

1. Melissa Franklin

Sustainability

Pew Fellowships in the Arts at The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage in Philadelphia was established in 1991. The Fellowships annually awards up to 12 unrestricted “no strings attached” fellowships of \$60,000 to artists of exemplary talent working in a wide variety of performing, visual, and literary disciplines. The goal of the program is to raise the visibility, both within and beyond the region, of the area’s most talented individual artists by concentrating support on practitioners in all disciplines and at all stages of their career, whose work is characterized by excellence, imagination, and ongoing exploration and growth. Through such support, the program aims to elevate the quality and raise the profile of individual artistic work in the region.

In 2008, the Fellowships underwent an intensive year-long process of critical re-evaluation. Our primary goal was to establish a refreshed/renewed strategic focus for the program. We had just marked our 18th year and the program had essentially operated the same way over that time period. Over this same time period, the landscape for support of individual artists had changed radically. Not only the loss of the National Endowment for the Arts artists’ fellowships in 1995, but also the advent of other programs that provide support to individual artists. Regionally, two other programs had been established to offer grants to artists in the form of fellowships and nationally we also saw several programs come into being including The Herb Alpert Awards, United State Artists, and Creative Capital. Additionally, the general environment had become noisier and to be successful as an artist took more doing. We wanted the opportunity for a deeper engagement with the Fellows to extend the impact of our grant. We wanted to surround them with the resources they would need to push their practice forward. A major outcome of this work is that we moved from an open application process to nomination.

Another factor was that the context for our grantmaking had changed. When the Fellowships was established by The Pew Charitable Trusts in 1991 we were one of two initiatives focused on supporting work being created in our region. Over the years, six other initiatives were established; all of them project focused and discipline-specific. Seven years ago, in 2005 Pew established the Pew Center for Arts & Heritage and brought all of us together in one space. Today the Center is a multidisciplinary grantmaker, supporting seven areas: dance, visual art exhibitions, heritage, management, music, theater, and individual artist fellowships. In addition to our grantmaking, the Center has also embarked on a number of projects that take on critical questions surrounding artistic practice. Two examples of current such Center projects include :

- *Letting Go? Sharing Historical Authority in a User-Generated World* an anthology that features 26 newly commissioned thought pieces, case studies, conversations, and artworks by 19 leading cultural practitioners. This collection investigates path-breaking public history practices at a time when the traditional expertise of museums and historical institutions is constantly challenged by evolving trends in technology, community-based programming, oral histories, and contemporary art.
- Another project that will take place in the spring of 2013 is *Making Time II* a symposium and publication focusing on inter-disciplinary literacies through the exploration of certain

“keywords”. The time is right for such a focused keyword project now, one that would reckon with artistic innovation across art forms as well as with the changing institutional, critical, economic, and socio-political landscapes that propel and are propelled by such forms.

One of our goals of our work at the Center is to ensure that our region’s most talented artists and cultural leaders are connected to national and international dialogues about advancing cultural practice. Lastly, just as we embarked on this effort to re-imagine the Fellowships, we experienced seismic changes to the economic environment which meant that we weren’t going to be able to add significant resources to the program.

In rethinking the Fellowships, an exciting development that we wanted to take advantage of was the shift in how artists are practicing and the fact that many artists work in and across multiple disciplines. Previously, we made awards to artists working in 12 specific discipline categories, which rotated on a four-year cycle. This meant that each year applications were accepted from artists working in only three categories and those artists had to wait four years to apply again to the program in their discipline area. But, the breakdown of traditional barriers in artistic practice meant that artists often no longer fit within established categories. Additionally, the talent pool is in flux all the time and the program could benefit greatly from being able to capture an artist of high talent and quality of practice when the moment is upon us. This was an opportunity for us to be proactive and we therefore abandoned the notion of categories and decided to entertain artists in all disciplines every year.

Another important change we made is that now the financial support to the fellows is accompanied by a set of customized professional-development resources to further expand the impact of the monetary award to each fellow. One aspect of this work is that we have partnered with other organizations that support artists to offer resources to our Fellows. To kick off the fellowship period, new Fellows attend a weekend Professional Development Program intensive designed by the New York-based Creative Capital Foundation. Workshop leaders present an intensive two and one-half days of hands-on workshops and consultations that focus on professional skills and artistic goals including self-management, strategic planning, fundraising, web strategies, verbal communication and promotion.

We have also embarked on a new relationship with the Alliance of Artists Communities to offer a limited number of fully-supported residencies for Pew Fellows. Our residency partners, who each provide one space for a Pew Fellow each year, include the MacDowell Colony as well as a consortium of residency programs including the Ucross Foundation in Wyoming; 18th Street Arts Center in Santa Monica, CA; Headlands Center for the Arts in Marin County, CA; and the Banff Centre for the Arts in Canada.

Other resources that we have put into place to assist Fellows include financial and marketing advice. For many artists, the infusion of the Fellowships grant monies into their income stream represents its own challenge, over and above the creative incentive it provides. We also see that the grant is an opportunity for artists to place their financial lives side by side with their creative work, observe the relationship, and determine what, if any, changes could be made to plan for the most effective use of the fellowship dollars. To this end, Fellows will have the opportunity

to meet with a financial advisor to seek expert advice before beginning their fellowship period. The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage's Senior Marketing Specialist is available to guide Fellows towards realizing imaginative ideas for engaging audiences with their scheduled performances, projects and exhibitions.

As a means to foster a sense of community and build relationships we are working to create a strong cohort of fellows across disciplines through a variety of convenings to exchange ideas, information, and explore commonalities across disciplines. We often invite an artist from another community to join us and share their work with the Fellows.

In addition to the above activities, Fellows are encouraged to consider what non-monetary resources the Fellowships might provide to help advance their work and careers. These activities have ranged from support for the creation of a Fellow's first-ever website, attendance at various conferences and symposia, international travel, to ongoing curatorial consultations and support for fellows to engage special mentors in a long-term peer to peer relationship.

I believe it is critical that we do our best to remain responsive and flexible to the changing needs of artists and the way in which they practice; to not get complacent, but to continually evolve our program. I hope to continue to explore partnerships and collaborative relationships with other organizations that work directly with artists, nationally and internationally, to leverage our joint resources to support artists in innovative and substantive ways.

Looking ahead 10 years and considering support systems for artists I would say that artists' needs in many ways are no different than anyone else's needs including health insurance, retirement funding, home/studio ownership. Meeting the material needs of artists would greatly assist in allowing them to focus on their creative work. Although it has been encouraging to see the advent of new funding streams for artists, support for artist overall is still very limited. We need to recognize that artists are paramount to any configuration of a cultural ecosystem; that artists are the starting point for all artworks created and that in order to enable the ongoing production of art the artist must be supported.

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