

**Trip Report – Cultural Commissioner Debra von Huene  
Americans for the Arts Conference 2018  
June 14-18 in Denver, Colorado**

**Principal Take-aways:**

1. There are many untapped opportunities for funding for public art, which the City of Santa Clara Cultural Commission is not pursuing.
2. The Cultural Commission should be networking with our peers throughout Santa Clara County, Silicon Valley, and the State of California (<http://artscouncil.org/> lists SVCCreates, California Arts Council, Northern California Grantmakers, and others)
3. To align with the “Activate! Santa Clara” proposal which the Cultural Commission submitted in March 2018, effort needs to be made to investigate and apply for national and state art grants, and develop our Art Impact Fee proposal.
4. As evidenced by the 2018 Sculpture Exhibition, Burning Man artists are leading the way in innovative, interactive and impactful public art in cities throughout the country.

**Thursday, June 14**

**8:00am – 7:00pm: Public Arts Preconference: Public Art in Times of Change**

**Break-out session: Neighborhood Public Arts Examples & How-tos  
Funding available beyond “1% for Arts”:**

- Greenspace programs funded by public utilities
- Grants to artists: Allow city to pay out small fees to artists (up to \$10k?) without having to go through the arduous process of vendor bids, major contracts, insurance, etc. Fast application process – remove barriers.
- Communities (ethnic, historical, or neighborhood associations) might have their own organizations with funds
- Private investments and sponsorships, patrons (with no name on any signage)
- Look at geographic diversity, not just downtown, meet people where they are
- Developers (Placemaking, etc.)

**Public Art Tour of Denver:**

1. Theater district – electronic billboards for advertisers: % goes to public art such as “UnderStudy”, an unused space under the escalator in the Convention Center & commuter rail station.



2. Civic Center Park – “Tree of Transformation”, an interactive art piece by Burner artists/Denver residents Nick Geurts and Ryan Elmendorf (was at Burning Man in 2015). Note about the “Conoco” tent – the summer Friday Food Truck lunchtime event had just ended when we arrived.  
<https://www.denverpost.com/2018/02/17/interactive-art-lures-civic-center-visitors-color-music/>

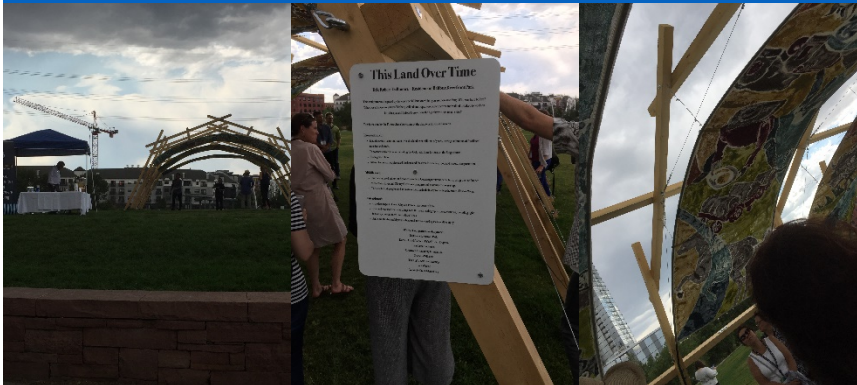


3. P.S. You Are Here – Part of an art initiative called “Imagine 2020” sponsored by Denver’s mayor and Denver Arts & Venues (overarching city org that includes Office of Arts & Culture).

<http://www.artsandvenuesdenver.com/imagine-2020/psyah>

We visited an installation called “This Land Over Time”, funded with a grant and created with participation of residents of Balfour, a CCRC retirement community, in partnership with local 5<sup>th</sup> graders. The art piece was conceived by Burner artist Eric Robert Dallimore.

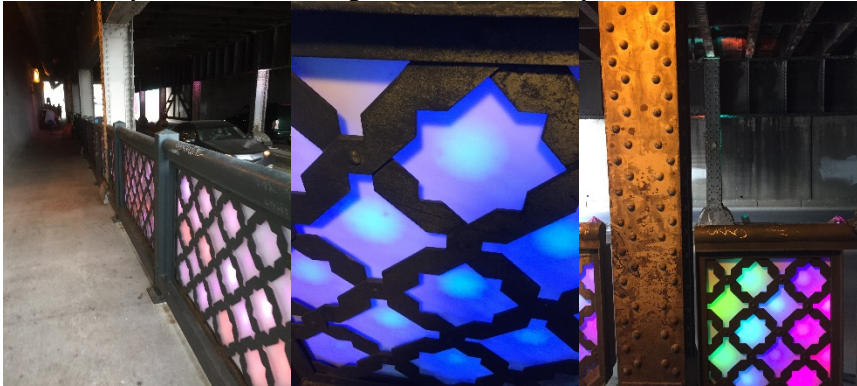
<http://vocafilms.com/2018/05/29/p-s-you-are-here-grant-2017-this-land-over-time/>



- Arabesque Railway Underpass – Part of Denver’s “303 Artway” program which is a 5.5 mile trail for pedestrians and bicyclists:

<https://shelterforce.org/2017/01/10/creating-miles-of-art-in-the-mile-high-city/>

The latest installation is part of the walkway/bike path underneath the Union Pacific Railway and was also conceived by Burners, the Birdseed Collective, using LED lights that reflected the historic arabesque pattern of the wrought iron in the underpass:

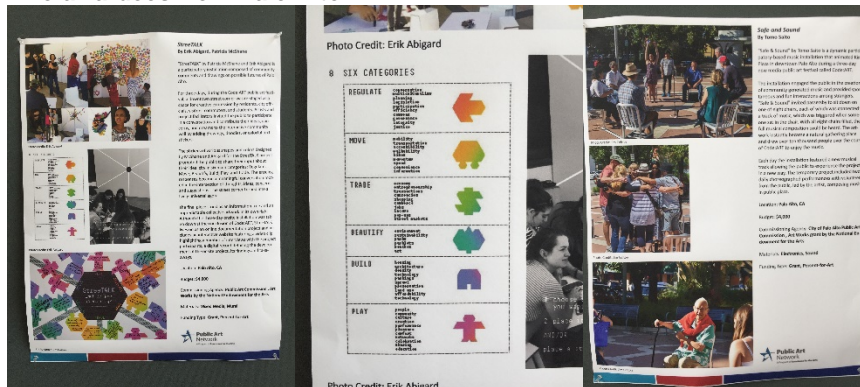


**Friday, June 15**

**8:00am – 11:00am – Public Arts Preconference: Public Art in Times of Change**

**Public Art Network (PAN) Awards & Review** [www.AmericansfortheArts.Org/YIR](http://www.AmericansfortheArts.Org/YIR) (Year in Review)

- Site-specific art
- Social practice/monuments
- Civic art (placemaking, contemplative spaces)
- Two awardees from Palo Alto:



**12:00 pm - 2:00 pm – AftaCON Opening Keynote - Arts and Culture in this Urgent Moment**

Introduction by Mary Anne Carter, Acting Chairwoman of National Endowment for the Arts  
Mark Morial, former Mayor of NOLA and currently president & CEO of the National Urban League

Public art should have three elements:

- Inclusion and diversity – plan how all elements of the community can participate
- Intersectionality – some ways that we see ourselves as separate are also ways we are intertwined. Consider how the arts can impact health, infrastructure, seniors (even ComicCon!) Transfer alleyways, dumpsters, other neglected eyesores (not just utility boxes...)
- Intentionality. Leadership, voice, advocacy, fight ... telling the story to state and local leaders to promote the value of art as an instrument of social change
- Bonus element #4 --- inspire!



## 2:30 pm - 4:00 pm - Meet & Ask the NEA

NEA staff provided an overview of the 2018 NEA grant programs (all grants require matching funds):

1. Challenge America grants (art in underserved communities) - \$10K  
<https://www.arts.gov/grants-organizations/challenge-america/grant-program-description>
2. Art Works grants (e.g. <http://www.artsneworleans.org/event/luna-fete/>) - \$10K - \$100K, two application periods per year  
<https://www.arts.gov/grants-organizations/art-works/grant-program-description>
3. Our Town (creative placemaking) - \$25k - \$200K  
Partner with at least two primary partners – cultural associations and/or local government  
<https://www.arts.gov/grants-organizations/our-town/place-based-projects-applicant-eligibility>
  - Can apply for both an Art Works & Our Town grant in a single year
  - Start early! Federal registration is the first step, takes time & must be completed before applying to NEA
  - FY19 applications are being reviewed now – each program has an eligible start date
  - Other sources of funding:
    - California Arts Council grants  
<https://www.kqed.org/arts/13832352/governor-jerry-brown-proposes-5-million-hike-in-state-arts-budget> (we just heard this was actually approved!!!)
    - HUD federal grants
    - AftA Public Arts Resource Center  
<https://www.americansforthearts.org/by-program/networks-and-councils/public-art-network/public-art-resource-center>

## 4:30 pm - 6:00 pm - Programming and Funding Public Art in Rural Places

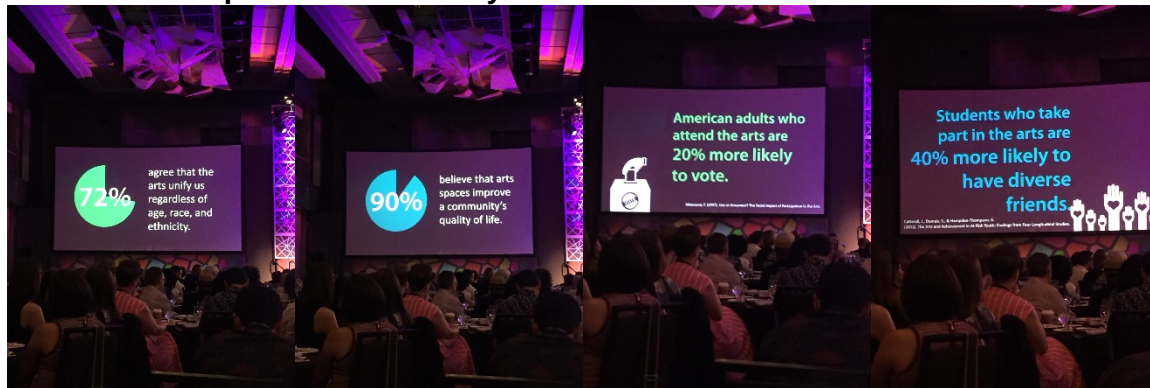
1. Investigate NEA Strategic Partnerships (Citizen's Institute on Rural Design helps fund art in [Blue Star Museums](#) and [Military Healing Arts Network](#)).
2. Little Rock, Arkansas revitalized their downtown by identifying gateways to the area and developing art in those first, then proposed an EPA grant to connect those gateways together
3. South Carolina's state art board's measure of success is how many grants they give out to towns within South Carolina. All states are likely the same (e.g. California Arts Council!!!!)
4. Focus on rural community identity – shared value, love/pride of place, love of community, reciprocal experience, stories about how someone sees themselves or their value as an “oldtimer” [reminded me/inspired by the PS You Are Here program ... people who have lived all their lives in Old Quad, near Portuguese Hall, Mission Park area, RiverMark, etc.)

## Saturday, June 16

### 9:00 am - 10:30 am - Morning Plenary Session: Driving Forward with the Artist-Activist

1. Be a guest in the diverse communities in your city. Come into the neighborhood. If there are lots of low-riders in the tradition/culture of the place (like there are in Santa Fe), plan a [Lowrider Block Party](#) day-long celebration, display, food, music etc. in front of a local museum. Beyond placemaking, the arts should come to the intersection of daily lives.
2. Corporate campuses should place themselves into a neighborhood and work to “belong” there. In Toledo, the Planning & Cultural Commission rounded up CEOs and took them on a bus tour of the city (this made me think of the tour I recently took as part of Leadership Santa Clara). View areas of displaced communities, both by gentrification and by industrialization. Look at anchor institutions ... how can they be preserved or amplified? Would CEOs be willing to provide matching funds to bring art to their neighborhoods (not just in front of their own building?)
3. Work w/ CDFI (community development financial institutions) and other community funding (e.g. George R.R. Martin, author of Game of Thrones, bought an old bowling alley in Santa Fe, converted it to a place for experiential artists – now called [Meow Wolf](#), has spread to Denver and Las Vegas)

## 11:00 am – 1:15pm – Lunch Plenary Session: The Arts Unite Us



1. 72% agree that the arts unify us regardless of age, race and ethnicity
2. 90% believe that art spaces improve a community's quality of life
3. American adults who attend the arts are 20% more likely to vote
4. Students who take part in the arts are 40% more likely to have diverse friends
5. The arts drive 4.9% of the U.S. GDP – that's \$736.6 billion!!!

## 1:15pm – 2:30pm – Unlocking New Capital

1. Investigate working capital loans – technical assistance from institutions such as [Andrew W. Mellon Foundation](#), [The Kresge Foundation](#), and other foundations and CDFIs (Community Development Financial Institutions). Capital – used for permanent installations.
2. Case Study: [Silk Road Rising](#), a theater company in Chicago, often ran out of operating funds during their fiscal year (because box office receipts only came in during the performance season). Partnering with the [MacArthur Foundation](#), they were provided collateral for 1-year loans, renewing annually, which assisted them in better cash planning and credibility, eventually eligible for their own operating line of credit with the bank. (Could investigate with Santa Clara Players, other partners that the Cultural Commission supports?)

## 3:00 pm - 4:15 pm - Radically Disrupting the Community/Cultural Planning Engine

1. Rather than defining culture as centered on artists and artistic activities (opera, theater, ballet, etc.), what if those were perceived as “elitist” notions of art and culture?
2. If we are not “from” a community or culture, we need to de-center some of our assumptions about what it's like to live in that community
3. Santa Monica “Popsicle For Your Thoughts” campaign to gather community input/survey
4. Denver’s “Imagine 2020” initiative was launched by their Mayor who directed: “I want you to get in the nooks & crannies of the city, and not just hear about art from the usual suspects in the usual places”
5. Develop a cultural plan!!! <http://www.artsandvenuesdenver.com/assets/doc/AV-1401-Imagine2020-FullPlan-WEB-55e6ae7250.pdf>



#### 4:45 pm - 6:00 pm - Designing Arts Experiences with the Impact Echo in Mind

Case study: Indianapolis's [PreEnact-Indy](#) event partnered with a theater company for an interactive all-day "play" to distill 2 years' worth of research, interviews and planning into a public presentation on the plans for their new downtown. This included using prop store fronts and abandoned buildings to host "pop-up" businesses. The idea was rather than hold a "re-enactment" which looked towards the past, a "pre-enactment" looked towards the future and what the new downtown could be.

#### Sunday, June 17

#### 9:00 am - 10:30 am - The Pluses and Minuses of Getting on the Pot Train

Case study – Plans to build a [Levitt Pavilion](#) in Denver (sponsored in part by [The Levitt Foundation](#), a national foundation of outdoor venues presenting free concert series).

- The policy of the NEA, which is a federal agency, (with whom recreational cannabis is \*not\* legal), is that no funds used for matching its capital grants can come from the cannabis business. However, they can be used to operational funding.
- On the other hand, the City and County of Denver does not allow operational projects to be funded by cannabis, but could be used for capital.
- Regulations limit how a cannabis company can market and advertise, so they look for funding/partnership opportunities. City of Denver licensing includes a community engagement plan for cannabis companies. Sponsoring interesting art events is just an organic & natural fit for cutting-edge cultural and musical events.
- Normalization of cannabis and removal of its stigma is still taking place. While it's expected that most events will have an alcohol sponsor, cannabis is often kept "behind the scenes". Sometimes they may sponsor Lyft/Uber rides from city events where alcohol is served.
- <http://kindcolorado.org>

#### 11:00 am - 12:30 pm - Closing Plenary: Crafting Equitable New Visions through the Arts

- Hip-hop artist DJ Cavem uses vegetables (!) as a pathway to health and nutrition ("laying down the beats with beets!!"). He somehow had motion sensors attached to his array of veggies which played different notes and rhythms when he shook them. Wild!
- Fashion designer Camila Chiribonga uses technology to create functional clothing for the blind and for patients with other medical conditions requiring ports, and has redesigned hospital gowns
- Virginia San Fratello from Oakland presented her 3-D printing business which produces objects from waste products
- Ovation TV closed the convention
- 2019 Convention will be in Minneapolis next June