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advance  
achieve  
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HOUSTON ENDOWMENT

A PHILANTHROPY ENDOWED BY MR. AND MRS. JESSE H. JONES

thrive

2008  
ANNUAL REPORT







# Arts

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**DiverseWorks** (DW) explores social and cultural issues through visual, performing and literary arts presentations. “A lot of the work we present is not about the object, but about the concept,” explains co-executive director Sixto Wagan. “We engage our audiences in experiences that last beyond the doors and walls of our space, out where people continue to think about what they saw and talk about it.” Diane Barber, also co-executive director, says, “We take great effort to get rid of all the barriers that separate the audience from the artist, so there’s a full experience connecting with the artwork. There are multiple layers to most work, and so multiple ways to understand it, and we try hard to create an environment where that can happen.” In addition to presenting compelling art, DW helps artists manage and build their creative careers through DW2 workshops that focus on strategic planning, communication skills, fiscal management and marketing. “Many artists struggle with these issues,” says Mr. Wagan. “We help them look at their careers as businesses without taking the creativity out of their work. We help them define their short-term and long-term goals and determine how to achieve them.” The workshops are held once a month over eight months and teach approximately 60 established and emerging local artists practical skills like creating budgets and writing press releases. Nicola Parente, a painter who has gallery representation and an international show under his belt, took the workshop and says, “The program gives resources to artists who are serious about their careers and want to grow. I revamped my Web site, rewrote my artist statement and learned how to work with newspapers and magazines, and how to use Facebook as a tool to spread the word about what I’m doing as an artist. Before, I had 50 Facebook ‘friends.’ Now, I have more than 700. It would have taken years to figure out these things without the workshops.” Mr. Wagan says, “About 250 artists have been through the program. Many have increased sales, some have figured out how to create continuous and reliable income streams, and some have received national funding and attention.” They have all become part of a growing creative community. Successful artists from the community and those who have gone through the workshops serve as instructors. “We capitalize on local resources and bring the community together,” explains Ms. Barber. “Participants get to know the experts and can access them because they’re all friends now. The workshops help artists, they strengthen the local arts community, and they help make Houston a more vibrant place for everyone.”

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