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**The Social and Economic Impacts of Public Art: Connections,  
Complexity, and Possibilities**

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**The Social and Economic Impacts of Public Art: Connections,  
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by

**Emily Kay Goodrum, B.A.**

**Report**

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# **The Social and Economic Impacts of Public Art: Connections, Complexity, and Possibilities**

by

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The University of Texas at Austin, 2015

SUPERVISOR: Michael Oden

This professional report addresses the broad issue of evaluating the impact of artistic and cultural activity. Focusing on the quantitative and qualitative effects of public art, this report attempts to address the following questions: What are the social and economic impacts of public art, and what can planners (land use, economic development, neighborhood development, participatory action planners) do to reap potential benefits while avoiding negative impacts? I address these questions through an in-depth review of existing literature from diverse fields and schools of thought and through qualitative analysis of the case study of Aurora, a large-scale new media art event in Dallas, Texas. Drawing upon these sources a number of connections are made and contradictions are revealed, and the complexity of how people perceive and value public art emerges from the literature and the case. The qualitative, cross-disciplinary analysis is used to suggest routes to further avenues of multidisciplinary research as well as revealing possible new ways of thinking about the form and value of public art. The research demonstrates both positive and negative effects from public art depending on context, content, interpretation, as well as an interaction between these factors. Thoughtful implementation suggests great potential for public art's social benefit and it is an activity that planners and policymakers certainly have role in as regulators of urban space.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

*“Powerful ways of acting spring from powerful ways of seeing. Yes, visual images can be manipulative, but they can also be transforming in ways we do not immediately understand.” –Suzanne Lacy*

Art has appeared in public places since the beginning of recorded human history, yet its meaning, purposes, and impacts have been hotly debated for just as long. In more recent times, public art has been praised as a tool for economic development, demonized as a manipulative ploy, and lauded as liberator of the human spirit. This report seeks to draw from diverse disciplines which have examined the arts, and specifically art in the public realm, in order to answer the following questions: What are the social and economic impacts of public art, and what can planners (land use, economic development, neighborhood development, participatory action planners) do to reap potential benefits while avoiding negative impacts?

Although the history of public art has been clouded with controversial themes in some cases, clear evidence exists of benefits arising from public art. In terms of broad benefits, the celebration of creativity throughout diverse segments of society is seen to positive effects including the ability to instill a sense of community belonging. Impacts of public art are often challenging to identify and quantify due to the confluence of multiple variables, multiple forms and media involved, and the complexity and multiplicity of voices responding to public art. Public art’s impacts seem to depend on interrelated factors which include who chooses and funds the art, the form and content of the art, its location, the process of its creation, its messages, and its externalized impacts, such as its influence on property values and potential gentrification.

In the scope of my work, I will define art, creativity, and public art as a first step in building a theoretical base for this analysis. I then review the literature spanning numerous disciplines to build a better understanding of how public art might affect individuals and communities. I examine existing theory related to the impact and meaning of public art from various disciplines, including medicine, public health, art criticism, sociology, history, economic development, and planning. This cross-disciplinary approach seeks to create a more holistic picture of what has been said about public art, to identify existing gaps in knowledge, and to more thoroughly examine the current state of affairs and what may be possible for public art.

The Aurora Dallas art event, held biannually in Dallas, Texas, presents a valuable opportunity to explore the impacts of public art on the ground and in detail. This case study also presents the opportunity to examine complex interrelationships between permanent and impermanent public art structures. In this case a temporary art event focusing mostly on video, light installation, and performance was embedded and interfaced with the permanent, institutional Dallas Arts District structures and institutions. The examination of this case study may offer lessons related to public art event planning as well as to the complex relationships between public art and social and economic structures.

Just as community and regional planning occurs in various contexts and under many pretexts, so does the creation of public art. It could be argued that public art creation itself is inseparable from the basic act of “urban planning”, whoever may be doing it, whether it is by a specially trained “urban planner” or a group of neighborhood residents who take it upon themselves to create something new. The act of planning occurs in a democratized process, at least in theory, and through this, public art may be seen as a democratic, participatory action as well. There are strong parallels between the journey of both “planning” as a field and that of “public art”. This analysis seeks to suggest ways that the two may come together to produce positive outcomes for society, while avoiding potentially negative changes to the physical and social milieu in an area. This work, furthermore, seeks to examine the connections, complexities, and impacts within the realm of public art, as well as to suggest possible paths for future research as well as more socially and economically beneficial public art installations.

## Chapter 2: Methodology

As noted the central research questions I will examine are: 1) What are the social and economic impacts of public art; and 2) What can planners (land use, economic development, neighborhood development, and participatory action planners) do to reap potential benefits while avoiding negative impacts?

In order to answer the research questions and to create a thorough and holistic understanding of the impacts of public art, I engage with articles, texts, and commentary from a variety of sources and disciplines which include, but are not limited to articles, books, news, and other commentary about the effects and meaning of public art from a variety of disciplines. These disciplines include fields of medicine, public health, art criticism, sociology, history, economic development, planning, and other works which transcend traditional barriers in knowledge. The goal of this assemblage is to provide a holistic and nuanced perspective that may illuminate the subject in ways that can better inform the field of planning and public policy, and the other fields which have investigated the topic of public art. One such example is the work of David Edwards (2008) who combines insights on scientific inquiry with thoughts about the production of art and the relationship between these processes and their outcomes<sup>1</sup>. My work seeks a similar role: to make connections between various fields looking at the same subject, and to draw out commonalities that may be applied to create a more well-rounded understanding of public art, its applications and effects.

To this end, a diverse body of literature is engaged, along with analysis of multiple cases presented in existing research and literature as well as general theories around the subject. This knowledge is then sifted to find connections, contradictions, and to highlight complexities in an attempt to advance understanding. The unifying threads that emerge are then applied to a detailed case study, that of the Aurora Dallas event. It is the hope that this line of inquiry may provide insights for future research that is cross-disciplinary from the outset, and that it may also inform public policy and the practice of planning.

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<sup>1</sup> See Edwards (2008). Edwards refers to a process he deems *artscience* in which the processes of art and science intermingle and influence each other, producing innovative outcomes.

It is important to note in seeking to perform a sort of survey of the impacts of public art across disciplines, the scope of this paper is necessarily broad. The formation of knowledge and understanding of this phenomena in reality is highly complex. It is near impossible to absorb, digest, and process such a multitude of information simultaneously. Because of this, in the pursuit of knowledge and understanding, as a society, we have created branched disciplines which investigate the same facets of reality from different perspectives, using different vocabularies, and often for different end purposes. The structures of knowledge that emerge from this branched chain of investigation are often disjointed, each perspective often lacking key insights that other fields may have revealed. Thus, there is significant value in attempting to integrate knowledge from various fields of thought and investigation, as the action of assemblage, comparison, and analysis may reveal insights that no field alone was able to produce due to their limited focus.

### **The Case Study**

To engage the reader with a deeper understanding of the impacts of public art, I examine a single case in more depth from a multidimensional perspective. Case study methodology is combined with participatory action research methodology<sup>2</sup>, yielding deeper, more complex insights. Of the value of the case study methodology and context-dependent knowledge, Bent Flyvbjerg states:

Context-dependent knowledge and experience are at the very heart of expert activity. Such knowledge and expertise also lie at the center of the case study as a research and teaching method; or to put it more generally, still: as a method of learning. Phenomenological studies of the learning process therefore emphasize the importance of this and similar methods: it is only because of experience with cases that one can at all move from being a beginner to being an expert. If people were exclusively trained in context-independent knowledge and rules, that is, the kind of knowledge which forms the basis of textbooks and computers they would remain at the beginner's level in the learning process. This is the limitation of analytical rationality: it is inadequate for the best results in the exercise of a profession, as student, researcher, or practitioner. (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p.5)

The Aurora case presents the opportunity to probe the issues more deeply because of my multiple perspectives and roles in relationship to this public art event: those of an artist whose work is part of the event, an event attendee, and academic analyst with a background in planning, art, economic development, and real estate. These overlapping perspectives, as well as those of the

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<sup>2</sup> "Participatory research methods are geared towards planning and conducting the research process with those people whose life-world and meaningful actions are under study. Consequently, this means that the aim of the inquiry and the research questions develop out of the convergence of two perspectives—that of science and of practice" (Bergold & Thomas, 2012, para. 1).

individuals with whom I interacted during the course of the event, provide an in-depth qualitative account of the event's meaning and effects.

Through examining Aurora, I draw connections to existing literature and use specific insights from the event to provide signposts with which to suggest forward movement for planners and others interested in public art. This investigation of Aurora relies primarily on qualitative information which includes my own experience and observation, and a survey given to event personnel. The analysis will be presented as a holistic measure of impact, creating a dialogue between voices within existing literature/theory, and will seek to identify factors that moderate the effects of public art as well as examine the relationship between temporary events and prominent public art installations.

The detailed experience and analysis of participants can be invaluable, especially when it is a perspective informed by a large body of knowledge on the subject along with a multiplicity of perspectives. It is arguably not a wholly objective perspective, yet it is one that considers multiple interests simultaneously, thus it is thorough and honest. My own perspective and observations are paired with those of other event attendees who I observed, media commentators, local business staff, and event personnel. My hope is that the combination of perspectives will yield a deeper understanding of the impacts of public art and what it may be capable of and also public art may come to exist in ways that provide maximum benefit while avoiding negative impacts.

Qualitative accounts of this sort are able to illuminate phenomena in ways quantitative analysis alone cannot due to the focus on human-centered detail that most quantitative analysis is unable to provide (Flyvbjerg, 2006). It is still recommended that a more thorough analysis of the Aurora event which includes more quantitative measures be undertaken at some point in the future, as the scope of this report is decidedly qualitative, however key insights extracted from this analysis can be useful for informing future public art events and installations, as well as more broadly inform the use of public art in planning related fields.

## Chapter 3: Defining Art and Public Space

### What is *Public Art*: Jane Jacobs on the City, Art, and Planning

One of the greatest challenges for art critics and sometimes the public observer is determining exactly what counts as art. What is it? How do we know it when we see it? Beginning within the aesthetic eras of modernism and post-modernism, and perhaps with Dadaist Duchamp's infamous urinal<sup>3</sup>, the bounds of what is considered art today have become expansive, almost endless. It seems that the artist's will and statement that what she has produced is called "art" is enough to render a creation of the realm of art. This is not to say necessarily that all art is good art, but that is quite another determination.

Art may be seen as the embodiment of creativity, and it is also, at its most simple, a type of communication. Communication is the transmittal of messages, even if the only audience is the self. Jane Jacobs provides a useful point of discussion on art related to the City and public space, and life. She states:

We need art, in the arrangements of cities as well as in the other realms of life, to help explain life to us, to show us meanings, to illuminate the relationship between the life that each of us embodies and the life outside us. We need art most, perhaps, to reassure us of our own humanity. However, although art and life are interwoven, they are not the same things. Confusion between them is, in part, why efforts at city design are so disappointing. It is important, in arriving at better design strategies and tactics, to clear up this confusion.

Art has its own peculiar forms and order, and they are rigorous. Artists, whatever their medium, make selections from the abounding materials of life, and organize these into works that are under the control of the artist. To be sure, the artist has a sense of the demands of the work (i.e., of the selections of materials he has made) control him. The rather miraculous result of this process—if the selectivity, the organization and the control are consistent within themselves—can be art. But the essence of this processed is highly disciplined, highly discriminatory selectivity from life. In relation to the inclusiveness and the literally endless intricacy of life, art is arbitrary, symbolic, and abstracted. That is its value and the source of its own kind of order and coherence. (Jacobs, 1961, p. 372-373)

Jacobs sees that art is an abstraction and representation of life, a small piece of which the artist has selected to emphasize. Life itself, she believes, is much too complex, too messy to be considered a work of art. Her description is persuasive, as it does seem that all art has the characteristic of curating from the whole of life, taking aspects of it and communicating about it in

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<sup>3</sup> See Krause Knight (2008). Krause Knight finds that the work of Duchamp, and the Dadaists pushed the viewer to move outside of the comfort zone of conventional art and to "interrogate the foundations of society" (p. vii).

a specialized way. This, she believes, is where the power of art is, in its ability to bring meaning to life. Her understanding of art also dictates why she believes that city planning itself should not and cannot successfully function to create a city as a single work of art, as she believed some planners wanted during her era. For one, there are too many artists, too many moving pieces, and a high level of complexity and autonomy that defy single singular ownership. Even collaborative works of art are defined by a consensus of common purpose, and the city itself does not possess this attribute. However, the key point is that Jacobs recognizes that the city, its residents and humanity in general, desperately need the arts. Her description serves as a useful starting point for the case for public art.

### **On the Meaning and “Publicness” of Public Space**

An understanding of “publicness” is crucial to determining what constitutes public art as well as gauging its impact. This is so because the level of publicness of a work of public art as well as its overall context partially determines its impact on its human viewers and the society with which it interfaces. It is also important to understand the conversation around “publicness” because it relates to issues of ownership, control, and sense of belonging, all of which relate to the effects of art in public places.

Of late, there has also been a rise in the number of pseudo-public spaces which deserve our attention<sup>4</sup>. Due to funding shortfalls in the public sphere, there is often a partial “adoption” of a public space by a private entity, or a public-private partnership in the ownership and/or management of the space. Authors such as Nato Thompson who analyze the impact of public art in our society today see that these pseudo-public spaces may be problematic, and others concerned with accessibility and maintaining the virtues of public space have expressed similar concern<sup>5</sup>.

Another question that should be answered, at least in brief, if we are to understand the effects of public art is, “What are the benefits of public space in the first place?” George Varna and Steve Tiesdell of The University of Glasgow (2010) outline a model for understanding the “publicness” of public space, and also draw upon the work of major thinkers in the field to identify

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<sup>4</sup> See Thompson (2015) and Krause Knight (2008).

<sup>5</sup> See Dooling (2009). Her work speaks to the effect of privatized parks on marginalized populations such as the homeless who may become effectively eradicated from the public sphere due to privatization of space.

the main benefits arising from public space. They find these to be as follows, adding in also the criteria of *meaning*:

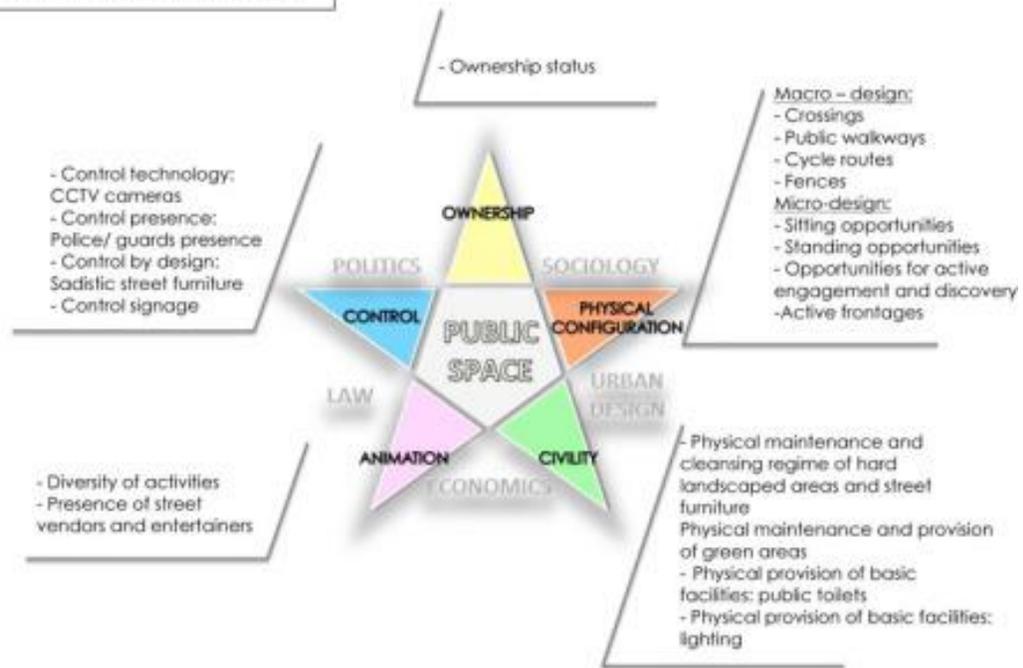
- *Political/democratic*. Public space offers a political stage/forum—for political representation, display and action. Offering universal access (being ‘open-to-all’) it is neutral territory (free from coercive forces), which is inclusive and pluralist (accepting and accommodating difference).
- *Social*. Public space affords common ground—for social interaction, intermingling, and communication: it is a site of sociability. It is a stage for information exchange, personal development and social learning (i.e. about ‘the other’) and for the development of tolerance.
- *Symbolic*. Public space is symbolic and representative of the collective and of sociability (rather than individuality and privacy).

To these can be added an access value in the sense that public space provides access to private land parcels; a commercial or economic value in the sense that public space provides opportunities for trade and exchange without restriction on consumer access; and leisure value in the sense that public space provides opportunities for leisure and recreational activities.  
(Varna & Tiesdell, 2010, p.579)

Varna and Tiesdell ascribe great possibility and meaning to public space. Admittedly, the possibilities they describe are the ideal, however, the significance inherent to public space in a democratic society is high. Thus, our treatment of it should be held to high standards. The highest possibilities for public spaces constitute a standard to achieve and maintain. The installation and use of art in these spaces may help further the cause of creating and maintaining public spaces that reach the ideals for which they should be known.

Varna and Tiesdell espouse and expand the use of the Star Model to assess the publicness of public space. This model goes beyond a unidimensional model of public space based on a continuum of ownership to include 1) control, 2) civility, 3) physical configuration, 4) animation, and 5) ownership. Thus, “publicness” exists on a multi-planar continuum, such that a privately owned art gallery or sculpture garden may possess dimensions of publicness” if it is, at times, open to the public. Publicness is a fluid dimension that depends partially on transitory states. Although public ownership might seem enough to render a space *public*, even a public park may have curfew rules and other mechanisms which detract from dimensions of publicness. The following diagram demonstrates Varna and Tiesdell’s model:

**The Star Model of Public Space and the indicators for each meta-theme**



There are 19 indicators, calibrated from 1 (low publicness) to 5 (high publicness)

Georgiana Varna

Figure 1: Star Model of Public Space. (Varna, 2010)

For the purposes of this paper, the meaning and dimensions of public space will consist of those delineated and advocated for by Tiesdell et al., and they will include pseudo-public spaces, spaces that are privately owned but publicly accessible, and will include such spaces as hospitals and shopping malls. However, the lack of public ownership or other *missing dimensions* of publicness may be found to significantly affect the perception and overall impact of an art installation itself, and therefore may have further bearing on analysis.

The criteria outlined by Tiesdell et al. also relate to the efficacy of public art in these spaces, yet the relationship is complex. A work of public art may serve to enhance a facet of public space, ie, its publicness itself, instilling a sense of control or activating a space to create the possibility of a new use or to call attention to something that needs to be changed within or outside the space.

## Chapter 4: Theory and Literature on Public Art

### Overview: Connections, Contradictions, and Complexity

The dialogue on public art has emerged within different disciplines and various domains, which include fine art, as context and part of architecture, planning, social policy, history, medicine/psychology, and in social change/activism, as well as informal grassroots work. Thus, the conversation about public art, its definition, forms, benefits and drawbacks, has been viewed through many lenses depending on the knowledge base and perspective of the viewer and analyst. There has been much criticism of public art, especially of traditional forms such as “the monument”<sup>6</sup> as well as public art that perpetuates unjust power relations through extolling false historical narratives, contributing to gentrification, or evincing symbolism reserved for an elite, educated portion of the public<sup>7</sup>.

In contrast, public art has been praised as a liberator of the human spirit, a sign of hope, a tool to create a sense of community belonging, and the process of viewing and creating art as healing for mind, body, and spirit. Over the last ten years or so, there has been a growing body of research that shows both viewing and creating art (visual, performance, and music) can lead to healing. Positive physiological changes have been documented in many medical studies, and most authors of these studies admit that positive health effects may only touch the surface of what the possible impacts might be. Most suggest the need for more studies which are expansive and not confined to discrete realms of medical treatment.

Public art has also been viewed as instrumental to activism and social change, documenting injustice or challenging views of history and power. Visual art, at its most basic, is a form of communication<sup>8</sup>. Just as art can communicate in a way that bolsters existing social structures, it can also defy them, sometimes in surprisingly powerful ways. Public art has lead the charge to social

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<sup>6</sup> See Miles (1997).

<sup>7</sup> Abstract public art has been criticized as elitist due to a majority of the public being unable to understand the work due to complex historic symbolism that would require a high level of education to understand. See Ken Lum’s discussion (2014) of art as a tool for gentrification in the case of the St. Louis Gateway Arch in which city officials demolished an entire neighborhood to build the Arch, and the case of Chicago’s Millennium Park, which is filled with artworks chosen by wealthy donors, producing a disjointed reflection of elite tastes in public space.

<sup>8</sup> See Doherty (2012).

change through the use of political imagery and it has forced us to acknowledge difficult things about our society and humanity. Public art has also served to remind us of diverse histories, the experiences of minority and other oppressed groups, and has allowed for collective remembering and difficult discourses as well as healing.

The National Endowment for the Arts also documents economic and social benefits of arts-related industries and activities. They primarily focus on quantitative monetized contributions to the economy from industries such as advertising, performing arts, and the like. From the current dominant economic viewpoint in the U.S., art-related fields add jobs and money to the economy, providing clear benefits to those who hold employment in these fields, as well as quantifiable benefit to the economy at large through economic growth and tax revenues to the public sector. In the case of arts-related industries such as advertising, we may observe economic benefit, however, the social effects of these industries deserve greater scrutiny, as advertising can clearly be argued produce many negative social (and possibly economic) consequences, such as promoting detrimental behaviors or untruths.

Further complicating the story, there is not as much focus on *public art* per se in the literature on economic impacts of arts-related activities. However, the two dominant art industry segments found to produce economic growth are advertising and film, whose work product is for public consumption, and therefore could be argued to be of the public realm and as “per se” public art. If it can be argued that commercial advertisements and film are not “art”, we may still infer impact about the power of creativity in society, which may be the most useful observation of all.

Just as community and regional planning occurs in various contexts and under many pretexts, so does the creation of public art. It could be argued that public art creation itself is inseparable from the basic act of “urban planning”, whoever may be doing it, whether it is by a specially trained “urban planner” or a group of neighborhood residents who take it upon themselves to create something new. The act of planning is often democratized, at least in theory, and through this, public art may be as well. There are strong parallels between the journey of both “planning” as a field and that of “public art”. This analysis seeks to show how these have been connected, to document their potential effects, and to suggest ways that the two may come together to produce positive outcomes for society, while avoiding potentially negative ones. It also seeks to examine the connections, complexities, and impacts within the realm of public art, as well as to suggest

possible paths for future research as well as more socially and economically beneficial public art installations.

### **Public Art as Public Health: Medical and Psychological Benefits of Art**

There has been a longstanding, intuitive belief in many cultures throughout the world that the arts and creative pursuits are good for the soul, and good for man's health and well-being. Evidence of music and dance rituals, and visual expressions are found all over the globe from times before written history<sup>9</sup>. It is almost enough to beg the question, "How could we ever live without art?" In our modern culture the arts have for the most part been relegated to a realm separate from other aspects of life for many people. In *Art as Experience* (1934), John Dewey describes the social role of the arts throughout history as follows:

Dancing and pantomime, the sources of art of the theater, flourished as part of religious rites and celebrations. Musical art abounded in the fingering of the stretched string, the beating of the taut skin, the blowing of the reeds. Even in the caves, human habitations were adorned with colored pictures that kept alive to the senses experiences with the animals that were so closely bound to the lives of humans. Structures that housed their gods and the instrumentalities that facilitated commerce with the higher powers were wrought with especial fineness. But the arts of drama, music, painting, and architecture thus exemplified had no particular connection with theaters, galleries, museums. They were part of the significant life of the social community. (Dewey, 1934, p.5)

Dewey goes on to describe the social process of "sectioning off" of "the arts" from the rest of society, and he attributes this to the rise of imperialism in the case of the establishment of museums and great monuments with collections pirated from colonies, and to the spread of capitalist economics where the collection and viewing of fine art came to take on a social meaning of upward mobility and fine taste. Due to these dynamics and their evolution since the time of Dewey's writing, "the arts" are, to this day, often relegated to a realm separate from the rest of life. If one's work does not directly involve the arts, a daily interaction with the purely creative pursuits may be difficult to reach, either due to time or access constraints. This is unfortunate considering there are many documented positive health effects of viewing and participating in the creation of art.

Public art may have the ability to reach people whose lives might otherwise be detached from art and to add creativity even in small doses. As we can see, this is not a new concept, however, the controlled study of medical benefits of the arts is a relatively new pursuit which has gained

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<sup>9</sup> See Getlein (2002) and Dewey (1934).

steam over the past 20 years, producing quite a large body of evidence showing that engagement with the arts has the ability to improve psychological and physical well-being of individuals.

Michael Friedman, professor at the Columbia School of Social Work states, “Arthur Danto—a philosopher and art critic—refers to the transcendent capacity of art as the “transfiguration of the commonplace.” By this he means that art somehow becomes imbued with meanings that go well beyond the surface of the artistic product.” He discusses that art has the ability to help us express repressed emotions, to allow us to create a sense of accomplishment, to lose ourselves in the moment, and to create meaning in our lives (Friedman, 2012). In other words, art allows us to elevate our lives beyond the mundane. These more philosophical thoughts are supported by the work of medical researchers such as Anne Bolwerk, Jessica Mack-Andrick, Frieder Lang, Arnd Dorfler, and Christian Mailhofner who observe that, “visual art represents a powerful resource for mental and physical well-being...our findings are the first to demonstrate the neural effects of visual art production on psychological resilience in adulthood.” (Bolwerk, et al., 2014). Their study is noteworthy because their controlled study using MRI brain scans was able to show significant improvements in brain functioning simply as a result of engaging in the act of visual arts production.

Tomohiro Ishizu and Semir Zeki of the Department of Cognitive Neurology at University College London (2011) have also worked to understand the psychological impact of art on the brain. In recent research looking for a so-called, “brain-based” explanation of the phenomenon of perception of beauty, the authors found that viewing art itself is able to produce neural effects similar to those that occur when a person is falling in love, a semi-euphoric state, and that a deep level of mental pleasure and fulfilment can be achieved through the act of viewing art. An article from Art Fund cites their video and interview with Zeki:

“There have been very significant new advances in our understanding of what happens in our brains when we look at works of art,” said Zeki. “We have recently found that when we look at things we consider to be beautiful, there is increased activity in the pleasure reward centres of the brain. Essentially, the feel-good centres are stimulated, similar to the states of love and desire.” (“Leading neuroscientist says ‘Viewing art like being in love’”, 2011)

What’s more is that “beauty” was found to be subjective, meaning a person could experience these effects from anything he or she deemed beautiful. This finding is significant because it shows that viewing art alone is enough to produce a positive psychological response in

a viewer, and it helps confirm what many who are allied with the arts have stated for years, that art is good for the brain.

In a recent meta-study, Norma Daykin, University of the West of England, led a team of researchers that examined studies carried out over the past 30 years that relate to health benefits of art (2008). In a review of over 600 papers published between 1985 and 2005 on the impact of arts, design, and environments in mental healthcare, the authors find that exposure to the arts can reduce anxiety and depression, may contribute to wayfinding where patients have memory impairments, may reduce stress, and enhance recovery from illness. None of this should be surprising considering art therapy has become an established discipline in mental healthcare<sup>10</sup>, however, the synthesis of information from existing studies, as well as newer studies have shown that the arts can have a powerful, positive impact on human health.

While viewing art has proven health benefits, being involved with its production may have even more. “Repetitive satisfying art making may actually mediate depression and anxiety by stimulating the “accumbens-striatal-cortical” connection in the brain. It is perhaps connected to what psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi named “flow,” an experience of complete concentration and absorption (Malchiodi, 2011, p. 11). The experience of being involved with participatory art making has fortunately been tried, and those involved reap strong emotional and psychological benefits.

### **A Case for Public-Art Therapy**

Considering the myriad documented positive health effects of engagement with the arts, there is a strong case to be made for public art as a specific contributor to enhanced public health outcomes. Although there may still be much to be decided in terms of content and mode of artistic production, the aforementioned studies and the years of collective wisdom about the healing effects of the arts suggest that the health of our society may be improved by instituting more ways to interact with the arts – in other words, *public art as public health*. Have these connections been made before? It seems that although the research has provided support for the arts improving health, public art and public health have not often been closely allied in existing discourses and practices in the United States. There has, however, been a more prominent focus

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<sup>10</sup> See Eaton, Doherty, & Widrick (2007).

on art for public health from outside the U.S., such as the work of Cameron Marsaili and his colleagues.

Leading a group of researchers in the UK, Marsaili and his team were recently tasked with analyzing an innovative program that defined its goals as improving well-being through artistic activity. This program, entitled, *Be Creative Be Well* is a part of a larger public health initiative in the UK's The Well London Programme. The initiative focused on 20 of London's most disadvantaged communities and enacted a variety of artistic interventions with the following stated goal: "the determination to animate or reanimate the relationship between private and public life, with the aim of helping people achieve greater well-being." (Marsaili et. al, 2013, p. 53). The researchers find that despite the great variation in types of projects, from community-designed sculpture to dance performances at the YMCA, there were consistent positive effects across the board. This is striking considering the diversity of initiatives described below:

In consultation with local residents and agencies, the leaders of the arts and health programme originated and developed a wide range of arts and cultural activities – around 100 different creative projects. The programme aimed to engage communities and individuals in a process of change to improve health and environments, to increase community cohesion through intercultural and intergenerational projects, and to provide accessible and enjoyable whole-community activities. A 'one-size-fits-all' approach was not taken. No art form was left untouched across the programme, and local activities ranged from painting workshops to dance classes, parades to musicals, personal poetry to communal sculpture. (Marsaili, et. al., p.54, 2013)

Marsaili and his team used qualitative analysis to gauge participant and artist leader feedback including interviews throughout the intervention process. They cite that a more qualitative approach is of utility and necessity when examining such diverse contexts of participatory and public art. Although they cite that there are challenges in instituting a public art initiative of this magnitude they found that there were almost universally positive effects across all 100 projects<sup>11</sup>. They state:

Even when a project involved comparatively few residents, there were individual breakthroughs—people who were inspired to try new things, change jobs, refresh their outlook on life and gain useful creative skills. In nearly all the projects visited, there was a new sense of possibility evident in the neighbourhood—a hint of what could be. (Marsaili, et. al., 2013, p.56)

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<sup>11</sup> Marsaili and his colleagues also provide insights for how public art activities for public health may achieve the greatest benefit while avoiding potential pitfalls. Their observations may serve as useful guideposts for those interested in community-based public-art-as-public-health initiatives.

Perhaps most illustrative is the reference to a new sense of possibility. This relates to the concept of “The New” and to the creation of meaning in one’s life which will be addressed in more detail in the following sections.

The findings of Marsaili and his team are also supported by the work of Paul J. Silvia and his co-authors, Roger E. Beaty, Emily C. Nusbaum, Kari M. Eddington, Holly Levin-Aspensen, and Thomas R. Kwapil (2014), who come to similar conclusions, one being that a creative state is associated with higher levels of mental and psychological well-being. In a controlled week-long study of 79 students, it was found that “When people reported doing something creative, they reported feeling significantly happier and more active. It’s notable that these findings, taken from people’s uncontrolled and idiosyncratic environments, align with the large experimental literature of affect and creativity” (Silvia et al., 2014, p.187). The quality of the product of the creative production also did not affect results, suggesting that any type of creative activity, whatever its end-product, is beneficial for well-being.

An exciting recent addition to the literature on the positive impacts of public art comes from the work of The Yale School of Medicine and a team of researchers led by Jacob Kraemer-Tebes. Kraemer-Tebes and his team measured the effects of The Porch Light Initiative, a community-based mural project in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania with the goal of measuring public health impacts of public art. The authors describe the program and purpose of their research as follows:

Can public art promote public health? This is the central question addressed in this four-year evaluation of the Porch Light Program, a collaborative endeavor of Philadelphia Mural Arts Program and the Philadelphia Department of Behavioral Health and Intellectual disability Services (dbhids). Porch Light creates public murals that seek to transform neighborhoods and promote the health of neighborhood residents and individuals who help create the mural. This collaboration involves a variety of stakeholders, including behavioral health consumers, artists, family members, service providers, neighborhood residents, and the leadership and staff from two city departments. (Kraemer-Tebes, et al. 2015, p.iii)

Over the course of a two-year analysis period, the researchers examined effects of six murals, five for community-level effects and one for individual-level effects. Individual-level effects they found are as follows:

- A relative decrease in the use of secrecy to cope with behavioral health stigma.
- A relative decrease (at a statistical trend) in reports of rejection experiences due to stigma.
- A relative decrease in stress.

Lastly, case study interviews of Porch Light participants indicated that the program can enhance friendships, sense of self, a desire to give back to one's community, and hope for the future. (Kraemer-Tebes, et al., 2015, p.iv)

The study authors also noted a wide range of positive community-level effects which pertain simultaneously to public health and social realms. The differentiation is arguably somewhat arbitrary, however, the results relating to community-level impacts are included in this section for ease of comparison with the individual-level effects. Of the community benefits, the authors found:

Community-level results showed that over the course of about one year, residents living within one mile of a newly installed mural reported:

- A relative increase in collective efficacy, including social cohesion and trust among neighbors as well as informal social control.
- A relative increase in neighborhood aesthetic quality, including overall aesthetic quality, the walking environment, ratings of specific buildings, and perceived neighborhood safety.
- A relative decrease (at a statistical trend) in stigma toward individuals with mental health or substance abuse challenges.

Also, after almost two years, residents living within one mile of more than one newly installed mural reported:

- A sustained relative increase in collective efficacy, including social cohesion and trust among neighbors as well as informal neighborhood social control.
- A modest but sustained relative increase in perceptions of neighborhood aesthetic quality, including the quality of the walking environment and perceived neighborhood safety.
- A promising and sustained relative decrease (again at a statistical trend) in stigma toward individuals with mental health or substance abuse challenges.

(Kraemer-Tebes, et al, 201.,. p.iv)

This study of the impacts of a mural-based public art program is highly valuable to understanding the possibilities for public art. The authors used a controlled methodology over a two year period, and the results are promising. It is suggested that a similar methodology be undertaken to examine the impacts of other public art installations.

Considering all of the documented positive health effects of engaging with the arts, how do we reconcile conflicting reports of public art as a force for domination, and as a negative social presence? These voices are important as well, and they tell a story very different from the health related studies examining the impact of the arts. The factors that supply art its health benefits seem to relate to its content and aesthetic splendor and in the case of Zeki's findings, and in many of the other cases, interaction with art was deemed to have positive effects when there were elements of

participation in the act of creating the art. Thus, the content and co-authorship of public art could be said to generate positive effects.

Although few studies have been done about the health impacts of public art forms in everyday settings<sup>12</sup>, such as with murals, sculptures, and statues, the existing evidence suggests it is possible to interpret content as well as rely on the work of other disciplines in order to pinpoint the root of negative impacts of some public art. Regardless, the existing health-related studies are strong indicators that there are health benefits to public art if there are most certainly health benefits to individual engagement with art. This conclusion suggests that further studies should be undertaken, if possible to examine health impacts of public art exposure and engagement over time.

### **The Relationship between Nature and Public Art to Health**

Another key finding revealed by some of the studies examined is that there was a strong observed benefit of views of nature (green spaces, trees, outdoor plants) to various measurements of health and healing. This is important to mention because it suggests that models of public art for public health could be improved through the incorporation of green space and other elements of nature. These findings also highlight the importance of elements of nature, especially views to natural scenes (as opposed to building walls, for example) as they have a strong measurable impact on patients' well-being and speed of healing. (Ulrich, 1984) Similar effects have been observed in non-medical settings such as office buildings, where those who had views of nature were actually sick less often, as well as in general health evaluation (Maas, Verheij., Groenewegen., de Vries & Spreeuwenberg, 2006). These findings, coupled with the those on the health benefits of engagement with the arts suggests that planners and policymakers should seek to incorporate both of these measures simultaneously into city and town plans and that public health measures may be more effective when the aspects of art and nature are combined in programming and space planning.

Public art may have a stronger positive effect when it is placed into green space settings such as parks. The work of Mass, et al. also strongly urges that the incorporation of green space

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<sup>12</sup> It would likely be a challenging endeavor to control for the many other environmental factors in a public space because there are so many variables that could affect outcomes, however, the researchers at the Yale School of Medicine may come close. Refer to their methodology on p 8-22. (Kraemer-Tebes, et al., 2015)

must become a greater priority for spatial planning of cities, especially as densification and urbanization continues. It seems that while public art may be a highly useful addition to the public realm, green space is something that we cannot do without, lest our health begins to suffer<sup>13</sup>. The authors also highlight issues of unequal access to green space as a rising threat to public health. The same issue could be argued of public art, although inclusion of public art in lower socioeconomic areas has different issues, some of which relate to gentrification. These socially-related issues will be addressed in the subsequent sections.

## **The Social and Political Impacts of Public Art**

*Buildings are mechanisms of representation –systems of organizing things—and in that they are political constructions. (Wigley, 1995, p.72)*

Public art can be understood as part of what Lefebvre deemed *spatial practice*.

Explaining this concept, Malcom Miles states:

Lefebvre develops a precise terminology to distinguish the space of experience and everyday life with its embodied interactions, and that of abstract thought. This is the key part of his theorisation: The *spatial practice* of a society is its experience of space through what it collectively does: the use of gateways, methods of transporting goods and people, and marking the boundaries of property; representations of space are the perceptions or conceptions of space which use signs and codes to enable a common language of space – ‘conceptualized space, the space of scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers and social engineers’ and intellectually formulated devices, hierarchies of spaces, and the hierograph of everyday life known through its associated images, and involve non-verbal communication, appropriation, rituals, riots, markets and other aspects of life in the street. The formulation is a model, which Lefebvre sees as a whole, of: experience; perception and conceptualisation; imagination and feeling. (Miles, 1997, p.46.)

The key aspects of what Miles and Lefebvre describe are that space, its understanding and representation, are socially constructed. This understanding, also expressed by Nato Thompson (2015), stems from the view that knowledge and perception itself are socially constructed. Those in positions of power to control the form and content of space also control perception of those who move in the space. This is so of planners and policymakers, developers, and others who influence urban space, as well as artists whose work resides in these spaces either permanently or temporarily. Thus, with this power comes a high level of responsibility, and also opportunity to create environments which provide a high quality of life and promote creativity in society. Public Art is

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<sup>13</sup> Existing research suggests that “nature” and presence/views of greenspace is likely a direct mediator of health, and thus the relationship between nature and public art appears to be a hierarchical structure in terms of relative impact on human health. This point suggests the need for further research that compares and integrates the two variables more cohesively.

a powerful tool to this end, as it has the ability to inspire, to unite, to spark questioning, and more through its communicative nature.

Arguably, all art can be considered a form of communication, either with an observer, participant, or even with the self. There are messages and a language embedded within these forms, whether they are visual through paint on a wall, through bodily movements and dance or performance. Art in all facets possesses this communicative nature, and what it communicates determines its effect, as is the case with plain speech or text. All human structures, including buildings, may communicate some message or value which has social and/or political effect, yet, art, and art that interfaces with the realm of public space, possesses (or can possess in its highest form) the attribute of creativity that other human-created forms lack. This is why we call it “art”, because it is considered an act of creation, of authorship by the artist(s) brought into the world for the purpose of communicating their message alone. Creativity is where the power of transformation lies. Instrumentalist art, which is art that is deferent to another purpose, may lack some of the power of art for its own sake, which could be said of advertisements for products or billboards for social campaigns meant to change behavior, such as an anti-smoking billboard on the side a highway. Although there may be an artist involved, purely instrumental art is subservient to a social role of conversion, and this is likely why we do not refer to it as “art” per se.

Public art has complex social and political impacts due primarily to the complexity and variety of public art itself. Regardless of the extreme variation in form, it is possible to locate factors which produce both positive and negative impacts on society. This was shown in part by the aforementioned work of Marsaili et al. evaluating London’s *Be Creative Be Well* program which utilized 100 different projects of different types, yet almost all were found to have a positive impact on those involved. In the case of that particular program, the participatory aspects and the interaction with artists and project leaders were determined to be highly related to the positive impacts of the initiatives. Taking into consideration the great diversity of public art, this section represents a sampling of the forms that public art can assume, as well as diverse sets of social and political impacts.

The impacts of public art are highly tied to their usage and meaning, a combination of variables that determine those traits. The artist, the endorser, the location, the goals, and the messages conveyed in the works, the location, along with their interpretations all determine the

impact of a work of public art. Thus, understanding the social and political impacts of public art is necessarily complex, and arguably, each work must be engaged with individually to gain a deeper understanding of its impacts. However, examining a diverse set of examples may also point the way to common traits which render a work a bane to its society as well as those which render it a healer, enrichment, and inspiration.

### **Is All Public Art Political?**

It is necessary to note that much of the literature on the social and economic impacts of public art is itself highly politicized, and is often polarized as well. It begs the question, “is all public art inherently political due to its public nature? Jacques Ranciere (2004) answers this question definitively and finds a deeply entwined relationship between art and politics through their commandment of space and form. They are, to Ranciere, inseparable.

There is thus an ‘aesthetics’ at the core of politics that has nothing to do with Benjamin’s discussion of the ‘aestheticization of politics’ specific to the ‘age of the masses’. This aesthetics should not be understood as the perverse commandeering of politics by a will to art, by a consideration of the people qua work of art. If the reader is fond of analogy, aesthetics can be understood in a Kantian sense – re-examined perhaps by Foucault – as the system of *a priori* forms determining what presents itself to sense experience. It is a delimitation of spaces and times, of the visible and invisible, of speech and noise, that simultaneously determines the place and the stakes of politics as a form of experience. Politics revolves around what is seen and what can be said about it, around who has the ability to see and the talent to speak, around the properties of spaces and the possibilities of time. (Ranciere, 2004, p.8)

From reading Ranciere’s description, it seems there is an innate relationship between politics and art, and especially public art, through common power to command and shape space and meaning, essentially, the space in which we order our lives. Although art and politics may be inextricably connected on some level, not all public art contains decidedly political messages. However, a work’s placement and use may inevitably convey political messages and values. Thus, its placement must be done with care and with reverence to the principles which undergird ideals of political justice. This argument carries even more weight considering the context of democracy.

The assertion can be made that in a democracy, public space is crucial to the functioning of democracy itself due to the primacy of freedom of speech and necessity and right of assemblage. In this case, although the art itself may remain a product of a single mind, its installation and effects should be such to support the proper functioning of that space in its role as a conduit for expression and free thought, or at least not act as a hindrance to this effect. This effect may be achieved through

democratic modes of selection and installation, through representative bodies, and arguably through an avoidance, however tempting, of the creation on pseudo-public spaces which may be public-private partnerships in ownership or management (or if these structures are deemed necessary considering the current economic reality, then they must be regulated by the forces of democracy such that they do not become spaces of propaganda or threats to the democratic purpose of public space). Jacques Ranciere takes this argument further, stating, “The aesthetic regime of politics is strictly identical with the regime of democracy, the regime based on the assembly of artisans, inviolable written laws, and the theatre as institution” (Ranciere, 2004, p.9) This connection should not be forgotten as we examine the social, political, and economic impacts of public art.

### **The Monument and Memorial as Testament to the Complexity and Power of Public Art**

Some of the most highly recognizable works of public art are monuments and memorials. This genre of public art is characterized by an embodiment and promotion of messages about political and social history. Analyzing the meaning of monuments and memorials provides evidence as to the complexity of effect that these forms can create, as some may contribute to domination and oppression, while others contribute to collective healing or the instillation positive values. Prominent monuments/memorials in the United States include The Statue of Liberty, Mt. Rushmore (Tribute to Democracy), and The Vietnam War Memorial. These three well-known works of public art have very different histories, and their social meanings are divergent although they all reflect a shared history of the United States. Malcom Miles explains the significance of and problematizes the monument, stating:

Monuments are produced within a dominant framework of values, as elements in the construction of national history, just as such buildings as the Sydney Opera House contribute to a national cultural identity; they suppose at least a partial consensus of values, without which their narrative could not be recognized, although individual monuments may not retain their currency as particular figures fade in public memories, and individual buildings may be disliked. As a general category of cultural objects, however, monuments are familiar in the spaces of most cities, standing for a stability which conceals the internal contradictions of society and survives the day-to-day fluctuations of history. The majority in society is persuaded, by monuments amongst other civil institutions, to accept these contradictions, the monument becoming a device of social control less brutish and costly than armed force. (Miles, 1997, p.59)

Miles’ description of the monument is critical, and there is certainly evidence of his perspective in our society, and those beyond our borders. More authoritarian and totalitarian societies often provide exaggerated cases which speak to Miles’ criticism. The shrines and statues

dedicated to political leaders may stand as reflections of the dominant power structure and the ideologies and mythologies for which they stand<sup>14</sup>. North Korea currently possesses some of the most illustrative monuments which speak to this social and political effect of dominance and power. One such example is the *Arch of Triumph*. The structure, a stylized imitation of the Arc de Triomphe in Paris, France, was created in 1982 to honor President Kim II-Sung on his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday. It is constructed of 25,550 bricks, one for each day in Kim's life up to that point.



Figure 2: Arch of Triumph, Pyongyang, North Korea (Nicor, 2006)

The Arch of Triumph is a clear representation of a mythological history and grandeur of a political leader, and a case in point for Miles' view of the monument. It's visual dominance and scale relative to the size of other elements in the view shed creates a feeling of smallness in the viewer, and a sense of power and dominance of the structure, metaphorically representing the power and supposed greatness of the North Korean government and President Kim II-Sung.

Although the political and social history of the United States is highly divergent from that of North Korea, our monuments and memorials serve the similar role of promulgating and normalizing a version of history as well as the values implicit in that depiction. One such case that is closer to home is that of the statues of confederate generals strewn across the state of Texas on

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<sup>14</sup> Also refer to Peter Kenez' (1999) History of the Soviet Union where he recounts the use of propaganda throughout the regime to structure and control people's beliefs and actions.

public lands, one of which previously resided at The University of Texas. Some have argued that the monuments are simply innocuous relics of the past, or pieces of history that should not be removed, while others see them as tacit endorsements of the anti-heroism and rejected values exemplified by the enshrined individual<sup>15</sup>. Following the argument of Miles, the latter role dominates. Apparently, the University of Texas agreed, as it removed the statue of Confederate President Jefferson Davis during the summer of 2015. In light of the removal, one student commented, "I think that this more than anything, it is a fantastic first step for showing support for students of color, for really anything that students identify as an impairment to their personal experience, education or their personal growth." (Adeniyi, 2015). It is clear to see that these monuments have an impact on the minds and lives of those who interface with them, and the impact can be the creation of an environment that feels hostile, and one that reinforces failing narratives of the past which have since been reframed. In cases such as these, it is the public who judges these structures and installations, and we the people who must interpret and decipher their true meaning. In cases of literal, life-like representations, this is often easier than where expressions are more abstract and symbolic. Although some symbols are recognizable through their common cultural language, some enable closer introspection and wider individual interpretation. Maya Lin's Vietnam War Memorial is one such example; and it is one that has been lauded for its honesty and healing impact on society. Visitors to the minimalist designed memorial bearing the names of all those killed during the Vietnam War are regularly photographed in emotional and contemplative states. Lin's memorial has served the positive role of healer while seeking to present truth objectively as opposed to exaggerate or construct a collective mythology. Of her work, Lin states:

Obviously I built a memorial that asked us to accept death as the primary cost of war. Having studied countless other memorials, I found that this is rarely discussed at a national level, though it is sometimes addressed at a local level...I wouldn't say it's anti-heroic. I would say it is anti-monumental, intimate. No matter how public my work gets, it remains intimate, one-on-one with the individual. Even though I use text, I never use text like a billboard, which a hundred people can read collectively. The way you read a book is a very intimate experience and my works are like books in public areas. I think that is what has made people respond to my work in a quiet way. Again, I think gender and my Asian-American heritage play a role. (Finkelpearl, 2000, p.118-121)

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<sup>15</sup> See Adeniyi (2015) where Luqman recounts the conflict over the Jefferson Davis statue on the University of Texas campus. After a long-standing debate within the university, the statue was removed. The Sons of Confederate Veterans has vowed to fight to have the statue returned to campus, arguing that it is a symbol of their, and Texas' heritage.

Memorials and monuments have the ability to function in a way that preserves the autonomy of the viewer to make his or her own mind up as to the meaning of the content displayed while also embodying values that the artist wishes to convey. They may also convey emotions that allow for collective feeling and processing of social and political events.

In contrast to permanent, physical structures temporary installations may assume the role of monument or memorial. Although they have been perceived by some as a form of activism, they may also be considered a form of living art, or performance art, as these types of enactments may allow for personal interpretation in a similar fashion to Maya Lin's Vietnam War Memorial. One such example is the *Tank Man Tango*, a public dance performance first acted out in the year 2009, that has since spread to multiple locations and has been re-enacted over the years as a living memorial to those who perished during the Tiananmen Square Massacre in China on June 4, 1989 in which Communist forces forcefully removed and killed thousands of pro-democracy protestors. Deborah Kelly created this work of living public art by uploading an instructional video online of a dance routine paying homage to a lone man who was photographed standing directly in the path of moving tanks with grocery bags in his hands, instructing viewers how and when to carry out the performance. During the performances, dancers with grocery bags in hand move methodically and in sync imitating the bold actions of the lone man who became an icon for this struggle<sup>16</sup>. Although his identity remains unknown, his simple act of disobedience was photographed, and his image became a symbol of defiance in the face of oppression. This act of public art embodied values of protection of universal human rights and against forces of oppression, while prompting onlookers to stare in wonderment, provoking closer examination and possibly research that could lead to a more profound understanding of the art performance. As for the participants, they are able to step into the shoes of the lone man, to feel the emotions contained in that moment, and to act defiantly, if only in metaphor, as the Chinese "Tank Man". On this impact, Kelly and her colleague state:

People gathered to pay homage, to learn how courage feels, to remember in their skins. They made the memorial to show solidarity, to promise resistance, to bring life to history and make it their own. It connected people internationally - giving them a way to collectively engage with ongoing violations of human rights and articulate them powerfully in public. (Kelly & Niemann, 2009)

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<sup>16</sup> See Doherty (2015).

The *Tank Man Tango* provides an opportunity for collective healing from injustice as it embodies acts of political struggle, at the same time, the performance contains elements of the absurd with its strange appearance in the public realm.

These elements of absurdity relate to what Claire Bishop deems an aspect of *negation*. In Bishop's striking analysis of participatory public art, she finds that participatory public art is able to "emancipate [the audience] from a state of alienation," (Bishop, 2012, p.275) informing participants and viewers through deeply symbolic gestures. She states:

The dominant narrative that emerges from the examples surveyed in the book is one of negation: activation of the audience in participatory art is positioned against its mythic counterpart, passive spectatorial consumption. Participation thus forms part of a larger narrative that traverses modernity: 'art must be directed against contemplation, against spectatorship, against the passivity of the masses paralyzed by the spectacle of modern life. This desire to activate the audience in participatory art is at the same time a drive to emancipate it from a state of alienation induced by the dominant ideological order—be this consumer capitalism, totalitarian socialism, or military dictatorship. Beginning from this premise, participatory art aims to restore and realise a communal, collective space of shared engagement. But this is achieved in different ways: either through constructivist gestures of social impact, which refute the injustice of the world by proposing an alternative, or through a nihilist redoubling of alienation, which negates the world's injustice and illogicality on its own terms. In both instances, the work seeks to forge a collective, co-authoring, participatory social body—but one does this affirmatively (through utopian realization), the other indirectly (through negation of negation). (Bishop, 2012, p.275)

Bishop finds that participatory public art is powerful in its use of human beings as a medium of expression which enables participants to be empowered co-authors forming and reforming impressions of society. What she describes is a public art that although not totally enmeshed with the work of activism, is able to prompt deep questioning and to point out inconsistencies and injustice in our society. This is certainly a useful impact of public art, especially in a democratic society where free thought and free speech is advocated as a main tenet.

It is, however, important to clarify the difference between public art with a social role or message and art which seeks to "convert" or proselytize, because the difference likely renders the latter to a realm more of propaganda than art, as it does not allow the viewer/participant the space to make up her or his own mind as to the meaning of the work. To illustrate this point, Claire Bishop utilizes the example of Schilingensief's *Please Love Austria* (2002), an installation which calls attention to the xenophobic political activities of the time by creating a mock detention facility in a Big Brother-style compound where "refugees" are voted out of the compound by online viewers.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Schilingensief created an online television station where the activities of the "refugees" could be monitored constantly during the project period. He allowed online viewers to then "vote out" their least

Bishop notes that Schilingensief's goal was to arouse and agitate the populace, a goal which he accomplished quite successfully. Crowds gathered around the site and engaged in heated debate throughout the installation.



Figure 3: Photo collage of people debating and engaging the installation. (Poet, 2000)

On the work's role of engagement versus conversion, Bishop states:

The point is not about 'conversion', for that reduces the work to a question of propaganda. Rather, Schilingensief's project draws attention to the contradictions of political discourse in Austria at that moment. The shocking fact is that Schilingensief's container caused more public agitation and distress than the presence of a real deportation centre a few miles outside Vienna. The disturbing lesson of Please Love Austria is that an artistic representation of detention has more power to attract dissensus than an actual institution of detention. In fact, Schilingensief's model of 'undemocratic' behaviour corresponds precisely to 'democracy' as practised in reality. This contradiction is at the core of Schilingensief's artistic efficacy –and it is the reason why political conversion is not the primary goal of art, why artistic representations continue to have a potency that can be harnessed to disruptive ends, and why Please Love Austria is not (and never should be seen as) morally exemplary. Participatory art is not an automatic formula for political art, but one strategy (among many) that can be deployed in particular contexts to specific ends. (Bishop, 2012, p.282-283)

The goal of "converting" is not wholly compatible with allowing a space for an autonomous decision or transformation. Therefore, as Bishop also asserts, it seems probable that for public art to retain its social and political potency, it must also retain a level of abstractness that allows for divergent modes of engagement and debate. In fact, this debate itself may be one of the

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favorite refugees. The last refugee remaining at the end would be "rewarded" with a chance of Austrian citizenship. This whole endeavor, with refugees played by actors was filmed and released as a cinema project after the actual public art installation. (Bishop, 2012, p. 277-283)

most desirable facets a work of public art can produce, and one that is compatible with functioning notions of democracy.

### **Public Art as Rebellion and the Case of Normalization**

Bishop's vision of public art provides a stark contrast with that embodied by most traditional monuments and memorials. She sees the power of public art in its defiance of dominant narratives, while permanent physical monuments and memorials tend to reflect dominant, established narratives about history. There is arguably room in-between for works that cannot easily be classified on this sort of continuum, and at times, works which emerge as acts of rebellion may become normalized through gaining wide social admiration and governmental acceptance of their presence. Cases of graffiti and street art which are created illegally, but allowed to remain by governments and building owners provide a clear example of this phenomenon. The work of international artist, Banksy provides a testament to an acceptance of once illicit art. Will Ellsworth-Jones of Smithsonian Magazine states,

Most of his fans don't really want to know who he is (and have loudly protested Fleet Street attempts to unmask him). But they do want to follow his upward trajectory from the outlaw spraying—or, as the argot has it, “bombing”—walls in Bristol, England, during the 1990s to the artist whose work commands hundreds of thousands of dollars in the auction houses of Britain and America. Today, he has bombed cities from Vienna to San Francisco, Barcelona to Paris and Detroit. And he has moved from graffiti on gritty urban walls to paint on canvas, conceptual sculpture and even film, with the guileful documentary *Exit Through the Gift Shop*, which was nominated for an Academy Award. (Ellsworth-Jones, 2013)

It is quite a strange social phenomenon when work which was originally placed illegally becomes regarded as highly valuable in this way, and it is especially fascinating that Banksy's work also contains obvious social commentary that is highly critical of the current economic, political, and social reality. Yet, these works somehow become normalized and absorbed into the dominant culture, due to their high aesthetic quality and strategic placement. This could be seen as a case of the absurd itself becoming normalized, or possibly it demonstrates a thread of rebellion within the culture surrounding the work. Of this dynamic, Nato Thompson states, “Illegality as an aesthetic is just the most obvious in a whole range of interventionist and cultural acts that are keenly aware of their position in relationship to existing mechanisms of power” (Thompson, 2015, p.123). When a work loses this illegality, to Thompson, it also loses some of its social power. Regardless of whether we accept that a legitimized work loses some of its power, this case clearly demonstrates that the impact of a work of art is highly context-dependent (Thompson, 2015, p.122).

## **Public Art for Place and Cultural Identity**

Although the roles of promulgator, commentator, healer, and critic are significant, public art is capable of much more than this. Public art may also serve to form an identity of place through imagery which captures elements of culture, and even images which seem to lack any representational elements can define space creating elements of place identity. By adding distinguished visual elements such as variations in shape, color, texture, etc..., a work of public art becomes an aspect of space which differentiates it from all others. In this way it acts as a marker of identity of place, regardless of its content. When content is more referenced to recognizable forms, a work may also contribute to a sense of collective identity and the culture of a place.

The “Hi, How Are You?” mural in Austin, Texas provides an example of public art which has come to embody the city’s “Keep Austin Weird” cultural identity, as a city which purportedly celebrates difference and honors deviation from the mainstream. The image of a spray-painted alien-like frog asking the viewer, “Hi, how are you?” was commissioned by a music store for the side of their building. The artist, also a musician and a man diagnosed with schizophrenia, is symbolic of a counter-culture which values oddity, but also somehow accepts difference and difficulty in human life. (Solomon, 2010)

Johnston's career pries open the assumptions and hypocrisies that surround "outsider art" in this country. His work has a disturbing found-object innocence, yet in his lucid moments he's as ambitious as any working musician (and when he goes off the rails, his monomania is the dark side of rock-star excess). Johnston is a willing participant in his fame, but how much do his fans respond to the music and how much to his status as a hip train wreck? Where's the line between exploitation (including self-exploitation) and admiration? If Daniel Johnston weren't mentally ill, would anyone listen to his songs? (Burr, 2006)

The image has in some ways become a brand of its own, appearing on t-shirts, mugs, and other for-sale items. The image could also be argued a representation of “the absurd” of which Claire Bishop speaks, but in this case it is an endearing image which engages the viewer through a direct question about the viewer’s well-being. On a deeper psychological level, this sends a message that possibly, someone out there cares. The image also has connections to the genre of punk rock and to Kurt Cobain, lead singer of Nirvana, who helped popularize the image of the frog through wearing t-shirts emblazoned with the figure. (Burr, 2006) Thus, there are complex messages embedded in this simple image, all of which have somehow blended together to form a cultural icon for Austinites and a popular photo-shoot spot for tourists.

This case also illustrates that public art need not be participatory in the sense of a performance in order to have an effect on a viewer and a society. Contrary to Bishop’s assertion,

passive spectatorship need not be a social liability, and instead may allow for positive personal transformation<sup>18</sup>.

### **Public Art's Role in Personal Transformation**

In accordance with the research of Jeffrey K. Smith (2014) and others, reflective viewing of art has the ability to transform and lift humanity. Smith states,

I believe that museums have a civilizing effect on society that can affect not only communities, but also one person at a time. That is, people who visit museums and use the opportunity of that visit to reflect upon their lives and society become “better” people as a result of that visit. This is a somewhat daring claim, but I believe it to be true, and hope to convince you of that in the ensuing pages. I don’t believe it happens to every visitor, or with any visitor on every visit, but I think it is a phenomenon that occurs frequently within the halls of the museum. (Smith, 2014, p.xi)

It seems then, that the content and meaning and context of the work may be most influential when examining the effect of a work of art, and possibly an individual’s level of attention to the work. The Perez Museum of Modern Art in Miami, Florida provides an example of an otherwise traditional museum space which features work which promotes deep reflection in this way, as Smith’s work suggests museums can. Tony Capellán’s *Mar Caribe*, is a floor installation comprised entirely of flip-flop sandals in various shades of blue and green designed to look like the Caribbean Sea. This piece contains strong social messages upon closer examination and a reading of the plaque accompanying the work. The “sea of sandals” is comprised of shoes found by the artist in an impoverished area in the Caribbean, and the work is intended to highlight the stark contrast between the beauty of the natural environment and the desperate concentration of poverty of which many observers may be unaware. Public art operates on various cognitive levels and allows varying depths of engagement. A viewer might simply walk by and think, “This looks interesting!” and continue moving along not to contemplate further meaning. Alternatively, a viewer could stop, look very closely at the installation and notice upon closer examination, that straps of these hundreds of sandals had been replaced with barbed wire. That closer inspection alone might be enough to send a chill through the viewer, or to prompt further reading about the work, in search of its deeper meaning. The opportunity is there, if taken, to seriously consider the lives those hundreds of individuals whose sandals were seemingly washed away in the gleaming blue sea. A moment of

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<sup>18</sup> The impacts of making and viewing art differ, and although both types of engagement with art may have positive effects, making art seems to have the most personally therapeutic effects. The comparison of effects from making versus viewing art deserves further research.

deep introspection and a change of perspective is possible. Although Jeffrey K. Smith examines this phenomenon through the viewing of many pieces of art in a short museum visit, this same effect may be extended to the consideration of isolated works, and those found in public spaces as well.



Figure 4: Tony Capellan's Installation: *Mar Caribe*. (Goodrum, 2015)

This example stems from personal experience, and it directly embodies the type of experience Smith describes.

### **Small Scale Public Art Interventions for Social Engagement and Creative Reuse**

Public art does not have to occur on a grand scale in order to produce positive impacts in society. Smaller artistic interventions may also have powerful social effects. Trail Towns, a community and economic development organization working in small towns in Maryland and Pennsylvania around trail tourism and outdoor recreation has identified ways public art can benefit small communities. They find that public art can:

1. Engage young people
2. Create a sense of place
3. Advocate creative reuse of space

They state that, “community art projects can help young people become socially conscious, confident, and responsible individuals that can continue to shape and promote a healthy, balanced community” (“Three Ways Art Improves Small Communities”, 2011). They cite an example of children partaking in a community public-art project in which 13 telephone poles

throughout the town of Confluence, Pennsylvania were chosen to become sites of painting and design by local students. According to the authors, the project focused on students, but the entire community was invited to participate as well. This inclusive approach allowed for young and old to work together to create works of art that exemplified the history and culture of the town. This type of public art reflects an example of a small-scale intervention that can be utilized in communities of all sizes. Other small-scale projects may include the community painting of a mural, painting park benches, or even collaboration with a local artist to design elements for a public space, such as light fixtures or sidewalk designs. These types of initiatives are able to create a sense of ownership and pride in one's community because they involve becoming a co-author of shared space. They also may allow for the creation of meaning in the lives of participants and viewers, and may have tangible benefits such as improving sense of place and wayfinding ability. In fact, this is what Trail Towns finds as well.

They find that art helps define one's surroundings "by providing something unique in your community whether a mural, sculpture, or gallery" ("Three Ways Art Improves Small Communities", 2011). Adding unique elements is helpful to differentiating one area of a town or city from other areas. This also has positive effects on tourism due to increased wayfinding ability through noting distinct elements, as well as the potential for the site to become a draw in and of itself. This facet will be addressed in greater detail in the section focusing on economic development.

Trail Towns' third finding, that art advocates creative reuse, has positive social and economic development aspects. Reuse may pertain to the use of space or of objects. In the case of objects, Trail Towns recognizes that many artists reuse discarded objects to create new pieces of art. They cite an installation by Hostetler and Gurzenda who used old bike and train parts to create a sculpture of a steam locomotive representing the town of Rockwood's history and trajectory forward. Art has also been used to provide a temporary "face lift" to vacant retail spaces. Having something of visual interest in these vacant spaces not only provides a higher quality visual experience, and it may also aid a community struggling with retail vacancy by promoting an atmosphere of possibility. It demonstrates that the space and area have not been forgotten or abandoned, which itself may have a social-psychological effect of making the community itself feel as if it has not been abandoned also. Art has the potential to spark creative ideas for filling these spaces permanently, and the practice may also benefit local artists by providing free space for their work to be shown and/or produced. Revolve Detroit, one organization using this strategy for

economic development as well as for general promotion of the City and its arts and entrepreneurship outlines their mission related to the arts as follows:

*Re-imagining neighborhoods through creative expression*

- Use the arts to spur economic development and neighborhood revitalization
- Showcase Detroit’s world-class art scene to new audiences in-person and online
- Transform the image and potential of Detroit’s historic neighborhoods (“What We Do”, 2015)

Economic development and planning agencies across the U.S. have undertaken similar strategies, usually in the context of area revitalization. The economic impacts of this practice will be addressed in greater detail in the following section.

Jared Green of *The Dirt* (2012), believes that “public art can revolutionize urban planning” using small scale interventions that can also lead to bigger changes in planning policy and practice. He cites Candy Chang’s informational public art projects, which seek to “break down barriers between design professions, studying architecture, graphic design, and urban planning to create a new hybrid approach to solve the complex problems facing communities.” (Green, 2012) One such project of Chang’s is “Post-It Notes for Neighbors” project that enabled residents to communicate with their neighbors about how much they paid for rent in New York City. Chang used a store display window with Post-Its affixed where residents could fill in blanks about their rent cost, length of stay at their current location,<sup>19</sup> This public art project created new lines of communication within the community and could be used as a tool for housing advocates, planners, and policymakers. *Urban Omnibus*, an online publication which focuses on urban design and planning states,

At *Urban Omnibus*, we are way into her work because it makes urban systems and possibilities visible while bringing a much-needed sense of narrative and personality to the all-too-often dry world of wayfinding, data visualization and public information exchange. In the process, she articulates an important field of action for designers of all disciplines. (“Post It Notes for Neighbors”, 2009)

Of her own work, Chang finds the possibility in small interactions between neighbors. She states,

Residents are brimming with local knowledge, from the trivial to the empowering: the best slice of pizza, the nearest place to donate clothes, the latest news on the power outage, and the lowdown on yesterday’s community board meeting. All of these fragments of local information are dispersed amongst a population within a defined area, and lots of people would benefit from the knowledge and resources of others (Chang, 2009)

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<sup>19</sup> See Chang (2009). Chang was able to compile data on housing and put it into a graphical form that could serve area residents and policymakers. One message that emerged was that longer stays were highly associated with lower rents, suggesting personal economic benefit from staying in place.

Work like Chang's demonstrates the power of public art to inform the practice of planning, and may pave the way for more creative planning interventions which are able to identify and operate on aspects of urban existence in ways traditional methods have been inadequate.

### **Complexity and Connections within the Social and Political Literature**

The examples of public art outlined in this section demonstrate a wide range of typologies of public art, as well as wide ranging uses, impacts, and meanings. This section both problematizes and demonstrates the complexity of public art. Even within the same typology, we can observe that impacts may be highly divergent due to factors such as the context, interpretation of meaning of the work.

Another issue highlighting the complexity and challenge of evaluating public art is that the public may disagree about its merits. What if a work of public art is loathed by its community? This type of response to art has occurred, and when it does, it presents a challenge to governing bodies in communities. An example which provides a democratic solution to such a dilemma is the sculpted bust of Nefertiti originally commissioned to reside south of Cairo, Egypt. The sculpture was considered by many Egyptians as a gruesome misrepresentation of the famed queen. Jonathon Jones of *The Guardian* (2015) recounts the unfolding of the statue's removal:

Egyptian bloggers and Twitter users soon called it "Frankenstein" and denounced it as "an insult to Nefertiti and to every Egyptian". So far so typical – public art often gets derided. But then something unusual happened: the people were listened to. Samalut authorities have responded by removing the hideous Nefertiti, and say they will put up a peace dove instead. (Jones, 2015)

The public's response to the statue was so negative, and organized, that the authorities governing the art's placement decided to remove and replace it. As a policymaker and planner, these types of decisions are challenging because they support the notion that public art must be accepted in order to remain. But what of art that has the power to provoke in a positive way, leading to revelations and social change? Arguably, the democratic solution, although possibly not producing the best outcome in every situation, is still the option which best preserves justice in determining what to do with controversial art. These examples of difficulty also point to the inclusion of more community-created work as it is generally more likely to be accepted because it already has a portion of community members as co-creators.

## **The Economic Impacts of Public Art**

The preceding sections have demonstrated positive health, social, and political impacts of public art, while these installations and activities have also been problematized by critics from a social and political, standpoint. The criticisms leveraged against public art often turn out to also be criticisms of the prevailing social, political, and economic order. Thus, they are mostly criticisms of public art's instrumentalism and misuse to manipulate, dominate, and distort truth and reality. A work's content and message, as well as the ways in which it is brought into and stationed in space determine its impact, as we can see by examining works of the same typology which have radically different interpretations and effects. Of the criticisms lodged at public art, there are quite a few which relate to the commodification of art and the person, which critics like Nato Thompson see as a product of the capitalist system. Although many of his criticisms are valid, one could argue that it is not necessarily an economic system which is at fault when it comes to a misuse of art, but of a deeper rooted fault in humanity that seems to emerge in most societies regardless of the prevailing economic system: those are a drive to greed and power. By examining history, one finds that these traits show up from the beginning of recorded history, and they have been challenged over the course of human history as well. Public art has had a role both as enforcer of and as rebel against these elements. Although many argue that certain works of art are timeless, all works are inevitably rooted in their times. This is important to recognize, because the same can be said of public art used for economic development today.

Art may be autonomous, but it speaks using the language of its day, although some art seems able to transcend existing language to create new forms of communication, thus altering the course of the aesthetic and actual language of a society in the process. Within this process, a dialogic relationship emerges. Systems do not create people. People create systems, and we respond to and react to these systems, being shaped by them in the process. Public art works this way with the society that surrounds it.

This section acknowledges the criticisms of public art while also finding great contributions and possibility that may bring improvement in economic conditions for cities and individuals at various economic statuses.<sup>20</sup> It turns out that the arts, and public art specifically may

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<sup>20</sup> It is important to note that the discussion here relies on sources from with the existing capitalist system in the politically mixed democratic regime of the United States. This discussion notes both positive and negative effects of public art without claiming a specific economic stance. The examination is intended to serve to identify possibilities and new ways of being while avoiding potential negative impacts on all

universally support economic development, regardless of how economic development is conceived, whether from the prevailing capitalist growth model in the United States which focuses on competition, free exchange, and accumulation of capital, to qualitative and/or sustainable growth models. This is due to art's ability to inspire, to spark innovation and new ways of thinking, to point out the unseen, and to critique, pointing the way towards new possibilities within all systems.

### **How Public Art Enhances Economic Development**

The American Planning association, as part of a collaborative project with RMC Research Corporation and funding from the Rockefeller Foundation created an arts and culture briefing paper to outline the positive economic impacts from public art and arts related industries. The paper is authored by M. Christine Dwyer of RMC Research Corporation, Kelly Ann Beavers of Virginia Tech, and edited by Kimberly Hodgson of the American Planning Association. They found strong links between a community's arts and culture sector and its economic vitality. They state that arts, culture, and creativity can:

- Improve a community's edge
- Create a foundation for defining a sense of place
- Attract new and visiting populations
- Integrate the visions of community and business leaders
- Contribute to the development of a skilled workforce

(Dwyer, et al., 2011)

Through examining arts and economic development practices from around the country, the authors find that conventional economic development practices can be greatly enhanced through collaboration with arts related initiatives. They state:

Traditional outcomes of economic development in planning include job creation, increased tax revenues, increased property values, increased retail activity, and more sustained economic vitality. These goals are often pursued through programs such as workforce development, recruitment, amenity packages for firms, local property investment, and policies that support business. When combined with creative approaches, these traditional programs can create a richer context for economic development. (Dwyer, et al., 2011)

The authors cite key points that can inform planning and economic development policy. These are as follows:

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members of society. The hope is that art may be able to help people in the here and now, even if it is unable to resolve complex economic challenges.

- Keypoint #1: Economic development is enhanced by concentrating creativity through both physical density and human capital
- Keypoint #2: The recognition of a community's arts and culture assets is an important element of economic development
- Keypoint #3: Arts and cultural activities in an area can draw crowds from within and around the community
- Keypoint #4: Planners can make deliberate connections between the arts and culture sector and other sectors (Dwyer, et al., 2011)

Keypoints #1 and #2 relate to Richard Florida's argument about the rise of the "creative class", and the concept that in today's increasingly service-based, creative economy, that those working in this growing sector typically want to live in places where there is a concentration of creative industry and arts, as well as opportunities for experiential living, which include entertainment options, fine dining, music, performances, outdoor activities, and others (Florida, 2002). The APA summarizes this relationship as "concentrations of cultural enterprises and creative workers in a geographic area provide a competitive edge, likely by elevating the quality of life, improving a community's ability to attract economic activity, and creating a climate in which innovation can flourish" (Dwyer, et al., 2011). Particularly encouraging is the connection made between quality of life and economic development. It seems self-evident that people want to live in places that offer a high quality of life, and when facets that contribute to this come to be in higher market demand, it benefits a municipality through business attraction and it benefits the residents who are able to enjoy the higher quality of life. The growing connection between economic development and quality of life also relates to the concept of *qualitative* economic development. Of this concept, Fritjof Capra and Hazel Henderson state:

In the human realm, the notion of quality always seems to include references to human experiences, which are subjective aspects. For example, the quality of a person's health can be assessed in terms of objective factors, but it includes a subjective experience of well-being as a significant element. Similarly, the quality of a human relationship derives largely from subjective mutual experiences. The aesthetic quality of a work of art, as the saying goes, is in the eye of the beholder. Since all qualities arise from processes and patterns of relationships, they will necessarily include subjective elements if these processes and relationships involve human beings.

Accordingly, many of the new indicators of a country's progress use multi-disciplinary, systemic approaches with appropriate metrics for measuring the many aspects of quality of life. For example, the Calvert-Henderson Quality of Life Indicators measure 12 such aspects and use monetary coefficients only where appropriate while rejecting the conventional macroeconomic tool of aggregating all these qualitatively different aspects into a single number, like GDP. Similarly, the UN's HDI, launched in 1990, which has become the principle contender in complementing GDP, brings in such qualitative measures of poverty, health, gender, equity, education, social inclusion, and environment –none of which can be reduced to money-coefficients or aggregated into a simple number. (Capra & Henderson, 2009)

Apart from the subjective experiences that Capra and Henderson acknowledge as aspects of qualitative well-being, complexity may be a factor underlying the notion of “quality”.<sup>21</sup> It also seems that what we refer to as subjectivity may actually be a factor of complexity as well. We state that an individual’s internal evaluation and feeling state is “subjective” because it is inaccessible to an outside viewer and because it is necessarily a highly complex state of being that current scientific tools do not have the ability to evaluate holistically, although some have tried using MRI brain scans and other scientific tools to explain these phenomena occurring internally in humans. The same way of thinking could be applied to understanding the impact of public art on economic development, as well as on economic development itself. Art embodies subjective experience, and it is interpretable by others as well, although within the process are complex elements of reality which we describe as subjective due to their complexity, and the inability to have direct access to the mind of the artist, or to the mind of the viewer<sup>22</sup>. The process of reflection on a mural, sculpture, music, or performance entails attention to complexity and meaning, a process that can spark a qualitative change within the viewer.

As to Keypoint #3, the APA finds that arts and cultural activities can increase traffic to an area and increase the amount of time and money that visitors spend, thereby contributing to the success of area businesses. They also cite that communities can help revitalize underutilized space through placement of art, increasing an area’s attractiveness and suggesting creative uses for the space. One such program they cite is the Boston Art Windows program which transforms vacant street side retail space into temporary art galleries.

Boston Art Windows is a collaboration between the city and local artists aiming to fill vacant storefronts in the Downtown Crossing area with exhibits that draw pedestrians. The space is a streetside art gallery incorporating interactive video, lighting, and sound to encourage passersby to pause and enjoy the spectacle. One artist’s camera records the movements of pedestrians and plays them back in time-delayed video loops that eventually cover a screen. The redevelopment authority involves curators with the storefront show, seeing the exhibit as an opportunity to facilitate changes to Downtown Crossing as economic development continues (Dwyer, et al., 2011)

This type of program is beneficial to the neighborhood in that it counters negative effects of vacancy as well as to artists who are able to show their work to the public. These types of initiatives also provide entertainment value and the potential to improve a community’s image.

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<sup>21</sup> See Benedict & Oden (2011).

<sup>22</sup> In other words, an external observation of another human’s internal state does not negate the possibility of an objective reality. The complexity of external experiences combined with different internal states suggests the possibility of different *interpretations* of single aspects of reality.

Keypoint #4 suggests that planners should work to establish connections between the arts and other industries in order to create partnerships which benefit the partners and the community as a whole. They state, “The talents of artists (especially related to design and communication) can enhance the value of local products and services and increase dissemination” (Dwyer, et al., 2011). An example of this paradigm working in a positive way is Connecticut’s Cultural and Tourism Partnership Grants that seek to combine tourism, film, and other arts organizations. The program’s goals are to enhance tourism through programs such as film and arts festivals, garden and museum trails, seasonal craft fairs and other events which support the arts as well as local economy. They require that lead applicants be non-profits, although they allow non-profits to partner with for-profit companies for funding (Dwyer, et al., 2011). The activities that these programs espouse allow the implementation of art in public places, which is beneficial to the community through access to the arts as well as to the governing body through potentially increased revenues from the proportional increases in economic activity.

Supporting the findings and suggestions of the American Planning Association, the Texas Cultural Trust, an organization promoting and examining the benefits of arts and culture on economic and societal well-being in Texas has documented a strong economic impacts associated with the arts. In a recent press release highlighting the key findings of their *Texas Cultural Trust 2015 State of the Arts Report*, the organization states:

The economic results, compiled from state and federal data sets, highlight how the 42 Art and Culture Industries collectively generate \$5.1 billion for Texas’ economy, and contribute nearly \$320 million in state sales tax revenue annually. TCT research over the years shows how this economic impact has grown steadily since 2003, increasing 24.6 percent over the past 10 years. (Sarver, 2015)

From reviewing the 2015 report, it seems evident that the arts and culture sector comprises an important part of the Texas economy. It is important to note, however, that a large portion of the “arts and culture” sector is represented by fields such as computer, mathematical, life, physical, and social science, and engineering, making “fine arts” a small piece of the equation in determining direct economic impacts from jobs and this part of the “sector” and even more challenging if we are interested in art in the public realm specifically. (*The Art of Ensuring a Bright Future for Texas: Texas Cultural Trust 2015 State of the Arts Report*. 2015) However, their 2015 findings provide useful evidence as to the positive impact of arts on students’ academic performance which refer to fine arts specifically. They find that students with more art classes have up to 15% higher pass rates on standardized tests and also that high school students who complete at least one art class are half

as likely to drop out. Obviously, the inverse relationship that must be considered in examining these effects, however, the findings of the other aforementioned studies related to the positive psychological impacts of engagement with the arts suggest that the causative relationship may be determined to be the arts impacting educational performance and student well-being as the Texas Cultural Trust suggests. They summarize these benefits as follows, echoing what the APA and Richard Florida have also suggested:

“The arts are integral to preserving our rich, vibrant Texas culture; they increasingly play a vital role in our economy, and now, we can show they also contribute to student success,” said Jennifer Ransom Rice, Trust Executive Director. “Our data show students engaged in arts education have lower dropout rates, greater graduation rates, and greater rates of enrollment in higher education. Investing in the arts is a clear investment in Texas future.” (Sarver, 2015)

### **Contradiction: Art and Instrumentalism**

Although the arts may have the aforementioned positive effects, critics such as Nato Thompson worry about the arts being misused when they are an instrument of a consumptive economy. Thompson is concerned about the increasing privatization of public space and well as the monopolization of art by power structures in perpetuation of social and economic inequality (Thompson, 2015). He states:

All too often, the ambiguous gesture conceals the nonambiguous political economy of capitalism. This is the lesson of the cultural industry. This knowledge of advertising culture has vastly eroded any trust one might have for the complex or ambiguous. The encroachment of capitalism’s manipulation into the very fabric of art, speech, journalism, books, homes, and philosophy has produced a radically paranoid public, which is likely to interpret even liberatory theorizing as just a transparent maneuver for social status. This is scrutiny as survival act: only through skepticism can we hope to understand what’s really going on. (Thompson, 2015, p.49)

Thompson sees capitalism as imbuing the arts and culture sector, which he finds renders it manipulative<sup>23</sup>. Without wholly accepting the ties to capitalism, one can still see aspects of instrumentalism, either a move to power or even more innocuous economic development within the arts and culture sectors. These dimensions of artistic expression are most evident in the enormous spending on advertising, an art existing principally to persuade someone to buy something on the market. In her book, *Undermining: A Wild Ride through Land Use, Politics, and Art in the Changing West*, Lucy Lippard recounts the history of injustice involving the destruction of land previously belonging to Native Americans and housing sacred sites and lands. She also

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<sup>23</sup> Also see Lucy Lippard (2014).

recounts the collective mythology surrounding the American West, along with it, the art and media that has sprung up along both story lines. She states,

Spanish writer Pepe Baeza contends that both press and documentary images have become pawns of the advertising industry, a co-optation necessary to business because reality interferes and conflicts with marketing. Because the same images are used for everything, reality is reduced to “stereotypes that conceal the diversity of the phenomena to which they refer, and conceal the most obvious information—who is benefitting from such injustice and violence.” While blockbuster photography, war correspondence, and the spectacular continue to get most of the attention, the social consequences in place are often neglected. (Lippard, 2014, p.172-173)

What both Lippard and Thompson see is that public art forms assume a form of imagery that is used to distort reality and to create a public perception of events, social/political situations, and products that benefits those with power, often in subtle ways that are defined less by what they state than by what they omit.

These are valid concerns that planners and policymakers should remain aware of when public art programs take shape. In the current cultural climate, there is sometimes a sense that corporate funding and advertising is a requirement for the success of programming, especially with the arts, yet, nothing is inevitable. As Thompson also suggests, it is up to the voting public and artists themselves to remain aware and to act to preserve the publicness of public space, as well as to ensure that the arts are able to remain *art* as opposed to propaganda or advertisement.

### **Does Public Art Promote Gentrification?**

There has been debate for some time whether public art and artists themselves promote gentrification. The prevailing idea is that artists move to lower income neighborhoods, often those with predominant ethnic minority populations, which spurs the in-movement of other higher income residents, usually white, to these neighborhoods. This then sparks developers to notice area change and potential property value appreciation and to speculate or redevelop properties, leading to economic and cultural pressures on the original community of lower income residents and businesses. As property values and rents appreciate, existing residents over time become unable to afford the neighborhood due to rising property taxes that occur through value increases (Project for Public Spaces, 2015). Anne Markusen, however, disputes that gentrification is the “fault” of art or artists and instead finds the cause to be associated with increasing demand of higher income individuals to move to urban areas and developers, perceiving this demand, capitalizing on opportunity. She states, “profit-seeking, developer-led, district turnover only occurs in cities where there is a high generalized demand in housing and land markets” (Markusen, 2014, p.570).

Markusen finds that artists have, at times, worked against gentrification, and that the story is more complex than some have entailed. She cites the work of Grodach, Foster & Murdoch (2013), who through analyzing Census and Department of Commerce data, developed a model of the impact of art on neighborhood change. They found that the type of arts in a neighborhood affected whether the neighborhood experienced gentrification and displacement of existing residents. Their findings are as follows:

Our findings reinforce claims that the arts are associated with urban revitalization, but also show that particular types of arts activities are connected to gentrification processes. Whereas fine arts activities (e.g. visual and performing arts companies, fine art schools) are more likely associated with indicators of revitalization, commercial arts industries (e.g. film, music, and design-based industries) are a strong predictor of neighborhood gentrification. Furthermore, while the fine arts are associated with stable, slow growth neighborhoods, commercial arts clusters are associated with rapidly changing areas. To effectively incorporate the arts into neighborhood planning efforts, planners should recognize that different types of arts activities have different relationships to the type and pace of neighborhood change and are associated with different neighborhood conditions. (Grodach et al., 2013. p.3 as quoted in Markuson, 2014)

Although artists and public art may not in and of themselves promote gentrification, a combination of factors as noted above may lead to the process of gentrification. It is up to planners and policymakers to ensure that when public art is considered as a strategy for revitalization, that it does not exacerbate existing socioeconomic inequalities. Julie Kahne writing for *The Project for Public Places* states:

Good public places cannot be built or installed, as they often are in many privately-led gentrification processes – public spaces need to be inspired and cultivated by the community that uses them. Whether an old timer or a newcomer, everyone can, and should, play a role in shaping their community’s public spaces. (Kahne, 2015)

Thus, participation in the design and creation of public space and communities tends to be one of the key factors which may lead to more equitable community revitalization.

Another positive example of art working on concert with community-led development is Rick Lowe’s Project Row Houses, a “multidecade experiment in social action, preservation, community development, and public art” according to Tom Finkelpearl who has interviewed Rick Lowe on multiple occasions and written about his work. He states,

In general there is no hesitation in the rhetoric of Lowe and others at Project Row Houses to ascribe social goals to the endeavor. The website proclaims the project is “founded on the principle that art—and the community it creates—can be the foundation for revitalizing depressed inner-city neighborhoods.” But it also claims an aesthetic dimension in architectural preservation and innovation, the ongoing creation and presentation of contemporary art projects on site, and, most relevant for this book, the notion that there can be an aesthetic of human development and action. (Finkelpearl, 2013, p.132)

The project combines low-income housing, arts, and revitalization into a single paradigm that has been carried out over time with the support of the NEA and other organizations. On the scope of the work, Finkelpearl states:

In 1993, the artist Rick Lowe led a group in founding Project Row Houses, an organization that has since become an important player in the development of Houston's Third Ward by renovating a series of shotgun houses and translating them into an art and community center; by expanding the campus to provide housing for single mothers; by acquiring, renovating, and reactivating a historically significant ballroom; and by building new affordable housing. An early inspiration was the interpretation and depiction of row houses by the Houston-based African American painter John Biggers. But the original twenty-two shotgun houses on a block and a half were only the start: the organization now extends six blocks and includes forty properties. It is an artist-led non-profit corporation, but it is also the Row House Community Development Corporation, an affiliated but separate corporation that has designed and built low-income housing units. (Finkelpearl, 2013, p.133)

Lowe's project functions as a public art installation through its visual and historic narrative, but it is also a living community and a form of equitable redevelopment that benefits the community in which it takes place. The development garners visitors from outside the community and serves as a model for what it possible when art comes to have a greater influence on the spheres of development and public consciousness. This type of multidisciplinary purpose and activity is innovative in its combination of objectives, and it demonstrates an "art as life" model that poses the potential for positive social and economic change. Although Project Row Houses are inspirational, a potential criticism is that the organization is dependent on outside sponsorship and funding for its continuation ("Sponsors", 2015), and this could be said to render the project a weak promoter of economic development in the sense that it is not driving economic production directly and it is not self-sustaining. However, the programs have been received positively and provide valuable social services through affordable housing, creation of positive relationships, and support and promotion of the arts, and thus they could still be said to produce indirect economic impacts that could reverberate through a community. It is also possible to imagine similar strategies being carried out that incorporate small business incubation and training in ways that stimulate the local economy more directly. Regardless, the model provides an aspirational example of what is possible when public art works in concert with area revitalization.

### **Economic Impacts of Large Events: Festivals and Large-Scale Arts Exhibitions**

Large scale public arts events can have some of the greatest immediate and observable economic impacts. Events of this sort include music and film festivals such as SXSW (South by

Southwest) and Austin City Limits in Austin, Texas as well as ArtPrize and Dallas' Aurora. These events command large audiences and tend to bring in visitors from other states and countries, providing an arts tourism effect. Through their large attendance, these events bring more patrons to local businesses and hospitality industries, benefitting those businesses as well as the city through increased tax revenues from this increased economic activity.

The annual, week-long SXSW music, film, and new media festival in Austin, Texas is considered one of the largest of its kind in the world and according to the Austin Chamber, "SXSW is the highest revenue-producing event for the Austin economy, with an estimated economic impact of \$190.3 million in 2012 increasing to \$218 million in 2013<sup>24</sup>." The latest figures are even more impressive, with an estimated \$317.2 million being injected into the Austin economy<sup>25</sup>. Austin Chamber President Michael Rollins lauded the festival for its positive impact on the community in both economic and social measures. He states:

This festival not only brings the world's attention to Austin's strengths in community, creativity and commerce, but also provides opportunities to spotlight and support our small businesses which work tirelessly to prepare for – and engage with – the festival's record-setting attendance of over 155,000. Every year we see more quantitative and qualitative benefits from SXSW, and are thrilled to see what the future holds. ("SXSW Announces 2013 Impact on the Austin Economy", 2013)

Another large-scale public art event which has been recognized for its profound economic impact is ArtPrize, an annual city-wide arts competition that takes place in Grand Rapids, Michigan. ArtPrize is unique in that it allows anyone to submit and display a work of art in the district where the competition is held. Two grand prize winners are awarded \$200,000 each and are selected by the voting public using an online or phone. In this respect, the event is populist and highly interactive. Due to the spacing out of works of art, the viewing public is encouraged to meander through the exhibit district and to interact with works on a more intimate level. Local businesses as well as most all public spaces become venues for this large-scale event. The event website states:

For 19 days, three square miles of downtown Grand Rapids, Michigan, become an open playing field where anyone can find a voice in the conversation about what is art and why it matters. Art from around the world pops up in every inch of downtown, and it's all free and open to the public.

It's unorthodox, highly disruptive, and undeniably intriguing to the art world and the public alike. ("Welcome to ArtPrize", 2015)

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<sup>24</sup> See "SXSW Announces 2013 Impact on the Austin Economy" (2013).

<sup>25</sup> See Analysis of the Economic Benefit to the City of Austin from South by Southwest 2015.

In 2013, an economic impact study was commissioned, and the key findings were that the event not only drew people from around the country, it also had a powerful stimulant effect on the economy of Grand Rapids. The study authors found:

- ArtPrize 2013 attracted more than 225,000 people, some of whom returned more than once, resulting in 380,400 attendee days, nearly 20 percent above the 2011 estimate of 322,000 visits.
- Just 13.3 percent of the survey participants resided in the city of Grand Rapids, an additional 36.8 percent were from elsewhere in Kent and Ottawa counties. Another 41 percent were from Michigan outside Kent and Ottawa counties, and nearly 8 percent were from outstate.
- ArtPrize visitors came from every U.S. state and 18 countries. The most outstate visitors came from Illinois, Indiana and Ohio, respectively, in the Midwest, and from Florida, California, Texas, North Carolina and New York, respectively, outside the Midwest.
- Attendees at ArtPrize 2013 generated more than \$11.5 million in net new spending.
- The economic impact from ArtPrize 2013 was over \$22 million in new net output, including \$6.3 million in earnings and 253 jobs created.  
(Kaczmarczyk, 2014)

Both SXSW and ArtPrize have had positive impacts on the economies of their cities, spurring patronage of small businesses, creating new jobs, and exposing people to the arts in the process. These type of events are wins for their communities both economically and artistically. Both events have endured some criticisms, one related economic criticism is that most of the jobs created by these type of events are temporary, and thus the economic gains are not permanent for those with those jobs. This is a valid concern and there may be opportunities to help temporary employees find more stable work, if they so desire, after these type of events through collaboration with other community organizations that focus on employment. Overall, however, impacts from these large scale events appear to have positive economic impacts on their communities.

### **An Intriguing Connection: Art and Innovation**

Another intriguing and vital aspect of public art, and engagement with the arts in general, may be its ability to spark innovation in other areas of life, including in areas of scientific and technological fields. David Edwards, Gordon McKay Professor of the Practice of Biomedical Engineering at Harvard University, sees that the arts may have a profound influence on scientific innovation through a concept and process that he terms *artscience*. This concept refers to what he has found through years of research, that new discoveries and technological innovations did not come about through rigorous application of scientific method alone, instead, they required

imagination, creativity, and that key discoveries were often heavily influenced by artistic processes and activities in arts related fields (Edwards, 2008). An illustration of this concept is Steve Jobs' invention of the first computer script. Edwards, and Jobs, attribute this society-altering discovery to a purely artistic experience. Edwards narrates this serendipitous occurrence as follows:

Disaffection with contemporary institutions is the story of famous technology innovators, like Steve Jobs. As he pointed out in his 2005 Stanford commencement address, Jobs remained on campus after dropping out to take a calligraphy course. He took the course for purely artistic reasons. The beauty of calligraphy fascinated him and he wanted to acquire an ability to create with it. Ten years later, Jobs went on to design the first Macintosh computer. His experience studying calligraphy led him to create the first artistic computer script. Steve Jobs left the university, turning away from disciplinary specialization. Through an arts experience he translated an idea that fueled the commercial success of Apple computers. (Edwards, 2008, p.15)

Jobs' transformative discovery was attributable to the influence of the artistic process and product on his way of thinking and perception of reality. The nature of the artistic endeavor renders it powerful to innovate, to communicate what scientific language and mathematics alone cannot, and to discover hidden aspects of reality. Edwards describes art as follows:

When I speak of art, I will mostly refer to an aesthetic method, by which I mean a process of thought that is guided by images, is sensual and intuitive, often thrives in uncertainty, is "true" in that it seems to reflect or elucidate or interpret what we experience in our lives, and is expressive of nature in its complexity, a basis of entertainment and culture. Art is more than this, of course. It is not only method, but the "result" of the method, an aesthetic "product" or "work". (Edwards, 2008, p.8)

Edwards differentiates artsience from the conventional scientific process in that conventional scientists "are famous for believing in the proven and peer-accepted, the very ground pioneering artists often subvert" (Edwards, 2008, p.14). Edwards also posits that the interaction between art, science, and society is even more nuanced than this; that processes and aspects of each influence the other siphoned off area. He finds that, "Science mixes with art and art with science, and in in process neither merely serves the other" (Edwards, 2008, p.41). The process of intermingling of art and creativity in other areas of our lives may be so common that we cease to notice it. This is in fact what Edwards find as well. He provides the example of Julio Ottino whose creation of chaos theory was actually mediated by the act of painting, as it sparked his awareness of the fluidity of mixing through visualization of this concept, almost as if by chance. Yet arguably, it is not chance that led to these discoveries. Instead, it was that the artistic process and product helped reveal aspects of the universe that had been hidden before, and as Edwards finds, it actually may frame the scientific problem itself. Without art, many of the scientific discoveries we regard as definitive of modern society and knowledge might not have occurred. This realization suggests that policymakers and planners should be more attentive to the arts, and that more emphasis should

be placed on arts in education, as well as art in public places. It is possible that the inclusion of art in more spaces of life has the power to spark realizations in the way Edwards describes. This is quite a powerful prospect for art. It also suggests the benefits of bringing more participatory art to the public sphere in ways that allows viewers to become participants and co-authors on a large scale. The result could possibly be the next great scientific discovery.

This concept is also supported by research by arts advocacy groups which have found that children who take art classes tend to score higher on standardized tests and to perform better in other academic areas.

### **The Common Thread: Creativity and the Possibility of “The New”**

The previous sections have outlined the complex potential impacts of public art, from improving public health to reinforcing the version of history perpetrated by the few to sustain power. The impacts of public art are highly complex due to the myriad of expressions they can take, the messages they contain, and the ways in which they are brought about. Public art installations may be temporary or permanent, they may consist of visual, social, musical, or other types and combinations of works. Despite many complex variables, there is a commonality between works that have a positive impact. This uniting factor stems from the act of creativity itself, and consists of a work’s ability to inspire creativity and a sense of possibility and meaning in people’s lives. It relates to a concept which is closely tied to what David Edwards discusses with his concept of *artscience* which outlines stories of prominent inventions that came about not through rigorous scientific methodology, but instead through a highly intuitive, creative process that either directly comingles with art, or is highly influenced by existing art. Edwards’ focus is primarily on social and scientific innovation, however, his analysis points to a more profound process which I call *The Creation of The New*.

*The New* is any and every new *aspect* of existence that has been brought about into the physical plane of existence or into the realization thereof, either through a new combination of preexisting elements or through a new discovery or utilization of properties and matter of the universe. This explanation may at first seem removed from the understanding of public art and society, but they are highly related in a tangible way that is just now beginning to be understood through the work of medical, social, and other researchers, many of whose work is outlined in this report.

*The New* comes about through a moment of creativity, an act, or event that one could argue has metaphysical properties, much in the way consciousness itself arises, functions, and exists. In a split second, or maybe over a period of time, a new piece of information is brought into the world, a new understanding, a new meaning, a new physical object—a new creation. These are all acts of creativity, and this is the power of creative initiatives and activities: they have the ability to bring about new meaning in life, and through new meaning and new understanding, new objects and ways of living.

Examining human history's interaction with art and especially looking at the way new things are brought into being all the time, we can see this power exists in every moment. This is not a topic for metaphysics alone, it is one for politics and planning, for, as planners, we have the ability to define the space for creation itself, through allowing public space for the arts in as many forms and places we can.

The arts specifically, when they are not abused for the sake of manipulation, are inspiring partly because they allow a glimpse into the process of creativity itself, and in the post-modern era, where art can be almost anything, the space for creativity grows as well. The research outlined in this report suggests that the more we are able to imbue society with space and support for the creative act, the more we are likely to have healthier, more meaningful lives. Social change that may have seemed elusive may be possible in ways we never imagined, as art has the ability to elucidate something a person he or she may not have seen or thought of before. New solutions may emerge, new sciences, and new ways of being. This possibility exists on top of the already documented positive health, social, and economic impacts, and it represents the greatest power and possibility of public art. It is the thread that unites the positive impacts between all of its expressions on a deep level, because it is what gives art its transformative power.

### **Levels and Mediators of Effects of Public Art**

The examination of literature and theory from a variety of disciplines finds that exposure to and creating art in public settings can have powerful effects on our lives. The mechanisms and levels of effect are complex and are mediated by various factors, such as whether art is simply viewed or created, and the effects accrue differently to individuals than to communities or societies. However, the amalgamation of many individual-level effects may present larger community or society-wide effects when taken into account together. This sort of addition of individual effects is challenging, although a few of the authors cited in this review carry out such a task, such as

Kraemer-Tebes, et al. (2015). The following table attempts to summarize the benefits and drawbacks of public art as well as to pinpoint their mediating effects and the social level of impact categorized using the same structure as the literature analysis. The “+ / - / or Both” category is an attempt to label the effect positive, negative, or potentially both depending on content and context using color: green is positive, pink is negative, and yellow represents the effect as potentially positive or negative depending on content and mediating effects.

Effect	+ / - or Potential for Both	Factors Mediating Effect	Individual	Community	Society
<b>Health Related: Medical and Psychological</b>					
Improve psychological and physical well-being through various mechanisms		Viewing and producing art	X		
Elevate our lives beyond the mundane		Viewing and producing art	X	X	X
Help us express repressed emotions		Producing art	X		
Create a sense of accomplishment		Producing art	X		
Create meaning in our lives		Viewing and producing art	X		
Improve brain functioning		Viewing and producing art	X		
Produce neural effects similar to those that occur when falling in love		Viewing art	X		
Produce a semi-euphoric state and deep level of mental fulfillment		Viewing art	X		
Reduce stress and anxiety		Viewing and Producing art	X		
Contribute to wayfinding where medical patients have memory impairments		Viewing art placed in medical treatment settings and nursing homes, placed on walls and in spaces of movement	X		
Enhance recovery from illness		Viewing and producing art	X		
Mediate depression and reduce anxiety by making art over time		Producing art	X		
Improve community well-being		Viewing and producing art	X	X	X
Increase community cohesion through intergenerational projects		Producing community-based art		X	X
Individual transformation and personal breakthroughs		Producing community-based art	X		
Create a new sense of possibility and hope		Producing and viewing art	X	X	

Table 1: *Levels and Mediators of Effects of Public Art*

Decrease in use of secrecy to cope with behavioral health stigma in mentally ill by community art making and mural presence		Both through mural/public art production and the presence of the work in the neighborhood, consistent viewing over time	X		
Decrease in reports of rejection due to stigma with mentally ill by mural presence			X		
Relative decrease in Stress by mural presence			X		
Relative increase in collective efficacy, social cohesion, trust, and informal social control				X	
Relative increase in neighborhood aesthetic quality including quality of the walking environment and perceived neighborhood safety				X	
Sustained relative decrease in stigma toward individuals with mental health or substance abuse challenges				X	
Increased health and well-being from views of nature and access to green space		Through viewing green space - this point is important to consider in regards to public art placement as well	X	X	X
<b>Social and Political</b>					
Helps structure space and meaning		Through placement in public, by viewing		X	X
Sparks questioning		Through viewing provocative art	X	X	X
Conveys political messages and values		Through viewing symbols, imagery		X	X
Impacts democratic value of public space		Through placement/location, viewing and producing art. Can be negative or positive depending on the content of the art.		X	X
Can be used as propaganda		Through conveyance of negative, and/or manipulative messages.		X	X
Reflect unjust power structures		Through placement and viewing of large oppressive art installations and through external effects that perpetuate injustice		X	X
Create and promulgate mythological histories		Through public placement of symbology and imagery of the history, through regular viewing of these structures		X	X
Endorse and promote a certain version of history				X	X
Create an environment that feels hostile to marginalized populations			X	X	
Promote collective healing		Through viewing public art with positive, truthful messages	X	X	X
Function as activism		Viewing and Participating in public art installations and performances	X	X	X
Promote social change		Viewing and producing socially-related art		X	X
Memorialize heroism		Collective viewing of memorials		X	X

Table 1 Continued

Promote historical truth		Through viewing and creating public art with truthful messages		X	X
Emancipate the viewer from a state of alienation		Through allowing participation in acts of negation of "the absurd"	X		
Restore/Realize a collective space for social engagement		Through use of public space for community arts activities and public art with social and political messages	X	X	
Arouse and Agitate the Populace		Viewing and participating in provocative public art projects	X	X	X
Draw attention to social issues		Through people viewing and interacting with public art	X	X	X
Defy dominant social narratives				X	X
Enhance place identity		Through providing distinct visual elements		X	
Enhance wayfinding ability				X	
Contribute to cultural identity		Through viewing symbols of culture and through creating community-based public art		X	
Convey complex messages		Messages may be positive or negative		X	X
Transform and uplift humanity		Through viewing and creating public art with truthful, uplifting messages or those that provoke			X
Promote deep reflection			X		
Engage young people and help them become socially conscious, confident, and responsible		Through creating community-based public art, and through viewing it over time	X	X	
Advocate reuse of space and materials		Through reusing old materials to make art, and through using un-used space for public art	X	X	
Provide opportunities for intergenerational collaboration and relationships		Through creating community-based public art, and through viewing it over time	X	X	
Create meaning in people's lives		Through viewing and creating art	X	X	
Increase tourism to arts activities and installations		Through public art activities, events, and installations attracting people from outside	X	X	
Help communities with retail vacancy through temporary art exhibits (helps artists and community)		Through turning vacant space into temporary gallery space or artist workspace	X	X	
Create hybrid ways to solve social problems by breaking down traditional barriers between professions		Through using creative methods that go beyond traditional methods of social problem solving		X	X
Improve the image of an area		Through the aesthetic impact of art, which also has social impacts of creating an image of care		X	
Create new lines of communication		Through participatory public art that also serves a social purpose	X	X	

Table 1 Continued

Economic					
Commodification of art and the person		Through advertising and through the instrumental use of art to manipulate and force action		X	X
Transcend existing language and create new forms of communication		Through the creation of new symbology and imagery in public art	X	X	X
Spark innovation in other areas		Through assisting in the recognition of pattern, revealing aspects of reality that had not been obvious and through inspiration to act and create	X	X	
Improve a community's competitive edge		Through a variety of mechanisms, a combination of others mentioned here		X	
Attract new and visiting populations		By elevating quality of life leading to attractiveness of community and through arts tourism where visitors stay longer and spend more money in an area.		X	
Integrate the visions of community and business leaders		Promotion of multiple industries simultaneously to the outside.		X	
Contribute to the development of a skilled workforce		Through educational effects, concentration of creative sectors and individuals, and an entrepreneurial culture	X	X	
Enhance traditional economic development approaches		Through combining creative approaches and arts planning with traditional approaches		X	
Counter negative effects of retail vacancy and spur economic activity		Through programs which fill empty spaces with art temporarily, enhancing area appearance and appeal.		X	
Enhance the value of local products and services		Through design and communications		X	
Contribute to economy on the whole		Through multiple arts related industries providing jobs, increased tax revenues			X
Improve student performance		Improved test scores and higher graduation rates of student in fine arts classes	X	X	X
Compound existing socio-economic inequalities		Through manipulating people into believing untruths or buying non-beneficial products and through gentrification.	X	X	X
Contribute to equitable community revitalization		Through revitalization strategies that take into account equity as a goal and combine multiple stakeholders in the process		X	
Large temporary events have immediate observable economic impacts, often of millions of dollars		Through arts and music festivals that bring in many from within and outside the community, who then spend money in the area and may be inspired by works. These events also create jobs.		X	X

Table 1 Continued

## Chapter 5: Aurora Dallas Case Study

### What is Aurora? History and Goals

Aurora is a nighttime, immersive public art event featuring new media, light art, and performances taking place in downtown Dallas. The event allows residents from all over Dallas as well as visitors to the city to share in a unique, collective experience that embodies creative energy.

The Aurora event started off as the concept of two Dallas-based artists: Shane Pennington and Joshua King as a part of the Cedars Open Studio Tour in South Dallas<sup>26</sup>. In its first year in 2010, the event was held in the small historic district of Dallas Heritage Village, also known as Old City Park. Forty installations were organized along with a student gallery show. The event garnered around 1,500 visitors in its first ever appearance on the Dallas scene, all on a production budget of only two hundred dollars and three sponsors: BuyLEDS, Lee Harvey's, and the Dallas Heritage Village. Of the event's goals, Joshua King states, "Our goals have always remained the same: to bring the creative culture to the forefront of Dallas by supporting the local art scene and bringing the public of the city of Dallas together to explore high quality public art presented in unexpected places" (King, 2015).

Aurora has its roots in showcasing the talent of Dallas artists as well as in bringing new media art to a larger audience. The event creators, being artists themselves, recognized the connection between a city's cultural and artistic vitality, and its overall vibrancy and image. This connection between the arts and culture sector and overall vibrancy and well-being of place has been recognized by the American Planning Association, The National Endowment for the Arts, and Trail Towns, among others cited in this report. In its first incarnation, Aurora achieved the event creators' stated goals, and it also brought together historic buildings with new media art in a way that seemed to highlight the nature and significance of both. Gail Sachson of Art and Seek stated that, "Aurora 2010 was deemed a success! The artists had fun creating and viewers were enticed and surprised to discover art in unexpected places 'not normally reserved for fine art'" (Sachson, 2010).

In 2013, Aurora began its second chapter by relocating to the Dallas Arts District, a move that would allow the accommodation of larger crowds, as well as forge new relationships and create a new visual contrast with the large institutional buildings of the Arts District as opposed to the

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<sup>26</sup> See King (2015).

smaller, historic building of Old City Park. In 2013, Aurora placed new media installations between buildings as well as projected onto facades. Food trucks, larger crowds (and estimated 30,000) and a greater diversity of work were hallmarks of Aurora's second year.

In the five years since Aurora's beginning, the event's attendance has increased to over 50,000 from an original attendance of just over 600. Even though the event has expanded dramatically, its creators have worked to remain true to the event's original goals and roots in promoting the Dallas' arts community while providing an immersive public, fine art experience. The event website states, "Aurora is a free and public contemporary art exhibition centered in the 68-acres Dallas Arts District. The expansive and immersive exhibition presents interactive light, video, performance, and sound artworks in exciting and unexpected public spaces" ("About Aurora", 2015). Event co-founder Joshua King describes the event unfolding as follows:

Many organizations from inside and outside of the Dallas Arts District have stepped up to the plate to help bring Aurora to fruition. We've thankfully received financial and promotional contributions from the City of Dallas and other Dallas city institutions. Further, companies such as BuyLEDs have donated hundreds of projectors over the last few Auroras and the Dallas Morning News is our founding media sponsor. This year, we began a valuable production partnership with AT&T Performing Arts Center. They have contributed staff, resources, promotion and much more to bring us to the next level. Reliant also joined us this year as a new major Presenting Sponsor. Over the last five years, we've also built a strong and essential community of generous patrons and supports that have contributed time/volunteer hours, money, and other resources over the years. They share our passion for Aurora and are essential to the event's growth over the years. The first major supporter was former Executive Director of the Dallas Arts District (DAD), Veletta Forsythe Lill. She attended the first Aurora and approached us soon after believing that Aurora was a missing link in uniting the city. She showed us the 68 acres of the DAD and became the third founder of Aurora who elevated the event to the scale it is today. (King, 2015)

In its current form, the event possesses a festival-like atmosphere with elements such as live performances, VIP lounges, large crowds, and food trucks. In 2015, the event featured works from 80 artists, selected by internationally recognized curators, and spaced out into different zones, each curator commanding his or her own zone and theme, all under the umbrella of the larger theme, "All Together Now", which "references the concept of synesthesia: a term describing the joining together of senses. The theme also hints at Aurora's new partnership with nonprofit → AT&T Performing Arts Center, and the coming together of the local and international community for the enjoyment of public art" ("Exhibition 2015". 2015). The experience at times works to overwhelm the senses through this joining together of diverse visual and auditory elements, which may be considered a positive aspect that enables the transformation of the surrounding urban environment. Of this effect, the event website states,

“Visitors are offered the unparalleled opportunity to see their familiar urban environment converted into an interactive site for some of the world’s most innovative contemporary art. Aurora’s aim is to liberate art from space and disciplinary confines, involving the general public and the international arts community in an inclusive and larger cultural conversation about artistic experience.” (“About Aurora”, 2015)

Thus, the event’s goal of “liberating art from space and disciplinary confines” takes effect by utilizing the space between and within the institutional buildings of the arts district. The event demonstrates a laudable effort by the City of Dallas and local arts institutions to bring art to a larger public. Of this effort, Mayor Mike Rawlings stated,

“Aurora completely pushed the boundaries of what is possible in the Dallas Arts District,” said Dallas Mayor Mike Rawlings. “It reshaped for the tens of thousands of people how art can be experienced, and demonstrated that the Dallas Arts District can be the perfect setting for events of this scope and scale.” (“About Aurora”, 2015)

Supporting the arts has been a key goal for Mayor Rawlings and The City of Dallas. In his 2014 “Mayor’s Letter” to the public, Rawlings states, “The arts continue to have a huge impact on the community and economy, and its essential that we all support our fine local arts organizations and attend local events” (Rawlings, 2014). The Aurora event is one of the ways the Dallas community can support the arts and benefit from its positive impacts.

## **The Artwork**

Aurora’s works consist of new media art installations<sup>27</sup>. These forms include films, which were mostly projected on the outside of buildings, light installations, live performances, and other combinations of materials and performance that defy simple typology. As the previously examined literature has suggested, it is difficult to fully understand the impacts of public art without reference to its content, although some blanket inferences may be made about large scale arts events due to the sheer amount of content and variation among works. In order to create a more thorough understanding of the event and to illustrate the diversity of scale and meaning of the work presented, a few examples are presented in greater detail.

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<sup>27</sup> A common cultural understanding is as follows: “New media art is a genre that encompasses artworks created with new media technologies, including digital art, computer graphics, computer animation, virtual art, Internet art, interactive art, video games, computer robotics, 3D printing, and art as biotechnology. The term differentiates itself by its resulting cultural objects and social events, which can be seen in opposition to those deriving from old visual arts (i.e. traditional painting, sculpture, etc.)” (“New Media Art”, 2015)

3\_Search's projected installation, *Sense/Coalescence*, on the exterior of the Wyly Theatre was one of the most visually dominant works featured at Aurora. The projected film installation appeared to make the entire theater building deconstruct and reconstruct itself to the tune of opera singing and deep house music. Of the installation, the Aurora website states,

Curator Leo Kuelbs, with John Ensor Parker and the Glowing Bulbs creative group, team up with composer Joris Blanckaert, performer Elise Caluwaerts, DJ Alex Hamadey, and mappers Bordos, and Dandelion and Burdock, to probe the phenomenon of 'synaesthesia', where senses elicit sympathetic responses from other senses. Dynamic visuals and vocals interact and respond to each other – a set of mapping is answered by pieces of Opera singing – all combining to represent universal interdependency and connectedness. ("3\_Search", 2015)

The theme of synaesthesia was a prominent aspect of this piece due to the mixing and response of the different elements simultaneously moving and reacting to each other. The work temporarily altered the Dallas skyline, and was entertaining to watch. Large crowds stared at the building throughout the event, suggesting a high level of engagement with the piece.

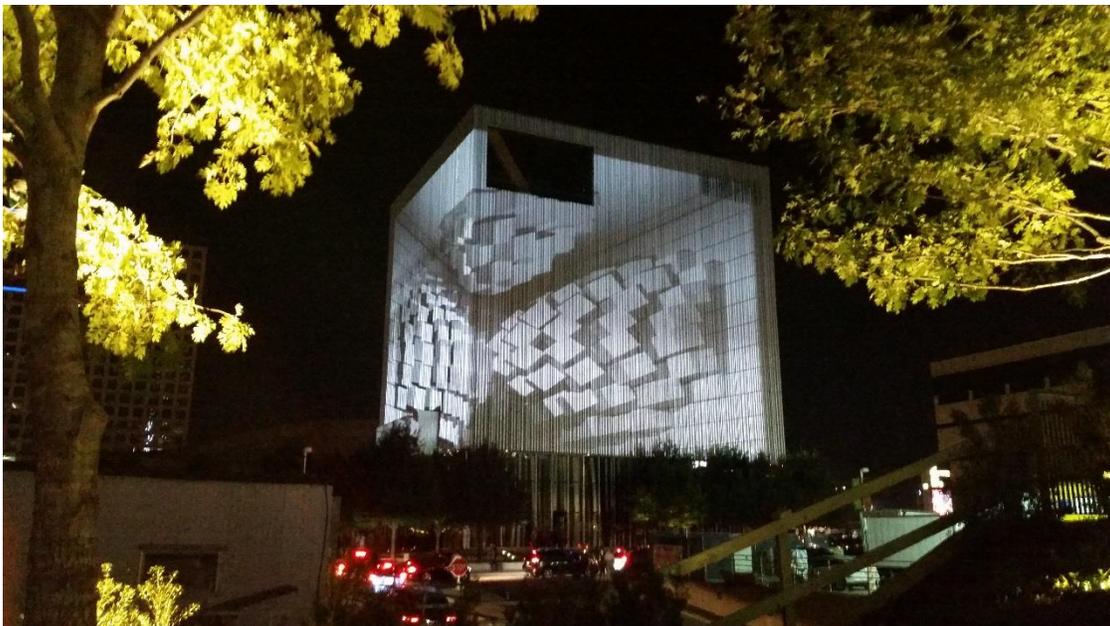


Figure 5: 3\_Search's *Sense/Coalescence* (Goodrum, 2015)

Another work which garnered media attention was the installation of James Clar entitled, *Pixelated Serenity*. His piece consisted of three lights, one blue, one red, and one green, stationed above the altar inside the Cathedral Shrine of the Virgin Guadalupe. As viewers entered through the back of the church, smoke filled the cathedral creating an eerie feeling that something was about

to happen, which it never did. Attendees made their way up to the altar, only to see the three simple lights.

Some critics and attendees commented that they “didn’t get it” or felt like the work lacked something<sup>28</sup>, while others sensed that they were in fact part of some large social experiment, and part of the work of art itself. Upon further reading of Clar’s work, it is clear that this confusion and movement through the foggy space is what he intended for the work, as the event website states,

The installation plays upon the metaphysical and spiritual aspects of a church, allowing viewers to walk towards the bright white light. However, as they approach the front, the light separates into distinct color ‘pixels’ hinting upon the notion of our reality as a digital simulation. Visitors are encouraged to take their time in the installation. They can relax, find a seat, and watch people walk past them while staring into the void of light.

In today’s media-saturated and technologically integrated world, the separation between real and computer generated is increasingly blurred. His work uses controlled, artificial light as a sculptural medium with a computer-minimalist aesthetic. However, his subject matter offsets these data-driven techniques by dealing with (and in a way ‘digitizing’) the natural phenomena, human emotions, or socio-political environment we live in. (“James Clar: Pixelated Serenity”, 2015)



Figure 6: James Clar’s *Pixelated Serenity* (“James Clar: Pixelated Serenity”, 2015)

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<sup>28</sup> This statement refers to my experience standing outside of the cathedral during the event as well as through review of online statements from yelp.com and from Dallas Morning News reviews. See Simek (2015) for a more nuanced review.

Thus, Clar’s piece is one of social and metaphysical commentary, and its strategic placement within the cathedral a statement about multiple aspects of reality. It is certain that the attention the work received, whether positive or negative, is an indication that it made an impression on its viewers, and it made people think. As Claire Bishop (2012) has stated, this ability of art to engage and spark debate is one key indicator of a work’s success.

Stationed outside the cathedral was my own work, a decidedly minimalist LED light installation. When I decided to use the Aurora as the case study for this report, I didn’t know that my work would be featured in the event, yet, the inclusion of my piece added a deeper dimension of meaning to this analysis, as it enabled the creation of a new perspective on public art—that of an artist whose work interfaces with the public. My piece, entitled *Ascend*, uses light to explore the concept of overwhelming simplicity — the moment in meditation where stillness seems to exist, and quickly it is gone, back to the racing thoughts and material concerns of the world. It is my belief that even a momentary break from the mundane may allow us to glimpse the depths of existence. Although the current may be confined to its material conduit, light is able to escape the material surface and transpose the atmosphere, touching all in its presence. Light is therefore the greatest metaphor for transcendence. Showing this metaphor as an aspect of reality was the goal of my work. It also relates to what I believe is the possibility of art: to show us these hidden aspects of reality and to speak through metaphor.

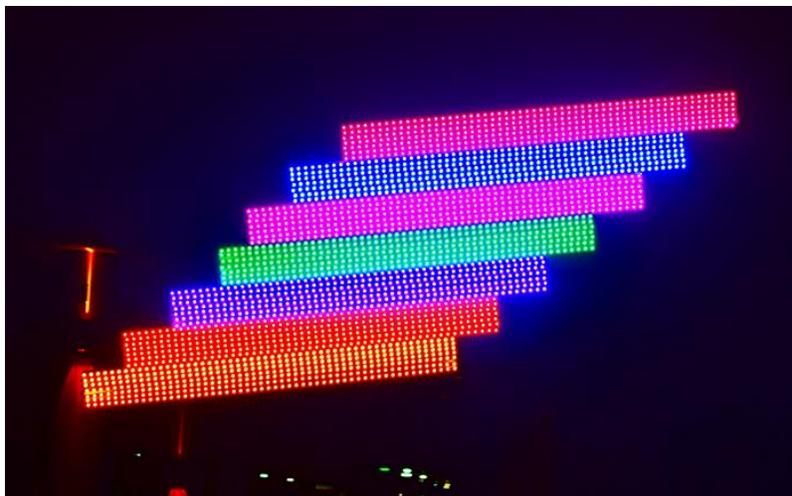


Figure 7: Emily Goodrum’s *Ascend* (Crossland, 2015)

Although my work, along with many other artists was not directly participatory, it is interesting to note the phenomenon of people stopping to photograph the work and to take “selfies” with the work. While critics such as Peter Simek lamented the ubiquitous taking of “selfies” at the event, I find the act mostly innocuous, and even possibly beneficial to attendees. The act of taking a photograph is creative and artistic in itself, and the inclusion of oneself in the same image with a work of art may somehow allow a measure of ownership and co-creation in an event that could have been more spectatorial. As the literature on the social and public health benefits of public art suggests, the act of creation, however miniscule, may still yield benefits for the creator in that it allows the creation of meaning and ownership of an aspect of one’s life.

Simultaneously holding the perspective of artist and event attendee created a multifaceted understanding and appreciation of the event. From the perspective of artist, the event allowed myself along with around 80 other artists/groups to have their work seen by thousands, which is beneficial to an artist through allowing increased public exposure and recognition. As an observer, I enjoyed seeing the work of other artists, as it began to spark new ideas within myself. It also prompted me to reengage my inner dialogue on the possibility of urban space. The possibilities for creative engagement society-wide could likely be expanded if events like this happened more frequently and in more places. It seems that people crave creativity in life, at least gauging from the volume of people in attendance at the event. An escape from the mundane and a chance to experience something new are important activities in human experience as evidenced from the previous discussion on the impacts and benefits of interacting with the arts.

Many of the works in Aurora contained strong social messages, thus, public art in this hybrid arts setting was able to expose the public to works containing social critique and content that invited questioning, as many of the authors mentioned in this analysis have suggested in a great possibility for art.. One performance with such provocative content was the music video recording of Naomi Ruiz and Martín(e) Gutierrez entitled *Origin*. Their performance consisted of two female dancers in short black dresses and thigh-highs (the artists) situated on a revolving platform divided by a giant mirror. The two female dancers used “selfie sticks” to take mock photos of themselves while posing languidly and dancing. Through the performance, “Gutierrez and Ruiz confront seduction and intimacy in mainstream media through selfie culture. The origin of the modern woman, idolized.” (“Aurora”, 2015) Upon further research, one finds that Nomi has been a voice

for the transgender community<sup>29</sup>, and it seems that the performance reflects deeper themes of sexuality and gender identity relating to sexuality and beauty, and possibly the impact of first impressions and appearances.



Figure 8: *Origin*, Performance by Naomi Ruiz and Martín(e) Gutierrez (“Nomi Ruiz and Martín(e) Gutierrez”, 2015)

These examples are just a few of the many installations that appeared at Aurora. Although the experience certainly possessed entertainment value, most, if not all of the work was thought-provoking, containing social commentary and profound messages about society and humanity. As Jefferey K. Smith (2014) argues, the ability to be transformed by art takes an effort of engagement, if not a seemingly metaphysical connection between a work and its viewer. At Aurora, attendees could choose to engage deeply with the works, or simply observe and take it all in.

### **Mutually Beneficial Relationships: The Dallas Arts District Context**

The event created a mutually beneficial relationship between Aurora and The Dallas Arts District institutions. This was evidenced by Aurora’s official partnership with the AT&T

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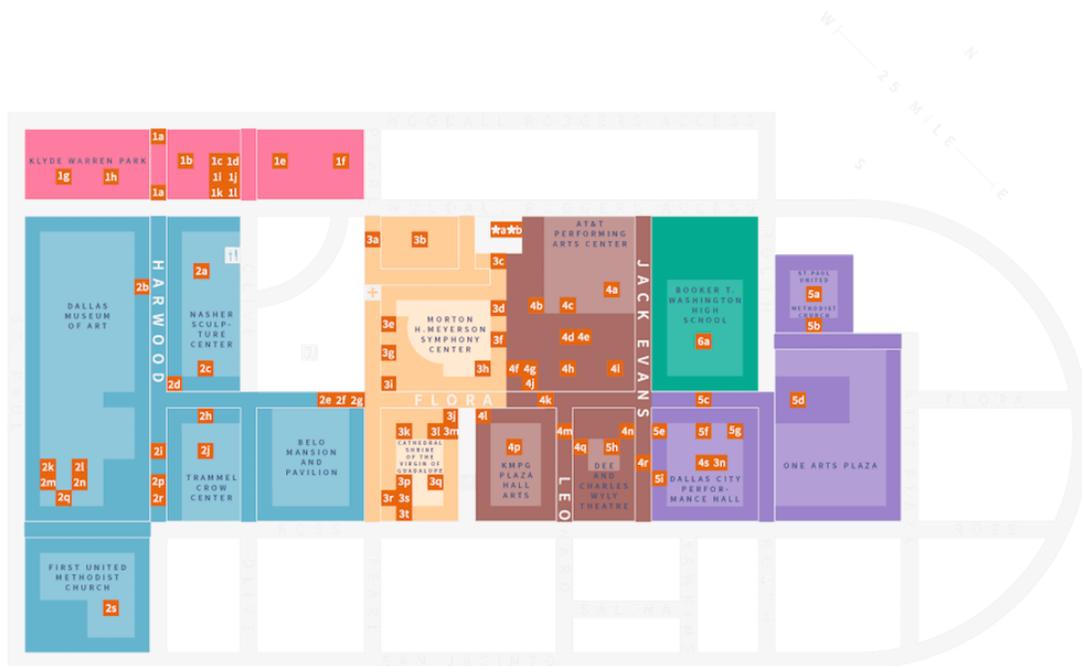
<sup>29</sup> See Sciortino (2014).

Performing Arts Center, the utilization of interior institutional spaces to showcase some of the event performances, and through the Dallas Art museum and Nasher Sculpture Center exhibits remaining open during the event. The organizations partnered to create an event that allowed visitors the possibility of full exploration of the Arts District.

The District consists of a 68-acre area of land bordered by Dallas’ Central Business District which contains Dallas’ leading cultural institutions, prominent examples being The Dallas Museum of Art, The Nasher Sculpture Center, The Meyerson Symphony Center, The Winspear Opera House, The Dee and Charles Wyly Theatre, Booker T. Washington High School (Dallas’ Arts Magnet), as well as other notable buildings and spaces such as the Cathedral Shrine of the Virgin Guadalupe, One Arts Plaza, along with Klyde Warren Park, which forms a land bridge over the Woodall Rodgers Freeway. Following is a map of the arts district provided by the Dallas Arts District website, as well as another from Aurora showcasing the locations of the featured art installations and the event’s spatial structure.



Figure 9: Map of the Dallas Arts District (“The District”, nd)



**Section 1: f = {range}**  
Curated by Aja Martin

- 1h Carmen Henza
- 1d Dan Rule
- 1g Don Relyea & Steven Visneau
- 1l Elissa Stafford
- 1f James Geurts
- 1c Jose Simoes
- 1l Olga Guse
- 1j Pavita Wickramasinghe
- 1b Picaroon (Rebecca Gischel & Sebastian Walter)
- 1k Renata Kaminska
- 1e Rhonda Weppler & Trevor Mahosky
- 1a Varvara and Mar

**Section 2: Togetherness**  
Curated by Tim Goossens

- 2c Betuna Poustichi
- 2k Delia Gonzalez
- 2l Emily Roysdon
- 2j Janeil Engelstad
- 2h Jitish Kallat
- 2f Juan Pedro Freyre
- 2n Luis Roque
- 2e Nomi Ruiz & Martine Guterriez
- 2g Patrick Romeo
- 2r Ricardo Castrozv
- 2m Roen
- 2a Ryan Whittier Hale
- 2s Sahra Motalebi
- 2d Sarah Grass
- 2q Saul Sanchez
- 2p Tori Wrenes
- 2b Veronica Georgieva & Stephen Shanabrook
- 2i Zipora Fried

**Section 3: Second Hand Emotions**  
Curated by Carson Chan

- 3q Andreas Greiner
- 3n Andy Graydon & Pete Bjordahl
- 3m Caitlin Berrigan
- 3j Carolyn Sortor
- 3i Mirjamsvideos
- 3s Dan Bodan
- 3r Emily Goodrum
- 3p James Clar
- 3f James Connolly
- 3h Jon Vogt
- 3d Julianne Aguilar
- 3c Kate Firth
- 3t Liz Magic Laser
- 3g Lynne Marsh
- 3b Mari Hidalgo King
- 3k Michael Alexander Morris
- 3e Cynthia Mulcahy
- 3a Niko Princen
- 3l Olaniyi Rasheed Akindiya

**Section 4**  
Curated by Shane Pennington & Joshua King

- 4m s\_search
- 4b Art Con
- 4j Bike Friendly Cedars
- 4n Danielle Georgiou
- 4h Erica Felicella
- 4r Fabiano Miso
- 4e Francine Thirteen
- 4k Gregory Lasserre
- 4s Jeremy Shaw
- 4g Jevan Chowdery
- 4a Jim Lively
- 4d John Dombroski
- 4f Liss LaFleur
- 4l NRG installation
- 4p Scott Oldner
- 4c Good Shepherd Episcopal School Students
- 4i Tom Hansen
- 4q Winston School Students

**Section 5: Altered States**  
Curated by Julia Kagansky

- 5i Ange Leccia
- 5a Anne Senstad
- 5h Jose Seira
- 5b Matthew Jensen
- 5d Memo Akten
- 5f Ofri Csaani
- 5g Sean Miller
- 5c The Principals (Drew, Charlie & Chris)
- 5e Undervolt & Co.

**Section 6**  
Curated by the students and the faculty of Booker T. Washington HSPVA

- 6a 'Metamorphosis bending Time'  
Artworks by over 50 students of Booker T. Washington HSPVA

Section 6: VIP Afterparty at Annetta Strauss Square

- \* a Com Truise
- \* b Tycho

Figure 10: Map of Aurora Installations and Zones (“General Info”, 2015)

Following is a brief history of the area from The Dallas Arts District, “a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization that serves as an advocate for the venues and organizations in the Dallas Arts District and as a representative of the Dallas Arts District as a whole, both internally and externally” (“About The Dallas Arts District”, 2015):

The cornerstone and catalyst for creative vitality in the region, the Arts District is home to the city’s leading visual and performing arts institutions, whose range and depth make Dallas a destination for the arts that is unique in our country.

Starting as early as the 1970s the city hired a series of consultants to determine how and where to house its arts and cultural institutions. In 1978, Boston consultants Carr-Lynch recommended that Dallas relocate its major arts institutions from different parts of the city to the northeast corner of downtown. This location would allow for easy access through a vast network of freeways, as well as local streets, and leading into an area that would become a lively mix of cultural and commercial destinations, further defined by a mix of contemporary and historic architecture.

The city progressed to define the boundaries and design guidelines with the assistance of Sasaki Associates. With the adoption of the Sasaki Plan, developed by Sasaki Associates, and the opening of the Dallas Museum of Art, designed by Edward Larabee Barnes (1984), the formation of the Arts District was underway. Throughout the next 20 years, the development of the Arts District continued with the Morton H. Meyerson Symphony Center, designed by Pritzker Prize winning architect I.M. Pei (1989); the Crow Collection of Asian Art in the existing Trammell Crow Center (1998); the Nasher Sculpture Center, designed by Pritzker Prize winning architect Renzo Piano (2003) and the Booker T. Washington High School for the Performing and Visual Arts, recently opening a new addition designed by Brad Cloepfil (2008). In 2009, with the opening of the AT&T Performing Arts Center, the planned relocation of many of the major cultural institutions was complete. With the openings of Dallas City Performance Hall, Klyde Warren Park and The Perot Museum of Nature and Science in 2012, the cultural build-out of the district was complete. (“About The Dallas Arts District”, 2015)

As the brief history of the Arts District demonstrates, The City of Dallas and many art patrons within the city, have invested enormous effort, time, and money, to create a strong arts infrastructure in the city’s center. Temporary arts events have been shown to increase activation of urban space and to promote arts tourism, and Aurora provides an opportunity to reap these benefits, and to bring attention to Dallas’ art scene and Arts District on a larger scale. Joshua King sees the possibility for Aurora to change the way people interact with the Arts District through its intangible benefits which are: “The belief in community, Dallas wants to be known for something culturally defining. It’s always measuring itself to others. I believe that we are arriving at the time where we can be a cultural destination that others look to” (King, 2015). King sees, as do many of the authors cited in this report, that public art has the ability to build community, which in turn leads to an external effect of creating recognition from the outside as well.

The partnership between the AT&T Performing Arts Center and Aurora demonstrates a spirit of cooperation and of mutual benefit through merging outdoor public space with institutional structures. Through Aurora, the arts district gains heightened public awareness, and if the event continues to be well-received, admiration and patronage. In the current economic climate, fine art requires a great deal of private sponsorship, and through the integration of advertiser support, such as that of Reliant and Neiman Marcus, the arts receive much needed funding while the supporting companies receive notoriety and public recognition for their support the arts and the greater goal of enhancing community. Thus, there are multiple mutually supportive relationships within the context of Aurora as the APA suggested was possible in their recommendations on the use of art for economic development (Dwyer, 2009).

### **More on the Power of Context**

Although the event created a physical synergy and interaction between the Arts District institutions and the Aurora event, there are complicating issues associated with expected, and unexpected, contexts for viewing art. As much of the previous literature suggests, the context of a work helps define its meaning and how it is received by the public. Andreas Gartus and Helmut Leder (2014) of the University of Vienna found this as well in their evaluation of perception of modern and graffiti art both within a museum and outdoor “street” setting. They found that aesthetic evaluation was dependent on context, suggesting meaning is shaped by context. They state:

Our findings suggest that an appropriate context can indeed be important for the evaluation of different styles of art—at least in interaction with the specific interests of the viewers. The white cube (O’Doherty, 1986)—the prototype of today’s museum or art gallery—minimizes outside influences, which almost appears to be a necessary condition for appreciating artworks. However, graffiti art, which emerged in public urban environments (Austin, 2010; Riggle, 2010), seems to require rather the “gray” cubes of a street context to facilitate its aesthetic appreciation. (Gartus & Leder, 2014)

Although Gartus and Leder’s work focuses on modern art and graffiti in contexts of the “white cube” of the museum in contrast to “the gray cube” of the street, their observation that interpretation of meaning is at least partially context dependent is highly relevant to understanding people’s reactions to an event like Aurora. Aurora presents works that do not easily fit into a specific typology, and in a way, the event creates a new context for viewing art that is not a part of the usual social-spatial vocabulary for viewing works of art. Thus, it is possible that because, as

observers, we lack expectations for the context, we may not know how to interact or perceive some of the works of art embedded in that context. Aurora also combines multiple contexts, further complicating expectations and perceptions. These multiple contexts could lead to confusion, provocation and/or personal transformation, depending on the perceptions that are engendered.

### **Personal Transformation and/or Provocation**

The event could be said to produce aspects of the “museum effect” described by Jeffrey K. Smith in that eventgoers have the opportunity to engage with a multitude of artworks in a short time span as they do in a museum setting. Smith finds that these experiences in museums have the capacity to transform visitors’ perceptions of themselves and the world in a very short time. He finds,

The people for whom such transformations take place are not experts. They are not historians or literary critics; they may not know a whole lot about the works that they encounter. They are firemen, salesclerks, college students, homemakers, lawyers, airline pilots, and schoolteachers. There are no doubt layers upon layers of meaning known only to those who created the works. That is not the issue here. The issue concerns the encounter between an ordinary individual and a great work of art. It is the essence of what art, in its various forms (and I want to define it ultimately as broadly as possible), does when seriously contemplated by an individual. It holds the potential to be transformative. But it may not simply be the case of a person contemplating a single work of art. It may be a bit more complex than that. It may be a person contemplating a series of works of art, each for a fairly short period of time, that has the power to change how people look at themselves, their interactions with others, and life in general. (Smith, 2014, p.3)

This is good news, because what Smith describes is one of the best possibilities and aspirations for the arts. Personal reflection and conversations with others confirm these findings as well.

What’s more is that Aurora showcases new media works which sometimes challenge conventional notions of art and provoke greater inquiry as to their meaning, increasing their potential to initiate a process of introspection and inquiry. Although this departure from viewing art in the traditional museum setting may make some uncomfortable, and arguably has its own challenges, it opens the door to seeing life in urban space differently, and for literally thinking “outside the box” of traditional spaces.

### **Re-Imagining Urban Space**

Aurora not only uses the public spaces around the arts district, but the arts institutions themselves are open to the public during this the event, and some of the institutional spaces are

used for viewing spaces for Aurora's art installations and performances. Thus, there is a spatial synergy between the traditional institutional components and the outdoor public spaces which surrounds them that may allow visitors to expand their views of how institutional arts settings relate to their lives, hopefully opening up space for more playful interaction and more interactive engagement. Of this possibility, Peter Simek states,

This past weekend proves that Aurora's organizers have an incredible success on their hands. As they think about how to tweak the event for the next installment, they should consider expanding out of the Arts District. Aurora's best quality is that it serves as a powerful tool for leading people through an experience of urban space in a city that provides too few tools for doing so. Aurora could help build habits of being in and experiencing Dallas, helping attendees learn and read connectivity between neighborhoods. (Simek, 2015)

Simek sees that Aurora provides an opportunity for the activation of urban space in Dallas as well as the opportunity to create modes of being and moving through the city; in other words, establishing connectivity. Joshua King echoes this possibility of connection. He states,

What I see Aurora doing is helping people become familiar and comfortable with a beautiful part of Downtown, while helping to create an urban environment where people come together to connect, learn and appreciate culture together. In this common, open space, we hope class barriers of society are broken down and the attendees feel united through the enjoyment of viewing and experiencing the art of light, video and sound. (King, 2015)

The expansion outside of the arts district is an idea that would allow for this possibility, and something event organizers should consider moving forward.

Moreover, the fact that Aurora occurs at night is central to its ability to affect the perception of urban space. Lights adorning the facades of buildings have become more prevalent in Dallas' recent history, as these elements increase awareness of the buildings and provide a greater sense of place identification at night<sup>30</sup>. As lighting designer Scott Oldner relays, "Lighting brings emotion and spirit and character" (Brown, 2015). Aurora plays a similar, albeit temporary, role. The movement through space between icons of light in the form of video, LEDs, or other installations enables a transformation of space and structures the ways in which we view and move through space. It becomes easier to "feel" the distance between the buildings of the Arts District, and it makes possible the notion of moving on foot between these buildings, which themselves are engaged with in a nighttime setting, also when events regularly occur. It is possible that this exercise in movement through space, aiding by the altered sense of space and place identity could lead to

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<sup>30</sup> See Brown (2015). Dallas Morning News Real Estate Editor Steve Brown notes that Dallas' entire skyline is being reshaped by a surge in lighting on facades of buildings. Brown notes that this is not new, Dallas has always been shaped by lights at night, but now, the pace of technology is making more possible.

changes in patterns of movement over time, much in the way Candy Chang's temporary installations could lead the way to larger changes in planning through showing patterns and information which had not been previously agglomerated in public.

### **Attendance and Traffic Impacts**

Arguably, there were benefits attributable to the high attendance level and accompanying traffic brought to downtown Dallas by Aurora. Throughout most of the event, long lines and large crowds were observed at all the restaurants and in front of food trucks surrounding the event<sup>31</sup>. One food truck even ran out of food due to higher than expected demand. These observations suggest what previous literature has found, that large arts and culture events bring in large numbers of visitors, many of which will choose to buy something to eat or drink while in the area. This observation was confirmed by local restaurant employees who all stated that the night of Aurora was big for business. Benjamin Madrid, Manager at Proof + Pantry stated that the evening of Aurora was the venues' busiest day of the entire year, producing the largest sales and cover count noted for the year. He and his staff welcomed many new customers, some of which have been back since the event. (Phone Conversation with Benjamin Madrid, Manager of Proof + Pantry, November 3, 2015) Aurora was a clear boon for area restaurants, both on the day of the event, and afterwards as well. Large public arts events like Aurora benefit surrounding businesses through increasing traffic and awareness of the business, both during and after the event.

Although the increased traffic created by Aurora was beneficial to area restaurants as well as the event itself, the car and foot traffic around the event made it challenging for individuals to access the event as well as to navigate parking. Many event attendees, including myself, noted that automobile traffic around the event was gridlocked well into the evening, despite the use of Uber, Lyft, and DART by many attendees. Although this is a clear sign of the event's popularity and success, it suggests the need for more traffic control measures in the future. This high volume of traffic also suggests the potential for expanding the event to multiple days or expanding the event into more areas in order to break up the traffic.

Due to the large volume of work and long lines I was unable to experience quite a few of the works in person, especially the performances and works inside the arts district buildings. It is

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<sup>31</sup> Refer to the Facebook and Yelp comments in the appendices. The observations stated in the text are my own as well as others who left public comments.

suggested that upon Aurora's next occurrence, that wayfinding and scheduling are adjusted to allow for simpler navigation and ability to engage with more performances inside the institutional buildings. This would allow more in-depth engagement with more works. This option would require more resources from the city and of the participating organizations, however, it could lead to an event where more thorough engagement with the art is possible.

### **Populism Encounters Elitism: Art, Entertainment, or Both**

Aurora combines elements of both populism and elitism, a contrast that emerges as dominant theme within much of the literature on public art. This aspect also relates to the artistic and cultural status of Dallas, known for its concentration of elite art collectors and growing institutional arts base<sup>32</sup>. Although Aurora's VIP lounges were suggestive of this exclusivity, the event's free admission, widespread advertising, and festival-like atmosphere created a sense of populism. The event location also provides conflicting aspects to consider. The Dallas Arts District is intended for wide public access, yet the professional curation of the works within the institutions and the event as well as the location of the event itself may be seen to intensify elite access by some. However, one could argue that if the event had taken place in a lower income area, it could promote gentrification, and would likely not allow for such large attendance or easy access, as the Arts District is easily accessible by mass transit, making the event reachable by those across the city, regardless of transportation mode choice. Cher Krause Knight helpfully describes the conflict in valuing and interpreting art and its installation as follows:

A few words must be said about the frictions – perceived and actual – between art elitists and populists, although caution must be exercised when dealing in such binaries. Generally, elitists emphasize the need for professionalism and formal education in the arts, art-specific institutions, and standards of quality according to established canons of taste. For them the boundaries of culture are fixed though fragile; they are perceived as centurions standing guard over and imposing their culture on others. Conversely, populists usually argue for the widest possible availability of art experiences, welcome cultural diversity, and promote public (often “amateur”) participation in and experiential relationships to art. Their pluralistic construction of artistic merit, open-ended definitions of taste, and insistence on art's subjectivity and mutability prompt elitists to charge them with eroding culture's quality and substance. These conflicting agendas resulted in what Margaret Wyszomirski identified as “the tension between the quest for excellence and the quest of equality.” She concludes that these “quests” might coalesce in a framework of cultural democracy, if we temper the notion of “elite” art audiences with “open-door exclusivity” (1982: 13-14, 17; Levine 1988: 255). I interpret this as an egalitarian impulse; to provide all interested parties with an entrée into the arts that nurtures confidence in their own critical faculties, but allows final decisions about engagement to rest with the individual. (Krause Knight, 2008, p. ix)

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<sup>32</sup> See Corris (2015) for a more detailed analysis of Dallas' art culture and the recent “renaissance” the arts sector is experiencing. The author points to deeper conflicts and issues of gentrification.

Krause Knight describes a type of public art that respects the autonomy of individual viewers, creators, and curators, yet seeks to bring a larger public into the fold of public art. In this respect, Aurora is populist in the best sense possible, as it specifically aims to bring new media art, often innovative, avant-garde works, to a wide public. The fact that much of the work beckons attendee participation and close interaction amplifies this effect.

The commentary of Peter Simek of D Magazine exemplifies the conflict between art elitism and populism. Simek lamented the festival-like, “nightclubbish” atmosphere, suggesting that a public expecting a “reward” of entertainment was often brutish in its interaction with the surrounding art. For example, he notes the effect of some many participatory installations as well as “inappropriate” reactions to James Clar’s work:

Aurora is an exhibition-as-scavenger hunt, and when you find what you are looking for you expect a reward. That so much of the art at Aurora is interactive furthers these expectations. At Klyde Warren Park, you could wait on line to get free Warhol-esque consumer objects lit with LEDs and fastened to lanyards to wear around your neck. On Flora St. you could wait in line to past through a glowing tent. On Pearl, you could stand and pose for a photo in between two enormous yellow-lit parentheses. In light of this, it is not enough for Guiseppe Penone to have simply cast a tree trunk. Amidst the buzz of Aurora, there’s no time or space to think about what Penone’s act might mean. Instead, you simply ask, “What does it do?”

Another illustrative disappointment was James Clar’s *Pixelated Serenity*, a shrewdly simple installation in the Cathedral de Guadalupe that consisted merely of a trinity of glowing lights – red, green, and blue – hovering over a sanctuary space that has been completely filled with smoke. It should – or could – have been a bewildering, disorienting, or even sublime rethinking of the nature and possibility of spiritual art. But amidst all the chatter, laughter, noise, flashing bulbs, and general hubbub churned up by the mob inside the church, the piece merely turned the sanctuary cathedral into a neon-lit smoke-filled pop-up dance club. (Simek, 2015)

Simek’s critique is less about the art of Aurora, and more about its viewing public, the masses of citizens who came out to explore, see art, and possibly, have a good time. His critique echoes deeper conflicts within the literature on public art that questions its intentions and who it serves. Much of the literature reviewed powerfully argues that public art should serve the whole public. Some works may be best approached with some measure of reverence, such as Maya Lin’s Vietnam War Memorial. But, how does a viewer know how to interact with art? Context is a factor, but a deeper question remains: Is there a “right way” to interact with art? Although as artists we may have specific meanings and understandings embedded in our works, each viewer brings his or her own set of internalized beliefs and lens with which to view art. Any interaction can be beneficial, depending on the openness of the viewer. Although Simek’s critique may have some validity in terms of the difficulty of being able to fully engage with a work due to large crowds,

noise, and even taking of “selfies”, these works of art can still have a strong impact. Moreover, the crowds at Aurora appeared to be very diverse, and the group of curators that selected the works was highly diverse as well, representing multiple ethnicities, genders, and nationalities. Thus, it seems that a diverse group of curators selected works from a diverse group of artists for an equally diverse Dallas audience.<sup>33</sup>

My experience viewing James Clar’s installation was quite different than that of Simek. I observed a diverse group of people sitting in the pews quietly, myself being one of these people. While I sat, groups of people entered through the back of the building, walking toward the light, only to see there was nothing there besides the three aforementioned lights, at which point, most exited to the side, while others stood in contemplation a while longer. I did not observe dancing or other spectacles described by Simek. More so, I found it intriguing to watch the masses of people moving through the space towards the lights, some confused, some irritated by the smoke, all reacting to and simultaneously trying to decipher their surroundings. The experience created a large-scale metaphor for the search for meaning in human life, a metaphor which the viewers became a part of as they moved through. The experience was entertaining, in an absurd and metaphysical sense. And what is wrong with that? The larger implication is that possibly, it is ok to have fun while viewing art. A work of art need not have entertainment value, but if it does, it might have the ability to attract wider attention. Depending on its content, this could still spark beneficial change. This is where an artist may use creative license; although he or she cannot directly control the ways in which people respond to a work, the artist can attempt to craft a work or installation that powerfully conveys a mood, idea, or environment. Conveying a specific mood or idea, whether whimsical, serious, or purposefully ambiguous, is a product of effective art.

Moreover, as Charles Montgomery finds in his book *Happy City*, “the most important psychological effect of the city is the way in which it moderates our relationships with other people. This last concern is so powerful and so central to personal and societal well-being that researchers

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<sup>33</sup> Although I do not have data showing ethnicity and race of attendees, I observed racially and ethnically diverse crowds, which are at least somewhat representative of the city, with populations of 28.8% white-non-Hispanic or Latino, 42.4% Hispanic/Latino, 25% Black or African American, 2.9% Asian, 2.6% two or more races at the last decennial census (State and County Quick Facts, U.S. Census. 2010). It would likely be useful, however, to have an idea as to the official representation of diversity at the event, as this information might be helpful to institutional and event actors in determining how their efforts attracted a diverse group of Dallasites. When an event-wide analysis does occur, a survey of representation may be useful.

who study it become positively evangelical” (Montgomery, 2013, p.37) Viewing art outside of the reverent yet vacuous space of a museum sometimes creates a notion of solitude that is far from the reality of urban, and human, existence. This aspect of interfacing with others in urban space that Aurora offers, although objectionable to some, offers an opportunity to experience interaction with others who are also interacting with art. The experience itself may provide an element of social education and a chance to meditate on the meaning of installations that use us, the urban public, as media.

### **Opportunities for Co-Creation and Participation**

The new media work featured in Aurora was more participatory than the majority of conventional artwork partly due to its setting, and some due to its design. The setting and placement of sculptures and installation inherently required more of a viewer than standing in one place to appreciate and understand the majority of work, as the three-dimensional pieces can be explored from multiple vantage points, and some invited the viewer to physically move through new spaces created by works, such as James Geurts: *Periphery*, Laserist Tom Harman: *Inspired by Dali*, Mari Hidalgo King: *Valley of the Giants*, and Olaniyi Rasheed Akindiya: *Shopping List*, among others. There was also a collective-memory-based, community-co-created installation near the Nasher, along Harwood Street entitled *Memory Lane* by Veronika Georgiva and Stephen Shanabrook<sup>34</sup>. The installation consisted of a series of images sent by North Texans of their memories of the area. These images were projected in larger-than-life format onto the sides of white eighteen-wheeler trucks lining the street. This installation, and many others, invited a high level of participation from the audience, and it seems even more may be possible, especially in ways that involve children. A children’s activities area with creative activities or contribution to a larger single project would increase benefits and expand participation.

Considering the wealth of data showing potential health impacts for participatory arts, it is possible to imagine that adding in installations of elements and activities that ask even more participation and co-creation by the audience may increase the potential benefits of the event. And although some critics lament the ubiquitous taking of “selfies” during the event, existing research suggests that this more participatory element of creating a photograph during the event may actually constitute a creative act of its own, and may promote benefits similar to other creative acts. There

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<sup>34</sup> See Evans (2015).

is potential to expand this kind of activity through inviting attendees to post their “selfies” and also to write comments about their experiences, some of which is also being done through an invitation by Aurora to post photos take on Instagram. The capturing and sharing of one’s own images and experiences also provides qualitative feedback from attendees may be useful for event personnel and the City of Dallas in understanding the impact and meaning of the event in people’s lives.

**Facilities and Wayfinding Strategies**

The sentiment was expressed by quite a few that Aurora needed more and easier accessible facilities<sup>35</sup>, especially food/drink options and restrooms. Due to the very large crowds, locating restrooms was a challenge. Long lines formed to access the food trucks which lined the Woodall Rodgers Freeway abutting Klyde Warren Park. Fortunately, there are restaurants in the area, but their locations did not appear on the Aurora map or the phone app. These are issues that are easily corrected through the addition of facilities and increased wayfinding mechanisms.

**Summary of Benefits and Challenges**

Aurora was found to offer multiple benefits as a public art event. Examining the event also allowed conflicts and contradictions to surface related to interpretations of art’s role as populist or elitist. It was found that Aurora was organized to engage a wide public and to transcend binaries, creating an event that mostly works to “coalesce into a framework of cultural democracy” as Cher Krause Knight finds is possible with public art. The following tables outline a summary the observed benefits and challenges of Aurora as well as possibilities and opportunities.

<b>Benefits</b>	<b>Possibilities</b>
Transformative and health inducing capacity of interacting with art	Include more participatory work and opportunities for co-creation Add children's activity center to include children in the participatory experience
Increased traffic to area businesses and the Arts District	Expand Aurora to multiple days to increase benefits Partner with local venues in creative ways
Heightened visibility of the Dallas art scene	Increased arts tourism

Table 2: *Current Benefits and Possibilities for Aurora*

<sup>35</sup> Refer to the event reviews on Facebook and Yelp in the appendix.

Enhanced cultural and place identity	More permanent installations in the public space within the arts district could lead to more permanent identity and wayfinding ability as well as create
Artists enabled to show their work to a large number of people	More recognition for Dallas and Texas artists on a broader scale
Spur innovation and creativity in other areas of life and society	Expanded entrepreneurship, new inventions and ideas that improve quality of life
Increased sense of community, social cohesion	

Table 2 Continued

Challenges	Opportunities
Lack of wayfinding	Create a paper map in addition to phone app map Add creative wayfinding using lighting and signage
Traffic control	Increase traffic control presence Expand event outside of Arts District Expand event to multiple days Add online/phone traffic and wayfinding app
Difficulty seeing the art / Crowding	Ensure work is above eye level Disperse work (through time and/or space) to reduce crowding
New context for viewing art challenges perceptions and expectations of art	Possibly, over time people will acclimate to art in new contexts. More events of this type could spur normalization
Perceptions regarding elitism and/or populism	Expand and promote the event in a way that brings in diverse audiences, maintain high quality work that allows artistic license and boundary-breaking while including participatory elements
Lack of facilities (or perception thereof)	Add more restrooms (and wayfinding to them) Add more food trucks Add area restaurants to maps and app

Table 3: Current Challenges and Opportunities for Aurora

### **Possibilities Going Forward: How can Impacts of Aurora be Determined?**

There is great possibility for Aurora going forward. The event is arguably an asset to the City of Dallas, residents, visitors, artists, and all those involved with the event, and with the potential for future expansion, the event's positive impacts can continue to develop as well.

Considering that an official, independent evaluation of Aurora Dallas has not yet occurred, it would be recommended to carry out a more comprehensive evaluation at some point in the near

future, preferably at a point when the event has addressed some of the “growing pains” which other commentators had noted, such as crowd control, wayfinding, and traffic.

Impacts can be measured using both qualitative and quantitative measures. The economic impact study of ArtPrize in Grand Rapids, Michigan conducted by AEG used a variety of measures to determine the economic impacts of the event. The team at AEG administered both demographic and economic surveys which they analyzed using rigorous methodology.<sup>36</sup> Their methodology was primarily quantitative in nature. This sort of analysis is useful to determine economic impacts such as sales, attendance, and job creation. These quantitative measures could be complemented by qualitative data, such as surveys of local business owners and employees, event staff, visitors<sup>37</sup>, artists, city personnel involved with the event, and any others who were involved. The inclusion of qualitative information in an analysis may be able to provide a more nuanced perspective on the event. For example, were new jobs created, and if so, how many remained after the event? What were the artists’ perceptions of the event? Did it spark any new relationships or business endeavors? What does the event mean to Dallas residents? These type of questions may point the way to more detailed policy and planning related to these events, and may illuminate the potential to form partnerships to problem solve and make these kinds of events even more successful in the future. Katherine Gressel, writing for Createquity, found that public reception through reviews and media reactions were also methods to gauge reception of public art (Gressel, 2012). It is important to note, however, that negative comments do not necessarily indicate overall negative impacts. As has been discussed previously, the ability to provoke and incite may turn out to be a positive effect of public art. As for comments related to the ability to navigate space and physically view the work, those are more process-related challenges that may be resolved through alterations in the event programming.

## **Directions for Future Research**

It seems clear from the preceding discussion that more research should be done to gauge the impacts of public art. Researchers and theorists from various backgrounds have made great strides in understanding the potential impacts of public art, however, there is room to increase our

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<sup>36</sup> Refer to p. A-1 to A-3 in the 2013 ArtPrize Economic Impact Study for detailed methodology.

<sup>37</sup> To my knowledge, there has been at least one electronic survey sent to those who supplied the AT&T Performing Arts Center with an email address. I received one of these surveys about a month after the event. This represents a positive step in determining public response to the event.

understanding in order to create interventions which have the greatest positive effect. Specifically, in the area of public health, it would be useful to have studies looking at short-term and long-term impacts of engagement with public art, whether it is through interviewing participants or viewers in a qualitative study, or whether measuring other more tangible variables related to health and psychological well-being. Some of this research has been carried out in the UK through the BeWell programme, and similar research is currently underway in the U.S. through a partnership between Philadelphia's Porch Light Program and the Yale School of Medicine. Their methodology is described as a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods as follows:

The rigorous evaluation design includes a process evaluation including the careful tracking of program activities as well as a longitudinal outcome evaluation including individual interviews, qualitative case studies, community surveys, systematic observations, comparison sites, and archival data. ("Porch Light", n.d.)

The Porch Light program's evaluation poses a useful methodology set that could be employed to gauge impacts of public art that go beyond economic measures.

It would also be useful to better understand the relationship between arts and "nature" in crafting environments that foster health. There has been much research showing positive impacts of contact with and views of nature, as well as positive effect shown from engaging with the arts. Studies that simultaneously look at these variables might go a long way in crafting better healing environments, as well as better public spaces. They could also help inform planning decisions concerning amount and placement of green space in concert with public art displays.

## **Chapter 6: Conclusion**

This report set out to examine the social and economic impacts of public art in a holistic and multidisciplinary way in order to illuminate connections between divergent fields of inquiry, as well as to point out contradictions and complexities in the understanding of public art. The goal of this analysis was to provide planners, as well as others involved in the creation of public art, a clearer lens with which to view its implementation.

During the course of this analysis, it was found that the context and content of a work of public art were more impactful than work typology in determining effects. It was also found that the process of creation of a work of public art determines impact and that participatory public art creation may yield positive health and social benefits related to conceptions of eudemonic well-being. Complex relationships emerged between economic development and the arts. At one end of the spectrum, art may promote economic development through enhancing the aesthetics of a place, by increasing place identity, and by promoting arts tourism, however, art has been viewed as a tool for gentrification and inequitable development. It seems that art, regardless of its aesthetic appeal, may enhance the capacity to innovation in society through a common thread in the creative process. Those working in planning-related fields may utilize studies demonstrating positive health effects from engagement with the arts to create programming and plans that allow for community-based art creation. For those working in economic development, the knowledge that arts-related initiatives may powerfully stimulate local economies through large, temporary events as well as through coordination between traditional economic development planning and arts and culture related industries may create better outcomes for all involved as well. Thus, combining public art with other programs may benefit those programs through innate benefits of interacting with and producing art.

Insight from existing literature and research was applied to the understanding of a single case study: Aurora Dallas. Due to its unique position within an established arts district, its context as an event occurring at night, as well as its focus on so-called “new media” art, Aurora presented the opportunity to examine the unique aspects of public art event of this kind. The insights from examining this event reveal process-related issues which planners and policymakers should be attentive to, such as the importance of wayfinding, traffic control (foot and automobile) as well as the relationship of the event to larger planning goals such as activation of urban space at various times of day as well as public arts planning focusing on place identity and increasing the

prominence of a city's arts community within and beyond the city. There are also potential positive effects related to community cohesion and enhanced place identity through the creation of shared experiences in an arts-related public space. There are opportunities to build upon what has been created to facilitate more positive outcomes going forward. This case study suggests that the awareness and inclusion of diversity both in works of art and in audiences are important factors that relate to an art event's success, especially in settings with diverse populations. Aurora event organizers worked to be inclusive, and this is an important ideal with large public art events.

The literature also reveals cautionary tales that planners and policymakers should heed, such as the problematic decline in public space and its social and political importance in a free, democratic society. It was found that public space is key to well-functioning democracies, and that public art in these spaces may promote their democratic virtue, or it may do the opposite depending on the content of the art as well as the process of its selection and funding. However, any challenges in creating public art installations should not deter those interested in its positive effects. Public art's benefits may support a variety of social roles and may be incorporated into other planning and policy-related initiatives. Overall, the impacts of public art are complex, however, an analysis of diverse fields of inquiry and cross-examination reveal that public art may exist as an instrumental boon to its society, although it arguably possesses intrinsic value in its existence as a pure act of creativity. It is suggested that planners and policymakers work to ensure that space for public art is supported and easy to find so that all may enjoy its benefits.

## Appendix A: Survey Questions

### Survey Questions: Aurora Dallas

**Instructions and Disclosure:** Please Fill out the Survey to the best of you knowledge. This survey will be included in the appendix and the responses analyzed in the masters professional report for Emily K Goodrum of The University of Texas at Austin, Department of Community and Regional Planning. The report will be accessible in The University of Texas library database at completion.

1. How did the Aurora event come to exist? Who was involved and what was the chain of events that brought the event to life?
2. What were your (or your organization's) initial goals for the event? Were different goals expressed by different groups/entities participating in the event's creation?
3. How did private organizations, arts districts organizations, and the City of Dallas collaborate and work together on the event? Who took responsibility for what?
4. At what point during the process did various organizations get involved? How did the process of working together develop?
5. What challenges did you (or your organization) encounter with the event process and how did you resolve them?
6. What lessons did you learn over subsequent years with the event?
7. How were event logistics handled? (parking, timing, security, art installation/de-installation, wayfinding, etc...)
8. It seems that the event has expanded over subsequent years. To what do you owe this expansion?
9. What, if any, feedback about the event have you (and your organization) received from businesses and property owners around the event area?
10. How do you measure the success or general effects of an event like Aurora?
11. Have there been unexpected effects of the event?
12. Do you see Aurora as changing the way people interact with the existing Arts District space? If so, how?
13. Is there any indication that attendance numbers are affected (higher or lower) during the time before or after Aurora in the surrounding arts venues (Dallas Museum of Art, ATT Performing Arts Center, Meyerson Symphony Center, etc...)? If so, how is this measured?
14. How to area institutions relate to the event?

15. What do you feel are intangible effects of Aurora? What's happening that is difficult to measure, but you feel strongly about?

16. What do you feel is the impact of public art?

17. Explain any participatory aspects of the art on display at Aurora. How do you see the public interacting with the art?

## Appendix B: Survey Response from Joshua King

*(Responses Received November 23, 2015)*

1. How did the Aurora event come to exist? Who was involved and what was the chain of events that brought the event to life?

- *In 2010 Shane Pennington and Joshua King brought the first Aurora to life at Dallas Heritage Village as part of the Cedars Open Studio Tour in South Dallas. They organized 40 installations and a student gallery show. With only 3 sponsors - BuyLEDs, Lee Harvey's and the Dallas Heritage Village - and a \$200 dollar production budget, an attendance of 1,500 people turned out and the first Aurora was born.*

2. What were your (or your organization's) initial goals for the event? Were different goals expressed by different groups/entities participating in the event's creation?

- *Our goals have always remained the same: to bring the creative culture to the forefront of Dallas by supporting the local art scene and bringing the public of the city of Dallas together to explore high quality public art presented in unexpected places.*

3. How did private organizations, arts districts organizations, and the City of Dallas collaborate and work together on the event? Who took responsibility for what?

- *Many organizations from inside and outside of the Dallas Arts District have stepped up to the plate to help bring Aurora to fruition. We've thankfully received financial and promotional contributions from the City of Dallas and other Dallas city institutions. Further, companies such as BuyLEDs have donated hundreds of projectors over the last few Auroras and the Dallas Morning News is our founding media sponsor. This year, we began a valuable production partnership with AT&T Performing Arts Center. They have contributed staff, resources, promotion and much more to bring us to the next level. Reliant also joined us this year as a new major Presenting Sponsor. Over the last five years, we've also built a strong and essential community of generous patrons and supports that have contributed time/volunteer hours, money, and other resources over the years. They share our passion for Aurora and are essential to the event's growth over the years. The first major supporter was former Executive Director of the Dallas Arts District (DAD), Veletta Forsythe Lill. She attended the first Aurora and approached us soon after believing that Aurora was a missing link in uniting the city. She showed us the 68 acres of the DAD and became the third founder of Aurora who elevated the event to the scale it is today.*

5. What challenges did you (or your organization) encounter with the event process and how did you resolve them?

- *When doing an event of this size, the main thing to remember is that with belief and a willingness to ask for help, timing and a little bit of luck... Anything is possible*

7. How were event logistics handled? (parking, timing, security, art installation/de-installation, wayfinding, etc...)

- *We had an amazing production team in 2015 supported by The AT&T Performing Arts Center and a handful of production managers that worked around the clock for months leading up to the event. Each area of operations and production was assigned to a point person that was in charge of laying out a game plan for their section. We met together weekly to update the teams.*

8. It seems that the event has expanded over subsequent years. To what do you owe this expansion?

- *Lots of amazing supports, key stakeholders that have believed in Aurora from the beginning, a class of artists that have been taking Dallas into their own hands. The city's own demand for an event that unites the community and that they can proudly call their own.*

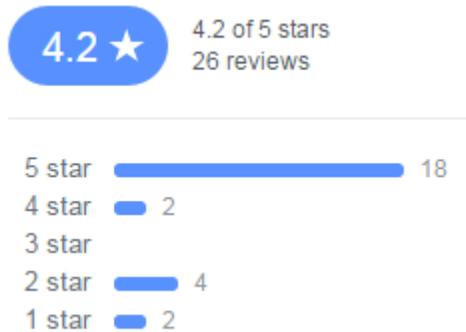
12. Do you see Aurora as changing the way people interact with the existing Arts District space? If so, how?

- *What I see Aurora doing is helping people become familiar and comfortable with a beautiful part of Downtown, while helping to create an urban environment where people come together to connect, learn and appreciate culture together. In this common, open space, we hope class barriers of society are broken down and the attendees feel united through the enjoyment of viewing and experiencing the art of light, video and sound.*

15. What do you feel are intangible effects of Aurora? What's happening that is difficult to measure, but you feel strongly about?

- *The belief in community, Dallas wants to be known for something culturally defining. It's always measuring itself to others. I believe that we are arriving at the time where we can be a cultural destination that others look to.*

## Appendix C: Aurora Ratings and Reviews from Facebook



*Aurora Event reviews from the event's Facebook page retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/dallasaurora/reviews/>*

### Reviews and Comments from Aurora's Facebook Page:

*(Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/dallasaurora/reviews/>)*

#### **Keisha Kay** — 1 star

I was really excited about this event. I stepped off of the Dart rail expecting to be overwhelmed by light and color. There was nothing of the sort. The exhibits we did see were not impressive and there were far too many people to enjoy the exhibits we were interested in. The food/beverage lines were equally crowded. I can't think of one good thing to say about this event.

#### **Caleb Jaimes** — 4 star

A fun event where you get to see art done in a different medium. It is also a fun event where people can just relax, walk around, socialize, meet new people, and eat food. You can even interact or be part of some art works. Best of all, it's FREE!

#### **Eliza Galindo** — 5 star

#### **Apryl Bracken-Crenshaw** — 5 star

#### **Peter Cairns** — 5 star

#### **Pablo Padgett** — 2 star

Compared to first Aurora, this was a disappointment. I'm not going to knock the large crowd and epic wait for food/drinks. I get that. What perturbed me was that people were there really wanting to see, experience, and appreciate Art, but it was few and far. Sure a couple of the big boys were there and it was awesome. But where was the small intimate stuff? The "grass roots" Art that was so prevalent last Aurora. And a lot of the video was just plain boring. Sorry but think about the

first Aurora. What killed it for me was when I went to go see the Annete Strauss Square (which rocked last time) and found it was closed for the VIP after party. Really guys?

Jonathan Dixon Agreed. The square was awesome last time. It was really ethereal. It just seemed like they were throwing a party with a few art pieces thrown in. And I loved the first two Aurora's and have been an advocate for it to everyone I know. I was embarrassed bringing my friends who had not been before.

**Jacob Merwin** — 5 star

Mind Yack'ed! MY kind of show! Amazing sound n visual affects!

**Kristha Archila-Giri** — 5 star

I was in awe! It was excellent. Great artists and art and I won't miss it next year.

**Enrique Mascorro** — 1 star

**Stefanie Tovar** — 5 star

**Sandra Castillo** — 5 star

**Jody Stafne** — 5 star

What an amazing night! Perfect weather, very cool and interactive pieces, and nice people everywhere! Loved it! And really appreciated the app!

**Cera Deibel** — 2 star

This was an event where the arts district invites remarkably innovative local and international artists to display their work, only to have the general public take selfies with it and then scoff and say "how is this even art?". They spent more time and money on their "come see cool light stuff downtown!" advertising campaign to attract as many people as possible, instead of finding ways to comprehensively engage the public with contemporary art and it showed. Compared to two years ago, there was more people, less art, and much more corporate sponsorship and "VIP" perks. This was an event in the Dallas arts district that disregarded art and artists in favor of attracting a crowd that doesn't even appreciate it.

**Jonathan Dixon** 100 percent agree. The first Aurora was the best art event of my life. It's not even a shell of that experience.

**Pablo Padgett** Agree. But...people were there really wanting to see, experience, and appreciate Art. But it was few and far between. Sure a couple of the big boys were there, but where was the small intimate stuff? And a lot of the video was just plain boring. Sorry...See More

**Barry Wakeling** — 2 star

Very disappointing compared to 2013!

**Paula Matthews** — 4 star

Well it's Friday night and I'm at Aurora Dallas, good food, good fun, and good fellowship!

**William Turner** — 5 star

**Kesha LaShay** — 5 star

**Lacey Dowden** — 5 star

**Marsha Hoffman** — 5 star

**Marcus Young** — 5 star

**Christi Starritt Walker** — 5 star

**Britain Stone** — 5 star

**Monica Salazar** — 5 star

**Kalli Sexton** — 5 star

I can't imagine a better event offered for FREE for families and visitors in the Dallas arts district!!

**Ruenda Escamilla** — 2 star

**Scott Berry** — 5 star

What a phenomenal event.....and FREE

BUILDINGs decomposing and being restructured before your eyes. Creative light installations...

On of the greatest community events in my memory

## **Appendix D: Aurora Reviews and Comments from Yelp**

### **Reviews and Comments From Aurora 2015 Page:**

*(Retrieved from <http://www.yelp.com/events/dallas-aurora-2015>)*

**William M.**

Just a heads up folks... This event was so fun last year... And it's free, but do bring some cash, for some of the amazing food trucks!

**Pashy K.**

Thanks for the info.

**Anna M.**

Thanks William M. for that info!

**William M.**

Heads up: There is a free down load app on iTunes: Aurora Dallas

The App should help out. It has a map of the area and locations of the different exhibits. The app also tells you about the artists. (Make sure to fully charge up your phones and cameras!) The McKinney Avenue Transit Authority (Uptown trolley) is also scheduled to run late, up until 1:30am. But always double check!

Here is the Yelp bookmark to checkin and add more pictures, reviews and tips:  
[yelp.com/biz/aurora-dall...](http://yelp.com/biz/aurora-dall...)

**Emmanuel L.**

Just left the arts district. Its already getting packed!

**Altoon C.**

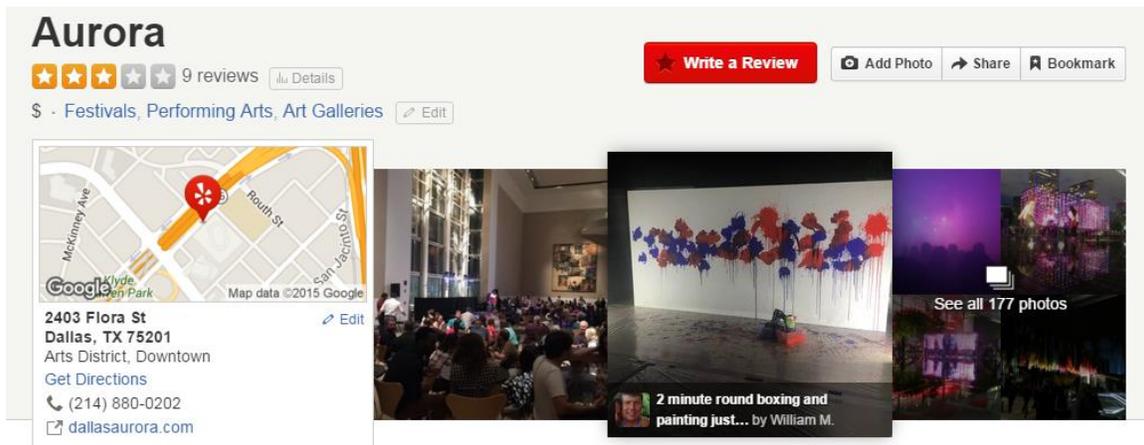
Had a great time , the arts were astounding . The graphic images displayed on The Wyly was a mind bleep . Great job by the curators also, and of course every artist that participated .

**Chris W.**

Great event!

**Mara Z.**

Most food trucks are taking credit cards.



Screen Capture of Aurora Yelp Page from <http://www.yelp.com/biz/aurora-dallas>

### Reviews And Comments From Aurora Page:

(Retrieved from <http://www.yelp.com/biz/aurora-dallas>)

#### Suman C.

4.0 star rating 10/20/2015

Pros: never saw Dallas so vibrant and busy, several creative pieces, Wylie theater's exterior light show rocked!

Cons: poor crowd management, long lines everywhere (especially the food stalls), no directions (app was useless), a few dumb exhibits (like fog machines in the church)

Hope they unleash the full potential in the coming years!

#### Cera D.

1.0 star rating 10/29/2015

I'll preface this review by saying this is an event centered around CONTEMPORARY ART that merges art and technology into interactive pieces that engage viewers using light and sound. This wasn't an event just for "cool lights" as some might have believed (and frankly, if you're looking for a cool light show, you should have just gone to a rave instead).

I attended Aurora Dallas expecting the same remarkable quality that made the inaugural event in 2013 so fantastic (many of the 5 star reviews here were from 2013). Instead, this year's event was the Dallas Arts District inviting remarkably innovative local and international artists to display their work, only to advertise it as a "cool light show party" and then have the general public take selfies with their work and then scoff and say "how is this art?". Aurora spent more time and money on their advertising campaign and afterparty DJ to attract as many people as possible instead of finding ways to comprehensively engage the public with contemporary art and it showed. Compared to two years ago, there were way more people, less art, and much more corporate sponsorship and "VIP" perks. The event failed to represent the work well and was not

prepared for the huge amounts of people that showed up - especially considering that most of the pieces were interactive but the lines were just too long to be able to really engage with it at all.

When a significant number of people show up to an event centered around contemporary art and say "this isn't art" or "I don't get it", the event has failed to represent the Dallas arts community and instead turned our neighborhood into a big party. As a Booker T. Washington Arts Magnet alum, my neighborhood and my fellow artists were disregarded and disrespected by the Dallas Arts District in favor of attracting a crowd that didn't even appreciate it. I was terribly disappointed with this years' event and can only hope that Aurora eases its growing pains for the next event and works harder to meaningfully engage the public with the art they display.

**Sharde A.**

3.0 star rating 10/22/2015

Listed in 2015 Challenge

Thank Crom this was a free event. I'm sure we have talented people in Dallas, but some of the displays were as if a hobo constructed them out of the trash left from an abandoned topless bar.

By 10p, the beer was all bought up at the tent in front of Winspear so I couldn't drunkenly enjoy the exhibits. I don't partake in drugs either, but I'm pretty sure this would have been more fun if I were tripping on acid.

Or.....I just expected some massive light display that was so bright that I had to wear shades.

Or.....maybe I just don't know anything about art.

However, I was super excited to see this many people come out to an event supporting the arts. For what it's worth, it was a great place to socialize and get stuck in traffic (take the DART, just do it).

**Sandor K.**

5.0 star rating 11/20/2015

1 check-in

I have never seen so many people in downtown Dallas!! This was a wonderful event and great experience for anyone to see. Great music, exhibits and food! It was fantastic to see so many people out enjoying this event!

**Cat N.**

1.0 star rating 10/16/2015 Updated review

Okay aurora got lame. The first year they did it was the best. Kept losing cool stuff every year. This year they had pretty much more art and less light. The first year had a lot of lights and bigger things. Also, what pissed me off was they advertise till 2AM but kicked everybody out by 12 at klyde warren park area. What?

5.0 star rating 10/18/2013 Previous review From mid cities, it'll be easy for you to take the dart down so you won't have to worry about... Read more

Samantha T.

2.0 star rating 10/16/2015

Sorry. Did not get it. There were some lights here and there but nothing awe dropping.

We started from Klyde Warren and wondered down toward the Nasher. Not much happening.

There were two women moving to some Madonna music looking into a mirror. So low to the ground that we did not see them until we were right next to them.

Wandered thru the Nasher.

Came out and found a person with an orange shirt who was a volunteer and she told us of a few areas with something happening.

There was a church with three lights and a few fog machines. Not sure what that was about.

The piano n algae performance ended prior to the time noted.

The laser show was small and there was no music to with it or provide any indication of the meaning of it.

The area was really missing directions and flow.

Very disappointed.

**Vivi P.**

5.0 star rating 10/17/2015

I did not go to the one they had 3 years ago but I thought it was amazing. I was really impressed, it felt like I was in a different city. Tons of people, this is the most alive I've ever seen Dallas.

Good job big D.

**Cleo J.**

2.0 star rating 10/17/2015

Was excited to go, but underwhelmed while there. There was confusion about what was happening where, and the downloaded app was not at all helpful. Lots of videos which lost their punch outdoors, and projected lights on buildings were not as impactful as I had hoped. Great idea but needs refinement, and lots of volunteers to steer the crowds next time.

**Tim L.**

5.0 star rating 10/19/2013

1 check-in

I've always been envious of Europe and how it seems like they always have outdoor art/light exhibits. Needless to say, I was pretty excited when I heard the whole Arts District would be turned into a canvas for many artists to do things that not even they do often. Don't get me wrong. Traditional art is fine. It's great, in fact. But it's still..well..traditional. So when a plethora of artists come together to collaborate to transform a portion of the city into something entirely different it's gotta be exciting even for the not so artsy types.

Turning Wyly Theater into what it seemed like moving parts was probably one of the coolest things at the event. I'm sure we could have spent the entire evening there watching the reconstruct itself. But it was just one of what seemed like a thousand exhibits there. There was also an interactive piece at Klyde Warren Park where people stepped into an inflated chamber with a paint gun and created their own art from the inside.

Live performances were popping up here and there at random times and there were pieces of art everywhere you turned. The 20 or so food trucks made this event that much better. I can't recall

the last time there were that many food trucks congregated in one place. It made deciding what to get pretty challenging. All in all, this was an amazing experience and I can't wait to see what next year's installment has in store for us. Perhaps, with the awesome displays of light, sound and art like what Dallas witnessed last night we can finally take the next big step in becoming a well known arts city.

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