

**HARNESSING THE POWER
OF FEMINIST ARTS
ORGANIZATIONS**



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INTRODUCTION

Who tells the story matters. Whether it is a written narrative, spoken word... film... a painting, a blog or a photo, it is important that all people get to speak for themselves and tell their stories. This is particularly true for people who are often silenced and excluded from public forums... Telling one's own story changes a person and a community in ways that support larger social change by building agency as well as both individual and collective power

“Envisioning Change through Art: Funding Feminist Artists for Social Change”, March 2018, Society for Int'l Development, 2018, Vanina Serra, Monica Enriquez Enriquez, Ruby Johnson

“Movement times” are back. They build on a powerful legacy from the second wave feminist movement of the 1970s and on civil rights, anti-war and anti-poverty movements of the 1960s. The millions of people who came out for the Women's Marches, the thousands of revelations fueling the *Time's Up* and *MeToo* initiatives, the most inclusive and diverse crop of candidates for the U.S. House and Senate that ever contested for elections, and other movements focusing on environmental sustainability, immigrants' rights, gun control and other social justice issues all create a climate for change. And a climate for backlash: The confirmation of Supreme Court Justice Kavanaugh despite sexual harassment allegations; increases in hate crimes fueled by racism, homophobia, xenophobia and anti-Semitism; the threats to women's reproductive rights; and the vengeful climate surrounding immigrants and refugees all converge to create real threats for justice and equality.

The arts can play a formative and influential role in both sustaining the wave of interest in social justice currently sweeping this country and in countering backlash. For this to happen, however, the art world has to confront its own entrenched intersectional discrimination. Numbers tell part of the story: Less than 4 percent of artists in the Modern Art section of New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art are women (but 76 percent of the nudes are female²). Of the top 100 individual works sold between 2011 and 2016, only two were by women artists.

As Stacey Smith of the University of Southern California's Media, Diversity and Social Change Initiative finds, the situation for people of color—and, especially women of color—is far worse: “of the 1,000 highest-grossing movies between 2007 and 2016, four percent of directors were women, five percent were black, and three percent were Asian. Further, while the women helming feature films tend to be in a relatively narrow age bracket, the span of ... males' [careers] appears to be limitless.”³ Of 43 female directors who made movies between 2007 and 2017, four have been black, two Asian and one Hispanic. And for those who think the arts and media worlds are on an upward trajectory when it comes to gender equity, here's a sobering statistic: Women accounted for 8 percent of movie directors in 2018, down 3 percentage points from 11 percent in 2017. All of this is compounded by who shapes our thinking about what is valuable: men write 80 percent of the film reviews in the U.S.

Cracks in the glass and celluloid ceilings have occurred, in part, because of the solidarity and support women artists and women's arts organizations have offered each other. Over the last 40 years, tens of thousands of women visual artists⁴ have been supported by feminist arts organizations. These organizations provide a space for the creation and exhibition of feminist art and film, for peer support, showcasing, marketing, building skills and for challenging the dominant narrative produced by (until very recently) the mainstream art establishment, commandeered, largely, by elite white men. They have catalyzed and nurtured generations of women artists to create images that help us see the world in a different and more inclusive way.

In 2017, four women's organizations focused on media and visual arts — Women's Studio Workshop (WSW), Women Make Movies (WMM), New York Women in Film and Television (NYWIFT) and the Center for Women and Their Work (CW&TW) —joined together to revisit and document their history and value as a way of learning from each other and envisioning ways to meet the opportunities and challenges of the future. Each organization was founded as part of the second wave feminist movement in the 1970s and is unique in having survived, transformed and thrived for more than 40 years. Their programs and services respond to strategic opportunities and constituency demands. They adapt their business models and technology as they mature and as factors in the external environment change. They build inclusive and expansive constituencies of women artists and artistic expression. They are living archives of women's artistic production over the last 40 years. Drawing on their experience and hard-earned wisdom, they have a great deal to teach arts organizations and feminist organizations about how to grow and sustain themselves over decades.

The four organizations joined together over a 18-month period to engage in collective reflection on the question: **What will it take to adapt to and cultivate the next generation of arts leadership to address current issues of inequality for women in the arts?** The organizations gathered three times over the grant period to:

- Explore issues specific to women-led art spaces
- Exchange and honor the history and heritage of the founders and the organizations
- Produce learning and findings for dissemination to peers throughout the field in the form of reports, publications, panel discussions, etc.

At the first gathering, the groups formulated a second question that they hoped to explore together: **How might we project our 40 years of knowledge from a collective, inclusive perspective to inspire, redefine, and communicate the women's art movement in ways that expand impact, bust silos and generate sustainability and thriveability?**

The feminist art that emerged in the 1970s, constituted an encounter between the fields of art, social activism, and intellectual and political thinking...influenced by the feminist movement. The conjunction led to the emergence of an art and theory whose ramifications left their clear stamp on the lives of women throughout the world.

² Brooks, Huff Post, 11/20/2015

³ SLATE, David Canfield, Feb 1, 2017, “A New Study Says that While Awareness of Hollywood's Diversity Problem is Increasing, Opportunity is Not.”

⁴ Visual arts include drawing, painting, sculpture, printmaking, ceramics, photography, film, video, crafts, design and architecture

This report highlights key insights and outcomes that emerged for these groups during the three meetings and through other interaction and communication. The report synthesizes:

I. PREAMBLE: THE PROCESS AND THE VALUE OF COLLECTIVE SPACE: The process we used to enable these organizations to engage in the kind of reflection conveyed in this report and the value of that collective reflection to each group;

II. WHAT IS A WOMEN'S ARTS ORGANIZATION? What defines and differentiates women's arts organizations? The four organizations generally agreed on five characteristics

III. ADAPTATION TO A CHANGING LANDSCAPE: Ideas that emerged about how these four groups—collectively and individually—adapted to the changing landscape over 40 years to address inequities faced by women artists and enable their views and visions of a more equitable world to emerge;

IV. CHALLENGES FACING WOMEN'S ARTS ORGANIZATIONS: THE OTHER SIDE OF THE STORY: What will it take to adapt to and cultivate the next generation of arts leadership to address current issues of inequality for women in the arts?

V. THE SECRET SAUCE: WHAT MAKES THRIVEABILITY POSSIBLE? Recommendations for further strengthening these organizations and the multitude of other organizations also committed to opening space for intersectional, equitable and feminist artists to speak their truths.

VI. NEXT STEPS: STOKING SUCCESS FOR THE NEXT 40 YEARS: The convening process enabled these organizations, individually and together, to reflect and begin to develop a larger vision for the power and impact of women's arts organizations in the coming years.

VI. CONCLUSION: At the final convening, participants highlighted the value of this process and the ways it helped them learn, reflect and focus on avenues to systemic change.

These four organizations estimate that they have reached and assisted more than 30,000 women artists. Would we have a #Time'sUp or #MeToo movement if women's arts organizations had not made it possible for a critical mass of women to work as artists and speak their truth? The attention currently being paid to the issues and injustices that women in media and the arts have faced is due in part to the groundwork laid by organizations like these over 40 years.

We are demanding a shift in systems because a culture of abuse and harassment is inextricably linked to (media) content that perpetuates patriarchy and white supremacy. ...toxic masculinity is destroying our communities and our country... We work in the space of culture, and therefore we work in the space of the imagination. We must think big about how we can help build a culture in which white men are not perpetuating structures of power that exclude, dominate and harm. (Manifesto of 50/50 by 2020)

I. PREAMBLE: THE PROCESS AND THE VALUE OF REFLECTIVE SPACE

We held three convenings (February, June and November 2018) aimed at assisting the leadership—both board and staff—to reflect on: 1) the major strategies and decisions that helped them survive for 40 years and 2) what is needed to nurture the next generation of leaders of women's arts organizations and movements. Three-day workshops and follow-up communications were designed by the consultant team: Sara Gould, Idelisse Malavé and Joanne Sandler.

While the consultants designed the process, the executive directors were at the helm of the initiative, making all of the key decisions about the process. Each organization sent at least three people to each convening, including at least one Board member and one staff member.

The face-to-face gatherings were designed to enable exchange, analysis and reflection through participatory, appreciative, and emergent exercises and discussions. The first convening focused on deepening understanding about all four organizations and on clarifying the framing questions for exploration. The second workshop focused on identifying the “secret sauce” that each organization understood as determinant in its ability to survive and thrive. The third workshop zeroed in on the kinds of collective initiatives these four organizations could advance together to build on the insights developed through their time together.

One of the priorities for the EDs was to bring back the insights and excitement generated by the workshops to their staff and Boards of Directors. Consultants circulated syntheses of notes from each workshop to enable this. Additionally, we held a one-week on-line discussion—*What is a Woman's Arts Organization?*—that was open to all Board and staff members of the organizations.

Our participatory evaluation at the last convening affirmed that the process:

- Enabled each organization to imagine a larger impact for itself;
- Pushed participants to be specific about the kinds of impact they could have through joint action;
- Deepened participants' connection to their work as part of a larger feminist project;
- Facilitated organizations to articulate and exchange the “secret sauce” of their strategies, success and survival over the past 40 years, and their needs to remain viable and thriving into the future;
- Offered highly-valued and rarely available space for reflection and learning, including the opportunity to appreciate what each organization had achieved and the potential value of learning from others on a regular basis.

II. WHAT IS A WOMEN'S ARTS ORGANIZATION?

What defines and differentiates women's arts organizations? The four organizations generally agreed on six characteristics:

1. Their work **emerges from a gender and feminist analysis of the systems that limit opportunities and options for women artists**. It focuses specifically on breaking down structural barriers that prevent women from lifting their voices and expressing their views. Whether they are operating in the worlds of film and television (NYWIFT and WMM), art galleries and exhibitions (CW&TW) or artist books and artists' residencies (WSW), each of these four organizations engages in a dynamic and continuous analysis of their sector and develops programs and areas of support to challenge and change gender and intersectional discrimination in the arts.
2. **They put women artists at the center of their work** and create spaces where women artists are in charge of their own vision. For instance, the Center for Women & Their Work *"gives up a certain amount of our curatorial agency to best support the artist and her vision, rather than molding group shows that support the organization's vision. This is a feminist model...but one that isn't particularly visible."*
3. They **take an intersectional approach**, recognizing how multiple forms of discrimination make it more difficult for different communities of women. All of the four organizations are intentional about reaching out to under-represented communities, including women of color, women with disabilities, and others.
4. They make space for **a multitude of expressions and avoid a "feminist litmus test"**. They avoid rigid definitions of what it means for an artist to advance gender equality and women's rights. For example, NYWIFT pointed out, *"we are a feminist group and say so in public, but we are about helping all women in film, television and digital media, not just members and not just feminists."*
5. They provide a platform and a **model of what it looks like for women to take power individually and together**. Interviews with artists who have benefitted from the services of all four organizations highlighted this as a key benefit. Prior to her recent passing, Carolee Schneeman—an artist who works closely with WSW— noted, *"Women's aesthetic contribution was hugely undervalued. Yet, with women's collaborative energies (at WSW), the work flourished and we began to gather support in ways not possible before."*
6. **They prioritize increasing the economic resilience of the artists** they engage and their communities. Each group is acutely aware of the way that exclusion and discrimination have impacted their own revenues, as well as the incomes of the artists they serve. WMM, for example, has generated \$2.5 million in royalties for filmmakers in the past five years and sponsored 275 film productions that received more than \$6 million in 2017.

The four participating organizations reflect important similarities and differences that inform us about what it takes to make an impact and thrive in a patriarchal system. The chart below provides a quick overview of some of these similarities and differences.

A male filmmaker pitched his idea for a film on acid burnings in Pakistan to WMM. When they said they support women filmmakers, he brought on a Pakistani woman to be co-director. She became the first woman to get an Academy Award for Pakistan. It started her career.

	CENTER FOR WOMEN & THEIR WORK	NEW YORK WOMEN IN FILM & TV	WOMEN MAKE MOVIES	WOMEN'S STUDIO WORKSHOP
Year founded	1978	1977	1972	1974
Founders	Rita Starpattern, Carol Taylor, Deanna Stevenson	Lenore DeKoven and Morna Murphy-Mortell	Ariel Dougherty and Sheila Paige	Ann Kalmbach, Tatana Kellner, Anita Wetzel, Barbara Leoff Burge
Current Executive Director	Chris Cowden	Cynthia Lopez + Terry Lawler ⁵	Debra Zimmerman	Lauren Walling
Types of artists they serve	Women visual artists at all stages of their careers	Film, television, and digital media professionals	Film and multi/interactive media artists	Visual artists at all stages of their careers, working in print, paper, book arts, and ceramics.
Types of support they offer	CW&TW offers solo exhibition opportunities including a curatorial advisor, a commissioned critical essay published in a four-color catalog, and a video featuring the artist's work. We provide fiscal sponsorship and technical expertise to artists.	NYWIFT inspires women in the moving image industry by illuminating their achievements, training and professional development programs, awarding scholarships and grants, and providing networking opportunities to foster a supportive community of peers.	WMM is a pioneering social enterprise that offers professional development, fiscal sponsorship, and industry expertise to a diverse array of female directors, producers, and storytellers. WMM also offers distribution services to open financial pathways for filmmakers.	WSW offers an integrated residency experience through which AIRs receive extensive studio support and economic opportunities through teaching, residency grants, internships, and book sales. Also, WSW maintains a robust artist book selling program with nine repositories and sales to over 250 schools nationwide.
Estimate of #s of artists they've served over 40 years	1,905	20,000	7,500	846
Source of funds (%)	39% from earned income; 61% contributed	67% from earned income; 33% contributed	92% from earned income; 8% contributed	42% from earned income; 58% contributed
Year/highest budget	FY 18: \$906,400	FY 18 - \$1.1 million	FY 15 \$1.8 million	FY19 \$1.066 million
Year/lowest budget	FY 78: \$18,224	FY 78 - unknown	FY 74 \$22,354	FY74 \$2,800
Annual budget 2017	\$725,000	\$1.052 million	\$1.522 million	\$1.066 million

⁵ Terry Lawler was the ED for 21 years and, in December 2018, handed over leadership to Cynthia Lopez

III. ADAPTATION TO A CHANGING LANDSCAPE

Over the past 40 years, women's arts organizations have created fertile ground for a renewed wave of awareness and action to expose gender discrimination in the arts. They have contributed to change at three levels: at the **micro level, for the individual women artists** they serve; at the **meso level, by building strong organizations**, aligning with relevant feminist, arts and other organizations, and encouraging mainstream arts organizations to change; and at the **macro level, by identifying gender and intersectional discriminatory practices** and offering both a critique and alternatives. In each convening, and in the intervening months of sharing strategies, achievements and insights informally, the participants identified the kinds of changes they have achieved at micro, meso and macro levels:

CHANGES AT A MICRO LEVEL: WOMEN ARTISTS AT THE CENTER

For 40 years, the unifying element across organizations has been their clear and unswerving focus on the priorities and needs of women artists as the driving force behind their work and strategies. Their work has garnered recognition and generated many "firsts" for women artists; it has catalyzed greater financial resources and economic resilience for women artists; and it has generated a sense of belonging and collective power, especially for women artists from historically excluded groups.

- **Garnering recognition, building legacies and generating "firsts" for women:** Each of the organizations can point to numerous ways their efforts have led to breakthrough opportunities for women artists. Whether it is CW&TW giving artists their first gallery exhibition, WSW helping women to create their first artists' book, or WMM and NYWIFT supporting first-time women media makers, each organization opens doors that were previously closed. They offer resources that enable women to excel in their artistic fields and advocate for recognition of women artists by the mainstream, as well as create their own awards and prizes. This impacts both the individual and the collective: when one woman artist cracks the glass or celluloid ceiling, it makes it possible for others to follow.

For instance, women-made films supported by WMM have won or been nominated for Academy Awards for 11 of the past 12 years. In 1980, WMM supported Julie Dash to distribute *Daughters of the Dust*, which became the first theatrically released film by an African American woman director. More than 30 years later, WMM was a fiscal sponsor for Dee Rees' first short film, which was then made into a feature film. Dee went on to make *Mudbound* and became the first African American woman nominated for an Academy Award in scriptwriting. The film also received an Academy Award for cinematography for Rachel Morrison, the first woman to win in that category.

Importantly, these organizations also create their own awards as a strategy to bring greater visibility to women in media and arts and also to link successful media makers with aspiring ones. NYWIFT created the MUSE awards, an annual gala luncheon to celebrate the vision and achievements of women who work in the entertainment industry. Each year, remarkable and accomplished women are honored with this prestigious award. Past honorees include Abigail Disney, Barbara Kopple, Ellen Burstyn, Ellen Kuras, Mable Haddock, Kristi Zea, Sheila Nevins, Mira Nair, Christine Vachon, Thelma Schoonmaker, Pauline Kael, Sarah Jessica Parker, Laura Dern, Gabourey Sidibe, Victoria Alonso, Dawn Ostroff, and Robin Wright.

- **Money for women artists:** All four organizations focus on generating money for the women artists they work with and on advocating for pay equity policies to benefit all women artists. CW&TW offers substantial support for solo exhibitions—including a curatorial advisor, a critical essay, a color catalog, and a seven minute professionally produced video—to help individual visual artists take their work to the next level and to the market. By creating residencies, teaching opportunities and markets for women-made artists' books, WSW has generated money for women artists annually for 40 years. WMM has generated more than \$2.5 million in royalties for women filmmakers over the past five years. NYWIFT is addressing issues of pay equity within the entertainment industry, in front of and behind the cameras. It is hosting an upcoming 2019 NYWIFT Women's Summit which will convene industry professionals, governmental officials, and advocates to spotlight forward-moving strategies with an eye towards mobilizing support and leadership on this issue for the future.

Creating options and opportunities for traditionally excluded women artists: Taking an intersectional approach is common to all of these organizations. Their exhibitions, convenings, capacity building and distribution services have made specific efforts to be inclusive and diverse. As Crystal Emery, a member of NYWIFT, points out: *"It's very lonely being a woman filmmaker, a black woman filmmaker and a filmmaker who is quadriplegic. From the first time I met NYWIFT, doors opened. My first film was The Deadliest Disease in America. We did our first screening at NYWIFT. It is a community. To enter that community as a colleague and to get support is a miracle."*

CHANGES AT MESO LEVEL: WOMEN'S AND MAINSTREAM ARTS ORGANIZATIONS

These four organizations blend feminist and social venture approaches, generate economic resources for their communities, demonstrate innovative approaches to surviving and thriving, and influence mainstream organizations to expand opportunities for women artists.

- **Expanded notions of feminist and social venture organizations:** Founded by small groups of women in the 1970s, each of these organizations moved on to professionalize and appoint an executive director. Their recognition as "go-to" organizations in their sectors has expanded over the years. WSW is the largest publisher of women's artists' books in the U.S.; WMM is the largest distributor of films by and about women in the world, with a collection that grew from about 40 films in the 1980s to more than 700 films currently.

CW&TW has presented more than 1900 women artists in gallery shows since its establishment and been voted "Best Gallery in Austin" by readers of the Austin Chronicle 9 times since 2001; NYWIFT's membership of 2,000 film professionals and outreach to more than 20,000 others involved in film in NY City creates unique opportunities to keep gender equality visible in the industry.

Importantly, this year of reflection revealed that all four organizations are under-recognized as flourishing social ventures with expertise in blending arts and "activism," feminist organizing and revenue generation. Their earned income percentages range from 92 percent (WMM) to 79 percent (NYWIFT), 42 percent (WSW) and 23 percent (CW&TW). WMM, WSW and CW&TW also incorporate real estate in different ways. WSW has significant assets in their four buildings now valued at \$1.7 million. WMM put its more than 20 years of experience in the New York City real estate market to use, significantly defraying its rent and facilities costs by renting space to others. CW&TW is

in contract to purchase a 15,000 square foot building in Austin that will make possible exhibition and studio space for dozens of artists and meeting space for many Austin art organizations.

- **Generating economic opportunities for constituencies and communities:** While all of the organizations focus on increasing the earnings that individual artists receive for their work (see above), their economic contributions extend far beyond this. WSW, for example, calculates that it generates \$2.5 million annually for the local economy by bringing artists in for residencies, shows and events, as well as through its real estate holdings and cultural tourism.

- **Influencing mainstream organizations to create space for women artists:** Each of these organizations engages in different types of advocacy to ensure that power brokers and gatekeepers expand opportunities for women’s art. WSW is tireless in its efforts to make sure that women’s artists’ books are included in permanent collections, and currently has nine repositories (from the Library of Congress to the New York Public Library) and sells to 250 schools. NYWIFT’s one-of-a kind event called *Designing Women* honors women in hair, makeup and costume design in film, in an effort to change how the industry values these positions. Women Make Movies partners with mainstream institutions around the world to increase visibility of women media makers: for instance, for its 40th anniversary, WMM partnered with the Museum of Modern Art in New York City to honor groundbreaking women filmmakers, prioritizing the films of women of color whose achievements have been under-recognized.

CHANGES AT MACRO-LEVEL: TOPPLING THE PATRIARCHY

The impact of these four organizations extends far beyond their ability to keep their doors open and provide support to individual women artists. They intentionally contribute to efforts to **challenge and transform** intersectional and gender discrimination in the systems that determine how women artists and their representations are valued. They use feminist and social justice principles to uncover and chip away at gender discriminatory norms and practices. Each organization does this in unique and innovative ways, sometimes focusing on the arts sector, while also using art and media to influence the larger culture and social norms. For example:

- NYWIFT, the pre-eminent entertainment industry association for women in NYC, intentionally nurtures an Old Girls Network, building its power as an inclusive and diverse voice in the industry. Through its membership, it has “insider” access and a pulpit that many social justice organizations working to influence popular culture dream about. From this base, it can advocate for policies like pay equity, *50/50 by 2020* and other industry-wide changes.
- WMM’s influence in both the arts and social justice communities enables it to attack intersectional injustices in many ways. Its support is central to exposing greater numbers of women to important film festivals and pitching opportunities. The breadth of social justice issues addressed in its formidable collection of documentaries positions it as a key influencer. One of its most compelling examples is its distribution of Lisa Jackson’s *The Greatest Silence*, about rape of women in the Democratic Republic of Congo. In 2008, feminist organizations were advocating with United Nations Security Council members to agree to a resolution recognizing rape as a tactic of war and a punishable war crime. The U.S. Ambassador’s agreement was central. After seeing *The Greatest Silence*, he agreed to participate in a preliminary meeting, and was then instrumental in securing passage of UN Security Council resolution 1820

on addressing sexual violence in situations of war and armed conflict.

- WSW, the largest publisher of artists’ books in America, have publications available in over 300 university and college libraries and special collections. Last year alone, 60 percent of the books WSW published addressed issues of sex and gender discrimination, immigration and prison reform.

IV. CHALLENGES FACING WOMEN’S ARTS ORGANIZATIONS: THE OTHER SIDE OF THE STORY

The cracks in the glass and celluloid ceilings are, mostly, on the surface. While we hear a lot about *#MeToo*, and both gender and race critiques of institutions like the Motion Picture Academy or major museums, change is happening slowly. U.S. film festivals, for instance, show 16 narrative feature films made by men for every six that have at least one woman director.⁶

As resourceful, impactful and successful as these organizations have been, they face significant systemic barriers to their growth and impact. As in every field, organizations focused on women and girls receive far fewer resources and enjoy less access to decision-making, influence and sustainability than their counterparts without a gender-equality focus. Take, for instance, the total of arts and culture grants from a group of 1000 foundations below:

Arts and Culture Grants for Women and Girls, 2012-2016				
Year	Women & Girls		Arts & Culture Total	
	Dollar Amount	No. of Grants	Dollar Amount	No. of Grants
2012	26,159,081	199	2,346,013,730	20,669
2013	13,828,023	178	2,371,798,391	20,553
2014	22,325,573	194	2,499,692,882	18,939
2015	24,182,349	263	2,841,164,657	21,244
2016	15,647,415	194	2,930,900,774	20,036

Source: Foundation Center by Candid, 2019. Based on all grants of \$10,000 or more awarded by the FC 1000 – a set of 1,000 of the largest U.S. private and community foundations by giving. For community foundations, discretionary grants are included and donor-advised grants when provided by the foundation. Grants to U.S.-based private and community foundations are excluded to avoid double-counting grant dollars awarded. Grants to individuals are not included in the sample.
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Note that the dollar amount of grants in Arts and Culture total goes up every year from 2012 to 2016, while the dollar amount of grants to women and girls/arts and culture goes down from a high of \$26M in 2012 to the second-lowest year in 2016 (\$15.5M).

⁶ Center for the Study of Women in Film and Television, 2018

Additionally:

- In 2016, the dollar amount of grants to women and girls/arts and culture is 5.3 percent of the dollar amount of all arts and culture grants, down from 8.5 percent the year before. In 2012, the percentage was 11 percent.
- The number of grants to women and girls/arts and culture is about 1 percent of all grants given in arts and culture (the highest percentage is 1.2 percent).
- Both the dollar amount and the number of grants drop dramatically from 2015 to 2016.

Our work with these organizations generated particular insights about three categories of challenge that could be remedied by increased philanthropic investments. These are challenges that cross their organizational differences and could be worked on together, and could mobilize other organizations serving women artists to join. Given the importance of popular culture in influencing hearts and minds, investing in these areas is a strategic path to nurturing equity and inclusion more broadly.

1. Organizational capacity, learning and a dearth of research and data on

impact: Unlike many other non-profits, these organizations rarely receive the kind of core funding or other support that enables them to invest in longer term reflection, evaluation, research and data collection in their fields. They constantly re-invest funds in the technology, services and marketing that women artists need. This severely restricts their ability to gather evidence of their long-term impact.

The case for increasing core support and strengthening their knowledge-building capacity is strong. Tens of thousands of artists have passed through their doorways. These women artists are a key source of information and insight for strengthening the work of these organizations, helping them to better understand and claim their influence and impact, while pointing the way toward a more nuanced and targeted set of programs to reach and serve women still excluded.

Additionally, studying the inclusive and diverse group of women artists reached by these organizations would yield a detailed knowledge base about their aspirations and career paths, as well as the obstacles they have faced. As noted in an article in *HyperAllergic* (2018) about challenges for women of color artists, “The only way to begin to solve a problem is to have a clear handle on its scale. We have compelling evidence, both anecdotal and statistical, demonstrating that women working in the visual arts face discrimination and inequities while trying to forge a career as an artist. What we don’t have is a comprehensive, data-driven exploration of how race and ethnicity intersect with gender in the arts⁷.”

2. The opportunity to create a unified voice and collective impact: We learned that there are many similarities across visual arts and media sectors in the challenges and opportunities that women artists and women’s arts organizations face. Yet, there remains a dearth of spaces in which they convene across sectors to analyze, organize and advocate for change. Expanding the opportunities for women’s arts organizations to explore and share ways to build their sustainability while advocating for systemic change in the visual and media arts emerged as an important and powerful pathway to a more impactful future.

*We don’t make films,
we make filmmakers.
We don’t make art, we
make artists. Artists
who change the world
and create new role
models for future
generations.*

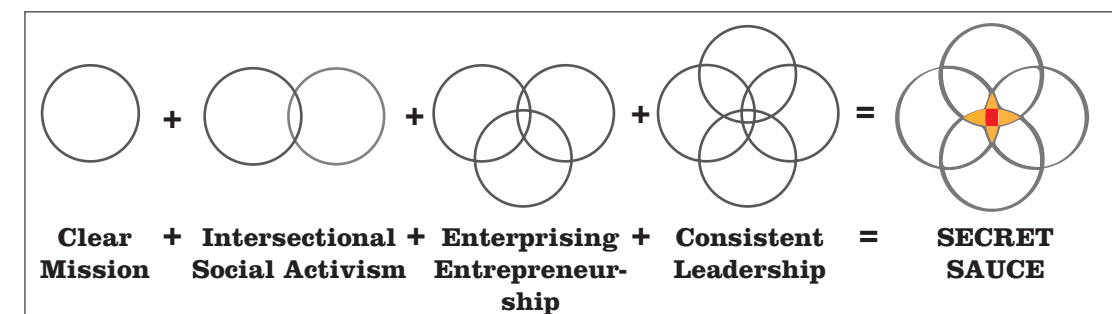
Developing a unified voice that includes and extends beyond these four organizations, and includes many other women’s arts groups, offers many potential benefits. It would enable women’s arts organizations to demand the types of standards and accountability currently lacking in the arts and entertainment fields. “Voluntary’ pledges, such as the inclusion riders⁸ in the film industry, do exist. But changing industry standards and regularly tracking and publishing progress of major arts institutions—while pressuring/supporting the laggards to do better—remain a somewhat haphazard effort. A unified voice from an inclusive and diverse coalition of women’s arts organizations could be highly influential in bringing about more systemic and sustained change.

3. Under-capitalization/the need for working capital: While these organizations generate flexible resources through earned income, the fluctuations in income and markets create challenges for staffing, growth and the sustainability of their services. There is rarely capital for investing in larger, long-term growth initiatives. What also suffers, in many cases, is financial security for staff. This comes with a high cost to individuals. Only one of the organizations, for example, offers pension plans for its staff. Too often, this leads to staff needing to choose between their own financial sustainability and their career passions. The organizations also run the danger of needing to find staff with family or other resources, running in direct contradiction to their commitment to inclusion. As one participant noted, “People are making personal sacrifices to work in our organizations, which were built on the backs of the founders in the 70s. How do we make sure we resource ourselves?”

This process provided an opportunity for staff and board members from these four organizations to envision the kinds of actions they could take together to address these challenges. Section V of this report synthesizes their ideas.

V. THE SECRET SAUCE: WHAT MAKES THRIVEABILITY POSSIBLE?

One of the key framing questions for this initiative was: What will it take to adapt to and cultivate the next generation of arts leadership to address current issues of inequality for women in the arts? This section synthesizes the “how” of the survival and growth of these four organizations. In the context of 40 years of change and challenge, each organization has continuously, and skillfully, adjusted their programs, revenue models, and capacities to meet the opportunities and challenges presented in the moment. The ingredients that served them best need to be cultivated to grow the next generation of arts leadership committed to addressing inequality for women in the arts. Participants identified four cross-cutting elements of their “secret sauce”:



⁷ Amy Mannarino and Mara Kurlandsky, “What the Data Tells Us about the Challenges Facing Female Artists of Color” *HyperAllergic*, March 1, 2018

⁸ Inclusion Riders are a stipulation that actors and actresses can ask (or demand) to have inserted into their contracts, which would require a certain level of diversity among a film’s cast and crew.

INGREDIENT 1: Clarity of mission: women artists at the center

The four organizations are remarkably clear about why they exist: to advance the stories, aesthetics, power and profile of women artists. They work in close collaboration with their communities, re-invest in their core business, receive constant feedback, and adjust accordingly. Their mix of programs and support services has changed over the years, in direct response to the needs and interests of their constituency and the opportunities in their sectors. For instance, WMM started in 1972 as a community-based organization to empower local women in Chelsea (NYC) to make films about their own lives. As more women gained skills and became directors and producers, WMM transformed its services so that by the beginning of the 1980's, it had moved to distribution and finding audiences for films by and about women.

INGREDIENT 2: Linking to intersectional, inclusive, feminist and historic struggles for women's rights and gender justice

All of the organizations have the dual focus of: 1) making visible the experiences of women from diverse backgrounds in the world, and 2) creating space for them to equitably express their views about the world. In doing so, the work they support effectively bridges the personal and political. Examples abound of the ways that NYWIFT's members and Women Make Movies-sponsored films have influenced wide-ranging intersectional policy and awareness initiatives, from pay equity to reproductive rights to recognizing rape in conflict situations as a war crime. For instance, after 9/11, WMM launched a Response to Hate campaign and offered films by and about Muslim women for free, as long as they were used for educational purposes. The campaign went viral and WMM distributed hundreds of videos to groups across the country. Described earlier, CW&TW's groundbreaking exhibition, *Thirst*, is an example of using a large-scale public installation art project to bridge feminist, environmental, economic and human rights issues. Creator Beili Liu, an Asian American artist, commented: "I came up with the concept of a tree because this was happening during the drought. We had a team of female architects and two female landscape architects. It was a project of a lifetime. *Thirst* reached a population and community way beyond what a typical gallery can do...Everyone in Austin knew about it. It was such an iconic image. It really opened up my perception and understanding of what art could do." The exhibition received two Austin Critics Table Awards and was featured in national and international media.

INGREDIENT 3: Enterprising and opportunity-focused spirit as a social venture

Each of the organizations is here today, successfully navigating 40 years of change, because they are enterprising, risk-taking and sufficiently nimble to spot and seize opportunities. Creativity is in their DNA and they have used it well to blend social justice and revenue generation, resulting in relatively high percentages of earned income in each organization. Skillfully balancing risk and opportunity, they use earned income to pilot new ideas and to grow and institutionalize them. In this way, they operate as social ventures, even though they are not recognized as such. Future plans of WSW illustrate the enterprising spirit that each group regularly applies: In 2018 and 2019, WSW is doubling the number of artists served by its residency program from 30 to 60, the result of a successful five-year capital campaign to double its active space and provide additional housing for artists in residence. They recently constructed: a new front-facing exhibition gallery with public gathering space that can accommodate 50 people; a second dedicated gallery that can accommodate 20 people; a book bindery; a climate controlled archive for prints and artist's books; and new offices, all of which directly support visiting artists. Soon, they will complete a commercial kitchen, a print study center adjacent to the archive, and additional AIR housing. These investments have the

potential to generate a social return for women artists and, in the longer term, assets that can be used to underwrite expanded services on a sustainable basis.

INGREDIENT 4: Consistent leadership

All four organizations have attracted effective leaders to serve on the staff and on the board of directors. In addition, they have all enjoyed long-serving, creative and influential founders and executive directors who attained national and, in some cases, international recognition. These women have built teams of highly talented and committed people willing to work long hours for less pay than they might otherwise have earned. The organizations have also attracted board members eager to use their skills and their broad and deep networks in the field to advance organizational goals. As a result, all of the organizations have benefitted from deep institutional memory to guide them, ensuring the ability to look backward and forward seamlessly. They each demonstrate profound respect for their roots and founders, with current leaders exemplifying the same skill in taking calculated risks for future gain. For example, at *Getting Real*—a 2018 conference for documentary filmmaker, hosted by the International Documentary Association—had more than 50 current or former filmmakers, staff, board members, and interns in attendance. 25 were speakers or moderators at panels and workshops. Their former staff and interns are now Hollywood executives, leaders of influential tech and media non-profits and B-corps, award winning directors with films at Sundance and on Netflix, and acclaimed film scholars and professors.

VI. NEXT STEPS: STOKING SUCCESS FOR THE NEXT 40 YEARS

The convening process enabled these organizations, individually and together, to reflect and begin to develop a larger vision for the power and impact of women's arts organizations in the coming years. It also sparked a wide range of questions and ideas requiring further development.

As resourceful, impactful and successful as these organizations are, they face significant systemic barriers to their growth and impact. While each of them has continuously, and skillfully, adjusted their programs, revenue models, and capacities to meet the opportunities and challenges presented in the moment, none has received the kind of long-term, generous investments that mainstream arts institutions receive.

Foundations and individual donors focused on social justice and inclusion have an opportunity to create new kinds of impact by providing unrestricted support to fuel the creativity and build the sustainability of these four organizations. For example, each organization has specific plans to increase its earned income and strengthen its asset base. Support to enable these efforts would demonstrate a commitment to a more inclusive arts community and produce exciting models for other women's arts organizations to replicate.

In addition to increased support tailored to each organization, two promising areas for continued collaboration emerged during the process:

1. Collecting and making accessible the herstories of the four organizations and the artists they have served: The 30,000+ women artists who have passed through these four organizations' programs include a small number who have gained wide recognition and many more who have pursued their creative paths without widespread critical acclaim. A comprehensive assessment of the ways in which the support

We have to become the narrators. We have to shout out together!! We need women critics, women curators, women producers, women film festival planners—without this we will be dismissed.

provided by the organizations have shaped the different artists' lives and narratives, the art produced, and the impact on their communities and the broader society, has not yet been undertaken. Understanding more about these areas—within different communities of women—would assist these four organizations and many others to shape their services more strategically for future and diverse generations of women artists. It would honor the founders of the feminist arts movement and make visible the living archive of women artists that each organization holds. Collaboration with a university or research institute would enable these four organizations to begin a first phase that could expand to include other women's visual arts organizations over time.

2. Equity and inclusion for women artists and arts organizations: Inequity in representation of diverse communities of women in the arts may be related to inequities in the money and other resources that individual women artists receive, as well as in the funding that reaches women's arts organizations from institutions and individuals. The chart from the Foundation Center on funding for arts and culture (see Box on page 15) shows that arts funding for women and girls has actually reduced since 2012 and also reveals areas—including how gender intersects with race, sexual orientation, disability and other factors—around which we need more granular information. These gaps in information hinder the creation of innovative approaches to supporting women artists that can expand both their incomes and their profile in the world.

To continue to advance ideas about equity and inclusion, the groups expressed an interest in working together to uncover more information about creative strategies that could counter traditional under-investment in women artists and women's arts organizations. This could involve studies that explore innovative forms of financing, diversity tax credits, social venture funds focused specifically on women's arts organizations, crowd-funding platforms, launching new awards and prizes and other possibilities. It could also explore how influential gatekeepers—from museums to galleries to film festival programmers to cable channels—could make pledges to donate a certain percentage of their proceeds and change their practices to ensure that women artists are treated equitably. It would also be timely to create local and national convenings for women's arts organizations to join together across different disciplines to develop a collective voice and strategies for change and increased impact.

VII: CONCLUSION

At the final convening, participants highlighted the value of this process and the ways it helped them learn, reflect and focus on avenues to systemic change. If the past is prologue, these four organizations will use their creativity and resilience to survive as long as they are needed. They will continue to stretch inadequate funding to serve the largest possible number of women artists. They will continue to bring women artists together to draw strength from each other, generate additional income from their art, and build their collective power. They will continue to reveal barriers of all kinds and to advocate for change with the mainstream gatekeepers who systematically screen women artists out of their exhibits and festivals.

Their results over 40 years—created with limited and insecure funding—make a strong case for a surge in philanthropic support that enables these organizations and others like them to thrive as well as survive. Each organization has several areas ripe for investment, including but not limited to expanding their earned income potential, taking a deeper look at their impact on the lives and influence of women artists, increasing

their staff capacity for innovation and to serve a larger number of artists, and enabling them to gather regularly with peers.

The *Time's Up* movement has brought to light what feminists working in the arts and other large “systems” have known for decades about the deep structures that hold gender inequality in place. For *Time's Up* to achieve a world in which vulnerable women and men no longer need to join a #MeToo movement, the Time is Now to increase funding to these organizations and the many others like them. The way to a person's heart is not through their stomachs, but rather through the art and media consumed on a daily basis.

APPENDIX: PARTICIPANTS IN THE WOMEN'S ARTS CONSORTIUM

CENTER FOR WOMEN & THEIR WORK

Chris Cowden
 Laura Garanzuay
 Rachel Stuckey
 Kelley McClure
 Diane Sikes
 Connie Arismendi

WOMEN MAKE MOVIES

Debbie Zimmerman
 Tina DiFeliciano
 Kristen Fitzpatrick

WOMEN'S STUDIO WORKSHOP

Lauren Walling
 Jennifer Naylor
 Kerry McCarthy
 Erin Zona

NEW YORK WOMEN IN FILM & TELEVISION

Terry Lawler
 Simone Pero
 Duana C. Butler
 Cynthia Lopez

Women artists are pursuing a profession. It's not a side job. We need to change the perception that institutions don't need to pay women for their work.