

# Arts and the Cycle of Innovation

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With the digital age enabling us to share globally—resulting in an explosion of creativity—Knight Foundation began to seek the best ways to harness innovative ideas and help them grow. First in media, and now in the arts, Knight now taps into the wisdom of the crowd, offering funding for ideas through open contests.

The Knight Arts Challenge Philadelphia creates a physical and virtual environment where artists and organizations innovate, learn and birth new ideas. The simplicity of the model is part of its innovation. The initial online submission is just 150 words, making it easy for anyone to apply. In turn, the arts and cultural community is incentivized to put out its best ideas—and most importantly learn from each other and spawn new projects that feed the cycle of innovation.

As a result, the challenge has helped transform both Knight Foundation—by opening it up to new groups and organizations—and the community, by funding ideas that are helping to weave the arts into the fabric of Philadelphia's neighborhoods.

Below, I highlight six trend-setting artists and

organizations who through their creativity are defining tomorrow's culture.

1. Fresh Artists is creating a studio space to build its apprentice program that trains apprentices in Photoshop, Illustrator, print artwork and more in partnership with the Philadelphia Youth Network and our Digital Printing Advisory Council. The teen apprentices participate in all aspects of the studio, and learn marketable job skills in digital printing and art collection management. Through leveraging the talents of these emerging artists and adding the much-needed transactional capability, Fresh Artists will open a flow of new business with smaller art-based products that will produce both organizational income and printing work for the apprentices that leads to the purchase of better equipment and expertise for training.
2. Opening Night Philadelphia launched Philadelphia's cultural season with a live, high definition simulcast of the Opera Company of Philadelphia's Opening Night performance of Bizet's Carmen on Philadelphia's historic Independence Mall. With capacity for an estimated 7,500 attendees and more than 5,000 registered—more than the opera's entire subscriber base—the free-of-charge event was a unique opportunity to provide access to the opera's programming to audiences that would not otherwise have easy access to traditional offerings. The large

video display and sound system delivered a high-quality outdoor viewing experience that brought opera outside the opera house and into the community. To further enhance the experience for event attendees, the opera provided live audio streaming to smartphones and mobile devices and provided informative pre-performance podcasts, exclusive behind-the-scenes content, up-to-the-minute event info, transportation guides, and interactive themed activities.

3. The African American Museum in Philadelphia (AAMP) amplified its connection to Philadelphia's tradition of public art performance with RAAMP It Up Wednesdays, free evening concerts at AAMP Plaza. AAMP turns 7th Street plaza into a stage for local artists to showcase their musical and performance talents in Dance, Spoken Word, Jazz, Hip Hop, Gospel and Classical that results in the commission a total of three new works. Connected to this showcase of talent, AAMP provides free public access to the museum that increases visitor traffic to AAMP and to the Philadelphia Historic District, thereby growing new audiences.
4. Tiny Dynamite Productions replicates "A Play, a Pie, and a Pint," an innovative theatre concept that benefits Philadelphia audiences and artists alike, based on the successful performance phenomena from the UK. The premise is simple: plays are performed in a non-traditional venue (a cafe/bistro)

at a non-traditional time (6pm) on days when most other theaters are traditionally dark (Mondays & Tuesdays). A Play, A Pie, and a Pint introduced new audiences to our city's theatre experience while providing an outlet for the work of both established and emerging local artists. Patrons, primarily people who may not be regular theatre-goers, are enticed into the experience with the promise of an after-work play, a slice of pizza pie and pint of beer. And the artists, typically people who have until now been limited in the size and diversity of their audience, are given the opportunity to present their work before a relaxed, eager house. The show starts at 6 p.m. and finishes by 7 p.m., leaving our audiences the majority of their evening to do with as they please. It's the perfect post-work prescription! It's affordable, informal, and doesn't eat up your evening.

5. The Art Blog recognizes that Philadelphia is a nationally important center for contemporary art, with museums, galleries, and a growing number of non-commercial spaces. Yet, without knowledge of the amazing cultural opportunities, most are lost to visitors and residents. The Art Blog makes the disparate and far-reaching art world accessible to a broader public by translating art and culture maps into a mobile phone application that serves people exploring Philadelphia and seeking a cultural experience. The Art Blog takes an important cultural activity and ensures it's accessible to a bigger

audience, thereby creating more interest in the art produced and shown. With upwards of 45.5 million people in the U.S. owning smartphones, accessing art and culture forms and experiences will primarily be through these tools. Art lovers rely on Art Blog when they want to know which of these spaces and which shows are worth a visit. And those spaces rely on Art Blog to get the word out to our 41,000/month audience.

6. The Philadelphia Sculpture Gym provides a space for artists that is set up with wood shop, metal shop, mold making and casting facilities. As much of this equipment is too expensive, too large or too complicated for artists to buy, store or figure out on their own, Philadelphia Sculpture Gym provides the space that has these items available for use in exchange for a daily, weekly or monthly membership fee. In addition, Philadelphia Sculpture Gym offers classes, both private and group, that artists could take to become more familiar with certain pieces of equipment or specific processes. This will allow the artists of Philadelphia to become more self-sufficient, yet will also foster a community of artists working alongside one another and potentially together on various projects. The Philadelphia Sculpture Gym has created a space where people not only come to work but who can also access a community of artists to help one another and increase creatively.

I'd be remiss if I didn't acknowledge a few of the 2012 art and culture innovators and trendsetters defining Philadelphia's future cultural scene:

- First Friday in Old City is a destination for culture lovers. Yet the event with 50-plus galleries includes just one theatre company. Soon, Arden Festival Fridays will help diversify artistic offerings by celebrating Philadelphia's many performing arts groups. Every First Friday, a different group will have the opportunity to make the Arden its own. This curated, multidisciplinary performance series will embrace unlikely collaborations, showcase new, innovative work and provide the first established performing arts forum on First Fridays.
- To cultivate new audiences for Latin jazz, Artists and Musicians of Latin America (AMLA) will present "pop-up" performances of local artists and student ensembles via a portable stage. The Flash Jazz Mobile will present free concerts in different neighborhoods throughout Philadelphia from April through November 2013. Using social media, residents will be able to track the progress of the mobile stage and share photos of the events as a way to build community involvement.
- Asian Arts will support five teams of artists to create site-specific works of art in nontraditional places—a restaurant, storefront window, parking lot, public park or plaza, for example. Each installation will engage

residents through community workshops, other public programming and multimedia content. The project invites audiences to experience neighborhoods as destinations of diverse histories and spirited complexity.

- Black Pearl Chamber Orchestra, the only two-time arts challenge winner, will transform a symphonic pops concert into a festival of world music. Featuring guest performers from the Afro Pop, Arab Pop and Pop Latino traditions, this festival will use the orchestra's unique multicultural spin on classical music to connect with new audiences and showcase a shared musical heritage. While diversity is a challenge for the classical music field, this project will help the orchestra engage Philadelphia's diverse communities and reinvent the 21st century orchestra.
- Philadelphia Photo Arts Center will provide free digital cameras to "Bring to Light: Philadelphia" with the third annual Philly Photo Day. Everyone in the city is invited to take a photograph of any subject in city limits during the designated 24-hour period. The photos will be printed each and hung in the Icebox at the Crane Arts Building for a unique exhibition presenting a day in the life of Philadelphia
- Sean Stoops will create an innovative form of 3D digital animation that creates outdoor and indoor video art events screened on local buildings. The site-specific events, at venues throughout the city, will use 3D projection mapping—a recent technology

that animates stationary objects with immersion video, sound and music. Viewers will not need special glasses for the viewings; animations will be processed by software that projects over architectural surfaces, generating the animated 3D effects.

By fostering artistic networks via its investments, Knight is creating the environment for innovation. The artists and organizations take care of the rest. If we want to know what tomorrow's cultural themes looks like, we only have to know today's artists and the innovations they are spawning.