

Divergent Consistencies

The Studio and Community Art of Hugh Merrill, 1969-2009

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Hugh Merrill and Chameleon Arts and Youth Development

Hugh Merrill has worked with artists, educators, partners and clients over the past 10 years to evolve Chameleon from a small theatre company into a highly successful interdisciplinary community arts agency. The journey has been a difficult one for an artist who has had to learn to unravel the mysteries of management practices, grant writing, business plans, budgets, audits and developing an effective board of directors. Merrill has contributed successfully to helping create a well-run and transparent arts agency. With the help of Chameleon's new board, a consortium of small arts agencies and excellent staff Chameleon focuses on bring arts projects and programming to disenfranchised communities such as homeless youth, families in domestic violence shelters and providing support for inner city schools.



Since 2006 Chameleon has facilitated over 1 million dollars in community arts and youth development programs. Even in this time of severe economic crisis Chameleon has expanded programming and is presently serving Kansas City Parks and Recreations Community Centers, Office of Homeless Liaison of Kansas City Kansas Public Schools, Rose Brooks Shelter, St Marks Child and Family Development Center and the Kansas City Missouri School District. Chameleon has received funding from the Muriel McBrien Kauffman, Francis Families, Bank of America, R.A.Long, Sosland and Oppenstein Foundations, as

well as the Arts KC Fund, and the Missouri Arts Council.

Chameleon wishes to especially point out its long term relation and partnership with the Kansas City Parks and Recreation Department without whose support we could not reach out to help small arts agencies and disenfranchised youth communities.

Chameleon Mission and Vision

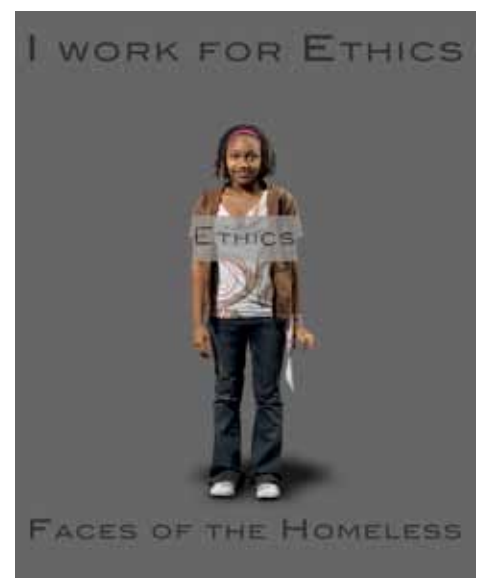
Chameleon Arts and Youth Development is committed to inspiring and fostering an interdisciplinary artistic community of racial, ethnic and cultural diversity to serve at-risk youth from urban neighborhoods, artists and the community.

Chameleon believes that:

- Art is one of the keys to solving social, educational and community difficulties
- The success of its youth development programs is tied directly to its ability to create aesthetically beautiful and intellectually challenging community artworks.
- Long-term collaborations with select schools and social services agencies is the best way of facilitating community arts projects and simultaneously reaching at risk youth with arts programs that can be life changing, and assessed for their success and impact.

Who is Chameleon?

- Chameleon is a program for internationally regarded artists to create outstanding community arts projects with diverse communities.
- Chameleon provides cultural and arts performances to Kansas City Parks and Recreation community centers, neighborhood festivals, schools and social service agencies.
- Chameleon is an arts center providing small arts agencies, mostly from the east side of the urban core, studio, technical, administrative and creative support.
- Chameleon creates and facilitates nationally acclaimed curriculum and youth development programming for at risk youth in partnership with school districts, social service agencies and community centers.
- Chameleon has consistently received funding from Kansas City's major foundations to further its programming and enhance its 16,800 square foot facility.



Narrative

Chameleon is a highly successful community arts agency that uses interdisciplinary artistic practice to create exceptional works of art that change and enrich the communities we serve. Chameleon has engaged in a focused effort to develop long-term relationships with five community arts partners: the Kansas City, Missouri Parks and Recreation Department; the Office of the Homeless Liaison of Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools; Phoenix Families Housing; Rose Brooks Shelter and the Kansas City, Missouri School District.



Through the development of these long-term connections, Chameleon has become better situated to create and exhibit aesthetically beautiful and intellectually stimulating community arts works and to deliver in depth and highly effective arts programs for at risk youth. Chameleon believes strongly that the success of its arts and youth programs are tied to its success as an arts organization serving small arts agencies, artists and the community. Chameleon provides free access to creative studio facilities for 6 small arts groups. These professional and cultural arts resources permit Chameleon to draw on passionate and committed artists to facilitate community arts projects and contribute to our youth development programming.



Our partnerships also allow Chameleon to function as a focused and highly stable arts organization. By establishing deeper and on going relations with our partners, we are better able to design new arts curriculum, chart the outcomes of our programming on specific at risk communities and make the most of foundation and other programming revenues. We work with our partners to finance, evaluate and manage our work. This guarantees arts and educational programs of the highest quality to at risk youth communities, at an effective cost.

For example, Chameleon is using new arts and academic curricula designed in collaboration with the Institute for Children and Poverty in New York City. This program is titled ArtWorks, and represents a curriculum originally developed to meet the needs of homeless children living in shelters. Each of the arts and academic units meet national instructional standards. Chameleon uses certified school district teachers, who have worked with the tutoring program of the Office of the Homeless Liaison, to facilitate the academic portion of the curriculum. Chameleon then trains artist/educators to provide the artistic studio response to the themes and lessons. This year's theme was built around Alvin Ailey's production, *Revelations*.



"I credit Chameleon with significantly improving the lives and self-esteem of our community of homeless children and youth. Chameleon has not only taught art, dance, drumming and creativity but has created beautiful art works that demonstrate forcefully to these disadvantaged children that their lives matter to society. The art works produced by artists So Yeon Park, Deanna Skedel and Hugh Merrill are not only beautiful but through exhibition, presentations at national and regional education and arts conferences, they are having a national and international impact on using art to change the lives of homeless children and youth."

–Staci Pratt, Director of the Office of Homeless Liaison of the Unified 500 School District Kansas City Kansas.

Chameleon Arts Consortium members, March 2009

StoneLion Puppet Theatre

I Am U Entertainment

Esokie African Drumming

Gospelunifics

Lewis Scenic Design



Chameleon Board of Directors, March 2009

Staci Pratt, JD, LMSW is currently the Homeless Liaison for USD 500 (the Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools). In this position, she acts as an advocate for homeless children and youth attending Kansas City, Kansas public schools. Students associated with her program have actively engaged in arts programming at Chameleon for the last two years. Ms. Pratt was previously an attorney at Shook, Hardy & Bacon, where she practiced administrative and environmental law for over nine years. She received her B.A. from Dartmouth College, her J.D. from Boston College Law School, and her M.S.W. from the University of Kansas.

Nicola R. Heskett, JD, is presently involved in Barack Obama's campaign for the presidency. Prior to this time, she acted as a partner with Shook, Hardy & Bacon in the products liability arena. She also served in the firm's diversity and search committees. Ms. Heskett has been a dedicated benefactor for children; as a Board member for the Children's Center for the visually impaired, she chaired two Evening in the City Fundraisers and raised a total of over \$120,000. She obtained her B.A. from the University of Kansas and her J.D. from the University of Minnesota.

Bebe Bartholomew, B.S.E., is the event coordinator for Park University, a reading facilitator for the Missouri Humanities Council Read-from-the Start program, and sales associate for Necessities. For fun, Bebe is the box office volunteer for Friends of Chamber Music. She also: recently helped launch the Ameristar weight loss program, coordinated the four city 75th Anniversary celebration of Beta Sigma Phi, acted as the official Easter Bunny, helped to establish a Fringe Friends group, and advised the Mu Gamma Sorority.

In the past, she coordinated the volunteer program for the inaugural KC Fringe Festival, and also acted as the souvenir manager, volunteer coordinator, and office assistant for Shakespeare Festival. She has coordinated Park University conferences, taught elementary school and tutored, designed wedding gowns, veils, garters, etc., and worked on a farm.

Bebe is a member of Gamma Alpha Master, Daughters of the American Revolution, and an inactive member of Eastern Star. She received a BSE in Education from Central Missouri State, Warrensburg, Missouri and has taken classes in employee management.

Jennifer Sniderman, B.A., Sprint Nextel Corporate Communications, Group manager. Ms. Sniderman is a professional communicator, writer, mother. Currently serving as Manager of Employee Communications at Sprint Nextel Corporation and board member for The Kansas City Chapter of The International Association of Business Communicators.