



ARTS & SOCIAL CHANGE MAPPING INITIATIVE
A project of Animating Democracy, a program of Americans for the Arts

THE ARTS CAN and DO MAKE CHANGE HAPPEN. Animating Democracy, a program of Americans for the Arts, has launched an initiative to map and highlight the spectrum of ways the arts are being activated to engage and make change. A centralized online resource will make this important work visible and serve to link change agents, artists and the arts, funders, and an interested public.

By mapping this arena of practice the initiative seeks to enhance understanding of: 1) the growing spectrum of arts activity that fosters civic engagement and social change; 2) the expanding circle of artists and arts organizations actively pursuing this work; and 3) the funders who support such work. From the results of the mapping process, this initiative will:

- Assemble a current portrait of funding support for arts that foster civic engagement and social change available from a range of arts, social change and other funders;
- Design and implement a robust, online registry of artists as well as cultural and community organizations that foster civic engagement and social change through the arts; and
- Synthesize a typology and a vocabulary that helps distinguish different streams of practice and intended civic and social outcomes as well as advances unifying language for the field.

ARTS & CHANGE ONLINE (working title) will help to tell the stories of the power of art to make change. This robust resource will:

- *Recognize and promote the spectrum of arts and media activity that fosters civic engagement and social change*
- *Inspire and inform community organizers, civic engagement planners, and funders to connect artists and cultural organizations to their efforts.*
- *Help make the case for continued and expanded support for this work.*

The initiative is supported by The Nathan Cummings Foundation, The Open Society Institute, and CrossCurrents Foundation.

SIGNIFICANCE

The arts play a vital and varied role in engaging people and making change. They call upon a sense of humanity and the underpinning values of democracy to deepen understanding around persistent social issues of race, economic inequity, and identity. Organizers and activists regularly employ the arts to provoke, but also as welcoming, impactful methods of engagement

that are essential to building community, celebrating and commemorating, deepening understanding of issues, solving problems, and making positive change. Artists also work directly to address social issues, sometimes as social commentators, but also as cultural activists and organizers in their own right.

Although examples are ubiquitous, for those who wish to find and support creative activity that fosters civic engagement and social change, information about artists, arts and community organizations, and projects and programs is fragmented and spread across the web. A centralized online resource is needed to coalesce the diversity of creative work and disciplines; artists; arts and non-arts organizers of the work; and a range of outcomes such as social justice, community building, community development, and civic engagement capacity building.

Imagine:

- *A media outlet is looking for examples of art works and programs that have helped to reframe a conversation on a contentious issue.*
- *A regional planning agency is launching an initiative to stimulate citizen participation in land use issues. It is seeking artists who can motivate participation and infuse creative strategies into public deliberation and later environmental strategies.*
- *A social justice funder is looking for examples of projects that employ arts and culture in community organizing and for artists in its region who could be resources to its grantees.*
- *A community foundation officer wants to identify peers who are supporting the arts as a strategy for activism.*

ART & CHANGE ONLINE will chart the field in a way that describes and distinguishes the full spectrum of creative strategies that advance participatory democracy and community, social, or civic change. It will identify and profile existing sources of private and public sector funding for this work from both arts and non-arts sources. Finally, it will create a centralized and comprehensive resource of active artists, arts organizations, and excellent project examples that can meet the needs of a wide variety of stakeholders and serve to connect social and cultural activists.

When complete, this effort will produce a dynamic resource that shall be consistently accessible to the field and the public.

ACTIVITY

This initiative will be implemented starting in September 2009. Resources are expected to be available on-line beginning late in 2010.

LEADERSHIP

With extensive experience in the field and access to in-house technology and research expertise, Animating Democracy and Americans for the Arts are well positioned to undertake this work and execute it in an efficient and timely fashion. Barbara Schaffer Bacon and Pam Korza, co-directors of Animating Democracy, will oversee the project.

To ensure high quality content and online formats that are useful and effective for a variety of users, Animating Democracy will engage a small group of advisors and field based consultants to aid us in this project. This advisory committee and consultants will include field leaders, funders (including initiative funding partners), and practitioners and others who bring valuable stakeholder perspectives including:

- *thought leaders working at the intersection of art and social justice/civic engagement;*
- *non-arts social justice and civic engagement funders interested in or already engaged in supporting efforts inclusive of arts and culture;*
- *leaders within social justice organizations, community organizing entities, and dialogue and democracy organizations that can ensure value and use by these stakeholders; and*
- *relevant artist networks and funders of relevant arts sectors and organizations.*

ORGANIZATIONAL BACKGROUND

With a more than a 45-year history of service to the field, Americans for the Arts seeks to represent local communities and to create opportunities for every American to participate in and appreciate all forms of the arts. Through its work in five core areas—research, policy, advocacy, professional development, and visibility—Americans for the Arts seeks to accomplish three goals: 1) foster an environment in which the arts can thrive and contribute to the creation of more livable communities; 2) generate more public- and private-sector resources for the arts and arts education; and 3) build individual appreciation of the value of the arts.

Launched in 1999, the Animating Democracy program nurtures civic engagement through arts and culture. Animating Democracy’s emphasis on the vital role of the arts in a democratic society connects to all three of Americans for the Arts’ mission goals. The work is based on the premise that democracy is animated when an informed public is engaged in the issues affecting people’s daily lives. The arts and humanities can contribute unique programs, settings, and creative approaches that reach new and diverse participants; stimulate public dialogue about and engagement with civic issues; and inspire action to make change.

Over the last decade, Animating Democracy has supported a wide range of arts organizations doing compelling civic engagement work, implemented national research, and developed field resources and publications. Through Animating Democracy’s work, Americans for the Arts has evolved into a national resource on arts and civic engagement practice and is called upon frequently to serve as program adviser, researcher, and as a funding and research partner. Today, as the ideals and work of arts-based civic engagement have gained currency across many sectors, Americans for the Arts and the Animating Democracy staff have invested new energy in the effort to: 1) demonstrate the public value of their work to effect social change and 2) inform public and private-sector leaders about their work as part of a larger endeavor to influence the development of policy that advances the role of the arts in civic engagement.