

## LETTER TO MEMBERS

November 18, 1996

**Dear NAIA members,**

Long time, no news. Right? Don't be discouraged, the association is alive, healthy and productive. The steering committee has been on task all year and though communication with the membership has been limited to the first newsletter, that's about to change. This letter is the first of what we hope will be bimonthly updates.

**The association** was formed so that together we might have greater input into shaping the future of our industry. Some of the changes we're able to effect will be more quickly realized, while others will be gradual. Ultimately, our effectiveness will rely on our capacity to remain focused on the "the big picture." We all want more recognition and consideration for our status as professionals. That will be reflected in the degree to which our venues become more artist oriented, and we will work toward that end. Simultaneously, we must promote the health of our industry and thus the growth of our opportunities by maintaining a "what can we do for our industry?," approach. (Sound familiar? )

**You'll all remember** that we began with a series of surveys in which artists were asked to tell us what their concerns were regarding the art fair industry. The most frequently mentioned issues were a lack of standardization in the application process, the need for more good shows, the need for a collective voice in communicating with event producers, insurance and other benefits.

**As an association**, we've already made some very positive inroads. Show directors have been enthusiastically receptive. They welcome the prospect of having a collective artists' perspective on the strengths and weaknesses of their events. In an effort to promote understanding between shows and the exhibiting artists, we devised a pair of exhaustive surveys that will comprise the bulk of the next newsletter. The first is the collective responses we have already received from a lengthy series of questions put to directors of the top shows in the nation. They were glad to participate and were very forthright in their answers. The second will solicit the viewpoints of you, the artists. The majority opinions gleaned from this survey will become the consensus upon which the shows may base many of their future decisions. Through interactions such as this, the NAIA is establishing its position as the "go to" representative for artists. This is one way in which we've successfully addressed the artists' desire to form a collective voice.

**Standardization** in the application process is another front on which we've met with some early success. Dan Gable represented the association at the annual convention of the International Festival and Events Association. For the past two years, the directors of arts festivals have met as a subgroup of the IFEA in arts affinity sessions. Dan was able to address this group of about forty and he found them very receptive. At that session they agreed to adopt a standard slide-labeling format. The proposed standard will appear in the next newsletter. Let us know what you think of it.

**New shows and better shows** was another concern. Again, we're making progress. Initial contacts have been made with the mayor of Nashville and with the director of the New Orleans Museum of Art. Proposals will be for October shows in these cities. We've also been contacted by some of the established smaller shows who are ready to make the leap.

**We have spoken with representatives** from the insurance industry, which could scarcely be more complicated. To be eligible for a group plan, we must have existed for at least two years. Individual plans are equally tricky, as underwriting considerations vary from state to state. So at this point, until a volunteer steps forward to chair a research committee, the insurance is on the back burner.

**On the other back burners** is the pot in which swim the other artists' perks. Increased membership will have to provide the flame.

**We are able to say**, however, that we're cooking up some nice benefits of our own! Michael Hamilton, who created and continues to maintain our web site, has devised a great plan for members to have their own pages linked to the NAIA address, even those of us who are not yet on-line.

**There's a "Who's Who Among Exhibiting Artists"** directory in the works, inclusive only of NAIA members, which will go to directors, curators, and galleries. There will be more info on both projects in the newsletter or the bimonthly letter which follows that..

**The steering committee** has spent the majority of its time this year wrestling with the nuts and bolts of incorporation. After months of letters, faxes and phone calls, committee members, each at their own expense, met in Winter Park, Florida, for two days in early November. We spent fourteen hours at a conference table and came away with this; a formal mission statement, a much discussed set of by-laws, a workable channel of communication, a membership policy, interim officers and nine committees.

**Just to head off any misunderstanding** among the NAIA membership, here's a sequential explanation of this "instant officers" phenomenon.

**The reach of the organization** is limited at this juncture by financial restrictions that cannot be wholly overcome by membership dues. In order for us to reach out for broader support we find it necessary to incorporate as a nonprofit entity. Legal requirements require that we formalize a set of bylaws, establish a board of directors, and have an executive board (officers).

**In the interest of continuity and expediency**, the steering committee appointed officers to hold title on an interim basis until a board of directors is convened and can assume directorial leadership of the association. In the future, the officers of the NAIA will be elected from among the full membership of the association and be confirmed by the board of directors. Your understanding and support of this interim appointment procedure is important, as the credibility of the association requires the trust of all those it represents. It is incumbent on each of us to convey confidence in this decision.

**The interim executive board** is Banister Pope, president; Larry Oliverson, vice president; Kathy Eaton, secretary; and Dan Gable, treasurer.

**It has been suggested** that we would be better served by securing leaders for whom the demands of artistic productivity are not a distraction. That may be the case, as the time required to pilot an organization is substantial. Unfortunately, this is a good idea whose time has not yet come. There are two primary reasons; one, the money isn't there, and two, citing the infancy of the association as a point of vulnerability, many artists are reluctant to grant leadership to someone outside our immediate ranks. So for now, the members of the executive board will have to give as best they can, shepherding control of our agenda and calling on the strengths of our membership. As we gain footing, secure financial support and establish operating policies, the association might do well to enlist professional leadership.

**Regarding our board of directors**, we will pursue as fine a board as we can enlist, seeking members who can function as advisors in a variety of professional disciplines and who command broad respect within their fields. Please be thinking of persons you know or know of whom you might suggest for inclusion.

**If anyone has wondered** where the money is, here's a financial report:

**Income** from dues: \$6985.70

**Expenses:**

- \$1555.34 newsletter
- 159.00 K. Eaton - postage

- 320.00 D. Gable - convention
- 137.80 meeting room

**Total expenses:** \$2172.14

**Upon reflecting** on the progress made over the past year, we are encouraged by both the acceptance of the NAIA and by the incredible potential of this organization. If we are at all discouraged, it comes from the realization that we could have been much more effective and accomplished so much more if our efforts had not been limited by the time that we could steal from our families and art. It is becoming apparent that to move forward in a big way, we will need to hire a person who can handle much of the correspondence and paperwork that is so time consuming. To do so will require a large commitment from the artist community, both in the size of the membership and the dues assessed. Membership renewals will be coming up. Details and a membership form will be provided in the next newsletter that will be published in the next few weeks.

**We hope each of you** will be encouraged by the progress that's been made. The effort has been constant, even if the communications have not. Although membership grew considerably following the first newsletter, but we're still way short of where we want to be, so please encourage your colleagues to respond to the forthcoming survey and to get their membership materials in the mail.

**Sincerely,**

Banister Pope - President

Ray Hartl - Communications Committee

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