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The Democratization of Art: Placemaking Initiatives in Rural Spaces

Sarah Leigh Ayers

THE DEMOCRATIZATION OF ART: PLACEMAKING INITIATIVES IN RURAL SPACES

by

Sarah Ayers

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sarah ayers 12/9/2022
Sarah Ayers

(Type name here) (Sign here) (date here) Max Dunbar
Committee chair

(Type name here) (Sign here) (date here) Khristin Landry 12/9/2022
Committee member

Stefanie Snider 12/9/2022
Committee member

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A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the School of Arts, Media, and Communications
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By

Sarah Leigh Ayers

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ABSTRACT

The Democratization of Art: Placemaking Initiatives in Rural Spaces

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Creative placemaking is defined as when artists, arts organizations and community development practitioners deliberately integrate the arts and culture into revitalization work. Examining the historical context and implementation of creative placemaking practices before the coining of the term, the following essay uses Marxist and Post-Modern methodologies to examine the ways in which art can serve as a tool for driving economic growth while exploring the socio. Using examples ranging from politically driven initiative the New Deal to non-profit contemporary art museum La Chinati in Marfa, Texas, I examine the ways that culturally-driven projects have affected the rural communities in which they are located. Focusing specifically on creative placemaking within a rural context, I outline not just strategies for adopting creative placemaking initiatives, but recognize pitfalls and exclusionary practices in monetizing the cultural sector.

I also use my gallery space Patch & Remington as a catalyst for this study. Founded in February of 2021, I launched Patch & Remington in the rural community of Marcellus, Michigan, population 1,085 — my hometown that I left when I was 17, returning twenty years later. With the objective of creating the space I wish I had growing up, I lead with the concept of an art gallery and retail space featuring independent art publications. After listening to what the people wanted, however, has led me in a different and valuable direction and the space has shifted into one that serves as a community hub. With a small computer lab, laser printers, 3-d printing stations, and retail now featuring local artists and artisans, Patch & Remington has gone from an art space with a focus on community to a community-led art venue with robust programming and engagement opportunities. Recognizing the shifts in participation, intention, and ultimately implementation, Patch & Remington has presented itself as an ideal opportunity to apply what I have read, disrupt the expectation of the role of art and art institutions, and gather practical data on the feasibility of creative placemaking theory, especially as it pertains to rural art institutions, galleries, and centers.

Recognizing that creative placemaking strategies and methodologies are as diverse and "living" as the communities in which they reside, the paragraphs following present methodological benchmarks, historical context, and contemporary theory with the understanding that foundations shift and concepts change, but opportunities are constant. As I was told when I launched my first business in 2014, "Your business will never be the business you envisioned. Flexibility is the key to long-term success."

Dedication and Acknowledgements

Dedicated to Tony Ruacho. Thank you for being the one constant in this crazy adventure we're on, for following me to the middle of nowhere and making it the center of my universe. Long con, baby.

I would like to acknowledge my committee chair Max Dunbar for going above and beyond to provide me with additional readings, consistently critical feedback, and academic support. I would also like to acknowledge my committee members Dr. Stefanie Snyder and Dr. Khristin Landry for their valuable insight that pushed me to rethink my assumptions and broaden the scope of my understanding. Thank you.

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Introduction

Rural locations have long since been hubs for artists. Ranging from experimental venues to artist residency programs, the affordability of out-of-the-way places has served to host creative endeavors Stateside and abroad. Art has been used as a tool for social awareness, economic development, activism, and community engagement. With the increased implementation of creative placemaking initiatives, researchers ranging from historians and educators to economists and municipal leaders, are examining the ways in which art and culture can advocate for community development.

Creative development can be defined in a number of ways, however, the primary definition as outlined by the National Endowment for the Arts describes creative placemaking as:

> "Partners from public, private, non-profit, and community sectors strategically shape the physical and social character of a neighborhood, town, city, or region around arts and cultural activities. Creative placemaking animated public and private spaces, rejuvenates structures and streetscapes, improves local business viability and public safety, and brings diverse people together to celebrate, inspire, and be inspired."[1]

This description, with its upbeat language "celebrate, inspire, and be inspired", fails to recognize nuanced approaches, and the complex set of issues involved in creating that place. In order to thoughtfully examine the pros and cons of creative placemaking, it is critical to begin with the idea of place itself. Matthew Clarke, author of "A Place of My Own, A Place of Our Own" states that place can be defined "in its simplest terms, people- together- create culture; the geography of those people creates place. And inversely, the culture of that place affects and shapes people."[2]

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[1] Kevin Wilson and Roger Mantie, "Inspiring Soulful Communities through Music: Connecting Arts Entrepreneurship Education and Community Development via Creative Placemaking," *Artivate* 6, no. 2 (2017): pp. 32-45, https://doi.org/10.1353/artv.2017.0001.

[2] Clarke, Matthew.. "A Place of My Own, A Place of Our Own: Creative Placemaking in a Transatlantic Context." German Marshall Fund of the United States, 2018. http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep18782.

The National Governors Association defines Creative Placemaking as occurring "when artists, arts organizations and community development practitioners deliberately integrate the arts and culture into revitalization work."[3]

This quote, similar to many others in municipal guides and pro-creative placemaking publications, fail to define the idea of revitalization and the benchmarks it may include. For example, does revitalization serve purely as a marker of successful economic strategies? Growing population? Active community engagement? The vague language used is subject to interpretation but necessary to understand before launching initiatives that will ultimately affect communities and their residents.

There are two keywords that require consideration before launching into the conversation surrounding creative placemaking due to their nuanced meanings: community and place. Community, as defined by Webster's Dictionary, is "a group of people with a common characteristic or interest living together within a larger society". [4] Communities can also be understood as interest groups, specific demographic groups, personal or institutional, and projected versus real. For the sake of this research, I will speak of communities as groups living in close geographical proximity, tied by shared employment, educational, and engagement opportunities. Considerations of community in its extensive nuanced contexts certainly warrant further exploration, however, due to time limitations I will focus on geographic structures for analysis.

Place is primarily defined as " physical environment; a way for admission or transit; physical surroundings"[5] with the third most frequent usage meaning "a particular region,

[3] "National Governors Association," accessed November 26, 2022, https://www.nga.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/NGA_RuralArtsReport.pdf.
[4] https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/community
[5] "Place Definition & Meaning," Merriam-Webster (Merriam-Webster), accessed November 26, 2022, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/place?utm_campaign=sd&utm_medium=serp&utm_source=jsonld.

population, or location"[6] and in fifth "relative position in a scale or series such as a position in a social scale."[7] For this study, I will focus on place within the context of a particular region, population, or location while considering the social positioning and scale of the community residing within its geographical parameters. As with the word "community", the exploration of "place" in its myriad of definitions certainly provides endless avenues for conversation. For example, how can one find their place within a place when they have been marginalized? How do we create space within the places one resides?

I launched Patch & Remington in 2021 which gave me a chance to personally address these problems. The gallery became the first rural safe space in the county for the LGBTQIA+ community, begging the question, where was the LGBTQIA+ community "place" before we existed? The building did not create the community. The community existed with no marked space, despite having a foothold in the geographic locale ("place") in which they reside. How do creative placemakers or communities in general create space for their residents? How do we build towns and villages that consider its residents? I hope to continue to explore this trajectory of thought throughout my research aside from this thesis and in real-world application.

Matthew Clarke states "place identity refers to those characteristics of a place -its people or its landscape-that typically get associated (by natives, outsiders, or both) with that place."[8] Using this analysis as a launching pad for research, creative placemaking methodologies can be viewed as community-driven projects as much as economic development strategies. And, as

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[6] "Place Definition & Meaning," Merriam-Webster (Merriam-Webster), accessed November 26, 2022, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/place?utm_campaign=sd&utm_medium=serp&utm_source=jsonld.
[7] "Place Definition & Meaning," Merriam-Webster (Merriam-Webster), accessed November 26, 2022, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/place?utm_campaign=sd&utm_medium=serp&utm_source=jsonld.
[8] Clarke, Matthew.. "A Place of My Own, A Place of Our Own: Creative Placemaking in a Transatlantic Context." German Marshall Fund of the United States, 2018. http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep18782.

contemporary research is proving, social factors and community-led benchmarks are a necessary tool in determining the success or failure of creative placemaking strategies. This can begin by defining success: Talent retention? Diverse community engagement? Economic growth? And addressing failures:Gentrification? Displacement? Understanding the objectives and the pitfalls are paramount to implementing effective and mindful strategies.

I will argue that creative placemaking, despite its relatively new moniker, has deep roots in shaping communities. I will also specifically note the ways in which creative placemaking strategies have both helped and hindered communities, the necessity of community involvement, and the importance of municipal and community stakeholder dialogue in the adoption and implementation of creative placemaking practices.

In my research, case studies and examples of urban creative placemaking and gentrification publications were plenty, however, very few focused on the realities of rural locales. While rural locations and communities are unique in their ability to quickly pivot, strong interpersonal relationships, and shared geographical struggles, we must be aware of the similar pitfalls of displacement, gentrification, and exclusive creative placemaking practices.

I will use my experimental art space, Patch & Remington, as a thread throughout my analysis to explore implemented processes, address contemporary issues, and provide insight into the practical application of creative placemaking practices by an art space located in an agricultural town of 1,200 residents.

Beginning with an introduction to the historical context of art institutions and centers in rural spaces, I will go on to explore methodological approaches to analysis, contemporary creative placemaking theory, and summarize my research by providing personal experience and practical implementation opportunities. Serving as a catalyst for dialogue rather than an

encyclopedic analysis and one-size-fits all approach, the content following seeks to address the age-old question: where and to whom does art belong?

Methodological Perspective

Artists that reside in rural locales face unique challenges, however, tech-based infrastructures are rapidly shifting the focus to leverage geographical inclusivity. That shift in potential equitable opportunity for artists residing in rural landscapes itself raises questions of access, systemic barriers to materials and opportunities, and societal perceptions of both the artists and the artwork created outside of urban centers. Various methodological approaches work to break down the nuanced and politicized realities of rural residents and will be applied throughout the paragraphs following.

Marxist methodologies could determine that expanding technological access may democratize the art community, making equitable opportunities for artists living outside the urban purview. Post-modern methodologies such as socio-economic, race, gender, and feminist analysis further expound the lines of questioning that can be applied to creative placemaking initiatives. These methodologies present questions of how or why the structure is as it is by examining urban gentrification, the composition and definition of community, employment, and opportunity. In consideration of these methodological approaches, the following analysis explores the conscious and unconscious bias surrounding the arts in rural spaces and the ways in which we can actively engage to reconstruct a more equitable arts infrastructure.

Note that the seeming contradiction of creative placemaking as a potential socially equitable tool is not lost on me as I examine the concept through the lens of Marxism and Post-modern methodologies. After all, if one is advocating for social equity while simultaneously working to leverage marginalized communities, can there be a reconciliation? Despite the cyclical and somewhat conflicting nature of this type of examination, the *acknowledgement* of

socio-economic status, privilege, preconception, and representation within the cultural landscape is invaluable.

Art, often used as a tool by the wealthy to demonstrate superiority, have long been presented in white cube galleries and marbled museums, boxing out the communities it claims to serve. Subversive snobbery through language and visual cues and exorbitant art or ticket costs only reinforce the idea that art is in fact, not for everyone, despite institutional claims of "art for all". The subtext reads: art for all, if you can afford it. This recognition of the societal structure within the art world is a necessarily uncomfortable conversation if cultural torchbearers seek for actual institutional change.

First, it is important to recognize some of the fundamental principles of Marxism.

> "The aim of Marxism is to bring about a classless society, based on the common ownership of the means of production, distribution, and exchange. Marxism is a materialist philosophy: that is, it tries to explain things without assuming the existence of a world, or of forces, beyond the natural world around us, and the society we live in." [9]

Seeking to change the world in which we live by actively acknowledging bias, socio-economic impact, and politics, Marxism analyzes and implements its methodologies in actions that seek to equalize peoples.

Using the time in which it is made to offer context to the reading of a work, Marxism analyzes the nuance and implications of the creations of pieces. It also considers the socio-economic situation of the author or artist and in what ways that shape the work created, along with the "social assumptions of the time in which it was "consumed".[10] This quote raises a

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[9] Peter Barry, in *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2019), pp. 151-151.

[10] Peter Barry, in *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2019), pp. 161-161.

number of questions that should be considered when we contemplate the role of art-at-large. How do, or do, cultural institutions change to reflect the society in which they are housed? How can a museum constructed in the 1800s reflect contemporary ideals, desires, and conversations? Or does it serve as a time-capsule simply to house a collection of artwork? Or, on an individual level, how do artists create using only the materials their means can afford? What does that mean for the work? Or for the way in which we view the work?

Arnold Hauser claims "...with the autonomy of art growing more and more assured, still in no phase of art history, not even in times of the most extreme aestheticism and formalism, do we find the development of art completely independent of the current economic and social conditions."[11] This timely reflection is as applicable today as when it was written. Consider the art made during 2020 and 2021 in the wake of Covid, Black Lives Matter, Indigenous decolonization protests, and political upheaval. Rather than idyllic landscapes, art reflected social and political tension, leveraging marginalized voices and showcasing shifting American perspectives. (Figure 1)

The newfound technologies that broadened the scope of the definition of art, along with the content such as photography and wide spread publications, afforded access to a myriad of works that had before been, by and large, for the wealthy. This is not so dissimilar to the implementation of high-speed broadband internet in rural locales today and accessibility to broadly distributed content including 3-d tours of cultural institutions and extensive websites dedicated to artwork, galleries, and individual artists. This, compounded by the recent pandemic and urban migration to rural spaces, presents a groundbreaking opportunity for rural artists and creative-sector professionals to leverage their skills to a broader audience, potentially increasing

[11] Arnold Hauser, *The Philosophy of Art History* (Cleveland: World Publishing Company, 1969).

earning potential, visibility, and opportunity. This is not to say that there are still no socio-economic and infrastructural barriers to technological access.

In Marcellus, Michigan the three block downtown district is the only part of the township to have access to high speed internet service. Outside of those parameters, residents have one internet company option that currently operates using dial-up. This outdated mode of internet service presented numerous challenges during Covid when families were forced to choose between online learning and working from home. The almost impossible choice prompted Patch & Remington, located downtown Marcellus, to open our doors as a space where anyone could come in and use our free high-speed wi-fi. We upgraded our plan so multiple users could log on at any given time and extended our hours to accommodate more expansive working hours for our community members. Being the only options aside from the Village library, with its public and timed computer sessions, this service brought through our doors an audience that came for the internet but ultimately stayed for the conversation. This initiative directly changed our direction as an art space and prompted us to pursue funding to purchase computers, printers, a fax machine, and tech training for our residents. Following the lead of community demand and recognizing the existing financial limitations of our residents, this computer lab has served as an educational tool, engagement opportunity, and catalyst for creative dialogue.

Michael Mosher, professor, and muralist described community-driven arts projects in spaces outside the urban purview as such, “Community arts are usually content-driven stories of real people and particularities. In our society, that means admitting race, ethnicity, and class.”[12] later echoing that sentiment by stating “A community mural is democratic politics in the best sense of the word, a process of incorporation of many voices, addressing multiple agendas and

[12] Mosher, Michael. *Material Culture: Community Art Research in Saginaw, Michigan.* (Material Culture, Fall 2012, Vol. 44, No. 2, Special Issue: Art as Material Culture) pp. 43

needs to everyone's benefits." [13] Mosher goes on to say, aligning with Marxist methodologies, "It heals the split between art and the general populace that deliberate investment strategies have brought about, returning the arts to something approaching their rich significance in previous societies."[14] Recognizing the divide in arts, creation, and access as a direct result of investor intervention, Mosher advocates that community-driven art projects can serve as a gap to dialogue.

In contrast, Joseph Cordes and Robert Goldfarb argue that public art, and publicly-funded art present its own set of issues rooted in the reality that private money often dictates politically funded projects.

> "He/she can use his/her time and money to exert political pressure to influence the amount of direct government financial support for public art and culture; and/or he/she can also use his/her time and money to provide private support for the arts, for example, making private contributions to a performing arts company or a museum."[15]

Understanding both sides of the coin, the need for community driven projects and the funding of those projects, is a tricky conversation. Marcellus is currently undertaking a water tower mural project. The mural, initially painted in the mid-1900s, is long past its prime with its outdated subject matter - a Native American and a maiden cattle farmer - and its flaking paint chips. As the most visible marker when one enters the town, it's a strange welcome at best. As such, a group of community members have been advocating for a new mural to replace the long-standing imagery. In fall of 2022, the local bank agreed to pay for a new mural as long as it

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[13] Mosher, Michael. *Material Culture: Community Art Research in Saginaw, Michigan.* (Material Culture, Fall 2012, Vol. 44, No. 2, Special Issue: Art as Material Culture) pp. 44

[14] Mosher, Michael. *Material Culture: Community Art Research in Saginaw, Michigan.* (Material Culture, Fall 2012, Vol. 44, No. 2, Special Issue: Art as Material Culture) pp. 43

[15] Joseph J. Cordes, and Robert S. Goldfarb. "The Value of Public Art as Public Culture." In The Value of Culture: On the Relationship between Economics and Arts, edited by Arjo Klamer, 77–95. Amsterdam University Press, 1996. http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt46mwr9.8.

tells the same story, regardless of allowing for modernized imagery. The artist, an Asian American woman, has accepted the challenge and as part of her initiative, is actively recruiting residents and community members to assist in the painting of the new mural. While the new mural has yet to be started, it presents a number of potential issues. If the bank dictates the imagery reflect the original story, what does that mean for the content of the mural? And representation? How will the artist reinterpret the story as an Asian American woman in a predominantly white community? Will that change the way residents view the mural? Leveraging community participation is always encouraged, but to what extent do they get to become involved? And is it paid? Or simply free labor? What and who determines the value of the work and those participating?

Such lines of thinking also bring to mind representation in public art, direct and indirect funding of public art, and the National Endowment for the Arts controversy of the late 1980s.[16]

To further the discussion regarding gaps in dialogue is the necessary acknowledgement that arts funding in public education across the country has been slashed, resulting in a discomfort and disconnect that directly affects the public's relationship with art and culture. The reality is that art is often associated with the wealthy and actively works to alienate participation from those outside upper socio-economic communities, especially art values, the language used when speaking of art, art representation on television and media, and the way in which art is spoken about in magazines and newspapers. It is no surprise that a resident of a rural community or an underfunded school feels insecure about engaging with art and culture. When an academic can read ArtForum and not digest content, how can one expect someone with no understanding of cultural context, vocabulary, and personal connection to feel included in the conversation? It

[16] "National Endowment for the Arts: Controversies in Free Speech," National Coalition Against Censorship, March 6, 2019, https://ncac.org/resource/national-endowment-for-the-arts-controversies-in-free-speech.

is through this lens that Formalist analysis falls hand-in-hand with Marxist methodologies as it applies to arts accessibility. “Transcending the individual as the expression of a social group, visual ideologies are a “specific combination of the formal and thematic elements of a picture through which people express the way they relate their lives to the conditions of their existence, a combination which constitutes a particular overall ideology of a social class.”[17]

Formalism “rose to prominence in the early twentieth century, usually defining itself as objective in opposition to subjectivist theories of literature such as critical impressionism.”[18] Rather than seeking to read into works or dive into the social and political implications of creation, Formalism “attends to artistic structure and form.”[19] While this sounds much like the pretentious jargon associated with contemporary art, this is essentially saying to read works as they are, not how they may be perceived. By identifying color, line, and composition, Formalist analysis allows even those without a fundamental understanding of artwork to have a thoughtful and engaging conversation about works. Through this engagement, the initial barrier to access has been addressed and continuing the conversation becomes easier with the reader, regardless of locale, educational level, and socioeconomic status.

In applying my personal objectives as an arts advocate located in a rural community, the reality that one must make art approachable is fundamental to the ability to grow and leverage the rural art space within a broader community. Ralph Waldo Emerson stated “access to “culture and inspiration” could only come through public ownership of art “properties”--- ownership by states, towns, and lyceums.”[20] Over one hundred years later Declan McGonagle echoes “new

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[17] John Roberts, *Art Has No History!: The Making and Unmaking of Modern Art* (London: Verso, 1994).
[18] M. Keith Booker, in *A Practical Introduction to Literary Theory and Criticism* (White Plains, NY: Longman, 1996), pp. 17-17.
[19] M. Keith Booker, in *A Practical Introduction to Literary Theory and Criticism* (White Plains, NY: Longman, 1996), pp. 17-17.
[20]Jane De Hart Mathews. “Arts and the People: The New Deal Quest for a Cultural Democracy.” *The Journal of American History* 62, no. 2 (1975): 316–39. https://doi.org/10.2307/1903257.

models of art are needed in the present, which foreground and validate participation, engagement and commonality – the reconnection of artist and community within social space."[21]

On July 4, 2021 Patch & Remington invited Korean-American artist Mike Han to exhibit in Marcellus. The show, titled "Gyopo", was an exploration of identity and what being American looks like. Advertising not only the artworks on view, but also hot dogs topped with traditional Korean chili, guests arrived in droves to try the food but stayed for the conversation. This presentation of the familiar holiday staple, the hot dog, combined with the Korean chili offered a sense of safety alongside the unexplored. A potentially touchy conversation, especially since it was hosted on the 4th of July, turned into an opportunity to experience new food, broaden perspectives, and share conversation about the idea of being an outsider in your own home. Unconventional presentation encouraged connection that would have been absent had the exhibition been presented in a more traditional institutional setting. (figure 2)

Urban migration and internet accessibility may afford rural residents an equal footing as it pertains to employment and opportunity *given* they are provided the same training and access to educational opportunity. As such, we must rethink the way in which we teach, talk about, and learn about art so that community members can engage with the creative sector. This includes offering free internet access, public computers, educational training and convenient hours of access. This ability to retain creative talent is necessary to develop sustainable and mindful rural communities. "Rural Prosperity through the Arts and Creative Sector" reiterates the concept.

> "Young people are increasingly attracted to careers that prioritize creativity, including those in the arts and technology. With the benefit of high-speed internet in rural America, more of these jobs are available in small, tight-knit rural towns and regions. These

[21] D. McGonagle, "A New Deal': Art, Museums and Communities Re-Imagining Relations," *Community Development Journal* 42, no. 4 (2007): pp. 425-434, https://doi.org/10.1093/cdj/bsm034.

towns, in turn, are becoming more popular with younger people and those displaced by rising housing costs of urban areas."[22]

Understanding this, many rural school districts including Marcellus Public Schools, have implemented Career Technical Education (CTE) programs that include Business Management and Marketing, providing practical application skills to high school students. Local teacher McKenna Terrill presented enrollment numbers for CTE programs that include 10 marketing students, 17 digital design students, and 43 students enrolled in business administration and management. With a class size of fewer than 40 students per grade and no existing art curriculum, the number of high school juniors and seniors enrolled in design and marketing reinforces the concept that young people are interested in creative opportunities, regardless of whether they exist in their communities. Keeping that in mind, can the key to keeping these young adults in the community be contingent on the development of creative opportunities?

Arnold Hauser wrote "the concept of ideology can be sensibly employed only in relation to a certain social group; to speak of the ideology of a historical epoch, without an attempt to differentiate classes or groups, is sociologically meaningless."[23] While we must acknowledge differences, we can simultaneously develop strategies of support for our diverse community residents.

By implementing the methodologies surrounding Marxism and Post-Modern methodologies regarding class, gender, and representation of marginalized communities, rural communities can make art and subsequent creative sector employment opportunities a manageable, approachable, and accessible trajectory for their residents if provided with strong foundational support.

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[22] "National Governors Association." Accessed November 26, 2022. https://www.nga.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/NGA_RuralArtsReport.pdf.

[23] Arnold Hauser, *The Philosophy of Art History* (Cleveland: World Publishing Company, 1969).

Literature Review

" The destiny of a work of art should not be a museum, either small or large, public or private. Museums seem like cemeteries of illustrious men. Works of art should be in contact with the daily life of people."[24] Carmen Foncerrada, 1921.

Historical Context

The art world as a whole is complicated and oftentimes, contradictory. If one asked the *purpose* of art, the answers would range from conveying emotion to ideologies to having no purpose. Where art should be located and to whom it is meant to serve would surely provide the same broad range of answers. For centuries, critics and artists alike have challenged the idea of art being only in museums, churches, and the homes of the wealthy. Using Post-Revolutionary Mexican Carmen Foncerrada's quote as a touchstone advocating for the accessibility of art, I will present a number of case studies that demonstrate the ways in which cultural institutions have expanded beyond the traditional institutional setting and into the unconventional. From New Deal initiatives that used art as a catalyst for economic stability to Katherine Drier's ambitious goal of a rural art museum and educational facility, and Donald Judd's non-profit contemporary art museum La Chinati in Marfa, Texas, to Dia:Beacon's permanent exhibition museum space in rural Beacon, New York, I will highlight the unofficial creative placemaking initiatives that pre-date the coining of the term.

In order to understand the nuance of creative placemaking practices, it is important to first dive into the ways in which, historically, art has been used to create a place. One of the

[24]Flores, Tatiana. "Strategic Modernists: Women Artists in Post-Revolutionary Mexico." *Woman's Art Journal* 29, no. 2 (2008): 12–22. http://www.jstor.org/stable/20358161.

most familiar touchstones for creative placemaking would be the development of cultural infrastructure established during the New Deal of the Franklin Roosevelt administration. First, however, we must explore the origins of the New Deal.

In 1921, Mexican artist Carmen Foncerrada wrote: " The destiny of a work of art should not be a museum, either small or large, public or private. Museums seem like cemeteries of illustrious men. Works of art should be in contact with the daily life of people."[25] Foncerrada, one of a number of post-Revolutionary Mexican artists, advocated for the accessibility of art. Arguing that the distance between the "institutions and their public… exposed social inequalities. Museums, and art itself, for that matter, were wholly removed from the lives of ordinary people."[26] Strategically challenging societal constructs that prohibited arts accessibility, Foncerrada and her colleagues sought to disrupt the traditional cultural institution narrative, advocating on behalf of citizens and communities to use art as a means to implement and encourage social and cultural change.

Inspired by the Mexican President Alvaro Obregon's Mexican School to which Diego Rivera, Clemente Orozco, and David Siqueros belonged, Franklin Roosevelt and colleague George Biddle saw the opportunity to reach the public through arts advocacy. "Noting the grand achievements of the Mexican Muralists, [Biddle] portrayed young American artists, supporters of a Roosevelt-guided social revolution, as being eager to express the ideals of that revolution on the public walls of America."[27] The result of this interest in Post-Revolutionary Mexican arts advocacy ultimately led to the formation of the New Deal's art initiatives.

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[25]Flores, Tatiana. "Strategic Modernists: Women Artists in Post-Revolutionary Mexico." *Woman's Art Journal* 29, no. 2 (2008): 12–22. http://www.jstor.org/stable/20358161.
[26] Flores, Tatiana. "Strategic Modernists: Women Artists in Post-Revolutionary Mexico." *Woman's Art Journal* 29, no. 2 (2008): 12. http://www.jstor.org/stable/20358161.
[27] Jared A. Fogel, and Robert L. Stevens. "The Canvas Mirror: Painting as Politics in the New Deal." *OAH Magazine of History* 16, no. 1 (2001): 17–25. http://www.jstor.org/stable/25163482.

Robert Leighninger, Jr. argues in his essay "Cultural Infrastructure: The Legacy of the New Deal Public Space" that "This brief but rich period of commitment to public building produced many of the works that define the public space we use now… They constitute an immense legacy of what might be called a cultural infrastructure underlying our public space." [28] This colossal undertaking, with a noted 40,000 new buildings and 85,000 improved buildings, among them 3,980 historic structures and 7,488 educational buildings, were built with a dual purpose: offer employment opportunities to those that needed it and build gathering places.[29] Jane De Hart Matthews writes "Only through accessibility would people come to regard the arts, not as an expendable luxury, but as a community asset."[30]

The idea of art in the home and as an accessible touchstone rather than a historically elitist endeavor is consistently advocated for by artists, politicians, and philosophers alike. Implemented through New Deal initiatives, I question the efficacy of simply putting art in front of people as a means to stimulate engagement. For example, Paw Paw, Michigan, a ten minute drive from Marcellus, houses a New Deal built Post Office complete with an original mural. [31]Despite growing up in Marcellus and being an art enthusiast from an early age, I did not realize this until doing research for this paper. If an art lover is unaware of a significant mural ten minutes away, how does this affect the everyday resident? Or does it?

The New Deal programs, for example, were "based on an ideology that a return to rural life would restore the virtue and stability being undermined by urban industrialism…devoting considerable effort to reeducating and controlling the residents of their

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[28] Robert D. Leighninger, "Cultural Infrastructure: The Legacy of New Deal Public Space," *Journal of Architectural Education (1984-)* 49, no. 4 (1996): p. 229, https://doi.org/10.2307/1425295.
[29] Robert D. Leighninger, "Cultural Infrastructure: The Legacy of New Deal Public Space," *Journal of Architectural Education (1984-)* 49, no. 4 (1996): p. 229, https://doi.org/10.2307/1425295.
[30] Jane De Hart Mathews. "Arts and the People: The New Deal Quest for a Cultural Democracy." *The Journal of American History* 62, no. 2 (1975): 316–39. https://doi.org/10.2307/1903257.
[31] "Post Office - Paw Paw Mi," Living New Deal, November 15, 2017, https://livingnewdeal.org/projects/post-office-paw-paw-mi/.

varied rural settlements."[32] Exemplifying these views were two contrasting ideologies: those of the Regionalists and those of the Social Realists. While both groups of artists centered their representational works on the rural "working man", they could not have been more different in their views at large. Regionalists often embodied their hard-working figures as salt of the earth types, fighting for the American Dream. Social Realists, on the other hand, opted to depict the struggles of Capitalist reality — men and women bogged down with financial strife, racial tension, and dissatisfaction.

Regardless of artistic and political affiliation, "the result was what we have termed American Idealism, a paean to the nobility of the average American, be they farmer or worker, and the wonders of the economic recovery affected by governmental programs that had their best interests in mind."[33] Championing the "every man", Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal initiatives were largely propagandic, "intended to advertise Roosevelt's vision of an America restored to economic and emotional health by means of governmental largesse."[34] How does the presentation of an image and propaganda *actually* affect the every man that it seeks to idealize? How does the larger societal infrastructure support the inclusion of every man in publicly funded artworks? And is that a necessity or responsibility when developing and installing public works? Ultimately, what does artistically represented lip service mean to the rural residents that were being celebrated?

In viewing the Living New Deal website, it is clear the amount of resources and energy allocated to rural locations, driven to "the new Utopia by technology and the grit and can-do

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[32] Robert D. Leighninger, "Cultural Infrastructure: The Legacy of New Deal Public Space," *Journal of Architectural Education (1984-)* 49, no. 4 (1996): p. 229, https://doi.org/10.2307/1425295.
[33] Jared A. Fogel, and Robert L. Stevens. "The Canvas Mirror: Painting as Politics in the New Deal." *OAH Magazine of History* 16, no. 1 (2001): 17–25. http://www.jstor.org/stable/25163482.
[34] Jared A. Fogel, and Robert L. Stevens. "The Canvas Mirror: Painting as Politics in the New Deal." *OAH Magazine of History* 16, no. 1 (2001): 17–25. http://www.jstor.org/stable/25163482.

attitude of the American worker."[35] This re-centering of identity in the rural environment echoes today's "urban flight" and romanticization of the "simpler times" resulting in the migration of urban residents to rural locales amidst the uncertainty of Covid, social and political tensions, and the interconnectivity as afforded through technology. Rapidly changing the face of rural communities, this pattern of relocation and the rural countryside echoes the concerns voiced in regards to creative placemaking: Where do residents go when property values surge? How do we develop communities without displacing its current residents? How do we build on an infrastructure of tradition while creating a sustainable future?

Despite "creative placemaking" as a relatively new term, the idea of creating communities centered around the principles of art and development, or art as a community-centered organization, is not. In the 1940s and 1950s, New York's now-elite Hamptons was an affordable artist enclave that hosted such artists as Jackson Pollock and Robert Motherwell.The once abandoned Air Force Base in Marfa, Texas, with a current town population of 1,800, is now an international art destination after initiatives launched by minimalist artist Donald Judd in the 1970s. Dia: Beacon, a town of 14,375 now houses a 300,000 square foot facility that cost an estimated $32 million to build.[36] Prior to these initiatives, however, was the failed project of artist and collector Katherine S. Drier.

Katherine S. Drier is a name not known among many beyond recognition in regards to the donation of her sizable collection to the Yale University Art Gallery unless, perhaps, one is familiar with the early 20th century avant-garde art scene and Société Anonyme. Ahead of her time in collecting and aesthetics, Drier was also ahead of her time in rethinking what an art space

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[35] Jared A. Fogel, and Robert L. Stevens. "The Canvas Mirror: Painting as Politics in the New Deal." *OAH Magazine of History* 16, no. 1 (2001): 17–25. http://www.jstor.org/stable/25163482.
[36] "A Beacon on the Hudson: Dia's New Branch Opens." *Art on Paper* 7, no. 7 (2003): 20–20. http://www.jstor.org/stable/24559161.

could be, what it could include, how it could engage with the community, and where it could be located.

Throughout her involvement with the arts, Drier would collect over "1,000 works of American and European avant-garde art, including Brancusi's *Yellow Bird,* Duchamp's *Tu m*', and important works by Mondrian, Klee, Ernst, Miro, Picasso, Braque, Lissitsky, Kandinsky, Gabo, Man Ray and others that now form the core of the Gallery's holdings of twentieth-century Art." [37] Equally remarkable, however, was the vision of her collection that would be housed in a rural location and called the Country Museum of Visual Education. As the co-founder of Société Anonyme alongside groundbreaking artist Marcel Duchamp, and considering her encyclopedic collection of avant-garde art, she hoped to expound upon the success of the Société Anonyme exhibition at the Brooklyn Museum, which drew over 53,000 visitors over six weeks.[38] (figure 3)

Unlike the standard trajectory, and seemingly obvious choice, of capitalizing on the exhibition's success by launching a physical space in New York City, Drier challenged societal norms by advocating for a space outside the urban purview. Drier's approach to a physical location mirrored her visionary collector aesthetics, challenging what should be expected from a cultural institution, differentiating her from her contemporaries. To put this in historical context, the Museum of Modern Art was founded in 1929, while Drier's original museum concept,"the Sociéte: Museum of Modern Art," was launched in 1920. [39] "You might not be cognizant of our organization:the Sociéte: Museum of Modern Art," she wrote to publisher John Barnes Pratt in

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[37] Liena Vayzman, "Katherine S. Drier's Vision for a Country Museum: Integrating Avant-Garde Art and Modern Life in Rural Connecticut," *Yale University Art Gallery Bulletin*, 2002, pp. 50-61.

[38] Liena Vayzman, "Katherine S. Drier's Vision for a Country Museum: Integrating Avant-Garde Art and Modern Life in Rural Connecticut," *Yale University Art Gallery Bulletin*, 2002, pp. 50-61.

[39] Liena Vayzman, "Katherine S. Drier's Vision for a Country Museum: Integrating Avant-Garde Art and Modern Life in Rural Connecticut," *Yale University Art Gallery Bulletin*, 2002, pp. 50-61.

1933. “Great confusion occurred when - The Museum of Modern Art took our subtitle in 1929. Since then we have always added the 1920. The humorous part is that they have the money for a building and all its equipment but little Modern Art- whereas we put whatever money we had into a collection but so far have no building.” [40]

Historically speaking, cultural institutions or institutions that house art including cathedrals, museums, and galleries, have led with the architectural structure often creating spaces of grandiosity, demonstrating the wealth and power of the institution. Strikingly, Drier prioritized the work before the building. Rethinking the conventional construct, Drier’s dedication to the artwork is paramount to structural perception. If museums and collectors prioritized the artworks, why construct such elaborate and expensive structures rather than using those funds to support the art and the artists it claims to serve? Or allocate a percentage of those funds to community outreach, programming, or development? For paying fair wages? Ultimately, what do we prioritize? The art or the institution?

Throughout the following years, Drier developed plans for a building that would be outside of the urban hub of New York City, rather located in rural Connecticut. In addition to housing her sizable collection of avant-garde artworks, it would also “organize temporary exhibitions in many fields of human endeavor, including industry and science, and support a wide variety of complimentary educational and leisure activities. Drier argued that “Unless we have art in the home, we cannot learn its language”[41] and tried, albeit unsuccessfully, to create a rural space where art was accessible and interactive; a living engagement, rather than a stationary decoration. The educational programming, for youth and adults, would be taught “with a “liberal,

[40] Liena Vayzman, “Katherine S. Drier's Vision for a Country Museum: Integrating Avant-Garde Art and Modern Life in Rural Connecticut,” *Yale University Art Gallery Bulletin*, 2002, pp. 50-61.
[41] Liena Vayzman, “Katherine S. Drier's Vision for a Country Museum: Integrating Avant-Garde Art and Modern Life in Rural Connecticut,” *Yale University Art Gallery Bulletin*, 2002, pp. 50-61.

experimental rather than doctrinaire attitude for art education."[42] While the concept of education for children and adults within a museum setting is now commonplace, at the time, the concept was innovative and outside the typical parameters of cultural institutions. "Thus, the Country Museum plans can be seen in the context of the history of museums as an alternative, visionary model for a cultural institution as well as a realistic approximation of current solutions and strategies in the museum world."

After moving to Marfa, Texas from New York City in 1971, minimalist artist and critic Donald Judd activated former Fort D.A. Russell in Marfa, Texas in 1986.[43] The non-profit organization named La Chinati Foundation/La Fundación Chinati, is located on 340 acres of land in the sparsely populated community of 1,750 residents.[44] The contemporary art museum, serving as a location for permanent art installations, comprises over 340 acres of land that includes installations, land conservation, and Judd's former ranch.[45] Artists included within the collection include some of the most recognizable blue-chip artists of the twentieth century including Dan Flavin, Roni Horn, John Wesley and Richard Long. While this list is impressive, it is also largely male and white. In a town that is 56.5% Hispanic as of the latest census, how does La Chinati reconcile its artists with the community in which it resides?[46] Transforming this former military base into an art destination, Marfa's working class roots now act as a destination for the elite even, including a Prada store. (figure 4)

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[42] Liena Vayzman, "Katherine S. Drier's Vision for a Country Museum: Integrating Avant-Garde Art and Modern Life in Rural Connecticut," *Yale University Art Gallery Bulletin*, 2002, pp. 50-61.
[43] https://visitmarfa.com/visit/page/about-marfa
[44]https://www.texas-demographics.com/marfa-demographics#:~:text=Marfa%20Demographics%20Summary-,Population,Texas%20out%20of%201%2C805%20cities.
[45] https://juddfoundation.org/visit/marfa/
[46]https://www.texas-demographics.com/marfa-demographics#:~:text=Marfa%20Demographics%20Summary-,Population,Texas%20out%20of%201%2C805%20cities.

NPR reports "This tiny town perched on the high plains of the Chihuahua desert is nothing less than an arts world station of the cross, like Art Basel in Miami, or Documenta in Germany. It's a blue-chip arts destination for the sort of glamorous scenester."[47] Vogue magazine writes that Judd "transformed Marfa into a cultural mecca for art aficionados from around the world, attracting everyone from Solange Knowles to BTS's Kim Namjoon. In 2019, an estimated 49,000 people visited Marfa, a number almost 25 times its population of 2,000."[48] While art tourism undoubtedly serves as an economically viable tool, this presents a number of questions.

How does the interconnectedness of a community shift when the landscape changes from residents to tourists? Does the town have the infrastructure to support a robust tourist economy? In what ways is the community, or do they, benefit from an increase in artistic tourism? Specifically when it's "blue-chip arts" rather than an immersive and community-led initiative? Did the residents of Marfa have input surrounding the development of La Chinati and its initiatives? If not, why? And if so, how was it received and incorporated into the plans of the non-profit organization? If Judd was seeking "peaceful creative respite after years spent in the hustle and bustle of New York City"[49], what would lead him to believe that the existing community and its infrastructure would welcome a tourist economy of over 49,000 people annually?

Closer to New York City lies Beacon, New York, a sixty-mile 90 minute train ride from Grand Central Station.[50] In 2003, Manhattan collective Dia Art Foundation, also known as Dia, opened its new facility in a former Nabisco printing plant in Beacon. Costing an estimated $32 million dollars, the 300,000 square foot facility houses large-scale permanent sculpture by artists

[47] https://www.npr.org/2012/08/02/156980469/marfa-texas-an-unlikely-art-oasis-in-a-desert-town
[48] https://www.vogue.com/article/marfa-texas-travel-guide
[49] https://www.vogue.com/article/marfa-texas-travel-guide
[50] Frank Edgerton Martin. "PARTNERS IN ART." *Landscape Architecture* 95, no. 12 (2005): 60–65. http://www.jstor.org/stable/44677010.

including blue-chip artists Joseph Beurys, Louise Bourgeois, Donald Judd, Gerard Richter, among others.[51] [52] Dia, founded as "a collaborative effort started in the 1970s to support artists who challenge boundaries"[53], saw the idyllic rural yet easily accessible community as a natural extension of their ethos. Challenging art world convention and concepts of space and location, Dia reinhabited the 1929 plant by both paying homage to its history and exerting its financial power. (figure 5)

Dia: Beacon's facility honors the tradition of the printing plant – the building retains its "industrial character"[54], utilizing the building's many skylights "originally intended to show true colors for press checks". How does it honor, however, the community and landscape into which it moved? With a 2018 population of 14,375 residents and 43% of households earning less that $50,000 annually, how does a $32 million institution reconcile with a community where 14% of its resident households live below the poverty line?[55] With the community profile that is used as a reference in this essay supported by Urban Policy Agenda due to Beacon's poverty profile in New York? One of 16 communities to be chosen for its economic place in the State of New York?[56]

As Declan McGonagle observes "development requires a connection to power but to redistribute and to refocus that power, not to destroy it." [57] In what ways did these historical initiatives redistribute the power of the art elite to the hands of the communities into which they

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[51] A Beacon on the Hudson: Dia's New Branch Opens." *Art on Paper* 7, no. 7 (2003): 20–20. http://www.jstor.org/stable/24559161.
[52] Gemma Tipton. "Whispering Architecture." *Circa*, no. 105 (2003): 42–47. https://doi.org/10.2307/25564008.
[53] Frank Edgerton Martin. "PARTNERS IN ART." *Landscape Architecture* 95, no. 12 (2005): 60–65. http://www.jstor.org/stable/44677010.
[54] A Beacon on the Hudson: Dia's New Branch Opens." *Art on Paper* 7, no. 7 (2003): 20–20. http://www.jstor.org/stable/24559161.
[55] https://beaconny.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Beacon-Community-Profile.pdf
[56] https://beaconny.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Hudson-Valley-Profiles-Beacon.pdf
[57] McGonagle, Declan. "'A New Deal': Art, Museums and Communities — Re-Imagining Relations." *Community Development Journal* 42, no. 4 (2007): 425–34. http://www.jstor.org/stable/44259072.

moved? Or do the initiatives simply continue to act as a demonstration of power through exclusion and monied projects? Were local residents given the opportunity to engage in the development or sustainability of these art spaces? Do these art institutions give back to their community through school programs, educational programming, or living wage employment opportunities? Have property taxes and housing costs increased as a direct result of gentrification? Has that changed the composition of the population? Have they implemented internal benchmarks for reviewing successes and failures? And in what ways do community members get voice in the decision making process of the institution?

All of these questions lead us to recognize the importance of an art venue in a rural space, serving as a reminder that the peripheral effects, albeit perhaps unintentional, are no less real to the residents within existing communities. With this in mind, rural art spaces, whether galleries, museums, or foundations, must engage with key community stakeholders that already exist at the table, and invite those that have yet to be seated.

Contemporary Theory

The United States government states that creative economies host approximately 2 million artists, 3.6 million cultural workers, and 4.9 million cultural industry jobs.[58] Art and cultural contributions generated over $763 billion in 2015 while $67.5 billion was contributed "to the economies of states in which 30 percent or more of the population lives in rural areas."[59]. With a strong tech-based infrastructure, the normalization of remote-working, and proven track record of support, can rural communiţies rethink economic development using creative placemaking? Is there an existing proven methodology regarding the adoption and implementation of creative placemaking policies within rural spaces? What role does public perception play in regard to subsequent economic development strategies, execution, and community development? And in what ways are creative placemaking strategies advocating for civic engagement and more economically, socially,and racially equitable strategies?

Beginning with an introduction to the methodology of creative placemaking and a brief history of creative communities within rural spaces, this study references governmental data, private studies, and existing frameworks to analyze the feasibility of implementing diverse creative placemaking strategies in rural communities.

Creative placemaking has a number of definitions; however, the overarching concept is the integration of arts, culture, and design-oriented activities as a means to advocate for stronger communities, equity, economies, and policy development. When thinking about the parameters of economic development and the subsequent role creative placemaking plays within it, it is important to also have a baseline understanding of the concept of relevant terminology. As outlined in the introduction, for our purposes, we will define "community", as "a group of people

[58] https://www.arts.gov/grants/our-town/program-description
[59] "National Governors Association." Accessed November 26, 2022. https://www.nga.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/NGA_RuralArtsReport.pdf.

with a common characteristic or interest living together within a larger society". [60] I will focus on the word "place" within the context of a particular region, population, or location while considering the social positioning and scale of the community residing within its geographical parameters, except when otherwise specified to mean a sense of belonging. Rural, although not universally defined in regards to policy considerations, will be defined as the Census reports. "Urbanized areas" have 50,000 or more residents and "urban clusters" have 2,500 to 50,000 residents; "rural" encompasses areas not included in the other two categories."[61]

The California Association of Economics breaks down the notion of economic development as follows: "the economic study of the public sector, economic and social development is the process by which the economic well-being and quality of life of a nation, region, local community, or individual are improved according to targeted goals and objectives."[62]

Typically, this definition is refined and broken down into three actionable categories:

- Business Retention and Expansion-enhancing existing businesses
- Business Expansion-attracting new business
- Business Creation-encouraging the growth of new businesses[63]

Creative placemaking initiatives, while founded on principles of economic development and business strategies, provide a more inclusive approach to concepts of development and consider equally the human and community component, alongside monetary development and gains.

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[60] https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/community
[61] "National Governors Association." Accessed November 26, 2022. https://www.nga.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/NGA_RuralArtsReport.pdf.
[62] "Economic Development Basics." CALED, July 16, 2021. https://caled.org/economic-development-basics/.
[63] "Economic Development Basics." CALED, July 16, 2021. https://caled.org/economic-development-basics/.

The term “placemaking” itself emerged in the 1960's, however, was largely used in its relation to design and development, specifically within community development projects as a means to engage local residents in the decision-making processes regarding the communities in which they lived. “Creative placemaking,” however, is a relatively new mode of development being initiated in the early 2000s, and, subsequently, has few long-term studies and markers of success. Regardless, many government-driven initiatives have launched not only in the United States, but internationally. Among them are the National Endowment for the Arts, Australia's Community Pulse initiative,UK-based Arts & Humanities Research Council, and The City of Minneapolis's Creative CityMaking (CCM) initiative. “These examples demonstrate how creative placemaking can function as a tool for institutional change, advancing collaborative problem-solving and realizing alternative futures that benefit everyone.” [64]

In Kiley Arroyo's “Creative Policymaking: Taking the Lessons of Creative Placemaking to Scale,” Arroyo argues that unlike traditional economic development methodology, creative placemaking initiatives serve equally as a means to advocate for social justice and equitable development. Based on the concept that “meaningful participation" perpetuates creative democracy and a rethinking of the role of citizens in the development of communities, Arroyo advocates that creative placemaking offers citizens a unique opportunity to engage with their communities and, subsequently, can activate civic participation that results in actionable and meaningful change.[65]

> “A creative democracy embarks on that journey, recognizing that critical imagination is the generative basis on which individuals and societies are successfully adapt to changing

[64] Kiley K. Arroyo, “Creative Policymaking: Taking the Lessons of Creative Placemaking to Scale,” *Artivate* 6, no. 2 (2017): pp. 58-72, https://doi.org/10.1353/artv.2017.0000.
[65] Kiley K. Arroyo, “Creative Policymaking: Taking the Lessons of Creative Placemaking to Scale,” *Artivate* 6, no. 2 (2017): pp. 58-72, https://doi.org/10.1353/artv.2017.0000.

> conditions by introducing novel ideas, prototyping alternative futures, and learning how to behave differently. Without the human capacity to imagine, humanity would be bereft of new narratives about who we are and what we might become. It is through the process of envisioning alternative futures that anxiety about change can be transformed into excitement for the possibilities it may yield." [66]

This "envisioning alternate futures" is what Patch & Remington has embodied from the onset. Despite knowing what I had wanted to see growing up in Marcellus, I knew that after twenty years, the desires of the current community would likely be very different. Originally debuting as a space that served as a gallery with a real space featuring art publications, a year and a half later, it now serves as a community center. With game nights, computer classes, financial literacy programming, and a small coffee bar, we have been able to use art-adjacent opportunities to encourage participation and ultimately, encourage more diverse residents to the exhibitions and events we host. Every morning the retired veterans play chess and sip free coffee, but they stop to look and talk about the exhibitions along the way, particularly noting if one has been up exceptionally long. Our elementary school Roblox computer classes run every Thursday after school and the ten-year-olds try to decide if "they could make that." Simply hanging art has what meaning if it's left unseen? Although unconventional, our programming and open door policy has brought more visitors than our paid advertising. And, inadvertently, has remained more consistent in growing our numbers than we could have anticipated.

Implementing mindful strategies for civic engagement and, thereby, developing community-driven governance, creative placemaking can result in community members feeling more engaged with their local communities, invested in its future, and with deepened

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[66] Kiley K. Arroyo, "Creative Policymaking: Taking the Lessons of Creative Placemaking to Scale," *Artivate* 6, no. 2 (2017): pp. 58-72, https://doi.org/10.1353/artv.2017.0000.

connections to one another. As we consider racially and socially equitable practices, it is paramount to rethink the ways in which community members not only engage with each other, but with governing bodies, municipalities, and key community stakeholders. It is through equitable participation with these groups that systemic changes begin to take root and the transformation to more inclusive communities can develop.

It is important to note at the outset that there is a marked difference between economic and community development. While often lumped together in creative placemaking texts, I seek to differentiate the concepts moving forward. Recognizing that economic development is not always in the best interest of the community, I aim to acknowledge the needs of the community while advocating for developing equitable opportunities for residents.

George Grodach explores the intersection of community development and public space, however, the questions asked can be applied to creative placemaking initiatives across the board. "To what extent do art spaces function as public spaces and whom do they serve? How is the public space role linked to development? What are their weaknesses and what types of support do they need to continue or expand this role?"[67] Arguing that public art spaces serve five primary functions: attract and represent diverse audiences, offer community engagement opportunities, enhance the visibility of marginalized communities, serve as a community nucleus, and economic generators, Grodach both acknowledges the importance and the shortcomings of public art spaces.[68]

The City of Minneapolis and Intermedia Arts Creative City-Making Initiative (CCM) set the objective of trying to engage underrepresented communities with decision-making

[67] Carl Grodach, Nicole Foster, and James Murdoch. "Gentrification, Displacement and the Arts: Untangling the Relationship between Arts Industries and Place Change." *Urban Studies* 55, no. 4 (2018): 807–25. https://www.jstor.org/stable/26958507.

[68] Carl Grodach, Nicole Foster, and James Murdoch. "Gentrification, Displacement and the Arts: Untangling the Relationship between Arts Industries and Place Change." *Urban Studies* 55, no. 4 (2018): 807–25. https://www.jstor.org/stable/26958507.

municipalities. Launching an "equity pulpit," a mobile unit where local community members could voice concern and share views, over five years, CCM learned that "90 percent of the program's participants reported they had never contributed to a local planning process before and that participation by communities of color increased from 30 percent of the total participants to 60 percent." [69]

Advocating for community participation in much the same way as CCM, Patch & Remington often hosts community programs. Due to my position as the Economic Development Director and the need within the community to rethink our downtown which is now 50% vacant storefronts, I wanted to encourage community members to engage in the decision making processes that will ultimately shape our downtown district. As such, we have hosted two programs from the Michigan Economic Development Corporation. The first addressed building repair and vacancies and how the state can support redevelopment for property owners. The second featured the Main Street Michigan Program, a program targeted toward the redevelopment of downtowns through community engagement and volunteer committees. Both well attended programs, we are hosting our third installment with a local event coordinator from the Main Street Cassopolis program. Speaking to fundraising, community events, publicity, and organization, the goal is to support our existing community-led events and programs and encourage new participants.

Published in 2007 in The Journal of Museum Education, Villeneuve and Martin-Hamon's study identifies elements regarding the feasibility of rurally-based cultural institutions and the unique opportunities presented to them. Encouraging community-centered discourse in the development and implementation of creative placemaking strategies, the author's state that

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[69] Kiley K. Arroyo, "Creative Policymaking: Taking the Lessons of Creative Placemaking to Scale," *Artivate* 6, no. 2 (2017): pp. 58-72, https://doi.org/10.1353/artv.2017.0000.

"Service learning integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich learning, teach civic responsibility, and meet vital community needs."[70]

Creative placemaking and culturally imaginative methodology has the unique opportunity to expand on economic development principles and engage in meaningful civic engagement with community members. Advocating for community participation from the onset, Villenueve and Martin-Hamon outline recommendations "to use as appropriate," including "Incorporate a brainstorming session early in the study. Consider questions as: "What are the needs in our community? How can we address them? Who else could work with us?" and "Participate in your community, and be aware of community issues, interests, and values". [71] By identifying key issues within the community, creative placemaking initiatives can provide unique and diverse opportunities for municipalities and residents to rethink and redevelop their communities using grass roots programs rather than top-down governance.

While many community-based initiatives are subjective in their analysis of success, creative placemaking strategies can, and often do, incorporate tangible data analysis of growth in employment, income-base, business growth, and population growth. Based on recent data, new remote work opportunities enabled an estimated 14-23 million Americans to relocate. Concurrently, pre-2020, rural communities were on a steadily decreasing trajectory; however, urban flight during and post-Covid has reinvigorated rural communities through population increases of up to 6%. As we rethink rural community development and economic growth, how do we develop strategies for not only engaging recent transplants but for

[70] Pat Villeneuve and Amanda Martin-Hamon, "At the Heart of It," *Journal of Museum Education* 32, no. 3 (2007): pp. 251-260, https://doi.org/10.1080/10598650.2007.11510575.
[71] Pat Villeneuve and Amanda Martin-Hamon, "At the Heart of It," *Journal of Museum Education* 32, no. 3 (2007): pp. 251-260, https://doi.org/10.1080/10598650.2007.11510575.

retaining existing creative talent? In an attempt to reach our young talent, Patch & Remington has become active with the local school and has set up booths at the county fairs. Again, unconventional in its approach, our youngest residents have been our strongest supporters and the future of many rural communities, Marcellus included, rely on these young folks to continue to reside and work within our towns. As such, we aim to meet them where they are.

"Public Perceptions of Artists in Communities: A Sign of Changing Times, "published in Artivate: A Journal of Entrepreneurship in the Arts, not only addresses recent shifts in the public perception of artist as isolated to creative thinkers and do-ers, but the ways in which such perception shifts manifest in regards to policy-making and shifts in the United States. Using government-initiative analysis, Noval-Leonard and Skaggs incorporate qualitative research from programs, such as the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) initiatives Our Town and ArtPlace, alongside supplemental data to explore the role of non-profit institutions, government-funded support, and art communities in the development of creatively-focused economic signifiers and policy shifts.

Beginning by outlining the challenges of gathering objective and thorough data regarding the cultural sector, Noval-Leonard and Skaggs address even the most seemingly simple questions, such as "What is an artist?" In their first internally-conducted survey, they found that many respondents indicated an artist was a painter or musician, but if that is the perception, then what of the myriad of other jobs within the arts? Does a graphic designer or textile designer, or brand manager or writer, fall into the category of artist? And, if public perception is so limited, how does that reflect in the data being sourced in regards to the creative class and creative Placemaking successes? Essentially, who defines the arts community since the interpretation of the mere word is so subjective? And, if we can not decide on a definition,

how are there possibly measurable markers of success?

Implementing their own methodology, Noval-Leonard and Skaggs conducted a survey of over 1,110 adults in their local community, asking questions such as “Do you know an artist?” and “What is the role of an artist within a community?” The results provided interesting data. 50.3% of respondents viewed artists' roles in local communities as to “create or perform art as a way to earn money,” while 43.3% saw them as a means to “bring attention to community concerns or causes.”[72] This simple analysis provides significant insight into the expectation and roles of artists in communities. While the title “artist” would be seen as an explanatory marker in regards to a profession, over 40% of respondents saw artists not as professionals or entrepreneurs, but as community representatives. [73]

And, if artists have such a wide range of perceptions, what is a museum? A gallery? Or cultural foundation? Often viewed as elitist and uninviting, how do the roles of institutions change as society dictates? And how does society’s perception of these institutions shift in relation?

What does that mean from an economic development perspective, however, when we begin to see artists as community voices, rather than contributors to economic sustainability? Are they viable entrepreneurs, activists, or both? And, from a strategic and implementation perspective, how do municipalities and economic developers support such diverse entrepreneurs and community ambassadors? Likely, the answers will be as diverse as the community in which it engages, necessitating community-driven discussions, identifying the community's direct needs and perceptions, then aligning them with long-term objectives and desired outcomes.

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[72] Novak-Leonard, Jennifer, and Rachel Skaggs. “Public Perceptions of Artists in Communities: A Sign of Changing Times.” . *Artivate* 6, no. 2 (2017): 5-22. https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.34053/artivate.6.2.005.

[73] Novak-Leonard, Jennifer, and Rachel Skaggs. “Public Perceptions of Artists in Communities: A Sign of Changing Times.” . *Artivate* 6, no. 2 (2017): 5-22. https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.34053/artivate.6.2.005.

In contrast to efficient localized community-specific creative placemaking initiatives, considering a broad-level approach to creative placemaking is equally necessary as a means to understand the breadth of what all creative placemaking initiatives potentially entail.The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) outlines key successes regarding creative placemaking initiatives, stating that benefits include:

- "Re-uses vacant and underutilized land, buildings, and infrastructure
- Recirculates residents incomes locally at a higher rate
- Created jobs in construction, local business, and cultural activity
- Expands entrepreneurial ranks of artists and designers
- Trains the next generation of cultural workers
- Attracts and retails non-arts-related businesses and skills"[74]

And states that " Arts, culture, and design can help to strengthen communities by:

- Bringing new attention to or elevate key community assets and issues, voices of residents, local history, or cultural infrastructure.
- Injecting new or additional energy, resources, activity, people, or enthusiasm into a place, community issue, or local economy.
- Envisioning new possibilities for a community or place - a new future, a new way of overcoming a challenge,or approaching problem-solving.
- Connecting communities, people, places, and economic opportunity via physical spaces or new relationships"[75]

While these advantages may make the implementation of creative placemaking policies seem like a natural solution to a number of community issues, it is important to recognize the

[74] https://www.arts.gov/grants/our-town/program-description
[75] "Creative Placemaking." Creative Placemakingg. National Endowment for the Arts. Accessed November 1, 2022. https://arts.gov/impact/creative-placemaking.

constantly evolving nature of communities and their needs, the shifts in implementation strategies depending on geographical location and localized funding opportunities, and the unknown long-term ramifications regarding the implementation of such practices. The data as outlined above, for example, has adapted over the past few years to include relevant terminology and practices such as "cultural infrastructure" and shifting language from tangible assets to intangible desired outcomes regarding "enthusiasm" and "a new future". While the NEA text does not specify or differentiate rural and urban initiatives, and because of the lack of existing literature, it is my objective to contextualize the data as a means to consider rural creative placemaking.

Considering the shift in migration patterns to rural spaces, localized economies are left to determine the best next steps for their small towns. Creative placemaking may have the allure and glamor of art and culture, but how does it best fit and represent the community in which it resides? Will creative placemaking realistically advocate for creating a sense of place or will it transform existing communities into playgrounds for the wealthy, boxing out long-term residents? Putting theory into practice is a risky business for many rural communities that are already facing financially imposing infrastructure problems, and local governmental bodies are left to gamble their remaining resources on an untested economic theory: that the cultural sector can revitalize and re-establish struggling communities. (figure 6)

In 2019 the National Governors Association published a "Rural Prosperity Through the Arts & Creative Sector: Rural Action Guide for Governors and States." [76] Providing a framework for implementing systems alongside trackable data and case studies, the text outlines the benefits – both monetary and intangible- that the creative sector can add to rural locales. Results from a

[76] "National Governors Association." Accessed November 26, 2022. https://www.nga.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/NGA_RuralArtsReport.pdf.

2018 roundtable including "thought leaders", Governors, and national experts identified specific advantages to incorporating creative placemaking strategies including:

- "Mitigating geographic isolation by building connections.
- Diversifying regional economies by attracting visitors, businesses and investment
- Injecting pride and enlivening rural communities
- Improving quality of life.
- Promoting inclusivity."[77]

Critical in these "advantages" is recognizing the statement "promoting inclusivity." Inclusivity itself is a broad overarching concept because the questions become centered around *who* is actively being included in the conversation? Existing residents? Marginalized communities? While the Rural Action Guide does not specifically address these questions, it does outline key strategies to implementation that include "Social Change" and "Systems Change."[78] These somewhat vague umbrella statements include "improvements to social relationships; civic engagement; community empowerment; and amplifying community identity, including collective efficacy, social capital, social cohesion and community attachment."[79]

What social relationships are being improved? Who is dictating if improvements are *improvements?* What are the benchmarks of success? Is there a specific number of engaged community members that determine an engaged community? Or is it simply an increase in numbers, period? And who determines the identity of a community, especially in locales with diverse gender, racial, and socio-economic residents?

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[77] "National Governors Association." Accessed November 26, 2022. https://www.nga.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/NGA_RuralArtsReport.pdf.
[78] "National Governors Association." Accessed November 26, 2022. https://www.nga.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/NGA_RuralArtsReport.pdf.
[79] "National Governors Association." Accessed November 26, 2022. https://www.nga.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/NGA_RuralArtsReport.pdf.

An important consideration at this point would be to identify key stakeholders within the community. This may include artists, churches, non-profit organizations, business owners, municipal leaders, and the public. Not only do cross-sector stakeholders offer unique positioning toward the implementation of creative placemaking initiatives, they ensure that diverse voices are part of the larger conversation around where a community is and where it would like to go. If I had endless hours, I would be curious to read the minutes of municipal meetings in Marfa, Texas for example, to find out in what ways, if any, the public was engaged and represented in the initiation of La Chinati and the changing landscape of the town. Communities that build on a foundation of dialogue not only expand capacity, but offer leadership and professional development opportunities for stakeholders to "achieve a shared social and economic future."[80]

Centering on American creative placemaking ideologies and strategies, I would like to note the way in which European centers outline modes of effective strategy as a touchstone for future text, largely noting the differentiation of emphasis between the strategies. Transatlantic approaches outline the following as placemaking priorities:

- "Connect artists and cultural organizations with social service training
- Identify and support intermediary actors between cultural and other spheres
- Find new ways of knowing
- Listen to youth"[81]

While creative placemaking methodologies have successfully engaged communities and enhanced economic viability in some communities, it is not without its downfalls and detractors."Proof" is a word that seems to give creative placemakers hives these days" writes Ian

[80] "National Governors Association." Accessed November 26, 2022. https://www.nga.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/NGA_RuralArtsReport.pdf.
[81] Clarke, Matthew.. "A Place of My Own, A Place of Our Own: Creative Placemaking in a Transatlantic Context." German Marshall Fund of the United States, 2018. http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep18782.

David Moss, a journalist for the organization Createquity, a pioneering ten-year initiative to help make the world a better place by better understanding the arts. Outlining four key issues with government-launched initiatives, such as Our Town and ArtPlace, Moss states:

- "It doesn't give a clear road map for project selection that will identify investments most likely to make a difference.
- It doesn't give us the tools to go back and analyze why certain projects did and didn't work.
- It doesn't acknowledge the complex nature of economic ecosystems and the indirect role that arts projects play in them.
- It provides little insight on how to pursue arts-led economic development while avoiding the thorny problems of gentrification" [82]

Moss's analysis includes one of the key words when considering the primary issues regarding implementing creative placemaking policies: gentrification. How does one implement civic engagement opportunities, modes of participation, and community-driven growth alongside developing economically stable and sustainable futures? How do creative placemaking initiatives provide necessary growth without boxing out the community's long-time residents?

While posing questions that remain unanswered, such as providing "insight on how to pursue arts-led economic while avoiding the thorny problems of gentrification,"[83] it does present concepts that may be trackable if considered from the onset. While current methodologies may not provide toolboxes for why certain projects did or did not work, there is no reason why it can not. For example, arts-led organizations can develop benchmarks of success and document the

[82] Ian David Moss. "Creative Placemaking Has an Outcomes Problem." *Createquity.* May 9, 2012. http://createquity.com/2012/05/creative-placemaking-has-an-outcomes-problem
[83] Ian David Moss. "Creative Placemaking Has an Outcomes Problem." *Createquity.* May 9, 2012. http://createquity.com/2012/05/creative-placemaking-has-an-outcomes-problem

successes and pitfalls of campaigns and practice. It can develop long-term engagement opportunities for feedback and dialogue that can serve as a learning tool for future projects. It can advocate for inclusivity rather than displacement as a result of gentrification through regular and honest analysis and dialogue throughout the implementation process. The question becomes, do those that are applying creative placemaking practices have the desire or capacity to carry out these supplemental outreach and research-driven initiatives?

Potential benchmarks for review throughout processes may include:

- Tracking changes in property taxes
- Hosting annual or biannual community-led meetings to discuss changes and best next steps
- Open lines of communication with community partners with an opportunity to address questions and concerns periodically
- Documenting community engagement within placemaking projects. Are people attending public forums? Municipal events? If not, why?
- Is there potential for and a recognition of increased community participation?

Rachel Fleming examines the potential and the pitfalls of implementing creative placemaking strategies within a rural framework. Arguing that “many artists choose to live in rural locations near metropolitan areas because of affordable living costs, access to markets, and the attractiveness of rural landscapes,” Fleming goes on to state that despite “idealized lifestyles,” rural development presents “complex layers of urban-to-rural migration, class

conflict, and land-use change."[84] She writes, "Rural gentrification can stimulate rural economies and environmental preservation in a simultaneous, if contested, process."[85]

Aligning with Fleming's criticism, Megan Wilson states that creative placemaking "can also be highly problematic. Outside interests (developers, real estate agents, corporations, policy makers, or new residents) without long-established roots in a neighborhood can end up destroying years of coalition-building, networks of trust, and community frameworks proven to be successful and integral to the health of a neighborhood and its residents."[86] This concept will be illustrated further in this chapter through the examination of Michigan's "Harbor Country".

One timely note that Wilson makes, and that I allude to when discussing urban flight, is that she acknowledges "new residents' ' among the "outsiders" that can break an existing community. This notation is significant in recognizing that seemingly obvious culprits like corporations, are not solely responsible for the potentially problematic shifting of local communities. This can also include new residents, investors, organizations, and small businesses. Matthew Clarke identifies three innate challenges faced by creative placemaking initiatives on a broad scale: "Immigration and Perceived Fluidity, Distrust in Systems and Institutions, and Power and Culture. Breaking down these traditional barriers, Clarke argues that by acknowledging the power dynamics surrounding these issues, municipalities and placemakers can intentionally develop successful strategies.[87] Stating that "policymakers should lean on "soft power", or those strategies that involve art, culture, and education, which are powerful mediums

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[84] Rachel Fleming. "Creative Economic Development, Sustainability, and Exclusion in Rural Areas." *Geographical Review 99,* no. 1 (2009): 61-80. http://www.jstor.org/stable/40377366

[85] Rachel Fleming. "Creative Economic Development, Sustainability, and Exclusion in Rural Areas." *Geographical Review 99,* no. 1 (2009): 61-80. http://www.jstor.org/stable/40377366

[86] Wilson, Megan. "Creative Placemaking-A Cautionary Tale." *Race, Poverty & the Environment* 20, no. 1 (2015): 101–5. http://www.jstor.org/stable/43875800.

[87] Clarke, Matthew.. "A Place of My Own, A Place of Our Own: Creative Placemaking in a Transatlantic Context." German Marshall Fund of the United States, 2018. http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep18782.

to enact character."[88] Using approachable and engaging tactics rather than force, policymakers are given an opportunity to use creative placemaking as a tool that can drive *community-led* change.

> "What is even more exciting is the growing interest in place-based cultural policy, loosely calling it creative placemaking, which has the flexibility to address complicated social issues and to increase our access to the arts. The ultimate aim of this policy is not to levy a particular view or belief, but to ensure that the arts have a seat at the policy table and to give everyone a chance to feel agency over their own culture and how that culture connects them to their place."[89]

The second exhibition at Patch & Remington was titled "After Effects: Exploring Life, Race, Class, and Identity Through Art." Curated by Taylor Childs, this group of young Black artists challenged the perception of being Black in rural spaces. Speaking on identity, challenges, and collaboration, this exhibition was one of the most well attended exhibitions to date. Setting the tone for our space and the inclusivity for which we advocate, the artists' voices were heard by a new audience and have served as a platform for continued dialogue. (figure 7)

Lai and Ball present "placed communities", an expansion of place to include our relationship to nature and our landscape. Placed communities, Lai and Ball argue, are born out of concern of globalization and environmental trajectories, forcing people to center on the concept of home. This centralization of home is due to an awareness "that their own futures are at stake in the quality of community life and the nature of their relationship to the land."[90] This

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[88] Clarke, Matthew.. "A Place of My Own, A Place of Our Own: Creative Placemaking in a Transatlantic Context." German Marshall Fund of the United States, 2018. http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep18782.

[89] Clarke, Matthew.. "A Place of My Own, A Place of Our Own: Creative Placemaking in a Transatlantic Context." German Marshall Fund of the United States, 2018. http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep18782.

[90] Alice Lai and Eric L. Ball, "Home Is Where the Art Is: Exploring the Places People Live through Art Education," *Studies in Art Education* 44, no. 1 (2002): p. 47, https://doi.org/10.2307/1321048.

awareness affords community-based arts organizations a unique opportunity, outside of economic development, to consider creative placemaking as a means for environmental activism, calling for "an art education of place" that would "educate and encourage a proactive environmental stance."[91]

Combining art, place, and activism, Lai and Bell feature a number of thinkers working in this space. Citing Krug, for example, they advocate "by exploring the concept of nature and culture's interdependence in relation to examples of ecological art, he has shown how some "artists are working collaboratively with members of communities to use their creative energies to solve real life-centered problems."[92] Suggesting people focus on local art that is relevant to people's everyday lives, and using that as a tool to implement change, there should be "a shift away from studying the art of the institutionalized artworld to studying the more inclusive category of visual culture."[93]

Tyler French continues the conversation surrounding community-led placemaking strategies and highlights 186 Carpenter, a community-driven art space that denotes itself as a "not-not-for-profit."[94] Questioning why they opt out of possibilities, particularly funding possibilities, as remaining a not-not-for-profit, French explores the key considerations for maintaining a low profile and whether organizations such as these are considered within the constructs of creative placemaking research. If an organization's motive is not economic, does it

[91] Alice Lai and Eric L. Ball, "Home Is Where the Art Is: Exploring the Places People Live through Art Education," *Studies in Art Education* 44, no. 1 (2002): p. 47, https://doi.org/10.2307/1321048.
[92] Alice Lai and Eric L. Ball, "Home Is Where the Art Is: Exploring the Places People Live through Art Education," *Studies in Art Education* 44, no. 1 (2002): p. 48, https://doi.org/10.2307/1321048.
[93] Alice Lai and Eric L. Ball, "Home Is Where the Art Is: Exploring the Places People Live through Art Education," *Studies in Art Education* 44, no. 1 (2002): p. 49, https://doi.org/10.2307/1321048.
[94] Tyler French, "Keying in: Getting Close to 186 Carpenter, Creative Placemaking, and the Artist Entrepreneur," *Artivate* 7, no. 1 (2018): pp. 60, https://doi.org/10.1353/artv.2018.0001.

warrant study by creative placemaking researchers? What are its measurable benchmarks of success? How does it, or does it track data, in regards to engagement, attendance, and capacity?

186 Carpenter implements alternative modes of organizing and is largely funded through space rental and personal contributions of the organizers. Not driven by capital, this space is intentionally under the radar, seeking only to provide a service to the community: a safe space for gathering centered around art and culture. Noting "tension between "gentrification and social-equity agendas", French highlights the importance of 186 Carpenter as a community touchstone, devoid of the complications of social distrust and monetization. [95] "This not-not-for-profit, as this example shows, produces an alternative culture of support that works against the grain of a place and a discourse that is quick to criminalize or entrepreneuralize any of its members."[96]

This idea of an Anonymous-esque functioning safe-space within a marginalized community is the direct opposition to the market-led initiative of Michigan-based "Harbor Country."[97]

Harbor Country, located in Southwest Michigan, comprises a number of rural communities including Harbert, Union Pier, Lakeside, Grand Beach, Sawyer, Three Oaks, and New Buffalo.[98] Declared "Harbor Country", as local legend has it, by an entrepreneurial real estate developer in the 1980s, this cluster of rural towns has experienced rapid economic revitalization through effective marketing of its natural beauty and art/design led villages. As such, I have the unique opportunity of experiencing the reality of rural gentrification through

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[95] Tyler French, "Keying in: Getting Close to 186 Carpenter, Creative Placemaking, and the Artist Entrepreneur," *Artivate* 7, no. 1 (2018): pp. 60, https://doi.org/10.1353/artv.2018.0001.
[96] Tyler French, "Keying in: Getting Close to 186 Carpenter, Creative Placemaking, and the Artist Entrepreneur," *Artivate* 7, no. 1 (2018): pp. 60, https://doi.org/10.1353/artv.2018.0001.
[97] "Home," Harbor Country Chamber of Commerce - MI, October 31, 2022, https://www.harborcountry.org/.
[98] "Home," Harbor Country Chamber of Commerce - MI, October 31, 2022, https://www.harborcountry.org/.

creative placemaking practices first-hand. Most of the aforementioned communities that comprise Harbor Country have year-round populations under 1,500 residents and hover around 15% living beneath the poverty line.[99] In direct contrast to its role as a hot and care-free destination for Chicago's wealthy, long-term residents are facing school closures, displacement, and unemployment. As an aside, it is worth noting that Three Oaks specifically dramatically shifted from pre-2020 poverty levels of about 34% to a current 10.6% in 2022, largely due to the sale of primary residences to more affluent investors and recently relocated urban residents.[100]

On February 25, 2022, Travel and Leisure Magazine wrote in their article "The Best Destinations to Buy a Lakefront Home":

> "Set along the beautiful sandy shores of Lake Michigan, New Buffalo is home to just shy of 2,000 residents. But this charming town, with its many breweries and a thriving artist community, is the preferred vacation destination to many visitors from Chicago, northern Indiana, and Michigan, looking to escape the hustle and bustle of big city life."[101]

The second home market is booming in New Buffalo and other lakeside towns in southwest Michigan, with homes selling in eight weeks on average, and "many selling much quicker than that," said Mike Golden, co-founder and co-CEO of @properties, Christie's International Real Estate.[102] "Just prepare to deal with a very limited property supply. Inventory

[99] https://datausa.io/profile/geo/three-oaks-mi
[100] Dobrina Zhekova. "The Best Destinations to Buy a Lakefront Home in the U.S." *Travel & Leisure,* February 25, 2022. https://www.travelandleisure.com/hotels-resorts/vacation-rentals/lakefront-vacation-home-destinations
[101] Dobrina Zhekova. "The Best Destinations to Buy a Lakefront Home in the U.S." *Travel & Leisure,* February 25, 2022. https://www.travelandleisure.com/hotels-resorts/vacation-rentals/lakefront-vacation-home-destinations
[102] Dobrina Zhekova. "The Best Destinations to Buy a Lakefront Home in the U.S." *Travel & Leisure,* February 25, 2022. https://www.travelandleisure.com/hotels-resorts/vacation-rentals/lakefront-vacation-home-destinations

in New Buffalo is low - down 30 percent compared to January 2021 - with a double-digit price increase over the last year."[103]

Meanwhile, Three Oaks Public School announced they were closing due to low enrollment, likely an unexpected side effect of the housing market boom and subsequent increase in property taxes. New Buffalo downsized their already small police force due to lack of funding. Most local businesses can not afford to stay open after the tourist season that runs from May to September, leaving local residents as seasonal staff and local business owners reliant on summer profits to get them through to the next tourist season.

The key sentence in the article as I read it was this; "This charming town, with its many breweries and a thriving artist community..." Does this mean that the Harbor Country moniker, a catch-phrase coined by a real estate developer in the 1980s as a way to attract clientele, was successful? That creative placemaking strategies, albeit unintentional, served its purpose in attracting financial support to previously impoverished rural communities? Who, ultimately, determines success?

As an advocate of creative placemaking strategies while experiencing, first-hand, the negative side effects of an "effective" creative placemaking campaign, I am provided with critical insight and ideas for contemplation.

- It is imperative to discuss avenues of implementation from the onset with community members. *Where* do they want to see the community in five/ten/twenty years? *What* do they want to see in the community?

[103] Dobrina Zhekova. "The Best Destinations to Buy a Lakefront Home in the U.S." *Travel & Leisure,* February 25, 2022. https://www.travelandleisure.com/hotels-resorts/vacation-rentals/lakefront-vacation-home-destinations

- Define objectives and set boundaries. When we reach x objective, let's reconvene to discuss how it has affected the community and in what ways it has impacted, positively or negatively, the trajectory of the community.
- Long-term strategies are paramount. While moving ahead cautiously with a systematic approach, continually advocate for touchstones of success and long-term vision.
- Emphasize fluidity within practice. When the idea of Harbor Country was introduced in the 1980s as a means to advocate for the sale of properties, there is no way it could have been known that in less than 40 years we would have the internet, that short-term rental firms like VRBO or AirBNB would exist, and that the communities it sought to revitalize would be reconfigured as the "Hamptons of the Midwest."[104] The need to consistently check-in regarding development and community shifts are imperative to maintaining inclusive and equitable practices. For example, Do we limit property rentals? How do we ensure local residents can continue to afford to live and work in the community? How do we reconcile employment shortages when potential staff can not afford to live locally?

In order to effectively implement mindful creative placemaking strategies, it is critical to equally examine the potential pitfalls surrounding its implementation. In Fall 2021, New Buffalo capped the amount of rental properties in an attempt to save the infrastructure of its community, recognizing perhaps years too late that the seeming cure-all tourism band-aid effectively

[104] https://www.nytimes.com/1990/08/16/garden/chicago-s-getaway-not-the-hamptons-no-way.html

destroyed the local economy. Public school numbers dwindled to the point of consolidation. The police force lost funding but was overworked with the influx of tourists and short-term rentals. New Buffalo resident William McCollum states: “ he feels like a stranger in his own neighborhood. “The loss of community shocks me,” he said.”[105] Eve Moran, another full-time resident declares, "This used to be a real town. Now, all I see are strangers." [106]

Since the memorandum limiting the number of vacation rentals passed in Fall 2021, numerous lawsuits have been filed including “One is from a property owner who claims that the mayor and the city violated her civil rights. Another suit, filed May 25, 2021, is from a group of 17 property owners who say their property rights are being violated.”[107] In an already economically struggling town, how do municipal leaders make changes when faced with potential lawsuits that will reduce already limited funding? What are avenues for change? How do communities learn from their mistakes? How do we ensure that creative placemaking strategies remain inclusive to its existing residents at the onset, while capitalizing on the appeal of arts and culture to drive the economy forward? What happens to year-round or local communities, when towns like New Buffalo, decide to cap rentals? [108]

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[105] Stan Maddux, “New Buffalo Caps Vacation Home Rentals,” nwitimes.com, December 6, 2021, https://www.nwitimes.com/news/local/new-buffalo-caps-vacation-home-rentals/article_063b6029-2eb5-5a9d-907f-8d9ec38e5b22.html.

[106] Stan Maddux, “New Buffalo Caps Vacation Home Rentals,” nwitimes.com, December 6, 2021, https://www.nwitimes.com/news/local/new-buffalo-caps-vacation-home-rentals/article_063b6029-2eb5-5a9d-907f-8d9ec38e5b22.html.

[107] 2022 Jamie A. Hope | March 18, “New Buffalo's Mayor Takes Hardball Approach to Short-Term Rentals,” Michigan Capitol Confidential, accessed November 27, 2022, https://www.michigancapitolconfidential.com/new-buffalos-mayor-takes-hardball-approach-to-short-term-rentals.

[108] Stan Maddux, “New Buffalo Caps Vacation Home Rentals,” nwitimes.com, December 6, 2021, https://www.nwitimes.com/news/local/new-buffalo-caps-vacation-home-rentals/article_063b6029-2eb5-5a9d-907f-8d9ec38e5b22.html.

Practical Application/ Anticipated Results

Situations presented by Covid in 2020 provide a timely framework for considering and rethinking creative placemaking strategies. Municipalities and governing bodies have been forced to recognize their diverse constituencies, systemic methodologies of inequality, barriers to access, and the need to adapt to a rapidly-changing community landscape.The potential to capture opportunities for growth as presented by high-speed technologically-based infrastructures and the normalization of remote-work present new and unique workforce development opportunities for local residents, likely retaining local creative talent and capturing new audiences, both paramount to the long-term sustainability of rural communities.

Taking advantage of my unique position as Economic Development Director within the Village of Marcellus, Gallery Owner in Marcellus, and my residence in the perhaps cautionary tale of Harbor Country, I am implementing internal measurable markers of creative placemaking practice that I will continue to explore during the next three years, using my art space as a case study for creative placemaking and community gathering within a rural context, answering direct questions such as:

- What does the Village of Marcellus need?
- Who determines what the Village of Marcellus needs?
- What do local residents want to see for the future of the village?
- How do we differentiate between the wants and needs of the community?
- What lessons can we learn from Harbor Country as we develop site-specific policy?
- How are municipalities in the tri-county area activating and supporting their existing creative communities as a driving force for economic development?

- How does my space shift to reflect the needs and desires of the community that it serves?
- Can elevated exhibitions result in sales while concurrently serving as a community art space?
- How do we develop actionable next steps to provide more inclusive, diverse, and equitable community representation?
- How do we develop programs and outreach for residents and visitors?

The idea of success as it pertains to creative placemaking is subjective at best. Regardless of self-imposed benchmarks, it is important to note that *economic* success may be at the expense of the community in that it has the potential to displace existing residents by driving up property values. Or that long-time residents may be forced to relocate due to increased property taxes. The trickle down of rapid economic growth can dramatically shape the sustainability, or lack of sustainability, of any community. Rural communities, due their small size, lack of diverse and expansive employment opportunities, and ability to rapidly pivot are particularly vulnerable. It is with this in mind, I approach the economic development strategies of creative placemaking through the lens of resident first and entrepreneur and economic developer last.

Centering on the social component of "place" rather than the economic signifiers of business-driven research, my personal research methodology seeks to explore the long and short term effects of creative placemaking on rural communities, the development of community-led initiatives, and the required dialogue between municipal and community stakeholders in order to ensure mindful placemaking programs.

Trotsky described art as "realistic, active, vitally collectivist, and filled with limitless creative faith in the Future."[109] In viewing art as a living entity, evolving and shifting, it is easy to think of the ways implementing cultural practices can and will actively change communities.

I own an experimental art space called Patch & Remington in Marcellus, Michigan with a population of 1,200 residents[110]. Since opening my doors in February of 2021, I have implemented data gathering as part of our regular practice, affording the opportunity to have a direct "case study".

In 2021 data gathering points included:

- How many students have attended our art classes? And how many returning students?
- What topics and exhibitions encourage the most community engagement? Video Art? Photography? Identity? Nostalgia? Etc.
- How do our sales reflect, or do they reflect, our growth?
- How many dollars went back to our local artists?
- How many teachers did we employ?
- How many artists did we exhibit?
- Did other businesses see an impact as a result of our programming and outreach?
- If you could bring anything into town, what would it be?
- If you could *be* anything, what would you be? Followed by, "what has kept you from pursuing that goal"?

In summary, we:

- Hosted seven exhibitions featuring 19 artists
- Hosted over 250 students and employed eight teachers

[109] Margaret M. Bullitt, "Toward a Marxist Theory of Aesthetics: The Development of Socialist Realism in the Soviet Union," *Russian Review* 35, no. 1 (1976): p. 53, https://doi.org/10.2307/127656.
[110] "Marcellus, MI," Data USA, accessed November 27, 2022, https://datausa.io/profile/geo/marcellus-mi.

- Featured over 30 programs including art classes, author talks, floral arranging, and fly tying
- Redistributed over $3500 back to our local artists
- Visitors wanted access to technology and software such as Adobe Suite and photo editing access
- 37 visitors wanted to pursue a career the arts but identified finances and educational access as the barrier

As we entered the second year, we expanded the conversation to include trying to document how many visitors were local (meaning the town of Marcellus), county-wide, or from other places outside of Cass County. By documenting the changes of the business and the ways in which it is growing, we can continue to identify not only our strengths and shortcomings, but the wants and needs of the community we serve.

Throughout the first year, we wanted to center our data gathering around what the community wanted and what it identified as needs. Having grown up in Marcellus, but leaving at 17, I suspected that some of my objectives would align, however, I was not sure to what extent considering it had been twenty years. I *was* aware that statistically, over 13% of Marcellus residents live below the poverty line, with that number being higher in children.[111] I knew this was not an affluent "art" collecting community, in fact there was not even art education in the local public school, so I intended to include community as a touchstone of our endeavor. I wanted to use community as a way to encourage conversations surrounding art, and art as a means to reach the community.

As a direct result of data gathering and identifying gaps to entry in employment, in May of 2022, we successfully completed a *Public Spaces, Community Places* fundraising campaign

[111] "Marcellus, MI," Data USA, accessed November 27, 2022, https://datausa.io/profile/geo/marcellus-mi.

that secured funds to build out a coworking and learning lab.[112] This campaign goal of $40,000 was matched by the State of Michigan and we received a total of $80,000 to implement programming centered around workforce development and the creative sector. Supplying the tools, teachers, and resources needed to bridge the gap to employment, our curriculum provides courses ranging from graphic design 101 to financial literacy, and brand management to web development. The objective, aside from supporting our community residents in gaining employment, is to create a sense of pride and reinstall the artistic sensibility of having "vision". Something that is easily lost when bogged down with the minutiae of existing. Again, this also serves as an in-house case study for me as I navigate best practices, community-driven engagement, and long-term viability.

During 2022 we have implemented more robust questioning to include peripheral considerations, such as computer training, workforce development classes and larger community development questions:

- How many classes were based on the suggestion of visitors and/or prospective teachers?
- What classes did we host that were not art related?
- What are the approximated ages of our visitors?
- How many people walk through the door every day? And of those, who are returning and who are new?
- How did visitors hear about our space?
- How many people have we employed as teachers, consultants, contractors, and employees from within the Village of Marcellus?

[112] "Public Spaces Community Places: Miplace," Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC), accessed November 27, 2022, https://www.miplace.org/programs/public-spaces-community-places/.

- How many students are from the Village of Marcellus?
- How many miles did visitors commute to visit Patch & Remington?
- What and what type of support did we receive from local municipal leaders/organizations?

Since officially launching our workforce development lab, complete with five iMacs, two MacBooks, two 3-d printers, Adobe Suite, photo-editing software, two laser printers, and necessary building infrastructure and employment support, we have partnered with the Marcellus Public School Career Technical Education (CTE) Advisory Committee. Acting as community partners that support teaching staff in developing curriculum and real-world engagement opportunities, Patch & Remington's transition from gallery space to community hub has actively sought to *reflect* the needs and wants as identified by the community rather than acting to *determine* the needs and wants of the community.

Outside of the personal case study of Patch & Remington, I am also using data-driven metrics from the National Endowment of the Arts website, alongside other State and Federal documents, to trace where funding was allocated and then in what ways it directly impacted the communities served. This includes looking at neighborhood development, potential rising housing costs, public school enrollment, and other signifiers of gentrification. This also includes looking at the potential formation or emergence of community-led organizations surrounding the changing placemaking landscape.

As I continue to look ahead in both my position as gallerist and economic development director, I aim to work collaboratively with county-wide art organizations to drive art tourism from the more affluent neighboring communities into Cass County. While this project is in process with a brief directory on the Cass County municipal website, I look to flush out the

directory and create a more user-friendly and engaged platform for cultural mapping within the region.[113]

The National Governors Association's Rural Action Guide identifies cultural heritage tourism as an economically successful tool for rural exploration. "Of the 116 million American adults who traveled more than 50 miles one way in 2012, almost 30 percent of them extended their trip to participate in a cultural, arts, heritage or historic activity or event."[114] While mapping tools are obviously place-based, it is an easily adaptable model and can run singularly or concurrently with other planning and development initiatives. Michigan, with its historic routes and scenic backroads provide a natural backdrop for leisurely travel, and if driven by cultural centers, can serve as an effective catalyst for exploration.

During January through March of 2023, I intend to reach out to new contacts that may be interested in being included on a culture map that will lead from the affluent lakefront communities of Harbor Country to the inland counties of Cass and Van Buren. Cass County, listed as one of the state of Michigan's "underserved art counties" despite its numerous historical sites, public sculpture, and arts organizations, warrants exploration and support.[115] Using my position as Economic Development Director of the Village of Marcellus, I hope to leverage my position to secure municipal support for our creative community.

Moving ahead, our goals for Patch & Remington remain a somewhat moving target, developing as the community needs change. Personally, my goal is to remain relevant and accessible to our existing community members and to expand our audience to include those

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[113] "The Arts and Cinema," The Arts and Cinema | Cass County, MI, accessed November 27, 2022, https://www.casscountymi.org/1371/The-Arts-and-Cinema.

[114] "National Governors Association." Accessed November 26, 2022. https://www.nga.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/NGA_RuralArtsReport.pdf.

[115] "Underserved Counties Underserved Michigan Counties," accessed November 27, 2022, https://www.michiganbusiness.org/4a8543/globalassets/documents/macc/underserved_counties.pdf.

without access to transportation. This includes online programming and in-person programming at senior and affordable housing centers within the Cass County area.

Conclusion

In conclusion, creative placemaking methodologies and approaches to economic activation through the cultural sector represent hundreds of years in the making. Giving name to initiatives from political projects to non-profits, Marfa to Dia:Beacon, and from community activists to economic development professionals, creative placemaking is simply the implementation of economic development through the advocacy of art and culture. Its purpose is varied as the results, and the concept itself is as fluid and evolving as the communities it serves. Understanding the living nature of the methodology and shifting societal landscapes can help cultural practitioners and advocates explore avenues for implementation while cautiously considering the potential pitfalls.

As I move ahead professionally both as Economic Development Director and Gallerist, I will continue to gather data, analyze trends, and advocate for the inclusion of existing community residents while pushing for equitable opportunities. Recognizing the contradiction and potential conflicts in implementation, I will engage in opportunities for dialogue with community stakeholders in an attempt to incorporate best practices. I aim to development incremental benchmarks and data gathering to address the following questions:

- Who are the key stakeholders in the conversation? Recognizing both who is present and who is absent
- What residents are the initiatives serving? Existing, new or both?
- Are initiatives providing a *disservice* to residents? If so, to whom? And in what ways?
- How have goals and objectives been reached or shifted since the implementation of practice?
- How do we continue to expand engagement? There is always more room at the table.

As a rural space, we have found initial hesitancy towards our mission and our organization. Our doorway had an apparent force field surrounding it, denying entry and it took over a year for many of our residents to enter the space and even longer for them to feel comfortable. The reality is that many rural residents have not had access to the arts in any capacity: educational, professional, or otherwise, and based on media and presumptions alone, the art world is daunting. That feeling is heightened when there is often only one person in the space at a time, and insecurity is exacerbated by the realization that the space may not be welcoming unless you're carrying a checkbook. Regardless of obstacles, we have found some key strategies particularly useful.

- Develop conversations around art that are approachable and art-adjacent. For example, we hosted a fly tying class. The outdoorsman that had no interest in art attended the class, many with their children, and it was an opportunity to engage with a new audience without being assertive.
- Take time to have conversations. Anyone that has ever lived in a small town knows people love to talk. Prioritize the conversation over the to-do list.
- Listen. Visitors will continue to return if they feel heard. That can be as simple as remembering artwork they like or that they have kids. Remind folks that art professionals aren't all Prada wearing silent types. They have a voice in the arts.
- Support other community organizations. Attend their events. Invite organizations for private events. Actively look for collaborative opportunities.
- Engage with local municipal leaders. Bring a voice and a face to the decision-making table.

Similarly to the analysis of Katherine Drier's Country Museum, my gallery space, Patch

& Remington, may meet the same fate: founded on good intention and plagued lack of financial and community support. My objective, similarly to hers over 100 years ago, is to engage the community through participatory education, visionary goals, and perhaps answering the age old question, “Art is transformative, while business is a transaction. Can the two ever meet?” [116]

[116] Liena Vayzman, “Katherine S. Drier's Vision for a Country Museum: Integrating Avant-Garde Art and Modern Life in Rural Connecticut,” *Yale University Art Gallery Bulletin*, 2002, pp. 50-61.

Figures

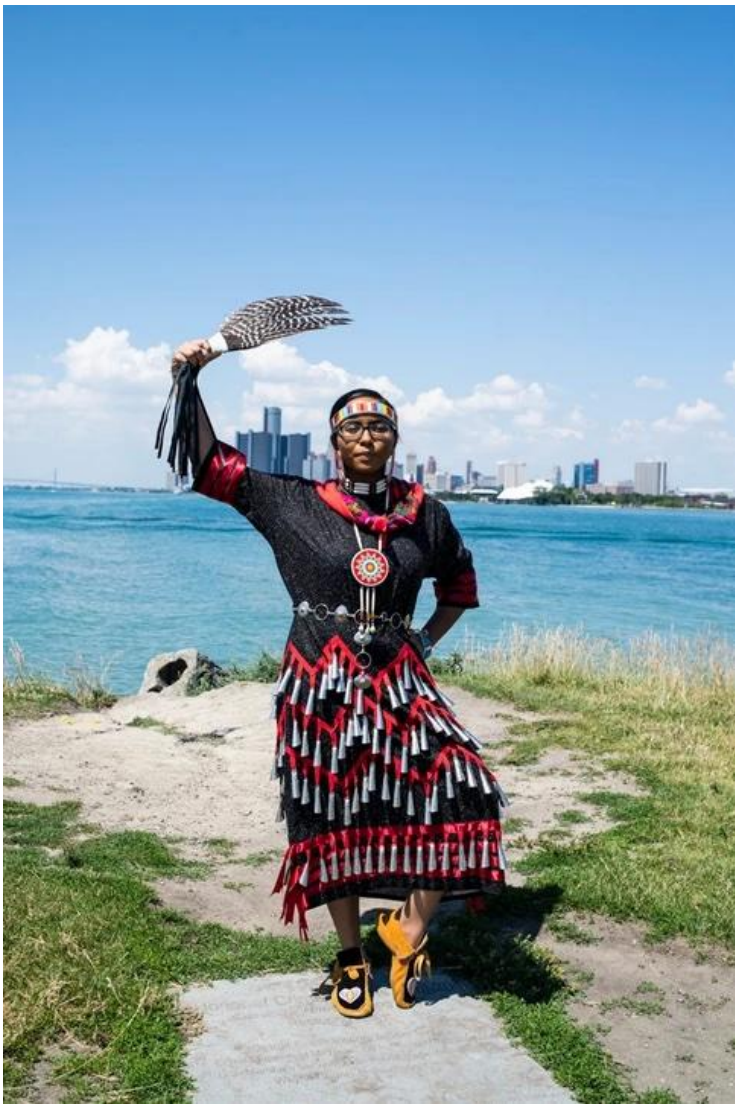

Figure 1, Rosa Maria Zamarron, *Decolonization,* photograph, Private Collection.

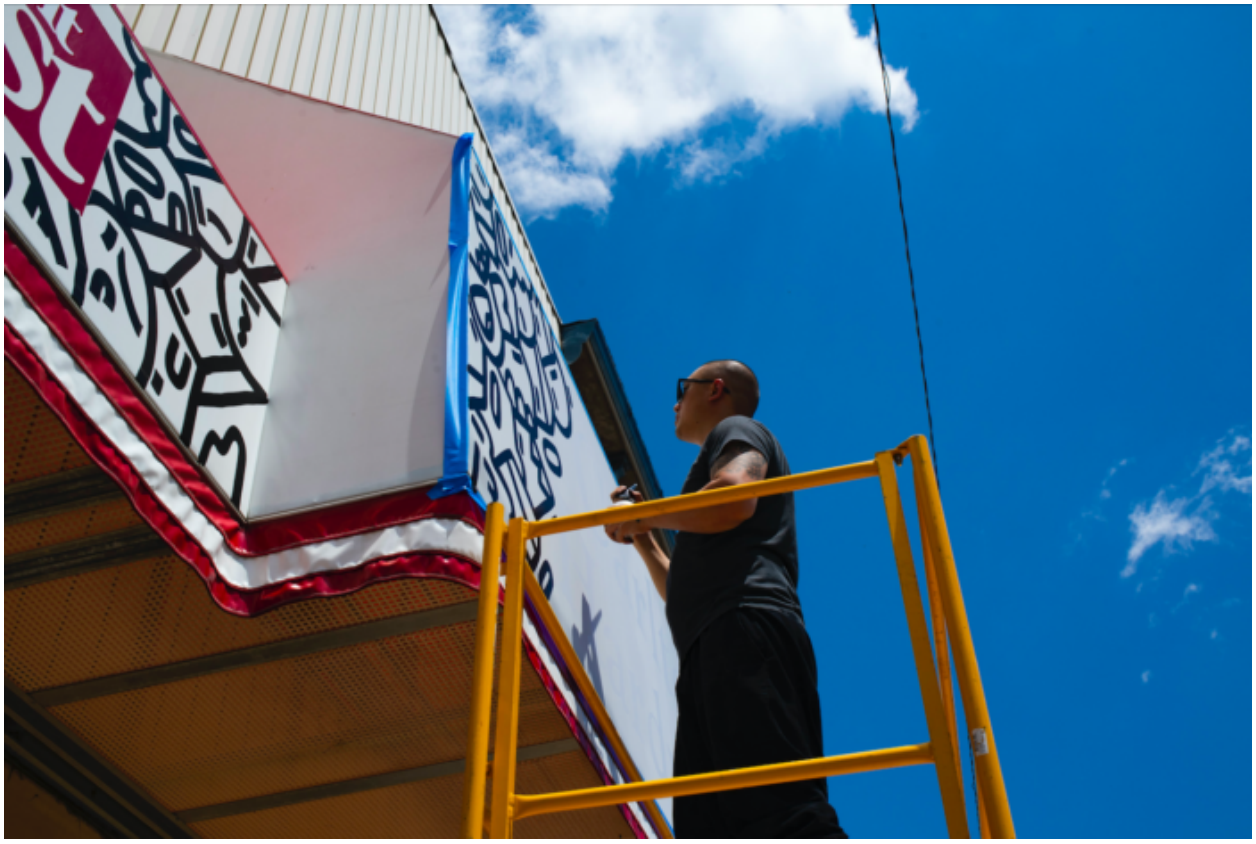

Figure 2, Mike Han, Courtesy of Mike Han, photograph

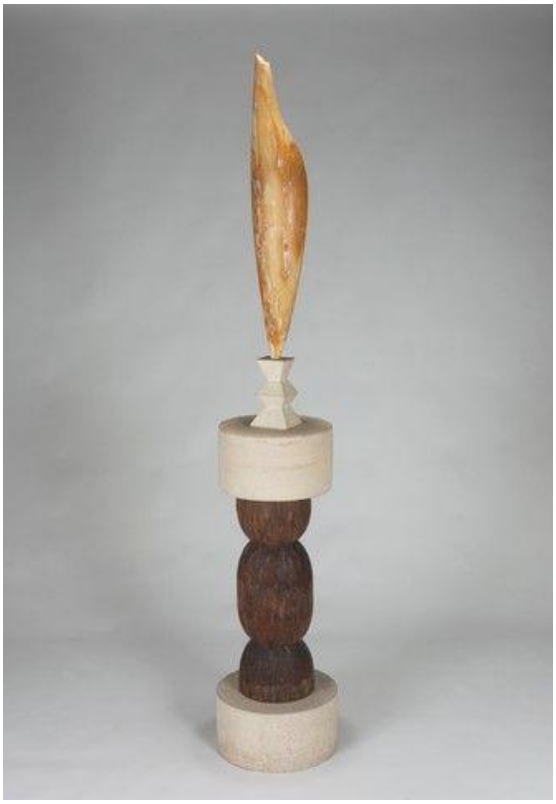

Figure 3, Constantin Brancusi, *Yellow Bird,* Yellow marble, limestone, and oak, Yale University Art Gallery

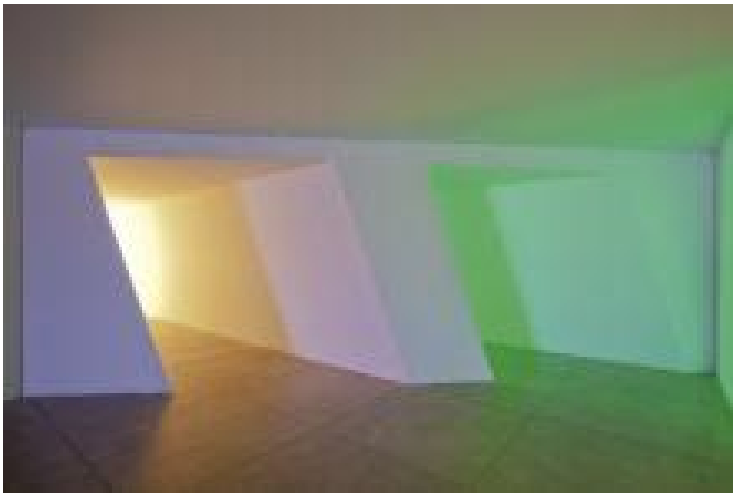

Figure 4, Dan Flavin, *untitled (Marfa project)*, 1996. Permanent collection, the Chinati Foundation, Marfa, Texas.

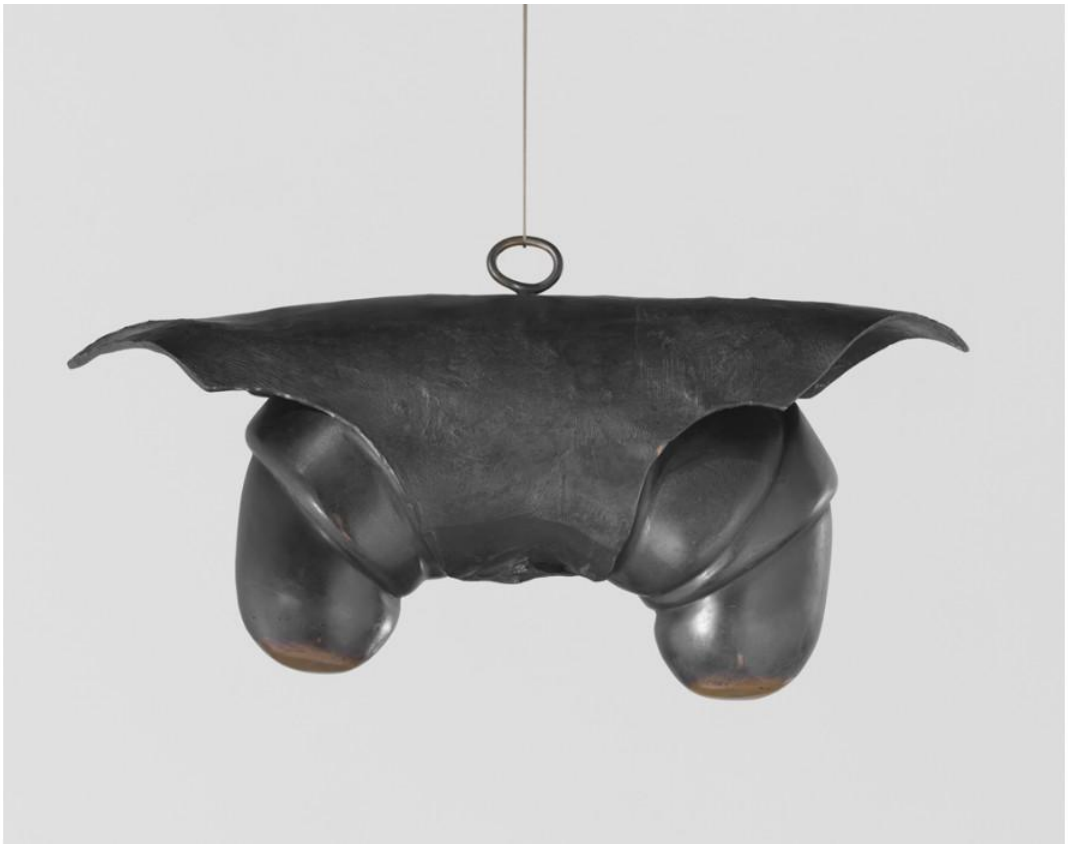

Figure 5, Louise Bourgeois, *Janus in Leather Jacket*, 1968. Courtesy Cheim & Read and Hauser & Wirth

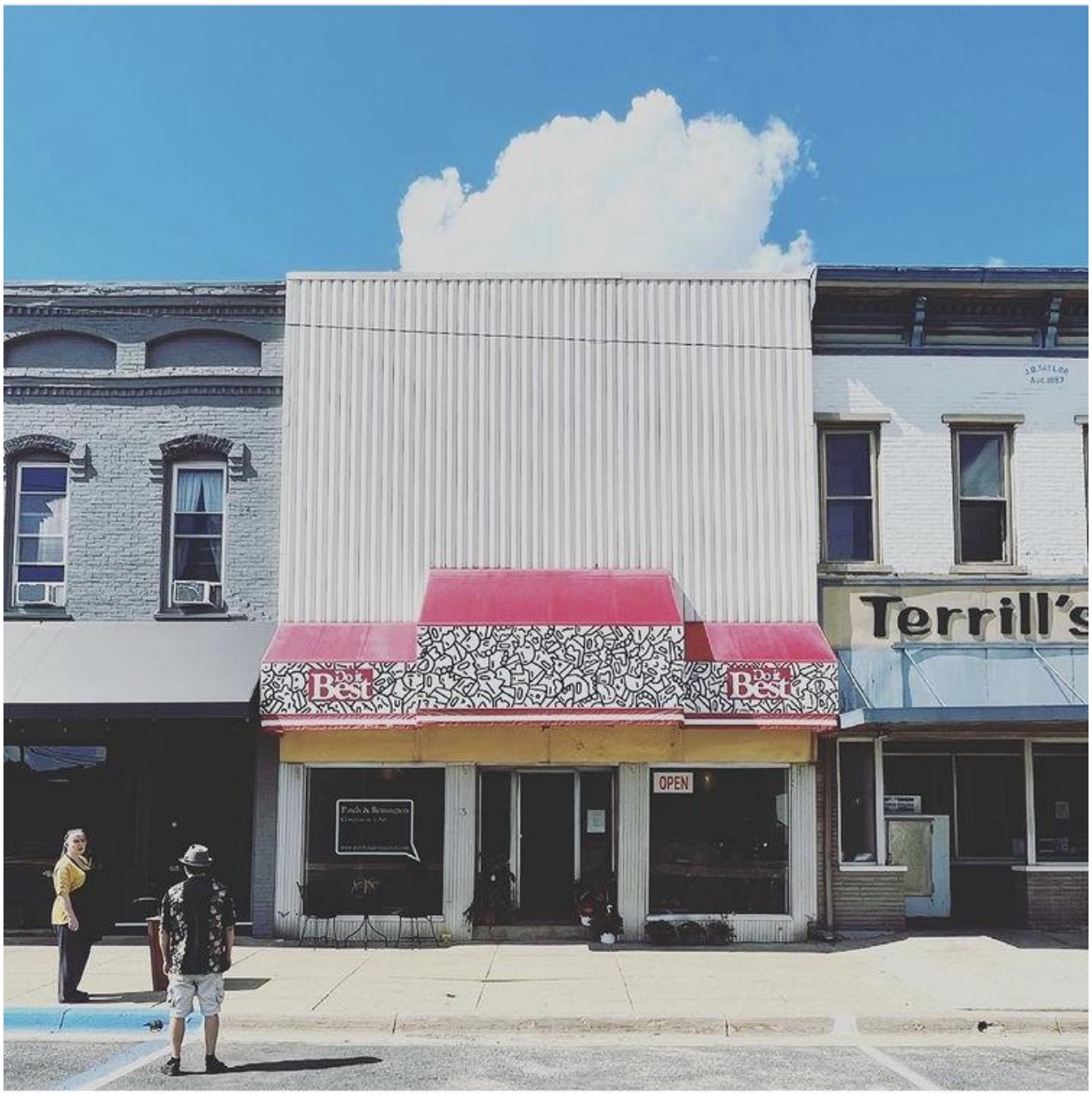

Figure 6, Patch & Remington, Courtesy of Mike Han, photograph.

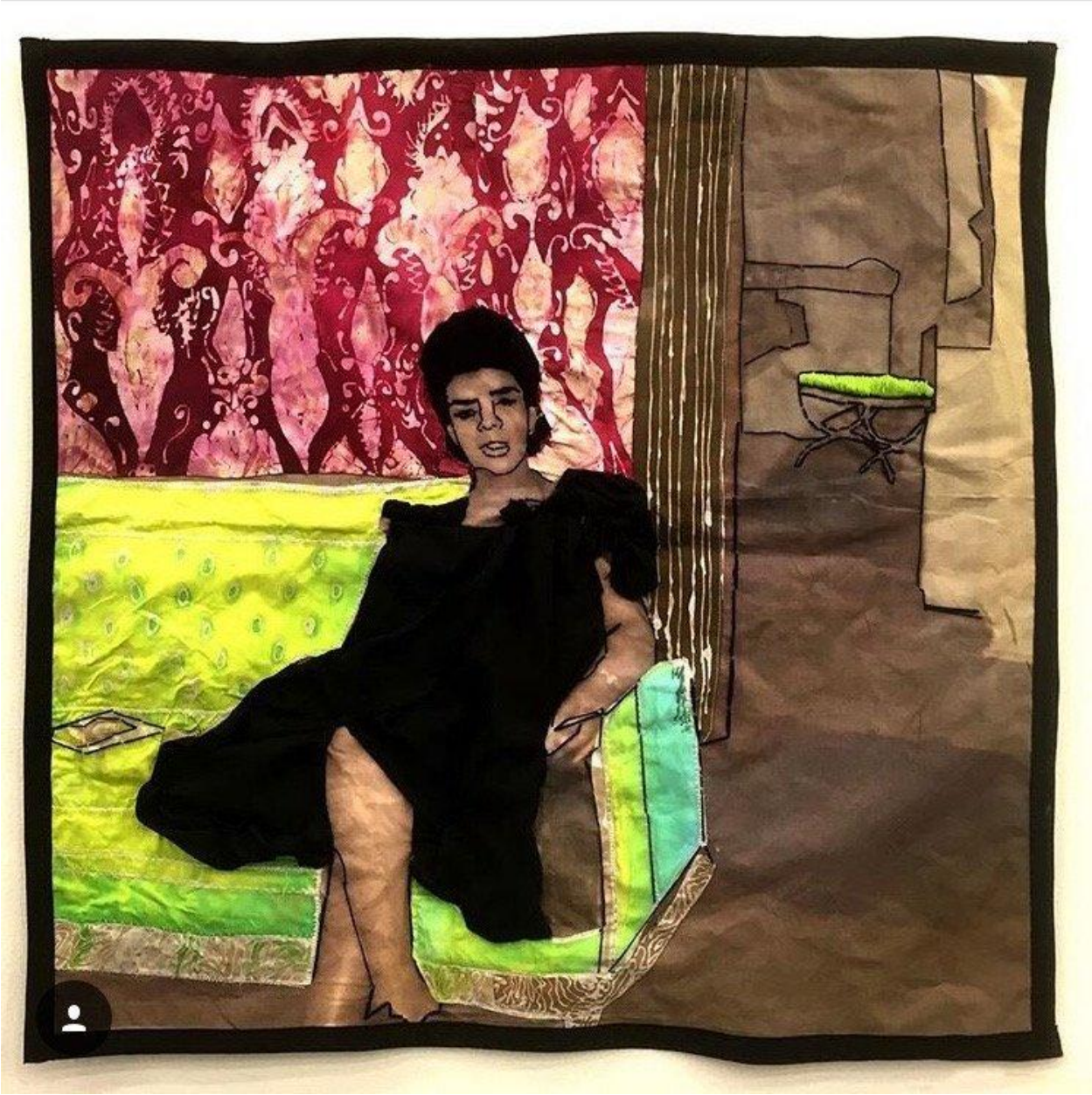

Figure 7, Taylor Childs, *Nanas Couch,* quilt, Courtesy of Taylor Childs.

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