2015 ABOG FELLOWSHIP FOR SOCIALLY ENGAGED ART
HOW WE DECIDE

Reader and Selection Committees
• A panel of readers made up of an artist, a community organizer or participant in a community-based art project, a curator or arts administrator, an educator or scholar, and an ABOG representative will review initial letters of interest and recommend up to 50 semi-finalists. Initial applicants will be informed of their status in mid-December, 2014.
• Semi-finalists will submit a full application by January 16, 2015, which will be screened by a separate but similarly composed selection committee.
• ABOG staff will screen final recommendations made by the selection committee and interview the finalists.

Readers and Selection Committee members are asked to review Fellowship proposals using the specific context and criteria outlined below:

Our Stake in Social Practice
The ABOG Fellowship for Socially Engaged Art is designed to serve artists working in leadership roles and in partnership with communities, in ways that are relevant in everyday life, at ambitious scale, to enact change.

This specific stake in socially engaged art and these fellowship resources are informed by the book Education for Socially Engaged Art, by artist Pablo Helguera. Selection committee members receive a copy to use as a reference when reviewing materials. We specifically ask reviewers to keep in mind two of Helguera’s key points:

• Socially engaged art is about activating members of the public (or a community) as collaborators, rather than passive receptors.

• Artists who produce socially engaged works are interested in creating a kind of collective art that affects the public sphere in a deep and meaningful way, not in creating a representation of a social issue.

Selection Criteria
We ask reviewers to rely on four criteria for evaluating proposals: artistic excellence, capacity to enact social change, viability in everyday life, and fit with fellowship resources. The specific questions we ask reviewers to consider are below:

Artistic Excellence
• Does the artist have a strong track record?
• Is the project ambitious?
• Is it aesthetically compelling?
• Can it act as a leading example in the field of socially engaged art?

The Project’s Capacity to Enact Social Change
• Does it approach a specific issue in a new way, or otherwise offer opportunity for innovation?
• Does it enact, as opposed to represent, social change?
• If the project is ongoing, does this proposal represent meaningful growth in the project?
• Is the project aesthetically or formally innovative?

The Project’s Viability in Everyday Life
• Does the project attract the interest of non-artist stakeholders?
• Does it meaningfully engage a community or communities?
• Is it legitimately helpful?
• Is its language externally focused?
• Is it meaningful in the absence of a contemporary art context or an initiated audience?
• Is it feasible?

Fit with Resources
• Is the artist working independently (i.e. as an individual or collective, and not as a 501c3 nonprofit organization)?
• Will the artist and/or project particularly benefit from a supportive cohort of other artists working on similar problems?
• Will the artist and/or project particularly benefit from occasional institutional assistance, such as contacts or consultation?
• Will this project benefit from the artist’s guided self-reflection, reciprocal peer evaluation, and study by an outside evaluator?
• Is this a project that can benefit from having its story told through an external voice?

Top Reasons Proposed Projects Were Not Chosen in 2014
• The project was not innovative.
• The project was not aesthetically compelling.
• The proposed project’s relationship to the community was poorly defined or overly prescriptive.
• The proposal added a small community engagement component to a static public art proposal rather than developed a project with the participation of a community.
• The project conflated access to contemporary art and social change.
• The project primarily represented social issues rather than enacting social change.
• The project proposed to represent a community without meaningfully engaging it.
• The project has an impact exclusive to or primarily in service of the initiated contemporary art dialogue.