

Journal

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News of The Cultural
Council Foundation
CETA Artists Project

Artists in CETA: Making the Most Of Affiliation For Public & Media

By KEN SOFER

All CCF/CETA artists should be aware of two distinct yet related issues: the recognized art establishment's apparent lack of interest in the CETA Artists Project and the reluctance of many CETA artists to publicize their connection with the project. Although my focus will be on the visual arts, the points are applicable to all disciplines within the CCF/CETA Artists Project.

The term "art establishment" needs little clarification. It is that historically well known sodality which arises wherever art is produced, bought and sold, and has existed in one form or another since the Romans began collecting Greek art. In the United States, especially in New York City where this cadre is particularly active and complex, many individuals, groups, and institutions are involved, including selected artists, critics, magazines and newspapers, dealers, collectors, speculators, corporations, museums, etc. Visual artists achieve legitimization in this system by showing with the right dealers, being reviewed by the right critics (working, of course, for the right publications) and being bought by the right collectors, private and corporate. The end result of true legitimization is always money—although not necessarily for the artist. Also, the process outlined above, does not necessarily follow in the given order. Interactions between involved parties are so complex, so interdependent that it is usually impossible for outsiders to tell who initiated what deal, and in what sequence various events take place (for example, the Rothko case).

While all of this is well known, the obvious connection between it and the CETA issue is overlooked. The CETA Artists Project functions outside of this establishment. While legitimate art is being produced, the two primary establishment ingredients are lacking—the selling and the buying. Emphasis in the project is not mainly on product, but split between product and service. Artists are chosen for reasons other than the daringness or marketability of their work—there is the accountability and service criteria which is inherent in governmentally funded positions. In the commercial fine-art world, powerful critics make and break artists. Powerful dealers are able to attract the right critics. But in as much as a critic's rise to power is dependent upon making some good predictions, (i.e., which new-to-the-scene artists are good investments) they are dependent upon the



South Street Seaport Museum

Harry Walker

Design Team Plunges Into Community Work

By ROBERT HUTCHINSON

Wednesday of Orientation Week: a Wednesday of ominous rumblings, of desperate rearrangements at the City Center. Till then we were more or less unified in spirit, united in our CETA hopes. But Wednesday, with its urgency and sense of drama, was different; in a sudden shouting and movement of crowds Hitchcock might have envied, this conversation could be heard on the stairs: "Are you a residency?" "No, I'm a team." It was not Martians learning to speak English, it was you and me, trying to find where, for the next year or so, we belonged.

On Wednesday all creativity, like earth and water, was divided into two parts: residencies and teams. For last year's CCF/CETA artists, residencies were familiar; but for all of us, teams were something else again: like rumors in a Busby Berkeley musical that Cultural Commissioner Henry Geldzahler and City Council President

Carol Bellamy were casting a new show. What are the teams, and why are they being created now, in the year of the great expansion?

Five specialized teams under coordinator Suzanne Randolph were announced at the orientation: Public Art, Documentation and Neighborhood Awareness, Exhibition Services, Graphic Design, and Literary Works.

Of these, the Graphic Design Team, since it is one of the most visible, will serve as an example of where the five teams are headed, and show why the team coordinators and artist-members feel there is real excitement in this new-old idea. Headed by Lloyd Stevens, who last year was the Brooklyn borough coordinator, the Graphic Design Team consists of eight persons: Stevens and seven artists chosen because of the quality of their work and their professionalism.

When their new home is completed, they will be established in a 40 by 50-foot skylit room on the fourth floor of Brooklyn Borough Hall, a landmark building. With its high ceilings, wooden floors, and arched windows, it will house what Stevens hopes will be a highly professional design studio, answering the needs of the community.

But why a team? ...Stevens explains: Since the founding of the CCF/CETA Artists Project, there has always been a tremendous demand for design

Poetry

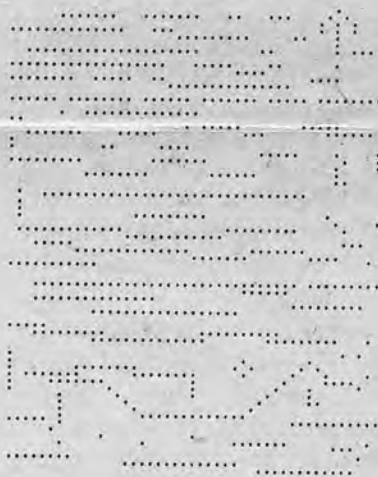
A Work In and Out of Progress

semi-lit lamp on desk society
of eternal incomplete manuscripts,
the bulb has disappeared
just the dimmed light remains
on great unimportant thoughts,
pencil eraser reminds my feet
how cold the floor feels tonight
when nothing is supposed to occur,
the same song will be heard
for the next seventy two hours
while writing yourself a letter
you have no intentions of mailing,
the lyrics you remembered so well
in the day are forgotten at night
in light dreams you are avoiding
to continue walking straight lines
in the twisted space between you
and the location of your shadow
where it's safe to be misunderstood
and the words of wisdom are:
the tape recorder records everything!
you will hear your footsteps
in a foreign country night club
ordering one of many last drinks
because it looks like it'll rain
and I will gently put my arms
around your soaked wet waist
and ask you: so what else is new?

Community Work

daydreaming across
the absentminded bridge
to embrace shadows,
in another world
the mind disappears
the body stays here
feelings explode
into sex episodes
everything is heard
in different words
the stage melts
with the audience
the night becomes
everybody's lover
strange in some circles
straight in others

Autobiographical Daydream



—Pedro Pietri

Artists in CETA...

dealer's ability to choose and market.

With dealers busily engaged in a fast-paced and cut-throat business, and with hundreds of young art historians desperately trying to become the next Clement Greenberg or Hilton Kramer, plus well established critics frantically maintaining their connections and positions, on what level can CETA hope to compete? For, as stated earlier, the Artists Project was not created to function in an art market. CCF/CETA was designed to provide support for artists by allowing them temporary relief from the hustle; an opportunity to develop work while bringing to the community a high level of artistic experience. In this way CCF/CETA offers us a radical perspective on the arts—as a service-oriented rather than a commodity-producing industry. This is why an artist won't gain traditional art establishment legitimacy through a CCF/CETA job, mural, or group show. And this is why artists should not be looking for it through their CETA functions. One should be able to achieve an equally valid sense of artistic worth through service. Of course I am not so naive as to suggest that a serious artist does not need traditional affirmation through shows, reviews, and sales. But CETA shouldn't function in this area. We all know that while Leo Castelli is promoting an important new show, his friendly critics won't have the time or space for a non income-producing mural unveiling. But CETA activities have their own constituency—and who is to say that these activities are not as culturally significant?

Therefore, while it might be nice to find *Art-*

forum or the *New York Times Arts and Leisure Section* interested in social issues (and occasionally they are), we must not be surprised or disappointed when they are not. CETA artists' constituent audience is reached through other publications.

Of course when artists take CETA jobs they don't stop functioning in the art establishment. During the past year, for instance, CCF/CETA artists have had extra-CETA shows, and some have been favorably reviewed. However, artists generally choose not to acknowledge their connection with the CETA project. One example comes to mind, in which copies of a CCF/CETA artist's lengthy, detailed resume were available at a one-person show, without one reference to the artist's CETA activities. In another instance a catalog from a mid-town group show included the biographies of the participating artists, one of whom was a CCF/CETA artist who chose to make no reference to that fact. CETA shows are listed on resumes without reference to the fact that they were CETA-related. In many instances, artists clearly have no say in what is printed about them, but here were occasions where there was control. And examples extend beyond the visual arts—to poetry readings and publications, and dance performances. Why the secrecy? Perhaps there is still a stigma connected with what is viewed as a public dole—perhaps no one wants to admit not having earned above a poverty income the year before last—perhaps some really did earn above a poverty income and would rather not draw unnecessary attention to themselves. Some of these fears may be paranoiac, some may be legitimate. Nevertheless, much good could be done by CETA artists acknowledging and promoting their affiliation with the project.

For although CETA might not be able to legiti-

mize the artist in the art establishment, the artist can legitimize CETA. We do not remember all those wonderful Abstract Expressionists because of what they did on the Federal Arts Project, but we remember the Federal Arts Project because of those artists. That great artists come out of FAP backgrounds is vital evidence of the value of such programs. CETA will find its way into the art magazines and history books in connection with the artists whose achievements become recognized by these publications. This is very important to the future life of governmental support of the American artist.

Meanwhile, there are many publications which could service the project. For example, a study of the media habits of CETA-service recipients would probably turn up precious few *Artforum* subscriptions. The most widely read daily paper in New York is the *Daily News*—the most widely circulated periodicals in the country are the *Reader's Digest* and the *National Enquirer*. While their editorial policies are often hostile to the arts, artists and arts administrators don't take these publications seriously enough to respond. This is a mistake. *Reader's Digest* prints articles on the "CETA Billion Dollar Boondoggle," while *National Enquirer's* view of governmental support of contemporary art is exemplified by the following quote from a recent article:

"Bubble-headed bureaucrats have thrown away nearly \$120,000 of your hard-earned tax money buying way-out art for a regional office of the US Environmental Protection Agency." This is what most of America reads and believes. We should not underestimate the importance of publicizing the social and spiritual achievements of governmentally funded arts programs through these media. Also, community, ethnic, and local foreign language (Spanish, Jewish, Ukrainian) publications are important.

Our message—that the art community is more than just a self-serving bund—must reach the New York communities, from which come the recipients of our artistic services and the voters whose opinions affect public policy. Our limited resources and man/womanpower should be directed towards efficiently reaching the greatest number of New Yorkers. As the project scores more success stories in the communities, and artists begin speaking openly of their employment, CCF/CETA will find its way into art-scene vocabulary as legitimate activity for a serious artist. □

Design Team...

services. Under the residency system, however, a sponsor would request an artist, the artist would look over the situation, and get a residency of perhaps three months. Usually he would complete the assignment in much less time than that, and then be in a make-work situation, thinking up projects to fill out his time.

An additional problem arose from the fact that many small neighborhood organizations needed graphic art but could not—especially in today's economy—afford a full-time staff member. Nor was it just in the field of graphics: the CCF Artists Project experienced last year a growing demand for specific arts projects, such as neighborhood histories, large-scale works of public art, traveling exhibitions, and public writing: everything from commissioned plays to projected poetry trucks. It was to meet these needs that the five teams were created.

Already Stevens' team is providing the following services: creating banner designs, small flyers, large posters, brochures, logos, and letterheads. The team provides camera-ready art for the sponsor, but the sponsor must pay for all materials and



Senior Citizens League of Flatbush (from L to R): Katie Norwood, Roberta Haber, Deborah Bitter, Helen Lofman, and CCF/CETA teacher Jerzy Bitter. Watercolors by Helen Lofman. Photo by Barbara Ellen Adelman.

for the cost of printing. So far the artists have gone out to assignments individually, but when their new home in Brooklyn Borough Hall overlooking Brooklyn Bridge and the Mall is completed, they will go out in groups. One remembers the WPA and the names, legendary now, of those who went out in threes and fours.

Stevens feels he is lucky to have such capable and cooperative artists. Five were in the project last year and were selected because of their high level of performance and their community work. The two new members were selected because of their portfolios and promise as team members. "Artists in our team," Stevens says, "must do more than work at their drawing boards, as important as that is. They must be ready to go and interview new sponsors and answer an incredible number of design needs." These, for example, are a few of the projects the artists have already done: Wendy Tiefenbacher, a poster for Displaced Homemakers Opportunity Conference; Elizabeth Pollock, a brochure for Queensborough College; Jimmy Wright, a logo for the Good Old Lower Eastside, Inc.; James Margulies, a banner for Columbia University; George Gershinowitz, a poster for the Department of Cultural Affairs; Rosalyn Hawthorne, work for Abused Women's Aid in Crisis;

Eventually, Stevens wants to increase the size of the team to 10 to 12 artists, for there is no doubt that the team idea is proving successful. Last month alone there were 50 applications for the design team and 25 percent were answered. A larger team in the new Brooklyn home would enable them to take care of an even larger number.

And the members of the team seem satisfied too, in spite of hours and strict deadlines that might seem to many people those of a nine-to-five job. "It's really exciting for us," Jimmy Wright says, with a half-smile. "Remember, the Bauhaus was a team too!" Of the five teams, the Graphic Design is probably most truly team-like right now, and shows the possibilities of the concept.

With the projected increase in size, Stevens hopes there will not be a falling off of quality. "There should be, for all of us in CCF/CETA, not two or three levels of work, depending on whether the sponsor is small or large, but one level."

The aim of all of us, whether we ended on that raucous Wednesday in a residency or on one of the teams, should be, Lloyd Stevens feels, to work so well that someone, perhaps thirty years from now, will pick up a poster or a banner we were working on, and say: "You know—that was good work they were doing in those days." □

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CETA Artists And Workers Plan Demonstration

The CETA Artists Organization is calling on all CETA artists to join with thousands of other non-artist CETA workers to demonstrate May 23 at noon for a waiver of the 18-month work limit.

The demonstration will be held in front of the regional office of the U.S. Department of Labor at 46th St. and Broadway. The waiver would provide CETA participants with one more year of employment.

All CCF/CETA artists are urgently requested to get the petitions distributed at pay day filled out with as many names as possible by May 17. They should be given directly to CAO representatives or mailed to CAO, 435 Central Park West, No. 1 E, N.Y.C. 10025.

CCF/CETA Director To Moderate Arts Panel

Rochelle Slovin, CCF/CETA Artists Project director, will be panel moderator at a special conference May 19 on "Brushing up on the Arts and the Public Sector."

The conference will be held at City Hall, the purpose being to acquaint New York City's cultural community with the services, programs, and projects that are available to artists through public mechanisms.

City Council President Carol Bellamy and Commissioner Henry Geldzahler of the Department of Cultural Affairs will make introductory remarks, starting at 10 a.m. The panel on CETA and the arts, moderated by Ms. Slovin, will start at 10:30, lasting until 11:30 a.m. Panelists will include Gregory Millard, Assistant Commissioner, Dept. of Cultural Affairs; Stanley Brezenoff, Commissioner, N.Y.C. Dept. of Employment; David Bailey, Executive Director of Jazzmobile, and Michael Spencer, Executive Director, Hospital Audiences, Inc.

Mayor Edward Koch will make the welcoming remarks for a second panel discussion at 11:45 a.m. on "Public Funding and Technical Assistance for Artists and Arts Organizations." The conferences are open to every one, and admission is free, but reservations should be made by calling 964-2595.

Sweet 14: Dancers Plan Second Year Of Performances

Last year's CCF/CETA Sweet 14 dance program at Union Square Park was so successful that it has been invited to present another series of eight performances this spring and summer.

The concerts will take place every Monday from May 16 to July 2 at 12:30 p.m. at Union Square Park. They are a part of an over-all program of 36 concerts running from May 16 to Oct. 3 and sponsored by the 14th St.—Union Square Area Project, Inc.

The CCF/CETA series was well attended last year and received strong media coverage. The performances include a wide variety of modern dance ranging from abstract through lyric, dramatic, and ethnic.

The schedule for the CCF/CETA concerts is as follows: May 16, David Woodberry, special opening performance with music; May 21, Beverly Brown Dancensemble; May 28, Kathryn Berenson and Stormy Mullis Dances; June 4, David Malamot and Cathy Williams; June 11, Theodora Yoshikami with the Morita Dance Company; June 18, Dana Reitz, dances; June 25, Martha Bowers and Mitchell Rose in Mitchell Rose Dance Co.; and July 2, the African Music & Dance Ensemble of Ladji Camara.

Journal welcomes submissions from all CCF/CETA artists in the form of articles and article ideas on the visual, performing, and literary arts. All inquiries and suggestions, addressed to Grover Amen, Journal, CCF/CETA Artists Project, 175 Fifth Ave., N.Y.C. 10010, will be answered promptly. Or call days 473-5666, nights, 596-9353, 7-10 p.m.

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Joseph Delaney

Nancy Wells

Short Takes

Joseph Delaney... Four days a week I come to my studio in the Henry Street Settlement. It's a large sunny place and everyone here is extremely pleasant. I've done several paintings suggested by the neighborhood, including a 40 x 50-inch acrylic of a performance of *La Traviata* at the Henry Street Playhouse. I may have started painting because one of my school teachers in my home town of Knoxville, Tennessee, pressed a fifty-cent piece into my hand for a prize drawing I'd done. That was a lot of money for a child in those days. I'm old enough to have worked on the WPA. That was very exciting. Philip Evergood was my advisor, and I was assigned part of the time to the Children's Aid Society. One fantastic assignment was at the Metropolitan Museum, where I worked in the American Wing—among other things duplicating, with great precision, Paul Revere ware. I worked

three days a week for the WPA, compared to four days now, for CCF/CETA. My main influences as a painter were probably Thomas Hart Benton, in whose class I studied, along with Jackson Pollock, at the Art Students League, and also George Bridgman, with his helpful anatomy class. At 74 I am the oldest artist in CCF/CETA. The older artist, I feel, has a larger number of accumulated works, has a more interesting story to tell, but obviously doesn't have the physical stamina of a younger person. I admire CETA's humanitarian aims, broader than the more politically oriented WPA. But I do feel CCF/CETA should give artists more freedom to do their own work. An artist will work an incredible number of hours on a subject that interests him, but if he is not a machine, it has to be work of his own choice. On the whole, this is a good time for me. I can't help feeling a little pleased that the college I attended, the University of Tennessee at Knoxville, is honoring me with a tribute, this May 14-16. I have to be there to make a speech and unveil an oil I did of Martin Luther King, Jr.

Kenn M. Stepman... Entering the CCF/CETA Artists Project came at a time following a year or more of great personal and artistic change. Many of the ideas of art I had so long nurtured no longer served me and were set aside. What newer ideas were developing were little more than embryos.

Until this time my life had been a private one withdrawn into my art. But as I grew older, newer insights dictated a willingness to risk my talents in a competitive world of ideas. Making application to the CETA Project was one of these first steps; with it I brought a greater awareness of my own ignorance and powers.

Had I, at this time, been asked to define my creative goals, I might have more grandly stated: that it was to walk as surely as I knew how to the edge of human knowledge, and there, standing with my bare toes dangling over the brink, at once to step out, knowing that to look down was probably the only sure way of falling. And so there I would stand looking ahead with the wind rushing up at my sides until either others were to join me, or, in fear, I would leap back to surer ground. But with each step I have found others there waiting and I wonder if I will ever be alone again.

If I have required any two things of the Artists Project and its administrators, it has been that they benefit the careers of the individual artists and significantly further the welfare of the artists' community. I agree with those who would hold that community service is inherent in what an artist does, and equity more a function of accessibility to it. Where these criteria have not been met the artist has been reduced to the level of subservient worker, and a public trust violated. Where they have been met, the artist has been viewed as a co-equal professional. The ground between has often troubled me.

When, in early 1978, I entered the Artists Project, my ideas were no more than toothpicks glued together. One of the first questions I addressed was that of its suitability to a larger and public scale. Just how esoteric, just how accessible was my work to a broad public? How accessible need art be to justify itself in a public place? These were the questions that wandered through my mind with the result that I needed to free my work from any references to an elitist education, from the signs and symbols—from the jargon of a specialized education in art. Beyond this my ideas and the work that contained them would have to stand bare. The process has been rewarding.

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