

# ARTS & THE NEW ADMINISTRATION

A REPORT ON FINDINGS &  
RECOMMENDATIONS FROM SURVEYS AND  
INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED IN SPRING 2017

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# 1. PREFACE

In the spring of 2017 we wanted to know what individual artists and culture workers in America thought about the incoming Trump Administration.

We created an online survey and 1,100 people from 47 states working in a range of artistic disciplines and types of organizations participated. The responses reflect an array of specific concerns for artists and arts organizations and high levels of engagement in social justice and environmental issues. In addition to taking our poll, respondents also provided nearly 600 comments.

We also interviewed 15 arts advocates and culture sector leaders to tell us how they see their roles changing in this current era and what response strategies they believe will be effective in the years ahead.

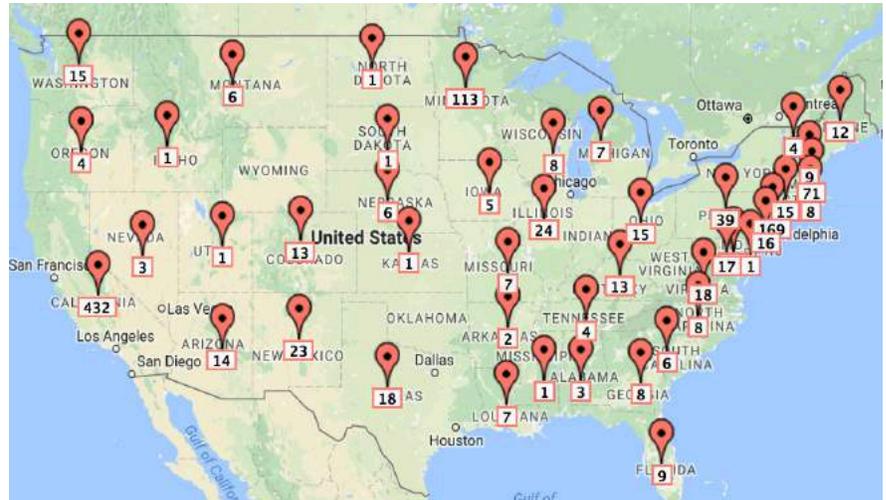
This report contains findings from our survey and interviews, a synthesis of the comments we collected, key observations from our interview subjects and examples of the different ways artists, arts organizations and arts advocates are responding to the Trump administration.

Additionally, this report includes our recommendations about what we, as a consortium of individuals who care deeply about our country and who have devoted our lives to the ideal that the arts are inseparable from a just, healthy, inclusive society and a fully-realized life, believe we need to do next.

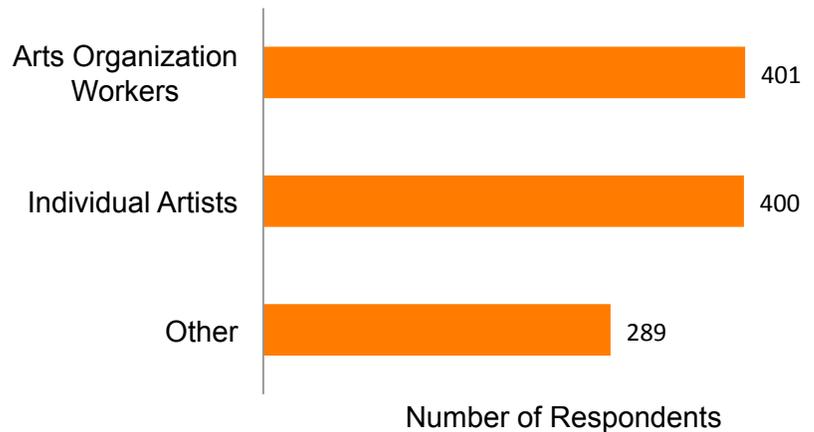
We thank you for your interest in this topic and welcome your thoughts.

## 2. SURVEY RESPONSE

Our online survey was conducted February 14–28, 2017. 1,190 respondents completed the survey from across the United States.



Survey respondents were evenly split between self-identified Arts Organization Workers and Individual Artists.

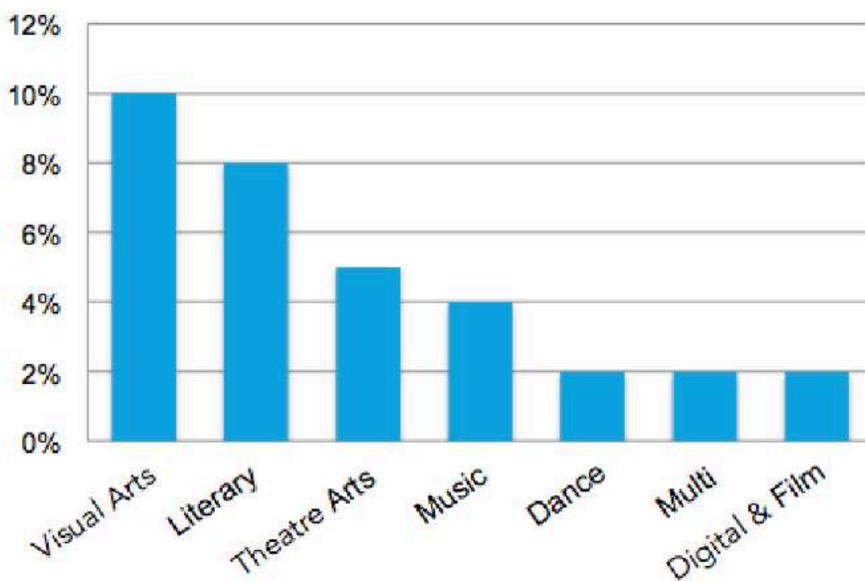


The largest concentration of respondents came from California.

|              | Individual Artists | Arts Org. Workers | Other      | Overall     |
|--------------|--------------------|-------------------|------------|-------------|
| CA           | 16%                | 13%               | 12%        | 41%         |
| NY           | 6%                 | 7%                | 3%         | 16%         |
| MN           | 5%                 | 4%                | 2%         | 11%         |
| MA           | 4%                 | 1%                | 1%         | 7%          |
| Rest of US   | 5%                 | 11%               | 7%         | 25%         |
| <b>TOTAL</b> | <b>37%</b>         | <b>37%</b>        | <b>26%</b> | <b>100%</b> |

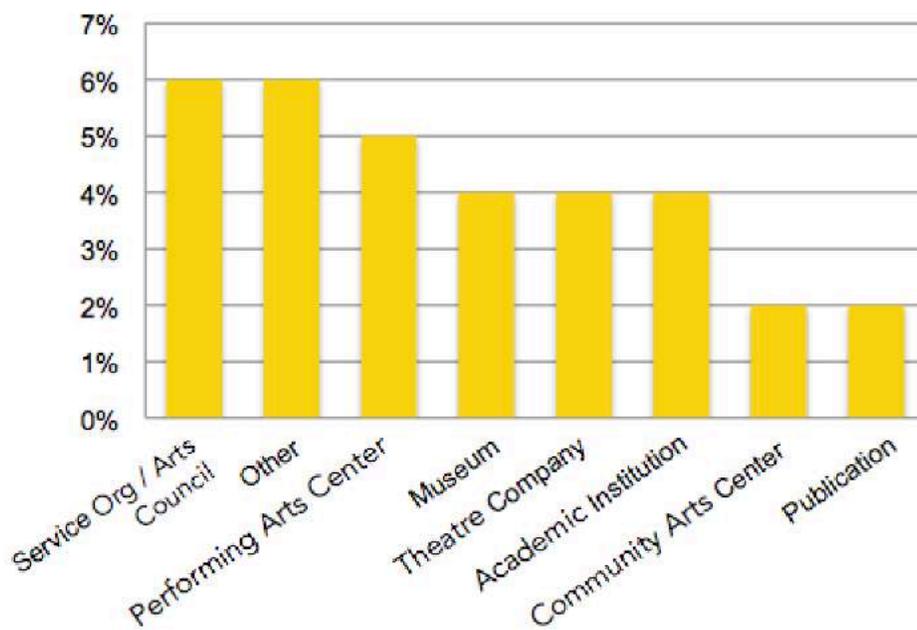
Survey respondents identifying as artists reflected a wide variety of disciplines.

**COMPOSITION OF 400 ARTISTS RESPONDING BY DISCIPLINE**



Survey respondents identifying as arts organization workers spanned organizational types.

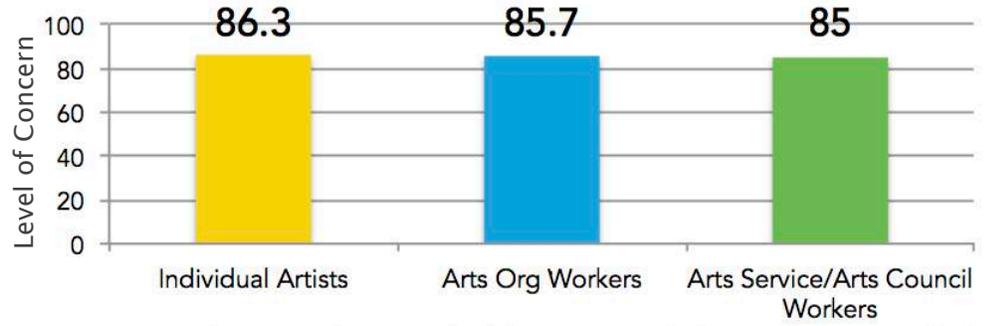
**COMPOSITION OF 401 ARTS ORGANIZATION WORKERS RESPONDING BY TYPE**



# SURVEY FINDINGS

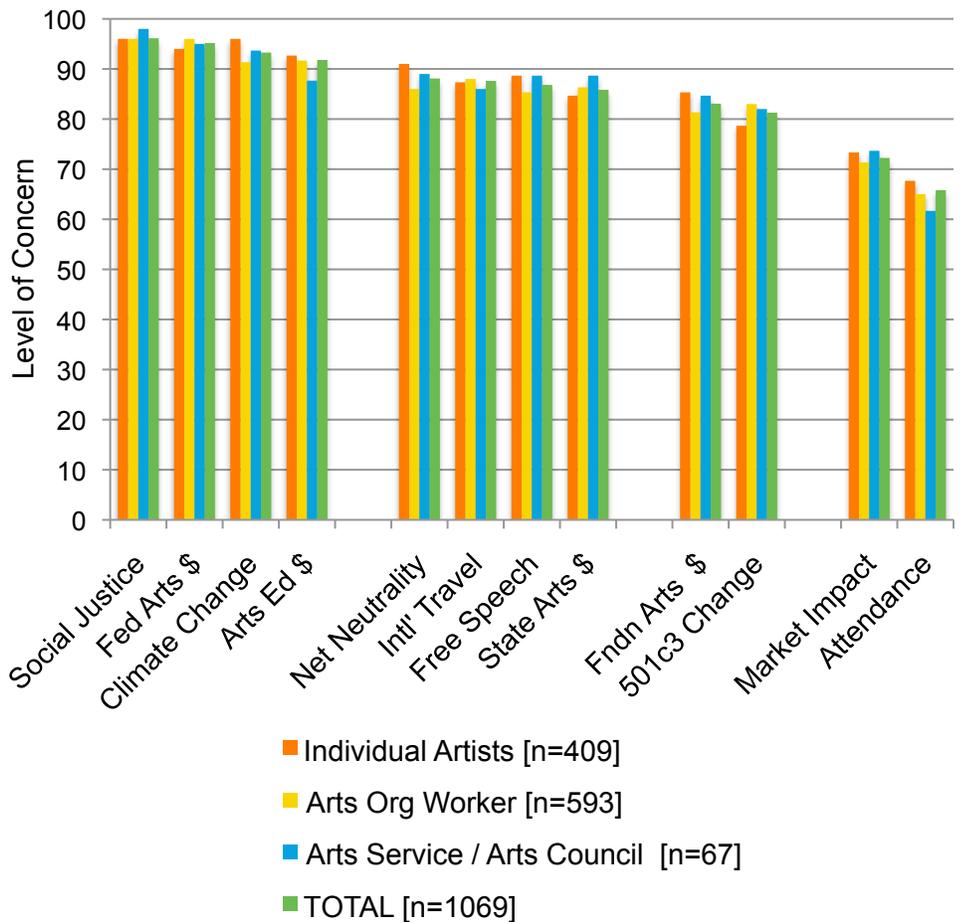
Overall the respondents expressed the same, high levels of concern about the 12 issues they were asked to rank.

FIG. 1: LEVEL OF CONCERN FOR ALL ISSUES POLLED



There was also general consensus about the issues that they were most and (relatively) least concerned about.

ISSUES RATED BY LEVEL OF CONCERN



## THE SURVEY RESPONSES INDICATED:

1. There is consensus that the **TOP issues of concern** for the arts in the new administration are:
  - **Social Justice**
  - **Federal Arts Support**
  - **Climate Change**
  - **Arts Education**
2. All respondents are **LEAST concerned** about:
  - **The Impact on Market Place For My Art**
  - **Audience/Visitor Attendance and Participation**
3. Individual Artists are significantly more concerned about **Net Neutrality** than Arts Organization Workers.
4. **Free Speech/Freedom of Expression** is not a top 5 rating for any group.
5. **Changes to the 501(c)3 code and impact on charitable contributions** is among the lowest concerns for everyone, however, Arts Organization Workers are significantly more concerned about it than Individual Artists.
6. Artists and Arts Organization workers are **already engaged** in a tremendous amount of work addressing issues of social and environmental justice. Many are responding to the election by creating new works and reaching out for new community partnerships.

**75%**

of Individual Artists report social justice and/or environmental justice issues are part of their work.

**72%**

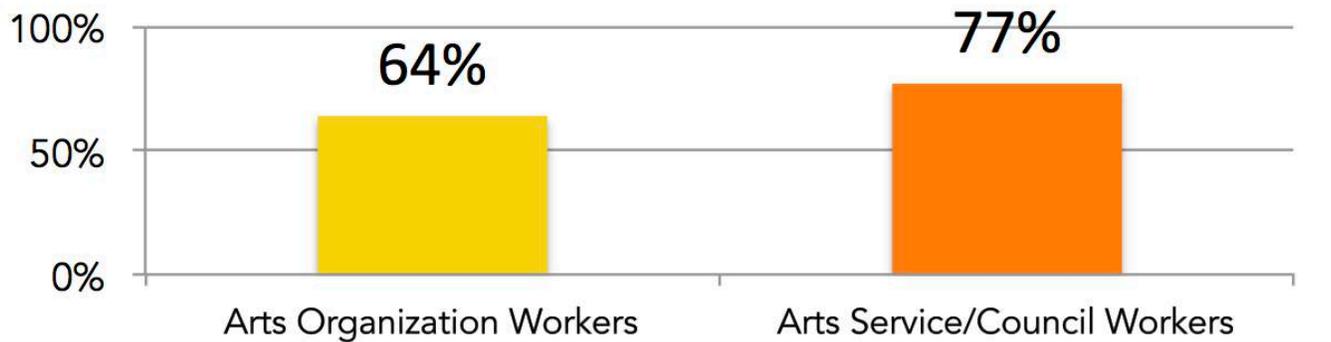
of Arts Organization Workers said they regularly present or support artists with a strong social justice focus.

**51%**

of Individual Artists are creating new work related to the election or actions of the new administration.

7. Individual Artists are twice as likely to be very concerned as Arts Organization Workers about the overall impact of the new administration on their work or **capacity to deliver on their mission**.
8. The vast majority (79%) of Arts Organization workers anticipate that artists, and communities with whom they work, will be impacted by **policy changes**.
9. Arts Organization and Arts Council workers believe their Boards, and the Boards of arts organizations with whom they work, want to learn more about how to be **politically engaged as a 501c3**.

**% OF RESPONDENTS WHO BELIEVE THEIR BOARD WOULD LIKE TO LEARN ABOUT POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT AS A 501C3**



# SURVEY COMMENTS

In our online survey we collected 582 unique comments in response to 5 open-ended questions.

| QUESTION   | NUMBER OF COMMENTS |
|--|--------------------|
| <i>What do you see as the role of the artist over the next four years?</i>   | 315                |
| <i>Of all the organizations/members you work with, who (or what types) do you think are well positioned to step up in the years ahead and find ways to be successful, on their own or as part of broader efforts to advance agendas important to your field?</i> | 101                |
| <i>If you work for, or with, a nonprofit do you think the organization would be interested in learning about how they can be politically engaged as a 501c3?</i>   | 70                 |
| <i>Of all the organizations, members, grantees you work with which generally defined groups are you most concerned about in the years ahead? What is it about them that makes them vulnerable?</i>   | 48                 |
| <i>Have you reached out to any organizations about new partnerships?</i>   | 48                 |

Over 50% of survey-takers answered the question ***“What do you see as the role of the artist over the next four years?”***

This question elicited passionate responses from the survey participants. If we were to summarize them in a single phrase, it would be:

***“RESIST, PERSIST AND  
TELL THE TRUTH.”***

Q: What do you see as the role of the artist over the next four years?

A: *"To give deference to those more oppressed than me and to provide hearty platforms for the voiceless to speak triumphantly... Hang on. Hang on tight."*

– Survey Respondent

Respondents were clearly looking at the big picture of what they saw as being threatened over the next four years. They expressed greatest concern about the principles of democracy, free speech, civil rights, immigrant rights, social justice as well as finding ways to heal a divided nation.

The responding artists clearly see themselves as 'citizens' and feel the need to be engaged with their fellow citizens in their communities.

At the same time, many respondents asserted that their primary responsibility is to remain focused on their daily work: to make art.

The comments reflected the unique voices, skills and methods artists use to elevate the understanding of issues and to 'tell the truth.'

They expressed a desire to be an ally to those most impacted by the administration and to find allies to create a larger sense of community, through far reaching arts alliances. There was also a theme that spoke to the need for compassion and healing through their work and through the creation of larger community effort.

*An additional selection of comments from the field is provided below in Section 6.*

# 3. INTERVIEW SUBJECT RECOMMENDATIONS

Our conversations with arts advocates and culture sector leaders yielded the following recommendations for action—steps that can be taken by arts funders and nonprofit arts organization leaders:

## DEVELOP AND DISSEMINATE A FRAMEWORK OF THE ISSUES

Since the election there has been an explosion of responses to myriad issues that artists and culture sector workers perceive to be under threat. As the intentions and methods of the new administration become more clear with the passage of time there is a need for culture sector leaders to form common understandings of how these many issues intersect and how responses can potentially be coordinated for greater impact. Greater collaboration with allied community organizers will also help disparate members of the cultural sector find common cause and greater success in our activism.

## FACE-TO-FACE SPACE FOR STRATEGIZING

Forming artistic responses to complex challenges amidst shifting political terrain is very hard to do in isolation. Thus, it is especially important that artists and culture workers come together and meet in-person to share knowledge, create strategies, build resilience and find hope together.

However, a theme in our interviews was that face-to-face gatherings should not only happen on the coasts, or only in the “Blue States.” Convenings will be more successful if they bring together people from diverse regions and make an explicit effort to engage individuals and communities who have felt disconnected from the government and from national conversations about our future.

*“We need funding for convenings and bridge building; to identify which organizations can bring people together and for sector-wide conversations.”*

– Interview subject

*“Face to face is the most beneficial; creating spaces for strategizing and moving forward otherwise it's just ‘information’ which is not bad but without some way to connect people it doesn't help.”*

– Interview subject

## ENCOURAGE THE PHILANTHROPIC COMMUNITY

The philanthropic community must be encouraged to back the efforts of artists and cultural workers and to move quickly. There are also existing activities that the philanthropic sector can support with current discretionary funds or by modifying the agendas of already planned convenings or activities.

## INVEST IN LEADERS WHO WILL BE CHANGEMAKERS

Addressing the many issues that concern the culture sector will require artists and arts leaders to carve out time to deepen their knowledge, practice new skills, and build new relationships. It is essential that investments be made in current and emerging leaders to support their efforts to make change not only for their narrow discipline based or geographically anchored community but to cross borders and contribute to greater collective action. Organizations must encourage their leaders to engage politically in their local and national communities, and investments must be made in the platforms that will raise the voices of young people.

## EQUIP ARTISTS WITH SKILLS TO CONNECT WITH ISSUES AND HAVE VOICE

Artists and cultural workers need the **community organizing and social activism** skills to coordinate efforts and move messages forward in a collective voice. And to maximize impact, there needs to be more visible avenues for artists and cultural workers to connect to movements and social activism organizations in their communities.

*“I am interested in how to invest in the rising leaders around the field and country who will be the next changemakers?”*

*“What kinds of skills, opportunity, and support they’ll need for their work.”*

– Interview subject

*“There is a huge gap and disconnect between the activism that moves communities and the creativity that is a part of how we live in the arts field. We need more space for the confluence of the two.”*

– Interview subject

## 4. EXAMPLES OF ARTISTS RESPONDING

Our survey took place in the Spring of 2017 and much of what people feared would happen in the new administration has and is coming to pass.

As a result we have been seeing artists and arts organizations stepping up to this challenge in both the usual and in new ways.

- **Traditional national and local arts advocacy organizations marshaled public support** to push back against the administration's initial attempts to defund federal arts agencies.
- **Art centers have become forums for activist discussions about resistance.** For example, the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles held a post-election community gathering and The Yerba Buena Center for the Arts in San Francisco partnered with the ACLU of Northern California for a forum on the lessons of the internments of Japanese-Americans during WWII.

#SAVEtheNEA



HAMMER

MUSEUM ADMISSION IS FREE  
OPENING TODAY AT 11AM

Visit Exhibitions Collections Programs Support



CONVERSATIONS, HAMMER MUSEUM COMMUNITY GATHERING

**"Show up, dive in, stay at it":**

Post-Election Community  
Gathering at Royce Hall



### MoMA Takes a Stand: Art From Banned Countries Comes Center Stage

By JASON FARAGO FEB. 9, 2017



### In Wake Of Election, SF Gay Men's Chorus & Oakland Interfaith Gospel Choir To Tour 'Red States'



- **Curators and artistic directors have mounted exhibits and performances with overtly political stances or thinly veiled commentary on the administration's policies.** High profile examples include the re-hanging of art from travel-ban countries at the MOMA and the Public Theater's depiction of Trump as the lead in their 2017 production of *Julius Caesar*.
- **Artists and arts organizations have changed their strategies to engage directly in building connections between divided Americans by doing what they do best: making art.** Instead of a planned tour to Europe, the SF Gay Men's Choir partnered with the Oakland Interfaith Gospel Choir to mount a joint concert tour to five southern states.
- **Artists have been creating explicitly political protest art.** Shortly after the inauguration NPR's affiliate in San Francisco, KQED, profiled dozens of artists making their opinions on the new president manifest in new works of art (pictured below and on next page).



Davone Tines performs on March 17, 2017 at the SF Symphony's Soundbox 'Rebel' concert celebrating artist resisting oppression and censorship (photo by: Jessie Huntsman/SF Symphony)



by Malaquias Montoya, exhibited at Juan Fuentes Gallery, February 2017

- **Individual artists working outside of institutions have embraced political subjects without referencing Trump explicitly.** The French photographer JR unveiled his untitled work at the U.S. Mexico Border at Tecate, CA in September 2017



by JR, at US Mexico Boarder at Tecate, CA, September 2017

- **Artists are preparing to run for office.** Over a hundred artists applied to participate in a first-of-its-kind Artists Campaign School boot camp in Detroit in October 2017 to learn the fundamentals of electoral politics.

*Whether it's for the school board or Senate, learn what it takes.*

**ORGANIZE. RUN. LEAD.**

## 5. OUR CLOSING THOUGHTS (AT THIS MOMENT)

In many different ways artists are engaging as *citizens* in their various communities and bringing with them tool kits that can deepen and expand the results of local efforts. They bring not only their own unique voices, but practices that amplify the voices around them. This includes work that speaks to, and engages, communities in rural America and those who see themselves separate and alienated from the ‘costal elites.’ Artists can hold aesthetic and intellectual space open for others by continuing to be on the forefront as thought leaders, change makers and people who can help us all to look, think and reflect on our world.

Arts organizations are reaching out to form new collaborations across issues and disciplines to address national issues from local vantage points. Many artists have for years been creating new work in collaboration with scientists, environmental activists and social justice and public health advocates; this work is picking up speed and can serve as models to be expanded and replicated in different communities across the country.

We believe this work will only increase as the impact of the administration’s new policies, the rescinding of established policies and the disparate enforcement of existing laws is felt.

We encourage artists and arts organizations to flex their considerable muscle to focus, shape and sharpen public dialogue on critical issues through their work and to deepen individuals’ and communities’ understanding of vexing policy challenges as well as to consider and rally for alternatives to the status quo.

***ARTISTS AND ARTS ORGANIZATIONS CAN BRING PEOPLE TOGETHER IN COMMUNITY AND USE PUBLIC NARRATIVE TO MOVE THEIR NEIGHBORS TO DIRECT ACTION.***

We encourage artists and arts organizations to speak candidly with their private funders about the work they’re doing in responses to the new administration. Many times foundations have the capacity to be surprisingly flexible in how their funding can be applied in light of changing conditions in the operating environment. Thus far funders have primarily issued public statements in response to the administration’s initiatives, while financial support for artists efforts is coming from grassroots backers and crowdfunding platforms.

***WE HOPE THAT FOUNDATIONS WILL SEE THESE ALARMING TIMES AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO FUND COLLABORATIVE WORK ACROSS PORTFOLIOS AND DISCIPLINES TO CREATE MORE SOCIALLY JUST AND INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES.***

We also see a need for vigilant scanning of the environment for the arts sector over the next three years. In a rapidly changing political landscape its essential to be highly attuned to the cultural sector's vulnerabilities and to celebrate and spotlight work that is successful at fostering effective civic engagement and knitting frayed communities together. We need to constantly monitor the threats to, and implications of, changes to public and philanthropic arts funding and to continue to advance dialogue and collaboration among artists and arts organizations.

In the responses to both the survey and the individual interviews there was considerable interest in how arts organizations can become more civically engaged without jeopardizing their 501c3 status. We believe these are conversations every arts organization Board should have and recommend engaging the Bolder Advocacy program of the Alliance for Justice to enhance Board understanding of what's permissible. More information is here: <https://www.afj.org/our-work/issues/bolder-advocacy>

This is going to be a long hard fight that turns on both a both political and a moral axis. It is essential that we keep the big picture in mind but work diligently locally so that our communities engage in the processes necessary to regain power and shape their vision for the future.

Marni, Marcy, Ted, Diane and Marc  
December 2017

## 6. COMMENTS FROM THE FIELD

THE FOLLOWING ARE A SELECTION OF THE COMMENTS COLLECTED THROUGH OUR ONLINE SURVEY AND IN-PERSON INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED IN THE SPRING OF 2017.

- *“Our challenge is: Which issue are we going to tackle, in which order, with which resources?”*
- *“This is not a time for the “arts” community to be thinking of itself. There are bigger issues at hand: Civic community, Democracy, redistribution of resources, smaller grass roots arts organizations will be more impacted. What is the obligation for the larger organizations to think about the ecology of culture in a discipline or community is considered... up to and including the sharing of resources?”*
- *“This is an opportunity to ponder our own culpability & think collectively. 20% of Americans live in rural communities...2% of the arts \$ go to the arts there; we have contributed to this problem. As a class institutions and organizations have not been working effectively on fighting racism; economic inequality [and] the cultural pluralizing of our communities.”*
- *“I think there is something to be gained. We're in a funny time because science has trumped everything. Art needs to be shown to be important in a scientific way – quantified to show there's a benefit to arts education. One positive thing is that people may be empowered to figure out how to do these things themselves. Progress in how beneficial music education is to children. Creative ways to come up with information and strategies to push this kind of things in the arts.”*
- *“Trump/ Bannon has a well oiled well-defined media strategy they have the images, metaphors; sounds; memory; know the triggers; works all artistic strategies...the reach.... Progressives do not have a similar strategy in place, artists could help us.”*
- *“Organizations who have thrived when the political climate & social conditions turn sour and have always had a place in social justice can help others. This can make these organizations and the pioneering artists they support more visible.”*
- *“We have been working for a number of years between ‘rooting and bridging,’ and making progress. The tone of this presidency will push us back, preventing the complexity of contemporary life from being understood and celebrated.”*

- *“Cost of opportunity– things and issues we thought were resolved are open again and we now need to fight in the battles business.”*
- *“We will lose a whole generation that will not be connected to or served by our work. Supreme court; immigration laws; environment; other policies things will be rolled back quickly but can not be re–built quickly– and this weighs very heavily.”*
- *“Overall tone is one of uncertainty about what this means about censorship and public funding. [And when you] drill down [the] discussion, what it means for organizations presenting controversial work. [What it means for] border groups –people facing deportation. What does it mean to groups connected with trans communities? Arab–Americans?, etc.*
- *“The gain could be huge as there are huge shifts in demographics...this is now, [this is] the moment that we can say that the way that the non–profit arts system has worked or has not worked for enough people. The hegemony of the non–profit arts system has to change, it must become more open and more inclusive, more expansive.”*
- *“We have not done enough about the populist perception of the artist/art as an elitist institution.”*
- *“Traditional artists are conveners in their work, bring methodologies that bring people together to make art and find common ground; people come to the work with their whole selves (not just their heads)”*
- *“Many artists & cultural producers see the NEA as a vehicle for support of a conventional 501c3 and they don't see themselves in this there is a fatigue within the arts about going to bat for the NEA /NEH when many have not felt benefited by these organizations. If the NEA & NEH rallies as they have in the past artists w/o giving a link to the common cause within other federal agencies they will piss off a whole generation. We will disenfranchise the future base.”*
- *“The funding community has to say this is not a time for retraction and needs to find ways to support this critical work.”*
- *“Articulate an arts policy agenda that is more aligned with a social justice agenda. Be more engaged in addressing issues of equity. Make the connections between movements.”*
- *“Lots of conversation in the field and at the board level assessing risk --how will funding change (some foundations were already pulling away from the arts; others may join) current business models may not be valid or sustainable. Could be a perfect storm for the arts?”*

# APPENDIX:

## A. LIST OF INTERVIEW SUBJECTS

1. Amy Kitchner – Alliance for California Traditional Arts
2. Ken Grossinger – Cross Currents Foundation
3. Angie Kim – Center for Cultural innovation
4. Claire Rice– Arts Alliance, Illinois
5. Carlton Turner – Alternate Roots
6. Carol Bebelles – Ashe Cultural Arts Center
7. Caitlin Strokosch – National Performance Network/ Visual Arts Network
8. Clyde Valentine – Southern Methodist University
9. Felicia Shaw– St Louis Regional Arts
10. Holly Sidford – Helicon Collaborative
11. Ken May – South Carolina Arts Commission
12. Kevin Erickson Future of Music Coalition
13. Lucas Reiner– Painter
14. John Michael Schert – Dancer, Choreographer, Visiting Artist, University of Chicago Booth School of Business
15. Maureen N. McLane – Poet, Professor of English, New York University

## B. ADDITIONAL EXAMPLES OF ARTISTS RESPONDING TO THE NEW ADMINISTRATION

**First 100 Days: Art in the Age of Trump – *KQED.com*, January 18, 2017**

<https://ww2.kqed.org/arts/2017/01/18/first-100-days-art-in-the-age-of-trump/>

**A Tremendous Roundup Of Street Art Ridiculing Donald Trump – *Huffington Post*, January 27, 2017**

[https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/anti-trump-street-art\\_us\\_58820c24e4b070d8cad1ead2](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/anti-trump-street-art_us_58820c24e4b070d8cad1ead2)

**Protest Art in the Era of Trump – *New York Times*, February 20, 2017**

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/20/t-magazine/protest-art-betty-tompkins-postcommodity-rirkrit-tiravanija.html>

**Bay Area Artists Respond to Trump – *KQED'S Forum with Michael Krasny*, February 28, 2017**

<https://ww2.kqed.org/forum/2017/02/28/bay-area-artists-respond-to-the-trump-presidency/>

**Hard Truths or Easy Targets? Confronting the Summer of Trump Onstage – *New York Times*, August 16, 2017**

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/16/theater/hard-truths-or-easy-targets-confronting-the-summer-of-trump-onstage.html>

**Queer Nightlife as Radical Resistance – *East Bay Express*, August 30, 2017**

<https://www.eastbayexpress.com/oakland/queer-nightlife-as-radical-resistance/Content?oid=8744157>

**“As Boy Peers Curiously Over Border Wall, His Artist Asks: ‘What Is He Thinking?’” – *NPR.org*, September 8, 2017**

<https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2017/09/08/549491208/as-boy-peers-curiously-over-border-wall-his-artist-asks-what-is-he-thinking>

## C. RESEARCH TEAM CONTACT INFORMATION

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

*We would like to thank Kelly Varian for the technical support she provided in our data collection efforts and for assisting in designing this report. We are deeply grateful to all of our interview subjects who made time to share their insights with us. We could not have reached 1000+ artists and arts workers in our survey without the assistance of many arts–community connectors including colleagues at many service and intermediary organizations and lots of old friends too! Most of all we are indebted to the artists and culture workers who answered our questions and are each, in their own inspiring ways resisting, persisting and telling the truth! Thank you!*