



Grantmakers in the Arts  
2003 Conference

## THE EDGE

### Proceedings from the Conference

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### MEMBER REPORT

#### ARTIST-TO-ARTIST TEACHING MODEL: THE CREATIVE CAPITAL WORKSHOP SERIES

Over the past two years, Creative Capital has designed a professional development workshop to deliver skill-building opportunities to artists across the country. This program seeks to build the capacity of individual artists, many of whom operate as one-person organizations. The workshop uses an integrated approach to fundraising, marketing, and public relations with an emphasis on individualized strategic planning. Professional consultants and trained Creative Capital grantees co-lead the workshops so that participants benefit from expertise and first-hand experiences. Creative Capital has found this artist-to-artist teaching model to be an effective means of sharing and disseminating information. Creative Capital reported on the structure of this new program, how it is being received and what they are learning through it.

*Session Designer:*

Alyson Pou  
*Creative Capital Foundation*

*October 22, 2003, 10:00 a.m.*

**POU:** I'd like to start this morning by going around the room and having everyone introduce yourself and say the organization that you're working with. We have a lot of great people in the room, and I thought that would be a good way to start this morning. So shall we start in the back?

### (INTRODUCTIONS)

**POU:** Thank you. And I'm Alyson Pou, the Associate Director for Creative Capital Foundation. I've been with Creative Capital for almost five years now, and had the privilege to organize the first panel, and then continued to work with that group of grantees from that point on. I'm very, very excited to be here today and to talk with you about this new program that we're developing.

I also want to recognize that there are a number of people in the room who are also developing programs along similar lines. Barbara Courtney gave a report yesterday about a program that Artist Trust is doing, and Penny Dannenberg (of the New York Foundation for the Arts) is working on a program.

I hope that when we open this up for discussion, after I do my presentation, other people will join in. We had a very lively discussion yesterday, and it would be great to continue that.

I'll start very, very quickly and give you a little bit of Creative Capital information and then go directly into a description of how I've worked on developing this particular program.

I believe that everyone in the room probably already knows that Creative Capital is a national grantmaking, not-for-profit organization, which gives project-based funding directly to artists in four categories: the visual arts, emerging fields, film/video, and performance. Since its founding in 1999, Creative Capital has completed three grant cycles, awarding to date about \$3 million to 158 artists' projects.

As you probably already know, we're committed to working in partnership with our grantees to provide advisory services and professional development assistance. Around this idea we've developed a holistic, four-point approach to our funding and our partnerships with our artists. I'll give you the four points.

It's focus and attention to the project; to the person, to the artist themselves in the development of their life and their careers; to nurturing the community of artists, and broader, the arts community; and engaging the public. To this end, we've developed a comprehensive Artists' Services program that we continue to

develop. As with everything at Creative Capital, we're in a continuous process of analyzing and being more precise and making things more effective.

For example, with the project focus, the original money that's awarded by the panel, is, of course, support for the project. Then we have subsequent planning meetings with the artists to talk with them about their careers and their projects.

With attention to the person, we've developed a strategic planning program that's specifically focused for artists and artists' needs and how to think and plan about the bigger picture of their lives. We think about the project that we're funding as fitting into the bigger picture of an artist's life and the development of their life and developing a success model for that.

And then, nurturing the community. We do a retreat for the artists where we bring together the artists and advisors and consultants. This has been really an amazing component of what we figured out to do in terms of working with the artists. A lot of the program that I've been building is based on our retreat model and I'll talk about that some more in a minute.

And then the last piece, engaging the public. For example, we have a very active Web site, and all of the artists' projects are represented on the Web site. There's public access in that way to promote the artists and to promote their work. Because we've recognized that a lot of really good work gets made but doesn't get seen, it might have limited distribution. We're trying to think in creative ways about how to use new technology in relationship to that. Our Web site is one of those places.

The professional development workshop really grows out of this four-point approach, particularly with the retreat. One of the main things that we realized with the retreat is that it's a very powerful thing to bring artists together and that they end up being this amazing resource for one another.

I know that for myself, as a working artist, some of my best relationships and some of the best information that I get comes from other artists and that artists share with each other and network about information and opportunities.

We also realized the benefit of putting together people in different kinds of configurations and different combinations, like across disciplines. To put the consultants with the artists in different combinations, like at mealtimes, was just amazing! Just catalytic! In terms of the kinds of



connections that came out of it, more than you could ever do as a program or as a plan. We really wanted to make use of this idea in terms of the professional development program.

The other piece was the use of strategic planning. We discovered very early on that though we, as organizational folk, know a lot about strategic planning, most artists have never been exposed to those concepts. One of the challenges with that is the translation of, how does this make sense to me as an individual and how can I apply this to my life?

We have spent some time developing a strategic planning model that's based on the kind of model that we're all familiar with but making it more accessible to artists. We now have a strategic planning handbook that we use with our grantees and we make it available in the workshop.

So those were two of the things that we knew we really wanted to do when we started to work on this program. The other piece is that because of this artist's art or the significance of this artist's connection, we knew we wanted to build a peer training model. Although I think training is not exactly the right word, it's more like facilitation. I'll use that term just for lack of a better one.

I wanted to build a peer model, and I knew that the strategic planning piece was key. When I began to think about developing the curriculum for the workshop, I knew right away what we wanted to do. Because the retreat had been so successful – this sort of condensed, intense, get-yourself-out-of-your-life boot camp kind of situation, we knew that it worked. I wanted to do a weekend; follow that format but reduce it from the four days that we had done with the retreat and really compact it into a weekend.

I knew I wanted to start there, and I decided to take three topic areas: strategic planning, PR and marketing, and fundraising, and developed the curriculum around those areas.

I hired three consultants to come in and to bring their ideas to the table about a core curriculum that we could use.

I worked with Colleen Keegan, who had previously – and still is working with us – to help us all develop the strategic planning. Another consultant was Aaron Landsman, who had been involved the fundraising person with The Field in New York, and had developed their workshops for fundraising. I brought him in to consult with us on the fundraising component. And then Jackie Battenfield, who runs the AIM program in

the Bronx, for the Bronx Museum, to do the PR and marketing component.

So they all came in. We needed to hit the ground running on this program, because within one year I needed to develop the curriculum and get it on the road with the pilot presentations. I wanted to bring in a core consulting group that was going to bring a lot to the table. We began to have meetings about the curriculum.

At the same time I reached out to our funded artists and I polled them and said, are you interested in working with us to develop this peer-to-peer workshop model? A number of the artists got back to us, and we ended up working with 16 of our artists. Not surprisingly, they were the artists who had made use of our strategic planning program and all the services that we had to offer, and so they were very keen to share what they knew with other artists.

Then I planned two curriculum planning weekends. And the 16 artists came to both of those weekends. We had one weekend in January, one weekend in March.

The consultants gave presentations about what we're thinking about the curriculum. Then we had breakout meetings and the artists chose the topic area that they wanted to focus on. We broke out into three groups.

Then they, as teams, began to develop their curriculum teams. The artists brought their input and their refinement of the curriculum and their additions to it. After those two weekends we ended up with three teaching teams, with the consultant heading the team of five members. In one case we had six, because we had sixteen artists.

My charge to the consultants was to be the wrangler, the team leader. After the training weekends, they would keep in touch with the artists, and they would work together as a team to further develop their curriculum and preparation for the first pilot. So that's how I worked with the curriculum development piece of it.

I'll also say, with the curriculum development, every time we go out to do a workshop, we meet before the workshop to go over the materials that we want to do and how we want to present; and then we meet after the workshop to consider the evaluation that we've received from that workshop. We do it differently the next time. So we're creating a new workshop every time we go out based on what we've learned from the workshop before.



Often, we're tailoring the workshop to a specific constituency. So we take that into consideration, too.

So the consultants know that we have these meetings before and after; and often at the retreat we're talking about things, or at the workshop we're talking about things and how to shape it and make it work best for the group. That's the curriculum piece.

Then I thought I would give you a sample workshop agenda and how I thought about organizing the workshop in general. As I said, this varies from site to site.

We begin on Friday evening with bringing all the artists together, and they show their work. They do a five-minute presentation of their work. We feel that it's very important to begin everything with the work, with focusing on the artists as individuals and on their work. We set that tone on Friday night and keep the individual artists and their needs and their work at the center throughout the whole weekend. That's part of the strategic planning idea.

We begin with showing the artists' work on Friday night. We time the presentations; in fact, we time everything in the workshop. By the end, people are making jokes about the program coordinator who walks around with the watch around her neck saying, "Time's up. Time's up."

Then on Saturday we open with a strategic planning session where the fundamental concepts of strategic planning are introduced. Then we do a PR and marketing introduction and overview and we do a fundraising overview.

Because we're trying to think about engaging people in different ways and not just making it an all-lecture format, within each of these introductions, there's a hands-on exercise that the artists get to do. In the discussion I can give you more details about the kinds of things that we do.

Then we probably have lunch. Then a session where they break into three groups, and rotate to the three topics, and we have a very specific thing they do in their small group rotation on those three topics. That allows us to take it the overview into some more specifics.

For example, in the first break-out group we might do for fundraising like writing about your week and each person brings a sample of writing, a grant proposal or something like that. Then they all read each other's proposal and get feedback of the group and feedback from the

leader. Also, there's a portfolio follow-up because they've done an exercise with each other on that. Then they get to go into the smaller group and have more in-depth discussions.

We do a communication exercise. The small group takes turns and they come up front and they partner. You present your ideas to a funder or a presenter then you switch and the leader gives feedback. People love that. They either love that or they're totally freaked out because they have to be up in front of a group talking. But it's been extremely useful.

In the afternoon, we go back to strategic planning. And we just walk, point by point, through the strategic planning workbook with them.

At the end of the day, they sign up for their one-on-one consultations with a leader on the next day. They tell us the topic or a specific question they have, a specific thing that they would like to have an individual consultation on. They get two of those. So they can talk to two people about two different things, or two people about the same thing, or whatever.

We take those and match them up with the leader who will be the best resource for them.

On Sunday we do a targeted marketing and fundraising exercise that was developed by Ruby for a workshop that she does, and it is just kick-butt. It is so good.

People break out into the three small groups again and they brainstorm with each other about their specific projects. This is usually the moment where people have that "aha" like, Oh my God, we can be this amazing resource for one another.

People come up with ideas that you never had about your own work. And also it allows the artists to expand the way that they're thinking about their project and how they reach out to audiences and what is their project really about? So it hones the thinking of the individual about what they're trying to do. They usually walk away with sheets and sheets of ideas on chart paper. We do that on Sunday morning.

Then we go into another round of breakout groups, again on the three topics, but focusing on different things. So, for example, this time in fundraising we'll focus on budgets and contracts. And they'll bring their budgets, and we'll talk about that.

Also, one of the things that I'm realizing is that everything about money, anything about financial planning, is something that artists are



really hungry for because they don't know how to gain access to financial planning. Even when they do gain access to financial planners at banks and so forth, one artist said to me, "They're trying to sell me insurance accounts, or they're talking to me in a way that doesn't really relate to the reality of my life."

So, in this context, we've found that the financial planning piece is really important. Hearing an artist from where they need to start, like maybe, "I can't even pay my rent, how do I start from here?" Or, "Gee, I need to get Quicken. What is Quicken?" I mean that's not true of all artists. Many artists are very sophisticated in their financial dealings, and they have investments, and they have real estate, and that sort of thing.

So, we've really gauged this. We have three different groups, and you sign up for 101, 201, or 301. And then the group leader actually talks with that group at the level that they need to talk about their financial planning. That's an example with the breakout on Sunday.

In the afternoon, we ask them to do a very in-depth evaluation of the workshop. We don't ask to pay for the workshop – not yet – but we do ask them for their feedback and their ideas. We give them quite a bit of time in the afternoon to work on that as they rotate in and out of their one-on-one sessions.

We also ask them to write up goals for the next period of time. The reason we do that is the follow-up piece is very important. This is something that I've been thinking a lot about, and I've done a few things with it.

One of the things that we have built into the workshop is that in three months, if they would like, they can have a follow-up, half-hour telephone conversation with one of the leaders on any topic that they would like. It can be a review of their goals, or any other questions that have come up in that period of time.

Then six months out we follow-up with asking them for further evaluation. "How's it been for you since the workshop?" "What have you actually used?" "Have you used..." We give them handbooks of information to take away. "So have you made use of the strategic planning handbook, and in what way? Has that been useful?" And then the PR and marketing, and fundraising handbooks.

I have other ideas about follow-up and I continue to think that the follow-up is very, very important, so I'll look forward for us to have a discussion about that. That's the basic workshop agenda.

The next thing I want to talk about is the partners, and this partnering idea. I knew in the beginning that it probably wasn't going to make sense for us to try to directly market this to artists, because we were thinking with a national focus but obviously we don't have the deep information and the community that a local organization would have about the group of artists. How do you put together the group of artists, who do you invite, what kind of mechanism would you use to include which artist? I decided that partnering with other organizations would be the way we needed to go.

I thought of it as, can we develop the curriculum then roll it out in the first year of going out to do pilots. I'd like to do a minimum of five workshops around the country and partner with different kinds of organizations like state arts agencies, regional arts agencies, not-for-profits, education institutions and to try to figure out, what are the best organizations, what's the best match here, how do we best get this workshop out there?

I didn't mention this yet, but the workshop is designed for 20 artists. We have six leaders: three teams of two, one artist facilitator and one professional consultant, in each of the three topics. I travel with the workshop, as does my coordinator.

So this is great! We talk about it as the "Cadillac version." I really wanted to create, and I know Barbara mentioned this yesterday, we both wanted to create the very best model that we could, the Cadillac model. And then understand that you have to move on from there when you start to think about sustainability over a period of time.

The workshop is not cheap. It's not inexpensive, it comes with a price tag of \$1,000 an artist for the weekend. It's a \$20,000 price-tag to do the workshop. We ask the partner to provide a venue, the catering, to select the group of artists, and to pay the leaders' fees for the weekend, and all the travel and accommodations, and the leaders are paid \$1,000 a workshop. So this was what I came up with as the minimum of the expectation of the partner.

Now the other thing about the partnering situation is, we realize that this is a hefty price tag for small not-for-profits that are working at a local level. So we're very committed to working with our partners to find the funding that's required for the workshop.

To date, we have done three pilots. Between the spring of '03 and spring of '04, we will have done



eight workshops in seven locations around the country. I'll just give you a run-down of that.

Our first partner was the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council in New York. Then this summer we went to Diverse Works in Texas. In October I was so eager to take the ideas that we got in Texas and go and do another workshop. I really felt like the leaders had a momentum to continue, and so we did another workshop in New York.

We asked the artists who came to the first workshop to recommend to us artists that they think would really make great use of this material for the second workshop. I thought that that would build in an interesting way, on this peer-to-peer sharing model. So we did another workshop in October at Creative Capital.

In November we will go to the Pennsylvania State Arts Council. That's an interesting situation, because we're going to go to two cities in the state and workshop with two different groups of artists. This time we're going to be working with 50 to 90 artists in each location and do a five-hour workshop. So we've completely reconfigured what we're doing. Again, this is part of the experiment, how much of what we're doing in the weekend can translate to this format? What will be effective and what won't? We've been working closely with them to figure out the model for that presentation.

This summer we'll go to Mid-Atlantic and do another weekend workshop for 20. In February we'll go to North Carolina. We'll work with the North Carolina State Arts Council. In March, we'll be working with Austin Peay State University in Tennessee. But they are sponsoring it for a statewide group of artists.

So we work with our partners, and each partner comes up with their own unique approach to how they want to find their artists. So for example, Lower Manhattan Cultural Council did a nomination process. They chose their top 30 artists that they'd worked with on projects that they thought could really make use of this and recommended them to us and then we got in touch with them.

However, Diverse Works decided that they really wanted to do an open call. They conducted it like a grantmaking process. You had to fill out a form and send your work and then a panel met to discuss the work and choose the artists to participate. And that worked extremely well, we had a really fantastic group of artists in Texas.

In Pennsylvania, this is a group of artists that works in their Artists in the Schools statewide program. All the artists in that program will

be the participants. It's just different with every partner, how the group of artists gets chosen.

Through the development of the curriculum and the feedback that we get from our grantees, we've realized that focusing on artists that have been out of school for usually around five years tends to be the best group to be able to make use of this. They've had some time to be out there and hit the ground and see what's going on and get their land legs, have presented their work and have shown their work a bit.

But I would say there's no other kind of demographic about age or where you are in your career because we've really discovered that artists that have been around for quite a long time and seem to us to have a great amount of success and track record, are still in crisis-management mode and still have large, large issues around their career, their finances, their lives.

That gives you kind of the overall picture of the program. This would be a great time to open it up to questions and comments and other people's ideas and thoughts.

**PARTICIPANT:** I have a question about the costs that you were just talking about, and the charge to artists, \$1,000. Is that charged to the individual artists?

**POU:** No, that's the budget. It's free to the artists. The whole issue of artists paying for the workshop is a big issue, and this is something that we don't really know yet. We haven't sorted this out.

But this is part of why I decided right away that I had to go for working with partners. The idea was to work with organizations that have a mandate for artists' services or an interest in that, but maybe don't have their own budget or staff to do that. We could actually come in and work with them in partnership, but they would pay the fee for the artists to do the workshop.

In our questionnaire, we always ask, "Are you willing to pay for this workshop?" and "If you are, how much are you willing to pay?" And we've gotten not what we really wanted to hear, that many of the artists are saying that they would not pay for this workshop.

**LERNER:** The rest of the evaluation that you say, is absolutely glowing. "This changed my life." "This is the best thing I've ever done." "Would you pay for it?" "No."

**POU:** I have these handouts up here, and part of the handout is a sheet of quotes from artists



who've been to the workshop. And, as Ruby said, "It's changed my life." "I'll never be the same." Blah, blah, blah. They're tearful at the end, when we have the closing. I know you've had this experience too, people are weeping! It literally does change their lives.

I think that this comes from one of the things that we're trying to address in the workshop, which is to help artists shift from a perspective of scarcity to a perspective of abundance in their own lives. That the refusal to make an investment in yourself to do this workshop, to believe in yourself, that if you invest this money and do for yourself what you can actually do, to make your life more abundant and that that's not only in financial terms, it's an investment in yourself and yet that's the last thing that artists feel confident to do. Of course, if they have a scarcity mentality about resource, money is definitely in there, and they're not going to feel that they can afford it.

**PARTICIPANT:** And sometimes they've just paid \$40-60,000 for a BFA and MFA, or have that kind of student debt as well. So some of it is perception, and some of it is reality.

**LERNER:** We recognize that the customer for this, which we hope will be partner organizations, is not obviously the ultimate user of the services. Which is why it so important to have the good partners and partners who have relationships in their communities so that they can help raise money.

We've been really helped in the development by the Tremaine Foundation. It would not have been possible for any of us to have developed this work without the wonderful support of the Tremaine Foundation over a long period that's given us the ability to develop this.

The truth is that we help subsidize some of the locations because the situation now has been so bleak in so many places that we feel it's something we want to get good at it and make it more widely available if it turns out that it's really useful. So we've tried to ask what can you do? Then we try to come up with something to match it.

**PARTICIPANT:** My question is, does this pool of artists, then, feed your applicant pool for your project support?

**LERNER:** For me, as the organizational person looking at how the workshop fits into the other things that we do, I would say one of the most exciting things about it is that it educates us about communities of artists around the country

or particular constituencies of artists that we might not otherwise know about.

The experience in Houston was really phenomenal in that regard! We had 20 fantastic artists. I would say not all of them would be competitive in our process – that's not surprising – but I would say that maybe about a half dozen of them would be competitive.

I'm very hopeful that they will apply and that at least a couple of them might get grants. So that's incredibly exciting to us that we can begin to educate ourselves about communities that we really don't know as much about as we should.

**POU:** The other piece about that is our aim to partner with an organization, and Diverse Works is a good example of this because they've gotten three years of funding from the Tremaine to work with us and they've also got some local funding.

My idea with it is that we go in the first year and do the workshop. We go in the second year, add a day to work with artists from the first year who want to become trainers for the local artists. Then, by the third year, they're actually co-leading the workshops. Then we're helping to build a model, a local model that can be sustained locally. That gets to that issue of follow-up and sustainability.

**LERNER:** One of the things that we ask ourselves with the work that we do is, what will be residual here? What can we do that will be residual? In the case of the strategic planning, we're leaving people with some kind of skills base long after we're out of the picture. With the retreats, it's the relationships with other artists and with arts professionals.

So it's the same thing here. Are we just going to come into a community and then walk away? That's not really enough.

**PARTICIPANT:** I'm really intrigued by your statement that you want to move folks from a perspective of scarcity to a perspective of abundance. That's not a matter of intellect. It's a matter of cosmology. How you think the earth is constructed.

**POU:** This came up yesterday. We were talking about this issue of what do you do when you train a whole bunch of artists to go out into an arts economy that can't support them? So, in other words, what do you do when you get a whole bunch of visual artists that go out into the gallery system but the gallery system can't actually support that?



The fundamental thing with this, and the key part about the strategic planning which gets to what you're saying, is that what this workshop is about motivation. Individual motivation to take on your own life and to look at.

That's where the strategic planning thing is. We emphasize it's about listening to your own voice, and that everything comes from that point of listening to your own voice and planning out from that. My notions of success might not be your notions of success. But it's important not to buy into some notion of success that's not your own.

However, we do that. In the arts community, the artists particularly do that, because they get this notion of, "I have to be this way or I have to be that way."

The culture itself among artists is very punishing. There's very little notion of success. I've talked to artists who've gotten the MacArthur and a Guggenheim and they still feel like they're failures! So what you're bringing up is a very important point. It's almost like success coaching in a way.

**PARTICIPANT:** It seems like the first step in your work would be to convince them that their attitude could determine success or failure, that their expectations are key.

**POU:** Yes, that's what we do. We set that up in the workshop from the very beginning. We do it through the concrete point of view of the strategic planning.

One of my big fears is that this thing all sounds too New Age-y. It has to be grounded. It always has to come back and be grounded and, what are you doing? How are you thinking about yourself and setting your goals? But this issue of individual voice is crucial. It's fundamental.

**LERNER:** We'd like to believe that you can proceed from your heart and from your values and your ethics on out. In the process you're not asked or expected to violate anything that you believe in order to be successful.

But the planning person that we work with – who is just an amazing human being – one of the first things she says in the workshop is, "You are all small businesses, and you know what? You're really bad bosses of yourself. You would never work for you. You work long hours, you have no benefits, you have no vacation, you have..."

I say that this workshop is almost like an unraveling in some ways. It's like an un-brainwashing workshop. A lot of the expectations

and a lot of the things that artists come out of art schools with are damaging and punishing. It's not helped by the environment that they're in either.

The idea that you can be in a position to take control of your career. A lot of the thinking is kind of wishful thinking. "I'm going to get discovered by somebody." Or, "My goal..."

One of the things that was asked in Houston was, where would you like to be in five years? These were visual artists and everybody said, "Well, I want to have a gallery." One of the things that gets communicated is, yes, and then what? The gallery has its own interests at heart, you know. What are you doing for yourself and about yourself?

So it really is not the savior model, in the salvation outside yourself.

**POU:** We immediately recognize the struggle. We also recognize the success to date. Like we recognize the struggles of it, and that you are incredibly successful. That you are here. That you're sitting in that chair. That you've done what you've done. You've come to the point that you've come. And it can just get better from this point on for you.

Well, nobody ever says that to a group of artists. The message they usually get is, survival of the fittest. They get that in school. We all got it in school, look at the demographics. Five artists get the galleries, and there are a million artists in the deal. A more positive perspective is enough to put some people in tears.

**PARTICIPANT:** I would love to hear you define success for artists.

**LERNER:** No.

**PARTICIPANT:** One of the problems is that most professionals recognizes success steps on a ladder.

**POU:** You have to set your own.

**PARTICIPANT:** Success as an artist is if you are still practicing five or ten years down the road.

**POU:** That's a great success model. The thing that we reinforce in the workshop is, it has to be self-defined. We could go to each person in this room, and you would self-define success. That might be it for you, and for someone else it might be completely different.

We don't have that sort of corporate structure. I've had some very interesting conversations with Colleen about this, because she comes from the corporate structure. She works with strategic





planning and success coaching with corporate CEOs. She was moving from that model of how you define reward and success, to the artists' model of how you do. And it's been an interesting trip of discovery for her that really has brought her and us to a clearer understanding of this idea of it must be your own voice.

**END**

