

BOARD OF
DIRECTORS

October 1, 2019



Amanda Mantle Winstead
Chairman

E. Tiffany Adler
Vice-Chairman & Ex-
Oficio, Past Chairman

Beth Colon
Treasurer

Monique Gougisha
Doucette
Secretary

Alex Beard
Susan G. Brennan
Jade Brown Russell
Lucy Chun
Amy Collins
Paola Paoli Corrada
Dr. Takeisha Davis
Scott Fisher
Josh Mayer
Christopher Reade
Lee C. Reid
Pamela Reynolds Ryan
Jessie Schott Haynes
Jeffrey Schwartz
Matt Schwartz
Leopold Z. Sher
Liz Sloss
Tod Smith
Kristi Taglauer
David Teich
Kurt Weigle

Emeritus Members
William H. Hines
Thomas B. Lemann

Heidi Schmalbach
Executive Director

RE: Impact Statement on Arts Council of New Orleans Engagement with Performing City Resilience (PCR)

In 2018 and 2019, the Arts Council of New Orleans worked with Dr. Stuart Andrews and Dr. Patrick Duggan on their *Performing City Resilience (PCR)* research project. The following is a summary of the lessons learned from that visit and an endorsement of the team's continued work in New Orleans.

In 2018, Dr. Andrews and Dr. Duggan facilitated an extended conversation with the Art's Council's executive team. During that meeting, we identified critical and pressing issues in the city and discussed the continued and extraordinary successes of artists, arts organizations and Arts Council initiatives in New Orleans. It was refreshing to reflect openly and frankly about challenges and opportunities with visitors who not only have an impressive understanding of the city, but who also intentional created a safe environment in which to have the discussion. The work was useful to us in identifying areas of potential development and it was exciting to hear about developing links with City Hall. While we have established significant connections with key stakeholders in the city over the past forty years, it is easy to follow familiar tracks, and we valued the opportunity to think about new ways of working and new areas of practice with established and emerging partners in New Orleans.

Late in their first visit to the city, Andrews and Duggan also convened a public conversation on the arts and resilience at the Contemporary Arts Center of New Orleans. This attracted key contributors from city government and offered a facilitated opportunity to reflect on new ways of thinking about local contexts and challenges. While some of this landscape was familiar, the international perspective of the research project created a particular sense of opportunity, urgency and a new call to action. As we detail below, we have valued the specific opportunities that have resulted from our engagement with PCR, especially rethinking arts practice, strategy in the context of resilience and the arts, and the Arts Council's work as a critical component of the city's resilience work.

As a result of that first phase of the PCR project and our desire to engage with new stakeholders, the New Orleans Office of Homeland Security and Hazard Mitigation (NOHSEP) invited us to sit on the review panel for the City's Comprehensive Recovery Plan. Through this work, we were able to recommend that arts and culture be included in planning processes for that Plan, building on the work that Andrews and Duggan had begun with NOHSEP in revealing the importance of the arts and culture to policy and practice in City Hall. In opening up opportunities for high-level dialogue between the Arts Council and NOHSEP, *Performing City Resilience* enabled us to engage with City

Hall in new and exciting ways, particularly in terms of recovery planning, thereby enhancing our strategic relationship with City Hall and, thereby, the city as a whole.

In 2019, Andrews and Duggan led an extended workshop with Arts Council staff and challenged us to rethink our role in - and relationship to - the city. Again, as informed 'outsiders' to the city, they were able to ask openly about our work and offer provocations and recommendations for enhancing our role in the city. We are reflecting on these recommendations as part of our future planning processes and we would be interested to continue conversations with Andrews and Duggan about the ways in which we might advance these in the future.

A key recommendation from the 2019 workshop was for the Arts Council to develop an 'arts/artists network' for New Orleans, which would serve as a voice for the arts in the city. In the current context, Andrews and Duggan recognized that, while crucial to the identity of the city and its tourist industry, the arts are often overlooked at city planning and governance levels. A city arts network, facilitated by the Arts Council, could offer a powerful voice in the life and strategic development of the city. We are excited about the possibilities for this network to become as a critical new part of our existing strategic development work.

One of the principal benefits of this project has been our ability to engage in conversation with new contacts in the city as well as the ability to engage with existing contacts in new ways. Through Andrews and Duggan's day-long site-based workshop (2019), we were able to productively reflect on our institutional concerns, to think differently about the places, practices and contribution of the arts to the city, and to reconsider what a more resilient city might be. It was interesting to undertake this workshop in the context of Andrews' and Duggan's research essay on 'Situation Rooms' in the city. Their model of thinking has helped us recognize the importance of arts and cultural spaces as sites in which individuals and communities develop and share their specific understandings of New Orleans. We are interested in how this thinking might lead us to frame such places - and our funding of them - in terms of tolerance for multiple perspectives, histories and identities in the city.

We have very much valued working with Andrews and Duggan. Their research has enabled us to connect in new and significant ways with City Hall (through NOHSEP), with arts organizations in the city around the idea of a new arts network, and has challenged us to think about our existing activities in the city with a renewed sense of the importance of this work for the future of New Orleans. We look forward to working with Andrews and Duggan in future iterations of the project.

Warm regards,



Alphonse Smith
Acting Director