
B I L L M O S K I N

Warrior Angel: The Work of Lily Yeh
October 21, 2004

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Introduction - by Lily Yeh

My work is about the power of acting from the heart and the impact of grassroots action. It is a testimony to the capacity of art to transform people and society. In my search for the sacred in everyday life, I was able to create opportunities for others to participate in this quest. Through working together, people were reconnected to their inner light of creativity. This inner light illuminates our landscape and guides us through our daily lives, especially in dark times. I feel that we are in a very critical time in our human history. I hope the material that follows will inspire people to take action to make the world a better place for us and for our children.

After devoting eighteen years of my life and my energy to “The Village of Arts and Humanities” in North Philadelphia, I need to step down. Engaging in community development through the arts has been daunting and challenging but at the same time inspiring and empowering. Because I am an artist, I worked very differently from a city planner, social worker, or community developer. Although I lacked basic knowledge for the community revitalization work I was called to do (in the fields of construction, finance, and urban studies), I was well equipped with the artist’s skills of improvisation, invention, and spontaneous action. In particular, I knew the power of action. I would respond to an impulse or idea, to an inspiration, exploring it through the creative process to understand where the idea came from and where it might lead. The result of this exploration was the art product, a mural, a garden, a piece of sculpture, or a celebration. I also understood the art of turning deficits into resources. I turned my lack of knowledge about community building and urban renewal to my advantage. It provided me the opportunity to ask experts in different fields for assistance and advice. Having no pre-set ideas, I had the freedom to work with whatever resources came my way and with whoever was willing to participate. The process of park construction and community building evolved naturally and seemingly without structure or methodology. Yet this way of working continued with success and sustained continuous growth and increased stability through a period of nearly two decades. Something must have been right in its organic unfolding.

The methodology at work in the Village is an innovative, resilient, and flexible model of community building. This process of bringing beauty, ingenuity, aesthetic taste, and strong values has proved to be most effective in creating a Village, one filled with a sense of community harmony, pride, and a genuine concern for others. To me, these are the essential though intangible elements in any healthy and vital society. Through the innovative process at the Village we have created opportunities, resources, and hope for the future. Art, defined as creativity in thinking, methodology and implementation, has been our tool. What began as a humble summer project with a bunch of kids on the street has become an established organization that has impacted our nation and the world.

The last project I launched before my departure from the Village was a planning program titled “Shared Prosperity.” It provides opportunities for neighborhood residents, business owners and community groups to work with city officials, government agencies, university groups, health organizations and professional advisors to develop a comprehensive plan for transforming north central Philadelphia into a vital, healthy and thriving community. Although our neighborhood does not even occupy a pin sized dot on the world map, we feel that we are a part of a powerful worldwide action– against homogenization, against unchecked growth and development, against the global market forces taking over and devouring local and family businesses. Our work is about encouraging diversity, about human rights, about freedom, equality and economic opportunities for all. In other words, it is about the essence of democracy and the best of America.

My work is a testimony for the power of an individual to create a call to action. This work counts. Each positive thought and action is like a drop of rain, which will help to nurture and restore our parched land in danger of further destruction by human greed and violence. Together we can change our world for the better through a united effort of positive thoughts and actions.

During my years at the Village, I was not able to see the methodology behind it because I was too close to the work and always under tight time constraints. As I was leaving, I realized that it was important to write down my methodology so that other people who are interested in doing similar kind of work in community building can learn from my experiences. I knew I needed help to face this daunting task. Through the support from the Leadership for a Changing World program of the Ford Foundation, the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, and our long time supporter, the William Penn Foundation, I was able to collaborate with Bill Moskin and Jill Jackson, two nationally prominent consultants in the field of arts and culture, to produce this document. I hope people will use this material for inspiration and guidance in finding their own authentic voices and creativity. I hope the methodology offered here will help people to realize their visions and dreams through action. Echoing Jane Goodall’s words, we can achieve all these by working harder, being patient, and following our hearts.

Introduction to the Methodology- by Bill Moskin and Jill Jackson

The impetus for this project came as Lily was contemplating her transition out of the role of Executive Director of the Village of Arts and Humanities. At that time, Lily was serving as a mentor to ten mid-career arts administrators participating in the Arts Leadership for the Future program based in Northern California, a program we direct. As a part of her work with the program, Lily hosted a two day facilitated session with ALF participants and key staff of the Village. The primary topic was to develop a game plan for Lily's transition out of the role of Executive Director of the Village of Arts and Humanities. One of the many things that emerged from that two-day session was the need to document Lily's methodology both for the Village and the field. Although there are numerous videos and documented speeches that describe Lily's work in her own voice, there has been little written about her methodology in a manner that those unfamiliar with the Village could easily understand and utilize. Additionally, there was a need for tools to assist future Village board and staff members in carrying forward the best aspects of Lily's methodology beyond her tenure with the organization.

In the months following, Lily contacted us and asked us to assist her. We were charged with documenting her methodology and with creating related worksheets that could assist others in applying Lily's methods to their own work. To accomplish this, we reviewed existing background materials from the Village and from Lily's personal files. We did extensive interviews with past and present board and staff members and with a variety of stakeholders that surround and assist the Village in its work. In addition, we met with Lily extensively, both to gather information, and to assist her with her own writing.

What emerged from this project, as reflected by the following material, is a combination of writings developed by Lily and by the two of us. Our original purpose was to analyze Lily's organic approach and delineate a step-by-step methodology so that practitioners, funders and volunteers could access her work in a more linear fashion. Ultimately, we went further, working with Lily to create her own materials that offer a counterpoint to the methodology. It is our hope that by providing various access points to Lily's purpose and methods we will better serve her numerous audiences.

We very much appreciate the opportunity to have worked on this project and have learned a great deal. We marvel at Lily's willingness and ability to embrace this process. It is not easy to face having one's work dissected and translated. Our thanks are also extended to the many people who took the time to speak with us, both from the Village staff, as well as from the many stakeholders outside of the organization. We thank the Ford Foundation, the William Penn Foundation and the David and Lucile Packard Foundation for providing the funding for this project. Additionally, we hope the material that follows can assist others as they approach their own work providing meaningful cultural services to communities.

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My Story - by Lily Yeh

The story I am telling is a very personal journey made public. It is about my search for meaning, involvement, authenticity and a personal voice. My life unfolded through the work I did in North Philadelphia and subsequently in Africa, China and other places in the world. My story is a look into how personal endeavors can become a catalyst for community actions and how an inward journey can manifest in social change.

In the next section of this document, you will see my methodology written down in a very organized and orderly manner. Although I think it describes my process well, it is important to say that I did not start out to create a detailed system for doing my work, nor did I originally intend to create an organization to sustain my work and the work of others for eighteen years. Instead, I managed to rise to the opportunity placed in front of me, albeit with apprehension and fear. I followed my heart and took action. The process of community-based work certainly felt messy and chaotic much of the time. Yet something was working, and what began as a simple project, grew into a complex nonprofit organization with multidimensional programs and activities. Looking back (although I acted intuitively) I was guided by strong principles. In my story, I want to share the pivotal moments and events in my life that shaped my sensitivity and thinking, and gave me courage to walk my own path. I hope it will help you to find your own voice and authenticity and that your life will unfold through your brave actions.

A COMPLICATED JOURNEY REVEALS A SIMPLE PATH

Somehow destiny has a way of unfolding itself through people in certain circumstances. The creation and the growth of the Village of Arts and Humanities (the Village) have turned out to be my life's work up to this point. The fact that it came into being, flourished and became successful was a surprise to me. Eighteen years ago, when I first started a humble summer project to convert an abandoned lot in inner city North Philadelphia into a modest art park, I could not have dreamed of such a possibility. However, despite the improbability of its existence, the Village came into being. My experience as co-founder and Executive Director of the Village has been difficult and challenging yet at the same time exhilarating and enlightening. I described it as being in the battlefield, which demanded my constant attention and energy. People often asked me how I was able to work with such intensity for so long without being consumed and spent. Most of the time I did not sense such a problem. I felt connected and charged. I felt that I stood at an energy center and that the meaning of my life manifested through the work I was doing in North Philadelphia. That work became the Village, an entity and force that has been creating itself for the past eighteen years and is continuing to evolve into the future.

The irony in life is that to accomplish something simple it often requires one to go through a complicated process. For me, it was a twenty-year journey after my arrival to this country in the 1960s to find my passion and light. I studied a lot, traveled a lot, nurtured a family, and tried to understand the real meaning of things. I was exploring to find a way to become a

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contributing citizen living in contemporary America, yet still keep my personal values and integrity that were shaped by a different world and era. It was a difficult journey. There were times I would suffer panic attacks fearing that somehow life was passing me by and I was not living it. Gradually, through this patient search, clouds began to lift and clarity revealed itself. That was when I stepped into the light and began to live the life of an artist.

TAKING ACTION ON A SMALL PARK BUILDING PROJECT

The Village had a very humble beginning, both in intention and scale. Arthur Hall, Founder and Director of Ile-Ife Black Humanitarian Center and Arthur Hall's African American Dance Ensemble was the person who invited me to create a park on the lot next to his building. I intended to do a short summer project aimed at converting an abandoned lot into a community park with \$2,500 from the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts. The team of workers consisted of myself (an eager artist with few skills), a local resident willing to help, and a bunch of kids from the street. No one felt that it could be done. People told me, "Do a feasibility plan and forget about the building part." Or "Kids will destroy everything you build." It seemed really undoable. Then the city leveled the ten dilapidated houses next to the lot. This left me a huge vacant site with 11 adjacent lots. Then I became fearful and wanted a way out. As I was struggling to make a decision, I heard a little voice in me saying "Rise to the occasion, otherwise the best in you will die and the rest will not amount to anything." I decided to gather my wits and start the project. I engaged children, figuring they would not destroy something they helped to build. Then I found Jojo (Joseph Williams) at Arthur Hall's suggestion. Living in a rundown house next to the lot, Jojo (jack of all trades and a man of fiery spirit) embraced the idea and became my guardian and partner. Because of him, the park building project became rooted in the community. One thing led to the next: first the children came, and then adults drifted in. Then we got plant materials and trees from Philadelphia Green. Then came the volunteers.

When the warehouse, the old Ile-Ife Center headquarters, next to the park was abandoned, Stephen Sayer, who knew how to do renovation work, joined forces with us. A lawyer by training, a writer, educator, and builder, Sayer understood the enormous potential in the modest park building project. With the help of neighborhood adults, he took on the renovation of the vacant three-story warehouse and incorporated our projects into a nonprofit organization. We became co-founders of this new entity, which we named the Village of Arts and Humanities. Upon completion of the building, we launched our year round after school program, which was followed by theater production, crafts production, publications, Core Leadership Program, festivals, and a community health program. In the mean time, we continued to convert more trash-strewn lots into parks and gardens, and renovated several abandoned buildings into education facilities and offices. In 2000 we converted a two-acre industrial brown field into a lush tree farm with a meadow filled with wild flowers. The tree farm had 65 permanent trees, 100 trees in containers, and the capacity of holding over 15,000

seedlings. We conducted many job training sessions and created employment for teens and adults in areas of tree tending and urban gardening. We were contracted to grow native tree seedlings for Fairmont Park and Awbury Arboretum. The proudest thing I can proclaim is that our tree farm has no fence! Everything is in the open. Yet, we have very little vandalism because the community watches over and protects it.

In addition to all these activities, The Village now assists and collaborates with various community groups nationally and internationally. All of these activities of the Village have resulted from the little park building project that I launched some years ago. The ultimate intention is to build a new kind of urban village in where people are reconnected with their families, sheltered in descent housing, sustained by meaningful work, nurtured by the care from one another, and thus can protect and raise their children together.

LOCAL BECOMES INTERNATIONAL

At this point I want to share with you another momentous time in my life that impacted me in a profound way: my experience in Korogocho, Kenya. Korogocho is a shantytown outside Nairobi with 100,000 residents. The town hovers around a huge city dump. Thousands of children and adults enter the dump daily, competing with hundreds of menacing storks, to scratch out their daily bread. It is a living hell with horrid odor everywhere and thick dark smoke rising from various trash piles spontaneously combusting. It is a place where industrial, medical and food wastes; and animal carcasses are dumped. Yes, this is hell, a vast land of total destitution and despair.

I had the good fortune of meeting Father Alex Zamotelli, a man with a gentle yet fierce spirit and unfaltering faith. He established the St. John's Catholic Church in the midst of Korogocho. He lives there with the poor so he can best help them. With the assistance of my hosts, Phillda and Elimoa Njau of Paa Ya Paa Art Center and Father Alex, I was able to mobilize children and adults in the community to transform a barren and bleak church yard into a jubilant environment filled with painted flowers, guardian angels and colorful patterns. Here, I witnessed the power of art in transforming environment, to bring hope, joy, and beauty to people. The day of dedication brought together government officials, international guests, and hundreds of community residents. On that day the heavy door of Korogocho opened and sunlight and hope came in. The jubilation of the people made me realize that our presence from the outside was very important in Korogocho because it made residents feel that they were not forgotten and that their sufferings were not in vain.

FOLLOWING THE LIGHT INSIDE

How was it possible for a woman with few skills in park building and even fewer skills in community building, to become a catalyst for such creative energy and rebuild a whole community? The answer is simple. I followed my passion and was guided by the light inside of me. That light does not belong to me alone. It is innate in all of us. Everyone has it. But more often than not, we choose not to see it.

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I have often been given credit for helping people transform their lives. However, it was I who felt isolated and separated. It was I who longed to make contact with that which is essential and real in myself and in others. In short, I think I longed for love and a real sense of belonging through reconnection. I did not know where to find it. So the only thing I could do was to be quiet, to listen, to wait, to observe, to understand, to get ready, and finally, to become involved. I traveled far and wide to look for that and I found it in the inner city of North Philadelphia and the trash land of Korogocho, Kenya. I found it in the hearts of many people who also long to belong and reconnect.

FINDING OPPORTUNITY ON THE FLIP SIDE

Back in 1986 I went to North Philadelphia to build a park on an abandoned lot. I was not well equipped with knowledge or resources. I was well equipped with something essential, the desire to take action and the understanding of the power of embracing. The experience of growing up in China and years of studying Taoism and Buddhism made me understand that the world is made up of two conflicting and yet complimentary forces the Chinese named the Yin and the Yang. The Yin and the Yang is, for instance, the shady and the sunny side of a mountain or an object. They must appear simultaneously and always in the company of each other. Nothing is ever still. These two forces or elements are constantly moving to become each other. Each element contains the seed of its opposite and will eventually become its opposite. This understanding makes me see things differently. When I see the brokenness, poverty and crime in inner cities, I also see the enormous potential and readiness for transformation and rebirth. When I see deficits, I see resources on the other side of the coin. When I stepped into the project, I was lacking in every way. This weakness became my most powerful tool in realizing the project. Because I was lacking, I needed help. It provided opportunities for people to meaningfully join the project, helping me to realize my goal. It helped people realize their strength and provided people opportunities to reconnect with each other through working together. Through this process, our separate and individual selves were made whole. Empowering and healing in people began to take place. This was the first step towards community rebuilding.

BECOMING A LEADER

I did not know how to lead. It was the children who taught me how, the children who came into my project some 18 years ago. It was a project from which most of the adults stayed away. The children, through their innocence, curiosity, joy, and willingness to take part showed me the power and source of their creative energy. Their participation forced me to figure out a different way of doing things. It was a way that was not taught in my school, not in my family life, nor in the talk of our society. That was when I learned how to be a leader. A real leader understands the art of following. To lead, one must follow the feeling that comes from the heart and the energy that surges forth directly from life itself.

EMBRACING ACTION

I have dedicated myself to making art since my high school years. Then, beginning in 1986, I chose to create art with people in poor communities such as inner city North Philadelphia, the old town in Accra, Ghana, the trash-filled land outside of Nairobi in Kenya, and very remote villages in Ecuador, China, Ivory Coast and the Republic of Georgia. For me, it has been a special gift to work with people in these dire circumstances, to make a real contribution and a difference in people's lives. These difficult and compelling situations make life more real for me. They help me to better understand who I am and why we live, and to see the complexity of human nature in its light and dark manifestations. By looking at challenges face-to-face and acting with compassion and creativity, we can find hope and new solutions.

For me being an artist is not just about making art, it is a way of life. It is about delivering the vision one is given, about sharing one's gifts freely, and about doing the right thing without sparing oneself. If one does all that, one can eventually become truly free. In May and early June of 1989, I visited Beijing and witnessed the unfolding of the Students' Movement at Tiananmen Square. It was like being in the eye of an immense storm, which revealed history in the making. Quietly sitting in the middle of the enormous square, the students who went on the hunger strike triggered a powerful force, arousing the whole country and the world to support and rally behind their actions. In Beijing at that time, everyone became an artist expressing their feelings through action: writing poetry and prose, creating paintings and sculptures, participating in marches of people, motorcycles and trucks. The country was on fire with new hopes, dreams, and intense emotions. The hunger strikers were students from Beijing and Qing Hwa Universities, the equivalent of Harvard and Yale in China. They were the cream of the crop and the chosen leaders of the future. Yet, in deciding to do the right thing, they did not spare themselves. That was where their power lay. They did not ask to change others. They simply took action themselves. That left an indelible mark in me.

The most powerful action is to embrace our fear. Wonders happen through that action. Yet most of the time, we lack courage to do it. I almost did not do it. Fortunately in a moment of strength I stepped forward. In this one step, the mystery of my life unfolded in thousands of ways and my life has forever been changed.

THREE STEPS FORWARD. . .

In my most recent trip to Medellin, Colombia to attend an international conference on Centros Y Ciudades Competitivas (Competitive Centers and Cities), I realized that the work I have been doing is not only about an individual artist working with disfranchised people in an isolated situation. It is a part of the global movement to make the world a better place through grassroots efforts. Government, professionals and the private sector can build powerful systems such as transportation, utilities, communication and other infrastructure. They can construct physical buildings, highways, and technology complexes. But they cannot solve all the problems caused by the enormous growth of urban centers all over the world, particularly problems caused by poverty and population displacement. While good

systems can bring physical, social and economic improvement for people, they rarely can address the emotional, mental and spiritual needs of the people. Although intangible, these needs are critical to people's well being. We need to focus on building compassionate communities where people have a strong relationship with each other and are genuinely concerned for the welfare of all. Art and culture can function as powerful tools to connect people, strengthen family ties, preserve cultural heritage and build community.

Scientists explore the mystery of the universe through science, philosophers through philosophy, and artists through art. When we create art that comes from the heart, it heals and transforms. The art we create with community residents flows out of their experiences and deep concerns. It reveals the pain and sorrow and celebrates the hope and joy of the people in the community. Its process is open and inclusive. Through this creative process, participants become reconnected with each other and with their innate creative power and imagination. This creative power and imagination is the light within each one of us.

Through doing projects together, we intend to pass on this light within us to illuminate that within others. Together we unite and shine. This light cuts through the darkness of our ignorance, greed, politics, and social blight. It connects us with compassion, generosity, and kindness. Here, I believe, lies the hope for the future.

Community building is challenging and often without glory. It is three steps forward two steps back. It is trench work filled with sloppy and mundane details. Then why do I do it? I do it because it fulfills my deepest longing to be connected with others and to become whole. Despite the endless failings, in that one step, the world begins to change.

The Methodology of Lily Yeh - by Bill Moskin and Jill Jackson

As we move into the 21st century many founders of America's cultural organizations are thinking about pursuing other endeavors or about retiring. These individuals and their organizations have persevered in communities around this country over the last 25 to 30 years continually providing meaningful cultural services. They are stepping back. It is a significant issue in the field. Who will follow? Will these cultural services continue? How do we learn from the work of these dedicated individuals?

When we were contacted by Lily Yeh and asked to assist her in documenting her methodology, we saw an opportunity to begin investigating this issue directly with an extraordinary community artist/founder. There has been little work done to document the process of individuals like Lily. It is our hope that this document will assist others, both in better understanding Lily's methodology, as well as in providing the impetus to document their own processes.

A. LILY'S CORE BELIEFS

Lily Yeh was born in China and grew up in Taiwan. Her thinking has been deeply influenced by Taoist teachings, Confucianism and Buddhism. For the past forty years she has lived in a Western environment; teaching for nearly thirty years at the University of the Arts in Philadelphia; and working for eighteen years, mostly concurrent to her teaching, in a low income African-American neighborhood in North Philadelphia. Lily has spent extensive time in Kenya, traveled internationally and carries with her influences of numerous cultures. All of this informs the way she puts her principles into practice.

Lily's entire body of work is deeply rooted in a distinct set of beliefs. It is imperative to be familiar with these if her methodology is to be fully understood. Although Lily's artistic sensibility is rooted in traditional Chinese painting, her life in the west and her experiences intersected in a way that led her into a new form of expression, in which the community became her canvas. Her values create the environment in which her particular mode of art can be practiced and in which she can exercise the creative process in every moment of her life. They are the bedrock of her worldview, her decision-making and her actions. We all hold a set of principles from which we make most of our choices; Lily uses her principles as a litmus test for all things in daily life. In Lily's artistic sphere, complex thoughts and ideas are communicated through metaphor and expressed in international iconography. Each and every visual image, activity and artistic choice combine to create a world in which her beliefs are expressed.

The following expresses Lily's core beliefs:

- Everyone has the capacity for creativity, joy and compassion; an internal flame that can be rekindled through the creative process.
- To build hope and a sense of future, one must first have self-esteem.
- Art that comes from the heart heals and transforms.
- Doing justice is to honor, respect and cherish self and others.
- Forsaken individuals and forlorn situations contain boundless possibilities.
- Through hard work, creative imagination and a nurturing environment, people have the power to realize their dreams.
- Deficits can be turned into resources and despair into hope and renewal through an alchemy-like process of actions and transformations.
- Conflicting forces can be harnessed into a powerful, cohesive energy that serves to build rather than destroy.
- Every action should have multiple benefits.
- One can realize one's dreams, if one lives the life she or he believes in.
- In serving and in order to serve others, one must find authentic meaning in one's own life.

Grounded in her principles, Lily interacts with the world, creating project after project that adheres to her set of standards for meaning and relevance. She can and does follow many ideas at once. The ten steps below describe how she goes about each project individually however it is absolutely essential to note that she is at various stages of development at different times with each project. Each project informs and interweaves with the others. Her process unfolds organically and does not always appear orderly. It does, however, follow identifiable stages. In the early years, her work was much less organized or rooted in methodology. It was based mostly in instinctive action. In the later years, when the organization became more established and mature, the work followed a more prescribed path, even if not all projects include every step or occur in the order described below. Lily's methodology is not without its ups and downs, successes and failures, however she consistently and effectively produces projects that hold true to her values. An apt model for Lily's body of work is contained in her own working metaphor, that of a garden. Her principles are the earth from which all projects spring. She finds the tiny cracks in hard surfaces and plants seeds of projects, however unusual and implausible. She plants compatible projects next to each other. Some projects shelter others from the elements and some provide nutrients to enrich the soil. Some projects have familiar elements, like plants that we recognize, and others contain exotic botanicals, unusual but beautiful. Some projects flourish and some wither. The garden is always in flux, filled with life and growth, even when it is invisible to the eye.

B. METHODOLOGY STEPS

The following ten steps describe Lily's procedure for addressing each of her projects. These steps are not intended to be a "how to guide" for others interested in replicating Lily's work, but rather a look into the process of a visionary who acts in a primarily organic manner. Section Five of this document, *You Do!*, examines putting Lily's methodology into practice.

1. Hold constant awareness; looking for opportunities to act on values; make personal connections and address mission

Lily brings to her life and her work the sensibilities of traditional Chinese painting that seek to provide the viewer with a contemplative, quiet, peaceful state. She says, "I sculpt space more than form. I make images and shapes to create a space that evokes the presence of a particular place that the Chinese describe as the 'dustless world'. It is a place of pristine beauty, beyond the pollution of human passion, desire and attachment. It is tranquil and eternal. In each of my new works, I try to recreate this place in which one can relax, reflect and re-center." It is from this point of view that Lily creates.

Lily approaches her artistic and programmatic explorations by cultivating a position of readiness in which she can receive impulses, connect ideas and allow situations to unfold. To work in this way requires that Lily operate in a state of hyper-alertness, one in which she can quickly recognize and seize opportunity when it arises. She is more acutely aware of what is going on around her and is gifted in her ability to make and create multiple connections between disparate elements. Lily intentionally cultivates this awareness through practice and focused observation. Her intuition, although educated by a variety of influences, is quite similar to highly successful individuals in other fields of endeavor that have a better understanding of opportunity and timing than those around them. Lily is ready and able to act on situations that relate to her beliefs, values or mission, even if this requires a change of direction or plan. (see example below)

Lily places a high value on taking action. Her readiness allows her to harvest the inspired energy of a community and translate it into action before it dissipates. She emphasizes the ease and power of taking a simple action, following up by paying close attention to what occurs as a result and determining what can be done next. She believes strongly that people are responsible for taking control of their own circumstances and that accepting this charge creates empowerment. She cultivates the mindset that many individuals working in unison can attain great things. To Lily, this achievement can begin with the act of one person. Lily asserts, "People get bogged down by what they cannot do. I say, think about what it is you can do." It is this point of view that drives Lily to remain ready to act on her values and mission at any opportunity.

The Philadelphia Eagles Youth Partnership Program approached Lily about collaborating on a project to create a playground in North Philadelphia. Lily's initial reaction was, "We don't make playgrounds, we make art parks. We don't sponsor sports, we facilitate creative expression." But she didn't immediately rule it out. After examining the Eagle's mission for the project and evaluating the reasons they wanted to collaborate, Lily realized that there was shared mission and intent. A playground and an art park could be the same place. The Eagles Foundation and the Village worked together to meet their missions. Four years later, a successful relationship still exists.

2. Focus attention and creative thinking when a situation, an issue or a need appears

From Lily's position of general awareness she observes specific needs, opportunities or problematic situations. These focus her attention and generate new program ideas. The focus may be on issues such as a specific piece of land that needs attention, a resident in the community who has a problem, a funder's guidelines that relate to mission, a stakeholder's suggestion of a potential and important project, or even a meaningful personal revelation that relates in a significant way. It is Lily's creative connection of one issue or opportunity to another that forms the foundation of each project. Her principles are the measure for the project's legitimacy and, to gain her interest, the project must connect in an integral way to the whole of her work.

As Lily focuses on potential projects, she finds positive opportunity and resources in situations that most others find undesirable. She is drawn to those opportunities and is not afraid of dark and troublesome issues. She responds to broken situations with creative thinking and creative means. She is not daunted by limitations. She identifies any problem that might stand in the way and shifts her thinking until the limitation becomes an opportunity. She doesn't work to solve every aspect of a problem. Instead, she tries to elevate the situation by creating new opportunities. In the process the original problem is addressed. She is able to grapple with multiple situations at the same time and also able to see how multiple opportunities fit together, creating a greater whole than might have been possible if dealing singly with each issue.

Lily does not avoid working outside of her own comfort zone. She is willing to tackle issues in which she may not have all of the skills necessarily to bring something to fruition. She is also comfortable with the idea that actions perceived by others as improper behavior can reap positive results. (see example below)

Sometimes she does not immediately have a definite idea, but she has a sense that certain aspects of a situation need to be addressed. Even when she does not have all the answers, she keeps moving forward, searching for the appropriate structure for her project idea. Lily focuses her work on people and so she pays careful attention to who might be involved. Sometimes, she simply trusts that the right people will appear when they are needed. Although this can be a risky approach, time and time again, appropriate collaborators have arrived to assist at pivotal moments.

Each aspect of program arises from personal need and from Lily's desire to use art to transform. For instance, at the Village she developed a theatre program so residents could process pain by telling their stories; a community garden to help residents eat better and a dance program that highlights traditions in order to reinforce community identity. In this stage of her methodology, Lily is devising a way to enrich and elevate a situation, not simply address it.

Even when she does not have all of the elements in place Lily can sense and visualize the final results of any opportunity. It is that, combined with the above that guides her and allows her to settle on one opportunity and not on another.

A group of 9 to 15 year-olds lived a block from the Village on 11th Street. They hung out together and posed a threat in the neighborhood by harassing merchants, committing vandalism, etc. They would not attend any Village workshops despite repeated invitations. One day, Lily heard hammering in a nearby vacant lot. This very group of kids was trying to build a clubhouse. Lily insisted the Village crew go support their effort by providing them with tools, materials and technical guidance. In one afternoon, they created a structure with a main and a sub floor, railings, steps and a door. In response, Lily invited a construction worker in the community to lead various hands-on, carpentry workshops. Subsequently, she engaged the group in the transformation of five adjoining lots and named it the 11th Street Youth Construction Park. Through the process, the youth became the protectors of their park and of Village.

3. Envision the end result, knowing that the process will affect the outcome

Very early on in her process, Lily envisions the end result of any opportunity that she identifies. Often she receives a clear visual image of a way to create a project or address the situation. This image might be a mental "snapshot" of a moment in the process or of a finished product that would come from the project such as a building, a new park, a ceremony, a celebration or a work of art. It might even be more abstract and may arrive as a visual image accompanying a concept or as a metaphor that illuminates the situation. This is the stage at which she determines whether she wants to pursue an idea.

Lily packages her idea by observing or looking for vital opportunities to realize it. She identifies key players who can address those opportunities. Then she constructs a creative process to tackle the issue. Lily is able to see connections to her mission, to funders and to other program opportunities. Her unusual method of packaging shapes the project to take full advantage of available resources.

Initially in this envisioning process Lily does not fixate on whether the project will ultimately occur, on who the specific audience is, on whether it is practical or fundable. She accepts the burst of a big idea. She embraces the big emotion brought on by her vision. She trusts her vision of the end result. She welcomes the sense of wonder and raw possibility that comes with a new opportunity.

At the same time, Lily understands that the process of vetting these opportunities will alter their outcomes. Arriving at Lily's vision entails the creation of art objects and arts activities, but her goal almost always includes something else as well. A particular change of situation, the solution to a community problem, the evolution of individual relationships or even the creation of a given emotion in a single participant can be as important to Lily as the final product. The goal of a given project may be to make an artistic garden and, in doing so, build community. The participatory process is the means by which the goal is achieved, but the desirable outcome is that the community process has created something powerful. In measuring this outcome, the creative and healing process is equal to or more important than the particular artistic product. Inherent in this is the understanding that the end result, as it was initially envisioned, will be altered as the development process goes forward. (see example below)

The end result of Lily's projects are further complicated because they may not be realized until months or even years after the physical art project is complete. Creating community change or making connections between disparate elements are activities that take significant passage of time to be recognizable. Such change is most often not visible to the casual viewer. Understanding the significance of Lily's work requires great trust and belief that her principles and the projects based on them will bring about long-term success.

Lily saw a series of abandoned, dirty lots on N. Alder Street in the heart of the Village. She envisioned it to be a place of quietness and serenity for the community and named it Meditation Park. Her design for the park grew into something rather complicated, including a patterned floor inlaid with stones and tiles. She had a limited budget and wanted to involve some of the community people who did not have jobs (or building skills.) Not knowing how to accomplish her vision, she simply began by renting a bobcat and starting construction. Seeing this, skilled carpenters and masons in the neighborhood volunteered (and were recruited) to train her unskilled crew. As a result, Lily and the crew (along with numerous volunteers from the neighborhood and nearby universities) were able to create an impressive art park filled with beautiful mosaic work and the inlaid floor. Although the initial plan never involved buildings, they expanded the project and renovated a dilapidated building (serving as one of the park's walls) to house various Village activities.

4. Analyze existing resources, such as funder resources, volunteers and staff, space, timing, etc., and investigate imaginative use of all assets and deficits

At this stage, conversation about nascent ideas is occurring in a very limited circle. Lily shares new ideas with only a few people and she's just beginning to define the project's potential in a way that it can be discussed with a larger group. Often she chooses one person with whom she can brainstorm. For instance, at the Village it was usually her grant writer. The idea is measured against a variety of issues. Does it address beliefs and mission? Does it fit with existing programs? Could it resurrect a dormant but good idea? What opportunities does it offer to use available resources or develop new and beneficial ones? Considering all this, is it doable?

The next important step is to analyze whether the idea is, or could be, financially supported. Lily is responsive to funder guidelines that relate to her beliefs and mission. She works to design fundable projects and she is creative in helping funders see how their needs correspond to her project. She seeks financial support from a variety of sources and sectors. A specific program might receive arts grants as well as receiving support through a greening contract with the city. She does not feel limited by grant guideline restrictions but instead uses funding parameters as a way to ground her idea in practicality. Lily definitely does not limit herself to typical arts funders and so often ends up implementing with partners that other artists/arts groups ignore, such as seemingly unrelated elements of industry and government.

Lily examines how her ideas could take advantage of an unaffiliated artist with whom she would like to collaborate. She reaches out to local, national and international artists who bring a fresh yet relevant perspective to the community. She instinctively works to unearth people's hidden talents and considers the undeveloped skills of those around her as important elements in an emerging idea. She is a master at recognizing and rewarding aptitude. She connects people to certain projects in a way that fosters success both for the participants and the work. At times, the people who are involved in Lily's projects self-identify and become involved as a result of their own needs and desires. As Lily analyzes what resources might be available to her, she is very good at evaluating and creating mutual benefit. This often opens doors that might traditionally be shut. (see example below)

In this stage of her procedure, as with all other aspects of her work, Lily sees a different set of tools and possibilities. Where others might see limiting deficits and a situation filled with roadblocks, Lily sees exciting undeveloped assets and a vast field of potential. That said, sometimes project ideas, no matter how good are simply not feasible. When this is the case, Lily shelves them with the idea that they may be brought to fruition later.

In 1991 the Village began working with Sally Hammerman, a fabric artist and later a community nurse at Jefferson University Hospital, whose passion has been to help the Village and surrounding community become physically healthy and vital. The Village also has been working with the nursing department of Temple University and with staff and volunteers from Health Corps. Lily realized that many approaches are needed to create true community health. She noticed that funding was available for health work in community settings and began to apply for grants from pharmaceutical companies, the state program for lead poisoning prevention, and health concerned private foundations. She facilitated a joint effort of residents, innovative thinkers in the community, health professionals, and the funding community and became a catalyst for many projects pairing art and physical healing. One of the products was an informative children's coloring and activity book about the dangers of lead paint called "Wipe Out Lead North Philly Style."

5. Share the vision to provide a sense of direction and invite participation, creative ideas and problem solving

At this point in her procedure, Lily has a clear sense of who she would like the players to be and is looking for meaningful ways for them to be involved. She shares her vision strategically with those whose values are consistent with the project that she is developing. She speaks to potential collaborators, both internally within the organization and externally with community and other stakeholders, about potential ideas and assistance. She works to garner assistance for implementation, to gain knowledge about the subject at hand and to create an open invitation to participate in the project. She does not need a broad buy-in to proceed, but rather a few key collaborators to take the risk with her. If the program is good, others will join in.

Lily tends to engage others through the creation of a sense of wonder about the possibilities. As one collaborator put it, “Her biggest gift is that she can sell a vision.” It is important to note that in order to communicate her concepts with diverse individuals and organizations, Lily uses metaphor. She is able to gain buy-in through painting a picture in metaphor that helps those around her understand her vision. This use of metaphor is a part of Lily’s artistry that distinguishes her from those who use primarily traditional narrative to describe their work (see *Glossary of Lily’s Metaphors*, page 25).

Lily consults with experts for advice on how to shape or accomplish her projects. She gets ideas from anyone she needs to in order to assess and develop the idea. She may have the vision but not the background to implement the project. In these cases she designs a road map and looks for collaborators that are accomplished in the skill set she needs. She is always careful to search for collaborators who share her beliefs, understand the mission of her project and are willing to teach others. She definitely uses others to further develop ideas and implementation strategies. (see example below)

Lily guides this development process very skillfully. She listens, facilitates when necessary and delivers on what was decided by those that she brings into the loop. She operates this process in a collaborative fashion, looking to establish partnerships and to connect to larger systems. It is not her intent or desire to put herself forward in this process beyond the initial articulation of her vision. She utilizes shared values to generate unusual partnerships.

As a result of her work in the community, residents talked to Lily about themselves and their families. Many of their stories revealed dark and tragic content that Lily felt would destroy individuals, families, and the community if it remained trapped in the secret recesses of personal and family memory. Though troubling, these stories reflected the reality and fragility of being human. Lily felt the best way to encourage healing was to embrace the darkness in the most public way possible; to act out the stories on stage by and for the people from the community. After much searching she found theater director H. German Wilson, who she felt understood the power of community-based theater. Wilson worked from interviews Lily collected. He brought in other professionals and worked with the community to create an original performance piece for the stage. This developed into the Village Youth Theatre which produces new work annually and has performed in several U.S. cities.

6. Define and discuss program specifics and create an open and participatory process

Once the intent, the parameters and the participating parties of a project are decided, Lily addresses programmatic specifics. Initially there are a variety of issues she considers, such as how the program fits thematically and practically with other programs already in place. How does this new program fit into the full panoply of programs? Do the themes of other projects relate to this new one and, if so, what specific programmatic elements are dictated by this connection? What elements are dictated by the funders' requirements and how does that affect program design? What are the budget and time restrictions? In relation to these issues, Lily designs and directs a program that is community-based and is presented in a skillful manner.

As Lily's ideas evolve, she envisions interconnectedness and overlap between the variety of programs or projects she is doing at the same time. The idea is applied to various programs in a way that creates interdependency, forces collaboration and demands sharing of resources. This often assists programs to be richer and stronger. Such a connection also means that individual grants and contributions can serve several different projects.

Lily takes inspiration from community input and then designs and leads a participatory process, assisted by a mix of gifted professionals, volunteers and community members who share her beliefs and basic aesthetic. Lily's particular visual sense, her vocabulary of iconography and the project content inform every aspect of the program design. She pays meticulous attention to each step along the path. Every activity is meant to bring the project and the participants closer to the final outcome. Each step is also evaluated for what it brings to the overall concept. Eventually, the originally envisioned product becomes deeply influenced by the participatory process itself. As Lily says, "The right process becomes the right product."

Lily translates and transforms community desires into beautiful and inspiring projects. She always asks the community, "What do you want?" but she does not focus on consensus or on any process that can get bogged down by competing visions. She

concentrates on utilizing the available talents in the community and on building skills. Lily changes passive audience members into active participants by creating challenges in the implementation process that require meaningful involvement. The participants' work changes the environment or the product noticeably and the process is designed to make them feel good about themselves and their contribution. Lily establishes reachable goals and moves incrementally toward them. She constructs ways for participants to step in at various levels of skill or commitment. She believes strongly that projects created in partnership inspire ownership in everyone who participates. Lily understands the inherent value in "beginning" and no matter the complexity of a project; she insures that there is an initial step that can be implemented right away. The energy that is created from immediate generative activity inspires community involvement.

When determining program specifics, she is not limited by familiarity with subject matter or by initial failure in a certain aspect of the process. She is upbeat but not overconfident and she continually uses inquiry and creative innovation to find the next step of the "right process." Lily also uses other tactics to involve participants, such as designing programs that encourage parents to attend with their children. A Lily Yeh signature program element is a culminating event that usually involves all those in attendance in ritual ceremony, celebration, processions, costuming and participatory music. (see example below)

In order to interconnect the many Village programs, Lily felt it important that the whole organization come together to reflect and celebrate the year's accomplishments. This annual celebration developed into the Kujenga Pamoja Festival (in Swahili, "Together We Build.") Lily sets the theme for the festival near the beginning of the year and shares its meaning and relevance with her staff. She leads discussions about the theme and invites feedback and ideas for collaborative projects both from staff and involved community. The program and structure of the festival emerges in the following months as staff members collaborate and figure out ways to enhance each program, conserve resources, and create new activities that lead up to the festival. Finally, the celebration embodies and celebrates what was learned and created in the planning process and through participatory festival activities.

7. Observe as the structure emerges, continually coordinating staff, partners and funders

Lily's manner of working creates an atmosphere in which program detail is fluid. She is able to see the structure of a program emerging while the specifics are being developed. Often the influence of various staff and other collaborators stimulates changes that Lily could not have predicted. She checks in with those involved and adjusts the project gradually, bringing detail to the structure. It is not uncommon for staff to feel that she is approaching things in a random manner and it may take a while for them to translate her intentions into connections that they can relate to and understand. This tension between Lily's vision and practical application often exists during the planning and implementation phases. As one staff member put it, "We sort of go with the gist of things." That said, the freshness of this type of creative process, the shared trust in Lily's

vision and her ability to coordinate large numbers of stakeholders, keeps staff, partners and funders moving forward, even when there is considerable ambiguity.

Lily puts great trust in staff, volunteers, community members and other stakeholders who she feels have a deep understanding of the nature of her projects and who have the basic skill sets to accomplish the tasks. These relationships are defined more through intuition than from the creation of traditional job descriptions or organizational structures. If someone proves trustworthy, he/she is assigned to lead a certain aspect of the project and his/her particular gifts and propensities shape the way a project is done. Trusted leaders are given considerable responsibility but they continue to check in with Lily for final decision-making. Her principles shape almost every aspect of program.

Projects evolve as different pieces and new players are added. By the time a project is sixty-percent completed it may look very different from the originally envisioned end result. Often Lily's initial ideas are extremely ambitious and, through programmatic expression, they are crafted into projects that can be accomplished with the available resources. Even though fluidity is a key element in Lily's projects, she keeps a tight hold on material and labor costs.

It is at this stage that problems can arise if the project is unwieldy. When that occurs, Lily gets additional resources and pulls in expertise. If a part of the project is completely dysfunctional it is reworked. If after such attention the project is still in trouble, it is downscaled in a way that it can prove successful. Lily's stakeholders trust that she will deliver on her projects and programs. Lily does whatever is necessary to insure that she lives up to that trust. If a project has to be reworked, she communicates clearly with all involved, including funders, to insure that the new version fits everyone's needs. (see example below)

Lily envisioned turning a two-acre trash-filled lot into a tree farm that would green the environment and earn income for the Village. She enlisted the help of State Senator Kitchen to acquire the land and partnered both with National Tree Trust and Philadelphia Green to get the plants and technical support. She also engaged the volunteer service of Ken Kolodziej, a professional landscaper who utilized his own crew and trained Village crew and volunteers. They set up a collaborative structure through which the Village tree farm was able to produce and provide 15,000 seedlings to various entities in Philadelphia. The project ran into difficulties due to different styles of management, lack of shared understanding of the project's purpose and completion of the initial funding cycle. It had to be re-organized and re-focused. The Village took responsibility for all project operations. The number of seedlings was cut to between two and five thousand, but the remaining land was kept free of trash. An educational program was created to train youth and adults in urban greening and tree tending. The skills they developed established credibility for the Village staff and crew. As a result, the Village received a contract from the city to remove debris, green and maintain vacant municipal lots.

8. Provide necessary skill building

As each of Lily's projects develops and transforms, skill building often is necessary to underpin the success of the vision. The professionals who work with her as well as the community or student population participating in her projects may need training to support their involvement. In each case, Lily remains half a step ahead, identifying those skills and finding ways to provide the required education.

If hired staff or collaborators are involved, sometimes experts or consultants are brought in to train and assist those implementing projects. Workshops by outside parties also help provide skills for the group of professionals assisting Lily in her work. Sometimes Lily must hire additional or better-suited people to achieve her vision. Her particular style necessitates staff and volunteers who are personally motivated, reasonably skilled and able to operate within a flexible structure. Because of Lily's unconventional approach, this type of person is more capable in her project environment than one with highly developed, exclusively professional experience who expects the structure to remain consistent.

Skill building in the participating population offers different challenges. Notably, Lily is able to design programs where participants do not fail. She evaluates participant's levels of ability and appropriately adjusts the program to include and validate all skill sets. She takes an inclusive approach to creating product and finds ways to turn mistakes into new creations. If someone comes to her with a particular vision, Lily offers an extraordinary amount of her own and her staff's expertise to help that individual achieve the vision. (see example below) If a particularly gifted participant shows interest in a certain area, Lily connects him or her with a mentor or advisor who can assist in the development of that gift. As Lily says, "I give skills for others to succeed." And she provides dignity by holding her participants accountable to realize their specific gifts, hopes and ideas.

Neighborhood resident Esther Wideman volunteered for the Village's after school program. At the same time, she was leading a volunteer effort to clean up the nearby historic park, Fotteral Square. Impressed by her activism, the Village invited her to serve on its board of directors. Additionally, Lily and the staff provided training for Esther in grant writing, documentation and presentation. They also connected her with the city agency in charge of the Square. Empowered with these new tools, Esther appealed for funds and assistance to restore Fotteral Square. Her group received a \$100,000 grant to refurbish and upgrade the park. She also applied for and received grants from other organizations for tools, supplies and playground equipment upgrades. Now, an activity grant from the City supports a Christmas celebration and a thirty five-foot Christmas tree is installed by the fire department. She also routinely solicits and receives Halloween and Christmas gifts for North Philadelphia children from Target, Home Depot and other merchants.

9. Refine and direct program and related activities

At this stage in the project, Lily revisits all previous steps, evaluates whether the program includes all the elements necessary for success and finalizes what is needed to move forward. In some cases, a substantial element is missing and is created at the last minute in order to insure the final product is appropriately participatory, professional and relevant. In the case of ongoing programs, this review process is done continually to insure the program remains fresh and suited to the specific task at hand. If Lily herself is conducting the program, this review process happens on a moment-by-moment basis and can change even the course of an hour-long lesson or presentation. Lily choreographs experiences that absorb people and she is at her best when she can be purely spontaneous.

Her hands-on, spur-of-the-moment style of direction often throws staff and other partners off balance, particularly those that have not worked with Lily before. It can be challenging for those who have been deeply involved in the planning and logistics of a project to go with the flow, especially when much of the success of an event is dependent on it being well organized. Lily's attention to the moment does, however, create an energy and excitement that is contagious. Often this stage is where the magic happens and Lily, her staff and the community come together to create a meaningful confluence of circumstances that result in a particularly powerful and relevant program. (see example below)

One of Lily's standard approaches is to finish every program in a culminating event that reflects on the various elements of the project and reconnects it to the original intent. For Lily, ritual celebration is quintessential to the well being of the community and to the participant's spirits. It creates cohesion and makes sense of what has been accomplished.

After all of the meetings, the fund raising and the delineation of tasks, Lily continues to be directly involved in the specifics of programs and related special events. Her role at this point includes providing assurance to all staff, collaborators and participants; making sure that all tasks are within the ability of the participants; engendering spontaneity. She is meticulous about giving credit to those that have assisted her in bringing the project to fruition.

Lily also spends time and energy cultivating events that are related to program, but not a part of program. These might be fundraisers hosted by supportive outsiders or events that offer the opportunity to meet with people and communities not directly involved in her projects. These related events can add resonance, bringing the message of her beliefs and her projects to others who might be inspired, chose to help or be involved in some fashion.

The Village celebrated its tenth anniversary in 1996 with a great festival. A video crew was there to document the event that included a costumed procession, blessings of the neighborhood, and the torch-lit Rites of Passage ceremony. During the rehearsal, Lily worked out a procession route. The video crew set up equipment to best capture the event. Lily planned to make a stop in front of the commemorative sculptural monument of Joseph Williams, the first person who helped her in her park building project, and make an offering to him. While leading the procession, Lily sensed that the designated space was too small for the large crowd and the energy she was trying to buildup in the procession would dissipate if people could not hear or see her actions. Spontaneously, she changed course and led the crowd on to the next station where she could lead the blessings of the neighborhood with everyone's participation. The video crew had to figure out what was happening and quickly reposition along the new route. The procession was a great success. Despite the chaos, the video crew managed to get sufficient, good footage of the event.

10. Document program activities and conduct evaluation

Documentation is integral and important to Lily's work. Detailed documentation of program elements provides a link between projects and supports development of meaningful processes and products. Though she is constantly updating her basic program materials, she also builds on the successes and the patterns of the past.

Lily creates detailed and professional published materials for her seminal programs. Such documentation serves to prove accountability, demonstrate to funders that grant requirements have been met, validate the art created in the project and provide a sense of what was accomplished for all the parties involved. She takes great care to insure that the professionally published materials represent or augment the quality of her community-based projects. Lily's documentation is a work of art in and of itself and it helps stakeholders understand that the art that emerges from a project is integral to the success of the venture. (see example below)

Much of what Lily does is documented by outside professionals interested in various aspects of her work. This comes in the form of articles written for arts and/or community development publications, television news and feature footage, and filmed documentaries. These all serve to document the work and are often utilized to secure financial support, volunteers or professional assistance. This very publication is a good example of one of these vehicles that will serve to document and describe Lily's methodology.

Lily also documents by regularly connecting with her community. At the Village, a professionally produced newsletter has been a means of staying in touch with the wide range of organizational stakeholders invested in Village programs.

Yearly and ongoing evaluations are also an important aspect of Lily's methodology. This is primarily accomplished by post-mortem sessions involving those who were integral to project design and implementation.

All of Lily's methods of documentation and evaluation stem from her determination to successfully deliver on her initial idea. She understands that the process is not complete until stakeholders are able to see and reflect on the power of the project.

In 1992, nearby Hartranft Elementary School invited the Village to work with two groups of high-risk children. Throughout the project, Lily and her staff carefully documented materials, procedures, successes and challenges and took high quality photos of activities and the student's art. Heidi Warren, project associate director, organized the materials and wrote text that might later be used in a publication. The Village steadily sought funding to publish this material. In 1997, CoreState Bank gave the Village substantial general support. Included in that grant were funds for creation, publication and marketing of a book about the Hartranft project. The book was thoroughly edited and then a graphic designer went through eight drafts. Finally, *Learning Through Creating* was published by the Village Press in 1998. The superior quality of the piece made it useful in securing new grants. The method by which materials were gathered and organized has been used in many other Village projects, paving the way for other successful publications.

Lily's Use of Metaphor

A. EXPLANATION OF USE - by Bill Moskin and Jill Jackson

More than any other tool, Lily uses metaphor as a means of sharing her ideas and eliciting participation and partnerships. She uses metaphor to paint the picture of the world she wants to create with her projects. Metaphor allows Lily to assimilate ideas and visual references from world cultures and to share with others the deep meaning she finds in life's situations. Using metaphor is a way for Lily to communicate about her vision with diverse individuals who have varying needs and interests. People can choose their own entry points into Lily's vision by attaching to the part of the metaphor that resonates with them. It allows her to discuss projects in a manner that sparks creative thinking. Lily also uses metaphor to communicate her style of working and to coach those who work with her.

The metaphors described below are the primary ones Lily uses to describe the way she approaches her work. She often crafts specific metaphors that apply to individual projects, however those are not listed in the following glossary.

B. GLOSSARY OF LILY'S METAPHORS - by Lily Yeh

The Village of Arts and Humanities works like cultural ecology. It reminds me of the work of ecologist William Niering. He turned bad soil to good soil through cultivating the land. At the Village, we turn bad stuff into good stuff through art and culture. I call this process of turning dark and destructive materials (lead) into positive, nurturing substance, and into beauty and joy (gold), urban ecology. It is magical and very doable. There are steps and structures to this process. It is the essence of my methodology. When I think of the Village and how it functions, I think of the following images in nature:

1. The planting of a seed

A seed, though small, is potent. It contains all the growth patterns and qualities of a plant, be it a small bush or a huge tree. I see that a seed is like an inspired idea. It has authenticity because it contains life in its small but potent form. Inspiration comes not from our head; it is given from the source of life. It is from an energy source that makes our heart beat fast. It is like our inner light, it guides us. It knows when and how to make things grow. It comes from our heart that is connected to the divine source of energy, of feeling and of love. If one is connected to one's heart, one is connected to the primal energy source. Ideas that come from there have immense power for growth and impact. An artist's work is to realize those ideas so that they blossom, come to fruition and are not wasted.

2. The growth of a tree

I see that community evolves in the way that a tree grows. As the seed of a tree breaks ground (reaching downwards), its stem reaches upwards towards the sun, the source of light and energy. As the seedling grows stronger, it begins to sprout leaves and branches. The deeper the roots grow, the taller and stronger the tree grows. As the tree grows downwards and upwards, its branches reach simultaneously in all directions. With the rain and dew in the night, the tree puts out flowers. It begins to attract insects, birds, animals and people because of the resources it offers; the shelter, shade, cool breezes, nourishment and beauty. This is the way I see that the Village has become a community. It grew organically and naturally. It emerged and is still in the process of creating itself through many people's hard work and dedication. The deeper the roots grow, the more the tree can open up, reach out, survive stormy weather and realize its full power and potential.

3. Deep ocean kelp

Deep ocean kelp is securely rooted in a small and fixed place. Although the plant is pliant, it is tremendously strong. Riding and responding to the ocean current, it can reach far and wide to gather food and look for new opportunities. The Village works this way. It takes root in a particular community in inner city North Philadelphia. It has regional, national, and global impact due to the clarity of its mission, its values and artistic sensitivity, the simplicity of its primary structure, the flexibility of its methods, and its openness to people's participation.

4. A school of fish

Schools of fish are interconnected, in tune with each other, sensitive and responsive to the environment and quick to reorganize. They move in unison and are dynamic.

5. Shedding and frogging

In lean times, plants shed leaves and even branches. A certain kind of frog burrows underground in the dry season. When rain comes, the leaves and the frogs surface and take action. At the Village, we burst into full bloom when resources are plentiful. In lean times, we frog some of our programs. Whatever we have learned and begun is not lost. We simply frog the activities until the resources (rain) arrive.

6. The drifting of a coconut fruit

Imagine a coconut in a river or on the ocean shore. The coconut drops into the water and gets carried away according to the force of the current and the formation of the land. If the new environment is supportive, the coconut will take roots and begin to propagate. Although the original coconut tree grows only in one fixed place, its impact can have infinite possibilities. This is how the Village can have a local and regional influence and, at the same time, a national and global impact.

7. Throwing a pebble into a pond

This is another image to show the impact of the Village. The pebble is thrown and touches the water at a particular place. From this place, the center ripples push outwards toward the edge of the pond. This reflects the impact of the Village on a local level, then regional, national and international. The physical center is the Village and, particularly, the circle in the center of Ile-Ife, the first park. When I started, I drew a circle in the middle of the vacant land with a stick I picked up from the ground. I announced that from here, we would build. Looking back, I see that circle was the physical manifestation of my own center, through which I came in contact with the primary energy source that makes the earth go round and the stars rotate. What connected me with that energy source is that I listened and took action in order to realize the inspired idea I received as a vision.

***You Do!* - by Bill Moskin and Jill Jackson**

If you are working with Lily Yeh and come up with a good suggestion, there is a likelihood that she will turn to you and say, “That’s a good idea. You do!” The following pages contain actionable strategies to provide you with some tools to assist in better understanding some of the key concepts and behaviors that Lily uses in her work. These same tools provide strategies for approaching your own ideas and program activities.

LEARNING TO EMBRACE AMBIGUITY

Working in community is not neat. In fact, no matter how carefully and meticulously a situation is approached, the environment is always shifting in a way that requires adjustment or even large scale change. This is especially true in situations that do not follow typical or traditional models. Many try to force a rigid structure for planning and implementation, however it can be better simply to learn how to cope with and respond to ambiguity effectively.

Lily’s manner of embracing ambiguity allows her to grow her projects organically, seize unforeseen opportunities and function successfully in a creative and flexible environment. The following are some of the key concepts in Lily’s approach to ambiguity.

Key Concepts:

- Accept that adversity sometimes brings good things.
- Learn that there is no ideal situation.
- See each situation through a lens of opportunity rather than restriction.
- Embrace, rather than ignore, discomfort that comes from lack of clarity.
- Try not to share anxiety with coworkers.
- Cultivate comfort in the gray zone.
- Learn how to present yourself well, so you can soften failures and highlight successes.
- Work to help others be comfortable with ambiguity.

Action Strategies:

- When facing a situation that you feel is unclear, get advice from a trusted outsider, learn from the experience of others who have faced similar situations or call an expert for advice even if there is no previously existing relationship.

- When you become stressed by an ambiguous situation, don't feel pressure to make a decision right away. Take time to think through the situation. Go to a quiet place and reflect.
- Sometimes clarity comes from returning to basics. Use your core principles as a platform or litmus test to help clarify the best path of action in an ambiguous situation.
- Education, discussion and shared perspective are vital elements in helping others become comfortable with ambiguity. Set aside and structure time with stakeholders to reflect on important core issues such as shared principles, original intent, shared successes and hopes for the future.

CREATING PROJECTS WHERE PEOPLE CAN'T FAIL

Cultural participation is a hot topic in the arts and culture world. It is becoming an accepted approach to growing audiences and increasing effectiveness in a wide range of arts organizations. The primary concept in cultural participation is that audience members who have a personal connection to a programmatic offering are more committed consumers of that product.

One of the benchmarks of Lily's work is that she designs projects that offer participants meaningful and plentiful ways to participate successfully. She has honed her process for doing this through her many years of working in communities in which others have not succeeded. The following are some of the key concepts in Lily's approach to cultivating successful participation.

Key Concepts:

- Allow people to participate in a meaningful way. Otherwise, their participation is not empowering.
- People's participation must change the environment or produce results significant enough that they experience a palpable contribution.
- Don't concentrate on recruiting participation. Instead, create a project people can't resist.
- Construct ways for people to participate at various levels of skill or commitment.
- Create an overall project design that will result in a successful project without relying on the caliber of the participant's work.
- Have an open approach to product. Anything made needs to feel like a success.
- Education is cumulative. Doing the process is part of the success.
- Use ritual as a connecting device for participants. Design rituals that use elements from other cultures but also emerge authentically from within the designer and truly reflect community emotions.
- Address negativity or opposition quickly. Keep participation stimulating and positive.
- Be patient and avoid judgment in workshop settings.
- Take manageable risks by preparing for the worst-case scenario. Have multiple solutions for the same potential problem.

Action Strategies:

- Design opportunities to participate in your program from a variety of entry points. Participation should allow for flexibility of time commitment and involvement at various stages of process. Some people like to be involved from the beginning. Others like to participate only in a culminating event.

- Consult and hire people from other cultures who use ritual effectively who understand the power of ritual and use it effectively for various purposes and occasions.
- Reflect on a past project that did not live up to your standards of success. How could you have adapted the program, changed your goals or changed your expectations in a way that could have allowed all involved to feel successful?

BUILDING SUSTAINABLE PROJECTS IN ADVERSE CONDITIONS

The difficulty of building sustainable projects (much less organizations) is of constant concern in the field. Even when impact rather than longevity is the intent, a project must be able to build, grow and affect a target community in a meaningful way. This sort of development typically takes time and yet funders and other supporters most often require results within their grant or giving cycles. Sustainability has its own set of complexities for those who work in under-resourced communities.

The majority of Lily's work has taken place in communities where there is a history of failed initiatives or where the condition or situation offers little hope of success. In such environments, she manages to turn deficits into resources. She is able to build successes while facing daunting obstacles. Lily brings to this work a special brand of creative problem solving and a perspective shaped by her core beliefs. The following concepts provide a glimpse of how she approaches creating sustainable programs in adverse conditions.

Key Concepts:

- Creating sustainability may seem like building a stable structure on quicksand.
- Crisis can provide new opportunities.
- Remember to measure steps toward mission rather than only program successes.
- Process and impact garner resources, not just product.
- There must be something in the work that replenishes you on a daily basis, otherwise you burn out. You must practice self-preservation.
- It does and it doesn't take a long time to succeed. Some miracles happen quickly. Realize the gift so it's not wasted.
- When programs work, people experience stability.
- Don't waste energy being confrontational. Pick your battles.
- Creating sustainability in adverse conditions must stimulate a grassroots effort, especially if the environment or populace has been damaged a long time.

Action Strategies:

- In order to better garner resources, gather a small group of staff, board, stakeholders and other advisors to help assess whether you are taking full advantage of process and community impact. Is the process, either of a program or of your organization, effective enough to warrant the focus of stakeholders and funders? Do you assess the impact not only of your product but also of the process? How could you design documentation that shares your process and impact?
- Make sure that you do something every day that replenishes you. Begin by making a list of what sustains you. If you are not replenished, what could you do to adjust the situation that is not dependent on the actions of others?

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- Over the next three months, make a point of identifying successes that occur in the process of executing a new or ongoing program. Make a list of these highlights and share it with staff, board, stakeholders and funders, as appropriate.
- As you work during the next three weeks, choose three battles not to fight. Make your choices based on whether you think you will gain more in the end by focusing on a different or larger problem. After three weeks, observe the results to see what you've learned.

APPROACHING ACCOUNTABILITY

In the nonprofit arts world, accountability can be a major stumbling block. Despite numerous attempts to improve business practices, lack of accountability from individuals and organizations is widely tolerated in the field. In the current environment, audiences, stakeholders, investors and funders are becoming increasingly stringent about holding groups responsible for accomplishing their goals. Consistently delivering on promises puts organizations and individuals at a distinct advantage.

Lily's colleagues and funders identify her as someone who gets the job done. They cite accountability as one of the important reasons they are willing to collaborate with Lily and support her initiatives. The following key concepts address Lily's approach.

Key Concepts:

- Concentrate on successfully delivering on the idea that was promised rather than on the specific programmatic elements. Make program adjustments if needed to achieve the goal.
- Getting people to work together well and insuring that collaborations function are key elements in successful delivery of program.
- Even if you're not naturally systematic about accountability, you can work to improve.
- Be clear about expectations at the beginning of any project or activity to avoid confusion and disappointment later.
- Get the right people involved in every project and then understand that even they may occasionally fail.
- Train supervisors and staff by coaching. Then, as they deliver they also learn. Help them to identify and distinguish what you want and expect.
- Find a way to bring in experts when experts are needed.
- Personal involvement of the primary leader is key in insuring accountability.
- Draw upon your entire pool of resources to accomplish a goal.
- You're only accountable if you can consistently deliver over time. Structure projects with that in mind.

Action Strategies:

- Identify someone among your staff, board or stakeholders who is consistently accountable. Identify the behaviors that distinguish their approach. Apply those behaviors, or the rationale behind those behaviors to your own work. If possible, have a conversation with that person about their methods or request their assistance in helping you improve at delivering what you've promised.

- Think of a business that consistently delivers. Read about their accountability practices or, if the business is small enough, engage the owner in conversation about his or her approach to accountability. How does this information apply to your work?
- Identify and make a list of aspects of a project for which you are responsible. Break the tasks down until you have a list against which you can measure whether or not you are being accountable. Follow your progress.
- Identify a project that you and/or your organization are having difficulty handling in a timely manner. Are there resources that could be dedicated to that project that currently are not? Or, are there adjustments that can be made to the program to make it easier and more successful?
- An important part of holding staff accountable is making sure an individual's capability matches his or her assignment. Often we make assignments or create job descriptions based on precedent. A helpful activity is to work with a trusted advisor and evaluate the breakdown of tasks in your project or organization. Are there adjustments that could be made to better align jobs with capabilities? Make those changes in a positive way by highlighting the activities each person does well. Sometimes, having the conversation with each staff member about strengths and weaknesses, likes and dislikes can offer surprising and helpful information that can increase effectiveness.

FUNDRAISING WITH A FRESH PERSPECTIVE

There are myriad sources of funding and yet it is tempting to rely on avenues that are easily approachable or historically successful. Finding creative ways to tackle fundraising is a constant battle. Sifting through funder guidelines and grant requirements and trying to match those opportunities to mission can be a confusing and frustrating task.

In her fundraising efforts, Lily approaches each opportunity as a fresh chance to make connections between the needs of the funders and her need to meet mission and realize her vision. Her primary intent is to receive support, but she also strives to create innovative approaches that address issues that both she and the funders want to solve. She acknowledges that the idea or proposal itself is not the only requirement for getting the grant. Her actions must also pave the way for meaningful interaction with funders. Lily seeks funding with the following ideas in mind.

Key Concepts:

- It is worth spending resources and time to insure that all materials presented to funders are high quality and artful. The design must be cohesive and in keeping with the program and organization. Documentation must be first-rate.
- Sell both the program and the idea of the program. Together they make a strong case.
- Concentrate on the proposal, sculpting the project to the guidelines but be sure to remain true to the project or organizational mission.
- If necessary, push the boundary of guidelines with the content of your proposal, helping the funder to see how their goals and yours align.
- Do not be limited by conventional wisdom or adhere to generalizations about funders. Find out for yourself what funders are willing or unwilling to do.
- Carefully discern what type of relationship each funder wants, i.e. personal interaction or written only, a steady flow or information or intermittent communication, etc.
- Design a project that meets the funder's needs, even if the idea seems different from the type of project they seem to desire.
- Look for opportunities to fund your organization as a whole as a part of seeking individual program support.
- Obvious gratitude and enthusiasm helps funders understand their support is appreciated.
- Be graciously tenacious.

Action Strategies:

- Many funders suggest they like to hear from grantees for reasons other than a request for money. It is important, however, to carefully determine the content and manner of the interaction. Think of a funder who has supported a project you are implementing or one from whom you would like support. What sort of successful moment in the process would appeal to that particular funder? Once you have identified that moment, evaluate the best way to share that experience. Would they like an invitation to your events and activities? Do they prefer to be phoned, e-mailed or snail mailed? How could the information be packaged in an inexpensive but imaginative way to get the funder's attention and brighten his or her day? Remember, photos often speak eloquently.
- Do a review of organizational or project materials. First, gather all materials into a box. Include promotional materials, newsletters, stationery, grant proposals, mailing labels, applications for participation, anything you can think of that represents your organization to a funder or to the community. Ask five people outside the organization to evaluate your materials based on questions you construct about what the materials communicate visually. Be sure your questions are not leading, but rather focus on general impressions as well as issues related to your target community. Make sure one of the outsiders is a graphic or visual artist. What have you learned?
- Rather than looking at a funder's guidelines, look instead at the foundation's mission and vision statements or guiding principles. Compare them to your organization or project mission, vision and principles. Evaluate similarities and differences. Brainstorm about an ideal project built on the shared values of each organization. Be mindful about involving community needs and participation in the vision. Assess what will enrich your organization. Now, revisit the funder's guidelines. Do you see new approaches or possibilities? How can you incorporate those possibilities into a proposal?

CULTIVATING GRACIOUSNESS AND A PERSONAL APPROACH

Because nonprofit work is focused on helping others and because it can be taxing and depleting, there is a tendency for practitioners to feel entitled to support, resources and participants. Lily approaches this situation in a very different manner. She envisions herself as needing help to accomplish her vision and is grateful and gracious to funders, donors, collaborators, participants, volunteers and community members, to anyone who is willing to be a part of her work. The following pivotal concepts have been identified by Lily, and those who have worked with Lily, as being integral to her approach.

Key Concepts:

- It is important to recognize that certain issues are not organizational issues, but are personal issues.
- If something intrigues you about a person, it is worth sticking with him or her until a project or an idea is achieved.
- Be a faithful and generous collaborator. It's not only about what others can offer you. Don't discard collaborators when you've gotten what you wanted.
- Bring out the best in people. Foster loyalty and dedication. Teach by example.
- Be gracious and enthusiastic. Let people know you are grateful when they offer assistance.
- Try to frame feedback in the positive. You can communicate displeasure or tackle a problem by communicating what a positive or successful outcome will be.
- Cultivate patience.
- Be reachable and accessible.
- Help reflect the talents, abilities, gifts and finest attributes of others.
- Celebrate the successes of individuals, collaborators and organizations that offer support.

Action Strategies:

- Send handwritten thank you notes to a variety of people and organizations that may be surprised to receive them.
- It is important to let funders, supporters, stakeholders and participants know that you are interested in them for reasons beyond what they can offer you. This is especially true of those you ask for money. Create a filing system to record personal notes about your funders, supporters, stakeholders and participants. When you get the opportunity to speak with or write to them, inquire about parents, children, or anything else you observe that you have in common or know is of interest. Personalizing your relationship in this way lets people know you are aware that they have outside lives and concerns.

- When you are asking people to assist you or be a part of your organization in some manner, it is helpful to understand what will make them comfortable. It is important put them at ease. Whether the interaction takes place on your turf or theirs, they need to know it is important to you that they have a positive experience. This requires that you evaluate the situation before it occurs from an outsider's point of view and make plans or adjustments to provide a welcoming and/or comfortable experience.
- Take the time and energy to be complimentary to those you work with. We all need to be reminded of what we do well.

Conclusion - by Bill Moskin and Jill Jackson

It is our sincere hope that this material will be useful both to the Village of Arts and Humanities, as well as nationally and internationally to the field at large. The material presented here was developed primarily during the summer of 2004 as Lily was transitioning from her position at the Village. It is reflective of all of our best efforts at that time. As we all move forward the perception of Lily's work and our interpretation it, will no doubt change. It is our intent that depending on where you live, and what your work entails, various portions of this material will resonate for you now and in the future.

Our thanks to Lily and to the many people who took the time to share their insights with us. Our very best wishes and thanks also go to those of you that devote yourselves to working tirelessly to enrich communities across the country and around the world.