

“Our Communities: A Symposium on the Arts”

George Tzougros

THIS IS GEORGE TZOUGROS’ RECORD OF WHAT WAS SAID. IT’S IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER, TAKING THE KEY POINTS FROM EACH SPEAKER FOLLOWED BY A DISTILLATION OF THE SUBSEQUENT CONVERSATION. MOST OF THE SPEAKERS’ REMARKS ARE AVAILABLE AS A PREPARED PAPER AND ARE AVAILABLE AS AN AUDIO FILE, AND THE READER MAY WISH TO USE THESE NOTES AS A FRAMEWORK FOR READING/LISTENING TO THEM.

George Tzougros Opening Remarks

- Thank You to Bruce Bernberg, Past WI Arts Board Chair; Roger Dower and Wingspread/Johnson Foundation; The Gard Foundation Board
- This gathering – drawn from Gard’s seminal 1969 work is:
 - Not a memorial (what has been)
 - A living memorial (what will be)
- Here is how Wisconsin Arts Board has used these ideas in the past:
 - WAB’s 1992 application to the NEA’s Locals Program; Valuable counsel of Diane Matarazza
 - Rediscovery of our roots – “the Wisconsin Idea” – hearing Gard speak at “Grassroots & Mountain Wings” conference
 - The resulting NEA application, entitled the Wisconsin Idea Revisited, led to the WAB’s
 - decentralization program
 - regranting program
 - Wisconsin Assembly of Local Arts Agencies, now Arts Wisconsin
- The WAB’s vision statement results from this work and is from the Arts in the Small Community: "If we are seeking in America, let it be for the reality of democracy in the arts. Let art begin at home and let it spread through the children and the parents, and through the schools and the institutions, and through government. And let us start by acceptance, not negation-acceptance that the arts are important everywhere, and that they can exist and flourish in small places as well as large, with money or without it, according to the will of the people. Let us put firmly and permanently aside the cliché that the arts are a frill. Let us accept the goodness of art where we are now, and expand its worth in the places where people live."
 - This statement has been endorsed by Republican and Democrat appointed board members alike and has lasted literally decades
 - Though we talk about community, the root of all this is the individual and human potential, expression.

Maryo Gard Ewell – Welcome; Who was Gard? Why are we here? FULL WRITTEN REMARKS

Maryo Gard Ewell – Community Arts :Where Did We Come From? FULL WRITTEN REMARKS & AUDIO AVAILABLE

- Art of the people – not a new idea!
- The Pageantry movement of the early 19-teens integrated theater/music/dance into community planning
- Others doing this work Arvold (ND), Drummond (NY), Koch (NC)
- Wisconsin Idea –linking of the arts to the Progressive movement at the turn of the 20th century. Gard came to Wisconsin to further the Wisconsin Idea in 1945.
 - Justice, self-determination, cultural soul searching
 - Active participation – not just seeing or hearing
- Rachel Davis DuBois- described “cultural democracy” in the early 1940’s
- 1949: the first two local arts agencies
- Questions this history leaves me with:
 - Is the apparent tension of arts “for” the people and arts “of and by” the people real? What does it mean for our work? Is our goal to meld the two ideas into a single idea? Or is it a both/and situation? Or will community arts remain a sort of stepchild in the arts ecosystem?
 - I keep hearing people say, “Well, it’s not great art, but it sure is great community process.” How does the arts world move beyond this and develop an aesthetic that fuses excellence in both?
 - How do we find a good and sharable language that helps us describe and correctly evaluate community arts?
 - Where do arts organizations fit into the mix?
 - What does it mean to be of a culture? Of a place?
 - What does it mean to have a voice? Why does it matter?
 - Why does our field not know about, and use, our very rich past as we design a very rich future? Or is it a field at all?

Diane Matarazza – FULL WRITTEN REMARKS & AUDIO AVAILABLE

- Staggering debt for major institutions (pre-NEA)
- 1967
 - \$800,000,000 in philanthropy
 - 3% given to arts by business
 - 23,000 foundations, only 1,000 interested in arts
- NEA funding and support of the arts
- State arts agencies appease those who thought NEA was going to become a ministry of culture
- 70s and 80s
 - Decentralization programs begun
 - Started modestly, grew with decentralization mandate in legislation
 - 6000 nonprofits by the 1980s

- Grantmaking | NEA
 - Purposeful grantmaking for meaningful change
 - Peer review
 - Safe
 - Dollars to 501 c 3
 - Stewardship model cloned by others
 - Imprimature
 - Be agile in grantmaking; support for thinkers and pioneers
- 1983 the Locals (program) initiative was begun
 - Promoted increasing funding at the local level, since NEA funding had to be matched by local (public) money
 - Joint planning
 - Model proposals
- When Diane was there, leveled the playing field.
- Creation of a giant ecosystem for the arts
- How do we encourage, enable, and empower the community artist
 - To do better work
 - To be authentic
 - To welcome the new

E’Vonne Coleman – FULL WRITTEN REMARKS & AUDIO AVAILABLE

- Expansion Arts (initial \$1,000,000 budget)
 - It was about politics
 - Vantile Whitfield was Expansion Arts’ father; EA had many mothers!
 - Why “Expansion” Arts?
 - To expand beyond the prevailing definition of the arts
 - New centers beyond the established organizations
 - Arts Councils – NOT “laa’s” which is a bureaucratic term.
 - Service to the field – a technical assistance vehicle for the NEA
 - Field grows up to organizations, leads to general operations
 - Luiz Valdez noted as one of the inspirations for EA.
- Hallmarks
 - Recognition of fields with their own aesthetics
 - Passing it on
 - Responsiveness (EA listened to the field)
 - Sustainability
 - Communities to communities
 - Artists to artists
 - Cultural warriors to cultural warriors
 - Give their money back to them
- Components of Expansion Arts
 - Advancement

- Folk Arts
 - Services to the Field
 - CitySpirit program was a short-lived effort to put artists at the center of community development.
 - CityArts became locals program
- In 1992, the first grants from NEA Expansion Arts came prior to the recipients receiving grants from their state arts agencies.
 - Recipients were based on aesthetics, not “wonder kid artists”
 - Community Foundations were provided 1:3 grants to create a local Expansion Arts program
 - Giving Circles were encouraged
- In 1996, Expansion Arts was gone. May Expansion Arts’ idea of expansion live in all of us.

Discussion

- Vickie – values are truly evident. Not always true for all funders.
- Diane – Not a single system going forward. Agile. Must create systems *with* people.
- E’Vonne – inclusive policy making
- Roberto – policy (fixed), cultural (fluid)
 - Transformative policy making vs. transactional policy making
- Janet- Philanthropy
 - Created out of love
 - Administered out of fear
- Maria – 5% of NEAs grants to Latino Arts orgs
 - Now don’t apply; it is not worth it
 - A loss of confidence, trust
 - How is this changed?
- Barbara – Responsiveness as a value, placemaking as an example
- Eric – System is designed exquisitely to get the results we are getting
 - Impatient
 - What can each of us do?
- Ramona – United Arts Funds, business community and chambers of commerce
 - People fund and listen to what they know, understand.
- The system is changing
 - Fear of losing a \$
 - Fear of someone else getting a \$
- Bob – Better organized, but more timid
- Vickie – Responsiveness disassociated from transformation
- Maryo - notes that the pendulum swings between specialization and the human community.
- Janet brings forward “intentionality” and GIA’s new cultural equity language/program.

Carlton Turner – FULL WRITTEN REMARKS & AUDIO AVAILABLE

- Art is not culture by itself
- Democracy, bottom up; hear all voices
- Don't confuse chaos with disorganized
- Exclusion of artists
- Nonprofit Industrial Complex
 - Alternate Roots, born in 1976 - Artist Driven (not just artists turned administrators)
- Don't let them lift you out of community. Community is where your power is.
- Society's art will always be an indicator of a community's health.
- Dallas example
- Arts organizations valued, artists not
- Art is not a transactional experience, it is a transformational one.
- Hiring – partner with organizations of color
- Concentrate or distribute power
- Spirit House, Durham; Performance Statistics, VA;
- Arts Change US
- Intercultural Leadership Group
- There is a science to vision. Birth to an idea
- What tomorrow are you giving birth to?

Barbara Schaffer Bacon – FULL WRITTEN REMARKS & AUDIO AVAILABLE

- Artists are not precious; should be ubiquitous
 - In and out of systems
- In, with, for people, communities
 - Co design
 - Activates and offers social imagination to others
- Disconnect between informal arts and community arts
- Culture Bearers (health, equity, vibrancy)
- Performing Artists (Actors Fund)
- Through Community Organizations
- Artists support – beyond the arts community
- National Center for Creative Aging
- Fellowships, residency programs
 - Residencies
 - Artist Communities
- Ways artists are supporting their work listed.
- Community arts not just an isolated practice, a community (integrated) practice

- A lot of gaps – communities without a corpus of community practice
- Localized work – not a national picture
- Training; education (metrics) needed
- Marketplace vs. ecosystem
- Universities as partners
 - Universities standardizing vs fluidity
- Artists are driving practice, infrastructure
- Artists as philanthropists
- Social practice
 - Don't create dividing lines
- To what degree can effective program, practice be a business model?
- Laramie Project, V-Day
- Where can the work go? (in bigger ways)
- Local arts agencies need to build out and connect a system of support.
 - The invisible hand of the local arts agency/state arts agency.
 - This must include new forms

David O'Fallon – AUDIO AVAILABLE

- “Can you hear my story?” a vet asked the Minnesota Humanities Center (MHC)
- School, low funding policy structure.
 - Needs resources to create an ecosystem.
 - Minnesota Humanities Center invests in programs that help create the ecosystem
- Challenge the origin stories, past and future
- Who gets to decide what the problem is?
 - Achievement gap vs a relationship gap
 - Strength of relationships
 - Projects led by the people that they are for
- MHC asked, “What can we do that would matter?”
- Metrics/Evaluation
 - Whom are you not talking to
 - Relationship then program
- How do we find our kinship with each other?
- Our work to create the human community
 - What connects us, rather than what separates us?
 - Let's find our way to each other

Discussion

- Laura
 - Scale/system changer
 - Drawing a line around this work

- Artists that do this work who don't care about this conversation
- Equal value
 - Abundance/trust/values
 - Don't just question others values. Question our own.
- Roberto
 - Sovereignty of context
 - How does governance affect this work?
 - Governing, behavior, world views
 - Scale out vs. scale up
 - Property rights movement/human rights movement
- David mentions importance of place
- Michael
 - Carlton's demand of historical context
 - Lack of young artists in this conversation
 - Not about bringing them into our circle; being lucky enough to be in theirs
- Roseanne
 - With young people, art is not separated from the community
 - There is never one way of doing things
- Janet
 - Ferguson MO: It was not about the training. It was about the networks
- Bill
 - These systems have taken a toll on our imaginations
 - Meet the scale that is happening from the ground up
 - Efficient, effective, lean and mean, fast, scale
 - Accountability, not to a granting organization. To the community who will bear the success or failure of the work.
- Caroline
 - Artists have knowledge but don't have the resources to connect (time, \$, people)
- Mitch
 - Informal arts, community arts development also includes doctors, lawyers, etc. who also like to work in the arts.
- Bob
 - Don't let things (time, \$, staff) keep you from being there.
 - Pathways to relationships
- Barbara
 - From David scaffolding vs infrastructure
 - Image the "cage" around a tomato plant
 - Pathways created for with artists
- Added terms to aesthetic attributes
 - Coherence
 - Commitment
 - Communal meaning
 - Cultural integrity

- Context
- Disruption
- Emotional experience
- Openness
- Stickiness
- Artists and other professionals speaking for themselves
- Community Arts
 - Arts for change | intention outward
 - Informal arts | expression from within
- Rosy
 - What do we imagine we must do?
 - What systems would we need to do this?
 - I am
 - A bottom feeder
 - Invisible
 - A member of a sovereign nation, not “people of color”
 - Community work is part of what I do; an interest tied to community
 - Why does it take so long for funders to analyze stats to be accountable?
 - We set up a system that is keeping artists in poverty.
 - I want to see a more equitable system – with people who are making decisions about my life
- Denise
 - Keep artists here.
 - Avenues available for funding are overwhelming
 - Art Seed noted
 - Come up with approaches that are easier
- Diane
 - Created a system of dependency
 - Role of the artist valued enough that we (planners, etc.) get communities to pay for the artists’ work.
 - Can you change systems without changing the beliefs upon which they are based?
 - What is a new model to support the work of artists?
- Anne K.
 - Way forward all must make a living
- Artists as plankton
 - Collective impact of the arts funding ecosystems
- Demand building and mechanisms for building value
- Systems that don’t support artists, don’t support other people
 - Healthcare, workers’ rights, income inequality
- Roberto
 - Images, stories, legends
 - We is not the plural of I (not me and my friends)

- Need a belonging strategy
 - Comfortable introducing metaphor into civic discourse
 - The arts are a secular faith system
- Savannah
 - Not alone
 - Not one thing, many
 - How do we support ourselves, each other
 - How do we invest in the field and if we don't how can we expect them to care about this work?
- Bob
 - Create a civic we, "find the money" follows systemic change
 - Private and public
 - Public good
 - Fire fighter, healthcare
 - Have done this in France, Israel, countries with not as many people as our own
- Vickie
 - Rosy created we by insisting on conversations.
- Roberto
 - A secular we includes people we don't know
 - Sovereignty of context
 - The locale is a we.
 - Inhabitants rather than citizens
- Maria
 - History | Place
 - "The borders crossed us"
 - Transformational
 - Who are the invisible people where you live?
 - Go there
 - Be unafraid
 - Listen
 - Race
 - Economic inequality
 - Educational equity
 - Right to practice your culture
 - System for artists fits in the greater community context
 - Imagine
 - We know what it is not, what doesn't work. What is it?
 - Who? What? Where? Why?
- Michael
 - Intention
 - What conversation are we having?
 - Who is the we?

- What are Gard's questions? How do we make them live right now.
 - Values, conflicts, tensions
 - Project where people were given \$1000 towards poverty reduction.
 - Must listen to collaborators outside our field.
- Tatiana
 - Social indicator outcomes diminish the power of the arts
 - Intention
- Roberto
 - Poetic will vs political will
- Barbara
 - Systemic racism vs income inequality

The Future: A Three-Way Conversation – that includes many of the rest of the attendees –
AUDIO AVAILABLE

- Laura
 - Theater, rehearsal
 - Doing, tinkering; not just talking about it
 - Mentors, collaborators
 - Support in doing things the wrong way; a different way
- Savannah
 - Work evolutionary, iterative
 - Sense of practice based on relationship
 - Owned by the land instead of owning land
 - Gard
 - Connectivity
 - Invitation
- Tatiana
 - 1st generation Cuban Colombian
 - Identity
 - Americanism
 - Culture I come from (which I hadn't been to till adulthood)
 - Relationship/reciprocity
 - Scaffolding for art
 - "The right way" vs doing what the people need
 - Process not product. What does that look like?
 - Joy/bright spots/where the juice is
 - Accountability isn't to a field, a constituency
 - Accountability is to the person or people in front of you
- How do you keep this from being an insular club
 - Openness/open systems
 - No secret handshake
 - Joy in intimacy, openness (place or people)

- Tatiana
 - Claim openness and don't have an intentional invitation
- Work – invitation, connection
 - Example Kiva lending program
 - 80% know Kickstarter, 20% don't know it
 - 20% know Kiva, 80% don't know it
- Ginger
 - Joy connector
 - Invitation and the bureaucracy
 - Be sure the entire community knows the invitation exists
 - Finding vs cultivating a relationship. For example, Knight materials in other languages
 - Belonging
 - I found my tribe (individual) through
 - Association
 - Human expression
 - Sense of Wonder | transformation
- Tatiana
 - Awe
 - Experiential, not passive
 - Most transformative, emotional, nature, spiritual, artistic
 - Not justify, clarify
 - Impact vs intent and meaning
- Laura
 - How meaning making is connected to economic opportunity
- Michael
 - Awe and wonder is a doorway to transformation, not transformation
 - Intimacy and vulnerability necessary for transformation
- Networks are critical (of people, not organizations)
- Formal/informal artists | not a thing for this generation
- Respect for the work that comes before
 - The past carved out the space in which we work
- Connecting to power
 - Build relationships with power
- Mitch
 - I had to create my own systems.
 - It is impossible to keep up with the work ethic.
 - Take time
 - Be mindful
- Community as a verb, not a noun
- The dramaturgy of community
- Invitation vs from and of
- Necessary to bring the spiritual self to this work.

