

# The New Cultural Plan for Chicago

## *What Commissioner Michelle T. Boone has planned for 2012*

*In May 2011 Michelle T. Boone was named Commissioner of the Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events (DCASE), succeeding Lois Weisberg, Chicago's Commissioner of Cultural Affairs who retired in early 2011. Now overseeing the 5<sup>th</sup> largest creative economy in the United States, one of Boone's first undertakings as commissioner is a major one – relaunching a new Cultural Plan for Chicago. CGN spoke with Boone about the City's commitment to artists, her hopes for the new plan, and her favorite public art. - GV*

**CGN: The city is putting together a new Cultural Plan for Chicago - the first since Mayor Harold Washington's administration in the 1980s. What do you expect to improve upon this time around?**

MB: The plan was last updated in the mid-90s, so we thought it was time for a new one. We are hosting 30 meetings, varying by demographics and geography, with working artists, arts groups, business leaders, heads of major organizations, etc. We are also taking recommendations from the community (visit [ChicagoCulturalPlan2012.org](http://ChicagoCulturalPlan2012.org) to submit input online.) We will present a new plan this May.

The goal is to determine how to elevate Chicago's global visibility using neighborhood and community cultural assets. Also, now people are interested in information and technology. That's really interesting to me, since at the time when the plan was first created, there was no internet or social media. What role will technology play going forward? We can develop solutions for issues like, 'How can the City support artists so they will stay in Chicago and contribute creatively?'

**How do you think the city/arts relationship should ideally function? Will this kind of relationship be a part of the new plan?**

One of the things selfishly that I'm looking for from the plan is how to work the arts into other city departments. Such as, 'How can arts be thought of as part of a solution to some pressing societal prob-

lems?' We could use creative alternatives to deliver information, build community and change how our political leaders think about the arts – ultimately it could influence policy.

**You spoke this fall about how Chicagoans can support the arts by being active patrons and attendees. What are some efforts we can expect from DCASE in 2012 on the programming side?**

There are programs the City coordinates all year long, such as running [Chicagoartistsresource.org](http://Chicagoartistsresource.org) (CAR) as well as our annual Chicago Artists Month in October. We will continue our free exhibitions program at the Cultural Center, where we show Chicago artists in our Michigan Avenue galleries. Through the exhibitions and public programming we hope to make an introduction for people to see great work by Chicago artists and performers. A vast City database of Chicago artists is available to the public at [Cityofchicago.org](http://Cityofchicago.org). For artists, if they register they can be included in the Chicago Public Art Program's Public Art Registry, used by DCASE to fulfill responsibilities to the Public Art Program of the Percent-for-Art Ordinance.

**What are some of your favorite public art works in Chicago?**

There are several things I like for different reasons. The new sculpture at the entrance to O'Hare – *The Runners* – is so unexpected. It's a static piece but it implies movement, and it will look different in various light, times and weather. [Jaume Plensa's] *Crown Fountain* in summertime is also amazing to me because it's just so joyous. Anybody and everybody enjoys it. You can't help but smile when you walk by it.

