A Blueprint for Action

For opinion leaders, policy makers, and creative thinkers in all sectors of society.

Goal:

Restore creativity as a priority in American public policy, philanthropy, and education.

Steps:

1. Recognize that creativity is not discipline-specific but transcends age, gender, race, and culture; its sustenance is a societal issue, one vital to the future of American society. Recognize that creativity is an innate quality in all individuals, and work towards a society that unleashes that creativity for the common good.

2. Identify the ingredients that nurture and expand the creativity of individuals. Widen the debate on the nature of creativity to include educators, policy-makers, and practitioners from all disciplines.

3. Continue to support creative activities, environments, programs, and projects that move society forward. Work vigilantly to keep healthy the infrastructures that nurture the development of creativity in individuals in all sectors of society.

4. Become an advocate and practitioner of bringing the disciplines together to address the issues of our times. Look to the collective skills and wisdom of all individuals in our society to bring about a creative renaissance in the new millennium.

5. Urge parents to take responsibility for the education of their children. Advocate the development and maintenance of informed educational systems, ones that emphasize universal access and that reward innovation, educational excellence, and social responsibility, rather than the “right answers.”

6. Recognize the role that artists play in society. Collaborate with institutions, business, unions, government, and the media, establishing national and international linkages to enhance opportunities for artists to serve society as creative problem-solvers. Extend public understanding and respect for artists’ skills and insights, and their abilities as citizens to work with other problem-solvers to advance humanity.

7. Recognize that with innovation comes the possibility of failure; creativity and risk are strange bedfellows whose progeny cannot be predicted. Advocate for research and development budgets with the understanding that they are the bedrock of innovation, ensuring that the concern for the bottom line does not mortgage our future.

This Blueprint for Action is a broad summary of the ideas expressed in the November ‘96 symposium, “American Creativity at Risk,” held at Brown University and Rhode Island School of Design, organized by the Alliance of Artists’ Communities, a national consortium of organizations that support artists and other thinkers in the creation of their work.

The Alliance will hold a second national symposium in November 2001, aimed at implementing parts of this Blueprint, at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

The Alliance can be reached at:

Alliance of Artists’ Communities

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ALLIANCE OF ARTISTS’ COMMUNITIES

FACT SHEET

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GENERAL DESCRIPTION:  The Alliance of Artists’ Communities is a national service organization that supports the field of artists’ communities and residency programs. It does this by encouraging collaboration among members of the field, providing leadership on field issues, raising the visibility of artists’ communities, promoting philanthropy in the field, and generally encouraging programs that support the creation of art. Currently made up of about 70 leading, nonprofit artists’ communities and 55 individuals, the Alliance continues to accept new members.

HISTORY:  The Alliance of Artists’ Communities grew out of the MacArthur Foundation's 1990 program entitled "Special Initiative on Artists' Colonies, Communities, and Residencies." The eighteen recipients of grants under this one-time program formed the Alliance in 1992 with seed money from the MacArthur Foundation and the NEA. Please see the reverse side of this fact sheet for a list of Alliance members.

MEMBERSHIP CRITERIA:  Alliance Institutional Members fulfill the following criteria:
♦ A primary purpose of the organization is support for artists in the creation of work.
♦ The organization brings artists together into a community, removing them from their everyday obligations and providing uninterrupted time to work, in a specific site that is dedicated to that mission.
♦ The organization selects artists for residencies through a formal admissions process that is rigorous in terms of artistic quality and regional, national, or international in scope.
♦ The organization is not-for-profit, has artists represented in its governance, and maintains a paid professional staff.

PROJECTS:  Presently, the Alliance is conducting a strategic planning project for the field of U.S. artists’ communities. This work builds on a 1998-99 research project on program structures and management practices in the field of artists’ communities (report available), designed to help the boards and staff who manage artists’ communities. Past work includes: ♦ a variety of education and outreach projects to foster artist resident diversity and publicize the values and goals of artists’ communities; ♦ the publication of Artists’ Communities, a directory of residency programs in the U.S. (Allworth Press); and ♦ the 1996 “American Creativity At Risk” symposium (held at Brown U. and Rhode Island School of Design) which brought together national leaders and thinkers from a variety of sectors—arts, science, education, and business—to draft a strategy for restoring creativity as a priority in public policy, cultural philanthropy, and education.

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