

**REFLECTING,
TOGETHER.:
ESSAYS IN
RESPONSE TO
CREATED,
TOGETHER.**



APR 2024

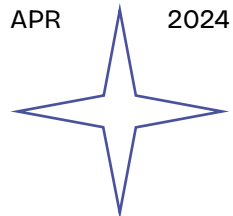




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Photo by Maya Ramirez

EDITOR'S NOTE

CAITLIN BUTLER

Created, Together. was a national assembly for artists and creatives working with communities. On Friday, October 20, 2023, roughly 200 participants from the United States and Puerto Rico visited public art projects in Philadelphia. On Saturday, October 21, they gathered at Friends Center for a day of learning and dialogue. The event was hosted by the Mural Arts Institute, which is dedicated to sharing knowledge, ideas, and experiences that have shaped Mural Arts' approach to community centered artmaking with a global audience.

The convening was structured to foster learning through exposure to content and method. Its design immersed participants in processes often used in participatory public artmaking. In particular, I noted the use of emergence: allowing each moment to drive the next, providing the minimum necessary structure to support participants bringing forth the topics most important to them.

Created, Together. was literal: we did, in fact, create it together. Mural Arts Institute Senior Program Manager Joseph Iacona reflects on the design of *Created, Together.* in the first essay in this compilation.

The Institute's staff invited me to serve as editor of a series of essays documenting some of the conversations that occurred on Saturday. Six facilitators hosted break-out sessions tackling questions related to participatory public art. Institute staff hoped to capture key takeaways that might be shared back to assembly participants and with the field. We collaborated to identify the writers. First, the Institute put a call out to invited artists, to see if any of them would be interested in serving as writers. Two

responded with interest. We engaged the remaining four by invitation, seeking out people with knowledge of Mural Arts, expertise in participatory public art, and experience as writers.

Each writer was tasked with describing a session and capturing learnings in about 500 words. They were given freedom to work in whatever voice felt most authentic to them, and to share as much about themselves and their experience of the session as they would like.

Aislinn Pentecost-Farren initially planned to document garima thakur's session. In her writing, she organically moved outward, offering a broader reflection on how navigating power dynamics often arises at forums that bring participatory artists together. I suggested we use the essay as a coda. I had coincidentally participated in garima's session, and volunteered to write the summary in Aislinn's place.

For anyone who has ever agonized over which breakout group to attend at a conference, this piece is an antidote. The six essays documenting sessions are vignettes, both distinct and interconnected. Like Aislinn, I see common themes. Together, they give the impression of a community of people searching for connection, for understanding, for progress, to be at once affirmed and challenged. I hope they are received as an opening: as a call for more dialogue, for more forums where artists and creative workers can surface and process the complexity they encounter in participatory work.

CREATING IT TOGETHER:

JOSEPH EDUARDO IACONA

As artists, we cherish Creativity as a value to be held above all others, but what is it to truly be creative? Creativity is closely connected with the practice of experimentation. Experimentation is an act of bravery; a conscious decision to explore the unseen, to step forward into the unknown, and to investigate something new. But how does one channel this devotion to inquiry within the construct of a gathering? When we collaborate, we embrace a permission to let go (of control), to share power in mapping a direction, realizing our greatest potential as homo sapiens manifests in our collectively created outcomes. By design, *Created, Together* was an exercise in collective conversation, guided by the belief that to build a true exchange, space must be constructed for people to share their voice in shaping a collaborative dialogue.

The themes that inspired *Created, Together* developed over many discussions with artists and changemakers from across the United States. Through phone calls, letters, and visits to their cities, an exciting and organic exchange took place, forming in recognition of the unified concepts that direct our approaches to community-engaged public art. Six themes were established, becoming the guiding questions that would inform many elements of *Created, Together*. This includes the facilitated conversations that transpired on the final day of the convening, documented in the pages that follow. While these conversations posed a question for participants to explore in their time together, the goal of this exercise was not to formulate answers, but instead to pose new questions in response. To enable this exchange, a set of playing cards were produced with the guiding questions and distributed

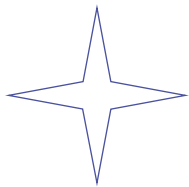
AN EMERGENT APPROACH TO CONVENING

among participants. A blank card was also included in the set. An instructional card informed participants of the goal to “consider critical questions that will inspire equitable & inclusive decision-making for our public art practices with communities” and invited them to “generate their own questions for the future of Public Art”.

During the convening, participant-generated question cards were collected through drop boxes placed throughout the event spaces. The final conversation that took place in closing *Created, Together* was a panel discussion composed of self-electing participants from each of the six facilitated groups. Conversation topics were presented to panelists from the stack of handwritten questions generated from their audience of peers, and an exploratory discussion unfolded that progressed into a beautiful, organic, honest, reflective, vulnerable, even if at moments awkward, yet poetic, dialogue that was undeniably powerful in the fragility of the moment. Walking away from this closing discussion, it was clear that what was happening here was not a clean end to our pursuit, but instead the beginning of a questioning mentality that would take us further than any one answer could.

Approaching *Created, Together* through an emergent lens means that while there was an intentional spark to ignite us, there was no scripted ending. This required an immense amount of trust in people to step forward and fill the void, to care for one another with respect, and to believe in themselves to discover the answers. These blank question cards signify the heart of what this experience was about; recognizing our commitment to curiosity, possibility, and critical reflection, in our pursuit of socially-engaged public art practice.

WHEN DO WE MOVE BEYOND PAINT & PEDESTAL?



Facilitator
PHOEBE BACHMAN

Writer
JARED C. DIAZ

WHERE DO WE CENTER PROCESS OVER PRODUCT?

We are in a room together, over a dozen or so practitioners. I seat myself at one of two round tables - the central question written before us is uttered softly in dialogue throughout the room. Phoebe leads us with an introduction and guides us through the setting of group norms. We each contribute our ideas about how to make this a safe, productive space. One still resonates with me in this moment of writing: "Whatever is learned here leaves here, but whatever is shared here stays in this room." I lean in, trusting my peers with my truths.

Now we are speaking to the subject: centering process over product. Phoebe invites us to peel back the layers together, unfolding with a question, then an idea, a connection, a new question, some answers. We voice stories of how we've approached the process in the past, sharing about our purpose driven work, obstacles we've faced, and how we've attempted to overcome them. A synergy of analysis, acknowledgements, and critical discourse quickly bubbles to the surface. Everyone has so much value to share and I am overtaken with a rush of energy, realizing that I am in good company.

We break into two smaller groups, each approaching the subject from a different vantage point. With a poster board, markers and our bright minds, we join efforts to create a kind of a roadmap. It asks the who, what, where, when, and how to centering process over product in communal art making. We already had our answers to "why?"

We start with a beginning, middle and end. Many cards are placed, some multiple times throughout our roadmap. We dive deeply into these points of connection, and through our conversation it

feels as though we've actually drawn a map between each of our postcards and ideas. We can sense the connection between each point, and like language one thing flows into the next. The eminent sense of relief passing throughout the room is something I can only describe as spiritual respite, as if weary travelers still on their journey turned the dry sands underfoot into a cool oasis.

A contribution shines resoundingly on our board - a values-centered approach. It gives an opportunity to align every subsequent step with what the community has decided is most important. It's a way to negotiate space for other voices using rules of engagement that are built by our consensus. We understand the power in that. Shouldn't those values, not goals or the will of any one stakeholder, be what guides us? Shouldn't our values be how we prioritize, encourage us to be nimble, and galvanize us when we need the power to overcome? Shouldn't whether or not these values continue to resonate with the community through the work's materialization be the highest measure of integrity? Does it feel like it was supposed to? Why? Why not? We speak on the work of deadlines with discomfort and what's actually required to answer these questions honestly.

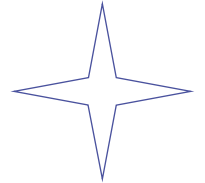
WHAT ARE THE WAYS WE REFLECT ON OUR CHOICES?

Facilitator

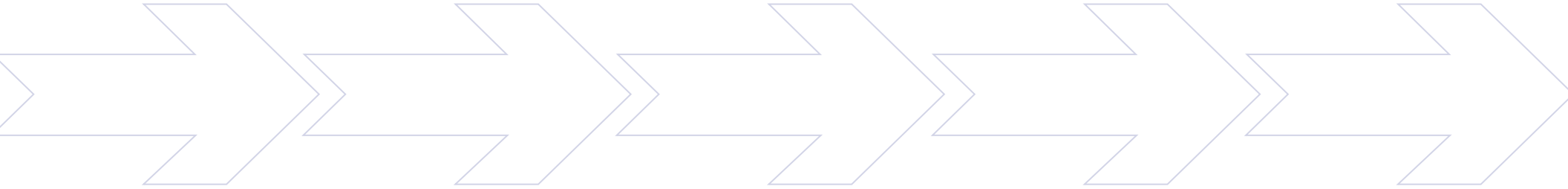
ISRAEL HAROS LOPEZ

Writer

SARAH C. RUTHERFORD



HOW DO OUR VALUES SHOW UP IN OUR WORK?



Israel Haros Lopez’s breakout group explored the two questions, *What are the ways we reflect on our choices?* and *How do our values show up in our work?* The workshop was held in the large Quaker meeting house at the Philadelphia Friends Center. While the traditional wooden bench row seating created an obstacle for a preferred circle formation, the spacious room’s reverberation and reverence felt fitting. Framed as the *Chicano Visionary Poetry Machine*, Israel seamlessly employed a combination of call and response, large and small group sharing, personal written reflection and collective writing. Using participants’ words as anchors, he improvised spoken word poetry around our individual and shared values, our inner colonization, and our relentless hope. My writing here is an effort to capture the essence of that shared experience.

PROMPT:

The values that I bring are...



RESPONSES:

- LIBERATION
- LOVE
- HONESTY
- HEALING
- ADVOCACY
- CREATIVITY
- EMPATHY
- SPIRITUALITY

Israel offered a spoken stream of consciousness and invited our collaborations popcorn style. Each poem became a swirling motion of witnessing, receiving, reflecting, and offering. To process these call and response portions, we took time for personal writing during which he sang traditional Nahua and Lakota prayer songs intended to bring healing.

PROMPT:

I am a colonizer when...



RESPONSES:

- I'M TOO BUSY TO MAKE CHANGE
- I'M BORN
- I PRIORITIZE ENGLISH
- I LET PEOPLE SAY MY LAST NAME WRONG
- I JUDGE
- I LET SHAME DIRECT WHO I AM
- I SHOW THAT FAKE SMILE

By presenting us this prompt to confront our inner colonization, Israel challenged us to dig deep. Our group was diverse in age, race, and gender, and as a result this prompt affected each one of us differently. To work in community, we must first reflect on ourselves and shine light on those parts that wish to hide in the shadows. How does our inner colonization seep into how we present our values? How can we be softer and more porous in our approach?

PROMPT:

HOPE is...



RESPONSES:

DOPE
A DISCIPLINE
A DEEP BREATHE
MEDICINE
PATIENCE
LAUGHTER
A GOOD COOKED MEAL
BRIGHT LIGHT IN LIFE

We ended our session combining one line of each of our personal writings to create our collective poem *Ballad of Relentless Hope*. After looking at our individual and shared values, examining the ways our inner colonization bleeds out into our work and our community, and reflecting on personal and collective impacts of the pandemic, to end with a poem about relentless hope was a radical act. It served as a reminder and invitation to slow down and tap into those old, embodied ways of reconnecting - by kneeling down upon the earth and looking to the stars above.

Ballad of Relentless Hope

By Iz Something (Our Group Appointed Name)

Hope honors what you've been, though while
also showing you a new way of living.
Hope gets passed down by your ancestors,
A deep inhale and exhale
A cup of oolong tea with a touch of honey.
Hope is believing in who you are, a bright
light brighter than the stars above.

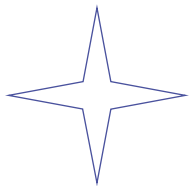
Hope is harnessing love.
Hope is creating beauty as I travel through this journey called life,
And believing in the right to my tomorrows.
Hope is sinking into the moments of
levity, laughter and connection,
When the world feels heavy with grief.
Hope is growing everywhere it's planted.

AUDIO & VIDEO VERSION

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ku4FoZQ7ZWo>



HOW CAN WELL-BEING GUIDE OUR PRACTICE?



Facilitator
SHIVON PEARL LOVE

Writer
QIAIRA RILEY

WHERE DO WE PRIORITIZE CARE FOR OUR COMMUNITIES?

As a part of a collective guided meditation practice, community educator, Shivon Pearl Love, asked, “Where do we prioritize care for our communities?” This breakout session began with an introduction, where each participant was asked to share the people, lineages, and traditions they bring into their creative and community practices and would be bringing into the space that afternoon.

Many participants recognized and honored Black southern ancestry and practices that influenced their lives and work. An arts administrator from Kentucky spoke of her grandmother, a Black woman experiencing mental illness who could’ve been held with more care in her lifetime. Someone from Alabama mentioned they always uplift the care traditions in Black Baptist queer southern lineages. Other folks said they came with the joy of their ancestors, or children, or nature. Shivon observed that several participants uplifted mothers or mothering, not so much in the sense of the act or ability to give birth, but as an act of radical caregiving through grief, trauma, and love.

Shivon’s next offering was a guided meditation inspired by a passage from Lama Rod Owens’ *Love and Rage*, exploring embodiment. She asked, “Who do we belong to and who are we accountable to?”. We explored how we could physically embody caring for ourselves, while beginning to lower our eyes or close them all together, attempting to find some comfortable stillness in our seats. Shivon invited us to set the intention: may I be happy, may I be healthy, may I be safe, may I be at ease, may I be free.

WHO IDENTIFIES THE CHALLENGE?

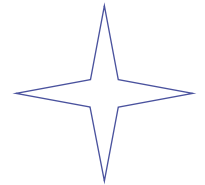
We were invited to extend that same intention beyond ourselves: to our loved ones and community. We were then invited to attempt to extend those words to those we may be at odds with. After our meditation, someone noted that the notion of extending that kind of peace felt courageous, especially in a moment of global political tension. One participant felt emotional, reflecting that they were experiencing an uncommon feeling of vulnerability in a public space. Someone applauded that vulnerability, recognizing that we're always bringing our full selves: trauma, history, and baggage to our work as socially engaged artists.

In our final moments together, we reflected on a piece from Audre Lorde's *The Uses of Anger*, asking us to ponder how we extend compassion to folks that we are angry with. We asked each other, what's under anger? Are there emotions that hide behind anger? We shared our experiences with avoiding anger or unfairly projecting it onto people and situations, while attempting to honor the importance of acknowledging anger.

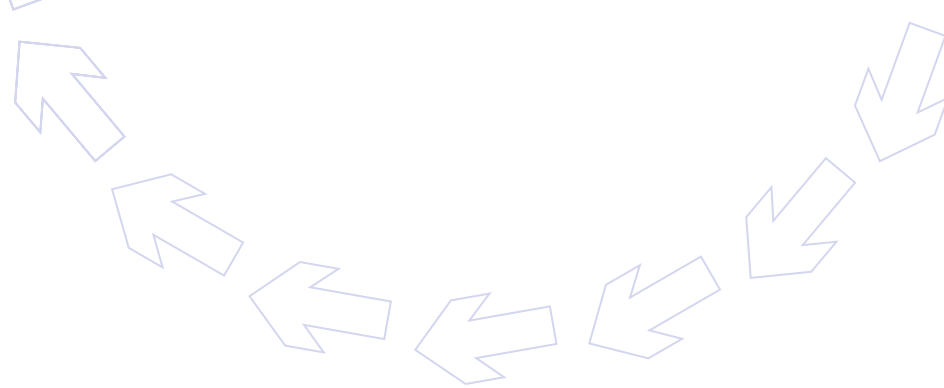
We thanked Shivon and one another, before continuing to engage with these conversations while heading to lunch.

Facilitator
ROSHANI THAKORE

Writer
PATRICE WORTHY



WHO DEFINES THE SOLUTION?



Art for public spaces is the reflection of how a community identifies themselves, a vision that weaves individual stories into a physical form. To accurately share this vision, it is essential for any public artist or team of creatives to be in conversation with the community. This process not only enhances the creative vision of the artwork, but also allows the community to feel as though there is shared input in the development of the public work.

In *Who identifies the challenge? Who defines the solution?* Roshani Thakore began by asking participants to consider how part of gathering collaborative community input is understanding and acknowledging inequities. Collaborators navigate complex roles as artists, administrators, and community members. Thakore offered that as a result of this, collaboration is a spectrum, and asked participants to consider what would be ideal parts of a true partnership between all stakeholders that support agency and power. Key aspects the group arrived at included support, influence, and transparency, with the knowledge that on one extreme of collaboration is a work being made for but not with the community, and the alternative is a work directly made from the community itself.

Participants were then asked to define collaboration in community-led partnerships. Collaboration was defined as a process where community members and organizations work together towards a shared goal, with varying levels of involvement and control. Collaboration can be complex, with diverse perspectives and potential negatives, but also opportunities for growth and creativity.

From this definition the conversation shifted to power dynamics and privilege. The group agreed that geographical locations and proximity to power centers are key factors in understanding how power operates. The group discussed the power of various privileges, such as media representation, ability, age, physical appearance, and perceived intelligence.

After this discussion, Thakore led participants in a movement exercise on identity and collaboration. Participants were asked to stand in a row and then move forward or backward based on prompts that illustrate the impact certain privileges have on an individual's background.

Those who have faced discrimination take one step back.

Those who have a parent who did not complete high school take one step back.

By the end of the exercise participants could physically see their privilege in proximity to others. Those that exhibited more privilege ask themselves often how to use that power responsibly, particularly when working with marginalized communities. Others reflected on privileges that they were not aware of, recognizing the importance of self-awareness and cultural sensitivity.

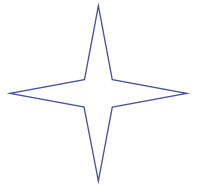
In summarizing the session, all agreed that collaboration and power sharing in community arts initiatives requires acknowledging and addressing power dynamics. Participants concluded that representation and who has decision-making

power are key elements that can shift the power balance. Knowing this and identifying a clear vision for community partnership allows stakeholders to create a work that can create a powerful acknowledgement of the past and a curiosity towards the future. Considering these dynamics and creating processes where inequities are elevated are essential for any arts organization or individual who wishes to create public art that truly reflects the people of its community.

WHO OWNS PUBLIC ART?

Facilitator
garima thakur

Writer
CAITLIN BUTLER



WHO IS PUBLIC ART ACTUALLY FOR?

Author's note: *This piece is intended to offer an impression of the session. To that end, I share a selection of excerpts from the conversation. I selected sections that I believe will be most legible to a non-participant.*

I enter garima thakur's session anticipating a discussion about who owns public art and for whom public art is created.

A group of about 10 people are gathered in a circle. garima shares that we will be having a kaleidoscope conversation. They explain that this is a conversation in which participants only ask questions. They produce a kaleidoscope affixed to a wand, decorated in a way that makes me think of a Mardi Gras mask. They pass it around, inviting us to contemplate it as a metaphor for our conversation. We all bring different perspectives. Be open, like children, garima encourages.

garima emphasizes that our task, as a group, is to generate meaning through questions rather than answers. They provide an example, demonstrating how to move from one question into another. We go around the circle, naming intentions. People express an interest in learning, both about the topic and the method. Some wonder how it will work, communicating curiosity and uncertainty.

WE BEGIN:

Who owns public art?

Who is the public?

Who decides who's the public?

Who's in control?

Why does someone need to be in control?



It continues like this. There are long pauses. People shift, stare at the floor, make eye contact, smile. I notice my discomfort with the silences, and breathe deeply, working through it. The conversation loops back periodically to the original question and then moves in a different direction.

At first, a few people ask most of the questions. I assume they are more comfortable with the format. I feel grateful to them for modeling the practice.

What does public art look like outside of institutions?

What communities want public art?

I'm genuinely confused, where did the idea of public art generate from?

The long pauses continue, but more people are stepping up to offer their questions. The questions are punctuated by laughter, or

snapping fingers when someone hears something that resonates.

The questions surface the assumptions present in our concepts; they challenge the meaning of our words. I consider how language impacts our ability to find common ground, to connect us across our differences. I think about how language is essential to communication, and at the same time I ponder its limitations.

Where would we be if there was no ownership?

How would we act if there was no ownership?

Can we even talk about ownership, having this conversation inside an institution?

Is this institution interested in ownership?

The moments of laughter are more frequent, even as the questions surface increasingly complex issues. I perceive that trust is growing as the group moves through this exercise together. We are connecting over our shared commitment to building our kaleidoscope.

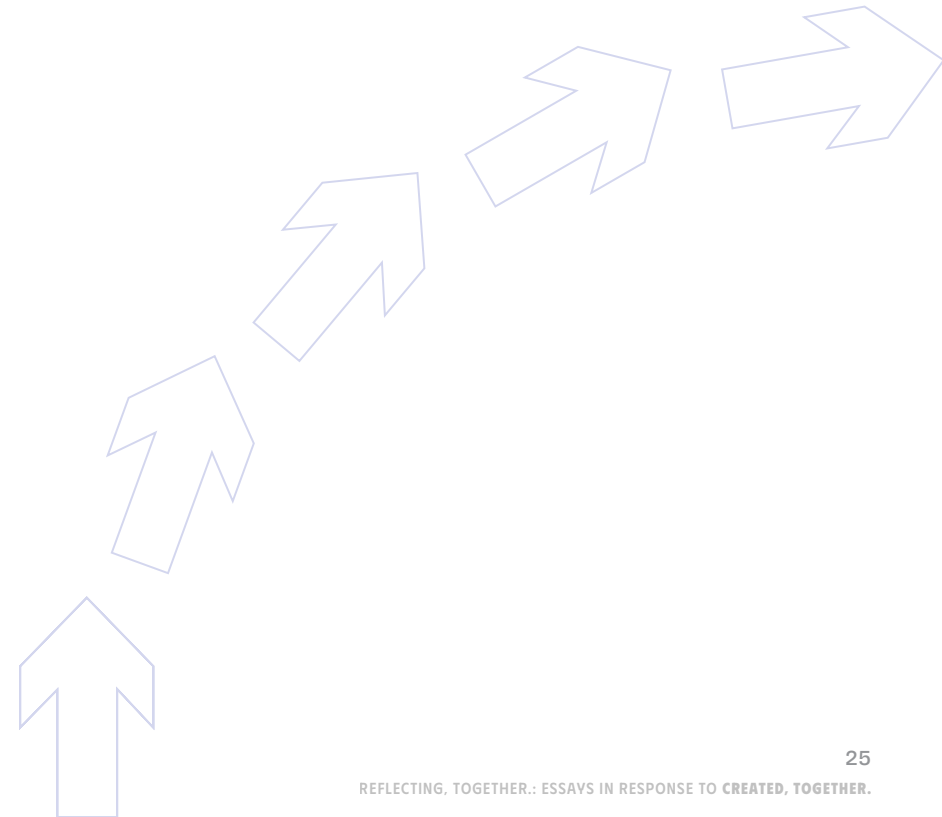
Can we all close our eyes and think about what is owned in this work?

Does owning make me feel more peaceable?

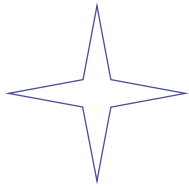
Do we know who owns the world?

Can I be owned?

We can stop at that question, says garima.



HOW DO WE MEASURE CHANGE?



Facilitator
DEIDRA MONTGOMERY

Writer
KATELYN RIVAS

WHO DEFINES SUCCESS?

On the second floor of the Friends Center, a group of socially engaged art practitioners and administrators gathered to talk about the role of research within the practice of arts-based community building. Despite the title being, *How do we measure change? Who defines success?*, facilitator Deidra Montgomery asked participants to form a new title around the topic of trying new things, intentional listening to the community, and asking questions.

HERE WERE SOME OF THE GUIDING QUESTIONS:

Who sets the goals within a community project?

What is the relationship between the goals that have been set and the community or the funder of the project?

What change does the work seek to support?

Who benefits from the project once it is completed?



Deidra, who is an engaging thought leader, directed the group to imagine creating qualitative research spaces that are rooted in our values. This includes our values as artists and learners and the values of the community we are seeking to work alongside.

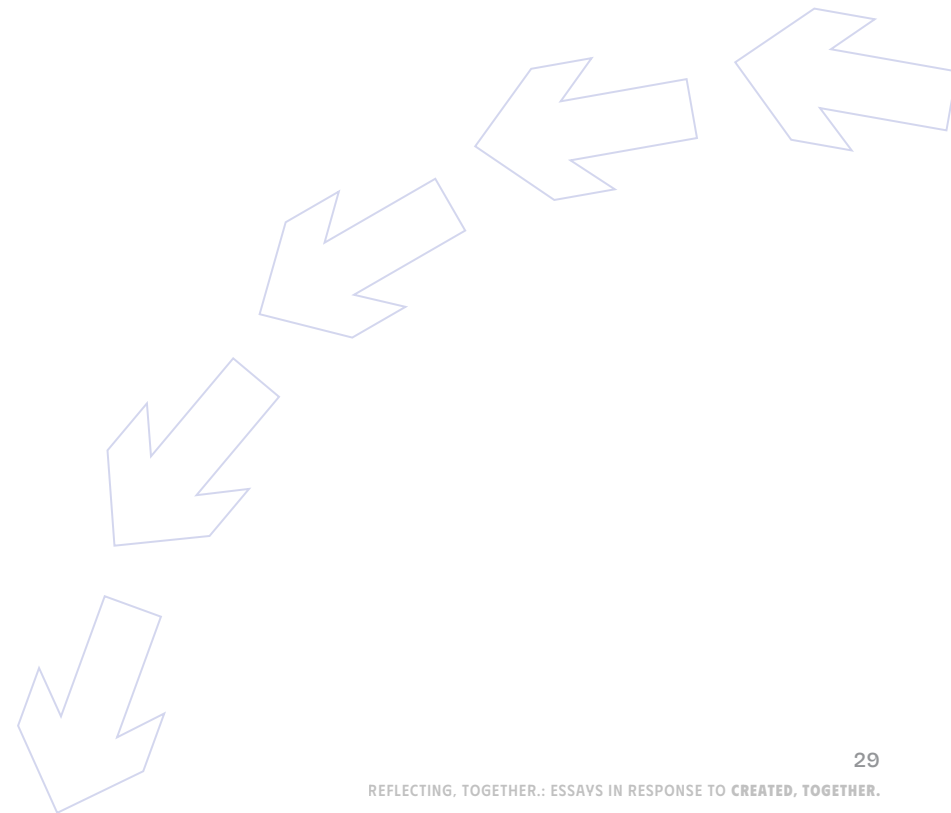
There are a lot of big questions about change in the world of participatory artmaking. It can be especially challenging to crystallize impact when creating socially-engaged art, as it

does not always produce the tangible outputs most easily measured by traditional qualitative research. There is even greater responsibility for the artist when collaborating with communities who have been marginalized, misrepresented, and even further disenfranchised by research and evaluation designed by those outside of these communities.

Deidra gave a brilliant analogy of how goals can be marked as successful but not always for the receiver. In Deidra's analogy, the goal is to address their sister's hunger. Montgomery suggested that when they noticed their sister was hungry, they offered her a sandwich. There are several possibilities at play. Maybe their sister says she is hungry and would like a sandwich. Maybe Deidra sees that their sister is hungry and decides that a sandwich is what is right for her. In each of these scenarios, the sister gets to eat a sandwich and is no longer hungry. The goal is complete. But did she want a sandwich? Is it something that will nourish for a long time? Did she like it? Or was it only about meeting a prescribed goal that was put on her from an outside entity?

Though research can be a reflection of a larger power dynamic at play, it can also be an offering someone gives through their story of impact by participating in the project. Creativity is always an invitation for meaning to be found. Philanthropists may be making money off the things that don't work, things that deepen and perpetuate harm and injustice - often the very issues that we want to disrupt; but we as artists, practitioners, and administrators have the opportunity to recognize and

honor the goals of our collaborators. We are planting seeds that inspire change within the field of participatory art making. Gathering data to show a goal was met may fail to tell this bigger story. By remembering our values and centering the values of those we are working alongside, we build capacity to do things differently than they have been done before. New stories - stories of truth, joy, hardship, challenge, and community - shine.



CODA: NEGOTIATING POWER

AISLINN PENTECOST-FARREN

At a “national assembly for artists working with community”, what do artists want to talk about? Power was the topic that circled the discussions. Artists working with community are struggling with, standing up to, and having to re-design their practices in response to the power dynamics that swirl and settle around their work. At *Created, Together*. I witnessed a day of experienced and dedicated artists pointing out power to each other, building ways of articulating how it works, and sharing confessions, frustrations, and strategies around power in public art making.

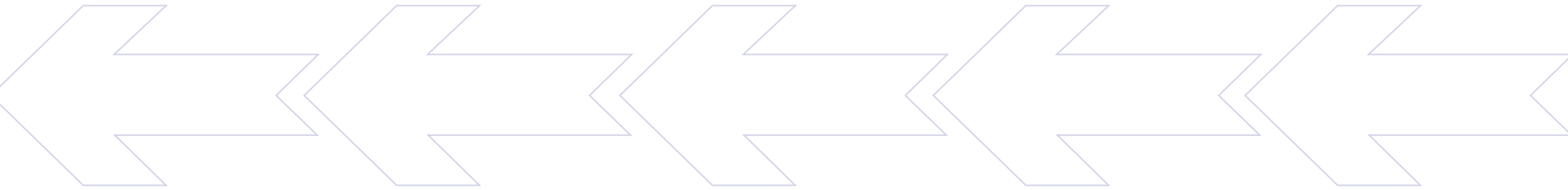
The preceding essays reflect how the theme of power was a thread through the six Saturday small-group workshops. With the guided meditation prompt, “Who do we belong to and who are we accountable to?” Shivon Pearl Love asked participants to imagine beyond formal power structures in her workshop about care. Deidra Montgomery’s data workshop raised questions of power around who sets project goals, and how success is determined. Israel F. Haros Lopez’s workshop on values asked participants how they grapple with the ongoing legacies of colonialism when they wield or cede power. Artists attending garima thakur’s conversation about who owns public art highlighted the vested interests behind public art and who benefits from it. Participants in Phoebe Bachman’s workshop on process over product held the community’s priorities as the most important, and then arrived at the question of preventing funders and partners from using their power to determine a project’s direction.

Power came up repeatedly in the final panel that brought together

questions and insights from all the workshops. Discussing evaluation, panelists critiqued funders asking for data that was meaningless to those closest to the project, and commissioning agents who didn’t understand the work or see the community for who they are. Panelists talked about getting pushed aside, then hired later by the same forces that had them arrested or displaced. They discussed ways being an artist gave them less power than some, more than others, and how to share that power.

Within the richness of these conversations, an important distinction went unarticulated: the difference between what I would broadly categorize as institutionally sponsored public art, in which a government entity or established nonprofit hires an artist to create a public art project within parameters they determine, and something more like grassroots public art, in which an artist or a group of people create an art project for their own purposes or to serve a broader public they determine. Throughout the conference, participants used the term “public art” or “community art” to refer to projects that existed on both of these extremes, and all over the field between them.

Power is wielded in both institutionally sponsored public art and in grassroots art but in different ways. To over-simplify, institutional public art has the power of funds, labor capacity, legal permits, and through this, ties to systems of financial and state power. Grassroots public art has the power of nimbleness, creative freedom, and most importantly, the power of authenticity: a meaningful claim to represent core truths and values of a place or group.



These different types of power create the foundation for many of the tensions articulated at *Created, Together*. Art institutions trade in authenticity as the currency that gives their work value. Political institutions rely on legitimacy of representation or lose their authority (at least in a democracy). Both of these types of institutions benefit when they appear to support community artists, grassroots artists, as “authentic” representatives of communities and publics. This is why the institutions bring them on, rather than installing more generic forms of public art. In this dynamic, some criticism from the commissioned artists can actually help maintain the institution’s image of authenticity. But the artist has to take care to critique without meaningfully threatening the way the institution maintains itself.

The conversation circling around power at *Created, Together* felt familiar. If the term “public art” had been replaced with “creative placemaking,” or “social practice,” the conversation could have happened at many of the art conferences that I attended in the mid- and late-2010s - ArtPlace, In/Out, Creative Time, Common Field, MonumentLab Town Hall. Negotiating power dynamics is in the backdrop of the work all public artists do. Politics and history makes the context we all work in, and do our changemaking, healing, place-defending, justice practices for.

At some of these gatherings, the power conversation never surfaced as it did at *Created, Together*: even as it defined what was offered in every presentation. But I’ve seen this conversation move the farthest and offer the most to participants when someone

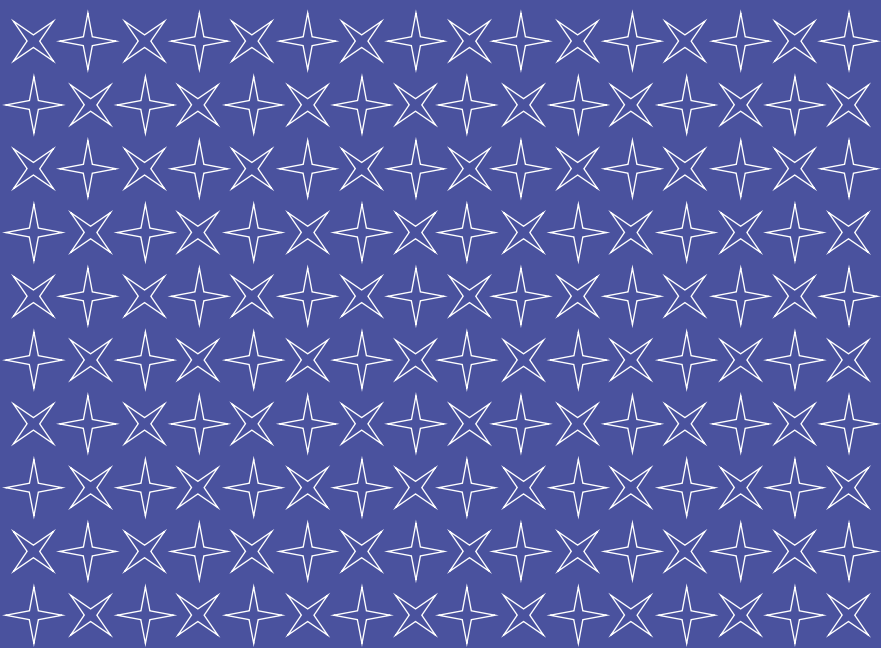
acknowledges the power dynamics of public art making at the outset and offers a model for understanding them. Working from a common model to reference, participants can take it or counter it, move deeper, get specific, more clearly describe how a project managed within this landscape or offered a new path. For example, Roshani Thakore’s small-group workshop designed to unpack power and privilege in creating community art projects would have been useful in conversation with the keynote or framing the final panel, for all participants to build on together.

Artists working with community are a diverse group of people that come to the field via many different paths, but it was apparent at *Created, Together* that the rising practitioners in this work understand that institutional public art has a complicated relationship with the promises about authenticity that it makes. They are frustrated, like the artists gathering for years before them, that institutions who commission them often aren’t as singly motivated by making change and healing as they say they are. Power plays a role that is hard to fully articulate as an individual with a single perspective. Gatherings like *Created, Together* can help artists build a shared understanding of how to navigate it, especially when it is raised up as a defining issue. If the convening institutions don’t do it, the artists will.

WRITER BIOGRAPHIES



Symposium attendees share ideas after participating in different facilitated conversations. October 21 2023. Photo by Erin Blewett.



CAITLIN BUTLER



Caitlin Butler is an independent consultant and coach dedicated to helping build communities where all people can thrive. She focuses her practice on supporting community-driven cultural organizations and creative practitioners navigating periods of change. She blends skills in research methods and facilitation with her deep knowledge of the field to help clients clarify how to move forward. Caitlin has a BA in Sociology from Swarthmore College and an MA in Arts Policy & Administration from The Ohio State University, where she was a Graduate Fellow.

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JARED C. DIAZ



Jared Diaz (they/them) is a second generation Dominican artist, born and based in New York City. Diaz specializes in murals and public art alongside a studio practice that focuses on portraiture and life study. Since 2018, Diaz has worked as project manager for some of the largest mural companies and art programs in America, including Mural Arts Philadelphia's national PACE initiative. Diaz is also the President and Founder of a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, Open Air Projects. OAP was founded to support the creation of public art as forms of social justice.

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JOSEPH EDUARDO IACONA



Joseph Eduardo Iacona is a visual artist, educator and facilitator. Combining Restorative Practices with participatory art-making, he connects people through collaborative processes centered on communication, shared power, and an emphasis on co-creation. Joseph has explored art as a tool for reflection with people in behavioral health facilities, community service centers, museums, prisons, and schools. With the Mural Arts Institute, he supports artists and community leaders in socially engaged participatory art practices, locally, nationally, and globally. He previously managed artist-in-residence programs for the Philadelphia Museum of Art's division of education and has written for Art21 Magazine.

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AISLINN PENTECOST-FARREN



Aislinn Pentecost-Farren is an artist, curator, and public historian. She takes landscapes, artifacts, and histories as the starting point for writing, sculpture, and public interventions. Over the past 10 years, Aislinn has led dozens of interdisciplinary projects that convene communities and publics to create collaborative, site-specific projects with heritage places and green spaces.

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KATELYN RIVAS



Katelyn Rivas is a poet, essayist, researcher and mother who examines themes of Black girlhood, abolition and care for Black bodies through her work. She completed an MA from Eastern University in Urban Studies and Community Arts and has a BA in English and Writing and Art and Design from Northern Michigan University. In 2019, she published the chapbook "Radical Self-Care for Black Women" and founded the Detroit chapter of The Free Black Women's Library.

www.instagram.com/thefreeblack-womenslibrary_det/

QIAIRA RILEY



Qiaira Riley is an interdisciplinary artist, educator and cultural worker, born in Chicago, and based in Philadelphia. Her creative practice shifts between painting, ceramics, video, and alternative photography and transfer techniques. Her work is influenced by the visual language of Chicago's south-side, her grandma's house, childhood memories, and reality tv.

www.qiairariley.pb.gallery

SARAH C. RUTHERFORD



For the past fifteen years, Sarah C. Rutherford has worked in her chosen community of Rochester, NY as a muralist, educator and community-based artist. Most recently, Sarah has been awarded a Creative Rebuild NY grant in partnership with Willow Domestic Violence Center to expand her multifaceted public art project Stories of Strength, which engages survivors to explore storytelling as a tool for healing.

<https://storiesofstrengthroc.org>

PATRICE WORTHY



Patrice Worthy is a producer and owner of Cathect Management, a consulting agency for artists and creatives. Originally trained as a biochemist, her career shifted to the intersection of arts, culture, and community, working with orgs such as BlackStar Projects in various capacities since 2012, most prominently as operations director.

ABOUT

Created, Together. assembled a diverse group of more than 200 artists, from across the United States & Puerto Rico, who work with their communities in public spaces. This convening opened a reflective space to explore critical questions in the field, amplifying the voices of people doing this work daily, and to consider our collective path toward an inclusive and equitable future for public art.

Created, Together. represents the Mural Arts Institute's ongoing commitment to create connections, develop resources, and support the field of socially engaged public art practitioners.

The Mural Arts Institute is a part of Mural Arts Philadelphia, the nation's largest public art program, dedicated to the belief that art ignites change. For 40 years, Mural Arts has united artists and communities through a collaborative process to create art that transforms public spaces and individual lives. With a portfolio that includes more than 3,500 murals, Mural Arts continues to expand its community engagement projects beyond painting to include performance, photography, sculpture, and temporary installations.

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Special Thanks to All the Artists & Creatives that Contributed to these Conversations and Informed Our Collective Experience

LEARN MORE

Hear directly from artists at the symposium in these videos



Explore other resources from the symposium at muralarts.org/created-together



Learn more about the Mural Arts Institute at muralarts.org/institute



Learn more about Mural Arts Philadelphia at muralarts.org



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AN ENVIRONMENT WITH
DIFFERENT
OF EVENTS
HAVE FACED

Where does
Public Art?

What can
control?
How

How can public
art on a specific
identity or 'ism'
be represented
or made relevant
in a dominant
culture?

We all know
there is inequity
in our communities
and people with more
power and privilege
will occupy the room
What we can do to
empower those that
are not seen?
How to do it if with us
by us? For those
that are not privileged?

What has a public
art project
place
purpose?

Why is it so important to continually
ask questions about the world, and how
do we create the time and space for
questions to be asked and heard?

What inspired this Art
community?

What is
the lease
is which we
view what
public art
is or
isn't?

How do
we solve
collective
loneliness?

What's the next
step?
piece no longer
speaks to who
is there now,
changes? If the
community

What artists?

Does public art
marginalized
communities?

How does it
relate to
page?

How

Photo by Maya Ramirez

**CREATED,
TOGETHER.**

