

Last November, Robert Barker, the director of ARTCROFT, attended the Alliance of Artists' Communities' second national symposium entitled "The Future of Creativity." Held at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, the three-day gathering of artists, industry leaders, and scientists was a forum for increasing understanding of the importance of creativity and innovation in society. The presentations, most involving educational and community activist themes, ranged from an Experimental Town Meeting conducted by performance artist Guillermo Gomez-Pena, featured in a recent issue of *ArtPapers*, to a slide show by T. Allan Comp, founder and program analyst for Acid Mine Drainage and Art, a community initiative to restore environmental areas damaged by acid mine drainage.

ARTCROFT Arts and Humanities Center

Wants to Secure the Future of Creativity

Barker's contribution to the future of creativity is the ongoing development of ARTCROFT, an artists' retreat named after the Scottish word for craft and inspired by the Roycroft movement, founded by Elbert Hubbard at the start of the 19th century. Barker, who received a four-year scholarship from the Hermitage Foundation in Norfolk, Virginia, and



PHOTO BY FLORENCE THORNE

By Nancy Bronner and Amy Drew McAlester

received his masters degree in sculpture from Virginia Commonwealth University, is establishing a peaceful rural oasis where an artist can take the time needed to contemplate and evaluate the nature of his work, meaning a "hermitage."

Barker hopes the 20-year project will become self-sustaining. "Time and setting to critically evaluate one's work can be difficult to find," Barker said, "especially away from an academic environment and enmeshed in today's rampant consumerism." He believes that community artists or single media groups do not always provide the serious feedback that artists need or the opportunity for solitary reflection. "Our 400 acres offer the perfect environment for undisturbed thinking and an open sharing of ideas." ARTCROFT will be sponsoring the Blue Licks Arts Festival and other community arts events in the coming months. 🍷



PHOTO BY N. BRONNER

Robert Barker (r) discusses one of his sculpture's with University of Kentucky art professor Arturo Sandoval at last year's Blue Licks Arts Festival.

For more information e-mail: artcroft@msn.net.

Amy Drew McAlester is a freelance writer and an avid supporter of all types of creativity.

The Alliance of Artists' Communities is an international nonprofit consortium created from 18 nonprofit artists' communities, all funded by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, and operates on the premise that supporting creativity and a broad diversity of artists is vital to our culture. The Alliance has created the only searchable Web site and database on artists' communities and has published Artists' Communities, a directory of residency programs. www.artistcommunities.org or call (401) 351-4320.

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