ENACTING COMMUNITY THROUGH THE ARTS

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Dissertation Prepared for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS

December 2014

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This study is concerned with the roles and relationships between artists-in-residence, community audiences, and program coordinators/art educators as they engage together in community arts programs. This study takes place at Project Row Houses (PRH), a community arts organization located in Houston, Texas and focuses on the artist-in-residence program, which commissions a group of national and international artists for a 6-month period to create art installations in relation to the community and its African-American heritage.

This ethnographic case study is based on the activities and events surrounding the 2008 PRH exhibition, *Round 29, Thunderbolt Special: The Great Electric Show and Dance, after Sam Lightnin’ Hopkins* and employed qualitative data gathering methods of participant-observation, conducting semi-structured, open-ended, in-depth interviews, and through document collection, and contextual information. Observations were recorded through field notes, photographs, and video. Interviews were conducted with 3 artists-in-residence, 3 community audience members, and 3 program coordinators or staff members involved with the program, regarding their experiences at the site and experiences with each other.

My analysis presents the roles of artist, community audience, and program coordinator/art educator through three sections on cultural work. Within these sections I discuss topics related to the power of voice, situatedness, and creativity, as it relates to the artists and community audiences. For the role of program coordinator/art educator, I focus more closely on her role in the process of mediation. Topics of power, social dynamics, identity, and representation are also framed within these discussions.
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By

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to give heartfelt thanks to my advisor, Dr. Rina Kundu, for believing in me and that I had something important to say. Her continuous support and encouragement contributed to the completion of this dissertation. I wish to give thanks to committee members Dr. Nadine Kalin and Dr. Connie Newton for asking important and timely questions that enriched my thesis, and for rallying support for me, so I could complete the doctoral program. I am grateful to Dr. Christopher Adejumo for encouraging my interest in art education outside of the classroom. Our conversations helped me develop an understanding of community-based arts practices.

I would like to express my appreciation to everyone at Project Row Houses that made this research possible, especially Rick Lowe and Ashley Clemmer Hoffman. I would also like to thank Dr. Dawn Steineker and Dr. Amanda Boyaki for giving me strength and courage when I needed it most. Lastly, I would like to thank my other mother, retired educator, Jill Zank Keller, for the endless hours she spent taking care of me and my daughter so I could write.

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my first teacher, my mother, Indira Talusani and to my father, Pratap Reddy Talusani, an educator and life-long learner, who showed me the value of working with community. I would also like to dedicate this to my extraordinarily supportive and understanding husband, Tim Keller and my beautiful daughter, Leela. Bringing her into this world made my journey a bit more challenging, but all the more meaningful.

Lastly, I would like to dedicate this to the memory of artist and educator, Terry Adkins. I am grateful for the time we spent together during this project, for the adventures we had and the laughs we shared, but especially for the wisdom he imparted on me regarding all aspects of life, and the friendship that endured beyond it.
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CHAPTER 1

THE PROBLEM

1.1 Background of the Problem

1.1.1 My Introduction to Project Row House and Its Impact

Anyway, what I’m saying—or what I’m getting to is that we knew everybody in the neighborhood and everybody knew us. I call that a ‘sense of community.’ When you say, a ‘sense of community,’ I had that. So, when I came to Houston, I didn’t have that until when Row House was formed...By Row House being here, I feel I’m part of a community now. I have a community.

George Smith, artist and professor

In 2005, I approached Project Row Houses, a renowned community arts organization located in Houston’s Third Ward\(^1\), a historic African-American neighborhood, to discuss the possibility of conducting my doctoral research project there. At the time, I was still taking coursework, but I wanted to gather some background information about the organization and make contact with the director before formulating a proposal. I had been there before when I was in graduate school working on my master’s degree in art education—while at the University of Houston, just a couple miles from there. Back then, I was taking a summer course that included visits to various arts institutions and arts organizations in Houston; among them was Project Row Houses.

On this particular day in 2005, I remember walking onto the property made up of several identical white shotgun houses\(^2\), or row houses, and being a bit confused as to where the entrance

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\(^1\) In 1840, Houston was divided into four political areas, or “wards.” Each ward was governed by the city mayor and two aldermen from each ward. After slavery ended in Texas in 1865, ex-slaves were forced to live in segregated sectors of each ward (Houghton, Scardino, Blackburn & Howe, 1998).

\(^2\) Freemen began constructing shot-gun houses in and around Freedman’s Town, an area encompassing parts of Third and Fourth Ward. “The shotgun house usually has two narrow rooms linked front to back, with front and back porches and a gabled roof. They are considered major contributions to vernacular architecture, with their origins tracing to West Africa and Haiti” (Brunner, 2004).
was. Before, when I visited with my summer class, we met in front of the houses and were led into the installations. This time I was not meeting a class and was unsure how to navigate my way to a main entrance, much less, find the director.

Located in an inner-city neighborhood with several rows of shot-gun houses on nearby streets, it would be easy to drive by and miss the unassuming campus. On foot, however, I could see how they stood out. They were neat and sturdy, standing tall and proud, unlike some of their dilapidated and abandoned counterparts on streets nearby. It made me wonder what it was like during the heyday of this neighborhood when all of the houses were new and filled with families.

I followed the sidewalk in front of the houses and turned into an alley. I stumbled onto a courtyard, located behind the row houses, where a group of predominantly African-American children and adults were holding hands in a circle. As an end of the school year celebration, they were taking turns honoring the children’s accomplishments. The back porches of this row of houses faced the back porches of houses on the next street, forming a courtyard, a communal

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3 I later participated in the “Unity Circle” while teaching art in the after-school and summer youth programs.
backyard space, which included a community garden and playground. Houses on one side of the courtyard were used as art exhibition spaces, while houses on the opposite side of the courtyard were used as classrooms for after-school programs. When the circle broke up, the adults started to set up a barbecue for a picnic while the children played in the courtyard, wandered freely through previously completed art exhibitions, or worked with an artist to create a new art exhibition for one of the houses. Everywhere I looked, I saw layers of community, from the circle of praise to the communal courtyard, to children working together to transform a house into a work of art. It was beautiful to see how this organization embraced the concept of community, yet I could not help but feel like I was intruding on a private moment meant for a community I did not belong to. I began to wonder how these people came together to form a community? Were they all residents from the neighborhood? How did they define their community? How was art involved in pulling people into a sense of community?

The artist working with the children seem to stand out from the group. Her tall, lean frame, straight blonde hair, and fair skin were a stark contrast to the small African-American children surrounding her. Her blunt haircut, white blouse, and hipster jeans, gave her the appearance of a rock star. She seemed isolated from the other adults, standing near the front of a house with several children ready to make art. One group of children waited for her to trace the outlines of their bodies on large pieces of butcher paper. Another group worked busily, painting on their paper silhouettes with bright bold colors. Once they were dry, she would cut them out and hang them, together with the help of the children, in a house. She spoke with me briefly in a German accent, explaining she was a visiting artist participating in the artist-in-residence program. I wondered how she felt about being there. Did she feel like an outsider, like me, or did she identify with the community? Did the community accept her or did they see her as an
outsider? As part of the artist-in-residence program, she was given one house to create a collaborative art installation with the community. The installation had to address the issues and needs of the community. I wondered what process she went through to connect with the community and develop the project and what role program coordinators played in this process. I wondered how the community audience felt about the project. Did they find it meaningful? Did they feel it spoke to their identity? How about the artist---did she find it meaningful? Did it speak to her identity too? How do community, art educators, and artists come together to make programs and projects that are vibrant, meaningful, and viable?

1.1.2 History of Project Row House

Located in a historically African-American residential area, Project Row Houses uses its art education programs to honor the local history and culture of African-Americans. In addition, art education programs are also used to address the current needs of the local community. In their mission, Project Row Houses states, “The setting of a community of shotgun houses provides a unique environment for the creation of works that engage our visitors in the creative process, celebrate African-American history and culture, and address educational and community needs” (2007).4

Project Row Houses (PRH) is a neighborhood-based community art and cultural organization. Established in 1993, PRH spans several city blocks along Holman Street between the campuses of Texas Southern University and University of Houston. Inspired by the paintings of African-American artist Dr. John Biggers, who celebrated the social significance of the shotgun house community (Wardlaw, 1995) in his work, Rick Lowe, a local artist and founder of

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4 As of September 2010, the mission has been updated on the new web site (http://projectrowhouses.org/about/mission/).
PRH, led the effort to rescue and restore the historic shot-gun houses or row houses located on the PRH campus. Lowe was first attracted to the structures because they resembled the houses in Bigger’s paintings, but it was Bigger’s use of the row house as a symbol of the African-American experience that inspired Lowe to create a community arts organization with a mission to value and celebrate that experience (Finkelpearl, 2000). With the help of local artists, architects, and community members and additional support from local museums, arts organizations, and educational institutions, the PRH organization was able to restore twenty-two abandoned shotgun houses, now used for community projects, meetings, and housing for single mothers completing their education (Farbstein, Wener & Axelrod, 1998).

Although I am looking at PRH as an art educator, Lowe and others (Finkelpearl, 2013; Kester, 2012) explain PRH as an art project. In the following interview from fall 2008, George Smith—artist, professor, and one of the original founders of PRH talked about how PRH came to be and Lowe’s role in that process.

GS: When it was put together, it was an idea that came from 7 of us. I don’t want to mention names, but…if you want you can find out from Rick.

ST: Ok. I will ask him.

GS: But, Rick had the will power to pull it off—to make it work. But we all sat around…what we were talking about was trying to find a place where we could show our work in the community and…outside of the museum situation. I think that’s what it was. First of all, very few of us had showed in the museums anyway, other than certain times when they would show us when they would have an annual show or something like that, where they would probably get local people—that kind of thing. So, we were trying to figure out how we could expose ourselves—our work, I should say…and also expose it to the community. One of the ideas came up from somebody—it might have been Rick, was PRH.

George recognizes Rick Lowe as a leader and organizer, acting on the ideas generated by the group and envisioning a solution. Through an art as social practice lens, Lowe can be viewed as an artist, with PRH—an entity of social engagement, being his work of art. In fact, Lowe’s
understandings of PRH and social engagement draw from Joseph Beuys and his concept of social sculpture. Lowe (2004) talks with Finkerpearl (2013) about how Beuys and Biggers shaped the way he viewed PRH during the early stages of development:

As time went on in my researching possibilities in the area, I came across Joseph Beuys and his idea of social sculpture, which he defined as a way in which we shape and mold the world around us. This was interesting as a potential kind of work. And there was something about those houses that was hauntingly reminiscent of John Biggers’s paintings. Biggers was a senior African American artist in Houston who died three years ago. I started looking at Biggers’s paintings and trying to understand the houses from that point of view, until I realized there was a possibility there that went beyond a temporary act of guerrilla art. At that point I realized it was going to be something that was way beyond me as an individual, bigger even than the seven of us artists, so I started planting the seed and telling people what the possibilities were. (p. 135)

From a Beuys-ian lens, Lowe situates himself as artist/social sculptor and the social entity of PRH as his art. Within this ideological view, all participants that interact within the social entity of PRH contribute to the art process, whether they are artists, architects, volunteers, educators, or any other type of community audience member.

While this social perspective views PRH as a work of art, this school of thought is not without its critics. Claire Bishop (2004), a prolific author on the subject of relational aesthetics and participatory art would make the argument that PRH is not a work of art at all, rather a service project with an art component. Other critical conversations surrounding community-based art practices come from artists like Ernesto Pujol who is wary of community art that is meant to temporarily interrupt or even distract the consciousness, rather than make any real lasting social change (as cited in Finkelpearl, 2013). Some even question whether the actions of socially engaged art that involve the community are a form of busy-work for community audience members, not meant to bring about any real change, especially in government policy; or if the government is foregoing their responsibility to care for its citizens and instead is relying heavily on artists and arts organizations to improve the social conditions of depressed areas.
In an interview with Terry Adkins (2008), [artist and professor] he talks about the political function of his work at PRH and his desire to make city government act responsibly:

TA: There is an activist underpinning that drives the whole process…because…for
me, it has to do something in the real world too—sure, spiritual nourishment for
people who can get that from it, but at the same time it’s very practical and
functional, like we were speaking earlier about African and Indian art being
functional. This is functional too in that it has the purpose of—in this case,
shaming the city of Houston into the fact that there are no memorials to Lightnin’
Hopkins.

Terry’s goal was not to merely make the life of Lightnin’ Hopkins visible in Third Ward, he wanted to make visible the inactions of government and their lack of responsibility.

I acknowledge these various critiques surrounding socially engaged art. However, my focus is not on PRH as a work of art. My interest is the artist-in-residence program housed within PRH and my study is based on the activities of those who participate in the program—and in the actual dynamics of the space and people in their construction of meaning through art in relation to community. I also elaborate on the political gestures put forth by Terry Adkins in Chapter 4 in relation to his practice, as he was an artist that participated in my study of the artists-in-residence program.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

There are a variety of community arts programs involving everything from community theater to the visual arts. I am interested in programs similar to PRH, which involve artists-in-residence, or artists who are invited to construct collaborative works with community members. I am also interested in programs which are primarily involved with the visual arts. As part of my research, I read texts about community arts programs by Desai (2002) and Lippard (1997). In my readings, I noticed themes regarding tension between artists and communities. This tension
stemmed greatly from issues of identity, representation, and power.

In *The Lure of the Local: Senses of Place in a Multicentered Society*, Lippard (1997) discusses problems regarding artist identity in site-specific community projects. Though these programs are intended for the community audience, it can be problematic for visiting artists to construct work about an unfamiliar community. Lippard discusses the plight of visiting artists when she writes, “many artists are less successful at being conduits or catalysts for experiences they themselves may not have had, or be able to have, precisely because they are not local” (pp. 278-279). In addition, artists who are used to developing projects in isolation have to enter into a collaborative decision-making process with the community, relinquishing power and ownership over the project. This can lead to confusion regarding their identity in the art project and their role in the development of community art. Lippard writes, “Artists unaccustomed to consulting their audiences before, during, or after the artmaking process are often in for some unpleasant surprises, leading not to collaborative compromises but to craven concessions” (p. 272). I believe a large part of this problem is due to a lack of understanding of the artist’s social role in communities today, as well as expectations from communities themselves.

To better understand the confusion surrounding artist identity and issues of community representation, we must examine the historic significance of the artist in community. In ancient Greece, the role of artist contributing to community is often associated with the role of artisan or craftsman, and considered a laborer for the state. Efland (1990) discusses how artists applied their talents for the good of the community, when he writes, “those with lesser means [artists] contributed what talents and labor they could, with equal willingness, to the building of the monuments that adorned Acropolis” (p. 11). Just as other laborers, these artists did not receive name recognition, as it was their duty to share their wealth and resources---i.e. talent, skill, and
hard labor, with the state. For example, Becker (1995) points out no artists were named under the great buildings program led by Pericle’s in Athens (p. 20). Becker goes on to write, “The artist employed by the ancient democracy is a laborer, and what surrounds the object---its donor, its effects, its powers, its political meaning as established by the democratic assembly---matters far more than its maker” (p. 21). Today, however, much emphasis is placed on the artist as intellectual, whose worth is based on the artist’s professional identity and the amount of recognition the artist receives.

Somewhere between the two worlds of artist as artisan and artist as intellectual is the “socially-conscious” artist, or the artist-activist of today, who seeks out opportunities to work collaboratively with communities. Though the collaborative nature of these programs may attract a broader audience, collaboration is at the same time a sensitive issue with artists seeking recognition in the art world. This is because collaboration can also be viewed as compromise in the art world---compromising the artist’s professional identity and ownership of the work. The art world attitude is, “the role of artist is being co-opted or compromised; it is not the work of the artist, but of the community, thus it is not art” (Jacob, 1995, p. 54). This attitude reflects a relinquishing of power by artists and loss of control of projects by conceding to the community. With the presence of today’s socially-conscious artist, or artist-activist, these conflicting concepts of the artist in community are in need of reconciliation. Artists working in the community need to view themselves as valuable contributors to the community and they must be recognized and valued by the art world, as well as the communities they work with, for taking on this difficult and challenging role.

For communities, issues of power, representation, and identity are also sensitive issues, which can lead to the mistrust of community arts programs and the artists they employ. Both
Desai (2002) and Lippard (1997) are concerned with issues of power through visual representation, specifically the responsibility of the artist, or outsider to ethically represent another culture or community. Desai (2002) compares artists working in communities to ethnographers, discussing their role in the production of knowledge in relationship to other cultures. Desai believes a responsible artist should become a participant observer, enabling the community to share power over what is produced. This requires artists to view the community as experts, engaging them in the co-construction of knowledge, through all stages of the artistic process. Lippard (1997) agrees with this concept, advocating place-responsibility by artists through a “humanistic geography” approach, which seeks “to recover the geographical imagination… and to introduce moral discourse…” (p. 14). Applying a humanistic geography approach would require artists to employ methods, such as ethnography and participant-observation to attempt to answer questions that capture people’s subjective experiences regarding their physical and social environment (Knox & McCarthy, 2005). By geographical imagination, Lippard (1997) is referring to the cultural and psychological constructions of environment through histories, memories, and mythologies. For artists to help audiences recapture spaces through ethical representations of the subjective community experience, they must include the community audience in the process from the very beginning, “thus redefining the relationship between artist and audience, audience and the work of art” (Jacob, 1995, p. 54). Giving the community authority over the representation of their own identities is crucial in creating a positive and transformative experience for the audience.

For artists and community audiences, the negotiation of power and authority is a difficult balance. For artists, to give voice to the community means relinquishing ownership and giving up control over the outcome of the project. For communities, it is necessary to have authority
over community projects so they have control over how their identities are represented. If visiting artists are to represent communities responsibly and engage community audiences in meaningful ways, more information needs to be made available to artists regarding the process of community interaction. Also, because the meaning-making process between artists-in-residence and the community audience can enable ways of programming in relation to the community, this type of information would be highly beneficial to program coordinators or art educators. Thus, I have developed the following research questions to serve as a framework for my investigation:

- What does it look like when the needs of artists-in-residence and their community audiences intersect and diverge?
- What criteria are required to create community arts programs, which are meaningful to both artists-in-residence and their community audience?
- What does it look like when programs successfully engage both artists-in-residence and their community audiences?
- What factors contribute to programs that do not engage both the artists-in-residence and their community audience and what does this look like?

1.3 Theoretical Framework

This study is concerned with the roles and relationships between artists-in-residence, community audiences, and program coordinators/art educators as they engage together in community arts programs. More specifically, the interaction between artists-in-residence and community audiences as they contribute to cultural production and the role program coordinators/art educators play as mediators. In order to establish a context for the current practice of bringing these parties together, I have researched texts regarding the history and evolution of artists working with community, as well as the history of community arts programs. I am also researching theories and movements, such as, community cultural development theory, Neighborhood Arts Movement, and community-based art education, which have influenced
community arts practices today. A more thorough discussion of the theoretical and historical contexts surrounding these topics is presented in Chapter 2. In the following section, I provide a brief overview of texts and authors, which have informed my theoretical framework. In addition, I explore and define the concepts of community and community-based art for the purpose of this study.

1.4 Literature Review

Much of the literature surrounding the practice of community arts within the field of art education is written in the context of the K-12 classroom. Constructing a framework, therefore, requires weaving philosophies and histories from various disciplines and adapting theoretical concepts to further explore the roles of community, artists, and program coordinators/art educators.

To get a better idea of how artists are working in the community, I am drawing from such books as *The Lure of the Local: Senses of Place in a Multicentered Society* (Lippard, 1997) and *Dialogues in Public Art* (Finkelpearl, 2000) and *What We Made* (Finkelpearl, 2013). These books provide a historical context for artists working in the community to create site-specific public art. Both authors provide insight into social and political issues surrounding art in the community.

The articles “Postscript to a Past: Notes Toward a History of Community Arts” (Goldbard, 1993) and “Converging Streams: The Contemporary Arts and Sustainable Community Movements” (Shifferd & Lagerroos, 2006) provide historical information on community arts and neighborhood arts movements, while the article “Grass ROOTS Vanguard” (Adams & Goldbard, 2002a) goes further discussing the role of the neighborhood artist, also
known as a neighborhood animator⁵. Regarding the artist’s experience, the articles “Practicing in Public” (Jacob, 2003) and “The Artist as Educator: Challenges in Museum-Based Residencies” (Pujol, 2001) discuss the role of artists-in-residence from the artist’s perspective.

The book *Creative Community: The Art of Cultural Development* (Adams & Goldbard, 2005) and articles “An Introduction to Community Art and Activism” (Cohen-Cruz, 2002) and “Community, Culture and Globalization” (Adams & Goldbard, 2002b) discuss community cultural development theory, which was influenced by the work of Brazilian liberation theorists Paulo Freire and Franz Boal. In their article, Adams and Goldbard (2005) define community cultural development as “the work of artist-organizers [community artists] who collaborate with others to express identity, concerns and aspirations through the arts…while building cultural capacity and contributing to social change” (p. 107).

The article “The Ethnographic Move in Contemporary Art” (Desai, 2002) addresses a shift in contemporary art, where artists are using ethnography as an integral component to their practice, as is the case with artists-in-residence creating site-specific works of art in relation to the community and its identity. Desai (2002) provides further insight into issues of power through visual representation, specifically the responsibility of artists/outsider to ethically represent another culture, similar to an ethnographer’s text on another culture.

Regarding the co-construction of community art, I am pulling from the writings of Desai (2002) and Becker (2002). In the article “Public Art’s Cultural Revolution,” Becker (2002) discusses public art as a dialogue between the artist and the public, which combines the artist’s vision and community’s values with a common goal in mind. Desai (2002) agrees with this

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⁵ Animator comes from the French word *animateur*, a term commonly used in the 1970s in to describe community artists in Francophone countries (Adams & Goldbard, 2005, p. 4).
notion and believes artists should view community members as experts and active co-constructors of projects.

To understand the nature of how art educators view community-based art education, I am using “What is Community Based Art Education?” (Ulbricht, 2005) and “Community-Based Art” (Adejumo, 2000). In the first article, Ulbricht describes multiple forms of community-based art education in an attempt to define the theory. In the second article, Adejumo defines community-based art and discusses the integration of community-based art and community-based art practices into school curriculum, highlighting the potential impact it can have on students’ lives and the learning process.

Before I can begin to discuss the history and theories surrounding community arts practice, I feel that it is necessary to explore my beliefs of community and define the concept as intended for this study.
CHAPTER 2
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Defining Community

The term “community” is frequently applied by museums and art organizations. Evidence of its usage can be clearly found within the mission statements of institutions. But because each institution is unique, varying in function, purpose, collection, size, etc…, so is the interpretation of the term. The problem of defining the concept of community is not specific to the field of museum and art education. This burden has long been shared by the disciplines of sociology, anthropology, and education, resulting in numerous studies and the development of the specialized field of “community studies.” In one study, at least ninety-four separate uses of the term “community” were identified within the field of sociology alone (Hillery, 1955). Among them, sociologists varied on their definitions of units of analysis, ranging from population, groups, and families, as well as how communities are bound. Examples of this include concepts regarding shared geographic place, totality of attitudes, the use of shared symbols and common lifestyle. The only common thread that sociologists could agree upon was that communities were made up of people. Among the ninety-four definitions, most included elements regarding area, common ties, and social interaction.

One of the earliest attempts by American sociologists to define community came out of the sociology department at the University of Chicago, which later became famous for its contributions to the development of urban studies. American sociologist and professor, Robert Park (1936) contended that community embodied three essential characteristics---that it is “(a) a population territorially organized; (b) more or less completely rooted in the soil it occupies; (c) with its individual units living in a relationship of mutual interdependence” (p. 3).
Although additional research suggests a variety of specific criteria regarding the definition of community, their findings prove to be equally vague, encompassing any number of concepts. For example, sociologists Butterworth and Weir (1970) defined community as containing some or all of the following criteria: (a) territorial area, (b) complex of institutions within an area, and (c) sense of belonging.

Sociologists, Minar and Greer (1969) took a different approach to community, defining it in terms of social life, excluding geographic or territorial area as criteria. They wrote, “The roots of human community lie in the brute facts of social life organization” (p. xi). Minar and Greer (1969) go on to discuss the organization of a human aggregate as requiring (a) shared perspectives, (b) shared culture, and (c) a sense of interdependence and loyalty. They did, however, feel geography played a major role in the formation of social life, therefore establishing an inherent relationship between geography and community.

This concept of community agrees with one proposed by fellow sociologist Warren (1966). On the role of how geography plays in community formation, he wrote, “a clustering of people for residence and sustenance involves a relationship of social interaction within a geographic location” (as cited in Lee & Newby, 1983); the idea being that most “social systems” are geographic and their existence relies on the mere nature of close physical proximity, as in local living, work situations, or educational institutions.

Technological advances in mass communication, however, have challenged the role of geography in defining or forming communities. Critics, such as McLuhan and Weber, believed the ever increasing availability of communication tools to middle class society would lead to communities of interest, rather than communities of place (as cited in Lee & Newby, 1983). Though at the time, they were referring to tools such as telephones, radio, and television---on-
line communication, as well as satellite and other mobile technologies of today prove consistent with this theory.

Though this definition uses technological advancement to broaden the concept of community, it also brings up significant questions regarding ties---or the lack thereof, between people who do live within close proximity. McLuhan and Weber’s argument that communities of interest are increasingly replacing communities of place, forces us to consider the fact that people who live within a confined geographic place, such as a neighborhood or street, may never communicate or have little to do with one another. “It is the nature of relationships between people and the social networks of which they are a part that is often seen as one of the more significant aspects of community” (as cited in Lee & Newby, 1983, p. 57).

If this is true, then activity becomes essential to the formation of community. Through social networks and organizations, such as neighborhood associations, church, or community centers, communities are formed through active participation in events and functions. This concept blurs the geographic boundaries regarding community membership, while at the same time points to specific local sites for social interaction. This approach to community, found in systems theory, is called the interactionist approach (Lyon, 1989). My beliefs of community are based on the interactionist approach, which binds community through activities relating to locality. This concept fits well with my study because I view community membership as being based on participation in events and programs that take place at PRH, regardless of where these community members actually live. This means community members include staff, local and visiting artists, and community audiences who reside in various locations inside and outside of Third Ward. What is most important is that they are bound through participation and social interaction at PRH.
2.1.1 Introduction to Community-Based Art Projects

It is a difficult task to find a single agreed upon definition for the term “community arts program.” In its most generic form, it is used as an umbrella to cover any number of programs that involve arts in the community. I am interested in community arts programs based in the practice of “community arts.” To distinguish these types of programs from the larger category of “community arts programs,” I prefer to use the label “community arts.”

Artists often play a role in programs, though their physical presence is not required. The role of the artist is to interact with the community through their art practice. I imagine artist interaction as a participation spectrum. On one end of the spectrum, the artist works alone in the process of making art. Participation requires little to no interaction with communities, as in artist as presenter and community as audience. On the other end of the spectrum is a deep level of artist-community interaction, where the process of constructing art is a collaboration, or co-construction of the artist and the community and the content is community-centered. This level of interaction is consistent with Arlene Goldbard’s (1993) description of community arts practice.

In her definition, Goldbard (1993) points out two essential qualities of community arts. The first “is that community arts practice is based on the belief that cultural meaning, expression and creativity reside within a community, that the community artist's task is to assist people in freeing their imaginations and giving form to their creativity” (¶ 5). The second “is that collaboration between artists and others is central and necessary to the practice of community arts” (¶ 6). To further distinguish this approach---where community is central to the art-making process---from broader notions of community art, this approach is also referred to as community-based and the projects themselves as community-based art projects.
I acknowledge that there is a long history of community arts programs. The broad nature of the subject conjures up a wide variety of programs involving arts and communities. The content varies from studio-centered classes to cultural festivals, functioning in a vast number of ways, depending on an organization’s mission and the needs of their community. I am interested in community-based, “community arts” programs with a social agenda. Though I believe all interactions with art result in some form of social transformation---which is quite possible through a pottery class at a community center, I am not interested in programs that do not have a strong social agenda. I am interested in programs such as PRH that combine community-based art, art education, and social work to enable positive social changes in the communities they serve.

In the last decade, an effort to consolidate concepts of community-based art and art education has led to some discussion on the discourse of community-based art education (CBAE). There is still a great deal of confusion surrounding the concept of CBAE (Ulbricht, 2005). Much of the confusion is related to the problem of understanding what it looks like and how it should function, especially in relation to the school curriculum. Some view CBAE as starting in the classroom and extending into the community, while others view CBAE as starting in the community and extending into the classroom. A more progressive perspective of pedagogy values various sites of knowledge production beyond the classroom, challenging the necessity for direct involvement with schools for legitimacy (Giroux, 1995, p.8). This perspective eliminates the need to include the classroom as an essential component of CBAE, valuing community art programs as sites of knowledge production in and of themselves.
2.1.2 Community Cultural Development Theory

The concepts of community cultural development (CCD) theory are rooted in the philosophies of social reconstruction and critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970; Giroux, 1995).

Adams and Goldbard (2002b) describe community cultural development as the “work of artist-organizers (community artists) who collaborate with others to express identity, concerns and aspirations through the arts and communication media, while building cultural capacity and contributing to social change” (p. 8). This form of arts activism focuses on cultural production through the construction, preservation, and expression of culture, made possible through community arts projects. The definition of “community” in community cultural development (CCD) theory is left for the communities themselves to decide. However bound—through interest, location, ethnicity, etc… the only set requirement is that CCD projects must serve the common interests of the group. Through this approach, CCD practice empowers marginalized communities by giving them a voice and bringing awareness to issues regarding their community.

CCD theory aligns closely to my beliefs regarding community art, and is therefore central to the theoretical framework of this investigation. A more thorough discussion of CCD theory and its predating philosophical streams of social reconstruction and critical pedagogy are presented in Chapter 2.

2.2 What is an Artist in the Community?

I see my work as a series of beckoning gestures that perpetually have more to do—that address about...more than just a visual encounter with them. Hopefully they can be agents for change in the communities where they occur. I’ve done one recent one on Bessie Smith, where the result is that now, there are going to be walking tours in Philadelphia, that addresses places where she used to live, that were not there before. There
is an activist underpinning that drives the whole process...because...for me, it has to do something in the real world too—sure, spiritual nourishment for people who can get that from it, but at the same time it’s very practical and functional, like we were speaking earlier about African and Indian art being functional. This is functional too in that it has the purpose of—in this case, shaming the city of Houston into the fact that there are no memorials to Lightnin’ Hopkins.

Terry Adkins, artist and professor

This question is important to my study because an integral portion of my data comes from documenting the activities of and interviewing artists-in-residence at PRH, my research site. I acknowledge that there is long history of the artist working in society, but I argue that the role of the artist in society is constantly evolving and we are in need of newer definitions. I believe that there are more opportunities today for artists to become active in the community, because arts programs are increasingly becoming a popular vehicle to address societal issues and promote social change. I also believe that from these opportunities to participate in socially-minded community arts programs, the socially-conscious artist is born. By socially-conscious artist, I refer to the artist who is motivated to connect and contribute to society as a cultural worker. Giroux (1995) discusses the role of cultural workers as an “opportunity to serve as border intellectuals who engage in a productive dialogue across different sites of cultural production. Border intellectuals function in the space between ‘high’ and popular culture; between the institution and the street; between the public and private”(p. 5). As cultural workers and border intellectuals, artists serve as educators, engaging the public in critical dialogue necessary for transformation. This type of involvement raises many questions regarding what the responsibility of the artist is to society today.

2.3 What is the Role of Art Educator

Throughout this project, there has been much discussion on the participation of artists and
community audiences---but how do art educators fit into this model of community art programming? Art educators serve community art programs under a variety of titles, depending on the particular organization and their specific role. Some of the roles they assume are program designer, artist-community liaison, and events coordinator. They are commonly referred to as “directors” or “coordinators” of “art education,” “education programs,” “community programs,” etc… Sometimes these positions are not filled by degreed art educators at all; rather artists, art historians, or other educators assume the role of a community arts program coordinator. For the purpose of this project, I refer to the position as “program coordinator.” Regardless of their background training, I believe all community art program coordinators are art educators. First of all, the community institutions themselves are sites of knowledge production, through public programs and the construction of art works (Giroux, 1995). Secondly, program coordinators are in charge of those programs---programs that bring artists-in-residence and members of the community audience together for collaborative projects, as well as deliver education to the community at large. Therefore, when I speak of art educators, I am referring to the lot of us who assume this role.

2.4 Art Educator as Cultural Worker/Border Intellectual

According to Henry A. Giroux (1995), a cultural worker is a person working in the public sphere in sites of cultural production, with the purpose of social welfare. As mentioned earlier, this includes community artists, but it also includes art educators who work in community art programming and those who work in public schools. Giroux opens up the possibility of cultural workers as border intellectuals. Similar to artists, art educators “function in the space between ‘high’ and popular culture; between the institution and the street; between the public and private”
(p. 5), but as educators, they also function between school and the broader context of education. As border intellectuals, art educators can engage in dialogue, issues on a local community level to reveal how they are situated within the broader context of humanistic values and social justice. Giroux writes, “As public intellectuals, we must define ourselves not merely as marginal, avant-garde figures, professionals, or academics acting alone, but as critical citizens whose collective knowledge and actions presuppose specific visions of public life, community, and moral accountability” (p.13).

2.5 Purpose of the Study

As stated earlier, I believe the meaning-making process between artists-in-residence and the community audience can enable ways of programming in relation to the community. I feel this study can aid program coordinators to design programs that are meaningful to both artists-in-residence and the community audience. As part of my data gathering process, I felt it was important to research the process program coordinators go through in order to select artists-in-residence for their programs. Lippard (1997) gives examples of artists working in communities, but points out the lack of documentation regarding the artist’s process in creating collaborative community art projects. This notion led me to document the process in which artists-in-residence connect and collaborate with the community to develop site-specific work regarding community interests. Lastly, I felt it was important to gather information regarding the community audience experience of collaborating with visiting artists-in-residence.

I chose PRH, a community arts organization located in Houston, Texas, because it is an ideal site to conduct my research. It has been the recipient of numerous grants and awards and a report from the Bruner Foundation describes PRH as a “national model which is being adapted to
other inner-city locations” and recognizes its “combined use of local historic structures, art forms growing out of community cultural identity, and social programs responsive to local community needs” (Farbstein, Wener & Axelrod, 1998, p. 25).

The most well-known program at PRH is the artist-in-residency program, which commissions seven national and international artists for a 6-month period to create art installations in relation to the community and its African-American heritage. Each artist is given one shotgun house to transform during their residency.

Artists are also asked to schedule workshops and events where they interact with local residents. Documenting this art program provided me the opportunity to investigate the process artists go through to create community-based projects. Researching this program also allowed me to gather information on community interaction from both, artist and community perspectives.
I was able to identify criteria that contributed to positive experiences for both parties, as well as identify factors which contributed to poor experiences. From this information, I was able to study the intersections of artist and community and examine what this meaning-making process looks like. While I was there, I was also able to gather and document data about the design of the program, as well as learn more about what program coordinators are doing to encourage interaction between artists and communities. I believe this information is valuable to program coordinators, so they may reflect on their own process, enabling them to design programs that are mutually beneficial to visiting artists and the communities they serve.

2.6 Methodology

The scope of this ethnographic case study is based on the activities and events surrounding the Round 29 exhibition at PRH. This study employed qualitative data gathering methods of participant-observation, conducting semi-structured, open-ended, in-depth interviews (See appendix A, B, and C) and through document collection, and contextual information. Observations were recorded through field notes, photographs, and video. Interviews were conducted with artists-in-residence, community audience members, and program coordinators or staff members involved with the program, regarding their experiences at the site and experiences with each other. Documents gathered for this study include historic and current data about the community, the institution, and past and present programs. Documents also include pamphlets, programs, and exhibition catalogues of the work of artists-in-residence participating in this study. E-mail communication between the artists, the program coordinator and staff members, and myself, were also collected for this study. Please refer to Chapter 3 for a detailed explanation and summary of methods for data collection and data analysis employed in this study.
2.7 Significance of Study

Interest in the study of community arts programs in the field of art education is growing rapidly. In the past, this need was fulfilled through courses primarily offered in the field of social work. However, evidence in the recent rise in programs and courses offered through art education departments across the country prove that there is a real demand for education and training in the study of community arts within the field of art education (Burnham, 2006; Garneau, 2005; Hager, 2006; Mangahas, 2006; Zuccarini, 2006). In addition to art education and art history students, studio artists are now seeking out education and training through courses and programs offered in the field of community arts to gain access to employment as artists-in-residence in community arts organizations. I believe my proposed study will further the field of art education because it addresses issues related to the practice of program coordinators and artists, a timely and relevant topic of discussion in the education of community arts educators.

Lippard (1997) gives examples of artists working in communities, but points out the lack of documentation regarding the artist’s process in creating collaborative community art projects. This study documents the process in which artists-in-residence connect and collaborate with the community to develop site-specific work regarding community interests. Information regarding data gathering techniques employed by artists in the field provide valuable insight into the artistic process, contributing to much needed research.

As stated earlier, I believe the meaning-making process between artists-in-residence and the community audience can enable ways of programming in relation to the community. Though the findings of this study cannot be directly applied to other sites, it will help program coordinators and artists reflect on their current practice of working with the community, so they may create better experiences for community audiences. I feel this study can also aid program
coordinators to design programs that facilitate positive interactions between artists-in-residence and community audiences, which result in better experiences for both parties.
3.1 Community Arts: A Historical Framework

The purpose of this section is to describe historic events that have influenced (a) community arts programs—specifically, programs that combine community-based art, art education, and social work and (b) the development of CBAE in the U.S; and discuss the benefits of such programs for society at large. I could go as far back as ancient Greece and Pericles’s great buildings program⁶ or talk about the ancient Egyptian monuments built under Amenhotep’s program⁷, but I feel those events are too far removed from the topic at hand. Let us just assume that a long and vast history of art in society from around the world has influenced the development of community art programs of the twentieth century in the U.S., an appropriate starting point for this discussion.

3.2 U.S. Social Programs of the Early Twentieth Century

3.2.1 Social Role of Artists

At the turn of the century, “social photography,” began to gain the recognition of social welfare agencies as a way to make visible the living and working conditions of working-class Americans. Social photography, a type of social documentation “combines lucid pictorial organization with an often passionate commitment to humanistic values—-to ideals of dignity, the right to decent conditions of living and work, to truthfulness” (Rosenblum, 1984, p. 341). Social

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⁶ “Instituted to relieve unemployment, keep the residents happily engaged in productive work, and make Athens a cultural capital…Buildings were planned cooperatively by state officials, architects, sculptors, and…an interested critical public” (Runes & Schrickel, 1946, p. 729).

⁷ An Egyptian Pharaoh, Amenhotep II’s building program resulted in the construction of several temples and monuments dating back to c.1400 BC (Gardiner, 1964).
documentary, such as social photography, was viewed as an art form, rather than a mere visual record captured by anyone who could work a camera. American photography historian Beaumont Newhall (1938) described this distinction, when he wrote, “documentary images involve imagination and art in that they imbue fact with feeling” (as cited in Rosenblum, 1984, p. 341). A well-known example of social photography is Lewis W. Hine’s photos depicting child labor. As part of a campaign to reform child labor laws, the National Child Labor Committee hired Hine to document the poor working conditions of children throughout the nation. Hine’s most popular images—the portrait of a 10-year old girl in a textile factory and photographs of young coal mining boys, proved social documentary efforts, such as social photography, to be a powerful force in not only drawing attention to social issues, but also affecting changes in policy regarding the social conditions of American society.

Though the 1930s were scarred with devastation and poverty from the Great Depression, it was a significant time in the development of arts programs under Roosevelt’s New Deal cultural programs. Recognizing the impact of social documentary, artists, such as Lewis Hine and Dorothy Lange, were hired to document the condition of the nation through photography under the Historical Section of the Resettlement Administration (RA) and its successor the Farm Security Administration (FSA). The Works Progressive Administration (WPA), also part of the New Deal, created arts programs with a social agenda to benefit both artists and communities. Through the WPA arts programs, the Roosevelt administration was able to give jobs to thousands of unemployed artists. These artists were hired to document American life, as well as monitor the effects of programs offered through the New Deal.

While social documentary photography was used heavily to document migrant farmers and families throughout rural communities, artists were also hired to create Regionalist murals to
depict the beauty of urban communal life in efforts to raise morale and civic pride (Stewart, 1985). These site-specific Regionalist art works are evident in post office murals, sought to reflect the life of communities on a locally-specific level. These programs are significant to the history of community arts programs because they placed artists in a socially positive role.

3.2.2 Community Arts Education

Under the New Deal, several regional art centers were established, while existing ones were transformed, with a goal to make the arts accessible to all members of society. The concept of making the arts accessible included the consideration of physical, emotional, and intellectual accessibility, necessary in cultivating an appreciation of the arts. Art centers were encouraged to offer art-making workshops and present local artist exhibitions, as well as introduce art through traveling exhibitions. Support for this brand of community art education was built on the belief that through the exposure of art and participation in art activity, art would become a meaningful part of daily life and result in an appreciation of art’s value to society. The development of community art centers through the New Deal once again employed artists in a social role as artist-activists, art teachers, and mentors.

3.2.3 Harlem Community Art Center

One of the most significant programs to employ artists under the New Deal was New York City’s Harlem Community Art Center (HCAC). It was one of the first government programs to provide financial support for African American artists, who in turn delivered arts programs and exhibitions to African American audiences in Harlem. It was this environment that made the Harlem Renaissance possible, where a prolific body of work documenting the African
American experience was produced. Among those to come out of the HCAC, as either employed artists or workshop attendees included Jacob Lawrence, Henry Bannarn, Charles Alston, and Romare Bearden.

The HCAC was a major milestone for not only African Americans, but also artists and activists because it exemplified arts advocacy and activism at the grassroots level. At a time when racist legislation was permissible by government agencies, the government included the plight of African American artists and community members in their goals for society at large. Through their programs, “children and adults encountered the works of black artists, often for the first time” (De Hart Mathews, 1975, p. 325). The content reflected and celebrated African American life that resonated with the Harlem audience.

Even more significant were the grass roots efforts that originated within Harlem prior to its adoption by the WPA. Records of HCAC’s humble beginnings are found in the writings of poet and visual artist, Gwendolyn Bennett. In 1935, Bennett wrote an article about the activities of the Harlem Art Committee (HAC), a grass roots organization whose goal was to establish support for a community art center in Harlem. As part of their effort to gain support, the HAC, held a large art exhibition, whose venue brought public attention to growing artist community in Harlem and led to the formation of the Harlem Artists’ Guild (HAG).

Determined to bring an art center to Harlem, HAG members “aggressively lobbied government officials” to be included as a WPA Federal Art Project, “and their efforts are credited for the Federal Art Project’s employment of 125 African American visual artists in New York” (Carlton-Smith, 2000, p.4). It was the persistence and commitment of artists and community members that led to the establishment of the HCAC in 1935. When the HCAC opened, Bennett joined on as director of the organization. As director, she documented HCAC
activities and program assessments, wrote articles to promote the work of the organization, and created literature for the public audience.

3.2.4 Owatonna Art Education Project

During the Great Depression, morale was down with our nation’s children growing up in impoverished communities. While the nation was under dire reparation, the Owatonna Art Education Project (OAEP), sponsored by the Andrew Carnegie Foundation in 1933, was conceived. This privately funded project was deemed a success by their philanthropic sponsors, who reported evidence of social and behavioral changes within the Owatonna, Minnesota community (Efland, 1990).

The foundations efforts were based on the belief that societal problems could be solved through philanthropic efforts and viewed schools as hubs for initiating such social reform (Freedman, 1989). Coinciding with Progressive Movement ideology, the OAEP attempted to restructure curriculum around life and society with art education as its vehicle. As a result, art was integrated across school disciplines as an instrument to improve everyday life at school and in the community. Theoretically, the program was to instill a positive attitude towards general education and the public school system in Owatonna, Minnesota through the delivery of art education curriculum and programs.

Edwin Ziegfeld (1944) began developing the OAEP after hearing a speech given by Melvin Haggerty in 1931 to a group of art teachers in Minneapolis. In Haggerty’s speech, he questioned how the arts could make a community’s daily life more meaningful. Inspired by Haggerty’s words, Ziegfeld designed the OAEP as a three-phase study that would first, determine the role of arts in the community, then modify the curriculum based on those findings,
and conclude with a discussion of the outcomes and possibilities of art in the daily life of the community (Efland, 1990, p. 207).

Ziegfeld and his staff supervised classroom teachers, showing them how to integrate art into their curriculum (Efland 1990, p. 208). The teachers were shown how art could be used to teach other disciplines and how it could also be used in daily life. Through subjects such as art in commerce, industry, printing, recreation, basic design principles, and color, students learned creative problem-solving skills and practical knowledge that they could apply in “real life” within their community.

The amazing thing about this project was that there were documented behavioral changes that took place as a consequence of this program. Evidence of these changes included requests for more art classes and art lectures with guest speakers. The town’s library also showed a marked increase in art books that were checked out. Continuation of the program was supported by Owatonna’s public schools, even after funding by the Carnegie Corporation was relinquished (Efland 1990, p. 208). This project was a milestone in that it produced research that proved the positive effects of community art programs.

3.2.5 Community Arts Decline During WWII

By the 1940s, the government shifted its focus from domestic policy to foreign policy and the war effort. The absence of Americans, who had gone off to war, left a considerable number of jobs available to the unemployed. Among those that benefited were women and minorities. With unemployment no longer an issue and a growing sense of a united war effort, the social state of American society was no longer a major concern. The government viewed the work of artists as instruments of propaganda, promoting societal changes that supported a war-
time government. Evidence can be seen in poster campaigns, which urged Americans to invest in war bonds or the famous “Rosie the Riveter” poster, used to attract women into the workforce. The community art programs once supported by Roosevelt’s administration were no longer a priority and “the WPA was ended by a presidential proclamation in 1942, the victim of censorship, the Red Scare and war preparations” (Goldbard, 1993, ¶ 19).

3.2.6 Public Art Programs

In 1959, the “percent for art” movement sought to improve the quality of urban life by introducing works of art into urban centers that were overwrought with concrete and steel structures. At the time, modern architecture began filling the city with clusters of tall buildings and skyscrapers, which blocked much of the sunlight and left little room for breathing space. First passed in Philadelphia, the “Aesthetic Ornamentation of City Structures law,” required 1% of construction costs of public buildings to be set aside in a separate “art allocation” budget to commission public art works (Finkelpearl, 2000, p.20).

In 1967, the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) created the Art in Public Places Program, whose purpose was to “give the public access to the best art of our time outside of museum walls” (as cited in Lacy, 1995a, p.22). Filled with elitist undertones, this program prescribed “high art” for the citizens in the form of large—often steel, sculptures in open plazas that had little or no connection to the community.

Coinciding with the civil rights movement, “advocacy planning” was introduced in the 1960s. This form of planning addressed community issues and required real estate developers and speculators to consider the needs of low-income community residents on or around urban development sites. Artists were asked to collaborate with architects to identify community needs
and devise creative solutions that are sensitive to the existing community (Finkelpearl, 2000, p. 20-21). Future generations of urban planners who followed this philosophy became the “equity planners” of the 1970s. Equity planners were interested in community redevelopment, which meant repairing the damage of past urban renewal projects through the creation, as well as preservation of community spaces.

Equity planners often hired artists to work alongside architects on projects. Because of the negative attitudes towards urban renewal projects, which destroyed neighborhoods and historic buildings in favor of modern structures, architects were viewed as “destroyers,” while artists, on the other hand, were perceived as “salvagers” of the community (Krumholtz & Clavel, 1994). Artists worked as anthropologists, taking to the streets to gather information about the community from the community. They sought to create spaces that reflected the community’s needs, as well as its histories, mythologies, and identities.

3.3 Community-Based Art Education (CBAE)

Community-based art education (CBAE) is an approach to art education, which extends beyond the classroom into the experiences of everyday life. What distinguishes CBAE from other approaches to art education is its emphasis on the utilization of community-based art and community-based art resources from the immediate local environment. Adejumo (2000) describes community-based art as “works of art produced by people living within the same locality, and defined by common interests such as shared concerns, cultural heritage, traditions, and language patterns” and “consists of a wide variety of aesthetic objects, such as sculptures, murals, architecture, and various crafts” (¶5). By starting with the local—the familiar, students become motivated to discuss art in relation to their own lives.
CBAE curriculum is as individual as each community because it is student-centered and community-specific. London (1994) writes:

The community is the web of life that inextricably embraces, defines, and empowers children and adults alike. Using the school as its base of operations, community-based art education forays out into the community for its motivations and its subject matter. The community is the arena for the creative expression of personal encounters with one’s environment, one’s web of life. (p. 4)

By expanding the notion of education to include and value experiences in the environment outside of the classroom, CBAE blurs the boundaries of where education takes place, connecting art education to home, neighborhood, and community. Instead of learning about art from text books and images of art work students may never encounter, they are able to give first-hand accounts of how art has served a purpose in their community and discuss how art creates meaning in daily life.

CBAE teaches art educators to utilize what is already there---what is accessible. Adejumo (2000) believes educators often overlook community-based art experiences as opportunities for learning enrichment and “artistic resources within the community are often completely neglected or underutilized” (¶ 4). The use of such resources supports community art organizations and local artists, and introduces students to resources available in their own area. In addition, it is also a solution for acquiring primary artistic resources, a common problem for art educators.

There are several ways art educators can incorporate CBAE into the curriculum. This may include both, bringing community members into the classroom, as well as and taking the classroom out into the community. For example, artists from the community may be invited to speak to a class about how they develop art projects and share their knowledge of studio practice. Community members, including parents, relatives, or neighbors, may come in as guest speakers to explain the cultural and historical significance of a community-based art project.
Art educators may take their students on fieldtrips to view, or even participate in community-based art projects or local festivals. Bailey and Desai (2005) suggest community-based projects can “serve as both material and model for classroom curricula” (p. 41). For example, as material, the content of an art project can be used as an opportunity for rich dialogue about social, political, and/or historical issues that affect the community. Students and teachers can also utilize community-based art projects as models for their own investigations of community issues. In addition, such investigations can lead to student art projects based on these models. Applying these types of CBAE methods can help students appreciate the work of community artists, build respect for members of the community, and gain an understanding of how art functions in the community and larger society.

There are numerous other benefits to incorporating CBAE into the curriculum. As students and teachers learn about community-based art, they become instilled with a sense of civic pride, adopt a sense of ownership and responsibility, and cultivate a respect for creativity. It is important to note, though CBAE is often discussed in context of the K-12 classroom, I believe CBAE may take place wherever teaching and learning occur, including community centers, museum programs, and after-school programs. Children who participate in the PRH programs learn about the work of visiting artists and respond to the work from their communal perspectives and personal experiences. In addition, I also believe CBAE may occur through informal interactions between community participants of all ages. For example, a visiting artist may learn about the community through conversations with various community members or community members may learn about the art process by spending time with visiting artists.
3.4 Theoretical Framework

3.4.1 Introduction to Community Cultural Development Theory

To truly understand CCD theory, it is important to discuss the foundation of its concepts, which borrow heavily from social reconstruction and critical pedagogy ideology. Though the philosophies of social reconstruction and critical pedagogy are fairly harmonious with one another, there are slight differences between the two and the contexts from which they developed. Though both were born of different times and places, they both developed from climates of severe economic depression and are considered important contributions to the field of education (Efland 1990; Goldbard, 1993; Lownd, 2011). The purpose of this section is to explore the philosophies of social reconstruction and critical pedagogy, as they have been a great influence on CCD theory and this project. I also show how these philosophies have made important contributions to the field of community arts and art education. In addition, I attempt to articulate how artists, communities, and art educators fit into a community art program model informed by CCD theory.

3.4.2 Social Reconstruction in U.S. Art Education

Rooted in the progressive education movement, social reconstructionism made its way into the discipline of art education largely through the work of educational theorist, John Dewey. In *Schools of Tomorrow* (1915) John and Evelyn Dewey wrote about the innovative models, methods, and guiding philosophies of progressive schools. The schools they wrote about shared common philosophical beliefs:

that teaching and learning should be based upon the natural development of the child and that education should be grounded in real experiences, organically related to the social life of the community. The activity programs of these schools mirrored the conditions of actual life. (Efland, 1990, p.189)
Though the progressive education movement spawned a variety of reform ideologies, social reconstruction ideology was most heavily influenced by Dewey’s early work.

3.4.3 John Dewey’s Early Work

During the 1890s, Dewey began conducting research, setting up schools, and writing books based on his social educational philosophy at the University of Chicago. At that time, Jane Addams gained attention for her social work at Hull House in Chicago and the University of Chicago’s sociology department, later known as the Chicago School, was just beginning its innovative research on urban sociology. It was in this setting that Dewey established the Laboratory School at the University of Chicago. Dewey, a strong critic of the traditional structure of education, felt the public school system did not prepare students to become functioning members of society. Because disciplines were compartmentalized from one another, education was disconnected from community life, and students were taught primarily through books, he felt students would have a difficult time applying what they learned to the world outside of school.

Opened in 1896, the Laboratory School gave Dewey the opportunity to construct a forward-thinking school, which based its activities around community living (Efland, 1990). Dewey, a self-proclaimed pragmatist, used the school as a research site to put his theories into practice and investigate the role of schools in education. Dewey’s research and philosophy of education became the foundation for social reconstructionist ideology.

By the 1930s, social reconstructionism was gaining a steady following. Proponents of this philosophy used Dewey’s work as jumping off point to raise further discussion regarding education reform during the Great Depression era. Social reconstructionists criticized the
exclusiveness of child-centered schools and their child-centered focus, in favor of an education based in the true experiences of communal life and which was accessible to all children—not just the privileged. George S. Counts (1932) challenged:

If Progressive education is to be genuinely progressive, it must emancipate itself from the influence class, face squarely and courageously every social issue, come to grips with life in all its stark reality, establish an organic relation with the community, develop a realistic and comprehensive theory of welfare...etc. (as cited in Efland, 1990, p. 195)

3.4.4 Concepts of Social Reconstruction

For social reconstructionists, school is viewed as a preparation for living in society. This means education should extend beyond the boundaries of the school and into the communities where teachers and students live. Social reconstructionists view school as a place to develop solutions to the problems of “real life” in their neighborhoods, communities, and beyond. Therefore, education, according to social reconstructionists, should be interdisciplinary, since life and its problems are not isolated into disciplines. If schools are places to develop solutions in the real world, then students could not learn from books alone. Dewey discussed the concept of “learning by doing,” where students learn to solve problems by taking action, as is required in daily life.

For social reconstructionists, preparation for living entailed gaining an understanding of the world—the various factors in play that affect our lives, and learning how to act upon them in the world outside the classroom. Kilpatrick (1933) felt education should “prepare individuals to take part intelligently in the management of conditions under which they live, to bring them to an understanding of the forces which are moving, to equip them with the intellectual and practical tools by which they can themselves enter into direction of these forces” (as cited in Efland, 1990, p. 194). This belief, held by social reconstructionists, meant education should prepare individuals
not only to take action, but to make intelligent, informed, decisions on how to take action in the world.

3.4.5 Critical Pedagogy

The relationship between literacy and oppression inspired Brazilian educator, Paolo Freire to develop a teaching program that enabled his students to think critically about knowledge and power to transform their lives and communities. Set against the socio-political climate of 1960s Brazil, Freire offered adult literacy classes where he practiced a form of liberatory education called critical pedagogy. Critical pedagogy employed critical thinking, dialogue, and action to liberate his impoverished students from oppression. Although Freire applied this approach towards literacy education, critical pedagogy has been adopted by contemporary critical educators, such as Henry A. Giroux, Peter McLaren, and bell hooks, who have expanded the dialogue of critical pedagogical practice to the areas of arts and humanities.

3.4.6 Roots of Critical Pedagogy: A Historical Context

Paulo Freire was born in 1921 in Recife, Brazil. He grew up in a climate of severe economic depression, where he witnessed the hardships of poverty. Though he was trained as a lawyer, Freire chose a career in education and went on to receive a doctoral degree from the Universidad de Recife in 1959. He was then appointed as the first director of the Cultural Extension Service of the Universidad de Recife. As director, Freire designed an adult literacy program to service illiterate workers and peasants. Like Dewey and the social reconstructionists, Freire believed education should be accessible to all people, not just the privileged.
In an effort to engage participants in his program, Freire developed vocabulary lists that were relevant to work-related issues faced by working class students. Freire’s program became so popular that he was asked to set up similar programs around the country. Plans came to a halt in 1964, when Freire was jailed and later exiled as a result of a military coup.

While in exile, Freire continued to work outside of Brazil and in 1970 published *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. In his book, Freire discusses his educational philosophy in relation to his adult literacy program, which emphasized liberation through education. Though his book came from his experience with educational programs in Brazil, Freire took his approach to countries throughout the third world, where colonized citizens engaged in dialogue relevant to their immediate concerns. Through the principles of critical pedagogy, they experienced the power of language and their own power to shape culture through its use. Instead of seeing literacy training as a scheme foisted upon them by authorities for reasons having nothing to do with their lives, they come to understand that learning to read empowers one to decode the world and act within it. (Adams & Goldbard, 2005, p. 51)

### 3.4.7 Concepts of Critical Pedagogy

Critical pedagogy is both a theory and a practice, whose goal is to reach “critical consciousness” of oppressive social and political structures through a process of “conscientization,” and in turn transform those structures through action. In their book, *Creative Community*, Adams and Goldbard (2005) provide a thorough definition for this process, which Freire called conscientization.

Conscientization, from the Portuguese conscientizao of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire is an ongoing process by which a learner moves toward critical consciousness. This process is the heart of liberatory education. It differs from “consciousness raising” in that the latter may involve transmission of preselected knowledge. Conscientization means breaking through prevailing mythologies to reach new levels of awareness—in particular, awareness of oppression, being an “object” of others’ will rather than a self-determining “subject.” The process of conscientization involves identifying contradictions in
experience through dialogue and becoming part of the process of changing the world. (p. 115)

Freire felt this process could not take place within the structure of traditional education, finding its oppressive structure problematic. For example, Freire (1970) explains the oppressive nature of traditional teacher-student interaction through his banking concept, which he describes as “an act of depositing, in which the students are depositories and the teacher is the depositor” (p. 58). Unlike the traditional approach to education, Freire’s approach “sought to teach critical consciousness, learn from students, redefine the power relations between teacher and student, promote dialogue across the economic, political, and educational lines that divided society, and inspire action on the part of the underclass” (Finkelparl, 2000, p. 277). This approach requires teachers and students to enter into a democratic process of dialogue, reflection, and action.

The concept of dialogue refers to the interaction that takes place between all learners of the class. Because the teacher is also a learner and students are also teachers, they are seen as equals in a process of mutual open communication, where “they become jointly responsible for a process in which we all grow” (Freire, 1970, p. 61). Freire describes this model of dialogue through mutual communication as “problem-posing” education, where all learners enter the creative process of constructing knowledge. Through the dialogic process that is supported by the problem-posing model, “people develop their power to perceive critically the way they exist in the world with which and in which they find themselves; they come to see the world not as static reality, but as a reality in process, in transformation” (p. 65). It is through this process of dialogue and reflection, offered by problem-posing education, that the learner can come to understand how she is situated within the larger historical, social, and political context of society. Once the learner reaches this critical consciousness, she goes through a psychological
transformation of liberation, which inspires her to take action in transforming the social and
political structures that bind her. This informed action is referred to as “praxis.” Praxis
is not simply action based on reflection. It is action which embodies certain qualities.
These include a commitment to human well being and the search for truth, and respect for
others. It is the action of people who are free, who are able to act for themselves. (Smith,
1999, p. 7)

Praxis, therefore, embodies ethical and democratic action. It requires making a conscious
action that is responsible, informed, ethical, and dialogic. It is a creative process that occurs
through the deconstruction and reconstruction of knowledge, through dialogue and action.

Deconstruction, intended as a method to analyze philosophical and later, literary texts, is
also a method for analyzing other bodies of knowledge, such as visual texts from works of art or
cultural artifacts. Deconstruction implies there are subtexts to bodies of knowledge, or
underlying meanings that reveal social, historical, and political constructs. In critical pedagogy,
meaning-making and interpretation becomes a social construction between the author or artist
and the audience, which results in the psychological reconstruction of knowledge. Psychological
reconstruction may in turn, manifest in physical acts of reconstruction through activism.

For example, visiting artist Terry Adkins initiated a conversation with program
coordinators at PRH about public art in Houston. Through the dialogic deconstruction of public
art representations, a lack of historic figures from the Third Ward is revealed, which resulted in
the reconstruction of knowledge surrounding issues of representation in public art. This
reconstruction of knowledge manifested in Round 29, in which Adkins invited a group of artists
to join him in creating an exhibition and performance piece dedicated to blues legend Sam
Lightnin’ Hopkins, a former resident of Third Ward. The process of deconstruction and
reconstruction continued as community audience members were invited to interact with Round
29 and generate dialogue about the relationship between local blues legend, Hopkins and Third
Ward; and how both are situated in the broader context of the history. This form of reconstruction/activism resulted in the placement of a historic city marker and proposal of a public art piece in honor of Hopkins in the Third Ward. The process of understanding how we are situated in the world, so we can make intelligent, well-informed judgments on how to take action agrees with social reconstruction.

3.4.8 Concepts of Community Cultural Development Theory

Community cultural development (CCD) theory came into recognition during the 1970s. Inspired by past cultural arts projects, including the Mexican murals of the 1920s and the Works Progress Administration (WPA) supported public arts projects, CCD was influenced heavily by an atmosphere of activism during the human and civil rights movements (Goldbard, 1993). The theoretical concepts of CCD theory were also supported by the beliefs of leading theorists of the time, including Paulo Freire, Frantz Fanon8, and Augusto Boal9 (Adams & Goldbard, 2002; Cohen Cruz, 2002). All three were concerned with helping the oppressed, whether peasants or colonized people, liberate themselves and make social change through communication, expression, dialogue, reflection, and action.

The idea of social change is also found within CCD theory, which utilizes art as a symbolic tool of cultural expression, seeking to give voice to the community, as well as generating dialogue that speaks to community issues. Significant to CCD theory, is its

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8 Born in Martinique, Frantz Fanon (1925-1961) was a philosopher, political activist, and author. Trained in psychiatry, Fanon wrote fervently against oppression and racism, which stemmed from the psychopathology of colonization. His writings fueled the field of post-colonial studies and influenced liberation movements (Bulhan, 2004).

9 Brazilian theater director, Augusto Boal (1931-) created the Theatre of the Oppressed during the 1950s and 1960s. A critic of traditional theater, he believed the lack of interaction between actors and audience, as well as the silent, passive role of audience members, to be oppressive. He sought to transform theater from a “monologue,” or one-way communication, into a two-way dialogue, where both actor and audience participate through interaction, critical thinking, and action (Patterson & Weinberg, 2002).
democratic nature. CCD projects involve the co-construction of culture by community members and artist-organizers through creative problem solving by the whole group. It is this democratic process that decides the direction of arts projects that best suit the community’s needs.

Evidence can be seen through the collaborative efforts of artists, such as Tim Rollins and K.O.S. (Kids of Survival). K.O.S. grew out of an after school program in South Bronx. Rollins, an instructor in the after school program, serves as a mentor, teaching his students about art and studio practice (Lacy, 1995, p. 268). Rollins uses his knowledge of art to enable the K.O.S. to produce art based on themes and ideas generated from the group. Just as in critical pedagogy, all teach and all learn. As a group they are empowered to negotiate and make decisions about what they produce and how they produce it.

Through CCD projects, such as these, artists are employed as community workers, or cultural workers, who work directly with the community to co-construct public works of art, which generate cultural capital. This form of capital, unlike economic capital, leads to a rise in civic self-esteem, or civic pride. Projects like these, not only require civic engagement on a local level, but also attract engagement from those considered outside of the community. As a result, the community builds civic pride, which attracts positive attention to the community.

3.4.9 Neighborhood Arts Movement

The Neighborhood Arts Movement, also called the Community Arts Movement, is a more specific form of CCD, where community artists, or artists-organizers are also long-time community members. The driving concept behind the Neighborhood Arts Movement was to employ neighborhood artists to utilize their artistic skills at the service of a community and this introduction of community art would thus aid in transforming the experience of community
members. The concept of neighborhood artist for this purpose is similar to the function of artist-organizers.

Artist-organizers, also known as a “community animators,” became popular in Europe during the 1970s and 1980s in response to the psychological post-colonial wreckage that colonialism left behind. According to Goldbard (1993), the purpose of employing an artist-organizer in the community was to help “vitalize community cultural life and assist people in becoming active cultural creators” (p. 6). More specifically, the function of an artist-organizer is to “collaborate with others to express identity, concerns, and aspirations through arts and communication media while building cultural capacity and bring about social change” (Adams & Goldbard, 2002, p.2). Due to the special relationship a neighborhood artist has with the community, they have first-hand knowledge of community issues and may be more committed to long-term goals sought by the community, unlike a visiting artist-organizer, or a visiting artist. Their constant presence also allows the artist to serve as a mentor to those growing up in the community.

Though neighborhood artists have a strong on-going commitment to their community, communities can benefit most when neighborhood artists team up with visiting artists from outside the community. As outsiders, visiting artists can: a) help us see what established community members are too close to see and; b) offer new ways of seeing things that community members think they have already seen (Becker, 1995). The exchange of knowledge of the community and available resources offered by neighborhood artists with fresh outside perspectives of visiting artists are highly beneficial in finding new solutions to community issues.
3.4.10 Evolving Definition of Artists Roles in the Community

There are a variety of roles artists take in the community, all carrying educative aspects to inform or teach the public, whether social, political or practical. One role an artist takes is that of activist, encompassing many more roles to suit the specific needs of each community. Among the roles artist-activists take is that of cultural protector or co-constructor, as in CCD theory. The protection of existing culture is evident through restorative projects involving historic preservation of buildings, spaces, and places, while the co-construction of culture can be found in additive projects, which construct new spaces and places through urban revitalization. Some examples of this include community gardens, parks, and public art projects. Regarding government policy, artists are sometimes brought into communities as activists and community advocates, where their function is to give voice to the community regarding important issues related to local policy.

Some of the practical roles of artists in the community are most directly related to the knowledge of studio art practice, hands-on skill development, and the acquisition of art historical knowledge. This is mostly evident in the role of artists as art educators. This not only includes K-12 art classroom teachers, but also after school programs, and for-profit art instruction programs.

The roles of neighborhood artists and artists-in-residence may participate in one or more of the roles discussed above, whether it involves a form of activism or simply teaching practical skill development to deliver a form of activism. Some artists-in-residence programs are museum-based, involving little more than delivering knowledge of art process, while others are community-based, or through community arts organizations, and ask artists to co-construct issue-based projects with the community, similar to neighborhood artists (Lacy, 1995).
3.4.11 Artist in the Community: What is Possible?

I believe communities are based in social interaction and activity. Based on my beliefs of community, I also feel artists have the ability to contribute to the sustenance and livelihood of a community by affording opportunities to involve their audience in the art-making process. This can be done in a variety of ways and at various stages of project development. This requires looking beyond the obvious examples of artists recruiting community members to help in the studio process to complete projects. Instead, I believe the artist should also actively engage the community in a co-constructive process of on-going dialogue from beginning to end, to develop ideas, gather resources from the community, and generate rich discussion based on completed projects.

Community artists may take many forms. However, I believe a community artist that is genuinely committed to the community, must be prepared to embrace the multiple roles of a cultural worker. As cultural workers and activists, artists have the ability to co-construct art with the community to address the cultural issues, concerns, and aspirations, which affect the social well being of a community. When artists work as cultural workers they have the ability to give voice to the community and bring about meaningful dialogue, necessary for change. As place makers, cultural co-constructors and cultural protectors, artists have the ability to help communities preserve, protect, and construct places in the community, building civic self-esteem. Community artists should recognize these roles as important parts of their identity. Finally, because of the many educative aspects of community art, all artists in the community should see themselves as cultural workers and educators and should be valued as such.
3.4.12 Art Educator as Cultural Worker/Border Intellectual

According to Henry A. Giroux (1995), a cultural worker is a person working in the public sphere in sites of cultural production, with the purpose of social welfare. As mentioned earlier, this includes community artists, but it also includes art educators who work in community art programming, as well as art educators who work in public schools. Giroux opens up the possibility of cultural workers as border intellectuals. Similar to artists, art educators “function in the space between ‘high’ and popular culture; between the institution and the street; between the public and private” (p. 5), but as educators, they also function between school and the broader context of education. As border intellectuals, art educators can engage in dialogue, issues on a local community level to reveal how they are situated within the broader context of humanistic values and social justice. Giroux writes, “As public intellectuals, we must define ourselves not merely as marginal, avant-garde figures, professionals, or academics acting alone, but as critical citizens whose collective knowledge and actions presuppose specific visions of public life, community, and moral accountability” (p.13).

As a program coordinator, it is the responsibility of the art educator to reflect on the current design of the program and find ways to improve experiences for artists and community audiences. I suggest introducing a three phase dialogue model, which represents three phases of interaction. The initial phase consists of interaction between the art educator and the community. The second phase consists of interaction between the art educator, community, and visiting artist. The last phase consists of interaction between the art educator, artwork/artist/community and the community at large.

In this model, all interaction occurs through dialogue, or respectful, open communication with audiences, artists, and art educators. Art educators create opportunities for dialogue through
a problem-posing model, so communities, artists, and art educators learn to value each other and view each other as experts. In a problem-posing model, as suggested by Freire (1970), the visiting artist, community audience, and art educator enter into a problem-posing interaction where all learn and all teach---the audience teaches the artist about their community, the artist teaches the audience about the art process, the art educator serves as mediator, who communicates with both the artist and community.

As a border intellectual, the art educator moves between artist and community and designs opportunities for dialogue and reflection. The artist and community learn how they are situated within the larger social and political structures in a joint process of knowledge production, which results in action through the process of making art. This joint process is against the banking concept of education as both parties enter a process of conscientization to reach critical consciousness. As a result of this interaction, through dialogue and reflection, both parties are transformed. This democratic process values the voices of artists and community audiences and allows for positive social change to occur. The dialogue then continues through interaction with the community at large, thus creating the possibility of a broader potential for transformation and social change.

It is critical for art educators, who work as program coordinators, and artists to consider strategies for interaction with the community that respect and listen to the community voice so they can deliver programs that meet the needs of their audience. Through democratic mutual dialogue artists are able to ethically represent the community because the community makes critical decisions of how they should be represented. For art educators, dialogue can make our own work meaningful. It is through dialogue that artists, communities, and art educators can move forward together in praxis.
3.5 Implications for Art Education

The application of critical pedagogy and social reconstruction ideology may seem like a difficult task for some art educators. The process can be messy and time-consuming as decisions are negotiated. The parties involved may not be comfortable expressing critical dialogue. Participants may be offended or offend others, as there is no authority figure in critical pedagogy to discipline. Dialogue may become chaotic and confusion may set in regarding roles of the art educators, artists, and community members. The art educator can serve as mediator to help stimulate dialogue by raising questions and establish a position as a border intellectual, respected by the artist and community as an advocate for both parties, but some may be uncomfortable with the passivity of the role. The lack of control over the direction of the project and final product may become frustrating for the art educator who is used to planning activities in detail. Though the process seems messy and intimidating, I am convinced that the benefits of applying
critical pedagogy and social reconstructionist approaches must outweigh the perceived difficulties.

As art educators, we do not expect everyone we educate to choose a career in art. On the other hand, common goals for art educators include visual interpretation, art application, and art appreciation. I believe critical pedagogy and social reconstruction ideologies are highly effective approaches in achieving these goals. Through dialogue and deconstruction, students learn to analyze and interpret visual texts. This happens through works of art, as well as through popular cultural artifacts of daily life. In fact, starting with an object from the world they are familiar with, as in a billboard, will help them gain the confidence to apply these skills to works of art and other complicated structures. Through this activity, they will understand how manipulations are constructed and they learn how to critique other structures in the world. Dialogue and reflection encourage ideological shifts and provide “opportunity for increased perception and appreciation of art as a valuable and important part of learning about life” (Yokley, 1999, p. 24). Appreciation, therefore, is a meaning-making process that can be encouraged through critical pedagogical practice.

Art application includes the constructive processes, as well as instrumental use of an art object. Critical pedagogy and social reconstructionism teach how visual objects are loaded and layered with meanings, and how representations can be manipulated by dominant structures, as in advertising. The process of deconstruction, provides the learner with an understanding of how works are constructed, so she may approach the construction of visual imagery in personal works of art, to create newer representations.
3.6 Art Education in the Public School

It may be difficult to imagine how the role of public school art teacher fits into the model of community-based art education model. The problem of defining community-based art education within the field of art education is evident in the article, “What is Community Based Art Education?” (Ulbricht, 2005). In his article, Ulbricht finds multiple interpretations of CBAE and works toward a definition through various examples, raising more questions than answers. In the end, he implores art teachers and students to “clarify their community-based art education definitions and objectives,” so they can “envision meaningful projects and programs that are enriching and educational” (p. 11). In addition there is a need to understand and even legitimize art education outside of the school context.

Regarding public schools, both Giroux (1993) and McLaren (1994) believe these institutions should be conceived as democratic public sites in connection to other forms of public life in broader society. Here, the concept of art educator as cultural worker and border intellectual also applies to the role of art teacher in the classroom. By taking on these roles, Giroux (1993) argues, they become transformative intellectuals, “engaged in intellectual labor, as opposed to defining it in purely instrumental or technical terms” (p.125). Miron (1999) believes it is conceivable for public school teachers to reach out to sites of cultural production and to artists, activists, and other cultural workers, and suggests that they do so, if they are to forge, to use Giroux’s words, a “wider struggle for democratic public life and critical citizenship” (as cited in Miron, 1999, p. 92). If we are to realize Dewey’s decree and Giroux’s vision, then we must find ways to integrate school with neighborhood and community.

In her article, “The Ethnographic Move in Contemporary Art,” Desai (2002) writes about contemporary artists employing ethnographic methods when collaborating with community
members to create site-specific or community-based art. She acknowledges these sites of cultural production, where site-specific, community-based art is developed and constructed, as sites of learning, for artists, community participants, and the public at large. As in critical pedagogy and CCD theory, the co-constructive art process requires artists and community members, to teach and learn from each other. The art product or exhibition becomes a site for dialogue, critical thinking, and reflection, accessible by all who encounter, interact, or learn about the work. I believe, as Giroux and Miron suggested, public school teachers should reach out to and utilize these sites, as opportunities for critical dialogue regarding local histories, community issues, and the function and construction of art in community.

Desai (2002) summarizes the literature of several art educators (Chalmers, 1981; Congdon, 1989; Freedman, 1996; Stuhr, Petrovich-Mwaniki, 1990) on the benefits of classroom investigations of community art through ethnography, when she writes

According to these art educators, ethnography encourages students to become aware of the social dimension of art; that is, understanding who makes art and why, where art is practiced in a community, and what form it takes. Additionally, they argue that art teachers need to move beyond the consideration of the physicality of the art object per se to a contextualized understanding of the object in terms of the social, political, economic, and cultural conditions of production and appreciation. (p. 318)

She provides several examples of successful projects where artists involve community members in the process by including their voices in the co-constructive art making/meaning making process. These examples serve as models for both, classrooms investigations of art in the community, and for the art-making process of applying ethnographic methods to construct art about students’ own communities.
4.1 Paradigmatic Assumptions

The research methods employed for this study are most closely situated within an interpretivist paradigm. Interpretivism\textsuperscript{10} is based in the belief that reality is a social construction that is complex and ever-changing (Glesne, 1999). From the interpretivist’s perspective, interaction and locality are key factors in the construction of knowledge and beliefs, and these constructions in turn affect behavior. Interpretivists believe knowledge about the world, as well as beliefs of the world are constructed “as people interact with one another over time in specific social settings” and are subject to change through dialogue or over time (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999, p. 48). As changes occur, new constructions may form, altering perceptions of reality and creating new ways of acting (Nastasi & DeZolt, 1994).

Interpretivists view culture as a social construct, which requires group interaction and is based on a specific location or social setting. This concept agrees with my interactionist beliefs of community, that communities are bound by participation in social activities related to a specific location. Interpretivists also believe culture is reflected through shared meanings and in the process of assigning meanings they must negotiate with group members through dialogue and participation in social activities (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). These shared meanings are evident in the language, codes, symbols, and modes of communication they share.

Interpretivism emphasizes the position of participants in the construction of meanings, knowledge, and beliefs. By position, I am referring to the influence and affect of social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic, age, gender, and other contextual characteristics the participants are

\textsuperscript{10} Interpretivism is also referred to as constructivism.
situated in (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). Because of this, “interpretivists stick close to local meanings and find it difficult to tell only ‘one’ story. Instead, they tend to present complex accounts as polyvocal texts, or stories told in the voices of many different people” (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999, p. 49). This fits well with study because I wanted to gather voices from various community members, to include artists, the community audience, program coordinators, and staff, to get a richer picture of events and interactions.

In summary, the interpretivists believe cultural meanings are socially constructed, relative to a situated context---meanings are not fixed, but negotiated, polyvocal, and participatory. The interpretivist paradigm supports the openness of the types of questions I wished to ask and honors the complexity of social interaction between the participants at my research site. This perspective also agrees with my belief that the results of my research will not be generalizable and are relative and specific to the site and those who interact within it.

4.2 Design of the Study

Since I wanted to know what it looks like when the needs of artists-in-residence and community audiences intersect and diverge, I chose a methodology that allowed me to gather and report data based on the personal experiences of both the artists and community audiences in relation to a locally specific site, or institution. The methodology approach which best fits my research goals and interpretivist paradigm is ethnography. Conducting an ethnographic case study allowed me to describe the complex nature of social interaction within my research site, while valuing the narratives of each participant.

LeCompte and Schensul (1999) define ethnography as “an approach to learning about the social and cultural life of communities, institutions and other settings,” which adheres to the
concept that “locally specific meanings and behavior are those that originate in and are found in one specific location” (p. 1). This approach aligned well with my study and site because my research took place at a community-specific organization which addresses specific issues related to its locality.

4.3 Participants/Location of Research

This study took place at PRH, a community arts center located in the inner-city neighborhood of Third Ward in Houston, Texas. I chose this site because it has an artist-in-residency program, which requires artists to collaborate, interact, and involve the community audience in the art-making process. Ten row houses on the site are dedicated to art exhibitions and literary projects, which are installed on a rotating four-month basis. Each commissioned artist is given a row house to create a site-specific installation, which addresses the history and cultural issues relevant to the local African American community. During my study, four artists were commissioned to construct installations and present a performance piece for the community audience and six of the houses were occupied for exhibition spaces.

The core participants in my research project included a purposeful sampling of three of the visiting artists-in-residence, three community audience members, and three program coordinators and/or staff members at PRH that participated in this program during one “round,” or four-month rotation of the artist-in-residency program. Purposeful sampling allowed me to choose specific participants to give me the most significant data during the course of my research. In addition, I also called upon additional participants as sources for contextual data regarding the program at PRH.
4.4 Method of Data Collection

In ethnography, the researcher is considered the primary tool, employing qualitative data gathering methods in the act of discovery. Glesne (1999) writes, “Ethnography comes from the anthropological tradition of illuminating patterns of culture through long-term immersion in the field, collecting data primarily through participant-observation and interviewing” (p. 9). While in the field, I gathered most of my data through participant-observation, conducting semi-structured, open-ended, in-depth interviews with artists-in-residence, community audience members, and program coordinators/staff members regarding their experiences at the site and experiences with each other (See appendix A, B, and C) and through document collection, I was able to gather contextual information. I employed this multiple data-collection method to construct a rich picture of the interactions at the site through the process of triangulation. The process of triangulation “involves confirming or cross-checking the accuracy of data obtained from one source with data collected from other, different sources” (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999, p. 131). I, however, applied the method of triangulation to construct a rich, multilayered view to help create trustworthiness.

4.4.1 Participant-Observation

There are many levels of participant-observation based on the amount of interaction the researcher has with the community. Glesne (1999) describes a four-point continuum ranging from observer, who has little or no interaction with participants, to full participant, who is simultaneously a functioning member of the community under investigation and an investigator. According to the participant-observation continuum, upon entering the field, I began my study as an observer as participant. This means I was primarily an observer, but had some opportunities
to interact with the participants. As a participant-observer, much of the data is collected through the eyes and ears of the researcher. I recorded my observations and thoughts through written and tape-recorded field notes. Observation began immediately, as I entered the field and met with participants at formally scheduled appointments and informal social gatherings, which took place on and off site.

After spending some time in the field, I transitioned into a participant as observer when opportunities arose to participate on a more extensive level with the artists, the community, or institution. By the end of the study, there were times when I felt as though I was a member of the community, becoming a full participant, the next point on the continuum. I further explain the process I underwent of transitioning between observer as participant to full participant and the circumstances surrounding my transformation later in the chapter.

Glesne's (2004) continuum of participant observation:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Little to no interaction with participants/subjects being studied.</th>
<th>Ex. Observing a class through one-way mirror, typical in psychology.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. observer</td>
<td>Primarily an observer, but has some interaction with participants. Participants are aware of the researcher’s presence.</td>
<td>Observation from back of the classroom and through interaction with students and teachers as investigator.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. observer as participant</td>
<td>Extensive interaction with participants, but is not fully functioning member of the community</td>
<td>Observation from back of the classroom and through interaction as school volunteer and investigator.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. participant as observer</td>
<td>Simultaneously a functioning member of the community undergoing investigation and an investigator.</td>
<td>Ex. Observing one’s own practice of teaching. Interaction with teachers and students as teacher and investigator.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.4.2 Interviews

During the course of my study, I conducted open-ended, in-depth interviews with artists-in-residence, community audience members, and program coordinators regarding their experiences. The interviews were semi-structured, which means I prepared a set of predetermined questions, but I was also able to ask additional questions as they emerged during the interview process. The openness of the interviews questions were beneficial in learning the perceptions, attitudes and opinions of participants and identifying emerging themes from the data. Regarding the interview process, I also took advantage of the face-to-face nature of ethnographic research, where I was able to raise questions when I wondered about something while the interview was happening (Glesne, 1999).

4.4.3 Document Collection

In addition to participant-observation and interviews, I used document collection to complete my triangulation model. As stated earlier, triangulation is a data collection method used to strengthen the accuracy and trustworthiness of data. One function of document collection is to corroborate information from observations and interviews (Glesne, 1999, p. 58). Documents can also provide context for data, revealing factors that influence events, attitudes, opinions, and behaviors. For example, newspapers and archives may offer historical or current events that have direct bearing on the socio-political climate. Journal entries can reveal attitudes and opinions that drive the behaviors of participants. Documents can also raise questions that can point to new leads and shape the direction of research.

There are a wide variety of documents that can be used for research. I collected archival documents regarding the history of the community, the institution, and its programs. I also
reviewed assessments of the artist-in-residence program and attendance information. I also collected meeting minutes regarding artist selection and other decisions surrounding the artist-in-residence program. I gave each artist a sketchbook journal so they could document their personal experiences in the program, to record their thoughts and feelings about the process of constructing an installation with the community. However, I did not ask the artists to relinquish their journals at the end of the project; rather I asked them to use their journal as a reflective device to encourage rich conversations and dialogue about their experience.

4.4.4 Applying Methods in the Field

Since wanted to know what it looks like when the needs of artists-in-residence and their community audiences intersect and diverge, I gathered data based on the experiences of both the artists and the community members. In addition, since the process that connects artists with the community is based on the program’s design, I also gathered data regarding the current practice of program coordinators and staff members involved with the artists-in-residence program at PRH.

4.4.5 Entering the Field: From Observer as Participant to Full Participant

My initial entry into the field began once I secured permission from the director of the organization to conduct my study. During this period, prior to the artist-in-residency round for my study, I introduced myself and my research project to staff members and community participants and learned more about their roles and how they came to know PRH. Through conversations, I learned about past exhibitions and how the program evolved over the years. While meeting with the staff to discuss details about the project, I shared background
information regarding my education and work experience. It was during this conversation that I was offered a position as an after-school art instructor at PRH. I was excited about the prospect of working with an organization that I greatly admired and promptly accepted. Soon, I was attending meetings with other teachers and working with staff members to develop art lessons for middle school students. This opportunity allowed me to learn more about the organization and its mission, and to meet and interact with staff members, community audience members, and artists.

While teaching in the after-school program, I regularly met with the program coordinator to learn more about her responsibilities and past exhibitions hosted by PRH. We also discussed possible upcoming artist-in-residency rounds that would be appropriate for my study. At first, she suggested that my study could cover the summer artist-in-residency, *Summer Studios*, in which local college students apply to work on site and develop a summer exhibition. This program requires student artists to work closely with the program coordinator, attending weekly workshops, critiques, fieldtrips, and lectures by guest speakers and artists. The program coordinator discussed the possibility of my project taking place during this round with the director and it was decided that because it is comprised of college students, that it would not accurately represent the way in which professional artists work during a traditional artist-in-residency round. It was also decided that my project would cover the upcoming fall exhibition, *Round 29, Thunderbolt Special: The Great Electric Show and Dance After Lightnin’ Hopkins*. In the meantime, I continued to work with the after-school program and was offered a position teaching art at PRH’s summer camp.

While working at the summer camp at PRH, I was also able to attend weekly meetings with the Summer Studios student artists, participate in critiques, and was even given the opportunity to work with the program coordinator to develop a lecture for one of the workshops.
While discussing the upcoming Round 29, the program coordinator and I negotiated what my role would look like as a researcher and as a member of the PRH organization and community. It was decided that I would work with her in an assistant-type position. This allowed me to observe and ask questions regarding her day-to-day activities and needs, while assisting with the preparation and implementation of Round 29. Some of these tasks included working on a welcome packet for artists, taking artists to find resources and to appointed meetings and promotional events, and documenting the exhibition through photographs and video. These multiple levels of interaction allowed for a comfortable transition from observer as participant to participant as observer, and at times, to full participant during the study and well after.

Teaching at PRH and assisting the program coordinator allowed me to develop relationships with, and gain the trust of my research participants---staff members, community audience members, and visiting artists. This trust made observations, interviews, and interactions a more comfortable experience for me and the participants involved with this project.

4.4.6 Gathering Data in the Field

Through the use of interviews, I was able to gather information regarding each artist’s practice, or process of making art in relationship to the community (See appendix A). As a participant-observer, I documented my observations of artist activity and interaction through field notes and photographs. To better understand their personal experiences, my observations included time I spent with the artists, individually and together, and took place on and off the PRH campus during their residence. During their stay, there were several occasions where I was able to engage the artists together in conversation on the topics of community arts, the role of community artists, their experiences of community interaction, and their ideas of success and
failure regarding projects. Through field notes and photographs, I was able to document
observations of their interactions with community members, program coordinators, and each
other, and their living and working spaces on the PRH campus.

In addition to capturing the artist experience, I conducted interviews with community
audience members to learn about their experiences with the artist-in-residence program at Project
Row Houses (See appendix B). Conducting individual interviews gave me a chance to explore
the community’s understanding of community art and its relation to community identity. In
addition to interviews, I also spent time with community audience members to learn how they
felt about the program and interacting with visiting artists. I was able to engage multiple
community members in conversation on the topics of community identity, community art,
interacting with artists, and their ideas of success and failure regarding projects from past and
current experiences with the program. Through field notes and photographs, I documented time
spent with community audience members, including their interactions with artists, program
coordinators, and each other, while participating in activities and events associated with the
artist-in-residence program.

Lastly, I wanted to know more about the current practice of the program coordinators
involved with the artist-in-residence program, specifically, what they are doing to bridge the gap
between artists-in-residence and their community audiences. For this portion of the project, I
chose a purposeful sampling staff members directly involved in the decision-making process of
the program. Though observations, interviews (See appendix C), and document collection, I was
able to learn about the selection process for artists and projects and how projects are understood
and negotiated. I was also able to learn the ways, in which they encourage interaction between
artists and the community, and how they involve the community in the art construction process.
In addition to the interviews, I collected documents, such as past program assessments, meeting minutes and administrative records regarding the artist selection process and the program design.

As stated earlier, I chose to document my observations of the artists’ process and community interaction through photographs. These photographs served a duel purpose--- (a) to
illustrate the process and interaction and (b) to aid in the recollection of events during the in-depth interviews. All interviews were tape recorded and transcribed for coding and analysis.

4.5 Method of Data Analysis

In ethnography, it is not necessary to complete all data collection before beginning the process of analysis; rather it is an on-going, continuous process that is done simultaneously with data collection (Glesne, 1999). From the moment I entered the field, I started collecting data through participant-observation. Thus beginning the cyclical process of analysis, reflection, and shaping the study as I continued to collect data through observations, interviews, and document collection while in the field. During this time, I kept field notes to reflect, record thoughts, develop theories and make sense of what I had learned. After each piece of data was processed, it was sorted in analytic files for coding and analysis. When the study was complete, I compiled all of the data I had collected and coded each piece based on emerging themes and patterns. Once the data was coded, I was able to identify patterns and relationships, which come through in my interpretation of the findings. Through data analysis, I was able to identify criteria that contributed to the meaning-making process for artists and the community audience, and identify factors that contribute to successful and unsuccessful experiences for both artists-in-residence and the community audience.

4.6 Validity

To ensure that my findings and interpretations are credible, I employed a variety of approaches and techniques to establish trustworthiness. First of all, as an ethnographic researcher, I felt it was important to be aware of my own subjective lens, in which I observe,
analyze, and interpret data; and recorded these thoughts in my field notes. I also share autobiographical information with readers and make visible my biases as a researcher.

It was also important to spend sufficient time in the field and to be as focused and thorough as possible, regarding elements most relevant to my study. Lincoln and Guba (1985) write, “If prolonged engagement provides scope, persistent observation provides depth” (p. 304). I believe the six months I spent at PRH was a sufficient amount of time to capture an in-depth look at the program. The six months I spent at the organization took place during one complete cycle, or round, of the program, so I was able to follow developments that occurred from the moment the artists entered the site until the end of their residency, when their installation exhibition spaces come down.

I also employed triangulation to verify and cross-check data and identify patterns and relationships. As discussed earlier in the section for data collection, I employed multiple data collection methods, focusing primarily on participant-observation, interviewing, and document collection. In addition to reporting data that fits into emerging patterns and theories, I also reported negative cases that did not conform.

Desai (2002) writes about the artist’s process of entering the field, or community, and employing ethnographic methods of gathering data to construct projects that are ethical and meaningful to the community. As an ethnographer, it is my responsibility to ethically represent participants in my study, in the same way we would expect from an artist, and it was also my intention to produce knowledge which benefits these participants, as well as further the field of art education. I was able to do this by employing a form of members checking that involved interview respondents in the interpretation process (Glesne, 1999). This involved giving each respondent a transcript of their interview for review and approval. Respondents were able to
verify that their perspectives were reflected and inform me of sections they did not wish to
publish due to personal or political reasons (Glesne, 1999). I also utilized the respondents as
experts and notated any insights, ideas, and interpretations they were able to offer, to help shape
my study.

Lastly, I felt it was necessary to be open about the limitations of my data. This involves
being open about circumstances that may have skewed the data by sharing information regarding
resources that I could not gain access to, such as people, places, or documents and any peculiar
circumstances about the site or selection of respondents (Glesne, 1998, p.152).
CHAPTER 5

ANALYSIS

My intension for this study was to understand the process and conditions in which artists, program coordinators, and community audience members contribute to the development of community-based art. As part of this investigation, I also wanted to explore issues of identity, power, and representation. In my attempt to explore and discuss these issues, I am building upon the discourses of social science and cultural studies, and focusing on the process of cultural production. This perspective supports the concept that the meaning-making process in which we make sense of the world and understand ourselves and others within it is a social construction; and that culture shapes how we come to that understanding and take action. With that in mind, I employ the method of content analysis to observation field notes, interview transcripts, and other data to identify and interpret the cultural knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors of participants, in relationship to how they develop community through the arts. From this process of analysis and interpretation, I was able to gain perspective on how artists, community members, and program coordinators understood the art-making process in relation to community and how they viewed their roles as contributing to this process.

In this chapter, I discuss the role of artist, community audience, and program coordinator/art educator through three sections on cultural work. Within these sections I discuss topics related to the power of voice, situatedness, and creativity, as it relates to the artists and community audiences. For the role of program coordinator/art educator, I focus more closely on her role in the process of mediation. I am aware of the relational nature of these concepts, which could be presented in various overlapping discussions. However, I also believe they play distinct roles in contributing to the larger story. I acknowledge the complexity of such discussions, but in
my effort to work through the messiness and to make sense of my data, I present the stories as framed within these contextual sections.

Topics of power, social dynamics, identity, and representation are framed within these discussions. Each section concludes with an analysis of the needs of artists and community audiences, providing valuable information for the program coordinator and raising issues for program coordinators at other sites to consider in their own practice. Through conversations and observations, I became aware of issues regarding the needs of the program coordinator, and I feel that is important to also address these issues here.

5.1 Introduction to Project Row Houses Exhibition

In the fall of 2008, PRH opened Round 29, Thunderbolt Special: The Great Electric Show and Dance, after Sam Lightnin’ Hopkins, an exhibition of art installations to commemorate Hopkins, a local blues legend. In the 1940s Hopkins made Third Ward his home, picking his guitar on Dowling Street and playing blues at the El Dorado Ballroom before signing his first record deal. As part of Round 29, the participating artists held a performance on opening night in the historic El Dorado Ballroom to invoke the spirit of Lightnin’ Hopkins. Later in the spring, the artists reunited once again to close the exhibition with a final performance to honor the local legend.

Though I spent a year researching and collecting data before, during, and after Round 29, much of this project surrounds the events that began 12 days leading up to the opening. Several events took place during this short time span, which included preparation for the artists and their arrival; the process of developing the installations and special performance piece; and the actual exhibition opening and performance. The closing exhibition was also a major event which
involved all of the participants. This event brought back the artists to conduct a special performance and later de-install their house installations. During the run of the exhibition, my position as an afterschool art teacher allowed me to observe the space on an almost daily basis and talk frequently with community members, the program coordinator, and staff about their experiences during various phases of the Round. During this time, I was also in contact with some of the artists by telephone and e-mail. At times we had conversations about their experiences at PRH, while other communication dealt with practical requests, such as checking on the status of their artist spaces, or requesting documentation of their installation.

While the artists were here, they participated in formal events while working on their installations, including an art talk on the PRH campus, a public radio interview for listeners drawn from the broader Houston public, and a visit from a funders group while working on their installations. More natural, organic interactions took place between the artists and community when community members assisted the artists, when residents shared their homes with the artists, or when feeling curious, just stopped by to engage the artists in conversations about who
they are and what they were doing. While teaching in the after-school program, I was also able to take my middle school and high school students on a tour of the houses to meet with the artists and facilitate a discussion about the art process and progress of their installations.

5.2 Cultural Work and Cultural Workers

5.3 Overview

Creating art that capitalizes on the capacity of a community to innovate through collaboration requires that artists and program coordinators are prepared to embody an ethic of cultural work. As art educators, it is no longer enough to provide an art education based on the notion of individual expertise alone; rather it is our responsibility to prepare arts workers who wish to work in the public sphere, by introducing democratic models that engage communities in critical dialogue. On the concept of cultural work, Adams and Goldbard (2005) write:

This term, with its roots in the panprogressive Popular Front cultural organizing of the ‘30s, emphasizes the socially conscious nature of the arts, stressing the role of the artist as cultural worker, countering the tendency to see art-making as a frivolous occupation, a pastime as opposed to important labor. (p. 116)

If we are to expect artists and program coordinators to affirm the identity of cultural workers, then we need to deliver an art education curriculum that recognizes the significance of embracing such a role.

In chapter 2, I present the roles of artists and program coordinators as cultural workers framed within the context of CCD and its major influences, critical pedagogy and social reconstructivism. As CCD is rooted in educational theory, I posit the roles of artists and program coordinators as educational, performing as cultural workers and border intellectuals in alternate sites of cultural production. Cultural production necessitates participation from the community audience, and therefore, it is important to acknowledge the educational role community plays as
they too participate in cultural work, by mediating the process and contributing cultural knowledge of life experiences. As critical pedagogy suggests, a democratic model of cultural production requires that artists, program coordinators, and community enter a collective process of knowledge exchange, where all teach and all learn, resulting in the production of knowledge.

5.4 What is Cultural Work as Defined by Artists?

One of the visiting artists-in-residence, Terry also served as curator of the exhibition. Terry is an artist, musician, and art educator, who teaches studio courses at the University of Pennsylvania. He has a long history of working at various national and international residencies. During an interview I asked him to describe his work. Although he does not ever use the title “cultural worker,” his words provide insight into how artists are embracing this role. The following passage also serves as an introduction to the major topics of this analysis, specifically, the power of voice, situatedness, and new ideas regarding creativity when working with community.

ST: So, tell me about the artwork you produce.

TA: The kind of artwork I produce…I try to produce work that’s basically sculpturally and installation based, but I’m also a musician…and so what I try to do is to reclaim, recover, and reenact the legacies of individuals who I consider to be worthy of this…and most of the time it’s because they have been either ignored in the communities where they are from or their contributions to society go underknown, so I do this in a form called a recital form, in which there is always a performative component that accompanies the installation. In some cases the sculptures themselves are performed, are performed on, or acted upon. They are not complete until they perform this aspect—what is built into them. So, I have been known to work with... “found materials.” I prefer to call them “reclaimed materials” because I do not think that the term “found objects” aptly describes what I do. I intend to call it “potential disclosure”—and that’s a situation where the materials make known to me what they are to become…and there’s a very unified process. You become one with the thing, so, it would be impossible then for me to have a dichotomous relationship with it. I’ve never called it an object, thinking of myself as the subject, because we came into being somewhat together, so that union is very important to how I work. I work mostly on—driven more by
faith than by judgment. By faith, I don’t necessarily mean religious faith. I mean faith in the intuitive moves when creating something because I want to be just as surprised as anybody—otherwise it’s boring.

Terry’s response evokes multiple layers of cultural work at play. For example, when he says his motivation is “to reclaim, recover, and reenact the legacies of individuals who I consider to be worthy… because they have been either ignored in the communities where they are from or their contributions to society go underknown,” he is bringing attention to figures that are lost and invisible. He is contributing to cultural work by making them visible and accessible to the communities they hail from and to larger society. He contributes to cultural work by giving a voice to the community.

Another form of cultural work is revealed when Terry talks about using “found materials,” or “reclaimed materials.” Here, Terry is talking about his use of materials and resources he finds on site in the communities where he works. For example, in one of his installations at PRH, he used a large concrete boulder that bore witness to events that have taken place in Third Ward. The boulder was once perched curbside, in the same way Hopkins was when he would pick his guitar for passers-by. Here, Terry uses situated materials from the community as part of his artist process. He performs cultural work by including situated materials to tell a story that will resonate with his community audience.

Something I found interesting in the conversation I had with Terry was his desire to be moved, or “surprised” when he is working creatively in the community. By saying this, he is implying a sense of shared accessibility over the project. This is not a case where artists are employed to present the community’s vision or to prescribe art to the community; rather this artist takes ownership of his creation, which is also representative of the community. Here, cultural work challenges notions of creativity—that creative acts are performed by the genius
artist in isolation and that creative work in the community is for the benefit of the community and not the artist. For Terry, working creatively in the community gives him a sense of excitement as he interacts with the community and projects unfold. Cultural work becomes a creative act that is art education, a learning experience for the artist and community…and it is valued by both.

In the following sections I elaborate on the topics of the power of voice, situatedness, and creativity in cultural work and support these sections with conversations I had with artists working at PRH.
5.4.1 Power of Voice

In this section I explore how artists perform activism as a form of cultural work—specifically by giving voice to the community. To illustrate this approach and process of constructing art in the community, I borrow from conversations with Terry Adkins, artist-in-residence and curator of Round 29. In the first section Terry talks about his art-making process and his desire to make social change within the communities he works in. He provides an example from a project he worked on prior to his residency at PRH and shares his motivation for Round 29. Later he shares his process for developing his project at PRH:

I see my work as a series of beckoning gestures that perpetually have more to do—that address about…more than just a visual encounter with them. Hopefully they can be agents for change in the communities where they occur. I’ve done one recent one on Bessie Smith, where the result is that now, there are going to be walking tours in Philadelphia that address places where she used to live, that were not there before. There is an activist underpinning that drives the whole process…because…it has to do something in the real world too—sure, spiritual nourishment for people who can get that from it, but at the same time it’s very practical and functional, like we were speaking earlier about African and Indian art being functional. This is functional too in that it has the purpose of—in this case, shaming the city of Houston into the fact that there are no memorials to Lightnin’ Hopkins.

As stated earlier, cultural work, as applied to the arts, emphasizes the socially conscious nature of art. When artists work as activists in the communities they serve, they are performing a form of cultural work. In this case, Adkins hopes to give voice to the community by making the contributions of a deserving community member known to the public. He hopes that his work will motivate social change in the communities he works with. Although he is an outsider entering a community, he performs cultural work through his activist approach and art process, where the art that is produced functions as a voice for the community and an instrument of change. At the same time, he enables communities to perform their own cultural work—to reclaim forgotten legacies that hailed from those communities and make them visible again. His
intention is for the community to continue their own cultural work after he is gone—to come up with creative solutions to keep those legacies alive. In the case with the community that honored Bessie Smith, the evidence is in the walking tours; for the PRH community, he hoped that the voice of the community is heard by the city, so a memorial in honor of Lightnin’ Hopkins could be erected. At the same time, he used his voice to send a message to the City of Houston, on behalf of its citizens, regarding their inaction in taking responsibility for creating such memorials.

In the next conversation, I speak with Sherman, another artist-in-residence who participated in Round 29. Sherman is primarily a performance artist, but also works as a sculptor and an art educator creating murals with at-risk teens as part of a city-wide program in Philadelphia. I asked him what role he thought community should play:

I think the community should have voice. I think it needs to speak up. When I do community meetings, often times, people are like—when they’re arguing with me, I know they’re not arguing with me. They’re arguing because there’re very little instances where someone comes to them and says, “What do you want?” That’s a very compelling and powerful thing because all of a sudden—‘Oh. Let me tell you how I feel.”

Really, people just want to know, “Who are you? What are you? What do you need? What do you want? What are your dreams? What are your desires?” Very rarely does that happen right now. So, I see those meetings as not so much—Well, I see it like it’s an opportunity for people to just speak, so that they can be heard...because often times we just aren’t.

Here, Sherman talks about the power of voice, and the need to listen to the voices from the community during the art process. He offers that community meetings are opportunities for community audience members to have their voices heard. This is especially important during the process of creating art in the community. To perform cultural work in the community, artists need to be sensitive and listen to the community to understand community values and meet their needs. These opportunities contribute to the artist’s process and result in art works that speak to the community and at the same time enables voices from the community to be heard.
In the next excerpt Sherman gives insight into his beliefs about community art and the contribution of community voice and participation. He also uses his work as an art educator in his mural program to illustrate what goes into this type of cultural work.

Well, again, community art is working with people, however that may be—working with children…getting them engaged with something, working with trying to bring families into the role of making something—creating something, responding to their needs, responding to what is lacking in their lives, as well as, for you [the artist]. It should be an exchange. What does the organization lack that it needs? Well, often times it needs people. It needs people to support it. It doesn’t have to be all the time artists and professionals. It just has to be people that are willing to see something else in their lives that they don’t ordinarily have. So, it’s got to be a two-way street, but it’s the responsibility of an organization to make that two-way street very possible. So, in a lot of ways—for me and my organization, we put a mural up on the wall, but the mural only—it doesn’t tell the tale. I mean, it’s a beautiful piece. It’s beautiful to look at. People don’t really know the process that goes into making that possible….and that’s the thing. It is a process. Even if the mural or art project never comes about, everyone has been touched by the idea that—you know, we all get together and sit down at the table and we can make something happen, whatever that may be. That may not be the original vision, but it can actually be something.

In this passage, Sherman talks about his approach to cultural work. He talks about an exchange that happens during the art process. Part of this exchange is listening to the community and their needs. He enables the community to perform their own cultural work where the artist and community audience all participate in the learning process. In the end, the cultural worker/artist must share control over the project to respond to what is lacking in the lives of both the artist and the community. By listening to voices from the community and at the same time guiding the process, both community and artist benefit from the experience of the art process and product.

5.4.2 Situatedness of Work

One way artists perform cultural work is by considering the situatedness of materials and content while creating art in the community. To set up this discussion, I would like to introduce
5.4.3 Critical Theory

In an article by Gaztambide-Fernandez (2008), he explains ideological shifts in the discourse of critical theory in relation to creative activities. His writing provides a backdrop for understanding the role of community in cultural work. Gaztambide-Fernandez writes:

Marx (Marx & Engels, 1967) argued that culture reflected the ideas of the ruling classes, and played the ideological role of protecting their interests by implicitly validating their social position. Antonio Gramsci (1971) furthered Marx’s conception of ideology by highlighting its hegemonic role; ideology pervades people’s actions, interactions, and the kinds of activities—including entertainment and creative activities—in which people engage. Gramsci (1985) proposed that a cultural revolution was necessary to overturn the capitalist order, because ideology was not just a reflection, but a tool of hegemonic coercion that could only be overturned with new cultural practices developed by the working class. Several members of the Frankfurt School also continued to develop a Marxist theory of culture and cultural production. Horkheimer and Adorno (2001) theorized the “culture industry” and Adorno (1995), sought to distinguish between “legitimate” and “vulgar” culture and to theorize the role of artistic production in consciousness raising. Echoing liberal humanism, Herbert Marcuse (1978) claimed that art had a “transhistorical substance” (p. xii) that manifested through historically located forms. He suggested that experiencing works of art triggered states of estrangement—or separation from what appears as social reality. This led the perceiver to realize the discord between the way capitalism overdetermined their experience and their own self-consciousness. Marcuse warned that art that was overtly political simplified and diminished its power to awaken, and ran the risk of being “flattened out, . . . losing its own dimension of change” (p. 35). He insisted that art had to illuminate not the dominated but the liberated world, or “risk to obscure the qualitative difference between the old and the new” (p. 36). This view is parallel to liberal humanism, in the idea that there is a supra-social source of artistic or aesthetic order and value. Yet, while the expectation of liberal humanism is that art will advance civilization—as the culture of the elite—critical theory has a social reconstructionist agenda that seeks to revolutionize class structure all together. (pp. 244-245)

In this passage, the author supports the concept of political art for radical change. Yet at the same time he warns us about artists who prescribe political art to the public, or community audience. Creating political, activist art without representation of community identity and experience continues to perpetuate the hegemonic practice of creating art for an exclusive elite
art audience. Although the intention is to create social change, it further reinforces divisions in class structure, as well as structures of race, and gender. Even though I am setting up this false dichotomy of elite and non-elite, this type of action applies to the artists and to the community audiences they work with. One way to resolve this conflict, which we have already discussed, is to include voices from the community. Another approach is to apply materials and content that are situated in the community to the works of art.

In the following section, I provide examples of how artists included situated materials and other content from the Third Ward and the PRH community as part of the art process. Here, Terry and I continue our conversation about his art process at PRH.

ST: For this project, are you looking in the community to gather information or talking with people, or is there any other way that you are…since you are creating something about a figure from here that you have to research—besides reading, is there anything else that you are doing to investigate?

TA: Well, I’ve talked to some people who knew Lightnin’ Hopkins. Some of them are around PRH. I know that he was active on Dowling Street. In fact he was called the King of Dowling Street.

ST: Uh-huh.

TA: So, because he played his guitar on a bus line that ran up and down Dowling Street for tips…and so, the fact that he did that—the last time I was down here I saw a boulder on Dowling Street. [***inaudible] some constriction and I asked Rick to save it for me and it’s probably going to be in the show. So, a lot of times it’s important that—that when something is site inspired, it’s important to get materials that existed at the same time or probably were witness to his travels…and so forth. So, for me it becomes a lot more meaningful. Then I try to do the best I can after that to get something out of it.

ST: So, you let things flow organically, but then you also want to use things that are there?

TA: Yeah…well I try to…

ST: Are there other methods you employ to gather information?

TA: Internet—the internet—internet. It’s easy. You can go as deep as the rabbit hole as you want to.
ST: How were you able to identify the people that you talked to around PRH and Dowling that knew him?

TA: Well, I just leave it up to the way things go. Yesterday a gentleman was driving me to an appointment I had at a neon place and he just started telling me about it—Didn’t even really ask me.

ST: So, just through dialogue?

TA: Yeah... In the same way that I try to let things happen with the art experience, it’s the same way I try to let things happen

As part of his art process, Adkins researched his subject, Lightnin’ Hopkins using the internet. For the artist genius working in isolation, researching a subject and community from afar could be enough to create an installation for the site. However, this would most likely lead to the traditional practice of prescribing art to a community. Although the intentions may be good, it can lead to suspicion and distrust from the community. This type of practice risks isolating the community from the message being sent. To perform cultural work well and for activism to work, the community must feel like an insider, rather than an outsider in the process. For Adkins, he went further than internet research. He submerged himself in the community. He included the community in his process. He met with people in the community and traveled to the places where memories of Hopkins existed. He gathered local resources and materials from the community to add to the materials he had been collecting for the exhibition. In a way, he also grew to become part of the community as he spent more time at the site.

As a result, community members were able to identify with his work. They were able to experience his work and walk away with something meaningful. They were able to recognize representations of community life, learn more about the life and legend of Hopkins, and reflect on their individual lives in a community context. I share examples of this later in the community section of this chapter.
The next example of how artists are using situated materials comes from a conversation with Sherman Fleming. Here, Sherman provides insight into his art process and how he came to use a large telephone pole that had fallen a few blocks from PRH due to a recent hurricane.

SF: So, I wanted to have something that evoked endurance and classic…and that his [Hopkins’] music is about making connections, hence, the telephone pole. It’s enduring. It’s strong. It’s phallic. It’s powerful. The way in which I position it has a certain power to it, but it’s also old. I found this old gnarly thing. Well, you saw it [referring to a fallen telephone pole located a few blocks away—damage left behind the recent Hurricane Ike]. It’s just an old ugly piece.

[Interview is interrupted briefly by community audience member with a question about his project.]

SF: So, the idea is to have the butt end crashing out of the house, which sort of disrupts the narrative. Usually you think of things crashing into the house. You certainly wouldn’t see an object of that size occupying the house. So, I wanted to sort of reverse and disrupt our expectations of what that pole can do—especially in light of the storm that just occurred. So it has a sort of destructive quality to it, but it’s also a telegraph. It’s used for the transmission of information. So, that’s why it seems like the best object to use for this.

ST: What was making you think of using the telephone pole? Was that something that happened when you came up here or was that---

SF: No. That was the one image that kept coming up through all of my process, as I was getting closer and closer to the date and I was just going, “I don’t know what the hell I’m going to do.” So, I was thinking about the shot gun house. It’s a straight through house. I was thinking, “What could I find that would articulate the narrowness of this house?” Again, I needed something long. I needed something that would be—that could measure that house when you looked in…and that’s where the telephone pole came in. Then, of course, when I heard about the storm, it reinforced the “There’s got to be some down telephone poles around here. There’s got to be! They’re all over the place.” That was my thinking. It was like resurrecting this object that people throw away, but I think it’s that throwaway quality that…[George, another artist in the show greets Sherman…so it’s that throwaway quality that—that when we think of musical genres that have been left by the wayside, but somehow creep back into the recognition and relevance. That’s what I think about the blues. Like that club we went to last night. It was like literally walking back in time, yet it was right there. It was very vital. It looked like 1972, but it was 2008, but it had that really—it wasn’t diluted. It was still there. It was really basic and had a lot of energy. So, there are other things that will supplement the pole.
Hurricane Ike struck Houston a week before most of the artists arrived to construct their installations. The storm left many Houstonians without power for at least a week. Many homes were damaged and the streets were still lined with debris from buildings and fallen trees. A very large tree had actually fallen right in front of the exhibition houses and one of the artists had considered including it in one of the installations.

Sherman’s choice to use the telephone pole in his installation created a visual reminder for the community audience of the recent events that had taken place at PRH and the greater Houston area. In his installation, the telephone pole goes through the house, extending from the front porch to the back of the house. Although he creates the illusion that the pole explodes from the inside of the house to the outside, it also reflects damage experienced by the community audience from Hurricane Ike just weeks ago. As critical theory suggests, this imagery works as a representation of everyday life experienced by the community audience. Sherman’s intent may have been to talk about issues of communication and racial tension, but because the fallen telephone pole was situated within the community, the community audience was able to have an entry point through an object and experience they were familiar with.

George is an artist and art professor at Rice University in Houston, TX. He works primarily in sculpture and has shown work all over the world. Here, George talks about his art process and installation for Round 29.

It’s sort of related to my work, but it took something outside of that. Because the way I work is very selfish…because I am working on my stuff and it has to be a certain way, whereas, when I did this house I had to adapt to the community. For example, I am adding more lightning bolts because I feel that… “shapes”—I’ll say “shapes”…to the house because I feel that it’s too minimal….and I want to get the idea across a little better and I feel I have to do that for the community. That’s not to say they wouldn’t understand, but it’s just that I feel that—I feel like I want to give more…give them more information about Lightnin’ Hopkins—more of a celebration that anything else.
In the next example, I talk to George Smith, a local artist who was invited to participate in *Round 29*. George, originally from New York, was one of the original founders of PRH.
When George talks about “shapes,” he is referring to a repetition of metallic lightning bolts placed along the walls of the shotgun house and a flashing neon lighting bolt hanging inside the house. He also created an Mbari sculpture mounted above the entrance to the front door, in reference to his recent body of work influenced by Nigerian sculpture. I asked him whether he gathered any information locally:

I did. I went to this blues club…a friend of mine took me there. I can’t remember the guy’s name—the guy who runs it. It was great—the way it was decorated, I kind of got into that kind of thing and he had Christmas lights up and he had all kinds of flashing lights. So, the idea of Lightnin’ Hopkins—playing with that name, made me think about lightning bolts and it gave me the idea of using neon for the first time. The place had neon. As you walked in, the neon was on the outside. There was always this kind of flashing going on. It was like a light bulb went off or a piece of neon went off in my head. Hahaha [chuckles]!

As part of his process in developing his installation, the artist vocalizes his desire to create representations that resonate with the community audience. He wanted to recreate the experience of being in a locally authentic blues club. He chose materials that translated into the ornate folk art atmosphere Lightin’ Hopkins might have played in when he was in Houston.
5.4.4 Working Creatively with Others

While at PRH many of the artists-in-residence talked about their experience of performing cultural work with the community and each other as a positive experience. They challenged notions of creativity as acts to be performed by the genius artist in isolation. By being open to the creative process while being submerged in the community, artists were able to represent their own identities along with representations from the community. The artists also recognized the supportive role of community to promote desired social change. Below, I provide examples from our conversations where artists viewed working creatively in the community as part of their own personal growth, in addition to the community they were serving.

While talking with Sherman, a visiting artist, he speaks about the creative process involved in producing community art and how the creative process has evolved from a solitary act to a social, communal one.

Again, I think art is used as a tool for social change. I mean, art has that power. It used to have that power a lot. When you think of modern art, I think a lot of people are just really wary of it. They don’t understand it and I think that misunderstanding—or not understanding, was by design…because I think it became a very solitary experience, which really was exclusive. It really was to…to only have the ‘in’ crowd get it…and whatever that ‘in’ crowd may be. So, I think community art is just sort of like—“Let’s give art back to those who have always had it in their lives and want to see more of it.” It is a communal experience. It is putting up something that everyone recognizes as something that is a part of them and is reflective of their values, not just the artists’ values.

In this passage, Sherman talks about art as a tool for social change. He talks about a solitary creative process performed by modern artists, who create art for an exclusive art audience, excluding everyone one else from the message being sent. When he talks about the creative process for artists in the community, he speaks of the inclusion of community through a social process, necessary to make social change.
5.5 What is Cultural Work as Defined by Community Audience Members?

Cultural work is not exclusive to the work of artists and program coordinators. Community audience members also contribute to the art process through cultural work. As community resources and experts of their community, they contribute to the content of the installations through personal stories, information, services, and participation. Even when the community plays a passive role, they contribute to cultural work by providing a context for artists to create, through local culture and ways of living. How community audience members engage with the work also is something artists must consider during the art process. Although artists at PRH are not required to work directly with the community audience members and are given the freedom to pursue their personal artistic vision, it is nearly impossible to separate community contexts from the art process. When artists-in-residence are submerged into the community and required to create site-specific work over a period of time, the culture of the community permeates and mediates the art process. This mediation is another way the community audience contributes to cultural work. Also, at PRH, community audience members are encouraged to carry out their own cultural work projects in response to the exhibitions.

5.5.1 Cultural Populism and the Role of Community in Cultural Work

One way to revolutionize class structure was to create art that represented the culture of the working class majority, rather than the culture and ideology of the elitist minority. This theory came to be known as cultural populism. Gaztambide-Fernandez (2008) writes:

Cultural populism suggests that the products of artistic work are representations of larger struggles over meaning and identification, and therefore, their significance lies not on their value as works of art or their ability to trigger consciousness, but on how audiences engage with them to represent themselves…The work of artists is part of the cycle in a web of production and consumption (Hall, 1997). In fact, this approach to understanding
culture suggests that we should question the very existence of an individual subject or agent who we might identify as “the artist.” (pp. 248-249)

This approach to cultural populism suggests that the artist/producer and community audience/consumer are both necessary in the process of cultural production. The community audience contributes to cultural work by providing their identity and life experiences as content for the art. The artist relies on the community audience to contribute cultural work through support, service, input, dialogue, and on-going engagement with the art. This contribution of cultural work by the community creates a platform necessary for social revolution.

CJ is a member of the PRH community. He first became attracted to PRH through the Spoken Word scene. He and his young son frequent the PRH campus, where his son attends classes in the after-school arts program. Although he views his participation in the artists-in-residence program primarily as an observer, he gives insight into the broader role of community in cultural work.

ST: So, do you feel the artwork produced in the program represents community identity?


ST: How so?

CJ: Not to have me rack my brain on a lot of stuff, but just the contemporary exhibit—the Lightnin’ Hopkins exhibit—it feels like some of the underlying cultural morays of greater Third Ward. I think one artist had all of these magazine type clippings of…It might have been out of the national, but some of it was in the local news, but some of it had that urban feel and everyday lifestyle of the people…

ST: So, but in that way it does speak to the community identity here?

CJ: Well, I think generally, most of the artists, I think, from what I’ve seen…that’s pretty interesting because I think you’re getting into that particular artist’s urge and where do they pull from to shape it, because it can be something—I see definite aspects of the community, but what I’m saying is everybody has a different experience. So, that’s kind of part of that broadening, in which an experience can come from maybe outside the community and there might be an
integration or a merger…but at the same time though, it doesn’t have to be. It can be pulled pretty much from that community experience and turned around a certain way. So, but I do see a lot—and from most of the exhibits I’ve seen here over time—I do experience things from, I would think, this broader community. Definitely in studying the particular artists, finding out where they’re from and in my travels, I can say, “Ok, they’re pulling from the community.”

ST: I’m kind of interested in that because they might come from somewhere else…and then they construct something here, but how are they considering the community, if they are even.

CJ: I think there’s some commonality. I wonder if I can use an example here. I thought Mr.[Terry] Adkins’ work—Was that the one with the Western motif?

ST: Yes.

CJ: Yeah—ok. To me, Houston really has a strong cowboy tradition across the board and there are a lot of Black cowboys here…and that kind of stuff—the saddle and all that kind of stuff, I don’t know if he’s been here, but some of that kind of stuff looks really particular to the way people look at things here—right in the greater Houston area. Houston, I think, basically—we’re really kind of—I think you told me you’re from Houston too, right?

ST: Yeah.

CJ: So, one thing I don’t know if you’ve recognized and I won’t say it’s unique, but Houston is kind of like the Gulf Coast—really.

ST: Uh-huh.

CJ: I mean, you do have the northeastern continuous urban block, but Houston is, to me, one of the more interesting mergers—with the urban and the rural. I think it really is.

ST: I think so too.

CJ: So, for him to do that, it seems like he definitely had some type of semi-rural connection…and I understand Houstonians doing it because a lot of folks are only a generation or two removed from the country and still go back to their rural roots monthly—and definitely for the family reunion—and definitely when you’re young, for the summer. If he was from Houston and did that, I would say, ‘Ok. I understand.’ Now, I don’t know where he’s from originally. If he got that stuff from the East coast and came down here…to me, that’s pretty amazing. Let’s put it that way.
In this conversation, CJ illustrates the role of community in the process of cultural work. Although the artist appears to be the primary fabricator of art, the fact that the content resonates with beliefs of community identity is not a coincidence when it comes to cultural work. Cultural work is a co-construction and merger of both the artist and community experience. While the artist may utilize his life experience and experience of executing work, the community also contributes by providing content from their own life experiences in the meaning-making process.

The community contributes to cultural work by providing their expertise on community life and culture. For example, they may inform the artist about the local experience, share personal stories, or provide historical information. They may also perform cultural work by contributing dialogue necessary to keep the art relevant, vibrant, and alive.

5.5.2 Power of Voice

The community audience may also perform cultural work in more visible ways. They may physically participate with artists by contributing their talents and knowledge to the art process through performance or fabrication of art pieces. These forms of cultural work provide a visible platform for community voices to be expressed and heard. Voice gives power to the community audience to represent their own identities and to become active participants in the production and dissemination of knowledge. Voice gives the community audience power to make their histories and legacies visible, to make injustices visible, and the power to act now, creating new histories and legacies for future generations.

The following two interview excerpts provide examples of these forms of cultural work performed by community audience members. In this first example, CJ, a community audience member talks about a performance piece comprised of ceremony, spoken word poetry, skits, and
live music. The performance was used as an incantation to wake the spirit of Lightnin’ Hopkins.

In this conversation we talk about J***, another community audience member recruited by the visiting artists to play music with them.

CJ: I really enjoyed Mr. Adkins and his performance. I enjoyed the music. I enjoyed the ceremony a little bit, but really I enjoyed the music and I enjoyed how he put the program together. The highpoint to me was—it was kind of an avant garde piece. This guy J*** was on trumpet and I think Adkins was on a saxophone at that point. They had a drummer. The three of them—yeah, that was pretty good. That was good stuff. When I say ‘good stuff,’ you might not know what I mean.

ST: Yeah. Tell me what you mean by ‘good stuff.’

CJ: Well, ‘good stuff’ is kind of a colloquial term. What it means is…everybody likes folk and rock, whatever they like. When they hit it, when they feel it, they know. You’re in that space. They hit the zone. Let’s put it that way. That’s what we’re talking about in spoken word, when we say ‘hit the zone.’ When you’re in the zone, that’s a very, very pleasurable—you’ve done it…and they hit the zone. What more can you ask.

ST: So, you talked about J***. He’s a local community member here?

CJ: A lot of people say he’s one of the deans of spoken word here in Houston—maybe age wise. He plays trumpet and maybe some other instruments, but I think that event brought out one of the best performances I’ve seen out of him. I really didn’t think he had that intensity. Yeah! I learned a different dimension about the J*** character, who’s also a poet—but who’s best known as a performing poet.

ST: I was just curious since it was someone from the community here, and not just the visiting artists—that someone else, a community artist from here was in there.

CJ: Would you define him as a community artist?

ST: Well, I’m just saying since he played his trumpet with the other artists…and you just told me he’s a poet. So, how did you feel it affected the overall performance?

CJ: J***’s performance?

ST: Yeah…and the fact that someone from here participated too.

CJ: I think it was a big plus. I think it was a very good addition. I think he was part of that moment. When I said it hit the zone. I think he was very much a part of it.

In this example, J*** contributed to cultural work by bringing his experience, talent, and expertise to the performance. Through this venue, the artists enabled J*** to perform his own
cultural work. At the same time, the community audience was able to engage with the performance and identify with J***, as a member of the community. J*** had the power to represent his own identity, as an individual and as a member of the community. He contributed to the production of knowledge by participating with the other artists and became part of history in the making at PRH.

The following example is taken from an interview with my mother, Indira. Her journey of becoming a member of the PRH community led to her contributing her own creative work to the Round 29 performance and one of the installation houses. My mother’s initial introduction to PRH began through my participation there. She attended film screenings, art openings, and participated in family day activities. While I was teaching the after-school program she also attended the children’s fine arts programs and performances. She became a member of the PRH community audience over time through her participation. In the following excerpts, my mother talks about her background and how she came to contribute cultural work during Round 29 as a member of the PRH community.

Her participation at PRH and interaction with art, artists, and other community audience members made her reflect on her own art experiences as a child and stirred up her own desire to create art.

Everybody has different ideas, different views and made me think a lot more and it wanted me to get involved more into arts and things like that. Even though I was so much interested when I was little, but I just didn’t nourish art, but then I started thinking about it and trying to do something.

During this part of our conversation my mother, Indira shares her art making experience, from her upbringing in India to her journey to Houston in the early 1970s, and through her present day life.
I don’t have official training or anything, but when I was growing up, I used to do some sketches—anything I see. Then, any creative thing—I used to sew, design, embroidery, or any decorative pieces. Anytime I see, I used to do the creative—just look at the dresses through the window…and I used to make dresses for you. It’s kind of, to me—it’s art because I don’t look at the patterns or anything. There is an eye for it—how to do, what to do. I use to do it. I used to decorate—myself, for the house, in my own house, but I never had formal training…and I used to sew so many different things—threading, needling, knitting, or any kind of things—kind of art…crafts.

In the following excerpt she talks about her participation with PRH artist-in-residence program and her feelings about membership in community audience. She talks specifically about her contribution to Round 29, where she created fraternal sashes for the visiting artists and an additional symbolic sash for the spirit of blues musician Lightnin’ Hopkins.

ST: Tell me about your experience with the artist-in-residence program. In what ways do you participate in the program? Why do you choose to participate? How would you like to participate?

IT: The first few times I watched and enjoyed it. I participated one time when they were honoring the musician-artist [Lightnin’ Hopkins] from the community. They needed some help with their sashes and I did that…and I went there. I sewed all day and I went there and I put them on them and helped them…and really—I enjoyed it and I felt proud to be helping the community as a community member. I felt like even though I didn’t use to think I was a part of the community—when I went there and I did all that, I felt like I was part of the community…and they were so happy that I was helping and made me very proud…and I felt like I was one of them. They made me feel like one of them. So, rest of the time, I enjoyed every time I went there.

ST: So, tell me what were the sashes used for?

IT: They put them on. They wore it honoring a person [Lightnin’ Hopkins]. They also put it on him—symbolically. I’m not exactly sure what was the meaning of it, but that was one of the decorations they put on to do the performance.

In this case, my mother contributed cultural work by bringing her artistic talent, expertise and life experience to the performance piece through her sewing and embroidery. After the performance, the fraternal sash created for the deceased Hopkins was placed in one of Terry Adkins’ exhibition spaces. Adkins draped the sash over a throne he created for Hopkins in the center of the house, where it remained until the last day of the Round. As with J***, the artists
enabled my mother to perform her own cultural work and also fulfilled her desire to create again. Her contribution of cultural work made her identity visible, while solidifying her feelings about community membership.

5.5.3 Situatedness

The theory of cultural populism suggests community audience members participate in the process of cultural production by providing the cultural basis in which the artists create representations of community life. The situatedness of a work of art and the process in which it is conceived affects how community audiences engage with the work. The situtedness, or lack of—
regarding community culture and experience also affects the artist’s ability to communicate messages to and with the community audience, as is the case with the following examples provided by BR.

BR is a local artist and studio art professor who resides in the Third Ward. She has participated at PRH as both an artist and community audience member. For Round 29 she was recruited as a community member to assist the visiting artists with their installations. In a conversation with BR, she shared her observations regarding two artists and her feelings about their approach to cultural work.

During the 10-12 days before the opening, 4 of the 5 visiting artists arrived to begin constructing their installations. One installation house remained empty until the day before the opening when the last artist arrived. His installation house was bare except for a video monitor with his assistant, a young Korean woman singing on screen. Here BR talks about her experience with this particular installation house from the Round 29 opening.

BR: Each of the other houses, I got something specific from…and when I walked into that one, I totally didn’t get anything from it. I know that sounds terrible. That’s the God’s honest truth.

ST: I’m curious then…why do you suppose that one wasn’t as effective or successful in representing community identity?

BR: Because the person was not part of the community at all—not from here. I don’t feel—not that all of the artists were, because they weren’t. Only one of them actually lives here, if I’m not mistaken…but that camaraderie, in that sense of grabbing things and—the light pole, which existed here…the pieces of wood that we found in the street…the newspaper from the community. It was very literally connected to the community…and when I walked into that space, I didn’t recognize the person on the screen. I didn’t hear the music I was supposed to be hearing to make that connection to this person [Lightnin’ Hopkins] who was from the community. There was no reference—no visual reference for me. The other houses had very specific references.

ST: Mmm..hmmm. This particular artist wasn’t present for all of it…

BR: Yeah. He wasn’t here. I didn’t talk to him.
The artist who created this installation was not present in the community in the days leading up to the exhibition. His lack of presence, interaction, and dialogue with the community created a space where BR, a community member was unable to engage with his work. The lack of community representation left BR confused by the message the artist was trying send. His process excluded community audience members and resulted in a poor experience for community audience members.

After opening day this particular artist’s installation house was locked and no longer available for public viewing. The monitor and DVD player were expensive electronic devices that could not be secured in the house. This was problematic to the program coordinator and made community audience accessibility and interaction impossible to achieve. Had the artist spent more time in the community and fostered a dialogue with the community audience, he could have been more sensitive to their needs. He could have altered his approach to consider the community and the space to create work that was more accessible and available to the community audience.

In the next excerpt BR and I continue our conversation about her experience with the same installation. She then follows with an example of another artist’s approach to cultural work from a previous Round.

Yeah. That’s why—those are probably the situations where I’ve walked in and not been able to make a connection. Robert Hodges is a good example of an artist connecting directly because his characters came from him working in this house and then [community members] literally coming by. They were not premeditated at all. He ended up using them as characters for his wall pieces because that’s who he met during that time. Had it been anybody else coming in, they would’ve ended up being on the wall. You know what I mean?

Here BR uses Hodges as an example of an artist performing cultural work by taking a very literal approach of interacting with the community. Hodges’s work developed out of his
interactions with community audience members. Terry Adkins and the 3 other artists who arrived 10-12 days prior to the opening of Round 29 did not take the same literal approach, but they did spend time in the community. Their work was influenced by being submerged in the local culture of the community and through dialogue with community members. They also utilized local resources, including people to assist and included local artifacts in their art process. As a result, community members, like BR were able to engage with their work through representations of community life. If the artist prescribes a message about the community without dialogue or engagement with the community they run the risk of isolating community members from their work. As a result, the community audience may not get the artist’s message because they feel excluded. There needs to be a negotiation between artist and community—a model of practice that encourages communication.

5.5.4 Creativity

The impact of the artists’ Rounds is evident in how they live on through community projects. These community projects, supported by the PRH organization, are often born from the creative minds of community audience members, which include the community audience, participating local artists, and staff. Visiting artists-in-residence may have ideas of how their projects may impact community activities, but when they leave the site, control over which projects live on and how they live on is taken on by community members. As a result of the Rounds, community audience members become enabled to perform their own cultural work. They contribute to cultural work by interpreting the artists’ work—installations and performances, and devising creative solutions and projects they deem most important to their community.
For example, as a result of the attention brought to public figure, Lightnin Hopkins through *Round 29*, on-going community projects were set into motion to honor the local legend. In the years following the exhibition opening, community projects took the shape through a mural, a historical marker, and a proposed public art piece in the PRH neighborhood campus.

5.5.4.1 Lightnin’ Hopkins Mural

The mural was a project undertaken by an after-school art teacher and her teen students at PRH. Following *Round 29*, students in the PRH after-school art program participated in an arts education program held at the House of Blues in Houston through the International House of Blues Foundation. This fieldtrip enriched their understanding of folk arts, from blues music to the visual arts. Later, they painted a blues mural in honor of Hopkins. These series of events was not anticipated by the artists-in-residence who participated in *Round 29*. These community activities and projects were creative acts driven by the community—the community audience performing their own cultural work.

5.5.4.2 Historical Marker and Public Art Proposal

While talking with Terry Adkins, artist and curator of *Round 29*, he spoke about the activist underpinnings of his art. He described his intent for the exhibition, “shaming the City of Houston into the fact that there are no memorials to Lightnin’ Hopkins.” His intent was to bring this injustice to light and for the community to perform their own cultural work to make this happen. Following *Round 29*, members of the Houston blues community converged with members of the PRH community to erect a city historical marker in honor of Hopkins on the PRH campus. It was through the perseverance and campaigning of community members that
spurred the project. A little over two years from the opening of the exhibition, PRH and the Houston Blues Society held a dedication for the marker on what is now called Hopkins’ Corner. The mural created by teen members of the PRH community was presented at the celebration and an announcement was made that there would be a public art piece to be placed on the bus stop across the street from the marker.
5.6 What is Cultural Work According to Program Coordinators?

At PRH, the social dynamics of cultural production include artists, community audience members, and program coordinators. Although they are not as visible as artist and community participants in the art-making process, they provide an important and vital service as cultural workers. I believe they are the art education practitioners of community art institutions, such as PRH. Their professional artistic experiences, coupled with membership in the community, places program coordinators in a unique position to assist in the flow of power and communication between artists and community audiences as mediators.

5.6.1 Cultural Worker/Mediator

Program coordinators typically come from a fine arts background, but how do they evolve into program coordinators and how does this affect the way they perform cultural work? Dubin (1987) talks about the process of developing artists into cultural workers in his book *Bureaucratizing the Muse*:

> This term [cultural worker] referred to individuals with artistic training who had successfully learned to adapt their skills to the existing market, whose needs as workers could be as seriously acknowledged as those of other occupational groups, and whose contributions to the health and welfare of local communities would be considered of value and thus worthy of continued support. (p. 35)

Simply put, he refers to the process as a way of taming the free-spirited artist. In fact, the tone of his book implies cultural work as being a negative experience for trained artists, sacrificing creative freedom for regular employment. Unfortunately, this outdated concept of artists working as cultural workers in the public sector still pervades the imaginations of those in the art world. After spending time at PRH and observing the work of program coordinators and
staff, I learned they found their work to be challenging at times, but also rewarding, highly creative, and rooted in a dynamic spirit of activism.

Ashley Clemmer Hoffman, the program coordinator at PRH, is a petite energetic young woman, who talks very passionately about her work in the community. After completing a BA in Fine Arts, she enrolled in an AmeriCorps program associated with the Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA) called Community Art Corps. During that time, she created art curriculum, taught in an after school youth program, and completed a Master’s degree in community art from MICA. In the following passage Ashley talks about her journey from artist to program coordinator/cultural worker and her attraction to cultural work in the community.

Well, my background started as an art-maker and then moved more into utilizing art to impact community—still as an art-maker…and when I took on this job, although I had some experience working as an organizer, and administrator, and program developer, this was really my first experience of removing myself from that art-making side, and being on the other side of representing the institution and working with the artist…and really helping to provide a good experience for them. My attraction has always been working with people and utilizing the creative process to make connections—I love that. So, I’ve been here for 3 years now and I’ve coordinated a total of 7 Rounds and 4 Summer Studio programs, as well as other numerous public programs and studio residencies. So, the experience has been a lot of trial and error and a lot of observing when things go well and things don’t go so well…and really learning how to facilitate that process—“How do you put everything in place, so that people can have a meaningful, but still very natural, organic experience?”

Ashley’s training and varied experiences in art-making, working in the community, and writing and teaching art curriculum provide insight into the preparation of a cultural worker. Each of her experiences has contributed to how she approaches cultural work—how she identifies with artists and community audience members and mediates between them. In addition, she expresses her attraction to working with community and the creative process afforded by her position, debunking myths that cultural work is boring and stifles creativity.
The following passage is actually one continuous conversation that I have broken up into sections for the purpose of clarity. After each section, I include personal observations regarding the education and training of cultural workers.

ST: What kind of formal education/training do you have?

ACH: I received my undergraduate degree at Roanoke College. It was a Bachelor’s of Art in General Fine Arts and that was in 2003. Then I enrolled in an AmeriCorps program that was associated with the Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA), called Community Art Corps. So, that was 2 years of creating curriculum and teaching an after-school arts program with youth. Then in my last year, I was enrolled and graduated from MICA with a Master’s in Community Art.

ST: Have you worked as a program coordinator/art educator on any community art programs/projects prior to your employment at PRH?

ACH: Mmmm…hmm [yes]. Before I came here, I was working at the Creative Alliance, which is a multi-purpose arts organization in Southeast Baltimore…and there, I was the assistant director of the education program. So, I was working predominantly with artists in the Baltimore community, who were teachers. I held two roles. On one hand, I was developing curriculum and teaching, but then, more specifically, I was coordinating the program. So, I was in the process of hiring the educators, helping them develop the curriculum, and then, overseeing those projects.

ST: Can you give me an example of a program/project where you felt the community audience had a really good experience when you were there?

ACH: When I was at the Creative Alliance?

ST: Uh-huh [yes].

ACH: I would speak more specifically if it—I think it still relates. As part of my Masters program, I created a number of different arts-based projects in the community because there was a big focus on making art in community. For my thesis exhibition, I worked with individuals throughout Southeast Baltimore, focusing on food…and I was specifically interested in families who’d immigrated to Southeast Baltimore because it’s the most culturally diverse part of Baltimore…and I was using food as a tool for exploring their heritage, looking at the things they hold dear, but even more importantly, the intersection that occurs between cultures—things that individuals who immigrated from Poland are doing, that in some ways, are similar to people who immigrated from the Dominican Republic—the different types of food that seemed to come up on different levels in different cultures. So, what I did was, I collected their stories and learned about the foods that they represent with their culture…and then I brought them all
together to share their stories, and talk about their experience moving to Baltimore and what that was like, and the food they carried with them—that was their home. Then afterwards, we all had a big tapas dinner, where we all ate each other’s food. I felt like, in general, it was such a wonderful response. First off, from these individuals, who are from the community, who came into the art center, which used to be this old theater—many of them associated this theater as part of their community, but as the community has shifted and become gentrified and changed, the theater is now this arts organization. A lot of people don’t feel comfortable going into it because it’s alien to them. They don’t know what it is. So, part of my aim was to bring these people from the community into this space, which is theirs. It’s in their community. So, first off, I found that great—they all were really honored, I think, to be highlighted and featured in this space…but, two—a lot of these individuals from these different communities—individuals from an Italian community, Greek community, individuals from the Dominican Republic, Polish individuals…where else? It was like 6 different groups, and many of them are all neighbors with each other, but they never interact with each other. They never go into each other’s restaurants. So, it was really fun watching them go to each other’s tables and try each other’s foods…and there was this one woman from the Dominican Republic, who spoke only Spanish, and she ended up at the Greek table…and so, she was eating all of these really delicious foods, and meanwhile, the grandmother of this Greek family, who spoke no English, as well—they’re communicating, but they’re not. They’re speaking their own language…and this woman was so taken by this Greek food that she had never tried before, and probably would never try if she wasn’t in this environment. So, long story longer, I feel like that was a situation where I felt like my role as an organizer and as a visionary, really paid off and showed—it brought people together and people were able to share and they seemed very receptive to it…and that’s continued. So, every year they continue to do those dinners.

This project was an important learning experience for Ashley. As part of her Master’s thesis, she needed to submerge herself into the community. Her initial introduction to the community came through a two year long job placement opportunity as part of her teacher training through the Community Art Corps/MICA program. While performing her work with art educators and youth attending the program, she began to make observations about the local residents in that area. This time allowed her to learn about the local, identify strengths and needs, and devise creative solutions through creative programming.

In the following passage, Ashley continues talking about her experience with the Creative Alliance, where she interned and worked as part of her training.
ACH: When I was in Baltimore—this is just more about what happens when you actually go to a community and work with community and you spend time with them, you start to really get feedback from their observations, especially in response to organizations, because I think sometimes, as an organization, we’re kind of removed—although we’re in a community, serving a community.

Sometimes we’re not with the people, so we don’t really hear what they feel. So, I’m working at this place, Creative Alliance in Baltimore, and it’s housed in this old theater and this used to be where everyone would go watch movies and everyone had all these stories. It’s kind of like the El Dorado. It’s this hotspot for many, many years and then it just started falling in disrepair and finally it closed and a group of artists, who had this project called the Creative Alliance in a different neighborhood, were looking for a new location, found this theater, and renovated it—made it amazing and contemporary and beautiful. Then they started doing all this art stuff inside—and mind you, they’re doing some things that are very risqué. They have a huge gay following and they do these gay burlesque shows…and then they have artists who are living there. There’s an education program, which is all about outreach. Then there’re two exhibition spaces…there’re films—a lot of it is contemporary and cutting edge. So, you have all these old-timers—mostly Eastern European immigrants, who were raised there on this Eastern Avenue, which can be compared to Dowling Street. It used to be the “hot spot.” It was this huge corridor of businesses—just a big economic boom at one time…and then it changed. So, it wasn’t quite that way anymore. At that time—similar to Third Ward and I think a lot of neighborhoods, it was becoming gentrified. It was a mixture of a growing Latino community coming in, as well as rich White people, who were buying up the townhomes—$50,000 townhomes were being rehabbed and now going for $300,000. So anyway, there were these weird things that were happening, where people felt separated from the place they called their home. So, my first project within my Masters program was to do some kind of project within the community. Because I was working at the Creative Alliance, I wanted to connect it to the Creative Alliance in some way, so I decided to do a project about the theater, when it was a theater. So, I went to this senior home. It’s kind of like a day space where senior citizens would go and play games and hang out.

ST: Like an adult day stay?

ACH: Yeah, but they’re taking themselves there. So, they’re all independent. They’re living by themselves. It’s more of just a space for them to go, spend time, and they do programming and activities. So, I go there and introduce myself and I’m interviewing people—totally on the spot. I’m really not that prepared. I have a lot of expectations. I don’t quite understand what it means to work in community. I don’t quite understand that it’s really a relationship—you’re nurturing relationships. So, I go in—and people were amazing! They were amazing, but I was very like—there on the spot, ready to interview people…and I’m having these interviews in the middle of them having lunch—and asking them questions and passing out surveys and trying to learn about what it was like being at a theater—and people were really responsive…and I ended up with a group of
about 6 people, who started having ongoing interviews with me and gave me photographs from their childhood—original photographs…gave me envelopes of photographs, that I took with me, scanned, and then didn’t bring them back on time—So much I didn’t know about how you do this stuff. But, what I want to speak about, one—I would say they gave me a positive response, in terms of my interaction, despite the fact that I was young and naïve, but what I noticed more so was, that they were very negative about the Creative Alliance…and they were like, “What is that place?” They felt like there weren’t any—There was no signage telling them what it really was…and the hours weren’t made available. They couldn’t see when they passed by, when you could go in. Even when they were open, the doors are locked. You have to get buzzed in. So, it was like this fortress in their community. This place they always went in and they felt totally disconnected…and it seemed the Creative Alliance wasn’t putting forth any energy to bring them in…and they weren’t doing any programming that was relevant to the community. So, what I was finding, were people that were kind of like, “Why don’t they just show regular movies there? Why does it have to be these weird black and white movies from the 1930s that are silent films?” I don’t think that’s necessarily negative, but it was very constructive and I think I went in just expecting to be scooped up and welcomed and loved…and what I found was, even though I was just a student interning at this organization, I was receiving a lot of feedback that seemed not so positive. I would say this similar thing has happened here at PRH when I first started meeting people here in the community and getting this buzz back. It didn’t match the reputation of these two fine organizations that are so wonderful. That would be that experience. So, to fast-forward my experience here…

This conversation reveals so much about the importance of spending time the field and the lessons that can be learned and applied throughout one’s career as a cultural worker. While she was in Baltimore at Creative Alliance, she took the time to thoughtfully research the history and development of the local area and how these events impacted local residents. She also wanted to understand why local residents were not utilizing the programs and resources of their organization- why they were not participating members of the community audience. Although she felt prepared to approach possible participants at the senior center, she also humbly reveals there was so much she more she needed to learn. Working at the Creative Alliance gave her a chance to apply and test the theories and methods she had learned through coursework in the field. More importantly, she was also able to develop her own approaches and personal philosophy as a cultural worker that she can take anywhere she works and lives.
5.6.2 Mediation and Art Education

The art that is produced at PRH is the product of mediation, between the artists/art world and community/public life. The knowledge that is produced from the art and art process is a product of mediation between artists and community and between school and public life. It is the creative work of the program coordination and her role in the process of mediation that makes this educative experience possible!

This project is concerned with the role of program coordinators and their ability to mediate, so that artists and communities work together, providing better experiences for the artists and communities they serve. Through mediation, program coordinators create opportunities for respectful communication between artists and community audience members. Program coordinators can also mediate by matching specific community members that may be a valuable resource for a visiting artist. In addition, program coordinators can create opportunities for community audiences to have on-going dialogue surrounding the work, once it is completed. These experiences foster a sense of shared ownership over art in the community, both artists and community audience members identifying with the art work and what is represented. Through this type of mediation, artists and community audience members value each other’s contributions, creating a positive learning experience. This is why I believe program coordinators, as mediators, are practitioners of art education. The evidence of knowledge production and learning through the act of mediation is in the art that is produced and on-going dialogue that ensues.

The following passage is an example of how ACL works with and mediates between visiting artists and community audience members. Through the process of mediation, ACL sets the stage for an educational experience where knowledge is exchanged and produced.
ACH: Essentially, I run the entire public art program—sometimes it’s curating, sometimes it’s selecting the artists. Most regularly, it’s just coordinating the artists’ experience, from the beginning of creating the contracts with the artists, helping them to arrange their accommodations—they take care of their own flights, but I work with them, making sure they’re getting everything lined up, collecting all of their information, figuring out where they’re going to be housed, setting up their space, and then really working closely with them about what project it is they want to do while they’re here and how I can aid them, in making sure that that happens, whether it be just connecting them with other people or actually assisting them in developing it—whatever that might look like…all the way to doing everything needed to help them get ready for the exhibition opening and then having the show up for the duration of the exhibition.

ST: For that last question, you addressed very much how you work with the artists. Can you tell me about the part of your role that deals with the community audience?

ACH: Well, I think that…I’m the face of the public art program. So, everyone who lives here and who’s in the community, as well as people who just come to visit—like if they want to learn more about the public art program or see an exhibition, I’m generally the person they interact with. When people come in for tours, I’m the person who talks with them and shows them around. So, I’m constantly interacting with community, whether that’s “community”—in the sense of people who just live nearby, or if it’s just the community of people who support PRH, or the children and the parents—who are part of the education program or the Young Mothers program, or the residents. So, I have an ongoing working relationship with all of them…and specifically, when artists come in, I spend more time with the community than I do with the artists, because the artists are only coming in 3 times a year, but when the artists come in, I then, become the gatekeeper in some ways…and I’m the one that can help them, kind of direct them to how to connect with the community—whatever that means. It’s really getting a sense of what they’re interested in, and then combing through my files that live in my head of who could be a good person. Like—“Oh—I want to do something related to blues.” “Well, ok. Who in this community plays blues?” or “Who are the people we’ve worked with in the past?” or “What are the clubs that they might need to go to?” “Who’s who in that community that they need to connect with?”…and sometimes I know and sometimes I don’t. So, sometimes it’s a little bit of me doing a little research for them or asking around to see how to best connect them with the appropriate people.

Just as artist and community audience are producers of cultural work, program coordinators are too. Program coordinators identify simultaneously with the identities of artist, community member, and organizational representative. As producers of cultural work, they are able to work with artists, with community audiences, mediate between artists and community
audiences, and produce as artist and community audience member. Their creative intellectual work and ability to coordinate with all involved to produce an exhibition and events surrounding it, is also evidence of their role as cultural worker.

5.6.3 Power of Voice

Through a process of mediation, program coordinators can create opportunities for social interaction between visiting artists and community audience members. These meetings allow artists and community audience members to learn from one another. These social interactions enable community audience members to share knowledge about their lives and their perspective of community. During such occasions, community audience members are able to contribute to the art making process through the power of voice.

In some cases these meetings lead to community members producing cultural work with the visiting artists. As a result, community audience members become visible in the art making process and have the power to express their voices through the art that is produced.

For example, Ashley talks about a Round where she connected women from PRH’s Young Mother’s Program with visiting artists-in-residence and how this led to some dynamic collaborative installations.

This last “round,” I worked closely with the woman who runs the Young Mothers Program and I led 3 consecutive workshops with the Young Mothers on arts exploration…and we, specifically, made those times so that they would fall at the same time as when the artists were here. So, what I did for that was, I invited all the artists to come to the Young Mothers session and meet them and everybody got to meet each other…and then the second session, I invited all the artists, if anyone would like to do a presentation or do a project. So, one woman came and she did a presentation and then we did an arts project afterwards. During that first session, I said, “This is a good time, if any of you need help, the Young Mothers might be available to help you.” So, a couple of the people said, “I would love to work with one of the Young Mothers.” So, we had 2 artists who connected with 2 other Young Mothers and for their entire installation the Young Mothers helped them with their project….and as a result of them coming to the
Young Mothers session early on and learning about it, a lot of interaction happened out of that, without me really having to push it. So, 2 people had this initial idea, and it didn’t quite happen as they planned. What they ended up doing was, inviting people from the Young Mothers Program in residence to come in and interviewed them, and then that became part of this sound installation that juxtaposed with choir music from local churches…and another artist was looking at an ancient manuscript from the Philippines that was rediscovered in the U.S. So, she ended up tattooing the names of all of the Young Mothers on the front of the house using nails—using that ancient manuscript. So, the whole front of the house was dedicated to the Young Mothers. So, I’ve tried to make more—letting it be organic, but also trying to create situations. One “round,” last spring, I worked with the residents and we did a pot luck that all the artists were invited to, so that all the artists could meet all the residents early on…and we all had food together and got to meet each other…and then out of that, they were able to make connections and do some projects together.

As a mediator, Ashley created opportunities, or “situations” for visiting artists to connect with community audience members. During these meetings, there was an exchange of knowledge between the artists and the community audience. Initially, the artists taught the Young Mothers about their work and the art making process. Later, the Young Mothers taught the artists about their personal life experiences and about life in the community. From this shared learning experience, they were able to co-construct work that included voices from the community.

When program coordinators are trusted members of the community, they can also mediate on behalf of the community, so community voices are heard. This is especially vital for addressing problems with the programs or participating artists, so the community audience has a positive experience. Ashley talks about an instance when a community member shared a negative experience while working with a visiting artist.

ACH: I selected all artists who’ve worked in a community setting, who were really interested in being here. All of it was focused on this idea of home space and place, whether it was a different home or different place or this one, but—kind of making that correlation. I had an artist here. She was doing this ceramic project and it was kind of like this ceramic quilt—was the idea. So, she was making all these beautiful pillows and she was lining the entire floor with all these porcelain pillows—that it almost looked like a tabletop, but then also like this quilt. So, she
was here for 3 weeks, and as part of her being here, she wanted to open up her art house as a studio, where people could come in and make something. She was inviting people to make flowers—she was teaching them to make flowers, and the idea was that at the end they could have that flower, but during the exhibition, it would be part of this quilt. So, from the outside standpoint, it seemed like it was going swimmingly…and she was really excited. She worked with the Young Mothers. She worked with the Young Mothers children. She worked with residents. She worked with people just passing by on the street. She worked with individuals from the greater Houston area, who found out about it, who came through. She got lots of participation and she totally activated her space. It felt like a real ceramics studio. She had tables set up, and there were ceramics everywhere, and she was pouring and making…and she was engaged—and she was living here. Then I spoke with one of the residents who felt yucky about the situation.

ST: A resident, as in an artist-in-residence or a resident living here?

ACH: A resident who lives here—someone who lives here. A community member, who lives specifically here at PRH—on our campus.

ST: Ok.

ACH: She felt kind of exploited or something. She was a Black woman, who had participated in the session, and the woman holding the session was a White woman—a White woman, originally from California, who was living in LA, and worked at an all-Black school, and living in—pretty much, an all-Black community…and most of the people she was working with here, were Black…and this woman—being a Black woman, came to me and just said she had a very—It was just a really bad experience and she felt there was something that was just kind of yucky about it. It was kind of like this White woman coming in to save the world, or to come save them, or to bring them something, or expose them to something…and I never really got more of a response than that, but what I did talk about with this resident was, that probably what should happen is that we should create some kind of document, where people can give their feedback in the future.

[Interview is interrupted briefly as Ashley talks to community member passing by.]

So, what came out of my discussion with the resident, who had this negative experience was that we should really assess—we should have some kind of formal process for assessing people’s experience—both the artists, in general, but also the residents. Anyone who comes and participates in these workshops, we should get their feedback on what that experience was like, so that we can really look at: “What was it about that, that wasn’t comfortable?”; “What was it about that for this resident that just made her feel uneasy?”; “Would it have been different if I was there?” She just had her house open and there was no mediator. There was no one from PRH making the introduction. It was just the resident
interacting directly with the artist. So, I feel like that was negative feedback that I wouldn’t have known of or seen, had someone not told me. Fortunately, this was a resident who feels really comfortable with me, but there could be a lot of people who don’t know me that well, that could never say that. From the outside it looked like such a successful project and the product was amazing and the installation was beautiful…and in the end, she gave away every single ceramic piece in the house. She opened up the house, and every single person she interacted with, she had gotten their name and signature. She wrote them “thank you”s. She gave away all the ceramics. So, in terms of best practices, I thought she was very good—coming in, the way she interacted with people was very respectful, but there was something there about that interaction that wasn’t good on the receiving end…and I don’t know what that was, really.

As a trusted mediator, Ashley enabled a community audience member to share her voice. When the community audience member shared her feelings and concerns about the artist, Ashley realized more assessment and community feedback was needed to improve interactions with artists. Because this community audience member stepped forward, Ashley was able to develop better ways of improving the community audience experience.

5.6.4 Situatedness

As mediators, program coordinators assist artists by connecting them to community resources that will be helpful their art process. This type of assistance encourages artists to situate their work within the context of the community. This is important because the situatedness of the art that is produced affects community engagement, or how the community experiences, relates, and responds to the art installations. Ashley talks about how she helped artists learn about the Houston blues scene and the community life during Round 29.

ACH: So, once we have the artist here, usually we try to talk with them—that conversation happens before they get here, since they’re here for such a short amount of time…then depending on what they want to do, then it’s figuring out what approach makes sense—in terms of connecting them with individuals or community. So, for example, Terry created a project that was totally inspired by this community and totally inspired by this blues legend, who lived in the community, but he wasn’t necessarily asking for the community to work with him on the project. He wasn’t interviewing them or getting their feedback. He was
just doing his thing within the context of this space. So, my role with that was more of helping to connect him to people that might aid him in that research. Thinking of, for instance—he wanted...he was interested in blues and there’s a guy from this neighborhood—well, he’s always in this neighborhood...Little Joe. So, Little Joe, who is known world-wide—and he’s this blues musician, but he’s pretty down and out, and I think he might be homeless, and he’s definitely, I think, addicted to various substances. So, the first thing when Terry was here for a site visit, I said, “Well, do you know about Little Joe Washington?” So, I did some research and said, “Well you know every Tuesday night he performs live at this place down the road.” So, my role was more of that—trying to put people in his radar and send him out so he could get, “So, what’s the local flavor?” So, his first thing was that he went to that place. I did all the research and Rick took him to that place, and they went out for music, and apparently—it was amazing! When he [Terry] was here with the artists—they first arrived and they had just gotten here, so I made the offer to take them out to hear blues. That was the night you bailed on us, Sarita. [Both laughing]

ST: Which I wish I hadn’t, so badly!

ACH: So, I took them...and I don’t know as much about the blues community, but I did know there was a book called Down in Houston, which is a book that was written about blues in Houston...and I did lend them those books. I found all the books I could on blues that I had in Houston. I gave them those resources to start looking through them and I took them to the Big Easy Social Club, which is this blues spot, and then from there, we met people and we went to another R&B blues spot in the Fifth Ward. So, I feel like that was more of my role—of, just like, helping.

[Interview briefly interrupted by passing community member, who stops and talks with Ashley.]

So, that’s more of what it was. It’s really just figuring out what people want to do and then helping to problem-solve—of what would make sense.

Through Ashley’s efforts to expose the artists-in-residents to the community, the artists were better equipped to develop their work in relation to the community. The artists’ installations became spaces to showcase their personal perspectives situated within the culture of the community. Community audience members were able to have various entry points for experiencing and understanding the work through visual references to the blues scene and its relationship to their community (An example of this can be read in the community section of this chapter.) The result was an intersection of both, artists and the community.
5.6.5 Creativity

At PRH, even before a Round begins, artists discuss their ideas with the program coordinator, who mediates the creative process through a dialogue about their intent, how it may fit into the community, and community resources. When the artists-in-residents arrive, the program coordinator comes up with creative ways for artists and community audience members to interact. These interactions contribute to a larger creative process for artists when developing their installations, as well as contribute to the creative growth of community audience members. Artists may come in with an idea or theme they would like to run with, but when they enter the community, see the space and site, and meet community audience members, their work often shifts and develops in creative ways they could not have imagined prior to their arrival.

For program coordinators, much of the cultural work they perform is intellectual creative work. Through dialogue, they help artists shape and negotiate projects prior to exhibition. They problem solve to come up with creative solutions for encouraging community participation, for mediating between artists and community, and matching artists with community audience members based on the intersection of their needs. Through mediation, program coordinators contribute to the creative process and the larger body of knowledge that is produced through the exhibition.

At PRH, the program coordinator mediates the art process as necessary throughout various phases of exhibition development. Once artists are selected, the program coordinator enters into an on-going dialogue with the artists as they plan, shape, and negotiate the overall Round and individual installations and/or performances. Ashley’s knowledge of the PRH organization and community, and experience with art processes allows her to contribute to the creative process by assisting the artists in devising solutions as problems arise. In the following
passage, Ashley discusses the selection process and her role in assisting the artists with the development of their projects.

ACH: What’s happened—most of the individuals we’ve invited, we’ve already been pretty confident that we wanted them to do the project, like—“We want you to do a project here!” In the beginning for instance, to talk specifically with the “round” you did your project on with Terry Adkins, we approached him to just do a project—to be an artist in a house…and then we talked with him about what he might want to do. Then we invited him in for a site visit. We flew him in to just be here and then we talked with him. It started off with, “Do you want to do a project?” It grew into, “What kind of project?” Then it grew more into him, “Ok—So, I want to create 3 of the houses!” and then—“I want to do the whole round!” At first he wanted to do all 7 houses by himself.

ST: Wow!

ACH: Then he was like, “Well, I’ll do 3 of the houses and then I’ll invite 4 artists to participate with me…and I want the entire round to be about Lightnin’ Hopkins.” So, it was this very—on our end, it was a very deliberate movement of pursuing Terry to do a project, but it became very organic and us giving him space to let us know what he’d like to do and what makes sense…and we just kind of danced with him until we got to that final point.

ST: I like that—that metaphor of dancing. Describe the process of developing projects and how you encourage the community audience to participate and interact with artists?

ACH: Well, we give the artists a lot of liberty and freedom to create a project—to do really anything they want. It’s really trial and error and sometimes it comes out really well and sometimes not so much…but we really hand it over to them. So, we don’t really curate that experience. We don’t curate that process. Once we do get feedback—I have artists who come in and they know what they’re going to do and they do it…and I’m not going to get in their way. We have other artists who come in and they’re not as sure, so we’ll have a lot of meetings, where they’ll pass ideas by me or ask for my opinion on, “Well, I’d like to do this.” Then based on what they want to do, I might say, “Oh—well, that makes sense because yaddi, yaddi, yaddi….” or “Ok—but how would that work?” So, it becomes this conversation, and sometimes it’s more dialogue than others…and I try to encourage that dialogue early on by making phone calls and sending out e-mails, but some people are more receptive to outside feedback than others. So, once we have the artist here, usually we try to talk with them—that conversation happens before they get here, since they’re here for such a short amount of time…then depending on what they want to do, then it’s figuring out what approach makes sense—in terms of connecting them with individuals or community.
Ashley talks about her practice of mediation in terms of dancing with the artist. She assists artists with a gentle hand enabling them to complete their projects on site at PRH. She draws from her rich background of artist, community member, and organizational representative to creatively connect artists with the tools and community resources they may find useful to problem solve during the art process. Once she finds out what the artists intend on doing, she creatively matches individuals from the community that best suit the artists’ needs.

For each Round, it is a given that artists-in-residence will participate. Artists are selected in advance and are bound to their responsibilities to complete their projects within the allotted time frame. On the other hand, the participation of community audience members is of their own volition, and can vary based on their desire to participate. According to cultural populism, along with the artist/producer, the community audience/producer/consumer is also necessary in the process of cultural production. In other words, if community members do not participate during the art process or attend the exhibitions, then the knowledge that is produced is incomplete and falls on deaf ears. The support and participation of community audience members is essential to produce exhibitions with a greater potential to impact social change in the community. Program coordinators are the gatekeepers to community participation as they mediate between artists and community, and enable community audience members to become part of the art process.

For instance, program coordinator, Ashley uses her knowledge of community to identify and creatively insert community audience members into situations where they can help artists solve problems during the art process. In the passage below, Ashley talks about community participation at PRH:

**ST:** In what ways does the community participate in the program?

**ACH:** Specifically the public art program?

**ST:** Yes. I’m looking more at that. How do they participate…or in what ways?
ACH: As viewers, coming in and just looking at the art work. As participants, when they come interact with the artists during the artist/community talk. They’re invited to give their feedback and talk and ask questions. As helpers, when we put calls out for volunteers to come help the artists. As participants, when we have workshops…and people can come work with the artists to do their projects. Sometimes they’re subjects, when the artists are looking for individuals to interview about specific experiences throughout the community. Sometimes as individuals being celebrated, if they have artists who are interested in honoring someone who lives here, who does good work. As resources, if they’re being called upon to just provide information or help shed light on a certain subject. So, yeah.

Ashley identifies and creates opportunities for communication between artists and community audience members, enabling community audience members to perform their own cultural work. This process of mediation enables community audience members to contribute their knowledge and specific talents to the art process while working with artists, and can also lead to inspired community-driven cultural work long after a Round has ended. In the following conversation excerpt, Ashley shares how some community audience members contributed during the art process to Round 29. Later, I provide some examples of community-driven projects that were inspired by interactions with artists from past Rounds.

For Terry’s project, it’s hard. Well, you know what I did for Terry’s project, was…the community that I encouraged and interacted with, was actually an artist community. So, I reached out to artists—emerging artists, young artists, who we’ve worked with before, many of whom live in this community…and encouraged them to volunteer with and work with Terry and the other artists, to have that experience of working with a very professional, well-known artist, to be able to network with them, to be able to learn from them. So, I would say in that situation it was less about the broader community. It was a very specific community that I targeted, and what ended up happening was, that almost every artist had 1 or 2 people working with them during that week period…because they were all only here for 7 days, which is insane. They’re here for 7 days creating projects. So, each of them had 1 or 2 people with them helping them do their project.

In this specific example, Ashley matched local artists from the PRH community audience with Terry Adkins and the other artists-in-residence participating in Round 29. She identified these members of the PRH community based on their talents and how they suited the needs of the visiting artists. At the same time, she considered the needs of the local artists from the PRH
community audience, and felt this learning experience would benefit their own practice. Through thoughtful mediation, she was able to connect visiting artists with community audience members based on the intersection of their needs, and enabled community audience members to perform cultural work.

While some artists-in-residence are local, most are not. They can only stay in Houston for a short time and must leave after the opening. They have steady work they must attend to and cannot stay for the duration of the Round. At the request of artists who have specific interactive components to their space, Ashley mediates between the artist and community, by carrying out activities that require community participation. As a result, Ashley enables community audience members to contribute their own cultural work within the context of an installation. The participatory nature of these mediated activities can make a strong impact on community audience members, enabling them to establish their own community-driven cultural work projects. For example, a Round 30 installation grew into the GreenHouse Collective, a community gardening initiative on the PRH campus, which inspired Round 34: Matter of Food.

5.6.5.1 GreenHouse Collective

For Round 30 Elia Arce approached Ashley with her idea for an installation about gardening. After several conversations with Ashley about community response to past artists’ gardening projects, Elia developed an installation she felt would engage the community in a unique way while addressing their need to access quality produce in an urban environment. She created a living installation by growing wheat grass entirely indoors with the use of artificial light. At the opening she invited community audience members to drink wheat grass shots and plant seeds in cups to take home or contribute to the installation/house. Seeds planted by
community audience members and the artist continued to grow into an indoor vegetable garden for the 4 month duration of the Round. Her installation made a big impact on PRH community and led to the creation of the GreenHouse Collective, an urban organic gardening initiative located on the PRH campus. As part of this initiative, community audience members wanted to design and build an organic garden, create edible landscaping, and develop an irrigation system. They also wanted to provide workshops to explore and teach various technological methods of gardening to PRH residents, kids in the summer and after-school program, as well as other interested community audience members. Produce grown by the collective would be available for sale and shared with community members.

5.6.5.2 Round 34: Matter of Food

This exhibition explored:

an array of food-related topics that include labor conditions that bring us readily accessible food, the process of urban farming and sustainable practice, the role of food in our belief systems and daily rituals, the image of the African American cook, and the recipes that are passed down from generation to generation preserving cultural heritage and family legacy. (PRH web site)

These examples illustrate the power of mediation. When performed thoughtfully, mediation is a powerful tool for program coordinators. Mediated experiences can enable community audience members and artists to exchange knowledge, work creatively, produce knowledge, and take action to make real change in the community. These experiences can inspire and empower community audience members to initiate their own projects long after artist residencies have ended. Mediation as praxis is a highly creative action. It cannot be duplicated in any other community. If program coordinators want to do it well, they must really know their community audience and must be members of the community themselves.
At the start of this project, my intention was to conduct an in-depth ethnographic study framed by the following research questions:

- What does it look like when the needs of artists-in-residence and their community audiences intersect and diverge?
- What criteria are required to create community arts programs, which are meaningful to both artists-in-residence and their community audience?
- What does it look like when programs successfully engage both artists-in-residence and their community audiences?
- What factors contribute to programs that do not engage both the artists-in-residence and their community audience and what does this look like?

These questions served me well, as a map and a jumping off point in my ethnographic journey. They forced me to look deeply at the roles and relational dynamics of artists, community audience members, and program coordinators. In my quest to flesh out some answers, new and unexpected topics of inquiry began to emerge, dominate, and provide a slightly new direction for my study. These topics include dialogue, reciprocity, and creative engagement and is discussed later in this chapter.
CHAPTER 6

CASE FOR STUDYING ART EDUCATION PRACTICES IN ALTERNATIVE PUBLIC SPACES

6.1 Implications

6.2 Expanding the Field of Art Education in the Classroom

Currently, much of the field of art education is devoted to the study of teaching in the K-12 school classroom, using modernist concepts of art making. When art educators study institutions outside of the K-12 classroom, they are most likely talking about public and private museums. Through my own graduate studies, I earned a certificate in museum education by completing a breadth of coursework devoted to museum studies and educational programming, with a period of time spent on an internship. As a member of National Art Education Association (NAEA), I have even attended the one-day museum pre-conference, established for the minority of art educators who either work professionally at museums or desire to. Unfortunately, there is still little discussion regarding art education practices in alternative public spaces within NAEA or other art educational forums, although more recently this is beginning to change with the establishment of the Place-Based Art Education group and the Community Arts Caucus within NAEA and the current call from a new journal *Field: A Journal of the Socially Engaged Art Criticism*. When I say alternative public spaces, I am referring to cultural institutions and community arts organizations, other than museums, that promote cultural work, primarily through the visual arts. These sites may not resemble traditional learning models, where students, or learners are organized by age groups and teachers facilitate the learning process. However, I believe cultural institutions, like PRH are educational sites, where multiple layers of learning take place through dialogue and cultural production. Giroux (1995) writes:
The key issue here is that *education* cannot be reduced to the discourse of *schooling*. Pedagogical relationships exist wherever knowledge is produced, highlighting how conflicts over meaning, language, and representation become symptomatic of a larger struggle over cultural authority, the role of intellectuals and artists, and the meaning of democratic public life. (p. 8)

At PRH, knowledge is exchanged and produced by visiting artists and the multigenerational community audience, as they enter into a process of dialogue and cultural production. Artists learn from community audience members and community audience members learn from artists, while program coordinators or art educators mediate between the two parties, therefore facilitating the learning process.

Authors Carpenter and Tavin (2009) write about the reconceptualization of art education, specifically, the shift from traditional practices to more contemporary ways of making and thinking about art, and in relation to an even broader public. They write, “We believe that the reconceptualization of art education…is engaged in an ongoing attempt to shift from traditional modes of artmaking and ‘art thinking’ toward a profoundly critical, historical, political, and self-reflexive understanding of visual culture and social responsibility, coupled with meaningful and transformative student production in a variety of forms and actions (p. 245).” Although the authors’ emphasis is on visual culture, for the sake of my study and my own ways of understanding community-based arts practices, I prefer to imagine the related concepts of place, community, identity, power, and representation in place of the general term “visual culture.” I agree with the authors that the reconceptualization of art education is ongoing, and visual culture and our understanding of curriculum should be part of that shift. They define curriculum as a “complex mediation and reconstruction of experience,” (p. 245) and as such community-based art programming needs to be seen as a type of experience that mediates and reconstructs to negotiate cultural meanings. We can no longer understand art education as movements where the
creation and study of art within K-12 classrooms are the focus, as with the creative self-expression movement and DBAE. Instead of learning a medium or technique, engagements found in community-based art education offer “symbolic representations” that make and circulate meanings through cultural inquiries and for the sake of democratic living. My study offers insights into art education practices where “symbolic representations” are offered and need to be interpreted to broaden the field, infusing it with alternative understandings.

Carpenter and Tavin (2009) further go on to provide examples of what they call a “radical departure” from the traditional art education curricula of the past to include a more expanded range of images, objects and ideas about visuality including those found in popular culture and on the internet, via inquiries made through public pedagogy, environmental pedagogy, arts-based research, and community-based art education. Important to my own research on community-based art education, the authors speak about one particular direction for it, which is cultural criticism. Following the lead of Green (1999), the authors note that community-based art education facilitates new art forms, engages the community in social constructions, and recognize art making as intellectual:

This endeavor resists being reified as a mere intellectual project fitting within the existing canon of art. It strives to embody collaborative practices among artists and their audiences, and the engagement of multiple audiences through empathy and appreciation. This sense of “new genre public art” builds on exposure, deconstruction, and rejection of modernism’s constructs and myths of “art” and “audience.” In fact, making the very notion of art problematic may allow the ambiguity of the meaning, content, and intention of community-based projects to avoid the trappings of the past. (p. 80)

My own finding show that similar to digital media practices, community-based art practices challenge hierachal structures of power and involve a community of practice that constructs knowledge together, although as an ideal. When discussing the creative engagement of the artists in PRH, we saw new art forms that had less to do with the aesthetics of modernism
but more that enabled an enactment of social relatedness and healing, using traditional and nontraditional materials, which interacted with a community. This art differs from traditional public art because of the level of engagement shared between artists and communities, the use of non traditional media, and the implementation of strategies used to enact social transformations (Lacy, 1995). Most artists in the program demystified their practices, sought community input, and socially situated and contextualized their work within the space of the neighborhood. Moreover, as discussed in chapter 4, community-based art practices offer opportunities of “actual” (vs. virtual) community exchange, civic engagement, and can change the way people act in their daily lives. Art making was an intellectual endeavor here, where artists were required to cross borders and interrogate life and living in a community by addressing its cultural and historical issues and (non)representations. Production in the classroom can reach beyond the traditions of learning a media or technique to include such inquiries found in the new genre public art.

6.3 Relevance of Community-based Art Education to Museums

I believe the study of CBAE through CCD practices can be beneficial to museums. One of the most common concerns discussed among museum workers is community audience participation. In fact, I hear the same conversation every year at the NAEA pre-conference museum session. The conversation is usually regarding failed attempts to bring in community audience members that typically are not museum goers. Additionally, museum workers express disappointment about the lack of culturally diverse participants, especially when there is an exhibition that addresses perceived interests of specific cultural groups. For example, if there was an exhibition about immigration, the expectation is to draw immigrants into the museum or
if there was an exhibition on Indian sculpture, the institution hosting it wants to attract Indian participation. On the upside, it is exciting that museums are attempting to present themselves as inclusive democratic institutions for all people. Unfortunately, searching for solutions through insular discussions with other museum colleagues is not furthering their effort. Anthropologists are also adding to the conversation, but I think community-based art educators should be contributing to this larger discourse too.

Currently, concepts of participation are being revisited, as more museums are making an effort to evolve by attempting to adopt democratic practices (Simone, 2010; Thelan, 2011; Kundu & Kalin, Forthcoming) and responsible postcolonial practices (Boast, 2011). Simone (2010) discusses ways in which museums can work with community members to make their environments more relevant through participatory activities that allow visitors to create, share, and connect with each other around content through interactive design. Thelan (2011) notes that museums are doing more than just designing participatory activities that are user-centered but rethinking how they might be a part of civic society. Indeed, he states that many believe that the health of museums depends on becoming civically engaged with communities and recommends partnering with community-based organizations. One strategy suggested is civic dialogue, but another is to begin by identifying the actual and potential civic dimensions of the work museums are already doing, reach inwards to gauge how they can participate and what

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1 According to Ehrlich (2000), civic engagement means working to make a difference in the life of communities and combining knowledge, skills, values, and motivations to make this difference. All of which promotes the quality of life in a community. In relation to museums this means moving beyond shared authority towards the forging of community bonds. Examples of civic engagement in museums has included opening up safe spaces for groups to meet, using their expertise to influence community issues, and designing exhibition to construct meaningful dialogues on fractious issues.

12 Civic dialogue differs from simple discussion according to Yankelovich (1999). Characteristics include: many people have ideas to contribute and thus can craft a solution together; participants work together toward common understanding; participants listen to understand, reveal assumptions for reevaluation, and reexamine positions; the belief that another’s thinking can improve one’s own; and searching for strengths and values in other’s positions to discover new options and to not close down conversation.
skills and assets they provide, and then to look outwards to other institutions and groups to
define how and why they seek partners to help them develop public and civic aspects of what
they already do or want to be able to do. All of which still involves civic dialogue. Community-
based partners are important for this movement towards civic engagement because these
organizations have more practice in participatory civics. As seen in the study, PRH offered more
than networking and buy-ins, but built sustained collaborations through co-creation,
empowerment, and reciprocity. For this type of participation to occur, as seen at PRH, however,
the postcolonial needs to be considered.

Lynch (2014) writes:

Postcolonialism is about negotiating the immense challenges of cultural translation in a
world changed by struggle and which it is to be hoped, may be further transformed.
Postcolonialism cannot be divorced from postcolonial politics that looks to bring about
global justice. It is about empowerment rather than exploitation, through sustainable
social change developed from local knowledge systems and resources. (p. 86)

One participatory concept of great interest that draws from postcolonial ideology is the
“contact zone.” Borrowing from postcolonial studies, literary theorist Mary Louise Pratt (1991),
James Clifford (1997) applied the concept to the postcolonial museum. Pratt used the concept “to
discuss cultural mediation in community settings, and to explore unequal power relations based
on past colonial relationships. She also drew attention to strategies which seek to include and
collaborate with people previously considered as ‘Other’” (Purkis 2013, p.51). Clifford (1997)
felt museums should be a space for “active collaboration and a sharing of authority” (p. 210).
His ideas challenged museums to share some authority over knowledge that is produced by
making space for negotiation and collaboration with public audiences. Boast (2011) criticized
Clifford’s concept of the contact zone, believing it could never be sustained. Similar to Freire’s
(1970) concept of ‘false generosity,’ Boast (2011) felt any effort to collaborate with the public
would be a temporary and superficial achievement, where the museum remains for the most part unchanged, meeting a self-serving agenda.

To adopt participatory practices that reflect responsible postcolonial thinking, museums must go beyond the simple rethinking of public events, and begin to critique their institution from the inside out—beginning with the museum’s philosophy and mission. If there is a desire for the museum to make any real change, the institution must develop a philosophy of social and ethical responsibility to the public that goes beyond functioning as a repository. Museums should critique community-based arts organization models to see how their philosophies and missions inform their institutional practices, structures, and programming. Museums should then use these models to reflect and critique their own institutional practices. They need to dig deep and ask themselves if they are exploiting instead of empowering; and whether or not they value local knowledge systems enough to include their voices in the construction of knowledge they are putting out for the public. From there, museums need to critique their own infrastructure, attitudes about power, and how exhibitions and participatory activities are designed, especially in relation to how these entities affect their ability to foster trust and lasting relationships with the community audience. Community arts organizations, like PRH, can provide models for critiquing museum practices. Two major constraints with implementing responsible postcolonial museum practices can be attributed to the overly structured events and general attitudes about power in relation to knowledge production. From critiquing community-based practices at PRH, I found the cultural work attitude to be flexible, accepting of challenges, and filled with learning opportunities. In conversations with Ashley, she views what could be perceived as negative community responses as constructive criticism and valuable information. She was able to use that information to better understand community attitudes, reflect on her practices and the
practices of the organizations she worked with. Upon reflection, she also felt the community audience members trusted her enough to share their true feelings without being admonished.

6.4 Community-based Art as a Legitimate Area of Study within Art Education

Although art teachers can borrow social practices named here and used by the artists at PRH, and museums can look to and partner with community-based art organization to enact civic engagement, I also purport, the investigation of public art spaces outside of schools and museums, and especially through a community cultural development lens, is an even more “radical departure” in art education than the examples put forth by Carpenter and Tavin (2009), and should be looked at in relation to conceptual considerations for conducting such educational programming. I believe community arts organizations and other alternative public spaces need to be included in the discourse of art education, moving it beyond classroom practices and the artmaking found within. These public environments should be viewed as living, dynamic, democratic sites of learning. Through the cultural work conducted, they can function as places for creating social change, enacting community, fostering empowerment, and understanding and negotiating identity and culture. Although this study is unique to one community’s culture and locality, there is much that can be learned by studying the roles and relational dynamics of artists, community audiences, and program coordinators who perform cultural work in this type of setting. In this case, I was able to see how dialogue, reciprocity, and creative engagement played major roles in the art and learning processes.

6.5 Dialogue, Reciprocity, and Creative Engagement

Compared to the traditional classroom or museum program setting, where educational
activities tend to be heavily planned and focused on reaching specific outcomes, the activities at PRH are organized, but at the same time, they are semi-structured and flexible. Activities are, for the most part, designed to create occasions for interaction between artists and community audience members. Through dialogue, reciprocity, and creative engagement, artists and community audience members are able to learn from one another, find solutions through problem-solving together, and have some control over the learning process. Artists may see their art process unfold and develop in unimagined ways, as they are submerged into the community and interact with community audience members. In turn, through creative engagement, community audience members may be able to contribute their voices to artist projects or see how to apply art as a tool to communicate their own ideas and foster change.

For example, while I was teaching at PRH in 2011, community audience members, including children in my after-school art class, were introduced to Round 34: Matter of Food (described in Chapter 4). Round 34 actually evolved from multiple artist and community-led initiatives that took place during the previous year. When artist, Elia Arce approached Ashley, the program coordinator, with a gardening project for Round 31, Ashley connected her with other community audience members, who were either already gardening or were interested in urban gardening. This led to the creation of the Greenhouse Collective, comprised of artists and community audience members. At the same time, ECOTONE began developing an urban garden on an empty residential lot adjacent to the PRH campus. These two community driven projects, the Greenhouse Collective and ECOTONE, inspired Round 34: Matter of Food. As a mediator, the program coordinator encouraged dialogue between the artist and community gardeners. This dialogue led to reciprocity, where both parties exchanged knowledge and shared control over the learning process. This reciprocal exchange fostered a mutual respect between artists and
community audience members, and together they were able to devise creative solutions. The flexibility of the program allowed the artist’s work to develop in a new ways and afford room for creative engagement. This led to the inclusion of the community audience’s voices and contributions as installation came together. The collective artist and community-driven work then inspired a whole new *Round* of artist installations.

Unique to community cultural development, is the concept of reciprocity. This is something that differentiates arts institutions based in cultural work. Occasions for dialogue can lead to reciprocity and productive action. Reciprocity helps to build trust and avoid conflicts between artists and community audience members. Dialogue and reciprocity are vital in fostering mutual respect, creating authentic relationships and taking real action to make change. Goldbard (2006) writes;

> Community cultural development is grounded in reciprocity and authentic sharing. When parties in conflict are more or less equal in social power, community cultural development methods can evoke and illuminate multiple coexisting realities, overcoming stereotyping, objectification and other polarizing habits of mind. Appreciation for valuable distinctions and deep commonalities can emerge from reciprocal communication through arts media, as participants begin to perceive common interests and possible compromises where they previously saw only intractable differences. (p. 146)

During *Round 29*, the program coordinator created several opportunities for dialogue by connecting visiting artists with community audience members that would be most helpful to the artists developing their installations. For example, she matched local artists from the community audience with each visiting artist to assist with the construction of the exhibition spaces. When matching them together, she considered how well their skill sets would meet the artists-in-residence’s needs, how similar interests would encourage learning and creative growth benefitting both parties, and how well they would work together based on their personalities. These interactions encouraged reciprocity and mutual respect between the two parties. Visiting
artists appreciated the assistance of community audience members, who helped construct the installations, and contributed their knowledge and input to help problem solve throughout the art process. Local artists from the community audience took pride in their work that was being recognized and were able to add this experience to their professional resume. They were also able to learn about various art processes from seasoned artists and have one on one time to discuss their own work and growth as artists. In this case, learning took place as knowledge was shared through reciprocal communication, therefore giving power to visiting artists and artists from the community audience.

The thoughtful mediation or facilitation on behalf of the program coordinator, laid the groundwork for authentic dialogue and reciprocity to take place. The mere bringing together of artists and community audience members does not create reciprocity. For example, an event, such an artist lecture, introduces community audiences to the artists and their work. Interaction may consist of the audience asking questions, but the exchange is essentially superficial. Power is given to the artist and the institution, not the audience, and the artist’s work is unlikely to change, except perhaps in expanding their knowledge, because of this public relations experience. The fixed agenda of the institution only reinforces power structures because there is little to no room for authentic dialogue or reciprocity. It is the process of mediation, employed by the program coordinator and flexibility of the arts organization that allow for the negotiation of power through dialogue, reciprocity, and creative engagement.

6.6 Mediation as Praxis: Imagining the Future of Art Education

The program coordinator at PRH performs most of her work through acts of mediation. Mediation should be recognized as an important role in bridging community and artists together
and contributing to the construction of community-based art work. This type of mediation embodies the definition of praxis, where one practices thoughtful “reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it” (Freire 1970, p.33). Mediation as praxis is a highly creative act requiring knowledge, sensitivity, thought, and action. Unfortunately, the work of art educators is often most visible through the documentation of products, such as art education curricula and art works that are produced. In a museum or alternative art space, the attendance of visitors may be recorded or photographs of the artist and community participants may be documented. Mediation, on the other hand, is less visible as a process, and therefore less recognized as a creative act and a valuable skill. I believe it is one of the most important skills one can have as an art educator and should be included in the studies and training of art educators, especially for those who wish to perform cultural work.

6.7 My Observations of Mediation

Mediation is a form of art education where knowledge and power flows between artists and community, and is regulated by the program coordinator. The process of mediation is a highly creative act that is locally-specific. It cannot be duplicated in other locations or communities. The program coordinator must become a respected member of community by building relationships. In my study, Ashley, a white woman in a predominantly African-American community built relationships because she was sensitive towards the community, understood how the community functions, and knew the strengths and needs of members. At the same time, program coordinators must also have a rich background of art training to be respected by artists. When performed responsibly, mediation is a powerful skill that can enable artists and
community audiences to utilize each other’s strengths and learn from one another to create dynamic work and make social change possible.

6.8 Art Education in Higher Ed: Preparing the Cultural Worker

As mentioned earlier in Chapter 1, there is a growing interest for community arts training within the field of art education. While taking graduate courses, I, myself, was referred to the social work department. Faculty in the social work department did not have experience working with community arts and advised that I sign up for an “independent study” course in their department. I imagine this has happened to other art and art education students that aspire to practice in a community arts setting. Goldbard (2006) writes:

It has long been a complaint of college-educated community artists that they were not able to learn much about the precedents and practices of their future work while at university, as if the history of community cultural development had been excised from the curriculum. Practitioners feel strongly that the curricula of conventional arts programs should include history, theory, and practical applications of community cultural development, legitimizing the work of community artists as part of the arts. (p. 158)

First of all, I strongly agree with what Goldbard is pointing out here—that the history, theory, and practice of community cultural development, as it relates to community art should be part of the conventional arts curricula, but I also believe advanced courses for future practitioners should be offered, more specifically, as either higher level undergraduate or graduate art education courses. I say that for a couple of reasons. Firstly, cultural work is about the flow and transmission of information through mediation and constructing knowledge. Future practitioners need to understand how these concepts are practiced and adapted in various community arts settings, and eventually develop their own philosophy of practice. Secondly, the history, theories, and practices associated with cultural work and community arts, such as critical theory, social
reconstruction, and community-based art already overlap and intertwine with the history, theories, and practices of art education.

I envision the coursework for studies in cultural work and community arts to be similar in design to the breadth of museum coursework I took at UNT to receive a certificate in museum studies. Classes were comprised of graduate and post-graduate students majoring in studio art, art education, art history, and library/information science who were interested in museum work. Coursework included a historic overview of museum practices, theory, and practical application through field trips, museum research projects and a summer museum internship. I believe a similar breadth of courses in relation to community cultural development would be helpful in preparing future cultural workers to enter the professional world of community arts.

Community cultural work, however, requires a stronger commitment to working with an organization and its community. In essence, it involves being submerged into communal life. Performing cultural work requires gaining an intimate knowledge of the community, establishing relationships and building trust with community audience members, and acquiring an understanding of community values. To perform best practices in cultural work, one must be open to entering a transformative process of becoming a member of the community. This may be nearly impossible through the short span of a summer internship.

Short commitments, like summer internships, run the risk of building superficial relationships in a community arts organization setting. Short commitments may also lead community audience members and community arts organizations to believe they are being exploited by universities and their students for personal gain. Therefore, I believe a longer internship, of at least one year, would be a desirable and more valuable experience for both, the cultural worker in training and the community audience.
In chapter 4, program coordinator, Ashley, talks about her training through Community Art Corps. and MICA. As part of her training, much of her coursework was completed through internships and job placement. This experience helped her learn about the complex dynamics of the community, what it means to perform cultural work with members of the community, and gain a better understanding of the process of mediation. It was also an invaluable opportunity to hone her organizing skills, which later transferred to her professional work at PRH.

As part of her Master’s program, Ashley created several community projects and a thesis exhibition. This would be impossible to do in a summer’s time. What I take away from this, is that advanced coursework needs to be a marriage of theory and practice that happens almost simultaneously through classes and internships. Internships should start much earlier and last longer, rather than being seen as a bridge between a formal education and employment or as a postscript to a university degree.

6.9 Contributions to the Field

As I stated in chapter 1, there is a growing interest in the field of art education, to develop programs through that prepare art educators, artists, and other cultural workers to enter the field of community arts (Burnham, 2006; Zuccarini, 2006; Mangahas, 2006; Hager, 2006; Garneau, 2005), yet much of the literature I found regarding community-based arts practices, were from outside the field of art education (Lippard, 1997; Finkelparl, 2000, 2013; Jacob, 2003; Pujol, 2001; Adams & Goldbard 2002a, 2002b, 2005; Becker, 2002) . Many of the authors that write about community-based art practices do not align themselves as art educators, although they touch on many of the same pedagogical concepts that are important to our field.
Authors Lippard (1997) and Finkelpearl (2000, 2013) provide historical contexts to understand the development and evolution of site-specific art and associated community-based art practices. Both also discuss social and political issues surrounding contemporary community-based art practices—Lippard through stories and talking with artists; Finkelpearl through interviews, or dialogues primarily with artists and academics in the fields of art history, sociology, and urban studies; and through a few very interesting interviews with community audience members that took place many years after they participated in a program. Jacob (2003) and Pujol (2001) have written about the role of artists-in-residence from an artist’s perspective. Adams and Goldbard (2002a, 2002b, 2005) have written extensively on community cultural development and organizational practices.

Art educators that have written about community-based art and community-based art education practices outside of schools include Adejumo (1997, 2000, 2010), Desai, (2002) and Ulbricht (2005). Adejumo (1997, 2010) has performed extensive research on community-based art education and pedagogical practices within a low-income community youth program setting. As both a working artist and art educator, Adejumo (2000) has written about the community-based art practices of artists and the benefits of integrating these practices into the school curriculum. Ulbricht (2005) researched various community-based art sites in an attempt to define community-based art education (CBAE), or make visible the lack of a clear definition of what CBAE looks like. Desai (2002) writes about artists employing ethnographic methods to create art in relation to the community and its identity. She writes about issues of power through visual representation, specifically the responsibility of artists/outsider to ethically represent another culture.
I believe my study will contribute to the field by adding to the body of literature that covers community-based art and contemporary understandings of community-based art education practices. I hope my study will legitimize art education practices and learning that takes place in alternative spaces, outside the K-12 classroom; provide a model for art educators working in community arts settings, museums, and other places of cultural work to reflect on their own practices; provide a progressive model for art education, where art educators are mediators of knowledge and power between artists and community audience members.

6.10 Future Research

My observations regarding future research implications are tied to Rick Lowe’s work with the Nasher Sculpture Center in Dallas, TX earlier this year. Lowe was one of 10 artists that were commissioned to install public art pieces in Dallas. A “social sculpture,” Lowe’s work set out to transform Vickery Meadow, a residential community comprised of immigrants and refugees from over 100 different countries. For his piece, *Trans.lation: Vickery Meadow*, Lowe along with community participants created an art outdoor market that would run one Saturday every month for four months. He also organized an outdoor potluck dinner to kick off his project on opening day. In light of this event, I think there should be research regarding the relationship between the length of artist residencies and artist-community engagement. I also think further research needs to be done on museum programs that host community projects outside of the museum, and their ability to engage community audience members.

In conclusion, I believe my study will further the field of art education because it addresses issues related to the practice of program coordinators, artists, and community
audiences, a timely and relevant topic of discussion in the education of community arts educators.
General Information
Name:         Date:
Date and place of birth:      Gender: M/F
Current address/ph. #:

1. What kind of formal education/training do you have?
2. Describe the kind of artwork you produce?
3. Have you worked as an artist-in-residence prior to your residency at Project Row Houses (PRH)? If so, can you give me an example of a project where you had a really good experience. Can you give me an example of when you had a poor experience?
4. Have you worked on any community art projects prior to your residency at PRH? If so, can you give me an example of a project where you had a really good experience. Can you give me an example of when you had a poor experience?
5. How did you come to hear about the artist-in-residence program at PRH?
6. Tell me about your experience with the artist-in-residence-program. What attracted you to this residency?
7. What is your role in the program, as an artist-in-residence?
8. Describe your process of developing your project. How do you go about gathering information about the community for your project? What do you look for?
9. In what ways do you participate in the program? In what ways would you like to?
10. What do you think is the role of an artist in the community? What are the artist’s responsibilities to a community they are working with?
11. Tell me about your experience of interacting and collaborating with the community?
12. What role does the community play in the program? What role do you think the community should play?
13. Describe what community art means to you.
14. What role do you think art plays in pulling people together into a sense of community?
15. What role has the program coordinator played in helping you interact with the community? What could they do to improve your experience?
16. Do you feel that the community accepts you?
17. Do you feel the artwork represents community identity? How so?
18. Do you feel you have ownership over your project?
19. Do you feel your project represents your identity too? How so?
20. How do you feel about your project and residency at PRH? What do you like most? What do you like least?
APPENDIX B

COMMUNITY INTERVIEW
General Information
Name: Date:
Date and place of birth: Gender: M/F
Current address/ph. #: Occupation:
Number of children:

1. How did you come to hear about the artist-in-residence program at Project Row Houses (PRH)?
2. Tell me about your experience with the artist-in-residence-program. Why do you choose to participate? In what ways do you participate in the program? In what ways would you like to?
3. What is your role in the program, as a member of the community?
4. Tell me about your experience of interacting and collaborating with the artist?
5. Do you have training or experience in the arts?
6. What role does the artist play in the program? In the community? What role do you think the artist should play?
7. What do you think is the role of a community artist?
8. Tell me about the community you live in?
9. Do you feel the artwork produced in the program represents community identity? How so? How not?
10. Describe what community art means to you.
11. What role do you think art plays in pulling people together into a sense of community?
12. How do you feel about the artist-in-residence projects at PRH? What do you like most? What do you like least?
13. Have you participated in this program before?
14. If so, can you give me an example of a project where you had a really good experience. Can you give me an example of when you had a poor experience?

Appendix C
Program Coordinator Interview

General Information

Name: Date:
Date and place of birth: Gender: M/F
Current address/ph. #: 

1. What kind of formal education/training do you have?

2. Have you worked as a program coordinator/art educator on any community art programs/projects prior to your employment at PRH? If so, can you give me an example of a program/project where you felt the community audience had a really good experience? Can you give me an example of when the community audience had a poor experience?

3. Have you worked as a program coordinator/art educator on any artist-in-residence programs/projects prior to your employment at PRH? If so, can you give me an example of a program/project where you felt artists-in-residence had a really good experience? Can you give me an example of when artists-in-residence had a poor experience?

4. How did you come to hear about the artist-in-residence program at PRH?

5. Describe the design of the artist-in-residence program.

6. Tell me about your experience with the artist-in-residence-program. What attracted you to this program?

7. What is your role in the program, as a program coordinator/art educator?

8. How do you attract the community audience? Where do they come from?

9. How do you select artists for the program? What does the process look like?

10. Describe the process of developing projects. How do you encourage the community audience to participate and interact with artists? How do you encourage artists to interact with the community?

11. How do you help artists gather information for their projects?

12. Can you give me some examples of how past artists gathered information about the community?

13. In what ways do you participate in the program? In what ways would you like to?

14. Tell me about your experience of interacting with artists in the program?
15. In what ways do artists participate in the program? In what ways would you like to see artists participate?

16. What do you think is the role of an artist in the community? What are the artist’s responsibilities to a community they are working with?

17. Tell me about your experience of interacting with the community?

18. In what ways does the community participate in the program? In what ways would you like to see the community participate?

19. Can you give me some examples of a successful artist/community interaction? Can you give me an example of a less successful artist/community interaction?
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