

URBAN ARTS COOPERATIVE

1125 Grand Concourse, Bronx NY 10452

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact

Bill Aguado

Executive Director, En Foco., Inc.

baguado@enfoco.org, (917) 838-1223

Contact

Ron Kavanaugh

Executive Director, Literary Freedom Project

ron@literaryfreedom.org, (347) 454-2161

SMALL INDEPENDENT BRONX ARTS ORGANIZATIONS FORM COALITION TO ASSESS AND EMPOWER ARTISTS

July 10, 2017, Bronx, NY – As the Bronx continues to transform under assiduous development and economic pressures, a group of diverse independent arts organizations have formed the Urban Arts Cooperative with the goal of advocating as one collective voice for local artists.

Urban Arts Cooperative

Launched by five small community-based arts organizations: BronxArtSpace, Dominican York Proyecto GRAFICA, En Foco, Inc., Literary Freedom Project, and Puerto Rican Institute for Development of the Arts, the Urban Arts Cooperative has developed a strategically localized advocacy initiative that will enhance the members organizational capacity to serve artists and grassroots cultural interests and to effectively leverage human and capital-based resources (financial and in-kind) on behalf of artists. Independently, each Cooperative member is continuously undercapitalized, with budgets under \$100,000, and managed by unsalaried leadership. Collectively, through a diligent commitment to the arts, UAC will bridge many communities and remain steadfast in assuring the financial well-being of artists they benefit and employ, while also collectively addressing the lack of cultural equity for the artists and communities of color that we primarily serve.

The Cooperative's goals:

1. Design and implement a survey of the artists we serve to ascertain the impact of our programming and services and their access to funding, resources, work spaces, etc; awareness of advocacy efforts and strategies.
2. Assess the survey's responses and schedule focus groups with artists and the communities to determine our member's best practices.
3. Design and implement a long-term advocacy plan with extensive and sustainable social media methods for our cooperative, artists, and other like-minded groups.
4. Assess the potential impact of the advocacy strategy on the cooperative's members.
5. Convene planning sessions based on the survey to design cost effective community-based artist funding models that reflect our artist's priorities and concerns. Ultimately, there will be regular advisories on advocacy issues sent to artists.

Providing funds as a management mechanism for artists will be one of the functions of the Cooperative. The initial assessment will help develop a funding-advocacy model to present to private foundations and

URBAN ARTS COOPERATIVE

1125 Grand Concourse, Bronx NY 10452

institutions, and government-based funders, i.e., New York State Council for the Arts, National Endowment for the Arts, NYC Dept. of Cultural Affairs, etc. The goal is to build a financially viable alternative to the existing local arts council and institute strategies for arts support that does not rely on the traditional 501(c) nonprofit model while meeting accountability standards set by funders.

Acknowledging there is a need to develop a new model, the Urban Arts Cooperative has received seed funding from the New York City Cultural Agenda Fund in The New York Community Trust. This new model will ultimately act as intermediary providing funds directly to artists—particularly those who reside in The Bronx, Harlem, and Washington Heights.

Historically, better-funded nonprofits have led a prescriptive cultural dialogue at the expense of artists and smaller cultural organizations, effectively creating a two-tier support system. One in which new artists/arts orgs, which are not adept at grantsmanship and fundraising, have diminished agency. UAC will be able to nimbly identify needs and create a platform for advocacy for the estimated 4,500 artists we continue to serve—digitally and tangibly—through direct engagement, employment, professional development, and public programs, building a network to address needs and common issues.

Further, UAC expects and would welcome additional like-minded collectives, small-budgeted arts organizations, and networks within our geographic area to join the Cooperative. We are also hopeful that we can begin to develop a younger cohort of arts managers and artists to assume the mantle of arts advocacy leadership.

For additional information contact

Bill Aguado, baguado@enfo.org, (917) 838-1223

Ron Kavanaugh, ron@literaryfreedom.org, (347) 454-2161

URBAN ARTS COOPERATIVE

1125 Grand Concourse, Bronx NY 10452

Urban Arts Cooperative Members

The following arts organizations are committed to building a better way to support artists and build a better platform for artist's voices to participate in change.

BronxArtSpace is a non-profit gallery that promotes the innovative ideas of underrepresented and emerging artists and curators. Started in 2008 by Linda Cunningham and Mitsu Hadeishi, BronxArtSpace is dedicated to exhibiting the highest quality artwork from the Bronx and around the world. Our mission is to foster dialogue around the contemporary local, national and global issues while advancing local arts education and opportunities. www.bronxartspace.com

Dominican York Proyecto GRAFICA is a printmaking collective of 12 artists of Dominican descent who live and work in and around New York City. The artists of the collective are: Carlos Almonte, Pepe Coronado, René de los Santos, Iliana Emilia García, Reynaldo García Pantaleón, Scherezade García, Alex Guerrero, Luanda Lozano, Miguel Luciano, Yuniór Chiqui Mendoza, Moses Ros-Suárez, and Rider Ureña. www.bit.ly/2tXnGMn

En Foco, Inc. is a non-profit that supports contemporary primarily U.S.-based photographers of African, Asian, Latino, Native American and Pacific Islander heritage. Founded in 1974, En Foco makes their work visible to the art world, yet remains accessible to under-served communities. Through exhibitions, workshops, events and publications, it provides professional recognition, honoraria and assistance to photographers as they grow into different stages of their careers. www.enfoco.org

Literary Freedom Project is a Bronx-based non-profit arts organization that seeks to restore the importance of social and cultural identity through reading. Towards this goal, LFP publishes *Mosaic Literary Magazine*; develops literature-based lesson plans; presents the Mosaic Literary Conference and cohosts the Bronx Book Fair. www.literaryfreedom.org

PRIDA, Puerto Rican Institute for the Development of the Arts is an organization dedicated to the preservation and promotion of Puerto Rican artists and the arts. PRIDA supports Puerto Rican artists with a website, timely newsletter, and social networking resources that inform members about upcoming events and opportunities. www.prida.org

###