NEW YORK ARTS COUNCIL
APPEALS AND AWARDS

What if you don’t get a grant you think you deserve? In New York State, organizations that get turned down by the arts council (NYSCA) have the option of making an appeal. NYSCA maintains a special panel that meets five times each year to review disputed decisions on grants. Like other NYSCA panels it is composed largely of artists, administrators, and other peers who are actively involved in the fields they represent.

NYSCA’s guidelines clearly state that “dissatisfaction with the denial of an award or with the amount of award is not sufficient reason for an appeal.” However, appeals are considered on the following grounds: information given to NYSCA was not provided to the panel or committee making decisions, the information was misrepresented, or NYSCA acted improperly, or “its discretionary authority...was arbitrary and capricious.”

In NYSCA’s media program two appeals have recently been argued and won by applicants. In both cases the grants had initially been approved by peer panels. Yet, they were rejected when sent for approval to the Communication Arts committee—a group composed of NYSCA council members Kitty Carlisle Hart, Robert Towbin, Elisabeth Chapin, Hugh Downe, Peter Duchin, Lee Guber, Edward Kresky, Samuel Lindenbaum, Armond Magnarelli, Arthur Mitchell, and Andrew Wolfe. This committee of political appointees checks all grants recommended by NYSCA’s film, literature, and media programs.

The Experimental TV Center in Owego had asked for money for the production of Gary Hill’s videotape The Writing’s on the Wall. After rejection by the Communication Arts committee, the appeals committee (David Bailey, Pablo Figueroa, Ming Cho Lee, Ann-Ellen Lesser, Joan Lyons, Bessie Schönberg, Norman Singer, and Breffny Walsh) examined the application. According to NYSCA media program director John Giancola, the materials were sent back to the Communication Arts committee for closer scrutiny, e.g., the committee screened Hill’s entire tape instead of an excerpt. After that the committee reversed its previous decision.

The committee also held up a proposal from the Raindance Foundation to produce a pilot program for a cable series of artists’ videotapes. According to Giancola, in this case the reasons involved the problem of a non-profit organization making a profit. The Raindance pilot was to generate income for the production of future programs. However, the Communication Arts committee feared that if profits were made they might be distributed outside the Raindance organization. At the committee meeting NYSCA staff could not confirm that Raindance intended to hold all the profits, and the grant was rejected. The appeals panel received assurance from Raindance that the project’s income would not be shared with others, such as artists or co-distributors. This convinced the Communication Arts committee to make a $20,000 award—$6,000 less than originally recommended by the NYSCA fiscal staff and the media panel. Ira Schneider, a coordinator for the Raindance project, said that although the foundation was grateful for the NYSCA support, the reduced size of the grant and the full year it took to resolve the matter made execution of the program difficult. Schneider added that Raindance had requested funding to continue the project for another year, but that application was turned down.

That these two actions taken by the Communication Arts committee were reversed is good news, but that the projects were held up is not. Such interference with the peer review system throws all awards and rejections into question. Unfortunately, such occurrences are likely to continue. They are the unavoidable consequence of NYSCA’s organizational structure which subordinates the authority of a body of active arts professionals that reviews all applications to that of a group of dignitaries that sees only a few.
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This year the media program has awarded 37 grants totaling $288,189 to organizations sponsoring video and audio productions. Selections were made from a pool of 301 applications. Last year 34 projects were awarded a total of $293,247 and selected from 167 requests. The panel making the selections listed below was composed of Ed Bowes (videomaker), Lynn Corcoran (videomaker), Ayoka Chenzira (director, Black Filmmaker Foundation), John Driscoll (audio artist), Robert Kanter (videomaker), Lillian Katz (director of media services, Port Washington Public Library), Shigekko Kubota (video artist and curator), Nathan Lyons (director, Visual Studies Workshop), Sherry Miller (co-director, Experimental Television Center), Karen Ranucci (assistant director, Downtown Community Television), and Edin Velez (videomaker).

The following organizations, projects, and artists received support:

Alternative Media Information, Paper Tiger, by Dee De Halleck ($8,000); An Claidheamh Soluis/Irish Arts Center, Hay Foot, Straw Foot, by Deborah Green ($2,500); Black Filmmaker Foundation, Black-Black, by Warrington Hudlin ($12,000); Black Maria, the Erking, by Grahame Weinrib ($10,000); Center for New Art Activities, Cast Iron TV, ($5,000); Collaborative Projects, Potato Wolf, ($3,500); Committee for Visual Arts, Michael Smith ($10,000); Earthcore Foundation, Monitoring the Manhattan Estuary, by Paul Ryan ($9,000); Electronic Arts Intermix, Good Morning Mr. Orwell, by Nam June Paik ($11,000); En Foco, The River Runs Deep, by Carlos de Jesus ($5,000); Experimental Intermedia Foundation, New Music Radio, by Phil Niblok ($7,500); Experimental Television Center, The Writing's on the Wall, by Gary Hill ($10,000); Experimental Television Center, Video/photo Process, by Peor Bode ($5,000); Frederick Douglass Creative Arts Center, Black Roots Festival XII Video Project, ($9,970); Greenburgh Community Video, Artists of Greenburgh, by Joel Banow ($1.500); Hallwalls, Mythical and Ironic Songs and Stories, by Michael Auder ($10,000); Institute for Art and Urban Resources, Projector/Act, by Al Robbins ($15,000); Intentional Acts, The Victim of New York, by Traci Sampson ($4,500); Latin American Music in Alternative Spaces, Latin Americans in Baseball, by Gustavo Paredez ($12,000); Media Study/Buffalo, Artdisc, by Mitchell Kriegman ($10,000); New Radio and Performing Arts, Like the Free Spirits of Birds, by Helen Thorington ($4,000); New York Foundation for the Arts, Boreo Playback, by Carol Kreeger ($10,000); Parabola Arts Foundation, Cymbal, by Liz Phillips ($20,000); Performing Artservices, Ireland Now, by Kit Fitzgerald ($10,000); Port Washington Public Library, The Gold Coast, by Mary Lucy ($18,000); Portable Channel, Exploring Irokios Culture Through Its Music, by Frank Semmens ($6,700); Queens Council on the Arts, Encounetr in Black Traditions, by Samee Lee ($5,000); Radio Foundation, Crime of Silence, by Janice Ball ($8,000); Rotoulette Extra-Media Resources, Rotoulette Broadcast Series, by David Weinstein ($7,250); Trisha Brown Foundation, Cutting, by Trisha Brown ($4,000); Visual Studies Workshop, Five Video Studies, by Lynn Blumenthal ($5,000); Visual Studies Workshop, Geneesey Valley Video Thea-ter, by Nancy Norwood ($2,000); Women Intercenter. Women Are Talking, by Constance Chang-Jin ($7,000); Women's Initiative, Why We Want the Vote, by Marc Sturmer ($7,000); Women's Initiative, Survival Skills, by John Malpede ($9,870); Hallwalls, Images on Bus Shelters, by Bill Henrich ($8,610); Hallwalls, Indoor Public Art, by Lizzy Kende ($18,000); Home Area Arts Council Large works in terra-cotta, by Tom Splet ($10,227); Just Above Midtown/Downtown, Paths of Glory, by Francesc Torres, ($10,500); Just Above Midtown/Downtown, Visual/ Light/Life/Performance, by Mel Wong and Kathey Billan ($10,500); Lake George Regional Arts Project, Adirondack Guide Memorial, by Brower Hatch ($9,555); Light Work Visual Studies, Adirondack Panorama, by Christian Sunde ($10,000); Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, Trick or Drink, by Vanalyne Green ($6,750); Medicine Show Theater Ensemble, Over, by Vanalyne Green ($6,750); Southwest Cultural, Sound Sculpture, by William Heffelman ($8,190); Organization for Independent Artists, Gates, by Brit Bunkley ($6,621); Visual Studies Workshop, Fekner, by Michael Smith and William Wegman ($8,815); Visual Studies Workshop, For Living Cinema, by Yuet-Fung Ho ($10,000); Visual Studies Workshop, Survis, by Mark Blane ($10,000); Exit Art, Bird's Caught, by Neil Apes ($25,000); Diva, The Rise and Fall of the Borscht Belt, by Peter Davis ($13,000); Film Fund, Coccolos and Roqueros, by Ana Maria Garcia ($8,000); Film Fund, Take Back the Night, by Meni Weingarten ($10,000); Film News Now Foundation, Overseas, by Lisa Hsia ($12,000); Film News Now Foundation, A Question of Color, by Kathe Sandler ($16,000); Living Archives, Far From Poland, by Jill Godismow ($20,000); Media Study, "H", by Holis Frampont ($12,000); Now & Then Productions, Domination and Democracy, by Jose Ponce and Doug Eisenstark ($15,000); Pandora Educational Film Center, Anzia Yezerska, by Bonnie Freidman ($7,000); Portable Channel, How the Frog's Eye Sees, by Skip Battaglia ($10,000); Queens Council on the Arts, Deep Play, by Paul Wagner ($5,000); Spiderwoman Theatre, Spiderwoman, by Bob Rosen ($15,000); Theatre for the Forgotten, Mexican Footage, by Roberta Cantow ($15,000); Upstate Films, Current Events, by Ralf Arby ($16,000); Video Repertorie, Travelling Light, by Jane Aaron ($15,000); Women's Intercenter, Nausea, by Ann Flourney ($20,000).

The awards represent a $30,000 increase over 1982-83 levels of support. The panel reviewing the 220 applications this year was comprised of Bruce Jenkins (programmer, Media Study/Buffalo); Lillian Jimenez (executive director, Latino Film and Video Center); Joanne Koch (executive director, Film Society of Lincoln Center); David Liu (filmmaker); Christine McDonald (director, Crandall Library); Yvonne Rainer (filmmaker and choreographer); Pedro A. Rivera (filmmaker); Lawrence Sapadin (executive director, Foundation for Independent Video and Film); Jacqueline Shearer (filmmaker); Charlotte Sky (co-director, New Community Cinema); and Irwin Young (director, DuArt Film Laboratories).

The organizations, projects, and filmmakers to receive support are:

Alternative Media Information Project, Plena Is Work, Plena Is Song, by Pedro Rivera ($15,000); Asian Cine-Vision, This Generation, by Calvin Wong ($6,000); Camera News, Chinese Restaurant Workers, by Yung-Fung Ho ($10,000); Collective for Living Cinema, Brothel, by Lizzie Kende ($25,000); Diva, The Rise and Fall of the Borscht Belt, by Peter Davis ($13,000); Film Fund, Cocolos and Roqueros, by Ana Maria Garcia ($8,000); Film Fund, Take Back the Night, by Meni Weingarten ($10,000); Film News Now Foundation, Overseas, by Lisa Hsia ($12,000); Film News Now Foundation, A Question of Color, by Kathe Sandler ($16,000); Living Archives, Far From Poland, by Jill Godismow ($20,000); Media Study, "H", by Hollis Frampont ($12,000); Now & Then Productions, Domination and Democracy, by Jose Ponce and Doug Eisenstark ($15,000); Pandora Educational Film Center, Anzia Yezerska, by Bonnie Freidman ($7,000); Portable Channel, How the Frog's Eye Sees, by Skip Battaglia ($10,000); Queens Council on the Arts, Deep Play, by Paul Wagner ($5,000); Spiderwoman Theatre, Spiderwoman, by Bob Rosen ($15,000); Theatre for the Forgotten, Mexican Footage, by Roberta Cantow ($15,000); Upstate Films, Current Events, by Ralf Arby ($16,000); Video Repertorie, Travelling Light, by Jane Aaron ($15,000); Women's Intercenter, Nausea, by Ann Flourney ($20,000).

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