shades of green/the emerald ocean:

an artist's reflection on regional community art practice

by

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Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of Masters of Arts

in the Faculty

of

Education

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Title of Thesis/Project/Extended Essay

Shades of Green/The Emerald Ocean: An Artist's Reflection on Regional Community Public Art

Author:

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Date: April 02, 03
Abstract

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an artist’s reflection on regional community art practice

As the personal is part of local history this thesis is concerned with what influences are shaping regional community public artist practice and explores this through the lens of story, and the place we live: in an artist’s reflection on the last ten years (1993-2003) of collaborating with community.

The inquiry is grounded in an autobiographical approach to the subject and draws on research through community public arts practice to tell a story of learning with and within community by drawing on practice examples. The inquiry weaves narrative with analysis of, cultural policy, government funding programs and discourse from longer histories and models demonstrating influences on regional artists working with community. The research concludes by linking community public art practice to interdisciplinary critical inquiry, and collaborative learning recommending the development of future arts education and curriculum development that would encourage community collaborations with artists to advance art education in collaboration with community education. Interdisciplinary inquiry as a thread ties together and deepens connections while imbuing the sensory and the transformative possibilities of learning.

Anne Marie Slater, March/03
Dedication

To my darling, Maya-Rose

With hopes for love, commitment, joy, dance,

and a life full of learning

with thanks to your grandparents and in honour of my grandparents

It is a matter of interpretation
and reflection on the essence
of connection as close
and as far as a tear
is from the heart

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Acknowledgements

Sometimes life provides the diamonds that help us shine

With thanks to my Committee; Supervisor, Dr. Stuart Richmond and Dr. Jerry Zaslove for your faith and humour in provoking questions at all the right times.

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And a thank you to Joan Wolfe for the positive flow that brought this home.
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CHAPTER ONE

Artist Practice with Community

a. Purpose and Objectives

This thesis is concerned with what influences are shaping artist practice in the evolving regional community public art model.

A number of specific questions guide this inquiry to its conclusion linking community public art practice to interdisciplinary, critical, and collaborative learning. This inquiry identifies the community public artist practice as a good model for interdisciplinary critical learning and recommends the development of future arts education and curriculum development strategies.

The overall objective is to expand on local discourse about regional community arts and community cultural development philosophy (Alibhai, 2000; Simons, 2001) by reflecting and developing the understanding of professional community public artist practices in relation to regional community public art production. Understanding the artist's experience in regional community public art practice and the influences that guide this work will add to future collaborative experiences, encourage artistic
innovation, and social change in the production of collaborations between artists and community.

Questions

- How is the role of community arts and artists working with communities defined within the dynamics of regional, and national cultural policy and programs?
- What are the influences and critical underpinnings of the practice of participatory and collaborative community public art?
- What can we apply to Vancouver’s developing community public art practice and discourse from the longer history of other places, experiences, and models?
- What influence does the place we live in have on community public art practice that is developing regionally?

I will consider these questions in light of the relative newness of community public art practice in Vancouver, whose formal history began in 1993, as compared to the twenty to thirty year histories of the overall movement and discourse established by practices in Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States. I will reflect on the local experience by comparing the longer history, theory, and discourse that informs participatory community public art and arts practice outside this region and by an analysis of regional and national cultural policy that is defining funding directions for community arts and cultural development. Cultural policy examples in this thesis will identify the relationships between overall regional and national cultural policy, and
community public art interpretations in local programs that guide artists and communities working together regionally. There has been a vast amount of material developed outside of this region about artists and community and the “how to” approaches detailing techniques such as listening and consensus group approaches that inform this work which is beyond the scope of this thesis. I will focus on a survey of local community public art examples from my practice as research to contribute to the overall knowledge of community education and learning about art, and community with community, gained by learning through story and practice.

b. The Emerald Ocean

This reflection on regional community public art practice embodies two distinct lenses: one is this place we live, the vast, and compelling green landscape of British Columbia, of Vancouver surrounded by an Emerald Ocean. The place we live is one of the last ecosystems that contains 1,000 year old trees that are facing extinction, and an ocean a deep green because of the rich living nutrients that form a living veil of green, one of the few left in the world. The place we live has an international record in leading environmental initiatives such as the founding of Greenpeace and the David Suzuki Foundation. It is also a global banking and trade centre. Where I live
overlooks the busy Port of Vancouver, and the cruise ship facility, and I often reflect about where these containers come from, the trading routes, across oceans, the impact of trade locally, as I see and smell evidence of inner harbour pollution as an effect of high diesel output from cruise ship tourism, trains, and freighters. It is this place that forms my reflection on community art and critical practice which when combined can make visible the interdisciplinary connections that we have with each other and the cause and effect issues that interpolate and relate to global influences such as social equity, and environmental factors. It is from this place that I am inspired as an artist to investigate, with other community members, different disciplines and subjects like ethno botanical species, marine ecosystems, and to extend my critical lens outward with an eye on the environment, the world and you.

c. From Here to There, The Wide Sea of Community Arts

The field of artists working with community over the last 10 years (1993-2003) has developed and evolved to include a wide range of interpretations and definitions for community arts and artist practice.

Currently some of the more developed examples of community public art practice in the UK and USA integrate an emphasis on activism and arts
practice (Adams & Goldbard, 2001). These social change collaborations with community actively promote engagement with art in context and critiques of social and systemic relations on both a local and global level. Other philosophies about artists working with communities are based on developing, and connecting local communities, beginning with building the personal relationship. Then through the process of mobilizing, organizing, planning, and having influence in the co-creation (Friere, 1998) of a collaborative public artwork the personal enters into a deeper relationship with community and this often produces long term associations, networks and change. The personal is also sometimes interpreted by identifying the goals of art with community as therapeutic in collaborations with patients in hospitals, prisons and in situations where grief is omnipresent.

I am interested in developing arts practice that travels beyond thematic categories through interdisciplinary practice incorporating in the process an analysis of social context, prevailing power structures, and is more than a “register” a “challenge to ideological codes” (Giroux, in Becker, p. 198) (Blackbridge). The thematic categories for arts practice with community such as arts and activism, art in health, art in urban regeneration, describes a wide range of practice crossing into many disciplines. This is acknowledged in Australian programs that incorporate Art in hospitals, Art and the
environment, *Art and disability* as just a selection of the specialized areas community artists are being funded to work with community.²

I feel that it is important for local use to integrate a range of perspectives about artist practice in community public art policy to both incorporate in principle the way artists work alone, as well as in the practice they develop with community. For example this might mean encouraging community members to have more access to artists working in their studios like the *East Side Culture Crawl*³ as well as artist practice working directly with community. Embracing the vitality and full range of artist practices promotes an overall public awareness for art and delineates the need to put individual art production in conflict with community art production.
d. Defining the Possibilities

Within the range of possibilities that contribute to overall community public art and artist practice, I am including in this thesis a concentration on collaboration, dialogue and community cultural development processes that indicate in my practice a commitment to working with community in the process of not only creating a public artwork but the process of learning as a "co-participant" (Freire, 1998, p. 42) of change. I am most interested in incorporating the critical aspect in work that informs current environmental concerns and the processes of working with community to do so. In order to discuss community public art practice I want to be clear about the terms and definitions being used to discuss this varied field of community public art.

For the purpose of this thesis "participatory" means community members who are participants actively involved in a community public art project. The participation can vary in degree from making, to organizing, to managing, and is usually defined more fully by the use of collaborative practices, project design and the overall philosophy guiding the project.

I am using "interdisciplinary" to mean how artists in community public art bring different forms of knowledge together during the process of community based art i.e. the knowledge of ecologists, artists, bureaucrats and
engineers, to enact a process that makes meaning visible. The interdisciplinarity modeled in community public artist practice that incorporates a critical edge is rooted in artist practice that in itself is interdisciplinary applying to the problem solving or investigation at hand various forms of knowledge, research, and analytical methods.

The terms “community public art” and “community public art practice” are used to identify the community working with artists towards collaborative artistic outcomes in the creation of a public artwork, sited in the public realm by the community producing it for the larger public. The term “community arts” is used to encompass all methods of working with community and the arts. Dependant on the project framework, length of project, goals, and funding criteria, community cultural development processes are integral to community public artist practice. This practice is intended to include community cultural development processes and philosophy. However, limitations of project and program deadlines may have an impact on the degree of, and use of, these processes which in some cases may identify the project as participants making art together without the collaborative framework. The degree of collaboration with community is also defined by project design, funding criteria, timelines, by a particular artist’s skill, and practice in collaboration with community and most importantly the needs and wants of the community.
In this field of working with community there are different applications and definitions for “community cultural development”, otherwise abbreviated as (CCD). For comparison with regional definitions this thesis refers to the more widely agreed interpretation for (CCD) derived from the Australian Community Cultural Development (CCD) Network whose definitions reference the pivotal USA report *Creative Community: The Art of Cultural Development* (Adams & Goldbard, 2001).

**Community Cultural Development** describes a range of initiatives undertaken by an artist in a collaboration with other community members to express identity, concerns and aspirations through the arts and communications media, while building cultural capacity and contributing to social change. Incorporating new media or exploring the traditional cultural activities of people from any background. CCD encourages communities to manage the projects in which they participate. The artists/artworkers provide their expertise through facilitating the cultural activities that the community wants to undertake. Social and developmental changes take place alongside artistic outcomes - i.e. something changes through the exposure of ideas, issues, and community members to arts and cultural activities. (Community Cultural Development in Australia (2002). *What’s CCD?* glossary C, para. 7)

**e. Approach**

The inquiry is informed by my professional practice as an interdisciplinary community public artist, arts administrator, and educator who has been active in local arts projects and policy development since 1992. My experience as Coordinator in 1993 for the pivotal *Community Cultural*
Development Workshops (CCD) the Arts in Social Action jointly produced by the Vancouver Board of Parks & Recreation’s, Arts Policy Team, BC Recreation & Parks Association, and the Office of Cultural Affairs, City of Vancouver, informs the research. The success of the Community Cultural Development Workshops attended by 200 regional cultural decision makers and artists helped shape and inspire local arts practice and policy while generating ideas for future community public art concepts and community cultural development initiatives.

My approach is to explore regional interpretations of community public art and (CCD) arts practice post 1993 by drawing on my experiences in the field as a community public arts practitioner using projects that I was awarded by competing in public calls. I will look at roles, artist strategies, community development processes, collaboration, and dialogue, by reflecting on my learning gained through practice.

f. Methodology

My methodology is based on self-reflexive inquiry, that questions and reflects on my community public art practice over the past 10 years and, by doing so, mirrors the value that the arts model of community cultural development places on personal knowledge and informal learning.
My role in the research process uses reflection and observation to understand my own practice and tell a local story about community public art practice. My story draws on five community arts projects [City of Surrey, Greenway Art Plan (2001), Carnegie Centre's, Footprints Community Art Project (2001), Woodland Park: Talking Poles Project (2001), Days of Sun (1999), The Trout Lake Restoration Project (1995)], as regional examples demonstrating varying roles and responsibilities for my involvement and indicates an evolving practice through action. All of the projects utilize interdisciplinary approaches, relationships to a wider social context and involve collaborations with community differentiated by project design and community participation. Two out of five projects were funded mainly by local government, one project received overall funding from a private foundation with support from local government funding and two projects were funded by two levels of government federal, and municipal.

g. An Artist's Reflection on Regional Community Public Art

Stories are important to my work with community. It may be the story of a place, a person, a current community or the story of how a lake was formed or a river whose spawning history has been interrupted by urban
development. How does an artwork emerge in a community public art project? From process to form how does practice contribute to an artwork or outcome and how is this whole story “integral to reading it’s meaning”? (Finkelpearl, 2001, p. X11).

My research is grounded in an autobiographical approach, because the personal is part of local history. I have, through the community public art projects that I have worked on, found meaning and learning in moments that became deeply interactive, provoking change, and curiosity about my surrounding world. Sometimes affection, respect, and conflict is mixed up in these collaborative moments where passion and empathy held hands. Beyond it all imagination prevailed while decisions, creation, and dialogue were the knots in the story of artmaking together with community.

There are many regional community public art projects that are significant examples of community public art practice. I have selected projects that have formed my community public art practice as a way of interpreting different experiences and roles connecting this to other descriptions of artist practice, in my observations of how a project evolves, and what happens in collaboration with community. As this thesis is focused on autobiographical practice, and research in action, a comprehensive, evaluative survey of other community public art projects is beyond the scope of this inquiry. My
methodology is based on bringing my experiences, successes, limitations, and hopes for the future together to more fully understand the possibilities of how to work with art and communities in the context of time and place.

There are 3 key questions that need addressing. First, what can we apply to this region’s developing community cultural development context about the role of the artist? And, second how can the artist’s role as a model for interdisciplinary and critical inquiry contribute to future community collaborations and public education? Third, are there any gaps in the artist role and if so, what other influences are guiding local practice?

My view argues for a wider reflection, support, and definition of the artist’s role in regional community public art, one that more fully acknowledges the critical and interdisciplinary nature of this artist practice, the skills, and processes that interconnect in relationship such as my research through practice demonstrates in Chapter 4.

Collaboration with community in a neighbourhood setting can offer a unique opportunity for an artist to share not only skills in artmaking and process but also a political consciousness and worldview that can inspire different ways of looking at opportunities and solutions while negotiating risk in the collaboration with community members. This is a powerful conceptual toolbox for artists working in collaborative ways that extends beyond the
experience of making, and adds another layer to the regional community development model of community arts. Creating and power sharing is about risk and "curiosity" (Freire, 1998, p. 37) this is the edge that goes beyond connecting people to each other and their selves but also connects to the world, no matter how different that place or condition might be.

h. Interdisciplinary and Critical Learning

New artist practices that include collaboration and community action are the focus of growing participation nationally in The Canada Council’s, Interdisciplinary Arts (Inter-Arts) program that funds and “fosters art education through the Artists and Communities Collaboration Fund” (Canada Council News & Updates 2002, Fall-12 para. 5).

The community public artist practice as a role model for interdisciplinary and critical learning links to increasing awareness for the arts and critical thinking through community based arts education. This increased awareness creates the stage to develop opportunities for the long-term establishment of community public art practice to take it beyond a “national trend” (Canada Council News & Updates 2002, Fall-12, par 2).

The breaking down of the modernist paradigm of individualism (the studio artist operating at a distance from society) (Becker, 1994) began with the
move into the community by activist artists in the 70’s and 80’s (Lacy, 1995). The *Culture Wars* of the 80’s (Lacy, 1995; Simons, 2001) demanded that artists who are funded publicly communicate meaning more directly to the community. These factors focused attention on access to art, and artmaking, beyond the gallery system and this influenced government to develop cultural policy and public programs that integrate and reflect arts and culture in the everyday life of the community. One of the direct influences of these changes observed in artist practice locally is the increase in collaborations between artists and community made possible by funding programs and initiatives that commission artists to work in various ways with communities. (See Chapter 2, *Regional Cultural Policy*)

i. Supporting Regional Community Public Art Practice

Regionally a gap exists between the evolving community public art model and a lack of reflection about artist experiences, and practice. Currently there are no evaluation methods for doing so that are independent of local government. After a ten-year formal history (1993-2003) the region still does not have a professional artist-led organization or union dedicated to community public artist practice. This is a limitation, a void, which leaves
only program guidelines and bureaucracy as the impetus for project
definition, and training. There is no venue for artist led development and
notions gleaned from community art in practice, an incubator that would
support innovation, and discussion. With this in mind I am reflecting on
regional arts practice through the experience over ten years of developing an
arts practice working with community.

j. Context: Local History Grounded in Government

Community Cultural Development (CCD), an arts based model, currently
driving a number of municipal and provincial policy mandates includes
engagement processes and principles that are grounded in social planning,
and community development as traced by funding roots that grow from
municipal, provincial, and national policy initiatives identified in Chapter Two.
The influence of integrating the arts into municipal planning and social
systems in Australia, the UK, and the USA is also evident in local municipal
policy and programs that are evolving to focus on arts and community
change. Utilizing the arts as a force in urban community building encourages
community development goals of healthy, vibrant, communities, and
neighbourhoods. Incorporating the arts in the everyday reflections of the
community suggests a connection to global themes of re-connecting citizens in active ways to the powerful, multi-layered human experience of culture that deepens meaning, and reflects identity (Adams & Goldbard, 2001). Referring to the importance of identity and diversity in a globally, homogenous, corporate culture, writers Don Adams, and Arlene Goldbard in their definitive report *Creative Community, the Art of Cultural Development* cite a UNESCO publication \(^{10}\) that underscores the strength of local and place based expression for the marginalized and for communities who are experiencing change:

> people turn to culture as a means of self-definition and mobilization and assert their local values. For the poorest among them, their own values are often the only thing that they can assert. (Adams & Goldbard, 2001, p. 10)

Within municipal structures the multiplicity of social goals is the connecting thread to diverse cultures, and the varied groups of citizens, and interests that comprise a contemporary urban environment like Vancouver and the GVRD (Greater Vancouver Regional District) municipalities? The arts for the most part in this urban environment are enjoyed in traditional audience terms, such as a consumer purchase for an art gallery visit, symphony concerts, and recreational arts courses. The separation of the arts from everyday culture in North American terms has its roots in modernist and post modernist history that encourages individual expression (Simons, 2001). The
artist rooted in studio practice and distribution systems for art, such as
gallery presentation, and academic distribution of artist work and ideas
through publications and critical journals, is unavailable to most community
members, and in particular this route to cultural expression is far from the
everyday experience of the marginalized.

The evolution of the creative process from individual to collective expression
plays out locally in municipal programs that support artists working in and
with communities locating artmaking and cultural development amidst the
everyday events and concerns of a community by removing the ticket price
and providing interaction and work with the creative process.

What is this power that art has in combination with social action and
collaboration with community? Is it the sum of creative energies looking
every which way at a problem and then through reflections of the
collaboration, the sensation (Dewey, 1934) of collective making? As a guiding
principle story is the starting point for this inquiry as the metaphor of many
voices begins the action, and knowing is in the making. As the invisible ties
of identity, place, race, and gender are made visible in the making, the
knowing continues. As I talk with you and inquire about you the recognition
of personal knowledge, and the narrative of the collective experience
deepens. The community public artwork is meant to continue this dialogue,
weaving together concept, spirit, process, community, and artist through time and site.
Interdisciplinary learning creates multiple entry points from different disciplines, mediums and materials as methods to understand a subject or theme and all of its relationships and interconnections. I mean this to include the use of community public art as interdisciplinary inquiry as a thread that ties together and deepens connections while imbuing the sensory and the transformative possibilities of learning. See Heidi Hayes Jacobs, *Interdisciplinary Curriculum Design, and Implementation*, (1989) for more about interdisciplinary learning. Jacobs defines interdisciplinary learning as a knowledge view and curriculum approach that consciously applies methodology and language from more than one discipline to examine a central theme, topic, issue, problem, or work. I also use interdisciplinary to describe a community public art project’s characteristics related to an artist’s practice and methodology of working.

The formal history I am defining as the beginning of discourse in 1993 with the launch of the *Community Cultural Development Workshop, Arts In Social Action* and the development of the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation’s, *Arts Policy* (1993) There was a history of artists working in and with community in Vancouver prior to 1993 and this included Headlines Theatre, Public Dreams, Mayworks, Arts in Action, and the non commercial collective.

In BC the surrounding ocean is referred to as the Emerald Ocean so named because of its deep green colour that we see which is actually the green of living nutrients called phytoplankton.

Naomi Klein in *Fences and windows: Dispatches from the front lines of the globalization* debate critiques social and systemic relationships that underlie the local but whose real influences are tied to global actions and policies (i.e. food production).

Theorist, Henry Giroux in Carol Becker’s, *Subversive Imagination* argues for more inquiry and questioning of the consumer and corporate culture as he critiques Benetton ads that used the public realm to adopt the social issues of racism, inequality, and exclusion within a commercial advertising format. Giroux states that the viewer was denied the ability to reflect or understand the power structures that influence these issues, information and context that was left outside of the advertisement frame.
In *From the Inside Out*, Vancouver artist, Persimmon Blackbridge addresses ideological codes through her work with community members who had experience with *institutional* living and their transition into living in the community at large. Blackbridge created an exhibition that featured audio soundscapes of participant stories, artwork depicting residents' emotions and experiences of life inside and outside British Columbia's institutions. The work completed in 1998 was part of the Canada Council's, *Artists and Communities Pilot Program* in BC administered by the Assembly of BC Arts Councils.

In Community Arts longer and more developed history in Australia and the US artists are working in a number of different areas like artists and youth, artists and disability see the *Australia Council for the Arts* funding resources at [http://www.ozco.gov.au/resources/index.html](http://www.ozco.gov.au/resources/index.html)

*East Side Culture Crawl*, an annual open house of artist studios in Vancouver's east side.

The Assembly of BC Arts Councils identifies critical thinking as important but critical inquiry and practice are not mentioned. CCD is to include "community processes where artists are equal partners, as well as illustrators, interpreters or observers and community arts projects which encourage critical thought and action and the continuing development of a body of community-building skills such as facilitation, consensus-building, collaboration, listening and communication. [That CCD involve] many people from many sectors engaged in community arts processes which are longer-term and unpredictable, but produce measurable results using new criteria." (Assembly BC Arts Councils, 2002, Who We Are [http://www.assemblybcarts councils.ca/who/ccd.html](http://www.assemblybcarts councils.ca/who/ccd.html))

CHAPTER TWO

Regional Frameworks

a. Cultural Policy and its Influences on the Regional Field of Community Public Art

Cultural policy is the map that guides the development of arts programs when it reaches the front line delivery of services to community and the broader goals informing and defining the gap between communities on paper, art on paper, and the experience in the field of artists and communities as they work together. The approach in this chapter is to form an analysis of policy documents from government and umbrella non-profit art organizations, in particular arts councils. The limitation of this approach is testament to the sheer growth and change over the last ten years in policy that allowed a selection of documents to be within the scope of this thesis. The documents are based on a sample of policy that defines national, regional, and municipal directions that are influencing artists working with communities. The other limitation speaks to art operating within bureaucracy as government is establishing policy, and driving the process.
b. Context: Moving Towards Direct Experience

Within the last ten years a major Canadian cultural policy shift on the national, regional, and municipal level has made it a priority to locate and connect cultural development to the everyday life of the community. Partly this has been influenced by the backlash of the “Culture Wars” the conservative Reagan/Bush era of the 80’s (Becker, 1994; Lacy, 1995) (Simons 2001, pp. 3-6) that signaled a new censorship of the arts and the continuing trend by the conservative right to want more accountability for funds spent on the arts. Another parallel influence has been the recognition by social government agencies, and cultural planners in policy and programs acknowledging that investment in artists can directly influence the well being, social capital, and connectedness within diverse communities often disconnected by change.¹

This disconnectedness in communities is symptomatic of the maze of contemporary living, and isolation from personal interaction in a world defined by the indirect experience of mass media culture. The direct experience artists provide, working in communities within communities, is in contrast to the experience of art delivered through the gallery and academic system where the viewer is a spectator. The direct experience of an artist
working with community can be a catalyst for community arts in action and social change based on building the personal through relationship and dialogue.

For the purpose of this chapter I am concerned with the trend to link arts production, and artists with community and the way that is being described as a benefit to the community. I am also interested in how the artist role is being defined in this context and whether it is being defined. With this in mind I will focus on the shift to policy that directs funding for artists working with community. How is this being described and how does it play out in funding and programming criteria for artists working with community? What are some of the influences on regional and local cultural programming from a policy viewpoint? And how has arts policy affected developing artist practice in this region?

Cultural funds have historically been on the chopping block in a government context of decreasing funds for many other essential services like healthcare. The need to secure and broaden funding for the arts is quite judiciously linked to the language of capital value and making visible to the community and business the unseen economics that cultural activities produce. The often-primary relationship to economics is made by cultural policy that links the arts as benefits to generate cultural tourism (Strategies for Regional Arts
& Culture, 1999) and the wide net of positive impact to local retailers and restaurants that this includes. The overarching term of “culture” with respect to cultural policy includes thinking about culture as it applies to multiculturalism, institutional based art, and civic cultural infrastructure such as theatres, galleries, museums, heritage, traditional arts, the performing arts, dance arts, film & television, music, symphony, opera, visual arts, new media, inter-arts, publishing, and writing, and now community arts.

Regionally the formal launch of the current era of local government working with artists and the community began in 1993 with the Community Cultural Development, Arts in Action Workshops. Local policy, program initiatives, and continuing project development has been influenced not only by examples of artists working with community introduced in these workshops but by examples of partnerships and projects developed by workshop participants. A former Director of the Assembly of BC Arts Councils, called the event seminal, and commented:

I suddenly saw a field that could be supported by an infrastructure and regional and province wide bodies. I saw artists sitting at the table in other community settings. I saw that we could widen the focus beyond the arts councils. 3

The Workshops organized and sponsored by the Arts Policy Team or (A TEAM) of the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation, the City of Vancouver’s Office of Cultural Affairs, and the BC Recreation and Parks
Association sought to begin a discourse and provide examples of artist practice working with community. Two models were represented by international speakers artist Suzanne Lacy (USA), and Australian, cultural planner and community artworker, Marla Guppy. Headlines Theatre, Public Dreams, Mayworks, the Powell Street Festival, and organizers from the community development field provided examples of local practice in a Community Forum.

It is at this point that two distinct ways of working and philosophies were introduced to the region, which have influenced regional program development, and artists practice. The Australian model of community cultural development embeds cultural production in partnership with local government programs in contrast to new genre public art that signifies a critical arts practice working with community and artists operating in collaboration with local government but not necessarily as part of a program. This dual influence is manifested locally in hybrid approaches to project development and collaboration.

The Australian model originates from a study done on local government and the arts in 1990. From there a number of government bodies were established and funding was delivered at a number of levels the national arts council, regional arts council, and municipal government. A number of grants
and funding provided a large “artworker” base. 5 The Australian model focused on cultural development that united cultures utilizing the networks of local community centres, and neighbourhood groups. Artists were hired as design team members to create art amenities and treatments for local facilities; community members were also part of this team. Community cultural development was a collaborative art-based approach to cultural planning intended to bring about change in people’s lives. Changes included community actions and collaborations between cultures around issues and were designed to make use of public space and media space to re-broadcast community identity, and address political, and social concerns. 6

Currently the Australian emphasis is less issue based with a focus on “place making” (Pacific, 1999, p. 11) which is community reflected in place and a reflection of community through design in place. Place making reveals the relationships between history, social and natural systems and the invisible layers that tell the life story of a place, past, and present, creating renewable bonds with community.

The Lacy, or new genre public art approach, is collaborative but not located in local government within a cultural planning context. The model is based on political intent and utilizes new media, film, and television so as to critique dominant structures and culture by drawing on a variety of artist strategies,
including interdisciplinary approaches and large scale public performances in order to engage community members (Lacy, 1995).

Input from the Community Cultural Development Workshops helped shape the final draft of the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation's, Arts Policy that was launched and approved in late 1993 and still guides overall program development in community arts today. Ten years later (2003) a consultative review of this Arts Policy with a focus group of artists, and separate consultations with other stakeholder groups is currently in process.  

This region's interest in community public art and the understanding of the role of community arts practice in cultural development is influenced by the success of other models of local government involvement in communities arts, in particular Australia. The model of local government and arts as a connecting language for communities reflects the successful Australian experience that has utilized CCD philosophy in addressing the historical, physical, cultural and social fragmentation of contemporary growth, and the varying cultural histories that intersect that growth. The Australian model has integrated community cultural development practice by employing artworkers in a variety of roles within local government, designing facilities as design team members, resident community artworker, and lead artists as catalysts for neighbourhood projects (Pacific, 1999, p. 11).
This influence of place making recently interpreted by the revitalized Vancouver Community Arts Council’s (CACV) community cultural development mandate has a connection to the Australian emphasis on place making as a way to discover and reflect community concerns about the place people live. In a recent project call for *Art and the Environment* the CACV focus on place is specific to art and artmaking that utilizes natural materials to address environmental issues with community (CACV 2001, programs, project call). This environmental theme has the opportunity of incorporating the social activism that influences this region’s environmental groups but as yet the political intention embodied in cultural democracy, characteristic of new genre public art (Lacy, 1995), is not reflected in this region’s policy, and support to artists.

Beginning with the *Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation’s, Arts Policy* in 1993, followed in 1994 by the launch of the *Artist in Residence Program*, a pilot community cultural development initiative, *The Trout Lake Restoration Project*, (see Appendix) and the City of Vancouver’s, Office of Cultural Affairs, *Community Public Art Program*. These were heady times for artists and community art activists: there was inspiration, funding, and dreams. Eighty applications were received for the launch year of the *Artist in Residence Program* for four residencies awarded to Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation Community Centres in four distinctive communities.
On the ground, results were successful but the relationships between artists and park board staff in the field were at times awkward. Funding was provided for the start up of the Artist in Residence Program and at this time did not include a continuum of support when the projects were in action. Collaborative styles and roles were being defined, and the power relations between employer and employee, contract worker and full time employee within the community centre context often had an impact on the dynamics and direction of the work. Many discussions ensued about collaboration, and how to balance input and decision making in the creative process. 8

Striking a balance between artists operating within local government institutions such as the Vancouver Board of Park’s and Recreation is based on recognizing and working with the difference between art and recreation cultures and acknowledging alternate modes of experiencing and seeing the world. Staff training in art awareness is a recommendation of the 1993, Vancouver Board of Parks & Recreation’s, Arts Policy (Arts Policy, 1993, p. 5 recommendation 1.4.5) and artists echoed this at a recent 2003 review of this policy. More development in this area with a focus on contemporary artist practice will, as an outcome, encourage more depth to the understanding of an artist’s critical and analytical values and within an institutional context encourage collaborations based on equity, and acceptance of difference. The self-employed artist working within a recreation
model with its own distinct corporate culture (a history of programming the arts, and paying artists to teach arts programs) and supported by a strong civic trade union, has and is, a relationship that requires ongoing learning, and understanding about artist’s experiences within this system, and influences on practice in action with community as this thesis encourages.

c. **Strategy and Policy Lead**

In the document, *Canada’s National, Urban Strategy: A Vision for the 21st Century* a number of recommendations from national roundtable discussions focus on sustainability issues, immigration, re-settlement, integration into the workforce, and community. A specific mention from the Vancouver Roundtable identified the need to support “community models of arts and cultural development programs” and to develop more “long term funding for this sector” (Canada’s National Urban Strategy, 2000, p. 68).

Culture and the arts are the buzz in cities like Vancouver: they can intervene and visually describe the honeycomb of interconnections and diverse narratives that make up the place where we live and economically determine the success of urban centres. Cultural tourism initiatives support urban tourism with spin off dollars for businesses that surround art and cultural activities in the downtown retail core. ^9
Canada’s National Urban Strategy describes a context for influences on community public art practice and the urban in this region. The City of Vancouver, and surrounding regions, the Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD) a partnership of 21 local municipalities is noted in the document as one of the fastest growing urban metropolitan regions in Canada. Vancouver, Canada’s largest port city has been experiencing intense growth due to immigration mostly from Southeast Asia according to the 2001 census analysis cited in Canada’s National Urban Strategy (p. 67). The rapid change in cultural dynamics is reflected in the document with reference to “over 90 distinct languages spoken in the City of Vancouver, an urban centre with an Aboriginal population of well over 31,000” (p. 67).

The context and spectrum of diversity that describes this place we live is contrasted by an underlying urban dichotomy and the dynamic nature, and interaction an urban area can provide, with the isolation that also occurs within urban environments. The social breakdown, and social justice concerns stemming from isolation, and marginalization extend beyond cultural difference to include gender, sexuality, disability, and employment/underemployment. These types of relationships form the background to the foreground use of artist strategies in engaging community in collaborations where social issues and diversity are addressed in context.
d. Artists Can Facilitate Connections to Issues

Although artists are not specifically mentioned in Canada’s National Urban Strategy: A Vision for the 21st Century, the document’s emphasis on community development and culture as an expression of identity, urban vitality, and diversity is made. The report embodies recommendations (p. 68) to support community based art models and this moves artists into arts practice requiring connection and collaboration strategies. The report a summary of input from a range of regional urban interests and sectors represented in regional roundtables also connects community arts to the wider interdisciplinary context of factors affecting regional change. This wider context ultimately affects neighbourhood issues about physical, population, and environmental concerns related to balancing the social equity challenges of a growing diverse population.

A similar link to the wider context that describes community art locally is identified in the Vancouver Community Art Council’s (CACV) revitalization report, Building Bridges & Opening Doors (Janzen & Associates, 2000). This consultative based report recommends the re-vitalization of the oldest arts council in Canada established in 1946, the closing of its office and gallery programs, and the renewal focus on a community cultural development mandate. The renewal focus is based on “an ever-increasing role for the
community arts with social, health, youth, and other organizations to collaborate at a community level to deliver programs and services which can [be] significantly relevant to citizens and groups that have traditionally not been the focus of the arts council” (Janzen & Associates, 2000, p. 19).

This increased role for the arts shows up in the health sector recorded in an early Assembly of BC Arts Council publication and is another regional influence connecting the community arts model, and artistic practice to the service of developing and building healthy communities. Linking the arts to healthy communities has its roots in the health and community development sector and in art viewed as a change agent, and therapeutic catalyst. Art as a connecting and reflective method in the context of healthy communities produces active learning about the self and connection to others, the first step to health and well-being (Power, 1995, p. 4).

A similar emphasis on community arts advocacy and the building of strong healthy communities through the arts has been adopted by the new service mandate, and subsequent strategic directions of the Community Arts Council of Vancouver (Janzen & Associates 2000, September; Community Arts Council of Vancouver, Program Plan, September 2000 - June 2001).

This paradigm shift for the Assembly of BC Arts Councils, and Vancouver’s, Community Arts Council, firmly sets the broad policy goal identified by the
Assembly in their report *1998-2000 Programs and Services: Strategic Initiatives*, to "reposition arts councils as sustainable and relevant local cultural agencies".  

The role of the artist is not clearly defined in these descriptions but the Assembly does refer to the unique ways artists can contribute to and vitalize community life, and vice versa the contribution communities can make to artists practice (Assembly of BC Arts Councils, 2002, *Who We Are*).

From this broad based policy goal of widening resources and constituents for the job of art in development, the change of direction for Regional Arts Councils towards strengthening connections to current community life provides interdisciplinary opportunities for both artists and community members to reflect together on all of life's facets (life cycles, environmental, physical, social, cultural, political). The regional shift of the arts council model reflects the longer established models of integrating artists in collaborations with community addressing the broader social goals of diversity, and intersectoral partnership in Australia, the UK, and USA.
e. Diversity

Addressing and supporting diversity is a strong thread throughout local and national policy and regionally this is as much about the reflection of the place in which we live as the times we live in. Reaching out to the community and supporting diversity is recognized in the *GVRD, Strategies for Regional Arts and Cultural Development* (1999, July, V1, B, para. 2) and encompassing culture includes “physical ability,” “economic,” and “sexual orientation” in local definitions (Janzen & Associates, 2000, p. 21). Expanding the reach of the arts into the community is based on incorporating artist strategies that will address the broader goals of government policy such as diversity.

Diversity is mandated in the 1993, *Vancouver Parks Board Arts Policy* (1993) recommendations, the non profit, funded by government, Community Arts Council of Vancouver’s, *Building Bridges Opening Doors* (2000) report and in the regional GVRD *Strategies for Regional Arts and Cultural Development* (1999). Cross-cultural understanding as a priority influence on ways of working and living is unique to the place we live. This is reinforced in the Community Arts Council of Vancouver’s (CACV), *Building Bridges & Opening Doors* (Janzen & Associates, 2000) with statistics similar to those in Canada’s *National Urban Strategy* identifying the linguistic diversity of Vancouver a city where 50% of Vancouverites first language is not English. Within the City of Vancouver “ the largest language groups [are] Chinese, Punjabi, Vietnamese
and Tagalog" (Janzen & Associates, 2000, p. 22) with a large urban, Aboriginal population with various additional language groups within that community. The CACV report also cites the City of Vancouver's, Social Planning figures showing a 72% increase from 1996 to current figures identifying 24% of all Vancouver families as low income (Janzen & Associates, 2000 p. 22). The context of diversity in Vancouver and the changes inherent in diverse cultural values, culturally appropriate ways of working, the influence of economic instability are central to developing and creating relationships between artists and community members, and in reflecting this diversity in regional community public arts practice (see Days of Sun, Chapter 4).

f. Support to Artists/Increasing Visibility/Access to Information

The significance of the GVRD cultural planning document, Strategies for Regional Arts and Cultural Development in Greater Vancouver (1999) is the continuing critique of the low level of regional funding that arts and culture receives (Strategies for Regional Arts & Development, 1999, p. 1). In Arts & Culture in Greater Vancouver: Contributing to the Livable Region (1997) a provincial ranking of 8 behind other provinces is well below the national
average for BC. Translated into dollars, other regions spend between $3.27 and $4.78 per capita while the GVRD currently spends $0.13 on supporting cultural organizations (Arts & Culture in Greater Vancouver, 1997, Exhibit 7b).

An earlier report to the GVRD, Planning And Environment Committee dated June 20, 2000, identifies the strength of GVRD intermunicipal partnership in lobbying for sustainable investment for the arts and culture sector. The report also notes the region as experiencing a culture drain due to the “result of under-investment by both the federal and provincial levels of government” (Report to the GVRD, Planning And Environment Committee dated June 20, 2000, No. 2 Context). 11 Arts organizations are described as spending “more time trying to fundraise leaving less time to engage in the creative process” (Report to the GVRD, Planning And Environment Committee dated June 20, 2000, No. 2 Context).

The relationship connecting regional policy influences to frontline artworkers is evident in the economic effect on artist practice over the past ten years community arts has developed in the region. The funding experience for community artists has been similar to organizations as there has been limited funding and program support to sustain individual artist practice over the long term. This leaves more artist time trying to cover basic expenses,
underemployment, and less supported time for the creative process and professional development.

The funding influence on artist practice is tied to the overall under investment in the arts provincially, and the larger systemic undervaluing of the vitality that culture and artists create. The challenge in community arts is to create sustainable funding to support artists working with community and to diversify some of this funding outside of local government by delivering it to artists and communities (Adams & Goldbard, p. 106). This diversification of funding would work towards changing the current funding emphasis on short term projects and move it to longer term, more open-ended funding that mirrors the goals of artists' identifying, imagining, and realizing with community while financially supporting the contribution of artists' work with community. Based on the success of longer one-year term residencies at the Roundhouse Community Arts Centre, and input from artists' the Vancouver Park Board's, *Artist in Residence Program* linked to local community centres now offers in its tenth year an extension of the annual residency of three months to six months.

The 1993, *The Vancouver Board of Parks & Recreation's, Arts Policy* recommends that artists become more integrated into the park and recreation system, "in policy-making, planning, programs and projects" (Arts
Policy, 1993, Goal #2) yet few artists are hired as arts programmers since the recreation model acknowledged by the municipal union does not formally recognize their experience and education. The two-year Community College Recreation training program has different values for competency such as facilities management and social marketing from the four-year degree program at ECIAD (Emily Carr Institute of Art & Design) where values of critical thinking, social analysis, and artmaking in multiple contexts are valued in determining competency. Within the public recreation, corporate structure the emphasis on programming the arts based solely on cost recovery is changing as community cultural development is gaining program success stories and the value of connecting the community in this way has the longer lasting benefits of maintaining a healthy community. As community centres act as a metaphor for the neighbourhood hive, the need to integrate and expand the arts by hiring artists in all facets of the parks and recreation system is needed.

As quoted in the Proposal to the Vancouver Park Board recommending a visual culture gallery at the Roundhouse (Slater, Rosenberg & Varney, 1991) demographer, Foote notes the decreasing need for purely recreation activities in an aging population. The need to connect people in a community to dialogue about the world, values and life experiences is a growing concern.
The development of new programs like the two-year, Canada Council for the Arts, *Artists, and Communities Collaboration Fund* (Canada Council for the Arts, 2002, July 8) are promising for their support and emphasis on valuing artist’s work with community. The need to sustain longer-term commitment for funding such as this, and to create diversity for funding outside government such as a committed community arts foundation or trust would support and encourage the ongoing development of innovative and long-term artist practice and collaboration. The development of community artist networks, coalitions, unions, and collectives, to support artist development of projects while identifying protection and safeguards for work with community over the long term, is inspired by a parallel national investment in building the cultural bureaucracy (Simons, 2001) that administers community arts at municipal levels.

Strategies to implement Regional Arts and Cultural Development in Greater Vancouver in a report titled *Business Plan and Implementation Options an interim report of the GVRD Regional Cultural Plan Steering Committee* has not received the required budget commitment from member municipalities for the implementation of the overall plan. An intergovernmental partnership to implement a national *Cultural Information Network* for municipal workers was one recommendation that evolved from this regional cultural planning process and did proceed with Federal funding. The network goal is to access
municipal cultural workers, build support, share policy strategies, economic
benefits, best practices, and statistics supporting the economic contribution
of culture specifically cultural commerce, the creation of cultural policy, and
cultural tourism opportunities towards the promotion of liveable and creative
cities. The larger infrastructure related cultural services i.e. Festivals,
Performing Arts, Opera, Symphony, Dance are usually linked to cultural
tourism opportunities as opposed to community art initiatives. Endorsed
nationally by members of the Creative City organization initial funding was
secured for the Cultural Information list serve, (Culture-L) open specifically
to municipal cultural workers and administered locally by the City of
Vancouver’s, Office of Cultural Affairs. Secured funding sponsored a national
conference, Creative City, held in Vancouver in 2002 for municipal cultural
workers and planners. In these times of overall decreases in government
funding for many sectors such as health, economic benefits are required to
justify funding for the arts and this is especially relevant due to low funding
for the arts in this region. In the GVRD’s, Strategies for Regional Arts &
Cultural Development in Greater Vancouver (1999) culture is described as a
benefit in terms of “cultural economic development” (Strategies for Regional
Arts, 1999, p. 15 para. 5) with a “new economy focus on tourism”
(Strategies for Regional Arts, 1999, p. 15 para. 1) a frame of
commodification similar to art operating within the economics of the gallery
system. Art's value ends up being translated into the language of global economics to justify continued public sector funding for the arts.

Commodifying cultural products, as commerce is valuable in demonstrating the interdisciplinary strength of the arts in terms of reaching and affecting other sectors with the connection to sustaining urban economic health. The danger lays in the potential manipulation of creative autonomy by limiting a critique of the very system that supports and funds culture. Do current funding criteria narrow the development of critical avant-garde production, and favour more marketable products that are geared towards successful audience statistics? Or is there danger in the case of community arts of a limited ability to develop artwork with community in the public realm that stimulates dialogue and critique about the dominant system? The organized cultural bureaucracy that is defining trends, funding, and artist selection criteria for community arts is by its creation mediating an artist's developing practice with community. This again raises the issue of an equitable relationship with the commissioning agent as professional community public artist practice in this region is underdeveloped in terms of representation as there is no local artist union or published guidelines for fair labour practices, and rates for artists working with local government. The effect on community artists who are working with municipalities is to be processed through long accounting procedures as a contractor like larger municipal suppliers,
engineers, architects, when the average community artist commission rarely exceeds $5,000. Comparatively the average design contract is often between $20,000 and $40,000 (Slater, 2001, p. 64).

A focus from the big picture of cultural policy to structures of support for frontline artsworkers is needed and is demonstrated by the contrast in the overall economic benefit of the arts to Canadians ($24 billion in 1996-1997) as compared in a report to Parliament by the Canadian Artists and Producers Professional Relations Tribunal to individual artist income.

In describing the Status of the Artist the Tribunal cites recent Canada Census figures that found artists mostly “self employed” without pension, disability, or health benefits, “earning below the national average including other work of $23,000 per annum ... with a higher than average education” (Canadian Artists and Producers Professional Relations Tribunal, Plans & Priorities, 2000-2001, Section 11: Departmental Overview, C External Factors). 15

g. A Critically Inspired Collective Narrative

Dominant politics, structures, funding programs, and bureaucratic systems that reflect values, which are, in the case of most municipal programming more conservative, limit encompassing the full range of an artist’s practice
within government systems. Sparse funding, and project timelines encourage volunteer labour from artists, and overall produces more "show me" projects. This has an impact on the development of longer artist investigations, and collaborations, critiques of power relations, and ongoing critically inspired artmaking within municipal funding, and programming structures influencing local community public art, and artist practice. A strategy to encourage longer artist engagement through increased funding for municipal programs is to partner budgets from other municipal departments or external foundations and, additionally to increase artist and community projects delivered outside of government funding that is specifically attached to programs and to see what effect this produces on developing relationships and community public art practice.

Artists work regardless of obstacles and there are exceptions regionally of successful critical work with community. I am arguing that this work needs to continue and in order for this to happen with ease artists need sustainable incomes over the long term. Local examples of artist-driven projects are community theatre groups such as Headlines Theatre, the public art group, Collective Echoes (2002) Big Picture, Media Interventions as well as an inner city Community Centre coordinating the production of a community play whose directing non profit society has a long history of social activism and critique of the dominant system (The Carnegie Centre’s, Community Play,

A variety of new roles for the arts are evident in policy directed towards increasing an arts presence in the everyday lives of the community. Diversifying an awareness of arts in the community also brings with it the core nature of artist practice: a critical outlook. To divorce this from collaborations with community is to limit creative and investigative solutions that might imagine new possibilities. The dominant values we see manifesting in global corporate and government policy are changing the very landscape and air we breathe. Change is risk and to break the monotone rhyme of mass media information that constructs our image of the world is challenging.

Content that is developed with and in, the context of community as different from individual artist production, investigates meaning that is already located in the community. In these times it is also important to encourage a reflection of the global in the local. A critical arts practice derives meaning
from a wider collective narrative, created and reflective of community
diversity, and place in the context of our home planet.

In order to evolve regional community arts outcomes my findings through
practice, and experience with local government, and policy analysis
recommends the addition of the *artist and critical thinking* to regional policy
and strategic plans. This would support community and artist collaborations
encouraging critical expression and reflections of community identity
grounded in the awareness of the cyclic interconnectedness that the regional
has to the global as well as to the personal.

Stirring the pot is an artist’s strength, and a community’s; use the power of commitment and
freedom, while you have it, use it. am slater, 03

h. From the Regional to the Global to the Personal

Towards understanding strategies and methods in community public art that
over time produce change working with community by encouraging critical
learning, and interdisciplinary approaches to research and inquiry a focus on
descriptions and theories from the longer history of community public art will
in Chapter 3 add to the regional policy layers influencing local community
arts practice. The following chapter is organized around identifying key areas that inform and locate, influences and components, of a regional artist practice and hopes for that practice. The key areas are dialogue, critical pedagogy relational and critical practice, and other models of artist practice with community.
notes


2 In Artichoke, Magazine, Carol Procop cites Corlin Bordeaux's, address about the longer history of art and community, 'Community Culture Notes from BC History' given at the Assembly of BC Arts Councils, Roundtable Conference, Sept. 27, 1997.

3 Deborah Meyers former Director of the Assembly of BC Arts Councils comments on the 1993, Vancouver CCD Workshops, Arts in Social Action in Initiatives in Cultural Democracy, a report to the Laidlow Foundation, May 1999.

4 The Australia Council for the Arts, Local Government's, Report, Role in Arts and Cultural Development 1990.

5 I will use and refer to Artworker an Australian definition from the CCD.Net What's CCD? that incorporates two distinctions 1. Professional CCD workers might be involved in project design and management instead of artmaking and 2. To distinguish a great range of skills that CCD artworkers need that include planning, negotiation, management, and collaborative skills.

6 The Australia Council for the Arts, Report, Local Government's, Role in Arts and Cultural Development 1990 and Robin Pacific's, interview with Australian community artist Kathie Muir in Initiatives in Cultural Democracy, a report to the Laidlow Foundation.

7 To incorporate the arts in the everyday life of the community and to increase the arts in parks and recreation policy, and plans, artists need to be present at the planning and policy creation stage. I attended a recent review (February, 2003) of the 1993 Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation's, Arts Policy as part of the artist focus group who recommended changes to the Arts Policy that would add the role of the artist directly into the wording and spirit of any future document.

8 I was hired as a Coordinator to develop artist calls, a selection process, and coordinate the launch of the Artist in Residence Program in 1993. When initial funding ran out I applied and was awarded the facilitator position for The Trout Lake Restoration Project.
Cultural tourism looks at spin-off benefits from (i.e. blockbuster exhibitions, destination festivals, cultural heritage districts like Gastown) to surrounding business and services.


Report from Burke Taylor, Chair, Regional Cultural Plan Steering Committee, dated June 20, 2000 regarding the Business Plan and Implementation Options for Strategies for Regional Arts and Cultural Development in Greater Vancouver.

As part of the 1990 Artropolis Exhibition at the Roundhouse a lobby was formed to pursue a permanent visual arts gallery by the non-profit society that produces Artropolis. The report was presented to the Planning Director of the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation. Slater, A.M., Rosenberg A & Varney E. (1991, April). [Unpublished] Proposal to the Vancouver Park Board recommending a visual culture gallery at the Roundhouse, Vancouver: A.T. Eight Artropolis Society. Dr. David K. Foot is mentioned in relation to a talk he gave entitled “Move over Sport here comes Culture” in synopsis para. 4.

The Creative City Network formed in 1999 manages an internet network and resource centre of cultural plans, policies, program guidelines, reports, and statistics. Open to employees of municipalities involved in the arts, culture, and heritage. In 2002 the Network became a non profit organization with over 75 member cities. (creativecity.ca)

GVRD, Strategies for Regional Arts and Cultural Development in Greater Vancouver (1999). The network was identified as a regional strategy the Greater Vancouver Cultural Information Network, p. 105 in Strategies for Regional Arts and Cultural Development in Greater Vancouver, Draft Summary Business Plan, June, 2000.

The Status of the Artist Act was enacted in 1992 to recognize the important role that artists play in Canadian society and to provide mechanisms to improve the socio-economic status of self-employed artists. Canadian Artists & Producers Professional Relations Tribunal.
CHAPTER THREE

Participant & Artist: Standing Together

a. The Shift from Spectator to Participant

At the regional level this new art practice of working with community includes community public art that distinguishes itself from public art by shifting the production by an artist of a site specific art object for the spectator (public as audience), to artmaking that crosses disciplinary boundaries. This new art practice utilizes varying processes to facilitate collaboration between artists and community members in the work’s content, planning and production. This shift of artist and audience includes the role of participant in the creation process and art production that is shaped by and responds to community issues and interests.

The philosophy and processes of an artist’s practice in collaboration with community creates interactive opportunities for community engagement. No longer simply the spectators outside, the participant and artist are standing together looking forward to the artwork’s completion and the reception and interaction with the work by other members of the community, the larger audience. The community art experience is interdisciplinary since it may
draw on strategies from other disciplines such as urban ecology, geography, medical science, design, and urban planning to produce outcomes like a community planning document, play, dance, walkway, film, celebration or infrastructure public artwork such as a gateway or the re-design of an urban park. The process that binds this collaborative journey is a component of the overall final artwork.

There are many approaches, methodologies, processes, and theories influencing artists working with communities beyond policy, funding, and program criteria. What is the balance between theory and practice and how is this being interpreted in examples of community public art practice from other places, and what possibilities exist? Characteristics that form community art in practice are the relational, dialogical, and transformative roots connecting it to critical pedagogy evident in examples demonstrating critical practice that combine interdisciplinary approaches to working with community.

These examples and philosophies grounded in art with community will lay the groundwork to identify, understand, and describe my own community public arts practice (in Chapter 4) and experience, embodying and ultimately influenced by aspects of these models filtered through the lens of the place I live and work.
b. The Relational Process

Not only does participatory public art extend the traditional field of artistic practice by locating artistic activity in and with the community it is characterized by Lacy (1995) and Adams and Goldbard (2001) as employing multiple viewpoints and practices that soften the traditional boundaries of art and including intangibles such as the relation of artist to participant, and the relational process itself.

Incorporating the relational process into community public art practice makes a clear distinction between other types of participatory art production with communities.

It is useful in this thesis to distinguish between the engagement processes of community cultural development, the practice of cultural animation, and the term cultural democracy cited in current literature that often has the intention of affecting and transforming the participant. The community cultural development field utilizes the arts to engage and build community with an emphasis on community defined direction and participation in all aspects of project management and artmaking.
The practice of cultural animation relies on the artist as catalyst who brings resources and skills to the community and assists in mobilizing participation through the development of an organizing art project or theme that is reflective of community interests and or place. Cultural democracy is a term that describes a pluralistic society where diversity and the acceptance of different cultural traditions and ideas result in wider access, participation, and equity in cultural initiatives (Adams, & Goldbard, 2001; Pacific, 1999).

Another distinction is contemporary art practice that draws on social themes in the traditional hierarchy of subject/object while still maintaining change through form and content that is not directly based on the relationship with community members through the dialogical. The subject/object hierarchy shifts in a community public art process and is replaced by the relation of artist to participant.

c. Dialogue with You

The outcome of art in collaboration is the development of a critical ability to wonder about the world, as it exists, fusing the inside and outside. Interactive learning, collaboration, connection, and context are paramount in working with community to produce socially engaged art.
The process of working with community acts to dissolve boundaries between artist and audience, and this movement through interaction and dialogue propels a change of perspective, a new realization. In literature that describes art and community, this moment of change the heart of transformation is attributed to dialogue (Gablik, 1991, p. 161). Gablik moves the structural aspect of dialogue into the realm of spirit with her use of “heart”. This intangible dynamic of dialogue and heart experienced in action through critical inquiry, and collaborative exploration in the act of creating is for many community public art practitioners and participants transformational (Lacy, 1993). An example taken from my own practice and experience is a story from the local Trout Lake Restoration Project, 1995 (see Chapter 4). A 70-year-old participant who lived across the street from Trout Lake disputed the use of the word “ecosystem” to describe the lake. He knew the lake, he went there everyday it was not an ecosystem it was “Trout Lake” to him. Six months later after many conversations and art inspired environmental explorations of the lake he became a tour leader for the lake walks. I heard him one day, as he was guiding a lake walk, introduce and explain to participants the many facets of the Trout Lake ecosystem. I also saw him later, this time as a new volunteer for an art organization hosting a community celebration.
For me evaluating what happens between artist and participant in an art-based community process eludes more to the out of space and time (Kester, 1999) quality of what engaged relationship and dialogue produces. As a metaphor I will describe dialogue as me talking with you and the process moves me outside of myself into a place of engagement with you as I reflect, and create, evaluate, and reflect again with you in action.

Dialogue as an interdisciplinary method intersects the social theory of Freire, and functions in multiple modes as Bakhtin suggests (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 332). Dialogue operates with relationship towards gaining a non-objective interaction based instead on insight and, in the case of a community cultural development process, furthers my knowledge of your perceptions, your world. This intersubjective process registers in both language, and social modes of interaction (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 314). As dialogue moves to the aesthetic realm the language boundary is crossed and becomes a layer as it embodies poetry, image, and visual symbols. The dialogue is interpreted and remains as an image or, in community public art, a physical place that in its creation becomes a site for dialogue. The result is an image of dialogue moved into the visual realm and situated in public space like the “Days of Sun” streetscape markers that continued participants dialogue in public space. These streetscape markers, the result of a one year project with a local multicultural family centre, embody, in visual symbols, participant
stories about the value of home and community, images representing diverse cultures, diaspora, memories of other places, and cultural homelands far from here. (See *Days of Sun*, Chapter 4)

The reinvesting of public space with community identity and reflections of collective imagination is an example of the community re-locating the "heroic" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 388) back in the polis itself. The collective artwork symbolizes and imbues multiple modes of dialogue integrating the personal story with the local and the global, and interconnecting back to the personal, and the subjective.

d. Expanding the Frame

The expansion of art making and the re-defining of aesthetics to address contemporary artists working with community in collaboration and dialogue is signaled by a *critical framework* (Kester, 1999) for community art practice based on the essence of a work’s outcome embodying a diverse story rooted in dialogue. Interaction and the undetermined unspecified result of socially engaged collaborations in process is the focus of “dialogical aesthetics”. (Kester, 1999) The work includes notions of time and duration as a register of the frame that surrounds the longer periods that link artist and community
as they co-participate and the aesthetic experience is woven through
dialogue.

In the catalogue essay *Conversation pieces: Collaboration and artistic
identity* (2000) from the exhibition, *Unlimited Partnerships: Collaborations in
Contemporary Art* (2000) Kester introduces examples of dialogue based
collaborations which are interdisciplinary and critically based in work that
includes systemic influences (Kester, 2000).

*Intervention* (1994-1995) was a Zurich based performative work concerned
with drug politics. The media imaging and messaging about vilifying drug
addicted sex workers had the Zurich police and municipal authorities in an
oppositional and clamp down stance. The work began with a series of
"performative talks on boats, on Lake Zurich", where police, municipal
leaders, a cross section of institutions, community members and sex workers
concerned with drug use in the city met and began a dialogue, secluded from
the pressures of the everyday and mediation of the media onslaught. These
"floating dialogues" created a neutral space where drug addicted sex workers
could begin a direct dialogue with municipal authorities and police about their
story: "this led to an unprecedented consensus in support of establishing a
boarding house for addicted sex workers, who had previously been forced to
sleep out of doors" (Kester, 2000, *Conversation Pieces*, Section 1. para. 8).
Setting the ground for collaboration and a dialogical art practice encompasses how the artist functions in the model of dialogical aesthetics. Kester applies three distinct characteristics to the dialogical in practice.

1. The role of the artist is integrated into a new whole through dialogue and a breakdown of the divisions between artist, artwork, and audience is evident in the process. 2. Critique and interdisciplinary investigation are possible as art practice operates “between” institutional sites and disciplines. 3. Meaning is not solely derived from an object of creation, and occurs and is dispersed over time in multiple registers derived through the process of dialogue and the *indeterminance* of what will happen and what kind of “collaborative knowledge will be produced” (Kester, 1999, section 4, para. 1-3).

Canadian artists Carole Conde and Karl Beveridge have worked in a dialogical way for over 20 years collaborating with labour unions in Canada and the USA. They work with this community to produce collective narrative and photo based work. Their recent interest in the state of health care was precipitated by a personal health crisis and extended stay in hospital by Beveridge and the impact and experiences the couple had with the health care system. Their recent portrait series *Theatre of Operations* (2000) places Buffalo health care workers in a staged theatre of operations as they tell
stories about the everyday crisis in the U.S. health care system (Conde C & Beveridge K, 2000, Unlimited Partnerships. Artist Statement).

The dialogical, formed as a contemporary critical art practice with community is a clear distinction from local community development CCD literature that currently lacks the broader goals of defining critical practice encouraging a wider critique of systemic influences on the everyday.

Including references to global, social equity, and environmental sustainability is evident in the UK model of Littoral art practice. Central to Littoral practice is a way of working within a community for a longer time that removes "the artist from the art" (Problem Finding: Art without Artists 2002, July 15, Littoral.org. background). Other key aspects of Littoral practice that are similar to the needs of developing local art practice are working long term with community, and interfacing a critical recognition of the total dialogue operating from and with systemic influences, structures, policy, and influenced by the character of the political times (Kester, 1999).

Working from within a community Littoral artist practice claims to be seamless. In this model the artist submerges into the community becoming one as suggested by Kester’s model of dialogical aesthetics (Kester, 1999). The nuance is the interpretation in practice. How invisible can an artist really be? Even if artists are working within a community and become a part of
that community, aesthetic decisions are being made and by whom? *The Routes: Bus Workers Exhibitions, Northern Ireland (May, 2002)* a public art project and exhibition by Littoral, UK, provides an example of a work that evolved through dialogue incorporating aspects of the dialogical aesthetic model with the artist’s mark present in the production of the work.

A team of photographers (Belfast Exposed), artists (Flaxart Studios), and film makers (Banter Productions) worked with Littoral and with Irish bus drivers and associated workers over two years (2000 - 2001) to develop the ROUTES project. The ROUTES documentary provides a record of the role of the Transport & General Workers Union and its members in maintaining an essential public service and community lifeline over the past 30 years of conflict in the region. The project is also an investigation of shop-floor approaches to anti-sectarianism in the workplace. Components of the project included: Audio arts recording, sound archive, video and film projects, educational resources, traveling exhibition, current and retired workers memories, region wide celebration a week of routes, exhibitions, public art projects, educational, and conference programs. (Littoral, *The Routes: Bus Workers Exhibitions, Northern Ireland, May 2002. Projects, Recent Projects*, para. 3)

The photographic artists, and filmmakers in this project are making decisions about framing, timing, and interactions in the making. The artist is present and needs to be. Seamlessness can be a strategy to reduce the power relations that may exist in an artist/participant relationship an effort to neutralize the hierarchy that is a barrier to collaborative process. Another strategy to render the collaborative process “seamless” is to dissipate perceived control through the action of dialogue, and in collaboration an agreement to power share. I meet you, and you, and when we are working
and visioning together our specific skills may serve the whole, we trust, and utilize these skills towards realizing our collective creation.

Trust is what I have experienced ongoing dialogue produces in collaborations where artists and communities are working together to reflect and express themselves mutually. I would differ from describing the artist as disappearing from the process (i.e. "seamlessness"), an aspect of the *Littoral* model of practice. To become completely invisible as artists is to deny a reflection of who we are; and identity is what artists and communities are striving to give voice and expression to. Instead my approach in practice is to keep an eye on balance in the relationships that develop in a community public art process, and to power share leadership with community.

The discovery of meaning is reflected in the day-to-day dialogues and circumstances that occur in this form of collaboration. At times, reflections of a community are difficult; apathy is rampant, racism exists, often consensus doesn’t work, and sometimes it is the artists’ role to create strategies that will move and gather the community to a place where conversation, and ideas, can simply breathe.

The focus is on community. Reflections of community in the *Littoral* example include critical explorations that acknowledge operating within the larger social and political systems that produce social exclusion, divisions based on
economics, the health, and ecological crisis that are at the core of the everyday. Dialogue based collaborations with community provide a method for mediating theory and practice by incorporating the everyday experiences of community as authors as evidenced by this example from Australia.

The heritage flour mill of rural Oatlands in Tasmania was the site of a multimedia production of town life in the 90's. School students worked with professional artists from Salamanca Theatre Company interviewing locals to create Still Life. An audience of 400 locals were guided along a circuit around the heritage mill: they found girls in white at the top of the staircase stacking loaves and fantasizing about fast food whilst further up the stairs Joe the local Butcher was on a video montage with his customers and outside a soundscape from the old town well, featured snippets of gossip and council politics.


Community authorship is translated reciprocally into identity and is often expressed in work with marginalized groups drawing on the sociological theories of social capital and social inclusion in group artistic production and inquiry.

A recent study measuring the impact of the community arts model (CCD) in Australia identifies the process of "working together in community based arts projects to reach common goals reduces social isolation" and "acts as a catalyst" for generating social capital (Williams in Jermyn, 2001, section 4.8 p. 24). The process of attaining common goals realized through the process
of artmaking that creates learning experiences is evident in the Carnegie Community Centre, Street Program’s, *Footprints Community Art Project* (2001). This pilot project met the indicators of social capital identified in the William’s study for participants in an art based collaborative which were improved skills in “communicating complex ideas, planning, organization, and understanding of different cultures” (Williams in Jermyn, 2001, section 4.8 p. 24). There were two components to *the Footprints Project* the design and production of 18 historical mosaic markers, and an accompanying street banner project that would mark the mosaic route that meandered through the Downtown Eastside /Old Vancouver Townsite, and Strathcona neighbourhoods. The Carnegie Street Program deals with the street drug scene in the heart of the Downtown Eastside. The *Footprints Project* was designed by Carnegie staff to promote social inclusion by reaching active drug users who were out of the loop in terms of contact with health care, and other essential services due to the street “scene” they were involved with. A storefront work studio on Hastings near Main Street was rented and work began to have street people become part of the project. The Carnegie Street Program set the intake up and participants were required to register and participate in health prevention workshops about Hepatitis B, street participants could then research designs, make the mosaics, or participate in the banner program and get paid for this work.
Over 15 artists worked with street addicted participants to investigate the history of the area (oral, geographical, settlement) and from that research they co-designed a mosaic marker.

The Footprints Project developed social capital defined in practice by the sheer energy, repeat visits to the studio, ongoing building of relationships and for these street people a true experience of social inclusion and pride when the mosaics and banners moved from the design stage to the finished product. The Footprints Project combined a community arts model with job training, and the arts as economic stimulus for the regeneration of neighbourhood identity through the street beautification, mosaic, and banner installation program. The project has continued to develop over the past two years and currently the program is expanding to form a non-profit company that will produce mosaics, create ongoing training, and other economic initiatives for drug addicted participants.

The main issue that was addressed by the project was to include recovering addicts and hard to reach active drug users involved in the street drug scene in a community based art process thereby increasing social inclusion and social capital through extending and developing new skills and relationships. I was the Artistic Director for the banner side of the project.
The project had been awarded Federal funding, the catch was the mosaic research, design, training and production had to be up and running, and the storefront studio operational, and work completed within six weeks. The energy was indescribable. At its peak the place, an old bikers’ hangout, was jumping. People were connecting, making, singing, yelling, laughing, and crying: the human spirit was indomitable. Art was at the centre of this experience. Due to the short project timeline, pressure and tension combined with the miracle of seeing artworks completed. Participants were buoyed with enthusiasm and word spread on the street...everybody came in to the studio.

Part of the goal of the banner program was to create an art based work-training component. Over a number of conversations with participants I realized that silkscreen would be a portable medium for participants to learn. They could make and sell t-shirts and connect to the street banners that needed to be silk-screened. I found out that one of the artists involved in the mosaic project was a silkscreen expert so we collaborated and set up a silkscreen workshop in the front of the storefront studio. Over a number of days t-shirts were printed with the banner design on them. The banner design evolved from two sources; the first day I was in the storefront I had a conversation with a participant who was a former navy seaman.
A former seaman, who had lived in the Gastown area for 52 years remembered the groves of trees that used to be in the neighbourhood as he walked home from the port.

I researched the Gastown area and contacted a biologist in the Forestry Department who identified the botanical history of local trees of that time, and secondly I combined the four directions and the border designed by the Artistic Director for the mosaics. The completed banner design evolved to become the logo for the overall Footprint Project. The final component of the banner program was to place five participants in an all day silkscreen practicum at the company producing the 52 street banners. It was an intimate day; stories, food, and the process of art production were shared. Life journeys tough times, how addiction had happened, stories that revealed another side to people that I knew in a deep and also ephemeral way. We celebrated as we participated and observed the making of the first Footprint Street Banner and learned about the science and alchemy of colour from a dye specialist.
e. The Learning Public

Transforming participants includes transformation of the artist, which has been my experience. My own world has expanded in the process of learning, of movement, a discovery of different viewpoints that has brought me more in touch with the different ways people think and experience the world. My community art experience has put me in touch with a range of ages working together from 2 to 85 years old. My deepest learning has happened in contact with elders. I, like a lot of contemporary people do not have daily contact with elders, the term I will refer to seniors as. I have not had grandparents or aunts, uncles in my immediate life for over 30 years due to immigration. I am most struck upon reflection about the intergenerational linkages that I am drawn to and through my relationships and dialogue with elders that have made visible life cycles and life stories.

Community oriented education is central to cultural pedagogy and the sharing and exchange of knowledge through relationship and creating which community public art practice encourages in my view produces multi-faceted reflections and ongoing learning through time as this reflection is provoking in me.
The Collaboration of Art and Critical Pedagogy

Interdisciplinary approaches and methods working with communities are driven by the complex investigation of self and others in the collaborative process and the further inquiry and application of context in artmaking processes. These aspects characterize the essence of critical community art practice and educational practice (i.e. formative learning) that layers experience and wonder with rigour, and insight. The collaborative outcomes and experiences of community public art can engage both the community and artist in critical interdisciplinary approaches to inquiry; making connections in learning as transformation occurs the journey deepens and relationships widen. The role of the artist and art as an agent of transformation has echoes in the roots of diverse cultural interpretations that incorporate art and spirituality (Arguelles, 1992) as the nexus of creative experience. Bringing this home, spirit is here not only in place, but is demonstrated in the self as a connection: the internal home of self and planet connecting through memory to experience.

In critical pedagogy, Freire refers to transformation as grounded in the critical transformation of consciousness gained through open-ended dialogue and the renewed ability to understand and take charge of shaping reality.
(Adams & Goldbard, 2001, p. 50). This theory connects to community public art processes where taking charge emanates from dialogue in decisions that move, create, and define an artwork.

Transforming the participant through the action of social change occurring over time is often described in the literature that has defined the larger CCD, and new genre public art field (Gablik, 1991; Lacy, 1995). This reference to transformation is problematic when re-interpreted by local government as an outcome of the art experience using social change without including the transformative core of critical consciousness as defined in popular education and critical pedagogy (Freire, 1982; Giroux, 1993; Adams & Goldberg, 2001). Transformation in a critical art practice model rooted in critical pedagogy and community interaction is attached to challenging social stereotypes by pushing boundaries that structure inclusion and exclusion (Giroux, 1993).

An artist’s practice with community can soften boundaries and imbue challenge with metaphor and symbol, in ritual and celebration, in shades of green. As boundaries soften and move whole learning is reflective of practice in action experienced through collaboration and the critical methods of investigating, analyzing, and reflecting. Change then occurs not only in the
creation of an object but applies to the personal and collective narrative. The process is then a metaphor for internal movement.

The difference in practice between an educational experience and education experienced through community public art and its connecting processes is demonstrated by intention, the production of meaning, and collaboration in practice. Creating a learning environment as a facilitator of adult education in workshop and conference design, I rely on facilitating critical learning moments by creating a setting for change using informal learning methods, the use of video, role playing, art activities, interactive games, and critical questioning. This is similar to my community public artist practice that draws on my formal training as an artist, public education practitioner, and facilitator. The difference in my community public artist practice in methodology includes the language of art and my arts practice as context in facilitating an artmaking “experience,” (Dewey, 1934, p. 5) and the intention of encouraging action and reflection by the community in connection, as identified and experienced, by the community in collaboration.

The process of connection is the first step to collaborating and this shift from you to me, and you rely on dialogue, deep inquiry, and empathy in unraveling the story to tell and deciding how to tell it. The process of collaborating for me is questioning, finding, looking, hearing, and talking;
this is the research that uncovers meaning for you and me. The discovery of the problem or issue through this collaborative action shapes and informs the direction to take and is expressed and digested through the process of inquiry that grounds artmaking. The resulting work, in whatever form this may take, is given life through the collaborative, co-creation process. This distinction of co-creating, in community public art practice incorporates a critical point of view that creates and discovers meaning through critical investigations of something as a whole. Whole experiences that engage the imagination, and relationship in multiple ways and are of issue to you, and me, and the larger community produce change. Marking that change by manifesting it symbolically in whatever form through a collaborative process or object, characterizes a community public art process, and differentiates it from a strictly educational experience.

Locally, two examples from my community public art practice that symbolize arts based inquiry, and mark change through community dialogue, deep critical inquiry, and a process of collaborative learning are the creation of local planning documents, *The Community Action Plan for the Restoration of Trout Lake* (1995), and *The Greenway Art Plan* (2001). Both documents were produced to operate and guide local government in applying solutions that addressed space, place and location characteristics of Trout Lake and its ecosystem, and the extensive Surrey Greenway routes that transect social,
psychological, and geographic spaces constructed by the settlement and subsequent management of the City of Surrey and its environs. Both plans represent the fusion of local government, community, artistic, and environmental vision. With a view to restore a lake’s ecosystem damaged by human impact, *The Community Action Plan for the Restoration of Trout Lake* was developed with resident and local government input in an intensive dialogue between participants and disciplines. A variety of investigations created whole learning experiences that brought together methods of inquiry from art, biology, horticulture, and urban ecology to investigate the influences of municipal design, planning structures, and philosophies on parks, engineering, the environment, and municipal development. The resulting plan details a 20-year vision with recommendations to sustain the lake’s health and was presented by the community to the *Vancouver Board of Park’s and Recreation* for approval and implementation. The *Community Action Plan, for the Restoration of Trout Lake* was approved by the Park Board in 1995 (see Appendix).

An example of critical investigation also occurs when at times participants in the collaborative process are researchers as in the *Trout Lake Restoration Project*, 1995. Students from an alternate high school located across the street from the lake explored their *neighbour* Trout Lake with cameras, tape recorders, rock rubbings, paintings, and model making. Student
investigations of the lake's ecosystem used interdisciplinary approaches to combine visual methods, with geography, writing, history, and biology. This participatory action research as described by (Adams & Goldberg, p. 29) is pivotal in engaging community participants in identifying concerns and making connections to their surrounding world. In the words of a student participant in the Trout Lake Restoration Project, “the lake looks different to me now. I can identify the plants, the trees, I know the history...” 

A community public artist practice assists participants in revealing and making place through inquiry, metaphor, symbol, and story often crossing into other disciplines like ethno botany to interconnect identity and juxtapose relationships with the community in community.
notes

1 Michael Clague, Director of the Carnegie Center, by e-mail 12/16/02 described the evolution of the project and the proposed Downtown Eastside, Mosaic Arts Enterprise with the continued goal to provide "addicted street people with life skills, health management and pre-employment training for volunteer and employment opportunities."

2 As Artist in Residence for the *Greenway Art Plan* (2001-2002) I collaborated with City of Surrey Municipal Staff from Engineering, and Parks, Recreation and Culture Department’s to produce the *Greenway Art Plan* an art based planning document that defines project templates that will guide the future development of public art for the City of Surrey, Greenway network.

3 Student quote from the *Trout Lake Restoration*, videotape.
CHAPTER FOUR

Shades of Evolving Practice

Interconnectedness weaves
the micro and the macro together,
the story to experience,
the personal to community,
the leaf to the rain.

It is a matter of interpretation
and reflection on the essence
of connection as close
and as far as a tear
is from the heart.

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Connection is at the heart of my experience in the practice of working with community and developing a community public art practice over the last 10 years. The degrees of collaboration differ from project to project and the uniqueness of each interaction defined by the people, the place, organizing structures, and budget. Each process was as different as the people there was no recipe for best practice as chosen strategies grew a different process and outcome, true connection happened over time and in degrees.

Experiences with community public art were as varied as shades of green, differentiated by action and nuance in practice, as each project was unique to place and time. I developed specific approaches and strategies from
interactions and research with community; drawing on visualization, painting, dialogue and mapping methods. There were many ways to interpret meaning as it was accumulative, driven, and uncovered by interaction and dialogue occurring at various stages of organizing, planning, before an object or during the production and creation of an object. People’s stories revealed life cycles, reflections about living and journeys through time. Specific critical investigations occurred in some projects and in others the critical awareness was imbedded in the context of implicit interconnection as in racism, and social inclusion mirroring society’s systemic acceptance of exclusion. My process with community reflected outwards to make connections to the larger natural bio-systems of place, and the larger social, physical, and institutional environments that often remain unseen factors that affect the everyday life of you and me.

No matter what the role or who defined this role in community public art projects, the constant aspect of my being involved, the lens that forms my analysis and collaborations is looking at the world from the point of view and vision of an artist. My art practice is concerned with relationships between the urban and the natural environment these influence me as does my background in large-scale public events, the gardens of my childhood, and the greens that represent the complex coastal ecosystem that characterize the place I live...the coastal city, Vancouver.
Interconnectedness operates at two levels in this chapter providing reflections and analysis about my community public art practice. In terms of practice an acknowledgement that the full range of a life narrative, place and time, imagination, vision, drawing on lived and work experience, cultural background, education, and the systemic, and political influence that impacts how approaches, and points of view are interpreted and received all of these aspects are interconnected and contribute to form the context for my arts practice with community.

I cannot separate this knowledge and only use some of it and hide the rest when, for example, I am working as a Facilitator who from the discipline of community development is seen as a neutral model. The role of Artist/Facilitator allows for more interpretation, passion, and range in practice while respecting, listening, and engaging the diverse voices of collaboration and relationship. The Australian term *Artsworker* (Community Cultural Development in Australia. (2002). *What’s CCD?* glossary A. para. 1) acknowledges the high level of skills beyond artmaking that are needed to organize and develop a cultural project with community. The principle of interconnectedness, the process of making connections visible is at the essence of my community arts practice.
Just as the emphasis on including the artist in community reduces separateness through connection with community, the exclusion of environmental relationships in daily life highlights our current disconnection from, and commodification of nature, which is similar to the commodification of art in the market system. With an eye to reducing separateness and revealing interconnections, *the environment* is central to my community public art practice, and my explorations of place through photography and video. Interconnectedness also operates in this reflection on community public art practice as a method to recognize the symbiosis between natural and social systems across disciplines. Emulating nature, all things are connected and reflect aspects of each other’s actions or non-actions. It is this full range of experience integrating the cause and effect into dialogues with community that embodies a critical perspective in arts practice and grounds local concerns within a worldview. Looking up and around encourages reflection as a model to critique, change, learn, and imagine.

a. Making Connections: The Dialogical in Place and Story

*Interconnectedness* was the mode of inquiry that fueled the variety of methodologies used in *The Trout Lake Restoration Project (1995)*. The
project's critical investigations looked at the systemic influences of urban planning on the health of a lake's ecosystem, and the lake's contribution to the well-being of the community. This community cultural development process used community mapping to identify steps to ensure the future sustainability of Trout Lake.

*The Trout Lake Restoration Project* provides an example of the use of interdisciplinary approaches in community public arts practice with a focus on environmental education and mapping to reveal the story of a local lake in order to plan for the stewardship of its future. Funded as a pilot community cultural development project by the *Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation* in 1994, *The Trout Lake Restoration Project* grew from a small group of committed community members who were concerned about Trout Lake's closure to swimming in the summer months due to high levels of E. coli and a dropping water level. The group led by artist Paula Jardine from *Public Dreams* set about to secure seed money to develop further community involvement, and cross-disciplinary investigations to look at what was causing the lake closures and to look beyond E. coli related to bird droppings and pull together a total picture of the lake past and present. The community team had a consulting biologist, a groundwater hydrologist, the Executive Director of the Trout Lake Community Centre, artists, and a landscape
architect. Interested community members, and representatives from the Park Board Department responsible for water quality also attended meetings.

*The Trout Lake Restoration Project* characterizes the full range of the Australian community cultural development model this thesis refers to while also reflective of the model of dialogical aesthetics. *The community identified the issue* and prioritized actions to be taken and *interdisciplinary approaches engaged* participation from the wider community in creating a *Community Action Plan for the Restoration of Trout Lake*. *Intensive collaborations* with biologists, urban planners, ethno botanists, artists, educators, students, and Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation staff from planning, maintenance, arts and culture, and engineering, *made visible, institutional structures* and philosophies that needed to collaborate to fulfill the goal of future sustainability for the lake. Investigations and information was collected with community through personal research and collaboration with other disciplines, biology, landscape architecture, water hydrology, ethno botany, recreation, and *extensive use of news media* to make connections visible to community and as a site for dialogue, and the creation of a long-term *Community Action Plan for the Restoration of Trout Lake*.

The project had the objective of building a community to learn about the environmental imperatives of the lake and to become involved in identifying
long-term recommendations to secure sustainability and stewardship of the lake. The community steering committee grew from 5 to 20 and a variety of initiatives continued after the community-planning phase ended. A volunteer coordinated the production of the recommended lake walk, educational package for local schools, guides were trained to give lake walks, and bird counts continued. *The Trout Lake Restoration Project* promoted interest in the local environment and made local government networks visible. For the first time in Vancouver Park Board history this was an artist led community planning process initiated by the community. Twelve city departments attended planning workshops and worked at the table with community members to address and create recommendations for the *Community Action Plan for the Restoration of Trout Lake*. The plan was presented at a Board meeting of the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation, and implementation recommendations were formally adopted into the Park Board budget.

The *Trout Lake Restoration Project* used interdisciplinary inquiry and approaches to identify key themes. Themes that emerged from the research considered the crossing of art and science, institutions, intergovernmental collaboration and the impact of park planning history on the control of nature (manicured vs. wild). Several art projects were completed by the project and included: community made tile tables for the Trout Lake Café, a mosaic
pathway project. (the concept and content was a result of an intensive design charrette, and collaboration between community members and the Landscape Architecture school at UBC), a gathering sculpture, community celebrations, and the Community Action Plan for the Restoration of Trout Lake.

Another example of a community cultural development project utilizing cross-disciplinary collaboration is the Talking Poles, Woodland Park Community Art Project (1999-2001). The focus for this example is the place making process of the project, and the partnership between an environmental organization, a community art project, the community, and the local Aboriginal Friendship Centre. The site was Woodland Park an underused green space in an inner city neighbourhood. Neighbourhood residents were experiencing a level of disconnectedness and fear about using the park due to its proximity to a street with high rates of prostitution and drug traffic. Needles and condoms were found in the park in the children’s play area and pool, and there was increased night traffic and disturbances. Police and community members identified a crack house located across the street from the park. I was hired as the Facilitator for this Community Cultural Development Project. My role was to initiate and identify a community art project and develop outreach strategies to build community and address community concerns about safety, and identify plans for park
enhancement. The Woodland Park, Community Committee also identified the need to encourage the participation of First Nations participants who lived around the park and the Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre that was located only two blocks away.

With the Woodland Park Community Committee, directions were identified for the summer months and I conceived of an organizing community art concept, *The Talking Poles*. The project referenced previous archival research about the forest that preceded the development of Woodland Park, and addressed the diversity of the neighbourhood through the notion of neighbours of all ages and cultures telling stories through symbols. *The Talking Poles* commissioned a sculptor who leads participatory community carving projects to work in conjunction with the summer playground program and to collaborate with children to design and carve a wooden pole. A group of First Nations artists were commissioned to design a totem as a protection symbol for the new children’s playground (They were unable to complete this carving). The project evolved over a two-year period and saw the creation of the *Pokémon* pole designed by the children, and the *Tree* sculpture designed by Eric Neighbour and carved with the help of more than 300 children and families. A senior First Nations carver completed the *Eagle Bear* totem and 500 school children visited the Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre, studio where this pole was carved. A traditional pole raising for the *Eagle*
Bear totem had over 700 people and twelve First Nations in attendance to witness the ceremony, and participate in a feast, subsequent gifting and dancing, a cultural celebration that is often more important than the carving of the pole itself.

The defining distinction between The Trout Lake Restoration Project and the Talking Poles, Woodland Park Project emerges from the very different way the dialogical, and place operated and guided practice. In Trout Lake the process was dialogical and the place and its interconnections were explored from multiple viewpoints and the “analytic resources” (Kester, 1999, Section 4. par. 2) of other disciplines. In the Woodland Park example a dialogical space was created as an outcome of the whole process that in the end symbolized the community coming together and taking stewardship of the community garden and the park. The landscape design of the community, Circle Garden (a product of the Evergreen Foundation’s, Urban Oasis collaboration) integrated the three Talking Poles, and the final installation plans were based on incorporating culturally appropriate site considerations. The Pokémon pole and Tree sculpture remain placed just outside the circle garden with the Eagle Bear totem placed inside the inner circle oriented towards the playground. The ritual giving of life to place through art, song, and spirit marking the pole raising ceremony for the Eagle Bear totem, shapes and grounds Woodland Park, with the energy of all who participated
in the pole raising ceremony and the overall *Talking Poles Project*. The ritual ceremony, celebration, and blessing of the space marks the site for the community to meet in a sacred place that imbues cultural stories, and the labour of many neighbours and now friends. The completed installation and the power of integrating the community art project with the *Circle Garden* is testament to the visibility and harmony that collaborative efforts can produce in making place.

*Indeterminacy* was similarly evident in both projects interpreted by shades of meaning that popped up in sprouts (Kester, 1999). In *The Trout Lake Restoration Project* core sample results of the lake bottom analysis by Atomic Canada introduced the notion of invisible layers of time that influence a place, and discourse. The lake was located in a scientific/historic discourse as scientific investigations through the core sample interpreted Trout Lake’s glacial history and sediment composition. This added to a different type of knowledge from the social historical discourse of the lake as neighbour, which was gleaned from oral history interviews with seniors who had lived around the lake.

During the two years preceding the installation of the *Circle Garden*, and the *Talking Poles* many layers of information overlapped, producing questions about the relationship and power hierarchy between community dreams, and
the institutional management of nature and public space. Working through installation concerns about the wooden poles brought together the disciplines of planning, design, landscape architecture, horticulture, engineering, art, ecology, and the accounting lens of municipal Risk Management. It took about a year to coalesce the completion of all three poles, the approvals for location, and the budget to fulfill the planning, and the City of Vancouver’s, Risk Management criteria for stamped engineering plans, and the manufacturing of those specifications. An engineering firm donated its services to design the infrastructure required for the installation of the poles. The installation costs far exceeded artist fees, and illuminated cultural difference and the value of experience within municipal institutions when one participant commented; “we have been raising poles for hundreds of years [they may over time decay but] they never fall down and we raise it together as a community.”

Two contemporary sculptures and one traditional First Nation’s totem pole are installed in Woodland Park overlooking the children’s playground and situated in the newly created Circle Community Garden. The Circle Garden is designed based on a traditional medicine wheel and incorporates native plantings. The House of Culture Arts and Carving Program created by lead carver Mike D’ Angeli during the Talking Poles carving project is housed in the Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre. The House of Culture facilitates
traditional First Nations carving techniques, training, and mentorship for urban aboriginal youth and in addition works with local school programs. In terms of artist practice The Talking Poles project is a good example of the cultural animation model (Clover & Hall, 2002) that identifies the artist as catalyst who identifies a core concept or metaphor around which she can conceptualize and engage community members in a project. An initial mapping phase also a component of the cultural animation model was accomplished during the Community Visioning Workshop (1997) and in the Design Workshop organized by the Evergreen Foundation’s, Urban Oasis project in 2001.

Future place based learning is possible using the Talking Poles site to extend cultural understanding about First Nations culture, through the artwork on site, explanations about the pole raising ceremony, and the Native Plant Circle Garden (which is based on the symbol of the prairie medicine wheel).

Woodland Park community dreams: a new playground, a community garden, native plantings, a bulletin board, drinking fountain, a bike path for kids, drainage tiles to address the wet bog in the playing fields, and a public art project

(Community Visioning Action Plan, 1997)
b. Standing at the Kitchen Sink

I will compare my role as an artist in community public art from my first work as a (CCD) Facilitator ten years ago to a more recent role as an Artist in Residence, which demonstrates an evolving understanding of practice through the experience of practice and the interconnectedness of life experience to working methods. My role as Facilitator in the Trout Lake Restoration Project (1994/1995) was to collaborate with the Artist in Residence who was a Celebration Artist and organizer and to extend this collaboration outwards by involving and engaging the wider community in looking at the lake’s health and future. My practice had included to this date the organizing of the 1993 Community Cultural Development Workshop, the conceptual development, and the coordination of the successful Art in the Urban Landscape (1992) temporary public art competition. I had recently received a graduate award for a place based art work from the then Emily Carr College of Art & Design, and co-produced a large series of 60 public events in the Spring of 1994 for Design Week on the theme of place making, and sustainable community development. I drew on and was influenced by these experiences and my formal training as a facilitator of adult learning in my role as Facilitator for the Trout Lake Restoration Project. I was hired as a Facilitator for the project at the point where the lake was closed to swimming
and community meetings consisted of not more than five people. The primary organizing principle was to map and create a composite picture of Trout Lake.

I researched all the Trout Lake Community Centre's archival newspaper files, and discovered that Trout Lake was the first source of drinking water for the new town of Hastings Mill (circa 1898) located in Gastown the area that defines the founding of Vancouver. This initiated more investigations by the community team and biologists into why the level of the lake was so low now compared to then. They found sewage engineers had blocked three streams feeding water into the lake during the development of the neighbourhood. Additionally park development had replaced most of the native lake vegetation with other species. The lake was a peat bog and this further had an impact on the type of plants that needed to be near the water's edge for bio filtration needed to enhance water quality. My formal role as Facilitator was to engage a wider community public in the project so I contacted and began to talk with groups recommended by the Trout Lake Community Centre and to invite them to join in planning meetings. The resident Artist and I began to collaborate to produce an open house to present the Trout Lake Committee's initial findings about the lake, and to gather more community stories with an emphasis on involving the surrounding Asian community, other residents of the area, and youth.
The role of Facilitator was defined in the beginning of the project by Park Board organizers. The role on paper had an emphasis defined by community development goals of building community, remaining neutral when facilitating community input and disagreement, and not contributing creatively to the project. Three factors impacted this definition in practice, one was my orientation as an installation artist with a practice based on the environment, and my recent history three months previously of producing large scale public projects (*Design Week 94*) and my recent graduation from ECCAD two months before making it difficult to separate and check my artist training at the door. I was involved from the beginning of the project researching, and collaborating while adding to the conceptual development of the project. Two was the sheer involvement in tackling the vast interdisciplinary nature and information to process. And three as my connection to the place and people deepened I found that this naturally softened the boundaries of my role as Facilitator to include aspects of my artist practice. This made it hard for me to remain neutral when a disgruntled community faction joined in the process and tried to move this arts based, environmental community planning process into a larger neighbourhood community plan that didn’t exist at the time. I was located as a Facilitator within a system more familiar with traditional community development processes and this was the first pilot project. I realized only through practice
and action that the split of severing the artist skill set from a Facilitator position was impossible, and needed over the long term to be integrated and distinctly defined as an Artist/Facilitator model that acknowledges the conceptual and organizing skills of artists.

At the end of the funding for the first phase I decided to stay on the project based on a joint artistic collaboration with the Artist in Residence. This was agreed upon but the clarity and natural flow of this collaboration through day-to-day dialogues was not fully translated and subsequently understood by Park Board organizers who were not on site. This added a layer of tension to the collaboration process. The project could have ended as the seed budget had at this point, and been successful but there was a desire by the community committee and all involved to take it to the next level. This was the community based planning phase, a mapping of a 20-year sustainable vision for the lake, and additionally the production of educational materials, and artwork markers around Trout Lake. Through our combined skills with large-scale productions the Artist in Residence and I decided to continue and pursue funding to do so. The collaboration continued and produced a partnership with Environment Canada to fund the community planning and pathway phase. The dialogical nature was inherent in every facet of the project from deep environmental inquiry to personal reflections about life. I had ongoing coffee conversations with a participant about life, death, feelings
after retirement, the death of a magical someone, and of course talk about love the register of connection that was expressed in a participant created event, *A Wacky Love Affair with Trout Lake*.

The role of the artist as defined by local government in the early stages of community public art relied on categorizing artist skills as artmaking skills without the wider consideration of organizing and project development as part of the artmaking (Lacy, 1995). Art objects in the early days and even now as evidenced in a regional catalogue of community art are highly valued. The community process is hard to record. The process of interconnecting relationships, the day-to-day registers of meaning that dialogical practice employs are often as ephemeral as a leaf falling to the ground.

Ten years later my arts practice has evolved and integrates the full spectrum of my training, experiences, and critical orientation. My recent experience as *Artist in Residence* for the City of Surrey, *Greenway Art Plan* (2001–2002) integrated my work to date in community public art and brought together my ongoing interest in looking at relationships between the environment and the urban systems that impact the control and management of nature. I was working in collaboration with the Transportation Division of the Engineering Department that develops Greenways for the city. My role was to research and develop a series of project templates that would guide staff in developing
future art projects for the Greenways network. Within the Engineering Department I had access to the web of issues, methods, balances and checks that combine in decision-making philosophies unique to engineering, municipal structures, and budgets.

From the viewpoints of engineering and art we learned about each other’s disciplines and often it was a steep learning curve for us all. Multi-use pathways as greenways symbolize access and the linking of pedestrians to green space. The City of Surrey is a vast web of terrain from rural to sea to highway. Engineering concerns were not always compatible with my concerns when I realized that development translated to wild patches like the Boundary Bay route being altered and paved. Maps became the symbol of our collaborative efforts to understand a myriad of influencing factors.

We drew on existing engineering maps to create composite maps featuring many topics, population, salmon in the city and topography. The maps told a contemporary story of land and municipal intervention and they made connections visible between the social and geographic spaces that overlaid nature’s baseline. Maps are the foundation of planning, and engineering is the repository of every layer of nature being traced and marks every movement and development of the urban population and their settlement. In the role of artist in residence I researched through talking, walking, and
driving, investigating the landscape with photography and archival research. The results sketched out a number of special places and identified passion for the local environment.

The collaboration with City Staff took us all to places we had never been before in terms of finding solutions for designing the templates that would shape the art plan. During a Community Consultation Workshop special places and local stories filled out the maps and identified the corn maze, the alien site and the best berry-picking site. I became fond of the landscape and the people. I created five master templates for the Greenway Art Plan.

1. Infrastructure, Integrated Art & Design  
2. Greenway, Identity Design  
3. Place making Connections to Community  
4. Interventions & Celebrations  
5. Intersections.

My learning through practice in creating the Greenway Art Plan illuminated the layers of relationships that trace the human mark of development which shapes and grooms nature. During this Greenway Art Plan, Artist in Residence, the collaboration between the disciplines of art, and engineering, created possibilities out of difference.

One example that demonstrates the uncovering of learning through practice is the Greenway Art Plan template project, Giants The Memories of Trees, in Place making Connections to Community (Slater, 2001, p. 34). As I was
researching in the Surrey Archives I came across some photos of early residents on top of a tree. This was a giant old growth tree, I still can’t believe how big this was no, it was giant. The whole forest at Green Timbers in Surrey was once covered with these trees. I began to research more and found that not long ago, within the last 80 years, some of those trees existed. Rapid development changed the landscape and this template project is a memory to the scale of those giants as in twenty years our children will not be able to comprehend a tree was ever that grand. The template draws on making visible layers of time, the relationship between nature and culture, and the sentiment of the forgotten. The essence of collaboration is building trust in relationship of weeding out similarities and disagreeing, sometimes. Freire points to difference as bringing out the best learning (Freire & Finkelpearl, 2000, p. 290). Questioning the status quo, artists say why not? Let’s do this, why can’t this change? As someone working inside a system from the outside of a system this is sometimes about mediating and questioning the questions, and answering those connections through difference.
c. Days of Sun: How a Project Grows

*Days of Sun* (1998-1999) was created in collaboration with members of *Our Own Backyard*, community mapping project, the REACH Community Health Centre and one of their programs the Multicultural Family Centre (MFC). *The Days of Sun* was developed as a community public art project using cultural development processes. The project developed in contrast to the standard community development model based on asking for participation and input generated by attendance in a solely language based interaction that is consultative more than dialogical. Designed around the metaphor of the sun the project utilized artist strategies to address cultural barriers of language and time, and to include the visual in dialogue, food and dialogue and material based artmaking in the form of mosaics and paintings.

*Days of Sun* was interdisciplinary as it created a dialogue between art and community health, and the discourse of social work that grounds the mandate of the Multicultural Family Centre through its partnership with the UBC School of Social Work.

The final artwork included a display of paintings in the REACH Community Health Centre Windows, *A Community Celebration* on the street and permanent sidewalk markers installed in front of the REACH Centre. 1) A sun made of mosaics and bronze. 2) An image of roots in bronze and brass. 3)
An image of the world with words in English, Spanish, and Swahili, made of mosaics, and bronze. All three markers are imbedded in terra cotta coloured cement.

The three completed sidewalk panels have mosaics depicting aspects of diverse cultures, Latin American, African, and Vietnamese. All the images of people in the mosaics are people of colour, and there are words in bronze and brass in different languages, Spanish and Swahili. Each ray of the sun represents images created by diverse individuals and groups that when brought together form the whole sun. The main umbrella text on the sun mosaic reads *Days of Sun in Our Own Backyard*.

**Issues:** time, budget, social exclusion, racism, acceptance of cultural difference, appropriate ways of working with diverse cultures, reducing hierarchy through the use of community story.

**Context:** The REACH Community Health Centre, and the Multicultural Family Centre (MFC) draw on the healthy communities model that extends health determinates beyond traditional medical models, to include well being, social inclusion /exclusion, income, and connectedness as some of the many indicators of good health, and healthy communities. The REACH Centre Association (Research, Education and Action for Community Health) has a thirty year history of working in the Grandview Woodland community and
strives to in their definition of health support adaptability and social change by including health as "The extent to which an individual or group is able on one hand to realize aspirations and satisfy needs: and on the other hand to change or cope with the environment" (REACH Annual Report, 2000, p. 6). This interdisciplinary definition of health extends the frame of health to include characteristics of the discipline of social work.

History marks us for life

How we see ourselves, and others is shaped by the history we share at home and in our community.

As we share our stories we gain deeper understanding of each other. And as a community living in harmony, history then becomes an important point of reference for understanding other cultures and ideas.

Days of Sun, workshop participant

d. Beginning Dialogues

The Days of Sun aimed to link and bring together individuals and communities in the Grandview Woodland area who contribute to the neighbourhood in many ways although their visibility in public process to
date has been limited. The vitality and uniqueness of various cultures is what the “Drive” is known for yet in my experience and those of Our Own Backyard organizers very few individuals and groups representing diverse ethnic backgrounds had been participating in organized public process. This began a series of conversations about how to engage and reflect some of the diverse cultures and marginalized groups who meet, live, shop, or socialize around the Commercial Drive area. I had recently completed The Trout Lake Restoration Project (1995) that was inspired by community mapping and this was the beginning link for a dialogue that developed over a two-year period with the Coordinator of Our Own Backyard, an extensive interdisciplinary, community-mapping project of the Grandview Woodland area.

Through this dialogue a collaboration emerged and we decided to work together on a community public art project that would draw on mapping and focus on engaging participants who did not ordinarily participate in public process due to barriers we would discover in more detail as I gathered information and talked to community members. Our observations over a two to three year period of community engagement work led us to reflect on why there was a low rate of participation from the multicultural community and marginalized groups in the area. We identified that the multicultural community were not attending workshops scheduled on evenings and weekends no matter what the outreach or translation methods used. With
this in mind, I was hired as an artist to research and develop a community process and community public art project with members of the multicultural community and other marginalized community members in the Grandview Woodland area. The Kettle Friendship Centre, The Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre, and the Lesbian Mother’s Group at Eastside Family Place were mentioned by Our Own Backyard workers in addition to the Multicultural Family Centre as groups that are rarely visible and hard to get involved in public process outside their own communities.

I began an ongoing dialogue with the Multicultural Family Centre’s, Coordinator and the REACH Community Health Centre’s, Executive Director. The Multicultural Family Centre (MFC) located in the basement of the REACH Centre operates support services to the immigrant and refugee community, ranging from health promotion activities, parenting support groups, ESL conversation, youth and children’s activities, language interpretation to personal coaching and preparing for citizenship court. These support groups encourage connection and well being alleviating the stress of being isolated as a new Canadian, immigrant, refugee or as a person of colour. Through discussions with MFC it was clear that many different immigrant and refugee groups operated out of the Centre. The Latin American Senior’s Group, African Women, and Children’s group, a language ESL class, and Vietnamese Women’s group as well as other individuals who were being assisted in one
way or another. These groups were supported by MFC staff, part time cross-cultural facilitators from the Latin American, Vietnamese, and African community assigned to facilitate the in house programs directed towards the specific needs of these communities and to reduce barriers to health services for community members.

Workers from the Multicultural Family Centre observed that marginalized groups were stressed to the maximum preventing participation in activities beyond building their own community and family due to the personal demands of family, language, work, or lack of it, low incomes, immigration, refugee, and citizenship concerns.

Research continued and from informal discussions with health workers and the multicultural community, racism, displacement, and social exclusion were identified as a part of the daily lives of the immigrant and refugee population, the mental health community, and less visible community groups like the Lesbian Mothers group and first nations youth in the Grandview Woodland and Commercial Drive area. Language barriers were also a factor in maintaining social inclusion.

Other factors came up in discussions with MFC staff, questions about what is community art, and how is this going to be meaningful and connect to participants with these concerns? With this in mind the project developed
with the objective of designing engagement strategies to involve groups who might not ordinarily participate in this type of community art, and cultural development process but whose cultural roots historically integrate the arts into daily life. The project continued to develop from the ground up and drew on questions gained from the larger *Our Own Backyard* investigation such as what are people's experience of home and neighbourhood? This added to a synthesis of the many informal interactions that had encapsulated the research through dialogue to date.

From this dialogue and in conversation with the *Our Own Backyard* Coordinator we decided to expand participant groups to include The Kettle Friendship Centre, Women’s Group, and the Lesbian Mother’s Support Group who met at the Eastside Family Place in the project and to meet with the Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre. The proximity of these groups to REACH and their use of the Health Centre helped make it easier to engage these groups. (The Lesbian Mother’s Group had a very capable facilitator and this group worked independently on the art project due to the demands of having young families and this worked well for them. Their resulting artwork had a clear and strong impact.) The Kettle Friendship Centre’s focus is serving people who have a history of mental illness, providing advocacy and support groups to encourage inclusion of participants in the community. I
went on site and worked with the group and used paintings, mosaics, and photography to capture participant stories.

**e. Organizing Questions**

What are the values of home and place that you carry with you from your home country? How do you tell your story, and explain cultural differences while informing the current place you live? These were the organizing questions for the project and the basis to begin to explore, collaborate, reveal and map the experiences of participants through memory, identity, and cultural perception.

As part of my process in organizing and conceptualizing the project to engage participants I began to reflect on the Commercial Drive area and look for a common visual symbol that would transcend language barriers, something that would encourage conversation, story, song, and shared experiences. Through dialogue as research a number of themes began to surface; permanence, boundaries and transition, were some of the reflections. I made connections with the vast amount of energy and enthusiasm going on in the basement of REACH where the Multicultural Family Centre resides to the busy street above and the notion of making a connection to the street. The REACH property had an extended sidewalk on
the street in front of the Community Health Centre and this provided a place-based site to work with. The REACH Centre and the Multicultural Family Centre had become home base for my involvement in the project.

f. The Metaphor of the Sun, the Artwork and Process

Upon receiving permission from the REACH board I began to research and conceptualize an organizing concept and theme to coalesce and gather people’s feelings, ideas, and stories about their culture and to add to mapping data for the Our Own Backyard, community atlas.

I researched stories, and myths from a diverse range of cultures and found that many cultures have stories and myths about the sun. From this point I delved further into the image represented of the sun in multiple cultures and what it symbolized. When I thought of the Drive and the many cultures and food represented in this place I thought of the sun as a reflection of many global cultures. The concept developed based on using the sun as a metaphor for the world and union to form a common point between participants from varying cultures, backgrounds and languages as in an ever-changing world, the theme of the sun provides a constant metaphor: as everyday the sun rises, and the sun sets. I developed the project name
Days of Sun based on this concept and this strategy was met with enthusiasm by Our Own Backyard and MFC staff.

**g. How Did the Artwork Occur?**

We wanted to reflect the diversity and energy of the ethnic and cultural communities who contribute to the global village feel of Commercial Drive and to claim a permanent public space for reflections and stories of home and place from different cultural perspectives and to reflect these stories back to the larger community.

Working with a public space that was site specific in front of REACH gave participants an opportunity to make visible their contributions, notions, and expressions of identity from diverse worldviews in a permanent way in contrast to the impermanence of change and the transience that some community members were experiencing. The public street also became a physical symbol of connecting the vibrancy and stories of the Multicultural Family Centre located below ground to the street site above.

One of the original intentions of the Days of Sun art project was to develop with community member’s symbols to represent important aspects of community and translate those into sidewalk imprints on Commercial Drive.
The technical aspects of sidewalk imprints were researched but the process was open ended and the choice of mosaic and other materials was made in response to the series of acrylic paintings produced by participants. As the project developed through the painting workshops it became apparent that the images would be stronger and the opportunity for in depth participation and dialogue increased if the medium of mosaic was used in the artmaking.

h. Creating Connections

Two groups operating out of the Multicultural Family Centre (MFC), the African Women’s and Children’s group and the Latin American English class created and worked together for the first time in the Days of Sun workshops.

Within the MFC organization, each of Multicultural Family Centre groups (Vietnamese, Latin American, African) had their own community and culturally specific needs and activities. The groups rarely came together unless it was a holiday celebration even though they operated under the same roof. The community art project brought the groups together to complete a project that was designed to exchange cultural stories, experiences, and learn about each other’s culture, journeys to Canada, and feelings about home in Canada. We didn’t know what was going to happen but I began to spend more time at the MFC Centre.
i. Observations and Reflections

A letter from the Multicultural Family Centre (MFC) Coordinator, dated October 23, 1997 supports the development of a community public art project by Our Own Backyard and identifies that MFC participants most of whom are immigrants and refugees experience barriers to accessing community services. The letter expresses hopes that the community art project will provide immigrant participants with “an opportunity to enhance their sense of belonging with the larger community by contributing in this public display”.

A sense of belonging within a larger community of cultures is what I experienced in relationship with the community at the Multicultural Family Centre and as connection grew around The Days of Sun, I grew with it.

Reflecting on what happened I have to begin with what affected me. What was this sense of community I felt? The different cultures, languages, I made art with people who didn’t speak English our conversation was translated yet I feel I still know some of these people’s stories and they know mine. Time was an important factor, the long term immersion that Littoral practice refers to translated into my spending every week over two years at the Multicultural Family Centre with the exception of two months when I had a baby.
The choice of mosaic influenced the over time aspect as it is a medium that takes time and concentration. Cultural history also contributed to this feeling of being connected through artmaking as many of the participants had grown up with mosaics, and the other rich cultural traditions of Africa, Latin America, and Vietnam. We shared an interest in art as a cultural language and we shared stories of immigration.

My experiences were also filtered through the lens of being pregnant which had a great impact on my creating bonds with other woman and men as stories about life cycles were traded. The Multicultural Family Centre was alive with children, and women who were in arms with kids, grandmothers and pregnant women. We also were operating out of a health clinic and this context became part of the work and the development that occurred.

Cultural stories were shared about birth, tradition, and women’s stories. Men participated in the project and added to the stories about the birth of their children and their current concerns about resettling in Canada often separated from those children. When my baby was born I continued, after a cessation of the project, to arrange for unfinished mosaics to be finished and installation schedules, and budget concerns to be addressed. I brought the baby with me, and another level of relationship and exchange began with participants. Cultural stories were shared a common life passage explored
and a wealth of wisdom, history, pain and pride were talked about. When the finished sidewalk panels were installed and the community celebration began my daughter was the first presented with a flower bouquet, and she was affectionately called the *Days of Sun*, baby.

My work was to facilitate community connections through art I never understood before that this was dialogical in a formal sense as it has been a natural part of my practice to encourage dialogue. The longer time period of working with the *Days of Sun* encouraged relationships and dialogue to develop in their own time. Deep discussions about experiences of racism difference and life led to relationships developing that changed my sense of community and culture. I experienced through the process of my practice in engaging discussion and artmaking a sense of inclusion through collaboration that matched the participants.

My reflection includes the observation in practice of art as a connecting force. A powerful mark of this is the dialogue among people of quite varied backgrounds and cultures that brings the notion of storytelling into the artwork. The paintings and drawings made by participants and the subsequent mosaics are conversations, stories of home and place reflecting the aesthetics of specific culture. Designed template for sidewalk based on community drawings. The painting workshops were story workshops.
The *Roots* image for example happened within a talking circle in the afternoon workshop with the African women’s group. Dialogue revolved around home, place and identity *Days of Sun* hired an African artist to work in the workshop to translate and draw a visual image of the dialogues. The result was the root image that was later translated into a bronze sidewalk panel. The image depicts dialogue around the feeling of being uprooted in between worlds. Drawings and stories represent an intergenerational dialogue between different ages, children, teenagers, adults, and seniors of both genders.

![Roots image](image)

Photo 2  *Roots*, bronze, mosaic, 1999 (photo am slater, 1999).
Nurture your roots and you can grow to be a healthy citizen

Days of Sun, participant

Why Art? From cross cultural differences to learning abilities vs. background and life experience art connected participants in situations where meaning was collectively shared, and the exchange of life stories was translated visually in paintings and mosaic. Art seemed to open a space for dialogue and exploration in artmaking that was different from the challenges of the everyday.

The wider relationship to environment, the links between places and people leads to the notion of place as a bond between people. Even though you have and never will visit that place.

My role as an artist in this context inspired me to draw out and facilitate the combination of process and visual outcomes. The artworker in this community context of public process works to give space to other voices and visual stories. I have found that going beyond my own expectations to a neutral zone is a way of working where even the product is undetermined and changing. In terms of measurable results one Latin American participant, a retired 70 year old who created the original painting that inspired one of
the sidewalk markers, commented when seeing the completed installation, “I will be famous”, and you know I think she will be.

The approach to engaging community members was to meet them where they were, in what they were doing and in the way they liked doing things. This translated into lots of meetings with children, food, music, and laughter. In keeping with setting a creative, casual atmosphere, food, refreshments, and childcare were added to the *Days of Sun* materials budget. Food preparation was a line item in the budget and members of the community were hired to cater lunch as all of the formal meetings were scheduled to coincide or happen within existing group meeting times during the day. Music when available added to create a working studio environment in the Centre as I set a table up with mosaic supplies and as I worked people dropped in or over from participating in other events. It was fluid but not fast. The mosaic sunrays were completed piece by piece and this encouraged a continuing dialogue about life and the everyday that an art project with a specific timeline could not engage in.

**j. Weaving The Stories Together**

In my role as Artist /Facilitator I set up the initial painting workshops with participant groups during their scheduled meeting times. The *Days of Sun*
project provided participants with art making materials; acrylic paints, brushes, good quality paper, and mosaic materials for subsequent workshops.

The workshop design included a discussion of place, a history of community mapping, and visual examples that were tied to the notion of geographic and psychological place related to memory, stories, and dreams about the sun. I designed these initial sessions to begin with a group brainstorm with the objective of transferring direction of the project to participants and by having them identify themes, feelings and qualities that they experienced as being important to a healthy community. Participants discussed and focused on identity, and visibility issues relevant to their sense of a healthy community.

A series of acrylic paintings were then completed by participants in response to this initial and continuing dialogue about the qualities of home and place.

Participants of varying language abilities translated for other participants who didn’t speak English and took ownership of the project by teaching others how to prepare mosaics and help with the final sidewalk installation. Participants through the initial process did not understand the value of a community art project but as the mosaic rays were completed and gathered for installation, great pride and celebration began to well up in the community. The installed sidewalk markers complete with text derived from
the series of participant discussions has become a site that continues this dialogue.


k. Storytelling and Painting Used in Process

Participants chatted and shared experiences after I coached the initial brainstorming dialogue. Stories about relocating to a new country trying to overcome language and age barriers and the importance of values and emotions began to flow for the group over a hearty feast. Food was catered by one of the members of the African Woman and Children’s group. People
were warmed up and began, some in groups others alone to paint, almost like they were writing a letter.

The choice of acrylic paints helped participants create more spontaneous paintings and added dimension to their expressions. My role was to create a relaxed atmosphere and coach participation by offering my own storytelling, facilitating discussion and lots of encouragement.

Workshop participants of all ages from 10 to 70 responded with a great deal of freedom to the materials and produced images about their personal world, stories that reflect their specific cultural experience. I observed that the Latin American paintings for example were distinctively Latin American images of place, in color and style, as were the images that reflected African participants reflections of place. The images and responsiveness’ of Days of Sun participants to artmaking differed from my experience with other community groups were more structure, coaxing, and technical information was required with participants. I observed that the strength of visual literacy was very high in the Days of Sun participants and through many conversations and stories I concluded that culture is integrated on a daily basis not separated as recreation or for special occasions. Culture and art are celebrated in food, music, clothing, and in ritual, dance, and in celebration everyday. The arts provide connection by increasing the visibility of cultural
roots and integrating art and design in everyday expressions of life.

Expression is an imperative and community process involves cultural expression. From my experience in the Days of Sun community connection was entrenched in culture and art as food, dance, and music bring people together while embodying dialogue.

I. Visual Narratives

The painting workshops encouraged the visual discussion of place and manifested images that expressed participant’s cultural heritage. The participant’s positive reaction to the materials and encouragement of their ideas generated quite distinctive reflections about place. Often visuals referenced memories to another time and place but the qualities that indicate the health of a community were timeless and transcended not only the groups’ language barriers but also their community of interest.

The painting workshops were held over a couple of months with two or more sessions per group. Over 40 paintings were completed. The images were for the most part spontaneous and reflected the artist’s unique background, memory, and cultural viewpoint of place. The paintings have directness about them, a spirit that could be called naïve, but the images about memory
and place are much too complex in their narrative quality to locate them there.

The completed paintings formed the basis for the mosaic workshops that followed. I reviewed the paintings and selected symbols and images that would read well translated into mosaic. The objective was to create an overall storyboard that would become a permanent record of the conversations, images about place and thoughts about what qualities it takes to make a healthy community and these reflections would be read in the installed sidewalk markers outside the REACH Centre. The edited images to be made into mosaics were then copied onto paper sunray patterns. The image of the sun and rays with intermittent circles appeared in a participant painting and this formed the shell of the main sun mosaic. Each participating group was given two or three panels to mosaic over the course of several drop-in workshops that ended up being extended over a six-month period. Tiles were provided and resource people were on hand to help participants with their mosaic.

The three completed sidewalk panels use mosaic, inlaid brass, and bronze to convey the images. Bronze historically was used in the public art of statues and memorials. Using this material in the sidewalk panels connected this community public art project to the longer tradition of public art and
established community participant voices in a medium that itself symbolizes permanence and longevity. Permanent streetscape markers reflect back to the whole community, stories of home and place from diverse multicultural groups.

Photo 4.  
*Days of Sun, bronze, text, mosaic, 1999* (photo am slater, 1999).
m. Engagement Strategies

Working from an artist in residency model and immersive practice as described by the Littoral model 4 I became a part of the community. I went there, hung out, and began to develop relationships while developing the project.

I worked with the Multicultural Family Centre, Coordinator, and the cross-cultural facilitators from the Latin American, Vietnamese and African community to facilitate language translation, and participation with individuals. I attended group meetings and engaged their participation.
through storytelling, dialogue painting, and mosaic tile preparation. I worked in participant time; Food was a pivotal engagement strategy as was music, sharing time, talking, and eating. The Days of Sun project hired women from the African Women and Children's group to prepare food for the group workshop and the Latin American cooking group to prepare food for the community celebration.

Talking circles had focus questions for example: Home, what do you think is important about home, sense of community in new place.

Then we used the medium of drawing and painting to continue dialogue. Participants drew what they were talking about symbols and images from their culture, pictures of home.

Cultural animation. Designing an overall concept The Days of Sun was an engagement strategy based on research that found that every culture has sun symbols so that participants could connect their story to the project. My role was to design the sidewalk markers and edit the paintings to create the design of panels and to consult with community members. I had to keep the energy going.

Collaboration, and engagement of other artists. The Days of Sun hired a couple of young artists one to produce illustrations from group dialogue and
the other to produce a mosaic design. One of the youth who was
commissioned to work on the project was unable to complete the work due
to health problems related to a recovery program. I also collaborated with an
experienced Latin American artist who co-facilitated a painting workshop in
Spanish with the Latin American women’s group. Two other artists were hired
to provide technical assistance to the project in preparing the mosaics and
other design features and installing the sidewalk panels.

(photo am slater, 1998).

**Limitations**

The first limitation encountered was receiving 65% less of the funding we requested for the project from a community public art grant application. The initial project design in addition to a permanent streetscape installation was to generate posters from the participant paintings with a focus on cultural awareness. The poster strategy was designed to generate and influence the media and the greater community and to draw on the larger history of posters as social history. The project narrowed from this point to focus on work with a more concentrated group of participants instead of the initial
target of participants from all over Commercial Drive. The poster concept was dropped due to lack of funding and the street markers were reduced from five panels to the final three. The lack of funding for the full project concept was disappointing as this affected the education and awareness component of locating diverse cultural histories and stories in posters a popular culture format with wider access to the larger community. The design concept was to produce four posters one for each season and to produce four images of cultures and messages about home and place in text. This use of public media would have placed community health, art, and culture in a public space and created connection for Commercial Drive residents and awareness of the Days of Sun, community art project, and the larger Our Own Backyard mapping process. This reduction in the artistic and educational outreach of the project did not diminish the overall concentration of artist practice on process and building relationships and in that concentration the focus on producing artwork markers that reflected artistic excellence.

A limited budget for artist fees, materials, installation and the funding criteria for production of the artwork was a barrier to following the process in the time it required. The imposed time frame was not appropriate to working with people who were resettling, or who were operating through factors of change and instability. The process of engaging people from different cultures or people who have experienced marginalization took a lot of
intensive relationship building and time. There was a certain amount of transience inherent in the project as participants primarily new immigrants and refugees were resettling and could not keep to a rigid, scheduled timeline. Some participants left Canada and returned to their home country. It took a lot longer to engage participants in conversation with English as a second language. Since the larger goal was to make community connections and build long term working relationships the process could not be rushed. Other barriers, family obligations, employment, and language often impacted participation. In the case of the Kettle Friendship Centre the effects of medication and illness on their clients affected a low participation in Days of Sun workshops, and celebrations that were located outside of the Kettle community.

When the mosaics were completed in the fall of 1998 the next phase was to find the right people to help with the installation. A great deal of time was spent on finding the best deal on materials such as bronze, brass and the engraving of text because of a limited budget. The mosaic installation and concrete work was delayed until late April 1999 due to intense winter rain.
Through the *Days of Sun* process participants from diverse backgrounds and cultures who experience racism and marginalization have images representing their cultures, and identities occupying public space. The permanence of conveying community ideas of diverse cultures in a lasting message reflects participant feelings about place and community marked in permanent sidewalk streetscape. Community members created paintings focused on aspects of community, belonging, and shared cultural stories, and made mosaics in this process that was dialogue and relationship based. As this is a permanent work on a busy main street it is symbolic in itself that participants who have experienced racism and marginalization will have the opportunity of occupying public space, conveying cultural identity and their personal memories of place and community to the community for times to come. This continuing dialogue symbolizes through permanence the qualities of the human spirit that reside in a continuum beyond place and time.

For Britannia Community Education and *Our Own Backyard* sponsoring this project has enabled us to establish a more in-depth working relationship with the majority of these community groups. *Our Own Backyard Project* has learned ways of working more culturally appropriate to the involved groups and has established a trust that will enable us to continue to work with these community groups and individuals as we move into the next phase of the *Our Own Backyard* project.
This has been a deeply enriching experience for members of *Our Own Backyard* who worked closely with many of the participants. All participants made more community connections.

notes

1 In September of 2000, the Woodland Park Committee approached the Evergreen Foundation to seek assistance in developing a native plant garden identified as part of the Committee’s wish list. Evergreen co-hosted, with the Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre Society and the Talking Poles Community Art Project a community design workshop where the concept plan for the Native Plant Circle Garden was developed with community members, horticulturists, landscape architects, and elders from the Aboriginal Friendship Centre familiar with native plants and their healing properties. The Evergreen Foundation’s, Urban Oasis Vancouver is a project to restore local ecosystems and natural areas while making urban green spaces. Evergreen is a national non-profit organization committed to bringing communities and nature together for the benefit of both. http://www.evergreen.ca/en/cg/cg-case1.pdf

2 Our Own Backyard was a three-year community mapping project sponsored by the Urban Issues, Samuel and Saydie Bronfman, Family Foundation in partnership with Britannia Community Education, and The Institute for the Humanities at Simon Fraser University. The Our Own Backyard project undertook extensive investigations and community research with participants in the Grandview Woodland area to look at what people value in their community and what was important in their community. Participants expressed their views through art in a number of ways. Art was used extensively and work with artists included, trees in the neighbourhood, artists book, community maps in clay, paint, public maps, and visual stories on the street in mosaics. The project produced several publications, local history, oral histories, and published Journeys through the Neighbourhood Our Community Atlas: Grandview Woodland, Vancouver, 1998. Take it to the Street was a mapping initiative to access people as they shopped, and walked on Commercial Drive and surveys mapped food production, housing, the environment, and crime. The Our Own Backyard project was awarded a Heritage Vancouver Award in 1998 for the Walking Tour Book of Grandview Woodland.

3 Unpublished letter from the Coordinator, of the Multicultural Family Centre to funders supporting the Days of Sun project.

4 Immersive practice as described by Littoral.org describes the artist as becoming part of a community through long-term relationship building over time.
Karen Martin, Coordinator of Our Own Backyard refers to this intensive relationship building in her final [unpublished] Our Own Backyard report on Days of Sun, which was submitted to the City of Vancouver Public Art Program.
CHAPTER FIVE

A vision for the 21st century

What if I imagined the seamless extension of the arts in the pedagogy of the everyday what would that look like? I imagine walking into my local community centre a honeycomb of social, artistic, and cultural expressions. A centre that is a metaphor for inquiry a creative space full of colour, unevenness, with giant frogs and spiders on the wall, fountains the shape of shells, the door handles sculpted as hands. An inspiration for inquiry, a space visually demonstrating connections, a dialogical space. As I walk along I drop in to the interdisciplinary studio an unscheduled open studio where many people of all ages are talking, making, having tea. Whimsy is woven into the furniture encouraging amusement; recreational activities are viewed in a cultural context as extensions of a larger history and values. Critique is essential.

Artworkers are integrated throughout the municipal system. The arts are present in the everyday, and economic democracy for artists is finally attainable. Joy is an organizing principle. Beyond the centre, arts districts fund street level studios in neighbourhoods. Artists are valued as role models for critical imagination; collaboration with community is an honour. Individual expression and equity in collaboration are valued. difference is accepted in
practice and everyone breathes with ease. A high level of valuing interconnectedness supplements a high level of visual literacy.

What if we operated in the realm of discovery and imaginative action?

What if we viewed the world, as our arm, our leg, our eye, locating the environment as our listening ears? Visions of colourful questions, as diverse as the forest floor, interconnected by shades of difference.

What if?

My reflections on regional practice are integrated with my growing and learning about life through my art practice with community during the last 10 years. The vast landscape of experiences and stories with people fill my memory. I am able to balance theory with practice in my understanding of what I need to do in order to create an open space for dialogue and relationship. I realize that I am not a neutral practitioner, I am fair, and I am curious, and I am human, so fallible.

I am arguing for more space for artists in policy and in education.

The artist needs to be included in policy that defines arts and community. Without the artist the critical imagination, the looking upside down, turning things upside down, and expressing these explorations symbolically is unlikely to happen. Expanding space for art through community based arts
education, as a method of inquiry that helps interpret and reflect on life experience and place based issues is possible utilizing a critically based, community public artist practice. A “practice” in action that uses interdisciplinary approaches, critical thinking, and an emphasis on dialogical interconnection, and collaboration.

My vision as a narrative for future directions includes expanding the arts in education through curriculum based on modeling the inquiry inherent in critical arts practice and through interdisciplinary explorations rooted in the analytical methods of art for community members, and students from elementary to college levels.

The challenge for the future in imagining artists working with community is creating sustained support to include artists in all levels of cultural development, plans are one shade, and thinking green is another. Let’s imagine.

Future development of arts education and curriculum development is presented here in the form of a project prospectus for a local community public art project, a template creating a map for practice in action. The proposed project is local, based on utilizing theories of place, space and location in a place making context that will operate to focus the art processes of inquiry and critique. The proposal situates opportunities for cultural
development and artist collaboration with the community of an inner city school. Strathcona elementary is situated in the midst of an historic neighbourhood, with rich cultural traditions, affected by its proximity to Vancouver’s downtown eastside drug and prostitution traffic, its closeness to Chinatown and “fenced in” by major arterial networks that cut off routes to the Port of Vancouver less than five blocks away. The objective of collaborating with the school community would be to create an inquiry that would explore water routes, trade routes, social and cultural routes, road and engineering routes, and essentially create an arts based planning process to map the children’s journey to the Port as a symbol of the global in the local. In collaboration with the teaching community and students, artist’s inquiries, for example might through the lens of biology look at what affects water quality and inner harbour habitat. Cycles revealed in this process would be developed through visual solutions that might for example be manifested in public art applications in the school yard. Artist collaborations and interdisciplinary investigations would continue in Social studies Math, Art, English, and Mandarin, and small chap books of photography, maps and writing would be developed for the Strathcona Community Library located in the school.

Through art processes of inquiry and reflection a number of artmaking experiences, in addition to the chapbooks, could develop. Using the model of
place making, community bridges symbolizing access and crossing could develop. Marking different times, engagement and poetry could be mobilized by asking, what do you hear? Turn around what do you see? Students looking at municipal planning maps might identify new routes that they would claim and develop as “children’s routes”, a children’s planning process grounds the framework for learning through the art processes of inquiry, imagination, and reflection. This project map demonstrates how arts curriculum can be developed from a creative kernel, placing learning in and with the community to develop through process. By experiencing and observing location through art, children and the school community in this example may reflect themselves through created spaces that resonate the complexity of inner city ecology, both social and environmental, through contemplations as simple as wind, and water imbued in chime sculptures installed around the school. Street chimes marking place with the ephemeral sound of memory and children’s voices.

My reflection on regional practice also includes the many voices of diverse cultural experience. Community cultural development and community public art practice encourage a space for these voices to be expressed and contribute to the wider community.
The freedom to collaborate is necessary to these times as is an emphasis on action even if this action is reflected in a critical dialogue with you.

Maintaining space and developing public space for stories and voices is the task of a community public art practice. What makes for good practice with community? What makes a healthy community? The vision for the 21st Century is reflected in these words from *Days of Sun* participants.

**Liberty**

**Unity**  **Courage**  **Equality**

**Harmony**  **Strength**

**Respect**  **Peace**

amani  **unidos**
References: shades of green/the emerald ocean


References: shades of green/the emerald ocean


References: shades of green/the emerald ocean


References: shades of green/the emerald ocean


References: shades of green/the emerald ocean


References: shades of green/the emerald ocean


APPENDIX


Commissioned by the City of Surrey, Public Art Advisory Board. The Greenway Art Plan identifies five template projects that will guide municipal staff and artists in creating future public art projects for the Surrey Greenway network.

Author, and Artist in Residence: Anne Marie Slater, 2001-2002.
Appendice b. Trout Lake Restoration Project Videotape (attached)

The Trout Lake Restoration Video provides a story of the 1995 Trout Lake Restoration Project. The video was created in 2002 from video footage taken during the project with the participation of Pacifique Cinematheque's, summer training program at Templeton High School for young filmmakers.

Writer/Director: Anne Marie Slater, 2002

Produced by the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation in collaboration with Pacifique Cinematheque’s, Summer Film Institute for youth ages 14-19, Summer Visions Film Institute.
Appendice c. Project Documentation


SCHEDULE "A"

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED WORK - "The Proposal" as provided by the Artist Anne Marie Slater for the Greenway Art Plan.

The Work will be delivered to the Surrey Arts Centre located at 13750 88th Avenue, Surrey, BC V3W 3L1 Attention: Pamela McKeown

Within 30 days after the delivery of the Work, the Artist will furnish the City with the following Final Project Documentation

A. Title of the Work
B. Artists' Statement
C. Detailed Description of the Work
D. Photo Documentation of the Work
E. Artist Resume

DOCUMENTS ATTACHED

There is no Schedule "B", Schedule "C" or Schedule "D".
COMMUNITY • CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT • IN • ACTION

CULTURAL PLANNER MARLA GUPPY AND ARTIST SUZANNE LACY PROVIDED UNIQUE VIEWPOINTS AND EXAMPLES OF LINKING COMMUNITIES WITH THE ARTS AND CULTURAL PRACTICE.

THE FOLLOWING ARE TRANSCRIPT EXCERPTS FROM THE JUNE 3RD MORNING PRESENTATIONS.

MARLA GUPPY
Cultural Planner, Australia

During the morning session of June 3, many ideas, experiences and examples of community cultural development were presented by visiting experts Marla Guppy and Suzanne Lacy. Video tapes, slides and many valuable insights made for an inspiring morning. Marla Guppy spoke about specific Australian community cultural development projects such as “Pulling out the Rug” that involved older residents of a government housing block making a latch hook banner project. Another project focused on issues of community identity and documenting community life, where people worked with artists in a range of different media to map what they found important and valuable about life in an inner city suburb.

I would contend that culture is about those rituals, customs, symbols, understandings and behaviours that give a group of people a common identity. I’d also like to suggest to you that, in a sense, the position of the artist within that cultural landscape is like a continuum, and the place on that continuum is very negotiable. I think if you see the continuum at one end is the area where people are doing those kinds of things without any intervention from artists, cultural development or from cultural programs. Up the other end of the continuum we might have artists who work exclusively within galleries, whose work is not particularly reflective of the culture of community life. What we’re interested in here is the middle section of the continuum, where people, communities and artists, choose to work with each other in differing ways.

In a sense, it didn’t matter whether it was an aboriginal community, or Spanish, or whether it was a geographical community, like a public housing estate. People were always concerned with questions of community identity, they were always concerned with preserving and conserving what was unique and valuable about local environments.

Fragile communities were often very concerned with their reputation and the way they were constructed in broader culture and with being able to develop ways of describing themselves in their own terms. Often, when they asked us to work with them, they really wanted a chance to renegotiate their position in the world or the way they were seen in the world.

I think that what’s happened in Australia is that these early projects where people worked on issues of community identity and documenting community life, are being used in a very precise way to map what the components are of community life, with a view to using that information to plan for better cities.

What’s happening now, is the artist as collaborator, and the potential of artists to collaborate on broader issues seems to be what the future holds. The kinds of artists that are getting work in this area are artists who are flexible, willing to work as part of a team, who are interested in what the outcomes of their work is for the community, and who enjoy the collaborative process.

I feel that what the Parks Board of Vancouver is suggesting here is an enormous opportunity for Vancouver to get involved in some very exciting sorts of collaborative projects. To have an organization that has such a broad jurisdiction really wanting to develop a cultural development policy is fantastic. I think that now it’s time for some lateral thinking. It’s time for people to start thinking about participating in developing some cultural agendas. It’s time for people to look at the potential of collaboration in your community, who the players are, how they can work together to develop this process.

continued on back page...
4. Inventorying and Monitoring

5. Continued Community Involvement and Education Staff met with representatives of the Restoration Committee and discussed the Vision report's recommendations. A number of these are implemented. Others are in progress, while others require further study and funding prior to implementation.

Several action plan activities will be ongoing over a period of many years.

DISCUSSION

A detailed review of the recommendations, their status, those responsible for taking action and comments on their implementation is attached as Appendices A & B.

One of the major benefits, however, is the extent of Community involvement. This is in large part due to the energy, commitment and dedication of the many community volunteers and staff who have pursued this effort.

Several areas such as stream daylighting, boardwalk construction and indigenous planting will require further study and discussion and the development of cost estimates for further funding consideration. See descriptions in Appendix B.

Other program and communication strategies already have the endorsement of the broader Trout Lake groups and these efforts will continue.

CONCLUSION

In summary, many of the recommendations represent very thoughtful consideration of the options for the long-term future for Trout Lake. With a collaborative effort on the part of all parties many of the recommendations presented in the Trout Lake Restoration Community Action Plan 1995 are ongoing and will continue to result in changes and enhancements to the area.

Prepared by:

Environment and Operations Division
Board of Parks & Recreation
City of Vancouver

LM:ad
SUBJECT: TROUT LAKE RESTORATION PROJECT - TOWARDS CREATING A TWENTY YEAR VISION

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Board:

1. Approve Appendix A as a status report of recommendations that are complete, underway or where agreement in principle has been reached.

2. Consider the recommendations identified in Appendix B for approval after further feasibility studies and costing proposals have been developed.

3. Request the Trout Lake Restoration Committee in conjunction with Park Board staff to present an annual status report of these action plan.

BACKGROUND

Swimming at Trout Lake, a very popular activity, has been curtailed on a more frequent basis each year over the last several years. More than 18 months ago a group, the Trout Lake Committee, was formed to consider the problem. They found that human influence, use and development had changed the natural functioning of the lake.

In order to expand the role of the public in reviewing this problem a series of events occurred with the support of the community Cultural Development initiative. A subsequent group, the Trout Lake Restoration Committee and the Trout Lake Community Action Plan are the outcomes of this effort.

The public process involved more than 500 people who participated in a wide range of activities including:

- interpretive mapping and lake walks,
- an open house,
- the Tile Table project,
- lake inventory and walk,
- a "Wacky Love Affair with Trout Lake",
- workshops for:
  - Creating an Action Plan for the Lake
  - Connecting with Schools
  - Community Public Art Program
  - development of visual Communication materials
  - Oral history pilot project
  - Community organization structure

The Community Action Plan is a "Twenty Year Vision" and includes a number of recommendations divided into five main categories:

1. Environmentally Sensitive Area.
2. Water Quality
3. Biological Diversity