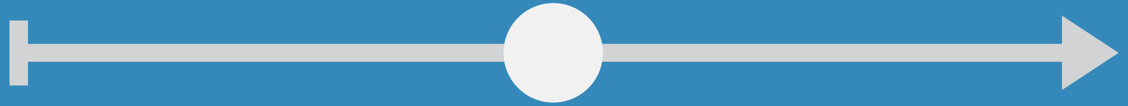
The James Irvine Foundation



FOCUS

Arts Engagement Research

Why “Where”? Because “Who”

Arts venues, spaces and tradition

Brent Reidy, AEA Consulting

DECEMBER 2014

Foreword

Place has the ability to pull us toward — or away from — the arts. While it can powerfully influence whether we enter into an arts experience, place is largely underexamined among nonprofits challenged to address declining attendance. By more fully understanding the dynamics between space and arts engagement, and by rethinking the role of place, arts organizations can open up new opportunities for themselves and for the people they want to engage. Responsive, innovative use of place fuels experiences outside the walls of usual arts spaces, so the arts can live where communities live.

Our goal in the Irvine Foundation’s Arts program is to promote engagement in the arts for everyone in the state. We support arts organizations as they adapt to social, cultural and demographic changes in California and seek to achieve new relevance through a greater focus on engagement. Since part of this commitment involves *where* engagement happens, we invited AEA Consulting to explore the relationships between arts programming, new audiences and unusual spaces to build deeper knowledge in the arts field. The firm’s findings, reported in *Why “Where”? Because “Who,”* provide context, insights and examples. They also present a set of practical recommendations, including a framework for applying these lessons.

We’re pleased to share these resources with arts groups and supporters who, like Irvine, seek tangible ways — and places — to expand engagement in the arts.

Sincerely,

Josephine Ramirez
Arts Program Director
The James Irvine Foundation
December 2014

Resources for Practitioners

ARTS ENGAGEMENT FOCUS: AN IRVINE RESEARCH SERIES

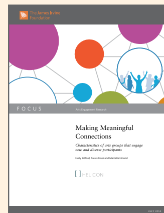
The goal of The James Irvine Foundation Arts program is to promote engagement in the arts for all Californians. The arts provide a distinct, powerful contribution to a vibrant, inclusive and compassionate society. To create and sustain this value, arts organizations must be relevant to the increasingly diverse populations of our state.

Irvine Arts program grants support organizations and initiatives that aim to expand arts engagement. We also commission research that deepens our understanding of effective arts engagement practices. Toward this end, we present this three-part research series intended to help open timely conversations within and among arts organizations. The series brings to light information from practitioners regarding key questions: Who participates in arts? How can we engage new participants? Where can arts participation take place?

Access the series at irvine.org/artsengagement.

Getting In On the Act
How arts groups are creating opportunities for active participation

By Alan S. Brown and Jennifer L. Novak-Leonard, with Shelly Gilbride, Ph.D.; WolfBrown



Making Meaningful Connections
Characteristics of arts groups that engage new and diverse participants

By Holly Sidford, Alexis Frasz and Marcelle Hinand Helicon Collaborative

Why "Where"? Because "Who"
Arts venues, spaces and tradition

By Brent Reidy AEA Consulting

See report findings at a glance in this easy-to-share infographic

Get report conclusions and recommendations, plus a framework for considering use of unusual art places

Also from Irvine: We support research to advance knowledge of current trends in arts participation and related practices in the arts sector. In 2011, we released findings generated by Markusen Economic Research on *California's Arts and Cultural Ecology*. In 2015, we are releasing companion research that illuminates the gap between traditional arts programming and arts participation in an increasingly diverse California. Conducted by NORC, this survey-based study is titled *The Cultural Lives of Californians*.

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Author's note:

I am deeply grateful to The James Irvine Foundation — and in particular Josephine Ramirez, Kevin Rafter, and Rick Noguchi — for providing me this opportunity to write about the relationship among spaces, audiences and art. This relationship has been a preoccupation of AEA Consulting for the 25 years since its founding, and this paper reflects the observations and perspectives of my colleagues as well as my own. I am particularly grateful to Adrian Ellis for his perspective, which has influenced my thoughts on the topic, and for his comments on the paper as it was drafted. I would also like to thank Stacey Marie Garcia, Director of Community Engagement at the Santa Cruz Museum of Art & History for her review and insightful comments on a draft of this report. Finally, I would like to thank the team at Williams Group for bringing the paper to life through their editing and design.

Brent Reidy
AEA Consulting

Summary

Facing waning audiences and challenged relevancy, many arts organizations are paying closer attention to place — the settings where arts experiences are offered — as a way to attract and more deeply engage new audiences.

Why "Where"? Because "Who" examines why and how place has become an important variable for arts practitioners to consider as they chart a course for the future.

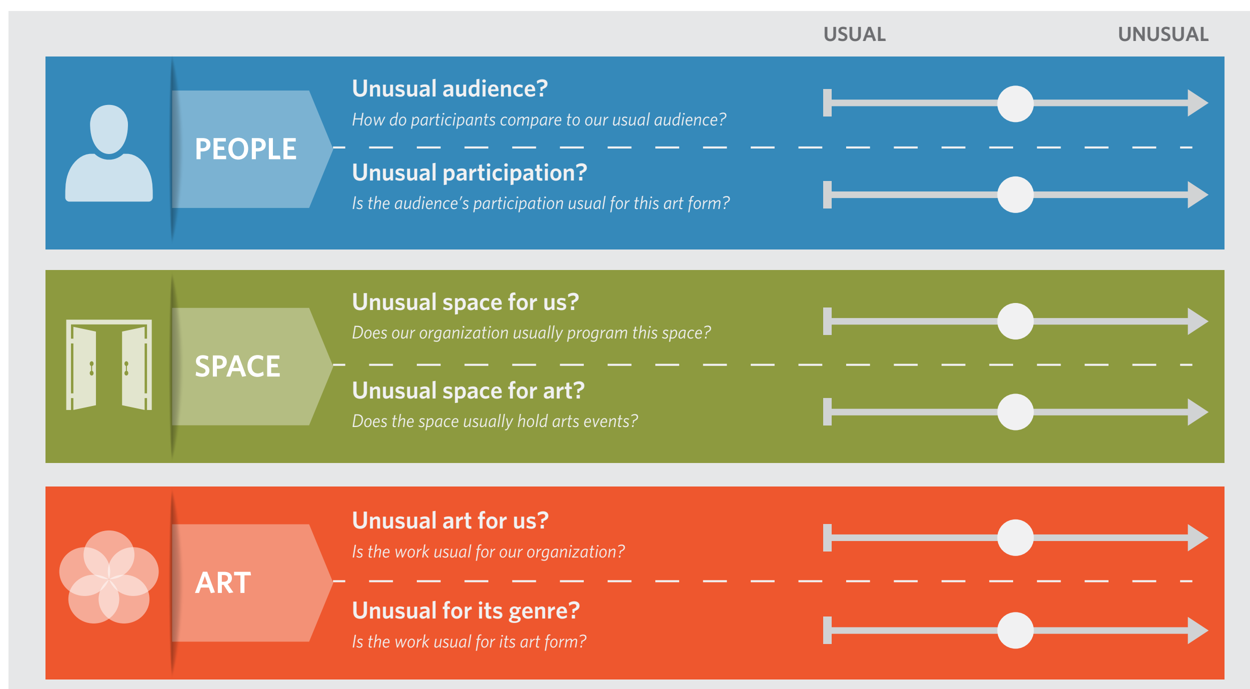
HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL CONTEXT

This report looks at the historical and social context for this phenomenon. The arts have existed for centuries in public and informal spaces that are only recently considered unusual places to program. In many ways, this new focus on "where" has brought art back to the places in which it once existed, not taken it to places that are entirely foreign.

These places are often more accessible to more potential participants than are "traditional venues." The arts were once "owned" by a larger portion of the population but that control shifted over the last two hundred years. Programming in unusual spaces has the capacity to reengage a broader public by creating experiences that align with their values and expectations in the places they want to be engaged.

FRAMEWORK FOR UNDERSTANDING AND APPLICATION

Why "Where"? Because "Who" presents a framework designed to help practitioners understand and make informed choices about the variables at work in arts programming across a variety of places. This framework is applied to project case studies included in this report, offering examples and ideas for interested practitioners and supporters.



CONCLUSIONS

Study of organizations featured in this report generated a set of six lessons learned about putting place to work toward an arts organization's goals for new audience engagement. These are:

1. **Plan the approach.** Just showing up isn't enough. Successful efforts in new spaces that connect with new participants are often the result of many months of planning and engagement.
2. **Share ownership.** Invite communities to fully participate by sharing ownership. Don't just go to new places to "give" art to the people there. Listen to that community and learn from it.
3. **Partner up.** Efforts of this type are enabled by a broad array of partnerships involving community groups and other local organizations, private businesses, donors and foundations.
4. **Prepare to invest and adapt.** This work is often labor-, time- and resource-intensive. Pursuing it may require rethinking programming, business models and funding.
5. **Aim for engagement.** This work is not about luring audiences back to a conventional venue. There may be some audience crossover, but project objectives should focus on engagement at the chosen locations, not hope for engagement somewhere else later on.
6. **Open new doors.** It's not an all or nothing game. New sites have been successfully integrated as part of an organization's total offering, the majority of which still occurs in less unusual places.

These lessons, and the many more than can be drawn from looking at other examples of best practice, are vital. The increased focus on "where" is not likely to change anytime soon. The future of the arts depends on programming in both new and old spaces, creating experiences that satisfy current participants and speak to new ones. Ultimately, "where" should and will grow to be an ever more important variable in the presentation and production of art, especially as one considers "who" one serves.

Introduction

IN RECENT YEARS THERE HAS BEEN A GROWING FOCUS ON WHERE ART TAKES PLACE. EVERY WEEK BRINGS A STORY OF A CULTURAL ORGANIZATION ACTIVATING AN INFORMAL OR UNUSUAL SPACE TO REACH NEW AUDIENCES.

From the surge of popups and surprise art “interventions” of a few years back, to the recent success and spread of site-specific immersive performance, it seems that *where* has become as important an interrogative word in the creation of art as *who, how, what* and *why*.[1] This interest comes at a time when the “traditional” arts programmed in “traditional” spaces feel increasingly fragile. These new art encounters in “nontraditional” locations are in part an effort to reengage waning audiences.

This report explores art programming in unusual spaces for new audiences in an effort to understand the impetus behind the work and what lessons can be learned from leading examples of it. It builds on other recent efforts that discuss participation and location by placing the trend in its historical context, and it challenges the assertion that the trend is a recent one.[2] Unusual locations are as much a part of the history of art as are the venues that are today considered more usual. Likewise, the venue that is unusual to some is often quite usual to many others — including, importantly, new audiences that the arts seek to reach.

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A typology of this activity follows the historical survey, with some suggestions as to the vocabulary that might be used to describe what is happening. A series of case studies are then presented, indicating the range of outcomes possible when arts programming is pursued in unusual places.

Lessons from these case studies, as well as from the broader survey, lead to some conclusions about the future of the work and its significance. The hope is that this report is inspiring to practitioners who have begun experimenting with work in unusual places as well as those who are eager to join in. This knowledge is intended to be both theoretical and practical, as the lessons drawn from the case studies can serve as guideposts in creating similar work. And, as the report describes, more work like this is important to the future of the arts if they are to serve all people.

Context

ON CREATIVE PLACEMAKING

Perhaps the most important contemporary thinking on *where* art takes place has been inspired by the interest in creative placemaking. The latter half of the term harkens back to the 1970s, when urban design focused on creating public spaces that would activate the city, generating the kind of vibrancy described by Jane Jacobs in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. Creative placemaking arose as a concept decades later. While the arts had for years been a part of activation and placemaking strategies for city planners and policymakers, creative placemaking puts "artists and art at the center of planning, execution and activity,"[3] using the arts to transform "the physical and social character of a neighborhood, town, city or region."[4]

The term "creative placemaking" originated in a white paper for The Mayor's Institute on City Design[5] and gained prominence through the National Endowment for the Arts' *Our Town* program, begun in 2010, that funds art projects that "support creative, economically-competitive, healthy, resilient, and opportunity-rich communities." The initiative has since gained momentum, spurring 256 grants totaling $21 million across all 50 states and inspiring similar efforts, most notably ArtPlace America.[6]

Many creative placemaking grants take the arts out of their usual settings and put them in public spaces that are usual to the public but unusual to the presenting organization. For example, a 2013 grant to the Roanoke Arts Commission funded a program that, "rather than consolidate art in a museum and expect people to come experience it" used public park space to "bring the art to communities."[7] An irony of these initiatives is that the places being creatively "made" have for much of the long history of the arts been primary sites for creative expression and engagement, and the public these projects reach was once less distant than it is today. The arts have not existed for eternity in stand-alone cultural facilities apart from our shared public life. In this respect, these efforts do not create a new paradigm, but rather restore one that was lost over the last two hundred years.

Many creative placemaking grants take the arts out of their usual settings and put them in public spaces that are usual to the public but unusual to the presenting organization.

While classical music began in churches in the Middle Ages and later became a fixture of court life, its public life did not properly begin until the 18th century and in venues we would consider unusual today, including coffee houses, inns, taverns or pleasure gardens. Around the mid-18th century, modest concert halls of a few hundred seats began to appear, replicating for the public the private performance spaces found in settings such as Esterházy Palace.[8] These small concert halls begat the much larger spaces that developed in the 19th century, which, importantly, marked the first time structures had been purpose-built for classical music performance.

Though concerts began to move to bespoke spaces, they were not as physically and socially isolated from their communities as some spaces are today. In 19th century America, classical music was a public good. A broad swath of the population enjoyed classical music concerts — at least more than does today. The larger halls of that period were built to meet the demand of a growing middle class, quickly expanding due to the industrial revolution.[9] It was an era of rising virtuoso stars like Franz Liszt and of monster concerts, in which hundreds of performers and thousands of attendees would come together for large-scale performances the likes of which we can only imagine convening for a classical music concert today — or that we see only for a pop superstar (e.g., Lady Gaga's "Little Monsters" are certainly not little in terms of attendance figures).

The difference between classical and popular music was not so rigidly defined as it is today. Early 19th century symphonic concerts in America exhibited flexibility in mixing together popular and classical music of various genres. One could enjoy an evening of the works of Haydn or Beethoven followed by a popular song, or even a magic act, while drinking, chatting, smoking, generally ignoring the performances or observing them only peripherally. But through the late 19th century, into the 20th century and beyond, the function music served transformed as it underwent a "sacralization." This is not to say that the role of music became more religious, as music was "no longer merely an instrument to celebrate the greater glory of a reigning sovereign or Supreme Being."[10] Rather, music performance "lost its representational and recreational function and became an activity to be worshipped in its own right."[11] Music concerts were stripped of popular genres and irreverent attitudes as the "growing conviction… that music had the capacity to disclose the 'wonders' of the universe" played out.[12] This sacralization served not only to elevate music beyond pure pleasure, but also marked music as a privilege for elite upper classes, and as a form of art for dedicated spaces that could offer the right acoustics and the right social setting for the right people:

> [Musical masterworks were] to be performed in their entirety by highly trained musicians on programs free from the contamination of lesser works or lesser genres, free from the interference of audience or performer, free from the distractions of the mundane; audiences were to approach the masters and their works with proper respect and proper seriousness, for aesthetic and spiritual elevation rather than mere entertainment was the goal.[13]

As Christopher Small wrote in his study of the meanings of performance and listening, *Musicking,* every building "is designed and built to house some aspect of human behavior and relationships, and its design reflects its builders' assumptions about that behavior and those relationships. Once built, it then has the power to impose those assumptions on what goes on within it."[14] Concert halls became sites of sacred practice and, in turn, the mode of communication they espoused became increasingly "one-way" from composer down to listener, resulting of this was the loss of a "rich shared public culture that once characterized the United States."[15]

The difference between classical and popular music was not so rigidly defined as it is today. Early 19th century symphonic concerts in America exhibited flexibility in mixing together popular and classical music of various genres.

Similar tales can be told for other artistic genres, as dance, opera, painting and many other forms of art making grew more isolated in the 19th century. Through the early 19th century, the works of Shakespeare were widely known and enjoyed in America; the playwright was not yet "firmly entrenched in the pantheon of high culture." During this timeframe, Shakespeare's works would be best characterized as popular entertainment. Indeed, theaters at the beginning of that century were a "microcosm" that "drew all ranks of people to one place where they constituted what Erving Goffman called a 'focused gathering' — a set of people who relate to one another through the medium of a common activity."[16] As the century progressed, theater audiences grew increasingly segmented.

At the beginning of the 19th century, American public museums followed in the tradition of *cabinets of curiosities*, as "paintings and sculpture stood alongside mummies, mastodon bones and stuffed animals."[17] They were anything but "segregated temples of the fine arts, but repositories of information, collections of strange or doubtful data."[18] There was a drive through the century to spread fine art to a broader public in order to educate that public. Museums were sanitized and made more orderly. They were increasingly conceived as "instruments capable of 'lifting' the cultural level of the population," an overall "civilizing influence" for the betterment, not entertainment, of the public.[19] "It was quite common, toward the end of the 19th century, for the museum's early historians… to contrast its achieved order and rationality with the jumbled incongruity which now seemed to characterize the cabinets of curiosity which, in its own lights, the museum had supplanted and surpassed."[20] Museums were no longer meant to delight and wonder, but to educate and improve.

THE ARTS UNDER PRESSURE

Sacralization continued through the 20th century. During the Great Depression, the arts programs of the Works Progress Administration — the most audacious commitment to the arts in United States history — focused not just on economic support for artists, but on cultivating an intelligent public through art as a form of social relief. Hallie Flanagan, director of the Federal Theater Project, believed theater was necessary to make people "better citizens and individuals."[21] To her, theater was not a luxury or good for entertainment but a necessity for moral and social betterment. The Federal Art Project focused on the support of easel painters, emphasizing professional art above amateur, which did not bring together the artist and the public, but did "bring the artists together within their own world."[22] Federal Music Program director Nikolai Sokoloff believed the nation needed a rejuvenation of classical music performed by orchestras — cultivated, not vernacular music,[23] stating that his programs would "not participate with every Tom, Dick or Harry who has no musical ability," and would instead employ only highly trained classical musicians.[24]

A midcentury surge of interest in the arts, which ultimately led to the National Arts and Humanities Act of 1965 that created the National Endowment for the Arts, was deeply steeped in the rhetoric of the arts as sacred. After World War II, the United States, "despite its unimaginable resources, muscle, and expertise… was a confused and conflicted country that was not sure what it really was, or how to find a moral and spiritual center."[25] Artists were positioned as our nation's moral and spiritual compass. Several weeks before his assassination, President Kennedy, in a speech at Amherst College, proclaimed, "If art is to nourish the roots of our culture, society must set the artist free to follow his vision wherever it takes him. We must never forget that art is not a form of propaganda; it is a form of *truth*."[26] Months earlier he had willed into existence by Executive Order 11112 the President's Advisory Council on the Arts, which became the National Council on the Arts by law in 1964. He was influenced by the advice of his arts advisor August Heckscher, who had reported "there has been a growing awareness that the United States will be judged — and its place in history ultimately assessed — not alone by military or economic power, but by the quality of its civilization."[27]

The most powerful factors changing the art field are demographic and socioeconomic.

Over the past few decades, belief in the sacred power of the arts has subsided and the "persuasive power of virtually all the arguments that helped establish and sustain the Federal Arts for the past thirty years [eroded]."[28] The arts no longer seem defensible from a purely "arts for arts' sake" perspective, as advocates instead cite the "instrumental" benefits of the arts — such as impact on economics, education, health and other facets of life.[29] Additionally, the sacred nature and place of art has been challenged, for example, as artists participating in Dada and other movements staged happenings in unusual spaces that questioned the elitism and hierarchy within the arts, and the very definition of what is and is not art.

Any artist, practitioner or funder in the field today can readily produce a well-rehearsed litany of statistics describing the disintegrating world of the arts: decreased attendance, declined philanthropic giving and weakened balance sheets. There has been a destabilizing growth the sector as we seemingly have introduced too much supply while demand stalled.[30] The ways in which people participate have shifted, as patrons now desire activities that are more socially engaging, casual and informal. There is increased competition for leisure time, in part fueled by the growth of digital media and other forms of entertainment that rival the spectacle and power on which the arts once held a near-monopoly and which have shortened our attention spans and decreased our willingness to sit in a dark place for hours and concentrate on something.

The most powerful factors changing the art field, however, are demographic and socioeconomic. The population of the U.S. tripled in the 20th century, during which time the number of Americans identifying as a race other than White doubled from one in eight to one in four. Between 1980 and 2000, the population identifying ethnically as Hispanic doubled as well.[31] In 2002, the U.S. Census Bureau reported "racial and

ethnic diversity increasingly characterized the population of the United States during the last half of the 20th century, especially in the last three decades of the century."[32]

Those trends have only accelerated since. The Census predicts that by 2042 our nation's population will be a "minority majority" — meaning citizens identifying as White non-Hispanic will comprise less than half of the nation's population. Several states, including California, New Mexico, Texas and Hawaii, have already made this transition. Between 2020 and 2060, the nation's Hispanic population is projected to increase from 64 million to 129 million, while the non-Hispanic White population is expected to decrease from 199 million to 179 million.

The nation's socioeconomic makeup also has changed dramatically over recent decades. While the United States has maintained its position as the world's richest large country by gross domestic product through the end of the 20th and beginning of the 21st centuries, recent income gains have flowed to an increasingly smaller proportion of Americans. The country's middle class is no longer the world's most affluent.[33] Inflation-adjusted median per capita income has remained virtually flat in the U.S. since 2000, while it has grown by a fifth in both Great Britain and Canada. Income inequality has increased significantly since the 1970s to the point that one percent of the U.S. population now holds two-fifths of its wealth, a condition that led to the formation of the Occupy Wall Street movement that began in 2011. Census and IRS data have reported that the gap between the rich and poor is the widest it has been since 1928.[34] Absent a large-scale policy intervention that seems improbable in the current political climate, there is no indication that the trend will reverse anytime soon.

These demographic and socioeconomic changes are vital to consider, as the arts sector has generally been patronized by a White middle and upper class. While some recent reports indicate progress in increasing attendee ethnic diversity,[35] the relevant statistics are more sobering than inspiring. The National Endowment for the Arts' *Survey of Public Participation in the Arts* reports, for example, that Hispanic Americans are about three times less likely to attend non-musical theater than are White Americans, while African Americans are half as likely to visit an art museum or gallery.[36] Other studies have found that audiences of color are less likely to patronize purpose-built art facilities.[37] The public that the arts predominantly serves is looking less and less like the public of America today.

WHY "WHERE"? BECAUSE "WHO"

All the while a great deal of art making, by every kind of American, continued in places that are now unusual to "high culture." Popular culture has not suffered a loss in relevance. By some measures we are entering into a golden age of popular arts participation, with a dramatic increase in amateur art making enabled by technology and widespread sharing through social media. More people have access to more kinds of culture than ever before, and they can participate from anywhere they like thanks to cheap and abundant technologies. While there certainly are sacred spaces for popular culture, there has always been, and remains, a flexible relationship with *where* popular art occurs, *how* it is consumed and *what* purpose it serves.

Certain spaces were not suddenly without the arts through the 20th century, but rather they were without certain *kinds* of art. These kinds of arts have not discovered new spaces; they are *returning* to them to reach the public there. They are bringing art to the people, rather than expecting that people come to the art. Work in unusual spaces capitalizes on the opportunity to create a public engaged with arts and regain the broad relevance that was once traded for piety.

Shifting the scene creates other changes that can further bridge the gap between an arts organization and its public. Unusual spaces can free an organization of the accumulated performance behaviors that can feel inhibitive and stifling to some patrons. In unusual spaces, silence is not a given. Socialization more often occurs during a performance event — not just before, after or at the interval. Different modes of participation are

more readily welcome and authority is more often shared among an organization and its audience members. The rules around electronic recording devices are relaxed, allowing art to more readily transform into digital artifacts that can be shared through social media.

Art in unusual spaces aligns with shifts in participation and the desire for more social and less formal events. It is also often purposefully disruptive and demands attention in a way that art in a conventional space cannot and can compete with video games, movies and other forms of entertainment. It can even generate moments that go viral, creating a level of cultural relevance and popularity that has otherwise escaped the arts for years.[38]

The most shortsighted of these efforts are calculated attempts to hook new patrons and somehow convince them to come back to the places they do not currently attend. Increasing attendance back at base is possible, but only when an organization can re-legitimize and ground itself through efforts that reach new patrons in genuine ways. For the work to be truly effective, as the case studies later in this report evidence, it must be part of mission, not only of strategy, and an organization must be committed to meeting its current and future patrons *where they are,* not where that organization *wishes they were*.

Vocabulary and Framework

LANGUAGE MATTERS

The historic and social context of this trend highlights the need for a new vocabulary to describe it. The authors of this paper and the funders who commissioned it are sometimes guilty, as are many others in the field, of relying on commonly understood but problematic phrases. The paper was originally commissioned as a study of "nontraditional venues," a term with which few are entirely comfortable, but which is used because all understand exactly what it means.

The word "nontraditional" is relational; it refers to something that is not traditional to some person or some group. In this case, the people who view some spaces as "nontraditional" are not the people to whom many of these efforts try to reach. The term is therefore self-defeating — it sets one up in opposition to the very audience one is attempting to cultivate. One cannot claim historical accuracy as a basis for the word, unless one takes a very short view of history. As described above, much of this work is about art returning to spaces that are, and have been, traditional to the arts for centuries.

The word "venue" is equally challenged. Its use tends to conjure up very particular kinds of spaces meant for particular kinds of art and for particular kinds of organizations. Many have fixed seating; others, additional fixed features: the social structure they reinforce, the audience that attends, the behavior that is expected from attendees, and the perceived relevance and importance of the work that takes place therein.

The word "nontraditional" is relational; it refers to something that is not traditional to some person or some group.

"Venue" is also not historically defensible. The word was originally used in the 14th century to describe a thrust in fencing, deriving from the Old French feminine past participle of *venir,* "to come." By the 1500s it was adopted as a legal term for the place where a jury is summoned to try a case. It was not until the mid-19th century that the word was used to describe a more public event with an audience, at which point it was used to denote the site of a match or competition. Only by the middle of the 20th century did the word mean the site of a theatrical performance, and later, the site of arts events of all kinds.[39] The word, then, is historic only to the period from which efforts of this type are struggling to break free.

Rather than speaking of venues, it might be more useful to refer instead, as this report has tried, to the place or space in which an art event takes place, whether that is a museum gallery or subway platform. The word "traditional" should be used with suspicion, and with an understanding that its misuse can engender antagonistic and exclusionary relationships. It is perhaps more useful to refer to something as usual or unusual to a person or group.

ORGANIZING FOR UNDERSTANDING AND ACTION

It is important not only to adopt new words to refer to the places where art occurs, but also to understand the different kinds of new work that are possible in new places. A framework for classification is helpful in this regard. The example below describes this new work along a continuum with three dimensions:

PEOPLE

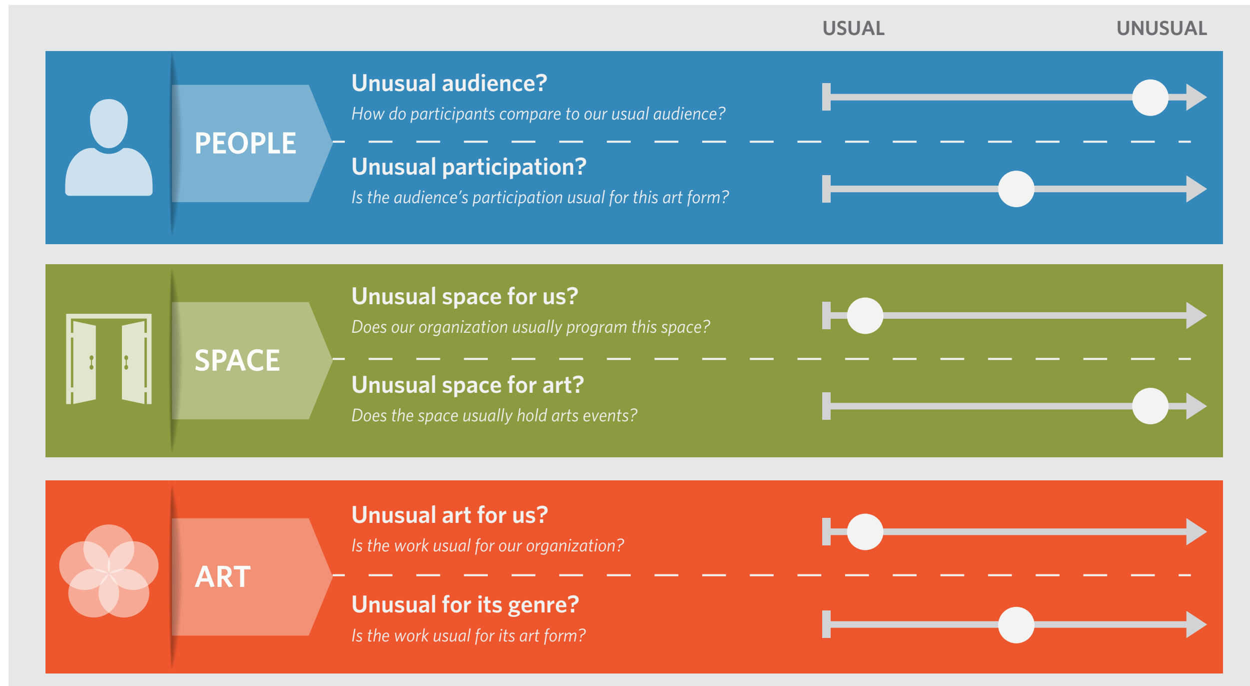
- Who is there? Is it the organization's usual audience?
- Is the audience's participation usual for this arts form?

SPACE

- Does the presenting organization usually program art in this space?
- Does the space usually hold arts events?

ART

- Is the work usual for the presenting arts organization?
- Is the work usual to its arts form?



The goal of this framework is two-fold. First, it is a tool by which one can assess use of unusual spaces. The apparent newness of some of these efforts can seem discouraging, especially to organizations that have not yet experimented in similar ways. By breaking down what is and is not usual among the three dimensions described above, the framework demystifies endeavors of this type. While in some cases every element of an art experience in question will be unusual, most of the work taking place today is a mix of the usual and unusual.

Second, this framework can be used as a planning tool for those wishing to engage new arts participants. One could focus on making a work that transforms a space that is normally devoid of art, but is otherwise usual to the organization and genre. Or, one might be inspired to create an event that invites new modes of participation, but takes place somewhere that is often the site of art events. By charting in advance what aspects of a paradigm one will shift toward the unusual, it becomes easier to plan for an event and anticipate its outcomes.

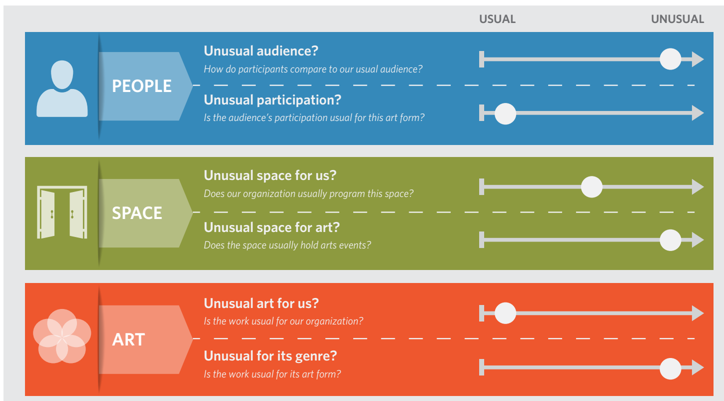
Case Studies

The following case studies illustrate inspiring ways in which organizations have utilized new spaces to reach new audiences. They are arranged roughly according to the ways in which participants engage with the art, from more usual forms of participation (e.g., spectating) to less usual (e.g., co-creating, audience-as-artist). An attempt was made to incorporate a variety of approaches from across the country and from different genres of art. There are many more examples of extraordinary work, all of which deserve study.

GROUP	PROJECT	LOCATION	GENRE	DESCRIPTION
STREB Extreme Action Company	**STREB Surprises: One Extraordinary Day**	Brooklyn, New York	Dance	Pioneering company continues to make use of unusual spaces, despite having a much admired new facility
Detroit Institute of Arts	**Inside|Out**	Detroit, Michigan	Visual arts	Art reproductions are placed throughout communities to expand access and foster creativity and pride
Play On, Philly!	**Annual Performances at Unusual Venues**	Philadelphia, Pennsylvania	Music	Youth orchestra performs in a variety of venues — usual and unusual — to reach a broad constituency
Roosevelt Row Community Development Corporation	**Hot Box Gallery**	Phoenix, Arizona	Visual arts	Urban development group teams up with contemporary art group to fight blight with popup galleries
Albany Park Theater Project	**Immersive Theater Project**	Chicago, Illinois	Theater	Leading commercial theater company teaches group how to engage their community through immersive theater-making
The Industry	**Invisible Cities**	Los Angeles, California	Opera	Popup performance functions both as a private paid experience for a few and a free grand spectacle for many more
Heidi Duckler Dance Theatre	**The Duck Truck**	Los Angeles, California	Dance	Dance troupe uses mobile camper to bring a site to students rather than students to a site
The Public Theater	**Mobile Shakespeare Unit and Public Works**	New York, New York	Theater	Theater company brings Shakespeare and performance experiences to new places and people
San Diego Symphony	**Your Song, Your Story**	San Diego, California	Music	Underserved populations are invited to co-create a symphony, premiered in concert halls and public places
Oakland Museum of California	**We Dream in Art**	Oakland, California	Visual arts	Museum co-creates public murals to connect with its community

Photo credit: Julian Andrews, Eye R8 Productions

STREB EXTREME ACTION COMPANY
STREB SURPRISES: ONE EXTRAORDINARY DAY



“Will anyone ever be surprised again by a work in a theater?” asks action architect Elizabeth Streb.[40]

The question is a pertinent one, as Streb's dance company has for just over a decade made its home in a custom-built facility (SLAM, the STREB Lab for Action Mechanics) after a 28-year itinerant existence. Housed in a warehouse in Brooklyn's artistic Williamsburg neighborhood, SLAM is a cutting-edge facility that has inspired many since opening in 2003, especially in the way it breaks down the barriers between audience and performer. The public is invited to come by anytime to watch rehearsals or merely sit in the lobby, use the Wi-Fi and work among the bright circus colors and hustle and bustle of the staff offices just above them. Outsized pieces of industrial kit utilized for STREB's “pop-action” technique are visible throughout the facility, stirring the imagination of all who enter. The performance space is informal, as are the bleacher-style seats reminiscent of a high-school gymnasium.

Regardless of the newness of that space and what goes on inside it, SLAM is still a space with fixed features and fixed-patron expectations. And the STREB troupe works in performing art centers nationwide; recent tour stops include the Germantown Performing Arts Center in Tennessee and Carolina Performing Arts Center in Chapel Hill. All of these spaces, SLAM included, come with assumptions that Streb tries to shake.

SLAM has presented important opportunities for STREB, but it also imposes barriers the work must surpass. “I try to surprise people by being *harder, faster, sooner* — because that's not traditional within the space,” says Streb. To escape the space, “the physicality must be *transgressive*.”

Despite now having a much admired home, the company continues to perform in unusual public settings as it did in its earlier years. Perhaps the company's boldest undertaking was a series of seven surprise performances for the 2012 London Olympics taking place in the course of "STREB SURPRISES: One Extraordinary Day." Events included Streb and two dancers abseiling down the side of the glass-clad city hall and the company performing inside and along spokes of the London Eye while it was in motion.

Why go to these spaces, even after securing bricks-and-mortar of their very own? According to Streb, new locations provide the opportunity to "reinvent all the forms we've invented" as "'where' is now the question — we invented 'why.' That's done. Now we are inventing 'where.'"

A distinct challenge of this kind of work is the lack of authority involved. Despite their modernity, most dance works choreographed by Streb have a beginning, middle and end. In unusual spaces, that narrative is usurped. A passerby could come upon the work at any moment, see a single dancer take a single action, and then move on satisfied that he or she had witnessed a complete work. "That's fine," says Streb, but it means she has to rethink her creative process.

The audiences drawn for the London work and others like it are different from those that show up at SLAM. Outside of this home base, the audience is more diverse along many dimensions — age, race and interest in dance. While Streb is certain that some patrons have experienced moments that have changed their lives, she is not sure that these encounters have won her company any new fans, as "the 'accidental patron' won't necessarily remember who we are, even if they saw our name or read about it the next day," she says. Even if they did, Streb does not see a plausible way to convert 'accidental' patrons, in London, New York and elsewhere into regular attendees at SLAM or for her tours.

The economics of the proposition are challenging. It is more difficult to earn income from a popup event. And if the event does not bring patrons to an organization down the line, it does not translate into traditional earned revenue streams, such as ticket sales. These outdoor spectacles are much more expensive than anything that takes place inside SLAM or other places like it. However, events like these can attract major sponsors, and the scale of these investments can dwarf what might be earned from a regular performance.

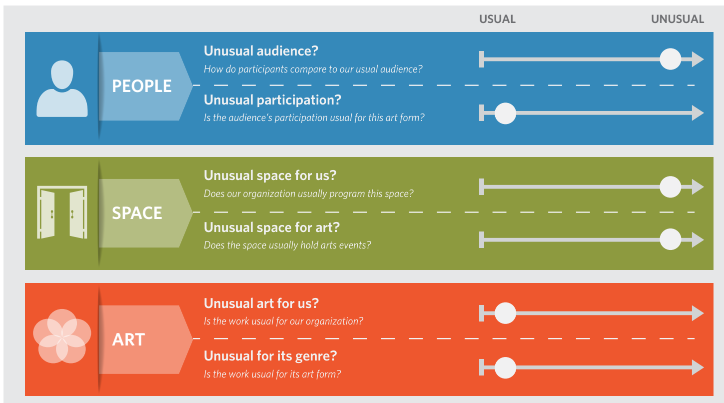
Despite now having a much admired home, the company continues to perform in unusual public settings as it did in its earlier years. According to artistic director Elizabeth Streb, new locations provide the opportunity to "reinvent all of the forms we've invented."

LESSONS LEARNED

- Popup performance attendees are very different — they are "accidental" and autonomous, and tracking the impact of this work can be difficult
- Performances of this type can be more challenging and more rewarding, both artistically and economically

Photo credit: Kathryn Dimond

DETROIT INSTITUTE OF ARTS *INSIDE|OUT*



The Detroit Institute of Arts (DIA) stewards one the nation's most significant and important art collections. Spanning from ancient to contemporary art, the collection contains some 65,000 items, housed in a 650,000 square-foot Italian Renaissance facility that is highly regarded among architects and art aficionados alike.

The DIA is no stranger to the economic issues plaguing Detroit.[41] At a time when few things seem certain in what was formerly one of the proudest and largest cities in America, the DIA has pursued a program of putting art in unusual places that has captivated the imagination of audiences in and around the metropolitan area.

Launched as part of the institution's 125th anniversary in 2010 and inspired by a similar National Gallery program in London,[42] Inside|Out installs high-quality weatherproof reproductions of masterworks throughout Detroit neighborhoods. The program began with 40 works — actual size and fully framed — placed throughout Wayne, Macomb, Oakland and Washtenaw counties. The works appeared on the sides of commercial buildings and in parks and other public spaces, each accompanied by description of the work and the Inside|Out program.

According to Kathryn Dimond, the DIA's Director of Community Relations, the program was started to reinforce the idea that "the museum and its collection truly belong to the community — *to make sure they understood it was theirs, not ours.*"[43] The community responded to the initiative with enthusiasm and the program has been highly successful. In its fifth year, Inside|Out placed over 80 works throughout nine cities in the spring and another nine cities over the summer.

CONTINUED: CASE STUDY DETROIT INSTITUTE OF ARTS *INSIDE|OUT*

Central to Inside|Out's success is making sure the DIA listens to and creates the program with their communities. The program asks for applications from downtown development authorities, municipal parks and recreation departments, historic districts and anchor arts organizations to have a cluster of art works placed in a walkable pocket of their communities. The DIA then works with participating communities to help them host events around the art exhibitions, which have included biking tours, wine tastings and talks at local libraries and galleries. This process involves "taking their guidance and modifying our program accordingly" remarks Dimond, as "this isn't the DIA's program, it's a shared program; we want to help them meet their own objectives for their communities while we meet ours for the program."

In addition, residents of these communities have received admission to a Family Sunday event at the museum, where they can see the original works of art that were replicated and placed in their communities. Some patrons have come and raced through the facility to find where "their" art is located in the galleries, including some individuals that otherwise might have never come to the institution in the first place. Dimond recognizes that "museums can be intimidating places and the DIA is an imposing building." By viewing art in their own communities and in a place they are more comfortable in, new audiences now feel like they "own" the art and are a part of the DIA. And that's the point — the program is not meant just to bring people to the DIA, but to make sure people build deep connections with the institution that go beyond the edifice.

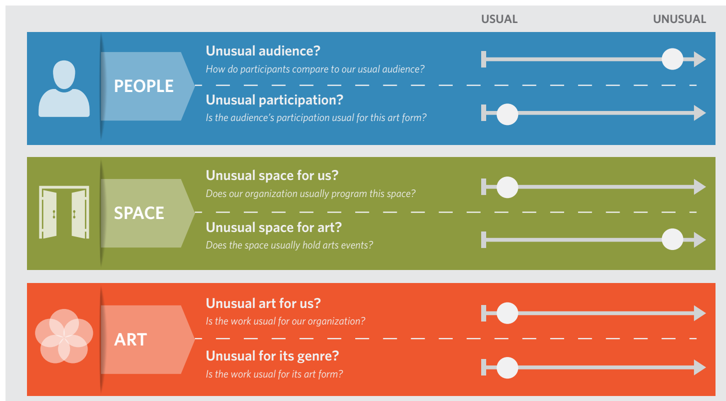
Inside|Out now has a healthy waiting list, and many communities are vying to take part in its sixth iteration slated for 2015. A Michigan Municipal League study of the program reports that "thousands of students, parents, neighbors, and other community members come out and experience the pop-up collection" and that their participation is encouraged because "art is just around the corner from where they live, work, and play."[44] Dennis Scholl of the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, the program's primary funder, asserts, "it's not enough simply to present art in today's world. Audiences demand to be engaged."[45]

LESSONS LEARNED

- Share ownership of the project with a community and they will embrace it
- Work with a broad array of partners to co-create and co-curate

Photo credit: Steven Krull

PLAY ON, PHILLY!
ANNUAL PERFORMANCES AT UNUSUAL VENUES



Many orchestras today are experimenting with the kind of genre-crossing that was more common in the early 19th century — concerts of music from the movies, playing with pop music stars, etc. — expanding upon the typical "pop" series in an effort to reach new audiences.[46] However, not all groups look to different programming to bring in audiences. Venezuela's *El Sistema*, a massively popular youth classical music program founded in 1975 that today has some 500,000 children involved in regular after school practice and concertizing, has found unprecedented success in programming standard orchestra repertoire concerts for large, eager audiences that may not have previously found value in classical music.[47]

This is what excited Stanford Thompson, the Founder and Artistic Director of Play On, Philly!, a Philadelphia program modeled after *El Sistema*. Play On, Philly! has found that by experimenting with where it programs classical music, the organization can successfully bring together unusual audiences for the usual classical repertory. Thompson is inspired by the words of *El Sistema* founder, Dr. Jose Abreu: "Culture for the poor should not be a poor culture."[48]

Play On, Philly! performs a few dozen times per year, and while some performances take place in conventional spaces, like Philadelphia's Kimmel Center, the majority are held at a variety of locations throughout neighborhoods including West Philadelphia, an economically challenged and diverse section of the city that is not usually the site of classical orchestral concerts.

Why go to those places? "I am fighting for a new undeveloped audience," explains Thompson, and that audience "doesn't always feel comfortable and welcome at places like the Kimmel Center… We take concerts to the community — the community needs you out there with them more than you need them in your hall."

Reaching that community has meant performances at churches, community centers, secondary schools, colleges, outdoor parks, coffee shops, museums and libraries. The audiences gathered have been diverse, including typical classical music patrons, the friends and family of the youth involved, and everyone in-between. Thompson programs a broad array of spaces in order to reach a wide constituency — he intends that no Philadelphian, young or old, is left out.

"I am fighting for a new undeveloped audience," explains Thompson, and that audience "doesn't always feel comfortable and welcome at places like the Kimmel Center… We take concerts to the community — the community needs you out there with them more than you need them in your hall."

The difficulties of this strategy are significant. "The acoustics are certainly not that great!" laughs Thompson, and the spaces are inadequate in other ways, at least when compared to sites like Philadelphia's Verizon Hall. Thompson also stresses that just showing up in a neighborhood does not guarantee support and a full house for a Mozart concerto. "Delivering a product to a community that had very little connection to classical music [presents] tremendous challenges," he says.[49] Play On, Philly! has built its audiences through a meticulous process of network building that involves staff, board members, teachers and many local supporters in all the communities the organization programs.

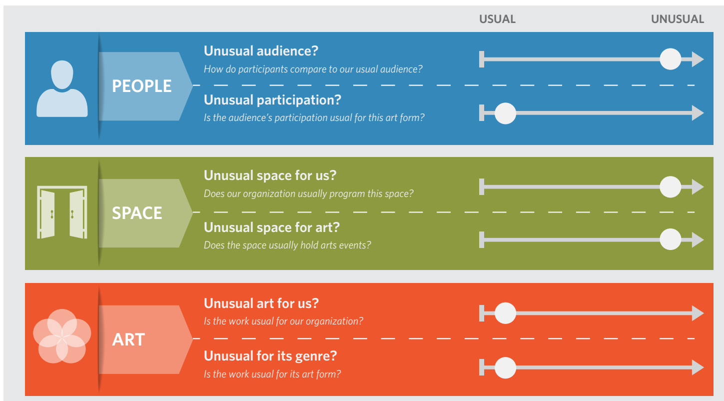
Thompson says that regardless of a space's shortcomings, "I'd rather have 400 people in that room and touch them deeply." This kind of impact has led to support from Play On, Philly! donors and funders. The organization is quickly growing programs, staff and budget, says Thompson, because "we aren't just knocking down doors of art '*venues*.'"

LESSONS LEARNED

- It isn't necessary to "dumb down" to reach new audiences
- Formal settings may not feel welcoming or comfortable for new target participants
- Programming unusual places can win new participants and philanthropic support
- Just "showing up" in a community is not enough; an organization must also build connections

ROOSEVELT ROW COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION *HOT BOX GALLERY*

Photo credit: Greg Esser, courtesy Roosevelt Row Community Development Corporation



Beginning in the mid-20th century, Phoenix, Arizona became synonymous with urban sprawl. As the city's population grew, upper- and middle-class Phoenicians abandoned the then relatively compact downtown for the growing suburbs. The city attempted to battle the resulting blight since the 1970s, leveling empty neighborhoods to create high-rises and parking lots, but the result was “superblocks with few community anchors,” and it did nothing to stem the city's suburban expansion.[50] The 2007 housing crisis only made matters worse, as homes in the region lost more than half their value and more stood empty, abandoned by their owners or built but never sold.[51]

In recent years since, the city has focused on various strategies to infill and reactivate its urban center. As a result, Phoenix's downtown, like the proverbial mythological bird that gives the city its name, is experiencing a resurgence.

The city's cultural quarter is key in this redevelopment. Designated in 1985 as a special planning district, the Roosevelt Row Arts District is home to many of the city's cultural facilities, as well as galleries, restaurants and businesses. Its diverse population includes many local artists. However, while the area has many of the elements that make for a vibrant arts district — both institutions and potential patrons — the blighted voids between those elements inhibit community development and “create a sense of unease” for potential pedestrians.[52] Some cultural facilities are better at attracting suburbanites than locals, and the area overall lacks social cohesion.

Photo credit: Ted G Decker, phICA

In response to this situation, the Roosevelt Row Community Development Corporation (Roosevelt Row CDC), a nonprofit organization focused on developing the district, partnered with the Phoenix Institute of Contemporary Art (phICA) to turn the area's chief challenge into an opportunity through momentary transformations of empty spaces. Through its Adaptive Reuse of Temporary Space program, the CDC worked with phICA to repurpose a shipping container for a temporary art exhibition, dubbed the "Hot Box Gallery."

The result is an art gallery that "opens right up onto the sidewalk," says Greg Esser, the project's designer and Vice President of Roosevelt Row CDC.[53] As a result, many pedestrians stop in to see what is going on who otherwise had no intention of going to a gallery that day — if ever. This walk-by traffic is not the "typical audience you see at the museum just a few blocks north," remarks Esser, but is representative of the residential area around Roosevelt Row — a low to moderate income area with very high diversity.

"These spaces are engagement opportunities and they are starting to close that gap between who is and is not an arts patron here," says Esser. "They've brought in the most diverse audiences I've ever seen at an art event in Phoenix, in terms of income, diversity, ages and languages spoken."

That's precisely what has made the Hot Box a successful part of the CDC's strategy to invigorate the area's streets. "These spaces are engagement opportunities and they are starting to close that gap between who is and is not an arts patron here," says Esser. "They've brought in the most diverse audiences I've ever seen at an art event in Phoenix, in terms of income, diversity, ages and languages spoken."

Why is it successful? In part because of the CDC's collaboration with phICA, which in turn brought in local and international artists to curate the spaces. Artists are naturally good at activating space like this, says Esser. They are "hard-wired to see value where a traditional cultural institution might not… if a museum tried

this on their own they'd do it differently and probably less effectively." And partnering with artists in the community makes it an "artistic driven grassroots effort rather than a top-down initiative."

phICA has curated and collaborated on shows across a variety of venues in the area and in Rio de Janeiro, including in more usual art galleries as well as the shipping containers. Work on the Hot Box Gallery project is particularly exciting and has introduced the organization to new audiences. phICA Director Ted Decker says one of the most surprising things he has experienced is the "level of engagement of those who enter the Hot Box," as "they are intense and focused. They don't just blow through the exhibit like a seasoned gallery-goer might."[54] Decker thinks this is because "for some of these audiences, they are experiencing an art show for the very first time."

"I've rarely experienced this level of engagement from patrons inside a museum," reflects Decker, which made him realize "this is an opportunity to broaden our practice pursuant to our mission and engage people in truly new ways."

Since opening the Hot Box, the CDC has purchased and refurbished two additional shipping container galleries. The program is relatively inexpensive, with each container costing about $10,000 to purchase and refurbish and costs have been defrayed through a grant from ArtPlace.

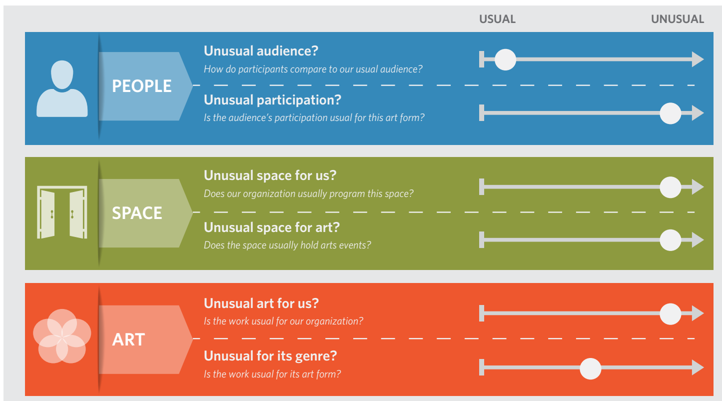
No income is earned from the exhibitions, but the CDC finds the containers well worth the cost based on the outcomes they have achieved — and that is why they plan to continue to create engagement opportunities for Roosevelt Row residents in unexpected spaces.

LESSONS LEARNED

- When leveraged and programmed intelligently, unattractive and inactive spaces can be key sites for public engagement
- Arts and urban development groups can partner to program unusual spaces and create community
- The uninitiated arts patron might be the most engaged patron

Photo credit: Joe Mazza–Brave Lux, Inc.

ALBANY PARK THEATER PROJECT
IMMERSIVE THEATER PROJECT



Over the past few years, immersive productions have taken the theater world by storm. This theater-making involves not just site-specific works, but it can also bring audiences into the drama as active participants. Perhaps the best known work in recent years is Punchdrunk's "Sleep No More," a Hitchcockian take on Macbeth that occupies multiple floors and rooms of three adjoined Chelsea warehouses transformed to resemble an old hotel that viewers freely wander bedecked in masks. Its New York production opened in 2011, where it has since enjoyed a highly successful and lucrative run and has been joined by many other immersive works, including "Then She Fell" and "Natasha, Pierre, and the Great Comet of 1812."

Albany Park Theater Project (APTP) of Chicago recently brought in members of Third Rail Projects, the group behind "Then She Fell," to kick off a two-year immersive theater project that will culminate in performances in the building that normally serves as APTP's headquarters and a Chicago school. Unlike some of the other organizations studied for this report, APTP is not pursuing work in unusual spaces specifically as a way to reach diverse audiences; the company is a multiethnic youth ensemble that already serves a very diverse audience. Instead, APTP is learning from a premiere theater company how to leverage performance in unusual spaces to further serve its constituency and engage meaningfully with both "usual" and "unusual" arts patrons.

"We realized that this kind of work presented a unique opportunity to bring together two audiences that are both the holy grail of performance organizations these days," explains David Feiner, the group's Producing

Photo credit: Joe Mazza–Brave Lux, Inc.

Artistic Director and Cofounder. "It can reach diverse populations, underserved by mainstream arts, who might be interested in the subject matter, but for whom buying a ticket and sitting in a theater is an unfamiliar and perhaps alienating experience. At the same time, it can appeal to millennials who are seeking arts and cultural activities but for whom traditional theater may feel boring and staid."[55] And, not only can this work reach both audiences, but it puts these two kinds of people who might otherwise never share the same room in the same space together.

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Founded in 1997, APTP's mission is to inspire "people to envision a more just and beautiful world" through a dedication to "art, to youth, and a vision of social justice." Located in one of the most ethnically diverse neighborhoods in the country, the company's work is based on the "life experiences of people whose stories might otherwise go untold: urban teens, immigrants, and working-class Americans."

This new immersive theater project will expand APTP's effort to tell those stories. Feiner notes that "immersive theater is a natural extension of what APTP has always done: taking people on journeys deep into the worlds with which they are unfamiliar, or through which they experience the familiar in new ways."[56]

APTP's choice to work with Third Rail is key to the program. While Third Rail does not directly share APTP's mission and does not perform specifically to reach diverse audiences (its major performances have taken place in mostly the hipper parts of Brooklyn), its methods can be adapted to meet APTP's goals. The project began during the summer of 2014 with a weeklong residency with Third Rail. Within only a few days, the ensemble of 18 experienced APTP youth performers had begun to reconsider how they viewed objects and rooms while creating work — the spaces, and the materials within, essentially become co-performers to whom the actors can respond. By the end of the week, the 1920s Tudor Revival-style field house that serves as APTP's home was utilized for a 40-minute immersive work-in-progress piece made of a dozen scenes across a dozen spaces.

The piece, which was performed for 140 audience members, was just an initial early workshop performance created after Third Rail's residency. A longer piece with more preparation is in the works. But even so, the

company delivered a moving performance focused on the failures and triumphs of being a Chicago high school student. Audience members embraced and heralded the opportunities afforded by the venue; one noted that with "all of the performance safeties removed — lights, curtains, assigned seating — the characters became more real, more like people we knew and were in high school."[57] The audience became more interactive, too. Some patrons directly responded to a scene involving bullying, intervening to help a character they felt was in need, a situation for which the actors had not fully prepared but which Feiner finds exhilarating and a wonderful artistic challenge to work with, not around.[58]

Feiner has high expectations for the program, given the reaction created by the workshop performance. "The work-in-progress got people so animated. We realized there's a high potential for social change here, higher than is possible in a conventional setting — people are so animated, vulnerable and willing to share their personal experiences after an experience like that." Importantly, says Feiner, "this includes our longtime supporters who see theater all the time as well as those who don't."

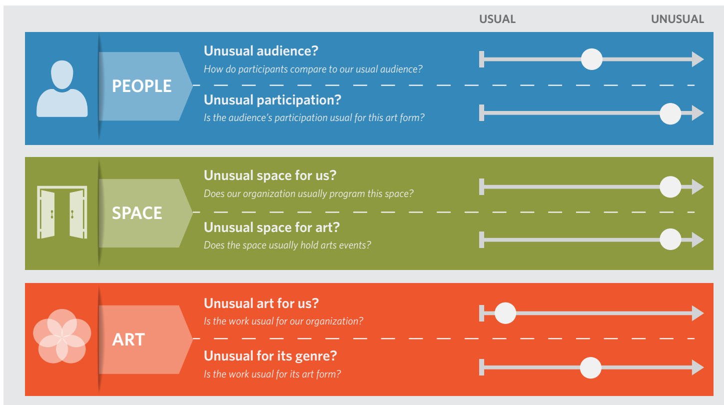
Another set of workshop performances is in the works, and it is clear that the organization is committed to absorbing and adopting a new vocabulary for relating its work to unexpected spaces. Feiner feels that the ultimate goal of this project is finding new ways to place audience members "directly inside" storytelling of shared experience. "I don't think old-fashioned conventional forms and places are going away," he remarks, "but the potential with this kind of work is enormous — not just to reach new audiences, but to electrify those who have been coming for ages, too."

LESSONS LEARNED

- Adopt from the successful efforts of others, whether nonprofit or commercial entities
- Storytelling can be made more personal and meaningful through work in unusual spaces
- Work in unusual spaces has the capacity to excite and bring together both "usual" and "unusual" patrons

Photo credit: Dana Ross

THE INDUSTRY
INVISIBLE CITIES



Developed in 2011 by Artistic Director Yuval Sharon, The Industry has quickly become one of the most talked about new opera companies nationwide. Its first production, "Crescent City," immersed its audience in a multimedia cityscape created by six visual artists in Atwater Crossing, an experimental art space spanning five industrial buildings and two blocks in a diverse neighborhood of Los Angeles.

The Industry's next effort, "First Take," brought new works of Pauline Oliveros and Mohammed Fairouz, among others, to the Hammer Museum's Billy Wilder Theater. But it was The Industry's "Invisible Cities," a collaboration with L.A. Dance Project, that won the company international recognition, in part for its unusual location — Los Angeles Union Station. This was no mere public popup; Christopher Cerrone's operatic adaptation of Italo Calvino's novel of the same title was produced for an audience wearing wireless headphones spread among travelers at the train station, mixing intentional and unintentional patrons in a single performance and setting.

Christopher Cerrone's operatic adaptation of Italo Calvino's novel of the same title was produced for an audience wearing wireless headphones spread among travelers at the train station, mixing intentional and unintentional patrons in a single performance and setting.

An 11-piece chamber orchestra began the performance in an unused food service space in the station. After the overture, the audience, clad in headsets, was released to wander the station. Dancers and singers began to reveal themselves in locations around the facility. Listeners were free to move from space to space, watching the drama unfold as they wished.

The performance experience was not limited to these listeners. The unsuspecting crowds quizzically watched the performance coalesce around them, albeit with a bit less musical context, as they could hear just the singing near them, without the orchestral accompaniment and without the voices of singers positioned elsewhere in the train station. While the listeners were a self-selected group (they bought tickets and, it is safe to assume, are fans of opera), the crowds that made up the majority of the audience were just ordinary citizens caught unexpectedly in a musical happening. "Invisible Cities" created a special experience for paying ticket holders while creating something that also was a fascinating spectacle for everyone else around it.

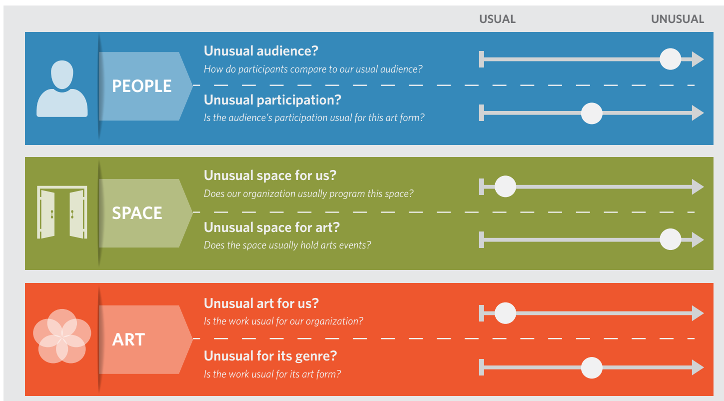
In a blog post recounting the first years of this activity, Artistic Director Sharon notes that "the making of a performance is a social activity," that opera is a contemporary form and that a "collaborative method of creation is inherent to its definition."[59] The Industry's upcoming opera production will continue to explore these ideas through work in unusual venues. It will take place in multiple cars crisscrossing Los Angeles, with performers and audience sharing the rides. Meanwhile, all the activity in the cars will be broadcast to a central hub, where many more patrons can enjoy the opera.

LESSONS LEARNED

- There are innovative ways to monetize a popup without taking the public out of the performance
- Different kinds and levels of experiences are equally valid, and a performance can support several at once

Photo credit: Frances Chee

HEIDI DUCKLER DANCE THEATRE *THE DUCK TRUCK*



Heidi Duckler is used to performing in new and unusual places. Over the last two decades, her eponymous dance company has focused on creating site-specific productions, working exclusively outside of proscenium stage settings. Called a "nationally recognized pioneer of site-specific dance,"[60] Duckler has generated works for laundry mats, baseball diamonds, empty swimming pools and jails.

Sites, according to Duckler, are "not simply supporting elements" for her work, but "catalysts and collaborators" within the choreographic process. The location and history of a place, along with the community that occupies it, become part of her work. To Duckler, site-specific work can be a tool of social justice and meaningful civic engagement, and she has sought out spaces that represent the range, breadth and scope of diversity in Los Angeles.[61] "My work is about me and you, and the world we inhabit together," she says.[62]

A new project has literally turned a recent work into a vehicle for even further engagement with diverse communities across spaces that are typically not sites for dance. The project, "The Duck Truck," is based on Duckler's 2013 "At the Oasis," which transformed a 1961 Oasis trailer into a mobile dance space. The work traveled to various locations around Los Angeles. At each location, the performance changed, reflecting the space and community in which it occurred and bringing "a site to the audience" rather than "an audience to the site."

"The Duck Truck" carries forward the lessons learned in "At the Oasis." The trailer used as the mobile set for "Oasis" has been turned into a classroom on wheels that has traveled to schools throughout California. The program includes several weeks of afterschool dance and movement classes and culminates in a live performance by middle school students alongside members of the troupe. In its first year, the truck traveled 100 miles to five sites, engaging 2,000 Californians through classes and performances along the way.

While the company has other education programs, "The Duck Truck" was created specifically to reach low-income and ethnically diverse neighborhoods without access to arts education or programming and is funded through a grant from The Irvine Foundation's *Exploring Engagement Fund*. Having a mobile site means the program can more easily be provided to a school, as they are not burdened with finding and supplying adequate space and supplies. In addition, it is provided free of charge to its partners.

The length of engagement, as well as the insurance, maintenance and towing costs associated with the trailer, means the program is more expensive and intensive than the company's other education efforts. Sadie Yarrington, the organization's Outreach Associate, thinks the investment is well worth it due to the deep level of engagement it creates. "Through this program, we are able to become part of our participants' community — part of *'their site'*."[63]

The vast majority of its participants have not engaged deeply — if at all — with dance previously. Sadie notes that this doesn't present a barrier to work around, because an uninitiated participant is precisely the kind of dancer the program is calibrated to serve.

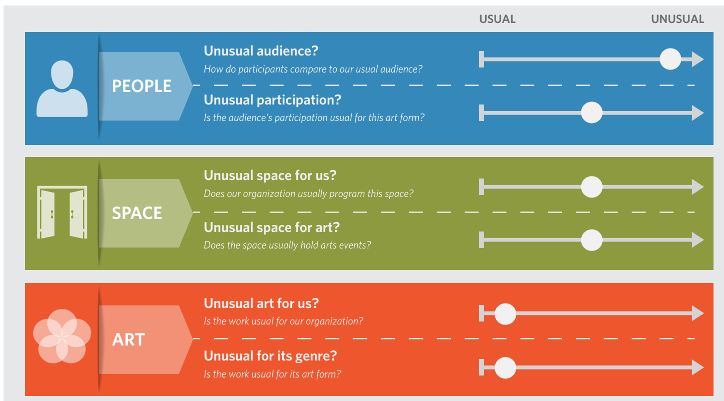
Duckler's company has undertaken educational work for years, but "accessibility has been an issue and a challenge for us," says Duckler. "The Duck Truck" solves that problem — turning a former dance set into a mobile engagement unit that can reach youth in diverse communities throughout all of Los Angeles by simply turning the ignition switch and shifting from park to drive.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Art work in unusual spaces can be transformed into engines for education
- Mobile productions can be designed to adapt unusual work to multiple locations

THE PUBLIC THEATER *MOBILE SHAKESPEARE UNIT* AND *PUBLIC WORKS*

Photo credit: Tammy Shell



The Public Theater originated from the passionate belief of its founder, Joseph Papp — that Shakespeare belongs to everyone. Papp's earliest efforts were a series of free Shakespeare workshops and productions scattered around Manhattan's Lower East Side, beginning in 1954. He secured permission three years later to use Central Park for these free productions. Papp's zeal was pivotal to the creation of the park's Delacorte Theatre in 1961, which has since served as The Public's summer home for what is now the world-renowned Shakespeare in the Park series.

Since 1967, The Public Theater has been situated in the stately former Astor Library, which now features five in-house theaters and recently underwent a major renovation. However, The Public has not lost touch with its roots or its namesake. Two major programs undertaken in the past few years show The Public's continual commitment to returning to unusual sites and connecting with audience in unexpected ways.

The theater recently re-launched Papp's original Shakespeare program as the "Mobile Shakespeare Unit." Under the aegis of Director of Special Artistic Projects Stephanie Ybarra, the unit presents Shakespeare productions in prisons, homeless shelters, centers for the elderly, recreation facilities and other community settings throughout New York's five boroughs.

CONTINUED: CASE STUDY THE PUBLIC THEATER *MOBILE SHAKESPEARE UNIT* AND *PUBLIC WORKS*

Mobile Shakespeare Unit productions are taut, with streamlined costumes, sets and props as befits a touring production. Casting reflects the diversity of New York City residents to whom these shows are geared. Interestingly, while the goal of the tour is to provide free Shakespeare to audiences with limited or no access to the arts, free reservations are also available to the public, logistics permitting, to see the productions on tour.

The audience gathered for the program is very special, reflects Ybarra, as she says "the most effusive, enthusiastic and generous audiences in New York are behind bars and in our shelters… the level of engagement we have is unlike anything else."[64] The audience members are in general "unpracticed in the ways of theater. They are not conditioned to clap politely and sit passively and quietly. They talk back. They shout back. It is this kind of interaction that breaks down the many barriers between us and our audience," muses Ybarra.

Following a three-week tour to eighteen spaces around the city, Mobile Shakespeare Unit productions return for a short run at The Public's downtown home. As Ybarra notes, the audience drawn to these performances is "the dream audience" as it has "so much generational, ethnic, cultural diversity of all kinds."

The Public has also committed to a fresh and deeply audacious year-round model for bringing new audience members into performance spaces and onto stages. PUBLIC WORKS is a community-based initiative that seeks to engage New York residents by making them artistic creators, not just spectators.

Working in partnership with community organizations in all five boroughs, PUBLIC WORKS Director Lear deBessonet offers what The Public calls "a 360-degree transformational experience of theater: of, by, and for the people." Participants see theater, discuss productions at regular meetings and potlucks, and make theater in yearlong classes and workshops.

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Lear deBessonet notes that the “longitudinal commitment to our community partners is vital” to the program, as “that commitment is what causes transformational growth — months and years of building relationships together rather than just a one-off project.”[65] The program’s primary motive is nurturing those relationships. This is key, says deBessonet, as “whatever your true deep reasons for creating a program will eventually be revealed. If you are not authentically interested in your community as equal partners who can share ideas with you then the effort will not flourish.”

The culmination of PUBLIC WORKS is a free late-summer Shakespeare production at the Delacorte Theater, directed by deBessonet and starring hundreds of individuals from partner organizations and independent performing groups side-by-side with professional actors. These productions create a joyful, infectious chaos as participants fill the stage, each given opportunities to let personal talents shine. Critics called the program’s inaugural 2013 production of The Tempest, “more vibrantly alive than many of the turgid, star-studded blockbusters floating around out there. This was a love letter — to Shakespeare, certainly, but really the city of New York.”[66]

When participants do come together for the final performance in Central Park or to other PUBLIC WORK events at The Public’s facility, deBessonet said that they feel and act like the spaces is “theirs” in a way that might not have been possible if The Public had not first gone to them at their own sites. “People don’t feel unwelcome at some arts facilities because of their facilities,” remarks deBessonet, “they feel unwelcome because they don’t have a relationship with the organizations in those facilities.”

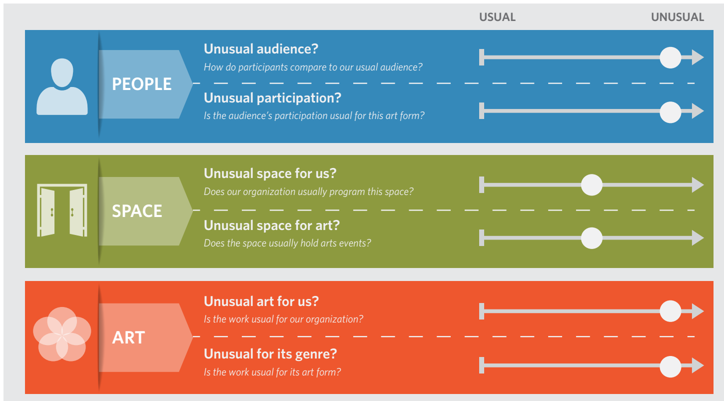
The Public’s institutional might makes both of these programs available at no participant cost, as its leadership recognizes the importance of ongoing commitment to meeting new audience members where they are. While the program does not generate earned revenue, it does attract charitable funding. Artistic Director Oskar Eustis considers the PUBLIC WORKS program a charge against the “commodification” of the theater into “a glittering object that is then purchased by the wealthy.” He explains: “These are works of theatrical art that completely break down the boundary between who is making it and who is watching it, and that return the act of making and watching and participating in theatre to a set of relationships, and not to an object.”[67]

LESSONS LEARNED

- Inviting a community to co-create in a meaningful way yields deep relationships
- Focus on the relationships, not just on the production
- Longer commitments with multiple touch points do more than one-off engagements

Photo credit: Steve Baker

SAN DIEGO SYMPHONY
YOUR SONG, YOUR STORY



Founded in 1910, the San Diego Symphony performs over 100 times per year in and around San Diego, with offerings that include classical repertoire, pops and holiday series. The orchestra also pursues a robust education program typical for an orchestra of its size that includes musician visits and ensemble performances at local schools, libraries, senior centers and hospice facilities, a young artists competition, family concerts and more.

In the summer of 2014, the San Diego Symphony premiered the results of an intensive two-year program that sought to build an even deeper relationship with San Diego's communities by involving audience as co-creators. *Your Story, Your Song* invited residents of historically underserved neighborhoods to submit their songs, stories and dance toward the creation of an orchestra composition. The submissions were reviewed and a handful were woven into the final work, producing a symphony that featured members of the community as co-composers.

A long lead-up to the summer premiere of the resulting composition was needed to gather contributor materials. San Diego Symphony ensembles visited ethnically diverse communities to perform, introduce the project and help record materials. More than 320 submissions were received through the process and shared through the organization's social media activities. Ultimately, 18 contributions were selected for the composition, representing a broad range of community groups, including performers from Native American dance troupes, Mariachi music ensembles, gospel choirs, Taiko drum groups and beyond.

The resulting work was much more than a patchwork of crowdsourced themes. Bill Conti, an Oscar- and Emmy-winning film composer and conductor of San Diego Symphony’s Principal Pops Series, connected the submissions and composed new music around them to create a cinematic experience integrating video and live performance, in which the community was just as much at the center of the work as was the orchestra.

The process of creating a work with the community was central to the project’s success. According to Director of Artistic Planning Tommy Phillips, other Symphony education efforts “can sometimes feel as though we just show up, present ourselves for you, and head home.” Those programs are and remain important to the San Diego Symphony and many groups like it, but with *Your Song, Your Story* “we brought and involved community members as co-creators in this final product. We weren’t just imposing ourselves on the community, but integrating ourselves within it.”[68]

The premiere performances were located in spaces that were both traditional and nontraditional. One performance took place at the orchestra’s home at the Jacobs Music Center, while another happened at the outdoor marina park that is the Symphony’s summer outpost. An additional concert took place at a local high school in a low-income neighborhood, and another in the auditorium of a Salvation Army community center. Each concert was filled to capacity. The concerts also featured block parties, with free food and additional entertainment — all of which were well attended by a diverse and eager audience.

Through this approach of reaching out to people in their communities and performing across a variety of spaces, Phillips says the organization “reached more diverse audiences than we ever anticipated.” In addition, onsite surveys revealed that many of the audience members at all four concerts had never before seen the group perform.

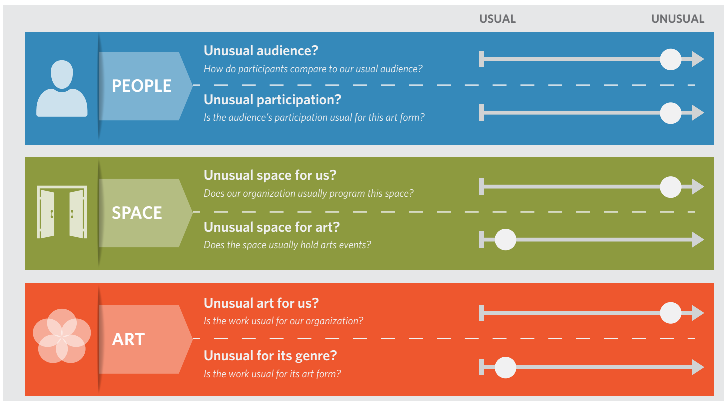
The two-year project was made possible by a $580,000 grant from The James Irvine Foundation. The process required extensive outreach, many ensemble trips to local neighborhoods and rigorous planning to coordinate its many moving parts. It would certainly be cheaper and easier to rehearse and perform a Beethoven symphony at a community venue, but the significant community involvement necessary to create *Your Song, Your Story* is what made the connections it generated so deep and meaningful. Phillips notes that the Symphony is in the process of synthesizing what they learned and figuring out how to apply it moving forward. The work, he says, “made us realize we can’t just contain ourselves to our four walls. We need to be part of our community as part of our mission, and doing that means going out to them, not necessarily always waiting for the community to come to us. Our job now is to figure out how to do that on a regular basis within our regular business model and throughout all our activities.”

LESSONS LEARNED

- In-depth community building in new places can be time consuming and expensive , but the rewards can be much greater than programs with less outreach
- A project can live in both usual and unusual venues
- Involve the community from the start to build deeper connections

Photo credit: Sibila Savage

OAKLAND MUSEUM OF CALIFORNIA
WE DREAM IN ART



Oakland has historically been known as one of the nation's most diverse cities. Twenty-six percent of the city's population identifies as White non-Hispanic, compared to 40 percent statewide and 63 percent nationally. The Black and African American identifying population makes up 28 percent of the city, compared to just 6 percent in San Francisco and across California. While recent gentrification has altered Oakland's makeup,[69] the city retains a significantly multicultural mix of residents.

As leaders of the Oakland Museum of California have learned, however, just being embedded in a diverse community does not guarantee a diverse audience. A 2013 report created by the Museum found that while "residents know of OMCA" and it is "geographically close, many feel it is a 'remote place'" meant for "'other types of people' (White affluent)" and that has "exhibits and programs tailored for that audience." Despite its closeness, many community members "have not visited in years, if ever," and communities closest to the museum were among the least served by it,[70] a result that Niva Flor, OMCA's Community Public Programs Developer, said was "particularly sobering, to say the least!"[71]

OMCA observed this through its *Neighborhood Identity Project*, which is part of an effort to understand better the needs and values of the neighborhoods near it. Through a series of focus groups and a digital ethnography study, in which respondents electronically documented special places in their neighborhood,

OMCA was able to define strategies to further community engagement that would "[break] down the barriers that identify the Museum as its building and not an integral member of the community at large."[72] The museum launched this project in service to its mission, which is "to inspire all Californians to create a more vibrant future for themselves and their communities." The project is part of their greater OMCA Connect initiative, which "brings together community members, professional artists, community-based organizations, and Museum staff to create participatory arts projects in community spaces and surrounding neighborhoods" and is supported by a grant from The James Irvine Foundation.

While some neighborhood residents perceived OMCA as distant, the study found that residents consider art and culture in general to be deeply important — and that the many murals that can be found across Oakland are a particularly well-regarded expression of this value. Mural art has historically been an important vehicle for protest, resistance and activism among Oaklanders, as well as a way of reinforcing and grounding the cultural heritage of many groups.

OMCA's 2013 We Dream in Art project has taken the museum beyond its walls and played into the local mural culture. Over the course of six months, OMCA attended community events and asked Oaklanders, "What is your dream for your community?" OMCA staff provided supplies and assistance as they collected responses in the form of crafted collage squares. These squares, along with photographs of community members, were turned into a large-scale mural that was installed outside the museum.

The project was created in close partnership with a variety of local organizations. "We realized that we needed to learn from and listen to partner organizations from the start — before any of the art making would even happen," says Flor. Those partnerships needed to be based in sincere and thoughtful engagement, as many community members had previously experienced "big institutions coming in with promises on which they never deliver — we needed to show them this was about their communities and not just our institutional goals."

OMCA has made deeper connections with its communities as a result of the program and has since pursued another mural like it, titled *Reflections of Healing*. The Museum has noticed some increased attendance from those communities it involved. That's a "happy outcome," reflects Flor, "but just one benefit of our showing locals that we have a heartfelt and sincere desire to be part of their communities." And it hasn't just changed how community members regard the institution, but it has "informed every facet of what we do." In this regard, Lori Fogarty, OMCA's Executive Director, hopes that OMCA "can serve as a model, that people could say that we are an example of a museum that *truly is connected to its community*."[73]

LESSONS LEARNED

- Outreach is necessary — simply being located near a desired audience does not guarantee participation
- Leveraging art to which an audience already has a connection can foster success
- Partnering with community organizations requires going to them, developing trust and determining their wants and needs

Conclusions

A variety of important lessons can be drawn from the study of organizations presented in this report:

1. **Plan the approach.** Just showing up isn't enough. Successful efforts in new spaces that connect with new participants are often the result of many months of planning and engagement.
2. **Share ownership.** Invite communities to fully participate by sharing ownership. Don't just go to new places to "give" art to the people there. Listen to that community and learn from it.
3. **Partner up.** Efforts of this type are enabled by a broad array of partnerships involving community groups and other local organizations, private businesses, donors and foundations.
4. **Prepare to invest and adapt.** This work is often labor-, time- and resource-intensive. Pursuing it may require rethinking programming, business models and funding.
5. **Aim for engagement.** This work is not about luring audiences back to a conventional venue. There may be some audience crossover, but project objectives should focus on engagement at the chosen locations, not hope for engagement somewhere else later on.
6. **Open new doors.** It's not an all or nothing game. New sites have been successfully integrated as part of an organization's total offering, the majority of which still occurs in less unusual places.

These lessons, and the many more that can be observed from other efforts like the ones detailed, can help organizations find new audiences in new places. Such an endeavor is likely worthwhile, as the trends prompting this activity will not go away anytime soon. While it is difficult to tell which trends are systemic and which are cyclical, it is safe to assume that arts organizations will not spontaneously gain relevance with a broader range of the public without programming in ways that reach them. The ways in which people want to participate and engage socially with or around art might shift in the long term, but it is not realistic for organizations to wait for a more favorable environment. Organizations must learn how to create work in new spaces in order to reach new people. As indicated by the case studies, the ways one can do this are many, and the results can be exhilarating.

This paper did not assess innovative work in conventional spaces. The arts cannot survive by abandoning their bricks and mortar. Nor should they; there is much good about these buildings. They too can be the sites of interactions that resonate with a wider audience. With effort, almost everything that is accomplished in an unusual space can be accomplished in a usual one. It is possible to create a socially engaging experience where the rules are relaxed and authority is shared. Many new facilities have been built specifically with this objective in mind — for example, a spate of recent theater construction dedicates a great deal of square footage to social spaces, and performance areas are made as flexible as possible.[74] As Alan Brown puts it in his report for Grantmakers in the Arts, "New types of facilities are needed to breathe life into the art forms."[75] Change is underway, but there is much more work to do.

No matter how much arts spaces transform, however, it will likely be impossible to change audiences so that they regularly attend performances there, so reaching out to people in places where they already are or want to be is critically important. The future is in finding the right mix of activity across the variety of places where it can occur. Ultimately, *where* should and will grow to be an ever more important variable in the presentation and production of art.

As *where* becomes a more important variable, organizations will need to rethink how this kind of work fits in to their mission and business model. Some of the benchmark organizations studied in this paper have already adapted work in new spaces into what they regularly do. Others are only beginning to understand how the lessons learned from the project they completed will affect their organization's future operations, including how it might change the kind of programming they no longer pursue as they develop programs in new spaces instead. For many groups, this kind of work presents new and distinct challenges — to fundraising, earning income, human resourcing, artistic planning, etc. — that must be confronted if the work is to be pursued and sustained.

In addition, the arts field must be equipped to track and monitor change in *where* art occurs. While there certainly is an increase in interest in the question of *where* art takes place, there is little quantitative data to verify just how much art is taking place in unusual settings and how large an impact that is having. This report, like others before it, exists in the realm of anecdote and theory.

Hopefully, further work will follow and eventually in-depth longitudinal studies will be possible. By continuing to share stories of innovation and by gathering data around the development of this effort field-wide, the arts can have an even greater role in the nation's shared public culture.

Interview Participants

The James Irvine Foundation and AEA Consulting thank the following individuals and their organizations for supporting this study as participants in the interview process.

Philip Auslander, Professor, School of Literature, Media, and Communications, Georgia Tech University

Jamie Bennett, Executive Director, ArtPlace America

Lear deBessonet, Director of Public Works, The Public Theater

Alan Brown, Principal, WolfBrown

Ted Decker, Cofounder, Phoenix Institute of Contemporary Art

Kathryn Dimond, Director, Community Relations, The Detroit Institute of Arts

Greg Esser, Board Vice President, Roosevelt Row Community District Corporate; Cofounder, Phoenix Institute of Contemporary Art

David Feiner, Producing Artistic Director and Cofounder, Albany Park Theater Project

Niva Flor, Public Programs Developer, Oakland Museum of California

Phil Ford, Associate Professor of Music, Indiana University

Ray Gastil, Principal, Gastilworks Planning & Design; Planning Director, City of Pittsburgh

Thelma Golden, Director and Chief Curator, Studio Museum in Harlem

D. Carroll Joynes, Senior Fellow and Cofounder, Cultural Policy Center, The University of Chicago

Jennifer Novak-Leonard, Visiting Associate and Lecturer, Cultural Policy Center, The University of Chicago

Doug McLennan, Founder and Editor, ArtsJournal

Anne Pasternak, President and Artistic Director, Creative Time

Tommy Phillips, Director of Artistic Planning, San Diego Symphony

Jon Rubin, Assistant Professor of Art, School of Art, Carnegie Mellon University

Dennis Scholl, Vice President / Arts, John S. and James L. Knight Foundation

Peter Shapiro, owner Brooklyn Bowl and Capitol Theater, co-owner and editor, Relix Magazine

Elizabeth Streb, Founder, Artistic Director, and Choreographer, STREB Extreme Action Company

Stanford Thompson, Founder and Artistic Director, Play On, Philly!

Randy Weiner, Producer, EMURSIVE; Co-owner, THE BOX

Sadie Yarrington, Outreach Associate, Heidi Duckler Dance Theatre

Stephanie Ybarra, Director of Special Artistic Projects, The Public Theater

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The James Irvine Foundation

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