

Supporting, Sustaining and Inspiring the CU Arts Community
Academic Futures Response Paper
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Approximately 80 people (students, staff, and faculty) are currently on the CU Boulder Experimental Arts Collective (EAC) listserv, and approximately 40 people attended a meeting on September 20th, including faculty and/or graduate students from the BTU, CMAP, TAM, the CU Art Museum, the MAL, NEST, Pendulum, Sans Souci, Thompson Jazz Studies, and the Techne Lab, with faculty from A&AH, ATLAS, Cinema Studies and Moving Image Arts, CMCi DCMP & IAWP, Theatre & Dance, and the College of Music.

Noting that on account of its broader scope and aims, the public Academic Futures draft does not make recommendations that are targeted specifically to creative work, the following both summarizes the EAC discussion and responds to the “Interdisciplinary Teaching, Research and Creative Works” and “Sustaining, Supporting and Inspiring our Community” Academic Futures sections.

Overview and Abbreviated Scope of Issues

1. The historical legacy of creative practice at CU includes seminal artists such as filmmaker Stan Brakhage, composer George Crumb, and fine artists Muriel Sibell Wolle and Betty Woodman. Continuing this rich tradition, a number of current CU artists have been recognized both nationally and internationally, but **CU’s overall artistic reputation as a campus is far less widely recognized than it could be given the excellence of individual faculty members and various nationally ranked programs**. This is at least partially because CU’s collective artistic work isn’t being captured or archived effectively. **How do we tell the story of our work to a much larger audience?**
2. There are **islands and neighborhoods of activity** (i.e., our disciplinary silos), **but not yet a strong sense of a larger artistic community, nor are there structures and mechanisms to powerfully harness this collective nexus**. How do we move the needle on what an interdisciplinary artistic community can accomplish at a major research university in the 21st century?

The issues highlighted above suggest opportunities for investment, both from the campus and from external donors, some of which are sketched below.

-Create and sustain a dynamic, living archive. Build a content-rich central location for the aggregation of CU artistic work.

-Invest in graduate research assistantships that are dedicated to documenting and disseminating CU’s artistic work. Create mini-documentaries archiving and sharing the story of major faculty and student projects. In addition, capture artist visits to campus:

currently, visiting artists arrive, interact with students and faculty, and then leave without much of a trace. With proper resources, each such visit can result in a concise mini-documentary that captures the artist's work on campus, along with an interview, and that is ultimately aggregated alongside the curated creative work of resident CU faculty and student artists in the archive.

-Supporting multiple media channels for dissemination:

-Print media, such as our own quarterly magazine, featuring creative writing of all kinds, fine art, artists and curators interviewing other artists, and critical writing on CU dance, film, art, literature, theater, and music.

-Pop-up art exhibitions in major art regions of the country, such as New York and Los Angeles

-Recording label, producing and distributing CU recordings both online and with limited editions of manufactured media

-Performance partnerships with targeted organizations in performance centers of the country to 1), collaborate on bringing stellar artists from around the world to perform at external venues as well as ours, and 2), establish networks where our faculty and best students are regularly part of curated programming in venues that receive national press attention.

Supporting, Sustaining and Inspiring Art-making:

-Significant, career-building grants for artists. Primary support for artistic projects at CU currently comes from CHA GCAH grants. These are helpful, but the amounts are limited, and therefore so are the scope of projects they support. The Innovative Seed Grant is set at an appropriate scale, but because it is widely dispersed, doesn't tap the full potential of creative projects at CU. This need could be addressed through instituting a Creative Seed Grant of a similar monetary scale, targeted specifically to artistic creation, adjudicated by artists, and with enough grants awarded in a given year to stimulate considerably more activity at CU.

-Campus level support of arts activities. The proposals listed above leverage existing strengths, powerfully raising the odds of a significant return on investment. They are also complementary with recent Academic Futures submissions: a white paper by Bud Coleman proposed an Arts Consortium, and another white paper by Amerika, Auguiste, Boord et al proposed an Institute for the Arts. Taken together, these papers indicate the need for a campus-level Arts entity to help maximally support, sustain and inspire the nationally and internationally significant work already taking place at CU, and to help seed the flowering of the new creative work that a well-resourced campus-level consortium, center or institute could help unleash.