SMITH COLLEGE 150 YEARS

2024–2025 SOFA Annual Report

Prepared by the Office of Alumnae Relations and Development
in partnership with the Smith Office for the Arts (SOFA)

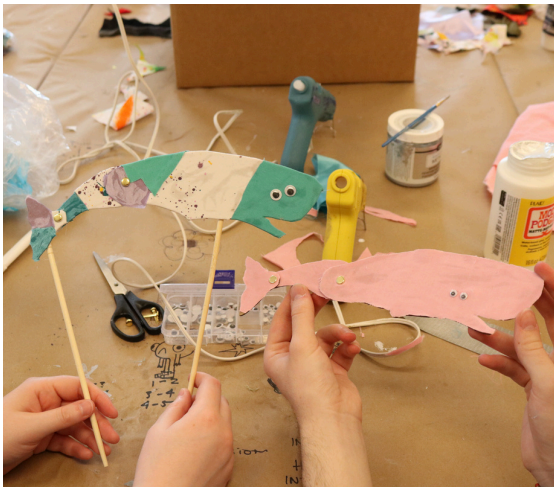
June 2025



Neilson Library, illuminated in honor of Smith Arts Day, 2025.









Smith Arts Day, 2025.

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Expanding Visibility, Deepening Impact

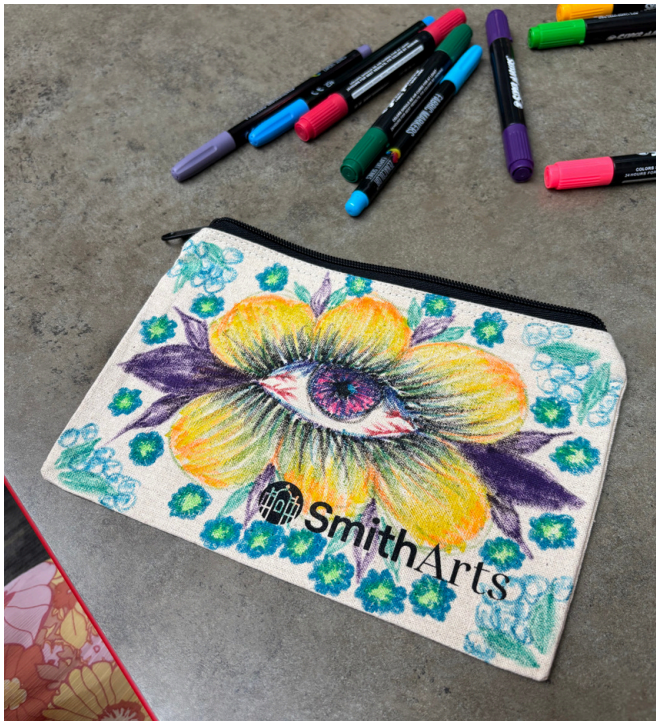
The Smith Office for the Arts (SOFA) had a productive second programmatic year, cultivating the creative community on campus and beyond through new traditions and resources. Recent advancements—such as building the foundational SOFA team, developing systems and tools for supporting campus creativity, and piloting new ways of engaging art students and student groups—have all been tremendously successful in expanding SOFA's visibility and impact. In collaboration with arts partners and departments across campus, SOFA was able to bring many communities together to make, engage, observe, and explore throughout the academic year.

Vision

Founded in Fall 2022, SOFA is focused on unifying arts planning and programming on campus through co-creation of programs and initiatives designed to support and promote the creative work of students, staff, and faculty.

SOFA acts as a hub of information about arts activities and events, operating as a central resource for elevating the role that the arts play within the campus landscape. Through developing sustained partnerships, SOFA aims to provide more resources and opportunities for students in curricular, co-curricular, and informal arts participation. Its purpose is to strengthen the presence and visibility of the arts and artists at Smith, creating the capacity to deepen the impact of the arts on campus and in the community.







Smith Arts Day, 2025.

Developing New Resources

SOFA has actively canvassed campus, listening closely to student ideas, needs, and hopes for the arts environment they want to build. This year, SOFA initiated two substantial projects based on student feedback:

Renovation of the Campus Center Dance Space

In response to ongoing conversations with student arts organizations and arts administrators across departments, SOFA identified a critical need for accessible, multipurpose rehearsal space on campus—particularly for dance. Existing studios often feature specialized flooring with limited availability, restricting the types of movement-based activities students can pursue. In partnership with the Office of Student Engagement and with input from groups including the Smith Tap Ensemble, Smith K-Pop Dance Crew, and Social and Contra Dance, SOFA led a renovation of the Campus Center Rehearsal Room. The space was outfitted with durable, multipurpose flooring, full-length mirrors, and upgraded finishes to support a broad range of rehearsals and creative practices.

Launch of the Cushion Fund

In Spring 2025, SOFA launched the Cushion Fund, a new grant initiative designed to support creative work by students, faculty, and staff, filling a growing need for accessible and flexible arts funding across campus. For its first application round, the Cushion Fund awarded $8,795 across 12 interdisciplinary projects, including student-produced films and music videos, performance workshops, publications, and exhibitions. Highlights include new portable tap boards constructed for the Smith Tap Ensemble, a professional studio album recording by the Smiffenpoofs a cappella group, a choreographed performance piece for the Black Culture Show, and a collaborative art and ecology exhibition.

These grants reflect the energy and ambition of Smith's arts community and represent a foundational step in expanding arts support through SOFA. Grants are awarded by a review committee composed of two faculty members (one from the arts and one from a non-arts discipline), two students, and two staff members (one from the arts and one from a non-arts role), ensuring a diverse and thoughtful evaluation process.






Projects awarded by the inaugural Cushion Fund, 2025. Clockwise, from top left: student-produced “Crush” magazine; students filming in a dorm room; *Field Works*, an art and ecology exhibition by student Avery Maltz AC ’25, pictured; student-choreographed dance and performance.

Cultivating New Traditions

Smith is built on traditions—many have stood for years, others have evolved, and some are taking root. SOFA contributed to the sense of community at the college this year by supporting the evolution of one tradition and creating some brand new ones.

Tourmaline and Cromwell Day Partnership: *Now What?: Liberation in the Midst of Uncertainty*

Artist, filmmaker, writer, and activist Tourmaline was the keynote speaker for Cromwell Day 2024, an annual event at Smith dedicated to reflection and education about diversity, racism, and inclusion. In addition to representing the arts on this year's Cromwell Day program committee, SOFA expanded Tourmaline's visit on campus in order to engage more deeply with students. SOFA collaborated with Film and Media Studies to screen a selection of Tourmaline's short films, which highlight the experiences of Black, queer, and trans communities and their capacity to impact the world. SOFA also hosted a Creative Career Talk with Tourmaline, in partnership with the Lazarus Center for Career Development, where she shared insights and strategies for creative careers in an informal, student-moderated lunchtime conversation. This series of engagements allowed students to learn firsthand about the vibrant career of an acclaimed multimedia artist.

Parlor Room Open Mics

SOFA recently developed a relationship with the Parlor Room Collective, a local arts nonprofit with a professional performing arts venue in downtown Northampton. This year, SOFA and the Parlor Room piloted two Open Mic nights, where nearly 30 Smith students shared their music, poetry, and talents onstage. The Smith-dedicated space helped to build community among musicians and performers and encourage new creative collaborations.

Bi-Annual Smith Student Art Sales

Based on the popularity of last year's inaugural student art sales, SOFA is pleased to establish the new tradition of hosting two annual sales on campus, one each winter and spring. In December, leading up to the holidays, over 60 student artists participated in the sale in the Campus Center. In April, as a kick-off to Smith Arts Day, the Spring Smith Student Art Sale took place in partnership with the Smith College Museum of Art (SCMA). In the Hillyer Atrium, hundreds of students, staff, faculty, and community members supported student makers and creators by purchasing jewelry, artwork, ceramics, clothing, photographs, prints, accessories, and more.







Clockwise, from top left: Students with Tourmaline, 2024 Cromwell Day keynote speaker, second from left; students performing at a Parlor Room Open Mic event; student vendor at the winter Student Art Sale.

Smith Spring Showcases: Cultivating Curiosity, Creativity, and Collaboration

SOFA convened partners from across campus who were organizing events coinciding with Smith Arts Day—including the Conway Center (Joypalooza), Provost's Office (Celebrating Collaborations), Wurtele Center for Leadership (Amplify Competition), and the Lazarus Center (Smith in the World)—to share best practices, collaborate on marketing, and develop a strategy with College Relations, increasing visibility for all of these amazing opportunities for faculty and students to share their projects and research with the broader Smith community.

Smith Arts Day

Introduced by SOFA in 2024, the second Smith Arts Day was held on Saturday, April 19, 2025. This daylong celebration of the artistic and creative community at Smith brought the arts together across disciplines and across campus. SOFA invited local community members to attend performances, exhibitions, workshops, art-making activities, and more. Overlapping intentionally with Admission's Admitted Students Weekend for a second year, over 40 events provided a wonderful platform for students, staff, and faculty to share their work, celebrate artistic activity on campus, and bring local and campus audiences together. This year, in addition to highlighting the college's thriving arts community, the event built on the legacy of 150 years of the arts as a key pillar of a Smith education.





Smith Arts Day, 2025.

Smith Arts Day 2025 Highlights

The second annual Spring Student Art Sale, held on Friday, April 18, ushered in the weekend of creative festivities. Campus-wide highlights included:

- Projections on Neilson Library throughout the weekend
- “Imaging Through the Ages in the Imaging Center," which included button-making with 35mm slides, relief printing, and a pinhole camera workshop
- Orchestra Spring Concert and Open Rehearsal, presented by the music department
- Drop-in, hands-on workshops with the Design Thinking Initiative and the botanic garden
- Curator-led tour of *Younes Rahmoun: Here, Now* at the SCMA
- “Erased Land: Blackout Poetry Project” and origami creations of T.S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land* with The Boutelle-Day Poetry Center
- “Zines Galore,” a collaborative making and sharing session of self-produced publications
- “Create Your Vision: A Cut Loose Collage Workshop”
- Smith Arts Day Community Mural
- Campus School of Smith College Sixth-Grade Pop-Up Exhibition
- Works-in-progress showings with dance, music, film, and theatre students
- Smith Student Performance Showcase



Student making a cyanotype during Smith Arts Day, 2025.











Smith Arts Day, 2025.

Supporting Faculty Collaborations

A key part of SOFA's mission to integrate curricular and co-curricular arts opportunities across campus is fostering strong relationships with faculty, building partnerships that will lead to a more dynamic and inclusive arts environment for everyone.

Do Plants Know Math?

Co-sponsored by SOFA, this exhibit in McConnell Hall featured large prints of a selection of photographs from the new book *Do Plants Know Math? Unwinding the Story of Plant Spirals from Leonardo to Now*, co-authored by Smith Professor Christophe Golé, Jacques Dumais, Stéphane Douady, and Nancy Pick, with photography by Victor Mozqueda. *Do Plants Know Math?* explores the Fibonacci patterns in nature and supports a powerful new geometrical solution that sheds light on why regular and irregular spiral patterns occur. This exhibit invited students to look afresh at botanical patterns and celebrated a faculty member's new publication that bridges the arts and the sciences.

Earth Music Theater Live

This multidisciplinary program combined astronaut-captured visuals from the International Space Station and genre-straddling music by Steve Thomas. Former NASA astronaut Cady Coleman shared videos and inspiring stories from her book, *Sharing Space: An Astronaut's Guide to Mission, Wonder, and Making Change*. It was a powerful cinematic, multimedia, and educational experience, designed to provoke thinking about the whole Earth and planetary stewardship. This special event was a collaboration between SOFA and Smith's NASA-funded Math Resilient Students (MaRS).

Audible Loss Book Release Event

This spring, SOFA hosted the book release event for *Audible Loss: New Music and the Crisis of Memory* by Andrea Zarafshon Moore, assistant professor of music. In *Audible Loss*, Moore analyzes a range of musical works written to commemorate late 20th- and early 21st-century crises in the United States—the AIDS crisis, 9/11, and anti-Black violence—and explores how contemporary classical music frames and narrates crises, gives voice to grief, and seeks to make loss audible. The event included a conversation between Andrea Moore and Lisa Armstrong, professor of the study of women and gender and co-director of the community engagement and social change concentration.

BODY FREEDOM FOR EVERY(BODY) Mobile Exhibition

In collaboration with the art department, SOFA organized a visit from the BODY FREEDOM FOR EVERY(BODY) truck. This mobile exhibition features work that explores intersecting issues of bodily autonomy including reproductive justice, queer liberation, and trans joy. The mobile exhibition traveled coast-to-coast, wrapped in an original artwork by Barbara Kruger, *Your Body is a Battleground* (1989). Its journey coincided with the 2024 election and stopped at Smith from April 10 to 11, 2025. Related programming included a public lecture and creative career lunch featuring Jasmine Wahi, curator, educator, activist, and co-director/co-founder of Project for Empty Space.



Clockwise, from top left: *Do Plants Know Math?*, Earth Music Theater Live, *Audible Loss* book release, BODY FREEDOM FOR EVERY(BODY) mobile exhibition.

Designing Career Pathways

Two of Smith's programmatic priorities are the arts and career development. SOFA has partnered closely with the Lazarus Center since its inception, yielding important insights for students curious about careers in the arts.

Boston Arts Career Trek

In February, SOFA partnered with the Lazarus Center to pilot a trek to Boston. During this daylong event, 20 students explored the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, where they met the new curator of contemporary art and toured the museum's exhibition design studio with an alum employed there as a graphic designer. Students also enjoyed an informational lunch with four Boston-based alums who are professional artists. The day concluded with Lauren Budding '93, chief development officer at the Boston Symphony Orchestra, who shared insights in her talk "There Is No One Path to Building an Arts Career."



Boston Arts Career Trek, 2025.

Engaging Alums

The successful realization of an integrated arts environment at Smith depends on the involvement and support of its devoted and talented alums. Over the past two years, SOFA programming has expanded alum engagement in new and meaningful ways. These efforts have consistently been met with enthusiasm from alums, who are eager to support and connect with students.

SOFA on Tour

SOFA Director Leigh Fagin was invited to share SOFA's vision at alum gatherings sponsored by Smith clubs across the country. In Greenwich, CT, the local alum club hosted Fagin alongside Emma Chubb, Charlotte Feng Ford '83 Curator of Contemporary Art at the SCMA, for a presentation titled *Here, Now: Elevating the Arts at Smith–A Conversation About New Developments and Collaborations in the Arts at Smith.*

In the spring, Fagin and Chubb were invited to present again, this time by the Chicago Smith Club. They participated in a conversation with Lorelei Stewart '87, director of Gallery 400 at the University of Illinois Chicago. Their talk, *Supporting Creative Communities at Smith and Beyond*, explored experiential learning and arts engagement on campus and in the wider community.





The Chicago Smith Club event *Supporting Creative Communities at Smith and Beyond*, 2025.

Building the SOFA Team

In recognition of two years of successful solo leadership by Fagin in establishing SOFA, the team expanded in Fall 2024 with the addition of its first program manager, Shawn Reming, who was hired through the Strategic Initiative Process. Continuing the momentum of SOFA's early growth, the program manager role supports both programmatic and administrative functions, with a particular emphasis on student engagement. Reming contributes to program development and partnership initiatives in collaboration with a range of organizational arts partners at the college and beyond. This new phase of growth reflects a commitment to strengthening SOFA's impact, with a goal of regularizing the program manager position by the end of next year.

What's Next?

Building on the successes achieved by SOFA's two-person team, the coming year will be focused on deepening program impact and increasing student awareness of the arts events and resources available to them. From an expanded launch of the Cushion Fund to ongoing collaborations with the Lazarus Center and the growth of platforms for students to share their work, these pilot initiatives have become part of the fabric of Smith. SOFA will also cultivate long-term partnerships across campus and in the broader community, including with the Office of Admission, Residence Life, the Student Government Association, and College Relations, as well as the Northampton Downtown Association and Northampton Arts Council. Finally, SOFA remains committed to contributing to the implementation of the new strategic plan's emerging goals, ensuring that the arts remain an integral part of the Smith College experience and its campus life for generations to come.

Acknowledgements

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President Sarah Willie-LeBreton with the Smith College Orchestra at Smith Arts Day, 2025.


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