

Journal

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News of The Cultural
Council Foundation
CETA Artists Project

CCF Job Development and Counseling Program Launched

By GROVER AMEN

The CCF/CETA Artists Job Development and Counseling Program is getting under way, and those of us who have taken a curious but somewhat skeptical view of its potential may be in for some interesting surprises.

Standard job seeking is apt to conjure up two equally futile and forlorn memories: sending out scores of resumes to which there is never any response whatever (not even a one-minute interview), or sitting for hours at an employment agency only to be told by the personnel manager, as he flips through scores of index cards, that there is

nothing quite suitable, that we are either too young or too old, and either under- or (even more discouraging) over-qualified or lacking in some specialized area of expertise.

In any case, the Job Development Program is a far cry from all that; it is unabashedly optimistic, and ambitious and is designed to slash through all that bureaucracy of the absurd to find practical sources of income for CCF/CETA artists.

The program is essentially two-fold with one purpose being to help artists in their personal careers. A painter, for example, will be helped in every possible way to find maximum exposure for his or her work through galleries, dealers, and exhibitions. This will include seminars of general interest plus smaller groups focusing on more specific areas.

The other purpose of the program will be to help artists support themselves in either full or part-time jobs, which may be arts-related or, on the other hand, have nothing to do with the arts, depending on each artist's preference and interests. Painters, for instance, may have previously earned their living by making paste-ups and mechanicals, an obvious course, but one that they may actually detest and have pursued without considering viable alternatives. In fact, a large effort will be made precisely in this area—to make visual, literary, and performing artists aware of interesting income-producing occupations that simply might not have occurred to them before. For example, one poet in the project became involved in group therapy; the experience proved so interesting and beneficial that he is considering becoming a therapist himself.

An interesting aspect of the program is that none of its six staff members have exclusively manpower development backgrounds. Of the four new staff members, Charles Bernstein, who eschews his title of director as not quite befitting the communal spirit of the program, is a poet and editor with a number of book and magazine publications. He has worked previously for non-profit, community, and commercial organizations. Norma Jean Katan is a painter who has also written a book for young people, *Hieroglyphs: the Writing of Ancient Egypt*, soon to be published by Atheneum. She has a master's degree in museum education and is a former teacher. James Sherry is a poet who has run his own arts services foundation through which he has been active in seeking both private and public funding for the arts. And Joan Snitzer is a painter who has also managed a gallery in Soho for five years. The two other staff members were already in the CCF Artists Project, Sherakaa Osorio as Brooklyn and Queens coordinator, and Louis Aponte as artist-coordinator for the Bronx.

Rochelle Slovin, Artists Project director, says of the job program and her selection of staff: "I am very enthusiastic about it. The program will provide a unique service and will not limit itself to jobs as they are conventionally understood. As far as the staff goes, intelligence and sensitivity are the most important ingredients in the management of any arts program. I have found that most people with personnel expertise do not have an arts background, which is what makes our staff so unique. Each staff member has a full grasp of our underlying philosophy—that the artist is a hard worker who contributes to society and who needs and deserves congenial employment."

Filling us in on further details of the program, Joan Snitzer observed, "We are not going to solve everything, but as a group—and by group I mean all the CCF artists—we can do more than an indi-



Job Development...

vidual artist who is mainly concerned with producing his other work rather than dealing with all the problems of getting it promoted and accepted. A fact in our favor is that it's a good time for the arts; they are popular and people are receptive. We hope that we can come up with fresh connections between the artist and the market place."

Ms. Snitzer stressed the collectivist philosophy of the program: "The job development staff, the staff of the CETA Artists Project, and the 300 artists, including the sub-contractors—all that experience and information compiled and put to work *has* to produce more concrete results than each artist operating on his own. People have always succeeded better in groups. Art is created by the individual, but to succeed in this society a group effort is always helpful. That is one reason for the historical success of art movements. The artists were supportive of each other. We have here an enormous amount of talent and experience as a resource to draw on. This kind of information simply hasn't been focused on and compiled before."

Recalling her days managing the A.I.R. Gallery in Soho, Ms. Snitzer said, "Every day artists would come in with the same problems. How do I file my taxes? Where do I find a loft I can afford? How do I sell my work? By the time the individual runs around collecting all this information, a huge amount of potentially creative time has been wasted. Usually, the artist gives up on these issues and then suffers."

In all these problematic areas, seminars will be held on alternate Friday mornings. Subjects will range from preparing a resume or portfolio to finding out about grants and fellowships, legal services and reference materials. "But we need to know exactly what the artists want most from these seminars," stressed Ms. Snitzer, "This is their program, not ours, and we hope that at least half of the program will be formed by the artists themselves. We have the funds to get things done—a budget of \$250,000. The question is: what can we do for each other? If we can't help with a problem, we'll make connections with the people who can. We want artists to suggest people they would like to meet—and we have the money to pay consultancy fees."

In talking to the program staff, there was a strong undercurrent of sympathy evident toward the more subtle, psychological problems of the artist. As Ms. Snitzer put it, "There are two kinds of fear—the fear of rejection and, perhaps more insidious, the fear of success. Some people become petrified by praise. Anyway, we can also work on these kinds of problems as a group. If fifteen galleries reject your work, okay, that's discouraging. But if fifteen artists examine it, you can learn a lot. There's a way to walk into a gallery, to talk to a dealer. People simply don't 'think' about the solutions they haven't 'thought' of. Each artist's experience is different, the bad and the good, and our job is to help get it all together."

The headquarters of the Job Counseling Program will not, fortunately, be at the already cramped offices in the Flatiron Building. They will occupy 2,500 square feet of loft-like space at 1133 Broadway on 26th Street. It is hoped that the artists will have a place where they can come in small groups and talk over their problems in a relaxed, informal atmosphere.

If that's not enough for the present, there's one last nice touch: the program is strictly voluntary, but if you actively participate, for example, in the seminars, it can count as either community or studio time on your work sheets.



Staff members of the CCF Job Development Program are (from l to r) Louis Aponte, Sherekaa Osorio (standing), Norma Jean Katan, Joan Snitzer, and Charles Bernstein, program director. Not shown in picture is James Sherry. Stanford Golob

Disorder and Early Sorrow: Journeys Of A CETA Artist Through 1979

By JUDD TULLY

Sitting in the cramped seat of the packed Eastern Airline Shuttle flight to Washington, I tried to analyze the morning's events as the turbulence outside increased and my hands gripped the plastic armrests till my knuckles turned white.

That morning on the Bowery, dodging the greasy hulks of Garland stoves and amputated Bari Pizza ovens in the pouring rain, the new 1979 calendar from Citibank slipped out of my raincoat pocket. Bending down to the pavement I grabbed the rain-spattered calendar and came face to face with a dead black cat. Conscious of omens falling the second day of the new year, I interpreted the fall of 1979 a good sign since my foot would have squished the dead feline and that sensation would have sent fatal shivers up my spine.

Twelve hours later, 30,000 feet above somewhere, menacing question marks floated over the paranoid horizon of my imagination and the spectre of the Bowery casualty stared out from the glossy cover of the throw-away flight magazine.

The reassuring thud of landing gear on National Airport's fog-shrouded runway ended my premature wake and the business at hand came into focus: an interview the next afternoon with Ernest Green, assistant secretary of the Department of Labor's Employment and Training Act to be followed in quick succession with talks at the Longworth and Cannon House Office Buildings with Representatives Fred Richmond (D-New York) and Paul Simon (D-Illinois).

The interview with the Assistant Secretary in his large corner office went smoothly except for a few minor hitches—my tape recorder didn't work, one of his assistants doggedly looked over my shoulder at the sheet of questions I sweatily palmed, throwing off my timing and disposition. The third point colored my three day visit to the capitol, which was an attempt to take the pulse (journalistically speaking) of the CETA Artists Project versus the rest of the world. It was the Eduard Münch exhibit at the National Gallery's new temple of art, the East Wing, that threw my psyche into a funk of minor chords and churlish thoughts. Room after room of penetrating oils and unmerciful self-portraits spanning five decades bruised my perspective of government and the arts.

Wearing a winter weight tweed suit and pullover sweater to combat the presidentially-lowered thermostats in government office buildings, Assistant Secretary Green said, "In my own personal view, the CETA artist projects have brought art closer to the people, those who are not able to collect but who can appreciate art. This has been a great benefit of CETA and has given a wider audience for the artist to impact on. We have focused attention on the plight of the professional artist as a worker in our society. This has brought about a recognition by our employment service and unemployment offices that they can better serve artists' needs. An unemployed artist is just as worthy of job training help as an unemployed bricklayer or stenographer."

Over at the Longworth Building, chaos reigned. New elections and a new year triggered a rush on vacated office space and spurts in the all important seniority game. Nuances of transoms and window panes somehow improved or detracted from a Congressman's image and the long, sunlit-dappled hallways were gorged with office furniture and sweating workmen with carpeted and castor-wheeled dollies. Naturally, all the position papers I was interested in reading were packed away or floating in limbo-esque transit. It somehow reminded me of the opening I meant to attend of R.M. Fischer's lamps at Artist Space in far away Tribeca.



Germaine Keller installs a lawn drawing in Battery Park.

Marbeth

In between an interview with Chris Duba, an employment specialist at the National Association of Counties Research, Inc. (representing 270 prime sponsors) and Jim Gasser, the Arts Taskforce director of the U.S. Conference of Mayors, I combed the mural-rich walls of the Main Post Office Building. It only took fifty minutes to get "clearance" from the security force to walk down the spiral stairway and feast my eyes and camera on the poorly lit and neglected but still brilliant WPA murals by Rockwell Kent, Reginald Marsh, Alfred Crimi and the sculpture of Chaim Gross. All the art depicted some aspect of the postal system, from pontoon-adorned bi-planes delivering mail to seal-skin coated Eskimos to heavy muscled stevedores loading bulging sacks of mail onto ocean liners in New York Harbor. Some of the area of Marsh's dock scene were so dirty that

the harsh morning light and fast film made no impression on my light meter.

The murals have outlived their decorative function since most of the offices abutting the fantasy/social-realist/Ashcan School art, were now part of the Treasury Department's Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms Bureau. Standing at the foot of each landing by the spit-polished brass handrails, I marvelled at the anachronism of art lauding the postal system. It made me wonder about the CETA Artists Project murals that were sprinkled throughout the five boroughs and what they would look like in forty years. I just couldn't imagine.

Three days of navigating oceans of corridors and platoons of secretaries and dubious armed guards did not enlighten my steno pad grip on the fortunes and foibles of CETA and how levers and buttons on Capitol Hill affected the gavels and cigar smoke of Board of Estimate meetings at City Hall. I did divine that CETA was hurting and the claustrophobic limbo 325 artists employed by the Cultural Council Foundation were experiencing had no immediate itinerary.

Before I left the southern climes of Washington aboard a slow but ground-level Amtrak train, I met with Patty Ewald, the national coordinator, AFL-CIO Arts, Entertainment and Media Unions (I wish I had a title like that). She fed me a telephone directory-sized report on unemployment in the arts and a staccato-fire picture window of the regional offices' interaction with CETA Projects in Los Angeles, Chicago and New York. One comment Ms. Ewald made stuck with me and I heard it again three months later when she addressed the orientation program for the 1979-80 Artists Project at City Center: "Something is terribly wrong with the arts in America when arts management can get steady employment while artists and performers can't."

Perhaps it was the mesmerizing clatter of train wheels on pock-marked tracks that sent those words swimming in my head, only to collide with parked images of mahogany desks and marble lobbies of bureaucratic-bill amending Washington.

In the months ahead, the endless stream of openings and readings and workshops and performances and dedications fought tooth and nail with the political climate that yearned to behead

or at least cripple CETA. Item #111 passed unanimously at the Board of Estimate meeting of Thursday, February 8th despite the cacophonous outcries of competing cultural groups. The Cultural Council Foundation won the \$5,898,412.58 contract beginning March 3, 1979, and ending September 30, 1980.

For purists then, 1979 began in March and the dedicated warblings of the CETA Artists Organization launched salvos of petitions and laundry lists of politicians to buttonhole and cajole for support of the foundering artist ship dependent on the ayes and nays of roll-call votes. CETA artists marched in the rain and shine around City Hall, Times Square and the Roosevelt Hotel with soggy placards and hoarse slogans ("Build a Sistine Chapel in the Big Apple") demanding the elusive waiver that would adjudicate the pain of layoffs in well-orchestrated timetables instead of one deadly stroke of the pen.

What had been wide-eyed awe of manna from heaven in 1978 slowly rose to a coarser whole wheat approach to the buffeting winds of politics in 1979. Performance indicators and a switch from yellow to pink time sheets that warned in bold-face, "forgery is grounds for dismissal," ushered in a new managerial pinch to being a CETA artist.

With a new harder edge on the political canvas, CCF artists correspondingly dealt with their community sponsors with improved vigor and the results of this interaction peppered the flow of the project press releases heralding in new murals in public places, publications and performances that more than likely, would never have seen the light of day in 1978. Despite the slicked-back coiffure of the 1979 Artists Project and its exhibitions, the print media on one occasion ignored hard CETA art—the tri-daily blackout of Joan Mondale's dedication of the Port Authority murals at the World Trade Center. To be precise, the press was present in abundance, but no stories were published.

At 7:46 A.M. on September 10th, I entered the lobby of a skyscraper at 1633 Broadway that looked like a screen version of that timeless architectural hit, "Death Warmed Over." Across the street at the Winter Garden Theatre, an enormous billboard flaunted the upcoming invasion of Gilda Radner's "Live from New York." I was to be a witness of the much heralded CCF lottery to determine who goes off the gangplank first in the quarterly deadlines of artist layoffs.

Edward Weinstein, a board member of the Cultural Council Foundation and a senior partner at the management-consulting firm of Touche Ross, presided like a snake charmer, over a small woven straw basket. Slips of paper color-coded to artistic discipline were pulled from the basket and the bearer's name was duly recorded and jotted down in triplicate. It seemed like a seance and the sea of names would set the pastel slips of paper swirling around the conference room, shrieking in Helium falsetto, "Bring me back." By the time I heard my name just past the Ides of March, I was drowsy with daydreams perked by the no-frills plane ticket to Paris that cozily sweated inside my breast pocket.

That night, aboard an S.R.O. Air France jet, I tried to calculate the number of nautical miles over the watery black abyss before touchdown on beloved but foreign terra firma. The morning events mingled with flashbacks of one-armed bandits in Reno, Nevada, and a casino fire that slot-machine patrons remained oblivious to, despite the heavy smoke and ear-rattling clangs of fire engines. Sugar-plum visions of the Louvre and fragrant whiffs of the Seine inked out the termination date, 3/30/79. In half-sleep I mimed the motion of yanking down the chromed arm of the slot machine and dreamed about the whirling dervish dance of the mechanized images. 1979 was like that. □

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Grover Amen
Managing Editor

Selvin Goldbourne
Art Director

Wayne Karmosky
Director of Public Information

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George Diaz, Diallo McLinn and Marc Levin of FIVF taping at Alizana Tropical Senior Center, the Bronx.

George Malave

CCF Sub-Contractors

The contract figure of 325 artists in the CCF/CETA Artists Project includes 100 artists with the three sub-contractors, well-known and respected organizations before the CETA Artists Project began: the Foundation for Independent Video and Film, the Black Theatre Alliance, and the Association of Hispanic Arts. Working with their own individual programs dur-

Black Theatre Alliance

Now celebrating its tenth anniversary, The Black Theatre Alliance, a non-profit national service organization composed of black theatre and dance companies throughout the United States and Canada, sub-contracted through the Cultural Council Foundation thirty artists for its CETA Community Outreach Program.

The artists hired for this innovative program include: theatre artists (performers, technicians, and designers), literary artists, (playwrights, poets, and non-fiction writers), visual artists (graphic designers, photographers, filmmakers, and painters), and arts administration apprentices.

Attempting to fulfill the overwhelming need within the black community for competent arts administrators, CETA artist Niamani Mutima has coordinated an intense program training apprentices in proposal writing, fiscal and budget management, public relations, program development, office management, and other areas pertinent to arts administration. The program has prepared the apprentices to service many local BTA member companies during the past six months. Apprentices LaVerne "Ayodele" Moore, Stephen Tyson, and Ngoma (Cordell Hill) have also assisted the sorely understaffed Alliance with its administrative routine. As the membership of the Alliance increases, and the demand for its services expands, the

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The Foundation for Independent Video and Film

The Foundation for Independent Video and Film's Media Works project is winding up its second successful year with a number of public screenings of completed works.

This New York City-based community service team constitutes the media arm of the CCF and includes 27 CETA artists.

Marc Levin and Emilio Murillo's one-hour video documentary, *The Federal Artist*, is the most ambitious group effort of the project's first year. It has already been aired on public TV stations WNET and WNYC in New York and on WETA in Washington, DC. while Media Works' distribution coordinator John Rice is negotiating with

PBS to put it on their national feed.

Several other Media Works artists-in-residence have had their work in the public eye of late. Christa Maiwald's videotapes *Artists* and *Building a Nuclear Head* were screened at Video Free America in San Francisco, and *Artists* and *Underground Accelerator* were cablecast by SoHo TV in New York. Paul Schneider's film *The People's Firehouse* won a Gold Ducat at the Mannheim Film Festival and has also been accepted at Leipzig. In addition to recent screenings at the Museum of Modern Art and numerous community centers across the country, *The People's Firehouse* may be seen in the near future on WNET's *Independent*

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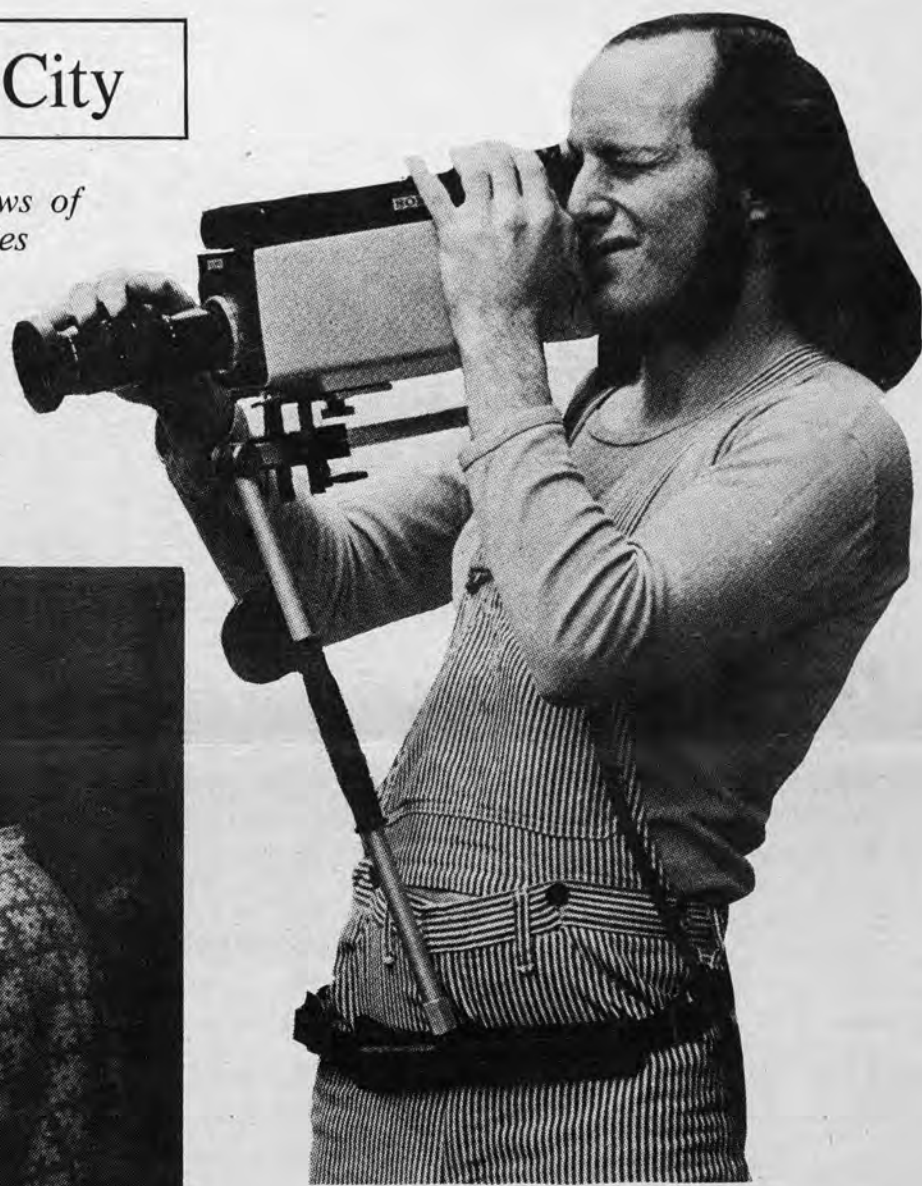
AHA CETA artists Awilda Villarini, Brenda Feliciano, and Angelo Cruz performing in concert at Lehman College.

Marco Kalisch

Keep Their CETA Artists Busy Throughout City

ing the past two years, BTA, under Executive Director Duane Jones, and AHA, under Director Elsa Ortiz Robles, have employed CETA artists to spread black and Hispanic cultural activities throughout the five boroughs. FIVF, under Director Alan Jacobs has brought to the public and to the community through its Media Works Project a variety of documentary

tapes and films. Brief reviews of the sub-contractors' activities are presented below. Continuing and more intensive coverage will be provided by the Journal in the year ahead.



CETA artist Jeff Byrd taping for the Foundation for Independent Video and Film.

George Malave



Black Theatre Alliance CETA set designer Charles Abramson is shown working on a set for one of the plays which ran at the Black Theatre Festival/USA at the Mitzi Newhouse Theatre of Lincoln Center. In top photo Black Theatre Alliance CETA actors Kirk Kirksey (center) and Pawnee Sills rehearse with BTA member company, The Family, a scene from Chekhov's *The Marriage Proposal* in a setting moved from Russia to the Caribbean.

Larry Neilson Photos

Association for Hispanic Arts

The many and diverse activities of CETA artists in the Association of Hispanic Arts included a recent highlight—the concert of Latin American music performed on the occasion of the visit of Pope John Paul II to St. Patrick's Cathedral.

The vocal group, organized and directed by Lydia de Rivera, included CETA artists Brenda Feliciano and Angelo Cruz, and assisting in the presentation were CETA artists Guillermo Lucero, Luis Melendez, Eddie Ruperto, Adal Maldonado and Marco Kalisch.

There are forty CETA artists affiliated with AHA whose skills encompass a wide range within the performing, visual, and literary arts. As examples, touring performances during 1979 or scheduled for 1980 consist of a children's puppet show, several plays, both classical and contemporary, a dramatic monologue, modern dance, a lecture-demonstration on Afro-Caribbean rhythm, poetry readings, concerts, piano recitals, screen slide demonstrations covering the whole AHA-CETA Artists Project, and exhibitions of paintings, photography, and drawings. (A detailed article on AHA activities by Guillermo Lucero will appear in a subsequent issue of Journal.)

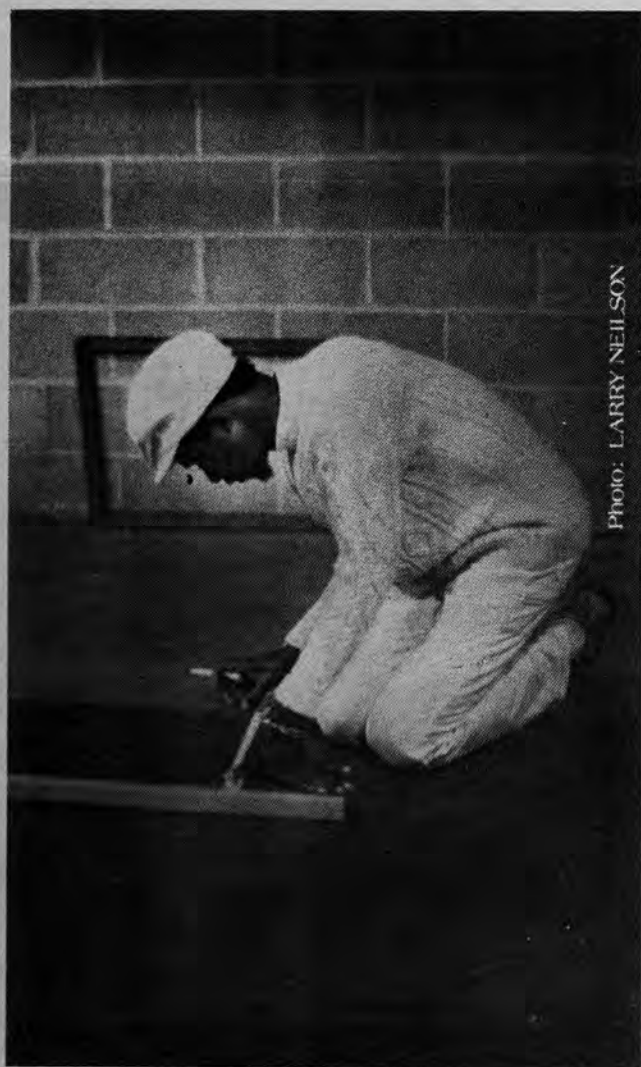


PHOTO: LARRY NEILSON



Josera Victoria Monter make-up workshop, a project of the Association for Hispanic Arts.

Marco Kalisch

FIVE...

Focus series.

Other fine films and tapes are nearing completion. Notably, Media Works' mobile video documentation pool recently wrapped up the outdoor scenes of *Madame Butterfly*, as performed by the Brooklyn Opera Society, at the Japanese pavilion of the Brooklyn Botanical Gardens. Indoor scenes will be shot over the winter in the Brooklyn Museum. Preliminary screenings of the completed opera footage promise an exquisite broadcast-quality product.

For additional information about Media Works or access to tapes and films, please contact Fran Platt at 966-0641. (A detailed article on FIVE activities will appear in a subsequent issue of *Journal*.)

BTA...

internal operations and budget management must be restructured. One of the first steps in this direction was the formation of a new board of directors to include business and political leaders from the community. With the assistance of Harold Youngblood, a new board was recently put together and voted into office by the BTA membership. Woodie King, Jr., has recently been placed at the helm as president of the Alliance. Another step has been the Alliance's acquisition of a five-story renovated building on 42nd Street's Theater Row. Coordinating the diverse technical activities in our new theatre space, dance studio and rehearsal facilities is CETA artist Toby Macbeth.

The BTA Newsletter, a monthly publication, has benefited greatly from the editorial assistance of CETA artist Walter Miles, and has been enhanced visually by the photography of CETA artists Larry Neilson and Jules Allen, and by the graphic designs of Lee Jack Morton and George Ford. Lee Jack and George have also worked providing graphic services for numerous non-profit organizations including the New York Library.

Recently, the Seventh Annual Audelco Awards which are given for excellence in black theatre took place at the Symphony Space Theatre. CETA artists from the Alliance were involved not only in every aspect of the production, from designing the invitations to assisting the technical crew, but also two of the CETA artists for the past two years were nominated for an award. Sandra Ross, lighting designer, won an award last year for the production of *The Estate* by Ray Aranha, and Abdul Rahman, set designer, was nominated this year for the production of *Simply Heavenly* by Langston Hughes, both of which were staged at BTA founding member company, Richard Allen Center for Culture and Art.

The first exhibition ever of paintings, drawings, prints, and graphic art of CETA artist Lee Jack Morton was mounted during the entire month of April at the Henry O. Tanner Gallery.

At the historic Black Theatre Festival USA at Lincoln Center, CETA artist Charles Abramson worked with festival set designer, Ed Burbridge, painting and constructing sets for each theatre and dance company appearing in the union house during the entire month of May. CETA administrative apprentice Marcia Nurse assisted in the box office for the festival.

During the summer several CETA artists collaborated on *Zappers and the Shopping Bag Lady*, a BTA musical production that played the city parks, and featured CETA artists Pawnee Sills and Kirk Kirksey in the leading roles, with choreography by Matt Turney. Another summer program



Sandra Esteves reading her poetry.

Dawoud Bey

for city youth interested in technical theatre careers was coordinated by CETA artist Marvin Watkins.

Technical artists Toby Macbeth, John Brown, Sandra Ross and Marvin Watkins also lent their able coordinative and technical assistance with another historic festival, the month long Africa Diaspora in the Caribbean Festival at such sites around the city as the Delacorte Theater, Lincoln Center, and Carnegie Hall.

Two city wide technical training programs were also coordinated by Harold Youngblood. BTA artist Sandra Ross joined other outstanding artists from the diverse disciplines of technical theater in teaching classes to aspiring technicians. A new and expanded technical training program is currently being designed by Tech Coordinator Tobias Macbeth. It will take place in early 1980.

The BTA Community Outreach Program has been successful with many organizations which are not member companies of the Alliance. Because each CETA artist has worked with some community agency within each borough, the list is too long to enumerate. For example, CETA artists George Ford and David Brown assisted the Harlem Week Committee with graphic materials for publicity and promotion; Georgia Collins conducted dance seminars for teenagers at several community centers, Aishah Rahman has interested senior citizens in playwriting, and recently, Walter Miles was assigned by The Black Christian Caucus of the Riverside Church the formidable task of writing the evolution of black music in America in a few hundred words.

Working under the direct supervision of Associate Director A. Peter Bailey and Executive Director Duane L. Jones, who designed the BTA/CETA program, the artists have helped BTA distinguish itself in the community by providing otherwise unattainable services to both members of the Alliance and to the community at large. □

Wage Labor

The portrait artist never seeing
all day working his own face,
mirrors from paper; the face of his children.

— Richard Levine

The Poet As Performer: Magician Of the Moment

By RICHARD VETERE

Established publishing houses are suffering from "best-selleritis" and, because of it, they print very little contemporary poetry. Small press publishers nurture new work but their audience is small and inconsistent. Reading in general has declined, and the effect on professional poets has been a long-discussed condition touching tragically the very lives of Delmore Schwartz, Sylvia Plath and John Berryman, to name a few of the better known. It is not a time for rejoicing if you're a lover of language, but getting depressed about it isn't going to do any good either. There are other ways.

Bob Holman, a literary artist with CCF/CETA, runs an innovative and experimental project called "The Poetry Performance Workshop" which accepts the above realities but also has a plan to deal with them. The workshop's way of combating the cold shoulder of the publishing world is to cultivate the theatrical ingredients of poetry in the poetry reading, making it more entertaining by highlighting its performance-oriented elements. This, Holman feels, will nourish the audience that publishing houses are ignoring.

Every other Friday (payday) a workshop is held either at Madeleine Keller's (the literary coordinator of the project) loft or poet Rose Lesniak's place for two hours. Here poets trade ideas on performance, take part in vocal and physical exercises, experiment with new works, methods of presenting them, and attempt to create a new vocabulary to deal with this new phenomenon: performance.

"We want poets to look at the reading as part of the writing," says Holman. "Most poets don't realize that the reading starts as soon as they get on stage and the audience needs to be brought in, but, since poetry readings don't get reviewed like films

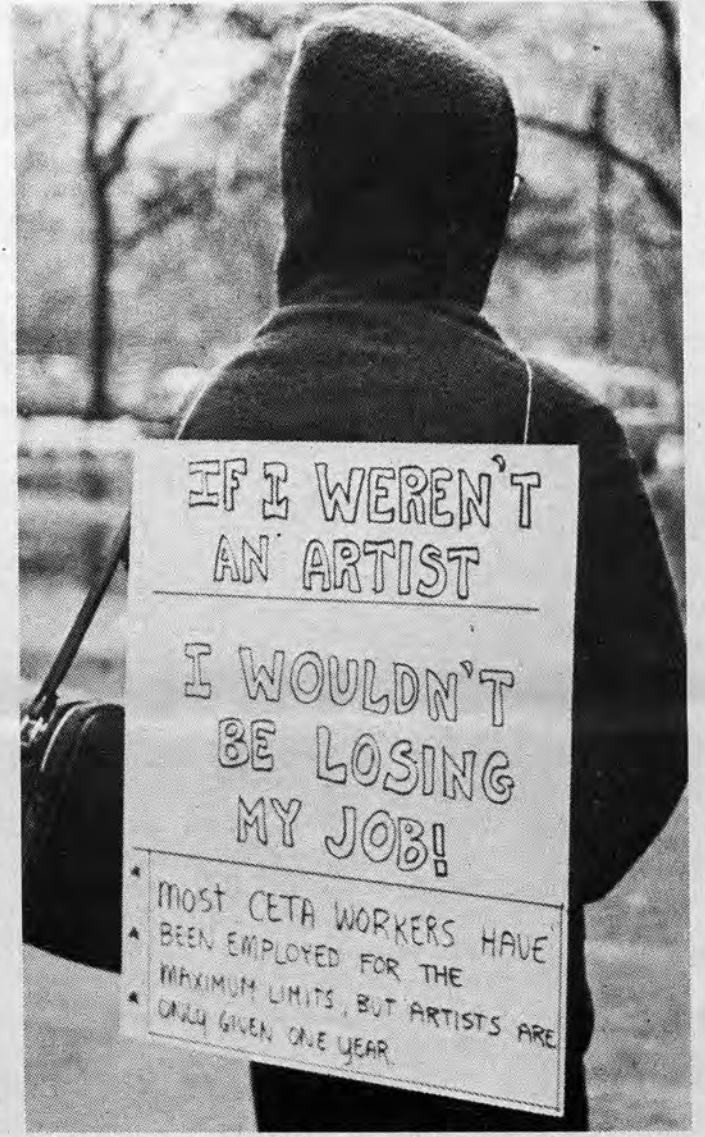
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Deep in December, It's Nice to Remember...



New artists register at old McGraw Hill building, January, 1978.

Joan Wyer



Artists demonstrate at City Hall, protesting job cuts.

George Malave



CCF Executive Director Sara Garretson addresses pay day artists' meeting at Bernard Baruch College.

George Malave



Project Administrator Vincent Pinto explains payroll sheets in old McGraw Hill building cafeteria.

Blaise Tobia



Artists kick-off party at Hurrah's, January, 1978.

Sarah Wells



Willie Birch with friends and his mural at Tremont-Crotona Day Care Center, the Bronx.

Ann Marie Rousseau

Poet as Performer...

or theatre, and since there isn't a vocabulary for this kind of criticism, everything we're doing here is brand new."

Innovation is nothing new to Holman; a couple of years ago he founded the now well-known Poetry Calendar, which is a published list of poetry readings in the New York City area partially funded by the New York State Council on the Arts. He is also the director of the Performance Troupe, a group of CETA/CCF poets who invade cultural centers in the city with collaborative poetry readings. This concept also has a twist to it: the Troupe is actively looking for and creating an audience, not just waiting for one to come along.

"A poet deals with total spontaneity when he

reads," says Holman. "He is a—magician of the moment. But unlike a play, where an actor portrays only one character, a poet, when he reads, must assume the many voices in a poem and, of course, those voices are the poet's *own*."

The Performance Troupe's producer is Ed Friedman and the literary coordinator is Madeleine Keller. According to Holman, it was Friedman who brought in the idea of performance poetry as a workshop and as a traveling piece. "What we're doing here is also job training for poets. We are trying to develop marketplaces for readings since it is mostly through readings that poets make money and not through book sales. By developing these readings, poets can get their work out, get the recognition they deserve, and the money they want. Poets want money now!"

Where money is concerned, Holman feels that most poets have been getting the short end of the

stick because they see what they do as pure, and they fear that doing it for money will corrupt their intentions. Many well-known poets may write lousy stuff, yet are recognized poets mainly because of their reading skills. These poets know how to "entertain" their audiences with sensationalized behavior that has nothing to do with the written word. Holman is aware of this: "You can take a bad poem and make it seem good by giving it a good reading, but this is not our intent. What we are stressing, however, is that an audience will probably accept risks taken by poets reading their work as long as the risks are made in the direction of reaching out to the audience. If changes in the environment—the use of props, dance or even background music—are elements of that risk, well why not?"

If most poets do read in a monotone, it could be called the "listen-to-me-I'm-a-poet" voice which has been adopted as the "only way to read" by many coffee-clutch literary groups. The end words of each line are given in a soft, feminine stretch that is nothing near a speaking voice and has all the potency of a sleeping pill. But even if you rid the stage of these tranquilizers, will better readings help the quality of poetry? James Dickey and Gilbert Sorrentino are two poets who feel that "over-analysis" and the very idea of "poet as performer" is exactly what has helped the dissemination of the written word, yet Patti Smith is one poet and Richard Hell another who have actually left the written word at times to put words to music, finding a much larger audience in the process. Maybe poets are thinking of becoming performers because they've realized that's what people want and "if you can't beat 'em, join 'em?"

"People aren't reading. They watch TV and see films—all performance-oriented activities. But we're gonna outflank 'em. Our biggest audience is in the schools. Our biggest audience is the kids and their love for language. Poets belong in the schools, cultivating their tastes for reading. I'm optimistic. We're developing an audience who cares," Holman says hopefully and with a smile.

Most poets may be lost and confused about where they belong in society, but projects like the Performance Troupe and the Poetry Performance Workshop are making sure that the act of poetry itself is going somewhere. Bring your work and try it. December dates are: 12/7/79 and 12/21/79. For the Performance Troupe's schedule, check with Madeleine Keller at the CCF office. □

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