



**District of Columbia  
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## **DCAC Archive : Director's Letters November : December 2012**

Some days it's hard to be inspired to talk the talk and walk the walk about art. We all suffer through it; artists and administrators alike. Sometimes when asked what I do for a living, non-artists will respond, "Oh, that sounds like fun." Artists will typically respond, " Oh that sounds like a tough job." There are of course, a lot of people in between for whom the words coming from my mouth make absolutely no sense at all and respond with something like, "You mean like Washington where the president lives?" The latter are really my favorite because at least I know we are not going to get into a conversation about art or arts funding.

Of course, for us at DCAC it's the funding part that makes our lives difficult and can cast a real shadow over our daily life. Not that dealing with artists all the time is necessarily a walk in the park, but it doesn't cast the same pall over the staff that the prospect of not being paid does. At least we like the artists, no matter how difficult, but no one likes that empty bank account. We spend a lot of our time trying to get money so we can support artists and try to maintain a presence in the community. I think our presence is necessary and benefits our community greatly, so we scrape by with far less than other organizations. And in a city that has attracted so many new arts organizations, getting the limited funds that are available gets tougher and tougher all the time. I have heard the phrase, "We'd like to fund you, but we just can't see how you're different from so and so." I think a lot about how we are different, what we provide, how we function, the impact we make. Even when it doesn't get us any more money at least it makes me think it is important we remain.

My rap usually goes like this: "We are different because we are not cool, we don't have art parties, and we don't have dj's at our openings. We are art nerds. We are all about being able to talk about art, dwell on art, debate the value of art to humanity, and create art." I know there are lots of people who say that we need to create a social atmosphere to promote art openings and get people to our events. From what I see there are plenty of folks coming to openings here that want to dialogue with the artists and curators. I meet people at our events each month who are eager not to be in "a scene"; themselves not feeling cool enough, young enough or wealthy enough to fit in. They are serious about art and are looking for like-minded people. I think that I, myself fit that category.

The real question is whether or not we can survive with this model. Sure, it's great to espouse these ideals and proclaim ourselves outside the box, but we live in a world of convenience, and being able to define yourself within a box makes things easier for potential funders, the media

and patrons. We have to create our own little sound bite so we can be pigeonholed in the consciousness of the masses. "Art nerds" doesn't exactly do us justice but sometimes it is unusual enough to get the conversation started, and that conversation can eventually lead to support for DCAC. That's what we really need, conversations about who we are and why we should be supported; financially, spiritually and in the media.

I appreciate your support of DCAC and hope that when you have the chance to talk about what is different in Washington that our name comes up. I hope you will help us in our long and arduous task of staying alive. We are counting on you to keep the faith, and by your so doing, helping us keep up the good fight and walk the walk one more day.

**B Stanley,**  
Executive Director