public art resource center

Building Public Art Programs in the 21st Century with a Focus on Small to Mid-Sized Cities

By Mandy Vink

AMERICANS for the ARTS

About the Americans for the Arts Public Art Resource Center

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

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

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

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

About this Essay

More and more communities are interested in investing in public art, especially in mid-sized cities. Mid-sized cities have a unique set of interests and needs that warrant a closer look at how public art can evolve in civic spaces as these cities grow or maintain their size. This essay explores how different cities are looking to utilize public art as strategy for civic exploration.

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Introduction

Public art contributes to the defining character of a place. It tells the history and the priorities of a community and creates a humanized built environment, not just a utilitarian one. It remains unattested that visual art has always been a vital means of communication for major civilizations from archeological artifacts to modern monarchies and democracies. In the United States, government patronage of the arts was significantly pursued through the New Deal. In 1959, Philadelphia established the first formal percent-for-art program, which sets aside a certain percentage of any building development to include the creation or commissioning of public artwork. Major cities followed suit: San Francisco established its percent-for-art program in 1967, Seattle in 1973, Chicago in 1978, New York in 1982, and Denver in 1988.

I see what you mean by Lawrence Argent. Image courtesy of Arts and Venues Denver.

Historically, municipal public art programs have been funded through this percent-for-art model, tied to the "parent" capital construction projects that dictate artwork placement and budget. Frequently integrated into or sited adjacent to the parent projects, many art works have been stigmatized as "plop art" or "art by committee." The "high art" scene dismissed public art projects and community members balked at the frivolous spending. British art critic Jonathan Jones stated that public art is "a production line for boring art and mavericks have no place in its dreary ethic,"[1] with mavericks referring to "true artists." Additionally, the collective perception of a project's success is regularly situated within the context of its commissioning amount. Whether the funding is too low for qualitative investment or a community feels the price tag is superfluous, these traditional programs investing in permanent works carry a history both good and bad. Notable public art opportunities were also localized to large cities. Small to mid-sized cities—those ranging in populations of 100,000 to 250,000—have not made a comparable impact through municipal programs like their larger counterparts, partly due to a lack of formal programs and partly due to smaller project budgets.

The commissioning climate is shifting, however. A recent increase in the frequency of temporary, small-scale, and social practice projects has assimilated into the public art dialogue. These types of projects are creating a forum for community discussion, using the arts (and city funds) to address subjects that are hard to tackle at the heart of many communities. Public art is no longer being created in the singular context—it is no longer tied to a "parent" development, nor is it always permanent or cost-prohibitive. Temporary projects have become labs for experimentation and can provide frameworks for beloved, long-term projects like Chicago's *Cloud Gate* (or "The Bean") by Anish Kapoor or Denver's *I see what you mean* (or the "Big Blue Bear") by Lawrence Argent.

Small to mid-sized cities are joining the conversation previously available only to larger, established programs, and are building innovative partnerships to successfully forge these redefined programs. With nearly 225 American cities with populations between

1 Jonathan Jones 'The fate of Ballinger's horse shows why public art cannot be good art', Guardian, 5 July 2011

Above: View of the Flatirons, part of Boulder's Open Space and Mountain Parks. Image courtesy of the City of Boulder.

100,000 and 250,000, and only about half of those with a formal public art program, strong opportunity exists for considerable growth of new programs contributing to the built environment and civic dialogue through innovative commissioning approaches. These smaller cities may additionally be best situated for the conversational and material shift in public art. The following is an exploration of three cities, ranging in size from 100,000 to 250,000, with each exploring what it means to build a public art program in the 21st century: Boulder, CO; Des Moines, IA; and Buffalo, NY.

Below: Experiments in Public Art: *Harm to Table* by Matthew Mazzotta, commissioned by the Boulder Office of Arts and Culture. Image courtesy of the artist/Boulder Office of Arts and Culture.

Boulder, Colorado
(POPULATION: 103,166)

Nestled at the base of the Rocky Mountains, Boulder is surrounded by natural beauty, including 45,500 acres of open space, and is home to a major research university and a high concentration of government research facilities. Boulder fancies itself as a center of innovation in Colorado, and hosts the nation's most highly educated population. The city is home to more than 140 cultural organizations, award-winning restaurants, and high-quality schools and healthcare.

Boulder Public Art Program History

Natural beauty lured many creative greats to this Rocky Mountains city. From Allen Ginsberg to Eve Drewelowe, the city of Boulder, CO is surely an inspiring place. However, the City of Boulder surprisingly has not had a formal public art ordinance. Rather, the city has benefited from a community of individuals committed to the arts.

In 1979, the Library and Arts Department of the City of Boulder established the Boulder Arts Commission. Library staff and the Arts Commission advocated for the arts to be integrated into projects across City departments, including Transportation and

Experiments in Public Art: *Boulder Beetles* by Emma Hardy, commissioned by the Boulder Office of Arts and Culture. Image courtesy of the artist/Boulder Office of Arts and Culture.

Parks and Recreation. In addition, the Arts Commission awarded grants to practicing artists within the community, with grant recipients donating a finished artwork to build the City's portable works collection. Through these separate ambitions, Boulder has built an eclectic collection of City-owned works over the past 30 years: stand-alone sculptures, many publicly sited loaned artworks and sculptures, integrated infrastructure enhancements, and a significant collection of portable works.

From 2013–2015, Boulder's Office of Arts and Culture wanted to understand the community's perception of the local government's role in arts and culture. Boulder's Community Cultural Plan was written by the community and for the community, drafted through the feedback from more than 2,000 participants. In November 2015, City Council adopted this new Community Cultural Plan with the shared vision: "Together, we will craft Boulder's social, physical, and cultural environment to include creativity as an essential ingredient for the well-being, prosperity, and joy of everyone in the community."[2] Residents identified a set of six community priorities which include:

- Focus on the expression of culture and creativity in the public realm through public art, the urban landscape, culture in the neighborhoods, and serendipitous encounters with the arts.
- Create a supportive environment for artists and creative professionals, while fostering innovative thinking and leadership among them.
- Prioritize the civic dialogue about the ability of culture to positively contribute to the economy, social offerings, the environment, and the authentic expression of diversity.

In response to these community priorities, the Office of Arts and Culture responded with action strategies. And it comes as no surprise that a leading strategy is to reinvent the public art program. The public art program is now a part of the Office of Arts and

2 City of Boulder, Community Cultural Plan (adopted 17, November 2016), p. 16

Culture, a division of the Library and Arts Department. This placement initially seems curious, but in fact is an extension of the library's role in providing resources and information accessible to its community. Matt Chasansky, manager of the Office of Arts and Culture, describes it as, "Both the library and the arts are a community's mirror: we have in common the task of representing the community's priorities and desires back to those citizens and serving as a forum for the conversation about them."[3] The program is guided by an internal public art policy, the Community Cultural Plan, and governed by the Arts Commission and the City Manager. With the goal of transparency, the community, additional boards and commissions, and city council all have access to the public art process.

Boulder Public Art Funding Sources

Over the last 30 years, many individual public art and urban design projects were delivered within larger capital improvement projects at the discretion of individual departments but never mandated. Transportation, Parks and Recreation, and additional departments used a one-percent guideline, with each project independently run within its initiating department. This process is now streamlined through the Office of Arts and Culture, but initiating public art projects is still at the discretion of each department and project management team. The City of Boulder updated its public art policy and is currently campaigning for sustainable funding to build a strong and lasting program.

With additional momentum through the cultural plan, the Community, Culture and Safety (CCS) tax, passed in 2015, earmarked nearly $600,000 for public art projects and maintenance of existing works to be implemented over a three-year window. Upon conclusion of the CCS funding, the City of Boulder hopes to identify a sustainable funding stream.

Additionally, the Arts Commission allocated roughly $200,000 in 2013 from its grant pool to commission a substantial project that coincided with the renovation of the main public library. Without support of a strong and transparent policy, this project dissolved during its contract negotiations. Although inopportune that the selected artist team's concept would not advance, the funds were reallocated into a concept more suited for the community: an opportunity for temporary projects through Experiments in Public Art.

3 Interview with Matt Chasansky, Boulder's Office of Arts and Culture Manager, 15 September 2016.

Experiments in Public Art: *Mapping Stories* by Markus Dorninger, commissioned by the Boulder Office of Arts and Culture. Images courtesy of the artist/Boulder Office of Arts and Culture.

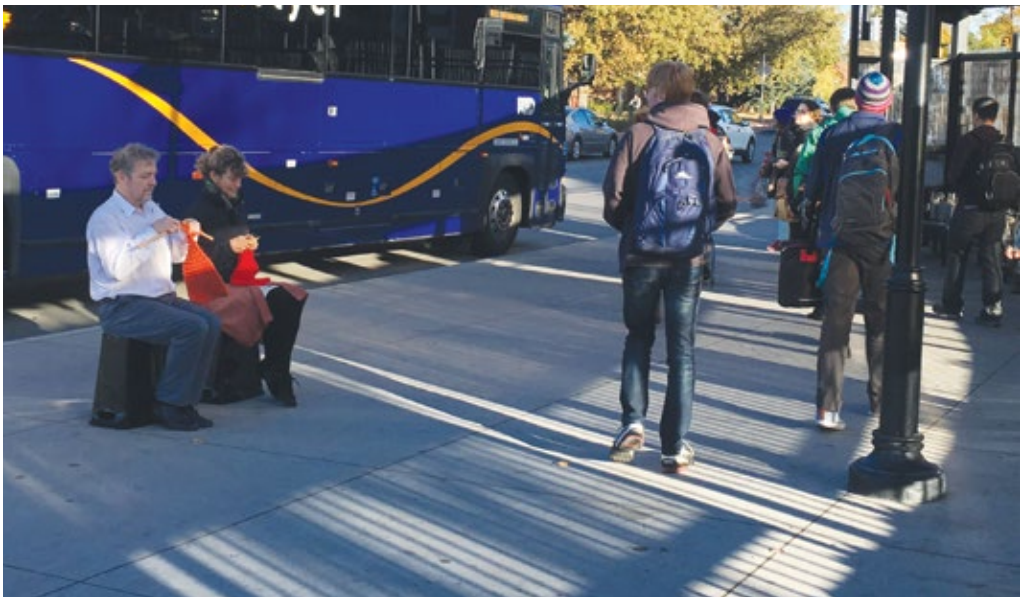
BOULDER PUBLIC ART CASE STUDY:

Experiments in Public Art

With a community encouraging increased transparency and investment in the arts from its local government, the Office of Arts and Culture assembled a new selection panel for the remaining grant funds to commission a series of temporary projects rather than a singular, longer-term one. A five-person selection panel brought forth names of more than 100 artists, ranging from local to international, that they felt relevant to the Boulder community and could create a work experimental in nature. The concept resulted in a pilot program Experiments in Public Art, an ongoing series of public interventions that serve as a city-wide laboratory expanding the potential of public art. Artists were also asked to identify their preferred location anywhere within the city and to define their budget within a sliding threshold, with the majority of the projects between $10,000 and $20,000. These projects debuted in Boulder in the summer of 2016.

Fleeting in nature, these projects covered the gamut:

- Colorado artist Emma Hardy's *Boulder Beetles*, five seven-foot-tall beetle puppets donned by performers which roamed the streets for serendipitous encounters;
- New York artist Matthew Mazzotta's *Harm to Table*, a mobile dining experience with a metamorphosing dining table and a focused menu in which each item features an ingredient anticipated to be extinct in the next 20–40 years due to climate change;
- Colorado artist Ana Maria Hernando's *Knitting Ballet*, a tango-infused knitting performance along two of Boulder's busiest bus routes;
- Texas artists The Art Guys' *Urban Preserve of Boulder*, a completely augmented, nonphysical project based on the concept of the disappearing landscape that materialized in a scholarly catalogue with critical essays; and



- Austrian artist Markus Dorninger's *Mapping Stories*, a series of workshops centered on Dorninger's "tagtool" software then translated into realtime animation on the facade of some of Boulder's most notable architecture.

Feedback from these temporary projects has been predominantly positive, with many community members curious as to how they came into being—which is exactly the intrigue the Office of Arts and Culture was hoping for. By providing interactive, unexpected experiences, members of the Boulder community now have an opportunity for authentic dialogue to get to the heart of the community's wants, needs, and concerns.

Experiments in Public Art continues to inform Boulder's goals toward achieving more residency-based and temporary experiences alongside longer-term, integrated works. The project's flexibility in site and media also respond to the Arts Commission's recent adoption of the Americans for the Arts Statement on Cultural Equity: "To support a full creative life for all, Americans for the Arts commits to championing policies and practices of cultural equity that empower a just, inclusive, equitable nation."[4] By creating public art opportunities that capitalize on a spectrum of community assets, projects will garner more community involvement and speak more directly to top-of-mind issues for much of the community.

Experiments in Public Art: *Knitting Ballet* by Ana Maria Hernando, commissioned by the Boulder Office of Arts and Culture. Images courtesy of Mandy Vink/Boulder Office of Arts and Culture.

Experiments in Public Art: *Harm to Table* by Matthew Mazzotta, commissioned by the Boulder Office of Arts and Culture. Images courtesy of Dasha Gaian Photography/Boulder Office of Arts and Culture.

4 Americans for the Arts Statement on Cultural Equity, cited from http://www.americansforthearts.org/about-americans-for-the-arts/statement-on-cultural-equity (30 September 2016).

Pappajohn Sculpture Park, Des Moines, Iowa. Image courtesy of Rich Sanders/ Des Moines Art Center.

Des Moines, Iowa
(POPULATION 207,510)

Iowa's capital, Des Moines, is positioned on the Des Moines and Raccoon rivers and is home to large industries, including insurance, financial services, healthcare, and publishing. The city prides itself on its schools, family-friendly communities, affordability, and accessibility to many amenities. As a built environment, Des Moines embodies characteristics of the City Beautiful movement of the 20th century in its parks and governmental buildings. Downtown is in the midst of a residential boom, repurposing industrial buildings into contemporary lofts and commercial spaces. The city boasts many art and history museums, performing arts groups, an annual art festival, and contemporary cultural assets, including the John and Mary Pappajohn Sculpture Park. The city is currently experiencing a renaissance and was recently touted in the *Politico* article "How America's Dullest City Got Cool."[5]

Des Moines Public Art Program History

The City of Des Moines, IA established its public art program in 2001 through the passage of Ordinance No. 14,005[6] which mandates 1.5 percent of general obligation funds annually appropriated for capital improvements fund the public art program.

This program was initially administered as a traditional municipal public art program.

5 Collin Woodard, "How America's Dullest City Got Cool" (Politico Magazine, 21 January 2016), cited from http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2016/01/how-des-moines-iowa-got-cool-213552

6 Des Moines, Iowa, Municipal Code Article IX, § 82-400 (2016).

Alex Brown's bus wrap design for the Des Moines Area Regional Transit (DART) Authority, Des Moines, Iowa. Image courtesy of the artist/Greater Des Moines Public Art Foundation.

However, in 2003, the City of Des Moines and the Greater Des Moines Community Foundation, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, entered conversation to transfer the municipal public art program to the Foundation. This transfer was formalized in 2004, granting administration of the annual, municipally allocated 1.5 percent funds and affording private fundraising to occur through the Foundation. Additionally, the Foundation established a new organization to realize the responsibilities of the public art program: the Greater Des Moines Public Art Foundation (GDPAF).

Through the GDPAF, public art projects are able to extend into adjacent Des Moines suburbs and receive additional financial support through private fundraising, expanding the reach of the public art program beyond what a purely municipal program could. A governing Board of Directors stewards the GDPAF, a flexible group board comprised of no fewer than 11 members. As the program's only staff is the director, the program and individual project success would not be possible without "an articulate and expressive board that understands the merit of proposals. A board that can publicly articulate the value of a project when scrutinized."[7] The board's role includes, but is not limited to: "advocate for a high quality public art program, serve as an advisory body to the City Council regarding disputes involving aesthetic judgment relative to the public art program, and to identify public and private projects with the potential of benefiting from an artists' involvement."[8]

In addition, the GDPAF is guided by its 2011 Policy and Procedures Manual. This policy guides the Board as well as the GDPAF Director. As indicated in the Downtown

7 Phone interview with M. Jessica Rowe, director of the Greater Des Moines Public Art Foundation, 20 August 2016.

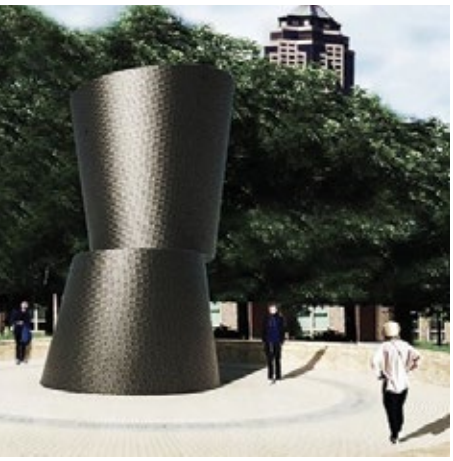
8 Greater Des Moines Public Art Foundation Policies and Procedures Manual (2011), p8

Des Moines Planning Project, cultural development is integrated into city-wide decision making and development: "Building our cultural identity should begin with that which makes Des Moines unique: trails and biking, our extensive network of public arts, agriculture and our wildly successful Farmer's Market, our two rivers, and our unique history."[9]

Des Moines Public Art Funding Sources

Through its partnership with the City of Des Moines, the GDPAF receives 1.5 percent of capital funds annually for public art projects, with additional funding and support from private donors and strategic partnerships. Fundraising is a critical component of the collection, and is a significant factor in determining timelines and project ambition. With 90 percent of annual budgets committed to major projects, innovative temporary concepts and volunteer groups become big factors in the feasibility of additional smaller and temporary projects.

DES MOINES PUBLIC ART CASE STUDY:
A Monumental Journey and Project Spaces



Rendering of A *Monumental Journey* by Kerry James Marshall. Rendering courtesy of the artist/ Greater Des Moines Public Art Foundation.

With the highly visible and highly successful John and Mary Pappajohn Sculpture Park, a collection of 28 large-scale works donated to the Des Moines Art Center by the Pappajohn's and installed in the centrally-located urban park in 2009, expectations of publicly sited art is now set quite high. This sculpture park is a unique public/private investment for the citizens of Des Moines: The works were gifted to the Des Moines Art Center by the Pappajohns. The Center then worked collaboratively with the City, resulting in the City of Des Moines providing prominent, accessible land for the Center to exhibit the works publicly.

With the Des Moines Art Center finding prominent placement for these blue chip artworks within the accessible sculpture park, it could be said that the GDPAF must be even more intentional with thoughtfully commissioned artworks across greater Des Moines. Or it could be that encounters with high-caliber artworks are common across Des Moines. This is evidenced by recent permanent additions to the GDPAF collection featuring Jun Kaneko's large ceramic monoliths along the Des Moines River waterfront, Anna Gaskell's site-specific hedge maze and video installation at the Iowa Events Center, and Jim Campbell's large-scale and interactive LED installation at Cowles Commons. These commissions were possible through collaboration with various public and private entities partnering with the GDPAF.

In 2008, the GDPAF initiated a project in partnership with the National Bar Association to honor the 12 pioneering African-American attorneys that founded the National Bar Association in 1925 in Des Moines. This honorable memorial deserves significant artistic merit. The commission was awarded to Kerry James Marshall, an artist traditionally known for his large-scale paintings. Over the course of the last six years, fundraising

9 City of Des Moines Downtown Des Moines Planning Project (adopted 10 March 2008) p. 99

Paintallica in situ at the Iowa State Fair, Des Moines, Iowa, featuring Paintallica artist Josh Doster. Images courtesy of the *Little Village Magazine*.

was significant to the project development, the sites have changed, and the concept has also evolved. But there has been unwavering trust in the significance of this project. The Director and GDPAF Board also acknowledge a skill in timing, knowing just the right time to announce a project when funds and support are far enough along to gain momentum for the final funding push. In November 2016, the GDPAF had a groundbreaking celebration for the final site of Kerry James Marshall's *A Monumental Journey*, finalized materials of Manganese Black brick and steel which are manufactured in Iowa, and anticipate to install the sculpture during a political climate that resonates with all the necessity of the project's narrative and the significance of the National Bar Association's establishment nearly 100 years ago.

Beyond these permanent and stationary commissions, the GDPAF understands the role of active artmaking in everyday places. Project Spaces is the program's ongoing initiative for in situ and temporary projects which "places compelling, temporary works of art in highly visible public spaces"[10] including the Iowa State Fair and Des Moines Area Regional Transit Authority (DART) bus wraps. These temporary projects help keep public art active in the community during the development phases of long-term projects like Marshall's *A Monumental Journey*.

10 cited from http://dsmpublicartfoundation.org/?s=project+spaces (2 September 2016).

Noodle in the Northern Lights by Jessie and Katey, commissioned through the Albright-Knox Public Art Initiative. Image courtesy of Michael Krupski/Albright-Knox Public Art Initiative.

Buffalo, New York
(POPULATION 258,959)

Buffalo is the second most populous city in New York. It is a diverse community, with mixed neighborhoods of African-Americans, Hispanic and Puerto Rican, Italian, Irish, and Russian Jewish concentrations. With its proximity to the Erie Canal, Buffalo grew as a predominately industrial city. This economy accounts for its steady population growth and peak in the 1950s and its steady population decline since. Buffalo's economy is transitioning from industrial to sectors like biomedicine, financial services, and education. Government investment in Buffalo is advancing its economic climate, and the city is expecting population growth. In 2012, Governor Andrew Cuomo announced the "Buffalo Billion," a billion-dollar investment in Buffalo's economy by the state of New York. Although not blatantly identified as an anchor component of the "Buffalo Billion," art and culture are key components of this investment as economic growth is locally acknowledged to be unsustainable without cultural development.

Buffalo Public Art Program History

Buffalo is situated in a historically rich location resulting in a significant collection of roughly 1,000 traditional monuments[11] that reflect this history. The city also has identified a percent-for-art program in its municipal code to allocate 1 percent of projects over $1 million.[12] However, this code historically has not been mandated and may be waived by the decision of the Common Council.[13]

The municipal public art program is overseen by the Buffalo Arts Commission, founded in 1980. The commission is comprised of 15 participants, but experienced a hiatus in the

11 Mark Sommer, "Maintaining Buffalo's many monuments can be monumentally challenging" The Buffalo News, 23 May 2015.

12 Buffalo, New York, Charter and Code City of Buffalo, § 409-1 - 409-9 (1999).

13 Buffalo, New York, Charter and Code City of Buffalo, § 409-4 (1999).

early 2000s. With the leadership of Mayor Byron W. Brown, the commission was reconstituted in 2008. Brown remains a leader in rejuvenating Buffalo's arts, culture, and economy.

In 2013, New York's Erie County partnered with the Albright-Knox Art Gallery to launch the Albright-Knox Public Art Initiative. Administered by the 154-year-old museum, the A-K Public Art Initiative is a public-private partnership "to enhance our shared sense of place and cultural identity in the urban and suburban landscapes of Western New York."[14] This initiative was largely facilitated by A-K Art Gallery Director Janne Sirén and former Albright-Knox Board President Leslie Zemsky and supported by a region hungry for a revitalization of its cultural economy. County Executive Mark C. Poloncarz realized the necessity to take art to his constituents as museum and gallery attendance from county residents was historically low.

The City of Buffalo joined the partnership in 2014 by matching Erie County's annual contributions. This public-private partnership currently applies city and county funds directly to administration and operation of the A-K Public Art Initiative, with a promised commissioning budget of a minimum $120,000 annually from the Albright-Knox Art Gallery acquisition endowment. This is a restricted endowment, limiting allocation of funds solely to the acquisition of artwork. Without Buffalo and Erie County providing administrative funding, the program would not be feasible. Additionally, the initiative is supported by outside sponsorships and contributions from private development.

Supported by the city and county governments, the A-K Public Art Initiative is not a governmental entity. An internal public art committee oversees large budgetary moves and acquisitions and is comprised of six A-K Art Gallery board members and seven public members from the Buffalo Arts Commission, Ex-Officio County representatives, and participants appointed by the legislature. Currently the program is immediately supported by a two-person staff, but the A-K Public Art Initiative also has assets of Albright-Knox departments and staff, including the recent addition of the Director of Education and Community Outreach.

Buffalo and Erie County exhibit a confidence in Albright Knox's approach to public art, as their funding supports a public art curator. This is a large distinction from most municipalities staffing their respective programs with coordinators or administrators, but rarely create authority for a curator. But as A-K Public Art Initiative Curator Aaron Ott states, "My job is to listen, to build a framework to find success: to show the community what they haven't seen but what they've articulated they want."[15] Ott does not want to be a curator that dictates to the community, but instead finds success when he delivers something to the public that is a result of listening to the community. From project initiation to candid conversations after the work is installed, public art creates an active, ongoing dialogue in a community. The A-K Public Art Initiative hopes to stimulate these conversations with an expanded view of what public art can be, including, as listed by Ott: "temporary, esoteric, and performance art alongside more traditional or monumental pieces."

***Milkweed Dispersal Balloons* by Jenny Kendler, commissioned through the Albright-Knox Public Art Initiative. Image courtesy of the artist/Albright-Knox Public Art Initiative.**

14 cited from https://www.albrightknox.org/collection/public-art/ (17 September 2016).

15 Phone interview with A-K Public Art Initiative Curator Aaron Ott, 25 August 2016.

Above: *Shark Girl* by Case Riordan Millard and commissioned through the Albright-Knox Public Art Initiative. Images courtesy of Tom Loonan/Albright-Knox Public Art Initiative.

Below: *Shark Girl* comes to life through local teacher Adam Kreutinger. Image courtesy of Adam Kreutinger/Albright-Knox Public Art Initiative.

BUFFALO PUBLIC ART CASE STUDY:

Shark Girl, Milkweed Dispersal Balloons and Spectral Locus

Shark Girl is a sweet little thing, donning a blue dress with a large pink waist sash tied in a large bow, wearing knee-high stockings with her ankles crossed and hands resting together in her lap. The only difference between her and any other charming little girl is the neck-less transition from her Peter Pan collar to a grotesque shark head, nose vertical to the sky.

Artist Casey Riordan Millard's *Shark Girl* was conceived through existential reflections on love, life, and loss. She can be found in nearly all of Millard's paintings, drawings, and sculptures, and this fiberglass version is Millard's first public art project. She was also one of the first pieces to greet Buffalo through the A-K Public Art Initiative. Sitting on a large rock with ample space for strangers (or perhaps budding friends) taking seat alongside her is just one contributing factor to her success. *Shark Girl* became an instant Internet sensation and contribution to the community. She encourages a constant stream of friends and selfies. Installed as a temporary project in 2014, *Shark Girl* received minor conservation in April 2015 and was reinstalled in a new, more visible and more permanent location at Canalside near one of the newly constructed bridges beside the historic Commercial Slip. Unlike traditional percent-for-art projects, *Shark Girl* has opportunity to reflect with flexibility in her location and the duration she'll remain. Additionally, she collects her own quantitative data through social media when internal staff resources for tracking data are limited. Buffalo's pride and ownership in *Shark Girl* are apparent. Resident Adam Kreutinger, a K-8 grade art teacher, developed his own curriculum around *Shark Girl* and created a costume replica he wears around the city—further supporting the notion to create room for the unplanned in public art projects.

Spectral Locus by Amanda Browder and *Spectral Locus* workshop. Images courtesy of Tom Loonan/ Albright-Knox Public Art Initiative.

Also unconventional in its approach, a second public art commission from A-K Public Art Initiative was Jenny Kendler's *Milkweed Dispersal Balloons* from summer/fall 2015. Kindler participated in the A-K Public Art Initiative as a Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) artist-in-residence, building concepts that expand the view of public art through artist-driven beautification and preservation of our collective space, amplified by her material choice. Exactly as they sound, *Milkweed Dispersal Balloons* are biodegradable balloons, filled with milkweed seeds, and distributed to the public. Participants were encouraged to pop the balloons in their neighborhoods, aiding the resilient plant in its dispersal.

Most recently installed is Amanda Browder's *Spectral Locus*, which was on view August–September 2016. Over the summer of 2016, Browder and A-K Public Art Initiative asked the community to donate non-stretch fabrics of bright, bold, unpatterned colors. The goal: to adorn three iconic buildings across Buffalo in a vibrant, quilted facade. Browder asked the community to join her in the realization of this project through 40 public workshops—cutting, crafting, and sewing giant swaths of donated fabric. More than an aesthetic enhancement to a community's thoroughfare, the project united the community to collectively make something nearly unimaginable. Browder has said, "It is similar to a rainbow—a happenstance encounter with something so awesome that you would tell more than one person about it—and that conversation, construction, and reinterpretation is just as unique as the piece."[16]

16 Albright-Knox Art Gallery, "Amanda Browder Spectral Locus" (2016). cited from https://www.albrightknox.org/collection/public-art/piece:spectral-locus/

Conclusion

Public art programs must be reflective of their community. As these three cities prove, the one-size-fits-all model would be unsuccessful. Programs must know their resources and deficiencies, including collaborators and local talents. A clear but nimble mission is good guidance, but equally significant is to educate staff, boards, and committees on how artists are responding to the current climate within the public realm. Listening and responding to one's community is critical to a public art program. The program must be willing to also explore different types of projects—to exhibit a proactive approach to the projects' possibilities: finding the right artist, artwork, site, and partnership(s) that result in a collection reflective of the whole community. Boulder, Des Moines, and Buffalo additionally acknowledge a high volume of temporary projects covering a myriad of themes and approaches can actively facilitate community conversation and collaboration.

All public art projects, including temporary and ephemeral ones, uniquely define a place; projects are never just art for art's sake, but define a city in an age of an increasingly homogenized urban experience. Although a single commission may never galvanize an entire community, each project has potential impact on every person that passes through your city. Program administrators must be passionate to argue for the potential asset of a project and capable to articulate the value of the unseen. Stated Albright-Knox Public Art Initiative Curator Aaron Ott, "Every space you operate in is an education and negotiation. Relationships need to be fostered and community involvement must be rooted in generosity."[17] In order to create something for everyone, a program must meet the community where they are, understand who they are, and what they want their spaces to reflect.

17 Phone Interview with Aaron Ott

Americans for the Arts is the nation's leading nonprofit organization for advancing the arts in America. With more than 50 years of service, we are dedicated to representing and serving local communities and creating opportunities for every American to participate in and appreciate all forms of the arts.

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