



public art resource center

Intertwining Practices of Public Art and Arts Education

by Olivia Gude



About the Americans for the Arts Public Art Resource Center

The Americans for the Arts Public Art Resource Center (PARC) was launched in June 2017 to serve the expanding field of public artists, administrators, advocates of public art, and field partners as they develop projects and programs in their communities. As an online portal, the Public Art Resource Center also allows individuals to find resources and tools that suit their work and interests.

As part of this project, Americans for the Arts is publishing a series of essays to explore ongoing and current trends that impact public art professionals, artists, field partners, and community members.

The essays in this series include topics like developing public art in rural, mid-sized, and urban communities; caring for public art collections in times of natural disaster, and the intersection of public art and arts education.

This essay series is just one resource available through the Americans for the Arts Public Resource Center. Visit AmericansForTheArts.org/PARC today to explore more.

About this Essay

Public art and arts education have been intertwined by arts administrators, educators, and artists over many years. This foundational paper explores the intersection between public art and arts education by expanding on the current state of each field, the similarities between the two, and the opportunities currently present for further engagement between them.

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Writing about the intersections of public art and arts education is a daunting task—not because these subjects have little in common, but rather because there are so many contemporary and historical intertwinings of values, purposes, and artmaking approaches. There is a wide range of practices and projects that have brought together arts education and public art, with rich diversity in the ways artists, educators, students, community participants, public art administrators, schools, community and arts organizations, museums, and public art programs have created new methodologies of blending the arts and arts education, as well as new vocabularies for US cultural life.

Public Art in Arts Education Is Not New

- An elementary school art teacher proposes to her school administrators and PTA that her students work together to create a large ceramic tile mosaic for the school's entrance lobby.
- A community group recruits high school-age teens to research, design, and paint a mural in the town square to celebrate local history.
- Students work with a visiting teaching artist to study surrounding natural habitats and then create a series of sculptural benches to educate the public about enjoying and conserving shared spaces.

The Rhythm and Views mosaic takes shape in public view as participants apply cement and cracked tile to make free form patterns within the planned design. By Todd Osborne, Tracy Van Duinen, and Cynthia Weiss with area youth and neighborhood volunteers, 2011. Photo courtesy of Chicago Public Art Group.

These are familiar scenarios in today's cultural landscape. Students, educators, parents, principals, politicians, and other community members understand these populist forms of creating public meaning and shaping public space. There are thousands of collaboratively created art projects in formal and informal educational settings that date back to the early years of the 20th century, and are all-too-often uncelebrated public art achievements. The continued evolution of formally commissioned, engaged, participatory, and collaborative public art projects today has been inspired by artists and citizens who learned in elementary, high school, college, and community arts education that paying attention to one's surroundings, sharing ideas, engaging in dialogue, and making art and places together is a pleasurable and meaningful contribution to democratic social life.

Context of Public Art Today

The dizzying array of ever-expanding public art media includes the revival of traditional materials such as mosaics, audience-responsive electronic installations, architect-artist collaborations, and the many hybrid forms created by the interactions of digital design with new and traditional materials. In the Americans for the Arts Monograph *Public Art: An Essential Component of Creating Communities* (2004), Jack Becker, founder of Forecast Public Art, suggests that a workable definition of public art is a “work created by artists for places accessible to and used by the public,” while stipulating that this description is not adequate to encompass “a much broader spectrum of activities and approaches.” Becker’s follow-up observation points to an emerging shift in thinking about what public art is and how public art functions. Once conceived of as (ideally) permanent physical additions to—or later as the creation of—public space, public art is now widely understood as interventions into public consciousness, whether perceived as gracious invitations for contemplation or play, or as startling or thought-provoking interruptions of everyday life. The growth of public art programs and projects in the United States since the 1980s suggests that public art and place design are no longer considered expendable frills, but rather are essential components of public space, even while there are many disparate claims about why public art is essential to the quality of life.

Many contemporary public art projects eschew the once-unquestioned formulation that the art is an object or place designed and made by professional artists and fabricators; instead they suggest that artists be conceived of as facilitators who structure public discursive spaces of artistic investigation within which once passive audiences are reconceived as coparticipants who generate histories, insights, and meanings. The art of the project may consist of more than a static material manifestation and could involve a range of activities and objects, such as performances, conversations, communal meals, websites, or ecological interventions.

Informed by such diverse sources as the German artist Joseph Beuys—who advocated for art as *social sculpture* with the potential to transform social life, the performance interventions into everyday activities by the international network of Fluxus artists,



As part of the *Reading Between the Lines* series commissioned by Mural Arts Philadelphia, artist Greg Lamarche introduced middle school youth at the Centro Nueva Creacion community center to the science and art of typography. Untitled mural by Greg Lamarche, 2016. Photo courtesy of Steve Weinik.

the collaborative community-based street art murals of Chicago and Los Angeles, and later the critical discourses surrounding *new genre* public art, artists, public art administrators, and arts advocates have continued to reimagine the meanings and functions of art, artists, audiences, communities, public art, and places within the cultural landscape. Intense public, civic, art world, and critical interest in new forms of artmaking—often grouped under headings such as dialogical art, community arts, relational art practices, social practice art, or socially engaged art practices—have encouraged artists, public art programs, museums, municipalities, foundations, and schools—as well as service agencies and other institutions—to explore the unfolding possibilities of public participatory ephemeral and permanent public artworks.

In *Education for Socially Engaged Art* (2011), Pablo Helguera, an artist and the director of adult and academic programs at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City, stated that many public projects can be described as socially engaged art that “blends educational processes and art-making.” He coined the term *transpedagogy* to point to the increasingly common intersections of collaborative artmaking and pedagogy, the methods and practice of teaching to describe “those practices that propose a rethinking of education through art,” but also a rethinking of art through participatory education.

Context of the Arts in Education Today

For more than two decades, there has been widespread public interest in and discussion of the value of arts education in US schools. Based on observations of how students become more enthusiastic, engaged, and self-directed learners when they have access to quality arts education, many educators, artists, arts advocates, and community members have long posited correlations between involvement in the arts and success in schools—academically and socially. Many research studies have been conducted that point to the benefits of arts education for all students, particularly for low-socioeconomic status and second-language learners. James Catterall, professor emeritus at the University of California Los Angeles, conducted a 12-year study of arts access and educational outcomes for more than 25,000 students and published the results in *Doing Well and Doing Good by Doing Art* (2009). His study shows that arts learning is strongly connected with both general academic success and positive social outcomes. Other researchers—such as Lois Hetland and Ellen Winner, associated with Project Zero at the Harvard Graduate School of Education—prefer to focus their studies on identifying the significant life skills developed by engagement in the arts, such as abilities to engage and persist, observe, reflect, stretch and explore, and envision.

Founded in 2002, the P21: Partnership for 21st Century Learning builds collaborative partnerships between business, education, community, and government leaders to ensure that all students acquire the skills they will need in the 21st century. As part of its Framework for 21st Century Learning—which identifies creativity and innovation,



communication, collaboration, and critical thinking and problem solving as necessary and interconnected capacities—P21 designated the arts as one of the key subjects needed for a comprehensive education and identifies arts education as “compelling and effective for developing 21st Century Skills.”

Today, federal law identifies the arts as an important component of a “well-rounded education.” This requires consideration of the role of the arts in the design of teaching and learning in local and state arts education policies. Though arts education advocates have made significant progress in shaping positive perceptions of in and out-of-school arts education in communities throughout the US, providing equitable arts education access for all youth remains a challenge, particularly given the emphasis on high-stakes testing in the educational climate in recent years.

Despite concerns related to access and quality, support for arts education continues to grow and sometimes to manifest itself in surprising ways. For example, the City of Chicago conducted research in 2012 for a new Chicago Cultural Plan through a months-long facilitated process with thousands of participants at town hall meetings and community conversations throughout the city. One of the top three priorities identified through the process for the future of Chicago’s cultural life was “to foster arts education and lifelong learning.”

Young people on Chicago’s West Side created temporary public art projects—including performances and installations—in the existing natural and built environments to explore aspects of life in the city for *City As Site* a project by Maria Gaspar, 2010. Photo courtesy of Maria Gaspar.



Students participate in making outdoor site sculptures, gain skills in using tools, and experience the power of collaboratively building large projects. Projects shown: Morgan County Elementary School, 2007; Walker Park Elementary in Monroe, GA, 2008; and Harlem Park School in West Baltimore, MD, 2011. Photos courtesy of Jeff Mather, Mather Site Art.

New State Standards for Arts Education

In 2014, after several years of planning and development by thousands of arts educators, experts, and policymakers from throughout the US, the National Coalition for Core Arts Standards (NCCAS) produced new national voluntary arts standards for prekindergarten through high school education in dance, media arts, music, theater, and visual arts. Americans for the Arts, a key NCCAS member, has worked to educate communities about these new National Core Arts Standards and to build support for states to adopt and adapt these new standards to meet the needs of each local context.

The NCCAS Conceptual Framework for Arts Learning explains that “no longer will we talk about standards as lists of what students should know and be able to do. Rather, we will talk about standards as measurable and attainable learning events based on artistic goals.” The Framework proposes that contemporary arts standards will not just be about individual knowledge and skills, but also will emphasize “the collaborative nature of arts production.” NCCAS identifies the arts as a crucial form of community engagement that “provide means for individuals to collaborate and connect with others in an enjoyable inclusive environment as they create, prepare, and share artwork that bring communities together.” Thus the Philosophical Foundations and Lifelong Goals of NCCAS link creative personal realization and wellbeing with community engagement and insights into individuals’ own and others’ cultures and societies.

New Paradigms for Visual Art and Design Education

The overarching philosophy of the new NCCAS framework and its focus on process over product, as well as the dramatic evolution of how contemporary visual art is made and understood in the 21st century, led to a comprehensive reconception of the 1994 Visual Arts Standards. Many past visual arts national and local standards tended to focus on skill building in various media, developing modernist formal vocabulary for interpreting art, and learning art historical content like that in traditional university survey texts. The new Visual Arts Standards support teachers and students in engaging a wider range of cultural productions and artmaking approaches—individually and collaboratively.

Another major influence that shaped the new Visual Arts Standards was the national conversation about the role of the arts in developing students (and citizens) who have the knowledge and interest to become the technological and scientific innovators of tomorrow. There is general agreement among policymakers, educators, and communities that to participate in the global economy and ensure a prosperous future for the US, today's students need stronger knowledge and skills in key academic disciplines—science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM). Interdisciplinary STEM curriculum has been developed and promoted to fill this knowledge and interest gap. Yet educators and arts advocates throughout the US quickly noted that if the goal of STEM curriculum was to promote creativity and innovation through interdisciplinary practices, an “A” for the arts should be added to the equation to create STEAM. John Maeda, designer and technologist, contributed to the growth of the STEM to STEAM movement while he was president at the Rhode Island School of Design with the goal of fostering “the true innovation that comes with combining the mind of a scientist or technologist with that of an artist or designer.”

The 2014 National Core Arts Standards group grade-level learning objectives under discipline-specific Enduring Understandings. These are Big Ideas about arts and culture. Many of the Enduring Understandings for Visual Arts provide descriptions of artistic processes that are relevant to both artists and designers.

- Artists and designers shape artistic investigations—following or breaking with traditions in pursuit of creative artmaking goals.
- Artists and designers experiment with forms, structures, materials, concepts, media, and artmaking approaches.
- Artists and designers balance experimentation with safety and freedom with responsibility while developing and creating artworks.

Other shifts throughout the Visual Arts Standards support expanded understandings of the processes and purposes of artists and designers from a focus on making individual works of art to express personal meaning to conceiving and creating works that have multiple individual and shared social goals (and sometimes social and material constraints).



On-site exhibitions at Hilliard Apartments—during the research and making of the *Structure Is Space: 63-66* mosaic installation—explained the design process, acquisition of craft skills, and encouraged community participation, 2007. Photo courtesy of Olivia Gude.



Children in a summer program in Denver, Colorado investigate the city, imagine creative interventions in the urban environment, and then return to sites to share their inspirations to stimulate the imaginations of passersby, 2017. *School of the Poetic City* directed by Anne Thulson, Peter Thulson, and Fred Thulson.



The Enduring Understanding “people create and interact with objects, places, and design that define, shape, enhance, and empower their lives” is perhaps the most significant new addition to recommended content in the field of visual arts education. This is a call to US arts educators, schools, communities, and arts advocates to recognize that a high-quality contemporary arts education cultivates awareness of how material culture and public space shape our life experiences and our interactions with others.

Here are several related grade-level standards outlining learning objectives for public art and design in the curriculum that build from early awareness to engaging issues of planning and designing.

- Create art that represents natural and constructed environments. (Kindergarten)
- Individually or collaboratively construct representations, diagrams, or maps of places that are part of everyday life. (Third grade)
- Document, describe, and represent regional constructed environments. (Fourth grade)
- Identify, describe, and visually document places or objects of personal significance. (Fifth grade)
- Design or redesign objects, places, or systems that meet the identified needs of diverse users. (Sixth grade)
- Collaboratively develop a proposal for an installation, artwork, or space design that transforms the perception and experience of a particular place. (Beginning High School)

Many of the Visual Arts Standards relate to presenting and responding, supporting teachers in working with students to consider the context in which artworks are experienced and understood. Consider how the Enduring Understanding “people evaluate art based on various criteria” may play out for students. Every public art program is aware of conflicting criteria, but this is often not explicitly stated, discussed, and valued during sometimes contentious discussions about public art. However, by incorporating discussions, say in the fifth grade, about suitability, siting, or meaning of a public artwork, students may then contribute to family, school, and civic discussions. It would be helpful, then, for a visual art curriculum to focus on standards such as:

- recognize differences in criteria used to evaluate works of art depending on styles, genres, and media, as well as historical and cultural contexts; and
- apply formal and conceptual vocabularies of art and design to view surroundings in new ways through artmaking.

Consider also the Enduring Understanding “individually or collaboratively create visual documentation of places and times in which people gather to make and experience art or design in the community.” Middle school students might conduct a community survey, working together to document where celebrations are held, where people gather, where children walk in their communities. Students in this pre-driving age group might also be particularly attentive to places that would benefit from interesting art, seating, walking paths, playgrounds geared toward older children, or shade structures.

To meet the Advanced High School Standard “construct evaluations of a work of art or collection of works based on differing sets of criteria,” students might work with the local public art program, a community organization, or the county supervisor’s office to develop a survey to determine people’s reactions to and valuations of local public art works.

Studying the history and development of public art may provide students with a new way of perceiving their community. By working with their arts teachers, artists, public art administrators, architects, space designers, and others, students could develop assessments that encourage people to view a work of art from differing perspectives. Some of the criteria developed by the students might be surprisingly different than what the goals were for the public art project. Additionally, the students will have learned about the different roles needed to develop a public art project. By engaging in the education of students, people who commission public art can become more in touch with their audiences.

Note that in the examples above the students are not passive recipients of knowledge about public art. Youth and intergenerational school communities can contribute to the creation of public dialogue about public art and places on an ongoing basis. Through such project-based learning, students and teachers can raise awareness of the public art in the local and regional contexts, help civic leaders and public art administrators understand various community perceptions, and provide valuable on-the-ground research on what sorts of new projects might be considered.



Teen artists from Yollocalli Arts Reach, a youth initiative of the National Museum of Mexican Art, collaborated with Chris Silva to create a mixed media mural *Sailing To The Home of The Heart* using reclaimed wood and acrylic paint, 2012. Photo courtesy of Chris Silva.

Public Art as Community Curriculum

All public art functions as community curriculum, pointing to what is considered to be interesting, useful, and valuable to know and experience. The content of public art curriculum is both the content of each artwork—its subject, site, theme, and idea—as well as the subject of public art itself.

In 2017, Chicago celebrated the 50th anniversary of two internationally known iconic artworks in urban settings—Picasso's untitled monumental cubist sculpture in Daley Plaza and the collaboratively created *Wall of Respect*, a street mural on the South Side of Chicago. Each was an early example of its kind and as such educated the public about new possibilities for public art.

Though sometimes dismissed as mere plop art, works such as the Chicago Picasso or Calder's 1969 *La Grande Vitesse* in Grand Rapids, Michigan, introduced a wider public to modernist sculpture and created local and national conversations about styles, criteria, and uses of art in public space. Calder's many vividly colored public works offered relief from urban drabness and enticed passersby into walking beneath their planes, seeing and experiencing the three-dimensional works from multiple perspectives. Such work functioned as the perfect stimulus for reeducation of a general public who had been conditioned to think of public artworks as statue objects of generals and other great men. Today, many once-maligned modernist sculptures are beloved landmarks and icons of their site cities.

In the summer of 1967, Chicago-based muralist William Walker and some 20 artists belonging to the Visual Art Workshop of the Organization of Black American Culture added a new style of art to Chicago's urban environment. The evolving design of the *Wall of Respect* featured portraits of more than 50 notable African Americans—statesmen, religious leaders, musicians, athletes, actors, and literary figures—as well as scenes depicting racist violence afflicting the Black community. The work quickly became a local landmark, and literally a national and international sensation, spurring artists in other cities to create similar tribute walls.

Seen as social education, the *Wall of Respect* memorialized inspirational African American leaders and greatly expanded the cast of characters populating the many official monuments and murals in towns and cities throughout the US. The decision of community artists to create a public memorial without the authorization of an official commission raised profound questions about public education and public art. Whose histories, stories, and cultures are represented? Who decides? Why, how, and when was a particular artwork made and installed? What did it mean then? What does it mean now?

Contemporary public art programs have embraced public art as a form of public education. Programs provide information, activities, tours, and resources for new artworks, as well as for works in their historic or inherited collections. In an excellent article, "Public Art Education: Beyond the Ribbon Cutting," found in *Public Art By the Book* (2005), Renee Piechocki, founding director of Pittsburgh's Office of Public



The *Great Wall of Los Angeles* is a cultural landmark, depicting the story of the ethnic peoples of Los Angeles from prehistoric times to the 1950s. Conceived by artistic director Judith F. Baca, the project employed over 400 youth and their families working with artists, oral historians, ethnologists, scholars, and hundreds of community members, 1976-1981. Photo courtesy of Social and Public Art Resource Center (SPARC).



Art, outlines the many complications of bringing a public art project into being. She observes that “in order to continue the excitement and meaning of a project beyond the ribbon cutting, a similar effort must be made to develop information and programming about public art projects and programs.” Piechocki argues for the importance of setting aside funding for educational programming in the budgets of each project, as well as in the overall budgeting for public art programs. Educational programming begins with the commitment to provide basic information about each artwork through onsite signage, website directories, and technological innovations such as mobile phone apps and audio tours. Maps and brochures, artist lectures and panels, slide presentations to various groups, and tours for local residents and for visitors are all strategies to expand knowledge of, interest in, and support for public art.

Today, public art programs often commission projects that, from their inception, are understood as intertwining public art and public education. Such projects reestablish the potential for public art to address social content, potentially dissolving the isolation created by modernist aesthetic insistence on the primacy of abstract form over extrinsic content. However, rather than merely representing ideas and content, contemporary public art often educates through community involvement.

For example, in recent years many projects throughout the country have focused on an area’s relationship to water. These projects have a wide range of investigatory and aesthetic strategies, but all suggest that a resource that was once taken for granted



A Avenue Water Shed Educational Wall organized by ARTS (A Reason to Survive) in National City, California depicts water traveling from the headwaters in the local mountains to the ocean. By Rob Tobin with over 300 artists, students, and volunteers, 2015. Photo courtesy of Rob Tobin.

be more fully understood, valued, and utilized with care. In Boynton Beach, Florida, *Water, You and I*—a permanent project at a water treatment plant—invites visitors to participate in drawing water from a well, reminding them that the source of water for the town, and much of central Florida, is the unseen Floridian Aquifer. In the summer of 2016, the City of Los Angeles presented *Current: LA Water*, billed as the city’s first public art biennial. It was comprised of 15 multidisciplinary artworks sited in public spaces along the Los Angeles River, as well as public programs and activities focused on water-related topics in conjunction with the art installations. The stated purpose of the project was to “raise awareness of the importance of water and of critical issues related to conservation, ecology, and drought.” Projects included Refik Anadol and Peggy Weil’s projections of geologic core samples from the rapidly drying aquifers of East Los Angeles and Mel Chin’s invitation to residents to receive plans and then recreate mirror gardens to his prototype gardens of California-native plants.

Public Art in School Curriculum

Partnerships between schools and public art programs can lay the groundwork for meaningful public dialogue by today’s students and future citizens. Arts educators have a great deal of experience in introducing students to unfamiliar styles and artmaking approaches that may initially be perceived by students as bewildering, irritating, or just plain dumb.

Public art controversies are typically understood as problems that indicate the failure of an art project (and its related pre- and post-project educational outreach) to communicate effectively to (and to please) multiple public constituencies. In contentious times, such controversies can be a matter of real concern, yet controversies suggest that art is important to our shared social life and is a catalyst for dialogues about democratic culture, shared public space, and contemporary art practices. A shared aspect of the educational mission of public art programs and the study of public art in schools could be conceived of as creating frameworks for addressing disagreements about public art and public space, while developing language, skills, and forums to talk about such subjects before controversies occur.

The NCCAS Visual Arts Standards definitions for criteria—established criteria, contemporary criteria, relevant criteria, and personal criteria—provide starting points for considering how criteria for valuing art, far from being universal and timeless, are shaped by cultural contexts. Zoya Kocur, in the chapter “Art in the Public Realm” in *Contemporary Art and Multicultural Education* (1996), approaches arts education curriculum by using three public artworks that were viewed as controversial for a variety of reasons when first created to provide examples of carefully articulated questions and approaches to building conversations.

Surveying and analyzing an area, city, or town’s public art and prominent places can be the basis for understanding layered, geographically situated, and social and



Filling the Void is a permanent, yet changeable artwork designed to accommodate additions in different artistic media by future youth and artists-in-residence. The artist worked collaboratively with youth experiencing homelessness to create an initial fiber installation. By Randy Walker with youth participants, 2013. Photo courtesy of Randy Walker.

aesthetic histories. In *Memorial Mania: Public Feeling in America* (2010), art historian Erika Doss compares the 19th and early 20th century statue mania during which thousands of figurative monuments to founding fathers, soldiers of various wars, cultural great men, Columbus, and others were placed throughout the US to today's memorial mania. Doss defines memorial mania as the thousands of new public art projects created to memorialize a wider range of American experiences and cultures, commemorating victims as well as heroes and heroines, shameful events as well as celebrated achievements. Documentation and mapping by public art programs provide valuable opportunities for students and community members to consider the many and sometimes conflicting narratives that shape our understanding of our social contexts. Led by experienced educators and facilitators, discussions of such information identify unexpected connections and foster recognition that the places we inhabit are shaped by historical choices and that it is possible to reexamine and reinvent, not the past, but the present places of contemporary social life.

Many public art programs post curriculum, resources, and lesson plans related to public artworks in their collections. This can be a tremendous resource for teachers of art and other disciplines, particularly when websites include downloadable image presentations and videos in which the artist (as well as participants and planners) share the story of a work's inception, design, making, and siting. Lesson plans on public art websites vary greatly in detail, approach, and quality. Plans developed by experienced arts teachers, teaching artists, artists, and other educators while actually

working with youth tend to offer more exciting, varied, and practical approaches to public art curriculum. The most successful curriculum supports students in engaging public art as a means of open-ended inquiry in which youth share multiple interpretations and consider how they are shaped by and might contribute to the public spaces that they inhabit.

A collaboration of program staff of the Arts in Public Places and Arts in Education programs of the Washington State Arts Commission (ArtsWA) resulted in Arts Learning & Public Art in the Classroom, an excellent series of participatory lessons that use a Big Ideas format to introduce students to age-appropriate concepts in public art. Assessment for meeting learning targets is tied to student reflection and self-assessment. The Big Idea for the lesson for kindergarten through second grade students is “changing the size or scale of something compared to the world around it can engage the imagination;” for sixth through eighth grade students, it is “artists choose, change, and arrange recycled materials in ways that can communicate ideas.” Though these lessons are developed in relationships to specific works in the Washington’s State Art Collection, their creative and conceptual framework make them easily adaptable to many educational settings. For more information on ArtsWA Arts & Learning Public Art Classroom, visit arts.wa.gov/public-art/arts-learning-and-public-art-in-the-classroom. (Additional public art programs with education components are Association for Public Art, associationforpublicart.org; and Boston Art Commission, publicartboston.com.)

Commissioning Public Art for Schools

During the first half of the 20th century, public art—murals, mosaics, decorative ceramic, wood, and metalwork—were expected features of new schools. Public schools were seen as important signifiers of community strength and community culture. Various aesthetic and educational philosophies suggested that beautiful learning environments uplifted and educated students. In the decades after World War II, the rapid expansion of the suburbs and the urgent need for schools for the burgeoning student population resulted in more functionalist approaches to modern school design. Even in towns and cities in which their older schools housed significant professional artworks, the notion that professional public art should be included in new school buildings was seldom considered by planners, architects, school boards, or community members.

An exception to the artlessness of many newly built American schools was the continued commissioning of public art for schools in New York City (NYC). The commitment to placing high quality public art in schools in NYC dates back more than 100 years. In *Public Art for Public Schools* (2009), Michele Cohen, founding director of NYC’s Public Art for Public Schools (PAPS) program, recounts the rich history of the city’s investment in public art and showcases a stunning array of beautifully maintained public art. Cohen explains that when PAPS was founded in 1989, many artworks were in poor condition and the work was not considered to be a collection to be cataloged



and cherished as an important educational contribution to New York's children. PAPS, a unit of the New York City Public Schools, continues to commission new artworks, conserve older works, provide curriculum and resources for classroom use, and has an innovative Sites for Students program through which artists experienced in teaching and in public art collaborate with students to make new permanent public art additions for their schools. (For more information on the NYC Public Art for Public Schools program, visit schools.nyc.gov/community/facilities/PublicArt/default.htm.)

Washington is one of only a few states that include public schools as participants in their percent-for-art programs. This has resulted in many beautiful additions to contemporary schools. The ArtsWA Art in Public Places program clearly outlines the steps for eligible school districts with new construction to apply for funding—pooled through the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction—to commission new, site-responsive artworks. The Big Idea for ArtsWA's ninth through 12th grade lesson plan on public art—making site specific public art is a multistep process that is collaborative, technical, and creative—mirrors the steps outlined in the Guidelines for the Artwork Selection Process for the State Art Collection in K-12 Schools, creating a wonderful example of intertwining public art, public school education, and community education. (The Guidelines for the Artwork Selection Process for the State Art Collection in K-12 Schools can be found online at arts.wa.gov/media/dynamic/docs/Public-Art-Guidelines%20-%20K-12.pdf.)

Youth members of El Puente's Community School (MS 50), its High School (El Puente Academy for Peace and Justice), and its Leadership Centers collected oral histories, photographs, and other artifacts as research for a mural that conveys the history of the Los Sures community in Brooklyn. *MS 50 School Mural Project* led by Joe Matunis, 2016. Photo courtesy of Joe Matunis.



Rhythm and Views, a “bricolage” mosaic (combining many different materials, including sculpted cement, handmade ceramics, photo silkscreened tiles, glass and paint) enlivens a dark underpass leading to the lakefront in Chicago. By Todd Osborne, Tracy Van Duinen, and Cynthia Weiss with area youth and neighborhood volunteers, 2011. Photo courtesy of Chicago Public Art Group.

In the 1990s, there was renewed interest in the many murals in the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) from the Progressive and Works Progress Administration eras. An exemplary partnership between CPS and the Conservation Center resulted in murals being cataloged; many murals were restored, including some that had been badly damaged or covered over for decades. The CPS Mural Preservation Project also included a partnership with the Art Institute of Chicago that produced a curriculum guide and tours that serve as models for arts education, social studies, and history curriculum. This curriculum and related activities made some connection to the contemporary Chicago mural movement, but commissioning new work was not part of the Chicago Public Schools Mural Preservation Project.

However, being without an official program to commission permanent new public artworks doesn't necessarily preclude schools from creating high quality public art with professional artists. Beginning in 1987, artist members of the Chicago Public Art Group, an organization with deep roots in the Chicago community mural movement, began forming partnerships with individual schools to create permanent public artworks. Like the street muralists of an earlier generation, these grassroots activist artists created their own commissions, identified funding from a diverse range of private and public monies, and built relationships with educators and community members. The artists developed forms—such as mosaics framing doorways or reopening bricked in windows—that complement the traditional architecture of many Chicago schools. Amidst a citywide interest in the arts as a means for improving educational outcomes, many principals and local school councils requested artworks to stimulate students' learning and draw attention to new school cultures. In the

ensuing 20 years, Chicago Public Art Group has created more than 80 permanent public artworks in Chicago schools and inspired many other artworks by artists working independently or with other organizations. (For more information on the Chicago Public Art Group, visit chicagopublicartgroup.org.)

It is important to note that an often-overlooked source of quality permanent public art in schools are exceptional works made by inspired and hardworking certified arts teachers or teaching artists working in collaboration with students and community members. Such projects—often made in ceramics or tile mosaics, created during art classes or through out-of-school programs, and clearly showing the handiwork and styles of the youth who made them—can achieve high levels of complexity and sophisticated design.

Collaborative Public Art in School and Community Settings

Artists who make collaborative public art—including certified art teachers, teaching artists, commissioned artists, and residency artists—are likely to wince if someone suggests making a mural by having each child put a colorful handprint on the wall. This is because these artists believe that collaborative public art, even art made with elementary age children, can be more than just a fun time to splash paint around or a simple recording of presence with a mark by each child. Under the guidance of an experienced artist, youth can make surprising, thought-provoking, and fascinating works of art.

There are many approaches to developing and making collaborative artworks. There is no one right way that is always best. Some artists work intensively with youth on the research, drawing, and design phase of a project and then may make the final work themselves or have it fabricated, or work with youth participants through all phases of the making. Others may begin with an overall design concept and ask the youth participants to contribute individualized smaller units to make up the whole. Some artists may focus on developing craft skills such as mosaics and encourage students to make increasingly challenging patterns with tiles. Yet another artist may begin by asking students to develop stencils and then create a improvisational mural by layering, shifting, and repeating images and texts. There are more style variations of making collaborative work than there are artists, as many artists engaged in making collaborative work speak of designing a unique process to meet the particular needs and assets of each community and site.

It is tempting to make a distinction between artists collaborating with youth who conceive of their work as a form of curriculum and those whose primary interest is in creating public art. However, this distinction does not hold up when examined because in many of the best projects, educationally and artistically, artists create curricular opportunities for students to learn about the phases of a design process, conduct significant research, develop technical skills, and experiment with compositional and stylistic approaches.



Taft High School art teachers Joanne Conroy and Jenny Trejo worked with their students to create *Native Plants & Flowers*, a stunning mosaic incorporating tile, stained glass, mirrors, and broken crockery from the students' homes. In this Chicago school attended by students throughout the world, each student contributed an image of a plant or flower native to their home country, 2008. Photo courtesy of Joanne Conroy.

The Importance of Pre-Planning a Public Art Project

There are some commonalities among aesthetically, conceptually, socially, and educationally effective community collaborative projects.

- An experienced artist or artist team identifies and works with all stakeholders to explore and develop clear and appropriate goals for the final project and for youth and community participation.
- Project hosts hold preliminary meetings to develop timelines, and design parameters, budgets, and plans for youth and community participation.
- There is a community of stakeholders—school administrators, young people, parents, teachers, public art staff, facility managers, architects, community organizers, funders, staff of partnering organizations, and others—that is committed to making the project happen.



Having developed a high level of craft skills, a youth participant painstakingly fits tiles for a mosaic using the “indirect method” — creating the design in tile in the studio before installation. *Cannas & Corn: A Garden Community* at the Chicago Transit Authority Central Park Station by Olivia Gude with community teens and elders, 2004. Photo courtesy of Olivia Gude.

Despite the importance of initial frank conversations and careful planning, an art project also needs to be open to the unfolding possibilities of the process. Johanna Poethig, an artist who has made dozens of collaborative public artworks and is a professor in the Visual and Public Art department at California State University, Monterey Bay, explains that “community process can fail or be more difficult than it needs to be if there are too many requirements. A good project isn’t prescribed: it has to be experimental, playful, and have an improvised feeling. However, as the lead artist it’s my job to exercise due diligence, to shape a project that will work in terms of space, materials, participants, and timeline.”

The French community sculptor and builder Henri Marquet is fond of telling this story: “I’m often asked how many weeks will it take me to make a project? After thinking it over, I might respond, ‘That will take 12 weeks.’ The response from the questioner will then be, ‘Oh great, how fast can you do it with 30 helpers?’ I answer, ‘Probably 18 to 24 weeks.’” This is not a criticism of the quality and devotion of students or project volunteers. It is the recognition that quality engagement takes time and effort. Jon Pounds, director emeritus of Chicago Public Art Group, explains that “doing something with students or community members does not make it faster or cheaper; it does add meaning and creates a sense of ownership, pride, and responsibility.”

Experienced collaborative artists assist community organizations and schools in thinking through questions of longevity and purpose. It is often a good idea to begin with a smaller project, on a less prominent and challenging site, and build community capacity and participant skills. A public project, whether indoors or out, can take many attractive forms other than permanent paint or mosaics on a wall. These include canvas banners, shaped mounted panels, projections, window stencils, benches, or wall hangings. It is critically important that adequate resources be devoted to preparing the wall or site so that a project is safe, attractive, and easy to uninstall if that becomes necessary.



Design, Make, and Share a Public Art Project

Skillful collaborative artists and organizers develop accessible project structures that inform participants and audiences about all aspects of the creative planning and implementation processes—from initial inklings of what might be to fully elaborated plans and completed projects. For people who have participated in making public art, public spaces are no longer seen as static, but as something that is continually created and recreated through decisions and actions of artists, cultural leaders, policymakers, and everyday citizens.

These components contribute to designing and making a collaborative public art project.

- **Build an on-the-ground support team.**

Form a core group with teachers, young people, parents, administrators, or other community members to support the project. Identify go-to people for various needs.

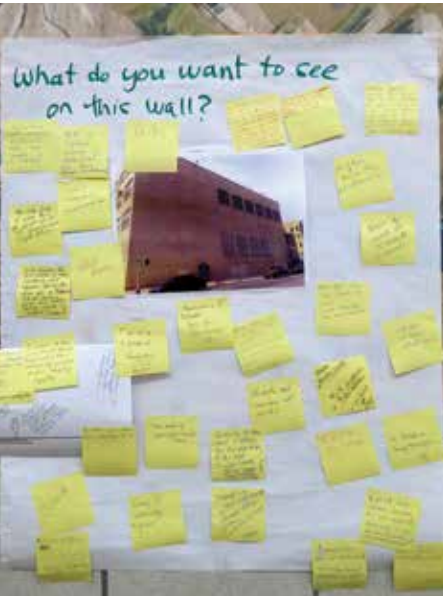
- **Consider the site.**

Who are the predominant users of this place? Who else regularly uses or encounters this space? What message does this place currently send? What message would you like to send?

- **Conduct open-ended generative theme investigations.**

What is happening here and now in this community? What are the histories of this community and site? What questions or possibilities are people currently interested in? Whose stories do you want to tell? Whose stories aren't we hearing? What subjects or issues could be a focus for a public work?

Amherst College Portraits: Building Community Through Learning integrated the creative processes of artist Brett Cook and photographer Wendy Ewald—working with students, faculty, and staff—to develop 18 large-scale public works. Photographic portraits were transformed into ink drawings, and then made into 12 foot projections where participants could add imaginative color interpretations, 2008. Photo courtesy of Brett Cook.



Youth participants and community members identify important themes, strengths, and issues to represent in a proposed mural. *MS 50 School Mural Project* led by Joe Matunis, 2016. Photo courtesy of Joe Matunis.

- **Develop criteria for artistic success.**
The criteria for success should consider the desired artistic impact along with the desired educational and social impact. A public art team might decide that it wants to draw attention to a serious issue such as environmental degradation, but also wants to create something beautiful and uplifting. Such goals are not incompatible.
- **Showcase the exploratory artistic process.**
Set up an open studio space so that all students on the design team, as well as others, can watch the work evolve. Invite participants and others to research and bring in ideas and images. Layer and juxtapose design ideas from many people.
- **See students and other participants as your most valuable asset.**
A high quality participatory process makes use of the unique contributions of each group member. How will the process and artwork make use of the skills, styles, and cultural knowledge of participants?
- **Build community.**
Model a participatory democracy in which people work together to find “yes, and” rather than “no, but” solutions. Avoid contests and voting. Don’t create winners and losers.
- **Practice grounded decision-making.**
Trust the artists and designers to make sometimes hard decisions regarding materials, level of expertise required to execute the project, safety, budget, or timeline.
- **Build skills.**
Support students in learning needed skills by allowing time for practice pieces and continue to develop skills throughout the project. Encourage participation in all aspects of making and managing a project.
- **Expand your circle of expertise.**
Reach out to others in the community who have needed skills such as carpentry or cement finishing.
- **Interpret as you work.**
As you work together to create the project, make time to reflect together on the aesthetics and meaning of the artwork. Involve others in the school community, as well as visitors. Support students in becoming articulate advocates for this artwork and for all public art.
- **Host in-process events.**
Build support and interest by inviting visitors to see the work in progress. Schedule community work days in which others can contribute to making the project.
- **Celebrate.**
Invite the entire school community. Have students make invitations to give to family and friends. Rehearse the students so they are prepared to act as docents, welcome people, and explain the artwork and process. Have students write press releases. Make signage to identify partners and participants.

- **Create community curriculum to continue the arts education process.**

Work with teachers to develop interdisciplinary units that include the new artwork. Create a temporary or permanent display showcasing the process, including the words of young people and other participants.

Whether originally conceived as a youth development, arts education, or public art project, a common denominator of quality public arts education projects is that they exemplify for participants and audiences the potential of people working together to make something and to make something happen.

Invite Participants into an Artist's Practice

The expanded field of public art today, both permanent and temporary, offers many opportunities for artists working in educational settings to develop hybrid forms of practice that involve participants in processes of learning, interacting, researching, designing, and making. There is now a great deal of arts criticism and arts journalism that explores the intent, meaning, and possibilities of art practices described by such terms as dialogic art, community-based art, new genre public art, and collaborative art. Projects that combine public art and arts education are no longer pedagogical artistic oddities. Such projects are part of a swelling interest in art practices that encourage participatory democracy in which the artist opens a space where others participate in producing creative work for the public sphere.

In *What We Made* (2013), NYC Department of Cultural Affairs Commissioner Tom Finkelpearl explores a spectrum of art projects that involves participation in various ways. He contrasts the term *social cooperation* to the term *social collaboration*, popularized by Claire Bishop, professor of art history at CUNY Graduate Center, New York. Acknowledging that “not all participants are equally authors of these projects, especially in the initiation and conceptualization,” Finkelpearl suggests that perhaps *social cooperation art* might be a better term to use “because it simply implies that people have worked together on a project.”

The extent and range of ways in which participants and artists collaborate or cooperate on forming and making projects have become—like materials, site, styles, or fabrication methods—some of the choices that are made when social cooperation art projects are conceived and planned by artists and host communities. All quality arts education/public art projects involve young people in learning about the processes and purposes of collaborative creation. Collaborative artists skillfully utilize available materials, tools, technologies, and contexts to expand students' awareness of artistic practices and introduce new methodologies of experiencing, researching, and producing. With such an education, students can now (and then later as adults) understand themselves as citizen artists cooperating in a process of making an artistic statement.



Transferring the mosaic design to clay slabs for the *San Juan Square Mural* designed by MOSAIC Artist-in-Residence Alex Rubio with MOSAIC student artists Robert Velasco, Joshua Alfaro, Michelle Rangel, 2009. Photo courtesy of Blue Star Contemporary.



The public unveiling of *Neighborhood Landmarks*, designed by MOSAIC Artist-in-Residence Alex Rubio with student artists: Juan Flores, Christian Murillo, Zoe Palacios, John Martinez, and Kree Villegas, June 2012. Photo courtesy of Blue Star Contemporary.

When commissioning a project, host communities should be attentive to an artist's style of engagement, as well as the range of finished projects they have produced for various settings within differing timeframes and with varied numbers of student participants. Artists who work regularly in collaborative settings develop multiple methods for making public work. Though they often design a unique approach for each project, there are also commonalities in their practice, habitual ways that they approach space, imagery, language, metaphor, materials, and interaction with a core group of participants and others in the community.

Artists who are committed to collaborative practices develop frameworks within which many students and others can contribute and participate in various ways. Experienced artists convey that all participants can make valuable contributions to a project, even if they don't all see themselves as talented in visual art. The art of a quality public art/arts education project is to involve many people in a collaborative artistic investigation and to then create a work that powerfully conveys to others the experience and insights generated in the process.

Opportunities for Public Art and Arts Education

There are many possibilities for advocates for public art and advocates for arts education to work together to create projects and activities that will support quality public art and public art programming while enhancing the depth and range of arts education in school and community settings. Throughout this paper, we have explored opportunities with visual art, but through the National Core Arts Standards, and interdisciplinary arts programs in schools and communities, the same principles may be engaged to advance dance, media arts, music, and theater in a public art setting as well.

How might we further current practice and invent new approaches linking public art and arts education?

- Make the first move. Whether your work is primarily in arts education, community development, or public art, reach out to others to create a community conversation about successes, challenges, and opportunities for cooperation and collaboration.
- Host small art education and public art gatherings to share your practices and priorities. Map out intersections and overlaps.
- Identify existing projects and partnerships. Publicize local histories of cooperation and collaboration.
- Brainstorm and plan.



The Connections Gallery is an outdoor gathering place on the front lawn of Roosevelt High School in Minneapolis. The artist, Randy Walker, worked with students and teachers to design a public artwork that is a permanent, changeable framework that can be continually “re-programmed” with new works by students, 2015. Photo courtesy of Candida Gonzales.



Arts Education Outreach to Public Art

- School districts, individual schools, or teachers can collaborate with their local, state, or private public art programs to develop curriculum and resources. Identify materials to support public art curriculum, such as print publications, websites, documentary video, or image banks. Find out what local or regional stories are told by public art and consider how they can be included in history, art, social studies, science, or other subjects.
- Schools can host public art presentations by artists, public art program staff, landscape architects, and others to heighten student and community awareness of public art and places.
- Plan public art fieldtrips or include a stop at a public art site on trips to other destinations.
- Arts teachers can meet the new Visual Arts Standards (or any other discipline standards) by working with area arts and design professionals to create curriculum related to documenting places and to develop project proposals. Dance, media arts, music, and theatre teachers can work with public art professionals to identify opportunities to interact with, and enhance, public art spaces.
- Arts, language arts, and social studies teachers can involve students in developing criteria for judging and valuing traditional and contemporary public art. Use case studies of local or national controversies as the basis for students writing about and debating the merits of an artwork.
- Encourage interested parents to form a Parent Public Art Supporters group. Work with this group to set goals and fundraise as needed.

Johanna Poethig and community participants designed and painted *Humming with Life* on the San Francisco Civic Center Post Office. Humming birds fly through the mural and circle lightly at the center of this urban garden, 2011. Photo courtesy of Johanna Poethig.



Structure Is Space: 63-66, a mosaic installation at the historic modernist Hilliard Apartments in Chicago, was created by Olivia Gude working with teens and seniors from the housing complex. Participants researched and reflected on the significant social changes happening during the years Hilliard Homes was built, 1963-1966. The phrases are drawn from the writings of Hilliard's visionary Bauhaus-trained architect Bertrand Goldberg, 2007. Photo courtesy of Chicago Public Art Group.

- Provide budgetary support for materials, tools, and equipment for teachers who want to make collaborative public art an aspect of their regular school arts curriculum.
- Contact state arts agencies, museums, or other organizations that offer teaching artist or artist-in-residence programs to identify artists experienced in making collaborative public art who can bring new skills and ideas to making public art to your school and community.
- Consider how local community arts organizations might partner with a school to create projects in after-school or summer programming to enhance the school environment.
- Advocate for local percent-for-art funding ordinances to include new school construction.

Public Art Outreach to Arts Education

- Public art program staff can coordinate outreach to schools by contacting art teachers and administrators to begin conversations about needs and possible collaboration.
- Package and publicize field trip tours that are aligned with school curricular needs to teachers and school districts.
- Develop a docent program for tours and school presentations for students and parents.
- Develop an intergenerational docent program in which students act as docents for a special public art events.
- Make plans with teachers to include student groups (elementary through college) in programming related to new public art.
- Create how-to events for school administrators, teachers, and parents to share examples of high quality art education/public art projects and to explain various ways in which such projects are conceived, planned, and funded.
- Develop innovative commissioning processes—including Request for Qualifications, Request for Proposals, and design contracts—that encourage in-depth community involvement, arts education experiences, and participatory process.
- Develop public art programming that supports commissioning public art with roots in arts education and cooperative and collaborative art practices.

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