

Skowhegan Governors Award

H O P E S A N D R O W

For the past six years, artist Hope Sandrow has marshalled a sometimes unwieldy, radically unpredictable, and consistently enthusiastic coterie of art workers and residents of three City of New York homeless shelters and, weekly, has transformed them into a well-oiled machine which calls itself *The Artist & Homeless Collaborative*. Unlike the standard "Lady Bountiful" situation in which the intramural participants are clearly demarcated from the "extramurals" in the Collaborative, everyone is put to work towards the achievement of a goal which offers a reward to both sides. In the words of participating artist Ida Applebroog, "Hope envisioned a very different program that figured out how two people can touch each other as equals." Whether it be site-specific installations composed of bits of old clothing, hyper-realistic portrait busts cast from the bodies of the shelter residents themselves, a lecture on contemporary art in Japan, a bus trip to visit the recent Henri Matisse retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art, or an energized quilting session, things are always jumping when the Collaborative is sailing at full steam. In addition to empowering all sides, the resulting projects also have permanently changed the physical environment in which the shelter residents live. At times, just for a moment, one can almost forget the anonymity of the institutional surroundings. Rather than choosing simply to document a contemporary social inequity by making the residents the subject of their art, the artistic collaborations have involved everyone in both the conceptualization and facilitation of the art works themselves. Art does make a change



when artists have the opportunity to speak for themselves, to become the authors of their own representation.

Hope Sandrow founded the Collaborative as a component of her own art making, but certainly never anticipated the organizational complexity into which her creation would grow. In her own words, Sandrow comments "Living in New York City and experiencing the myriad social changes of the mid-eighties, such as homelessness and censorship, propelled me to expand beyond theory to include activism in relating the concerns of the public." Her new admixture worked not only for her, but for all. Funded by an impressive cadre of sources both private and public such as the National Endowment for the Arts, The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, The New York Foundation for the Arts, and the American Express Company, *The Artist & Homeless Collaborative* has become a fertile ground for the creation of innovative and moving works of art. The fruits of the Collaborative's labors have been exhibited at the Alternative Museum, The Whitney Museum of American Art, the Henry Street Settlement, Art in General, and the Aldrich Museum. Workshops co-organized with the

education department of The Whitney Museum have conjoined homeless children and museum professionals and docents using shelter residents as the connective tissue. The results of this project, among others, have earned Hope Sandrow the 1991 Manhattan Borough President's Citation for Excellence in the Arts and the 1992 NYC Mayor Dinkins Superstar Award.

Without a doubt, *The Artist & Homeless Collaborative* has made a palpable difference to both shelter residents and the artists who have engaged with them through the nexus of art. Hope Sandrow has shown all of them the way. Perhaps the ultimate compliment comes from one of the participants herself, shelter resident, Lonzetta Poole, "I often wondered what the quotation meant 'Without art a nation perishes or is reduced to the bare essentials of life.' Comparing this idea to the shelter means the same. With art we are better for these positive effects." Hope Sandrow has made a difference and has provided all of us with a model which desperately needs to be cloned again and again. Her initiative, propelled by her dreams, has given both art and life new meaning.

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