

Knight Foundation funds 31 South Florida arts Projects

The Miami-based John S and James L. Knight Foundation announced \$8 million in grants to fund 31 ideas for arts projects in South Florida.

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The mandate was straightforward. Come up with a big Idea for an arts project that can unite South Florida's diverse communities under an umbrella of culture. When the Miami-based John S and James L Knight Foundation made that announcement in February –backing it up with \$20 million in grants and opening the competition to any individual or group -- it was flooded with more than 1,600 proposals

From that group, the Knight Foundation announced Monday 31 winning ideas that it will fund with \$8million. More calls for ideas will be issued in 2009 and subsequent years.

The winning ideas include a residency program for emerging artists, a music education program for Miami-Dade County public schools, and an institute that will fund and advise local filmmakers.

As varied as the Ideas may be, they share a common goal," said Alberto Ibarguen, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Knight Foundation.

"We at Knight Foundation look to support ways that people in Miami can come together, share experience, and then shared experience becomes the new Miami, the fusion culture that's evolving," he said.

"That means that the places where we can most easily do that in our Judgment are places like public education and the arts."

The grants announced Monday are the second phase of the overall Knight Arts Partnership. The first phase was unveiled last February when the foundation awarded \$20 million in endowment grants to three institutions: \$10 million for the Miami Art Museum and \$5 million each for the Museum of Contemporary Art in North Miami and the New World Symphony.

Funding large cultural organizations remains part of the Knight Foundation's arts initiative Ibarguen said.

But the contest was designed to solicit the collective creativity of South Florida.

"It really allows Miami to express itself" he said.

Among the winners announced Monday was the Miami Music Project an idea led by former Florida Philharmonic Orchestra music Director James Judd who still lives In South Florida. It will receive \$1million over three years.

Judd, along with Richard Hams, a former trombonist With the New World Symphony, proposes to create a year-round classical-music outreach program culminating in a two-week collaborative arts festival led by Judd and anchored at the Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts.

PATH TO HARMONY

"I've been really concerned about the lack of funding and of opportunities for kids in public schools for music," Judd said "and the belief that I have in music is if we all can understand and just listen through music to one another, then I think the world is going to be a better place. It will help us to listen to one another's words as well."

Participating schools have yet to be selected. Judd said but he has already met with Miami-Dade school officials and others who have promised to help.

As part of the project Judd will assemble a ensemble of musicians who will visit schools and community centers, lead master classes and encourage people to attend concerts.

"We hope that would include a lot of people who would not necessarily feel comfortable or would not normally have a visit to the Arsht Center on their agenda," Judd said.

Judd said he already has a commitment of \$500,000 for the Miami Music Project from Miami philanthropist Donald Carlin, and he plans to rollout a fundraising campaign in January.