



National Arts Policy Roundtable

A Program of **Americans for the Arts**

The Arts and Civic Engagement: Strengthening the 21st Century Community

A Report on the Proceedings of the
Americans for the Arts National Arts Policy Roundtable
September 25-27, 2008
Sundance Preserve

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sundance
P R E S E R V E

“Let us find a way to ensure that by 2010 significantly more Americans will participate in (not merely consume or “appreciate”) cultural activities, from group dancing to songfests to community theater to rap festivals. Let us discover new ways to use the arts as a vehicle for convening diverse groups of fellow citizens.”

Robert Putnam,
Professor of Public Policy
Kennedy School of Government Harvard University
and author, *Bowling Alone* and *Better Together*

Americans for the Arts wishes to thank the generous sponsors of the
2008 National Arts Policy Roundtable:

The W. K. Kellogg Foundation CONNECT Fund

and

The Ruth Lilly Fund of Americans for the Arts

A Message from Robert Redford and Robert L. Lynch

Americans for the Arts and the Sundance Preserve established the National Arts Policy Roundtable in 2006 on the premise that the arts are critical to our society—and that every American should have an opportunity to participate in all forms of the arts. Since its inception, more than 60 distinguished CEO level decision-makers from business, government, philanthropy, education and the arts, have gathered annually at Sundance to discuss issues critical to advancing American culture—and to recommend the public sector policies, private sector practices, and research needed to move from thought to action.

On September 25-27, 2008, 29 leaders gathered at the third annual National Arts Policy Roundtable to consider the topic **The Arts and Civic Engagement: Strengthening the 21st Century Community**. We believe that civic engagement—that is, the active commitment by individuals to participate and contribute to the improvement of one’s neighborhood, community, nation and world—is vital to healthy communities, healthy business environments, and a healthy democracy. We believe that the arts can and do play a unique role in fostering citizen engagement—by bringing forth new ways to view an increasingly complex world, and providing the creative space in which difficult issues can be addressed and solutions can take form.

Our goal in examining this topic was to better articulate how the arts can help catalyze a more vital and participatory civic culture in our communities, workplaces and nation. This report represents the results of this dialogue. In preparation for the Roundtable, focus groups of arts and civic engagement program officers from major foundations were convened to consider this issue; we also relied on the case studies, research and data from over ten years of work conducted in arts and civic engagement through the Animating Democracy program of Americans for the Arts. Our dialogue was strengthened by the on site case study presented by the community members of Crossroads Charlotte—a major civic engagement initiative designed to address Charlotte, NC’s changing community through storytelling, dialogue and the arts. Finally, we would like to express our gratitude to the Kellogg Foundation CONNECT Fund, and The Ruth Lilly Fund of Americans for the Arts for support of the 2008 National Arts Policy Roundtable.



Robert Redford
Chairman, Sundance Preserve



Robert L. Lynch
President & CEO, Americans for the Arts



A Message from the Chair

2008 represented the third meeting of the annual Americans for the Arts National Arts Policy Roundtable at Sundance. Our topic this year, **The Arts and Civic Engagement: Strengthening the 21st Century Community** stems directly from the imperative given to us by participants in the inaugural Roundtable in 2006 which focused on the future of private sector giving to the arts. Participants were unanimous in their belief that in order to create the society we envision, it was imperative for all citizens across all sectors to work together in support of “...Advancing a cultural climate in which civic life may thrive,” stating that:

“The arts provide solutions to many of our most pressing social problems...the arts are — and need to be understood as — a valuable part of strategies to address a variety of social issues, and build vibrant, healthy communities.” (*National Arts Policy Roundtable, 2006*)

The annual National Arts Policy Roundtable is the culminating event following a year long investigation of the topic by Americans for the Arts. This has included the conducting of literature reviews and engaging with experts and stakeholders in a meaningful exploration of new ideas around the topic. Through the generous funding of the Kellogg Foundation’s Connect Fund, we were privileged to be able to welcome new partners in this dialogue well known for their work in civic engagement: Public Agenda, American Public Media, and Philanthropy for Active Civic Engagement (PACE). The staff and leaders of these groups have worked closely with our advisors to the Roundtable, Barbara Schaffer Bacon and Pam Korza, co-Directors of Americans for the Arts Animating Democracy project, in helping to bring different perspectives and shed new light into our investigation.

Our goal for the Roundtable was to generate specific, actionable policy recommendations during our gathering at Sundance, and to proffer them to the appropriate leaders in both the public and private sectors. In keeping with the spirit of the topic, our work at the Roundtable was deeply rooted in dialogue and engagement with the arts and with each other. We were pleased to welcome the artists and community leaders from the City of Charlotte, who shared their experiences in attempting to bring about change in their community through poetry and storytelling. Peter Clowney, from Weekend America, and Liz Lerman, from the Liz Lerman Dance Exchange, led lively discussions with members of the Roundtable, designed to launch us into new ways of thinking and viewing this topic.

Our charge, from our cross-sector perspective, was to use this gathering to help launch new ideas, strategies and efforts, designed to bring the full force and potential of the arts to this growing societal challenge. We are pleased to share with you the results of our efforts, and hope that this report serves as a launching point to a new national dialogue between the public and private sectors and within our communities on renewing civic life through the arts.

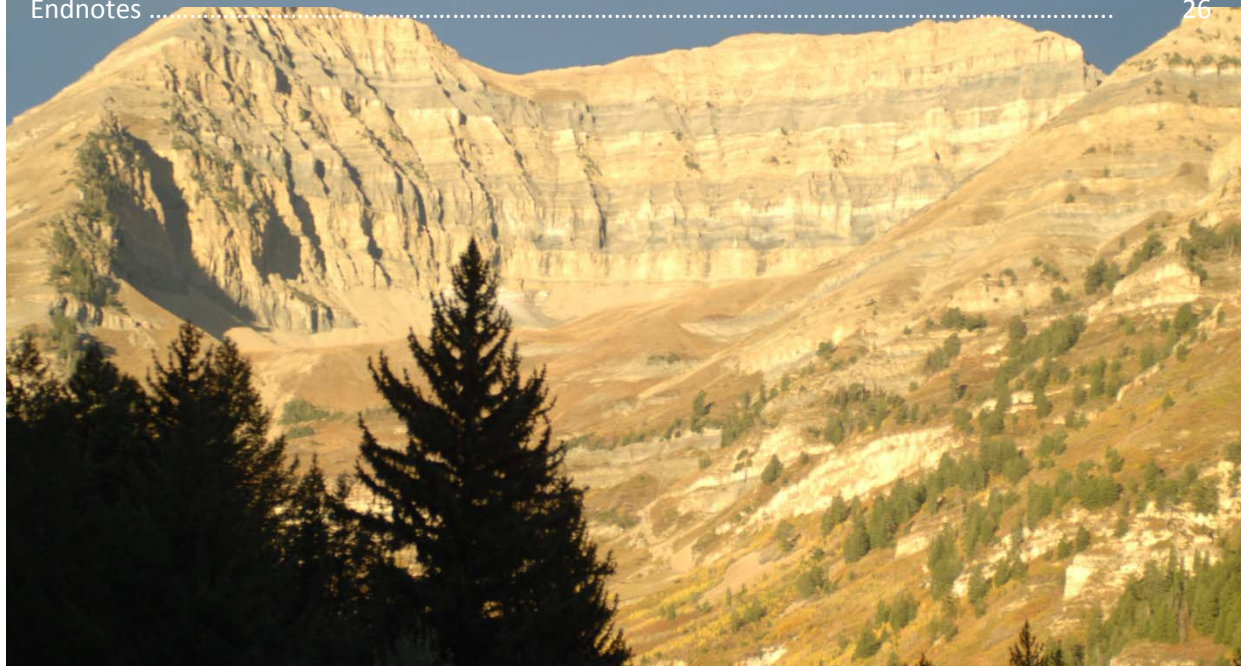


Marian Godfrey
Chair, National Arts Policy Roundtable



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Introduction to the National Arts Policy Roundtable

The Americans for the Arts National Arts Policy Roundtable at Sundance is an annual forum of national leaders who share a commitment to the arts and a willingness to meet and recommend policies critical to the advancement of American culture. Americans for the Arts created the Roundtable on the premise that issues important to the arts are also important to society. Co-convened annually at the Sundance Preserve in Utah by Americans for the Arts President and CEO, Robert L. Lynch, and Chairman of the



Day 1 at the 2008 National Arts Policy Roundtable

Sundance Preserve, Robert Redford, the Roundtable is composed of individuals who serve at the highest levels of business, government, philanthropy, education and the arts.

The Roundtable is the center point of a year of activity which includes more than 100 events Americans for the Arts convenes with the field intended to view the chosen topic through different lenses and help frame the discussion. Policies and recommendations that are developed are widely disseminated by Americans for the Arts through the media and its national networks.

Introduction to the Topic

The 2008 National Arts Policy Roundtable explores the role of the arts in fostering civic engagement. A growing body of research is demonstrating that civic engagement is vital to building healthy communities.

By stimulating creative thinking and encouraging people to see things in new ways, the arts can fuel a more active participation in civic life. Research shows that engagement in the arts helps build human, social, and community capital. Increasingly, artists and arts organizations are fostering citizen participation through the arts by bringing people together to understand and address complex issues, and by engaging audiences in more meaningful ways through the creative experience.

The 2008 National Arts Policy Roundtable examines the vital role the arts can play to promote civic engagement that builds healthy communities, healthy business environments, and a healthy democracy.

A Matter of Definition

The term “**civic engagement**” can mean many things to many people. In the context of the National Arts Policy Roundtable, we chose to define “civic engagement” broadly as ***participating in and contributing to the improvement of one’s neighborhood, community, and nation.***

Similarly we used the term “**the arts**” to reflect the broad array of artistic disciplines and expressions which includes ***dance, music, theatre, visual and media arts, literary arts, traditional and folk arts,*** as well as our ***cultural resources and infrastructures,*** including ***individual artists, cultural institutions, local arts enabling organizations, arts presenters and providers, and discipline-specific nonprofit arts groups.***

The Imperative: Why Civic Engagement? Why Now?

Civic engagement springs from a feeling of belonging, a sense of responsibility, and an experience of investment and ownership in the local, regional, national, and international communities to which citizens belong. Volunteering and voting are the two most often cited indicators of civic engagement but they are not the only ones.

This is a propitious moment to capitalize on the resurgence in civic engagement in order to make inroads on critical issues that press upon our communities, regions, nation, and world.

There is a growing sense of urgency to renew civic engagement across many sectors of society. Business leaders recognize that corporate community investments in human capital are essential to our social as well as economic progress. Colleges and universities are initiating programs to foster values and commitment to civic engagement in young people. There is a drive to

reinvigorate civics in our classrooms. Changing demographics are raising issues that demand civic dialogue in order to find solutions.

The presidential primaries and caucuses launched an historic re-engagement by Americans around issues that directly affect their interests and concerns. Nielsen Media Research reported more than 40 million people watched the political speeches by Barak Obama, John McCain and Republican vice presidential candidate Sarah Palin. These political speeches were watched by more people than the 2008 "American Idol" finale, the Academy Awards or the opening ceremony of the Beijing Olympics.

The essential and defining characteristic of active civic engagement is the commitment to participate in and contribute to the improvement of one's neighborhood, community, and nation.

The 2008 Democratic National Convention became the most-watched political convention ever—until the record was broken a week later by the Republican National Convention. The presidential inauguration brought millions to the Mall on a frigid January morning in Washington DC to be witnesses to the historic moment in American democracy.

It is incredibly important that we take advantage of the amazing window of opportunity that is open before us now. ...An opportunity like this—to sustain a long-term growth of our civic engagement—comes along only once or twice in a century, and we need to support and nurture it. Opening the door to civic engagement and responsible citizenship...is the job of all who care about strengthening our democracy and our communities.

David Eisner, CEO, Corporation for National and Community Service, former Vice President, AOL Time Warner

An Imperative that Transcends Sectors

The movement to renew civic engagement seeks to create more viable ways for publics and institutions to re-engage in public life—for the purposes of building stronger communities, better and more productive businesses, as well as a healthy democracy. In the 2004 report, *Civic Participation and the Promise of Democracy*, author Craig McGarvey, suggests that civic engagement leads to potent effects—enhanced human capital (individual potential), social capital (networks of human and institutional relationships), and community capital (positive change in communities). The benefits of effective civic engagement resonate across sectors.

Civic engagement has become the focus of vigorous attention within and across sectors.

Government

Public officials, civic leaders and agencies are thinking critically about ways to better engage the knowledge and experience of community members toward creating lasting change. The American Planning Association has responded, for example, to shift the field from top down planning interventions to promoting *collaborative planning* strategies that engage stakeholders at neighborhood levels. Elected officials are appealing to citizens to move beyond complaint and to take responsibility and action to make change around issues that matter in their communities. Boston City Council has begun organizing a Civic Summit—an unprecedented gathering of community leaders, new and old—to begin a conversation on strategies to increase civic participation throughout neighborhoods. Building social capital has direct impact for municipalities. Areas with high social capital are better able to maintain homeowner value.¹ In New York, longitudinal studies have shown that even minimal participation in building activities significantly lowers crime levels both toward the building and its residents.² Studies of neighborhood associations show participation improves crime and health rates.

Research suggests that areas with high social capital are better able to maintain homeowner value. Studies of neighborhood associations show participation improves crime and health rates.

Foundations

Foundations are supporting a range of civic engagement strategies that strengthen communities and families, including community problem solving, community building, civic education, leadership training, and political and policy reform. Funders with longstanding commitment to advancing these strategies at the local and national level, such as Knight, Case, Carnegie, Ford, Pew, Rockefeller Brothers, Surdna, Kellogg and Kettering, are being joined by a new movement within private philanthropy to increase the quantity and the quality of philanthropic investment in civic engagement strategies. PACE (Philanthropy for Active Civic Engagement), a coalition of 25 foundations, is coalescing a peer learning community to inspire and incubate strategic collaborations to support active citizenship; The Nathan Cummings Foundation is convening a working group of funders interested in supporting arts and social justice efforts.

New giving trends documented by the Forum of Regional Associations of Grantmakers indicate increasing opportunity for supporting civic life and civic participation through new donors emerging among women, young social and corporate entrepreneurs, and communities of color.

Corporate

For corporations, engagement can be a strategy to address external corporate citizenship goals, as well as improve internal business practice. Increasingly corporate leaders are acknowledging their role as

Engagement as a competitive strategy goes beyond promoting social harmony in the workplace. A recent study from the global investment research firm, Ned Davis Research, Inc., found that in 1975 tangible assets, like inventory and equipment, made up over 80% of the value of the S&P 500.

Today, intangible assets, like corporate brands, employee talent, innovation, and engagement levels, are 80% of its value.

stakeholders in community improvement and are making strategic investments in civic life. Since 2002 when a new movement called Business Strengthening America began, more than 800 CEOs representing 5 million employees have joined and are making institutional changes in their policies and practices to support a culture of community service.³ As diversity increases within the workforce at home and abroad, corporations increasingly view engagement skills as essential to navigating cultural context and differences and to developing and implementing institutional policies and practices.

The costs associated with the “disengaged employee” are high: The Gallup Organization estimates that disengaged employees cost the American economy as much as \$350 billion every year in lost productivity.

Business leaders recognize that corporate community investments in human capital are essential to social and economic progress, which is increasingly reflected in their philanthropy and business models. A report from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce’s Business Civic Leadership Center (BCLC) (December 2007) asserts that, “the more a business’ corporate community investment initiatives aim at improving the community’s human or economic development potential, the more the business’ corporate citizenship will help both the wider community and the company.” The future of

corporate community investment is dependent, BCLC states, upon the degree to which corporations becomes even more intentional about investing in key drivers of social and economic progress, such as education, workforce development, financial literacy, and homeownership.⁴

Engagement can be a vital internal business strategy which helps create a

In a controlled study, business units that applied engagement practices outperformed their peers by 26% in gross margin and 85% in sales growth.

culture of employee loyalty and productivity. The business benefits generated by being socially responsible are being quantified. Numerous studies have attested to the proposition that being socially responsible

results in financial gains, particularly through an impact on customer loyalty, employee recruitment and retention, and other factors.⁵ Gallup researchers have found *engaged employees* are: 18% more productive, 12% more profitable, 51% less likely to leave the organization at low-turnover companies, 31% less likely to leave the organization at high-turnover companies, 62% less likely to be involved in an accident on the job, 27% less prone to absenteeism and 51% less likely to be a source of inventory shrinkage.



John Tarnoff, Head of Show Development at Dreamworks, raises a point.

Nonprofit Sector

Comprised of trusted institutions with deep reach into communities, the nonprofit sector is acknowledging its unique position to be a “powerful bulwark against further civic disengagement,” as reported in a 2007 Independent Sector report.⁶ The report urges more innovative strategies among nonprofits that both address public concerns and achieve greater impact toward their own particular missions. A 2007 national meeting of funders and practitioners concurred that nonprofit service agencies can effectively reach low-income and other marginalized communities typically left out of civic participation and offer existing infrastructure through which people gain skills in civic participation and actively get involved.⁷

Education / Youth

The *National Civic Review* reports that, within schools and community-based youth-serving and youth leadership organizations, young people are increasingly being recognized as powerful contributors and sources of solutions to civic and social concerns rather than

The Partnership for 21st Century Skills, along with the Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools, argue that a healthy 21st century democracy will rely on young people who know how to stay informed, understand the local and global implications of civic decisions, and exercise the rights and obligations of citizenship at local, state, national and global levels.

problems to be fixed. Youth organizing promotes collective, not just individual action, and fosters “firm identity, strong motivation to participate, and a host of important life skills (public speaking, conflict resolution, habits of sustained involvement, policy analysis, and creating community change).”⁸ There is a drive to reinvigorate civics education in classrooms as well as service-learning opportunities to reclaim the traditional civic missions of schools. The Partnership for 21st Century Skills, as well as others, observes that current emphases on test scores and the process of personal learning and achievement have undermined the teaching of democratic values.⁹ Colleges and universities are initiating programs to foster values and commitment to civic engagement by students and are making innovative changes in policies and practices to foster a culture of civic engagement on college campuses. Campuses are advancing new, authentic, sustained campus/community collaborations through public scholarship and by training young people to engage effectively in and with community.

Civic dialogue

A movement to create a culture of civic engagement has emerged over the past decade or more in response to the decline in the quality of public dialogue and opportunities for meaningful public dialogue. This movement has been both advanced and supported by a range of organizations committed to foster democratic values and practices, civic dialogue, and deliberation.¹⁰ Some, such as the Public Conversations Project, explore deeply rooted differences of perspective, identity or world view and foster understanding through dialogue. The “dialogue-to-change” approach of others, such as Everyday Democracy, facilitates community-wide engagement to identify collective strategies to tackle issues related to improving schools, community-police relations, and racial and economic inequities. Yet others such as Public Agenda and the Kettering Foundation facilitate ways to engage broad, nonpartisan publics in deliberating new solutions and improved policies by giving them time and structure and by giving civic leaders tools to reach past special interests in order to engage the public more effectively.¹¹ There is movement to incorporate *connected activism* (i.e. the use of technology and the web to create networks among activists who can share information and other resources to mobilize action) into social change efforts because it opens new possibilities for communication, collaboration, content development, and collective action.¹² Promoters of civic engagement are assessing how to adapt and change to take advantage of the potential for increased speed and scale of civic engagement online. Experts observe that the key is not in the latest tool or tactic, but rather “balancing the need for scale with the need for the intensity and personal connection that comes from in-person gatherings and activities.”

The Power of Art in Civic Engagement

Many are seeking more and varied opportunities to enhance the quality of public engagement. They are looking for innovative strategies and the arts are increasingly recognized and being called upon for their unique creative capacities.

Civic engagement
is about reimagining.
The arts help us reimagine.

*Sterling Speirn, President
W.K. Kellogg Foundation*

Through such elements as metaphor, humor, and story, the arts can offer welcoming entry points to civic participation, help people imagine new possibilities, suspend judgment, tolerate ambiguity, and hear and absorb different perspectives. Beyond the traditional roles of producer, presenter, or

exhibitor, arts and cultural institutions are leading as well as partnering with community partners, business, schools, and others to apply the power of art.

Benefits to Community and Democracy

With intention, artists and cultural organizations are extending art into new civic settings—community development agencies, neighborhood associations, community planning meetings— as well as positioning their own cultural spaces and civic space. In so doing, they are lending important content, creativity, humanity and vitality to civic engagement and to advance the achievement of a variety of civic and social effects.

The arts increase social capital. Art functions as physical and experiential space where people learn to co-exist, connect, and build trust. Neighborhood cultural centers, events, and community-based arts programs engage people in creative activity that coalesces social and civic relationships.

For instance, Philadelphia's Mural Arts Program, a public and private venture with sponsorship from the City, has created more than 2,700 murals. Social capital is developed each time a mural is commissioned as neighborhoods organize and apply for resources, contribute time and energy, offer ideas for themes and images, and participate with artists and each other in artmaking. Such civic engagement forges social contracts between people and across various block associations, civic groups, congregations, political, and business leaders.¹³



Roundtable participants discuss specific issues in focus groups at the Bear Claw

Best Buy has similarly used the power of history and the National Civil Rights Museum to personalize a corporate commitment to inclusion. The museum's potent setting and displays in the former Lorraine Hotel, where Martin Luther King was assassinated, have immersed 1,300 Best Buy managers in dialogue about issues of individual responsibility in an increasingly diverse company and society. Fostering stronger bonds within the company has benefited the work environment and, in turn, profitability.¹⁴ New research suggests further that employees take lessons learned in the workplace and apply them to civic life and that "economists and policy makers would do well to consider the role that business can play ...in starting positive social changes."¹⁵

The arts expand civic participation. Art can extend an invitation, bringing together groups of people with divergent viewpoints who might not readily agree to talk or work together in other settings. Art can bring forward the voices of those often left out of public discourse. As a development project threatened displacement of immigrants, refugees, and low-income residents in Minneapolis, Intermedia Arts, a contemporary community arts center, engaged artists to work with each of these affected groups. Through creating art together on the theme of what makes a community safe, they explored the issue in relation to its impact on their own lives, and gained skills and confidence to participate in broader public dialogues about the development project.

The arts stimulate and deepen public dialogue and help people envision new opportunities and solutions. They can *spark* honest and meaningful dialogue on the most critical issues of our day. They help assess who we are and imagine what we want to be as a community and a nation.

In 2000, Charlotte, NC placed 39th in the category of interracial trust out of 40 communities surveyed by sociologist Robert Putnam. This statistic propelled *Crossroads Charlotte*, an arts-based planning process in which four plausible stories based on real data about this community's future were creatively translated by artists and then creatively used in community forums to help people imagine fresh responses to the question: "What course will Charlotte chart over the next 10 years as we deal with issues of access, equity, inclusion, and trust in the social, political, economic, and cultural life of the community?"¹⁶ Since 2005, over 3,000 individuals affiliated with corporate, nonprofit, and government organizations have participated in dialogues and the initiative is expanding now to the broader public. At the same time, the Foundation for the Carolinas has also reoriented to strategically address civic issues through a new Center for Civic Leadership.



Participants watch a video presentation of *Crossroads: Charlotte*.

The arts motivate individual and collective action. A year after a devastating elementary school shooting in Flint, Michigan, Flint Youth Theatre (FYT) led a community-wide project that helped move the community from emotional response to action. Drama workshops that facilitated youth and community members to look at the causes and effects of youth violence informed FYT's development of a new play. The play then became the centerpiece of a diverse array of public dialogue opportunities. In partnership with education, dialogue, neighborhood crime prevention, and community organizations, FYT enabled the community to define action strategies including a mentoring program for youth, conflict mediation program for teens, and an assessment of prevalence of guns in homes.

Benefits to Civic Engagement

Research from Robert Putnam and the Saguaro Seminar at Harvard University, as well as the work of Animating Democracy at Americans for the Arts, provides evidence that suggests that the arts are powerful tools that can help fuel a more active participation in civic life.

Increasingly, artists and arts organizations are defining a greater role for the arts in fostering citizen participation in their communities. They accomplish this by bringing people together to understand and address complex issues and by engaging audiences in more meaningful ways through participation in the creative experience.

Artists and cultural organizations have devoted much creative energy to the concept of community development and the realization of community, advancing civic goals related to urban design and placemaking, youth development, and downtown and neighborhood revitalization.

Robert Putnam has noted that the arts play a unique role in building social capital, particularly among groups of different race, religions, cultures, social and economic status. As he points out, “The arts have a singular advantage in rebuilding social capital: Cultural activities are enjoyable and fun. Unlike attending meetings or voting – what we call “civic broccoli” because they’re good for all but unpleasant to many – artistic performance is akin to civic fruit. .. The enjoyable nature of the arts makes them perhaps the most promising, if neglected, means of building social capital. We recommend that America’s cultural institutions and the people who work within them create opportunities for political expression, community dialogue, shared cultural experiences, and civic work – all with an eye toward making citizen participation fun.”

Benefits to the Arts

Besides contributing to healthy communities and a healthy democracy, there are direct benefits to the arts sector. Fostering civic engagement through the arts:

Satisfies growing public expectations for active engagement in arts experiences. The ways that people are accessing and interacting with art are changing. People are demanding different experiences from artists and arts institutions. Research by the Curb Center for Art, Enterprise, and Public Policy at Vanderbilt University as well as Cultural Initiatives of Silicon Valley indicates that people want active rather than passive ways to engage in arts and culture.¹⁷ Such active, meaningful experiences are provided through arts and civic engagement opportunities.

Strengthens the viability of the arts within the ecology of community.

As arts organizations are building relationships with community segments and partners to advance civic and social concerns, they are introducing new constituencies to their own institutions and the arts.



Left to right: Frank Hodson, former Chair of the National Endowment for the Arts, Peter Clowney, American Public Media, Michael Rizer, Wachovia Foundation and Darrel Williams, co-chair Crossroads: Charlotte, enjoy a poetic response to the deliberations.

Puts cultural assets to work for the public good. As nonprofit organizations entrusted to advance the public good, arts organizations are using cultural assets to fulfill their social roles in meaningful and impactful ways. By advancing the public good, arts organizations are strengthening their case for public and private support.

Based on these multiple benefits, cultural organizations are increasingly exploring their civic roles with the support of field initiatives and service organizations. The Museums and Communities program of the American Association of Museums has bolstered the museums field while the Association of Performing Arts Presenters' Arts Partners program played an early role in community engagement through the arts. A tool recently launched by the League of American Orchestras is helping orchestras assess their authentic role in community and civic life. Animating Democracy, a program of Americans for the Arts initially supported by The Ford Foundation, has advanced leading edge practice across all arts disciplines and within a wide range of organizations from local arts agencies to dance and theater companies to major museums and symphony orchestras. It has brought important recognition to small and mid-sized culturally specific organizations whose inherent ways of engaging community unite artistic and civic concerns.



Members, presenters, guests and staff of the 2008 Americans for the Arts National Arts Policy watch as a rehabilitated hawk is released into the wild. Front Row Left to Right: Robert Redford and Marian Godfrey, Chair of the National Arts Policy Roundtable.



The Challenge: How can the arts and civic engagement be advanced to strengthen 21st century communities?

Together with hosts Robert Redford and Robert Lynch, the 29 leaders from business, philanthropy, government and the arts convened at the Sundance Preserve on September 25 -27, 2009 for the third annual Americans for the Arts National Arts Policy Roundtable on “The Arts and Civic Engagement: Strengthening the 21st Century Community.” Their dialogue focused on ways in which the arts can engage people in working together to build healthy communities, healthy business environments, and a healthy democracy. Members of the Roundtable examined what is needed to support and advance the role of arts and culture in civic engagement, addressing such core questions as:

- *What cross-sector opportunities exist with the potential to make real change?*
- *What is needed to help the arts be effective partners and leaders in advancing civic engagement and change?*
- *What public and private sector investments are necessary to advance mutual civic interests through the arts?*
- *How do we more effectively communicate the power and potential for the arts in civic engagement to the general public?*
- *What messages and recommendations should be sent to policy leaders in the public and private sectors?*

Participants examined research and looked at examples of how the unique qualities of the arts are being applied to bring disparate people together to create joint solutions to a range of social problems and challenges. They concluded that the arts, as both leaders and partners in civic engagement efforts, can help catalyze a more vital and participatory civic culture in our communities, workplaces and nation.



Presenters at the 2008 National Arts Policy Roundtable, clockwise, from upper left: Robert Lynch, Barbara Schaffer Bacon, Michael Marsicano, Panel (Peter Clowney, American Public Media, moderator; Christopher Gates of PACE; Barbara Dyer, the Hitachi Foundation, and Lt. Governor of WI Barbara Lawton), Robert Redford.

2008 Policy Recommendations

Members of the 2008 Americans for the Arts National Arts Policy Roundtable affirmed that the arts can and do play a unique role in fostering citizen engagement by offering new ways to view an increasingly complex world, and providing creative forums in which difficult issues can be addressed and solutions can take form. As such the arts are, and should be, part of the solution to the many problems facing America today—from conditions that put youth and families at risk, immigration, health, race relations, and a struggling education system, to economic and workforce challenges.

Members of the Roundtable made recommendations in four key areas to help the arts achieve their full potential in this role:

(1) Opportunities and Resources

Identify, develop and advocate for public and private sector policies, practices and initiatives that advance the role of the arts in fostering citizen participation and better utilize the skills of artists and cultural organizations in helping individuals engage in civic and community life.

(2) Research and Evaluation

Build a body of compelling stories and evidence that demonstrates how the arts foster civic engagement and contribute to healthy communities, healthy work environments, and a healthy democracy.

(3) Messaging and Casemaking

Generate greater visibility for how “arts-based” civic engagement strategies fuel community building and problem solving.

(4) Strategic Alliances

Advance strategic alliances across sectors that promote and establish common cause between the arts and proponents of civic dialogue, deliberation, and engagement.



Members, presenters, and staff of the 2008 Americans for the Arts National Arts Policy Roundtable.

1. OPPORTUNITIES AND RESOURCES

Identify, develop and advocate for public and private sector policies, practices and initiatives that advance the role of the arts in fostering citizen participation and better utilize the skills of artists and cultural organizations in helping individuals engage in civic and community life.

Policies

- ★ Promote the creation of an “Arts Corps” as part of any national service and/or national jobs programs.
- ★ Collaborate with civic engagement advocates to develop joint messages and strategies that include the arts in policy and position papers related to national service, civic engagement, or related interests.
- ★ Encourage public officials and community leaders to: a) connect arts resources with civic initiatives, and b) support artists and cultural organizations working to advance civic participation and problem-solving.
- ★ Encourage Local Arts Agencies (LAAs) to play an active role in connecting local arts resources with civic initiatives.

Practices

- ★ Promote the use of arts venues as civic spaces and arts programs as opportunities for civic engagement.
- ★ Provide training through academic or other professional programs for artists and arts practitioners to become effective leaders and partners in civic dialogue, and acquire the skills and sensibilities to effectively work in civic contexts.
- ★ Create opportunities for mutual learning and exchange among arts professionals and professionals in the public engagement/deliberative democracy fields.
- ★ Hold local and regional forums and workshops to build skills that enable effective arts and civic engagement partnerships, and that connect artists and cultural and community leaders with each other.

Investments

- ★ Promote increased public sector investment at local, state and national levels that supports the arts as an innovative strategy toward achieving civic and social goals.
- ★ Encourage private and community foundation support for arts-based engagement strategies that address issues such as the environment, health, children and families, poverty, race relations, etc.
- ★ Educate and encourage individual donors to support artists and cultural organizations whose work engages citizens for public benefit.

2. RESEARCH AND EVALUATION

Build a body of compelling stories and evidence that demonstrates how the arts foster civic engagement and contribute to healthy communities, healthy work environments and a healthy democracy.

Map the Field

★ Develop a comprehensive picture of the ways in which the arts engage citizens and address civic issues through a collaborative, iterative mapping effort that:

- characterizes the full range of activity taking place
- collects and organizes informational resources about projects, artists, and funding.

Centralize Knowledge

★ Create a centralized online database and forum which:

- aggregates reports, project profiles, news, information and databases resulting from the mapping effort, as well as relevant information on the arts, engagement and related topics
- utilizes social networking and other technology to organize and connect stakeholders and promote and disseminate tools and high quality practices.



Left to right: John Esterle, Michael Rizer, Glen Howard and Diane Swonk in a break out group.

Advance Research

★ Advance research to better understand the social and civic impact of the arts on their communities, and their unique contribution to enhanced civic engagement by:

- encouraging social capital researchers to continue research that examines the impact of the arts in building relations between divergent groups (bridging social capital)—a vital element for healthy pluralistic democracy.
- encouraging the inclusion of arts and civic engagement indicators in studies that track social and community health, e.g. Civic Health Index, National Arts Index.

Collect Evidence

★ Encourage cultural organizations and artists to identify, measure, track, and report evidence of meaningful civic/social outcomes by:

- strengthening the capacity of arts practitioners to substantiate the effects of their arts-based civic engagement activity by providing useful impact indicators, evaluation frameworks, methods, and tools
- educating arts practitioners on the use and application of these civic/social outcomes measurement tools in their work.

3. MESSAGING AND CASEMAKING

Generate greater visibility for how “arts-based” civic engagement strategies fuel community building and problem solving.

- ★ Generate feature coverage of art and civic engagement initiatives in traditional and new media.
- ★ Promote awareness in public and private institutions that artists and arts groups can bring the unique qualities of art to civic engagement and communication strategies.
- ★ Build awareness among artists and arts groups about their potential to exercise civic responsibility by applying their creative talents to enhancing civic participation.
- ★ Focus casemaking efforts on both decision-makers and “gatekeepers” regarding opportunities to utilize the arts in civic engagement.



Artists Laurence Maher (left) and Q interpret one of the scenarios from the Crossroads Charlotte project through poetry and song for the participants at the Roundtable.



Top to bottom: Michael Rizer, Darrel Williams, Robert Redford, Marian Godfrey (partial) Tim McClimon and Ruth Wooden listen.



Choreographer Liz Lerman leads a moment of creative reflection.

4. STRATEGIC ALLIANCES

Advance strategic alliances across sectors that establish and promote common cause between the arts and civic dialogue, deliberation, and engagement groups and initiatives.

- ★ Develop national level strategic alliances across arts and non-arts sectors that advance the inclusion of arts in “on the ground” efforts such as: civic planning and land use, deliberation and dialogue efforts, community, and workforce development, and youth development initiatives.
 - Investigate and foster arts/civic engagement partnerships with corporations, the media and faith-based institutions.

- ★ Work with associations of elected officials such as the U.S. Conference of Mayors, the National Governors Association, the National Lieutenant Governors Association, and the National Conference of State Legislators, to advance understanding of and integration of the arts as a civic engagement strategy.

- Integrate the arts in public sector policies and position statements or initiatives developed to address specific issues concerns such as: immigration, health, race relations, prison practices and recidivism, and the environment.



Terry Lewis (left) and Lt. Governor Barbara Lawton (WI) listen to a presentation during the Roundtable.

- ★ Work with associations of private sector business leaders and philanthropy, such as The Conference Board, Business Roundtable, US Chamber of Commerce, National Association of Business Economics, Council on Foundations, Independent Sector and others, to advance understanding and integration of the arts as a civic engagement strategy. Integrate the arts in private sector policies and position statements.

- Develop articles for publication in professional journals.
- Develop and provide workshops, speakers and other training opportunities at professional conferences and venues.



Julie Jensen and Elin O'Leary take a moment to dialogue on a break at Bear Claw.

Americans for the Arts: A Commitment to Arts and Civic Engagement

Americans for the Arts is committed to advancing a role for the arts in civic engagement as an important and timely strategy for strengthening 21st century communities. We have been privileged to work at this exciting intersection of art and civic engagement for over ten years. The work of Animating Democracy has contributed to a tradition of community-based cultural activity, bolstering a widening array of cultural organizations and community partners in the process, and offering valuable research and documentation to advance scholarship and artistic investigation.

Through Animating Democracy's initial support of on-the-ground projects (thanks to generous resources from The Ford Foundation) and its dissemination of best practices through convenings and publications, Americans for the Arts is helping to build capacity for creative, effective, and responsible civic engagement through the arts at the local level. And because participation in civic engagement efforts typically extends beyond traditional arts audiences, Animating Democracy's efforts are helping to broaden public participation in the arts.

Current efforts include arts and civic engagement workshops and forums in partnership with Local Arts Agencies across the country, supported in part by the National Endowment for the Arts. An initiative supported by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation seeks to advance understanding of and help make the case for the social efficacy of arts-based civic engagement work. Animating Democracy's work was featured in a presentation and report on innovative civic engagement strategies at the 2007 Independent Sector conference. We have been called upon for advisory support by a citywide human service agency that is incorporating arts into civic engagement work, dialogue organizations, and funders. Americans for the Arts is increasingly becoming a central resource, researcher, and leader in arts and civic engagement.

With a vision of access to the arts for all, Americans for the Arts works to foster an environment in which the arts can thrive and contribute to the creation of more livable communities, generate more public- and private-sector resources for the arts and arts education, and build individual appreciation of the value of the arts. The Animating Democracy program's emphasis on the vital role of the arts and humanities in a democratic society connects these core goals.

Americans for the Arts aims to increase the national clout of the arts and arts education through policy, research, advocacy, leadership development, visibility and recognition, and strategic alliances and partnerships. Equally important is its work to provide local tools to advance the arts in communities and to increase the involvement of individual citizens in arts and culture. The arts can help citizens better understand and deal with issues that affect their communities and their own lives. When people connect the power of the arts to enhanced civic life, they are motivated to become advocates for the arts.

Americans for the Arts investment in this topic by the nation's key thinkers at the National Arts Policy Roundtable furthers its own commitment and, in turn, seeks to advance endeavors that make a civic and an artistic impact in all corners of the country.

Common Terms

Although definitions are always subject to debate and interpretation, here are some common terms and meanings that have informed Americans for the Arts Animating Democracy program.

Civic engagement The many ways in which people participate in civic, community and political life. From proactively becoming better informed to participating in public forums on issues, from volunteering to voting, from community organizing to political advocacy, the defining characteristic of active civic engagement is the commitment to participate and contribute to the improvement of one's neighborhood, community, and nation.

Social capital The collective value of all "social networks" (who people know) and the inclinations to do things for each other that arise from these networks ("norms of reciprocity"). Specific benefits that flow from social networks include trust, reciprocity, information, and cooperation. Bonding networks that connect people who are similar sustain particularized (in-group) reciprocity. Bridging networks that connect individuals who are diverse sustain generalized reciprocity. (Robert Putnam, *Better Together*, an initiative of the Saguaro Seminar: Civic Engagement in America, Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University; www.bettertogether.org/socialcapital.htm)

Community building The process of improving the quality of life in a neighborhood or community by strengthening the capacity of residents, associations, and organizations to identify priorities and opportunities and to work, individually and collectively, to foster and sustain positive neighborhood or community change. (The Aspen Institute)

Community arts Community arts are creative activities produced by professional artists with community members that combine significant elements of community access, ownership, authorship, participation and accountability. (Bill Cleveland, "Mapping the Field: Arts-based Community Development." Community Arts Network, www.communityarts.net)

Social change Social change can be described in terms of a range of outcomes, from attitudinal change to the building of public will, to policy change that corrects injustice. Human, social, and community capital are three interconnected and measurable outcomes of civic engagement work that constitute social change.

- *Human capital* is the development of individual potential with measures of acquired skills, knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors.
- *Social capital* is the development of networks of human and institutional relationships, with measures of depth, breadth, diversity, and durability.
- *Community capital* is the development of positive change in communities, with measures of problems solved or prevented, policies improved, systems and institutions made more accountable. (Craig McGarvey, *Civic Participation and the Promise of Democracy*, 2004)

Dialogue Two or more parties with differing viewpoints working toward common understanding in an open-ended, most often, face-to-face format. In dialogue:

- Multiple and possibly conflicting perspectives are included rather than promoting a single point of view.
- Empathy and understanding are promoted.
- Assumptions are brought out into the open.
- Suspension of judgment is encouraged in order to foster understanding and break down obstacles.
- Equality among participants is established to honor all voices and help build trust and safety for deep dialogue. (Study Circles Resource Center and *The Magic of Dialogue* by Daniel Yankelovich)

Civic Dialogue Dialogue in which people explore matters of civic importance and consider the dimensions of a civic or social issue, policy, or decision of consequence to their lives, communities, and society. In civic dialogue, participants understand the civic purpose of the dialogue. Participants are encouraged to contribute their own views and listen actively to others.

Arts- or humanities-based civic dialogue/engagement In arts- or humanities-based civic dialogue/engagement, the artistic process and/or art /humanities presentation provides a key focus, catalyst, forum or form for public dialogue/engagement on the issue. Opportunities for dialogue/engagement are embedded in or connected to the arts or humanities experience. In addition, the arts may provide a direct forum to engage in community planning, organizing, activism, and therefore is a form of arts-based civic engagement. (Animating Democracy, Americans for the Arts)



Participants were taken to the Bear Claw ski cabin at the top of the mountain by ski lift for inspiration and discussion.

2008 National Arts Policy Roundtable Participants

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American Public Media

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The Hitachi Foundation

Dianne English
Executive Director
Community Building Initiative

John Esterle
Executive Director
The Whitman Institute

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Chief Executive Officer
National Bank of Commerce

Christopher Gates
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Philanthropy for Active Civic
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Bill Ivey
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Julie Jensen
Chair
Chasdrew Fund

Barbara Lawton
Lieutenant Governor
State of Wisconsin

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Liz Lerman Dance Exchange

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Ruth Wooden
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2008 Resource Seminar Participants

Americans for the Arts would like to thank the following individuals who generously donated their time and expertise at the Resource Seminar held for the giving community in advance of the 2008 National Arts Policy Roundtable. The seminar took place on May 28, 2008 at NASDAQ Headquarters in New York City.

Rahda Blank, The Nathan E. Cummings Foundation

Denise Brown, Executive Director, Leeway Foundation

Claudine Brown, Program Director, Arts & Culture, The Nathan E. Cummings Foundation

Alessandra DiGiusto, Chief Administrative Officer, Deutsche Bank Foundation

Will Friedman, Chief Operating Officer, Public Agenda

Catherine Fukushima, Program Officer, Arts Program, The Wallace Foundation

Miguel Garcia, Deputy Director, Community & Resource Development, The Ford Foundation

Marian Godfrey, Managing Director, Culture and Civic Initiatives, The Pew Charitable Trusts

Heidi Holtz, Program Director for Community Grantmaking, Gifford Foundation

Ellen Holtzman, Program Director for the Arts, The Henry Luce Foundation

Victoria Lord, Program Associate, Rasmuson Foundation

Martha McCoy, President, The Paul J. Aicher Foundation

Olive Mosier, Director, Arts & Culture, William Penn Foundation

Diane Ragsdale, Associate Program Officer, Andrew W. Mellon Foundation

Ben Rodriguez Cubenas, Program Officer, Rockefeller Brothers Fund

Ellen Rudolph, Program Officer, Arts, Surdna Foundation, Inc.

Daniel Windham, Director, Arts Program, The Wallace Foundation

About the...

The Americans for the Arts National Arts Policy Roundtable is an annual forum of national leaders who share a commitment to the arts and a willingness to meet and

recommend policies critical to the advancement of American culture. The Roundtable is composed of distinguished individuals who serve at the highest levels of business, government, philanthropy, education, and the arts. Americans for the Arts and Sundance Preserve are co-conveners of the Roundtable—teaming the two preeminent national organizations dedicated to advancing the arts and creative industries in the United States. The Roundtable was established on the premise that issues important to the arts are also important to society—addressing social and educational needs, quality of life, promoting economic prosperity, enhancing innovation, growing the creative workforce, and fostering diplomacy and cultural exchange.



National Arts Policy Roundtable

It is the distinctive mission of the Roundtable to elevate these issues by giving them national prominence in a forum of informed discussion—one that will yield public policy options, private sector practices, and identify key research needs. The National Arts Policy Roundtable is the pinnacle convening of more than 100 meetings sponsored annually by Americans for the Arts—conferences that enable government and business leaders, scholars, funders, arts agency directors, and others to network, share knowledge, and proffer policies for consideration by the Roundtable. Policies recommended by the Roundtable are, in turn, circulated back to these networks for implementation.

Co-Conveners:



Founded in 1960, Americans for the Arts is the nation's leading nonprofit organization for advancing the arts in America. From its offices in Washington, D.C. and New York City and via a network of more than 100,000 members and stakeholders, Americans for the Arts works to cultivate strong leadership and increase resources for the arts and arts education while building the case for their integral value in the lives of our citizens, communities and nation.

Nestled at the base of 12,000-foot Mount Timpanogos in Utah, The Sundance Preserve is dedicated to maintaining the balance of art, nature, and community as well as the cultivation of independent, innovative thought amongst artists, scholars, scientists, public policy, and business leaders. Residing within the protected

splendor of its own preserved lands, it is the mission of the Sundance Preserve to inspire action for the benefit of civil society.

sundance

P R E S E R V E Sundance, the place, is set in the wilderness,

but people are the source of its spirit. This great wilderness embodies the transformative power of nature on the creative process and the human spirit. It is to this, that the Sundance Preserve has dedicated its land, legacy, and initiatives.

Endnotes

¹ Temkin, Kenneth and Rohe, William. "Social Capital and Neighborhood Stability: An Empirical Investigation," *Housing Policy Debate*, 9(1). 1998. 61-88.

² Social Capital and Crime in New York City's Low-Income Housing.

³ Bridgeland, John M. "Fostering a More Engaged Citizenry: Philanthropy's Role in a Civic Reawakening." PACE (Philanthropy for Active Civic Engagement), May 2005.

⁴ "The Future of America's Communities and Competitiveness." The Business Civic Leadership Center, U.S. Chamber of Commerce, December 2007. www.uschamber.com/bclc

⁵ McClimon, Timothy J. "The Shape of Corporate Philanthropy Yesterday and Today." *Grantmakers in the Arts READER*. Vol. 15 No. 3, Fall 2004.

⁶ *Collaborating for the Common Good: Nonprofits Engaging Communities to Advance Their Missions*. Washington, DC: Independent Sector, October, 2007.

⁷ "Nonprofit Service Organizations and Civic Engagement: Addressing Challenges and Moving Forward." Building Movement Project, 2007. This report summarizes priorities, obstacles, and actions related to enhancing the work of nonprofits in building democracy in the U.S. The meeting was sponsored by the Carnegie Corporation and the Rockefeller Brothers Fund and planned by a committee that included these foundations, the Building Movement Project, Alliance for Children and Families, Minnesota Council on Nonprofits and the Nonprofit Voter Engagement Project.

⁸ Kim, Jee and Robert F. Sherman. "Youth as Important Civic Actors: From the Margins to the Center." *National Civic Review*. Spring, 2006.

⁹ The Partnership for 21st Century Skills encourages schools, districts and states to advocate for the infusion of 21st century skills into education and provides tools and resources to help facilitate and drive change.

¹⁰ The National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation, established in 2002, has coalesced hundreds of institutional and individual members committed to "fostering a world of conversation, participation, and action." It has become an active network representing dialogue and deliberation practitioners, managers, and scholars based in community, government, and educational and corporate settings.

¹¹ Yankelovich, Daniel, Steven Rosell, Heidi Gantwerk, and Will Friedman. "The Next Big Step in Deliberative Democracy." *The Kettering Review*. Fall, 2006.

¹² Fine, Allison H. *Momentum: Igniting Social Change in the Connected Age*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass. 2006.

¹³ *Creativity and Neighborhood Development: Strategies for Community Investment*. The Reinvestment Fund in collaboration with the Social Impact of the Arts Project at the University of Pennsylvania. December, 2007.

¹⁴ NBC Nightly News report on the 40th anniversary of the death of Martin Luther King, April 4, 2008.

<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/21134540/vp/23960059#23960059>

¹⁵ Hitz, Christoph, "How business can save the world: A provocative study suggests that enlightened management philosophies can spread from the office—and change societies." *The Boston Globe*. Feb. 17, 2008.

¹⁶ Crossroads Charlotte is led by the Community Building Initiative, a nonprofit organization established in 1997 by government and civic leaders that works to achieve racial and ethnic inclusion and equity in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg community. The four scenarios were: 1) *Fortress Charlotte* - In 2015, Charlotte is a city gripped by racial division and fear, and the economy falters. 2) *Class Act* - Charlotte emerges as a truly world-class city and offers a quality of life second to none; however, old patterns of racial, ethnic, and social division remain in the midst of prosperity. 3) *The Beat Goes On* - Charlotte is positive proof that old habits die hard, as growth and opportunity remain on the lips of citizens, though many wonder if an opportunity has been missed. 4) *Eye to Eye* - Charlotte has found new ways to govern itself, and has succeeded in making collective decisions and creating a city where diversity is the rule, not the exception.

¹⁷ Bill Ivey indicates that the next generation of arts appreciators is not interested in a passive experience. They want choice and control; multiple access points (before and after, onstage and offstage); skillful, meaningful content; and innovators to lead them. Research by Cultural Initiatives of Silicon Valley also underscores the importance and policy implications of the wide-ranging practice of the *informal* or participatory arts, i.e. art produced by everyday people in informal spaces not typically associated with art: commercial storefronts, restaurants, coffeehouses, or knitting stores. Alvarez, Maribel, Ph.D. with Lisa van Diggelen. *There's Nothing Informal About It: Participatory Arts within the Cultural Ecology of Silicon Valley*. San Jose, CA: Cultural Initiatives Silicon Valley, 2005.