



## District of Columbia Arts Center

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### **DCAC Archive: Director's Letter** **March : April 2009**

When I became director of DCAC fourteen years ago and began to create programs and schedule performances I always said that DCAC was a place to show one's work and try new or different things. I still say that. But more and more when I am asked to define our difference from other organizations, I find myself talking about the ideas that that are nurtured here. The main thing that we do is provide a place for here is exchange and development of thoughts, concepts, and plans of action. The Curatorial Initiative is but one example. Now that we have moved past the original funding from the Andy Warhol Foundation, there is no funding for the program. We manage to find funds from membership and events to cover the program, and in a way, that provides us tremendous freedom. There is no one asking us for a timetable or "measurable outcomes." (That's a favorite phrase for funders.) Besides, how would we measure how much the mentor and mentee get out of a program that is centered on the development of a relationship? Can we measure how much the aspiring curator feels they have benefited by working with a talented and generous mentor? How it makes them feel when they see their first exhibition mounted or their first essay in their first exhibition catalogue? The only true measurable outcome I have for that program is the amount of pride I feel each time we complete a cycle and realize that we have been successful in creative person's desire to curate, and hopefully curate more shows for us and other organizations. They emerge; they go out into the community armed with more knowledge and confidence. And I think that impacts our world. The same is true for our Sparkplug program. Facilitating a space and time for artists to come together and talk about their work, their ideas, and their plans. They make studio visits to each other and critique each other's processes. I suppose we could count the number of people in the program and how many times they meet, how many exhibitions they have together, but I don't even want to measure the outcomes. I want to see those artists' work, hear them talk about it, experience some little part of what they have gained by being in Sparkplug.

Every performance and exhibition here has some elements of those programs. Growth. Artistically and personally. New and exciting ideas. That really turns my crank, and I guess in the end the most obvious thing to measure is the 20 years that we have been here, providing a space for all of this to happen. Yeah, you put that together with the pride and satisfaction I and the Board of Directors feel about helping make that so, and you can give a measurable

outcome. We are looking forward to being able to continue this mission for another 20 years. Thanks for being with us on this quest, every membership and donation is greatly appreciated, not just by the organization, but by every artist and audience member who benefits. With your help, even the worst financial year in decades can't stop us.

**B Stanley,**

Executive Director

