



The Business of Being an Artist

Becoming Established: LLCs & Nonprofits

Dr. Jackeline Mejias-Fuertes, Regional Director
NJSBDC at Brookdale Community College





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Brookdale Community College**



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Welcome, Artists & Innovators

Today's session is designed for artists, creatives, and cultural entrepreneurs who are ready to take the next step — **transforming creative passion into a sustainable, professional business.**

Whether you're just starting out or looking to formalize an existing practice, this workshop meets you where you are.



Session Objectives

By the end of this session, you will be equipped to make confident, informed decisions about how to structure your creative work.

1

Understand Business Structures

Explore the legal frameworks available to working artists

2

LLC vs. Nonprofit Pathways

Compare two powerful models and when each makes sense

3

Structure Supports Growth

See how the right entity unlocks funding and opportunity

4

Real-World Experiences

Learn from artists who have made the transition successfully

The Artist Mindset Shift

Growing a sustainable creative career means evolving how you think about your work — without losing what makes it yours.

1

Passion

Your creative drive and artistic vision

2

Strategy

Intentional decisions that support your goals

3

Enterprise

A structured, scalable creative business



Why Structure Matters



Protect Your Work

Separate your personal assets from your creative business legally



Build Credibility

Clients, venues, and partners take registered businesses seriously



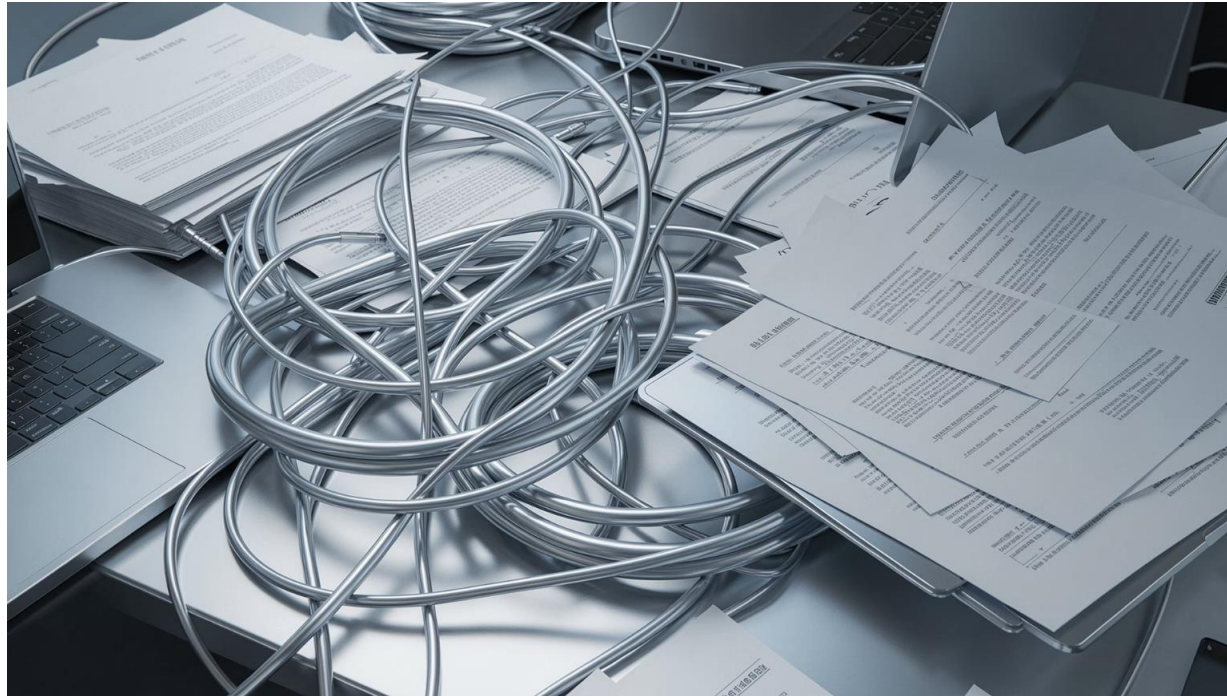
Unlock Opportunities

Grants, contracts, and institutional funding often require formal status



Support Long-Term Growth

A solid foundation lets your practice evolve and scale with confidence



OPERATING WITHOUT STRUCTURE

The Risks of Going It Alone

Personal Liability

Your personal assets are at risk if a dispute or debt arises

Financial Confusion

Mixing personal and business finances creates chaos at tax time

Limited Funding Access

Most grants and lenders require a registered business entity

Growth Barriers

Informal operations make it difficult to hire, partner, or scale

OPERATING WITH STRUCTURE

What Structure Makes Possible

Legal Protection

Your personal finances are shielded from business liabilities

Clear Financial Systems

Separate accounts, clean records, and tax-ready books

Access to Funding

Qualify for grants, loans, and institutional support

Scalable Opportunities

Hire collaborators, enter contracts, and grow with confidence



Two Primary Business Models

Every artist's path is different. The right structure depends on your **mission, revenue model, and long-term vision.**

For-Profit Path

LLC

Ideal for artists selling work, offering services, or building a creative brand with earned income at the center

Mission-Driven Path

Nonprofit

Best for artists whose work serves a community purpose and who want to pursue grants, donations, and tax-exempt status

 Choosing the right path is one of the most important early decisions you'll make as a creative entrepreneur.



Model 1: What Is an LLC?

A **Limited Liability Company (LLC)** is one of the most popular and flexible structures for independent artists and creative businesses.

Legal Separation

Your personal assets — home, savings, car — are protected from business debts and legal claims

Flexible Structure

LLCs can be taxed as a sole proprietor, partnership, or corporation — choose what works best for you

Minimal Bureaucracy

Easier to form and maintain than a corporation, with fewer ongoing compliance requirements

Your Next Step Starts Here

You don't have to figure this out alone. The **NJSBDC at Brookdale Community College** offers free, confidential advising to help artists and creatives formalize their businesses and build toward sustainability.

Reflect

Identify your mission, revenue goals, and community role

Research

Explore LLC and Nonprofit requirements in your state

Connect

Schedule an advising session with NJSBDC for personalized guidance

✔ Your creativity is already your greatest asset. Now it's time to protect it, grow it, and sustain it.



LLC: Who It's For

An LLC isn't just for big businesses — it's a powerful structure for creatives at every stage. If you're earning money from your art, an LLC may be your next smart move.

Artists Selling Work

Painters, sculptors,
photographers selling
originals or prints

Commission-Based Creatives

Illustrators, muralists,
designers working on client
projects

Scaling Entrepreneurs

Artists growing income streams, products, or services

LLC: Key Benefits

Forming an LLC unlocks a set of protections and advantages that let you focus on your creative work — with greater confidence and control.



Liability Protection

Your personal assets stay separate from your business — protecting your home, savings, and belongings from business debts or legal claims.



Tax Flexibility

Choose how you're taxed — as a sole proprietor, partnership, or S-Corp — optimizing what you keep at the end of the year.



Full Ownership Control

You remain the sole decision-maker. No board, no investors required. Your vision leads the business.



Professional Credibility

An LLC signals legitimacy to clients, galleries, and partners — making it easier to win contracts and collaborations.

LLC: Common Questions

Thinking about forming an LLC? Here are the questions creatives ask most — answered plainly.



Do I need one?

If you're earning income from your art or services, an LLC adds legal separation and credibility — often worth it from the start.

When should I form it?

As soon as you're taking on clients, signing contracts, or generating consistent revenue — don't wait until something goes wrong.

What does it cost?

Filing fees vary by state — typically \$50–\$500. Many artists recoup that cost with a single protected contract.



LLC: When You're Ready

You don't need to wait for the "perfect moment." These three signals tell you it's time to make it official.

1

Generating Income

Money is flowing in — from sales, commissions, or services

2

Taking on Clients

You're signing contracts and building professional relationships

3

Ready to Grow & Protect

You want structure that scales with your ambition



ARTIST SPOTLIGHT

Ricardo Roig

Building an art business through structure. Ricardo didn't just create — he built a framework around his creativity. By forming an LLC, he transformed his practice from freelance hustle into a scalable business.

From Commissions to Contracts

Formal agreements gave Ricardo stability and credibility with major clients.

Scaling Through Structure

An LLC allowed him to hire collaborators, expand his brand, and protect his work.

TRANSITION

From Art to Enterprise

Great art becomes a lasting business when it's supported by intentional strategy. These three pillars bridge the gap between creative practice and sustainable enterprise.

Branding Your Work

Define your visual identity, voice, and market position to stand out and attract the right clients



Expanding Reach

Grow your audience through digital presence, exhibitions, licensing, and strategic visibility

Building Partnerships

Collaborate with galleries, brands, nonprofits, and fellow creatives to multiply your impact



What Is a Nonprofit?

A nonprofit is a legally recognized organization built around a **mission — not profit**. Any revenue generated is reinvested into the work, not distributed to owners.

- **Mission-Driven:** Every decision aligns with a defined public purpose — arts access, education, cultural preservation, and more
- **Public Benefit Focus:** Nonprofits serve a community, not shareholders
- **501(c)(3) Designation:** Federal tax-exempt status that unlocks grants, donations, and special rates



Nonprofit: Who It's For

A nonprofit structure is purpose-built for artists whose work extends beyond the studio — into communities, classrooms, and culture.

Community-Focused Artists

Muralists, public artists, and creatives whose work serves neighborhoods and public spaces

Educators & Advocates

Artists running workshops, after-school programs, or arts advocacy initiatives

Cultural & Social Impact Work

Organizations preserving heritage, amplifying underrepresented voices, or driving social change through art



Nonprofit: Key Benefits

The nonprofit structure offers a unique combination of financial advantages and community trust — making it a powerful vehicle for lasting impact.



Grant Eligibility

Access thousands of government, foundation, and corporate grants unavailable to for-profit entities



Community Credibility

Nonprofit status signals accountability and public commitment — building trust with donors, partners, and participants



Tax-Exempt Status

Federal and often state tax exemptions free up more resources to reinvest directly into your mission



Scalable Impact

A board-governed structure allows you to grow programs, hire staff, and deepen your reach over time

Nonprofit: Common Questions

Considering a nonprofit? These are the questions arts organizers ask most before taking the leap.



Can I pay myself?

Yes — nonprofit founders can receive a **reasonable salary**. You just can't distribute profits to yourself as an owner.

Is it better than an LLC?

Neither is universally better — it depends on your **mission and model**. LLCs suit income-focused creatives; nonprofits suit community-impact work.

How complex is it?

More complex than an LLC — it requires a board, bylaws, IRS filing, and annual reporting. But the access it unlocks is unmatched.

Artist Spotlight: Camille Moten Rennie

A mission-driven creative who proves that **structure amplifies impact**. Camille's journey shows how choosing the right business model transforms artistic vision into lasting community change.

Mission-Driven

Creative work rooted in purpose and community

Structured for Impact

Using legal frameworks to sustain the mission

Built to Last

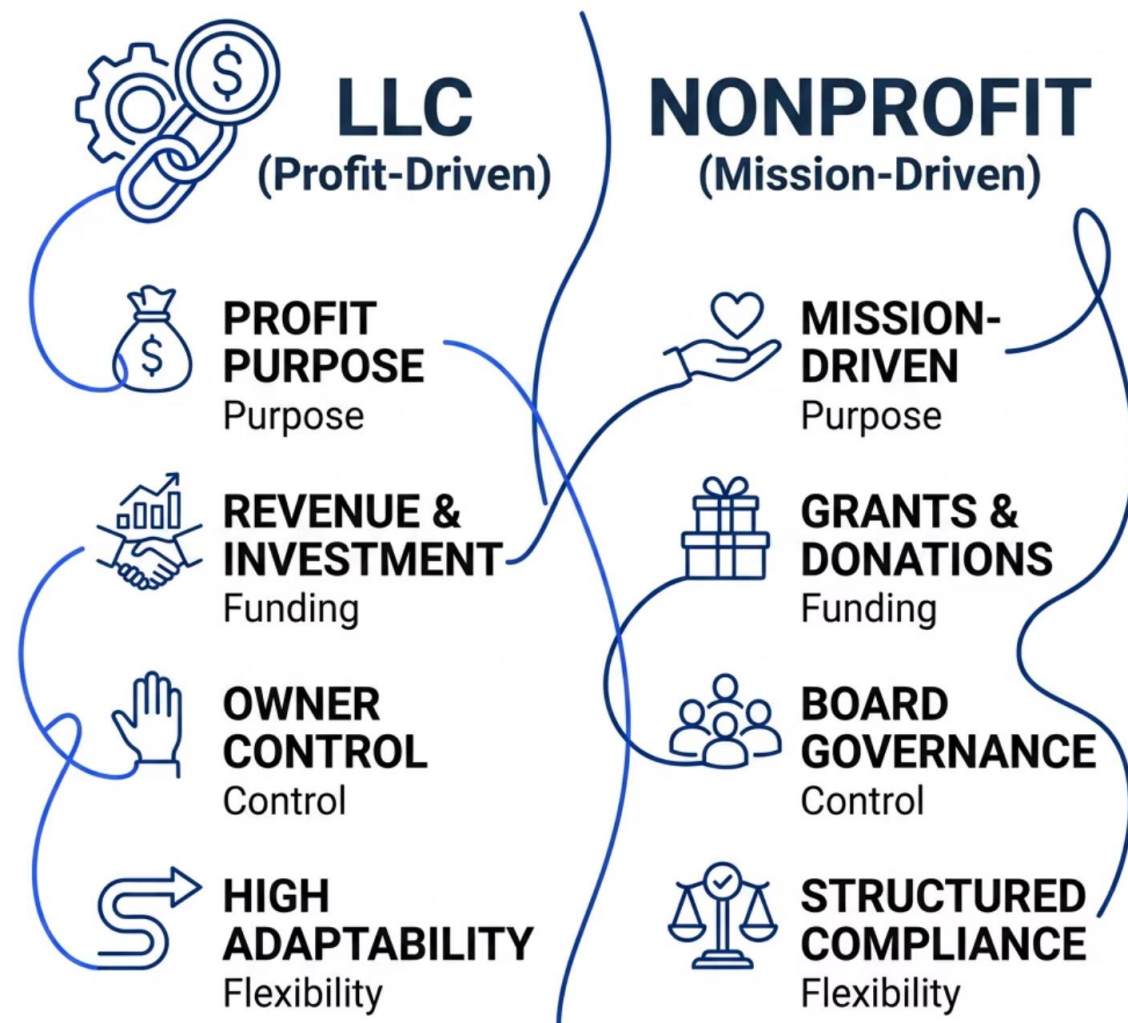
Designed for growth, resilience, and reach



LLC vs. Nonprofit: Which Structure Fits?

Two powerful models — each with distinct strengths.

Understanding the difference is the first step toward building something sustainable.



Purpose

LLC: Generate personal income. Nonprofit: Serve a public or community mission.

Funding

LLC: Sales, services, investment. Nonprofit: Grants, donations, tax exemptions.

Control

LLC: Owner-directed. Nonprofit: Governed by a board of directors.

Flexibility

LLC: Highly adaptable. Nonprofit: Requires stricter compliance and reporting.

Choosing Your Path

There's no single right answer — only the right answer *for you*. Consider these three tensions as you define your direction.

1

Income vs. Impact

Do you want to build personal wealth, serve a community cause, or find a way to do both?

2

Individual vs. Community

Are you building something for yourself, or creating an organization that outlives you?

3

Flexibility vs. Structure

Do you need room to pivot quickly, or does accountability and governance strengthen your mission?



Your Next Steps

Momentum starts with clarity. Here's a simple four-step framework to move from idea to action.



Define Your Vision

Get clear on your purpose, your audience, and the impact you want to create.



Build Your Foundation

Register your entity, open accounts, and put the right legal structures in place.



Choose Your Model

LLC or Nonprofit? Weigh income goals, community mission, and long-term plans.



Seek Guidance

Don't go it alone. Connect with advisors, mentors, and business support organizations.

Your Creativity Is Your Gift. Your Structure Is Your Strategy.

You've done the hard work of showing up. Now take what you've learned and build something that lasts — for yourself, and for your community.



Own Your Vision

Stay rooted in your mission and let it guide every business decision you make.



Build Intentionally

Choose the structure that serves your goals — and revisit it as you grow.



Questions & Discussion

This is your space. Ask anything — no question is too big or too small.





**NJSBDC at
Brookdale Community College**

Stay In Touch!



Thanks for your participation!



Please stay connected through your journey as an artistic entrepreneur. For additional assistance and guidance, please contact us through the following channels.



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EXPAND YOUR MIND THROUGH THE
13th Annual
HALE SPEAKER SERIES

Hosted by: The Westfield Memorial Library
Sponsored by: Friends of the Westfield Memorial Library, The Anne and Lee Hall, Cook and The Gleason Foundation



"Local Color"
Ricardo Roig
With 30+ years of experience as a professional painter, gallery owner, and creator of the Westfield Circle mural. Hear the inspiring story of a local artist who has painted his hard-earned paper screen prints into an art world success.

Wednesday, November 16, 7pm
Westfield Memorial Library
Open to the public. Pre-registration required.
Register online at www.wmlnj.org or call 908.789.4090 ext. 1.
*New Jersey Art 2000 program will be available on the "Public" Facebook share link.



Roig

C O L L E C T I O N

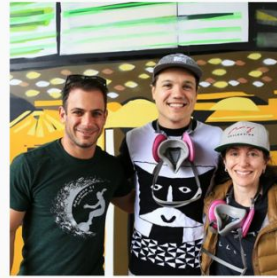
*Roig Family
Art Scholarship*



Ricardo Roig

Professional Full Time Fine Artist
4 NJ Gallery Locations





RollingStone

H
HOBOKEN

amazon

Sales
Fifth
Avenue

designNJ

W
HOTELS

CHRISTIE'S
INTERNATIONAL REAL ESTATE
GROUP

CENTRAL
BOOKING

NYU | STERN

DAILY NEWS

HGTV

EDITION

JED

The Jed Foundation

The New York Times

HOBOKEN
HISTORICAL
MUSEUM

Art | Basel

AWA

ART FAIR
14C

Town of
Westfield
NEW JERSEY

MARIDIAN
PROPERTIES

SHAKE SHACK



THE RITZ-CARLTON

canopy
BY HILTON

THE OTHER
ART FAIR



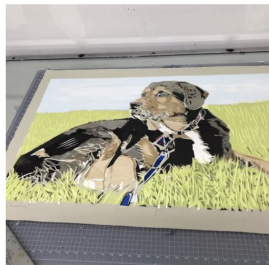
Roig innovated a new medium of hand cut paper stencil screen printing of 20+ layers in small editions.

Roig also runs 4 physical Art Galleries for his own work in Montclair, Westfield, Hoboken & Chatham NJ

(+2 more exhibitions spaces @ The W Hoboken & The Hudson Tea Building in Hoboken)

Roig currently has no employees and manages it all with his wife of 11 years. Roig has been a full time Fine Artist for 9 years.

Roig has two young children & has designed his own successful, sustainable Art business at the age of 42.



roy
COLLECTION



HOW CAN I BE IN CONTROL OF MY DESTINY?

How I did it at 42 Years old only selling ORIGINAL ART in NJ!

A red cursive signature, likely the name 'Moing', written in a fluid, handwritten style.

C O L L E C T I O N

HOW CAN I BE IN CONTROL OF MY DESTINY?

1. Permission
2. **Direct Your Energy (In & Out)**
3. Development
4. **Hardline**
5. Communities
6. **Develop Your Future**
7. Right Room/ Right People


C O L L E C T I O N

W

W

RICARDO
ROIG



GALLERY

roig

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RoigCollection.com

CHRISTIE'S

INTERNATIONAL REAL ESTATE

GROUP

F E A T U R I N G

A red cursive signature that reads "Mering". The letters are fluid and connected, with a prominent 'M' and a long, sweeping 'g'.

C O L L E C T I O N



*What you seek is
seeking you!*

Enjoy, be grateful, love and work hard *to contribute!*

*Knowing who you are and what you want allows you to
think authentically, aligned and the universe fold into your
path.*



Visit our NJ Galleries For Current Works

- CHRISTIE'S featuring Roig Collection
Art Gallery Westfield + Montclair
- Roig Collection Hoboken
- Roig Collection @ W Hoboken Window
- Roig Collection Chatham
- Roig Studio Westfield
- Roig Collection Art Gallery Westfield

Roig



Alphabet for the Amature Artist

A - Z E-Book

How Roig turned his passion into a thriving career.

Pre-Sale Art Book Here

RoigCollection.com

Book Comes out Septemebr 2026

For more & to set up a meeting for your Art Career
Advice:

Jorge Morales

201 575 5923

jmorales@omni-mate.com



COCA

COMPANY OF COLLABORATIVE ARTISTS

About CoCA∞

The mission of the Company of Collaborative Artists (CoCA) is to spread love and light internationally through dance arts and creative community. We strive to energize, express, and elevate our collective human condition by illuminating the freedom and power of the spirit within. Our dance works explore themes of embodied consciousness, radical imagination, spiritual truth, and physicalized effort, with the intent to inspire and encourage holistic healing and transformation.

Founded in April 2021 by Camille Rennie, CoCA is a New Jersey-based grassroots nonprofit dance organization rooted in compassion, unity, and equity. We aim to create high-impact performance art and healing-centered spaces that elevate underrepresented voices, ignite community connection, empower self-study, and foster global consciousness—using movement as the catalyst. We are committed to making dance accessible, resonant, and personal by building a vibrant community that embodies joy, resilience, and creative liberation.

Our collaborative partnerships are the heartbeat of our organization. We believe movement is medicine, and we meet artists and audiences where they are—across borders, across disciplines, and across lived experiences.





About Camille

FOUNDING ARTISTIC DIRECTOR & CHOREOGRAPHER

Camille Rennie (Moten) (Somerset, NJ) began her professional dance training with PHILADANCO! while earning a Bachelor of Fine Arts in dance from Temple University. After performing professionally for five years as a freelance dance artist, she was invited to join the inaugural Master of Fine Arts dance degree cohort at Mason Gross School of the Arts, Rutgers University. For her thesis, Camille choreographed and produced the evening-length production of Ella's Trip (2019) and subsequently published an excerpt of her written work in the January 2020 issue of Black Dance Magazine. Camille worked with Tony Award-winners Andre DeShields and Crossroads Theater Company as the Assistant Choreographer for Ain't Misbehavin' (2018) and Choreographer for A Christmas Carol (2019) under the direction of Marshall Jones III.

Camille's choreography has since been presented by Dance New Jersey, New Jersey Performing Arts Center (NJPAC), New Jersey Theatre Alliance, Art House Productions Inc., Project for Empty Space (PES), Mana Contemporary, Newark Dances, North 2 Shore, WestFest Dance, That Which Connects & Camden County, BAAD! Bronx, coLAB Arts, Rutgers University, Drexel University, Drew University, Stockton University, and Raritan Valley Community College, among others. In 2024, she was awarded an Individual Artist Fellowship by Mid Atlantic Arts and the New Jersey State Council of the Arts.

Camille has a passion for empowering artists and servicing all levels of movers as a university professor in dance and a certified yoga instructor.

Our History

Founded with Purpose

- Established in April 2021 during the height of the global pandemic
- Created with the singular intention of providing dance artists space to continue training, creating, and exploring their artistry within holistic and community-centered environments
- Built in response to the urgent need for community connection, healing, and creative continuity during a time of global uncertainty
- Asked what was possible using the resources I had:
 - University networks, yoga certification + LLC (July 2020), online community, Zoom, social media + website

Founder's Vision

- Believed dance could serve as both an artistic practice and tool for navigating the emotional and social complexities of the 2020s, expanding audience and how dance was presented
 - Asking *who* gets to experience dance led to innovation and expansion
- Centered community, reflection, and embodied storytelling as the foundation of the organization
- Committed to paying artists/collaborators and fueling artistic ecosystems

Grassroots Model

- Activated public spaces as sites of artistic practice and performance (city parks, public sidewalks, and beach boardwalks throughout New Jersey and New York)
- Ensured movement, live performance, and artistic access remained available to both artists and local communities



OUR HISTORY CONT.

Early Growth & Expansion

- Received fiscal sponsorship from Dance New Jersey at the end of our first year
 - Clear mission and purpose, archiving, branding, website development,
 - Consistent applications (residency, grant, performances, etc.)
- Expanded from outdoor grassroots gatherings to:
 - Site-specific performances, theater productions, festival performances, community workshops, dance film productions, CoCA's first community gala

Organizational Development

- Established as a nonprofit public arts charity [509(a)(2)] in March 2023
 - Board development, business training (score.com), building a team
- Continued to grow our artistic programming, community partnerships, and educational programming each year
 - Developing brand, managing artists, working with collaborators
 - Project-based model
- Fundraising and building lasting support
 - Donor relations, grants, institutional support, small business connections, community partnerships

Leveraging Business

- Camille Moten & Company, LLC (single member) supports administrative operations including marketing, contracts, scheduling, invoicing, vendor coordination, and production logistics to strengthen organizational efficiency



Leveraging Business (2)

- Serves as an operational backbone that allows the nonprofit to focus on artistic programming and community impact
- Balances creative excellence with professional business infrastructure and long-term sustainability
- Separate entities, taxes, and bank accounts
 - Excel tracking, legal assistance and accountant review
- Annual reporting & IRS compliance



2025 Programming Highlights and Community Events

JAN: CoCA Winter Residency at New York Live Arts (NY)

MAR: CoCA Performs in Dance New Jersey's Show Up and Dance (NJ)

MAY: CoCA Performs in the New Jersey Performing Arts Center (NJPAC) Ailey Day (NJ)

MAY: CoCA Performs in WestFest Dance Festival 2025 at Martha Graham Studio Theatre (NY)

MAY: CoCA Performs in Art House Productions, Inc. and Kenia Rosete Dance's Focus Choreography Series (NJ)

JUNE: Company Photoshoot with Julia Discenza at Magnum Opus Studios (NJ)

AUG: CoCA's First week-long Summer Dance Intensive at Kean University (NJ)

OCT: CoCA Performs for Jersey City Art and Studio Tour at Magnum Opus Studios (NJ)

OCT: CoCA Performs for New Jersey Theatre Alliance's 2025 Creating Change Summit at Count Basie Center for the Arts (NJ)

NOV: CoCA Performs as Guest Artists at Drew University's Fall Dance Concert (NJ)

Thank You!



Please stay in touch and connect with us below!

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Socials: <https://linktr.ee/cocamoves>



Photography by Julia Discenza