

Social Justice and the Arts

ARTS ORGANIZATIONS PARTNERING WITH THEIR
COMMUNITIES TO ADVANCE SOCIAL JUSTICE

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BUFFALO, NEW YORK

Open Buffalo | Partnership for the Public Good Innovation Lab



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INTRODUCTION

This document is designed to provide a concise but representative sampling of the many arts programs, projects, networks, and individuals involved in creative, progressive change in their diverse communities.

The purpose of this examination is to provide information to enhance the creative work of the Open Buffalo Arts Network as the initiative moves forward.

This research relied heavily upon what is contained on websites, so a more accurate accounting of the program or network may be sought through personal contact with staff. Online and/or telephone contact information is included.

Not meant as an exhaustive list of relevant places to study, this report represents a variety of small and large organizations that are currently addressing issues of justice and opportunity, worker equity, and high road economic development, and similar topics. The programs or policy organizations in this document are arranged by listing first those potentially the most useful to Open Buffalo or like-minded organizations. However, all the programs listed have interest as creative, purposeful, and sometimes “out of the box” ways to advance social justice and the arts.

Thank you to Barbara Schaffer Bacon and Jennifer Lawrence of Animating Democracy for invaluable advice and assistance in preparing this report.

GENERAL INSIGHTS

The creative arts not only enhance the human experience, reflect the beauty of nature, and promote cultural uniqueness, but also, in many various ways, highlight and seek solutions to some of the world's most pervasive problems. There are thousands of programs with this mission; below are just a few examples.

- An international program entitled *Barefoot Artists*, founded by artist Lily Yeh in 2002, trains and empowers local residents, organizes communities, and takes action “for a more compassionate, just and sustainable future” in countries such as Rwanda, Kenya, Ghana, Ecuador, and China; this program is an off-shoot of the non-profit organization Yeh founded in 1986 called *The Village of Arts and Humanities*, which was developed to build communities through art, learning, land transformation, and economic development.



- A sculptor in Mozambique, Goncalao Mabunda transforms weapons into sculptures based on traditional thrones, masks, and other motifs to combat violence and instability.



- An exhibition in Los Angeles, California (2012) entitled *Women Hold Up Half the Sky*, featured photographs, visual art, innovative sound installations, and interactive opportunities involving stories of women's triumph over oppression. Inspired by the book *Half the Sky* by Kristof and WuDunn, the exhibit included a work of art about a Pakistani woman who had been abused by her husband and ignored by her community. A loan of \$65 enabled her to open an embroidery business, which now supports over thirty families in her village.



- In a Washington, D.C. exhibit entitled *The Ripple Effect: Currents of Socially Engaged Art*, artists opened conversations with various communities on issues of the environment, immigration, homelessness, and violence. For example, one artist organized a tree-planting ceremony with shovels made from guns taken from Mexico streets to initiate discussions and solutions to violence in that country.

Many arts/justice programs focus on peace, youth violence, trauma, physical and mental health issues, poverty, oppression, homelessness, and domestic violence. Programs typically connect artists with community organizations and/or governmental partners to develop creative ways to highlight a social problem and promote solutions.

The following elements appear to be essential in successful programs/networks:

- Passion for an articulated mission
- Agreement on shared principles
- Inclusion of artists in the planning as well as operational phases
- Development of an understandable “message” to promote
- Community outreach/citizen and stakeholder input
- Cross-sector collaboration and partnership development
- Multiple funding streams for sustainability
- Solid infrastructure, i.e. staffing expertise, training, leadership, organization, program evaluation
- Support from power bases such as elected leaders and decision-makers in the following fields:
 - government
 - arts/cultural
 - media
 - not-for-profit agencies
 - education
 - law enforcement, judiciary, criminal justice
 - labor
 - land and space development
 - urban planning and design
 - neighborhood and community associations

Art is a powerful
tool for the
transformation of
society and
individuals.

Open Buffalo Areas of Focus

Justice and Opportunity

Worker Equity

High Road Economic Development



Grain Mills of Buffalo, New York, where Irish, German, Italian, and Polish immigrants built a waterfront economy in the 1800's, producing many historically important people such as Fingy Conners, the largest private employer on the Great Lakes, and Wild Bill Donovan, the founding father of what became the CIA. These signature landmarks in Buffalo became empty once the St. Lawrence Seaway was opened, but are now a backdrop to a new waterfront economy and artistic space.

Examples of Arts Programs, Networks, and Organizations That Promote Social Justice

Focus Area: Justice and Opportunity

Restorative Justice Center, U.C. Berkeley: Community Works Project

<http://rjcenterberkeley.org>

<http://resolvetostoptheviolencesf.org>

Founded by a group of Berkeley law students and the Community Works Project in 1997



This project brings together the criminal and juvenile justice systems, public school systems, and various community based organizations – guided by principles of restorative justice and a belief in the power of the arts to educate and heal individuals. It engages both youth and adults in various arts, educational and restorative justice programs that interrupt and reduce the impact of incarceration and violence on families. Many partner organizations are involved, such as the Sheriff's Department, Probation, District Attorney Office, Catholic Charities, etc. Programs include:

- *RSVP (Resolve to Stop the Violence Project)* is an intensive, therapeutic program within jail that involves men in group discussions, classes in art and creative writing, theatrical enactments, role-playing, counseling, and discussions with victims and survivors of violent crime. For example, the *Drama Project* is led by theatre professionals within the jail; the inmates write one-act plays based on an event in their lives and then perform the roles.
- *Social Justice Arts Programming* places artists in non-traditional settings such as schools, jails, and re-entry centers to work with program participants through theatre, oral histories, exhibits, publications, and installations of art.

Structure: The RJ Center has a committee with two co-directors and various student assistants. They have weekly meetings with prison inmates, volunteer as judges in a high school student court, and meet regularly with former inmates. RJC has ongoing community and staff training, an advisory board consisting of staff, students, and faculty, and an extensive research division.

Philadelphia Mural Arts Program

<http://www.muralarts.org/programs/restorative-justice>

Program Coordinator: Robyn Buseman, 215-685-0726

Robyn.buseman@muralarts.org

Founded: 1984

The Mural Arts Program incorporates the concepts of restorative justice through art instruction, mural making, and community service within the criminal justice system. Current inmates, probationers, parolees, and juvenile delinquents learn new skills and make positive contributions to their communities to repair the harm they have caused. In the Mural Arts RJ program, there is a growing emphasis on re-entry, reclamation of civic spaces, and the use of art to give voice to people who have consistently felt disconnected from society. Through weekly programs and opportunities for involvement in mural projects, Mural Arts provides art instruction to over 300 inmates and 200 juveniles every year. This is one of the largest public arts programs in the United States.

Structure: This is a large organization with 36 Board of Director members and 54 staff.



From MAP's collection, entitled Boy With Raised Arm

ARTWELL – Philadelphia

<http://theartwell.org>

Additional contact information:

215-386-7705

Founded: 2001

This is a collaborative between local artists, schools, community groups, and youth to promote peaceful communities and to help youth as they encounter poverty, violence, and discrimination. Youth are encouraged to reflect and creatively express themselves in order to discover and honor strengths in themselves and others. Programs such as the *Art of Growing Up* (a multicultural rites of passage program), *Heartspeak* (a program to encourage the expression of the impact of violence on youth and the wish for peace through art, poetry, music, video, social media), *Masterpeace* (a program producing large scale artworks for the community), and *We the Poets* (a poetry program) have transformed the lives of over 30,000 youth facing challenges.

Outcomes of these programs, as documented through the Drexel University School of Public Health, include:

- Social Justice – empowering future generations of visionary leaders and citizens with skills and knowledge to create systematic change;
- Education – improving school attendance, graduation rates, and academic achievement; and
- Public Health – decreasing violence in the communities served.

ARTWELL Student Quote:

“Instead of going after the guy who shot me, I wrote a poem about it.”

Structure: Artwell lists seven staff, partnerships with over 350 school and community organizations, 19 funders (foundations and institutions), and three artists in residence. In 2013, they had a total of approximately \$530,000 in revenue and support. Their organization uses 65% of funding for programming, 20% for management, and 15% for fundraising. They recently were able to award tax credits to businesses that contribute money through an Educational Improvement Tax Credit Program, which they anticipate may increase contributions.

Thousand Kites, headquarters in Norton, Virginia

<http://thousandkites.org>

Founded: 1999



The phrase to “shoot a kite” comes from prison slang that refers to inmates sending each other various messages. Thousand Kites is a national project that uses performance, web, video, and radio to open a public space for incarcerated people, corrections officials, the formerly incarcerated, grassroots

activists, and ordinary citizens to dialogue and organize around the United States' criminal justice system. They provide advocacy to local groups on criminal justice issues, and host various projects having prison reform as a mission.

Thousand Kites believes:

- The criminal justice system is the most pressing civil rights issue in the United States;
- Breaking down the silence surrounding the U.S. criminal justice system through storytelling and listening helps people find effective solutions to over-incarceration in their communities;
- Because policy follows public perception, insuring that there is ample opportunity for free and open dialogue demands that all communities work together for media justice.

The Prison Arts Coalition/Poetry in Corrections

<http://thepisonartscoalition.com>

pacoalitionadmin@gmail.com

treacyziegler@yahoo.com

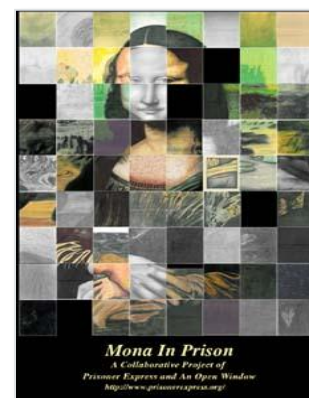
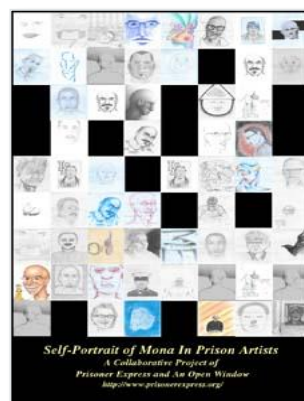
<http://youngnewyorkers.org>

Founded: 2008

This network and associated blog provides information and resources for people creating art “in and around the American prison system.” It is an advisory body, with a list of prison arts programs in the U.S., organized by state and region. PAC may give some insight into the power of poetry when used in a therapeutic setting like that of restorative justice practices.

Projects include:

- *The Center for Transformative Action*, affiliated with Cornell University, has a number of projects including *An Open Window*, which donates and exhibits outside artwork inside prisons in a number of states, as well as conducting creative workshops for inmates. Tracy Ziegler, artist and social worker, is a key individual with this program. A writing journal newsletter, the *Prisoner Express*, has joined with *Open Window* to invite prisoners to participate in an “art through the mail curriculum.” Their *Mona in Prison* project gave prisoners in solitary confinement a way to unite through art by being assigned various sections of a Mona Lisa poster, redrawing that section and drawing a self-portrait. Artist Gary Fine took these submissions and created one new Mona Lisa poster, with a correlating poster of the self-portraits.
- *Bard Prison Initiative (BPI)*, founded in 1999, offers courses and degrees from Bard College to incarcerated men and women in New York State. Its goals are “to redefine the relationship between



educational opportunity and criminal justice,” to reduce recidivism, and to increase employment for released prisoners. There are six satellite campuses and by 2013 they had enrolled over 500 students and awarded 275 degrees.

- *Cornell University Prison Education Program* offers liberal arts courses to prisoners at two N.Y.S. correctional facilities.
- *Young New Yorkers* is a Brooklyn-based eight week court mandated restorative justice arts program for 16 and 17 year olds with open criminal cases. It enables youth to avoid having adult criminal records by completing themed workshops, often led by artists, and discussions about the following areas:
 - Community
 - Choice
 - Accountability
 - Responsibility
 - Contribution
 - Leadership

This network partners with a number of organizations such as the Brooklyn Defender Services, Red Hook Community Justice Center, N.Y.C. Department of Probation, The Center for Court Innovation, and the American Bar Association’s Racial Justice Improvement Project.

Alabama Prison Arts and Education Program, Auburn University

<http://www.humsci.auburn.edu/apaep/>

Kyes Stevens

stevenk@auburn.edu

Founded: 2002

The Alabama Prison Arts and Education Program is a program of the Caroline Marshall Draughon Center for the Arts and Humanities at Auburn University. It consists of over 80 writers, artists, scholars, and visiting writers who teach classes in 12 Alabama correctional facilities.

Minnesota Prison Writing Workshop

<http://www.mnprisonwriting.org>

info@msprisonwriting.org

The MPWW offers courses in fiction writing, essay writing, poetry, spoken word, oral story-telling, children’s literature, and fantasy writing to inmates in all Minnesota state prisons. Classes are structured in a variety of ways, and the students are a diverse group of writers ranging from beginners to experienced and published authors.

Story Catchers Theatre, Chicago

<http://www.storycatcherstheatre.org>

312-280-4772

Founded: 1984

Story Catchers Theatre is a youth development arts organization that prepares young people to make thoughtful life choices through the process of writing, producing, and performing original musical theatre inspired by personal stories. It serves youth living in urban neighborhoods as well as those incarcerated in the juvenile justice system. Partnerships include the Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra.

Structure: This organization has four staff members.



Court involved and incarcerated youth write and perform original musicals and plays which are inspired by personal experiences.

It's not just black and white, Arizona State University Art Museum

<http://www.itsnotjustblackandwhite.info/>

<http://www.gregorysaleart.com/>
gregory.sale@asu.edu

The *It's not just black and white* exhibition at the ASU Museum in 2011 provided gallery space to exhibitions, performances, events, and discussions to explore justice and public safety. For example, artist Gregory Sale used the iconic black and white striped prison uniform as a metaphor for the highly complex issue of mass incarceration. There were three programs:

- *PEARLS* – artistic workshops and activities that framed the mission
- *(re)SEARCH* – participants explored the impact of the criminal justice system through tours and forums

- *OPEN BOOKINGS* – shared space was provided for classes, performances, and discussions about civil justice and law and order issues



An installation created with the participation of inmates enrolled in the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office reentry/rehabilitation ALPHA program. This installation serves as an instructional platform for public forums, panel discussions, and social actions.

Creative Action, Austin, Texas

[www.//creativeaction.org](http://creativeaction.org)

info@creativeaction.org

Founded: 2001

This organization develops theatre programs for social change in the Austin, Texas area. One such production was an interactive violence prevention program for youth.

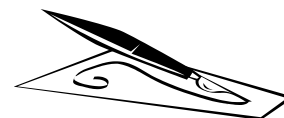
Structure: This large organization employs over 75 individuals, including teaching artists, and operates with a \$1.3 million budget. It has served over 16,000 youth in six school districts and private schools.

Leeds Young Authors – Leeds, United Kingdom

[www.//leedsyoungauthors.org.uk](http://leedsyoungauthors.org.uk)

Founded: 2003

This program uses creative writing to develop youth's social, political, and cultural awareness. Youth are encouraged to use literacy and artistic expression to break the cycle of criminality and poverty in their neighborhoods and communities.



Focus Area: Worker Equity

Appalachian Media Institute, Whitesburg, Kentucky

<http://animatingdemocracy.org>

Additional contact information:

www.appalshop.org/ami

606-633-0108

Founded: 1988

This multi-media arts and cultural organization, including an online gallery, addresses issues in central Appalachia such as a declining coal economy and associated environmental damage, high unemployment rates, and poor educational and vocational opportunities. Their strong youth program uses the process of place-based media making to explore and address local issues, involving over 1,000 youth and producing 125 pieces of artwork. Additional programming for youth includes access to colleges and a summer documentary institute for video production, an after-school media program, and pairings of students and art teachers during school as part of the artist residency program.

Appalshop is a non-profit multi-disciplinary arts and educational center in the heart of Appalachia, producing original films, video, theatre, music and spoken-word recordings, radio, photography, multimedia, and books. “The creative acts of listening and telling are *Appalshop*’s core competency.” An example of their films is **Mine War on Blackberry Creek**, which chronicles the long and bitter 1984 strike between the United Mine Workers of America and A.T. Massey, a large U.S. coal company with ties to apartheid South Africa.

AMI participates in many successful collaborations and exchanges (national, state-wide and local), and associates with activist organizations where their media is used to hold dialogues, work campaigns, influence policy, and mobilize the community for social action. One example is the Sundance National Youth Media Conference.



C.D. available through the Appalshop by a Kentucky string band whose soul is from Kentucky’s mining community. The song “Dying to Make a Living,” for example, describes the price miners pay for a lifetime of digging coal.

Structure: This organization is supported by the Open Society Foundations, partners with VISTA, and consists of five staff and nine board members.

Center for Public Policy Priorities HATCH Project, Austin, Texas

www.hatchsocialchange.org

Founded: 2013

This is a non-profit initiative that bringing together artists and cross-sector leaders through the use of art and creativity to solve problems, inspire social change, and transform communities. The Center for Public Policy Priorities works to ensure that economic and social opportunities are available to all Texans.



“Art helps ignite people’s imagination. People are afraid to fight for unknowns, art helps them visualize what an alternative world can be.”

— Gan Golan, Graphic Artist and Cultural Organizer

HATCH programs include:

- *Four Plus Four Equals* – a city-wide visual and audio art project to increase awareness and conversation about mental health through a collaboration between artists and mental health consumers
- *Above All Else* – a film produced about the battle between activists, landowners in East Texas, and the Keystone XL pipeline, as well as a larger fight about climate change; this film gives “a window into how social change happens in America”
- *Conspire Theatre* – theatre productions during and post-incarceration of men and women in Texas
- *Pen 2 Paper* – a creative writing contest for authors with disabilities
- *Southwest of Salem: The Story of the San Antonio Four* – a documentary about four Latina lesbians wrongly accused of gang rape
- Creation of a festival that is a tribute to art created by, for, and with women who were or are incarcerated in Texas.



A Hatch-Up

HATCH believes in establishing gatherings, workshops, and retreats for leaders and artists to discuss food policy, housing affordability, mental health, the power of voice, poverty, and inequity. HATCH provides financial support and technical assistance to creative projects that advance social change. A recent multi-media project is focused on alleviating income equality in the community.

Structure: Two staff are dedicated to the HATCH Project.

Art At Work (AAW), various locations such as Portland ME, Holyoke MA, and Fulton County GA

www.artatwork.us
terramotoinc@gmail.com

Founded: 1995 in Fulton County, Georgia, and 2007 in Portland, Maine

This is a national initiative created by Terra Moto Inc. (a non-profit arts group) to improve municipal government through strategic arts projects with city employees, elected officials, and local artists. Key stakeholders are interviewed to identify critical challenges, and then a strategic arts project is designed to address that issue. City workers, officials, and union members are brought into the project and through the process of making art such as photography, collages, poetry, music, etc., participants become engaged, risks are taken, and solutions are formed.

Examples include projects to improve police morale, deepen cross-cultural understanding among public service workers, and increase the public's appreciation of the role of government in their community. Projects with the departments of Social Services, Health, and Public Works have been instituted. Over 100 city workers and 50 artists have been part of this project to date in Portland. The project has received national awards, and has a variety of funders and partners. It has been found to be a "cost-effective way to address city problems, deepen public awareness and appreciation of local government's role in creating healthy, educated, engaged, and economically vibrant communities." Art At Work is involved in replicating this project in other cities across the U.S.

A key artist/playwright/director involved in the Portland Maine project is Marty Pottenger (<http://www.martypottenger.com>). She is Director of the Art At Work program and Executive Director of Terra Moto, Inc. Her play *Abundance* explores ways that people of different classes, races, and ages negotiate economics in their daily lives.

REV, New York City, NY

<http://www.studiorev.org>

Additional contact information:

hello@studiorev.org

<http://www.nannyvan.org>

This is an art, media, and social justice organization created by artist Marisa Jahn to address critical issues such as worker inequality. One project created with The National Domestic Workers Alliance is *The Nanny Van*, a mobile design lab and sound studio that "accelerates the movement for domestic workers' rights nationwide." Other projects include *The Book Bandit* in Honduras to address the large illiteracy rate and in 2010, a



collaboration with *People's Production House (PPH)*, a media arts institute. In 2012, REV and PPH became integrated to advance an agenda of art and social justice.

Structure: A small organization, with three staff, and additional interns, volunteers, and collaborators.

Creative Time's Creative Time Summit: Art and Inequity, New York City

<http://creativetime.org>

summit@creativetime.org

212-206-6674

Founded: approximately 1970

Creative Time is a public arts organization which commissions and presents public arts projects in New York City and around the world—art that transcends racial, geographical and socio-economic barriers. Various summits have been held in NYC to address social justice issues.

Their core values are:

- Art matters
- Artists' voices are important in shaping society
- Public spaces are places for creative and free expression.

Projects include "Tribute in Light," the twin beacons over Manhattan, following 9/11, and a summit in 2012 on confronting inequality and wealth and how it erodes democracy.



"Tribute in Light"

Structure: there is a large staff, with many interns, fellows, and volunteers.

Voices Breaking Boundaries (VBB) – Houston, Texas

www.vbbarts.org

Additional contact information:

info@vbbarts.org

Founded: 2000

This program was founded by five women artists/writers to cross borders, sustain dialogue, and incite social justice through art. Their *Living Room Art Productions* is a multi-disciplinary experimental production which examines issues related to education, race, women's rights, demography changes, and more. It is designed to



create space for spoken word artists, writers, performance artists, musicians, and speakers. Goals include transforming Houston residential spaces, connecting diverse populations to artwork, being free and open to the public, and addressing social justice issues. The *Borderlines* program is a recent attempt to explore parallels related to border issues between the USA and Mexico as well as India/Pakistan/Bangladesh. They seek to explore the parallels between issues affecting the local community and global issues affecting others around the world.

Art for Social Change – The Netherlands (part of the Digicare Foundation)

www.artforsocialchange.net



Founded by artist Rini Hartman, this effort changes people's minds, attitudes, and behaviors by touching them on a "deeper level of consciousness" through art and popular culture. Artists involved with the project include Sting and Bono. Art is promoted to challenge many of society's deepest assumptions. Art becomes a political act and a conscious effort to facilitate and participate in social change.

In addition to lobbying elected officials and governments, providing "consultancy" to identify community issues and achievable solutions to community problems, they have completed several projects around the world (often in third world countries), based on the belief that a healthy society is founded on principles of justice, shared economic opportunities, and sustainable environmental practices.

The *Digicare Foundation* is a Dutch nonprofit organization established to promote the "art of social change" through cross-media productions, education, and the arts. It consists of designers, artists, filmmakers, and advertisement and communication specialists who have created a pool of knowledge, creativity, and inspiration for social and cultural art projects around the world.

Taller Puertorriqueno, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

<http://tallerpr.org>

Founded: 1974

This community-based multidisciplinary arts organization supports Puerto Rican arts and culture, producing work that promotes social justice, community development, and equality. Their work bridges European, African, Caribbean, and Latino cultures. Issues of unemployment, school dropout, drugs, prejudice, and violence are part of the community in which “Taller” is involved.

Structure: The organization has 11 staff.

Focus Area: High Road Economic Development

Arts and Democracy, NYC, Washington D.C., Charlotte, Atlanta, Holyoke,

<http://artsanddemocracy.org>

info@artsanddemocracy.org

[http://www.participatorybudgeting.org./](http://www.participatorybudgeting.org/)

347-554-7357

This organization grew out of the National Voice campaign, promoting decision-making to include the under-represented. It links arts and culture, participatory democracy, and social justice, and provides a variety ways to connect artists and community organizers, such as:

- Sharing resources (social media, newsletters, presentations)
- Events, roundtable discussions, workshops, etc.
- Urban planning courses



Examples include an artist in residency program with Service Employees International Union (SEIU) to highlight labor stories, and *Participatory Budgeting NYC*, a neighborhood process of participatory democracy, in which people are engaged in government by directly deciding how to spend part of a public budget.

Structure: Five key staff in the above cities collaborate on both local and national issues.

Center for Urban Pedagogy, Brooklyn

<http://welcometocup.org>, [http://makingpolicypublic.net/
info@welcometocup.org](http://makingpolicypublic.net/info@welcometocup.org)

Founded: 1997

This is a non-profit organization that uses the power of design and art to increase meaningful civic engagement. Their poster series, published quarterly and entitled *Making Policy Public*, uses graphic design to explore and explain public policy. A goal is to have more people participating in urban planning and policy.

- Once a year, CUP issues a call for groups to explain complex policy issues to a particular constituency
- A jury of design and policy leaders selects 4 projects that would benefit from a visual explanation and would impact a social justice issue
- CUP issues a call for designers to collaborate on the chosen topics
- A jury selects the final teams
- CUP designs the process, and provides art direction and research assistance
- The outcome is a publication distributed directly to advocacy partners and constituents, plus those in the art/design professions.



Springboard for the Arts, Saint Paul, Minnesota

<http://springboardforthearts.org>

Founded: 1991

This is an economic and community development organization for artists and by artists which has become a major provider of services to artists in Minnesota while promoting artist sustainability. The goals are to use art to build stronger communities, neighborhoods, and economies. Various services are offered to artists so they can pursue art as a career, and to integrate artists within communities in meaningful ways and to increase the standard of living for resident artists.

Specific programs include:

- *Community Supported Art Initiative* – an exchange program where people buy into a share of locally produced art, receive original creations, and artists receive payment
- *IrrigateArt Program* – a public private initiative to infuse art and cultural development in the Central Corridor Light Rail Transit Project from St. Paul to Minneapolis; an example of city

planning infused with cultural and aesthetic sensibility which promotes cultural identity in challenged neighborhoods near this rail project.

Structure: This is a large organization, with a staff of 15, including designated staff for their rural program. Their 2013 financial statement listed grant income of approximately \$1.2 million (out of a total \$1.5 million income), and expenses of \$1.3 million.



Vong Lee, second from right above, also known as Knowstalgic, is a poet, spoken word and hip hop artist. As Artist Organizer, Vong is addressing how a neighborhood hit by the foreclosure crisis can engage artists to animate and create positive narratives around vacant lots and homes that lead to new uses for lots and attract new homeowners. Vong's solo project is to create "Frogtown Beats" with several other local hip-hop producers that captures the vibes of Frogtown.

Seattle Office of Arts and Culture

www.seattle.gov/arts

Founded: 1971

The city of Seattle adopted a mission forty some years ago to "envision a city driven by creativity that provides the opportunity for everyone to engage in diverse arts and cultural experiences," thus creating a city department devoted to the arts and culture. In 2014, they developed the *Work Readiness Arts Program* which partners with several community groups to develop workforce readiness and youth employment programs.

This Office of Arts and Culture participates in Seattle's *Race and Social Justice Initiative (RSJI)*, working within city government and with community leaders to address institutional racism. Other partnerships with the Office for Civil Rights, 4Culture, and Artist Trust supports the ARTISTS UP program, providing leadership training, professional development, and funding in various communities.

Another initiative within this Office is the *Cultural Space Agency*, devoted to giving artists and arts organizations a decision-making role in their creative space. Both traditional and non-traditional cultural spaces (music clubs, coffeehouses, bookstores, and bars that showcase art, as well as the

“invisible” artists’ studios and rehearsal rooms) have value in defining the social character of neighborhoods. This Cultural Space program’s goals are as follows:

- To support, strengthen, and expand cultural square footage in Seattle
- To work with artists and arts organizations to strengthen their role in charting the future of their creative spaces
- To work with developers and builders to incorporate arts and culture into new projects
- To work with property owners to incentivize the preservation and expansion of arts and culture.

Los Angeles Poverty Department

<http://lapovertydept.org>

info@lapoverty.dept.org

Founded as the Utopia/Dystopia project in 2014

LAPD (its name satirizes the more famous LAPD – the Los Angeles Police Department) is a collaborative that has undertaken various artistic performances and multidisciplinary activities that connect the experience of people living in poverty to social forces that shape their lives and communities. One example is the *Festival for All Skid Row Artists*. Art is used to inform and broaden the public discourse on the city’s development, drawing comparisons between the high-rise financial center of Bunker Hill and the homeless and working poor of the Skid Row area.



Festival for All Skid Row Artists

Design Studio For Social Intervention, Roxbury, Massachusetts

www.ds4si.org

Founded: 2005 (originally situated with
the Center for Reflective Community Practice in MIT's Department of Urban Studies and Planning)

This is an artistic research and development project that brings artists, activists, and academics together to design social interventions that engage people in imagining and producing new solutions to social problems. Urban designers, cultural architects, community activists, game designers, performance artists, and youth organizers have joined to translate design theory into public interventions. Their "Action Labs" have addressed problems in Boston and have connected with other cities and organizations looking for help with designing social interventions and creative actions. Their mission is "to change how social justice is imagined, developed, and deployed in the United States."

Recently, they partnered with Community Labor United to create a Boston-based fellowship and residency program for select socially engaged artists called the "Department of Public Imagination." This pilot program (8/13-4/14) is an 8 month residency program for artists within a community-based organization where they initiate a creative action team to design public art projects that address the challenges and goals of that group.



"**design** a thing by **considering** it in its next larger context -
a chair in a room, a room in a **house**, a house in a **community**,
a community in a **city**"

- Eiel Saarinen

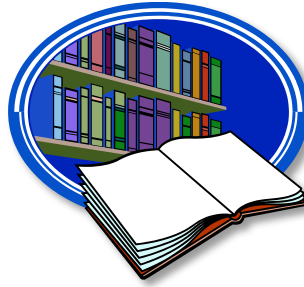
RECOMMENDATIONS

- a) Place a high value on the contributions of artists to the process and product, including having artists in the planning process (invitations to meetings, participating on the campaigns, etc.)
- b) Adopt a commitment to artistic creativity and freedom
- c) Study, contact, visit existing relevant and successful programs, networks, government departments or non-profit organizations that can provide insight and guidance
- d) Participate in conferences and exchanges; subscribe to newsletters
- e) Identify and engage a diverse representation of arts groups and individuals in the process of collaboration
- f) Bring community leaders on board who are committed to the mission, passionate about the issues, and successful in their professions
- g) Develop various outreach plans to engage citizens, community groups, stakeholders, etc. into the process, including input into the critical social justice issues they would like addressed
- h) Build partnerships and collaborations throughout the process
- i) Form a written mission statement and related values and principles
- j) Capture the essence of diversity in the mission and practice
- k) Develop process steps in the design of the program/network
- l) Formulate an evaluation component of the process, program, network through partnerships with research organizations and/or higher education
- m) Give thoughtful consideration to the location(s) of the artwork, as related to the social justice issue, citizens affected, visibility to the public, and creativity
- n) Seek sustainability through multiple funding sources
- o) Build, include, promote, believe in and celebrate the individual as related to the common good



*Untitled, by Denise Shaw
From the 2013 Annual Human Rights Art Exhibit, McAllen and Brownsville (Gallery 409), Texas*

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



- **Toward A 21st Century City For All** is blueprint for progressive change and includes several commissioned writings, one of which is *How Arts and Culture Can Advance a Neighborhood-Centered Progressive Agenda*, by Caron Atlas, Director of the Arts & Democracy Project and an instructor at the Pratt Institute. This essay describes the author’s concept of a “progressive cultural policy,” and suggests three concepts: cultivating naturally occurring cultural districts, strengthening cultural citizenship, and animating public space. Information included in this website may be particularly relevant to high road economic development. <http://www.21cforall.org>
- **Prison Fellowship International Centre for Justice and Reconciliation**, Washington, D.C., has an online restorative justice service that includes a tutorial on building local support, sample brochures, training, evaluation design, practice issues, program administration, and policy manuals; their Restorative Justice Library has over 11,000 publications on restorative justice; subscriptions to monthly R.J. updates can be purchased through www.restorativejustice.org.
- **Art in Action: Expressive Arts Therapy and Social Change** (2011), Ellen & Stephen Levine, a collection of essays from a collaboration between staff of Lesley University and the European Graduate School in Switzerland which has the only Master’s Degree program in Expressive Arts in Conflict Transformation and Peacebuilding; the book is divided into three sections as follows:
 - *Principles* – how art can offer unique approaches to conflict situations
 - *Issues* – how art can be used to engage a wide variety of groups and how it can achieve certain outcomes that are difficult to arrive at in other ways
 - *Projects* – how the use of art in a variety of projects and interventions around the world has been transformative
- **Animating Democracy (a program within Americans For the Arts)**, founded in 1999. Their mission is to inspire, inform, promote, and connect art and culture as potent contributors to community, civic, and social change. The organization was developed with thousands of stakeholders to serve, advance, and lead a network of organizations and individuals who cultivate, promote, sustain, and support the arts. They provide workshops and consulting services to communities related to designing, implementing, funding, and assessing arts and civic engagement and social change work. Of particular interest may be their *Arts and Social Change Mapping Initiative*, which maps and highlights how arts are being activated to engage people and make change. Relevant examples and methodologies may be seen at <http://animatingdemocracy.org/working-guide/trend-papers-by-topic>
 - Social/Justice/Practice: Exploring the Role of Artists in Creating a More Just and Social Public by Lori Lobenstine

- Participatory Art-Making and Civic Engagement by Ferdinand Lewis
 - Playing for Good: The Arts in Planning and Government by Jon Catherwood-Ginn and Bob Leonard
 - Cultural Organizing: Experiences at the Intersection of Art and Activism by Javiera Benavente with Rebecca Lena Richardson
 - Making Art, Making Detroit, Making a Difference by Eddie B. Allen, Jr.
 - Re-Imagining Revitalization: Thoughts on MicroFest: Detroit by Michael Primo
- **www.socialjusticeart.com** is an online learning community and social justice art gallery serving as a collaborative environment for artists, scholars, and activists. This project is in association with the University of Ottawa.
 - **Surdna Foundation** has a *Thriving Cultures Program*, devoted to promoting the belief that communities having a thriving arts and cultural community are more cohesive, prosperous, inventive, and diverse. They fund programs or initiatives in four areas: teens' artistic and cultural advancement; community engaged design; artists and economic development; and artists engaging in social change.
 - **Black Youth Project, New York City**, founded in 2004. This national research project examines the attitudes, resources, and culture of black youth aged 15 to 25, and how those factors influence behavior, decision-making, and norms. One target of research has been an analysis of rap and hip/hop music and lyrics.
 - **Writing with At-Risk Youth: The Pongo Teen Writing Method (It's Easy to W.R.I.T.E. Expressive Writing)**, R&L Education (2014), R. Gold.
 - **Arts Programs for Juvenile Offenders in Detention and Corrections: A Guide to Promising Practices**, 2002, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and the National Endowment for the Arts, G. Hillman.
 - **A Therapeutic Approach to Teaching Poetry**, Palgrave Macmillan (2012), T. Williams.
 - **The Prison Arts Coalition.** <http://thepisonartscoalition.com/practitioner-handbooks/>.
 - **Grantmakers in the Arts: Supporting a Creative America.** [www/giarts.org/arts-social-justice.org](http://giarts.org/arts-social-justice.org).
 - **Beautiful Trouble: A Toolbox for Revolution**, 2013, a book, web toolbox and international network of trainers committed to achieve creative action. Grassroots groups, artists, and activists around the world share their best practice ideas.