
MINI GRANTS

ROUND ONE

p. 58

ROUND TWO

p. 62

ROUND THREE

p. 66

The Creative Recovery Mini-Grant program supported work produced at the intersection of art, social justice, and recovery in New Orleans. It fueled the recovery process with the energy of the local creative community by supporting the vibrant activity on the ground level. Mini-grants provided direct project support for the work of independent artists, unincorporated groups, gathering spaces, publications, and collectives active during the rebuilding of New Orleans. During the first round of the mini-grant program, more than eighty applications were received, and five grants were distributed in July 2008. During the second round, approximately forty-five applications were received, and five grants were distributed. In the third and final round, more than ninety applications were received, which led to the awarding of sixteen grants. (The granting fund for the third round was twice the size, hence the additional grantees.) In each round the applications were reviewed by a different panel made up of individuals with professional backgrounds in art history, community organizing, education, community development, urban planning, urban agriculture, real estate, and housing rights.

ROUND 1

2008 2009 2010

ONE YEAR

Review Board—

Jessica Cusack
Sam Durant
Rick Lowe

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A=AGHT

Jackie Sumell

This project created a semi-utopic virtual space/town whose rules, population, and culture were generated by marginalized youths from New Orleans and Tallaght in South Dublin County, Ireland. Adult facilitators and artists from both cities challenged the youths to explore historic moments, social grievances, and ethnic and racial disparities and encouraged them to solve identified concerns through creative projects. A=AGHT empowers young people with a virtual voice and practical skills as they construct solutions through film, video, photography, sculpture, and design. There were five kids from Ireland and five from New Orleans who participated in the physical exchange and ultimately developed the international social-networking site AEQUALSAGHT.ORG.

"I'm the kind of person who appreciates open, friendly, flexible, and informal arrangements in my work, and the Transforma grant was all of these things."



NINE TIMES 10TH ANNIVERSARY POSTER PROJECT

Abram Himelstein

The project met the intended goals of creating an installation about the Desire Development for the Nine Times Social and Pleasure Club's Tenth Anniversary parade. Three posters—one focused on the history of the club, one focused on the history of the Desire Development, and one focused on the rebuilding of the Upper Ninth Ward—were collaboratively created by the Neighborhood Story Project, Nine Times Social and Pleasure Club, and independent graphic designer Erik Kiesewetter. The screen-printed posters were stapled along the parade route, and as the five thousand parade participants passed through, people took down the posters as intended. A drive along the route after the parade found only six of the one thousand posters remaining. Many of the posters can now be found hanging on living room walls throughout the city.

"We definitely would not have been able to afford the quality materials that we used if not for the grant, and I believe that the response from the audience would not have been as positive."



O. C. HALEY COMMUNITY GARDEN

Kathia Duran

The Latino Farmers Co-op of Louisiana brought together artists and community farmers to develop the vision for an ecological mural at the O. C. Haley Community Garden. Participants agreed that the image should convey themes of peace, harmony with nature, food, history, and community identity among people of all colors. As a site of community-oriented programs for the Central City neighborhood, the garden was intended to provide access to educational and agricultural resources to encourage the production and consumption of healthy food. The process of creating the mural reinforced this goal. Twenty-five youths and adults engaged in the design process at the garden during six sessions while simultaneously learning about urban farming practice, nutrition, and diet.

"The Transforma mini-grant was instrumental in inspiring, engaging, and empowering Latino families. These efforts were and will continue to be crucial in integrating this emerging population into the 'new' New Orleans landscape."



OUR LIVES IN STORY

Eve Abrams

This project supported the five young New Orleans-based authors involved with the Neighborhood Story Project by recording each of them reading one of their stories. The purpose of these recordings was twofold: they provided experiences for these five young authors with microphones, elocution, and expressively reading in front of an unfamiliar audience. In other words, these recordings provided an opportunity for the authors to gain comfort with the readings that accompanied the release of their books. The secondary purpose of this project was to create a product that could be posted on websites and social media sites. These recordings captured the texture of the authors' voices, their cadences, and their word choices, all of which give a richness to their stories that is largely absent from the print versions.

"The only change I'd suggest for the mini-grant program is for more initial contact with other grantees. I wonder what sorts of collaboration might have flourished."



SANKOFA MARKETPLACE

Rashida Ferdinand

The launching of this market brought activity to the historic Lower Ninth Ward. The market, which continues to operate, is open from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. on the second Saturday of each month at the corner of Caffin and St. Claude Avenues. Visitors to the marketplace have access to health and wellness information, community rebuilding resources, a farmers' market with fresh produce, a crafts market, prepared food vendors, youth activities, and an exhibit on Lower Ninth Ward history and culture. This community-building initiative supports the neighborhood revitalization of the Lower Ninth Ward and is a significant catalyst to the community's economic development.

"The Transforma mini-grant provided the funding needed to initiate production of this grassroots project."



"The Transforma mini-grant certainly helped to get the ball rolling on this project, not only in financial terms but also in the encouragement and support provided by the opportunity to meet with and engage other artists working in the community."

— TRISTAN THOMPSON

ROUND 2

2008 2009 2010

ONE YEAR

Review Board—

Anne Gisleson
Leslie Lawrence
Rick Lowe
James Perry
Robert Ruello

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CORNERSTONE OF THE MONTH

Bethany Rogers

In the months after Hurricane Katrina, *Cornerstones: Celebrating the Everyday Monuments and Gathering Places of New Orleans' Neighborhoods* was published, showcasing seven social and cultural landmarks that helped revive the city. By creating a monthly print series, this project called to attention a selection of overlooked and threatened landmarks. Each month one site was selected, and two hundred collectible-quality postcards featuring site-specific photographs, quotations, architectural drawings, and maps were printed and distributed. This allowed the featured site to more dramatically showcase its inclusion in the place-promotion project and remain relevant and acknowledged during the city's rebuilding process. By documenting and advocating for the "unofficial" monuments of the city, *Cornerstones* was an outspoken advocate for the preservation of integral spaces that keep community environments and social networks intact.

"In total, around fifteen hundred people were able to take home a tangible mark of this project, and many more were introduced to unique histories, stories, architecture, and people of New Orleans."

Fall 2008 through Fall 2009



LIVING NEWSPAPER

Aminisha Ferdinand

Teens in New Orleans are most often discussed in print and television news in reference to crime or education. In the two-part residency program, the teens of All Souls Episcopal Church Community Center read multiple news stories from the *Times Picayune* and the *New York Times* that referenced their peers. They re-created the printed stories of success and violence, from their perspectives, through image theater, retelling the news through sound and gesture. In the second part of this project, third-graders at a Gentilly charter school explored how the images of younger children were used to sell the news. They re-created the print ads as living commercials, exaggerating the happiness of the children and the products that they were being used to sell.

"The convenings with the other grantees were definitely a large part of the success I felt with the Transforma mini-grant program."



NEW WORLD WAILING WALL

Cynthia Scott

This project was a sculptural installation sited on the vacant slab that was once the site of a family home in the flooded Gentilly Terrace neighborhood. The goals were threefold: to mark yet another empty spot to which a family had yet to return, to reanimate the partially repopulated community by providing an artistic and social focal point, and to help the community attract attention to its continuing struggle to recover. Made of twelve-foot-high plaster reinforcement panels scavenged from Katrina piles as a base, the sculpture incorporated hundreds of clear plastic strands that reflected sunlight by day and were illuminated by fiber optics at night. This referenced volumes of water. The neighborhood association enthusiastically supported the project as a means to draw attention to this forgotten corner of New Orleans.

"The Transforma mini-grant made the difference between solvency and my going into debt to complete the project."



PUPPET ARTS AT COLTON SCHOOL

Nina Nichols & Pandora Gastelum

As a series of performance-oriented workshops, this project fostered collaboration between us, as puppeteers and storytellers, and the youth of our community. Working with fifteen ninth-graders from Carver High School, we guided the group through a process of developing unique puppets that were assembled to form a Mardi Gras float. In the brainstorming workshop, the students settled on Obama's presidency as a theme. They became empowered by the freedom to express their frustrations about the former president, George Bush, and his treatment of the city during Hurricane Katrina. Our workshops included narrative development, paper sculpture, costume design, character development, vocal performance, puppet construction and operation, and physical theater. The puppets were created with found objects and recycled garbage, and the work was fully interactive. Our work offered a unique opportunity for a dialogue to occur between cultural perspectives in a format that transcends the limits of language.

"After the program was established and documented, it was awarded a grant from the Annenberg Foundation. The Transforma grant helped the group to grow and gain credibility. It gave us a foothold in the community."



STREETCAR SERENADE

Raymond "Moose" Jackson

This project was a historic and boundary-breaking gathering to celebrate and rethink the functions of our public spaces and services. Seven of New Orleans's finest spoken-word artists—including Lee-Meitzen Grue, Quess, Gina Ferrara, and Moose Jackson—performed their works on the St. Charles line, both at the stops and aboard the streetcar. The performances engaged other riders in a rolling narrative that examined our diverse neighborhoods, backgrounds, and approaches to recovery. These soulful works encouraged listeners to examine our process of rebuilding as well as the possibilities available for a social forum in our everyday lives. As other riders moved closer to become part of the poet's circle, community formed, hearts were lifted, and the journey became the destination.

"This culture is our lifeline, our salvation. It lives in the defiant celebrations, memorials, music, architecture, and supper-table soliloquies that make up our everyday life. It's what gives us the strength to struggle through our recovery, and we make it happen."



PHOTO by Cynthia Scott



2110 ROYAL STORIES

Joanna Russo

The stated goals of the workshop were to “promote social interaction, engage the imagination, and build confidence and listening skills,” and I believe that all these goals were met. 2110 Royal Stories provided a space for empathy and story sharing within what is sometimes a lonely living situation for elders, many isolated from friends and family. During each session, participants were encouraged to share stories related to a single theme. This encouraged friendship among participants, many of whom had not previously interacted. At the end of the residency, there was a celebration for our storytellers, during which residents shared stories with a broader community. The project encouraged the sharing of the memories of the elderly in a post-Katrina environment, which will foster a more coherent and thoughtful rebuilding of the city.

“Having the backing of an organization like NPN/Transforma was useful in adding legitimacy to the project. It helped to arouse the curiosity of other professionals in my field and made it more likely that additional granting organizations would take note.”



DOCUMENTARY WITH IBERVILLE BOYS/GIRLS CLUB

Lily Keber

In summer 2009 New Orleans VideoVoices partnered with the Iberville Boys and Girls Club to teach documentary filmmaking techniques to youths aged ten to fifteen. We assisted the participants in creating new films focused on issues important to the Iberville community. Through community interviews and ongoing discussions, the youth producers investigated what community strengths and concerns exist. At the end of the program we hosted a public screening and community discussion, encouraging parents, professionals, young people, and policy makers to come together to discuss issues presented in the film and to mobilize for action. In an era known for increased youth violence and decreased levels of opportunity, this project served as an important vehicle of empowerment, creative stimulation, and self-expression.

“Through the partnership with the Boys and Girls Club, we were able to encourage critical thinking and media literacy skills, and to bridge the technology gap often found between inner-city youth and their suburban counterparts.”



FIELD GUIDE FROM A WORK IN PROGRESS

Tristan Thompson

This project was designed to address the complex nature of the reconstruction of New Orleans by bringing together the collective energies and expertise of artists, writers, community activists, and engaged citizens. The publication serves as both a resource and an artistically engaging documentation of the renaissance of community-led initiatives since the storm. “Field Guide” spotlights the resilience and creativity of individuals and groups from across the city’s varied demographics who have filled the civic voids left in the wake of the levee failures—those who hand-painted street signs; who started or reopened businesses against all odds; who tend our parks, reforest our diminished urban canopy, clean our streets, lobby for stronger levees, and organize campaigns to counter crime and violence—as well as the artists and cultural institutions whose work helps people stay hopeful and engaged.

“The project is a positive reflection of the community’s efforts, advocating for the city’s continued rebuilding, acting as a resource for those outside the city, and presenting stories that might not otherwise be told.”

ROUND 3

2008 2009 2010

ONE YEAR

Review Board—

Johanna Gilligan
Miranda Lash
Asia Rainey
Paul Richard
Robert Ruello
Jerald White

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JAZZ HIP HOP ORCHESTRA

Angelamia Bachemin

Jazz Hip Hop Orchestra taught hand percussion instruments, songs, and jembe drums to New Orleans youths between the ages of three and thirteen. We convened at various sites throughout the city, such as the Sojourner Truth and River of Hope Centers, as well as community health fairs hosted by churches. We spread knowledge through our programs and also managed to stay in touch and in tune with the needs of our youth, many of whom are at risk due to limited resources. Through this work we were able to further our mission and to secure funding from Berklee College of Music in Boston and Project Rizing Sun to continue programming. We are currently teaching a summer music camp at Langston Hughes Academy with ReThink New Orleans.

"After the Transforma grant we were able to secure further support to keep this project going."



JUNEBUG JABBO JONES

Royce Osborn

The original proposal submitted was for a project titled *Junebug Jabbo Jones: Talkin' My Way Back Home*, and the plan was to produce a documentary on the artistic director of Junebug Productions, John O'Neal, and the evolution of the Free Southern Theater (FST) into Junebug. After interviews with O'Neal and others involved in FST and Junebug were shot, the project took a different turn. Producer Royce Osborn is currently involved in a production with Junebug titled *I Want My Money Back*, a multidisciplinary project that combines theater, video, dance, music, and visual arts. Osborn is working with Junebug to document the process of creating this work and will also create video installations as part of the project. Some of the footage will eventually be used in the original project (*Talkin' My Way Back Home*) to show John O'Neal's method as a producer-director of relevant social theater in New Orleans.

"The mini-grant program is especially helpful in getting projects off the ground. The 'first money' is always the hardest to secure, and the mini-grant program gives you a boost in getting the project started."

Summer 2009 through Summer 2010



LOUISIANA DRUMLINE CAMP

Terence L. Higgins

The principal objective of this project was to educate students and to preserve a long-standing drumming tradition in New Orleans. The mini-camp allowed the students to develop discipline and leadership through the hands-on learning of the fundamentals of drumming and also exposed them to contemporary drumming skills. The camp was staffed by a team of veteran drum instructors who donated their time and talent to ensure that the students received a high level of instruction and guidance. The students were enthusiastic about the camp, and their parents expressed extreme gratitude for the free program.

"Without this grant the project may not have become a reality since no other funding was secured."

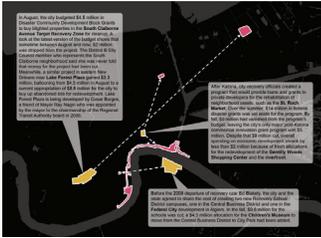


MARDI GRAS INDIAN HISTORY & BEAD SEWING

Ed Buckner

These workshops have brought together a supportive, inspiring, intergenerational community in which participants have shared and learned the knowledge of Mardi Gras Indian artistry and are now able to explore new possibilities for the art form. A core group of youth came out as Indians this past Mardi Gras in the suits they made during this project. During the first phase we conducted a daily summer session at the Porch, led by Collins "Coach" Lewis of Fi-Yi-Yi, for ages three through fifteen. In the second phase the program's most interested and dedicated youth participants continued working with Chief Jermaine of the Seventh Ward Creole Hunters. The participants became passionate about their suits, and the transformation of their energies is very apparent when it comes to their involvement in this tradition.

"We had about fifty youth involved, but the most dedicated sewers are the five young boys from the Porch's neighborhood."



OPEN WINDOW PROJECT

Ariella Cohen

The Open Window Project offered journalism mini-trainings for New Orleans grassroots organizations. The mini-trainings were geared toward members of Puentes and Neighborhood Partnership Network, two community-based organizations serving underrepresented groups. The goal was to teach young people in marginalized groups how to make their voices louder in the local public process. One outcome of the trainings was the discovery of a largely unused city grant intended for use by nonprofits doing citizen engagement training. After the story of the unused grant was published, the grant was extended, allowing Neighborhood Partnership Network to participate in the competitive bidding process tied to the grant money and make neighborhood voices heard in a discussion of engagement. In addition to this by-product, the trainings created a forum for information sharing and helped build media competency among community activists.

“The mini-grant program enabled us to get started on an initiative that was needed in the neighborhoods of New Orleans.”



OUR PRAYERS FOR THE CITY

Vanessa Adams

The Flags for the City youth silk-screen workshop involved students from Carver High School. We taught students the screen-filler technique inspired by paper cutting and the photo-emulsion technique with photocollage. We shared with students the work of a wide range of contemporary artists—from big-name artists like Kara Walker to lesser-known printmakers like Xander Marro. By working with students one-on-one, we were able to gradually expand upon their arsenal of techniques, images, and ideas to help them develop successful compositions for printmaking. Each student printed and sewed at least sixteen flags, all of which were displayed in the central walkway of the school like prayer flags. They were also exhibited at the Ashé Cultural Arts Center, the Sound Café, and the Contemporary Arts Center of New Orleans.

“We will continue to run a youth printing so that we can continue working with our six students. We are pursuing funding to pay them as teaching assistants so that they can help us train other youth in New Orleans.”



RECYCLED GLASS ARTS & JEWELRY

Yasmin Bowers

This project responded to the overwhelming amount of wasted glass and the termination of glass recycling in the City of New Orleans. In this project, glass was “up-cycled” into unique and environmentally friendly jewelry and accessories, diverting its life cycle from waste to commodity. YB Green, a trademarked brand of recycled jewelry and accessories, is a community effort, creating ownership in the process of collecting the glass in the Ninth Ward. The goal was to fill a gap in the post-Katrina recovery process by providing service, product, and recycling education. Materials were collected from local bars and at a monthly table in the Sankofa Marketplace, and products were sold at the Essence Festival and Green Festival and are available online and at local boutiques through the city.

“The project received subsequent funding through the Louisiana Cultural Economy Fund and the Good Work Network.”



SEVENTH WARD ARTIST RESIDENCY

Maria Hinds

This project was a multidisciplinary, multifaceted six-week-long, artist-in-residence program based in the Seventh Ward. It was a cross section of where art meets activism, answering a need in a community that has long been neglected and fallen prey to opportunistic developers and landlords. The residency invited international visual artists, writers, landscape architects, musicians, filmmakers, and photographers to work with youth and adult groups in the Seventh Ward to identify needs in the community and initiate creative resolutions. In the Seventh Ward we have a deep need to inform and equip community members with the means to address and discuss social issues that immediately affect our psyches, particularly in relation to disenfranchisement, violence, opportunistic development, education, and health and particularly in the wake of Katrina.

“We collaborated with local children, schools, community organizations, and businesses to produce meaningful and engaging works.”

**SIGN UP**

Rondell Crier

After Katrina there was a great need for creative support in the recovery process in New Orleans, especially in areas of youth empowerment and community development. The overall goal of the project was to support neighborhood recovery by utilizing art to strengthen local businesses and empower young people. Signs were designed and built by young artists for local businesses such as Liberty's Kitchen and Alpha Coffee Shop. We accomplished the intended goals: to provide visual arts training for the local youth participants, to create signs for small businesses that were in need, and to provide opportunities for young people to develop a sense of serving as contributors to their neighborhoods.

"It's great that Transforma supports smaller grassroots projects that may not be eligible for traditional funding sources, and without the mini-grant it would have been very difficult to realize this project."

**STORYPOD**

Emilie Taylor

One goal of this project was to challenge young designers to develop a greater social awareness and to become better designers through community interaction and involvement. Throughout the process the students interacted with the community client, the Neighborhood Story Project, while creating a design solution in a studio environment. The final product, located at the NSP's storefront office and classroom space, is a series of storage boxes configured in a way that is both functional (as storage that partitions off an interview space) and sculptural. The community partner has expressed gratitude and delight in the project. Their feedback, ideas, and criticism were crucial to the design process, and the students responded positively and proactively to the real-world interaction.

"Transforma's program has been a delight to work with, especially compared with other grants I have applied for."

Summer 2009 through Summer 2010

**STRETCHING SKY ARTS LABORATORY**

Hao-Peng Liao

The workshop was led by instructors from the New Orleans Noisician Coalition, all of whom were interested in exploring new mediums for noisemaking devices, and Peter Spring, who earned a living on the craft show circuit as a flute maker. With a mix of students from Frederick Douglass High School and community members, we made a gamut of horn instruments using the extruder method. We began with short, straight flutes, in which the concerns resided in diameter-to-length ratio (to obtain a wider sound range), smoothness of the interior walls (to optimize the resonance), and mouthpiece shape (to induce enough air pressure). Later in the workshop we explored more creative forms and made pieces in the mold of Swiss alpine horns, multiple-pipe forms recalling abstracted back pipes, and large pieces resembling didgeridoos.

"I thank Transforma for being patient with me throughout the granting process."

**WHAT MY NEIGHBORHOOD MEANS TO ME**

Ariya Martin

The New Orleans Kid Camera Project facilitated a series of workshops designed for young people to explore the self-posed question "What does my neighborhood mean to me?" Students learned the technical aspects of photography while simultaneously considering the role and impact that art can have in a community. As the participants learned how to be visual storytellers, they were documenting their impressions of the neighborhood, focusing on what makes them proud and what they would like to change. To supplement the photographs, the students created biographies with text and imagery to express what they think about themselves and articulate what they imagine for their futures. The images were shared with family and community at a final exhibition and reception.

"What Transforma provides is extremely significant to the community in which these projects are realized."



WORDPLAY NEW ORLEANS

Valerie McMillan

WordCamp was a free two-week boot-camp-style poetry project sponsored by WordPlay New Orleans. The program taught the craft of spoken-word poetry (poetry that is written primarily for performance) to teens and provided multiple forums for youth to practice the art form in community with one another. Participants, referred to as WordCampers, networked with their mentor writers, local artists, and other youth to share their work and better their craft. They worked with spoken-word veterans to learn how to host, maintain, promote, and produce an “open mic” show. WordCampers promoted and produced their own event, called Comeunity Poetry Cyper, which was held at the Craige Cultural Center. The final event was a success, as evidenced by the packed house. This was symbolic of the overall success of the WordCamp.

“With Transforma funding we were able to provide honoraria to the mentor writers, allowing them more time to teach.”

Summer 2009 through Summer 2010

“It was a small boost that made a huge difference.”

— NINA NICHOLS



TOP Storypod design review at Neighborhood Story Project. Courtesy of Storypod Project.

RIGHT Open mic produced by WordCampers. Courtesy of WordPlay New Orleans.

FAR RIGHT Student photograph. Courtesy of the New Orleans Kid Camera Project.

