

Argyle Studio: Cultivating Diversity and Creativity in the Heart of Oakland

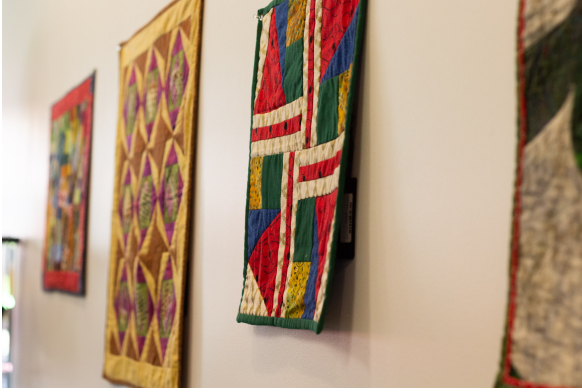
A Mother-Daughter Duo's Vision Transforms a Retail Space into a Cultural Haven for Local Artists and Makers



Image Courtesy of Lindsay Hayes, Studio Hayes Photography

In honor of International Women's Day on March 8th, this month shines a light on Argyle Studio, a remarkable project supported by OBID's dedication to workforce development and the advancement of diversity and BIPOC opportunities. Nestled in the lively heart of Oakland, Argyle Studio stands out as a symbol of diversity and innovation. Founded by the dynamic mother-daughter team of Christine and Brigitte Bethea, this special retail space addresses the call for increased BIPOC representation in Pittsburgh's arts community. The studio serves as a thoughtfully curated sanctuary, showcasing unique handmade goods and exclusive items crafted by local artists, makers, and entrepreneurs.

Beyond its role as a retail space, Argyle Studio is a nurturing ground for creativity and community spirit. The founders have a clear vision: to cultivate an atmosphere with a distinct "cool factor" that goes beyond traditional shopping norms. Hosting the work of over 30 local makers, spanning an impressive age range from 14 to 80 years old, the studio proudly boasts a vendor lineup that is more than 50 percent BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, people of color).



Argyle Studio is the brainchild of ULEADx, a renowned Pittsburgh-based leadership development consulting firm established by Brigette Bethea in 2015. With Christine Bethea joining as the Creative Strategist in 2019, ULEADx operates as a woman, minority, and veteran-owned entity. The studio serves as a retail incubator, a testament to ULEADx's commitment to supporting small businesses on the path to recovery from the challenges posed by the pandemic.



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The studio's inception traces back to the discovery of a grant aimed at diversifying Oakland's main business street. Supported by the Oakland Business Improvement District (OBID), UPMC, and InnovatePGH, and funded by the City of Pittsburgh, Allegheny County, and the Urban Redevelopment Authority, this initiative aligns with the shared goal of fostering the growth of both emerging and established small businesses. Together, these partners are champions of the local arts and makers' community, contributing to the vibrancy of Oakland's cultural landscape.