

HEADLANDS CENTER FOR THE ARTS

Remarks prepared for the 30th Anniversary Celebration, 2.11.12

A number of you have asked how it is that I found myself the first president of the Headlands. Here's the short answer. My wife Gloria is a gardener. She loves to watch flowers grow. When people congratulate her, she always replies: The gardens grow themselves. I just help. The gardens in which I work are cultural institutions. I love to watch them grow.

The first California garden in which I worked was the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco where I was the Chief Curator. I helped the de Young Museum & the Legion become something new: a united museum that could better serve our community. As it grew from a conceptual seed toward maturity, I became restless. I enjoyed that growth process so much I felt I wanted to help other institutions grow. But I was not sure how to focus my energy, and my wife thought I should have my head examined.

I did not have a psychiatrist, so I turned to the friend I trusted most, David Sibbet. David has a remarkable capacity to size up a situation in a single word. He took an x-ray of my psyche and said my deepest professional love is for the SEED-STATE of cultural institutions. That term crystallized my plans. At the suggestion of the National Endowment for the Humanities, I left the Fine Arts Museums to start an institute that would help institutions grow.

The first Masterplan we wrote for a Federal Agency was for the Ft. Mason Center. The National Park Service then hired us to write a Preliminary Planning Study for the Headlands Center. That was 1979. Then we were hired to write the actual Masterplan. That took our fine team three long, exciting years to make structural studies of all similar programs and formulate a practical dream. Everyone eventually liked the dream and our plan for achieving that dream. We incorporated in 1982. With that seed growing well, I grew restless again. I handed my gardening hoe over to Dave Sibbet and his team, and accepted an invitation from the government of Australia to help grow their new National Gallery.

I am still helping institutions grow. My current project is developing a Teaching Museum of World Art at California State University, East Bay in Hayward. But I remain in love with the Headlands. It has been a boundless joy to see this Center grow into what it has become. Every year my wife & I spend a night up the road in the Hostel just to feel revived by the magical Spirit of this Place.

So I raise my glass to all the Board members & staff members to have turned a small seed into a big beautiful reality, all the artists who have resonated with and amplified the Spirit of this Place, and most of all the Spirit of Headlands herself who has kindly allowed us to be here with her for a while. TO THE SPIRIT OF THE HEADLANDS!