

Artists as Change Agents within Complexity – Workshop Series

Developing teaching artists as leaders of community change in complex environments

Why Artists as Change Agents within Complexity? | EmcArts' has a deep desire to work closely with individual artists, to support their growth as leaders in their communities beyond the cultivation of aesthetic culture, or the field of education. We believe artists have unique skills and intrinsic capabilities that, if honed, have the potential to impact community challenges at the system-level. Beyond the ephemeral moments of artistic appreciation, we believe artists can effect fundamental shifts in the lived experiences of individuals and communities. Until now, the unique capabilities of artists have not been explicitly connected or deployed in the process of leading at the civic level through complex change. We argue that ***the creative assets artists can bring to community developmental processes could become central to the complex change work itself.*** We see this as a pivotal moment to progress from the theoretical to the actualized. The interactive workshops focus on five artistic capabilities which our research suggests are pivotal to effective change in complexity. The program provides unique capacity-building support for local artists committed to work on community change – opportunities to slow down, reflect and learn how to make real progress in changing the dynamics of complex systems of people's daily lives through artistic practice. Overall, the program has two aims: To advance local artists in contributing as leaders of complex change in their communities, and to foster local support networks for artists in this and related work.

Who makes a good participant? | Artists who will likely benefit the most from this work are those with an established practice (at least five years of professional experience) in any discipline, that already extends beyond the studio, rehearsal room, or classroom. We seek artists who are deeply interested in community-based artmaking, and who have experience of facilitating a wide variety of different groups in creative processes. We welcome those artists who have interest and experience in community organizing, social impact work, social justice, etc. and/or artists with a background in a field which also encourages systemic thinking (anthropology, architecture, psychology, etc.). Those who self-identify as teaching artists will likely be particularly attracted to this work – the passion of a pioneering teaching artist includes a high commitment to the kind of curious exploration and inquiry that the workshops will demand.

What are the five artistic capabilities? | Our research, and its application to practice in our Community Innovation Labs, has identified a core set of five capabilities that are vital to change in conditions of complexity, and which are also inherent in many artistic processes:

- 1. Being able to work with the surprises of inter-dependence and unpredictability within complex social systems**
(recognizing and responding to the dynamics of complex systems)
- 2. Being able to weave new networks and make imaginative and unexpected connections across experiential and relational difference in individuals and groups**
(connecting like-minded people across difference)

3. **Being able to let go of advance planning in favor of experimentation and discovery**
(using repeated small experiments to discover new insights and possibilities)
4. **Being able to make generative use of sustained uncertainty**
(making active use of multiple simultaneous approaches to plumb unexpected strategic potential)
5. **Being able to rehearse new pathways and dispassionately let go of our favorite ideas**
(amplifying and elaborating promising experiments, while closing others down)

We believe that strengthening these capabilities through repeated and extended artistic processes will uniquely empower groups of people pursuing systemic change in conditions of social complexity to generate novel and effective new pathways with momentum for achieving a better world.

Workshop Structure

Each program consists of two workshop weekends (Friday evening; Saturday and Sunday 9:30am – 4:30pm). The five capabilities central to systems change form the backbone of the Workshop Series. The workshops will orient artists to the five capabilities, and explore the ways each artist can use them in a community context. In addition, we will introduce and explore the concepts of complexity, systems thinking, and methods of facilitation practice. Our aim is to facilitate an exchange and dialogue with local artists in order to find and develop the meeting points between their existing practices, these complexity-related capabilities, and the concepts that form the foundation of EmcArts's existing body of work.

Workshops 1 and 2: Design (provocation)

- Overview of the whole arc of this work, including related histories, clarification of terms, and consideration of the ways this work connects to and reaches beyond most teaching artist/community artist/social practice artist opportunities
- Introduce the five target capabilities that teaching artists focus on to foster innovative success in complex social change
- Engage with the key dynamics of social complexity, and explore the teaching artist's opportunities to disrupt entrenched patterns and activate discovery of innovative alternatives

Between the two workshop weekends, participants will sketch the design of an original workshop activity they could imagine leading that addresses a complex local issue.

Workshops 3 and 4: Testing (response)

- Artists will test out activities from their emerging workshop series on their feet, with colleagues as participants and detailed feedback on their facilitation methods for ongoing growth
- Reflection on key challenges, common pitfalls, examples of success, detailed self-assessment and individualized learning plans
- Closing reflections on the application of this work to complex local challenges

Workshop Timeline

- **June 10th**: Applications open
- **July 11th**: Info Session (late afternoon, more info TBD)
- **July 23rd**: Artist applications due
- **August 16th**: Notifications of acceptance for artists
- **September 20th-22nd**: Workshops 1 and 2
- **October 25th-27th**: Workshops 3 and 4

Application

In selecting our cohort in your community, we are looking for understanding of what needs to be learned and a high level of critical self-awareness and openness to change. Your application should provide a window into the conflicting ideas, creative tensions, areas of growth and hard choices that this work generates for you, as well as identifying particular experiences of yours that seem pertinent to the kinds of challenges in this work.

The application should include two elements:

1. An Application Narrative that can be videoed or typed (If videoed, please do not exceed 5 minutes. If typed, your Application Narrative should be no more than 3 pages and should use 11-point type) The narrative should include:
 - A Personal Vision Statement (up to 3 minutes or 2 pages): What do you hope to gain by participating in this program? Why is this kind of work important for you at this stage of your career? How will this program benefit your career goals? What is your experience with facilitating group processes in the past and how would you describe your approach to facilitation?
 - Community Realities and Future Possibilities (up to 2 minutes or 1 page): Who do you want to work with and why? What are the opportunities and barriers for that specific community (or communities)? How do you hope this program will support your efforts in moving those opportunities and challenges forward?
2. Your résumé (two-page maximum)

Applications due by

July 23rd, 2019 6pm EST

Send as PDF (include video link if applicable)
to

aquizon@emcartarts.org

All applications will be acknowledged by e-mail upon receipt. You will receive notification by August 16, 2019 of the status of your application. Please officially accept your admittance by August 30th, 2019.

If you have a specific question that's unanswered by this call for applications, or if you'd like to explore in more detail whether your application would be appropriate and timely, please contact Liz Dreyer, Lead Process Facilitator directly at LDreyer@EmcArts.org

About EmcArts

Inspired by the arts, driven by a world in transition, EmcArts works alongside individuals, organizations, and communities as they take on their most complex challenges. By advancing processes and practices of innovation and adaptive change, EmcArts strengthens the resilience of individuals and organizations in the arts and social sectors. Through carefully designed and facilitated workshops, coaching, and labs, we create space and conditions to navigate uncertainty, test innovative strategies, and build adaptive cultures. Our current programs include *Community Innovation Labs*, *New Pathways*, *Arts Leaders as Cultural Innovators* (ALACI), and our resource-sharing and storytelling web platform, ArtsFwd.org. To learn more, visit www.EmcArts.org.

About Kirya Traber (Artist Facilitator)

Kirya Traber is a nationally awarded playwright, actress, and cultural worker. She is a co-host of the PBS series *First Person*, the lead Community Artist in Residence with Lincoln Center Education. From 2014-2017, Kirya was faculty, and Social Justice Coordinator at the New School College for Performing Arts, School of Drama. Kirya received her MFA in Acting from the School of Drama at the New School, and is the recipient of the California Governor's Award for Excellence in the Arts, Robert Redford's Sundance foundation award for Activism in the Arts, Congresswoman Barbara Lee's Certificate of Recognition, an Astrea Lesbian Writers Fund award for Poetry, and is a former judge for the LAMDA Literary awards in LGBT Drama. She has worked as a teaching artist with youth and adults, in school and community based settings, and within the juvenile justice system. More at kiryatraber.com

About Liz Dreyer (Lead Process Facilitator, EmcArts)

While Liz Dreyer is a classic rock fanatic, she also has a lifetime appreciation of boundary-breaking art in all genres – both high and low. “I love deeply risky work,” she says, and she has devoted her career to creating the “brave space” to make it happen. After attending Oberlin College and subsequently earning her MFA in stage management from Yale University in 1990, she spent 20 years at the Gertrude Stein Repertory Theatre, an experimental theatre devoted to exploring form and process. In 1998, she began working in virtual space as well when GSRT established Learning Worlds—a for-profit technology consulting firm focused on helping companies and organizations use digital technology to tell their stories more effectively.

At EmcArts, Liz continues to focus on space—and on the “deeply risky” work of organizational change. As the Senior Program Manager and Process Facilitator, she helps create challenging and flexible environments for organizations to explore innovation and adaptive capacity. She designs, and delivers and manages the Community Innovation Labs and Arts Leaders as Cultural Innovators programs, as well as facilitating in the New Pathways programs and helping to organize national convenings.

About Eric Booth (Initial Co-Designer)

In 2015 Eric Booth was given the nation's highest award in arts education (the only artist ever to win it), and was named one of the 25 most important people in the arts in the U.S. He began as a Broadway actor, and became an entrepreneur and author of six books, one of which is the primary textbook for teaching artistry. He has been on the faculty of the Juilliard School (12 years), Tanglewood (5 years), The Kennedy Center (20 years), and Lincoln Center Education (for 34 years, where now he is the leader of their Teaching Artist Development Lab). He has founded many of the nation's pioneering endeavors in teaching artistry, and consults with many arts organizations, cities, states and businesses around the U.S., and in six foreign countries. A frequent keynote speaker, he founded the International Teaching Artist Conferences. Website : ericbooth.net.