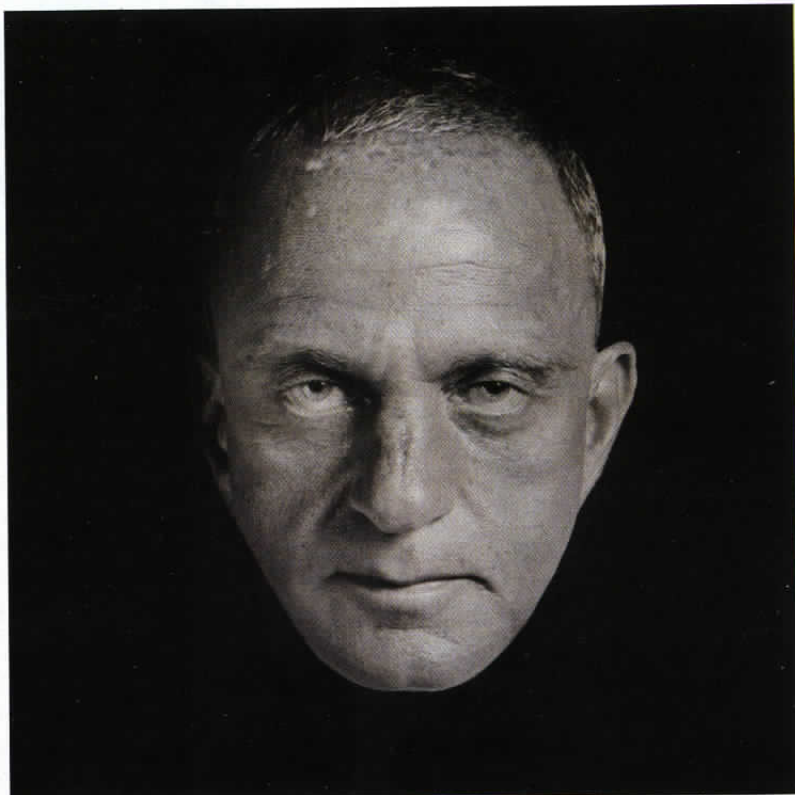




**Alex Podesta's mixed-media sculpture *City Watch*, 2008, installed on a rooftop. It was commissioned by the "Art in Public Places" project administered by the Arts Council of New Orleans and funded by the Joan Mitchell Foundation.**



**Robert Mapplethorpe's portrait of Roy Cohn, 1981, from the National Portrait Gallery's "Hide/Seek" exhibition. The Mapplethorpe Foundation supported the show, but after David Wojnarowicz's video was removed, it refused to let the gallery use its images on promotions.**

# The Artist as Philanthropist

At a time when government and corporate support is decreasing, artists' foundations are becoming increasingly influential

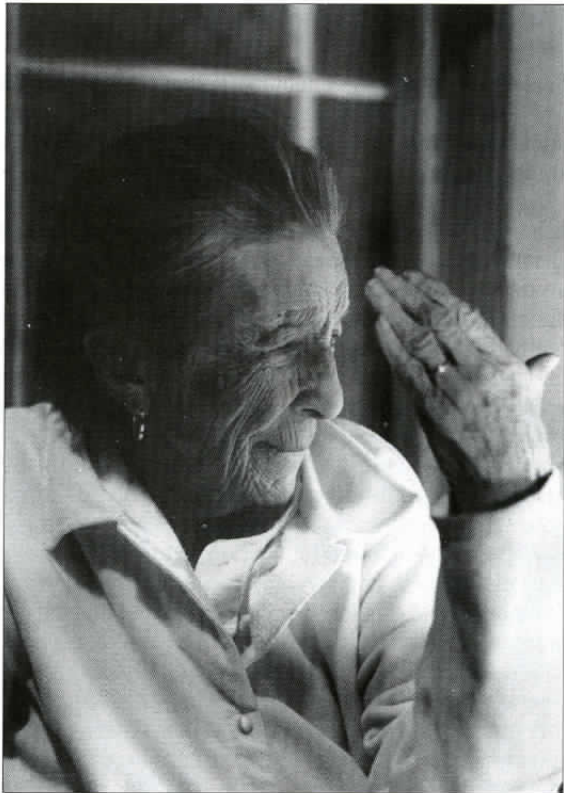
BY EILEEN KINSELLA

**In the wake** of the devastation left by Hurricane Katrina, in August 2005, representatives of the New York-based Joan Mitchell Foundation reached out to the arts community in New Orleans in an effort to help. After corresponding with individual artists and arts-organization leaders, says Carolyn Somers, the foundation's executive director, "we realized that returning to the studio and finding a way to continue to make work following the flooding of the city" was a major challenge for New Orleans artists.

In September 2005, the foundation made its first emergency grants to artists who were adversely affected by Hurricane Katrina, and in the years since, it has provided more than \$3 million in support to both individual artists and arts organizations in New Orleans. By 2007, the foundation had concluded that the city's infrastructure for supporting artists, even before the disaster, was "fragile" at best.

In the summer of 2010 the foundation made its first real-estate acquisition in New Orleans: a bed-and-breakfast in

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**The sculptor Louise Bourgeois set up her own foundation, the Easton Foundation, before her death in 2010. Artists' foundations are becoming a powerful force in the world of cultural philanthropy.**



**Herb Ritts, *Cindy Crawford, Ferre 3, Malibu*, 1993, from a recent gift to the J. Paul Getty Museum. The aims of the Herb Ritts Foundation are to advance photography as an art form and support AIDS-related causes.**

foreclosure on an acre and a half of land near the city center that was once part of a Creole plantation. It is now being transformed into an artists' community.

The Joan Mitchell Foundation was established in 1993, a year after the artist's death in Paris, and was formed with her stated goal of aiding painters and sculptors. The foundation also provides free art-education classes in New York City and, through a nomination process, awards grants to painters and sculptors as well as graduating M.F.A. students.

It is one of a small but growing number of artist-endowed foundations that are becoming a powerful force in the world of cultural philanthropy. In addition to overseeing individual artists' legacies by documenting and protecting their work, such foundations, through hands-on involvement with other artists and organizations, are discovering the best and most efficient ways to provide much-needed support at a time when traditional funding sources are shrinking.

"Most government officials think the arts are dispensable," says Joel Wachs, president of the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, the largest artist-endowed foundation, which currently has about \$330 million in assets. The foundation announced \$14 million in cash grants to arts organizations for the fiscal year ending April 2012. Funding provided by artists is the "purest and best way to support the arts," says Wachs.

In late 2010, the Smithsonian Institution's National Portrait Gallery in Washington, D.C., bowed to pressure from critics and removed David Wojnarowicz's video *A Fire in My Belly*, which includes a segment showing ants crawling over a crucifix, from its group exhibition "Hide/Seek." The Warhol Foundation, a lead supporter of the show, publicly condemned the move and said it would cease funding for all future Smithsonian shows if the work was not reinstated. In a letter to secretary G. Wayne Clough, Wachs wrote that the museum's "blatant censorship" was "unconscionable."

Since the work was not reinstated, the Warhol Foundation's position remains that it will not fund any further exhibitions at Smithsonian museums, Wachs confirmed. The foundation made a \$150,000 grant to bring the "Hide/Seek" show to both the Brooklyn Museum and the Tacoma Art Museum in Washington state.

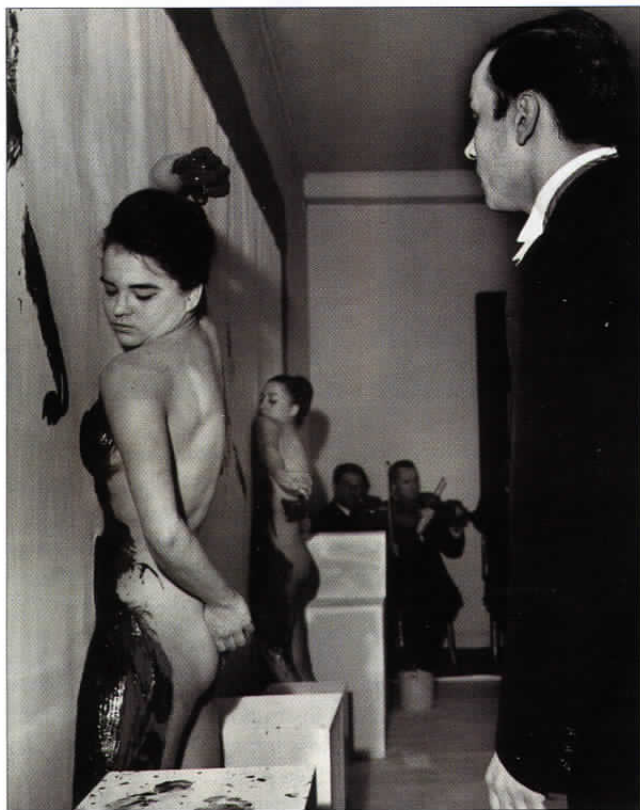
The Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation, headed by Michael Ward Stout, also condemned the museum's action, although it did not take the additional step of cutting off funding to the institution.

The purpose of the Mapplethorpe Foundation, established by the artist in 1988, a few months before his death at the age of 42, is to protect the artist's work and advance his creative vision. It also has a second mandate: to support medical research in the area of AIDS and HIV infection. To date, the foundation has directed \$5 million to this goal.



Over the last several decades, the number of artists whose careers thrived during their lifetimes has grown exponentially, a shift that has allowed them more time, resources, and flexibility to plan ahead. As the market for modern and contemporary art keeps expanding, experts say, the number of foundations established by such financially successful artists will continue to multiply.

The first-ever comprehensive survey of this field was released late last year by the Aspen Institute's Program on Philanthropy and Social Innovation. The massive two-volume



**Harry Shunk photographed Yves Klein's actions, including the making of *Anthropométries de l'époque bleue*, in Paris in 1960. The Roy Lichtenstein Foundation spearheaded a project to preserve Shunk's archive.**

study, *The Artist as Philanthropist: Strengthening the Next Generation of Artist-Endowed Foundations*, led by Christine Vincent, a former deputy director of the Ford Foundation, was supported by a consortium of donors, including many of the leading artist-endowed foundations, such as the Warhol Foundation, the Pollock-Krasner Foundation, and the Roy Lichtenstein Foundation.

The study identified 300 artist-endowed foundations holding a total of \$2.5 billion in assets, of which more than \$1 billion was in art assets. Between 1990 and 2005, the number of these foundations nearly doubled, with charitable-purpose

payments totaling \$954 million. Of that sum, \$639 million was paid out in grants, while \$315 million went toward administrative costs, such as funding exhibition programs and study centers.

A key purpose of the study is to provide guidance to artists, heirs, and experts who are considering setting up such entities. "Its aim is to fill a significant information gap facing individuals involved in creating and leading new artist-endowed foundations," according to Vincent. Many of these foundations do not become active until after the death of the artist or his or her heirs. The study found that the current average age of artists planning their own foundations rose to 74 years in 2005, from 64 years in the mid-1980s.

In a dialogue with Vincent that was included in the Aspen Institute study, Yale University School of Art dean Robert Storr pointed out: "Even now, as you look at the list of artists who have privately endowed foundations, virtually none of the art stars of the 1970s and 1980s appear. They may show up later but most of the existing foundations have to do with the generations of artists active in the 1950s or 1960s."

Many foundations that are set up during the artist's lifetime are "on the shelf" entities, meaning that they make only one or two modest grants per year, says Vincent. (Artists and foundation heads must abide by strict rules that prohibit "self-dealing" or situations in which handling or selling or appearing to promote an artist or the work could present a conflict of interest.)

Among recently deceased artists who set up foundations are Louise Bourgeois (the Easton Foundation) and Cy Twombly. Living artists who have set up foundations and are already making substantial gifts of money and artwork include painters Alex Katz, Ellsworth Kelly, LeRoy Neiman, and Helen Frankenthaler.

The Los Angeles-based Herb Ritts Foundation was "the result of a very short conversation" in 1996 in the broader context of estate planning, says director Mark McKenna. It essentially became active after the artist's death in 2002, McKenna says, and is aimed at advancing photography as an art form and supporting AIDS-related causes.

**Foundations sometimes** assume the responsibility of authenticating an artist's work. However, as the market has continued to rise, the stakes have gotten much higher. In October, the Warhol Foundation announced it would cease authenticating works and dissolve its authentication board after having spent millions in legal fees to defend against authentication disputes. The Dedalus Foundation, which supports the oeuvre of artist Robert Motherwell, has also been at the center of a recent high-profile authenticity-related legal dispute.

Motherwell, after making provision for his wife and daughters, left a substantial number of artworks, the copyrights to all of his works in all mediums (including his writings, both published and unpublished), and all of his professional papers, notebooks, and archives to the Dedalus Foundation. The foundation, which is working on a catalogue raisonné, scheduled for publication this year, assists with museum exhibitions and loans of Motherwell's works. It also awards grants to graduating M.F.A. students.

Jack Flam, president of the foundation, says that in overseeing copyrights, image reproduction, and licensing, the question

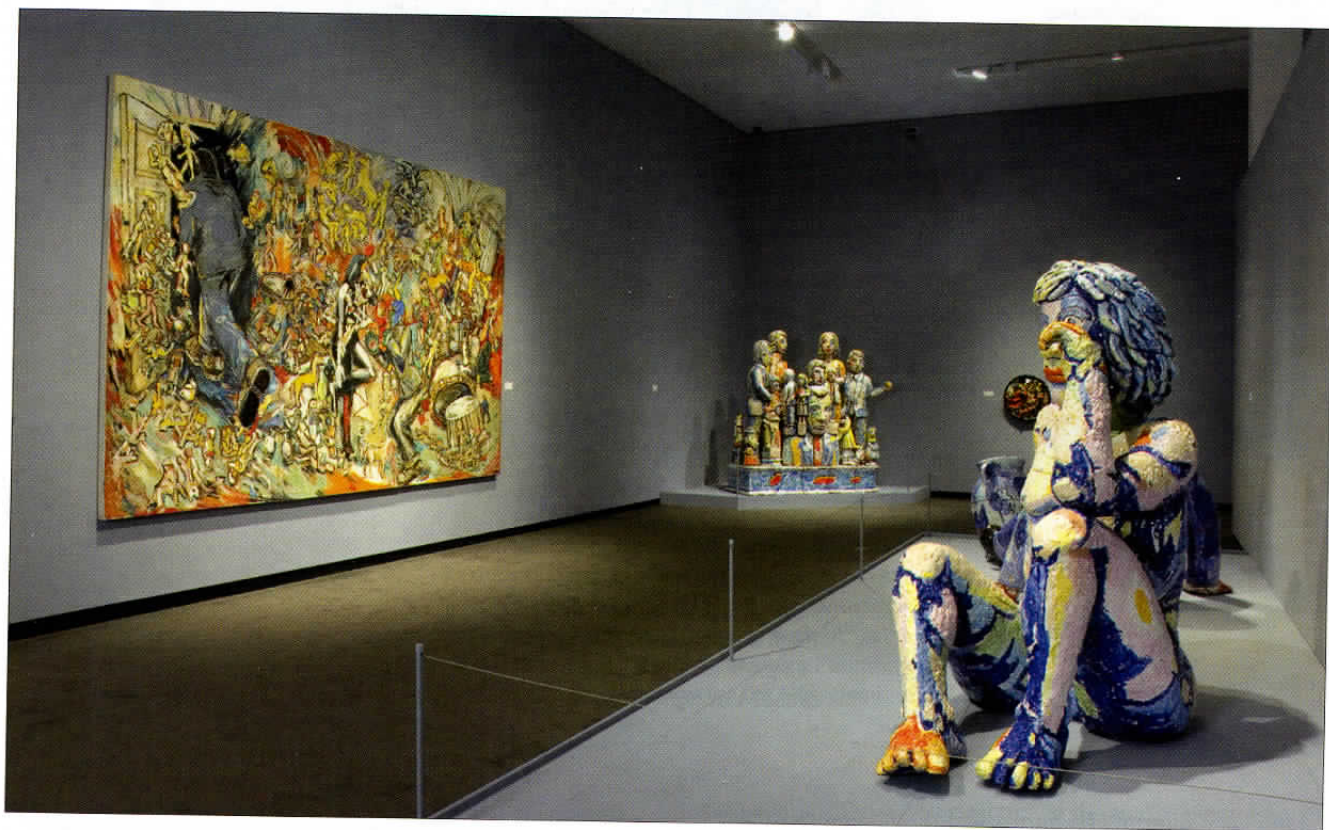


often arises: "Is this what Bob would have wanted?" For instance, "if a movie producer wants permission to use a Motherwell artwork or image in a film, say, in a psychiatrist's office, you have to ask what the character is about. Is he a mad killer?"

Other foundations are interested in researching and documenting the work of the artist-founder's contemporaries as well as his or her own work. Jack Cowart, executive director of the Roy Lichtenstein Foundation, spearheaded a project to save and document the archive of renowned photographer Harry Shunk, who, with his longtime partner Jean Kender,

the material is ongoing. Cowart, who knew and worked with Lichtenstein during his lifetime, says the artist would not have wanted the foundation to be focused solely on his own art.

In some instances, when a single artist's oeuvre is not enough to support a foundation, artists have joined forces with nonprofits or with each other. In 2000, artist Squeak Carnwath; her husband, Gary Knecht; and their friend Viola Frey incorporated the Artists' Legacy Foundation. Carnwath and Frey (who died in 2004) planned to bequeath their artwork to the organization, and all three arranged to leave it their estates. Over the



**Installation view of "Bigger, Better, More: The Art of Viola Frey" at the Racine Art Museum, Wisconsin, 2009. Frey joined forces with two others to create a foundation, which helped organize this posthumous exhibition of her work.**

captured such seminal art events as Yves Klein's 1960 *Leap Into the Void*, as well as early photos of artists including Warhol and Lucio Fontana, openings at the Leo Castelli and Sonnabend galleries, and major Christo installations.

Shunk, who became a recluse in Greenwich Village later in life, died intestate. In 2008, the Lichtenstein Foundation, housed just blocks away in Lichtenstein's former West Village studio, acquired Shunk's entire archive of more than 100,000 items, with over 60,000 printed photographs. Cowart says it was important to act quickly to save this treasure trove of photographs, and the task of sorting, documenting, and archiving

years, the foundation has helped organize exhibitions of their work, including a posthumous multiveneue exhibition of Frey's work, entitled "Bigger, Better, More," in 2009. Now, says Diane Frankel, former executive director of the foundation (she left in September to become a consultant to museums), the foundation is starting the process of bringing in another artist.

Vincent points out: "If you create a foundation, there is a very big financial obligation. So when I talk to artists, I tell them, 'If the art couldn't support the artist during the artist's lifetime, then it likely won't support a foundation unless there are additional funds.'"