

***My Reflections on the Americans for the Arts Conference, Seattle, WA  
June 18 – 20, 2009***

***By: Flo Oy Wong, Artist***

As a recipient of an Arts Council Silicon Valley (ACSV) scholarship I was privileged to attend the 2009 Americans for the Arts annual convention entitled *Renewable Resources: Arts in Sustainable Communities* that took place in Seattle, WA, June 18 - 20. The ACSV delegation also included: Bruce W. Davis, Executive Director; Diem Jones, Director of Programs; Jeff Trabucco, Interim Managing Director – Artsopolis; Jeffry Walker, Executive Director of Community School of Music and Art; and, Jess Morales, Executive Director of Teatro Vision.

The stimulating conference began on June 18 with a Newcomer Orientation for first-time attendees, a plenary session that featured Bill Ivey, former chair of the National Endowment for the Arts and member of President Barack Obama's transition team, and Robert L. Lynch, President and CEO of Americans for the Arts. Salutations to Bruce Davis who received the 2009 Michael Newton Award at the plenary session for demonstrating innovative funding techniques, a distinctive management style, and dedication to the united arts fund movement.

Following Bill Ivey's discussion regarding the position of the arts in a challenged economy and potential opportunities for the arts in a new presidential administration, the conference opened for attendees to work and to learn in smaller groups. There were break out sessions in the areas of advocacy, arts education, civic engagement, diverse cultures, economic development, leadership, public art, and the private sector. On Friday, Dr. Peter Senge, noted author and senior lecturer at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, presented the Leadership Keynote Presentation. Each conference day there were networking breaks and receptions that enhanced the user friendly atmosphere, a concept that successfully began at the Newcomer Orientation.

As a first-time conference attendee I was like a kid in the candy store, eager to bite into whatever I could. I was inspired by many sessions, including the *Uprooted Memories: Storymapping in Communities* workshop where I learned about Joe Lambert's (and a colleague) work with grassroot communities throughout the United States. I was also uplifted by programs presented by the Wing Luke Museum of Seattle and the Urban Bush Women. The Wing Luke Museum's inclusive program of Pan Asian American art and cultural presence in the Pacific Northwest, as well as the Urban Bush

Women's Civic Engagement discussion that included body movement within a social justice environment were both impressive.

On Friday most conferees went on *Artventure* tours that explored art in the Seattle Pacific Northwest region. I took the tour to Harborview Medical Center and Swedish Hospital (personal disclosure – my grandson was born at Swedish Hospital almost three years ago). This tour led by outstanding facilitators demonstrated the commitment of the medical and art communities of Seattle to heal with art – a model for hospitals throughout this country to emulate.

On Saturday I experienced two highlights - the closing session featuring public art curated by Janet Echelman and Mildred Howard and the brief session facilitated by Gay Hanna, Executive Director for the National Center for Creative Aging. Both Janet Echelman and Mildred Howard presented PowerPoint programs featuring engaging art in public places. Gay Hanna provided a space where older artists like myself (I turned 70 last October) had a chance to share and network.

What did I like about the conference? I liked being a part of the energetic delegation from ACSV. I liked the friendliness of the conference, especially Newcomer Orientation where we were encouraged to meet others. We developed secret gestures to communicate with one another as we rushed from session to session. I liked learning from presenters such as Joe Lambert, Jawole Willa Jo Zollar, Maria Bauman, and Gay Hanna. I liked witnessing the passion of those involved with the arts at Harborview Medical Center and Swedish Hospital.

What didn't I like? I was disappointed that some panels that I attended did not include artists of color as presenters. As a former member of the national Women's Caucus for Art (WCA) board of directors in the 1990s, I recall the time when the WCA made a commitment to include artists of color on all conference panels. That commitment was powerful.

Will I attend future Americans for the Arts conferences? Absolutely! Why? Because my participation will allow me to be a part of an organization that supports and grows individual artists and arts organizations through policy and guidelines that puts the arts front and center in our country.

It is with gratitude to the Arts Council Silicon Valley that I offer these reflections.

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**About Flo Oy Wong**

*Flo Oy Wong, is a Sunnyvale, California-based mixed media installation artist and a recipient of two National Endowment for the Arts grants. A previous board member of Arts Council Silicon Valley (ACSV), she has received awards from many organizations, including ACSV, the Euphrat Museum of Art, the Women's Caucus for Art, Kearny Street Workshop, the Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation, the City of Sunnyvale, Asian Pacific American Democratic Club, and the Asian American Hero award from President Liz Kniss, Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors. In addition, she has exhibited widely at local, national and international arts venues including the Triton Museum, San Jose State University, de Young Museum, the Oakland Museum, the Smithsonian, the Flomenhaft Gallery in New York, the U. S. Embassies in Lusaka, Zambia and Copenhagen, Denmark, and in Hong Kong, Beijing, and Japan. She has also attended artist residencies including Djerassi, Headlands, and Art Omi in New York. Her work has appeared in many publications and she has been featured on the KQED SPARK, the national NewsHour with Jim Lehrer and many art films art such as I Can Fly, Part V, Kids and Women Artists in their Studios, Amazing Art Adventures: Variety and Emphasis, and Mixed Media Masters: Alison Saar, Al Loving, and Flo Oy Wong. For more information regarding Flo visit:*

[www.flo-oy-wongartist.com](http://www.flo-oy-wongartist.com)