

Meltdown History

Meltdown, Inc. is a not-for-profit social service arts organization founded in 1983 by Bronwyn Rucker and Rick Russo. Incorporated in 1986 as Meltdown Performing Arts, Inc. and changed in 1994 simply to Meltdown, Inc., the organization has expanded its practice, uniquely connecting social service and arts.

Evolving from an experimental music/theatre production company, Meltdown advances artistic expression through public presentations, festivals, workshops and symposia, with particular outreach to underserved populations.

Meltdown's work has been widely documented in assorted publications, and has impacted on both local and international levels. Meltdown has also worked with some of America's most acclaimed avant-garde figures. The 1986 Meltdown production of *John Cage Meets Sun Ra* was a landmark event in the history of experimental music. In 1991 Meltdown participated in the *Museum Inside the Telephone Network*, a global-access media project based at the International Communication Center in Tokyo.

Meltdown has extensively presented the performance work of *Rucker & Russo*, in productions such as *Inclines* and *The True Story*, at various venues throughout New York. Meltdown has brought together diverse performing, literary and media artists in its unique productions, including *Fivephase Meltdown*, *Vaudeville Meltdown*, *Antic Meltdown*, *Club Melt*, *The Arts Playground* and others. Meltdown's artistic assemblage includes social workers, theatre artists, composers and musicians, choreographers and dancers, video and film makers, painters and literary artists.

Meltdown has consistently done innovative work at its Brooklyn home base, providing professional arts activities to youth and seniors, as well as special populations. A major Meltdown program is *Voices of the Armory*, a project developed in 1993 with the homeless women of the Park Slope Armory. Meltdown also produces large-scale outdoor neighborhood festivals, such as Park Slope's *Seventh Heaven*, bringing together local businesses with diverse community artists and organizations. Meltdown prides itself in its programming outreach to a multitude of audiences.

Meltdown promotes creative expression as a way in which one can better understand the world and oneself. Meltdown seeks to provide this constructive, meaningful outlet through its work.

Meltdown Programs

Meltdown runs a year-long season of programs and activities. Many of these are ongoing, while others are special productions. Meltdown's artists and social workers are also consultants, providing technical assistance in community organizing and social service arts.

* **TEEN LEADERSHIP/VIOLENCE PREVENTION DRAMA PROGRAM:** Teaches young people the concepts of abuse/respect, power/control, sex role stereotypes and directly deals with racism and sexism, and the effects of young people's lives. The drama study includes improvisational techniques, scene study, conflict resolution, character study and voice and movement. The youth create scenes reflecting relevant issues of today's world. The program includes educational workshops and group discussion, youth-run community forums and businesses.

* **VOICES OF THE ARMORY:** An empowerment and advocacy group of women residents of the Park Slope Armory and the Park Slope community. This program was initiated in 1993 by Bronwyn Rucker and Laura Metallo, CSWs, and addresses the social support, advocacy and economic empowerment needs of shelter residents, and to improve relations between shelter residents and the community-at-large. Utilizing theatre, the stories of the women in the shelter are told, bridging the gap of understanding. The show, *Voices of the Armory*, developed from the group, confronts issues of racism, sexism and classism within the community.

* **MASTER ACTING CLASS:** Provides professional training to dedicated artists. This includes traditional monologue and scene study, theatre history, movement and voice for the actor, and experimental improvisatory techniques. Instruction is also provided in developing original material. The purpose of the class is to encourage the artist to strengthen her/his voice and further understanding of theatrical traditions through working together in a supportive, collaborative process. Guest instructors provide an interdisciplinary approach. In addition, special group sessions that address the philosophy, problems and survival skills of the artist are provided.

* **MULTI-ART CLASS:** This program is also known as the 'survival art' class, as practical applications of art, such as creating and selling handmade crafts, are applied to everyday life. Children and adults discover the art in themselves through a multi-disciplinary approach, incorporating lessons in drawing, painting, writing and acting, which culminate in community performances. This class stresses the belief that everyone is an artist, and is tailored to the individual needs of the participants.