

Public Engagement in the Arts, Humanities, and Design

As defined by Julie Ellison and Tim Eatman in [*Scholarship in Public: Knowledge Creation and Tenure Policy in the Engaged University*](#):

Publicly engaged academic work is scholarly or creative activity integral to a faculty member's academic area. It encompasses different forms of making knowledge about, for, and with diverse publics and communities. Through a coherent, purposeful sequence of activities, it contributes to the public good and yields artifacts of public and intellectual value.

Examples include:

Public History of Slavery: An international symposium on the subject complemented the publication of James Oliver Horton and Lois E. Horton, eds., *Slavery and Public History: The Tough Stuff of American Memory*. Lonnie Bunch, former president of the Chicago Historical Society, director of the Smithsonian Museum of African American History and Culture, and co-editor of a publication series on the New Public Scholarship, keynoted that symposium. At Brown University, Professor James Campbell, at the instigation of President Ruth Simmons, led the Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice in a research project on the university as a "site of conscience" inseparable from its city and region, leading to the production of rich documentary and curricular resources.

Arts and Civic Dialogue: Seeking to explore "who has voice and authority in critical writing about civically engaged art," the Animating Democracy Initiative funded the participation of writers in three "arts and civic dialogue" projects, assigning three writers per project. The writers were familiar with civic engagement, community cultural development, and nonprofit arts organizations. The group included university-based scholars, such as John Kuo Wei Tchen and Renato Rosaldo, as well as nonacademic writers. The writers interacted with the creative teams during the development of the project and responded to the final production. The essays that resulted, with responses from the arts organizations and from community collaborators, have been published by ADI as *Critical Perspectives: Writings on Art and Civic Dialogue*, which has been used in a number of college classes.

Urban Design, Historic Preservation, and Community Development: *Sento at Sixth and Main* is the product of a long-term historical preservation project of the University of Washington's Preservation, Planning, and Design Program. It was co-authored by Gail Dubrow, a faculty member, and Donna Graves, a writer and planner, in collaboration with designer Karen Cheng. *Sento* documents the buildings and artifacts of the early Japanese experience in the U.S.

Teachers as Public Scholars: Sarah Robbins, at Kennesaw State University, led the Keeping and Creating American Communities Project, based at the Kennesaw Mountain Writing Project (part of the National Writing Project Network). This multi-year project, supported by the NEH, developed a theoretical and critical framework for community-engaged research and teaching. K-12 teachers became public scholars of their own regions. The teachers then developed curricular modules that enabled their students to undertake

local investigations that benefited the community. Two books—one composed of critical essays, the other of teaching models—resulted from this project.

Visual Arts: SPARC (Social and Public Art Resource Center), founded by Judy Baca in 1976, has produced highly participatory public art projects of historic dimensions, including the “Great Wall” of Los Angeles. It has generated new curricula at UCLA and Cal State Monterey Bay, as well as numerous publications and documentaries.

Theater and Visual Arts: At the forefront of a growing movement in prison arts work, the Prison Creative Arts Project (PCAP) founded at the University of Michigan in 1990, is led by Professors Buzz Alexander and Janie Paul. Through a course in the U-M Department of English, PCAP supports creative writing, theater, and visual arts workshops. Alexander’s book on PCAP is under contract with the University of Michigan Press and he is a recent recipient of the Carnegie Foundation’s Professor of the Year award. PCAP serves over thirty correctional institutions in Michigan and mounts an annual Prison Art Exhibition that is videotaped and shared with each contributing prison artist. Paul, as Director of Community Connections for the School of Art and Design, oversees the School’s new engagement requirement and curates the PCAP exhibit.

Humanities Education: The Free Minds Project in Austin is supported by the University of Texas Institute for the Humanities, Austin Community College, Skillpoint Alliance, and Foundation Communities, an affordable housing organization. Free Minds is part of the national network of Clemente Course programs offering a college-level humanities curriculum for low-income adults. Free Minds was led by doctoral student Sylvia Gale. As a result of this and other collaborations, Gale and UT professor Evan Carton co-authored “Toward the Practice of the Humanities” and launched an on-campus sabbatical program for community fellows. Gale is writing her dissertation on the history of vocational education and the humanities in the U.S. She was the first director of IA’s PAGE (Publicly Active Graduate Education) program.

Museum-Based Community History: The Harvard Center for Community Partnerships at Bates College is collaborating with Museum L-A, a museum of work and industrial community in Lewiston-Auburn, Maine. Four Bates faculty oversaw the collection of more than one hundred oral histories of millworker elders. The partnership moved on to archival historical research and exhibition development, leading to two new exhibitions: “Portraits and Voices,” a collection of photographic portraits and oral histories, and “Weaving a Millworkers’ World,” a traveling social history exhibit. Through undergraduate research opportunities, Bates students contributed to these exhibits; one went on to join the Museum L-A staff as a curator. Bates faculty and staff serve on the museum board and Exhibit Committee. Professor David Scobey has written on the implications of the project for faculty scholarly work in “Making Use of All Our Faculties: Public Scholarship and the Future of Campus Compact.”