

http://www.artistsandcommunities.org/search_forward.html

The best examples of Federal investment in community-based arts projects are actually associated more with hard times than celebration. During the Depression, thousands of unemployed performers, writers, and visual artists found full-time work first through the Works Progress Administration (WPA) arts programs. Much of this creative labor was dedicated to documenting and celebrating the history and cultural life of hundreds of American communities. At its peak in the mid-Thirties, the WPA employed over 40,000 artists in community-based arts initiatives. These included the Federal Art Project (FAP), Federal Music Project (FMP), Federal Theatre Project (FTP), the Federal Writers' Project (FWP), and the Historical Records Survey (HRS).

More recently, during the economic downturn of the late 1970s, the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) also placed unemployed artists in public service positions with government and community based agencies. As a result, many artists found themselves with full-time jobs making art in hospitals, prisons, public housing, senior centers and the like. So many, in fact, that by the end of 1979 CETA had become the largest Federal arts program in history.

CETA introduced a generation of artists to the notion that good art, public service and community development are not mutually exclusive. For thousands of artists and arts administrators, the program also expanded the dictionary of American culture beyond the realms of decoration, entertainment and investment. It showed that artists and communities could partner to serve the public good and, most importantly, that the arts could be a powerful agent of personal, institutional and community change. CETA also laid the foundation for the distinctive mix of intentions and outcomes that characterize the Artists & Communities residencies profiled in this book.