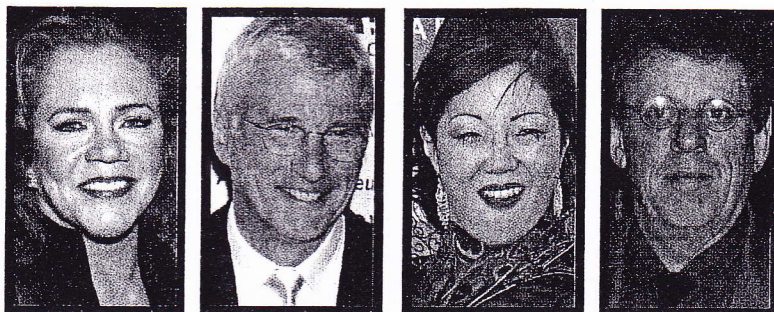


CRAIN'S

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PHOTOS: AP/WIDE WORLD

ARTISTIC EXPRESSION: Kathleen Turner, Richard Gere, Margaret Cho and Phillip Glass will be among the celebrities participating in the Imagine Festival of Arts.

Arts groups make a statement

SOME NEW YORKERS AREN'T fleeing the city and instead are using the convention to make a broad statement. More than 40 arts institutions throughout the city will present nearly 175 events featuring marquee names from every corner of the arts world, from Kathleen Turner and Richard Gere to Margaret Cho and Phillip Glass.

Called the Imagine Festival of Arts, Issues and Ideas, the festival will use the arts to explore issues facing the country today. The festival is nonaligned—Republicans for Choice is helping Planned Parenthood organize **a major concert**—but it is clearly anti-Bush.

“People are so deeply concerned with where we are right now,” says Chris Wangro, a live events producer and the founder of the festival. “At a time when the politicians and the media have failed us looking at the issues, it’s the role of the arts to do so.”

Mr. Wangro began work on the festival more than a year ago. Participating arts organizations, such as the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, are funding **their own programming**, most of it created especially for the festival.

The events range from a nightly political cabaret at Symphony Space to a piece of performance art in which 5,000 people holding pink slips over their heads form an “unemployment line” from Wall Street up Broadway to Madison Square Garden.

—MIRIAM KREININ SOUCCAR