

ISALTA 2011 Mission Statement

Pursuant to the August, 2011 Command Meeting, the Mission Statement of ISALTA is being revised to reflect the changes that have occurred during the thirty years since the organization was formed. In that time members have dispersed, retired and passed away, and the world has moved on. What has not changed is the need to understand the world, its' art, and to preserve such knowledge as only art can bring into being. In fact, the need for understanding traditional art and how it can live has grown critical in this time when armies trample the cradle of civilization, entire peoples are displaced as refugees, and the natural environment disappears into charcoal fires and growing deserts. Such is the dawn of the so-called third millennium on Earth.

ISALTA has always been voluntary, and it will remain so. ISALTA consists of artist-researchers as defined in its own literature, and that will remain true.

ISALTA is a New York State registered 401(C)3 non-profit organization established to sponsor inquiry into creative, critical, and theoretical aspects of art traditions world-wide. The work of the Society includes field surveys, documentation of selected artistic processes, promotion of apprenticeship programs and workshops, the mounting of performances and exhibitions, and the publication of reports, monographs, and general information for the purpose of advancing living traditions in art across all modalities.

Current members of the Board of Directors will be invited to identify new Board Members to continue the work. Elected or appointed heads of art groups and organizations and recognized masters of living traditions are invited or nominated to become members of the Society. Associate members receive all publications and invitations to participate in special events.

Qualified artist-researchers, arts professionals, scholars and specialists will be sought by ISALTA to join specified projects on a temporary or long-term basis. Research reports or invited proposals will be welcomed by the Editorial Board or by the Research Committee.

Concerned individuals and representatives of business and industry may be solicited for funding the work of ISALTA through qualified recipient organizations. For example, ISALTA conferences have been hosted by universities and businesses in the past through their organizational structure.

Of special interest to the Society is the recognition and nurturance of artistic traditions at risk of extinction as a result of the impact of technology. Whereas that impact was felt in Europe and America in the nineteenth century, it was absorbed by the pre-industrial societies of the Third World in the twentieth, and now seems doomed by a declining planetary economy in the twenty-first. Many of the basic questions remain the same. Manual versus mechanical skills, loosely organized artisans versus disciplined and bureaucratized workers, the division of labor for mass-production of goods, and the meaning of tradition in modern life constitute some of the issues to be investigated.

In need of examination are not only the processes by which the traditional arts are transformed, co-opted, corrupted and diminished, or revitalized and enhanced by the impact of technology, but also the processes by which new traditions are being formed by technology. Even those mainstream traditions we think we know best deserve continued study, since some of the oldest techniques are employed to create some of the newest art. That is, all art irrespective of modality or medium which can benefit from coherence and continuity of research sponsored by ISALTA.

Given the magnitude of these concerns (and the existing fragmentation of efforts to deal with one or another problem as a social, political, or economic matter rather than in terms of the life or death of the tradition itself) ISALTA will provide a framework for examples of organized and coherent inquiry.