

What follows is a report of what was titled the “KC Arts Summit,” put on by a variety of arts organizers and artists, taking place on Saturday, July 6th, 2019 between 9:00 AM and 1:00 PM at the H&R Block Artspace at the Kansas City Art Institute, in Kansas City, Missouri. This meeting was facilitated and outlined by Clara Irazábal-Zurita, PHD in response to a survey of Kansas City Artists of a variety of wants & needs within the city (link included throughout). Approximately 84 people attended, with numerous artists participating throughout. This report is intended to summarize the topics discussed and be open to the public for those who did not attend so they may know what happened. Partial audio was recorded and what follows is a mix of summary and transcription from that audio. Release of the audio is pending as of July 21, 2019. Furthermore, plans are in motion to create an audio recording of this document to increase accessibility.

Financial support for the creation of this summary comes from the Charlotte Street Foundation and was written by Ruben Castillo. Editorial help in putting this together comes from the Charlotte Street Foundation, specifically Amy Kligman, Executive/Artistic Director; Mason Kilpatrick, Marketing & Communications manager; and Jennifer Baker, visual artist & Assistant Curator at the H&R Block Artspace.

LINKS CITED

Artist-Led KC, Need + Wants Survey (responses):

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1top1ORnkGNcKAtRjO9cO--FOgDVcNuk-wbrVl8wW_R0/htmlview

Summit Archive - comprehensive document of recorded participant data for various exercises under the sheets “Capital Needs and Assets,” “Institutions Map,” and “KC Arts Hope for the Future”:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1Kyekg4YUHp5mOPHVpEYHG3EeLBQhSC2FpJSUQPbchQk/edit#gid=0>

ADDITIONAL LINKS

As of July 21, 2019, members of Charlotte Street Foundation have assembled data to have centralized and published. Links to the following can be found here:

Centralized WordPress for the event:

<https://kcartistsummit.wordpress.com>

Flickr page featuring photos of the event taken by Mason Kilpatrick:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/charlottestreet/albums/72157709517389556>

Update (July 26, 2019): Audio version of summary of KC Artist Summit:

<https://soundcloud.com/user-243000459/audio-summary-of-kc-artist-summit-1-762019?fbclid=IwAR07gLiQGjxrdoP1VRHU3pRsZODxJdvDAnAlaEnK-vd0jR9pSP52yWVrcmc>

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The following is provided based on an email conversation between Ruben Castillo and Amy Kligman on Wednesday, July 10th, 2019. After the summit meeting, Castillo asked Kligman for a list of organizations who were present in the initial conversation referenced in her introductory statement at the summit.

This is a summary of the email by Amy Kligman, featuring direct quotations:

-the original meeting was to discuss the studio displacement issue in Kansas City and primarily featured downtown arts organizations centered around visual artists.

-Representatives present included, “Charlotte Street Foundation, H&R Block Artspace, ArtsKC, Mid America Arts Alliance (specifically folks from Artist Inc), KCAI’s [Kansas City Art Institute’s] Center for Contemporary Practice, and the Office of Culture & Creative Services. KCAC [Kansas City Artists Coalition] wasn’t at the first meeting but was invited and indicated a desire to participate in the summits going forward. Not all of those folks provided financial support for the project, but all were involved in the conversations about how it would develop, and committed to having administrators present at the summit to bring the info back to inform the work being done in their organization.”

-Other organizations were reached out to after this meeting, with some sending representatives while others were unable to due to the initial timeline, but indicated they would be involved going forward, including, “Bruce R. Watkins, African American Artists Collective, InterUrban Art House, and Kansas City Friends of Alvin Ailey.”

AMY’S INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT FROM THE KC ARTS SUMMIT ON SATURDAY, JULY 6TH:

The following is a direct transcription from Amy Kligman’s introduction to the summit. It is isolated as its own record, as there are helpful directives for understanding this meeting and all subsequent meetings going forward.

“Our goal in gathering folks here today is to begin the development of a platform that will exist and can change and evolve. The purpose of it is for artists to be able to have conversations in a public space that will impact decisions being made on their behalf. [...] the folks in this room today are a starting point and this should grow. Everyone of you here knows somebody else who should be here and as this evolves, let’s keep reaching out very purposely to make that possible for people.

This essential framework was developed by a small group of administrators who had gotten together to talk about a very specific issue that was affecting artists in downtown Kansas City related to studio space. That group was a group of people dealing with visual artists primarily and talking about studios... Very quickly, we realized that both the conversation and the group of people involved needed to be broader. Our community in Kansas City isn’t visual artists, it’s all artist. The arts community in Kansas City isn’t downtown, it’s broader than that. This was a step in the direction of that movement.

Today is a way to get started. We invited Clara to help tease out a map of what is here and what needs to be here for us to move to the next level as a community.

At the end of today, we will ask you to prioritize where we should all be focusing our energy. And I say, “we all,” I do mean arts administrators who are here and who are listening very purposely to this conversation to integrate this into our work. But I also mean artists and I mean the community at large. After today we will be taking that list of priorities and forming subsequent meetings and platforms like this where we will be inviting community members who are not artists to be a part of that conversation and problem-solving. As we go, more and more people will be involved in this as seems relevant to the issues we talk about.

Also, most immediately: a tangible, visual takeaway of this conversation will be designed and published by JC Franco. JC is going to be developing something that we can all use in our conversations going forward that is developed out today. We will make sure that all of you will have access to that but it will also be published publicly so that anyone who was not here can use it as often as they see it useable.

How this is going to evolve: we will have this meeting, we will identify some things we want to work on, we will have subsequent meetings to work on those things, and there will be a time where will be like, You know what this list we made is irrelevant and we need to back up again. And that's the fluidity of this thing and that's what we want it to be is that we want it to be this cycle of us working on things as we see it useful and backing up and then identifying other things we need to be working on. Again, you in the room are the nexus of that, but as we go we just need to be building that group and building that group.

So one last reminder: our intent today is to center this conversation on the assets and needs as identified by artists in the room. There are people in the room that might not self-identify as artists. They might identify as organizers or administrators. In that capacity we ask that you join us in listening to this conversation and really taking it in and let the artists help us shape what happens next.”

-Amy Kligman, Executive/Artistic Director, Charlotte Street Foundation

SUMMARY OF ARTS SUMMIT

Amy passes off to Julia Cole to introduce Clara E. Irazábal-Zurita, PHD who will be facilitating today's meeting. In Cole's introduction, she notes, “Clara is the director of the Latinx and Latin American studies program and is professor of planning with tenure within the Department of Architecture, Urban-planning, and Design at UMKC. Her research and teaching explores the interactions of culture, politics, and placemaking and their impact on community development and socio-spatial justice in Latin american cities and U.S.-Latinx and immigrant communities. Cole notes how she was taken by how Clara addressed the typicality of gentrification within KC and how the way in which particulars such as class and race influence how different communities experience the impacts of displacement among other outcomes.”

Cole encourages us to appreciate her insights into “the patterns of precarious conditions that many artists are experiencing today as well as the strategies we might explore for coping, learning, organizing and acting towards a more resilient, just, and sustainable future for the arts in Kansas City.”

Clara Irazábal-Zurita welcomes all of us and emphasizes our care for the community by being here today and facilitating the day's worship of our own community. Clara is from Venezuela and has lived in the

U.S. for 25 years. She has lived and worked on both coasts and has settled in the midwest. Today is the first time she is interacting with artists in the community. She thinks the richness per capita is stronger in Kansas City by comparison to the coasts and highlights the ease and strength of collective action that can happen here.

Irazábal-Zurita notes her activities to help us identify insights and feedback that can shape our ideas moving forward. In order to understand the present and situate ourselves in the now and here, she asks us to situate ourselves in the past and anchor ourselves within our hopes for the future within our imagination. She notes our society's lack of introspection, but feels artists are the perfect individuals to lead this. She introduces two activities, encouraging us to take a moment to be introspective and recall our first or more impactful memories of the arts in our lives or artists (for arts administrators). After one minute, members of the audience were encouraged to share these memories in order to locate for them the sensations, place, and tangible moments that affectively pulled us to the arts.

Memory Exercise #1:

Summary of the responses to the exercise:

- Being in middle school in Dodge City, KS and feeling excited to work fantastically with clay and receiving the validation of their teacher needed to keep going on.
- Being asked to participate in a show and how the curator made a connection between her and another artist to collaborate with one another.
- Going from KC to Higginsville where their older brother, who was deaf, lived and seeing genuine experiences occurring there while visiting to work there. Having a level of empathy for other worlds becomes necessary.
- In Marshall, MO (near Higginsville), going on a road trip to see Willie Nelson and seeing a big community turnout for this large music festival. Being around music and being around people meant to him to get him back on track in his life and out of a very dark experience.
- The 90s, the decade they went to the Art Institute. Recalling very a type of self-focused public art and remembering where they achieved their own sense of self and making some of their most personal work.
- Memory of KC artwork going to Miami and getting all this work into one truck to travel there. Feeling this sense of investment in the 90s and having faith in each other and in curators and having that sense of wealth.
- Art always being in the family and recalling seeing their mother dancing in private. This type of integration of art into life demonstrates something we all need to have.

Imagination Exercise #2:

Irazábal-Zurita encourages us now to return to a more introspective state again and now imagine our hopes and dreams into, if possible, individual words to be shared by the audience members.

- Get into neighborhoods and get individual stories (recognizing our own individuality, perhaps specifically with artists)

- Affordability and providing breaks on rent for artists
- Diversity in all programming and open access
- Maps and transportation (to encourage a less myopic arts scene and eliminate some of the current feelings of incestuousness within the KC arts community)
- A (safe) space for more risk and collaboration between different areas
- Understanding safe spaces and recognize the need to make accessible space for artists of color, free from white fragility
- Focus on the long-term and acknowledge the need for intersectionality
- Regular access to information for communities who don't have access, particular with adult-directed programming
- Disabilities

A full list of what was recorded in this exercise can be found in the [Summit Archive](#) under the "KC Arts Hope for the Future" sheet.

Identifying Current Assets Exercise:

Irazábal-Zurita addresses the [Artist-Led KC Needs & Wants Survey](#), noting the need for space was the main priority amongst the 66 participants. Irazábal-Zurita asks us to turn to the now and identify on various maps of the city our assets supporting the art. This is encouraged to be taken broadly. The maps provided cover Wyandotte County, the Metro area (which includes Lawrence), and downtown Kansas City.

Addressing the need to preserve what we have, this exercise is a collective inventory of the arts in Kansas City. Irazábal-Zurita asks us to share what is found and to make it complete and accurate through more contributions.

A full list of what was recorded on these maps can be found in the [Summit Archive](#) document under the "Institutions Map" sheet.

After the exercise, the audience brought up the following points on the scale of the assets in the city.:

- One-Percent for the Arts' future funding is a strong potential and in particular, the potential for affordable housing near the downtown airport (not quite happening, yet). Irazábal-Zurita emphasizes the need to not focus too much on potential, but to identify the present physical or spatial assets.
- Wyandotte County is an untapped and under-utilized area. There is space for sale there and our concentration seems to be in midtown or downtown (editor's note: Platte County was listed on the map, but curiously has no contribution as to what is available for the arts there).

Irazábal-Zurita importantly notes our inventory will not be complete and this can become very apparent once the maps are publicized.

- The public libraries are very under-utilized and should be included.

- With so much public art in Kansas City, it all tends to be forgotten about, particularly when we just had the Open Spaces event. While a lot of new art work was introduced to the city in a public fashion, a lot of our older public art was ignored. For example, a Dale Eldred sculpture in Cypress Park been completely overgrown and is not maintained by the city. Irazábal-Zurita addresses how we can include these tours to locals and visitors. Additionally, she encourages public schools to include tours of these public artworks to engage curiosity within our city in our educational pursuits (as opposed to just happening at the colleges and Art Institute). We don't need to wait for landmark exhibitions to take our students to see them.
- Having more Graffiti Tours across the city, not just in Graffiti Alley. Irazábal-Zurita notes that professors can make these spaces alive by including them as part of our public consciousness. We need to grow our community in the same way that *30 Americans* at the Nelson had a community advisory group to help grow what exists and create a stronger archive for the future.

In general, Irazábal-Zurita seems to ask us to think of our roles as citizens and what we do for our cities. How can we record what is here to make our present more aligned with what we want.

-At this point, we break for fifteen minutes-

After our break, Irazábal-Zurita introduces the audience to the seven different capitals. She summarizes them, along with providing infographics posted around the room.

Human

Capital we bring ourselves as individuals, but it also aggregates that collectively. It can refer to level of education, types of skills (entrepreneurial, artists), and our health (our own well-being considered as an asset).

Social

What we have as a collective. Refers to relationships, networks, resources, and values who support our work. This involves organizations, such as the ones putting this summit together. Community and neighborhoods.

Cultural

Rituals, values (social, cultural, religious) which support us as a community. Languages we share, not just individual languages but also media languages (the things we use to make our work).

Political

How well represented are we in the decision-making spheres affecting us? Do we show up to vote? Do we have representatives in our local government?

Financial

What capital can we tap into to build this community we want. In a capitalist society, we must acknowledge how artists have been converted into commodity. We must be aware of this game but not be subservient to it.

Natural

Harder to see this type. We believe our city is defined by what is built up and that our city is what we have constructed, but rather this refers to the environmental elements that without, we would not be healthy (flora, fauna, the air, etc)

Built

What was referred to when we were mapping in the earlier exercise. When spaces become less affordable, they can become less tangible.

The audience posted a variety of assets for each of these capitals and shared these. The hope for addressing each form of capital individually was to help us see how these things can be interrelated.

The full list of these assets and needs inventoried in both the Assets and Needs exercises was made into a spreadsheet by an H&R Block Artspace intern and can be found here in the [Summit Archive](#), specifically in the “Capital Assets and Needs” sheet.

Notes made by Irazábal-Zurita regarding a presentation of Kansas City’s assets:

Human

Skills themselves are human assets.

Social

We need to build on the public programming. Social groups build cultures

Cultural

UNESCO-recognized as a city of music. That is part of our cultural asset. This list addresses diversity of all of the artists collectives

Financial

It’s important to think about things/assets and we need to really acknowledge and use them. They matter

Natural

Think beyond what we have, but about their quality as well and not take them for granted.

Political

We need to take a stronger political turn in our community and get more people to consider running for local office.

Built

A collaboration with Natural capital, amongst others and create a synergy.

Overall, she suggests we must start a planning project from a point of strength/wealth in our capitals.

Notes from Irazábal-Zurita regarding a presentation of Kansas City's needs:**Built**

We need all types of spaces made but we also need more courage around our built capital and thinking beyond ownership. We need to partner with others more.

Political

Educate! Organize! Advocate!

Natural

Here, we are thinking very big in how artists can raise awareness and collaborate with mother Earth to better our planet's health

Financial

We are thinking about making immediate needs or challenges come within our grasp. We are thinking about short-term and long-term needs. We first need to imagine the revolutionary future, to name it and then embrace it together

Cultural

Get behind reparations

Social

We need to imagine things that are intrinsic, things we grow endogenously rather than exogenously. We need more solidarity and collaboration, being more explicit in our needs and declare, as a collective what it is we need.

Human

These are comprehensive lists and we must keep investing, individually.

For convenience again, a full-list of what was recorded during this exercise can be found here on the sheet "Capital Assets and Needs":

[Summit Archive](#)

Ultimately, now we must find ways to prioritize. How can we find an entry point and start working on some of that? Irazábal-Zurita encourages us to economize and prioritize.

Lastly, our final exercise included this prioritization. To do this, all participants were given 6 dots to put onto *assets* and 6 dots for *needs*. Participants were encouraged to go around the room to all the different capitals and prioritize between the two areas. With only 6 choices, we would not be able to individually prioritize one asset and need per capital. Furthermore, we were allowed to prioritize multiple assets and needs for each of the 7 capitals, thus meaning one or more capitals could be left out of own individual prioritizations.

[Writer's note: audio recording of this portion of the meeting was cut short and not collected for this portion of the meeting. The following information was gleaned from the infographics participants worked from during the meeting and was noted strictly on the basis of quantity and from the [Summit Archive](#). Items listed on this spreadsheet which include parenthesis numbers indicate how many participants in the activity cited this as a priority.]

We then went around the room and addressed the top two assets and needs per capital.

KC Arts Priorities Exercise:

Built

Assets: Public Libraries, Non-conventional Artspace

Needs: Artist Ownership Investment Ops, Affordable housing & studio space

Political

Assets: KC Tenants, Artists in the political dialogue

Needs: Arts Representation without political agenda; Leadership development for creatives; Less police/prison abolition (this last one was also specifically vocalized by members of the audience)

Natural

Assets: Community gardens

Needs: Reel in big developers - make them honor smallness, texture, weirdness, and plant trees/pocket parks

Financial

Assets: Artist & Project Grants/Scholarships

Needs: Pay artists & writers

Cultural

Assets: We value our past, present, and future cultures

Needs: Land Acknowledgement (Osage, Kansa, Souix); support + space for subculture & subversion

Social

Assets: Small pockets of artists meeting to push each other's work (ex. RAD school, hosted by Julia Cole);

Needs: More advocates + representation; sober gatherings + non-alcoholic drink offerings at events

Human

Assets: Publications (Informality Blog, The Pitch, Artspeak Radio); Elders are still present to share their wisdom

Needs: Healthcare; More representation of marginalized voice in all spaces.

This concluded the first meeting. From this list of priorities, the next steps will be made. Suggestions were collected by Charlotte Street and can be further provided to them directly via the WordPress created by Mason Kilpatrick. All artists of Kansas City are urged to make their voices heard.

<https://kcartistsummit.wordpress.com>