

Journal

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News of The Cultural
Council Foundation
CETA Artists Project



Group portrait of HOLA members, the AHA/CETA actors' group includes, (l to r): Miguel Angel Diaz, Eddie Gallardo, Jerry Gonzalez, Alfredo Hernandez, Josefa Victoria Monter, John Faro Pi Roman, Guillermo Lucero, and Eddie Ruperto. Marco Kalish

Book Show Documents Riches of Project

By GROVER AMEN

"Original documentation of the Project by the artists themselves. There's no reason why documentation has to be second-hand, limited to photographs. And if it can get into performance, into motion, so much the better. That's what this show is all about."

So spoke Susan Share on the opening night of *The Naked Book*, a show she single-handedly put together at the BACA Downtown Cultural Center, 111 Willoughby St., Brooklyn, supported by her resident sponsor, the Center for Book Arts in Manhattan. It was the night of a near-typhoon, but cold rains and 40 m.p.h. winds had not prevented a goodly crowd of participating artists, staff members, and well-wishers from gathering in Brooklyn to celebrate the occasion. High spirits were not dampened either by the prospects of the March termination date for 35 CETA artists, including Susan herself.

Images, rich with texture, color, and heavily

accented by collage and three-dimensional effects, were what the show was all about; it spilled generously along walls, tables, and sculpture stands throughout the two-room BACA gallery, many individual pieces being plucked off the walls to become part of a live reading or performance. The readings were like a nostalgic replay from the Project's more elusive legacy, the human imagery, faces, voices, words: Bob Holman, poet of many masks, on this occasion outfitted in a white jacket and red bow tie, holding at arm's length and reciting with lyrical humor and gusto, his six-foot-long horizontal scroll poem (hand-bound by Susan Share) *Dining Out at the Hotel Orpheon*; Roland Legiardi-Laura, moving spirit of the *Words to Go* traveling poetry van, reciting his vertical scroll poem impaled on two drumsticks; Janet Bloom, slowly but intensely moving in measured steps, holding out her book of words and images to the audience, as though it was a votive offering; Haaz Hosseini dancing with a sturdy mechanical partner composed of hardened slabs of wheat-paste pulp; Kathryn Bernson and Stormy Mullis reciting words in a closet; Cassia Berman, brood-

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AHA and CETA: A Personal Memoir

By GUILLERMO LUCERO

For thirty minutes the slender young man with the haunted eyes had spoken of his agonizing loneliness. His only friends were photographs torn from magazines and taped to chairs. He spoke to them of his desperate efforts to remain happy. I could feel his pain as he described in vivid detail his previous attempts at suicide. When he swallowed the two white pills and finally lay down to die the well-dressed men and women spectators sat for a few moments in stunned silence. Abruptly the room exploded into loud applause. I slapped my hands together with enthusiasm, gratefully releasing the accumulated tension constricting my chest.

The occasion was an AHA-CETA performance of a play by Edward Gallardo. The suicidal young man was actor-director Lui Marquez. The two white pills were Tic Tac mint mouth fresheners. The audience was made up of employees of the U.S. Defense Contract Services Administration, gathered for an Hispanic Heritage Week presentation.

This performance was one of hundreds flashing by my eyes during my selection of material for a recent slide presentation documenting the AHA-CETA Artists Project. This selection process spurred me to write an article describing my involvement in 360 days and nights of cultural activity as program developer of the AHA-CETA Artists Project.

My first few weeks pass in a bewildering succession of meetings, planning workshops, and exhibitions, rehearsals and community outreach visits with Field Coordinator Luis Melendez to promote our program. On our rickety subway excursions he shares with me his experiences as founder and performer with a traveling street theatre group in Puerto Rico. He conveys his vision of the theatre's dynamic potential to galvanize our communities. From Luis, I begin to learn the complexities of New York City's Hispanic Art Movement. He tells of trials and tribulations the previous year in running the AHA-CETA Project all by himself and genuinely welcomes me and newly hired promotion coordinator Manuel Juan Touron to help supervise our rambunctious project.

During our travels through every borough and barrio of New York City we meet dedicated community workers and leaders. In El Barrio, Dori Collazo, director of the Bilingual-Bicultural School desires performances and workshops in music and puppetry by our professional artists to supplement her imaginative program. There, all academic subjects are taught to her gifted children in both Spanish and English while using art as a catalyst. Nearby at the James Weldon Community Center,

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Book Show...

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ing and menacing, describing herself as "high priestess of the spirit of the bathroom," ensconced at a low table in the ladies room, a glass of white wine at her right, a pile of tootsie rolls on her left, typing out a poetry journal on toilet paper heisted from the Integral Yoga Institute ("Beautiful! I love it!" exclaims Charlene Victor, BACA director); and Brenda Connor-Bey, tall, spare, elegant, reading from *her* personal journals, entitled appropriately *Some Bare Facts*, proud, impassioned observations on poetry, blackness, and womanhood.

The Book, Susan Share's hand-bound compendium of photographs documenting the CCF project and presented last November to Mrs. Joan Mondale, was loaned back by the vice-president's wife for the occasion. Augmenting it was the even more ambitious *Naked Book* in two thick volumes: image after image struggling to survive the impending sweep of the Artists Project into the abyss of history. Speaking of documents surviving, one odd, irrelevant, but marvelous specimen: a 1935 photograph found on the street by Susan Share shows Brooklyn Dodger catcher Al Lopez inexplicably *sliding* into *first* base in a game with the St. Louis Cardinals, May 8, 1935 at Ebbets Field. How's that for survival? We closed the good book, brooding on poet Jeff Wright's apt one-liner: "All I ask of the immediate future is to be in it."

AHA and CETA...

cont. from page 1

Fred Wilson and Maria Mar request art workshops to help return their facility closer to its original function as a Theatre Arts Center. We meet with Estrella Rivera Jacobowitz of the federally funded Project SABE program to arrange dance and drama workshops and performances at several schools with sizable Spanish-speaking populations.

The Book (for Susan Share)

The book is too complex
to fit around a piece of writing.

When the book was taken
its makers had seen it too little
had yet to read
had yet to learn of themselves from.

The pages and the book
are not continuous in the same way.
To take images from a book
and return them to become
a book is not always possible.

As the book was taken
the young naturally, the talented
forgot to leave their souls out
got sore hard spots of distrust.

One can break the book into two pieces
by merely stating

Part II

even though Part I has not been named.
The giver grinned
looked for dust at the podium
and made a speech
hinting the book's power is tribute.

At first the book was oriented.
There was a direction to read it.
Later this was not true.



Susan Share, at opening of her exhibit *The Naked Book*, manipulates a folded paper sculpture.

Stanford Golob

Organizers of Hispanic Heritage Week for federal employees (Maria Ortiz of the Defense Department, Larry Acevedo of the Justice Department and Al Anaya of The Internal Revenue Service) request performances of poetry, dance and theatre for their employees. At these gatherings, high-ranking supervisors will recite the disgracefully low federal employment percentages among Hispanics and assure employees of their rights to equal promotional opportunity. They will be asked to help recruit more Hispanics for federal jobs.

On the Lower East Side Carlos Adorno helps organize tenants to maintain housing in the face of "urban removal projects." Our concerts and plays will entertain residents at block parties.

Nearby, Director Oscar Rivera and assistants Nestor Rios and Bob Anduze of Mobilization for Youth use various strategies to retrieve young people entangled with the law and direct them toward productive employment. They are interested in our workshops which have practical application such as photography and video. A few blocks further south, Helene Hodges, director of Madison Preparatory School, prefers workshops in the visual arts, including ceramics and mural painting for her students. Her program combines aerospace career training with academic subjects to motivate youths turned off from education in regular junior high schools.

Near Yankee Stadium, Luis Cancel, director of the Bronx Museum of Arts and his assistant Norma Torres focus on the museum as a generator of a wide range of cultural activities. Located on the ground floor of the Bronx borough hall courthouse, the museum can use our performances to attract employees and visitors to enjoy innovative art exhibitions during their lunch hour. Meanwhile, Bill Aguado travels the streets for the Bronx Council on the Arts, identifying and organizing worthy artistic projects. In cooperation with Bill and Community Board #1 we plan an Hispanic Festival at a park the local people are trying to rescue from exclusive use by derelicts and dope dealers. Bill invites our artists to exhibit at his storefront gallery. For struggling, newly organized theatre groups he sponsors our technical workshops in set design, make-up, costume, lighting and management.

At the Jamaica Art Center, Tanya Bien invites our participation in a theatre-concert program for senior citizens. While upstairs at the Queens Council on the Arts, Carole McCully orchestrates a complex system delivering cultural services to various ethnic neighborhoods. She directs us to neighborhood stabilization programs formed to cool the tensions of newly integrated areas. Our performances will help promote friendship and unity by assembling residents in relaxed, non-confrontational gatherings.

I recall attending numerous meetings in Brooklyn and Staten Island with U.S. Park Ranger Jose Rosario, community liaison for Gateway National Park. As a former naval base Gateway has inherited auditoriums and large hangers—excellent facilities for performances. Jose wishes to expand the popular conception of Gateway as mainly a place for

As the book was taken
the subjects of the photographs
didn't know there was a book
containing them and missing.

At first the pictures were windows
well framed
later pictures lost definition
merged into each other
framing each other
reversing and repeating.

Where the book was taken
there were happy receivers
and handshakes as success
passed to not understanding lack of need.

One sentence with a hole the sentence
around.

Words, pictures and a book
are different logical categories.
We are speaking of the book.

The crowd looked up
when they realized a crowd can not have
a book. The day had some motion
gaspd into certainties or not.

We will take one sentence and
remove
an essential part leaving a hole
the sentence will revolve around.

—Nathan Whiting



Donald R. Manes, Borough President of Queens, proclaims "CELEBRATE DANCE!" week to honor CCF festival in Queens. (l to r): Andora Hodgin, CCFAP Dance Coordinator; Gladys Roman, CCFAP dance artist; Muriel Manings of QCC Dance Faculty.

Courtesy of Queensborough Community College

athletic fun and sun on the beach. He plans concerts, plays and exhibitions to encourage the poor people of the inner city to make greater use of the conveniently located, tax-supported facilities of Gateway. Similarly, Joe Piazza of the Snug Harbor Cultural Center invites us to sponsor an all-day Hispanic Festival to attract Staten Island's Spanish-speaking population to make regular use of his neoclassically monumental cultural complex.

At CABS, a modern, architecturally exquisite nursing home serving blacks and Hispanics in Bedford-Stuyvesant, we talk to Administrator Emma Albert. She wants to make CABS a model of compassionate nursing care throughout the

nation. She loves her patients and welcomes performances of our artists to cheer the daily lives of her elderly friends—grandparents of us all—now lonely, invalid, and forgotten.

From our education at the University of the Streets we discover opportunities for our artists to make indispensable contributions toward revitalizing devastated neighborhoods. Our artists expose audiences to music by Rafael Hernandez, Pedro Flores, Hector Campos Parsi and to plays by Jose Marti, Miguel de Cervantes, Lope de Rueda, Ramon Mendez Quinones, and Edward Gallardo. Performances by our talented Hispanic artists stimulate pride in our continuing cultural traditions. Our productions and workshops help instill in our audiences the necessary confidence to overcome current social problems. Our artists directly attack the underlying causes of apathy and demoralization which afflict our uprooted Hispanic communities.

At rehearsals we glimpsed exciting moments which augured well for future performances. In the apartment of pianist Awilda Villarini, the voices of Angelo Cruz and Brenda Feliciano commingled in exquisite harmony during one soaring passage of their rehearsal. At the New Rican Village, dancers Ana Ortiz and Miguel Angel Diaz with percussionist Ricardo Torres, bassist Eddie Ruperto and trumpet player Jerry Gonzales created a fascinating improvisation of music and movement. And at a premiere presentation of "La Cueva de Salamanca" at Madison Prep, the cast of Mirtha Cartaya, Jose Machado, Manuel Martinez, Zully Montero, Milo Salazar, and Brau Villar flung themselves into a vivacious modern version of Cervantes' classic comedy, dynamically staged and choreographed by Dume.

I remember many successful events. The months have passed so quickly. I can hardly believe that Luis and I have personally contacted over 150 representatives of 125 community agencies and arts organizations to promote our program. Our records show that our artists have given over 250 performances since March and 575 workshops.

We've also organized or participated in eight exhibitions, completed four murals, two theater backdrops and several schools full of puppets. Our 36 artists have reached an audience estimated at 200,000.

Much of the satisfaction of coordinating the AHA-CETA Artists Project derives from watching artists achieve a special interaction with the audience during a moment of esthetic excellence. Often these moments pass unrecorded. I mention just a few of the many I've been privileged to witness.

I remember a white-jacketed Raul Santiago Sebasco, sky high on natural adrenalin, at the bandshell at Lincoln Center, trying to channel the energies of the dynamic performers and musicians of "Piñones" by Tato Laviera. The expansion of this musical from the tiny space at the Nuyorican Poets Cafe to a Lincoln Center spectacular was a triumphant vindication of Raul's vision of encouraging the talents of local people to create art.

I saw two occasions where the dancing of Ana and Miguel riveted the attention of audience.³ The seniors at Little Star of Broome Street were fascinated by their movements—so perfectly synchronized with the exotic rhythms of percussionist Ricardo Torres. Months later a noisy lunchtime crowd of North Central Bronx Hospital employees was stunned into attention by the interplay of futuristic electronic sounds of Eddie Ruperto and the percussion of Ricardo. Spellbound, they focused on the graceful and intense arabesques sculpted by the movements of Ana and Miguel.

I recall poet Americo Casiano before an audience of FBI and Drug Enforcement agents at the Department of Justice, reciting images of rage and pain (frank language from convicts and addicts thrown in the faces of their adversaries).

In my memory I see an elegantly gowned Awilda Villarini seated on the stage of Carnegie Recital Hall. Her face a mask of intense concentration, with flashing fingers she drew fireworks from the concert grand piano. I recall three occasions when our singers enchanted three generations of Hispanics.

I see an audience of 200 kindergarteners and first graders, squirming like puppies, freeze in their seats at the sound of Brenda Feliciano's powerful operatic voice. Several children clap their hands over their ears to shut out the astonishing sound. When the music ends all the children and teachers of the Bilingual-Bicultural school clap their hands delightedly.

At another auditorium, Awilda, Brenda and Angelo deliver their concert at graduation ceremonies of the bilingual program of Lehman College. Friends and family envelop our performers with warm gratitude for the music of Puerto Rico which accompanied this emotional occasion perfectly. Afterward we are invited to share homemade cooking and down home dancing.

At CABS Nursing Home the concert of Puerto Rican music releases an outpouring of emotion from the gathering of elderly invalids. The music evokes such poignant memories that tears roll down the cheeks of audience, performers and photographer.

Through the AHA/CETA Artists Project we have felt the power of our profession to help create communities of people responding to each other. Our performances and workshops have been part of a process to unify apathetic, isolated and even hostile individuals into groups who can work together. We have seen the effective contribution of our art work toward the reclamation of our devastated neighborhoods. Now that we know our art work is essential in repairing the unraveling fabric of our society, can we agree to be eliminated from our rightful jobs?

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Panel Discusses Making the Most Of the Press

The difficulties of an unknown artist getting a good press from a known critic were detailed with a vengeance March 11 at a panel discussion featuring Lawrence Alloway, art critic, Jennifer Dunning, N.Y. Times dance critic, and Victoria Lucas, a public relations consultant specializing in promoting the arts.

The panel, sponsored by the Artists Project Job Development Unit, was held at the Black Theatre Alliance on West 42nd Street and was moderated by Leslie Stackel, project press relations director.

In her opening comments, Ms. Lucas stressed the importance of having a third person prepare an artist's press release, whether it be a professional PR firm or simply a capable friend of the artist. More technically, she explained that the first two paragraphs should succinctly state all the essential information, as press releases tend to get edited from the bottom up. Ms. Dunning agreed and added a few more points:

- Take care to send the release to *all* pertinent editors and reporters on a given publication. Don't phone.

- Timing is of the utmost importance. Get the releases to the right editors well in advance.

- Try not to have your exhibit or performance outside of Manhattan. Though it's unfair, critics are reluctant to travel to the other four boroughs.

- Wherever your event is, to insure that reviewers *can* come, do not schedule it on the same night that the Bolshoi Ballet opens at Lincoln Center.

Mr. Alloway disagreed about the importance of a press release for visual artists, saying that anything he'd get from a PR firm would go straight into the wastebasket. "It's the function of the

gallery," he declared, "to act as liaison between the artist and the critics." He added that a good reproduction of the artist's work on the invitation was the best tool to attract a critic's interest—that further photographs were superfluous, as they can always be requested.

Responding to a more general question about criteria for judging the eclectic diversity of performances and exhibitions today, both critics stressed the irrelevance of absolute standards. "I try to estimate the most pertinent areas of energy right now and work from there," said Alloway. "For me these would include feminism and realism." Alloway went on to emphasize that it's the dealers and galleries that are the movers and shakers of the art scene and that the critics merely respond to their taste. "It's unrealistic," he said, "to expect Hilton Kramer or John Russell to explore underground or alternative spaces. A more viable solution is to have a new publication with competent critics and good professional distribution devote itself to experimental work." He added that, for good or bad, "nobody pays a lot of attention to art critics anyway."

To questions about co-op galleries, Alloway replied that he thought co-ops were exceedingly important and represented the single most successful and serious change in the art distribution system in the last 15 years.

Seminar Analyzes Free Lance Work

At a Job Development panel in February, free-lance work was discussed by artist Ginny Gardner, writer David Jackson, and cartoonist Don Reilly. The dominant theme emerging from the panel was: If you have doubts about a nine to five job, free lance work is even more demanding. "You'll have to hustle assignments 12 hours a day all week," said Jackson. "And then write your assignments on weekends." He stressed two further points: Get all assignment agreements down in writing, and always remain a generalist, but, for each particular assignment, pretend you're a specialist.

Murals Slated For Installation

Four large-scale paintings are scheduled to be installed in late March or early April at four centers of the Human Resources Administration throughout the city. The entire HRA project involves a total of 12 murals and four photo-murals and represents an HRA commitment of \$4,000.

Ademola Olugebefola's 84 by 90-inch mural entitled "Equatorial Equinox," is composed of acrylic and collage on canvas at the HRA Bushwick Center, 30 Thornston St., Brooklyn. The other HRA murals are by Hunt Slonem at St. Nicholas Center, Harlem; by Vincent Smith at Crotona Center, the Bronx; and by Steve Linden at Waverly Center in Manhattan. Another completed HRA project consists of four photo-murals by Dawoud Bey at the Queensboro Center; by George Malave at the Jay Street Center in Brooklyn; by E. Lee White at the East Harlem Center; and by Dan Dawson at the Concourse Center in the Bronx. Eight other murals for the Human Resources Administration will be announced later.

CCF artist Ademola Olugebefola has also completed another project entitled "Auditorium Uplift," consisting of full-length, semi-circular colored draperies for the auditorium stages in I.S. 136 and J.H.S. 43 in School District #5 of Manhattan. Olugebefola's idea was to change the usual drab appearance of stage curtains in the schools: the new draperies are subtly colored in pastel shades of blue, green, and violet. Olugebefola is known for his previous work in set design for the New York Shakespeare Festival, The National Black Theatre, and The New Lafayette Theatre.

* * *

A large outdoor mural by Ellsworth Ausby has been completed on top of the Howard Johnson's plant in Queens Village.

Composed of sharp, jutting lines and bold colors, the horizontal mural is highly visible from the passing trains of the Long Island Railroad. ("His colors are our colors," quipped a Howard Johnson's spokesman.) Dedication ceremonies were planned for the second week in April.

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