



★ ★ ★ *New Community Visions* part of the
Transforming America's Communities Through the Arts Initiative

Arts, the Environment, & Sustainability

Excerpted from *Arts & America: Arts, Culture, and the Future
of America's Communities*

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An Introduction

Dear Reader,

For the last 30 years here at Americans for the Arts, I have had the privilege of visiting and learning about a different community almost every week.

In multiple places in every state, I have witnessed firsthand the magic and majesty of the arts themselves and also their transformative power in helping to tackle social and community issues. Whether in a small town or a major population center, the same breadth of value is present. Magnificent, awe-inspiring performances and museum exhibits exist side by side with arts programs designed to accelerate healing in hospitals; musical performances with the homeless to bring comfort and perhaps new inspiration; hands-on visual and performing arts programs in military facilities to aid returning wounded service men and women in coping with PTSD or recovering from physical injury; or the myriad of other ways that the arts are a part of people's lives.

During my travels, I usually have the honor of meeting hard working local leaders from the government, business, and

education sectors as well as from the arts. When a mayor or county commissioner proudly talks about her home-grown arts treasures—while in the same breath explaining the economic and employment benefits of the arts to her community or the attractiveness of the arts offerings there as a cultural tourism destination—it is clear that the arts are valued as a source of pride and identity and as a positive contributor to growth.

Although the arts have delivered this spectrum of entertainment, inspiration, and transformative value for as long as humankind has existed, they have faced a roller coaster of recognition and marginalization in our country since even before our founding. We are now, however, at a moment where there seems to be an increased recognition of the broad value of the arts. That provides us with an inflection point at which to explore, discuss, and recalibrate what it takes to advance the arts and arts education in America. This book of 10 essays provides an opportunity to look at ideas that might help a community invent or reinvent how the arts fit into it. Our guest authors take a look at the kinds of thinking and mechanisms decision-makers, leaders, and citizens need in order to make the arts more fully part of the quality of experience that every child and every community member gets from living in a particular place.

Americans for the Arts is in the business of helping leaders build capacity for the advancement of the arts and arts education. We work toward a vision that all of the arts and their power can be made available and accessible to every American. The leaders that we help are generating positive change for and through the arts at the local, state, or national levels and across all sectors. Since our founding 55 years ago, we have created materials, management tools, case-making research and data, along with professional and leadership development training to help leaders carry out this important work. About 25 years ago, our publication, *Community Vision*, along with a series of companion pieces, was created to guide the process of expanding capacity for community development through the arts. But a great

deal has changed since then, so we have embarked on the three-year journey to update those tools, look anew at what the arts are doing in communities, and create materials that will help community leaders advance that work today.

In this book, 10 authors focus on just a few of the issue areas that the arts are working in today. These essay topics do not illustrate the only way the arts are working in communities. We are continually looking at other topics in other publications, tools, and discussions to help communities customize their unique approach to involving the arts in addressing their particular needs and goals. Such additional issue areas include: the re-entry of active military service members, veterans, youth at risk, crime prevention, immigration, technology, disease, drug abuse, housing, aging, faith and religion, and perhaps most importantly cross-cultural understanding and equity. This is a partial list of the challenges and opportunities where the arts are playing an important role.

To set some context for the future, we have also included an essay that lays out some thoughts on the history of art in community. My friend, Maryo Gard Ewell, has done more to document the history and sea changes of the last century of arts-based community development than anyone else I can think of. She says that she does it because a field isn't a field if it doesn't know its history. I thank her for her extensive contributions to our database of field knowledge, which Clayton Lord has been able to draw upon for his comprehensive history piece in this book. Maryo is also fond of saying that a field isn't a field without a few heroes in the mix. I count both her and her father, Robert Gard, mentioned in that history, to be among those heroes.

Our field of nonprofit arts organizations and individuals working to advance the arts and to create better communities through the arts is constantly evolving, constantly reinventing an understanding of itself and its role in this great American experiment. But the field

should never waver on the deeply rooted belief in its essential necessity to the world. We are in a period of evolving understanding right now. The broad transformative power of the arts as a means to help create solutions to a broad array of social and economic issues is a big part of the value of the arts in today's American Community.

The rising demand for deeper accountability for what the arts bring to the table in terms of social welfare along with the advent of new sources of data, technology, and processing power to make previously invisible connections visible brings us to a pivotal moment. The arts are poised to be fully integrated into a nuanced, deep, and powerful conversation about who and what is needed to create healthy, equitable communities for everyone.

The arts are valuable. Artists are essential. Arts education is critical to keeping America creative and competitive in order to meet the challenges of the 21st century. The arts are a strong partner in the solution to these challenges and can be even stronger in the future. The arts help transform American communities and the result can be a better child, a better town, a better nation, and perhaps a better world. My hope is that this book of ideas can help in that transformative journey.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Bob Lynch". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Robert L. Lynch
President and CEO
Americans for the Arts



Arts, the Environment, & Sustainability

— by Ian Garrett —

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This essay looks at changes related to the environment and issues of sustainability and the role that the arts may play in positively impacting those changes over the next 10–15 years. In particular, this essay proposes the following trends and associated arts interventions:

- The next 10–15 years will see a burst of new technological and technical advances that will allow the construction of smarter, more energy-conscious appliances, buildings, and other devices. This will both mean a shrinking of the ecological footprint of arts experiences and an increase in the opportunity

to creatively integrate environmentally conscious measures—including monitoring energy use, community engagement, and conservation efforts—into art projects large and small.

- As climate changes occur and certain parts of the world become less inhabitable, whole communities will have to migrate in what has been termed a “climate diaspora.” This diaspora will, initially, disproportionately impact marginalized native populations with fragile, rich cultural histories. Efforts to preserve and disseminate those cultural and artistic histories will both increase awareness of the migration and maintain community cohesion among those attempting to incorporate into strange new conditions.
- While others will not have to immediately move as a result of sea level rise or temperature fluctuation, many environments will eventually change so drastically as to impact the feeling of being “home.” Artists, in reaction to that unease and as activist leaders, will respond with an increase in art driven by environmental and ecological issues across all mediums, which will in turn create new public knowledge, dialogue, and action.

— *C. Lord*

The term “Anthropocene” has been proposed as the name for the time we live in. In its reference to humans (“anthro”), this term proposes that the current geological epoch is primarily defined by the vast impact humans are having and have had on our planet. Labeling a geological age should not be taken lightly—and the term does come with some controversy—but given our ongoing impact as a species, it does not seem outlandish to highlight that we, the human race, are now the driving force behind our changing planet.

The coming massive climatic change is complex and will present many opportunities and challenges. Technology will allow us to not only measure the effects of this change but to manage it efficiently. Where we can't manage, mitigate, or adapt, many populations will migrate to escape rising waters or changing temperatures and to access the resources they require to survive. For those that are not required to relocate, the world will still change around them; we will all experience change.

Within the arts, we will feel these changes as well, but we will also have unique, active responsibilities. Our cultural facilities will evolve into sustainable machines and contribute to environmental health. The art and culture that we preserve and carry with us will ease migration and transition and preserve memory. And, within our communities, the arts will play an essential role in discerning who we have been and what we are becoming.

INVESTMENTS IN SMART INFRASTRUCTURE

Infrastructure is a popular point of political discussion. In the United States and internationally, we are dependent on a vast network of roadways and power lines that have allowed for exponential growth throughout the 20th century and into the 21st. Our success is dependent on these shared arterial resources to transport goods quickly, to allow us to work together across those great distances, and to work on a 24-hour clock.

These physical connections are showing their wear. Forty-eight bills and resolutions were introduced in Congress between 2013 and 2014 related to the repair, improvement, and security of national infrastructure. Whether it's about jobs, communication, transportation, or power distribution, the webs that connect our cities and make our country work are strained and in the spotlight.

New times require new solutions. In December 2007, Congress passed, and the president approved, legislation that offered the Department of Energy support to pursue short- and long-term plans to transition to smart grid technology.¹ A national smart grid will eventually use computerized and networked communication to manage electricity networks from power plants, solar arrays, and wind farms to end-user homes and businesses.

On a more micro scale, best practices in sustainable architecture and construction include mandates to create automated, healthy buildings: occupancy sensors, for example, turn lights on and off, while other systems adjust brightness over the course of the day in response to predictable sunrise and sunset times.

After years of increasing overall capacity with “dumb” infrastructure, the future is one where our resource systems will effectively provide feedback through the “Internet of things.”² Our thermostats—like those made by Nest—have started to monitor our usage habits. The next logical step is to monitor the weather and heating prices to keep us constantly comfortable and on budget. Refrigerators will know what’s inside them, and will suggest recipes and build your shopping list based on your preferences. Moreover, they will know that you might want to rethink the barbeque on your calendar based on the forecast. Self-driving cars will know the quickest route to your office, will drive themselves to the nearest place to recharge for your journey home, and will connect with the national smart grid to power up for the next day at the optimal time for your overall electrical usage.

How will this future of connectivity and shared resources impact the arts and environment? New cultural facilities are already integrating building management systems that save the operating organization’s money and minimize the environmental impact. Sometimes this plays out in clever ways. When the Harbourfront Centre in Toronto engaged in re-glazing the atrium lobby of the Harbourfront Centre Theatre, it wanted to integrate newly transparent photovoltaic cells. Just a couple of days before all of the materials were purchased,

however, someone also had the idea to engage glass artist Sarah Hall. This resulted in *Waterglass*, a permanent installation of 119 hand-painted and fired glass panels that incorporate the photovoltaic

cells, generate solar energy for the building, and document the history of Lake Ontario and the Toronto harbor. By prioritizing a capital improvement to building infrastructure, and integrating it into a large public art commission, the Harbourfront was able to create a sustainable and educational arts-based environmental intervention.

“Today, the arts sector has relatively little and disparate environmental data on its impacts.”

Many sustainable building retrofits for arts institutions are less flashy. Dynamic, zoned climate control systems are an important but invisible change, for example. Climate control systems in theaters and galleries are often designed to maximize the comfort of the audience at maximum occupancy. This has historically meant theater practitioners spending a cold week rehearsing in a theater with the air conditioning set to keep the hundreds of audience members that will hopefully fill the seats comfortable. Future systems will allow for more nuanced adaptations. They will monitor use; measure occupancy; project needs based on office, rehearsal, and performance schedules; and even know the heat gain expected from attendance based on box office sales and from the connected show technology in those spaces.

This change won't just be about saving on energy bills; it will also decrease the environmental footprint of arts events and facilities. Today, the arts sector has relatively little and disparate environmental data on its impacts. From what we do know,^{3,4,5} public cultural events appear to typically consume fewer resources than a night at home, if one excludes audience transportation. As more funding bodies around the globe begin to require environmental impacts reporting, a vast accumulation of data on the environmental impacts of cultural events will likely show that cultural activity encourages the congregation of

people together to share resources—encouraging the interpretation of cultural experiences as environmental investments. This will become truer as our facilities get smarter. Soon your museum admission may also be considered a significant carbon offset investment.

THE CLIMATE DIASPORA

Technology will greatly help in solving or mitigating the resource issues of the future. As our population grows, however, relying on our technical ingenuity alone will not solve everything. The world is changing, and catastrophic weather events are already occurring more frequently. It should be telling that in New York City’s PLANYC,⁶ there is an integrated strategy for climatic adaptation and that the original release of this plan predicted the flooding later caused by Hurricane Sandy.

*“Through our actions,
we are posing a threat to
long-lived cultures, artistic
practices, and identities.”*

There will soon be areas around the world that cannot adapt to our shared climate future. Some island nations may soon vanish, such as Kiribati and Tuvalu in the Pacific Ocean, both of which are likely to partially or wholly

disappear as sea levels rise in the coming decade.⁷ During COP15, the 2009 United Nations Climate Change Conference and negotiations, Ian Fry, lead negotiator for that small island nation of Tuvalu, pled with attendees to help, saying, “I woke up this morning crying, and that’s not easy for a grown man to admit...The fate of my country rests in your hands.”⁸

Those displaced populations may be relatively small, but globally, there are a number of environmental factors that are already beginning to force larger migrations. The United States has the largest immigrant population in the world and houses four times more immigrants than the next country on the list. As noted in a 2014 United Nations report, “Planned relocation not only involves complex

logistical considerations, but also profound challenges and anxieties relating to personal and community identity, social coherence, and culture, which may be inter-generational.”^{9,10} As new populations, driven by climate change or by other factors, flow into the country, the arts have the potential to play a large role in easing the integration of displaced people into their new homes.

Projects such as *Song of the Bird King* preserve disappearing music and dance traditions of populations displaced or disintegrated by climate change.¹¹ What started as a more traditional collaborative music project ultimately turned into a preservation project in the wake of man-made environmental disaster for the indigenous T’bolis, Tirurays, Ubos, and Manobos peoples.

This is one way in which the arts will be necessary in our upcoming transition. Many indigenous people have been in their ancestral geographies for many generations, and much of their culture can be attributed to that traditional geography. There is no doubt that losing land will impact the cultural tradition.

So, how will these cultures survive? Through our actions, we are posing a threat to long-lived cultures, artistic practices, and identities. As communities are moved around, they will carry the cultural touchstones of those communities with them, which will help them as they integrate into other populations. When one’s home is gone or unliveable, culture will be what’s left to provide the connective tissue of tradition.

For those welcoming new populations into their neighborhoods and communities, this will be an opportunity for new cross-cultural understanding. The recent *EcoCentrix: Indigenous Art, Sustainable Acts* exhibition in the Bargehouse on Oxo Tower Wharf provides another current example of how this may need to happen. The exhibition “explores how indigeneity is expressed and understood in our complex, globalising world.”¹² If we are to prioritize multiculturalism and diversity as the future of our communities and the art that emerges from them, the cultural survival of many populations will become our collective responsibility.

GRAPPLING WITH CHANGE AROUND US

As the massive climate changes of 2014 have shown, it doesn't take a direct threat to the future of your home to understand that action is important. Even with numerous advances in the way we measure, manage, and mitigate change, we can no longer completely avoid the effects of climate change. We see it happening in strengthening storms that come with greater frequency, giant algal blooms, bleached coral reefs, and previously unheard of daily high temperatures. In Australia, they required new colors on their weather maps to represent the increased heat.

It is an Australian that has coined the term “solastalgia” to describe the feeling associated with these changes that have subtly been occurring around us. This emerging idea, originated by Glenn Albrecht in 2005, refers to a form of homesickness one gets when one is still at home, but one's home has changed as a result of environmental shifts:

If we accept that love of landscape and place can be a powerful emotion, especially for Indigenous people and people who live closely to the land/soil, then a lived experience of the chronic desolation of that landscape/place would be an equally powerful emotion and psychic state. It is this precise experience that solastalgia describes.¹³

What will we do to move forward?

This emotional shift in our collective thinking will be revealed most clearly in the arts. Ecological themes are identifiable in Shakespeare, Ibsen, and other canonical Western drama, but there has been a rise of eco-drama in recent years that reflects the consideration of the artist in the Anthropocene. Similar movements in visual art and climate-based fiction demonstrate equal attempts to use the arts to grapple with environmental and societal change. If the arts serve as a mirror to society, and we are facing the greatest existential threat we've met as a species (ironically in the degradation of the

natural environment at our hands), then we have only seen the beginning of an increase in ecological art.

*“We are inseparable
from the environment.”*

The artistic contributions to understanding and exploring the future of ecology or sustainability may have been considered niche, but one can watch the niche moving in the mainstream when Charles McNulty, theater critic for the *Los Angeles Times*, authors a feature on the emergence of eco-arts. In his correspondence with eco-drama luminary Una Chaudhuri, she agrees, “A great shift is finally happening—in theater and in culture at large.”¹⁴

McNulty, in his article, writes that he seeks “artists to lead us into an expanded awareness of what it means to be human and to reformulate our paradigms for understanding our relationship to the rest of the planet.”¹⁵ The arts, as a vehicle for making science and policy both digestible and effective, will be instrumental in understanding both what is happening and how it is changing us and our world. They are our best coping strategy, whatever else happens. We do not exist outside of the environment, nor does the artwork we create. We will focus on that truth, and find ourselves making sense of our distresses and hopes, our *solastagia*, through a vast wealth of artistic interpretation. More exhibitions, more dramatic commissions, and more effective and environmentally minded art will serve as our signposts towards who will become in the Anthropocene.

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We are inseparable from the environment. Whereas we once tried to tame an endless and antagonistic world, we now sit squarely in the driver’s seat. We must act responsibly and resourcefully now, even as we understand that for some, displacement will be inevitable. We must prepare for populations to shift. We must be welcoming and build mutual understanding. We must understand that for everything

we can measure and for every adaptation plan, our deep links to the world around us will affect us in ways that are hard to describe.

This is precisely why the arts will be instrumental to our future. Congregating audiences has environmental benefits that will be enhanced by the ongoing integration of smart infrastructure. This is all good practice. The arts, however, also form our identities; they weave together our communities new and old. It is the unique utility of the arts and their ability to affect us in ways that are hard to describe that will make them the key to our ongoing adaptation to a changing world, a shifting environment, and an uncertain future.

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Arts in Healthy Communities: Additional Discussion and Resources

The Transforming America’s Communities Through the Arts initiative, of which New Community Visions is a part, is an effort by Americans for the Arts and our partners to explore more deeply the important, symbiotic structure of America’s modern communities and to better understand the role that the arts can play in amplifying the positive impacts of the many sectors that exist inside every community.

This book has focused on 10 sectors, but Americans for the Arts generally has identified 30 sectors that we believe need to be considered when talking about creating and maintaining a healthy community, many of which can be aided by arts and culture.

In the efforts encompassed by Transforming America’s Communities Through the Arts, as well as in the day-to-day work of Americans for the Arts going back nearly 60 years, we continue to pursue an expanded, better appreciated, and better understood role for the arts in healthy community development and maintenance.

For more resources related to the varied role of arts in community development, we recommend exploring the following Americans for the Arts resources—as well as the Americans for the Arts website in general—and the many great resources outlined in the endnotes of each essay.

New Community Visions

Keep track of the progress of New Community Visions by visiting www.AmericansForTheArts.org/CommunityVisions

Arts and the Military

Americans for the Arts is a founding partner of the National Initiative for Arts & Health in the Military, and hosts the partnership’s website, www.ArtsAcrossTheMilitary.org, where you can

review full text of reports related to the role of arts in the lives of active military, veterans, and their families along with a list of upcoming events, a national network directory, and more.

Arts and the Economy

For more than 20 years, Americans for the Arts has been at the forefront of measuring the economic impact of the arts on American communities and the United States, most visibly through the Arts and Economic Prosperity reports (www.AmericansForTheArts.org/AEP). Americans for the Arts also generates bi-annual Creative Industries reports on all U.S. counties, and is working to launch a new program called the Institute for the Creative Economy as part of the Transforming America's Communities Through the Arts initiative. Find out more about both at www.AmericansForTheArts.org.

Arts and Business

Americans for the Arts has a robust set of programs and trainings around the role of the arts in the private sector, most notably the pARTnership Movement, which showcases the role that the arts can play in bettering businesses and other private sector organizations (www.pARTnershipmovement.org).

Arts and Civic Engagement

For more than a decade, the Animating Democracy Initiative of Americans for the Arts has been exploring and developing the academic literature, case studies, and general knowledge and vocabulary around arts and civic engagement, social justice, and community health (www.AnimatingDemocracy.org).

Arts and Education

Americans for the Arts' arts education programming is a cornerstone of our belief in the role of arts in developing the communities of the future (www.AmericansForTheArts.org/ArtsEd). We work with more than 30 other arts education organizations across the country on advocacy, research, policy, and capacity-building. We also implement large-scale programs and partnerships like the Arts Education State Public Policy Pilot Initiative (www.AmericansForTheArts.org/SPPP), which seeks to encourage innovation around the adoption or adaptation of core arts standards in education at a state level, and the Arts Education Navigator series (www.AmericansForTheArts.org/ArtsEdNavigator), which creates easy-to-use advocacy plans and tools for parents, students, and teachers, as well.

In addition to these specific areas of work, Americans for the Arts also houses a trove of research, policy, and practice documents for arts organizations, local arts agencies, and others in the arts sector through our website, www.AmericansForTheArts.org

Arts and America: Arts, Culture, and the Future of America's Communities

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ABOUT THE NEW COMMUNITY VISIONS INITIATIVE,
PART OF TRANSFORMING AMERICA'S COMMUNITIES
THROUGH THE ARTS

The essays in *Arts and America* collectively form the first phase of an initiative called New Community Visions—a national visioning exercise for local arts agencies, arts organizations, artists, and those interested in better understanding the future role of arts and culture in helping American communities thrive.

New Community Visions is part of a sustained, three-year suite of large-scale initiatives from Americans for the Arts that are together called *Transforming America's Communities Through the Arts*. Through those initiatives, we hope to:

- generate dialogue on a national, state, and local level around the creation and sustainability of healthy communities;
- activate a diverse set of programming and partnerships spanning public, private, and nonprofit sectors;
- lay the groundwork for a collective movement forward over the next decade and beyond;
- and help leaders and the public better understand and celebrate arts and culture as mechanisms for creating and sustaining healthier, more vibrant, and more equitable communities in the United States.

www.AmericansForTheArts.org/CommunityVisions

This project is made possible through an ever-growing list of funders, partners, and advisors.

FORUMS CURATOR AND DOCUMENTARIAN

Michael Rohd and the Center for
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NEW COMMUNITY VISIONS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The New Community Visions Advisory Committee, which has informed the nature and trajectory of the project, includes:

- Jennifer Cole, Metro Nashville Arts Commission
- Deborah Cullinan, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts
- Carla Dirlikov, opera singer
- Randy Engstrom, Seattle Office of Arts & Culture
- Tatiana Hernandez, Hemera Foundation
- Maria Rosario Jackson, The Kresge Foundation
- Michael Killoren, National Endowment for the Arts
- Ron Ragin, composer and artist
- Holly Sidford, Helicon Collaborative
- Nick Slie, performing artist, Mondo Bizzaro
- Regina R. Smith, The Kresge Foundation
- Katie Steger, The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation
- Carlton Turner, Alternate ROOTS
- Nella Vera, Serino/Coyne
- Laura Zabel, Springboard for the Arts

REGIONAL, STATE, AND LOCAL PARTNERS

The regional gatherings associated with New Community Visions would not have been possible without the participation of this growing list of regional, state, and local partners who have contributed thought leadership, proposed the names of participants, and assisted in crafting the regional events.

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Regional

- Arts Midwest
- Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation
- Mid-America Arts Alliance
- New England Foundation for the Arts
- SouthArts
- WESTAF

State

- California Arts Council
- Georgia Council for the Arts
- Minnesota State Arts Board
- New Mexico Arts
- Oklahoma Arts Council
- Oklahomans for the Arts
- Pennsylvania Council on the Arts
- Vermont Arts Council
- West Virginia Division of Culture and History

Local

- Allied Arts
- Arts & Business Council of Greater Philadelphia
- Arts Council of Oklahoma City
- Burlington City Arts
- Philadelphia Office of Arts, Culture and the Creative Economy
- City of San Jose Office of Cultural Affairs
- City of Santa Fe Arts Commission
- Clay Center for the Arts & Sciences of West Virginia
- Creative Santa Fe
- Cultural Development Corporation
- Flynn Center for the Performing Arts
- Greater Philadelphia Cultural Alliance
- Macon Arts Alliance
- Metropolitan Regional Arts Council
- Minneapolis Office of Arts, Culture, and the Creative Economy
- Norman Arts Council
- Oklahoma City Office of Arts & Cultural Affairs