



Flourish: Artists Explore Wellbeing

Programming Theme 2013-2014

For centuries, philosophers have applied themselves to the task of defining “wellbeing,” and asked how we might best live meaningful, happy, and healthy lives. For Aristotle, individuals could only achieve *eudaimonia*, or a state of flourishing, when they lived lives of virtuous activity, fulfilling our deeply human capacities.

Today, this focus on wellbeing appears to be part of a global trend. In 2011 the UN General Assembly adopted the resolution Happiness: towards a holistic approach to development, urging member states to recognize that the pursuit of happiness is a fundamental goal in the lives of all human beings. The late 20th and early 21st centuries have witnessed an explosion of interest in the topic as TV personalities, spiritual leaders, health professionals, psychologists, sociologists, business people, environmentalists, politicians, writers and artists have all sought to redefine our understanding of a life well lived and answer the question: how can we live meaningful, happy and healthy lives? How can we flourish?

Seeking to contribute to the ongoing international conversation about wellness, Montalvo embarks on ***Flourish: Artists Explore Wellbeing*** its new 20-month-long programming theme. Flourish will not only cast light on the question of happiness and health, it will also bring to the community a series of exhibitions, conversations, performances, workshops and screenings, promoting creativity and communal engagement. All programs will be mounted in collaboration with artists from the Lucas Artists Residency Program and Montalvo’s Education Department.

The following topics will be examined:

- **The critical relationship between wellbeing and our environment.** As earth’s life support systems—food supplies, clean water, stable climate—necessary for human health and wellbeing continue to deteriorate, how do we forge new sustainable relationships with the various ecologies upon which we so intimately depend?
- **The role of “sacred” and “healing” spaces in generating wellbeing.** As we wrestle with the demands of modern life, increasingly we seek to identify spaces where we can connect with our inner and outer selves, recharge and build capacity and strength. Where are these “sacred” and

“healing” spaces? Why are they meaningful? What can the nature of these spaces tell us about emotional and physical wellness?

- **The interrelated health of the body and the mind.** Countries that have achieved great progress in economic development are also experiencing severe health crises among their citizenry, including high rates of obesity and diabetes as well as mental illness, including depression. How do we develop an integrated and holistic approach to our mental and physical health? Can we track and regulate our moods? What is the role of loss in our lives and how do we ameliorate its negative effects? Can we learn to grow old gracefully?
- **The intimate relationship between what we eat and how it is produced and human, social, environmental and economic wellbeing.** Increasingly, we are recognizing the importance of food nutrition for our cognitive and physical health, as well as the inequities and threats associated with current food production policies. How does sitting down for a meal promote emotional and physical nourishment? How does it cultivate a sense of community? How can we support environmentally sound agricultural practices?
- **The affinities between play, creativity and wellbeing.** Play, as an exercise of the imagination, excites neurons; it enables us to test out possible models of behavior, and broadens our perspective and capacity for empathy. Today human beings, and children in particular, are spending more time in front of electronic screens and less time engaged in out-door play. This development has serious physical and mental health consequences, including attention deficit disorder, anxiety and obesity. How can we create an atmosphere of play at Montalvo? How can we transform our 175-acre park into an arena of experimentation where our audiences can explore the intersection between play and wellbeing?
- **The important role that social relationships play in emotional wellbeing.** Research suggests relationships shape our personality and influence our physical and mental health. Through high quality social relationships we experience affection, intimacy, and nurture, all of which fosters wellbeing. How can we build strong communities with high degrees of trust? How can we support family life? How can we care for our children? How can we practice compassion for others and for ourselves?

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT

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