

**Making the Visual Arts More Visual in
Chautauqua**
*Or,
“Outreach is Us”*

*Director’s Report for the CCVA
Chautauqua Season, 2006*



Introduction

What follows are my recommendations and suggestions for a possible future and direction of the **CCVA** based on my short time here as Director of the Galleries. Much, if not all of it is common sense; some of it is based on the observations of a naïve tourist, just arrived. The rest comes from a perspective where, in the varied experience of my sometimes-checkered résumé, many things have been tried in the past, usually with some degree of success.

It should also be said that the through-line for all here, the underlying driving thought, is all about two points: the first is **Outreach**: to the local arts community, to the community as a whole, to the local area, and then beyond that to a national and even international presence. The second point (which flows from the first) is **Space**: if you have it, use it. A gallery is not simply a pretty building to put up pretty pictures, but should be, I believe, an active, vital part of any community, a provocative place in that it should create dialogue and exchange. And this, whether it be a commercial gallery, museum, or a not-for-profit organization. The point of art after all, is to transform, to take us to that better place in ourselves and in so doing help us all find common ground.

I believe that Chautauqua is at an exciting juncture at this moment in its history, especially in light of the movement generated by the **Idea Campaign**. I believe that Chautauqua could and should be a major **Cultural Center for the Arts** - a cultural *and* economic magnet - in this part of New York State: firstly, because there is nothing like Chautauqua *anywhere* and secondly, because there is nothing else *here*. At this moment, Chautauqua is uniquely positioned to capitalize on its uniqueness. Where else but here can one find ballet, theatre, opera and the visual arts, all working at so high a level, and all under one roof, one umbrella?

What follows, then, are suggestions, observations and recommendations, followed by lateral, inexpensive, quick things that can be done that would improve the Galleries' position and daily operations.

The CCVA Galleries



Although it might seem a bit silly, I think it important at the outset that we stop here for a moment and revisit the gallery name, or at least what those initials stand for: the **Chautauqua Center for the Visual Arts**. This is not a small thing, because I think that over time and abbreviation, the full impact/import of those words has gotten lost a bit, and in so doing, the gallery's place in the hierarchy of the Art School and the Institution as a whole has

fallen through the cracks. Sure, the Gallery and the School / Institution have only recently merged, and yes, the thrust of the **Idea Campaign** in the visual arts is the grand new gallery complex; but human nature being what it is, without attention to the real meaning of the words, the point of the whole can be lost or neglected. All of this goes to the point of **mission**, and then to **visibility**, of which the gallery thus far has had little.

The **Chautauqua Center for the Visual Arts** is a more encompassing idea than just another gallery, just another pretty space to hang pictures. I think it is, or should be, the culmination of the work that goes on at the **Art School**. Especially as regards the Institution, and certainly the **Idea Campaign**, I think the main point - certainly the central **PR**, or public relations point - for the CCVA needs to be the **School**, the **Faculty** and the **Scholarship Program**. Everything else should flow from, and work in conjunction with, that idea.

Certain types of people will give large sums to see their name on a plaque in a building; many, many more will donate freely to fund education. I know this from my experience years ago with the **Delta Blues Education Fund Project**, based in Clarksdale, Mississippi where older Blues musicians were brought into inner city schools to teach the kids musicianship and pass on the Blues tradition as well. This was one of the few fundraising efforts where, instead of trying to hang up on me, people would suddenly say, "tell me more." So too, for the **CCVA**, the students and education are key.

But education is also key in all dealings with the public. Many people are put off, are mystified by modern or abstract art: it's not always as accessible as the other, more obviously entertaining or "sexy" arts, like theatre or film. Even a little bit of "back story," or any information, for that matter, goes a long way towards building an audience curious to see what's happening at the gallery. I learned this as the Director of a large sculpture gallery in New York City: it was when they understood the language that the dialogue could begin.

The Arts Program, the Faculty & Interdisciplinary Collaboration

In this regard, I think it important that a good deal of attention be spent publicizing the **Student Scholarship Program** and the **Faculty**. Work should be done with Development and the Idea Campaign to find ways to do this. They exist, and aren't necessarily a huge investment of funds. Piggybacking, or folding into other areas and Departments should be a possibility.

- Similarly, the **Faculty Show**, and the **Student Show** (pray for a good batch of students, as this year's) should be continuing highlights of the season;
- Maybe instead of one large faculty show, have **several small Salons** over the season as the faculty changes;
- Have several **Meet the Faculty** events. By all means, do them at the **Quad** - we need to get people, *especially* donors, over to the Quad to see the quaint and squalid Bohemian conditions that are so in need of repair and attention. Yes, it can be a pain, yet another bit for the faculty, but that effort could be offset by a) sales of their work, and b) newfound visibility of the faculty artists (which in turn could lead to further sales and recognition. Something like this could help solve the problem of faculty having to part with work at cut-rate prices in a large Faculty show here, since suddenly you'd be in their studio dealing with them – the Artists - interacting with them, getting to know them, instead of dryly looking at work in the “quaint” CCVA gallery. Experienced collectors, as well as novices thinking about collecting, love these important interactions.



I think that **Don Kimes'** program and artistic vision here are totally unique, an immersion approach that throws students and faculty into an intense and focused dialogue in a cultural setting which is pretty much “all art all the time.” This is not your usual bucolic art school experience, and people need to know this. It's crucial that the program's visibility be increased.

This is where the **Outreach** project and the **Gallery** come in, for the Gallery needs not only to have “real” and professional-looking exhibitions, but it needs to be perceived as an active, exciting venue where things are happening, where dialogue is taking place. There's a dog-and-pony aspect to all of this, to be sure, but this isn't - nor should it be - a museum setting, or a pristine gallery setting, and the Gallery's

direction needs to take this into account. People come to Chautauqua for education and information, as well as to be entertained. At its best, all three can and should occur at the same time. To aid and abet all this, I think it crucial that:

- **Directors of all the Arts Departments** should meet pre-season and, if at all possible, during the season as well, to discuss ways and strategies of working together (I know that this is next to impossible once the freight train that is the Season takes off, but if the idea is built in at the beginning it can happen, perhaps weekly breakfasts or a Sunday evening glass of wine). To this end, the Gallery Director should begin in **May** at the latest, which is, coincidentally, when the Theatre Directors arrive. That department's use of the local media, the pace of their announcements and events, and how they allocate their assets is exemplary, a great example of Outreach to build an audience. These are exactly the same issues that face the **CCVA**.
- **All exhibitions should be set by this time;** they actually should be set well before, in order to avoid – acts of God aside - any sort of scramble once the season gets underway. This will give staff the opportunity to pre-assemble press kits and information handouts, including press releases, photographs and generic “boilerplate” packets describing the **CCVA** and its work. These need to be ready to be distributed well before and after the openings as well; the shows come fast, and any delay results in loss of press coverage and momentum – not to mention sales - not only here at the *Daily*, but especially with media outside the gates, and even with people simply passing through. It was frustrating this season, having good shows mounted that simply couldn't get press coverage either because of time constraints or readiness.

From my conversations with Ethan and Vivienne (Theatre), and with Jay (Opera) as well, I know there's a frustration and sense of isolation in *all* of the arts departments. There needs to be some communication, and some collaboration between all four departments (examples will follow later). This goes to the **long-term goal** of creating a cohesive **Arts Center at Chautauqua**, that cultural magnet *and* economic engine in the area, and the short term goal of creating a wider audience for **CCVA**, including a wider membership (more of that later as well).

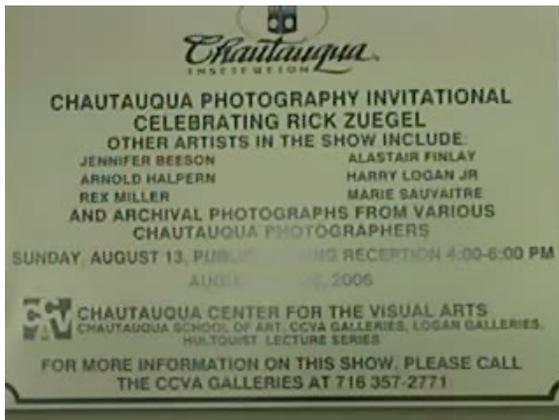
An example of a possible collaboration that became a lost opportunity occurred last month (August) for example, during the run of ***The Art of Coarse Acting***. In a very long article in the *Daily*, the fictional director of that show-within-a-show bemoaned the fact that Jay Lesenger would not allow the **Opera** to perform his company's song before a performance. He went on to claim that he would then search out the **Symphony**, and then the **Ballet Company**, and then- **stopped there**. I wrote a rebuttal entitled ***What Are We, Chopped Liver?*** * As over the top as it was, it brought home how far the CCVA needs to go when even the *Theatre Department* forgets that the Visual Arts here exists, to the point of not including it in a farcical joke. With no pre-planning or co-ordination, my piece ran two weeks later as a letter to the editor, a loss for both departments since the banter could have continued all week and increased attendance and revenues in both departments.

* **[See Addendum Notes]**

Signage

The most basic and inexpensive collaboration between all four departments would be to implement **four-way signage**. There is simply no reason I can think of that the **CCVA Gallery** cannot have signs advertising the activities going on in the other departments and vice versa. **Theatre** had no problem with this idea when I suggested it, even offering to put our announcements on their seats, if we would print them up.

All signage needs to be *simple and direct*. Signs at Chautauqua tend to be rather verbose and visually boring. The rotating signs at **Logan**, for instance, appear with great regularity, and consistently cause the eyes to glaze over. Two shows had passed before I realized the signs' content had changed. A better use of that wall would be the colorful posters we have on the sandwich boards.



Speaking of which, if we indeed have **sandwich boards**, we need to physically construct them with three visible facing sides, perhaps four: the **CCVA Logo**; the **current CCVA Exhibition**; the **current Logan exhibition** (or Kellogg, as the case may be); and the **Gift Shop**.

The **Logo**, as it is or re-imagined, needs to appear any- and everywhere **CCVA** and/or visual arts activities occur. Like Coca-Cola, from the **Sculpture Park** (and near each sculpture, of course), down the blacktop through the alley to Wythe and all the way to Kellogg and Logan, there should be obvious and subliminal signs galore (did anyone notice the small Logo signs on the hanging CCVA Gallery placard for most of the summer?).



Printing costs need to be reassessed and consolidated. Some of that was begun this season after Cheri's great work started hitting its stride, but a lot of the early printing costs were *extremely* excessive since things were being put together at the last minute. Once this issue is addressed, the printing budget can be adjusted to implement more types of **flyers**:

- those for **theatre seats**, for example;
- and for handing out at **Bestor Plaza** and/or
- the **front gate** (whether or not this is actually permitted is a question, but they can be handed out until someone tells us otherwise).

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- We should have cards at the **Bookstore**, and in other shops and locations as well.
 - The theatre has its season's play schedule in the **Colonnade**, at the **front gate**, etc.; where's ours?
 - How about a student to walk around with an **actual sandwich board** around the Plaza? This may sound silly, but sometime in August someone had a kid in a pink rabbit outfit walking around in over 90-degree weather...

Hierarchy and Communication

In line with all this, I think it a good idea to keep in mind the **Visual Arts Hierarchy**, in order that communication be smooth and cooperative, without any sense of a turf war or separate agendas: there's a through-line and a common goal here after all, and all assets should be appreciated and utilized, working together towards that goal. It should be well-noted, moreover, that the **CCVA** falls at the exact midpoint between Development and the literal "person on the street."

Development
Architectural Design Committee
Art School
Visual Arts Council
Chautauqua Center for the Visual Arts & Logan Galleries
Gift Shop
CCVA Auction Committee
Art on the Porch Program
Art in the Park

Once again, because of the crush and speed of the scheduled events (2200 or thereabouts for the entire Institution, if I recall correctly), at various points during the season communication would be spotty at best, and potential opportunities were not fully taken advantage of. Addressing some of these issues might include:

- Smoother **planning and coordination** between **Development** and any fundraising events or gallery tours that might involve and/or benefit the **CCVA Galleries**;
- Having all press releases, materials and communications regarding the **CCVA Galleries** and its exhibits flow primarily from the **Gallery** itself and not the Art Program, which itself has its hands full: doing otherwise creates overlapping work and things like reviews and follow-ups falling through the cracks;
- Again, better communication and smoother planning in all events involving the Galleries, i.e. the Auction, the Member Shows and the **Art on the Porch** events. These last would oftentimes just suddenly appear on the CCVA porch - or not.

Membership



Against the backdrop of this hierarchy is the **CCVA Membership**, an issue that I think needs to be examined and perhaps reassessed. The basic question at present is: *Why should one become a member; what does one get?* At the moment the answer, I believe is: very little - except for those who want to exhibit their work.

There seem to be two types of people that join the **CCVA**: those who want to simply support the visual arts because they believe in its value, and those who in addition seek the *quid pro quo* of showing their work in the various member shows that take place yearly. From the gallery perspective, it's these last that become an issue. Volunteers and supporters in the other arts, including the Theatre, may get certain privileges, but an entitled expectation of being onstage acting or dancing or singing isn't among them.

I submit that the **Member Exhibitions**, especially considering their number and the number of available slots for shows, become an expensive trade-off for minimal financial support: expensive in time, labor and image and in perception, since the work in these shows tends to be uneven. I well understand that this issue treads on toes and traditions, but I believe that dealing with it head on is the best way to improve the situation for everyone, from Gallery Staff to Members to the long-term goals of the **CCVA** and the **Institution** as a whole. To do otherwise goes contrary to the ideas of mission and visibility mentioned at the outset above.

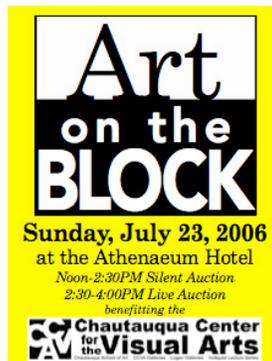
A shift away from the expected *quid pro quo* needs to take place: just **one** large Member Show per season would be appropriate which, along with other incentives, could revitalize inactive members and also bring in new supporters as well. As things are now, the Membership rolls are stagnant. More **Outreach**: give people a reason to join and participate in the Gallery's mission. Examples:

- **Meet the Faculty** Series;
- Sitting in on special "**crits**" at the Art Studios;
- Perhaps even attending one or two classes, or special classes/demonstrations;
- **Meet the Artist Talks** at the gallery;
- **Front rows** at lectures;
- Outings: **Meet the Museum Directors**;
- **CCVA Brown Bag events**, where the Director, Artists and/or curators can discuss the exhibitions, trends in the art world, etc.

All of these proposed activities have in common the active involvement of the members with the **Gallery**, the **School** and the **Faculty**. Over time this will expand our base of support, attendance and sales. More than their yearly dues, I believe that the prime value and asset of having **CCVA** Members is their active support and **participation**. This brings us to the

Art on the Block Auction

As of last week, next year's auction is envisioned as an Art on the Wall event presented as a cocktail party, with a pricier per-person admission, a live auction, and the elimination of the silent one. I think some of the basic idea is sound, if limiting, since you're then locked into the maximum amounts you can raise, dependent on selling those tickets. But details aside (actually obtaining 200-odd worthwhile objects, etc.), it seems to me - especially in eliminating the ongoing silent auction - that this undercuts the element of **Outreach**, which I believe is crucial at this moment. It's been suggested that we could "*try this, and if it doesn't work, there's always next year.*"



I believe that, in a sense, there *is* no "next year." This is it, now: the year of the **Idea Campaign**, where time and attention and momentum are being focused to specifically aid the arts, including the Visual Arts and the **CCVA**. It's not a time to pull back and cater only to - or even *appear* to cater to - those who can afford a ticket. That silent auction for example, is where the Sunday crowd can join in and be a part of something, get involved. Nickels and dimes to be sure, but the perception and the participation are priceless and can help build the audience that CCVA needs, inside and *especially* outside of these gates. Yes, the **Auction** is an enormous amount of work and I've seen this firsthand; but it seems to me that this coming season, of all seasons, is where efforts - in all programming and events - should be redoubled instead of scaled back.

I also think that ease and elegance aside, the auction should take place at the **Gallery**, or even better, at the **Quad**. This fundraiser, after all, is for the Gallery and the Arts Program (and how those monies are allocated, assigned and doled out between the two is a different issue); it seems obvious to me that you might raise more money when your audience sees where its money is going to, and also sees firsthand how blatantly the money is needed. Yes, it's more work, especially for gallery staff; but I think it essential in this make-or-break year.

In this vein, I'd also say that although Dick & Paul did a wonderful job, rising to the occasion in a difficult and short notice, a **professional auctioneer needs** to be engaged. A professional will assess the value of the lots beforehand, move the auction quickly past the low lots and squeeze as much as possible from the rest. A smooth professional can practically auction off the paint off the walls and leave you smiling and grateful for the opportunity. The point here is to raise money, obviously; it seems to me equally obvious that an investment here would have multiple returns.

Volunteers

The **Volunteers** are a wonderful and crucial asset, one whose time and talents facilitate so many of the events that speed along during the season; truly, the number and outstanding quality of these events would not be possible without them. Nevertheless, more coordination and communication between the various committees, volunteers and staff would be helpful. Staff needs to keep in mind that the **Volunteers** are exactly that: giving us their time while essentially on their vacations. Volunteers need to remember that at present there is but a small paid full-time staff - plus interns - with an extremely large workload. Although ideas are terrific and welcome, follow-through is essential, and simply tossing out ideas without it becomes counter-productive.

One area that's already being discussed, *vis a vis* this issue, is at the lectures where a **table** should be set up to recruit new members and apprise the public of new/ongoing shows, events, etc. **Volunteers** could rotate their services. This should take place at **every** CCVA event.

Subagh recently initiated a short introduction about membership before some of the lectures; this should be continued, a regular part of the series. Perhaps start the lectures a little earlier, since people will often want to quickly move onto whatever performances are happening at 8.15.

Art in the Park

Although the **Art in the Park** event did very well this year, selling every table (with thanks to this year's students having bought several as well), perhaps the event might be moved to **Bestor Plaza** or even the **Arts Quad**, in order to help increase the **visibility** of the CCVA, **introduce** people to the Art School and its historic buildings and maybe even **raise a few dollars** for their restoration.

The Children's Show

In keeping with the concept of Outreach, as well as in trying **to make every exhibition count** towards a goal of creating and maintaining an audience, it seems to me that more attention might be paid to the **Annual Children's Show**, the more if it's an exhibition that needs to happen politically.

Let's not forget that a) the children have **parents** who potentially might support **CCVA** or simply buy art, and that b) the children are the Art School Scholarship Students of the **future**. If a Children's Show is going to happen, ways should be explored of making it count, making it a real show that can contribute something, create a meaningful experience rather than an obligation that has to be fulfilled. Education again, is key; this is an opportunity to tie the educational aspect of the Art School with the larger aspect of **children's education**, creating a through-line.

Two Digressions

The Indians

Another area worth considering might be a dialogue with the **Seneca, Mohawk and Iroquois** in the area; in short: has anyone talked to the Indians? At this point in time, they have money, political clout and economic power, all generated by the gaming industry, a euphemism if ever there was one. As they continue to expand their presence and continue the process of trying to regain their ancestral lands, it may soon be time for them to at least appear to curry favor with their neighbors, and a little good PR might be in their interest.

Towards a goal of having a Cultural Center in this part of New York State, a common (and economic) ground might be found between the **Indian Nation** and **Chautauqua**, and perhaps tied in with the resurgent art scene in Buffalo. A long-term and delicate dance, but worth looking into. Chautauqua is an Indian name after all, and it seems to me - especially with the aging demographic of Chautauqua – that without some sort of interaction and association, the tribes may very well eventually get back these lands as well.

The Internet

At a time when the Institution is rapidly expanding wireless (WiFi) access across the grounds, this seems a particularly important moment in which to push to expand and establish the **CCVA's Internet presence** on the Institute **web site**. This is no small matter since, aside from the *Daily*, people get much of their information from the Web, and as well use email on a regular basis.

The **Theatre Department** here again is the paradigm: reference their web site links at **ciweb.org** and one sees the results of attention (and yes, some funds) paid. It's an active, informative site that helps create an audience: if people can easily access the web site and learn about the exhibitions - on the grounds and off - visitor numbers (and ultimately sales) will increase. Ideally, the site should include mention of:

- **the 2007 Calendar**
- **CCVA e-mail**
- **Current Exhibitions**
- **the Idea Campaign**
- **Profiles of Staff and Members**
- **CCVA and Gallery Events**

At present, none of these are mentioned (nor is there any **CCVA** presence in the **ciweb.org email Newsletter**). Additionally, information on a website is only good if it's current, so maintenance is essential. A dialogue with David Kindervater, who maintains the web sites, should be begun in order to find inexpensive options (perhaps a savvy art student in exchange for credit) that can be utilized to take advantage of this unused asset. There are upfront costs involved, of course, but the returns on the investment are obvious and invaluable.

Proposed Exhibitions / Events for 2007

From the Archives: Historic Photographs of Chautauqua



(For **Week 2** Theme:
“Family: All of a Kind? All Different?”)

What better exhibition to explore the “*changing landscape that defines the modern family...driven by ... diverse value systems...inter-religious (and) inter-generational family members?*” * than an historical exploration of Chautauqua’s past, even as it marches towards the future with the **Idea Campaign?**

This would be a full exhibition, expanding on the “teaser” recently on view in the **Photography Invitational** at Logan. It would be organized and curated in conjunction with **Bob Hopper** and **John Schmitz**, and should have a section dedicated to the **Quad** and **Art School**. Somewhere in the signage the audience should be encouraged to visit both to compare the “then & now.” Possibly the show can be tied into the existing historic walks and tours of the grounds.

Bob Hopper will be available to do gallery talks, and a **lecture on the Archives** and the **history of Photography in Chautauqua** should be a part of the experience, either at Hulquist or another venue. More **CCVA outreach** here: to Chautauquans in general, to photo buffs and history buffs.

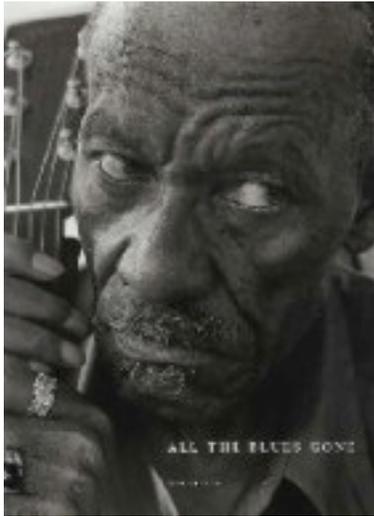
Additionally, Bob and I discussed the possibility of partnering with **Eastman House**, possibly having this show travel there at some point, with reciprocal shows at a later date a possibility.

Bob has taken my suggestion that these photos should be turned into a **book**; he and John are looking into copyright issues, and depending on how far along this project gets, talk about that fact could be part of the whole Archive exhibition experience. Whether this could appear under the aegis of a revived **Chautauqua Press** should be investigated.

The show should take place at **Logan**, which as an intimate and controlled space is a much better venue for this sort of exhibition than upstairs at the CCVA gallery. This is a show that should be well prepped and orchestrated as well, to be pitched to a national audience, since it will definitely bring people through to the **CCVA**.

[*From the 2007 Amphitheatre Lecture brochure]

Blues All Gone: Music and Life in Mississippi ***Photographs and Documentaries by Rex Miller***



*(For **Week 8**, “Music: Heart, Soul and Dollar,” which will explore “how music affects learning and creativity, cross cultural music trends and contributes to the economy”)*

This would be an exhibition in conjunction with the **Delta Blues Education Project**, based in Clarksdale, Mississippi, also home of the **Blues Museum**. Few better examples exist of the effects that music - or art - can have to change peoples' lives than this Program, which employs older musicians to teach music and blues techniques to inner city and disadvantaged children in Mississippi and Louisiana.

The show would feature 50 or so of Miller's striking photographs, which documented the lives and experiences of several generations of Blues musicians, many of them now passed on, who were the bedrock of Delta Blues. Additionally, recorded interviews as well as his documentary film *I'm Walkin': A Journey Through Parchman*, which chronicles the 10-year incarceration of Mitchell Pendelton, a Chicago-born blues musician, at Mississippi's infamous Parchman Penitentiary, a former plantation for runaway slaves, would run continuously in the gallery.

Additionally, a blues performance, either by a Clarksdale representative, or by local musicians could take place during the run of the show. Possibly that representative could be **Mr. Johnnie Billington**, the octogenarian blues guitarist and guiding spirit of the Blues Program, which could also tie in with **Week 9's theme** of *Healing and Healthy Aging*.

***Traveling A Lost World:
Europe in the Post-War Years,
Photographs by Harry Logan, Jr.***



(For **Week 4**: “21st Century Cities”)

As a contrast to the week’s theme which asks: *...what causes some cities to thrive while others experience decay?*, this exhibition will look to the not-so-distant past in order to perhaps begin to posit an answer.

In his travels through Post-war Europe, **Harry Logan, Jr.** saw and captured images of cities and landscapes and people that had then only recently begun the process of healing and rebuilding after years of unimaginable destruction and horror. These black and white photographs exude a joy of living and exploration, and the people in them - in towns, cities and countryside - exhibit a resilience, a humor and a *joie de vivre* that are a testament to the human spirit.

Fifty or so photographs (all matted, 11 x 14 inch images) are in the gallery now. In conversations with **Tom Logan**, he informs me that he “has a house-full more” in boxes. Copyrights should be looked into, reproduction rights for the possibility of a coffee table book, postcards, etc., both of which can be sold in the book and gift shops here (and of course museums nationally). Perhaps with Bob **Hopper’s Photo Archive Project**, yet another opportunity to revive the ***Chautauqua Press?***

The Legacy and Immediacy of Columbus’ “Indians”

*(For **Week 3**, “The Meteoric Rise of China and India”)*

Contrasting with the week’s theme examining the amazing pace of economic reform and growth in the Far East, this exhibition would examine the current role and experience of the **Native American Indian** populations in this country, specifically in New York State and the Northeast.

From a long social stagnation to a thriving and rocketing economic engine fueled by casinos and the commerce of gambling, what are the ramifications of the Indian Nations’ attempt to finally regain their lost territories nonviolently? And how nonviolent really, is a restoration whose collateral effects are addiction, alcoholism and even yet more poverty in the tribal populations as well as in the nation as a whole?

Through an engagement with the Seneca, Mohawk and Iroquois tribes, this exhibition would provide examples of traditional and modern Native American art, and perhaps begin a dialogue between not always easy neighbors.

Vita Peterson / Charles Cajori / Nick Carrone / Emilie Brzezinski

*(For **Week 9**, “Healing and Healthy Aging”)*

This would be a small group show of artists “of a certain age” whose work, vitality and talent have been undiminished by time or its physical passage, artists whose works glow with the patina of experience.

Come For the Music, Stay for the Art Events:

I believe that all the arts are interrelated, springing forth from that same place in each of us, all trying to take us to that “other,” better place within ourselves. To that end - and *especially* in terms of **Outreach** –

I believe that the performing arts should be an integral part of any ongoing gallery experience, especially in a place like Chautauqua: if you have the space, use it: ***Come For the Music, Stay for the Art.***



In addition to the two annual **Jazz Concerts** that take place in August, we managed this season to bring in two **Viola concerts** before we ran out of time. In conversations with **Evan Wilson** and **Vince**



Scacchetti of the Music Department, I’ve discussed the possibility of having even more next season, including a **biweekly Jazz** series. The student musicians for these events would appear gratis, especially in the Jazz series, for the opportunity to play and stretch their musicianship.

Additionally, I spoke with their young Colombian pianist, who would be available for an evening recital of ***Cuban & Puerto Rican Danzas*** next season. These last are rarely performed pieces that were essentially the Caribbean response to Ragtime; very elegant and romantic dance music at the turn of the century. This event could be tied to the education, sociology and politics, even the religious departments.

Pre-opening dinners for the Opera

In conversations with **Jay Lesenger**, he lamented that the **Opera’s pre-opening dinners** were being held in the basement at Hurlbut; since people who attend operas regularly are usually supporters and patrons of the visual arts as well, having the **CCVA** host these events is worth considering. Unless a craft or large sculpture exhibition is taking place, there is little the CCVA needs do save attend and supervise. He will be in touch after speaking to his Guild.

Chautauqua Dance Circle: 25th Anniversary Poster Competition

*(Planned for **Week 7**)*

Charlie Higgins and Rachel Rogers of the **CDC** (which apparently went from a membership of 15 or so to 400 in a single season or some such, and at \$10 a pop for just a button, at that) approached me regarding a planned **Poster Competition** celebrating **Jean-Pierre Bonnefoux's 25th year** at Chautauqua next season. Serious and well organized, they're seeking a venue for their exposition, with perhaps a dance event tossed in as well. They'll be in touch with **CCVA** post-season.

And:

- **Cathy Leibowitz**, Exhibitions Editor at *Art in America* has expressed interest in lecturing next season. She'll be in touch with me and/or with Don come September.
- And finally, I've written to **Edward Albee** and **Carter Ratcliff** about curating the 2007 National. Ratcliff is a friend of a friend, and Albee shares an interest in a sculptor I've represented, Zero Higashida, for whose exhibition he contributed an essay for me some years ago. Long shots, but we'll see.

Final Thoughts

Sales for the 2006 Season are about to hit \$ 60,000.00, considerably up from the \$20,000 or so last year. Several people have asked me why. The answer lies, I believe, with a combination of factors, a happy set of accidents conspiring to advance the **CCVA's** mission this year.

I think that the work exhibited this year was consistently very strong; the shows looked like “real” shows; there was a concerted effort by staff to sell work (made easier by the first two items); and finally - like the excellent student body this year, aggressive and a presence - I think that some sense of what was attempted in the galleries, to try and create an active, engaging showcase for the visual arts (“***Making the Visual Arts More Visual in Chautauqua***”) - some of that seeped through to the community, and hopefully has begun a process that will result in fuller engagement, curiosity and support in 2007, and in the future beyond that.

My thanks to all who've aided and abetted me in these attempts; it's been my pleasure and privilege to be a small part of this Chautauqua.

- **René Garcia Grayre,**

*Director, CCVA Galleries
September, 2006.*



Addendum

Immediate Pre-Season at the Gallery

Basic front signage:

- A **paint** job for the porch wouldn't be a bad idea,
- As is simply **cleaning the hanging gallery sign**;
- If quick local sculpture can be found and/or obtained, this would be the time to put it up: **sculpture as signage** to lead you from the **CCVA** to **Kellog** and/or to **Logan**, or whatever the configuration might be next year.



- The **hydrangeas** should be **eliminated** by then, replaced by two plants, either side, that open up the porch to view from the street as you pass;

The front of the Gallery became increasingly invisible as the season progressed.



- The **wild grass** should be **cut** way, way back: at present, it reads too much of neglect;
- Also, the porch should be **swept** regularly;
- The simple **Color CCVA logo** improved or not, should be everywhere- quiet subliminal message - the **CCVA** is: inside, outside, on outdoor sculptures, doors, etc.

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- The **CCVA** and **Logan Galleries** should be **open on Saturdays**, or at least have abbreviated hours then;
 - **Evening hours**: the galleries should be open one evening a week, at least. Besides attracting leisurely traffic after some events, some students and artists from the other departments have expressed astonishment at our existence.

Basic Office Supplies and Organization

This should be coordinated with the **Gift Shop**, since both the gift shop and gallery will share the same areas and at times, supplies, which should include at all times:

- flat files (can be had cheaply at used office supply places);
 - foam core;
 - acid-free paper;
 - bubble wrap;
 - rolls of plastic;
 - glassine;
 - cutters and a cutting area that actually works;
 - cardboard;
 - tapes in various widths, etc.
 - Finally, and tricky, but tool areas should stay organized as season picks up
-
- **As regards the *National Exhibition***: The Juror/Curator should have a short statement explaining him/herself regarding the process, reasons for choices, etc.,
 - All shows should have a **Gallery Book at the desk** with Artist's Statement, Bio, Reviews, etc., as much in advance as possible, with of course, price lists, all readily at hand;
 - Similarly, each show should have **press materials** prepared and ready:
 - Press release, photos, statements, where appropriate - all this needs to be coordinated. Material prepared by, and emanating from, the Art Office is all well and good, but these things are germane to, and normally generated by, the gallery. If not so, then better coordination/communication is needed: this season there was a definite feeling of the **CCVA Gallery** being left out of the loop from ads, press releases, Bestor Society tours, etc.
 - As always, better allocation and use of assets would go a long way toward mutual goals.

“What Are We, Chopped Liver?” Or, What Might Have Been

1.

On Friday, July 21 2006, a fictional promotional piece was published on page A3 of the Chautauquan Daily. In it, to publicize the real play, “The Art of Coarse Acting,” the fictional Theatre Director For Life Louis E. Katron, of the fictional Bakersburg Community Theatre, loudly lamented the fact that the Chautauqua Opera would not remotely consider his company’s “theme song” for performance. The byline read:

BCT! Director upset with lack of collaborations

The piece continued:

“I have never met Louis E. Katron, nor do I ever wish to meet Louis E. Katron,” said Jay Lesenger, artistic and general director of the Chautauqua Opera, in a statement. “His company’s music appears at the opera over my dead body!”

... Although the Opera turned him down, Katron plans to explore other Chautauqua outlets in the spirit of artistic collaboration.

“The Symphony seems to me another venue we should explore,” Katron said. I also have heard that there is a ballet here at Chautown, and I double as choreographer... Let me have those ballet dancers for five minutes, get the Symphony to play, the Opera to sing. I mean, this is the fabric of Chautown, a synergy of the arts, a joining of hands, a mingling of something.”

Something, indeed...

2.

The following response ran two weeks later, as a letter to the Editor, one of very many:

*From the CCVA Galleries -
An open letter to BCT Artistic Director for Life Louis E. Katron:*

What are we, chopped liver?!

*(*** N.B.: This is a fictional response from the fictional director of the **CCVA Gallery** to the fictional director of the fictional **BCT Theatre Company** regarding their (until proven otherwise) fictional song)*

21 July, 2006

Chautauqua, NY - -

To the Editor:

In an article in Saturday's **Chautauqua Daily**, **Louis E. Katron**, Artistic Director for Life of the Bakersfield Community Theatre, bemoans the fact that the Chautauqua Opera refuses, in no uncertain tones, to indulge, digest, ingress (not to be confused with that greatest of artists), egress, entertain or even chew upon - in fact, they deliberately eschew - the remotest possibility of ever in this lifetime performing the BCT's wonderful song.

Now we here at the **CCVA** (that's the **Chautauqua Center for the Visual Arts**, for the uninformed) have not heard this song, a song we are sure sings so fine despite the fact that even its title is unknown to us, as to all of Chautauqua; nor have we met Mr. Louis E. Katron, he of the Lifetime Directorship of the Bakersfield. No, sight unheard we can with certainty presume this strain, this air, this anthem - this *ballade* - to be a thing of beauty, of unbridled and exquisite charm and melody. How else to explain the wall of antipathy, of *résistance*, of dare-we-say-it (and in *Chautauqua*, no less!) *rudeness* towards this our guest, Mr. Louis E. Katron. We can only surmise that Mr. Jay Lesenger was misquoted as he arose from the wrong side of his featherbed at the Opera House.

Nevertheless, we must take issue with Mr. Louis E. Katron for, as the aforementioned article informs us, he - increasingly incensed - muses upon the other artistic venues through which he might expose his beloved aria. He explores the symphony; proposes a sing-along

(O Mitch, we knew ye well!); and even, in a flight of flippant fancy suggests the ballet as a possible, even suitable venue for his “good music.”

To this litany of artistic alternatives we here at the CCVA can only say, “*What are we, Chopped Liver??!!*” We, who as you, toil in the garden of the arts, that fertile soil of imagination; we, who like you live for the *frisson* between the real and the unrealized; how can you so blithely pass over us who wait to sing your song? Are we not real? Are we not Men? And Women? Are we not Chautauquans all, in fact or in Spirit? Where is charity, consideration? We have space, we have air; we are not, sir, liver: chopped, broasted, sautéed or otherwise. I would not believe you to be a philistine, but “*Cherry Sisters?*” Indeed.

Raglan Sleeves,
Director, CCVA Galleries

