

Monograph

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AMERICANS
for the ARTS

The Arts, Religion, and Common Ground

Edited by Jennifer Gottlieb, JNG Communications

The arts and religion each have longstanding traditions of discipline and creativity. Somewhere along the way, however, we came to view the relationship between the two as contentious rather than connected. It's an area ripe for research, and the Henry Luce Foundation has taken a lead in learning more about the association between culture and communities of faith. Motivated by their program interests in both the arts and religion, and by instances of conflict between these two significant realms of American life as reported by scholars and the press in recent years, the Luce Foundation has funded dozens of initiatives dating back to 1994.

photo by Liz Deschenes



Installation of "Andres Serrano: World Without End," St. Boniface Chapel, Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine

This *Monograph* explores both the "How" and the "Why" of arts and religion programs, and demonstrates the depths that communities, cultural organizations, and religious institutions are willing to go to uncover and understand the inter-sections. We begin with a chapter from *Crossroads: Arts and Religion in American Life*, a collection of essays commissioned by the Luce Foundation published in conjunction with the Center for Arts and Culture in May 2001, followed by a series of program profiles for an overview of who is doing what when it comes to the arts and religion, and the range of rationales for this work. Revealing new research findings are excerpted throughout to further illuminate this work.

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AMERICANS FOR THE ARTS

SERVING COMMUNITIES. ENRICHING LIVES.

Arts Leaders and Religious Leaders: Mutual Perceptions

by Robert Wuthnow

This essay examines the ways in which influential leaders in the arts and influential leaders in religion view each other. It focuses on four questions: How do they perceive the relationships between their respective communities? Do they think greater cooperation between the arts and religion is desirable? What do they regard as the most significant barriers to such cooperation? And how do they imagine these barriers being overcome? Knowing how leaders view these issues is critical to any effort to bring the arts and religion closer together.

The research was conducted in Cleveland, Dallas, New York, Philadelphia, and San Francisco. These cities were chosen because each is an important center of cultural activity in its own right and because their geographic and cultural differences give a sense of the range of issues that may be present in other large cities. In each city, 10 leaders of arts organizations and 10 leaders of religious organizations were interviewed. Leaders were selected because of their prominence and because they represented particular kinds of organizations. The arts organizations represented include municipal and regional arts councils, nationally prominent museums and performing arts centers, organizations oriented toward the interests of racial and ethnic minorities or disadvantaged communities, for-profit galleries, production companies, and foundations or sponsoring coalitions. Religious organizations include Catholic, Jewish, conservative Protestant and liberal Protestant congregations, Muslim and Buddhist organizations, and ecumenical or interfaith councils (see pages 21–22 for names of interviewees and organizations).

Perceptions of Religion and the Arts

These leaders overwhelmingly believe that art and religion each make important contributions to the well-being of their communities. Arts leaders emphasize their organizations' role in raising ethical questions, creating greater awareness of racial and ethnic diversity, and helping people express their deepest spiritual yearnings. With a few exceptions, religious leaders largely agree that the arts play these roles. For their part, there is widespread agreement among religious leaders that religious organizations do a great deal to promote appreciation of the arts through their music programs, and both sets of leaders express commitment to helping disadvantaged children, nurturing altruism, and encouraging people to take a more active interest in community development.

Yet these leaders are divided in their opinions about how well religious organizations and arts organizations support one another. Although the two sectors may perform complementary roles and

generally get along peacefully, many leaders admit there is little or insufficient interaction. This view is illustrated by Gerry Givnish, artistic director (and former executive director) of the Painted Bride Art Center, a leading presenter of contemporary visual and performing arts in Philadelphia. Mr. Givnish is a church member and has frequently sponsored exhibits and performances dealing with religion, but he says, "They don't look at us as a resource, and we don't look at them as a resource. It's a problem we've inherited. There're just no lines of communication between artists and church people."

In each city, there have been specific instances of cooperation between religious and arts organizations, and these are suggestive of the kinds of cooperation that might be cultivated by other organizations. Dallas's Cathedral Santuario de Guadalupe works with the Mexican Cultural Center to sponsor events celebrating the region's Spanish heritage. Dean Alan Jones at Grace Cathedral in San Francisco is a frequent speaker at fundraisers and educational events sponsored by Bay Area arts organizations. Several of the historic churches in downtown Philadelphia provide space for concerts and poetry readings. New York's Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine is widely known for its support of the arts through concerts and programs for artists-in-residence. The Cleveland Museum of Art sponsored an exhibit of "Vatican Treasures" and director Robert Bergman provided further evidence of ties between the arts and religion by rushing from our interview with him to a meeting with the archbishop.

In reality, many religious organizations are doing a great deal to promote the arts, either within their own

congregations or through activities involving other organizations in the community. For example, Pilgrim Congregational Church in the city center of Cleveland is a multiracial congregation of approximately 250 members whose regular activities include a thirty-member chancel choir, a gospel choir, a folk choir, and a jazz trio. Weekly services often feature short dramatic performances, and since the 1950's it has experimented with liturgical dance. Although none of the members are professional musicians or artists, the church prides itself on its artistic emphasis. It also provides space for the Gottlieb Dance Troupe and rehearsal space

for the Gay Men's Chorus of Cleveland. Another example is Prestonwood Baptist Church in Dallas, where a large fraction of its 14,000 members gather each Sunday at its five-square-block campus for worship services—more than at any other "house of worship" in the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex. With an annual budget exceeding \$10 million, it employs two dozen pastors and an additional six dozen staff and administrative assistants. The four full-time music pastors' responsibilities include directing the church's orchestra and 450-member choir. Typical Sunday morning worship services include performances by professional soloists and ensembles, while

evening services include a 10-member vocal group and a band that plays contemporary Christian music. The church also produces the Dallas Christmas Festival, attended by more than 35,000 people and televised nationally on NBC.

Although these examples are atypical, nearly all the religious leaders mention some involvement with the arts. At the First Baptist Church in suburban Medina on the outskirts of Cleveland, Reverend William Cunningham believes Americans have been influenced by the media to the extent that they can no longer be reached primarily by sermons. His weekly services include a "praise band" of keyboard, drums, guitar, trumpet, and clarinet. Once a month, members of the church put on a dramatic performance during the Sunday service. A recent performance featured the boyhood life of Henry Kissinger. At Har Zion Temple in suburban Philadelphia, Rabbi Gerald Wolpe says his congregation has little formal interaction with the arts community but, as he reflects

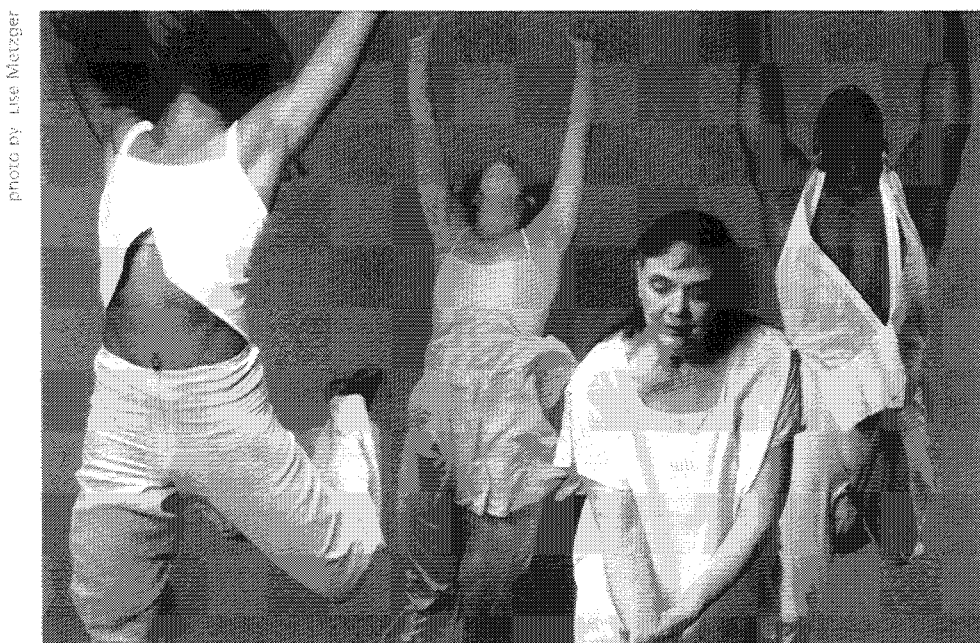


photo by Lise Metzger

Liz Lemon Dance Exchange company members (L-R) Pene McCourty, Margot Greenlee, Martha Wittman, and Marvin Webb perform a piece from the *Hallelujah* project.

further on the subject, notes that the temple periodically sponsors traveling art exhibits, recently hosted a string quartet from the Philadelphia Orchestra, advertises the city's annual film festival, organizes trips for members to attend plays in Philadelphia and New York, and includes several members who serve on boards of museums. His own lectures are filled with references to literature and music, and he speaks at length about the significance of the temple's liturgical music and stained-glass windows.

Yet these examples do not figure as prominently in leaders' remarks as the lack of closer interaction. Each city has in fact experienced some conflict between religious and arts organizations, and the memory of these skirmishes gives leaders pause when considering further interaction. At Galeria de la Raza in San Francisco's Mission District, Olivia Armas recalls rocks being thrown through the gallery's front window by protesters angered by an exhibit including a sculpture of Mary Magdalene kissing the Virgin of Guadalupe. She believes they were from a nearby Catholic

church. In Philadelphia, Mr. Givnish remembers religious groups threatening to picket controversial performance artist Karen Finley when she appeared at *Painted Bride* in 1988. Nearly all the leaders in Dallas recall the police issuing a citation for public nudity when *Six Degrees of Separation* was performed at the Dallas Theater Center; several believe fundamentalist groups were behind the incident. Cleveland's leaders remember an incident involving a nude performance by a rock singer that resulted in protests from conservative religious groups. In New York, conflict between the Catholic League and the Manhattan Theatre Club over a controversial play about the life of Christ has been a source of continuing interest.

Most of these conflicts, however, seem not to have escalated into across-the-board tension between religion and the arts. Ms. Armas recalls Galeria de la Raza receiving support from other religious leaders after the rock-throwing incident. Down the street, at St. Peter's Roman Catholic Church, where the concern allegedly originated, Reverend Daniel Maguire denies having instigated the incident and says there are good relations in the community, even though he does think it wrong for an artist to intentionally "ridicule" what others hold sacred. In Philadelphia, Mr. Givnish says the threatened picket never materialized. Richard Hamburger, artistic director of the Dallas Theater Center, discounts the role of religious groups in the Dallas incident and cites other cases (such as Tony Kushner's *Angels in America*) where more careful planning helped circumvent conflict.

If most leaders are not especially troubled by local conflicts, they are nevertheless keenly aware that all is not

PARTICIPATION IN THE ARTS

Respondents to the General Social Survey³ were asked about their attendance to two types of arts activities during the previous year: (1) arts museums and (2) performances of classical music or opera. Overall, 39 percent of American adults attended a museum and 16 percent attended a classical music performance (nearly identical to the results of the National Endowment for the Art's Survey of Public Participation in the Arts⁴). Among the seven religious denominations categorized for this survey, Jewish respondents have the highest participation levels, while black and conservative Protestants are least likely to attend such events; Catholics and mainline Protestants are similar to the national averages.

Attendance to:	Classical Music or Opera	Museums
Conservative Protestant	12%	31%
Mainline Protestant	17	41
Black Protestant	7	22
Catholic	19	43
Jewish	40	76
Other faith	23	56
Unaffiliated	20	43
All respondents	16	39

Source: Peter V. Marsden. "Religious Americans and the Arts in the 1990s." *Crossroads: Art and Religion in American Life*. 2001. Data are from General Social Surveys, 1993 and 1998.

well between religion and the arts nationally. Nearly all the leaders of arts organizations lament the decline in federal funding for the arts, and many blame religious groups for the attacks experienced by the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). "Fundamentalist preacher Donald Wildmon led the fight against the NEA," one arts leader observes. "He saw the Mapplethorpe photographs and contacted his congressman and then escalated it to an attack on the National Endowment, and I think he's still trying to bring the Endowment down." Other leaders think the NEA would have weathered these attacks if less conservative religious groups had been more outspoken. As one suggests, "In the struggle to keep the National Endowment for the Arts alive, which was a political struggle, the churches were silent. They didn't say, 'Yes, we want our taxpayer dollars spent on art.'" Or as another leader observes, "In the case of the NEA, the other Christian churches could have spoken up against them, because fundamentalist Christians essentially represented all religious people by default."

Within their own communities, leaders attribute the separation between religion and the arts to each having a different function to perform (for instance, helping people find spirituality versus beauty). A common view, however, is that religion and the arts both deal with fundamental questions about human existence and for this reason may compete with each other. Jennie Rodriguez, executive director of the Mission Cultural Center for Latino Arts in San Francisco, says art "puts you in contact with yourself—with who you are—and these basic questions that we have about ourselves—where do we

come from, and how do we express ourselves and interact with fellow human beings." In this sense, it is like religion. Yet she adds, "Religion states that only through following a certain path will you get to a certain place. With art, it's much more open, there's no specific path to follow—there are many different paths. With religion, you have to conform to one way of doing things and practicing things in order to obtain eternal grace."

With similar or overlapping functions and some interaction, it is therefore all the more noteworthy that a majority of these religious and arts leaders believe the two communities are separated by a great deal of misunderstanding. "From the arts' point of view," William Busta of Cleveland's William Busta Gallery states, "there's not enough communication with the religious communities and there's not enough understanding of it. It's reciprocal. I don't think people in the arts are aware of the functions of religion and I don't think people in religions pay much attention to the functions of art." Kim Noblitt expresses a similar view. A professional musician, he lives in both worlds, serving as music director at the conservative First Baptist Church in Euless, Texas. He has observed the misunderstandings between religion and the arts at close range.

photo courtesy of Liz Lerman Dance Exchange



Rabbi Judith Halevy, Malibu Jewish Center, performs with Liz Lerman Dance Exchange company members and Los Angeles community members in the *Hallelujah* production, "Stones Will Float, Leaves Will Sink, Paths Will Cross," hosted by the Skirball Cultural Center, Los Angeles, February 2001.

"I think there are a lot of weird people in the arts field," he chuckles. "They're not humble people many times because they're so excellent in their field. There are more common salt-of-the-earth people in churches, and arrogance is something they disdain. There's definitely a problem."

Although most of these leaders think the gulf between religion and the arts can be bridged, they worry that media accounts, extremists, politicians, and the lack of broader communication make matters worse. "Witness the flap about Andres Serrano, the famous "Piss Christ" photographer," says Mr. Bergman of the Cleveland Museum of Art. "There's a great example, where the assumption was that Serrano was an anti-church guy, when in fact he was a guy with a history of being devout himself and his "Piss Christ" was a commentary about the corruption of what he saw as a pure state of Christian devotion." Reverend Laurinda Hafner at Cleveland's Pilgrim Congregational Church thinks conservative interest groups are largely to blame. "I'll tell you where the misunderstanding comes," she asserts. "It's when folks see the religious right as the only true religious community, when they think that is the religious community speaking. Then I can see where there're some problems. I'm not sure that there is a separation otherwise. But I can see why some arts groups immediately are on the defensive when it comes to religious groups because they think that the religious right is who we all are."

But few of these leaders think the tensions between religion and the arts are limited to the occasional flash point or controversial performance. Jerome Weeks of the *Dallas Morning News* admits he has experienced tension between religion and the arts all his life. In San Francisco, Rabbi Alan Lew of Congregation Beth Shalom describes the tension this way: "The ethos of the art world is that you're supposed to be getting outside of boundaries all the time and the ethos of the religion world is that you're supposed to be making boundaries all the time. Although the really talented people in both fields operate pretty much in the same way, the general ethos of each world is in conflict with the other." In New York, Susan Feldman of St. Ann and the Holy Trinity Church expresses a similar view: "I think there is an inherent tension between the hierarchical quality of how religion may be implemented versus the freedom and the need to express in art."

When asked to characterize trends in these tensions, many of these leaders say they seem to be increasing. Dr. Larry Allums of the Dallas Institute of Humanities and Culture says, "Religion, if it is formalized and systematized, looks upon itself as a guardian, as the arbiter of what comes to the individual. It says, 'I don't want this person to be hurt by the wrong things.' It says art must be judged before it's disseminated. Now, in some quarters the tension

is increasing because our openness is increasing. There is now an absolute demand on the part of some people for openness." Barbara Colton, director of the National Association of Performing Arts Managers and Agents in New York, also thinks the growing rigidity of religious views in some segments of the population is a source of increased tension; she observes, "Religious points of view become so rigid as to strike fear in the heart of the artistic community."

Is Greater Interaction Desirable?

Since there is relatively little formal interaction at present, the desirability of greater cooperation between religion and the arts is a matter of speculation. Most leaders say there should be more cooperation. But what are their reasons for saying so? Are these reasons compelling? Do they suggest that efforts to promote such cooperation would be worth the investment?

One of the more common arguments for initiating a dialogue between religion and the arts is simply that dialogue is in principle beneficial—period. Harry Pritchett, dean of the Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine, summarizes the benefits as "greater collaboration, a greater influence on each other, particularly in terms of current cultural trends, from both religious leaders and artistic leaders; also, mutual support in forming and having discussions with artists about religious leaders and religious leaders listening to what artists are saying and trying to incorporate that." Michie Akin at the Cathedral Santuario de Guadalupe in downtown Dallas agrees with this view: "The benefit would be that we'd dialogue and understand this common denominator, this common

ground of supporting each other." As the cathedral's director of cultural arts, he wears hats of both communities and thus feels there is indeed common ground to be explored.

A variation on this argument suggests that dialogue would be constructive, but unlikely to produce agreement. One example is Rabbi Michael Oppenheimer of the Suburban Temple in Cleveland, who thinks dialogue could lead to "understanding, recognizing the boundaries, and acceptance of each other." But he muses, "Now, will that happen? No. Because of human nature."

In the religious community, several leaders illustrate the likelihood of agreement not being reached when they suggest that dialogue would mainly be a way of persuading artists to become adherents of their particular faith. For instance, Reverend Victor Sokolov of the Holy Trinity Orthodox Cathedral in San Francisco believes dialogue may be an opportunity for the Holy Spirit to open artists' hearts to closer communion with God. "If there were the dialogue, I will tell them, 'Come back to the church. Come back to your roots. Come back to the source of the creativity.' It's hard to expect any great benefit instantly or even remotely, but dialogue is always good. At least the words will be said, the invite the opportunity."

The more common argument, though, is that dialogue is most helpful when the major parties expect to learn from one another. Rabbi David Stern at Temple Emanu-El in Dallas, the nation's third largest Reform synagogue, illustrates this view. "I think religious leaders can benefit from the diversity impulse that is prominent within the artistic community, and I think that the

photo by Susan Lerner



Artist-in-Residence Judy Collins, Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine

artistic community could benefit from the meaning impulse that is prominent within the religious community." At San Francisco's Cornerstone Evangelical Church (a Chinese-American congregation affiliated with the conservative North American Baptist denomination), Reverend Chanson Lau emphasizes a different kind of learning. To attract young people, he has aggressively incorporated the arts into his services, including skits, puppet shows, and a rendition of the life of Jesus in rap music written by several younger members of the congregation. He thinks more interaction with arts organizations would "increase the awareness of the congregation about the development of the arts as a whole."

Many of these leaders believe dialogue will be most beneficial if it actually leads to concrete programs. J. Weldon Smith of the San Francisco Craft and Folk Art Museum thinks dialogue will have such an effect. "I think that many churches could benefit from having more active artistic programs. Art institutions could benefit by certain liaisons with churches in terms of building different audiences. We learn something from all of our constituencies." Adrienne Jenkins of the Philadelphia Cultural Alliance observes that her organization could initiate such dialogue by working with churches in neighborhoods that already have active arts programs.

Mr. Weeks thinks dialogue may be a vehicle for arts organizations to recruit board members that may be helpful in developing new programs. "The arts organization would get a certain amount of religious input if the board member is there in an advisory capacity. Sometimes you can tap them for the benefit of their knowledge, wisdom, background. If they are good religious people—by good I mean successful, not in the sense of money, but successful as they really have a dedicated flock or whatever—they would seem to be

'people' people, they would have certain people skills. That's not a bad thing to have on a board." Although virtually all the leaders think dialogue would be beneficial, a few are skeptical. One skeptic is Edsel Matthews at the Concepts Cultural Gallery in Oakland. He supports efforts to bring people together at the grassroots level but fears that discussions among leaders may be ineffective. "I don't believe that leader kinds of discussions are going to change anything. There would be more benefit from having more relations between the artist and the people in the congregations than between religious leaders. And religious leaders, they ain't going to

is going along just fine," she explains. "If there was a crisis where you got censorship, then there would be a need to get together."

DOES ART BRING US CLOSER TO GOD?

While conservative Protestant groups have the lowest levels of arts attendance, they are the most likely to agree that, "Through such things as art and music, we come closer to God." Not surprisingly, those unaffiliated with a religion are the least likely to agree with this statement. Nevertheless, 51 percent of the respondents from this group still concur with the statement.

Believe the Arts Bring Us Closer to God

Conservative Protestant	76%
Mainline Protestant	79
Black Protestant	79
Catholic	68
Jewish	63
Other faith	66
Unaffiliated	51
All respondents	70

Source: Peter V. Marsden, "Religious Americans and the Arts in the 1990s," *Crossroads: Art and Religion in American Life*. 2001. Data are from General Social Surveys, 1993 and 1998.³

do nothing except for sit around and talk. But if the artists get a chance to sit down with kids and play their art, teach them about the art, give the kids the opportunity to experience the art, that's more meaningful than all of the religious leaders sitting around talking and all. I hate those kinds of things, to tell you the truth, because nothing ever comes out of it. If we're going to communicate, then we got to communicate human being to human being." Another skeptic is Rena Bransten, owner of the Rena Bransten Gallery in downtown San Francisco. Although she worries about the apparent influence of fundamentalism, she is personally uninterested in religion, has no interaction with religious organizations, and prefers to keep it that way. "I think everything

Barriers to Cooperation

Because it is easy for religious and arts leaders to express support for greater interaction, we asked them specifically to address some of the barriers that might stand in the way of such cooperation. We were interested in their impressions of what might discourage leaders from getting together to talk about common issues and interests in religion and the arts, rather than just their own views about participating. The majority is confident that the barriers are not insuperable. Yet they also identify several obstacles that may not be easy to surmount.

Nearly everyone agrees that religious and arts leaders don't interact very much simply because they already have too many other things to do. Clergy are especially likely to say their schedules are extremely full. Tight budgets in recent years have meant cutbacks in support staff, and volunteer help is often less available because families devote more time to working or other activities. If clergy take on additional tasks, these tasks have increasingly been driven by efforts to respond to community needs precipitated by cutbacks in social welfare programs.

Reverend James Dowd at the Church of the Covenant in Cleveland illustrates why it might be difficult to stimulate more interaction between clergy and leaders of arts organizations. Although his church is located in the University Circle area, which includes the Cleveland Orchestra, Museum of Art, and Museum of Natural History, he says the demands of his job place serious

restrictions on how much more he could take on. "Let me put it this way," he explains. "In addition to serving as the pastor of this congregation, my other major efforts here have been to provide leadership to the creation of what's called East Side Interfaith Ministries, which began as a nine-congregation coalition, and is now about a 36-congregation coalition, with a focus on this East Side neighborhood, the three neighborhoods to which we are adjacent, to do things like meeting basic needs—primarily food, shelter, helping youth and families, and neighborhood development. I put a lot of time and energy into that and continue to do so. The other activity in addition to the congregation and East Side Interfaith Ministries that I work with is the campus ministry, what's now called United Protestant Campus Ministry, the offices of which are housed here in our church building. The combination of those two plus being pastor of a congregation means a six- to six-and-a-half-day week, including three evenings on average per week. I really am not in a position to take on other things."

Several leaders observe that complaints about being too busy are actually an indication that dialogue between religion and the arts may not be a high priority for many of their colleagues. Reverend Bill Counts of the Fellowship Bible Church in Dallas thinks religious leaders are particularly unlikely to value relating to arts organizations. "Religious leaders are not sitting around wondering what to do with their time. This is why I think you have a big problem. The religious leader has to have a real vision or burden that 'hey, we've got to do this or that with the arts' and carve out the time to do that. The arts groups are not going to be

able to persuade him very easily to do that because the arts groups are reflecting a secular point of view. They are not in touch with where the church is, so for them to come to him and say, 'We want you to do five hours to come to this meeting that relates to the arts,' he will not do it unless he sees something in it for himself."

In many of these leaders' minds, the only solution to the problem of busy schedules is thus to persuade religious and arts leaders that working together would actually benefit their own organizations. Mr. Givnish asserts, "I don't have time to help another organization unless that effort is going to help my organization." Dr. Allums puts it this way: "It's true that everybody is busy. Leaders are busy, but I think that if a religious leader could be shown that art and religion have something in common, then I think that could be very easily incorporated into mission statements, goals, objectives—that kind of thing."

Most of the clergy say they respect artists and arts organizations, and most of the arts leaders say they respect religion. But each side worries that its interests and activities are not respected by a significant segment of the other side. They feel this lack of respect—or at least worries about it—will have to be overcome in order to get the two sides talking.

Reverend John Fiedler at the First United Methodist Church in Dallas emphasizes how a lack of respect can be a barrier to cooperation: "I believe the basis of any relationship, whether it's between individuals or collectives, is respect. If you had arts people that perceived the church as a threat or as some sort of oppressive, antiquated throwback to other days, and that they in being clever and classless and free have been more enlightened, then that's a barrier. When you can't be validated, when they can't see what you do as having any value at all, it makes it tough in terms of understanding and appreciating one another."

The experiences of Cliff Redd, of The Five Hundred in Dallas, with wealthy patrons of arts organizations and from serving on arts councils in Dallas prompts a similar observation. "There's a whole lot of judgment going around on both sides. I think we have to have a peace treaty. We just have to lay down our shields and say, 'We're about acceptance here for a period of time and let's celebrate the diversity.' I think that we can start to heal that way."

Most of the leaders think dialogue itself will result in each side gaining greater respect for the other. Most of them seem personally willing to approach such an effort with an open mind. Yet their comments sometimes suggest that the road to greater understanding will not be smooth. As in other areas of life, these leaders are sometimes more eager for the other side to change its

views than to consider changing theirs. For instance, one arts leader has this to say about the disagreements that might separate religious and arts organizations: "I think that religion would have to move. Art cannot compromise itself, but religion could learn to use art with wisdom and discrimination."

Mr. Matthews' experiences in Oakland make him think the solution may be to start with leaders particularly interested in the greater good of the community, rather than leaders who only want to promote religion and the arts. "I've seen all kinds of people in the arts. But I will say this—most of my experience with people who are in smaller arts organizations, they are being driven by the same kinds of feelings that drive people in religious organizations. They're being driven by the same desires to create a better humanity, to be more compassionate about other people, to improve their communities. It's the same things that motivate people in religion."

Richard Newirth, director of cultural affairs for the San Francisco Art Commission, adds the important observation that respect for religion and the arts generally will be enhanced if the leaders selected to participate in dialogue between the two sectors are themselves highly respected within their own sector. "I keep going back to this Clinton dialogue on race. If people who are respected in the arts community, people who are respected in the religious community start that kind of dialogue, a lot of people in the arts community would open their minds to things that they would previously have closed them off to."

Another potential barrier to cooperation is the perception that arts organizations are elitist, catering only to the rich or upholding aesthetic standards that are unappreciated by the wider community. Religious leaders may be particularly indifferent to working with arts organizations if their own religious traditions favor a more inclusive approach or one that emphasizes the needs of the disadvantaged. But our respondents have mixed views about the possibility that people in religious communities think arts organizations cater only to the wealthy and powerful. Most leaders say this perception is inaccurate. They are divided, however, in terms of how widespread they think it is. And those who regard it as widespread feel it does, indeed, constitute a significant barrier in trying to promote cooperation between religious and arts organizations.

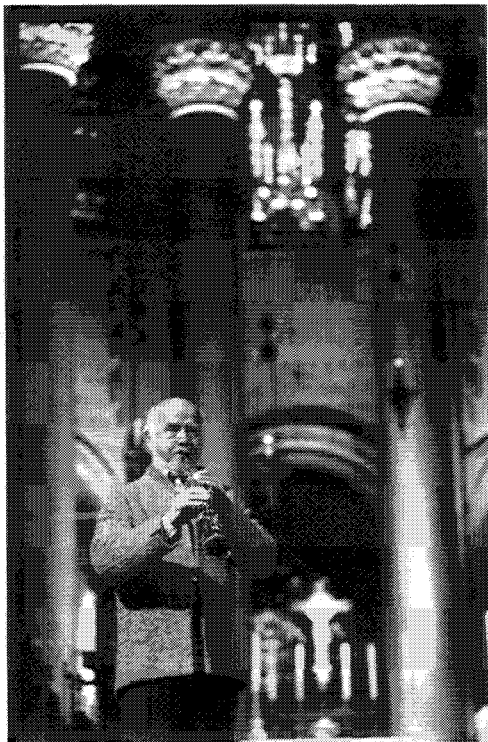
Mr. Akin at the Cathedral Santuario de Guadalupe is sensitive to the question of elitism. His church tries to minister to Hispanic families in Dallas, many of whom are lower-income, but also works with the elite arts organizations in the Arts District. "I think the general perception is that the arts organization is more elitist, whereas the church is more concerned with the poor," he ventures.

But he thinks this perception can perhaps be modified. "I'll tell you what happens here. The Symphony often brings over blocks of free tickets which we distribute on Sunday morning. It's not for all concerts, but it's for special concerts. There are Sunday afternoon free concerts over there. Now whether or not the poor Hispanic feels comfortable walking into the building is another issue."

Mr. Bergman makes a similar observation from his experiences in Cleveland. "Within the arts community, many organizations are still so focused on performance or product that they might not take this [concern about elitism] into consideration. At the same time, this museum being a good example, we use a lot of our resources precisely in serving previously disenfranchised or nonparticipatory audiences. That's what we do with a vengeance. And more and more arts institutions are doing this. It's self-interest as well as living up to our democratic responsibilities."

Although they feel they are serving the wider community, many of the arts leaders we talked to nevertheless acknowledge that there has not been enough publicity about these efforts. One way of overcoming the perception of elitism, they say, is to interact more with religious leaders who can then spread the word to their congregations and neighborhoods. Mr. Bergman remarks, "Whether or not it's true, the perception is a barrier. I can tell you that. It's a barrier to participation in general, and I think it would be a barrier if religious leaders felt that that's the way we really are. I think dialogue is important so that I can say some of these things to religious leaders."

photo by Susan Lerner



Artist-in-Residence Paul Winter, Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine

Another view that some arts leaders would like to convey is that elitism isn't necessarily a bad thing or one that is limited to the arts community.

Mr. Busta offers this observation. "The arts are always elitist to the extent that we're looking for the people who do things the best. It's just like the baseball teams are elitist, they want the person who can throw the ball the best. It's a difficult thing, but in the visual arts and in the other arts, we engage in this all the time, this sort of culling and selecting, and training one's self to be able to do that is a large part of what it's about. It's difficult, but it's crucial and it really needs to be done."

In principle, competition between arts and religious organizations for scarce resources (donations, volunteers, and

participants) presents a barrier to greater cooperation. But most leaders do not regard such competition as a serious problem; for the most part, they think the audiences and donors are different enough—or sufficiently committed to both—that competition should not stand in the way of closer relationships. "Our holds on people's imaginations are different," one man observes. Another pastor suggests that "religious people have a second pocket." He explains, "In addition to what they give to their church, they have a second pocket out of which they take other charitable giving." He is "not convinced that we're in head-to-head competition for the same dollar."

The exceptions—those who say competition is real—tend to be among the rabbis we interviewed. In their view, Jews are particularly supportive of the arts—a view that many of the arts leaders share. And for this reason, some believe synagogue giving suffers. For instance, Rabbi Lew says, "We do find ourselves in direct competition with the arts. Our major donors are also the major donors of the arts world and they give much more to art than they give to us and we bitterly resent that. There's also people's time, which is another resource that we are in direct competition for. I mentioned the people coming from the opera to this service. Well, that's because it's a special service. Other times if there's a conflict, they would just go to the opera." Rabbi Wolpe echoes this concern. He says competition is "especially true today. You're in competition with one another. Should you give the money to an art alliance or should you give it to a school for retarded children which is run by a religious organization? I hope I wouldn't have to make that decision, but I suspect where my money would go."

Some other exceptions are community arts leaders who find themselves in direct competition with church programs. Vicki Meek of the South Dallas Cultural Center has experienced such competition. When asked if there is competition between arts organizations and religious organizations, she responds, "Yes, unfortunately that is true, especially in the philanthropic community. There doesn't seem to be this ability to see cities holistically. Philanthropy seems to go in waves. One year it might be in vogue to do the arts and the next year it's human services. The next year it might be housing or something else. I don't see enough of, 'Let's look at people's needs totally and holistically and make sure that our communities have all of these things that make for a healthy community spiritually, intellectually, and physically.' So that's why I think we compete for similar dollars oftentimes. I know, for instance, that we're up for a grant for our preschool program, but there are also some churches who are trying to get that same money for some things that they're doing. It's like, why

do we have to compete with each other? What we're doing is so different than what they're talking about, but yet there's not that separation in the philanthropy community."

The leaders who think competition is minimal generally frame their answers less in terms of individual donors or specific projects and more in terms of government funding (where religion may be excluded) or foundation support (where the arts and religion may be funded by separate programs or by different foundations). For instance, Lori Fogarty of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art remarks, "I don't think there's any overlap in the kinds of public funding areas or really even in foundation funding areas." Where she does see potential for competition is among individual philanthropists, but at this level she believes "most generous people are generous to a lot of things."

But if they mostly deny that competition between religion and the arts is actually a problem, many of these leaders acknowledge that the perception of competition raises difficulties. Mr. Hamburger thinks overcoming this perception is another role dialogue can play. "If more of us got involved with churches, then you're looking from the inside of those churches and you're making them realize there's nothing to fear and there are more tie-ins, there are more possibilities. It's the fact that we're so separate that is in fact causing the problems. As long as you're looking at someone as an other, there's a problem."

The fact that special interest groups, such as the American Family Association, as well as some politicians and television preachers, have been active in efforts to eliminate or reduce public funding for the arts caused us to wonder how local leaders viewed these interest groups. We asked them whether interest groups, politicians, and television preachers are an obstacle to greater cooperation between arts and religious organizations.

Answers to these questions vary considerably. Politicians are sometimes regarded as a problem, and specific names are sometimes mentioned. For instance, Ms. Armas explains why she thinks politicians are a barrier: "Because it's happened so much in the past. I mean, like you have with Jesse Helms or with Andres Serrano or different artists. Someone sees something, they write to their politician, and the politician takes it up as a thing, and they can really hurt an organization. For example, we're pretty tiny. If some politician decided to be against us in a big thing, it could really hurt us." A Protestant pastor makes a similar observation about politicians. "They go to the religious groups and jump on the artists and play up stuff. Their main objective is to get elected. There's a lot of demagoguery that goes on in politics. That's why artists and religious folk need to wake up and be in

communication with one another, not get their information about one another from politicians."

Besides their concern about specific politicians, some leaders emphasize the need to avoid participating in any activities that might be viewed as partisan. As Jay Gates of the Dallas Museum of Art explains, "This museum, in particular, since it is so dependent upon public funds, simply has to pay

CONSERVATIVE PROTESTANTS MOST LIKELY TO EXPERIENCE ART AT PLACE OF WORSHIP

Attendees of religious services were asked if they had experienced the arts at their place of worship during the past year. Conservative Protestants were the most likely to cite such experiences (41 percent), suggesting that art forms compatible with religious commitments may be more acceptable to religious conservatives. Given that virtually all religious services include congregational or choral singing, it is notable that fewer than half of the survey respondents identify such experiences as an arts event.

Experience Arts at Place of Worship

Conservative Protestant	41%
Mainline Protestant	39
Black Protestant	39
Catholic	18
Jewish	35
Other faith	33
Unaffiliated	32
All respondents	33

Source: Peter V. Marsden. "Religious Americans and the Arts in the 1990s." *Crossroads: Art and Religion in American Life*. 2001. Data collected from General Social Surveys, 1993 and 1998.³

attention to positions like that. I'm asked, in a different arena, to endorse candidates for political office. These may be people I'm going to vote for and I know well and I think they're really great, but I'm not going to endorse them. I can't, because as the director of the museum, who receives public funding, I'm not going to endorse them. I'm not going to endorse their program. I'm not going to endorse a party. I'm not going to endorse a particular religious point of view."

More so than politicians, television preachers are frequently viewed as an interest group that promotes conflict between religion and the arts. Reverend Fiedler says, "Some ministers, TV evangelists, will want to create litmus tests, simplistic, oversimplified litmus tests. A litmus test is always about 'us versus them,' and when they frame that scenario and they come into town and say, 'There's this exhibit or there's this film and we're going to picket it, and every real Christian minister will be down there,' it puts you in the light of having to come up with an explanation. 'If you're not down there, why not? Don't you believe that?' That's fine. Again, that's just part of the participation in the process, but it can be divisive."

And televangelists are not considered the only problem. Rabbi Oppenheimer observes, "If you're part of a religious community, and I mean generally, then the extremists in your group tend to pull you toward them and that's a barrier to dialogue. It's happening in the Jewish community in Israel and in America. The extremists tend to polarize the community and the issues more than they are without the extremists." Reverend Otis Moss of the Olivet Institutional Baptist Church in

photo courtesy of Liz Lerman Dance Exchange



The Reverend Masao Kodian, Senshin Buddhist Temple, performs with Liz Lerman Dance Exchange company members and Los Angeles community members in the *Hallelujah* production. "Stones Will Float, Leaves Will Sink, Paths Will Cross," hosted by the Skirball Cultural Center, Los Angeles, February 2001.

Cleveland remarks, "When you look at what a group like the [James] Dobson group, Focus on the Family, is constantly doing with the abortion issue, there is reason to believe that they might do a similar thing with something as delicate and at the same time as important to our society as the arts."

On the whole, arts leaders are particularly aware that interest groups can be influential if there are no countervailing efforts, such as those that might be launched in cooperation with supportive segments of the religious community. Mr. Bergman puts it this way: "We're very easy targets. It's hard to know whether the religious fundamentalist is stirring up the politicians more or the politicians are stirring up the fundamentalists more. But having been through the wars about the NEA in recent years—it's still going on—we are very easy whipping posts for politicians, because they have conservative constituencies. Same thing for fundamentalist Christian groups trying to develop support. So unfortunately there is this very unhappy axis between highly conservative politicians and fundamentalist groups that can use the arts in a very negative way. Yeah, they can stop or certainly hurt the development of a dialogue."

The leaders we interviewed are in virtual agreement that moral issues are the most serious barriers at present between religious and arts organizations. Clergy recognize that there are many

ROLE OF RELIGION IN ARTS CONTROVERSIES

Paul DiMaggio and his colleagues identified a total of 100 public arts controversies that occurred in Philadelphia between 1965 and 1997. They found that: (1) only 16 of the controversies involved arts and religion; and (2) religious supporters were marginal players in these conflicts. The controversial incidents included issues with sexually explicit books, films, videos, music, or erotic dancing. Researchers concluded that the arts controversies are most likely to be fanned by the media and special interest groups, not the clergy, churches, or artists.

Source: Paul DiMaggio, Wendy Cadge, Lynn Robinson, and Brian Steensland. "The Role of Religion in Public Conflicts Over the Arts in the Philadelphia Area, 1965-1997." *Crossroads: Art and Religion in American Life*. 2001.

different views of morality among religious organizations, but even those who personally find little to object to in the performances and exhibits sponsored by arts organizations know that moral issues concern many of their members and are worrisome to more conservative religious organizations. Arts leaders vary in their appraisal of particular performances and exhibits as well, sometimes candidly observing that certain artists seem more intent on outraging the public than striving for artistic excellence; they nevertheless maintain the importance of arts organizations' freedom and are distressed by religious leaders' efforts to curtail this freedom.

The complexity of arts leaders' thinking about moral issues is evident in a remark by Edith Baker of the Edith Baker Gallery in Dallas. "I'm not saying that art is all right all the time. There's a lot that's ugly and filthy and unnecessary, just as our language today is so ugly and impossible." She longs for more decency and civility in public life. Yet, as she thinks about America's young people, she concludes that moral reform isn't likely to come from the churches. "Religion has distanced itself from the youth of today, because it is so dogmatic. I think that our youth is not prone to accept dogma. I think that's why there is this tension and maybe there is this distance as well."

Although their views vary, most arts leaders are concerned about the stance they associate with conservative religious organizations. "There's a certain narrowness in religious people that does more to affect the communications than anything else," says Mr. Matthews.

"I don't think that the problem comes from the people in the arts as much as it comes from the narrowness of certain attitudes about people who call themselves Christians." Ms. Meek thinks arts leaders may generalize about the views they associate with religious conservatives. "I don't think that most artists think about the religious realm as being accepting of the arts. I think that the perception is that those are the censors, those in the religious world are the censors because they're thinking erroneously that religious areas are a monolith, everything is the same in religion. We all know that there are all different kinds of religions and all different levels of conservatism in religion. I think that's part of the problem, we tend to rubber stamp—'This is how these people are and ne'er the twain shall meet.'"

But conservative religious leaders agree that their views are probably in conflict with those of arts leaders, and they sometimes admit that this conflict would be a significant barrier in any effort to promote greater interaction with arts organizations. Reverend Cunningham acknowledges this possibility: "I think we have to be honest up front and say, 'This is who we are and what we're about.' And then as you build a relationship and as you get ready to do something and someone wants to do something that just violates your beliefs or your values, you'll have to say something. So it would be an element of conflict, which could lead to not cooperating." Mr. Noblitt makes a similar observation. "You get to an impasse in working together on something when they say, 'We want to bring in something immoral.' We would have tremendous problems with that because of our personal convictions as a church."

Apart from conservatives, other clergy nevertheless say they worry about interacting with arts organizations that might sponsor an exhibit or performance that church members would find offensive. Reverend Fiedler illustrates this view. "Where you've got a formalized partnership and somebody goes to an exhibit and they're offended by something, that could be a problem. They say, 'What I want to know is why is my church endorsing this painting?' When you endorse a museum, you endorse the exhibit. When you endorse the exhibit, you endorse every painting. There's always going to be something. We've got right now an impressionistic nude that somebody came up to me and said, 'Take a look at it and make sure that that's something you can live with.'"

For clergy in similar situations, the issue is often one of deniability. If they can deny having any formal association with the arts organization (such as an explicit partnership or financial arrangement), then they don't mind the arts organization doing something with which they disagree. They just don't want to appear to be lending their support.

Some of the religious leaders extend this argument to the question of public funding for the arts. While they would not hesitate to engage arts leaders in dialogue, they would be more reluctant to support public funding for arts programs with which they disagreed. Reverend Todd Bell at Prestonwood Baptist Church in Dallas offers this observation: "I would not be for funding for any organization that would produce anything that would have any kind of an immoral or indecent cast upon it in any way. I think the Bible would be our guide on that. Particularly the evangelical Christian or even the Catholic or the Jew, we can all line up on traditional family values, and I think they're very, very well lined out in biblical scripture. So for us, that becomes our guiding point."

Clergy with other views generally defend their right to criticize artistic presentations they find morally objectionable. This does not mean they think it a high priority to do so or that they agree on what was offensive. They mostly think arts organizations have the right to present whatever they want. But they also think it acceptable for clergy and laity to write letters, make telephone calls, advise their neighbors not to participate, or (for that matter) stage protests. Where they disagree usually is on specific issues, such as whether or not a nude scene is worthy of criticism. Where they agree is that religious organizations should speak up if they think something is truly offensive. They also agree that it is better for religious organizations to voice criticisms than for legal sanctions or governmental censorship to be attempted.

Apart from overt disagreement about moral issues, the two communities are sometimes separated by perceptions among adherents of religious traditions that their commitments are not appreciated or are somehow underrepresented in current discussions of diversity. Perhaps more than they realize, arts organizations sometimes risk indifference or hostility from religious groups because of different orientations toward religious diversity. Besides the rock-throwing incident in San Francisco, Galeria de la Raza has experienced conflict with local Catholics because it sponsors dances and festivals rooted in indigenous traditions that were historically regarded as pagan by Catholic missionaries. Many devout Catholics continue to view these practices as antithetical to the church's teachings. Similarly, Mr. Gates experiences some of these tensions because the Dallas Museum of Art's collections are strongest in pre-Columbian and Indonesian art; Christians, he says, may find relatively little representing their traditions.

IS TOO LITTLE SPENT ON THE ARTS?

One-quarter of American adults feel there is too little money spent on the arts. Similar to findings related to attitudes and participation in the arts, non-Christian groups are more inclined to feel that more needs to be spent while conservative Protestants are the least inclined.

More Money is Also Needed for...

Health	70%
Environment	65
Law Enforcement	55
— Arts —	25
Defense	18
Welfare	17
Space Exploration	12
Foreign Aid	7

Source: Peter V. Marsden. "Religious Americans and the Arts in the 1990s."

Crossroads: Art and Religion in American Life. 2001.

Data are from General Social Surveys, 1993 and 1998.³

Arts leaders generally argue that their activities should not be censored by religious organizations. Yet many of them distinguish censorship from the legitimate right of religious groups to speak against objectionable forms of art. Mr. Weeks says, "A religious leader has to do what a religious leader has to do. If the particular artwork that you find is essentially beyond the pale for you, then it is in your need to say that 'this does not fit, this does not work, this does not cut the mustard,' and I don't see anything wrong with that."

While many of these comments strike an optimistic note (suggesting that differences can be surmounted), the caution expressed by several leaders is worth underscoring. They too think dialogue is sorely needed, but they perceive some segments of the religious community as being separated from the arts community by a serious gulf. One of the more forthright observations about this gulf is that of Larry James, who heads the Greater Dallas Community of Churches (a fifty-year-old ecumenical organization representing more than 300 member churches, mostly affiliated with mainline Protestant denominations). "It's not just misunderstanding," he says. "It's disagreement about values. We're talking about radically different starting points in terms of values. An organization like James Dobson's Focus on the Family promotes art, but it's very traditional, wholesome art. I don't think they have a clue about what motivates the more radical expressions that they would be so critical of. I don't know that they ever take the time to sit down and ask. It probably works the other way, too. Artists who are more radical and more expressive and avant-garde probably look down on James Dobson and would never have a dialogue with him, so it probably goes both ways."

Promoting Cooperation

The various barriers notwithstanding, most of the leaders to whom we talked believe positive steps can be taken to bring the arts and religion closer together. Although their views differ about what may be most effective, many of them have strong feelings about whom should be included in any such efforts as well as topics that may be particularly fruitful for consideration. As leaders of their respective organizations, they often bring substantial experience from previous efforts to address problems within their own communities.

Most leaders take as a given the premise that dialogue between religion and the arts should include high-ranking leaders in each of these communities. Reverend Bell asserts, "Everything starts with leadership, and I think there would need to be an effort within the religious community, within the church leadership of our city, a delegation assembled, and then within the artistic community, a

delegation assembled, and then a fusing of those two together at some point. That'd be terrific."

With only a few exceptions, these leaders favor including representatives from the widest variety of religious and arts organizations. Mr. Givnish envisions a three- to four-year process involving at least 10 different working groups, each with 10 members, as being most effective. "It would have to be culturally diverse. It would have to be very inclusive of Muslim, Jewish, and all kinds of Protestant and Catholic. The setting has to be non-threatening and people have to be able to open up."

Of course these leaders recognize that dialogue is often most effective when limited to a small group. There is less agreement on who should be included or excluded. One recurring idea is that dialogue should begin with leaders who have already shown interest in bringing religion and the arts together. At Grace Cathedral in San Francisco, Lauren Artress suggests including representatives of churches with resources for contributing to the arts. "I would say that for the churches able to sponsor art programs, the larger churches—Glide Memorial, Grace Cathedral, Temple Emanu-El—the leaders need to come forward in that way. So I would say the larger churches are able to really enter into a dialogue and also have either gallery space or have used art as a vehicle." Reverend Fiedler in Dallas thinks the core of such an effort would naturally come from leaders who have already worked in both spheres. "Choose some people who have shown an ability to cross the gap," he advises. "When you've got a minister who's shown a real ability and an affinity with the arts, that person would have credibility with the arts

community. When you have artists who have credibility with the religious community, then that would be the way to go, rather than just go with the formal institutional figures."

These leaders generally agree that dialogue should include some recognition of what religion is already doing to promote the arts and of what the arts may be doing to further religion or spirituality. For instance, Mr. Bergman remarks, "It may well be that certain religious organizations are doing things for us in terms of talking about what we do that we don't know about. I mean, I once had reported back to me that a minister quoted me in a sermon he gave. I had no way of knowing that unless somebody happened to be sitting there in his church. So who knows? Maybe there are things going on."

As they consider what religious organizations are or could be doing to promote the arts, several arts leaders express caution, however, about the idea of "promoting" the arts. Mr. Busta puts it this way: "To me, the arts don't need to be promoted—they need to be understood. If we look at the way religions have traditionally integrated the arts within communities of faith, we can understand a little bit more why they have done this in the past and maybe that offers some suggestions as to why you might do it in the future." From a different perspective, Reverend Counts also suggests caution in trying to promote the arts. As one of the leaders who thinks dialogue between the arts community and Dallas churches is probably wasted effort, he nevertheless thinks greater effort might be devoted to helping church people appreciate the arts within their own congregations. "What you want to do is to encourage artistic appreciation on

the part of people in churches, and by that I mean you want to create whole people. You don't want to have people who only think in spiritual terms twenty-four hours a day. You want well-rounded people because I think that's what God wants us to be." He illustrates his point by suggesting it would be useful for church groups to attend the opera. "I would like to see a lot of encouragement of artistic appreciation in the church. We're not going to go and have some impact on the Dallas Arts Council or whoever is there spiritually or Christian-wise. I mean, as a church we're not going to have that much impact. What are we going to say to them? You guys need to do this or that. Well, it's not going to work."

There is, however, special enthusiasm for dialogue that might lead to ways of helping the disadvantaged. Ms. Armas has found that community projects for the disadvantaged are often of interest to religious organizations as well as artists. "That's one time when artists and churches really get together. For example, there're a lot of artists who work with St. Peter's to do afterschool projects sometimes and give workshops for kids. There're lots of groups there. Basically they work closely with the church and they do a lot of afterschool workshops and projects for the children whose parents are working."

TOLERANCE OF IRRELIGIOUS ARTWORKS

Should exhibitions that "mock or demean religions or religious figures" be permitted? Fifty-five percent of American adults believe irreligious art should be allowed to be exhibited in their community. Among those who would permit the exhibit, Protestants and Jewish respondents are most likely to say in a follow-up question that—while such an exhibit would personally offend them—they distinguish their personal taste in art from the constitutional rights of free expression.

Irreligious Art Should Be Permitted

Conservative Protestant	45%
Mainline Protestant	51
Black Protestant	48
Catholic	57
Jewish	89
Other faith	59
Unaffiliated	72
All respondents	55

Source: Peter V. Marsden. "Religious Americans and the Arts in the 1990s." *Crossroads: Art and Religion in American Life*. 2001.
Data are from General Social Surveys, 1993 and 1998.¹

ART FOR BEAUTY'S SAKE?

Thirty-nine percent of General Social Survey respondents believe that the aim of art is beauty. Researchers found that those with an orthodox view of the Bible are more likely to support this statement than those with a more secular view.

Believe The Aim of Art is Beauty

- 54 percent of those who believe the "Bible is the actual word of God and is to be taken literally, word for word."
- 37 percent of those who believe the "Bible is the inspired word of God, but not everything in it should be taken literally, word for word."
- 17 percent of those who believe the "Bible is an ancient book of fables, legends, history, and moral precepts recorded by men."

Source: Peter V. Marsden. "Religious Americans and the Arts in the 1990s." *Crossroads: Art and Religion in American Life*. 2001.

Data are from General Social Surveys, 1993 and 1998.

Besides ways to serve low-income neighborhoods in general, there appears to be strong interest in joint projects by arts and religious organizations to help children. Lauren Artress stresses the importance of such projects: "Look at Marian Wright Edelman's work with the Children's Defense Fund. She says that children below the poverty line constitute a crisis second only to just after the Civil War in terms of health care and having daily food. It really puts it in perspective." Ms. Artress would like to see artists approaching religious leaders who say, "Well, yes, we have space here. Yes, let's invite the children in. Let's work with them here." Howard Dodson of the Schomburg Center of Research in New York thinks efforts to provide arts education for children would have significant benefits. "I just know personally that one of the central resources in my character formation, in developing self-discipline, in thinking about myself and my relationship to the world came through my experiences in band and orchestra and chorus and, to a lesser extent, in the visual arts. And kids basically being denied that part of their educational experience—which I think is, in fact, the spiritual dimension of life—is just a travesty."

Both with children and with lower-income neighborhoods, religious leaders sometimes talk as if their organizations are doing the lion's share of the work and would simply benefit from talking arts organizations into helping. But arts leaders disagree, especially when they are part of community arts programs or have been

involved in efforts to widen public participation. Several of the leaders in both sectors also register concern that any talk about helping the disadvantaged should not be done in a way that seemed patronizing. Reverend Fiedler thinks this may be an opportunity for religious leaders to learn from artists: "The arts could offer some exciting new venues for helping churches to reach out to people. Just like the new thrust in missionary work. It's not to send people in to tell other cultures how to do their job, but to build up the people who are there. So you could use the art to help build up disadvantaged children and let them express themselves, rather than turn them into a passive audience that parrots what you want them to believe. You could use that to build them up, because the goal is to help shape self-reliant young lives."

On the whole, the most insightful comments insist that dialogue needs to go beyond mere talking and result in actual projects. Such projects would provide a common focus that could overcome the separate agendas and interests of the various parties. Ms. Fogarty makes a strong case for this approach. "I think there would be a lot of hesitancy on the part of arts organizations if there was a sense of religious organizations passing judgment on arts organizations in terms of the kind of work they show. But focus on ways to look at opportunities for educational outreach. Are there opportunities to work on projects together that would bring together their various constituencies?" At the Episcopal Church of the Transfiguration in Dallas, Reverend Terence Roper suggests a specific possibility: "A major production every year that said these are the two

communities working together. I think of it as an act of witness that says, 'We've got a lot of people who are deeply concerned on both sides who will work together for this project, and it matters to all of us.'"

Conclusions

The views of these leaders suggest, on balance, that there are opportunities for arts organizations and religious organizations to work more closely together than they have in the past. But efforts to promote dialogue must recognize that organizations function with different perceptions of who their communities are: the neighborhood, the city, the nation, an ethnic group, a congregation. Many of these leaders' comments reflect these differences. For some arts organizations and religious

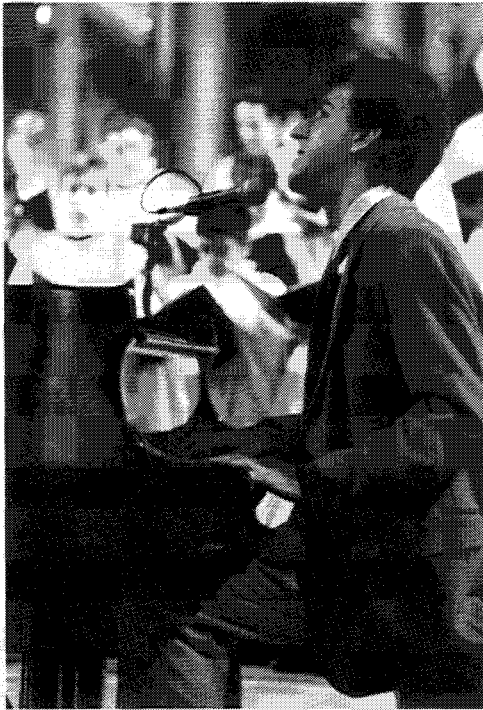
congregations, interaction down the block or across the street is much more meaningful than citywide dialogue. For others, the value in such interaction is to forge ties that will benefit the larger metropolitan area, while others clearly indicate that interaction at the local level needs to have consequences for national debates about the arts and religion.

Although the tensions separating religion and the arts seem especially to focus on the activities and beliefs of conservative religious groups, the diverse definitions of community also suggest a need to look beyond these particular tensions. Others are rooted in the growing populations of immigrants and in other minority identities that often combine religious traditions and ethnic loyalties. Just as Muslim, Russian Orthodox, and Buddhist leaders have distinct views about religion and the arts, so too do the heads of Korean, Chinese, and Latino arts organizations. For many, wider discussions involving elite organizations in their communities fail to generate much interest or comment. But they are eager to explain that there are rich intersections between religion and the arts within their own traditions, and to assert that these traditions should be respected even if they are on the margins of larger discussions.

In principle, greater cooperation between religious and arts organizations should be possible. The leaders of these respective organizations generally believe more interaction is desirable. With some significant exceptions, they respect each other and recognize that both religion and art contribute positively to the wider community. Many of the activities of major churches and synagogues actually further the arts by providing practice space, employing musicians, or organizing outings to museums for members. By the same token, arts organizations sometimes benefit religion as well, such as sponsoring exhibits about spirituality or putting on plays about religious topics.

Many of the barriers that might have been presumed to stand in the way of greater cooperation seem not to be significant, judging from these leaders' comments. Actual conflicts and controversies, while frequent enough to be present in the folklore of most communities, are not perceived as major stumbling blocks. Most leaders do not believe that dollars given to the arts are dollars not given to religion or vice versa. Hardly any of these leaders worry that people going to the opera on Saturday nights means fewer parishioners in the pews on Sunday mornings, a fear that would have concerned their predecessors a century ago. And, while the view that artistic excellence rightly involves some elitism is present, the fact that arts organizations in recent years have done much to develop community programs means that many religious leaders see them as potential allies. But the prospects for cooperation actually taking place are diminished by the fact that the two

photo by Susan Lerner



Artist-in-Residence Jason Robert Brown,
Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine

institutions do have different mandates. Even the most broad-thinking leaders recognize this to be the case. Congregations fundamentally exist for spiritual purposes and their use of music and art is intended to achieve these purposes. A worship service may include an excellent musical performance, but parishioners may not regard it as an example of "the arts," and the clergy may be concerned that it focuses attention on the performers to the extent that worship is not served. An artistic display of religious

least for many leaders. Personal preferences aside, religious leaders are often concerned about the moral ramifications of the arts. They do not concede that violations of commonly accepted moral norms necessarily have beneficial results, even though they may grant that this occasionally

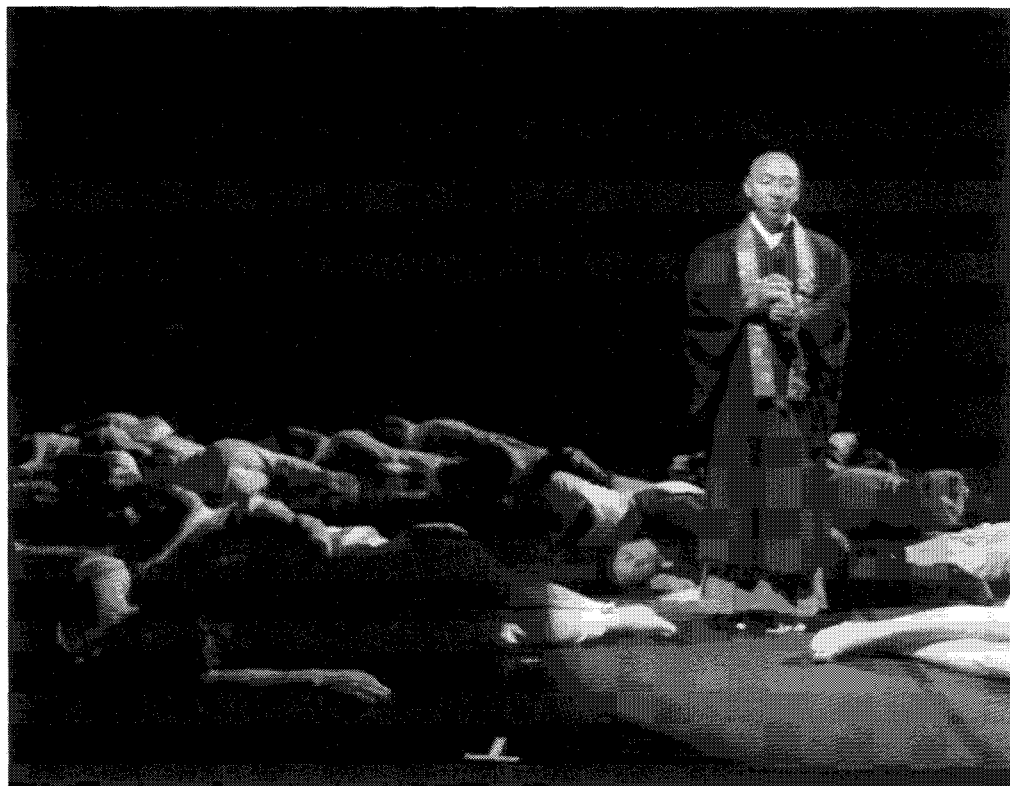
happens. The leaders of arts organizations, notwithstanding differences in their own views of what is morally acceptable, are much more likely to defend the artist's right to push the boundaries of conventional moral norms.

This is not to suggest that moral controversies between religion and the arts constitute an insuperable obstacle to cooperation. At least that is not how leaders themselves see it. In their view, most of what religion and the arts do gives little reason for moral concern (perhaps too little). And even the rare instance in which there is fundamental disagreement may be

healthy for the community, as long as religious and arts leaders help to structure the response. Nonetheless, leaders' views, taken on balance, suggest that differences about moral issues are likely to continue as one of the reasons for separation between the two institutions.

An even more serious reason for the lack of cooperation is that institutions necessarily carve out their own domains of influence, activity, and interaction. This is the social reality behind leaders'

photo courtesy of Liz Lerman Dance Exchange



The Reverend Noriaki Ito, Higashi Hongwanji Temple, performs with Liz Lerman Dance Exchange company members and Los Angeles community members in the *Hallelujah* production, "Stones Will Float, Leaves Will Sink, Paths Will Cross," hosted by the Skirball Cultural Center, Los Angeles, February 2001.

artifacts may invite people to think more deeply about their own heritage, but they would not be expected to engage in worship at the exhibit itself. This is why leaders of arts and religious organizations generally insist that their efforts are distinctive, even if complementary.

Under most circumstances, separate venues and the public definitions associated with calling something "religion" or "art" help to underscore these distinctive institutional purposes. Questions of public morality, however, are less easily resolved, at

admission that they are too busy to devote time to improving relations between religion and the arts. Much the same would be true if clergy were asked why they did little to work with universities, or if business leaders were asked to pay more attention to the arts. Within distinct institutional spheres, leaders have incentives that cause them to devote time to their own institutions.

The most constructive way around these institutional constraints, as leaders themselves suggest, is through cooperative projects. Indeed, the more thoughtful of their comments suggest that cooperation is unlikely to be achieved if it is pursued as an end in itself, but only if it comes as a by-product of working together on specific activities. Community art councils that work with churches and synagogues to help lower-income children are one of the clearest examples of such activities. Neither congregations nor most arts organizations have resources to spare. But they do have leaders and budgets, and most have volunteers. By pooling limited resources, they are sometimes able to launch programs that would otherwise be impossible. Once launched, such programs provide the sinews that tie religious and arts organizations together and form the basis for common activities in the future.

Robert Wuthnow is professor of sociology at Princeton University.

Participants in the Study

Akin, Michie	Cathedral Santuario de Guadalupe	Dallas
Allums, Larry	Dallas Institute of Humanities and Culture	Dallas
Armas, Olivia	Galeria de la Raza	San Francisco
Artress, Lauren	Grace Cathedral	San Francisco
Aulston, Frances	West Philadelphia Cultural Alliance	Philadelphia
Baker, Edith	Edith Baker Gallery	Dallas
Bell, Todd	Prestonwood Baptist Church	Dallas
Berger, Ted	New York Foundation for the Arts	New York
Bergman, Robert	Cleveland Museum of Art	Cleveland
Bermudez, Jesse	Asociacion de Musicos Latino Americanos	Philadelphia
Bransten, Rena	Rena Bransten Gallery	San Francisco
Brown, Curtis	Minority Arts Resource Council	Philadelphia
Busta, William	William Busta Gallery	Cleveland
Butts, Calvin	Abyssinian Baptist Church	New York
Caliandro, Arthur	Marble Collegiate Church	New York
Chalker, Ken	First United Methodist Church	Cleveland
Channing, Susan	Spaces	Cleveland
Chapin, Schuyler	NYC Department of Cultural Affairs	New York
Cheung, Julie	Chinatown Community Arts Program	San Francisco
Churn, Arlene	Cathedral of Faith Baptist Church	Philadelphia
Clark, Nicolette	New York State Council on the Arts	New York
Coakley, Kathy	Committee for Public Art	Cleveland
Colton, Barbara	National Association of Performing Arts Managers & Agents	New York
Counts, Bill	Fellowship Bible Church	Dallas
Cunningham, William	First Baptist Church, Medina	Cleveland
Dalto, Diane	Philadelphia Office of Arts and Culture	Philadelphia
De Zon, Alan	Blockbuster Sony Entertainment Center	Philadelphia
DiPietro, David	Kensington Assembly of God	Philadelphia
Dodson, Howard	Schomburg Center of Research	New York
Dowd, James	Church of the Covenant	Cleveland
Duffy, Barbara	House Foundation for the Arts	New York
Espersen, Elizabeth	Thanks-Giving Square	Dallas
Feldman, Susan	St. Ann and the Holy Trinity Church	New York
Fiedler, John	First United Methodist Church	Dallas
Focht, Joe	Calvary Chapel	Philadelphia
Fogarty, Lori	San Francisco Museum of Modern Art	San Francisco
Forbes, James	Riverside Church	New York
Galloway, John	Wayne Presbyterian Church	Philadelphia
Gardner, Jeanette	Gardener Arts Network	New York
Gates, Jay	Dallas Museum of Art	Dallas
Givnish, Gerry	The Painted Bride Art Center	Philadelphia
Golubov, Alexander	St. Nicholas Russian Orthodox Cathedral	New York
Hafner, Laurinda	Pilgrim Congregational Church	Cleveland
Hamburger, Richard	Dallas Theater Center	Dallas
Hinojosa, Clara	Mexican Cultural Center	Dallas
Holmes, Zan	St. Luke's Community United Methodist Church	Dallas
Horn, Holly	First Unitarian Church	Philadelphia
James, Larry	Greater Dallas Community of Churches	Dallas
Jenkins, Adrienne	Philadelphia Cultural Alliance	Philadelphia
Junger, Peter	Cleveland Buddhist Temple	Cleveland
Kzvacki, Yusef Ziya	Islamic Association of North Texas	Dallas
Killacky, John	Yerba Buena Center for the Arts	San Francisco
Lau, Chanson	Cornerstone Evangelical Church	San Francisco
Leath, Jeffrey	Mother Bethel A.M.E. Church	Philadelphia

Participants in the Study *continued*

Levin, James	Cleveland Public Theater	Cleveland
Lew, Alan	Congregation Beth Shalom	San Francisco
Luciani, Chris	Bureau of Cultural Arts	Cleveland
Mackle, Daniel	Philadelphia Roman Catholic Archdiocese	Philadelphia
Maguire, Daniel	St. Peter's Roman Catholic Church	San Francisco
Matthews, Edsel	Koncepts Cultural Gallery	San Francisco
McClamy, Gerry	Karamu House	Cleveland
McClelland, James	Philadelphia Art Alliance	Philadelphia
Meek, Vicki	South Dallas Cultural Center	Dallas
Miller, Carl	Salem Communications	Cleveland
Miller, Frank	Greater Philadelphia Baptist Association	Philadelphia
Mirikitani, Janice	Glide Memorial United Methodist Church	San Francisco
Moss, Jr., Otis	Olivet Institutional Baptist Church	Cleveland
Murphy, Patrick	Institute of Contemporary Art	Philadelphia
Newirth, Richard	San Francisco Art Commission	San Francisco
Noblitt, Kim	First Baptist Church of Euless	Dallas
O'Connor, John	St. Mary's Roman Catholic Cathedral	San Francisco
Oppenheimer, Michael	Suburban Temple, Beachwood	Cleveland
Pasha, Izak-El	Masjid Malcolm Shabbaz	New York
Paulson, Dennia	Interchurch Council of Greater Cleveland	Cleveland
Payne, James	Golden Gate Performing Arts	San Francisco
Perseli, William	Trinity Cathedral	Cleveland
Pilla, Anthony	Catholic Diocese of Cleveland	Cleveland
Pomeroy, Marcus	Central Baptist Church of Wayne	Philadelphia
Pritchett, Harry	Cathedral of St. John the Divine	New York
Rahman, Clyde	Muslim-American Society	Cleveland
Redd, Cliff	The Five Hundred, Inc.	Dallas
Reese, Margie	Office of Cultural Affairs	Dallas
Richmond, John	Northeast Ohio Jazz Society	Cleveland
Rodriguez, Jennie	Mission Cultural Center for Latino Arts	San Francisco
Roese, Ronnie Lee	Biblical Arts Center	Dallas
Roper, Terence	Episcopal Church of the Transfiguration	Dallas
Rosenthal, Gilbert	New York Board of Rabbis	New York
Sasaki, Laverne	Buddhist Church of San Francisco	San Francisco
Schell, Donald	St. Gregory of Nyssa Episcopal Church	San Francisco
Schorgl, Thomas	Community Partnership for Arts and Culture	Cleveland
Sereda, Sheryl	Cleveland Cultural Coalition	Cleveland
Shafer, Margaret	Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church	New York
Silva, Gail	Film Arts Foundation	San Francisco
Smith, Fergus	First Presbyterian Church	Philadelphia
Smith, J. Weldon	San Francisco Craft and Folk Art Museum	San Francisco
Snyder, Jill	Cleveland Center for Contemporary Art	Cleveland
Sokolov, Victor	Holy Trinity Orthodox Cathedral	San Francisco
Spink, Ken	Berea Baptist Church	Cleveland
Squire, Chris	WDAS-AM/FM	Philadelphia
Stern, David	Temple Emanu-El	Dallas
Thomas, Kola	Center for African & African American Culture	San Francisco
Thorpe, John	Network of Cultural Centers of Color	New York
Thurman, Robert	Tibet House	New York
Torreulla-Leval, Susana	El Museo Del Barrio	New York
Tully, William	St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church	New York
Weeks, Jerome	Dallas Morning News	Dallas
Weigand, John	St. James Catholic Parish, Lakewood	Cleveland
White, David	Dance Theater Workshop	New York
Wolpe, Gerald	Har Zion Temple, Narberth	Philadelphia

Case Studies—A Coming Together of Culture and Faith: Program Profiles

The collection of this country's arts and religion programs is as varied as the people who participate in them. Some programs focus on the spiritual, others on the secular; there are programs run by religious groups that have embraced the arts and programs run by cultural organizations that have embraced theology; many times traditions introduce the alternative, though often the alternative harkens back to tradition. What follows is a selection of programs that reflects a range of purposes and goals, and gives insight into how the arts and religion are coming together to create exciting opportunities and outcomes nationwide.

The Fourth Church Music and Art Program

Boston, Massachusetts

Strengthening a congregation, and a community, through the arts

LEAD AGENCY: Fourth Presbyterian Church,
Boston
PROGRAM FOUNDED: 1992
PARTNERS AND FUNDERS: Self-sustaining

"I believe we're all created in the image of a creator, and I think a large part of getting in touch with oneself is reclaiming this God-given creativity."

— Reverend Burns Stanfield, pastor,
Fourth Presbyterian Church

Through a thriving arts program few local public or parochial schools can match, South Boston's Fourth Presbyterian Church has revitalized a struggling neighborhood and become a beacon for young people in the community. With early support from local foundations and the Boston Council for the Arts and Humanities, the church developed an array of cultural activities open to everyone and infused a dwindling congregation with new creative energy.

Fourth Church has been a mainstay in working-class South Boston for well over a century. Founded in 1870 by Western European and Canadian immigrants, the church's congregation slowly diminished in size as members left the city for the suburbs. For a time in the 1980's, Fourth Church was on the brink of shutting down, with less than 10 weekly worshippers. But when Reverend Burns Stanfield became pastor in 1991, he brought with him a lifelong love of art and music and incorporated these interests with his theology. Under his leadership in the fall of 1992, the church introduced the Music and Art Program, opening the church's doors to neighbors and boosting its prominence in the community.

Today Fourth Church, which sits between two low-income housing projects, offers year-round music and art classes in order to foster basic skills, build self-esteem, and develop relationships within the community. The Music and Art Program attracts nearly 200 participants and makes lessons available to people of all ages, religions, ethnicities, and economic backgrounds, providing equal opportunity through financial aid. What began as a new way for the church to minister youth in need of new social outlets has quickly become a self-sustaining program that can help people make a connection, however subtle, between art and faith.

On the subject of art and religion, Reverend Stanfield says, "There are artists who may be skeptical of religion because they see it as conservative and confining, and perhaps there's fear among church folks that art threatens order." Reverend Stanfield encourages creativity as part of one's own spiritual practice, helping his congregants understand that "the arts aren't just about appreciating something that's beautiful, but also about understanding how we can be part of the creation."

Reverend Stanfield's own faith is bolstered by his strong arts background. Prior to divinity school, he worked as a professional mime and later toured the country as a member of a rock band. His appreciation of many musical styles supports a blended Sunday service featuring traditional hymns alongside gospel and country—in fact, the Fourth Church choir recently released a CD recorded in cooperation with other local musicians. Reverend Stanfield hopes to expand the church's repertoire following a three-month sabbatical looking at the role of music in spiritual

renewal; he plans to explore everything from contemporary Black gospel and ancient chanting to sacred harp singing and folk music. His goal is to integrate alternative ways of worship into Fourth Church's services and inspire new identities.

An extension of the church's commitment to culture and diversity, an annual Creative Arts Worship Service highlights individual and collective creativity with musical presentations, poetry readings, and dance, as well as artwork lining the walls of the sanctuary. "If you ask a room of kindergartners who can paint, they'll all raise their hands," says Reverend Stanfield. "But ask a room of adults the same question, and only one or two hands go up. It's a lot about self-perception, and through the work that we do we try to draw out the artist in everyone."

Fourth Church's programs are simple yet meaningful, making a big difference to one community and the many lives within it. Reverend Stanfield's suggestion for those looking to develop formal arts programs is to relish the role of church as catalyst and community center: "There are bound to be gaps in the community, and the church can help fill those gaps with everything from space to programming." Spiritual connections to the arts, he reminds us, can emerge at any time, provided they are given the opportunity to do so.

Arts and Religion in the Twin Cities

St. Paul, Minnesota

Delving into public dialogue to discover intersections between arts and religious communities

LEAD AGENCIES: Minneapolis Institute of Art and United Theological Seminary

PROGRAM FOUNDED: 2000

PARTNERS AND FUNDERS: The Rockefeller Foundation and the Henry Luce Foundation, as well as a consortium of local arts and religious organizations

"Historically, art and religion have influenced one another profoundly, but in recent years, they have been portrayed as essentially at odds. This is an exciting opportunity to explore in the public sphere the complex ways art and religion intersect."

—Rabbi Shirley Idelson, project manager,
Arts and Religion in the Twin Cities

Led by the Minneapolis Institute of Art and the United Theological Seminary, a consortium of arts and religious organizations and artists in the Twin Cities is using grant money to explore intersections between local arts and religious communities and find ways to forge stronger, broader alliances among them.

Convened in May 1999 by the Henry Luce Foundation to discuss connections and conflicts in the faith and arts communities, representatives of various Twin Cities organizations found themselves part of a larger picture of religious and artistic innovation. Despite any tensions between, as well as within, the two groups, the meeting brought to light many examples of creative endeavor and lively cooperation. The breadth and diversity of participants and their activities inspired interest in continuing the exploration, and a committed coalition of Minnesota's arts and religious communities is moving forward with support from the Rockefeller and Luce Foundations—a total of \$300,000 over three years.

The project has two key phases: first, a year-long information gathering effort and series of community dialogues which will, second, inform a regranting program to fund religion-related activities in electronic multimedia, dance, theater, music, the visual arts, and other areas. The goal of both phases of the project is to strengthen communication and understanding, while encouraging new artworks and collaborations that engage seriously with religious experience and reflect the rich diversity of the metropolitan area.

Arts and Religion in the Twin Cities Project Manager Rabbi Shirley Idelson notes, "In both the arts world and the

religious world, a tremendous amount of value is placed on knowing traditions and building upon them. Once we understand our traditions, we can engage in a rigorous critique so that they can be made even more meaningful to our lives in contemporary society.”

In this spirit of elevating understanding, the project has organized a series of public dialogues, large-scale and intimate, hosted by area organizations that include churches, schools, and art centers. At the same time, a survey exploring existing arts/religion relationships and attitudes about such intersections is underway. Participants include people who attend the dialogues in addition to those affiliated with cultural and community groups in the area. As results are compiled, gaps may emerge, encouraging focused follow-up with particular segments of the community in order to make the process as inclusive and reflective as possible. Through the dialogues, the survey, and an organized planning process involving a steering committee of volunteers, the project will present specific community needs and compelling criteria for a funding program to support arts and religion-oriented collaborations.

The Twin Cities area is primed for such a journey of discovery. Well known for the vitality of its arts community, Minnesota has more than 1,700 arts groups representing a variety of disciplines; research by the University of Minnesota shows that 92 percent of residents believe creative activities and the arts are important contributors to quality of life across the state. Likewise, Minnesotans also participate in religious organizations at a higher level than elsewhere in the U.S.; a poll conducted

GOVERNMENT SUPPORT FOR THE ARTS

Fully half of American adults believe the federal government should fund arts organizations. An even larger percentage (62 percent) feels that local governments should fund the arts. Jewish respondents are most likely to support government funding of the arts. Conservative Protestants are much more likely to approve of arts funding by local government rather than the federal (57 percent and 8 percent, respectively).

Denomination	Percent Supporting Federal Arts Funding	Percent Supporting Local Arts Funding
Conservative Protestant	8%	57%
Mainline Protestant	53	65
Black Protestant	52	65
Catholic	50	62
Jewish	83	82
Other faith	60	70
Unaffiliated	60	61
All respondents	50	62

Source: Peter V. Marsden. "Religious Americans and the Arts in the 1990s." *Crossroads: Art and Religion in American Life*. 2001.
Data collected from General Social Surveys, 1993 and 1998.²

by the *Minneapolis Star & Tribune* demonstrated that six in 10 Minnesota families give to religious organizations, compared with fewer than half of families across America. And the complex issue of artistic freedom that often arises in discussions of arts and religion has additional meaning here, where, several years ago, performance artist Ron Athey's piece involving blood and body mutilation gave rise to heated national dialogue on public funding of controversial work.

According to Rabbi Idelson, there's a striking link between the prophetic tradition of religion and the voice of contemporary artists today. While once upon a time prophets stood outside religious communities to provoke change through their own spiritual conviction, she says, today's contemporary artists may put forward unpopular ideas out of a desire to inspire new ways of thinking rather than for the sake of sensationalism, as often believed.

Architects of Arts and Religion in the Twin Cities hope it can someday serve as a national model for collaboration between these two complimentary, though sometimes colliding,

communities. Though the project is still in the early stages, Rabbi Idelson's recommendation to others interested in opening public dialogue around the issue of arts and religion is to begin before there's a specific problem or point of tension. "It's entirely possible that you'll uncover some challenges," she says, "but this work doesn't have to be precipitated by problems."

The Faith-Based Theater Project

Los Angeles, California

Opening minds and hearts to multiple perspectives on issues of religion and faith

LEAD AGENCY: Cornerstone Theater Company

PROGRAM FOUNDED: 2001

PARTNERS AND FUNDERS: National Conference for Community and Justice, Center for Religion and Civic Culture and University of California, Interreligious Council of Southern California, and Americans for the Arts through the Animating Democracy Initiative (supported by the Ford Foundation)

"With this project, we're trying to shorten the distance between perception and reality when it comes to religion and the arts. We want there to be fewer myths."

— Leslie Tamaribuchi, managing director,
Cornerstone Theater Company

The purpose of Cornerstone's Faith-based Theater Project is to produce and present new works that encourage creative dialogue around issues of religion and the question: How does faith unite and divide us?

A traveling theater company founded in 1986, Cornerstone worked in a series of rural areas before settling in Los Angeles in 1991. Since its inception, Cornerstone has pursued a mission of community and bridge-building: "We believe society can flourish only when its members know and respect one another, and that we have a responsibility to make theater in this spirit." Over time, says artistic director Bill Rausch, the company began to notice a striking difference between the number of people in communities visited who practiced organized religion and the number of

colleagues and company members that did the same. These observations drove Cornerstone's desire to explore cultural and spiritual perceptions and gaps through both performance and public exchange. Thus the Faith-based Theater Project was born. From January 2001 through June 2004, Cornerstone will collaborate with communities of faith in Los Angeles, involving first-time artists onstage and backstage alongside the company's professionals to create original performances. The project, supported in part by Americans for the Arts' Animating Democracy Initiative (see sidebar on page 27), features several elements of community dialogue as well, including:

Community focus groups that develop artistic content

Since 1986, Cornerstone has created more than 40 new plays and adaptations by engaging diverse focus groups in dialogue about civic issues; the faith-based project will deepen this work through expert facilitation and a greater number of sessions.

Interfaith dialogue

On the first Monday of every month, Cornerstone offers public discussions centered on spiritual topics and featuring prominent members of the arts and religious communities. Among areas to be covered: sharing rituals, exploring core beliefs, and issues that straddle faith and public policy such as sexuality, abortion, the death penalty, and euthanasia.

Electronic bulletin boards

Audience members are invited at every performance to post online their own perspectives and insights related to issues raised, which will be incorporated into the live dialogues.

"Allowing multiple viewpoints to be expressed, however unpopular they might be, is something that's scary for both artists and those in religious communities," says Leslie Tamaribuchi, Cornerstone's managing director. But the candor can be cathartic, she says, noting a situation related to Christian views of homosexuality that occurred within the theater's own community a few years ago, which forced the company to struggle with the issues of inclusiveness its members preach.

"In every community in which we've worked over the last number of years, there have been divisions based on faith, sometimes between members of different faiths and sometimes between believers and nonbelievers," says Ms. Tamaribuchi. In a small ranching town in eastern Oregon, for example, residents were welcome in the bar on Saturday night or in the fundamentalist church on Sunday morning—but not both. Despite the profound differences in their beliefs, however, members of both communities worked together on a Cornerstone play about morality. Ms. Tamaribuchi admits that such faith-based divisions have historically informed the theater company's productions, but, she says, "we feel the time has come to address questions of faith as the primary content in a series of Cornerstone projects."

The Faith-based Theater Project is preparing for its Festival of Faith this fall, a city-wide event developed in cooperation with local religious institutions that will feature a series of site-specific short plays followed by facilitated discussions on the issues explored in performance. "This is about sharing, not just learning," says Ms. Tamaribuchi. "It's important to

remember that we all bring something to the table in terms of experience. Rather than being passive, we can and should be participants."

And Ms. Tamaribuchi encourages communities not to hold back on the issues for fear of discovering deep divides. "When the stakes are high," she says, "there's the potential for the best kind of engagement and exchange."

ANIMATING DEMOCRACY PROJECT

Cornerstone Theater Company and the Liz Lerman Dance Exchange are participants in the Animating Democracy Lab, a component of the Animating Democracy Initiative—a four-year programmatic initiative of Americans for the Arts supported by the Ford Foundation. The purpose of the Animating Democracy Initiative is to foster artistic activity that encourages civic dialogue on important contemporary issues. The Lab encourages experimentation of ideas and approaches to arts-based civic dialogue through project support and exchange with peers, and also seeks to advance the creation and/or presentation of artistic activity that enhances dialogue on important civic issues of our time and to advance field understanding about the philosophical, practical, aesthetic, and social dimensions of this work. Among 30 projects receiving Lab grants, Cornerstone is supported for the Faith-based Theater Project and the Dance Exchange for analysis and documentation of its ongoing work in arts-based civic dialogue, including the *Hallelujah* project.

In addition to the Lab, the Animating Democracy Initiative will document and disseminate practical resources and scholarly research and writing about arts-based civic dialogue. An interactive website and searchable database, as part of the Americans for the Arts online National Arts Information Clearinghouse, will centralize information, link to other sites, and provide a dynamic vehicle for communication and exchange. National convenings will bring together practitioners, scholars, civic leaders, critics, and the media and disseminate knowledge growing out of the Animating Democracy Initiative. For more information, visit www.artsusa.org/AnimatingDemocracy.

Hallelujah

Takoma Park, Maryland

Asking communities across the United States: What are you in praise of?

LEAD AGENCY: Liz Lerman Dance Exchange

PROGRAM FOUNDED: First public program in 1999; launched national residencies in January 2000

PARTNERS AND FUNDERS: Funded by more than 15 foundations and organizations, as well as local arts presenters in communities nationwide

"Each creative act is in essence multiple acts of making something and of finding meaning."

— Liz Lerman, founder and artistic director, Liz Lerman Dance Exchange

Choreographer Liz Lerman and her Maryland-based Dance Exchange are leading big cities and small towns across the U.S. in celebrations of praise, performance, and participation. The *Hallelujah* project, conceived in 1997, has engaged more than a dozen localities nationwide in a process of public inquiry that often touches on various aspects of the art/faith connection. Each exploration inspires a one-of-a-kind presentation that features company dancers alongside members of the community, some of whom are seasoned artists, some first-time performers.

Ms. Lerman founded the Dance Exchange in 1976 as a school and performance troupe emphasizing the connections between art and community. By the early 1980's, it had evolved into a multigenerational and multiracial international touring company. For more than 20 years, the Dance Exchange has been known for work that explores relationships between history, culture, and personal identity. But after years of examining and interpreting challenges faced by ancestors and the plights of the past, Ms. Lerman decided it was time to focus on what gives people joy rather than what gives them pain. So with the theme of praise as a starting point, she set about the country, talking to people in communities of all kinds about things worth celebrating. From the deeply religious to those who have abandoned organized religion, the response has been remarkable, as reflected in the scores of participants and sold-out shows.

From boat builders in Maine to Buddhist priests in Los Angeles, she convenes those with an experience and sentiment to share and incorporates faith-based forms of art and performance such as American gospel music and Japanese obun, a rural form of religious observance through movement. With the help of a local presenting organization, the Dance Exchange works with each participating community over a series of weeks or months to gather information and inspiration, culminating in a performance that embodies spiritual and contemporary dance, sermon and story, and creative experimentation as well as accessibility.

Putting religious belief in the context of artmaking, says Dance Exchange Humanities Director John Borstel, can alter perspectives and open new doors to understanding. "Art is the outcome we seek. With this project, our intention is to create something wonderful on stage, and all sorts of things can happen along the way. If we set out with community healing or education as the goal, however, the end result probably wouldn't be as effective."

All the same, *Hallelujah* is, by nature, a spiritual pursuit: it requires a small leap of faith to commit to the Dance Exchange's process of community collaboration with confidence that the personal and public outcomes will be positive and productive. But when the project stays true to the spirit of the community in which it presents, the result can be powerful. Projects to date include the inaugural initiative in Eastport, Maine, "*Hallelujah: First Light*," greeting the dawn of the new millennium, and "In Praise of

Fertile Fields" at Jacob's Pillow, a reflection of the renowned dance festival's rich history and the farming tradition of Western Massachusetts.

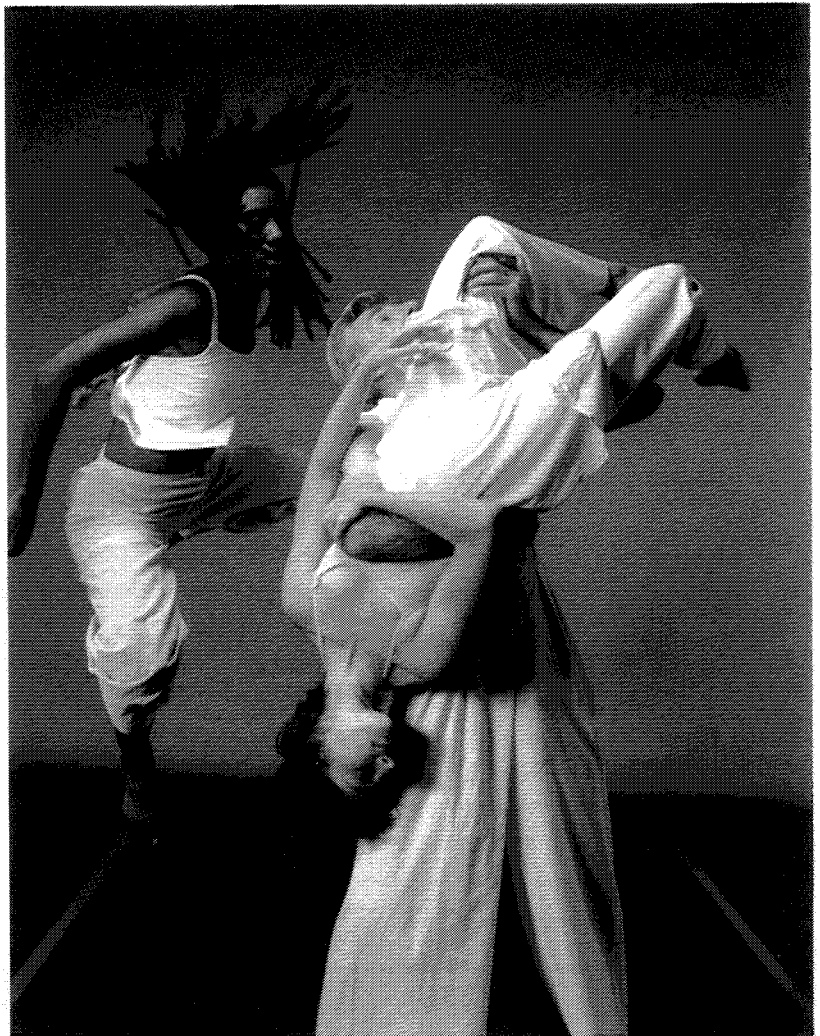
In Houston, "In Praise of Unexpected Ancestors" began as a look into family legends, with more than 80 participants joining the Dance Exchange for the mainstage production. In Tucson, Arizona, "In Praise of Ordinary Prophets" drew links between such varied participants as a South African-born rabbi, a Tohono O'odham tribal leader, the University of Arizona's Gospel Choir, and the prioress of the local Benedictine Monastery, together with other members of the community—150 participants in all. Los Angeles's performance of "Stones Will Float, Leaves Will Sink, Paths Will Cross" was created in collaboration with California composer/choreographer Nobuko Miyamoto, and the narrative was anchored in the lives of Nobuko's two grandmothers, one Anglo, one Japanese. Burlington, Vermont's "In Praise of Constancy in the Midst of Change" built on the story of a group of women in nearby St. Albans who have played cards together every Monday night for the past 40 years; in line with its theme, the performance came to be at a time when the community was coming to terms with the civil union law, Vermont's groundbreaking legislation in support of same sex couples.

"We all stand in the circle together," says Mr. Borstel, referring to the shared experience *Hallelujah* strives to create. "While one person may be leading a particular piece at a particular time, we all have something to give." And, he notes, it is this concept of self-expression in a group setting that is part of the pursuit of art and religion alike.

"When Liz Lerman led us in an exercise experiencing a Torah portion through movement and personal stories, I found I could touch places inside myself much more deeply than when I just sit in front of a book and discuss the reading. I need all the layers that Liz allows to emerge.... The religious experience is much broader than a set liturgy. Adding your personal story is what makes Torah real."

—Rabbi Judith Halevy, Malibu Jewish Center

photo by Lisa Metzger



Liz Lerman Dance Exchange company members (L-R) Pene McCourty, Thomas Dwyer, and Margot Greenlee perform a piece from the *Hallelujah* project.

Liturgy and the Arts

New York, New York

Providing creative expression for religious themes

LEAD AGENCY: Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine
 PROGRAM FOUNDED: 1892, upon church's inception
 PARTNERS AND FUNDERS: Program specific

"The arts, like religion, challenge us as well as comfort."

— The Reverend Canon Jay Wegman, canon for liturgy and the arts,
 Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine

The world's largest cathedral plays a unique role as convener, cultural and civic leader, and house of prayer for all people. The Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine, located in the heart of Manhattan, is the mother church of the Episcopal Diocese of New York, and the seat of its Bishop. Considered by some to be the spiritual crossroads of the city, its passion for the progressive and commitment to community combine to create a prominent cultural presence.

Since its first arch was erected at the turn of the twentieth century, the Cathedral has celebrated the relationship between the artistic and the sacred. Today, free concerts, readings, visual art exhibits, and onsite textile conservation help to make the Cathedral's cultural life rich and varied. "Our goal is to tie artistic works to the liturgical calendar," says Reverend Canon Jay Wegman, who heads up the Cathedral's cultural program. "While we certainly honor and embrace traditional sacred composers and art forms, what really interests me is applying a theological lens to non-sectarian artists and works. This approach often creates profound intersections between 'the church' and 'the world.'"

Coinciding with Easter 2001, the Cathedral exhibited works by Andres Serrano, known more for controversial photographs deemed blasphemous by the Religious Right than for his visionary approach to difficult themes. Drawn from two different series of work, "The Church" (1991) and "The Morgue" (1992), the show invited viewers to engage the artist's photographs as a means of contemplating the traditional Lenten themes of Christian vocation and mortality. Curatorial takeaway cards accompany all of the

Cathedral's exhibits and serve to both educate and provoke. On the subject of the spiritual and the mortal, the Serrano card states: "This intersection is a productive one, for the acknowledgement of death presents an invitation both to live intentional, dedicated lives, and to reflect on one's life choices and goals. Such are the aims of Lent."

The Anglican tradition supports the doctrine of incarnation, a belief in God's humanity and the virtues of creation; to Canon Wegman, the arts are a natural extension of that. "We like to look at the creative process as something through which people can deepen their own spirituality," says Canon Wegman. "And we also serve the community, by offering access to the arts for those who can't afford to go to the Museum of Modern Art, for example." "The joys of being an artist-in-residence at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine go beyond the pleasures of working with people of great faith," says Tony Award-winning composer Jason Robert Brown, "because what the people at St. John have great faith in is community."

The Cathedral has had a series of artists-in-residence over time, and is in the process of establishing a formal program similar to its Poet-in-Residence, a five-year term overseeing a board of celebrated poets and writers. There are several other new initiatives in varying stages of formation, including a literary series called "In the Beginning Was the Word," celebrating everything from hip-hop poetry to young novelists, and a new jazz and folk music series, "Cathedral Coffeehouse."

“The Cathedral celebrates the shifting line between the sacred and the secular,” says Canon Wegman, who strives to provide an artistic response to the spiritual, to give creative, tangible expression to overt religious metaphors. And while he admits that it may be considered risky to invite artists like William Wegman or Tony Kushner to participate in the life of the cathedral, the reward comes in the resulting inquiry and inspiration, even the discomfort that forces new ways of thinking about theology. “There’s a difference between saying ‘this art is disturbing to me’ and saying ‘this shouldn’t be in a church because it is disturbing,’” says Canon Wegman.

“For each person, faith becomes a bit like connecting the dots,” he says. “It’s important to understand that people are on their own journey. You can provide a stopping point along the way, but you can’t be the process in its entirety.”

CONGREGATIONS AS ARTS PRESENTERS

In a random sample of more than 100 congregations of different faiths in six cities, Partners for Sacred Places found that 80 percent are involved in arts programming. While researchers were not surprised to find that nearly 60 percent host music programs, they were surprised by the extent to which congregations are involved in dance, poetry, and theater, as well as the large number of congregations that make their buildings available for performances, classes, exhibitions, and lectures.

New York City’s historic **St. Mark’s Church-in-the-Bowery** has incubated at least two national programs: The Poetry Project and The Danspace Project. The Indianapolis Chamber Orchestra got its start at Robert Parks United Methodist Church.

Chicago’s **Berry United Methodist Church** began its Children’s Art Project to supplement a declining arts presence in the public school curriculum.

Congregations provide a safe place where the culture, music, and language of national and ethnic groups can be honored and preserved. Forty-five percent of the congregations indicated their buildings are the hubs for neighborhood organizations and causes that meet on a regular basis.

Congregations Presenting Arts Programs

Arts exhibitions	23%
Art classes	14
Music classes	24
Community theater	22
Music performances	57
Artistic dance classes	16
Architectural and historic tours	26
Book clubs	17
Choral groups	51

Source: Cohen, Diane and A. Robert Jaeger. *Sacred Places At Risk: New Evidence On How Endangered Older Churches And Synagogues Serve Communities*. Partners for Sacred Places. 1998.

Sidebar Footnotes:

- 1 Bradshaw, Tom. *Survey of Public Participation in the Arts 1997: Summary Report* (Research Division Report Number 39). National Endowment for the Arts. 1998.
- 2 Chaves, Mark A. and Peter V. Marsden. *Congregations and Cultural Capital: Religious Variations in Arts Activity*. Paper presented at the Annual Meetings of the American Sociological Association, Washington, D.C., August 2000.
- 3 The General Social Survey is an ongoing study of the social and political attitudes and behaviors of U.S. adults. Conducted at least every other year since 1972, each survey is based on a random sample of households representative of the non-institutionalized, English-speaking U.S. population, aged 18 and over.

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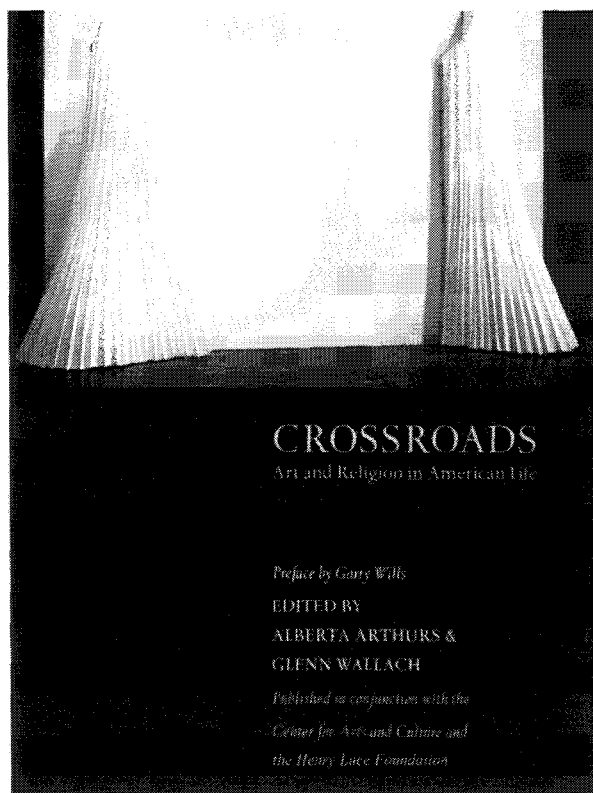
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Courtesy of artist Petah Coyne and Galerie Lelong, New York



Jacket cover for *Crossroads: Art and Religion in American Life*. 2000. The artwork pictured on the cover is by Petah Coyne. [*Untitled 978*, 1999-2000, mixed media]

Programs Profiled in this *Monograph*

Fourth Church Music and Art Program

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Boston, MA 02127
617.268.1281

Arts and Religion in the Twin Cities

United Theological Seminary
3000 Fifth Street NW
New Brighton, MN 55112
651.633.4311 x159
www.artsandreligion.org

Faith-based Theater Project

Cornerstone Theater Company
708 Traction Avenue
Los Angeles, CA 90013
213.613.1700
www.cornerstonetheater.org

Hallelujah

Liz Lerman Dance Exchange
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301.270.6700
www.danceexchange.org

Liturgy and the Arts Program

Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine
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212.316.7490
www.stjohndivine.org

Organizations

The Henry Luce Foundation

111 West 50th Street
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Partners for Sacred Places

1700 Sansom Street, Tenth Floor
Philadelphia, PA 19103
215.567.3234
www.sacredplaces.org

Founded in 1989, Partners for Sacred Places is the nation's only non-denominational, nonprofit organization devoted to helping Americans embrace, care for, and make good use of older and historic religious properties. Partners provides assistance to the people who care for sacred places while promoting a new understanding of how these places sustain communities.

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