“Assessment Strategies for Residencies”
The Bellagio Center | April 4-6, 2012

ORGANIZERS
Alliance of Artists Communities
Res Artis
The Rockefeller Foundation

INTRODUCTION
With an estimated 500 residency programs for visual artists, writers, composers, scholars, and others in
the U.S. and more than 1,000 worldwide, the residency field offers a wide variety of models, structures,
and programmatic approaches to offering residents of many disciplines with dedicated time and space
for the development of new work. Despite these differences, residency programs share a common goal:
to provide an environment that entrusts residents with uncertainty and risk and that supports creative
development without dictating specific outcomes. And yet this presents one of the field’s greatest
challenges: How do we evaluate efficacy and impact when we do not dictate outcomes? And can we
articulate impact in ways that are both meaningful and measurable?

Believing that assessment is critical for the quality of both the resident’s experience and organizational
management, the Alliance of Artists Communities and Res Artis – in partnership with The Rockefeller
Foundation’s Bellagio Center – set out to explore values and strategic goals that residency programs
share in common and develop tools and recommendations for assessing residencies. Recognizing that
there is no one-size-fits-all approach to this field, we embrace the rich diversity among residency
programs and hope to offer resources to develop strategies and assessment plans that are rigorous,
reflect the goals and needs of artists, and suited to each organization.

OUTLOOK
The great variety of approaches to residencies is a tremendous strength of the field, though it can
present some challenges in developing common direction. During the three days of intensive
discussions, this variety manifested itself in the rich and dynamic contributions by thoughtful and
dedicated participants. Nonetheless, as the following summaries of our discussions highlight, there were
often clear overlaps in interests and goals among the organizations represented. The participants in this
convening comprise a small snapshot of the field of residencies, its partners, and its stakeholders, and
the meeting represents a starting point in a process that will include many others in the months and
years to come. The Alliance of Artists Communities and Res Artis are committed to continuing the work
of identifying priorities for and considering how we might assess the impact of the field of residencies.
We look forward to providing further opportunities for this kind of exchange, leading toward the
formulation of shared values and tools to assist the field in assessment practices.

PARTICIPANTS
Participants were selected to represent the diversity of the field of residencies, as well as individuals
from agencies, institutions, and other stakeholders engaged with the field.

Mr. James Baker
Executive Director, Pilchuck Glass School
Stanwood, Washington, U.S.

Ms. Mary Ann DeVlieg
Secretary General, IETM (International Network of Contemporary Performing Arts)
Brussels, Belgium
Ms. Suzanne Fetscher  
President/CEO, McColl Center for Visual Art  
Charlotte, North Carolina, U.S.

Mr. Robert Frankel  
Director of Museums and Visual Arts, National Endowment for the Arts  
Washington, DC, U.S.

Mr. Karol Frühauf  
Director, Bridge Guard Residential Art / Science Center  
Board Member, Res Artis  
Štúrovo, Slovakia

Mr. Stanford Makishi  
Director of Programs, Asian Cultural Council  
New York, New York, U.S.

Mr. Roger Mandle  
Senior Advisor, Qatar Museums Authority  
Doha, Qatar

Mr. Tanner Methvin  
Executive Director, The Africa Centre  
Cape Town, South Africa

Ms. Marge Myers  
Associate Director, STUDIO for Creative Inquiry  
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, U.S.

Mr. Robert Picciotto  
Visiting Professor, Kings College  
Board Member, European Evaluation Society  
London, U.K.

Mr. Johan Pousette  
Curator of Contemporary Art, Swedish Traveling Exhibitions  
Board Member, TransCultural Exchange  
Stockholm, Sweden

Ms. Regina Smith  
Senior Program Officer – Arts & Culture, The Kresge Foundation  
President, Grantmakers in the Arts  
Troy, Michigan, U.S.

Ms. Maria Tuerlings  
Director, TransArtists  
Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Ms. Risë Wilson
Program Manager, LINC (Leveraging Investments in Creativity)
Founder, The Laundromat Project
New York, New York, U.S.

Ms. Cheryl Young
Executive Director, The MacDowell Colony
Peterborough, New Hampshire, U.S.

ORGANIZERS
Mr. Mario Caro
President, Res Artis
Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Ms. Juanita Frazier-Martin
Administrative Assistant to Rob Garris, The Rockefeller Foundation
New York, New York, U.S.

Mr. Rob Garris
Managing Director – Bellagio Programs, The Rockefeller Foundation
New York, New York, U.S.

Ms. Caitlin Strokosch
Executive Director, Alliance of Artists Communities
Providence, Rhode Island, U.S.

Ms. Carla Wahnon
Associate Director, Alliance of Artists Communities
Providence, Rhode Island, U.S.
SUMMARY OF SESSIONS

Shared Values / Standards
Discussion leaders: Jim Baker, Maria Tuerlings

Introduction: Are there core values all residency programs share? If so, might these values imply a set of standards for the field? Can the Alliance of Artists Communities and Res Artis develop shared values for the field that leads to a set of standards that may offer a structure for assessment?

Key discussion points:
• Artists are the centerpiece of residency programs; this is the basis of our work.
• Values for the field (excerpted from longer list)
  o Generosity
  o Freedom
  o Inclusivity
  o Learning
  o Responsiveness
  o Tolerance
  o Respect
• Goals for the field (excerpted from longer list)
  o Artistic development
  o Exchange and communication
  o Creation of new opportunities for artists
  o Community engagement
  o Empowerment and collaboration
  o Learning
  o Diversity
  o Positive social change
  o Creativity

Next steps:
• Survey the field and its partners to engage more people in the discussion
• Develop a statement of shared values for the field
• Determine a set of standards based on those values

Defining Innovation
Discussion leader: Johan Pousette

Introduction: How do we define innovation? In what other environments (besides artist residencies) does innovation thrive, and what might we learn from those?

Presentation:
Conditions for innovation include the following:
• New ideas, or old ideas introduced differently
• Building blocks: existing knowledge, traditions, and achievements are perceived and developed upon in a new way
• Collaboration: the differences others bring can be challenging as well as valuable
• Creative process: a basic condition for all innovation
• Perspective shifts: unexpected views and disruptions
• Interconnectedness: similar new ideas are often “in the air,” occurring elsewhere in response to conditions
• Input: new materials offer the opportunity for innovation; international exchange and residencies play a particularly important role in this
• Chance: mistakes, failure, and chance often generate new thinking and discoveries
• Looking: perception allows us to see the creative opportunity in failure
• Open-endedness: research and development requires freedom from defined outcomes; each outcome may be a beginning to a new process
• Critical thinking: question existing ideas
• Working conditions for artists that offer time and encourage autonomy and discourse
• Nerds: being completely absorbed by one specific subject can be necessary to achieve groundbreaking results
• Equality: connection between equality and innovation; can society support innovation by providing a structure that allows as many as possible to be innovative, independent of gender, race or class?
• Risk-taking: maybe there is no such thing as failure in a creative process
• Limitations: sometimes creativity expands within constraints
• Play: not all innovation comes from serious work!
• Passion: innovation requires a strong driving force

Key discussion points:
• Other observations
  o Innovation is catalytic: disruptive, transformative, and leading to change; something that has the potential to be emulated
  o Innovation is not necessarily new; it involves creation and re-creation, birth and re-birth
  o Innovation is not linear: it is often incremental, can be part of a revisiting, and may be the beginning of a process of change
• Relative to artist residencies
  o The notion of “innovation” can push artists to come up with something new without first perfecting craft; we need to continue to support artistic development and technique. Likewise, we need to support artists who are deepening their work, not just doing something new.
  o Risk-taking sometimes needs to happen in a vacuum; residencies can provide a critical environment for this work.
  o We may not yet have the ability/vocabulary to assess the quality of the new; assessment of artists’ work may often be based on trust in past work
  o Peer practitioners may be best suited to assess whether an artist is breaking new ground.
  o Using new technology does not necessarily equate with innovation.
  o Be careful of qualitative or quantitative terms that only match a certain cultural perspective. Language and notions of innovation – that society can only grow and change with something new – often favor Western artists and ideas. Creativity can respond to existing forms of culture and ideas and improve them in ways that are still within a canon.
  o Innovation can be vulgar; an artist may push an art form to extremes in order to shift the entire genre forward to a lesser degree.

Approaching Assessment
Discussion leader: Karol Frühauf

Introduction: What is the purpose of assessment? What motivations are driving it (e.g., funding, program changes, desire for continued relevance, etc.)? What benchmarks are appropriate to assess against? Who assesses, and who sets the standards? What is the desired result of the assessment? Who are the agents, and
where is there common interest or conflict? This discussion will engage us in establishing the principles and priorities for assessment.

**Presentation:**

- **The purposes of assessment**
  - To gain admission (threshold): Specific criteria are set by which you are admitted into a guild, a market, or a voluntary network (e.g., to receive a certificate of occupancy, you must meet building safety standards)
  - To improve (objective): Comparisons are made relative to your own standards, business standards, peers, and/or benchmarks.
  - To provide classification (subjective): Expert or novice opinions can provide subjective assessment (e.g., star-ratings for movies)

- **Who assesses?**
  - Self-assessment (first party): mainly used for improvement
  - Customer (second-party assessment): used to determine whether a customer decides to purchase, use, participate in, etc.
  - Neutral body (third party): professional body (guild, network, public authority, etc.) assesses in order to ensure minimum threshold standards

- **Assessment of residencies**
  - What purposes can assessment of residencies serve? Whom?
    - To understand how a residency program compares with others, relative to quality of experience, facilities, support to artists, etc., so that improvements can be made.
    - To be better equipped to communicate in such a way that artists choose the right residency program for them.
    - To demonstrate to stakeholders that the organization is doing good work.
  - Who should assess residencies?
    - External agencies (e.g., Alliance of Artists Communities, Res Artis)
    - Artists-in-residence
    - Constituent groups
    - Staff
    - Local community members
    - Vendors
    - Art market
    - Faculty and students
    - Those with inside and close knowledge of the program
    - Other residency programs
  - Where should the standards come from against which residencies should be assessed?
    - Clearly articulated goals of the individual program
    - Field-wide standards
    - Distinct standards based on similar peers within the residency field and/or related fields
  - What methods and tools do we need for assessment of residencies?
    - Goal-setting: Clarify the organization’s and the artist’s goals in advance, in order to establish a benchmark for subsequent assessment
    - Surveys – clear questions related to the mission and shared intention of a residency; capture interim goals and process, not just final result
    - Internal review – staff and board review of feedback can bring accountability and determine accuracy and areas for change

**Collaboration & Cross-Disciplinary Work**

*Discussion leaders: Rob Garris, Marge Myers*
**Introduction:** What role does collaborative and cross-disciplinary relationships play in innovation? Do different approaches to cross-disciplinary collaboration enhance different outcomes (for example, facilitating intentional collaboration within a specific group of artists, scientists, and scholars vs. creating a fertile environment for collaboration and cross-disciplinary exchange but allowing it to happen on its own)?

**Key discussion points:**
- **Equality** is important in collaboration; openness thrives when all parties feel equally empowered.
- Collaboration is more valuable when confronting differences and working through them together.
- Distinction between collaborations that are managed versus naturally-occurring collaborations; an institutional vision versus one inspired by artists.
- Space/architecture can foster collaboration: e.g., The Steel Yard in Providence, RI created a welcoming site in an industrial area, one that all can wander into and explore; private/public, work space/play space, industrial/natural, and indoor/outdoor are permeable. The City of Asylum creates satellite activities to interact with the neighborhood.
- There must be balance between creating opportunities and environments for collaboration to occur and micromanaging or forcing collaboration.
- Connect collaborations back to innovation—cooperation to create something new.
- Consider community, institutions, and space (not always physical)

**Public / Private Residencies**

*Breakout sessions*

**Community Engaged Residencies**

*Discussion leaders: Mary Ann DeVlieg, Risë Wilson*

**Introduction:** How can residencies best facilitate artists as agents of social change? What is the role of community-engagement in residencies? How can residencies balance the interests of their artists with the needs of the community?

**Key discussion points:**
- What is essential for success?
  - Selection and willingness of the artist is fundamental to success. Artists should be invited into the process, and not simply seen as a utility.
  - Listen to the community. Relevance and needs of the community should drive the work, and the community should be involved in shaping the work.
  - It is the institution’s responsibility to understand and frame the context for the artist.
  - Take the time to engage around social issues; value ongoing collaborations. There must be active engagement and collaboration, and an investment of time to address complex social issues.
  - Examine why you want to engage—instrumentalism vs. intrinsic value; have a clear and authentic intention that is aligned with the organization’s mission.
  - Manage expectations around the artists-in-residence and the community with the artists as a partner in helping to address themes.
  - Foster mutual respect between artists, the community, and the organization(s).
  - Engage the community in shifting from product- or outcome-driven to process-driven.
  - Consider the artist as an agent — not being used — but part of the intervention and as a partner with the institution or the community.

**Residencies as Retreat**

*Discussion leader: Cheryl Young*
*Introduction:* What is the value of residencies that offer separation from the public? What role do these programs play in shaping contemporary society? Are there artists for whom this is better suited? How do we continue to assess and articulate the value of retreat-style residencies today?

**Key discussion points:**
- Residencies are a safe zone where artists need to know what to expect and have transparency into how much of an intersection exists with the community.
- There must be public understanding of the field and the impact of supporting artists, but measuring the value of the experience may take several years.
- We need to do better at helping artists understand distinctions in residency styles — e.g., community-engaged vs. retreat-style residencies — not as either/or but as different styles appropriate at different times in their careers or creative practice. The differences within the field are a strength, and not all programs should share the same framework.

**Evaluating Impact**

*Breakout sessions*

**Impacting Artists**

*Discussion leader:* Robert Frankel

*Introduction:* What frameworks can we develop for assessing our impact on artists? When are quantitative measures (for example, awards, publications, performances, and exhibitions by alumni) most useful, and when are qualitative indicators more appropriate? What tools might we use for gathering information on impact?

**Key discussion points:**
- The field needs tools to assess the impact on artists at key intervals (pre-, mid-, and post-residency) along with a process for organizations to do this.
- A commitment to evaluation is needed, which requires staff support to not only gather information but also to integrate results into evolving programming.
- It is important to build a culture of follow-up and longer-term relationships with alumni and artists.
- Recognize the potential of internal and external applications for the organizations to better articulate the impact of the field.
- Having this information in a form that is well gathered rather than anecdotal material will strengthen the organization’s ability to convince the funder of a program’s worth.

**Impacting Communities**

*Discussion leader:* Suzanne Fetscher

*Introduction:* How do we assess the impact our programs have on our communities, the general public, or society at large? How do we manage competition/conflict between supporting communities and serving artists?

**Key discussion points:**
- Define where organizations, artists, programming, and the community overlap. Time should be taken to identify the community groups most appropriate for the work of a particular artist or the goals of the residency organization.
- Defining (and assessing) the relationship between the artist, organization, and community can be awkward and messy as there can be tension.
- Skill-sharing should occur between the artist and community members in both directions.
• Validate the artist to the community, and the community to the artist.
• We should be satisfied with short-term impact; this doesn’t have to be monumental all the time.

Assessment Models
Discussion leader: Robert Picciotto

Introduction: What different models of assessment lend themselves to different purposes? Are there assessment frameworks that account for work that is not outcome-based in the first place – for example, qualitative vs. quantitative, logic models vs. developmental models, etc.? How do we design assessment systems that honor the goals of the residents while also serving the organization?

Goal: To develop evaluation strategies that serve the organization, the artists, and external forces (e.g., funders), and that can adapt as these environments change.

What is evaluation? A systematic determination of worth, merit, and significance using criteria against a set of standards. The basic logic of evaluation is relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and impact.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WORTH</th>
<th>MERIT</th>
<th>SIGNIFICANCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Doing the right things</td>
<td>Doing things right</td>
<td>Achieving valuable results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relevance</td>
<td>Effectiveness, efficiency</td>
<td>Sustainability, impact</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Why evaluate? To learn, understand impact, uncover the hidden, improve; for the stakeholder/funder to determine value and compliance

Linear logic: Using assumptions and theories to take you from inputs to impact

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INPUTS</th>
<th>OUTPUTS</th>
<th>OUTCOMES</th>
<th>IMPACT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facilities</td>
<td>Attitudinal change</td>
<td>Creativity</td>
<td>Positive social impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
<td></td>
<td>Innovation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funds</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

System logic: More of a complexity theory dealing with uncertainty and conflict. Distinguish between assessing impact and organizational performance — the artist may succeed while the residency fails. Look at residencies as experiments. Accept a theory of change and learn from outliers.

Evaluation Examples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EVALUATION FOR</th>
<th>KNOWLEDGE (Formative)</th>
<th>COMPLIANCE (Summative)</th>
<th>CAPACITY BUILDING (Developmental)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>METHOD</td>
<td>Case studies: experimental</td>
<td>Auditing: inspection</td>
<td>Complexity theory Systems analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOOLS</td>
<td>Regression models</td>
<td>Rating: absolute and economical Ranking Cost/benefit analysis</td>
<td>Participatory tools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPROACH</td>
<td>Social science research</td>
<td>Performance</td>
<td>Utilization focused: using</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When to evaluate? Consider a cycle of design, implementation, and adaptation.
- before (design) – ensures relevance through clarity of goals
- during (monitoring) – requires indicators to track/judge and willingness to change course
- after (assessment) – requires tools to gather data, indicators to judge feedback, and plan for implementing; if results are used 20% of the time it is WORTH IT!

Who should evaluate? Evaluation is to the public sector what accounting (self-evaluation) and auditing (independent evaluation) are to the private sector.
- Self-evaluation
  - Pros: allows for relevance, efficiency, and adaptability; inexpensive
  - Cons: biased; may not offer the same legitimacy
- Independent evaluation
  - Pros: allows for objectivity, credibility, validity
  - Cons: too much evaluation can get in the way of management; can be expensive

Exercise
Respond Yes or No to the following questions about your organization/agency/programs:
1. Goals are explicit and coherent
2. Responsibility for monitoring and evaluation is assigned at the right level (highest possible)
3. Performance goals are set and owned (must be realistic)
4. Judicious success indicators are selected
5. Baseline data is secured
6. Data collection/interpretation is in place
7. Evaluation methods are rigorous and valid
8. Monitoring and evaluation skills/resources are adequate
9. Results are used
10. Leadership (management and board) is committed to results based on evaluation

Key discussion points:
- To what extent will evaluation constrain an organization’s ability to be creative? Question protocols that you have, vary data to get analysis as things change, and be creative in how you implement what you’ve learned.
- There is a danger when one is too risk-averse that you choose programs, partners, and artists who are already successful. We must carve out a safe space for taking risks.
- Learn from artists: Creativity and evaluation are what artists do all the time while still taking risks.
- Evaluation is not only for survival but also to assist with goals and objectives and shift accordingly with checkpoints. What did we learn? Where do we go from here?
- Evaluation is not just something you do once in a while; it should be part of an institutional practice and culture.
- Institutional memory is critical to evaluate the evaluation itself.