Inclusive Arts and Culture

Kathlyn M. Steedly, PhD

Steedly Consulting

" *Art is amazing because it comes magically from your own thoughts and imagination. Through my art I have learned that the storms outside in the world are like my personal storms and you can get through them.* "

—Lisie, Inside Out Artist

Learning Outcomes

After completing this chapter, learners will be able to do the following:

- Define inclusive arts and culture.
- Understand key concepts of inclusive arts and culture programs.
- Identify fundamental aspects of successful inclusive arts and culture programs.

Early one June morning, employees of VSA arts (formerly Very Special Arts) arrived at the Baltimore airport to pick up a group of artists from Iceland. How would the VSA arts group meet up with artists who were possibly blind, had limited mobility, or needed other types of special assistance? What could they do to make sure the artists could get from baggage claim to ground transportation? The usual airport headaches were magnified by issues of language differences, health concerns, and logistical complexities, such as getting wheelchairs specifically designed for dance through U.S. customs. It was VSA arts' responsibility to make sure the artists made it to Washington, DC, safe and sound.

The Icelandic artists were only one group of international artists that VSA arts hosted as part of the 2004 VSA arts International Festival. VSA arts, an international arts organization committed to providing access to the arts for people with disabilities, produced an arts festival in which artists from all art forms, from all over the world, met in Washington, DC, for a week-long celebration of arts and culture. This was a unique event. Venues not traditionally focused on showcasing the work of artists with disabilities included their work front and center alongside permanent exhibits and performance seasons. The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts opened its stages to musicians and dancers with disabilities. The Smithsonian Institution displayed the work of artists with disabilities. Local arts reviewers had the opportunity to view and respond to the work of artists with disabilities whose work was on display throughout the city. The international arts community, including the community of international artists with disabilities, was represented by juried, professional-caliber artists from all artistic disciplines. Most important, the Washington, DC, community could experience the power and possibility of the arts through witnessing the contribution of artists with disabilities.

The VSA arts International Arts Festival exemplifies inclusive arts and culture programming as mirror, magnifying glass, and microphone. Space was created for artists with disabilities within the larger arts and culture community (participation was determined on the basis of artistic merit through a rigorous selection process). Artists with disabilities were no longer absent from the conversation because artist and audience alike could use an artistic lens to examine commonalities. Issues and challenges of the disability community could be viewed for both their sameness and their difference by the entire arts and culture community.

This chapter sets out to encourage inclusive arts and culture programs in recreational contexts. Toward that end, three primary objectives are outlined: to define inclusive arts and culture programming, to identify inclusive programming across arts disciplines, and to forward fundamental components of successful inclusive arts and culture programming.

Inclusive Arts and Cultural Programming

What makes an inclusive arts and culture program inclusive? Is an inclusive arts and culture program simply a good arts program? Where do inclusive arts and culture happen? These questions frame the central issue addressed in this chapter: How do we encourage inclusive arts and culture programs in recreational contexts? Arts and culture programs occur in a variety of places. Theaters, galleries, museums, studios, live music venues, and school auditoriums are typically the first places people associate with arts and cultural programs; however, some of these places may seem somewhat removed, difficult, expensive, boring, irrelevant, or strange to people who are disconnected from the arts.

If we scratch beneath the surface of mainstream arts and culture, we see that the arts also exist in the cracks and crevasses of everyday life. Arts and culture happen in public parks, community centers, schools, churches, coffee houses, hospitals, living rooms, building lobbies, street corners, and highway viaducts. The arts intersect life where people meet. Inclusive arts and culture programs require that traditional arts and culture program providers shift and mold their practices to include more voices and spaces. Inclusive arts and culture also demand a broader embrace of arts programming by people who may have left the arts off of their agendas. Meaningful reach requires understanding and action across a broad spectrum of stakeholders, including government and business, based on knowledge and commitment.

Erickson (2008) suggests several policy-level actions—such as government subsidy of arts and culture events—in responding to what she terms the "crisis in culture," in which participation and inclusion in arts and culture are

limited by socioeconomic constraints. Defining terms, identifying key concepts, and providing tangible examples lay a foundation for new or reinvigorated inclusive arts activities in a variety of communities.

Defining Inclusion

The term *inclusion* is surrounded in legal, cultural, and philosophical meaning. The Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Architectural Barriers Act of 1968, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Fair Housing Amendments Act of 1988, and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 offer legal safeguards to ensure physical accessibility, employment protection, and civil rights support. The Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 (now called the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) ensures free and appropriate public education within the least restrictive environment for infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities. These laws exist to create a more just society for all people. The long-waged legislative struggle toward inclusion has required a shift of public and political will. Inclusion is defined and required as a matter of law; however, definitions of inclusion must also include cultural and philosophical considerations.

Cultural inclusion recognizes and affirms the presence and contribution of all people in meaningful ways throughout society. Cultural inclusion makes space for a variety of images, and a variety of people, to be publically presented. Cultural inclusion demands that people move beyond pity, fear, and deficit thinking—aspects of "help" that often allow one group of people to remain marginalized and powerless. Cultural inclusion provides for accurate and honest representation of all people. Cultural inclusion seeks to provide equal airtime for all stories to be told. Cultural inclusion views diversity as the golden thread in the fabric of a multicultural society.

Philosophical inclusion speaks to what motivates society to create inclusive environments. Philosophical inclusion involves the ethical notion that all people have the right to fully participate in society. If an inclusive philosophy guides the ways in which society happens, all children are educated soundly, businesses are run fairly, resources are allocated justly, and rules are followed consistently. Within this framework, laws are the product of and the method by which an inclusive philosophy is lived out.

Ultimately, real inclusion involves legal, cultural, and philosophical action. A defined legal system cannot truly protect the rights of people if society does not hold the philosophical belief that all people have rights. Likewise, cultural inclusion can provide the understanding necessary for philosophical and legal inclusion. Real inclusion means that people actively support the rights of others. Inclusive arts and culture programs have the privilege of making visible the powerful beauty of the creative impulse of all people, allowing the voices of all people to be heard, and creating space for understanding across the societal divides of race, class, and ability.

Universal Design

The concept of universal design is central to inclusive arts and culture practice. The way in which environments and objects are developed to increase access, and by extension participation, by the largest group of people is a tenet of universal design. Mace (2008) defines universal design as "the design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design" (www.design.ncsu.edu/cud/about_ud.htm). Ivey (2001) explained universal design this way:

> The operative point of view for designers (whether architects, landscape architects, interior designers, engineers, industrial designers, web designers, or way finders) becomes one of empathy for the human condition; in universal design, solutions reflect the diversity of human abilities—throughout the range of life. Although codes may assure compliance where the society has improved intransigent, the ultimate answer to the universal design lies in employing our full imaginative and aesthetic gifts in a new way of seeing. (p. xvi)

Universal design is built on the basic belief that all people function better when environmental barriers to participation are removed. The principles of universal design offered by the Center for Universal Design (2008) suggest that a universally designed environment is equitable, flexible, simple, and intuitive. Some everyday examples of universal design include lever handles for opening doors, wide interior hallways, appropriate lighting, and adaptable auditory and visual controls on technology.

Universal design has specific implications within the field of arts and culture. To reiterate, universal design dictates that function and utility yield participation. That includes the entire breadth of the arts and culture field. John Killacky (2005) described the effort to move beyond compliance and make arts programs accessible:

> Accessibility is much more than ramps, seating, listening devices, large print programs, and sign language interpretation. Exhibition lectures, films, interactive computer displays, plays and concerts examine disability, as well as materials about programs—catalogues, labeling, scripts, libretti, brochures, maps, and publicity have become more accessible.

The frame for accessibility into which universal design can be folded acknowledges the specific steps the arts and cultural community has taken to be more inclusive—listening devices, large-print programs, and building spaces that all people can enjoy. Although a great deal of work has been done with respect to universal design and access within the arts and culture community, as evidenced by the work of the Kennedy Center, the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies (2003), and many others, great deal of work remains.

Cultural Economy

Recent years have seen the arts and culture community begin to intensely scrutinize the impact the arts and culture in terms of dollars and cents—making an argument for the arts from an economic perspective. This growing body of literature reveals the important role that the arts and culture community plays in the economic life of society. Best-selling books assert the emergence of a "creative class" in which power and commerce are increasingly controlled by creative, innovative, arts-minded people from arts-friendly communities (Florida, 2002). The data can be particularly persuasive when we communicate with people who may hold the view that the arts are frilly extravagances for easy times.

The data suggest several interesting things with respect to overall economic impact of the arts. Americans for the Arts (2009) reports that 2.98 million people work for 612,095 arts-centric businesses (see figure 13.1.)

The National Endowment for the Arts (2008) found that nearly 2 million Americans identified *artist* as their primary occupation on the U.S. census. Designers are the single largest group of artists, followed by performing artists such as actors, dancers, and musicians.
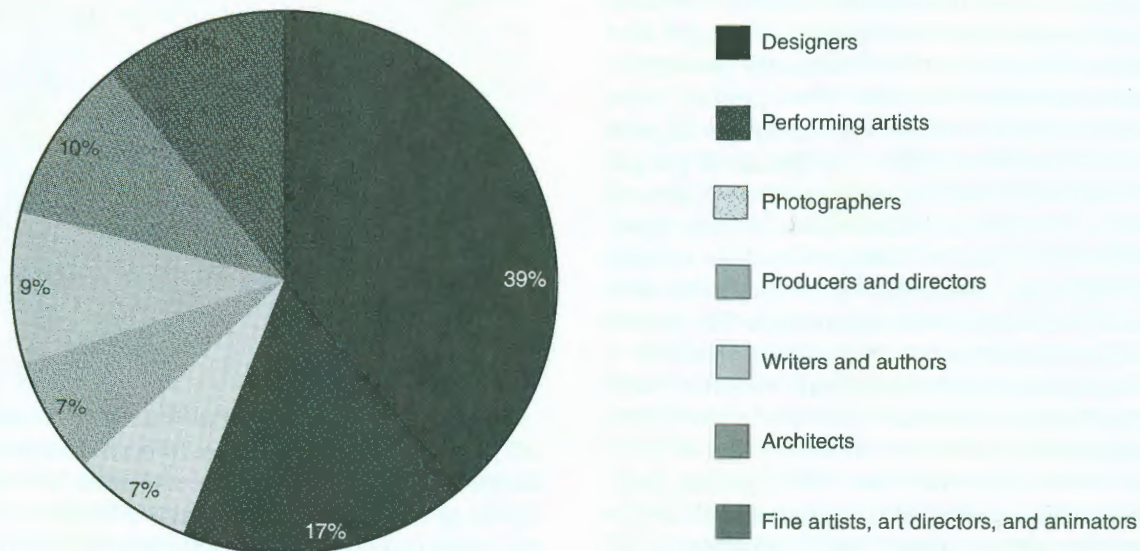

- ■ Designers
- ■ Performing artists
- ▨ Photographers
- ▨ Producers and directors
- ▨ Writers and authors
- ▨ Architects
- ■ Fine artists, art directors, and animators

Figure 13.1 Economic impact of the nonprofit arts and culture industry in the United States in 2005.

Data from Americans for the Arts. Available: http://www.americansforthearts.org/pdf/information_services/research/services/economic_impact/aepiii/highlights.pdf and National Endowment for the Arts. Available: www.nea.gov/research/researchreports_chrono.html.

Examples of art-centric employers are these:

- Arts council
- Government agency (e.g., department of cultural affairs)
- Museum
- Arts or science center
- Art school
- Symphony orchestra
- Summer theater
- Opera company
- Theatrical company
- Performing arts center
- Community theater
- Ballet company
- Dance studios, schools, and halls
- Theater (building, ownership, and operation)

Arts & Economic Prosperity (Americans for the Arts, 2009) offers perhaps the most powerful economic case for the arts. In the United States, the nonprofit arts and culture industry generates $166.2 billion in economic activity annually. In 2005, this spending supported 5.7 million full-time jobs (see table 13.1).

The breadth and depth of economic data reveal several important ideas. The arts and culture community is central to economic development—it provides jobs, revenue, and income. The notion that the arts live at the periphery of society may now be challenged with facts that assert a far more comprehensive model of economic involvement. Finally, these numbers give permission for various sectors of society to support systemic arts involvement, including significant funding to ensure comprehensive arts and culture programming.

The economic argument outlined above can be extended to include demographic trends suggesting that the economically valuable arts and culture community embraces inclusive practice. There are 41 million adults and children with disabilities in this country (U.S. Census Bureau, 2004). McNeil reported the following in 1997:

> It is estimated that among the population 6 years and over, 8.6 million people had difficulty with one or more activities of daily living and 4.1 million needed personal assistance. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008, pp. 70-71)

We must acknowledge the connection between disability and aging, given that there are 37 million people age 65 or older in the United States. By 2030, the population of older adults will reach 71.5 million.

Connecting the demographic and economic dots reveals a direction for arts and culture programs. Society in general, including arts and culture institutions, will have to develop inclusive practice to ensure that people are able to continue to participate and enjoy arts and culture. There will be more demand for inclusive practice: Market forces will dictate arts and culture programming that more clearly reflects a society where accessibility determines involvement. It can also be argued that current levels of participation (as indicated by employment and dollars spent) will not be sustainable without systemic attention to inclusion.

Table 13.1 Economic Impact of the Nonprofit Arts and Culture Industry (2005)*

	Amount
Total expenditures	$166.2 billion
Resident household income	$104.2 billion
Local government revenue	$7.9 billion
State government revenue	$9.1 billion
Federal income tax revenue	$12.6 billion

*Expenditures by audience and organizations.

Note: The nonprofit arts and culture industry in the United States provided 5.7 million full-time-equivalent jobs in 2005. Data from Americans for the Arts (2009).

Based on http://www.americansforthearts.org/pdf/information_services/research/services/economic_impact/aepiii/highlights.pdf and National Endowment of the Arts www.nea.gov/research/researchreports_chrono.html.

Cultural Competency

The ability to successfully understand, live, and work with people from various cultural backgrounds has arguably never been more important. The cultural competence movement can be viewed as a societal response to that need. In a globally focused world with an increasingly multicultural, multi-abled, and linguistically diverse population, culture competence becomes a deeply important skill set. Culture competence can be defined as

> a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes and policies that come together in a system, agency, or among professionals and enables that system agency or professionals to work effectively in cross-cultural situations (Cross et al., 1989, p. iv).

Growing out of the health professions and the desire to appropriately diagnose and treat people from variety of cultures, cultural competence is historically tied to health and well-being. Business and industry have co-opted *cultural competence* as an umbrella term for diversity initiatives within the workplace. Within education, cultural competence can apply to policy circles that seek to understand and confront issues such as the overrepresentation of African American and Latino students within the special education system. Also within education, cultural competence refers to culturally relevant teaching and curriculum.

Inclusive arts and culture programs address cultural competence in several key ways. Programs provide a venue for exploration of different cultures and abilities in artistic, compelling, and responsive ways. Programs that involve instruction and interaction allow for conversation between and among people of various cultures and abilities. Programs draw on the unique texture and nuance of culture—in all its manifestations of materials, language, history, and context. Finally, programs inform and remind communities about the multicultural reality of our society by providing windows into experiences we may not have lived.

Arts and Culture Inclusion in Practice

Common practices are used within the arts and culture community to create more inclusive arts experiences. Inclusive arts and culture programs use tools from the worlds of technology, the arts, and language to bridge the divides created by different abilities. Providing inclusive arts and culture experiences requires program providers to consider the barriers to participation in the artistic event, develop a strategy or approach to overcoming the barrier, and implement a solution to the problem.

Arts and culture within this discussion includes the visual, performing, literary, and media arts. The close relationship shared by the specific art forms, such as music and dance, cannot be underscored enough as inclusive practices are systemically developed. The language used within the arts and culture community reflects the overlap and interdependence of art forms. For example, an exhibit of neon tubes and televisions may be viewed at a museum alongside painting and sculpture—or—a performance artist may play an instrument, recite poetry, and dance during a performance. Art forms are often authentically integrated in practice.

Highlighting a few strategies that arts and culture programmers use to create inclusive arts and culture experiences not only will shine a light on arts and culture but potentially will spur thought about how these strategies might inform work outside the context of arts and culture.

American Sign Language Interpretation and Shadow Interpretation

Many theaters offer performances that are interpreted in American Sign Language (ASL). An interpreter often stands to the side of the stage and translates what is being spoken as part of a play, for example. Often, a few ASL-interpreted performances are offered within a theater company's entire season. ASL interpretation allows people who are deaf and hard of hearing to experience a performance event that would otherwise be inaccessible to them.

Taking ASL interpretation to another level, theaters and performance groups are turning to shadow interpretation as a way to fully integrate aesthetic goals and inclusive practice. Sign language interpreters "shadow" actors on stage and translate the dialog into ASL for deaf audiences or spoken English for hearing audiences. In shadow interpretation, the actors on the stage speak the script in a traditional way (speaking English while performing English scripts) and are

shadowed by actors performing in ASL simultaneously to the voiced performances. The approach allows an audience to experience both ASL and the spoken word simultaneously. Reviews of shadow-interpreted shows speak to the power of this approach. A review of a production of *Children of a Lesser God* presented by Pied Piper Players in Lakeland, Florida, explains, "shadow signing allows everyone in the audience to see and understand the play's action as it happens" (Ellis, 2005, www.theledger.com/article/20050420/ NEWS/504200308?Title=-Shadow-Signing-Brings-Play-to-Life). A review of Deaf West's *Big River* lauded shadow interpretation:

> What's most striking about this Broadway ensemble is how thoroughly it has intermingled sign-language with the lexicon of musical theater, to the point that we're soon convinced that this singular lingua franca—physical, expressively theatrical, somehow clarifying, even to a hearing audience—is the only way this story of friendship without borders can be told (Kendt, 2003, www.deafwest.org/productions/review.html#lati1mes).

ASL and shadow interpretation exemplify tools for inclusion used in the performing arts. Both specifically create the opportunity for the deaf or hard-of-hearing community to participate in a theatrical event.

Audio Description

Audio description allows people who are blind or visually impaired to enjoy the arts in meaningful ways. Audio description can be delivered live or by a taped narrator. The National Center on Accessible Information Technology in Education (2008) at the University of Washington defines audio description, saying, "Narrators typically describe actions, gestures, scene changes, and other visual information. They also describe titles, speaker names, and other text that may appear on the screen."

Audio description is used across a variety of contexts. In museums, audio description allows a more interactive experience than provided in basic audio tours, which often simply provide information about a particular artist or the historical context of a work of art. An audio-described exhibit gives museumgoers a vivid description of a piece of art. It may provide information about the way in which the artwork is oriented in the museum space, the texture of brush strokes on a painting, or the finish of a statue, for example. Audio description within a television context provides a way in which a program can be watched and understood simultaneously by all viewers. Audio description of a dance performance allows the audience to appreciate the movements as well as the music. Because audio description is used across a breadth of artistic and cultural locales, its implication outside of arts and culture cannot be overlooked.

Assistive Technology

Assistive technology is the broad term used to describe devices that increase access and participation in society. Although often discussed in respect to the disability community—in reference to wheelchairs, for example, or a device that speaks while the user types a message on a keyboard—assistive technology also encompasses the variety of universally designed equipment intended to help all people fully participate in society. Some common types of assistive technology include telecommunications devices, speech recognition software, electronic sensors connected to an alarm system that notifies caregivers of an emergency, and various computer adaptations such as a foot mouse, large monitor, or large-key keyboard. Much like the concept of universal design brings together disparate fields and constituencies under the big tent of access, the field of assistive technology informs and is informed by information technology, health care, product design, and urban planning.

Assistive technology has very specific implications for arts and culture programs. Whether by affording an audience member the opportunity to fully participate in an artistic event (as exemplified by the technology used in audio description) or by providing an artist the tools necessary to create, assistive technology affects arts and culture in real ways. Mouth-sticks can allow an artist to apply paint. Adjustable or motorized easels and tabletop easels make it possible for an artist to create from an optimal position. Adjustable drawing boards and tables, magnification devices, and Verilux lamps are also used by artists as they design a light plot, sew costumes, or draw a set rendering.

ASL interpretation, shadow interpretation, audio description, and assistive technology illustrate practices within the arts and culture community intended to increase participation in and access to the arts for all people. These practices embody the effort to merge the practical

and the aesthetic. They acknowledge the fact that all people have the right to fully enjoy the arts. The visible presence of inclusive practices across institutions and contexts also reminds people that different abilities are a fundamental and valuable part of society and that inclusive practice benefits everyone.

Inclusive concepts and practices come together when arts experiences seamlessly, creatively, and deliberately allow for the complete participation, appreciation, and involvement of all people: when the theater troupe decides to cast an actor regardless of ability; when a community builds a museum that all people can enter and move through; when a park secures a piece of public art for the enjoyment of visitors. These actions are concrete manifestations of inclusive arts and culture.

Inclusion and Art Forms

After drawing inclusive arts and culture with broad strokes, we now look at inclusion as it manifests across the art forms. Differences exist in the unique way artistic media communicate using the tools of the body, words, paint, canvas, instruments, and technology. That being said, important overlap can be found in the way dancers move through music, actors portray characters, or a visual artist constructs a mixed-media collage combining materials, words, and images. Providing an inclusive arts experience requires a thoughtful approach that acknowledges the specific needs of artists and the form in which they are working. What follows is not an exhaustive list of inclusive programs. Neither is it necessarily a recommendation of these programs, although the merit of these programs can perhaps be determined by the awards they have received, their longevity, and their ingenious approach to meeting community needs. The programs described here can be considered windows into the practice of inclusive arts programming, conversation starters for artists and others who seek to better understand arts programs, and evidence of the possible breadth and depth of inclusive arts programming. Focusing on several examples of inclusive arts and culture organizations, and specifically on their work, will illuminate the way in which the art forms themselves affect inclusion.

Perspectives and Examples From Performing Arts, Music, and Dance

Deaf West Theatre   Deaf West Theatre (www.deafwest.org) was founded in Los Angeles in 1991 as the first professional, permanent, residential sign language theater west of the Mississippi River. Deaf West's productions involve award-winning artists and have earned more than 60 awards for artistic and technical merit. Deaf West offers a variety of theatrical programming in which the deaf community can engage with theater, and the theater community can experience theater by and with artists and technicians who are deaf. Deaf West produces three main stage shows each season. Deaf West's outreach activities include national touring, in-school workshops, professional acting workshops, and a program called ASL Story Time.

A primary example of Deaf West's overarching impact on the theater community is its production of *Big River*. Deaf West's Broadway production of *Big River* (a musical based on Mark Twain's classic novel *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*) was nominated for two Tony Awards, Broadway's highest honor. Following the successful Broadway run, a multicity national tour commenced. The tour crossed the United States throughout the 2004-2005 season. Promotional materials for the tour exclaimed, "Deaf, hard-of-hearing and hearing actors perform each role in a synchronized ballet of speaking and signing. Spoken English and American Sign Language are interwoven with music, dance, and storytelling techniques from both hearing and deaf cultures into a 'third language' creating a unique theatrical event—the adventure of a lifetime!" A *Big River* study guide and deaf sensitivity packet were developed in conjunction with the tour to support the literary and artistic value of the production and bridge the communication divide between people who are deaf and others.

AXIS Dance Company   AXIS Dance Company (www.axisdance.org) began in 1987 as an inclusive movement class for women who use wheelchairs (see figure 13.2). Its press packet explains, "AXIS has been a bridge between contemporary dance and physically integrated dance." AXIS'

mission includes creating and performing contemporary dance by dancers with and without disabilities; teaching about collaboration and disability; and promoting physically integrated dance locally, nationally, and internationally. AXIS' commitment to artistic excellence, and its recognized position within the dance world, can be witnessed in its collaborative work with prominent artists and choreographers and its numerous regional national awards. AXIS has created 40 in-house dance pieces, and its educational programs were featured at the Kennedy Center's national Imagination Celebration at the 2002 Olympic Arts Festival. In articulating the power of AXIS Dance, contemporary dance pioneer Bill T. Jones explains, "There is no more defiant a land that I can think of than AXIS. They showed me what dance could be."

Club Wild Club Wild is an Australian community arts organization. Its Web site (www. clubwild.net) explains, "Club Wild runs disability friendly dance parties, training and creative workshops in songwriting, music performance, drumming and dance, hip hop, rapping, DJing,

Figure 13.2 AXIS Dance in Action.

MCing, and multimedia." Simply stated, "Club Wild supports the creative expression of people with a disability through music, video and performance, and champions their equal participation in society—in seriously funky style!"

Club Wild's work stands uniquely in the middle of artistic, social, and vocational purpose. People of all abilities attend the club's dance parties. Club Wild's workshops develop artists. Its production program graduates theatrical technicians who are equipped with 21st-century techniques. Club Wild artists include DJs, bands, technicians, and more. Akash, a Club Wild DJ, works as a professional performer and composer, having created five film scores and seven albums. The Big Bag Band, another Club Wild act, is a group of artists with and without intellectual disabilities who have been making music since 1989.

## Perspectives and Examples From the Visual Arts

VSA arts and Green Light We previously described the scope of VSA arts programming across the breadth of artistic disciplines, and we now focus on one program within this group's visual arts work. In 2001, VSA arts (www.vsarts. org) and Volkswagen Group of America initiated an awards program in which artists with disabilities ages 16 to 25 would receive a significant cash award to further their artistic careers. It is the largest awards program for young artists with disabilities in the United States. This award is particularly important in that it is received at the time in the artist's life when the first professional decisions are being made and support is especially important. Each year a call for entries focused on an arts-related theme is released, and a jury of accomplished leaders from the visual arts community reviews the entries and makes the award. (See figure 13.3 on page 242.)

The theme for the 2008 VSA arts/Volkswagen Group of America award was Green Light. Green Light encouraged young artists to reflect on their artistic motivations and inspirations. Each artist was asked to write an artist's statement as part of the submission process. The statement received from award recipient Michelle Herman explains, "For me, my disability is my 'Green Light.' I am thankful for the experiences I have had as they
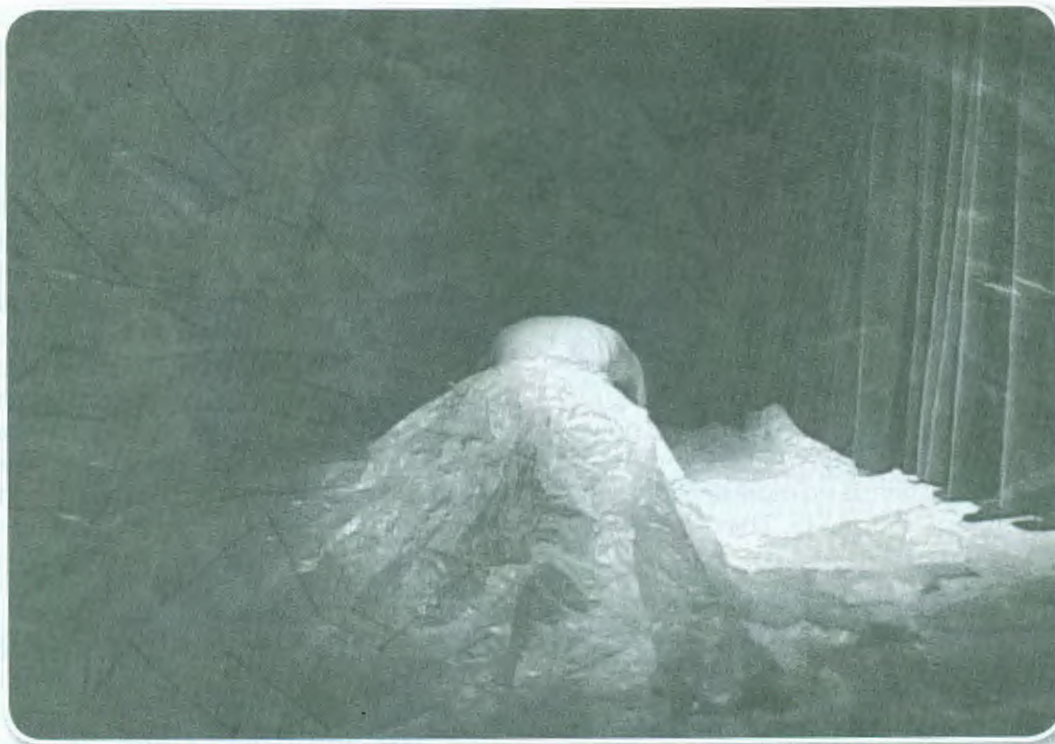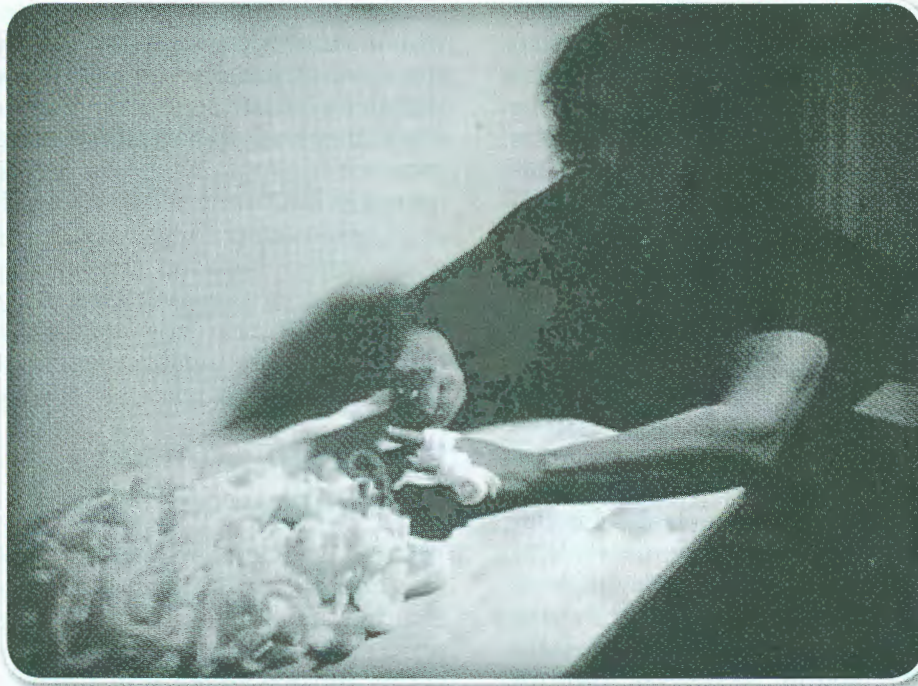
Figure 13.3 *Rustle* won the grand prize in the VSA arts Project Greenlight competition. This piece is a still picture taken from a video in which the sculptural capacity of fabric to illustrate environmental boundaries and movement is explored. The artist, Sara Meuhlbaeur, received her BFA from the University of Wisconsin–Madison.

have shaped me into the artist I am today." The total cash amount for the 2008 competition was $60,000. Fifteen emerging artists with disabilities received individual cash awards of up to $20,000 at a Capitol Hill reception (see figure 13.4). The works of art were then on display at the Smithsonian prior to a 2-year tour of U.S. colleges and universities. The VSA arts/Volkswagen Award, in terms of financial commitment and visibility, stands as an example of the importance and potential of the artists with disabilities when given recognition and support.

Sprout Sprout (http://gosprout.org) is a New York City–based nonprofit organization founded in 1979 to provide travel opportunities for people with disabilities, particularly people with intellectual disability or other developmental disabilities. Sprout programming has grown to include group travel experiences, camps, music festivals, and a film festival. Sprout currently serves more than 1,800 people with disabilities each year. Sprout's promotional materials assert that the organization's age-appropriate recreational and leisure activities enhance mobilization, self-confidence, and socialization

of participants while breaking down societal barriers that prevent the inclusion of people with disabilities.

The Sprout Make-a-Movie program and Sprout Film Festival are unique examples of media programs. The Make-a-Movie program, which began in 1994, offers people with developmental disabilities the opportunity to be involved in developing and producing movies that chronicle and display the life experiences of people who are traditionally marginalized or absent in mainstream film. Since 2005, the Sprout Film Festival has sought to provide a forum for artistic excellence and open discourse about the lives of people with developmental disabilities. Selected movies highlight both the ordinary and the exceptional nature of the day-to-day lives of people with disabilities. The 2008 festival included such titles as *Look Joe I Am in College*, which focused on the stories of four young men with Autism from public schools who are chosen to attend a university pilot program, and *The Gillian Film*, which tells the story of a woman with developmental disabilities who decides to move out of her family home and live on her own.

Figure 13.4 *Healing* won the Award of Excellence in the VSA arts Project Greenlight competition. This piece is a still picture from a video in which the artist's mother reflects over the act of preparing bandages. Healing, both physically and emotionally, is the theme explored in this piece. The artist, Michelle Herman, earned her BFA in fine art and art history from the Maryland Institute College of Art in Baltimore.

Inside Out Productions, L.A. Goal Inside Out Productions (www.insideoutproductions. com), a program of L.A. Goal, was established in 1994 "to provide non-traditional creative jobs for adults with developmental disabilities." L.A. Goal maintains a variety of programs focused on developing independent living skills. Inside Out draws on the tradition of "outsider art" in which artists develop an individual style and artistic approach outside of traditional, or formal, artistic style. Inside Out employs part-time artists in a commercial art and sewing studio. Inside Out artists take classes in drawing, painting, ceramics, printmaking, and sewing led by professional artists. Their work is displayed in a virtual gallery online, an annual art show at an art gallery, three exhibitions at a cultural museum, and numerous special exhibitions. Members of Inside Out have been featured on the *NBC Today Show* discussing the publication of their book *Disabled Fables: Aesop's Fables Retold and Illustrated by Artists With Developmental Disabilities* (L.A. Goal, 2004).

The Inside Out artists themselves offer a compelling argument for the value of their artistic endeavors. The artwork featured in the virtual gallery depicts creative explorations of color and theme. Artist statements provide personal insight. Susan simply states, "Painting brings me peace." Jennifer describes, "My art is changing for me because my fingers have grown up." Lisie exclaims:

> Art is amazing because it comes magically from your own thoughts and imagination. Through my art I have learned that the storms outside in the world are like my personal storms and you can get through them.

David sums up his opinion about his artwork by saying, "I feel happy when I do art—proud and safe."

The art forms affect inclusive practice in several important ways. They are inherently inclusive in that they provide avenues for groups of artists to collectively communicate on equal ground. Dancers' bodies move through space in relation to one another, allowing the choreography to showcase the unique physicality of all dancers. The cast of a play creates a production by bringing the words of a script to life on a stage, embracing the abilities of all performers. Troupes, casts, bands, and choirs all encourage

inclusion by their very nature. The art forms provide the mechanism by which individual artists can express their unique creative selves. Within this context, inclusion involves the space for a person's story to be told through art, thereby including that story alongside other stories and experiences. All stories are then given the opportunity to be heard. The art forms become a conduit for an inclusive message.

What Makes An Inclusive Arts and Culture Program Successful?

Now that we've defined inclusive arts and culture programs, discussed the fundamentals of inclusive arts and culture programming in terms of concepts and common practices, and highlighted examples across the art forms, it is time to turn our attention to the components of successful arts and culture programs. In general, well-run programs are well-run programs. Sufficient, well-managed resources are critical. Commitment to defined, sustainable, and meaningful impact is also important. But what does all that really mean? In pursuit of those broad and somewhat nebulous goals, it is helpful to break successful inclusive arts and culture programs down into actionable steps.

Maintain Sound Programmatic Practice

Successful inclusive arts and culture programs demand sound programmatic practice. We can draw on wealth of literature and practically gained wisdom about what constitutes good programming (Patton, 2002; Preskill & Catsambas, 2006). Organizational communication is key; this is particularly important in large organizations where many people work on many programs, across many organizational areas. A strategic plan and logic model can provide the backbone for communication and effective program execution. Fiscal responsibility and sound accounting infrastructure are also important. Evaluation—looking closely at how well a program is achieving its stated goals and objectives—plays a central role in programmatic practice, especially in an environment in which funding is often tied to a clearly articulated evaluation plan. These principles hold true across a breadth of organizations and programs.

The arts community has explored the ways in which sound programmatic practice intersects the work of artists. Publications are available that demonstrate sound evaluation practice in arts contexts (Callahan, 2004; National Endowment for the Arts, 2004; VSA arts, 2008). These resources uniformly acknowledge the challenge of arts evaluation, in terms of defining program goals, developing tools that accurately discern the impact of the programs on participants, and maintaining artistic integrity, while looking closely at programmatic elements that may or may not be closely related to the arts.

Integrate Context and Resources

What does it mean to integrate context and resources within an inclusive arts context? One example can be found in the experiences of people who provide programs in rural contexts versus those who work in urban or suburban areas. People who provide arts programming in rural contexts may have to reach out a little further in their search to receive funding. Finding artists trained to implement inclusive programming and obtaining space to conduct inclusive programs may also be barriers.

Providing programs that reflect local arts interest and need, while also maintaining a commitment to inclusion, is not always easy but certainly is possible. For example, you find that your state, city, town, or neighborhood has a community of visual artists with disabilities, and you work at a community center. You might suggest that the center be used as an exhibition space. You may also reach out to those artists to both show their work and possibly develop arts education classes. Similarly, suppose you work at a hospital that has an auditorium, large rooms, or common family areas, and you learn that a local theater troupe offers children's theater classes and performances. You may facilitate an arrangement in which the troupe offers workshops or performs in the hospital.

Integration of context and resources hinges on effective needs assessment. Needs assessment can be used to drive organizational strategy, determine potential funding sources, and guide hiring decisions (Gupta et al., 2007). Needs assessment can provide a solid foundation for providing inclusive programming in that it can map community strengths and needs with respect to the disability community, highlight

inclusive resources, and initiate conversation and collaboration among groups in the community that have worked together before.

Provide Meaningful Arts and Culture Experiences

Arts and culture programs exist to provide meaningful arts and culture experiences. A clear focus on the arts needs to be continually reinforced and remembered in environments where program administration, competing organizational priorities, and better-funded programmatic agendas may divert attention. This is particularly important in contexts where resources dictate hiring people to run arts programs who may or may not have a commitment to the arts. Also, attempts to integrate the arts into other programs (such as a basic after-school, homework-focused program) may create the situation in which neither the arts, nor the homework, are well served.

Just what are meaningful arts and culture experiences? That question has perplexed artists, philosophers, theologians, and scholars for centuries. Theoretical explorations of experience abound in the work of prominent scholars in psychology, sociology, and education. "Multiple intelligences" (Gardner, 1983), "dispositional capacities" (Eisner, 1985), "flow" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990), "aesthetic epistemologies" (Muxworthy Feige, 1999), "wide-awakeness" (Greene, 1977), "an experience" (Dewey, 1934/1980), and "narrative modes of knowing" (Bruner, 1985) are outlined in brilliant detail in an effort to describe the nature of meaningful experience. The science and philosophy of experience center on the idea that meaningful experience is a holistic process, allowing people to engage with themselves and others in unique and powerful ways. Change and evolution occur in the process of art making, pushing the boundaries of communication, investigation, and understanding. A commitment to meaningful arts and culture experiences demands that inclusive arts and culture programs flirt with the edge of identity, perception, and representation, challenging stereotype, privilege, isolation, and prejudice.

Capitalize on Diversity

One beauty of arts and culture programs is that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to making or appreciating art and culture. Within that frame, diversity becomes a reality within which to work—a strength to tap. Artists approach their art form as the product of their lives, using tools and a capacity for expression that allow them to create in individual ways. Similarly, audiences bring a unique and individual cultural background from which to interpret, respond, and participate. The distinction between artist and audience can be blurred when we talk about participatory and educational contexts, but diversity is still central to providing a rich artistic and cultural experience. This heterogeneity, this cacophony of voices, is the foundation on which arts and culture programming is based.

Often diversity gets stuck at the level of bumper sticker notions of Coke commercial unity and sameness, in which all are encouraged to "teach the world to sing in perfect harmony." Inclusion asks that diversity not stop there. Diversity is messy. Inclusion is messy. Real inclusion means that we navigate the world differently, create avenues for different opinions, and open doors for diversity to be explored with glorious contention. It also allows space for healing the wounds that arise when people talk of injustice, anger, pride, and love in the same breath. Inclusive arts and culture programs are in the enviable position of being able, by their very nature, to bring diversity to the front of community conversation.

Focus on Access

We now revisit access as a primary component of inclusive arts and culture programs. Access involves not only bricks and mortar accommodation but also a systemic approach to comprehensive policies and practices that encourage universal participation. Whether we're talking about an after-school arts program that provides support for its arts instructor to attend a professional development program focused on inclusive teaching practice, a nonprofit organization's board of directors that commits to hiring people with disabilities, or a community center that offers a broad variety of inclusive programs in which people of all abilities can participate, decisions must be based on accessibility.

At base, successful inclusive arts and culture programs use sound programmatic practice to increase participation in the arts and culture. Clear strategy and organizational structure are first steps to successful program implementation—that is, beginning with a defined end in mind. The groundwork for inclusion also

includes fair hiring, appropriate space, and flexible planning. Decisions must be made based on artistic values and a commitment to diversity and access.

Summary

This chapter set out to encourage arts and culture programs in recreational contexts. Defining the legal, cultural, and philosophical aspects of inclusion provides the connection between general inclusion and inclusion within arts and culture. Learning about universal design, cultural competency, and cultural economy expands our ideas about access to include cultural and economic participation. Examples of inclusive practices and arts programs from across the arts disciplines make the theoretically explored concepts more tangible. Successful arts and culture programs that include all people can guide us in program management. The examples of such groups provided in this chapter reinforce the

centrality of the arts experience within the inclusion discussion, support the idea that diversity is an asset, and demonstrate ways in which access can be achieved.

Discussion Questions

1. Describe inclusive arts and culture programs. What makes inclusive arts and culture programs inclusive?
2. Choose one of the highlighted arts and culture program and discuss the ways it is inclusive.
3. In what ways does cultural competency relate to inclusion?
4. What steps have been taken by the arts and culture community to increase inclusive practice and universal participation in arts and culture programs?
5. Identify common aspects of successful arts and culture programs.

›› Professionals in Action

Jaehn Clare

Apply dog logic to life: eat well, be loved, get petted, sleep a lot, dream of a leash-free world.
    –SARK

Background Information

Education

*BA Theater Arts, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis *MA Dramatic Literature, University of Essex, Colchester, United Kingdom

Credentials

*CTRS *CPRP

Special Awards

*Southern Artistry, the online registry of acclaimed artists living and working in the southeastern United States (2008) *Teaching Artist Fellow, VSA arts, the inaugural class of a new initiative, providing a year of high-level professional development for teaching artists with disabilities in the visual and performing arts (2006) *The Chaikin Prize, for outstanding contributions in representing people with disabilities in the performing arts; received the inaugural Chaikin Prize, established by Not Merely Players in honor of the late Joseph Chaikin (2005) *VSA

arts of Minnesota establishes the *Jaehny*, an Arts Access Award, Minneapolis, MN, named in recognition of Jaehn's service as the chair of the founding board of directors (1996) *The Indie Award/Outstanding Achievement, *Belle's on Wheels, The Independent*, Santa Barbara, California (1995) *Commission Award, *Belle's on Wheels,* the Arts Council of Great Britain, London (1989) *Community Art Fund Grant, Seeing the Being, COMPAS, St. Paul, Minnesota (1987) *Outstanding Achievement/Drama, Rapid City Fine Arts Council, Rapid City, South Dakota (1977) *Best Thespian Award, Stevens High School, Rapid City, South Dakota (1977)

Special Affiliations

*Member, Arts Education Teaching Artist Bank, Georgia Council for the Arts, 2008 to present *Member, Touring Artist Roster, Georgia Council for the Arts, 2008 to present *Member, American Association of People with Disabilities, 2006 to present *Member, Alternate ROOTS, 2000 to present; Regional Representative/Executive Committee, 2003 to 2005 *Golden Key International Honor Society Lifetime Member *Phi Kappa Phi, Lifetime Member ·

Career Information

Position   Director of Artistic Development, VSA arts of Georgia

Organization Information   VSA arts of Georgia is a fully accredited affiliate of the VSA arts international network.

Organization's Mission   VSA arts of Georgia provides access to the arts for people with disabilities and those with low income. We are a statewide resource working with artists and organizations to fulfill our vision of an inclusive community that encourages everyone to enjoy and participate in the arts.

Size of Organization   VSA arts of Georgia is a medium-sized nonprofit arts organization employing four full-time employees and serving 165,000 people annually.

Job Description   The director of artistic development is the chief contact between VSA arts of Georgia and the artists, teaching artists, and others within those constituencies. The director of artistic development reports directly to the executive director and is responsible for the organization's consistent achievement of its mission as it pertains to artistic programming, education, and relations with community-based artistic organizations.

Following are other duties of the director of artistic development: Provide leadership in implementing organizational plans that pertain to artistic goals with the executive director. Work with the executive director on programming directly related to the artistic goals of the organization, which can include but is not limited to (a) curriculum for artist development and (b) programs and lesson plans for in-school and community residencies, workshops, and master classes. Maintain official records and documents, to assist in grant reporting and application. Maintain a working knowledge of significant developments and trends in the field, including attending and presenting at relevant conferences and gatherings. Publicize the activities of the organization, its programs, and its goals. Establish sound working relationships and cooperative arrangements with community groups and organizations. Represent the programs and point of view of the organization to agencies, organizations, and the general public in partnership with the executive director and especially as they pertain to the artistic goals of the organization. Be responsible, in partnership with the executive director, for the recruitment, employment (contractual), and communications of all artistic personnel, both paid and volunteers. Manage Arts for All Gallery including working, as a peer, with all committees, contractual curators, and artists related to the work of the gallery. Maintain basic marketing efforts for Arts for All Gallery in partnership with the executive director.

Career Path   When I moved to Georgia in 1997, I had a history with the VSA arts network based on my service as the chair of the founding board of directors of the VSA arts of Minnesota affiliate, in 1986. I contacted the Georgia affiliate office when I became a resident in Georgia, offering my services and seeking employment opportunities. In 2000, I moved to Atlanta, and I once again contacted the Georgia affiliate office, seeking opportunities for gainful employment as well as opportunities to contribute to the ongoing work of the VSA arts network around the world. Initially, I was hired as a part-time, temporary employee to serve as the office receptionist while the position was posted and the hiring process was managed. After a month in the position, I was offered a full-time permanent position. Since then,

my title has changed four times, and my job description has continued to evolve and expand. I served the organization as interim executive director from February to April 2006.

What I Like About My Job   In the current U.S. economy (March 2008) as a person with a disability, as a woman, and as an artist, I very much appreciate being gainfully employed; I like having a job. Additionally, I am employed in a position and with an organization that allows me to combine my personal and professional passions in service to positive social change in my immediate community, the southeastern United States, the United States as a nation, and the global culture. I do not have to stray very far from my authentic self in order to do this work. My job is grounded in providing significant learning opportunities for others, including working with and mentoring aspiring, emerging, developing, and established artists with disabilities who are in pursuit of their own career goals and artistic missions. My position affords me a high degree of flexibility; I enjoy and am honored to have the trust and confidence of a boss and colleague who is quite literally a *humane* being. I take my title of director of artistic development very seriously, and each day on the job I endeavor to apply it to our constituents, my colleagues at VSA arts of Georgia and at our partner agencies and organizations, and to myself as well. I appreciate having a job that feeds my soul.

Career Ladder   Although I may not retire from or die in this particular position, working with VSA arts of Georgia is part of my long-term career goals and efforts and my personal and professional artistic mission. Given my history with the larger VSA arts network, no matter where I live I will seek out whatever local nonprofit arts organization that is affiliated with VSA arts to apply for employment opportunities and to contribute to the larger context of the work.

Advice to Undergraduate Students   My advice to anyone aspiring to and developing a career path is this: Find a way to secure gainful employment doing something that you genuinely care about, even love. Too many people work at jobs that destroy their souls. Life is too short and (for most of us) our working lives are far too long to be employed doing something that we do not care about and that does not foster our own personal growth.

Personal Statement   As a person with an acquired disability, I experienced a very particular form of oppression—the negative social stigma associated with being identified as DISabled. Working in the field of arts and culture allows me to maintain my personal sense of identity as an artist while also earning income with which to support my life. As an artist, I focus my work on the authentic exploration and expression of human experience, in all its myriad forms and manifestations. This is an endlessly fascinating field of study and endeavor. It is a personal choice to (or at least endeavor to) be part of the solution (rather than part of the problem). I have made a personal and professional commitment to working toward the elimination of all forms of oppression, and I believe the arts are uniquely and profoundly well suited to this work.