

## ARTS AND CULTURE

### History that lives in the present tense.

Ninety-seven Orchard Street on Manhattan's Lower East Side was home to an estimated 7,000 immigrants between 1863 and 1935. Today, this first homestead is the Lower East Side Tenement Museum.

As museums everywhere strive to be relevant, the Lower East Side Tenement Museum is a leader in making conscious use of history to address contemporary social issues. Its restored tenement homes interpret the experiences of families who lived in the building, thereby increasing visitors' understanding of American immigration. Its English-as-a-second-language classes for today's immigrants use diaries and letters from the tenement's first residents to engage and instruct the students. Visitors participate in discussions of such contemporary issues as immigration, labor and social welfare. The museum also hosts an interactive Web site for immigrant teens and partners with *The New York Times* and St. Martin's Press to publish *The New York Times Guide for Immigrants in New York City*.

Kresge is assisting the organization in purchasing a neighboring property for use as a research and planning facility. While the building is important, what goes on inside is infinitely more so: the museum's timely, important work dovetails with our own values for developing relevant, innovative programs to assist those with limited access and means.

The arts and culture are a vital component of strong, healthy communities. This sector faces several challenges to its long-term sustainability, however, including a volatile funding climate, under-resourced organizations, changing audiences, turnover in leadership, changes in technology and a fragile arts education system. We find that the values of strengthening community impact, creating opportunity and promoting innovation and risk particularly relevant for the challenges this field faces.