

So You Want to Join a Collective?

A Guide to the Membership process of the Rock Paper Scissors Collective

Hooray! We're excited! And we hope you're excited too! You've been exposed to RPS and perhaps want to be in our collective. This is a good beginning. We look forward to the good times and close friendships to come. But before we all hold hands and join in song, a few words of caution: Being in a collective is tough work. It's a big commitment of time and energy. Behind the glamour and glitz are weekly meetings, accounting, outreach, and [*scary music rises*] **the process of consensus**. We suggest that before you continue through these pages, you take a moment to consider why you are interested in joining this collective. Pause, take a deep breath, and let's get started!

How did RPS get started anyway?

Rock Paper Scissors began in early 2004 as a conversation between two friends about local crafts culture. Inspired by San Francisco's zineshop/gallery *Needles and Pens* and provoked by the abundance of such "homemade" shops and alternative art spaces in Portland and elsewhere, these friends wondered: Why are there so many amazingly crafty and artistic people in the Bay Area yet so few spaces dedicated to supporting and fostering new connections between them? And why are there hardly any such places in the East Bay? A few months, meetings, and roped-in friends later, the Rock Paper Scissors Collective was born.

The following year included fundraisers, weekly collective meetings, and much discussion of how each RPS member envisioned the space to function upon opening. As our funds and community support grew and we began to look for potential storefronts, it became clear that having enough space to teach classes and house equipment was crucial to our mission. While the art gallery component of the space remained important, we also recognized that a fixed retail point for crafters and the resources to learn how to "do-it-yourself" are much more scarce in our community. We saw the need for physical and organizational space where artists and community members could come together to teach, sell, exhibit and learn about art.

In May 2005, after more than a year of fundraising, we moved into our storefront space at 2278 Telegraph Ave., in downtown Oakland. As of this writing, we are approaching our 2-year anniversary in the storefront. Since moving in, our vision has expanded along with our programs. Along with our retail, gallery, and education programs, we have developed a Youth Internship program with Metwest High School, a zine library that is nearly completely catalogued, and a number of yearly events - most noteworthy being the Halloween street festival, Street Scare. We are also in the process of developing a public arts lab, a membership based space

for working on arts and crafts projects. Our focus has expanded beyond providing a space towards building a network of resources with other community and arts organizations.

In January of 2006, we received fiscal sponsorship¹ through Intersection for the Arts². As of January 2007, our fiscal sponsorship has moved to our neighbors 21 Grand³, a long-standing member of the Oakland art community. We have been and continue to consider non-profit status of our very own and are working to the utmost of our ability to develop our fundraising and grant writing abilities.

How does RPS do things?

Meetings: Collective members meet every Sunday at 8pm to discuss pressing issues and plan for the coming months. Every member is on at least (and usually several) committees that organize and develop our different programs. These committees hold their own meetings and report back to the entire collective on what they're doing. Every 3rd Sunday of the month, the collective invites our volunteers to come and participate at our regular meeting. It's a chance to help us plan, give feedback, and learn more about RPS and our process.

Programs

Retail: The Rock Paper Scissors Collective Space is sustained financially primarily through the retail store, which features an extensive array of locally made goods sold largely through consignment. Due to the large amount of designers selling on consignment, maintenance of the retail space involves effort on many fronts.

The administrative aspects of the Retail sector includes but is not limited to organizing designers information, consignment forms and contracts, contacting designers to pick up inventory, paying out all consigners monthly and tracking sales via the paper receipts, computer sales log and individual designers' inventory sheets.

Currently, the monthly payouts are done using an Excel spreadsheet and regular checks although we anticipate upgrading to QuickBooks in the next

¹ Fiscal sponsors are 501(c)(3) charitable corporations that give unincorporated groups whose missions are aligned with their own a tax-exempt home. Although sponsored programs are not completely independent—they are legally part of the sponsor organization—they nevertheless retain programmatic autonomy and often have separate advisory boards making their strategic decisions. They are responsible for their own fund-raising, and they absorb any shortfall and retain any surplus. http://www.tidescenter.org/fileadmin/tc_pdfs/WP_TSNEHowFSNatures.pdf

² <http://www.theintersection.org/>

³ You should check out their web page if you aren't familiar – <http://www.21grand.org>

few months. The other main component of RPS Retail is organizing the actual store.

We are currently looking for people interested in displays and layout of the items. Because of our unique space and variety of merchandise, maintenance of the retail wares requires creativity and innovation and can almost be a piece of art in and of itself! The clothing, jewelry, accessories, music and zines require basic upkeep, like arranging, color/size coding and straightening; however, we are also looking to revamp the overall appearance of the store by creating new fixtures and window displays to better showcase all the exciting merchandise that we have!

Finally, work in the retail committee also includes outreaching to new designers, attending craft fairs and keeping tabs on what is new in the world of hand-made stuff.

Classes: At Rock Paper Scissors class instructors are encouraged to restrict their class fees to cover the cost of materials. We strive to keep our classes low-cost or free, and generally price them on a sliding scale. We are working to develop partnerships with other groups to offer a wider variety of classes and material resources. The first of such partnerships is our weekly screen-printing lab at Lobot Gallery – they have the lab and we help to staff it so that it can be open the public for four hours a week.

Gallery: The Rock Paper Scissors Collective Gallery is committed to exhibiting emerging artists, underrepresented groups and artists, and looks to encourage creative collaborations. This said, in the spirit of group action, the gallery does not host solo shows. Three to four shows a year are ‘open-call’ shows. In these cases, the collective decides the subject matter or theme of the show, and makes a public call for submissions. The collective’s members then jury the submissions and hang the show. We also accept proposals for shows from groups. This is about collaboration. We are interested in the coming together of creative minds to conceive of an art show together. The group will work with RPS to realize the show (advertising, install, deinstall). Otherwise, RPS is always doing outreach so that community and arts groups are aware that there is a gallery space available to them for exhibition. Individuals within the collective also curate shows.

Each art show lasts three weeks: It opens on the first friday of the month, and closes three weeks later. At the opening, there is often a DJ or just music played through the CD player. At the closing, artists are welcome to organize a live music show.

There are many elements to putting on an art show. Duties include: conception of the show, sending a press release, having digital images ready for advertisement, making fliers/posters, distributing the

fliers/posters, hanging the show (including price list, artist list, signage), making art sales, de-install of the show, and making sure that artists get paid.

Youth: We offer two types of internships to youth: one a partnership with Metwest High School youth who intern twice a week at RPS 11am to 3pm; the other, a more open-ended internship in any of our program areas depending on the interest of the intern. Current and past internships have included organizing the zine library, developing a retail rack for youth, creating a clothing line, organizing a fashion show, and airbrushing business development. We are also developing a separate classes program specifically for youth.

Committees

(there are committees for each of the programs as well)

Admin: Every meeting's a party in the RPS Admin Committee! As a committee member, you will not only be invited to all of these parties, but will serve a vital role in keeping the machine that is RPS well-tuned and running smoothly. Responsibilities include: keeping track of RPS's income and expenses from all of it's programs using Quickbooks and an amazingly elaborate, yet simple, binder/folder/paper system, counting money, making weekly bank deposits, knowing secret codes, and crunching numbers. Long-term visions for Admin include making a yearly budget for RPS, setting fundraising goals, and forecasting the future!

Volunteers: Team Volunteer is working on developing a program that includes recruiting volunteers from local communities, contacting interested volunteers, making sure they receive proper training and orientation, writing training guides and creating a formalized volunteer program that includes appreciation barbecues.

Community Outreach: RPS needs help to get the word out about our programs and open up our space to a wide array of local communities so that we can better represent and serve Oakland. Our goal is to strengthen RPS's accessibility by actively networking with community organizations, schools, and small business owners and create programming that fosters such partnerships. Future partnerhsips include: St. Vincent's, First Friday Community Events, and afterschool programming at Metwest High School.

Fundraising/Development: Everyone at RPS works on fundraising events throughout the year, but several members focus on the questions: How can we make RPS a sustainable project? How can we develop our programming to best fulfill the RPS mission and current visions? With one eye on

longterm goals and another on immediate financial needs, the RPS development team meets regularly to work on fundraising (from grantwriting to cultivating individual donors), nonprofit matters (from fiscal sponsorship to applying for non-profit status), and outreach (working and partnering with individuals, community and arts organizations), as well as bringing these considerations to the weekly RPS meetings and whenever collective decisions are made.

Website: The website redesign will streamline navigation, create a single point for members to communicate, and allow volunteers to easily keep track of what's happening and how they can get involved.

Who is RPS?

Emily Cohen currently works with high school seniors in Richmond, and lately has taken to cursing out loud while listening to kpfa on the way to work. She also volunteers with Prisoners Literature Project, sending books to prisoners. In RPS she buys zines, helps organize classes and events, works on fundraising and admin stuff, and often brings snacks to meetings. She sees herself as a very amateur crafter/writer/musician and hopes to use this perspective to make RPS a welcoming and inspiring space.

Amy Mosley lives and works in Oakland.

Taylor Neaman-Goudey has been a member of RPS since September of 2005, when she left the Mission and moved to Oakland for sunshine and crafting. Soon after becoming a member, Taylor began RPS's youth program along with another RPS member. Since then, she has mentored two youth a year at RPS aiding youth in projects that promote economic self-sufficiency through creativity. She also has 6 plus years of experience working with youth in the Bay Area in a variety of settings, including youth organizations, juvenile hall, and schools. Her hope for RPS is for it become a sustainable and accessible space that reflects the uniqueness and diversity of Oakland. Taylor recently began RPS's Community Outreach Committee and got involved in the administrative side of RPS to reach these goals. When not at RPS, Taylor screenprints clothes in her garage for taylor-made clothes, the independent clothing business she runs.

Mark Nicola came to CA from ATL, GA via Seattle. He has had a total of 32 jobs over the span of his life, including: photo assistant, mover, handyman, ice cream truck driver, accountant, visual effects production assistant, and dishwasher. He went to Berkeley, studied many different subjects and finally graduated in 2003 with a BA in Film Studies. At the moment he makes money by writing code for computers to interpret and change into

something else. He also does this for RPS sometimes. He likes to help with the bike class, sewing night, and the classes committee in general.

Sydney Silverstein graduated from the university of california, berkeley in 2002 and has since spent her time working with rps collective and teaching in various incarnations. for the past four years, she has worked as a counselor, tutor, mentor and academic advisor for a nonprofit education program in richmond, ca. in addition, she is a beginning student of herbalism and an experimenter with herbal cosmetics, and sometimes teaches classes on this practice. she has been involved with rps collective since february of 2004 and has works with the retail and consigners, teaches classes, and helps to organize events and art shows. and, if you ask her nicely, she will most likely give you an excellent pedicure. she also really likes to go on walks and read books.

Cielle Taffe-Johnson grew up in Missoula, MT and moved to California to study French Literature and Art History at UC Santa Cruz where she also did a lot of dance, coffee drinking, and worked at a cafe and gallery. Cielle has since moved to Oakland. She currently works for Education Unlimited, coordinating a creative writing summer program for high school students and “Summer Focus,” a college-credit program at UC Berkeley for high school juniors and seniors. At RPS, Cielle works on the Classes Committee and manages the retail aspects of the store. She also serves as a mentor to the RPS Youth Interns.

Jen Watkins comes from a short line of moonshiners, craft empresses, hot rod drivers, and storytellers. She loves Oakland, diy projects, and animals (primarily b/w cats who run away to form jug bands in the wilds of N Carolina). She dabbles in a variety of crafts including crocheting (most recently granny squares), bookmaking, welding, and web coding. Jen currently answers to Volunteer Coordinator and has recently started working on the redesign of RPSCollective.com.

How does one become a member of RPS?

You made it! The membership process starts here. It's kinda long and a little complicated, but it's worth it. Really. And if you have any questions, please don't wait. Ask them now!

Step One: Read this packet. Check! So what's next? Well, now that you're a little more familiar with RPS, you may not be surprised when I tell you that step two happens inside your head.

Step Two: Take a moment to process everything you just went over and then think about what you would like see happen at Rock Paper Scissors and what you can do to make it happen.

Step Three: Fill out the form on the final page of this stack and bring it in to RPS.

Step Four: Within two weeks RPS will contact you and get you started in an apprenticeship period. (If you don't hear from us in two weeks, you should bug us.) There will be one collective member who will serve as your primary contact/mentor. We'll figure this out based on your schedule of availability and your interests. Here's what happens during that time:

- 1.** You'll train with your mentor in how to work in the store. Once you're ready to work on your own, including opening and closing the store, we will ask that you commit to six months of staffing the store – at least one four hour shift per week.
- 2.** In addition to training you to work in the store, your mentor will go over the details of all the different programs and committees with you and arrange for you to meet with all the members of RPS and learn about what they do. It will be a little like reading the stuff above, but over and over again until you know it all like the pockets on your favorite pair of jeans.
- 3.** When you feel ready, you and your mentor will develop a project for you to work on during your apprenticeship. This may be anything from developing the arts lab membership structure to organizing a craft fair. This project is meant to be a way of exploring your interests in RPS, so we suggest waiting until you are familiar with all the aspects of the collective before you get started.
- 4.** During this period, the collective will also ask you to commit to attending two of our weekly meetings a month. If you are available, we would prefer that you attend on the third and fourth Sundays of the month.

Step Five: When you've completed your apprenticeship, you and your mentor will make a short presentation to the collective – basically, whether or not you are still interested in being a member, what responsibilities you want take on in the collective, and some feedback on the apprenticeship

process. Then, if the collective is in consensus, you will become a member!⁴

So that doesn't sound too bad, right? Right? Cool. Well, don't forget the form on the next page. We're excited to see a lot more of you soon!

⁴ Don't worry too much about this. If you make it to the end of this process, the chances are slim to none that you wouldn't become a member. I mean, really, if you're still reading this, I would put money down that you could be a member of RPS if you wanted to.

Sign me up! I want to be a member of RPS!

name _____

phone number _____

email address _____

mailing address _____

days and times I am generally available

what I've come to RPS for in the past

(eg. to volunteer at first friday, take a class, teach a class, shop, etc.)

a short blurb on why I want to be a member

another short blurb on what I'm interested in doing at RPS