

CREATING OUTSIDE THE BOX

Written by Kyoung H. Park

INTRODUCTION

The first Brooklyn Commune Meeting identified the need to research diversity and social inclusion in the contemporary performing arts, so a research team comprised of artists, arts journalists, and arts administrators was constituted to investigate Cultural Democracy and Representation in our field. The team reached out to various artists—playwrights, directors, choreographers, performers, dancers—and asked them to share with us their experiences as underrepresented artists in the field. While discussing our artists’ responses during The Brooklyn Commune’s committee meetings, we complimented our research by speaking to arts leaders working locally, regionally, and/or nationally in the field, to understand how the landscape diversifies its access to both artists and communities. Furthermore, our team analyzed data from The Brooklyn Commune’s Performing Artists Census 2013, a community-driven effort to aggregate real, meaningful information from performing artists about their financial reality.

We understand that the history of identity politics in America needs to address the intersectionality of social issues regarding race, gender, faith, disability, class, and age—which have been the scope of research for our team—and we’ve asked ourselves:

How can we diversify audiences, work, and artistic leadership?

How do we address the value of diversity in artistic programming?

How do we become socially responsible and address racism, ageism, sexism, or other types of ableism?

The following report is based on interviews, data analysis from the Brooklyn Commune’s Performing Artist Census, anecdotal experiences and conversations we’ve held at The Brooklyn Commune, including the “Uncomfortable Conversation: Race, Gender, and Privilege,” an open event hosted for our community at the Brooklyn Commune’s Global Congress. Over the span of eight months, our team has become aware of the need to democratize the participation of both underrepresented artists and communities in cultural organizations, and that this process will facilitate the production of more diverse works of performing arts with greater public support. We’ve also identified the necessity to address the systemic challenges that limit the participation of underrepresented artists in the field, including the financial precariousness through which contemporary artists are working, and the lack of funding and direct engagement between artists and arts leaders to address social issues through the performing arts.

We hope that the following illuminates the trends and shifts in artistic practices that currently shape the lives and work of NYC-based performing artists and that this report can help other communities organize and continue making work. In our current cultural landscape, artists are, in great part, creating work “outside the box” (as defined by the artist’s identity or artistic practice) and working within institutions in which their work

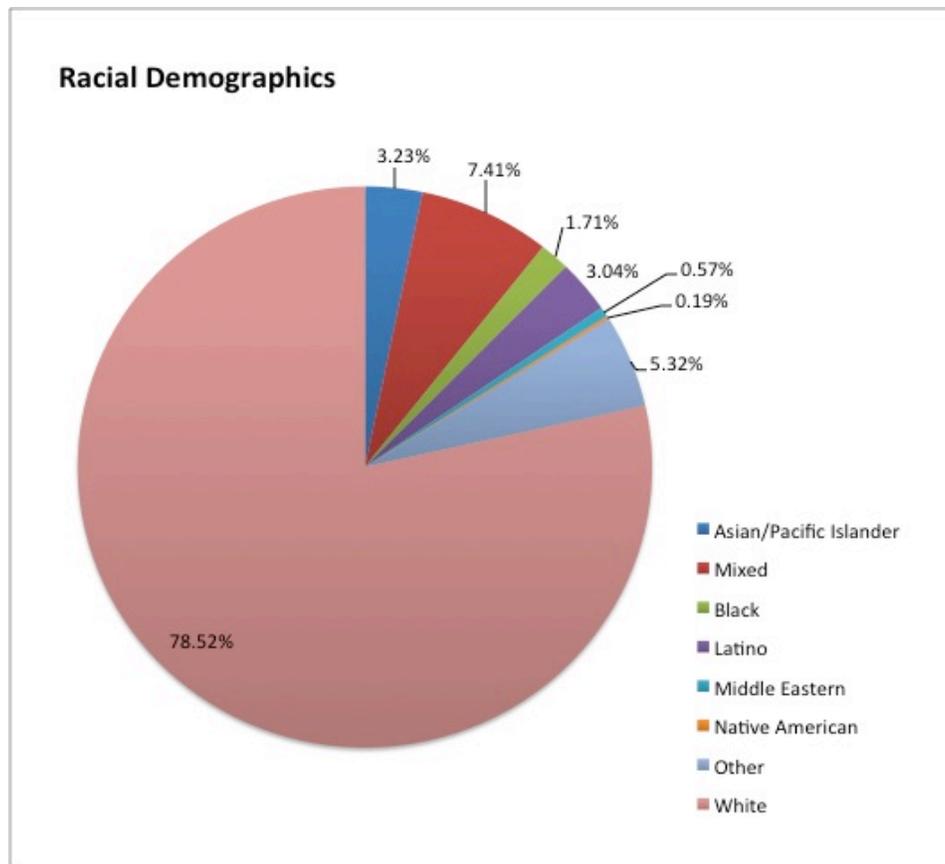
can serve as potential models for arts leadership, as this work is at the vanguard of artistic, social, and economic principles that enable a deeper democratization of not only the contemporary performing arts, but American culture at large.

WHO WE ARE and WHAT WE DO

Who we Are

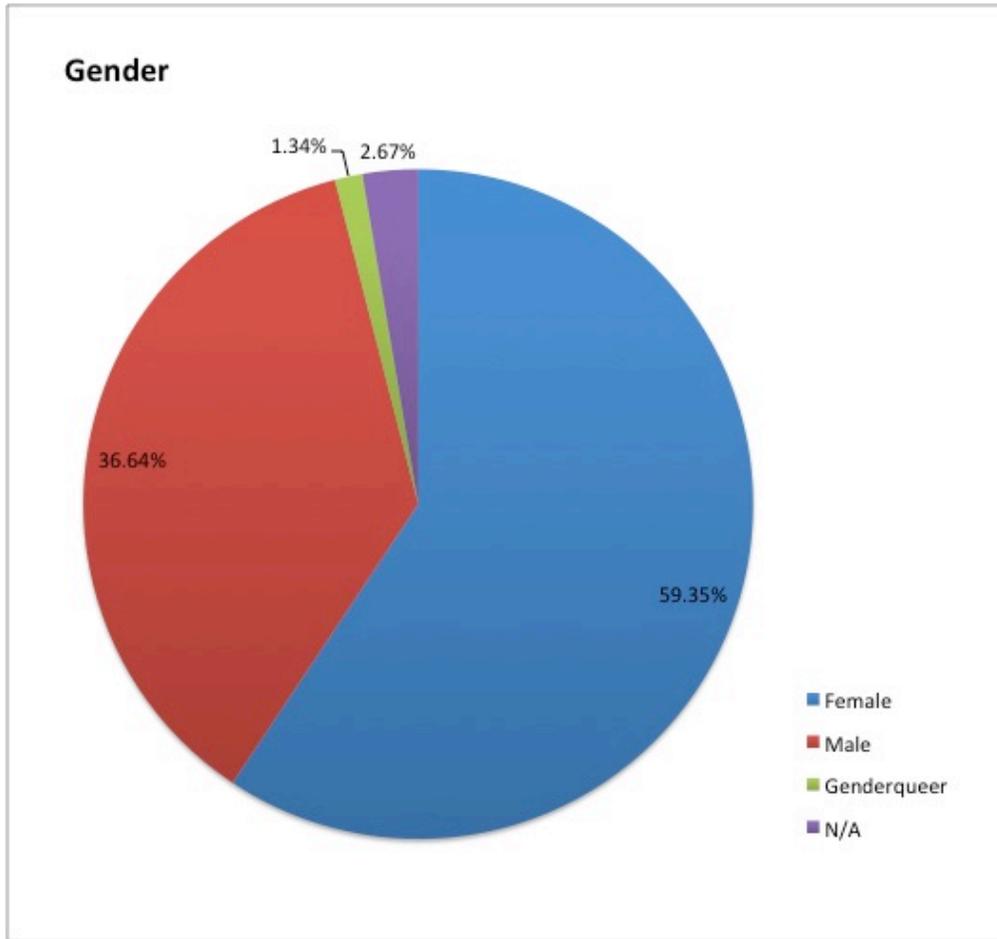
The Brooklyn Commune launched its Performing Artist Census on September 22 and over the period of four months, reached out to independent arts organizations, artists, and arts service organizations to collect data about our community of performing artists and performing arts administrators. The Survey gathered demographic information, work history, personal income and expenses (as related to the arts), and education history of 526 respondents, mostly based in New York City.

The following data is a snapshot of where our community of independent, experimental performing artists stand in New York City, and while the Census data gathered does not fully represent the community we work in, it provides an interesting jumping point to understand who we are and what we do within the performing arts.

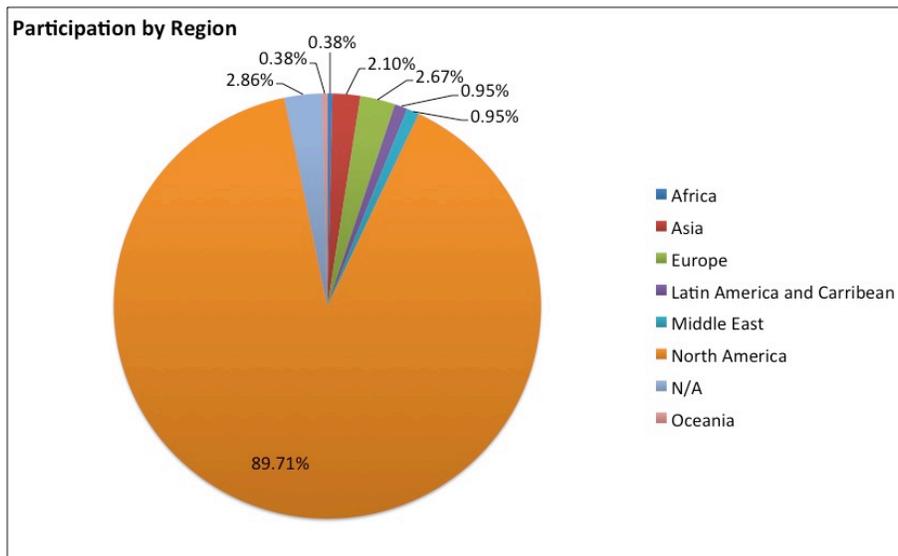


The demographic breakdown of our survey respondents is as follows: 78.52% White (Caucasian), 7.41% Mixed (primarily White (Caucasian) with another race), 3.23%:

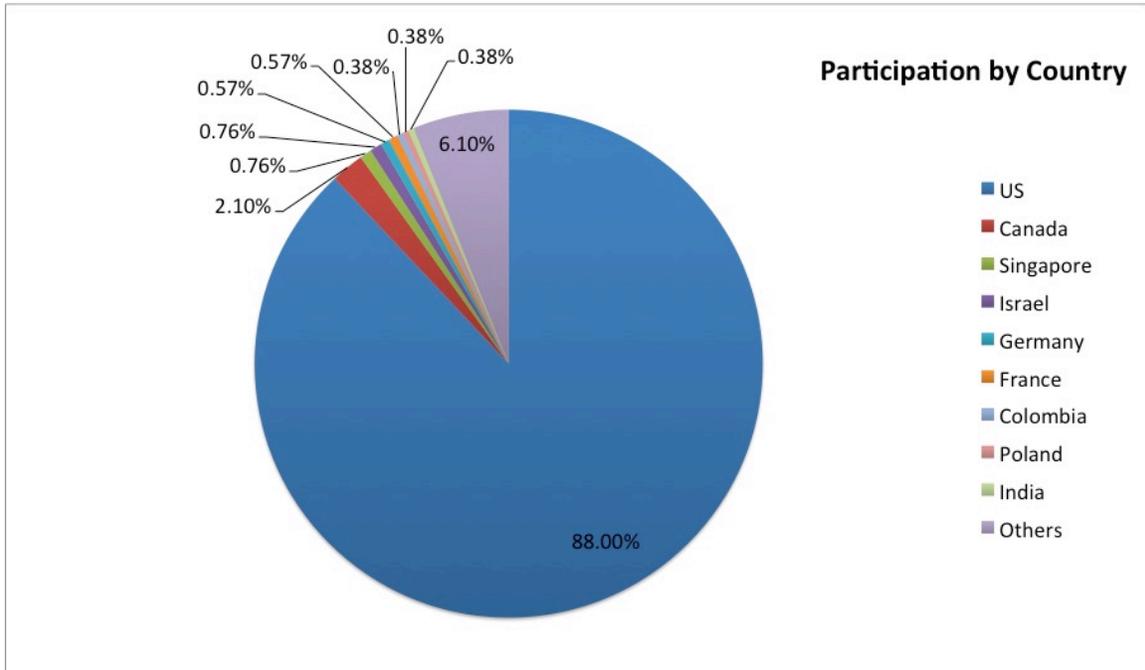
Asian/Pacific Islander, 3.04%: Latino, 1.71% Black, .57%: Middle Eastern, .19% Native American, and 5.33% self-identified as Other.



In terms of gender, 59.35% of our respondents identified as female. 36.64% identified as male, 1.34% identified as transgender, and 2.67% did not self-identify with any gender.



In terms of international representation, 89.71% of those surveyed were born in North American (US and Canada), 2.67% in Europe, 2.1% in Asia, .95% in Latin American or Caribbean, .95% in the Middle East, .38% in Africa and .38% in Oceania. 2.86% of our respondents did not provide their national origin.



The countries most represented in the survey are the US (88%), followed by Canada (2.1%), Singapore (.76%), Israel (.76%), Germany (.57%), France (.57%), Colombia (.38%), Poland (.38%) and India (.38%).

As this data is further analyzed in this report, we will continuously note the limitations of this census, as these demographics do not fully represent our community. However, the data does illuminate both our own investigatory limitations in counting the incredibly diverse community of artists working in New York City, who perhaps were not informed or contacted efficiently through our grass-roots endeavors, and the fact that many artists—particularly of color—did not take this opportunity to be counted by our census.

What we Do

To address labor and the conditions in which our survey respondents create work in the field, we asked our participants to provide their employment history for the past 3 years (2010). Certain individuals, employed or specialized in a specific practice before this time period, began their employment histories dating back to the 1970’s (3 respondents), 1980’s (1 respondent), 1990’s (5 respondents), 2000’s (76 respondents), and 2010’s (104). 103 of those surveyed did not provide dates for their employment history and 234 did not provide employment information. In other words, only 292 (or 55.5%) of our respondents provided their employment histories, but based on this data, we believe that the trend of people entering the field is growing.

As our community usually works in more than one job (juggling day jobs, free-lance projects, and/or arts management positions), we allowed respondents to list more than one job as part of their employment history—some individuals listing as many as seven. And as the individuals surveyed work independently or at a grass-roots level, we assumed that not everyone made their primary income through the arts, although their artistic practice may be recognized as highly specialized work contributing to the field.

To make sense of these financial complexities, we selected the highest reported, paid position in each individual’s employment history as representative of their annual income, and additionally we categorized their job titles into one of the eight categories below. The category of Artist/Performer/Designer represents those individuals whose highest income is attained through their art practice, while the remaining categories reflect the level at which individuals work both in and out of arts organizations, even though all respondents primarily identify themselves as performing artists.

Artist/Performer/Designer

(job titles include: Actor, Dancer, Performer, Bass Player, Vocalist, Playwright, Director, Opera Singer, Playwright, etc.)

Senior Leadership

(job titles include: Artistic Director, Managing Director, Executive Director, Director of Development, General Manager, etc.)

Middle Management

(job titles include: Company Manager, Marketing Manager, Production Manager, Stage Manager etc.)

Non-Leadership Staff

(job titles include: Freelance Technician, Studio Monitor, Program Assistant, Office Assistant, etc.)

Academic/Trainer

(job titles include: Fulltime teacher, College Professor, Assistant Professor, Voice Coach, etc.)

Consultant

(job titles include: Fundraiser, Solution Consultant, etc.)

General Labor

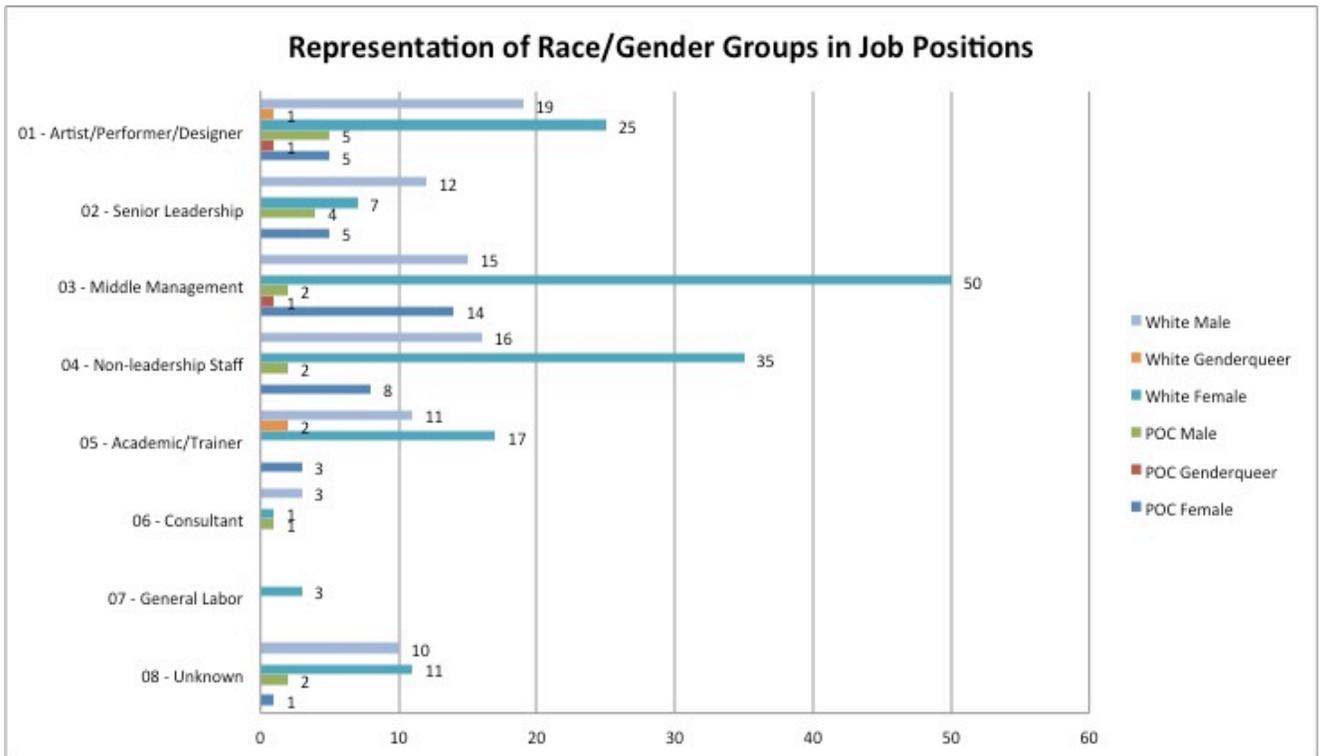
(job titles include: Freelance Nanny, Childcare Provider)

Unknown

As we further analyze the data using these categories, we take a moment to note its limitations. The job categories above reflect different roles and jobs available in the performing arts, but if a non-arts related job (ie. “Barista”) was an individual’s highest paying source of income, “Barista” was categorized as “Non-Leadership Staff” rather than being categorized by the individual’s art practice, which may be the individual’s primary artistic focus, but not necessarily a primary source of income. Due to this categorization, our demographic analysis of labor may be muddled, as all paid positions are not necessarily arts-related, for the exception of the Artist/ Performer/ Designer category.

To address the discrepancy between annual incomes and the amount artist earn in the arts, we have additionally asked our respondents to provide an annual percentage of their annual income from the arts (in comparison to other non-arts related work) to supplement our analysis, and such data will be analyzed further in this report.

We recognize that this data sample provides complicated challenges to ascertain factual evidence; instead, we believe that the data supplies suggestive evidence on both who we are and what we do. For example, if we combine both our race and gender demographics and the employment histories (simplified through categorization) for analysis, we are able to provide the following table, which displays the roles diverse artists serve in several levels of our field, noting that not all of the jobs included in this table are arts-related.



While gender and race specific tables will be provided further in the report, we can see that only 56 (10.6%) of the individuals surveyed reported their arts practice as being their highest source of income, and 45 (8.6%) of these individuals are White, while 9 (2%) are People of Color (PoC).

In addition, White Male and Female individuals are the majority in most levels of the (primarily arts) field, and White Female participation is higher than White Males in most categories, for the exception of Senior (primarily Arts) Leadership.

In the meanwhile, both Male and Female PoC are represented equally in number at the Artist/Performer/Designer category, though not equally represented in comparison to their White counterparts. Also, it is interesting to note that Female PoC are more visible than Male PoC, particularly in jobs in Middle Management and Non-Leadership staff.

A highly unrepresented population is the genderqueer community. There are only 5 (.01%) individuals who self-identified as genderqueer in our survey—two working as Artists/Performer/Designers, 1 in Middle Management, and 2 in Academic/Trainer.

Census Demographics Summary

In terms of demographic diversity, our survey respondents showed a high participation of White (Caucasian) artists, 78.52%, while other communities broke down into the following percentages: 7.41% Mixed (primarily White (Caucasian) with another race), 3.23%: Asian/Pacific Islander, 3.04%: Latino, 1.71% Black, .57%: Middle Eastern, .19% Native American, and 5.33% self-identified as Other. The high participation of White respondents led to show a high participation of White Males, Females, and Genderqueers at all levels of the field, with underrepresentation of PoC Males, Females, and Genderqueers in the performing arts sector at all levels—specific percentages broken down below.

In terms of gender, our survey showed a majority in female participation (59.35%), followed by 36.64% identifying as male, and 1.34% identifying as transgender. Female (primarily White) participation was the highest in most levels of the field, for the exception of Senior Leadership, and Female PoC showed highest levels of participation in Middle Management and Non-Leadership Staff positions (primarily in the arts).

Job Positions by Race

	White	POC	Total Surveyed
Artist/Performer/Designer	8.60%	2%	10.60%
Senior Leadership	2%	1%	3%
Middle Management	12.40%	3.20%	15.60%
Non-Leadership Staff	7%	1.60%	8.60%
Academic/Trainer	5.70%	0.50%	6.20%
Consultant, General Labor	0.10%	0.00%	0.10%
Unknown			0.45%
No Data Provided			55.45%

While the individuals responding to the survey primarily self-identify as Artists, only 10.6% of those surveyed reported their arts practice as their highest source of income, and 8.6% of those respondents are White while only 2% are PoC.

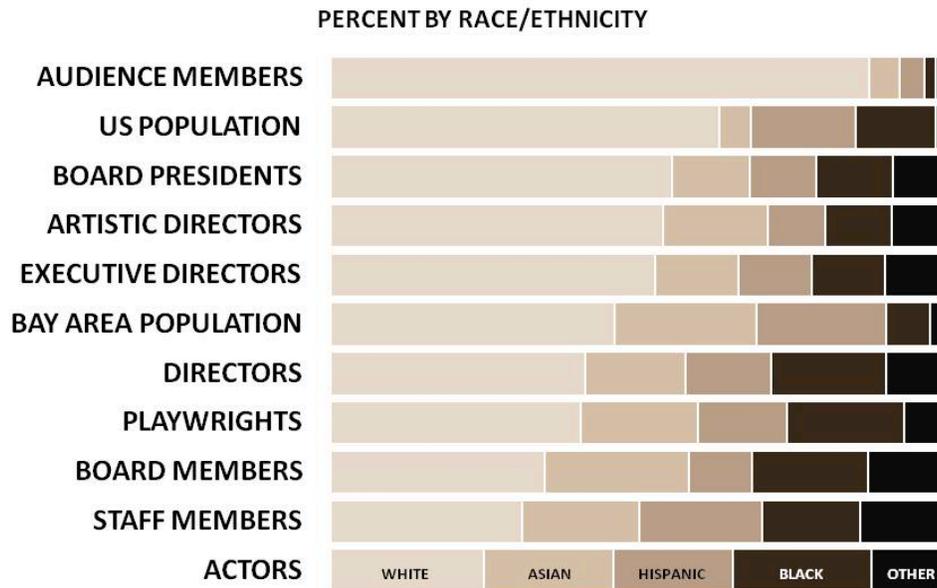
Meanwhile, 3% of those surveyed reported their highest income from their positions in Senior (primarily Arts) Leadership (2% White, 1% PoC); 15.6% of those surveyed reported their highest income from their positions in Middle (primarily Arts) Management (12.4% White, 3.2% PoC), 8.6% of those surveyed reported their highest income from their positions in Non-Leadership (primarily arts) Staff (7% White, 1.6% Poc), 6.2% of those surveyed reported their highest income for their positions as Academic/Trainer (5.7% White, .5% Poc), .1% of those surveyed reported their highest income for their positions as Consultants or General Labor (all .1% White), .45% is income from Unknown sources, and 55.45% of those surveyed did not provide their Employment History, so their sources of income have not been included in this report.

CULTURAL DEMOCRACY, IDENTITY POLITICS AND INTERSECTIONALITY

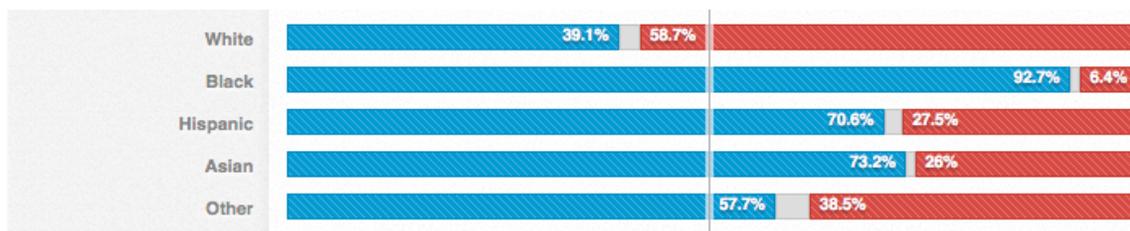
The Brooklyn Commune Performing Artist Census data suggests that the current representation in the performing arts in New York City—particularly in terms of race—is disproportionate to the actual demographics of our nation. In 2011, the Pew Research Center’s Census Bureau reported the US Population as 63% Caucasian, 12% African-American, 17% Latino, and 5% Asian-American, and projected the growth of African-American, Latino, and Asian-American communities and the decrease of Caucasian (White) Americans.¹

In response to this need for more equal and just participation in the field, we launched our team’s research looking at the incredible diversity of voters who helped the Democratic Party succeed during the past Presidential elections², and presented this model as an alternative to the “untenable whiteness of theatre.”³

THE UNTENABLE WHITENESS OF THEATRE



VS



This “untenable whiteness”—coined last year in Clayton Lord’s Arts Diversity Index for 56 Bay Area theater companies—relates to some current descriptions of the theater as a

¹ <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2012/11/07/a-milestone-en-route-to-a-majority-minority-nation/>

² <http://www.usatoday.com/interactives/news/politics/how-the-race-was-won>

³ <http://www.artsjournal.com/newbeans/2013/05/the-untenable-whiteness-of-theatre.html>

predominantly white, culturally conservative landscape similar to the GOP⁴, in which cultural policies and cultural practices are being made through a White Racial Frame—a “foundation frame from which a substantial majority of white Americans—as well as others seeking to conform to white norms—view our highly racialized society.”⁵

“As an artist of color, in today’s field, identity is, in many ways, destiny. Artists of color are employed to bring “diversity,” the “other.” The main audience of theatre (as well as most of the fine arts) is made up of older, somewhat conservative, upper-middle class white people. Being an artist of color means having to cloak yourself in some form of exoticism, outsidership in order to justify the act of choosing your work... The market (and, make no mistake, it is a market) rewards work that lives within the bandwidth that theatres can think in. On the flip side, though, artists are often punished for being too “ethnic,” too much a part of their culture, not “mainstream” or “accessible” enough.”—J. Holtham, Playwright

The complexity of national debates, based on identity, require an immense awareness to both the realities affecting diverse communities in America, but also the local and national movements holding communities and the government accountable to each other. While none in our team claim to be experts in identity politics, the most salient conversation on how a progressive movement can be successful, has been modeled after the recent successes in the LGBTQ movement, which last year won the battle for Marriage Equality at a federal level, and is now winning battles from state-to-state in support of gay marriage, while pushing forward a legislative agenda (ENDA) in support of equal-employment and non-discrimination nation-wide. This movement is significant to our research, as the precarious state of artists’ working conditions is highly impacted by the lack of public consensus for support in the arts.

Then again, social progress requires a more complex analysis. For example, Marriage Equality in the United States has taken place alongside a steep rise in anti-gay violence in New York City, which has severely targeted transgendered people of color—especially transgender women. And while the LGBTQ movement celebrated the end of DOMA (the Defense of Marriage Act), this Supreme Court ruling took place along a series of other national, legislative debates in regards to women’s rights—Wendy Davis’ 11-hour long filibuster in Texas’s Senate; civil rights—the dismantling of the 1965 Voting Rights Act; affirmative action—questioning how *diversity* should be considered in admissions to higher education; and a historic passing of a bill in the Senate proposing an overhaul of US immigration laws, which is a debate still ongoing.

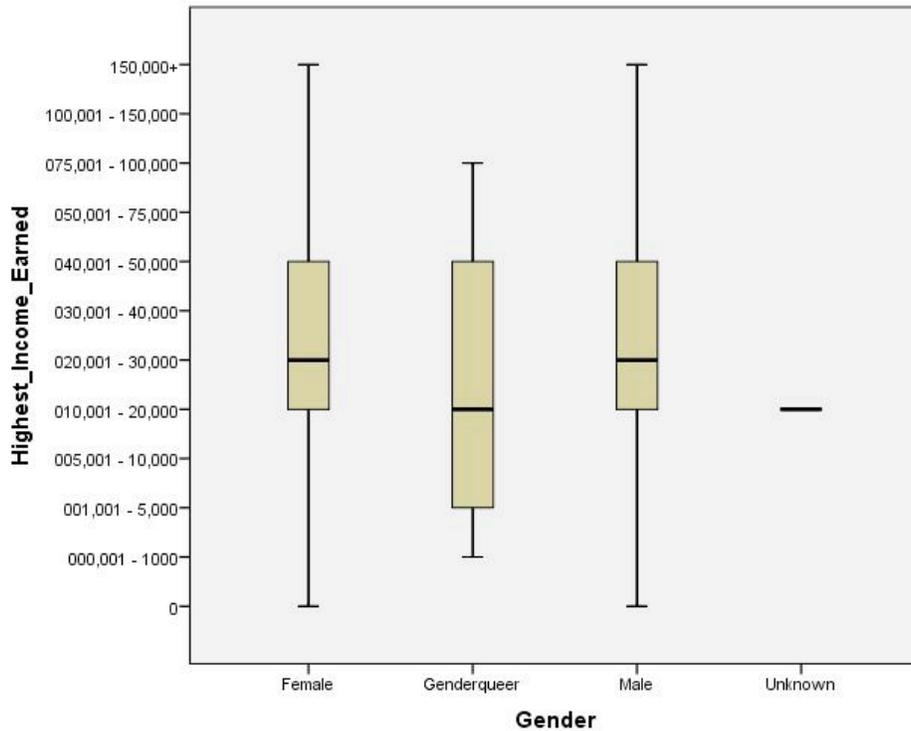
These issues are all related to the power of the dominant culture, which in our field is represented by the White (Caucasian) male, and there is a need to address social issues, such as gender (male, female, and genderqueer) to acknowledge the complicated and

⁴ <http://www.howlround.com/does-the-american-theater-have-the-same-problem-as-the-gop>

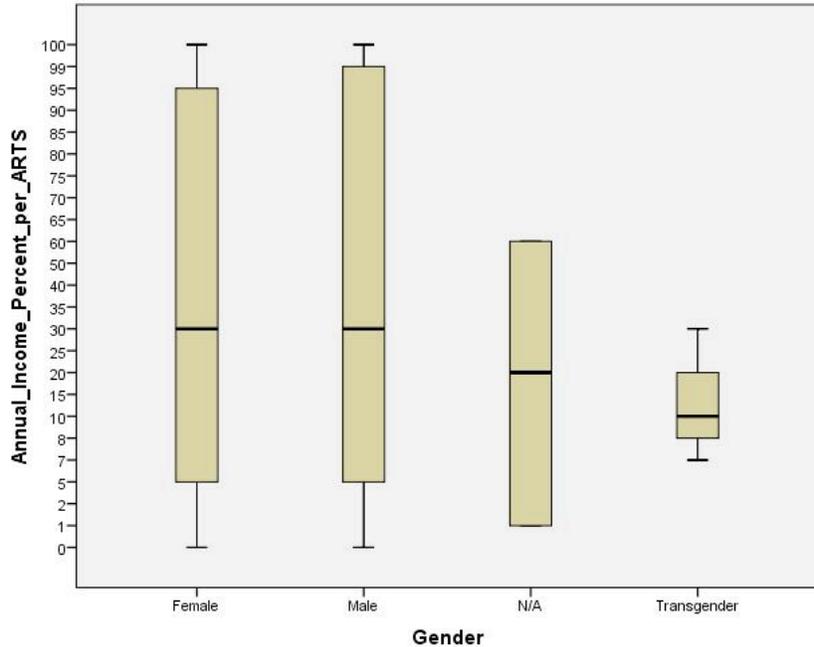
⁵ <http://www.artsjournal.com/engage/2013/03/the-white-racial-frame/>

nuanced questions that need to be raised to analyze social phenomenon, both in theory and in practice.

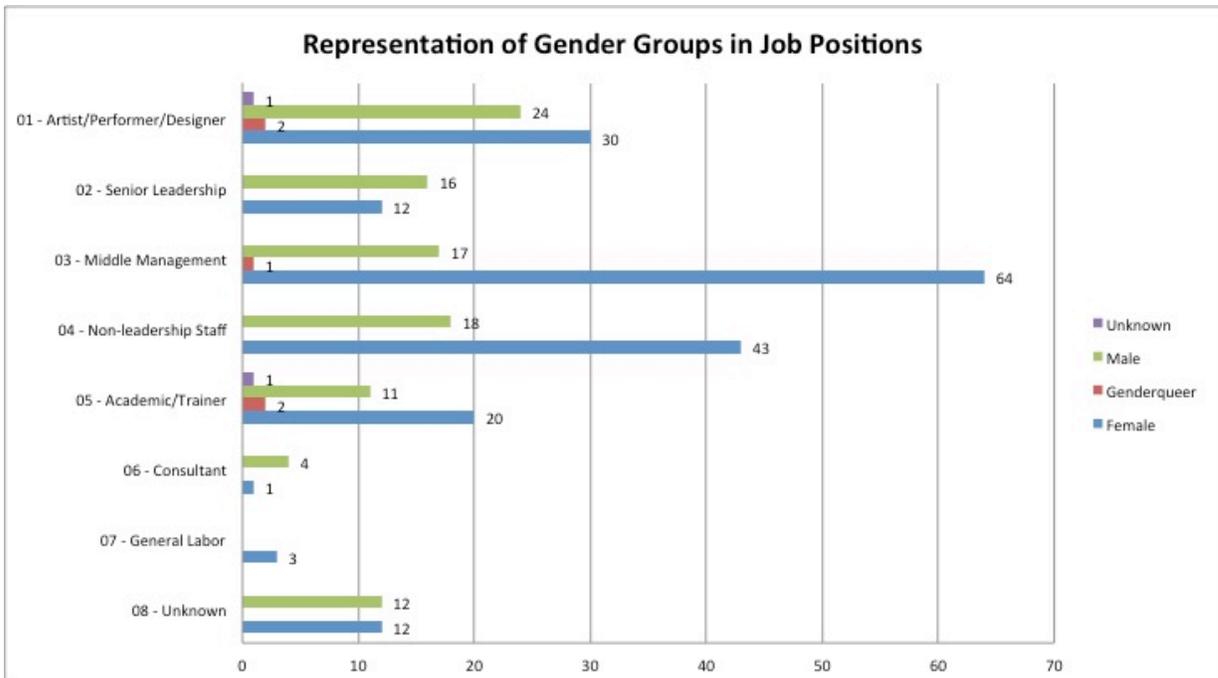
To elaborate, we looked at the annual income of male, female, and genderqueer individuals surveyed by our census, and found that our data does not fully support the argument that there is an income inequality between men and women. Both genders reported annual incomes ranging from \$0 to \$150,000 and both genders have a median income between \$20,000-\$30,000 a year. In comparison, the small sample of genderqueer individuals who participated in our survey, reported a smaller median annual income, in the range of \$10,000-\$20,000.



When we look at the percentage of annual income earned in the arts, both men and women are again, similar in their median percentages, suggesting that approximately 30% (or \$6,000-\$9,000) of the annual income of both men and women is earned working in the performing arts. However, genderqueer individuals make 10% (of \$1,000-\$2,000) annually from the arts, suggesting that while our data cannot support gender income disparity between men and women, genderqueer individuals make 20% less.



However, looking more closely at the data, we can see that in the highest quarter of the percentages of male and female annual incomes, there is a disparity in the amount women average at the highest levels of income. While women are capable of making up to 95% of their annual income from the arts, men are able to make up to 99% of their annual income in the arts. Thus, the gender income disparity we can find through our data is at the highest levels of income, and based on our Census data, we can state that 76.9% of the individuals earning more than \$100,000 a year are men, while only 23.1% of the individuals earning more than \$100,000 are women. This data can be cross-referenced with gendered representation in the arts.



Women are in the majority in most levels of our field—as Artists, Middle Management, Non-Leadership Staff—but women are not the majority in Senior Leadership. While we might expect that the gender disparity (between men and women) might be located at this level of the field, where artistic salaries and significant power positions are at stake, out of the 13 jobs providing more than \$100,000, only 6 are Senior Leadership positions, while 3 are Academic Positions, 2 are Non-Leadership/Staff positions, 1 is Middle Management and 1 is a Consultant position.

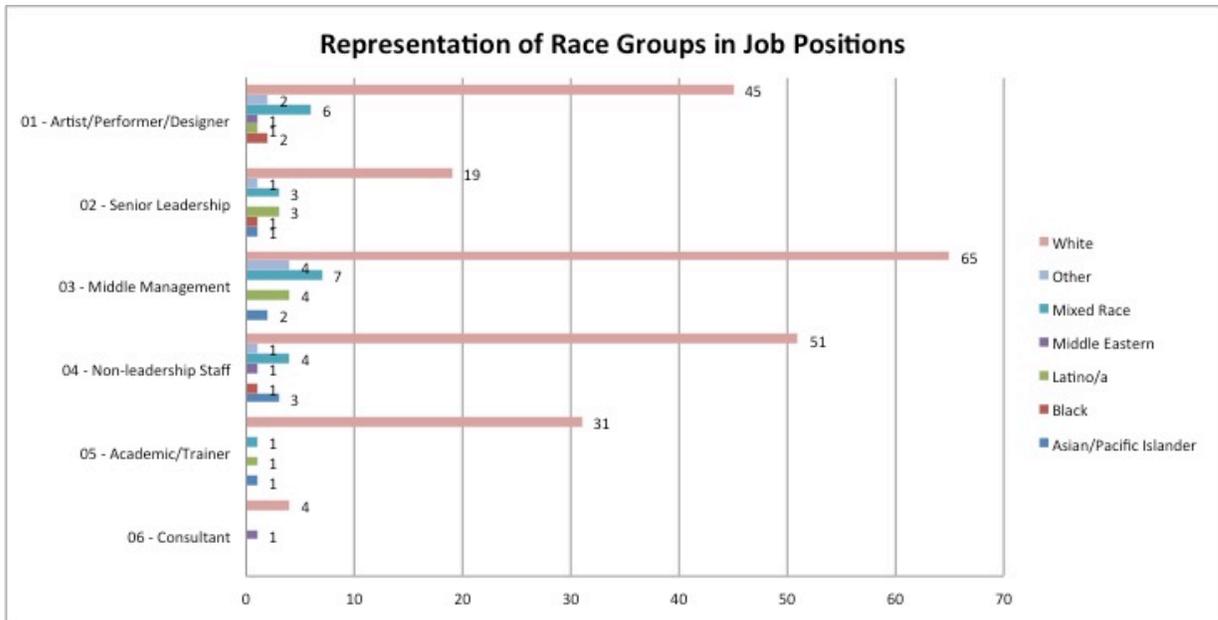
The work of contemporary performing artists doesn't need to address identity politics such as gender, but their work exists within a socio-political and economic context in which artistic projects are often created with public and private funds provided with the intention to support larger societal needs. Whether it is to raise awareness of a past or present moment of history, foster dialogue on a topical issue, or to serve as a process of inquiry towards issues unforeseen in the present moment, the learning mechanisms embedded in the creative process of the experimental performing arts have allowed us to identify certain trends which require intersectional debates on the multi-polarity of identity politics.

In contemporary performing arts, identity-based programming—such as festivals—have been the predominant platform for underrepresented artists, but this is changing.

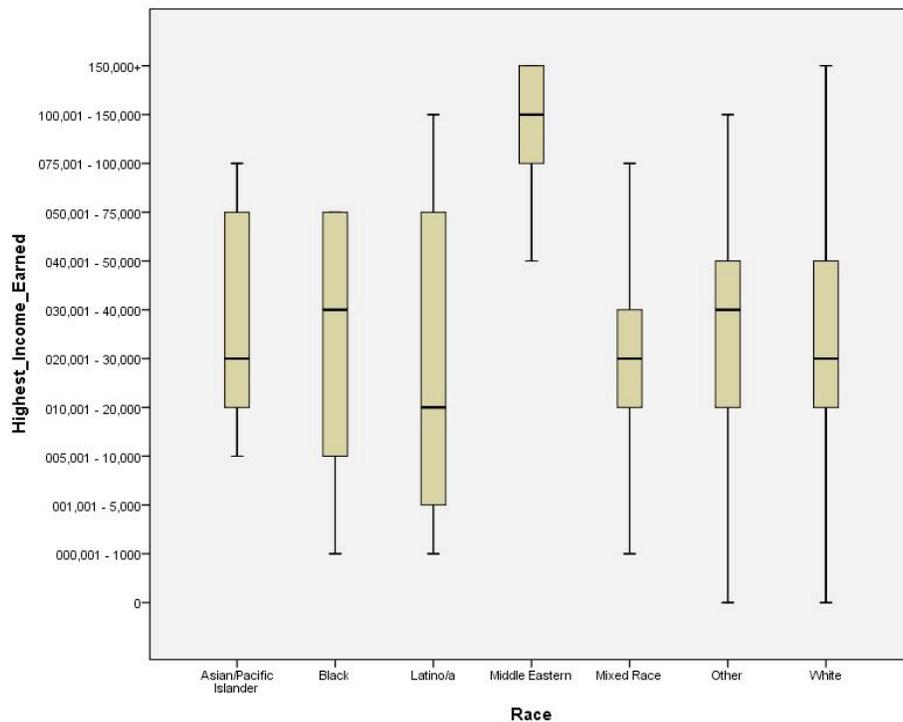
“I grew up as a presenter in the late 90’s, when there were a lot of festivals with categorizations—here’s our queer festival, here’s our black festival, here’s our people of color or women’s festival. We’ve moved away from these categorizations to not ghettoize the work and instead, let it exist on its own. But this type of learning was a large societal shift and I think that in terms of phasing these categorizations out, I’ve experienced different reactions based on marketing strategies and audience perceptions.

**Some audiences like the categorizations because it helps them pierce through the plethora of options available, as they wanted to identify with the work they see. But I think, younger audiences are more inclined towards experimental theater which defies categorization and/or ethnic representation, and these categories don’t matter as much as what the artists are talking about.”—
Sixto Wagan, Director for the Center for Arts Leadership, Univ. of Houston**

These change in artistic programming and audience participation may be the result of social movements that aren't simply issue or identity-based, but rather, intersectional. No individual community is pushing forward a social agenda, but rather a seismic, collective movement of diverse populations is now learning, supporting, and collaborating with each other to address multiple issues and obtain rights that until now, have been systemically denied to them as individuals.



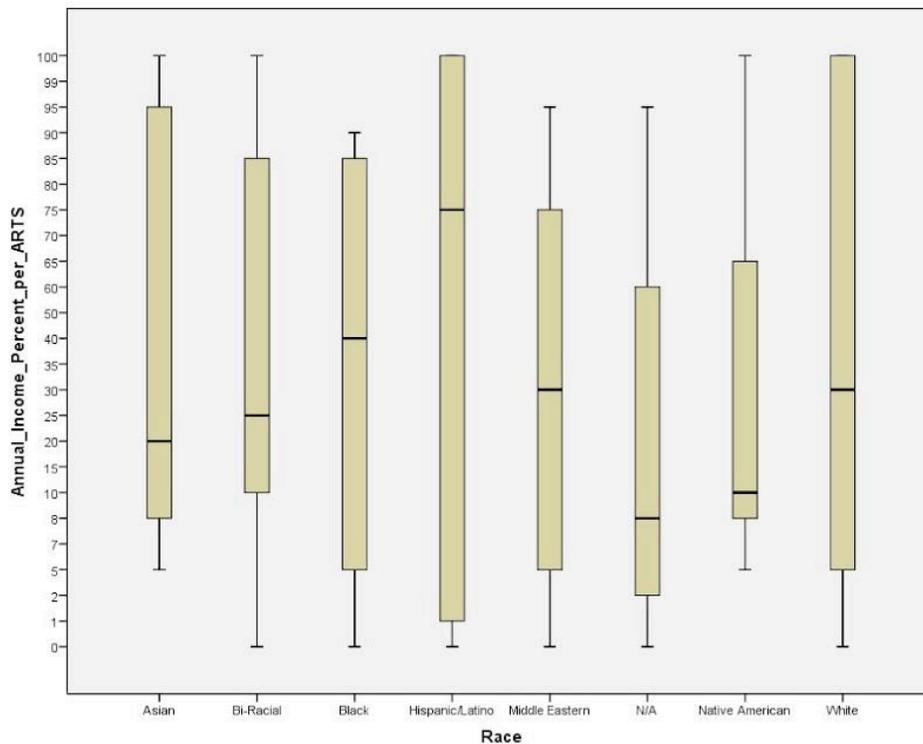
The greatest cultural dissonance for cultural democracy lies in representation based on race. Based on our demographics, we can expect White (Caucasian) individuals to be the greatest population in the field, but when broken down into job positions, Whites hold a jarring majority in each category, while all other races have between 1-7 people participating in paid positions in the arts, suggesting that while gender inequality is not experienced in terms of participation, all racial minorities are still struggling to achieve equitable representation and participation in the arts.



In our limited sample of performing artists of color, Latinos self-reported as making the lowest median income (\$10,000-\$20,000), followed by Asian/Pacific Islander, White (Caucasian), Mixed Race artists (\$20,000-\$30,000), Blacks (\$30,000-\$40,000), Middle Eastern (\$100,000-\$150,000), and Others (\$30,000-\$40,000). As our sample population for each race is low, we do not claim these income levels are representative of race-based communities at large, and we simply supply this information as a way to look at the financial reality that artists of color may be experiencing within our community vis-à-vis the 526 individuals sampled through our efforts.

We begin by acknowledging that the few (3) individuals self-identified as Middle Eastern cannot provide conclusive data about this subset for our research, and also that three races (White, Asian/Pacific Islanders, and Mixed Race) reported similar median incomes, ranging from \$20,000-\$30,000. On the extremes, Latinos reported the lowest median income (\$10,000-\$20,000) while Black artists reported the highest income (\$30,000-\$40,000). While this data may suggest higher incomes in medians for Black artists, it is important to note that the data on all races includes individuals earning \$100,00 or more, while Black artists reported \$75,000 as their highest annual income, suggesting a financial glass ceiling for this race group.

As the individuals surveyed for this census self-identify as artists, these annual incomes are not representative of their races—in financial terms—but these numbers allow us to take a closer examination in to how much artists of color are statistically earning for their work in the experimental performing arts.



Annual Income from the Arts

	Annual Income	Annual Income from the Arts	% Earned in the Arts
Latinos	\$10,000-\$20,000	\$7,500-\$15,000	75%
Asian-American/ Pacific Islanders	\$20,000-\$30,000	\$4,000-\$6,000	20%
Mixed	\$20,000-\$30,000	\$5,000-\$7,500	25%
White	\$20,000-\$30,000	\$6,000-\$9,000	30%
Black	\$30,000-\$40,000	\$12,000-\$16,000	40%
Middle Eastern	\$100,000- \$150,000	\$30,000-\$50,000	30%
Native-American	Not Available	Not Available	10%

The table above, calculated in medians, states that Latinos earn 75% of their income from the arts (\$7,500-\$15,000 out of their \$10,000-\$20,000 annual income), Asian-Americans/Pacific Islanders earn 20% of their income from the arts (\$4,000-\$6,000 of their \$20,000-\$30,000 annual income), Mixed earn 25% of their income from the arts (\$5,000-\$7,500 from their \$20,000-\$30,000 annual income), White (Caucasians) earn 30% of their income from the arts (\$6,000-\$9,000 of their \$20,000-\$30,000 annual income), African-American artists earn 40% of their annual income from the arts (\$12,000-\$16,000 of their \$30,000-\$40,000 annual income), Middle Eastern artists earn 30% of their annual income from the arts (\$30,000-\$50,000) and one Native-American respondent reported 10% of an annual income as earned through the arts, though an annual income or employment history was not reported to the survey.

While these statistics are only representative of the 292 individuals who provided employment histories *and* demographic self-identification in our survey, allowing us to conduct cross-variable analysis, this data is not substantial enough to determine whether these numbers are representative of the active, diverse population of artists working within New York City's performing arts community.

However, based on the data supplied, we can report that a range of \$4,000-\$16,000 was reported as an annual income for all races, except the Middle Eastern respondents, who averaged an annual income of \$50,000 from the arts. If a range of \$4,000-\$16,000 reflects the annual earnings in the arts disregarding race, why is the representation of artists of color so low in the community?

While we have acknowledged that this survey sample is not representative of the entire performing arts community, and our own grass-roots approach may have failed to effectively reach to diverse, artistic communities of color, it is significant to note that disregarding race, most artists surveyed make less than 40% of their annual income from the arts, which leads to the argument that no matter what race the artists are, they must be able to secure their income from alternative sources (independent wealth, family assistance, or other forms of labor), a condition which severely hinders the possibilities of anyone to participate in the arts, but more specifically, people of color.

The clear anomalies to this argument are the individuals self-identified as Middle Eastern, who make an exceptional income both in and out of the arts—perhaps pointing to the privilege this racial group may need to participate in the community, or the financial security necessary for Middle Eastern artists to participate in public activities in a post-9/11, racial-profiling New York.

In addition, while Latinos generate most of their income from the arts, they report the lowest annual income levels, below the poverty line, suggesting that Latino artists are the most likely to be pursuing their creative practice while subsisting in precarious financial conditions.

Furthermore, White (Caucasian) artists are the only race group to report participation in the arts even while generating zero income, signaling a potential White privilege which other race groups do not have. Based on the data, Latino, Mixed, and Black artists reported earning between \$0-\$1,000 to participate in the arts, Asian/Pacific Islanders reported earning at least \$5,000-\$10,000 to participate in the arts, and Middle Eastern artists reported making at least \$40,000 for their participation in the arts.

Looking at the bigger picture, in terms of race and gender, our data suggests that most men and women are earning \$30,000 a year, but White, Mixed, Asian-American/Pacific Islanders make in average up to \$30,000 a year, and only Black artists make at least \$30,000 (in median terms). Furthermore, all respondents of our survey reported that \$45,000 was necessary as a yearly income to attain stability in New York City, and that \$75,000 as a yearly income was considered “successful.” While people currently hope to earn 95% of their annual income from their work in the arts in the next 5 years, currently 75% of those surveyed make between 0%-10% of their income from the arts.

While there are flaws to our survey, we hope that this analysis can provide some clarity to both the demographic representation and the financial reality in which artists are working (and being counted) in the performing arts, and we suggest that to democratize our culture towards just and equal participation in the arts—representative of the demographics of our city and ideally, our nation—we need to further examine the cultural policies that affect us economically, socially and politically, as these factors ultimately determine who can be part of this community.

Lastly, based on this data analysis, interviews, and research, we humbly pose the following questions to encourage further conversations and research on identity-based issues that are fluid, and will constantly remain in flux:

On Gender: How do we address gender parity and support the education, training and empowerment of women in contemporary performing arts? How do we encourage equitable arts leadership? How do we define gender equality to be inclusive of genderqueer individuals and through what mechanisms can this be achieved?

On Race: How do we continue our debates on race relations in America to not only

acknowledge our country's history of racism and slavery, but complicate this discourse to include the histories of Native Americans, Latinos, Asian-Americans, and Arab-Americans? How do we examine the complexities within each "ethnic grouping," which actually represent a web of culturally and ethnically specific communities, to look deeper within the history of these socially constructed labels to promote fairer racial representation in the field?

On Sexual Orientation: While the diversity of lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, and transgendered artists present a myriad of experiences and identities within this community, how do queer issues intersect with issues of race, gender, class, and faith? How do current political and legal changes affect the visibility of queer voices and how can queer artists be more included in the mainstream?

On Age: How do we address ageism and the challenges confronted by elders in our community? How do we ensure not only the sustainability of emerging and mid-career artists, but financial security for active aging? How are intergenerational dialogues supported to encourage the transfer of knowledge, skills and practices to younger generations and preserve the learned lessons within the field? How do we value practical knowledge gained through experience and support the continued artistic practice of elders within the field?

On Disability: How do we promote financial and artistic opportunities for differently abled performers and promote larger visibility for the community? How is the Disabled Experience understood within the field and how can we better explore the personal and collective identities that cross all socio-economic, political and racial lines, while remaining specific to the different challenges different abled artists experience in their lives?

On Immigrant Artists: How do we address the legal requirements and limitations of H-1 Visas (Employment Based), O-1 Visas (for Aliens of Extraordinary Skills), and the labor conditions in which foreign artists are employed through these legal mechanisms?

On Faith: How is racial profiling, stop-and-frisk, and the current conflicts in the Middle East shaping the work of contemporary Arab Americans performing artists? How are issues of faith, tradition, and Islamophobia addressed within our community, and can interfaith dialogues serve a greater purpose to support theatrical communion?

"I struggle with the question of identity on a daily basis, and my work, I think, tends to reflect my struggle to identify rather than an identity... Just because I am an Iranian-American, and a female, and have an hereditary disorder, am I obligated to address issues from those communities in my work? These are all questions with which I wrestle in myself, well before I think I can even claim an identity."—Haleh Stilwell, Dramaturg

CREATING OUTSIDE THE BOX

Shifting debates within identity-based politics pose programmatic challenges for arts organizations. Criticisms of “tokenism,” in which slots or performances are directed towards a specific underrepresented community, address the statistical evidence that within our field, the majority or “mainstream” culture is still identified as white (Caucasian) and primarily male.

This problem is pervasive within the landscape, where intellectual and economic biases establish further limitations on the accessibility of the experimental arts, creating a cycle of exclusion in which artists and audiences do not feel invited to participate. And while funding has been provided to support the diversification of institutions, institutions require more than coercive support from the funding community, as the management of these shifts require long-term support of organizations to truly make a change.⁶ Furthermore, the lack of people of color not only in arts funding, but in philanthropy in general, poses another layer of complications to the way wealth is distributed to artists of color, especially considering the fact that few wealthy people of color start foundations to support other people of color.

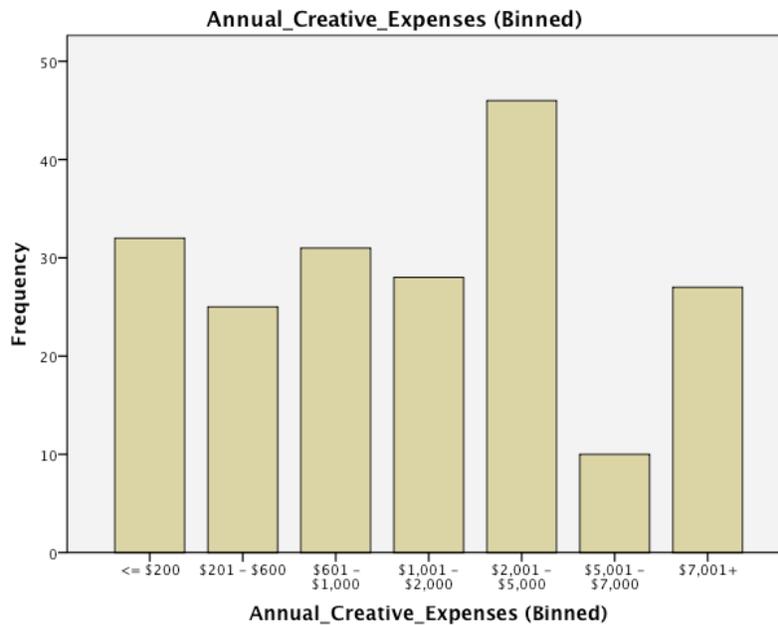
Having identified the trappings of such institutional and funding practices, the most common response to both acknowledge the socio-economic, cultural and historic context of one’s work and the desire to work within this context, is for the artist to do the work with or without funding. Based on DIY models, artists have for decades created their work outside the box and this shift has enabled artists to continue their practice without the need to find ins to major institutions or mass-audiences, to instead focus the work on one’s artistic freedom and embrace one’s identity without fitting into any ethnic-or-discipline specific mold, transgressing the traditional definitions of aesthetic practice or identity-based narratives, if necessary.

**Generally I say to people or whoever’s asking that I make shows. I make performances. If I’m talking to a non-dance audience I say I make dance-based performance. If I’m talking to a dance audience I say I make performance. If someone calls me a choreographer I get annoyed and say that I am a dance artist or that I just make shows. If someone calls me a performance artist it makes me crazy and I say that I am a choreographer... It’s unfortunate that the world is still divided, especially in the United States, into these disciplinary divisions between “dance” and “theater” and then even worse in dance, stupid divisions like “modern” and “ballet” and the ultimately hateful “experimental.” in the american dance/performance “market,” if we may use such a term, it feels like we’re really stuck with this idea of what is mainstream and what is not. I hate this. but whatever I just go ahead and make my work and don’t worry too much about it.—
Miguel Gutierrez, Performer/Choreographer**

⁶ <http://www.artsjournal.com/jumper/2013/02/on-coercive-philanthropy-and-change-when-breakups-may-be-necessary/>

Interdisciplinary, multi-disciplinary, hybrid, experimental, devised are all words commonly used in the field to classify new works coming from the dance and performing arts, but as performance and dance becomes more visible within museums and installation art becomes more popular in theatrical spaces, the cross-pollination of artists and artistic disciplines will continue to provide both creative freedom and collaborative opportunities to further aesthetic forms, while tapping into different art audiences in new live experiences that challenge our conventional understanding of the arts.

Unfortunately, working outside the box leads to economic precariousness, as the experimentation, development and creation of new works is often self-funded. These funds are earned through day-jobs, donated at a low (often unlivable) wages or in-kind by artists, or supported through individual wealth, which allows artists to freely keep doing the work without the support of institutional funding.

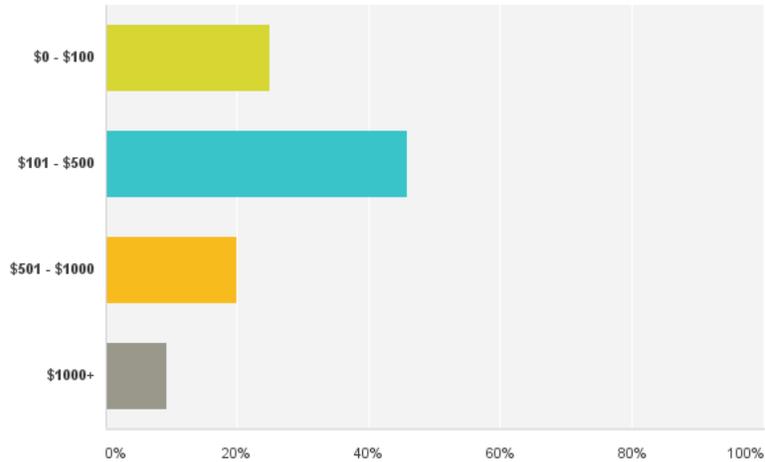


72.33% of those surveyed by the Brooklyn Commune Performing Artist Census grew up in Middle to Middle-Upper class homes and nearly 50% of those surveyed spent at least \$2,000-\$5,000 a year out of pocket in their art practice. 81% of those surveyed spent \$2,000 or more per year out of pocket and over 30% of those interviewed spent more than \$7,000 per year to make their work.

In addition, over 20% of those surveyed gave charitable donations of \$0-\$100 to the arts (including tickets to shows, Kickstarter campaign, benefits, etc.), over 40% gave between \$101-\$500 to the arts, 20% gave \$501-\$1,000 to the arts, and approximately 10% gave more than \$1,000 to the arts.

Q59 Annual Charitable Donations in the Arts (incl. tickets to shows, kickstarter, benefits, etc.)

Answered: 216 Skipped: 213



Class differences, therefore, play a factor in determining who has the means to create this type of work, and an unspoken challenge within the experimental arts community—or avant-garde—is the acknowledgement that this artistic movement has often been a privileged artistic community.

“If your identity is a little different from the typical upper-middle class white college grad who claims to be middle-class but actually comes from more money than you can imagine, things can get pretty challenging both socially and professionally, especially if you point it out through your art or in casual conversation. I’m still pretty traumatized by that whole experience because so many artists were quick to defend or deny that privilege (which was telling)...”—Leah Nanako Winkler, Playwright

While there are class differences within the field, a vast majority of the artists working in contemporary performing arts do not live with much financial security, and the possibilities to remain in the field and continue their practice is based on their ability to survive economically within the field.

Furthermore, the hybrid, DIY-model, requires reconsideration given the conditions through which it is made. Projects that are inherently experimental are subject to trials and errors; similarly to the scientific practices of research and development, this creative process is lengthier (averaging three years) and requires space, financial resources, and materials that are acquired to the extent the artists can attain these for themselves. This often comes at great financial sacrifices in the lives of artists and with no institutional support nor financial guarantees, artists continue to work in survival mode and sometimes burn out, which often leads artists to self-organize and establish grass-roots arts organizations to provide support, resources, and services to artists in need.

At the present moment, a majority of contemporary performing artists cannot rely on the patronage of major grants or public support, as the economic recession and the restrictions of public funding deny most artists from obtaining individual funding unless they are collaborating with a third-party organization: a presenting organization or not-for-profit organization. Hence, most contemporary performing arts are paid for (and made) after work-hours, and the artists' capacity to manage and cope with the economic challenges of making a living, and creating work at the same time, profoundly shapes the nature, process, and even the content and context through which the work is made.

It's hard enough to think about your next concert, or your next exhibition, not to mention your rent and your next meal, but still, there is a degree of self-analysis necessary. For too long, artists in the late 20th Century thought that somebody would map this out for them. Grants would fly you there. And maybe they did, to a certain point because they gave you the time for you to discover your own purest motivations and where you wanted to land on this creative territory. But this is a time-based process and you have to really understand what you want out of your career, out of the dramatic arc, of art-making, not to mention out of living and working in the world, and making sure those practices connect to a community you would be proud to represent. —David White, Artistic and Executive Director of The Yard, Former Executive Director of National Performance Network

Currently, New York City performing artists are working an average of 33+ hours in the arts and 18+ hours in outside jobs weekly, totaling 51+ hours of work a week. Given these conditions, questions arise on how artists can continue creating work outside the box. The following questions are suggested for further discussion and research:

On Artist Sustainability: How can artists' financial needs be valued and met with opportunities for proper compensation? How can resources be distributed within the field to support artists' continued practice? What kind of practices can artists develop to diversify their income opportunities?

On a separate note, entrepreneurial practices have been encouraged within the creative process of performing artists, so while artists are both creating and producing the work, what type of producer-artist relationships are necessary to address the administrative challenges that accompany self-production? How can collectively sourced information and technology support the organizational needs of self-producing artists? And how do we address administrative/ organizational costs often incurred by self-producing artists?

On Venues: What type of conversations and marketing is necessary to engage audiences interested in contemporary performing arts, and how are venues interacting with artists to ensure the successful production of the work? How can venues work with artists to engage an audience that is diverse, intergenerational

and multiracial, at affordable ticket prices (\$15-\$20 dollars)?

On Audience Engagement: In the case that a project is identity-based or issue-specific, how are artists empowered to represent their communities and provided larger, or institutional platforms, for their work? Rather than creating formal panels, pre or post-show discussions, how can artists and audience conversations be fostered in social settings where audience engagement is not necessarily formalized? And ultimately, how can artists and the communities they represent be included within the creation of a project?

As I grow older I strive to expand any definitions of who I more broadly (hence, feeling more comfortable calling myself an artist than a choreographer). I find it often limiting to define someone just by those [labels] and leads to quick judgment and dismissal. I find them limiting and reductionist in expressing a complex identity “portfolio” of an individual. I see how these labels became limiting to my growth and provided exclusion rather than inclusion. So in my life and work I attempt to expand those defining lines so I can be enriched by people around me and enrich those that allow me to.—Pavel Zustiak, Artist

WORKING WITHIN INSTITUTIONS

As racial politics shift from politics of recognition—identity politics—towards politics of equity—reallocation of resources—the lack of diversity and social inclusion within institutions can be seen as structural problems due to the lack of direct funding to artists and a lack of diverse arts leaders that actively address the “white racial frame” which limits the capacity of current, institutionalized decision-making processes to successfully diversify their organizations.

Value, which is partly defined by how resources are allocated, brings to question how resources are distributed. And without a mindset geared towards fairness and equity across racial, gender, and class lines, cultural decision makers may remain blind to the systems of privilege that exists within our field.

There is a lack of Black experimentation on stage because there is a lack of Black curators and producers. So I work in multiple arenas, to confuse the traditional approach to ways in which a project can be supported and presented. So I work as a producer, a curator, an artist, a poet. I wear many hats. I must admit that it is hard to find Black male experimentalists and visual performance artists showcasing their work consistently in NYC and other nearby regions. There are plenty of Black dance companies. But I don’t self-identify in that lineage.—Jaamil Olawale Kosoko, Performer, Curator

National organizations such as the National Performance Network and its many member

organizations, have sought to foster diverse, new leadership, and artists who are successfully invited to work within their institutions are paid through seed funding (commissions) and production and travel funds.

It's about artists determining what they want their process to be, what level of resources their projects are going to have and require. Who their collaborators will be. And what communities they want to engage with. It's really about encouraging them to think about the whole piece and to develop that on the track that is the right track for them. I think that means that the work will be different. Thinking through all of those things simultaneously changes the texture of the work.—Kristin Marting, Artistic Director, HERE Arts Center.

During this process, underrepresented artists are provided a seat at the table and given a voice to address the issues that underrepresented communities mostly face on their own. The possibility of artists to represent their communities implies that organizations must build community-organizing practices and infrastructure to not only listen, but learn from diverse artists how they can work together to take action with clear understanding of what's different and what's to be done.

In addition, the representation of communities—rather than cultural production in service of institutional audiences or interests—requires the capacity of arts leaders (presenters and curators) to establish long-term conversations with artists to understand the artist's intentions and to engage with local community organizations and community leaders to translate these artistic visions into projects of mutual benefit.

These partnerships tackle both artistic and financial needs, based on the engagement in social issues that require both arts leaders and artists to understand the needs and perspectives of communities, to ultimately serve the needs of the public, whose trust must be secured.

Culturally, we don't have the clout or history of work that other minorities or marginalized groups have. That's something we need to work on. Historically, I'd say we're a good quarter of a century behind. The ADA (American With Disabilities Act) came out twenty-five years after the Civil Rights Act of 1965. There's been activism and political movement surrounding Disability Rights for several decades now, but the exploration of disability through a cultural, artistic lens is still relatively new.—Gregg Mozgala, Performer

This combination of art-making and social-engagement addresses the most pressing need faced by both artists and arts organizations. With the descent of public consensus in support of the arts, artists have been encouraged through existing public and private funding to address social issues, and the end result of community-based, experimental

forms of performance often culminate with art as a by-product of these newly formed social interactions.

How this practice translates to the funding and critical community, which influences the perceptions of what constitutes successful, meaningful, and beautiful art, has not been investigated by this team, but the growing trend of people entering the field, alongside the visible decrease in arts funding, and the dwindling opportunities for arts journalism to play a part in this process, restrict the field's ability to create this type of socially-engaged work.

From an artists' perspective, this renewed need to address both individual and social needs places further challenges. Artists are now given the added responsibilities of learning and responding to community-based needs, while managing both artistic and financial responsibilities for the production of their work.

But if done successfully, artists, arts organizations, and audiences can feel both ownership and involvement in the creative process and attain a renewed sense of achievement, which may translate into higher social awareness that artists, and the institutions that host them, serve larger public needs, which in turn, may provide an opportunity for the performing arts to organize and eventually attain higher public consensus in support of the arts.

"You build the future by being more involved in the government, being informed on who is making these decisions, who if you want change, you can talk to, or approach, and it's all politics, but it's the environment we're in. We're not in a bubble. These are people that affect us and I always used to ignore that stuff and thought about my own little thing. But now, it's not just about this theater existing, it's about the city being a kind of place that allows places like this to exist."--Noel Joseph Allain, Artistic Director, The Bushwick Starr

CONCLUSIONS—FROM THE GROUND-UP

Our research began with community-based discussions and interviews with artists and arts leaders, to understand from an artist's point-of-view, the experiences of creating new performances from underrepresented perspectives in the field. While we were concerned that our discussions would focus on a culturally capitalist mind-frame and remain stagnated in discourses of cultural oppression, what we've discovered was a series of community and identity-based identity politics that repeatedly asked similar questions: how to achieve equity in the field?

The strategies, based on self-determined questions and action, were focused on educational parity (for artistic training, arts management and leadership), redistribution of financial resources for underrepresented artists, and a deeper democratization of the creative process—involving arts leaders, artists, and communities—with the ultimate goal to achieve measurable social impact that can be recognized by funding institutions, the critical media, and more importantly, the public.

For this purpose, artists have gone past traditional fields of practice to transgress labels that may place artists within myopic contexts in which their work is viewed and judged based on the artist's identity or form. Through multidisciplinary/ interdisciplinary practices, self-producing artists have now developed the capacity to establish dialogue with communities that are of relevance and interest, experimenting techniques in the creation of their work while sustaining the involvement and participation of their audiences.

While artists search for much needed financial support, it is clear that contemporary performing arts are more likely to succeed if built from the ground-up, in partnership between artists, arts organizations and communities, to establish earnest points of social contact.

I love dancing, I love to share dances, I love dancing with other people and I love to collaborate with other artist. For me every situation I am in is ideal. I dance and have danced in Opera houses, black box theatres, concert halls, streets, gallery space, ware houses, beaches, churches, castles, prisons, abandoned houses, cemeteries, subways etc. Where ever there is a space I dance. Every situation is ideal if you make it ideal.—Nejla Yatkin, Dancer

Due to the limitations of this research, which has been conducted informally and on a volunteer-basis by members of The Brooklyn Commune, it is not possible for us to provide definitive answers to the questions that catalyzed this research, but the following provides suggestions and practices that may support the further democratization of the field of contemporary performing arts.

How can we diversify audiences, work, and artistic leadership?

By creating contemporary performing arts at a grass-roots level, both artists and arts organizations can re-create the relationship between creator and spectator, asking audiences to become participants in the creation of new work. This begins with conversations amongst artists (and arts leaders, if working within an institution) to discuss the intentions of the artist, what a project can mean to communities, and reaching out to communities in order to build audiences that can support and attend these new works.

This process requires arts leaders that can connect, facilitate and ultimately organize communities, whether that is at an institutional level—collaborating amongst arts/non-arts organizations—and at a community-level, building partnerships based on mutually recognized goals and trust.

I feel that there are two problems here: the lack of minority representation in theatre and a nearly fatal mistake in figuring out who we're making work for. This double-misrepresentation of the use of theatre leads to the work itself suffering, endlessly

repeating previous innovations from the groundbreakers of the 70s, or content to dwell in somatic crowd-pleasing irony or mindless design exercises that speak more about the technical rigor of the work than any meaning behind it. Which is precisely the problem. Other avant-gardes could fill this listless gap because they arose in communities that formed around the work not vice versa. A need was found and it was exploited. But a need that connected us to an actual group of people.—
Julian Mesri, Director

The diversification of curatorial practices and artistic leadership will be slower. Due to the limited opportunities for career advancement at an executive level, current curators, presenters, and even arts managers may find themselves working within organizations for longer periods of time, sometimes a lifetime, fostering conversations and building communities that may only show changes after a significant number of years. As leadership transitions may be generational, the mentorship of younger, diverse leaders can ensure not only succession, but a future vision which cannot be achieved today.

How do we address the value of diversity in artistic programming?

The main response to this question is two-fold: the valuation of the artist's work (with clear numerical value) and the redistribution of funds, allocated with the purpose of diversifying and supporting underrepresented artists and their work.

How this redistribution is allocated and what guides this decision-making process has not been part of this team's research, but we suggest that this financial redistribution acknowledges the artist's ability to address current and future financial needs, while clarifying that the creation of new work is only part of an artist's journey, and that nurturing other skills in education, applied efforts in social sectors in need, and developing relationships both locally, regionally and/or internationally, is necessary to sustain both an individual's path in the long-term, but also the needs of the community, the field, and the performing arts' relationship with the public at large.

I have to be real and say that my real wish of an ideal situation is to perform in these circumstances under the ability to sustain myself primarily as an artist/performer so that I can focus full time on creating, touring, leading workshops, training and studying. I'm beginning to see more and more how we value artists in this country needs to change. It's a constant catch up game to write those grants, continue to update your work samples, pay your rent, try to gain recognition by aiming for those higher profile performances in order to try to make that leap from "emerging" to "established" artist WHILE keeping your vision alive to be able to produce work.—Soomi Kim, Performer

How do we become socially responsible and address racism, ageism, sexism, or other types of ableism?

The social fears that fuel discrimination lead to the denial or dismissal of one's history—one's oppression—and the basic problem with discrimination, manifest in racism, ageism, sexism, and other types of ableism, is the exclusion or invisibility of underrepresented perspectives.

But if culture guides the understanding of our identity, and artists engage in communities to further our cultural understanding of our shifting histories, then cultural democracy is our need to democratize the participation of both diverse artists and audiences in our cultural institutions in order to create work that can humanize the social, economic and political factors that shape our daily, lived experiences.

To this end, we suggest the following recommendations to the field to promote cultural democracy in the performing arts:

1- For Artists: Given the precariousness of working outside the institution and the lack of public consensus on the public and/or direct funding of artists, artists—particularly artists working outside the box—are recommended to consider the longer dramatic arc of living a life of art-making and evaluating how earning a living (through work done either in or out of the arts) will influence the trajectory of one's artistic practice.

This practice not only consists of career-building in the arts (self-producing at a grass-roots level), but also consideration of how skills can be applied to collaborate in the social sector (health, education, etc), in different art disciplines, and in the promotion of greater representation and participation of audiences in the field.

2- Arts Organizations: The field (and our survey) has shown a high participation of White (Caucasian) artists, arts leaders and audiences in contemporary performing arts, while women, artists of color, genderqueer artists, disabled artists, artists of faith, have been segregated (usually into separate artistic programming), demonstrating larger, structural issues of exclusion.

To address underrepresentation, reallocation of resources to financially support these artists is necessary to address their financial needs and as a response to the rights underrepresented communities do not experience in society, in comparison to their more privileged white counterparts.

While these changes are in process, it is also recommended that the next generation of arts leaders be diversified as well, and that their mentorship secures a more inclusive perspective within arts organizations in the future.

3- Coalition of Artists and Arts Organizations: Arts organizations are recommended to diversify their engagement with artists of underrepresented

communities by inviting them to their institutions, and establishing long-term discussions between the artists and communities to both support the artist's goals and intentions, while ensuring the artist's vision addresses social needs.

Additional support for the artist can include fostering artistic solidarity through peer-to-peer support, while promoting artistic practices not only institutionally, but also with the community both the arts organizations and artists plan to serve.

4- Cross Sector Partnerships: Creating work within institutions requires long-term, project-based planning (approximately 3 years) to determine where the artist is in the creative process. Once understood, it is necessary, from the very early stages, to establish who the intended audience is for a project, what issues will be examined both aesthetically and in conversation with the community, and what type of funding and physical resources will be necessary to develop the project at each stage of development.

This planning enables engaged participation in the creative process which can eventually include funders (private and public) and media, to raise awareness of the questions set in motion by the artist, which in turn, can lead to meaningful and more impactful work.

While these suggestions may not resolve today's most pressing issues, we recognize the singular opportunity artists have to not only represent communities, but include communities through socially conscious and civically minded creative practices that empower the public at large to participate in the contemporary performing arts, by providing tools and creative work that further not only the democratization of our field, but our culture and society at large.

How often has an artists' work been written about incorrectly? How often has our research been misconstrued? How often has the short blurb become the fixed thing when it is not at all the correct thing? I think it's a larger problem...a need to condense/ prioritize/ simplify/ categorize/ even colonize. But we can do it differently. We can listen to people talk about their identity, where they come from. Our words about our lives and our identities are important and interesting. We can listen to artists talk about themselves, their ideas, their work. Even if the words are complex or hard to categorize or make us a little uncomfortable. We can let the words be; we don't have to change them, simplify them, or add our own.—Emily Johnson, Performance Maker

CREDITS

Data Source: Brooklyn Commune Performing Arts Census 2013

Survey Host: Survey monkey

Length of Survey: 68 Questions over 6 sections

Sections: Personal Information, Work History, Income & Expenses, Educational History (including costs and debts), and questions on labor and the future

Total Census Participants: 526 (426 respondents to the first version, 100 to the second which addressed certain technical issues)

Data Analysis: Dorit Avganim, Nick Benacerraf, Andy Horwitz, Daniel Lim, Kyoung H. Park, Risa Shoup

Artists and Arts Leaders Interviewed: Josh Conkel, Beverly Emmons, Miguel Gutierrez, Amina Henry, J. Holtham, Emily Johnson, Soomi Kim, Kristin Marting, Karen Malpede, Julian J. Mesri, Leah Nanako Winkler, Gregg Mozgala, Manu Narayan, Jaamil Olawale Kosoko, Haleh Stilwell, Sixto Wagan, David R. White, Nejla Y. Yarkin, Pavel Zustiak

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