

Karen Brooks Hopkins
President, BAM

ArtTable Keynote Address
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I am so honored to be the keynote speaker here at ArtTable today. I have attended this lunch many times and have always been inspired by the honorees and leaders of this group. Congratulations to all organizing today's events, including the remarkable honorees. I would also like to give a special thank you to my significant other Ron Feiner, BAM Executive VP Alice Bernstein, and BAM VP of Marketing and Communications Soo Pak, who are all with me today.

This year will mark my 35th season at BAM and, as some of you might know, I have announced my plan to retire in June 2015. These 3-plus decades I have spent in Brooklyn have been remarkable, and despite all of the struggles of running a complex organization, I am so grateful that I have had the incredible opportunity to work and live in the community of the arts. In a larger context, even though I have been fortunate to work for a great organization, I am saddened by the fact that our field is so grossly undervalued. It is truly hard to comprehend for so many reasons. For example, the arts build the economy of communities and encourage diversity. They can be an enormous force in education, stimulating the love of learning and self-expression. The arts are also the primary driver of tourist spending. Artistic buildings – think about The Met or the Guggenheim, or my own BAM – are among the greatest architectural landmarks we have. On top of it all (and most importantly) there is the glory of art - the only thing that actually endures generation after generation, and century after century. Best of all, these magnificent treasures can be available to everyone at a relatively low/minimal cost of public and private investment.

And yet, for some reason the arts are tagged as elitist, a frill, an afterthought. This reality could be profoundly depressing for those of us who know about the impact of arts, and who work in this field. And yet, despite the lack of funding, the lack of understanding, the lack of Federal or State government commitment (so different from our European neighbors) art will not go away. It will simply not be ignored or denied. It thrives, especially here in New York City. Now we all live here and frankly we know how hard it is. We live in small cramped apartments, can't drive or park anywhere, pay the highest prices for everything, we have awful weather, traffic, noise, sanitation issues, underperforming public schools; but more than anywhere else in the world, we have a soaring breathtaking cultural life. Some days, when you begin your morning and go out into the street, you can literally be overcome by a love of the city that is so immense, it almost knocks you over.

Art drives that love - walking by a church downtown and seeing in front an installation of 100 colored t-shirts blowing in the wind; feeling the energy of the large pieces of public art at the Highline. Park Avenue has literally been lifted off the ground by Alice Aycock's astonishing sculptures; see Jane Valentas' magnificently restored antique carousel living in a perfect Jean Nouvel house in Brooklyn Bridge park facing the towering

Manhattan skyline; watch the kids taking pictures in front of the KAWS mural and David Byrne designed bike racks across the street from BAM; feel the grandeur of the new lobby of the Queens Museum which is like an art airplane hangar. This impact is mighty and powerful and passionate – and it makes our city great.

New Yorkers can't get enough culture! They will sit at BAM watching Macbeth in Japanese for hours (sometimes with translation – sometimes without). They will stand in line for hours for McQueen at the Met or the Rain Room at MoMA. They will subway everywhere to visit small galleries and theaters in every nook and cranny of the city. We are so lucky to be a part of this insatiable curiosity and fervor for the creative life.

We professionals are the luckiest of all. I work in a place that is always filled with music and dance. You are surrounded by beautiful objects. We hang out with artists and people who see and experience culture, and are always excited about sharing it. This is our world. It is filled with energy.

This driving energy of culture and limitless possibility is what makes New York attractive to the young people that are flocking here in droves.

There are those personal moments each of us have had, when we are humbled by a great cultural experience. At BAM, I have had so many. Cate Blanchett's Blanch Dubois in Streetcar Named Desire; Peter Brook's 10 hour theatrical masterpiece: The Mahabharata; Robert Wilson & Philip Glass' Einstein on the Beach; Kevin Spacey's Richard III; and on and on.

Sometimes as an arts administrator, I like to observe how others react to great work. Years ago at the old New Museum, the artist Liza Lou created a replica of a kitchen. Many of you may remember it. It was the size of a full kitchen and was completely constructed of beads. The sink, the stove, the bacon frying in the pan – all beaded. The piece was simply called: "The Kitchen". In front of it, the audience (mainly women) looked at the work. I watched them. Woman after woman, standing in front of this kitchen, openly weeping. In this piece, they saw their daughters and grandmothers. They saw the pain and endurance of all women for all time. In a piece like this, the artist has given us not just her talent, but her heart.

So knowing what we know, how can our field get more respect? I was astonished that earlier this week the New York Times ran a two-day conference on the future of cities. Issues of affordable housing, green buildings, water rights, transportation – every topic was there - every topic but Arts & Culture. I wrote to the organizers, but never heard back. Then I realized that maybe, if all of us would have written perhaps it would have made a difference, and now I am sorry I didn't organize a letter-writing effort. But the point is that we need to step up our efforts. We need to get the arts back into schools. We need great young talents to receive commissions. We must support our great institutions, so NYC can continue to be the cultural capital of the world. We must enable every neighborhood to vibrate with creative energy.

In years past, Arts received (and still do to some extent) substantial private and public philanthropic dollars. Now however, because of some combination of recession and Republican rhetoric, government no longer supports social services needs at the level it once did. Social services now rely more on private philanthropy and therefore corporate and foundation dollars have moved (as has government) away from arts. Luckily, many individual supporters are still there to help, but it is not enough. We need more supporters and we need every member of the audience to be an advocate for the entire field.

Finding the way forward isn't easy. It leaves us in the place where we must simply dig in and endure. Stay the course. Keep making the case – again, and again, and again.

I have seen the impact of this strategy – it's an old fundraiser's tool – I call it the strategy of delayed gratification – of simply not going away and fighting every single day. In Brooklyn, it has taken 40 years and it still isn't completely done, but it will be. Here in New York City, after decades, we will have a new 21st century Brooklyn Cultural District that embodies the urban energy of New York today. This will be a neighborhood where small and large organizations sit side by side; that is ethnically diverse; where everything looks different but is pulled together by a common streetscape; where public art dots the landscape and visual and performing arts organizations are next to each other. From Barclays Center to BRIC, the Brooklyn Cultural District will have arts and entertainment venues ranging from 250 seats to 17,000, all in a 5-block radius, sitting on the 3rd largest transportation hub in the city. BAM is more than 150 years old and has withstood fire, flood and the great depression and it has taken a lifetime to revitalize it. Soon however, the problems will be different. Where once there were abandoned buildings and dark streets, now there will be apartment towers and development sites. We will have to persuade the developers who will see profit in this district to share some of it by supporting the organizations who created it. We will have to fight the deadening blandness of chain stores who will try to turn our beloved neighborhood into "Anywhere, USA". We will have to work hard to keep the population diverse and interesting and the work accessible to all.

Starting now and into the future, all of our organizations will have to define new streams of income in addition to ticket sales, memberships, concessions, and fundraising to generate resources in a competitive landscape. We will continually be asked for and will need to supply the data to make our case. The next one is important. We need to de-compartmentalize and create an institutional mindset that speaks in one voice – where the marketing and fundraising effort feels like the programs of our organizations so that we break through the informational clutter and speak to our audiences in a clear direct manner. We will need to determine which new technologies are fads and which to invest in. We will need to make our buildings even more welcoming and replace old systems with new energy efficient materials. We will need to deliver as both education providers and a source of jobs. All of this and we must always be vigilant about staying true to our mission.

So what is the lesson here? Yes, I know, we have a lot of work to do, but no matter what, we are never going away. We are simply not going to stop. We are not in it for the quick fix – we are in it for the long haul – and I mean long haul! And that is how we will finally and irrevocably succeed.