

# WELCOME

On behalf of all of us connected to the Orcas Conference -- the members of the Conference Planning and Invitation Committee, the Staff, and the New York Foundation for the Arts -- I'm pleased to welcome you to share in the spirit and experience of Orcas. This Notebook, like the Conference itself, attempts to serve as a prism through which the many thoughts, plans, issues, and concerns about support for individual artists may be examined and pondered.

By no means could any one conference or notebook capture everything that should be said about the contributions and needs of individual artists. Rather, we hope this Conference and Notebook will provide background materials to spur thought, dialogue, and action that is appropriate to you and your community to improve the situation for artists.

The effectiveness of Orcas must be in serving as a catalyst to inform and reinforce your individual and collective efforts to bring attention to individual artists in this country.

Please join us to continue the dialogue and the action necessary to effect change for artists.

Let us know what you're doing for artists. Let us know how we can help.

Thank you for your concern.

Ted Berger  
Executive Director  
New York Foundation for the Arts

# INTRODUCTION

*Anne Focke, Conference Coordinator*

This notebook was assembled as a functional part of *The Orcas Conference: Creative Support for the Creative Artist*, November 12-15, 1988. A principal purpose of the notebook was to provide a common base of facts, information, and ideas for conference participants. Conference planners hope that the notebook will be a useful resource for anyone concerned about the situation of the artist in this country.

## *About the Orcas Conference:*

The Orcas Conference, sponsored by the New York Foundation for the Arts, brought participants together around a shared concern for the creative artist. The subject of the conference was the support of artists -- how artists support themselves now, what programs exist to help, and what new steps could be taken to foster conditions necessary to their work. Believing that questions of artist support are linked to larger issues, conference planners wanted to encourage discussion of artists' relationship with their communities and of artists' roles in society.

A precedent for the Orcas Conference was set in 1986 when 150 artists, arts administrators, and funders gathered at Montauk, on the tip of Long Island, to wrestle with issues of support for individual artists. This conference, also sponsored by the New York Foundation for the Arts, played a key role in increasing national visibility for artists' issues and stimulated the continuing search for solutions. (A report on the Montauk Conference can be found on page C:1 of this notebook.)

Early planning discussions for the Orcas Conference involved many people across the country and the shape of the conference began to emerge through a series of planning meetings held in Philadelphia, San Francisco, New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles. A planning and invitation committee helped determine the themes and structure for the conference and identified potential participants.

Guiding the conference planning was a commitment to include many perspectives and engage a wide diversity of people in the discussion. To

ensure diversity and broad representation, attendance was by invitation. Conference costs were subsidized for many participants to ensure that their personal finances didn't preclude participation. The conferees, a total of almost 200, represented a wide range of artistic disciplines, professional commitments, cultural traditions, and regional experience. The discussion brought together many voices, some overlapping and some not.

Artists' involvement was crucial, and participants included working artists from many disciplines -- writers, composers, painters, filmmakers, choreographers, playwrights, sculptors, photographers, crafts artists, video artists, audio artists, performance and interdisciplinary artists, and a puppetry artist. The conference commissioned artists' papers and presented artists' performances, readings, and video presentations. Counting artists who are also administrators, between one third and one half of all participants were artists.

Public arts agencies were represented, and came from national, regional, state, and local levels. Participants included representatives of private and corporate funders as well as many administrators from organizations that serve artists -- artists' spaces, service organizations, artist colonies, and producing and presenting organizations.

People came from communities of many sizes, from major metropolitan areas like Los Angeles and Chicago and from smaller and rural communities like Whitesburg, Kentucky and Clearmont, Wyoming. They came from all parts of the country -- from Atlanta and San Diego, from Santa Fe, New Mexico and Helena, Montana. International guests came from Japan, Ethiopia, France, Mexico, Canada, and the Netherlands. The cultural heritage of participants was also diverse -- Hopi, Black American, Chicano, Chinese American, Vietnamese, Lithuanian, and Icelandic, among others.

Conference planning emphasized the importance of regional issues and the value of concentrating on local action. Two regional conferences were stimulated by the planning activities for the Orcas Conference and were held earlier in year -- one in Philadelphia and one in the San Francisco Bay area. Planning efforts were coordinated and information was exchanged between the regional meetings and the national meeting. (Reports on the regional meetings begin on page C:59 of this notebook.)

The Orcas Conference took place on Orcas Island in the northwestern corner of the contiguous United States, in northern Puget Sound near the Canadian border. Being outside a major metropolitan center, the location reinforced the value of regional thought, and the retreat-like setting removed people from their normal day-to-day environments.

Throughout the three days, participants moved from plenary sessions to small group discussions, from meals to performances, from scheduled meetings to impromptu activities. There were times the whole group came together and times people scattered in many directions -- alone and in small groups, to the bar, the spa, the beach, and the mountains.

The conference was designed to stimulate the exchange of ideas and information; it was intended more as a laboratory than as a mechanism for creating a specific plan of action.

In an anthem written in the thick of the three days of activity, Welsh videomaker Terry Dimmick caught the spirit of the gathering by dubbing it a "raucous caucus." There were fervent speeches, intense conversations, proposals, disagreements, challenges, new ideas, and inspiring examples. There was passion, compassion, frustration, and imagination. And people listened to each other -- sometimes in rapt attention, sometimes with great irritation, and sometimes with new understanding. There was no single outcome. Rather the great variety of perspectives suggested many future actions.

A complete report on the conference proceedings is found behind the second tab in this book. The record of the conference reflects the diversity of voices heard there.

### *About this notebook*

This notebook contains both resource materials provided in advance to conference participants and also the report on the conference proceedings. The background materials are evidence of the many efforts that preceded this meeting. The report on the conference proceedings and the post-conference papers begin to point to the many directions ahead.

The notebook was produced in four installments: two installments of background information were distributed before the conference, in August and October 1988, to people who had registered; some materials were distributed at the conference; and the conference proceedings were mailed to participants in the spring, 1989. The additive production process helps to explain both the logic (or lack of logic) in the order of the notebook's contents and also its somewhat unusual system for numbering pages.

The notebook has five sections. Following this introduction, Section A contains basic information about the conference including the schedule and

roster of participants. Section B consists of a report on the proceedings of the conference including texts of featured talks, reports from the working sessions, summaries of plenary discussions, and a list of the many artists who presented their work. This section also includes the many thoughtful responses written afterward by conference participants, based on their experience of the conference – papers, letters, stories, drawings, proposals, and even a short play. Section C includes papers specifically commissioned for this conference and for the Montauk Conference as well as reports from related regional conferences. Section D and E contain materials provided as background and constitute a collection of the most recent materials on the situation of the artist in this country.

A small overrun of conference notebooks was produced so they would be available to people who couldn't attend. Remaining copies can be purchased from the New York Foundation for the Arts.

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Many people contributed invaluable time and energy before, during, and after the conference – Ted Berger, Marschel Paul, Mary Griffin, Becky Lewis, and everyone on the Invitation Committee: Susan Dickson, Ruby Lerner, Inverna Lockpez, Sarah Lutman, Jim Pomeroy, Suzanne Sato, and Ella King Torrey. The conference funders and all the others acknowledged on the next two pages are among those whose efforts were critical.

Ultimately, the conference belonged to those who attended. The conference was conceived to be a working retreat where everyone's participation was encouraged. Participants accepted this wholeheartedly and their energy gave the meeting its intensity and its strength.

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