OUT OF THE BLUE: EXPANDING THE CAPABILITIES OF ART EDUCATION

THROUGH A MOBILE ART STUDIO

By

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**Abstract**

The applied project I completed as requirement for the M.A.Ed. degree—titled *the Out of the Blue Studio*—investigates the role of socially engaged art in both the public sphere and the art education field. The art world and the art education field alike are currently undergoing many changes, opening opportunities for art educative practices to build new relationships with the art world and the public sphere. This report serves as autoethnographic evidence of a project that pushed the boundaries of the art education field, and challenged conceptions of art making through engagement of public space.

## Purpose of the Project

Many contemporary artists are currently incorporating human relationships and pedagogy as medium in their work; this is contributing to what O'Neill and Wilson (2010) call the "pedagogical turn" in contemporary art. This turn is giving rise to practices such as socially engaged art (Helguera, 2011), dialogical art (Kester, 2004), littoral art (Barber, 1998) and many other practices (for a full discussion, see Kalin, 2014). Artists are creating works of art that connect individuals and move art-making out of the galleries and into alternative spaces within the public sphere. Because the art world is changing, art educative practices, both formal (within schools) and informal (outside of schools), too are changing; the growth of these practices has caused a shift in art education's relationship to the art world (Carpenter & Tavin, 2009). Scholars in fields such as public pedagogy, socially engaged art, and art education are currently researching how these changes might progress and reform the art education field (Helguera, 2011; Kalin, 2014; McDermott, 2014).

But as Graham (2010) noted, "In the flurry of art projects, exhibitions, writings and publications on the 'pedagogical turn' of the arts in recent years, we seldom hear the voices of workers for whom art and pedagogy have been connected in practice" (para. 1). My applied project, the Out of the Blue project, is a voice to fill that void. This narrative will explore my personal practice, discussing its existence as both art and pedagogy, and conferring how it existence connected the art world, public space, and the art education field. Through autoethnographic methods, I will investigate and reflect upon the reflexive

roles of socially engaged art and art education—how and why they inform one another, and what the implications for their futures, both together and apart, may be.

**Project Overview**

Over the past few years, I began to recognize a rising popularity of communal artistic events in my community; for example, the Living Walls conference in Atlanta, the Slingshot festival in Athens, GA, a "dumpster gallery" art exhibition at the Lamar Dodd School of Art, and even the popularity of the King of Pops popsicle stand in downtown Athens. Everywhere I turned, there was a new, 'trendy', social art event happening. My friends were extremely enthused by these events, and so seemingly, was the community. This made me wonder—how can I, as an art educator, stay relevant in this local movement towards social, public events? Was there a way for art educators to engage in these practices as well? A way to bring art education into the public sphere? In order to explore these seedling research questions, I developed a project concept called *Out of the Blue.*

*Out of the Blue* is a mobile, pop-up art studio run out of a vintage, pull-behind camper (see Figure 1). The project is similar to a food truck or a popsicle stand but promotes art-making instead of food. It pops up at various public spaces, such as street corners, businesses, and local parks, and is set up for the public to use as an 'out of the blue' pop-up art studio.  The camper holds a multitude of free-to-use art supplies, and a specific collaborative art project. The goal of this project was to create an innovative public space to promote art-making, increase human connection in public, and challenge perceptions that art education belongs solely in the classroom. As I will discuss

throughout this report, the project revealed many realities about art and art-making's role



*Figure 1.* Image of trailer studio during renovation process.

in society and public space and many implications for the future of the art education field.

## Project Introduction

In May of 2014, I purchased a 1969, bright blue camper and began an eight-month renovation process to transform it into a transportable art studio (Figure 2). After completing the renovation, for the past three months (January 2015-March 2015), I have been using this camper to bring art making to the streets of Athens, GA. The trailer is transported to a specific location set up with outdoor/indoor tables, and a specific art-making endeavor for all who encounter it to stop, interrupt their daily lives, and make some artwork for free.

*Figure 2.* Interior renovation before and after.

Thus far, I have taken Out of the Blue to three different locations in Athens, GA, on three separate days. Each day, the trailer's location was spontaneously announced via social media and public encounter. Each of these days, Out of the Blue provided a specific, semi-structured project for its participants, which I titled the sketchbook project. Through the sketchbook project, participants were allowed a choice and voice in *how* they participated in the trailer's programming, further discussed in later chapters. As participants approached the trailer, they were informed about the project's purpose and invited to participate. Each time, I stated, "inside the trailer, there are various sketchbooks of all different sizes. On the inside cover of each of these sketchbooks is a prompt; some are serious, some are a bit silly. They range from 'draw or paint yourself with your left hand' to 'draw, paint or collage what racism in Athens looks like to you'. Look through each of the sketchbooks and choose the prompt you would like to respond to (see Appendix A for a full list of these prompts). Then grab whichever art materials you'd like to use, and find a spot to sit and make art!" The participants then selected a sketchbook to respond to, chose their art materials, and selected a suitable sitting spot to create their artworks.

The sketchbook project was conducted three separate times at three different locations. I selected each site specifically, purposefully varying the setting and participant demographics. At each location the participation, dialogue, and art making outcomes varied tremendously, resulting in compelling research comparisons. This applied project serves as a report of these findings. First, I will detail my inspirations for the project in order to contextualize Out of the Blue and its main goals. I will then present a literature review discussing the current conversations surrounding socially engaged art, the public sphere, and art education to contextualize my research.  Lastly, I will narrate, summarize, and critically reflect upon the three event days and their artistic and social outcomes.

**A Prior Inspiration**

Before I present the literature review, I find it imperative to detail my initial inspirations and the overarching goal of the Out of the Blue project. On a day in December of 2011, my friends and I were enjoying a normal, warm December afternoon in downtown Athens, Georgia, ambling without a cause. Early in the afternoon, we encountered a street performer named Dotan Negrin. Dotan was traveling across America solely on tip-money, setting up a piano on street corners to play music for the public, and creating a campaign he called "Piano Across America". My friends and I talked with Dotan for a while, asking him about his experiences with the project thus far; eventually, we began to participate and play music with him. One of my friends went home to retrieve her violin, and we made a day of it. The rest of our afternoon was spent playing music and singing with Dotan and his piano (Figure 3).



*Figure 3.* Photograph of my friends with Dotan and pop-up piano.

This was such a strange, yet powerful day. What my friends and I felt during those hours is truly unrepresentable in text. We had never experienced something like that before—an encounter of strangers producing a random, artistic event in public. We could not get over how powerful the experience was. We spoke together about how it changed our views of public space and music. Meeting Dotan had somehow made downtown Athens seem opportune for meeting new people and perfect for active, fun, and creative activities. This day truly motivated each of us to become more spontaneous and more activated in our own city; it encouraged each of us to interact with public places and strangers in a more engaged, intentional way.

Felix Guattari describes this phenomenon beautifully in his book *Chaosmosis*. He states, "patently, art does not have a monopoly on creation, but it takes its capacity to invent mutant coordinates to extremes: it engenders unprecedented, unforeseen and unthinkable qualities of being" (Guattari, 1995, p. 106). Our performance with Dotan was instigated by music, by stumbling upon a mutant coordinate. By simply acting on this encounter, we built a new experience and all felt a "new way of being". There was something truly special about the way Dotan interrupted our lives that day. He did not demand us to participate but simply suggested that we take a moment out of our days to share a collective, artful experience. It truly engendered an "unprecedented, unforeseen and unthinkable quality of being" within all of us (Guattari, 1995, p. 106).

Participating in this musical performance was the first of many personal experiences to come that would build my interest in art and the 'public sphere'. As I learned more about socially engaged art and social practice, I became enthralled by art's ability to create collective experiences in public—its ability to serve as a fleeting meeting

point, to keep experiences new, and in revolution. I became obsessed with projects such as JR's Inside-Out project, Atlanta's Living Walls conference, and Pow Wow Hawaii, constantly reflecting upon these projects' effects on their participants and the art world as a whole.

I realize now that the core of my interest in these topics was my fixation with Dotan and his piano. I was determined to find a way to create experiences like mine with Dotan for others. I became fixated with finding a way to do this through my own passion of art making. I wanted to build a social art practice of my own—to build upon my new understanding of living spontaneously and collectively through social art practice, and, with a bit of luck, to be able to provide this motivation for others.

Over the past year, I have been granted a $2,500 project scholarship, run a $5,700 Kickstarter campaign, bought and renovated a vintage trailer, and facilitated a mobile art studio for the public of Athens, Georgia. Based on these results, I feel that I have scratched the surface of fulfilling this duty. I was able to build experiences for residents of Athens that, from my perspective, provided them an experience comparable to mine with Dotan, an experience that may have in various ways provided "unthinkable qualities of being" (Guattari, 1995, p. 106). I was able to throw the project's participants out of their daily routines, to jostle their standard public existence through the means of art and art making. I was able to make them think about their surroundings and how they spend their days. Lastly, I was able to push the envelope of my (and hopefully others) perception of art and art educative practices.

## Literature Review

The notion that I described in the preceding section—art's potentials for building innovative and/or educational experiences in collective, public environments— is one that is discussed and analyzed by scholars in many different fields, who define them as many different theories and "catch-phrases" (Bishop, 2006, p. 179). The effects of art and social practice on the public sphere and educational field are conferred in widespread disciplines such as geography, sociology, and art education and are devised into subtopics such as public art, aesthetic theory, public pedagogy, and social practice. In order to understand how Out of the Blue fit within research of the public sphere and the art education field, I reviewed literature containing the following topics: socially engaged art, relational aesthetics, public pedagogy, and surrounding sub-topics. By exploring these ideas through literature, I have gained new understandings about the ethics, theories, and impact of social art practices, and the effects they may have on contemporary art, the public sphere, and art education.

This literature review will survey and define these understandings in attempt to map my scholarly journey previous to, and throughout my engagement with, the Out of the Blue Project. I will first define and discuss the many scholarly "catch-phrases" I consider applicable to the project (Bishop, 2006). Secondly, I will analyze the implications of social practices on the public sphere—what scholars hope they can "do" for the progression of public space and public learning. Lastly, I will discuss the ways in which the "pedagogical turn" in art has affected the art world and art education, and explore how social art practice may inform and negotiate art's current role in society and in art education (Kalin, 2014).

**Defining Relevant Theories and Practices**

Many scholars acknowledge the "umbrella" term for practices like Out of the Blue as "social practice art" (Lind, 2012; Thompson, 2012). Within social practice art, there are various "catch-phrases" such as "socially engaged art, community-based art, experimental communities, dialogic art, littoral art, participatory, interventionist, research-based, or collaborative art" (Bishop, 2006, p. 179). Of this vast realm of "catch-phrases," the specific theories I found to be most relevant to the Out of the Blue project were relational aesthetics, socially engaged art, and public pedagogy. In the following paragraphs, I will define and discuss these three topics, and briefly discuss how they inform and relate to the Out of the Blue project.

Relational aesthetics, identified by Nicolas Bourriaud (1998), refers to artworks that involve methods of social exchange, and interactivity with the viewer as a way to link individuals and human groups together. Bourraiud explains that relational practices, or art that involves human interaction, are being contemporarily called upon to open up human communication, bond, and the social contact that our society is now lacking (Bourriaud, 1998). He states that it is now art's role to focus on the "sphere of human relationships" rather than "forming imaginary spaces," to present "ways of living and models of action within real life" (Bourriaud, 1998, p. 13). Bourriaud calls upon art making to contrast the structures of everyday life, and encourage an "inter-human commerce that differs from the communication zones around us" (Bourriaud, 1998, p. 16).

This was precisely my goal for Out of the Blue. I aimed to create a work of art, or an art practice, that would create a space in contrast with the spaces and occurrences

around it, an arena that would open up pathways for human communication, and focus on building human relationships through public art making. Bourriaud's theory helped me to understand, though at times idealistically, the overarching goal of Out of the Blue—the goal to construct a concrete space for inter-subjectivity to occur and serve as a "departure point where alternative forms of sociability, critical models and moments of constructed conviviality are worked out" (Bourriaud, 1998, p. 44). I would, first and foremost, provide the space as a catalyst—a "departure point"—for human intersubjectivity to occur, "giving rise to other relations, and so on and so forth, ad infinitum" (Bourriaud, 1998, p. 22).

After gaining a theoretical, somewhat idealistic basis for the project's main goal, my next literary inquiry brought logistical and ethical light to the project. While reading Helguera's book, *Education for Socially Engaged Art* (2011), I came to conclusions regarding the ethical, political, and logistical issues I would face with Out of the Blue. Helguera (2011) defines socially engaged art as "art that depends on social intercourse as a factor of its existence" (p. 2); a "hybrid, multi-disciplinary activity that exists somewhere between art and non-art, in a state of limbo that may be permanently unresolved" (Helguerra, 2011, p. 8). It is a practice of art that involves people as its main medium.

Socially engaged artworks, at times, ambiguously present themselves as public/private, and non-art/art, creating confusion for the viewers and participants. Helguera (2011) argues that this fact is what holds potential for these projects. He explains that this ambiguity allows the artist, or the educator, to temporarily snatch away "subjects into the realm of art-making" and "brings new insights to a particular problem or

condition and in turn make it visible to other disciplines" (p. 5). This theory answered a

troubling question for me—was Out of the Blue art or education? Did it need to have a

category? In Helguera's mind, the answer is neither, and no, socially engaged art can exist

as a permanently unresolved hybrid. By existing ambiguously, participants may be more

interested, and potentially bring to light new insights—both social, and personal— for its

participants (Helguera, 2011).

Helguera (2011) explains that there are five pertinent categories of socially

engaged art projects: the construction of community or temporary social group through

collective experience, the construction of multi-layered participatory structures, the role of

social media in the construction of community, the role of time, and assumptions about the

audience (Helguera, 2011, p. 9). Each of these factors proved to be extremely important in

the planning and execution of Out of the Blue. The most compelling and relevant to my

project of these discussions was considering "assumptions about the audience."

Coupled with reading Friere's (2000) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed,* I was able to

better understand my interactions with and the ethical relations between myself the

project's participants. Helguera (2011) addresses that it is impossible to not conceive a

specific audience for your work; a socially engaged artist, no matter how diverse he/she

intends the projects' audience to be, will always assume their audience demographic based

on the chosen location. He argues that artists must understand the context and social

dynamics surrounding their socially engaged work in each of these locations; if not, the

project can unfold in a negative way when the artist is not prepared to deal with

interpersonal scenarios or if the community does not want to receive the project. In other

words, as a socially engaged artist, you must be ethically aware of your audience's needs

and their reception or interest in your artistic goals. If not, your project can fail and exist unethically. In the words of Freire (2000), "attempting to liberate the oppressed without their reflective participation in the act of liberation is to treat them as objects which must be saved from a burning building: it is to lead them into masses which can be manipulated" (p. 65). Like "emancipators", socially engaged artists must first gain the interest and trust of the participants, without manipulation, before undergoing the project. This notion helped me to perceive my project with caution. I would be "choosing" my audience, based on where I decided to bring the trailer. If I was not careful, as I will further discuss in the section on J and J Flea Market, the project could be perceived as oppressive and completely unsuccessful.

Understanding socially engaged art practice, and reading Helguera's text helped tremendously in my understandings of logistic and ethical sensibility. Reading *Education for Socially Engaged Art* also reiterated and contemporized my previously fathomed goal—to provide a departure point, or a catalyst for human intersubjectivity—or as Helguera states, to seek "more convivial environments of conversation, encouraging participants to give, and, hopefully arrive at interesting exchanges" (Helguera, 2011, p. 43).

Near the end of his text, Helguera describes a pedagogical element of socially engaged art he defines as "transpedagogy," or "projects by artists and collectives that blend educational processes and art-making in works that offer an experience that is clearly different from conventional art academies or formal education" (p. 77). Though defining the pedagogical element of these projects was helpful, Helguera (2011) did not fully explore the pedagogical aspects of socially engaged art; this spiked curiosities

regarding the pedagogical elements of Out of the Blue. I concluded that Out of the Blue fit the bill as a socially engaged art practice. However, as an art educator committed to teaching and spreading my love of art, I wanted to examine the pedagogical elements of the project. Was Out of the Blue going to teach anything? Is the project considered pedagogical? In an attempt to answer this question, I moved on to research the topic of public pedagogy.

Public pedagogy is defined by Burdick, Sandlin, and Schultz (2010) as research that explores "the ways that identities and social formations develop in the public sphere;" and additionally, seeks to explain how these formations relate to educational research and practice as a whole (p. 3). Public pedagogy calls for an interdisciplinary approach towards pedagogical research and educational theory and seeks to inhabit and combine the often "ambiguous spaces of pedagogical address" (Burdick, et al, 2010, p. 3). It serves the purpose of linking all ways that we learn in the public sphere and combining them into one innovative, interdisciplinary research field.

Leading scholars of public pedagogy acknowledge that its current basis as a field is vastly theoretical. Scholars speak often about public pedagogy's potentials, but lack investigative evidence or reflection of how these sites actually operate as pedagogy (Burdick, Sandlin, O'Malley, 2010; O'Malley, Burdick & Sandlin, 2014; Savage, 2010). It is often critiqued for its lack of empirical research (Savage, 2010). Beer, Bickel, Grauer, Irwin, Springgay, and Triggs (2010) explain that this is largely because "public pedagogy is plagued by the same problem that John Rajchman (2000) sees as art's problem. Public pedagogy's problem and ongoing experiment is "to create arrangements in space and time in which we relate to ourselves and one another in a manner not already subordinated to

identity or identification, imaginary or symbolic" (p. 82). In other words, public pedagogy

is as an idea, compelling, but in research, it is difficult to represent because it seeks to

record a type of pedagogy that is novel and ephemeral.

Ellsworth (2005) explains that this is because public pedagogy "resides in the

complex interplay between space and time and the relations between bodies and

knowledge" (p. 9). Public pedagogy is not recorded through periodic written tests, or

teacher feedback. Rather, it exists between bodies, between space and time (Ellsworth,

2005), and is largely symbolic (Beer et al., 2010). As Slattery explains (2010), "public

pedagogy, as a field, exists to contextualize public projects as post-modern, post-structural

forms of pedagogy in the public sphere, and to release the imagination of its pedagogues"

(Slattery, 2010, p. 37). The field grants scholars the opportunity to find pedagogy within

our daily lives in a post-modern, creative form (Slattery, 2010). It creates possibilities for

pedagogy whose center is not "not an academic, teacher, student, public, counter public,

or a work of art" but instead something we cannot yet see; pedagogy that is still

"indeterminate, and underway" (Beer et al, 2010, p. 302).

Regardless of the 'airy', 'indeterminate' quality, public pedagogical research

helped me to understand the pedagogical nature of Out of the Blue. It became apparent to

me that the pedagogical elements of the project would forever reside "between bodies,"

(Ellsworth, 2005) and that the only pedagogical elements I would ever fully understand

were those between my own body and another persons'. I could theorize about the ways in

which participants learned from the project outside of my earshot, whether they learned

something about a certain art medium or gained something meaningful in conversation

with another participant. This conclusion of pedagogy would only be theory; the pedagogy

itself can only exist between the bodies that experienced it. I could only prove the pedagogical occurrences that I was personally a part of.

The pedagogical moments of the Out of the Blue project are largely imaginary, symbolic, and indeterminate. Regardless of their ephemeral, symbolic nature, in my opinion, there were many meaningful moments of pedagogy throughout the projects' programming, as I will discuss in later chapters. Ideas pulled from public pedagogical literature will permeate the remainder of this applied project.

**What scholars hope these practices can do for the public sphere**

Relational aesthetics, socially engaged art, and public pedagogy provided me a foundational, theoretical understanding of the Out of the Blue project. As I moved forward in my literary research, I became interested in scholars' perceptions of how social practices affect the public sphere. This section will discuss contemporary research surrounding what socially engaged art can do for the public sphere. It will analyze the common aims, goals, and potentials of these practices in altering the public sphere and relate them to the outcomes of the Out of the Blue project.

The first common theme I found, which Bourriaud (1998) and Helguera (2011) speak to, but many other scholars expand upon further, is social practice's ability to bring people together and increase human connectivity in public (Becker, 2012; Bengsten, 2013; Biesta, 2012; McDermott, 2014; Richardson, 2010), taking steps, however small, to repair "the social bond" (Bishop, 2012a, p. 35). Many scholars feel as through capitalism has estranged humans from engaging together in public spaces (Bishop, 2006; Langman,

2003). They believe that because of this, artists are gravitating towards creating what they feel capitalism has destroyed; they are making art that encourages public discourse and human relationships (Becker, 2012, p. 67). As Thompson states,

> Perhaps in reaction to the steady state of mediated two-dimensional cultural production, or a reaction to the alienating effects of spectacle, artists, activists, citizens, and advertisers alike are rushing headlong into methods of working that allow genuine interpersonal human relationships to develop. The call for art into life at this particular moment in history implies both an urgency to matter as well as a privileging of the lived experience. These are two different things, but within much of this work, they are blended together. (Thompson, 2012, p. 21)

Allowing genuine human interaction to occur (in a public sphere that is becoming exponentially alienating) is a common theme and ideal between scholars of social practice. Many believe that public space can be tested (Biesta, 2012), interrupted (Richardson, 2010), and reinvigorated through artistic practices (Bishop, 2006). In order to counter this current alienation of public space, many scholars speak about the role of "interruption" as a key method of social practices, explaining that to change the course of mundane, or non-existent human interaction, there must be a catalyst or an interruption (Biesta, 2012; Richardson, 2010). Bourriaud (1998) describes this practice through scientific ideas; he states, "when an atom swerves off course, it causes an encounter with the next atom and from encounter to encounter" causing a "deviation and random encounter between two

hitherto parallel elements" (p. 19). These off-beat encounters shake conventional

certainties and open up pathways for something new to occur (Greene, 1984, p. 131).

Many scholars define and theorize specific types of 'interruptions'. Biesta (2012)

explains that by performing a socially engaged art practice in a particular place, we may

test a spot's "concern for publicness." Illeris (2013) describes a type of collaborative,

experiential interruption she deems "performative experimental communities" (p. 79).

Richardson (2010) describes a practice he calls "interventionist art education" as a social

art practice that provokes social dialogue and collaboration and produces an art form that

can "function as the basis for intellectual investigation into the social environment"

(Richardson, 2010, p. 20). Interrupting the "norm" of the public arena is a strong, common

theme throughout these literatures.

Human connectivity and interruption were two themes that strongly presented

themselves through Out of the Blue's programming. The project brought people together

who would not have otherwise been in contact. On each programming day, it certainly

interrupted the status quo of that space, and tested the potentials of that area and its

peoples' willingness for human connectivity.  Wherever the trailer was taken, something

new occurred. It interrupted what would have been. It connected strangers, if only for a

brief moment, and tested public spaces' potentials and capacities.

The success of these interruptions, many scholars argue, is often due to the

embrace of risk taking or enduring uncomfortableness (Burdick and Sandlin, 2010;

Burdick, O'Malley, Sandlin, 2014). Setting up the trailer and encountering the public was

sometimes uncomfortable and confusing for both patrons and I, alike. When patrons did

not participate, or this uncomfortableness was overwhelming, the project often felt like a

failure, but each time, these feelings of uncomfortableness or failure opened up an opportunity for something not yet experienced and for learning to take place. As Burdick and Sandlin (2010) argue, "once someone is uncomfortable, critical learning can take place" (p. 355).

Borrowing from ancient Greek philosophy, Burdick, O'Malley and Sandlin (2014) speak of these uncomfortable moments as aporias, "moments of doubt, confusion, loss, or discomfort associated with not knowing," as conditions of true possibility (p. 3). These moments are also spoken to in feminist literature as "reflexivities of discomfort" (Pillow, 2003, p. 187) and by Ranciere (2010) as "dissensus". As Maxine Greene states, "that, really, is the point: to awaken persons to a sense of present-ness…without such experiences, we are all caught in conventional (often officially defined) constructs in such a fashion that we confused what we have been taught to see with the necessary and unalterable" (Greene, 1984, p. 132). Interruption and uncomfortablness allowed Out of the Blue to alter the public spaces it encompassed. It increased human connectivity in that area, even if only for a fleeting, ephemeral moment.

**Socially Engaged Art and Art Education**

Thus far, this literature review has described the "catch-phrases" relevant to Out of the Blue, and synthesized how contemporary scholars believe these practices may alter the public sphere. Here, I will connect these ideas to the art world and art education by addressing Out of the Blue's relationship to both, and discussing contemporary literature surrounding contemporary art, art education, and the "pedagogical turn" (O'Neill & Wilson, 2010). Socially engaged art is a growing research field that has a strong

connection both to the art world and the public sphere, but what about art education? How

is the art education field affected by this growth, and what is the field's role in progressing

or teaching socially engaged art? How do socially-engaged projects such as Out of the

Blue, exist between the art world, the public sphere, and art education?

      To discuss this, it is important to first address a trend in contemporary art, what

scholars deem as the "pedagogical turn." The "pedagogical turn" refers to the new use of

educational formats, methods, processes, and terms in contemporary art practice (O'Neill

& Wilson, 2010, p. 183). Similar to social practice's potentials within the public arena, the

pedagogical turn in contemporary art appears to "promise openness, genuine engagement

and a breaking down of boundaries" (Kenning, 2012).  It marks a "surge of interest in

examining the relationship between art and pedagogy", and in cases, uses pedagogy as a

method and form of art (Bishop, 2012b). Many scholars recognize contemporary artists'

desire to make 'pedagogical art' as a backlash and criticism of capitalism within the art

field; that by creating art involving people and human relationships, we may connect what

has been lost in society by capitalism (Bishop, 2012a; Mouffe, 2007; Thompson, 2012).

      This pedagogical shift in contemporary art has by effect shifted the alignment of

art education and the art world (Carpenter & Tavin, 2009). Bishop (2012b) and Kalin

(2014) argue that this change may allow art and education to reinvent and inform one

another. The point of pedagogical art projects, Atkinson (2012) explains, is to "reconsider

sites of learning... and ask how these sites might be expanded to involve new forms of learning, discussion and debate and so, we might deduce, new forms of competence and new economies of knowledge" (p. 7). This pedagogical turn has challenged what it means to learn, to be pedagogical, and to be a work of art. It is time that art education and the art "world" acknowledge each other through this newly opened connection.

Kalin (2014) views the pedagogical turn as a prime opportunity for art educators to reflect upon the current state of the art education field. She explains that education-as-art projects, or projects that operate with a direct aim of pedagogy, "reveal contradictions and exclusions within the constellation of education, art, and politics" and that this should be acknowledged and critiqued by art educators (p. 190). She explains that by understanding and evaluating these paradoxes, we might be able to "inform and awaken" the art education field (Kalin, 2014).

The first of these paradoxes to acknowledge is the disposition of art activism. Kalin (2014) and Charnley (2011) note that by nature, education-as-art projects, or socially engaged art projects with a critical aim, can become somewhat contradictory. Ranciere (2010) and Charnley (2011) explain that because these projects must proclaim themselves as "art," they are inscribing themselves to an institution that created these structures in the first place, causing the projects to play a "double game" by nature (Charnley, 2011). In addition to existing under the institutional structure, these projects also cannot avoid the capitalistic structures they attempt to critique (Mouffe, 2007). This was certainly the case for Out of the Blue—no matter how hard I tried, I could not evade the private sector. I still felt as though, at times, I was burdened by the structure of the art world or capitalism as a whole. As I will further discuss in later chapters, it seemed nearly

impossible to find a location, with steady foot traffic, that evaded private ownership; the

majority of property in Athens, Georgia is privately owned, and there are very few

spacious, public meeting spaces. As Kalin (2014) explains, I could not escape art's

"capitalistic institutionality;" the spaces I could take the trailer were extremely limited due

to the overwhelming amount of private ownership of property in the city.

Because of this, the areas I could take the project were restricted to wherever I was

welcomed by the property owners. Scholars argue that limitations such as this issue can

force the projects to sidestep their critical aims, becoming a "watered down version of

social critique" (Bourraiud, 1998, p. 82). The projects may become purely "edu-taining"

and lack true critique of issues associated with institutionalized education places (Kalin,

2014, p. 195). Contrarily, for those who decide to act fervently against these structures,

those artists run the risk of becoming 'unethically activist.' If the artist too eagerly

attempts to emancipate its participants and assumes that by nature they are lacking

understanding, a notion Friere (2000) calls the "banking model of education," the project

reaches the other side of the spectrum; it becomes ineffectively activist.

So where does this leave the role of these projects? If they are critiqued for

edutainment value (Bishop, 2006) and contrarily for being the current avant-garde (Kester,

2004), how do the projects strike a balance between the two? Is this paradox indicative of

current issues in the art education field as a whole?

Kester (2004) and Charnley (2011) argue that the answer, the midpoint between

"avant-garde" and "edutainment," for socially engaged art projects is dialogue. Charnley

(2011) explains that in order to sidestep the "authority" inscribed to the artist, but to still

have critical effect, pedagogical projects must commit to invoking open dialogue

(Charnley, 2011, p. 48). Helguera briefly addresses this sentiment, stating, "conversation is conveniently placed between pedagogy and art" (Helguera, 2011, p. 42). Is the dialogue these practices produce what really matters?

Though the objects existing within Out of the Blue—the trailer, the art supplies, and the art work created—did play a large part in producing the experience, it seems as though the dialogue "between bodies" held just as much lasting effect on its participants as the physical project did. The conversations—those had while explaining the project to patrons, those overheard on site between participants and passerbys—played a huge role in construction of the project. In this sense, Out of the Blue became what Kester (2004) refers to as dialogical art. Kester (2004) defines dialogical art, or dialogical aesthetics, as art that replaces the 'banking' style of art interpretation with a process, rather than product-based, dialogical encounter between people. Dialogical art uses conversation to "imagine beyond the limits of fixed identities, official discourse, and the perceived inevitability of partisan political conflict (Kester, 2004, p. 8). This practice is, at its root, an ethical practice of engagement with the "other" (Charnley, 2011, p. 39). As the artist engages with his or her audience through mutual dialogical exchange, the dialogue then becomes the art, and the artist ethically engages with those participating in it. Charnley (2011) adds to this sentiment, explaining that

> There is always a temptation to extend this consensus: to educate participants in collaborative art to accept its fundamental claims. This is a necessary part of collaborative practice, but it can easily override the critical perspective that is the greatest asset of the uninitiated. To listen then is to find a way outside of this consensus, and to carry a suspicion and discontent within it…and although it

seems contradictory it may be that dissensus is best served by listening, as long as

listening does not always mean agreement. (p. 52)

In Charley's (2011) eyes, getting the most out of these artistic exchanges may lay

in our ability to exchange dialogue, and more specifically, to *listen.* During my dialogical

exchanges held through Out of the Blue, I found this sentiment to be extremely true.

Though I had many plans to debunk everyone's ideas of art and art education through this

undertaking, as I will explain further in the coming chapters, the project first and foremost

taught me instead to *listen;* to engage in dialogue, and to understand this as an artistic

practice.

Though each of the paradoxical aspects of socially engaged art, or education-as-art

practices—to be an activist, to be entertaining, to be art, to be dialogue—are each

critiqued in some shape or fashion, I personally see potential in finding a balance between

all of them. To be activist, but to listen; to be art and non-art. To rearrange fixed

understandings, but create entertainment, or 'feel-good' experiences.  During Out of the

Blue's programming, I concluded that there were various beneficial points along this

spectrum. As I will discuss in further chapters, I found that the Out of the Blue's ability to

adapt at each location between each participant, to each of these aspects contingent upon

the circumstance was possibly the most compelling aspect of the project.

Kalin (2014) argues that these paradoxical elements not only shine light on

socially engaged art and the art world, but should also shine light on issues and practices

within formal art education today.  She explains that rather than ignoring education's

problems and providing "edutainment," or contrarily, attacking them headstrong, being

overtly "activist," educators must strike a balance somewhere in between by invoking "antagonistic disturbances". She states,

> Rather than stultifying students toward preset ends, we might mobilize disagreement in learning and facilitate a space for differences to be confronted. In place of ignoring tensions in learning, these disruptions could be confronted as sites of unpredictable potentiality. What's more, antagonistic disturbance might be integrated into art education as a necessary operation of the educational process itself. (p. 196)

As educators, or politically active artists, Kalin (2014) argues that is our role to disrupt, to confront, and instigate, to "awaken persons to a sense of presentness, to a critical consciousness of what is ordinarily obscured" (Greene, 1984, p. 132). It is not to be edutainers, or protestors. It is our role as educators to be "antagonistic disturbances" (Kalin, 2014), to create uncomfortable aporias (Burdick, Sandlin & Schultz, 2010), to become interventionists (Richardson, 2010), by interrupting the lives of students, and public citizens, alike. Kalin (2014) argues that by creating 'disturbances' such as education-as-art projects in the art education field, we may ponder the overlaps and incongruities that exist between the art world and art education, and "awaken the art education field from neutrality" (p. 200). In other words, as the art world becomes more pedagogical, art education gains a new pathway connecting to the art world. As art educators, we must respond to this new passageway, ponder its paradoxes, and consider this passage as a possibility of art and art education changing and reinventing one another (Kalin, 2014).

After reading Kalin's article and considering her call upon art and art education to "reinvent" one another, I began to view Out of the Blue in an entirely new light. Throughout this project, I considered myself both an artist and an art educator. The project was neither purely a work of art, nor a purely pedagogical act. When I taught a patron how to use a fountain pen, the programming felt like an act of pedagogy. When speaking with patrons about the project, the project felt like dialogical art. However, when I took a step back and viewed the project from afar, it felt like a tangible, object-based work of art. Out of the Blue was in constant oscillation between art and pedagogy, between public space and the art education field, between the art world and art education. I was proud of this ambiguity; each time someone asked, "What is this? Why are you doing this?" I felt a sense of pride. I truly feel as though the project became an ambiguous, antagonistic disturbance between the art world and art education and that its existence within these paradoxes was one of the most exciting aspects of the project.

When I began Out of the Blue, I simply wanted to test the boundaries of art education. I was tired of feeling confined to the classroom and confined to curriculum. I was intrigued by the 'trend' of artful experiences in public spaces and simply wanted to play along. What I have learned through this process, though, is that socially engaged art, and education-as-art hold much more potential than simply being a 'trend'. They are merging the worlds of art and art education, and in my opinion, it is time that art educators respond to this linkage and take advantage of the opportunity to rearrange the boundaries, and capabilities of, art education.

Throughout this literature review, I have contextualized Out of the Blue, discussed social practices' potentials for altering the public sphere, and lastly, expressed the

changing relationship of the art and art education fields. For the remainder of this report, I will discuss the Out of the Blue project as evidence of these ideas. This applied project serves as evidence that art education can permeate and affect the public sphere, that social practice can create new connections between the art world and art education, and lastly, that a simple, vintage trailer can open up conceptions and perceptions of both the former and the latter.

### The Trailer Renovation as Artistic Practice

Before chronicling the trailer's programming events, I feel it is important to narrate the renovation, and portray the planning process as foundation for the project's outcomes. Eight of the ten months of this project's duration were spent planning, promoting, fundraising, and renovating. Throughout the planning period, I was forced to make many design, artistic, and logistical decisions that would shape and form Out of the Blue's future programming. I learned so much through this process. I learned about construction. I learned about craftsmanship, and about color. I became a graphic designer, a painter, and a woodworker. I learned how to budget, how to lay a floor, and how to crowd fund. The renovation and planning process, though it may not serve as 'compelling research', became one of the most amazing experiences of my life thus far. It tested my patience, my relationships, and my confidence. And I find it to be a very important part of the Out of the Blue project, both as artistic practice and as a life experience.

In May of 2014, I found an ad on Craigslist from a man near the Atlanta airport who

*Figure 4*. Day of trailer purchase.

renovated and sold vintage trailers. I decided to pay him a visit. He had over ten trailers in his lot, all at different stages of renovation. Within minutes, I spotted an odd-shaped trailer in the corner of his lot (see Figure 4). It was a shape and size I had never seen before. It was unique, and quirky. It was perfect. I purchased the trailer for $600 that day, and my dad and I towed it back to my parents' Atlanta home.

The trailer was dinged, chipped, battered, tarred, molded, and completely unusable. The entirety of the interior was water damaged (see Figure 5). The floors were rotted out, the tires were almost flat, and the exterior was full of tarred-shut holes. Luckily, my father had extensive renovation experience and selflessly committed to helping me complete this project. Unknowingly, that day he committed himself to eight months of construction work. I am forever in debt to my family for the amount of work they put into this project; without them I could never have completed, or even begun, this renovation.

*Figure 5.* Interior of trailer prior to renovation.

Purchasing this trailer was only possible due to a generous scholarship I received from Lamar Dodd School of Art—the Tom Hollingsworth Graduate Scholarship. I applied for this scholarship months previous, and received $2,500 towards completing the project from the generous donors, Tom and Carole Hollingsworth. A couple of months into the renovation process, I found myself knee-deep in construction costs. I quickly realized I would need more funding. Friends, family, and strangers had been so supportive of the project up to this point that I decided to start Kickstarter crowd funding campaign to supplement the scholarship funds.

I made a promotion video, created a website, and opened a Kickstarter account, setting my fundraising goal at $5,000 (see Figure 6).
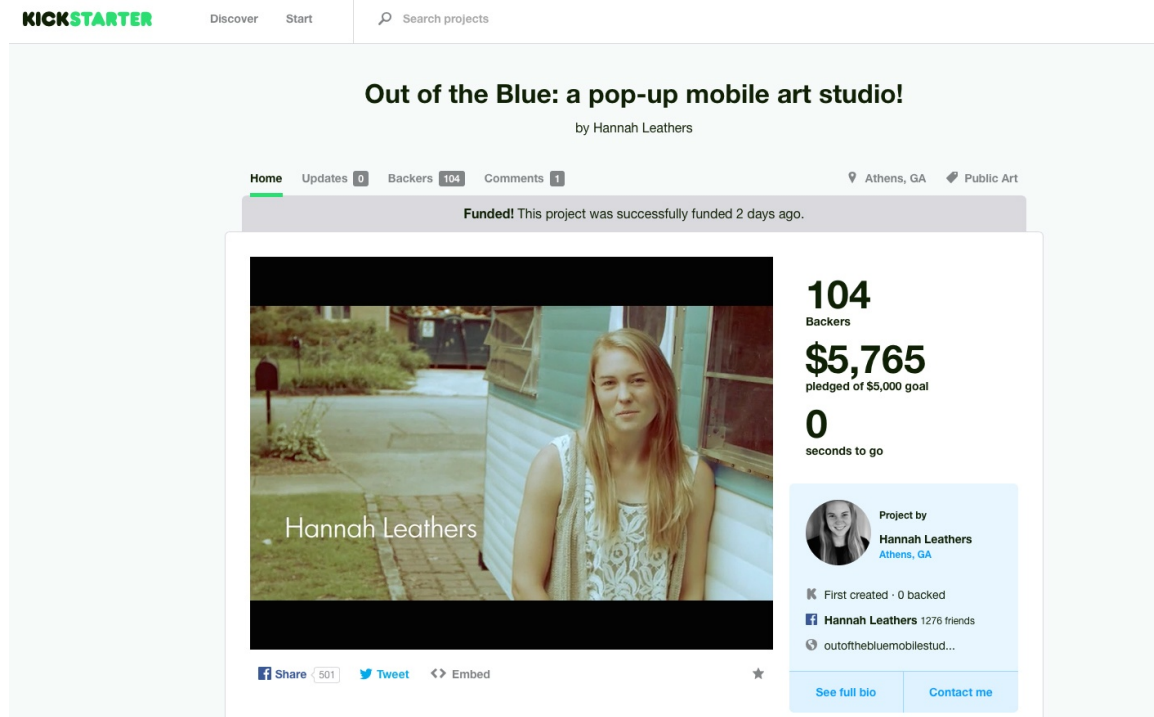


*Figure 6.* Kickstarter campaign website page.

In just 40 days I raised $5,765 solely through Internet and social media promotion. The Kickstarter campaign was publicized through our website and Instagram, and my personal Facebook. Estranged friends donated hundreds. Strangers contacted me about the project from all over the country. I knew immediately from this campaign that Out of the Blue, with the monetary and promotional support of Kickstarter and social media, was going to be a more meaningful experience than I had ever anticipated.

Gaining this funding allowed me to start planning Out of the Blue's programming and to finish the renovation stress-free. With countless volunteer hours from friends and family, the trailer's renovation was finally completed in January of 2015. By the time we

were finished, every single surface of the trailer had been re-done. Over half of the walls

had been ripped out. We reinforced every wall and ceiling stud, ripped up and re-laid all

of the flooring, re-painted every interior and exterior surface, stripped tar from the roof

and the exterior tin, laid a new roof, installed an air conditioner/heater, and outfitted it

with new tires and interior décor (see Figures 7, 8 and 9).



*Figure 7.* Trailer interior before and after.



*Figure 8.* In-process documentation of painting the trailer exterior.

*Figure 9.* Trailer interior post-renovation.

The process took about eight months from start to finish, working each weekend we had time to. There were some very long days and nights throughout the process, but in the end, this experience was extremely meaningful for both my family and me. It was all worth it. The trailer space became the perfect area for art making.

As you approach the trailer, the first thing to notice is its unique shape—it is a type of rounded rectangle, with a bed shelf that juts out over the front edge. The exterior is a bright white tin with a teal-blue stripe down the middle. As you open the front door, in front of you is a kitchenette, complete with a bright teal stove, small refrigerator, and clean white and gray drawers and cabinets. As your eye moves through the kitchen, it settles upon a large sitting space in the back corner—a dining set for four. This space is complete with navy blue sitting cushions, vintage patterned throw pillows, and a table that folds out from the wall. From this sitting space, your eye moves to the freshly painted

walls transitioning from white to gray, accented with a vintage sunburst clock and bright red pencil sharpener in the corner. The flooring is a dark wood-grained linoleum, a strong contrast to the bright white and gray walls.  The interior is well lit, fairly spacious, and well suited for patrons' art-making experience. This trailer is, to my family and me, truly a work of art. It was painted, deformed, reformed, and redesigned.  Every weekend, we worked in our 'studio' creating a collaborative piece of 'art' (see Figure 10).



*Figure 10.* Interior of trailer as art.

Looking back, the renovation process itself became a smaller-scale work of socially engaged art. During the renovation, the trailer resided in my parent's driveway, which is very visible from the street. Throughout the process, the whole neighborhood, one by one, stopped to ask us what we were up to. Pedestrians would stop by very frequently to check in and view our progress. Even before the trailer itself was finished, the project had created a "micro-community" (Bourriaud, 1998, p. 17) within my neighborhood.

The renovation and planning process also created a micro-community on the Internet. The Kickstarter, Instagram, and my personal Facebook page kept friends and family and interested strangers updated throughout the renovation, gaining the project a plethora of followers. Each week I posted an update on Facebook and Instagram chronicling the renovation progress. The more drawn out the renovation process became,

the bigger the community of followers grew. Some even became involved in the renovation, volunteering their time in various ways. The renovation was an artistic practice that built a community and relationships between my friends, family, and the Internet community. It allowed me to build relationships with more people than I could have ever imagined—neighbors, Internet funders, old friends, and so on. Creating the trailer space and building these micro-communities was a hugely meaningful part of the Out of the Blue Project; not only did it build the foundation for the project's programming, it provided me with a life experience that I will never forget.

## Day One: Five Points Parking Lot

In order to further discuss ideas presented in the literature review—social practice's effects on public space, and its role and relationship between the art world and art education—the next three chapters will summarize and reflect upon three of Out of the Blue's programming events. The first of these events was Out of the Blue's inaugural programming day, conducted on January 16, 2015. On this day, the trailer was set up in a public location known as "Five Points" in Athens, GA. Five Points is a residential/retail area at an intersection of five busy streets. The trailer was parked and set up in a recently closed Yoforia ice cream store parking lot that faced this road intersection. This spot usually has heavy foot traffic due to its restaurants, grocery store, bakery, and coffee shops. It is about a mile from the University of Georgia's campus, in a neighborhood that is a predominantly wealthy, white residential area. The area attracts students, professors,

local families, and couples, and is constantly buzzing with pedestrians, runners, and shoppers on any given day.

Because it was the middle of January, I had to wait patiently for a day of good weather. On January 16th, everything was perfect—it was about 55 degrees, sunny, and the intersection was lively for the first time in a week. As residents began to emerge from their homes and businesses for lunch around 12 p.m., my friend Nancy and I began to set up the trailer. We parked it facing the intersection so that car drivers and pedestrians alike could see the face of the trailer (see Figure 11). Art supplies were placed on a table outside, and the sketchbooks were laid out on the kitchen counter inside.



*Figure 11.* Image of trailer at first pop-up site (Five Points intersection).

The first hour of the program was a trial run, to say the least. Before beginning the programming, I assumed that the trailer alone would catch pedestrians' attention, and encourage them to participate. This was not the case. Many people walked by, making funny faces and staring, but no one stopped. Nancy and I soon realized that we would have to promote the project; we had to find some way to let people know what we were doing. I had been so focused on planning the art project and choosing the pop-up spot that

I had not even considered needing a marketing plan! We found that the trailer, visible art supplies, and two girls standing outside was simply not enough to draw in participants.

Thus, we started to market the project. We painted signs that read, "free art studio" and "come make art, for free!" and taped them up all over the area. Eventually we decided it was necessary (and just plain fun) to also stand at the intersection and wave the signs at cars passing by. Watching drivers attempt to read the sign, mouthing "come… make… art…" felt so powerful. I felt like I was protesting (see Figure 12)!



*Figure 12.* Holding up "come make art" signs for passing drivers to see.

In addition to posting signs, we also went into the surrounding businesses—Jittery Joes Coffee, Independent Bakery, Waffle House, and Earth Fare Grocery—to let them know what was going on. I spoke with the baristas, cashier attendants, and customers at

each location, explaining the project and handing out stickers. Eventually, our last-minute

marketing plan began to draw patrons in one by one.

The first people to stop and participate were two college-aged pedestrians. They

noticed the signs, and approached us on their own accord. After I explained the goal of

the trailer and the instructions of the sketchbook project, the two shyly but willingly



*Figure 13.* First patrons of the day making art.

obliged to participate. They chose (without prompt) to sit inside the trailer, and create their

artwork. I let them make art together inside, without interruption, as I was still unsure of

my exact role as the project's facilitator. When they were finished, I asked to take their

picture, and they went on their way (Figure 13).

After greeting this first set of patrons, I realized that I had not given much thought to my personal role in the project. After inviting them in, and explaining the project, should I impede and start conversation while they worked on their pieces? I decided that I would gage each participant's level of interest in conversing with me and to do whatever felt natural. I did not want to simply give instructions for the project and disappear, but I also did not want to impede or inhibit their experience by forcing dialogue between us.

The next patrons to come by were two college-aged female friends that I had spoken to during my marketing attempts in Waffle House. I could tell immediately that they both had big personalities. As they approached the trailer, their first statement was, "do you guys do caricatures?". We laughed. They assumed that we were the artists, and they were the free art recipients. We explained the project, and their enthusiasm did not change a bit. "Oh! We make the art. Cool!" they exclaimed. Like many of the future patrons would do, the pair explained that they "were not artists" and "couldn't draw", but chose to participate. They selected their art materials, their sketchbooks, and chose to sit at the table outside with Nancy and I. This time, I decided to engage in art making with them to make them feel more comfortable talking to me. We talked for the remainder of their time at the trailer, eventually realizing that we had mutual friends and a lot in common. They took a picture for their Instagrams, said thank you and good-bye, and went on their

way (Figure 14).



*Figure 14.* Enthusiastic participants say goodbye.

This experience was an interesting contrast to the first set of participants. Their personalities completely changed the dynamic of the project. It was seemingly collaborative, rather than just participatory. This dichotomy played out similarly for the rest of the day. Participants with "outgoing" personalities would choose to sit outside with Nancy and I, and the more "shy" participants chose to sit inside by themselves or with their comrade(s).

By the end of the day, the project attracted about fifteen to twenty strangers in a three-hour time span. Many more pedestrians were interested in participating, but expressed that they did not have the time to stop in due to daily agendas. Even though they did not participate in the art making, two of these interactions in particular were still

notable. One of these interactions that stuck with me was the reaction of an elderly couple that stopped to find out about the project. I explained the project to the man, and he replied "so, the whole thing is art, when you really think about it." I was so enthused by this—he basically summed up my literature review with one reactionary statement!

Another notable encounter was with a passerby who stopped in after working an eight-hour shift at a breakfast place across the street. She was really excited about the project, but said that she just "didn't have the energy to do artwork". Regardless, she sat down in the trailer with Nancy and I, and we conversed as if we were old friends. This interaction in particular took some stress off of my shoulders; I realized that even if patrons did not want to participate in the art-making aspect of Out of the Blue, they still became a part of the project. The dialogue was a form of participation, too; and this too, was a form of art making. It simply used a different medium—human relationships, rather than paint or paper.

The last encounter I will discuss from this day of programming was with a woman named Colleen. As Coleen approached Out of the Blue, my partner Nancy and I were outside of the trailer with a couple of other participants. Colleen was soft-spoken, but very enthusiastic. She was more interested in the project and its intentions than anyone else had been all day. She asked question after question about why I was conducting this project and how it came to be. Eventually, she chose a sketchbook to respond to and sat down with Nancy and I outside. She had chosen the "what does gender inequality or equality look like to you?" sketchbook. Her art material of choice was a fountain pen and ink. She was not familiar with the material, so I showed her how to use it. She promptly began to make random marks all over her sketchbook page, as we continued to converse and get to

know each other. She explained that she was an anthropology major at the University of

Georgia, and that she worked part time in a lab that does a type of digital 3-D rendering.

Colleen was really interesting. She was so shy, yet more open to conversation and

participating in the project than any other participant had been thus far. She remained at

Out of the Blue's table—sometimes alone, sometimes joined by other participants—for at

least an hour. After finishing the line work of her piece with the fountain pen, she chose to

layer watercolor on top of her drawing. The artwork she created was unbelievable. The

mark making was impeccable. The subject matter, a mother bird and two babies, was

symbolic and subtle. The watercolor overlay was faultlessly applied (see Figure 15).



*Figure 15.* Coleen's "gender" artwork response.

Nancy and I could not get over her talent and her enthusiastic disposition. We both agreed that our conversation with Coleen, and her momentous participation affected us more than any other contributor did all day.

As we began to pack up the trailer, and the afternoon came to a close, suddenly the project came to a rapid, powerful halt. A woman approached the trailer, and I quickly asked, "Would you like to make some art?" as I did with every patron. She did not comply, and assertively commanded to speak with the owner of the trailer. She was on the phone with the police, she explained. The Yoforia parking lot was her private property. She demanded that we leave, exclaiming that she would stand in our periphery until we were done packing up. The woman was inconsolable. I explained to her that we weren't selling anything, and that the project was simply there to promote art making. Nothing could quell the forceful steam coming out of her ears. For a moment, I truly believed that Out of the Blue could be over—she was so intensely angry about our trespassing. Worried that the police could arrest me, or shut down the project, Nancy and I rapidly threw all of the art supplies into random containers, folded up the table, and left the premises as quickly as physically possible. In hindsight, I should have asked for her permission to use the property, but it made for an impactful, demonstrative ending to the day!

This experience brought to light many implications and realizations about the project. The day was a bit rocky at first, but overall I was really happy with its success. Although it took some promotions and marketing to get patrons to participate, I believe that eventually the 'confusing' status of the project in this certain space was actually what made it so successful—the private/public ambiguity (Richardson, 2010). People were not

exactly sure what to make of it. We weren't selling anything, and were not associated with any business near us. As people confronted the project and negotiated the space, the trailer allowed alternative ways of participating, interacting, and knowing" in that particular location (Richardson, 2010, p. 29).

This was reminiscent of Biesta's (2012) ideas of "testing publicness" through art practices. By popping up in this parking lot, I was able to test the "publicness" or the participants' willingness to become inter-subjective. Some participants were enthusiastic; some were a bit less willing. Once the spaces' ambiguity was cleared up through conversation, patrons were more willing to converse and take part in the project. The trailer created what Bourraiud (1998), borrowing from Marx, refers to as a social interstice, a trading community that eludes the "capitalist economic context by being removed from the law of profit; this suggests other trading possibilities than those existing within this system" (Bourriaud, 1998, p. 16). Though it took extensive conversation to explain to passerbys what we were up to, they eventually understood our goals. As they negotiated their own relationship with it, I was able to gain insights about social relationships and human intersubjectivity in that particular location.

One conclusion of this "test" is that people were truly confused by my motivations; patrons' reactions showed me that it was not normal to them to come across a free, 'public' space for people to take part in a particular activity. However, while at this location, post dialogue of the project's explanation, around three-fourths of the passerbys decided to participate, and the last quarter of them at least showed enthusiasm about the idea. Each person's reaction was different, but overall, this space did allow for unnatural human communication. It was a 'safe space' for Out of the Blue to take place.

Regardless of this spaces' safeness or publicness, the project was still unable to evade capitalism's hold. The property was privately owned, and we were kicked out in the end. As Kalin (2014) states, "avant-garde claims that artists today can offer such a radical critique as to remain outside of capitalist systems are futile" (Kalin, 2014, p. 196). But regardless of the inability to evade capitalism, the project was indeed successful in "testing publicness." It gave rise to a space "in which language, behavior, and thoughts can proceed, at least momentarily, that defy the organizing structures imposed by a monitored area" (Richardson, 2010, p. 21). It invited participants to live in a shared world; to give rise to other types of human relations in that space (Bourriaud, 1998).

Pedagogically, this event made me curious about what (Kotze & Wildemeersch (2014) define as a 'pedagogy of contingency.' Moments of learning, about art materials, the art school, the art world as a whole, occurred during the trailer's programming that day. Reading Kotze & Wildemeersch's (2014) piece, I began to reflect upon these moments of learning as pedagogy that was contingent upon the moment, place, and participants, pedagogy that disrupted notions of continuity and stability transformed in relation to changing dynamics. It felt so natural. It was based on conversation and on questions and inquiries that participants had. Does this type of naturally flowing pedagogy have a place in formal education?

The first day of Out of the Blue's programming was truly special. It tested an area's public space, pushed the boundaries of what was possible in that parking lot, and brought a lot of people together to make art work. It was a great start to Out of the Blue's programming. I learned a lot about my personal role in the project, patrons' willingness to participate, and the importance of planning and logistics.

Almost a month later, I went to a coffee shop in downtown Athens. I saw Colleen, the brilliant pen and ink bird drawer sitting at a table. I was so excited to see her. I spoke with her in passing; she remembered me. She remembered the work she did. This was such a special moment for me. The project's effect, had if only for a moment, extended beyond the day in the Five Points parking lot. Colleen and I exchanged a few words, she thanked me for the experience, and we both went on our way.

## Day Two: Creature Comforts Brewery

On the second day of Out of the Blue's programming, I decided to try something new by collaborating with a private institution. Creature Comforts is a newly opened brewery in the heart of downtown Athens. The space is large and inviting, and always well attended by residents of Athens. In addition to their indoor bar and seating area, they also have an outdoor picnic area. On January 24, 2015, I set up the trailer in the corner of this parking lot.

The trailer itself was set up in the same way as it was at Five points—doors open, a table out front with supplies, and signs posted that read "come make art" and "free art

studio" (see Figure 16).



*Figure 16.* Creature Comforts set-up location.

For the first hour or so, our existence was slightly ignored. As customers started to trickle in, a few of them came outside, read our signs, looked confused and went back inside. I realized that I would probably have to do a form of "marketing" similar to actions performed on the first day of programming. I went inside the brewery, gave the bartenders stickers to give out, and explained to them what the project was, and what to tell people that approached them about it. I also went around to groups of people in the brewery, and encouraged them to come participate.

As the weather warmed up, and more customers started to arrive, we went from zero to sixty *very* quickly; all of a sudden, patrons interested in the project swarmed around us. From this point on, until the brewery's closing, I was constantly engaged in interaction with project participants. I stood behind the table out front, greeting each person that approached with the same introduction, "Hey, are you guys interested in making some art?" Using this statement as a way to gage their interest levels. If the patrons wanted to participate, which I approximate about 70 percent of the people who approached did, I would explain the sketchbook project's instructions and invite them into the trailer. "There are about 15-20 sketchbooks laying around on the inside of the trailer. All of them have prompts that say things like 'draw your ideal imaginary world' or 'paint with your left hand', some are silly some are more serious. Choose whichever prompt you'd like to respond to, and come back outside and choose one of these art materials. Let me know if you need any inspiration or want to know anything about the materials. You're welcome to sit inside the trailer if there isn't anyone in there already, but if so, you're welcome to take the sketchbooks with you and sit anywhere in the brewery's space!"

At any given point during the afternoon, there were around 10-15 people drawing and painting around the brewery (see Figure 17 and 18).
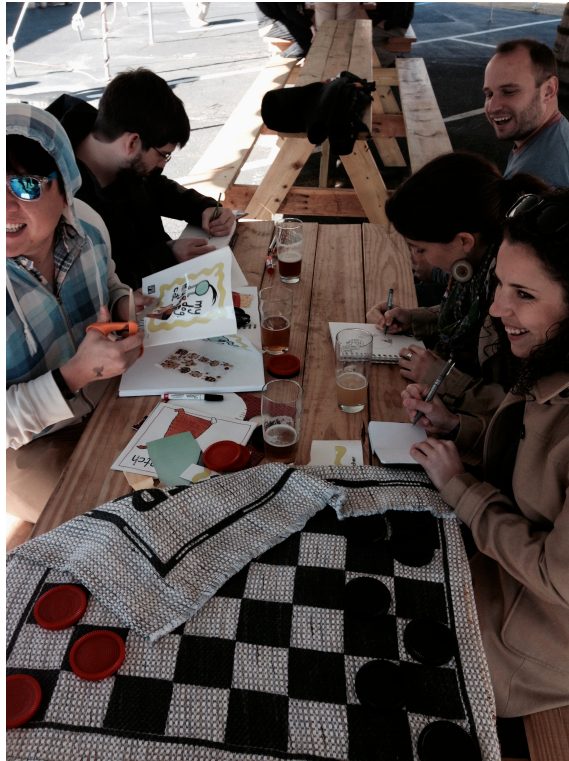
*Figure 17.* Patrons engaging in art making at brewery tables.

Some sat inside the trailer, and some sat at the brewery's picnic area. The sketchbooks circulated quickly. I would say the average patron spent about 15-20 minutes on their artworks. At one point during the day, there were so many sketchbooks "checked out" to participants that I sent a friend of mine to go buy more of them! Something worth noting is that I (accidentally) did not specify whether to leave the completed art works in the sketchbooks. I noticed as people returned them that some of the pages were ripped out; some patrons took their works with them. This was obviously disappointing for me, but I am glad they cared enough about their work and the experience to take it with them.

It was truly an incredible sight to see the patio filled with people creating art. Everywhere I looked, there was someone making art—groups of friends working on a collaborative "continue the storybook" sketchbook together; duos and trios sitting on the

parking lot floor painting new, imaginary worlds, friends inside the trailer at the sitting area, creating new robots and monsters (see appendix B).



*Figure 18.* Art making around the brewery premise.

Everywhere I turned, there was an interaction occurring I wished I could overhear. The feedback and interactions I was able to hear, though, were extremely positive. I received feedback such as, "This is actually one of the cooler things I have ever seen in Athens" and, "This is so great, it makes so much sense. You always just go to breweries and sit around and talk, it gets really boring. Why not make some art while you're here, right?". I got asked the question "why are you doing this? And how did you get money for it?" many, many times. A very frequent reply from the patrons was, "Oh, I am not good at art. You don't want me to participate." Many people were skeptical of themselves as 'artists' and were not confident in their creative or skillful abilities; but, most who were

skeptical did end up participating regardless of their skewed views of their art-making abilities.

Overall, patrons were more willing and enthusiastic in participating than at the first day of programming at Five Points. I wondered if the success and willingness was because Creature Comforts provided a "safe space"—a pre-established institution, with like-minded individuals there for the same goal. Looking back, it does seem like the success of this day was highly due to this fact. People trusted me and trusted the project. The space was literally 'enclosed' by a fence, and a parking lot, which may have created an illusion of safety or privacy for the project (see Figure 19).



*Figure 19.* Trailer inside the brewery walls.

Another notion of 'safety', which seems ridiculous but I do think it had an effect, was the patrons' intake of alcohol throughout the day. As the day went on, and more beer was imbibed, the enthusiasm and willingness of participants did seem to escalate. In

addition to the space (and beer) allowing participants to trust the project, the sketchbook

prompts did exactly what I intended them to do. They allowed the art making to appear

accessible, and encouraged collaboration between participants.

Though I was often too busy informing people about the project to observe the art

making processes or to have lasting conversations with individual patrons, there were a

few specific moments this day that stood out to me. The first of these instances was an

artistic collaboration between the brewery owner's children, and a local artist, Michelle

Fontaine. The kids participated first; they sat with their father inside the trailer, painting

random watercolor marks inside the "paint whatever you want" sketchbook. Their artwork

was typical of a four and five year old watercolor painting—made up of playful,

intentional, and beautiful mark making. An hour or so later, Michelle approached the



trailer. I was unaware at the time, but Michelle chose to respond to the project by collaboratively drawing on top of the children's watercolor markings. She created a beautiful, inspired portrait of her friend she had with her. Viewing her final drawing and talking with her about the collaboration was such a powerful experience—two

*Figure 20.* Michelle Fontaine artwork.

strangers, of two completely different age groups, collaborating to produce an amazing work of art (Figure 20).

The second notable interaction was near the end of the day, with two outspoken, outgoing men. They were burley in stature, and dressed as though they had just finished a hunting trip. One of them, after hearing the project's purpose, expressed more excitement in participating than anyone had all day. He asked if he could use the easel outside that held the "come make art" sign to put his large, "paint anything you want" sketchbook on. He opened the book, and began to paint. I realized that he had chosen the acrylic paint as his medium, but hadn't taken a water can or paint brushes. He began to paint using the paint tubes themselves to apply the paint to his canvas. Without hesitation, he swirled the paint around the page creating a swirly "starry-night"-esque landscape painting (Figure 21).



*Figure 21*. Man creates landscape painting.

By this time in the day, the brewery had mostly cleared out. I decided to sit down with these two men, intrigued by their outgoing personalities and excitement towards the project. We talked for about twenty minutes as one of them continued to uniquely apply globs and globs of paint to his canvas. I found out that they were actually from Napa Valley, CA, and that they were visiting some friends in Athens for the weekend. They explained that they really loved art and were so pleasantly surprised to come across the trailer. They were very curious about my intentions and goals for the project. At the end of the conversation, one of them asked me if we had an art museum in Athens. He explained that they wanted to continue their "artful" day.  I gave them directions to the Georgia Museum of Art, and they went on their way. This experience was so meaningful to me. This reflected one of my main goals for the project—to affect patrons' views of art, and to influence their lives beyond the ephemeral experience of the Out of the Blue Project.

I approximate that about one hundred people participated in the sketchbook project over the course of this day. As I gathered up the materials and looked through the works created that day, I realized that some sketchbook prompts were more popular than others. Based on volume of response, the most popular sketchbooks were those that prompted creating monsters or robots. This was interesting to me—what is it about imaginary realities that is so accessible to people, particularly with art making? In addition to these books, other prompts that had many responses were the "what does gender inequality look like to you?" and the "continue the story" collaborative storybook. (see Appendix B). Another popular book was the prompt "paint or draw yourself with your left hand". I theorize that this one was popular because of its accessibility—allowing participants and excuse of "yes, its horrible, but I drew it with my left hand!" The least popular books were

the "what does racism look like to you?" book, and the "create something abstract" book (see Appendix B). I find these results extremely interesting. The willingness for participants to respond to gender, illustration, robots, and monsters was much higher than responding to race and abstraction. Is this because of the accessibility of these topics, or because we see many of the former in American visual culture?

I received feedback from a few participants that their favorite books were ones that allowed for collaboration with previous participants. For example, there was a book whose prompt reads "continue the story…"; each person read the existing story, added a page, which created a collaborative, page by-page storybook. One particular woman acknowledged how "cool" she thought it was to be able to collaborate with people she didn't know.

Another interesting research aspect of the day was the popularity of each artistic medium. The most popular artistic mediums were watercolor and pen/ink. The popularity of the former may be due to the "easy clean up, grab and go" aspect. I theorize that people may have chosen the latter because of the unique nature of the fountain pen. The least popular medium was the acrylic paints. I wonder if this has something to do with the "formal, fine art" nature of tube paints. Additionally, acrylic paints required more clean up, and a longer drying time. Regardless, there was a clear split between the most and least popular chosen mediums—watercolor at the forefront, and acrylic paint lagging behind.

Another important aspect of this day was the role of social media. Social media not only helped inform people of the project's pop-up prior to the day's beginning, it also allowed the programming to extend beyond the hours spent at Creature Comforts. Because

of the high level of participation and our marketing of the Out of the Blue Instagram, the page gained a large number of followers. I realized that I needed to find a way to continue and build upon this newfound 'community' of followers.

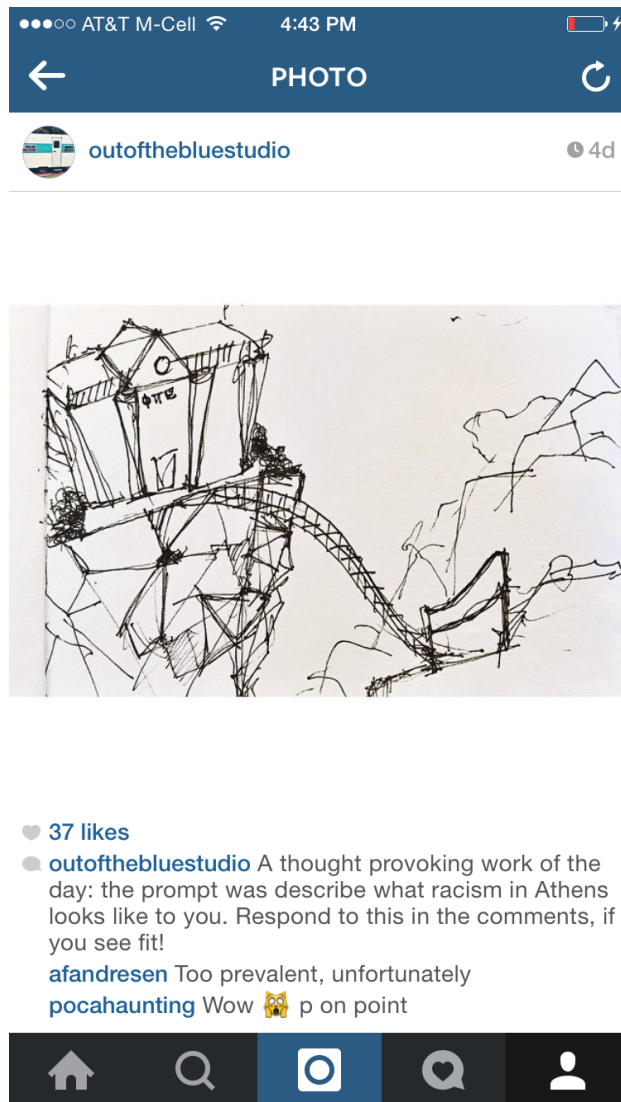After this day, I decided to share the works made at the trailer by posting one work per day on the Instagram page. I titled these posts the "work of the day." Each day, I chose a new work from the sketchbooks, posted it, and included a small blurb or comment about it (see Figure 22).

The Instagram page itself has built a type of community—followers are able to claim authorship of their work when it's posted, dialogue is had within the comments section about the works, and I have received numerous comments in person of followers stating that "it is their favorite part of



*Figure 22*. Example of the Instagram "work of the day".

the day to see the Out of the Blue "work of the day". For more images of the Instagram page, and for additional scans of the works done at the trailer this day, and others, please reference the appendix following the concluding chapter of this report.

**Critical Reflections**

In the literature review section, I spoke about art education and socially engaged art becoming "edutainment". Kalin (2014) and Helguera (2011) argue that if artists of socially engaged artwork are not careful, their projects may be perceived as "fun" rather than artful or educative. Of all three event days, this day in particular seemed the most "edutainment" based. I collaborated with Creature Comforts because I knew that their space was safe, fun, and that the patrons would have a good time making artwork with the trailer. I did not have a particular social goal like I did with the first programming day (to make a statement about public space, and art, in a public intersection). Instead, I allowed myself one attempt at partnering with an organization that was for pure fun and art-making's sake.

Helguera (2011) acknowledges that socially engaged art (SEA) is often strongly critiqued for its "social work" nature; that because of this, these events cannot be considered "art." In his argument against the "social work" nature of these projects, he states "SEA has a double function that social work lacks. When we make a socially engaged artwork, we are not just offering a service to a community (assuming it is a service-oriented piece); we are proposing our action as a symbolic statement in the context of our cultural history … and entering into a larger artistic debate" (p. 36). Though the project at Creature Comforts did have entertaining or edutaining qualities, I believe that it did play a part in what Helguera speaks to; it did propose a symbolic statement of the role of art and art making. Patrons were not expecting the trailer to be there, and this fact alone

allowed for 'symbolic statement'. This was my goal for this day—to be symbolic, interruptive, and challenge what art education can be.



*Figure 23*. Instagram follower's new notions of Art education.

I believe that this goal was partly successful. Of the patrons I interacted with, it seemed like at least half of them were 'thrown off' by the trailer and were challenged to perceive art differently—particularly the patrons I was able to speak at length with, and fully explain the intent of the project to. Evidence of this was shown in dialogue, which I noted previously in this summary, and within the patrons' Instagram posts and commentary (see Figure 23).

The project served as an agent of art education outside of school boundaries, and challenged hegemonic conceptions of art education (McDermott, 2014).

Socially engaged art projects that are less provocative in a critical sense, and more edutainment based, are according to Helguera (2011) "often able to fulfill its purpose of strengthening a community's sense of self by lessening or suspending criticality regarding

the form and content of the product and often, promoting "feel-good" positive social

values" (p. 10); participants "may even walk away feeling enriched or able to reproduce it

with others" (p. 13). In this sense, the project was extremely successful. It was able to

create an ephemeral sense of community and foster a "feel-good", enriching vibe. I

struggle to understand whether this "feel-good, enrichment" was more or less meaningful

than the other two programming days, which had a particular "social goal" in mind.

This view of socially engaged art as "edutainment" is a contested point of opinion.

Bishop (2006) argues that socially engaged art projects are more meaningful and effective

with "avant-garde, social activist" goals in mind; she acknowledges that in order to be

considered "art", the projects must push the envelope. Kester (2004), on the other hand,

acknowledges the opposite, arguing that the dialogue itself within these projects is indeed

a work of art. Though the project was "edutainment"-esuqe on this day, I argue that this

program was still extremely successful in enriching the lives of its participants, creating

micro-communities (Bourraiud, 1998) through social media and art-making, and

promoting "feel-good social values" (Helguera, 2011, p. 10). The dialogue, and 'feel-good

nature' in itself, in my opinion, holds potential to have lasting affects beyond the

ephemeral program regarding art and art making, regardless of its ill-perceived

"entertainment value."

**Day Three: J and J Flea Market**

The third day of programming was conducted on February 14th, 2015 at J and J

Flea Market just outside of Athens, GA. This day was by far the most unsuccessful of the

three days in terms of artistic productivity; but it produced the most compelling social results of all three. The morning of the 14th, I woke up without a plan. I did not know where I was going to take the trailer. This was, in a way, on purpose. With the overwhelming success of the first two project days, I wanted to take a chance with the final day. I felt as though I had played it safe with my locations thus far. I knew I wanted to go somewhere completely different, reaching a more diverse demographic than the last two programs; I wanted to take a risk.

To select this location, first, I polled Out of the Blue's Facebook page. I asked our followers, "We want to hear from you. Where should the pop-up be? We want to set up in a spot that will reach as many demographics as possible. Can you think of a particular spot in Athens that serves as a type of intersection between demographics? Let us know." From this response, we received two suggestions: the Athens public library, and J and J Flea Market. Both seemed like great options, but I wanted to first survey for any other choices.

The morning of the project, I hopped into the car and began to drive around looking for suitable locations. I was looking for a public space with high foot traffic and a diverse demographic. In search of this perfect spot, I surveyed what seems like the entire city of Athens—downtown, Normaltown, Broad Street, and multiple other areas. Downtown seemed like a good option. It was the only place in which diverse demographic groups interacted, and had the highest foot traffic. But unfortunately, I could not find a space large enough that was not privately owned. After driving around town for nearly an hour, I began to get frustrated. I truly could not find a suitable spot in town that served as a meeting place of diverse demographics.

I realized that this occurrence itself was an extremely prominent observation. First of all, every area in Athens, GA is privatized. Every parking lot, every building, *everything.* Secondly, I concluded that the city lacks an adequate number of public areas in which its residents can interact, especially residents of diverse demographics. Downtown was the only place in which I found two demographics existing "harmoniously"—everywhere else served a specific demographic group.

After searching the entire town, I concluded that my Facebook post had actually been productive. The library and J and J Flea Market were two of the best options. In the end, I chose to set up at J and J Flea Market solely because it had higher foot traffic. J and J flea market is a very intriguing place. It proclaims itself as the "largest yard sale in Georgia". The market itself is a gigantic dirt lot, with hundreds of tables lined up for vendors to rent. Each Friday, Saturday and Sunday, it opens its grounds for anyone to come and sell anything they wish, at the cost of $10 per vending table. The market attracts almost every demographic from the Athens area— lower, middle and upper class African Americans, Hispanics, and Whites. You can find almost anything being sold there—from metal pipes, to antiques, to shoes, and beyond.

When we arrived at J and J's with the trailer, I realized immediately that 'Out of the Blue' was 'out of place'. I anticipated this. The project obviously doesn't sell anything, and the trailer itself is a bit of a spectacle based on its sheer scale, and its vintage quality. But I was determined to move forward, and experiment with it regardless. We pulled up, found a flat, open spot for the trailer and parked it. As we began setting up, I started to feel the "what is that" stare upon us almost immediately. During the time it took us to set up the table, signs, and art supplies, three people had already asked to buy the

trailer. "It's not for sale, but would you like to come in and make some art work?" Each person gave a very confused face, politely said no, and walked away. After about twenty minutes, we were finally set up. We began to wait.

The first people to approach us were two middle aged Hispanic women. Right away, I realized that they did not speak English. Regardless, they hopped right into the trailer, asking me questions in Spanish. I began a pseudo "sign language" attempt at explaining the project, pointing at art supplies, at the table, and the sketchbooks. Of course, this was an utter disaster. We smiled at each other, they giggled, and left.

The second group to approach us was a white family of three; an elderly couple and their son. We engaged in dialogue for about ten minutes about their past attempts to buy and renovate a trailer. They were curious about the renovation process, what my project was about, and why exactly I was doing it. I explained to them that it was a pop up, free art studio, and that I had taken it to many places in town and had success with it. They were very intrigued and loved the idea, but did not choose to participate in the art making. Some comments they made were "wow, this is really, really cool… you should try places in town like the farmer's market. Yeah, this would be perfect for a place like the farmer's market" and "if only I had my four and five year old with me!".

The third group to approach was a Hispanic family of three—a father, and his 6-7 year old daughter and son. Like many others, he assumed the trailer was for sale. I explained to him the project's purpose, and asked if they would like to participate. The father stared at me blankly, and asked if they could go inside. I replied, "of course, please go in and check it out! And if you want to, please take part in the art project." The three of them went inside, sat down at the table for a brief moment, giggled, and left. The kids

thought the space was "cool" they told me. But the father wasn't so sure. During our entire

exchange, he spoke one sentence, asking if they could go inside. The rest of our exchanges

were my enthusiastic pleas for them to participate, and his blank stare in reciprocation.

After sitting in the trailer for a moment, they thanked me, and left.

This type of interaction occurred for the rest of the day. Each person to approach

us seemed utterly confused by the project, and untrusting of its intentions. My boyfriend

and I sat out front of the trailer for two hours, making art and encouraging passing patrons

to participate. Over and over, the same encounters occurred. Families and singles, mostly

Hispanic, would encounter the trailer, I would promote its purpose and invite them in, and

they would stare blankly and walk away.

Near the end of the day, I met a man named Bobby and his wife Elsie—an elderly,

middle class white couple from Monroe, GA. Bobby was a talker. We engaged in

conversation for probably about thirty minutes discussing the project, and he and his

wife's creative endeavors. He told me that they owned a flower shop in Monroe called the

"Corner Flower Market". Within five minutes of speaking to Bobby, he offered to have

the trailer at their shop, and to provide flowers to all of the participants as part of the art-

making program. He explained that they do this a lot; they host events for children in their

community "who are predominantly black," he added, to come to the shop and paint

flowerpots together. He explained that he and his wife were both artists—floral artists, and

drawers. But regardless of this, I could not get them to participate. Bobby, like other

previous patrons, commented "this would be so great for the kids!"

In the closing moments of our conversation, Bobby made a comment that aided my

understanding of the day. I mentioned to him that I was thankful to have met him and

Elsie, because the project had not been particularly meaningful so far that day. I described my encounters with the families beforehand, and this was his response—"Yeah, that's because most of the folks here are ethnics. I don't mean that in a racist way, but they're just not going to trust you. They won't believe that anything is free. They won't understand why you're doing this, or how you have the means to do it. They just won't trust you." He added that he was so happy to see someone like me out here, but that it probably just wasn't going to work; that I should go in town, or elsewhere. I was so upset by this comment, but I knew that he was probably right. After being at J and J's for about three hours, not a single person participated. Confused, lost, and upset, we packed up the trailer, and left the flea market.

**Critical Reflections**

As I began to reflect upon this experience, a statement made by Pablo Helguera (2011) rang in my head. In his book, *Education for Socially Engaged Art*, he warns against failures like this day at the flea market. He warns that in order for a socially engaged project to be successful, the artist must understand the context and social dynamics surrounding it (Helguera, 2011). Artists must "understand the public's perception of artists in that community" in order to be successful (Helguera, 2011, p. 37). I now understand the issues he warned against. Because my decision to go to J and J Flea Market was a blind one; I had never been to that space before, and was unaware of the audience I would encounter there. I was not fully aware of the situation I was constructing. I had no idea what the population there was like, what the peoples' perceptions of an artist might be in that situation, or what the social context of the flea market itself was like. I

could have been much more prepared by having a Spanish translator, Spanish signs out front, or a different type of project to make the art making more accessible and inviting. I was so eager to go somewhere "different" with the trailer that I did not consider the issues I would face, or the audience would perceive the project in that space.

Ruitenberg (2011), pulling from an idea of Ranciere, states that there is a predicament of "artists and curators who, in their eagerness to convey a critical message or engage their viewers in an emancipatory process, end up predetermining the outcomes of the experience, hence blocking its critical or emancipatory potential" (as cited in Kalin, 2014, p. 211). I was so eager to bring the project to a new demographic, to an "oppressed group", that I forced and rushed the process without thinking through the ethics. First off, I did not fully commit to "comradeship" with the population; Friere (2000) states, "only through comradeship with the oppressed can the converts understand their characteristic ways of living and behaving, which in diverse moments reflect the structure of domination" (p. 61). Rather than taking the time to understand the group present at J and J's, acquainting myself with the cultures, or presenting myself as a "comrade", I just impulsively, and blindly, set up there.

It is important for socially engaged artists like myself to understand that collaborative art projects can be "centered on an exchange between an artist (who is viewed as creatively, intellectually, financially, and institutionally empowered) and a given subject who is defined a priori as in need of empowerment or access to creative/ expressive skills a structure that is by nature, oppressive" (Kester, 2004, p. 137). To make this programming location a successful one, I should have worked harder to understand the audience I was working with and been more aware of myself as an empowered

enabler. There were issues of conflicting interest between myself and the audience and multiple information exchange problems (Helgeura, 2011), which would have been solved, or at least eased, if I had fully understood the context I was bestowing this project upon.

If there was one successful aspect of this day, though, it was my gained understanding of the emancipating, oppressive aspects of Out of the Blue. Art is, to many, quite superfluous. By inviting those to participate who may not care to, I am assuming that the people are "lacking" art in their lives—or that they themselves are "lacking". Additionally, I realized that socially-engaged art is often not as *accessible* as it intends to be; whether it be linguistics, location, or enacting unethical aspects of emancipation, projects such as Out of the Blue are not openly available to all. I realized that as I move forward with Out of the Blue, I must reconsider ethical aspects of the project and how they correspond to each demographic that comes along. This day taught me that in the future, it is important to commit to comradeship, to understanding fully the social dynamic of the area I am in, and finally, to work as hard as possible to make the project ethical and accessible to as many people as possible.

**Conclusion**

At each of these locations, the Out of the Blue project became an atypical experience for all that were involved. Each individual person, including myself, perceived the project in many different ways.  Some perceived it as a work of art; some did not trust it; some were angered by it; some thought it was "the coolest thing they had ever seen"; some thought it was for sale; some learned something new; and some just simply had fun participating. In each location, for each person, this project built a unique experience—an occurrence that was unforeseen and 'out of the blue'. The project tested publicness of its locations and altered both my own and the project participants' conceptions of art education's capacities.

The project's successes in these areas were often due to its paradoxical, ambiguous foundation. What were its goals? Was it a work of art, or non-art? Was it public, or private? Was it free, or did it cost anything? As patrons approached the trailer, they negotiated these questions, attempting to understand how to interact with it. Though from a research standpoint, these ambiguous qualities may not be ideal, from my own perspective, this is what granted the project such success. As Helguera (2011) explains, socially engaged art exists in a permanently unresolved state of art/non-art, and, while this produces ambiguous tension between artist and participant, these tensions should be addressed, but not resolved; it is this vagueness and uncertainty that allows the projects to "temporarily snatch subjects into the realm of art-making" producing new insights of art and art making to people of different disciplines (p. 5). It allows the socially engaged artist to offer new understandings of art and art making to those not involved directly with the art world. It gave them an ambiguous, innovative, and entertaining experience with art.

In his work *Art as Experience*, John Dewey (1934) describes aesthetics and art making as foundations of having "an *experience"*. He explains that an experience without aesthetics is incomplete, and non-emotional; that emotions are attached to a person, place, or object (p. 43). In this sense, it is the role of aesthetics to create opportunity for humanity to have an experience; to create pauses in their lives; to have a moment of unity, and disruption from every-day life, something new and non-blueprinted (Dewey, 1934).

Dewey (1934) suggests that this is the nature and role of art and art making. He states, "in short, art in its form, unites the very same relation of doing and undergoing, outgoing and incoming energy, that makes an experience an experience" (p. 49). Without the creation of *an* experience, or a pause in our experience of life, our existence becomes mundane. Dewey (1934) states, "the real work of an artist is to build up an experience that is coherent in perception while moving with constant change in its development" (p. 52); to build moments of unity and novelty for both the artist, and the viewer.

Socially engaged art, and projects like Out of the Blue, open up a connected pathway for these "moments of unity between the artist and the viewer." It allows its viewers and the artist to exist in one unifying moment. These moments are no longer separate between viewer and artist; they are simultaneous. Experiences occur through spectacle; through dialogue; and exist between bodies, rather than apart from. By bolstering art's potential to create "an experience" in a public, collaborative manner, socially engaged art produces these moments as joint experiences that are ambiguous, unresolved, and in "constant change in development" (Dewey, 1934, p. 52).

Not only did Out of the Blue open up novel channels for an artistic experience, it gave its participants complete agency over building these experiences.  In the end of his

chapter *Having an Experience*, Dewey delineates between recognizing and perceiving an experience or an artwork. He explains by simply *recognizing* a work, we fall back upon a stereotype, or a previous scheme; but that by *perceiving*, we create a new going-out energy, or a new experience. He adds that in order to truly perceive, a "beholder must create his own experience" (p. 54). Out of the Blue allowed its participants to 'perceive' rather than to simply 'recognize' this work of art, or this experience. During the Out of the Blue project, no participant was able to fall back upon a previous experience as reference. They were able to become agents of their own experience, and navigate this 'perception' on their own accord.

Socially engaged art in the public sphere encompasses the very nature of art and art making—having an experience, bolstering new perceptions, and providing constant changes in development (Dewey, 1934). Coming across, or participating in, an art project in public is juxtaposed with our 'usual' existence in those spaces. This allows for the invention of "mutant coordinates to extremes: it engenders unprecedented, unforeseen and unthinkable qualities of being" (Guattari, 1995, p. 106). By expanding the arena for these mutant coordinates beyond the gallery, and beyond the school, these qualities of being may permeate everyday public life, and open up more opportunities for art and art education to challenge *perceptions* (Dewey, 1934). Socially engaged art holds strong potential complicate experience so that "we can discover new questions" (Helguera, 2011, p. 71).

Through the Out of the Blue project, I not only experienced these potentials, but also stumbled upon a plethora of these "new questions," specifically relating to the art education field. How can Out of the Blue, and other projects like it, push the boundaries

of, and inform, the current art education field? In the literature review section, I heavily

referenced Kalin's (2014) arguments considering art education's changing relationship to

the art world; specifically, I expanded upon her theory that the pedagogical turn in art

holds potential to "arouse art education out of apathy, neutrality, and reproduction within

our institutional confines and peripheral position in relation to the art world" (Kalin, 2014,

p. 199). She states that,

> Knowledge needs to be cast as contextual, contestable, intersubjective, and fluid
>
> so that students might be able to participate in social practices and the reordering
>
> of knowledge for meaning making that is ever more inclusive. Convention must
>
> be questioned so that the production of art education knowledges might be
>
> characterized as a site of paradox and struggle (Kalin, 2014, p. 199).

She explains that art education has been granted an opportunity to reinvent its roles

in schools, museums, and public alike, due to the pedagogical movement in contemporary

art.  Through my experience with Out of the Blue, I could not agree with her sentiment

more. I believe that by participating and/or researching socially engaged art, art educators

may gain new perspectives in teaching art and the public sphere's role in art education.

Out of the Blue provided a new perception of art and art education to its participants. It

created moments of pedagogy, intersubjectivity, criticality, and entertainment. As

contemporary art changes and pedagogy becomes the "avant-garde" in the art world

(Bishop, 2006), art educators should take advantage of this opportunity to become

connected agents in the socially engaged, publicly-pedagogical art world in any shape or

form. Projects such as Out of the Blue not only engender amusing, innovative experiences;

they provide the opportunity for the art education field to challenge its stereotypes, expand

its possibilities, and to test what the future of the art education field is truly capable of

(Kenning, 2012).

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**Appendix A: Sketchbook Project Prompts**

1. Draw or sketch something on your person right now (in your pockets, purse, etc).

2. Draw, paint or collage your ideal imaginary world.

3. Paint, draw or collage whatever you want!

4. Grab a paintbrush. Grab three tubes of paint. Make a random mark on the page. Go from there.

5. Draw or paint something abstract.

6. Create a comic strip.

7. This book contains a family of robots: add to the family!

8. Draw or paint what racism in Athens looks like to you.

9. Draw or paint what gender equality or inequality looks like to you.

10. Draw or paint yourself or someone around you with your left hand.

11. Be a kid: either doodle, or finger paint anything you want.

12. Collage a representation of your favorite meal in Athens.

13. Draw or paint your current struggle.

14. Continue the storybook.

15. (Monster sticker) Name this guy, write him a story, and draw or paint him a friend.

16. Finish the drawing, and then start half of a new one for someone else.

**Appendix B: Archive of Artworks Created Through Out of the Blue Programming**

Please visit www.outofthebluemobilestudio.com, and click the "photo gallery" link to view all of the artworks created during the Out of the Blue programming.