

## BEYOND THE BUILDING: PERFORMING ARTS AND TRANSFORMING PLACE

**Question 1: Language & Framing:** What does "creative placemaking" mean to your organization? Has your organization treated or framed the issues surrounding "creative placemaking" in other terms, or in other language?

Presenter/Group Leader: Colleen Jennings-Roggensak  
Reporter: Mitch Menchaca

**In part because of the association with physical space and the built environment, ‘creative placemaking’ does not seem to have gained currency in the performing arts field. Community engagement is a more common - but not ubiquitous – frame used in the performing arts.**

AMY FITTERER: Dance/USA does not use the words “creative placemaking” frequently in our daily dialogue. However, we do use the following words: community, relevance, access, network, and infrastructure.

MARK SCORCA: ‘Increasing Civic Impact’ is a phrase that has been adopted to reflect OPERA America’s and members’ interest in building the real and perceived value of opera companies in their communities through strengthened reciprocal relationships with other arts and non-arts organizations (and the individuals they serve) that draw on opera’s creative assets in authentic ways to address public priorities.

TERESA EYRING: TCG ... developed the following definitions for ways in which theatres affect their publics and their place--and in effect, how theatres are part of the Creative Placemaking equation. Audience engagement builds opportunities for dialogue between theatres and audiences and includes a full spectrum of goals, strategies, tactics and outcomes. Community Development connects theatres and non-arts sector partners using artistic assets to build collaborative and mutually beneficial projects addressing community needs.

MITCH MENCHACA: Chorus America has adopted the goal in our most recent strategic plan “to encourage choruses to adopt strategies that lead to meaningful community engagement.”

ASHLEY SPARKS: For the Network of Ensemble Theaters (NET) it is about ‘engagement’. It is a *process* by which artists, arts orgs, and cultural bearers are a critical component in community development, civic practice, and enhance quality of life for neighbors and community (both geographically specific and shared interest specific). Placemaking is an extension of activity that is often common to ensembles.

HOWARD HERRING: The New World Center was created through a public/private partnership ... Building the educational and performance program for the new facility required us to focus on the public aspects of all our work. Assuming that placemaking is an integration of artistic expression and public service, the New World Center was a placemaking idea from the beginning.

NOAH SPIEGEL: We view “creative placemaking” as one of many efforts to remove barriers to participation. ... the developing demography of our region seems to indicate that the theatre experience itself, along with price, location and other associated barriers preclude large segments of our community from participating. Our Opera@ series attempts to break down those barriers (perceived or quantified) by removing the theatre and bringing the music directly into social and community spaces ....

**Alternative frameworks and language describing practices were offered that emphasized ways that performing artists and organization operate in a community.**

COLLEEN JENNINGS-ROGGENSACK: Our mission is Connecting Communities™, by connecting communities through the arts and ritualized cultural expressions, we utilize the principals of creative placemaking.

CARLTON TURNER: To demonstrate a culture of creativity to engage a community in a call and response dialogue to actively listen to each other, study our collective stories, develop a critical analysis our current and historic place, design and implement sensible, sustainable solutions developed by those most affected.

SARAH WILKE: We don't actively use the term "creative placemaking." It has always implied to us more to do with the physical space than programming, people or community building activities. Often we strive to figure out how to get beyond our walls and not stuck in our "place." We wonder if the philosophy around destination-building is out-dated. Instead we focus on the idea of the "experience" before, during and after the show and the lasting impact on relationships and community.

MICHAEL ROHD: ...a practice of arts-based partnership work in community with a purpose of bringing artist assets into dialogue and action around issues of place, public good, equity, coalition building, problem-solving, access and opportunity.

SANDIE ARNOLD: For YBCA, creative placemaking is centered on developing cross-sector partnerships, working with our city government, business and community-based organizations to activate places off of our campus and throughout our city, with the arts infused into and driving these collaborative efforts so we can together create opportunity in an inclusive way. When talking about creative placemaking, our conversations focus on growing our "in community" and "away" programming -- (for two growing programs --a multidisciplinary placemaking program and a commissioning program that support artists in the creation of performance works that are staged throughout our city.

MK WEGMANN: A key phrase in the current lexicon of creative placemaking is "strategic shaping" - describing the role that partners in a community play in addressing the issues confronting a town, city or neighborhood for its improvement. Many artists and arts organizations explicitly act strategically in the practice of their work for the improvement of their communities. At the National Performance Network/Visual Artists Network we frame creative placemaking from the perspective ....that artists are individuals who contribute to the place(s) where they live and work, and presenters are organizations that are embedded in communities

... creative placemaking is simply a new rubric and "funding trend" to which artists and organizations working in communities must respond in order to continue to find resources to support their work, sometimes feeling "forced" to try to build partnerships that are inherently antithetical to the communities in which they live and work. Its emphasis on economic development, the built environment and the products of art (performing or visual) in the marketplace reduce creative practice to a commodity. Roberto Bedoya's critique of creative placemaking resonates within our sector of the field.