

A Working Guide to the Landscape of Arts for Change

A collection of writings depicting the wide range of ways the arts make community, civic, and social change.

ACTIVE ARTS: Dancing in the streets at *Biggest Dance Ever* in Downtown Los Angeles. Photo by John McCoy



Participatory Art-Making and Civic Engagement

By Ferdinand Lewis

There is a growing trend among innovative organizations to use participatory art-making programs to increase civic engagement, due to the wide variety of positive outcomes such programs engender. Participatory art-making experiences can have a profound impact on communities. They can build social networks, encourage new leaders, increase the quality of community life, enhance the lives of individuals, and engage citizens in new and profound ways.

Three case examples illustrate the ways in which participatory art-making programs can have a positive impact on community life. In Oakland, California, Banteay Srei, a small social-service-oriented nonprofit, fulfills its social service mission of community engagement and transformation by bringing together community elders with at-risk young people. In New York City, Make Music New York, a grassroots effort, engages people in more than a thousand participatory music-making events in the course of a single day, transforming the city and providing people access to spaces they would otherwise not use. And a major U.S. performing arts center, The Music Center in Los Angeles, fulfills its mission as a civic, cultural institution by programming participatory art-making alongside its traditional programming.

This dynamic approach can be implemented in a variety of other contexts, leaving open numerous possibilities for a group or organization to test new program ideas. This trend paper, researched and written by urban planner Ferdinand Lewis on behalf of The Music Center, is intended to encourage innovation and exploration of the many ways in which active art-making can enliven, enhance, and enrich communities.

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INTRODUCTION

When groups of enthusiastic people gather to dance, sing, tell stories, write, or make music together, they are participating in the most time-honored forms of community engagement. Active art-making experiences can build social networks, encourage new community leaders, increase the wellbeing of communities, enhance the lives of individuals, and engage citizens in a new and profound ways.

With such a wide variety of positive outcomes, participatory art-making offers an interdisciplinary 21st century approach to building [civic engagement](#), defined as the “commitment to participate and contribute to the improvement of one’s community, neighborhood, and nation.” There is a growing trend of using participatory programs to increase civic engagement; many innovative organizations that recognize the value of these programs use them to pursue different goals. Some organizations offer participatory programs to reach underserved populations such as immigrants and at-risk youth, while others focus on activities that will increase the overall vibrancy and connectivity of local communities.

In Los Angeles, for example, Active Arts® at The Music Center is reimagining how a long-established arts institution can actively engage residents and bring new life to urban, downtown public spaces through large dance events, group sing-alongs, drum circles, and opportunities to practice music. The Oakland, CA nonprofit Banteay Srei uses monthly cooking events and a community oral history project to create cultural bridges between isolated elderly immigrants and some of the city’s most at-risk teens. Make Music New York brings music and the spirit of participation to New York City’s seven boroughs, with thousands of public performances by amateur musicians in a dizzying range of styles, including classical, jazz, rock-and-roll, and even Indonesian gamelan music played on the city’s cast iron buildings.

Leaders in a variety of fields are now gathering to explore cross-sector models and discuss new strategies for building lively, healthy, and stable communities through participatory art-making. In 2010, for example, The Music Center/Performing Arts Center of Los Angeles County organized a forum series entitled *Envisioning a New City* that drew professionals and researchers in fields as diverse as nonprofit arts, urban design and planning, public health, and community development. Over the course of three *Envisioning* fora, professionals and researchers from these sectors discussed participatory art-making as a potential strategy for strengthening community networks and building community health and [cultural vitality](#).

The conversations that began at the *Envisioning a New City* sessions both inspired and informed this trend paper. Groups and organizations large and small are already using participatory art-making in different ways to engage community members in civic life. The following case examples from Los Angeles, Fresno, and New York City illustrate how active art-making gives voice and expression to a community, leverages a community's assets, and creatively reimagines the use of public spaces. A review of key research shows the connection between participation and civic engagement and the cross-sector benefits that result from active art-making. And for the professional practitioner, civic leader, board member, or individual who is curious about exploring this topic further, a practical checklist will guide and help stimulate dialogue on how this approach might benefit a community.

PARTICIPATORY ART-MAKING: CASE EXAMPLES

Participatory art-making programs have been successfully adapted to a wide variety of situations and institutional missions. The projects described below illustrate quality practices drawn from a range of sectors:

1. Participatory art-making helps a small social-service-oriented nonprofit fulfill its social service mission of community engagement and transformation;
2. A grassroots effort engages New Yorkers in more than a thousand participatory music-making events across New York City in the course of a single day; and
3. A major U.S. performing arts center extends its ability to fulfill its mission as a civic, cultural institution by programming participatory art-making alongside its traditional programs of dance, theater, opera, and music.

Banteay Srei: Cross-Sector Participatory Art-Making

One late afternoon each month, a unique group gathers in a storefront community center in Oakland, CA for a participatory arts event. The group includes Southeast Asian-American teenage girls, who are either survivors of sexual exploitation or at risk of being recruited into Oakland's underground sex economy. These young women are joined by a female elder from a local community of Southeast Asian-Americans who are survivors of refugee camps, war, and genocide. The elder brings a traditional Southeast Asian recipe and everyone brings fresh



Banteay Srei Sister Circle. Photo: Banteay Srei

ingredients. Together they cook and eat and laugh and, around the dinner table with one of Banteay Srei's trained staff, share stories from their lives.

This is the Southeast Asian Unity through Cultural Exploration (SAUCE) program of the Oakland organization [Banteay Srei](#) ("bahn'-tea-ay suh-ray"). Named after a 10th century Cambodian temple honoring female deities, Banteay Srei means "Sanctuary of Women." The organization started in 2004 as a volunteer grassroots effort by community leaders and health advocates for women and girls who have been traumatized by the refugee experience. They often live in extreme poverty, isolated by lack of language, formal education, and resources. Those conditions make young Southeast Asian girls particularly vulnerable to predatory sexual exploiters and often leave elder women socially isolated, unable to process memories and grief or to meaningfully connect with younger generations. In 2008, Banteay Srei initiated the SAUCE program to encourage social and cultural bridge building between generations of Southeast Asian women.

The mission of Banteay Srei is to promote the self-empowerment of Southeast Asian girls and young women by helping them to establish peer and intergenerational support networks and thereby decrease their vulnerability to exploitation. In addition to the SAUCE program, Banteay Srei offers programs for teens in leadership development, participatory cooking, storytelling, health education, and photography, and sustains a commitment to engaging elder women in building community identity and support.

Banteay Srei demonstrates how one small grassroots-level creative participation project can develop into a set of ongoing programs with a powerful cross-sector impact. Their initial 2004 program, which offered weekly story circles and an informal mentoring program, quickly delivered results in empowering victims of sexual exploitation through frank discussions about women's health, sex, overcoming violence, communication, and healthy relationship strategies. The story circles and informal mentoring have continued on a weekly basis for more than seven years and today those groups are led by graduates of Banteay Srei's Bong Srei ("Older Sister") leadership training program.

Banteay Srei's photography and oral history project is another successful foray into participatory art-making. This project focused on the unique and sometimes extraordinary inter-generational bonds that developed between the young women and elders during the SAUCE program. The teens were trained to document the elders' oral histories with interviews and to artistically interpret those histories with photography, then to connect their own lives with those of the elders. Through the lens of survival and resilience, the teens experienced the vital link to self-empowerment provided by cultural identity.

Banteay Srei's participatory arts and culture programs contribute to the reweaving of a torn community and the empowerment of women. They illustrate the powerful cross-sector effects that participatory art-making can have, bonding community identities and building bridges of empowerment, healing, and hope.

Make Music New York: Large-Scale and Concentrated Music-Making



Mass Appeal Mass 2001. Photo: Ellen Rachel Davidson

The mission of [Make Music New York](#) (MMNY) is to engage as many New Yorkers as possible in the joy of making music. MMNY produces a wide variety of participatory music events in public places throughout New York's five boroughs, all 100 percent free and open to anyone. MMNY has no permanent home and adapts spaces for each new event. Since 2007, MMNY has produced nearly 4,000 performances of music in nearly every genre, including folk, classical (orchestral and vocal choir), jazz, blues, Dixieland, world music, and the latest cutting-edge experimental

works. MMNY occurs twice a year, on June 21st, the summer solstice, and on December 21st, the winter solstice.

Most of MMNY's participatory music-making events invite musicians of any level and many encourage nonmusicians to participate. In MMNY's "Mass Appeal" series, each event focuses on a single instrument—bagpipes, woodwinds, saxophones, trombones, tubas, guitars, harmonicas, ukuleles, ouds, and many others. MMNY's "sing-it-yourself" Mozart *Coronation Mass* assembles a one-time-only choir of nonprofessionals, joined by a professional conductor and soloists, with chamber musicians as accompanists. While most of the MMNY participatory events include professional musicians as leaders and trainers, they are focused on the music-making experience of the participants, who often include professionals, nonprofessionals, and first-timers playing side by side simply for the joy of making music.

Most of MMNY's events are ephemeral in the sense that they must transform public spaces into rehearsal and performance venues. This means that the acoustics of each location must be carefully considered and organizers must plan for accessibility and the overall approachability of the space. Adapting the city's unused spaces in this way enhances the experience of participants, who are often making music in parts of the city where music has literally never been made. Excitement floats in with the music on the summer air, as forgotten parts of the city come to life in new ways.

One MMNY strategy is to create large-scale projects that can reach many people at the same time. Events like the "Second Line Down the High Line" in New York's Highline Park—with New Yorkers dancing the traditional steps behind a New Orleans-style marching band—are meant to catch up as many people as possible in the exuberant energies of civic participation and creativity. The Hudson

Square, Lincoln Square, and Harlem neighborhoods have all provided parade routes for these participatory second line parades. Another example of the scope of some MMNY events is the “Gamelan Walk” concert, in which participants play Indonesian Gamelan-style percussion music on the columns and facades of SoHo’s historic (and musically resonant) cast-iron buildings, literally transforming the buildings into a neighborhood-scale instrument.

The health/arts awareness nonprofit Sing for Hope approached MMNY about producing one event on a day other than June 21st. This highly successful project, *Pop-Up Pianos*, set 88 artistically painted pianos in open, active public places in 88 city neighborhoods for a period of two weeks. Volunteer musicians—both professionals and nonprofessionals—were encouraged to pre-register to play on a particular piano at various times, to bring attention to the pianos. However for most of the day the beautifully painted pianos were open and available to anyone who wanted to play them or simply enjoy them as a piece of public art.

All these events help community members experience music and the city anew, as parks, street corners, abandoned lots, wharves, sidewalks, gardens, and cemeteries are transformed into sites of creativity, imagination, and celebration.

Active Arts® at The Music Center: Fulfilling a Civic *and* Cultural Mission

Lanterns sway over an outdoor dance floor as an instructor leads hundreds of beginner dancers in a free tango lesson. An emcee welcomes and encourages everyone to try out their new moves or simply have fun on the dance floor, which gradually fills with enthusiastic novices and groups of friends and family dancing to a live band. There may be a few missed dance steps along the way, but no one is being judged for their technique. As in all [Active Arts](#) at The Music Center events, everyone is welcome and everyone is encouraged to participate in the fun.



Active Arts: A Spanish language, community-based, visual, story-sharing workshop in South Los Angeles. Photo: Paul Redmond

The goal of the program is for everyone to “be active” and participate in the arts *by doing it yourself* across a set of multidisciplinary programs—vocal and instrumental music, dance, and storytelling—regardless of experience or skill level. All programs are free or low-cost. Active Arts provides relaxed, nonjudgmental environments where participants feel

supported in trying out a new dance step, reconnecting with a musical instrument that has been gathering dust, or joining in a boisterous group sing-along. The programs are designed to bring together multiple modes of arts engagement by providing a *continuum of arts experience* where the act of participating connects the variety of arts experiences that a person might have, such as dropping into an art gallery, singing in the car, and exchanging stories over the dinner table.

Participants in Active Arts programs are mostly recreational art-makers with non-arts related day jobs; 90 percent of them self-identify as “nonprofessional” or arts hobbyists/enthusiasts. Their primary reason for art-making is “the love of,” and most find that devoting time specifically to arts engagement reinvigorates and reenergizes them.

Active Arts designs, creates, and facilitates programs that encourage amateurs to bring their own lens to art-making. For example, the photography narrative project “[24/1](#)” comprises four levels of participation: DIY art-maker, photography contest entrant, voter, and attendee. Captured within a 24-hour/one-day period and based on the theme “What does your day look like?” more than one thousand images depicting everyday stories by everyday people in the Los Angeles metropolis were submitted. Winners were determined by peer voting rather than by a panel of expert judges, with several thousand ballots collected online from all over the country in a single week.

Engaging Active Arts’ core constituents has been a key value from the outset. Active Arts approach is two-fold—first, it engages its constituents as participants in art-making experiences, and second, it involves the community through volunteerism and strategic cross-sector partnerships with like-minded nonprofit organizations. In doing so, Active Arts creates and invests in authentic connections with its users, both individual (volunteers also known as *Activators*) and institutional (community partnerships). *Activators* are Active Arts’ signature asset; their collective energy fuels the program and keeps it grounded. Community partnerships involve cross-sector institutions such as social service agencies or health-focused organizations whose missions support the shared vision that the arts, especially participatory arts, are vital to the overall well-being of any community.

Active Arts extends and realizes The Music Center’s mission as a civic, cultural institution by providing a spectrum of opportunities to engage in the arts. This program is an example of how established arts institutions might reimagine their relationships to their communities and expand the definition of “arts engagement” to include active participation.

PARTICIPATORY ART-MAKING: AN EMERGING STRATEGY FOR CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

HIGHLIGHTS: How arts participation strengthens and transforms communities

Participatory art-making can strengthen communities through familiar cultural arts practices, while simultaneously **bridging differences between diverse groups** that come together around their common artistic passion.¹

Participatory art-making activities can **revitalize neglected city spaces** and **activate public plazas, parks, and underused facilities**.²

Participatory art-making contributes to the liveliness of “creative cities;” **promotes safe, inviting, and livable neighborhoods**; and can also support local economic development.³

Research shows that participatory art-making programs represent a variety of values to participants and their communities. In particular, there is a significant body of research in the four areas described below.

Social Value

Supporting community creativity can bring new meaning to arts participation and extend the leadership role that nonprofits play in their communities. Participatory art-making combines multiple and overlapping social networks, and in this way supports *bridge building* between communities.⁴ People with different perspectives come together to focus on artistic challenges while respecting each other’s boundaries and considering other viewpoints, bringing collective imagination to bear on artistic challenges while making room for larger common issues.

Participatory art-making activities not only strengthen community networks; people who engage in group art-making activities are also more likely to engage in other kinds of non-arts-related civic activities. In *Making is Connecting*, author David Gauntlett describes how community creativity and the emerging “DIY” (Do-It-Yourself) movement build networks of meaning and

How people engage with arts and culture is changing...to a new model that’s about enabling creative capacity.

– Urban planner (forum participant),
Envisioning A New City

and recognize the integral role that nonprofessional art-making can play.⁵ A community’s quality of life and cultural vitality are strengthened by the creativity and innovation of America’s nonprofessional art makers. They require only opportunity, encouragement, and a

few resources to build the cultural vitality that transforms neighborhoods, public spaces, and local economies.

National studies such as *Better Together* have argued that nonprofit arts represent the “most significant underutilized forum for rebuilding community in America.”⁶ At the local level, research projects such as Alvarez’ *Nothing Informal About It* and Wali’s *Informal Arts* have



Central Park Gongscape, Make Music New York. Photo: Dan Gottesman

documented the local-level contributions to community life and civic engagement made by amateur art-making activities.⁷ Researchers refer to the *collective efficacy* that is an outcome of civic engagement. Collective efficacy is the belief among community members that they have the capacity to make change. In fields such as public health, community development, and urban planning, professionals and researchers increasingly recognize that collective efficacy is an important factor in a community’s cultural vitality and quality of life.

One of the most important points in the RAND research report [Gifts of the Muse: Reframing the debate about the benefits of the arts](#) is the relationship between the arts and collective efficacy.⁸ One Portland neighborhood came together to address neighborhood safety by revitalizing a neglected intersection through group street painting, and the eventual transformation of the area into “[Sunnyside Piazza](#).”⁹ In post-Katrina New Orleans, a citywide [storytelling project](#) helped diverse communities put words to the traumatic experience they shared; that common story strengthened the conviction that city-wide change was possible.¹⁰

Community Health and Well-Being

Research suggests that when art is made *in a group* there are greater health benefits, including an increased sense of social identity and human worth, stronger communication skills, a greater sense of autonomy and responsibility, more self-direction and control, and increased participation in political decision-making.¹¹ Participatory art-making contributes to strategies for developing healthy places. *Place* is a key determinant of health, and strategies to make places healthy must consider community involvement and commitment to change. Social, economic and environmental conditions—such as employment, education, transportation, and even land use—all have an impact on the health status of an individual and a community. Participatory art-making is gaining the attention of organizations in the public health field, where the value of community efficacy and a lively public realm are increasingly recognized as essential to

evaluating the health of communities. New models for evaluating community health are being developed, as described for instance in the Prevention Institute's [Good Health Counts](#) indicators.¹² Building civic engagement through participatory art-making experiences can strengthen the social fabric of a healthy, safe, and sustainable community.

Place Making

When people can take ownership of places and make them meaningful through art, it builds creative citizenry for our cities.

– Artist (forum participant), Envisioning A New City

Participatory art-making activates public spaces and informs the redefinition and redesign of urban plazas, parks, and neighborhoods. Participatory art-making programs that take place in public often shape and even define how places are used. Art-making and creativity in new, familiar or forgotten places encourages residents to re-imagine and re-purpose neighborhoods, empty lots, civic plazas and parks in new ways. Participatory events can involve residents and community members directly in imagining the possibilities for their streets and neighborhoods.

The everybody-jump-in spirit of a public participatory art-making event can activate public spaces with creative and unexpected uses, such as a New Orleans-style second line parade through a park, a nighttime neighborhood nature walk with handmade lanterns, or a miniature dragon-boat race in a public fountain. In making public participation integral to public spaces, these programs redefine and enliven the *public realm*. Studies of participatory art-making show that the same qualities that make a space suitable for an event, are often the same qualities that make spaces approachable and welcoming.¹³

When unused, forgotten, or single-use spaces are reimagined and repurposed by participatory art-making events, the public realm becomes more visible and accessible, and formerly “narrow-minded” spaces become flexible and approachable.¹⁴

Other Economic Value

Participatory art-making can contribute to creative place making. In *Cultivating Natural Cultural Districts*, Stern and Seifert show a strong correlation between the presence of cultural assets and neighborhood revitalization.¹⁵ Participatory art-making activities are community assets and as such have a strategic role to play in the revitalization of neighborhoods and downtown. Urban planning researchers Markusen and Gadwa call

this sort of creativity-oriented revitalization “creative place making.”¹⁶ In creative place making, the liveliness and creativity of communities become assets for community and economic development. Researchers who study the link between the arts and economic development show that place-based “culture-led development strategies” make real contributions to economic and community development.

With the publication of Richard Florida’s *Rise of the Creative Class*, U.S. economic development specialists were encouraged to leverage the vibrancy and the “cool quotient” of communities to attract 21st century “creative class” workers.¹⁷ These are workers in innovation-oriented fields such as software development, media, engineering, and technology, as well as designers and artists associated with those fields. This creative class also includes specialized service professions such as law, medical services, and accounting. Cities around the country are developing distinctive cultural districts and encouraging community arts clusters in order to revitalize older parts of town and attract creative class workers. The celebratory spirit of participatory art-making programs can contribute to a city’s competitiveness by activating public

Increasing the value of the participatory nature of the arts is really about acknowledging and embracing everyone’s voices. It’s democratizing the arts.

– Nonprofit arts administrator (forum participant), Envisioning A New City

spaces and encouraging participation, which builds cultural vitality and distinctiveness. That distinctiveness can attract local shoppers and diners to a cultural district, for example, and in this way creative place making plugs holes in local economies, keeping a greater portion of local income in local businesses. Participatory art-making activities activate public spaces and contribute to cultural vitality, accessibility, and even safety in revitalized areas of the city. Combined with local festivals and other civic arts programs, participatory art-making can help shape the creative character of a redeveloped neighborhood, which in turn can attract foot traffic, social activity, and investment.

Creative place making calls for places to feel creative and engaging, and participatory art-making can encourage this over time. Pittsburgh Children’s Museum created its participatory [Charm Bracelet Project](#) in support of a creative place-making strategy to develop an arts district in one of Pittsburgh’s inner city neighborhoods.¹⁸ Because participatory art-making activities often take place in publicly accessible places, they are inviting to passersby and visitors who are encouraged to watch or join in. Over time, those public spaces can become associated with the inclusive spirit of participatory art-making. When participatory arts programs encourage people of different backgrounds, skill levels, and experiences to come together through their mutual passion for art-making, they contribute to the community’s diversity,

accessibility and inclusiveness, which specialists say are important components in creative place making.

One-time participatory events like [ArtsWave](#)'s flash-mob *SplashDance* energize public spaces with bursts of creative spirit and joy.¹⁹ Over time a number of such events can contribute to the overall creative spirit of a place and so can be viewed as assets in fostering the community's overall development.

EXPLORING PARTICIPATORY ART-MAKING TO FOSTER CIVIC ENGAGEMENT & CULTURAL VITALITY IN YOUR COMMUNITY

Participatory art-making can be an intentional strategy for engaging your community in new ways. Art-making activities can be designed to be culturally relevant to your constituents as well as flexible and adaptable across a wide variety of circumstances and locales. Each of the case study projects described above engages its community in response to its situation, available resources, and distinct institutional missions, yet certain themes and concepts persist across a variety of programs and projects.

As communities grow and change over time, participatory arts programming can grow and change with them. For example, Active Arts[®] at the Music Center in Downtown Los Angeles proactively engages its volunteers and constituents in planning, implementing, and evaluating its programs. Make Music New York is run almost entirely by volunteers whose input shapes events and who are involved in nearly every aspect of the program as well. Civic participation is encouraged through volunteerism and, by giving the community an active voice, the organization encourages new methods of community input and involvement.

The following check list is intended as a guide for individuals and organizations interested in exploring and experimenting with new ways to engage their constituents in civic life through arts participation. These four check list items—the participants' experience, the existing assets and resources in a community, the options for activating and revitalizing public spaces, and how to start with your organization—are drawn from research and field experience on what participants value in these art-making experiences. It is hoped that these ideas, and the questions formulated from them, will stimulate discussion within your organization and in your community about active art-making.

CHECK LIST

Put the participants' experience first.

Ongoing participatory art-making is a way to engage groups of people in a shared creative experience and is a valuable asset in any community. *Consider the different ways that do-it-yourself art-making programs can be:*

- Barrier-free, i.e. low or no cost, independent of skill level or ability, easy to join, drop-in/drop-out, etc.;
- Creative and fun;
- Flexible with the opportunity to “design-your-own” experiences;
- Relevant, i.e. engaging and interesting to local populations; and
- Group (not individual) focused, people connecting with other people.

Leverage existing assets and resources within a community.

One potential outcome of participatory art-making experiences is that people who might not otherwise spend time together have the opportunity to creatively collaborate. This collaboration can extend across generations, ethnic or religious identities, or even blend new traditions with ancient arts and folkways. When existing groups come together and share a mutual enthusiasm for creativity and the imagination, new affiliations are encouraged. *Consider how the following actions may create new networks and open new pathways for you:*

- Discover ongoing sources, i.e. those who are already engaged in recreational art-making—how, where, why, what, and who;
- Investigate latent potential—look outside your own box and find out who else in your community may be interested in what you're doing;
- Identify partner groups/organizations that share your values and mission;
- Strategically pool existing resources, for example, physical spaces, human resources, talents/skills, funding, etc.; and
- Set clear goals and outcomes and be sure to have both entry and exit strategies.

Activate and revitalize public spaces.

Participatory art-making programs can entice people to visit parts of the city with which they are unfamiliar, or re-introduce them to familiar spaces in new and surprising ways. These renewed perceptions of neighborhoods and districts encourage a sense of ownership by residents of the community. The social bonds built up during a creative collaboration event become associated with the qualities of the city's physical fabric. *Consider the following options to animate space:*

- Design and re-purpose existing physical space so it becomes conducive to participation;
- Utilize public spaces that have not been activated before;
- Consider spaces that are typically hidden from public eye, i.e. “behind-the-scenes” and/or off-limits; and

- Develop a behavioral etiquette appropriate for your space and reconsider etiquette that may be too restrictive.

☐ **Start with your own organization.**

Groups and organizations across the public sector can adopt participatory art-making as a strategy to achieve goals related to building community health and vitality and improving quality of life. *Look within and consider the following:*

- How does it intrinsically benefit your organization?
- How will you build internal support and structures for this work?
- How does it change your organization operationally and culturally?
- How will you foster new paradigms and language for this work?
- How will you manage expectations, measure success, and mitigate failure?
- How will you sustain this work?

CONCLUSION

Experiments with various participatory art-making programs in cities across the country are changing the way communities interact and connect. Leaders in nonprofit arts, public health, and urban planning are recognizing the contribution of participatory art-making to cultural vitality and community health and well-being. As shown by the three case examples, participatory art-making is a dynamic approach that can be implemented in a variety of contexts, leaving open numerous possibilities for a group or organization to test new program ideas. This paper is intended to encourage exactly that type of innovation and to explore the many ways in which active art-making can enliven, enhance, and enrich communities. A small idea can yield tremendous impact; to get started one only needs inspiration, creativity, and the commitment to try something new.

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Founded in 1964 and representing a long-standing public-private partnership with the County of Los Angeles, **The Music Center** is committed to building civic vitality by strengthening community through the arts. This is accomplished by bringing to life one of the world's premier performing arts centers with four theatre venues that include the Walt Disney Concert Hall, Dorothy Chandler Pavilion, Ahmanson Theatre, and Mark Taper Forum, and an outdoor garden. It is home base for four world-class resident companies (Los Angeles Philharmonic, LA Opera, Center Theatre Group, and Los Angeles Master Chorale), and provides distinctive leadership and diverse opportunities for life-long learning and engagement with arts and culture such as *Glorya Kaufman Presents Dance at the Music Center*, Education, and Active Arts®. Nearly two million people participate and attend performances, programs and events at The Music Center every year.

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End Notes

- ¹ This concept is best described in Putnam and his associates in *Better Together* (2000), see especially pp. 8, 26, 31, 97.
- ² See the discussion of multiplier effects in Taylor (2008).
- ³ The most thorough description of these is found in Markusen and Gadwa (2010).
- ⁴ See endnote 1.
- ⁵ Gauntlett (2011).
- ⁶ Putnam (2000) p. 33.
- ⁷ For example see important studies by Alvarez (2005), Wali, Severson and Longoni (2002).
- ⁸ See McCarthy (2004).
- ⁹ Sunnyside Piazza is an important example as what Semenza calls the “intersection of urban planning, art, and public health,” in Semenza (2003). See details on Sunnyside Piazza at the website of City Repair, the Portland, OR community development non-profit. <http://cityrepair.org/how-to/placemaking/neighborhood-sites/sunnyside-piazza/>.
- ¹⁰ Since its founding in 2004 the Neighborhood Story Project has documented the power of storytelling as civic engagement, with an impressive body of work. <http://www.neighborhoodstoryproject.org/>.
- ¹¹ Angus reviews studies of “community-based arts” in the UK in terms of their contribution to health and well-being, in Angus (2002).
- ¹² This ‘ecological’ perspective of the relationship between the ‘built environment’ and public health is at the core of Robert Wood Johnson Foundation’s *Active Living* initiatives. www.activelivingresearch.org.
- ¹³ The qualities that make public space welcoming, safe, and comfortable are not only the necessary capacities that make public space suitable for informal arts, they are also community assets. These qualities are described in detail in Wali, Severson and Longoni (2002).
- ¹⁴ See *The Pleasures and Costs of Urbanity*, Walzer (1995).
- ¹⁵ This research is discussed in terms of urban planning, economic and community development, in *Cultivating Natural Cultural Districts*, Stern and Seifert (2007).
- ¹⁶ Although strongly associated with Markusen and Gadwa, (2010), the term has become useful to a variety of arts-based development initiatives.
- ¹⁷ Since the landmark study by Florida (2002). This study coined the term “creative class.”
- ¹⁸ The Pittsburgh Children’s Museum’s *Charm Bracelet Project* was remarkable for a number of reasons, not least of which is that it demonstrated how an arts non-profit could lead the development of an entire arts district, emphasizing arts-based civic engagement throughout. <https://pittsburghkids.org/about/in-the-community/charm-bracelet>.
- ¹⁹ Organized by Cincinnati’s ArtsWave. *SplashDance* is a good example of a ‘flashmob’ participatory arts experience. See a video at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EW58tCXeb80>.