



NeuroArts Blueprint

Advancing the Science of Arts, Health and Well-Being



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Aspen Institute and Johns Hopkins Announce Initiative to Link Science and the Arts to Advance Health

*NeuroArts Blueprint Helps Build Emerging Cross-Disciplinary Scientific Field that
Recognizes How the Arts Change the Brain and Improve Well-Being*

Washington, DC, September 15, 2020. Today, the International Arts + Mind Lab (IAM Lab) at Johns Hopkins University and the Health, Medicine and Society (HMS) Program of the Aspen Institute launched the NeuroArts Blueprint, an initiative to advance the science of arts, health, and well-being. Four remarkable pioneers in art and science co-chair the Advisory Board that guides the work: Renée Fleming, Eric Nestler, Michael Paseornek, and Anna Deavere Smith.

The NeuroArts Blueprint will help build the emerging field of neuroarts—the storehouse of robust scientific evidence that tells us art can change the brain and the body and advance well-being in ways that can be measured, mapped, and put into

practice. In the era of the Covid-19 pandemic, the critical role that the arts play has never been more apparent.

“The dramatic strides we have made in neuroscience and the breakthrough technologies we have developed allow us to detect and measure the brain pathways that are engaged through art,” says co-chair Eric Nestler, MD, PhD, neuroscientist and dean of Academic and Scientific Affairs at Mount Sinai Medical Center. “We can use that knowledge to treat specific diseases and to promote health and well-being across broad populations.”

The importance of the arts has perhaps never been clearer than in these historic times. “In the face of the Covid-19 pandemic, we see people turning to music, dance, theatre, and other creative arts to maintain their well-being,” observes co-chair Renée Fleming, the renowned soprano, arts and health advocate, and artistic advisor to the Kennedy Center. “They might not understand the biology behind that drive, but they are certainly experiencing the benefits.”

The NeuroArts Blueprint initiative will lay out a coordinated plan to collect, evaluate, and act on rigorous evidence to propel neuroarts forward over the next decade. Groundbreaking work is already well underway in many disciplines, but it has not been well-coordinated across fields. The Blueprint is designed to bring many sectors together in a science-based commitment to lift up art as an accessible, affordable solution to the many longstanding and seemingly intractable barriers to health.

“Artists, scientists, and technology pioneers are already working at the edges of innovation in their own fields to elevate art as essential to well-being,” says co-chair Michael Paseornek, originator and long-time president of Lionsgate Motion Picture Production. “But they have too often been siloed. We see ourselves as conductors helping to coalesce, integrate, and scale up the field.”

The Advisory Board members of the NeuroArts Blueprint are leaders in the fields of art, science, medicine, technology, public policy, philanthropy, and communications. “Together, we are growing a scientific field that allows us to harness the power of the arts to restore health and prevent disease,” declares co-chair Anna Deavere Smith, actress, playwright, author and University Professor at New York University’s Tisch School of the Arts. “Our vision is as sweeping as it is bold.”

Key activities of the NeuroArts Blueprint include:

- Defining the field and crafting a common language across sectors.

- Articulating the scientific evidence that grounds neuroarts.
- Identifying research gaps and activating the scientific community to dig deeper into the discipline.
- Defining the value proposition to attract public and private investment.
- Mapping out a policy and funding infrastructure to grow and sustain the field.
- Creating communication strategies that clearly explain neuroarts and its potential.
- Empowering scientists, artists, practitioners, and community stakeholders to promote the evidence-based science that supports the health properties of art.
- Recommending training and professional development pathways to educate a cadre of experts.
- Showcasing exemplary models so clinicians recognize the role of neuroarts in health and well-being.
- Scaling up neuroarts as a potent, evidence-based prevention and intervention tool.

The NeuroArts Blueprint is co-directed by Susan Magsamen, MAS, executive director of IAM Lab, and Ruth J. Katz, JD, MPH, HMS executive director. Emmeline Edwards, PhD, director of the Division of Extramural Research at the National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health (NCCIH), part of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) serves as scientific advisor. Sunil Iyengar, director of the Office of Research and Analysis at the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), is research advisor.

More information about the NeuroArts Blueprint is available [here](#). Initial support comes from the Dana Foundation and Johns Hopkins University.

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[The International Arts + Mind Lab](#) (IAM Lab) is a Center for Applied Neuroaesthetics from the Brain Science Institute at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine. Its mission is to amplify human potential. IAM Lab is pioneering [Impact Thinking](#), a translational research approach designed to address intractable problems in health, wellbeing, and learning through the arts. IAM Lab brings together researchers and practitioners across a range of disciplines and art modalities through research, education and outreach, and community building. IAM Lab aims to accelerate the emerging field of neuroaesthetics and empower humankind to realize the full potential of the arts to help us heal, grow, and flourish.

The **[Health, Medicine and Society Program \(HMS\)](#)**, established in 2005, is the domestic health initiative at the Aspen Institute. HMS brings together influential

groups of thought leaders, decisionmakers, and the informed public to consider health challenges facing the US in the 21st century and to identify practical solutions for addressing them.

The [Aspen Institute](#) is a global nonprofit organization committed to realizing a free, just, and equitable society. Founded in 1949, the Institute drives change through dialogue, leadership, and action to help solve the most important challenges facing the United States and the world. Headquartered in Washington, DC, the Institute has a campus in Aspen, Colorado, and an international network of partners.