



**Sozosei Foundation Arts Convening
July 25-27, 2022
Key Findings**

In mid-summer 2022, the Sozosei Foundation – a philanthropic arm of Otsuka - convened a group of artists and leaders from the nonprofit and philanthropic sectors to consider the role of the arts at the Sozosei Foundation. The Arts Convening was diverse by design. Participants traveled from rural and urban communities and brought varied views on race, economics, and lived experience to answer the question: are the arts essential to increase access to mental health care outside of the criminal legal system?

We are eager to answer this question. The word Sozosei means “creativity” in Japanese, and in this spirit and with curiosity, we have been advancing an arts grantmaking strategy to decriminalize mental illness since our launch in 2019. This work has supported art galleries featuring the work of formerly incarcerated people with mental illness, storytelling projects, podcasts, public radio shows, music festivals, and more. Our goal in supporting this work is to positively impact upstream interventions (e.g., enforcing the Mental Health Care Parity Act), rather than other laudable goals, like expanding the use of the arts as a treatment modality. As we advance the Foundation’s arts strategy, we continue to ponder what role the arts play in eliminating the inappropriate use of jails and prisons for the diagnosis and treatment of mental illness?

Building on this question, during the Arts Convening, we also considered:

- Is there a benefit to funding artists/designers to create work (e.g., logos, tag lines, and more) that shifts the current cultural perceptions of mental illness, and if so, how might these funds be deployed?
- Is there a benefit to funding artists and the arts to boost public health messages and outcomes that lead to greater access to mental health care in communities?
- How might we measure the impact of an arts strategy?
- What can we learn from the field of the arts and design right now?
- Is this about creative placemaking? Do we fund artists to shift local economies to decrease reliance on jails and prisons as an economic driver in local communities?
- What role do the arts play in advancing the goals of the annual Sozosei Summit to Decriminalize Mental Illness?

We asked convening participants to come prepared to answer these three questions:

1. How would you describe the current role of the arts in increasing access to mental health care outside of the criminal legal system?
2. What, if any, are your experiences in the arts and their role in increasing access to mental health care?

3. What would need to change for the arts to successfully address the need for increased access to mental health care before a mental health emergency?

All participants gave compelling answers, and a few key findings and additional questions emerged from our discussions as the Arts Convening moved forward. These include:

- Artistic training and expertise can accelerate the identification of solutions to seemingly intractable issues.
- Targeted storytelling, especially narratives by those with lived experience, advanced with a clear goal, can positively impact policy reform.
- Opportunities and programs supporting artists to create artworks that seek to drive specific policy change goals are impactful.
- There is much to learn from art history. For example, what power do tropes like the artistic “mad genius” do to support or derail efforts to decriminalize mental illness?
- Art is a powerful tool to reverse stigma and trivializations of mental illness, including the perception that one can simply choose to “be well” or just needs to “cheer up” or find a distraction, thus increasing access to care.
 - For example, the criminalization of mental illness is shrouded in “safety narratives” and the notion that people with visible symptoms of mental illnesses are inherently dangerous. Art can help us break down this narrative to advance compassion and empathy for those with mental illness.
- We must address the stigmatization of psychiatry itself. Psychiatrists are misunderstood and often maligned medical specialists who must be reframed as caring, competent, and effective practitioners.
- Technology might play a vital role. Can augmented realities or video games be leveraged to effect social change?
- There is much to be learned from the trauma inflicted upon individuals and communities by the opioid crisis. What role might artists play in making a clear connection between mental health and substance use?
- Art has a role in dismantling systemic racism in the healthcare system and should be supported for that purpose.
- The arts and artists can help envision and create new models of mental health care and the design of environments where care is provided.
- Funding to support the creation or continuation of artist-driven creative economies can replace carceral economies, especially in rural prison towns.

In addition, there were helpful reflections for foundations and individual philanthropists to consider when supporting the arts. These included:

- Initiatives need space and time for failure and success;
- Funding (and continued funding) should not be tied to quantification and metrics— measurement and impact should not be punitive and instead should engender a creative response for course correction and iterative practices;
- Measurements used should better define successes, i.e., “quality of life” vs. easier to quantify “lower recidivism rates;”
- Philanthropists might consider funding programs serving populations not usually addressed, e.g., small-town, LGBT, rural, specific locations such as Appalachia and the Black Belt region of Alabama;
- Funding should help build a bridge between micro-level efforts supporting particular art projects to macro-level efforts such as public messaging and policy reform.

The Sozosei Foundation is deeply grateful to all participants who worked with us during these dynamic discussions to surface these key findings. Please see appendix A of this report to dive deeper into participant reflections and thoughts on next steps. The Foundation will continue to host conversations such as those at the Arts Convening as we seek solutions to decriminalize mental illness.

Mental illness is not a crime. Jails and prisons should not continue to be used as the nation’s largest mental health care provider. Together, we can accelerate change and build access to care in communities.

Please remain engaged with us and provide us with feedback at info@sozosei.org as we continue to ponder and work on the question: what role – if any – do the arts play in the decriminalization of mental illness?

Appendix A- Participant Reflections

Things I didn't get to say during the meeting.	Final ideas for Sozosei Foundation?	Action Items: Three things I will do differently as a result of this meeting (if any) and/or three things I hope philanthropy will do differently as a result of this meeting.
<p>1) In some ways we are our brains - they contain our essence. So MH stigma is intertwined with self/identity. Not sure whether cancer or HIV/AIDS faced that same type of challenge. May be linked to how we consider solutions/language A's needed/etc.</p> <p>2) Not all mental illness is equal. There is a range/continuum of impact on external and internal behaviors/processing. Are we focused on a portion of this continuum? Why? Often MH is dynamic/cyclical how can we capture this or consider it?</p>	<p>1) What are the ways to approach people with mental illness from a strengths-based/thriving framework?</p> <p>2) What does mental health look like? How can this vary? (e.g. different conceptions of beauty, what are the different conceptions of mental health?)</p> <p>3) What does a model of art/science integration look like?</p>	<p>1) Increase my understanding of pathways/pitfalls of measurement in arts and how it may be punitive.</p> <p>2) Think about how to bring artists into evaluation design in a more intentional way.</p> <p>3) Bring equity to the fore-front of planning and conversations. It would be a key piece of informing eval/measurement particularly if equitable access vs. increased access was emphasized.</p>
<p>Who is working on replacing the care of economy?</p> <p>What can trauma informed artistic expression do?</p>	<p>Bring group together with Nami and others to continue conversation, share findings from this meeting.</p>	<p>Ensure we have an artist in residence. Center art in Board meetings. Center art in communications, art at convenings and artist voices at convenings.</p>
<p>Look at the design studio for social intervention especially their "Ideas - Arrangements - Effects". Look at their Five "S" Methodology (System, Scale, Structure, Symbol and Sensation)</p>	<p>Fund existing plans. There are already lots of people doing good work. Use your money to support, strengthen and extend. (Not Stat)</p>	<p>Spend more time visiting with new colleagues. Spend more time reconnecting with old colleagues. Remember to explicitly include race, gender and wealth in ALL "Decriminalization" conversations.</p>
<p>We need to find a way to hear our Bipolar Friends about the ways mental illness has been used to other them, their deep suspicions of ALL institutions. In the Grey campaign, we need to bring in this perspective - Mental Illness can be a result of "What happened to you" not "what's wrong with you". (Like a person who has a terrible accident needs to share that story / not just the fact they are paralyzed.)</p>	<p>1) If honored, our friends may be more willing to "wear" the diagnosis and seek help.</p> <p>2) Acknowledge the struggle - including the struggle that brought one to a place of physiological Mental Illness.</p> <p>3) Element of moral injury that must be addressed in trauma.</p> <p>4) I am fascinated by the ways Art and healing local places can open people up to share that first struggle with trauma.</p>	<p>1) Bring Artists to every meeting.</p> <p>2) Convenings are an art form - this was brainstorm art. (Great Job Marta!)</p>

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<p>1) Outline policy goals that you'd like states/counties to adopt</p> <p>2) Organize brand awareness-building events in targeted areas.</p> <p>3) Ensure all grants require social media component.</p>	<p>1) Create an arts space for youth. State of the art with podcast booths, video game live stream capability, content creation space for YouTube/Tik-Tok.</p> <p>2) Create micro grants for people exiting the system.</p>	<p>1) Learn more about Art History</p> <p>2) Create a fellowship to train impacted people on how to get funding for their projects.</p> <p>3) Less academia, more people with experience.</p>
<p>We all have traits of mental illness - we feel overwhelmed and stressed out sometimes, or when we're driving home we wonder if the car behind us is following us or we have certain things we see to be "just so." But to diagnosis anxiety or paranoid schizophrenia or OCD these traits must persist for a <u>significant amount of time and also interfere with daily life.</u></p>	<p>Think about two target audiences for decriminalization/destigmatization - the general public (includes reducing stigma changing policy and the people experiencing mental illness themselves (Including reducing internalized stigma, seeking care, etc.)</p>	<p>Large organizations uplifting smaller-scale, locally-oriented organizations in their work. Listening to multiple voices, being open to any and all solutions.</p>
<p>There are up and coming technologies that could become powerful platforms for this messaging. Augmented realities and video games, and metaverses present an opportunity or states of mind. They can be powerful locations for embodiment and training _ but they are also safe spaces.</p>	<p>This is a fifty-year problem that will require patience and persistence. We can have hope and early successes but ultimately need to build on effective strategies for the longer term. It seemed to me younger generations have been cited as those having capacity for acceptance and social justice _ maybe we're talking about a change in a world view that is also generational</p>	<p>I will repurpose my talk for my courses - perhaps with the purpose of thinking about the creativity/mental illness language not just for art history but for social justice ends. I will try to form a course at the intersection of criminal justice/psychology and arts. (Criminal Justice is a huge part of student enrollment at my institution). Other fields might include public policy and political science.</p>
<p>1) Love the idea of supporting artists to research/develop work related to abolition - process, so important we reach area for creative depth and exploration, difficult topic to discuss - perfect for artists?!</p> <p>2) More and more focus on early primary next generation weaving mental health care into fabric of communities for all from the start.</p>	<p>See the living museum, is reclamation/repurposing of spaces by artists useful/productive/sustaining</p>	<p>1) Love the idea of measurement (eval) focus on abundance and sustainability from that place will borrow.</p> <p>2) Check out Yayoi Kasama (SP?)</p> <p>3). Learn more about the work happening in Central Appalachia.</p> <p>4) Think about integrating the arts into our forthcoming public realm grantmaking strategy.</p>

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<p>The stakeholder instigation is crucial here and possible the steepest battle. How do we crate an environment and situation in which policy maker, law enforcement are brought closer to truthful narratives as a way to impact their conduct and decision making.</p>	<p>Policy campaign (Visual Media) around mental health hotline? Many people do not know to access. And in my experience the bureaucracy has been thick and therefore this service ineffective. Alternative to policing.</p>	<p>Really think more explicitly about potential culture shift on a community and local level - how mental health integration might look and feel. Daily collection/evaluation often falls outside the capacity and expertise of cbo's and artists. How does philanthropy support external partnerships for this?</p>
<p>Can you look at programs that exist and "what works" and what doesn't work?</p>	<p>Have you done a landscape of arts-based programs that exist that could be expanded, or what the holes are?</p>	<p>Given that the Illumination Fund has already started its work in arts and mental health this convening is encouraging me to think about "what's next" in these initiatives. Ex. About public perception, influence, public policy and/or systems of care. -- there is more to be done (by us, and hopefully by others in philanthropy).</p>
<p>Emphasizing the importance of communities design, small grassroots efforts. Put the power in the hands of the people impacted. 1997 I performed on Broadway at the new victory theater. LOL</p>	<p>None. This is my first and hopefully not last encounter.</p>	<p>Convene "thought" meetings with grantee partners I'm curious about this. Will research "What's the history with criminalization of mental illness?"</p>
<p>It was an honor to be here, to meet you all in person and to see our work being an inspiration for such a smart and amazing audience.</p>	<p>I think the arts strategy for the Sozosei Found action should be a compilation of micro projects that could work on a quick to decrease the number of prisons for people with lived experiences in a local level and micro projects focused on general population to raise awareness for the cause: mental illness is NOT a crime. Integrate people with lived experiences in everything we do.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Work hard to change / correct the narratives around mental illness. No one is doing and it's urgent. 2) Fund fewer projects with greater impacts 3) Measure, measure, measure iterate and measure again
<p>Eye opening. The ability to hear this rang of perspectives is incredibly insightful and offered both a glimpse and exchange of ideas I know I otherwise wouldn't have thought.</p>	<p>Keep doing these sessions and face the issue. Speaking of let's really define the "issue" so can best utilize available resources to move the needle.</p>	<p>I am walking away with an expanded lens and appreciation for both the role, and the respect of the arts and the role they as a medium and as an individual play.</p>

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<p>Media is a powerful tool that can be used to build awareness and change perspectives. Media is influence. With that, using media for good should be the intent.</p>	<p>Perhaps for the Summit, create space to showcase artists who have a mental health focus (live performance/portrayal, showcase of work, etc.) Continue to identify and invite artists into rooms like this convening.</p>	<p>1) I will use my creativity/talents to design visuals around the decriminalization of mental illness. (to be used for digital campaigns, merchandise, etc.)</p> <p>2) I hope philanthropy identifies (or supports those who can) people or movements across the nation that are making impact within their communities and uplifts them.</p>
<p>I feel like I said a lot and not sure I left anything out. Thank you so much for inviting us to the table. Art is one of our most powerful tools to shift the culture and change hearts and minds to then push systems. I'm so glad Sozosei "gets" it. I am leaving with some questions/places I need clarity: What are the policies we're talking about? What are the systems (healthcare, policy, etc.) we have the most opportunity to influence and change? What are the most effective interventions we could be adopting now? Ex: I'm thinking about a \$2M grant budget vs. the budget of the NYPD.</p>	<p>Thank you for engaging us this early stage as thought partners. I think continuing to engage practitioners is an important part of effective strategy setting course correction along the way, and evaluation of how your philanthropic work is going. Local context local histories, place and culture really matters in this work! I think a strategy that looks at funding policy change, narrative change, and provides examples of new models of care will be important as it takes all 3 to move systems.</p>	<p>1) I LOVED the idea of an artist-in-residence for foundations. I now think all institutions need an artist-in residence!</p> <p>2) I am bringing back some really great ideas, observations and new relationships that I hope will get woven into our place-based work.</p> <p>3) I wish other foundations were as intentional as Sozosei in bring together different perspectives - especially rural and urban.</p>
<p>I think I said pretty much everything. I do love this event and would love to participate again. Laser focus on decriminalizing mental health for Bipolar folks because that's who is most affected. Abolition is the only answer.</p>	<p>Offer mentorship programs for grantees to build community and create more philanthropists, fundraisers, etc.</p>	<p>I can only think of one thing philanthropy should do differently: Practice what you fund! In other words don't be a hypocrite. Something I will do differently as a result of this meeting is change my language to reflect more compassionate attitude towards myself and others who suffer. Also I will give my testimony about my struggle with mental health to people who may be hesitant to get care.</p>

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(No input)	I am still curious where cultural workers fit into the conversation. By cultural workers I mean people who are shifting the policies/practices of community that shifts culture towards the goal of decriminalizing mental health. I bring this up because it may include art or could be about a change in practices of communities related to mental health.	<p>Start thinking about how decriminalizing mental health could/should be incorporated in the work of Warmakers Collective.</p> <p>Have you all thought about having an artist/cultural worker tract at the annual convening? What training support could the convening give artists/cultural workers around decriminalizing mental health?</p>
One big difference between Cancer, AIDS and Mental Health is that people with Cancer and AIDS want treatment, many with MH resist treatment / and or don't recognize their illness.	<p>1) Do not be overly focused on measuring results. If requiring evaluations, be willing fund it.</p> <p>2) At the convening have a panel where there is conversation between the established MH Organizations and the more bottom-up innovative players in the space.</p>	Better appreciation of the role of artists in social change movements. The importance of funding them to be involved in social change.
<p>1) We need to separate artists from artwork, objects and projects are not the same thing as the social practice and capital of artists as community members and builders.</p> <p>2) To address criminalization of MI and substance abuse - the efforts have all been around low-level drug offenses/felonies but that's not whose in prison. We have to address violent crimes/felonies and unravel this narrative of punishment creating safe communities.</p>	<p>1) How can you eliminate barriers between the capital A Art world and more artis run, emerging, local community based artists - widen the net, hear from more people and places.</p> <p>2) Does Sozosei want to produce more artists and build culture and safety or produce tangible measurable outcome? I know it's both but my thought is that the more radical/abolitionist efforts are less measurable but more impactful.</p>	<p>1) I will never say we don't need your ideas AGAIN. I will instead say "I have available works"</p> <p>2) I feel more empowered to research other funders and learn the funding landscape if that makes sense.</p> <p>3) I will reach out to some of these amazing folks I met this weekend! THANK YOU SOZOSEI!</p> <p>1) Understanding of value of artistic practice > prediction uplift?</p> <p>4) Find ways to bridge the gap between Pharma/Drs and community based care / social supports.</p> <p>5) KEEP GOING! We do need your ideas (and the \$ LOL)</p>