss, and renewal. In 2024, he played a leading role in the **Arts-Based Inclusive Education Program**, working with students of all abilities to co-create murals and stories that reflected their lives. Whether collaborating with a deaf student designing a mural in sign language or helping a shy teenager find their voice through stop-motion animation, he meets each participant where they are.

One moment has stayed with him:

"A boy in Azraq Camp drew a bird and said, 'Even a bird deserves a sky.' The next day, we all painted a sky around it."

That mural still stands – and so does Sameer's belief that every story deserves space and every person deserves to feel at home.

"My experience of losing my own home gave me the strength to help others tell their stories, to build spaces that feel safe, colorful, and truly theirs."

Sameer's work reflects what's possible when art is rooted in empathy and led from within the community.



Sameer Al Ghafary
Teaching Artist – Jordan

Karena Bravo Teaching Artist – United States



As a teaching artist, Karena approaches art-making as a powerful tool to build relationships, foster belonging, and help others find their voice. A multidisciplinary artist from Colombia now based in New Jersey, she led Artolution projects across New York and Connecticut in 2024, guiding young people through the mural-making process with care, clarity, and heart.

In a recent project in the Patterson public housing in the Bronx, Karena worked with teenagers to create a mural that reflected their pride in their neighborhood and their personal journeys. She encouraged them to take ownership at every stage; from visioning and sketching, to the final brushstrokes. Her process is grounded in listening: understanding community values, holding space for vulnerability, and letting youth see themselves in the work they create.

One of the most meaningful moments for Karena this year came not in a formal session, but while observing how youth engaged with their own environment.

"They weren't just painting," she reflected. "They were sharing who they are and who they're becoming."

She believes the real power of these projects lies in what they awaken: the sense that **each participant, no matter their background, has something valuable to say.**

"I want them to feel proud – not just of what they created, but of who they are becoming throughout the process."

Karena's work reminds us that the colors and images of community murals capture the presence, recognition, and deep pride of their creators. A pride that cannot be painted over.

Virtual Bridges & Innovation

Where creativity, technology, and cross-border connection come to life

In 2024, Artolution’s **Virtual Bridges program** grew into a bold new phase, in partnership with UNHCR, with the launch of immersive digital art initiatives with refugee youth living in **Uganda’s Bidibidi Refugee Settlement**, the **Czech Republic**, and **Indonesia**. Through Virtual Reality (VR) and collaborative design, young people experiencing displacement and crisis were not just introduced to cutting-edge technology, but were mastering it hands-on, building friendships, reimagining their futures, and leading the creative process from the inside out.

Participants used VR platforms like MultiBrush to connect across borders, bringing together teens who had escaped conflict in South Sudan, Ukraine, Myanmar, and beyond to co-create 3D worlds and share their life experiences.

These sessions used collaborative art-making to catalyze mental wellbeing, connection, and creative leadership.

“Each moment of virtual connection is a lesson in itself and a seed of hope and friendship.”

– Luba Winnie, Teaching Artist, Uganda

Luba, a refugee and now a certified VR trainer, spoke of how the program gave her tools, income, and purpose:

“I used to know nothing about virtual reality. Now I train others – and the stipend helps me support my siblings through school.”

In Indonesia and the Czech Republic, youth explored themes like peaceful coexistence, belonging, and digital storytelling – all grounded in local identity and culture.

Whether painting in VR or turning their designs into public murals, the outcome was significant: **youth leadership, healing through collaboration**, and communities demonstrating what happens when innovation is driven by those most impacted.



UNHCR Partnership & Sustainability Goals

Scaling impact through collaboration and community-led solutions



Our Work & the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Artolution's programming contributes to global goals that prioritize inclusion, wellbeing, and shared progress:

In 2024, Artolution deepened its long-standing partnership with UNHCR, expanding creative programming in Uganda, Indonesia, the Czech Republic, and the United States. Together, we delivered:

- Community made murals in refugee camps and urban resettlement sites
- VR, AR and digital art workshops through the Virtual Bridges program
- Refugee-led activations for World Refugee Day in DC and NYC
- Artist-training models embedded within local education systems

These efforts centered displaced youth not as victims – but as leaders in shaping community narratives.



Arts and Culture for Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS)



Arts and Culture Educational Programming



Uplifting women and girls as artists and leaders



Reducing inequality by amplifying marginalized voices



Our Global Network of Partners

In every country where we work, Artolution builds deep, trust-based partnerships with organizations that share our belief in community-driven art as a tool for healing, education, and inclusion.

Our partners bring local knowledge, institutional support, and long-term vision, helping us grow sustainably and reach the people who need this support most.



“Through every brushstroke, art weaves our stories together, turning pain into hope and strangers into a community.”

-Kuen James Dak
Artolution Lead Artist
South Sudan & Uganda



Meet Our Team

The people behind the movement

While this report highlights our core team, Artolution's strength is built on a much wider foundation. Across more than 35 countries, hundreds of Artolution-trained community artists are leading programs in their own neighborhoods – facilitating workshops, mentoring youth, and transforming public spaces. They are the frontlines of our mission and the reason this work is truly grassroots.

Headquarters Team



Joel Bergner
Co-founder, CEO



Dr. Max Frieder, Ed.D
Co-founder, Chief Creative Officer



Marine Burdel
Operations Director &
MHPSS Advisor



Samir Omary
Communications &
Development Officer



Paula Golez
Finance Officer



Carolina Gomez
Administrative Assistant

Global Team



Ayat Asa'ad
Jordan Country Director



Richard Katamba
Uganda Program Manager



Muhammad Moshir Rahman
Senior Program Manager, Bangladesh



Camilo Echeverri
Director of Artolución Colombia



Amos Odhiambo
Kenya Program Manager and
Director of AfroCure



Esero Nalyong
Uganda Field Coordinator



Juliette Nakate
Uganda Finance & Admin Officer



Mahmuda
Compliance Officer, Bangladesh



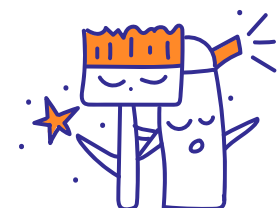
Batuhan Bintas
Creative Technology Lead



Emma Altman
Global Fashion Specialist



CJ Thomas
Head of Performance
Programming



Strategic Growth & Financial Health

Sustaining impact through smart growth and shared trust

In 2024, Artolution fostered pride and connection through community-led murals and digital workshops, while also strengthening organizational and community resilience, thus creating a multiplier effect on the wellbeing of the communities we serve.

This year, we strengthened our foundation in critical ways:

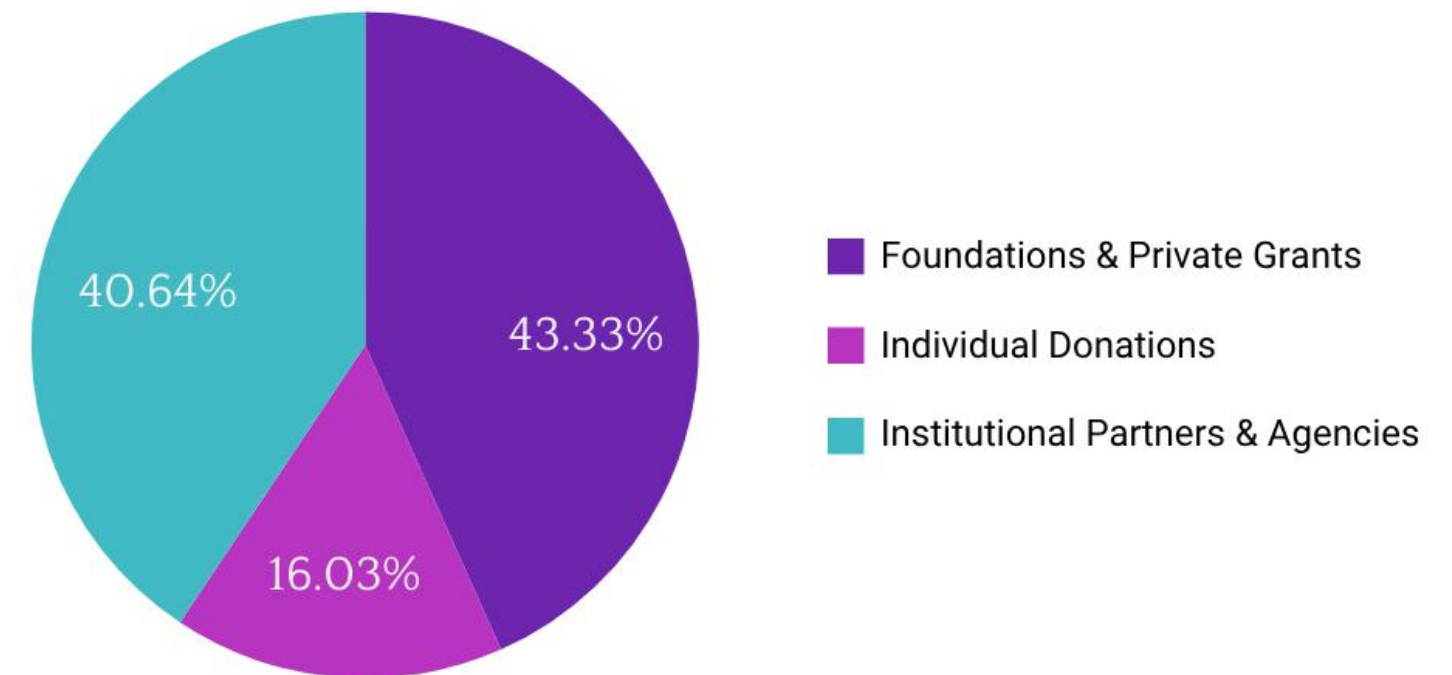
- **Expanded our headquarters team** to support global operations with greater strategic capacity, creative leadership, and development expertise.
- **Established and resourced local offices** in Jordan, Uganda, Colombia, Bangladesh, and the United States – ensuring that our work is driven by local knowledge and grounded in place.
- **Built robust operational systems** that enable us to deliver year-round programs, monitor impact, and respond quickly to emerging needs.
- **Secured multi-year funding**, including a five-year commitment from ICONIQ Impact, setting the stage for long-term program growth, expanded youth mental health initiatives, and continued innovation.

At the core of this growth is a commitment to sustainability. Our team of over 120 trained community artists now leads programming in more than 35 countries, passing on skills and methods to new artists so they can continue creating projects long into the future. By building capacity, fostering leadership, and transforming systems from within, we ensure that the impact extends far beyond each mural or workshop. This is how we scale with purpose: by investing in people, partnerships, and infrastructures that serve the communities we work with, years after years.



Funding Sources

This chart reflects the 2024 breakdown of Artolution's funding sources.



“ Personally, I never knew the strength and impact of working as a group to accomplish a set goal... I am now aware and able to use the togetherness and self-expressive forces through effective visual expressions and colors. ”

-Alexx
Artolution Artist
Uganda

Vision for 2025

More voices, more impact.

As Artolution moves into 2025, we do so with focus, momentum, and a renewed commitment to creativity as a tool for healing, connection, and change.

With strong partnerships, sustainable funding, and an ever-growing team of local leaders, we are ready to scale our impact in both expanded outreach and depth of our programming.

In the year ahead, we will:

- **Launch new year-round programs** across four countries, rooted in local leadership and long-term community engagement.
- **Expand Virtual Bridges** to new regions, connecting displaced youth through immersive digital storytelling and collaborative XR art.
- **Train and certify 25 new teaching artists**, creating opportunities for employment, mentorship, and regional leadership pipelines.
- **Partner with ministries of education and public institutions** to integrate arts-based inclusion, mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), and creativity into formal education systems.
- **Build creative hubs in high-needs areas**, offering youth safe and vibrant spaces to express themselves and reimagine their futures.
- **Grow our global network of partners**, inviting new collaborators across sectors to co-create inclusive, arts-based programs that center dignity, innovation, and long-term impact.

This next chapter is about building the kind of systems, teams, and partnerships that make creativity a lasting force for social transformation. This future is only possible because of the trust and investment of our donors and global partners.



“

I want to be an artist
when I grow up. I don't
just want to paint; I want
to help people feel the
way I felt this week:
happy and important.

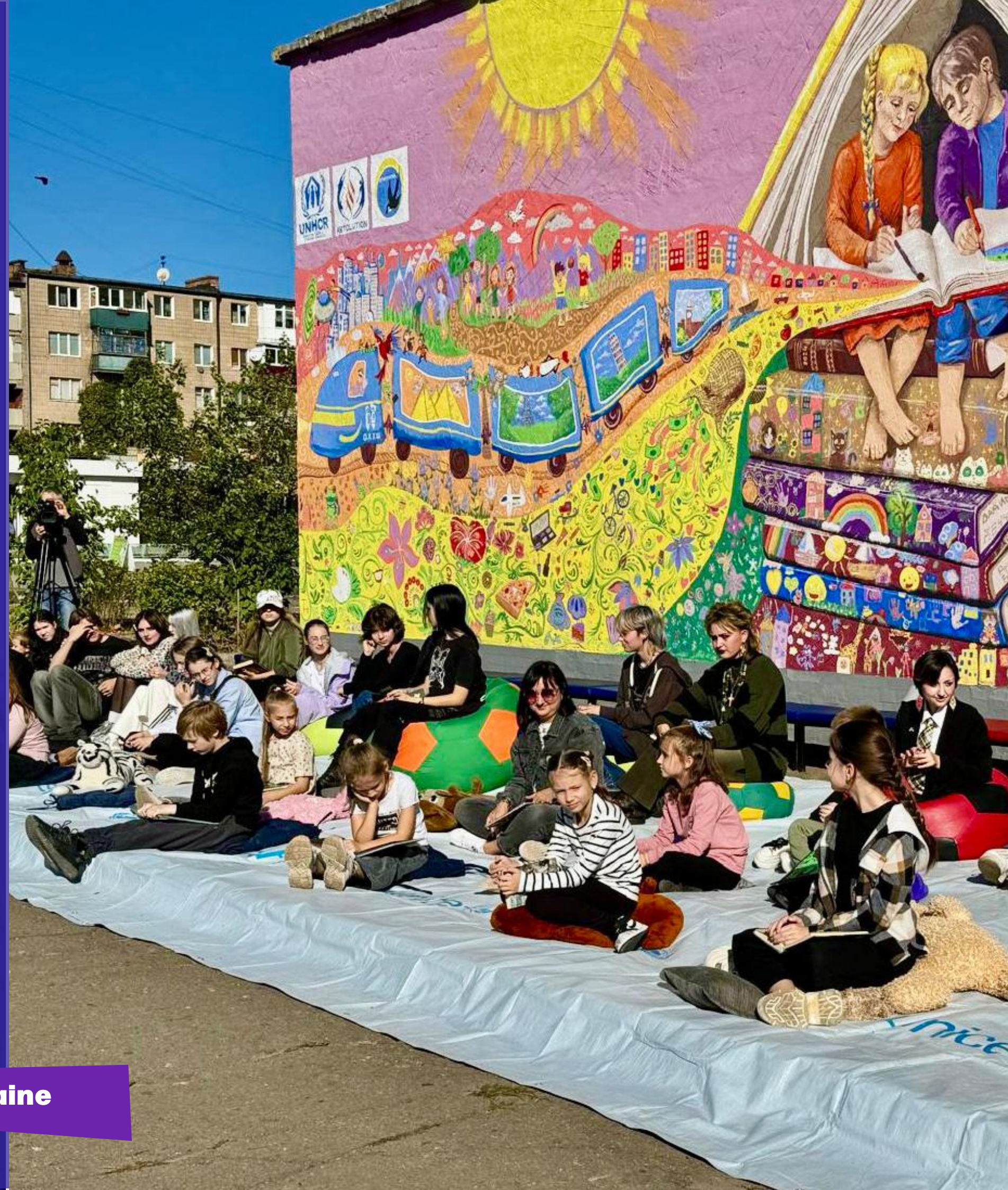
- 9-year-old student
Jordan

”



A child-initiated project to create four murals in four regions of Ukraine alongside artists: turning public spaces into messages of hope, memory, and resilience.

Ukraine





“
This program was a godsend
– it allowed young people to
explore what art can bring
to them and to the entire
community.”

-Karen Dawn Blondel
Community Organizer, Red Hook, Brooklyn

“
I am paid during Artolution
projects and that money
helps me support my
family.”

-Tokara Annet
Female, South Sudanese artist living in
Bidibidi Refugee Settlement, Uganda.



“
We’ve seen a remarkable
transformation in both the
students and teachers. From
skepticism to excitement, it’s been
a journey of growth for all involved.”

-Marah Rimawi
Facilitator from Jordan



“

I want to help people feel the way I felt this week:
happy and important.

”

- 9-year-old participant
Jordan

This is what art becomes when it's rooted in community.
A space for healing. A spark for memory. A mirror for belonging.

In 2024, young people and local artists led creative work grounded in lived experience. Together, they turned walls into voice, process into pride, and public space into something shared.

Thank you for standing with the communities who lead this work.



www.artolution.org

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