

BLACK ROCK ARTS FOUNDATION

INSPIRING ART, COMMUNITY & CIVIC PARTICIPATION

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NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS ANNOUNCES GRANT TO BLACK ROCK ARTS FOUNDATION

*\$10,000 grant will support new BRAF project, 'The Bike Bridge'
January 2011 – December 2011*

November 23, 2010—Oakland, CA. Rocco Landesman, Chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts, today announced that the Black Rock Arts Foundation has been approved for a grant of \$10,000 to support *'The Bike Bridge,'* a new BRAF project launching in January of 2011. Black Rock Arts Foundation is one of 1,057 not-for-profit organizations recommended for a grant as part of the federal agency's first round of fiscal year 2011 grants. In total, the Arts Endowment will distribute \$26.68 million to support projects nationwide.

An independent agency of the federal government, the National Endowment for the Arts advances artistic excellence, creativity, and innovation for the benefit of individuals and communities. NEA Chairman Rocco Landesman said, "I continue to be impressed with the creative, innovative, and excellent projects brought forward by arts organizations across the country. Our grantees are not only furthering their art forms but also enhancing their neighborhoods by making them more vibrant, livable, and fun."

In January of 2011, the Black Rock Arts Foundation begins a yearlong project in Oakland, CA, collaborating with young people (ages 12 to 18,) with qualified artists, and with local partner organizations. Together, Oakland youth and lead artists will create a gateway sculpture, standing 10 to 20 feet tall, made of reclaimed bike parts. As a work of art, the Bike Bridge will be the gateway to the City of Oakland's new Uptown Merritt Art Park, to be located adjacent the Fox Theater. This new art park was also recently awarded \$200,000 by the National Endowment for the Arts, and will feature temporary exhibitions of large-scale works of art.

Tomas McCabe, Executive Director of BRAF, says, "BRAF is excited to announce our next Civic Arts project, the Bike Bridge. This project is the next evolution of our community-focused public art projects. This time, we're creating an educational and creative program designed specifically to engage Oakland's youth. We're looking forward to mobilizing the many BRAF supporters and artists that live in the area with this project, and to providing youth with a fun, unique educational and artistic experience. BRAF is grateful for the support and opportunity to grow the capabilities of our Civic Arts program, and to serve the vibrant community of Oakland."

Building on the successes of projects like David Best's temple in Hayes Valley and Peter Hudson's Homourobos in San Jose, the Bike Bridge will rally the participation and input of the

community, involving locals in every stage of the artwork's creation and display. BRAF turns their focus on serving Oakland's youth, offering them a unique opportunity to connect with each other and to their community, to provide substantial creative input to the design and creation of a large scale public work, and to learn new skills in a fun, positive and supportive setting.

Outreach efforts for the Bike Bridge project begin in early 2011. BRAF and the project's partnering organizations will invite Oakland youth to mobile recruitment events, featuring local musicians and entertainers. Together with project partners the Crucible in West Oakland and NIMBY in East Oakland, BRAF will offer classes in bicycle mechanics and welding to the 30-45 enrolled youth participants. In mid to late 2011, a lead artist will work with the youth participants in the sculpture's construction.

The use of reclaimed bike parts as sculptural medium connects with green, urban bike culture and taps the exciting, creative buzz around 'scraper' bikes, an art bike movement that originated in Oakland and continues to captivate urban youth. At the end of the project, youth will have the opportunity to build their own 'scraper' bikes.

The sculpture's site is centrally located in the up-and-coming Uptown district of Oakland, a transition zone between East and West Oakland. The sculpture's arched form represents a bridge between adjacent communities with a history of conflict. Furthermore, this project was devised to inspire BRAF supporters and artists in the area to connect and contribute to their immediate neighborhood. In this way, the sculpture is also a metaphor for a 'bridge' between BRAF's base of supporters and the local community.

One of the most ethnically and culturally diverse cities in the country, Oakland is poised to exemplify how the integrated presence of art in a community's growth can fuel its success and strengthen relationships. BRAF feels that it is of utmost importance that a socially and environmentally conscious work of art be a predominant feature of this quickly emerging art scene and metropolitan area. Building the Bike Bridge in this up-and-coming neighborhood will provide the opportunity for new residents and visitors to connect with the existing community, and for young adults in need of support to benefit from the area's new wealth of business and culture.

N.E.A.'s grant of \$10,000 sets this ambitious project in motion. Fundraising efforts are underway to meet the project's overall budget of \$60,000. Visit www.blackrockarts.org to make a donation.

*The mission of the **Black Rock Arts Foundation** is to support and promote community, interactive art and civic participation. A San Francisco-based 501c3 nonprofit organization, BRAF emerged in 2001 with ambitious goals to inspire community and civic participation through art. BRAF promotes and supports free, accessible public art that invites community members to interact directly with the work itself as well as their community at large.*

*The **National Endowment for the Arts** was established by Congress in 1965 as an independent agency of the federal government that has awarded more than \$4 billion on projects of artistic excellence, creativity, and innovation for the benefit of individuals and communities. The NEA extends its work through partnerships with state arts agencies, local leaders, other federal agencies, and the philanthropic sector. To join the discussion on how art works, visit the National Endowment for the Arts at arts.gov.*