

Between Grace and Fear: The Role of the Arts in a Time of Change

By William Cleveland and Patricia A. Shifferd

This paper stems from the findings of a research project that invited a range of writers, artists, politicians, scientists, community leaders, theologians and social theorists to engage the following question: *If a major shift in worldview is taking place, what role might society's arts and cultural resources (artists, arts institutions and cultural creatives) play?*

Background

In 1999, the Clinton administration invested in a wide range of cultural programs to commemorate the dawn of the Third Millennium. By far, the most unique of these was a program that placed composers in residence in American towns and cities called Continental Harmony. Developed by the American Composers Forum, Continental Harmony was a countrywide expression of the burgeoning community arts movement that had been establishing itself in American neighborhoods and cities over the previous two decades. Visiting composers worked with the participating communities to create musical works that explored local history and identity. The resulting compositions were performed by local musicians at communitywide millennium celebrations in all 50 states. The success of the program led the National Endowment for the Arts and other funders to extend the program, culminating in over 100 community celebrations through the end of 2005.

As researchers working to assess the program's impact from 2000 through 2005, we had a ringside seat for all of the Continental Harmony proceedings. Although the project more than fulfilled expectations, much of what we found was unexpected. For many of the sites, involvement in Continental Harmony had provided a crucible for building new, often unanticipated community partnerships. Many of the participants we talked to were truly surprised by the vitality and rigor of their collective effort. As a result, they came away a different view of their community's future capacity and potential, both within and beyond the cultural realm.

Of particular interest was the fact that many of those in the arts, business, educational, human service and public sectors who had worked so hard to make Continental Harmony happen in their communities were first-time arts partners. In site after site we found that while people actively involved in civic affairs perceived the arts as a valuable asset, they did not see them as relevant to their core concerns, be they business interests, sustainability issues or environmental concerns. Reflective of our own views about culture as core element in sustainable community development, we began to refer to this separation as "the disconnect." Rather than seeing this as a problem, we regarded it as an interesting opportunity.

In the spring of 2006, we concluded our work with Continental Harmony with a two-day gathering of key representatives from host communities, some of the resident composers, and leaders from the larger field of arts-based community development. Participants were asked to consider the question: *How can the arts help build caring and capable communities?* The day's discussions exhibited both urgency and passion, in part because of their common experience via Continental Harmony, but also because of a shared sense that the world was on the cusp of social and environmental changes that would likely alter the very foundations of the modern age. As such, the conversation moved rapidly from local updates and stories to questions about how these broader currents would manifest and how artists might be integrated into the emerging global movement for a sustainable and just future. The need for alliance between the community arts sector and individuals and groups whose goals are similar — organizers, community builders, environmentalists, forward-thinking researchers, etc. — was also expressed, as was a wish for ongoing conversation and connection among like-minded others.

In our final session, the questions raised by this challenge loomed large. If culture is indeed a critical element in the alchemy of change, how will the needed cross-sector, cross-discipline amalgam form? If the opportunity for arts-based community partnerships that we perceived in our research was lying fallow, then what kinds of support and stimuli are needed to make them grow? Most important, what barriers create “the disconnect” between progressives and cultural activists working on parallel paths for change, and how might they be bridged?

We left our Continental Harmony retreat with these questions largely unanswered, but also with a sense of obligation to continue addressing the ideas and issues that had surfaced there. In the weeks that followed, it became clear that our path had already been set for us by our colleagues. We would do our part as researchers and writers by taking on the questions they had posed and seeing where they led.

The book this paper is based upon (publication 2009) is the product of that effort. It seeks to explore the questions posed above and contribute to the growing discussion among historians and social/political theorists about what some see as an historic shift or “turn” in how the world’s systems and institutions function and are viewed. It is interesting to note that “the disconnect” we observed in the Continental Harmony communities was also evident in our review of recent writing reflecting on the current era as a time of widespread global transformation. As we reviewed the literature, we were struck that there was little or no mention of how arts and culture figure in these “turning” scenarios, a situation forcefully described by Jennifer Williams, director of a community-development group in the United Kingdom:

You only have to look at all the conversations going on around sustainable development in the 80s and 90s. This work laid the foundation for the making of a new worldview. The arts-and-culture community was not invited nor did they ask to be included. Here is a major transformation that has had a huge effect and there was no significant cultural presence whatever in any country. Perhaps if there had been artists present, the conclusions about dwindling natural resources and sustainability would have been less about economics and more about social and health concerns.

A brief look at some of this literature will suffice. The conversation about the potential for a new worldview was given encouragement in 2001 with the publication of “The Cultural Creatives: How 50 Million People are Changing the World.” The thesis of the work, based both on interviews and survey data, is that a third worldview has emerged between the modernists, with their secular and materialist ideas, and the traditionalists, who look longingly at an imagined past. The Cultural Creatives are characterized by a concern for authenticity and holism, rejection of materialism and social inequality, interest in the arts and spirituality, and a global ecological consciousness. A major point of the work is that this belief system has been emerging “beneath the radar,” since the cultural creatives, at least at the time Ray and Anderson collected their data, do not recognize themselves as a social movement. Interestingly, there is now reason to believe that such a social movement is coalescing. Internet-based progressive political groups (MoveOn, True Majority, etc.) have emerged to affect the outcomes of elections and policy debates. Moreover, a huge number of civil-society organizations continue to emerge around issues of social justice and environmental protection. This is compellingly documented by sociologist Paul Hawken in his latest book. He notes that over the years as an itinerant lecturer on the environment he gradually became aware that manifold numbers of small organizations, mainly local, have emerged all around the world to confront issues of social and environmental justice.

Daniel Pink and Thomas Friedman have contributed to these ideas by arguing that, given the inexorable development of global forces in technology and economy, people in the West need to emphasize mental skills that are holistic, creative and synthesizing. Friedman’s analysis ends with this advice: “On such a flat earth, the most important attribute you can have is creative imagination” (571). Pink suggests that six attributes of right-brain thinking will be essential to success in the world. He calls these: design, story, symphony, empathy, play and meaning.

In “The Great Turning: from Empire to Earth Community,” David Korten makes an impassioned plea for a new values narrative, a new set of stories, to counteract the crises of environmental destruction, rampant materialism, growing inequality and degradation of democratic institutions. He calls on people to work together in local communities and in networks of congruence globally to bring into being a new social structure based on cultural, economic and political principles.

Although each of these thinkers emphasized the importance of creativity and imagination to our ability to deal with the difficult challenges the world faces, none of them directly addresses how those most directly engaged in creative work — artists, arts institutions — should be involved in the emergence of a new social and environmental paradigm.

Throughout 2007 we interviewed and collected the thoughts of around 30 individuals, asking each to contribute their reflections on the core question. The selection of our interviewees, while deliberate, was certainly not scientific. All can be considered activists and change-makers in their respective fields. As such, although they represent a wide range of expertise and experience, they share dissatisfaction with the status quo and a hope for a more equitable and sustainable society. Their work, whether in the academy or civil society, is spent in serving and learning from the people, communities and circumstances that inform their thinking. After getting to know these people individually, it became obvious that the convenient labels (environmentalist, artist, philanthropic executive) that appear next to their names do not adequately portray the breadth and diversity of their experience and skills. In fact, a quick inventory of occupational titles for the group totaled over 150; among these are biologist, sculptor, social theorist, psychologist, urban planner, economist, theologian, composer and community organizer. Most of them are active as teachers and writers on a wide range of subjects. And although only four would self-identify principally as “artists,” most are practitioners of one or more art forms. Another common characteristic is an abiding sense of responsibility to engage issues and circumstances beyond their immediate sphere of interest and action. They are global citizens in the best sense of the word.

A Great Turning?

Some of those interviewed were clear that they do see a major shift in worldview taking place. For example, Sarah James, sustainable-development planner, says:

I completely agree with David Korten and Joanna Macy; we are at that point and the situation is very dire indeed. But I have hope because, while things are deteriorating and collapsing, in my work I’ve had the opportunity to see the growth of the new attitude, the new awareness, and all over the country, local efforts moving in a sustainable direction. I think there’s more going on now in sustainable development in the United States than one organization or person can possibly see. I’ve watched this over the last ten years and it’s increasing, I think exponentially.

Similarly, internationally known artist and community organizer Lily Yeh felt:

I think we are at the tipping point, maybe, or we’re already passed over the tipping point just in terms of the environment and of the almost unstoppable push of the dominating, top-down, capitalistic economy. I don’t know of a way to stop it. I feel the threat is at every level; it threatens diversity, people, culture, plants, and the seas, everything. It threatens the well-being of the environment and the possibility of a sustainable future. So, in the communities where I work, I feel it is so important to create a counter-force to provide some kind of balance.

Others, while concerned about the challenges facing the planet, were not so optimistic that a fundamental reorientation of belief and values is imminent. Erik Takeshita, who directs a community arts center, put it this way:

I think human society has evolved over time and we are in a continuation of that evolution. I think we tend to be somewhat narcissistic in our view of the world, thinking that this is the most important time it’s ever occurred. I personally don’t agree with that. I think that over the course of human

history, lots of things have changed and that in the grand scheme of things, this is probably not a major shift as much as a minor moment in evolution I don't think there will be a fundamental change in the way we do business.

And when the interviewer noted that he seemed pessimistic about the ability of the human spirit to rise to the occasion, scholar Dick Ringler, replied:

It is a pessimism which is founded on ancient spiritual and psychological insights of Christians and Buddhists alike. If you look at things *sub speciae aeternitatis*, from God's point of view, the disappearance of human beings and human cultures is really no bigger a deal than the disappearance of the saber-tooth tiger or the dinosaurs. Something else will come after us; we can't destroy all life on earth.... This long-term view is not exactly consoling, of course, because it would be terrible if human beings committed species suicide out of greed, anger and ignorance, by not looking at long-term consequences.

All those interviewed, however, agreed that the questions of environmental destruction including climate change, globalization and the alteration in social and economic relationships through technology, and the ideological and social divisions created by increasing inequality must be of concern to all. A representative view was expressed by the Rev. Dr. Wilson Yates:

Thomas Friedman in his book, *The World is Flat*, argues that we are becoming a global community. But do we have the structures to guide us that can provide some limits and guidance to international corporations? We do and we don't. Just establish yourself in Bermuda and you don't pay hundreds of millions of dollars worth of taxes. What do these changes do to the individual? I think its danger side is that it tends to level, mechanize, and technologize work in the name of efficiency. The human quotient can get lost in that. If you can outsource the work to Bangladesh, what's the impact on some town in Illinois which had a factory where that industry was primarily located? Technology levels and asks for a certain kind of efficiency and speed. The fair questions say "What happens to people? What is the impact of technology on the human spirit?"

The Importance of the Local as a Locus of Change

Many respondents argued that local initiative is essential to confront social issues and to build social cohesion and a sense of rootedness. Perhaps because of widespread frustration with the nation-state system, many expressed the view that the appropriate foci of attention should be both global and local. The local/regional arena was seen as the place to reorient our consumerist society through developing food systems and the other areas of a sustainable society. Local communities also provide significant opportunities to face the questions of religious and ethnic division. And they are the arenas within which community artists and designers have and should continue to be working. For example, regional arts administrator Sharon Rodning Bash expressed the point this way

I have been pondering the question of "rootedness" lately. How do we find new senses of rootedness and valuing of place? The environmental movement is interesting in this regard because it's causing us to start thinking about being rooted in a place at the global level ... We need to feel bound to the earth beneath our feet and need to be bound to our common global environment, focusing on keeping it in good health "to the seventh generation." As an old American Indian saying states, we need to "keep our head in the clouds and our feet muddy."

Political scientist Harry Boyte laid out the requirements for an effective civic culture grounded in local institutions:

Populism ... when it is a democratic movement-building force ... is a politics of popular agency, in a world of scripts, bureaucracies, dehumanizing routines, and hidden manipulations. It builds popular power and agency. This includes building or transforming the civic institutions that have become one-way service delivery operations ... A key element of populist movement-building is building or rebuilding mediating institutions grounded in the life of communities [emphasis added] through which

people exercise power on a continuing basis, breaking up unaccountable centers of concentrated power ... The hallmark of populism is development of what I would call civic agency. And it advances values of egalitarianism and community. Any populist movement has a strong culture-changing and culture-making dynamic, both in the broad sense of culture related to patterns of human interaction, belief, norms, images, and identities, but also related to aesthetic and cultural production.

The Role of the Arts

Each of those interviewed were asked to consider what role the institutions of creativity might play in the decades ahead. Of course, given the context of the interviews, no one responded that artistic resources are irrelevant to the task at hand. Not surprisingly, several of the artists we interviewed provided responses of eloquence and great depth. One of the most moving came from artist and community organizer Lily Yeh. When the interviewer noted that the “medicine” she brings to her community work is beauty, Yeh responded:

Beauty, yes. Beauty can lead to creative action. Action offers opportunities to create more beauty. Then when they experience this, other things come. It’s like striking the pilot light. I feel that’s what it is to believe in democracy — the equality of all of us; we all have that light within us. So, it’s not about one person’s light shining very bright. If you get your pilot light lit, then you go and light other people’s pilot lights. This is how you create a democratic space ... You create a simple project that everybody can participate in that creates beauty through action and working together. Then their pilot lights are lit and other creative ideas come that can make their lives better. You go to the essence of our being. We all have imagination and we all long for beauty. I feel these are angelic qualities given to all of us. There is a kind of beauty that you can buy and put in a museum on the pedestal. But, there is this other beauty that sings, like the bird. It’s like the springtime, the flower, the crocus just breaking the hardness of the ground, stretching their leaves and bringing the most fragile flowers. The longing for this beauty is innate. The power of this beauty is a kind of divine element that’s given to us, just like the ability to imagine ... We all have it and in that, we are all truly equal. When you create this kind of a project you can invite all people to come in and get their pilot lights lit up. I call this the art space that creates the democratic space. The art from the heart creates a democratic space.

But many of the non-arts participants also contributed remarkable insight and thoughtfulness to the question. For example, environmentalist Rod Mast noted:

Nature has always been the greatest inspiration for art. Art can have a significant and life-changing influence on people. I think it can help to bolster the motivation that people have to actually make changes in their lives. I was at a Van Gogh exhibit in D.C. a few years ago. I saw a lady standing in front of the paintings; there were blossoms and those beautiful golden fields of grain that he painted out the window of his cell in the asylum. She was standing there in front of these paintings and weeping. And it wasn’t about “information” or a story. She didn’t have the recorder on her ear. There was no plaque to read. I thought, what’s behind this? It’s just an image, but it has the power to go straight into her soul. It didn’t stop in the brain along the way to analyze some statistics. That’s what made me start thinking ... about how art alters people. Music does the same, or theater, any imaginable form of art, has the ability to move us. Art connected to nature can be a powerful tool to help us to once again regain our connection to the earth and to stop doing bad things to it.

In total, the respondents were able to articulate important functions that the arts do and should play in the issues of our time.

- For both good and ill, artists are creators of powerful images and narratives that comprise our worldview.
- Artists encourage the development of creativity in all of us.
- The arts, along with religion, have been and continue to be a prophetic voice confronting the institutions of power.

- Works of art provide transcendence and spiritual insight.
- The arts fulfill multiple human needs and are intrinsically important to a healthy individual and society.
- Participation in the arts encourages tolerance of diversity.
- Artists are problem-solvers, not satisfied with the accepted answers to problems.
- The arts have been regarded as a healing force across all cultures.
- Finally, the process of artmaking is a central means for the creation of meaning.

This list of arts attributes probably does not contain any surprises for those who have worked in the arts. An important theme that threads throughout the interviews is that the creative process is as important as product. Our subjects, both art-makers and non-artists, provided a strong statement of intention and possibility for effective collaborative action. The place of the arts in a time of social change is not just to produce paintings, plays or musical compositions that inspire people, as important as that is. The hope of the authors is that citizens from various community sectors, including the arts, will develop ways to engage one another in an ongoing project of restorative action. When asked what arts organizations should be doing, one respondent replied, “The first is to be at the table. The arts, just as much as other forms of organizations and other sectors, need to get out of their silos and be at the table.”

The title of our book, “Between Grace and Fear,” comes from Milenko Matanovic, executive director of the Pomegranate Center in Issaquah, Washington. Noting, as many of our other subjects did, the pressing social and environmental issues faced by the global community, Matanovic points out that we can learn how to live through grace or through fear:

Change will happen, whether we want it or not. The choice is between being a constructive and willing participant in the change process or being a victim. Can we adjust, learning and adapting with grace, or do we wait until 4 x 4s start falling on our heads, subsequently allowing fear to spur us into action? The trouble is that learning by fear doesn’t work, because our creativity is constricted, our imagination is compressed, and we become reactionary only. Fear is like a black hole sucking energy, reducing the large field of possibilities to a singular point of view. Human beings have the capacity to be very creative and imaginative under the right conditions ... We need to create an exciting, inspiring and joyful image of the future that pulls us forward. It requires a deep re-imagination of what human existence and culture is about.

Our wish is that people of good will from throughout society will, in the years to come, join in the creation of a more just and sustainable society. So, what next steps should be taken? Specifically, how might the power of art be mobilized to this end?

Setting the Table

As noted, we began this project with a set of assumptions. Given the activist make-up of our cohort, we assumed that our interviewees would generally share the perception that we are in the midst of a significant (if not singular) moment in human history that demands a powerful collective response. We also anticipated that “the disconnect” between community artists and environmental/community activists that we noted at the Minnesota retreat would be seen in the interviews. From our reading of the data we conclude both conjectures are accurate. In addition, we found most our respondents in general agreed with the David Korten thesis that the guidance system for the current global trajectory is, in fact, the set of stories that comprise our worldview. Given this, the question remains: What steps could be taken to bridge “the disconnect” to change the stories that determine our assumptions and expectations about how the world works. More specifically: How might cultural practice and civic/social redevelopment be linked? And, how do arts activists forge

effective partnerships with groups/communities working for sustained environmental and social change? Our interviewees shared a broad range of ideas and opinions on these issues.

1. *Build local bridges, but be discerning.* Sustainable community development emphasizes local organizing and network building. The cross-sector bridges and translations discussed in this article are most likely to succeed if they are forged at the local level. Prospective partners should be aware, though, that not just any artist or cultural organization is suited to community-based activism. In the early days of the community art movement, many funders assumed that if you placed practicing artists in community settings the magic would *just happen*. They also tended to make their investments with the established institutions they knew best. Those local artists who had been engaged in community work for decades became frustrated watching novice artists from mainstream arts organizations making a mess of things in their own backyards and then depart. It is important for community activists looking for arts partnerships to understand that arts-based community development is a specialized subset of the larger ecology of culture. The best collaborators will be artists and arts organizations with significant community-based experience working across sectors.
2. *Process and product both count.* We live in a society that defines the value of the arts primarily through its products. Community cultural activists operate within a more complex value system that places equal emphasis on the processes and products of the creative act, both of which contribute to broader social/political goals. In his work at the Pomegranate Center, Milenko Matanovic considers both creative practice and outcomes as essential for tapping into a community's "collective wisdom."

We try to create conditions where collective creativity can flourish and where change can take place. I base my work on the simple idea that together we know more than any one person. We try to create environments where that knowledge can come to the surface to guide projects. I bring artistic methods to my community work. This means that I am interested in creating specific projects that connect to the ideas and hopes that reside in a given community.

3. *Cross-fertilize at every opportunity.* The dominant culture story tells us that the arts are an extra, an add-on, an enhancement. In community-based work we see this when artists are invited into well-established projects as an afterthought to design a poster or provide entertainment at a rally. The emphasis in these instances is on art as a product. As full partners, artmakers can offer more than a colorful banner or theme song in support of common goals. Experienced community artists bring capacities as bridge-builders, translators and problem-solvers. At its best, change-focused artmaking is a powerful resource for social transformation. Many of the veteran community artists we interviewed held the view that the fundamental economic, social and environmental changes advocated by most of our subjects *will not* become manifest until the "movement" becomes culturally infused and translated. For this to occur, the activist arts and non-arts communities need to come together at every level. At the local level, the simplest way for this to happen is for groups and individuals from each community to invite each other to their respective tables to discuss common ground and collective action. The same should occur at the regional and national level among and between activist institutions and networks. Other forums for exchange include: Web sites, publications, conferences, governing boards, political campaigns and study circles.
4. *Don't reinvent the wheel.* It is important for all activists, non-arts and arts alike, to recognize that artists have always played a central role in social-change movements. In his interview, organizer Harry Boyte points to the crucial role artists played in the labor and civil-rights movements in the U.S. and abroad. That legacy, and the wisdom that goes with it, is a valuable

resource for contemporary community activists. In her interview Judy Baca talked about the historic role of artists in times of change:

The role of an artist within society as provocateurs and change agents has always existed. It just falls in and out of favor of power... (But now) we have the means to gather and manage and act on information in ways we never had before. Artists are poised to become significant actors in these kinds of situations. If we can join with activists in critical ways, it's going to be powerful.

Baca knows of what she speaks. Since 1976, the community-based arts organization she founded with Christina Schlesinger (the Social and Public Arts Resource Center) has been a powerful force in the struggle for human rights and economic justice in Los Angeles and across the globe. She and the other politically active artists we talked to felt it was critical that this history become more widely acknowledged and integrated into contemporary thinking about how communities find common purpose to make significant change.

5. *Artists, leave the comfort of the arts ghetto.* Many of our interviewees believe the arts community needs to be more cognizant of the roles they have been cast into on the political stage. They feel many of the negative stereotypes that were used by the religious right in the U.S. during the so-called "culture wars" still impact perceptions of the cultural community. Working effectively across community sectors will require both an understanding of these predispositions and an active effort to confound and dispel them. Specific ideas included understanding the alienating effect of arts-centric language and being more aware of how the arts have been used as a marker of status. Mississippi State Assembly-person Linda Whittington observed that the American arts community will always be politically vulnerable until there is a critical mass of people who experience the arts as a life-connected personal experience and not as some other-worldly event in some faraway land.

6. *Artists must recognize both opportunity and responsibility.* The commercial, scientific, academic and even governmental infrastructures of the world have already recognized the functional utility of creative-process experts in an ever-changing environment. If we just look around, we can see that some of the most creative minds in the world are applying creative processes to the problems, needs, and desires of the power elite. Most of our interview subjects were very clear on this, saying that in a fast-changing, networked world, dynamic, adaptive ways of working are the only option, particularly in the commercial realm where products and their markets are in constant flux. Some years ago, Bert Mulder, information-technology consultant to the Dutch government and member of the European Cultural Parliament, noted that in this environment many artists will move from marginalized status to high-demand status very swiftly. When this happens, he warned, the issues artists face will shift from questions of survival to questions of values and belief, in essence, "whose God will you serve, under what conditions, and to what end." In his lecture, excerpted in "Between Grace and Fear," Mulder went on to say:

Culture... is it at the heart of the information society... because it creates meaning. It connects me to my own ability to create meaning, to be creative, to find my inspiration, but it does it in such a way that I when create something that is meaningful, it is for me and for somebody else. Artists are the professionals in this area. Because their innovation and creativity are at the heart of society, there is also a certain kind of responsibility, a certain kind of ownership that is necessary for it to thrive with integrity.

7. *Train and develop standards across sectors.* Since artmaking is a process of inquiry, the best training for this work brings arts and non-arts partners together to learn how to best use these

processes in a community-development context. The St. Louis Regional Arts Council's Community Arts Training Institute (CAT) is a case in point. CAT brings community artists, organizers, educators and community-development and human-service professionals together in a six-month, arts-based community-development leadership academy. The program offers its fellows an opportunity to understand the common ground that the creative and community-development processes share. It provides hands-on arts-based experiential learning to help students understand the enormous demands inherent in the work and their own capacity to meet those demands. Most important, its curriculum is based on commonly developed standards that integrate the best practices from both the arts and community-development sectors.

8. *Expand cross-sector funding.* Many of our arts interviewees felt that funders do not appreciate the complex web of interdependent relationships and resources involved in cross-sector arts collaborations. Some saw this as a barrier to the forging of new community-development alliances. Others saw "the disconnect" as an opportunity. Given the meager resources available to community arts collaborations, most agreed that the field needs to make sure that its investors are well-informed about both the opportunities and barriers to the development of new arts-based community activism.
9. *Recognize artmaking as an essential change strategy.* To make positive change in a world where change is constant, community activists must be able to respond responsibly and constructively in increasingly unpredictable circumstances. Like it or not, social-change work is going to be less and less symphonic and more and more like jazz. The arts have been teaching people to think on their feet, to improvise on a changing theme in a structured way, to make things without knowing the outcome, and to engage in effective collaboration for thousands of years. The components of the creative process needed to advance change in a nonhierarchical, change-constant 21st century are adaptation, flexibility, creativity, freedom balanced by form and the integration of head, hand and heart through disciplined imagination.
10. *Change the community culture story.* The old narrative defining the role of the arts in Western culture trivializes and stifles humankind's most powerful capacity — our creativity. This view believes that human creativity is rare and vaguely magical. Along the same lines, while creative people are regarded as interesting and even occasionally useful, they are also perceived as unreliable and potentially disruptive. Artists' work is generally seen as a commodity whose worth is determined either by its utility as decoration or entertainment or its valuation in a market mediated by experts (critics, curators and dealers). Cultural acumen is sign of advanced education, worldliness and privilege in our otherwise "classless society." The old story says that the best artwork is generally found in large cultural institutions like museums, symphonies and opera companies. And art and artists are not seen as central to the success of any movement for social or political change, regardless of whether it comes from progressives or conservatives.

Certainly, Lily Yeh, quoted earlier, provides a different story. Similarly, in a talk given recently at the University of California-Berkeley, activist and writer Arlene Goldbard, one of our interview subjects, articulated an alternative narrative that provides an antidote to the above dominant-culture story.

I feel certain that any approach to community development that fails to recognize and incorporate the power of culture is a total waste of time, like writing on sand. If I had the power to bring the

community-development field into full realization of this integral wisdom, I would offer a yardstick for valid interventions.

- The arts ... engage the whole person, the whole community and the whole story — people's feelings about the neighborhood as much as the bricks-and-mortar of the neighborhood itself.
- They use inherited cultural values to promote citizenship, cultivating the desire and means to have a say in what happens to one's neighborhood, serving as a means of emancipation.
- They promote active participation in community life, understanding that activation in one personal or social arena will spill over into others.
- They help people to create a commons, a permeable social space with wide-open potential for interaction and cooperation, for a meaningful, lived equality.
- By supporting social imagination and creativity, they help to create new opportunity — economic, political, social and cultural — for everyone.

This essay is part of the Community Arts Convening & Research Project, 2008, funded by a Nathan Cummings Foundation grant to the Maryland Institute College of Art. The essay was reviewed and selected by the project's Editorial Board: Ron Bechet, Xavier University of Louisiana; Lori Hager, University of Oregon; Marina Gutierrez, Cooper Union; Ken Krafchek, Maryland Institute College of Art; Sonia Mañón, California College of the Arts; Amalia Mesa-Bains, California State University Monterey Bay; Paul Teruel, Columbia College Chicago; and Stephani Woodson, Arizona State University.

William Cleveland uses his more than 25 years of involvement as spokesman and researcher in community arts as the director of The Center for the Study of Art and Community, the purpose of which is to build new working relationships between the arts and the broader community

Patricia Shifford recently retired as vice president for community and education programs at American Composers Forum; she now works as an independent consultant in research and evaluation for cultural organizations and communities.

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Original CAN/API publication: June 2008