

Beginner's Guide To Community-Based Arts



Synopsis

Ten transformative local arts projects come alive in this illustrated training manual for youth leaders and teachers. This energetic guidebook demonstrates the enormous power of art in grass-roots social change. It presents proven models of community-based arts programs, plus techniques, discussion questions, and plentiful resources. Writer Mat Schwarzman directs the Crossroads Center at Xavier University, which trains youth leaders nationwide in community-based arts activism. He holds a PhD in transformative learning. Graphic storyteller Keith Knight is an award-winning cartoonist, rapper, and hip-hop musician with two nationally syndicated comic strips.

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Customer Reviews

"Beginner's Guide to Community-Based Arts is a rich combination of life stories, curriculum ideas and insights about the importance of nurturing creativity to confront the difficult circumstances many people find themselves living in these days. Cartoonist Keith Knight ("The K Chronicles" and "(th)ink") and author Mat Schwarzman (Crossroads Project for Art, Learning and Community of New Orleans) crisscross the country profiling ten community-based arts projects that encourage people with little recognized power to share their perspectives, ideas and images with broader publics to effect change. Through the Village of Arts and Humanities in Northern Philadelphia, Big Man's Maxton discovers his ability to make beautiful mosaic sculptures and kicks a 22-year addiction to drugs and alcohol. Big Man's personal recovery and public art inspire old timers and young children to collectively join the Village's efforts to transform their struggling neighborhood. The women of Mujer Artes in San Antonio, Texas, make ceramic altars to honor and raise

awareness about the women murdered at the U.S.-Mexico border. Together the women of Mujer Artes build a valuable intergenerational learning community while bringing national attention to an issue often untouched by the media and public officials. While in college, Tom Hansell sees an Appalshop (Appalachian multimedia cultural organization) film about the people who live in coal mining regions. To him, "the film was like a good punk song—raw, strong and from the heart." Shortly thereafter, Hansell moved to Whitesburg, Kentucky, to join Appalshop's staff and made an award-winning documentary about the challenges and dangers of coal-haul trucking through narrow mountain hollers.

Erica Kohl, CommunityArtsNetwork "Beginner's Guide to Community-Based Arts: Ten Graphic Stories about Artists, Educators & Activists across the U.S. is an amazing educational collection of thousands of social change artists of varied, diverse backgrounds and locations. Committed to the concept of transforming communities through information as art, (or art as information), Beginner's Guide to Community-Based Arts is organized on the CRAFT principle. CRAFT is a conceptual map that stands for five territories of the community-based art process: Contact—"Cultivate trust, mutual understanding and commitment as a foundation for creative partnership." Research—"Gather information about the people, places and issues you are working with." Action—"Produce a new work of art that benefits the community." Feedback—"Spark community reflection, dialogue and organizing to spread the impact of the new work." And Teaching—"Pass on new community-building skills to others to sustain the impact" (p. xxv). Many amazing comic illustrations are quoted and reproduced in black and white in the chapters of Beginner's Guide to Community-Based Arts. The book ends with a list of resources, inspiring quotations, artist's profiles, and a Craft Activities Table that shows how "art, learning and social change take place in each of the CRAFT territories" (p. 159). The ideas of CRAFT began at the East Bay Institute for Urban Arts, a teen program in Oakland, CA from 1994-2001."

Nancy Lorraine, Midwest Book Review

Fifty percent of proceeds from the sale of this book will go toward arts-based programs for New Orleans youth. See the Crossroads Project of New Orleans.

Perfect

I was required to read this book for an arts class. The book is mostly made up of cartoons and at the end of each chapter, there is a summary (and bottom line) of the story. Each chapter in the book was a different true story with a different but real character. It is an easy read but the information is

common sense and sometimes useless. It's good for examples of how to include the community in arts, but otherwise I wouldn't recommend it.

good book; good condition

great book, i love it!

I love this book. (Of course, I read all the Keith Knight cartoons first, then went back and read the book.) Lots of good information here. It's a wonderful resource in these times of massive budget cuts for the arts. The lesson is: DO IT YOURSELF (but get help!) This book will get you started, and teach you to allocate the few available resources and align with like-minded activist folks to get the job done. Should be required reading in every high school and college.

This book is wonderful; it's accessible, fresh, and inspiring. Its playful tone will appeal to young adult audiences. The illustrations are dynamic, the language is clear, and the structure is elegant. Having taught reading and literacy for many years, I am suspicious of books that teach "methods." (There is always a new method or 'miracle program' out there being foisted on teachers.) Methods almost always become stale and tired and eventually end up constricting learners and teachers. What I like about the Beginner's Guide is that in lieu of a "method" the authors present a sound philosophy in which they make a connection between art and community. This is presented in a charming and informal manner and without needless complication or fuss. The authors' philosophy seems to be based on common sense, a deep feeling for humanity, and an understanding of art as a vital expression of that humanity. The authors present their ideas in a clear and simple framework that can be used by artists, art students, and community members in any number of situations and for any number of purposes. It's difficult to imagine such a process becoming 'stale'; what you can do with this book is only limited by the energy and imagination of your community.

Great stories that provide models for meaningful arts programs. One reviewer here on referred to the book being political and not arts centered. I found that to be way off base. What I got from the book is how art becomes a response to the struggles of different communities, and in turn helps to address those challenges. So, art is both an end in itself as well as a tool for articulating and facing the world. The drawings and the approach itself is grounded in how art is practiced with everybody, how art is powerful for everybody to engage in (not just those who get to call themselves "artists" and

lead the "artistic life" of writing grants to arts councils). Keith Knight's comics in particular rock!

This book can be used to formulate a grant, jazz up the funders, get students to learn about community work through comics, to teach college art students how to get out and get to work. I am so excited about this book because of how it outlines and lays out in simple forms the organizing process. They want you to be able to reproduce the processes. It's not high falutin art or theory gobblidigook. It is, on the other hand, a highly engaging funny cool and groundbreaking book about art. Comics of real artists doing real art. Great for artists, teachers, organizers, and people who work for social change.

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