



# Artists' Centers

Evolution and Impact on Careers,  
Neighborhoods and Economies

Ann Markusen      Amanda Johnson







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Project on Regional and Industrial Economics  
Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs, University of Minnesota

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# Preface

**W**hen we published *The Artistic Dividend: The Arts' Hidden Contributions to Regional Development* in 2003, calls came from all over the world. Why, people wanted to know, did second-tier metros like Minneapolis–St. Paul, Seattle, Boston, and Portland generate, attract, and retain high concentrations of artists when other fast- as well as slow-growing regions did not? We believe that one important factor is the creation of dedicated centers where artists can learn, network, get and give feedback, exhibit, perform, and share space and equipment. We believe these spaces not only serve artists but contribute to economic and community development in their respective regions.

In general, the contemporary discourse on cultural and economic development policy undervalues the significance of space and place in the arts. Arts administrators and funders tend to think organizationally. But many artists and arts fans think instead of a place: a theater space, a gallery, a jazz club, an art crawl, or even an entire arts neighborhood that they love to visit and revisit. Ongoing access to spaces that offer novelty and serendipitous encounters with other artists and art lovers is a great gift for artists. It is not only the events and equipment that matter, but also the networks and friendships formed around them. We argue that “more and better” artists, to use the rather crass terminology of economics, emerge in and are attracted to towns and cities that offer a portfolio of dedicated spaces for learning, networking, exhibition, and sharing tools and workspace. Once there, they contribute to the host economy by exporting their work, contracting with businesses to make them more productive and profitable, stimulating innovation on the part of suppliers, and bringing income and energy to their neighborhoods.

In this study, artists' centers are defined as dedicated spaces where artists are routinely welcome, where membership and

access to programming are open to all comers, and where workspace, residencies, grants, mentorships, and exhibition and performance space are available on a selective, often competitive basis. We explore how centers in Minnesota often start informally, serving a rather narrow constituency of artists, but morph into more inclusive, diversified hotbeds of artistic activity with benefits for artists, their neighborhoods, and communities. We make policy recommendations for artists, entrepreneurs, and communities who wish to start or improve upon existing artists' centers. This study of artistic space is the first of a trilogy, to be followed by a study on artists' live/work and studio buildings and another on performing arts spaces.

We would like to thank the hundreds of artists, founders, arts administrators, funders, arts observers, and supporters who have shared their time and insights with us. They are listed by name inside the back cover. Many read portions of our draft and responded with important contributions. We thank the Humphrey Institute at the University of Minnesota and especially our wonderful assistants, Michael Leary and Katherine Murphy, for the nexus of resources and talent we have been able to rely upon; Greg Schrock, for his advice on using Census Data; Sylvia Lindman, our editor; and Kim Dalros, our graphic artist. Above all, we thank our two funders, The McKnight Foundation and especially Arts Program Director Neal Cuthbert, and the University's Fesler-Lampert Chair in Urban and Regional Affairs, administered by the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs, without whom this work would not have been possible.

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# Executive Summary

**B**eyond formal training, most artists create and work in relative isolation. In early career stages, they often lack the expensive tools, such as darkrooms, digital labs, kilns, and printing presses. They need spaces to rehearse, hang their work, try out their poems and plays on audiences—even a room of one’s own to think and write. Cut off from peers and mentors, they need encouragement and critical feedback. They don’t know much about how art markets work. If there is nowhere for artists to go for help, there are likely to be fewer of them, and the quality of their work is likely to suffer.

Over the past generation, a unique form of dedicated space for artists has emerged in the United States. Minnesota serves as a laboratory in this study to explore the impact of artists’ centers on artists and on regions and neighborhoods. The state and its major metro area—the Twin Cities of Minneapolis–St. Paul—host high concentrations of artists, with their ranks growing relatively rapidly over two decades. In tandem with other elements in the region, the extraordinary density and quality of artists’ centers contribute to the state’s artistic reputation.

At least twenty-two Minnesota organizations offer artists places to meet, work, and present their art. These spaces also serve as bridges among amateurs, art appreciators, and emerging, midcareer, and master artists. Four are in Greater Minnesota and the rest in the Twin Cities. They vary from medium-specific centers (e.g., Northern Clay Center, Textile Center, Minnesota Center for Photography, IFP Minnesota Center for Media Arts, SASE: The Write Place, The Playwrights’ Center) to community-specific (Intermedia Arts, Homewood Studios, New York Mills Regional Cultural Center, Banfill-Locke Center for the Arts) or affinity group centers (Interact Center for Performing and Visual Arts, for artists with disabilities). Interviews with founders, directors past and present, staff, and artists at all stages of development enabled us to chart the evolution and impact of each center. We conducted more than 200 interviews, and in the case of the Loft Literary Center, surveyed more than 1,000 participants.

Over time, the function and nature of these centers have changed. Earlier centers to emerge (Duluth Art Institute, American Composers Forum, The Playwrights’ Center, the Loft Literary Center, Film in the Cities, Northfield Arts Guild) were started by artists who were also friends to provide a collective forum for learning, working, and presenting. The activist 1970s was a particularly fertile decade for these kinds of organizations, which often had political as well as artistic agendas at the time. Those that survived endured at least one serious fiscal crisis, moved multiple times, and struggled with governance. Artist-founders had to face the need for professional management and business skills, and though a few did prove to have such skills, most turned to experienced outsiders for help.

As these relatively informal organizations took on the financial burden of space and staff, they also faced growth and inclusiveness challenges. Especially in the 1990s, when budget cuts slashed into operating, project, and regranteeing budgets, artists’ centers were compelled to question and to alter their real or perceived clubbiness and morph into truly supportive organizations nurturing both artists and audiences.

Why does Minnesota have such an unusual number of artists’ centers? The state is blessed with “incubators” that have been around for decades: funders, including family, nonprofit, and corporate foundations; the State Arts Board and its regional arts councils; and sophisticated city governments. These entities have provided competitive and sustained support to artists’ centers. Since 2000 alone, these funders have contributed more than \$15 million to the centers studied here, a number bolstered by large patron and membership contributions. Funders have given more than dollars; their arts staff also have counseled artists and organizational leaders, nudged them to gain management expertise, pitched in during crises, and helped them network with each other, enabling them to cross-fertilize and learn from each other.

Interviews and the survey from the Loft Literary Center show that artists’ centers can have a powerful impact on individual artists’ careers and the quality of their work. Through classes, instructors, apprenticeships, chances to see experts at work, newsletters and libraries, expensive equipment and space, competitive grants, presentation opportunities, and diverse audiences, artists’ centers make it more likely that the region’s aspiring artists will find encouragement, master new techniques, connect with

## *Executive Summary*

mentors and peers, and learn the business side of their fields. Artists credit the centers with building long-term audiences and markets for their art, both in the region and nationally.

Many centers have contributed to neighborhood and community development by raising cultural awareness and helping communities use art to solve problems, connect residents with each other, and express identity and pride. Many have contributed to the commercial vitality of their immediate surroundings by investing in historic or new buildings, bringing artists and audiences to the neighborhood day and night, encouraging restaurant and service start-ups and façade improvements. In Northfield and New York Mills, the Guild and Regional Cultural Center respectively have become important anchor tenants on main street and attracted visitors from a much larger region.

Although all the artists' centers showcased here serve artists directly, many are not artist-centric. They have found that to be successful advocates for artists and art forms, they must serve amateurs and audiences as well. Their priority activities may include serving their communities, the general art-loving public, or school children. Community-oriented centers seek out artists as catalysts to pursue other goals.

As a group, these centers have done an outstanding job of bridging amateurs and professionals and of blending inclusive with competitive and meritocratic programming. Yet the organizational challenges of creating and sustaining such centers have been and remain formidable. Four such challenges loom particularly large: identifying and serving a constituency, including issues of inclusiveness, diversity, and community outreach; finding and managing dedicated space; right-sizing and funding a balanced program portfolio; and adapting to new trends, such as the emergence of digital technologies, the overlapping of media, the rise of for-profit arts, and the ongoing decentralization of population.

The Minnesota experience suggests that artists' centers are an important wellspring of the regional arts economy. When compared with the largest arts institutions in the region, these hothouses for talent have made remarkable contributions at a very modest price. Based on this assessment, we recommend the following:

- Public and nonprofit policymakers responsible for economic development, urban planning, and cultural policy should acknowledge and support artists' service centers as good investments and as candidates for brick and mortar subsidies, operating funds, and technical assistance.
- State and local governments should use the many tools at their disposal to help create appropriate spaces for artists and embed such centers in their neighborhoods. Flagship arts institutions should honor centers' incubating role for regional artists and consider them partners rather than competitors for public and patron dollars.
- Private sector businesses should approach and work with artists' centers as suppliers of creative ideas, design, and skills that will help make them more productive, including partnering on technique and training.
- In states and regions without the generous funders that Minnesota enjoys, fundraising campaigns and publicity that raise public and patron understanding of the significance of convening space for artists and audiences can help fill the gap.
- State and regional arts agencies, especially those operating in suburban and smaller town settings, should foster collective spaces for artists.
- Artists should not only testify to the significance of centers for their careers and artistic development but play active roles in center governance, fundraising, and recruitment of artists and art lovers to center activities.



# Part I. Study Overview and Findings

## I. Concepts and Methodology

### Why Artists' Centers?

Life as an artist is a formidable challenge, fraught with relatively low lifetime earnings, modest exposure and acclaim, and a great deal of uncertainty. Many fall by the wayside for lack of encouragement or the ability to afford the training, space, and time to pursue their work. Yet few other occupations attract the talent and fierce commitment the art world does.

An artist's needs change as his or her work evolves. At the outset, aspiring artists, whether through school, lessons, or traditional and community activities, need encouragement and training. A few are self-taught. Some artists, especially dancers, take classes throughout their lives. But for most, the end of formal schooling is a critical juncture. Suddenly cut off from teachers, classes, practice, and workspace, they must find new peers and mentors, new spaces to convene with others and try out their work. For many, Minnesota's dedicated gathering spaces for artists serve these needs.

Emerging artists also need critical feedback. Although much artistic innovation happens in isolation, eventually artists must find ways to reach people. Feedback on form and content are particularly precious, even if artists sometimes have a hard time hearing it.

Some art forms—music, dance, theater, film—require partners. Artists in these disciplines need venues where they can link up with writers, directors, performers, and technicians who will help them see and hear how the work unfolds and bring it to the public.

Many artists need access to costly tools, equipment, and space. Artists' centers can provide these things collectively and much less expensively, and often at higher quality, than an artist could afford alone. Of course, artists also need financial support, such as grants and awards, to buy space, time, and supplies. Many artists' centers help in this regard by acting as regrants, funneling resources to worthy artists by running grant competitions funded by foundations, individual contributors, and state and regional arts boards. Artists' centers also offer opportunities for more accomplished artists to mentor or teach, providing intellectual stimulation as well as income.

Few studies in the fields of economic and cultural policy focus on space.<sup>1</sup> In this study, we use the lens of an evolving artistic career to chart the contributions of Minnesota artists' centers to artistic development and livelihoods as well as community development. While other major arts regions host centers run by artist-focused organizations—CELLspace and Ninth Street Media Consortium in San Francisco, ART/NY in New York City, Poets and Writers' League and ArtHouse in Cleveland, and Self-Help Graphics and Art and the Harbor Arts Center in Los Angeles (Jackson, Kabwasa-Green, Swenson, Herranz, Ferryman, Atlas, Wallner, and Rosenstein, 2003b)—no metro area appears to have as many and varied a set as the Twin Cities. Those we profile in Greater Minnesota are, however, representative of the variety of centers found in some other states.

### Artists' Centers Defined

This study focuses on service venues where artists come together to show and share their work, give and receive feedback, teach and learn, ponder artistic and professional challenges, share workspace and equipment, and exhibit their work. Two features distinguish artists' centers from other artist-serving organizations and training institutions: 1) a dedicated space for gatherings, shared equipment, personal or group work areas, exhibitions and performances; and 2) an open door, in the sense that anyone who expresses an interest may become a member, have access to events and services at an affordable price, and apply for merit-based mentorships, funding, and exhibitions. Services either are offered on a modest fee or first-come, first-served basis, or are competitively available on the basis of merit or need.

A full-service artists' center offers some or all of the following. Not all artist service centers offer every one of these, but the first two are critical for inclusion in this study.

- A space dedicated to an artistic medium or a geographical or affinity community, accessible to all without a fee to walk in the door.
- General membership at an affordable rate without screening requirements, though certain services may be restricted to those who meet criteria or successfully compete for them.
- A newsletter and other publications, including a website, that cover upcoming events, publishing and exhibition opportunities, funding competitions and sources, and community news.
- Classes at various levels of expertise.
- Opportunities to see master artists at work and hear them speak about their careers and art.
- Equipment to share and space to work or rehearse, often on a rental basis.
- Meeting space for artists, art lovers, and community members.
- Competitions for grants, mentorships, and awards at different levels of expertise.
- Opportunities for exhibition, readings, publication, and performances for artists at various stages of development.
- Mentoring and critical feedback.
- Connections to people, resources, organizations, and networks in their field regionally, nationally, and internationally.
- Leadership and teaching opportunities.

Artists' centers differ from other arts organizations and spaces that contribute to artistic development and livelihoods, such as educational institutions and teaching studios; presenting and producing organizations (theaters, museums, galleries, clubs); art fairs and crawls; artists' retreats; artists' service organizations without dedicated space; artists' live/work and studio buildings; and arts incubators (Walker, Jackson, and Rosenstein, 2003; Community Partners Consultants, 2004). These other types of artist-serving organizations are summarized briefly in Appendix A. The ongoing access, the shared equipment and workspace, and the chance to rub shoulders with artists and art lovers of varying

## I. Concepts and Methodology

degrees of experience in interactive formats, are what makes artists' centers such powerful generators of artistic work and careers. In the jargon of regional economists, these convening spaces help to maximize artistic spillover within the region; they offer the greatest number of people affordable access to new ideas and career-building experiences in diverse and ongoing forums.

Many of Minnesota's artists' centers focused solely on the artists when they began. But over time, most of them broadened their scope to include other constituents—children, amateurs, members of their local communities, and artists inside and outside of the region. As one center director put it: “Without all the other constituencies, a center specific only to artists becomes a guild, self-serving and limited in impact.” We adapted our research design to inquire into this evolution.

### Working Hypotheses and Empirical Approach

Our premise was that dedicated artists' centers have an appreciable, positive impact on artistic development, regional economies, and neighborhood development. For artists themselves, they provide material support and a learning context that enhance the quality of artistic work and their ability to making a living as artists. We hypothesize that these centers make a significant difference in the ability of regions to home-grow, attract, and retain artists. We expected to find qualitative substantiation of arguments made in *The Artistic Dividend* that nurturing a pool of artists strengthens regional economies through income generated from direct export of artistic work and through artists' contributions in making non-arts businesses more productive. Artists' centers, we anticipated, also invigorate neighborhood economies.

We have found evidence for these hypotheses in qualitative analysis of the emergence, growth, challenges, and achievements of artists' centers as documented in the secondary literature and seen through the eyes of their founders and managers, participating artists, and other arts and community watchers. We focus on the state of Minnesota because of its proximity and diverse arts environment. Minnesota and its major cities support more artists per capita than does the nation, and Minnesota residents patronize the arts in larger numbers and with greater economic returns than in the United States as a whole (Markusen, Schrock, and Cameron, 2004; Americans for the Arts, 2002; Kocczynski and Hager, 2004).

We focus on artists who try to make at least a portion of their living from their work and who are continually developing their style. We include self-defined artists who spend consistent time on their work and share it with others beyond their families and friends, even if they are not relying on it for income (Karttunen, 1998; Filicko and Lafferty, 2002).

The geography of the centers studied reflects the spatial distribution of artists in Minnesota. Before choosing centers to study in depth, we mapped Minnesota artists by region and by district within the Twin Cities using Census data (Appendix B). Although these data do not account for all artists, especially those who are doing artwork as a second occupation (based on the amount of time spent per week) or without compensation (Markusen and Schrock, 2006; Markusen, Schrock, and Cameron, 2004; Alper and Wassell, 1999),

they offer a large and fine-grained look at artists by place, recent migration patterns, and socioeconomic characteristics, including age, gender, race, ethnicity, immigrant status, educational attainment, and personal income. They permit us to distinguish among four artistic disciplines: musicians, performing artists, visual artists, and writers. In general, we anticipated that artists' service centers across Minnesota would tailor their programming to reflect the disciplinary and socioeconomic differentiation of artists served. We also compare the incidence of artists in Minnesota and the Twin Cities with artists in other U.S. regions as stylized evidence of artists' centers economy-wide contributions.

We map the distribution and character of Minnesota artists by region and by district within the Twin Cities. We also compare the incidence of artists in Minnesota and the Twin Cities with artists in other U.S. regions. In general, we anticipated that artists' service centers across Minnesota would tailor their programming to reflect the disciplinary and socioeconomic differentiation of artists served.

Through previous work and discussions with key arts observers in Minnesota, we identified more than two dozen possible candidates for our study—a mix of discipline-, community-, and affinity-based centers in rural, suburban, and central city locations, corresponding closely to the spatial density of artists. Each had to meet the two fundamental criteria: possession of dedicated space and open membership at affordable prices. We stretched these criteria slightly in two or three cases for reasons we make explicit in the profiles later.

We initially interviewed managers to determine if their organizations fit the criteria and if they were willing to be included in the study. For those that were willing, we did further in-depth interviews on the evolution and current space and operations of each organization, toured its space, identified up to a dozen artists at different career stages who might be interviewed, and submitted a first draft of our results for comment. In the case of longer-lived or defunct centers, we interviewed founders and former managers.

In structuring and analyzing the interview data, we relied on key-informant techniques, analogous to those we have used to study firm motivation and impact on regional economies (Markusen, 1994). We read newsletters, annual reports, and publications of the centers, along with studies done by third parties, such as foundations. We collected data on finances and governance from the organizations and from funders.

Many artists recommended to us by the centers referred us to others, especially to people whose experience might differ from their own. We used a loose version of “theoretical sampling” (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), in which researchers choose additional interviewees by how well they fit the overall dimensions of the population in question. When we felt we lacked coverage of a particular medium, experience level, or type of artist, we worked to find willing subjects. For each center, we interviewed at least six and as many as twenty artists. In the case of the Loft, we conducted a web-based survey of current members and students, and past and present award recipients.<sup>2</sup>

Artists and managers do not always see their organizations the same way. This is hardly surprising, because management crises are not uncommon in evolving organizations and may involve leadership transition or closure. It is often difficult to serve multiple

constituencies, especially when most cannot pay what it costs to deliver services. Disgruntled artists can make managers' work lives harried and challenging, but their vocal input may prompt an organization to take important steps forward.

When we encountered controversial views, we cross-checked them with other artists, managers, and funders. We also interviewed key arts observers, and we often went back to them for help in arbitrating conflicting stories. Funders in particular were excellent sounding boards, because they review the performance of their grantees every one to three years, including extensive interviews with artists served. The artist service centers featured (Table 1) break down into five groups:

**Centers for writers of music, poetry, fiction, nonfiction, spoken word, and plays**

The American Composers Forum, the Loft Literary Center, The Playwrights' Center, and SASE: The Write Place. The American Composers Forum operates like a virtual center. It decided against having a dedicated space chiefly because its core constituency—composers—are few in number and spread over a larger geographic area.

**Visual arts centers in the Twin Cities**

Highpoint Center for Printmaking, IFP Minnesota Center for Media Arts, Minnesota Center for Book Arts, Minnesota Center for Photography, Northern Clay Center, and the Textile Center.

**Twin Cities' community-based venues that serve artists on the basis of affinity or geography**

Center for Independent Artists (south side and immigrant artists), Intermedia Arts (the 55408 zip code), Interact (artists with disabilities), Homewood Studios (the Homewood neighborhood), and Juxtaposition Arts (north side hip-hop youth artists). These centers address diverse cultural communities and see the nurturing of artists as key to helping their constituencies and communities solve specific problems.

**Smaller city arts centers that go beyond presenting roles to mount programming for artists that brings artistic development center stage to the community**

Duluth Art Institute, New York Mills Regional Cultural Center, Grand Marais Art Colony, and Northfield Arts Guild. We also include Banfill-Locke Center for the Arts (northwest metro suburb of Fridley) as an example of new publicly funded suburban community arts centers that aspire to foster artistic development as well as presenting art.

**Failed artists' centers**

Film in the Cities (portions of which were replicated by IFP and pARTS, now the Minnesota Center for Photography) and the Minnesota Dance Alliance. A close look at these organizations offers lessons about the pitfalls of developing and operating them in the tenuous world of artistic production.

Our subjects range, then, from those that have endured and grown since the early 1970s to about a dozen that have emerged or been reconfigured in the past decade. They range in membership size from under 100 to 3,500 and in annual budgets from \$30,000 to \$1.8 million (Table 1).

**Table 1. Minnesota Artists' Centers: Location, Start-up Date, Budget, Membership, 2004-5**

	Location	Year Started	Annual Budget (\$)	Members
American Composers Forum (MN)	St.Paul	1973	2,300,000	700
Banfill-Locke Center for the Arts	Fridley	1979	100,000	200
Center for Independent Artists	Minneapolis	2001	87,000	50
Duluth Art Institute	Duluth	1896	350,000	550
Film in the Cities	St. Paul	1970	defunct	defunct
Grand Marais Art Colony	Grand Marais	1947	107,000	300
Highpoint Center for Printmaking	Minneapolis	2000	305,000	325
Homewood Studios	Minneapolis	1999	30,000	none
IFP Minnesota Center for Media Arts	St. Paul	1987	800,000	500
Interact Center for Performing and Visual Arts	Minneapolis	1995	1,400,000	100
Intermedia Arts	Minneapolis	1973	1,000,000	200
Juxtaposition Arts	Minneapolis	1995	150,000	none
Loft Literary Center	Minneapolis	1974	1,800,000	2700
Minnesota Center for Book Arts	Minneapolis	1983	850,000	700
Minnesota Center for Photography	Minneapolis	1989	350,000	600
Minnesota Dance Alliance	Minneapolis	1978	defunct	defunct
New York Mills Regional Cultural Center	New York Mills	1990	133,700	400
Northern Clay Center	Minneapolis	1990	1,235,800	600
Northfield Arts Guild	Northfield	1959	650,000	600
Playwrights' Center	Minneapolis	1971	700,000	550
SASE: The Write Place	Minneapolis	1993	300,000	100
Textile Center	Minneapolis	1994	500,000	800

Sources: Interviews, websites, annual reports.



## **II. Formation, Transformation, and Cross-fertilization**

### **Formation of Artists' Centers**

Each center studied had founders who came forward to articulate a vision and begin to fill an artistic need. In some cases, founders were friends emerging from school and wanting to continue the peer support and feedback they had enjoyed as students. In other cases, one or several emerging artists played a key start-up role, finding and recruiting others to join the effort. In general, at least one founder in each case had a strong artistic sensibility and worked from an artist's point of view, although he or she may have soon paired up with non-artist partners skilled in management.

The conditions under which centers start reflect the larger arts, social, and political environments of the times. Several pioneering Twin Cities centers—the Loft, The Playwrights' Center, the Composers Forum, Film in the Cities, and Intermedia Arts (initially called University Community Video)—emerged in the early 1970s, a time of political ferment and new forms of artistic expression. Notions of collective action were in the air, and young artists who had studied or been politically active together were eager to continue their association once they left campus. Writers around the University of Minnesota convened in the loft above a nearby bookstore to hear Robert Bly and others read poetry. They began to teach creative writing classes, attracting post-college and other disaffected writers, and the Loft was born. From the start, they also saw themselves as advocates for free speech and for using the written and spoken word to defend the rights of the oppressed.

In the same period, four playwrights from a University of Minnesota graduate class formed an outside playwriting lab to read work aloud and give each other feedback. This grew into The Playwrights' Center. The Composers Forum was started by two University of Minnesota graduates to create a local support group “of composers, by composers, and for composers” to share and perform work. University Community Video was started by university students and faculty who wished to make new video technologies widely accessible.

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, arts nonprofit organizations were growing rapidly, in part because funds were available. The Ford Foundation led in developing arts grants that required leveraging with other funds; the National Endowment for the Arts emerged, offering regional grant pass-throughs; and state public arts agencies were established (Kreidler, 1996). In the larger society, Kreidler argues, an explosion in the ranks of young people desiring to be artists and willing to accept relatively low economic returns was associated with the arrival of baby boomers on campus, the ascendancy of liberal arts education, a peak in economic prosperity, shifts in societal values, and a high-water mark in leisure time.

Artists' centers begun in the 1980s and 1990s often coalesced differently. They were less the outcome of politically mobilized artist collectives and more the project of one or several individuals dedicated to an art form or a community. For example, pARTS (later Minnesota Center for Photography) was begun in 1989 by two photographers who wished to develop an artist-friendly gallery and

workspace. SASE: The Write Place was begun by Carolyn Holbrook in 1993 when she left the Loft to build a writers' organization that was affordable, accessible, and easy-to-find for writers of diverse cultural and social backgrounds.

Centers bridging artists and particular communities were often the brainchildren of individual artists as well. New York Mills Regional Cultural Center, for one, was the result of a single artist, John Davis, moving to a rural community, initiating and finding funding for an artists' retreat in 1993, and convincing the community to transform a stately old building in its declining downtown into a cultural center. Homewood Studios was created by George and Bev Roberts in 1999 to provide work and gallery space for artists in their lower-income, diverse neighborhood, providing a community focal point that uses art to combat high drug use and crime rates.

Of those centers outside the metro region, several date as far back as the 19th century, when the Duluth Art Institute was first set up. Its operation as an artists' center, however, was more recent. The Grand Marais Art Colony, begun in 1947 as a summer retreat for artists and students, and Northfield Arts Guild, begun in 1959, have both grown to offer substantial programming for local artists.

In the past fifteen years, a new group of artists' service organizations has emerged, focusing on culturally specific programming and/or with an overarching commitment to diversity. Examples in Minnesota include SASE; Asian-American Renaissance; Native Arts Circle; the Hmong America Institute for Literature; and Mizna, serving the Arab American community through literature and art. Should these organizations decide to create dedicated space, they may evolve into a new layer of artists' centers in the region, taking as their model Intermedia, which switched from its original, video-centered mission to a broader, multidisciplinary center.

### **Transition to Professional Management**

Sooner or later, with space to manage and staff and budgets to run, most new centers turn to professional managers. Changes in board structure are often a counterpart to this leadership transition, adding more individuals with business and fundraising skills. This transition is often brutal, because founding artistic directors and original members do not always see the need and may try to hold on to leadership and control. Or a founder may leave and create a leadership vacuum that youthful boards must struggle to fill. In some cases, founding directors or entrepreneurial managers may take the center into financial insolvency. In rare cases, a founding artist becomes an executive director and finds the skills to grow into that leadership role.

This evolutionary process can be fraught with tension as artist board members resist the recruitment of non-artists and the loss of decision-making power to staff. Artist factions may fight over organizational focus and resource allocation. Our cases range from a majority where the professionalization of management and boards is far advanced to those that retain an artist-controlled or representational structure. In some of the smaller-town and community-based cases, the public sector plays a role in center management, and one urban neighborhood artists' center is nominally “for profit.”

## II. Formation, Transformation, and Cross-Fertilization

The quality of leadership is key to endurance. “Some people leap into a new space and animate it, and others trip over the threshold,” reflected one funder. “It all comes down to leadership.” Of course, management styles vary, and what works in one period may not in the next. In its youthful years, The Playwrights’ Center was led by a would-be playwright turned entrepreneur who had creative programming ideas and was fabulously successful in securing foundation support. He and his successor, however, were less than diligent in paying the mortgage and taxes. And one year, when fellowship money had been diverted to cover cash flow, there wasn’t money to fund the awarded fellowships. Many centers underwent painful management changeovers when their organizations outgrew the talents and perspectives of individuals who had been able leaders in an earlier stage.

Board composition, responsibilities, and relations with directors and staff also challenge growing organizations. During some crises, the quality of a center’s board was key to its survival or failure. At Film in the Cities, for instance, conflict between a visionary founding leader and his board confounded efforts to save a pioneering and much-admired organization. At Grand Marais Art Colony, board changes undermined the director’s ability to collaborate with other arts organizations to create and operate new space.

Once artists’ centers move beyond visionary and pioneering stages and have achieved professional management, many have been able to win fairly reliable operating support from foundations or public arts boards. Many have also taken on regranteeing functions that, unless mismanaged, are likely to be renewed. This process has been facilitated mightily by regional funders, both public and private.

### The Strategic Role of Funders

In the 1970s, when Minnesota’s new art-form specific centers appeared, artists’ organizations were sprouting up all over the country, especially in New York and San Francisco. They were propelled by the collective and political spirit of the times, by a newfound respect for artists in the society, and by new funding streams that made an artistic career seem possible. Why did those in Minnesota persist when many others fell by the wayside? Support from Minnesota’s foundations,

philanthropists, and state and local government arts and economic development programs are a big reason. Aid from funders has been strategic, because their grants and grantmaking activities have focused on building capacity and mentoring leaders, and have often been long-term, going beyond particular programs to help with operating and capital costs. Minnesota’s local governments, too, have creatively provided important support for artists’ center physical spaces by pooling resources with different agencies and programs.

Three of Minnesota’s nonprofit foundations—McKnight, Bush, and Jerome—have large arts portfolios and are committed to spending most or all of their arts program resources regionally. In the past four years alone, the three have awarded a total of more than \$13 million to the organizations profiled here (Table 2). The Loft, The Playwrights’ Center and the Composers Forum received early support from Jerome, McKnight, and Bush as far back as the 1970s and early 1980s. With it, they created effective organizations that acted as models for other start-ups. Over time, these foundations and their arts program officers provided resources and guidance that helped artists’ centers develop programming, build membership, improve administrative capacity, and find, rehab, and equip workable space.

**Table 2. Total Awards from Three Regional Foundations, All Programs, 2001–2005 (\$)**

	Total	Bush	Jerome	McKnight
Loft Literary Center	2,450,000	415,000	653,000	1,382,000
Playwrights’ Center	2,116,870	267,870	380,000	1,469,000
American Composers Forum (MN)	2,030,700	440,000	419,700	1,171,000
Northern Clay Center	1,464,000	303,000	152,000	1,009,000
IFP Minnesota Center for Media Arts	1,240,000	20,000	207,000	1,013,000
Intermedia Arts	1,132,000	105,000	409,500	617,500
SASE: The Write Place	433,060	78,860	264,200	90,000
Minnesota Center for Book Arts	432,600	129,600	68,000	235,000
Juxtaposition Arts	327,884	122,884	45,000	160,000
Duluth Art Institute	326,000	145,000	51,000	130,000
Minnesota Center for Photography	300,000	45,000	100,000	155,000
New York Mills Regional Cultural Center	255,800	34,800	116,000	105,000
Northfield Arts Guild	205,000			205,000
Highpoint Center for Printmaking	166,080	66,080	30,000	70,000
Textile Center	159,000	235,000	59,000	100,000
Center for Independent Artists	55,000		20,000	35,000
Grand Marais Art Colony	30,000	30,000		
Interact Center for Visual and Performing Arts	30,000			30,000
Minnesota Dance Alliance	19,000		19,000	
Banfill-Locke Center for the Arts				
Film in the Cities				
Homewood Studios				
<b>Total all Centers</b>	<b>13,172,994</b>	<b>2,203,094</b>	<b>2,993,400</b>	<b>7,976,500</b>

Source: Compiled from foundation websites and annual reports.

## II. Formation, Transformation, and Cross-Fertilization

The Jerome Foundation began supporting The Playwrights' Center in the 1970s and today funds a large number of the Minnesota centers profiled here. Most of its arts funding goes to nonprofits (80 percent), a good portion in the form of regranting money to arts service organizations. Jerome Foundation President Cynthia Gehrig says Jerome favors regranting because it adds value: the recipient organizations devote additional resources to the effort, run the selection process, and boost the impact by fostering networking, providing space, and disseminating information. In recent years, Jerome has funded project grants for Northern Clay Center; fellowships at The Playwrights' Center, Highpoint, and SASE; artists' services and MNTV—a broadcast program of new works by emerging film-makers—at IFP Minnesota; and a career advancement program for midcareer writers at the Loft. Jerome will support smaller organizations without 501(c)(3) status if their proposals are submitted by nonprofit fiscal agents. Recently, it has funded the Center for Independent Artists in this way. Although the foundation rarely funds large arts organizations (“frustrating but delightful,” quipped one large arts organization head), it makes an exception if the program is a strategic and important initiative for emerging artists.

In 1980–1981, The McKnight Foundation began its artist fellowship programs at five centers: the Loft, Composers Forum, Film in the Cities, Minnesota Dance Alliance, and The Playwrights' Center. Program Director Neal Cuthbert says McKnight's decision to turn the emerging centers into regranting sites was profound, increasing the survival rates of local centers from 50 to 80 percent. “It gave managers this annual chunk of money so that they had stability and were allowed to grow,” he said. “It was putting money in the center of the community, so people got interested in that organization. The vote of confidence was as important as the money.”

Since the mid-1990s, the Bush Foundation has diversified its arts operating support from a focus on the largest cultural institutions in the Twin Cities to include some of the larger artist service centers. It also provides grants for short-term capacity development for some smaller organizations, including those in Greater Minnesota and the Dakotas. In 1994, Sarah Lutman, who was arts program officer at the time, and the Bush board decided to fund midsized regional arts organizations of artistic excellence that were vulnerable in ways that the Guthrie Theater and the Minneapolis Institute of Arts were not (Bush Foundation, 2005); five of those showcased here have benefited (Table 2). Many smaller, newer centers have been funded by Bush at critical growth junctures. Bush grants are tailored to what a center needs, whether it's administrative or fundraising help, expansion, or strategic planning.

Corporate foundations intermittently fund artists' centers, generally on a project basis. The Dayton-Hudson Foundation, before being made over as the Target Foundation in 2000, was a major donor to the arts and still funds some projects today. Other corporate foundations have also backed center initiatives, sometimes in collaboration with nonprofit foundations.

Foundation support has been particularly instrumental during organizational crisis, especially in earlier stages of center evolution. Foundations have provided bridge funding, counseling, and hand-holding. Jerome, for instance, provided crucial infusions of funds for

The Playwrights' Center, the Loft, and Minnesota Dance Alliance. When The Playwrights' Center almost shut down after failing to pay payroll taxes, Jerome helped it survive. “A huge part of my job is just talking to people running organizations,” reports one foundation program officer, “giving TLC, letting them cry in my office, counseling them, doing active listening. . . . You are part of their lives, their troubles and trials.”

Informally, arts program directors of nonprofit foundations and state and regional arts agencies often compare notes to develop a strategic view of artists' centers and their place in the arts community. “When I'm asked by my counterparts about an organization, I try to be even-handed,” one says. “It's a bit of not wanting to violate the confessional.” They have often worked together with centers in crisis.

Public sector support for artists' centers and operations comes from the Minnesota State Arts Board and eleven Regional Arts Councils (Table 3). Minnesota's highly decentralized system for distributing state and NEA pass-through dollars, which began in 1976, is the second oldest in the country. The Metropolitan Regional Arts Council, serving the Twin Cities metro area, is the state's largest and serves as coach to its organizational grantees in ways that regional arts councils (RACs) with more limited staff and resources cannot do. The Metropolitan Regional Arts Council provides project support for organizations and arts projects with budgets under \$300,000, serving both professional artist-initiated and community-based activities. For centers too small to be eligible for the larger operating support offered by the State Arts Board or the Bush Foundation, the Metropolitan Regional Arts Council funding and technical assistance is a great boon, especially during tender growth stages.

City governments have also been key, from Minneapolis to tiny towns like New York Mills. Minneapolis and St. Paul don't offer grant programs for individual artists, as do cities such as New York, Los Angeles, and San Francisco, but the Twin Cities as well as Duluth and a few smaller Minnesota towns commission public art. Some cities require that publicly bonded projects devote one percent of the bonding proceeds to public art. Minneapolis was a pioneer in bundling cultural, economic, and community development programs to support the building and renovation of artists' centers, performing arts spaces, and artists' studio buildings. St. Paul has been a pioneering investor in artist live/work buildings. Such support is important, because most centers are simply not large enough to play in the state bonding game.

From 1983 to 2005, a number of centers benefited from City of Minneapolis funding in the guise of grants and loans (Table 3). The mix of acronym-laden programmatic sources suggests just how much center and city energy went into assembling these packages. For instance, to help buy and rehab its new home on Lyndale Avenue, Intermedia Arts received loans totaling \$330,000 from City of Minneapolis programs: \$205,000 from the Commercial Economic Development Fund (CEDF), \$25,000 from Program for the Arts and Social Services (PASS), and \$100,000 from the Neighborhood Revitalization Program (NRP). The first two were construction bridge loans that were paid back with interest, but the third is convertible to a grant after twenty years if Intermedia remains a nonprofit arts center in the neighborhood. Northern Clay Center



received \$200,000 from NRP, \$40,000 from the Urban Renovation Action Plan (URAP), and \$30,000 from the 2 Percent Fund, a blended participation loan between the city’s Community Development Agency and a local bank, for a loan total of \$270,000. City money more often comes in the form of loans than grants and may impose stiff requirements.

Smaller town centers have also benefited from local government funding. The City of New York Mills donates \$10,000 annually to the New York Mills Regional Cultural Center, and its Civic and Commerce group pays a portion of the center’s executive director’s salary because she also serves as the town’s tourism director. In Grand Marais, the Art Colony’s effort to build the Arrowhead Center for the Arts received support from the school district, a match from the region’s taconite tax fund, and a vote of the populace to raise property taxes to pay off the bonds.

Crucially, foundation and government support in Minnesota has been enduring. The sheer volume of resources, the associated technical assistance, and formal and informal collaboration among regional funding partners appears to be unique to Minnesota.

## Collaborations and Synergy

It isn’t unusual for founders, board members, and staff of artists’ centers in the Twin Cities to learn from each other and collaborate. As early as 1983, the executive directors of American Composers Forum, The Playwrights’ Center, the Loft, University Community Video, Minnesota Independent Choreographers Alliance, and *Artpaper*, a lively regional arts publication of the time, got together every couple of months. They shared problems and ideas and compared notes on funders, sometimes approaching them as a group, sometimes teaming on projects. One former director reflected, “There were some disastrous projects, but much more communication among us.”

Joint projects continue today. For example, the Loft, SASE, and The Playwrights’ Center have collaborated on spoken-word performances. American Composers Forum has partnered with The Playwrights’ Center to match up composers with lyricists. For the 2005 Juneteenth Festival, Homewood Studios and Juxtaposition Arts jointly programmed a visual arts exhibition that also included Obsidian Gallery. IFP Minnesota teams with Walker Art Center, Twin Cities

Public Television, and Intermedia Arts to support short-form work by Minnesota filmmakers to broadcast on MNTV. Five visual arts centers—Minnesota Center for the Book Arts, Highpoint, Northern Clay, Minnesota Center for Photography, and the Textile Center—have launched a joint marketing campaign.

But there are times when artists’ centers compete over turf and programs. Both the Loft and SASE, for instance, run writing programs for teen mothers and approach the same funders for grants. When Minnesota Center for Photography opens its digital and darkroom facilities, it will be vying with IFP Minnesota for photographers. In general, good and respectful relationships prevail, but competition and tensions can tax the energy of center staff.

Creating a shared space is perhaps the most challenging collaboration. An ambitious partnership of the Loft, Minnesota Center for Book Arts, and Milkweed Editions created Open Book, a home for the literary arts on Washington Avenue near downtown Minneapolis. Conversations began among the directors of these centers as early as 1996. All three organizations were renting at the time. Each felt that together, they could create a space that neither could afford alone. Twenty-two organizations joined exploratory talks for what became Open Book, but only Minnesota Center for Book Arts, Milkweed, and the Loft ultimately committed to the project.

It was a monumental effort, occupying all three organizations from 1998 to 2000, when Open Book debuted. The planning process confronted each with tough questions of what they wanted to become and how they would use the space. Foundations

**Table 3. Cumulative Awards, Minnesota State Arts Board, Regional Arts Councils, Local Governments (\$)**

	Minnesota State Arts Board 2002-2005	Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul 1983-2005	Greater Minnesota City/County 1983-2005
American Composers Forum (MN)	352,044	75,000	
Intermedia Arts	230,396	330,000	
Loft Literary Center	225,612		
Northern Clay Center	198,703	200,000	
Minnesota Center for Book Arts	133,867		
Playwrights' Center	131,228	28,000	
Interact Center for Performing and Visual Arts	104,006		
SASE: The Write Place	98,339		
IFP Minnesota Center for Media Arts	97,749	47,500	
Northfield Arts Guild	80,313		
Duluth Art Institute	66,962		500,000
Minnesota Center for Photography	66,282		
Textile Center	49,252		
New York Mills Regional Cultural Center	32,649		64,000
Center for Independent Artists	25,761		
Grand Marais Art Colony	17,318		
Juxtaposition Arts	17,081	200,000	
Banfill-Locke Center for the Arts	12,772		
Highpoint Center for Printmaking	11,200		
Homewood Studios	not eligible	80,000	
Film in the Cities	defunct		
Minnesota Dance Alliance	defunct		
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,951,534</b>	<b>960,500</b>	<b>564,000</b>

Sources: Minnesota State Arts Board, 2005; Phill Lindsay for Minneapolis through 2000; Local government records; Artists' Centers. Data for cities and counties after 2000 is incomplete.

## II. Formation, Transformation, and Cross-Fertilization

contributed planning funds, but large sums had to be raised from private philanthropists and the larger (and less-well-heeled) literary community. A name had to be settled on as well as a complicated scheme to create a separate nonprofit, Open Book, to own and operate the building, leasing to the three organizations. An appropriate building had to be found and purchased, and an architect engaged to renovate it to each organizations' specifications. They had to allocate capital and maintenance costs among the three and arrange for building management. Each organization had to anticipate its future programming and figure out how to cover its lease. Today, Open Book includes a café, a gallery (a bookstore branch formerly occupying that first-floor space closed), and office space for for-profit tenants.

Working so closely on a common project is expensive and exhausting. In the case of Open Book, it was worth the trouble, producing a magnificent facility that each organization endeavors to use maximally. By contrast, a recent effort in Grand Marais illustrates some of the downsides of space-building partnerships.

In the mid-1990s, the Grand Marais Art Colony, the Grand Marais Playhouse, and the North Shore Music Association banded together to plan and build a large new addition to the local high school, to be called the Arrowhead Center for the Arts. The Colony director and Playhouse president worked long and hard to plan, design, and oversee the building. Construction preoccupations trumped designing a separate governance structure for the center or planning how to cover operating costs. On its completion in 1998, no governance structure was in place. In the interim, the boards of these groups had changed, and the boards of the Art Colony and the Playhouse now blanched at the financial and staff burdens implied. They preferred getting smaller and focusing on artists and shows, as they had always done. The directors of both lost their jobs, and responsibility for the gorgeous new center remains in limbo.

While collaboration and mutual learning are often fruitful, organizations must be careful about imitating others' successful models, especially when it comes to creating a space. Nancy Fushan, arts program officer at the Bush Foundation, says, "A model like Open Book represents an extraordinary combination of positives—a group of literary arts organizations with complementary missions and programs that were at similar stages of organizational development. They also possessed strong leadership operating in a promising fundraising environment." But space has to be configured to the mission, Fushan reflects. "One can understand why American Composers Forum chose not to invest in a space. At the time they considered it, their mission was to connect composers to communities in new ways. How would a space advance that mission? On the other hand, the objective of The Playwrights' Center is to move plays from the written page to the stage, and a dedicated space that brings playwrights together with actors and audiences for staged readings forwards their efforts."

## III. Impacts on Artists and Beyond

### Artists

We found rich and compelling evidence that artists' centers further the quality of artists' work and enable more of them to make a living at it. Via "breadth experiences"—beginning and survey classes; newsletters; opportunities to attend public exhibitions, performances, and readings; and first-time chances to publish, enter a piece in a show, or hear one's work performed—aspiring artists find precious encouragement and inspiration and deepen their knowledge of artistic conventions (Becker, 1982). Many artists may never publish, exhibit, or perform their work but continue to write, paint, dance, and make music for their own satisfaction or to share with their communities and will become lifelong patrons of the arts in the process.

From "depth experiences"—mentorships; access to equipment, workspace, and technical assistance; linking up with actors, dancers, and musicians who perform work in progress; tutoring in the business of the arts; and exposure to masters at work—emerging and accomplished artists receive the validation, critique, and insight that help them chart their own unique course and reach audiences and markets. At all levels, artists meet and interact with other artists, forming networks and informal working groups that persist throughout their careers, creating the "weak ties" that Putnam (2000) argues are so important to economic success in American society.

As we hypothesized, the impact of an artists' center on an artists' work varies by stage of career, which is not the same as by age. Indeed, artists' centers appear to augment the ranks of artists in this region by attracting people in non-arts occupations who are looking for a change at any age. Centers offer older would-be artists an alternative to going back to college.

For aspiring artists first contemplating an artistic career, we expected to find that critical feedback available at a center would be important, but we found raw encouragement to be more so. Many artists tell terrible stories of discouragement from their youthful years—teachers or parents who dismissed their talent or warned them away from the competitiveness, poverty, or social stigma associated with an artistic career. Such a traumatic experience could delay an artistic career for decades. Walking into a class, a conversation with others, kind words from a teacher, or a performance at a center generated the first "eureka" moment for many. Hearing that your work has promise turns out to be precious currency. One writer recounted how after reading in a class, her memoir teacher at the Loft said to her privately, "You know that piece was dynamite, don't you?" Encouragement may also come from listening to master artists recount the travails of their own careers.

Many aspiring artists emphasize the instruction and information available at artists' centers as important when they're getting started. Many artists say the newsletters that come with membership opened their eyes to the opportunities for exposure to great artists locally, as well as competitions, publications, and shows. For some, hanging their work in the annual member show or publishing a short piece in the *View from the Loft* provided the first, powerful shot in the arm they needed to make a commitment to art.

Whether they need video equipment, printing presses, kilns, or something else, artists at all stages benefit from access to equipment, libraries, and working and meeting space at modest fees. Center libraries provide access in one local place to much of the written and recorded material in that art form. In short, centers are welcoming spaces to meet, converse, learn, and perform.

Many of the centers studied brilliantly master the tension between serving local, aspiring artists and established artists from the region and elsewhere. Some subsidize mature artists by raising modest sums from large memberships of amateurs and art lovers and sales of art in gift shops, while others subsidize community access to meeting and exhibition space by renting studios or equipment access to artists. Bridging these different needs, however, is a great challenge that has sometimes thrown organizations into crisis.

Many staff members, artists, and observers speak of the important connection centers foster between masters and beginners, pros and emerging artists. “There is an attitude of help that pervades many of the successful ones,” a funder said. “I show up as a budding writer and I get to hear Judith Guest.” Readings, openings, and performances offer wonderful opportunities for artists at all levels of expertise to mingle and trade impressions, opportunities that many report are simply not available elsewhere.

Minnesota’s artists’ centers encourage experimentation. In this way, they not only are inviting to newcomers who are uncertain about their talent but also may help to generate work that is edgier than the region might otherwise tolerate. The Center for Independent Artists is an example. “Many people are looking for the real, the unfinished work in progress,” says Robert Booker, executive director of the Minnesota State Arts Board. “The centers are an entry point to participation,” as well as a laboratory for experimentation. As a bonus, when budding artists bring their friends and families, it helps to broaden a center’s arts constituency.

The benefits of the artists’ centers can be glimpsed, too, in comments from artists living in rural areas and small towns where there may be fewer supportive artistic venues. Fushan says when Bush brings together its fellows from the Twin Cities, Greater Minnesota, and the Dakotas for periodic social gatherings in the Twin Cities, “they yearn for the opportunity to talk with other artists. .... They’ve told us that those creative discussions are valuable and important for their artistic development.”

### Communities

In the 1990s, constituents and funders demanded that arts organizations better articulate the communities they serve. “Community” is a fuzzy concept. For centers, it can mean the community of artists, the community of art lovers, or geographic community. Most centers understand why it is important to recognize and target their sometimes multiple communities.

The imperative to link artists to communities is rooted in controversies over public funding of art, triggered by debates over the works of Robert Mapplethorpe and Karen Finley in the 1990s that resulted in huge cuts to funds for the National Endowment for

the Arts and, in linked fashion, to funding at the state and local levels. After the stock market fell in the late 1990s, foundations drew back as well, and corporate mergers eroded largesse for regional arts funding. Since then, taxpayer revolts have cut deeply into public arts funding. These events plunged the arts organizations into internal conversations about how to reconfigure their missions for a new era.

Some argued that changes in the American economy and culture were the chief cause of the decline in arts funding (Kreidler, 1996). Others wondered if the decades-long structure of arts funding, funneled to nonprofits and to artists, hadn’t unwittingly created distance between artists and their communities. Had the availability of funding for individual artists, awarded by often incestuous peer groups, unduly narrowed the definition of worthy art, and had it created a sense of entitlement among artists and a dulling of their sense of serving the larger society? Why was it that in public polls, people ranked artists as untrustworthy, along with politicians and lawyers?

Whatever the causes, fiscal pain propelled arts funders and agencies to search for broader audiences and stronger connections between artists and their communities (Lowell, 2004). In general, they concluded that for the arts to rebound, many more people would have to be served by artists and arts organizations, and in highly visible ways. Recent surveys have shown that while the majority of Americans patronize at least one arts event a year, most of those attend very few such events. Minnesotans attend more than people in other states, but the pattern is similar: although almost 75 percent of Twin Citians went to a live performing arts event in 2002, only one in seven of those were frequent attendees (Kopczynski and Hager, 2004).<sup>3</sup>

For Minnesota’s artists’ centers, this has meant documenting whom they are serving—which is especially important to public and private sector funders. “Our mission is to guarantee that citizens have an opportunity to participate in the arts, either as the audience member or the doer, in the creative process and in their own community,” explains The Metropolitan Regional Arts Council’s Bye. “Often the grant applicants have not thought about the questions we pose: what is the community that you intend to serve? Who are they? ... You have to be able to say what that community wants and needs and how what you offer fits that.” For individual artists and artists’ centers, it is no longer adequate to address only quality, ability, and artistic challenge in a grant proposal. They must also address access, diversity, and ability to get the quality project to the audience.

As a result, several of Minnesota’s centers have mounted exploratory programs that reach out to new communities and constituents. This has always been true of those that define (or have redefined) themselves as community-serving, such as Homewood, Intermedia Arts, Interact, and Center for Independent Artists. Over the years, centers that once operated almost exclusively for artists have broadened their work into educational programs, youth programs, and initiatives for identity groups that will help widen their relationships with larger communities and heighten their visibility. This takes resources, which in turn raises tensions among organizational constituencies, but it is a pattern that is here to stay.



### III. Impacts on Artists and Beyond

#### Neighborhoods

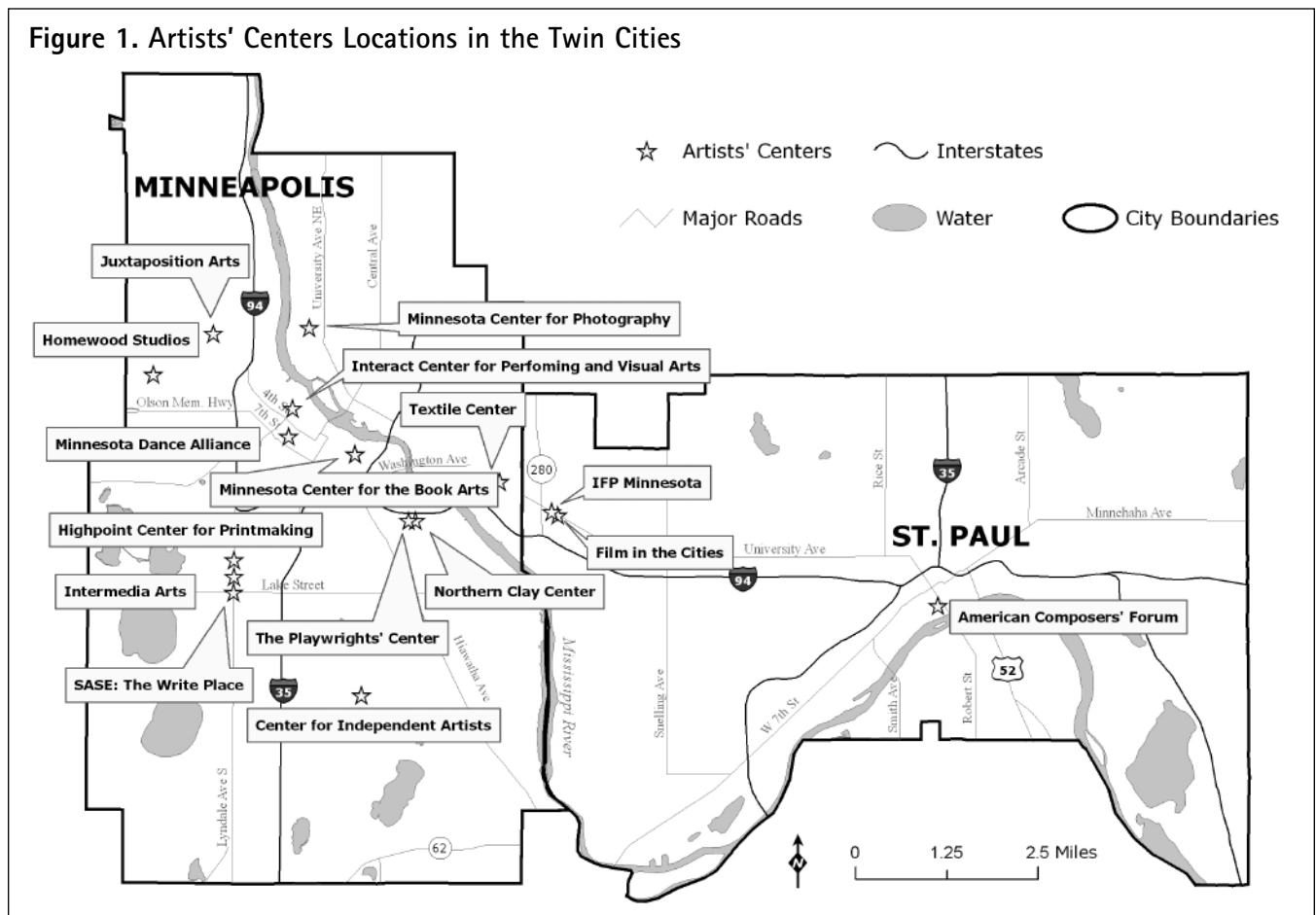
Centers operate in living neighborhoods or towns that offer a potential constituency and for whom they can be an economic and social as well as cultural asset. In smaller cities, centers may be tourist attractions and anchor tenants in commercial districts. In the Twin Cities, artists' centers are spread throughout neighborhoods, complementing and sometimes stimulating the creation of other artistic, commercial, and community venues. They form an outstanding 21st-century example of what Jane Jacobs celebrated about 1960s Manhattan, with its SoHo, Chinatown, Little Italy, and Greenwich Village—a mosaic of unique cultural destinations that encourage city residents to cross porous borders to visit distinctive neighborhoods (Jacobs, 1961). The locations of these centers within the two central cities are shown in Figure 1.

Centers in the Twin Cities differ in the degree to which the neighborhood location has been important and in how much attention they pay to their surroundings. For some, like the Loft, Minnesota Center for Book Arts, The Playwrights' Center, and Northern Clay, the search for a physical home was driven by space requirements, cost, and centrality rather than the character of the neighborhood. For a few, detachment from a surrounding neighborhood or low visibility to pedestrian traffic can be an unanticipated liability. For Minnesota Center for Photography,

Intermedia Arts, Homewood Studios, and Juxtaposition, neighborhood has been important in committing to a site. Homewood's founders, for instance, initiated the project as much to reverse commercial decline and drug use in their neighborhood and to serve as a focal point for young people and community residents as to support neighborhood artists. Most centers offer classes for neighborhood children and youth. Some of these young visitors will go on to become artists, and many will become art appreciators for the rest of their lives.

But whether neighborhood concerns are a conscious priority or not, most centers contribute to the vitality and safety of their immediate neighborhoods. They bring in artists and audiences who spend money in nearby stores and restaurants, increasing foot traffic on the street. They occupy and beautify the façades of formerly vacant buildings. The presence of two or more centers or other artist-serving buildings can magnify the impact by creating an informal arts district. The Playwrights' Center and Northern Clay in the Seward neighborhood have had this effect, as have Intermedia Arts and pARTS in the LynLake district near the Jungle Theater. Some center managers work with neighborhood associations and local business groups on larger planning initiatives to improve the immediate area.

This local dividend is perhaps easiest to see in smaller towns. Grand Marais Art Colony, Northfield Arts Guild, and New York Mills Regional Cultural Center bring artists to the community and also home-grow and retain artists. Through these artists, modest amounts



of income are generated for housing and local shopping, sometimes amplified by drawing tourists and visitors from surrounding areas. By investing in an artistic space, these organizations spruce up a neighborhood or commercial strip and help reverse small town, downtown, or inner-city decline. They bring psychic energy and visual pleasure to the community, and they give residents somewhere besides bars and churches to socialize, play, and be challenged.

### Regional Economies

Artists' centers make important contributions to regional economies and to the social, cultural, and commercial lives of their neighbors. Do collective spaces that nurture artistic careers contribute to overall economic dynamism in the regional economy? Conceptually, it is not difficult to make the case for what regional economists call "spillover" or, more formally, creating external economies of scale.

First, by providing a visible, durable forum for artists at many stages in their careers, the centers counter the risk of losing artists to other regions. Artists do move at different stages in their careers, but centers replenish their ranks by continually recruiting new and emerging artists. Second, centers help to create spillover among artists for the investments a region makes in them as individuals, through their exposure to and networking with each other. They increase the probability that artistic learning and achievements of individuals are shared with others before they retreat to their studios or leave the region. Third, enduring centers may draw émigrés back from the major arts capitals.

For instance, a young playwright whose work is nurtured at The Playwrights' Center may leave for New York at a crucial stage in her career. Before leaving, her staged readings, local performances, and networking with others at the center may have improved her local colleagues' writing as well as her own and inspired others to try their hands. And she may decide to move back to the region later, in part because the center and its community are a draw. Jerome Foundation's Gehrig, whose foundation has been supporting The Playwrights' Center since the 1970s, concludes, "My own review suggests that the number of playwrights who remain in Minnesota for

a period of time has increased. The center has helped in providing employment and production opportunities for them, and by making them better artists. Yes, younger aspiring playwrights may need to go to New York City, but many of them are coming back."

We cannot directly measure the regional economic contribution of artists' centers as distinct from other artistic institutions and forces at play in building Minnesota's artistic pool. This problem plagues empirical analyses of externalities in urban economies in general. The high incidence of artists in the Twin Cities economy and in Minnesota as a whole suggests that the payoffs to artists' centers are notable (Table 4). The Twin Cities' density of artists in the workforce rose dramatically from 1980 to 1990, falling somewhat in the 1990s,

**Table 4. Artistic Concentration Index for the Top 29 U.S. Metro Areas by Employment, 2000**

	Total	Performing Artists	Visual Artists	Authors	Musicians
Los Angeles, CA	2.99	5.44	2.34	2.71	1.95
New York, NY-NJ	2.52	3.71	2.01	2.99	1.85
San Francisco-Oakland, CA	1.82	1.85	1.83	2.51	1.12
Washington, DC-MD-VA-WV	1.36	1.51	1.01	2.27	1.08
Seattle, WA	1.33	1.15	1.48	1.48	1.06
Boston, MA-NH	1.27	1.24	1.02	2.00	1.15
Orange County, CA	1.18	1.21	1.36	0.92	0.98
Minneapolis-St. Paul, MN-WI	1.16	1.12	1.10	1.33	1.16
San Diego, CA	1.15	0.90	1.27	1.10	1.25
Miami, FL	1.15	1.48	1.05	0.82	1.28
Portland, OR-WA	1.09	1.12	0.99	1.50	0.87
Atlanta, GA	1.08	1.05	1.11	0.97	1.15
Baltimore, MD	1.08	0.96	1.10	0.92	1.30
Chicago, IL	1.04	0.83	1.14	1.27	0.84
Newark, NJ	1.02	1.07	0.97	1.24	0.83
US AVERAGE	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Dallas, TX	0.99	1.08	1.11	0.73	0.87
Philadelphia, PA-NJ	0.96	0.90	1.04	0.94	0.88
Phoenix, AZ	0.96	0.70	1.13	0.88	0.94
Nassau-Suffolk, NY	0.93	0.83	1.10	0.84	0.76
Kansas City, MO-KS	0.90	0.59	1.16	0.82	0.76
Denver, CO	0.90	1.08	0.82	0.98	0.79
Tampa-St. Petersburg, FL	0.89	0.83	0.89	0.76	1.08
San Jose, CA	0.84	0.75	0.95	0.95	0.61
Cleveland, OH	0.79	0.61	0.79	0.74	1.05
Riverside-San Bernardino, CA	0.77	0.79	0.84	0.61	0.76
Pittsburgh, PA	0.76	0.63	0.74	0.79	0.91
Houston, TX	0.74	0.65	0.75	0.66	0.91
Detroit, MI	0.74	0.61	0.82	0.73	0.74
St. Louis, MO-IL	0.71	0.52	0.79	0.67	0.80

Source: Ann Markusen, Greg Schrock and Martina Cameron. 2004. *The Artistic Dividend Revisited*, Project on Regional and Industrial Economics, Humphrey Institute, University of Minnesota. Data from Census 2000 5% PUMS dataset, Integrated Public Use Microdata Sample, Minnesota Population Center, University of Minnesota. The figures index each metros' artists as a share of all employment over the national share.

### III. Impacts on Artists and Beyond

when funding retrenchment and the pull of commercial art centers of New York, San Francisco, and Los Angeles created a gap between these three “super-arts cities” and successful mid-tier artistic cities. For shares of artists in the workforce, the Twin Cities, at 16 percent above the national rate, outpaces many larger and faster-growing metro areas.

Artists’ centers have helped the region add to and retain its artistic pool through the 1980s and 1990s, even given the heavy hit to the arts sector from the implosion of National Endowment for the Arts funding and comparable state and local cuts. Among the top arts-rich cities, the Twin Cities were the only midsized metro area to join the three arts super-cities in outstripping the relatively slow national growth rate of artists in the 1990s (Table 5). These data cover only employed artists, including self-employed, whose artwork is their major occupation. It is impossible to know how many other artists working part-time also find their artistic development enhanced.

One remarkable feature of Minnesota’s artistic workforce is the extent to which it appears to be “home grown.” In the latter half of the 1990s, the Twin Cities was not a net recipient of artists through migration (Table 6); slightly more artists left than arrived. Newcomers are a somewhat smaller share of all artists (16 percent) when compared with Los Angeles, Portland, New York, Atlanta, or San Francisco (20–28 percent). Since the ranks of artists grew relatively rapidly in the Twin Cities over the decade, we can infer that much of that growth was accounted for by people entering artistic occupations locally.

This home-grown phenomenon may be credited in part to the state’s artists’ centers, since the vast majority of artists they serve are already Minnesota residents. The centers help to retain area artists by continuing to serve their evolving needs as their careers unfold. They may also contribute to the greater economic impact of the arts in the region, as producing and presenting organizations and as long-term developers of audiences. In Minneapolis, non-profits arts organizations and their audiences outspend their national counterparts by about 50 percent (Americans for the Arts, 2002).

Aside from excellent leadership, nurturing private and public sector institutions, and the synergy among them, why have Minnesota’s artists’ centers thrived? Affordability of studio space and housing is one major reason, enabling centers to be roomier and accommodate more artists. Highpoint Center for Printmaking, for instance, has about ten times the space of the renowned Lower East Side Print Shop in New York City. Many artists interviewed credited the cost of living and amenities such as Minnesota’s four-season recreational opportunities as reasons for living in the state.

**Table 5. Size, growth rates, employed artists, selected metros, 1980, 1990, 2000**

	% Change 1980–1990	% Change 1990–2000	2000
Atlanta, GA	64	53	14808
San Francisco–Oakland, CA	39	20	25263
Los Angeles–Long Beach, CA	52	20	79781
Minneapolis–St. Paul, MN	63	13	12155
Portland, OR	66	10	6630
Seattle, WA	52	9	11030
Cleveland, OH	28	7	5667
San Diego, CA	73	4	10330
New York–Northeastern NJ	33	4	77216
Miami, FL	42	3	7033
Boston, MA	73	2	16884
Chicago, IL	50	1	26901
Orange County, CA	87	-5	10656
Washington, DC/MD/VA	70	-6	22925
United States	53	10	881841

Source: Our computations from Census 2000 5% PUMS dataset, Integrated Public Use Microdata Sample, Minnesota Population Center, University of Minnesota. Artists are defined as the 1980, 1990, 2000 Census codes: Authors (285/183), Musicians and Composers (275/186), Performing Artists (270, 274, 271/187, 193), and Visual Artists: Artists and Related Workers (260/194, 188). These totals do not include unemployed artists.

**Table 6. Migration of artists by metropolitan area, 1995–2000**

	In/out migration ratio	New artists as % of total	Moved into metro	Moved out of metro	Artists 2000
Los Angeles, CA	2.16	22	19250	8918	88325
San Francisco–Oakland, CA	1.48	24	1634	1105	6876
Orange County, CA	1.47	26	2814	1914	10881
New York/Bergen, NY–NJ	1.45	21	17653	12164	82267
San Francisco–Oakland, CA	1.37	28	7258	5285	26071
San Diego, CA	1.25	24	2680	2144	10961
Atlanta, GA	1.22	26	3971	3255	15282
Washington, DC–MD–VA	1.14	24	5436	4749	23016
Seattle, WA	1.11	22	2482	2244	11428
Boston, MA	0.98	24	3770	3847	15552
Minneapolis–St Paul, MN–WI	0.97	16	1994	2047	12275
Chicago, IL	0.83	16	4379	5288	27612
Cleveland, OH	0.53	12	669	1255	5805
Houston, TX	0.37	21	2008	5388	9725

Source: Markusen and Schrock. 2006. Calculated from Census 2000 5% PUMS dataset, Integrated Public Use Microdata Sample, Minnesota Population Center, University of Minnesota. These figures include unemployed as well as employed artists, i.e. all those in the labor force, and are thus somewhat larger than the artist totals for 2000 in Table 5.

As we argued in *The Artistic Dividend*, a high density of artists in a regional economy adds to its economic base by bringing in “export income.” Many artists earn income from sales of their work in other regions or by traveling to perform elsewhere. Such infusions of income are not captured in typical arts impact assessments. We concluded that an over-representation of artists in a region means more externally generated arts income as well as more “import

substitution”—Minnesota residents consuming locally produced, labor-intensive culture rather than buying such “products” elsewhere. Many artists also freelance for non-arts organizations by writing manuals and marketing materials, filming videos and photographing workspaces and products, using performance to improve human resource management, and designing goods and websites. A rich and diverse pool of artists thus enhances regional corporate productivity and profitability, beyond the often-acknowledged role they play in helping businesses recruit personnel from elsewhere.

### IV. Organizational Challenges

Artists’ centers spend a lot of time managing growth and change. Few are resting on their laurels. Challenges arise on a number of fronts: identifying and serving a constituency; finding, paying for, and optimally using dedicated space; understanding and dealing with diversity; and right-sizing and funding a balanced program. Some challenges are enduring; some come to a head and are resolved.

#### Identifying and Serving the Constituency

Defining the target affinity group or groups served is not always simple. It is perhaps easiest for medium-based centers, such as Northern Clay Center and Minnesota Center for Photography, and for the affinity-based centers, such as Interact. But even the medium-specific centers struggle with what constitutes the art form and with cleavages in the ranks of practitioners. Several have faced uncomfortable demands to admit more popular subgenres. An example is the late 1980s/early 1990s clash at the Loft over science fiction, mystery, and romance writing. “Was such ‘genre’ writing really literature?” was the question of the day. Others argued that these forms offer the best modern work on plot and engage many more readers than much award-winning fiction. Eventually, the Loft decided to offer courses in these genres and host open book clubs if someone would lead them. The American Composers Forum has been the locus for similar “fine art” debates about music and has expanded from its classical roots to include composers of many musical genres.

It can also be challenging to serve artists playing different roles in an artistic medium or using different techniques. The Minnesota Dance Alliance’s difficulties were rooted to a large extent in its inability to decide if it was serving mainly choreographers—its original mission—or the larger community of dancers, or both. Choreographers mostly needed promotional assistance and shared office support functions, whereas dancers needed a place to meet, career counseling, and rehearsal space. Similarly, IFP Minnesota, inheriting space and equipment from two different organizations, strives to serve both photographers and filmmakers, whose needs are quite distinct.

Medium-specific centers also confront controversy from members over resource allocation to local versus national artists. Some criticize the awards to artists outside of Minnesota, on the

grounds that since these organizations are mainly supported by local memberships and regional donors, programming and especially grants should be focused on local artists. At The Playwrights’ Center, a recent initiative to increase the participation of promising playwrights nationally in mentorships and residencies sparked a public flap. But, said one observer, “if they didn’t do that, The Playwrights’ Center couldn’t sustain itself. You have to get bigger or smaller; you can’t stay the same. Without the national scale, the center would be back to zero, and no one would be funding it.”

In general, center managers, funders, and many artists agree that bringing in high-profile, highly talented national writers, musicians, visual and performing artists provides education and exposure for local artists and enriches their work. Some local artists report that their connections to New York publishing houses and galleries were cemented through encounters with visiting artists. Bringing in master artists also helps to build a local audience for the art form and generate visits by the public to the space, stimulating new memberships, donations, and sales of artwork and publications.

The local/global tension extends to issues of membership, too. The Composers Forum early on decided to deal with its small local constituency by creating chapters in other U.S. cities, becoming the American Composers Forum; some of these have survived though now are self-funded. The Loft actively recruits members around the country, principally through its *Speakeasy* magazine but also through openness of some grants and programs.

Simply because resources are scarce, most centers also face some conflict over balancing services to professional versus amateur artists. Space and equipment must be allocated either on a first-come, first-served basis, or on the basis of merit. The former has been the norm. Loft studios, Northern Clay Center studios with access to kilns, and Homewood Studios’ individual artist spaces are allocated on a queuing basis once the artists have met basic criteria. Sometimes this means space is underutilized; some artists are willing to pay the relatively reasonable rent even if they seldom show up, while others wait in the queue.

More controversial, however, are the grants and awards given to emerging and career artists. The letters to the editor in the *View from the Loft* have featured bitter complaints in some years that the same inner circle receives all of the grants, or that only beginners seem to receive assistance when career poets need income support. All centers try to serve amateur and aspiring artists as well as emerging and career artists, because that is central to their missions and to maintaining a supply of new members. Some quietly subsidize professional artists’ space and exhibits through revenue-generating classes and gift shops. In general, almost all centers studied have done a masterful job at bridging across the artistic spectrum, thanks to cross-fertilization of ideas and practice among them and to the active counseling of foundation program officers.

Neighborhood-defined centers and those in smaller towns face the added problem of serving the needs of a geographic community with few artists and limited notions of art and culture. John Davis, founder of the New York Mills Cultural Center, decided he had to find “the artist in every resident in the county” to pursue his dream.

#### IV. Organizational Challenges

In its major transformation, Intermedia Arts chose a neighborhood with many artists as its home, but then had to hone the definition of service area, a low-income and ethnically and racially diverse neighborhood that could be summed up in a single zip code, to establish a unique identity and mission. Some neighborhood and smaller-town centers also face competing demands from artists practicing different art forms. Some visual artists, believing the Northfield Arts Guild favors performing artists and writers, have formed an alternative organization, ArtOrg, which is competing for the loyalties of visual artists.

To retain and expand membership, it's important to get the constituency right. Since funders often use membership to gauge demand and services rendered, centers must assess the impacts of change in programmatic direction or local/national focus on their membership rolls. Keeping mature, professional artists engaged is one kind of challenge, while attracting young artists and art lovers is another. "You have to have a director who works at this and recognizes the great mentors and path-breakers," Booker says. Attracting young or minority artists to a center that may seem to be the turf of an older, more successful cadre is a further challenge. Some, like the Loft, have found that hiring younger staff members can help serve this mission.

#### Embracing Diversity

A related issue is the center's ability to serve minorities, immigrants, and other diverse constituencies. This topic has generated considerable debate in art circles, reflecting tensions in American society as a whole. As census data reveal, artists in Minnesota's labor force are disproportionately white and male and less apt to be immigrants than Americans as a whole. Over the past three decades, controversies over inclusiveness have touched many centers, often linked to debates over the definition of art (high/low, fine/craft, modern/traditional). Many have taken on this challenge directly, creating opportunities for new artists and helping the wider arts world think about art in a different way. A major issue is whether to provide special programming and groups for people of color and affinity groups or to work along an integrationist path.

How have Minnesota's artists' centers dealt with the underrepresentation of people of color, women, immigrants, and other affinity groups? Some have launched targeted programs and hired staff members explicitly to broaden their membership and service delivery.

For example, beginning in the early 1980s, Loft writers, board members, and managers began to discuss how to make the organization "less white." There were disagreements, former *View from the Loft* editor Ellen Hawley recalls, about how much energy to put into this and what it meant. The issue came to the fore one day when no one showed up to open the building for an event that featured a black writer—an oversight that could have reflected disorganization, incompetence, or racism. "So we started a diversity committee, whose sole responsibility was to push the borders outward," Hawley says. The committee sponsored readings, mentorship programs, and contests. Its most successful initiative was the late 1980s Inroads program serving emerging writers in the

African American, Asian American, Native American, and Latino communities (a gay/lesbian/bisexual group was added in 1994).

Special treatment often runs afoul of the desire to serve all artists universally. In the mid-1990s, the Loft's Inroads program ended. The funder's priorities had changed, and no other resources were found. Feeling the Inroads program had become ghettoized, Loft directors argued for mainstreaming affinity groups into regular programming. The decision was controversial. Many of the individuals who had come through the Inroads program felt that providing emerging artists with peers and mentors of similar cultural backgrounds was a powerful way to encourage and include new writers from minority and affinity groups. As Native American Marcie Rendon reflects: "I would have never applied for a Loft mentorship had it not said 'Native mentor.'"

Subsequently, the Loft has succeeded in attracting, mentoring, and awarding grants to a broad array of writers, but some writers continue to feel uncomfortable around what they experience as a mainly white, middle-aged membership. This is true even for people who have participated in the mentor program or who have taught there. One lesbian writer expressed her experience this way: "Most of us feel that when you go in there, you are always walking on foreign territory." Executive Director Linda Myers responds that Loft membership data show that white boomers are not the largest constituency, but "since perception is reality, we must never rest in our efforts to be open and accessible to everyone."

Thoughtful observers of these cultural clashes say the arts community must work hard to understand the experience of artists from outside the mainstream (e.g., Bye, 2004). For artists of color, immigrant artists, and others, a great advantage to working with a group of like-experienced people is not having to explain yourself. Photographer Bill Cottman (Homewood Studios) explains how growing up, he had never seen photographs of black people outside of anthropological treatments in *National Geographic*. Rendon talks about the absence of a written Native American tradition and the lack of any mirror in which young Natives, especially, might see themselves reflected in contemporary culture.

Artists of color and immigrants often run up against narrow definitions of what constitutes art. Funding panels may dismiss culturally specific art forms, such as Native beadwork, mariachi music, or spoken word in Somali as traditional or craft, not art, on the grounds that such work simply replicates or performs a received art form. Yet musicians and orchestras who perform European classical music are not held to the same standard.

At the same time, white audiences patronize "ethnic" arts events in larger numbers when the material consists of folk tales and drumming rather than artistic efforts to make statements about contemporary racism and poverty or to introduce modern innovative sensibilities into traditional forms.<sup>4</sup> Educating directors and staff, program officers, boards, panels, and audiences is the only way around this challenge. But since so much of the nonprofit world works on a self-replicating basis (the directors recommend board members, last year's winners serve on the panel for this year's award, and so on), making the case for the skill and originality of such work is an uphill battle.

Reaching and incorporating immigrant and refugee artists into artists' centers presents another set of problems. Many talented musicians, poets, actors, dancers, and visual artists in immigrant communities do not consider themselves artists, a term they associate with elite institutions. Few may be making art as a living, and many may be producing and presenting as part of community life and tradition. Several centers, notably Intermedia Arts and Center for Independent Artists, work to find and nurture immigrant artists both as individuals with career potential and as problem-solvers in their communities.

Chad immigrant and painter Koffi Mbairamadji received his first recognition as an artist here when Intermedia invited him to show his depictions of Biblically linked African images in an *Immigrant Status—Talking Suitcases* show. The Loft's recent efforts to reach immigrant and minority communities, through its *Equilibrium* spoken-word series and related community work, is another route for minority artistic development, as are SASE's sponsored performances around the region.

The challenge in reaching out to Native Americans is particularly tough. Minnesota's Native Americans are spread around the state on a dozen or more reservations—some Anishinaabe, some Sioux—as well as concentrated in inner-city Minneapolis. Because tribes are small and isolated, it is difficult for them to create their own arts centers. Native artists must thus create and market their work themselves. Singer-songwriter Annie Humphrey and her mother, author Anne Dunn, founded Sister Braveheart Lodge, a nonprofit co-op of Anishinaabe women whose beadwork, moccasins, paintings, and CDs Humphrey sells on her performance tours around the country. Fond du Lac artist Wendy Savage worked for years to create and market the Ojibwe Art Expo in the 1970s, the first of its kind in the United States. "We took a group of Native American artists' work on tour," reflected Savage. "No one paid me to do it; I dedicated twenty-five years to this for free. I did everything—loaded the work in my van, drove all over the country on my own dollar, did all the correspondence." Minneapolis foundations gave some support, intermittently, and John Steffl, the curator of the Duluth Art Institute at the time, exhibited Ojibwe Art Expo work.

Despite formal commitment to diversity among arts organizations in Minnesota, many observers say it is very difficult in practice. Carolyn Holbrook, artistic director at SASE, puts it this way: "As much as large arts organizations would like to be open and inclusive, they are not." In reaching out, she adds, "The invitation is to come and do things their way, not to come in and be who you are." Fond du Lac's Savage believes that "the state's art centers and funders profess multiculturalism but don't want to pay for it. Established art institutes and employees are paid, but Native Americans are expected to donate their work and volunteer their time."

Another observer perceives tension between the opening up of the constituency and the wealthy, white, and relatively conservative funders whom centers seek as board members and donors. Class and artistic politics weigh in here as well. Many minority, immigrant, and affinity group artists are relatively poor and working class, despite high educational attainment. They are also articulate

and able to use their art to make political statements that board members, staff, and other center members may not like hearing (Markusen, 2005).

### Creating and Using Dedicated Space

Committing to operating a space is a major step that complicates center management. It is a commitment large enough to alter an organization's priorities. Not many artist-serving organizations actually take this step.

Once a center chooses to have a dedicated space, it must decide whether to rent or buy. Although ownership and tax-exempt space offer protection against rising rents and property taxes, many centers rent because of finances, management, and future uncertainty. The Minnesota Dance Alliance, despite a foundation's willingness to help buy a space, decided not to own, but rented space in the Hennepin Center for the Arts. Highpoint Center for Printmaking is renting while it mulls over its future; if it continues to be successful, it may need a larger space. In smaller towns like Northfield, New York Mills, and Grand Marais (in building the Arrowhead Center for the Arts), support from local government and/or state and regional arts councils made ownership possible. Northfield, for example, gave the Arts Guild its handsome downtown building for one dollar. Ownership of space may also follow a successful capital campaign, as with Open Book or the Textile Center's effort to buy a space for its nascent center.

Locating an ideal building, rented or owned, immerses organizations into commercial real estate markets at vulnerable points in their careers. Center managers often have to trade off building attributes—the space they need for the services they offer—against cost, access, and neighborhood desirability. Sometimes, as at Open Book, the perfect space and good access trump less-than-optimal neighborhood effects. The fact that Open Book's neighborhood is not residential may have contributed to the demise of the Ruminator bookstore branch on the ground floor.

Other centers have settled on a site with an eye to the surrounding community of artists and residents. Choosing its new quarters in 2004, Minnesota Center for Photography was particularly keen to be an anchor tenant in the emerging Northeast Minneapolis Arts District, where it would benefit from the foot traffic that the Art-a-Whirl and nearby artist studio buildings would naturally generate. Homewood's desire to reverse the decline of a neighborhood commercial strip dictated its location, while Intermedia Arts sought a neighborhood with high artist density, using zip code statistics to find it.

Stepping up to a space requires a jolt of funding that many centers have found difficult to assemble. Earlier, serendipitous arrangements were sometimes made between centers, between the center and the owner of the space, or between the center and an angel investor. The Loft moved into the basement of The Playwrights' Center shortly after the latter bought a former church in the Seward neighborhood. In return for two years' free rent, the Loft renovated the downstairs to create an office, lounge area, and classrooms. After that, it paid full market rent. This gave The Playwrights' Center a route out of debt at a time when the



#### IV. Organizational Challenges

organization was financially unstable. Minnesota Center for Photography has benefited from a special progressively increasing rent arrangement with its landlord, enabling the refurbishing and opening of its new space in Northeast Minneapolis.

Relating the space to the external world has its special demands. The artists' center must present a face to the neighborhood and larger community, invite entry, and maintain its attractiveness. Some of the most visited centers are those that enjoy a lot of foot traffic, easy and cheap parking, and full-length windows that allow peering into the arts-rich space. Highpoint, the Textile Center, and Minnesota Center for Photography are particularly advantaged in this regard, whereas the photography center's former location in the basement of the Calhoun building made it hard to pull people in off the street to view the gallery.

It takes skills and know-how to manage a space, and often centers hire a manager to do so. If an organization's space is larger than it needs, it may cover building costs by renting out space to others. Open Book, for one, is a landlord to some commercial firms (and must pay property taxes on these for-profit uses). Sometimes, membership subgroups cover the rent, as in the loom space operated by the Weaver's Guild in the Textile Center.

Coping with multiple demands on space presents another management challenge. Highpoint uses the same printmaking space in the midsection of its building for its artist co-op and its children's programs. This constrains the hours available to co-op members and requires cubbyholes along the wall to store printmakers' work in progress. Classes may be in high demand on weekday evenings, overtaxing available classroom space, but empty on weekends. The Loft is trying to respond to this challenge by designing new classes for constituencies that might prefer daytimes or weekends. Meeting rooms are subject to the same problems.

#### Right-sizing and Funding a Balanced Program

Artists' centers are always pondering questions of appropriate scale and programming mix. Bigger is not always better. Several have faltered by becoming too big too soon or poorly managing the balance between fundraising, service, and space maintenance. Programs and services must continually be assessed for their impact and affordability. Ideas and demands for new programs and services are continually emerging and must be balanced against existing offerings. Ending a particular program risks alienating some constituents, but it may free up funding and staff time for others. Staff must be reconfigured to cover new frontiers and match abilities to tasks. Energy that goes into building management and membership drives may compete with attention to programs and services.

One measure of balance is the ratio of earned to contributed income. Earned income consists of rents for studios and equipment, class tuition, admissions to special events, sales from galleries and gift shops, membership dues, advertising revenue, investment income, and rents from non-arts uses. It is a measure of effective demand for services—of artists' and audiences' willingness and ability to pay. Contributed income includes grants from foundations, individuals, and the public sector.

Earned-income ratios range from 100 percent in the case of for-profit Homewood Studios, which covers all its costs with studio rents, to as low as 20 or 30 percent. Although there is no ideal ratio, most center directors would like to increase earned income. A large center like the Loft, with a 2005 budget of \$1.8 million, has maintained an earned income share of 40 to 45 percent over the past few years, about two-thirds of which comes from fees for classes and workshops. Successful visual arts centers such as Highpoint (55 percent) and Northern Clay Center (60 percent) earn higher ratios because they receive a share of master artist sales of work produced on the premises or exhibited in their space and earn commissions from artwork sold at their juried art shops.

Activities that do not pay their own way, such as mentorships, grants, programs for targeted groups, plans to bring in master artists, and educational work with children, must be funded by grants and contributions. This means proposal writing and fundraising, which are staff-intensive. As Miller (2005) argues, "When nonprofits provide services to people who can't pay for them, they must 'sell' their wares to the people who do pay. The players in these two markets have diverse and sometimes contradictory goals, and nonprofit managers spend time and attention marketing to them all." For many centers, a substantial portion of programming is supported by contributed income for specific programs. These are hard to sustain in the long run. Some initiatives end when a cycle of funding subsides or when funding philosophy changes at a foundation, prompting the need for new programs. Some centers use earned income to cover services for master artists and/or to reach worthy constituents unable to pay.

Some centers, especially those with a community orientation, believe they will grow only by increasing the participation of artists and art lovers in their communities. For medium-specific centers, the local constituency may already be well served, and they may need to expand regionally or nationally to grow, as American Composers Forum and The Playwrights' Center have done. But for many others, expansion is difficult. Face-to-face encounters with other artists and teachers are what many members value about these centers, and this is expensive and hard to replicate in Greater Minnesota or farther afield. The Loft, for instance, is trying to attract more members nationally by publishing *Speakeasy* and listing myriad grant competitions and publishing opportunities for writers in its newsletter. It runs a few retreats in Greater Minnesota and is expanding its suburban programs, but it remains a largely regional center with a national reputation.

The rise and fall of Film in the Cities provides an object lesson in the dangers of underfunded growth and organizational top-heaviness. One arts administrator involved in FITC's late stages sums it up: "Film in the Cities was like a huge machine. Its staff became so large that its management ended up mainly chasing dollars to keep the infrastructure afloat. As a result their programming suffered. The staff worked very hard, but much of the work was about day-to-day survival." Of course, not all participants agree with this assessment, and other factors were at play in FITC's closure.

Whatever an organization's vulnerabilities, they can be lessened by paying attention to the constituency. "It helps to develop a listening culture," one funder says. Centers variously use surveys,

openness to complaints about the grant process and open mics as ways of listening. Some excellent initiatives have been born out of protests. Responding to all petitioners is of course not possible. But often, critical decisions about future development turn on how organizations cope with multiple views and demands.

“These are fragile organizations,” concludes one observer. “Their mix of how they get their funding from grant and earned income is a balancing act. It is so easy for one piece to not work.” Jackson et al (2003b) make a similar argument about the fragility of artist-focused organizations and their ability to provide space.

### Future Challenges

Directors, artists, and observers in Minnesota foresee a number of art world developments that will challenge centers’ identity and programming. These include dramatic technological changes, greater interpenetration of artistic disciplines, more for-profit art activity, and the continuing dispersion of population away from the largest cities.

**Technology** Several art forms are becoming increasingly sophisticated electronically. Photography is going through a wholesale reorientation toward digital techniques. Video technologies will continue to contest the film medium. Books and short written work, as well as music and videos, can be self-produced and promoted on the web. As Jerome Foundation’s Gehrig puts it, “The result is likely to be an upswing again in the numbers of artists who self-produce, a trend that has been on the ascendancy for eight or nine years. Through the web, they can control their own destiny. They can’t or don’t have to wait for a gallery or a record label to pick them up.” Centers will have to adapt to teaching and providing the new technology, and to supporting and encouraging the impulse to self-produce. The State Arts Board’s Booker, as a public funder, worries, “The Minnesota State Arts board isn’t on the curve on this. We’re poor—we have to figure out how we can do this. We don’t even have the advanced technology ourselves.”

**Mixing Media** As artists mix media more often, they create a challenge for medium-specific centers. Pure creative drive explains much of this interpenetration of art forms, sometimes enabled by new technologies and tools. It may be that the shrinkage of discipline-bound funding for individual artists has encouraged artists to think outside the box, and some foundations have created new funding streams to encourage the trend. For instance, coping with how film relates to the other media arts is a challenge for IFP Minnesota. Should it attempt to incorporate instruction and mentoring for screenwriters as well as film and video makers? Of course, music has always been linked to the performing and visual arts (especially filmmaking), yet a vigorous property-rights contest over use of music in other art forms plagues choreographers, dance companies, and filmmakers, among others.

Crossing disciplinary boundaries also creates opportunities for medium-based centers. The explosion of young spoken-word poets, for whom performance is more important than the written artifact,

has animated SASE’s programming and is also finding a home at the Loft. Dean Otto, assistant film and video curator at Walker Art Center, says Walker has taken film and video out of their dark spaces, exhibiting the work in galleries and highlighting work by media artists combining disciplines: “Artists were moving outside of traditional screening spaces and into the gallery. Is it film? Is it sculpture? Now, when you walk into a gallery, it isn’t shocking,” he says.

Multimedia explorations can draw new constituencies and provide new outlets. Intermedia Arts was a pioneer in shifting beyond its original video focus into the broader visual and performing arts. Minnesota Center for Book Arts targets artists who are not primarily book artists but can incorporate their particular medium (sculpture or music) into a book. For instance, Minnesota Center for Book Arts is bringing in comic book artists to work with fine-press printers.

**To Profit or Not** Another trend is a move toward more for-profit activity in the arts world. As a response to the 1990s implosion of public funding, many young people have simply developed their own spaces and companies without worrying about nonprofit status or grants. Gehrig says of this trend, “Young people aren’t so hung up on purity, so some of their work can be product and service driven while others can be nonprofit. They are not as organization-oriented. They see themselves as a circle with ‘you in the middle of your own artistic life.’ They have a self-producing wing, and a work-on-contract and ‘for hire’ wing. ... If the work is good, that is all that matters.”

Hip-hop artists, for instance, move seamlessly between the two worlds. There is also an upswing in “web artists” as more work is marketed in this fashion. Media artists are making their own films and videotapes, and visual artists can create their own websites and mount a page on the McKnight Foundation–funded MNArtists.Org. Even performing artists are reaching audiences through the web. Ironically, the for-profit swing is a return toward a system that prevailed in the late-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when proprietary companies and private galleries played a lead role in delivering art to the market (Kreidler, 1996).

The blurring of boundaries between for-profit and nonprofit is apt to alter funders’ priorities in the decade to come. The State Arts Board’s Booker predicts, “Although now we work with nonprofits only, sooner or later we are going to be looking at working with for-profits on a more proactive basis. If we got an application today from a new Prince, early on, when he was creating his style, this might be attractive to the panel. And after all, individual artists *are* small for-profit businesses. That’s why we have revamped our individual support program more toward funding career initiatives rather than rewarding past performance; we are treating them as entrepreneurs building careers.” Minnesota’s conversation parallels a challenge issued by former NEA Chair William Ivey, who believes that the American arts community needs to think more open-mindedly about a for-profit art sector that he sees as particularly robust in the performing arts (Ivey, 2005). Centers are well positioned to bridge the two worlds because although they are nonprofit and raise considerable funds from other nonprofits, much of the fruits of their work are realized by artists who cross over between the two spheres.

#### IV. Organizational Challenges

**Population and Political Pressures** A final problem is the continual dispersion of population in Minnesota, to the suburbs and along certain rural corridors. Artists' centers, especially the medium-specific ones, work best in dense agglomerations of artists where constituents live within a half-hour's drive. Agglomerations, regional economists have argued, grow through a self-reinforcing dynamic, where existing pools of talent continually pull in the like-minded, depopulating rural and exurban regions of their creative human resources.

Despite Minnesota's decentralized public funding structure and the concern of foundations to reach Greater Minnesota, artists in the Twin Cities still have a better shot at grants and informal mentorship. As Booker puts it, for "those who have access to other artists, galleries, information exchange, and collegial relationships with other people, positive things happen. The connections are weaker elsewhere."

But population and political pressures are sure to place competing demands on the funding resources that central city artists' centers have enjoyed. The imperative to increase participation in the arts to maintain funding will likely draw resources away from artist-centric activities, whether individual or collective, unless they are more woven into the suburban fabric. The small-town centers profiled here have grappled with and succeeded, at least in part, in bridging among these multiple agendas: expanding and serving an arts audience; providing arts education, especially for children; and showcasing and supporting artists in the region. Yet it can be extremely difficult to bring artist-centric services into the mix.

In suburban locales, especially in more affluent and educated communities, a new generation of arts centers is assuming some artist service functions. Adding to the venerable Minnetonka Center for the Arts, the greater metro area has recently spawned the Hopkins Center for the Performing Arts, Bloomington Arts Center, Edina Arts Center, Eagan Art House, Discovery Art Center (Orono), and Sandhill Art Center (St. Francis). Some offer classes and affinity groups for artists and are moving to serve more accomplished artists, while others remain focused on avocational art or on presenting artwork and performances to the public. The Hopkins Center, built with bond funding from, and operated by, the city, has helped reverse the decline of the commercial strip in the town's center.

Suburban centers that serve artists pose a challenge to central city centers, because they are more accessible to people who live farther out and offer some of the same services. Recently, for instance, Bloomington Arts Center hosted a Saturday writers' conference attended by several hundred people, out of which emerged a writers' group. The Loft, with a grant from The McKnight Foundation, is reaching out with its *Loft around Town* initiative, partnering with some suburban arts centers and libraries to bring experienced Loft writers to teach classes that are tailored to the centers' views of their demographics.

Suburban centers are receiving greater attention from funders than in the past. The thinking is that such centers do not so much compete with more centrally located ones as generate new audiences and help underserved artists bloom. The McKnight

Foundation has published two studies of arts in suburbia (2002, 2005), making the case for more arts activities in the rings around cities and presenting cameos of a dozen or more such centers. Many of these centers have banded together to promote their own agendas: the directors in Eagan, Blaine, Bloomington, Edina, Fridley, Ramsey, and Lakeville meet quarterly to discuss such topics as programming and financing as it relates to a suburban context. As suburban centers fight the inaccurate stigma of presenting and promoting lower quality and amateur art, funders have begun to support them.

#### V. Conclusions and Recommendations

Our intensive study of twenty-two Minnesota artists' centers leads us to conclude that they play an important role in creating, enhancing, and organizing the pool of artists, and thus the overall cultural economy, in the state's cities, regions, and smaller towns. They work in the large gap between individual artists and big arts organizations and markets where art is selected, produced, employed, and consumed. By providing equipment, work space, instruction, exposure, and networking for artists at all levels of development, they act as forums for synergy and interaction that encourage artists to pursue their art form, plan their careers, and share their work in multiple venues. Their visibility and accessibility boost the state's creative economy by attracting artists to Minnesota and home-growing them in numbers beyond the national norm.

Our evidence is drawn from the more than 200 interviews with artists of many disciplines, degrees of maturity, experience, and mixes of commercial, nonprofit, and community focus. Although this is a small sample of all artists in Minnesota, we are confident that it is both representative and diverse. Overall, these artists attest to the key roles that the centers studied have played in their decisions to pursue their artwork, the evolving character of that work, and their willingness and knowledge of how to share and market their work. Paraphrasing many of those profiled, they would not have become the artists they are today without the center experience, and some would not be in Minnesota at all. Our Loft survey yields quantitative data on the numbers of artists who enhanced their careers and reputation, and of amateurs and would-be writers who have taken important first steps, as a result of Loft services and engagement.

Two hypothesized features are key to these outcomes—the maintenance of a dedicated space where artists come together, and the openness and accessibility of the space and its services to all interested. These distinguish artists' centers from many other arts producing and consuming venues, such as schools, performing arts organizations, artists' studio buildings, galleries, museums, and also from artists' service organizations without such space (unions, professional associations). We have found that the welcoming atmosphere of the centers and their "come one, come all" modus operandi attracts artists at many different stages of development, albeit for different reasons. Their ongoing programming encourages multiple and even habitual visits to the center,

nurturing a sense of ownership of the space and the organization on the part of artists. Of course, there are tensions and growing pains in this process, many of which we have probed in the profiles.

We also found that successful centers deftly bridge between artists just beginning their work and those who have launched careers and may even have attained fame and a comfortable living. They provide a portfolio of services that reward and exhibit accomplished artists while attracting and nurturing those in early stages. Although artists look to centers for changing services as their work evolves, most value highly this expertise-spanning atmosphere. Veterans enjoy teaching, finding their creativity charged by it. Newcomers recount the motivating power of working with masters and hearing about the jolts and setbacks in their careers along the way.

Because they are places, artists' centers are embedded in the life of their immediate neighborhoods. We found anecdotal evidence that most have enlivened street life, brought local businesses more trade, and contributed to community stabilization and development. Spread out as the Twin Cities' centers are among many neighborhoods, they add to the cities' cultural mosaic. They help to embed artistic experience in communities and to integrate the arts into problem-solving and celebrations. In smaller cities, their contributions are more visible and highly acclaimed by chambers of commerce and city leaders, both in commercial district revitalization and in increasing tourism and overall economic activity.

Because our field research offered us an opportunity to talk to founders, directors, and other center staffers whose work it is to build and operate such centers, we have also developed a composite picture of how these centers have evolved and the growth challenges they have and will face. We have found multiple pathways to success, some involving professionalized staff and others governed by artists' membership groups or artists themselves. We have documented the financial and coaching role of Minnesota funders, private and public, and the role of local governments in helping to create, refurbish, and maintain physical space. We have explored the formidable constituency-building, space-mounting, funding, programming, diversity, technological, and suburbanization challenges to centers. In the profiles, the ways that each has confronted and responded to these challenges is closely studied. We hope that their stories will provide encouragement and insight to others hoping to launch and maintain artists' centers.

To thrive, artists' centers piece together support from a number of sources. In closing, we make a number of recommendations for each, moving from the larger policy arena and the regional economy to center leaders and artists themselves.

First, public and nonprofit policymakers responsible for economic development, urban planning, and cultural policy should acknowledge and support artists' service centers as good investments, paying cultural and economic dividends. The resources required to run this complex of centers in Minnesota are very modest in comparison with what is spent on large arts organizations and on big economic development projects. As such,

they should be considered candidates for brick-and-mortar support, operating funds, and technical assistance.

One barrier to such investment is the division of responsibility for cultural policy, economic development, and urban/regional planning into separate agencies at the state and local level, a division replicated within some funders as well. In the City of Minneapolis, for instance, the land use and infrastructure decisions affecting artists' centers are made by the planning staff, disposition of buildings and rehabbing subsidies by the economic development staff, and public art and arts programming by the cultural affairs office. Yet other groups run federal pass-through programs or neighborhood revitalization programs that help individual centers. Though the heads of these units are interested in working more closely together, we were not even able to tally recent financial and in-kind support given by the city to its artists' centers.

The more that policymakers understand the synergy between the arts and economic development, the greater will be the effort to work across bureaucracies and the more likely the collaboration. State and local governments should coordinate the many tools at their disposal to help create appropriate spaces for artists and embed such centers in their neighborhoods. Foundations should explore funding projects across their operating divisions. In smaller towns, the synergy is more apparent, but many local leaders will not "get it" without concerted advocacy on the part of artists and art lovers.

Flagship arts institutions could do more to nurture artists' centers, perhaps offering them dedicated space in less populous regions. In large cities, major museums and performing arts organizations have often walked away with the lion's share of public and philanthropic resources, because they are well organized and staffed and can afford the lobbying and networking required. Historically, their role has been to present "the best" art from whatever eras and by artists who are non-local. This could change. In modest ways, Minneapolis's two top arts museums—the Minneapolis Institute of Arts (MIA) and Walker Art Center—have offered programming for regional artists. MIA hosts the Minnesota Artists' Exhibition Program, which exhibits a show dedicated to Minnesota artists once a year, selected by artists in a relatively open and democratic process. Walker has co-hosted performing arts events showcasing the work of local artists, though the artists have no input into the selection process. Visual and performing arts centers could consider offering space to artists for center-like functions. In all types of communities, flagship arts institutions should acknowledge artists' centers' incubating role for regional artists and consider them partners rather than competitors for public and patron dollars. In smaller towns, performing and visual arts centers should consider adding services for artists as an expansion of their portfolios.

Private sector businesses, perhaps through their trade associations, could approach and work with artists' centers as suppliers of creative ideas, design, and skills. Our interviews uncovered dozens of instances from all disciplines where artists contract with firms on product design, writing and graphics projects, marketing efforts, human-relations interventions, training

## *V. Conclusions and Recommendations*

programs, and art in the workplace. These artists' work helps firms become more productive and profitable, yet there is no organized market for such skills and services. Companies and industry representatives could give talks and do training at centers to help artists understand how their work is used by non-arts employers. The state's MN.org website could add a function where employers searching for artists with particular skills could easily find and review potential partners for projects.

For arts leaders and advocates, making the case for artists' centers to funders, individual philanthropists, and community leaders is also important. Minnesota is blessed with an unusual group of family foundations that have played a lead role, and individual giving has been very important for many of the centers, large and small. But in Minnesota, as elsewhere, and especially for smaller towns and urban and suburban neighborhoods without centers, fundraising campaigns and publicity that raise public and patron understanding of the significance of convening space for artists and audiences can help fill the gap. New York Mills, a tiny town far from large metropolitan centers and without unique environmental qualities, has shown how a community can organize and find within its own region the support to create an artists' center.

State and regional arts agencies, especially those operating in suburban and smaller town settings, should offer collective spaces for artists explicitly as a function of their arts centers and as a way for communities to experience and engage in artistic practice. Outside of the Twin Cities region, most regional arts council spending in Minnesota goes directly to individual artists or to presenting organizations and in very small amounts. In the absence of intermediaries like artists' centers, the potential spillover effect of one artist's work on other area artists and would-be artists is lost. Where there is local will and initiative, arts agencies should encourage it with funding for space development and projects that will solidify programming and organization and constituency-building. The same precious counseling that the family foundations and the Metropolitan Regional Arts Council gives to existing artists centers should be replicated in smaller-town and suburban communities. States without decentralized public arts funding structures should consider the advantages of such a system in seeding artists' centers beyond major cities.

For directors, boards, and staff, our research has reviewed and compared across cases a number of challenges to center-building and programming, briefly summarized in the paragraphs above. By documenting conflicts, setbacks, crises and even failures, and by reporting how centers have creatively overcome their particular challenges, we have used their experiences to suggest best practices and pitfalls. Success as an artists' center requires that leaders and staff perform the roles of a small to medium-sized business, and more—they need to raise contributed as well as earned income and to engage and satisfy diverse constituencies (by discipline, degree of artistic experience, diversity, national as well as local artists, arts audiences, and children as well as artists). They must also tend to their neighborhoods and local governments. Our evidence confirms the findings of an Urban Institute study (Jackson et al, 2003b) that artists' organizations are often in a weak

position to advocate for space because they do not have the skills to interact effectively with powerbrokers, developers, and gatekeepers at city hall. We recommend that directors and boards of artists' centers acquire such skills.

Artists, as direct beneficiaries, should help make visible to the arts community and the larger public the significance of artists' centers for their careers and artistic development. Often, the boost received from center engagement is diffused across many encounters and small services enjoyed there. Many artists interviewed could name a moment of insight or a grant received via a center as seminal in their development. But on reflection, they could articulate the more subtle ways that networking, exposure to the good work of others, and access to professional know-how mattered, too. To ensure the continuation of artists' services, artists must also play active roles in center governance, fundraising, and recruitment of artists and art lovers to center activities. The centers with the forward momentum, we found, were those in which artists felt committed to the place and were willing to give their time (and artwork and even donations) to help make it a success.

Artists' centers are important intermediaries in the development of a distinctive regional culture and the cultural economy. They provide an environment for learning, sharing, networking, and exposure not offered elsewhere in the regional arts ecology. Minnesota's remarkable ensemble of artists' centers have contributed to the state's continuing attractiveness as a place to live, to do business, and to innovate.

## Part II. Centers and Artist Profiles

### Centers for Composers, Literary Artists, Playwrights

#### *American Composers Forum*

Composers by nature tend to be solitary. Their acts of creation take place long before their work is presented, without access to the earned-income channels other artists use. They aspire to win a commission, fellowship, or some other source of support, and, if writing for others, to find someone to play their music. These are difficult objectives to achieve, because composers are mostly invisible to the larger society. Few ensembles and musicians play new music. Many people have never met a composer, and few know where music originates. Because people rarely hear new compositions more than once, it's hard for composers to develop and sustain audiences. So, while composers need performances and reading opportunities to develop their work, they also need help raising their profile.

Like many other artists, composers put their work ahead of audience development, networking, and marketing. They receive little training in the business of arts, or in how to prepare for panel reviews, make tapes, identify partnerships, and publish their music.

The American Composers Forum (ACF), a St. Paul-based organization with a national constituency and chapters, has worked for more than three decades to meet the needs of composers in the noncommercial field. It runs grants programs and acts as a clearinghouse for information related to other grants, residencies, and reading programs. It develops new audiences and links composers with communities through special funded programs.

In the 1990s, ACF deliberately decided not to have a dedicated space. Their rationale was that, unlike many other artists, composers do not need space to create, and their relatively small numbers would make it difficult to maximize the value of the space. The Forum does organize salons in composers' homes and offers its Minnesota members recording facilities, Fur Seal Studios in Minneapolis.

#### Emergence and Evolution

Libby Larson and Stephen Paulus, two composition students at the University of Minnesota, founded what became the Minnesota Composers Forum in 1973. The young organization staged concerts and readings for like-minded artists as a way of getting their music heard. ACF President John Nuechterlein says, "The mission was one of composers, by composers, for composers." Early on, the Jerome and McKnight foundations awarded the Forum sizable fellowship funds for regranting, a strong vote of confidence and an incentive for membership and organizational growth. Among its early successes, the Forum produced a high-profile music series at Walker Arts Center, partially supported by the National Endowment for the Arts.

Over its first two decades, the Composers Forum added new services and programming when it could raise contributed income to do so. To help its members record and disseminate their work, the Forum started its own label, *imova*® Recordings, in 1982, annually recording the works of the McKnight Fellowship winners and later documenting groups chosen for the Walker Arts Center performance series. McKnight supported a recording loan fund through the Forum to remove some of the obstacles artists faced in releasing their own music. The Forum also set up a fund to cover the cost of hiring local musicians.

The Forum's long-standing salon programming started when composer Aaron Jay Kernis was in residence with the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra. Every month, composers would play tapes at Kernis's house, and he would critique them. The salons enabled members to meet other composers and establish informal networks. Of the salons, ACF member David Evan Thomas says, "When you start to write, you need encouragement. It helps to talk to other composers and hear their work. This initial contact is especially important for young composers."

In the 1980s, the artist-run organization began to suffer from leadership challenges and a poor public image, resulting in a funding crisis. In 1990, the board recruited executive director Linda Hoeschler, a prominent local businesswoman who, at the Dayton-Hudson Foundation, had given Libby Larsen and Stephen Paulus their first major grant for the Forum. They gave her a mandate to restructure the Forum. Mirroring developments at other artist-serving organizations of that era making the painful shift from artist-run to professional governance, Hoeschler instilled good business practices into the organization. She reflects, "You have to be responsive to members, but you have to be a leader in the field. This is the difference between being successful and unsuccessful as an organization."

Hoeschler's other major contribution was a more imaginative and diverse vision of programming, captured in the mantra, "New



Composers' Forum founders: (L-R) Stephen Paulus, Cynthia Stokes, Libby Larsen and Jim Reece.



Markets for New Music.” Instead of spending \$80,000 on four poorly attended concerts a year, the Forum’s staff worked to weave the organization into the local arts fabric by nurturing community partnerships. By growing programs from five to fifteen in one year, the Forum began to offer new and unique opportunities for readings, residencies, and grants for composers at all career stages. For example, it brought in guest ensembles to curate pieces from local composers. In 1993, the Forum co-produced the award-winning program *Composers Voice* as part of a new partnership with Minnesota Public Radio. A new show begun in 2000, *Composers Datebook*, is now a nationally distributed daily program that educates listeners about the close ties between contemporary and classical composers. By the time Hoeschler stepped down in 2003 to pursue other interests, eight institutional funders in 1991 had grown in number to eighty.

Over time, membership has increased to include many non-Minnesota composers who did not have access to the regional regrant monies but still had access to its helpful staff and newsletter. Jokingly referring to themselves as the New York Outpost of Minnesota, a large group of New York composers founded a volunteer chapter of the Forum in 1995, followed by southern Minnesota, Chicago, Boston, Atlanta, New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Washington, D.C. The Minnesota Composers Forum became the American Composers



Composer Mike Crosswell performing PCV Pipe composition

Forum in 1996. Chapters now are a more loosely knit network of independent affiliates.

Under current executive director John Nuechterlein, a musician with private-sector management experience, the Forum has continued to encourage musicians to work with audiences and has developed new programs, such as the First Nations Composer Initiative. He feels that the Forum has been successful in evolving from a small local composers’ club into an organization of composers connected to diverse and new communities: “In the 1950s, we were writing art music for ourselves,” he says. “Most composers were academics, with Ph.D.s from the same ten schools. At the Forum, we have been trying to break away from this. We began talking about demand for the product—it was like preaching heresy. Composers were writing what they write, creating what they create, without regard to whether there is anyone out there listening. It has been a long road, but the field is finally listening.”

## Opportunities and Impact

The American Composers Forum today helps composers create new work and develop new markets for their music. It currently serves 1,700 members, 700 of them in the Minnesota chapter. For \$50 a year, members have access to the Forum’s database and *Sounding Board*, the bimonthly newsletter that lists granting opportunities and activities in chapter locations around the country. Through its record

### Artist Profile:

## Janika Vandervelde

Janika Vandervelde, a grant recipient and former board member of the American Composers Forum, experimented with composing at an early age but assumed she would be a music teacher. At University of Wisconsin Eau Claire, she decided to give a senior piano recital of her own work. She moved to the Twin Cities in 1977 to pursue a graduate degree in composition at the University of Minnesota and joined the American Composers Forum. Encompassing diverse contemporary styles, her work is distinguished for its rhythm and musical architecture. Through commissions, teaching opportunities, and grants, including two Bush and three McKnight fellowships, as well as



part-time teaching at the Perpich Center for the Arts, she has been “surprisingly able to sustain a career,” she says.

Vandervelde says the American Composers Forum and the Jerome Foundation had a marked impact on her career, especially in its

earlier stages. “When I first joined the Composers Forum, it was a community of composers who supported one another,” she says. “We came to each others’ performances. We gave critical feedback. We discussed the political climate surrounding the arts. We were people in the same profession.” Vandervelde received four grants from the Composers Commissioning Program. She also credits Meet the Composer, a New York-based

counterpart of American Composers Forum, for boosting her career through its New Residencies Program, through which she worked full-time for three years as composer-in-residence with the Minnesota Chorale, Perpich Center, and the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom.

Vandervelde praises the Composers Forum for creating incentive programs that secure multiple performances for new pieces. Although she dreams of support that would allow her to write exactly as she pleases, she is grateful to the Forum for the many opportunities it has given her to create new music. Looking back on her 25-year career, she says, “The Forum provides an infrastructure and a set of experiential stepping stones that composers need.”

label, artists have access to low-interest loans for the manufacture, design, and distribution of CDs.

Through diversified and community-oriented initiatives, the Forum works to change public perception of the field. Although there are many such initiatives, two examples illustrate how the Forum addresses this goal. With its Faith Partners program, ACF places composers within Minnesota churches and synagogues, institutions historically supportive of new music. "We created an audience instead of trying to drag people into a concert," says Philip Blackburn, a composer and long-time Forum employee. Through this program, for instance, Thomas, a neo-romantic composer, spends time with musicians who perform his compositions; he expresses gratitude for the unique collaboration in which creators of music and sound work together. Another initiative is the Forum's Continental Harmony®, created in 1998 in partnership with the National Endowment for the Arts. The program placed composers in all fifty states to celebrate the new millennium through newly commissioned music.

Some composers have felt uncomfortable moving from the periphery into the center of a musical community. They feel the

Forum's bold efforts to embed composers in communities, while successful as a funding strategy, are undercutting quality and taking time from their real work. One composer comments, "Most composers do not revel in this position. Often, we feel like counselors instead of artists." But Forum leaders believe that such embedding is key to a successful career. As Blackburn puts it, "They are not free agents to do their own music as they see it but in response to what the community wants. This is the genesis of what we do in these kinds of settings."

The Forum also organizes readings of composers' work by professional ensembles and orchestras. For instance, Scott Miller, a midcareer artist specializing in electro-acoustic composition, partnered with Zeitgeist on a performance called "Shape Shifting," in which electronic sounds interweave with the sounds of an ensemble consisting of a bass clarinet, alto sax, piano, and percussion. Without the Forum acting as fiscal clearinghouse for private and public philanthropy, Miller doubts his work with Zeitgeist would have happened.

Although many of its recent initiatives focus on connecting composers in communities and with musicians, the Forum continues

## Artist Profile: John O'Brien

Chicago native and multimedia artist John O'Brien refers to himself as a lifelong trumpet player. Jokingly, he mentions that braces in his youth may have briefly halted his progress but did not end his attraction to the instrument. In 1973, he decided against conventional academic training, leaving a sculpture program at University of Wisconsin-Madison to follow visiting artist and avant-garde jazz trumpeter Bill Dixon to Bennington College in Vermont. Working with Dixon, he became interested in the marriage of jazz and the European art form as found in 1970s American cutting-edge films such as *The French Connection*.

With a jazz-folk-ethnic composition grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Chicago native moved to the Twin Cities in 1976, where he founded the John O'Brien Ensemble and, to support his growing family, briefly worked at a series of other jobs. He reflects, "I wanted to be in the Twin Cities where it seemed much easier to execute a practical plan for doing the music itself. There are more artists, and it is easier to find practice and concert space." Needing a better career path, he formed O'Brien Executive Search, renting two spaces in the



Northwestern Building in St. Paul. In one, he ran the recruitment business, and in the other a second company, Complete Theatrical Sound, where he recorded and produced pieces for local theater companies.

Interested in radio drama, O'Brien connected with the American Composers Forum, which awarded him a McKnight Foundation grant to develop a multimedia piece, *Life at Night*. The film was nominated for Best Web Film at the Cannes Film Festival in 2001. Currently, with Jerome funding, O'Brien is developing a sequel, *The Rise and Fall of it All*, a comic-book multimedia piece in collaboration with Marvel Comics artist Salgood Sam.

For O'Brien, the most important part of his McKnight grant was that it offered an additional \$5,000 stipend to teach. He started Curriculimedia, a Twin Cities media education company, to work on projects with the St. Paul

Schools, Portage for Youth, Penumbra Theatre, and Metropolitan State University. O'Brien saw this as an opportunity to wean himself from grants, which he believes should help catapult artists into self-employment.

Today, O'Brien heads the Motion Imaging Department at the McNally Smith School for Music, a position he says he would not have had without the McKnight grant administered by the American Composers Forum. He comments, "Artistically, it allowed me to invest in an understanding of multimedia, including visual media. Professionally, it set in motion a series of events that allow me to make a living from my art. It has given me a second career."



*The Rise and the Fall of it All*

to support composers individually at all stages of their careers. In 2000, it started its Subito grant program in California, to give timely aid to composers and musicians who are strongly dedicated to their art, show artistic merit, and propose an excellent project. Composers who have reached a critical point in their career may apply for the Forum's annual McKnight Composer Fellowship that grants \$25,000 in unrestricted funds to each of the four composers chosen. Artists can use the money to pay for compositional time, buy equipment, travel, or finance private study.

American Composers Forum members include musicians who perform compositions by Forum members. For instance, *Zeitgeist*, a St. Paul-based organization, performs only music that has been composed in the past ten years. Once a month, *Zeitgeist* hosts a salon to perform one composer's music. Heather Barringer, a musician and *Zeitgeist* administrator, calls the Forum "a great resource," adding, "Their Encore Fund pays us for rehearsal time to work with a new composer. It is a great opportunity for people to play newly composed music and have other people hear it. Some composers never get to hear their own music." The American Composers Forum and *Zeitgeist* stand at the front lines for new music in the region. These and similar partnerships may help to explain Minnesota's musical reputation and prominence.

## Challenges

Plenty of challenges lie ahead. The American Composers Forum is grappling with changing fashions in music and the challenges of new technologies, including the ability of composers to market their work through the Internet. "I hope we aren't becoming more irrelevant," Blackburn says. "In the old days, there were so many barriers and gatekeepers to the industry that composers really needed us. Now with the Internet and e-mail, you can manage your own career if you have a website and are near a post office. We should be trying to find niches where new work is still needed and what we can do as an organization that individuals cannot do by themselves." The Forum must also continually reach new audiences for noncommercial music in an age when, as Libby Larsen puts it, the "the car is the concert hall of the 21st century."

Some composers interviewed see a problem with the name "American Composers Forum" and debate the idea of "composer" and the constituency targeted. There are performers who make music but do not think of themselves as composers. Traditionally, composers wrote music and musicians inherited it, but now composer-performers like Pamela Z and Fred Ho both perform and make their own music. It is difficult to know how the Composers Forum can help these artists whose primary need is to develop relationships with presenters. Blackburn says, "There are plenty of music scenes that we do not help or we just do not know about. It is a struggle for us to figure out how to access them and help them. Our job is to play catch-up. It would be arrogant to assume we can lead it." The Forum does not presently do much to serve — certain types of composers, such as singer-songwriters, whose work is performed in for-profit establishments. But some worry that this is an artificial distinction.

Without a dedicated meeting space, the Forum must work to connect composers and musicians with each other in a diversity of venues. Janika Vandervelde, a midcareer composer profiled here, misses the sense of community from the Forum's first decades. "Early on, the organization was more personal and passionate. Members had a stake in the organization because they voted their composer-peers onto the board." She recognizes that the Forum is trying to re-create that original energy with more salon programming.

Overall the American Composers Forum has given Minnesota a national reputation as a vibrant place where composers can live, work, find career support, and reach diverse audiences. As Nuechterlein reflects on the thirty-year history of the organization, he believes "the Forum has truly redefined how we can support and nurture living composers in their craft and livelihood."

## *The Loft Literary Center*

Writing is one of the more solitary artistic endeavors. With few exceptions, writers of poetry, fiction, memoir and non-fiction almost always create alone. Often they must struggle for adequate time and space. Many writers can't make a living at their craft but write nevertheless as a second job or avocation. Writers, especially earlier in their careers, need access to information, encouragement, role models, feedback, mentoring, funding, and inspiration from others. Some need a room of their own to write. The Loft Literary Center has addressed such writers' needs for more than thirty years.

The Loft currently resides in the Open Book, three renovated warehouses on South Washington Avenue in Minneapolis, shared with Milkweed Editions, a nonprofit press, and Minnesota Center for Book Arts. On the second floor, outside the Loft offices, a large open space offers moveable tables and chairs where people can group themselves. Adjacent is an auditorium for readings and talks that master writers, spoken-word artists, award winners, and students give throughout the year. Along the back wall sit classrooms and a library of books by Minnesota authors and small presses, as well as regional and national literary magazines. To the west lies a series of writers' studios, each with a table and chair, an easy chair and an ample window with afternoon light. Writers may rent studios on a scheduled basis and keep their materials in a phalanx of lockers that line the corridor outside. More classrooms, a book-club room and a rooftop space are upstairs.

## Emergence and Evolution

The Loft began in 1974 when Marly Rusoff, owner of a little bookstore in the Dinkytown neighborhood near the University of Minnesota, offered writers who hung out at her shop a place to meet. The year before, Rusoff had talked Minnesota poet Robert Bly into reading his poems aloud, and she was heartened by the numbers of poetry lovers who showed up. Rusoff suggested forming a "poet's club" that would support itself by charging dues of \$15 per year and pay a small rent. At a fundraising party, emceed by Garrison Keillor,

the group sold a hundred memberships. In 1975, the Minnesota State Arts Board awarded the Loft its first grant to hire a part-time coordinator, Sue Ann Martinson, and run a series of workshops.

About ten to fifteen poets and writers formed the initial core group, including Phebe Hanson, Patricia Hampl, Michael Dennis Browne, Garrison Keillor, and Jim Moore. “It was a club, but not exclusive; we would have welcomed anybody. But we were friends,” recalls Moore. They supported political actions such as the Honeywell Project, protesting the company’s production of napalm for use in Vietnam.

Soon the group began to offer writing classes. The Loft had no catalogue in the earliest days, and teachers did not get paid, though the group began publishing a monthly *Loft Newsletter* in 1976. When Rusoff left for New York, the Loft moved to new quarters nearby, the first of six such moves.

In 1978, the Loft moved into the Powderhorn neighborhood, above the newly renovated Modern Times Café. Outraged by their arrival, a group of local Powderhorn residents circulated flyers warning of activities that would take place in the combined cafe/writer’s hang-out—beer drinking, live music, readings, and performances. One woman, mistaking poetry for pornography demanded, “Why can’t they keep poetry on Lake Street?” referring to a nearby “adult” entertainment district. Major readings were held downstairs and classes upstairs. The quarters were spacious enough to offer studio space to writers for the first time. A Writers’ Support Group began regular meetings, the predecessor of today’s many Loft open groups.

The writer-run organization hired part-time administrators, generally writers with limited administrative acumen. An exception was Jill Breckenridge, a poet with a head for organization who took the Loft to a new level. She initiated mentorships to help younger writers, bringing in nationally known writers and raising funds from Jerome for the Mentor Series begun in 1980, the start of a long history of successful fundraising for specific programs. By the early 1980s, the Loft had full-time administrators.

In 1981, the Loft board approved its current mission statement: “The mission of the Loft is to foster a writing community, the artistic development of individual writers, and an audience for literature.” New energy went into nurturing cultural diversity and pluralism.

Also in 1981, the Loft began its McKnight Fellowships for Writers, the first in a series of regranting relationships with external funders. Over the next few years, the Loft created a scholarship fund for writers who would not otherwise be able to take classes, a creative nonfiction residency, a Jerome-supported study and retreat fund, and a McKnight-funded international writer-in-residence program. Next came member-driven initiatives such as a manuscript-critique service, and a series of anthologies with local small presses.

In 1984, the Loft moved into the ground floor of The Playwrights’ Center, where a large portion of its first two years’ rent was forgiven in exchange for its complete renovation of the space, a project that engaged the volunteer labor of many Loft members. The Loft sponsored controversial and high-profile freedom of speech events and projects: a 1987 reading by poet Yevgeny Yevtushenko, an 1988 Amnesty Action Project to coordinate letter-writing campaigns on behalf of specific imprisoned writers around the world, and a 1989 reading of Salman Rushdie’s *Satanic Verses* by local radio news



anchor Dave Moore in protest of the Ayatollah Khomeini’s sentence of death for Rushdie.

As its membership surpassed 2,000, the Loft moved again in 1990, to the Pratt Community Center, a former public school turned neighborhood community center close to the University of Minnesota. Here began its most important diversity initiative—the Inroads mentorship program serving emerging writers in the African American, Asian American, Native American, Latino communities, and gay/lesbian/bisexual communities. Funded by the Dayton-Hudson Foundation, Inroads recruited writers to work in affinity groups with master writers from the same culture. In another initiative, program director Carolyn Holbrook and Walker Art Center education director Margaret O’Neill Ligon pioneered Sunday Slams, readings held throughout Twin Cities neighborhoods at bars, bookstores, and the Walker. In the same era, in a novel move to help more accomplished writers advance their careers, the Loft won funding from Jerome for a Minnesota Writers Career Initiative program.

In the last decade, the Loft has grown to be the nation’s largest literary center. In 1994, Linda Myers became executive director, teaming up with administrative director Nancy Gaschott. They have introduced a more directive managerial approach, diversified the board, and expanded the staff. They launched programs for young writers, started summer youth writing classes, sponsored more readings by accomplished writers from elsewhere, focused more on reaching readers, and increased the funding for an array of new programs, including family literacy initiatives and programs in the schools. In 2000, they moved into their permanent Open Book home.

## Opportunities and Impact

The Loft has extraordinary reach in constituency and depth in programming. It offers membership to all comers at \$60 a year (\$25 for low income/students). It currently serves more than 3,500 members, largely in the Twin Cities but many living elsewhere in Minnesota and the United States. A member receives the newsletter

(*A View from the Loft*), the Loft's literary magazine (*Speakeasy*), quarterly class schedules, and discounts on many events, most of which are free or affordable to begin with.

The Loft's classes serve writers at all levels, with most of the tuition paid to the writers who teach the classes. Scholarships and work-study opportunities enable those to participate who might not otherwise be able to afford it. The Loft also supports writers through regranting programs and mentorships. It provides studios for writers at affordable rents. It offers free meeting space for book clubs and writers' groups that have emerged from classes or Loft-sponsored "open groups," such as Asian Women's Reading/Discussion and Wordplay Poetry Writing. The Loft is also expanding its work in the community through programs and partnerships that encourage reading and writing.

It is also seeking to broaden its constituency of writers. In seeking a national audience, its major vehicle is *Speakeasy*, a new literary journal that, in the words of editor Bart Schneider, is "exploring what it means to be a literary citizen, how writers choose to live our lives in the culture." It targets writers through MFA programs, conferences, and the publishing world and organizes "Speakouts" in bookstores around the country to get more exposure for the magazine. Some local members, Schneider notes, think *Speakeasy* should publish only Minnesota writers (currently, thirty to forty percent are from Minnesota), but he says that "would make it harder to appeal to writers in Boston."

With the Loft's cooperation, we designed a web-based survey of Loft members, students and award winners in recent years.<sup>5</sup> The large number of responses (1,388) enabled us to answer more firmly than in other profiles many of the basic questions posed in this research. We weave in these findings with insights from our interviews with a dozen emerging and accomplished Loft writers.

Members said they value the classes, with a remarkable 84% agreeing that "participation in the Loft classes enhanced my sense of being part of a writing community." The impact comes chiefly in encouraging their writing practice and furthering the quality of their work rather than in increasing their publication rate or ability to earn income through writing. Indeed, large majorities responding to the survey note that their motivation in taking Loft classes was to improve their writing skills (86%), personal enrichment (81%), improve creativity (63%), and be exposed to expert writers (63%). Many fewer took classes to become published (39%), to increase writing income (13%), or increase the prospects of receiving awards or grants (5%).

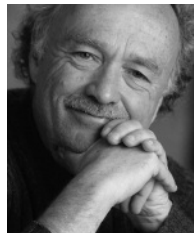
Across the board, class results exceeded expectations. Very high shares of respondents say they received encouragement and support (91%), improved the quality of their writing (88%), gained exposure to experienced writers (85%), and better identified their writing styles (72%). In the open-ended answers, the words "encouragement" and "self-confidence" appeared more than any others.

For many, connections made with other students and teachers was an enduring outcome. Some 61% made artistic connections with

## Artist Profile: Jim Moore

Poet Jim Moore, a Loft founder and St. Paul resident, has published six volumes of poetry, including *The Long Experience of Love* and *Lightning at Dinner*. His poems address love mixed with loss. Moore has been involved with the Loft as a founder, long-time teacher, winner of Loft-McKnight and Career Initiative grants, board member for multiple terms, and renter of studio space. Despite visibility and critical acclaim, Moore doesn't make a living from poetry royalties, but he does so through work associated with poetry—teaching, grants, and editing. "Poetry is my avocation and vocation," he proclaims.

An Illinois native, Moore credits his grandmother, who wrote a bestselling novel at age 60, with demonstrating that one could write successfully. At the University of Minnesota, he worked on the literary magazine with Garrison Keillor, Patricia Hampl, and others. After returning from a stint at the Iowa Writer's Workshop, Moore was among the group of poets and writers



TIM RUMMELOFF

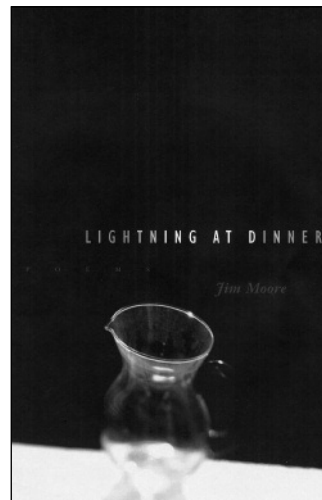
who formed the Loft in the mid-1970s. He taught the first poetry workshop. "That first night, I had no idea who would show up. But it was packed with people," he recalls. "One person from those classes has become a major American poet, and others have

published. It allowed things to happen that otherwise wouldn't have happened."

Moore has continued to teach at the Loft over the decades. Although he wishes for better pay, he calls his Loft classes his favorites. "People are there just because they are interested in writing or literature, not to fulfill some obligation," he says. "It is a very pure form of teaching. I get incredible energy from it." Moore still

rents a studio at the Loft periodically. "I like that nothing reminds me of myself there. I can sit there for hours at a time and lose track of everything. There is internet access within the studio. The little library is wonderful. No one bothers you. If you run into people in the studio hall, people look down. They understand the need for isolation."

The Loft has made a huge difference to Moore personally. "It is clear to me that the Loft—everything it stands for—has sustained me over the last three decades. I taught ten years at Minneapolis College of Art and Design but don't have a regular academic community. So the Loft is it. But mostly, the Loft is a place that cares about writers. It is hard to imagine what this writing community would have been like without it."



individuals or communities, 64% developed writing friends and colleagues, and 30% formed a writing group. For many, then, the Loft has been an important breeding ground for friendships and work circles that live far beyond the organization's walls and extend for years after Loft participation.

Recipients of Loft mentorships, career initiative grants, and McKnight fellowships confirm that the Loft offers important deepening experiences and tangibly contributes to career advancement. Of sixty-eight responding writers who had been mentored between 1981 and 2005 at the Loft, 41% published their work as a result and 39% received other writing grants and awards. More than three in four improved the quality of their writing and made writing friends and colleagues.

Recipients of competitive and prestigious career initiative grants and McKnight fellowships reported that after receiving their awards, they presented and promoted their work to new audiences (69%, 67%), received greater recognition as a writer (46%, 85%), were invited to give public readings (46%, 63%), and increased book sales (33%, 27%). One in three McKnight fellows reported an increased ability to support themselves from writing.

A Duluth writer, Arlene Atwater, won a mentorship on the basis of dozens of short story manuscripts that she previously had been unwilling to send out for review. She had learned to treasure criticism, even if it came with a "no" or "not yet." Since her mentorship in 2001–02, she has had her work published in several journals.

Experienced writers stress most the raw encouragement that they find at the Loft. Writers report naysaying encounters at early stages in their careers—parents who dismissed their talent or dreams, teachers who were indifferent or hostile, others who pointedly suggested that writing is not a responsible career. "We do all kinds of work with post-MFA writers who are so traumatized they haven't written anything for years," Myers says. "Some of these writers suffered under thesis committees—five people ripping up their short stories. They didn't know what their own voice was or how to begin again."

Patrice Clark Koelsch, a writer who first took classes at the Loft in the mid-1980s and periodically teaches there, recounts the significance of not just Loft instructors but also classmates, several of whom have gone on to be successful novelists: "It's important to be with other people who will read and respond to your work and to find others who really support you, who take seriously what you take seriously. It is helpful for people to point out the strengths in your writing, not just the weaknesses. And it was important to understand the struggles of other people in becoming writers."

Several writers credit publication in the *View* for its vote of confidence, visibility, and good feedback. The process of getting edited, reflects Ellen Hawley, *View* editor during the 1980s and 1990s, "is a gift the Loft has continually offered."



BOB WILLIAMS



BOB WILLIAMS

The Loft has played an important role in home-growing, attracting and retaining writers in Minnesota. The Twin Cities has one of the highest concentrations of writers for a metro workforce of its size in the United States. Though many Twin Cities writers are self-employed, they are more apt to have found paid employment than in other writer-rich cities. Several writers reported that they and others they know had chosen Minnesota as a place to live and pursue a writing career partly on the strength of the Loft and its access to

networking, funding, and learning. The Loft has been important in spawning other centers for writers, including those in Seattle, Chicago, Lincoln, and Indianapolis.

## Challenges

The Loft faces a number of challenges, among them coping with the demands of diverse constituencies, helping writers find community in such a large organization, increasing diversity, and dealing with its neighborhood.

Management of a nonprofit organization of the scale and complexity of the Loft requires delicately balancing revenues, staff, programming, and space. To use its new Open Book space optimally and to cover its share of building costs, the Loft has expanded its



programming, especially its classes and public events, and serves more and diverse constituencies. From classes, studio rentals, and business rentals, the Loft has been able to maintain an earned income share of 40-45%.

Fundraising is a continual, energy-consuming activity. Though the Loft's writers and readers are generally not high-income donors, the Loft has received consistent support from the region's major nonprofit foundations and the State Arts Board. Some of this comes in the form of operating support, but much of the Loft's contributed funds go for specific programs that are vulnerable to funding cycles and fashions. Some programs that the Loft feels strongly about end up being funded from the general budget.

Even with budgets that seem lavish to other centers, the Loft finds it a challenge to meet the emerging needs of its growing community. "What is the right size?" wonders director Myers. "Success brings with it many more demands from many more people. They say, 'you are doing this for that group, why not do this for my group? Why not come over to our school?' The more visible we are, the more people want from us."

Among the writers we interviewed, the contemporary scale of the Loft receives mixed reviews. Several long-time writers, although

proud of the Loft's longevity and achievements, worry that it is becoming more like a school than an artists' center; one writer who would like to continue to teach is discouraged by the need to schedule classes months in advance. As the organization has grown and matured, writers themselves are less involved with governance, which is mostly left to professional arts administrators. Writers continue to serve on the board, but they are not elected by writers and do not necessarily represent or consult with writer members.

One long-time Loft member and writer regrets that "what we don't try to do is be a group of writers talking about writing." Although writers think this is not the easiest conversation to have, many do wish that the contemporary Loft would do more to foster a sense of community among them. "It's impractical to imagine that 3,500 members would meet together all at one time," responds Myers. "People come to the Loft and take classes, and then, over the years, literally hundreds of them start their own writing groups that would not have formed if they hadn't first come to the Loft."

The new building is somewhat controversial, too, among artists interviewed. The space the Loft has helped to create and inhabits so actively gives some a sense of ownership, but some veterans miss the intimacy of the former quarters, and some newcomers feel confused

## Artist Profile: Sandra Benitez

Currently living in a southwest Minneapolis suburb, Sandra Benitez writes novels and short stories about Latina experience. Her first book, *The Sea Remembers*, was published by Coffee House Press and won the Minnesota Book Award and a Barnes and Noble award. She considers her best book to be *The Weight of All Things*, the story of a Central American child who loses his mother to political violence and is caught between rural guerillas and army troops. In 2004, she won the National Hispanic Heritage Award, which she accepted at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C.

Benitez grew up in Mexico and Salvador, daughter of a Puerto Rican mother and Missourian father. It never occurred to her that she would be a writer. She first taught high school Spanish and English and then worked for a large publisher of school texts. At age 39, she started taking a community writing course at a local school. For ten years, she went to class every Tuesday evening. She began work on her novel *Bitter Grounds* during this period and sent out a few stories for publication, but editors rejected them.



ED BOCK PHOTOGRAPHY

Seeing a Loft ad, Benitez called for a subscription to the newsletter. At first, the organization didn't seem like it was for her; it seemed so serious and so focused on poetry, mainly white poets. But Benitez kept sending chapters to the Loft for the mentorship program and finally won a mentorship. The experience proved decisive, she says: "I bloomed into whom I'm trying to become." Her group's mentors included Toni Cade Bambara, Etheridge Knight, Maxine Kumin, and Tim O'Brien. Shortly after her mentorship, her first piece appeared in *View*.

"When I stepped into the Loft, I felt myself to be a writer," she says. "I felt validated, encouraged and supported, even without being published. So the Loft became my writing community." Although the mentorship launched her career as a full-time writer, it still wasn't easy to write grant proposals and

market her work. At one low moment thirteen years later, she showed up to give a lecture at an exhibit of Latino paintings at Fargo's Plains Museum. No one came. She almost gave up, but soon she learned that Coffee House wanted to publish *The Sea Remembers*, and she received several important writing grants.

In thanks for her mentorship, Benitez in turn mentored others, especially Latino writers, and served two three-year terms on the Loft's board. With others she created the Inroads Program. "We were perceived as lily-white and wanted to rectify that," explains

Benitez. She helped guide the Loft through its move from The Playwrights' Center to Prospect Park, and later to the Open Book.

Benitez spends less time at the Loft now, a situation she thinks is part of a normal artistic maturation cycle. But the Loft helped her words reach an initial audience, and she has not stopped being an advocate for "a place for writers."



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and intimidated by the large-scale foyer. With its offices on the second floor, the Loft is not very visible when one walks in the building. The Open Book partners are working to reconfigure the ground floor of the building to make it easier to negotiate.

Diversity efforts have not always gone smoothly. The first diversity debate, recalls an amused Linda Myers, took place in the 1970s about whether the poet's club should permit fiction writers to participate. In the overview, we have reviewed diversity conflict at the Loft in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The Loft has a good recent track record in awarding grants to minorities, immigrants, and other affinity group members, some of them recruited by former mentor series and Inroads participants. A recent Loft effort to respond to the diversity challenge is its three-year-old Equilibrium series, a spoken-word program that has attracted more than 1,000 young adults, nearly all of whom are people of color. Several artists who met through the series have started writers of color groups, and some have been invited to conduct workshops or serve on a Loft advisory committee. Several have recently won Loft mentorships. The Loft finds it challenging to deepen its relationship with the diverse communities who come to hear spoken-word artists and ponders how to invite and extend their participation beyond that of audience members.

Yet another challenge for the Loft is its neighborhood. The Open Book was created in a kind of no-man's land between downtown, the Metrodome, the University, and the Mississippi River. The site is the result of both serendipity in finding the buildings and desire

to be central to the region's residentially dispersed writing constituency. But it is rather isolated. Around the Open Book, historic buildings have been torn down over the decades to make parking lots serving the occasional ballgame at the Metrodome. The resulting absence of people on the street makes the area less than attractive at night and cuts down on patronage and drop-ins that the Open Book would otherwise attract. Myers believes the neighborhood is transforming, however, and that in the future it will be a mixed-income neighborhood.

The Loft's continual growth and reshaping of its programming over three decades is a story full of accomplishments, and many individual writers have benefited substantially from its existence. In the words of art director Bob Williams, writer and long-time Loft staff member: "We could generate an amazing list of prominent and highly acclaimed authors who have worked in Loft programs over the years, both national and local. Many area writers have been beneficiaries of Loft competitions, grants, and other programs and launched into successful literary careers. The list of recognizable names numbers in the thousands and is literally a who's-who of local and national literary luminaries over the past thirty years." The Loft has played a major role in putting Minnesota on the national literary map.

As Koelsch reflects, "The mission of the organization is to sustain writers. The Loft respects the aspiration of writing. It affirms the worthiness of writing."

## Artist Profile: Jane Jeong Trenka

A writer in her early thirties, Jane Jeong Trenka won a Minnesota Book Award for nonfiction in 2004. Her work bloomed during a Loft mentorship in her twenties. An adoptee, Trenka grew up in northwest Minnesota and struggled with her identity as a



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Korean child. This drama forms the core of her book, *The Language of Blood*, an emotional account of a childhood of insecurity, a battle with a stalker that escalates into a plot for her murder, and an extraordinary trip to Seoul to meet her birth mother and siblings. Trenka's book has sold 8,000 copies and is being translated into Korean. She supports herself through speaking engagements and grants (including a Loft-McKnight Artist Fellowship and a Career Initiative Grant) that have enabled her to quit teaching piano and write full-time.

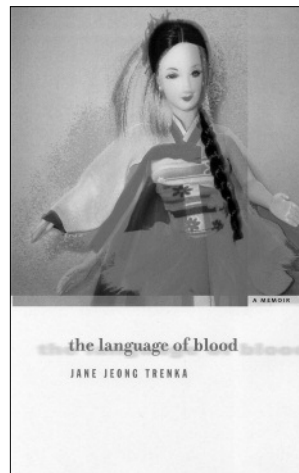
Trenka was one of the very few people whose approach to the Loft was a byproduct of being in the neighborhood. Shopping at

the nearby Frank's Plumbing & Heating when the Open Book opened, she stopped by and picked up a brochure about the mentor series.

She submitted part of a book she was working on to the creative nonfiction competition and won a slot.

Her mentors, Aram Saroyan and Louise Rafkin, "gave me confidence to trust what I was making would turn out to be something, even though it didn't follow others' routes," Trenka says. For two weeks, Trenka worked with five other writers of creative nonfiction in a mentored workshop format. Her fellow mentees encouraged her to read and gave her

suggestions. "After doing a degree in English, focusing mainly on older literature, I had not done much reading for a long time," she says. "But through the group, I found contemporary books that really spoke to me."



The Loft enabled her to see herself as a writer. After going back and forth to Korea since 1995 on Jerome and SASE grants, Trenka has recently moved to Seoul to finish her next two writing projects—a co-edited anthology on transracial adoption, *Outsiders Within*, and a memoir from Graywolf Press, *Fugitive*

*Visions*. She has also mentored other writers to give them the benefits she received. For SASE, she ran an eight-session Saturday workshop series for creative nonfiction writers. She also served on the Loft's LEAP committee, until she aged out at thirty.

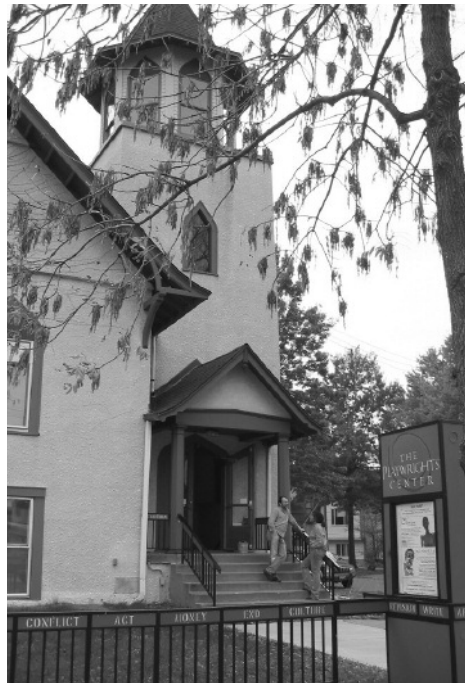
## The Playwrights' Center

Like any other writer, a playwright needs space and time, feedback, and access to professional development and encouragement. But unlike many other writers, a playwright also needs producers, performers, and presenters who can take the work beyond the solitary art of writing into the collective art of performance. Producers bear the costs of hiring actors, designers, directors, choreographers, and technicians, as well as renting or operating a theater, and playwrights must convince them that their work is worth the investment. The Playwrights' Center in Minneapolis has been helping playwrights develop their work, build reputations, and foster relationships with producers for over thirty years.

The Playwrights' Center is located in a former church on Franklin Avenue in Minneapolis's Seward neighborhood. Upon opening the door, the visitor encounters a pleasantly musty scent. Walk up the large, creaky staircase and you'll enter a beautifully renovated lobby/meeting space where weekly readings take place. Performances take place in the 120-seat Waring Jones Theatre beyond the double doors. Offices and a rehearsal room are in the basement.

### Emergence and Evolution

The Playwrights' Center was created in 1971 by four young playwrights who met in a graduate playwriting class at the University of Minnesota. Erik Brogger, Tom Dunn, Barbara



Field, and Jon Jackoway, joined by John Olive a few months later, formed an informal support group to encourage each other's work. A year later the Walker Art Center produced four plays developed in the group's "playwriting lab," and The Playwrights' Center was born. Foundations, particularly Jerome, Dayton-Hudson, and McKnight began funding its activities, recognizing it as one of a group of new arts service organizations, including the Loft and the Minnesota Composers Forum.

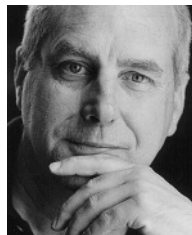
Early on, funding supported regular readings by professional actors, classes, playwright fellowships, and rental space. For the founders and other playwrights involved, a primary function remained the opportunity to hear work read aloud and receive critiques. Soon the center created Midwest PlayLabs, an annual summer festival of new plays, and

received McKnight and Jerome funds to offer competitive grants for playwrights.

During its first decade the center leased spaces temporarily. It acquired the old church during a period of leadership turmoil and financial crisis in the early 1980s. The building was empty and needed work. An entrepreneurial director expanded programming and won foundation and patron support, but finances were always precarious. Eventually the center fell behind on mortgage payments and withholding taxes. When the next executive director began to use foundation fellowship funds to cover cash flow, "all the balls started falling," recalls Carolyn Bye, who stepped in as executive director to resolve the financial crisis.

### Artist Profile: Lee Blessing

A native of Minnesota now based in Manhattan, Lee Blessing became involved with The Playwrights' Center shortly after its emergence in the early 1970s. His plays touch on controversial and timely themes. They include *Two Rooms*, which Time magazine called one of the best of the year, the story of an American hostage being held by Arab terrorists; and *A Walk in the Woods* (A Tony nominee and a Pulitzer Prize finalist), in which two superpower arms negotiators, a Russian and an American, meet informally after long, frustrating hours at the bargaining table.



As an undergraduate at Reed College in Portland, Blessing participated in a one-act play contest at The Playwrights' Center. He went on to receive two MFAs from the University of Iowa before returning to Minnesota.

In the early 1980s, Blessing received a Jerome Fellowship through The Playwrights' Center, which allowed him to work part-time while spending most of his time and energy on writing. Throughout the 1980s, Blessing was heavily involved with The Playwrights' Center and received another Jerome Fellowship, two McKnight grants, a Bush grant, two grants from the

National Endowment for the Arts, and a Guggenheim award. In 1986, Blessing was also selected to participate in the New Dramatists organization in New York. Eventually his plays began receiving more national recognition, and by the early 1990s, he was working only intermittently with The Playwrights' Center. In 1995, Blessing moved to Los Angeles for five years and then headed for New York.

Blessing now heads the graduate playwriting program at Mason Gross School of the Arts, Rutgers University, where he teaches playwriting to undergraduates and graduates. His plays continue to be produced regularly in the Twin Cities.

Among her innovations, Bye worked out an arrangement to share the lower level with the Loft, bartering the first two years' rent in return for the Loft's refurbishing the space. Bye also engineered a way for the center to keep the building. An "angel" bought the building with the sole purpose of renting it to The Playwrights' Center for just one dollar per year. The organization continues to "rent" the space at this price, on the condition that the center is its only tenant (the Loft left in 1990) and keeps it up. Upkeep includes occasional costly renovations, which in 2001 amounted to \$1.1 million.

Like the American Composers Forum, The Playwrights' Center serves a relatively small number of artists. Its mission makes it more difficult to earn income through classes, youth education, or sales of artists' work. In recent years, the center has been reframing itself as a national organization. It attracts playwrights to the Twin Cities and provides significant money for a small number of them. It has 500 members from thirty states. Artistic director Polly Carl says, "Our work has to be national in order to provide the services our artists need."

The Center's playwright-focused mission has not changed much over the decades. Its major activities involve its fellowships and grants, its offer of space and staffing for staged readings, and its PlayLabs festival to attract national as well as regional membership and



funding. The center's Jerome and McKnight fellowships provide artists at various stages in their careers with grants of between \$9,000 and \$25,000 to explore and develop their writing, requiring that they do a residency in Minnesota. The grants go much further than a similar amount would in New York, San Francisco, or Los Angeles because of the cost-of-living differential. The weekly roundtable

## Artist Profile: Lisa D'Amour

Lisa D'Amour, a New Orleans native, calls herself both a playwright and a multidisciplinary artist. "I often make things that look like plays, but also some that don't," she says. Her most recent work, *Nita and Zita*, follows the mysterious lives of two eclectic Romanian showgirls as they tour the world. She has also created an exploration of why we fear death (*Red Death*), the adventure of a half-girl/half-kangaroo (*Dream of a West Texas Marsupial Girl*), a comedy for children (*Captain Bob Sets Sail*), and the story of a young scientist's unceasing quest for the greater good (*Future Struck*).

After completing her undergraduate work in Mississippi, D'Amour received an MFA in playwriting from the University of Texas at Austin. In 1997, D'Amour made a "huge, uncharted move out of the South" when she received a Jerome Fellowship from The Playwrights' Center. "The Fellowship and the



move," reflects D'Amour, "allowed me to continue the trajectory of my writing career out of grad school." During her five years in the Twin Cities, D'Amour received two McKnight Career Advancement grants, developed two plays in the summer PlayLabs festival, directed readings of other writer's work in the Hothouse Festival, taught playwriting at The Playwrights' Center, and became "very much in the thick of the Twin Cities' theatre scene."

Although D'Amour moved to New York in 2003, she says the Twin Cities still "feel a lot like home," the place where she was able to establish herself as a playwright with confidence. "Artists in Minneapolis feel like they can sustain a career in the arts; like they can keep going and grow old in the theater," she says. Now D'Amour says she knows how to make it in New York, but that it would have been much harder as a young playwright.

The Playwrights' Center and Minnesota continue to support D'Amour's work. In the summer of 2005, D'Amour's newest creation, *LANDMARK: 24 Hours at the Stone Arch Bridge*, premiered in Minneapolis. A multidisciplinary public art event that took place in the St. Anthony Falls/Stone Arch Bridge area for a 24-hour interactive performance, *LANDMARK* represents the creative response of a team of six artists to the historical and geographical intricacies of the site. With The Playwrights' Center as the fiscal agent of the work and Polly Carl a member of its board, D'Amour says of the work, "It's an incredible example of the adventurous support and enthusiasm for unique art events in the Twin Cities."

*Nita and Zita* has taken on a life of its own. For example, after several performances in New York, it became the primary marketing tool for a Walker Art Center theater festival in the Twin Cities. The show also won OBIE awards for D'Amour and its two actresses.

## The Playwrights' Center

workshops, where scripts are read by paid actors, are open to members and the public. PlayLabs currently supports the development of ten new plays each summer over two weeks, culminating in staged readings. The center flies in representatives from more than twenty major national theaters to be a part of the final weekend. In addition to these activities, the center publishes a biweekly e-newsletter.

The Playwrights' Center has also engaged in new and collaborative programs over the years. A recent example is the Guthrie-sponsored Two-Headed Challenge, in which playwrights are invited to propose a collaboration with someone "outside the theater." As its grand prize, the contest awards up to \$10,000 in cash and development funds, plus a slot in the annual PlayLabs Festival. Another new initiative, launched in 2004, is New Plays on Campus, with the goal of pairing 75 colleges around the country with new plays.

The center's sixteen-member board includes people from the Guthrie and Children's Theater companies, both of which have

produced playwrights they found through The Playwrights' Center. The two large theaters also continue to support work emerging from PlayLabs. The center relies on a couple of playwrights on the board and regular member surveys to provide artistic input into governance and programming.

The Playwrights' Center continues to be generously supported by foundations. Some 85 percent of its \$700,000 budget comes from grants. Of that, \$220,000 is given directly to playwrights through regranteeing.

## Opportunities and Impact

Grants from The Playwrights' Center have fostered many careers. Lisa D'Amour, who recently won an OBIE (a New York City independent theater award), says her first Jerome fellowship helped launch her career out of graduate school by allowing her to continue writing. Talented writers and theater artists brought to

### Artist Profile: Marcie Rendon

A member of the White Earth Anishinaabe Nation, Native poet and playwright Marcie Rendon has lived in Minneapolis for more than two decades. In her poems and plays, she creates a mirror for Indian people— young people especially—to see themselves in the modern world. Her poems have been widely published, and she has published two children's books. Five of her plays have been produced, and she is working on a Native opera and seven more plays. She has been involved in four artists' centers: The Playwrights' Center, the Loft, SASE, and the American Composers Forum.

Rendon has written since she began to read, but no one had ever told her she could make a living at it. In the early 1990s, she met Juanita Espinoza of Native Arts Circle at a powwow. Espinoza encouraged Rendon to write.

Rendon applied for a Loft mentorship and won. She reflects that she would have never applied had it not said "Native mentor."

She and three other Native writers worked with Jim Northrup, a Fond du Lac (MN) writer, for six months. Together with Jim, they gave a public reading. For Rendon, it was not so much that the Loft mentorship changed her writing, but that it enabled her to see her

power with audiences. "When I read," she reflects, "people would laugh, people would have tears in their eyes. I could see the reaction that my work was having on them." She began to get the sense that she could change other people's lives, especially Native writers.

She determined to earn her living as a writer by combining her poetry and plays with work as a journalist and technical writer. She has succeeded. Although her kids, she says, would say it's not really a living, she makes her mortgage payments and keeps the heat on all winter.

The Playwrights' Center has provided an ongoing home for Rendon. Early on, she connected there with her first real mentor, Buffy Sedlecheck. She has benefited from the staged readings and connections with other

writers, directors, and composers.

Since her mentorship, Rendon has become detached from the Loft, which she sees as white and western-literature oriented. She thinks that younger Native writers find the Open Book confusing and intimidating. She hopes the Loft will revive its Inroads-style mentorships for under-represented groups.

Rendon has also worked with SASE as a

grant panelist, a participant in op-ed slams, and in a session on how to make a living as a woman artist. An American Composers Forum First Nations Composer Initiative drafted her as the lyricist for songs written by Mohican composer Brent Michael Davids. Over time, these organizations have helped her find important collaborators.

Rendon serves her community through her activism and mentoring projects, as well as her writing and speaking. Rendon led an effort to create a viable Native presence in the Twin Cities theater community, funded by St. Paul Foundation Leadership in the Neighborhoods, and continues to work on this front. She has helped aspiring Native actors find work and is coaching theater groups and The Playwrights' Center on how to reach them.

"When I was growing up, there were no pictures of yourself as a Native person," she says. "So now I give written or visual pictures, or even an idea, to the people I am encouraging. I try to make us visible, to be a mirror for Indian people right here today."

Although she honors the beauty and power of traditional Native arts and stories, her preoccupation is the here and now. "My job is to say, 'and here's the urban rez,'" she says. "I'm not writing so much to correct wrongs or to educate non-Native people. My whole thing is 'where's the mirror?' If I can give that back, a sense of self, of who we are, that's important."



REBECCA DALLINGER

Minnesota by The Playwrights' Center have built enduring relationships that raise the level of work here and tie Minnesotans into the national theater network. Many playwrights who come on a Jerome or McKnight fellowship end up staying longer than the terms of their initial grant.

Minnesota playwrights especially benefit from the center's presence because as members they have access to its performance and reading spaces during posted down times, available on a first-come, first-served basis. Not only can they hear their own work but they have the opportunity to see other playwrights at all stages struggling to advance their work, an exposure available in few other cities.

The value of networking can't be underestimated. At staged readings and PlayLabs events, playwrights make connections with other writers and actors, glean information on the rich regional theater community, and form friendships and networks that are helpful to them later on.

Nationally, The Playwrights' Center has been important in defining playwrights as a distinct group and working with them to create a greater sense of community. The spotlight on living playwrights raises audience awareness of this art form and creates a better environment for new plays.

The Playwrights' Center has been a visible part of the revitalization of East Franklin Avenue. Its activities put people on the streets day and evening, making the sidewalks safer. Along with its artistic neighbor, the Northern Clay Center, it is infusing modest amounts of consumer spending into the commercial strip on which it sits, strengthening local retail and service businesses and making the neighborhood a nicer place to live.

Regionally, The Playwrights' Center must be credited with enhancing the creativity and distinctiveness of the theater scene. Some fifty-five theater companies exist in the metro area in 2005, many of them performing original work. Because the center has brought more playwrights to the region, theaters benefit from a greater talent pool.

## Challenges

Like most midsized arts organizations, The Playwrights' Center must continually seek funds while trying to maintain a meaningful relationship with its membership. Its new programs and new funding will attract new members, but growth also challenges an organization that is trying to stay lean and responsive to both national and local members.

The Playwrights' Center's biggest current challenge concerns its national ambitions. The center has always awarded grants to non-Minnesotans, but recently, because its regional playwriting constituency is not large, the center's leadership decided to recast it as a national organization. There are several good reasons for doing so, including economies of scale in serving playwrights, the potential for contributed income from external sources, higher quality entrants in competitions, and greater exposure of the Minnesota playwriting and theater communities to top talent in the nation. However, because the largest chunk of its funding currently

comes from Minnesota-based foundations, complaints have surfaced that regional artists are being shortchanged.

Most of the fellowships require that recipients come to Minnesota, and though many of the playwrights who come stay beyond their appointed time, most eventually leave for New York or California—as do some locally spawned playwrights. The net result is that while The Playwrights' Center enhances the size and quality of Minnesota's playwriting and theater communities, it also devotes a fair portion of its resources to career development of playwrights who will not be permanent residents of the region.

Some supporters, many of whom feel a sense of ownership of the organization as longtime members and volunteers, question the increasingly national focus that supports a small number of artists with large grants. Former board member Roy Close has been particularly vocal in his criticism. Though he acknowledges recent successes in networking with major theaters, he feels that general membership needs have been neglected for a few favored writers that the roundtable readings—once the heart of the organization's local service—have fallen off the priority list. The tension has become public through stories in the local press (Skinner, 2005; Papatola, 2005). Some arts observers say it has gotten more attention than it deserves. Carl takes issue with the entire notion of a "local writer." "In the final analysis, there's no such thing," she says, "just as there's no such thing as a local blogger. The writers may be local, or be local for a time, but the field is out there. As long as our mission is 'to fuel the theater,' we must integrate ourselves fully into the field."

The Playwrights' Center has served playwrights well for almost thirty-five years. It plays a unique role in the regional and national playwriting communities as an incubator for new talent. Among theater companies and writers, it continues to foster relationships essential for promoting the production of new plays. It creates connections among artists and engages new audiences. It has enhanced the size and quality of the playwriting community in Minnesota and become a stabilizing element in the Seward neighborhood. For other artist service organizations, it has acted as a model.

## SASE: *The Write Place*

SASE: The Write Place serves literary artists by offering affordable classes, workshops, mentorships, granting and regranting opportunities, readings, and a poetry library. SASE occupies space in the Calhoun Building near the corner of Lake Street and Lyndale Avenue in Minneapolis. Five desks and a conference table occupy the cozy second-floor office. Its poetry library features numerous volumes of poetry and comfortable chairs for reading. It's the only library in Minnesota dedicated solely to poetry.

While SASE is a welcoming physical space where artists can congregate, its work does not happen within these four walls. SASE embraces the entire metro region as its workspace. Rather than pulling artists into the building, SASE's staff works to push artists out of it.

The organization places writers in residency programs and reading series throughout Minneapolis, St. Paul, and Fridley. It works with

## SASE: *The Write Place*

social service agencies to serve homeless people and survivors of domestic and sexual abuse. In its K-12 school programs, it works with students at all levels, including a unique program for deaf students at Metro Deaf School in St. Paul. SASE takes the writing experience into school detention programs, youth intervention and crime prevention programs, and boys and girls clubs. SASE offers opportunities for individual community members and artists to implement literary arts projects anywhere in the region. For example, Katherine Brozek, youth program coordinator and office manager, planned a program in southwest Minnesota where high school students record the histories of seniors.

### Emergence and Evolution

SASE: The Write Place was founded by Carolyn Holbrook in 1993. She envisioned a writer's organization that would be affordable and accessible for writers of diverse cultural and social backgrounds. Holbrook, a writer herself, grew up in south Minneapolis, where, as an introverted third and fourth grader she would hide out in the local library. The librarian noticed her and introduced her to the great works of literature. Since then, she says, "literature has always been in my blood."

After twenty years on the East Coast, Holbrook returned to Minnesota and decided to "learn" how to be a writer. Unable to find classes she could afford at either the Loft or the University of Minnesota, she bought a typewriter and advertised her typing skills in the *Minnesota Daily*. At the time, Holbrook's children played in Whittier Park, and she asked the park director if he would offer writing classes so she could enroll. Hesitant at first, the director eventually agreed to hire now-renowned Natalie Goldberg. Soon, the Whittier program offered three classes every six weeks with writers from the community, and people came from all around the region to take them. The Whittier director taught Holbrook how to write press releases, and soon she "walked into arts administration without knowing there was such a field." After nine years, Holbrook left the program and began working as an educational assistant at the Loft, where she eventually became the program director.

When she left the Loft, people asked her to start a program that would serve writers more broadly. With a friend, Holbrook organized a focus group to figure out what writers wanted from a supporting organization. The eighteen participants arrived at a consensus. They wanted programming to be out in the community rather than in a "monolith" where people drive to a single destination.

SASE started by getting programs into the Minneapolis school system through community partnerships. For their first program at Patrick Henry High School, Holbrook and SASE board member Julie Landsman sat down with the principal and school social worker to see what students needed. From that meeting, the Breakfast Club emerged, a Saturday program for youth assigned to weekend detention. "Charles, the leader of a group of high risk students, started to come every week because he realized that he did not have to write about flowers," Holbrook recalls. "He could write about a drive-by shooting that he witnessed the night before. When the neighborhood newspaper published Charles's work, it changed

his life." To Holbrook, the project demonstrated the effectiveness using writing in community settings as a way of confronting community problems and encouraging the writer in everyone.

From the outset, Holbrook built a board with well-known individuals to help with funding. The name SASE, for Self-Addressed Stamped Envelope (which writers are typically asked to send to publications to ensure the return of their submissions), was proposed by a founding board member. SASE has been successful in raising support from many local foundations and agencies.

### Opportunities and Impact

SASE's affordable membership program targets artists and community members. Members receive discounts on programs and fees. SASE's classes expose writers of all levels to more accomplished writers in the region and experiment with unusual topics not explored elsewhere—examples are Christine Sikorski's successful workshops on British World War I Poets and, with John Minczeski, post-war Polish Poets. They also offer workshops associated with the business of the arts, such as DIY Tax Tips for Artists, a collaboration with HAIL, the Hmong American Institute for Literature.



Calhoun Building, home of SASE: The Write Place



## Artist Profile: Juliet Patterson

St. Paul native Juliet Patterson is both a grant recipient and an artist-in-residence at SASE. As a poet, Patterson traces consciousness through language driven by images rather than stories. After receiving a BA in journalism from the University of North Dakota, she briefly worked at the *Twin Cities Reader*, where she sometimes secretly wrote poetry instead of reporting stories. Then she traveled around the country for a few years, writing ferociously between odd jobs of apple picking, bartending, and waiting tables.

In 1989, she returned to the Twin Cities and worked as the education assistant at the Loft. She participated in a private mentorship with poet Olga Broumas from 1995 to 1997 and then went to Vermont College for her MFA. She returned to the Twin Cities, working in the publishing industry as a sales representative for Abraham Associates, a job that introduced her to the business side of writing.

At age 41, Patterson claims that she "spiritually" makes a living as an artist because it is such a part of her identity and takes half of her working time. Minnesota State Arts Board grants and a Jerome Foundation grant administered by SASE provide limited financial freedom during her extended leaves of absence from work. These grants also provide a sense of validation and achievement.

In 2004, Patterson received a six-month fellowship through Intermedia Arts and the Institute for Cultural Development. She credits this experience with helping her think about her role as a poet outside of her own artistic work. Patterson pursues residencies that enable her to develop relationships with communities. Recently, she completed a residency sponsored by SASE and the Minnesota Center for Photography at Whittier Community Center for the Arts.

A self-described nomad, Patterson moves between different artistic communities; however, she credits both the Loft and SASE for providing a haven for writers. In particular, SASE fits her personal evolution. "I feel more emotionally and spiritually connected to SASE," she says. "The Loft gives the big money award, which is a rubber



stamp, but SASE is much more interested in the artists and the teachers. They have a clear identity that allows for innovative and edgy work."

Currently she is working with SASE and Pathways, a health-crisis resource center, to bring poetry to chronically ill people and their caregivers. It helps expand arts appreciation,

and it creates a role for artists within the community, she says, "They may not become writers but they become readers." She is also awaiting the publication of her debut collection of poetry, *The Truant Lover*, to be published by Nightboat Books in 2006.

Patterson hopes SASE will be able to expand its presence despite limited resources and a small staff. She says, "They are so community driven that they are invisible."

### OPENING OF A BURR

The owls confined to hunting the freeway's median  
 suggest we're apt to turn the unforgiving points  
 on ourselves. We skid past them,  
 the brain dropping letters in falling snow,  
 picking up speed, breaking into box-  
 elder. A mantle of snow covers all  
 of its branches. Mind wired: trunk, appetite,  
 bird. Each thing ending moves quickly  
 to the next, a neologism of "never" proving soul is not pathology  
 but nature. The globe of cranium mere instrument  
 for gutting fruit, teaching periphery.  
 What makes the body whittle details?  
 The right hand degrades the dress we wear,  
 dim in the fix of wing. In the snow we see corrosively the shape made  
 by our lives; not the narrative, but this trembling inside  
 all living—fixed intervals moving space as it muscles  
 in steps & a cascade of waves below. Our car veers around the handshake,  
 carrying a wave inside us in the dark.  
 Little animal life & its habit of hovering,  
 a hand to repeat oneself in a thousand contexts  
 until death or irrelevance. A lip by accident. A nest saddled  
 in a tree. Then, one owl & rodent prey hexed, claimed  
 where the naked eye catches, thrust,  
 clinging to its physiology.

Juliet Patterson

## SASE: *The Write Place*

The heart of SASE's programming is its Carol Connolly Reading Series, which presents free public readings by approximately 300 writers and poets each year, performed in a dozen different venues and attracting over 5,000 people. Offered in both inner-city and suburban settings, the readings provide artists with opportunities to share their work and help build audiences for the literary arts.

SASE encourages community members, artists, and art appreciators to initiate these events. All the reading venues are community partners, and all events are curated by practicing artists. For example, DreamHaven Books partners with SASE to sponsor monthly readings curated by SciFi Minnesota, the Carol Connolly Reading Series' longest running reading. At BirchBark Books, SASE's partner for Native American readings, Heid Erdrich, mentors young Native writers to curate the readings, finding writers to participate. This decentralized and collaborative approach is a defining characteristic of SASE's operating style.

SASE's grants to writers and spoken-word artists, offered through the Jerome Foundation, reach diverse constituencies and nurture nontraditional artwork. "I get frustrated with the conservative nature of what is generally funded in this region. But SASE tries to cross boundaries," one recipient says. Writer recipients are chosen by previous winners, and spoken-word applications are juried by a well-known spoken-word artist from outside the region. Five to seven writers receive from \$500 to \$5,000. SASE's Verve grant was the first spoken-word grant of its kind in the United States. It is awarded to five artists each year at up to \$3,000. SASE has established the Carol Connolly Scholarship Fund, to be awarded for the first time in 2006, for women writers who are the first in their families to attend college.

SASE offers two mentorship opportunities. One program matches established authors with up and coming writers in small groups to further develop their craft. In SASE's Wings mentoring program for youth, a collaboration with the University of Minnesota's Creative Writing Program, MFA and PhD students work one-on-one with writers between the ages of eight and eighteen.

By developing long-term relationships with communities, SASE has chosen a different route than COMPAS (Community Program in the Arts) or the State Arts Board model that "plants" an artist for a week or two only. SASE's writers cultivate ongoing relationships with teachers, schools, and other organizations. For example, Juliet Patterson completed a residency with the Minnesota Center for Photography that took place at the Whittier Community School for the Arts. It allowed her as a writer to participate in a collaborative process with another discipline. When Pathways, a Minneapolis health-crisis resource center, contacted SASE to set up a poetry program for chronically ill people, Patterson was able to begin within weeks to teach caregivers and the chronically ill to write poetry. Community-based teaching strengthens artists' work as well. Patterson says, "I am not a full-time teacher, but there is some aspect



Poetry library, SASE

SASE: THE WRITE PLACE

of teaching that is essential for my process as an artist, particularly working with groups that are not writers."

Artists express a sense of ownership in SASE, both for its physical space and its programming. Poet April Lott says, "It feels open and welcoming. It is diverse and down to earth." Because of the small size of the organization, SASE has an intimate connection with its membership. Patterson says, "SASE feels like a friendly ear."

By bringing the literary arts into the nooks and crannies of diverse communities, SASE builds connections between art and community. As Heather Ross, a spoken-word artist who performs as Desdama, puts it: "SASE is trying to instill a love of literature in younger people before they get corrupted by English classes. SASE teaches people not to fear writing."

## Challenges

As with many other artists' centers, funding is a constant constraint for SASE, perhaps exacerbated by the prominence of the Loft. The two organizations do work together on projects from time to time, but competition is a constant factor in SASE's fundraising and programming.

SASE faces imminent leadership and space transitions. Holbrook is leaving the organization to focus on her writing, and SASE is considering relocation as the building where it currently has its office has been sold by its developer, Artspace.

In sum, SASE has opened the door for many writers of diverse backgrounds and has given them their first opportunity to read their work before a live audience. It creates ties between artists and communities by working at the grassroots level, reaching out to many different communities in the region. Its diverse and dispersed programming reflects its foundational principles: "The world is a large writing tablet, and the act of putting pen to paper is one of the most powerful tools we have to create an environment of 'civic literacy' in which everyone's voice has an impact."

## Centers for Visual Artists

### Highpoint Center for Printmaking

Historically, the art of printmaking has been regarded as the most democratic visual art form. At one time, only a few wealthy individuals or families could commission or buy one-of-a-kind paintings, but etchings, woodcuts, and lithographs could be produced in multiple copies affordable to more people. By the 20th century, the invention and widespread use of reproductive and photographic technologies enabled the mass production of images. Because the public found it hard to distinguish an original print from a reproduction, printmakers lost standing, and the art market for this medium shrank. Many printmakers have thus found it challenging to pursue a career outside of academia.

Printmaking requires access to presses, rollers, hot plates, and lithographic stones and related supplies, such as solvents, etchants, drying boards, and grounds. Printmakers need space with reasonable lighting, heating and cooling, ventilation, waste disposal, and some measure of health and safety knowledge (or oversight) to use what can be dangerous chemicals. For an individual printmaker, the requirements can be prohibitive. It is more reasonable to share costs and maintenance. Individual artists also



HIGHPOINT CENTER FOR PRINTMAKING

benefit from being able to discuss techniques with others. Highpoint Center for Printmaking fills these multiple roles. In addition to providing space, tools, and expertise to printmakers, Highpoint educates the public about this traditional art form and the intrinsic value of an original print.

### Artist Profile: David Rathman

In a career spanning three decades, David Rathman melds painting, drawing, and printmaking. He recently became fascinated with Westerns after watching Clint Eastwood films and studying the work of



American artist Frederic Remington. Now he evokes the mythology of the Old West through figurative ink drawings and oil paintings that tell stories of lone characters riding through open landscapes into dusty and forlorn little towns with their guns blazing. He combines these images with darkly humorous bits of dialogue or text from literary and cinematic sources. Through his work, Rathman expresses his belief in the economy, simplicity, and beauty of "making paper."

Rathman grew up in the small town of Choteau, Montana, where his parents encouraged him to paint. He attended the Minneapolis College of Art and Design and decided to stay in Minneapolis because of its nurturing environment for artists. He has been the beneficiary of grants from Jerome, Bush, and McKnight, and has shown at

Walker Art Center and around the world. He has been able to focus solely on his work as an artist.

Rathman met Cole Rogers, Highpoint's master printer, when Rogers was running Vermilion Editions. In October 2001, Highpoint invited Rathman to be

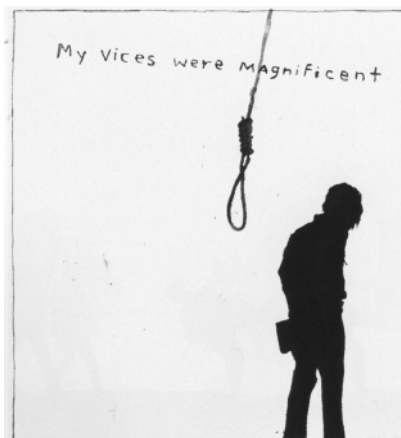
the first visiting artist and published the resulting work through Highpoint Editions. The timing was perfect, since Rathman had recently sold his printmaking equipment.

Rathman reveled in Rogers's ability to focus on the details. A gallery show, "Five New Etchings," and lecture at Highpoint followed.

The experience had a tremendous impact on Rathman's career. Highpoint helped raise his profile, and success has

helped Rathman to raise Highpoint's renown. Not only did the prints sell out, but he was now successfully "hitting it around the bases," rounding out his painting and drawing work with printmaking, drawing on the unique potential of each art form. Rathman credits Highpoint with knowing how to market and price the prints. For example, his prints were bought by such renowned institutions such as the Walker Art Center, the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, and the Plains Art Museum in Fargo, ND.

Rathman continues to interact with Highpoint, which he calls a place "where vectors converge at openings and exhibitions for all artists regardless of discipline." By crossing paths with musicians, printmakers, dancers, and painters, these creative connections have a substantial impact on an artist's community.



My Vices Were Magnificent

## Emergence and Evolution

Highpoint Center for Printmaking is located on Lyndale Avenue in south Minneapolis. Co-op artists consider it physically one of the best—if not *the* best—printmaking shops in the country. Natural light streams in through floor-to-ceiling windows. In the front room, a gallery features work by recent Jerome Printmaking Fellows. Behind the gallery, a large main room supports both an artist's cooperative and community programming. A tiny administrative office is tucked into a corner. On wheels, the tables and cabinets easily move around to create additional room for events such as gallery openings and lectures. Artists store their work in cubbyholes along a wall. In a semiprivate back studio, master printer Cole Rogers, his assistant printer, and an artist collaborate on a limited-edition print.

Highpoint was founded in 2000 by Rogers, the artistic director, and Carla McGrath, the executive director, who met when both taught at Walker Art Center. Rogers, former head of the printmaking department at Minneapolis College of Art and

Design, and McGrath, a lawyer turned teacher, started Highpoint to give regional printmakers a place to work after graduating from academic printing programs. They also wanted to connect printmaking with the community by providing an educational component for children and adults. As Rogers says, "We should invest in future populations of artists and collectors. It rounded out the idea."

They considered starting out small with two presses to "test the waters" but decided they "just wanted to go for it." Looking back, McGrath says with a grin, "I guess we should have been more afraid." But now they have a unique space. No other printmaking space in the United States simultaneously supports educational programming, a printmaking cooperative, a publishing arm, visiting artists, a gallery, and the opportunity to work with a master printer.

McGrath and Rogers sought out space in an arts-friendly neighborhood. To attract students and gallery-goers, they needed a non-intimidating place with easy access for school buses and people with disabilities. The storefront property near Lyndale and

## Artist Profile: Carolyn Swiszc

Carolyn Swiszc is a painter living in St. Paul and a visiting artist at Highpoint Printmaking Center. She grew up in New Bedford, Massachusetts. At eighteen, she moved to Minnesota to attend the Minneapolis College of Art and Design, earning a BFA in printmaking in 1994. "I hardly knew where Minneapolis was, but I had heard there was a lot of art there," she says. She interned for art director Marcia Roepke at the *Twin Cities Reader* and for letterpress printer and wood engraver Gaylord Schanilec at Minnesota Center for Book Arts.



After graduation, Swiszc struggled to balance part-time jobs with printmaking at the now-defunct print cooperative Below the Surface. In 1997, she received a fellowship from the National Foundation for Advancement in the Arts. Based in Miami for three years, she shifted from prints to painting, a critical turning point in her development. Her painting career took off. Her narrative work portrays cityscapes and landscapes of buildings and signs of first-ring suburbs. These are places she hates and loves, and she conveys the experience of repulsion and

attraction in her paintings. Soon after, she received grants from the Minnesota State Arts Board and the Bush Foundation.

Swiszc had graduated from Minneapolis College of Art and Design just as Cole Rogers had arrived to head its printmaking department but met him as she used the college's extension classes to continue her work. Rogers eventually invited her to be a visiting artist at Highpoint Center for Printmaking. She brought a painting to Highpoint to act as a bridge for the next stage in her development. The collaboration allowed her to focus on aesthetics while Rogers, "the meticulous genius," focused on the practical elements of printmaking.

Being invited to be a visiting artist has an immeasurable impact on an artist's career. "For me, Highpoint has been a luxury. It makes me feel like I am really an artist," Swiszc says.

Her work at Highpoint will culminate in a show in 2006. She and Rogers will also embark on a series of one-of-a-kind monoprints, and she hopes to join the Highpoint co-op on a short-time basis, to take classes and to continue using the presses. Her involvement with Highpoint and the arts community in the region allows her to reach the larger arts world, while her success elsewhere helps Highpoint raise the profile of its regional artists.



Boxes

Lake, a neighborhood that supports several other arts organizations, fit their criteria.

McGrath and Rogers had to personally finance many of the start-up costs. Although many print shops in the United States are privately owned for-profit businesses, they chose nonprofit status because they wanted the organization “to live on without us.” As a nonprofit Highpoint can more easily build relationships with the community, schools, foundations, and neighborhoods.

For artists, Highpoint offers residencies, community programming, print exhibitions, and access to equipment, space, and technical assistance. Artists have three routes to participation: an artist co-op, an emerging artist program, and a visiting artist program. Limited to forty members, the Highpoint co-op creates a collaborative working environment for regional printmakers and other artists interested in printmaking. To join, members must be able to work independently and safely in at least one form of printmaking. For an average fee of \$150 a month, co-op artists can use the main print studio and equipment and informally interact with other printmakers for up to seventy hours a week.

With funds from the Jerome Foundation, Highpoint awards grants to three emerging printmakers in Minnesota each year. Selected by an independent curatorial panel, the artists receive nine



months of subsidized access to Highpoint, plus critique sessions with established artists and curators.

Each year Highpoint’s publishing arm, Highpoint Editions, invites four to six artists to work with Rogers to produce new work to be sold. Highpoint supplies the technical expertise, equipment, materials and labor and eventually markets the finished work. Most published artists will share the gross sales proceeds equally with Highpoint Editions.

The visiting artists usually are not printmakers. In fact, the publishing program focuses on painters, sculptors, photographers, or installation artists who are often in the early stages of artistic recognition. This is an effort to distinguish Highpoint Editions as a publisher of important early prints by rising artists, or new work by

## Artist Profile: Jeremy Lund

Jeremy Lund, a local printmaker, is both a Jerome Fellow and cooperative member at Highpoint Center for Printmaking. Drawing since he can remember, Lund grew up in Karlstad, Minnesota, thirty miles from the Canadian border.



Growing up in a small town on the edge of the Red River Valley provided little exposure to galleries, museums, or art centers, but Lund was strongly influenced by books and maps in libraries.

At Bemidji State University, Lund transferred from graphic design to the Fine Arts Department to study printmaking. After receiving his MFA in printmaking at Notre Dame, he traveled to Los Angeles, then eventually moved back to Minnesota, in part because the “city seemed to be more inviting.” After three years in the Twin Cities, he feels that he can finally make a career out of his work. Highpoint Center for Printmaking has played a large role in this decision to stay

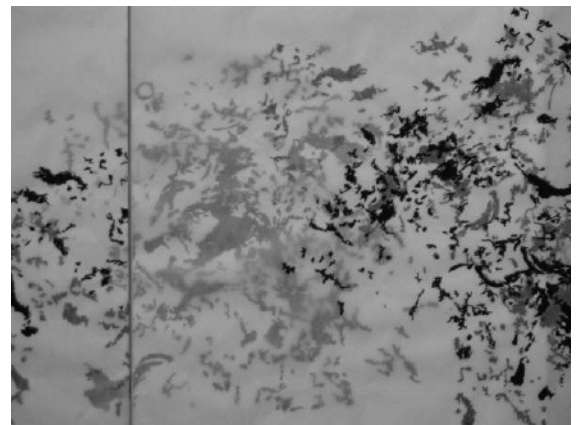
and a show. Highpoint enabled Lund to develop a relationship with a respected collector who has continued to buy his work.

In 2004, Lund was awarded the Jerome Residency for emerging printmakers at Highpoint. The Jerome fellowship allowed him free access to the co-op for nine months, as well as critique sessions

and a show. Highpoint enabled Lund to develop a relationship with a respected collector who has continued to buy his work.

With income both from the prints he made during the Jerome Residency and working as a consultant at ArtServ, a business that provides art-related services such as framing, shipping, and installing, Lund continues his relationship with Highpoint Center for Printmaking as a full-fledged co-operative

member. He values the access to letterpresses, silk screens, and lithographic equipment, as well as the network with fellow co-op members. Highpoint is more than just a space for a select group of individuals, he says. Rather, it is a “gallery space, teaching space, a lecture space, and a community space.”



Untitled

## *Highpoint Center for Printmaking*

established artists in new media. “I’m here to offer them new possibilities in printmaking media,” Rogers says. “They push me and I push them.”

Highpoint balances these artist-centric activities with educational programming. Highpoint has provided free access to schools that demonstrate need. In addition to a modest per-pupil fee, Highpoint covers most of the costs of the educational component with Target Corporation, St. Paul Travelers, Carolyn Foundation, and McKnight Foundation grants.

Diversified funding streams and earned income help Highpoint maintain financial viability. In 2004, its operating budget was around \$305,000 with 55 percent comprised of earned income from print sales, educational programming, and artist co-op memberships. Print sales comprise the most unpredictable but lucrative income source. Typically, Highpoint funds the production, marketing, and sales of visiting artists’ prints and splits the gross 50/50 with the artists. In 2004 and 2005, wildly successful sales of editions by visiting artist Judith Merhetu provided important evidence of Highpoint’s growing influence as a publisher. The sales from these editions not only help fund the center’s operations but also provide vital income for the published artists.

The co-op generates a reliable income flow that covers the rent, while educational programs produce a modest income, far below the one third of the budget devoted to them; eventually McGrath hopes to fully fund these through grants, enabling Highpoint to invite most schools to visit at no cost. Highpoint covers the rest of its budget with individual contributions, public and foundation grants, and corporate contributions.

### **Opportunities and Impact**

Printmakers praise Highpoint’s space and services. Clara Ueland, a co-op member, says, “I go to Highpoint to work because I need the facilities to work. A press will cost many thousands of dollars. You need etching baths; that presents certain safety issues. You need a special room with exhaust fans.”

For many, it is the interaction with and learning from other artists that matters. Jerome Fellow and co-op member Jeremy Lund says, “If I wasn’t at Highpoint, I wouldn’t be printmaking.” Highpoint is a central place for hands-on learning about printmaking’s conceptual and technical challenges. Printmakers also appreciate the opportunity to exhibit at Highpoint. The co-op artists show their work as a group in two annual shows, in June and December.

Regional printmakers also interact with visiting artists at Highpoint. Co-op member Suzy Bielak says, “When an artist like Linda Schwarz comes, your jaw drops. Schwarz’s work fascinates me. I look to her work for new ideas.”

Visiting artists credit a stay at Highpoint as critical in establishing their careers and increasing their productivity and the quality of their work. Visiting artist Carolyn Swiszc notes, “Highpoint is like having another feather in the cap. It validates you as an artist.”

The gallery space gives printmaking a prominent local profile, which is important to both artists and the community. It hosts co-op shows, student shows, and shows by emerging printmakers, visiting artists, and artists from other countries. Openings attract large numbers of artists of all genres, as well as art lovers and collectors.

Highpoint’s impact on the neighborhood owes largely to its relationship with area schools. For example, the center’s biggest school partner, Jefferson Community School, has sent every student from third to eighth grade to work on prints at the center. Highpoint also brings pedestrian traffic and visual appeal to its block on Lyndale Avenue.

### **Challenges**

One of Highpoint’s biggest challenges is educating people about the difference between an original print and a mass-produced image. “We encountered this confusion from the first day, and we will encounter it to the last day,” Rogers says.

Growth is another challenge. With limited financial support, the center has little opportunity to invest in long-term growth initiatives; cash flow is closely monitored and can be tight. Highpoint is already outgrowing its space. The center continues to seek board members who can pursue and attract individual donors.

In four short years, however, the center has clearly established itself. Led by a partnership with business and artistic savvy, Highpoint is financially stable and successfully bridging beginning, emerging, and established artists, the larger arts community, and general public.

## *IFP Minnesota Center for Media Arts*

Artists who create films, photographs, videos, and screenplays have a difficult time pursuing a career in the Upper Midwest. Because their ranks are thinner, it’s harder to find opportunities to improve their techniques and get feedback. These artists need people to help their work come to fruition and distribute it to the public. Both photographers and filmmakers need equipment. Digital technologies are changing these art forms. Because media arts in general are newcomers on the artistic block (McCarthy and Ondaatje, 2002), it’s often hard to get funding. To make a living, media artists often do commercial work.



JEFF KRUGER

For many, the IFP Minnesota Center for Media Arts has been a critical resource enabling them to advance their work while living in Minnesota.

IFP Minnesota Center for Media Arts occupies a converted industrial warehouse on the busy corner of University Avenue and Pelham Street in St. Paul. Free parking and colorful window banners encourage curious visitors to stop. A shared entrance is filled with art work and soft lighting. The building has an informal gallery space, and photographs and film posters adorn the vibrantly colored walls. It also has room for administrative offices, individual and group darkrooms, equipment rental facilities, classrooms, and the Minnesota Film & TV Board office.

## Emergence and Evolution

In the late 1980s, a group of Minnesota filmmakers created the Sundance-bound feature film *Patti Rocks*. Current IFP Minnesota executive director Jane Minton says, "It was wildly encouraging for filmmakers to be able to make a successful film in Minnesota outside the studio system." With ties to the New York and Los Angeles chapters of the Independent Feature Project (IFP), the filmmakers decided to start a Twin Cities chapter, Independent Feature Project

(IFP) North, in 1987. The organization supported filmmakers trying to make and market independent films. It ran educational programming to help them in writing, producing, and distributing their films.

At the time, the Twin Cities had another larger media artists' center, Film in the Cities (FITC). But FITC went bankrupt in the early 1990s. The Media Artist Resource Center (MARC) took over the darkroom and some programming of Film in the Cities, but it had to let go of the gallery space. In 2001, MARC approached IFP North about merging. It would mean adding photography to IFP's film focus. IFP was hesitant at first, but seeing similarities in the two art forms, finally agreed. "We realized that having the photography component would enhance our service portfolio, as it did for Film in the Cities," Minton says. "We decided to embrace it." The merger took place in 2002, and the name was changed to IFP Minnesota.

Since the merger, IFP Minnesota has aspired to be a one-stop shop for all media artists. Initially it operated out of two locations, with administrative offices in Minneapolis and a small darkroom and equipment rental office in Saint Paul. In March 2005, IFP Minnesota consolidated into a newly renovated St. Paul space, a block away from the old Film in the Cities location, where everything can be under one roof and it serves as a true center for artists.

## Artist Profile: Matt Ehling

Matt Ehling got his start in the local film industry by interning with IFP Minnesota. He has been involved with film and video production for the past twelve years. Early on, Ehling considered a career in graphic design and wanted to become a comic book artist. In tenth grade, he became interested in filmmaking. He completed a two-year program at the Minneapolis Community and Technical College and started working as a freelancer. In 1991, he got his first job as a production assistant for freelance camera operator Roger Schmitz, whom he met while interning at IFP Minnesota. "Every job you get is a referral," he says. "You can trace your last job to your first. I've been thankful to IFP for that first opportunity."

Ehling started a film production company, ETS Pictures, in 1996, working as a freelancer during the day and as a janitor at night to pay the bills. In 2000, he moved to a building on University and Franklin in Saint Paul, where he shares space with documentary filmmakers Lu



Lippold, Dan Luke, Laurie Stern, Emily Goldberg, and John Whitehead. Together, the group released a total of four independent films in 2004–2005, including *Wellstone!*, *Venus of Mars*, *Make 'em Dance: The Hackberry Ramblers Story*, and

Ehling's film *Security and the Constitution*.

Ehling pursues two concurrent roles: he runs a commercial production company for his livelihood, and he produces documentary films. His documentary work focuses on political issues. He handles the creative and

conceptual side, while his associate producer, Karen Manion in New York, handles the technical issues. Ehling relies heavily on grants to fund his political films, particularly from the Jerome Foundation and the Minnesota State Arts Board.

Ehling credits IFP Minnesota and luck as the two main reasons why he has had much of his work shown locally, regionally, and nationally. "IFP has been instrumental because they've paved the way for me and other people to get our work in places like Independent Film Channel and PBS," says Ehling. He says IFP Minnesota nurtures the tight-knit community in the Twin Cities where artists pitch in and help each other work on productions.

For the arts community as a whole, Ehling believes that IFP Minnesota creates a visible film community that people can organize around to support filmmaking and to learn more about the art form. Before IFP Minnesota and MARC joined, he says, IFP Minnesota struggled to find a sense of mission. "It's been good to put together the hard production side with the educational aspect," he says.



*Santeria: Beyond the Blue*, shot by Ehling, directed by Mickie Turk

IFP Minnesota offers screenwriting, photography, film, and digital video classes as well as inexpensive access to facilities and equipment for photography and film production. Trained in media arts services, staff members help artists develop the marketing and business savvy to increase the visibility of their work. IFP Minnesota supports a range of exhibitions and events that enhance the distribution infrastructure in the region. Moreover, they connect emerging, midcareer, and established artists by helping to build and sustain a network that is essential for a collaborative field.

IFP Minnesota has 500 members, 40 percent photographers and 60 percent filmmakers and screenwriters. Primarily, the members reside in the metro area, with a few in Greater Minnesota and outside of Minnesota. Members receive discounts on equipment and darkroom fees, access to a weekly newsletter, and opportunities to learn about and apply for grants. Members are also eligible for services such as consultation and referral meetings with staff, fiscal sponsorships, the IFP market in New York City, and more.

For aspiring filmmakers, IFP Minnesota provides grants like the MNTV project, a partnership with the Walker Arts Center, Twin Cities Public Television, and Intermedia Arts and funded by the Jerome Foundation. Each year, three to four hours of short film is broadcasted on Twin Cities Public Television, and a license fee ranging from \$500 to \$1,000 is paid to the creators of each film. Often, this is the first time a filmmaker gets paid for work. IFP Minnesota also hosts Cinema Lounge at Bryant-Lake Bowl, a monthly film festival for local independent short films.



REILLY TILLMAN

As a regrantsing organization, IFP Minnesota awards two \$25,000 grants for screenwriters and filmmakers each year with funds from the McKnight Foundation. Six months later, IFP Minnesota organizes a professional staged reading of the winning screenplays followed by critical feedback. Recipients automatically receive entry into the national IFP Market in New York.

IFP Minnesota provides affordable equipment rental for noncommercial production shoots. Often, aspiring filmmakers will volunteer at the Center for Media Arts. IFP Minnesota also hires six to eight interns a semester. For photographers and filmmakers, IFP Minnesota offers Access Grants, giving them access to equipment and darkroom space for a year.

## Artist Profile: E. Katie Holm

E. Katie Holm, a grant recipient, former photography student, and now teacher at IFP Minnesota, refers to herself as the "cemetery girl." She uses photography to document the history of cemeteries by tracing the history of those laid to rest there. Her photographs focus on what is most idealized and romanticized in these settings.

Originally from Michigan, Holm moved in 1995 to Northfield, Minnesota, to study English literature and concert music at Saint Olaf College. After taking a photography class with the modest goal of making Christmas gifts for family and friends, she realized that photography was her true creative calling. After graduating, Holm worked as a waitress in Northfield so she could save enough money to move to the Twin Cities to work for National Camera, a local retailer. In 2003, she became a full-time freelance photographer and commercial photography assistant. On weekends, she can often use her employer's



BILL CAMERON

studios for her own artistic work.

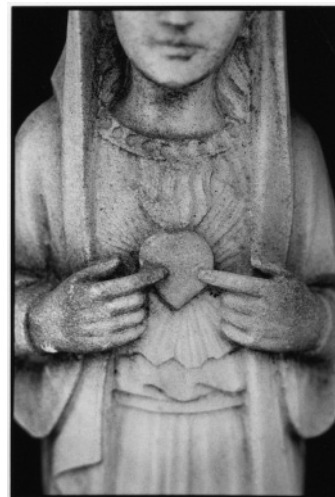
Dorothy Childers, whom she met in the Southdale Library's darkroom, introduced Holm to IFP North. Childers also invited Holm to join Women Photographers and Visual Artists, a local critique group that meets

monthly. Both groups have played major roles in creating a network of artists for Holm.

IFP is an important place for Holm's artistic and professional development because of its accessibility, affordable membership, and varied classes. Holm had little classroom experience in photography and was desperate to pick up

more education. Most important, IFP provides a supportive darkroom community where she can get feedback on her work. And every year, she participates in the annual member show. She says IFP has helped her learn the business end of her work: "Both online groups and my network at IFP have taught me how to market my work."

Holm received an IFP Access Grant for her recent project, "Cottage Grove's Historic Atkinson Cemetery." With other grant recipients, she participated in a group show at the Hennepin History Museum in November 2004. She has now become a mentor and instructor. She tells her students that "one good show does not mean the work is done; rather, the marketing has just begun."



Passion Heart



Because independent films usually get overlooked, IFP Minnesota is trying to create an alternative economy for films made in the Upper Midwest through film festivals and conferences. In addition to the Cinema Lounge at Bryant-Lake Bowl, the group organizes the Central Standard Film Festival, the Annual Independent Producers' Conference, and the Annual Screenwriting Conference. It also works with independent film operators at the Fergus Falls Center for the Arts, Fargo Theatre (ND), and Norshor Theatre in Duluth (MN).

## **Opportunities and Impact**

Artists praise IFP Minnesota for training, mentoring, resources, and apprenticeships. "Andrew Welkin, IFP's equipment access coordinator for many years, was like a bartender," says Barberg, a former volunteer for the organization. "He stood behind a counter and poured people their equipment while listening to the students unload about their experiences."

Classes have also been important launching pads for filmmakers and photographers. For emerging photographers, IFP's darkroom is a focal point for networking and development of technique. Photographer Simon Martinez reflects, "I was blown away by the fact that there was a community darkroom [in the Twin Cities]. I couldn't find one in San Francisco or San Antonio." IFP has also helped filmmakers and photographers cross over between the two mediums.

It is hard to document the role that IFP Minnesota has had in enlarging the appetite for film and photography in the region, in turn a boost to regional filmmakers. But many believe that it has played a role, along with other venerable institutions such as the University Film Society (now merged with Oak Street Cinema and called Minnesota Film Arts). Minnesota has a strong reputation for supporting local, national, and international independent film through its distribution infrastructure, including its several art film theatres and an array of film festivals.

As a forum for networking, IFP Minnesota helps artists match up their talents with others. Filmmakers need partners, as Barberg points out. "In filmmaking, you need friends. You can't record the audio or hold the boom stick by yourself." By creating a formal and visible community, IFP Minnesota helps filmmakers find the expertise they need to assemble teams for projects. IFP Minnesota's strong connection with the national filmmaking community also assists in career development.

A burgeoning arts neighborhood is centered on University Avenue and Raymond Street in St. Paul. IFP Minnesota has not yet become an active partner in the area's development planning, but its decision to locate there is a boon to revitalization.

## **Challenges**

IFP Minnesota continues to face challenges from its merger. IFP (and its ancestors MARC and FITC) offered a quarterly schedule of photography educational programs for thirty-five years. In 2002, those programs were dramatically expanded to serve both the filmmaking and photography communities. Now the challenge is

marketing their expanded educational offerings, equipment, and exhibits to a broader and more diverse community.

This project is complicated by the revitalization of the Minnesota Center for Photography that some see as competing for the same constituency. Many question whether there is room for two photographers' organizations in the region even though they have differing missions. IFP's strength lies in bridging film, video, and photography, and in maintaining a space where artists create their work and mentor students under one roof.

A second challenge is to serve more mature and professional filmmakers and photographers. IFP Minnesota has open doors for many artists early on in their careers. However, some participants in IFP Minnesota's Bryant-Lake Bowl short film festival wonder whether these events create a forum for real critique or are just a cheerleading exercise. Yet IFP's education director has trouble filling advanced filmmaking technical workshops, even though screenwriting and producer conferences are always fully booked. Advanced artists need expensive and sophisticated equipment that IFP cannot provide in the way that specialized equipment houses in town can.

IFP Minnesota struggles to raise the awareness of the film and photography industries in the region in order to keep artists here. State budget cuts have eliminated tax breaks to production companies that were given as an incentive to film in Minnesota. "Those in the independent world who want to make it work here, stay here and slug it out," Minton says. "Those who want to be in on the next Spider Man or the next sitcom have to be out there in LA. I don't mind that they get their training here and then go. That's fine, because that's part of what we do. What does hurt is that Minnesota artists that live here and want to make it here cannot."

IFP Minnesota also faces the same financial challenges that many other centers do. Much of its programming relies on contributed income. In addition, it is in the midst of a \$500,000 capital campaign to help finance their new building, a challenge that has made or broken other organizations.

The evolution to digital technology challenges IFP to keep up. There is tension between the old school film-based crew and the new technology crew, as one observer puts it. Through its classes, IFP Minnesota now keeps pace with these changes and will have to continue doing so as more innovations arrive.

Overall, IFP Minnesota provides a unique and important set of services for emerging filmmakers and photographers. Without it, the region would likely have produced fewer good films and host fewer photographers and filmmakers than it does today.

## **Minnesota Center for Book Arts**

**T**wo types of work make up the book arts. The artist may craft a book that looks and functions like a book. Or the artist may fashion a "book" that is more of an art object, somewhere between sculpture and printmaking. The latter and newer form is bringing artists who specialize in other mediums into the book arts—artists with less technical expertise in traditional bookmaking processes. Fine-press artists require the time-honored equipment for

letterpress printing and bookbinding. Few manufacturers now produce such presses, and prices are high, as are the costs of etching and lithographic presses. The machines are physically difficult to maneuver. As the field of book arts has grown, more artists are seeking access to the limited equipment available.

Minnesota Center for Book Arts (MCBA) serves artists who pursue both traditional and more contemporary book art forms. It hosts equipment and work spaces, classes, workshops, exhibition space, a small store, and an artist's cooperative. It is also a re-granting agency. MCBA occupies two floors in Minneapolis' Open Book complex, including a store that sells hand-crafted books and gift items made by local and national artists. The store acts as portal to a spacious gallery where books or parts of books are displayed in glass cases mounted on wood floors and white walls.

## Emergence and Evolution

Minnesota Center for Book Arts recently celebrated its twentieth anniversary. Founder Jim Sitter incorporated the organization in

1983. A dealer in rare and antiquarian books, Sitter became fascinated by book art after visiting a fine press book curator in Iowa and touring the Center for the Book in New York. He convinced former Minnesota Governor Elmer Anderson to support a similar project in Minnesota. Governor Anderson sat on the original board and came up with the organization's name. Sitter assembled a high-powered board of directors, and the organization opened in 1985 on Third Street North in Minneapolis.

Minnesota Center for Book Arts became one of the founding partners in the new Open Book building on Washington Avenue. The challenge transformed MCBA from a struggling organization to a more successful one. The directors and boards of MCBA, the Loft, and Milkweed Editions had been thinking about creating a larger joint literary arts presence. For MCBA, visibility and room for adequate programming were pressing issues. At the Third Street location, says current Executive Director Dorothy Goldie, "We did not seem public. People did not think that they could come in there and poke around."

When Open Book opened in 2000, MCBA's audience grew dramatically. The number of children served grew to 37,000 a year.

## Artist Profile: Paulette Myers-Rich

The oldest of eight from a working-class family in St. Paul, Paulette Myers-Rich is a longtime supporter of the Minnesota Center for Book Arts. As a young mother, she joined Film in the Cities in the early 1970s to study photography and filmmaking. She developed as a professional artist via workshops and internships rather than the more traditional academic track.

Now in her forties, Myers-Rich recently resigned as a research librarian to become a full-time fine-press book artist, working under the imprint Traffic Street Press. She supports herself through teaching and selling her work to museums, archives, libraries, and private collectors. Her work explores the changing cultural and economic shape of urban neighborhoods, especially the disappearing industrial landscape. She also publishes an annual fine-press edition of Irish poetry in collaboration with the Center for Irish Studies at the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul.

In 1985, Myers-Rich heard a radio announcement on the opening of the Minnesota Center for Book Arts. By then an established exhibiting



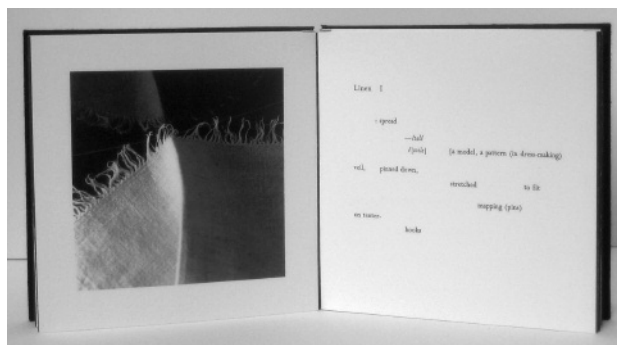
photographer, she contacted the center about internship opportunities. As an intern to Amanda Degener, the first paper artist-in-residence at the center and now the artistic director at Pyramid Atlantic in Maryland, Myers-Rich studied papermaking in a setting where she was

surrounded by major national and international art exhibitions. She says, "This exposure to outside work has had a marked impact on book artists in terms of seeing what is possible." She enrolled at the College of St. Catherine, studying information management and creative writing to complement her work as a book artist and later investigated letterpress printing as an

intern to Gaylord Schanilec, and bookbinding with Jill Jevne and Dennis Rudd, all highly respected practitioners in their fields.

Myers-Rich was a Jerome Artist-in-Residence at MCBA in 1997, overseeing the printing of Bill Holm's *Playing Haydn for the Angel of Death*. As a resident artist, she mentored an intern, Regula Russell, who became a letterpress printer and her co-teacher. Around that time, she also helped found the Artist Book Cooperative. Myers-Rich says, "I have done everything at the center. I was an intern. I worked in the library. I helped set up the archives. I was an artist-in-residence. I am now on the board representing the book artists. I teach there. It has been an important place for me as an artist."

Myers-Rich applauds the MCBA for serving both the traditional book arts and the artist's book. She works in both genres. "These are not mutually exclusive realms," she says. "They just have differing attitudes and perceptions." Although she has had her own studio for ten years, Myers-Rich still treasures the center. "Who wants to stay in their studio and never leave even if you have everything you could ever need?" she says. "The greater community in the end is what matters. It is the conversation that makes it interesting."



Border

Its leadership credits much of this to the public visibility generated by Open Book. “We were pioneers,” Goldie says. “It was all about civic pride.”

Increased visibility did not translate into stability. As demand increased the number of its classes, staff and expenses also increased. The organization accumulated a deficit during 2002 and 2003. MCBA lost its executive director during this period, and interim staff did not feel they should make financial decisions.

In 2003, MCBA’s board hired Goldie, a self described “born-again arts administrator,” to steer the organization onto a more fiscally responsible course and to help it realize the goals expressed in its strategic plan. Goldie had spent twenty-three years in corporate marketing and advertising for Dayton-Hudson and US Bank. She made significant cuts in expenses and positions. “We really didn’t know how to properly align the resources we had with the opportunities that were in front of us,” Goldie says. “We had devoted more resources to growth than we should have.” Now, MCBA matches programming with the revenue generated from earned and contributed income. It is paying off its debt while not accumulating any more.

MCBA has won important votes of confidence from the funding community. In 2004, it was awarded entry into the Bush Regional Arts Development Program, providing sustained operational funding for the next ten years. With the Bush funding, MCBA was able to hire a full-time artistic director. The Regional Arts Development Program funding encouraged other funders to make new and additional grants to MCBA as well.

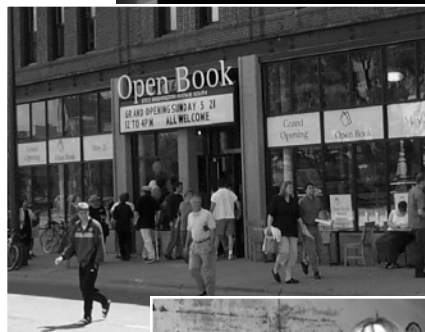
Simultaneously, the Andersen Foundation granted Minnesota Center for Book Arts a significant gift to start a cash reserve. A new bank agreed to restructure its debt into a long-term loan. By mid-2007, its debt will be eliminated. MCBA has not lost a single funder during its deficit period. She credits the Open Book story for creating good will in the funding community.

## Opportunities and Impact

As the largest book arts organization in the country, MCBA serves artists producing fine-press and artist books, as well as hobbyists and youth and adult learners. Because the art form depends on equipment, the center hosts a book arts cooperative that provides 24/7 access to equipment for \$100 a month. The cooperative is run by its members, and MCBA provides the book facilities. Members encourage and support each other. Fifty percent of the inventory in the MCBA’s shop is on consignment from artists. Artists outside of



GARTH ROCKCASTLE



the cooperative can rent presses or equipment at an hourly rate. To further develop professional bonds among book artists, MCBA hosts monthly roundtable discussions at \$1 per person. In these, artists, staff, and hobbyists discuss the business and practice of the arts through videos, informal lectures, and demonstrations.

MCBA grants a Jerome Fellowship that supports four to six emerging book artists in Minnesota every other year. Each receives a significant grant to create new book work that is presented in a public exhibition.

An artist-in-residence program gives the artist access to equipment and workspace to complete a specific project and provides

MCBA with technical and educational assistance. Resident artists may also teach a class or workshop. MCBA is in the process of reviewing its artist-in-residence program to attract artists from other media in hopes of nurturing collaborations with book artists.

Through its exhibitions, MCBA showcases book artists and also broadens the perception of book arts, displaying, for example, *SPOT ON: The Art of Zines and Graphic Novels in 2005*. The gallery serves the arts community at large because there are no other regional venues devoted to the book arts. Usually, fine-art books are under lock and key in libraries or archives, leaving the general public little access to such collections. Classes and workshops for adults and a broad and successful youth program are also important parts of MCBA’s programming, nurturing both artists and future arts appreciators.

Book artists who have worked at Minnesota Center for Book Arts emphatically praise its space and services. The artists interviewed said that their relationship with MCBA has been life-changing. And in an art form with a relatively narrow market, the opportunity to earn a living from their art or receive a grant keeps many artists going.

## Minnesota Center for Book Arts

Artists stress the importance that MCBA has had in raising the profile of the art form within the arts community. Multidisciplinary artist Harriet Bart, who met her bookbinder and printer at MCBA, reflects, “The center is a beacon. It calls to children, adults, hobbyists, and artists.”

### Challenges

Goldie sees MCBA’s biggest challenge as maintaining a broad vision. She says, “We take the concept of book arts and make it as big as possible. This leads to challenges with programming and resource allocation.” She wonders, “How can you serve a wide variety of constituents with varying needs and artistic abilities and still maintain integrity to the aesthetic, the art form, and mission?”

A narrow donor base makes the organization more vulnerable to the vagaries of funding. Goldie says, “If we could raise \$250,000 a year from individuals, we would be so much stronger even if our overall contributed income remains the same.” Another challenge is the scarcity of graduate programs in the book arts. Because a feeder system does not exist as it does in ceramics, painting, or writing, it is more difficult to build MCBA’s reputation through residencies, teaching, and other opportunities.

Fine-press book art also must co-exist with a digital world. This presents a future challenge for MCBA. While there will always be a realm for the fine-art book, book publishing is moving wholesale toward digital media. Literary magazines are full of fretful articles about the possible demise of the book altogether, in which defenders stress the book’s value as an artifact and an aesthetic experience over the computer printer. MCBA will be square in the center of this debate for book artists and is trying to chart a responsive course.

As the largest book arts organization in the country, the Minnesota Center for Book Arts considers artists its core constituency. Goldie says, “We exist for the artists. It is the most important thing we do.... If we peeled away all of the other stuff, the artists would still be here.” As it strives to support artists and create new audiences, MCBA will continue to keep the art form alive and elevate the quality of book art in a way that no one else is doing.

### Minnesota Center for Photography

Photographers have fought an uphill battle for respectability in the visual art world, where painting and sculpture have long dominated. The explosion and popularity of photojournalism in the twentieth century did not help; photojournalism was considered a craft while the traditional forms remained art. Since the early decades of the last century, however, photographers such as Alfred Stieglitz and André Kertesz began to be shown in galleries in Paris and New York. Today, *Photograph* magazine lists 85 galleries exhibiting photography in New York City boroughs, and another 160 across the country—not to mention galleries worldwide and private dealers.

Photographers, like printmakers, have expensive equipment needs. Not only are darkrooms and film developing equipment expensive,

but pursuing photography often demands experimentation with different kinds of printing and presentation. In the last few decades, digital photography has presented a further challenge. As hardware and software continually change, artists need access to classes, workshops, and technical assistance to help them master the tools. To respond to these needs, Minnesota Center for Photography, formerly known as pARTS Photographic Arts, has become a focal point for photography and photographers. The center also strives to enhance the perception of photography at all levels.

The center is part of the northeast Minneapolis Arts District, where former warehouses accommodate artists’ needs for expansive but inexpensive space. Its building is stunning, with glass windows spanning from sidewalk to roof. The first thing you see inside is a gorgeous bookstore offering volumes featuring Minnesota photographers and artists who are showing in the gallery or speaking for a particular program. Behind the bookstore are a gallery and an airy meeting and reception space. Classrooms and darkrooms were still being built in 2005.

### Emergence and Evolution

In 1989, photographers Vance Gellert and John Hruska rented space above a South Minneapolis auto-body shop. Filled with old greasy car parts, it housed a substantial working studio and a long hallway that functioned as both a gallery and gathering space for artist friends. Gellert says, “I am not sure what came first, the parties or the art. But the art never stopped.” After running out of their own work to hang, they invited other performance and visual artists, naming the all-media gallery pARTS Alternative Artspace. A three-week, 120-piece exhibition, “Artists Respond to War,” showcased the founders’ goal of supporting artists through developing and engaging audiences. “The space itself allowed people to consider art without pretense because it was a space of low expectation,” Gellert says. “Art appreciators and artists walked through layers of paint fumes to reach a clean and pristine gallery of high quality.”

In 1991, pARTS expanded its programming with a Youth Arts Exposition Program, hoping to build future audiences. In addition, they started publishing a popular quarterly newsletter.

Photographers Chris Faust and Dan Dennehy joined the two founders the following year by moving into the studio space, which



GEORGE SLADE

was renamed pARTS Photographic Arts. With the unveiling of the show "Alternative Photographic Processes," the gallery dedicated itself to photography. The organization moved in 1996 to the basement of Artspace's Calhoun Building in the LynLake neighborhood.

But over six months in 2002, pARTS faced a series of critical events that challenged the founder and artist-driven organization to reassess its role within the photography and arts communities. Following a leadership crisis, board reconstitution, a serious reconsideration of mission, and a hard-headed assessment of its inadequate Calhoun Building space, the organization avoided extinction and began to re-emerge in late 2002, changing its name to the Minnesota Center for Photography. It opened under that name in August 2004 in Northeast Minneapolis, where it became the first artists' center to join the region's largest



GEORGE SLADE

Photographer Lauren Greenfield with "Girl Culture" workshop

concentration of artist studio buildings in Minneapolis's recently designated Arts District.

The center focuses solely on photographic arts by "supporting and promoting the creation and appreciation of photography." Its resources

## Artist Profile: Alec Soth

Internationally renowned photographer Alec Soth credits pARTS Photographic Arts for hosting, in 1995, his most public and important show as an emerging photographer. It was a mentor/student show with Joel Sternfeld, who had been Soth's professor at Sarah Lawrence College in New York. Soth's photographs were exposed to new audiences who had been following Sternfeld's work.

A Minnesota native, Soth credits his high school art teacher, Bill Hardy, with introducing him to the world of art. After discovering photography at Sarah Lawrence, Soth returned to Minneapolis with few practical skills and an unwavering desire to continue his creative work. After bouncing from small newspapers to giant photo labs, he landed a staff position at the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, remaining for eight years.

After the show with Sternfeld, grants trickled in from McKnight, Jerome, and the Minnesota State Arts Board, allowing his work to develop instead of being typecast by a single show. "I was able to say what kind of photographer I am," he says. Although he thought of moving to New York, he decided to stay in Minnesota.

Three "magical events" catapulted Soth into critical acclaim: the Santa Fe Award for Photography, and invitations to show his work at the Whitney Biennial in New York and at a



DONNA KELLY

prestigious New York gallery. Years later, Soth discovered that a Minnesota Center for Photography staffer had anonymously nominated him for the Santa Fe Award. The award drew curators, book publishers, and critics to Soth's shows, kicking off a chain of events that allowed Soth to leave the Art Institute and pursue photography full-time. He rented studio space in north Minneapolis and eventually bought a building on Raymond and University in St. Paul.

Soth does not see himself as a documentary photographer but as a photographer who uses

the documentary style. He strives to position himself in both editorial and arts worlds. His "luck" in the art world led to opportunities such as providing the cover photo for a *New York Times Sunday Magazine* issue. Relying on the fine-art world is not enough for Soth: "I am wary of the instability associated with the art world," he says. "Things always come in and out of fashion."

Soth struggles with this entrepreneurial lifestyle, but he says it helps him transcend a local market like the Twin Cities, where artists must rely on grants. He says, "You get grant money, you work locally, you have local shows, but there is not a big enough market locally. There is danger in only thinking Minnesota." He stresses the importance of organizations like the Minnesota Center for Photography for "getting people up and putting them out." When he was an emerging artist, pARTS Photographic Arts provided both an informal gallery space and an opportunity to connect with other artists.

With the birth of his daughter and the demands of a high-profile career, Soth finds himself removed from the Minnesota Center for Photography. But his feeling of "indebtedness" remains. He says, "You are so hungry as a young artist. When somebody gives you an opportunity to exhibit work and they help organize and promote it, you owe them for life, especially if your career advances."



Charles, Vasa, MN, from the *Sleeping by the Mississippi* collection

and services target both the fledgling and more advanced viewer and artist to help widen their perception of the form. Artistic director, George Slade, says, "We are here for the makers and for the viewers."

The center is transforming itself from a gallery to a full-service organization. In addition to the gallery, which puts on six to seven shows a year, the center offers many programs and services for photographers at all levels. Nationally renowned and local photographers are invited to lecture. The center will provide affordable access to processing and darkroom facilities and will soon add editing studios for digital photographers. It currently offers a range of educational programs for children, hobbyists, and artists. In a unique service, it also organizes portfolio reviews for members with regional photographers, art critics, educators, curators, and administrators. While other galleries and organizations support photography, only Minnesota Center for Photography completely dedicates its programming and space to this art form and the people who create it.

Demand for classes is expected to center on digital photography. Wright says, "The idea is that students will bring in and learn with their computers right in front of them. It will be an electronic classroom working in a digital medium." In addition, the center plans to offer workshops for more established photographers on the business of photography. Minnesota Center for Photography also houses a reference library of books, periodicals and catalogs on photography.

The board and directors have also decided to serve amateurs, beginners and photography lovers. They see expanding the region's photography-literate community as an important long-term investment.

## Opportunities and Impact

As part of its work to support photography, the center's exhibition program includes photographers at all levels, including nationally

### Artist Profile: Terry Gydesen

Photography started out as a hobby for Terry Gydesen, a northeast Minneapolis native who ran a chain of Orange Julius stores in suburban malls. She became hooked on photography after taking extension classes at the Minneapolis College of Art and Design (MCAD) and Film in the Cities. In love with the darkroom, she would go to her day job, and every night she would go to MCAD to print. She quit her retail job in 1988 to become a full-time freelance photographer.

Gydesen focuses on social-political documentary in photography. When Jesse Jackson came to town to campaign for the presidency, Gydesen met him at the airport and spent the day with the motorcade. Mesmerized by his message and the reactions of his supporters, she spent three months on the road as an independent campaign photographer. Her career as documentary photographer was sealed. In the 1990s, after winning a McKnight fellowship, Gydesen continued her political work for such candidates as the late Senator Paul Wellstone and former Minneapolis mayor Sharon Sayles Belton.



The summer before Paul and Sheila Wellstone died in a plane crash, Scott Dibble, who was running for State Senate, asked Gydesen to photograph himself and Paul at an event in Loring Park. She had intended to shadow Paul for the last two weeks of his campaign. On October 25, 2002,

the day of the crash, she grabbed her cameras and was heading to the campaign office to get his schedule for the upcoming week. University Press subsequently published Gydesen's book on the Wellstone work, *12 Years and 13 Days*. The title speaks of the span of time Gydesen spent covering Wellstone, his message, and his followers.

In dire financial straits after months of devotion to completing the book, Gydesen fortuitously received another McKnight grant—her third. Her new work focused on people she felt were carrying on the Wellstone legacy, such as Dibble and Senator Mee Moua, the first and highest-ranking Hmong politician in the country. Gydesen has been able to make a living from freelancing for Target, *City Pages*, the *New York Times* and other periodicals. Her work has also been funded through grants from the National Endowment for the Arts/Arts Midwest, the Minnesota State Arts Board, and McKnight, and from a Minnesota Historical Society commission.

The Minnesota Center for Photography provides opportunities for Gydesen to show her work. She believes that the value of an exhibition in a beautifully orchestrated space underscores the importance of that photography. She is pleased to see the center expand its services and applauds its role in the community. Gydesen has participated as a critic for the portfolio review process, which enables her to send the message to local photographers to "stick with their passion and their message even when they get hungry."



*The Green Bus, 1996*

known artists. But the center also finds up-and-coming artists, promotes their work, and gives them the opportunity to talk about their work in a public forum. Sometimes innovative partnerships further the exhibits, such as one with the Junior League of Minneapolis to exhibit and present programs around Lauren Greenfield's *Girl Culture* photos. Ten thousand people came through the gallery for that show.

The Center serves midcareer to advanced photographers less formally than it does amateur and emerging artists. The theory is that photographers who have made a name for themselves do not need as much feedback or showcasing from the center as they once did. Slade says, "Midcareer and advanced artists benefit mostly from interacting with other artists. At our Second Tuesday lectures, there are a handful of artists that come to talk to other artists. They come for that nourishment and to keep ideas flowing." The center's exhibitions and workshops provide plenty of opportunities to connect. Many midcareer artists, however, stay tied in, out of loyalty or continuing interest. Accomplished photographers also can compete for exhibition space, teach classes, join speaker panels, and serve on portfolio review sessions.

As part of the Northeast neighborhood, the center is making an important contribution. Its board and leadership team decided to move there for four major reasons: pedestrian access, the opportunity to be an anchor organization in a larger arts neighborhood, rent made affordable to attract the center as a tenant, and the ability to design the empty space from scratch. The center's presence is a major boost to the Northeast Arts District, which is currently more a glint in the eye than a full-fledged plan with public or private resources behind it. It brings a regionally recognized institution to the corridor of galleries, studios, and live/work spaces, encouraging pedestrians to make several stops in the community. By raising the profile of this artistic enclave, the surrounding community benefits from an increase in publicity and traffic to the neighborhood. The center markets other businesses in the area on its website.

## Challenges

Minnesota Center for Photography (MCP) has ambitious plans. Major regional foundations, led by McKnight, have provided funds and are watching closely. The gift of low rent will not last much longer. Like other artists' centers, MCP must find a way to serve a community broader than photographers in order to pay its bills. The darkroom and digital classroom-based educational programming will help, as will the plan to partner with non-arts organizations around themed photographic exhibits.

Space costs, programming costs, and revenues must grow in proportion. The center must act on its ambitious agenda items simultaneously. As Wright says, "We must find a balance between the passion and talent associated with smaller organizations and the funding streams associated with the bigger organizations." The goal is to double the operating budget over the next two years. Seventy percent of the center's current funding comes from corporate funders and foundations, mainly for institutional support, and more must be sought from individual contributions

and earned income. In addition, while many other centers receive regrating money from foundations, the Minnesota Center for Photography does not. Eventually, it will need to locate funding for such artist support.

The Minnesota Center for Photography faces the same challenge that other centers do. On the one hand, it aspires to be as prominent as the International Center of Photography in New York. On the other, it wants to remain a fertile ground for local photographic artists to develop. As photographers move through the Minnesota Center for Photography and go on to artistic careers, keeping them tied into the center will also be a challenge.

Overall, artists and foundations appear to be rooting for Minnesota Center for Photography's makeover and ambitious expansion plans. Both as pARTS and as Minnesota Center for Photography, the organization has been key to many photographers' artistic development and their ability to make a career of their work. The new building, a showcase in itself, should draw more of the region's residents to view photographs and photo art, but its impact ultimately is still unknown.

## Northern Clay Center

Ceramic artists have faced an uphill battle for recognition as artists. Their work has been conventionally divided into functional and sculptural categories, the former classed as craft or applied art and the latter as fine art. Since the late 1950s, this distinction has been fading as curators, academics, arts administrators, and clay artists have challenged it and worked together to give the art form more visibility and expand its boundaries.

Ceramicists need access to expensive firing equipment, especially if they wish to explore the potential of salt, wood, gas, and electric kilns, each producing different surface results. To accommodate the size of kilns, storage space for raw materials and pots, and glazing facilities, most artists need large workspaces that are expensive, especially in cities. Because of code and zoning issues, individual artists have difficulty securing city permission to install and use kilns. Like other artists, ceramicists also need access to instruction, critical feedback, exposure to master artists, networking opportunities, and funding. They struggle to find sales and exhibition opportunities in a region where galleries have diminished in number and clay art is unconventional.

In the Twin Cities, Northern Clay Center provides a diverse portfolio of services to clay artists while drawing in ceramic lovers and creating greater visibility for the art form. It occupies a former rubber-stamp factory in the Seward neighborhood, on the corner of Franklin Avenue East and 25th Avenue in Minneapolis. Just inside the entrance is an elegantly designed ceramics gallery/shop with pottery including dinnerware, vases, jars, and other primarily utilitarian wares. Functional and sculptural works stretch from window to window. Through the sales gallery are two spacious exhibition galleries.

Beyond the gallery is the buzz of behind-the-scenes pot-making, instruction, and organizational activity. Winding hallways lead to

## Northern Clay Center

studio spaces and well-used equipment. In a separate room next to the glaze-mixing room, gas, soda, and electric kilns are protected by special walls and doors. Three wheel classrooms and a sculpture classroom house dozens of potter's wheels. Behind the building, a brightly colored truck, the ClayMobile, is about to travel to a nearby school.

### Emergence and Evolution

Wanting to expand sales of their work beyond art fairs, a group of potters in the late 1980s met regularly at Johnny's Bar in St. Paul to talk about other options. They envisioned a place like Film in the Cities and the Minnesota Center for Book Arts, in which the founding goals were exhibitions, education initiatives, and artist services. Initially, their vision was to serve potters rather than sculptors. After two years of fundraising, Northern Clay Center opened in October 1990. With little experience and no long-term strategy, the organization moved into a large and expensive building



into the vacant building, sharing space with the neighborhood association. In 2003, with McKnight and Bush Foundation funds, it rented the neighborhood space, and the neighborhood group moved down the street. In the larger space, Northern Clay has been able to expand its library, education program, and exhibition galleries.

### Artist Profile: Maren Kloppmann

A former staff member, grant recipient, and sales gallery artist, Maren Kloppmann has had a long and fruitful history at the Northern Clay Center. A potter working in the modernist tradition, Kloppmann creates a "simple visual language" through functional ceramics with a porcelain foundation, one-of-kind productions that build a bridge between fine art and craft.

She grew up in Germany, where her artistic impulses were not immediately encouraged. At eighteen, she applied for apprenticeships with a stonemason, photographer, and potter. The potter had the sole opening, and her journey into the ceramic arts began. On a gift from her mother, Kloppmann traveled to the United States in 1984 to work as an assistant to a studio potter in Iowa City. Through this mentorship, she overcame the language barrier, was exposed to a community of artists, art students, and professors from the nearby university, and learned about



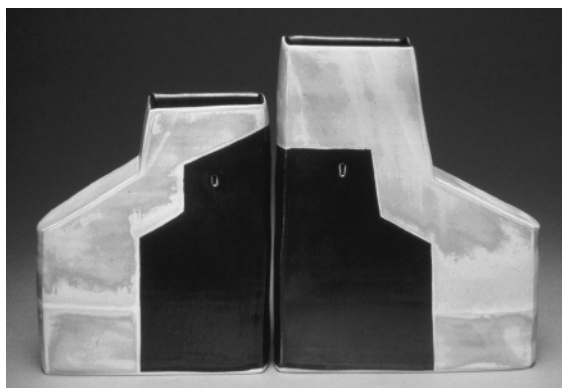
arts funding. Kloppmann also attended the Penland School of Crafts in North Carolina and participated in an arts residency program at Pewabic Pottery. At age 28, she enrolled at Kansas City Art Institute and seven years later received her MFA from the University of Minnesota.

She connected with the Northern Clay Center while at the university and has now been involved for eleven years. She says it has played a key role in nurturing her professional development, including an internship and a

part-time job as exhibition coordinator. She was on the staff for six years.

In 2000, Kloppmann accepted an adjunct position at the University of Wisconsin—River Falls. Because of the flexibility of the position, she could successfully handle the tension "between cranking out production to maintain an inventory while still challenging [herself] artistically," she says. Via the Northern Clay Center, she subsequently was awarded a McKnight fellowship that has given her the freedom to make a living from her work by combining teaching, gallery sales, grants, and direct sales.

Working at the center enabled Kloppmann to develop a network in which her contacts were transformed into "colleagues, friends, and peers." The Northern Clay Center "springboards you into a professional community where barriers do not exist," she says. The organization started carrying her work in the juried shop. Now she has a studio in the Northrup King Building, but she still encourages visitors to see more of her work and that of other clay artists at the Northern Clay Center.





Northern Clay's success, reflected in its grantsmanship and financial viability (see Tables 1, 2 and 3), is due largely to exceptional leadership. The board is composed of active members with relevant professional expertise and arts patronage connections. Since 1994, the organization has been led by director Emily Galusha, an art lover and collector with broad arts administrative experience with the Bush and McKnight Foundations and the now-defunct Film in the Cities; she has also worked with for-profit start-ups in health care management, high tech, and biotech. Arts observers credit Galusha with remarkable artistic as well as management skills. She has also been an important mentor to other artists' center entrepreneurs.

Six hundred members support Northern Clay, in turn receiving discounts on workshops, classes, and items in the sales gallery and exhibitions. They also receive a quarterly newsletter. Through its varied offerings, Northern Clay strives to "show it, teach it, house it, and sell it."

Annually, Northern Clay enrolls roughly 1,200 adult students and children in its regular classes tailored to a wide range of experience,

including 400 youth in summer clay camps. Classes serve people at all levels of experience. Master clay artists, often visitors from elsewhere, give lectures and workshops on special topics. The center also houses a large library of books, periodicals, and videotapes relating to the ceramic arts.

The center is part of a national and regional feeder system for ceramics arts. Undergraduate and graduate ceramic programs at colleges and art schools throughout the country create a robust demand from professional and aspiring artists for studio space and equipment, residencies, teaching, and grant opportunities. Galusha sees Northern Clay as an incubator for professional talent as well as a supportive place for serious amateurs.

The center licenses thirty-seven individual spaces to ceramic artists, about a quarter of them professionals whose art is their primary occupation, while the rest are serious avocational potters and sculptors. Given twenty-four hour access, resident artists must be able to work on their own and must demonstrate knowledge of firing processes. They work in private studios ranging from 100 to

## Artist Profile: Megan Bergström

Instructor, grant recipient, and former studio artist at the Northern Clay Center, Megan Bergström, a Minneapolis native, developed a love for the ceramic arts while studying anthropology and Latin American studies at Grinnell College. As a youth, she had explored photography and crafts, but art had not seemed to her a credible professional field. It took only a few art classes to persuade Bergström that in fact anthropology was her hobby and art her true passion. After graduating in 1993, she and several partners started North Prairie Tileworks, a handmade-tile business.

Two years later, she sold the business and took classes at the University of Minnesota in ceramics and sculpture. She also traveled to Turkey and Faenza, Italy, to study majolica, a type of pottery. A fellow graduate student introduced Bergström to the Northern Clay Center, and she worked there for two years and then at the Minneapolis College of Art and Design for five years. In December of 2004, she resigned to work full-time as an artist.

Bergström's clay work is both functional and sculptural and examines the interplay between the two aspects. Now a studio resident at the Northrup King Building and



an instructor at the Northern Clay Center, she makes a living from individual and commercial sales out of her own studio. Recently, Emily Galusha, executive director of the Northern Clay Center, connected Bergström to the curator at General Mills, who

commissioned Bergström to create a large piece for the cafeteria at the General Mills World Headquarters. She also does small commissions for other businesses.

Bergström credits the center for helping her develop professionally and artistically. She used Jerome Project grant money in 2003–2004 to buy new equipment for her studio. She recalls, "I needed it badly because I was working on a big commission. It sped up my work. I was able to leave my job. The long-term impact has been greater. The work I made spun off in eight different directions." She has exhibited at the center and also participated in the studio program that gave her access to expensive equipment not readily available elsewhere in the metro area. She has also

benefited from the social environment and the experiences of fellow artists.

The Northern Clay Center helped Bergström establish her professional and artistic network. She continues to teach intermediate and advanced topics such as firing, surfaces, and altered-wheel work. She



*Everyday*

volunteers at the center when she can. She sees a huge advance in organizational development at the center over the past eight years. "The galleries are bringing in more shows with more interesting work and bigger names," she says. In particular, Bergström is excited to see the gallery's focus expanding to include sculptural work.

## Northern Clay Center

210 square feet, or in a common space that includes vertical storage space, work tables, kilns, and wheels. Northern Clay employs a materials technician who can assist in the production rooms by mixing clay and glazes.

As a regrating organization, Northern Clay Center awards three \$6,000 Jerome Ceramic Artist Project Grants for emerging artists from Minnesota and New York City and two \$25,000 McKnight Artist Fellowships for Ceramics Artists for Minnesota midcareer artists. It also awards four McKnight residency grants annually for midcareer ceramic artists from outside Minnesota.

The Regis Masters Series honors influential senior artists from this country and abroad. Each receives an honorarium, participates in an exhibition, and delivers a lecture. In 2004, Northern Clay published *Clay Talks*, stories from the edited transcripts of the first thirteen lectures and reunions. The Regis Foundation funds this program, and the Minneapolis Institute of Arts co-sponsors the lectures.

Annually, Northern Clay's ten to thirteen shows exhibit the work of regional, national, and international ceramic artists, including the work of its McKnight and Jerome fellows. A juried sales gallery showcases the work of some fifty regional and national artists, mostly potters. The sales gallery is an important source of earned revenue for the center as well as for the artists, as are its occasional commissions on sales from exhibitions. Many see Northern Clay Center as filling an important exhibition and marketing gap created by the gallery implosion in the metro area over the past two decades.

### Opportunities and Impact

Northern Clay Center plays a major role in generating, attracting, and retaining ceramic artists in the region. Its programs contribute to the professional and artistic development of ceramic artists at various stages in their careers, successfully bridging between amateurs and beginners and more serious and accomplished artists. It maximizes the exposure of regional artists at all stages to each other and to broader audiences for their work.

By licensing Northern Clay's studio spaces with access to ceramics-making gear, local and regional artists have been able to experiment and expand their artistic skills and output. Visiting artists benefit from the gift of three months in a studio where all they need to do is focus on their work. Regional artists benefit from exposure to top talent via the McKnight residency program and from work that the galleries show from all over the world. Grant recipient Katharine Gotham says, "They bring in fresh faces and fresh ideas to the community that are vital to the development of artists." It is the



Linda Christianson at the American Pottery Festival

combined effect of Northern Clay's programming that has had such a marked impact on the artists interviewed. All have enjoyed multiple relationships with the center during their careers.

Eight years have passed since the center relocated to the Seward neighborhood. The neighborhood has a stake in the organization, since NRP funds were used to develop the site, but the relationship remains at arm's length. Galusha sees Northern Clay as being "in the neighborhood but not of the neighborhood." Even so, the neighborhood has seen many benefits. An abandoned space was re-created into a thriving arts center, generating more pedestrian traffic (about 50,000 people a year) and modest increases in patronage of nearby businesses.

Outreach to the neighborhood and larger community may involve something as simple as a wheel demonstration, where a professional artist works on display, to the more resource-intensive ClayMobile. A fifteen-foot truck that carries all the basic materials and tools needed for "ClayToGo"

activities, this mobile studio takes the clay-working experience to schools and other organizations around the region.

### Challenges

One challenge facing Northern Clay Center is simply the size and scale of activities possible given its current space, funding constraints, and ceramics constituencies. Galusha comments, "In the future, there is a limit to the amount that we can charge and remain mission-driven. We could do more expensive classes and exhibitions, but is that the best way to meet the mission of the organization?"

A more concrete challenge has been optimizing the use of studio space. Some studios are underutilized. Ceramic artists get stalled for aesthetic or work or family reasons, and they may not spend the time they intend in their studios but hang onto them because they are so affordable and hard to get. Raising licensing rates would discriminate against beginning and less affluent artists, often those who most need the space and access. Northern Clay has decided to deal with this problem by introducing term limits of three, five and ten years. It aspires to transform its studios into more of an incubator space by recruiting recent MFA graduates.

Northern Clay also faces new competition, as at least one for-profit ceramics studio has recently opened locally, also targeting recent graduates. However, it will be hard for any co-op or for-profit ceramics center to match the offerings at Northern Clay Center.

Overall, Northern Clay Center successfully serves both professional and amateur ceramic artists as a regional center with a

national reputation. It meets the needs of artists at various stages in their careers with diversified education programming, exhibitions, a sales gallery, and artists' services. It appears to deftly negotiate the tensions in serving regional as well as national artists, and amateurs as well as accomplished ceramicists. It serves as an arts anchor, along with the Playwrights Center, in the Seward neighborhood. Within the clay community, it has been a leader in challenging the functional/sculptural divide, and has helped to raise the visibility of Minnesota clay artists nationally and of clay as an art form.

## Textile Center

In the early 1990s, weaver Margaret Miller watched the success of the Center for Books Arts, Northern Clay Center, and others and wondered whether something similar couldn't be started for the textile arts. Miller had supported herself as a weaver for fifteen years but found it frustrating. The more skilled and complex her work became, the more difficult it was to sell. In the 1970s and 1980s, few museums and galleries had any interest in textiles. Practitioners of the art form were chiefly women, and many did not consider themselves artists. "Oh, I just quilt" or "I just knit," many said in response to the idea of forming a center of artistic excellence.

The Textile Center, "a coalition of the textile community, dedicated to promoting and preserving textile excellence," has

elevated the stature of textiles, even among artists themselves. Situated along University Avenue in a college neighborhood between Minneapolis and St. Paul, the Textile Center has become a home for fiber artists, weavers, sewers, knitters, and other textile artists in Minnesota. Because it is close to the university campuses, freeway access, and parking, suburban artists find it easy to visit.

The center's warm walls, vibrant tapestries, and big windows are inviting. A gallery and a juried gift shop occupy the front of the building. Farther back, a cozy room houses the country's largest library of textile and fiber-art books. The Weavers' Guild keeps a loom available for its members in a large adjacent space. Classrooms, a fabric printmaking lab, and offices and meeting space for the Textile Center and two of its thirty-eight member organizations, the Minnesota Weavers Guild and the Minnesota Quilters, occupy the rear.

## Emergence and Evolution

Four women of the Minnesota Weaver's Guild worked to create the Textile Center—Margaret Miller, Paula Pfaff, Carla Adam, and Nedra Granquist. Frustrated with the Guild's shoddy working conditions and poor location, they met weekly for a year with anyone who might be interested: quilters, knitters, weavers, basket makers, textile-shop owners, rug makers, jewelry makers, wire artists, and

## Artist Profile: Paula Pfaff

Paula Pfaff is a self-taught weaver and founding mother of the Textile Center. Growing up in rural Minnesota in the 1950s and 1960s, she knew art was not a career option for women. Instead, she received a degree in nursing from the College of St. Catherine. A few years later, a friend bought a loom. Pfaff took one look and told herself, "I have to do that. I think I already know how." Eventually she became a full-time artist: "I read everything I could find and followed my instincts," she says.

In the 1970s Pfaff joined the Minnesota Weaver's Guild, where she immediately felt at home. Married and the mother of two, Pfaff says she had never fit in well with her neighborhood mothers and the Guild became her support circle. She began earning income by weaving and selling her work at art fairs and through commissions. Although she could never support her family entirely on her artwork, Pfaff hoped to make enough to cover her supplies, most



of the household furniture, and vacations for the family.

In the early 1990s, when Pfaff was co-president of the Weaver's Guild, she and three colleagues, feeling that the Guild's conditions were less than adequate, started brainstorming ideas for a new textile arts center. Although

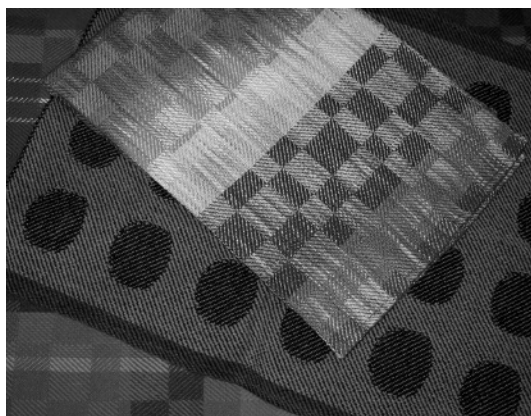
Margaret Miller has been the driving force behind the center, Pfaff has remained active with the group as much as possible. She has

contributed sweat equity, new ideas, monetary pledges, and unlimited enthusiasm.

The Textile Center has had a tremendous impact on Pfaff's life and career. In turn, she has influenced the community of weavers in the Twin Cities and beyond. She is a leading expert on the art of rag-rug weaving and co-authored one of the first published books on the art form. Emerging artists come to her for ideas. She continues to work toward building the Weavers Guild into a leading organization for weavers of all levels and

continues to sell her work. Pfaff believes her family has benefited from her career as her children have grown up surrounded by the arts community.

Pfaff's life as an artist and arts organization leader has been full, vibrant, and inspiring for fellow fiber artists. Her intimate involvement in the creation of the Textile Center has resulted in services and encouragement for many artists who would not otherwise have received it. Pfaff serves as a model for women taught to think of their art as just a hobby.



## Textile Center

beaders. They surveyed the community. They discovered textile artists all over Minnesota and the nation meeting in church basements, libraries, VFW halls, and homes. One group meeting in a machinists' hall had 1,700 quilters. Some groups responded to the idea of a "textile center" with skepticism and apprehension, afraid of disappearing into a big organization run by others. Many had trouble with the term "textile artist."

Patience and outreach eventually met with success, and in 1994 the Textile Center incorporated as a 501(c)(3) organization. Miller assumed the role of director. She acknowledges Emily Galusha, director of the Northern Clay Center, as a particularly helpful mentor in designing the organization, searching for space, and mounting a capital campaign.

It took seven years of passionate perseverance to find, fund, and rehabilitate the space. The founders toured hundreds of buildings seeking affordable space with rooms long enough to lay out quilts, wide enough for looms and yarn. Finally in 2001, the Textile Center moved into its current home, purchasing the one-story building for \$520,000—a good price for the location. They had to make the decision quickly, which was difficult for an organization run by committees and with little money. To cover the purchase price and rehab costs (the building had to be completely gutted), a local bank agreed to loan the group \$900,000 contingent on access to NRP funds. But after an aborted NRP deal with its neighborhood, University Village, the center lost the loan and access to city funds.

In 2001, the Textile Center bought the building for cash and started refurbishing it with more than \$1.2 million raised from

individuals and about \$1 million in matches from the McKnight, Bush, and Kresge Foundations. Support poured in from all over the country, including pledges from "starving artists," even if they could spare only \$30 a month. Miller reflects that the grassroots fundraising "created incredible devotion and commitment on the part of artists that has been enduring." After buying the building, the Textile Center's outstanding debt was just \$10,000. They had met most of their design dreams, except that they have not had room to provide artists' studios.

Anyone interested in creating art using textiles and fabrics has a place at the Textile Center. Artists of all ages and abilities can choose from a variety of classes—from embroidery and lace-making to needle arts. The center offers at least an introductory class in every genre and master classes in many. Children might see the Textile Mobile at their school, and teenagers can enroll in special classes at the Textile Center for their age group. Classes offer accomplished textile artists an opportunity to teach and earn income.

The center also makes it possible for textile artists to apprentice to the masters, see the latter at work, hear how they have built their careers, and get feedback on their own work. Emerging artists can apply to the Jerome-funded mentor program, through which up to seven protégés and mentors meet for thirty hours of one-on-one time over eighteen months; protégés also participate in career-building workshops. They must agree to sell the work that results. "It's a good exercise for them because they have to price their work and think about its value," Miller says.

In addition, the center hosts visiting textile artists from all over the country and the world who come to teach classes. In 2005, for

### Artist Profile: Jennie Clarke

Jennie Clarke, a Twin Cities business lawyer and emerging fiber artist, got her start at the Textile Center by serving on the board for four years. Clarke now creates complex surface designs by dyeing, painting, foiling, or stenciling layers of imagery onto white fabric.



exposure to work of local and national artists who came to the Textile Center, Clarke says, "opened my eyes to the 'art side' of textiles."

Hoping eventually to be able to support herself as an artist, Clarke is still trying to balance personal needs, work, and family, despite a demanding job. It pleases her that

the Textile Center tries to support artists economically by selling their work at the gift shop and displaying it in the gallery.

Clarke is currently secretary of the Textile Center board and also serves on the board of the Minnesota Center for Photography. She continues to take classes through the Textile Center.

Clarke feels the emotional impact of her artwork throughout her life, both professionally and personally as a parent. "I believe the pursuit of art as a means of personal expression is vitally important to



each of us," she says, "and that the world is a much better place when we are pursuing the act of creation."

instance, a Korean artist taught an exotic felting technique with wool, silk, and other materials. Student fees cover the cost of these classes.

Artists can display their work in one of eight gallery shows each year. National juried shows feature the artwork of experienced textile artists; member-only shows encourage emerging artists to participate. Mentors and protégés show off their progress in a gallery show. Visiting artists and member organizations like the Minnesota Weaver's Guild and the Minnesota Quilters can use the gallery for their own exhibitions.

Considerable informal learning and networking happens at the Textile Center, around classes, meetings, use of looms, and gallery openings. The center also hosts a conference once a year, the third largest in the country and the largest nonprofit one.

With a board comprised chiefly of representatives from the various fiber arts groups, the Textile Center stands out for its unique governance structure. The board includes members from seven of the thirty-eight fiber arts organizations under the center's umbrella, as well as accountants, business owners, attorneys, and others with textile experience. Every member group sends a liaison to the Center's separate community forum. Not having "deep pockets" on the board has sometimes been difficult, but an artist-centric board has paid off in commitment and dedication; the center plans to add board members skilled in business and leadership. Currently, foundations and contributions pay thirty to thirty-five percent of the Textile Center's budget, while the rest is earned income from memberships, classes, the gift shop, the gallery, and special events.

## Opportunities and Impact

The Textile Center is still young, but many artists credit it with making substantial contributions to their art. Audrey Henningson, a fiber artist and calligraphist from Minnesota, was interested in art in high school but opted for a degree in nursing. She taught herself to weave and eventually helped found the Textile Center. Lawyer Jennie Clarke always had an interest in textile arts but never thought of it as more than a hobby until she was asked to serve as a legal advisor on the center's board. She began taking classes and selling her work. Carolyn Halliday, a licensed psychologist by training, fiber-and-wire sculpture artist by passion, considers the center's classes the best she's taken and key to accelerating her artistic development. She also appreciates the community of textile artists she has gained. "Going into the Textile Center, whether I see old friends or people I've never met, I feel an instant connection," Halliday says. Artists credit the Textile Center for encouraging them to finally call themselves "artists," to see their work as a part of their career and as something the community appreciates. Many artists spoke especially to the center's

role in artistic development for emerging artists. They say there is no other place in the country as friendly and welcoming to new artists, and with so many connections and resources to offer.

The Textile Center also plays an important role in its neighborhood and the greater Twin Cities area. More than 60,000 people have come through the center since its inception, providing fiber artists with increased exposure and opening people's eyes to the high-caliber art that textile artists can create. As Jennie Clarke notes, "Even if the artists don't become sellers, the Textile Center creates consumers of the art form." Artists at the Textile Center are also working with University Village community members to find ways to

directly benefit the neighborhood, including the school behind the center. The Textile Mobile already makes an impact in schools where arts programs are being cut.

## Challenges

The Textile Center faces certain challenges simply because it is so new. Staff members are over-committed. Miller's goal is to have enough staff to do all the work necessary. She also wants to expand the center's programming

nationally, to have traveling exhibits, and to offer more fellowships. But these aspirations require money.

Midwestern conservatism poses a challenge to unique and "new" art forms like textiles. People here, fiber artists say, are often less willing to experience new and different things. Similarly, a gap remains between how people define fine art versus fiber art, but the Textile Center is working to promote fiber art as a legitimate form and to educate the public about the time and skill involved in creating it.

Diversity is a major challenge for the Textile Center. "In our culture," Miller says, "the money tends to be with the Euro-Americans. Our art form has been handed down from middle-aged white women who often are in households with a double income and can afford to buy yarn and fabric. It is extremely difficult to make a living doing this." A related challenge is that many women who are skilled textile artists are not bilingual, and thus cannot teach classes or sit in at board meetings. In the past year, the center has begun to showcase work by master artists from Minnesota's ethnic and immigrant communities.

The Textile Center is young and confident in its ability to continue improving and serving its community and the larger public. It offers its 3,000 members a full range of classes for all ages, abilities, and interests. It provides hundreds of schoolchildren their first encounter with fiber art and gives accomplished members opportunities to compete for mentorships and exhibit their work. It succeeds in bringing artists new to the art form together with masters. Much of the center's original funding was provided by individual donors who believed in the vision of its founders, resulting in



## Center for Independent Artists

exceptional commitment among those who run the organization. As an umbrella organization comprised of fiber arts organizations as well as individuals, it serves as an interesting experiment in artists' center governance. Because these artists are predominantly female, it is also a fascinating place to watch the progress of women as they develop their artistic careers and livelihoods.

## Community and Affinity-based Centers in the Twin Cities

### Center for Independent Artists

Independent performing artists who want to present their own projects are often discouraged for lack of access to infrastructure, marketing expertise, and tolerant audiences willing to provide feedback on work in progress. These challenges are particularly daunting for performing artists from underrepresented communities or working on unconventional projects, including those that cross disciplinary boundaries or rely on unique forms of instrumentation. The Center for Independent Artists was formed to support artists in these circumstances.

The center sits on the corner of Bloomington Avenue and 42nd Street in south Minneapolis, in the vibrantly painted Instituto de Cultura y Educacion, a converted grocery store. Inside the front door is the tiny but organized administrative office. Next door is an intimate theater and performance space, which *City Pages* named "Best Theater for New Work" in 2003.

The Instituto also houses three other nonprofit cultural organizations—the El Colegio Charter School, La Escuelita, and Mira Gallery. The three organizations share the 65-person theater and an art gallery. During weekdays and in the early afternoons, the theater functions as a classroom for the charter school and as a space for a Latino after-school program. In the evenings and on the weekends, the space transforms into a hotbed of artistic activity. While there is no defined relationship between the school and the center, students often participate on projects as interns.

### Emergence and Evolution

Performance artists Zaraqwar Mistry and Leslye Orr co-founded the Center for Independent Artists in 2001. Mistry received his MFA in theater from University of California-San Diego and moved to Minneapolis in 1991 to work as an actor with the Children's Theater Company and the Guthrie Theater. Weary of mainstream regional theater, Mistry became more interested in writing and directing. He started the center with Orr to create a place where artists could follow their own vision and not have to conform to someone else's mission. Mistry reflects, "We wanted to create a place where an artist could walk through the door and say, 'This is what I want to do. How can I do it?'" In addition to supporting independent work, they wanted to promote diversity of all forms.

While looking for a home for the center, Mistry came to the Instituto to meet with some artists. Current residents convinced him to move into the building. It has been a mutually beneficial



arrangement. The center has upgraded the theater by making improvements to its physical space as well as its sound and lighting infrastructure.

Serving as both executive director and artistic director, Mistry proudly points out that almost every curated project that has come through the Center for Independent Artists has been recognized by the regional press or has been given the opportunity to tour outside the region. Mistry also uses the space for his own work. In 2002 he premiered the play *Sohrab and Rustum* at the center that achieved national recognition when it was invited to tour nationally.

The Center for Independent Artists is a young organization with an annual operating budget of \$85,000. Operating funds come from the McKnight, St. Paul Travelers, and Oswald Family Foundations, while project funding comes from the Minnesota State Arts Board, Metropolitan Regional Arts Council, COMPAS, and the Jerome Foundation. Mistry, the only full-time employee, recently hired a new part-time associate director. As a first-time arts administrator with little training, Mistry has relied heavily on the center's board of directors and its advisory board. A consultant does payroll taxes, accounts reconciliation, and financial forms.

### Opportunities and Impact

The Center for Independent Artists "nurtures independent artistic vision, fosters diverse cultural perspectives and seeks to build an educated and enlightened citizenry." Defining an independent artist as anyone who does not have the support of a 501(c)(3), it has focused mainly on performing artists but has begun working with visual artists as well.

The center provides access to a theater and supporting infrastructure for minimal cost. Use of the renovated 65-seat performance space comes with equipment, sound, lighting, and marketing consultation. The flexible space can be used for a variety of performing arts projects. "We host artists who do not fit in elsewhere," Mistry says. For example, the center has hosted a multimedia presentation by two women who wrote and created a photography book on being Korean adoptees in Minnesota, and a piece by playwright Seraphine Richardson called *Found Naked* that addressed sexual taboos.

Unlike the Loading Dock Theater or the Theater Garage, the Center's theater space is not purely a rental house. Membership offers discounts on use of the space, but members still pay a minimal usage fee. Membership fees are \$40, and theater rental for one evening is \$60. While artists may bring in their own technicians, the center prefers to use its own technical people for an additional \$50 per night. Those who cannot afford to pay for the space and equipment may work it off through interning or volunteering. Larger organizations interested in using center space have been turned away. The center restricts its scheduling to short-term engagements with independent artists.

Mistry also acts as a consultant and a mentor for artists. He helps them to work through the steps needed to achieve desired results. If he cannot help an artist, he will direct them to someone who can.

The center also organizes nonjuried gallery shows open to anyone. The center is building its programming in the visual arts. Saudi native Hend Al-Masour, the associate director, has a good reputation and contacts in the 'Twin Cities' visual arts community. The center also



Festival of One-Woman Shows, 2004

partners on projects with SASE, Springboard for the Arts, MRAC, VSA arts of Minnesota, and Patrick's Cabaret.

In response to the 'Twin Cities' Fringe Festival that features 150 theater performances in twenty-five venues, the center created its Frinj of the Frinj Festival for productions that do not meet the Fringe Festival's criteria or whose creators cannot afford to participate. The only requirement for the Frinj of the Frinj is that performances be between fifteen minutes and two hours in length. "It is artist-centered

## Artist Profile: Maryam Yusefzadeh

Surrounded by physicians, architects, poets, and musicians as a child in Iran, Maryam Yusefzadeh received her early music training at the Tehran School of Music. In 1975, she moved to the United States to study art, music, and dance performance at the University of Minnesota. Describing herself as a weird multidisciplinary artist who dabbles in everything, Yusefzadeh simultaneously pursued careers in the art and business worlds.

In 1988, Yusefzadeh and three other musicians, Tim O'Keefe, Tim Sparks, and David Stenshoel serendipitously formed a band, Robayat. At a garage sale, O'Keefe discovered a tape of Yusefzadeh performing on the Persian drum during a master class at the University of Minnesota—Duluth. He tracked Yusefzadeh down, and their teacher-student relationship grew into a collaborative music ensemble. Robayat, a form of poetry based on quatrains, is an apt name for the four-person group specializing in the indigenous music of Persia, Turkey, and Central Asia. With support from the State Arts Board and COMPAS, Robayat has performed as artists-in-residence at schools in Minneapolis, St. Paul, and surrounding states.

Yusefzadeh is active in the world music



and dance scene and has been a performer, educator, and guest lecturer at several area institutions, including the Minnesota Historical Society, Walker Art Center, and the University of Minnesota. She acknowledges that is difficult to make a living: "My work is specialized so it is only brought in at certain times. Minneapolis is one of the best places to play live music, but the pay is not great. No one considers the time it takes to prepare a one- or two-hour set." In the past

few years, she has moved toward staged work and performance.

Yusefzadeh looks to places like Center for Independent Artists for artistic and professional development. Through fellow band member O'Keefe, she met Zaraawar Mistry. They subsequently collaborated on the acclaimed play *Sohrab and Rustum*. Yusefzadeh had just started Minnesota Global Arts, an organization focused on advancing cultural knowledge through music. Mistry had been looking for ways to promote the Center for Independent Artists and offered Yusefzadeh an affordable and convenient home for Minnesota Global Arts' events. Yusefzadeh also uses the center as an incubator for experimenting with new work and a monthly concert venue for Robayat. She says, "The intimate space is key. It allows you to survive with a small audience."

Yusefzadeh marvels at Mistry's success in promoting independent work. She reflects, "The center is all about his personality and his refusal to judge. He is strictly and totally open to anything and everything." She adds, "Like a child, your art has to grow and develop. Audiences have to experience it so it can mature and move somewhere else. He provides that schooling for the art."

## Center for Independent Artists

instead of providing the community with a festival,” Mistry says. The festival has been such a success that individual artists were limited to one slot each this year. There are no registration fees, and the artist takes home 75 percent of ticket sales.

The Center for Independent Artists plays an important role in the development of emerging artists who are in the early stages of connecting with artistic networks. Local photographer Jane Kramer says, “If you are a beginning artist and don’t know where to go, a lot of the other organizations can be intimidating. The center encourages independent artists to get out there and do what they want to do.” She met Mistry and Orr at a neighborhood festival in 2001. Mistry became her sounding board. He connected her with IFP Minnesota, an organization that eventually awarded her a grant. He also put her in touch with Charissa Uemura, a well-known photographer who was exhibiting at the Instituto. Kramer helped Uemura hang her work, giving her an opportunity to learn about presentation.

The intimate theater setting offers fledgling artists the opportunity to work in a space that is manageable and non-intimidating. For example, Mistry encouraged a group of twelve emerging female artists to produce a series of one-woman shows. The resulting Festival of Women helped give these performers the confidence to debut their work in a group setting. The space is a venue for work that is still evolving, an incubator for work that is ready to move to a larger stage, and a place to perform finished work. Maryam Yusefzadeh credits the Center for Independent Artists for allowing artists to control their own productions: “At Orchestra Hall or at the Northrop or at the Walker, you are a hired artist. They tell you where to go and what to do. .... With Zaraqar, you create everything.” This unique collaboration allows artists to develop professionally and artistically.

The Center for Independent Artists works to be part of its neighborhood’s life. The Bancroft Neighborhood Association hosts an ice cream social during the Frinj of the Frinj Festival, helping both partners broaden participation. The center works with local business owners to raise awareness about regional artists associated with them. In addition, artists bring members of their respective communities to the Instituto and the neighborhood.

### Challenges

The Center for Independent Artists faces a unique problem in that its very purpose—to help independent artists advance—makes it difficult to create community among its members and sustain the commitment of those it helps. Once it has done its job as a catalyst in an artist’s work and career, that artist may go on to be part of other arts organizations and no longer need the center’s services. Events like the Frinj of the Frinj create a larger sense of community around the center and may foster new artistic networks among members.

Tension exists between the center’s philosophy of not imposing curatorial direction on artists and the usual concern of funders and the larger community with quality of the artistic work nurtured. To date, as the *City Pages* designation and robust Frinj of the Frinj attendance confirm, the center has been credited with supporting quality artistic work. But the tension remains, and its resolution depends heavily on the center’s leadership.

The existence of other organizations offering some of the same services presents another challenge. In the performing arts, The Playwrights Center, SASE, Intermedia Arts, and other settings such as Springboard for the Arts and many private clubs also provide venues for experimentation and presentation. Some of them also provide counseling for aspiring artists. How will the center distinguish itself in the future?

Another challenge is a possible merger proposed by Patrick’s Cabaret. The center and Patrick’s have hired a merger consultant to see if the merger makes sense. Patrick’s Cabaret inhabits a large building with many different usable spaces, and it presents many different kinds of artistic programming. Since the Instituto focuses mainly on educational missions, Mistry thinks it might be an advantage to be in a dedicated space where the focus is on art. At the time of this writing, no decision had been made.

The Center for Independent Artists also faces a leadership challenge, as Mistry recently announced his impending departure to focus on other work. Because the center’s work has been so tightly identified with his stewardship and energy, the leadership turnover will be a crucial moment in its evolution.

Situated in a diverse, working-class neighborhood, the Center for Independent Artists has played an important role in encouraging artists from diverse ethnic and social groups to make important first steps forward in production, presentation, and exhibition of original work. It is youthful and to date closely tied to a single entrepreneurial leader, so it is too soon to tell how it will evolve.

### Homewood Studios

Minneapolis’s Near North and Willard Hay neighborhoods are remarkably diverse racially, ethnically, and socially. Single-parent and low economic status families predominate, and fifty percent of the population is under the age of eighteen. The struggles here differ from those in the more affluent areas of the metro region. Artists here sometimes feel cut off, literally by freeways and psychologically by class, from the bustling South Side and Northeast arts districts.

Homewood Studios, a community-based gallery with artist studio space, provides a place for neighborhood artists to create and show their work. It also offers opportunities for young people to use art to tackle community issues. Founders George and Beverly Roberts, who operate it on a “for-break-even” basis, believe that the visible presence of working artists in a neighborhood contributes to the vitality, self-image, and connectedness of that community. The Northside Center is not trying to replicate other art centers but to encourage the community to regard its artists as valuable resources.

Homewood Studios resides at the heart of a neighborhood bounded by Olson Memorial Highway to the south, West Broadway to the north, the city limits to the west, and the Mississippi River to the east. It occupies a former storefront grocery store on the corner of an old and architecturally distinctive commercial block. Paintings and a meeting place are visible through the enormous windows. The sound of jazz filters outdoors. Beyond a narrow hallway lined with art are five



studios, each resembling the character of its resident artist. The nexus of individual workspace and community space enables artists and community members to interact. "Homewood is about open doors, open windows, and open community," says former studio resident Maarja Roth.

## Emergence and Evolution

The Robertses have lived in the Homewood neighborhood since 1970. In the mid-1990s, George, an English teacher at North High School, dreamed of having a studio where he could write, draw, and print. He envisioned a space large enough to accommodate a letterpress printer. Meanwhile, Beverly was leading a task force to tackle vacant housing issues. Her group appealed to Artspace to work block by block to reverse deterioration but was told that since they did not own the properties, Artspace could not help.

In 1997, the Robertses saw an opportunity to combine their dreams and expand the community network by transforming a vacant building on a blighted commercial block into an art-focused



voted to grant them funds to help with the rehab effort, which Roberts designed and oversaw himself. In December 1999, the first two studios opened and artists moved in; by the summer of 2004, the five-year building plan was complete.

As the renovations progressed, Roberts made a list of artists residing in the neighborhood, a list that grew to a hundred. He approached artists to inquire about their studio needs and special issues like ventilation and lighting. From these conversations, George eliminated some activities such as ceramic arts because of fire codes and clean-up hazards.

## Artist Profile: Charles Caldwell

Growing up in North Minneapolis, Charles Caldwell, who rents a studio at Homewood, was a "bright and shining art student" in the Minneapolis Public School system. Art instructors encouraged him to explore his creative side. After graduating from high school in 1981, Caldwell chose military school over art school to give himself "direction and structure." He also joined the Commercial Arts program at the Minneapolis Community and Technical College. With a two-year certificate, he accepted a well-paying job in commercial art. Thirty days later, he resigned to pursue his passion in fine art.

Caldwell, a watercolor painter, focuses on reality through the lens of community and family. Self-published, he supports himself mainly through sales of prints and original work at art shows and festivals throughout the country. At one point, he needed additional income and began to do art illustrations and sell cars. He also went back to school to learn a new trade—plumbing.

Caldwell has been discouraged by the process of finding grants and commissions, which he finds restrictive. In his view, grants



do not support artists interested in making a living from their art but are more directed at exploratory work.

In 2001, Caldwell walked past the newly opened Homewood Studios. In the window a sign announced studio spaces for rent. Sick of working on his dining room table, he contacted George Roberts, who came to his house to talk about his work. Caldwell has been in a Homewood studio ever since. As a neighborhood artist, Homewood gives him a "future I can touch" in a place where neighbors remember him dreaming of being an artist when he was six years old. It gives him flexibility to work on multiple projects without interruption. Because

Homewood is a community space, work space, and creative space, it allows Caldwell to cement his commitment to his art work and to the community.

Caldwell participates in the Artist Forums to meet other artists and to gather intelligence about the business of the arts. He shows his work once or twice a year in solo shows at Homewood. His work also hangs along the hallways that lead to other studios. While the studios afford privacy, Caldwell thrives on the interaction between artists that Homewood hosts.

Caldwell credits Homewood Studios and artists working and exhibiting there as having a marked impact on the surrounding community. As a "canvas for the community," Homewood provides a sense of inclusiveness and openness to a population that may not be aware that art can be a "resource" or an alternative path in their own lives. He says, "Instead of isolating art and making it untouchable or unreadable, Homewood creates a safe place for engagement that demonstrates the positive power that art yields."

## Homewood Studios

Through the gallery, Homewood Studios shows community members some of the art that is created around them—an aspect of the neighborhood many haven't seen before. Resident artist Charles Caldwell says, "This community does not think about art, or about spending time and resources on art, largely because there are no models for arts in this particular community." Studio renters in the building have first priority on the gallery space, and neighborhood residents can also rent the gallery. Schools can use the gallery free. The gallery tends to support emerging artists and thus to provide a steppingstone to wider audiences and evolving careers. Roberts interviews artists who wish to exhibit and requires a certain standard of work based on their age and experience. Once invited, an artist may hang whatever he or she pleases.

Homewood also hosts various types of arts gatherings, such as Artist Roundtables organized by Northside Arts Collective to discuss business issues for artists. The Northside Writers' Group programs a monthly "coffeehouse" at Homewood Studios where anyone can give a literary reading. Homewood

Studios also programs a Tuesday Gallery Talk for new shows.

Homewood derives its income by renting the five studios, the gallery, and the basement meeting room. Like the classes, which must include neighborhood residents as students, the studios must be rented to people in the community.

Roberts does not apply for grants. As an events coordinator at the Loft in the 1970s, he observed how dependence on grants becomes ever more demanding. In addition, the funding environment runs counter to Roberts's philosophy: "Funders often ask us to say what is wrong with us instead of saying what's right. My community has labored under that burden for a long time. There is a lot we can do on our own. Not being beholden to the funding community means we get to say who we want to be."

## Opportunities and Impact

Artists say Homewood Studios has greatly influenced their artistic work and livelihoods. For many, access to space to create is a

### Artist Profile: Bill Cottman

Bill Cottman credits Homewood Studios for supporting his work as an emerging photographer and for leading redevelopment efforts in north Minneapolis. An East Coast native and a Howard University graduate in



engineering and architecture, Cottman moved with his wife, Beverly, to Minnesota in 1967 to work as an electrical engineer for Sperry Univac. Even though engineering was his "first" profession, Cottman remembers wanting to be a commercial artist in high school but was dissuaded by the "impracticalness of the field." He laughingly recalls how he and a fellow classmate hid their artistic ability so they would not have to design posters for school plays.

In 1969, a St. Paul neighbor introduced Cottman to the Hallie Q. Brown Camera Club at the Martin Luther King Center. He was drawn to the technical processes of photography and explored the works of classical masters such as Ansel Adams, Paul Strand, and Edward Weston. With little patience for view cameras, Cottman used a 35mm camera. He then soaked up the artistic work of street photographers Garry Winogrand and

Lee Friedlander. Eventually he discovered the narrative, poetic photography of African American artists such as James Van Der Zee, Roy DeCarava, and Gordon Parks. "It is about ordinary people living their lives," Cottman says. "All along I was taking pictures of my

family but trying to make them in a painterly style. Finally, I recognized that what I knew best was what I could best photograph."

In 1999, Cottman and his family moved to a home near George and Bev Roberts, the founders of Homewood Studios. Soon thereafter, Homewood Studios hosted one of his first solo exhibitions, *Looking Backward Moving Forward*, which documented his work over twenty-five years. In 2000, Cottman

received a McKnight Photography Fellowship. He spent the year working on *Four Women*, a tribute to his wife, daughter, mother, and mother-in-law, exploring their connections to freedom, identity, and responsibility.

Cottman had tried to make a living as a photographer, but found it too difficult until his McKnight grant encouraged him to try again. In the past two years his photography has been more successful financially than ever before.

Cottman credits Homewood not only with advancing his own artistic development but also for its impact on the neighborhood. "Homewood is one of several pieces of evidence that spiritual assets do exist here," he says.

At this stage, Cottman looks for opportunities to exhibit in juried shows outside of Minnesota. Recently, Homewood hosted his Minneapolis Arts Commission-sponsored show, *The Plymouth Avenue Project*, in which he created black-and-white postcards of every building from Wirth Park to the Plymouth Bridge. A mirror hung at the end of the exhibit with a map of the zip code in the background. In addition, Cottman, a co-host of "Mostly Jazz" on KFAI, also programs and promotes radio shows sponsored by Homewood Studios.



Untitled

significant boost, as are the camaraderie and the opportunity to show their work. Resident artists say Homewood helps them reach out into the community and make sense of their work, too. Through classes, artists have opportunities to work in the community with kids and adults.

“Homewood demystifies the idea that art is just for artists,” photographer Bill Cottman says. “It is hard to walk by without seeing George standing outside trying to get people to walk in and check out the place.” “Artists get recognized because of the exhibits they have there,” says writer Rich Bergeron, who with wife Linda organizes the monthly “coffeehouse” for writers at Homewood. “This makes Homewood Studios a key local arts institution.”

Artists also say the organization attracts art fans from elsewhere to the gallery and to the neighborhood. The shows not only expose the work of neighborhood artists to a much larger audience; they exhibit the positive qualities of the neighborhood to visitors, demonstrating that, as Cottman says, “violence isn’t the only thing here.”

Homewood Studios has had an important impact on the internal and external perceptions of the neighborhood. Roberts has partnered with organizations such as the Northside Residents Redevelopment Council to create a safer environment for the community. For example, Cottman agreed to enlarge some of his photographs and put them into windows of the vacant stores in a shopping strip known for criminal activity. Homewood Studios works to change the atmosphere of the neighborhood and offers children positive, creative opportunities. Richard Amos says, “The children in the neighborhood walk by and are exposed to art. Here, they see it as an option for the future.”

Now other arts organizations are moving in. Plymouth Avenue Art Studio and Asian Media Access are two examples. The Northside Residents Redevelopment Council is working to develop artist live/work spaces nearby. The Robertses intended to serve artists, but in doing so they also helped improve the community.

## Challenges

In a low-income community with relatively high crime and residential turnover, it’s a challenge to keep rents coming in. Many artists live on the margin, especially in this neighborhood. And as hard as Roberts works at it, it is still a challenge keeping neighborhood youth and residents walking in the door. “A lot of young people think Homewood is elitist,” Bergeron says, puzzled. In the longer run, if Homewood Studios continues to stimulate neighborhood improvement, its owners will have to work with other community leaders to stabilize rents and prevent displacement of lower-income residents.



Homewood Studios is successfully fostering artistic work and careers for artists in its neighborhood. As the only “for-profit” artists’ center in our group and without a membership, its unique structure offers a viable model for smaller-scale artistic space in neighborhoods that might otherwise have nothing. Homewood strengthens the economic and cultural vitality of its Near North and Willard Hay neighborhoods by acting as an anchor for commercial and residential properties and by operating as a neighborhood focal point for artistic expression. Homewood proves that a supportive

arts community, for both artists and residents, can grow in any neighborhood and demonstrates that helping neighborhood artists may have multiple benefits for struggling communities.

## *Interact Center for the Visual and Performing Arts*

As many government-based social service programs floundered at serving people with disabilities, art-based models appeared as alternatives in the 1980s. They place people with disabilities in creative work and social environments where they can contribute to society and find community. Minneapolis’s Interact Center for the Visual and Performing Arts is nationally recognized for its innovative approach. It works simultaneously to create art and challenge society’s negative view of the disabled by providing artists with disabilities a place to pursue and develop their art to its highest potential, and to increase their integration into the broader professional arts community through advocacy, mentorship, and collaboration.

Interact rents space on two floors in the city’s Warehouse District. In the basement, a visual arts studio features brushes, work tables, paints, and drawing equipment. Next door, a fifty-person theater hosts rehearsals and performances. A beautifully arranged gallery and administrative offices are reached by climbing steep, narrow cement stairs (also accessible by elevator). Adjacent to the exhibition space, is a large open area where artists with disabilities work with staff members on creative movement

## Emergence and Evolution

Louisiana native Jeanne Calvit is the brains behind Interact Center for the Visual and Performing Arts. An actress by training, Calvit spent ten years developing her craft in Vienna and Paris and touring internationally with the Black Theatre of Prague (now disbanded). In 1979, a relative convinced her to move to the Twin Cities because of its thriving arts community. As a freelance artist, she supplemented her income by teaching workshops for people with disabilities. In

## Interact Center for the Visual and Performing Arts

1983, Hennepin County hired Calvit to develop an arts-related disabilities program through Pillsbury Neighborhood Services. She recalls, "We were limited by the confines of the social service system. People with disabilities would go and clean a restaurant in the morning and then they would come in the afternoon to do art and theater. Their other work was their real job, although they were being paid a sub-minimum wage. We wanted to make art the real job."

In 1992, Calvit left to start Interact Theatre Company. Creating and performing original, satirical theater, Interact's actors with and without disabilities rehearsed and performed at various venues. At a California conference, Calvit was inspired to create a center encompassing all the art forms. In August 1996, Interact Center for the Visual and Performing Arts opened in the Warehouse District.

At that time, parts of the Warehouse District were in a slump. With financial support from the St. Paul Companies and the Minneapolis Foundation, Interact rented and renovated a raw industrial space meeting the safety standards required for public funding. Calvit and Charlie Lakin, a disability expert and advisory board member, navigated the project through government bureaucracy. Calvit says, "We were lucky. Hennepin County welcomed creative programming."

Six months passed before clients began to trickle into the organization. From the beginning, professional artists rather than



traditional social service workers filled staff positions. The original members of the Interact Theatre Company volunteered, and other artists offered their services. As the organization grew, Calvit chose to focus on artistic direction. Three years ago, the board hired Gregory Stavrou as executive director to oversee the business side.

Since then, Interact has grown into one of the "few visual and performing art centers in the world designed to facilitate adult artists with disabilities as they explore and expand their creativity as actors,

## Artist Profile: Sindibad (James O'Dell)

Self-described as the "Forest Gump of counter culture," James O'Dell, aka Sindibad, has a knack for being in the right place at the right time. More likely, it's his talent that led to his working with artists like costumer Joan Kelly. Or maybe it's because he is able to do anything art-related, be it dance, painting, costuming, writing, or whatever allows him to connect to a higher consciousness. Among his creations are the mural on the Blue Nile restaurant on Franklin Avenue (Minneapolis), the CD cover for Blue Buddha, and the logo for Holy Land Bakery (Minneapolis). His paintings are rich in cool colors, skillfully rendered to portray dreamscapes or surreal images. He thinks of his work as grassroots art because he had no formal teaching and does not deal with the business side of producing and selling art. He just creates.

Sindibad grew up in Florida, son of a jazz singer and brother of a musician, both so



talented that he tried every art form but music because he thought he'd never be able to compete. He has made art ever since he can remember, despite a brain disorder from being run over by a dump truck at four years old. Schooled through the sixth grade, he was on his own beginning at thirteen. Since then, he has lived a bohemian lifestyle, continually driven by his artwork, which he talks about like a love affair. Visiting his brother who was pursuing a music career in

the Twin Cities, Sindibad decided to make a home in Minneapolis. "I've lived in New York," he says, "and they do have a lot of artists. But they also have a good ol' boys network." He finds the Twin Cities progressive.

Sindibad became connected with Interact through a caseworker. Interact acknowledged his talent and set him to work. With that help, he has come a long way. He credits Interact with recognizing art as a form of intelligence and pushing people who have been in the shadows of society into the limelight. They "are on the crest of the now, the wave of the future," by bringing art and humanity together, he says.

Interact has helped Sindibad learn about the business side of art. It is only recently that he has been making any profit, and he still struggles. He aspires to do more to win contracts and create art for others beyond himself.

writers, painters, sculptors and musicians,” Calvit says. Product-oriented, it functions as an art laboratory where people with disabilities create and implement plays and exhibitions. “In some ways, disability enables artists to focus on their art completely,” she says. “They do not have to juggle day jobs like many other artists do. It is transformative. There is not one person here who didn’t change after being here for a few weeks.”

Over a decade, Interact’s operating budget, originally \$40,000, has grown to \$1.4 million. Eighty-five percent of its income comes from local, state, and federal government funding. Earned income from ticket sales and grants from St. Paul Companies, Bush Foundation, McKnight Foundation, Medtronic Foundation, and the Minnesota State Arts Board make up the rest. It has both a governing board and an advisory board.

## Opportunities and Impact

Interact’s two major objectives are to nurture artistic growth and to affect systemic change for artists with disabilities. Interact provides opportunities for artists from the disability community to compose music and lyrics and develop original plays while working with professional actors, and to pursue and develop visual art skills with the advocacy of accomplished visual artists, as well as exhibit their artwork and perform at Interact and elsewhere.

Supported by professional actors and musicians, the theater company produces two original, fully staged performances a year in its fifty-seat black box theater. Each show runs for approximately five weeks. All of the work is created, rehearsed, and performed by the staff and artists with disabilities. Touring shows, pulled from a repertoire of smaller theater pieces and excerpts, run throughout the year. Cast members receive a paycheck for both rehearsal and performance time for both the touring shows and the center’s shows. Past shows include *Worldwide Church of the Handicapped*, *Imagination and Memory*, and *Cloud Cuckooland*.

Artists with disabilities also work with community artists through visiting and guest artist programs and outside collaborations. For every show, Interact brings in professional musicians, technicians, designers, and directors. For example, Warren Bowles from Mixed Blood Theatre directed the fall 2005 production, *Live at the Funky Butt Jazz Club*. In addition to productions and tours, the theater company brings in guest artists for movement classes, technique, and improvisation. Also, it co-produces projects with other theatrical organizations, such as Theater Latte Da.

Interact’s visual arts studio is staffed by formally trained artists. The studio accommodates up to twenty-four artists who work independently. Interact supplies the materials for painting, drawing, sculpture, clay, and textile work. To support its education initiatives, Interact offers weekly seminars in life drawing, mosaic, watercolor technique, and art history.

Interact’s visual artists can exhibit work in quarterly shows curated by the gallery director at Interact’s Inside Out Gallery, the only “outsider art” gallery in the Twin Cities. Artists receive half of all proceeds when their work is sold. Interact also seeks alternative venues for group and individual exhibitions and alerts artists to opportunities to show or sell their work. It connects visual artists with the community through participation in events like Art-A-Whirl and the Mayday Parade and Festival.

Interact enables its participants to leave menial jobs with little social interaction and gives them an opportunity to earn a living through arts activities. By joining theater casts and showing their artwork in a public gallery, artists both earn income and are better integrated into a larger social community.

Interact is good for staff artists and volunteers, too. Staff member Annie Petrini says, “This is an artist-run organization. All of our clients and staff are artists. We have a peer relationship. We enter into a collaborative process together.”

Artists removed from traditional service programs and placed in Interact’s creative environment find help with their disabilities, too. Featured gallery artist Suzyn Lundgren has been creating art at Interact since January 2002. She is primarily interested in mixed-media sculptures and two-dimensional tile mosaics. One of her “abilities of otherness” is

Asperger’s Syndrome, a high-functioning form of autism. Describing the atmosphere at Interact, she says, “It keeps me sane. I want to be here all of the time.”

In the community at large, these artists make an impact. Through their regional and national performances and exhibitions, they showcase work that would not otherwise be seen or heard. Their work confronts the myths about disabilities in society. Staff member Tod Petersen says, “Artists arrive at the door with their disability labels—Down syndrome, cerebral palsy, whatever—that’s their ticket in. Then the staff sets those labels aside and gives them new labels—artist, actor, writer, sculptor, singer, etc.”

Interact integrates artistic and social service systems in a way that builds on people’s strengths rather than their limitations. Bill Borden,



## *Interact Center for the Visual and Performing Arts*

a regionally renowned visual artist, spent years in and out of mental institutions, struggling with autism and deafness. At Interact, he connected with the programming, and his drawing skills flourished. Today, he is Interact's top-selling artist. He used to hate being touched, and now he hugs people. Calvit says, "I ran into the person that manages Bill's residence, and he said that Interact has been a miracle for Bill."

Interact is one of just a few remaining theater, gallery, and arts organizations in the Warehouse District. Interact has helped bring people to the surrounding streets night and day, enlivening the district as a residential and commercial neighborhood.

### **Challenges**

In the midst of a strategic planning process, the Interact Center for the Performing and the Visual Arts is at a crossroads. Recently, it has been asked by the Guthrie Theater and Walker Art Center to collaborate with internationally and nationally known artists such as Charles (Chuck) Mee. Calvit says, "When they start calling you to work with them, you know that you could be doing this at Lincoln Center [for the Performing Arts]. This could be a big step for us." Interact is deciding whether to open another center or focus on continuing artistic growth through prominent collaborations that put Interact on a national level as an arts company.

Internally, the organization faces a transitional period with the board and staff. "When you are in the founding stage, the excitement of inventing something new fuels everyone. Then you become more established, and a certain complacency sets in," Calvit says. "We have to fight this natural tendency and challenge ourselves by constantly talking on the board and staff level about mission-important issues and raising the bar artistically."

The leadership is considering investing in a new permanent space that the organization would own. It is becoming increasingly expensive to stay in its neighborhood. Its theater has obstructed views and outdated technical equipment, impeding Interact's ability to create more diversified programming with other partners. Renting additional space in the area is not an option, since many of the older buildings are not disability-accessible.

On a macro level, Interact continues to challenge society's views of people with disabilities through the arts. Often, major publications will not cover or critique its work. Calvit says, "They avoid reviewing it because they don't feel comfortable or because there is a protective attitude about the disability factor. Ironically, when we perform at other venues both abroad and in town, we do get reviewed." Interact looks to opportunities with Theater Latte Da, Mixed Blood Theatre and Walker Art Center to help merge its work into the mainstream.

Interact Center for the Visual and Performing Arts successfully bridges between the missions of creating artistic work and changing public perception of people with disabilities. Tod Petersen says, "Interact holds up a mirror to our shared brokenness as human beings. It gives people permission to create art even though we are all broken. I think it is magical." Interact has matured as an artist-centric

organization, adopting a professional managerial division of labor and diversifying across art forms. It offers other cities a unique model of an arts-based alternative social service program.

### ***Intermedia Arts***

**M**any immigrant, folk, ethnic, and minority artists live in neighborhoods where their work is part of the cultural fabric. Many do not consider themselves artists but are more apt to consider themselves cultural workers or preservers and teachers of traditional arts. Other artists in the same communities may feel hindered by cultural expectations, afraid of being branded an "ethnic" artist as opposed to purely an artist (Bye, 2004; Moriarity, 2004). Artists in these communities need encouragement, connections with other artists and audiences with whom to share their work and get feedback, and resources—from financing to space and equipment.

In the past two decades, Intermedia Arts has become an important place for artists on Minneapolis' South Side. Its mission is to serve a diverse inner-city area with high artist density, high poverty rates, and concentrations of almost every ethnic, immigrant, and minority group: African Americans, Hmong, Latinos, and recent Somali and Russian immigrants. A few doors from the Midtown Greenway, Intermedia Arts inhabits a former auto-brake and wheel-alignment space in the LynLake neighborhood. Its north wall, facing the parking lot, is full of graffiti art. Artist-designed steps, tiles, and furniture surround the foyer, leading visitors either right into the galleries, ahead to a two-story exposed office suite, or to the left and rear where a performance space spans the back of the building.

### **Emergence and Evolution**

Intermedia Arts began in 1973 as University Community Video (UCV) by University of Minnesota students who wanted to make the new portable video camera and training more accessible. "It was a time of demonstrations against the war here," reflects Tom Borrup, executive director from 1980 to 2002. "Students would go out on the protest lines and then go home and watch the news, where they saw completely different stories than what they had seen in person." They wanted to make their own TV shows, and they did, producing thirteen to twenty weekly magazine-format shows from 1974 to 1978 out of UCV's Rarig Center headquarters for broadcast on Twin Cities Public Television, at that time affiliated with the university. In 1978, UCV relocated to a former church on the edge of the East Bank campus, enabling it to engage more with its community side.

By the end of the decade, however, artistic and financial tensions had developed. The interests of artists involved were diversifying away from documentary video, and the demands of producing for public television became too much to sustain. There were internal struggles between people who favored documentary production and those who wanted to do video as art. Borrup and his board were confronted with formidable funding issues as well. At the time, 80 percent of their revenues were from student activity fees. When video artists lost their slots on the budget committee, UCV's allocation fell. Soon UCV

decided to expand into other art forms. Renamed Intermedia Arts in 1986, the organization won grants from the National Endowment for the Arts' media arts, visual arts, and music programs, and worked in new venues, doing video in theater and visual installations. The emphasis on documentaries lost ground at Intermedia Arts in this era, despite the protests of some members.

To serve its new constituency, Intermedia Arts leased a Warehouse District loft in 1986, using its one big room as a visual arts gallery, performance space, and video-exhibition screening space, while classes and equipment access remained at the church. The goal was to incubate the emerging work of artists. In the early 1990s, with the church (owned by the university) scheduled for demolition, Intermedia Arts began looking for a new home in an arts-minded neighborhood. It analyzed its audience and artist mailing lists, literally pinpointing them on a map, and honed in on the 55408 zip code area, which happens to house the largest percentage of people reporting their occupation as artist on income-tax forms.



NATHAN RUDD

Intermedia Arts found an ideal building on Lyndale Avenue with 10,000 square feet of space, including a 120-seat theatre. General Mills Foundation provided crucial funding for the down payment and architect fees, and after that, generous contributions came from McKnight, Kresge, Dayton-Hudson, other national and local foundations, and many individuals. The neighborhood group awarded a \$100,000 forgivable loan through its city-funded Neighborhood Revitalization Program, and a conventional bank loan made up the balance of the \$1.5 million project cost. Artists were involved at every step, building the stairway, tables, and chairs and tiling the floors. Intermedia Arts moved into the space in 1995 and completed all work by 1997.

## Artist Profile: Chaka Mkali

One of the crucial actors in the revitalization of graffiti art in the Twin Cities, Los Angeles native Chaka Mkali credits Intermedia Arts with shaping his awareness of the local arts infrastructure. Mkali now supports himself as a muralist and graffiti artist. He paints his murals in places where he wants to speak to the community, begin public discourse, and inspire hope. A mural, in his view, is a means of storytelling. The medium does not matter, though Mkali prefers spray paint, acrylic, and exterior and interior paints.

Mkali's mother was a painter who helped nurture his interest in the arts. As a teenager, he sold homemade airbrushed t-shirts to friends for extra cash. But he often watched his mother barter her work for little or nothing to support her children, which made him want to advocate for African American artists.

Mkali moved with his mother to Minneapolis when she decided to complete a master's degree in social work at the University of Minnesota. After his graduation from South High, Mkali got into trouble and



spent a year in prison. His artistic background helped keep him from being trapped in the penal system, however. Loyal friends who were asked to be involved with a gallery agreed on the condition that Mkali be included, and he did his part while in prison. It was during this time that he became acquainted with Intermedia Arts.

In 1993, Mila Llaugher from Intermedia Arts chose Mkali for the "Extensions" program, in which master artists at Intermedia Arts select emerging artists in

the fields of dance, video, music, or spoken word to be mentored for one year. Subsequently, Intermedia hosted two gallery shows featuring Mkali's graffiti art and later hired Mkali to paint the outside of its building and teach classes on the art of graffiti. "Intermedia shaped my awareness of the infrastructure of arts in the Twin Cities and got my work in Minnesota off to a start," he says.

Mkali has not completed his formal education in art. He has one year of classes left for a degree in photography. But he doesn't know if he will go back.

He currently works at Hope Community as full-time artist and arts programming coordinator. Mkali is also working through Juxtaposition Arts and Arts-Based Community Development to empower African American artists.

For Mkali, art is a way of life. It helped keep him from the fate of so many youth in impoverished, drug-ravaged communities. Through his murals and youth work, he is helping to bring hope back into these communities.

The plan had been to do more video work, but, Artistic Director Sandy Agustín says, “We found ourselves in a mixed socioeconomic place, sandwiched between the extremes. We went from a quiet back-seat organization to ‘in their face’ when we moved here.” Seeing an opportunity to play a unique role with artists and communities of color, the organization expanded its target district to the 55401 through 55409 zip codes.

To manage the interdisciplinary mix, Borrup began experimenting in the late 1980s with part-time curators, hiring media arts, visual arts, music, and performance curators and a curator without a portfolio (Alexs Pate, prominent African American writer) on a contractual basis. Borrup, who was then serving as both executive and artistic director, recalls it was an interesting process working with them individually and collectively, especially since each wanted autonomy and artistic integrity. He found himself stimulated by Pate’s views about culture on a deeper level. “He opened my mind up in new ways and helped me to see Intermedia Arts’ potential as a multicultural center, rooted more in cultural change,” Borrup says. As the organization’s center of attention shifted to communities and artists within them, it did not make sense to maintain disciplinary curators. Instead, Intermedia Arts brought in curators for each project. In one

eighteen-month period, Borrup recalls, thirty curators fashioned events and exhibitions.

Intermedia Arts today describes itself as “a catalyst that builds understanding among people through art.” It is a multidisciplinary arts center, a gathering place where artists, their audiences, and program participants can share stories through visual arts, theater, dance, music, and literature. Intermedia Arts continues to view local artists as one of its core constituencies, showing visiting artists’ work but maintaining a programming mix that focuses on local and regional artists.

Intermedia Arts hosts a mix of genres, communities, and audiences. It has reached out to diverse constituencies, including Somali artists and filmmakers, Hmong artists from the Center for Hmong Arts and Talent, and artists from the Latino, African American, Native American, and Russian communities. The organization does not describe itself as fully artist-centric but is always in partnership with artists, showcasing their work and helping them to be catalysts for community change.

Currently, Intermedia Arts receives about 85 percent of its funding from private and corporate sources, some from foundations for operating support and some for targeted programs and projects. The

## Artist Profile: Aksana Muratalieva

A recent immigrant to Minnesota, Aksana Muratalieva is sharing her Kyrgyzstan culture with the Twin Cities. Her first piece, a Kyrgyz heritage house, or “bozu-ui,” emerged from the *Immigrant Status: Talking Suitcases* workshop at Intermedia Arts and was on display for five months after the workshop ended. Constructed of fabric, felt, wire, and other materials, the house served as Muratalieva’s invitation to the world to experience her culture. It told her personal story and her thoughts and emotions as an artist. It was so well received that her work was featured in the Minneapolis *Star Tribune*.

Muratalieva moved to the United States in the fall of 2000 to pursue a degree in human resources development at the University of Minnesota. Three years later, she was invited by artist Carla Vogel to participate in a workshop at Intermedia—a multimedia series that included an exhibit of the work of immigrant artists. Though she did not consider herself an artist, Muratalieva discovered her inherent talent



Aksana posing in traditional Krygystan dress with her Kyrgyz heritage house ‘bozu-ui’

and passion at Intermedia Arts, and, she says, “My journey of self-discovery began.”

Intermedia later invited Muratalieva to lead a community workshop, *Culture Preserved*, and then to talk with students at El Colegio in Minneapolis about Kyrgyz culture. Her public presentations have led to more speaking and interpretive and performance engagements.

Muratalieva credits her mentors at Intermedia Arts with helping her build an artistic network and connecting her to new opportunities. Through Sandy Agustín, she met Altyñ, a Minnesota resident from the

neighboring country of Kazakhstan. Through this connection, Muratalieva has become involved with Connect US/Russia, an organization engaging critical issues facing the United States and the countries of the former Soviet Union through collaborative relationships. With the help of producer Dean Seal, whom she also met through Intermedia Arts, she became involved with *Small Kindnesses: Weather Permitting*, a project associated with the Hiawatha Light Rail line. Three of her audio pieces are being played at small kiosks in the Minneapolis Light Rail train stations from Nicollet Mall to Fort Snelling. Muratalieva says of Intermedia Arts, “Every time I show up there, something great happens!”

As an emerging artist, Muratalieva says her involvement with Intermedia Arts has shaped her artistic career, introduced her to the larger arts and cultural community, and helped her stay in touch with her culture. She feels the staff at Intermedia Arts welcomed her talent and gave her the confidence and drive to continue sharing her culture through visual art, dance, language interpretation, and music.



remaining 15 percent is earned from renting out studio spaces in several neighboring buildings and by employing product-based marketing strategies. The directors are working on ways to use extra space behind their building to generate income and earn more from the programs they run in schools, such as the popular hip-hop programs.

Intermedia Arts offers all comers memberships, which offer artists access to equipment and information. The board has been historically community and artist-dominated, but in 2003 added more people with business skills and ties to the financial community.

### Opportunities and Impact

Intermedia Arts plays a unique role in the lives of many Twin Cities multicultural artists. Sandy Agustín, a lifelong artist and choreographer, says of its impact on her personally: "I would not be doing what I am doing now without Intermedia Arts. This place is a great sounding board, a great place to create." From people who didn't consider themselves artists until coming to Intermedia Arts, to established artists, the organization has inspired the creativity and talent of people across the Twin Cities and enabled them to reach their own communities and broader audiences.

For example, Intermedia Arts' efforts to reach at-risk youth found Lizbeth, a once-disengaged teen, through its residency at the Work Opportunity Center. Eventually, Intermedia exhibited Lizbeth's



ArtCar Parade, 2005

NOBBERT MARKLIN

work—framed and matted for free—and brought her to an English-as-a-second-language class. The following summer, Lizbeth participated in Intermedia's bilingual workshop for teachers and eventually was offered a job with the organization.

Aksana Muratalieva, from Kyrgyzstan, and Koffi Mbairamadji, from Chad, are two immigrant artists who found contacts, encouragement, and resources at Intermedia Arts. Many others have received important exposure and career boosts, and in turn, have helped Intermedia bridge to the larger community. Somali filmmaker Yassin Jama, who considers Intermedia his artistic home, has connected Intermedia to other Somalis who are seeking space and programs. Aziz Osman, an important painter in his Somali homeland, had never exhibited in the United States, but his engagement with Intermedia has enabled him to produce and exhibit a new body of work. Francis Kofi, artistic director and co-founder of Haylor Bibimma, a West African drum and dance group, first rented space from Intermedia, went on to use it as fiscal agent, and then was featured in its *Immigrant Status* show.

Intermedia Arts aims to "think culturally," to be a resource for neighborhood groups, a place to which school kids can walk, and a

### Artist Profile: Koffi Mbairamadji

Koffi Mbairamadji arrived in Minnesota two years ago from the African nation of Chad. Although he was an established painter in his home country, it wasn't until his introduction to Intermedia Arts that Mbairamadji began to receive artistic recognition in the Twin Cities.

About a decade ago, Mbairamadji began to paint depictions of African images with links to Biblical scenes. In 2003, soon after arriving in Minnesota, a co-worker at Walker Art Center suggested Mbairamadji attend the Twin Cities' annual Fringe Festival. There Mbairamadji met an artist who asked if he'd be interested in displaying his work at an Intermedia Arts show called *Ndingbe*, part of its *Immigrant Status* series. Mbairamadji's work was accepted.

The piece he had on display turned into a

much longer adventure. He decided to expand it into a mural-like display with Biblical images from Genesis to Revelations. The now-completed work comprises 66 consecutive paintings.

Mbairamadji showed it for the first time at St. Mark's Episcopal Church and has since shown it throughout the Twin Cities.

Mbairamadji continues to work closely with Intermedia Arts. Artistic Director Sandy Agustín asked him to attend some of the organization's meetings and put together projects with other artists. He formed a group that is currently working on its first



project, *Traditional Values*. The group will bring artists from numerous cultures together to talk about the values from their respective cultures that shape their art.

"It's the seed that got him going and helped him meet other artists. It gave him the confidence to go after other resources," Agustín says.

Mbairamadji is working on a second series, *The Beauty of Nature*, large, mural-like panels designed to encourage people to love and preserve the nature around them. Its first showing will be in January 2006 at the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge.

## Intermedia Arts

good neighbor. It rents space across the street to artists at a reduced cost to artists and helps other arts-related organizations get started by acting as a fiscal agent. One organization, CreArte, a Latino art center and museum, eventually grew into its own nonprofit status with the help of Intermedia.

In local economic development and planning forums, Intermedia Arts works to infuse its approach of arts as an aid to community development. For instance, it is working with the Midtown Greenway Coalition to engage people in the neighborhood and with the Ryan Company, redeveloper of the huge Sears building a few blocks away, to help make the area safer.

### Challenges

To reach and integrate the large and diverse group of people Intermedia Arts aims to serve is a continuing challenge. Intermedia tries to find artists with connections in the many communities to act as “bridgers.” As with many other arts organizations, an added challenge is to encourage people to come to events and shows from outside their own cultures. The *Talking Suitcases* series has been a successful, creative effort to integrate across immigrant and migrant experiences. Intermedia’s directors search for new themes as well. As Agustín notes, “Artists in the community will change, and they will change us.”

Not all genres are equally easy to serve at Intermedia Arts. Attracting theater audiences has always been difficult, for instance. Intermedia Arts tries to do things no one else is doing, such as a wildly successful weekend “conference” of live performances and discussions on women in hip-hop.

Intermedia Arts is developing a new and interactive website, to which current Executive Director Daniel Gumnit is bringing his considerable experience as a video and Internet entrepreneur: “We are infusing digital technology into every aspect of our organization,” Gumnit says. Intermedia hopes to create a “relationship database” with links among people, their stories, and artistic assets—such as paintings, films, and music.

Fundraising is a never-ending task, especially because of the organization’s heavy reliance on contributed income and its unique community-oriented strategy. Borrup found that “it was a continual challenge to convince donors and funders that an arts center doesn’t have to be either community-oriented or art-oriented. It can be both, and the mix can be evolving.” Funders’ increasing attentiveness to community helps Intermedia’s current directors make their case.

Intermedia Arts is an example of a once artist-centric organization that has dynamically adjusted to changes in the art forms, artistic sensibilities, and diversity in its host region. Its embedding in its community and neighborhood is a great asset, and its ownership and lively occupancy of its building give it stability and visibility. It is helping to bring underrepresented groups into the ranks of artists in the region and is succeeding in many ways to help groups tackle problems in their communities through the arts.

## Juxtaposition Arts

Hip-hop, an underground youth movement, grew out of the Bronx during the 1970s and 1980s. Practiced by musicians, rappers, spoken-word artists, DJs, aerosol writers, muralists, and break dancers, it blurred the line between public and private art and between visual art, dance, and music, starting a revolution that reached younger people and provoked heated cultural debate. Using available materials such as spray paint to create art, aerosol writers (aka graffiti writers) were considered criminals by some and geniuses by others. While some graffiti artists still tag the urban environment, others have begun careers as creative entrepreneurs or have moved into the contemporary gallery scene.

Hip-hop artists who want to build careers need feedback, equipment, audiences, and business skills. They can benefit from a traditional fine arts foundation that encompasses art history, critique, and interpretation. Juxtaposition Arts, a Minneapolis-based urban youth visual arts organization, fills those roles. It engages audiences and influences individual artistic development through community collaborations, studio arts workshops, public mural programs, and art exhibitions. It raises the profile of aerosol art and provides resources and support for youth interested in urban art. Juxtaposition also works to enhance the identity of its neighborhood by celebrating its cultural diversity and youthfulness.

Juxtaposition occupies a 100-year-old brick building on the corner of West Broadway and Emerson Avenue in north Minneapolis’s Jordan neighborhood. The front door opens to a bi-level gallery space. Hip-hop music and joyful voices seep down from a second floor that houses administrative offices and additional work space.

### Emergence and Evolution

Juxtaposition, which recently celebrated its tenth anniversary, was formed out of the creative partnership between lifelong friends Roger Cummings and Peyton. Both developed a love for hip-hop culture in the early 1980s; as teenagers, they were widely respected aerosol writers in the Twin Cities. After graduating from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago with a degree in printmaking in 1993, Peyton returned to Minneapolis to open a gallery and studio. He invited Cummings, who was doing commissioned murals, customized textiles, illustrations, and teaching, to team teach with him at an after-school program in North Minneapolis, where the two had childhood roots.

Their first efforts took place under the social service umbrella of Professional Sports Linkage in the Glenwood/Lyndale public housing community. DeAnna Cummings and Peyton offered hands-on arts practice combined with art history and professional skill development. Many of their students came from nearby neighborhoods. Cummings, later a partner, says, “Peyton came out of art school without having been taught the business side of the arts. He learned from a mentor how to market and sell his work. Peyton thought we should do classes that taught kids how to make art and how to make it as an artist, where kids could think about art as a career path.”



In 1996, when their social service funding dwindled, Peyton and Cummings started Juxtaposition Arts. They chose “Juxtaposition,” a fine-arts term, to capture their intent to merge two seemingly opposite artistic genres—urban art and fine art. DeAnna Cummings, with business, community organizing, and nonprofit experience from work at the Council on Black Minnesotans and the Metropolitan Regional Arts Council, joined as part-time business manager and fundraising volunteer.

In the summer of 1996, the Minneapolis Arts Commission awarded Juxtaposition its first grant of \$1,500. The money enabled eight adolescents to attend an eight-week studio arts workshop. Soon, other organizations, including the North Minneapolis Club Fed, Council on Black Minnesotans, Metropolitan Regional Arts Council, and COMPAS, granted funds to Juxtaposition, and many people volunteered their time. DeAnna Cummings reflects, “North Minneapolis did not have other youth visual arts organizations, so the community was extremely supportive. All of the founders were doing it on love.”

To create a central space for its work, Juxtaposition sublet a warehouse space in 1997 for \$300 a month. The organization established its programs, connected with interested young people, and developed its core curriculum. But after two years, Juxtaposition had to leave the warehouse. For the next three years it worked out of a cramped two-bedroom apartment.

Without the square footage to accommodate its space-intensive arts and exhibition programs, the organization became more externally focused, partnering with parks, schools, and other organizations. Its mural program grew out of this nomadic existence. It also began bringing in national and regional artists to work with youth. Meanwhile, its board sought permanent space and opted to buy four

spaces on a corner rather than sign a long-term lease for a single building. DeAnna Cummings reflects, “We couldn’t be Juxtaposition without a permanent space.”

In February 2004, Juxtaposition opened its new doors and signaled its commitment to the community. It hopes to be an urban youth and culture center that utilizes mediums beyond the visual arts, such as spoken word, dance, and music, as well as artists’ live/work space and arts-friendly retail spaces. Its mission includes a vision

of public art as a catalyst for broader community dialogue. DeAnna Cummings says, “We picked West Broadway because it is a major commercial street in North Minneapolis and had once been the crown jewel of our neighborhood. We wanted to plant our permanent roots here.”

Much of Juxtaposition’s 2004 budget of \$150,000 is funded by contributions from The McKnight Foundation, COMPAS, Metropolitan Regional Arts Council, Medtronic Foundation, General Mills Foundation, Target Foundation, and the Bush Foundation. In its first year in the new facilities, its programming has also received a \$200,000 grant from the Minneapolis Empowerment Zone. Twenty-five percent of the organization’s budget is earned income from community arts partnerships, workshops in K-12 schools and universities, mural tours, and speaking engagements.

## Opportunities and Impact

Juxtaposition offers programs in studio arts, community arts partnerships, summer public art, and exhibitions. Participants range in age from eight to twenty-one years. With a three-person staff, a dozen project-based artists, and more than a dozen volunteers, the organization serves 500 youth a year.

For example, the Studio Arts Program runs after school three days a week for ten weeks. Beginning, advanced, and intermediate artists enroll to work with professional artists in different mediums. The

## Juxtaposition Arts

curriculum emphasizes fine art creation, artistic critique, art history, and an exhibition. The real cost of the program is \$1,000 per student, but students pay nothing and receive free access to the space plus food, framed work, t-shirts, field trips, and materials, within an art program that is comparable to a college preparatory class.

The Community Arts Partnership program places artists from Juxtaposition Arts at local schools to teach classes based on the client's needs. Most of the dozen artists on Juxtaposition's teaching roster are graduates of its youth program. Juxtaposition recently worked with eighty students at the Perpich Center for Arts Education High School in Golden Valley, teaching core academic classes such as linguistics, science, and urban design through the arts.

Juxtaposition's Summer Public Art program, formerly known as the Community Murals Program, is its most publicly visible activity. Students move between indoor studio-based projects and outdoor public art. Roger Cummings says, "Creating public artwork gives youth a sense of ownership of their neighborhood's public spaces. Murals promote neighborhood pride." Since its inception, artists have created thirteen murals throughout the inner city.

Through Juxtaposition's exhibition and guest artist programs, students create, display, and sell their work. Youth artists receive eighty percent of the proceeds of artwork sales and Juxtaposition the rest. They've also held youth exhibits at nontraditional venues such as

restaurants, malls, and office buildings, as well as at community events such as the Uptown Art Fair. Through its visiting artists' program, Juxtaposition exposes young people to renowned urban artists like Lady Pink, Blade, and Crash and Daze, as well as successful local artists.

Juxtaposition has made a difference for young artists. Some have embraced art as a career. A handful of Juxtaposition graduates have continued their arts education at the Minneapolis College of Art and Design and the University of Minnesota. Others have bypassed the formal education system to become young entrepreneurs, starting graphic design and clothing businesses.

All of the youth artists interviewed speak passionately about Juxtaposition as a home for artistic and professional development. Jonah Miller, co-founder of Turn Style Clothing Authority, says, "Roger and Peyton have helped me and inspired me and encouraged me. They are always there to offer constructive ways for me to improve, and they give fresh ideas." Others mention that the program has taught them how to showcase their artwork and given them access to highly regarded mentors, expensive materials, diversified arts education, and exhibition opportunities.

Juxtaposition attracts students from all over the metro region. Roger Cummings says, "We expose kids to visiting artists from Yugoslavia, Africa, and Ireland. It isn't just about putting work together but

## Artist Profile: Tequila Kates-Lewis

Tequila Kates-Lewis, a former student and occasional teacher with Juxtaposition Arts, is a black urban artist interested in the spiritual aspect of black culture. Her work spans a multitude of creative processes, including sandstone sculpture, customizing wearable textiles, painting, airbrush, and printmaking. As a clothing designer, she uses acrylic paints to decorate jeans, tennis shoes, and jean



jackets. Recently, Kates-Lewis participated in the B-Girl Be Summit, a conference supported by Intermedia Arts and Juxtaposition that featured women influenced by hip-hop. Her piece, *The Feminist*, was exhibited with thirty-two other highly regarded national and international artists.

Interested in art since the age of five, Kates-Lewis began drawing to compete with her older sister. "I drew because my older sister did," she says. "I drew all of the time

until I got better than her." When she was eleven years old, the north Minneapolis native enrolled in the Professional Sports Linkage after-school program, where artists Peyton and Roger Cummings taught a workshop. When Juxtaposition formed its own nonprofit youth program, Kates-Lewis was an original participant. She recalls, "Roger and Peyton took notice of my talent from the beginning

stages. They started talking to me about how I could make money as an artist by selling my work if I put in the effort. When I started making my own money through Juxtaposition, I realized I wanted to be my own boss." While attending North High School, where she graduated in 2001, she continued to participate in many of Juxtaposition's programs.

Kates-Lewis says Juxtaposition has had a marked impact on her personal, professional,

and artistic development. As a one-stop shop for her burgeoning arts career, it has given her access to critical feedback, mentors, materials, exhibition opportunities, and a supportive staff. It has given her the encouragement to stand up for herself as an individual artist. "Who I am as a young female artist comes from my involvement with Juxtaposition," she says. "I can speak critically about my art. I can stretch my own canvas. I know how to make publicity fliers. I know how to set up a gallery for an exhibition. I can manage and profit from my own art."

Kates-Lewis also sees Juxtaposition creating and implementing neighborhood improvement projects that visually enhance the public space on the North Side. She says, "We are very connected as an organization to the neighborhood."

Reflecting on her ten years with Juxtaposition, she says, "I was your average hard ghetto kid. Roger and Peyton took the one small thing that I was good at, painting and drawing, and told me to go after it. They taught me to respect my talent. Juxta is me and I am Juxta."

showing kids how far they can go with it. You may not be able to speak a particular language in a particular country, but if you show a fellow aerosol writer an art book with photos of murals and pieces in it, that has the power to be a universal language. No other visual art movement has had this kind of connection to youth.”

Juxtaposition is active in plans to revitalize its neighborhood. West Broadway is one of the most important commercial streets in North Minneapolis. Because it is also the dividing line between neighborhoods north and south of it, the community’s sense of ownership of the street is limited. Juxtaposition believes that murals, sculpture, seating, and other people-centered amenities can transform West Broadway from a seedy-looking commercial strip into a welcoming community center.

To this end, Juxtaposition two years ago initiated a project called *Remix: Creating Places for People on West Broadway* to create community pride, identity, and ownership of public space in North Minneapolis and specifically along West Broadway Avenue, where it is estimated that nearly half of the residents are African Americans under 21 years of age. In a collaboration with the West Broadway Area Coalition and the University of Minnesota’s Neighborhood Planning for Community Revitalization program, the project will help youth create safe spaces using art. “The street is insensitive to the needs of this highly pedestrian population,” DeAnna Cummings says. “It is built at a scale for cars. Remix is our attempt to do something about it by empowering younger people to remake it in their own way.”

## Challenges

Juxtaposition sees the development of the West Broadway project as one of its greatest challenges. But it also needs to balance the Remix project with its ongoing programming. As DeAnna Cummings puts it: “We cannot become so engrossed in the long-range work of neighborhood development that it leads us astray.” For Remix, Juxtaposition needs financial partners and buy-in from the community-at-large on governmental and grassroots levels, a tall order. But it also is committed to staying focused on its arts missions.

Like many emerging artist centers, Juxtaposition struggles to match staffing and resources with its programming. In its programming success and projected growth with Remix, it wants to keep its budget under control. One response to this challenge is for Juxtaposition to restructure its board, adding new members who will help it identify new sources of funding. DeAnna Cummings sees it clearly as “taking a leap from a family-run business to a medium-size community-run organization.”

Juxtaposition Arts is an organization for youth artists in the Twin Cities that melds the fine arts with the hip-hop arts movement. With its unique programming, Juxtaposition has already had a demonstrable professional and artistic impact on its participants. In addition, Juxtaposition has ambitions to be an anchor, a revitalizing organization in its diverse neighborhood, helping young people employ art to beautify its central corridor and make it safe and functional for residents.

## Smaller City Centers Bridging Artists and Community

### *Banfill-Locke Center for the Arts*

Suburban art centers have multiplied in the past ten years to meet the needs of growing numbers of artists and audience members living beyond the urban core. In recent years, a few of the suburban arts centers have begun to serve artists as distinct from audiences. Fridley’s Banfill-Locke Center for the Arts, one of the first such art centers in the metropolitan region, takes a particular interest in nurturing the careers of its local artists, including those who want to pursue creative work as a livelihood. The center encourages artists in all disciplines through opportunities to teach, exhibit, market, and perform their work, simultaneously enriching the quality of life of the community at large.



Banfill-Locke Center for the Arts sits in Manomin County Park at the confluence of Rice Creek and the Mississippi River, seven miles north of downtown Minneapolis. Built in Fridley in 1847 by John Banfill, the state’s first auditor, as an inn for soldiers and fur traders, the National Register building later served as the Locke family dairy farm and summer house, and then as a post office, scout camp, and furniture storage unit (Silberman, 2005). Now owned by Anoka County, the two-story Greek Revival house is surrounded by lush gardens and wildlife. The entrance opens into a quaint store that sells local and regional artwork. A narrow doorway leads to a gallery, adjacent to which is a workspace where artists and teachers meet for classes and workshops. The upstairs houses a small library, administrative offices, conference room, and two studios for resident artists.

## Emergence and Evolution

A group of visual artists founded Banfill-Locke in 1979 as the North Suburban Center for the Arts. It was located in the basement of a strip mall storefront in the village of St. Anthony. As one of the first suburban arts organizations, it continues to serve the area near Interstate 694, including Shoreview, Fridley, Anoka, and Coon Rapids.

In 1988, discovering that the county was using the building to store furniture, a community leader lobbied for its renovation as an art center. The county agreed to partner with the North Suburban group. Through its Parks and Recreation Department, Anoka County, who owns the facility and grounds, would maintain the facility in addition to working with the board of directors of the North Suburban Center for the Arts to hire and pay for the director while the arts organization would have stewardship of the house. The center was renamed the Banfill-Locke Center for the Arts (BLCA).

Over the years, the organization has struggled with leadership challenges. Embedded in small town politics, it has experienced a

revolving door of directors. Five years ago, Anoka County hired as its director Lia Rivamonte, a professional actor and painter with arts administration experience. As Banfill-Locke's sole employee, she managed the organization. Friction grew between the president of the BLCA board and Rivamonte over the director's role and organizational vision and goals. A small but powerful group on the board wanted to build an art barn on the property, even though it had little community, financial, or logistical support. The plan did not seem feasible to Rivamonte, who believed that they should devote their energies to developing the internal structure of the organization and strengthen and expand its services and programs. Eventually, her county position was eliminated.

After a fierce internal battle within the BLCA board, the Anoka County Commissioners removed itself from this sticky situation, handing over a portion of funding each year to Banfill-Locke without oversight authority. After voting out its president, the BLCA board chose to use these funds to keep Rivamonte on as director. Rivamonte says the Director of the Parks and Recreation Department, John VonDeLinde, and then Operations Manager,

### Artist Profile:

## Jessica Lee Shimek

Emerging photographer Jessica Shimek explores the crossover between abstract and realist ideals expressed through human memory. Her work, photographed at night, often superimposes shots of military bases and trucks over train yards to depict the relationship of a man and a woman distanced by war and how their shared memories converge and diverge. She may accompany these images with journal entries describing the day-to-day life of a military wife. She says, "Train yards have been a constant comfort in my life. Military bases have not. When my husband went overseas to Iraq, I moved away from familiar train tracks into this condominium so that he could have a place to come home to. But I can no longer hear the trains."

A Fridley native, Shimek discovered photography while studying journalism at Anoka-Ramsey Community College. In the darkroom, she assisted the editor of the monthly school paper and fell in love with the working process. With a two-year degree, she left Anoka to pursue her BFA in photography at the University of Minnesota. Now in the early stages of her career as a graduate, she struggles to make a living as an artist.

Shimek applauds the Twin Cities as a



supportive home for emerging artists with affordable opportunities for mentorship, critical feedback, and education. A former teacher, Laura Migliorino, contacted Shimek about volunteering for her old University of Minnesota classmate, Lia Rivamonte, at Banfill-Locke Art

Center. Welcoming the distraction with her husband overseas, she volunteered and soon began designing a curriculum and teaching black-and-white photography classes. In October 2004, she received an invitation to be a resident artist, along with writer Nancy Fredrickson and painter Judith Anthony.



Distance

The residency has had a powerful impact on Shimek's professional and artistic development: "It made me feel that someone thought my art was worthy of having that gallery space," she says. Her exhibition, *Waiting Ribbons*, was displayed at the Rice Creek Festival in September 2005. Rivamonte mentored Shimek on developing and presenting a show: "Lia taught me how to hang my work and to manipulate lighting. She helped me understand and control audience flow from one image to the next." The residency also allows her to teach classes and work with people truly interested in the art form.

The artistic community Shimek encountered at Banfill-Locke helped her establish a network of peers with whom she travels to art shows. Together, they help each other market their work and share the booth costs.

Because of her passion and appreciation for Banfill-Locke, Shimek continues to volunteer, coordinating the class schedule, assisting Rivamonte in the gallery, and handling the website. She cannot speak highly enough about the impact the center has on her neighborhood: "The people who know it is there love it. But we are still trying to get people to realize it is there. It is an amazing resource to have in your backyard."

Jon Oyanagi, helped guide the organization through this rough period: “VondeLinde believes that access to the arts is an integral part of health and well-being of a community. If it weren’t for his support, we wouldn’t exist,” she says.

Fourteen people sit on Banfill-Locke’s governing board. The annual operating budget hovers around \$95,000, of which Anoka County contributes \$40,000 through a contract that is reviewed each year. The Anoka County Parks and Recreation Department maintains the building and provides basic utilities. Earned income and individual fundraising covers the rest, including support from the Metropolitan Regional Arts Council and local businesses. Individuals contribute about \$5,000 annually. Classes and workshops generate about \$25,000 of income. Funders have recently been supporting suburban art centers with larger grants.

Banfill-Locke sees its role as ensuring that area residents have a place that speaks to their need for art and promulgates the idea that art is a vital part of daily life. It supports artists through classes, workspace, residencies, and exhibitions. Classes and workshops cover a wide range of topics—drawing, painting, photography, sculpture, movement, and book art—and serve all ages. The center also serves the general population by showcasing these and other Minnesota artists. For a modest fee, the center’s 250 members receive discounts on classes and items in the store. Other artists’ groups, such as a figure drawing cooperative and a writers’ group, also meet at the center.

With a \$6,000 grant from Medtronic, Banfill-Locke supports an artist residency of twelve to eighteen months for two artists in the area. Each artist receives a small stipend and twenty-four hour access to a studio space on the second floor. The program ends with an exhibition. While in residence, the recipients can teach classes or workshops and act as the artistic advisors to the board.

Half of the ten gallery exhibitions yearly are dedicated to local community artists in unjuried shows, and the other half to Minnesota artists (including local artists) in a juried process. Craig Blacklock’s North Shore photographs were featured in a 2004 exhibit. Local shows have included Artists del Norte, an Anoka County group without its own space, exhibiting the work of fifty of its members. The annual member show, curated by Rivamonte, features the work of emerging, mid-career, and established artists in the region.

Banfill-Locke’s programming is not confined to the visual arts. Partnering with SASE: The Write Place, the center hosts the Carol Connolly Reading Series that connects city and suburban art centers. The store sells local artists’ paintings and books by authors who participate in the writing series. It also sells art supplies.

Rivamonte finds artists and visitors at Banfill-Locke much like those in urban areas. “I had this bias when I came about being cutting edge and thinking of myself as more sophisticated. But in a very curious way, people here are more open minded,” she says. “Here, people are surprisingly willing to accept different types of work.” For example, in 2005, the center hosted a sound installation show by three artists from St. Cloud State University that was well received.

## Opportunities and Impact

Banfill-Locke provides area artists an artistic home within their own community. Painter Nedo Kojic, an Eastern European refugee who moved to the United States in 2000, felt alienated in his new environment and immediately connected with the center, where he eventually won a residency. Kojic says, “At the end of my residency, I had a solo show that contributed greatly to my art career and artistic development. The residency also gave me my first experience as an art instructor in the United States.”

Banfill-Locke works to overcome the suburban stereotype that artists should not be paid for their services. Its classes and workshops have given artists opportunities to teach and earn money. Rivamonte says, “The mentality exists that the artists are hobbyists and that they get pleasure out of teaching regardless if they get paid or not. We are working to change that.”

Banfill-Locke helps to raise the suburban community’s profile as a cultured place. Many retired people have found it a place to explore their artistic potential. Classes help build an artistic community for those interested in networking around art and culture. Rivamonte says, “It is less judgmental here.” The center also participates in community events, such as the annual Rice Creek Festival.

The center recently received a community award from Values First, an important Fridley organization. Rivamonte says, “I am happy that they finally accept that the center is an asset to the community and that we are here to serve the community.”

## Challenges

Moving up to the next level by expanding space and programming is the center’s biggest challenge. “We need to make a giant leap,” Rivamonte says. But there are several obstacles. Because the building is historic, the center cannot add onto it. Funding is needed to expand programming and add another employee who could help with marketing, the store, and fundraising. It’s hard for Rivamonte, as the sole employee, to find time for grant writing and strategic planning.

Some of the Center’s problems are rooted in the character of its suburban milieu. An ethic of volunteerism runs deep among those who are active, and many other area residents are recent arrivals and not very tied to the community. This makes it difficult to raise contributions. Rivamonte says, “It is hard for people to ask for money, even for board members. The attitude is that asking for money is begging.”

Nevertheless, Banfill-Locke Center for the Arts has been successful in nurturing artists in the north suburbs of the Twin Cities through its exhibition program, artist residencies, meeting space, small store, and teaching opportunities. It raises the profile of individual artists and groups of artists while providing a vibrant and diverse cultural space for the community at large. It demonstrates that quality stretches beyond the core city limits and can be found in every community, especially the often-dismissed suburbs.

## Duluth Art Institute

Artists in smaller cities have the same needs as their metropolitan counterparts for encouragement, information, feedback, access to space and equipment, funding, and exhibition and marketing opportunities. But these things can be hard to find. On the other hand, artists in smaller cities may be more visible to each other and find it easier to network informally, including across the disciplines. Duluth, Minnesota, population 87,000 in a bi-state metro area of 240,000, offers an opportunity to explore the role of a single key arts organization, the Duluth Art Institute, in providing services for artists in such a setting.

Over the past three decades, the Duluth Art Institute has moved beyond being an amateur arts club to become an important nurturer of emerging visual artists in the region. Under the innovative leadership of several artistic directors, it has developed and operates studio space for some disciplines and exhibits promising work accompanied by dialogues with other artists and the public. The Institute has helped to attract new artists to the region

and to retain them along with homegrown artists. Focusing on learning through the visual arts, the Institute sustains regional artists with exhibits and professional development, while promoting participation in the creative process for all ages and skill levels. Many of the Institute's programmatic and financing challenges are grounded in its de-industrializing city setting, where its artist-centric activities compete for organizational attention and resources with other local priorities.

The Duluth Art Institute currently cohabits a gorgeous limestone building, the Depot, with other historic and civic organizations at the west end of the city's downtown. There it houses its administrative offices, galleries, gallery shop, weaving studio, and black-and-white photo lab. The spacious galleries, located on the second floor, attract many of the region's artists, and openings are networking opportunities. Potters and painters may rent studio space in another building, the Lincoln Park Building, in the city's working-class west end, and all artists have access, for a modest fee, to a digital imaging lab there as well.

### Artist Profile: Scott Murphy

In his solo Duluth Art Institute show in October 2003, painter Scott Murphy exhibited twenty-one large oils under the subtitle "New Narrative Paintings." Reviewer Julia Durst found them stunning and strange, a co-existence of beauty and content rare in these modern times (Durst, 2003). Reviewer Glenn Gordon was intrigued with Murphy's way of captioning his work, "running legends right across the bottom of the canvases in Roman serif typefaces of great elegance....oblique, dry comment from the side streets of the painter's mind" (Gordon, 2004). Murphy's *Andre's Wandering Accordionist*, included in the show, graces our back cover.

Murphy remembers making art while growing up in St. Croix Beach, Minnesota. Although he completed a BFA in 1979 at the University of Minnesota—Duluth, it was commercial billboard painting that helped him learn his craft while also enabling him to support his family. Murphy continues to make a living as a union painter, doing murals, banners,



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and lettering for residences and buildings, including the Duluth Art Institute. He does his serious painting after hours.

The Duluth Art Institute show, curated by Jeffrey Kalstrom, was a great experience for Murphy, attracting viewers and publicity. Murphy enjoyed the chance to discuss his work in the dialogue session, and he sold four of the paintings. Murphy has exhibited work in the Institute's Arrowhead Biennials, one year winning the second place prize, and has taken a Photoshop class at the Institute.

Murphy credits Steffl with helping promote his work to collectors in the region. "John had energy and cleverness. Although the politics on the Art Institute board were

always brutal, he had a forceful vision, and he got things done," Murphy says. "He sold a painting of mine to a local bank. He knew I was laid off and that I needed the money. That is the kind of guy he is." When Steffl was diagnosed with cancer in 2004, shortly after being fired from the Art Institute, Murphy joined the committee to start ArtFund, an emergency fund for artists without insurance. He asked artists to donate work to be sold at fixed prices in a series of venues. The ArtFund event raised \$20,000 and, Murphy reflects, shows the community and commitment among Duluth/Superior and even Minneapolis artists.

Murphy hopes to spend more time on his own painting and marketing. He shows at galleries for exposure and also tries to sell directly via online art galleries and

Mnartists.org. He has received only small grants, one to cover the costs of his frames for the Duluth Art Institute exhibit. Murphy supports public funding for the arts but feels there should be a note of thanks sent to those taxpayers forced to pay for other people's frames.



Waiting for Father



## Emergence and Evolution

The Duluth Art Institute was formed in the late 19th century as an art club at the city's College of St. Scholastica. In the heyday of the city's commercial success as a port and financial center, the Institute formed one element in an ensemble of arts-producing and -presenting organizations that mirrored those in other rich eastern

and midwestern cities. Underwritten by an extraordinary number of millionaires per capita, the Duluth Playhouse was added in 1916 and the Duluth Symphony in 1934. Performers like Charlie Chaplin came through town.

But over the last 50 years, Duluth's economic and cultural character has changed dramatically. The steel mill closed, the iron ore mines have waned and waxed but with fewer employees, and

## Artist Profile: Shannon and Michael Cousino

At a summer 2004 *New Works* show at the Duluth Art Institute, photographer Shannon Cousino's emotional, light-filled black-and-white self-portraits hung beside her husband Michael's glossy photos of old wooden copper mine buildings incorporating scraps of wood.

Shannon and Michael met in photography class at the University of Minnesota—Duluth. Michael, from Eau Claire, Wisconsin and Rochester, Minnesota, was trying out different mediums when he took the class from Gloria Brush, who showed the students slides of what other contemporary artists were doing. "That opened me up," he says. "I saw different ways of doing things. I saw I could be a photographer and do nontraditional work, be more of an artist than a photographer." Using abandoned copper structures on Michigan's Keweenaw Peninsula, he began experimenting with a series. "I like materials and strive for a way to complete the piece, to incorporate the wood and metal from environments that I am shooting," he says.

Shannon, who grew up in Superior, Wisconsin, went on to get a graduate degree from the University of Wisconsin—Superior. "I wanted to use myself as subject," she says, "I was too shy to ask others." Her work is moody and personal. "If I used others, I wouldn't feel that it was coming from my heart," she says. "I shot so that people would not know it was me. I wanted the result to be more universal."



Early shows for the two included a "foot in the door" exhibit at the Norshore Theater and a 2001 exhibit at Artspace's Washington Studios gallery, where they rent a three-bedroom unit (with one bedroom serving as a darkroom). Duluth's Tweed Museum of Art bought one of Shannon's pieces at the latter opening and invited her to give a lecture there. In 1996, Shannon and Michael won first prize in the Institute's Biennial show for a photograph on which they collaborated. But the most important exposure was the 2004 Duluth Art Institute exhibit. "We had a good, long show and sold a lot of work, one third of it at the opening," says Shannon. "We sold a lot to arts people but also to strangers, people I wanted to know."

Shannon and Michael see the Duluth Art Institute as "one of the most important galleries in Duluth for contemporary modern work, a venue to see more progressive things." They credit John Steffl's leadership and encouragement. Says Shannon, "We could

have been disregarded as young kids, but he treated us as if we were real artists worthy of a look. John made the Institute an exciting and top of the line place to show art." Steffl also helped them learn about marketing their work. The two also credit Jeff Kalstrom, who led their artists' dialogue.

Shannon and Michael still work at other jobs to cover the rent and buy materials. Michael works half-time running his own design and photography business working especially for clients in the outdoor equipment industry, beginning with Granite Gear in Two Harbors, Minnesota. In 2004, Shannon, who had also been a student teacher, became the full-time education director at the Duluth Art Institute.

The Cousinos are active members of the Washington Studios co-op. They love living where they work, especially when prepping for an art show. "You have to be careful with hazardous materials, but you can just work around the clock," says Michael. They especially enjoy being part of a community of artists.

Both artists credit Brush, who lives in Duluth and exhibits her photographs all over the United States and internationally, with demonstrating that one didn't have to leave Duluth to be successful. "Every year, the art community grows here," Michael said. "Musicians, visual artists and writers mingle and are supportive of each other. The revitalized downtown can be a draw."



SHANNON COUSINO



SHANNON COUSINO



MIKE COUSINO

trucking has diverted shipments of many commodities away from the port. Wealth has melted away over the generations. The major employers are now universities and colleges, a huge health care complex, and the insurance and tourism sectors.

Transformation of the Art Institute into an organization that nurtures regional artists happened against this backdrop. Bob DeArmond was hired in 1977 as the Art Institute's executive director. He insisted the job be full-time, arguing that the Institute needed to address all artists in the community, not just the watercolorists who took its few classes. The board agreed. The organization moved from a downtown storefront to the Depot and began much of its current programming, adding a broader array of classes and facilities for potters, photographers, and fiber artists and serving as the primary exhibition venue for Duluth area and regional artists.

DeArmond, along with his successor John Steffl and recent exhibitions coordinator Jeffrey Kalstrom, worked to convince the board that nurturing quality art was the best way to attract the audiences the board wanted. In the 1970s and 1980s, the organization became artist-driven. The crafts, such as ceramics and weaving, were particularly strong components in this endeavor, with

studios created for them. By the early 1990s, the Duluth art scene was drawing talented artists from elsewhere and spawning new arts groups, such as Common Language, a nonprofit dedicated to creating novel ways to create and see art. The group produced a huge Halloween self-portrait show in Joy Kops Gallery, ran a regranting program focused on the creation of functional art for community gardens, and, most recently, organized the summer North Shore Iron Pour in northwest Wisconsin.

Steffl, an accomplished potter and painter, became the director of the Institute in 1993 and greatly enhanced the quality of artistic programming thereafter. He believed that services for artists, designed to improve their work and help them market it, should be funded at the Institute. Reflects Duluth artist and critic Ann Klefstad, "Steffl ran the Institute as a doorway to professional practice. Before this, there were precious few paths into real art careers for local artists."

Steffl revamped the exhibition program and ramped up publicity. He made the biennial exhibit competition more prestigious. These investments in artistic quality paid off in larger grants to the Institute, and the annual budget grew from \$150,000 to \$350,000. Steffl also

## Artist Profile: Annette Lee

Painter Annette Lee explains her work as spiritual doorways and mile markers commemorating past events. Horses and stars often appear as central features. "We are human beings thrown into the material world," says Lee. "How do we keep the spirit side of ourselves going?" She addresses that question in her work and considers her painting as one answer for herself.



Lee says she was born an artist. A mixed-race Native American with Chinese, French, and Irish ancestry from St. Louis, Lee identifies most strongly with her Sioux heritage. From junior high school on, Lee was attracted to both astronomy and art. At the University of California—Berkeley, she studied math and astronomy, planning to go to grad school in astrophysics. Just as she was graduating, she did her first vision quest, four days of fasting. She asked herself what she was living for, and started over in painting. Lee completed her second undergraduate degree, in painting, at the University of Illinois, supporting herself by tutoring in physics and math, and then an MFA in painting at Yale on a scholarship, working also as a research assistant in geophysics.

Accepting a chance to teach both art and

science at Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College in Cloquet, Minnesota, Lee visited the Duluth Art Institute one day and met John Steffl, who offered her a solo show. "My experience there was phenomenal," she reflects. The publicity attracted viewers and buyers. "The night before the show, people called wanting to buy work, and I sold half the paintings on opening

day." Lee says the Art Institute show "gave me a huge boost of motivation and set off an avalanche in my work." With her earnings, she bought an easel and other arts supplies.

Lee says the Duluth Art Institute is crucial in exposing people to broader notions of art. She has brought her classes of Native American and white working-class students there. "My students are often

shocked, upset and angry. They don't like the abstraction, the fluff. I have to help open the doors for them and get them to talk about it." Lee prods her students to submit their work, too.

Still devoted to science, Lee moved to St. Louis in the fall of 2005 to pursue a master's degree in astrophysics at Washington University. The Duluth interlude was important for her as a Native American and as an artist, winning her exposure and

feedback she never expected. In an old country farmhouse outside St. Louis, she plans to fix up the summer kitchen as a painting studio and get connected with a local gallery and the art community. "My studio will always be up and running and always be a part of myself and my life," she says. "One of my primary goals is to stay balanced. I know it's going to be challenging, but I won't give it up."



Fall Horses



SHANNON COUSINO

The Duluth Art Institute at the Depot



DULUTH ART INSTITUTE STAFF

started an Artist Services program. He helped artists write grant proposals and figure out how to market themselves and their work. If requested, he provided artists with a free critique service at their studios. Believing that visual artists needed access to digital equipment to help publish their artwork, Steffl and his education director Linda Hebenstreit raised grant money from the Duluth-Superior Area Community Foundation to purchase equipment and renovate a room in the Lincoln Park Building as a digital lab. Steffl raised the profile of the Institute in the larger community and state and increased the diversity of artists exhibited, with more women and Native American artists shown.



SHANNON COUSINO

The Duluth Art Institute, Lincoln Park Building

The artistic leadership of the Institute has been in turmoil in recent years. After prolonged conflict with the board over finances and programming mix, Steffl and Hebenstreit left in 2002, and Kalstrom was fired in 2005. The new director, Samantha Gibb-Roff, is working to expand the educational outreach of the Institute and to solidify its patronage and funding base.

## Opportunities and Impact

The Duluth Art Institute currently serves artists through its exhibition programs, classes, and stewardship of space and tools. It is a membership organization, mostly of artists. Members pay on a sliding scale, from \$30 for students and \$60 for households, with everything over that considered a contribution. Members receive the Institute's newsletter, discounts on classes, the right to exhibit in the annual member's show, and access to rental studio space. Members have the right to vote for members of the board, comprised of Duluth area artists, business people, and patrons.

The Institute's exhibitions, openings, and dialogue sessions provide exposure, networking, and feedback for all artists whose work is shown there. Kalstrom raised the visibility of dialogue sessions, introduced by

Steffl, at which exhibiting artists interact with all comers about their work. In the summer of 2005, he curated a much talked-about show titled *The Young and the Restless*, featuring artists under 30.

The various visual art forms are served in different ways. The Fiber Handcrafters Guild and the Watercolor Society meet regularly in the Institute's space. Potters have

access to rental studios and kilns, recently enhanced and moved from the Depot to the Lincoln Park building, where the entire basement is now devoted to ceramics. Fiber Guild artists, affiliated with the Institute since 1974, enjoy dedicated fiber space and looms in the basement of the Depot, while photographers may rent darkroom time. The Institute hosts classes in any number of visual arts forms, mostly for beginners but including master classes in ceramics and watercolors. Classes offer more experienced artists an opportunity to teach and a modest increment to income. In the 1990s, the Institute participated in an outreach program that placed artists in residencies with schools throughout northeastern Minnesota.

Visual artists in Duluth say the Duluth Art Institute has been important to their development as artists, their ability to make a career of their work, and their willingness to come to and stay in Duluth. Aspiring artists and those who chose to relocate to Duluth describe how the Institute was the first port of call for them—a place to network and make friends. Landing a solo exhibit at the Institute is important to emerging artists' commitment to Duluth, as well as for the development of their careers. Classes and studio space have been valuable to many, and networks and artistic friendships formed around the Institute endure, even when artists no longer need the instruction, services, or space.

Several artists believe that the artist-oriented programming at the Institute and its stimulus to the gallery scene have helped to build a

downtown culture in Duluth, a city whose commercial heart had languished for decades. “Nobody was on the streets ten years ago,” remembers Kalstrom. “Cultural life is happening now after dark, with restaurants, galleries, and people-watching.”

## Challenges

With 550 members and an annual budget of \$350,000, the Duluth Art Institute has almost as many members as the Northfield Arts Guild, with just over half its budget but more space and programs to manage (Table 1). But there is little arts support rooted in Duluth’s political economy, and the Institute faces a number of stubborn problems: its location, its name, and its ambitions, each with implications for staffing and programs.

Just about everyone involved with the Institute agrees that the Depot location is not optimal. It houses several other organizations and is run by the Railroad Museum board and a realty company. The Institute has little control over the space or the building’s use policy. The Institute’s galleries are invisible from the front entry, where visitors must pay \$9 and usually move on to one of several museums. Technically, no fee is charged to visit the Institute’s galleries, but this fact isn’t publicized at the entrance, and the cost serves as a deterrent. Some people also consider the Institute’s name problematic, implying a permanent collection and an *effete clientele*.

Because of these problems, traffic to and revenue from the Institute’s exhibitions is modest. The Institute receives support from the Minnesota State Arts Board and regional foundations in amounts similar to those received by similarly sized organizations, but the costs of operating and upgrading its Lincoln Park Building, an unfinished project, are relatively high. The board and management struggle mightily with money matters. Part of the problem has been the ambitious agenda of the Institute—community outreach and education, high-quality exhibitions, and artist services. The Duluth Art Institute has never had the resources or staff to adequately manage and fund all three.

Tight money, large program ambitions, and indecision about direction have created tensions within the board and/or between various constituencies and the Institute’s leadership over the past decade. Two lines of cleavage are distinguishable, present in recent restructurings. First, there is the tension, felt by many arts centers, between using revenues from some programs to cross-subsidize others, versus relying on an “every tub on its own bottom” approach, in which program size is dictated by the ability to raise revenue for it. In the past, revenue generated from the Institute’s educational activities helped to float the exhibition and artist services programs. The changeover from Steffl to Gibb-Roff reflects a shift toward equal



footing between exhibition and education, each of which is currently just breaking even.

Some artists fear that in the longer run, this shift will mean softer, crowd-pleasing exhibitions. Board chair Marlys Johnson sees it differently: “Artists are benefiting from the Art Institute, but the average public is not attending. We need something that pulls people in, gets them to participate in art.” In addition, some artists believe that competition for Institute resources endures between craft-

based art forms (weaving and ceramics) and painting, photography, and sculptural work, as well as visual art forms that bring new ideas and techniques to the broader community. Gibb-Roff dismisses this concern: “We are working to show craft and art in the galleries.”

The Institute’s leadership is currently pursuing a strategy that is more revenue-driven and community-conscious than in the past. Although the Institute’s budget under Steffl’s directorship rose from \$150,000 to \$350,000 because of foundation support for artist-centered programming, such programming is not a reliable money-raiser. As education director Shannon Cousino explains it: “Unfortunately we sink or swim on a tight budget, and it is definitely necessary to cater to those who have the money, who support what art can do in a person’s life.”

Gibb-Roff, who successfully started one small art center and turned around another financially challenged midsized art center in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan before taking the Institute job, hopes to attract more non-artist members to the Institute by devoting one of the two galleries to more interactive, fun arts programming aimed at children and families.

The Institute is tackling its visibility problem by creating a new gallery shop by the Depot entrance. It is taking art off-site to an experimental theater lobby in collaboration with the Duluth Playhouse and piloting an art rental program for local businesses, promoting, displaying, and encouraging sales of local artists’ work. The Institute remains committed to artists: “We are very aware that our core constituency is our artists,” says Gibb-Roff. “They form the basis of everything here.”

Some artists and arts observers in Duluth think that the Institute should liberate itself from the Depot and move to a storefront embedded in the blossoming pedestrian life of the city. Others would mix artistic media more, blending music and performance with visual arts events.

In Duluth-Superior, other groups periodically emerge to serve artists and audiences in novel ways. In 2004, a group of young people launched the Twin Ports Music and Arts Collective, renting a downtown space with the intent to offer a nontraditional, nonprofit setting to encourage artists of all ages, especially those in bands that can’t play in bars, dancers with new material, and visual

artists not yet ready for the Institute or the galleries. They lasted less than a year, unable to charge enough at the door to cover the rent. Two buildings with live/work and studio space for artists—Artspace’s Washington Studios and Superior’s new Kraemer-led Red Mug Gallery—have galleries and host artistic events. Mnarist.org offers Duluth artist-critics opportunities to raise the level of substantive discussion about art in the region, as does the magazine *Ripsaw*.

Since the 1970s, the Duluth Art Institute has played a lead role in cultivating creative visual artists in its region. The quality of artwork in Duluth and the web of artistic relationships, even the numbers of practicing artists, owe much to the Institute’s exhibitions, studios, classes, teaching opportunities, and artist services. The Institute’s nurturing of artists has also helped to create gallery business and quicken downtown tourism. Although the Institute faces daunting challenges, Duluth seems to be on the verge of an artistic renaissance. The Institute has both the history and the artistic resources to contribute to this project, whether it remains in its current space or not.

### Grand Marais Art Colony

Grand Marais sits between Lake Superior and the ancient Laurentian escarpment rising hundreds of feet into Superior National Forest. Ninety-five percent of the land in the county is government-owned. In recent decades jobs serving tourists and retirees have replaced those lost in logging and fishing, meaning fewer middle-income jobs and greater income inequality. During the summer 35,000 people live in the area, but only 5,000 are year-round residents. Artists are attracted to Grand Marais’s photogenic setting and its well-educated summer residents and retirees. The city is a hotbed of community-based arts organizations and galleries, such as the Fiber Arts Guild, Grand Marais Playhouse, North Shore Music Association, Good Harbor Hill Players, Sivertson Gallery, and the North House Folk School.

For visual artists, the Grand Marais Art Colony has long served as a magnet. In recent years, the Colony has expanded its space and services. Unlike other community-based arts organizations in this study, the Colony did not start as an artists’ center but as a summertime arts retreat and school for outsiders. Today, the organization serves the

community and local and visiting artists through workshops, events, and networking opportunities.

The Art Colony has been housed in a restored church for forty-three years. When we visited in the summer of 2004, a large open space showered by natural light served as a classroom. In back, a VanderCook press filled a small printmaking studio. An arts library overlooked a tiny administrative office and general teaching space. Over the past few years, the Colony has survived a series of traumatic attempts to expand its space and mission, accompanied by board and directorship changes. By 2005, it had added a three-story addition, connected by an outdoor deck to the original church.

### Emergence and Evolution

The Grand Marais Art Colony is the longest-lived retreat center of its type in the country. In 1947, Bernie Quick, a teacher at the Minneapolis School of Art, now the Minneapolis College of Art and Design, founded the Colony as a summer retreat for students (Sheehy, 1997). In 1954, Quick invited Minneapolis artist Byron Bradley to join him as an instructor. Together they mentored hundreds of Minnesota artists. When financial support from Minneapolis College of Art and Design came to a halt, Quick and Bradley operated the school as a private business. First residing in the old town hall building and then a local school, the Colony moved into its permanent church home in 1963. After Quick’s death in the early 1980s, the Cook County Regional Development Commission and community leaders secured nonprofit status for the organization to cement its strong ties to the Arrowhead region.

In the mid-to-late 1990s, under former director Jay Andersen, the Art Colony began its transformation from a summer retreat into a year-round center. The Colony increased its programming and began working with the schools, pairing paid community artist mentors with interested juniors and seniors. Grand Marais won state funding for a program as a magnet arts school, and Andersen raised additional funds to place artists-in-residence.

The Colony expanded its workshops, catering to amateur and professional artists from around the greater Midwest wanting to work with professional artist instructors in a spectacular setting. Some instructors were local—Betsy Bowen, Kelly Dupre, and Howard Sivertson—while others came from outside the region. The workshops were particularly popular among serious, middle-aged women painters desiring feedback and engagement.



## Grand Marais Art Colony

Often, artists who met at these workshops would start critique groups in their hometowns, especially the Twin Cities. The Colony's expanded programming nourished the local economy, as many participants came from outside the area and rented cabins or rooms during their stay.

The Colony struggled to recruit more local artists to its offerings, but many could not afford the tuition, and many worked during the tourist season, making it difficult to take workshops. Local art lovers benefited from demonstrations and lectures given by visiting art instructors. Andersen says, "The workshops, exhibitions, and lectures brought in the public, including the art-making public."

In the mid-1990s, the Colony's Andersen and the directors of the Grand Marais Playhouse and North Shore Music Association envisioned the creation of an Arrowhead Center for the Arts connecting the three arts organizations with the local high school. All three organizations felt they needed more production and presentation space. The school superintendent supported the plan. A committee of forty people, with Andersen and Grand Marais Playhouse President Dick Swanson in lead roles, took on the job of designing the center and raising funds. Holding eighteen public hearings, they sold the community at large on the project—sixty-

three percent of Grand Marais voters approved a bond issue to increase property taxes to support it. The whole process absorbed Andersen and his colleagues for two or three years. When the building opened in 1998, the Art Colony moved its administrative offices into the space and began to expand its programming to include dance and other events.

Once the construction phase was over, however, the Arrowhead Center ran into leadership and financial difficulties. The three arts organizations had promised the school system that they would create an umbrella organization to schedule use of the new addition and divide financial responsibility for its maintenance. But in the flurry of the building project, this task had been put aside. It turned out to be difficult to share the use of the space—the Playhouse wanted access for long stretches for rehearsals and performances, for instance, competing with the Colony's need for studio space for visiting artists.

Meanwhile, the directors of the arts groups involved began to have trouble with their boards, whose membership had changed since the original commitment. In 2001, the Art Colony board of directors physically removed its offices from the center and returned them to the renovated church. Both Andersen and playhouse

### Artist Profile: Hazel Belvo

For more than 30 years, Grand Marais artist Hazel Belvo has been painting, writing about, and photographing a 400-year-old cedar tree that stands on the North Shore of Lake Superior. Her portfolio of this tree exemplifies her passion for art, the work she does, and why she does it. Belvo, who describes herself as a painter, has taught at the Grand Marais Art Colony for many years. Through her work and her teaching, she hopes to bring about a better, more communal environment.

Art has been important to Belvo's life from the beginning. Her mother, as the head of the household and breadwinner, was her first role model. She presented Belvo with her first studio—a room in their house with a lock on the door. In this space, Belvo was given the privacy to create and grow.

Early on, Belvo received a scholarship to attend Dayton Art Institute, near the town where she grew up. In New York, she attended the New School for Social Research and met Louise Nevelson, who became her mentor. She later received a Bunting Institute grant from Radcliffe-Harvard, where she



served on faculty for two years. Belvo finished her degrees at the University of Minnesota. Her work is in many private and public collections, and she has exhibited nationally and internationally for many years.

Belvo came to the Twin Cities in 1970 with artist George Morrison. She taught at the St. Paul Academy, where she was the head of fine arts and established their art curriculum. She later was chair of fine arts at Minneapolis College of Art and Design and currently is an emeritus professor. She became acquainted with the Grand Marais Art Colony through Bernie Quick, an old friend and colleague. She

began teaching there in the 1980s when Bernie died and has been doing so since.

Belvo finds the connection between land and water in Grand Marais fascinating. The studio she shares with Marcia Cushmore sits only 30 feet from the water, and for her, it's like being on a ship. There is a spiritual sensibility in Grand Marais that Belvo loves. She appreciates that the citizens and galleries of Grand Marais celebrate and show the Art Colony's artists.

Belvo does not find the remoteness of Grand Marais constraining. She belongs to artist circles in New York and the Twin Cities as well as in town, all of them providing sounding boards for her work. She lives in both Grand Marais and the Twin Cities and credits both for artistic inspiration and supportive communities.

Belvo's latest body of work is entitled *Women in the World: Visionaries and Survivors*. The work comprises images of women whom Belvo describes as archetypes. Through her work, her teaching, and her relationships, Belvo is connecting to something larger and attempting to enhance it.

director Mary Ann Atwood lost their jobs. The governance issues at the Arrowhead Center for the Arts remain unresolved.

In 2003, the Art Colony board hired current executive director Jane Johnson, a volunteer and former board member with a business background. She is pursuing a growth strategy for the Colony physically and programmatically. The board decided to add onto the building. Johnson says, "In the back, we had land. We knew that after we built on that land, we could never build out anymore, but we could build up. So, that's what we did." Johnson and her board raised \$174,000 for the addition that now houses a printmaking studio, ceramics studio, glass studio, and artist studios. The Bush Foundation contributed a \$30,000 capital grant, and a number of artists and workshop participants helped with specific features of the project. Johnson hopes that the Colony will become self-sustaining.

## **Opportunities and Impact**

The Grand Marais Art Colony serves artists by making space and equipment available, offering workshops of high artistic merit for emerging artists, and sponsoring professional development workshops for self-employed creative people. It has grown from an art colony attended only by those invited to teach or paying for instruction, to a place that welcomes local artists and visitors year-round. It enables local artists to be mentored by accomplished artist instructors from outside the community.

The Colony's full-year schedule and amplified quarters enable broader visual arts programming. Summer workshop offerings have tripled and serve a wider range of artistic expertise. The organization offers artists grant opportunity workshops and networking opportunities. In a much-expanded exhibition program, the Colony plans five to ten juried shows a year. Every September, it hosts the annual Pleine Aire Competition where artists paint on location on the North Shore; after the work is juried, it goes on sale to the public.

The Colony provides opportunities to midcareer artists, both local and beyond, to earn income from teaching. Instructors are offered exhibition opportunities as well. Four of the Colony's eight board positions are held by artists or art instructors, some of whom live in the Twin Cities. Johnson says, "We need that connection. I get a different perspective on membership needs from city members."

Artists value having access to mentors and equipment at the Colony. Regional artist Kelly Dupre credits Colony art instructor Betsy Bowen for motivating and encouraging her to forge ahead with her career; Dupre continues to use the printing press and teach at the Colony. She says, "If I lived in a community that had no regular access to a printing press, I don't know what I would do."

Regional artist Betsy Bowen sees the Colony as playing an important role in her own career development. As a younger artist, she took art classes and workshops during the summers. Today, she teaches professional-level workshops. She also credits Andersen for his inspiring leadership: "He believed unquestioningly in art and artists. He emphasized that artists need to be paid for what they do. That generation of very substantial artists who were at the Colony was influential in making art accessible to everyone here."

The Colony contributes to the local economy by recruiting students from elsewhere who spend on lodging, food, and other services in Grand Marais. Only a third of the Colony's 300 members live in Grand Marais; most of the rest reside in the Twin Cities, with a smattering out of state. In addition, some local artists connected to the Colony sell their work outside the region, bringing additional income to the community.

The Colony contributes to community cultural life as well. It offers free public events such as artists' talks and exhibits. Its school-related programming constitutes a major public service, creating a future generation of artists and arts audience members. The Art Colony also offers other local arts groups such as the Fiber Arts Guild free use of its facilities.

## **Challenges**

Because the Art Colony has long cultivated relationships with visiting artists, community members and some local artists do not feel very committed to it. Students from the Twin Cities as well as New York, Texas, and California come to take classes from well-known instructors. But few local artists take these classes. Johnson says the Art Colony is trying to change this by expanding its year-round classes and workshops.

Financially, the Art Colony needs enough programming to cover the operating costs of the enlarged building. Its general operating budget is \$90,000, of which earned income is \$78,000, mostly from workshop tuition. The County Board gives the Colony \$2,400 each year, and The McKnight Foundation gave it \$25,000 this past year. It does not qualify for Regional Arts Council funding. Johnson says, "Our goal is to stay alive. One major weakness is that so many arts organizations are standing out here with their hands out."

Involvement with the Arrowhead Center for the Arts remains a challenge for the Art Colony. It remains unclear who is responsible for the governance and maintenance of the center.

Nevertheless, the Art Colony functions as the key institution building a local pool of visual artists in town and has stimulated the proliferation of arts groups in other disciplines. It continues to bring arts dollars into the community and contributes to cultural life through its work with children and its free public events.

## ***New York Mills Regional Cultural Center***

**A** tractor emblazoned on the New York Mills water tower symbolizes the cultivation of arts in this Finnish farming community. Through an arts-based rural economic development plan centered on the New York Mills Regional Cultural Center, the community has thwarted the discouraging future facing so many rural Minnesota towns. New York Mills, three and a half hours northwest of the Twin Cities, with no college and little tourism, demonstrates that artists and art lovers can be found in every community, however small.

The New York Mills Regional Cultural Center is housed in a renovated 1885 brick building on Main Street. Finnish flags decorate



## *New York Mills Regional Cultural Center*

the wall-to-wall windows. Inside, a store features artwork and knickknacks. The main gallery is downstairs, and a second-floor gallery showcases emerging artists or historic community photos. Performances take place on a patio in the back. Artists and visitors run next door to Eagles Cafe or the Finnish bakery; some stay in the Whistle Stop Bed and Breakfast or the artist-in-residence home.

### **Emergence and Evolution**

The New York Mills Regional Cultural Center, the brainchild of John Davis, proves that a single person's vision can transform a community. In the late 1980s, Davis, a graduate of the Minneapolis College of Art and Design, moved to an abandoned farmhouse outside of New York Mills. To make money, Davis painted barns and got to know local farmers. His preconceived notions about rural people went by the wayside as he encountered many who loved the arts.

Davis embarked upon a five-year plan to show that quality arts can thrive outside of a metropolitan area and also contribute to economic vitality. In a first step, he created and found funding for an artist's retreat. He felt visiting artists would bring creative ideas into the region, while the idyllic rural atmosphere would give them space and time to focus on their creative work.

Recognizing that he needed community support to accumulate the needed land and capital, Davis began to integrate community members into his efforts. He organized a board of directors, representative of regional demographics, half of them sixty or more years of age. He courted members with backgrounds in art, education, and government. When a local banker questioned the viability of an arts retreat, the board worked to convince him otherwise, and the banker authorized the loan Davis needed to renovate his barn into a retreat. Davis formally registered the New York Mills Arts Retreat as a nonprofit organization in 1990, and applications flooded in.

The second phase of his plan was to more directly connect the arts with the community by laying the foundation for the New York Mills Regional Cultural Center, an umbrella organization for the retreat and other cultural activities. Again in need of both capital and land, he and the board fashioned a formal partnership with the New York Mills City Council. Initially, the council did not support the center, but political and business leaders remained interested.

Eventually, because Davis marketed the center as an economic development project and not an arts project, the City Council overcame its hesitation, providing \$35,000 for the center in each of the first two years. To put this in perspective, a comparable per capita investment from the Minneapolis City Council to a metropolitan arts organization would be \$13 million. New York Mills became one of the first rural towns in the United States to fund such an innovative development project, and in 1993 the Northwest Area Foundation recognized the center as a national model.

Davis wanted the center to add life to New York Mills's downtown, which at the time consisted mostly of abandoned buildings. Property owners and council leaders advocated demolishing the buildings to create a clean slate for new commercial construction. By comparing the costs of renovation to demolition, however, Davis convinced



Harold Karvonen, a property owner, to donate his historic 1885 building on Main Street, once a mercantile store. Karvonen also contributed \$12,500 for renovations. The building's rehabilitation proved to be an important catalyst for change.

The renovation became a public project. Of the \$250,000 needed to open the doors, \$70,000 came from the City Council and community members. To save money, Davis served as the general contractor. He wisely cultivated local interest by hiring only local contractors and construction workers. In the end, the 4,800-square-foot center opened for less than \$120,000—an incredible fifty percent under budget.

Community investment continued to grow. A local gas station owner and City Council member paid his employees to help paint the center, while the mayor and school superintendent stripped the hardwood floors. In June 1992, the center opened its doors to show off its glamorous main floor and second-floor galleries, a small store, and a large dance/studio/performance space.

The New York Mills Regional Cultural Center nurtures both regional and nationally renowned artists. The retreat remains a cornerstone of its programming. Private foundations supported the project from the beginning. The Jerome Foundation currently funds it with a \$16,000 annual grant. A four-person jury considers applications. The Jerome Foundation requires that fifty-one percent



of those admitted come from Minnesota or the five boroughs of New York City and that at least one artist of color be invited every year. The artists stay at a house on Main Street and must volunteer within the community for at least fifteen hours. This means they interact with the community in many ways. Robin Barcus, a muralist from Chicago, coordinated a public art installation and involved the entire community. Farmers donated crops, students built the frames, photography novices acted as location assistants, and civic leaders hosted the unveiling of the sculpture. Jazz pianist Anat Fort taught a jazz improvisation class, open to all. Painters have taught classes at regional high schools. One media artist helped fix computers in the homes of residents.

The center hosts six to eight gallery exhibitions a year and many artistic performances. Visiting and area poets, authors, and storytellers share their work through readings and workshops. Traveling theater, music, and dance groups perform in the gallery. Regional artists encounter artists from all over the country.

By generating opportunities such as exhibitions, performances, workshops, classes, and retail space, the center helps overcome the disadvantages of being far from a major city. A monthly Artist Forum series brings artists from all over the area together to network and critique each other's work. In addition, the center works with other arts organizations to educate artists about the business side of the arts.

## Artist Profile: George Gloege

George Gloege, a thirty-five year resident of Nimrod, Minnesota, sees the New York Mills Regional Cultural Center as an integral part of his artistic community. A self-taught folk artist, he often paints nineteenth-century historical events such as the Civil War, the Indian uprising, and the opening of the West. Every year for the past fifteen years, he visits the Buffalo Bill Historical Center in Cody, Wyoming, to study the work of Frederick Remington and Charles Russell for inspiration.

Gloege used to teach history and political science in rural Minnesota. When he and his wife bought a canoe-outfitting business in Sebeka, Minnesota, in 1970, he veered onto a different course. Noting that rotting tent material made from duck cloth resembled canvas, Gloege began using house paint to paint faces on the fabric. He stored his work in a bunkhouse next to the canoe shed. He recalls, "If customers and artists showed interest, I would drag them into my bunkhouse to see twenty or thirty of my paintings."



Kent Scheer, the former curator of the New York Mills Regional Cultural Center, introduced Gloege to the center after visiting the bunkhouse. Gloege says, "Scheer was my primary mentor. He was instrumental in getting me more interested in folk art painting." In 1995, Scheer invited him to participate in a one-man show at the center. Three of the thirteen pieces were sold.

Gloege credits the center's impact on his professional and artistic development.

The center reaches out to attract new audiences, creating novel events such as an icehouse design competition and the nationally known Great American Think-Off, a philosophy competition designed to engage everyday citizens in a discussion of controversial and timely issues such as same-sex marriage. Because the contest focuses a national spotlight on New York Mills, the community responds with pride. The center also has a Youth Arts Program to nurture future artists and art appreciators. Davis says, "In a community of a thousand people, you don't have the luxury of demographics. Everyone is a potential audience member."

Half of the fifteen-member board are residents of New York Mills, with the rest coming from other communities within the region. The board hires an executive director and three part-time staff members. The Bush, Jerome, and McKnight Foundations support various programs and operations. Recently, the center won a Small Cities three-to-one matching grant to subsidize renovations, including a handicap access ramp and a deck for the outdoor performances.

## Opportunities and Impact

Artists applaud the New York Mills Regional Cultural Center for serving as the hub of a burgeoning regional artistic network in an area where artistic opportunities are few and far between. Stephen

"There are so many people that paint out of passion and instinct," says Gloege. "I think there is natural talent all over. This is why New York Mills is beneficial. They find it and display it." Exhibiting, he adds, made him more productive, giving him the boost to keep pushing himself.

Gloege has also expanded his outreach. The Galerie Bonheur in St. Louis, one of the few galleries specializing in Folk Art from around the world, represented his work nationally in New York, Los Angeles,

Atlantic City, Chicago, and San Francisco. Gloege is an example of an artist who flourished because of the center's investment in regional artists.

Gloege continues to nurture a twelve-year relationship with the center. He says, "Having the opportunity to show my work in a regional setting keeps me interested in my work and keeps pushing me to explore the boundaries. This is one of the few places that you can go and see art."

## *New York Mills Regional Cultural Center*

Henning, a painter and president of the Evansville Arts Coalition, says, “What is interesting about rural Minnesota is that artists stand out like a sore thumb, so you establish a network pretty easily. New York Mills is important because it is a place where these connections happen.”

Many of the artists interviewed also look to the center to provide a sense of community and encouragement. As a local musician says, “When you are a musician, you get dejected. You are isolated. You aren’t respected and you can’t make money. You are viewed as a bum. Here, there are people just like me. You don’t feel like an outcast.” Artist Pam Robinson credits the center for widening people’s horizons.

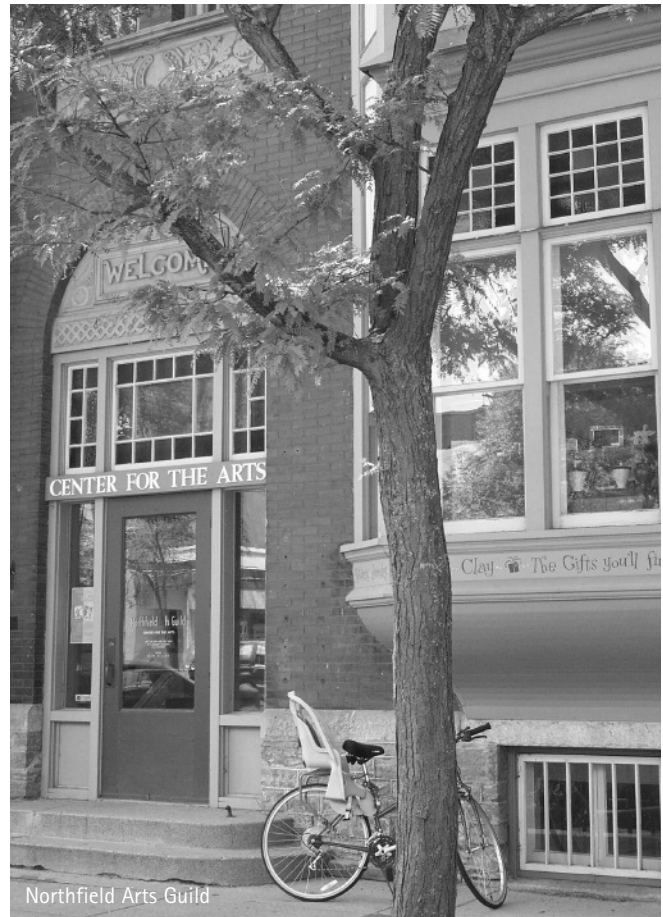
Visiting artists, too, praise the unique experience of working in New York Mills. The rural setting offers inspiration for some visiting artists, like McKnight fellow John Morton. Morton, interested in the sonic properties of abandoned farm machinery, retrofitted a stalk chopper so that it makes different sounds as it turns. He installed the piece in the New York Mills sculpture park.

In acknowledgment of the center’s economic development role, the City Council now donates \$10,000 annually to the organization, requiring in return that the center act as the tourism hub for the region. As a result, the executive director serves also as tourism director for the New York Mills Civic and Commerce department. Many tour groups take advantage of travel packages assembled by the center, including visits to community businesses such as Eagles Cafe, Finn Creek Open Air Museum, and Lund Boats. Tourists bring in vital outside money, creating income for local retail and service businesses that circulates throughout the local economy. The impact is enhanced because many residents of the region drive to New York Mills for cultural events, staying for a meal or to shop.

Because of this partnership, New York Mills has been able to stave off the decline experienced by many other rural Minnesota communities. By 2000, its population grew to 1,200, twice the projected estimate forecast before the center was built. Between 1992 and 1997, seventeen new businesses opened and employment increased by 40 percent. The downtown landscape has changed dramatically, with a new medical clinic and renovated storefronts replacing the abandoned buildings. New businesses like the Whistle Stop Bed & Breakfast would not have opened without the center. While schools closed and consolidated across the state, the citizens of New York Mills passed two bond referenda to expand schools and add a performing arts center. The town has also garnered good state and national press coverage. *USA Today* named New York Mills one of the “top five culturally cool towns in the United States.”

### **Challenges**

A wonderful but unlikely success story to date, New York Mills Regional Cultural Center continues to be strapped for funds. Over the past few years, the state’s funding environment has drastically changed. Previously, the center received almost half of its funding



from public sector grants, but budget cuts to the Minnesota State Arts Board and the Minnesota Humanities Board eliminated dollars for rural organizations and rural outreach. With an operating budget of \$133,000, the center struggles to maintain its current level of programming and leans heavily on foundation support, donations, sponsorships, and membership fees.

Yet New York Mills has remained stable economically. The success of this innovative project stems in large part from the efforts of one man to jumpstart the local arts environment by attracting visiting artists of stature and discovering regional artists who had been working in isolation. The center has enjoyed remarkable leadership, both in John Davis and in civic leaders willing to take a chance. It has accomplished what many thought impossible—bringing diverse and high cultural programming to a small community and embedding art more fully in the social fabric of one rural Minnesota town.

### ***Northfield Arts Guild***

**A**rtists living in smaller towns need feedback, space, and connections with peers, masters, and audiences, as artists do in larger cities. The economies of scale required to serve artists, however, are difficult to achieve where the ranks of any one genre are thin and the local audience is modest. The Northfield

Arts Guild is an outstanding example of how one smaller town has managed to serve both artists and its small community for more than forty-five years. Many of the community's writers and visual artists find opportunities to meet, teach, network, and exhibit or perform their work in the Guild's two dedicated spaces.

In a small college town about an hour south of the Twin Cities, the Northfield Arts Guild works out of a multistory, stately Victorian building in the middle of a four-block historic

downtown. Pictures of past events line the walls from the administrative offices and gift shop to the large visual arts gallery. Downstairs is a dance studio that doubles as a meeting room, and upstairs are several smaller meeting rooms and a large studio/classroom space, once a recital hall. Two blocks away, the Guild operates the Arts Guild Theater in a converted church, producing plays and musicals with professional directors and community actors over a nine-month season.

## Artist Profile: Penchant, aka Northfield Women Poets

Northfield Women Poets emerged in the early 1970s amid the flurry of the newborn feminist movement, when a few women from St. Olaf College put together a book of poems. Out of this, founders Karen Herseeth Wee and Riki Nelson convened the Northfield Women Poets that by 1974 encompassed more than a dozen women. It was unconventional to be a women-only group. "Some boys wanted to join," reflected Marie Gery, a founding member "but we felt it would change the tenor of the meetings."

The group meets weekly to critique each other's work and, over the years, has brought poetry in many different ways to the Northfield community and beyond. Early on the members read poetry for WCAL, the local radio station. One year they organized a writer's conference; another year, a small press fair, bringing in well-known writers such as Carol Bly, Paulette Bates Alden, and Alvin Greenberg. They have also held many readings, sometimes at the Guild, sometimes on street corners, sometimes at schools or clubs. For the past few years, the group has read at the Kitty Cat Klub in Minneapolis, with support from SASE: The Write Place.

Two years ago the group felt it needed a name with more cachet. "Northfield Women Poets sounds like exactly what it is — a bunch of old ladies reading poetry," joked member JoAnne Makela. "We came up with Penchant through a process of elimination. It has a great sound, can be divided into Pen and Chant, and also signals our penchant for poetry."

Penchant's enduring achievement is the publication of three anthologies, beginning with *Absorb the Colors* in 1984 (Heywood Press) and supported by a Minnesota State Arts Board grant. The proceeds from each have been devoted to funding subsequent volumes, including *A Rich Salt Place*

(Heywood Press, 1986) and *Tremors, Vibrations Enough to Rearrange the World* (Black Hat Press, 1995). Many members also have had their own work published separately.

For those interviewed, it is the intimacy and collegiality of the weekly meetings that is most important. "The encouragement is really an amazing thing," Makela says.

The poets hail from diverse backgrounds. Makela, for example, was reared in Pennsylvania and attended college in Ohio before moving to Minnesota with her former husband in the 1980s; she immediately knocked on the door of the Arts Guild, where then director Kay Brown gave her a job as part-time secretary and Guild newsletter editor. Makela describes poetry as her habit and has worked to support it over the years at the *Northfield News* and Carleton. Another member, Beverly Voldseth, who published poetry in a national student magazine as a Sioux Falls, South Dakota, high school student, lives in Goodhue, Minnesota, where she has edited a small literary magazine, *Rag Mag*, the *Minnesota Poetry Calendar*, and the Goodhue newspaper, and runs the Northfield Historical Society. Marie Vogl Gery, an Iowan, moved to Northfield when

### DANCER AT FIFTY-THREE

Sometimes, now, I can't quite imagine it that rage to move which used to satisfy and multiply itself in any open space.

Early denied in me, cast aside for pleasures more concrete, its bud burst late into a room with bars at all the lighted windows, and sprung me out to flower. It pressed me hard, once released, doubled my desire for all of me in the curving moment, all of me in the air.

Motion, that unwilling spark of heart, breath and blood that separates us from rocks yet binds our atoms with the same laws, motion flows in and out of all of us.

But sometimes, for seconds, now, the ghost of that raging dancer enters this body and I fly again breathing twenty-year-old breath singing through loose joints in love with the world.

Mary Easter



KAREN HERSEETH WEE

her husband got a job at St. Olaf; she has been a Loft mentee and a Minnesota State Arts Board grantee, and writes scripts for historical enactments in Northfield.

In the poetry group's long history in Northfield, the Guild has been supportive—letting them use the space, teach classes, or cosponsor events. It is a place where artists come expecting to find information, connections, and help in getting in touch with other creative people.

## Emergence and Evolution

The Arts Guild was formed in 1959 when a group of Northfielders produced Eugene O'Neill's *Ah Wilderness!* with a cast and crew of more than fifty. That same year, several artists, including Dean Warnholtz, who would become the Guild's first president, began teaching drawing and painting, while musicians, dancers, and writers began getting together. In 1960, the Guild formally organized and chose the old St. Peter's Lutheran Church building, now the Arts Guild Theater, as its first home, buying it for \$6,500 in 1961.

From the start, the Guild aimed to offer something for everyone interested in practicing or consuming virtually any phase or form of art. Within two years, artists were teaching classes in visual art, dance, music, theater, and creative writing. From the start, they fostered an environment in which seasoned professionals would inspire talented amateurs. The theater program was upgraded substantially in 1974 with the formation of the resident Northfield Musical Theater.

Northfield has two advantages over many other Minnesota towns of its size in nurturing and retaining artists: two liberal arts colleges, St. Olaf and Carleton, and proximity to the Twin Cities. The colleges boost the town's PhD's per capita far above those of other communities, forming a constituency for artistic expression, patronage, and arts education for children. They also employ arts faculty members. The Northfield Arts Guild has helped expand arts programming and support for artists beyond the colleges, and it has been particularly important to arts graduates who decide to stay in the area to pursue artistic careers. Proximity to the cities enables artists to enjoy small-town life while having access to outstanding arts organizations and activities.

The Guild faced the greatest growth challenge in its history in 1988. A decade earlier, in 1979, it had expanded into the leased Old City Hall after raising \$45,000 to renovate the interior and exterior. When the lease expired, the City of Northfield, envisioning the arts center as a draw for a struggling downtown, offered to sell the building to the Guild for one dollar. The Guild raised \$400,000 for renovations.

Today, the Guild counts nearly 500 households among its members in a town of about 17,000 people. Members receive a bimonthly newsletter, advance notice of season tickets, access to gallery shows, discounts on classes, and, in the words of one member, the "satisfaction of knowing that it is a privilege to support the art community of Northfield." The Guild serves artists of all ages and expertise in five artistic disciplines: theater, music, dance, visual arts, and literary arts. Many artists earn money from teaching at the Guild.



NORTHFIELD WOMEN POETS ARCHIVE

Northfield Women Poets reading their anthology, *Absorb the Colors*

The Guild offers multiple venues for performance and exhibition for both professionals and amateurs. By showing work of visual artists from elsewhere yet guaranteeing access for local artists, the Guild exposes its community to artistic excellence while giving visibility to local emerging artists. Musicians, directors, and actors from the colleges collaborate with community members through the Guild to put on performances. Special events draw members of the community to the Guild all year. The Guild offers space for groups of artists to meet, share their work, rehearse, and in some cases make their art. It also acts as a pipeline for future artists and art lovers.

As a nonprofit, the Northfield Arts Guild is supported largely by individual, family, and business memberships. Following a history of successful grant-raising, it has recently won funding for operating support and projects from the National Endowment for the Arts, The McKnight Foundation, and the Minnesota State Arts Board. A twelve-person board of directors governs the Guild, including one member from each of the five disciplines served (dance, theater, visual arts, music, and literary arts).

## Opportunities and Impact

The Guild has had a powerful and broad impact on community artists, both emerging and established. Tim Lloyd, a sculptor and jewelry artist recently retired from Carleton and now dedicating himself full-time to his artwork, sees the Guild as having "sustained a strong visual arts exhibition program that has pulled a lot of artists into the community." Fred Somers, a national award-winning landscape painter and portraitist operating his own farmhouse

gallery on the outskirts of town, received a grant from the Guild early in his career. His only public funding at the time, the grant allowed him to travel to schools and show his work. Paula Granquist, a writer who is also an active Loft member and teacher, appreciates the opportunity to participate in the juried Northfield Writers' Nights, to meet area writers and learn from them, and to earn income by teaching writing at the Guild.

The Guild enjoys a partnership with local political and business leaders that has nurtured the Northfield economy and cultural life for decades, sometimes in concert with the colleges. It has helped make Northfield a residential choice for many. Scott Schumacher, a vocalist who moved to Northfield by choice, credits the colleges, a progressive culture, a historic downtown, a new food co-op, and, especially valued by him as a single gay man, a diverse and quite tolerant community.

Several downtown development leaders laud the Guild's contribution, as one of the main anchors of downtown Northfield, to the city's economic vitality. The Guild's presence brings artists and art lovers downtown and creates welcome foot traffic and activity. Because of its central location, the Guild acts as a host for the numerous events held along the riverfront.

## Challenges

Rightsizing is major challenge for the Guild. Recently an opportunity arose to convert a vacated middle school into an artists' live/work and performance/exhibition building. The proposed Middle School project, first broached in 2003 by Artspace, provides a lens into the lumpy growth pressures a modestly sized organization like the Guild can face. Artspace staff felt that the large building, several blocks from downtown, had great potential, but the Guild's board worried that the project would take time and energies and require expertise in planning, finance, and management that they did not possess. They were uncertain whether the arts community could support a third space and whether the Guild should give up its downtown building. Eventually, Carleton College emerged as successful suitor for the school, planning to use it for the college's art program.

In an increasingly entertainment-rich world, and as the distance to the Twin Cities has shrunk in perception and traveling times, the Guild has had trouble keeping its membership up. Once at around 800 households, membership had declined to around 500 by 2004. And membership is key to securing ongoing business, foundation,

## Artist Profile: Mary Reid Kelley

A native of South Carolina and 2001 graduate of St. Olaf College who lives in Northfield, Mary Reid Kelley credits the Northfield Arts Guild with introducing her as a visual artist to the community. Mary's artwork focuses on constructions of identity and history created with photography and oil paints on paper.

An aspiring art major touring colleges as a high school senior, Kelley found that Northfield's St. Olaf had a much better art department than most other small schools. Graduating with a major in studio arts, Kelley won a fifth year St. Olaf art apprenticeship that gave her studio space and a small stipend. The Northfield Arts Guild hosted Kelley's second apprenticeship show. The following year, she contributed her work to a Guild auction and was amazed to see the pieces sell for good money. She used the event to distribute business cards and get her name out into the community.

Kelley moved away for a short period after the apprenticeship and



then returned. At first, she had to work almost full-time at a Northfield coffee shop to stay afloat. But the coffee shop, she reflected, gave her great exposure as an artist because she was able to easily advertise her shows to her customers. Over the next couple of years, she was able to

reduce her non-art-related work to three nights a week at an upscale restaurant.

Kelley has established herself as an artist and arts educator in Northfield. She has

taught oil painting through community education and a self-portrait workshop at ArtOrg, another arts Northfield arts organization. She focuses on helping students get over their fear of creating art. She asks students to confront their fears: "The key to teaching art and learning it is to break down what you're scared of," she says. "Most people are just nervous and unsure of their abilities."

Kelley has already managed to make herself and her work known beyond Northfield. Her work is shown throughout Minnesota, including the Minnesota State Fair in St. Paul; the Offbeat Gallery, Creative Electric Studios, and SooVisual Arts Center in Minneapolis; and the Rochester Art Center. In 2004, Kelley won a Jerome-funded Artist Residency Fellowship at the Blacklock Nature Sanctuary. Her youthful, productive five-year career demonstrates the partnership of St. Olaf College and the Northfield Art Guild in attracting and retaining a talented visual artist in small-town Minnesota.



## *Northfield Arts Guild*

and public funding. With only a tiny staff to manage fundraising, programming, and building management, membership-building is a heavy responsibility.

Northfield is a successful enough arts town that the genres are somewhat competitive, and within these, hopeful and emerging artists sometimes clash over priorities. In a way, the Guild is the victim of its own success. Its aspirations to serve artistic development and livelihoods has created expectations that it sometimes cannot fill. For example, some writers feel that poetry has been supported over prose and nonfiction, while visual artists feel there is little opportunity for them to exhibit their work because the gallery is often booked.

These tensions recently precipitated a major challenge to the Guild. In the summer of 2004, local businessman Dave Machacek, an entrepreneurial Northfield native, teamed up with Leanne Stremcha, president of the Minnesota Crafts Council, to form ArtOrg, an organization for visual artists. In early 2004, Machacek had proposed that the Guild create a separate division for the visual arts, but the Guild turned him down. ArtOrg managed by the spring of 2005 to attract 150 members (many of whom also belong to the Guild), offer more than 100 classes, including business skills for artists, and produce seven shows at its Moving Walls Gallery, particularly showcasing emerging artists. It is now working with a developer to build live/work space for artists and to launch a printmaking studio. ArtOrg has struck a responsive chord with some visual artists, even some with strong loyalties to the Guild. It has been a wake-up call for the Guild, which is currently working to secure and equip a large underused classroom at another Northfield school with a printing press and digital photography lab.

The Guild must also devote energy to working with local business and college partners. Although its neighborhood offers strong assets, the Guild and its downtown neighbors still face the challenge of increasing multi-activity traffic on their streets and tying visits to each of the arts buildings to other venues.

Northfield's proximity to the Twin Cities, while beneficial in attracting some arts-inclined residents, also creates competition for artists' loyalties and attention.

The Northfield Arts Guild aspires to bridge community, college, and artists' ambitions, and over its lifetime it has done so quite well. It shows what a dynamic mix of arts leadership, leveraging of physical and human assets, and community support can achieve in a smaller town. It is also a poster child for the challenges that smaller arts organizations face—across genres, across degrees of artistic commitment, across constituencies.

## **Cautionary Tales: Centers that Closed**

To further explore the challenges of center formation, we profile in this section two pioneering and beloved centers that failed in the 1990s— Film in the Cities and the Minnesota Dance Alliance. Film in the Cities was a model for many other centers across the country and in the area. Both centers faced multiple stresses and offer lessons in center structure and decision-making, including

balancing the relationship between board and directors, diversifying and financing programming, and responding to the needs of different constituencies.

## ***Film in the Cities***

Schools in the 1970s were actors in new arts initiatives that evolved into major and sometimes enduring organizations. Among these was St. Paul-based Film in the Cities (FITC), a center that went on to become a major resource for filmmakers and photographers in the region.

Located at the corner of University and Raymond avenues, Film in the Cities occupied a brick building in a once run-down part of St. Paul. FITC bought the building when the area was littered with vacant storefronts. FITC's 15-foot sign hung over the front door. The entrance, as David Southgate recalls, was filled with "people excitedly talking about their classes or upcoming projects" and gave the space a "creative buzz and camaraderie." With FITC gone, the area now hosts vegetarian restaurants and alternative bookstores along with arts organizations such as IFP Minnesota.

## **Emergence and Evolution**

In 1970, the St. Paul Public Schools asked the St. Paul Council of Arts and Sciences about launching an alternative educational experience for "hard to reach" students. (The St. Paul Council of Arts and Sciences was founded in the mid-1950s as a community arts program.) The council designed Film in the Cities to "increase the students' awareness of communication through non-verbal media, and to make each student visually literate, so that they have the knowledge and skills necessary to influence the world through media—not simply be influenced by media" (Sutton, no date).

The council hired Tom DeBiaso to start the program. He invited Rick Weise to join him, and the two created the Film in the Cities curriculum. DeBiaso envisioned Film in the Cities as a media arts center that would serve artists, hold public arts exhibitions, and educate. The organization was one of the first of its kind to blend all three. Early funding came from by the St. Paul Public Schools, the St. Paul Council of Arts and Sciences, Minneapolis Public Schools (through the Urban Arts Program), the Avon Foundation, the Hill Family Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Arts.

Initially, Film in the Cities operated out of the basement of the St. Paul Council of Arts and Sciences. At the beginning, only potential dropouts—students with discipline problems, for the most part—were involved. They were bused to the center and given class credit for participating. The nonstructured environment proved successful. Within a year FITC outgrew its location and moved to Roberts Street in St. Paul.

For classes at Film in the Cities, filmmakers and teachers developed a curriculum that taught Super 8 filmmaking to high school students and emphasized individual rather than group films. Eventually, any student could apply for the program on a "credit/no credit" basis. Programming grew to include photography and

videotape and reached more than 250 secondary students annually. By the mid-1970s, Film in the Cities was the largest school-related filmmaking program in the country.

Education was always a top priority. As a matter of educational philosophy and to keep tuition and fees low, Film in the Cities designed classes to be as restriction-free as possible and with no admission requirements. Founding executive director Weise believed that this approach would shape creative and successful professionals for the future. Leslie Wolfe, past FITC development director, notes that Film in the Cities did not originally intend to train filmmakers but to teach youth how to literate in media.

A turning point came in 1976. The school system decided to pull its funding, and foundations lost interest in alternative education programs. From the beginning, however, staff and Weise had been developing other programs, such as the Filmmakers Access Center (which provided equipment to members and students), a college curriculum, and film festivals that were more attractive to funders. FITC began to remake itself into a more diversified media arts center while still providing classes for high school students.

## Opportunities and Services for Artists

Film in the Cities became the “granddaddy of media arts organizations” in the 1980s (Southgate, 1993). Media art centers, as defined by the National Endowment for the Arts in 1980, were organizations that had budgets of over \$100,000 and worked in at least four of the following program areas: exhibitions, workshops, equipment access, instruction, preservation, information, and distribution of film and/or video. FITC provided major programs in each of these, and in 1980 was one of the first of fifteen U.S. centers to receive National Endowment for the Arts funding. It expanded to serve both filmmakers and a larger public through three components: exhibition (its photography gallery and the film, video, and performance programs); education (college, youth, and teacher programs); and artists’ services (the Filmmakers Access Center and the Artists’ Grants program).

To help filmmakers reach audiences, FITC began the Twin Cities Filmmakers series, later MovingImageMakers, a showcase for filmmakers in the six-state region. Artists’ demands for filmmaking gear grew as the art form evolved, and Film in the Cities began to

### Artist Profile: Todd Deutsch

Kids hanging upside down on a couch. Legos strewn about on the living room floor. Family members tightly packed in a small kitchen. Todd Deutsch’s photographs document his family and the fluidity of everyday life. He works in the documentary tradition, generally capturing the intimacy of his family. But Deutsch has started moving into the community with his work. He has recently received a McKnight Fellowship to photograph people of all ages with their collections, Star Wars figurines, and video games.



Deutsch has had an exhibition or received a grant to continue his work. In 1996, he received his MFA from Cranbrook Academy of Art. A couple of years later, he was hired to teach photography at the College of St. Catherine in St. Paul.

Deutsch has made a career of his photography in a roundabout way. He admits that attempting to support a family solely on his photographs would be dismal, but he considers his teaching a part of his artwork. He continues to receive grants allowing him to spend more time shooting and less time teaching. All of the

grants he receives are from private foundations such as Bush, McKnight, and Jerome. He rarely sells work through the galleries that show his art.

Local galleries, the Minnesota Center for Photography, and Film in the Cities, when it was still around, have been important to Deutsch’s career by giving his work exposure. But more importantly, they offer gathering spaces for artists to meet, share ideas, and interact. Film in the Cities, in particular, was an excellent venue for this because of its combination of darkroom access, workshops and classes, and exhibition space.

Deutsch believes that living in the Twin Cities has had a major impact on his work. For one, it’s an affordable city, making it easy to raise a family. Perhaps most important is the energy in the Twin Cities and a sense that something is going on here. “It’s not so big that one feels disconnected,” he says, “and it’s not so small that nothing is going on.” At a photography conference in New Mexico recently, Deutsch was amazed to realize that out of 100 or so photographers, “the largest percentage seemed to come from the Twin Cities. Something is going on here.”

Deutsch received his BFA from Minneapolis College of Art and Design in 1992. Upon graduating he was awarded a Film in the Cities/McKnight Photography Fellowship, which allowed him to continue working on his portfolio and gave him his first professional exhibition experience. Deutsch used the Film in the Cities darkroom facilities, which were affordable for an emerging artist. Almost every year since graduating from college,



Untitled, from the Family Days collection

## *Film in the Cities*

invest in equipment. FITC started the Filmmakers Access Center, largely funded by the Jerome Foundation, which provided filmmaking equipment to those who could not afford to buy it on their own. Film in the Cities continued to add externally funded artist-centric programming and joined with other organizations to attract a wider audience to its events. A visiting artist program showcased six filmmakers whose work had had a significant impact on the avant-garde cinema in America.

Early on, Film in the Cities had added photography to its curriculum, and later it opened a photography gallery in St. Paul, exhibiting emerging photographers side-by-side with recognized photographers, something it did for filmmakers as well.

On the educational front, Film in the Cities evolved into a film school. It offered workshops for teachers, who could then take their skills back to the classroom, so that the school district would not have to outsource to Film in the Cities. It began programs targeted to students in higher education and provided internships at local colleges and universities. It designed curricula to meet the needs of various populations—for example, senior citizens, Native Americans, and the hearing impaired. In all of its efforts, Film in the Cities' program was one of the least expensive film schools in the country.

FITC did not shy away from controversy or stray from its commitment to free expression. It showcased various films and film festivals at the Jerome Hill Theater. In a 1990 series, *Cinema and Censorship*, for instance, it screened a film titled *I'm No Communist: Are you now or have you ever been?* Film in the Cities' open environment and loose structure continued to attract praise, funding, and larger audiences, while targeting a media-savvy public in a technology age.

### **Crisis and Demise**

FITC's increased success and visibility attracted generous funding up through the early 1990s. More funds led to more projects, and new initiatives responded to expanding requests on the part of filmmakers, photographers, educators and the larger community. By the late 1980s, Film in the Cities began running in the red. The deficit began with an Education Association Challenge grant of \$300,000 that Weise expected to match by raising \$1 million. He planned to run a deficit while raising the match, but was unable to retire it fast enough to satisfy the board and other funders. When FITC disbanded in 1994, its annual budget was around \$1million with a deficit of \$360,000.

As with most organizational implosions, observers and participants variously attribute FITC's collapse to the adverse arts funding environment of the early 1990s, a clash between board members and a visionary leader, lack of fiscal discipline, failure to make necessary programming cuts, rapidly changing technology for this art form, and competition from other film and video centers. Weise cites the general crunch in arts funding at the time and blames foundations for not being willing to fund FITC's operating costs. He believes that if he had had more support from foundations and his board, his plan for long-term deficit reduction would have worked.

As FITC's deficit accumulated, expenses had to be cut, including staff salaries. Antagonism developed between the director and the staff, exacerbated by Weise's year-long leave of absence to attend a special program at Harvard on a Bush fellowship. Weise lost control of the board, recalls one member from that time. "Some board members did not understand FITC's culture, and they didn't understand Rick. Very few did what board members should—raise funds or give their own money." Some quit the board. Eventually, the remaining board members no longer found Weise's plans for chipping away at the deficit credible and voted to fire him. A leadership vacuum ensued, and the organization eventually folded.

Another view is that Film in the Cities became a huge, staff-heavy machine constantly chasing dollars and less and less in touch with its constituents. Staff energies were increasingly devoted to keeping its infrastructure funded, stretching project grant funds to do so at the expense of delivering services to artists and audiences. "At the time they were crumbling," noted one observer, "various other groups began picking up some of their functions, because they weren't doing it well. That is a sure sign of failure."

Yet another view stresses that film as an art form is very capital intensive, and with technology advancing rapidly, FITC had to keep spending money to upgrade its equipment. As at IFP Minnesota and pARTS (now Minnesota Center for Photography), the challenge of cheaper, more accessible digital technologies altered FITC's environment dramatically, including instruction methods and screening venues. FITC began to face competitors who understood the potential of these technologies. The Landmark and Oak Street theaters emerged as screening locales, competing with FITC's money-losing Jerome Hill Theater.

Film in the Cities' programs did not totally disappear when the board voted to disband. Other arts organizations, such as Intermedia Arts and IFP Minnesota helped take on some of its educational programs, equipment access, and re-granting for artists. Photographers began to be served by pARTS. But FITC's demise sent shock waves through the film and photographic communities nationwide. "It's tragic for people in the Twin Cities. It's tragic nationally," commented Ruby Lerner, then executive director of New York's Association of Independent Video and Filmmakers. "It's also tragic symbolically, and that, in some ways is most damaging. ... If one of the most significant organizations in our field can't survive, then it's hard not to feel your own morale kind of drop and really question the future of the field" (Southgate, 1993).

### **Legacy and Impact**

Though defunct for almost ten years now, Film in the Cities continues to wind its way into conversations regarding film, photography, and art in Minnesota. Its legacy is still so powerful because the organization was visionary. It was one of the first media access centers in the country, and the first in Minnesota, providing opportunities not available to media artists elsewhere. It was a major photography exhibition venue, the only one in the region, and it



provided the first forum for area screenwriters to write and develop their work. It was the first showcase for a number of now-famous photographers and filmmakers to exhibit work that didn't have a market at the time, such as Frank Gohlke, David Goldes, and Ricardo Block.

Reporter David Southgate summarizes *Film in the Cities*' impact succinctly: "Film in the Cities was a great leveling field where amateurs and professionals alike worked side by side, sharing insight, excitement, and ideas about filmmaking and photography. Under one roof, young artists could acquire skills, borrow equipment, get funding and exhibit their final product to the public. It was the ultimate program" (Southgate, 1993).

FITC also pioneered the framework many arts organizations use today. "It was the model," says Emily Galusha, director of the Northern Clay Center, "for the Book Arts, the Clay Center, and the succeeding generations of art centers." Leslie Wolfe points out that while FITC was artist-focused, it was simultaneously committed to bringing media art back to the community for all audiences. It created school outreach and residency programs that were revolutionary at the time. It dealt with, in Wolfe's words, "how the art form fit into culture and society. ... FITC didn't let artists go off and do their own thing and think it was separate from life. It was community based."



ARTISPACE

## Minnesota Dance Alliance

Creating dance is a collaborative effort that is both time- and space-intensive. Choreographers need dancers and large rehearsal space with sound equipment, sprung floors, mirrors, and heat. The costs of renting space and paying dancers are often prohibitive. Choreographers also need a place to present their work, promotional material, media contacts, technical assistance, and funds to pay for dancers, live musicians, or the rights to recorded music. Choreographers underwrite these costs through ticket sales, grants, and fundraising. But the dance audience is small in Minnesota, and dance concerts generally run just a week or two.

Dancers face their own challenges. Their careers are physically demanding and generally short. They need to take regular classes and workshops to stay in shape and learn new techniques. Work is seasonal and pay is low. Most dancers must have multiple jobs to support themselves or rely on income from their families.

Today the Minnesota dance community faces these challenges without its long-time service organization, the Minnesota Dance Alliance. In 2001, the Alliance closed its fifth-floor space in Minneapolis's Hennepin Center for the Arts. It had served the Minnesota dance community for over twenty years and was a model for dance service organizations in Florida, Ohio, San Francisco, and elsewhere. Founded in 1978 as Minnesota Independent Choreographers Alliance, the Minnesota Dance Alliance enabled the Twin Cities dance community to grow into a regional center with a national reputation.

## Emergence and Evolution

In the late 1970s, dance in Minnesota was dominated by a few big Minneapolis companies. Loyce Houlten's ballet company, Minnesota Dance Theater, had just helped renovate Hennepin Center for the Arts. Nancy Hauser's modern dance company and school was an institution, and there were a few smaller jazz, modern, and ballet companies with whom dancers could train and perform. Aspiring choreographers and dancers not in school or not connected to these had nowhere to go.

When twelve choreographers met in a Minneapolis living room in the winter of 1978, they had few options for presenting their work. The Walker Art Center held annual Choreographers' Evenings, but there was no theater presenting local dance and no institutional funding. Afraid that a generation of dancers would leave the Twin Cities, they formed the Minnesota Independent Choreographers Alliance (MICA) to create opportunities for choreographers outside the company-dominated dance ecosystem.

For the next six years MICA members met once a month. The meetings were invigorating. Almost everyone spoke, choreographers shared ideas and resources, and decisions were made democratically. Initially with money from the Metropolitan Regional Arts Council and later from foundations such as Jerome, McKnight, and Dayton-Hudson, MICA provided small grants to help choreographers create and produce their work. Founded on egalitarian ideals, Dancer Pool

## Minnesota Dance Alliance

(money to pay dancers) and Tech Pool (money to pay for technical support) grants were chosen by lottery. Members would attend meetings and cheer the lucky choreographers whose names were drawn from a hat.

The excitement surrounding MICA was contagious and well articulated to funding organizations by the first director, Judith Mirus. The budget grew quickly from \$15,000 in 1980 to \$183,000 in 1983. The dance community gained national exposure when the Walker Art Center sponsored the NEW DANCE USA festival in 1981 and began attracting young choreographers to the region who saw a community and a support system in MICA, which offered grants, a monthly dance newsletter, and regular workshops as well as a monthly community meeting.

The alliance was founded by and mainly served experimental modern choreographers, but as it grew, the organization tried to become more accessible to all dance forms. Intense debate over the future of MICA emerged. Some people wanted it to continue as a grassroots organization, while others demanded a more institutional approach. In late 1984, MICA hired a new executive director from New York, Bonnie Brooks. She launched an extensive planning process involving many people over the ensuing eighteen months. In 1986, MICA was renamed Minnesota Dance Alliance with the broad mission of supporting the dance arts in Minnesota.

The reshaped organization expanded services, began presenting dance concerts, and found a home in Hennepin Center for the Arts. The late-1980s to mid-1990s are generally considered its most successful. It received a MacArthur Foundation award for national leadership in dance. It also ran its first deficit.

The Dance Alliance's acquiring and operating a space was a huge step up for the region's dance community. Beginning in 1989, under new executive director Louise Robinson, Minnesota Dance Alliance rented the fifth and sixth floors of Hennepin Center for the Arts, a converted Masonic Temple in downtown Minneapolis. The sixth floor, now the home of Minnesota Dance Theater, contained the Dance Alliance's office, a small studio, and a 150-seat theater with twenty-foot ceilings and intimate stadium seating. There was another large studio on the fifth floor. Most weekends the Dance Alliance produced concerts in this theater or rented it at subsidized rates to members who chose to self-produce. It also curated Choreographers' Evenings at Walker Art Center.

The Dance Alliance provided artists with access to mailing lists, lists of venues and rehearsal spaces, a newsletter, a photocopier, video editing equipment, technical support, and simple outlines for how to produce a show. Members could ask professional staff to read drafts of their grant applications. Various dance companies, dance schools, and a theater occupied other floors of the building.



Marci Chapman's ballet class.

Serendipitous encounters in the building helped the dance network grow. A number of independent choreographers began to emerge and form companies around work presented by the Dance Alliance.

In this era, the dance community in Minneapolis exuded optimism and excitement. The University of Minnesota was producing highly trained dancers, Danny Buraczkeski moved to town to work with Zenon Dance Company, and the Minnesota Dance Alliance was presenting nationally recognized choreographers next to local choreographers. A push to involve more people of color and diverse forms of dance began to have noticeable effects. The McKnight Foundation sponsored an annual National Dance Fellow at the Dance Alliance. These artists helped build connections with Minnesotans and provide new approaches to creation or training. Also, the first signs of trouble in a maturing organization were addressed, as the first deficit of \$25,000 was whittled down to less than \$10,000.

## Unraveling and Demise

In the 1990s, the Minnesota Dance Alliance was continuously trying to reinvent itself by broadening its constituency. It aspired to serve Minnesota's dance companies and dance artists across the state, not just in the metro area. Focus began to shift away from serving and presenting primarily modern dance choreographers in the Twin Cities and toward a general advocacy role for dance in the state. This was also a strategic response to the changing needs of members, a nearly fatal financial crisis, and decreased funding.

Business as usual at the Dance Alliance was abruptly halted in late 1995 by the revelation that it was facing a deficit exceeding \$60,000 on a \$400,000 budget. The cause of this crisis is still debated. Mismanagement of the budget, miscommunication between the board and an ambitious new director, and the changing needs of the membership are all cited as contributing factors. A sense that funders

would bail out the Dance Alliance may also have contributed. The relative poverty of the dance community everywhere and the small size of its audience must also be kept in mind.

The Dance Alliance was on the verge of collapse. The executive director resigned, and a team of two former directors and a former business manager—Louise Robinson, Judith Mirus, and John Munger—went back to pick up the pieces. They saved the organization by openly facing the magnitude of the financial challenge and by volunteering many hours. The Minnesota Dance Alliance fully exposed its financial problems to its board, its members, its funders, and the dance community. Eventually the Alliance fulfilled all its obligations and ended the 1996 fiscal year in the black, reducing the accumulated debt to about \$44,000. The plan was to continue this kind of deficit reduction.

This crisis was, however, the beginning of the end, though the Dance Alliance would serve the community for another six years under the leadership of June Wilson. Its services became less relevant

as the internet brought other ways of disseminating information in the dance community. Funding shrank, as it did across the board for the arts in this era. The merger of the Dayton-Hudson and Target foundations and their decision to stop providing general operating funds was particularly difficult. Under foundation prompting, funding allocations shifted from lots of small grants (good for dancers) to fewer large awards. Membership became less relevant and less egalitarian, as a smaller percentage of members directly benefited from re-granting. The Dance Alliance also struggled as a presenter as rent continued to increase and other venues came on line.

As part of the dismantling process, membership was disbanded, and MDA moved its office to the fifth floor, giving up the sixth floor. Dance artists lost a space to hang out and meet. Without a clear and engaged constituency, the Minnesota Dance Alliance lost its energy. The Dance Alliance closed in 2001, having failed to identify a constituency and fill its needs. A brief effort to revive it as Dance Today in 2002–2003 also collapsed.

## Artist Profile: Ranee Ramaswamy

The artistic director and founder of Ragamala Music and Dance Theater, Ranee Ramaswamy performs and teaches the classical Indian dance form Bharatanatyam across the United States. She presents traditional stylized Bharatanatyam alongside poets, jazz singers, and tap and African dancers in a passionate celebration of the diversity and beauty of art.

In 1978, Ramaswamy moved from India to the Minneapolis suburbs with her then husband and three-year-old daughter, Aparna. She had danced as a child but stopped at seventeen, normal in India, and considered herself old at twenty-six. When Minnesota friends found out she was a dancer, they asked her to teach their children and to perform in a festival at the University of Minnesota. So she bought a tape player, borrowed music tapes, and, though Bharatanatyam has almost always been performed in bare feet, danced in nylons, afraid of Minnesota's cold weather. The passion she felt dancing and the supportive response changed her life.

More than twenty-five years later, she no longer considers herself old. She is full of energy and returns to India every year to study with her master teacher, Alarmel Valli. Dance has been a bridge for her between the traditional Indian community where she grew up and the American community that has supported her work.

In 1983, Ramaswamy cold-called the



Metropolitan Regional Arts Council looking for a way to fund her dancing. Louise Robinson, future director of Minnesota Dance Alliance, answered the phone. She gave advice and encouragement, beginning a long, supportive relationship. Ramaswamy applied for McKnight fellowships and other local and national funding to support her choreography. Her first major public showing was as one of three choreographers presented by the Minnesota Dance Alliance at the Ordway's McKnight Theater in St. Paul.

In 1991, Ramaswamy read traditional Indian poet Mirabai's poems, translated by Robert Bly. She called Bly and asked him to read the poems on stage while she danced. They presented the work at the Minnesota Dance Alliance's 6A theater in a show with internationally recognized performers Eiko and Komo and David Dorfman. Watching these artists perform opened Ramaswamy's eyes to other dance forms and ignited her desire for collaboration. The project also brought her into downtown Minneapolis for the first time in her twelve years of living in Minnesota.

A year later, Ramaswamy formed Ragamala with musician David Whetstone. She used the Dance Alliance's templates and resources to produce all her early shows, from contacting press to getting performance and rehearsal space. She met many of the friends and colleagues she now collaborates with in the Dance Alliance's offices in the early 1990s.

Today Ragamala inhabits a comfortable office and studio space in Minneapolis's Calhoun Building. It is a professional company performing an annual season at the Southern Theater and across the country. Ramaswamy's energy is infectious, and she collaborates with many of the top choreographers in Minnesota. She says, "Without Louise [Robinson] and the Minnesota Dance Alliance, Ragamala and I would not be here today."

## *Minnesota Dance Alliance*

Robinson says the organization was, in part, a victim of its own success. “The success of the organization’s programs resulted in a community that grew exponentially; it matured and diversified,” she says. “As it tried to reach out to more segments of the expanding community, it could do less and less for each segment. Then with poor economic management and oversight, it got out of control very quickly. The fiscal problems caused stress on the organization internally at a time when it should have been focused externally, on its rapidly changing, maturing community.”

### **Impact on Choreographers and Dancers**

The great successes of the Minnesota Dance Alliance were its nurturing of a group of independent choreographers, some of whom have gone on to form resident companies, and its pull of both established and young talent to Minnesota. The Dance Alliance made Minnesota and the Twin Cities in particular an exciting place to dance and made it easier for dance artists to make a living.

Patrick Scully, founder of Patrick’s Cabaret, found community in the early Minnesota Independent Choreographers Alliance meetings. Scully watched MICA’s successor, the Minnesota Dance Alliance, grow weaker as it divided its energies between being a service organization for all members and being a dance presenter for selected artists.

For dance artist Cindy Stevens, Minnesota Independent Choreographers Alliance/Minnesota Dance Alliance was an essential part of her decision to move to Minnesota in 1981 after visiting for the NEW DANCE USA festival. Support from the Dance Alliance’s regranting and presenting programs were essential to her career.

For Robin Stiehm’s Dancing People Company, the Dance Alliance was her fiscal agent and primary resource funnel. A professional ballet dancer until 1989, Stiehm didn’t use the resources of the Dance Alliance until she began working as a modern dancer and choreographer. Still, even with the Dance Alliance support, it was a challenge to make the shift from dancer to choreographer.

Minnesota Dance Alliance brought dance artists together and created enduring connections. Unfortunately, it also reflected and perhaps exacerbated divisions among members of the dance community. As the dance community grew and matured, the resources necessary to support it did not grow proportionately. This led to greater competition for dollars among companies, among dance forms, between local and out-of-state dancers, and between privileged dancers and people of color. Some felt the organization garnered a lot of resources in the name of Minnesota dance but, despite stated intentions, served chiefly the modern dance community in Minneapolis and St. Paul.

### **Dancers’ Future in the Region**

The dance community expanded and matured in the twenty years that Minnesota Independent Choreographers Alliance/Minnesota Dance Alliance served it. Today Minnesota hosts a community of independent choreographers, a number of venues to present their work, and pools of willing dancers continually refreshed through

schools and dance studios. What the dance community needs is still unclear. Decreased funding and the evaporation of the Dance Alliance has resulted in less dance in the region and lower pay for dancers. A number of choreographers have moved away or are creating fewer works. Information is more diffuse, and there is no meeting place for dance artists.

The Southern Theater has picked up some of the Dance Alliance’s services. It programs dance concerts by local artists, has partnered with Walker in presenting visiting dance companies, and acts as a fiscal agent for a number of small dance companies. It has also taken over distributing foundation-funded choreographer and dancer fellowships, and it has begun sending out a weekly dance e-mail with announcements for the community. But efforts to make the Southern a space for community dialogue have not taken off.

In 2004 and 2005, the McKnight Foundation sponsored day-long meetings for the dance community to discuss its needs. Both events were well attended, particularly by arts administrators and choreographers. The vitality and energy around dance in Minnesota was clear in these meetings, but so were the challenges. Dance audiences are in a cyclical decline, there are few touring opportunities, and funding is generally weak. Participants expressed the need to create some kind of dance service organization and some brought energy to do so, but no consensus emerged on who would be served and how.

Robinson believes Minnesota Dance Alliance’s demise was particular to the time and circumstances, and that a newly formed organization would not be doomed to repeat the experience. She thinks that a dance artists’ service organization would benefit from multiple performance venues, because it could partner with the various spaces to support a wide range of work. Then a smaller, more affordable space to congregate could be created. “But the dance community is much broader and deeper than it was in 1979,” she says. “What does it mean to ‘serve’ the community we have in 2005? I think the challenge is to find an area of common need, start small, and grow from there.”

# Appendix A:

## Other Artists' Resources in the Twin Cities Arts Ecology

Other art spaces and organizations play significant roles in artistic and career development in Minnesota. How do these differ from artists' centers?

### Schools

Minnesota's K-12 schools, colleges (e.g., University of Minnesota, College of St. Catherine's, Macalester College, Hamline University, University of St. Thomas), arts and music schools like MacPhail, Minnesota College of Art and Design, and the West Bank School of Music, and many private studios and individual teachers help to shape artistic careers through training and opportunities to teach and network with teaching colleagues. However, except for dwindling arts programming in public K-12 schools, these training institutions are available only to those who can pay tuition and have the time to devote to study or who are teaching there. Some require a certain level of achievement. They do not regrant funds. Their programs center on classes and degree program advising. Once a student has graduated or her series of music/dance/art lessons has ended, she does not have access to teachers, counselors, student peers, space, or equipment that schools provide.

### Organizations

In the performing arts and music worlds, artists must work collectively (Blau, 1989). Nonprofit and for-profit organizations constitute the conveners, producers, and presenters of performances: theater companies, dance troupes, orchestras, combos, and pop bands. Some support artists with salaried positions and ongoing rehearsals. The Minnesota Orchestra employs ninety-eight musicians, for instance, and the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra and the Guthrie support musicians, directors, actors, and composers (through commissioning) as well.

The more prosperous of these have their own dedicated spaces for rehearsal and/or performance. By one rough estimate, somewhat less than half of the nearly five dozen Twin Cities theater companies rent or own such dedicated space. Self-organized musicians playing jazz, pop, folk, country, and world music must rely on private clubs, museums, cultural centers, colleges, and theaters for performance space on a single-event basis. Festivals provide another version of this. Requiring artist involvement with support workers (lighting experts, stage crew, musicians), these presenting organizations typically hire artists on the basis of expertise, often for a single show.

Artistic careers in the performing arts are particularly challenging and varied, and so are their opportunities for collective learning. Many in rock bands or small experimental collective theater groups make little or nothing but perform for sheer love. In larger, better-funded performing arts organizations, artists can compete for slots that offer a kind of

job security (orchestras, repertory theaters), buttressed by union representation. In all these venues, auditions, rehearsals, and performances are a marvelous training ground for performing artists and musicians.

But they are not public forums. The producers and directors do not open their doors and invite in every young or aspiring performer. Live performances generally require admission. And they do not generally allow you behind the scenes to see how it is all brought together.

Aside from artists' centers, the main venues for visual arts post-training collective learning and exhibition are museums, galleries, retreats, art fairs, art "crawls," or studio tours, art criticism, and, increasingly, the web. Because their work is so individual and can be shown without their presence, visual artists find it hard to get feedback. Gallery openings provide one such forum, and some galleries, like Duluth's Art Institute, run a session with each solo show where the artist meets the public to talk about the work and hear comment. Galleries and museums show work on a highly competitive basis; very few living Minnesota artists have had their work purchased by Walker Art Center, the region's premier and nationally known modern art museum. The Minneapolis Institute of Arts runs the *Minnesota Artists Exhibition Program*, showing work of Minnesota artists chosen by a democratically elected panel and involving artists in the governing effort. But it otherwise hangs mainly deceased and non-local painters' and sculptors' work.

For artists needing space or equipment, residencies and collective activities can be an answer. Residencies at places like Anderson Art Center in Red Wing or Blacklock Nature Sanctuary near Moose Lake offer interludes for artists on a competitive basis. Metal sculptors informally gather for iron pours in the Duluth and Twin Cities areas a couple of times a year. In other instances, groups of artists have banded together to do group shows or run their own galleries. Art fairs offer artists a chance to mingle with other artists, and at least one organization, the National Association of Independent Artists (NAIA), was created by artists traveling to high-end juried art fairs around the country. Via its website, NAIA informs artists about the quality and likely weather conditions of various art fairs around the country, who buys what kinds of work there, how to work the art fair market, and how to structure a career in the visual arts.

### Other Service Organizations

Artist service organizations without gathering spaces comprise another sector of the local arts ecology. Unions like Actors' Equity, the Screen Actors Guild, and the National Writers' Union offer democratically run local chapters supported by members' dues and volunteer time. They represent artists in collective bargaining and offer classes in a variety of venues, and, for self-employed artists, provide career counseling.

## *Other Artists' Resources in the Twin Cities Arts Ecology*

Cross-disciplinary artistic organizations like Seattle's Artist Trust, Los Angeles's Center for Cultural Innovation, and Minnesota's Springboard for the Arts offer career counseling, give individual advice on contract copyrights and marketing, and work on issues such as copyright infringement and insurance plans. Some are technology-savvy and offer online counseling, chat rooms, and collective marketing for artists, such as [www.mnartists.org](http://www.mnartists.org), a McKnight-funded website that also invites and disseminates candid arts criticism. Though in other ways their service offerings are similar, these groups generally restrict access to artists (not their publics) and do not offer exhibition and studio space.

### **Live/work Spaces**

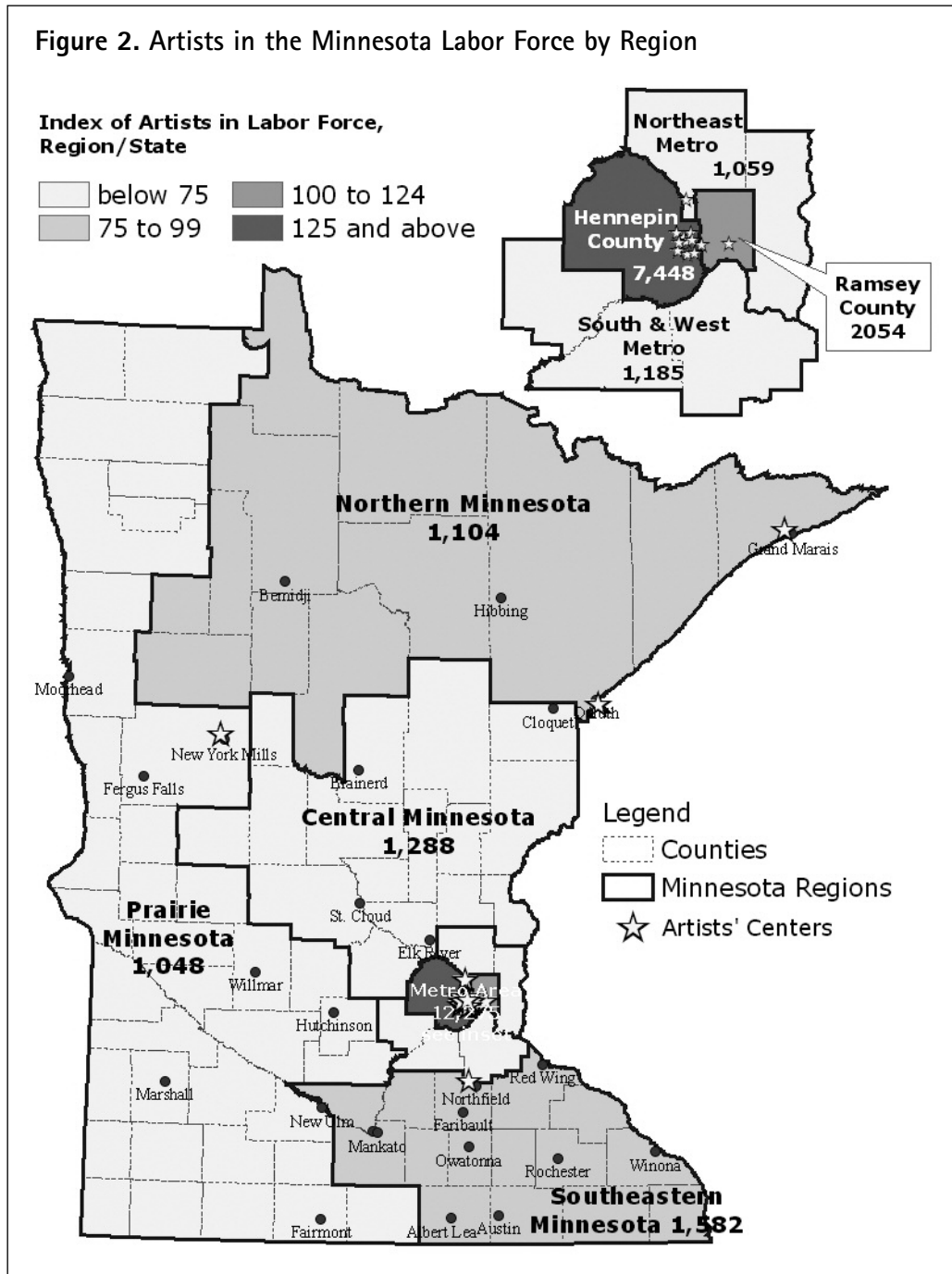
Artist live/work and studio buildings are another important sustaining spatial element in artistic development and livelihoods, and Minnesota is rich in these. Artspace, one of the nation's pioneers in nonprofit live/work and studio space, is headquartered in Minneapolis and has created three large live/work complexes in former industrial buildings in St. Paul, a large one in a former school in Duluth, and a smaller one in Fergus Falls, next door to an art gallery and performing space. In each case, it has worked closely with city and town governments to make the transformation possible. Northeast Minneapolis hosts several huge old breweries and warehouses that now house hundreds of artist studios. The informal networking and exchanges among artists in these group quarters is a highly visible and acknowledged enabler for artists.

It's interesting to reflect on what is absent in the Minnesota arts ecology. There are no arts incubators equivalent to what Washington, D.C. and Fort Lauderdale, Florida, have created, although the Center for Independent Artists plays this role in some ways. Minneapolis does not have a local arts agency or a United Arts Fund, although St. Paul has United Arts. Some larger arts organizations, one observer says, are reluctant to jeopardize their current access to foundation and corporate funding under a "united arts" approach that might be more democratic and spread funds more evenly across large and small organizations.

# Appendix B: Geography and Socioeconomics of Minnesota's Artists

The Minnesota artistic workforce, including those self-employed, totaled 16,768 in 2000. These are conservative estimates, because they do not include those for whom artwork is a second or third occupation or who are spending time on their art and sharing it beyond their families but not doing it for pay.<sup>6</sup> To ensure statistical significance, we aggregated census areas to form Minnesota regions

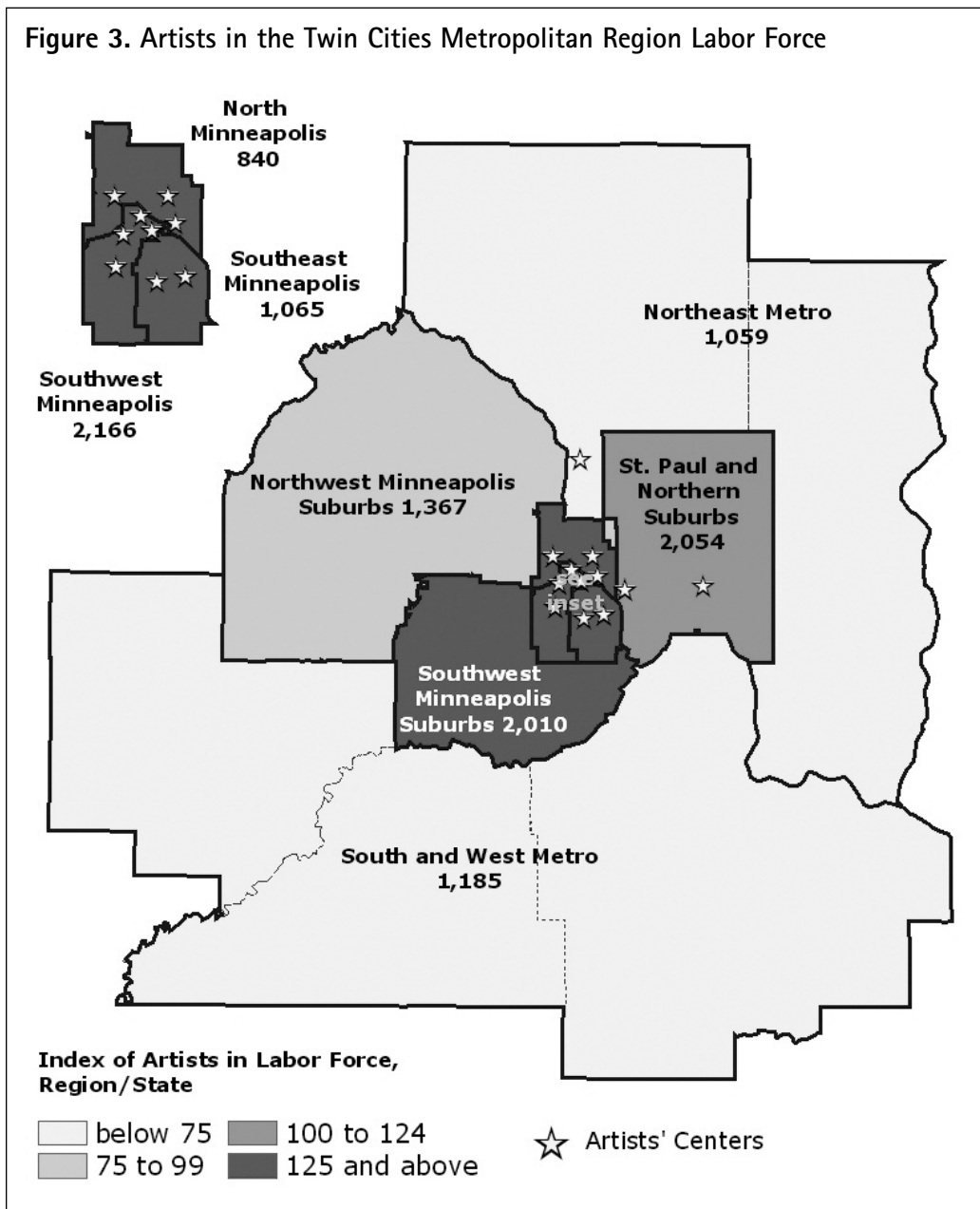
that host at least 1,000 artists active in the labor force, showing artistic totals and densities (see Figure 2), along with the location of artists' centers. More than 12,000 of Minnesota's artists live in its largest metro area, but sizable numbers live in Greater Minnesota. The Twin Cities metro labor force has about 25 percent more artists than the state's average, while Greater Minnesota has fewer than average.



Within the metro area, the highest densities of artists—more than 25 percent higher than state averages—are found in Minneapolis and the southwestern suburbs (Figure 3). Interestingly, new suburban arts centers are springing up in this inner southwestern ring. In contrast, artists are under-represented among the residents of farther out suburban areas. Southwest Minneapolis has the highest density of artists in any city district, with more than four times as many artists in its resident labor force

than in the state overall. The fact that so many of the artists' centers studied here are in south Minneapolis may reflect a symbiotic relationship between center locations and artists' residential preferences (explicit in the case of Intermedia Arts), or it may be a function of the availability of inexpensive and suitable commercial and industrial space.

Artists by discipline sort themselves out differently in Minnesota. Musicians and writers are more prominent in Ramsey County than



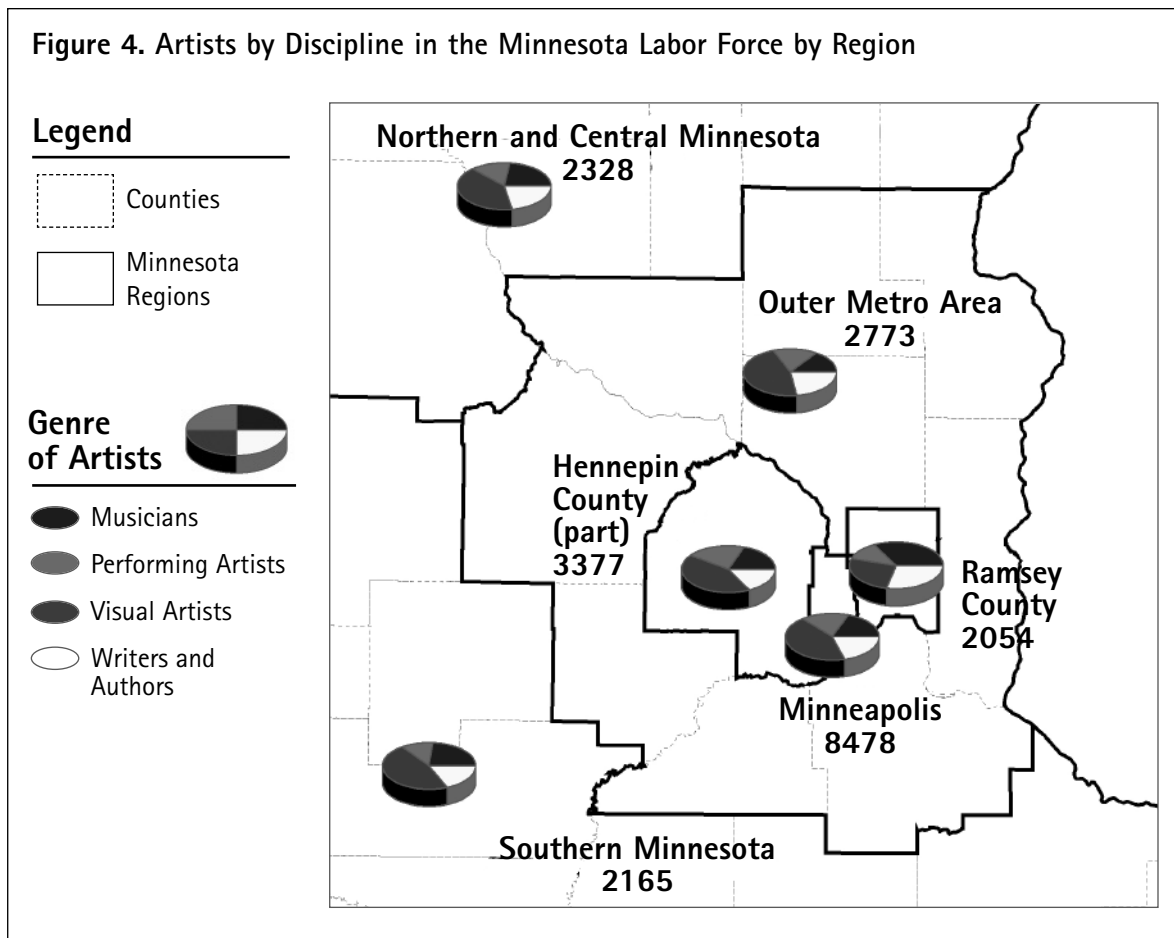


in the other five regions (Figure 4).<sup>7</sup> Performing artists account for more of the artistic workforce in Minneapolis, the rest of Hennepin County, and the outer metro area than elsewhere. Visual artists are fairly evenly spread out among the regions but under-represented in Ramsey County.

Minnesota's disciplinary map is distinctive. Most larger U.S. metro regions we have studied support larger concentrations of performing artists in core metro areas and more dispersed concentrations of writers and visual artists in suburban and rural areas, with musicians somewhere in between. It may be that writers and visual artists are more apt to work alone and rely less on interactions with others, while performing artists and musicians

need performance spaces, other artists, and technical support people. An intriguing possibility is that the high density of artists' centers in the Twin Cities metro area may attract more writers and visual artists than would otherwise be the case. Conversely, in Greater Minnesota, the relatively rich panoply of community theaters, the strong state college system, and the many churches that support musicians at least part-time help to disperse these artists around the state.

In age structure, Minnesota's artistic workforce closely parallels the nation's, but artists sort themselves out quite differently across the state's regions by age. In Minneapolis, artists aged 16–34 are over-represented, while in northern and central Minnesota, artists



in the over-55 age group are more prominent (Figure 5). The older group is over-represented in Ramsey County as well.

Artists migrating between regions (and into and out of the state) account for much of this age patterning. In the younger age cohorts, the Twin Cities metro region is a large net attractor of artists (Figure 6), while Greater Minnesota experiences a huge outmigration. The Cities' centripetal pull is associated with schooling and training opportunities and its wealth of post-graduate art experiences. But Greater Minnesota is a net gainer of artists in the 35-44 and over-65 age cohorts. Artists aged 35-44 have likely completed formal training and established a track record, and are in a position to decide where to live and work.

They may be successful enough to paint on the North Shore or write in solitude on the prairies, and they may find Greater Minnesota affordable and attractive for raising a family. Others in this age group may be leaving the Twin Cities for professional opportunities on the coasts.

Cost of living and environmental amenities may explain the net gains of Greater Minnesota (and net losses in the Twin Cities) among the oldest cohort. Thus Greater Minnesota appears to be most successful in attracting mature artists who have established their careers and are less in need of collective support systems, while the Twin Cities acts as a migration magnet for the young.

People of color and immigrants are under-represented in Minnesota's population, compared with the country as a whole, and this is true for artists as well. Minority workers comprise 8 percent of Minnesota's labor force but 6.5 percent of the state's artists, compared with 26 percent and 16 percent nationally. When minority under-representation in Minnesota's labor force is taken into account, artists of color do somewhat better in Minnesota than elsewhere, though they are still under-represented in the ranks of artists compared with whites. They are heavily concentrated in the Twin Cities metro area and are residentially clustered within it

Figure 5. Artists by Age Group in the Minnesota Labor Force by Region

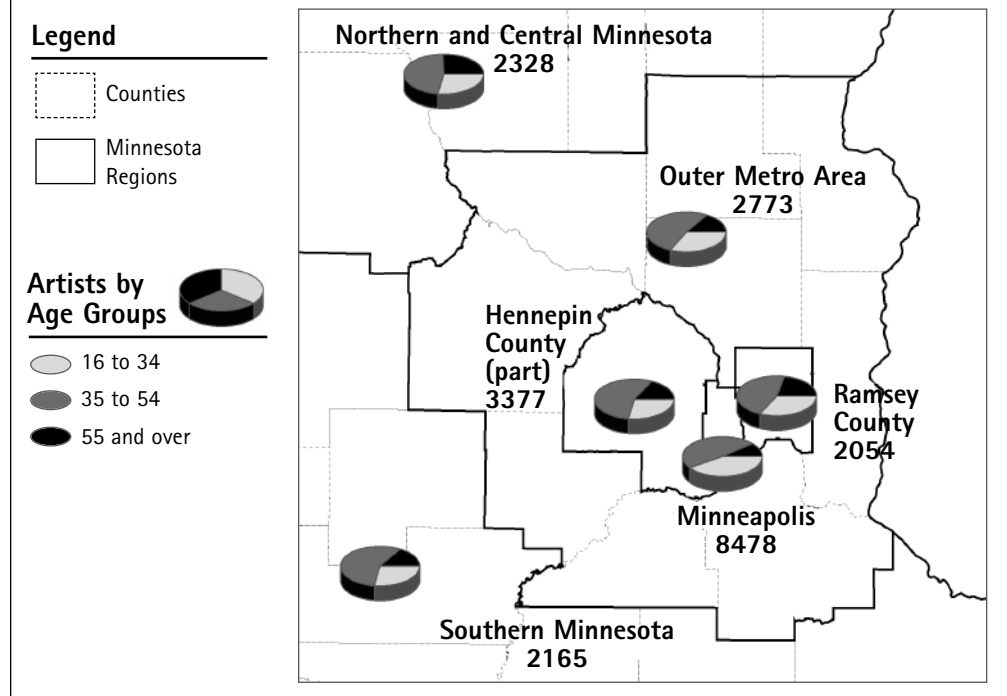
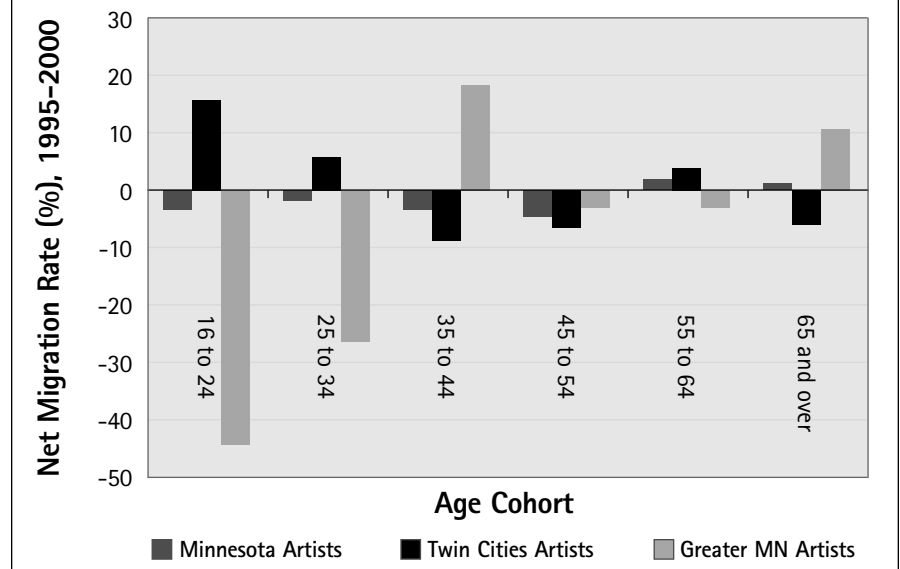


Figure 6. Net Migration, Minnesota Artists By Region, Age Cohort



(Table 7). African Americans, Native Americans, and multiracial artists live in much greater densities in Minneapolis, while Asian Americans and Hispanics comprise a larger share of the artistic workforce in Ramsey County. In southern Minnesota, artists identifying themselves as "other," including multiracial, account for a higher share of artists than they do statewide. But in all regions in Minnesota, artists of color are under-represented compared with

their groups' share of the regional workforce, and this under-representation is greatest in the Twin Cities.

Immigrant artists—those who report being naturalized citizens or non-citizens—are distributed somewhat differently (Table 7). Their concentrations are highest in Hennepin County outside Minneapolis, followed by Ramsey County, Minneapolis, and the outer metro. In all regions, immigrants are under-represented among the ranks of artists, given their presence in the labor force. As with people of color, this discrepancy is greatest in the metro area, especially the core cities.

Women artists also are under-represented in Minnesota compared with their presence in the state's labor force, though they do slightly better than do women artists nationally. Their spatial patterns within the state are interesting. Women are more prominent among artists in Ramsey County, the outer metro area, and southern Minnesota, while male artists dominate in Minneapolis, northern and central Minnesota, and the rest of Hennepin County (Table 8).

Minnesota artists, like Minnesota's workforce as a whole, are somewhat better educated than the nation's. The census data estimate that 87 percent of Minnesota's artists have at least some college education, while nationally the figure is 84 percent (Table 9). As is true nationally, Minnesota artists have completed more education on average than Minnesota workers as a whole, only 64 percent of whom have attended any college.

However, greater educational attainment does not translate into higher median incomes for artists, even when income from all sources, including non-arts work, is included. Minnesota artists make just under the state's median personal income. Visual artists and musicians in Minnesota make just about what their counterparts make elsewhere in the nation, but performing artists make only 90 percent of the national median and writers only 83 percent.

**Table 7. Artists in labor force by race, ethnicity, immigrant status by Minnesota region, 2000**

Region	Race, ethnicity, immigrants as % of total artists						
	Black	Native American	Asian	Hispanic	Other, incl. Multi-racial	White	Immigrant
Minneapolis	4.5	2.5	0.5	0.0	5.2	87.2	4.0
Ramsey County	0.9	0.0	3.1	3.7	1.1	91.9	5.2
<b>Minnesota</b>	<b>2.1</b>	<b>0.7</b>	<b>1.1</b>	<b>0.7</b>	<b>2.2</b>	<b>93.5</b>	<b>3.6</b>
Hennepin County Metro	2.4	0.0	2.0	0.0	1.5	94.1	5.8
Outer Metro	1.9	0.0	1.3	0.0	0.9	95.8	3.4
Southern Minnesota	0.7	0.5	0.0	1.2	2.5	96.2	0.4
North, Central Minnesota	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.9	0.0	99.8	1.5

Source: Our computations using Census data from Steven Ruggles and Matthew Sobek et al. Integrated Public Use Microdata Series: Version 3.0 Minneapolis: Historical Census Projects, University of Minnesota, 2003.

**Table 8. Artists by gender, Minnesota regions, 2000**

Region	Gender, % of total	
	Female	Male
Minneapolis	52.5	47.5
Ramsey County	50.6	49.4
Southern Minnesota	49.1	50.9
<b>Minnesota</b>	<b>46.2</b>	<b>53.8</b>
Hennepin County Metro	45.0	55.0
Outer Metro	43.4	56.6
North, Central Minnesota	41.1	58.9

Source: Our computations using Census data from Steven Ruggles and Matthew Sobek et al. Integrated Public Use Microdata Series: Version 3.0 Minneapolis: Historical Census Projects, University of Minnesota, 2003.

**Table 9. Artists' educational attainment, Minnesota and US, 2000**

Educational attainment	Minnesota		United States	
	Artists (%)	All employed (%)	Artists (%)	All employed (%)
Less than high school	3.3	10.8	4.3	14.4
High school or equivalent	9.6	25.6	11.4	26.7
Some college	25.7	27.1	23.1	24.3
Associates degree	5.9	8.6	6.6	7.3
Bachelors degree	42.4	19.8	38.6	17.7
Masters degree or higher	13.0	8.2	15.9	9.7
<b>Totals</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Ann Markusen and Greg Schrock, Markusen Economic Research Services, 2004, estimates using 2000 decennial population Census data from Steven Ruggles and Matthew Sobek et al. Integrated Public Use Microdata Series: Version 3.0 Minneapolis: Historical Census Projects, University of Minnesota, 2003.

# Endnotes

1. Exceptions include the Bacow, Whitlow, and Schupbach (2004) summary of affordable spaces for artists funded by the Local Initiative Support Corporation and the Jackson et al (2003b) discussion of artists' work space and equipment needs in a nine-city study.

2. For each organization profiled, we chose one or more artists to come. All interviews were confidential and covered by the University's human subject protocol; any artist profiled or quoted has given us permission for the particular material used. These artist interviews and the insights we gained from them are not necessarily representative of the totality of artists' experience, but they allow us to illustrate unique impacts and a range of experience at varying career mileposts.

3. In the past decade, a spate of studies have emerged to help arts organizations encourage and document participation and community cultural development (e.g. Adams and Goldbard, 2001; Jackson, et al, 2003a) and "create public value," i.e., raise the visibility of the arts as a public good (Moore, 1995).

4. Several recent studies address ways that service organizations and funders can better reach immigrant artists (Staub, 2003; Bye, 2004). Bye's study, based on her work as director of MRAC, explains the success her organization has had in Minnesota working with cultural brokers, channeling art funding through non-arts organizations where immigrants and refugees are served, planning for language issues, and not "requiring that all activities serve the majority culture" (p. 7).

5. The survey was designed to elicit answers to questions about the economic and artistic value of Loft programs (classes, mentorships, career initiative grants, and McKnight Fellowships) to Loft members, participants in the mentor programs, and grant recipients.

We sent the survey on March 16, 2005, to all 5,650 email addresses we received from the Loft. Three weeks later, we sent out a prompt that produced another 400 responses. We received 1,383 emailed responses and 5 downloaded, mailed forms. The response rate is 25%, in the ballpark of other large artist surveys (Jeffri and Greenblatt, 1998; Zucker, 1994). The survey responses cannot be considered representative for three reasons. First, we do not know the dimensions of the entire population of artists and others touched by Loft programs but who are not members or who have been members recently but were not at the time of the survey. Since the Loft has been in existence for more than thirty years, we have surely not captured the experience of many exposed to past Loft programming. Second, the Loft drew participant data over varying time spans depending on program and could provide email addresses for only portions

of each group (number in survey set and % of all Loft in that group in parentheses): they included all current members for whom the Loft had email addresses (1,786, 71%); all instructors (285, 68%); all students from 2000 to February, 2005 (4,398, 57%); all studio renters (161, 80%); and all participants in contests for grants and mentorships from 1982 to present (1,145, 43%). We do not know how those who are Loft participants but do not have email addresses on file with the Loft might differ from the population of those who did. About 20% of the emails were returned to us as undeliverable. Third, we cannot gauge the degree of selection bias among our respondents, because we do not know any of the features of the base population (age, length of time since Loft involvement) from which our respondents are drawn. Respondents may be among those more enthusiastic and loyal to the Loft, or alternatively, disgruntled.

Of those responding, Loft service usage ran as follows: 79% creative writing courses; 71% View from the Loft; 58% Speakeasy magazine; 52% Loft website; 44% literary readings and performances; 30% retreats and workshops; 17% the resource library; 10% or less Spoken Word performances, book club room, writer's studios, open writing groups, Mentor program, McKnight fellowships, and Career Initiative Grants.

6. The U.S. Census estimates are based on a 5 percent sample of people reporting their major occupation as artist. The census provides a wonderful snapshot of where artists lived, by state and sub-region, for each of the decennial census years. There are issues in using the census, particularly the under-representation of artists for whom artwork is a second occupation or a serious endeavor but for which they do not expect to earn income. For an extended discussion of these issues, see Markusen, Schrock, and Cameron (2004), especially the technical appendix.

7. To ensure statistical significance of artists by discipline by region, we had to further aggregate census geographical units to the six shown in Figure 4.

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# People Interviewed

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J. Anthony Allen	Martin Cozza	Audrey Henningson	Jonah Miller	Pam Robinson
Jay Anderson	DeAnna Cummings	Linda Hoeschler	Margaret Miller	Cole Rogers
Chel Anderson	Roger Cummings	Carolyn Holbrook	Jane Minton	Carrin Rosetti
Dennis Anderson	Ross Currier	E. Katie Holm	Zaraawar Mistry	Heather Ross/ Desdamaona
Susan Armington	Neal Cuthbert	Wendy Holmes	Chaka Mkali	Maarja Roth
Margo Ashmore	Lisa D'Amour	Dana Holstad	Renee Moe	Ellen Rutchick
Arlene Atwater	Colleen Daugherty	Annie Humphrey	Jim Moore	Jared Santek
Kirsten Aune	John Davis	Marion Hvistendahl	Wendy Morris	Pamela Sarvela
Kris Barberg	Margo Dean	Jane Jeong Trenka	John Munger	Wendy Savage
Heather Barringer	Robert DeArmond	Marlys Johnson	Aksana Muratalieva	Pete Scherzer
Harriet Bart	Tom DeBiao	Jane Johnson	Scott Murphy	Bart Schneider
Jeff Bartlett	Todd Deutsch	Patty Kakac/ Granary Girls	Linda Myers	Cora Scholz
Susan Bauer	Michael Dixon	Jeff Kalstrom	Paulette Myers-Rich	Tom Schrader
Rebecca Bazan	Joan Drury	Lynn Kasma	Brad Nelson	Patrick Scully
Connie Beckers	Eric Dubnicka	Tequila Kates-Lewis	Donny Ness	Luverne Seifert
Lina Belar	Kelly Dupre	Maggie Kazel	Pamela Hill Nettleton	Christine Seitz
Hazel Belvo	Matt Ehling	Mary Reid Kelley	Paul Niemisto	Pat Shifferd
Sandra Benitez	Tony Ferguson	Dean Kjerland	John Nuechterlein	Jessica Lee Shimek
Martin Berg	Barbara Fields	David Kjerland	John O'Brien	George Slade
Barbara Bergeron	Nancy Fushan	Tonya Kjerland	Sindibad/James O'Dell	Fred Somers
Rich Bergeron	Collette Gaiter	Ann Klefstad	David O'Fallon	Alec Soth
Dan Bergeson	Emily Galusha	Maren Kloppmann	John Olive	Roderic Southall
Megan Bergström	Nancy Gaschott	Philip Kobucher	Chris Osgood	Rebecca St. George
Del Bey	Cynthia Gehrig	Patrice Clark Koelsch	Dean Otto	John Steffl
Suzy Bielak	Vance Gellert	Nedo Kojic	Mike Parta	Cindy Stevens
Philip Blackburn	Marie Vogl Gery	Karin Kraemer	Juliet Patterson	Robin Stiehm
Lee Blessing	Samantha Gibb-Roff	Jane Kramer	Tod Peterson	Amy Stoller Stearns
Dickson Bond	Adu Gindy	Annette Lee	Gary Peterson	Carolyn Swiszc
Robert Booker	Felicia Glidden	Tania Larsen Legvold	Andrea Petrini	David Evan Thomas
Tom Borrup	George Gloege	L. Kelley Lindquist	Paula Pfaff	Clara Ueland
Betsy Bowen	Dorothy Goldie	Phill Lindsay	Bao Phi	Laurie Van Wieren
James Boyd Brent	Marlina Gonzalez	Timothy Lloyd	Ross Potter	Janika Vandervelde
Judith Brin Ingber	Katharine Gotham	April Lott	Ranee Ramaswamy	Marie Vogl Gery
Diane Brostrom	Rod Graf	Jeremy Lund	Betty Ramsland	Beverly Voldseth
Carolyn Bye	Paula Granquist	Sarah Lutman	David Rathman	Paulette Warren
Sarah Caffisch	Mary Griep	Dave Machacek	Sterling Rathsack	Rick Weise
Charles Caldwell	Richard Grushalla	JoAnne Makela	Mary Reid	Arwen Wilder
Jeanne Calvit	Daniel Gumnit	Melanie Marnich	Marcie Rendon	Bob Williams
Polly Carl	Terry Gydesen	Simon Martinez	Doris Ressler	Leslie Wolfe
Dorothy Childers	Carolyn Halliday	Scott Mayer	Jodi Ritter/ Granary Girls	Gordon Wright
Polly Clark	Chris Halverson	Koffi Mbairamadji	Lia Rivamonte	Marcus Young
Jennie Clarke	Reggie Harris	Carla McGrath		Maryam Yusefzadeh
Ray Close	Ellen Hawley			



## “Andre’s Wandering Accordionist” by Scott Murphy

There is a link in this painting that has to do with economic conditions that are handed down from one generation to the next. The steps represent a metaphor for the economic ladder, funny how it ends up that the poorest of the poor live below sea level. The painting is a challenge to the economists to figure social justice into the complicated math of sharing the wealth.

—Scott Murphy