

“Invention, it must be humbly admitted, does not consist in creating out of void, but out of chaos.”

— Mary Shelley

August 22, 2018

Dear Friends of Manifest,

Ordinarily you'd have gotten a newsletter in the mail from me sometime this past winter reviewing Manifest's 13th season accomplishments, challenges, and highlights. That didn't happen, and I'm writing today to give you a more direct report of the season you helped make happen. It's important for you to know that you and your support, as well as keeping you informed, matters a lot to me and to everyone here at Manifest.

Season 13 and early 14 (our 2016-17 and current 2017-18 fiscal and programming years) were a perfect storm of challenges for our small nonprofit. As I write this we're nearing the end of our 14th season which ends on August 31st. I'm happy to say that means we survived the storm.

Within the past twelve months we had 60% of our staff turn over. That sounds like a lot. But when you have a staff of five, including me, it's even more than a lot. Ironically these departures were largely the result of our *success*. To be specific, we had trained and provided such quality experience to our staff that they became more valuable than Manifest's meager budget could afford, and so they were recruited (and supported by my recommendations) to better paying full-time positions outside of Cincinnati. Kelia Hamilton, my long-time right hand and Operations Manager, and Kate Cunningham, our Drawing Center Coordinator for almost three years, both departed on good terms, but they also left two giant voids in our operations that needed filled quickly with the right capable individuals. Even in the best of situations, a transition of key staff can be time-consuming and cumbersome. This was hard, to say the least.

Fortunately both Kelia and Kate were able to help me vet and train their own replacements. For Kate's role at the Drawing Center we had a wild card in our hand, and perfect timing. Adam Mysock was just finishing up his year in the Manifest Artist Residency, having relocated back to Cincinnati from New Orleans to be at Manifest. Adam had spent nearly a decade teaching at Tulane while in New Orleans, and so was immensely qualified to fill the Coordinator role for the Drawing Center. Our great fortune was that, after a few conversations Adam agreed, and Kate quickly 'downloaded' all she knew to him before her departure for her new position teaching at Georgia State University in Atlanta. Adam recently completed his first full year at Manifest, and the Drawing Center programming and space has never been better than under his guiding hand. He has also expanded the team of people committed to teaching on an ongoing basis by managing the appointments of Sam Haring (another former Manifest Artist in Residence, relocated from Chicago) and Michael Wilson, our Cincinnati native photography guru, mentor, and good friend, as Resident Instructors at the Center. We have even more (r)evolutionary things in the works for the year ahead at the Drawing Center and Adam is making it happen.

Kelia's position of Operations Manager was a trickier fit. So we did our due diligence posting the opportunity, reviewing application after application, interviewing the best candidates to check for a 'Manifest fit', until we met Erin Corley. Erin showed up as yet another circuitous connection, having previously exhibited her work in Manifest exhibits and publications (Erin's focus is photography). It turns out Manifest's people make the best *Manifest people*, and they show up when you need them most. Erin spent several weeks shadowing Kelia, learning the incredible juggling act an Operations Manager has to perform here, including bookkeeping, grant work, staff management, facility oversight, and so much more. Erin is about 10 months into her time at Manifest and has really settled well into the role she holds, serving as the hub of all our work and activities, keeping Katie Baker (Exhibition Coordinator), Adam, myself, our new Operations Assistant Taryn Zust, as well as our board of directors all connected and in tune.

Once we patched those vacancies in our staffing roster, we re-hired Kelia to work remotely as Manifest Press Project Manager. As you may know, we are behind in the production of our vast *Manifest Exhibition Annual* (MEA) series of publications which are set to replace our old format small exhibition catalogs. Kelia is spearheading getting all the MEA books

in order and printed over the next several months, as well as keeping our regular annual publications going. She's doing this from her new home in Columbus, Ohio. The MEA, we are convinced, is going to be a book like none other (stop by the gallery and see our hard proof of the season 10 book!). The fact that we'll be creating one for each season at the gallery will make it all the more impactful as an archival document of what we, and so many artists, have done together.

Running a small nonprofit from the ground up, from its start to its 15th year, turns out to be a lesson in balance while maintaining a graceful upward spiral. Because Manifest is still a relatively young institution it has yet to find its limits, the shape of its boundaries, and its full flight. So we must work to grow it, albeit carefully, organically, and with restraint. But I have found we also must come to terms with the altitude we've reached after fourteen complete years. The distance to the ground is now quite far—so far that someone should have mentioned not to look down. Now I find myself looking both downwards and upwards, gauging two trajectories and, with a lot of help from people like you, our wonderful board of directors, and our all-artist staff team, keeping the flight steady and true to what this organization is meant to be now, and destined to become in the years ahead. I'll be honest with you—both directions are daunting.

Thanks to your support in Season 13, **we reached a level of public support far greater than our two operating grants combined** (ArtsWave & Ohio Arts Council). Exactly 214 people (those receiving this letter) joined our roster of donors and made last season's conclusion a resounding success. This means you all set the bar very high for our current season. We needed to reach a similar goal of support for our operations this year, for which at present we are falling far short with just one week to go. Not reaching our goal will severely hamper our budgeting process, which will impact both our people and our programming.

Just last week I received a challenge pledge by Director Emeritus of the Taft Museum, Phillip Long, in his hopes of inspiring others to pitch in and help us reach our goal. **Phillip has pledged \$6,000 towards our Fund if we can raise a matching \$6,000 by August 31st.** Counting this generous offer in the mix would put us at 13% short of our goal today, so that's what we're reaching for now.

There are 115 donors from season 13 (2016-17) who have not supported Manifest's current season (that's 54%!). If you have not already renewed your support for this season I hope you will do so today—we need it. Or if there is a reason you have chosen not to, I hope you will let me know. If you have already given, then I humbly ask that you spread the word of our good work to others who may be able to help. And please mention the challenge pledge we have on the table! Time is of the essence. The easiest way to donate is to simply visit our website and click on any donate link on the homepage.

Each year our Annual Fund is used to calculate the value of our Drawing Center scholarships (tuition waivers) for select high school students and emerging artists just out of college. The total amount of support we look to our contributors to provide is equal to our annual gallery *and* Drawing Center facility rents combined. Without the Annual Fund we would be homeless. Without our facilities Manifest would not exist.

Ours is a small but steadfast organization that is made possible by individuals like you who care about its impact, depth of programming, and perseverance. Individual contributions really make a difference and help sustain Manifest at its most basic levels. Your support provides a resilience against the winds of change and political chaos buffeting the world. Any amount of support helps us continue our non-profit mission as **a neighborhood gallery for the world and an educational center where learning to draw (and photograph) is learning to see.**

As I write every year, we continue to hold the line, believing that *our society cannot remain whole without creativity, and that good art, like good food, makes people healthy.*

Thank you again for your support last season and making it the best-supported year in Manifest's history. We look forward to seeing you in the gallery and studio!

Sincerely,



Jason Franz, Executive Director