

The Arts Politic

Inaugural Issue
Summer 2009

THE ECONOMY ISSUE

In this issue:

judyBACA

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jeffCHANG

dudleyCOCKE

maydaDELVALLE

arleneGOLDBARD

ericLEWIS

annMARKUSEN

randyMARTIN

susanSOMERS-WILLETT

maryperrySTONE

ayeletWALDMAN

ardathgoldsteinWEAVER

and many more!

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The Arts Politic

Issue 1: Summer 2009

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The Arts Politic is a print-and-online magazine dedicated to solving problems at the intersection of arts and politics. Cultural policy, arts activism, political art, the creative economy—*The Arts Politic* creates a conversation amongst leaders, activists, and idea-makers along the pendulum of global civic responsibility. A forum for creative and political thinking, a stage for emerging art, and a platform for social change, *The Arts Politic* provides a space that is intelligent, that is visionary, that is thoughtful, that will TAP new ideas from the frontlines to get things done.

Lots and lots of thanks to: Connie Choi; Quida Draine; Zack Elway; Deborah Kline; Janie Kucera; Randy Martin and the Department of Art and Public Policy at Tisch School of the Arts, NYU.

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Back cover image by
Bridgette Raitz



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LETTERS FROM THE EDITORS

Welcome to *The Arts Politic*!

Why here? I believe that our collective American conscious is starved for a more meaningful conversation about culture and the arts and their places in the public sphere. Each of us play a role in developing culture: as the member of a symphony orchestra; as the parent in the audience of a child's school play; as the critical constituent of a policymaker; as the engrossed reader of the grocery-store tabloids; as the passerby on a crowded city sidewalk. We are all culture-makers, as Arlene Goldbard discusses in her "Special Report" essay, *America's Cultural Recovery*, whether we want to be or not.

But are we all arts-makers? For those of us who have studied slam poetry, classical music, theatre, hip-hop, ballet, photomontage, or any artistic discipline (see the artwork of Dudley Cocke, Erin McElroy, Nat Soti and others), we are artists who are constantly exploring the tools that help us do our work. Still, many of us find it difficult at times to embrace our artistic lens, like Jasmine shares in her Editor's note. Some of us will make a career in the arts; many will not. Similarly, some of us will make a career out of economics or public policy and many will not. Yet, economics, policy and the arts collide with each other (see Brandon Woolf's column) and as a result, our government and our citizenry must engage in interdisciplinary work linking the arts with policy, or else the United States risks losing her ability to make lasting, truthful, compassionate connections both at home and abroad. In our "Dialogue" section, you will find interviews with artists and activists like Judy Baca, Eric Lewis, Ayelet Waldman, and Jeff Chang who bring creativity to communities across our nation and enliven a deeper conversation with the White House. Ultimately, we may not all define ourselves as arts-makers, but we can each discuss constructively and thoughtfully our individual roles as arts patrons, arts advocates, arts supporters, and arts policymakers.

Why now? I am hopeful for the future of arts and cultural policy, but I am not fooled. As I write, I am reminded of my incredible opportunity to work on arts and economic development issues for former Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton. At that time (2004-2007), I discovered that I was one of only a handful of staffers on Capitol Hill with a background in the arts, working on arts issues. But I believed that my position was a step forward *because* I was one small voice for the arts community. In our "TAP*MAP" section, you will read thoughts from individuals like Ann Markusen and Mike Latvis, who add complexity and resonance to this important dialogue.

There is much work to be done. Every profession commands a unique vocabulary and the field of arts politics is no different, a topic paramount to each issue of *The Arts Politic* (see Ardash Goldstein Weaver's *Creativity and Connectivity*). Interrogating the connective tissue between arts and politics, as Randy Martin's "Endnote" accomplishes, will unearth new possibilities. Perhaps now is the time to bring our tools, ideas, and experiences together to create a better conversation. In "Remembering," we look back to honor the work of Augusto Boal and Mary Perry Stone. In this issue, we also look towards the future.

The Arts Politic is excited to bring artists and activists, policymakers and constituents, scholars and leaders together. If not now, how & when will artists and policymakers be any better prepared to work together? Fifty years from now? One hundred years from now? We are willing and prepared to help expedite that change. We encourage you to come along.

Danielle Evelyn Kline, Executive Editor

A month before *The Arts Politic* debuted, I enrolled in a drawing class. I am an artist (musician and playwright), but not *that kind of* artist, and I hoped to learn the principles and joys of visual art. "Sketchbook Drawing"—a weekly course held at the zoo, open to all levels—appeared to be a great opportunity to do just that. Until I met my classmates. Each was *that kind of* artist, some with more years of visual art experience than I have age.

The experience differential was evident after each sketchbook assignment when prompted to share work. Nancy's emu looked like an emu; my emu, a blob. Sue's Komodo dragon looked like a giant lizard; my dragon, a curly-q. But with a conte crayon, sketchpad and faith—I strived on, and my art improved. It improved, in part, because of those uneasy sharing sessions; in them, I, the emerging artist, learned from the work of my experienced classmates. My art also improved after a lesson from our instructor (visual artist Barbara Fugate, who is featured in the "TAP*MAP" section) who said, "use drawing to touch your subject, to see things how they actually are."

These art-class takeaways—emerging artists alongside established artists and seeing things how they actually are—best explain why we started *The Arts Politic*. We seek to feature emerging artists (like visual artist Bridgette Raitz, who crafted our back cover image) whose work warrants more exposure, and essays by students who haven't yet received many chances to publish (such as Greg Londe's essay about 1950s CIA-led arts policy), alongside interviews with leading artists, activists and policymakers (like Judy Baca, Jeff Chang, Ann Markusen) and essays by well-known professionals (such as Arlene Goldbard who writes an essay about a new framework for cultural recovery). We seek to bring everyone to the table—artists, activists, politicians, academics, thinkers, and *you*—to engage in dialogue, to solve problems, and to act as a platform for social change.

A huge part of solving problems is seeing things how they actually are. There are many perspectives and we strive to feature a range. Take our "Special Report: The Arts & The Economy." Ardash Goldstein Weaver's essay about the economic development of a creative community in rural North Carolina abuts Doreen Jakob's essay, which questions the root benefit and beneficiaries of arts-led economic policies. RonAmber Deloney's column critiques HBO's newest show (a show she likes), which is set in Botswana and casts two African-American actresses as Africans, recasting questions of national and global blackness. Our interviews often ask different people about the same issue ("Dialogue" features those who performed for the President and the First Lady at the Poetry Jam). Seeing things how they *actually* are is not perfect pursuit, but it is a pursuit worthy of seeking a more perfect means.

The Arts Politic is our more perfect means. You might think: "A magazine? During these uncertain times? Why?" In this issue, we interview Depression-era scholar/author Victoria Grieve who enjoys studying the 1930s because during our nation's nadir, economic, social and political alternatives seemed so viable. Danielle and I started *The Arts Politic* because this magazine is, to us, the viable alternative—to solve problems and to make social change, *especially* during these uncertain times. (That said, I may auction off "Emu Blob No. 1" to fund TAP). We welcome you to our first issue, thank you for your engagement, and look forward to your thoughts, criticisms, conversations and activism.

Jasmine Jamillah Mahmoud, Editor

[We couldn't kick off *The Arts Politic* with "Letters to the Editors;" instead, we include what we intend to become a regular feature:]

LETTER TO THE POLICYMAKERS

On May 7, 2009, Minnesota state resident Judy Clifford sent this letter to Minnesota State Senator Richard Cohen, Chair of the Senate Finance Committee; Phil Chen, Committee Legislative Assistant, Minnesota House of Representatives; and Sheila Smith, Executive Director for Minnesota Citizens for the Arts. Ms. Clifford's letter is about the "Legacy Amendment," approved by Minnesota State voters in November 2008, but in need of legislative approval to take effect. The Legacy amendment sought to increase state sales tax by 3/8 of 1 percent to ensure increased sustained funding for wildlife habitats, clean water initiatives, and the arts.

To Public Policy Makers:

Through passage of the Clean Water, Land and Legacy amendment with 56% of the statewide vote, the electorate of Minnesota resoundingly decreed that protecting our quality of life is vital to the future of the state. The arts now contribute to a state public policy agenda.

The duty of state governments to support the arts is written into a number of state constitutions, including Massachusetts, California, Maryland, Iowa, Wyoming, and New Hampshire. Louisiana constitutionally specified appropriations for three arts schools from its Millennium Trust, created from the tobacco settlement. Passage of the Legacy amendment means that Minnesota is the first state to constitutionally provide a tax-supported funding stream for the arts, not tied to education.

Professor Robert Stein, constitutional scholar and former dean of the University of Minnesota Law School expressed concern about governance by referendum. But as another jurist, Chief Justice John Marshall, warned, "The people have made the Constitution, and they can unmake it." As a citizen, I wonder about possible unintended consequences (even backlash) of intervening in budgetary matters in this way, and I am concerned that these special funds are not used to replace annual funding allocations, and that they do not "migrate" to uses other than what was intended by the electorate.

We are setting precedent and we have a great responsibility to do it thoughtfully. Pumping up the existing supply lines for delivery of arts and culture is only part of what we should do. Instead of simply more of the same old same old, we should use this opportunity to benefit the entire state arts sector—organizations and individual artists alike—in a strategic manner that none of our cultural institutions can do on its own. With the capability to follow through with funding innovative initiatives statewide, now is the time to put some of our most creative minds to work on the best ways to support our cultural economy and reduce infighting over division of Legacy funds.

We could use an Uber Tech for the Arts to create a vibrant new link on the state's website, develop a statewide artists' registry with search features, and help individual artists to "go digital" with websites and portfolios. We need to market the arts to visitors, and convince Minnesotans to buy local artwork or attend a show. Perhaps the best strategy is to create something entirely new that we haven't seen elsewhere. The extraordinary funding stream provided by the Legacy amendment presents a unique opportunity to support the arts and artists throughout the great state of Minnesota.

A change like this may never come again.

JUDY CLIFFORD, M.P.A; ST. PAUL, MN

Ms. Clifford spent four and one-half years with the Percent for Public Art program administered by the Arts and Science Council of Charlotte-Mecklenburg. She earned a B.A. degree in Studio Art from the University of Minnesota and M.P.A. degree in Arts Administration Concentration from the University of North Carolina Charlotte. She recently completed post-graduate study with Dr. Ann Markusen at the Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs and works on an occasional basis with Forecast Public Art in St. Paul, MN.

***Editors' Note:** At press time, Ms. Clifford had not received any responses to her letter. However, on May 19, 2009, the Minnesota State Senate passed the landmark "Legacy Amendment," by a unanimous 67 to 0 vote, ensuring \$43.3 million to state arts funding over two years.

Send *TAP* your letter to a policymaker: email policymakerletter@theartspolitic.com

OPENING ACTS



The arts activists and community organizers who met with the White House Office of Public Engagement on May 12, 2009 [caption below]. Photo credit: Joe Lambert, 2009.

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Brandon Woolf discusses nonprofit tax structures;
RonAmber Deloney takes on HBO's *The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency*.

Photo Caption: Bottom Row, L to R: Alli Chagi-Starr, Green for All; James Bau Graves, Old Town School of Folk Music; Anne Pasternak, Creative Time; Alyce Myatt, Grantmakers in Film + Electronic Media; Judy Baca, SPARC; Loris Ann Taylor, Native Public Media; Jawole Zollar, Urban Bush Women; Michelle Miller, SEIU; Wendell Pierce, actor; Caron Atlas, cultural organizer; Michael Schwartz, muralist. Second row, L to R: Mario Durham, NEA (guest speaker); Clyde Valentin, Hip-Hop Theater Festival; Don Russell, Provisions Learning Project; Marc Schiller, Wooster Collective; John Malpede, Los Angeles Poverty Department, activist and cultural worker; Jeff Chang, writer; Dee Davis, Center for Rural Strategies; Roberta Uno, Ford Foundation. Third row, L to R: Sally Kohn, Center for Community Change; Rha Goddess, 1+1+1=ONE; Matthew Brady, Global Inheritance; Nick Rabkin, NORC at the University of Chicago; Kim Hastreiter, editor and publisher; Liz Lerman, Liz Lerman Dance Exchange; Liz Havstad, Hip Hop Caucus; MK Wegmann, National Performance Network; Meghan McDermott, Global Action Project. Fourth row, L to R: Erin Potts, Air Traffic Control Education Fund; Carlton Turner, Alternate ROOTS; Milly Hawk Daniel, PolicyLink; John Cary, Public Architecture; Dudley Coker, Roadside Theater; Arlene Goldbard, writer and speaker; Claudine Brown, Nathan Cummings Foundation; Gayle Isa, Asian Arts Initiative; James Kass, Youth Speaks. Fifth row, L to R: Ian Inaba, Citizen Engagement Laboratory; Liz Manne, Work in Progress; Michelle Coffey, Lament Foundation; Aaron Rose, artist; Arnold Aprill, Chicago Arts Partnerships in Education; Anasa Troutman, Movement Strategy Center; Robert Biko Baker, League of Young Voters; Matt Revelli, Upper Playground Enterprises; Jacqui Woods, Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation; Ryan Friedrichs, State Voices; Bakari Kitwana, Rap Sessions; Michael Nolan (with camera), National Campaign to Hire Artists to Work in Schools and Communities. Top Row, L to R: Davey D, Hip Hop historian and activist; Denise Brown, Leeway Foundation; Ellen Schneider, Active Voice; Maria Lopez De Leon, National Association of Latino Arts and Culture; Brad Lander, Pratt Center for Community Development; Jonathan Wells, Flux; Maria Teresa Petersen, Voto Latino; Duffy Culligan, The Directors Bureau; Diane Fraher, American Indian Artists, Inc.; Bill Cleveland, Center for the Study of Art & Community. Not pictured: Kate Emanuel, The Advertising Council; Joe Lambert, Center for Digital Storytelling; Doria Roberts, singer/songwriter; Anas "Andy" Shallal, Busboys and Poets; Billy Wimsatt, Green for All.

Briefs & Trends: Spring to Summer 2009

Not the usual players at the White House's Arts Day. The arts took center stage at the White House on Tuesday, May 12, 2009. That morning, the White House Office of Public Engagement hosted the "Art, Community, Social Justice, National Recovery" briefing with more than sixty artists and activists. It is noteworthy that attendees weren't the usual arts players (such as heads of major museums, symphonies, or theatres); rather, most were arts activists working in smaller venues and under-served communities to connect the arts to larger social goals. Attendees included activist/arts writer Arlene Goldbard (see her essay in our "Special Report" section); as well Roadside Theater director Dudley Coker; muralist and community activist Judy Baca; and cultural critic Jeff Chang (see our interviews with these arts activists in the "Dialogue" section.) Kareem Dale, Special Assistant to the President for Disability Policy, said, "go and tell everyone the arts are back." In the evening, the President of the United States and the First Lady hosted a White House Poetry Jam, with Shakespeare (James Earl Jones), jazz music (Esperanza Spalding and Eric Lewis), and spoken word. Most critics heralded the evening performance as cutting edge and inclusive of voices previously unheard at the White House; however, a few questioned the relevance of a poetry jam at the White House.

Meet the Office of Public Engagement. When the White House's Office of Public Engagement hosted the arts briefing on May 12, OPE staff members were resoundingly supportive of a new, bold role for the arts in the United States. In addition to Kareem Dale, Michael Strautmanis, Chief of Staff to the Assistant to the President for Intergovernmental Relations and Public Engagement said, "this is the meeting I have been wanting to have happen." Other members of the OPE, who are working, in part, on the arts include: Valerie Jarrett, Senior Advisor and Assistant to the President for Intergovernmental Affairs and Public Engagement; Christina M. Tchen, Director of the White House Office of Public Engagement; Buffy Wicks, Deputy Director of the White House Office of Public Engagement; and actor Kal Penn (*Harold & Kumar, House, The Namesake*), Associate Director of the White House Office of Public Liaison.

First Lady Michelle Obama = Arts Czar? That's what *The Daily Beast* suggested on May 19, after the First Lady advocated for arts education and inclusion at several notable events such as the White House Poetry Jam and the American Ballet Theatre's Opening Night Gala. At the ribbon-cutting ceremony for the new American Wing at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Mrs. Obama said, "The arts are not just a nice thing to have or to do if there is free time or if one can afford it. Rather, paintings and poetry, music and fashion, design and dialogue, they all define who we are as a people and provide an account of our history for the next generation." The suggestion that Mrs. Obama is the

new ambassador for the arts sent writers into a flurry. The UK's *Times* donned Mrs. Obama, "Queen of Arts," while Christopher Knight of the *Los Angeles Times* wrote, "Don't get me wrong. The Met is swell, and so is the first lady. I just think there is a message problem here. The desultory gesture doesn't match significant words with savvy deeds." Arts title or no arts title, the First Lady has continued her arts work; in June she invited 150 high school jazz students to the White House for an instructional session led by jazz musician Wynton Marsalis, and others.

NEA & NEH funding and leadership. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009—part of the 2009 National Economic Stimulus package—inserted a one-time funding increase of \$50 million into the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). This money has gone largely towards helping state arts councils preserve arts jobs and arts organizations. A House of Representatives subcommittee proposed annual budgets for the NEA and the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH); if approved, their budgets would increase from \$155 million to \$170 million for the 2010 fiscal year. President Obama nominated Rocco Landesman, a successful Broadway producer and theater owner, to chair the NEA, and Jim Leach, the former Republican congressman from Iowa and noted advocate for increased humanities funding, to chair the NEH.

State by state, recent arts funding (from bad to good). Connecticut Gov. M. Jodi Rell (Republican party) proposed that all funding for the arts, history, and film be severely reduced or suspended and that regional tourism districts be eliminated. Indiana Gov. Mitch Daniels' (Republican party) new budget proposal calls for a 50 percent cut to the Indiana Arts Commission's budget. New Jersey Gov. Jon Corzine (Democratic party) plans to cut arts funding by more than 25 percent, to \$24.9 million. His move puts NJ's hotel tax (which funds arts programs and mandates the arts to be funded at a minimum level of \$28.2 million annually) in jeopardy; his move is also receiving flack from former NJ Gov. Tom Kean (Republican party). A Pennsylvania Senate budget proposal would give the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts (which received \$15 million last fiscal year) nothing. The Oregon Arts Commission is slated to receive a 5 percent budget cut. Funding for New York State arts groups took an 8.8 percent cut, which is better than the initially-projected 20 percent cut. The Tennessee Arts Commission plans to use federal funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) to preserve jobs in the nonprofit arts sector. The Minnesota State Senate, by a unanimous 67 to 0 vote, approved the landmark "Legacy Amendment," increasing funding to the arts by \$43.3 million over two years (for more on the "Legacy Amendment," turn to page 4).

The White House Art Collection. The Obama White House visual art acquisitions include: "Sky Light" and "Watusi (Hard Edge)," abstracts by African-American artist Alma Thomas; "Numerals, 0 through 9," by Jasper Johns; and "I think maybe I'll..."

by Edward Ruscha. Their choices are notable for the heightened inclusion of minority and female artists, and for the effect on the visual art world where asking rates for the work of the chosen artists have increased.

Museum shakedown. Several institutions—Rose Museum at Brandeis University and the Montclair Art Museum in New Jersey—are slated to sell off their collections to fund economic exigencies. Some museums—New York's National Academy Museum, and the Carnegie Museum of Art in Pittsburgh, PA—have already put part of their collections up on the auction block. Budget cuts at museums nationwide are also affecting staff size and salaries, among them: New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art (74 layoffs); Walters Art Museum in Baltimore (7 layoffs and a salary/hiring freeze); Michigan's Detroit Institute of Arts (60 layoffs); Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art in Hartford, CT (6 layoffs); Henry Art Gallery in Seattle, WA (5 layoffs); and The Getty in Los Angeles, CA (plans for about 150 layoffs). Some museums are also increasing admission fees. For example, Arnold Lehman, Director of the Brooklyn Museum, recently stated, "We truly regret that the challenges created by the economic downturn have made it necessary to modestly increase the admissions fee at the Brooklyn Museum."

Orchestra belt-tightening. The economic downturn has necessitated a new budget trend at orchestras from across the nation: cut pay, rather than cut staff. Atlanta Symphony's musicians agreed to a 5 percent pay cut; Baltimore Symphony Orchestra players agreed to take an 8 percent pay cut to save \$1 million; Chicago Symphony Orchestra musicians agreed to a 2.5 percent pay cut to save \$4 million; Phoenix Symphony musicians, music director and staff agreed to a 17 percent pay cut to save \$2 million; Utah Symphony | Utah Opera musicians agreed to a 11.5 percent pay cut. This trend has led to a whole-scale re-examining of orchestra pay. In a May 17, 2009 *Chicago Tribune* article, John von Rhein questioned pay for conductors, which tops \$1 million per in leading ensembles.

High school students fight for the arts. In Shillington, PA, Mifflin High School students protested proposed school cuts to art classes. In Proviso, IL, hundreds of high school students bombarded a meeting of their school board (struggling with a \$1.5 million deficit) and asked the board to not cut funding for arts programs such as band and theatre. In Chatham, NJ (hometown of *TAP's* Executive Editor Danielle Kline) students and alumni of the Chatham High School theatre department waged a battle on Facebook and at school board meetings in a fight to save the active program.

Public Art Watch. The Mayor of Chicago, Richard M. Daley's (Democratic party) graffiti-removal initiatives have destroyed public art; an alderman painted over the "Bridgeport Mural," located on private property. Washington State Gov. Chris Gregoire (Democratic party) vetoed the "Public Arts Amendment," a protectionist bill, which would have allowed only in-state residents to receive state money for public art initiatives. In New York City, controversy arose over a statue of Che Guevara stationed at the south entrance of Central Park; U.S. Representative Dan Burton (Republican party) of Indiana, along with nine members of Congress,

wrote a letter to Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg (Independence party) seeking the removal of the statue. Charlotte, NC residents debated the merits of public art trash cans—featuring detailed mosaics—which cost \$1290 per. In Maine, six public art projects have been funded by private money from the Harry Faust Art Fund. It's summer travels for one mobile public art exhibition: The Armadillo, a FEMA trailer turned mobile, vertical community garden by M.I.T. students and faculty.

Scholarships & Funding. Sub Pop Records (home of Nirvana, Sound Garden, The Postal Service, Flight

of the Conchords) is offering three college scholarships to Pacific Northwest high school students to further their artistic pursuits. Actor and Sundance Festival founder, Robert Redford, will collaborate with the state of New Mexico to expand training opportunities for Native American and Hispanic filmmakers. Dartmouth College received \$50 million to build a visual arts center. The British government is funding band rehearsals by converting buildings in deprived areas into rehearsal spaces.

—JJM & DEK

BOTTOM LINE:

Twitter Challenge with Mayor Cory Booker

BY DANIELLE KLINE

Want to know what policymakers *really* think about the arts? Just join Twitter! On June 11, I logged in to our @theartspolitic Twitter account to read a recent tweet by @CoryBooker, Mayor of Newark, New Jersey:

My staff wouldn't let me share my original poem, said it wud hurt my reelection. They have tough rules 4 me: No singing, dancing or poetry :)

As Founding Editor of a new magazine focused on building a deeper, more constructive conversation between the arts and policy communities, it should be obvious: this tweet did not rest comfortably with me. @CoryBooker has more than 226,000 Twitter followers and odds are that some of those thousands of followers are constituents and members of the arts community who might be equally as displeased with his language. Why? Because arts constituencies find themselves in the frequent and unenviable position of having to advocate the importance of their work to policymakers time and time again only to find that many turn a blind eye or that many use language indicative of a mild understanding of arts and culture. Twitter has become a vibrant social media tool, so much so that many policymakers use it as a form of outreach and communication with their constituents. I do not have a deep understanding of Mayor Booker's sensibilities towards the arts; however, his seemingly innocent tweet made me pause because it communicated a fundamental lack

of concern for the arts and his arts constituency.

Was this tweet an inside office joke, not intended to cause an outside stir? More than likely. And so I will venture to say that neither he or his staff thought twice about posting that momentary critique of the arts on Twitter. Moreover, maybe it reflects the linguistic subtleties to which the arts community needs to pay infinitely close attention. Many arts constituencies do not hold significant power so more than likely, Mayor Booker and his staff did not consider any potential backlash by the tweeting arts community when penning said tweet. Herein lies the problem: when policymakers laugh at/joke about/poke fun at/demean arts and culture in a public forum, few people of power voice their opposition to these comments in an articulate, consistent, and lasting way.

Does this tweet suggest that the arts are not as high on Mayor Booker's priority list as for example, health or transportation? Most likely. For example: what if Booker wanted to follow a doctor on his rounds at UMDNJ-University Hospital in Newark for the day to learn about patient care? What if Booker wanted to perform the duties of a ground-based controller at Newark Liberty International Airport for a day to learn about the grueling hours of transportation labor? Would Mayor Booker's staff think poorly of a campaign tactic that helped their boss appear more understanding and conscious of the medical or transportation communities? Or would they create an office joke out of those professions, too? My guess is that his staff would think that a day in the life of a medical or transportation worker would be more worthy of Booker's time, in part because the medical and transportation lobbies tend to be more complex, empowered, unified, and financed than that of the arts.

It is not acceptable to have any policymaker imply on Twitter (or in any context) that the arts do not hold a worthwhile place in elections or that the arts are not worthy of engaged participation by every citizen (and Mayor), or that arts work is laughable. We must hold policymakers accountable.

Despite my concern for his twitter language, if Mayor Booker was yearning to write a poem, *The Arts Politic* would be remiss not to support the artistic endeavor of this policymaker. So on the evening of this story's events, I began to tweet reasons why Mayor Booker should write a poem or a haiku (appropriately deemed #twoem or #twaiku on Twitter). And so began a Twitter Challenge between @theartspolitic and @CoryBooker. In reply, Mayor Booker wrote:

My challenge: if someone from Twitter-verse calls into News 12 tonight while I am on Capitol Hot seat 8pm-9pm, I'll share a poem via a tweet.

I called in to the show that evening, spoke briefly with Mayor Booker, who said to me, "arts revive the economy." After the show, the Mayor fulfilled his promise and wrote a poem. Here we share with you Mayor Booker's poetic contribution:

Pain, sacrafice, peril & risk/plunge into fire, darkness & mist/This is R calling, onward w/raised fists/R road isnt easy, but we're born 4 this!

While I find these words motivating, I hope that Mayor Booker and his staff find it worthwhile to support legislation, partnerships, and a vocabulary deeply complementary to the arts, in Twitterland and beyond.

[For the full twitter conversation, visit *TAP* online.] **TAP**

DIALOGUE

Artists at the White House

TUESDAY, MAY 12, 2009 WILL BE REMEMBERED AS A NEW DAY FOR THE ARTS IN national politics. That morning, a group of sixty arts activists met with the White House Office of Public Engagement for a briefing about the role of the arts in the national recovery. [The meeting was organized, in part, by Arlene Goldbard, who contributes the lead Special Report essay to this issue.] In the evening, the President of the United States and the First Lady hosted a White House Poetry Jam with slam poets, musicians, and actors such as James Earl Jones. *TAP* spoke with activists who attended the White House arts briefing—Judy Baca, Dudley Cocke and Jeff Chang—as well as Poetry Jam performers Ayelet Waldman, Eric Lewis and Mayda del Valle

What did we learn? Muralist and community activist **Judy Baca** reminds us to save our murals, implores us to educate new policymakers about arts activism, cautions us to understand that public art can sometimes be used to cover up bad development practices, and encourages us to foster positive relationships between small arts groups and large arts institutions. Theater director **Dudley Cocke** details the untold arts recession of 1997 sparked by unfavorable NEA changes, calls on us to get someone in the White House with an arts activism background, and reminds us that the civil rights movement—as with most social justice movements—was won, in large part, through the arts. Cultural critic **Jeff Chang** reminds us that creativity is at the heart of community sustainability, warns against the privatization of imagination, and calls for a whole-scale rethinking of 21st-century arts policy. Writer **Ayelet Waldman** reminds us that arts are essential to our common humanity. Musician **Eric Lewis** lends an example of his own arts-led entrepreneurial success, leading a full-time career without a record label. Poet **Mayda del Valle** warns of a society that pushes the arts too far into the margins, asks politicians to see the world through the eyes of artists, and inspires us to think of the arts as the transformative place to imagine the future of society, the place where we can honor all humanity.

Interviews by JASMINE MAHMOUD

To witness the dialogue, continue on. →

JUDY BACA is a painter and muralist, community activist, UCLA professor, and the founder and artistic director of Social and Public Art Resource Center (SPARC). She is well known for directing *The Great Wall of Los Angeles*, a mural that stretched 2,754 feet, and was painted by hundreds of diverse L.A. youth.

It seems to be a dynamic time for arts policy in the White House. We are hoping for that.

You are a political landscape painter, who has revitalized disenfranchised populations and impoverished neighborhoods through their inclusion in art-making processes. Why do you think the pairing of arts and activism has worked particularly well in stimulating effective social and political change? There are still people in the arts who argue that art is about nothing, that it has a role in which it should just live within the aesthetic realm, and not in the utilitarian realm. It has been demonstrated in my own life repeatedly that [art] is effective in ways that it's not possible to do through other processes and other methods. Arts speak to people in the language that they understand.

The arts have a way of engaging people at the first line. Look at my own work on the *Great Wall*, in which I worked with young people—over 400 people—to paint this historical work that is an alternate history to the U.S., a sort of “pre-Howard Zinn Howard Zinn” giant-scale monument. It taught people to interact with each other and learn about each other's history. I took diverse kids from all these different neighborhoods and different ethnic groups, put them together to produce a long, giant-scale mural. We created a site of public memory, a place in which we could make a repository in the public realm for these stories that are family stories, these stories that were untold about people who helped build the country. And while we were doing that, we were calling across issues that were constant, that were bigger in scale than the bodies of the children who were painting them. The arts have the particular capacity to reach people where they are, to speak the language that they understand, to engage them in a way that is personal and emotional and spiritual.

Arts are often held up by government officials for economic and urban development reasons, which offer little benefit to artists. Often when cities emphasize the stretch of galleries in their neighborhoods, the gallery walk will be popular for a few years and then condos will come in and push out the artists. There's a tension in arts policy between economic development for some, and the sustainability of artists. What are your thoughts on that tension? Artists often become the predecessors. We are used in very strange ways; it's a real issue. In public art, for example, we have a very big

problem in that the percent for art in construction is what is usually used to create artwork, artwork [that] is often times asked to mitigate the bad circumstances of development—placed over an indigenous burial site or within a new subway station [built] in the middle of a neighborhood because they've declared it essentially a place that has to be patrolled. And then they are asking an artist to paint on the surface of the wall in that community to make the bitter pill more swallowable.

The same is true in terms of development. The artists go into blighted communities, areas that nobody wants to live in. They see the qualities of the beautiful buildings, they see what can become, they have the creative character and capacity to dream some other alternative. We are creative problem solvers, we are people who look at the issue and see beyond that particular paradigm and dream something else. And of course if you can't dream anything else, it just can't happen. We very often transform neighborhoods. In fact, I'm living in one of those neighborhoods, which was a very run-down community when I came here in the 1970s. Nobody wanted to live here: it was considered to be a drug haven.



JUDY BACA [photo credit: sparcmurals.org]

Where are you living? In Venice [California]. The artists came and took over the Venice canals, renovated the houses, the little cottages. What has been known as a historical art community in Venice has pretty much been made impossible for artists to live in it. And yet, they are still advertising condominiums and lofts as “artists' lofts.” There was a group of us artists who wanted to demand truth in advertising; make

them call these not “artists' lofts” but “lawyers' lofts.” If you love the neighborhood which creative people have transformed [since they] have honored the history of a place, have created sites of public memory, have [created] a more convivial space, perhaps it would be a better idea in the development to consider how you keep the artists in that region.

Going forward, do you have any suggestions for policymakers to solve this wide-spread problem of arts-revived neighborhoods becoming unaffordable for artists and other low-income residents? It falls into the larger rubric of affordable housing. In housing, for example, the mix of the kinds of people who live in the place is part of what should be considered in terms of low-income housing, or affordable housing. Why not set aside artist facilities? It makes [for] a better community.

Long ago, I proposed to [former] Mayor of Los Angeles, Tom Bradley—the city had a large amount of blighted real estate, big open lots—that they consider the possibility of turning old houses into living spaces for artists, and in return for that, the artists would generously give back to the community by opening their spaces to the community to teach classes or provide senior citizens the opportunity to paint on a Sunday afternoon, to give back to the community. It creates a better relationship between the community and the artists. There are many creative ways that this can be addressed. And probably not one I can think of is new. They have been proposed before, they have worked effectively before, and have been abandoned for political reasons—very often because the arts constituency is not political enough to hear.

I want to talk with you about the May 12th meeting with the Office of Public Engagement at the White House. What are the talking points that you remember and what was the most compelling thing about what White House officials said? We were getting a sense of the new thought that was coming from this administration. In one of your questions you ask: “why was the NEA not there?” The answer is kind of obvious: because the NEA has been rather insignificant for some period of time.

[Who] I saw were not the usual suspects. There were 60 people who were organizers and activists and artists who had worked in change organizations in their communities. They were the types of artists who created a kind of buzz around the country during the Obama campaign. They were the types of artists responding to policies in the Bush administration that they disagreed with. They were the types of artists who worked in communities. It was a really interesting range of people but what they had in common was an expanded view of who participated in the arts, what the purpose of the

art was, and its relationship to grassroots organizing.

You say that they were not the usual suspects. Who are those usual suspects?

Normally, a White House meeting with the arts would really be the high art world. It would be the museums, it would be the major philanthropists. It would be people designated by the Museum of Contemporary Art, or the Philharmonic, or the Opera. It would be the same people you would find at the White House presenting with orchestras and major-moned presentations. It wouldn't be Urban Bush Woman or Green For All or the hip-hop groups.

First thing Mr. Strautmanis [Chief of Staff to the Assistant to the President for Intergovernmental Relations and Public Engagement] said: "this is the meeting I have been wanting to have happen." People gave us their email addresses so we could propose presentations in the White House. They said, "real engagement is messy; you have to be comfortable with civic engagement. We are going to create a space for that. Here are the ground rules: no complaints, just solutions. Where are you willing to compromise?" People are not used to this idea of civic engagement. We know how to be oppositional; we don't know how to engage. We're not sure what that means. They said, "don't trust Obama, trust the process. Don't trust the administration, trust the process."

Buffy Wicks [Deputy Director, Office of Public Engagement] said: "we are going to do a month of service in the arts this summer. We're looking for organizations that do this kind of work, organizations like SPARC to do this." They mentioned our name. She knew us. She read the materials. I haven't even seen that kind of homework from the National Endowment for the Arts. Literally. I was so dumbfounded. I didn't even raise my hand until somebody poked me [and said], "Is SPARC in the house?" And then I jumped up and said, "yeah, I'm here!"

They said that they are giving a big focus to the arts. They think arts appreciation and creativity and ideas give us a competitive edge. Internationally the arts are necessary, they are really interested in arts education, they are really interested in health care for artists. Kareem Dale [Special Assistant to the President for Disability Policy] said, "go and tell everyone the arts are back."

There's been a lot of talk about a Department of Arts and Cultural Affairs and about an Arts Czar. At the briefing, was there a conversation about these ideas? No, there wasn't conversation about specific proposals although we came with them. What they did was create a vehicle for us to communicate with the White House. We broke into areas of interest, which were determined by [us], not by the White

House. I worked on Policy and we have five precepts. Arlene Goldbard is heading that committee; she calls it the cultural framework.

[Editor's note: Judy Baca listed those five precepts: 1) Protect and Expand Cultural Equity and Cultural Rights; 2) Include Artists In National Recovery and Building Sustainability; 3) Advance A New Works Progress Administration; 4) Assess Cultural Impact on Communities; 5) Restore Public Interest and Media Justice In the Culture Industries. The following is about the third precept, "Advance A New Works Progress Administration."] Literally, we checked around the room to see how many [of us] had begun at CETA [Comprehensive Employment and Training Act]—so many. They were given the impetus to do this work starting with CETA. What we need now is another boost. I think the total amount of money that we got, that opened SPARC was \$750 a month for the artists. And it was 1977. It was a modest income and people were grateful to have that income so that they could work full time doing work in their communities. It was a marvelous thing.

In sharing your policy brief among many people including arts activists, do you feel that there's anything that arts activists can do to be more effective at local and state levels, without policymakers? Yes. One of the things we received from the Director of the Office of Public Engagement is the notion that we should be appearing at *any* town hall meetings and raising the arts. That doesn't happen. There's reluctance when you are dealing with things like health care and the economy. Essentially, what's really critical is that we are not apologists for this, that we are not just advocating as a special issue group. That's the problem because we're caught in that historic position of the arts as the Culture Wars, where we were arguing for the rights of one individual to produce whatever work they wanted with public money. It hurt us, and made us come off as a community of selfish people who weren't concerned with the greater good. We were affecting First Amendment rights—the Mapplethorpe issues and Karen Finley, the NEA four—which was, of course, something I supported. I spoke in front of the Senate. At the time I went before the Senate, I was thinking, "what am I doing here, because I am really not speaking to the censorship that has occurred historically to the exclusion of entire populations of people."

The momentum surrounding this White House meeting seems to signal a shift from arts policy of the 1990s that centered on the Culture Wars and censorship issues (and was considered by many to be an attack on the arts), to arts policy today, which focuses on the question: how can the arts be utilized? Is that right? Yes, I think there's a shift. One of the things that [members of the Obama administration] said at the end of the White House meeting was "the arts are back." If they

are saying that the arts are back, there's a shift. A \$50 million infusion has gone to the NEA.

I don't think that they have anybody [with a deep arts knowledge]. There was a discussion between some of the people who were organizing the meeting and some of the White House people, and they [members of the Obama administration] didn't know what the CETA program was. So, we are not talking about deep knowledge in the history of the WPA or CETA. We are talking about most people in that room who are under 40 years old.

What advice would you give to an arts activist who was not at this meeting, who is not plugged in, but wants to make change by contacting her local, state or national policymaker? If it's an artist, hook [your work] into the Obama agenda, work on the environment, the priorities the administration has.

For activists, we have to raise the issue of the arts over and over again. Particularly with those of us who already come to grips with the notion that [the] arts don't have to be pigeonholed in one area in an intellectual dialogue between a small group of people, but that it has meaning in the larger sense of the population as a whole. That we can deliver it to the poor, that we can deliver it to the maintenance workers of Los Angeles.

Here's my favorite thing to talk about right now: Eli Broad [L.A.-based billionaire] steps forward to save MOCA [The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles] with \$32 million in a bailout. They overspent. If my organization had done that—had overspent—you would bet it wouldn't exist. He steps forward to bailout MOCA, and then he hooks [them] up to existing money within the city, ensuring that there will be \$15 million of matching money coming from another fund. This is all silently done.

What happens when all of the murals in the city of Los Angeles disappeared—many of them being the first ethnic face in particular communities? That the murals actually provided insight into Koreatown and into the Korean community, provided an insight into the Armenian community, provided the first Chinese door painter in Chinatown. We are looking at all of these images that were critical to the development of a diverse face of the city of Los Angeles. They brought in tourists, brought people from everywhere to see them. Children grew up alongside these pieces and marked their lives and their places near the presence of those murals. So then when we elect [Los Angeles Mayor Antonio] Villaraigosa, he gets in a position of power, he brings in a new cultural director and everybody doesn't worry because we have two Hispanics. Well he allows the entire legacy of the murals of Los Angeles to disappear.

I am working hard to give them an alternative to show how their stupid policies can be undone and reorganized. If you spend \$70 million on graffiti erasement and not one dollar takes graffiti off a mural; if you spend \$250,000 to incarcerate one youth; if you spend \$44 billion on prisons; if your whole agenda in terms of the budget is to make sure you increase the police force; how many people can you put in prison, and when is that a bankrupt idea? Just take 10% of your \$70 million, tax the people who are making money on the spray cans. Make them accountable for selling these things now, advertising graffiti on the side of the can. Give kids an opportunity to paint in areas that are sanctioned.

Where are [L.A. youth] going [to] go? We have allowed the proliferation of billboards and advertising to such an extreme, that they have learned that lesson above all others: not the arts, but corporation logos. The point is: “get myself up there like one of those guys.” That is what I am concerned about. That is bad policy, and that is policy we can attack. So we have been asking people to come online, we have built a website called savelamurals.org, we have asked people to come online to sign petitions. We are delivering those petitions to our mayor and to city council people. We are saying, “Yes, we heard you don’t have any money, we have heard that argument. Redirect your mis-spent money. We want to hold you accountable on how you spend that money, it’s not just cleaning blank walls.” Let’s teach a group of young people, give them jobs—instead of putting them in prison—let them learn to clean the walls, learn conservation practices, learn to be ambassadors for those works. Let’s build areas in the city for the kids.

One of the things we are doing right now, we are going to deliver books to our city council members [with images of] before and after the murals, because we have these wonderful archives. We frankly can’t get Eli Broad or any other people to put a dime into the massive numbers of 60,000 images. Los Angeles was the mural capital of the world at one point. These murals that have disappeared, we should at least bury them if we are going to let them die. Let’s put a memorial to what they stood for. We can conduct tours of what they once were. That’s what we plan to do. So you go to the place “The End of Despair, The Resurrection of Hope ... Not Here.” And you see the names of these pieces. These wonderful ideas about civic and public space, about hope for the communities—and they are gone.

Everybody can play a role. Take this issue of the murals, for example. Come online and deliver testimony of when you saw it first, what happened to you in front of it, what do you remember about it, why is it important to you. Because this isn’t about one artist or one person. It is about a slice of public memory. And is that important? I think that is important to a civil

society. I think it’s important to us understanding each other, to us working alongside each other with respect. That’s what I think is really critical. What is delivering that to the people? It is the arts. It happens to us in a hundred ways, with the hip-hop kids doing poetry where they make us see a new reality, that Russell Simmons stuff is going on national levels. That’s what we need, we need more methods of delivery. I think we are going to have to be really creative to figure out ways to communicate the way that the arts can be incredibly transformative.

You were speaking about what’s happening in L.A. and the covering up of murals. The historical wave demonstrates a tendency amongst local/state/national policies to vacillate between pro-arts and anti-arts thinking. In your mind, is there any way to have consistent growth and consistent progress where murals won’t be covered up and where we keep making progress in arts policies, instead of cutting against progress that we’ve made? You can identify exactly what it is. We had a complete turnover in City Council. We were protected by the City Council. But we have never had excellent leadership for the arts in L.A. We have struggled with the leadership from the very beginning. What we need is a consistent plan for neighborhoods, for community arts, for major museums. In other words, [we need] a healthy arts structure. Our community organizations are not to be abandoned when we build bigger and bigger museums. You’ve got the Getty, Skirball [Cultural Center], MOCA, and LACMA [Los Angeles County Museum of Art]—and therein does not make a healthy arts delivery program. While we can build these institutions, we can’t seem to sustain them.

You need a really strong arts community that can speak to its leadership, all these organizations that bring everyone to the table—both community level people and the majors. The majors should care when there is a loss of a mural. MOCA should care. But instead what they do is backend all these other arts organizations and say, “these are not significant, we are the only significant ones.” We have a problem in terms of our leadership recognizing that the health of an arts community—the cultural delivery in a city—has to come from a variety of different methods and places. We should work more collaboratively to keep health flourishing within the arts community. We really got to educate. Every time there’s a new council person, they should be visited by the arts leadership.

That seems like something to be done at every level. Is there a problem with a lack of historical memory eroding regional arts politics? We’re starting over and over again. In a sense, we are doing that with the Obama administration, too. I think they really do want us to speak about this, they want us to broadcast it

more widely and literally. They told us the arts are back, to trust the process, and until we have tried and have been knocked down, I am willing to do bottom up, if they are willing to hear from us. I’ll work extra hard to do my part and I will call on the arts community. I think really it’s going to take our whole community to begin to do this.

DUDLEY COCKE is the director of *Roadside Theater* (which won the Otto Rene Castillo Award for Political Theatre on May 17, 2009), a Virginia-based theater that creates new works to tell the stories of the Appalachian people. Cocke is also a stage director, teacher, writer, media producer and longtime arts activist.

At the May 12th meeting was there any push for an Arts Czar or a Department of the Arts? It was definitely named.

What was the reaction to that suggestion from the White House staffers? Kareem Dale said he was aware that people, including Quincy Jones, had been promoting the idea, but he didn’t know of any action presently being taken. He added that he didn’t always hear everything.

During the May 12th meeting, what was most memorable about the talk with the officials? There are a couple of things. First, I appreciated that the officials we spoke with had only been in Washington for a hundred days. Second, they did understand that the beltway bubble was inevitably encircling them and that it would require constant effort on their part not to become its prisoner. That was important, at least conceptually. The challenge for any administration is to stay connected to the people, and, of course, this should be especially important for the Obama administration whose victory sprang from—and, I would argue, whose effectiveness will depend on—an active, committed grassroots.

One of the takeaways: no one we met with on either occasion seemed to grasp fully how effective teams of grassroots community organizers and community-rooted artists can be when it comes to community problem solving and community revitalization. There didn’t seem to be anyone at the White House, at least among those with whom we spoke, who had a visceral grasp of how successful this artist-organizer combination can be. It appears there’s a knowledge gap among the staff, and I was advocating they recognize it and close it in the second hundred days.

Do you think they got that point that the White House lacks, but needs someone with arts activism and arts advocacy experience? I think you can get it conceptually, but until you’ve lived the practice, it is just another concept—just another political point of view. I’d like to see them hire someone who has this grassroots

experience. I felt in some ways I could get this message to President Obama easier than I could to the folks we were talking with because of his community-organizing experience. He knows first-hand the power of half of the equation that I'm describing. To introduce the artist part, I would say, "Mr. President, think back to the civil rights movement when artists and grassroots culture played such a powerful role. The civil rights movement in the South was—in some ways—a singing movement, for it was song that held us together in spirit and resolve."

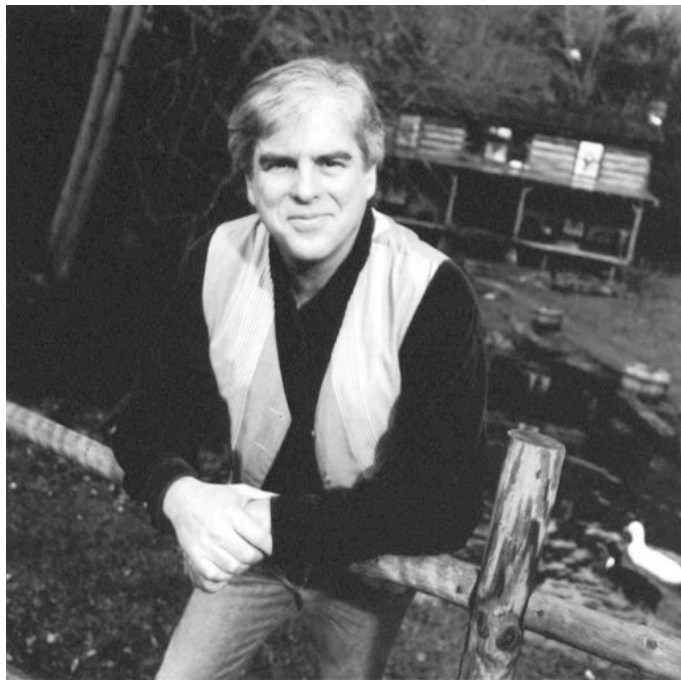
That's a really great point, that social movements have been won, in large part, through the arts. I think the officials heard us, but whether they'll move to bring somebody in who really has the knowledge—I don't know. But I think that's what needs to happen. We were making the point that artists can be involved in all sorts of rebuilding and revitalization efforts, whether it is education or health or the environment or the economy. But, again, the key pairing for me is artists working with organizers. Which is something I've done before, for example, in the Central Valley of California, where we found the pairing very complementary. In fundamental ways, community organizers understand grassroots artists better than the arts establishment does.

Why do you think that the pairing of artists and community organizers works well? If the artists are grassroots artists, they share with organizers a common base in community and an understanding of, and respect for, community dynamics. The organizers are, of course, much more directed at action and outcome, while the artists typically bring imaginative process and aesthetics to the partnership. It's an effective combination, appealing to the humanity we share. Both Roadside Theater and organizers emphasize community narrative. Mostly, we work with organizers with some training in the Saul Alinsky school—for example, the Industrial Areas Foundation. If you were an organizer coming into my community, you would spend some months just hearing people's stories. When the stories converged around particular local problems and issues, you would bring everyone together to share their perspective. The organizing strategy would emerge from the collective analysis of the issue. Artists are adept at surfacing community assets and bringing them to the organizing equation.

Our plays draw on our Appalachian Scots-Irish and Native American story-telling traditions. They are narrative based, and we've developed a

formal story circle methodology, which we often use to develop the plays and, in turn, to help the communities where they are performed to develop themselves. For example, we've made a series of plays with Junebug Productions in New Orleans, which started as the Free Southern Theater, the cultural arm of SNNC [Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee] during the civil rights movement. One play, in particular, was about the history of race and class in the rural South—it was a musical—and right after the performances we went into story circles with the audience. Cueing off the play, they were invited to tell stories about race and class in their community. The frankness and fun of the performance gave a kind of permission, and the community stories got very deep, very fast. Like community organizers, we work with community story.

I wanted to talk with you about Rocco Landesman. Can you go more in depth about your opinions on him. Also, what ideally would you want from the NEA Chair? I don't know him, and I have no idea what path he is going to take. So far, the Obama appointments have been a reach to veterans—for example, usual suspects from the Clinton administration. So I've been wondering, where are the fresh ideas and the new energy going to come from? I understand the country is in a crisis—when you go into heart surgery you want somebody who has done the surgery a bunch of times. You don't have a year to bring somebody along. So I've



DUDLEY COCKE [photo credit: Dudley Cocke]

rationalized their major appointments to date. But in the arts, they didn't have a crisis, and they could have taken time to find somebody who

had much more experience, not as a Broadway producer and theater owner, but bringing together community organizers and community artists. They are really a different group of people from those who are putting on Broadway plays and directing regional theaters. It's a different mind-set. Incidentally, the nonprofit regional theater audience and commercial Broadway audience, measured by income and education, are within a percentage point or two of each other; which means that 81% - 82% are white, and they're from the top 15% economically. It's a very narrow audience.

One of the questions I was asking, "How did we, who serve the majority of Americans, get stuck with minority arts status?" It's a total flip, Alice through the looking glass. In its national touring, Roadside, for example, reaches a broad cross-section of the American people. We know this based on six consecutive years of surveys of our audience by an independent firm. There's some history here. Roadside and its larger entity, Appalshop, got started during the War on Poverty—we began as a federal job-training program in the arts. We were the only rural member of the federal program and the only white one. All of our early connections were with urban, so-called inner-city minority organizations, and the spirit of those founding collaborations continue to this day. From the beginning, we were connected to audiences who were not receiving their fair share of arts support. I assume Chairman Landesman is a thoughtful guy, but my point is the one poet Marianne Moore made, "People don't like what they don't understand." I was hoping they would appoint someone who understood our field from personal experience.

Changing gears a bit. How has the recession caused you to re-think how Roadside Theater operates?

It's a very good question. For many of us, the recession began twelve years ago. It is an unreported story and a gap in our history of the democratic arts movement in the U.S. I think two big things happened. In 1997, the National Endowment for the Arts and its leader, Jane Alexander, caved into the relentless right-wing pressure, which began with the launch of the culture wars in 1981 and got rid of all the NEA's discipline programs. In place of dozens of programs, they substituted a few broad themes, like creation and presentation. The NEA had a Folk Arts Program and, equally important for many of us, the Expansion Arts Program, which was a legacy of the civil rights movement. Both programs were focused on expanding participation, on including the majority of Americans as audiences and as art makers. The leaders of the Expansion

Arts and Folk Arts programs, A. B. Spellman and Bess Lomax Hawes, respectively, were thoughtful leaders who really helped the rest of the federal agency begin to understand the gifts offered by traditional artists and other artists in inner city and rural communities.

When the discipline programs disappeared, a lot of the particular knowledge, which existed among program staff became lost. Also, organizations like ours now could only submit one application. Roadside Theater and Appalshop typically had been receiving annual support from a dozen different discipline programs. After 1997, we lost 90% of our federal funding. Equally damaging for Roadside and other touring companies, the NEA Arts Presenting Program collapsed, which in turn devastated national touring of new and experimental plays.

During the Clinton Administration, the NEA lost any credibility. It no longer had a bully pulpit, and private foundations, for the most part, went off on their own idiosyncratic, private ways. Prior to then, private funders were taking some of their lead from the NEA. Like the Justice Department's key role in advancing social justice during the civil rights movement, the NEA had been pointing the way to cultural democracy.

For grassroots organizations, the recession began in 1997, and, for their economically poor- and lower- and middle-class communities, the punishment began in 1981 with Reaganomics. The widening wealth gap, incarceration rates, and a host of other social indicators bear this out. Now, across the country, communities have lost their sense of efficacy, of being able to control their future, to give their children and grandchildren a better life. Civic virtue is in short supply. This is the type of re-building which artists and organizers can lead from the bottom-up. We always felt good about competing for public money, because it was taxpayer's money, and who were we trying to serve but the majority of the people.

That's a really good point. When the 1997 recession happened, what was your outreach to politicians? We have people on staff with responsibility to connect with our politicians. Unfortunately, we weren't able to prevent the 1997 change at the NEA. It was a done deal before we understood the consequences.

As I mentioned, the NEA change was part of the Culture Wars, which were launched by far-right conservatives during the Reagan administration. The Culture Wars coincide with the rise of hyper-capitalism. In fact, Jack Tchen gave the keynote paper at the June 2006 national "Voices" conference. Tchen's thesis resonates with Karl Polyani's argument in his 1944 scholarly tome, "The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time." Polyani's

research showed that whenever a society embedded its intellectual, spiritual and emotional life in its economy, rather than placing its economy within its culture, that society, whether industrial or pre-industrial, invariably went into decline. In short hand, when profit is encouraged by policy to trump people, social decay ensues. In our "Voices" organizing workshops, we ask participants to test this hypothesis in light of their local experience.

Back to the May 12th meeting, were there any new partnerships that arose among attendees? At a national meeting years ago, somebody asked me where had I been hiding out. "I'm still at the bus stop, waiting for the Poor People's March on Washington," I said. King's assassination led to an even more fractured progressive democratic movement, when, in fact, his analysis was making a powerful popular case about the relationship of war, race, and class and its negative effect on all of us, including the few who believed their fate was not joined to the rest of humanity. With his murder, everyone seemed to retreat into their own little corner. This meant that every year there was less and less meta-analysis of the historical moment we shared. Looks like a lot of nonprofit artists got lost in their own worlds, making their art less relevant to the majority of Americans. Our May 12th group of 65 was diverse, including organizers and public intellectuals, as well as artists. We hope that our reunion signals the re-start of a national conversation about local problems and national aspirations, a conversation in which everyone is invited to come together in the center of the ring to debate the best ways to build a sustainable and more just future. The center needs to be a place for Democrats and Republicans, liberals and conservatives, and all the rest of us.

JEFF CHANG is a journalist and cultural critic noted for his perspectives on hip-hop music and culture. In 2007, he interviewed then-Senator Barack Obama for VIBE magazine. This year, he wrote "The Creativity Stimulus," a cover essay for The Nation, about the role of artists and community organizers in the national recovery and economy.

You have chronicled the birth and growth of hip-hop as part of American cultural and social change history. Yet the story of hip-hop is often missing from mainstream American history accounts. What do you think accounts for the omission of hip-hop from the historical transcript? To paraphrase Bob Marley, culture and music tell the half of the stories that haven't been told. Some of these stories do become mainstream. Millions know the lyrics and music to "Get Up Stand Up" or "Dear Mama." This is a popular form of knowledge that doesn't need legitimization by the academy, because it functions and is retransmitted just fine, thanks. So I'd flip your

question on its head a bit. I think the lack of hip-hop in mainstream accounts of history is more of a problem for the mainstream than it is for hip-hop.

Having said that, I do want to hasten to add that I think that the lack is changing. There are hundreds of courses now taught in hip-hop studies in colleges and universities around the world. As those of us who came up with hip-hop get older, the body of knowledge that we bring with us diffuses more into the mainstream. And that body of knowledge changes, too. I think the study of hip-hop in the academy and in community organizations and institutions has reignited and sharpened needed debates around gender and sexuality in the hip-hop movement.

It's May 2009 and Jeff Chang, a journalist who writes about hip-hop, and Davey D, a hip-hop historian, are invited to the White House for a discussion with government officials about arts activism. The inclusion of you and Davey D, among other arts activists, seems to be a big step forward from the 1990s when political wars waged on hip-hop, and culture wars waged on the arts. Would you call this progress? What do you think accounts for the shift in cultural perception: from the arts as spectacle and cause for concern, to the arts as a means for social change. What misconceptions do policymakers continue to have about hip-hop, and about the arts? Yes, I do think this is progress. At certain points in history, change seems to accelerate and I think we're in the flux of that kind of moment right now. We witnessed an outpouring of art, culture, and creativity around last year's elections. People like Tom Brokaw compared it to the Velvet Revolution. In other words, politics and creativity seemed to converge to bring about a societal leap. Into what, I'm still not sure. But we all have a hand in guiding where we will land.

I work among artists and community organizers daily, and the thing we've all noticed is that we have a great urge to convene, to share, to talk, to try to puzzle out the moment. Liz Lerman likes to joke that "artists aren't afraid of living in Depression-like conditions because that's our lived reality." Right now, there's a sense among everyone that there isn't much to lose, and that's liberating. What I think many of us are coming around to understand is that creativity is at the heart of community sustainability and renewal. Hip-hop is the perfect example—here's the picture of forgotten, abandoned kids hard at work defining how to play amidst chaos. Out of nothing, they literally forge the conditions for their own breakthroughs. They created a new language for a new global generation.

In this country, the debates over the arts are still haunted by questions of individual freedom raised in the culture wars. These are rooted in



JEFF CHANG [photo credit: b+]

President Kennedy's founding Cold War-era charge for the NEA in which artists were positioned as the social outsiders an enlightened U.S. democracy was happy to bring into the fold. Communists in Russia and China, by comparison, were oppressing dissident artists. (This logic ran its course by the end of the 1980s, when anti-arts neocons took up—quite seriously—the role of Kennedy's cartoon communists. The irony escaped them, apparently.)

But what if we looked at arts and creativity as society's key to collective survival? In this re-imagining, artists and creatives—like community organizers—are not outsiders, so much as those who experiment and test and prod, but within the heart of the community. Their risk is indispensable not because it comes from the fringe, but from the center. When they succeed, they strengthen community and move it forward.

There are signs that we are moving toward this new conception of the role of creativity. Artists were recognized as workers in the stimulus package and will be in the coming health-care discussions. But we haven't come around fully yet to an understanding of artists and creatives that puts them in the thick of the fray where they actually live and work.

Part of this has to do with the other major reality of what's happened to the arts and culture over the past two decades. We've privatized our imagination. In some ways, it's impossible now to think of artists and creatives

as anything but entertainers, or even less, as brands. I think this is the inevitable result of the massive push toward consolidation in the culture industry. That's not to say there haven't been amazing examples of creativity coming out of the marketplace. It's to simply point out how difficult it is for us now to conceive of creativity that isn't somehow attached to the marketplace. That's a very long way to fall from Kennedy's formation of the NEA.

In "The Creativity Stimulus," your article in *The*

Nation, you envision a robust national arts policy, a cultural policy that could foster economic recovery. How many of your ideas were expressed during the May 12th meeting, and how receptive were government officials to your ideas? The first thing I want to say is that we were all impressed by the change in the wind. The Obama administration is clearly the most arts-friendly one in over a generation. The meeting in fact was a briefing—so our talkback was fairly limited. Those of us invited, though, weren't shy about making the case for the importance of the arts and the role that government could play in high-lighting examples of creativity's central role in national recovery. We expect to pursue these discussions for as long as the White House has its door open, and we were assured that they are going to remain very open.

This meeting—uniting artists and government officials—was arranged by the Office of Public Engagement, an office that has the broad task of "dealing most closely with the American people." It is not a centralized office for the arts. Was there a discussion as to why the meeting wasn't organized by the NEA? Was there any discussion about a Department of Art and Cultural Affairs or an Arts Czar? What was the Office's response to that discussion?

There were representatives of the NEA in attendance and speaking with us in the meeting. However, because the meeting occurred before they officially announced the appointment of Mr. Rocco Landesman, we were not able to meet the new NEA Chair. We did not hear any discussion about the notion to appoint an Arts Czar. The only thing we did hear was that there

was an effort afoot to have arts-related bodies across the federal government, from say the Department of Education to the State Department to the NEA to the Office of the First Lady to begin to have discussions about how they might better be able to coordinate their work.

White House officials from the Office of Public Engagement spoke about Obama Administration initiatives that might be advanced through the engagement of artists. What was most memorable about their talk? What do you believe was missing from the dialogue? Are there any talking points you wished could have been raised? White House officials are eager to court artists in their coming work around national service, green jobs, health care, and other issues, and that interest will certainly be reciprocated. These efforts are already in motion. We are also very hopeful that there will be deepening discussions about arts and cultural policy.

I personally would love to see a discussion occur in the White House and among leading officials from the NEA and NEH on what the outlines of a 21st-century arts policy could look like, one that takes account of the domestic and global landscape. A great arts and culture policy has a lot to do with levels of happiness and, let's be blunt, political satisfaction. Brazil's Lula, whose former culture minister Gilberto Gil had one of the most powerful tenures of any in recent memory, has off-the-chart ratings. It's clear that Brazil sees its cultural diversity as both an economic and a social asset. I still have trouble understanding why we don't.

I spoke with another attendee of the May 12th meeting: Dudley Cocke, director of Roadside Theater. He said that Obama's current arts team lacks someone with a grassroots arts background. Do you agree with Dudley? How do you envision arts activists being involved with the government, and with the national recovery efforts? Dudley's exactly right. The people represented in the room came from a broad swath of community arts and community-oriented backgrounds—non-profit, for-profit, business, and never-ever-gonna-profit. I think that's where a really interesting conversation can begin. I hesitate to outline what I think will come of it both because I don't know and because the areas of potential work extend beyond my grasp at the moment.

Arlene Goldbard makes a great point about the positioning of your cover story, "The Creativity Stimulus," in *The Nation*. She wrote, "One thing that especially tickles me is that 'The Creativity Stimulus' headlines this issue's cover. *The Nation*, that venerable journal of progressive politics, has long been known for relegating culture

to the back of the book.” What do you believe accounts for the split between arts and politics, such that the arts haven’t been substantively included in much political thinking and problem solving? That’s a fantastic question. There’s certainly a long-running genealogy to this split, which is practically Cartesian in some ways. We even talk about ‘hard’ power as that using force and economics, and ‘soft’ power as using arts and culture. The dichotomy is encoded into our higher educational systems, which divide the humanities from the social sciences from the ‘practical majors’ of engineering, architecture, or law. Then there’s also the marketplace, right? Culture is something you consume. It’s not something that enables, activates, or changes things. It’s a basket of goods that defines your ‘lifestyle.’ Arts [are] merely a subset of the bourgeoisie end of culture. Politics is outside of that matrix: it’s something *they*—a distant, unreachable *they*—do. I do see a little less of a split between arts and politics with the generations who have come of age after the 1980s. To us, art is no longer simply instrumental to social change, it’s core to the way we understand [how] that change happens.

This split seems to be everywhere. I read your 2007 interview in *VIBE* with then-Senator Obama. In the interview, culture—hip-hop, TV and literature—was discussed. Mr. Obama said “we have to acknowledge the power of culture in affecting how our kids see themselves and the decisions they make.” Online, the interview is tagged, “Hip Hop Activism.” But culture wasn’t addressed as a means to create social change. Why do you think there was little talk about cultural activism? It’s because I only had 20 minutes with the dude!

Why do you think the pairing of arts and activism has worked particularly well in stimulating social change in the United States? Well, it’s not just the [United States]. Jamaica’s roots rebels in the 70s, China’s rockers in the late 80s, and the Zapatistas are all profound examples. And there are so many more. The thing I say about hip-hop arts and activism is that it all comes from the same well of experience. Why should a kid who spends their Monday night in a rap cipher wake up the next morning and not be mad about the fact that they’re trying to build a toxic incinerator next door? Why wouldn’t that kid want to spit a rhyme about that? Why wouldn’t the kids who heard that rhyme be inspired to feel the same way? Why wouldn’t they think about getting together and trying to change things?

What do you think about President Obama’s choice to head the NEA: Rocco Landesman? I’m also curious about your thoughts on the NEA given the robust cultural policy you envision? What role

does/should the NEA have in creating an American cultural policy? I confess I don’t know much about Mr. Landesman. I’m hopeful he might be able to take a high profile in advocating for a stronger cultural policy. I don’t think that the NEA should be the only place that this kind of discussion is taking place, however. If we are to be talking about demonopolization and re-regulation, the same discussion has to be happening at the FCC. If we are serious about arts education and the Artist Corps notion of putting artists to work in the schools, then the Department of Education needs to be involved, not to mention state departments of education. The NEA chair can use his position as a bully pulpit, but we need the conversation to happen across a number of sectors at the same time.

The first issue of *The Arts Politic* is themed “The Economy Issue.” You’ve led a career as a successful writer. Has, and if so, how has the economic downturn changed your approach to writing? I’ve been blessed in my so-called career, being able to largely write and speak for a living. I’m also blessed to have a wonderful family and a partner who supports my work and has a great job and health benefits plan. The economy has affected us as it has everyone else. We’re scrutinizing finances in the short-term and thinking about the long-term now, more than ever.

But as I said before, the other thing about the economic crisis is that it has been liberating for me personally, and in terms of my craft. Bad times often bring out the best in people. I feel like there’s a human compulsion to seek out and find other artists and organizers and like-minded souls during times of hardship. And I’ve found myself more inspired than ever by the new groups of people I have found over the past two years. A great poet once said that “freedom’s just another word for nothing left to lose.” I’m blessed to be aware of how much freedom I have these days, and how much of that depends upon and is activated by the fellow travelers I meet and with whom I get a chance to build my communities.

What are your upcoming projects? I’m working on two books. The first is called *Who We Be: The Colorization of America*, a look at the controversies of the post-civil rights era. The book tracks the cultural transformation of the U.S. across the last three decades—from the arts to politics, from multiculturalism to the Obama moment. It’s about the cultural implications of a new American majority. I have also been contracted to pen a book of essays as part of the Picador Books’ special Big Ideas/Small Books series.

AYELET WALDMAN is an author and essayist, who performed at the White House Poetry Jam with her husband, author, Michael Chabon.



AYELET WALDMAN
[photo credit: ayeletwaldman.com]

Describe performing for the President of the United States and the First Lady. Exciting, intimidating. And oddly not as anxiety-producing as you might think. They are such down-to-earth, welcoming people. They seem like such a normal family, that they put you at ease. What really freaked me out was being on that stage with all those superstars who were so much more in their element than we were.

How did you and your husband prepare for the evening? What was the intent of your performance style—witty banker about the power of words? I was on tour, so we wrote it over the phone. Neither of us writes poetry, and we didn’t have enough time to read an actual essay. We had an idea to convey and we had to come up with a way to do it that wouldn’t be too earnest. But neither of us is a performer, and I guess that’s pretty obvious from the tape.

The evening was, in many ways, a new conversation between artists and policymakers. What came out of the interaction between politicians and artists? Did the President or First Lady say anything about arts advocacy, arts education or arts policy? There was a tremendous amount about politics—Jamaica’s piece on Hawaii was probably the first time a lot of people considered the fact that Hawaii was colonized by the United States. Both the President and First Lady spoke about the importance of art and culture, and how they plan to open the White House to traditionally-excluded voices and experiences.

In your performance, you joked with your husband about using “the pen is mightier than the sword” line at the White House. But there’s truth in using literature and the arts to make effective change. What are your thoughts on the

power of words (over the power of war)? Well, that joke was meant to lighten the tone, but of course that was the whole point of what we said. That literature and art informs who we are as a nation. In Obama's arts policy there is a great paragraph (that Michael wrote):

America's artists are the guardians of the spirit of questioning, of innovation, of reaching across the barriers that fence us off from our neighbors, from our allies and adversaries, from the six billion other people with whom we share this dark and dazzling world. Art increases the sense of our common humanity. The imagination of the artist is, therefore, a profoundly moral imagination: the easier it is for you to imagine walking in someone else's shoes, the more difficult it then becomes to do that person harm. If you want to make a torturer, first kill his imagination. If you want to create a nation that will stand by and allow torture to be practiced in its name, then go ahead and kill its imagination, too. You could start by cutting school funding for art, music, creative writing and the performing arts.

Was there a new sense of community that came out of the evening? If so, does that community have any political potential? Certainly on a personal level. I bet Lin-Manuel Miranda dinner that he couldn't get James Earl Jones to say, "Luke, I am your father." I lost. So we'll be dining together soon. On a political level? We'll have to see.

How have you been influenced by the evening? Dude! I got to go to the White House! 'Nuf said.

What are your upcoming projects? I'm on tour right now for *Bad Mother: A Chronicle of Maternal Crimes, Minor Calamities and Occasional Moments of Grace*. I have a novel, *Red Hook Road*, out next spring, and I'm working on a pilot for [a] TV series.

The first issue of *The Arts Politic* is themed "The Economy Issue." You've led a career as a successful author. How does the economy affect your writing? I support myself with my writing. We're artists, sure, but we're also busy trying to raise a family. When people have less money they buy fewer books, and that's scary for us.

The breadth of your career—from public defender to celebrated writer—has broached both politics and arts. Have you found synergies between the two fields? If so, what are they? My first books were all inspired by my short career as a Federal Defender. *The Mommy-Truck Mysteries* were about a former public defender turned stay-at-home mom who solved crimes to keep from going insane. My novel *Daughter's Keeper* was about the Mandatory Minimum drug laws and how arbitrary and draconian they are. Then I slowly began easing away from that subject. But I do still have a political axe to grind, and you can see that in my nonfiction where I've addressed issues like the violations of prisoners' human rights, the farce that is Bush's prescription drug benefit, the criminalization of reproductive behavior.

ERIC LEWIS is a jazz pianist who won the *Thelonious Monk International Piano Competition* in 1996, at age 23.

Describe performing for the President of the United States and the First Lady. It was surreal. Touching Obama's hand was like touching history. I felt like I had touched something greater than myself, something [that will] last long after I'm gone. It was also surreal to be known of by the First Lady before I met her personally. When I walked in she was making gestures indicating that she had seen me before and was familiar with my work. I really wanted to do a good job.



ERIC LEWIS [photo credit: Ingrid Hertfelder]

How did you prepare for the evening? I had an extensive rehearsal and getting-to-know-you session with Esperanza Spalding the day before. We hammered out an arrangement and strategy to approach all of the transitional music to be played for the entrances and exits of the poets.

The evening was, in many ways, a new conversation between artists and policymakers. What came out of the interaction between politicians and artists? Did the President or First Lady say anything about arts advocacy, arts education or arts policy? The President and First Lady began the evening with a statement of their initiative with regards to creating a White House that was more active in the perpetuation of the arts, even more specifically, the abstract arts. After they completed their individual mission statements, they sat down and enjoyed the show. They mentioned the importance of these types of abstract arts and how gestures of struggle and epiphany are central to the forward motion of a type of artistic process that has a very important place in the American cultural landscape.

Was there a new sense of community that came out of the evening? Does that community have any political potential? Yes, there is a new sense of community that came out of the evening; however, in my opinion economics and politics are so closely meshed that art dwells in a mutual exclusivity that probably, for the best, will never have a political office designated for it, rather it will maintain a position similar to Old Testament prophets in the wilderness—reminding America of the various types of thoughts and vision that live within it and then are judged and processed and digested by the hearts and minds of people.

I've read about your notable interaction with the First Lady. Did you speak with her about political concerns? No, I was too busy being gobsmacked [by] the fact that she even knew who I was, let alone that she was behaving like a fan.

How have you been influenced by the evening? The evening was a confidence builder for me because it served as a reminder that when artists concentrate on the business of being great artists, on the order of Stravinsky and Picasso, their impact on the culture, whether political or apolitical, is assured.

What are some of your upcoming projects? I'm fresh off doing my first Hollywood film score for *The Dark Country*, composing a 30-minute ballet for the Alvin Ailey Dance Theater and hopefully collaborating with Clive Barker on an upcoming project involving his series of portraits. I have a new band that I'm very excited about, and they'll be coming with me on an extensive European Tour this summer. Overall, I'm going to be working on the further escalation of Rockjazz as an art form.

***The Arts Politic's* inaugural issue is "The Economy Issue." You've led a career as a successful musician. How does the economy affect your work? Has the economic downturn changed your approach to making and performing music?** Yes. Elitism is expensive. Narcissism is expensive. Timidity is expensive. The IAJE (International Association of Jazz Educators) Convention went bankrupt. Chrysler just pulled out of giving Jazz at Lincoln Center money. The JVC jazz festival was cancelled for the first time in New York, as well as in two other states. Tower Records is gone. Virgin is about to go. Using music as a means to earn money has just become synonymous with being an entrepreneur. Most, if not all, music institutions are neglecting the serious consideration

of this point with regard to including it in their core curriculums for the would-be professional students. Personally, I'm experiencing a surge in creativity and in economic opportunity because I've embraced the entrepreneurial mentality and have surrounded myself with well-equipped individuals. The fact that I played the White House, played a high-end Oscar Party, have a European Tour and a West Coast tour on the books, am appearing in *Gotham* magazine this month and *Giant* Magazine next month, am selling out shows in Manhattan and am composing a 30-minute ballet for the Alvin Ailey Dance company, all without the help of a record label—demonstrates this point rather bluntly.

From Chicago's south side, MAYDA DEL VALLE is an acclaimed poet and actress who won the Nuyorican Grand Slam Championship, and the Individual National Poetry Championship. She was an original cast member and writer of the Tony award winning production of "Russell Simmons Def Jam Poetry on Broadway."

Describe performing for the President of the United States and the First Lady. Performing for the First family was an unforgettable experience. I was able to bring my mother to the event so to know that she was there in the room watching as I performed [work] that was inspired by my grandmother was profoundly moving. The President and First Lady were sitting front and center with Mrs. Robinson and the girls and as I stood on stage it took everything to not pinch myself because the moment was a little surreal.

How did you prepare for the evening? As soon as I found out I was definitely going to be participating my first thought was, "I have to write something new just for this." My second thought was, "What am I wearing?!" I spent most of the week leading up to the event just writing and thinking about the kind of performance I wanted to give. As for my attire I was able to find an amazing tailor in Los Angeles who was able to make me a white suit just in time, my cousin made a beautiful necklace for me to wear and it all came together pretty smoothly considering I only had two weeks to pull it all together. I had a lot of support from friends and loved ones who took care of some details so I could focus on the most important part, which was the writing!

What came out of the evening, an interaction between politicians and artists? Did the President or First Lady say anything about arts advocacy, arts education or arts policy? More than anything, the evening was really a celebration of the arts and their transformative power. I was extremely impressed and deeply encouraged by the comments made by both the President and First Lady about the power of the arts to spark a dialogue in our society and how important it was to include voices of different backgrounds in that dialogue. The President said, "We're here to celebrate the power of words and

music to help us appreciate beauty but also to understand pain. To inspire us to action and to spur us on when we start to lose hope." It is very encouraging to know that this new administration appreciates the role arts can play in our society, to heal, bridge differences and be a catalyst for understanding. And to know that they value the voices of artists that may not be considered "traditional." I am hopeful that this will be reflected in arts policy, particularly investing in making the arts a priority in our education system.

Your words brought tears to Ayelet Waldman's eyes, and moved so many in the room. What was the intent of your performance? My intention was very simple. To honor my ancestors in my performance and to come with words that everyone in the room could relate to. My grandmother has been on my mind a lot these days, I'm developing some new work that involves telling a bit of her story, and so this piece seemed to have come from that space. Oddly enough, several weeks prior to the performance I had started to write some of the lines. The idea was already "gestating" as I like to say. So when the invitation came, I thought to myself, "I *have* to finish the piece about 'Abuela.'" It just felt right. It felt like something universally meaningful. Later as I kept writing it sunk in that we have a grandmother living in the White House, and that the President just recently lost his own. So in that moment the piece took on a deeper meaning.



MAYDA DEL VALLE [photo credit: Daniella Renee]

Prior to the evening, what had been your interaction with politicians? Prior to the performance my interaction with politicians had been pretty limited. I don't really know what politicians think about my work. I hope they enjoy it. If they don't, well what can I do? It's not really my agenda to impress anybody—politicians or otherwise with my work. I just want to tell a story in a way that moves people. My work is mostly personal. But you know what they say, "The personal is political."

Was there a new sense of community that came out of the evening? If so, does that community have any political potential? I think overall everyone walked away feeling inspired, motivated, and optimistic. What we do with that inspiration and spark is ultimately up to us. I would like to see a community of artists come together to try and affect policy change around the arts.

Whose performance most inspired you? I was really moved by Esperanza Spalding. I had never seen her live and had heard so many wonderful things about her. She is simply gifted and her voice is just angelic. You can't help but be amazed by the sight of this small woman taking an instrument that's larger than her and mastering it to the point that it seems to shrink in her hands.

What are your upcoming projects? How have you been influenced by the evening? Right now I am wrapping up some work I've been doing with Youth Speaks as an artist in residence. I'm developing some new work and traveling to Puerto Rico over the summer for some research. After the evening at the White House, I'm tremendously inspired to continue my work and try to take it to another level of excellence.

The Arts Politic is dedicated to solving problems at the intersection of arts and politics. What is the best way to bring artists and politicians together, and what, at best, can come out of their collaboration—what problems can be solved? I sincerely believe that artists set the vision for a society to evolve into. They express what no one else wants to say, and express those things about the human condition that we sometimes find too difficult to get in touch with. Above all the artist is brave, willing to speak truth even when it is unpopular to do so. This can make the relationship between artists and politicians one filled with hostility and confrontation, particularly when artists are challenging the status quo, or those in positions of power. But to me, this is when the relationship between the artist and politician is the most powerful. Out of that conflict comes dialogue, learning, and a new perspective. In turn the politician must be willing and open to seeing the world through the eyes of the artist in order to not lose touch with the humanity he is supposed to be serving.

I don't know if there is an ideal relationship between artists and politicians. But I know I would like to see a dialogue between artists and policymakers that centers around the value of arts in our schools. I think we've pushed the arts so far to the margins that we don't even value it in our society anymore. We are more concerned with raising Doctors, Lawyers, and Bankers, than Painters, Poets, and Musicians, not understanding that they are all equally valuable and necessary in a society. **TAP**

STATE OF THE ARTS //
BRANDON WOOLF

Our Fishy Nonprofit Sector

The American arts economy can be likened to a Rube Goldberg contraption in which a cat, lured by a mouse, jumps on a seesaw that tosses a fish into the beak of a stork. The stork thereby gets fed, but the method leaves something to be desired.

— Karl E. Meyer, *The Art Museum*

Rube's stork certainly has received a lot of attention in recent months. As the economic recession has worsened and losses in the stock market have continued to mount, dozens of the nation's arts organizations have been forced to close their doors or summon trustees for emergency planning meetings due to major cash shortages. There has been an influx of op-eds and other articles by experts who worry that we are more than likely to see additional closures and cancellations if the "crisis" deepens. A recent report from the Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University lamented the lowest level of confidence in the fundraising climate in over a decade.

And yet, since the launch of the Obama campaign, the President has been increasingly vocal about the importance of arts and culture (broadly defined) in and for American society and about his commitment to directing schools of fish upstream. His is just one voice in what has been a welcome wake of cries for increased government involvement in the arts. There was Quincy Jones' call for a Cabinet-level Arts Czar and an accompanying online petition, which has garnered 242,384 signatures to date. There was the \$50 million in recovery funds earmarked for the National Endowment for the Arts as part of the economic stimulus bill. There were the (by now) common arguments to legitimate the \$50 million by means of articulating the large role the arts play in the larger American economy (in the vein of: 100,000 arts groups that employ six million people and contribute approximately \$167 billion annually to the economy). Then, of course, there was the expected persistence of partisan mudslinging: need we return to FDR's "big-government" Works Progress Administration? Or, need we maintain our faith in the reign of the all-powerful market?

There is a certain irony to these partisan alternatives, mainly because the majority of American arts organizations are neither (completely) public nor (completely) private. Rather, they are deeply imbricated in a more nebulous *third sector*: Nonprofit, not-for-profit, noncommercial, the third sector, tax-exempt, and that pervasive moniker, 501(c)(3), brand the articles of incorporation of so many of the nation's art organizations: 55 percent of the nation's theatres; 87 percent of art museums and art galleries; 93 percent of the orchestras, opera companies, and chamber music groups. Instead, then, of entering the dialogue by proposing steps the new President could take to "renew" the arts or proposing a new series of legitimating arguments for the inherent value of the arts, my goal is more modest. I want to look back in history toward the origins of this third sector—and thus, the origins of the federal income tax—in an effort to understand how the arts first came to be thought of as nonprofit, charitable, and

ALTHOUGH THE MAJORITY OF THE ARTS ORGANIZATIONS IN THE U.S. ARE RECOGNIZED AS NONPROFIT, THE ARTS ARE SURPRISINGLY ABSENT FROM THE LANGUAGE OF THE TAX LEGISLATION.

tax-exempt. My hope is to think about the implications of positioning the arts in this way, in this space, within the tax code, and to examine some of the motivations for maintaining this arts-policy-cum-tax-policy until the present day.

Traditions of tax exemption for *charitable* activities have a long history and can be traced back to the English common law. The "Preamble to the Statute of Charitable Uses" of 1601 both codified a legal definition of "charity" and mandated that funds be set aside for charitable purposes. Similar exemptions for "charitable" purposes appear in section 501(c)(3) of the current *Internal Revenue Code (IRC)*, and they date back to the Revenue Act of 1913, which was enacted immediately after the instantiation of the federal income tax. The most current form of section 501(c)(3) grants tax exemption to:

Corporations, and any community chest, fund, or foundation, organized and operated exclusively for religious, charitable, scientific, testing for public safety, literary, or educational purposes, or to foster national or international amateur sports competition, or for the prevention of cruelty to children or animals.

Neither in its original enactment in 1913 nor in the following decades, however, have reasons for the exemption of certain organizations (over others)

been discussed at length in legislative or judicial commentaries. Further, and though the majority of the arts organizations in the U.S. are recognized as nonprofit, the arts, as such, are surprisingly absent from the language of the tax legislation. There is no *explicit* provision that qualifies arts organizations as exempt in 501(c)(3). And yet, since the inception of the federal income tax, arts organizations—for the most part—have been classified as tax-exempt. I am curious about this *missing*—or is it?—arts discourse. When and how did arts organizations garner the recognition of being worthy of exemption? How is this exemption justified? What are the implications for arts organizations and for artists working within and alongside these organizations?

In order to better understand the historical workings—and deficits—of the nonprofit arts, I want to consider, as an example, a formative moment in which the language of the code itself was in flux. In his opening address to the nation after re-election, on April 2, 1917, President Woodrow Wilson "stated that his [ambitious] fiscal policy was to pay for the war [the first World War] while it was being waged, so far as possible." A—perhaps *the*—primary question for those in attendance was: how much of the money necessary to pay for the war in Europe should come from taxes and how much should come from government bonds? No matter the ratio, the estimated costs of the war were tremendous, which meant inevitable and significant tax increases. Taxpayers were nervous.

One section, in particular, of Wilson's proposed War Revenue Act of 1917 stands out:

Contributions or gifts actually made within the year to corporations or associations organized and operated exclusively for religious, charitable, scientific, or educational purposes, or to societies for the prevention of cruelty to children or animals, no part of the net income of which inures to the benefit of any private stockholder or individual, to an amount not in excess of 15 per cent of the taxpayer's taxable net income as computed without the benefit of this paragraph. Such contributions or gifts shall be allowable as deductions.

This section of the Act originated as an amendment proposed by Senator Hollis of New Hampshire. At first glance, due to the familiar language, the amendment seems relatively innocuous. After all, since the Revenue Act of

1913, this same list of organizations had been afforded exemption from income tax. But, upon closer reading, we see that Hollis is not reaffirming the tax-exempt status of these organizations. He is not proposing some additional form of aid or subsidy. Rather, Hollis proposes a different—and brand new (*at that time*)—kind of exemption. He proposes a deduction for the *individuals* who have donated to these organizations. Hollis proposes the amendment that will later become section 170(c)(2) of the *IRC*.

Why was it necessary for Hollis to advocate for individual tax deductions on charitable contributions? We have become used to a system that conflates exemption for charitable organizations and individual deductions for contributions unquestioningly; in our current system, sections 501(c)(3) and 170(c)(2) go hand-in-hand. But there was a time in which the two were not associated. After proposing his amendment, Hollis spoke to the Senate:

I believe the Senate will see the necessity for voting that exemption in war times. I have myself been on the other side of this proposition that colleges, hospitals, and charitable institutions should be supported by private contributions. I myself had the privilege of going to a large school. Before I went there I supported myself entirely for two years. I went there and received a tremendous amount of benefit; I enjoyed my experience there; but what I contributed in tuition did not begin to pay my share of the expense, and I never felt comfortable that I had been there because of private bounty. I have tried since I graduated to make it up by contributions to class funds and teachers' funds, and so on, so that I feel that I am square with the college. [...] [B]ut what have we done? We have permitted these institutions to grow up and become firmly established on the plan of depending upon private contributions. Now, however, the war affects those institutions more seriously than it does any other character of institution.

Hollis' testimony gives rise to additional questions: For whose benefit was Hollis advocating? Was he interested in the benefit—and survival—of the charitable organizations listed in the amendment, as he explicitly stated? Or was he lobbying for a particular interest group—those who, for example, made his education possible?

Hollis's (circuitous) argumentation mirrors a more widespread anxiety—voiced in hyperbolic editorials and letters to the editor published in the months prior to the passage of the Act—about the ramifications of increased taxes. Instead of advocating for subsidies to the organizations themselves, he sheathed his motivations within a call for the well-being of public, charitable institutions. The argument went: an established

history of philanthropic giving could be interrupted by increased taxes because individuals in the habit of contributing to charitable causes would now offset increases in their tax liabilities by reducing philanthropic giving; this reduction would, in turn, be detrimental to the entire American public. Therefore, as the outcry preceding the Hollis amendment made clear, the only “patriotic” solution was to allow the wealthy to continue to enable (and fund) the “well-being” of the nation through private philanthropy. Notice how these arguments repeatedly utilize conceptions of the *public good* to legitimate personal deductions. But, we are bound to ask, *which* public will benefit from tax deductions on gifts to charitable organizations?

BECAUSE OF THE VERY NATURE OF THE TAX CODE, ARTS ADVOCATES ARE ENCOURAGED TO STAND AGAINST POLICIES (LIKE EXPANDED HEALTHCARE COVERAGE) THAT MIGHT BENEFIT WIDER POPULATIONS. THESE ARE THE REALITIES OF OUR NONPROFIT ARTS SECTOR.

The Hollis affair also sheds light on the strategies used to justify educational institutions, in particular, as worthy of tax exemption. Since arts organizations were not—and are not—listed explicitly as one of the types of organizations considered tax-exempt, it was—and is—necessary to justify the legitimacy of exemption through other means. This justification occurred, almost exclusively, by advocating for arts organizations to be considered *educational*. Just as universities are educational, and thus charitable because they are “deemed beneficial to the community,” arts organizations were legitimated as providing a form of education to the public, and were thus deemed worthy of charitable exemption. This methodology was explicitly confirmed—and legislatively instantiated—in 1919, just a few years after the Hollis affair. So, it was by means of “education” that the arts first officially entered the charitable discourse. But such a notion of “art-as-public-education” evokes additional questions: Who is art meant to educate? What “public” benefits from the arts-as-education? What kinds of art are educational? Does a conception of art-as-education reify a set of objective standards of taste determined by a particular class of funders?

Fast-forward 90 years. In certain ways, Hollis' spirit is still pervasive on Capitol Hill. The very structure of the nonprofit sector—and the tax code itself—binds arts organizations within this particular relationship between taxes and charitable giving. As Robertson Williams at the Urban Institute and Brookings Institution's Tax Policy Center explains, President Obama's commitment to rolling back Bush-era tax cuts is likely to increase charitable

giving among wealthy donors, because in times of increased taxes, it is cheaper to give money to charities. In spite of the President's objections, there has also been talk of attempts to repeal the estate tax in 2010. And according to the *Chronicle of Philanthropy*, the logic would also hold (in reverse): a repeal of the estate tax could lead to significant, long-term decline in donations from the wealthy. Most recently, Obama has proposed a limit on charitable deductions for wealthy taxpayers in an effort to help pay for his health reform plan. As Howard Gleckman (also from the Tax Policy Center) explains: “As tax policy, [Obama's] idea has some merit. Deductions benefit high earners more than

ordinary working people.

Think of it this way: If you're in the 35 percent bracket, a \$100 deduction is worth \$35.

If you are in the 10 percent bracket, it is only worth \$10.”

The tremendous backlash against the President was not surprising: Republicans and Democrats alike,

philanthropists and arts

advocates ensured that the proposal was dead before it ever had a real life on the floor of Congress.

But why? According to Americans for the Arts, 43 percent of annual revenue for arts nonprofits comes from private philanthropy. In 2007, private sector giving to the arts surpassed \$13.5 billion. Because of the very nature of the tax code itself, it is in the best interest of arts organizations to share a concern for the purses of wealthy elite. Because of the very nature of the tax code itself, philanthropists and arts advocates alike are encouraged—implicitly, and in many cases without recognizing the implications—to stand against policies (like expanded healthcare coverage) that might benefit wider populations. These are the realities of our nonprofit arts sector. And it is easy to understand how these realities persist unquestioned. Who wouldn't want to “help a good cause” in exchange for a tax break? Yet, these are the realities and the histories that—in the midst of our excitement with the new Administration—must be reexamined. In addition to constructing arguments about the value of the arts, we must consider the implications, mechanisms, and motivations of a tax code constructed with particular interests in mind. Before we dream up new policy to benefit the arts, we must decipher *whose* arts. As we “hope” toward a new future for the arts, we must consider the longstanding, implicit imperatives that encourage artists, arts organizations, funders, even storks eager to become better singers, painters, and actors. **TAP**

POP POLITIK //
RONAMBER DELONEY

Africa, African Accents and African- Americans: Name That Relationship!

This spring, HBO debuted *The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency*. The show follows Ma Marotswe, a detective in Botswana who investigates crime. She is Botswana's only female detective and is played by the American neo-soul superstar singer Jill Scott. Many of the actors in the show are African-born; however two of its main stars—Jill Scott and Annika Noni Rose (who plays Marotswe's secretary)—are black American-born actresses.

The casting of these leading characters begs the question: what is the effect of portraying Africans by black Americans? What's more, leading characters in *The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency* defy traditional heteronormative gender roles. As an ambitious, single yet sought after female detective, Marotswe and BK, the flamboyant male hairdresser played by South African actor Desmond Dube, can be read as two radical responses to homophobia and gender-based hierarchies in Africa. A critique of conservative African culture could be read through the show's casting of Scott and Dube. If casting African-Americans as Africans, and employing humor and stereotypes are used to invite audiences to re-think Western ideas about Botswana, and Africa (a widely misrepresented cultural landscape in Western and European history of the world), is exploiting black American identity, homosexual identity, and feminist platforms the only way to engage/entertain Western television audiences around Africa and black bodies?

The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency, the HBO series, is based on ten novels under the same name by British author, Alexander McCall Smith. The plot of both the novels and the television series centers on the professional

and personal life of Precious Marotswe, Botswana's only female detective. As "Ma" Marotswe, as she is addressed on the show, investigates crime in her country, viewers are introduced to African life through the adventures, moral lessons and life circumstances of the show's characters. In the show, the prescriptive, imaginary deck of cannibals, loincloths and emaciated babies that often saturate media representations of Africa do not emerge as icons signaling what normative Western ideology has interpreted as the continued decay of an intrinsically failed continent.

Rather, one could argue that we are instead invited to look or gaze upon Africa from our living room couches by the "natives" Scott and Rose, allowing us to know and visit Africa through the show's two main protagonists, played by African-Americans. With Scott and Rose passing as African, Botswana is transported to American households via HBO—just as the World Fairs and exhibitions of the 19th-and-20th century did to excerpts of the African continent (e.g. Hottentot Venus). The result: a reinforcement of stereotypes about Africa, African people and African culture as an easily recreated space.

Non-white bodies have been embellished within race, gender-and-class-specific frameworks throughout the history of American film. The old ways—commodity racism campaigns (Pear's Soap) of the Reconstruction era through *The Birth of A Nation's* propaganda strategies in the early 1920s to Marlon Brando's Golden Globe nomination for his stained skin portrayal of a Mexican in *The Appaloosa*—did much to stifle self-authorship by minority groups, as the interests and imaginations of colonial white Americans guided on-screen portrayals of minorities. Even though countless minority filmmakers such as Oscar Micheaux and Melvin van Peebles created work seeking to represent an authentic cultural voice, assumptions and stereotypes about black behavior continued to penetrate national psyches across the globe via contemporary television and film [see Robert Downey Jr.'s Golden Globe nomination for his portrayal of Kirk Lazarus, an Australian actor

in blackface portraying a black American soldier in the 2008 film, *Tropic Thunder*.]

To cast African-Americans as African people treads thin ice on boundaries where reifying concepts of the *other* can easily become trendy network programming. Yes, well-known entertainers Scott and Rose act in roles that clearly intend to represent an ethnicity not their own as a strategy for attracting an audience. But it is important to remember: being African or being in Africa is not as simple as taking on a role as an African even if you are African-American.

While casting African-American actors as Africans could be a form of activism towards corrective self-authorship and a statement of solidarity through collective identity (as these two groups of people have indeed been forged through a similar trajectory of oppressive, uneven social positioning) a question of hierarchy still emerges where the culprit lies beyond the marginal boundaries of both groups.

I like *The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency*. The show's writing is innovative and refreshing. I cannot recall ever seeing a cable television network reach out to a Western public from within the nuanced African cultural perspective in this way through a television show. The set is believable albeit compact (one city center holds a school, beauty shop, the detective agency and other marketplaces)

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AS SIMPLE AS TAKING ON
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EVEN IF YOU ARE AFRICAN-
AMERICAN.**

and the storytelling element narrated by the local people who employ Marotswe reminds me of didactic African fables told in grade school. Every episode ends with a moral lesson and the depictions of rural Botswana life and women in nontraditional occupations feels as if the show achieves a fair blend of what is familiar and what is unknown in contemporary social discourse about Africa. I, however, have never been to Botswana and cannot confirm what is real and what is TV, which is ultimately the danger in a show like this. **TAP**

SPECIAL REPORT:

The Arts & The Economy

22: The national recovery demands cultural recovery argues **Arlene Goldbard**, who details an emerging and powerful cultural policy paradigm.

29: The roots of arts policies are many, and include the Central Intelligence Agency. **Greg Londe** particularizes CIA-funded magazine and arts projects of the 1950s.

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33: Arts for arts sake versus arts for economic sake. **Doreen Jakob** delves into the long-standing debate to ask the question: who really benefits from arts-led economic policies?

[Online]: Arts foundation officer **John R. Killacky** sets down strategies for nonprofit arts success.

35: **TAP*MAP** features voices from the field—artists, art-teachers, academics, regional arts council directors and activists—articulating how the current economy affects art making, arts communities, and arts industries.

40: The Founding Editors close with a **Policy Brief** because we believe that before our nation can implement arts policy well, we must articulate arts policy well.

ESSAY

America's Cultural Recovery

BY ARLENE GOLDBARD

Note: This essay is adapted from a talk I gave on May 20th in Philadelphia, PA, part of a speakers' series to mark the 25th Anniversary of that city's Mural Arts Program

On May 12th, I co-led a delegation of more than sixty community artists and creative activists to a White House briefing where we heard about the administration's openness to collaborating with artists on our great collective project of national recovery. We held a pre-briefing meeting not far from the White House, a gathering that included, among others, writers, filmmakers, dancers, hip-hop activists, muralists, educators, organizers, people who—like myself—are first-generation Americans; people descended from slaves; people whose parents worked on farms or in factories or had trouble finding work at all. We were so excited about being there that most people arrived early. We got confused and started the meeting half an hour early: we had to stop and start again!

Such an unprecedented opportunity is only one indication that this is a liminal moment in American history. All that is certain is that things are changing, that something big is happening. We are living through a period of extreme disequilibrium, the bleeding edge where the crusts of an old way of understanding crash into the tectonic plates of an emergent reality. Economies, governments and all aspects of social organization are struggling for a foothold as the very ground of life trembles beneath us.

To characterize this moment, I am tempted to quote Karl Marx's language of 1848: "All that is solid melts into air," he wrote, "all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses, his real conditions of life, and his relations with his kind."³

Marx's lushly romantic language conveys the intoxicating mixture of confusion and hope we now breathe every day. But the anachronisms so evident in this passage speak volumes about how our response to radical social imbalances must be very different from his prescription. One hundred and sixty-one years later, we no longer talk of man, but of humankind; we no longer think only of our own kind, but of the many interrelated forms life takes on this small planet. And despite the vast

portion of our commonwealth now being poured into the banking system, few of us any longer believe that changes in the means and relations of production will alone suffice to fix the mess we have made.

Yet we have something in common with Marx. He saw that in a period of seismic social movement, real and significant change is possible. And so do we. Those who fear such change advocate pulling our wagons into a circle, continuing to do what we have been doing all along—only more so. And those like myself, who hope to bring our actions in line with newly emerging possibilities, prescribe the opposite: an embrace of the opportunity this moment reveals.

The same story can be told with reference to almost any social sector—health care, environmental protection, economic development, education, and so on. But my subject is culture, because it cuts across all those realms.

What is culture? Gaze around you, skipping over everything that comes under the heading of "nature"—the sky overhead, the sun-dappled trees, the symphony of birds. Everything else is culture, the collective stock of signs and symbols, ways of communicating, customs, values, ideas of beauty and meaning, environments, objects and stories created by human beings—and also culture's purest expression, art.

Culture is a collective creation, animated by our desire to communicate and connect, to see and be seen, to know and be known. It exists everywhere human beings have emerged from the defensive isolation to which our spirits are prey and entered into communion. As Dorothy Day, founder of the Catholic Worker movement, put it so beautifully, "We have all known the long loneliness and we have learned that the only solution is love and that love comes with community."⁴ To which I add only that community arises from culture, precisely as rain arises from our watery planet.

One of the most grotesque ideas of the modern period is that all of this is somehow superfluous to the human project, nice but not necessary—and Mr. Marx deserves some of the blame for that. In

fact, the opposite is true. Culture is the secret of survival. As my friend Dudley Cocke of Roadside Theater in Appalachia likes to say, "We are the storytelling animal, and language and story have been our selective advantage."

Surely he is right. Lived experience is a hodgepodge: someone is born, someone wins the lottery, someone loses a job, someone laughs till tears come, someone sorts the recycling, someone dies. There's a war, a mortgage meltdown, an election, a surprise party, an epidemic, a parade. Our lives are a string of incidents until we craft the narrative that gives them meaning. Individually and collectively, the way we tell our stories shapes our lives.

Consider how many stories have been written and chanted and whispered and drawn and danced and projected and imagined since humans appeared on this planet. If each story were a butterfly, the earth would be carpeted in brilliant iridescence. If each story were a particle or wave of energy, the planet would be encased in a story field, a web or matrix of tales that binds and sustains our collective existence.

Can you see the planet spinning and glittering in your mind's eye? Take a moment to explore it in your imagination. Bring to mind a time when someone taught you a song, read you a poem, pointed to an obscure corner of some complicated image, drawing your attention to a detail that had previously escaped notice, showed you a dance step that filled your body with delight. Concentrate on that moment. Try to remember the sights, sounds and scents of that moment. Try to remember how it felt to receive and discover.

Now focus on the face of your benefactor, the infectious delight, the caring and generosity that attach to the gift of culture. And when you have that image in mind, pull back and imagine the person who gave it to the one who taught you. And the person who gave it to your benefactor's teacher, and to that teacher's teacher, as far into the past as you can imagine. Each of those individuals occupies a single point—a single particle or wave of energy—in the story field. And so do you.



Tickertape, Wall St. by WPA Artist Mary Perry Stone. For more on Stone, turn to page 58.

Now hold that image and at the same time, move your attention in the other direction. With whom will you share the teaching you received from your benefactor? Perhaps you've already taught someone else the song or read aloud the poem or screened the film for your beneficiary in this great cycle of cultural transmission. Perhaps you want to imagine a future moment when you will first tell a story or sing a song and watch your friend's face light up. When you have the moment in mind, picture your student teaching this same thing to someone else, and that person teaching it to someone else, as far into the future as you can imagine.

What you are seeing is vast, yet it is only a glimpse of a single corner of the story field, a network of human creativity emanating from each and every person who has ever lived—or will ever live—on this planet.

"Holy! Holy! Holy!" wrote Allen Ginsberg, "The typewriter is holy the poem is holy the voice is holy the hearers are holy the ecstasy is holy!"ⁱⁱⁱ

I have a name for the emergent paradigm, the unfolding reality that recognizes the holiness of stories, and that name is "Storyland." In Storyland, artists work with communities to capture and use the stories that support resilience, connection and possibility. Today in Storyland, as in every past moment of crisis, artists and cultural activists are once again ready to place their gifts at the service of democratic public purpose.

During the New Deal of the 1930s, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's response to the Great Depression included programs to employ artists. The longest-lived were grouped under the heading "WPA," for Works Progress Administration, a huge employment relief program started in 1935 at the beginning of FDR's "Second New Deal." They made up Federal Project Number One, comprising five divisions: the Federal Art Project, the Federal Music Project, the Federal Theatre Project, the Federal Writers Project and the Historical Records Survey, together employing more than 40,000 artists by the end of its first year, when the U.S. population was about a third of today's.

The New Deal included programs addressing unemployment and development in many sectors, from agricultural price supports to infrastructure projects, raising both personal expenditures and Gross Domestic Product every year. Nearly 75 years later, the federal arts programs of that period are the most familiar and beloved part of FDR's legacy, persisting in memory as symbols of the entire New Deal, because they generated images and stories embodying the spirit of the times. As the nation moved toward economic recovery, these arts projects helped to bring about cultural recovery, reframing the moment from one of isolation and despair to one of partnership and possibility.

Since World War II, more and more artists have worked in community cultural development, in participatory projects wherein artists collaborate with others to express concerns and aspirations, recovering histories, beautifying communities, teaching, expressing cultural creativity as a universal birthright and a bottomless source of resilience. In Storyland, arts-based approaches help communities realize their fullest potential and make the most of their resources, creating

large impacts in proportion to costs. Because it is driven not by market considerations but by the desire for cultural connection, for expressive opportunities and recognition for our contributions to local and national history, this practice constitutes a social good, like public education, not a market-driven commodity. It has flourished most in times of public investment.

In the 1970s, community artists and arts

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organizations took advantage of public service employment programs through the Department of Labor, notably CETA (the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act). At its height, CETA invested approximately \$200 million per year (over \$700 million in 2009 dollars) in jobs for artists teaching, performing, creating public art and administering arts programs in the public interest. Until Ronald Reagan abolished them, these programs were a mainstay of the community arts field; almost every community artist active in those days either had a CETA job or was close with someone who did. Many of today's most accomplished practitioners and most-admired organizations were helped by CETA to pursue the democratic interest in cultural life: promoting vibrant cultural citizenship rich with cross-cultural sharing, creating sites of public memory, commemorating community history and pride, making works of dance and theater that deepen and refresh understanding, stories that heal, opportunities for young people to express themselves and learn through artistic practice.

Then and now, sustainable recovery is rooted in communities' own awareness of challenges and our own knowledge of everything that supports resilience and healing. Artists are uniquely able to stimulate social imagination, working with people to cultivate creativity, connection and

strength. Today, as always, sustainable national recovery demands cultural recovery.

For instance, in *Community, Culture and Globalization*⁵, an international anthology I co-edited with Don Adams, muralist Judy Baca tells the back-story of "The Great Wall of Los Angeles," the world's largest mural, painted by crews drawn from youth gangs. It portrays the buried history of California and its people, the stories that seldom make it into the official version:

The site was a concrete flood-control channel built by the Army Corps of Engineers. Once an arroyo (a dirt ravine cut by river water), the Tujunga Wash flood-control channel was an ugly concrete dividing line within the community with a belt of arid dirt running along either side. The Wash is in Studio City, a few miles north of Hollywood in the San Fernando Valley (...)

The concreted rivers divided the land and left ugly eyesores, carrying the water too swiftly to the ocean, bearing pollution from city streets, affecting Santa Monica Bay and depriving the aquifer of water replenishment through normal ground seepage. In a sense the concreting of the river represented the hardening of the arteries of the land. If the river overflowing its banks regularly destroyed opportunities for the real-estate expansion that fast became the chief commodity of the fledgling city of the 1920s, then the river would simply have to be tamed. These first decisions about the river made it easier to displace historic indigenous and Mexican communities in the name of city development (...)

The concrete river invaded my dreams, its significance becoming clearer to me as the correlation between the scars on a human body and those on the land took shape in my mind. Fernando, a charismatic leader from the original Las Vistas Nuevas team, was brutally stabbed in his own neighborhood's local store the summer of the painting of *Mi Abuelita*. He suffered 13 wounds to his torso and one to his face. We were devastated by the attack, but Fernando recovered and returned for the dedication ceremony, continuing his work against violence through the murals for many years until he was killed in his neighborhood park in the 1980s, 12 years after he had abandoned "the life." I asked him after he had healed how he was doing with the psychological scars left by such an attack and he responded, "The worst thing is that every time I remove my shirt my body is a map of violence." It was for this reason that I proposed and designed a

series of tattooed images to cover and transform the scars on his body.

Standing at the river on that first day, dreaming of what it could become, I saw the concrete as a scar where the river once ran and our work in the channel producing the narrative mural, as a tattoo on the scar. The defining metaphor of what came to be known as the Great Wall of Los Angeles...became "a tattoo on the scar where the river once ran."

Cultural recovery means recognizing that the capacity for renewal that sustains communities in times of crisis is rooted in culture, in the stories of survival and social imagination that inspire people to hope and possibility even in dark times. Sharing our stories as song, drama, literature or image shows people how those who came before them met similar challenges, survived and prospered. Each panel of *The Great Wall* tells the story of another decade in California's history, the World War II struggle against fascism eliding into the Red Scare of the 1950s into the 1960s freedom rides.

Cultural recovery means cultivating social imagination, envisioning the transformations we hope to bring about, stimulating our thoughts and feelings toward the new attitudes and ideas that will drive recovery.

Consider the work of Marty Pottenger. Under the auspices of the Arts & Equity Initiative, she and other artists have been working with city employees in Portland, Maine, including the Police Department, where "the project was designed to address two key challenges that PPD had identified last year—their relationship with the public, and low department morale." Overall, the goal of the initiative is "to make the arts and artmaking everyday tools for municipal governments to come up with better solutions in challenging times." Here, in its entirety, is a poem by Officer Alissa Poisson of the Portland Police Department that seems to contain everything we want from keepers of the peace: empathy, humility, awareness of power, the wish to help:

I Do Hate The Hat

Talking to a child
Or a victim, someone harmed,
I take it off.

Cultural recovery means cultivating social and personal creativity. As the nature of work changes, culture becomes more and more key to social and community development. The "knowledge economy" is actually a cultural

economy. It's not just bits and bytes of data that are supporting jobs these days: without the imagination and artistry to devise and convey the words, sounds and images that fill our hard disks and iPods, Web 2.0 would be dead in the water. The skills of imagination, improvisation and problem-solving learned through artistic creativity are applicable, even essential, to countless new jobs that will be created as the economy morphs through its current fundamental restructuring. These are the most valuable skills society can pass on to people who will be doing work that cannot be prepared for in conventional ways because it cannot even be accurately imagined now.

the design of a mural was altered at the last moment to accommodate a dream that a key person had a few days before it was to be unveiled.

Judy and I have known each other for 35 years. She is brilliant, gifted and brave. At dinner afterwards, she confided that she'd been hesitant to share these stories of dreams and nightmares, bodies and scars with such an audience. Like many artists, she'd often sanded some of the rough edges off her stories so as not to excite the ridicule that sometimes attaches to bringing body and spirit into realms normally reserved for disembodied data.

like computers, or at least allow our behavior to be controlled by computers.

Scientism is the No Child Left Behind Act, where the phrase "scientifically based research" appears 111 times, premised on the idea that the quality of education can be measured best by control-group research that yields quantifiable data. Scientism is arguing that babies should be exposed to Mozart because it makes them grow up to score higher on I.Q. tests. Scientism is the mountain of money that has been wasted by public and private agencies in the U.S., trying to come up with "hard" justifications for public arts subsidy, such as the "economic multiplier

WHEN YOU ASK ARTS ADVOCATES WHY THEY CONTINUE TO PRIZE SUCH QUESTIONABLE—IF QUANTIFIABLE—RESEARCH, THEY SAY THAT EFFECTIVE ADVOCACY DEMANDS IT. "LEGISLATORS LOVE THESE CHARTS," THE DIRECTOR OF A NATIONAL ARTS RESEARCH PROGRAM TOLD ME. "GOTTA SPEAK THEIR LANGUAGE." WE DISCOVER THAT ALL THOSE DECADES OF "SPEAKING THEIR LANGUAGE" HAVE YIELDED A NET LOSS IN REAL VALUE OF NEARLY 45 PERCENT!

Cultural recovery means recognizing that making significant headway on a social problem or opportunity requires engaging with people's feelings and attitudes about it. We hear every day that no financial intervention will save the economy unless confidence is restored. Promoting safer sex, reducing the incidence of diabetes, treating addictions, spreading green consumer habits—these and countless other public aims are advanced by artists' skill at engaging people in expressing their own views and communicating freely with others.

In my book *New Creative Community: The Art of Cultural Development*, you can read about El Teatro Lucha de Salud del Barrio in Texas, using theater to help families learn what they need to act on their very real health concerns, the epidemics of asthma and diabetes swamping our most economically-distressed communities. Imagine what could happen if every agency of government collaborated with community artists to tell the important stories in ways that bring policy goals home, showing people what they could do locally to improve their children's education, reduce environmental damage and create jobs.

I was with Judy Baca last fall in Los Angeles, when she gave the keynote at a conference of universities engaged in collaborations with artists and communities. She told this same story of "the tattoo on the scar where the river once ran," along with other multi-dimensional stories about her experiences, including one in which

But she'd decided she wasn't going to do that anymore, ever. Many of us are ignoring the conventional embargo on full expression of body, emotion, mind and spirit—to bringing all we are and all we know into our interactions. A little ridicule is a small price to pay for the pleasure of living as if Storyland were all around us every day—which it is.

Of course, the old paradigm is all around us every day too, the counterforce that co-creates our disequilibrium. My name for its way of seeing is "Datastan," and it's a flatland nightmare of an old paradigm that worships hyper-efficiency, hyper-rationality, hyper-materialism and domination.

Datastan is conditioned on the scientism that was one of the most bizarrely reductive features of twentieth-century culture, taking methods and ways of thinking that work very well in the physical sciences and misapplying them to highly complex human endeavors, where they don't work at all. If you can arrive at solid truth about the behavior of minerals or gases by measuring them, this line of thinking goes, you should also be able to reduce human stories to quantitative data, and this should enable you to understand and control them. Scientism is not science, which entails as many creative leaps as measurements. It is another thing altogether, the misguided and distorted view that human beings in our infinite complexity ought to behave just

effect" of arts expenditure, which means that when people buy theater tickets, they also spend money eating and parking, multiplying the flow of capital. The trouble is, exactly the same economic benefits adhere to football tickets or lady mud wrestling or a trip to the zoo.

In the artworld region of Datastan, something is especially rotten. Many arts advocates live in the grip of a persistent obsession: to convey art's value through "hard evidence" such as numbers, graphs and charts. Mountains of flimsy research have been underwritten to support this aim. One staple of Datastan is the study purporting to show that higher test scores and lower dropout rates are achieved by students who participate in "the arts." Almost all of these are biased toward elite arts, so what they really mean is those who take drama classes or play in the school orchestra are more likely than their peers to excel by standard measurements. It's impossible to know if the research measures causes or effects. Formal education is consistently the best predictor of participation in nonprofit professional arts institutions; there's no control group in which the children of educated parents are denied entrance to drama class so that the educational effects can be measured for comparison. And if such studies were to include garage-band players, spray-can artists and hip-hop dancers, the results wouldn't necessarily measure up.

When you ask arts advocates why they continue to prize such questionable—if quantifiable—

research, they say that effective advocacy demands it. “Legislators love these charts,” the director of a national arts research program told me. “Gotta speak their language.”

Is that so? Has it worked? Let’s see. The National Endowment for the Arts’ budget was \$159 million in 1981, just after Ronald Reagan took office. Correcting for inflation, it would take \$372 million in 2008 dollars to equal that allocation. What is the 2009 NEA budget? \$155 million. Throw in the \$50 million supplement that was part of the Recovery Act, and we discover that all those decades of “speaking their language” have yielded a net loss in real value of nearly 45 percent!

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Datastan is blinded by scientism. Its passionate belief in the persuasive power of quantification resembles a modern-day cargo cult. In the classic example, Melanesians built airstrips from coconuts and straw, hoping that supernatural forces would deliver the richly stocked cargo planes that Europeans seemed to attract to their own airstrips. That worked about as well as today’s arts advocacy, but the news trickled down faster. After more than three decades, many arts advocates remain steadfast in their devotion to a ritualized strategy that consistently fails.

If you’ve ever fundraised for a not-for-profit arts organization, you’ve experienced other irrational Datastan orthodoxies. For the last forty years, funders have cajoled and commanded arts organizations to shape themselves after the corporate model, as if that were the only legitimate form of social organization. One result has been that even small, barely funded groups must generate endless reports and projections of organizational finances, plans and programs modeled on the reporting practices of for-profits, only a lot more strenuously vetted. These take tremendous amounts of time from creative and community work, often without adding any demonstrable value to that work.

Charlie Humphrey, the Executive Director of Pittsburgh Filmmakers, the Pittsburgh Center for the Arts and the Pittsburgh Glass Center, published a furious screed in the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette back in February. Here’s some of his message:

After sitting through countless speeches delivered by the high priests of capitalism about the need for the public sector to grow up and start acting like real entrepreneurs, it’s fascinating to watch billionaires grovel for a share of taxpayer money. Hell, I’ve been doing that for years, sans the corporate jet and multimillion dollar bonus.

Meanwhile, no business in America, large or small, receives the level of scrutiny that nonprofits get. It comes in three fundamental forms. Trustees who review financial data on a monthly or quarterly basis, publicly available annual audits that have become increasingly onerous and heavy handed, thanks to new federal regulations designed to create greater transparency in the for-profit world, and close scrutiny from public and private funding sources.

Every proposal submitted by a nonprofit, to either a government agency or a private foundation, is subject to rigorous review and follow-up. Private foundations, in particular, have become very good at analyzing and assessing the relative health of nonprofits. They hire experts in specific fields and often use outside consultants to further study a potential grantee. Government agencies often employ peer panels to review and rank proposals. The process actually strengthens organizations and goes a long way to protecting public investment.

Nonprofits should be held to a very high standard because they serve the public good and operate with tax-exempt money. So, move over. Now we have key industries in the for-profit world also floating on public money. And yet there does not seem to be the same sort of oversight that has been present for nonprofits for years.

Witness the speed with which the federal government came to the rescue of lenders and the auto industry. Billions in TARP money have been handed over with fewer conditions than a \$5,000 Pennsylvania Council on the Arts grant made to a struggling puppet troupe.^{vi}

Regard the dead and damaged corporate carcasses currently littering our commercial sector. An alarming amount of what purported

to be economically—scientifically—sound turned out to be Ponzi schemes of unprecedented proportions. When Charlie Humphrey wrote in February, the cost of the Troubled Asset Relief Program was estimated at under \$200 billion. In April, the Congressional Budget Office projected that we taxpayers will spend \$356 billion on TARP this year making up for corporate mistakes and malfeasance. This figure equals more than 1,700 NEAs.

In Datastan, arts groups are asked to produce confident-seeming multi-year plans projecting income, expenses and programs—even though the economy is in such disarray that it would be mad for anyone to imagine such predictions are worth the paper they are printed on. The rational approach to planning now is to cultivate readiness, improvisational ability and responsiveness, not to draw up blueprints for castles in the air. But the requirements haven’t changed.

For decades, Datastan urged arts groups to amass endowments. Large chunks of foundation and corporate giving were tied up in endowment campaigns, in serene confidence that those managing the economy were wise and capable, so investments would always grow. The current result is that philanthropic money that could be sustaining real-time, essential cultural interventions is sitting in the bank without accruing value.

Has this gone beyond a cargo cult into a suicide pact?

Thank goodness things are changing. Something big is happening, and to have the greatest possible impact in influencing its direction, artists, arts advocates, funders, public agencies and everyone else who cares about the future will reconsider old assumptions and embrace this opportunity to create cultural recovery.

Are you doubtful? Consider a few signs and portents, such as the fact that Jeremy Nowack, President and CEO of The Reinvestment Fund and a Board member of the Philadelphia Federal Reserve Bank, has emerged as a community arts advocate. This is from his report on culture’s intrinsic and powerful role in community development, based on a review of the findings of Mark Stern’s and Susan Seifert’s Social Impact of the Arts Project at the University of Pennsylvania:

“Community arts and cultural activities,” wrote Nowack, “through their intrinsic

expressive and exploratory processes and products, have the capacity to catalyze or reinforce place-making through each component of the architecture of community: through the coalescing of social and civic relationships around creative activity; through the creation and reinforcement of quality public assets that incubate or nurture art and culture; through market demand for commercial and residential space used by artists and the creative sector in general; and through networked enterprises of cultural institutions, artist/entrepreneurs and community collaborations.”^{viii}

Another indicator is that science is showing us the critical role creativity plays in personal and social development. For our brains to serve the future, we would be wise to develop our creative imagination and empathic capacities through arts participation. Antonio and Hanna Damasio of the Brain and Creativity Institute and the Cognitive Neuroscience Imaging Center at USC are leading brain scientists who have become advocates for arts education. “[M]ath and science alone do not make citizens,” they said in a speech at the 2006 UNESCO World Conference on Arts Education. “And, given that the development of citizenship is already under siege, math and science alone are not sufficient.”^{viii}

The Damasios point out that cognitive processing is constantly speeding up as we exercise it through interaction with machines, but that emotional processing cannot keep pace, with the result that young minds are emotionally underdeveloped, leading to a loss of moral compass, of the emotional sense and imagination that guide a well-rounded human being. Through stories, theater, songs and visual imagery, we can build comparable emotional and moral capacity. Without art, our schools are treading a deeply dangerous path.

Culture is the remedy that can begin to heal social injury, allowing us to face each other across every barrier that creates distance and objectification. Scientists who study how our brains process trauma say it can be healing for a traumatized person to tell his or her story in fullness and in detail, so long as the telling is received with respect, presence and caring. The same is true in healing social trauma. There are many sore spots in the global cultural matrix, old bruises where people have been told they are less than full citizens of the world, even less than fully human. One of the tasks and unique strengths of cultural development is to help heal those injuries through the telling and receiving of stories. Around the world, the work of community artists has addressed social trauma with remarkable results.

Often, cultural action creates the container that enables people to face each other and to enter into dialogue even about the most polarized, heated issues. In the body politic as portrayed by the commercial media, most issues are reduced to a simple pro and con. But issues are complex. For civil society to flourish, we must create genuine meeting-places and promote genuine dialogue instead of this angry tennis match.

Artists are doing this better than anyone else. Check out Thousand Kites^{ix}, a national dialogue project addressing criminal justice. A collaboration between two groups based at Appalshop in eastern Kentucky, Roadside Theater and Holler to the Hood, Thousand Kites has created a film, a dialogue-driven play, an interactive website and other initiatives to involve everyone, from guards to prisoner families to policy-makers, in considering what it means to be Incarceration Nation, a major public issue that hasn’t been able to get a full hearing otherwise.

The fact that Datasen persists even as Storyland emerges is just the way things are: anyone who has ever tried to kick a habit knows that resistance is as much a part of the change process as are will and desire. Resistance will arise, even within ourselves. The cure is to receive information from multiple senses and sources, including those devalued in Datasen. The most powerful way to remain open to the widest spectrum of information from body, intellect, emotion and spirit is making art. In the flow of creativity, we are resourceful, imaginative, playful, embodied, empathetic, excited, alive. When we make art, we inhabit ourselves fully, we are at once most godlike and most human in experiencing the pure possibility of creation.

In times of great disequilibrium, offering a gateway to this state of being is an incredible gift and intrinsically, a spiritual practice. I like to remember what the great 18th century teacher Rebbe Nachman of Bratslov said: “The antidote to despair is to remember the world to come.” We can’t remember what has not yet occurred, but I think he meant that despair yields to a glimpse of a perfected world in the experiences that remind us what it is to feel entirely alive. When we transcend the specific circumstances of our lives, diving headlong into the stream of

creativity, we learn that even mundane things—even the focus, diligence and practice of craft that sometimes feel like drudgery—can be lifted into pleasure by remaining aware of their higher meanings.

WE NEED TO CREATE A NATIONAL CONVERSATION ABOUT CULTURAL POLICY AS SERIOUS AND BROAD AS OUR DEBATES OVER EDUCATIONAL, HEALTH OR ENERGY POLICY.

Cultural creativity develops our capacity to envision, dream and shape the future we desire. The January 19th issue of Newsweek carried Jeremy McCarter’s piece, “Will Act for Food,” arguing that the very election of Barack Obama—let alone the hope that our new president urges us to cultivate—was made possible by the work of artists. He wrote:

“Cultural issues, which aren’t a top priority for new administrations even in the best of times, will have trouble climbing very high on the Obama agenda. But in light of what this election has helped us to understand about the potency of the arts in our national life, the new president would be wasting a glorious opportunity if he failed to give them his attention. Partly it’s because the overlapping crises we face at the moment give him a rare chance to dream big. Partly, too, his singular story gives him a unique ability to make connections among people that might change the way we think about culture. But it’s also a question of his larger vision for society, which the arts could help him to realize. If he treats them wisely, he might foster a climate for creativity as unprecedented as his election.”

No one can predict the future with accuracy, but we can pay attention to what is emerging. I don’t think artists are better or smarter than other people. But many of us have developed skills of observation acute enough to read subtle signs. When I wrote the introduction to *New Creative Community*, I thought of the riots that had overtaken the French suburbs in 2005—violent clashes between young immigrants and the police. The New York Times carried an article by Alan Riding entitled, “In France, Artists Have Sounded the Warning Bells for Years.” Riding pointed out that musicians and other artists had consistently predicted this conflict, whereas newspapers and politicians had “variously expressed shock and surprise, as if the riots were as unpredictable as a natural disaster.”

So let's imagine for a moment that Storyland's emergence is a very real possibility, not merely a projection of my own hopes. What does that moment call forth? When I ask myself that question, three answers heave themselves out of my gray matter, waving their arms for attention:

First, we need to use this moment of disequilibrium and change to promote the truth that sustainable recovery requires cultural recovery. The opportunity is wonderfully described by Maribel Alvarez, Assistant Research Social Scientist and Research Professor in The Southwest Center & English Department at the University of Arizona in Tucson: "Far worse than the crisis of the credit and housing markets, rising unemployment, or external security threats, a crisis of imagination has already proven devastating for our national psyche, will, and spirit. Artists and cultural workers are untapped resources we cannot afford to ignore nor waste; artists' ways of innovation, improvisation, and inspiration must be the ways of us all."

Second, we need to create a national conversation about cultural policy as serious and broad as our debates over educational, health or energy policy. Focusing only on narrowly conceived arts funding apparatus such as the NEA relegates cultural development to a special interest defended primarily by its direct beneficiaries, and that keeps it minuscule and vulnerable. If we want special-purpose arts agencies to balance marketplace forces by underwriting innovative or otherwise challenging arts work, that's a great and laudable thing. But the fundamental basis for cultural policy needs to shift to an integration or infusion strategy that touches all agencies and issues.

On his first day in office, President Obama issued a Memorandum on Transparency and Open Government, directing every part of government to find ways to be more "transparent," "participatory," and "collaborative." I want to see an equally remarkable thing happen in the realm of cultural policy, through another three-point directive, which I believe could win broad, public support.

Point one would require every public-sector agency to accept the work of artists and cultural activists as legitimate instruments to accomplish policy goals in every area of public action, forming relationships with artists and organizations and providing training and assistance in how to infuse cultural action into national recovery and the sustainable government we hope will ensue.

Point two would mandate cultural equity, recognizing that the United States' common culture is a rich and varied tapestry of heritage and invention, and that pluralism and equity are essential to democratic cultural development. This would ensure a more equitable distribution of resources in contrast to current policies, which consistently privilege the red-carpet arts at everyone else's expense.

Point three would be to introduce a "Cultural Impact Report" parallel to the Environmental Impact Statement originated in 1970. Just as the law mandates assessing possible impacts on the environment of regulations, interventions and projects, the CIR would assess cultural impacts in hope of ensuring that decision-makers consider the well-being of communities and their cultural fabric before approving plans. How would the vast mistakes of what is sometimes called "urban removal" have been mitigated if the cultural lives of the neighborhoods emptied out to make way for new sports stadiums, performing arts complexes, freeways and downtown ghost towns had been taken into consideration?

After our White House Briefing last week, we adjourned to working groups to discuss how best to respond to what we'd learned. Some people focused on immigration, education, health or green jobs, issues that are central to social justice. But the largest group convened around cultural issues, which covers all the others. We hope to adopt a cultural policy framework that can be supported by and supportive of a huge diversity of efforts at cultural recovery. That will take some time to craft, but in addition to the three points I have described, our discussion thus far focused on calling for a "new WPA," a purpose-built program putting artists to work for the common good, and on policies to de-monopolize and re-regulate the cultural industries, correcting for the massive corporate consolidation that threatens localism and free expression.

Individuals can advocate for such initiatives, spreading awareness and taking part in campaigns to secure them. But the third task that keeps jumping up in my mind's eye, demanding attention, is something each and every one of us can accomplish all by ourselves.

We can challenge ourselves to ensure that whatever we do as artists and citizens embodies the truth of Storyland, which is that every aspect of our humanity has a place in the true discourse of citizenship. In the past, with fragmented identities shaped by Datastan, we may have been tempted to say that politics has nothing to do

with spirit or art, or that merely to dash something off and blast it out suffices as political action, or even to swallow that moldy chestnut of Datastan philosophy, that art and politics don't mix.

But now, in the service of cultural recovery, we are being called to a higher standard. It is time to demand of ourselves that our creations simultaneously achieve equal beauty and power as art, as political action and as spiritual practice.

No matter what you do, no matter who you are, the choice between Datastan and Storyland is yours to make every day. If you've been facing into the dim light of Datastan, you need only pivot, a tiny turn in place, reorienting yourself toward Storyland. We are never too far, it is never too late, there is no wrong reason to turn, breaking the chain of causality that binds us to what no longer serves us.

Holy, holy, holy is social imagination. Holy is the act of cultural creation. Holy is the great opportunity we are afforded in this moment, to risk being thought foolish, to risk declaring ourselves, to risk holding ourselves to the powerful truth of sparkling, unbreakable connection we glimpsed earlier in our visit to the story field—to support each other in standing up wherever a door is opened, from the White House to every corner of Philadelphia that has taken part over twenty-five years in creating the nearly 3000 sites of public memory under the auspices of the Mural Arts Program—even as the ground quakes beneath us with the spasms of Storyland, being born.

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ⁱ Marx, Karl. *The Communist Manifesto*. 1848.

ⁱⁱ Day, Dorothy. *The Long Loneliness*. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1952.

ⁱⁱⁱ Ginsberg, Allan. "Footnote to Howl." *Howl and Other Poems*. San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1956.

^{iv} Baca, Judith F. "Birth of A Movement." *Community, Culture and Globalization*. Eds. Don Adams and Arlene Goldbard. New York: The Rockefeller Foundation, 2002.

^v Goldbard, Arlene. *New Creative Community: The Art of Cultural Development*. Oakland, CA: New Village Press, 2006.

^{vi} Humphrey, Charlie. "Hold us accountable but keep us alive." *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. 11 Feb 2009.

^{vii} Download Jeremy Nowack's report on "Creativity and Neighborhood Development: Strategies for Community Investment" and many other interesting reports from the *Social Impact of the Arts Project* here: www.sp2.upenn.edu/SIAP/trfrock.html.

^{viii} Download Dr. Antonio Damasio's speech from UNESCO's Web site: portal.unesco.org/culture/en/ev.php-URL_ID=2916&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html.

^{ix} See: thousandkites.org.



Perspectives USA Spring 1953 Cover by Paul Rand

ESSAY

Marshall Plan Modernism: The CIA and the Big Little Magazine

BY GREG LONDE

In a 1962 editorial, Paul Blackburn, poet and then literary editor of *The Nation*, described a change in international letters after WWII, a change largely conditioned, by modernists such as “Pound, Yeats, and Dr. Williams.” These poets’ preoccupation with the processes and errors of translation had “grown into a climate of opinion and now [express] a real need. Now that colonialism has become an anachronism politically [...] it is as though we are witnessing the sack of world literature [...] by the American publishing business.”¹ Put differently, imperialism and the Spanish Civil War were yesterday’s headlines: Americans were finding a new way to be international, even a new way to be imperial, by bringing it all back home.

A decade earlier, in April of 1952, the Ford Foundation had announced the launch of a quarterly magazine of the arts designed, as *Time* magazine put it, “to show people outside the U.S. that ‘Americans can think as well as chew gum.’”² *Perspectives USA*—proposed and headed by globetrotting New Directions Press publisher James Laughlin—occupied newsstands in England, France, Germany, Italy and America in October, appearing simultaneously in the respective languages of each nation. *Time*’s description of the pilot issue further asserted that the journal gives “the flavor of a ‘little magazine’s’ fragile view of American culture, blown up to Ford-plant size.”

Of course, one needs a heap of financial support to create an industrial-strength “little magazine”: the Ford Foundation was among the favorite laundering sources for the “Congress for Cultural Freedom,” a front organization for massive investments of CIA dollars. In the post-War period, the CIA had a strategic interest in funding cultural initiatives that would either proclaim Western cultural superiority outright, or that would operate as a kind of paradoxical propaganda: art that embodied American “freedom of expression” by dint of its non-representational, seemingly non-ideological surface. In opposition to official Soviet socialist realism, the CIA

posed a contrary internationalism, but still couched this call in the rhetoric of advisory structures: “something should be done about sending as many American writers and artists as salesmen and technicians to the ‘undeveloped’ countries—to learn instead of teach. More of us here should realize *we* need the spiritual development.”^v

When the damning dalliances of literary fashion and state power were finally revealed in 1967, Andrew Kopkind lamented that while the “illusion of dissent was maintained” in such publications as *Perspectives* and, more famously, *Encounter*,

sincere proclamations that can be recovered from the archive of mid-20th century covertly funded arts initiatives—the cracks and hiccups and awkward pauses that sound all the clearer on a larger stage. Every conspiracy was real; but the ubiquity of the CIA’s economic and ideological influence in the world of letters winds up, in retrospect, seeming like a murky but often mundane concoction of black-ops “persuasion” and a bookstore’s Employee Recommendation section (“recommended if you like liberal consensus,” “recommended if you like anti-Soviet diatribe”). An example, in closing: in 1955, the US Information Services office in Paris requested from publishers their most

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bankrolled foreign exhibitions of Abstract Expressionist painting and made an earlier mode of modernist lyricism diplomatically useful almost in spite of itself. William Carlos Williams’s verse from the teens and ‘20s takes up a fifth of *Perspectives*’s inaugural issue. As such, a form that had been the preferred mode of distribution for poets like Pound, Moore and Dr. Williams thirty years prior—little magazines such as *The Dial* and *Contact*—offered a surprising design for mid-century literary expansionism.

This global gift of literary modernism was intimately and structurally tied to broader projects born of America’s post-War clout. The Marshall Plan began distributing funds to a devastated Europe in 1947; but it was also an oblique arts policy initiative, euphemizing the containment imperatives that lay behind such largesse in a flood of propaganda that accompanied the infrastructural bailout. A 1951 traveling exhibition, for instance, showed France *Les Vrai Visage des U.S.A.* (“The Real Face of the U.S.A.”)—displaying (read: fabricating) the untroubled prosperity of American labor relations, with a daub of local color.ⁱⁱⁱ Moreover, as Greg Barnhisel points out in an excellent recent overview of *Perspectives USA*, Paul Hoffman and Milton Katz became, respectively, the President and associate director of the Ford Foundation in 1950 fresh off of administrative positions in the implementation of the Marshall Plan.^{iv} For his part, Laughlin

“The catholicity and flexibility of CIA operations were major advantages. But it was a sham pluralism, and it was utterly corrupting.”^{vi} Forty years later, we know that even *The Paris Review*—the most catholic and flexible of them all—had state funds silently guiding its inception, a revelation that reignited the opprobrium of “corruption” and “taint” but also reminded us of how such outright condemnation is not adequate to a history blushing with awkward bluster and capable of boasting real successes of translation and international distribution.

Many contemporaries just found Laughlin’s project redundant—he often reprinted highlights of the New Directions back-catalog—or bureaucratically bland. It would be easy now—all documents declassified, all paper trails traced—to deride such a publication along the lines suggested by *Time*’s modernism-goes-electric critique. It is clear, that is, that we could see Laughlin’s “Intercultural Publications” as the compromised product of the so-called “Cultural Cold War,” this constellation of state-funded institutions, charitable foundations and publications that provided a veneer of aesthetic disinterest for a global power at the noontime of its neo-imperial day.

More interesting at the level of anecdote and more accurate at the level of political portraiture is a record of popular fiascos, embarrassed repudiations and frightfully

“representative American books” for use by their Public Affairs division. What Robert MacGregor of New Directions sent in reply was Baudelaire’s echt-American *Fleurs du Mal*, laconically noting, “you might find FLOWERS OF EVIL a useful item for the New Year’s presentations to people of importance.”^{vii}

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ⁱ Blackburn, Paul. “The International Word.” *The Nation*. 21 April 1962. p. 357-360.

ⁱⁱ “Enter Perspectives USA.” *Time*. 14 April 1952.

ⁱⁱⁱ Kroen, Sheryl. “Negotiations with the American Way: The Consumer and the Social Contract in Post-war Europe.” In *Consuming Cultures, Global Perspectives*. Eds. John Brewer and Frank Trentmann. Berg Publishers, 2006. p. 251-278.

^{iv} Barnhisel, Greg. “*Perspectives USA* and the Cultural Cold War: Modernism in Service of the State.” *Modernism/modernity* 14.4 (2007): 729-754.

^v Laughlin, James. “Note by the Editors.” *New Directions 15: International Issue*. New York: Meridian Books, 1955. p. 12.

^{vi} Kopkind, Andrew. “CIA: The Great Corrupter.” *New Statesman*. 24 February 1967. Quoted in Frances Stonor Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War: The CIA and the World of Arts and Letters*. New York: The New Press, 2000. p. 408-409.

(Saunders’s book published in the UK as *Who Paid the Piper?*). *Encounter*, started in 1953, became the most infamous example of the CIA’s covert funding: founding literary editor Stephen Spender resigned in 1967 upon the revelation of collaboration, unaware until then of the state source behind his backers at the Congress for Cultural Freedom.

^{vii} Robert MacGregor, letter to Mr. L.L. Brady, Public Affairs Officer, USIS, American Embassy in Paris, 1 July 1955. New Directions Publishing Corp. papers, bMS Am 2077 (1681). Houghton Library, Harvard University. MacGregor further discussed the use of *Fleurs du Mal* for “end-of-the-year school prizes next June, the library loan collections and the lists of available titles circulated to the 21 French-speaking missions.”



ESSAY

Creativity and Connectivity: Learning the language of the creative economy

BY ARDATH GOLDSTEIN WEAVER

Communicating the value of culture beyond ‘the choir’ is like language immersion. Arts policy makers must not only learn to speak the language of business—they must also practice lessons in the real world. A model for this technique has recently been tested in Happy Valley, North Carolina, a rural foothills region known for its century-old farms.

Historic Happy Valley in Caldwell County, North Carolina—about an hour’s drive north of Charlotte—gained national attention in 2007 when Google announced plans to build a server farm there. And yet, the transition of its economy from its sole reliance on the furniture industry to a robust economy that now includes technology, arts, and tourism began before Google’s arrival. Partnerships and connections between local community and government agencies—fostered with creative economy principles—encouraged dialogue and ensured the retention of arts traditions while accepting development.

To better understand constructing connections along creative economy principles, it is helpful to review recent trends in arts and society initiatives that use the ‘foreign language’ of economics. In the past decade, economists have been predicting a shift in the nature of the economy. In 1998 Pine and Gilmoreⁱ introduced the *experience economy*, moving beyond delivery of services to

engaging people and connecting personally—in other words, what the arts have always been doing. In 2000, the New England Councilⁱⁱ defined the *creative economy* and examined the importance of arts and culture in contributing to a region’s quality of life. Richard Florida’sⁱⁱⁱ 2002 promotion of *creative class* expanded the *knowledge economy*; art, design, and culture are integral to developing and strengthening an information-and-technology-based economy.

Creative class as a locus of the creative economy in New York City was vividly described by Elizabeth Currid^v, claiming not only the creative industries of art, music, and fashion but also the social networks of their workers and the buzz they generate. What appears obvious in hip urban settings also translates to ordinary communities; in 2009, Jeff Chang wrote in *The Nation*: “What we might call ‘the creativity stimulus’ goes far beyond job creation and even economic development... Creativity can be a powerful form of organizing communities from the bottom up. The economic crisis gives us a chance to rethink the role of creativity in making a vibrant economy and civil society.”^{vi}

The cultural assets that make communities distinctive are also potential resources for economic growth. *Place-based economic development* is yet another planning term relevant to embedding

culture in community and making the connections that invigorate neighborhoods of all sizes. Engaging residents and visitors in authentic experiences is at the core of this strategy. A sustainable local economy must be planned and developed as an appropriate response to the possibilities and limitations of a particular place. Locally driven and capitalizing on existing local assets, a sustainable local creative economy is dependent on creative entrepreneurship and long-range vision.

In fact, North Carolina’s local, rich artistic and cultural traditions have contributed significantly to its economy since Lucy Morgan organized the Penland Weavers in 1923 (the genesis for Penland School of Crafts); the founding of the John C. Campbell Folk School in 1925; and the creation in the 1930s of Qualla Arts & Crafts Mutual by the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indian. In the present day, creative sector employment in North Carolina is estimated at more than 4 percent of total employment; nearly 159,000 people are employed in creative industries, which include the arts, entertainment, new media, and design. These creative workers earn annual wages of more than \$3.9 billion. The presence of creative professionals in a given county is the single most important factor associated with the amount that visitors will spend. What’s more, creative workers are

strongly associated with rising household incomes, and counties with higher proportions of workers in arts-related occupations are more likely to retain current residents and attract new ones. Nonprofit and public sector arts organizations working directly with the North Carolina Arts Council provide more than 1,200 full-time jobs, \$43 million in annual salaries, and each year involve nearly 43,000 volunteers whose time is valued at \$13 million.^{vii}

These numbers provide context, but the stories behind the numbers are the real lesson. North Carolina's significant arts assets have gained national attention through the development of local, community-based cultural trails: Appalachian music, Cherokee arts and culture, African American music, and Historic Happy Valley. With University of North Carolina Press three guidebooks for visitors have been published: *Blue Ridge Music Trails*, *Cherokee Heritage Trails*, and *Literary Trails of the North Carolina Mountains*. Another initiative, Homegrown Handmade, brought the Arts Council together with the Agricultural Extension Service and HandMade in America. The resulting Web site^{viii} and guidebook showcases 2,500 you-pick-it farms, arts galleries, museums, and artists' studios.

Preservation and promotion of unique, local traditions made the North Carolina Arts Council an early leader in arts tourism. Arts tourism enables communities to create jobs and generate revenue from a strong visitor industry, and maintain the artistic and cultural heritage of the area. Through the Arts Council's Creative Economies grant program, funding is provided to model projects—such as Happy Valley—that make connections between cultural assets and community development.

Scenic Happy Valley is located at the base of the Blue Ridge Mountains in the upper Yadkin River valley. Residents maintain older agricultural traditions such as training and working draft animals, cultivating heirloom vegetables and fruits, and constructing traditional barns and outbuildings. They also pass down stories associated with significant historical events.

The valley was home to Daniel Boone during the years he explored Kentucky. In 1780 the Overmountain Men traveled the old road that is still visible in places along the river. Thomas Dula, who served with distinction in the Civil War, was accused in 1867 of murdering a neighbor, Laura Foster. Events surrounding this crime live on in the famous ballad "Hang Down Your Head, Tom Dooley," which is still performed by singers from the region. In addition to musicians, Happy Valley is home to craft artists, painters, artisanal food producers, and storytellers.

In 2004, Happy Valley residents approached the North Carolina Arts Council. They knew that their open land had value beyond mere real estate and sought help in preserving farmlands and protecting water quality, as well as conserving arts traditions that have been practiced for generations. They hoped to create new jobs and boost supplemental income through heritage and cultural tourism development. In 2006, at the recommendation of the Arts Council, Historic Happy Valley was selected as a demonstration project by the Place Based Economic Development work group—a coalition of representatives from the North Carolina Departments of Commerce, Cultural Resources, Environment and Natural Resources, Transportation, the Governor's Office, and selected nonprofits.

This collaboration among state and local government agencies and Happy Valley residents has connected arts and culture programs with infrastructure planners. Project activities include several tangible accomplishments:

Public programs: The Arts Council provided \$70,000 that supported folklife surveys and writing of resource inventories, production of music and agricultural heritage events that present living cultural traditions to the public, creation of pod-casts for driving tours, and planning for year-round experiences. A Web site^{ix} for visitors to access the arts and history of the valley will launch in June, 2009.

Greenway construction: Department of Transportation staff identified \$54,000 to complete construction of a two-mile section of a public multi-purpose river trail located in Happy Valley.

Farmland protection: The Jones farm on the Yadkin River in Happy Valley is a century farm, having been in the same family for more than 100 years. The site preserves important cultural resources, including the Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail and Laura Foster gravesite, and is used for public events that present the valley's living traditions. Department of Environment and Natural Resources staff brought the Jones family into partnership with the Foothills Conservancy, which applied to the Farmland Preservation Trust Fund and the Clean Water Management Trust Fund programs for \$334,000 to place a conservation easement on 134 acres of the farm.

Signage: Department of Commerce staff identified \$9,450 in funding from the Appalachian Regional Commission and the National Endowment for the Arts to support the design, fabrication by a local metalsmith, and installation of 21 mile markers along Scenic Byway 268.

Happy Valley provides a lesson about learning the language of creative economy and assessing

what makes a community creative. The use of creative economy concepts for community development can take three forms^x: 1) projects that identify arts and living cultural traditions that have regional, statewide (and even national) significance and bring resources to support those traditions into the realm of tourism; 2) projects in which arts and living cultural traditions are integrated into non-arts components such as small town development, entrepreneurship training, and creation of business incubators; and 3) educational programs that help sustain the arts resources of communities and regions. Happy Valley grew through connections and partnerships hinged on its creative economy.

There's one more teachable story from Happy Valley, developing right now. In 2007, Google established one server farm in the county. Its development impact is increasing the risk of losing the historical integrity of some of the valley's sites. Growth that accompanies new industry, like Google server-farms, must be managed to minimize the impact on the important historic resources in Happy Valley. Current plans earmark federal Transportation Enhancement funds coming to North Carolina through the Economic Recovery Act to preserve viewsheds and historical resources at sites in the valley, create additional signage and interpretive panels, commission public art, and prepare maps. An additional \$99,500 is proposed to be spent on this project from a cooperative effort now being planned by the North Carolina Departments of Transportation and Cultural Resources. These partnerships and connections that build on creative assets thus continue to enrich the community as well as the economy.

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ⁱ Pine, B. Joseph, and James H. Gilmore. *The Experience Economy: Work Is Theatre & Every Business a Stage*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1999.

ⁱⁱ "The Creative Economy Initiative: the Role of the Arts and Culture in New England's Economic Competitiveness." Boston: *The New England Council*, 2000.

ⁱⁱⁱ Florida, Richard L. *The Rise of the Creative Class: And How It's Transforming Work, Leisure, Community and Everyday Life*. New York, NY: Basic Books, 2002.

^v Currid, Elizabeth. *The Warhol Economy: How Fashion, Art, and Music Drive New York City*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007.

^{vi} Chang, Jeff. "The Creativity Stimulus." *The Nation*. 4 May 2009.

^{vii} See: www.ncarts.org/creative_economy

^{viii} See: www.homegrownhandmade.com

^{ix} See: <http://www.nculturaltrails.org/happyvalley>

^x See presentation by Wayne Martin, North Carolina Arts Council Senior Program Director, Folklife, on Place Based Economic Development for Arts North Carolina, March 2007.

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ESSAY

Whose economy?:

Understanding who benefits from arts-led economic and urban development policies

BY DOREEN JAKOB

Two years ago—on May 17, 2007—Berlin Mayor Klaus Wowereit opened the exhibition “Suitcases from Berlin” at New York City’s M Project Gallery to much applause. Many celebrated his claim: “Presented is the best that Berlin has to offer, its unique creativity. Creativity is Berlin’s future.” Ten renowned Berlin-based artists had filled special suitcases with Berlin-themed items to portray the city and its art scene. The show was part of the “Destination Berlin” sales exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art’s Design Store in SoHo which offered scores of products from Berlin designers for six months, making it the largest of its kind at MoMA’s Design Stores. The exhibition opened on the designated “Berlin Day,” and was followed by a business dinner at the MoMA for selected “ambassadors of Berlin’s creative sector” and New York guests to develop networks and links between the creative industries of both cities. These events may have looked like innovative arts policy initiatives designed to introduce Berlin artists to New York City peers and customers. Yet, in practice, they were arts-led economic policies designed to boost the international reputation of Berlin as a business and tourist destination. As the Mayor explained in his speech: “Berlin in a suitcase also invites you to personally experience the diversity of our city [...] With this the city will further move into the international focus as a creative metropolis.”

The arts and their economy have become much talked about during the past decade. Academics, journalists, business leaders, and policymakers have all pointed to the economic value of the arts. By now, the arts economy makes up a significant percentage of employment (especially in larger cities), and generates revenue, and taxes. Yet this direct impact of the arts on the general economy is far superseded by the arts’ indirect effect on tourism, economic growth, real estate development, and urban revitalization. Around the world, city and state policymakers have not only invested in the arts to advance education, employment, production and consumption, but even more so to enliven downtowns, and attract tourists, residents, and investors.



The arts—and their associated infrastructure of museums, opera-houses, arts districts, festivals and fairs—have become catchwords, sources of localized competitive advantages in the global competition of cities and states, favored tools for economic development, and a source for revitalization (and, often gentrification) of

previously underdeveloped, often-low-income neighborhoods. Arts-led economic and urban development policies have been debated within academic and public policy circles. It is surprising, however, that the traditional arts policy with its focus on aesthetic concerns and accessibility has neither addressed such issues sufficiently nor been able to provide ample alternatives to this trend in the pursuit of public arts education, participation, and civic responsibility. No doubt arts and cultural support has benefited from enhanced interest in the arts as a motor of economic and urban development. And yet, the arts-as-economic-development method yields disadvantages for individual artists, non-profit arts groups, and arts businesses, disadvantages often ignored within current arts policies and debates. The issue is, whose economy actually benefits from arts economics policies? Who are the beneficiaries and who are the underdogs of arts-led economic and urban policies? Among artists, communities, businesses, and investors—who benefits the most, and the least? Is arts policy without economic and urban development elements actually still feasible?

Before the 1970s, the arts were taken to be almost entirely irrelevant for urban revitalization, city-branding and city-marketing, with the exception of the tourism industry. The emergence of place marketing as a municipal strategy to improve public images and attract visitors and investment

thus represents a sort of first-generation attempt to engage with the arts in the pursuit of place branding. Once the development of modern communication and transportation technologies started to undermine traditional determinants of location, spatial barriers decreased and companies, goods, people, money, and information became increasingly footloose. Consequently, soft location factors like the image and quality of a place, rather than hard location factors like material resources, became more and more significant to economic development. Investment into artistic facilities or festivals, among other tactics, started to be seen as less of an arts policy but more so as a way to develop uncertain neighborhoods by generating symbolic value and national and international recognition through the arts. “Can’t get companies to locate in lower Manhattan?” “Don’t worry,” we were told by city officials last week, “get us more art museums and we will be fine.”¹

only be won by providing the right kind of amenities valued by the managerial elite. Consequently, policymakers should regard the arts as an essential urban amenity in order to retain and attract “talent.” Yet the governing bodies of such policies are rarely arts policy experts. Instead, creativity schemes are usually part of commerce, industry, labor, tourism, and urban planning politics—or in the case of the abovementioned Berlin example (managed by the Berlin Partner GmbH), a privately-run business development and city marketing agency. Thus, whether their activities and interests are geared towards a holistic advancement of the arts is questionable.

Traditional arts policies like scholarships and residencies tend to focus on the quality of the work and often select their candidates via expert committees. Urban and economic arts policies, on the other hand, are usually centered around the

prescribed to cities as an economic and urban development model is not an advancement of artistic production but rather an advancement of artistic consumption as a means for economic development.

Too often, it seems, city and state departments of arts and cultural affairs, especially when starved for funding and support, engage into arts-led economic and urban development schemes to gain political momentum and financial resources without seriously questioning whether and how such policies serve their long-term goals and needs; or the long-term goals of the artists utilized. So far, arts policy has not found a sufficient response to gentrification nor to arts-led amenity policies. The arts have increasingly been used as a tool for a cause that is different from their own economy, such that placement of the arts—as a tool for creativity, education, understanding, and ultimately, quality artistic work—has been

THE ARTS-AS-ECONOMIC-DEVELOPMENT METHOD YIELDS DISADVANTAGES FOR INDIVIDUAL ARTISTS, NON-PROFIT ARTS GROUPS, AND ARTS BUSINESSES, DISADVANTAGES OFTEN IGNORED WITHIN CURRENT ARTS POLICIES AND DEBATES.

This development strategy increased: from the late 1970s on, urban regeneration schemes featured quality of life components, tourism, and entertainment facilities. The examples are plentiful and range from single projects to multiplex entertainment centers often featuring dramatic architecture (e.g. the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, Lincoln Center in New York City, the Kulturforum in Berlin). Moreover, the gentrification of areas with a high presence of individual artists like New York City’s SoHo led many city leaders to apply artists’ presence-led strategies to urban development. Indeed, SoHo’s identification with artist live/work spaces and inner-city urban chic has become such a strong brand that even its acronym is being replicated. Among others, there is now SoDo in Seattle, LoDo in Denver, NoHo in Los Angeles, SoMa in San Francisco, and SuHu in Chicago; even the South Bronx—with its re-emerging arts community—is sometimes referred to as SoBro. Those namings are less provisions of artists live/work spaces, and more urban entrepreneurial strategies in which “the city has to appear as an innovative, exciting, creative, and safe place to live or to visit, to play and consume in.”²

Once the ideas of the “Creative City”³ and “The Art of City Making”⁴—both assessments of how the arts can and should stand at the center of urban and economic life—and the “Creative Class”⁵ reached the policy sphere, many city and state governments further endorsed the arts as a motor of economic and urban growth. According to Richard Florida, cities and states find themselves engaged in a “war for talent” that can

quantity of exposure and place-based publicity. Yet for the most part, artistic production happens behind closed doors, invisible to the public and with little effect on urban atmospheres. The development of artistic place amenities and identities, however, relies on visibility, public access, and participation. Hence, arts-led urban and economic policies usually foster exposure, marketing, and consumption instead of artistic production. But as economically stimulating and desirable enhanced market access and public exposure may be, the ultimate goals of these arts-led economic development policies are still different. Arts-led economic policy attends less to the development of an innovative, aesthetically qualitative, and self-sufficient arts economy, and more to place branding and urban revitalization potential. From Berlin to New York City to Shanghai, urban policymakers first fostered the development of local artistic communities in underutilized neighborhoods via marketing and publicity tools like designated arts districts, walking tours, or festivals but turned their heads once other businesses and residents moved in, displacing artistic activities. Artistic development was a boon, in so far as economic development was. Beyond their rhetoric of the importance of the arts as the motor of urban and economic development, urban growth coalitions embrace “creativity strategies not as alternatives to extant market-, consumption- and property-led development strategies, but as low-cost, feel-good complements to them. Creativity plans do not disrupt these established approaches to urban entrepreneurialism and consumption-oriented place promotion, they extend them.”⁶ What is

questioned. If the private company, Berlin Partner GmbH engineers arts policies as an international publicity event, then what role is left for the traditional, aesthetics-based, arts policy especially at a time of decreasing public budgets for the arts? Is it foolish to think that if “creativity is [a city’s] future” than a quality oriented arts policy will always have a voice in the political decision making process? Probably.

To continue to be viable, influential, and independent, arts policymakers and artists must tackle the circumstances of a dominating arts-led economic and urban development policy, and find a new voice within that trend to advocate for an arts policy with direct focus on the quality and sustainability of artistic work.

Doreen Jakob is a research associate at the Emmy Noether Research Group on Urban Renaissance Mega-Projects at the Center for Metropolitan Studies in Berlin, Germany.

¹ Kotkin, Joel. “The Museum Trap.” *New York Sun*. 23 Sept 2003.

² Harvey, David 1989. “From Managerialism to Entrepreneurialism: The Transformation in Urban Governance in Late Capitalism.” *Geografiska Annaler*. 71.1, pg.9.

³ Bianchini, Franco and Landry, Charles “The Creative City. A Methodology for Assessing Urban Viability and Vitality,” (working paper). Comedia, 1994.

⁴ Landry, Charles. *The Art of City-making*. London: Earthscan, 2006.

⁵ Florida, Richard L. *The Rise of the Creative Class: And How It’s Transforming Work, Leisure, Community and Everyday Life*. New York, NY: Basic Books, 2002.

⁶ Peck, Jamie 2005 “Struggling with the Creative Class.” *IJURR*. 29 (2005): 761.

Photo credit: CREATE BERLIN; all images are from the May 17, 2007 “Berlin Day” event.

TAP*MAP

How is the economic downturn affecting artists, arts communities, art making, and arts policies? To answer these questions and to gain regional perspectives, *The Arts Politic* developed **TAP*MAP**, an exciting feature, which will TAP into diverse voice-portraits of pressing arts politic issues. For the inaugural issue, **TAP*MAP** features artists, academics, arts administrators, arts council staff and activists from across the United States who, together, construct a more vivid and detailed map of the arts/economic terrain.



Why does it seem that in terms of advocacy, we are always one step behind? The fact that \$50 million for the arts in an \$800 billion stimulus became an issue shows we're still not communicating effectively. —*Gene Meneray*

Some are responding creatively, and that sometimes works. But many are forced to pull back on their artwork for lack of time, the expense of materials, or loss of work space. —*Ann Markusen*

Many artists and writers teach at universities, but there is a growing trend for universities to hire fewer full-time instructors and more adjuncts who earn less money and no benefits. —*Rebecca Manery*

Grant and scholarship funds seem to be drying up everywhere. —*Rana Faye*

This current crisis has forced us to develop relationships with every member of the legislature—something that has turned out to be a blessing in disguise. —*Mike Latvis*

I think we as a country make a huge, short-sighted mistake by cutting funding for the arts. —*Bridgette Raitz*

Read their full responses →

GENE MENERAY

Director, Arts Business Program
Arts Council of New Orleans
New Orleans, LA

How has the economic recession affected artists and arts organizations in your region?

New Orleans is in a unique situation during the current recession. Due to the disaster of Katrina and the levee failure, the city already suffered tremendous losses in population and resources in 2005-2007. However, right now, there's still plenty of rebuilding activity, which is (perhaps artificially) stimulating the economy, meaning the city is less affected by the downturn than other communities. Also, the city's economy in normal periods doesn't track with the national economy. We don't really boom, so conversely, we don't really bust. The largest concern we have right now is potential loss of money from national or NYC-based foundations as they see their endowments shrink. The second concern is for art galleries that cater to the city's tourist trade. As we see less convention and leisure travel, we see more of those galleries struggle. However, galleries and art shows that cater to the local and regional market continue to show strong sales.

Have any new partnerships arisen during this time?

Local museums and arts organizations have launched CVAANO (Contemporary Visual Arts Association of New Orleans). This is a regular meeting of curators and executive directors, and arose out of a need for coordination before, during, and after Prospect 1, the city's first biennial, which was held in fall 2008.

How do the issues affecting arts groups during this recession compare to those during previous recessions?

The recession of the early nineties basically pole-axed a number of establishment organizations: Symphony and ballet took major hits and they had to work diligently to right the financial ship. As noted, we're still somewhat shielded from the recession, and events of 2005 meant that all organizations were already operating with reduced staff.

What does your political outreach look like?

The Arts Council is a founding member of the Louisiana Partnership for the Arts, our advocacy group dedicated to securing and increasing state arts funding. There is a budget battle going on right now at the state level, and after Governor [Bobby Jindal] initially proposed draconian cuts we saw a strong grassroots push back to restore funding. Funding has been restored at committee level, but the process is still playing out. However, it was extremely encouraging to see the level of grassroots activity (letter writing, street protests, media outreach). We are cautiously optimistic that

funding will remain intact. The Arts Council played a significant role in these efforts through email advocacy, direct contact with legislators, media outreach, and data collection and distribution.

Do you think elected officials have any misconceptions about the arts community?

New Orleans elected officials have no concept of the size and stature of the visual arts community in the city. To many of them, the arts begin and end with jazz. They have no concept of the depth and breadth of the creative community of our region.

If you could ask a policymaker one question about the arts community, what would it be?

Why does it seem that in terms of advocacy, we are always one step behind? The fact that \$50 million for the arts in an \$800 billion stimulus became an issue shows that [the arts community is] still not communicating effectively [with policymakers].

Do you have any other thoughts about the arts and the economy?

It's hard to overstate the impact the arts had on rebuilding New Orleans after Katrina. Artists were some of the first people back in the city, and while everyone was expecting arts activity to decrease, it actually increased. We have as many galleries as ever, more arts-focused events, the Prospect 1 biennial was a critical triumph, and we've seen at least 30 new pieces of public art come online post K. This outcome went against every single prediction, including some of my own. In 2007, the *Chicago Tribune* wrote an article entitled, "A Culture's Sad Finale?" Today, the culture is as vibrant as ever, and one would be hard pressed to find a worse prediction.

BARBARA FUGATE

Visual Artist
Seattle, WA

Has the economic climate affected your art making?

Yes, the economic downturn has affected my art making in that I have picked up other work to compensate for lost work and sales in other venues (i.e. art classes, teaching, and art sales) and that extra work has cut into my studio time, drastically reducing the amount of artwork I have produced. This has been going on for nearly a year now—at least nine months. Also, a gallery solo installation / exhibition I had been working toward for a year now (was scheduled for end of this May 2009) has been postponed due to lack of funding as a result of the current economy. This would have been income for me as well as an opportunity to produce my art in a popular gallery in Nashville, TN.

In regards to its effect on your art making, how does this recession compare to other recessions? It feels wider and deeper in its effect—affecting more of my artist friends as well as our clients and their art buying (less buying or none at all).

ARIN MAYA LAWRENCE

Singer/Songwriter
Brooklyn, NY



Has the economic climate affected your music career?

The economic crisis has affected most things I do. I took a vow of poverty to go after this dream of making music. I have three jobs, where as I used to have one nine-to-five job with benefits. I have no insurance. Often enough, I have to decide that rent is more important which slows down the already seemingly slow process of music making.

Do you have any other thoughts about the arts and the economy?

I spent a few months in Paris last year and it was nice to live as an artist there because art is a valid and valued part of society there. Artists have subsidies they can apply for and obtain from the government. It's just nice to have the conversation already set into the society—art and artists matter. [Here] it's difficult for artists to make a living. Let's help them out since we depend on them. This is the dialogue that needs to be had to create a space for artists to create and be taken seriously.

RANA FAYEZ

President and Founder
Fever to Sing: An Arts Advocacy Collective
Blacksburg, VA

Has the economic climate affected your activist work? Fever to Sing isn't exactly a political organization. Yes, we do a lot of advocacy work for artists and musicians, but we only mean to make things easier for the arts by combining our skills and resources, not by trying to ruffle the feathers of the law.

What worries do you have about the arts and the economy? We're just worried about getting funding for our nonprofit organization this school year (since we are all students) because the grant and scholarship funds seem to be drying up everywhere.

ANN MARKUSEN

Professor, Arts Economy Initiative
Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs
University of Minnesota
Minneapolis, MN



What is the most important component of a strong cultural economic policy? A strong cultural economy policy would acknowledge the contribution of arts and culture in three broad realms in addition to the narrow economic impact of nonprofit arts organizations. It would celebrate artists as special shapers of our national purpose and economic role in the world—as communicators, innovators, creators of beauty, producers of badly-needed social criticism, and educators of our neglected right brains. It would cherish the link between arts and cultural policy and the viability of our cultural industries such as media, publishing, commercial theatre, live music, advertising, fashion, design, architecture and tourism. Just as science policy supports the strength of our aircraft, machinery, pharmaceutical, and other technology industries,

good arts policy will help support the international pre-eminence of these leading sectors. It would champion the contributions of arts and culture to diverse communities by nurturing identities, encouraging creativity and initiative, solving problems, and fostering future artists and artistic forms of distinction, all essential to our economic future. Inclusion of each of these and their constituencies, working together, is the most important component of a strong cultural economic policy.

How has the economic recession affected artists and arts organizations in Minnesota?

Several wonderful arts organizations have shut their doors: the Minnesota Center for Photography, Theatre de la Jeune Lune. Our Minneapolis Arts Institute has laid off dozens of employees. Arts programs at our regional family foundations have taken large endowment hits that will constrain generous funding. State and local governments have pulled back. Many individual artists are experiencing layoffs (arts and non-arts), fewer opportunities to perform (actors especially, as theatre companies curtail seasons and produce shows with fewer actors), and lower sales and commissions. Some are losing homes. Some are responding creatively, and that sometimes works. But many are forced to pull back on their artwork for lack of time (working lower wage jobs), the expense of materials, or loss of work space.

If you could ask an elected official one question about arts policy what would it be? Why does our (city council, state legislature, U.S. Congress) not understand and invest in our artists and cultural producers, presenters and support organizations when they are key to a large segment of our most unique, economically-successful industries that also win us tremendous good will around the world?

MALLORY D. PIERCE

Director of Marketing and Communications
Oregon Shakespeare Festival
Ashland, OR

Has the recession caused you to reinvent how your organization operates? We reduced the size of our budget by cutting salaries in the form of top management pay cut, reduction in retirement match, a few lay offs and unfilled vacancies. We also reduced non-personnel expenses e.g. travel, training, and materials. We protected the work on stage and out-facing audience or customer service areas.

Given the economic impact on art making, have you reached out to your local, state, or national policymakers in regards to policy decisions that would positively affect your

organization? Our state is deeply affected by the economic downturn and arts funding has been cut. We protested to our sympathetic state representatives, but they were between a rock and a hard place and felt they had no other recourse.

How does this recession compare to previous recessions? During previous recessions attendance did not decrease; this time we have experienced a decline in ticket sales.

MIKE LATVIS

Director of Public Policy
ArtServe Michigan
Southfield, MI



How has the economic recession affected artists and arts organizations in Michigan?

Dramatically. Coupled with a continued disinvestment in state funding, we have seen many of our organization's largest corporate, foundation, and individual donors disappear, reduce funding or re-focus their vision. Ford Motor Company, General Motors and Chrysler have continually been among the largest of supporters to arts and cultural organizations. Not surprising, given the current plight of the sector, we have seen grants and contributions dissolve into near nothing. A big sign of the times was seen in late February when the Detroit Institute of Art laid off just over 60 employees.

Have any new partnerships arisen during this time? We are beginning to see more and more partnerships that deal with shared resources (i.e. sharing an assistant or accounting services). Our organization has partnered with many of the statewide arts education organizations to mobilize a more effective arts education advocacy network. This

has enabled us to stop carrying the bulk of the work and has opened the door to the institutional knowledge of the partner organizations.

How do the issues affecting arts groups during this recession compare to those during previous recessions? In Michigan, there is a perfect storm. A crippling economy has sent some of our biggest corporations into bankruptcy, unemployment is among the highest in the nation, and our state budget is facing a \$2 billion deficit in the coming fiscal year. In the past when the economy forced states to reduce its investment, arts and cultural organizations were able to lean more heavily on private money as they waited for the economy to turn around...that is not the case today as this recession has avoided no one.

What does your political outreach look like? Our political outreach is broader than ever. Being the statewide arts and arts education advocacy organization, it is our job to work with legislators. In the past, we have mostly spoken to those legislators directly related to the budgetary process. This current crisis has forced us to develop relationships with every member of the legislature—something that has turned out to be a blessing in disguise. At the grassroots level we have doubled our list of advocates, consisting of thousands of people who are willing to act at a moment's notice. Since mid-February this network has sent over 10,000 communications to Governor [Jennifer Granholm] and the legislature, helping ArtServe leverage their support by obtaining support from many legislators who have never supported us before.

Do you think elected officials have any misconceptions about the arts community? Absolutely! Many see state funding as a handout and fail to understand that the state's investment is a very small portion of the budget for these organizations, but rather an important tool that helps them leverage funding from corporations, endowments and individual donors. In Michigan, the 290 organizations funded by the state arts council, are able to leverage the state's investment by bringing in over \$280 million in a Cash Match and that number grows to \$310 million when you add in-kind into the mix. Additionally, I think that many see arts and culture as elitist. They fail to see the attraction and economic significance our organizations and artists have on tourists, families, and corporations.

ARDATH GOLDSTEIN WEAVER

Research Director
North Carolina Arts Council
Raleigh, NC

How has the economic recession affected artists and arts organizations in North Carolina? North Carolina Arts Council Deputy Director Nancy Trovillion reports that most arts organizations in North Carolina were in good shape prior to this recession, having learned from previous downturns to reduce debt, streamline operations, build some cash reserves, or secure lines of credit. Most groups are now facing up to 10-30% reductions in their budgets for the coming fiscal year. Declining revenues will likely require cancellation of guest artists, shortened seasons for some and extending exhibition runs for others, and postponing capital projects.

Have any new partnerships arisen during this time? Joey Toler, Beaufort County Arts Council Executive Director, is finding opportunities to partner with local government agencies like schools and recreation programs, and is working to develop a stronger regional infrastructure in eastern North Carolina. Flat Rock Playhouse Managing Director Dale Bartlett is adding more productions to appeal to local residents, expanding their audience beyond their traditional western North Carolina tourist base. Now that finance sector support has dramatically declined in Charlotte, Arts & Science Council Senior Development Officer, Chase Law, is cultivating more individual potential donors.

What does your political outreach look like? This year our grants budget was cut 10% halfway through the year when state revenues began to decline. We started this year with \$1.6 million in non-recurring funding that obviously we will not be requesting. Our approach to politicians continues to be: emphasis of the returns on investment in the arts through enhanced quality of life, visitor spending, and retention of residents and businesses.

Do you think elected officials have any misconceptions about the arts community? Elected officials may not realize that the arts are an industry. They need to be reminded of how many people earn a living creating, producing, distributing, and supporting artistic products. They need to be made aware that the skills learned through participation in the arts are workforce development skills—creativity, innovation, critical thinking, collaboration, and effective communication. The arts are a resource for citizens and communities and need to have a

seat at the table for planning, economic development, promotion, and education efforts.

If you could ask a policymaker one question about the arts community, what would it be?

Do you remember how the arts have personally touched you? Start a conversation about how art programs make their community distinctive, how excited their child was at their first performance, or how moved they were by an arts experience.

REBECCA MANERY

Poet & Literacy Specialist
Chicago Teachers' Center,
Northeastern Illinois University
Chicago, IL



How has the economic climate affected your writing? Naturally, I feel a great deal of anxiety about the economy on both a personal and global level. I worry about losing my job; I worry that I will never be able to retire. I worry about paying off the student loans for my MFA that are soon to come due. I'm deeply concerned for people all over the country and the world who are suffering far greater hardships. In such times, art making can feel like a frivolous choice, but I'm convinced that art is, if anything, more necessary in bad times than good. As [Bertoldt] Brecht wrote at an even lower point in history, "In the dark times/Will there also be singing?/Yes, there will also be singing/About the dark times." I may soon be forced to cut my book budget, but most of the financial sacrifices I've made that affect my writing take the form of money not spent—to replace my aging computer, for instance, or to travel, which used to be a major source of inspiration. Should anyone wish to underwrite a sabbatical to Bellagio, Italy, I would not say no.

How has the economic climate affected your activist work? I work for GEAR UP, a program that prepares students for post-secondary education. Many of these students will become the first members of their families to attend college. Recently, I was disappointed to learn that the Obama administration has not recommended any additional funding for the federal grant that supports this work (by contrast, the Bush administration made five attempts to zero-fund the program). I worry that when our graduates are ready to pursue their college dreams, they will find fewer scholarship and loan opportunities available just as tuition rates are soaring.

How has the economic recession affected artists and arts organizations in Illinois? Many artists and writers teach at universities, but there is a growing trend for universities to hire fewer full-time instructors and more adjuncts who earn less money and no benefits. Salaries for the few full-time positions available are often outrageously low, but there seem to be more than enough people with graduate degrees desperate enough to take them. Less scholarship money is available for artists and writers who want to continue their studies. Private foundations that support the arts are under pressure to give to more individuals and organizations in need, which means everyone gets a smaller share of the pie.

BOB FREITAS

Contemporary Sculpture Artist
Maoli Arts Month (MAMo)
Honolulu, HI



How has the economic climate affected your art making? Hawaii has been hit by the recession and several galleries in Honolulu have had to close. The impact is that there are fewer venues available to artists to show their work and it is especially hard for younger artists. I helped to create MAMo, which is in its fourth year. MAMo uses established artists to open up galleries in Honolulu to showcase established and emerging contemporary Hawaiian artists during the month of May every year. This year the economic climate has affected the numbers

of people that are coming to the events. [The numbers of people attending] are much lower as people think about their priorities. Fortunately, we have good partners and lots of grants so the organization is not affected, but the concern is for individual artists. The artists have priced their artwork lower, but the commissions charged by the galleries remain the same.

In regards to its effect on your art making, how does this recession compare to other recessions? I am an older sculptor and I learned a long time ago that you need to keep investing in yourself so I invested in the tools and materials to carry me through tough times. I shifted away from making art for a living since I wanted to insulate my ability to create art from external effects like a recession or having to sell the artwork. The reason for this is to have maximum creative freedom which is not tied to economics.

Given the economic impact on art making, have you reached out to your policymakers in regards to legislation that would positively affect the arts? In Hawaii it has been very difficult to get local governmental support for the contemporary Hawaiian art movement. The reason is that many policy makers tie art making to the efforts involving federal recognition of the native Hawaiian people as native people under U.S. law. Historically, this dates back to 1893 when the U.S. Government sent the USS Boston Gunship into Honolulu harbor and the U.S. marines overthrew the peaceful Hawaiian Government lead by Queen Liliuokalani. Ever since that time, the U.S. has failed to recognize native Hawaiian people as Native Americans so that they could enjoy the full rights and privileges under U.S. law. Our efforts continue to focus on private foundation support with the objective of creating a dedicated live, work, and play space for the artists. This idea is patterned after Canyon Road Arts in Santa Fe, NM. These foundations have supported the logic that every year that new artists are recognized and their new ideas are shared that this cultural/arts endeavor contributes to the constant evolution of the living Hawaiian culture that can be traced back 2,000 years. This Hawaiian culture is still alive and it will be here for many years to come.

Do you think elected officials have any misconceptions about the arts community? Yes. Few of them take the time to understand and appreciate the arts. Usually there is someone in their family [who] understands art and these are the persons that can be influenced to support art. It is a very indirect approach, but it works.

BRIDGETTE RAITZ

Mixed Media Artist
Atlanta, GA



How has the economic climate affected your art making? Due to the dip in the art market, I have had more time to experiment with mixed media pieces and am speaking out more about policies through my art. In order to put my thoughts about recycling into practice through art, I have even begun making altered sweaters and other upcycled clothing. To me, the current economic crisis is all about possibility—the old standards are falling away as America gets ready to reinvest herself. Freedom reigns!

Have you reached out to your policymakers in regards to policy decisions that would positively affect the arts? I have reached out to see what my senators are planning to do regarding proposed funding for the arts in the [Obama] administration's budget for FY 2010. No word from them yet. I think we, as a country, make a huge, short-sighted mistake by cutting funding for the arts. If, indeed, Daniel Pink is correct in his idea that the "the right brain is rising" and "high-concept and high-touch abilities" will prevail, we can't afford to cut back and devalue arts education when the creative solutions that result from the minds these programs help shape will be lost.

Do you think elected officials have any misconceptions about the arts community? Unfortunately, I think they too often regard it as a secondary pursuit, an extracurricular, a perk, instead of seeing education in music, art, band, drama, etc. as equally important as the "core" left brain academic subjects. I am very heartened that President Obama has asked for more arts funding than we have seen for some time.

Do you have any other thoughts about the arts and the economy? "Never waste a good crisis!" I believe that our current crisis represents an amazing opportunity to chart a new path—for sustainable design, for new careers not even imagined, for many amazing ways to improve the health of our planet—the possibilities are endless. And these opportunities have sprung from the economic crash that has America looking for new answers and new solutions. The old conventions are crumbling because they cannot solve what we have ignored for too long. **TAP**

Issue One Arts Policy Brief:

ARTS POLICY STRATEGIES FOR THE
ECONOMIC DOWNTURN

BY DANIELLE KLINE and JASMINE MAHMOUD,
FOUNDING EDITORS

Each issue's policy brief is informed by the magazine's contributors, TAP's reporting, and additional research. This policy brief is written for policymakers, artists, activists, government officials, academics and citizens; it is written for those seeking to solve problems and progress arts policy.

Today's snapshot of the American arts landscape is a decidedly economic one. It is also bleak. Several institutions—Rose Museum at Brandeis University, Montclair Art Museum in New Jersey, and the Metropolitan Opera in New York City—are each slated to sell off their collections to fund economic exigencies. Arts organizations are folding, and some regular cultural happenings have ceased. Among them, the Milwaukee Shakespeare Theater Company, the Las Vegas Art Museum, Opera Pacific in Orange County, CA closed their doors; the JVC Jazz Festival—New York City's summertime regular—will, in the summer of 2009, not take place for the first time in 37 years; and the Sacramento Ballet cancelled its remaining season. Heightened museum admissions fees now accompany already inaccessible ticket prices for theatre seats and music concerts. In 2008, the artist workforce shrank by 74,000 workers.

Under the current economic climate, many arts institutions continue to be inaccessible and unaffordable. Many arts organizations are closing or significantly changing their operating structures due to economic concerns. Others are, at the very least, re-assessing their short- and long-term contingency plans. Make no mistake, successful artists and arts organizations abound. However, we remain concerned because we live in an America that continues to render public funding for the arts controversial. Earlier this year, artist involvement on Capitol Hill was largely part of a rigorous economic battle to secure a very scant amount of funding for the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). We remain concerned because many government leaders proclaim the arts to be a successful tool for economic development and job creation, and yet, during precarious economic times, most turn a blind eye and render an empty hand. We want to live in an America where government leaders help to create a meaningful dialogue with the arts community. We believe we can live in an America that works together to learn the language of a clear and thoughtful plan for the arts.

When viewing the economic portrait of the arts, there are two details to keep in mind. The first: the arts revive economies. For cities seeking to foster robust economic, urban, and community development, an arts-conscious policy is an effective policy. The second detail: arts output into the economy is often much greater than arts input from the economy. In other words, artists and arts organizations often don't reap the economic reward of the work that they sow.

Few emphasize this second detail so bluntly, but evidence of it is well-known. Ask an artist about gentrification, and she'll show you the trendy neighborhood she helped to pioneer, a neighborhood she can no longer afford to live in. "Arts districts" across the country—NYC's East Village, LA's Venice Beach—are evidence; many are no longer known as thriving arts communities, but rather as locations for high-end, celebrity-dense, architect condos. [For a longer list of these cities, see Doreen Jakob's essay on page 33]. Where have all the artists gone and how will artists reap the economic seeds they have sown?

This economic portrait of the arts is not all bleak; after all, the arts community is enormously resourceful. During this economic downturn, artists and arts groups have engendered new work, partnerships, and means of inclusion. Their work reminds us that the arts are a necessary impetus for economic and community and educational and citizenship development, as well as for arts for arts sake. It is this economic lens—that is both bleak, and didactic—that informs this Arts Policy Brief.

Assessing public funding for the arts leads many to support economic policies as the sole type of arts policy. Take for example this year's \$50 million stimulus bonus for the NEA, or President Obama's FY2010 budget proposal which includes \$161 million in funding for the National Endowment for the Arts and \$38.16 million for the Arts in Education program at the Department of Education, or the House's FY2010 budget proposal which includes \$170 million for both the NEA and NEH—the highest funding level in fifteen years. We applaud the White House, the President, and Congress for these (proposed) budgetary increases to the arts.

However, much more can be done. The current economic lens calls for a drastic re-thinking of arts policy that is not just led by economic policy. Rather, a progressive arts policy means a long-term investment in our cultural future that promotes inclusion, sustainability and progress. To advance such development, arts policy must come from language, positioning, education, partnerships, policy, as well as funding. Arts policy must come from the arts community, from activists, and from policymakers. *The Arts Politic* has chosen to articulate such a policy, which includes robust, diverse proposals that can be started today, or in the near future.

Build and disseminate the historical record of arts policy and activism. Policies that harm the arts are often enacted merely because the history of arts policy/activism is not well-known. [See our interviews with Judy Baca, who discusses how community-created, history-keeping murals were painted over in L.A.; and with Dudley Cocke, who speaks pointedly about the changes that overcame the NEA in 1997 that wiped out 90 percent of funding for Roadside Theater]. Mal-effects of undone arts policy are widespread: cultural sites are damaged or lost, community-development regresses, arts districts are replaced by condos and parking lots, and arts leaders are left re-painting the lost portrait of the historical arts memory for each new Administration. Many local, state, and federal government officials are now being re-familiarized with the nuts and bolts of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and Federal One (the collective term for the Federal Writers' Project, Federal Theatre Project, Federal Music Project, Federal Art Project, and Historical Records Survey), as well as with the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA), started in 1973, which trained workers for jobs in public service.

Every policymaker should receive a consistent briefing from the arts community that gives an overview of arts policy history, mistakes, triumphs, as well as consistent suggestions of possible arts policies. Building the historical record is a low-cost way to integrate arts sustainability into arts policy and activism decisions. Artists: invite policymakers to your performances, openings and screenings. Arts Councils: work with your community to make a historical record of arts policies, activism and events, and to disseminate this record to policymakers. Policymakers: listen, listen, and listen closely. Understand carefully how the legislation and partnerships you enact and the language you use affects the arts community, often in subtle, albeit profound ways.

Reposition "Arts" in a Place of Prominence on Whitehouse.gov. "Arts" is not among the twenty-two issues listed within the main "Issues" drop-down menu on Whitehouse.gov. Rather "Arts" is listed on the "Additional Issues" page, with a three-sentence description:

Our nation's creativity has filled the world's libraries, museums, recital halls, movie houses, and marketplaces with works of genius. The arts embody the American spirit of self-definition. As the author of two best-selling books—*Dreams from My Father* and *The Audacity of Hope*—President Obama uniquely appreciates the role and value of creative expression.

The secondary placement of “Arts” may seem to be a small issue; however, Whitehouse.gov is a significant website committed to providing thoughtful, intelligent information to all citizens and its language and framing of issues has a tremendous effect on national positioning and economic support. *“Arts” should be placed within the primary issues section of the website; and accompanied (like the other primary issues are) by consistent press releases of policies affecting the arts. By repositioning “Arts,” the White House will also set an example for state and local governments to raise the online profile of the arts on their websites. By including this information and additional arts-related events, blogs and video posts, as well as a more robust description of the arts in the United States, the White House will be signaling its commitment to the arts as they are, and as they are envisioned to be.* Here’s a suggested description from the Editors:

Our nation’s creativity is all around us in the form of hard-working mothers and fathers, students, activists, professionals, and scholars, most of whom will never receive mention, many of whom work two- and three- jobs so that they can provide for their families and organize powerful community dialogue, empower thoughtful citizen engagement, and ultimately, inject creativity into our great nation through their work in the arts and cultural industries, a powerful field for job creation. While arts and creativity fill our venerable institutions, it is important to recognize that the arts also fill our sidewalks with illuminating street art and murals; our slam poetry clubs with artistic words that engage in conscious-raising dialogue; and our live-work studios with innovative, forward-thinking uses of space. A strong arts environment creates empowered people and spaces to grow. A strong arts environment fosters diversity, tolerance, compassion, education and unity—global citizenship values—and engenders a stronger, more informed, and more responsible America.

Revitalize shuttered communities with partnerships that leverage the arts. Across the nation, once thriving neighborhoods and districts, are now notable for “for lease” and “for sale” signs. The “empty storefront district” is ever-present and ominous. Artists can play a large role in economic recovery and community re-development by revitalizing neighborhoods where businesses and residents have left. *Local and state policymakers should work more proactively with neighborhood and city development agencies, universities, businesses, and artists to create partnerships that grant artists and arts organizations free- or low-cost rent of vacant spaces in exchange for art that contributes to community development such as low-cost classes, regular concerts and film screenings, the creation of public works, and citizen involvement.*

Re-think tax codes to better incentivize artists and for-profit arts businesses committed to the arts as a public good. The not-for-profit arts model expanded after the NEA was established in 1965, along with the nonprofit tax-exempt code that encouraged fundraising and empowered foundations. Yet nonprofit theatres, museums, and performance galleries were primarily formed for aesthetic reasons rather than economic goals, often to present eclectic- or socially-conscious work and to expand theatre communities as an antidote to the commercialism, inaccessibility and narrowness of work presented in for-profit spaces. Today, there are limitations to the nonprofit model, and in the past decade a flurry of for-profit (or not-just-for-profit) arts businesses committed to producing art, in part for the public good, have grown up.

Tax codes should benefit these businesses, with, for example, tax write-offs for low-cost concerts or classes that benefit the public. Tax codes must also better benefit artists who contribute to the public good. One example is the Artist-Museum Partnership Act (H.R. 1126 and S.405) introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate by Congressmen John Lewis (D-GA) and Todd Platts (R-PA) and Senators Patrick Leahy (D-VT) and Robert Bennett (R-UT) designed to allow artists to take a tax deduction for the fair market value of donated works.

Tie public funding of arts organizations to greater inclusion. The arts should be for all. Yet, many arts groups that receive city, state and/or national funding still have economically-prohibitive admissions fees. *Mandate that arts organizations that receive public funding (or perhaps a certain level of public funding) practice inclusive public engagement methods.* This could be regular free admission days at the museum, \$5 symphony tickets, or suggested pricing night at the theatre. This could be the encouragement of partnerships that produce free concerts, which bring art to the people.

Increase arts business know-how and foster entrepreneurship among arts organizations. Some arts groups suffer due to lack of knowledge about how to run their businesses financially. Theatres, and music venues, and art galleries are businesses too—their economic growth should be situated within the business community, and they should be encouraged to harness economic and business tools, such as Small Business Association courses. There are also economic issues particular to arts businesses (lack of high profit margins on ticket sales, for example). To persist in the 21st century, arts businesses deserve a large-scale re-thinking of business to identify means to grow and sustain the arts; this re-thinking can come from arts entrepreneurial summits or conversations about ways to harness technology to create more viable arts economic models.

Create an Office of the Arts. Many arts advocates, such as Quincy Jones, have called on the Obama Administration to create a Department of the Arts and Cultural Affairs. The impetus towards a national department comes in part out of frustration with the National Endowment of the Arts, a limited funding agency that primarily serves nonprofit arts spaces (instead of for-profit arts businesses and individual artists). The impetus also comes from the perceived benefit of a Department of the Arts. Consider the dramatically heightened impact of local and state arts councils (especially post 9/11 when national arts funding drastically decreased during the Bush administration) that has produced strong state arts programs, funding and advocacy. Nationally, there is a need for a place to root arts history, policies, development, advocacy, connections, activism, and funding, as a means to advance the arts.

A Department of the Arts may be long off, but the creation of a smaller-scale Office of the Arts would be a boon to advancing arts policies. Currently, the Obama Administration’s “arts staff” are clustered within the Office of Public Engagement and within other agencies; all have other duties outside of the arts. An Office of the Arts could cull policy briefs from arts advocacy groups; build the arts activism record; foster economic literacy and better funding practices among arts groups; learn from state agencies to spread working arts policies; lead national efforts to revitalize downturn communities with arts partnerships; foster new conversations among artists, activists and policymakers; and ultimately forge a new bold presence for the arts in education, civic engagement, the economy, and our society. **TAP**

EXHIBITION

Artwork by:

Jeremy Novy

Nat Soti

Alonso Sanchez

Dennis Redmoon Darkeem

Jim Costanzo

Beth Loraine Bowman

Tomas Oliva

Erin McElroy

Art Hazelwood



Industry by Jeremy Novy / Photography / 2006

“This image represents my perspective of the death of the industrial revolution in America.”

—*Jeremy Novy*

LEFT:
Before Theater
by Jeremy Novy /
Street Art / 2008

BELOW:
After Theater
by Jeremy Novy /
Street Art / 2008



“This project was commissioned by the SoHi District in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The building was built in 1918 and was a movie theater up until the 1960s. It since has been several clubs including a strip club and a punk rock club. Since the 1990s, the building has been vacant. [I want my work] to confront the reality that once a neighborhood has one or two boarded-up buildings in plain view, things change. Crime starts to climb...drug dealing and prostitution move in.” —*Jeremy Novy*





And Now the Cupboard is Bare by Nat Soti / Digital Image / 2008

“*And Now the Cupboard is Bare*, part of my series, *Headlines*, is my response to how American industry won World War II. By outproducing its competition in guns, tanks, and bombs, American industry created an economic golden age by outproducing its competition in food, appliances, and cars. Somewhere along the way we stopped making things. We built malls instead of factories; educated shoppers instead of artisans. Somewhere along the way our national confidence became measured by ‘consumer confidence.’ We ate more. We drank more. We bought more. And when we ran out, we borrowed more. We ate. And ate. And ate. And now the cupboard is bare.” —Nat Soti [Co-Founder, Chicago Art Department]

TOP CENTER: *Untitled*

by Alonso Sanchez / Stoneware-fired clay / 2009

“At times there are boundaries as to what we can or cannot say.
The tongue represents...freedom attempting to manifest itself.” —*Alonso Sanchez*

**CENTER LEFT: *Some Cry, Some Don't***

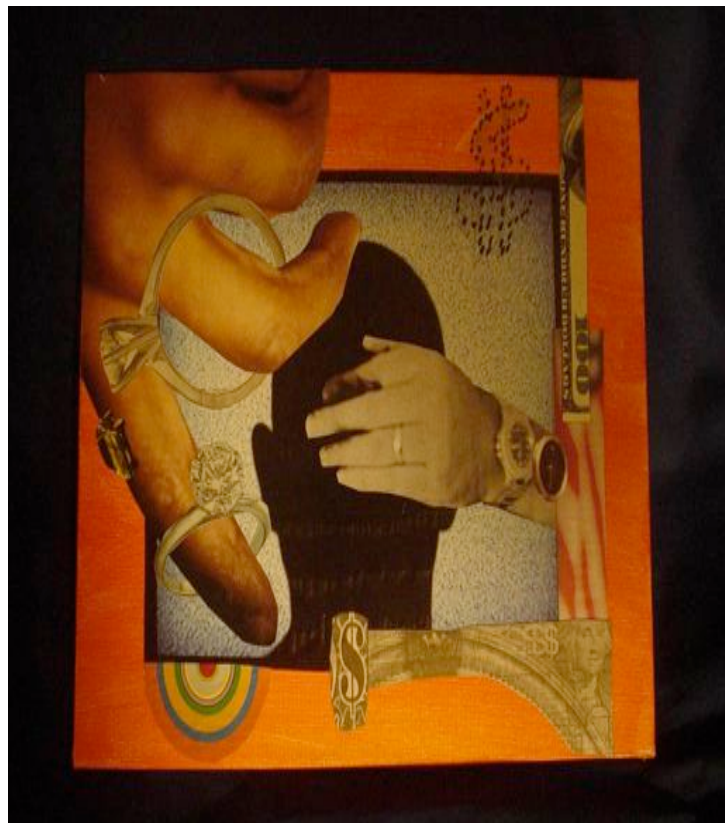
by Dennis Redmoon Darkeem / Mixed Media / 2009

“Our society has internalized consumerism and pop culture [so much so that our society] equates personal happiness with materialistic goods. The working poor are then left only with tears after yielding to [these] false hopes.” —*Dennis Redmoon Darkeem*

**BELOW RIGHT: *New Life***

by Dennis Redmoon Darkeem / Mixed Media / 2009

“A time [when] humans take the background while their materialistic desires come to the forefront. People become anonymous, defined by their goods. Creativity and knowledge become void.”

—*Dennis Redmoon Darkeem*



ABOVE: *Wall Street Sign* by Jim Costanzo /
 Photograph of his contribution to on-going Street Art
 Project / Part of the *Lower Manhattan Sign Project*, 1992

“With this sign, [I wanted to] discuss how government deregulation and Wall Street fraud caused each stock market crash and recession/depression since the 1890s.”

—*Jim Costanzo*

BELOW: *Wait to See* by Beth Loraine Bowman /
 Mixed media on wood panel / 2004

“Part of a series inspired by the exploration of forgiveness and reconciliation...the approach to the work is free, intuitive, and not bound by particular rules, regulations, or boundaries just as forgiveness, when authentic, is a rare and unbounded miracle.” —*Beth Loraine Bowman*



Sonnet 66

“Tired with all these, for restful death I cry,
 As to behold desert a beggar born,
 And needy nothing trimm’d in jollity,
 And purest faith unhappily forsworn,
 And gilded honour shamefully misplac’d,
 And maiden virtue rudely strumpeted,
 And right perfection wrongfully disgrac’d,
 And strength by limping sway disabled,
 And art made tongue-tied by authority,
 And folly, doctor-like, controlling skill,
 And simple truth miscall’d simplicity,
 And captive good attending captain ill:
 Tir’d with all these, from these would I be gone,
 Save that, to die, I leave my love alone.”

—William Shakespeare



My Sonnet 66 (After Shakespeare) by Tomas Oliva / Oil on canvas, collage / 2009

“At the present I am working on the re-appropriation of Shakespeare's ‘Sonnet 66’. I hurl it furiously through a time prism and I am nourished by the permanence of its resonance in the post-industrial society. With my art, I am not offering an expression of ‘truth’, [but rather] I am hoping to stimulate subtle perception in a world [in which] numbness is spreading [as rapidly as] ‘globalization’ and ‘confrontation’.” —Tomas Oliva



LEFT: *Boys* by Erin McElroy / Photo-transfer and oil paint hybrid on found wood / 2007

“I took this photograph during an anti-war protest where I hoped to capture a moment in which a deeply personal and interior feeling fused with a global struggle. I am deeply interested in studying relationships between interior and exterior conflicts. Can a stranger’s expression seem familiar to me because it echoes something universally human, something embedded in a collective aesthetic unconsciousness?”
—Erin McElroy

RIGHT: *Corporate Cookie Jar* by Art Hazelwood / Woodcut / 2009

“As AIG and the banking industry live and grow fat off the new corporate safety net, the people get less and less support. State cuts in California, where I live, target the poor, disabled, and the schools. As one state official said, ‘the poor take the services so those programs get cut,’ forgetting that the huge tax breaks for corporations, the loopholes for the rich, and the gigantic mortgage subsidies [are] in essence huge give-aways to the wealthy.” —Art Hazelwood



To view more art, and the artist statements by our Issue One Cover Artists, please visit: theartspolitic.com. **TAP**

POETRY

Visions of Infinity in the Milwaukee Art Museum

after Josiah McElbeny's Modernity circa 1952, Mirrored and Reflected Infinitely

inside a glass box
a disembodied eye
i recognize as mine

hovers like a green sun
or the eye of god
on a dollar bill

over emptiness
and reflections of
emptiness

weeks before
the bailout
will begin

-- *Rebecca Manery*

Government Support and Public Policy*

*[*On June 12, 2009, The Arts Politic put out a call on Twitter for Twaiku(s) and Twoem(s) (that is, a haiku or poem bounded by Twitter's 140 character rule) from the Twitter community. We sought to inspire poetry and inclusion of emerging poetic voices, and we agreed to publish the winning Twaiku/Twoem in our first issue. Below, we present to you the winning Twaikus, from poet and tweeter Lily Mulholland.]*

Government support
Global Financial Crisis
Quo vadis the arts?

Public policy
Upholding the common good
Slowly leaking out

-- Lily Mulholland

Are the Arts a Luxury We Can't Afford during a Recession?

Poor Arts. Seemingly forever tricked out to appear elitist or immoral, she is the face that launched the 30-year culture wars, which continue today. In the Congressional debate about the economic stimulus plan, there she was, just weeks ago, trotted out on the public stage to represent all that is fat and bloated. Republican politicians sneered as their Democratic counterparts recoiled at the sight of what they have come to regard as a toxic amenity.

Two months ago, the world celebrated the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Article 27 states: "Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits." Despite 30 years of self-serving political trickery and defamation, there persists a robust egalitarian Arts practice, no more luxurious than democracy itself. Let's focus the spotlight there.

-- Dudley Cocke

LIBRARY

INSIDE:

Book/Talk with Victoria Grieve, author of *The Federal Art Project and the Creation of Middlebrow Culture*.

Book/Talk with Susan Somers-Willett, poet and author of *The Cultural Politics of Slam Poetry*.

Film/Talk with Liz Turner and Reese Dillard, filmmakers of *Left Alone*, the YouTube-contest winning short film.

Film & book briefs.

BOOK/TALK: Victoria Grieve, scholar of the Depression-era, discusses her latest book on the WPA's Federal Art Project, art to the people, and why Depression-era studies are quite uplifting. *The Federal Art Project and the Creation of Middlebrow Culture* by Victoria Grieve (University of Illinois Press, 2009).

Interview by JASMINE MAHMOUD

FDR was not a huge supporter of arts policy. Instead it was his wife, Eleanor Roosevelt, who lobbied for federal support of the arts. What experiences in her life led her to support arts policy, and what language did she use to influence federal arts policy? Eleanor Roosevelt (and Harold Ickes, who had been a social worker) was the impetus behind the Roosevelt administration's support for the arts. In the early years of the Depression, Roosevelt and three close friends built a furniture factory called Val-Kill Industries with the intention of keeping farmers on farms rather than moving to cities, but also to create opportunities for creative work experiences. During the 1930s, Mrs. Roosevelt became deeply involved in the Arthurdale Homestead, a community created by the Resettlement Administration, which provided housing for unemployed coal miners in exchange for agricultural work and work in a furniture factory. Roosevelt believed, and repeated several times in her daily "My Day" column, speeches, and radio addresses, that the arts provided not only economic and social benefits, but less practical benefits as well. She argued that if the arts flourished, ordinary people would learn more sophisticated art appreciation, use handicraft skills as a creative outlet, and foster a more creative worldview.

In her defense of the WPA arts projects, Roosevelt emphasized the power of the arts to create more fulfilling lives, more complete persons, more engaged citizens. She shared a

nationalistic belief with many FAP supporters that the arts would contribute to the development of Americans "as a people." Finally, she came to the defense of the Federal Theatre Project when it was targeted by the Dies Commission, and defended art as free speech.

Did Eleanor Roosevelt tie her support of the arts to greater citizenship and human rights? I don't recall a specific occasion, but it wouldn't have been uncharacteristic of her or contradictory to her understanding of the role of the arts in human life. She basically saw the arts as a means to enrich individual lives and civilization. During her appointment to the United Nations, she chaired the committee that drafted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Article 27 of that document states: "Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits."

Artists in the Federal Arts Project included Jacob Lawrence, Eleanor Coen, Georgette Seabrook along with Mark Rothko and Jackson Pollock; the work of these artists reached rural communities and inner-city neighborhoods. How were these artists chosen? The FAP was famous, or notorious, depending on your point of view, for having no selection process for artists other than documented financial need. In addition, one of the guiding ideas of the FAP was that artists should be encouraged to

remain in their communities, rather than run off to New York, Chicago, or San Francisco. However, the sheer number of artists in urban centers meant that they would sometimes be sent to a rural area that lacked enough artists to staff the local program. For instance, Carl Morris, Guy Anderson, and Clyfford Still worked at the Community Art Center in Spokane, Washington.

Whose idea was it to have such an integrated set of artists in the 1930s, a decade before the after-effects of WWII lead, in small part, to vast societal integration efforts? The New Deal did not challenge Southern segregation, and all New Deal programs were administered at the state level. Those in the South reflected the laws of the South. It is well known that African-Americans on relief received less money than did whites, and that they were "the last hired, and the first fired." But most New Deal relief programs created African-American sections—the Civilian Conservation Corps, as well as the cultural projects. In my book, I write about the Harlem and the South Side (Chicago) Community Art Centers. Both were incredibly vibrant and active organizations that launched (or maintained) numerous careers, including those of Dox Thrash, Charles Alston, Augusta Savage, Gwendolyn Bennett, and Jacob Lawrence, to name just a few. The South Side Art Center is still functioning—what better legacy could there be?

[continued on the next page] →

Your book adds a new insight to cultural history by addressing the tension between highbrow critics/abstract artists and middlebrow artists/activists, and their fundamentally different views of culture. Why hasn't this tension been previously discussed? The middlebrow has been discussed extensively in literature, but not in the visual arts. I'm not sure why this omission has persisted, but perhaps because organized attempts to address the divide between art and the "common man" have been so intermittent. Perhaps with President Obama's arts initiatives, these fundamentally different views of culture can be addressed with less acrimony than in the culture wars of the 1980s and 1990s.

You write that the early 20th-century arts activists from the Arts and Crafts Movement championed fine arts as a means to "eliminate the daily harsh realities experienced by the urban poor and as a means of social uplift." How did their theories influence the creation and execution of the Federal Arts Project? Arts activists, both political progressives and Arts and Crafts activists, believed in the "highbrow" idea that art could elevate daily life, provide spiritual fulfillment, and assuage the poor working and living conditions of the working classes. The progressive activists that I mention in my book are settlement house workers like Jane Addams, education activists like John Dewey, and museum professionals like John Cotton Dana. Each of these individuals was very influential in terms of spreading such ideas through publications, speaking engagements, and educating later political activists, educators, and museum professionals.

What was the relationship between these art activists and the federal government?

The direct link between early 20th-century arts activists and the Federal Art Project is the relationship between Holger Cahill, the eventual director of the FAP, and his mentor John Cotton Dana, the director of the Newark Museum. It was at the Newark Museum that Cahill learned many of the ideas he put into practice in the FAP in the 1930s and early 1940s.

What can current arts activism groups learn from their efforts? Quite a lot has changed since the 1930s in the world of federal arts policy. I think that one of the best lessons of the FAP, though, is that in terms of the arts, you must meet people where they are. You will have more success in engaging them if art is not mystifying or hard to grasp.

Dana created exhibits from teacups and five-cent vases, not "difficult" modern art. What engages young people today? Animation, computer graphics, music. There have been recent examples of museums attempting to bring in new audiences using such strategies. Put the 'OM' in MoMA for example—yoga on Saturday mornings in the gallery!



FAP was conceived not only to enrich the public with artwork, but also to preserve the creative skills of artists. What were the policy arguments that supported the latter? The WPA cultural projects made the argument that artists, musicians, actors, and writers were the same as any other white-collar worker. This "artist-as-worker" idea supported the contention that if these workers allowed their skills to go unused for a decade, they would be lost. Therefore, rather than employing painters or trumpet players to dig ditches or plant trees, they should be hired to use their particular skills for the good of the nation.

What are your thoughts on why many European nations developed a department of arts and cultural affairs, while the United States never did, and still lacks a Department of the Arts? There has been a lot of discussion about why the U.S. has never implemented a centralized arts bureau, as have many European nations. My research on the 1930s adds to this—the perception of the "starving artist" contributed to a lack of funding. One congressman achieved rounds of laughter and

applause when he listed artists who had completed their masterpieces while starving in garrets. In other words, not everyone was willing to conceive of the "artist-as-worker."

What were the limits of the FAP? In terms of economic revitalization, the Federal Art Project was indeed limited, as was the entire New Deal. FDR himself was always uncomfortable with deficit spending, and he was not inclined to support a permanent Bureau of the Arts, in the tradition of some European countries. Congressional conservatives and other critics had been targeting the WPA for years, and when the economy began to revive, the program was an easy target. By 1943, many WPA projects couldn't hire enough people because defense industry jobs paid so much better.

Were there desired results that weren't realized? I think that for the years in which the FAP and other cultural projects existed, they achieved desired results. People who had never seen or experienced art, music, or theatre were able to do so. Careers were launched, and saved. Ideas were rooted that later flowered under the NEA and NEH, if not to the extent that some FAP advocates would have liked. I don't think that the divide between art and the people has been eradicated by any means, but I do think that it has shrunk considerably compared to what it had been. Ideas about what "counts" as art have changed radically, and as a result, more people are culturally engaged today than in the 1920s.

Who was your favorite visual artist of the 1930s? Hmm... my favorite artist? That's tough. Among printmakers, I like Elizabeth Olds. Among painters, it's Clyfford Still. I've also been researching the work of Irving Norman and Vanessa Helder.

The focus of much of this book and of your scholarship is the 1930s. What about that decade do you find most compelling?

Political, economic, and social alternatives seemed so viable. For a moment, the gears were stuck, and many other possibilities emerged. The Depression exposed glaring inequalities that working class and middle class people felt compelled to challenge, and they came up with creative ways to do so. I am fascinated by the ways in which art and politics collide and influence one another, by the ways in which people use culture to express political ideas, and in the 1930s the connections between the two are very strong.

TAP

BOOK/TALK: Poet and author Susan Somers-Willett talks about the branding of poetry slams and slam-poets, details why slam poetry is moving mainstream, and outlines the problems that commercialism poses to politically-minded poets.

The Cultural Politics of Slam Poetry: Race, Identity, and the Performance of Popular Verse in America by Susan Somers-Willett (University of Michigan Press, May 2009).

Interview by RONAMBER DELONEY & JASMINE MAHMOUD

JASMINE: Did you catch the White House Poetry Jam featuring, among others, spoken word by Mayda del Valle, Jamaica Osorio and Joshua Bennett? The mass reception has been mixed. Some applaud the White House for featuring “cutting-edge” artists; others are blasting this event because of its difference from what the mainstream associates with art. What are your thoughts? I think this event underscores what many critics forget to mention about slam and spoken word poetry: that its audience is there not only to hear poetry but to engage in political exchange. One of the main appeals of a poetry slam, or poetry “jam” in this case, is that the engagement is both literary and extra-literary. These events celebrate the performance of poetry but they also celebrate the performance of marginalized identities and calls for social change.

The opening remarks of President and Mrs. Obama make this political imperative of slam and spoken word poetry clear. Michelle Obama introduced the event as “another way for us to open up the White House and once again make it the People’s House—to invite people from all different backgrounds to come and share their stories and speak their minds” and to “be open to hearing other people’s voices.” By other people’s voices, she means the voices of the disenfranchised: people of color, the urban poor, women, and youth. Her continual reference to the White House’s new “openness” indicates that they are interested in poetry and authors that challenge the social and aesthetic boundaries of high art. This is not Laura Bush’s idea of an evening of poetry, in other words.

As for this work being “cutting edge”—I’m not so sure about that. Although del Valle, Osorio, and Bennett are fine artists in their own rights, they perform work that is pretty expected from an audience familiar with spoken word poetry: personal narratives from people of color that proclaim the validity of their social positions. The real challenge for a spoken word poet is how to make that proclamation new, to perform it in a fresh way. When one succeeds, or when one has a brand new audience that hasn’t heard much of that before, the poetry can be read as cutting edge. But for a slam veteran like me, performance poems about marginalized identity need to do more than just be proclamations. They need to also be formally innovative and provoke deeper questions about how identity operates to garner the “cutting edge” title.

I also worry about the branding of this event as a “poetry jam”—I realize there was some confusion in the press about whether or not this was going to be a “slam” (a formal competition with a strict set of rules) or something else. I get what the Obamas were going for with this term—they wanted to convey that the work being performed was non-competitive spoken word poetry and which for the most part wasn’t academic—but the term “poetry jam” puts Russell Simmons’ fingerprints all over this evening and represents his branding of spoken word poetry for his own commercial purposes (further represented by his Def Jam record label and franchises like *Def Comedy Jam* and *Def Poetry Jam*). The fact that del Valle, Osorio, and Bennett have all appeared on Russell Simmons-branded HBO programs—del Valle on *Russell Simmons Presents Def Poetry* and Osorio and Bennett on *Russell Simmons Presents Brave New Voices*—should not be lost on us. For me, the term “jam” signals that this new literary “openness” is also what is commercially viable, perhaps even sanctioned. That’s highly ironic for poetry that we expect to be grassroots, politically subversive, and largely non-commercial.

RONAMBER: I think slam rules limit the experience that the artist and audience could have, were props and time limits non-existent. However, without these rules, I know contemporary slam poetry as a genre wouldn’t exist because how could it then be distinguished from theatre? Do you think the marginality of slam poetry as a non-lucrative career path is because of its own politics of performance, or do you think the social interest in slam poetry is being hindered by the dominance of other normative, pop entertainment? That’s a pretty complicated question that requires taking

in a lot of “what if?” scenarios. Let me define the terms first. I think of slam poetry as what is being performed competitively in local and national competitions. Spoken word poetry is a much broader category, but it doesn’t entail poets competing against each other for scores. Instead, in popular American use, the term connotes poetry performed in the commercial sphere and is often aligned with hip-hop culture and African-American, urban, and/or underclass expressions. Both slam poetry and spoken word poetry entail politicized performances of marginalized identities, and both can disseminate politically subversive messages. The difference between them is that spoken word poetry is performed in the commercial sphere where slam is not.

That’s the theoretical distinction I like to make. In practice, however, the boundary between these worlds is very slippery, since many of the same poets skate between slam and spoken word venues performing the very same poems. That makes it hard to say that one venue is hindering the other or that one venue is more open to political expression. I think poets are more interested in what the carrot is at the end of the stick: if they are more inclined to being lauded by a live audience, they choose slam, if they want to make a viable career that will help pay some bills, they choose spoken word. Some poets move from slam to spoken word and never look back; some poets shift between the competitive and commercial contexts pretty seamlessly. Both entail crafting an argument to an audience—usually a political one—even as they are contextually different. The compelling question for me, the one that lies at the center of my book, is how and why American audiences receive politicized performances of identity the way that they do.

RONAMBER: Do you think that a bridge to the mainstream can be achieved without sacrificing thematically the political voice of slam poetry? I know *Def Poetry Jam on Broadway* made it to mainstream theatre but that audience is small compared to other audiences. On the contrary, I think the political voices we hear at slams are proving appealing to mainstream audiences and are at the heart of the success of projects like *Russell Simmons Presents Def Poetry* on HBO, *Def Poetry Jam on Broadway*, and his new series *Russell Simmons Presents Brave New Voices*. These programs hinge on marginalized poets’ expressions of personal and political strife, and so just tuning in can feel like a political act for white, middle-class audience members. Their consumption of a performed poem becomes a way to support the voices of the disenfranchised.

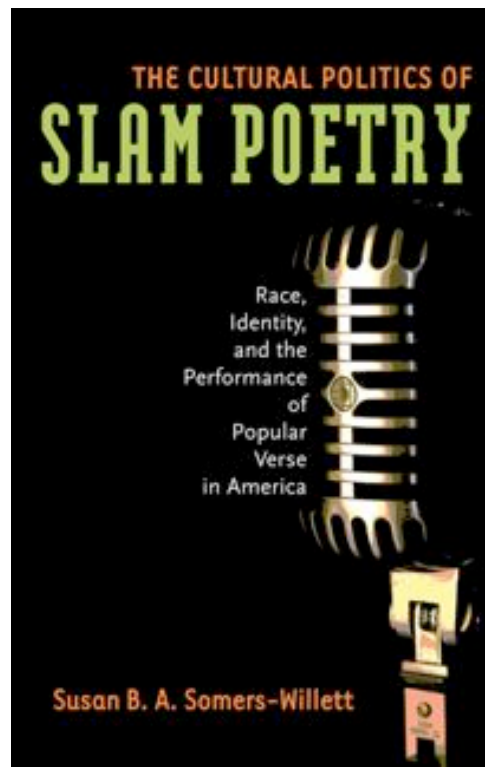
The problem is, of course, that those programs are designed to promote *certain* expressions of politics and identity in order to be commercially viable. So in the *Def Poetry* series, for example, we see a predominance of black, male, urban, and underclass voices performed in the hip-hop idiom. At the same time, we see artists and hosts wearing clothing from Russell Simmons's Phat Farm line on the show, Mos Def rapping to introduce episodes, recording artists like DMX, Kanye West, and Common sprinkled in among the featured artists. It's pretty clear that Russell Simmons is doing his best to connect spoken word poetry with the commercial viability of hip-hop in the popular imagination. In fact, he makes no apologies about his commercial aspirations; in the film *Slam Planet* Simmons says of poets appearing in his *Def Poetry* projects, "These niggas are honest as the day is long. They are commercial as the day is long. They are commercial niggas like me, and there's nothing wrong with that."

Of course, becoming a "commercial nigga" poses a real dilemma for the politically-minded poet. On one hand, participating in a commercial venture like this offers an opportunity to get politically subversive messages out to a much wider audience. On the other hand, one has to participate in and maybe even reflect commercial interests in her poetry—I'm thinking particularly of poets who have performed poems as advertisements for major companies. Furthermore, the desire of white, middle-class audiences to consume and reward what they see as ethnically or socially "other" can perform an act of "liberal violence" (to borrow Gareth Griffiths's term), fetishizing the poet and further marginalizing those who are already marginalized.

Given all this, I think slam poetry's introduction to mainstream audiences is incredibly complicated, involving both sacrifice and possibility. Staceyann Chin summed up this dilemma really well in a piece she wrote for *Black Issues Book Review*. She says of her participation in *Def Poetry* projects: "The dance of survival in this new world of art and money is the dance of the middle ground—one has to straddle the commercial/mainstream and the not-for-profit/underground...I am walking a tightrope between poetic prostitution and art—and that, my dear, is the only way not to die as an artist."

RONAMBER: I see the conversations about identity happening in the U.S. at

poetry slams through the performance of the *body authentic*, as you write about. Yet, when I remember the time I spent in Germany, I must admit, I never saw this conversation happen on stage at a poetry slam unless it was a black poet from the U.S. on stage. Do you think the only transferable elements of U.S. slam poetry are its politics of performance regarding slam rules? If each local appropriation of the poetry slam around the world creates its own discursive trajectory, how can slam poetry be a more transportable bridge toward establishing a global network of poets with a common activist goal?



This is a great question, RonAmber. You're right that each poetry slam around the world has a different flavor and discursive trajectory, just as different local slams in the U.S. differ from each other depending on their regular venues, locales, and audiences. The difference in the global context has to do with the fact that cultural politics in the U.S. are very different than other places around the globe. Here the politics of ethnicity and race seem paramount, whereas in some places in Europe, class is the foremost issue. This is a real success of slam, I think, for it has encouraged poets to speak to their local audiences in relevant and entertaining ways, as I think creator of the slam Marc Smith had always hoped. One of his main ideas in founding the slam was that the poet should

be in the service of the audience, and so it should make sense that poets are responding to local issues that need to be addressed, even as those issues may differ globally.

I do think there is a common element among slams internationally, and that is its spirit—a sense of willing play, of entertainment, and of democracy. Sometimes that gets translated into an anti-establishment vibe, particularly as it pertains to the academy or canonical literature. But mostly it just means that whether one is going to see a slam in Germany or the U.S., audiences are there to have fun and experience poetry in a new way. I went to an event billed as a poetry slam in Paris several years ago, and it looked nothing like a slam in the U.S. except for the ebullience of the performers. One poet performed his entire poem while speaking through a bullhorn! And you know what, I thought it was great! Fun is something we often forget about when marrying politics and arts, but it is incredibly necessary. This spirit of the slam is ultimately what can help build a sense of community between slam poets globally—and in turn how the slam can become a sphere for social and political exchange.

RONAMBER: Can the title, "best slam poet," achieved through events such as the National Poetry Slam, truly be achieved? Assuming the title can be reached, how can the title preserve an open platform for activating political voice amongst writers and not just "slam poets?" As for the title of the best slam poet being deserved...well, I've been to slams where I thought the most electrifying performance was passed over and others where the poet who blew my socks off won. It's a crapshoot, and on any given night poets are at the mercy of a certain randomly-selected pool of five judges who may or may not do a good job in my personal estimation. In this regard a slam title, although a sign of incredible prestige, is ultimately unimportant. What remains important to me is that slams are crucibles where poets speak out to audiences, audience members speak back to poets, everybody speaks back to judges...it's a veritable melee of talk! In this setting, the poem is not just a set of words that exist on the page that then are imparted aloud. At a slam, the poem becomes *an experience*; it exists in the exchange between poet and audience in that particular space and time.

For more on Susan B.A. Somers-Willett, check out her website: susansw.com. **TAP**

FILM/TALK: Liz Turner & Reese Dillard—filmmakers who won the “7 Conversations in 7 Days” YouTube Video Contest—discuss messaging in 105 seconds and the financial aspect of marriage limitations imposed on same-sex couples. *Left Alone – A Freedom to Marry Short* by Liz Turner and Reese Dillard.

Interview by **RONAMBER DELONEY**

When you found out about the contest, what were your immediate ideas and why did you decide on the theme you ultimately chose? REESE: The first thing I thought about was how people in the LGBT community tend to be dehumanized by our heterosexual peers. So the objective for me was to emphasize the emotions that we all feel as human beings, particularly the pain of losing someone you love. LIZ: We had a few ideas, but the one that resonated was dealing with the emotional distress, legalities, and injustice that occurs when a person in a relationship dies and their partner/spouse is not [legally] protected.

Why did you focus deeply on the financial aspect of the couple in your film? Why do you feel that the question of inheritance—in same-sex couple relationships—is overlooked by those who argue against gay marriage? LIZ: We chose to focus on the financial aspect because a lot of people don't take that aspect into consideration when they oppose same sex marriage. It is extremely unfortunate to lose everything that you've created with another person due to the legalities that prohibit such a union. REESE: We felt exposing discrimination in financial terms would be something that everyone on every level could understand. In our American landscape, people are dealing with having their financial lives turned upside down because imbalances in our social system and laws favor certain groups of people over others.



As a filmmaker, is there a certain process from concept to execution that you follow when you create? REESE: When collaborating on projects, we tend to brainstorm individually and then come together and present our ideas to one another. From there we engage in a process of adding to one another's ideas until we come up with a concept that we both like.

Since the contest asked for short documentaries, how did you handle selecting material that you could and couldn't include? Do you feel like you had to compromise any part of your objective in order to make the documentary short? LIZ: Shorts are a challenge since you have limited time to tell a story and get your point across. They are also a blessing because more people tend to watch until the end because of the length. I don't think we had to compromise much because of the short category. The contest allotted for five minutes and we barely used two. The script was on point since it gave you a lot of information within the first minute.

As an artist, why do you feel it is important to tap into your creativity despite your frustration with the gay marriage ban? REESE: As artists, our creativity allows us to find answers and make peace with our world. It allows us to use our own interpretation to assess how we feel and to not rely on how we are told to or expected to feel, which I feel is a revolutionary act in and of itself.

How do you think viral media like YouTube that make it easy to share video materials can be used to create more artistic works for social justice issues? LIZ: It is a new frontier that is about to be explored. I'm seeing a lot of grassroots organizations, non-profits, and foundations catch on and see that you can reach a huge demographic and also create a buzz. I'm excited. As an artist, I'm able to get a range of feedback on my work that was previously limited. I think there should be funding for online campaigns. **TAP**

FILM/BRIEFS by Caitlin Morris

Abraham Obama. In 2008, street artist Ron English created the image Abraham Obama. He was inspired by the similarities between the tall, skinny Senators-turned-Presidents from Illinois; English said: “I believe Obama will take up Lincoln's challenge of uniting the country.” In a pop-surrealist style, English crafted the Abraham Obama artwork as Obama's face superimposed onto Lincoln's. Once created, the image first publicly appeared in South Boston for the “A politic” exhibition. Then it began to multiply and travel across the United States, in an act of guerilla street artfare. Rather than stir controversy, however, conversation emerged from Abraham Obama's travels. In downtown Colorado Springs, artists covertly made additions to an installation of the image on the side of the local restaurant, Poor Richard's, creating a public forum for artistic and political discussion. Other artists and musicians took up the image's cause including Shepard Fairey, Jack Medicine, David Choe, Sam Flores, Will.I.Am and Morgan Spurlock. The documentary film *Abraham Obama* follows these travels; the film is in many ways another portrait—of the iconic image and of America's grassroots artistic landscape. *Abraham Obama* is a documentary film directed by Kevin Chapados.

The Youngest Candidate. “Do something positive. All of the change that we have been hearing is going to happen within the next four or eight years, it's not going to be done without you guys. So make sure to go out there and get involved. The best way to go about it is just doing something that you feel is good for yourself.” This, a message from Raul De Jesus, a 20-year-old mayoral candidate from Hartford, CT, and a subject in Jason Pollock's latest film. *The Youngest Candidate* documents a new wave of idealistic youth activism spurred by the 2008 elections: teens running for office. The film follows four teen candidates—De Jesus; Ytit Chauhan (age 19), a City Council candidate from Atlantic City, NJ; George Monger (age 19), a City Council candidate from Memphis, TN; and Tiffany Tupper (age 18), a candidate for the Hampton School Board from Pennsylvania. Each encounters difficulties along their campaign runs—corruption, racism, and the crueler facts of life. Despite frustrations with the political process, each candidate maintains an inspirational sense of idealism. *The Youngest Candidate* is a documentary film directed by Jason Pollock. Visit theyoungestcandidate.com for more information.

BOOK/BRIEFS by Caitlin Morris

The Federal Theatre Project: A Case Study (by Barry B. Witham). The Pacific Northwest contextualizes Witham's latest book about the Works Progress Administration's Federal Theatre Project, which was designed to bring theatre to the masses. Witham (Professor Emeritus of Theatre History at University of Washington) draws upon original documents from the National Archives, the Library of Congress, and first-person interviews. His regional focus allows for richly-detailed portraits of local protagonists, such as Glenn Hughes, founder of the School of Drama at the University of Washington. The book also recounts controversial performances by the Seattle Negro Repertory Company of *Stevedore* and *Lysistrata*, and the Living Newspaper productions of *Power* and *Spiridete*. While the FTP was ultimately halted by anti-New Deal congressmen, its influence persists: Witham charts this legacy throughout the Pacific Northwest's contemporary artistic, political, and social culture. (Cambridge University Press, 2009).

Voices Carry: Behind Bars and Backstage during China's Revolution and Reform (by Ying Ruocheng and Claire Conceison). In 1991, Claire Conceison (Tufts University Professor of Drama) met Ying Ruocheng, China's former Vice-Minister of Culture. Conceison was immediately impressed by Ruocheng's past as a cultural diplomat, as a survivor of the Cultural Revolution, and as an accomplished dramatist (one of the first to translate Shakespeare into Chinese). Ten years later, after Ruocheng was diagnosed with a terminal illness, Conceison proposed to him an idea for an interview project. *Voices Carry* is the product of these interviews, a collaborative autobiography of their two voices synthesized through their friendship. Ruocheng passed away in 2003 and had he lived, 2009 would have marked the year of both his 80th birthday and the 38th anniversary of his release from prison. (Rowman & Littlefield, 2008). **TAP**

DATEBOOK

festivals, conferences, intensives, workshops, readings, concerts, gallery openings, plays, screenings and other arts politics events

JULY 1, 2009; Online. **Webinar: Measuring Social Impact: Tools and Findings from the Arts & Civic Engagement Impact Initiative.** Introducing tools (adapted for arts practitioners) to help them assess and describe social change effects and to help them convey credible evidence of contributions; presented by Americans for the Arts. *More information:* <http://eo2.commpartners.com/users/afta/session.php?id=2004>.

JULY 2, 2009; San Francisco, CA. **Panel: The History of Public Funding and the Arts—The Legacy of the New Deal.** Panelists—authors Lincoln Cushing, Tim Drescher and Mark Johnson—speak to the similarities between the present era and the New Deal as they relate to public arts and government funding. *More information:* californiahistoricalsociety.org/cal/index.html.

JULY 5-31, 2009; San Francisco, CA. **Festival: LaborFest.** In commemoration of the 75th anniversary of the San Francisco General Strike and the West Coast maritime workers strike, the festival includes an art exhibition, presentations & a labor film festival. *More information:* www.laborfest.net.

JULY 6-11, 2009; Portland, OR. **Intensive: Devising Civic Theatre: Performance, Social Practice, Participation & Dialogue.** Sojourn Theatre's Michael Rohd leads an intensive on building community through theatre-based civic engagement and on exploring social & political issues through collaborative conceptual, improvisational & physical investigations. *More information:* www.sojourntheatre.org/comm_adults.asp.

JULY 6-26, 2009; Shepherdstown, WV. **Festival: Goose Route Dance Festival.** This ninth annual festival features performances, classes, lectures & events. *More information:* www.gooseroute.org.

JULY 10-12, 2009; Cleveland, OH. **Festival: Ingenuity Festival Cleveland.** A weekend-long celebration of art and technology, with diverse work by international masters, Northeast Ohio's performing and visual artists, and emerging artists. *More information:* www.ingenuitycleveland.com.

JULY 10-12, 2009; Louisville, KY. **Festival: Forecastle.** Merging a weekend lineup of live music with environmentally-educational art from "The Sustainable Living Roadshow" and a score of activist groups including the Sierra Club, Urban Seeds, Greenpeace and Voter Registration. *More information:* forecastlefest.com.

JULY 14-25, 2009; San Francisco, CA. **Dance: The Ballard of Polly Ann.** Dancers, artists, and a labor historian mine personal narratives of female bridge builders who worked on the Bay Bridges from the 1970s. *More information:* www.jlyanwayproductions.com.

JULY 15-18, 2009; Chicago, IL. **Conference: Creative Entrepreneurship and Education in Cultural Life.** Hosted by the Arts Entrepreneurship Center of Columbia College Chicago. *More information:* encatc.org/pages/index.php?id=91.

JULY 16-31, 2009; North Adams, MA. **Festival: Bang on a Can Summer Festival.** Daily gallery recitals at Mass MoCa, free concerts, and a six-hour art/music marathon. *More information:* www.bangonacan.org/events/upcoming.

JULY 27-AUGUST 14, 2009; Chicago, IL. **Course/seminar: Connecting The Dots.** One-to-three-week long development seminar that invites artists and arts administrators to interact along issues of institutions, policies, and practices in the arts. *More information:* www.saic.edu/connectingthedots.

JULY 28-31, 2009; Venice, Italy. **Conference: International Conference on Arts in Society.** Addressing a range of issues related to arts in society—such as arts policy and advocacy, social and community arts agendas, performing arts practices and media arts—the annual conference takes place in conjunction with the Venice Biennale. *More information:* artsinsociety.com/conference2009.

JULY 31-AUGUST 9, 2009; New Orleans, LA. **Summer Leadership Institute: Soul Deep: A New Artist for a Renewed Society.** Urban Bush Women leads this gathering of artists, activists and community organizers in daily UBW dance technique classes, community dancing traditions, teach-ins around specific political and social justice issues, undoing racism training and guided creative time. *More information:* urbanbushwomen.org/summer_inst.html.

AUGUST 5, 2009; Online. **Webinar: Report on Public Art Network Field Survey.** Learn about public art survey results from Janet Kagan, Principal, Percent for Art Collaborative and Liesel Fenner, Manager of Public Art, Americans for the Arts. *More information:* eo2.commpartners.com/users/afta/session.php?id=2050.

AUGUST 7-9, 2009; Dayton, OH. **Symposium & Arts Festival: Ten Living Cities.** A reaction to Dayton, OH making "10 Dying Cities" list—this event brings together artists and activists, community leaders and organizers, and civic-minded people for breakout sessions, panel discussions & performances that highlight community vibrancy. *More information:* www.tenlivingcities.org.

AUGUST 8-11, 2009; New York, NY. **Conference: Risking Innovation.** Join the ATHE (Association for Theatre in Higher Education)/AATE (American Alliance for Theatre & Education) community for discussions about innovation, multiple intelligences, and "risky agendas" in the theatre, with Howard Gardner presenting the Keynote. *More information:* athe.org.

AUGUST 11-16, 2009; Arden, NC. **Annual Meeting: Rebirth of a Nation: Using Art To Navigate the Intersection of Oppressions.** Alternate ROOTS 33rd Annual Meeting focused on how to use art for creative, sustainable solutions in the fight against oppression. *More information:* www.alternateroots.org.

THROUGH AUGUST 15, 2009; San Francisco, CA. **Exhibition: Hobos to Street People: Artists' Responses to Homelessness from the New Deal to the Present.** Art Hazelwood curates an historical investigation into homelessness and poverty with art by New Deal-era artists such as Dorothea Lange, Rockwell Kent, and Giacomo Patri along with contemporary artists such as Sandow Birk, David Bacon, and Christine Hanlon. *More information:* californiahistoricalsociety.org/exhibits/index.html.

THROUGH AUGUST 16, 2009; Washington, DC. **Exhibition: My Fellow Americans: 40 Years of Political Cartoons by Jules Feiffer.** A look-back at the career of Feiffer, the long-time *Village Voice* cartoonist and Pulitzer Prize winner. *More information:* american.edu/cas/katz/en/museum/2009summer_feiffer.cfm.

AUGUST 26-29, 2009; Boston, MA. **Conference: CommonWealth.** Artists, media makers, scholars, technologists, policymakers and activists commingle to chart the future of arts, media and culture. *More information:* www.namac.org/conference.

SUNDAY, AUGUST 30, 2009; Durham, NC. **Concert: Sweet Honey In The Rock.** Political messages of freedom, civil rights, and social change from the all-female, African-American, a cappella singing ensemble. *More information:* sweethoney.com.

THROUGH AUGUST 31, 2009; New York, NY. **Public Art Project: Sharecropper Art.** A public art project and micro farming installation by artist Leah Gauthier using organic growing methods to cultivate parcels of donated land in each of the five boroughs. A portion of the harvest will be shared with local soup kitchens, and a series of interactive cooking performances around the city are being planned. *More information:* www.sharecropperart.org.

AUGUST 31-SEPTEMBER 7, 2009; Black Rock, NV. **Festival: Burning Man.** The annual expressive, self-reliance art festival that brings tens of thousands to the desert. This year's theme: "evolution." *More information:* burningman.com.

Submit your happening to datebook@theartspolitic.com. **TAP**

Tree of the Theatre of the Oppressed



Augusto Boal (1931-2009)

Last year, as I sat in a café near New York University, a group of people walked in, some with suitcases, others with newspapers. Engaged deeply with each other and their surroundings, they sat down at the table next to mine. Slowly, I began to recognize that they were discussing social issues, and encouraging patrons, like me, to participate. As a graduate student at Tisch School of the Arts, it just so happened that I had been reading about the work of theatre director and drama theorist, Augusto Boal, and so I recognized what my afternoon coffee break was turning into: an exciting piece of social activism at work. At its heart, the performance I was witnessing was Invisible Theatre, one of the beginnings of Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed.

"To be a citizen does not mean merely to live in society, but to transform it. If I transform the clay into a statue, I become a Sculptor; if I transform the stones into a house, I become an architect; if I transform our society into something better for us all, I become a citizen. Invisible Theatre is a direct intervention in society, on a precise theme of general interest, to provoke debate and to clarify the problem that must be solved. It shall never be violent since its aim is to reveal the violence that exists in society, and not to reproduce it. Invisible Theatre is a play (not a mere improvisation) that is played in a public space without informing anyone that it is a piece of theatre, previously rehearsed. Invisible Theatre is the penetration of fiction into reality and of reality into fiction, which helps us to see how much fiction exists in reality, and how much reality exists in fiction." —Augusto Boal, Rio de Janeiro, 2004

Boal's body of work continues to encourage me, as well as the staff of *The Arts Politic*, and citizens from many nations. I believe that Boal would want us to look towards the future and continue to create meaningful interventions. May we continue to probe our public spaces thoughtfully and to strive to make sense of our experiences. --DEK

[Editor's Note: Augusto Boal's Center of the Theatre of the Oppressed in Rio de Janeiro (CTO-Rio) is waging a war of survival. In a recent email exchange with Ronald Matthijssen, Project Development & Evaluation at Formaat, Workplace for Participatory Drama in Rotterdam, Holland (host of International Theatre of the Oppressed's website), he wrote, "Augusto Boal's centre in Rio is in trouble because the Brazilian bureaucracy is trying to shut it down with absurd financial claims that have no substance." *The Arts Politic* encourages you to learn more at: www.theatreoftheoppressed.org] **TAP**

Image Courtesy of the heirs of Augusto Boal via the International Theatre of the Oppressed
Quote from www.theatreoftheoppressed.org

Mary Perry Stone (1909-2007)



War by Mary
Perry Stone /
Oil / 1999

*Thanksgiving,
Thank You Slaves*
by Mary Perry
Stone / Oil /
1998

The Arts Politic remembers the life of WPA artist and muralist, Mary Perry Stone.

Born in Jamestown, Rhode Island, Mary Perry Stone enrolled in art school at the age of 15 in 1923, attending both the Art Students League and the Traphagen School of Fashion and Design. In the 1930s, she began to work in the field of social-protest art and became one of forty women sculptors in the New York City Federal Arts Project, a significant cultural component of the Works Progress Administration. At this time, she also taught children the art of sculpturing and worked with the sculptor, Cesare Stea.

Throughout the 1930s and 1940s, Stone exhibited at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Carnegie Hall, New York University, Rockefeller Center, the Roerich Museum, the New School for Social Research, Radio City, Independence Hall, and galleries such as the ACA Gallery and the Municipal Gallery in New York City.

After moving with her husband and daughter to the San Francisco Bay Area in the early 1950s, her work was displayed at art galleries such as Telegraph Hill, East West, Greta Williams, the Artists Cooperative, and the Oakland Museum. Outraged at the Vietnam War, she held a solo show at Dominican College in San Rafael, California. Later, she would open her own gallery in San Rafael, California. In the 1970s and 1980s, Stone's work was shown in Benicia, Sausalito, and at the Commonwealth Club in San Francisco, California. Stone moved to Ashland, Oregon in 1992. The Grants Pass Museum, the Rogue Valley Art Gallery, and the Art Space Gallery near Tillamook each exhibited her work. Her last show took place in February 2006 at the Thorndike Gallery on the campus of Southern Oregon University.

Today, Stone's papers can be found at the Smithsonian, the National Museum of Women in the Arts, and at Sonoma State University in their collections on women artists. She received awards for sculpture from both the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Oakland Museum.

Mary Perry Stone completed over 80 social-protest murals during her lifetime.

Artwork and biography of Mary Perry Stone courtesy of the artist's daughter, Ramie Streng. TAP



ENDNOTE

Art—Making a Difference

by Randy Martin

Many are the varieties of arts politics. Work displays a range of political affiliation and commitment. Artists self-organize to devise myriad means for getting their work into the world. Artists parlay their celebrity to access the public domain and to address various issues of the day. And yet it is often the uninvited controversy that attend to works—especially when public funding is involved—that frame the terms by which art is rendered into the domain of the political. Such episodes commonly consider art through the lens of moral indignation, and index art in order to ask that we not look at it, as if by avoiding the art we could come to sudden consensus around the values we hold most dear (begging along the way the question of who the “us” is, who proclaims consensus, and what establishes the hierarchy of value). Art, by these lights, has been pinned in a rather defensive posture, a condition sometimes framed as a culture war of the last several decades, but on longer historical view, certainly an abiding feature of the Republic.

Against this strain, considerable hope has recently been vested in the promise of a more hospitable climate for the arts in the United States. There is an impetus for an expanded role of national arts leadership on par with other countries and aspects of commonwealth. After some back-and-forth, the arts were considered worthy of being part of the economic stimulus package. The National Endowment for the Arts is slated for a \$6 million budget increase to \$161 million for 2010 (although proposals had been for as much as \$50 million in additional monies). Encouraging signs these are, and the fruit of considerable effort. As with the controversies surrounding art, public attention revolves around these measures of economic efficacy, even as the actual allocations to the arts through these federal programs are not proportionate to art’s actual economic weight. Rather these indicators have symbolic value that stands for a national disposition toward the arts.

It is unsurprising that the arguments responsible for these gains would insert art into the nomenclature of economic development. Artists are workers too. Art-making is the most shovel-ready of endeavors. Investments in the arts have, at seven-to-one, higher multiplier effects than inputs to other industries. While art has suffered from economic illiteracy, its ready translation into this particular form of utilitarianism risks foreclosing a more fulsome conversation about the various uses of art, and leaves untouched the economics of artists’ remarkable productivity, which often comes at their own expense. Any longer-term expansion of the arts will quickly run aground if its specificity is lost, if artistic sensibility has no bearing on how we think about development, participation, dialogue, and social possibility. These critical and creative faculties must find their way into public discussion, if a fuller ground and grounding of the arts is to be part of our social and esthetic horizon.

From the perspective of countering the attacks on the arts, the impulse to show how art is just like other human endeavors, kinds of work, social goods, is certainly understandable. Art worlds will also be well served by answering the dual questions of how art is different and what difference it makes. Current expressions of artistic collectivity, collaboration and organization, break-open the seemingly straightforward opposition of commercial and non-profit spheres. On closer inspection both rely on a willingness for artists to discount the value of their own work, and a parallel conception of corporate governance. The myriad paths of artistic self-production—where creating work also creates venues and audiences—re-casts the question of who benefits from the arts, of what values people gather for, of where to imagine what sensibilities we may want to promote. This more general economy of the arts—the realm of possibility that we can grasp together but not fix or dismiss—drives a very ambitious program for how art and the world might be otherwise.

Randy Martin directs the graduate program in Arts Politics at the Tisch School of the Arts, New York University.

CLOSING EDITORS’ NOTE: Thank you for reading the first issue of *The Arts Politic*; we look forward to your thoughts, conversations & critiques. This magazine illuminates many examples of arts advocacy, activism and policy—ideas that you can continue to engage with and develop as a means of solving problems at the intersection of arts and politics. *But how can you take the next step?* Visit theartspolitic.com, click on the “ACTIVATE” tab, and learn how you can sharpen your contributions to the field.

—DEK&JJM



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