

SOCIALLY ENGAGED ART:
MANAGING NONTRADITIONAL CURATORIAL PRACTICE

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Thesis

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
CHAPTER	
I. DEFINITION, HISTORY, AND EXAMPLES OF SOCIALLY ENGAGED ART.....	1
II. ORGANIZATIONS, STRUCTURES, OPERATIONS, PARTNERSHIPS, AND AFFILIATIONS.....	14
III. DEVELOPING PROCEDURES FOR MANAGING SUCCESSFUL SOCIALLY ENGAGED ART PROJECTS.....	30
IV. REFERENCES.....	48

CHAPTER I

DEFINITION, HISTORY, AND EXAMPLES OF SOCIALLY ENGAGED ART

Art changes and transforms every day, just as the world around us. Likewise, the way in which we produce art is continuously changing and the actual definition of art has been altered repeatedly. The artists of each generation and art movement are challenging the concepts of art that have been established in the generations before them. Whether it is Manet questioning the history of painting with *Le déjeuner sur l'herbe*, or Duchamp turning his back on fine art with his readymades, or Christo and Jeanne Claude critiquing the art institutions themselves by wrapping buildings in cloth, each makes a point to question what were once thought to be important fundamentals and characteristics in the world of art (Gasparavicius). While the art world changes with these art movements, contemporary museums, galleries, and arts administrators that support these artists must transform along with it.

Art movements have gradually evolved from questioning the final products of art making to focusing on the art-making process itself. What makes one object a work of art and one non-art? Artists like Marcel Duchamp have raised this question by using appropriation. Duchamp's readymades are prime

examples of appropriation, a term used to describe taking something belonging to another person for one's own use. Duchamp is perhaps primarily famous for his 1917/1964 piece called *Fountain*, which was a porcelain urinal, bought directly from a store and presented as an art object in a museum. His stance was that the simple act of choosing and placing an existing object was enough to call the object art. There is no need for actual manual production of an object by the artist in this case; the thought, gaze, and intention suffice. Pop artists, such as Andy Warhol, also questioned the processes by which art is made. He had other people create his work by using reproductive techniques such as screen printing. This process created a discourse about consumerism and art. These artists called attention to how we act as consumers and also changed the ideas behind art production (Bourriaud 25-26).

As the world moves into the digital age and the economy is based more on services rather than goods, it only makes sense for the art to move in that direction also, taking attention away from the final result (the object) and focusing on the audience's experience and the processes by which art is made. Contemporary artists are attempting to move away from the idea of consumerism in art and more towards "social interstice" and relational art. "Interstice" was a term used by Karl Marx to describe communities that would trade and barter goods rather than contribute to the capitalist society and consumerism. This idea that Nicolas Bourriaud presents uses social interaction as the form or aesthetic in the art project. This creates temporary relationships and interactions within communities as a result of the artist's organization of the project. This way of

creating art neglects capitalism and consumerism because there is no end product, but instead relies on interactions and relationships (Bourriaud14-17).

One way artists realize a socially-based project is by incorporating participation, collaboration, and interaction into their work. These types of art practices, notably socially engaged art (SEA), sometimes come under scrutiny among critics and the public because there is no particular end result or object that *is* the art. There is also a functional aspect to the art which can be a controversial subject among critics. If the art has other purposes or functions aside from the aesthetics it produces, some critics are hesitant to call it art. The art is in the interactions and temporary relationships between the participants. Although socially engaged art has been around for decades, even some well-educated in art are not aware of the practice.

One artist who had a large influence on socially engaged art was German artist Joseph Beuys. Beuys was involved in the Fluxus movement which included a wide array of disciplines including music, theatrical performances, and speeches. The artists involved in Fluxus saw no distinction between art and real life, similar to what the artists who practice SEA strive to do (Foster 456). Beuys is also known for the concept of “social sculpture.” The idea of social sculpture revolves around the theory that everyone is an artist or has the capability of creativity, therefore, ruling out art as a profession. Beuys’s theory considers all producing activities, whether goods or services, to be capable of being called art (Mesch142). This concept accepts no division between art and life because

everyone is able to produce or do something creative. Through public participation, this is a goal of many SEA projects.

SEA walks a thin line, carefully balancing between activism, art, and real life. Since this type of art, often called social practice, usually relies on public participation, it questions the need for aesthetic objects in art. Even though some SEA incorporates visual arts, a project is not complete until the artist involves public participants. In this regard, the artists serve as organizers rather than the makers of art.

Typically in traditional designated art spaces, the public comes to view the preserved art objects within the exhibition space. One may wonder what a museum would be without objects, particularly when considering socially engaged art as a major curatorial project in a museum or gallery. A SEA project can take place within the exhibition space of a gallery or museum, but most of these projects are site-specific and rely on public interactions. In order to reach the people that the artist intends to reach, the art must take place within a broader public sphere.

Considering the momentum socially engaged art is gaining in the art world through organizations such as Creative Time and the Hammer Museum, how will traditional museums adapt to keep up with this evolution? How will the museum administration reach out to the ideal audiences for this type of art without alienating its existing audience?

Before the administration can curate or educate about SEA, they must first understand the theory behind the projects. The theory of relational aesthetics, as

proposed by Nicolas Bourriaud, is employed to explain how social interaction and participation can be considered artistic or aesthetic. Bourriaud proposes that relational aesthetics is more than a theory of interactive art, but a theory of current practice in the whole culture which is moving from a goods to a service-based economy (Bishop 54).

The concept of “relational aesthetics” is essential to the understanding of socially engaged art. Bourriaud proposes that artists who work in this field are creating forms which include the interactions and temporary social communities that relational art enacts. The projects that these artists organize provide ways for humans to aesthetically interact and collaborate with each other through social exchanges (Bourriaud 43).

Another characteristic of relational aesthetics is the idea of experiencing these pieces within certain time frames, unlike traditional art works. Traditional art objects such as paintings and sculptures can be seen and experienced at any time because they are continually on display. Non-availability is a common property of contemporary art practices such as performance. For instance, the documentation of the performance is the only thing that is viewable after the performance is over. Even though the video or film records the performance, it cannot be considered the artwork itself (Bourriaud 29). This is because human-to-human interactions and the temporary communities they create are important to the concept.

SEA projects often aim to provoke reflection among these temporary communities. They draw attention to social and political injustices while also

attempting to help the situation by empowering participants to act, instigating a discourse, or helping to make a difference within the audience involved by initiating participation. Because of SEA's growing recognition, it is important to identify its relationship to the art world as well as arts administrators and arts organizations.

How does SEA, a process and experience-driven art, relate to object-oriented traditional arts? Pablo Helguera, Director of Adult and Academic Programs at the Museum of Modern Art, proposes that there are traditional art works such as paintings that accentuate the process of creating the work as a main component of the work. These include action paintings with gestural brushstrokes that serve as a record of the movements of the paintbrush. Even though the painting relies on this action as a part of its aesthetic appeal and historical relevance, it is not simply the action which is important; otherwise the actual physical painting would not be preserved. On the other side of the spectrum, within Conceptualism the materiality of the piece is optional; the thought process is the artwork. SEA falls within this realm (Helguera 1-2).

SEA not only involves the visual arts world, but other arts and even philanthropy-centered professions, making the work reach a broader audience. SEA can encompass a wide variety of other disciplines, making it an ambiguous art form. These disciplines can include professions such as social work, theatre, dance, video, environmentalism, human rights, and even culinary arts. This temporary seizing of subjects into the art-making world can produce new insights to the subject matter or problem, making it more visible to the community or

public (Helguera 5). It is necessary to give a few recent examples of SEA in order to create a better understanding of the art form and some real-life applications of SEA.

Creative Time, a non-profit organization that will be discussed in detail within this paper, curated a project after the 9/11 attacks in New York City called *Tribute in Light* by Julian Laverdiere and Paul Myoda in 2002, just months after the Twin Towers fell. Two shafts of light representing the fallen buildings were projected to the sky in order to memorialize those who died in the tragedy and bring the idea of hope and rebirth to the onlooker (Creative Time).

Another contemporary project is a take-out restaurant based in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania called Conflict Kitchen. The founders of the project, Jon Rubin and Dawn Weleski, only serve cuisine from countries that the United States is in conflict with. They work with various communities in Pittsburgh in order to develop regional menus based on the food from the particular country that is the focus. Every six months, the storefront and the menu change to represent a different country. In addition, events and performances coincide with each change. The participants not only consume food from that culture but they also engage in discussion about the politics and issues of each country (Conflict Kitchen).

Women on Waves, also curated by Creative Time, is an undeniably controversial and politically-driven project. The project, which started in 2001, consisted of a boat that would anchor twelve miles from the harbors in international waters. Their goal was to bring women on board to provide

education and abortion services where the procedure is illegal. The medical professionals and activists provided contraceptives, pregnancy tests, and STD information, and also prescribed the abortion pill. The media created a buzz about the boat and it met much resistance in the visited countries. They were sending the message that abortion is “not simply a health issue, but a social justice issue” (Thompson 251).

These are just a few examples of what socially engaged art can be and the variety of disciplines that can be involved. SEA has evolved and grown greatly over the decades since it began. This type of art first emerged in the social turmoil that came about in the 1960s and the social movements that were a part of it. Site-specificity in art work developed in the form of performance art and installation art, which influence socially engaged art practice today. Perhaps one of the most controversial issues surrounding SEA is the terminology. Previously, art based on social interaction has been identified as “relational aesthetics” and “community,” “collaborative,” “participatory,” “dialogic,” and “public” art, among many other titles. Recently, “social practice” has been the more favored term for socially engaged art (Helguera 3). Even though this is the case, Helguera proposes that the term “social practice” ignores the involvement of art. Socially engaged art, on the other hand, actively recognizes the artistic and aesthetic properties used in the practice (Helguera 5). Because I believe that it is important to recognize the artistic qualities of these projects, I also chose to use the term socially engaged art. It is also important to understand how others in this field view this practice.

Nato Thompson, chief curator at Creative Time, not only sees SEA as an art but also links it to everyday life. He proposes that SEA is not an art movement like its predecessors, such as Russian Constructivism, Futurism, Situationism, Tropicalia, Happenings, Fluxus, and Dadaism. SEA is rather a new social order and a way of life that stresses participation and spans disciplines (Thompson 19).

Socially engaged art is a practice that straddles the line between activism and art and often involves participation. This quality connects the art with real life and therefore actually engages people in the public sphere outside the gallery. This is especially important, since socially engaged artists are often concerned that a designated art space, such as a gallery, would take the edge and effectiveness out of their projects (Thompson 22). This potential for impact can make the art more meaningful for the participant and the artist, while also involving people who normally would not visit a museum or gallery.

The socially engaged artist also takes on a different role than in other art forms. Anne Pasternak, President and Artistic Director of Creative Time, sees these artists' processes as being involved in thoughtful conversation, listening, and community organizing. They take pressing social issues and increase public awareness while motivating their communities. In doing so, they expand the model for art making and the definition of being an artist, all while involving a new audience (Thompson 7-8).

What other art forms are at the roots of SEA practice? Socially engaged art essentially melds together the ideas of public art and participatory art.

Although these mentioned forms of art cannot always be called socially engaged art, it is important to discuss them because of the great connection they have with SEA.

Lucy R. Lippard defines public art as “accessible work of any kind that cares about, challenges, involves, and consults the audience for or with whom it is made, respecting community and environment” (Lacy 121). A national move toward public art came about in the United States during the same time period in which SEA was emerging, the 1970s. This was implemented by the Art in Public Places Program at the National Endowment for the Arts in 1967 (Lacey 21). The point of public art during this time was typically “urban renewal” projects in which the artists were expected to bring areas of desolation to a point of recovery. Public works such as these are typically paid for by the government agencies or tax dollars. Thus, artists were employed to salvage the distressed cityscapes (Finkelpearl 21). This movement lets art take place outside the “white cube” and enter the public sphere. Making art in public spaces is a way of reclaiming the space and improving it for the good of the people (Lacy 21).

This public art movement gave artists a way to produce art outside of the existing museum and gallery system. Because of the pressure to explain this new work to the public, newly trained arts administrators emerged. They needed to ease communication between these artists and the various other people involved in the process, including representatives of the public sphere. This resulted in teams of artists, architects, and designers who interacted with other

professionals, communities, and civic groups in order to communicate effectively (Lacy 22).

Participatory art can be a debatable subject because of the varying levels of participation required. Participatory art can be described as “art that requires some action on behalf of the viewer in order to complete the work” (Thompson 21). But as Helguera states, all art can arguably be participatory. Simply passively viewing a work can be an act of participation. The participation involved in a SEA project is usually much more active and specific (Helguera 14). Helguera proposes that there are four different types of participation.

The first is *nominal participation*, a passive form of participation in which the visitor or viewer contemplates the work in a thoughtful manner. The second is *directed participation*, in which the visitor completes a simple task to contribute to the creation of the work. The third is *creative participation* in which the visitor provides a component of the work within a structure decided by the artists. The fourth is *collaborative participation* in which the visitor shares responsibility for developing the structure and content of the work in partnership and direct discourse with the artist. Nominal and directed participation typically take place in a single encounter, while creative and collaborative tend to cultivate over time (Helguera 14-15).

In addition, because of this digital age, there also comes the act of virtual participation through social media platforms. Although it usually cannot be considered a socially engaged art project because of the lack of concept, the congregation of a flash mob is proof that social media is effective in prompting

social action and demonstrates an example of directed participation (Helguera 17-18).

Participation and the views of the participants have changed and have been redefined throughout history. The idea of participants has changed from the crowd, to the community, to today's volunteers whose participation is constant with the accessibility of things like social networking. Participants have changed with the art movements as well. They have ranged from hostile, to an audience that enjoys being subjected to odd experiences developed by an artist. More recently, audiences can be encouraged to be a co-producer of the work. "This could be seen as a heroic narrative of the increased activation and agency of the audience, but we might also see it as a story of the ever-increasing voluntary subordination to the artist's will, and of the commodification of human bodies in a service economy (since voluntary participation is also unpaid labor)" (Thompson 39). Even though using participants is somewhat controversial, it is a way to engage the community in a way that other art practices cannot achieve.

Now that the theory, history, and roots of socially engaged art have been discussed, it is important to also discuss how this affects arts organizations and administrators. How can a museum include this type of art within their programming? One might wonder if this type of art even belongs within an institution. Contemporary participatory and discursive projects tend to critique the institution while not being anti-institutional, but one must keep in mind that a successful museum must be both a producer of and a home for both social and aesthetic experiences cultivating a conversational public space (Frieling 37, 48).

These interactive and participatory aspects of art are not typically considered in traditional curatorial practice. What can these organizations do to ensure that they are keeping up with the continuous changes in art world, engaging the public in new and exciting ways? Museums must engage new audiences in order to stay successful and keep attendance levels up. Is it necessary to collaborate with other organizations in doing so? Collaboration is a key component of many SEA projects but is it necessary on the organization level? The development departments must find new and creative ways to find funding. Will the traditional museum audience be alienated as a result? Some people may be put off by participatory art. In this case, how do you educate your audience and new audiences about this art practice? Does SEA threaten traditional curatorial practice and how does the organization adapt?

CHAPTER II

ORGANIZATIONS, STRUCTURES, OPERATIONS, PARTNERSHIPS, AND AFFILIATIONS

As mentioned in Chapter 1, arts organizations, must adapt to changes in contemporary art practices in order to stay current and relevant. Creative Time is an example of an art organization that focuses on socially engaged art without having a single venue. Creative Time is acknowledged as one of the most important organizations in the world that focuses on SEA. Creative Time, established in 1974, is a non-profit organization based in New York City. Because it is an organization with a successful record for its own work and for its collaborations with other arts organizations it is useful to look at the model it provides.

Creative Time helps artists from all over the world create socially engaged public art projects. Their mission statement is:

“Creative Time commissions, produces, and presents art that engages history, breaks new ground, challenges the status quo, and infiltrates the public realm while engaging millions of people in New York City and across the globe. We are guided by a passionate belief in the power of art to create inspiring personal experiences as well as foster social progress. We privilege artists’ ideas. We get excited about their dreams and respond to them by providing big opportunities to expand their practices and take bold new risks that value process, content, and possibilities” (Creative Time).

In an interview, Cynthia Pringle, Director of Operations at Creative Time, provided information about the organization's structure and operations. Since Creative Time is a non-profit organization (NPO), the structure is similar to those employed in other arts organizations. It has a board of directors, consisting of thirty-two members who meet quarterly. As with all NPO boards, their obligation is to oversee the organization's operations and help guide President and Artistic Director Anne Pasternak. Under Pasternak, is an executive team consisting of a Deputy Director, a Director of Operations, and the Executive Assistant.

In addition there are four designated departments. These are the following: Marketing and Communications; Development; Programming/Curatorial; and the newest department, Global Initiatives. Each department director supervises at least three associates, sometimes titled managers, associates, or editors.

The Marketing and Communications Department consists of the Director of Communications, the Director of External Affairs, the Social Media and Digital Communications Director, and a Curator and Director of Consulting. The Programming Department consists of the Chief Curator, the Director of Exhibitions, the Programming Assistant, and a Project Manager. The Development Department has a Director of Development, an Associate Director of Events and Membership, a Development Associate, and a Foundation and Individual Giving Associate. The Global Initiatives Department consists of a Director of Global Initiatives, Program Manager, an Editor, and an Associate Editor of Creative Time Reports.

The Executive department manages day-to-day operations; the Marketing and Communications department manages public relations, press, branding, and social media; the Development department is in charge of fundraising efforts from foundations, government, and individuals and memberships; the Programming/Curatorial department handles large-scale public projects; and the Global Initiatives department handles global relations, hosts the Annual Creative Time Summit in New York City, and also produces Creative Time Reports.

In addition to the staff, Creative Time offers a year-round internship program to undergraduate and graduate students. This program plays a large role in their educational efforts to provide the student with hands-on experience with this administrative process. Although there is no dedicated education department, Creative Time makes a concerted effort to incorporate educational components into each project.

Creative Time creates partnerships with many other organizations in order to achieve its mission. Collaborations and partnerships have included the Museum of Modern Art, the Whitney Museum, The New School, the Queens Museum, Parsons School of Design, and even MTV (Creative Time). These partnerships are particularly helpful when presenting and curating socially engaged art projects. Creative Time's projects include such a wide variety of professions and media that it is essential to reach out to organizations. Since Creative Time is a public arts organization with no designated exhibition/performance venue, it is possible that projects can be physically produced anywhere, as Pringle suggests, such as abandoned buildings, the

internet, publications, the sky, the street, or even outer space. She added, however, that a more traditional partnership with a large museum, such as MOMA, is much more useful in making their projects more visible and able to reach a broader audience than if they were taking a solo approach (Pringle).

Because of the uniqueness of each project, there is no particular universal formula for these partnerships. Each evolves in its own way, sometimes initiated by Creative Time, sometimes initiated by and person or entity that wants to collaborate. For instance, a project by Tania Bruguera called “Immigrant Movement International,” based on immigration reform in Corona, Queens, was presented in partnership with the Queens Museum of Art because the museum already had established a community outreach initiative in the area. The administrative staff at Creative Time saw it as beneficial and logical to approach the Queens Museum for a partnership because of its well-established connections to the community. In the same way, Creative Time initiated a project with MTV entitled MTV Art Breaks (Pringle).

In other situations, an individual artist may approach Creative Time to help realize a specific project. An example might be if an artist wishes to exhibit work in the Park Avenue Armory, he or she might contact both Creative Time and the Park Avenue Armory in order to create a team capable of realizing the project (Pringle).

Pringle said that partnerships with other organizations are generally successful. The larger organizations are strategic about developing different audiences. This helps Creative Time in expanding their press and fundraising

capabilities while establishing strategic partnerships to help promote their work. The potential down-side of these collaborations is that large organizations can sometimes overshadow Creative Time's involvement simply because of their size, or perhaps because of their landmark venues. These are issues which must be considered in the selection of projects (Pringle).

Fundraising is an issue that is encountered in all NPOs including arts organizations. Defending social practice work as art has been an on-going challenge to Creative Time's fundraising efforts. Nonetheless, the company has developed diverse range of income sources. Creative Time receives some of its funding from in-kind donations or sponsorships from companies that donate items such as technological devices. Although important, this source makes up a small part of the overall contributed income. Members of the Board of Directors are expected to make donations that go towards the General Operating Support. They also are asked to make additional contributions to projects of particular interest to them. The Board of Directors is also critical in a successful Annual Gala, for which the goal is \$1 million per year. These funds are also dedicated to General Operations.

Foundation grants, which tend to be project oriented, are typically acquired through personal relationships. Pasternak, who has been president of Creative Time for twenty years, indicates that a great deal of her job is to develop personal relationships with a wide range of foundations. These relationships enable her to match projects and artists with appropriate foundation funding. Finally, federal grants are received through programs such as the National Endowment for the

Arts, which also tend to be more project-specific funding. The development department makes a list of targets for these proposals (Pringle).

Creative Time selects projects to produce on a regular basis, but there is currently no standard operating procedure for this process. Developing a procedure is on Creative Time's short-term agenda. Producing projects with artists is an organic process in which they meet to discuss, make connections, and flesh out ideas until they come up with a course for the development of the project at hand. This is necessary since socially engaged art is process-oriented and therefore continually changing from project to project. The concept of proposed projects must be concrete in order for them to be successful. The planning stage is critical (Pringle).

Creative Time does not accept unsolicited proposals, so artists who propose projects to the administrative staff already have an established relationship with the organization. The organization also will sometimes approach artists with ideas. Nato Thompson, Chief Curator of Creative Time, spends time travelling, speaking, and developing relationships with artists in order to expand their base (Pringle).

Because of the nature of this type of art, it is somewhat difficult to analyze the success of each project. Once again, Creative Time does not have a standard procedure for doing this. There is concrete data such as attendance, reach, participation, and press that can be collected, but there is also an abundance of subjective evaluations that must take place. The subjective data comes from asking questions such as what went well, what could be improved,

were new funders interested, or was the result of the creative process something different, new, and exciting?

According to Pringle, Creative Time believes that none of their projects has failed. She says though they don't always go as planned, the results can be incredible, although unexpected. This is still a success in their eyes. For example, the project *Light Cycle*, by Chinese artist Cai Guo-Qiang was completely altered when it rained the day his project was to illuminate Central Park with fireworks for its 150th anniversary. The rain soaked everything including the triggers, which subsequently did not go off as planned, but "the result was something incredibly beautiful and therefore still successful" (Pringle).

Unlike Creative Time, most organizations do not focus on SEA for their main exhibitions or programming. Most arts organizations have a specific venue and exhibit object-based art within this container. Because of this difference in curatorial style, contemporary art museums, in order to explore this relatively new form of art, will have to find new methods to bring process-based art into their programming. The Hammer Museum in Los Angeles, California is one organization that is beginning to include this type of art into its regular programming and curatorial practice.

In 2009, the Hammer Museum received a grant from the Irvine Foundation Arts Innovation Fund for \$1 million in order to create an innovative artist-driven model for visitor engagement. This grant led to the creation of a new Public Engagement department. Allison Agsten, Public Engagement Curator, was hired to run this department in addition to her curatorial endeavors. Creating an artist

residency program was another effort to solve their visitor engagement issues (Hammer Museum).

Their first Artist in Residence (A.I.R) was with the Machine Project. The Machine Project is an artist-run collective based in a store front in Echo Park, led by director Mark Allen. This year-long residency resulted in over eighty programs throughout museum, each focusing public participation and engagement (Hammer Museum). This residency also provided the museum a means to deal with living artists in a way that is not always possible. Though not many museums who wish to include social practice work into their programming will have the funding to support an opportunity of this size, it is useful to examine their processes and experiences.

A recently released publication called *Machine Project Public Engagement Artist in Residence Report* outlines much of the artist-in-residence process. Essays and interviews with the Hammer Museum administrative staff, details about the processes and projects, as well as the experiences of the artists involved in the collaborations are presented in this report. This is meant to serve as a type of a guide for other institutions who may want to follow suit in presenting these types of socially engaged and participatory projects. The museum, over the course of the year, collaborated with over three hundred artists for the various projects. The projects highlighted artists as the problem solvers, including way-finding designs and visitor tours within the museum (Allen 3).

Unlike Creative Time's projects, the Hammer's Public Engagement programming has never left the building. The program is, in essence a smaller,

venue-oriented version of what happens with Creative Time. Rather than focusing on site-specific installations, the challenge at the Hammer was to create engaging projects within the confines of the museum. When the staff at the Hammer refers to Public Engagement, they are speaking of the relationship between the museum and the public, putting the public at the center of its programming. These projects are less universal in scope than those of Creative Time, but it focuses more closely on transforming the public's idea of what a museum should be; changing that perception from being a container for art to being a site for the creation of art (Allen 14).

Within this report, the staff members of the Hammer and the artists of Machine Project articulate the variety of engaging projects they experimented with. These include:

- Pieces that added a more personal dimension to visitors' engagement with work in the Hammer's special exhibitions and collections
- Ambient pieces that used sound or participation to alter the atmosphere of the Museum
- Intimate performances for one or two people at a time
- Hands-on workshops that brought Machine's participatory and interdisciplinary mode into the Museum
- Large-scale live action or performance pieces
- Projects that promoted interaction between Machine Project's artists and the Hammer's staff

- Pieces that directly addressed the Hammer's visitor services concerns, including hospitality and way-finding

This variety of programs was a way for them to experiment in order to figure out what exactly public engagement meant and how it could be approached (Allen 13).

The curatorial staff and the artists in residence would meet regularly to discuss, approve, schedule, and troubleshoot ideas for the public engagement projects. Once the projects were approved, they met with the collaborators in order to answer any questions and discuss potential issues. During the production of the projects there were three things that had to be addressed in each case. These included administrative issues regarding artists, performers, and consultants, public engagement components including waiver forms and level of participation, and the internal administrative production including staffing and documentation needs. Even with a thorough planning process, some elements of the projects changed according to visitor attendance and participation. At the completion of each project, a report was sent out to the staff of the Museum outlining problems, successes, and audience feedback (Allen 26-27).

Some of the most successful projects created for the Hammer Museum were *Giant Hand*, *Houseplant Vacation*, *Little William Theater: Micro-Concerts*, and *Dream-In*. All of these projects required participation from museum visitors and demonstrate a good range of possibilities when programming participatory art in a museum setting.

Giant Hand was a project developed to address the Museum's way-finding issues. This project took place in September of 2010 in the Museum Courtyard Foyer. *Giant Hand* consisted of a large constructed apparatus with a moveable hand at the top. Visitors would choose a button that coincided with the place they wanted to go. The choices were the Stairs to the Galleries, Admission and Bookstore, Elevator to Galleries, Billy Wilder Theater, Restrooms, Cafe Hammer, and at you. The hand would then move in order to point the visitors to the correct location (Allen 21).

Houseplant Vacation was a month-long event that took place in the Linbrook Terrace from July 31 to August 28, 2010. Visitors were invited to bring a plant to the museum for a cultural retreat. Performances and readings took place every Saturday in order to diversify the plants' vacation and portraits were taken of all seventy-seven participating plants (Allen 20).

Little William Theater: Micro-Concerts took place in the Museum Lobby Coatroom every Saturday from January to November, 2010. The performances consisted mainly of live music but also included a puppet show, a cheese tasting, and a bilingual poetry reading. These concerts were performed for two people at a time in the tiny coatroom located underneath the stairs in the lobby. The performances lasted only one to two minutes in this intimate setting (Allen 17).

Dream-In was an event in which 170 people signed up to spend the night in the courtyard at the Hammer Museum. The event took place from May 1-2, 2010, throughout the museum. Participants in this project were invited to attend a variety of sleep and dream-related workshops. One such workshop was

entitled “Lucid Dreaming.” The participants were read bedtime stories and treated to music concerts. At dawn the next day, they were awoken and asked to describe their dreams. The recorded interviews were edited and played on a loop in the Museum Lobby the next day (Allen 18-19).

The variety of the projects described above makes it clear that no single management or organization method suited them all. Allison Agsten, Public Engagement Curator at the Hammer Museum, does not have traditional museum curator’s background. Her previous experience was in journalism where she acquired extensive administrative and production experience. This experience led to her finding a skill set of putting projects together from the bottom to top, which is especially helpful when producing these public engagement projects (Agsten).

When hired at the museum, she was charged with the task of creating a new visitor experience. This duty not only involved working with artists in producing engaging projects, but also creating a new visitor’s service department. Originally, the museum was hoping the artists would solve the issues they had with their visitor services, but most of the artists ultimately complicated these problems or examined other problems entirely. This is just one of the lessons the museum staff learned during their residency with Machine Project (Mohseni). Not to say the “artists as problem-solvers” approach is a bad one, but it is often the nature of this type of art to call attention to problems rather than solve them.

With the Irvine Foundation Grant, the Hammer wanted to explore innovative and experimental art. Agsten states, “There are artists who have been

doing incredible work in the realm of social practice for a long time, but many museums haven't exercised this muscle a lot, including ours." When working with artists, Agsten makes most of her connections with those from the Los Angeles area. This is because most of the local artists have already spent a large amount of time at the Hammer and can adapt well because of this familiarity. Most of the public engagement projects are free-standing and are not associated with the work that is on exhibit within the galleries. Agsten also plans on working with these local artists to produce future projects that take place outside the museum's walls (Mohseni). A call-for-entries procedure is never implemented by the curatorial staff at the Hammer, therefore, all artists are contacted by the curators (Agsten).

Other partnerships are also explored in this programming. For example, a project at the Hammer by artist Fritz Haeg required a sit-in as a part of the piece *Domestic Integrities part A03: Los Angeles*, March 21-24, 2013. Volunteers and visitors were given the opportunity to crochet discarded textiles into the travelling *Domestic Integrities* rug (Hammer Museum). Additionally, the Hammer Museum is creating a partnership with a Los Angeles-based art and cultural engagement group called For Your Art. This is a company that emails patrons of the arts in order to create engagement and patronage for local art projects (Agsten).

Evaluating the success of each project is an important process when creating a new visitor experience. The Public Engagement department does this by conducting formal and informal surveys, keeping track of attendance, and evaluating press coverage and social media impressions (Agsten). Agsten

observes that music-based projects are typically the most engaging for the visitors. Even if the music is experimental, the visitor does not seem alienated as can sometimes happen with experimental visual arts. Project selection is important in order to reach the general audience (Mohseni).

Funding for this type of art at the Hammer Museum comes primarily from the Irvine Foundation Grant, although there are other sources of contributions as well. The staff does not normally fundraise on a project-to-project basis. Typically, these types of projects are not very commercially attractive to the usual museum patron who tends to be interested in art collecting (Agsten).

The Hammer Museum regularly invites Artists in Residence to work with the Public Engagement department to create projects. The result is a continuing collaboration with these artists. Although none of the A.I.R. projects has been as intensive as the year-long Machine Project residency, each has required extensive communication between the artists and the staff members (Mohseni).

A Public Engagement Curator position, such as Agsten's, requires a person who can think quickly and take action in any situation. The projects are so diverse a large variety of problems can arise. The main goal of the Public Engagement department at the Hammer Museum is to engage the visitors. Agsten states that the most rewarding part of her job is when an important project is realized and it changes the way the visitors think and also how they perceive a museum experience (Agsten).

The Hammer Museum is connected to the University of California, Los Angeles. UCLA is not the only university that has a connection with social

practice art. There are many MFA programs that are being implemented on a university level that incorporate aspects of this practice, though they are listed under a variety of titles. Portland State University, California College of the Arts, Maryland Institute College of Art, and the Herron School of Art and Design at Indiana University are a few examples. Students in the Herron program, for instance, work with their local communities, government, and businesses in order to realize their projects instead of working solo in their studios. Coursework in the Portland State University has an MFA program in Art and Social Practice that includes classes in social work, anthropology, environmentalism, and journalism in order to help students create these socially-based projects (Grant).

The Hammer Museum, likewise, is not the only traditional museum that is incorporating socially engaged art into its programming. The Queens Museum of Art has a large public programming presence within its community with an emphasis on immigrants. Positions that support this outreach include Community Organizer / Corona Studio Coordinator, Manager of New New Yorkers Programs, and the Director of Public Programs (Queens Museum of Art). In addition, the Executive Director, Tom Finkelppearl, is a leader in public art. He has written numerous books on the subject and has been invited to speak at the Creative Time Summit and the Open Engagement Conference held at Portland State University. He also is a founder of the Queens College MFA Program in Contemporary Art and Social Practice Pilot (Open Engagement).

The Contemporary Arts Center in Cincinnati, Ohio curated a socially engaged project that involved not only the museum but locations around the city

as well. *Green Acres: Artists Farming Fields, Greenhouses and Abandoned Lots* opened on September 22, 2012 and was on view until January 20, 2013. The project called attention to gardening as not only a kind of activism, but also an art form. It featured a working farm in the museum gallery, a farm stand in the lobby, sculptures used for farming, videos and other installations, and various satellite projects in the community. This project engaged the community in growing their own food and also in a conversation about food production. This exhibition was guest curated by Sue Spade (Contemporary Arts Center).

This type of curatorial practice is so different from the traditional, how can an existing museum or gallery incorporate it into their programming? Does this type of art threaten the traditional curatorial practice? In the case of the Hammer Museum, Public Engagement is only one aspect of their curatorial department. Traditional curatorial practice is not sacrificed in order to produce these projects. Agsten states that there is a growing interest in this type of art but at this moment in time, museums are best positioned to experiment with programming of this nature versus creating a new specialized department (Agsten). In the future, more and more arts organizations are going to try to incorporate this in their programming. Arts administrators need to be more creative and adaptable as contemporary art practice evolves into social engagement. This means they must have a plan for production, documentation, and outreach in order for their organizations to successfully produce socially engaged art projects. Are interactivity, participation, and engagement going to be the key for raising museum attendance?

CHAPTER III
DEVELOPING PROCEDURES FOR MANAGING SUCCESSFUL
SOCIALLY ENGAGED ART PROJECTS

As socially engaged art, social practice, and participatory art generates interest among arts organizations, arts administrators are challenged to develop strategies and procedures for managing this type of art. Issues include such things as developing appropriate methods of documentation, marketing, and organizing these projects. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the uniqueness of each of these events means that generalized policies may not be sufficient. Incorporating art such as this into a traditional museum will require some flexible guidelines and procedures. I am proposing the following guidelines and have divided them into three sections: Selecting and Organizing Projects, Documentation Procedures, and Audience Development.

1. Selecting and Organizing Projects

An example of the complexity of selecting and organizing projects can be found in materials created by The Hammer Museum and the Machine Project. Both entities have worked together to outline the procedures from the artist in residence program in a report. The procedures outlined in this report include many meetings, information on how the project will engage the public, and what

materials, artists, and location(s) the project will require (Allen 26-27). These procedures are a basic but essential element in managing and organizing projects for this type of artistic practice. Both Creative Time and the Hammer Museum's managing entities indicate the need for a large amount of communication and on-going discussion when producing these projects. The administrators must think creatively and discretionally about multiple aspects of these projects before approving them. These discussions not only cover what projects feasibly can be done, what partnerships may be essential, or at least beneficial, and what numbers of staff and volunteers would be needed in order to execute the project successfully. There must also be discussion to discern if taking on such an exhibition is going to be a successful and conceptually sound socially engaged art experience.

Because socially engaged art blurs so many lines, it is important for curators and other staff members to be able to distinguish SEA from social work or projects that would better fit in another category. An example would be an educational workshop, which would have distinct goals that processes that are not necessarily those of an artist. Social work and social practice as an art form are often confused. Some social work can be considered artistic and some social practice artists produce work that has similar elements as those of social workers. The elements of SEA and social work projects may appear similar, which further complicate the matter for onlookers. The difference between the two lies in the goals of the projects (Helguera 35).

Helguera indicates that social work is a value-based profession aimed at improving current social situations; its goal is social justice. According to him, this work guards human dignity and fortifies human relationships. That is not to say that socially engaged artists lack these types of values; they do not approach them in a similar manner. Socially engaged art often makes an effort to create problems, irony, and even tension around the issues in order to provoke reflection (Helguera 35).

For instance, a service-based project such as Creative Time's *Waiting for Godot in New Orleans*, by artist Paul Chan, has a double function. While it provided a service to the community in New Orleans, by creating symbolic actions, it also provoked reflection on issues raised by the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina (Helguera 36).

In 2007, four site-specific outdoor performances of Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* were performed in two New Orleans neighborhoods. This project was also combined with community events such as free art seminars, educational programs, and conversations with the community. Chan felt that this particular theatrical production was fitting for the situation that was occurring in New Orleans. Buildings and homes were demolished during the catastrophic hurricane, but there were minimal signs of rebuilding at the time (Creative Time).

The basic story of *Waiting for Godot* is two men standing by a tree waiting for a man named Godot who never comes (SparkNotes Editors). Beckett's play is a metaphor for dispirited humanity waiting vainly for a real sign of the existence

of a god. Similarly, the people in New Orleans were waiting for someone to help them rebuild their lives but the help never came.

This project, as opposed to a social work project, not only offered a service to the community, but was presented as a work that made reference to cultural and art history. By making these connections, those involved are participating in a larger artistic debate. Attention is drawn to the social invisibility of the people in New Orleans and how they were ignored in their time of need. Unlike social work, there is not only an evaluation of the accomplishments of the project, but also the symbolism involved in the actions (Helguera 36).

While Creative Time's portfolio of projects encompasses many world issues, the Hammer Museum's projects tend to be localized to the building itself. The public spaces at the Hammer, where all of the public engagement projects have taken place thus far, have been the subject for drawing attention to the museum's visitor service issues. The goal of the Hammer's projects is to highlight how museums in general are perceived by the greater public, create a dialogue about this perception, and to alter this view by changing the experience of museum visitors (Agsten).

Another aspect to consider when curating and organizing SEA projects is the idea of participation and collaboration. Is a project good just because it involves audience participation or collaboration? The answer to that question is found in the distinction that has been made between socially engaged art and social work, which can be referred to as "symbolic action." A successful

participatory piece must involve a concept and critical insight. A participatory project is not automatically successful or a conceptually solid art project.

For arts administrators to understand this idea, we must take a critical look at past participatory projects. Collaboration automatically places a project in favorable light among some art critics, but authorship should have an important role, even in participatory and collaborative projects.

According to critic and author Claire Bishop, some art critics have taken an ethical turn when criticizing collaborative projects. Artists that completely let go of their authorship, letting the participants take control, are often praised for it. Bishop criticizes people like her colleague Grant Kester for his opinion on socially engaged art projects. According to Kester, control over a SEA project by an artist is seen as egotistical rather than collaborative. Bishop believes this causes other projects that would be better categorized as social work to get higher praise, simply because there are more collaborators and less ownership by the artist. Bishop goes on to say that more collaboration compromises not only the authorship of the artist, but it also causes the artistic direction to be blurred. For this reason, collaboration alone does not necessarily make a more successful piece (Bishop 22-26).

Taking this point of view into consideration, it is important to explore the aesthetics or concept of a participatory or collaborative project when considering it for production at an institution. In order to protect the reputation and artistic merit of an organization, these projects must be carefully chosen and evaluated. It is essential to evaluate the type of participation and also the variety of

participants to be involved. Socially engaged art projects are meant to be public rather than exclusive events. One should also evaluate the quality of the experience that the participants gain from their involvement in the project.

Past projects, such as Tom Marioni's *FREE BEER: The Act of Drinking Beer with Friends Is the Highest Form of Art*, involved participation and collaboration from others but lacked involvement from the public. In 1970, Marioni invited sixteen friends to the Museum of Conceptual Art in San Francisco to drink beer and have a good time. The work was exhibited by displaying the debris and clutter that was left after the act (Frieling 134). Although this piece has an important role in the development of conceptual art, it would not necessarily make a good socially engaged art project. The interactions between the participants are discursive but the discussions are not necessarily going to be geared toward any particular pressing issue or topic. This project, therefore, failed to produce discussion or reflection about any social issues. Sharing a drink with another person does not create a new experience, even if it is presented as art (Frieling 36).

Socially engaged artists need to consider the quality of the experience the audience and participants receive, no matter what discipline or subject matter is involved. If successful, the audience's participation and involvement should provoke reflection and/or discourse on the issues being raised by the project. When organizing these projects, arts administrators must take a critical look at the participation, staff, and documentation requirements, quality, and practicality of each project before going forward with its production.

2. Documentation Procedures

The success of each project also depends upon the presenting institution and how it manages, documents, and communicates these artistic ideas.

Socially engaged art is multi-disciplinary in nature, which means many elements are involved with each project. With complex art projects such as these, the act of documentation becomes a necessity in order to record the process and ideas of the artist. Because of this complexity, administrators need to decide on methods of documentation for each project on a case-by-case basis.

Documentation, which plays a large role in the main function of museums in general, could include exhibition records, collections management, and condition reports. Thorough documentation is essential to the understanding of contemporary artworks and defining their artistic importance in a historical perspective. Good documentation strategies and management can make efficient use of the museum's resources in that this avoids later difficulties and the potential loss of information which may be needed in the future (Scholte 159). Keeping records at meetings, records of visitors' experiences, attendance numbers, and mapping the process for each project are all important for the documentation of socially engaged art projects.

The Hammer Museum uses formal and informal visitor surveys, photography, and video as a part of their documentation process. Allison Agsten states that she hires the same photographer for nearly all of the projects and the AV staff at the museum handles the videography (Agsten).

Interdisciplinary art requires multidisciplinary documentation activities. Information about the temporary or interactive components cannot be captured merely by recording the physical appearance and function. Context, relations, the effect of the project on the viewer, and the viewing habits of the visitor must also be taken into consideration in order ensure that future generations understand these projects (Scholte 158-59).

Interviews with the artists, such as in the Machine Project's documentation of their residency at the Hammer Museum, may prove to be beneficial. Interviews pass on knowledge, conceptual ideas, and process information in an efficient way and can be an excellent method of documentation. Because interviews can take a great deal of time, it is important for the staff member doing the interview to prepare beforehand. Preparation can be accomplished by doing research on the artist and his or her past projects (Scholte 109).

Although short-lived performances or social interactions cannot be preserved, some artists may choose to re-present the work at a later date. This is something that a collecting museum may want to consider during the process of documentation. Ephemeral art involving social interactions typically does not rely on creating a single materially existing work. Therefore, the documentation actually replaces the physical art object that would be kept in a museum's collection in a traditional sense. This documentation should cover a wide array of technical and conceptual aspects, including light, sound, space, movement, videography, interaction with visitors, tactility and olfactory effects. Prior

evaluation of these documentable qualities of the project is required in order to optimally capture the artwork (Scholte 158).

Keeping records after the actual documentation is something that also needs to be considered. Since there are no existing platforms or standard museum methods for keeping these types of complex records, a challenge is presented to create an effective way to document these performances and social interactions. There are many record-keeping methods available to museums, but newer technologies are being developed to provide more concise and organized methods and platforms. The combination of analogue text and image-based documentation is a method widely used in museums. The artwork is documented with printed photographs and text, which are then placed in organized paper folders. This method is very basic and may easily become extensive and hard to manage with complex artworks; therefore digital supplementation must be implemented. The issue with this is that collections management software is typically developed to organize traditional or object-based art and therefore cannot adequately organize the complexities and workflow of social practice projects. The awareness of the need for the development of more structured storage and data acquisition systems for complex artworks has resulted in various initiatives to develop methods and systems focused on workflow procedures, inter-institutional networking, and long-term preservation (Scholte 162-163).

Information management is becoming increasingly important in the museum world. Because of the need to document complex artworks, some

models, such as the Inside Installations Documentation Model (2IDM), propose guidelines on how to structure information and relationships using any collections management system that is based on relational databases. This model is meant to be a proposal for documentation specialists, curators, and conservators to create requirements for information systems in order to better serve the purpose of documenting installation artworks (Scholte 165). The 2IDM includes four basic components: identification and description, material and technique, location and exhibition history, and condition and conservation (Scholte 166). Even though this model focuses on installation artwork, the elements are relevant to socially engaged art because of the need to document the process, relations, and intricate details.

Although documentation has greatly improved over the years, there still a need to develop new models, standards, and tools, all of which require dedicating additional resources, and increasing training efforts. Cooperation between the artist and the museum staff is essential in order to optimize record keeping and documentation efforts. The internet has a huge potential as a platform for archival information because of the variety of presentation options. Since artists are increasingly using the internet to document their own artworks, museums can support artist-made websites that document these projects and help them secure them for long periods of time. This not only benefits the museum, but the artists as well (Scholte 170).

Documentation is not only important for collecting museums, but also for non-collecting institutions. For example, Creative Time's website

creativetime.org has a complete list of projects they have curated or produced along with a single photo and brief description of the project. Although these descriptions are brief, they provide a basic understanding and visual component for each of their projects with links to other sources for additional information. In addition, one can also access their online *Living as Form Social Practice Database*, which was created in conjunction with their book in 2011. Along with a photo and brief description of the project, certain categories and informational data are entered in order to describe the project. These categories of data include setting (i.e. urban), initiator/producer (i.e. small group or collective), duration (i.e. ongoing), methods (i.e. workshops and public events), who the project was recommended by, and how it was produced. This archive was produced to encourage research about socially engaged art and its histories, geographies, and interpretations (Creative Time).

To conclude, before a project is produced, the staff of the museum or art organization must decide on the best methods of documentation. The nature of these projects requires documentation of the process as well as the intentions of the artist and the reactions of the audience or participants. Staff members must decide beforehand which documentation processes and record-keeping methods are necessary for each project.

3. Audience Development

Once a project is approved for production and the documentation is planned, the museum staff must take on the challenge of developing an audience. The inevitable task of engaging the public with these art projects may

make marketing to a broad audience a difficult job. A flexible and agile approach to press outreach and advertising must be adopted by the staff (Kroll).

Like the other managerial aspects of these projects, there is no one-size-fits-all approach to promoting the events or projects; nor, with the possible exception of artists who produce similar works, is there necessarily a specific group or audience that is interested in the social practice or public engagement projects as a whole. Morgan Kroll, Public Relations Associate at the Hammer Museum, states that though each project differs greatly, there are some commonalities to most of them. The primary common thread in the Hammer's case is the effort to provide an atypical museum experience with their public relations projects. This can either be accomplished with audience participation, creating a more personal or unique experience for the guests, or by altering the museum's atmosphere with music or sounds (Kroll).

The Hammer promotes a large number of public programs, including traditional curatorial exhibitions and public engagement projects. The Hammer staff must be selective in their outreach to the press so as to not flood the arts and culture writers with too much information. Kroll indicated that one of her major marketing tools is to reach out to writers who have experience writing about this type of work so that the coverage of the projects is more in depth. These connections also ensure a spot in the local art listings which is a critical marketing element. The Hammer reaches out to the UCLA community, of which the museum is a part, finding that the students and staff members at the

University are, for the most part, more open to the experimental nature of these projects (Kroll).

Marketing Manager at the Hammer Museum, Jennifer Gould, explains her method of marketing for public engagement projects to be no different than with other temporary exhibitions. Once she gathers information about the artist, the project, and his or her practice, she projects which audiences would be most likely to engage with the artist. Then she targets her efforts toward these selected audiences (Gould).

Because of the experimental nature of socially engaged art, museum and gallery administrative staff members who are traditionally trained may find it to be challenging to integrate SEA into their programming. Although it can be a challenge, it can also prove to be a beneficial addition to traditional curatorial practice of museums, as evidenced by the success of the Hammer's Public Engagement Program. It is important to weigh the pros and cons before taking the leap into programming such as this.

When producing and curating exhibitions, Creative Time has no singular established venue; therefore it takes much more communication and marketing in order to reach its audience. As suggested in the interview with Cynthia Pringle, that is one of the great challenges of Creative Time's programming. Since the audience does not have a venue to associate with the organization, it can be difficult to get recognition. It has been proven that producing projects within a large, identifiable venue has been beneficial to the audience outreach for some of Creative Time's projects (Pringle). Since the Hammer has yet to produce any

projects outside of their museum walls, this is not raised as a potential issue. It can be argued, however, that the outreach is restricted by limiting the projects to the museum itself, although the Hammer's projects are not intended to be as in the public realm as Creative Time's projects are.

One of the major challenges with SEA is explaining why these projects are considered art. They do not fall completely within the framework of traditional visual art practices and could be confusing or off-putting to some arts patrons. Because of this, it is the staff's responsibility to educate, explain the goals, and provide details of these projects to the audience members.

The financial impact of producing these projects also may become a concern to some administrators. The museum's collection can be a large resource for many exhibitions that are curated within an institution. Exhibitions curated in this way typically have minimal financial expenses. When a museum borrows art work from other institutions, shipping and insurance are the major costs. Because of the potential cost of paying artists, extra documentation needs, and buying supplies needed for these social projects, a museum faces incurring expenses that may outweigh the costs that normally come with a traditional travelling exhibition or one curated from the museum's collection.

Some of the benefits of producing socially engaged art are evidenced by the examples used in this paper. The opportunity to partner with artists, other arts organizations, and corporate sponsors are ways organizations can broaden their audiences. These collaborations and partnerships are possible because of the wide array of disciplines that are involved in some of these projects. Even

some non-art non-profits may be interested in participating in these projects because of the pressing social issues that can potentially be brought to light. This can help establish philanthropy within the organization and therefore bring a wider variety of potential donors to the organization. Creative Time has also acquired technology sponsorships through certain projects, which can be a huge benefit to an arts organization (Pringle). Potential donors and audience members can come from a variety of backgrounds within this range of disciplines involved. Since museum attendance is on a steady decline throughout the country, it will benefit the museums to diversify their audiences by altering their programming. This means reaching out to minorities and other demographics that normally would not visit a museum (Davis).

Socially engaged art has the potential to reach out into the communities in a way that traditional exhibitions do not. This practice not only lets arts administrators work closely with artists, but also gets them out into the community and helps draw attention to the organization. The decline in attendance among minorities is a great concern for museums, considering that non-whites are becoming the emerging majority in the United States. In 2008, non-Hispanic whites made up 80% of museum attendance even though they make up only 70% of the general population (Davis). Socially engaged art, whether through public participation or placement in the public realm, may help diversify the museum demographic and grow audiences in a way that cannot be achieved by traditional paintings or sculpture. This is an appealing and possibly necessary step for contemporary art organizations to survive.

Despite all of the benefits, socially engaged art gets little acknowledgement compared to other art news such as auction prices and gallery openings. The growing presence of this type of art in recent years would seem to be of interest to the press, but not many journalists have written about it. Recently more articles and online resources have been covering SEA, but this has occurred primarily as a response to the lack of mainstream media coverage. According to Ben Valentine of *Hyperallergic* art blog, this could be because of a lack of spectacle. Since SEA is process based, the images captured of successful and meaningful projects may lack newsworthy interest. In order to produce the amount of spectacle needed for media coverage, design, documentation, and social media are important elements for a SEA project's success (Valentine). The success of spectacle is evidenced in Creative Time's *Tribute to Light* memorial for the 9/11 attacks. This project creates a dramatic effect that can be seen for miles around during its annual presentations. Although not all organizations can create projects on this scale, this is a good example of how the use of visual spectacle can get media attention. Garnering media attention, which often happens with commercial art, is not the goal of SEA, but can help get the artists' message more into the public realm.

Many socially engaged artists see a big divide between themselves and the commercial art world. Though commercial art tends to overshadow art practices like SEA, many art institutions are trying to incorporate it into their museum structure so that it can be appreciated along with other tangible art works such as painting and sculpture. Art as activism has been generating

momentum since the Occupy Wall Street movement in 2011. Artists want to make art that serves more than an aesthetic function (Kennedy). Arts administrators, especially those who work in areas with pressing social issues, can help these artists achieve their goals while creating a new museum experience. Arts institutions can help redefine the typical museum visitor by engaging the community and by being forward thinking with their public programming.

In conclusion, socially engaged art may not work in every art institution, but it could be a way for an organization to reach out to a wider audience, gain more financial support, and keep up with the continuously changing art world. Documentation, spectacle, quality of the experience, and communication are some of the important aspects to consider when curating and producing these types of projects. Keeping up with current art practices is something that contemporary art organizations must do. Socially engaged art not only broadens the curatorial aspects of the organization, but also diversifies the audience and artist interactions. Museums that incorporate SEA will not only establish closer working relationships with local artists but also reach out to the communities that surround them. Appealing to the local community, especially for small or medium-sized non-profits, is essential for increasing attendance and financial support. Intriguing the media through marketing, outreach, and spectacle will increase the donor base and museum attendance.

Because this type of curatorial practice is unexplored by many professionals, arts administrators need to look to organizations like the Hammer

Museum and Creative Time and carefully examine their successes and struggles in order to produce successful projects of their own. Artists involved in social practice want to reach a wider audience including people who are not typical museum attenders (Kennedy). SEA gives art organizations a chance to change their demographic and blur the line between museums and the public realm through participation just as socially engaged artists have accomplished with their projects over the years. This not only benefits the institution, but also the artists and the communities in which they reside.

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