

CEC ArtsLink, USA

Background

Citizen Exchange Corps, predecessor to CEC ArtsLink, was founded in 1962 to enable citizens of the United States and the Soviet Union to accomplish what their governments could not – opening doors, sharing ideas and building mutual trust. Since then, CEC has gone through several phases of cultural ambassadorship, focusing on cultivating cultural diplomacy through student exchange, environmental awareness and education, and – its current concern – partnerships in the arts.

In the mid-1980's, CEC was in the forefront of US organizations working in the more liberal environment of glasnost and perestroika in the USSR developing exchange projects for college and high school students. During this time, CEC also produced two documentary film festivals. In the 1990's, the organization expanded its target region to include Russia Eurasia and Central Europe and developed two new programs, ArtsLink and EcoBridge, to serve this new region. Established in 1992, ArtsLink was the first large-scale program of exchange in the U.S. for artists and arts managers from the former communist countries. It is now entering its sixteenth annual cycle of exchanges. 1992 also marked the beginning of major fundraising efforts and collaborations with cultural organizations in St. Petersburg, Russia, to help prepare the city for its tercentenary in 2003. In 1998, CEC's Board of Directors decided to focus the organization wholly on the arts, and in 2003 the name was changed to CEC ArtsLink to reflect that new focus. In 2004-2005, new creative arts exchanges were forged with countries in Central Asia.

Over its 46-year history, CEC, in its many iterations, has developed a strong network of partnerships with organizations and individuals interested in furthering cultural diplomacy between the US and Central and Eastern Europe, Russia, Central Asia, and the Caucasus.

How it works

CEC ArtsLink is the parent organization for several international residency and grant programs that facilitate cultural exchange between the United States and 30 countries in Central and Eastern Europe, Russia, Central Asia, and the Caucasus. *ArtsLink Awards*, distinguished by their open application processes, are comprised of *ArtsLink Residencies*, *Independent Projects* and *ArtsLink Projects*. CEC ArtsLink programs driven by nominations include the *Open World Cultural Leaders Residencies*, a collaboration with the Library of Congress and the Open World Russian Leadership Center; the *Arts Leadership Fellows (ALF)* program for arts professionals from Russia and Central Asia; and *VisArt*, a workshop- and project- based initiative meant to stimulate dialogue concerning contemporary arts issues.

By supporting sustainable professional development in the arts through residency programs, workshops, publications, public events and grant opportunities, ArtsLink aims to insure that an earnest dialogue between cultures continues to promote genuine understanding and acceptance.

ArtsLink Residencies Fellows are hosted for 5-weeks at non-profit arts organizations throughout the US with opening and closing sessions in New York City. *Independent Projects* and *ArtsLink Projects* Awardees carry out self-designed projects in the US and in our supported region, respectively, following approval of their budgets and project descriptions. Final reports are required of all participants. *Open World* participants travel to various cities throughout the US for short professional residencies; public events involving the participants are often scheduled. *Arts Leadership Fellows* meet with a range of US arts professionals to observe day-to-day operations within their organizations. *VisArt* workshops, seminars, and performances are organized based on an identified need in a particular region for exposure to various issues in contemporary art.

CEC ArtsLink has one office in New York City and one office in St. Petersburg, Russia. Major funding is provided by the National Endowment for the Arts, US Department of State, Open World Russian Leadership Center, the Kettering Family Foundation, and the Trust for Mutual Understanding.

For *ArtsLink Residencies*, applicants must be artists or arts managers with citizenship in one of our eligible countries and must have a command of the English language; they cannot have participated in the program before, and they must fit the current alternating-discipline criteria (i.e. visual arts/media in 2008 or performing arts/literature in 2009). For *Independent Projects*, applicants must be artists or arts managers with citizenship in one of our eligible countries; they must have a letter of invitation from a US host. Open to all disciplines every year. For *ArtsLink Projects*, applicants must be artists or arts managers who are US citizens with a project in one of our eligible countries; they must have a letter of invitation from a host in one or more of these countries. They must fit the current alternating discipline criteria (i.e. performing arts/literature in 2008 or visual arts/media in 2009). For all *ArtsLink Awards*, arts managers must be affiliated with an arts organization in the non-commercial sector; students, amateurs, and scholars are ineligible.

Eligible countries are: Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Georgia, Hungary, Kazakhstan, Kosovo, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Moldova, Mongolia, Montenegro, Poland, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan

The *Open World Cultural Leaders* program targets young Russian artists & arts managers, including writers, choreographers, filmmakers, and musicians. Those with limited knowledge of English can participate.

The *Arts Leadership Fellows* program targets mid-career arts managers in the fields of contemporary art and performing arts festival management from Russia and Central Asia. Those with limited knowledge of English can participate.

The *VisArt* program develops exchanges between American artists, critics, art historians and arts managers and their colleagues in Central and Eastern Europe, Russia, Central Asia and the Caucasus.

Participants for the *Open World Cultural Leaders*, *Arts Leadership Fellows*, and *VisArt* programs are all identified through a nomination process. There are no open calls for applications.

Results

ArtsLink Awards: Since 1993, 403 Fellows have participated in *ArtsLink Residencies*; they have been hosted by 218 US organizations in 33 states and Washington, D.C. Since 1999, 64 *Independent Projects* Awards have been granted to participants from 19 countries, and 324 *ArtsLink Projects* Awards totaling over \$1.5 million have been distributed to US artists and organizations from 30 states and Washington, D.C., to carry out projects in 25 of our supported countries.

Open World: 38 writers, 27 filmmakers, 8 choreographers, and a group of 5 folk musicians have participated in the program since 2003.

Arts Leadership Fellows: Beginning in 2008, three groups of 4 arts managers each have participated in the program in various cities throughout the US.

VisArt: Past projects have been conducted by well-known US artists such as Philip Glass, Shirin Neshat, Kendal Henry, Meredith Monk, and Kimsooja in communities including Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan; Almaty, Kazakhstan; Novosibirsk, Samara, and Nizhny Novgorod, Russia.

Sources

Official CEC ArtsLink website: <http://www.cecartslink.org>

ArtsLink Awards guidelines and applications: <http://www.cecartslink.org/awards.php>

Open World Russian Leadership Program: <http://www.openworld.gov/about/expands.php>

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