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BUSINESS OF ART

ASSISTANCE FOR ARTISTS IN NEED

BY DANIEL GRANT

Numerous accolades can be heaped upon an artist during his or her lifetime, including awards, sold-out gallery exhibitions, a museum retrospective, or rave reviews in an art magazine. Unfortunately, an artist may also experience certain setbacks, including illness or injury, which may prevent him or her from working. Suddenly faced with enormous medical expenses, often without sufficient health insurance, the artist can become destitute.

Several nonprofit organizations in the country—including New York-based Artists' Fellowship—are providing monetary support to artists in need.

"By the time artists in this situation apply to us, they're usually pretty desperate for financial help," says Babette Bloch, the president of Artists' Fellowship, which provides monetary assistance to artists and their families who find themselves in dire financial need as a result of a medical emergency, disability, or natural disaster.

The list of artists applying to Artists' Fellowship is long, and the number of recipients is shorter, based on the amount of money available to distribute and the degree to which the awards—currently ranging from \$400 to \$12,000—can actually help. In

2006, Artists' Fellowship helped 60 artists, the most ever in one year, on account of the organization's \$4 million endowment raised exclusively by members' dues, gifts, and bequests dating back to 1859. "Although we can't solve everyone's problems," Bloch says, "we try to give to those in situations where our money can do the most good." She added that the fellowship also provides "a psychological lift because artists know there is a community of artists wanting to help."

The organization—the oldest of its kind in the United States, founded in 1859 under the name The Helpful Society—is an all-volunteer group, without paid directors and financial advisors. At present, Artists' Fellowship has approximately 400 dues-paying members, and there is a board that receives and evaluates requests for help. A five-member Relief and Assistance Committee heads the initial review, before making its recommendations to the full board, which votes on awards. Some of the decisions require little discussion, while others take more, such as the 33-year-old artist with lung cancer who had medical coverage but was interested in alternative treatments that her insurance did not cover—she received an award.

Because it is sometimes difficult for applicants to admit that they are in financial distress and need immediate help, confidentiality at Artists' Fellowship is of

paramount importance. "We receive applications from some very well-known artists who have fallen on hard times," says Marc Mellon, a sculptor and former president of Artists' Fellowship. "It makes you shake your head wondering what happened, but I guess we're all a car accident or fall away from being victims of enormous medical bills."

Applying for aid from Artists' Fellowship involves filling out a brief, two-page form that asks for a limited amount of information: Is the applicant a professional, self-supporting artist? Does the individual have medical insurance? What is the artist's individual or household income? What is the nature of the emergency? Applicants are asked to send in slides of their current work, but decisions are based entirely on need and not on the work's style. "Our taste in art is no factor," says portraitist Everett Raymond Kinstler, a member of Artists' Fellowship since the late 1950s and a former president. "If they have the credentials as professional artists and can show they are in financial distress as a result of hardship, we try to help."

An artist's financial crisis may develop quickly, and Artists' Fellowship is able to respond quickly: there are no set application deadlines and the organization holds monthly meetings, moving even faster when a particularly desperate situation arises. "Meetings are often hard on board members because there's so much bad news out there," says Mellon, "but sometimes those members leave the meetings invigorated, realizing that the small amounts of money we give really can do an enormous amount of good." ■

For more information on Artists' Fellowship, including applying for aid or becoming a member, call (646) 230-9833, e-mail info@artistsfellowship.org, or visit www.artistsfellowship.org.

Following is a selected list of some of the many nonprofit groups and foundations providing rapid-response aid programs for artists in need:

Adolph and Esther Gottlieb Foundation

380 W. Broadway
New York, NY 10012
(212) 226-0581
www.gottliebfoundation.org
Emergency-assistance program providing one-time financial help up to \$10,000 for artists facing specific emergencies, such as fire, flood, or medical care.

Americans for the Arts

1000 Vermont Ave., N.W.
Washington, DC 20005
(202) 371-2830
www.artsusa.org
Financial assistance for local arts agencies affected by disasters.

Arthouse

Texas Fine Arts Association
700 Congress Ave.
Austin, TX 78701
(512) 453-5312
www.arthousetexas.org
Emergency grants for artists.

Mayer Foundation

20 West 64th St., Suite 15 U
New York, NY 10023
www.foundationcenter.org/grantmaker/mayer/
Grants of \$2,500 to \$5,000 for individuals burdened by poverty.

Pollock-Krasner Foundation

863 Park Ave.
New York, NY 10021
(212) 517-5400
www.pkf.org
Emergency-assistance grants for artists who have suffered a catastrophe.

Santa Fe Art Institute

Emergency Relief Residency Program
P.O. Box 24044
Santa Fe, NM 87505
(505) 424-5050
www.sfaai.org
Provides residencies for artists and writers whose lives and work have been disrupted by domestic, political, or natural disasters.

George Sugarman Foundation

448 Ignacio Blvd., #329
Novato, CA 94949
www.georgesugarman.com
Grants for painters and sculptors in need of financial assistance.

To view an extended list of nonprofit groups and foundations, visit the Business of Art section of www.myAmericanArtist.com.



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Juliette Aristides

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Jane Paul Angelhart

Portrait Painting in WC • August 25-29, 2008

Michael Grimaldi

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Figure Drawing
October 6-17, 2008

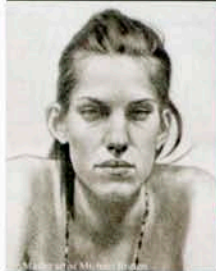
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