

Environmental Justice through Public Art

by
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this practicum was to assess how nonprofit reorganization and adding environmental justice learning could strengthen Public Art Workz, a small public arts nonprofit in Northwest Detroit. In order to reach that goal, I first studied how nonprofit reorganization helps PAWZ, my client, achieve its mission of art education and community beautification. The second part used employee and volunteer interviewers and the organizations' literature to compare and contrast PAWZ and similar Detroit public arts organizations to three other major public arts organizations. These three organizations were: The Social and Public Art Resource Center, in Los Angeles, California, The City of Philadelphia Mural Arts Program in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and The Heidelberg Project in Detroit, Michigan. The third component analyzed how public art contributes to environmental justice learning by studying the previously mentioned interviews, organizational and programing structure, and one public art piece from each organization that contained environmental justice themes.

My preliminary findings indicate if PAWZ completes a nonprofit reorganization, it could increase its mission's impact. Second, in the comparison and contrast section, each organization had different financial and marketing strategies, but shared a similar social justice purpose and process of creating public art. Third, I recommend how environmental justice and public arts organization can work together to make a clear environmental justice message in public art. I then offer suggestions on how PAWZ and similar Detroit organizations can improve through status quo, reduction, and/ or sustainability scenarios. Fourth, I realized one cannot solely learn about environmental justice from public art. If one already has an environmental justice awareness, then she/ he can apply it as a means to analyze a public art piece's. Public art best applies to environmental justice when its process, motivations, collaborations, and output are community and social justice based. Through the previously mentioned processes, a mural of other type of public art could be considered an environmental justice art piece because it amplifies the human environmental experience and create more environmentally just urban landscapes.

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INTRODUCTION

The goal of this practicum was to understand how to use public art as an environmental justice learning tool. This practicum is unique because it discusses the idea of environmental justice learning using art, which is rarely researched. There has been little study in environmental justice academia of connecting public art to environmental justice. Furthermore, there have not been many comparisons between public arts organizations in Los Angeles, Philadelphia, and Detroit using nonprofit management and environmental justice frameworks. The lack of research in this area is one of the main reasons behind doing this practicum.

This practicum consisted of three major research components that complemented the previously stated goal. The first was to examine one major public arts organization in Los Angeles, Philadelphia, and Detroit, and one famous public art piece from each organization that contains environmental justice themes such as access to healthy food and health effects of air pollution. The second was to compare the respective public art organizations from Los Angeles and Philadelphia to Public Art Workz (PAWZ), my practicum client, and similar organizations in Detroit. The last part took my PAWZ summer internship experiences and the case study organizations, and recommend how PAWZ can improve and what best practices it can incorporate from the case study organizations.

Environmental justice academia traditionally focuses on health disparities studies and quantifying human health impacts of toxic industries and/ or major air pollution sources (Bullard, Mohai, Saha, & Wright, 2007). Examples of this include the comprehensive environmental justice article “Toxic Wastes and Race at Twenty: 1987-2007” and “The 17 Principles of Environmental Justice” (Bullard et al., 2007; “Environmental Justice Principles”, 1991). My practicum fits into this traditional practice because art could be used in interpreting and

disseminating research results from health disparities studies using a participatory and/ or action research approach. (Wier, Sciammas, Seto, Bhatia, & Rivard, 2009). On the other hand, my practicum differs from typical environmental justice academia because it considers public art's ability to foster democratic public spaces (Please refer to the following articles: Woolley, et al., 2008; Strife & Downey, 2009; Strife, 2008; Diamond, 2004; Diamond, 2010).

My practicum aimed to answer the following research questions: How does nonprofit reorganization help Public Art Workz execute its mission? How can environmental justice learning be added in such a way as to support PAWZ's environmental goals of getting off the grid, becoming a community environmental example and resource, and generating capital from these environmental undertakings? Nonprofit reorganization for PAWZ means strengthening its human resources in order to have better financial support and increase its mission impact.

As a result of my Institutional Review Board approved research, I found that public art does not automatically make one know or learn about environmental justice. To clarify, a person studying or looking at a certain piece of public art may understand a few parts of environmental justice, but would not be able to totally understand the subject. However, if a person already knows about environmental justice, she/ he can use that as a lens to identify and examine a public art piece. Public art best applies to environmental justice when its process, motivations, collaborations, and output are community and social justice based. Through the previously mentioned processes, a mural, or other type of public art, could be considered an environmental justice art work because it amplifies the human environmental experience and creates more environmentally just urban landscapes.

In this practicum opus, I will first give a background on PAWZ and my methods. Then, I will examine one public art work and one public arts organization in each city of Los Angeles,

Philadelphia, and Detroit. I will later compare and contrast these public art organizations and apply lessons learned in Los Angeles and Philadelphia to PAWZ and similar Detroit organizations. After that, I will present my findings, answer my research questions, and offer recommendations for PAWZ and similar Detroit organizations. Finally, I will provide a conclusion, explanation of project limitations, and suggestions for further research.

CLIENT BACKGROUND

Public Art Workz

Public Art Workz, or PAWZ, is an arts education and community beautification nonprofit located in the Brightmoor Community in Northwest Detroit, Michigan. Muralist Charles “Chazz” Miller started PAWZ in 2003 as a means to do art education and beautify Brightmoor. PAWZ accomplishes its mission by teaching the community the value of art and educating the young people who create it. Currently, Brightmoor ranks higher in poverty level, single mother households, vacancy rates, and money spent on housing, than Detroit, Wayne County, the State of Michigan, and the United States national average (“A Basic Community Profile: Brightmoor”).

I first met Chazz Miller at the University of Michigan’s Ross School of Business’s Net Impact Conference in October of 2010. He was on a panel discussing art’s role in sustainability and community revitalization. Chazz’s stories about engaging the community through art and how art can help renew a community, caught my attention. His passion, drive, and love of Detroit stuck with me. After introducing myself after the panel talk, I became interested in PAWZ and how I could connect my environmental justice studies to this organization. I saw Chazz Miller speak again at the Revitalization and Business Conference at the Ross School of Business in January 2011. After again meeting with Chazz, I told him I wanted to do a PAWZ

summer internship. I mentioned that during the internship I would like to learn nonprofit skills such as grant writing and work on adding environmental justice aspects into PAWZ's summer arts program. Soon after, Chazz welcomed me into PAWZ as a summer intern.

My internship with PAWZ went from early May until the end of August 2011. I worked under the direction of former Executive Director Tonya Murphy. During my internship, I helped reorganize PAWZ's files, recruited and oversaw two interns and one part-time volunteer, wrote grants and donation request letters, and organized a volunteer cleanup day. As a result of Tonya's and my grant writing work, PAWZ was awarded \$3,000 by Detroit's Vanguard Community Development Corporation for Chazz to teach their mural summer arts program. Overall, I accomplished my goal of gaining basic nonprofit skills such as grant writing; however, I was unable to add environmental justice components to PAWZ's summer arts program. This was because PAWZ did not receive funding for its own summer arts program from the grants, donation letters, and outreach Tonya and I completed. Due to the lack of funds, I had to shift my practicum focus away from adding environmental justice to PAWZ's summer arts programming.



Figure 1. Chazz Miller, PAWZ's Founder, works on a mural at the Brightmoor Community Center in Detroit, Michigan.

METHODS

My primary research methods included using my personal experiences from my summer internship at PAWZ. I interviewed a total of five people from the following organizations: The Social and Public Art Resource Center, The City of Philadelphia Mural Arts Program, and The Heidelberg Project. These people were either organizational volunteers or employees. These interviews were conducted from late February to early March 2012. I then studied Detroit's history from three different books: Thomas Sugrue's *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit*; Kevin Boyle's *Arc of Justice: A Saga of Race, Civil Rights, and Murder in the Jazz Age*, and Grace Bogg's *Living for Change: An Autobiography*. This was so I could gain a background of Detroit and better understand its past and current situation. I visited all of these organizations at least once between 2011 and 2012. I specifically took tours during this time of The Social and Public Art Resource Center, The City of Philadelphia Mural Arts Program's Mural Mile Walking Tour, and The Heidelberg Project. I personally took many pictures of murals, sculptures, and mosaics of the art of the previously mentioned organizations as well as other public art around the cities in which they are located. (Please see Appendix II for my best photos of public art from these cities and short descriptions of each city's photos.) I used my own personal experiences from taking pictures, viewing the art, and reading the interpretive signs attached to the art work, to fulfill my research goals.

My secondary research consisted of studying the previously mentioned organizations and one of their public art works containing environmental justice themes. In order to accomplish

this I used information and general media from the previously mentioned organizations' website, videos, photos, links to artist's websites, paper pamphlets, handouts, posters, self-tour brochures, and general guides. Furthermore, I utilized the information, knowledge, and frameworks gained in the nonprofit management class I took during Spring 2011 to inform the nonprofit organization and management scenarios and recommendations I make in this opus.

COMPARATIVE CASE STUDY APPROACH

The Social and Public Art Resource Center in Los Angeles, California

The idea and framework for the Social and Public Art Resource Center, or SPARC, came out of the three great post-revolutionary war Mexican muralists: Diego Rivera, David Alfredo Siqueiros, and Jose Clemente Orozco (Coerver, Pasztor, & Buffington, 2004, p. 316-318). SPARC and other LA Chicano art movements were most influenced by Siqueiros. In 1932, Siqueiros created a mural called *America Tropical*. The city wanted Siqueiros to paint a mural for a touristy Mexican village. Instead, Siqueiros painted a mural depicting the abuse of a Mexican laborer. At the mural unveiling, the public was shocked and soon the mural was whitewashed. During the 1970s, the mural began to reappear through the white paint, which happened to be around the same time as the beginning of the LA Chicano movement ("Brief History"; F. Sanchez, personal communication, December 23, 2011).

Judy Baca is a Chicana muralist born in the Watts neighborhood of LA. She started the first LA city mural program in 1974, which specifically worked with Chicano youth, to paint murals across the city. In total, the city mural program completed over 100 murals that emphasized the experience of the poor and working classes (*Great Wall Historical Intro*; F. Sanchez, personal communication, December 23, 2011). The city mural program ran into

problems when local politicians wanted to use the mural program for their own means, instead of public good. For instance, one official wanted his portrait in a mural in order to support his reelection. Two years later, Baca and other city mural program supporters, decided to turn the city mural program into the nonprofit organization SPARC (F. Sanchez, personal communication, December 23, 2011; *Great Wall Historical Intro*; “Brief History”). Baca co-founded SPARC in 1976 along with painter Christina Schlesinger and filmmaker Donna Deitch. Baca later became a professor at UCLA, starting a digital mural program in collaboration with UCLA and SPARC (Imagining America: Artists and Scholars in Public Life, 2008; *The Great Wall of Los Angeles*; SPARC: Creating Sites of Public Memory Since 1976). She maintains that SPARC’s goal is to: “[create] sites of public memory...that recover the lost stories of indigenous and immigrant peoples” (Imagining America, 2008, p. 3).

The Great Wall of Los Angeles

I analyzed SPARC’s public art piece, *The Great Wall of Los Angeles*, because of its environmental justice themes. *The Great Wall* contains murals that relate past and current environmental injustices, such as the Bracero program and highway construction separating communities. Furthermore, the newly proposed “ ‘Interpretive Green Bridge’ ” will physically and symbolically bridge the two sides of the LA River and support the surrounding ecosystem because the bridge area will be replanted with native plants (Imagining America, 2008; *The Great Wall of Los Angeles*; F. Sanchez, personal communication, December 23, 2011). I will explain the artist behind the mural, the mural’s history, and why the mural has environmental justice connections.

The Great Wall of Los Angeles was painted under the guidance of SPARC's co-founder and current Artistic Director, Judy Baca along with a total of 400 youth and their families. The mural planning, prepping, and painting spanned the summers of 1976, 1978, 1980, 1981, and 1983 ("About the Great Wall of Los Angeles"; *Imagining America*, 2008; *The Great Wall of Los Angeles*).

The Great Wall is the world's longest mural at half a mile long in length and is located in Northwestern LA (*The Great Wall of Los Angeles*). The mural is 13 feet high and each section is about 350 feet long (*Great Wall Historical Intro*; *Ripley's Believe It Or Not*). The U.S. Army Corps approached Baca in the 70s asking her to create an art work that would beautify the LA River. She agreed and started the *The Great Wall* as a means to "tell the story of the people left out of history books" (*Great Wall Historical Intro*). She realized that the youth she employed to help paint the mural did not know their cultural background and history. The mural would give her student helpers, called mural makers, some of which were youth from the juvenile justice system, a sense of identity she hoped would help them find purpose and meaning in their lives (*There is a Mural I Know*; *Great Wall Historical Intro*). Different types of funding was used to support all aspects of the mural making including public and private grants and money from the juvenile justice system (F. Sanchez, personal communication, December 23, 2011). Funders and all mural makers are also recognized by their names at the end of each time period section in large, black letters.

The mural process for *The Great Wall* started with research. Baca then sought out people who experienced tragedies, such as Japanese Internment, and brought them in to speak with the mural makers during the research and mural painting components (*Great Wall Historical Intro*). Baca further collaborated with other artists, scholars, and community members to create accurate

historical and artistic mural representations (Imagining America, 2008; *The Great Wall of Los Angeles*). After the research, the mural makers, their art supervisors, and Baca would plan and draw ideas for each mural. Once the mural subjects were agreed upon, the mural makers, artists, and Baca created scaled black and white, and then color blueprints on paper. The plans were taken outside. The concrete walls of the LA River were then painted white with scaled blueprints outlined on a grid (*Great Wall Historical Intro; There is a Mural I Know; Mapping Another L.A.: The Chicano Art Movement*). A group of mural makers and artists were assigned to different parts of the mural, such as sketching mountains, and various parts of mural making process, such as washing brushes (*There is a Mural I Know*). The youth rotated jobs throughout each day to keep them engaged in the process and to stay on target with the mural completion deadline (*Great Wall Historical Intro; Bill Moyers' Creativity in America; There is a Mural I Know*).

The mural makers felt they learned more helping to create the mural than in school. They enjoyed working with each other and learning peoples' histories they had not discussed in class and the students liked getting paid for their work (*Great Wall Historical Intro; There is a Mural I Know*). However, the mural process was difficult because the mural makers, supervisors, and Baca faced stamina, odor, and dehydration problems because they painted in an open sewer during the hottest parts of the summer (*There is a Mural I Know; Donna Deitch Documentary Film*).

This mural represents a people's history of California from Prehistoric times until the 1950s (*The Great Wall of Los Angeles*). It mostly includes major acts of discrimination against minority groups such as the Zoot Suit Riots, Japanese-American Internment, and Native American Indian Schools. However, it shows a few glimmers of historical events when groups and individuals broke racial and ethnic barriers such as Native American Olympic runner Billy

Mills (“About the Great Wall of Los Angeles”; “Billy Mills”). The mural’s bright, visible vignettes flow into each other like the river and short descriptions of each vignette are easily readable.

In 2009 and 2011, *The Great Wall* was restored (Yaroslavsky, 2011; F. Sanchez, personal communication, March 3, 2012). Graffiti and grime were washed away and the murals repainted (*Great Wall Historical Intro*; F. Sanchez, personal communication, December 23, 2011). The next step for *The Great Wall*, which will enhance its environmental justice message, is interpretive signs, a “Green Bridge,” and a locator sign on the highway (*The Great Wall of Los Angeles*; F. Sanchez, personal communication, December 23, 2011; Yaroslavsky, 2011). The highway sign will hopefully attract more tourists and passers-by to find the mural. The bridge will be pedestrian and bike friendly, have photovoltaic cells to collect solar energy, and be made of recycled materials, some of which came from the River (F. Sanchez, personal communication, December 23, 2011; “Bridge Story”). Construction on the green bridge is expected to start during summer 2012 and will take about one year to complete (F. Sanchez, personal communication, March 3, 2012). The green bridge will help enhance the environmental justice message of reconnecting the two sides of the river (*The Great Wall of Los Angeles*). The bridge represents a symbolic reconnection between people in LA that were torn apart by the construction of highways, buildings, and the concreting of the LA River. This resonates with larger global environmental justice issues of native peoples and locals being displaced by dams or other major infrastructure projects. Adding signs along the bridge to explain each historical component of the mural, would help those without a background in LA history, relate the mural’s themes to current events and their own lives.

Overall, the process of creating the mural, the people involved in the mural marking, and the mural's repainting, green bridge, interpretive signs, and highway marker, represent an environmental justice process. This is an environmental justice process because it incorporates marginalized populations into learning and telling and their stories of exploitation through art. Furthermore, parts of *The Great Wall* contain environmental justice messages or themes, such as Native American assimilation and removing residents so Dodger Stadium could be built ("About the Great Wall of Los Angeles").



Figure 2. *The Great Wall of Los Angeles*, 1950s section. This section includes Jewish achievement in arts and science, Native America assimilation, and Asian Americans now able to become US citizens and have land rights.



Figure 3. *The Great Wall of Los Angeles*, 1940s section. This section includes labor activist Luisa Moreno and the Bracero program.

The City of Philadelphia Mural Arts Program

The City of Philadelphia Mural Arts Program, or Mural Arts, first began in 1984 as part of the Philadelphia Anti-Graffiti Network. The city hired muralist Jane Golden to oversee what the city branded as a solution to its graffiti problem (“History”; Weidler, 2011). Golden recognized the artistic potential in the youth she taught. Around the same time, she started the nonprofit Philadelphia Mural Arts Advocates, in to help finance the Anti-Graffiti Network programs. In 1996, the Mayor merged the two programs together into the Philadelphia Mural Arts Program. Mural Arts became a partially city-funded nonprofit organization (“History”; R. Derfler, personal communication, February 27, 2012). This is one of the most prominent public arts organizations in the U.S with over 3,500 murals in their 27 year history (Weidler, 2011; R. Derfler, personal communication, February 27, 2012; Dribben, 2011, p. P-3).

Today, Mural Arts has many different styles and themes of murals by international, national, and local artists. The public is encouraged to help paint many of the murals regardless of their artistic skills or knowledge (Weidler, 2011; R. Derfler, personal communication, February 27, 2012; C. Williams, personal communication, February 28, 2012). Some murals focus on incorporating local schools in the mural painting process. In other murals, such as *Holding Grandmother's Quilt*, Mural Arts bring communities and community members together with the artist to discuss what they want to see in the mural (Dribben, 2011, p. P-3; R. Derfler, personal communication, February 27, 2012).

Mural Art's Restorative Justice Program is one example of their environmental justice-type initiatives. This program involves current and ex-inmates, juveniles, and the communities these types of people impacted. Current, ex-inmates, and juveniles are involved in learning about art, how to paint murals, and use what they have learned to create murals about their experiences. The communities impacted by crime also collaborate on murals about how crime affects their lives. The Restorative Justice program embodies environmental justice because it reaches out towards largely ignored incarcerated populations. In essence, Mural Art's collaborative process allows them share their stories and literally change their environment through mural planning and making (Geringer, D. 2011, p. P-10; C. Williams, personal communication, February 28, 2012; Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2011).

Garden of Delight

I examined the mural entitled Garden of Delight by artist David Guinn. It was completed in 2011 and is located at 203 South Sartain Street in Downtown Philadelphia ("Mural Dedication: Garden of Delight") (See Figure 4). This mural relates to environmental justice because it

responds to the existing community garden and enhances its visibility and attraction. The mural's vibrant and bright colors and height, help it attract more attention towards the garden. *Garden of*

Delight has the potential to attract more foot traffic to the garden because of its downtown location, and it is on the Mural Mile Walking tour, the tour's brochure, and a cell phone audio tour. The mural's natural landscape complements the garden's general symbolism as a means to address environmental injustices via increasing healthy food availability, environmental education, and community building through cross-cultural and economic social interaction.

Garden of Delight brings city and natural landscapes together and shows the connection between them. The small cityscape on left side of mural could be interpreted as an opening to nature or as the nature is coming out of the buildings. This, in turn, relates to the definition of environmental justice because it expands upon a typical natural environment definition to include the built environment (Bullard et al., 2007, p. 2; Environmental Justice Principles, 1991). This is important because it shows that there are many different factors, such as location and the people living in an area, that go into an environment justice framework, rather than just the natural environment.

On the other hand, *Garden of Delight* may not be the best environmental justice mural example from Mural Arts because there is only one person in the mural. The mural supports the idea that nature is pristine and there are not many people or animals in the natural scene depicted in the art work. This notion is problematic because humans have manipulated landscapes around the world for thousands of years (Smith & Wishnie, 2000, p. 5-8). People are central to environmental justice efforts because it is a civil rights, social justice, and environmental movement (Bullard et al., 2007, p. 1-2). Therefore, the mural's natural landscape is not a realistic depiction human influence on and interaction with nature.



Figure 4. *Garden of Delight* by David Guinn.

The Heidelberg Project

The Heidelberg Project started in 1986. After finishing art school, Tyree Guyton, the head artist and founder of the Heidelberg Project (HP) returned to his boy-hood home in the Black Bottom neighborhood in Southeast Detroit, Michigan (“history”). Guyton returned to his neighborhood and realized how depressed it had become. He became angry that the city was not helping to restore his neighborhood. One day, with the encouragement of his grandfather, Sam Mackey, a house painter, he started to repair his neighborhood (A. Sansoterra, personal communication, February 28, 2012).

Guyton, Mackey, volunteers, family, and friends began to reinvent their neighborhood, expressing their feelings and impressions of Detroit through art. At first, many neighbors, Detroit residents, and the city did not like the HP. They argued that it was “[an] eyesore...trash” (A. Sansoterra, personal communication, February 28, 2012). Parts of the HP have been demolished

twice by the city; however, over its 26 year history, the HP has changed many neighbors and Detroiters minds. Some of them now see the HP's public art as creating a safer neighborhood because it makes abandoned houses into art, which discourages people from using them as drug or prostitution houses (Whitfield, 2011). Neighbors surrounding the HP cite the HP as a place that has inspired them to clean up their community (A. Sansoterra, personal communication, February 28, 2012).

Today, the HP houses other art works and artists besides those of Guyton. Artists such as Tim Burke, another HP resident artist, Lisa Rodriguez, and CODEPINK are examples of artists or groups of artists that have pieces in the HP. The HP is one of the largest tourist destinations in Detroit attracting 50,000 tourists every year from around the world and has a \$3.4 million economic impact in Wayne County (Whitfield, 2011; A. Sansoterra, personal communication, February 28, 2012). All of the art in the HP is influenced by Guyton's art work and style. The HP pieces use found object such as old pieces of torn down Detroit buildings, vacuum cleaners, shoes, metal, and rusty ovens, to create their work. The HP is now transitioning from an art piece, to a community art's nonprofit working towards giving back to the community through small grants and employment (A. Sansoterra, personal communication, February 28, 2012).

The Heidelberg Project as a Composite Environmental Justice Public Art Piece

Instead of examining one public art piece, as I have done in previous sections, I analyzed the HP as a whole art work. In general, the HP highlights past and present environmental justice problems such as urban renewal. It is located in the Black Bottom neighborhood of Detroit. From the 1850s to the 1950s, Black Bottom was one of the poorest areas of the city (Sugrue, 1996, p.23, 33, 36; Boyle, 2004, p. 110-112). Around the 1920s, Black Bottom's African American

population began to increase, turning it a predominantly African American neighborhood (Boyle, 2004, p. 109-110).

Detroit's population peaked in 1950 at 1.8 million and since, the city had a large population loss to reach about 714,000 residents in 2010 (Martelle, 2011). Black Bottom's population decrease reflected that of the larger city population loss due to several factors such as economic downturns and major decreases in auto industry jobs. Then, in the 1950s, part of Black Bottom was demolished for the urban renewal projects of Interstate Highway 75 and Lafayette Park (Woodford, 2001, p. 174). These types of project represent an environmental justice problem because instead of trying to reinvest in low-income and communities of color, cities build major infrastructure projects in the middle of them. This creates a physical disconnect between the community, which separates individual, family, and community identity from place. The area's social history is partially lost, because families who had lived in the area for generations are forced to move. In total, urban renewal pushes low-income and people of color farther and farther outside the city without fully addressing the structural problems that led to the area's poverty.

The HP is a grassroots, bottom-up response to urban renewal because it reinvigorates the neighborhood in multiple ways. Over the years, HP has paid community volunteers and local homeless people to help maintain and watch over the property (Whitfield, 2011). In addition to their work, community members and visitors keep eyes on the street year-round and this presence can deter criminals. The HP's art within and outside the homes show that HP artists' respect and care for the area, which acts as another deterrent against illegal activities. In essence, the HP shows that community members can help revitalize their neighborhood and enjoy the benefits of their efforts by, for example, having a safe place for their children to play.



Figure 5. The *OJ House* by Tyree Guyton in the Heidelberg Project.



Figure 6. *New White House*, formerly *Dotty-Wotty House*, by Tyree Guyton in the Heidelberg Project.

DISCUSSION

How Programs in Los Angeles and Philadelphia Compare to PAWZ and Similar Organizations in Detroit

SPARC, Mural Arts, HP, and PAWZ are on a different spectrum with the general realm of public arts nonprofits. However, these organizations share a social justice focused purpose and process in creating public art. SPARC and Mural Arts started with similar, but larger purpose goals to that of HP and PAWZ of helping the surrounding neighborhood or city. One of the ways SPARC, Mural Arts, HP, and PAWZ reach this goal in their work with marginalized populations. These marginalized populations include, but are not limited to: homeless (HP), inmates or those just released from jail (Mural Arts), underemployed (PAWZ), and previously incarcerated youth (SPARC) (Whitfield, 2011; “The Porch Light Initiative: A Year in Review”, 2011; “One-on-One with Muralist & Instructor Eric Okdeh”, 2011; F. Sanchez, personal communication, December 23, 2011). In focusing on these populations, these organizations’ strengthen neighborhoods because they outreach to people who may not have been brought into public art discussions and give them a voice in the planning process.

All of these organizations have a social justice process of planning and making public art. However, each organization does this differently depending on the specific public art piece, the program, and funding for the piece and/ or the program. For instance, in some programs and in certain murals, Mural Arts works through a collaborative planning and painting process between the community and mural artist(s) (R. Derfler, personal communication, February 27, 2012; C. Williams, personal communication, February 28, 2012). SPARC, Mural Arts, and sometimes PAWZ, depending on the project, incorporate the community’s ideas through community forums and informal conversations. These processes show community members that they are important in the decision-making process and helps build trust with them. Also, the community forums can connect community members and those relationships can continue after the mural is completed (Dribben, 2011). On the other hand, the HP and PAWZ sometimes involve community members

only in the painting process and not in the design planning. Thus, collaboration and participation at one or each step of the mural making process, enhances community participation and can help be a medium where community members can meet and continue helping their community after the mural's complete.

This social justice purpose and process is useful to PAWZ and possibly other similar Detroit public arts nonprofits because they can argue to potential donors or on grant applications that their mission and processes are connected. They can show on their website via pictures and volunteer testimonies how their community participatory artistic process impacted local residents. They could also argue that this process is important because it can be a safe space where community members can meet and talk to each other (Dribben, 2011; R. Derfler, personal communication, February 27, 2012).

How Programs in Los Angeles and Philadelphia Contrast with PAWZ and Similar Organizations in Detroit

Each of these organizations have different financial and marketing strategies because of their mission, organizational age, and funding sources. Mural Arts and SPARC have a much larger geographic area that they try to reach with their programming and mission, which requires more financial resources than neighborhood based nonprofits, such as PAWZ and HP. SPARC, HP, and Mural Arts are all much older organizations than PAWZ, which is about nine years old. This means that these organizations have had much more time to build their financial, employee, volunteer, management capacity. All of these organizations have different budgets, depending upon their sources of income. For instance, Mural Arts has a much larger budget than PAWZ or HP because it receives a large part of its budget, \$1 million dollars, from the city of Philadelphia

(Weidler, 2011). These organizations’ donors and financial resources also shape its autonomy. SPARC, for example, wants to maintain its community trust as a public resource and would not want to become a hybrid public-private entity. This directly contrasts with Mural Arts because it relies on financial support from the public, private, and nonprofit sectors (R. Derfler, personal communication, February 27, 2012; Weidler, 2011).

SPARC also faces a mural permitting issue that the other cities do not. Since 2002, LA commissioners passed a city ordinance that blocks mural permits. This policy not just impacts SPARC, but all the other public arts organizations and artists around the city. However, SPARC has built alliances with other organizations to change this policy (F. Sanchez, personal communication, December 23, 2011; F. Sanchez, personal communication, March 3, 2012). Luckily, Philadelphia and Detroit do not have to worry about such a policy restricting muralism in their cities.

Table 1. Comparison and Contrast of SPARC, Mural Arts, HP, and PAWZ.

Comparison	Contrast
Purpose	Financial and Marketing Strategy
Process	Autonomy
Social Justice	Policy

RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Presentation of Findings and Answering the Research Questions

My first research question asked: How does nonprofit reorganization help Public Art Workz execute its mission? Nonprofit reorganization for PAWZ means strengthening and maintaining a committed group of volunteers. This could help PAWZ gain more financial support because the volunteers could help write grants, and start meeting with potential donors. This would, in turn, increase its mission impact because it would have the human and financial resources to do programming, apply for grants, and build relationships with donors. If PAWZ completes a nonprofit reorganization, it could increase its mission's impact because during this process, PAWZ can begin to address its past problems in these areas, create professional policies, establish network of professionals and volunteers, and refocus its mission. During my summer PAWZ internship, Tonya, myself, and other interns and volunteers uncovered PAWZ's significant gaps in its management and financial and personnel records. The beginning of PAWZ's nonprofit reorganization that took place from May 2011 to August 2011 helped PAWZ gain recognition, bring in volunteers with professional experience and begin to address some of those gaps. If this process were to continue, PAWZ could have a larger mission impact because it would have more human and financial resources to maintain its programming.

My second research question considered: How can environmental justice learning be added in such a way as to support PAWZ's environmental goals of getting off the grid, becoming a community environmental example and resource, and generating capital from these environmental undertakings? Using the previously mentioned case studies, I suggest that PAWZ be explicit about its environmental justice efforts and form partnerships with environmental organizations to execute these efforts. First, I would make environmental justice an explicit PAWZ goal on its website, word-of-mouth, brochure marketing. Then, I would network with other Detroit environmental and environmental justice to for their ask support and to become

partners with them. This partnership could take the form of, for example, an expanded toxics tour. This tour would show polluting industries around Detroit and illustrate many different actions environmental justice and PAWZ are taking in response to those problems.

Using Public Art as an Environmental Justice Learning Tool

Through my personal observations and interviews, I realized one cannot solely learn environmental justice from public art. A mural or other work of public art may contain noticeable environmental justice themes, such as urban renewal, but one could not make a solid environmental justice definition from viewing a piece. However, if a person already knows about environmental justice, she/he can use that as a lens to identify and examine a public art piece's process, motivations, collaborations, and output. Through the previously mentioned processes, public art can amplify the human environmental experience and create more environmentally just landscapes. This is because public art can connect people with an environmental justice message or meaning and a connection to a community's struggle on a deeper, visual level than other types of communication or art (Woolley, et al., 2008; Strife & Downey, 2009; Strife, 2008; Diamond, 2004; Diamond, 2010).

Environmental justice and public arts organization can work together to make a clear environmental justice message in public art. Environmental justice organizations would benefit from working with public arts organizations by having a hands-on, visible, and empowering process to communicate about environmental justice. For example, as previously mentioned, environmental justice and public arts organizations could work together to make expanded environmental justice tours.

Recommendations for PAWZ and Similar Organizations in Detroit

Instead of offering PAWZ a list of suggestions, I embedded my recommendations in three different scenarios. These three scenarios are titled status quo, reduction, and sustainability. Part of all of these scenarios may also be helpful to similar Detroit organizations.

The first scenario is called status quo. In this is scenario, PAWZ's would continue on its current trajectory. This means that is management and financial and personnel records gaps would not be completely resolved. For this situation, I would recommend that PAWZ dissolve. This would enable Chazz to continue working on his own art, and become a guest teaching artists at other organizations, without worrying about running his own nonprofit.

Scenario two consists of reducing PAWZ's mandate. This consists of focusing and redefining PAWZ's mission and vision. For example, only doing one mural arts summer program for children ages 10-16, instead of doing multiple summer performing and visual arts programs. Sticking to smaller guidelines would help in writing grant application, program evaluation, and being specific when talking to potential donors.

Scenario three is an ideal, sustainability situation. This is where PAWZ would be able to build trust between volunteers and Chazz so that each feels comfortable splitting up tasks and completing them on their own. Chazz and volunteers would create a set of professional policies that they would follow. These areas, in combination with using professional volunteers to fundraise, would help make PAWZ a well-known Detroit nonprofit. However, this scenario requires business-like financial, infrastructure, and human resources management.

CONCLUSION

In this practicum opus, I gave a background on PAWZ and my methods. Then, I examined one public art work and one public arts organization in each city of Los Angeles, Philadelphia, and Detroit. I later compared and contrasted these public art organizations and apply lessons learned in Los Angeles and Philadelphia to PAWZ and similar Detroit organizations. After that, I presented my findings, answered my research questions, and offered recommendations for PAWZ and similar Detroit organizations. Finally, I provided a conclusion, explanation of project limitations, and suggestions for further research.

Overall, I found that each organization studied focused on different financial and marketing strategies, but shared a social justice purpose and process of creating public art. Also, if PAWZ continues its nonprofit reorganization process I helped start, it can increase its mission impact. Furthermore, PAWZ could work with environmental justice organizations to create an expanded toxics tour. Even though environmental justice academia traditionally focuses on health disparities studies art could be used in interpreting and disseminating research results from health disparities studies using a participatory and/ or action research approach (Wier, Sciammas, Seto, Bhatia, & Rivard, 2009). In addition, public art does not automatically make one know or learn about environmental justice. Someone looking at a certain piece of public art may understand a few parts of environmental justice, but would not be able to totally understand the subject. However, if a person already knows about environmental justice, she/ he can use that as a lens to identify and examine a public art piece. Thus, public art best applies to environmental justice when its process, motivations, collaborations, and output are community and social justice based. Through the previously mentioned processes, a mural, or other type of public art, could be considered an environmental justice art work because it amplifies the human

environmental experience and foster more democratic public spaces (Woolley, et al., 2008; Strife & Downey, 2009; Strife, 2008; Diamond, 2004; Diamond, 2010).

Project Limitations

My main project limitations included: time for pretesting interview questions, performing more interviews, analysis, and testing best means of feedback and dissemination for PAWZ. I did not interview enough employees, volunteers, and visitors to make see clean trends or groupings within the interviews.

Suggestions for Further Research

If someone were to continue this research, here are my suggestions as to improve the quantity and quality of data and analysis. More interviews with SPARC, Mural Arts, Heidelberg Project employees, artists, volunteers, and visitors would be necessary for a larger sample population. Also, performing before and after interviews these stakeholders and volunteering with each organization, would give the researcher a better understanding of the public art process, nonprofit organizational challenges, and nonprofit management effectiveness. Examining all public art with environmental justice themes would support emerging environmental justice theory (Woolley, et al., 2008; Strife & Downey, 2009; Strife, 2008; Diamond, 2004; Diamond, 2010). Furthermore, it could support traditional definitions of environmental justice by offering a type of community action that could disseminate and interpret results from a community based participatory research study. The researcher could also add this information into existing public arts databases, so the public could check a search box to search for murals with environmental justice themes.

Another route a researcher could take is to perform an in-depth study of the challenges, such as mission vs. finances and income diversification, of the public arts organizations analyzed in this opus. This would require building trust with the organizations, discussing with them their past and current challenges, and then examine how they have overcome their past challenges. Finally, plan with them how to address their current challenges.

Lastly, researching what happens to murals and other types of public art after they are revealed or over time. Looking into past and present censorship, such as seen in the whitewashing of Siqueiros's mural *America Tropical*, understanding why that happened, the consequences, and if the work reappeared, like in the Siqueiros example.

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APPENDIX I: INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD SUBMITTED DOCUMENTS

List of all visual materials to be used in study

Philadelphia:





Los Angeles:



MIGUEL CONTRERAS LEARNING COMPLEX DIGITAL MURAL PROJECT

Bringing together University and High School students to illuminate stories of labor, struggle, social justice and triumph.
Project of the UCLA@SPARC Cesar Chavez Digital Mural Lab "Beyond the Mexican Mural Class" led by Professor Judy Baca

| Sponsored by the Miguel Contreras Foundation



Detroit:





Consent to Participate in a Research Study
Environmental Justice Learning through Public Art -- Interview

Principal Investigator: Rebecca Hardin, Ph.D., School of Natural Resources and Environment and Department of Anthropology, University of Michigan
Co-Investigator: Rebecca Schwartz, Masters of Science Candidate in Environmental Justice, School of Natural Resources and Environment, University of Michigan

You are invited to be a part of a research study that compares and contrasts public art and public arts organizations in Los Angeles, California and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania to Detroit, Michigan and Public Art Workz (an arts education and community beautification non-profit in Detroit). The purpose of the study is to understand how public art can be an environmental justice learning tool. The study of Environmental Justice focuses on understanding why low-income communities and communities of color face unequal pollution burdens and how to use activism, scholarship, and communication to address those issues.

If you agree to be part of the research study, you will be asked to participate in one face-to-face or phone interview at the location of your choice. The interview consists of 15 questions and should take about 30 to 45 minutes. We would like to photograph you or have you provide us with a recent photo of you and use all or part of your name in order to show examples of the volunteers, employees, and artists in the public art field and the organizations in which they work. These photos and names will be used in the practicum opus, practicum presentation, and future presentations at conferences. You may still participate in the research even if you decide not to be photographed or have your name used. Interview questions include asking about the history of the respective public arts organization and the organization's growth over the years. We will also ask about the examples of public art that you think contain environmental and/ or environmental justice themes, and how you think public art contributes to environmental justice learning.

Although there is no benefit to you, possible benefits of your participation include the following: contributing to understanding how public art can enhance environmental justice learning and encouraging more artists, environmental justice, and public arts organizations to incorporate environmental justice into public art.

Questions are not sensitive and should pose no risk to participants. You may choose not to answer any interview question and you can stop your participation in the research at any time. There is no payment for your participation in the study.

We plan to publish the results of this study and/ or present this study at conferences, but, if you would like, we will not include any information that would identify you. To keep your information safe, interviews and consent forms will be placed in a locked file cabinet in Rebecca Hardin's office. As soon as this research is complete, interviews, consent forms, and if you would like, your photo, will be destroyed.

If you have questions about this research, including questions about the scheduling of your interview, you can contact Rebecca Schwartz (760) 420-1083, rsschwar@umich.edu or Rebecca Hardin, Associate Professor, School of Natural Resources and Environment,

University of Michigan, Samuel Trask Dana Building, 440 Church Street, Ann Arbor, MI 48109, (734) 647-5947, rdhardin@umich.edu.

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, or wish to obtain information, ask questions or discuss any concerns about this study with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact the University of Michigan Health Sciences and Behavioral Sciences Institutional Review Board, 540 E Liberty St., Ste 202, Ann Arbor, MI 48104-2210, (734) 936-0933 [or toll free, (866) 936-0933], irbhsbs@umich.edu.

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be part of the study. Participating in this research is completely voluntary. Even if you decide to participate now, you may change your mind and stop at any time. You will be given a copy of this document for your records and one copy will be kept with the study records. Be sure that questions you have about the study have been answered and that you understand what you are being asked to do. You may contact the researchers if you think of a question later.

I agree to participate in the study.

Signature Date

I agree to be photographed or provide you with a recent photo as part of the study.

Signature Date

I would like my photo to be destroyed or not used at the completion of the study.

Signature Date

I agree to have my first and last name in the study.

Signature Date

*I agree to have part of my name in the study.
This is the name I would like used in the study: _____*

Signature Date

I agree to have parts of my interview quoted in this study.

Signature

Date

I agree to allow the following for (please circle one, more than one, or none):

Practicum opus presentation

Future publications

Conference presentations

Parts of my interview quoted in this study

My name used in this study (please see above)

My photo in this study

NONE of the above

Signature

Date

Letter, Email Message, and Facebook Personal Message:
Date

Dear Mr. / Mrs. _____,

My name is Becky Schwartz and I am an Environmental Justice Masters student at the University of Michigan. I am doing my Master's practicum on environmental justice learning through public art. The final product of the practicum will include a written opus, presentation, and possible presentation at a conference.

I am recruiting individuals to interview about their experiences with public art and public arts organizations in Philadelphia, Los Angeles, and Detroit. I would particularly like to contact volunteers, employees and/ or artists from public arts organizations to participate in a 15 question interview which would take 30 to 45 minutes. Participation in this study is voluntary and you may withdraw at any time.

Would you be willing to participate? I would also appreciate any other contacts at your particular organization or from Philadelphia, Los Angeles, and Detroit.

Please feel free to contact me via cell phone, (760) 420-1083 or email, rsshwar@umich.edu.

I have also attached a letter with more information about this study.

I look forward to speaking with you or communicating via email soon.

Sincerely,
Becky Schwartz

Attachment:

Phone Call Script:

Hello Mr. / Mrs. _____,

My name is Becky Schwartz and I am an Environmental Justice Masters student at the University of Michigan. I am doing my Master's practicum on environmental justice learning through public art.

I am recruiting individuals for a 15 question interview which would take 30 to 45 minutes about their experiences with public art and public arts organizations in Philadelphia, Los Angeles, and Detroit. I feel that your experiences would be important to include in this study. Would you be willing to participate?

Phone Message Script:

Hello Mr. / Mrs. _____,

My name is Becky Schwartz and I am an Environmental Justice Masters student at the University of Michigan. I am doing my Master's practicum on environmental justice learning through public art.

I am recruiting individuals to interview about their experiences with public art and public arts organizations in Philadelphia, Los Angeles, and Detroit. I would particularly like to contact those involved with public arts organizations as a volunteers, employees and/ or artists to participate in a 15 question interview which would take 30 to 45 minutes. Participation in this study is voluntary and you may withdraw at any time.

Would you be willing to participate? If so, please contact me via cell phone, (760) 420-1083 or email, rsshwar@umich.edu.

Thank you and I look forward to speaking with you or communicating via email soon

INTERVIEWS

Environmental Justice Learning through Public Art

Date

Dear _____:

My name is Rebecca Schwartz and I am a Masters of Science Candidate in Environmental Justice at the School of Natural Resources and Environment in the University of Michigan. I am a Masters student under the direction of Professor Rebecca Hardin, Ph.D., at the School of Natural Resources and Environment and Department of Anthropology in the University of Michigan. I am conducting a research study to understand how public art can be an environmental justice learning tool. The study of Environmental Justice focuses on understanding why low-income communities and communities of color face unequal pollution burdens and how to use activism, scholarship, and communication to address those issues.

I am inviting your participation, which will involve one face-to-face or phone interview which will last for approximately 30 to 45 minutes. You have the right not to answer any question and to stop the interview at any time.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty.

Although there is no benefit to you, possible benefits of your participation include the following: contributing to understanding how public art can enhance environmental justice learning and encouraging more artists, environmental justice, and public arts organizations to incorporate environmental justice into public art. There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to your participation. There is no payment for your participation.

In this study, we would like to photograph you and use all or part of your name in order to show examples of the volunteers, employees, and artists in the public art field and the organizations in which they work. These photos and names will be used in the practicum opus, practicum presentation, and future presentations at conferences. You may still participate in the research if you decide not to be photographed or have your name used.

If you have any questions concerning the research study, please call me at (760)420-1083 or email me at rsschwar@umich.edu. Dr. Rebecca Hardin can also answer and questions or concerns. She can be reached via email at rdhardin@umich.edu.

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, or wish to obtain information, ask questions or discuss any concerns about this study with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact the University of Michigan Health Sciences and Behavioral Sciences Institutional Review Board, 540 E Liberty St., Ste 202, Ann Arbor, MI 48104-2210, (734) 936-0933 [or toll free, (866) 936-0933], irbhsbs@umich.edu.

Sincerely,

Rebecca Schwartz and Dr. Rebecca Hardin

Environmental Justice through Public Art Interview Questions

Location of interview:

Interviewer:

Interviewee:

Date of Interview:

Reminder: Have the interviewee and sign the consent form

Reminder: Go over the purpose of the study before asking the questions

1. Could you tell me about the history of your organization and how it first started?

2. How and why did you become involved with this organization?

3. How has your organization grown over the years?

4. What are some of your favorite memories or learning experiences at your organization?

5. What are some of your worst memories or learning experiences at your organization?

6. What is the leadership structure like in your organization? Do you think it is strong, weak, just right? Could it improve and if so, how?

7. What are some of your organization's strengths?

8. What are some of your organization's weaknesses?

9. Do you have any suggestions on how your organization can improve on those weaknesses or in general?

10. Could you tell me a story or an example that shows your organization's relationship with the community? How does your organization continue to build upon that relationship?

11. How do you define environmental justice? What are some examples of public art you think contain environmental and/ or environmental justice themes?

12. Do you know the story behind that (those) particular piece(s)?

13. Do you know the artist(s) of that (those) particular piece(s)?

14. Do you think public art contributes to environmental justice learning? If so, how?

15. Anything else you would like to add?

APPENDIX II: PHOTOS AND DESCRIPTIONS OF PUBLIC ART IN LOS ANGELES,
PHILADELPHIA, AND DETROIT

Los Angeles

These images were taken in December 2011 and reflect on LA and California history. The first set of eight photos in this group are of the *Great Wall of LA* is the world's longest mural and is located in the Northwest. The mural features a people's history of LA and represents untold stories of oppression due to race, ethnicity, religion, immigration status, sex, and sexual orientation.

The second group of two photos consists of a few photos of the art in the Central LA Public Library in Center City. Renee Petropoulos made the entrance ceiling to the library and embedded LA novelists names in it. The other photo shows a zodiac chandelier in the library's rotunda, which was designed by Goodhue Associates, modeled by Lee Lawrie, and manufactured by LA's Thomas Day Company.

Various styles, artistic expressions, and materials are found in public art throughout LA's subway system. The next three photos in this series are of North Hollywood station contains the piece *Kaleidoscope Dreams*. In this work, Anne Marie Karlsen's hand painted tile murals show different ethnic group's dreams about LA life. After those photos, the next seven are of the Universal City station's piece *Tree of Califas* by Margaret Garcia and Kate Diamond. This tile art uses Mexican imagery such as skeletons and picture descriptions in both English and Spanish to highlight the ethnic backgrounds of LA's founders.

The Watts Towers are in the last five photos of my LA series. These Towers were created over a 34 year period by one artist, Sam Rodin. Similar to the Heidelberg Project in

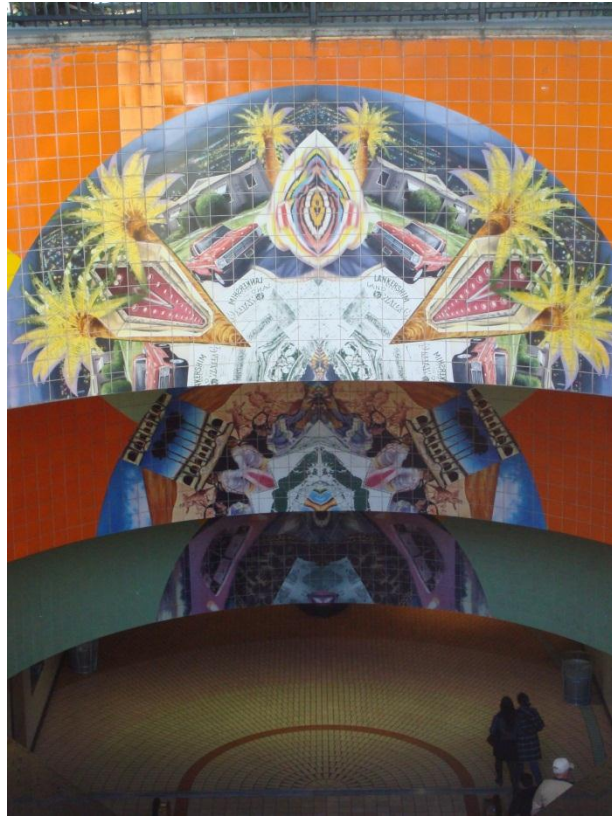
Detroit, the Watts Towers were first dismissed by neighbors and the city as an eye-sore, but have since become emblematic of LA.













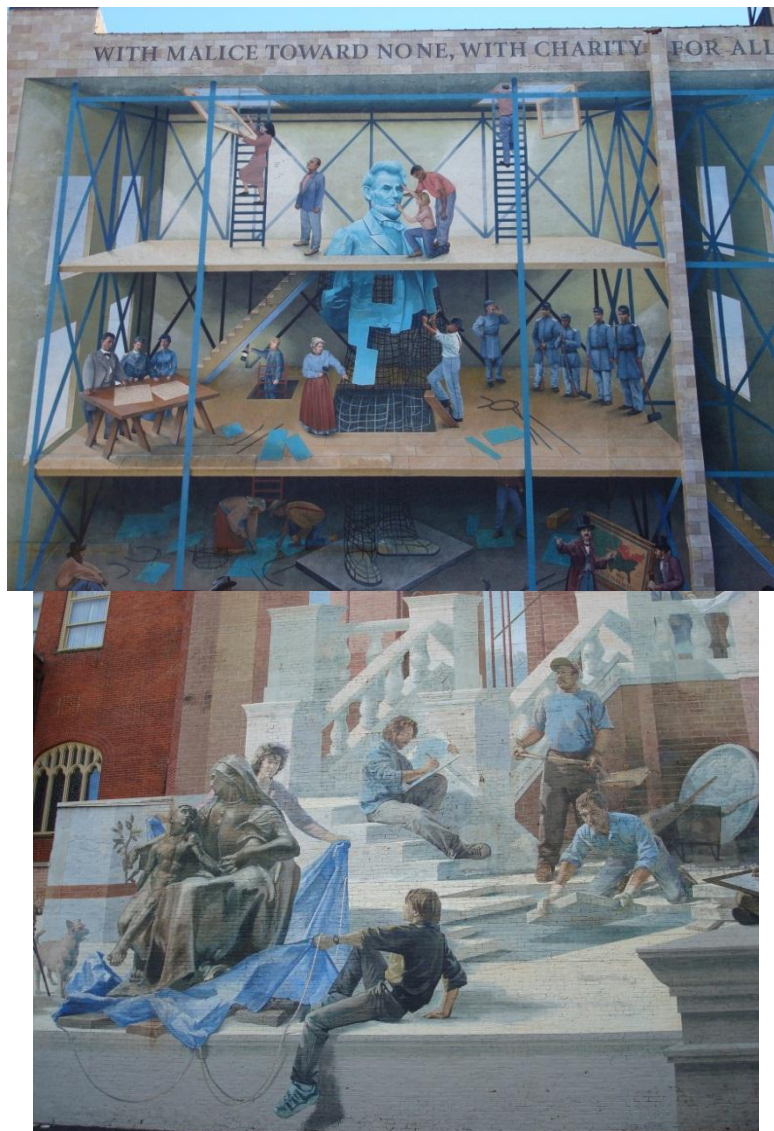






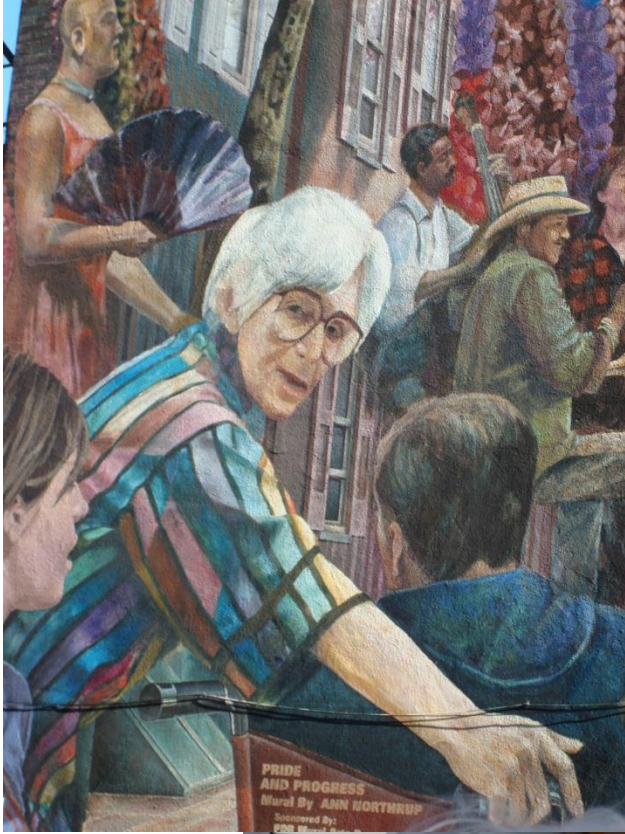
Philadelphia

All of the photos from Philadelphia, PA are of murals from the City of Philadelphia Mural Arts Program. These photos were taken in November 2011 or February 2012. Many of the murals represent a multicultural perspective on history and Philadelphia life. They show people of different classes and races working together to build a statue of Abraham Lincoln or William Penn. Each mural has a unique art style and different community story behind its creation.



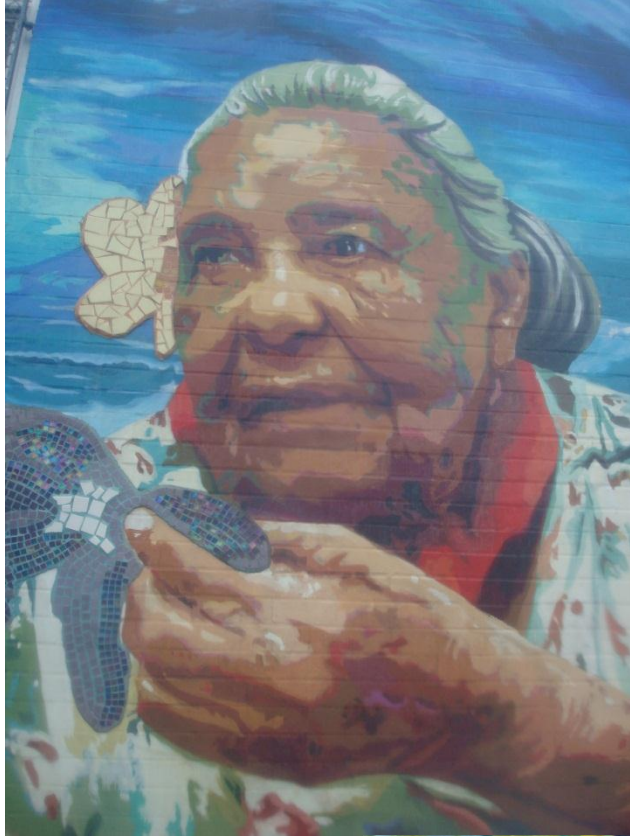












Detroit

These images were taken January through August 2011 and January 2012. All of the images represent outsider or insider views on Detroiters and Detroit history. The first eight images are of Diego Rivera's *Detroit Industry* mural, located in the Detroit Institute of Arts, reveals Rivera's perspective of Detroit's auto industry. Rivera's mural illustrates the duality between the benefits of industry and science, such as its creation of vaccines and jobs, with its consequences, such as its ability to manufacture weapons of war.

The next 22 pictures show Heidelberg Project, in Southeastern Detroit, is a public art dialog that utilizes found objects, such as shoes and pieces of historic Detroit buildings, to comment on Detroit's history and neighborhood life. In contrast, Public Art Workz, in Northwest Detroit, mostly focuses on incorporating the community's ideas and efforts into positive imagery murals and public art, such as butterflies. PAWZ is shown in the final five photos. The HP and PAWZ have different artistic and imagery approaches, but both aim to use art as a catalyst for change.

