

**ASIAN  
AMERICAN  
ARTS** > **alliance**  
Supporting Artists, Building Community

**ASIAN AMERICAN ARTS IN NYC:  
A SNAPSHOT OF CURRENT TRENDS AND ISSUES**  
SEPTEMBER 2009

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## Asian American Arts in NYC:

### A Snapshot of Current Trends and Issues

is a twelve-month research initiative produced by Asian American Arts Alliance made possible with support from The Robert Sterling Clark Foundation, The New York Community Trust, Consolidated Edison Company of New York, Inc., and in part with public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs.

Asian American Arts Alliance is dedicated to strengthening Asian American artists and arts/cultural groups in New York City through funding, promotion and community building. The Alliance is a diverse network of artists, organizations, and individual supporters who believe that working together as a pan-ethnic, multidisciplinary community is essential to nurturing the development of artists and arts organizations. Our members reflect the experiences of the city's growing multi-ethnic Asian population, ranging from new immigrants to multi-generation Asian Americans. They create, present, and produce work in the visual, performing, literary, and media arts, from the traditional to the cutting-edge.

This report was produced by  
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Special thanks to former staff members, Kelly Kuwabara and Haowen Wang, and to interns, Anne Huang and Martha Tien, for their work in the initial stages of this report.

## INTRODUCTION

“Although much work being produced today does not overtly involve matters of socio-cultural identification, Asian-ness, however conceived, still confers a viable means through which artists can view and address contemporary society. Despite their many differences and separate life-trajectories, foreign- and U.S.-born Asian artists are conjoined by a shared presence in this nation, and find themselves impelled, at some level, to consider how they are positioned as Asians in their various encounters with the nation’s social and political landscape.”

— Margo Machida, foreword to *Envisioning Diaspora: Asian America Visual Arts Collectives*

This report is a snapshot of the economic well-being of the constituents of the Asian American arts community in New York City, including artists, arts workers, and arts organizations. The report identifies demographic data as well as arising and longstanding issues, including those exacerbated by the challenges of the current recession.

The Alliance draws on data from two main sources. First, responses to an **electronic survey** (issued to the Alliance’s e-mail list) from 117 artists (85% of whom identify as Asian or Asian American) and 67 arts workers (70% of whom identify their organization as part of the Asian American community). All survey data was included in the analysis, considering all respondents to be part of the community. Second, data pulled from **990 tax filings** for 86 arts organizations defined as Asian American by the research staff (see Methodology for definition). The Alliance also conducted more than 30 interviews with artists, arts workers, funders, civic leaders and city officials, as well as a focus group.

This report is the Alliance’s first in an ongoing series, and we plan to engage in deeper outreach for future research so that more voices can be heard, including from more individual artists and small arts organizations across the city. The list of organizations (See Appendix A) and the findings presented here are intended as a basis for new and important conversations about the criteria and relevance of such lists, and about ways to support grassroots arts activity in the Asian American community at a time of paradigmatic shifts in the economy and developing discourse around the frameworks of identity.

## KEY FINDINGS

### ASIAN AMERICAN ARTS IN NYC

#### INCOME

- 60% of artists make less than \$10,000 a year from their art. 37% of arts workers are not being paid at all for their work. More than 50% of arts organizations have budgets of \$100,000 or less.

#### JOBS

- 70% of artists work either full- or part-time outside of their artistic career. 35% of arts workers carry out their arts-related job full time.

#### DEBT

- 40% of artists are accruing up to \$5,000 each year in debt to create their work.

#### LOCATION & SPACE

- 45% of artists live in Manhattan and 70% of artists create their work at home. 77% of arts workers have their office/workspace in Manhattan.

#### EDUCATION

- 26% of artists are self-taught and 35% have or are pursuing a graduate degree in the arts. 61% of arts workers hold undergraduate degrees and 28% hold a graduate degree.

#### TIME

- 67% of artists spend 30 hours a week or less on their artistic career and 60% note that just one-half or less of that time is actually spent on the art making process.

#### CHALLENGES

- 74% of arts workers and 65% of artists say that getting funding is their top challenge.

#### ARTISTS/ARTS WORKERS

- 56% of arts workers are also practicing artists.

## CONTEXT

### ASIAN AMERICAN ARTS IN NEW YORK: A BRIEF HISTORY

The Asian American cultural movement in the United States was inspired by calls for identity-based activism that arose from the Civil Rights Movement. In 1971 a group of artists, urban planners and activists began meeting in an Elizabeth Street basement in Chinatown, calling themselves Basement Workshop. That same year the National Endowment for the Arts established its Expansion Arts program to encourage and nurture the development of community cultural organizations. This activity, in turn, influenced state and municipal governments who increased their support for community based programming. This was also a time of increased Asian immigration to the United States, resulting from immigration law changes in 1965 eliminating quotas originally designed to restrict entry to the country to certain classes of immigrants, including from many countries in Asia.

Throughout the 1970s several Asian American organizations sprung up in New York City, such as the Asian American Arts Centre and the Pan Asian Repertory Theater. In the 1980s, public and private sector investment in community arts and audience development helped in part to spawn the multicultural arts movement. By the middle of the decade, the Asian American Arts Alliance was founded with support from the New York State Council on the Arts. The Alliance set out to raise the profile of a fast growing population and to lift up the voices of those artists and arts workers who create, produce and present arts experiences that are either created by Asian and Asian American artists and cultural organizations or that speak directly to the Asian American experience in New York City.

In the 1990s, new artist collectives emerged pushing forward the agenda of Asian American cultural visibility, including the visual arts collective Godzilla: Asian American Arts Network, which would come to include over 200 members. Godzilla was active throughout the decade, running against a backlash toward identity and issue-driven visual art that began to sweep the country and the visual art world. The 1990s also saw a large increase in Asian immigration to the United States. Between 1990 and 2007, the Asian and Asian American population nearly doubled, growing to almost a million. While East Asians have constituted the largest portion of the Asian population in New York historically, the biggest influx during the time came from South Asia, with the Indian population increasing by 146% between 1990 and 2007.[1]

## A SHIFTING COMMUNITY

“I met up with Basement Workshop in 1973 but didn’t become involved with any of the Asian American movements. I was on my own path and my vision was personal and allegorical. But if you look closely, there really is a sense of estrangement in all of the work that mirrors the existential experience of Asians in America. Out of solidarity we identify as an Asian American company; and we take seriously our role as a mentor and leader in the field. But on a philosophical level, I personally identify as a citizen of the world, and our company’s work is really about world culture and being a voice for outsiders.”

— Ping Chong, theater artist

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In 2007, Asians and Asian Americans accounted for nearly 12% of New York City’s population, up from just 7% of the population in 1990. Asian America today brings together perhaps more cultures, histories, and artistic traditions than ever before.

In *Envisioning Diaspora*, Alexandra Chang notes that individuals connect with one another in multiple “communities of affinity,” which overlap with other varying and shifting communities in which the individual takes part. These communities, such as the Asian American artistic community, may intersect with other communities of affinity, shift, reimagine itself and yet remain just as valid around which to gather over time.

Asian American arts organizations have also gone through major generational shifts in which certain issues continue to go unanswered, such as succession to a new generation of arts administrators, and the impact of cuts in expenditures on the arts across the public and private sectors, among others.

## A WORLD IN RECESSION

Starting September 2008, a massive crisis in the world financial markets signaled a sustained downward spiraling of the international markets, which effected the funding and employment of both artists as well as institutions throughout the U.S. Unemployment levels from the last quarter of 2008 to first quarter of 2009 rose from 6.9% to 8.1% on average.[3] The Zoomerang survey of nonprofit leaders conducted by the Nonprofit Finance Fund from February-March 2009 shows 41% of nonprofits surveyed nationwide considering a reduction of staff or salaries.

## DEMOGRAPHICS

“I don’t want to have to erase my Asian Pacific Islander American identity and at the same time I don’t want to be presented as a diversity card. But I am requiring you to see all of me. I speak to the issues of somebody from the Diaspora, of someone affected by the Cultural Revolution, Chinese folklore and Confucianism. But I was born in the United States, my topics and subject matter come from the United States. These are not separate from each other. They aren’t contradictory. They can be read either way.”

— Kelly Zen-Yie Tsai, spoken word artist

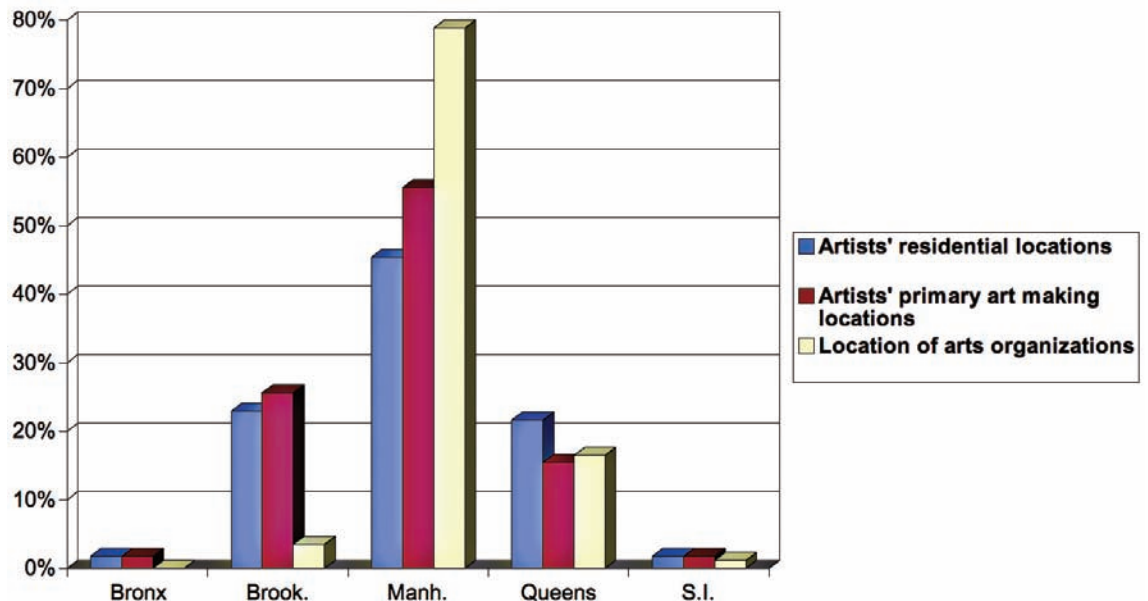
## DISCIPLINES

### DISCIPLINES OF ARTISTS SURVEYED

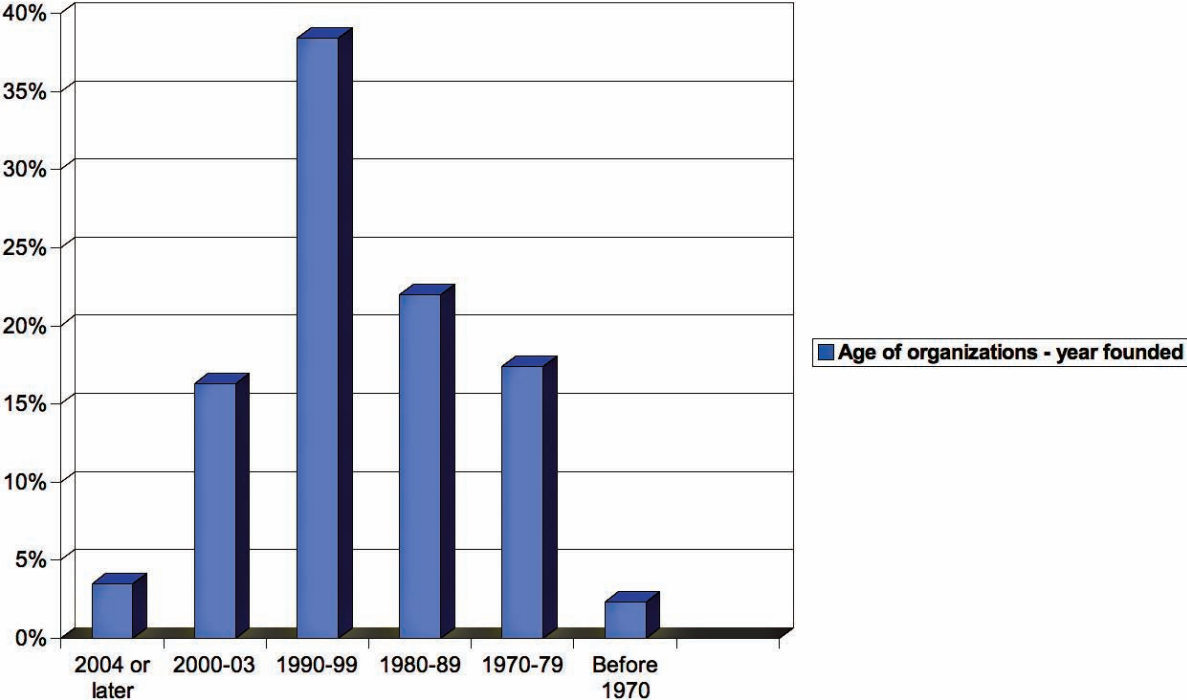
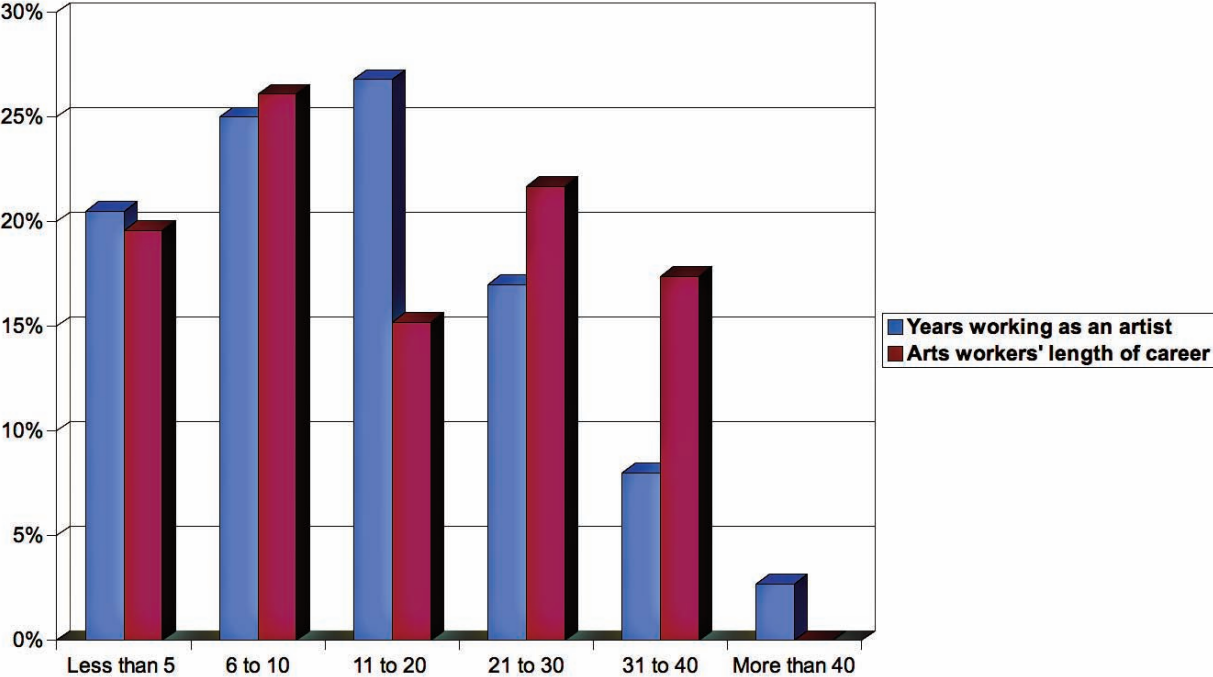
*(artists were asked to check all that applied)*

Visual Art.....	34.5%
Theatre.....	31.9%
Performance Art.....	27.6%
Film & Video.....	26.7%
Interdisciplinary.....	22.4%
Literary Arts.....	20.7%
Music.....	20.7%
Dance.....	17.2%
Digital/Electronic Arts.....	13.8%
Photography.....	12.1%
Sculpture.....	10.3%
Folk Art.....	4.3%
Crafts.....	4.3%
Other.....	7.8%

## LOCATION

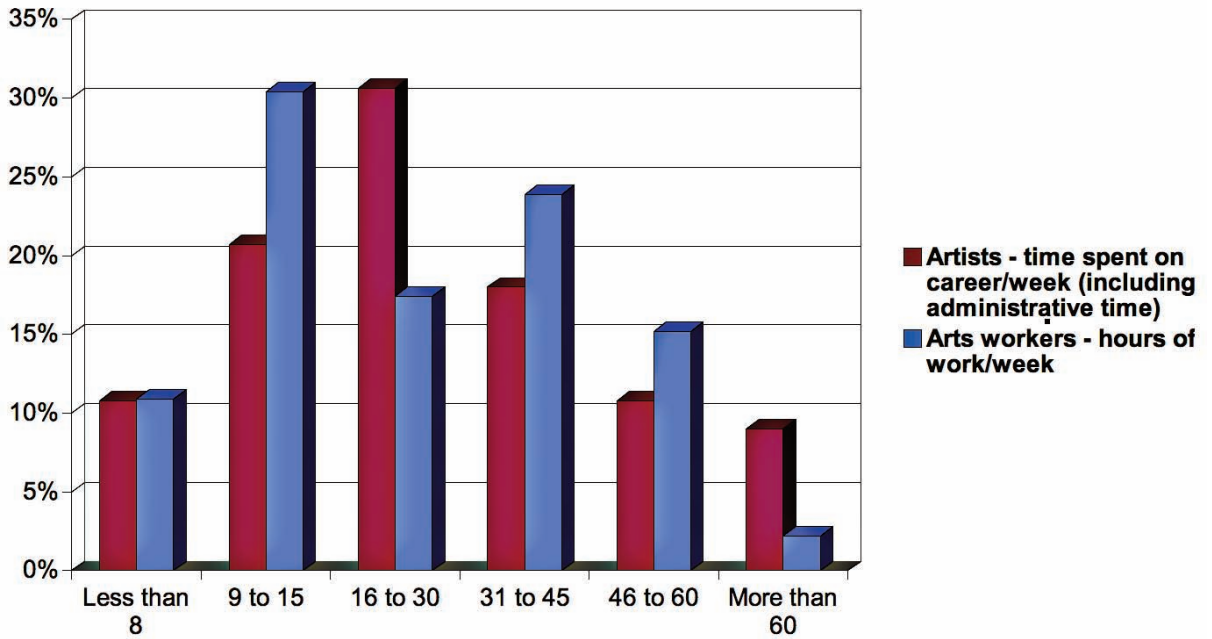


**CAREER/ORGANIZATIONAL LIFE-SPAN**





**TIME**



**EDUCATION**

**ARTISTS WERE ASKED:**

**Please describe your level of education/training (*Check all that apply*)**

I take / have taken occasional classes to advance my artistic practice .....	37.8%
I have / am pursuing a graduate degree in the arts (e.g. MFA).....	35.1%
I am self-taught as an artist.....	30.6%
I trained / am training as an apprentice with master artist(s).....	28.8%
I have / am pursuing an undergraduate degree in the arts (e.g. BFA).....	27.0%
I have / am pursuing an undergraduate degree NOT in the arts (e.g. BS or BA).....	21.6%
I have / am studying art at a non-degree program.....	9.0%
I have / am pursuing a graduate degree NOT in the arts (e.g. MA, MS, MBA).....	7.2%
Other.....	9.9%

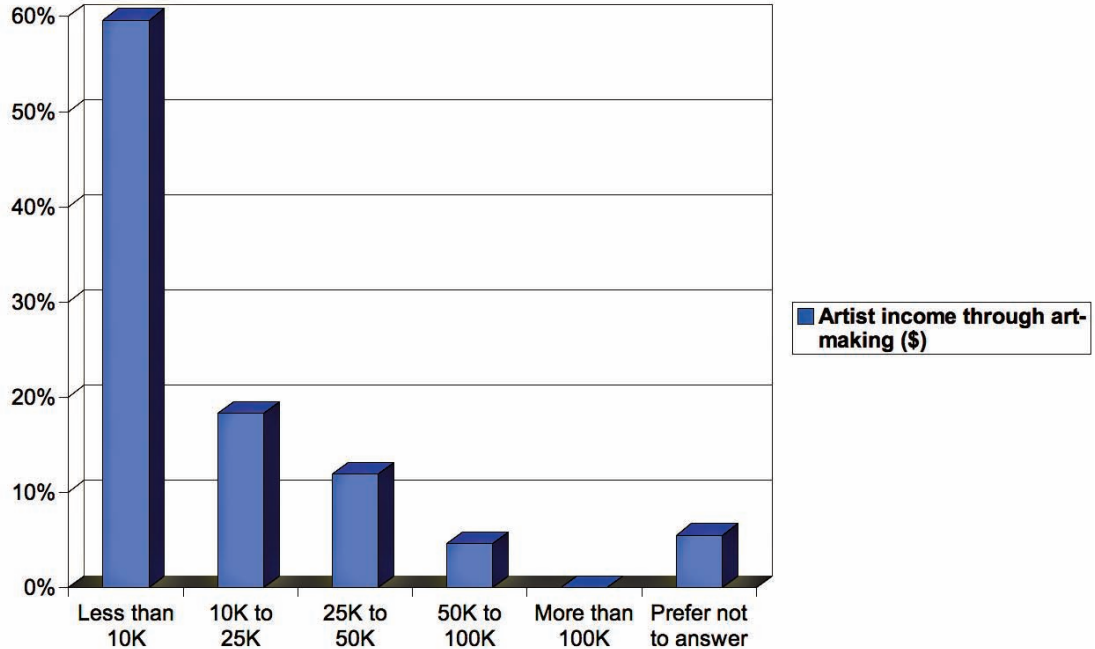
**ARTS WORKERS WERE ASKED:**

**What is your highest level of formal educational attainment?**

Undergraduate Degree.....	60.9%
Graduate Degree.....	28.3%
Post Graduate.....	6.5%
High School.....	4.3%
Other.....	0.0%

## SUPPORT STRUCTURE

More than half of artists surveyed earned less than \$10,000 of their total income through artmaking. The April 2009 NYFA Artists Recession Survey shows 58.1% of artists' total incomes falling between \$9,801-\$50,000 and 76.1% of artists' deriving about half or less of their annual income from their artistic work and 36.2% of these artists deriving none or virtually none of their annual income from their artistic work.[4]



### SOURCES OF INCOME FOR ARTISTS

*(artists were asked to check up to three)*

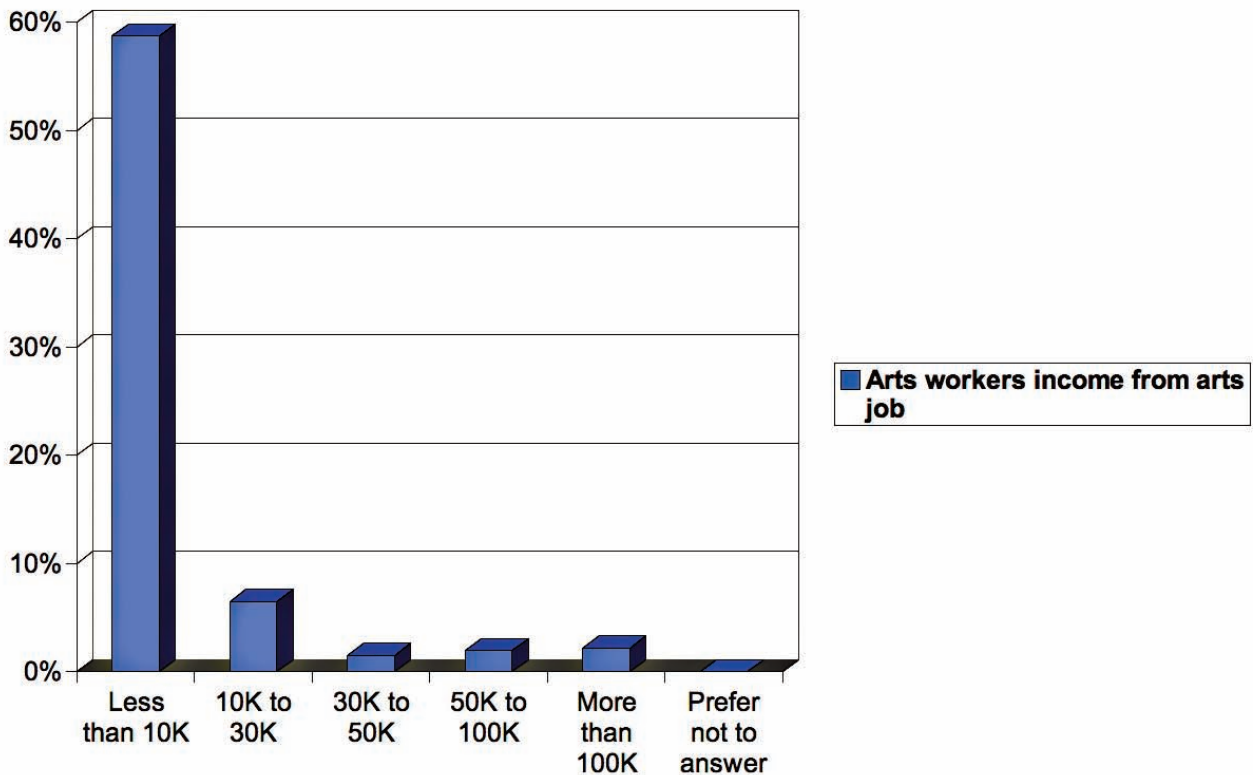
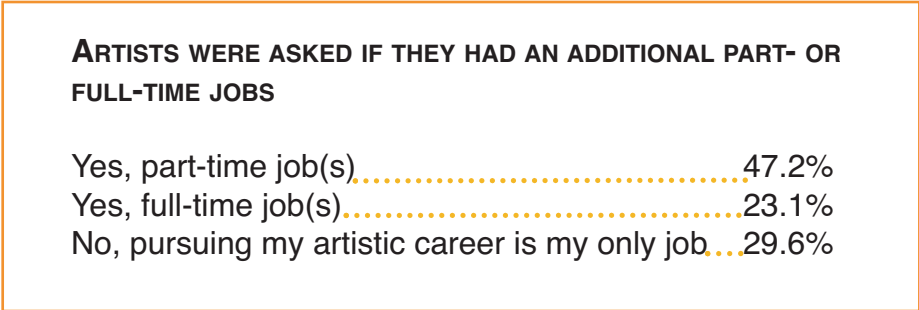
Grants.....	34.6%
Sales of art.....	24.3%
Teaching art workshops/classes.....	20.6%
Fellowships.....	19.6%
Individual donors and/or patrons.....	15.0%
Commissioning fees.....	14.0%
Residencies.....	10.3%
Self-presenting/ticket sales.....	10.3%
Presenter fees.....	7.5%
Licensing fees.....	1.9%
Other.....	26.2%

“Other” answers include:

- Freelance work
- Family support
- SAG wages
- Gigs outside of New York, for example in Europe or out-of-state
- Student loans

“More recently I began working part-time to provide a better balance between work and art. But, now I’m losing my freelance job due to the economic downturn. But, you roll with the punches and keep writing no matter what.”

— Derek Nguyen, screenwriter and playwright



**ARTS WORKERS WERE ASKED THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO ARTS ORGANIZATIONS**

Full-time paid staff.....	34.8%
Volunteer.....	30.4%
Part-time paid staff.....	15.2%
Other (see list below).....	19.6%

“Other” answers include:

- Officer
- Intern
- Founder
- Full-time but paid as a part-time.

**DEBT**

**ARTISTS WERE ASKED:**

**Do you occasionally borrow money or go into debt to make your art?**

Yes.....50.5%

No.....49.5%

**(for answer “Yes” to question above) How much have you borrowed in the last year to make your art?**

Less than \$500.....	20.4%
\$501 to \$1,000.....	29.6%
\$1,001 to \$5,000.....	29.6%
\$5,001 to \$10,000.....	1.9%
More than \$10,000.....	18.5%

## NEEDS

### How do artists and arts organizations, who are already typically under-resourced, survive in a recession?

During the time this survey was issued, from December 2, 2008 through January 4, 2009, the recent stock market crash had just occurred. The answers to some of the questions related to the economic crisis may or may not be significantly different now. The Alliance will be able to track this through its next report.

#### ARTISTS WERE ASKED:

#### In times of economic downturn, what do you do differently to sustain your career?

I do not do anything differently.....57.7%

I do the following (see list below) ..43.3%

“I do the following” answers include:

- I try to spend less, rent less studio space, eat out less, go out to shows less.
- Make smaller, less expensive pieces; be even more conscientious about expenses.
- Create avenues for self-earned income, such as workshop teaching and private coaching. Go on international tour, it creates a source of income that I can not obtain in the USA. Create side commodities that can be sold to audience members e.g. DVD's, postcards, books.
- I work harder and am prepared to perform for free occasionally.
- More self promo work.
- Stay in my full-time day job.
- I do my art now at home, take fewer art classes, buy fewer art supplies.
- Cut down on personal expenses, turn to digital media as materials/ platform to create work.
- Work two jobs.
- Have to be more outgoing and ask more favors of people.
- Assume less risk and debt.
- I push my art-making and artistic scale and take risks by continuing my art-making.
- Since work is more difficult, I actually have more time to work on my art.
- Sell books as soon as I finish reading them.

**ARTS WORKERS WERE ASKED:**

**How is your organization tackling the current economic crisis?  
(check up to three)**

Increasing individual donor solicitations.....	42.2%
Spending more time on fundraising.....	40.0%
Cutting down on programming.....	26.7%
Not doing anything differently.....	22.2%
Cutting back on marketing.....	17.8%
Increasing marketing.....	11.1%
Cancelling special events/galas/benefits.....	11.1%
Renegotiating payment terms and/or contracts with vendors.....	8.9%
Delaying payment to vendors.....	8.9%
Laying off staff.....	6.7%
Other (see list below) [1a].....	20.0%

“Other” answers include:

- Moved organization from Manhattan to Brooklyn
- Restructuring administration to create a staff spot focused on bookings & fundraising
- Rethinking Strategy

“The biggest challenge is simply to keep working and to keep making art... Usually I work two or three jobs in addition to making my art. Because of different grants, art commissions, and fellowships, I am only working [a] part time job now. You keep doing what you want to do and don't give up.”

— Skowmon Hastanan, visual artist

**ARTISTS WERE ASKED:**

**What are the three biggest challenges facing your work as an artist?  
(Check up to three)**

Funding.....	65.7%
Getting media coverage (e.g. reviews by critics).....	40.0%
Finding an agent/dealer.....	36.2%
Health insurance.....	34.3%
Finding an audience for the work.....	27.6%
Finding appropriate venue to share artwork with the public.....	26.7%
Finding appropriate space to create artwork.....	20.0%
Visa and travel regulations.....	5.7%
Legal issues.....	2.9%
Other.....	7.6%

**Top challenges facing arts organizations  
(arts workers were asked to check up to three)**

Getting funding.....	74.5%
Finding an audience for the work.....	31.9%
Getting media coverage (e.g. reviews by critics).....	29.8%
Lack of staff.....	27.7%
Real estate / finding appropriate work space.....	25.5%
Finding appropriate venues to share artwork with the public.....	23.4%
Health insurance costs.....	8.5%
Insurance costs (not including health).....	6.4%
Visa and travel regulations.....	6.4%
Legal issues.....	2.1%
Other.....	27.7%

“Other” responses included:

- Finding rehearsal space
- Renovation costs
- Finding a booking agent

## VISIBILITY

“As I enter this next phase of work by touring to more main-stream spaces, there are limitations. In general, there is still ignorance about the kind of music I do and a tendency for presenters to go to safer musical material like Indie rock bands and hip-hop. Glass ceilings mean you go outside the box to sell yourself.”

— DJ Rekha, deejay

New improvements in technology have allowed artists and arts workers to have less expensive access to marketing tools such as email and listservs and online communities such as Facebook and MySpace. Approximately two-thirds of the artists and 70% of the arts workers surveyed have underlined that emailing is their number one method of outreach, yet their mailing lists are often small.

### ARTISTS WERE ASKED:

**What are the most effective ways for you to attract audiences?  
(Check up to two)**

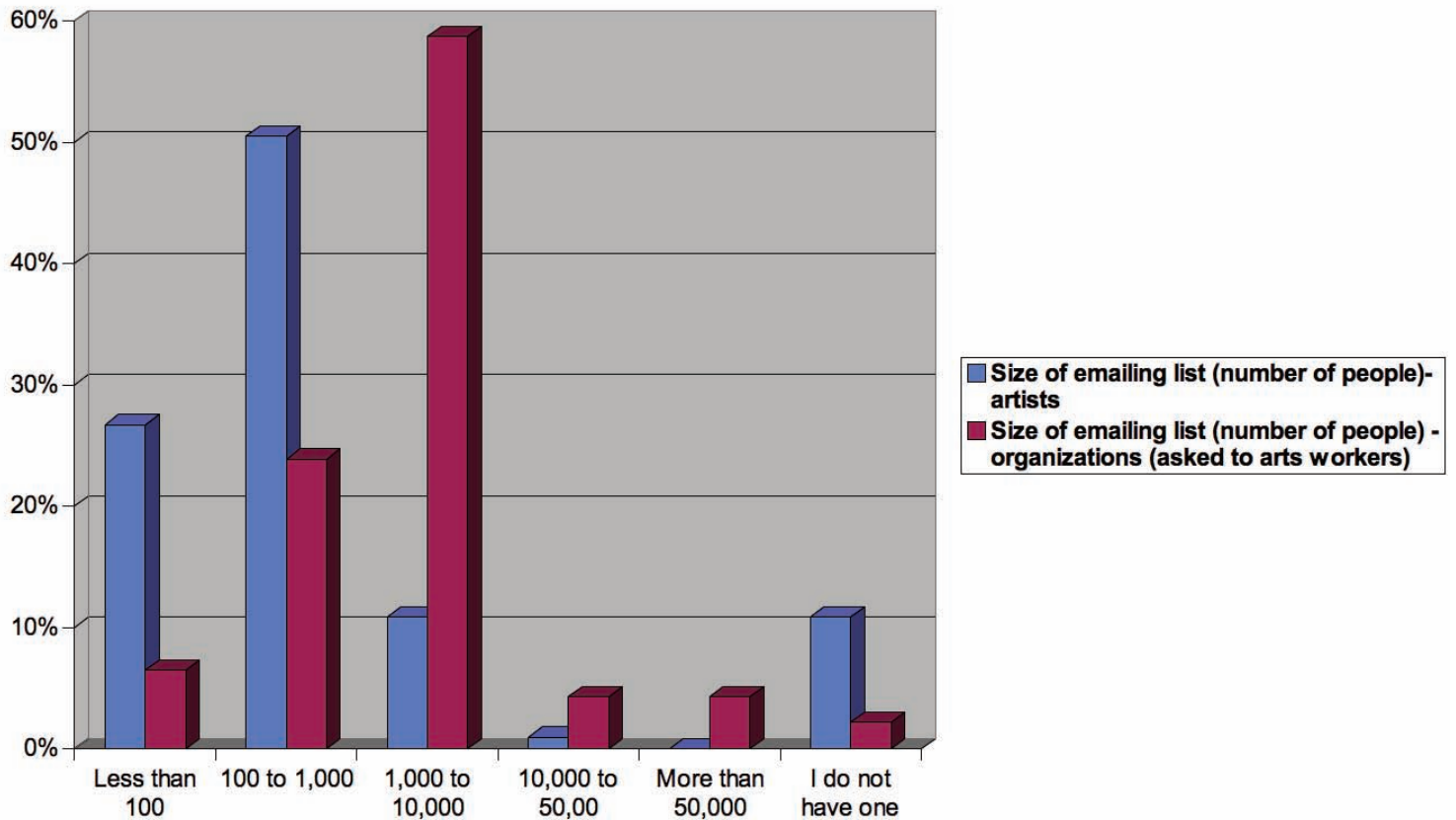
E-mailings.....	67.0%
Word of mouth.....	46.0%
Reviews in the press.....	30.0%
My web site.....	14.0%
Online social networks.....	14.0%
Interviews with tv, radio, and print media sources.....	14.0%
Mailings.....	6.0%
Other.....	2.0%

### ASKED OF ARTS WORKERS

**What is the most effective way that people find out about your organization’s work? (Check up to three)**

E-mailings.....	70.2%
Word of mouth.....	57.4%
Web site.....	44.7%
Mailings.....	29.8%
Online social networks.....	23.4%
Reviews in the press.....	19.1%
Interviews with TV, radio, and print media sources.....	12.8%
Marketing outreach of our programming partners.....	8.5%
Paid advertising.....	8.5%
Press conferences.....	6.4%
Other.....	4.3%





“One of our co-founders and a board member are marketing professionals who provide pro bono services. They have reached out to India Abroad and the South Asian journalists association. We also have an active listserv and are starting a Facebook community. We share information through other listservs like South Asian Women’s Creative Collective, and also use email, postcards and television programming to find audiences.”

— Rehana Mirza, Artistic Director Desipina & Co.

## FUNDING

I don't think grantmakers understand the differences between our work and that of amateur Chinese opera companies...We take six months to rehearse, have a crew and cast that goes up to 60 people, elaborate costumes, and scenic backdrops made in China...We train younger artists and have a rigorous audition process. And we invite one to two guest artists from China to perform with us each year. This is different from the amateur groups that rehearse in a week and then perform. But we all receive the same amount of money from the grants.

— Qi Shu Fang, Qi Shu Fang Peking Opera Company

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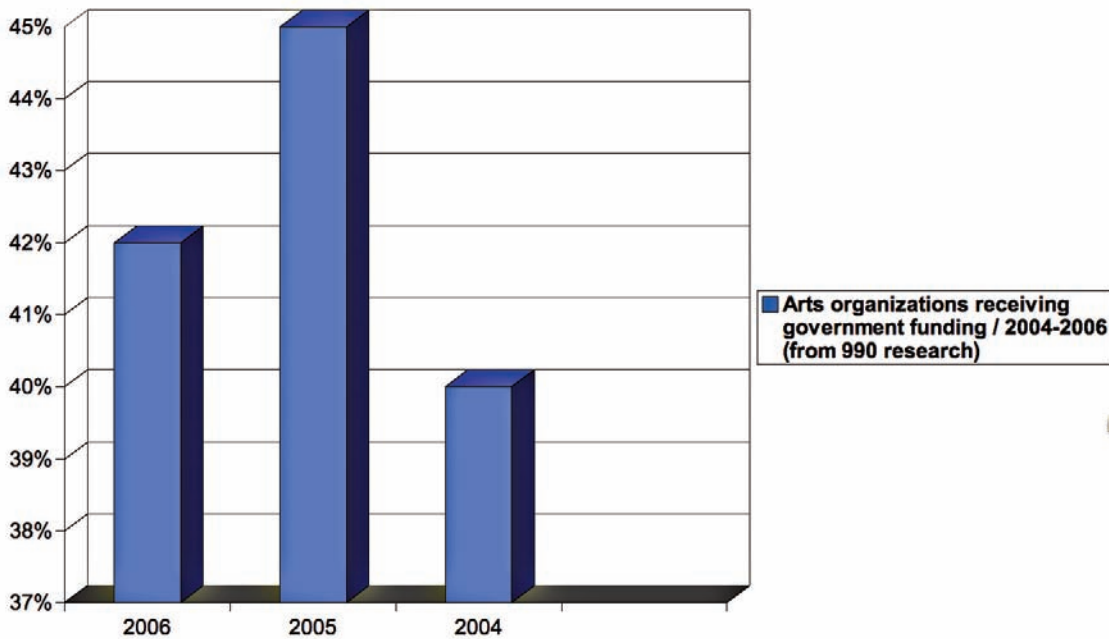
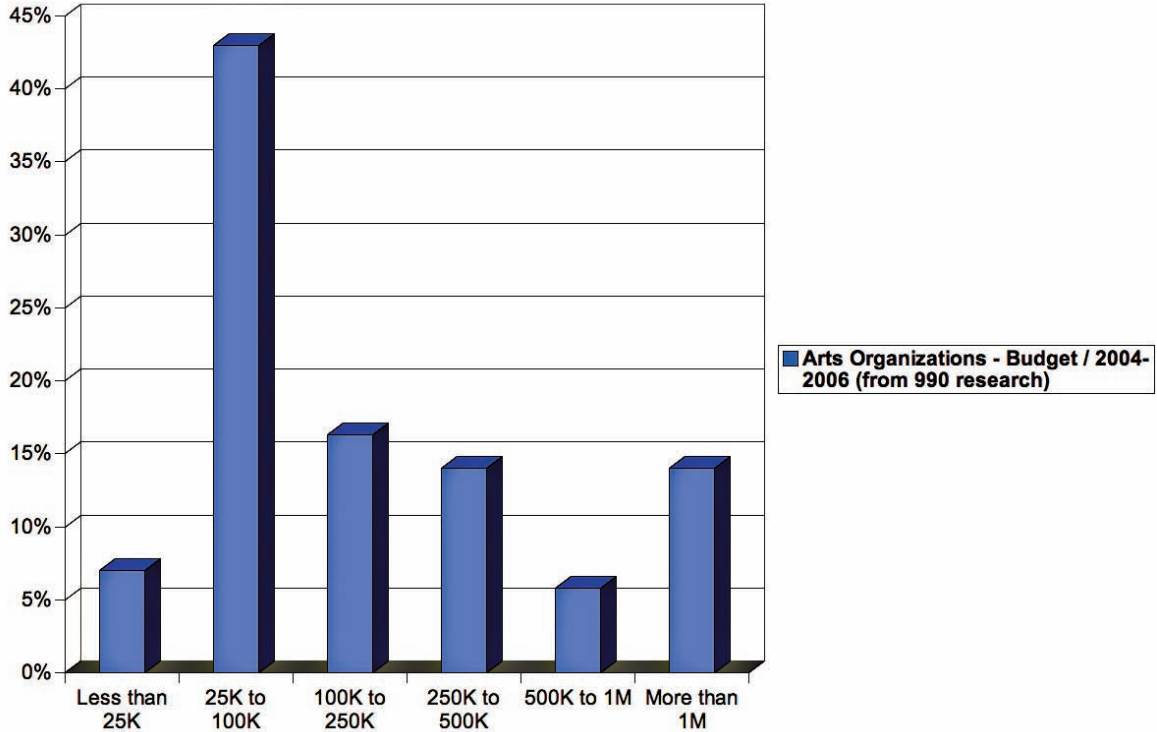
## ARTISTS

Many of the artists interviewed in this study commented on the difficulties encountered in motivating individual donors from within their ethnic communities to give. Rehana Mirza, artistic director of Desipina & Co, explained:

*“People are more interested in giving back to issues in their home country — like to natural disasters that occur in India or Pakistan, in education initiatives “back home,” or medicine and other NGOs that are not the arts. For contemporary theater and the arts, they feel that is a for-profit venture, and that the money they pay for the ticket price is to them, their giving, which of course, never covers the cost.”*

Grant-maker Jessica Chao has addressed the issue of cultural barriers to giving in communities of color in her research, noting that while cultural heritage is valued by Asian American donors, contemporary avant-garde artwork challenges them. To be successful with this donor segment, she urges groups to produce excellent artistic products and demonstrate the connective thread between their work and Asian cultural heritage. She also points to the new opportunities afforded by the generational wealth transfer taking place, particularly with those families and industries that created wealth in the 1970s and 1980s.

## ORGANIZATIONS



While the figure above suggests that government funding at the city, state and/or federal level supports more than one-third of the organizations, it is important to note that many organizations that operate under the radar may not be applying to the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, or the New York State Council on the Arts, for a variety of reasons, including lack of knowledge about their grant programs, lack of capacity to put together a government application, or because of psychological barriers to submitting documentation to the government. Also, this chart does not capture data relating to re-grants administered by service organizations with state and city agency funding, nor grants from private foundations.

“Asian-Americans and Pacific Islanders now number 12 million, or 4.5% of the nation’s population — a 70% increase over the past decade, But from 1990 to 2002 national foundations donated an average of just 0.4% of grant dollars to help Asian-Americans, according to the report by Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders in philanthropy.[5]”

— From the Americans/Pacific Islanders in Philanthropy (AAPIP) 2008 Report  
 "Growing Opportunities: Will Funding Follow the Rise in Foundation Assets and Growth of AAPI Populations?"

## SKILLS

### ASKED TO ARTISTS:

**In which of the following areas would you most like to improve your skills?  
 (Check up to two)**

Marketing.....	28.8%
Writing grants.....	27.9%
Career management.....	26.0%
Fundraising.....	26.0%
Networking.....	25.0%
Financial planning.....	15.4%
Technology.....	10.6%
Public relations.....	8.7%
Using the Internet.....	8.7%
Budgeting.....	4.8%
Communications.....	3.8%
Other.....	0.0%

### ASKED TO ARTS WORKERS:

**In which of the following areas would you most like to improve your skills?  
 (Check up to two)**

Fundraising.....	28.3%
Writing grants.....	26.1%
Marketing.....	21.7%
Financial planning.....	19.6%
Board Development.....	17.4%
Networking.....	13.0%
Staff Management.....	10.9%
Public relations.....	8.7%
Using the Internet.....	8.7%
Budgeting.....	6.5%
Communications.....	6.5%
Technology.....	6.5%
Other.....	8.7%

## SPACE

“I had to give up my studio when the artist I work for wasn’t selling her own work and had to let me go.”

— Vijay Sekhon, visual artist

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### Space Needed To Make Work

One in five of the artists surveyed during this research initiative said that “finding appropriate space to create work” was one of their three biggest challenges. Many reported that the economic downturn led them to give up or rent less studio space. Hai Ninh of the Asian American Film Lab said: “We recently lost our meeting space and now need a new home. This is a pressing concern.”

Artist Tomie Arai had studio space provided through residencies at artist workspaces, such as the Lower East Side Printshop, which provide the space, funds and technical assistance necessary to develop and create new work. She believes in the value of these programs and has served as a Board member for Women’s Studio Workshop. She noted:

*“Finding space to work is a huge challenge for most artists - especially in New York. Artists need studio space, a shared space that is supportive, and that’s why I’m a huge supporter of workspace programs. Today, there are few labs for new art forms that aren’t driven by the market.”*

Beyond the reduced rent and overhead expense, Arai has benefited in many ways from cooperative and shared studio environments explaining: “Learning to work with other artists, to share resources, and create your own institutions was enormously valuable. I felt encouraged by those collaborations, and they served as systems of support over the years.”

Kamala Cesar, founder and Artistic Director of Lotus Music & Dance, cited the lack of appropriate venues for solo dance performances, which require an intimate space. Too often, she has been directed to venues appropriate for a chamber music concert but missing the adequate lighting and wing space required by a dance company. Theater artist Ping Chong reflected on the challenges of finding a space due to his aesthetic and the size of his productions:

*“We’ve been a successful company but we always have difficulty finding suitable theater partners in New York because my work does not fit a tidy definition of theater. We have good relations with the New Victory, BAM, Lincoln Center Festival and La MaMa, where we have been based for 20 years. But finding partners for longer runs remains a challenge in New York, even though our shows sell-out at regional theatres. Many companies would agree that NYC needs a sophisticated and equipped midsize theater. We need a venue that will do for theater what the Joyce Theater does for dance.”*

Playwright Lloyd Suh of Second Generation noted that even as the number of Asian American theater companies in New York increased, there still remain very few production slots. Second Generation mounts just one production a year, and Ma-Yi Theater Company, two. With so few Asian American theater production opportunities and even fewer afforded by the mainstream, Suh stated:

*“A lot of very talented artists get frustrated because we can’t produce everything we want to. So we actively encourage people to self-produce. Playwrights Qui Nguyen, who is Co-Founder of Vampire Cowboys Theatre Company, and Young Jean Lee, who runs Young Jean Lee’s Theater Company, have done this very successfully. Other artists might look to them as models.”*

## Capital Campaigns

On the other side of the spectrum, Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA) moved into a brand new location this summer. Charles Lai, the museum's Co-Founder, shared:

*"It started as a \$2 million project and many people thought we were crazy to think we could increase our space by five or six times and grow our general operating budget. I pushed everyone to listen to the opportunity and see that the organization is nimble enough and disciplined enough to find and develop appropriate mechanisms for continuing our growth. Now this is a \$15 million campaign."*

The establishment of a significant new space for the Museum demonstrates an increased stabilization and institutionalization of an important cultural organization that has deep community-based roots. However, sustaining its increased level of operation presents a challenge MOCA will face in the next several years in the context of the current economic climate.

## Collaboration and Partnerships

Independent New York City based curator Luchia Lee embraced the space challenge when she set out to establish the contemporary art gallery known as Crossing Art, which is located in Queens Crossing mall, one of the newest developments in downtown Flushing. She created her own opportunity and found the space needed to exhibit art. Lee, who was formerly Director and Chief Curator of the National Taiwan Museum of Art, realized that Flushing was home to many successful businessmen who reinvested their income in their businesses. She approached F&T Group, the mall's developers, and made the case that a gallery focusing on contemporary Asian (and some American) artwork was both good business and good for the community.

The gallery functions as both a commercial and community space. Art is for sale, workshops for artists and arts organizations are held here (some in partnership with the Queens Council on the Arts), Chinese philosophy lectures take place twice a week, and artists show their work. The gallery also offers a series of programs designed to educate potential collectors about the value, intrinsically and extrinsically, of contemporary art. While commissions from art sales subsidize the gallery's costs, the mall's developers cover the majority of costs. They see the gallery as a way to both beautify its space and increase foot traffic into the mall itself.

The non-profit film production company Dharma Road Productions has found its own solution to resource sharing in a partnership with the for-profit arts and healing center Center for Remembering & Sharing that resulted in a cultural center opened in 2004 by Yasuko Kasaki and Christopher Pelham. Pelham notes:

*"Center for Remembering & Sharing (CRS) has its own program which includes counseling and classes that are more profitable. It contributes to Dharma Road by providing its space. Dharma Road provides performances and arts services, and CRS accepts what we can pay for a performance rental fee and this limits our risk. Dharma Road's programs are complementary and the for-profit subsidizes the non-profit's activities. This has been a good business model for us. We couldn't have dreamed of having access to another space."*

## CONCLUSION

“You also have to find the right people to work with, whether they are musicians, financial backers, or advice givers. You can’t do everything by yourself. By bringing together a team of volunteers, you can have great success artistically and communally and be part of something magical and that came out of the whole community.”

—Kaoru Watanabe, fue, Western flute and taiko player

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The issues and trends seen in the Asian American arts community are no doubt shared among others in the larger arts community in New York City. However, a large proportion of the Asian American arts community has been in existence for less than 30 years, and organizations started 20-30 years ago are coming up to certain firsts, including generational and legacy shifts at a time of exponential growth in the Asian American population. There are organizations like the Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA) (initially funded as the New York Chinatown History Project by the National Endowment for the Humanities), which launched major capital campaigns and recently opened a new museum space designed by award-winning architect, Maya Lin. Yet, the majority of cultural organizations — even MOCA with its efforts to institutionalize — are dealing with core issues of sustainability.

According to the Nonprofit Finance Fund’s March 2009 survey, 42% of non-profit organizations surveyed nationwide are looking to collaborate with another organization to provide programs. Through its interviews and current programs such as its monthly Town Hall gatherings, the Alliance has found that artists and organizations are more actively seeking out partners to build their capabilities. As the recession deepens, artists and arts organizations are searching for new ways to partner with institutions and collaborate with each other in order to expand financial, staffing, and spatial capacities.

Clearly, this initial study raises several questions about how artists and organizations are coping with the current economic crisis. The Alliance has initiated this research with the hope that it can continue to work with its constituents and other stakeholders to track data over time and engage in deeper outreach so that more voices can be heard, including from more individual artists and small arts organizations across the city who operate “under the radar.” By doing so, it will better understand and address emerging needs, trends, and the possibilities for creating a stronger support structure for artists and organizations who are part of this city’s vibrant Asian American cultural community.

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## METHODOLOGY

### • **Electronic Survey**

The Alliance created an electronic survey using the Survey Monkey online application tool and distributed it to Asian American Arts Alliance's e-mailing subscription list of 5,222. Of that list, 1,127 people opened the email announcing the survey, which was also posted as a link on the Alliance's home page, [www.aaartsalliance.org](http://www.aaartsalliance.org). The Survey was accessible from December 2, 2008 through January 4, 2009 and was completed by 304 individual artists, arts workers, and arts audiences. This represents a 5.8% response rate from the entire list and a 27% response from those who opened the survey announcement. Of the 117 artists who answered the survey, 85% identified as Asian or Asian American; and from the 67 arts workers, 70% identified their organization as part of the Asian American community.

### • **Organizational Analysis**

Organizations included in the research pool were defined by the research staff based on the following criteria: "Arts and cultural organizations in the New York City area active in the last three years and that create, reflect, and/or intersect with an Asian American experience, as expressed in their title, their mission statement, and/or evidenced by the content of their regular arts programming." From an original list of almost 300 organizations, the report focused on the 86 that had government 990 tax filings available for three consecutive years (2004-2006) at the time of research. While this process does not include the vast array of smaller groups that operate "under the radar" within this research, the Alliance recognizes that further research must be conducted on those groups in subsequent efforts. See appendix A for the list of organizations included in this research pool.

### • **Interviews**

The research staff conducted interviews with artists, arts workers, funders, civic leaders, and city officials. Their input helped shape the development of the questions explored in the surveys and interviews and some of their comments have been included in the body of this report. Interviews took place between September 2008 and February 2009. See Appendix B for a list of interview participants.



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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

**Asian American Arts Alliance is grateful for the generous support it receives from its many institutional funders:**

(January 2008 – present)

### Foundations

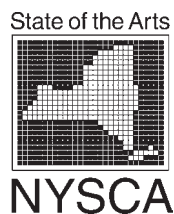
Bronx Council on the Arts / UAI Project  
Carnegie Corporation of New York  
CJ Huang Foundation  
New York Community Trust  
Ong Family Foundation  
Robert Sterling Clark Foundation  
The September 11th Fund  
Tiger Baron Foundation  
Woo Charitable Trust

### Corporations

Arts & Business Council of New York, Inc.  
Citigroup Foundation  
Con Edison  
Deutsche Bank Americas Foundation  
JPMorgan Chase Foundation  
Metropolitan Life Foundation  
The New York Times Company Foundation

### Government Agencies

Harlem School of the Arts/NYSCA Technical Assistance Program  
National Endowment for the Arts  
New York State Council on the Arts, a state agency  
New York City Department of Cultural Affairs  
Office of NYC Council Member John C. Liu



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## APPENDIX A

### List of Asian American arts and cultural organizations with government 990 tax filings available for three consecutive years (2004-2006) at the time of research

Afghan Communicator  
Ahl Foundation, Inc.  
Amas Musical Theatre  
Art Resources for Teachers & Students Inc.  
Arts Indonesia  
Asia Society  
Asian American Arts Alliance  
Asian American Arts Centre  
Asian American Writers' Workshop  
Asian Americans for Equality  
Asian Cultural Council  
Balinese American Dance Theatre  
Bangladesh Institute of Performing Arts, Inc.  
CAVE Organization Inc  
CBA Culture & Arts Center  
Chhandayan Inc.  
Chen Dance Center  
China Institute in America  
Chinese American Arts Council  
Chinese American Cultural Art Association  
Chinese Cultural Art Association  
Chinese Culture Center In New York  
Chinese Music Ensemble of New York  
Chinese Theatre Works  
Chung Ying Cantonese Opera Association, Inc.  
Dance Project Sequence, Inc.  
Dansology, Inc.  
Donna Uchizono Company/La Donna Dance  
East Winds, Inc.  
Gamelan Son of Lion  
Harmonia Opera Company  
Harmony of Shining Women Foundation  
Hong Kong Dragon Boat Festival in New York  
Imua Theatre Company  
In Collaboration, Inc.  
India Community Religious and Cultural Center  
Indo-American Arts Council, Inc.  
Institute for Korean-American Culture, Inc.  
Inta, Inc.  
International Sejong Soloists  
International WOW Company  
Isamu Noguchi Garden Museum  
Ise Cultural Foundation  
Japan Society  
Japan United States Concert Society  
Japanese Art Society of America  
Japanese Folk Dance Institute of NY Inc.  
Kalavant Center for Music & Dance  
Kathak Ensemble & Friends/Caravan, Inc.  
Kenkeleba House  
Korea Music Foundation, Inc.  
Korea Society, The  
Korean Traditional Performing Arts Assn.  
Kunqu Society, Inc., The  
Lotus Music & Dance  
Man Chee New York Cantonese Opera Inc.  
Ma-Yi Theater Company  
MUAE Publishing  
Museum of Chinese in America  
Music from China  
Music from Japan  
New York Cantonese Opera Inc.  
New York Chinese Cultural Center  
Pan Asian Repertory Theatre Company  
Ping Chong & Company  
Qi Shu Fang Peking Opera Association  
Ramos Dance  
Rattapallax, Inc  
Renaissance Chinese Opera Society  
Rubin Museum of Art  
Sachiyo Ito & Company  
Saeko Ichinohe Dance Company  
Second Generation Productions Inc.  
Shen Wei Dance Arts  
South Asian Youth Action  
T. F. Chen Cultural Center  
The Jacques Marchais Museum of Tibetan Art  
Tibet House  
Topaz Arts, Inc.  
Tung Ching Chinese Center for the Arts, Inc.  
White Wave Rising / Young Soon Kim Dance Company  
Yangtze Repertory Theatre of America  
Yara Arts Group  
Yoshiko Chuma & The School of Hard Knocks  
Young Korean American Service & Education Center  
Youth Orchestra, CYCNY, Inc

## APPENDIX B

### Interview Participants

Bruce Allardice, Managing Director, Ping Chong & Company

Tomie Arai, Artist

Theodore S. Berger, Asian American Arts Alliance Board member and Urban Artist Initiative project manager

Kamala Cesar, Founder and Artistic Director of Lotus Music and Dance

Jessica Chao, Vice President, Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors

Ping Chong, Artistic Director, Ping Chong & Company

Diane V. Espaldon, Principal and Director of Consulting, Larson Allen Company

Skowmon Hastanan, Artist

Billy Fox, Artist

Kathleen Hughes, Assistant Commissioner, Program Services, Department of Cultural Affairs, City of New York

Pak-Hin Kan, Artist

Ding Mei Kui, Co-Founder the non-profit Queens-based Qi Shu Fang Peking Opera

Hoong Yee Lee Krakauer, Executive Director, Queens Council on the Arts

Charles Lai, Executive Director, Museum of Chinese in America

Luchia M.H. Lee, Curator, Crossing Art Gallery

Kate D. Levin, Commissioner, Department of Cultural Affairs, City of New York

Lynn Lobell, Managing Director, Queens Council on the Arts

Derek Nguyen, screenwriter and playwright

Hai Ninh, President, Asian American Film Lab

Rehana Mirza, Artistic Director, Desipina & Co.

Ralph B. Peña, Artistic Director, Ma-Yi Theater Company

Christopher Pelham, Co-Founder, Center for Remembering and Sharing

Qi Shu Fang, Co-Founder the non-profit Queens-based Qi Shu Fang Peking Opera Company

DJ Rehka, Deejay

Joseph Salvo, Director, Population Division, New York City Department of City Planning

Vijay Sekhon, Artist

Aroon Shivdasani, Founder, Indo American Arts Council

Lloyd Suh, Artistic Director, Second Generation

Kelly Zen-Yie Tsai, Artist

Roberta Uno, Program Officer, Arts and Culture, Ford Foundation

Vicky Virgin, Population Division, New York City Department of City Planning

Kaoru Watanabe, Founder, Kaoru Watanabe Taiko Center

Vanessa Whang, Director of Programs, California Council for the Humanities

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## NOTES

[1 ]This represents a comparison of statistics taken from the Asian American Federation of New York's Census Information Center, "Census Profile: New York City's Asian American Population," published in 2003 with the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey comparing 3-year estimates, 2005-2007, in New York City from the Asian Alone Population.

[2] Alexandra Chang, *Envisioning Diaspora: Asian American Visual Arts Collectives* (Beijing: Timezone 8 Limited, 2009) 113.

[3] Bureau of Labor Statistics Employment Situation Summary for April 2009.

[4] The NYFA survey results are based on a pool of more than 1,000 respondents.

[5 ]"Growing Opportunities: Will Funding Follow the Rise in Foundation Assets and Growth of AAPI Populations?,"Americans/Pacific Islanders in Philanthropy (AAPIP), 2008.

[6 ]Including: Bradford Smith, et al. *Philanthropy in Communities of Color* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1999) and Diana S. Newman et al. *Opening Doors*(San Francisco:Jossey-Bass, 2002).

[1a] In the case where the category "Other" received more than 10% of responses, a sampling of respondents' comments is included.