



Grantmakers in the Arts
2001 Conference

Culture Influencing Community Change

November 5-7, 2001
Mohonk Mountain House
New Paltz, New York

Proceedings from the Preconference

Creative Support for Individual Artists

Artist Participants: Maya Churi
 Carole Maso
 Jennifer Monson
 Pauline Oliveros
 Pauline Oliveros Foundation
 Lorna Simpson
 Carla T. Smith
 The Woodstock Guild
 Walter Thompson

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The Event

The preconference "Creative Support for Individual Artists" was held at Mohonk Mountain House on November 3rd and 4th, prior to the Grantmakers in the Arts 2001 Conference, *Culture Influencing Community Change*. The purpose of this preconference was to provide activities for relaxation and opportunities for exchange of creative ideas in individual grant-giving.

On the evening of November 3rd, participants were put in a relaxed and introspective mode by participation in a "Deep Listening Workshop" conducted by Pauline Oliveros. This was followed by a leisurely private dinner and a campfire on the shore of the lake with s'mores, conversation and singing. The singing engendered more fun than vocal accomplishment.

After an early nature walk and breakfast, Sunday's discussions were divided into three consecutive sessions: Artists Speak to Artists' Needs, Unique Solutions, and Meeting the Twain.

Artists Speak to Artists' Needs involved a panel of five artists from different fields, sharing their personal experiences with grants and areas of need from their perspective and the perspective of others in their discipline.

In **Unique Solutions**, grantmakers touched on some of the creative and unusual ways in which their organizations are meeting artists' needs.

Meeting the Twain was an open and lively exchange among the artists and the grantmakers.

The formal exchange was halted for a quick buffet lunch and the trip to Storm King.

Many participants voiced the desire to continue the dialogue in the future.

The Discussion

The following is a summary of salient points raised in formal and informal discussion during the preconference.

The Need for Dialogue

Grantmakers seek to provide creative support. It is important to note that many grantmakers shy away from supporting individual artists because the process is perceived as too difficult or too controversial.

By exchanging information about individual grant-making it is possible to increase the number of organizations who will take up the challenge of artist support or will support grantmaking programs for individuals through already existing programs and organizations.

Dialogue between artists and grantmakers to individual artists can open understanding of the multiple facets of needed support. The artist's voice in the discussion is important. Dialogue among grantmakers can highlight the rich variety of existing programs. It can lead to creative approaches to existing and new programs of support. It can answer practical procedural problems. The camaraderie of the exchange can also energize the providers, giving effective support to the supporters.

Qualifying to Give to Individual Artists

Many grantmakers have the mistaken impression that it is impossible or difficult to qualify with the IRS for giving to individual artists. More education on this process is needed. Some organizations that have qualified for individual grant programs indicate that they would be happy to share the information with others.

Variety as the Goal

Ultimately it is important to remember that the goal of this conference and all such exchanges should be to encourage variety in the individual support of artists. The goal is not to produce one perfect uniform system of grant giving. Variety allows for inclusion rather than exclusion in solution of artists' needs. Support can take the form of money, services, information, or any combination of the three.

The Artist's Dilemma

In the need to create work, most artists face a lifelong struggle between time and money. If artists work to get money, they lose the time to create, the time for family, and the time for constructive dialogue with other artists. If they work at creating their art they have insufficient money to provide living expenses, health insurance, a place to create, documentation and marketing of their creations, tax advice and preparation, and legal and estate protection. This is true for artists in all disciplines. Many artists face the dilemma of compromising artistic integrity due

to their intense financial difficulties. In order to sustain their living and their art-making, they feel pressured to conform to conventional, safe work. Support, through grants and services, is essential in providing the artists with creative freedom.

Flexibility in Grant Categories

The categorization of fields in grant applications is often too rigid. Grant applications often ask for strict conventional categories into which many works no longer fit. Much work which is cross-disciplinary or new falls through the cracks in the system. If grant programs define eligible categories too narrowly, the artist finds very few available grants which are appropriate to the work the artist is exploring. To obtain support, artists sometimes redefine their work along strict conventional categories which are not appropriate to the artist's real work. Flexibility in the categorization of disciplines or the creation of new categories reflecting the ever-evolving field of art is strongly needed. As more artists work in hybrid forms and as new mediums emerge, some grantmakers are rethinking their traditional categories for grants. A few grantmakers have taken this challenge into consideration by structuring grants for evolving cross-platform and new art forms. Others have purposely remained traditional. Both are needed.

There can also be a problem with "project" grants. If grants are only given for specific projects, the artist may dream up a project which does not advance the artist's development or career, solely for the purpose of getting a grant.

Broadening Inclusion

Too many grantmakers tend to focus on emerging or successful artists. Many artists express the relative lack of organizations that support mid-career artists. Some organizations address this need by focussing programs on a particular niche of artists that are more prone to being ignored – such as older artists, women artists, minority artists, or mid-career artists. Sometimes grantmakers who find applicants through the nomination process tend to favor the already successful or successfully emerging artists. Limitations in the selection panel may inadvertently limit the scope of grantees even in an open application process.

Flexibility of Fund Use

Flexibility is needed in the use of the grant. There are many different steps in art-making, usually including research, development, production, documentation, and presentation. Each step costs money and each step needs to be funded. The artist should be able to use the funds with freedom according to his/her own individual needs. The grantmaker should not put any restrictions on the use of the funds based on a proscribed definition of what art-making is. In funding work or projects there is a tendency to concentrate only on development and production. Artists express the need for more assistance in getting the work read, seen, and/or heard. A few grantmakers include publishing, producing, or exhibiting the artist's work as a final, important phase of the grant.

Artists find grants which extend for two years or an adjustable time period preferable to short term support.

Many grantmakers do not limit the use of grant funds, recognizing that in order to provide time to make art, the artist needs income support for rent, food, clothing, child care, insurance, transportation, and medical insurance, etc.

Grantmakers should also understand that a project may evolve over time and change. Some grantmakers already allow for this change and even allow artists freedom in activating the use of the funds at an appropriate time.

Non-isolation

For most artists, the creative process is a lonely one. After years of struggle, the need for validation is strong. While the grant itself is an important validation, artists express a need for a one-on-one rapport with the grantmaker. A personal relationship between the artist and grantmaker can result in useful advice and understanding as the project evolves, and can fulfill the artist's need for moral support. Many artists feel that this intangible aspect of grant giving is just as important as the funds. For the grantmaker, this contact can optimize the effect of the grant and lead to clearer evaluation of the results. There are a few grantmakers who provide this service. The problem is one of finding adequate staff time and expertise.

Artists mention the value of an opportunity to spend time with other artists, whether in a discussion forum or in a gathering of grantees for a few hours or a weekend retreat. Few grantmakers provide this service.

Presentation

There are a few grantmakers who allot a portion of the funds specifically for marketing and presentation of a project. More grantmakers need to take the area of presentation into consideration. Often, projects are created with the help from grantmakers but never presented due to the lack of sufficient funds, lack of planning, or the lack of adequate venue. This is true for all grant-related work, but is especially crucial for new media works that do not have easy access to mainstream platforms of presentation. Grantmakers need to help artists create new venues for their works.

Artists need help in developing an audience for their work, whether this is specific project work created through a grant or a more general representation of the artist's work which has been recognized through the grant process. Few artists have access to the venues, mailing lists, or contacts which are needed for presentation. In new media art, or experimental works such as Web art that have a limited audience base, marketing and audience development is crucial.

Presentation can be enhanced for a wider audience by publishing written works, presenting and recording performances, and offering exhibitions with printed catalogues. The public community will benefit from access to the works created. Exposure to as many professionals in the field as possible is a valuable goal.

Artist Services

In dealing with a project or a career, many artists lack business background and adequate administrative and marketing skills. Even those with the needed experience and inclinations do not have adequate time. Nor do they have money to hire others to provide necessary services. Nor is it easy to contemplate paying high per hour fees to an expert when most artists do not think in hourly fees for their own creative work.

As artists create work and prepare it for presentation, there are multiple areas of support that are commonly problematic. These include problems of daily

living, such as child support and health insurance, or administrative support, such as office functions – computer skills and programs, duplicating, mailing. Professional support – strategic planning for project or career, help with documentation, copyright, contracts, accounting, taxes, estate planning – is often omitted. Advice and practice in interviewing and presenting work to prospective producers, collectors, or marketers is needed. The artist is not often a good agent for marketing work.

For an individual artist, trying to navigate the demands of even a middle-sized project, the assistance needed and the decisions which must be made can be overwhelming. What training and information is provided for artists? What services are most needed? What services are currently available to artists? What do these services cost? Are there adequate administrative and professional practitioners and advisors available? Are there qualified volunteers or adequate funding to hire non-volunteers? To what extent can or do grantmakers provide these services or funding for these services? How else can they be provided?

This area of artist services is one of the most important topics needing further consideration.

Emergency Grants

There are a few grantmakers who offer emergency grants to individual artists who have suffered from a disaster such as fire, flood or illness. After the September 11th disaster, many grantmakers offered such help either directly or through already existing programs.

Opportunity Grants

More than one grantmaker provides immediate, small grants to artists who have an opportunity which they cannot accept because of their financial limitations. For example, an opportunity may be missed to participate in an exhibition because the work must be framed or shipped or insured; a residency must be lost because there is no money to get there; a chance to perform must be turned down because a piano must be hired. Often these small grants allow an artist to take advantage of an offered grant or residency which does not cover all the required costs.

Travel Grants

Travel grants, provided by more than one organization, can provide the opportunity for an artist to travel for research or to enrich the creative process by broadening perspectives and experience.

Space and Community

There are organizations which create artist residencies, providing artists with free or low cost space in which to live and work, creating a community of artists concentrated on art-making and exchange of ideas.

One organization provides free studios to selected artists for one year. Another runs a large artist studio center, providing inexpensive studio space where artists have a better chance of gaining recognition. Still another provides live-work centers for artists of various disciplines.

Some programs provide studio visits by curators, collectors, artists, and critics. Others provide open-studio exhibitions.

While such programs may not provide a direct stipend or grant, they support artists by creating a community for creative synergy, concentrated work, and opportunity for recognition.

Registries

Many grantmakers provide a registry of their grantees' work, either online or at a research location. Some organizations select artists for a larger registry from a wider community.

Gallerists and curators use these registries for locating work.

Information

The Visual Artists Information Hotline provides free nationwide information to individual artists by phone and online about grants, residencies, and many other practical topics such as insurance, safety, and business information. A consortium of grantmakers supports it. A similar hotline for other disciplines is being created. Many other information services are offered locally or regionally to individual artists

either through newsletters or Web sites published by grantmakers.

Large Projects: Sponsorship or Becoming a 501(c)(3)

When a large project or process needs funding, artists may need to solicit grants and gifts from organizations and individuals which will only give to a 501(c)(3) entity. This can be done in two ways. The artists can find an existing 501(c)(3) which is willing to "sponsor" the project or group, or the artists can go through the process of becoming a 501(c)(3) organization. In both cases there is a need for information and advice for the artists. The need to become a nonprofit organization is most likely to occur in dance, theatre and music when projects grow beyond the scope of the initiating artist and a de facto group already exists. Making the decision to become an organization is daunting to artists who fear the process will divert them from the creative process.

Artist Participation in Governance and Selection

Perhaps more attention should be paid to artists' voices in the governance, procedural, and selection processes of grantmakers. Some grantmakers believe that their boards, trustees, advisors and selection panels should include artists. Many artists and a few grantmakers believe that governance and selection should be entirely by artists. Any organization which serves artists could benefit from regular input from the artists in the disciplines it serves.

Evaluation

Every program of artist support improves its procedures, adapts to changing needs, and achieves maximum success only through carefully considered evaluation. This is an area which warrants further discussion.

Variety in Artist Support

One organization describes the valuable results from small cash grants for artists' emergencies. Another organization develops comprehensive funding, selecting an artist and mentoring the work from concept to presentation, with strategic planning and professional support throughout the process, a retreat for the grantees to evaluate and share perspectives, and part of the financial gains from the project to

be returned to the funder. Still another grantmaker develops a program providing services in the form of computer training for artists.

One size does not fit all. There are endless varieties in existing support for individual artists. There is value in every one of these programs. It is important to have a wide variety of programs to serve the needs of artists in all disciplines and across disciplines. The need for all forms of artist support is far greater than the supply.

It is to be hoped that the discussion of this conference provides the impetus for further constructive dialogue.

The committee for the preconference on Creative Support for Individual Artists would like to express its appreciation to Jeewon Song and Upasna Bajaj for their excellent work in preparing this report.

THIS IS ONE OF A SERIES OF PROCEEDINGS FROM THE GIA 2001 CONFERENCE, CULTURE INFLUENCING COMMUNITY CHANGE.

Transcriptions of proceedings from GIA's 2001 conference, *Culture Influencing Community Change*, are published as individual papers. These proceedings are also available on GIA's Web site at www.giarts.org.

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- ___ After September 11: Dealing with a New Landscape for Arts and Culture (*Monday session*)
- ___ Beyond "Art:" A Community Perspective
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