

AMERICA BEGINS TO HEAL

Americans for the Arts Update
on the Arts Affected by and Response
Nationwide to the Events of 09.11.2001
(09.18.2001)



STATUS OF ARTS ORGANIZATIONS IN MANHATTAN

LOWER MANHATTAN CULTURAL COUNCIL

Michael Richards, a young sculptor and installation artist in the council's residency program, was in his studio on the 90th floor of the north tower of the WTC at the time of the attacks. We regret to tell you that his death has been confirmed. The council's new email address is lowermanhattanculturalcouncil@hotmail.com.

SMITHSONIAN NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAN INDIAN

The museum, based at One Bowling Green, is only a few blocks from the WTC site. Thankfully, their staff got out of the area safely, and they are in touch with all but one staff member. The museum remains closed and does not yet know when it will reopen.

In the City's budget negotiations, the museum was awarded \$1 million in capital support for their Education Center with ground floor access. This Center serving school children and their families will be more important than ever, and the museum now has even greater determination to get this project completed as quickly as it can.

ELAINE KAUFMAN CULTURAL CENTER

The Center, with its components—Merkin Concert Hall, the Lucy Moses School for Music and Dance, and the Special Music School of America, is located on West 67th Street in Manhattan. Staff was not directly affected personally by last week's events. However, telephone service to the Kaufman Center was disrupted as a result of Tuesday's attack, and they do not expect it to return in the near future.

The Concert Hall and their two schools are attempting to function again. Contact by e-mail is currently best: messages@ekcc.org, merkin@ekcc.org, or registration@ekcc.org. For voice mail, call 917.797.1052 (general) or 212.496.7109 (Merkin Hall). Please also check www.ekcc.org for regular information updates. Regular mail can be sent to 129 West 67th Street, New York, NY 10023. For faxes, dial 212.874.7865 (best if between 8 p.m. and 8 a.m.).

ASIAN AMERICAN ARTS ALLIANCE

Their board and staff are fine and their office is open.

MELA FOUNDATION/DREAM HOUSE

The MELA Foundation, at 275 Church Street, is only 12 blocks north of the WTC. All staff are fine and the facilities, including the Dream House, are unscathed. Their area is now a staging area for national guardsmen, rescue and construction workers, authorized vehicles, supplies, and as an alternate traffic artery from the disaster site. Power and phone service should now be reconnected.

The reopening of the Dream House, originally scheduled for September 22, may have to be delayed.
www.melafoundation.org

INTERNATIONAL NATIONAL ART MATERIAL TRADE ASSOCIATION

The association reports that its members—art retailers, manufacturers, distributors, importers, and exporters—have reported no one missing or store damage to date in either DC or New York. They are currently exploring the potential of showing their support with in-kind donations of art materials to a delivery system such as NSSEA and SHOPA to get to schools of victims of the families who suffered losses. NAMTA, 10115 Kinsey Avenue, Suite 260, Huntersville, NC 28078; 704.948.5554 ext 21; fax 704.948.5658; e-mail rfrowell@namta.org.

LOWER EAST SIDE TENEMENT MUSEUM

“The staff of the Lower East Side Tenement Museum thanks you as it thanks so many friends, colleagues, and neighbors who have expressed their concern and sent their prayers in the past few difficult days. Aware that you too are dealing with the trauma and horror of what happened on Tuesday, we thank you for reaching out to us.

Everyone on staff has been accounted for, as have the immediate family members of our staff. The Museum is located about a quarter of a mile from the Twin Towers, so our staff was spared the physical trauma that thousands of people suffered in the Financial District. However, we witnessed the events of September 11th first-hand, seeing the towers collapse some twenty blocks away and then working with many of the victims.

As thousands of people staggered up Allen Street from the Financial District, the Museum opened its offices and tenement building to minister to the dazed and dusty survivors. Providing water, food, bathrooms, and phones, staff made sandwiches, applied bandages and ice packs, helped people clean up and contact their loved ones, listened when people needed to talk, and offered hands and hugs to anyone in need. Afterward, many of our staff walked miles home only to find out that their own friends, neighbors, former co-workers, etc. were among the survivors, missing, or dead.

Over the past few days, some staff found that their loved ones or neighbors had become targets of hatred, simply because of the color of their skin or perceived nationality or religion. Many of us overheard hateful expressions of bigotry against immigrants, particularly against Arabs and Muslims.

The Museum staff is united in the belief that our nation's diversity makes the United States unique and that our tolerance for diversity is a source of great strength. It is unthinkable that Americans would give comfort to the terrorists by giving in to the hatred that they visited on our country last Tuesday.

Today, our first day back in the office, we worked on a set of pragmatic and programmatic responses to these dangerous sentiments. We would be happy to share it with you. Meanwhile, we take comfort in our understanding that you join us in standing against statements and acts of hate and terror.”

ASSOCIATION OF INDEPENDENT VIDEO AND FILMMAKERS (AIVF)

The AIVF staff and offices, located eleven blocks north of the WTC, are unharmed. However, due to the proximity of the offices to the disaster site, AIVF does not yet know when its offices will reopen. Elizabeth Peters, executive director, e-mail elizabeth@aivf.org, www.aivf.org

NEW YORK CITY ARTS COALITION

The Coalition, through a preliminary search by ZIP code, found 90 arts organizations with addresses near the WTC. The majority of them are outside the most devastated areas. Only a handful of arts-

related concerns had offices in the trade center complex—the *Theater Development Fund*, for example, maintained a satellite TKTS booth in the south tower that accounted for 17 percent of the revenues from its half-price ticket operations. And several other groups, like *Three Legged Dog*, an avant-garde theater troupe, and *Film Video Arts*, a nonprofit organization with classes and equipment for video and film production, were in buildings in the shadows of the towers. "At this point I don't know the condition of the building," said Eileen Newman, executive director of Film/Video Arts, at 50 Broadway. The *Screening Room*, a mecca for independent movie buffs (with an adjoining restaurant) just south of Canal, has been closed to the public but open to the needs of rescue crews. Its staff has been making food and providing it to recovery workers. The *United Artists Theater Company*, whose 16-screen complex in Battery Park City sustained exterior damage and has remained closed, opened its theater on Union Square as a shelter last week.

AMERICANS FOR THE ARTS PROGRAMS/ACTIONS

ANIMATING DEMOCRACY INITIATIVE

[Comments provided by Caron Atlas, 88 Prospect Park West #3D, Brooklyn, New York 11215; 718.965.1509, fax 718.965.2488; e-mail caronatlas@aol.com]

In the midst of all of this craziness and sadness I see so many people who want to do something to help. It is easy to feel helpless—you can't donate blood, don't have the concrete skills—doctor, construction worker to help in the rescue effort, don't have a lot of money to donate. This makes me think—what do we have to offer?

I see two things—people searching for a sense of community—whether in my apartment building, at the grocery store, in lines trying to give blood, in front of the fire station where 11 of our neighborhood's firefighters have been killed, in front of the community bookstore that is taking donations of clothes and bedding and posting notices on their front window like a bulletin board, at the many vigils. I also see a frightening build up of intolerance and hatred—lots of bomb threats—including one outside of the synagogue before their prayer service, and threats to the Arab American and Moslem communities, not to mention the war build up.

Animating Democracy has lots to do with both of these things—building community and promoting alternatives to violence and intolerance. Most of the gatherings and vigils I have attended have come from religious groups—how can the cultural community provide another way for people to gather and share their thoughts and feelings? I am hosting a gathering tomorrow at my home for friends and colleagues but what more can we do—using the power we know the arts has for dialogue and healing? There may be an important role for ADI in the midst of this.

NEW YORK ARTS GROUPS PROVIDING AID AND ASSISTANCE

NEW YORK STATE COUNCIL ON THE ARTS (NYSCA)

212.387.7000, fax 212.387.7164 (Please note that their phones are working but e-mail is not.)
www.nysca.org

[Memorandum to the New York Arts Community, September 13, 2001]

NYSCA staff, in a coordinated effort with the NYC Department of Cultural Affairs, is just beginning to inventory other arts organizations in the area to determine the damage. Because lower Manhattan is still a restricted area it may take a while before we get an accounting of what has been affected. Many of you have been trying to reach us with offers and questions on how you can help the Lower Manhattan

Cultural Council and other arts organizations that might have sustained damages. We thank you for your kindness and generosity. However, in light of the difficult situation in lower Manhattan, we must ask you to be patient for a few days to let us coordinate strategies with the Department of Cultural Affairs and others. As soon as we know something definitive and can suggest methods for individuals or organizations to respond, we will send out another announcement. We will likely communicate via the Alliance for New York Arts Organizations email list as our internet and email service is not functioning due to the damage to communications lines downtown.

The best way to reach NYSCA at the moment is via phone and fax. The transportation system within the City is restricted so some staff is finding the commute to work a bit difficult. Please be prepared to leave voice mail messages for individual staff members. We will make every effort to return them as soon as possible, even though our long distance phone service is intermittent. We also know that arts groups are anxious to obtain information about a supplemental state budget. We will post any news about the budget on this website.

Thanks to all of you who have sent messages of concern and support. They have been comforting as we all struggle to come to terms with this terrible disaster.

NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS
212.643.7770, fax 212.643.7780

ALLIANCE OF NEW YORK STATE ARTS ORGANIZATIONS
631.298.1234, fax 631.298.1101, www.theallianceny.org

A number of organizations are located below 14th Street, making their offices inaccessible. Groups in the city are beginning to inventory space to coordinate the accommodation of those who have been displaced. NYFA and Association of Hispanic Arts (AHA) is offering to share their space, phones and communication systems. Folks are offering to donate office equipment. We will let you know how this effort will be coordinated.

The New York state legislature will be convening separately to pass legislation providing emergency funds supporting relief efforts to assist victims and their families. The Governor and both Houses have also committed to pass legislation to continue the \$51 billion in re-appropriations in the 2001-02 budget that will expire on September 15.

OTHER HELPING ORGANIZATIONS

FORD FOUNDATION
www.fordfoundation.org

The Ford Foundation today announced a commitment of \$10 million for disaster relief after Tuesday's terrorist attack on the World Trade Center. The money will help families of individual victims and assist nonprofit organizations whose operations were disrupted by the violence. Referring to the money designated for nonprofit groups, Susan V. Berresford, the foundation's president, said, "much of the richness of life in this city has to do with the wide range of nonprofit organizations that serve in so many ways—helping the poor, improving education, promoting civil and human rights, supporting the arts."

COMMUNITIES ENGAGED IN HEALING THROUGH THE ARTS

LOWER EAST SIDE TENEMENT MUSEUM (New York, NY)

Recognizing how deeply and perhaps indelibly affected we all are by the terrorist attacks against the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, the museum staff gathered to reflect on what had happened, what we felt about it, and what positive steps the museum could take to stem any racist and anti-immigrant sentiments exacerbated by the bombings.

The museum's mission is to promote tolerance and historical perspective through the presentation and interpretation of the variety of immigrant/migrant experiences on Manhattan's Lower East Side. We know from experience that by "putting a face" on "those immigrants," we can arouse empathy; and our staff knows how to do that. Our tradition of outreach to immigrant/migrant communities in our neighborhood and city afford us a firm foundation from which to operate. Finally, we have many programs in place that, with just a slight adjustment, could be focused to deal even more specifically with the situation at hand. In a time when so many feel helpless, we found we could act.

1. **We can and will speak out and act as individuals.** After overhearing teenage boys saying vengeful and hateful things against Arabs in the area, one staff member weighed in among them and led a discussion. We can all do that in our neighborhoods and in our families. Staff have given blood, made donations, and are planning to volunteer for the Red Cross and get trained in CPR and First Aid.
2. **We will use the museum's communication tools.** The museum will explore how "Tenement Tidbits" and our website can be used to introduce Arab and Muslim immigrants as part of the family of immigrants with which we are concerned.
3. **We will use the museum's outreach capabilities and networks.** The explosion caught us in the midst of an extensive community outreach drive. By the time The Sweatshop opens, we will have invited scores of community groups and educators to see and comment upon it and its messages. We agreed to mount a special outreach to members of the Pakistani and Bangladesh communities in our area and to any Muslim and/or Arab teacher associations.
4. **We will use the Museum's ongoing programs.** Numerous programs now in development lend themselves to our pressing concern:
 - *Education Program.* Staff will integrate the Tolerance Curriculum of the NYC Board of Education, and will instruct teachers on handling the current situation.
 - *Dialogue Program.* The issue of Arabs/Muslims will be integrated into our upcoming dialogues about prejudice.
 - *Mourning Ritual Program.* We will use this program—which compares and contrasts Jewish, Buddhist, Catholic, Russian Orthodox, and Muslim mourning rituals—to establish common ground sufficient to sustain a dialogue.
 - *Tenement Tours.* We will seek professional training for staff on how to handle the anger we fear the incident has triggered if it is expressed by our visitors as they tour our historic immigrant apartments.
 - *Immigrant Theater.* We will add a professional dialogue component to our Immigrant Theater Project. The next series, scheduled for January, features plays written by Muslim women.
 - *The Museum As A Safe Haven.* We have always thought of the Museum as a "safe" place welcoming to people from all walks of life and with all perspectives. Today, we add the

concept of a safe physical space, and hope to communicate that to immigrants and other minorities threatened by hateful behavior.

- *Mural*. We will use the opportunity to redo the Mural in front of 90 Orchard Street to express and celebrate the diversity of the Lower East Side community, past and present. As an interim step, we may invite visitor stories on “How I promoted tolerance”.
- *Windows*. We will explore installing a memorial in the windows at 97 Orchard Street.

5. **We will use the museum’s position as a leader in the museum community.** We will explore convening a meeting of New York City museums and cultural organizations to discuss developing a coordinated response. We could discuss: the role of cultural organizations as places for dealing with trauma; what role history and art can play in promoting tolerance; and how/whether we can, by opening our institutions for reflection and learning on tolerance, create a network of sites of healing and dialogue around the city. In addition, we will involve the International Coalition in developing a memorial/site of healing and dialogue downtown.
6. Finally, aware of the size of our debt to the City’s fire and police departments, we decided to send **official thanks and free memberships** to our local precincts and engine companies for their heroic service.

THE ARTS COUNCIL FOR CHAUTAUQUA COUNTY (NY)

The council has established <http://reflections.artscouncil.com> as a place to write, share and read the thoughts and reflections of people who want to help but may not be able to in a physical way. There will be many different kinds of reflections: some confused, some angry, some sad, some prayerful. We reserve the right to delete any comments that promote hate, violence, or vigilantism.

CULTURE WORKS (Dayton, OH)

E-mail: jimclark@cultureworks.org

Culture Works and the artists they support will be producing a special event/concert in order to raise funds for the Lower Manhattan Arts Council and individual artists that have been affected by the attack.

ASSOCIATION OF INDEPENDENT VIDEO AND FILMMAKERS

www.aivf.org

AIVF wants you to contact your local news outlets to commend their coverage if you feel it merits such praise. Or, if warranted, to urge news outlets to tone down the bellicose tone of their coverage: it hurts their credibility, and only fans the flames of anger and hate. Likewise, readers are encouraged to do whatever you can in your community to encourage tolerance and diffuse racial tensions that may escalate.

STUDY CIRCLES RESOURCE CENTER

www.studycircle.org

SCRC will soon post on its website an outline that you can use to conduct study circles on terrorism and its impacts. They are already hearing from communities around the country who are feeling the need for productive dialogue about what we can do in our nation and in our communities in the wake of this tragedy.

NEWS SERVICE COVERAGE

ART LOSSES AT THE WTC

From the displacement of experimental theater and film companies to the likely obliteration of more than \$10 million worth of art in and around the World Trade Center—including works by Alexander Calder, Nevelson, Miró and Lichtenstein—arts groups are surveying the wreckage, trying to measure the extent of their losses and to determine how to begin to recoup. (*The New York Times* 09.17.2001)

HOW ART SHOULD RESPOND

America's arts directors spent last week figuring out how to respond to the World Trade Center tragedy. "Many said in interviews that they had resumed normal schedules after closing their doors for just one night. They said theater, dance and music performances have suddenly taken on new importance, not just because of their content but also because they draw people to common experiences at a time when the nation's sense of community seems to have been savagely attacked." (*The New York Times* 09.18.2001)

CANCEL OR NOT?

Indeed, while many cancellations were made out of respect for victims and the rescue effort, more mundane concerns were also snagging plans, including the difficulty some performers faced obtaining visas because of closed consulates in foreign countries. Discussions of safety and sensitivity to depictions of violence have been going on in administrative offices of arts groups all over the city. (*The New York Times* 09.18.2001)

EDITORIALS ON ART AND GRIEF

Some of you may be interested in the following link to editorials on art and grief from *The New York Times*. Registration is required but viewing and printing the article is free for a few more weeks: <http://www.nytimes.com/2001/09/13/arts/13GRIE.html>

THE HARWOOD INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC INNOVATION

In the wake of last week's tragedies, MSNBC.com is featuring a Richard Harwood commentary entitled "Stop polling. Start thinking." Harwood warns of the risks of polling the public so soon after the attacks on America.

The result of such polls is to force people to immediately decide how they feel about an issue—such as whether or not America should go to war—when in reality our emotional responses, ambivalence and uncertainty make it impossible for us to reach considered judgments so quickly. These polls also tend to frame public debate—we end up simply discussing the results of the polls, rather than the complexities of how we really feel about an issue. Instead of rushing to take quick and simplistic surveys, the nation needs time to think about these events, and room to hold genuine public conversations about their implications.

Harwood's full commentary can be found at <http://www.msnbc.com/news/629356.asp?Osi=> or <http://www.theharwoodinstitute.org/barometer/msnbc-polling.htm>.
<http://www.theharwoodinstitute.org>

MUSINGS

TOM ECCLES, DIRECTOR, PUBLIC ART FUND (NY)

"I feel it's a great loss [public art in and around the WTC]," said Tom Eccles, director of the Public Art Fund, a nonprofit group that places artwork around the city, including the financial district. "But you cannot divorce the loss of the art from the greater loss of life." Mr. Eccles added that the last week's events were likely to have a profound impact on public art in the future: "It will certainly change the nature of the projects we do. For years we moved away from the concept of public art as memorial. Now it will be difficult to be humorous or ironic. Public life in New York City will be under a cloud for a very long time. That's something we have to be conscious of."

EVERETT POWERS, THE ARTS PARTNERSHIP OF GREATER SPARTANBURG, INC. (SC)

In an era of national peril, at a time of national mourning, it may seem incongruous to hear the sounds of music, to see the beauty of a dance, to enjoy laughter at the theater or to look at paintings at an exhibition. It may seem an extravagance to indulge ourselves in anything that goes beyond satisfying the need for food, shelter and our physical safety. But, the arts, if not as immediate, are nonetheless as essential to our existence as any other necessity. They bind us together as a people, and, if life is to go on, so, too, must they go on.

In these first days after Sept. 11, the arts have helped bring us together and have given us comfort as we hold hands and sing our national songs of patriotism and of faith. As the days pass, they will continue to give us moments of relief from worry. Over time, the music that will be written and the literature and the images that will be created, will help us remember the heroes; they will help us understand the world as it has changed, they will make life more bearable, and, in the end, give evidence that we have been triumphant.

When the American Patriot John Adams was Minister to France and living in Paris, representing this country during the hardships and the horrors of the American Revolution, he wrote in a letter to his family a passage that, today, comes to mind. They were words, now often quoted, that put the trials of his time into a perspective that might also be valuable for us to recall.

"I must study politics and war that my sons may have liberty to study mathematics and philosophy. My sons ought to study mathematics and philosophy, geography, natural history, naval architecture, navigation, commerce, and agriculture in order to give their children a right to study paintings, poetry, music, architecture, statuary, tapestry, and porcelain."

The arts represent the highest attainment of any civilization. They help us know, understand and celebrate our lives and our culture. They leave a record of what life was like, at this time and in this place, and they help us dream of what we can become. Their value to our survival is as vital as the air that we breath.