



6-2003

Institutional Networks Serving Artists: A Look at Philadelphia

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Institutional Networks Serving Artists: A Look at Philadelphia

Abstract

This paper is a preliminary sketch of institutional networks serving artists in metropolitan Philadelphia based on interviews with 13 organizations from June to August 2002. The approach was to develop a “cognitive map” of the network of institutions that support artists based in the region. That is, what are the nodes and functions in an artist-centered network? What types of links connect these nodes or functions? What nodes and links are the most important?

The study found that Philadelphia’s institutional network appears to operate, by and large, on a *market* model with artists functioning as individual “buyers” in an environment of limited resources and imperfect information. Some parts of the network, however, operate more on a *service* model for categories of artists—including many low-income groups— who because of race, immigration status, or location are cut off from the mainstream cultural system.

Disciplines

Art Practice | Arts and Humanities | Sociology

Comments

SIAP’s Dynamics of Culture research was undertaken from 2003 to 2005 with support by the Rockefeller Foundation.



**Social Impact of
the Arts Project**

University of Pennsylvania
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DYNAMICS OF CULTURE
Working Paper #2003-1

**Institutional Networks Serving Artists:
A Look at Philadelphia**

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June 2003

SIAP's *Dynamics of Culture* research has been generously supported by the Rockefeller Foundation.

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Introduction

Our previous research has highlighted the importance of artists' networks to the vitality of Philadelphia's regional cultural sector. Based on this work, we identified the following objectives for future research:

- Document the network of institutions that support artists and that serve as intermediaries between artists and organizations, communities, or other agents.
- Document the social networks of individual artists and the role of these networks in the context of the community and regional cultural sectors.
- Develop a database of cultural workers/artists based in the Philadelphia metropolitan area— independent artists as well as artistic staff or contractors based at arts and cultural organizations.

As a first step toward our goal of developing a regional artist database and documenting artists' social networks, we examined the institutional infrastructure that connects artists with work in metropolitan Philadelphia. Our approach was to develop a “cognitive map” of the institutional network that supports the region's artists. That is, what are the nodes in the network supporting artists? What are the links that connect the nodes? Which nodes and links are the most important?

Our method was as follows: (1) to identify the region's artist-serving agencies and organizations (in conjunction with development of the 2003 regional cultural inventory) and (2) to interview staff of a sample of non-profit cultural institutions that employ or support artists as a part of their mission. The interviews addressed the following issues:

- What types of artists do you employ or serve? Are there eligibility requirements or geographic parameters that limit the types of artists involved?
- What roles do artists play in your organization? What kinds of relationships do you have with artists? Do artists play a role in the organization's decision-making processes?
- What do you do for artists? What services do you provide?
- Do you connect or refer artists to other organizations? If so, what kinds of organizations?
- How does your organization learn about artists? Where does one go to find artists? How do artists learn about your organization?

- In the broader context of institutional support for Philadelphia area artists, how would you describe the niche occupied by your organization? Do other groups provide comparable services? What does your group do that no one else does?
- Do you keep systematic information on the artists with whom you work? Are you aware of other sources of information on artists working or living in the Philadelphia area?

From June through August of 2002, we conducted interviews staff of 13 Philadelphia-based organizations. (See Appendix 1 for listing of organizations and staff interviewed.) Additional observations have been drawn from participation in a retreat for “cultural organizations that work in community settings” at the Community Arts Center in Wallingford, PA (June 2003) as well as previous study of community arts centers funded by the Culture Builds Community initiative of the William Penn Foundation (1997-2001).

This memo is a preliminary sketch of the institutional network that supports artists in metropolitan Philadelphia. We take a brief look at the profile of artists served, the institutional nodes, and the institutional links based on a sample of artist-serving organizations in the region’s nonprofit sector. Lastly, we look at existing sources of data on Philadelphia artists and point to some issues that require further research.

Profile of Artists Served by Cultural Organizations

Generally, there are four sets of characteristics that describe the types of artists with whom cultural organizations work: discipline or tradition, stage of professional development, social or community mission, and geography.

Discipline or tradition

Artist-serving organizations commonly work with either visual artists or performing artists, and many groups focus on a genre within those broad disciplines—e.g., opera, theater, dance, or classical music within the performing arts or sculpture within the visual arts. However, even among specialized groups, there are interesting interdisciplinary intersections—e.g., visual artists who are involved in set design for an opera, literary artists such as poets or storytellers who perform, or photographers and writers who work with sculptors on public art.

In addition, there are cultural organizations that are actively multi-disciplinary in scope—in particular, community arts centers (Wissahickon Community Center for the Arts) and presenting organizations, notably the Painted Bride Art Center, which shows both visual and performing artists. Organizations with a focus on ethnic-specific or traditional arts and culture (e.g., Asian Arts Initiative, Taller Puertorriqueno, Philadelphia Folklore Project) typically attract both visual and performing artists.

Stage of professional development

Many organizations seek to work with artists at a particular stage of professional development. People use a set of common terms but their meaning varies. The Philadelphia Art Alliance uses one of the more precise definitions of the career cycle of an artist: “emerging,” “mid-career” (10 to 15 years out of graduate school), and

“established.” Generally, the question of who is “emerging” and who is “established” is variable—for example, schools of art tend to see students as “emerging artists” while others assume “emerging artists” have completed their formal training.

Meanwhile, “student artist” is a variable term including (a) school-aged children undertaking progressive study of an art form and (b) college or post-secondary art school students. “Teaching artists” are typically professionals, mid-career or established artists, who teach at community arts centers, schools of art, or higher education institutions. Teaching artists are core professional personnel at arts education-based organizations.

For some organizations, support of “independent artists” is a goal. The Painted Bride Art Center defines independent artists as artists who are “existing on their own means.” The Bride considers an artist as “professional”—regardless whether they work other jobs in order to survive—based on their level of experience, integrity, and commitment to their work. The Pennsylvania Performing Arts on Tour distinguishes “professional” from “amateur” performing artists, or people for whom the arts are “an avocation rather than a profession.”

Social or community mission

A number of organizations seek artists whose work supports broader community or social goals. Some groups are particularly interested in artists “committed to social change” or who espouse the goal of “community transformation.” As its own social goal, the Leeway Foundation supports independent women artists. Artists interested in public art—whether sculpture or mural projects—must be interested in and willing to work directly with communities.

Some organizations strive to create a community of interest based on a particular art form or institution and thus nurture an environment of support for the artist. The purpose of the Philadelphia Dance Alliance, for example, is “to support and strengthen the community of dance in Philadelphia.” The membership includes dancers, dance studios, dance companies, university dance departments, presenters, students, choreographers, audience members, and patrons of the arts. The Delaware Valley Opera Company provides opera lovers and opera singers—and their children—the opportunity “to come together as a community and participation in every aspect of making an opera possible.” Freedom Theatre consciously creates a “cycle” of community participation—local residents come see a play, get involved in the theatre and receive training, participate in and perform works of art, and return to give back to the community as teachers—thereby creating over the long term “a vested community interest in the theatre.”

Geography

A few organizations (Leeway Foundation) are committed to the support of artists that live in the Philadelphia region and residency is a requirement. The Pennsylvania Performing Arts on Tour serves Pennsylvania artists only but reaches out to presenters in a 10-state area. The Philadelphia Exhibitions Initiative supports only Philadelphia area curators, but there is no restriction on participating artists. Some groups focus on the Philadelphia region (Philadelphia Dance Alliance, Delaware Valley Opera Company) but have no residency requirements.

A number of groups tend to work with local or regional artists (New Freedom Theatre, Philadelphia Art Alliance, Penn Career Services, Painted Bride Art Center, and Orchestra 2001) but are part of national or even international networks. Some groups (Fairmount Park Art Association, Mexican Cultural Center) actively seek to connect local communities with artists of notoriety at the local, regional, national, and international level.

Finally, the highly selective group, Astral Artistic Services, uses the Philadelphia-area network of artists, nonprofits, and audiences as a training ground and launching pad for the world's most promising young artists—in this case, classical musicians. Astral's sole requirement in this regard is United States residency.

Institutional Nodes in Artists Network

If we imagine the nonprofit cultural sector as an artist-centered institutional network, how would we describe the nodes of that network? From the artist's point of view, we have identified four key characteristics of these nonprofit nodes: (1) employment or livelihood potential, (2) career development potential; (3) professional influence—decision-making and advisory roles; and (4) types of access—that is, opportunity costs.

Employment or livelihood potential

Cultural organizations afford artists a number of opportunities for earned income inside the arts world. Artistic personnel employed by an organization include positions such as artistic director, program director, or teaching artist. Artists also serve in administrative positions. Often the founder and current executive director of an organization is an artist (e.g., Village of Arts and Humanities). The advantage to an artist of a staff position is relative job stability, a salary and employee benefits, notably health care.

Many artists are hired by cultural organizations on a contractual basis. A teaching artist or a performing artist, for example, hired even for a season or a year is often hired on contract and paid an hourly fee, a fee for service, or a stipend. Some established organizations refer to a union pay scale in determining fees, but many small or community-based groups are not knowledgeable about or in a position to pay professional-level fees. An artist as a contractor, like a consultant, is responsible for personal income taxes and health care coverage.

A highly desirable form of income for a working artist is a grant, fellowship, residency, or an actual commission to create new work. A number of grant-makers provide funds directly to artists in the Philadelphia region—e.g., The Pew Charitable Trusts, Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, the Leeway Foundation, the Independence Foundation, and the Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation. A number of non-profit organizations also provide financial support for independent artists to create new works. Orchestra 2001 commissions composers of classical music; Fairmount Park Art Association commissions new works of public art. The Painted Bride Art Center and the Community Education Center pay a fee directly to artists who come to their centers to present work. Pennsylvania Performing Arts on Tour offers professional development grants to artists on their roster and provides funds—for artists' fees—to presenters that book PennPAT

artists. The Philadelphia Exhibitions Initiatives often funds exhibitions in which artists have been commissioned to do new work. This “trickle-down” support for artists, with nonprofits as the actual grantees, is a common mode of public and private grant-making.

Career development potential

Cultural organizations also afford artists a variety of professional opportunities that are unpaid but have significant potential to advance their careers. These include professional training for art students, teacher training for artists, internships or apprenticeships, client services for artists, and artist exchange programs.

Some organizations provide in-house opportunities for their art students. The performing arts training program at Freedom Theatre, for example, includes job training and is designed as “a bridge to the repertory theatre company.” Dance students at Point Breeze Performing Arts Center have the opportunity to audition for resident dance troupes, which perform all over the region and beyond.

Despite the number of artists who teach and the variety of educational and community settings, college programs and art schools do not train artists to teach. Some nonprofit organizations have tried to address this gap. The Freedom Theatre runs seminars “to teach artists how to teach” and pairs new teachers with “master instructors” for a period of mentorship. The Philadelphia Arts in Education Partnership promotes and supports the artist and art teacher in the classroom. The Asian Arts Initiative has developed a professional development program for the wider community called Artists in Communities Training (ACT), which enables artists of all disciplines “to hone their teaching skills and build a community-based arts movement.”

A great many opportunities afforded by the nonprofit cultural sector, given the number of unpaid or low-paid seasonal positions for artists, can be considered a kind of internship or apprenticeship that serves as “a stepping stone” in their career. The Delaware Valley Opera Company gives opera professionals experience on stage and an opportunity to learn the art of opera from the ground up, from building sets to singing. Some artists on the board provide lessons and coaching for opera singing as well as language mastery. During the winter, performers are not paid for their services and during the summer only a small fee. “We help artists build their resumes, which is the best thing that you can do for up and coming artists.” In a similar vein, “an invitation to show” at the Philadelphia Art Alliance is an opportunity for an emerging visual artist to learn the entire exhibition process from A to Z—i.e., delivery, installation, and de-installation of their work and preparing materials for wall labels, press releases, and publications.

Some artists benefit from a “client” relationship with a nonprofit cultural organization. Astral Artistic Services calls itself a “non-profit manager” of the young musicians on its roster and provides a range of customized services free of charge. Pennsylvania Performing Arts on Tour, in addition to providing business and marketing advice to touring artists, helps the performing artists on its roster gain more work. The Mexican Cultural Center works directly with artists as an agent to negotiate and facilitate performance events, including sponsorship and promotion. With regard to public art, the Fairmount Park Art Association defines itself as “an advocate for the artist” and “a mediator between the artist and the community.” Nonprofit membership organizations,

such as the Philadelphia Dance Alliance, provide dues-paying artists a set of wholesale services and serve as an information clearinghouse.

A professional artist exchange is a somewhat rare and invaluable opportunity for artistic growth that may lead to new avenues of paid work. Orchestra 2001, for example, has been involved in an exchange program with Russian composers for over a decade and has commissioned several Russian artists to write new pieces for their group.

Professional influence—decision-making and advisory roles

Overall, in most organizations, artists have no direct role in decision-making processes. The Philadelphia Dance Alliance and the Delaware Valley Opera Company are exceptions in that some artists serve on their boards of directors. The Painted Bride Art Center was the only group interviewed that is looking to expand artists' role in decision-making by building "some type of artists' board structure."

Artists, however, sometimes play a formal advisory role as members of peer panels, particularly where there is a competitive selection process—such as, with the Philadelphia Exhibitions Initiative and the Pennsylvania Performing Arts on Tour. More common still is the practice of directors who actively solicit feedback and suggestions from artists, either informally or via formal invitational meetings of artists.

The Philadelphia Dance Alliance conducts surveys and holds town meetings, community meetings, and focus groups to determine the overarching needs of the local dance community. PDA incorporates the findings into program formulations and, according to the director, thereby includes the dance community-at-large in decision-making processes.

Artist-based groups tend to have their own culture. While the artistic director of Orchestra 2001 has the final say on all matters, he considers the role the musicians play in selecting material and producing the final product to be "quite collaborative."

Types of access—opportunity costs

By "access" we mean the degree of difficulty that an artist has in finding an organization, assessing its program, and taking advantage of any opportunities deemed worthwhile. Each type of access to information or resource—open and public, community or "insider" based, or competitive selection—implies a different ratio of costs to benefits for the artist. While not mutually exclusive, one of these approaches tends to typify an organization's relationship with the artist community.

"Open access" describes organizations with proactive strategies of outreach or information dissemination regarding opportunities or resources for artists. Pennsylvania Performing Arts on Tour has a marketing director, a state-wide media campaign and outreach strategy, and—in addition to PennPAT artists roster-only programs—has a workshop and seminar series open to performing artists from all over the state. The Philadelphia Dance Alliance strives to provide "any type of service to any type of dance artist at any point in their career" and taps regional and national university and trade association networks to get the word out and expand its membership. Many groups post opportunities for artists in the free Philadelphia newspapers, City Paper and Philadelphia Weekly, and some contact daily newspapers, radio, or television. The Internet—

particularly organizational websites—appears to be an increasingly effective and open avenue of information for artists.

“Community access” describes organizations that provide information for “insiders” or simply rely on their grapevine for information flow. Some organizations are structured to serve a particular community. The Philadelphia Dance Alliance is “first and foremost” a membership organization, and the membership is the primary vehicle for news and announcements. The University of Pennsylvania Career Services serves Penn’s fine arts graduate students. (In fact, this is a community based on competitive selection.)

Many established organizations learn about artists primarily through personal and professional contacts and via word of mouth. Groups as varied as the Painted Bride Art Center, the Delaware Valley Opera Company, the Fairmount Park Art Association, and the Freedom Theatre noted that these informal, *ad hoc* networks serve as primary channels of information about artists. For many groups, “the artists come to us.” A Freedom Theatre director commented on the shortcomings of finding artists through “homegrown networks”—e.g., Freedom’s performing arts school graduates who return to teach—and “word of mouth in the community” rather than through a strategic outreach plan. While the practice assures a pool of artists knowledgeable and committed to the theatre’s philosophy, it also keeps the organization “at the mercy of whatever flows exist out there.”

“Competitive selection” describes access only to a select group of artists based on an application or audition process. Astral Artistic Services, for example, represents only a limited number of promising young classical musicians (10-15% of applicants or a total of 13 musicians in 2002) based on an annual national competition. Astral reports that, compared to many of the city’s small nonprofits, they spend a lot on marketing and publicity. The Leeway Foundation, which awards grants to only 16-20% of all applicants, spends little on advertising but gets the word out through direct mailing to community arts centers and artists of all disciplines. Pennsylvania Performing Arts on Tour accepts artists to its roster annually (a total of 129 in 2002) based on an application and panel review process. The Philadelphia Art Alliance has shifted from a widely publicized annual application and panel review process to a rolling admissions policy, so that applicants can apply at any time, and posts guidelines for programming and gallery space on the web. The staff curator personally reviews much artwork, largely through studio visits, and actively solicits artists at various stages of their careers.

Institutional Links in Artists Network

If we imagine the nonprofit cultural sector as an artist-centered institutional network, how would we describe the links of that network? From the artist’s point of view, we have identified four types of links connecting the nonprofit nodes: free agent or artist-activated connections; informal institutional connections; formal institutional connections; and Internet-based networks.

“Free agent” or artist-activated connections

For many cultural organizations that engage artists as staff or contractors, their relationship is essentially contractual and the artists function as free agents with no direct

assistance from their employer. Community arts centers, for example, typically employ numerous “teaching artists”, working artists who teach their specialty to people of all ages and levels of experience. Fleisher Art Memorial, for example, employs 80 artists for 2 ½ to 8 hours a week. “We foster atomization,” the director pointed out.

Even organizations that provide unpaid or apprentice-type professional opportunities (e.g., Delaware Valley Opera Company, Philadelphia Art Alliance) tend to relate to artists as free agents. While such groups view their relationship to artists as “resume building” or “a stepping stone,” they rarely play an active role in referring artists to other organizations.

A few groups seek to alleviate the independent artist’s isolation, which exacerbates the difficulties of building a career that is both a creative and remunerative. The Fleisher Art Memorial has begun a fellowship program geared to its teaching artists “to help build a community of 80 people who are profoundly atomized.” The Leeway Foundation hosts parties and events for its grantee community “to foster communication among artists” and generally tries “to support ways in which artists connect to one another.” To increase the clout of performing artists in the business world, the Pennsylvania Performing Arts Network has been trying to help artists “organize and come together with unity to formulate a network.”

Informal institutional connections

Referring artists to other organizations is central to the work of the Painted Bride Art Center. “We do a lot for artists, though we do it very informally [in the sense that] we don’t have a formalized program. We try to keep an open door so that when artists come in here, we can talk about their work, about funding opportunities that we think match up with them, and about different performance spaces.” The Bride shares artists’ work with other presenters at national conferences and, in particular, works closely with the National Performance Network.

Local informal institutional networks appear to vary by discipline. Both Orchestra 2001 and Astral Artistic Services, which are part of the classical music scene, noted that organizations communicate and collaborate with one another extensively and are “constantly referring” artists to one another. (Astral alluded to “a great comradeship” among the nonprofits in Philadelphia.) The Philadelphia Dance Alliance, which rarely refers dancers directly, has been working since 1971 to foster an informal institutional network for dance. By contrast, according to the Philadelphia Art Alliance curator, the Philadelphia art scene is relatively small, and it is therefore rare for galleries to request or refer artists to one another or to show the work of an artist who has recently shown elsewhere in town. The Leeway Foundation, however, collaborates on behalf of grantees with curators and galleries to help visual artists exhibit their work.

Formal institutional connections

Connecting artists with other agencies or opportunities is central to the mission of some organizations. For Astral Artistic Services, in addition to introducing promising young musicians to the established music world, the “ultimate goal” is to connect its artists with professional management to handle the business aspects of their career. The Pennsylvania Performing Arts on Tour connects performing artists on its roster to

presenters and, in the case of many smaller organizations, gives grants to the presenter to help pay the artist's fees. The Fairmount Park Art Association, on a case-by-case basis, connects artists to communities, architects, and all of the stakeholders that play a role in making a work of public art successful.

Providing contacts for artists is an essential service of the Mexican Cultural Center. For foreign and other visiting artists, in particular, the center refers artists to local institutions such as the Painted Bride Art Center, the Clay Studio, the University of the Arts, or Old City galleries. The director cited an example of how a short-term collaboration evolved into a long-term international relationship. A few years ago, after a joint concert with the Curtis Institute, the Mexican conductor returned to work with Curtis students and formed a Mexican-Philadelphia ensemble. "Through this connection, [the Center] helped facilitate an international network that continues to generate connections and opportunities."

Schools of art at all levels help connect their graduates with people or places that can advance their careers. Freedom Theatre routinely refers graduates of its performing arts school to centers of higher learning—including area and national colleges—as well as to a variety of positions in theater, film, dance, voice, and even television. University of Pennsylvania Career Services provides resources, services, and alumni contacts to help connect students of the Graduate School of Fine Arts with schools, college, arts organizations, museums, and funding sources.

Internet-based connections

Internet-based connections are likely to expand as a resource, but their value to artists is not yet clear. Pennsylvania Performing Arts on Tour, in hopes of fostering a network of touring performing artists, has designed a "rosters only" website for artists to share information on an ongoing basis. However, the director reported that the website had been underused, probably in favor of "pre-Internet channels" such as word-of-mouth and personal relationships. The director of Penn Career Services likewise commented that Graduate School of Fine Arts artists had failed to take advantage of the extensive web-based resources and services offered, speculating that students are "allergic" to formal channels of career planning.

The Philadelphia Arts Alliance often refers artist to an online artist management service—www.mixedgreens.com—that is available for collectors and curators. The service, which functions as a clearinghouse for emerging artists, is interested in branching out from its New York base.

Existing Sources of Data on Philadelphia Artists

We have not identified to date any centralized source or systematic collection of data on Philadelphia-based artists. During our interviews, it was not uncommon for organizational staff to intend to maintain an artists' database but confess that "it's all in my head" or "we're technologically behind the times." Some groups keep resumes on file with no further ambitions. Several groups reported that they have a database of contact information on the artists with whom they work directly (Philadelphia Art Alliance, Philadelphia Orchestra 2001, Philadelphia Dance Alliance, and Painted Bride Art Center).

However, we did gather some useful leads toward building a comprehensive database of artists living and working in metropolitan Philadelphia.

National sources of data

- ❑ The *Urban Institute* in Washington D.C., funded by The Pew Charitable Trusts, is currently involved in a project that could be an excellent resource for a database. The project has two objectives: (1) developing a definition of an artist and (2) putting together a database of artists. (Contact person is Eric Wallner.)
- ❑ *Creative Capital Foundation*, based in New York, supports individual artists.
- ❑ *Young Concert Artists, Inc.* in New York maintains a roster of current and alumni artists and is a possible source of data on musicians.
- ❑ In New York City a number of local cultural organizations are trying to put together lists of artists as well as a list of resources for artists. (Contact Melissa Franklin at The Pew Charitable Trusts.)

Regional sources of data

- ❑ Foundations that give grants or fellowships to artists—such as, Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, The Pew Charitable Trusts, and Independence Foundation (in addition to those mentioned below)—are suggested as a good place to start in developing a comprehensive database.
- ❑ The *Leeway Foundation* has a database of approximately 2,000 artists in the Philadelphia region. The base list, provided by The Pew Charitable Trusts, has been augmented over the years by word of mouth, through links to their website (including Penn), and by direct and indirect mailings through various arts channels.
- ❑ *Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation* collects several types of information: (1) a database connected to its Artists in Communities Program, which supports artists' residencies, of artists that do community-based residency work; and (2) a database of artists in the region with basic contact information and their type of art.
- ❑ The *Painted Bride Art Center* compiles contact information for the visual and performing artists that present at the Bride each season. (The Bride's mailing list may also be a source of contact information on area artists.)
- ❑ The *Greater Philadelphia Cultural Alliance* and the *Philadelphia Cultural Fund*, both of which serve nonprofit cultural organizations in the region and city, may be able to point to additional sources of data on artists.

Sources of data by type of artist (Philadelphia region)

- ❑ **Visual artists.** The *University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Fine Arts*, a visual arts program, maintains an extensive database of alumni artists. While the most active alumni are based in the Northeast, alumni contacts are national and international in scope. (Contact person is Jane Irish.)

Moore College of Art maintains a slide registry of artists that is completely open and intended to be a curatorial resource. About 25 percent of the registry is on-line.

Philadelphia/Tri-State Artists Equity Association could be a source of data on independent visual artists in the region.

The *Philadelphia Exhibitions Initiative* maintains a listing of eligible curatorial organizations that is used as a resource for contact with visual artists. The *Clay Studio* was suggested as a possible source of data on artists.

- **Performing artists.** *Pennsylvania Performing Arts on Tour* maintains two types of information: (1) an in-house database of performing artists on the PennPAT roster (129 artists statewide) and (2) a mailing list of approximately 2,000 performing artists across the state. In addition, the PennPAT director provided SIAP with a copy of a consultant's report based on focus groups with performing artists who have participated in their programs, *Pennsylvania Performing Arts on Tour: The Program for Artists Who Are Going Places* (December 2001).

The *Philadelphia Dance Alliance* keeps a database of contact information and every two years produces a directory of its membership, which includes descriptive information about dancers and choreographers in the region.

American Federation of Musicians, Philadelphia Musicians' Local 77 and the *Musicians Union* are recommended as starting points for comprehensive contact information on musicians.

- **Public artists.** The *Fairmount Park Art Association* maintains an inventory of all the public art in the city, including historical as well as contemporary art and artists, as well as a library of resources for public artists. (The art association's website of resources for public artists is currently under construction.)

The *Philadelphia Department of Recreation Mural Arts Program* keeps a centralized contact database that includes muralists and artists teaching in their visual arts education programs. The *City Percent for Art Program* administered by the Philadelphia Office of Arts and Culture is also a possible source of information on public artists.

- **Artists in community settings.** The *Philadelphia Arts in Education Partnership* maintains a roster of teaching artists in the Philadelphia area. The *Asian Arts Initiative* is a potential source of data on artists who have graduated over the past six years from their Artist in Communities Training (ACT) program.

For Further Research

The sketch above of the institutional network that supports artists in the Philadelphia region is preliminary. To verify and embellish the picture we need the artist's perspective. A number of questions could be addressed.

- (1) Is there consensus among artists on the definition of terms, such as “professional artist,” “independent artist,” “emerging artist,” or “established artist”?
- (2) When does a person decide to become an artist? What strategies does an artist use to train and to build a career as an artist? Do these strategies change over time?
- (3) How do artists see the institutional network in connection to their own careers? What nodes and links are the most important?
- (4) Are there types of artists who are not served or who are underserved by existing institutions? Are there needs of artists based in Philadelphia that are not currently met by regional institutions?
- (5) How are organizations that serve artists founded or initiated? How are the needs of individual artists—and of cultural production collectively—identified?
- (6) What is the geography of Philadelphia area artists? Where are they born? Where are they trained (location, institution)? Where do they “make it”?

Conclusion

Our interest in the study of networks within the regional cultural sector is inspired by ecology, the field of biology that deals with the relations between living organisms and their environment. In human ecology, sociologists look at “the relationship between the distribution of human groups with reference to material resources and the consequent social and cultural patterns.” With regard to the regional cultural sector, we are asking: what are the significant agents involved, what is the relationship of agents to one another, and what is their relationship to their environment.

In trying to describe the dynamics of the region's institutional-artist network, based on the sketch above, two other concepts come to mind: a *market* model and a *service* model. The mechanisms of a market are the laws of supply and demand, that is, a kind of dynamic equilibrium between the supply of resources mobilized by “sellers” and the demand or need for resources expressed by “buyers.” By contrast, a service system assumes an overview of needs and resources, an imbalance of power between resource providers and consumers, and the desirability of strategic intervention to meet the needs of the weaker members of the system.

The institutional-artist network appears to operate, by and large, as a market with artists functioning as individual “buyers” in an environment of limited resources and imperfect information. The director of Pennsylvania Performing Arts on Tour explicitly describes the performing artist-presenter relationship as a “buyer-seller relationship” in which is artist is currently “disadvantaged.” One of PennPAT's goals is to arm performing artists with business expertise that will bring “more parity to the artist-presenter relationship” by “empowering” the artist.

The “network” also has elements of a service system however, largely due the initiative of foundations—such as The Pew Charitable Trusts, the Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation, and the Leeway Foundation—and selected cultural resource organizations—such as the Philadelphia Folklore Project. Such agencies have taken a lead in identifying categories of artists that are underserved segments of the sector and have created organizations to target services and resources to these selected groups.

Sociologist Howard S. Becker sees “art as collective action.” For Becker an “art world” refers to “the network of people whose cooperative activity, organized via their joint knowledge of conventional means of doing things, produces the kind of art works that art world is noted for.” Certainly the region’s nonprofit cultural institutions contribute to the viability of many an artist and are an essential feature of Philadelphia’s art worlds.

Appendix 1

Institutional Networks Serving Artists

List of organizations and staff interviewed, Philadelphia, June-August 2002

- ❑ Astral Artistic Services (Vera Wilson, President)—mentors and assists the career development of the most promising young classical musicians residing in the United States.
- ❑ Delaware Valley Opera Company (Renee Goldman, Vice President)—a small repertory company that stages operatic performances at the Hermitage Mansion in Fairmount Park.
- ❑ Fairmount Park Art Association (Laura Griffith, Assistant Director; Sarah Katz, Program and Publications Coordinator; and Charles Moleski, Program Manager)—the nation’s first public art organization devoted to the integration of art and urban planning, promotes and advocates for public art and artists in Philadelphia.
- ❑ Leeway Foundation (Barbara Silzle, Executive Director, and Michelle Schmitt, Communications Manager)—a grant-maker that supports individual women artists in the Philadelphia region toward achievement of personal and community transformation.
- ❑ Mexican Cultural Center (Elena Reilly, Executive Director)—cultural center connected to the Mexican Consulate in Philadelphia, devoted to the promotion of Mexican artists and cultural forms.
- ❑ New Freedom Theatre (Patricia Scott Hobbs, Director of Performing Arts Training Program)—an established African American theatre and performance facility with a repertory company and a performing arts training program.
- ❑ Orchestra 2001 (James Freeman, Artistic Director)—professional orchestra that presents contemporary classical music and serves as a resource for composers in the Philadelphia area.
- ❑ Painted Bride Art Center (Laurel Raczka, Executive Director) —a multi-disciplinary center for contemporary and innovative visual and performing arts located in Old City.
- ❑ Pennsylvania Performing Arts on Tour (Katie West, Director)—a funding agent of the Baltimore-based Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation, assists Pennsylvania performing artists to obtain touring engagements.
- ❑ Philadelphia Art Alliance (Amy Schlegel, Curator)—presents exhibitions and programs, primarily in the visual arts, in galleries that occupy an historic mansion.
- ❑ Philadelphia Dance Alliance (Nancy Dengler, Executive Director)—promotes the discipline of dance in all its forms and provides technical assistance for dancers and dance organizations in the region.

- Philadelphia Exhibitions Initiative (Paula Marincola, Director)—a granting program, funded by The Pew Charitable Trusts, supports visual arts exhibitions of high artistic excellence through grants to curators and curatorial organizations.
- University of Pennsylvania Career Services (Julia Vick, Graduate Career Counselor)—assists Graduate School of Fine Arts students with job search and career development and connects GSFA students with alumni artists.