



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

Arts & America: 1780–2015

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, appearing to read "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 & America: 1780–2015

— by *Clayton Lord* —

The story of the arts and the communities of America is a love story spooled out over the entire history of the nation. It has all of the hallmarks of a Shakespearean play, as yet unresolved as a comedy or a tragedy, unknown in nature for the fact that it is chronically lacking in the moment when all the threads tie together. That part is still being written, and like all of history, it's impossible to actually see how far from the satisfactory end we are.

Like many love stories that have gone on for some time, the story of the arts and the communities of America is one of resounding, repeating familiarity—of getting close, of being pushed away, of coming to the rescue, of healing the heart and then being pushed aside when health has returned, of taking each other for granted, of walking away, of coming back. Both the art makers and the community builders have approached each other with short memories, learning each others' quirks and specialties anew every time—each moment a

little different and yet somehow the same—a recurring dream, naïve reunion worthy of the best Elizabethan prose.

The relationship has, even for all of that dancing, progressed. As we have learned about ourselves as a nation, we have also learned about the peculiarities of what culture in America can mean and do. At times, that has been a utilitarian and capitalist impulse, and at a few blissful moments, the stars have aligned and the country has been given a glimmer of what it might mean if we could learn to value culture for how it makes us better people.

Like eternal lovers, American communities and the arts and culture of the individuals that create them have been and will be forever intertwined, unable to quit each other, and yet often not quite sure what to do with each other either. We are, in 2015, on the cusp of a future where an alignment of cultural awareness, information availability, technology, and ease of transportation could create a golden moment of blossoming, deeply engaged artistic output in American communities. That great moment may happen regardless of how well we understand what has come before. But it is like bike riding. We act now as though we have to invent the bike anew each time, like an amnesiac with a spark of brilliance discovering the wheel and spoke; the truth is the pieces have been made and put together and used before, and lessons learned, and heroes made. Think of all that time we could be riding, getting farther down the path, if we had just noticed the pre-made bike beside the road instead of the raw materials waiting to be molded.

This essay is a journal of sorts, a “Dear Diary” of the to-and-fro of the arts’ relationship with America’s communities—and the greater American community, in which the arts sector has grown up alongside everything else that makes this country great. It’s a story that, like all love stories, is necessary to know if you want to understand the history that is being brought to our next journey together. We cannot move forward together to create the vibrant, healthy communities of tomorrow if we don’t know all of the wounds and wonders that have come before.

AT THE START: 1780-1880

At the birth of our nation, John Adams, in a 1780 letter to his wife, Abigail, set the stage for the first blush of this arts-community love affair when he discussed a yearning for what was to come. Writing from Paris, Adams told his wife of a walk through the Tulleries Gardens and wishing to dive deeply into the art and sculpture there but being unable to find the time among the many mechanics of creating a country.¹

“Government it is my Duty to study,” he said. “I must study Politicks and War that my sons may have liberty to study Mathematicks and Philosophy. My sons ought to study Mathematicks and Philosophy...in order to give their Children a right to study Painting, Poetry, Musick, Architecture, Statuary, Tapestry and Porcelaine.”²

As the nation marched through those successive generations, the role of the arts bifurcated in a way, split essentially between craft, which was egalitarian and celebrated as the cultural outlet of the Protestant work ethic on which the country was built, and fine art, which even in the earliest of times hewed more closely to hierarchical, European lines of patronage and access.³ In a way, perhaps, it is this simultaneously Puritan and patrician impulse that has driven much of what has come since, the way that inherent, unchangeable traits of lovers delineate the boundaries of a relationship long before it is full enough to fill the space between them.

The dominant influence of English Puritanism, as drawn across the Atlantic by a group of refugees seeking a freedom of religion that actively shunned artistic practice or presentation as sin,⁴ has been an awkward prerequisite to the relationship between the arts and the communities of America. This particular distrust in artistic output has lingered, as the colonies aligned to the British crown, and eventually rebelled against said crown, and the smoke of war came, and out

of it the protection of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness—but only the faintest glimmerings of a guaranteed cultural life amidst the hard work of making a country.

As the country aged, and the particulars of the tug away from England faded, some of Adams’ prognostications came to pass. A strong civic thread emerged, and in 1840, the French author Alexis de Tocqueville marveled at the American propensity to create volunteer-based civic organizations to address societal issues of importance. At the same time, de Tocqueville had no illusions about how marginal the American focus on anything but driving success and economic pursuit—the “exclusively commercial habits...which seem to divert their minds from the pursuit of science, literature, and the arts”—was, and noted the proclivity for Americans to focus “upon purely practical objects.”

Holding up American society as an exemplar of the capitalist impulse he noted that the “taste for the useful predominate[s] over the love of the beautiful.”⁵

In prescient words, given the growing divide among the haves and have-nots that would come during the next 50 years, de Tocqueville further articulated the corresponding split between the art of communities and the “fine arts.” As the country marched further into the age of industrialization, this split would firm, and as machination and the repetitive process of the assembly line replaced artisanal craft, two trends began—a myopia among the upper class around the boundaries of true “art,” which did not extend to the working class; and a genuine, if top-down, desire to improve the lives of those deemed less fortunate through civic intervention. It would not be until the 1930s that these two threads would substantively meet, but both ran concurrently through the rise of factories and the migration into the city that became the hallmark of the end of the 19th century.

INDUSTRIALIZATION, INEQUALITY, AND FIRST MOVEMENTS:
1880-1929

The preoccupation with improving communities and regions has existed in the United States since the beginning.⁶ In the late 19th century, however, community development emerged as a true, structured effort in America for the first time as a newly wealthy class of philanthropists “discovered America’s ‘backward’ areas.”⁷ The Industrial Revolution left many casualties in its wake, and those who were socially minded found themselves confronted by overcrowded tenement buildings filled with immigrants and minorities suffering from malnutrition, poor quality of life, elevated rates of crime, and disgusting conditions. On a related, but perhaps ultimately shallower note, unsightly slums grew in city centers, creating displeasing visuals for those more fortunate, and a corresponding exodus to the suburbs left swaths of many cities under-populated and uncared for.⁸

Out of these conditions emerged two movements—one designed predominantly to address the needs of the people impacted by industrialization and one designed more squarely to address aesthetics and the crumbling infrastructure of cities left to tenements and factories, abandoned by those who could afford to.

Imported from England in the mid-1880s, the settlement house movement was aimed at the new impoverished class that emerged with the rise of the Industrial Revolution, particularly new immigrants coming into major U.S. cities. Settlement houses were the precursor to community centers—places with programmed activities to reinforce and undergird the lives of a community’s residents. The most famous settlement house, Hull House, was founded in 1889 by Jane Addams, and by 1890 there were more than 400 settlement houses throughout the United States.

Settlement houses provided a mixture of social services designed to mitigate the impacts of poverty and various classes to educate

immigrants and help them assimilate into American culture—classes including history, art, and literature. The houses, focused largely on European immigrants—and often excluding African-American immigrants as “incapable of entering mainstream American society”⁹—were designed as pathways to acceptance in mainstream America, and did not provide much room for the perpetuation of the immigrants’ extant cultural traditions in this new country.¹⁰ The focus, while benevolent and certainly deeply impactful to the disadvantaged groups that were served by the settlement houses, was top-down and focused extensively on easing the interpolation of these groups into larger American society by inoculating them to dominant American cultural mores.

Those working in this early time of community development witnessed, in the era of the Industrial Revolution, a great exodus from America’s burgeoning urban cores. The cities became dirty places, filled with smoke-belching factories, raw industrial materials, and many, many poor immigrants that the settlement house movement attempted to serve. Cities for the most part became therefore relatively unappealing to wealthy and middle-class residents, who began exiting the city in the first great urban flight. Infrastructure, in the wake of the departure of so much capital, floundered and urban planning went by the wayside.¹¹ Tent cities, tenements, and general decay became the order of the day for many city cores.

The City Beautiful movement, a planning effort first launched in Chicago following the Great Fire of 1871 and later taken up in most major cities in the United States, was born out of a dual impulse to beautify the ugly urban landscape of America and to create a more livable and pleasant environment for all. At its center, City Beautiful sought to create in American cities a uniquely new landscape and culture—one that eschewed the European strictures that had heretofore governed much of the way cities were constructed. Most obviously, this meant letting go of existing structures; creating large-scale plans to give full cities face-lifts in the modern mode; and using planning, architecture, and infrastructure building as a way of moving America’s communities more forcefully into the modern era of civic amenity,

social and political equality, and unique American identity. In at least one city, the City Beautiful movement coincided with the creation of a municipal body devoted to public art and sculpture—the Boston Arts Commission, founded in 1890.

Like the settlement house movement, City Beautiful emerged from a benevolent, but paternalistic impulse of a wealthy rising class. The aesthetic imposed, while developed with an eye toward egalitarian usefulness and all-encompassing civic pride, disregarded the existence and history of whole neighborhoods and communities—particularly those that existed in conditions that were truly unsanitary and unsafe—and became, in a way, the earliest example of well-meaning gentrification and forced homogeneity. As famed city planner Edward Burnham proposed in his *Plan of Chicago*, such efforts would help the city take “a long step toward cementing together the heterogeneous elements of our population, and toward assimilating the million and a half of people who are here now but who were not here fifteen years ago.”¹²

These two movements rose independently of cultural philanthropy, by and large. Arts-oriented philanthropy emerged, really for the first time, *not* as a way of relieving the ongoing suffering of the working classes, but as a way of creating isolationist, monolithic institutions where the rich could congregate and preserve the Eurocentric artistic legacy.¹³

The arts-based programming provided at Hull House and other settlement houses, for example, while sometimes underwritten by individual patrons, was often funded out of the general budget of the settlement house—and many of the most well-known, socially conscious artists of the era leading up to the First World War received no philanthropic support whatsoever for their work.¹⁴ As society progressed into the beginnings of the new century, some of the civic sheen began to wear away from these movements. The initial civically minded impulses of City Beautiful,

for example, transformed into something more specifically about economic might and capitalism. A movement about creating civic and cultural spaces and buildings to better integrate populations transformed into “federally funded urban renewal, tearing down and replacing aging factories and housing with monolithic districts and structures.”¹⁵

Great impulses emerging from an effort to counter the many difficulties associated with poverty also set into motion a mode of helping that would transcend the many decades to come—“the less useful principle that outside experts would save society by imposing reforms on the people they were trying to help.”¹⁶ At the same time, education reform advocate John Dewey was articulating his manifesto around the role of arts in the education of children. Dewey’s ideas, which emphasized the significance of the aesthetic experience in everyday life and insisted that the arts needed to be incorporated as a central tenet of any education system, informed a progressive desire to connect the arts more deeply to civic life.¹⁷ In this mode, a small group of artists were using their skills—independent of philanthropic support—to give a certain voice to communities and their members.

In part through Dewey’s evangelism, as well as the hard work of the early settlement house founders and other community-level activists, the beginning of the 20th century saw a rise in community-level arts activity throughout the country—community choruses and bands, the creation of the first municipal arts commissions, the rise of music and art instruction in public schools.¹⁸ As other forms of media, notably movies and the rise of entertainment circuits, took hold, the less established of these efforts slowly faded, particularly in the march towards the First World War.¹⁹ Certain others, like community-based pageantry, flourished in civically minded communities, and were some of the earliest demonstrations of arts integration into non-arts outcomes. Pageants, for example, were sometimes connected to social science research, as in Boston in

1910, when a study on social ills culminated in a large-scale pageant production featuring thousands of residents from all segments of the population presenting a theatrical vision of the city's future.²⁰

The most well-known such community-based pageant writer was Percy MacKaye, a Harvard-educated playwright primarily based in Cornish, New Hampshire, who wrote a manifesto of sorts in 1912 called *The Civic Theatre in Relation to the Redemption of Leisure*. In it, he laid out a role for art as a mechanism for engaging whole communities and for the blurring of lines between the professionals and the amateurs, the artists and the audience.²¹ His “slogan” of sorts was said to be “The community is the protagonist,” and in such works as his *Masque of St. Louis*, MacKaye coupled community-integrated arts with a week of civic dialogues about the future of cities.²²

“True democracy,” MacKaye said, “is vitally concerned with beauty, and true art is vitally concerned with citizenship.”²³

Truthfully, however, such work was in the minority. For the most part, in keeping with the general trends around urban development and renewal that had emerged first in the City Beautiful movement—and then in the balder attempts to remove blighted neighborhoods and build safer, more enticing enclaves for the wealthy—American cities continued to build large, monolithic cultural institutions, often through deep investment from a small group of philanthropists whose wealth was predicated on the inequality that MacKaye and his ilk were seeking to mitigate. Monumental art museums, theaters, music halls, and opera houses, most designed without much thought to community integration or general public access, emerged, and the divide between “fine art” and the art of the community first noted by de Tocqueville increased.²⁴

“*True democracy,*” MacKaye said, “*is vitally concerned with beauty, and true art is vitally concerned with citizenship.*”

Fine art was partitioned away, and the increased industrialization of the period led to a general decline in the appreciation of art and aesthetics in the broader day-to-day life of the community. Artisanal craft gave way to mass production, and the art of making became the industry of reproduction. Those driving the economy from the top were primarily concerned with efficiency and growth, and those driving the economy from the bottom, (e.g., the laborers) had little time and even fewer resources to consume institutionalized culture (what de Tocqueville would classify as “fine arts”), which gained a sheen of being “superficial, impractical, inefficient, and costly”²⁵ even as folk arts, craft, and indigenous culture continued to exist as it had.

Community arts were rooted in an opposite space—one that pushed back against the idea that an artist’s output was a commodity to be accepted or dismissed, and that instead embraced the role of the artist as “an integral part of community life, working with and for ordinary people and rewarded, as other workers hope to be, with a decent living and the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.”²⁶

Community arts, and the more general integration of arts in the healthy development of communities, slowly gained hold *not* in cities, but in smaller communities throughout the United States. The first state arts council in the country was founded in Utah in 1878, and in 1911, a visual art league was founded in Fargo, North Dakota. Throughout the nineteen-teens the Little Theater movement—a reaction to the rise of cinema that entailed the creation of smaller, more intimate theatrical spaces in many towns across the country—took hold. As the full breadth of what “industry” really meant hit the American psyche, “a certain nostalgia for tribal and pre-Industrial Revolution agrarian societies” emerged.²⁷ This desire to feel that culture was an integrated and working part of community sowed the seeds for what would, in the aftermath of the First World War and the Great Depression, become the civically minded and jobs-focused arts programs of the Works Progress Administration.

The First World War and the boom and bust that followed, while extremely ripe times for the creation of seminal pieces of American art in all genres, mostly constituted a fallow period for community development through the arts (and community develop-

ment in general). The pugilistic, patriotic drumbeat of the First World War shifted into the decadent, gin-soaked trumpeting of the Roaring 20s and Prohibition—and the arts continued a slide away from “essential” and toward “luxury.” The nascent stages of mass media distribution created a new class of easily consumable culture, much of it designed for distraction rather than civic engagement or betterment.

“It was the Great Depression that first made art and artists a concern of federal government.”

THE CRASH, THE DEPRESSION, AND THE WPA: 1929-1940

When the stock market crashed in 1929, the Great Depression, which created a larger and more representative class of economically disadvantaged people (including many who had been used to privilege), carved the way for community development—and, in part, the arts—to blossom beyond the treatment of the indigent, rural, or newly immigrated.²⁸ The election of President Roosevelt, with his strong Progressive tendencies, and the power that he wielded in creating the comprehensive federal actions that encompassed the New Deal, transitioned responsibility for community development and health away from individual philanthropists and to the federal government. Not incidentally, it also ushered in the first meaningful iteration of federal governmental support for arts and culture in U.S. history.²⁹

It was the Great Depression that first made art and artists a concern of federal government. Four days after the Works Progress Administration (WPA) was created in 1935, President Roosevelt sent a one-line memo to the head of the new administration asking him

to “work out a ‘project’ for the artists.”³⁰ While regarded skeptically for their entire existence and quickly dismantled less than 10 years after their creation because of “censorship, the Red Scare, and war preparations,”³¹ the Arts Projects of the WPA are generally regarded as “among the New Deal’s notable achievements, and their memory has done much to invigorate later proposals for federal support for the arts.”³² At their peak, they employed 40,000 artists,³³ and by 1939, the WPA Community Art Center program alone had reached 6 million people in the United States, and had given them “some understanding of the significance of art in the life of the community.”³⁴

For Holger Cahill, the National Director of the Federal Arts Projects, the successful proliferation of the WPA Arts Projects was also about getting over an inherited hump in how Americans understood art that stretched back to Europe. Speaking in the late 1930s, while much of the WPA work was still in motion, Cahill noted that “broad, democratic community participation in the creative experience is not implicit in the very form of our society, nor in the European societies from which it developed.”³⁵ The idea that art should belong to everybody was a historically alien concept that was just beginning to be embraced in America. Cahill derided the upper echelons of American society who, even in the moment of economic crisis that was the Great Depression, had a feeling that “art is a little too good, a little too rare and fine, to be shared with the masses.”³⁶

He pointed out that there were relatively few defined points where art has been deeply integrated in community—the Middle Ages, with its focus on art as a method of worship, the “era of handicrafts,” and the 18th century when an artist could fall back into being a craftsman:

In our modern industrial civilization, with its lack of unity, its tendency to divide the various activities of life into separate grooves, the arts have been more isolated than ever before...

For contemporary examples of community sharing in the art experience we must turn to societies such as those of the Pueblo Indians of our Southwest. In these coherent societies, art tradition is rooted firmly in community experience, and is kept alive through participation by the whole people. Here official art and folk art are united...Here the entire resources of a community, resources of design and color, of rhythm and movement in dance and song and chant, have been poured into a ceremony in which everyone participates...There is nothing like this in the experience of our European stock in America.^{37,38}

The WPA and its Arts Projects, in Cahill's mind, had remedied in some small way some of the profound and dangerous disconnection first remarked upon by de Tocqueville.

“Because during the last seventy-five years,” Cahill said, “the arts in America have had to follow a path remote from the common experience, our country has suffered a cultural erosion far more serious than the erosion of the Dust Bowl...the art experience...in our industrial age, has become divorced from creative craftsmanship.”³⁹

While in a way just as top-down and exclusionary in terms of programmatic development as the earlier community development movements,⁴⁰ the WPA Arts Projects did signal a strong sign of progress in treating the entire United States population as the recipient of the work, as opposed to just the “unfortunate” other. And, as stated by Archibald MacLeish in a contemporaneous article in *Fortune*, the WPA Arts Projects worked “a sort of cultural revolution in America.” He goes on:

They brought the American audience and the American artist face to face for the first time in their respective lives...From one end of the range to the other, American artists, with the partial exception of the popular novelists and the successful Broadway playwrights, wrote and painted and composed in a kind of vacuum, despising the audience they had, ignoring the

“As the decade turned to the 1940s, the newly energized, decentralized arts-based community development movement began to more fully emerge.”

existence of any other. It was this vacuum which the Federal Arts Projects exploded.⁴¹

The proliferation of thousands of arts projects, arts-based community centers, and arts institutions—coupled, in the post-WWII years, with a redistribution of the population out into the suburbs and toward the West—created a broader access to arts and culture. Starting in the late 1930s, U.S. Department of Agriculture Extension Service agents began incorporating the arts into their activities in rural communities, including using drama to encourage community planning in Ohio and New York, and using opera to engage in a conversation about the future of farming in Iowa.⁴² A Los Angeles fire chief linked the Federal Theatre Project, one of the Arts Projects, to his efforts to reduce delinquency, and the question was actively raised as to whether there might also be applicability for the arts in therapy, education, or general community cohesion.⁴³

THE ARTS COUNCIL RISES: 1940–1957

While the WPA Arts Projects might have been slowly strangled by a suspicious and war-oriented Congress, their spirit—and the vital, if temporary, patronage of the federal government—allowed for the continued evolution of arts-based community development in the form of a report called *The Arts and Your Town*. In 1939, Virginia Lee Comer, a Junior League consultant on community arts, conducted *The Arts and Your Town*, which articulated the first cultural planning process and laid the groundwork for a new concept called the “arts council.”⁴⁴

As the decade turned to the 1940s, the newly energized, decentralized arts-based community development movement began to

more fully emerge. In 1945, Robert Gard, a founder of the local arts movement, was hired as one of the first artists-in-residence at the University of Wisconsin College of Agriculture. Inspired by the so-called “Wisconsin Idea”—which coupled progressive politics, education of adults, and a democratic vision in which everyone’s talents were fulfilled, and through which communities achieved vibrancy and civic engagement—Gard set out to codify how best to embed the arts in community life, particularly in growing rural communities.⁴⁵

Meanwhile, Baker Brownell, an artist and community planner in Montana in the 1940s, saw art, particularly theater, as integral to community planning.⁴⁶ Elsewhere, people like New York City schoolteacher Rachel Davis-Dubois were experimenting with using folk arts as a mechanism for encouraging intercultural understanding and dialogue.

“Political democracy—the right for all to vote—we have inherited,” she wrote in 1943. “Economic democracy—the right of all to be free from want—we are beginning to envisage...But cultural democracy—a sharing of values among numbers of our various cultural groups—we have scarcely dreamed of.”⁴⁷

The construction of better roads and rapid transit systems, as well as residual flight during the Depression, had depopulated cities after the glut of the 1920s, but as the 1940s carried on, the inner city began to grow again, primarily via influxes of poor and minority populations—mirroring in its progression the economic disparity that had occurred during the Industrial Revolution.⁴⁸ Even as a more enlightened understanding of alternate viewpoints and cultural histories was beginning to occur in certain pockets both urban and rural, the ensuing clash of populations and growing income disparity issues created tension in cities—and started a rush of white flight out of the cities and into the suburbs—that was exacerbated rather than mitigated by local and national political policy.

Without really paying much mind to the ever-increasing complexity of inter-community relations, politicians fixated strongly—as they had in the last bout of urban renewal programming—on clearing away slums and demolishing tenements. Rather than attempting to replace those areas with cultural or civic hubs for all, however, the Housing Act of 1949 authorized the taking and razing of “blighted and slum areas” by eminent domain, after which the properties were turned over to private developers. This attempt to “staunch the departure of the upper middle class to the suburbs and stop physical and economic deterioration” occurred almost exclusively without consultation of those whose businesses and homes were destroyed and whose cultural traditions and histories were disrupted.⁴⁹

It is worth noting with some irony, then, that 1947 marked the creation of the first *de facto* arts council, the Quincy, Illinois Society of Fine Arts, and that 1949 marked the creation of the first body *called* an arts council in the United States, in Winston-Salem, North Carolina.⁵⁰ The Winston-Salem local arts agency emerged from Virginia Lee Comer’s research for the Junior League, and was nurtured by that organization. In looking at Winston-Salem, Comer detailed gaps that existed in the community’s cultural life that could be filled by a presence dedicated to coordinating and promoting the role of cultural activities in the area as a mechanism for increasing the quality of connection between the community and the arts within it.⁵¹

By 1956, there were more than 50 community arts councils in the United States, many of them built upon the research of, and fostered by, the Junior League. Early local arts leaders including George Irwin, Phillip Hanes, Ralph Burgard, and Charles Christopher Marks began to gather starting in 1955 as an informal cohort housed by the American Symphony Orchestra League to learn from one another and foster more councils as they started to emerge. Meanwhile, Robert Gard and others like him at universities

across the country continued strongly pushing the integration of arts more fully into community life. The country also began awakening to the more complex multicultural reality of America that its citizens had predominantly been oblivious to before.

Urban development became, if it were possible, more racist and classist in the 1950s. City officials built large-scale public housing towers in racial ghettos to encourage ongoing segregation, and the creation and expansion of the U.S. Interstate highway system in 1956, by some estimates, “demolished more low-income neighborhoods... than either urban renewal or public housing” in the same period.⁵²

(RE)DISCOVERING INEQUALITY, THE GREAT SOCIETY, AND THE
NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS: 1957-1970

Due in large part to ubiquitous access to new types of arts and culture, in which there were, in turn, more and more representations of the extant poverty in American cities,⁵³ the late 1950s and early 1960s were a time in which the general U.S. population “rediscovered” income inequality in the country. A special edition of *Fortune* magazine in 1957 was filled with essays on the negative effects of urban policy, and also featured the debut of Jane Jacobs’ extremely influential excoriations of such policies and their failure to revive American downtowns. Films like *The Blackboard Jungle* and *West Side Story* served as vanguards of a general influx of pop culture representations of the urban plight.⁵⁴ Photography, journalism, and music started opening previously closed doors between white middle- and upper-class populations and the African-American and Hispanic populations who were beginning to organize for equal representation.

The dawning awareness of poverty and inequality made it a political pressure point as well as a social one. A wide range of efforts cropped up to fight both urban and rural social problems,

particularly after the 1962 publication of *The Other America*, a scathing portrayal of various classes of “invisible” poor people that caught the attention of many national political leaders including President Kennedy.⁵⁵ Internationally, a slowly chilling Cold War provided another argument for the government’s role in nurturing the arts—cultural might.

“If we’re going to survive in the struggle with Russia, this is our only hope for victory,” said Roy Johnson, the head of the Advance Research Projects Agency. “Outright war is unlikely, so the battle of winning men to one camp or the other becomes the strategy of appealing to men’s spiritual needs, to their hunger for fulfillment, to their cultural sides. This country is on the verge of an explosion in culture. The traditional barriers between artists and businessmen are breaking down. So are the barriers between art and life. Cultural leadership is there for the taking. If we work hard and with understanding, we can take it.”⁵⁶

Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., one of President Kennedy’s senior advisors and a behind-the-scenes architect of the process that ultimately led to the creation of the National Endowment for the Arts, framed it more grandly:

*We will win the world to an understanding of our policy and purposes not through the force of our arms or the array of our wealth but through the splendor of our ideals. Let us never forget the wise reminder of the President’s Committee on National Goals: “In the eyes of posterity, the success of the United States as a civilized society will be largely judged by the creative activities of its citizens in art, architecture, literature, music, and the sciences.”*⁵⁷

Meanwhile, the Rockefeller Foundation turned its attention to philanthropic support of social interventions, including a variety of cultural measures—among them community-based arts activity.⁵⁸ Congress, which ironically had killed the Arts Projects of the WPA a

few decades before, also started to propose a variety of options for a more coordinated role of government in arts-based community development. In 1958, Congressman Jim Wright, in a statement so honest as to be practically unimaginable today, said on the House floor, “It is always kind of easy to ridicule and poke fun at things of a cultural nature. I plead guilty to having done my share of it, but I think, Mr. Speaker, that we have reached a state of maturity in this nation where that kind of attitude no longer becomes us. Sooner or later we have to grow up and stop poking fun at things intellectual and cultural.”⁵⁹

“By the beginning of the 1960s, Wright and others—the majority of Congress—had come to see the value of, and government’s role in, cultivating the arts as a way of promoting general community health.”

By the beginning of the 1960s, Wright and others—the majority of Congress—had come to see the value of, and government’s role in, cultivating the arts as a way of promoting general community health.⁶⁰ So prevalent was political support on both sides of the aisle for federal support of the arts in one form or another that poet Karl Shapiro, skeptical of the intervention of government into private artistic practice, derisively said, “We are in a period of cultural kissing games... every politician is taking on the arts as part of his constituency!”⁶¹

The number of local arts agencies continued to grow, as did the theory and practice around arts-based community development and cultural planning. For the second time in American history, the federal government had aligned behind a more formal and pervasive role of art in civic life—even as a rising spirit of resistance to dominant white cultural norms and top-down policy creation threatened to destabilize the whole country.

In 1960, the loose collection of local arts agencies that existed in the United States, nurtured under the wing of the American Symphony Orchestra League since 1955, coalesced into Community Arts Councils, Inc. (CACI, now Americans for the Arts).⁶² At the same moment, due to civil unrest and the rising voices of dissent from the disenfranchised, as well as increased support from both government and private philanthropy, a complex national community development system emerged.⁶³

As a new awareness of how power was shifting from the grasstops to the grassroots took hold, there was an explosion of cultural activity. The cultural hegemony that had been the norm basically since the founding of the country was being challenged nationwide, particularly through the large lens of the Civil Rights movement and cultural leaders within it like Luis Valdez of El Teatro Campesino (founded 1965) and John O’Neal of the Free Southern Theater (founded 1963).⁶⁴ Much of the power of the Civil Rights movement, particularly the coordinated and unified efforts of Black Civil Rights leaders in the South, emerged from the use of cultural assets ranging from songs to propaganda art that catalyzed action and gave the movement identity.⁶⁵

As early as 1859, presidents had been trying to create various iterations of a national commission on the arts. Presidents Buchanan, Theodore Roosevelt, and Eisenhower had all proposed or pursued such a body, with limited to no success.⁶⁶ The periodic, but persistent, federal-level interest in the creation of a national Advisory Commission on the Arts was, then, relatively long-standing.⁶⁷ In March 1962, President Kennedy appointed August Heckscher as the first ever Special Consultant on the Arts, and Heckscher, over the course of 15 months, wrote *The Arts and the National Government*, a report that recommended both a Federal Advisory Council and a funded Federal Arts Foundation to provide subsidies.⁶⁸ Kennedy issued an executive order in 1963 that founded the first Advisory Commission on the Arts inside the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, but was

assassinated before he could populate it. This left the creation of a federal arts body in the hands of his successor, President Johnson.

Following the Kennedy assassination, President Johnson launched the War on Poverty with a mandate to “strike at poverty’s roots [through] remedial education, job training, health and employment counseling, and neighborhood improvement.”⁶⁹ His noble efforts, like the iterations that had come before, felt to those on the ground like a top-down approach that minimized and marginalized the opinions of those most impacted by the work. Buoyed by a feeling of new empowerment and general awareness and support from the public, grassroots groups and individuals started rising up against top-down urban renewal efforts, stopping the construction of highway projects and the tearing down of homes.

Race riots occurred in Los Angeles and Chicago, the Civil Rights marches laced through the South, protests began around the Vietnam War, and the various protest activities of the United Farm Workers in the Southwest forced a reckoning among the population. These movements focused on extending agency—bridging up from local community development efforts first pursued in the aftermath of the WPA projects to encourage national-level policy that involved input from those who would be impacted by it.⁷⁰

To some degree, through these efforts, the anti-poverty and community development policies of the 1960s bucked the tide set in motion through City Beautiful, public housing, urban renewal, and the creation of transit systems and instead incorporated at least some degree of input from the bottom up.⁷¹ This is perhaps the reason that arts-based community development often situates the “founding” of the movement to the 1960s—not just because of the incorporation of the National Endowment for the Arts and CACI/Americans for the Arts in this decade, but also, fundamentally, because the War on Poverty was a watershed moment in how governments at all levels interacted with the communities they were trying to help, shifting

from a dictatorial approach to a collaborative one, and thereby opening the door for the transition of community-based art to art-based community activation.⁷²

With continued pressure being exerted nationally for the formation of what would become the National Endowment for the Arts—including by CACI/Americans for the Arts and other fledgling umbrella service organizations—legislation authorizing its creation was passed in September 1965 and signed shortly thereafter. The National Endowment for the Arts was born in 1966⁷³—a year when, incidentally, a new local arts agency was being formed approximately every three days in America.⁷⁴

As the NEA was dawning, Robert Gard and a set of compatriots applied for and received funding to publish *The Arts in the Small Community: a National Plan*,⁷⁵ which compiled rousing rhetoric, case studies, and a practical plan for the creation of community arts councils and the embedding of culture into community life, particularly in small and rural communities. By 1967, there were more than 450 community arts councilsthroughout the United States.⁷⁶

CREATIVE GOVERNMENT FUNDING OF ARTS AND ARTISTS:
1970-1981

As the late 1960s turned into the 1970s, the number of crimes in urban areas rose, and in inner cities, street gangs and drug peddlers increased their footprint dramatically. Meanwhile, a further expansion of the U.S. transportation system and a boom in real estate, particularly in the suburbs, damaged the inner-city real estate market until it was essentially under water in many communities.⁷⁷

As the community arts movement matured, the localized nature of the work meant that different exemplars emerged in different communities over time. In San Francisco, the

Neighborhood Arts Program (NAP), founded in 1967, funded the employment of young people through mural-making, learning and performing music, and producing other events like street festivals. In the 1970s, NAP became a sort of cultural incubator, employing organizers for specific neighborhoods, “talented and ambitious people who knew their own communities,” who created community-specific arts events and helped identify projects of significant impact for small scale grants. With the advent of the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA), a federal statute enacted by Congress in 1977—the latest attempt to address the systemic inequality and dismal conditions impacting many inner city neighborhoods—federal money flowed to local communities to alleviate long-term unemployment.

CETA placed the unemployed in full-time positions with government and community-based agencies, and by 1979, it had become the largest federal arts program in history, essentially by accident and opportunity. The Department of Labor estimated that in 1979 alone, more than \$200 million was distributed to arts-oriented community development organizations through CETA.⁷⁸

NAP was one of the first community arts programs to pursue CETA money to hire artists, but was far from the last. As the funding of artists in civil service continued, the CETA program sparked a new generation of socially conscious artists who were being given the opportunity to learn first-hand about the overlap between art, public service, and community development. CETA “expanded the dictionary of American culture beyond the realms of decoration, entertainment, and investment.”⁷⁹

Echoing the investment-in-work concept of CETA, the late 1970s also saw the founding of the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC), an initiative spearheaded by the Ford Foundation that gave loans, grants, and technical assistance to community development corporations. This and other large-scale

intermediaries fostered community development opportunities across the country, and as the 1970s rolled into the 1980s the federal government took an increasingly large role in funding the community development system.⁸⁰

With the rise of LISC in the 1970s, both public and private entities interested in community development began to direct substantial attention to the corporate sector as a mechanism for creating positive, sustainable community growth. Emerging primarily from late-1960s legislation that first allowed for the federal funding of community development corporations, and then from a resulting pilot program created by Senator Robert Kennedy, the LISC model lured large corporations to set up factories in the inner city as engines for community development⁸¹—a method of infusing communities with jobs and income that nevertheless diverged from the core impulses of many community development-oriented artists and arts organizations. That said, it did not directly hinder such work as had been the case in previous eras. An increase in the ability of laypeople to travel transatlantically in the 1970s brought more international community-oriented artists to visit the United States. They shared stories about their practice and funding and inspired new and alternative methods of nurturing community arts, notably more long-term and open types of collaboration that allowed for deep, flexible engagement with communities, to create art and arts experiences that reflected the needs of the community members.⁸² In 1978, the National Assembly of Local Arts Agencies (NALAA) emerged out of an evolved Community Arts Councils, Inc (CACI) to specifically support and advocate for local arts agencies—and just in time. NALAA and what remained of CACI would eventually re-merge to become Americans for the Arts.

REDIRECTING FROM NATIONAL TO LOCAL: 1981-1990

In 1981, the fledgling centralized, federally oriented system that had been built out of the founding of the NEA and CETA came under serious threat when President Reagan began a concerted effort to reduce the federal role in local communities. Having been stymied in his early efforts to get rid of the Endowment entirely, Reagan eventually proposed cutting the agency's budget by 50 percent, gutted CETA funding, reduced the Community Development Block Grant program, and essentially did away with all federal work subsidy programs that he could, including most that were underwriting the expansion of local-level, arts-based community development.

As the Cold War wound down, the militaristic (and ultimately intrinsic) justification for the National Endowment for the Arts disappeared, leaving in its place a desire for justification based on instrumental impacts.⁸³ The general population, reeling from a terrible economy, crime-ridden inner cities, and a world in constant conflict, had soured on the overarching/over-reaching role of the federal government, and had elected to the office of president someone who believed wherever possible in the decentralization of responsibility away from the federal government.

While strong lobbying efforts and the leadership of NEA Chairman Frank Hodson were able to reduce the cut to the NEA from 50 percent to 15 percent, the short-term impacts of cuts to the NEA, CETA, and other programs were dramatic. Baltimore's Theatre Project, one of the then-leading community arts institutions in the United States, experienced deep and immediate staff and programming reductions in the first year after Reagan took office, and by the end of 1981 its community-oriented programming had essentially disappeared.⁸⁴

Not surprisingly, the lack of public service employment programs and the reduction in funding to community arts

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programming slowed the growth of the field.⁸⁵ Interestingly, however, the long-term ramifications of Reagan’s larger efforts to decentralize power and redistribute policymaking to local communities can be argued to have had long-term positive impacts on local-level, arts-based community development, in particular upon the number and health of local arts agencies in the country. While the budget of the NEA has, since that time, remained essentially stable—and

while that has, in itself, been a hard and necessary battle—the organizational and budget size of local arts agencies, as well as their scope and impact, have increased many times over.⁸⁶ This is due in part to the relatively simultaneous creation inside the NEA of a program specifically aimed at local arts agencies, which funneled increased resources to the growth of the field over time.

In a way, Reagan’s attempted curtailing of a federal intervention that had, in the larger-scale context of community arts in America, been something of an anomaly, jump-started exponential growth in the local arts movement. Local-level activity has, by and large, been the primary driver of the arts movement in America and has indeed been responsible for almost all major, lasting cultural policy.⁸⁷ As one might have expected, given that reality, Reagan’s efforts had a chilling impact on the very nascent and immature national cultural policy. The resulting decentralization has stymied efforts to increase public and political will ever since, while indirectly sparking a flourishing of local-level agencies and support mechanisms over the next 30 years.

In 1988, at the inaugural Americans for the Arts Nancy Hanks Lecture on Arts and Public Policy, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., senior Kennedy advisor and lifelong champion of both the arts and the federal role in it, surveyed the past decades and looked to the future. Schlesinger spoke of the cycles of political life, the “fairly regular alternation between private interest and public purpose in its governing orientation.”

He went on:

From this perspective, the private-interest 1980s are a reenactment of the private-interest 1950s, as the 1950s were a reenactment of the private-interest 1920s. In the same fashion, the nation turns at 30-year increments—the span of a generation—to public purpose, idealism, and affirmative government: Theodore Roosevelt ushering in the Progressive Period in 1901, Franklin Roosevelt the New Deal in 1933, and John Kennedy the New Frontier in 1961. If the rhythm holds, and all indications are that it is holding, the 1990s should be a decade of innovation, experiment, and idealism—a turn in the cycle of which the arts, which have thrived in earlier eras of public purpose, will again be a major beneficiary.⁸⁸

He was, in a way, right. While the 1990s brought the Culture Wars and more attempts to defund and neuter federal programs aimed at supporting arts and culture,⁸⁹ they also brought about the beginnings of a much more complicated and nuanced engagement of art around what came to be called creative placemaking—a form of arts-based community development that strongly echoes previous efforts starting with the settlement house movement and carrying through to the present.

The two-decade-long exodus from cities had left some inner-city neighborhoods with one-third of the population they had had 20 years before.⁹⁰ The corporate-based community development strategies championed by LISC in the 1970s had transformed to become

more comprehensive, working from an implicit understanding that communities were complex organisms. It is worth taking a moment to reflect on the nuance here, and how differently it reads from the earliest endeavors at community development a hundred years before. Collaborative community initiatives aimed to address neighborhoods as holistic systems—to look at safety, education, housing, social services, employment, and more—in an attempt to bootstrap up whole systems at once. Unfortunately, many early efforts at these projects became victims of philanthropic whim—there until the funding ran out—and others, for various reasons, never quite gelled as they were supposed to.⁹¹

CREATIVE PLACEMAKING: 1990–2015

The 1990s saw the beginning of a two-decade struggle to rise out of the previous miasma—it was a decade of great upheaval, structural change, and migration. Arts-based community development leaders stepped into the collaborative conversations, and found receptive energy around the use of arts and culture as a glue among the various sectors being impacted. With the arrival of President Clinton, some major foundations re-invested in community development work, using the arts as a tool.⁹² Simultaneously, local arts agencies spurred growth in their communities, generating arts-based community development, a portion of which had now been labeled “creative placemaking.”⁹³

Culture and creativity began being employed as animating forces in community revitalization by municipal governments, community development agencies, and funders. New and unusual funding sources and a growing attention to arts and culture as “community creators and cultural industry stimuli”⁹⁴ led to an interest in the usefulness of the arts in the creation of vibrant communities. Perhaps most tellingly, a new, strong interest in the diversity and multiculturalism of America—and a desire to

experience different points of view, cultural and culinary traditions, and backgrounds—opened a door.⁹⁵ The arts, slowly but then more broadly over the course of the decade, became a way of doing all sorts of pro-community interventions: “stemming industrial decline and job and resident outmigration, reusing vacated land, buildings, and infrastructure in new ways that enliven neighborhoods and whole regions while incubating creative businesses.”⁹⁶

In 1999, Americans for the Arts convened a national visioning meeting of local arts agencies and other partners during which the Winston-Salem Arts Accord was crafted and ratified. These accords attempted to lay out “a vision for the arts in our communities and values and purposes of the local arts entity of the future.”⁹⁷ Among the priorities of those gathered: a lifelong continuum of arts creation, arts experiences, participation, and education; the existence of cultural equity and equality; a broad, inclusive, and participatory definition of “the arts;” and that the arts be recognized as a civic investment, with art fully integrated into schools; and artists recognized both for their skill and for their contributions to community endeavors.⁹⁸ These accords led to the release of *Community Vision*, a plan for the deeper integration of arts and culture into the communities of the 21st century.

By 2000, what had been an exodus of the middle class out of cities, leaving the city centers as the focal point for community development and bootstrapping of the poor, had flipped, in no small part because of the use of arts and culture as creators of community vitality. Unfortunately, and generally inadvertently, this first wave of placemaking had also often ended up being—as with so many well-intentioned community development efforts that had come before—a case study in displacement. This included, ironically, many of the artists themselves, who found themselves losing their living and work spaces as upper-middle-class professionals, drawn to the rich cultural landscapes the creatives and the indigenous populations had generated, drove up rents and home prices beyond reach.⁹⁹

Major migrations—both foreign and domestic—and major, seismic demographic shifts have dominated and will continue to dominate the 21st century.¹⁰⁰ The Great Recession drove the number of people living below the poverty line up to 15.1 percent of the population¹⁰¹ in 2008—but interestingly, thanks to changes in the relative affordability and accessibility of suburbs, those poor populations were not confined to destitute inner-city communities as they might have been in previous eras. In fact, between 2000 and 2010, the rate of poor people living in the suburbs increased at twice the rate of those living in cities—and two-thirds of that increase occurred during or immediately after the Recession hit.¹⁰²

In reaction to the gentrification dangers that had cropped up in the previous decade, and perhaps also out of innate restlessness or a prescience about how arts consumption and arts-based community development and engagement were changing with the advent of new technologies and the crossing of new populations, many foundations diverted funds away from place-based, real-estate-oriented arts-based community development.¹⁰³ The focus shifted substantially away from the physical edifices of a community and toward the people that existed within it. While it is always hard to tell where one is in the long arc of history, it is tempting to say that this shift signals a final reversal of what had been the chronic, congenital American tendency to revoke agency from those being helped. The publication of *Creative Placemaking* and other aligned research, including the Ford Foundation-funded publication of *Americans for the Arts' Animating Democracy* books outlining the arts-based social justice movement,¹⁰⁴ together created what Maria Rosario Jackson described as a “call for active and meaningful engagement of these populations not only as audiences but also as active participants involved in shaping the creations, presentation, and advancement of art in our society.”¹⁰⁵

Technology, cultural shifts, and an overdue redirection of investment from major philanthropic and, of late, public sources,

has created an environment where de Tocqueville’s “fine arts” institutions have found themselves finally forced to remove the blinders and join in the conversation about how all arts institutions in America must exist to serve greater community health goals. By some estimates, 95 percent of the American population consumes culture in some way in any given year—but the vast majority do so outside of the traditional, institutional channels that had, until recently, been the primary delivery mechanisms.¹⁰⁶ Evolving, nuanced conversations about what “excellence” in art means, and how and where it can exist side-by-side with equitable access and representation, are changing the arts field’s understanding of how community and aesthetic values intersect.¹⁰⁷ What had been viewed, in the first decade of the 21st century, as a temporary symptom of the larger economic downturn is now generally agreed to be a permanent change in how culture is consumed, evaluated, and understood to exist inside large community structures.¹⁰⁸

Deeper understanding of the symbiosis of community components, in the wake of the first efforts at holistic community development, has sparked a thousand community master plans, each attempting to understand and enhance the positive, amplifying role that one sector can have on another, and another, and another around the table. Culture has begun to be framed as a glue, spanning the gaps between communities and sectors, disparate groups, and resources—“a critical ally, a community resource and connector, and a builder of social capital in communities.”¹⁰⁹

NOW AND BEYOND

In looking to the future, what does all of this evolution mean? Most dominantly, it means we’ve all been here before, in some way—the cycles Schlesinger talked about, perhaps more in the general than the particular, are real. Our memories are short, and if a look back through the development of communities and the role art has played

over centuries in America proves anything, it is that, as Maryo Gard Ewell has said, “Sometimes time starts for us at the moment when we grow interested in something.”

“But,” she goes on, “it may be illuminating to take a look at what—and who—has come before us, for looking backward helps us focus our thinking about our future.”¹¹⁰

Understanding the history of a field gives the field power—it is like understanding the nature of the road, and being able to see everything that went into building it. The fits and starts of arts-based community development are reflective of the fits and starts of American society; a society that flows in and out of cities like the tides, a society that careens from a love to a loathing of the public, and then the private, sectors, of the federal and the local government, and their roles in the day-to-day lives we lead.

In surveying time this way, progress can feel exhausting, and looking into the murky, uncertain, and increasingly complex and precarious future can feel like a fool’s errand. And yet, where there were 7,000 arts organizations in 1960, there are now more than 100,000. Where there were, in 1950, a handful of local arts agencies, there are now nearly 5,000. Where there was an erroneous assumption of a singular American culture, there is an ever-dawning understanding of the unique complexity of cultures that is our strength and joy. We are on the long arc, and we are moving in the right direction.

“Whether a nation gets the culture it deserves, or deserves the culture it gets, are not questions beyond conjecture,” said arts advocate and local arts leader Eric Larabee. “After life has been made possible, the natural impulse seems to be to make it worth living. From there on it is only a matter of how much trouble you want to take.”¹¹¹

The arts and America’s communities have been hand-in-hand, for better and worse, for nearly 250 years. As we look forward to an era of increased technology, diversity, decentralization, and uncertainty, the lovers will continue their dance, long-married,

carrying their history, informed in every shift and shuffle and step by the sense memory of what has come before, working to the most satisfying of conclusions. They will, we must hope, breathe in unison, cheek to cheek, a prayer on their shared lips that our nation will get the great culture, and great communities, it deserves; the mantra of our time, all the arts bettering the lives of all the people, forever and ever, amen.

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31. Goldbard.
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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.

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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