



Better Together

An Inquiry into Collective Art Practice

Robin Hewlett, Editor



The Collective Artist Residency Project

The STUDIO for Creative Inquiry was founded in 1989 with the mission of supporting interdisciplinary projects, bringing together the arts, science, technology and humanities. From the beginning, this mission allowed the STUDIO to engage with collectives involving a diverse range of artists, scientists and technologists. These interactions shed light on the critically engaged and collaborative approach of collectives. Looking back over nearly two decades, one can see the significant contribution that collectives have made, and continue to make in the art world and beyond. The work of STUDIO fellows such as Critical Art Ensemble, subRosa and Institute for Applied Autonomy represent an important trend in art making.

Collective organizing has a long history in social, political and economic realms. In the essay “Periodising Collectivism,” Gregory Sholette and Blake Stimson claim it is “the desire to speak as a collective voice that has long fuelled the social imagination of modernism.” Collective practice in art can also be traced back through the modernist canon, to avant-garde movements such as Futurism, Dada and Situationism. Continuing on this trajectory, the 1980s saw artists coming together to merge art and political organizing with groups such as Gran Fury, Political Art Documentation/Distribution and Group Material, among others. In contemporary art practice, artists continue to collaborate in diverse and innovative ways. With a recently released book on collectivism from Sholette and Stimson, and a new book on group work from the artist collective Temporary Services, the sustained impulse of artists to work together is finally being articulated and documented.

The STUDIO is committed to supporting and advocating collective art practice. Artist collectives often work outside of gallery and museum spaces, choose media and tactics based on the specific needs of each project and create alliances with non-artists and non-arts organizations such as activist groups, community associations, and trade unions. As artists experiment with organizational structures and collaborative approaches to idea generation and problem solving, the methods they employ are applicable beyond the art world itself. Artist collectives have the potential to significantly impact the larger culture in dynamic and exciting ways. The STUDIO has hosted collectives with diverse membership, areas of investigation and tactical approaches. What these groups share is an interest in addressing important social and political

issues, in a manner that models a cooperative philosophy and counters the competitive nature of capitalist culture.

In 2004 – 2005, The STUDIO hosted two artists who work in collectives: Nathan Martin and Grisha Coleman. They received administrative and technical support, along with a salaried fellowship for one year. The fellowships also included travel and relocation funding, as well as a project budget. Funding for the Collective Artist Residency Project was provided by the National Endowment for the Arts, Heinz Endowments, PA Council on the Arts, The Multicultural Arts Initiative, and the Center for Arts in Society at Carnegie Mellon, provided additional funding for the artists' projects.

This report documents the collective residencies, as well as a symposium titled *Creativity in Collective*, which took place in November 2006 at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh. The fellowships, together with the symposium, generated considerable enthusiasm among participating artists and brought awareness to the need for increased support, documentation and critical writing about collectively produced artwork. Through this report, the STUDIO aims to catalyze further inquiry and to provide jumping off points for artists, scholars and students interested in exploring contemporary collective art practice.

*Robin Hewlett, Editor
Project Administrator
STUDIO for Creative Inquiry*

Nathan Martin with Carbon Defense League

Carbon Defense League

Nathan Martin began working as part of the Carbon Defense League (CDL) in 1989. It is a collective engaged in media arts, engineering and writing. Members come from disciplines such as design, architecture, geography, fine art, robotics, computer programming and critical theory. CDL's working methodology is to define and develop projects that engage a strategically targeted audience. CDL has shown work, participated in panels and led workshops throughout North America and Europe. Writing by CDL analyzes contemporary subversive media arts practices through rich metaphors and practical examples. CDL has been published in magazines, books and on the Internet.

MapHub

During Martin's residency, he worked with the Carbon Defense League to create MapHub, an online, interactive map of the City of Pittsburgh. The purpose of MapHub is to serve as a spatial forum for the residents of Pittsburgh to find and share information about their communities. Pittsburgh residents can contribute by adding objects such as events, people, places, sounds and comments to any location on the map. All objects are categorized into groups called Hubs. These Hubs allow individuals and organizations to share interests and information both internally and externally, leveraging the power of community feedback, contribution and review.

Through collaborative mapping technology and the accessibility of the Internet, MapHub allows the power and significance of each individual account to be documented and distributed. Our network of friends and our similar interests bind us in the way we uniquely and collectively experience the urban landscape. Participants who explore the MapHub system develop their own spatio-temporal history based on their situated geography. Through MapHub, the formerly undocumented narratives of the region gain the recognition they deserve by participants who share common interests.

MapHub also allows citizens from diverse backgrounds to play an instrumental role in their communities. MapHub provides a platform by which users can share information and communicate with local representatives about issues relevant to them. For example, MapHub is used by BikePGH!, a local non-profit, to map bicycle accidents and unsafe road conditions. BikePGH! uses this data to work with local government to recommend infrastructural improvements that tangibly impact the lives of cyclists in Pittsburgh.



Grisha Coleman with collaborators

Grisha Coleman

Grisha Coleman has a career commitment to working collaboratively. Past collaborations include Urban Bush Women and the performance group Hotmouth. Since 2000 Coleman has acted as a lead artist, creating choreography and composing sound and music for *echo :: system*. The project investigates the role and the limits of the performing arts with a team of collaborators from fields such as design, information technology, and biology. The collaborators have developed their working process during residencies at the Banff New Media Institute (Canada), the Beall Center for Art and Technology at UC Irvine, and the New World Theater in Amherst, MA.

echo :: system

During Coleman's residency, she worked on *echo::system*, a series of imagined environments that can be explored as an installation or observed as a performance. The project includes a series of site-specific, live performance installations, referred to as Action Stations. The ecosystem is the model/field of play, chosen for its complexity of life and seemingly limitless possibilities for interaction and its metaphors—essential to both live art and science.

Natural habitats such as the bottom of the ocean floor, an open prairie land, a volcanic island or a desert provide the information from which the team of collaborators develop physical, virtual and mythological material systems to create alternative environments. These synthetic environments are built using tools and techniques from science and technology and generate unique worlds of sound, movement and myth in which the audience can be immersed.

By engaging in discourse between the diverse disciplines of composition, choreography, architecture, writing, digital code and the visual arts, the collaborators question one perspective to illuminate another, including science and its methods. *echo::system* creates a new awareness for collaborators and audiences alike of the potential relevance of live art, the resonance between art and science and the impact of technology on the American landscape.



The Creativity In Collective Symposium

The STUDIO for Creative Inquiry marked the conclusion of the Collective Artist Residency Project with *Creativity in Collective*, a symposium on collective art practice. The symposium coincided with the Alliance of Artist Communities Annual Conference, hosted at Carnegie Mellon in November 2006 and included a panel discussion attended by Alliance members representing artists' communities, residency centers and retreats throughout the US and abroad. The panel created an exceptional opportunity for representatives of five highly accomplished artist collectives to share their thoughts and engage in constructive dialogue with an influential group of arts administrators.

The panelists addressed obstacles they encounter working collectively in an individual-centered art world. For several of the collectives represented, group identity is a form of conscious resistance against "the cult of the individual." Pressure from museums and curators to capitalize on individual name recognition poses a common challenge for artists who prefer to be credited solely by their collective title. Allocation of funding and resources based on the standard of an individual also creates strain within collectives when only one member is supported to travel, install an exhibition or give a lecture. It is often difficult to determine which member should benefit from these opportunities and how individual members should represent the group.

Administrators in the audience also had an opportunity to discuss the risks and challenges they face when considering whether or not to support collectives. Many longstanding residency programs face the challenge of adapting established selection processes to accommodate collectives. Some administrators worry that inter-personal conflict might impede the productivity of collectives while in residence, while others struggle with the question of how to most effectively use resources. Current standards for measuring the success of a residency program often value several individual projects over one group project, simply due to the greater quantity of art work produced.

By facilitating a true two-way dialogue, the discussion revealed misunderstandings and misconceptions held by artists and administrators alike. The openness of the panelists and the audience allowed the two groups to share different points of view and offer suggestions. By opening this dialogue, the STUDIO hopes to influence productive working relationships and increased support for collectives within the field of artists' communities.

Following the public panel discussion, the invited artists had the opportunity to meet amongst themselves, to share experiences and approaches. The five panelists were also joined by

local artists and members of the Carnegie Mellon community, for a round-table discussion that delved deeper into issues relevant to contemporary collective art practice.

The invited panelists were Jim Costanzo of REPOhistory; Carl DiSalvo of Carbon Defense League; Dara Greenwald of Pink Blogue and Samaras Project, among others; John Leanos of Burning Wagon Collective; and Hyla Willis of suRosa. Other artists participating in the symposium included: Bob Bingham (professor of Art), Peter Burr (Portland, OR-based artist), Jim Duesing (professor of Art), Curt Gettmann (Pittsburgh-based artist), Josh McPhee (Troy, NY-based artist), Ally Reeves (Pittsburgh-based artist), Shaun Slifer (Pittsburgh-based artist) and Suzie Silver (Professor of Art).

Several significant themes emerged during the course of the symposium. The following sections explore these key themes, drawing on conversations as well as written responses to *Creativity in Collective*, submitted by the invited artists.

The Creativity in the Collective conference assembled a strong group of artists and thinkers around the possibilities and issues in contemporary collective art making. I was honored to be part of such a creative group.

John Leanos

Symposium Collectives / Artists

Burning Wagon Collective / John Leanos

Burning Wagon Collective is a new media collective dedicated to the creation of independent artwork for historical, entertainment and educational purposes. Burning Wagon Collective aims to dismantle, disrupt and deconstruct colonial history. The collective also works to create and reconstruct underrepresented histories through popular forms of new media.



Carbon Defense League / Carl DiSalvo

The artist collective Carbon Defense League (CDL), founded in 1998, uses strategies such as online map making, workshopping, storytelling, hacking children's toys, re-labeling items on store shelves, and playing with the U.S. presidential voting process, to create debate where it had previously been suppressed. Through the Internet, mainstream media, video and performance, CDL works to stimulate change in access to communication systems.



Pink Bloque / Dara Greenwald

The Pink Bloque was a multi-issue, radical feminist street-dance troupe, active between 2002 and 2005. Pink Bloque used popular culture and performance theory to give post 9/11 protest culture a radical makeover. The group's street dance actions addressed issues ranging from the Patriot Act to date rape, the war in Iraq and more.



REPOhistory / Jim Costanzo

REPOhistory was a group of artists, scholars, teachers and writers who collaborated between 1989 and 2000. The group served as a platform for creating public art projects around issues of race, class, gender and sexuality. REPOhistory worked to expand the audience for art by going outside the confines of the museum and gallery structure. The group's projects retrieved and relocated absent historical narratives at specific locations by creating counter-monuments, actions and events.



subRosa / Hyla Willis

subRosa is a reproducible cyber-feminist cell of cultural researchers. The collective explores and critiques the intersections of information and biotechnology in women's bodies, lives, and labor. subRosa produces performances, installations, workshops, contestational campaigns, publications, media interventions and public forums.



Collectivity in Context

The collective has provided a compelling model for workers, activists and artists alike, as they struggle to reconfigure social relationships. Many artists find influences and inspiration in other fields of social organizing. During the Creativity in Collective Symposium, participating artists framed their collective practice in relation to trends in both art and politics.

One tenet of contemporary anarchism is practicing a prefigurative politics. This means that instead of attacking what you don't like in the world, you highlight and practice tendencies you prefer. Collective practice is one space to enact a prefigurative politics by challenging competitive individualism. If this can happen in spaces of commerce, education and political organizing, why couldn't it happen in art as well?

Like process art in the 1960's that attempted to reveal the subject of art as the making of the art itself and attempted to resist predetermined notions of the art object, collective art is a kind of relational process art. By naming their artwork 'collective,' artists who work in this way refer to a process they employ rather than a form or aesthetic that the work takes. Collective art making is a process of multiple people's ideas, agendas and aesthetic sensibilities being negotiated to create an artistic project that manifests the visions of the group not of a single individual. The process becomes about the social relationships developed and negotiated through the act of making the work rather than on the arts material. The material being processed and experimented with in this practice is social relations—this is the determining factor. Given the social circumstances of the moment, this often times is a resistant social and political practice informed not just by art history but by the history of egalitarian social struggles.

The process of collective art, although always involving human interaction and negotiation, varies among practitioners. I have been in collectives that follow consensus model decision-making influenced by Quaker meeting process and anti-authoritarian values. I have been in others that are more loosely structured around a conversation. In some groups we all participate in similar tasks and in others we divide up the work based on areas of specialization. These varied processes have also produced varied material manifestations: videos, performances, posters, websites, events, writing, sculptural interventions, etc. Although all of these projects have been realized with different participants in different contexts, they share in common the

project of collectivity. As a participant in this it means forming relationships; dealing with the Other; negotiating a multiplicity of voices and agendas to building something together; and in the mixture of all voices together, creating a new aesthetic/social/political project.

Believing that what we can do together is more powerful than what we can do as atomized, isolated individuals and that the process by which we relate to each other and cooperate to create a new culture is important is an earnest and crucial socio-political-aesthetic-historical project. For me, this journey continues to be personally and aesthetically fruitful; pushing the boundaries of what I, in relation to and through cooperation with others, can contribute to my fellow collaborators, the field of art and society at large.

Dara Greenwald

The question of primary authorship is of diminishing importance for artists interested in change.

Reiko Goto, distinguished Fellow

The Collective Impulse

Artists choose to work collectively for many different reasons. For some the choice is political, for others social. In the performing arts, the collective impulse is implicit. Here Grisha Coleman writes about her starting points in theater and the progression of collaboration in her work.

From the point of view of the performing arts, all work is collaborative. In that way, my entire training has been in a collective capacity. In traditional theater there is a very specific hierarchy of who works with whom and who has the ultimate vision. Authorship resides in the playwright or the director. Interactions in theater can be very clearly structured, but the interactive process itself is the work. In the project I've been working on in the STUDIO for Creative Inquiry, I've tried to bring that process to a different level. My objective was to bring together people from different disciplines and backgrounds: the sciences, technology, software development and the realm of new media. I wanted to see how different approaches and techniques, as well as a different vocabulary and knowledge bases, would intersect when crossing the boundaries between the science realm and the art realm.

For visual artists, collective work has to be an active choice because the tradition of the discipline is to work alone. Many visual artists conceive of collectivity as a conscious, political choice. In my case, I think it's more a matter of considering "what are your tendencies"? I was drawn to performing arts early on, maybe because of the collaborative nature of the work. Political views are difficult to discuss and a little more malleable when you are eight or nine years old. You don't articulate things in the same way at that age, but the environment has an affect on you. I would say that my tendency toward performing arts was de facto a political sensibility.

In my project, many things are questioned—the democracy of decision-making, what gets made, the rules of making. It's been interesting to apply my experience directing within the specific hierarchy of theater to collaboration with a group of extremely different people, who work in completely different ways and have very different vocabulary for talking about ideas. Our work is also challenging theatrical conventions beyond hierarchy. We are trying to create different ways for the public to experience performance. We are questioning the proscenium arch, for example, bringing issues of framing, scale and space to the forefront of our dialogue. We also challenge the expectation of a seated, stationary audience by introducing game theory and technology into the creation of an interactive installation.

By bringing together people who don't work in theater, even musicians and dancers who have very different processes than theater people, all bets are off in a way. For me this is a much more "in progress" way of thinking about how a group can work together.

Grisha Coleman

From my perspective ontologically, all of what we create emerges from a collective sense, that being the social. For me it makes complete sense to work in a collective. I don't understand artists who don't see their work coming out of a social context.

John Leanos

The reason we work collectively is a means to a means rather than a means to a project. Even if a project comes out of it, it's about attempting to challenge this atomized individualism that our society promotes.

Dara Greenwald

When REPOhistory started, it was '89. We were really trying to engage the public in the whole idea of what the go-go '80s were... It was so much about money, commodity. Some of us were very naive in certain ways, but we were reacting against that. We were saying, 'there's something else. We want an alternative to this gallery competition... There's more to it than that.' We were really involved in what art can be.

Jim Costanzo

Defining Collective in the Art World

In the world of contemporary art, groups identifying as collectives organize and operate in a variety of ways. During the Creativity in Collective Symposium, the definition of 'collective' warranted significant discussion, as it became clear that the participating artists were not necessarily approaching the topic with the same understandings and assumptions.

What exactly is a collective? There are many disciplines that involve collaborative or collective art making (film, theater, opera and all types of music, for example). Within these forms, there are numerous models to work from. In the fine arts many questions emerge: What distinguishes a collective from a collaboration? Are we defining collectives as groups of artists with distinct progressive and social aims, dedicated to a democratic or egalitarian model of creation and engagement? What ideologies are collectives founded on? Functionally, are collectives against the hierarchy of specialized roles and chains of command that are engrained in filmmaking (director, editor, producer, writer, etc.)? Or, can/do collectives adopt and alter these models successfully?

Some argue that a collective is required to have more than one person because a collective is founded on the idea of coming together and establishing a model where people are treated equally. This is one approach and one ideology from which collectivity has arisen. However, dogmatic definitions of collectivity are dangerous in that they limit possibilities of change and consciousness-raising. As artists, we work in the symbolic arena and can model change through ideas, possibilities, symbolic ruptures, media spectacles, etc. If we take this literally, we can imagine how fictitious collectives can function towards effective social change. Walid Radd and the Atlas Group is one example of a fictitious collective that uses writing, performance and installation to raise issues of history and war in Lebanon. The group is real and not real. This play is important and could open up ideas about how to form larger collectives. Do we need to settle into a limited scope of collectivity where young, politically active, hippy-types come together to perform art actions? What about critical masses? How are these forms of collectivity defined and represented? We can and should look towards many and different models in this and other cultures.

John Leanos

I've worked on things that never actually came to be as material projects, but they were about different kinds of people—artists, cultural workers—coming together, trying to experience a kind of egalitarian process together and sharing ideas.

Dara Greenwald

In this interdisciplinary model, artists expand their practice by moving outside their discipline and its institutionalized relationship to society.

Tim Collins, Distinguished Fellow

subRosa has varied between six people and two. When we create projects they are collectively authored. We come up with ideas together, we edit them together. Sometimes we break apart into different skill sets when we're actually executing a project. We also share a lot of the maintenance work of keeping a collective going, like running the website or writing proposals or speaking on panels. We pool the finances.

Hyla Willis

Collectives and Arts Institutions

Many collectives grapple with how to build constructive relationships with arts institutions. Here, Hyla Willis responds to the Creativity in Collective panel discussion with suggestions for artists and administrators alike.

Historically, artists have often hired assistants and fabricators, or worked in groups. subRosa does not believe that collective work is new. What might be new is that museums, residencies, granting agencies and other institutions are being forced to adapt their programming in response to artist collectives. This is a positive change. It presents administrative challenges due to years of investment in the “cult of the individual artist,” but the obstacles are not insurmountable. Here are a few things that both administrators and collectives can do if they wish to foster productive relationships.

To Artists Communities:

Understand that groups engaged in sustained collective practice are different than project based collaborations. While artists assembled for a short-term project may clash or fizzle out, established collectives often make an ongoing investment in each other and can be expected to work well together.

There is nothing to be gained by replacing the ‘cult of the individual’ with the ‘personalities of the collective.’ Consider collectives as a unit and make selections based on the work of the group. When a generational difference is involved, trust that a more established artist is making the decision to work with a less experienced person for a reason.

While considering the collective as a unit for the purposes of the jury process, understand that once a collective is selected, individual members may have different needs. People who work together may have very different sleeping and eating habits. Individual collective members may also hold different types of employment, some requiring a personalized invitation letter in order to be excused from their regular work hours.

To Collectives:

Collectives need to be disciplined in their interactions with other organizations. subRosa nominates a ‘project manager’ and ‘communications liaison.’ If everyone in the collective is communicating with everyone on the organization’s staff things can get muddled quickly.

Plan ahead and present needs in advance. This helps to avoid surprises and makes interacting with organizations go more smoothly. Try to take the other demands being made on the Organization’s staff into consideration as well.

Understand the opportunities and the constraints of the institution you are working with. If a collective feels compromised by the idea of electing a ‘point person’ or stifled by the need to stick to a timeline or budget, then perhaps the group should not work with the institution.

Hyla Willis

The institutions have been more open to collective work and that’s fantastic. I think in the future we’ll see institutions opening themselves more and more to these ideas. Whether the functionality and the practicality of how institutions work is going to change is up for question. Institutions come with histories. They come with rules. They come with deadlines and legacies. For us to think that a progressive art collective could come into those institutions to collaborate and alter them would be presuming a high level of flexibility on the institutions’ part.

John Leanos

Funny things often occur that reveal entrenched economies of support based on the model of an individual artists, such as [museums] only being able to provide one copy of an exhibition catalog.

Carl DiSalvo

As residencies we have to understand that art practice is changing and that we need to start thinking differently in terms of our jury process. It’s really important to start rethinking this model of individual artist.

Pamela Winfrey, Exploratorium Museum of Science,
Art and Human Perception

Collaborating Beyond the Collective

Through community based projects, some collectives push collaboration to its logical conclusion, making the recipients of their artwork participants in its creation. Carl DiSalvo describes the journey that lead Carbon Defense League to their current role as community facilitators and the impact this new practice has had on the group's artistic identity.

When we first envisioned MapHub, it was called Maptivist. We imagined a mapping system for activists. Perhaps we were not wrong in that, but rather naïve and romantic in our vision of who and what an activist is. We imagined protestors flanking police in riot gear. We did not imagine friends sitting on their porch or parents walking to the grocery store with children. We did not imagine elders. We did not imagine teachers. We imagined ourselves as artist-instigators, yet we've become municipal translators and community facilitators. The activists we serve are not those running riots in the streets (though we still commend them). Our practice is no longer confrontational or sardonic. Through our work, we have willingly become participants in a system we previously scorned.

MapHub is a geographic information system (GIS) designed to support collaborative mapping by non-experts and facilitate communication between residents, community groups, and city government. As a web-based application, MapHub promotes civic participation by providing public access to the same tools used by planning professionals. The capacity to organize and analyze data, usually exclusive to experts, now allows ordinary citizens to construct their own representations of the city and to support their own decision-making.

MapHub is currently employed by over 100 core users (and more than 500 occasional users). The core users of MapHub are committed, making regular contributions to produce a vibrant collective representation of Pittsburgh. In addition to individual users, numerous community development and advocacy groups utilize MapHub. One example is the Bike-PGH! Accident Hub. This project rallies the cycling community of Pittsburgh to contribute information about bicycle accidents across the city. This data is regularly shared with the Department of City Planning and will be used in future policy making and infrastructure development.

In the Safety Zones project, neighborhood residents, block watches and public school officials use MapHub to document and track safety issues within a 1000-foot perimeter of public schools and communicate these issues to city police and local officials. In this project, MapHub serves as a common ground between disparate groups and enables the direct action of community members. The Bike-PGH! Accident Hub and Safety Zones project exemplify the potential of MapHub as a public and participatory geographic information system that supports collaborative mapping by non-experts and promotes civic engagement.

Through our work on MapHub, Carbon Defense League has arrived in a space that we have long wanted to create. As a collective formerly committed to critique and intervention from

outside the system, we initially worried that working from within would be the wrong approach for us. Fortunately, our fears were not realized. What surprised us most was how quickly and smoothly we were taken in, and how natural it felt for us to work with, rather than against. In our current work we earnestly endeavoring to establish and maintain new support mechanisms within the very structure that we once aimed to undermine.

In 2003 we spoke of parasites and made a call for parasitic media:

A parasite is defined as "an organism that grows, feeds and is sheltered on or in a different organism while contributing nothing to the survival of its host." ... We need a practice that allows invisible subversion. We need to feed and grow inside existing communication systems while contributing nothing to their survival; we need to become parasites.

As we continue to develop MapHub, we are not abandoning our past, but rather submitting to a new practice. We choose to forgo tactics rooted in alterity in favor of engagement strategies rooted in reciprocity. We do not have the conceit to claim membership in the communities with whom we collaborate. However, we do strive for a place of belonging in those communities. We acknowledge difference where it exists, but we do not flaunt it. We work with it and through it, toward a committed and engaged presence.

Our politics remain. They are more present now than ever. Our art—now that has become the point of uncertainty. Have we discarded our artist practice, along with our program of parasitic media? Perhaps yes, perhaps no. At the moment, though, answering that question is becoming less important to us, and it is unimportant to our collaborators. Our work with others has come to eclipse our once finely crafted identities. We move forward with an assuredness that, regardless of what this practice should be called, we've arrived at the right place for the moment and we've arrived here together.

Carl DiSalvo

The Legacy of Collectives

Due to the inherently dispersed ownership of collective practice, the artifacts of this work are particularly vulnerable to being lost. The history of collectives often goes undocumented as well, within an art world weaned on the narratives of individual genius. The artists involved in the Creativity in Collective Symposium identified important action items for the creation of a living history of collective art practice.

Historically, the visibility of progressive art practices, both in the art world and for the general public, has always been negligible. However, a current increase in these practices seems to have brought about an increased visibility. Within this context, I believe we are at a critical point where it is possible to bring these practices into the mainstream of public consciousness.

An archive or repository of information about collectives is important. This would give artists interested in creating a collective the opportunity to see what others are currently doing and what has been done in the past. It would also facilitate academic research into obscure and difficult to find information.

The academy should not be underestimated. The vast majority of art students have a narrow window of what options are available to them as artists. Increasing the visibility of the alternative practices would not only increase awareness but would also provide a form of validation. An archive would act as more than an academic resource, it would provide important information for artists, writer and critics.

Jim Costanzo



ephemera from projects by subRosa

There seems to be a lack of art history and criticism about collective art practice. This lack makes it difficult to understand what has come before and difficult for collective artists to contextualize what they are doing now so that a broader understanding of this historical practice emerges.

Dara Greenwald

subRosa is often asked for members' individual biographies. We prefer to give a "bio" of the collective, which has a life of its own that is interesting.

Hyla Willis

Recently, thinkers, scholars, and artists have identified a dearth of writing about the history, inner processes and development of collectives. Although I would warn against formulaic renderings and/or dogmatic definitions, I do think that exploratory writing about different forms of collective work would be invaluable to a range of art practitioners, as well as institutions.

John Leanos

The STUDIO for Creative Inquiry™ is an arts research center in the College of Fine Arts at Carnegie Mellon. Its mission is to support creation and exploration in the arts, especially interdisciplinary projects that bring together the arts, science, technology and the humanities and impact local and global communities.

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National Endowment for the Arts
Pennsylvania Council on the Arts
The Heinz Endowments
Multicultural Arts Initiative
Center for Arts in Society (Carnegie Mellon)

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The poster features a collage of images at the top, including a person's hands working on a project, a person speaking at a podium, and various documents and materials. The main title 'Creativity in a Collective' is written in a large, bold, black, sans-serif font, with 'in a' in a smaller font size. To the right of the title, the date and time are listed: 'Saturday November 11th 10 am - 12 pm'. Below this, the location is given: 'Rangos Hall University Center, Carnegie Mellon'. The text 'Panel Discussion' is positioned below the title. The presenters are listed as 'The STUDIO for Creative Inquiry and The Alliance of Artist Communities'. The panelists are listed as 'Jim Costanzo REPOhistory', 'Carl DiSalvo and Nathan Martin Carbon Defense League', 'Dara Greenwald Pink Bloque, Samaras Project and Others', 'John Leanos Burning Wagon Collective', and 'Hyla Willis SubRosa'. At the bottom, it says 'with support from: National Endowment for the Arts, PA Council on the Arts, Heinz Endowments'.

**Creativity
in a
Collective**

**Saturday
November 11th
10 am - 12 pm**

Rangos Hall
University Center, Carnegie Mellon

Panel Discussion

Presented by
**The STUDIO
for Creative Inquiry**
and
**The Alliance of
Artist Communities**

with support from: National Endowment for the Arts, PA Council on the Arts, Heinz Endowments

with panelists:
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Burning Wagon Collective
Hyla Willis
SubRosa

cover image: ladyfest organizers meeting, courtesy Dara Greenwald