Artist-in-Residence Selection

A series of brief reports documenting the management practices of artist residency programs

April 2011
Artist Residencies At-a-Glance

OVERVIEW

• estimated # of artist residency programs in North America ............................................................500
• artist residency programs worldwide ..............................................................................................1,000+
• artists provided with residencies annually ......................................................................................16,000+
• applications for residencies annually .............................................................................................90,000+
• average length of residency ...........................................................................................................8 weeks

ARTISTIC DISCIPLINES

Artist residency programs that offer residencies in:

• visual arts (exclusively or in addition to other disciplines) ............................................................. 91%
• writing .................................................................................................................................................. 77%
• media arts ........................................................................................................................................... 64%
• music .................................................................................................................................................... 58%
• architecture / design .......................................................................................................................... 49%
• scholarship .......................................................................................................................................... 40%
• dance .................................................................................................................................................... 32%
• a single field or discipline only .......................................................................................................... 30%

GEOGRAPHY (WITHIN NORTH AMERICA)

Artist residency programs in:

• rural areas ........................................................................................................................................... 42%
• urban areas ......................................................................................................................................... 29%
• small towns ......................................................................................................................................... 21%
• suburban areas .................................................................................................................................... 9%

FEES + STIPENDS

• programs that offer residencies at no cost .......................................................................................... 61%
• programs that offer residencies at no cost and also provide stipends .............................................. 26%
• programs that offer fee-based residencies .......................................................................................... 39%
• programs that offer fee-based residencies but also provide scholarships and subsidies ............ 34%
• estimated value of support and services provided to artists-in-residence annually .................... $40 million
Artist-in-Residence Selection

Introduction

From Omaha, Nebraska to Hofdastrand, Iceland and New York City to Greensboro, North Carolina, there are over 1,000 residency programs worldwide that support today’s artists by offering time and space for the creation of new work. Each program is vastly different based on their location, organizational culture, and mission. These factors determine which types of artists a program aims to attract and the diverse processes used to select them.

What’s unique about your program and/or your community that makes it better suited to particular artists? There is no right way to manage selection – decide first who you want to serve and then design a process that will get you there.

Start with the application

Know what you are looking for and design your application accordingly. For example, a retreat center for established artists may need different information from applicants than a community-based residency for emerging artists. It’s important to keep your selection process in mind when designing your application, too, so that you capture information that will allow you to make informed decisions. Consider the following when creating your application:

• How does the language you use convey inclusivity/exclusivity?

• What does your jury and/or staff need to make the best decisions and how will they view that information?

• What information do you want to track over time about your applicants (e.g., ethnicity/race, age, career stage, education level)?

Choose a jury as carefully as you choose your residents

The artists who come through your program will become part of and contribute to your organization and its culture. It’s essential that the people who are a part of your jury “get it” – that they understand your organization’s values and are not just experts in the field. Choose jurors that reflect your program’s mission and goals. Juries can be comprised of staff, board members, alumni, other artists, curators, arts leaders, and laypersons; and local, national, or international jurors; and juries can be used exclusively to determine acceptance or as one or more phases of the selection process. While you don’t have to find all new jurors annually, it’s a good idea to rotate jurors regularly so that artist selection does not stagnate. Finding new jurors each year can be challenging, especially if you are in a small community, though online application programs can allow for virtual jurying anywhere in the world.

Other residency programs, colleges and universities, arts councils and funders, and other arts organizations can all be a source for identifying jurors. Grant-makers will likely already have a roster of jurors they can recommend.

Inform potential jurors when you invite them of your expectations (how many applications they will review, whether they will be responsible for reviewing all the applications or just a portion of them, how much time they will have to review applications in advance, and what your goals are). Define your entire selection process according to your needs, and go over it before the jurors receive materials.

Define your selection process

There are many ways for the selection process to work; some examples include:

• “Blind” selection – jurors make selections based on work samples but without any access to personal information (age, gender, race, etc.).

• “Non-blind” selection – jurors take into consideration other factors in addition to the quality of work, e.g., project proposals and statements of intent, demographic information, or previous education/exhibition/residency experiences.

• Nominate-to-apply – artists are invited to apply, but are not guaranteed a residency.

• Curated residencies – the selection committee chooses artists that they want to be in residence and then invite them. This process can completely remove the application process.

• Awarded or endowed residencies – artists are selected by a partner organization (a university or arts council, for example) or as part of an award; the residency organization may or may not be involved in the selection.
Selection Process Examples

The following examples look at four different residencies and how their selection processes work. Each example provides a snapshot of the organization including the types of artists each program aims to attract and the process and reasoning for decision-making. There are many other approaches to artist selection and some programs implement a combination of selection methods – open call, nomination-to-apply, curation, and awarded residencies.

ART FARM
www.artfarmnebraska.org

OVERVIEW
Location: Marquette, Nebraska; semi-isolated and rural
Eligibility: emerging-to-established artists in all artistic disciplines
Length + Number of Residencies: residencies last 2 weeks to 5 months (June through October), with 3-9 artists-in-residence at a time
What’s Provided: housing and studio space at no cost, in exchange for a contribution of labor of 12 hours per week to help renovate and maintain Art Farm’s buildings and grounds as well as other projects, suited to skills and temperament

APPLICATION PROCESS
Application Fee: $15
Requirements: work samples (JPGs, writing samples, etc.), three brief statements that answer the following:
1. Why would you like to have a residency at Art Farm?
2. Give a brief description of your intended or potential project/s at Art Farm.
3. Summarize your skills and experiences that you think could best aid in running Art Farm.

Acceptance Rate: 5% (9 out of 180 applicants)
Deadlines: March 1
Submission: application can be filled out and submitted online (via ArtFarm’s website), by email, or mail

Art Farm’s mission is to support artistic vision, which may be impractical, obscure, and independent of commercial recognition—where failing is no less welcomed than succeeding; and to offer artists, writers, performers, and others studios, time, and resources for pursuing their range of expression, for experimenting, for developing projects, and most of all, for distilling the promise and potential of their creative enterprise, while working and living in a rural environment.

SELECTION PROCESS
There is no jury in the traditional interpretation of the concept. Random emails go out to various people, from experts for their informed opinions to the unknowledgeable for their gut reactions. The process has evolved from looking only at the art/objects submitted, to the current process, where more emphasis is placed on looking applicants’ creative spirit, self-knowledge, skills, and insight into their own creative practice as well as the art they produce. Creating an environmental mixture of interaction, collaboration, and community from these groups has been a success at Art Farm. There is a consideration for how well one might fit into this environment. Most applicants are emerging, pre-emergent, or aspiring, along with a few established professionals.

FROM ED DADEY, DIRECTOR
“Do you have an inner pioneer yearning to get in touch with the source experience of subprime primary existence? It could be your ideal of disheveled dignity – a mud brick conceptualization center, free of all techno-distractions and high-concept fabrication, fully appointed with outdoor furniture. These are just a few of the items from the cafeteria of options you’ll find at Art Farm, with more arriving every day.”
As an artist-centered organization, the Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts founded by artists for artists and in this spirit, its programs seek to perpetually give the institution to artists through the gift of time, space, and support. Established in 1981, the Bemis Center’s sole mission has been to support contemporary artists of exceptional talent. This mission is achieved through an international Artist-in-Residence program and Exhibitions and Community Arts programs that directly fund and catalyze the artists’ work to engage and challenge the public.

SELECTION PROCESS
The Bemis Center selects artists-in-residence twice per year. A three-person jury composed of artists, alumni, curators, and/or art educators selects artists through three rounds of elimination. Each jury is made of entirely new jurors. Selections are based solely on the work submitted; jurors do not review resumes, education, location or names of the artists. Jurors review and score the first round remotely through Slideroom. The jurors then meet for rounds two and three at the Bemis Center.

FROM MARK MASUOKA, DIRECTOR
“Artists-in-Residence programs have emerged from isolated rural retreats to vibrant artist communities that serve the needs of artists and the community. The Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts has become a powerful resource for artists by providing direct time, space, and support. We are committed to fostering an environment that allows artists the opportunity to accomplish their goals, unencumbered and fully supported by the organization, staff, and the Omaha community. Our conviction is to support exceptional talent and our commitment is to create the ideal atmosphere and environment for artists to research, create, experiment, and take risks with total artistic freedom.”

BEMIS CENTER FOR CONTEMPORARY ARTS
www.bemiscenter.org
OVERVIEW
Location: Omaha, Nebraska; housed in two urban warehouses totaling 110,000 square feet in downtown Omaha
Eligibility: emerging-to-established artists working in all areas of the visual arts, including some performance artists; ability to understand and speak English
Length + Number of Residencies: 3 months of uninterrupted, self-directed work time for 36 artists per year, with an average of 10 in residence at a time
What’s Provided: large live/work studio with a private kitchen and bathroom; 24-hour access to facilities (including a wood shop, installation spaces, dark room, and a large sculpture fabrication facility); $750 monthly stipend

APPLICATION PROCESS
Application Fee: $40
Requirements: 10 images, a resume/CV, 3 references, and a brief description of what the artist would like to do while at Bemis Center
Acceptance Rate: 3% (36 out of more than 1,000 applicants)
Deadlines: February 28 (for January-June), September 30 (for July-December)
Submission: online applications only (via Slideroom)
The Hermitage's mission is to nurture creativity, preserve a Florida historic site, protect native ecology, and serve Hermitage’s Gulf Coast communities. The Hermitage curates its residency based on two philosophies:

1) to be the coolest place you can’t apply to (so when you’re invited it’s an honor),
2) to be known by the company you keep (by having the top experts in the field choose the top artists in the field, everyone’s status is raised).

SELECTION PROCESS

The National Committee is made up of top experts in the field who are located all over the United States. The National Committee meets twice a year by conference call: once to nominate artists for the residency based on priorities identified by the staff, and once to make final determinations. Artists who are selected receive an unsolicited invitation in the mail.

The Greenfield Prize and the National Committee: The Hermitage also administers the Greenfield Prize, offering a $30,000 commission to an artist to develop a new project. The prize is awarded annually and the selected discipline rotates each year between drama, music, and a wild card (with the discipline chosen by the National Committee). In addition to the commissioning fee, artists receive a residency and are encouraged to partner with a local non-profit during their stay at the Hermitage. For example, a playwright may be commissioned to write a play and, while in residence, work with a local theatre company to develop the work.

The Greenfield Prize jury includes one member of the National Committee and two others chosen by that Committee member based on the individuals’ personal and professional networks. This process draws on the expertise already within the National Committee while expanding the pool of experts that Hermitage is connected to in the given discipline. The jury nominates potential awardees and then determines the prize winner as a group. The Director of the Hermitage oversees the Greenfield Prize selection process.

FROM BRUCE RODGERS, DIRECTOR

"Every symphony you hear, every play you see, every dance you experience every painting and sculpture you see, and every book you read, begins its life with a person in a room with an idea and a passion. The Hermitage provides the room for accomplished creators in a spectacular, inspiring environment. Our artists bring their brilliant ideas. Together, with nature, we feed the passion, and we share it all with our community.
The mission of HUB-BUB is to build community through dynamic art and ideas. The HUB-BUB Artists-in-Residence Program is an opportunity for emerging young artists to focus on their art-making while helping with the organization’s mission to build community through dynamic art and ideas. Residents spend up to 20 hours a week working for HUB-BUB or The Hub City Writers Project and getting involved in community based art projects.

SELECTION PROCESS

Round 1: The Artist-in-Residence Director looks at all visual artist applications; the Hub City Writers Project Director looks at all writer applications. Based on quality of work, community involvement, and references, the staff selects the top 40 visual artists and the top 15 writers to be passed on to the Selection Committee for review.

Round 2: The Selection Committees – made up of local HUB-BUB alumni and local artists/writers who are connected to HUB-BUB and the Hub City Writers Project – review the work remotely through Slideroom and have access to all application materials. The Selection Committees recommend 20 visual artists and 12 writers for the next round.

Round 3: The remaining 20 visual artists and 12 writers are asked to complete a second questionnaire that further gauges their community interests and their personalities. That group is further whittled down by the Selection Committees to 12 visual artists and 4 writers.

Round 4: The staff (Director of the Residency Program, Director of the Showroom gallery space, Executive Director of HUB-BUB, and Executive Director of Hub City Writers Project) conducts 15-minute Skype interviews with the remaining 16 candidates. The staff then decides who will be best suited for the program and work together as a group. References are called and then offers are made. Background checks are conducted before contracts are sent out.

HUB-BUB

www.hub-bub.com

OVERVIEW

Location: Spartanburg, South Carolina; housed in a renovated warehouse space in the downtown of a small Southern city

Eligibility: emerging young visual artists and writers age 20-35

Length + Number of Residencies: 4 artists (3 visual artists and one writer each year) are in residence for 11 months

What’s Provided: individual 1,000+ sq. ft. live/work apartments located above HUB-BUB’s gallery and performance space and a $300 bi-monthly stipend in exchange for 20 hours/week work to help with HUB-BUB programming and to get involved in community-based art projects specific to their interests

APPLICATION PROCESS

Application Fee: $40

Requirements: 10 images or a writing sample, a resume/CV, artist statement, 2 letters of reference, and a description of community interests/involvement in the arts; writers are also asked to respond to the goals of the Hub City Writers Project

Acceptance Rate: 4% (4 out of 105 applicants)

Deadlines: February 15

Submission: online applications only (via Slideroom)

FROM CELIA COOKSEY, DIRECTOR

“The ideal candidates for this program are challenging, progressive artists who are self-directed, motivated, and passionate about creating new work. They are excited about interacting with the Spartanburg community and working closely with fellow residents, the HUB-BUB staff, and volunteers. The HUB-BUB residency is an opportunity for visual artists and writers to make a difference through their craft.”

Alliance of Artists Communities  5
BEST PRACTICES AT-A-GLANCE

Artist-in-Residence Selection

project manager
Alix Refshauge

executive director
Caitlin Strokosch

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ABOUT THE ALLIANCE OF ARTISTS COMMUNITIES

The Alliance of Artists Communities is an international association of artist communities, artist colonies, and artist residency programs – representing a field of 500 organizations in the US and more than 1,000 worldwide that provide artists of any discipline with dedicated time and space to create new work. Believing that the cultivation of new art and ideas is essential to human progress, the mission of the Alliance is to advocate for and support artist communities, to advance the endeavors of artists.

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