

2015

# Bringing Art to the Masses



Tasha Tavaras  
BlacOrchid Inc.  
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# Executive Summary

The art world is on the precipice of change. For centuries, art has been one of the things that have separated the cultured from the common folk. The Art world has been linked to a disconnection with people who lack the disposable income to participate in it, age restriction which bars young children from interacting with works of art and a lack of accessibility for those who do not live in areas considered trendy enough to house art organizations. It has been restricted to those who have the disposable income afford to purchase and participate in it, but art is beneficial to everyone. Art has the power to heal, helps in brain development and aids in the creation of a safe, strong society that celebrates its diversity.

Bringing Art to the Masses addresses a few of the issues currently facing the arts and its future such as the disconnection that some people feel when it comes to art. Age restriction covers the lack of access to art for children during their formidable years. Accessibility addresses how to make art availability to everyone, no matter their financial situation. BlacOrchid Inc. wishes to offer up the BOCA model to cities and other arts organizations in order to help rebuild cites and to expand the reach of the arts. Bringing Art to The Masses researches solutions to the some of the arts current issues and proposes solutions that can be implemented to cities in order to get more people involved in the arts and arts based programs.

## Problems

### Disconnection



Galleries and museums haven't upheld the best image throughout the centuries. First looked at as a place for scholars only and later as a gathering place for the well-off, galleries and museums have often shunned the average citizen who does not have a deep knowledge of the arts. Most galleries and museums have a policy of not touching or interacting with the art on display, and for good reason. The works that they display are often times very fragile and susceptible to the oils in human skin.

These works are often priceless one-of-a-kinds and are a tangible link to the past. To let the general population touch and handle

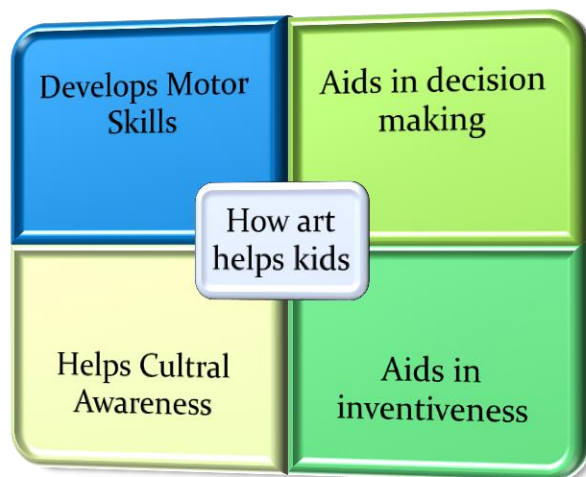
these works would most likely end in the destruction of a work that has extreme historical and artistic significance. While these policies are put in place in order to protect the art, they don't allow for people to have a genuine connection with the art on display. In research conducted by The Arts Midwest and Metropolitan<sup>i</sup> group in 2014 on building public will for arts and culture, it was found that connection is the key motivating factor to do just about everything. If people are not being encouraged to connect to places that provide arts and culture then there is no motivation to patronize them. People want to engage with art but are finding that most of the opportunities to engage are mostly passive and this creates a disconnection that ends up hurting society and the arts industry.

## Age Restriction

Traditionally, children have not usually been welcomed into arts organizations and in the past museums have not has much programming geared towards the under 18 crowd. Museums “no-touching” policy can be a deterrent for parents with children who are at ages where exploring their world means touching everything, a lot.



The main problem with this is that it is proven that young brains are sponges for everything around them and a surefire way to help instill an appreciation and connection to art. In the book *Neurons to Neighborhoods: The science of early childhood development*<sup>ii</sup> by The Committee on Integrating Early Childhood Development, “From birth to age 5 children rapidly develop foundational capabilities on which subsequent development builds. In addition to their remarkable linguistic and cognitive gains, they exhibit dramatic progress in their emotional, social, regulatory and moral capacities. All of these critical dimensions of early development are intertwined, and each requires focused attention.” Galleries and museums are integral to art and children are integral to arts future, not making space for them to experience art is crippling their future and the future of art itself.



## Accessibility

Galleries and cultural centers have traditionally been in areas that are not easy accessible to the general public. This has given off the feeling that the average person does not belong and has led to many people avoiding the arts altogether. A day at the High



Museum of Art in Atlanta can range from \$12.00 to \$20.00 dollars and up. For a family that is struggling to keep afloat financially, this could mean that they have to choose between a day of culture and food for the next week. It is unfair to deny a family culture because of their finances. In an opinion piece in the New York Times entitled *For the poor, the arts are a path to opportunity*<sup>iii</sup> by Robert Lynch, Chief Executive of Americans for the Arts and world renowned actor Robert

Redford beautifully illustrates how the arts touch and inspire people of all backgrounds and financial status. The article tell the story of a homeless, undocumented immigrant Los Angeles girl named Inocente, who was introduced to art through a community based arts center. She has since gone on to be an Academy Award winner for the documentary that bears her name as well as a well-respected artist. None of this would have happened if she were kept out of the art world based on her financial and social status alone.

## Solutions

In order for the arts to continue and expand its audience, therefore expanding its patrons, certain of its past constructs have to change. With the Baby Boomer generation steadily moving out of the workforce and into retirement, art's old guard is changing. More arts organizations are establishing their own rules on exhibition and what it means to be a facilitator for the arts. The BOCA model offers solutions to these problems and acts as a blueprint for community based arts centers around the world.

## Interactive Art

In order for people to get excited about art in a way that makes them want to make it a part of their lives then they need to feel a connection to it. One way to establish this connection is to involve them into the art somehow. It doesn't have to be very elaborate or very expensive. The artists featured in BlacOrchid Center for the Arts are encouraged to create an interactive feature for every show that they put on. The artists have thought of extremely creative ways of doing this. One artist, whose show was about dreams and dream interpretation did simply set out two large mason jars and sheets of paper and pens and encouraged visitors to write down the dream that most impact on them and to place them in either the jar labeled dream or the one labeled nightmare. The text above the dream jar spoke of the artists hope that they would come true for the dreamer. The text above the nightmare jar spoke of cleansing the dreamer of the negativity that their dream held. This received an overwhelming response from visitors. Several patrons stated that the show inspired them to use details of their dreams in art that they were creating. The BlacOrchid Arts Center model teaches how artists and arts organizations can create interactive spaces that honor the artist's work and allows patrons a creatively stimulating environment that inspires and encourages connections to art.

## Child Friendly Art Centers

As stated earlier, Art is extremely important to children's brain development and there should be dedicated spaces within arts organizations that allow children to create experiment and explore art and all its facets. This not only helps to grow well-rounded children but also inspires the next



generation of artists. The BOCA model shows arts organizations how to successfully incorporate spaces for children to learn and grow within the arts. The model provides sample programming that can be adapted for all ages and involves every discipline on the artistic plane. All plans that are a part of the BOCA model can adapt to accommodate any number of participants and only require 1 staff member per 5 children and involve a minimal amount of materials.

## Top 10 reasons to support the arts

### Creative Placemaking

The National Endowment of the Arts<sup>iv</sup> defines creative placemaking as “public, private, not-for-profit, and community sectors partner to strategically shape the physical and social character of a neighborhood, town, tribe, city, or region around arts and cultural activities”. This concept literally brings art to the masses by incorporating art and culture into neighborhoods to aid revitalization. Having arts organizations as part of the neighborhood allows for greater community involvement and aids in accessibility. When the arts are brought into neighborhoods it leads to a natural blending of community and culture. The BOCA model shows how arts organizations can effectively bridge the connection between the arts and the community to increase livability, access to the arts and to boost economic development.

### About the BlacOrchid Center for the Arts (the BOCA model)

In this age of technology, where two people across the world from each other can share information at an instance, the concept of art only being for the upper class is stale and outdated. The BlacOrchid Center for the Arts is an urban based oasis for arts and culture that welcomes and embraces the entire community. The center is housed in a formally abandoned warehouse. The warehouse was once the central employing force of the community and had become an eyesore and a haven for crime. BlacOrchid reclaimed this space and it now houses the multi-disciplinary art space known as the BlacOrchid Center for the Arts. BOCA's facilities offers 2 dance studios, sculpture studios, painting studios, photograph studios, a fully equipped dark room, 3 digital arts labs, a printmaking studio, recording studios, several media arts studios, a screening room, a large gallery and 3

- ★ Arts promote true prosperity
- ★ Arts improve academic performance
- ★ Arts strengthen the economy
- ★ Art is good for local merchants
- ★ Arts are an export industry
- ★ Arts spark creativity and inspiration
- ★ Arts improve healthcare
- ★ Art means business

other smaller exhibition spaces, a writers center, a theater and a separate children's arts facility. BOCA offers classes at all levels and in every artistic discipline. The exhibition spaces host several amateur and professional every year and all exhibition and performance spaces are available to rent for outside shows.

The BlacOrchid Center for the Arts Children's academy provides art classes for pre-school through high school aged students in all artistic disciplines. All classes are taught by professional artists and all students participate in two yearly exhibitions (The Winter Art Explosion and Summer Solstice) which consists of visual and performing arts and showcases not only the lessons that the children have learned but also showcases their personal creative expression. The academy also provides homework help, academic tutoring and enrichment, cultural and educational field trips and arranges college tours for high school aged students as well as assistance with scholarships and portfolio preparation.

The owner of The BlacOrchid Center of the Arts is Tasha Tavaras. Ms. Tavaras has been involved in several aspects of the arts throughout her lifetime, from ballet and dance in her early years, writing poetry and short stories, performing in several plays, participating in several choirs including graduating from North Atlanta School of the Arts with a concentration in chorus, to photography. She received her Bachelors of Fine Arts in Photography and has curated several independent visual art shows. Ms. Tavaras has always had a passion for the arts and that passion translated itself into the need to facilitate artists and to advance art on an administrative level. She decided to go into arts administration and received her Master's in Arts Administration from the Savannah College of Arts and Design. She has worked with several non-profit organizations to implement arts education into their programs and has worked for the past 4 years to develop the BOCA model.



## Conclusion

BlacOrchid Inc. has worked tirelessly to perfect the BOCA model in order to open up the arts so that everyone has access to it. The arts are an excellent way to breathe new life into distressed neighborhoods and to help foster a neighborhoods economic growth. BlacOrchid Inc. wishes to offer up the BOCA model to cities and arts organizations in order to help expand the arts reach and to help solve the problems of disconnection, age restriction and accessibility in a way that contributes to the neighborhoods livability and to aid in a neighborhoods economic standing. The barriers between the arts and the masses are beginning to be torn down and neighborhoods around the country are failing at an alarming rate. The BOCA model offers solutions to these problems to help build a stronger awareness and participation in the arts and to assist in rebuilding communities and to help in educating the nation's youth.

For more information please visit The BlacOrchid Center for the Arts at

[www.bocarts.com](http://www.bocarts.com)

Or email Tasha Tavaras at [ttavaras@bocarts.com](mailto:ttavaras@bocarts.com)

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<sup>i</sup> [http://www.artsmidwest.org/sites/default/files/ArtsMidwest\\_BPWRReport.pdf](http://www.artsmidwest.org/sites/default/files/ArtsMidwest_BPWRReport.pdf)

<sup>ii</sup> Shonkoff, J. (2000). *From neurons to neighborhoods: The science of early child development*. Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press

<sup>iii</sup> [http://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/11/opinion/for-the-poor-the-arts-are-a-path-to-opportunity.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/11/opinion/for-the-poor-the-arts-are-a-path-to-opportunity.html?_r=0)

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