

# THE NEW GUY

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**P**ROPOSED FUNDING FOR THE California Arts Council from the California general fund is flat. There is a slight increase provided by the Arts license plate fund. (For \$50, \$34.63 goes directly to support the arts. Visit: [www.cac.ca.gov](http://www.cac.ca.gov). The National Assembly of State Arts Agencies works to ensure the role of the arts in the educational, economic, civic and cultural well-being of our communities. From their recent press release: States Arts Agency budgets (in millions) for FY2006: California \$2.1, Rhode Island \$3.2, Kentucky \$4.2, Hawaii \$6, District of Columbia \$8.5, Pennsylvania \$14.5, Florida \$29.4, New York \$45.3.

The mission of the California Arts Council is to advance California through the arts and creativity. Among other things, the California Arts Council used to give grants to artists and arts organizations, who then leveraged those grants to obtain private foundation support. State support is often required for foundation support eligibility. It provides a "good housekeeping seal of approval." For two years California arts organizations have been unable to leverage that power.

Imagine you run a cement company and you are forced to go without wheels for your trucks. You could deliver your product with wheelbarrows, buckets and your bare hands, but for how long? The California Arts Council grants were the arts community's wheels.

Without them the California arts community cannot continue to be the economic engine (\$5.4 billion to the CA economy), job creator (66,300 full time/95,100 part time), tax revenue stream (\$300 million in state and local taxes) and cultural tourism generator (6 million out-of-state tourists) that we are known to be. To play out the scene, if the cement vendor can't get product delivered, contractors can't build houses, people lose jobs, planned developments are cancelled and a whole generation of economic malaise sets in.

Cement, bricks, mortar and art lay at the base of sustaining a civil society. How much work can any of us do when materials are forced to be delivered without wheels and we live in the land of the freeway?

Following the Governor's proposed \$222 billion "infrastructure" bond announcement, the definition of infrastructure and where exactly those funds might land is being debated statewide. Courthouses. Bridges. Landfills. Infrastructure by anyone's definition.

All made stronger and more powerful by the arts.

I attended an LA Contemporary Exhibitions event featuring Los Angeles-based architect Thom Mayne. He described the city's unique role as a metropolis with an utter lack of and no desire for public space and our endless commute within a series of continuous private spaces. Mayne's building and architectural ideology demands that a project is unfinished until completed by a viewer or the public.

Architecture is performance, incomplete without a connected audience. Public spaces and performance provide connections. Infrastructure is that which supports through fundamental connection. Infrastructure allows civilization.

In a quick aside on Charlie Rose, Mayne asserted his view on the semantics of true versus authentic. Distinct performance has the ability to be true, rather than authentic. To be authentic is to re-create. To be true is to simply be, continuously.

At LACE, Mayne spoke about a Courthouse project and this detail: the "skin" of the building was to contain the text of The Constitution etched into the walls: the fundamental purpose of the building manifest as its structural support. This detail was lost during subsequent phases of development, but I imagine the idea framed discussion for much of the project's development.

The work of artists Roman de Salvo and Joseph Waters at the 25th Street Musical Bridge in San Diego elevated an infrastructure improvement project to a

model of interactivity by incorporating a musical railing, bridging not only two physical communities, but also public works and public art, elevating a simple pedestrian safety upgrade to a participatory work of art. Art is infrastructure, improving the everyday: words, railings, our daily commute.

These creative connections were among many discussed when meeting with elected officials and staff members in Sacramento during a recent California Arts Advocates visit. ([www.CaliforniaArtsAdvocates.org](http://www.CaliforniaArtsAdvocates.org))

I urge our leaders to provide leadership such as that seen across both sides of the aisle including Assembly Member Leno identifying new public funding streams for the Arts Council and Assembly Member Niello introducing ACR 117 and bringing attention to the importance of music education through the National Anthem Project; Senator Jack Scott as Chair of the Joint Committee on the Arts and CAC Director Muriel Johnson and Council members including Annette Bening working to revitalize the California Arts Council. I urge staff members to look at models like the Oregon Cultural Trust ([www.culturaltrust.org](http://www.culturaltrust.org)) and Georgia Arts Trust, supplementing general fund expenditures with tax incentives for private donations to non-profit arts organizations and state arts agencies. And if the issue must be infrastructure, include the Arts Council and California artists of all disciplines in conversations and appropriations. Brilliant minds such as Mayne, de Salvo and Waters are crucial in considering infrastructure not as a means to an end but rather as a true catalyst for creative growth, opportunities and connections.

Governor, Senators, Assembly Members: place the California Arts Council on firm, repaved ground. Let it do its job and give us back our wheels! Better bridges will follow!

ART=TRUE  
INFRASTRUCTURE.  
RETURN OUR  
WHEELS TO BUILD  
BETTER BRIDGES.