

Culture counts on support

a transatlantic brainstorm on effective advocacy and strategic data collection in the cultural sector, for the benefit of broadening public support



At Tuesday the 5th of October 2010 several hundreds of culture representatives from the Netherlands participated in the conference Culture Counts on Support. Special guest of the day was the advocacy organization Americans for the Arts represented by their CEO Robert Lynch and Randy Cohen (National Arts Index) as key-note speakers.

Robert Lynch described the history of the Americans for the Arts and presented the main goal of his organization: *all of the arts for all of the people*. To realize this goal Robert Lynch spoke about effective lobby methods, such as 'selling' the importance of art in alliance with other areas than art itself, such as education, city development and international diplomacy. Moreover, try to speak the language of the area you want to be involved in. Or in his words: *What local politicians think is important*. Second best thing to do is to find the right person to reach a certain target group. For instance business people are better to persuade by someone they know. Furthermore, Americans for the Arts attracted special ambassadors for the arts, such as actor Robert Redford, jazz musician Wynton Marsalis en pop musician John Legend to spread the importance of art around the USA.



Randy Cohen (*Vice President of Local Arts Advancement at Americans for the Arts*) recently published *The National Arts Index*, the first annual measure of the health and vitality of arts in the U.S. by the means of 76 different variables. In his speech Randy Cohen emphasized that the arts are really an industry, and therefore a business. It's important to see it this way because than you know how the address potential sponsors. On the other hand, Randy Cohen presented successful numbers of special art projects that attracted

many people. He mentioned the *rusty orchestra* project in which amateur musicians could participate in a show together with the orchestra itself. The reactions were so overwhelming that more shows had to be planned.

In addition Ilona Kish from Culture Action Europe presented the campaign *We are more* to raise more money from the Europe member states. The conference was closed by a panel of Dutch representatives of private funds. They were highly inspired by the lessons the learned of the Americans how to increase the support for the arts.



Several conclusions can be drawn from this conference such as: Don't wait for them to come to you, go to them. Find the right people to persuade important people in business and politics, and use arguments they understand. Organize community arts projects, to give more attention to the arts. And last but not least: focus on what you can do, and not at what you can't.

In the week after the conference, the American lesson was put into practice as a new initiative for a consumer organization was established. This new organization called *Audience, the organization for Culture* will unite (up to this day invisible) art consumers and tries to influence the art policy in the Netherlands.

More information: www.boekman.nl | www.artusa.org