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COMMUNITY MURALS AS PROCESSES OF COLLABORATIVE ENGAGEMENT:
CASE STUDIES IN URBAN AND RURAL PENNSYLVANIA

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Abstract:

This thesis uses three community mural projects—two in inner-city Harrisburg and the Valley Roots Community Mural project in Millheim, Centre County—to analyze the impacts of collaborative community art. Contemporary technologies and materials that maximized collaborative community engagement were utilized in the mural-making processes. Local residents provided the visions for the themes and guided the designs, filled in the paint-by-number panels of the murals, helped to install the murals, and celebrated the unveiling. Community meetings, painting sessions, and unveiling ceremonies for these projects became opportunities for intergenerational and cross-cultural dialogue and relationship building. I discuss responses to the projects and analyze of community feedback in relation to an in-depth literature review of public art projects and related topics in the arts, communication, and social sciences. My analysis of formal and informal participant feedback and media coverage reveals three categories in which the mural project was highly successful for those who were engaged in it: the generation of social capital, the creation of amenities, and personal inspiration. The completed murals are lasting public art pieces—visual tributes to a collaborative community vision and each community's pride in the diverse physical and cultural aspects of its location and history.
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Chapter 1 – Public Art and Community Murals

Introduction

Defining my Exigency

Even before the current economic recession, arts programs and funding for the arts have seen continual decline in my lifetime. Music and art classes are being cut from public high schools as we struggle to prepare our students for standardized tests instead of giving them a well-rounded education. One of the many programs cut from the 2009-2010 Pennsylvania State budget was a program that had changed the course of my life: the Pennsylvania Governor’s School for the Arts.

Attending the Pennsylvania Governor’s School for the Arts (PGSA) as a sixteen-year-old art student was the first in many steps that brought art-making and community-building passionately into my life. As a rural high school student who did not have access to a very large or challenging art program, attending PGSA was profound. Not only was I pushed in the arts, but I was also introduced to interdisciplinary collaboration and exposed to a community of passionate, creative, encouraging, and positive teenagers and adults. In this stimulating context, my peers and I began to blossom into the motivated and talented people that we had the potential to be. I went back to PGSA in the summer of 2007 as a Resident Assistant and a Teaching Assistant, four years after attending the program. Watching the program transform hundreds of other teenagers into driven,
passionate, and creative contributors to society was an even more enlightening and affirming experience than my first had been.

After attending PGSA as a student in 2003, I wanted to be challenged beyond what my small public high school had to offer me, artistically, intellectually, critically, socially and spiritually. I left high school early and entered an early-enrollment program at Penn State, signing up for a full schedule of academic and artistic classes. The summer after my first year at Penn State, uninterested in working a familiar job in my hometown and looking for meaningful employment, I serendipitously stumbled across an internship organizing and designing community murals in inner-city Harrisburg. Shortly after sending an inquiry email, I was interviewed and accepted for the position.

I had no way of knowing at the time that this experience would lead me to many years of being involved in community mural projects. After two years of projects in Harrisburg experiencing the profound effects of community mural projects, I was inspired to formally study the impacts of community murals. I decided to continue doing community mural work and to organize another community mural as a research project for my honors thesis in Civic and Community Engagement. This time I chose to work in my own rural hometown of Millheim, Pennsylvania, using what I had learned from my experiences in Allison Hill to maximize community involvement and interaction throughout the project. This thesis uses my community mural projects as case studies for an analysis of the impacts of community murals. The analysis focuses on community feedback gathered from the Millheim mural.

The process of creating a community mural physically transforms the community involved with a collaborative work of art that is beautiful and represents a shared vision.
With the loss of funding for PGSA and the continual cutting of art programs of all kinds, the need for a creative outlet, not just for children but for everyone, is becoming critical. We must invest in creating opportunities for everyone to reach into their creative, innovative, and productive potential. It may not be possible to replace something as valuable as PGSA that has transformed so many young people into creative and passionate advocates of the arts. In the absence of government-funded programs within our educational systems, one way that creative environments can exist is through public art projects.

**Introduction to Public Art and Community Murals**

**Definition of Public Art**

Public art is “work created by artists for places accessible to and used by the public” (J. Becker 5). As such, public art encompasses a wide variety of creative expressions in the public realm, including everything from memorials, historical monuments, and sculpture parks to contemporary installations, performance events, and fireworks displays (J. Becker 1). Many famous cultural landmarks such as the Statue of Liberty, the Eiffel Tower, and the Vietnam Veterans are public art pieces (J. Becker 6). Today, public art also encompasses murals, environmental activism, cause-related art, sound installations, interdisciplinary performance events, community-based initiatives, and much more (J. Becker 5-6). Frequently, public art pieces are funded by a “‗percent-for-art’ strategy in which a small portion of capital improvement funds are allocated for acquiring or commissioning artwork” (J. Becker 4).
Public art pieces have the potential to enhance the quality of life of those who experience it and create a sense of pride and community identity (J. Becker 6). It is important to distinguish between public artworks that take into account its site and other contextual issues, and “plop” art that does not take its context into consideration in any way (J. Becker 5; Pilato 7). It is also important to distinguish public art that simply intends to visually enhance a space and public art as a means to activate civic dialogue or provide a vehicle for a community to express identity (J. Becker 1).

Ideally, public art “resonates with the site in context, engages the community, meets the community’s, artist’s, and client’s needs, and creates a sense of civic and community pride” (Pilato 6). It can also present an opportunity for local residents and visitors to have an artistic connection to a particular place. The content of public art can reflect cultural heritage, a specific social issue, commemorate an individual’s or groups contribution to the community, or depict a vision for the future (Pilato 6). Public art is often controversial because communities always contain a multitude of opinions and needs. In this context, conflicts can become an opportunity for a constructive dialogue, injecting meaning into the process (Fleming 103).

Public art can bring a variety of benefits to a community. Economic benefits include the ability of public art to attract residential and commercial tenants, increase property values, and stimulate tourism. Cultural and social benefits include the ability of public art to contribute to local identity through the use of open spaces, reduce the levels of crime by giving a sense of community ownership to residents, create a cultural legacy for the future, introduce innovation and experimentation in shared spaces, play a key role in urban and rural regeneration, provide an opportunity for art education, and inspire
people to take social action (Pilato 7-8). Public art projects establish networks, mutual trust and cooperation within communities for the benefit of all (Newman, Curtis, and Stephens 311).

Necessity of Public Art

Much of contemporary society views art as nonessential. Rather, art is considered something extra to occupy leisure time and surplus money. However, according to Ellen Dissanayake’s essay “Why is public art necessary,” the arts are not just necessary—without the arts, we are not satisfying our complete human nature (Bach et al. 27). The arts have been a significant part of every culture and society since the beginning of humankind. If the arts did not provide a benefit of some kind, they would not have persisted throughout the many generations of humankind. Though our lives are very different from our ancestors’ lives, perhaps we are creatures who have evolved biologically to require the social and emotional satisfaction that the arts bestow (Bach et al. 26-27). Dissanayake’s essay claims that there are ten contributions that the arts have made to humans. The arts:

(1) Provide sense of identity, (2) build community and reciprocity; (3) allow the physical and psychological satisfaction of making and creating something with one’s hands and body; (4) engage nonverbal parts of our minds; (5) enhance and enrich both the natural and the man-made environments; 6) help us to deal with anxiety; (7) provide refreshment, pleasure, and enjoyment; 8) put us in touch with important life concerns; (9) acknowledge the things we care about, and allow us
the opportunity to mark or celebrate that caring; and (10) awaken us to deeper self-understanding and to higher levels of consciousness. (Bach et al. 28)

While there are other ways to fulfill each of these, the arts achieve them all and seem to do it very well. The form of contemporary art that perhaps most comprehensively fulfills these is public art. This is unsurprising because throughout history most human art has been “public art” in the sense that it affects members of a community which experiences it collectively (Bach et al. 28).

History of Murals

Just as art is as old as humanity, the idea of painting on walls is an ancient one. The oldest radiologically dated cave paintings, The Chauvet Cave Paintings in France, are over thirty thousand years old (―Chauvet‖). Almost every major ancient culture had some form of murals including the ancient Egyptians, Babylonians, Chinese, and Mayans (Mueller 1-2).

In the modern western world, murals regained recognition as a means to make strong visual statement in the 1910’s in Mexico. After the fall of the Mexican government Mexican artists, revolting against traditional academic painting, used murals depicting revolution and struggle to express the social concerns relevant to their times (Mueller 6). In the 1930’s los tres grandes, or “the big three”, Mexican muralists came to the United States, bringing the mural movement as a means of cultural and political expression with them (Hurlburt 3). These three artists, José Clemente Orozco, Diego Rivera, and David Alfaro Siqueiros, were invited to paint important murals in the United
States. The resulting murals strongly influenced American painters during the depression. Financed by the government, American muralists transformed bleak areas with colorful murals depicting various social themes, city life, and celebration of America (Mueller 7).

The community mural movement exploded in America in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Many of these murals were in big-city ghettos and represented the nation’s struggle against racism and poverty. Soon after, community murals began to appear in small farm towns on churches, trade-union halls, schools, and local public agencies. Then they spread to white working-class neighborhoods, prisons, college campuses, middle-class streets, and the suburbs (Barnett 11). In the beginning of the modern mural movement, murals often depicted the brutalizing of minority people, the martyrdom of their leaders, and the affirmation of historical accomplishments. In the 1970s, murals were often protests against racism and attacks on urban renewal that removed urban people from their homes rather than rehabilitating their housing. Murals were then used to express antiwar sentiments, peace, and women’s concerns. As murals grew in popularity and became more diversely themed, public art became a method to celebrate and preserve a way of life, people’s relations to one another, and their beliefs in themselves (Barnett 131, 385).

The Philadelphia Mural Arts Program and Cloth Murals

When I first began community murals in Harrisburg, Keeping Pennsylvania Beautiful (KPB) sent me to meet Jane Golden, the founder and director of the Philadelphia Mural Arts Program (MAP). Jane Golden gave me a tour of some of the murals in Philadelphia, told me stories about each mural and the history of the MAP, and
introduced me to a mural artist who explained to me how to make murals using parachute cloth. The City of Philadelphia Mural Arts Program plays an important role in the contemporary mural arts movement and has also led me to the mural techniques that I use today. Therefore, I would like to review the history and accomplishments of the program as well as important lessons that can be learned from the program.

The Philadelphia Mural Arts Program is the nation’s largest mural program, having created nearly 3,000 murals and works of public art since its inception in 1984. Originally named the Philadelphia Anti-Graffiti Network, the MAP was conceived by Jane Golden as part of an initiative to reduce graffiti throughout Philadelphia. In addition to a massive graffiti-removal effort, the initiative included a mural-painting component designed to engage graffiti writers—who were often low-income, minority youth—in learning more positive and productive ways to express their creativity. In its first few years, Philadelphia Anti-Graffiti Network worked exclusively with graffiti writers. Though the resulting murals brought beauty and color to blighted neighborhoods, the murals were unprofessional. Jane Golden was interested in bringing the program up to the next level, so in 1990, Los Angeles-based artist Kent Twitchell was brought in to produce the Julius Erving (Dr. J) mural. The stunning visual impact of this huge portrait raised the standard for murals throughout the city. With this more professional standard in mind, the Anti-Graffiti Network was restructured in 1996 and the mural painting component became the Mural Arts Program (Fleming 107; Cleaveland).

Kent Twitchel’s mural was the first MAP mural to use the technique of adhering nylon fabric, commonly called parachute cloth, to a building (Twitchell, “Question”). Since then, the practice of creating murals on fabric panels glued to walls after being
painted, has become common in the MAP and used by muralists all over the nation. Kent Twitchell invented the method in the 70’s and continued experimenting with different kinds of papers and fabrics until the year after his Dr. J mural in Philadelphia when he discovered "Non-woven Media" sometimes called Pellon (Twitchell, “Question”). It is a synthetic, nonwoven fabric that is very lightweight and strong. Twitchell uses a fabric that is 70% polyester and 30% cellulose because it allows primers to fully saturate the fabric, preventing rot and deterioration. Additionally, the fabric never stretches or shrinks, which would cause the mural to wrinkle or crack (Twitchell, “Question”; Pellon). Since discovering this inexpensive material he has used it for every mural project. (Twitchell, “Question”).

By raising the professionalism in the MAP, Philadelphia has been transformed by thousands of pieces of incredible art. Murals can suffer from a stigma because of their association with poverty or children’s projects, and thus this professionalism is an essential component of meeting both the aesthetic and the social goals of the work (Fleming 99-100). MAP engages community members in the design process, even though the muralists and their assistants execute the final artworks themselves (Fleming 108). Today, MAP offers after-school workshops in mural making and community engagement with at-risk and low-income teens from around the city (Cleveland). The stated mission of the Mural Arts Program is to:

1) Design and create murals that reflect and depict the culture and history of Philadelphia communities. 2) Develop long-term, sustainable collaborations with communities that engage residents in the mural process of vision and design to

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1 To read full email from Kent Twitchell, see Appendix A on page 97.
expands their view of their community and environment. 3) Promote community awareness and understanding of visual art by developing and implementing visual and educational programming in those communities for children and youth through involvement in the creation of murals in their neighborhoods. 4) Build on neighborhood revitalization efforts and investments using murals and the mural design process as a community-organizing vehicle, blight-removal strategy, and demonstration of civic pride. 5) Generate professional development opportunities for artists committed to working collaboratively in communities to create murals and visual-art education projects. (Cleveland)

This brief history of public art and community murals ends here, with the largest mural arts program in the United States. This program and its goals are what I learned from and tailored to my own mural projects.

**A Note on Terminology - Defining “Community” and “Public”**

Both terms, *community* and *public*, have many definitions. As this paper deals so heavily in these terms and their associated concepts, a brief discussion of how these terms will be used in this paper is in order. A community can be a social group of any size whose members reside in the same geographical location, share the same government, or have a common cultural and historical heritage (“Community”). The place inhabited by a group of people can be called a community. Community can refer to any group of people that share common characteristics or a group that perceives itself as distinct from the rest of society. A community does not necessarily refer to people; a community can be made up of nations, ideas, or animals.
There are many other definitions and uses of the term *community* but the problem with this term extends beyond the fact that it has many definitions. The word *community* has no positive opposing term, so it can easily become an empty and sentimental word. According to author Joseph Harris in *The Idea of Community in the Writing Classroom*, “community tends to mean little more than a nicer, friendlier, fuzzier version of what came before” (qtd. in Eberly 168). The idea of community is “little more than a notion—hypothetical and suggestive, powerful yet ill-defined” (qtd. in Eberly 169). In this paper, the term *community* will simply refer to the people who live in the locations of the mural projects.

Some of the contexts in which the shortcomings of the term *community* become problematic, the term *public* can be very helpful. Like *community*, *public* also has many definitions. Jurgen Habermas outlines seven different definitions of the word *public* in *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Eberly and Cohen 37). The definitions, as summarized by Rosa Eberly, are as follows:

1. “We call events and occasions ‘public’ when they are open to all, in contrast to closed or exclusive affairs—as when we speak of public places or public houses” (p. 1);
2. “public buildings’ simply house state institutions and as such are ‘public’” (p. 2);
3. such occasions when “a powerful display of representation is staged whose ‘publicity’ contains an element of public recognition” (p. 2);
4. “when we say someone has made a name for himself, has a public reputation” (p.2);
5. what Habermas calls the most common usage, “the public as carrier of public opinion; its
function as a critical judge is precisely what makes the public character of proceedings—in court for instance—meaningful” (p. 2); (6) “the public sphere itself appears as a separate domain—the public domain versus the private” (p. 2); and (7) “sometimes the public appears simply as that sector of public opinion that happens to be opposed to the authorities” (p. 2).

(Eberly and Cohen 37)

From these definitions and Habermas’ additional analysis of public spheres, Eberly notes in her discussion of theories for conceiving of public scholarship that “because public spheres do not preexist spatially or temporally, but rather come into being as individuals engage in rational-critical debate about matters of common concern, colleges and universities can—under conditions that are better built from within than decreed from without—come to function as spaces for critical publicity and common purpose” (Eberly and Cohen 38).

Therefore, a public can also be defined as a group of people who have come together to act because they share consequences. This is the definition that is of greatest interest in this paper. A collaborative community mural project creates a public. Publics are ephemeral, and the publics created around public art projects usually end when the projects end. Communities, on the other hand, are more permanent. The existence and duration of a public usually depends on having an oppositional force to keep them going. The oppositional force for the public of a mural project could be the fear of loss of collective community identity, loss of sense of place, loss of close community ties, etc. However, the public of a project like this could be said to be more of an affirming public

2 See note on sustainability in Chapter 4, page _ for additional comments on this issue.
with the goals of forming and enhancing identity, place, and community ties.

To summarize, in this paper the communities are the populations of the locations in question. The groups of people that have come together to create the murals are publics. An individual who is part of the population of a neighborhood and thus a member of that community, but is actively opposed to the community mural project is part of a counter-public. The public, the counter-public, and the non-participating residents of a location are all subsets of the same community. Additionally, to be part of this public does not mandate that one must be part of the community. In my mural projects there were always visitors or even active participants and project leaders that lived outside of the neighborhood involved. In Harrisburg, I was in some ways a temporary member of the community and in other ways an outsider. However, I was very much part of the public.

I will continue to refer to my mural projects as “community murals” for two reasons. One is because this is already the common term for such projects. The other is that “public murals” is a confusing term, because all murals that are outside are “public” in the most common sense of the word, regardless of whether or not they involve anyone other than an artist and a client. My projects are “community murals” in the sense that they attempt to involve and engage all members of the community. The projects succeed in creating a public out of a subset of that population. Community mural projects are a type of public art, and public art is artwork created by a public.
Evaluating the Impact of Community Murals

Defining Success

To evaluate the impacts of Community Murals is a difficult thing. Quantifying empowerment, measuring identity enhancement, or graphing positive life change is next to impossible, especially from an artist’s perspective. However, the social sciences have methods for tackling such types of evaluation, and some variables are more numerically definable such as increased property values or number of participants engaged. Before determining how to evaluate a project, however, the intentions of the project must be defined. The meaning of success in a community mural project vary depending on the needs of the community and the goals of the project organizers.

One definition of success, given by the Philadelphia Mural Arts Program, is split into two distinct but interdependent categories. The first is “quality,” embodied in MAP’s long-term relationships with many of the finest muralists in the country. These mural artists are carefully selected not just for their excellence of their artwork on the walls but also for their community-engagement processes. The second category of success has to do with individual and community relationship. Symptoms of success include the following:

1) ongoing and increasing involvement by participants, 2) Community involvement, support and ownership of both the mural process and product, 3) Organizations and community partnerships that are sustained beyond individual projects, 4) Diverse representation of community throughout the mural-making process, and 5) Youth participants with new skills, a sense of accomplishment and the esteem of their peers and the broader community.
Other definitions of success may be more focused on education, economic stimulation, increasing support for the arts, beautification, or creating positive publicity in a stigmatized locality. Each project may be designed differently to accomplish particular goals. In my own projects, my goals are: to maximize community involvement and establish networks, mutual trust, and cooperation in order to create a public within a community; to create a design that represents a collaboratively created community vision; to build pride within the community; to have the project be a positive and fun experience for all involved; and to have a final product that is aesthetically beautiful and enhances the visual landscape of the town.

**Literature Review – What Previous Studies have Shown**

Many studies of the impacts of public art have been done. This literature review begins with a summarization of the findings of an article in which the authors examined studies that address the question: Do public art projects contribute to positive social and economic change at a local level? These studies were all community based, involved professional artists and art educators, were carried out over at least a six-month period, and intended to facilitate social and economic change (Newman, Curtis, and Stephens 310). Few evaluations of community-based art projects exist, and of these evaluations most report high levels of satisfaction without presenting evaluative data. Fewer still of these studies present evaluative data and give adequate description of their methodology. Eight of these studies met the methodological standards of a literature review of studies evaluating the impact of public art completed by Kathrine Curtis, Tony Newman, and Jo
Stephens for Barnardo’s, the United Kingdom’s largest children’s charity (Newman, Curtis, and Stephens 313). The combined results of these eight studies gives a good picture of what the existing evaluative literature on public art shows.

The majority of these studies included self-reports of positive personal, social, economic, and educational change. Across the studies, personal change included making new friends, being happier, becoming more creative and confident, reducing feelings of isolation, and increasing the number of people taking up training. Social change included more cross cultural community understanding, stronger sense of ‘locality’, bringing different groups together, and improvement in organizational skills. The studies showed that the public art projects caused economic change in the form of having an impact on the number of new jobs and people finding work, improving image of community helping inward investment, increasing sales of artwork and increasing investment in arts programs. There also was some evidence of educational change in the form of improved school performance (Newman, Curtis, and Stephens 318).

Relatively speaking, these eight studies were well-structured and ambitious attempts to map change in highly complex situations. However, the self-reports of participants of important but intangible factors such as ‘quality of public services’ or ‘community cooperation’ lack evidential weight when judged by conventional standards. These studies also failed to meet demanding methodological standards. For example, in some studies it was unclear how study populations were sampled, how respondents’ views were measured, how many participants were lost to attrition, and lacked evidence in many cases when claiming success in certain areas, such as claims of better health (Newman, Curtis, and Stephens 318). These criticisms are common to most evaluations
of community-based interventions.

To give more detailed examples of the evaluative studies on public art projects, two more studies will be briefly summarized. First is a low-budget evaluation of a group of public art projects in Lamar, Colorado. This study did a thorough job of qualitatively analyzing the success of their projects through extensive surveys, interviews, and monitoring of public discourse. The second is a large-scale study completed by the University of Pennsylvania evaluating the Philadelphia Mural Arts Program. These two studies are quite different in scale, approach, and in the types of projects studied.

The first study, “The Community Artist as a Community Development Catalyst: An Evaluation of a Pilot Project” by Bernie Jones and Nora Fesco, evaluates the impact of a series of public art projects organized in Lamar, Colorado. The purposes of this project were: “that the artist and community should be mutually challenged and enriched by such a project, that the artist will be placed in the role of community catalyst so that community can (begin to) articulate a community vision, and that the art will begin to enter into an overall strategy of community development” (Jones and Fesco 2). The project consisted of fifteen small murals, art workshops, and other art activities completed by the resident artist in coordination with a local arts organization, other local artists, and community residents. The study evaluated whether or not changes took place in the following variables: awareness and appreciation of cultural heritage and symbols, sense of community, identification with the community, and participation in community affairs (Jones and Fesco 2).

The evaluation methods chosen were appropriate to a low-budget study and included six approaches for gathering data: Interviews with public officials, media
representatives, school officials, local arts council members, local artists, and resident artist; surveys conducted with small random samples before and after the residency; informal interviews with residents on the streets; direct observations made during various project activities including photography; additional surveys left at various stores and restaurants for residents to voluntarily fill out and return; and monitoring of local newspaper for a month before the residency and two months after to see if coverage of the arts in general and the projects specifically had changed (Jones and Fesco 9-10). The data was analyzed quantitatively for surveys and qualitatively for all other methods in accordance with the evaluators’ theoretical scheme which identified the resident artist as the “change agent”, the local arts council as the “change agent system”, the local arts community and local artists as the “action system”, and the community at large as the “client system and action system” (Jones and Fesco 11).

The findings of this study reported that all systems identified in the theoretical schemes had been affected. Almost all impacts were positive ones and virtually everyone connected with the project viewed it as a success (Jones and Fesco 11). The resident artist was changed in many positive ways. The arts council was affected positively by the projects; its role was changed, capacities increased, and its stature within the community was enhanced. The local arts community and local artists were positively changed in the following ways: arts exposure was greatly enhanced, some perceptions of the arts altered, participation in the arts increased, and increased support for the arts was demonstrated in terms of funding and attendance of arts openings and other arts events (Jones and Fesco 11-15). The community at large benefited from and was altered by the project. The analysis found there was symbol creation and sharing, collective action and enhanced
sense of community, improved community image and pride, diverse groups were afforded a chance to work together, and capacity-building (the ability of a community to engage in collective problem solving) was enhanced by working through project ideas and controversies (Jones and Fesco 16).

The study concluded that the project did make an impact on the arts in Lamar. There was more public talk about art, a dramatic increase in visible artistic activity, more art works apparent, more people actively involved in the arts, and local artists were recognized and making contributions to the community. The study also concluded that a resident artist could indeed be a catalyst for community development. There was enhanced community identity and pride, existing community organizations were bolstered, and there was a chance for the population to reaffirm belief in the importance of cultural symbols and heritage. The study also noted that the arts can be a vehicle for community development only if the project is planned appropriately, the community has a degree of readiness (has some existing community organizations/infrastructure) and the resident artist has some special personal qualities and a professional outlook. Necessary personal qualities include openness, flexibility, understanding of community, and non-possessiveness about the project so that local ownership of project can develop (Jones and Fesco 18-19).

Through analyses of various forms of community and media feedback, this study shows how a low-budget approach can effectively show how a public art project enhanced the arts of a community and catalyzed community development. The next study that will be reviewed is a project of The University of Pennsylvania’s School of Social Work known as the Social Impact of the Arts Project (SIAP) study of the Philadelphia
Mural Arts Project (MAP) which looked at MAP’s physical, social and economic impacts (Cleveland).

The major findings of the study discussed in an article profiling the Philadelphia Mural Arts Program were:

1) Murals often serve as an indicator of a neighborhood that has the ingredients to create revitalization, including a diverse population and a strong civic life. To the extent that murals serve as an expression of that transformation, we can say that they have an impact in stabilizing and sustaining processes of community revitalization. 2) Every $1.00 of city funding for murals leverages roughly $.25 to $1.00 in community contributions — $.65 for the “typical” mural — or a 25-to-100 percent return on investment. 3) Of the 139 murals completed in 2001, young people were engaged with 69 (50 percent) of the projects. 4) During 2001, the Mural Arts Program employed a total of 99 artists to fill 113 positions available in its two core programs. (Cleveland)

A closer look at the study reveals how incredibly complicated it actually is to evaluate public art and how mixed the results of the various components of the study were. This report represents the first attempt to assess the impact of the MAP on Philadelphia’s neighborhoods (Stern et al. 1). The Social Impact of the Arts Project (SIAP) of the University of Pennsylvania School of Social Work worked with MAP’s development staff to develop the concept of the community impact assessment (Stern et al. 2). The purpose of the study was to respond to internal and external needs that had arisen as a result of the MAP’s notoriety, growth, and institutionalization (Stern et al. 2).
The internal needs were to assess the progress towards its mission and goals and to develop a framework for planning and program development. The external need was to communicate MAP’s effectiveness to a wider circle of audiences, and to develop the accountability needed to support long-range financing and resource-development strategies (Stern et al. 2).

The core of the impact study was designed to build the data-gathering capacity of the MAP (Stern et al. 4). SIAP then used two approaches to assess the benefits of the MAP to Philadelphia communities. The first approach was to develop a method to measure the community impact of murals. This involved forming a conceptual model of how murals might have community impacts, collecting data on murals, and identifying data sources and indicators of community outcomes (Stern et al. 4). It also involved looking at the neighborhood contexts of murals and using existing data to test the hypotheses about the community effects of murals (Stern et al. 4). The second approach was to develop a method to analyze the community-leveraging potential of murals. This involved designing a way to document the level of community investment in murals made possible by city funding. The concept of “community leveraging” was to use an economic valuation of non-economic contributions to draw attention to the “value” of community engagement. This involved assigning a dollar value to all community inputs in the mural process (Stern et al. 4).

The study identified three ways that murals might have an impact on communities: individual inspiration, the creation of amenities, and the development of social capital (Stern et al. 47). Individual inspiration in the context of murals could manifest in two ways. During the process of mural production, those involved may be
inspired and changed, or the viewers may be inspired and changed. Though either process may cause individuals to be inspired to a new life path, this *inspiration theory* of impact poses several conceptual problems for the SIAP study (Stern et al. 4). Individual inspiration does not always directly affect the neighborhood; it only creates the possibility that multiple individuals would be affected similarly and move towards the same end to affect the neighborhood. The chances of individual reactions to a mural project having a significant influence on a community is quite small and is likely to be muted by other residents who have less intense reactions to the mural (Stern et al. 7). For conceptual and methodological reasons, the SIAP study determined that it was unlikely that individual inspiration would lead to measurable community impacts (Stern et al. 7).

The amenity value of murals refers to the ability of murals to turn walls associated with vacant and demolished buildings into positive amenities. Mural projects are frequently connected to the development of a community garden or park, which in turn can create a positive space for community interaction. Some problems associated with *amenity theory* include the fact that lightly used spaces can just as easily be used for negative behavior as positive behavior and MAP’S current database does not differentiate between murals that are connected with community parks or in other ways transform the space around them (Stern et al. 8). Like the *inspiration theory*, it would be difficult for the SIAP study to determine what projects had benefits related to the amenity value of murals using the MAP databases (Stern et al. 8).

The third and most likely way that murals would measurably benefit communities is by creating social capital. Social capital is a term used by sociologists to talk about the value of networks of relationships on individual and group well-being (Stern et al. 9).
Currently there is a debate in the social sciences about whether or not social capital is distributed similarly or differently from monetary capital. If it is more equally distributed it can work to benefit low-resource groups, and if not then it simply reinforces current inequalities (Stern et al. 9). Murals might influence social capital before, during, and after they are installed. The community design process could be considered a social-capital-building process because, ideally, it brings people from a community together to talk about their aspirations and the potential role of a mural in their neighborhood and allows them to widen their web of relationships (Stern et al. 9). By promoting civic engagement, mural-making might help produce a social environment in which other positive changes could take place. Thus, for the purposes of the SIAP study, social capital is the most plausible and measurable means by which murals are likely to benefit communities (Stern et al. 9).

SIAP’s measures of social capital include: the number of cultural providers within or near a block group, the total number of social organizations, and the level of regional cultural participation. For mural assessment, the measure of community impacts also included changes in population, the ethnic diversity of the neighborhood, and in property values (Stern et al. 10). The SIAP authors identified that the “key to this model is disentangling the relationship of murals to the other ways in which social capital is formed. Are murals produced in neighborhoods that already have high levels of social capital? Do murals increase social capital over time?” (Stern et al. 10) This complex and multifaceted study is as thorough as possible given the existing data and has rigorous methodological standards. For the sake of brevity, only the section on evaluating the impact of murals on property values will be described in detail to illustrate the
complexity of the relationship between community murals and social capital before the conclusion of the study is summarized.

SIAP collaborated with the University of Pennsylvania Cartographic Modeling Laboratory (CML) to examine the extent to which proximity to a mural might have influenced property values (Stern et al. 19). Controlling for the influence of concentrated disadvantage in many of the neighborhoods containing murals, the results showed that the presence of a mural in a neighborhood tended to raise property values by more than eight thousand dollars. This suggests that the presence of a mural appears to have a significant, positive effect on sales processes (Stern et al. 19). This analysis supports the assertion that murals combined with other positive community efforts can have a measurable impact on neighborhood well-being (Stern et al. 20).

Given the connection between murals and other indexes of social capital such as institutional presence and cultural participation, the level of civic engagement in the neighborhood would need to be factored in before it could be concluded that murals had had an independent effect on property values (Stern et al. 20). This effect is likely to be a result of the fact that murals were produced in neighborhoods that had already begun to have an increase in civic engagement. With respect to community impacts, murals may simply be an indicator of pre-existing social capital. On the other hand, they may also promote higher levels of civic engagement (Stern et al. 23). Murals that were the product of a full process of community design are most likely to be associated with social capital creation. MAP’s database currently only contains data with the location and dates of murals, making it impossible for SIAP’s study to distinguish between the possible impacts of murals with a full community design process and those without (Stern et al.
The various aspects of SIAP’s study led to a new set of questions: “Do mural projects with more community process generate greater social benefits than those with little community involvement? Do murals with a high rating of artistic quality or design have greater benefits? Does type of mural matter—for example indoor, outdoor, temporary or permanent? Do mural projects with youth participation have greater benefits than those without?” MAP will need to gather more precise data, more purposefully, in order to answer these questions (Stern et al. 48).

The general conclusions of the study did not show that murals on their own could transform a neighborhood. However, murals “often serve as an indicator of a neighborhood that has the ingredients to create revitalization, including a diverse population and a strong civic life” (Stern et al. 6). To the extent that the murals serve as an expression of that transformation, the SIAP concluded that they do have an impact in “stabilizing and sustaining processes of community transformation” (Stern et al. 6).

The MAP Case Study 2001, conducted as part of the SIAP evaluation, found that few murals projects actually go through a full community process. SIAP recommends that MAP either expand the program in a way that it can routinely incorporate a full community process or reconfigure the program to produce fewer murals with a higher level of community participation. This would require the program to reconsider the importance of process vs. product and also the commitment of a stipend for mural artists (Stern et al. 66).

From this literature review it is apparent that existing evaluative studies are far from conclusive when trying to understand the social and economic impacts of public art
projects in general and community murals in particular. As long as mural activity is concurrent with other processes of social transformation, it will always be very difficult to quantify specific effects of mural work on property values, cultural providers, social organizations, and other large-scale metrics of social capital. However, Jane Golden of the MAP has spent decades working tirelessly because she believes in her personal mantra: “art saves lives.” As a community mural artist, I too know that the impacts shown by these studies, even if significant, are just the tip of the iceberg. The studies point to ways that future evaluations may better demonstrate the creation of social capital through community mural projects, and how there may be a positive relationship between amount of community involvement and amount of social capital created. The scope of my study does not allow for the use of the SIAP study’s recommendations, instead searching community feedback for indicators of impact.

This Study

Maximizing Community Involvement

When I first got involved in public art projects I had never heard of terms like “social capital,” and yet each of the community mural projects that I organized during the five years of my undergraduate education made me sure that involving the community as much as possible was very important. Over the course of the projects, it became my main goal; I learned new ways to increase community involvement during each project. After two years of projects in Harrisburg, when I decided to independently do a community mural in Millheim, I was able to design a project that had community involvement built in at every stage. I also had data collection and analysis in mind during the project in
preparation for this study.

All of my projects, especially the Millheim mural, invested more time in community involvement than the majority of MAP mural projects in Philadelphia. Using the technology for cloth murals brought to the MAP by Kent Twitchell, I create a paint-by-number mural on the panels. Cesar Viveros, the MAP artist who introduced me to Twitchell’s method of using Pellon, also sometimes creates paint-by-number panels to involve community members in the painting process. In this way, community involvement does not end at the design process. Community members of all ages and talents can participate in actually painting the mural, without compromising the professionalism and aesthetics of the final product. From the inception to the unveiling, hundreds of community members volunteer thousands of hours to collaboratively create a beautiful artwork that represents a shared vision.

**Project Goals**

It is my hope that these projects bring educational and economic benefits to the communities, that they enhance social capital, and that they establish networks, mutual trust, and cooperation within the communities for the benefit of all. The SIAP study identified three ways that murals might have an impact on communities: individual inspiration, the creation of amenities, and the development of social capital. I see no reason why these three ways could not work together synergistically to impact communities. It is beyond the scope of this project to quantify, for example, the amount social capital created, or to demonstrate that this project creates more social capital than another public art project with less investment in community involvement. I will not be
answering the questions posed by SIAP’s well-funded, multi-year study done by professional scholars at the University of Pennsylvania of the largest and most successful mural arts program in the nation. Instead, my goals for this project were: to design a mural project that would maximize community involvement; to make a design that integrated very different kinds of community input and accurately represented a collaborative community vision; to bring the community together across various boundaries; to build pride within the community; to have the project reach many people and have that be a positive and fun experience for all involved; and to have a final product that was aesthetically beautiful and enhanced the visual landscape of the town. My intention was to gather feedback from the community that would indicate success in my goals.

Participant reports from the Millheim mural project indicate that this mural successfully created individual inspiration, amenities, and social capital at the individual level. I believe that future large-scale mural projects with sophisticated evaluations can detect similar effects at community scales. My experience also indicated that building social capital required different approaches in different communities, and that the most social capital was built through participant interaction during the process of creating the mural. The potential benefits of investment in community murals is largely untapped, but could be a very valuable approach to enhancing art, culture, and society in communities of all sizes.
**Organization of this Thesis**

Chapter 2 of this thesis is a description of my mural projects in Allison Hill, including a narrative of how I got involved, a profile of Allison Hill’s history and current socioeconomic and demographic statistics, and a detailed description of all three of my mural projects in Allison Hill. Chapter 3 describes the mural project in Millheim. The first section introduces the town historically, socioeconomically, and demographically. The second section contains a narrative of the project and a detailed description of the community involvement. The last section of the chapter contains the analysis of community response to the mural. Chapter 4 contains a reflection on the projects, the conclusion, and suggestions for further research. The Appendices contain websites and publications that feature my murals, a how-to document describing in detail the mural techniques that I use, and other additional information.
Chapter 2 – Allison Hill Murals

Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful – Summer Internship in Harrisburg

In my second semester at Penn State, I took a class called “New Genre Art and Exhibition” with resident artist and art educator G. E. Washington at Penn State. The course involved the incorporation of art, especially performance art, into social education and as a part of initiatives to support community development. Throughout his teaching career, Washington’s students have created murals and community installation projects about history, race relations, and social class difference. In his teaching and art making, G.E. emphasizes that everything that we do is “performance” and utilizes dialogue as the primary medium for investigations into spaces of difference (Washington). During this course, as I was exploring the use of video, installation, and performance as means for social activism, Washington forwarded the class a flyer advertising a position as community mural artist who would be working with children in Allison Hill, an inner-city neighborhood of Harrisburg. I was already searching for an exciting and challenging job or program for the coming summer, so I was immediately intrigued by the internship. I sent an inquiry email, which led to an interview, and just a few days later I was offered the internship with Keeping Pennsylvania Beautiful (KPB.)

The idea of using college students as energetic catalysts for community-based beautification projects in inner-city neighborhoods of Pennsylvania had come to KPB director Julia Marano when she heard about the work that Jesse Hunting was doing in Allison Hill. Jesse is a former Penn State student in landscape architecture who had been
doing community projects in Allison Hill through vacant lot restoration and community
garden projects. Jesse had begun this work as part of a Penn State landscape architecture
course, but had continued on his own for several with literally no budget or
organizational support (“Making Life Better”). Julia Marano hired Jesse to select and
lead interns in a pilot project for KPB in Allison Hill (“Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful”).
Jesse was the contact person on that flyer, my interviewer, and ultimately my boss. In this
first year of the program several other interns and I were to take this pilot project on its
maiden voyage. Several interns were to continue Jesse’s vacant lot restoration and
community gardens, and I was to do the mural. Keeping Pennsylvania Beautiful had no
previous experience with large-scale community murals, neither did Jesse, and neither
did I.

A few months later when I moved to Allison Hill for the summer, I had no idea
what I was getting myself into as a rural white girl, eighteen years old, who had never
spent time in an inner-city neighborhood like it. Allison Hill, locally known simply as
“The Hill”, is one of the poorest and most dangerous neighborhoods in Harrisburg, the
kind that most suburban white people who worked in Harrisburg would lock their car
doors and drive quickly if they ever had to pass through. The demographic data below
should help to show why I was in for a culture shock.

Allison Hill is a neighborhood adjacent to downtown Harrisburg and not far from
the capital that was once a beautiful, thriving, and affluent community. Among other
factors of urban decline, damage in 1972 by Hurricane Agnes caused many residents to
relocate to the suburbs with federal grants intended for rebuilding the affected homes
(Rissler et al. 3). Now the gorgeous early nineteenth century brick facades are crumbling
and many of the homes are vacant, converted into crack houses, or are low-income rental properties bordered by alleys filled with trash. A more formal look at Allison Hill with the data from the Census Bureau offers detailed demographic data for Allison Hill and South Allison Hill (as it is split by census tracks in the 2000 census).

**Allison Hill Demographics**

Allison Hill’s population in 2000 was 8,905, 96.8% of whom lived in the 2,938 households (occupied housing units). There were 3,911 total housing units in the region, which means that 24.9% of all housing units in Allison Hill were vacant. Of the occupied housing units, 41.3% were owner occupied and 58.6% were renter occupied (U.S. Census Bureau, “Summary File 1”). The population is very transitory, leading to low levels of attachment to the neighborhood. According to the 2000 census, 54% of South Allison Hill residents had relocated in the five years prior to the census. A 2008 Weed and Seed Neighborhood survey found that 52% had moved in the past five years and 64% of the people surveyed said they hoped to move from the neighborhood within the next three years (Rissler et al. 6).

Allison Hill has a very young population; the median age in 2000 was 31.4 years for Allison Hill and 27.8 years for South Allison Hill, both below the national average of 35.3 years. Racially, Allison Hill is very diverse. The population is 55.4% Black or African American, 23.4% white, 21.5% Hispanic or Latino, and 3% Asian. 7.5% of the people were born outside of U.S. in U.S. territories and 8.4% were foreign born, representing dozens of nations and languages. The average household size and family
size were 2.92 people and 3.49 people respectively, above the national averages of 2.59 and 3.14 (U.S. Census Bureau, “Summary File 1”).

Lack of education is a problem in the area with a high dropout rate in local public schools. Of the population over 25 years of age, 32.7% had a high school degree or higher (compared to 80.4% of the nation) and only 2.9% had a bachelors degree or higher compared to 24.4% of the nation. The median household income in 1999 was $23,548 for Allison Hill and $22,509 for South Allison Hill (much less than the national average of 41,994). The percent of individuals below the poverty level was 31.7%, compared to the national poverty rate, which was only 2.4%. In Allison Hill, 21.4% of households had social security income and another 11.1% had public assistance income (U.S. Census Bureau, “Summary File 3”).

According to the 2008 Weed and Seed Neighborhood Survey, 31% of the adults were either unemployed or searching for employment, and only slightly more than half were in the workforce. The incidence of individuals reporting an annual income of less than ten thousand dollars rose from 24% in the 2000 Census to 32% in the Neighborhood Survey (Rissler et al. 6). Allison Hill has very high crime rates, higher than the rest of the city of Harrisburg and much higher than in the state of Pennsylvania. See the Fig. 1 from the Weed and Seed Revitalization Plan for comparisons between the crime rates of South Allison Hill, Harrisburg, and Pennsylvania.
This context was radically different for me than any place I had ever been. I became aware of my race, my class, my education and my privilege in a way I had never been. I had to confront my own stereotypes while at the same time be conscious of my own safety. I could sometimes hear gunshots in the night, and five gun homicides occurred within a few blocks of my house in one of the two-month periods that I lived there. At the same time, I learned to walk the streets by myself and feel comfortable and safe and got to know the neighborhood well enough that, by the end, I felt like I was becoming part of the Community.

The Mural Projects in Harrisburg

The first summer I spent in Allison Hill was much more than I bargained for, not just because of the kind of place it was, but more so because of the amount of and kind of work that I was responsible for. I soon found out that the mural I was assigned to organize and design was to be nearly 300 feet long by over 6 feet high. The technique I
used was taught to me by an artist from the Philadelphia mural arts program in one two-hour visit. I was to design the mural using Adobe Photoshop, which, at the time, I was entirely unfamiliar with. I had never even done a large scale painting at this point. On top of the responsibility of the mural, I needed to teach an arts and crafts class for inner-city kids at the local community arts center three mornings a week in exchange for the studio space I would be using for the mural projects. The camp kids were aged four to thirteen years old, and I had them all at once. This age range made for a set of attention spans that would not have been easy to teach even if I had had any experience teaching art or working in children’s camps. I also ended up volunteering extra time at those camps to take the kids on field trips and supervise lunches.

In addition to this already rigorous schedule, I was asked to do a small mural project for a nearby church (to try out the mural technique), and periodically to help with the other KPB projects that focused on vacant lot restoration. This meant I spent some of my days gardening, mixing cement, making mosaics, and removing trash and rubble. Those were my responsibilities related to the internship, but there were also the responsibilities that came with the place I was given to live.

All the interns were given a free living space in Harrisburg’s Catholic Worker House. This place, located in the heart of Allison Hill, is one of over 185 Catholic Worker communities nationwide. The organization is committed to nonviolence, voluntary poverty, prayer, and hospitality for the homeless, exiled, hungry, and forsaken. Catholic Workers have been protesting injustice, war, racism, and violence of all forms for many years (The Catholic Worker Movement). In Harrisburg, the Catholic Worker House is an eclectic reclaimed row house that just over a decade ago had been just
another vacant place used as a crack house. Now it is a bustling home of a few permanent Catholic Workers, a rotating cast of people in transition (such as coming out of jail, newly immigrated, or recovering from alcoholism) who were carefully chosen and committed to helping out, and college-aged community workers such as myself in the summers. The house functions not just as a home but also a community center that hosts events, collects and distributes donations of all types, and runs several community gardens. The house is filled to the brim with ever-circulating food and clothing donations to be distributed and is decorated with black Jesus statuettes and hand-made anti-war posters.

The place was a chaotic but wonderful home: something between a salvation army, a soup kitchen, a shelter, and a chapel. My responsibilities included helping to maintain our community gardens located in adjacent vacant lots, gathering and distributing canned goods, fresh food, clothing, furniture and almost anything else imaginable, cooking, cleaning, and participating in community events. In exchange, I got to have a bed and a dresser in one of the top floor bedroom of the row house through the hottest summer months without air-conditioning.

When the ten-week internship was over, the small mural and the other intern’s projects were all done but the larger mural was far from finished. In spite of the difficulty of the situation, I had made a connection to the community and a personal commitment to the project. I was deeply moved by the work I was doing; it challenged me personally, artistically, and professionally in many ways. I decided to volunteer my time, without stipend, and see the project through to completion. We had only just begun painting the 300 foot mural. I stayed in Allison Hill for a few more weeks until the end of the
summer, continued to work through the following year remotely (I did touch up painting in my studio at Penn State and made occasional trips to Harrisburg) and came back to finish and install it the next summer.

The summer of 2006 I was re-hired by KPB to be a head intern with two assistants working for me to do just one mural in ten weeks: no summer art camps and no vacant lot restoration work. That mural was finished in the ten-week allotted period, and I stayed on again for another month as a volunteer to finish the original 300-foot mural. In the following section I will give a more detailed description of individual mural projects, their themes, participants, and how the murals evolved.

**Shared Ministries Mural: June-August 2005**

My first mural was completed on the front of the Shared Ministry church in Allison Hill (1508 Market Street). I used this first small mural, just 24’ long by 4’ high, as an opportunity to learn the mural technique we were introduced to by the Philadelphia Mural Arts Program. Community input on the design was gathered at one large community meeting organized by the church. Over thirty people attended the meeting; they were mostly members of the church as well as a few other community members. Though the church was located in Allison Hill on Market Street just a few blocks from where I lived, the church members were almost entirely white suburban families from outside of the neighborhood. My impression was that for the church, the intention of this mural project was to have it be an outreach project for the community immediately surrounding the church. However, there were few if any residents involved in the community meeting.
The design ended up having a theme of renewal and regeneration and showed a symbolically compressed representation of the timeline of Allison Hill, showing pristine row house architecture, then falling apart buildings, then restoration and recycling. The street scene was also filled with children who were playing, gardening, and recycling. The famous taco truck that was always stationed nearby was also depicted. The mural was done with a paint-by-number technique on panels that allowed anyone of any skill level to be involved with the painting. Over sixty people helped with the actual painting of the mural, including neighborhood kids recruited from the nearby streets, a local day-care class of young girls, and church members.

Over fifty people came to the block party celebration organized by the church on August 6th, 2005. The celebrations had food, games, music, and dedication speeches by church members and local politicians. This was my first lesson in letting go of credit for community art projects; despite having designed the mural and done the majority of the labor to make the mural happen, my name was not mentioned during the ceremony.

**Mulberry Street Bridge Mural: May 2005-August 2006**

This mural was installed on a 296-foot-long by 6.5-foot-high metal wall facing inside the Mulberry Street Bridge. This pedestrian and vehicle bridge connects Allison Hill with downtown, ending right next to the bus and train stations of Harrisburg. To obtain community input for this mural’s design, my two assistants and I organized multiple open community organizing meetings that, no matter how much we advertised and offered free pizza, were sparsely attended. Ultimately, the ideas came through

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3 This technique is described step-by-step in Appendix B, page 99.
4 See Appendix C on page 131 for photos of this mural.
conversations I had with other local community organizers, the director of the community arts center, individuals at KPB, and my own personal interactions with community residents.

Designing something for such a long and narrow space was a challenge because it demanded that a large amount of content be depicted. The long, narrow format lent itself well to a narrative mural with multiple scenes, and I decided to use text to help make the multitude of images make sense together. The final design that I created tells the story of Harrisburg’s history by comparing and contrasting contemporary and historical Harrisburg in terms of political, economic, demographic, and cultural aspects. The historical images I obtained by going through Harrisburg’s historical archives and the contemporary images came mostly from my own photographs and a few others from different sources (with permission). Captions guide the viewer through each scene, ending with a poem that I wrote that encapsulates the mural’s theme of bridges: physical bridges and metaphorical bridges between time, people, and places. In addition, I also gave the date for each scene to make the time comparisons more interesting.5

Even with a total of over two hundred volunteers attending frequent painting sessions, it took more than five months to paint this large and detailed mural. The painting volunteers came from diverse demographic backgrounds, representing different races, ages (from 4 to late 70s), socioeconomic statuses, and neighborhoods (mostly inner-city, some suburban, and a few rural). Many of the volunteers came in groups from pre-existing organizations including day care centers, church groups, schools, community arts centers, Harrisburg’s prison work release center, juveniles on probation, and

5 See Appendix D on page 132 for photos of the Mulberry Street Bridge Mural.
suburban volunteer groups. Other volunteers came individually from the community or were visitors from further away. A dedication ceremony took place indoors on a rainy fall day in 2006 in which the Mayor of Harrisburg and other VIP’s were present. The mayor said in his speech that this was the largest community art project in the history of Harrisburg.

**Derry Street Anti-Violence Mural: June-August 2006**

This 20’ long by 25’ tall mural was installed on the side of a row house on one of the main corridors into downtown Harrisburg. The mural is adjacent to a vacant lot that had been previously restored by Jesse Hunting into a simple lawn with several trees and a white fence around the perimeter. Throughout the course of the mural project, we also worked in the lot with the mural participants decorating the fences and planting flowers. The theme of the mural was Anti-Gun Violence as part of our partnership with Project Safe Neighborhoods, a nationwide effort to reduce gun and gang crime in America. With the help of my assistant interns and the Project Safe Neighborhoods representative, we were able to fit more community input activities into our very tight schedule. Having already made contacts with various community organizations my first year of mural work there, we already had relationships with groups that I knew would want to be involved. We also spent time seeking out and contacting new groups for idea-generating meetings and painting workshops.

Over 100 people were involved in at least one of these meetings in which we facilitated conversations about personal experiences with violence, alternatives to violence, and how we could make a mural with positive imagery on this topic.
Additionally, we set up a free lemonade stand on the lot at the site of the mural with signs inviting people to have a free glass of lemonade in exchange for sharing their ideas for the mural. We did this to reach out to people we did not have access to through organized groups who would eventually be directly impacted by the mural. This was a very interesting experience; many people came and shared stories about how violence had affected their lives and contributed ideas for the mural.

From all of this input, we came up with three different basic design ideas and hosted one large community meeting for people to vote on the basic design and give input on how to improve and add to the designs. At the end of just two weeks we arrived at a design that incorporated the faces and words of community residents selected on the basis of being positive community role models working to make the neighborhood a safer and cleaner place. The faces are foliage of a large tree and the words, our mural slogan “Live the conversation” makes up the trunk of the tree, and the quotes from community members comprise the background. The additional words “water your roots and watch you grow” were painted on the adjacent fence with handprints of children who had helped to paint and other inspirational quotes that the children chose. We had over 150 volunteers involved in painting the mural or working on the lot, and met with a total of 200 people counting all of those who provided input and attended community brainstorming meetings. The people came from all of the same demographics and organizations described for the Mulberry Street Bridge Mural and there were many individuals who participated in both projects.

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Public Discourse

Starting in the Fall of 2005 after beginning my first mural projects, I have had the opportunity to present at various conferences collaboratively and independently on the topic of community murals. Conference presentations have been just one avenue among many for sharing my experience and knowledge in this field with others, and in many cases these presentations led to further communication with artists and art educators in which they consulted me for information and advice regarding other similar projects. My projects were also featured in The Patriot-News, on Harrisburg’s local television news channels, and in multiple Penn State University publications. On a more personal level, many people have contacted me with questions about community art and mural art and I frequently explain the process and share my “How to Paint a Community Mural” document with anyone who wants it.

[7] For a full list of the conferences and the titles of my presentations, see Appendix F on page 137.
[8] To see some of these articles, see Appendix G on page 139.
Chapter 3 – Millheim Mural

Promoting Civic Health

Civic health and social capital have well-established connections to important public issues such as disaster resilience, crime, education, public health, and American democracy. Additionally, individuals who are actively engaged in their communities not only contribute to society but also benefit personally. Students who volunteer in their communities are also engaged and successful in school, retirees who volunteer are healthier and happier, and cities with higher levels of civic engagement have better schools and other public institutions (National Conference 3). A recent study conducted by the National Conference on Citizenship, “America’s Civic Health Index 2009: Civic Health in Hard Times,” measured the current status of our nation’s current civic health at this time of great political change and economic turmoil. The economic crisis might be expected to have two effects on civic health: it could encourage Americans to work together on serious problems in their communities and nation, or it could reduce participation in civil society by turning Americans inward to look after their own families, and by reducing funding for the infrastructure that recruits and supports volunteers and other active citizens shrinks (National Conference 4).

The results of America’s Civic Health Index for 2009 showed that the economic recession is causing a civic depression. The national survey found that 72% of Americans say they cut back on the time they spent volunteering, participating in groups, and doing
other civic activities in the past year. This means that three-quarters of our population are less civically engaged resulting in a significant decrease in our nation’s overall civic capacity, or cumulative social capital (National Conference 4). According to the study, “66% of Americans say they feel other people are responding to the current economic downturn by looking out for themselves, while only 19% said people around them are responding to the recession by helping each other more” (National Conference 4). Unfortunately, this civic downturn coincides with a time when service and civic action is especially needed.

My own observation and experience, coupled with my research on current scholarship regarding the benefits of public art, strongly indicate that community mural projects have the potential to promote civic health, social capital, and individual well-being. By bringing people together, increasing intergenerational communication, and using deliberative democracy to discuss community concerns and goals, can these projects bring social and economic benefits to the communities? Can a mural help to make people care more about supporting each other and their communities and increase civic engagement? These questions motivated me to do another mural project with the purpose of promoting civic health to study the impact of community murals.

How it all Began

My decision to do a mural in Penns Valley was made for many reasons. I knew that in order to do this study I would have to think about ways to analyze the effectiveness of a mural during the process instead of waiting until the mural was finished, as was the case for my Harrisburg murals. In addition, I wanted to do a mural from the ground up to teach myself grant-writing, fundraising, and organizational skills. I
also wanted to design my own project in order to increase the level of community involvement and, I hypothesized, the effectiveness of the project. I anticipated that this would require more time for getting people involved, especially during the idea-building and designing process. I wanted to make a mural that was truly collaborative and represented the community’s vision. Because the project would overlap with my semesters at Penn State, the mural would not take place in Harrisburg. I needed a location that was close by.

The two places that came to mind were State College, the university town I had been living in for four years, and Penns Valley, where I had lived with my family for the previous decade. Penns Valley, a half hour drive away from State College, is a rural area of farmland, forests and small towns. I proposed the idea of a mural to my father, Gary Gyekis, and his enthusiasm and support for the idea convinced me, in the course of just one conversation, that the mural should be in Penns Valley. The decision felt right; it occurred to me that as an aspiring community artist I would come to understand public art and my relationship to it more fully after the experience of working in my hometown. Penns Valley was a place that I had detached myself from, leaving as quickly as possible by entering an early enrollment program at Penn State University while I was still in high school. I had never felt very much a part of this community of rural people and had in many ways avoided integrating myself into it. My previous projects had helped connect me to an inner-city neighborhood in which I did not fit in because of my class, race and culture. Now it was time for me to connect to a place and a community of people I had resisted.
As soon as I decided on Penns Valley, the exact location took only minutes to decide during that conversation with my father. My family is involved with a new restaurant and microbrewery called the Elk Creek Café and Aleworks, located on the main intersection of one of the towns, Millheim. This intersection is the location of “the light”—the only traffic light on the east side of Penns Valley—located along Penns Valley’s main highway Route 45. Route 45 is a main east-west road, and all traffic heading to State College would have a view of the mural. The only other traffic light along Route 45 is on the other end of the valley about eleven miles away on an intersection with no walls conducive to murals. All four of the buildings on the intersection in Millheim could be potential mural sites. The side of the Elk Creek Café was chosen because I knew the owners and I knew that permission to use their wall would be easily obtained.

Millheim’s streets are dotted with small businesses you would expect to find in a small, rural, Pennsylvania town: a laundromat, a pizza place, a meat market, antique shops, and of course a bank, a post office, and a fire company. The Elk Creek Café and Aleworks was recently opened, and stands out as a cultural venue with local art hanging on the walls and live music multiple nights a week. The micro-brewed beer is brewed on location and the menu of what they call “Nouveau Dutchie” cuisine combines “Gastro Pub and what rural Pennsylvania is known for - Dutch style cooking” (Hull). The restaurant uses local and organic meat, dairy, and produce whenever possible. The menu has something for everyone, with options for fine dining, a burger and fries, or a vegan dish. Because of its broad appeal, the Elk Creek Café has become a cultural crossroads for the various people of central Pennsylvania, making it an excellent establishment for a
community project to take place. Tim Bowser, the man who dreamed up the Elk Creek Café and is also its manager, is invested in making the restaurant the community’s meeting place. Creating the community mural on the side of this building meant that I had a great resource in the Elk Creek Café, its owners, staff, and customers, as collaborators and contributors to this public art project.

**Introduction to Millheim**

Penns Valley is a very different place than Allison Hill. It is a long, narrow valley of rolling hills filled with small towns, farmland, and forest within the seven mountains—a unique series of long, narrow, parallel mountains in central Pennsylvania that are part of the Ridge and Valley region of the Appalachian Mountains. Penns Valley consists of Haines Township, Penn Twp, Gregg Twp, Potter Twp and Millheim Borough.

Millheim’s population in the 2000 census was 749 individuals in 311 housing units. Of the occupied housing units, 73.6% are owned and 26.4% are rentals. The percentage of all housing units that were vacant was just 6.6%. The median age was 38.1 years, slightly higher than the national average of 35.3 years. Like most of rural Pennsylvania, Millheim is not racially diverse: 99.2% of the people are white. The average household size and average family size are 2.41 and 2.97 respectively, both under the national average. Of the population over 25 years of age, 86.8% have a high school degree or higher compared to 80.4% of the nation but only 11.7% have a bachelors degree or higher compared to 24.4% of the nation. The average household income in 1999 was $37,000 (less than the national average of $41,994). The percentage of families below the poverty level is 10.4%, slightly higher than the national proportion of 9.2% and the
quantity of individuals below the poverty level is 11.9%, slightly less than the national rate of 12.4 (U.S. Census Bureau, “Summary File 3”).

Millheim is different from Allison Hill in many ways. First of all, it is much smaller in comparison to a populous inner-city area. Though not wealthy, there is less poverty than in Allison Hill. While I have no data for Millheim equivalent to the Weed and Seed data collected in Allison Hill, it is immediately apparent that the Millheim population is much less transient and is actually very rooted in place with a high proportion of families that have lived in the area for generations. Because of these things there is a greater attachment to place, longer-term connections with other residents, and thus perhaps a stronger existing sense of community. It is also a cleaner, healthier, and safer place to live with excellent air and water quality, greater access to fresh local foods, and extremely infrequent occurrences of violent crimes. Racially, it is almost entirely white compared to Allison Hill’s diverse population. Millheim is also different for me as a community organizer because I have many more connections and a greater knowledge of the town, area, and resources that I might have access to. Even for the things that I do not know, I have the advantage of a greater ability to relate to and communicate with people because I share with them a similar racial, cultural, economic, historical and family background. In contrast, while I was in Harrisburg I had much less credibility in the community and because I was an outsider in many ways my presence and my intentions were often questioned or mistrusted. In Millheim, no one asked me if I was lost, accused me of working for the government in some way, tried to sell me drugs or asked me for sexual favors in exchange for money (all of which happened when I walked the sidewalks of Allison Hill). Millheim is similar to Allison Hill because they are both
below average economically and in higher education attainment and have problems with teen pregnancy, domestic violence, and vandalism. Both places lack intergenerational understanding and communication. Both places contain multiple communities that lack interaction and understanding between each other.

On the other hand, this small rural town and this inner-city neighborhood have something else in common. Both retain certain characteristics of a town that do not exist in areas of suburban sprawl. Towns and cities usually have a have a center, are compact enough to get around walking or have public transportation systems, and are distinct from the country around it. Areas of sprawl, on the other hand, have homes and businesses spread out at random on large plots of land that are only connected by roads and highways, and require a private vehicle in order to get around (Hylton 2). Inner-city neighborhoods such as Allison Hill and small towns like Millheim have a slower pace of life than many contemporary American places; people sit out on their porches or front steps to chat with the neighbors and passers-by. There is a small-town atmosphere in which most people know who their neighbors are and have an idea of what is going on in their area. This kind of place is more conducive to community projects than suburbia. First of all, it is easier to choose a location that is a prominent public space that many people interact with; a place with pedestrian and vehicle traffic, surrounded by both residential and business establishments. Secondly, it is easier to get people involved and talking to about the project to each other in an environment where a community is already somewhat connected socially and in closer proximity to one another.
Valley Roots Community Mural Project

Murals in the towns and small cities of rural America often focus on civic boosterism. The incentive for these mural projects is to bolster sagging postindustrial economy with tourism dollars, while renewing a sense of civic pride among the residents. These murals, at their worst, end up being rather stale retellings of local history (Fleming 97). I knew that there would be individuals who wanted to focus on history and I was ready to accept and incorporate it into the design, but in this project I did not want this to just be another small-town historical mural. I was after a stunning, large-scale work of collaborative art that empowers the participants by providing an opportunity for civic dialogue and working together to create something beautiful. Instead of going into a project with a predetermined intention according to geographic location—such as empowerment for minorities in an urban area or creating a historical mural to boost tourism in a rural area—it is important to begin a community mural project by getting to know the community and designing a project unique to the specific culture and geography of that place. Therefore, my overarching goals were essentially the same in Millheim as in Allison Hill: to make a mural that represents a collaboratively created community vision, whatever that might be. Murals in any context can empower people, build local pride, enhance a sense of place, and be an economic stimulus. However, the methods to achieve these goals and the focus of each project should be tailored to the needs of the specific community.
Gaining Support

I knew that this mural would be a very different project from my previous mural projects, and I was excited and nervous to get things going. Once I had decided on my exact mural location, I had to get permission and support for it. The building owners were as quick to agree as I had anticipated, but there were many more steps to take to get the approval of Millheim. There have never been any other community art projects or murals in Millheim so I did not have an already established path to follow. So I asked for advice, came up with a list of local organizations whose support I needed, and prepared tentative timelines, budgets, and project proposal pamphlets to distribute. ¹⁰ Sharon Heckman, the extremely helpful secretary of the Millheim Borough Council, helped to put my proposal presentation onto the agendas of the monthly meetings of the Millheim Borough, the Millheim Planning Commission, the Millheim Historical Architectural Review Board (HARB), and the East Penns Valley Business Association. I gave presentations explaining my project proposal, the benefits of community art, and asking for permission and support to continue.

To my delight, my presentations were met with much enthusiasm and almost no resistance. The HARB was not opposed to the idea of a mural, but because the wall selected for the mural is on a historical building, there was a problem. HARB had established a rule for Millheim’s historical buildings that no brickwork should be painted. Though this rule is referring to painting the entire exterior of a brick building with a coat of solidly colored paint, some members felt that the rule should be taken literally and applied to my mural also. They supported the mural but thought it should be done in a

¹⁰ See Appendix H on page 141 for project proposal pamphlet.
way that was removable such as on wooden panels that would be mounted on the wall. Though this is quite possible, it involves considerably more labor and funding and compromises the aesthetics of the mural. Luckily for me, the Borough Council and Planning Commission determined that were it on removable panels of wood it would look like a billboard, which is also prohibited, and overruled the HARB ruling to say that I could indeed permanently install the mural directly on the brick.

**Funding the Mural**

After gaining local permission and support, I had to start thinking about how I would fund the mural. I had no idea how difficult this would prove to be, or that I would end up spending thousands of dollars of my own money before I received my final grant that reimbursed me just days before the unveiling ceremony of the mural. I thought that I would get the majority, or at the very least half, of my funding from Penn State, but I ended up getting less than one twelfth of the budget from my University. My application was turned down for a research grant from Undergraduate Education I was sure that I would get, then turned down for another from the Schreyer Honors College because my project was local. After disputing this with the Honors College they agreed to give me $500. I was so shocked by this lack of funding because I had been funded for everything I had asked from the University up until that point including funding to travel for conference presentations and funding for research abroad. Now I was actually doing something valuable that was both real research and a genuine contribution to the world around me, true public scholarship, and I could not get funding because it was near my home. Ironically, this project and my work in general has since made me one of the
“poster children” of multiple parts of the University that had turned me down for funding.\textsuperscript{11}

At this point the only funding that had come through as I expected was $1,000 from a fellowship I had earned with Young People For, part of People for the American Way, an organization for young social activists (YP4). I applied for a corporate grant and was turned down. I fundraised within the community with the help of a few volunteers, but this was more successful towards the end of the project when people had seen the project well under way. I even made mural t-shirts with the help of a businesswoman in Millheim and sold them to mural participants. Though many individuals and businesses of Millheim made contributions, by the end of the project I was still thousands of dollars short. Finally, one last grant came through from the Centre County Community Foundation, fully funding the remainder of the mural expenses at a generous $3,500.\textsuperscript{12}

\textbf{Creating a Collaborative Community Design}

The difficulty securing the funding needed for the project meant that the mural process had to begin long before I had adequate funds, and that much more time and effort had to be devoted to these activities. After gaining support from the Borough Council and other local organizations, I started to get the rest of the community involved. Each of my previous projects had grown in terms of community involvement as I built connections in Allison Hill and learned more about what I wanted to do and how I wanted to do it. In Millheim I had a different set of resources in terms of my access to the

\textsuperscript{11} See Appendix I on page 143 for PSU publications and websites featuring my mural projects.

\textsuperscript{12} See Appendix J on page 154 for final budget details.
community, and I wanted to apply what I had learned from previous projects while keeping an open mind about what a different context might bring. In designing the mural timeline, I wanted to dedicate as much time as possible to community involvement. In this way there would be more time to make the project public knowledge, more opportunity for community members to have input, and the design would truly be a collaborative community vision between all of the community members and myself.

I decided to hold community idea-building workshops bi-monthly from January until May 2008. During these open community meetings held at the Elk Creek Café, community members of all ages shared their ideas about what makes Millheim and the surrounding area unique and what aspects of the natural and cultural heritage are important. My role as a facilitator was to ask questions, to listen, and to guide the conversation from the abstract to the concrete, from feelings and ideas to visual images relating to the themes that we were discussing. When organizing and advertising these meetings, I did my best to reach out to various communities in Penns Valley and in Millheim and hoped to have representatives of the various local cultures attend these meetings. Each group meeting was fairly small, usually between 5 and 15 people, but the attendees did represent different political and cultural backgrounds and were of all ages. Having various age groups was especially important to me, as I knew that the different generations would have very different viewpoints. This proved to be very true: the older generation focused on the history of the place, telling us stories about Millheim’s rich and thriving past. The teens and young people focused on the future and did not want the mural to be about a past that they were not part of. Everyone talked about the present. The mural needed to somehow honor Millheim’s past and yet also focus on what is and
what is yet to come. During one particularly inspired mural meeting about halfway through the sessions, our conversations about the history, present, and future of this place led to the creation of the mural’s theme phrase: Pride in the Past, Love of Place, and Hope for the Future.

At each meeting, I handed out sheets of paper with a few questions that I posed to the participants so that they could write down some of their ideas. After each of these community meetings, I would look over my notes and the surveys I had collected from the attendees, looking for themes and patterns and potent visual images. Unlike the last mural in Allison Hill, instead of making multiple designs from a set of ideas and having the community choose between them, I worked only with one ever-changing design. After each meeting I would try to combine all of the images and ideas that I felt were most emphasized into one composition. I would take this sketch, which compositionally integrated the images and ideas we had generated, to the following community meeting. There I would start the conversation all over again and eventually pull out the latest sketch. Then I would take all of the new ideas and the feedback I had received from the previous sketch and revise my design or even make an entirely new design. Each new sketch brought the design closer and closer to what can be seen in the completed mural that incorporates the ideas and feedback of dozens of community members. Finally, the unifying theme of a quilt enabled a myriad of ideas to be captured in a coherent whole.  

The process of making this design, with so much community feedback, was a daunting task. It is much easier to get limited community feedback and just a few ideas to work with than to get feedback from many people, having a large quantity of ideas, and

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13 See Appendix K on page 157 for images of the design at various stages and the completed mural.
then have to create something that fairly represents the different viewpoints in true community collaboration. Though the process of such a large collaboration is quite challenging to facilitate, it is one of the most important aspects of the project. Not only does this build a sense of ownership of the project for all of the people who contributed in the idea-building workshops, it also helps me to create a design that will resonate with nearly everyone who identifies with the area regardless of their participation in the project. A mural is a visual record of collaboration between a group in the community and an artist. The community suggests, visualizes and discusses a myriad of ideas and themes suggested which the artist then integrates into a design. However, no mural can represent everyone in the community, and perhaps it should not. Controversy and conflict within community collaboration process can provide the basis for a constructive dialogue (Fleming 103).

**Paint-by-number technique**

The idea-building process was just the first avenue for community involvement. The mural-painting methods that I use differ from most professional murals in that every part of the mural is painted by community members. This is possible without compromising the aesthetics of the final piece through a labor-intensive process of transforming the mural into a gigantic paint-by-number project on easily transported panels made of a synthetic, non-woven fabric. To make this transformation I used the technique I was introduced to by Philadelphia mural artist Cesar Viveros and taught myself how to do during the Harrisburg projects. I began the process by taking the finalized design sketch and re-create the design in Adobe Photoshop. For the Millheim
mural, the final digital design was a collage of digital drawings and dozens of my photographs of local sites overlaid on the original sketch.

Once the design was finished, a few volunteers assisted me in projecting and tracing the design onto eighteen Pellon (a synthetic, nonwoven fabric) panels that we had pre-primed with matte medium mural paint. I had hundreds of people involved in the project by the end, but there were a group of consistent volunteers that learned the process well enough to not just paint the mural but prepare and touch up the panels with me. My most consistent volunteers were local high school students Nick Engle of Penns Valley and Corinna Munn of State College, university students Lisa Shaffer and Bonnie Herman, and my parents Loanne Snavely and Gary Gyekis. After projecting and tracing the design onto panels we then labeled each small section of the mural with an elaborate color-coding system that I had created. The labels included a code letter and number combination (for example, B1 stood for a light blue color, and B6 stood for a very dark blue so that each basic color had six shades ranging from light to dark). Using Nova Color Artists’ Acrylic Paint (a special brand of paint formulated for murals with high pigment content, durability, weather-resistance and UV resistance) I mixed and coded over seventy-five colors for this mural, storing the colors in lidded plastic containers. Thus, each panel was a paint-by-number project that could be set up on tables inside and painted comfortably by people of all ages and skill levels. This process requires a lot of preparation and finishing work on the part of the artist, but it is well worth the time invested in order to have so many hours of community involvement in a safe and fun environment. This kind of participation would not be possible if the mural were painted directly on the outdoor wall.
During the months of June and July the eighteen panels that made up the quilt and the cut out panels of the clothes hanging on a “clothes line” were painted by over 150 community volunteers of all ages. The majority of the painting took place in the studio above the Elk Creek Café during open community painting hours. This time was a fun and leisurely opportunity for locals, visitors, children, teens, adults, and seniors to meet each other and interact. After each panel was painted, a few dedicated and talented volunteers and I did touch-up painting and added additional details. When all of the panels were finished in early August, a small and talented crew of volunteers helped me to install the mural. My installation crew included Gary Gyekis, David Wrestler, and Warren Leitzel, all Penns Valley residents. First, we prepared the wall by power-washing and priming the brick. Then we glued the thin fabric panels onto the wall in just a few days. Finally, we did one last round of touch up painting to disguise the seams between the panels and to create shadows underneath the quilt and the clothing on the line. All of the materials used are weather resistant and colorfast.  

Unveiling the Mural

When the mural was finally completed we planned a dedication and celebration event for the project. The Valley Roots Community Mural Unveiling Ceremony took place on September 6th, 2008 at the Elk Creek Café. Many of the key members involved with the mural project spoke, including me, my father Gary Gyekis, manager of the Elk Creek Café Tim Bowser, Mayor of Millheim Lauralee Snyder, Schreyer Honors College representative Richard Stoller, and Young People For representative Zach Dryden. The

14 For original mural unveiling comments, see Appendix L on page 160 and to see the excel file of sorted comments, see Appendix M on page 173.
event M.C. was Bonnie Herman—a good friend, a frequent mural volunteer, and my assistant organizer for special events surrounding the mural project including the Unveiling Ceremony. Over one hundred people attended the ceremony to dedicate and celebrate the mural. This mural Unveiling Ceremony was very different from my first mural dedication for the Shared Ministries Mural back in Allison Hill during which I had not been recognized and the speakers were the funders, the pastor, and local politicians who hadn’t been involved in the project. At my unveiling ceremony the funders were duly noted and thanked and the mayor spoke (she had actually helped to paint the mural with her children and had known of the project since the day I came to propose the idea to the Borough Council). However, the focus of the event was on the community. The mural project participants and other community members filled the event with an atmosphere of pride in the mural and the great place it represents.

The unveiling ceremony was also an opportunity for me to gather community feedback in writing about the project. At the ceremony, slips of paper were handed out to the attendees and they were asked to write down whatever feedback they had for me and for the project. Seventy-five of these slips of paper were handed back with writing from almost 90 people.

Analysis of Community Response to the Mural

Mural Unveiling Comments

I have based the majority of my analysis of community response on these comments left by attendees at the mural unveiling ceremony. As the event was attended primarily by people who participated in the project or supported the project enough to
attend such an event, the content of the comments is almost entirely very positive. Other responses to the project that were not as positive came up in other ways, which will be discussed later on in this section. After transcribing the comments, I read through them many times looking for reoccurring themes and assessing what the most appropriate way to categorize and analyze the comments might be. My goals for the project were to bring the community together across various boundaries, to build community pride, to enhance social capital, to make a design that integrated very different kinds of community input, to have the project reach many people and have that be a positive and fun experience for all involved, and to have a final product that was aesthetically beautiful and enhanced the visual landscape of the town. I was curious to see which of these topics would be commented on and if the comments reflected a successful completion of these goals. I was also curious to see what else was commented on, what would be most frequently noted, and what would be left unsaid.

My process of rhetorical analysis was not unlike my process of creating the mural. Rather than organizing the comments with a predetermined superstructure of rhetorical language and imposing it on the words of the community members, I allowed my topoi to grow and evolve from the words themselves, finding them in the patterns I saw when reading the comments. Topoi are, by definition and function, recurring inventional structures used to study and create public discourse (Eberly 4). Topoi are bioregions of discourse, that is, certain topoi will not grow in certain places. In this way I am able to create categories specific to this place and time. The rhetorical concept of topoi has to offer something that thematics and topics do not. By focusing on the process of inference rather than the matter of the subject itself, topoi are more suited to the application of
topics to public argument (Eberly 5). Instead of having in mind what my topoi might be, I
looked to the trends in the feedback from the community (Eberly 6).

From multiple readings through the community feedback, fifteen different topoi emerged, which I will discuss in order of the most commented on to the least commented on. Almost every note written the day of the unveiling ceremony commented on multiple topics. I broke the comments down into sentences and fragments of sentences for a total of 233 fragment comments, which I will henceforth continue to refer to as simply “comments” throughout this analysis. I sorted these comments by copying the phrases into cells of an Excel file to neatly keep a count of how many were in each category while simultaneously having all of the content for each category together for further comparison and analysis. I then graphed the number of comments on each topoi, as seen below in Fig. 2. As I discuss within each category, the name of which will be in bold type, I will also give the number of comments, two example quotations to illustrate the range of responses, and a more detailed description of what is discussed within the comments.¹⁵

¹⁵ For original mural unveiling comments, see Appendix L on page _ and to see the excel file of sorted comments, see Appendix M on page._
Fig 2. Graph of Community Feedback. The y-axis represents number of times a subject was commented on and the x-axis categories of comment subjects.

The most frequently commented on topic, at 27 comments, I have titled “Elody’s Achievement.” Many of the attendees used this as an opportunity to personally congratulate me for my role in this project. The topic includes “Thank You’s” and praises for my hard work, artistic talents, and organization skills. Some example quotes from this category include: “The amount of time and energy you put into this project is remarkable, and shines through the mural and the community” and “We could not have done this without your talent, dedication, and expert leadership.” Though this is the category with
the most comments, the categories about the community aspects of the mural added together would far exceed the comments specifically addressing my part in the mural. This is in keeping with the focus on the community during the entire mural project and during the mural unveiling ceremony.

The second most common category, “Mural as Contribution to Community,” was mentioned by 28 people. All of the comments that define the mural as an asset to the community that enhances lives and benefits the people and the town as a whole are in this section. “Your community is more alive, healthier, and cohesive thanks to your risk taking and generosity,” and “I think the mural is a wonderful contribution to the community, by the community,” are two examples of quotes in this section.

The next category is “Beauty/Aesthetics of Mural” which was mentioned 25 times. This category mostly includes simple statements that the mural looks good, such as “The mural is absolutely beautiful” and also occasionally includes more specific aspects of the design that were enjoyed such as “Beautiful mural! I love the way the building components are integrated into the clothesline, and how the waterfall spills out to the sidewalk.”

Community Involvement and Accomplishment was the next category. These 23 comments were about the project bringing people together, about the community working together, praising the community’s accomplishment and commenting that many people had been involved in the project. “It is great to see so many people involved with the process of making this mural so special to Millheim” and “[The mural is] A work of art that has certainly brought the local residents together” are two example quotes.
Many people also commented on their own Participation in the project. There were 20 instances of comments stating whether or not an individual participated. If the person had participated, they may have mentioned why they participated or in what capacity they participated. Those who did not participate (that is, prior to attending the mural unveiling ceremony, which I consider participation in the project) usually shared that they wished that they had painted or despite not having painted, they still felt connected to the mural. One comment from a participant was “I decided to join in on the painting so my grandchildren and great-grandchildren can say ‘Grandma helped with this.’” and a comment from a non-participant was “My only regret is that I did not help paint it, I think I would have felt like a part of me was in it. But oh well, maybe next time!”

The next category, Personal Notes for Elody, contained 16 comments. This category included mostly good wishes and good luck for me in my future and other personal notes to me. These comments were not about the mural project.

The next two categories, Other and Success of Project in General contained 14 comments. The Other category, as it suggests, contains a wide variety of comments that did not fit easily into any of categories but were not frequent enough to warrant another new category. The Success of Project in General contains mostly comments on the mural being a great project and a good idea, including some very moving quotes: “This is the best mural project I’ve ever been exposed to” and “It’s hard to find the words to really convey how great this idea—and its accomplishment—really are.”

The next category, with 13 comments, gave me in written form evidence that I had been successful in creating a mural design that reflected the community input and
accurately represented the community. The **Mural Design Represents Community** category included quotes such as “I think it really captures the essence of the town” and “After the meeting I attended trying to come up with ideas, I couldn’t imagine how you could capture all those ideas. You did it!”

There were 8 comments that specifically spoke about **Pride**, be it proud of the mural, proud of being part of the project, proud of the community, or proud of me. Two examples are “The mural will be a centerpiece for the community. We can all be proud of it and of its creator.” and “To see the faces of the young and old as the mural was unveiled, and then to see them point and say, ‘I did that!’ made it all worthwhile.”

There were three categories with 7 comments: **Building New Relationships**, **History of People and Place**, and **Inspirations for the Future**. The **Building New Relationships** aspect of the mural project, that people interacted with others in the community that they normally would not have been connected to, was one of my main goals. I personally felt the mural project was very successful in this respect and many people commented on this to me in person. Though few people wrote this down in their feedback, the comments were very touching. One was much like my own experience: “Just the experience of painting made me feel better connected with a community I felt somewhat apart from during my years of college.” Another captured the atmosphere of the painting sessions: “It really was an opportunity not just to paint and give something back but to get to know one’s neighbors, tell stories about the valley, and share in the experiences of life in Penns Valley.” The **History of People and Place** category focused on the past including the history of the person commenting and their memories of Millheim. Commenters would tell about where they were born, where they live now, and
their relationship to Millheim or the surrounding area. The **Inspirations for the Future** category included speculations on the future effects of the mural or described how the mural has inspired a person to share information of community murals or be more aware of community art. Two examples of quotes are “The energy you have graced Millheim with will linger for a long time to come,” and “I’m sure many other people and places will experience this with wonder and enthusiasm. They will share with their friends and families, now and in the future, their part and pride in this magnificent accomplishment.”

The next category is **“Suggestions for Future Action”** which contains suggestions for things that I should do in the future or for other things that need to be done in Millheim such as “Consider writing a how-to manual so that other people can try this in their communities” and “Now how about some restorative work to the main thoroughfare.”

There were 5 comments that specifically discussed **Participant Enjoyment** such as “My mural experience was very enjoyable and rewarding,” and “I will always remember this whole process – from brainstorming to painting to unveiling with a bursting heart.”

The last category, comments directly praising the **Mural Process**, had 3 comments including “The mural is beautiful and inspiring beyond words and learning about the process by which it came to be was truly moving,” and “The paint by number idea was Brilliant.”

Based on these comments written down at the community mural unveiling ceremony the project was a great success. While I was not looking for personal praise of my own accomplishment and hard work, I was happy to have it recognized. People felt
that the mural is an asset to the community and benefits the people, that the mural was very beautiful, and that the project was a great success that really brought people together to create it. I was especially proud of all of the positive feedback regarding the mural design and its success in the capturing of the community’s essence and incorporation of all the community input. I am pleased that people built new relationships during the process and enjoyed the painting itself. It was interesting that, like the mural’s theme, many of the comments were about the past, present and future of this mural project and its effects.

Feedback from Observation, Private Discourse, and Public Discourse

Though these mural unveiling comments were my only formal written feedback from the community, I have received other forms of feedback since the inception of this project until now. Indeed, I trust that will continue for as long the mural exists. Direct feedback includes all of the verbal feedback given to me every day of the project and in the months since its completion. Direct feedback also includes my own observations; I was always there to watch and be part of the painting sessions and other events to observe the atmosphere and watch participants interact with each other. I also have received second-hand feedback via all of the stories passed on to me about what other people have said about the mural project. There has also been public feedback I have received in the form of the published articles about the project in newspapers, newsletters, on the radio and on websites.

The direct feedback I received during the project was very similar to the comments during the mural unveiling ceremony, except in much greater detail and from
many more people. For example, during painting sessions many people commented on how enjoyable the painting process was. People found it fun, relaxing, even therapeutic. Many friendships were made during the mural project and there was usually a constant happy chatter throughout the sessions. From the feedback I received second-hand from stories people have told, I learned about the opinions of those who I would not normally hear from. For example, I heard about a woman from the Amish community who thought the mural was beautiful. It was through second-hand feedback that I heard about some of the negative responses to the mural, which will be described in the next section.

Some of the public discourses about my project include three articles in the local newspaper, The Centre Daily Times, an article by the Schreyer Honors College as well as a feature on their website and in one of their brochures, a website feature with interview and a video feature by Young People For, brochures for the civic and community engagement minor, and an article by the College of Arts and Architecture among others.\(^\text{16}\) Other than the few negative responses, all of the feedback from hundreds of people was extremely positive and was solid evidence that my project had to some extent been a success in the ways I had hoped.

**Resistance to the Mural**

Though the mural feedback was overwhelmingly positive in the mural unveiling comments, the press, and in all of my informal encounters, there were some negative sentiments towards the mural. Most notably, in the beginning stages of the mural process, there was actually a petition made against the mural. It was a very small effort with little

\(^{16}\) See Appendix N on page 175 for these articles and publications.
support, but it did exist. From what I could gather from the various community members that told me of this petition (I neither saw the document nor met the person who wrote it) it was a simple document that asked for signatures of those against the mural. The person who created it was opposed to the mural because she thought it would increase instances of vandalism because it provided an example of acceptance of painting on walls. The petition was posted at the bar of a nearby hotel and restaurant and gained a few illegible signatures, but no one ever followed up to actually try to do anything with the petition and none of these people actually approached me with their issues. I was fully prepared to explain to her that many mural programs such as the Philadelphia Mural Arts program actually began as anti-graffiti efforts, but the opportunity never presented itself to give her this information.

Another instance of negative feedback from the community came from an online comment posted in response to one of the Centre Daily Times articles that had been written about the project after its completion. Unfortunately, I did not save the post right away and when I went to retrieve it, it was no longer available. A friend of mine who had been closely working with me on the project saw the comment and was so infuriated by it that she wrote a lengthy and eloquent response that gave counter arguments for each point that the individual had brought up. My friend saved the response she had written in a Word document. From my friend’s response I am reminded of what the points of the online response were, but not his actual wording.¹⁷ The online comment was from a user called “Steve from Millheim.” Online discussions allow a person to be both anonymous and public at the same time, causing people to often feel less inhibited when participating

¹⁷ See Appendix O on page 192 for the “Re: Steve” document.
in public discourse online because the gaze of others is removed and one is able to maintain anonymity (Faigley 182). “Steve” asked in his comment if I had even gotten permission to paint on a historic building and claimed that my mural was comparable to graffiti. The mural, for him, ruined the quaint, small town atmosphere that he valued in the town and was an eyesore in his daily life. Steve of Millheim later responded to my friend’s response, but the only thing I recall from that post was that he further compared the mural to a tacky billboard advertisement that should not be allowed on the main streets of Millheim.

I can only assume that there are others who share these sentiments, but I am confident that the positive reactions overwhelmingly outweigh the negative responses, and I do know that some who were not for the mural in the beginning of the project came around by the end to support it fully. One of the comments in the “Other” category of the comments gathered at the unveiling ceremony contained perhaps the most interesting quote out of all of the comments from the mural unveiling ceremony. The woman who wrote it said, “I was not for this idea at all---However, I was somewhat-surprised at the end result! Happily surprised! I can live with this endeavor-I can change my mind-I like it!” The idea of someone’s mind changing throughout the process of this mural is very moving to me. A woman who may or may not have been the same person came up to me during the unveiling ceremony and said that she had been extremely skeptical about this project, thinking the mural would be garish and tacky. The manager of the Elk Creek Café knew this woman and knew that she and some of her friends shared this sentiment. One day he saw a group of these women at the Café on a day during the mural process when I was holding an open community painting session in the studio upstairs. He invited
them to come up and have a look, even if they did not want to paint. They came up, saw the group of people painting, saw the design, and saw some of the completed panels. Though they did not say much to me that day, one of the women did take up a brush and painted for a little while. Then, after seeing the final result, she told me at the unveiling ceremony that her mind had changed and now she thought it was beautiful and a contribution rather than a detriment to the community. The very nature of public art attracts controversy. Varied popular opinion is inevitable, and it is a healthy sign that the public environment is acknowledged and not ignored (Bach et al. 16). Perhaps one of the purposes of public art that involves community input should be to create a certain level of publicity and controversy early in the project and then to bring the people to as much of a consensus as possible through the process of dialogue and collaboration.
Chapter 4 - Reflection and Conclusion

Reflecting on Millheim and Allison Hill

In the Allison Hill and Millheim mural projects, community involvement took place in many different settings: in formal board meetings at a local government office, in open community meetings, in painting sessions, and out in the street at the mural site. Each of these contexts posed different opportunities and challenges in the inner-city neighborhood of Allison Hill and the small rural town of Millheim. My experiences in these two places were also very different because in Millheim I had more contacts, more in common with the community I was working with, and a greater knowledge of the processes I was working with.

Though I had no personal contacts or history in Allison Hill, I had access to people and organizations that did. This gave me the opportunity to use their contacts and influence to get other groups and individuals involved. Over the two-year period I spent there, everything became more accessible in the second year as I built relationships with the local community organizers. Allison Hill has a greater population and many more established community organizations that I could work with. In this way, with one phone call, I could get a whole group of people involved. However, as an outsider living in the neighborhood, it was next to impossible for me to engage local residents directly. Even if I were to spend many hours going door-to-door, it would be unlikely that I would get many recruits from this kind of interaction unless I had a known and respected member of the community with me. For these reasons, the majority of the community
involvement during the Allison Hill projects took place in the form of scheduled meetings with specific groups. Over the two summers, there were only two or three successful and well-attended open community meetings. Otherwise, idea-building workshops and painting sessions always took place with one or maybe two groups at a time. Though each group got to participate in the mural project, this meant that there was less interaction between different types of groups than I would have liked.

On the other hand, in Millheim, I had many more personal contacts to start, but far fewer established organizations to work with. Because of this it was harder to get a large number of people scheduled regularly, but easier to spread information about the project directly to residents. Thus in Millheim, almost all of the community involvement took place in the form of open community meetings and open community painting hours. The disadvantage of this was in not knowing how many people or what ages would show up. Sometimes only two people would come and sometimes over a dozen people would show up. The advantage was that each painting session and community meeting had a diverse group of people of different ages, different interests, and different affiliations. Also, a larger proportion of the group attendees were people I already knew, or friends of people I knew, than I had originally anticipated. However, I still met and worked with many individuals that I had not known or met before, and extended my connections with my home community. I also worked with any number of community organizations, such as the historical society, that had been far outside my realm of interest or association. Therefore, what began as a connected network extended far beyond the original scope by the end of the project.

While working in such different neighborhoods, it was very clear that in every
community art project the key ingredient is having someone on the team who is a resident, has connections, and has already engaged in community organizing. In Allison Hill, that was the Community Action Commission and Jessie Hunting, and in Millheim it was my parents, my family friends, and myself. Every context provides different opportunities and challenges and will require different tactics for engaging the community. There is no need to re-invent the wheel at every location if you can find someone there who already knows how things work. That being said, people who are already established in a community may have already-established allies and antipathies that could limit a community organizer’s access to certain groups. Therefore, it is helpful to have already connected community members as resources to get started in the community engagement process but it is important to continue reaching out to other groups.

I learned valuable lessons in each of my community mural projects. During the Shared Ministries Mural, I had my first try at using the paint-by-number technique on parachute cloth. I made huge leaps in efficiency and effectiveness of this technique after this mural, but I did not find that a very powerful community interaction took place. During the Mulberry Street Bridge Mural, I had wonderful and profound experiences with individual mural participants (especially with the prison work release men and the day care girls) as I witnessed their pride in having taken part in creating this public art project, but the community didn’t get to work together to come up with the vision for the mural. During the Derry Street Mural a community vision came to life, the faces and words of community role models were honored, and in the process a group of people were empowered. However, there was not a lot of interaction between the different
community groups. Within the Millheim Mural project there was time for the designing process to become an opportunity for dialogue, the community vision to be representative of many people’s ideas, and the painting workshops to be a space for different community members to interact and bond. Each project built upon the last as the project designs improved, thus giving more involvement and agency to the community.

**Critical to Success**

Through my research I found several key ingredients critical to the success of a community mural project which were confirmed and verified through my own experiences. The single most important ingredient is the presence of local leadership (Fleming 102). It is important to identify what communities want and expect from the arts rather than impose objectives formulated outside the community (Curtis, Newman, and Stephens 320). If the artist is not a local leader then they must do some research and find a community leader to help the artist discover the unique set of resources and needs of the area (Fleming 23). If a community does not have a community leader or some community organizing infrastructure already in place, it will be much more difficult to get a community project going.

Also critical to success are certain personality traits in the artist. Being a community artist requires a diverse set of organizational, interpersonal, and artistic skills. The tasks required of me during these projects were extremely challenging. I feel it will take a lifetime of learning to gain the wisdom and patience to truly master these skills. The work of a community artist is to spend one day writing grants and balancing a budget, the following day facilitating a conversation about community vision with people
of very different opinions, another day working to synthesize hundreds of disparate ideas into a coherent visual design, the next day babysitting children while they spill paint all over a mural panel, and the next day trying to keep a positive attitude and react gracefully while your ideas or actions are criticized. A community artist must be flexible, patient, persistent, hard-working, efficient, willing to learn and be challenged, honest, punctual, organized, consistent, credible, diplomatic, trustworthy, and friendly (Cleveland). She or he must also be comfortable speaking publically, have access to many kinds of resources, be able to balance relationship-building with maintaining clear roles and professionalism, be non-possessive about the mural design, and of course have artistic talent. Finally, a community artist must passionately believe in the power of community art or they will burn out when faced with challenges, frustrations, and long hours of physically and mentally intense work. The rewards of community art far outweigh the difficulties. However, if maximizing community involvement is desired in a community art project, it is extremely important to have an artist who is up for the job.

**Conclusion**

According to my analysis of the Millheim mural project, participating community members saw the mural project—its process and final result—as an overall success; it was a contribution to the community, the mural was beautiful and the mural design represented the vision the community had created, the project was successful in involving the community, and the participants had fun and built new relationships. The mural project had positive coverage in the newspaper, on the radio, and within the organizations, such as YP4 and PSU, that helped to make it happen. The feedback I
gathered was overwhelmingly positive and served as evidence that my project had been a success in the ways I had hoped.

One attendee at the mural unveiling ceremony summed up the success of the project in this written comment: “This is the best mural project I’ve ever been exposed to. It goes beyond the physical realm, nurturing community involvement. I was not involved in the painting but I have no problem feeling connected to the mural. Whether it’s the idea of it, or the act of putting it together, or the piece itself, it has something for everyone. This mural is a beautiful manifestation of life and spirit in Central PA.” Though this is the opinion of only one person, it is a small piece of evidence that the mural project was successful in almost every way that I had hoped for. I had designed a project that, to the best of my ability, had maximized community involvement. The Community participated in an intensive collaborative design process, in painting all of the mural panels, and in attending the mural unveiling celebration. Community volunteers took leadership organizational roles in the project, helped to prepare for an facilitate painting sessions, and helped to install the mural. The community feedback claimed that the design integrated very different kinds of community input to represent the collaborative community vision created in the idea-building meetings. From the mural unveiling comments and hundreds of in-person comments, it is obvious that many people in the community are very proud of the project and of the community. The project was successful in reaching many people, including the several hundred who directly participated, the thousands who see it regularly while commuting, the travelers from many states who stop to admire it and comment, and the tens of thousands who were exposed to it in media coverage.
The Social Impact of the Arts Project (SIAP) study reviewed in the introduction identified three ways that murals might have an impact on communities: individual inspiration, the creation of amenities, and the development of social capital. Individual inspiration is when, during the process of mural production, artists and other individuals might be inspired and changed, or when viewing the mural might inspire and change other residents or passers-by. The amenity value of murals refers to the ability of murals to turn blank walls into positive assets for a community. The third way that murals would benefit communities is by creating social capital—networks of relationships that benefit individual and group well-being.

Community feedback from the Millheim mural described success in all three categories. For example, from community feedback it is apparent that for those who participated it was a positive and enjoyable experience; many were surprised by how much they liked painting and came back to do it again and again. Many volunteers told me that they felt inspired by the project, and one of the high school students involved decided to start his own mural for his senior project. I have distributed my “How to Paint a Community Mural” document to many interested individuals, some of whom have gone on to use it to create their own community mural projects. For example, Natalia Pilato organized a beautiful mural with the children of an after school community center in a low-income area of Williamsport, Pennsylvania. These successes could be considered individual inspiration. In terms of the amenity value of the mural project, there was an enormous amount of feedback claiming that the final product was aesthetically beautiful and enhanced the visual landscape of the town. Evidence that social capital was created during the project was also plentiful. During the open community painting hours, I
observed people of all ages, professions, and personalities come together in good spirits with friendly chatter. The project brought the community together across various boundaries, as evidenced by the many individuals who participated in the project. From the senior citizens of the Red Hat Society and the local farmers to the skaters in their mid-twenties and the high school Art Honor Society students, everyone spent time together enjoying themselves over the painting tables. Every session people met each other and made new connections. At the close of each session, there were always several people exclaiming what a wonderful time they had had painting and meeting people. The regular painting volunteers especially developed close and meaningful relationships with each other. Perhaps I was the greatest beneficiary in terms of social capital, as I met the most people and developed many meaningful relationships, greatly expanding and strengthening my social networks in Millheim and the surrounding area.

As I mentioned in the introduction, precisely quantifying the inspiration, amenity, and social capital created by this project is beyond my scope. However, I believe that the mural feedback contains information representing different indicators of individual inspiration, the creation of amenities, and the development of social capital. By going back to the different topoi of the mural unveiling comments, sorting the topoi that logically fit into these three categories, and adding up the number of comments representing each category, I can get an approximate indication of whether the mural project had a greater impact by way of inspiration, amenities, or social capital.

Of the mural unveiling comment topoi, I felt that “Inspirations for the Future” and “Participant Enjoyment” fit best into the individual inspiration category for a total of only 12 comments. For the amenity category, I included “Mural as Contribution to
Community” and “Beauty/Aesthetics of Mural” for a total of 53 comments. In the social capital category, “Community Involvement and Accomplishment,” “Participation,” “Building New Relationships,” “Pride,” and “Mural Design Represents Community” were included for a total of 71 comments. I feel that the mural unveiling comments may under-represent individual inspiration in comparison to the other categories because during the mural painting sessions participants commented on those topoi many, many times. However, I still feel that these numbers do represent the comparative amounts that inspiration, amenity, and social capital were the ways in which the community was impacted. Interestingly, this supports the SIAP claim that social capital is the most likely way in which mural projects might impact communities.

Suggestions for Further Research

From the study completed by The Social Impact of the Arts Project (SIAP) of the University of Pennsylvania School of Social Work on the community impact of the Philadelphia Mural Arts Program, it is apparent that there is a shortage of organized and detailed data on mural projects, without which it is difficult to demonstrate the impacts murals may have on creating social capital and other benefits for the community. The study determined that murals that were the product of a full process of community design are most likely to be associated with social capital creation (Stern et al. 30). It follows, then, that mural projects with not only a full process of community design but also community involvement during other stages of the mural process would have an even greater impact.

In future studies, it will be important to define measures of community
involvement to quantify how much input community members had, how many community members were involved, and how many hours of community activities were provided by the project in order to distinguish between projects with little community involvement, projects with community input on the design process, and projects in which the community takes part in designing the project and actually creating it. I suggest that in the future, multiple studies be carried out to evaluate new community mural projects and other public art projects, involving collaborations between experts in qualitative and quantitative social science methods with highly talented artists and deeply committed community leaders. These studies should measure indicators of social capital and other community benefits in longitudinal studies of the neighborhoods in which community mural projects take place and compare this data with detailed measurements of the amount of community involvement that takes place during each project.

This is most likely to be achieved by conducting murals in places that are already part of ongoing long-term studies of urban development that measure social capital so that baseline trends in social capital are visible. To further strengthen the studies, it would be worth while to choose pairs of communities with similar baseline measures of social capital and conduct different mural projects in each community. In each pair, one community would have an artist come in and do a mural with little or no community involvement, and the other community would have an artist who attempted to maximize community involvement. In addition, increased effort should be made to measure and follow up on the social effects of participation in the mural-making process. After several high quality studies are completed, there will be enough evidence to demonstrate a relationship between increased community involvement in local murals and social capital.
outcomes. This would help to answer one of the questions posed by the SIAP study: “Do mural projects with more community involvement generate greater social benefits than those with little community involvement?” Furthermore, it would prove that, in terms of the amount of quantifiable social capital created, it is worth the extra time investment to have the community involved in painting the mural.

Other unanswered questions posed by the SIAP study were: “Do murals with a high rating of artistic quality or design have greater benefits? Does type of mural matter—for example indoor, outdoor, temporary or permanent? Do mural projects with youth participation have greater benefits than those without?” (48) Further research on these questions is also in order, as well as research on the educational and economic benefits of community mural projects. Eventually a body of literature could be built that can begin to show the impacts, if the correct factors are present, that mural projects are capable of having on communities.

One issue not addressed in this thesis is the issue of the sustainability of community mural projects in terms of continually having an impact on a community. How can the momentum created by such projects continue once the mural is up on the wall and the production process is over? This question is very important and was not discussed fully in this endeavor because it deserves an entire thesis of its own devoted to exploring the question. However, I will mention that it is possible to keep the momentum of such a project going. A community mural project often inspires other people to start public art projects of their own, such as Pilato’s Williamsport mural. More research needs to find new ways to distribute information about useful techniques for creating community murals to the people who might be interested in leading such a project. In
addition to more art projects, other community activities and events can continue to take place and new projects can be taken up by the public created during a mural project. This public itself is the core of the social capital created by the mural making process.

**Final Note**

When discussing the research that has taken place and should continue to take place evaluating the impact of community mural projects, it is important to remember that much of the impact is impossible to capture in numbers. In his book, *The Art of Placemaking: Interpreting Community through Public Art and Urban Design*, Ronald Lee Fleming comments that it “is not the architecture that turns a physical local into a well loved place, it is the remembrance of human interaction that helps us claim it” (Fleming 14). This human interaction that creates places that are loved can’t always be captured in research. To be part of a community mural project means to witness incredibly profound human interactions, to be part of experiences that change people’s lives. Information does not always have to be translated into numbers to have any validity. Shared learning is rooted in emotions and passions as well as facts and figures, in visions and dreams as well as historical experience (Newman and Stephens 319).
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Appendix A – Personal Email from Kent Twitchell

from: Kent Twitchell kent.twitchell@yahoo.com; to: elody gyekis elodyg@gmail.com;
Sent: Mon, Sep 14, 2009 at 7:12 PM; subject: Re: question about parachute cloth murals

Hi Elody,

Yes, I invented the method you mentioned. I was trying to get full penetration all the way through a mural fabric material for the sake of permanence. First I'd draw my mural on large sheets of white paper and then coat the paper front and back with clear water-based resin (AC 235) to which I'd added penetrating agents. Then I'd paint my mural with acrylic artist paints based on AC235, or a resin fully compatible with 235. I'd stick the mural pieces to the wall with gel medium, based on 235 and varnish it all after with acrylic varnish based on 235. The acrylic materials stuck to each other beautifully but there were 3 problems with my mural fabric. 1) The paper would stretch when it got wet with each of these coatings and then 2) it would shrink. When I finally put it on the wall with gel it would stretch again but was unable to shrink back, so it left some slight wrinkling. Plus 3) most importantly, there was the layer of paper in the middle that never was reached with the resin I used to coat it. Eventually an exterior exposure would cause this layer to rot.

I then tried using sheets of nylon which I referred to as "parachute cloth" since it was the same material parachutes are made from. I had painted 2 major murals with the paper and they held up very well. Fortunately both were removed by a conservator and reinstalled in new locations due to other circumstances. I was able to penetrate the paper during those moves using B72. Jane Golden asked me to paint one of my "American
Cultural Heroes" for Philadelphia's "Anti-Graffiti Network" when it was 4 only years old. I painted Dr. J during the summer of '89, through many rain storms, but I was quite dry and active up in my little apartment on the top floor of the International House, across from the Penn Campus, painting Dr. J on my parachute cloth. The next year I discovered "Non-woven Media" sometimes called Pellon. It is 70% polyester and 30% cellulose and my normal acrylic resins all penetrate it fully through. Also it never stretches or shrinks and it is not terribly expensive. I've used it for every project since finishing Dr. J in Philly and The Jesus Mural (also on parachute cloth) at Biola University in Southern California, painted immediately after Dr. J.

If you have any more questions I will happily try to answer them.

All the best to you,

Kent Twitchell

http://www.flickr.com/photos/kenttwitchell

http://www.facebook.com/kent.twitchell
How to Create a

Community Based

Paint-By-Number Mural

By:

Elody Gyekis
About the Author:

Before I jump right into explaining how to make a community mural, let me briefly introduce myself and my experience with mural painting. I am a Bachelor of Fine Arts major with minors in Civic and Community Engagement and Sociology at The Pennsylvania State University. During the summers between my freshman and sophomore and junior years at Penn State, I interned with Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful in Allison Hill, an inner-city neighborhood in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania designing and creating community murals. Two summers later, in 2008, I organized and fundraised for my own mural project in Millheim, Pennsylvania, a small rural town in Centre County.

During the summer of 2005, I was involved with a very small mural on the front of a church on Market Street and a very large mural on the side of the Mulberry Street Bridge. The second mural was a much larger project and required more time than we had anticipated and actually was not fully completed until August of 2006 and had at least 250 participating. For these two murals I was the artist and I participated in the organizational aspects of the project as well. The second summer I interned, in 2006, I was involved with a third mural of about 500 square feet. It was installed on a row house on Derry Street and was completed within the allotted ten-week time frame. For this mural, I was the project leader and had two other interns working full time with me who shared in all of the work, organizing, designing, painting, and the decision making processes. For the Millheim mural, I was entirely responsible from the inception to the completion in terms of gaining permission, writing grants, organizing, designing, and completing. It was also about 500 square feet and had about 150 people involved.
Paint-By-Number Murals

Simply put, this mural painting method involves taking your mural design and using a projector to transfer the image in sections onto panels and later gluing the panels to the wall. The design is traced in a way that results in separating the design into sections of colors which are coded with numbers and letters. Corresponding colors are mixed and stored in airtight containers and the mural can be painted by people of all ages and skill levels. After the panels have been painted, they are glued onto the designated mural surface. Philadelphia Mural Arts has been using the method for years in their community mural projects. As I describe the paint-by-numbers mural making process, I will be referencing examples from all of the mural projects.

This extraordinary method allows you to get the most people involved. Anyone and everyone can paint a gigantic paint-by-number project; I have worked with ages ranging from toddlers to senior citizens. The panels are lightweight and easy to transport. The painting can be done on location, in studios, or taken directly to any group of painters.

Section 1: Getting started
First of all, interested muralists need to have key resources: funding, a core group of people to drive the project, and of course a community to work in. It is important to be aware of the quantity of resources you have and for how long. Start right from the beginning setting goals on the time frame and budget of your project.

When budgeting for your mural, you will have to take into consideration whether or not you are paying your project leaders or artists. How much money you have for materials and the amount of time you have for the project will limit the size of mural that you can make. Your main expenses will be primers, paint, glue, and scaffolding or a lift if the mural is tall. Spend some time calculating estimates of how much these will cost for the size of mural you hope to do. In material costs, my three large murals each required between two and three thousand dollars.

To choose your mural site, look for a place that is highly visible, a location that makes sense to you and your community, and a place in which you can obtain permission to install a mural. The wall should not be crumbling or falling apart and can be made of any permanent material such as metal, brick, or cement.

**Community Involvement:**

In my projects, community involvement has been the most important aspect of the mural project. If community involvement is not a priority for your mural, this method of making a paint-by-number is irrelevant, but you may still find the use of the panels helpful. For a community based mural you ideally want to have the community involved at some level for every step of the way, from choosing the mural site to celebrating the finished mural.
Once you have the funding and location and are ready to begin a project, start getting people involved right away. Ask for your partners’ input on the theme and design of the mural and organize various events (such as weekly or monthly meetings) to get input from the community. Once you have settled on a design, start scheduling painting volunteers for when you are ready to paint. The best method of getting people involved will vary greatly depending on the community you are working in.

**Planning For Community Involvement:**

Before you start recruiting helpers and ideas, start by outlining exactly what kind of input you want from the neighborhood. For example, in the Mulberry Street Mural, there was not a specific theme already chosen by the main partners, but for the Derry Street Mural we were partnered with Project Safe Neighborhoods in a city-wide effort to reduce gun-violence so we had an anti-gun violence theme to start with.

**Ask yourself, what level of influence should the community have in the design process?**

You do not want to be misleading when you are recruiting for ideas and have community members be disappointed because they thought their ideas would be included more directly. When introducing the project to members of the community in any context, mention what has already been decided on (for example in the anti-violence mural we learned to explain both that it was an anti-violence theme and that we wanted the focus to be positive; on alternatives to violence rather than on the violence itself.)
For the Mulberry Street Mural we decided to have community meetings with people from the neighborhood. At the meetings we intended to have the residents work with us to brainstorm ideas on the theme, content and design of the mural. Unfortunately, we were unsuccessful at recruiting residents and did not have any residents show up for the meetings. This was not the best way in our case, but may work in other communities and contexts. The design was decided on by the project organizer, the artist (me), and our main community partner. While our ideas were influenced very much by interactions with the people in the community, we did not get direct involvement in the designing process.

The second summer we learned from our experience and realized that in addition to trying to get residents involved on an individual basis, we had to work with already organized community groups. That year we were partnered with the Community Action Commission (CAC), an organization that was connected in some capacity to every community group in the neighborhood and had years of experience organizing community projects. The CAC is the kind of community partner that you want to find, especially if you are unfamiliar with the community you are working in. We held idea building workshops with each of the organizations involved in the project, held open community idea building meetings, and even set up a free lemonade stand on the street at the mural site and asked people for their ideas.

The Millheim mural had even more time devoted to gaining community input. I held open community idea building workshops twice a month for five months and let the design change and build and grow through all of the community conversations for a truly collaborative community vision.
The following methods are examples of different approaches that can be taken to engage residents and organizations in a mural project from helping to come up with the design to scheduling painting workshops:

**Contacting Organizations:**

One method is to schedule meeting times with any and all community organizations that we could think of who might want to be involved with the project; especially groups that would want to contribute to the painting of the mural. We contacted church groups, youth groups, day care centers, schools, the work release center, juvenile probation and others. Any type of groups that were already organized and had leaders and members are fair game. If the group is interested in getting involved, schedule a time to meet with them to get their input on the mural and later schedule times to paint with them.

**Contacting Individual Residents:**

Reaching out directly to residents takes more effort than making a single phone call to an already organized group but it is very rewarding when you find people interested in your project. You can try an individual approach by talking to people on the street or at their homes. One fun way to do this is to have a free iced-tea or lemonade stand out on the mural site. In Harrisburg we did this and made big cardboard signs advertising that we were making a mural, announcing a community meeting to make the final decision for the mural, and offering “free iced tea in exchange for your ideas”. This was very fun and successful.
**Community Meetings:**

Every project I have done has involved community meetings as some stage of the process, either for the entire idea building process, to vote on the design, or to approve a design. For community meetings it is crucial to advertise and generate enough interest that you know people will show up. One way that we did this in Harrisburg was to piggyback on an already planned Residents’ meeting and held our meeting directly afterwards, in addition to advertising. When advertising, use as many approaches as possible; flyers, radio, newspaper, word-of-mouth, emails, phone calls, networking websites such as Facebook, and anything else you can think of.

**Things to Consider when Getting People Involved:**

**Volunteer Diversity:**

Get creative when engaging people in the project. Look into a wide variety of people and organizations. I contacted community organizations, clubs based on leisure activities, educational institutions (elementary, private, high school, and university level), religious organizations, rehabilitation centers, work release centers, and many others. Keep in mind that all of these groups can be potential painters, and it is ideal if you can have them involved with both the designing and the painting process. When possible, have different organizations working on the project at the same time and interacting with each other.

**Volunteer Scheduling:**
Have a rough idea of the time frame of each step of the process (but be prepared to be flexible!) while scheduling groups to determine how many volunteers you will need and for what length of time. Of course, you can target a specific age range or type of group, but I found that having such a demographically diverse pool of volunteers to be one of the most interesting and rewarding aspects of the project. Different types of groups will react differently to volunteering for painting a mural. Kids may be most enthusiastic, adults most patient and careful, and teenagers may take longer to warm up to the idea that painting might be “cool” enough to do.

Involving Local Businesses:

Finally, at every step of the way, try to get local businesses involved. You can put flyers in their windows, get food donated for community meetings or for your volunteers on work days, ask for discounts and donations on supplies you need, have nearby restaurants lend their restrooms to your volunteers, or have the bar across the street fill up water buckets for kids to wash paint off their hands. This kind of assistance is indispensable to getting things done and even more importantly, gets more people to be attached to the project.

Just a Mural?

Depending on where you are working, you may have some space adjacent to your wall to work with. The Derry Street mural project had an entire vacant lot next to it that had already undergone a “Clean and Green” treatment and was complete with a white
picket fence. There was also a tall wooden fence in front of a fire escape right next to the mural wall. As part of our project, we scheduled a Work Day to get people out on the actual mural site, since most of the painting goes on inside. During that day, we had our volunteers weed and trim and plant, pick up trash, and decorate the fences. Later, we scheduled times with each of our youth groups to come to the lot and also decorate the fences by painting leaves (with laminated Bristol board stencils we made), putting their handprints and names on the fences, and painting free-form decorations and quotes. Other options could be sculptures, benches, mosaics, gardens, tree plantings, etc. Get creative and make sure to involve the community in the decisions, what do they want to see in the lot?

As with everything else, the more planning the better, but you will also find that being outside on your site in public will also bring lots of surprises in terms of the weather, generating interest in your project, and inspiring spontaneous volunteering, assistance, or treatment to nice cold beverages from people in the neighborhoods. This method for mural making is great because it lets everyone get involved in painting in a safe way; the more work that happens in the actual space of the mural, the better.
Section 2: Making the mural!

Once you have your community partners invested in the project, you are ready to begin making and painting the mural. This section offers a step-by-step overview of how to paint a mural using the Paint-By-Number technique, which involves designing the mural on Adobe Photoshop, dividing the design into a grid corresponding to the size of your panels, projecting the posterized sections onto fabric panels, tracing and coding the images to create a paint-by-number painting, touching up and adding detail to the panels, and then gluing the painted panels up on the wall or designated mural surface (as though it were a permanent outdoor wallpaper.)

Most of the following steps will overlap each other during the painting process. For example, you may want to cut and prime your panels while you are creating the design, and you will definitely be tracing panels while other panels are being painted and still others are being touched up. You may even start mounting the mural before all of the panels are touched-up. Here are the steps in the general order that they will be done.

Preparing the Final Design for Tracing

**Design Materials:** (Depending on your method of design, you *might* need):

- Adobe Photoshop or other editing software
- Paper, markers, drawing supplies
- Photographs
- Digital projector
- A large room to project and trace panels in
**Formatting the Design:**

Once you have chosen what your design is going to be and are putting it together into an image, there are several things to keep in mind.

- First of all, make sure you are designing to scale and establish your grid right away. Size the grid (which will later be the panels) conveniently… we had 6’2” by 5’ panels for our 6’2” by 296’ mural, and 5’ by 5’ panels for the 25’ by 20’ mural. (Because the Pellon fabric comes 5’ wide, 5’ by 5’ tends to be standard.)

- If you are designing on a computer, the larger image file you work with, the better resolution you will have for tracing. However, if your file gets too large it is difficult to work with and slows your computer. For both murals I chose to have a ratio of one square inch to one square foot, so five inches was the width of each panel.

**Designing and Posterizing:**

It is important that whatever you design will later be projected, traced, and coded into a paint-by-number system. You can design the mural with collages of photographs, scanned drawings, text and anything else you want. I always do the final design with Adobe Photoshop. When making the design, multiple areas of solid color are easiest to turn into paint-by-number, but working with gradients and detailed areas can also be done. To transform these areas into paint-by-number in Adobe Photoshop, posterize your image (you can do this by going to the (Edit tab> Adjustments> Posterize). I like to posterize each layer separately so I can choose the number of “color steps” that looks
best. Posterizing separates an image into areas of different values. To choose how many steps to posterize your image,

- Choose the lowest number that looks good to you. In general a rule of thumb is that the larger a complex image is going to be, the more steps (and thus more detail) you can get away with. Usually it will be somewhere between 4 and 12 steps.
- Try to be realistic and keep in mind the scale you are working with and the skills you will have available to you… if the areas that will have to be traced and painted get too fine and small, only very good painters will be able to do it and you will have a lot more work in tracing and coding. Try to keep it simple.

**Projecting in color or in black and white:**

- For complex gradients of approximately the same hue (more than 5 steps posterized, especially for faces and the like) keep those areas in black and white. This will make it much easier to see the different values when you are projecting and tracing the image (and of course, it does not mean that the faces will be in black and white on your mural, you can mix the paints any color you wish.)
- Some artists do the entire design in black and white, but I found it was easier to keep the colorful areas in color, and when tracing them, code them immediately for the desired color. I did it both ways. In my first mural, which was translated entirely from photographic images, all of the areas were posterized and coded by value, not color. After tracing and coding for value using numbers, I went back
and color coded the areas with letters, so it ended up that every hue had six values (the number of value steps with which I posterized the whole mural.)

**Color Coding:**

- The Mulberry Street Bridge Mural was entirely posterized and had six values for each color. We used a letter to designate the color and a number to designate the value. For example, we had B1-B6 for blues 1-6. (for colors beginning with the same letter we would use two letters, Br for brown.) For every color, 1 was always nearly white and 6 always nearly black.

- In the second mural, only the background and the faces were posterized, while the rest of the image was designed with large sections of solid colors. In this way, the faces and background were numbers (in this case 1-10 and 1-6 respectively with the background numbers also accompanied with the letter B). The rest of the mural that was very colorful we coded with letters. Always make a key for yourself after mixing the paint so you know how to code it while tracing.

### Mixing Paint

It is important to mix enough paint from the start to ensure that your mural team can cover the mural and still be able to do touch ups.

**Materials:**

- Gallons of paint. I use Nova Color Paints from novacolorpaint.com. Order all of the basic colors you think you will need to mix all of the colors you will use. I usually order each color by the gallon and I get a yellow, a blue, an orange, a dark
red and a light red, a green or two, a purple, several kinds of brown, a black and a 5 gallon jug of white. If your mural contains a lot of shades of blue for example, you will want to order several gallons of blue.

- As many airtight containers as you have colors. I use Tupperware plastic containers or mason jars or whatever I can get donated. (When obtaining your containers, have in mind you need a container for every color in your mural, large enough to hold all of that color needed for the whole mural. Get different sizes, you will probably have some colors used a lot and others a little.)
  - Plastic spoons
  - Sharpie to label containers

**Process**

- For each of the buckets of paint, have a plastic spoon or some sort of scooper to get the paint into your containers. Use one plastic spoon also for each color you mix to avoid contaminating your primaries.

- Make sure you have a container for each color, and since this is a messy process, cover your table with a drop cloth or tablecloth. If you are doing a gradient, do them all at the same time so you can adjust them to one another to be an even progression from light to dark.

- Test your colors and see what they look like dry before you decide you are finished; the colors always become darker when dry. Either take notes or keep mental track of what colors you use to mix each color, you may have to mix it again.
• It is difficult to know exactly how much of each color you will need. If the color appears many times throughout a mural of 500 square feet, you will need several cups of the color. If it appears only in small areas, a very small container can be used to make a quarter cup or less of the color. Mix more than you think you will need.

• It is also a good idea to take notes on how much of which of your primary colors you used to mix a specific color for the mural, just in case you need to mix more paint.

• Label your containers of mixed paint clearly with permanent marker in multiple places to avoid confusion between colors.

Preparing your panels

While you are developing your design you can also begin preparing your panels. We recommend painting on a synthetic, nonwoven fabric known as parachute paper, Pellon, or PolyTab. This Pellon fabric will come in a large roll that will have to be cut down into individual panels. After cutting the panels with an exacto blade or scissors, you will prepare the surface of the panels with a primer so the paint will adhere properly.

Materials: (In general try to borrow tools and get as many of these items donated as possible)

• Pellon fabric- medium weight, 5 ft wide by however long you feel you need. It can be ordered in huge rolls or sometimes bought at fabric outlets. I recommend ordering from QST Industries. Their Chicago office phone number is 312-930-
9400, their New York office number is 212-764-2828, and their website is www.qst.com.

- Matte medium (order from NovaColorPaint.com) or acrylic based gesso (any art supply store.) I get the matte medium paint by the 5 gallon jug, usually one of these jugs is enough for a 500 sq ft mural.
- Exacto blades
- Measuring tape
- Straight edge (preferably 5 feet)
- A surface to cut on (preferably at least five feet wide)
- T square or other method of checking to make sure your panels are square
- Plastic drop cloths
- Duct tape
- Disposable rubber gloves
- Standard paint rollers, roller frames, and roller handles
- Paint trays
- Clothesline and clothes pins

**Cutting Panels:**

Roll out your Pellon fabric, measure and mark it by your desired intervals, and cut your panels to size. A handy trick for unrolling the fabric without it dragging on the ground is to stick a broom or mop handles in either end of the cumbersome roll and then put other end of the sticks through the back of a folding chair. This makes the roll like a giant toilet paper roll dispenser when measuring and cutting the panels. When cutting the
panels, I put some plywood underneath the cutting edge to protect the floor and used an exacto blade and straight edge to cut our 5’ by 5’ panels. I would recommend numbering the corners of the panels as you go to help you keep count. Do them all at once and cut out a few extra panels so if one gets ruined you will not have to do this step again.

**Priming and Drying Panels:**

Use NovaColor’s Matte Medium and roll onto both sides of panels until the panel is quite saturated (Philadelphia mural artist David Gray also told us that any acrylic based gesso would also do and I have heard that a few artists do not prime the panels at all.)

- The priming you can do outdoors or indoors, (if inside make sure it is a well ventilated space.) Outside, you can do it on sidewalk or if it is in the grass fabricate some kind of kind of platform (we used pieces of plywood nailed to scrap 2 by 4s because it is hard to get your hands on plywood that is 5 feet wide) to give yourself a smooth, hard surface.

- Cover your platform, or ground, or floor with a heavy-duty drop cloth (I would recommend 2 mm thick) that is secured with weights or duct tape so it will not move.

- Wearing rubber gloves, pour the matte medium into your paint trays (you may want to use disposable liners in your trays to make cleanup easier.) Dip your rollers into the matte medium and roll across your panels as evenly as possible. With two people, flip the panel over, and then roll matte medium on the other side as well.
To hang to dry, I usually hang them on a clothesline with clothes pins. Outdoors, I hang a clothesline or tie a kite string between any two sturdy objects (trees, fences, and telephone poles work great!) On a sunny and windy day the panels were dry in half an hour or so and ready to be taken down and replaced with the next. It took us most of one day and the following morning to do fifty-some panels. Inside, we strung up some yarn across the ceiling and it took much longer for the panels to dry, usually about a day, and we could not do more than four at a time (we only chose to work inside because of rain.) Tip for using the clothes pins: do not fold the panel corners over the line because they will dry that way and be wrinkled. Instead, overlap the panel with the string just a little bit and use many clothespins (the panels are much heavier when wet). When removing the dry panels, the clothespins may get stuck to the panels as they dry; do not worry, they should come off without damaging the panels.

Making it Paint-by-Number

Now that your panels are prepared and your design is complete, you are ready to begin projecting your image, section by section, onto the panels using an overhead projector or a LCD digital projector. You will trace out every single section of color, code it, and mix a corresponding color of paint in a sealable container.

Materials:

- Wall Surface
- Masking tape
- LCD digital projector and laptop computer OR
- Overhead projector and printed transparencies of your design
- Pencils (nice artists pencils that are all graphite work really well, but any ol number 2 will do)
- Plastic tablecloth or dropcloth
- Plastic spoons
- Sharpies or other permanent markers

**Projecting Option One:**

To do it the old fashioned way, print out each of your panels from the design onto transparencies. Use masking tape and adhere a blank, primed panel to a wall. Then just play around with your arrangement until you can get your design projected onto the wall and matching up with your panel edges.

**Projecting Option Two:**

My experience, however, is with digital projectors. When using a digital projector, turn on your projector and arrange it such that the blank panel taped to the wall is within the cast light.

- Dim or turn off the lights in your workroom during projection. If the room has windows and it is daytime, cover the windows with blankets or shades to darken the room.
- Select a Panel from your design and pull it up on your laptop with Adobe Photoshop. Resize and zoom in or out as much as necessary to get the cast image
close to matching up with the panel edges (you may also have to move the projector itself). If you make the “canvas size” on Adobe larger than your image and use the Distort feature under Transform options (under Edit on upper toolbar) you can distort the corners of your design to match perfectly to the panel corners on the wall. Have someone standing next to the panel directing the person at the laptop.

**Tracing and Coding:**

Tracing over every single line and filling in each space with a number is a time consuming process. I usually break up this task and trace the panels as I need them so I do not have to do more than a few a day.

- Once you have it all set up, do not bump the projector! If you are using a laptop with a digital projector, make sure your settings are such that the screen saver does not come on after a short amount of time. Use your graphite pencils or regular pencils and trace the entire image out. Keep a pencil sharpener on hand; you will need it often. (Do NOT use marker for this part, especially not permanent marker. It will bleed through the paint and require many layers of paint to cover it.) Know exactly how every color that is in the panel is going to be coded. Every time you close off a section of the same color, label it immediately. (Refer to Designing section for advice on projecting in color or black and white and how to come up with a coding system.)

- If you are working with gradients, a good way to do it is to start off with the highlights and work one value step at a time down to your darkest one. This is
probably the most difficult step of the process, it is best if someone who has a
good eye for value differences and is good at visualizing how these sections of
color will look when painted in.

- Many times it will be impossible to tell which value a given section is and you
  will just have to give it your best guess. When working in highly detailed areas,
you may need to simplify. Again, someone who can simplify in a logical way that
retains the most important information but reduces the complexity of the paint-by-
number process will make the process more efficient and the end result more
accurate. If it is frustrating, do not give up. You will get better as you go;
especially once you have seen a panel painted in.

- When you finish tracing a panel, turn the lights on to make sure you got
everything traced and labeled. For large sections or complicated sections, it is a
good idea to label the section in multiple places (in case a number or letter gets
painted over and the painter forgets what area they were working in.)

**Painting and Touch up**

After all of this preparation work, now you finally get to paint the mural! This is
the fun part, where you bring in your groups to sit down and paint with you. After your
groups are finished with the panel, you will have to finish the panels and do touch up
where mural participants made mistakes.

**Materials:**
• Lots of Brushes- synthetic brushes for acrylics work well. The brushes should have smooth fine bristles but also not so soft that the end of the brushes folds over easily… the relatively inexpensive ones with either white or bright orange fibers work best. Choose sizes according to your designs needs; large, medium, and medium-small brushes proved most useful, the extremely small brushes ones are irrelevant in mural making.

• Cups for water to clean brushes

• Cleanup facilities (a sink)

• Drop cloths to protect any tables floors you don’t want paint on

• Tables and Chairs

• Walls and thumbtacks

• Oversized old t-shirts or smocks for painters to protect their clothing with

• Snacks and drinks

• Access to bathrooms

**Painting with Groups:**

How this works will depend largely on your group sizes and what kind of people they are (age and level of interest in painting).

Getting set up:

• Make sure you have an appropriate amount of adult supervision for the ages and sizes of your groups.

• Setting up will also depend on the size of your group and what kind of space you have. Your options include:
a. Spreading out your prepared panels on multiple tables with many chairs around them
b. Setting out your panels on the floor on top of drop cloths
c. Using tacks to hold panels to wall with drop cloth taped underneath

- Have everyone wear clothes they can get paint on or hand out smocks or old t-shirts. All mural paint is obviously permanent and WILL NOT wash out of clothing once it has dried.
- Introduce yourselves! If it is the first time you are working with a group, take some time either at the beginning or during a break to really introduce yourselves and the project to your group, let everyone introduce themselves to you, and maybe get a conversation going about the theme of the mural.
- You may also wish to have a sign in sheet to keep track of all of your volunteers, the number of hours they contribute, their group affiliation, and their ages.

**Tips for distributing paint and painting the panels:**

- We found that it works best to give each individual a single color and have them find all the places on that panel that use the color. For children who might be prone to spilling, rather than giving out the entire container of paint, give just a scoop or two (from a plastic spoon) of paint in a small plastic cup that is labeled with the color code using a sharpie.
- Have an assistant on hand who can distribute paint colors when painters finish their color and who can wash brushes as needed. Other assistants can float around
among the painters and help them out. If everything is going smoothly, sit down and paint with your group.

- Explain to your painters that they are matching the label on their cup of paint to the labels on the panels. These small cups can be rinsed and reused for the same color, they allow multiple people to use the same colors and they prevent major accidents (such as spilling large amounts of paint across panels) from happening.
- Keep track of the brushes during groups, make sure they are washed quickly after use and washed well; you will go though a lot of brushes. Do not let brushes be put down unattended: a brush full of paint that dries is ruined.
- A good piece of advice to give is to work from the center of the panel out towards the edge to prevent putting your elbows in areas of wet paint.
- Create a good atmosphere, this is fun! Have music playing, and be sure to take a break and give everyone drinks and snacks.

**Touch-Up Work:**

- How much and what kind of touch-ups you will do depends very much on your artistic vision, the skill of your painters, how close the viewers will be to the mural… basically do what you need to do to be satisfied. Often this is also an opportunity to add details and make changes to some parts of the panel to make the image clearer or to add texture.
- Buy new brushes to do touch-up, they will be in pretty bad shape by the time your groups are through with them. Aside from just making it look better, you also will have to make the panels match up.
• Generally we would tack two or more panels up at a time, lined up next to each other to make the panels match up, but you can also do it once the mural is permanently mounted (which you will doubtless have to do some of anyway, the decision to do it before will be influenced by how much time you will have to work on the actual wall, for example number of days with scaffolding. It is easy to do some of it ahead of time and will probably save you time in the long run.)

**Priming the Wall:**

You will have to paint the wall that the mural is going up on before gluing up the mural. Weather it is a metal surface or a brick surface, there must be a primer down before installing. If the wall is already painted, you may only need to clean the wall. Prime your wall with an inexpensive white primer so that the Nova Gel has something to stick to. In most cases, this will be done about a day before you start mounting panels so that you only have to set up scaffolding once. (If you do not need scaffolding or a lift, then priming can be done well in advance.)

**Materials:**

• Primer (Acrylic, not oil based) appropriate for the wall you are working with (e.g. use a mason primer for a brick wall)
• Paint trays
• Rollers, frames, long handles
• Water buckets
• Scaffolding
• Drop cloths

If the ground at the base of the wall should be protected from paint, cover the ground with drop cloths (and be sure to weigh them downs so the wind does not take them away. Dump the paint into your trays, roll it on the wall liberally with your long-handled rollers, and let it dry. You may want to have water buckets on hand to wash your hands and clean up your rollers once you are finished.

Mounting the Panels

Installing your mural involves gluing each of your panels up on the wall so they line up as neatly as possible. When you are finished, it will look as though the mural was painted directly on the wall.

Materials:

• Nova Gel (this glue is from the same company as the paint and can be purchased at novacolorpaint.com)

• Rollers, frames, long handles

• Exacto blades

• Water buckets

• Rags

• Screen printing squeegees-anything from 7-12 inches long, the rubber edge should be narrow and firm, the wider soft ones that bend easily will strain your hands and be less efficient

• Scaffolding
- Rope
- Drop cloths

To glue up the panels, you will need to roll Nova Gel on the back of your panel and on the area of the wall that the panel will cover. How thickly you roll the glue will depend on the surface you are adhering to, a rule of thumb is always to use more than you think you need (any extra will be squeegeed out and reused). If your surface is very smooth, such as a metal wall, you will need much less glue than if you are working on a very porous surface, such as brick. For brick, you will need to roll the glue on very thick. It does not have to be a perfectly even, big gobs will be smoothed later. You can cover the back of the panel and the wall with glue at the same time if you have enough people, but do not get too far ahead of yourself because the glue dries very quickly if you are in the sun. Put the panels up in a systematic order, one side to the other side, bottom to top or top to bottom. A team of three to five people works best for installing the panels.

Note about the glue: it is non-toxic, so you do not have to worry about it touching your skin. That being said, cover as much of your skin as possible, because it is a very strong glue. Once dry, you have to peal it off (like you used to do with Elmer’s glue as a kid, except much worse) and it will take hair with it like an old Band-Aid. It is really hard to clean off of your skin and hair and a fairly painful process. The clothes and you wear will be ruined because the glue dries like a sheet of plastic and will not come off of the fabric at all.

**Rolling on the Glue:**
• Set up on the ground at the base of your mural. If you have a smooth hard surface to work on such as concrete, turn your panel upside down on that. If you are working on an uneven surface, a dirt surface, or a grass surface, you will have to use some kind of platform (did you make a platform out of plywood to prime on? Use it again here!)

• Use rollers dipped directly in your buckets of Nova-Gel to coat the back of your panel very thickly.

• Do the same thing to the wall, just in the area the panel will cover. Rolling the glue on the wall very thickly is trickier because large lumps of glue on your rollers may fall off and splat down on the ground. Make sure no one is directly underneath you (it is very hard to get out of hair), and cover the ground with drop cloths beneath you.

• You may want to have some kind of pulley and rope system set up when you are high up to hoist the heavy nova-gel and water buckets up. We just handed the buckets up one level at a time, which was pretty difficult.

**Putting up the Panels:**

• If it is a tall mural, start with the bottom layer and work up. Once you are above the first layer, you will have to hand the glue covered panel up to someone else on the scaffolding. To do this, fold your panel in half so the glue-covered side touches itself, then fold it again as many times as you need to for the panel to be manageable when handing it up multiple levels of scaffolding. Unfold it when you reach the location of the panel.
• With at least two people, lift the panel up and line it up with either the edge of the mural or later, the panel next to it. Use your hands to smooth it down without any wrinkles.

• Use your squeegees to squeeze out the excess nova gel and remove any air bubbles. Start from the center and slide your squeegee tightly against the wall first straight up from the center, then straight down from the center, and then out to each side horizontally from the center. Do NOT actually bring the extra glue out of the edges just yet, leave it in a big lump a few inches from the edge.

• Now continue working outwards from the center in vertical, horizontal, and diagonal strokes, working closer and closer to the corners, and leaving all of the glue just a few inches from the edges. You know it is tight enough when you can see the texture of the wall through the panel and you can feel no lumps of glue or air bubbles.

• If you encounter any protruding bumps that are part of the wall, such as the heads of bolts, use an exacto blade to cut your panel out around it (you can cover it over with paint later if it looks bad, but this will prevent cracking in your panel.) The same thing should be done for major cracks on your wall. For example on the Mulberry Street Bridge mural there were cracks between the metal panels making up the wall of the bridge. After mounting our panels over the cracks, we ran an exacto knife down them, cutting a line in the panel, and then filled the crack with glue.

• When you have squeezed all of the glue close to the edges, you can go back and squeeze it out the whole way, catching it on your squeegee and scraping the
excess glue back into your buckets of nova-gel to be reused. Use some of the glue to smear back overtop all of the edges (especially thickly over edges that will be the border of the whole mural.) This seals the panels and makes them weather tight. It looks milky white but will dry clear, so do not worry about the glue dulling the colors of your panels. However, make sure it is smooth so the final texture looks nice.

- Now use a wet rag to wipe up any lumps of glue that fell on top of your panel. Do not leave lumps of glue anywhere on the mural surface. Drop your squeegees in your bucket of water while you roll nova gel on the next panel. This prevents the glue from drying on your squeegee.

- Start all over again with the next panel! While one or two people squeegee, others can roll on glue, but again do not get too far ahead if it is a hot sunny day.

**Final Touch-Up:**

It is not always possible to do a perfect job matching up the panels, and you may have had to cut holes in the panels for irregularities in the surface of the wall. You will have to do one final round of touch up to fill in gaps or make the panels match up. If your primed area was larger than your mural area you may need to paint over the extra white with a color matching the wall color, or you can paint the mural outwards directly on the wall as much as you like. Do what you need to do to finish up! Now it is done. No additional protective coat is necessary, but it will not hurt it and may increase the longevity of the mural.
Celebrating your mural!

Give the project some closure by organizing an unveiling or dedication ceremony for your mural.

- Begin planning the celebration as soon as the mural project is started
- Invite the funders, project leaders, and community partners to speak as soon as the celebration date is set.
- Invite everyone who has been involved
- Make the celebration fun and upbeat with music and free food or ice-cream!
- Publicly recognize and thank everyone who helped organize and fund the project
- Additionally, thank you notes are a nice way to thank participants who really went out of their way to make the project happen.
Appendix C – Photos of Shared Ministries Mural

Digital Mural Design

Painting the Mural

Final Mural
Appendix D – Photos of Mulberry Street Bridge Mural

Photos of 296-foot-mural from left to right.
this is a wish for this bridge to be a bridge between those between place between class, between peace between “dirty” and “clean” between every style and scene between cultures and diversity suburbs and inner-city city of bridges these rivers must be crossed
Appendix E – Photos of Derry Street Mural

Digital Mural Design

Painting the Mural

Final Mural at Unveiling Ceremony
Appendix F – Conference Presentations

**Pennsylvania Art Education Association 2005 Annual Conference.** October 20-23;
State College, PA. Program Description: **Direct Address, Interaction and Relationship Building: A New Harrisburg Mural.** By G. E. Washington and Elody M. Gyekis - All Levels - Research - Discussion Group - Saturday - 3:00 - 3:50 PM.

**National Art Education Association 2006 Annual Convention.** March 22-26; Chicago Illinois. **Defining who we are: the many faces of art education.** Program Description: **Community mural projects, direct interaction and relationship building.** Presented by: G.E. Washington with Elody M. Gyekis. Thurs 11 am to 11:50/ALL.

**Pennsylvania Art Education Association 2006 Annual Conference.** October 26-29; Erie, PA. Program Description: **Live the Conversation: How Community Mural Project Became a Dialogue for Community Healing.** Presented by: Elody Gyekis • Student, Pennsylvania State University • Saturday, 4:00 – 4:55.

**Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful Annual Summit.** September 20 – 21, 2006; Harrisburg, PA:
Program Description: “**Community Art, Pride & Responsibility.**”1:00 – 2:00 pm and 2:15-3:15 pm.

**National Art Education Annual Conference 2007.** New York City, March 14-18.
**Live the Conversation: How Community Mural Project Became a Dialogue for Community Healing.** Presented by: Elody Gyekis with Stasya Panova and Miriam Rubin. Fri 2:00 PM to 2:50 PM.
Appendix G – Harrisburg Mural Projects in the News

Item 1 – Patriot News Article, August 01, 2005.

Item 2 – Patriot News Article, August 6, 2006.
Crossing Bridges:
Community Mural Projects in Allison Hill, Harrisburg

By Eloidy Gyskis
UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT, ART BFA IN DRAWING AND PAINTING

The mural projects began as a ten-week internship, part of a pilot project conducted and funded by Keeping Pennsylvania Beautiful (KPB). The pilot project was designed to see if college students could act as “community mobilizers” in the rough, inner-city neighborhoods of Pennsylvania using creative art-making and community art projects.

The project’s goal was to bring different people together in the name of art and community in an attempt to build interaction and dialogue across various social boundaries. It was a journey across literal and metaphorical bridges to build cross-cultural understanding, community identity and pride, and art appreciation. The images of the nearly 200-foot mural tell a story of Harrisburg’s various social, political, economic, demographic, historical, and cultural aspects and how they have changed over the past century. Through scenes and captions derived from historic and contemporary photographs, the conceptual ideas are made clear, and the mural concludes with a poem stating a wish for the aforementioned bridges to be built.

The process began in June 2005 with idea building and discussion with community partners, KPB interns, and volunteers. Design of the mural took place during July 2005 while a smaller mural project and the first project were being completed. The painting of the panels by the community volunteers took place from August through November 2005. A dedicated volunteer and the head intern ran the painting workshops during the last three months while I assisted from my studio at Penn State. From the time volunteers painted the first panel until mid-January of 2006, I was hard at work in State College doing a final overpainting and adding detail to the panels. The complete mural was installed in June 2006.

The pilot project expanded in the summer of 2006 to include more towns in Pennsylvania. As for me, I returned in the summer of 2006 to do it all over again. 


This page Detail of the Mulberry Street Bridge mural near Harrisburg’s bus and train station.
Appendix H – Valley Roots Project Proposal Pamphlet

Valley Roots
A Proposal to Visually Celebrate the Natural and Cultural Heritage of Millheim
Elody Gyekis and Gary Gyekis

Elody and Harrisburg youth working on the Mulberry Street Bridge Mural

If you have additional Questions or Comments about Valley Roots Millheim Community Mural Proposal, please contact:

Elody Gyekis - elody@psu.edu, Gary Gyekis - Gyekis@uplink.net, or Tim Bowser - timbowser@earthlink.net

Mulberry Street Bridge Mural by Elody Gyekis – Harrisburg, PA - 2006

Back and front pages of pamphlet.
Community Mural Project Proposal

- Community will be engaged in idea-building/designing process working around the theme of celebrating the natural and cultural heritage of Millheim. Community will also be invited to paint the mural.
- Project will be Elody’s honors college thesis project at Penn State, and will be funded entirely by outside sources such as grants and university research funding.
- Mural will be located on the side of the Elk Creek Café (other locations possible in future).
- The painting technique is a paint by number method on fabric panels, so anyone can paint from a safe location (not up on scaffolding). Once installed, mural is permanent.

Benefits to the Community

- Celebrate heritage of past and present vibrant culture in Millheim
- Involves people from all of the community
  - Community contributes to entire process and thus takes pride in and claims ownership of the result
  - Great activity for youth, adults, and seniors, creating intergenerational communication
  - Educational experience, involves the schools, builds and strengthens bonds between community members
- Stimulates pride in the landscape and culture of Elk Creek Watershed
- Generates Positive Publicity for Millheim

Elody Gyekis Experience as a Mural Artist and Community Art Organizer

- Elody is a Penns Valley Graduate and a current Senior BFA at Penn State, working on Honors Thesis in Civic and Community Engagement.
- She has organized, designed and executed three community murals in Harrisburg as an intern for Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful and has assisted organizing and executing community arts events in State College and Williamsport.
- She has received mural technique training from The Philadelphia Mural Arts Program and community organization training from Philly Green.

Derry Street Mural by Elody Gyekis - Harrisburg, PA - 2006
Appendix I – PSU Publications and Websites Featuring my Mural Projects

Item 1 – Schreyer Honors College Article. Run the offer brochure sent out to students offered admission into the Schreyer Honors College in Fall 2008. Article Written by Nicole Arias.

The thesis project is a milestone of academic achievement for Schreyer Honors College Scholars. But for Elody Gyekis ’09, it is an actual landmark in Millheim, Pa.: a 28-by-14.5 foot mural on the exterior wall of a downtown café.

The mural, envisioned as a collaborative community-building art project, is the result of a year of planning and fundraising, 10 community meetings from February to May, and nearly daily public painting hours throughout June and July.

“The whole point of the project is to have people take pride in it and claim it as their own,” Elody said. “There’s a lot more meaning in something when you can point out, ‘Oh, I contributed that idea’ or ‘I painted that corner.’”

To allow children and adults of all artistic levels the opportunity to paint the mural, Elody transposed the design onto 18 panels that sectioned the work in a paint-by-number fashion.

“It's a pretty complicated system,” she said. “It's more difficult than just painting it myself, but the point is the process and getting people excited about it.”

Ambitious and inclusive, the project mirrors how Elody approaches art.

“Most artists tend to be isolated,” said Charles Garoian, director of the School of Visual Arts. “The unique thing about Elody is that a lot of her work has been community-based.
She's interested in using art as a way to reach out in order to address the issues of a community as well as to celebrate its accomplishments.

“There are multiple dimensions of what she's doing in Millheim. She's dealing with questions, engaging the public and public space, creating the art, collaborating with the community, educating people about the value of the project, and gaining the trust of the community. Maybe we can call it one project but it has multiple components to it.”

This finished product outside the Elk Creek Café, unveiled in early September, was designed to resemble a quilt, with one central image bordered by smaller vignettes. The main image is of a farm and home on a lush valley and river landscape. Some of the bordering scenes include wildlife, produce, and children playing.

“All Pride in the Past · Love of Place · Hope for the Future” spans the top of the mural. As a Penns Valley native, that slogan resonates for Elody on a personal level.

“It’s a really beautiful place, but I didn’t really have any appreciation of the culture and the community and the people here,” she said. “I wanted to come back to Penns Valley and work with a community that was my own but that I never really took in as my own.”

That desire to, as Elody puts it, “reconnect and connect for the first time” with her hometown grew from her experiences interning in a place that, at first glance, was a polar opposite: inner-city Harrisburg.

During the summer following Elody’s first year at Penn State, she interned with Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful, a nonprofit organization that works to improve community environments. For this project, Elody assisted with organizing, designing, and painting a 300-foot mural on a bridge.
“I came to have a personal investment and I stuck with it,” she said, explaining how, although the internship was intended for only 10 weeks, she continued participating until the mural’s completion, five and a half months past her original end date.

“Doing community art in Harrisburg was a really positive experience for me, seeing how art could be used as a tool for something bigger. The process of mural making was a vehicle for connecting people and building community and building pride in an area that has a lot of neglect, a lot crime, and a lot of different social problems.”

The chronological overlap of Elody’s continued involvement in the project and her sophomore year only helped to fuse her ideas about the potential for creative applications of the arts.

“I was an art major but I didn’t really know what my focus was, and I was really interested in sociology and society and different people, so I was starting to think about how these things could connect for me,” she said. “I was thinking about the multi-generational and cross-demographic communications as it could happen in a project like this, and I was thinking about how different my experiences in Harrisburg were versus growing up here.”

When the time came for Elody – a visual arts student with a double concentration in drawing/painting and ceramics with minors in civic and community engagement and sociology – to decide on a thesis project, those percolating thoughts came to fruition: a mural created by a community for the community, her hometown.

Elody will write a paper using this experience as a case study about how large-scale collaborative community art projects foster community engagement.

“This is the application side of my education, which is an education onto itself,” she said.
Elody said that the Schreyer Honors College allowed her to explore other possibilities and applications of the arts.

“If I hadn’t gotten into the Schreyer Honors College, I probably would have gone to an arts school,” she said. “I’m really glad I came to Penn State because I learned a lot more than just studio arts. A lot of the art schools stereotypically aren’t concerned with having a rigorous academic component to their education, but I do and I think that has broadened my education a lot and has made it possible and of interest to me to do things like this within the arts.”

She will also draw upon her time interning in Harrisburg to compare the differences of doing this work in inner cities versus rural areas.

“This town, to a lesser degree, has a lot of the same problems: drugs, vandalism, and teen pregnancy, but it’s still a very different dynamic than in an inner city,” she said.

No matter the location, however, a community’s future is decided ultimately by its people. Through her contribution, Elody hopes to encourage people to be an active part in defining, improving, and preserving the place they call home.

“This used to be a very thriving community,” she said. “If you talk to any of the older folks who grew up here, they’re always going on about how this used to the hub of central PA. Projects like what I’m doing and what other people are doing with trying to get more business into town are trying to turn this around from something pretty dead to having something thriving again.”

Item 2 – Penn State Arts and Architecture Fall 08 Newsletter.

CLOSS-KNIT COMMUNITY INSPIRES STUDENT'S MURAL

When senior art student Elody Gyekis had to create an honors thesis project, she turned to her hometown of Millheim, Pa., for inspiration. The result was the “Valley Roots Community Mural,” a 30 foot x 15 foot mural on a local café wall featuring the people, activities, products and landscape that make up Penns Valley.

Gyekis held eight public sessions where the local people of Millheim could offer input regarding the theme, design and content of the mural. She then designed the final product and, using a computer process called postering, created 18 separate paint-by-number...
panels. Approximately 130 volunteers painted the panels during summer 2008, and the mural was unveiled on the wall outside the Elk Creek Café in September.

Volunteers paint part of the mural. {Photo courtesy of Elody Gyekis}

The mural features a quilt hanging from a clothesline, with a central scene of farmers, a fly fisherman and cows across the creek from a table filled with bounty from local fields. Around the outside edge are vignettes of valley life, while a heading summarizes the sentiments of happiness and optimism depicted in the painting.

Gyekis’ goal was to create a mural that celebrates the natural and cultural heritage of her hometown. “Four years ago, I graduated from high school with very little intention of ever coming back,” says Gyekis. “Now I’ve gotten to know a community I didn’t try to know before.” –FWM

**Item 3 – Schreyer Honors College Dean Brady’s Article.** “Student’s Mural Unveiled” Published by Dr. Brady on September 7, 2008 in Event, Research, SHC News, Scholarship and Service to others. [http://engage.shc.psu.edu/?p=469](http://engage.shc.psu.edu/?p=469).
MILLHEIM — If only all laundry looked this good.

Elody Gyekis’ mural of a quilt hanging from an imagined clothesline in downtown Millheim puts most washing to shame. After months of work, the mural that has been an exercise in community involvement through public art will have its official unveiling from 3 to 5 p.m. Sunday at the Elk Creek Café and Aleworks.

Many have already had a chance to drive by and see the mural on the side of the café, and their reactions are a range of awe and appreciation.

“I think it’s wonderful. It lets everyone who drives by know what Millheim has to offer,” said Amy Downs, director of St. John’s Childhood Center. She and her summer campers helped paint sections of the mural and watched its installation a couple weeks ago. “I wanted them to be part of this history,” said Downs.

I don’t believe I will be able to make the unveiling, but if you are out driving on this beautiful Sunday (or any other day) swing by and see this wonderful work. Well done Elody!

Item 5 – G. E. Washington’s Personal Website. G. E. Washington was a Resident Artist at Penn State during the 2004-2005 academic year. He taught a New Genre Art and Exhibition class in the spring of 2005 that introduced Elody to the Harrisburg mural internships and later collaborated on PAEA and NAEA presentations with her. He features the Mulberry Street Bridge Mural on the homepage of his personal website. 

http://garnellwashington.com/.
Item 6 – PowerPoint Presentation by Penn State President Graham Spanier at his Board of Trustees meeting, January 2009.

The Millheim mural project was mentioned as an example of exemplary work done by a Penn State undergraduate student in President Graham Spanier’s President’s Report, which he delivers to the Board of Trustees each time they meet (every two months). In the report, he covered a number of timely items – from the economic situation to faculty research to awards to THON. In this presentation he also had a
PowerPoint in order to show a slide with the photos that appeared in the Arts and Architecture newsletter.

These were Spanier’s notes for (Slide 9 – Mural) of his presentation:

An equally compelling, but entirely different type of project comes from Elody Gyekis (pronounced TBD), a senior art student and Schreyer’s scholar. For her senior thesis, she worked with her hometown in Penns Valley to create a 30 foot x 15 foot mural featuring the people, activities, products and landscape of the area. While it’s impressive in its execution, the real story can be found in the community collaboration. Elody held numerous town meetings to discuss the concept, and then she organized approximately 130 volunteers to paint the mural. The “Valley Roots Community Mural” was displayed on a local café in Millheim.

Other Items – Images or descriptions of my projects were also used in the following contexts at Penn State:

Undergraduate Exhibition Flyer in 2008 and 2009 distributed through email to Public Scholarship Associates, at the "Capacity to Sustain Democracy" Seminars, on the website in 2008 publicity, and posted on bulletin boards.
Laboratory for Public Scholarship and Democracy and Intercollege Minor in Civic and Community Engagement Brochure 2007 - distributed by Office of Undergraduate
Education and the Laboratory for Public Scholarship and Democracy at
University Park and to PSU Campuses 2007-2009

PowerPoint presentation to the Penn State Faculty Senate Outreach Committee in Oct. 2007


PowerPoint presentation to the Public Scholarship Advisory Council in June 2008
Appendix J – Valley Roots Community Mural Proposed Budget and Final Budget

**Mural Budget Proposal**

**Printing Costs:** Handouts, visuals, and design

proposals for community meetings.................................................. $200

**Rent:** Studio space rent for 3 months ($350 per month including utilities. 700 sq ft

office space plus access to kitchenette and bathroom.) ..................... $1,050

**T-Shirts:** cost to produce 60 mural t-shirts sold as additional fundraiser........... $250

**Scaffolding and Installation Labor:** these costs will be donated by the building

owners. This in-kind donation is valued at........................................ $500

**Materials for Mural:** including paint, cloth,

brushes, drop-cloths, Nova gel glue,

paint containers, hardware etc.,..................................................... $2,500

**Subtotal:**.................................................................................... $4,500

**Stipend for**

**Artist**............................................................................................... $2,000

**Total:**............................................................................................. $6,500
Valley Roots Community Mural Project

Millheim, PA.

Income

Centre County Community Foundation $3500
Penns Valley Pharmacy 100
Northwest Savings 275
Smart Work 250
Young People For (grant) 1000
Schreyer Honors College 431
Zachary Dryden 18
Millheim Lutheran Church 50

Total $5624

Expenses

Supplies $2665.47
Rent for studio/office 900.
Donation to Art Alliance 58.53

Total $5624
Appendix K – Valley Roots Community Mural, Designs and Final Product

Final Design, Drawing

Final Digital Design
Final Mural, main quilt section.

Final Mural, Clothesline.
Final Mural.
Appendix L – Mural Unveiling Comments

Transcriptions of the comments left at the mural unveiling ceremony may contain spelling errors of names due to handwriting illegibility. Also, though no words have been changed, minor spelling errors have been corrected.

Comment 1: The mural! A wonderful addition to downtown Millheim. Thanks Elody for seeing this project through. – I hope you expand the mural soon!

Comment 2: Love the Mural. A great asset to Millheim and the Elk Creek Café. You certainly captured Millheim’s highlights including Joni Smith’s bib overalls on the clothesline. Great job!

Comment 3: I was very impressed with the Mural!! –Worked on it just briefly—observed many dedicated people helping with the project. I’ve lived in Millheim many, many years and am extremely pleased with the “newer” people in the valley—always improving! Good Luck to Elody, With Many Blessings

Comment 4: Elody,

I’ve enjoyed seeing your art for many years now. Congratulations on completing this wonderful mural

Comment 5: I’m very impressed with Elody’s organization of the project.

I decided to join in on the painting so my grandchildren and great-grandchildren can say “Grandma helped with this.” I worked, and enjoyed working with “the Red Hats,” college students and friends and learned to know Elody.
Comment 6: The mural has yet to be unveiled, so my impressions are based on what I saw in the CDT and in the slides. It looks lively, fun, and seems to reflect the spirit of this community. A treasure!

Comment 7: Song is existence.. A Breath for nothing

Comment 8: Bring out the warmness of the town. Lovely.

Comment 9: Where is the Dark side of Millheim?

Comment 10: Elody,

I feel so blessed to have such an amazingly talented roommate and friend. The amount of time and energy you put into this project is remarkable, and shines through the mural and the community. Thanks for allowing me to share this experience with you!

Comment 11: Elody! What a cool girl you are and what a beautiful thing you have created here in Millheim! Bravo.

Comment 12: Elody,

Beautiful mural! I love the way the building components are integrated into the clothesline, and how the waterfall spills out to the sidewalk. I think it really captures the essence of the town. Great Job!

Comment 13: Exceptional… Community-building…. Perceptive. Tremendous addition to the community

Comment 14: Thank you Elody for bringing us all together for this beautiful project.

Comment 15: Elody- I’m __’s mom. I thought this was a great idea when I first heard, but never imaged it would turn out so well! The skateboarder will always remind me of __’s high school years. The mural is fabulous-a great addition to town.
There are plenty more buildings crying for your touch! Thanks for brightening my world!!

Comment 16: The Mural is so much more beautiful in person! What a treasure!

Comment 17: LOD,

Thank you for letting us throw a skateboarding panel up on this piece! The whole thing looks great-community out the wazoo. And props for getting skateboarders together to do something constructive! SKATE OR DIE!!!

Comment 18: Elody-

The mural looks amazing! Congrats on really capturing the community and bringing everyone together. You should really be proud of what you have accomplished.

Comment 19: Dear Elody, What a beautiful project. I could see the struggle between your vision and the community’s ideals. So lovely! Hope to meet you someday.

Comment 20: Although we are not residents of Millheim, we enjoyed painting some of the first panels at the Trout Fest and sections since then. It was wonderful seeing you bring this incredible project to fruition. Colors, Patterns, Details and a comprehensive scene. It is a metaphor for life of variety in harmony. Much Fun! Beautiful! An inspiring example of community engagement!

Comment 21: Elody,

What a beautiful gift you’ve given all of us. The design and sentiment touches all our hearts. Thank you for using your gifts in such a wonderful way!

Comment 22: Hi Elody,
What wonderful that you have done! The people of Millheim must be delighted to have such a beautiful tourist attraction. Good luck in your life’s work and please put me on your email list if you do another mural.

Comment 23: Fantastico Project. A work of art that has certainly brought the local residents together and obviously a better place to live.

Now how about some restorative work to the main thoroughfare.

Comment 24: Elody!

I am so proud of you. Once again, you have made a tremendous impact of the day to day of an entire community through your enormous talent. Thank you for letting me help out when I could and wrestling up rides for me. You are amazing!!!!

Comment 25: Beautiful job with the mural. Due to other work commitments I had I was unable to help with it, but really regret not trying harder to adjust my schedule to help with it. Hopefully help with the next one you do in Millheim. 😊

Comment 26: Dear Elody,

Thank you for being the shining light of creativity and artistic vision that you are, and for bringing your gifts home to Penns Valley. My love for this place, my adopted home, has been nurtured and expanded by the tremendous opportunity to participate in this amazing project. I will always remember this whole process – from brainstorming to painting to unveiling with a bursting heart.

Comment 27: Thank You so much. It has been wonderful to see our little town working together to create something so wonderful. We could not have done this without your talent, dedication, and expert leadership.
Comment 28: What a great, interesting project. She is to be congratulated on her accomplishments. Having grown up in Rebersburg, I see the area has maintained its country atmosphere, Nice to see.

Millheim has gone through a lot of changes in spite of remaining rural. The main street of Millheim used to be the place to come on a Saturday Night. The street was crowded with people from surrounding towns to meet and talk to friends.

Congratulations to the artist.

Comment 29: Hello There Elody!

Thank you for sharing your spirit with this place. The energy you have graced Millheim with will linger for a long time to come. I’m sure many other people and places will experience this with wonder and enthusiasm. Enjoy!

Comment 30: Elody,

Thank you so much for welcoming us to Millheim to see your inspiring work and to film so that we can share with others. We are so proud to support your work and we wish you the best in the future! Let us know how we can support you in the future! Congratulations on an amazing success!

Comment 31: Elody-

This is __’s little sister, __. I was at one of the planning meetings, but not much else.

Yadda Yadda- I cannot explain in human words, sign language, or semaphore how much ass the mural kicks. You can really tell how much work you and everyone else put into it, I wish you successes like this in all of your future projects.

Comment 32: Miss Elody,
Your project is absolutely amazing. Your ability to express the unity and love in this community through art cannot be expresses in words. I cannot believe how much your project has and will bring to this community – its too much to fathom. While the rest of the world is rapidly moving away from living in real communities, your mural shows just how much they are missing and this community has. It’s an incredible achievement. Congrats!

Comment 33: The mural looks great. I especially like the waterfall. The process is very intriguing as well. Consider writing a how to manual so that other people can try this in their communities.

Comment 34: Elody,

Thank you for sharing with your home town your gifts! This mural is a wonderful symbol of the heart of Millheim. Wishing you very best wishes in your future projects.

Glad to be able to share this day and the unveiling.

Comment 35: Elody,

Thank you so much for allowing ___ and I to share this event with you and your community! The mural is beautiful and inspiring beyond words and learning about the process by which it came to be was truly moving.

Comment 36: Elody-

Thank you, Thank you! Simply amazing —> what a wonderful accomplishment and legacy. Your talents and love of community shine through. And to have galvanized the community to action…! Best wishes for a bright future!

Comment 37: Dear Elody,
This mural was uplifting and phenomenal – one can tell you’ve enhanced people’s lives.

You really do have a solid grace and beauty about you. Everybody who contributed did an amazing job too. The vibe here is incredible; and you can tell the love just blossomed when we all gathered today. Thank you.

Comment 38: Congratulations, Elody and congratulations Penns Valley

Dear Elody, I look forward to working closely and collaborating with you on the next step of this project putting the scholarship in your public scholarship thesis. You are so capable of changing the scholarly conversation… Faith, baby, Faith, rigor, hard work, and love. See you next Friday, 10 am, steps of Pattee.

Comment 39: Its beautiful! Thanks and congratulations!

Comment 40: Elody- You did a splendid job. After the meeting I attended trying to come up with ideas, I couldn’t imagine how you could capture all those ideas. You did it!

Drawing the community into the process was a beautiful thing. Art seems to be the best way, besides Beer!

Comment 41: Dearest Elody,

Congratulations on this amazing project. It is truly inspirational and a testament to the hard work that community organizers do. You have successfully brought together a community and shared in a collective experience which I am certain has been a fulfilling experience for you, yourself. I have a lot of respect and admiration for you.

Comment 42: My mural experience was very enjoyable and rewarding. I was privileged to participate in painting as well as assisting with setting up the mural. It was fun
all around and the crew was great to work with. Thank you Elody! The Pleasure was mine.

Comment 43: Elody-

A project that honors the past, recreates the present, and inspires the future. Many thanks for giving so much, for uniting vast energies and for breathing life to new relationships.

To the rhizomes we have in each other.

Comment 44: Ah Elody, what can I say? I’m simply so thank thankful. Thankful that such a wonderful person created such a wonderful piece of art while letting others in on the process, and especially thankful that I got to see and help as much of it happen as I have. I feel like I did not waste my summer simply because of this project. Thank you for the opportunity to meet so many interesting people, discover what Penns Valley has to offer, and use my artistic passion in a way which brings people together! This was such a special experience.

Comment 45: Great addition to our town

It is beautiful – great work everyone. Some great ideas were placed on the wall. We have lived here for many years and love our town and this new addition, we tell everyone about it. Thank you all for your wonderful work.

Comment 46: The mural is beautiful

-from Millheim

Comment 47: Ms. Elody-

You live the balancing act of taking yourself lightly AND seriously. All your life I have delighted in you are, and its such a pleasure to see what you’ve manifested in this
mural. Your community is more alive, healthier, and cohesive thanks to your risk taking and generosity.

Comment 48: The mural is absolutely beautiful as it its creator Elody and all those who helped create as well as all who will continue to benefit from its creation **** (ah I don’t know!)

Comment 49: Haven’t really seen the whole mural yet but everything I have seen is splendid and it’s a lovely idea. And love the clothesline! The slide show is fun too. No question in my mind that it is a feather in Millheim’s cap. The paint by number idea was Brilliant.

Comment 50: It is great to see so many people involved with the process of making this mural so special to Millheim. They will share with their friends and families, now and in the future, their part and pride in this magnificent accomplishment.

Thank you, Elody, for being the catalyst for making this community mural a reality.

Comment 51:

- A fun project to be a part of, even if that part was small
- And, it looks fabulous
- I’ve often passed murals in other places with a with a glance, but now I will think of all the work that went into them and of the community of people that helped make them.

Comment 52: Love the liveliness and vibrancy if the painting, and especially how a “river runs through it.” Each image relates us to another, the ties of our community. Victory, sweet victory for Millheim!! Lets keep on celebrating our rich and unique local culture.
Comment 53: This is the best mural project I’ve ever been exposed to. It goes beyond the physical realm, nurturing community involvement. I was not involved in the painting but I have no problem feeling connected to the mural. Whether it’s the idea of it, or the act of putting it together, or the piece itself, it has something for everyone. This mural is a beautiful manifestation of life and spirit in Central PA.

Comment 54: Wonderful community contribution! Simply by coming together to create art – we strengthen the community. Thank you Elody and everyone who was involved. Let’s not stop here!

Comment 55: Thanks for the opportunity to participate with your fabulous project Elody!

Comment 56: I think the mural is a wonderful contribution to the community, by the community. Every person who looks at the mural can find some aspect in it that they can relate to.

Personally, I can relate to much of the mural if only because I painted several small sections of it over the course of the summer. Just the experience of painting made me feel better connected with a community I felt somewhat apart from during my years of college. It really was an opportunity not just to paint and give something back but to get to know one’s neighbors, tell stories about the valley, and share in the experiences of life in Penns Valley. Thank you Elody for making this possible!

Comment 57: The tremendous community spirit from focus groups to the mural. The dedication of local talent such as Elody is refreshing.
Comment 58: Love of place—the most important words in the mural! They’re the words that describe this wonderful project—the love that went into it and the reason I love this place.

Comment 59: We think it’s just what Millheim needs, a little culture to brighten things up! *It’s beautiful! Thanks 😊

Comment 60: Glad to see Elk Creek Café come to Millheim and the mural is a great asset. You did a great job.

- Millheim, PA

Comment 61: I was not for this idea at all---However, I was somewhat surprised at the end result! Happily surprised! I can live with this endeavor—I can change my mind—I like it!

Comment 62: It’s hard to find the words to really convey how great this idea—and its accomplishment—really are. From the first inspiration, to the working out, to the final creation. I guess the main “actors” could take their curtain calls in a revolving circle: Elody, her earliest helpers, the community that supported the mural in all the ways that they did: the “love of place” that inspired that support—and, finally the town and “the Valley” That inspired The Love of Place.

Comment 63: Elk Creek Café has been a fantastic gift to our valley. The addition of the mural brings even more pride to the people of the valley.

Comment 64: This is a wonderful idea Elody! Thank you! I came to join the painters at least three times and was amazed each time as the panels evolved into the completed mural. The mural will be a centerpiece for the community. We can all be proud of it and of its creator.
Comment 65: Elody- Great young girl! Great talent!

Shared with Great People, Celebrated with Great People

It just doesn’t get any better than this!! It all makes this world a Better Place

I Salute You All,

Comment 66: It is a beautiful mural. It has a lot of energy and life to it – the water just seems to flow when looking at it. 😊 My only regret is that I did not help paint it, I think I would have felt like a part of me was in it. But oh well, maybe next time!

😊 I’ll just take many photos of it. Good luck with the next project you do. Finally, thank you for adding some much needed beauty to the borough of Millheim.

Comment 67: Sehr Gut-

Bring life to Millheim and PV- best place for it is the Café

What a lot of appreciated work for the community

Thanks, Danke

Comment 68: Congratulations to Elody and the people of Millheim. By working together you have proven that there is hope for the future in small town America. The mural is beautiful and appreciated.

p.s. I actually painted some of the mural (my lawn and grass)

Comment 69: Dear Elody-

It has been a pleasure and privilege working with you and this project. From begging for money to designing t-shirts while hundreds of miles apart. To see the faces of the young and old as the mural was unveiled ~ and then to see them point and say, “I did that!” made it all worthwhile… and more…
As I pass the mural each day – your lovely rendition of the beauty that surrounds us, I will also see reflections and memories of unforgettable summer for more family and our town. Thank you!

Comment 70: Elody:

Words really can’t describe how the mural has impacted everyone that helped with it. It looks astounding, and I know that you have created a long lasting community centerpiece, and I’m so happy that I was able to both help with the painting and be with you at YP4. This mural truly represents “Si se puede!”

Cheers and good luck going forward!

Comment 72: How exciting to see participation of so many in this community project- great party and perfect venue.

Comment 73: Forty more than forty, maybe fifty, years, we have had a second home in Brush Valley, these two valleys have become “home” to us in may ways. This party reminds me of my home area in Monroe County, south western Illinois, a very German area that I got to know well years ago; Affable people, good humor, pride of place.
Appendix M – Excel File of Sorted Comments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>G</th>
<th>H</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>elody's achievements/organization/work, thanks and congrats to elody</td>
<td>love mural, mural is aestheticall y pleasing</td>
<td>community involvement</td>
<td>Participation why painted, weather or not they painted</td>
<td>good wishes/luck to elody, personal notes to elody</td>
<td>other</td>
<td>general - great job/project, good idea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Thanks Elody</td>
<td>A wonderful art</td>
<td>observed many</td>
<td>I decided to go</td>
<td>Good Luck to</td>
<td>I wish you</td>
<td>Dear Elody, I Congratulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>This is a wonderful art</td>
<td>A great asset</td>
<td>exceptional</td>
<td>I decided to go</td>
<td>Good Luck to</td>
<td>I wish you</td>
<td>Dear Elody, I Congratulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Congratulations</td>
<td>Tremendous</td>
<td>community of</td>
<td>I decided to go</td>
<td>Good Luck to</td>
<td>I wish you</td>
<td>Dear Elody, I Congratulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>I'm very impressed</td>
<td>The mural is</td>
<td>An inspiring</td>
<td>I decided to go</td>
<td>Good Luck to</td>
<td>I wish you</td>
<td>Dear Elody, I Congratulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>What a beautiful mural</td>
<td>Beautiful mural</td>
<td>Bringing every one</td>
<td>Worked on it</td>
<td>Good Luck to</td>
<td>I wish you</td>
<td>Dear Elody, I Congratulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>What a cool girl</td>
<td>The whole thing</td>
<td>A work of art</td>
<td>I decided to go</td>
<td>Good Luck to</td>
<td>I wish you</td>
<td>Dear Elody, I Congratulation</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Great job!</td>
<td>The mural was obviously a be</td>
<td>Some great</td>
<td>I decided to go</td>
<td>Good Luck to</td>
<td>I wish you</td>
<td>Dear Elody, I Congratulation</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>You should visit</td>
<td>What a beautiful</td>
<td>Thank you for</td>
<td>I decided to go</td>
<td>Good Luck to</td>
<td>I wish you</td>
<td>Dear Elody, I Congratulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>I am so proud</td>
<td>Colors, patterns</td>
<td>Thank you for</td>
<td>I decided to go</td>
<td>Good Luck to</td>
<td>I wish you</td>
<td>Dear Elody, I Congratulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>We could not</td>
<td>Thank you for</td>
<td>Glad to be able</td>
<td>I decided to go</td>
<td>Good Luck to</td>
<td>I wish you</td>
<td>Dear Elody, I Congratulation</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>You can really</td>
<td>The mural looks like</td>
<td>Thank you for</td>
<td>I decided to go</td>
<td>Good Luck to</td>
<td>I wish you</td>
<td>Dear Elody, I Congratulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>It's an incredible</td>
<td>The mural is beautiful</td>
<td>Thank you for</td>
<td>I decided to go</td>
<td>Good Luck to</td>
<td>I wish you</td>
<td>Dear Elody, I Congratulation</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>What a wonder</td>
<td>The mural is</td>
<td>Thank you for</td>
<td>I decided to go</td>
<td>Good Luck to</td>
<td>I wish you</td>
<td>Dear Elody, I Congratulation</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>It is great</td>
<td>The mural is</td>
<td>Thank you for</td>
<td>I decided to go</td>
<td>Good Luck to</td>
<td>I wish you</td>
<td>Dear Elody, I Congratulation</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>Everybody likes</td>
<td>The mural is</td>
<td>Thank you for</td>
<td>I decided to go</td>
<td>Good Luck to</td>
<td>I wish you</td>
<td>Dear Elody, I Congratulation</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Congratulations</td>
<td>From the first</td>
<td>Thank you for</td>
<td>I decided to go</td>
<td>Good Luck to</td>
<td>I wish you</td>
<td>Dear Elody, I Congratulation</td>
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<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Thank you Sir</td>
<td>Love the living</td>
<td>Thank you for</td>
<td>I decided to go</td>
<td>Good Luck to</td>
<td>I wish you</td>
<td>Dear Elody, I Congratulation</td>
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<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Thank you Sir</td>
<td>I Salute you Sir</td>
<td>Thank you for</td>
<td>I decided to go</td>
<td>Good Luck to</td>
<td>I wish you</td>
<td>Dear Elody, I Congratulation</td>
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<td>19</td>
<td>Thank you Sir</td>
<td>2011</td>
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<td>Dear Elody, I Congratulation</td>
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<td>20</td>
<td>Thank you Sir</td>
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<td>21</td>
<td>Thank you Sir</td>
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<td>22</td>
<td>Thank you Sir</td>
<td>Love the living</td>
<td>Thank you for</td>
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<td>Dear Elody, I Congratulation</td>
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<td>23</td>
<td>Thank you Sir</td>
<td>Thanks to you Sir</td>
<td>Thank you for</td>
<td>I decided to go</td>
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<td>I wish you</td>
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<td>24</td>
<td>Thank you Sir</td>
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<td>25</td>
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<td>26</td>
<td>Thank you Sir</td>
<td>Love the living</td>
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<td>28</td>
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<td>31</td>
<td>Thank you Sir</td>
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<td>32</td>
<td>Thank you Sir</td>
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<td>34</td>
<td>The dedication</td>
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<td>Thank you for</td>
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<td>Dear Elody, I Congratulation</td>
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<td>37</td>
<td>What a lot of</td>
<td>From the first</td>
<td>Thank you for</td>
<td>I decided to go</td>
<td>Good Luck to</td>
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<td>38</td>
<td>Thanks, Danke</td>
<td>From the first</td>
<td>Thank you for</td>
<td>I decided to go</td>
<td>Good Luck to</td>
<td>I wish you</td>
<td>Dear Elody, I Congratulation</td>
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</table>
Appendix N – Public Discourse about the Valley Roots Community Mural

Item 1 – Centre Daily Times Article “Discovering the True Colors of Home” by Jennie Delay. Published on March 2, 2008.

Article as seen in “Living” section of the CDT on March 2, 2008.
MILLHEIM -- It starts with a blank wall and a vision. By summer's end these will combine with community input and local talent to create a Millheim mural on the side of the Elk Creek Café. The creation is the honors thesis project of Millheim native and Penn State senior Elody Gyekis. A double major in painting and ceramics, with a minor in civic and community engagement, Gyekis has honed the needed skills during summer internships in Harrisburg. There, employed with Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful, she lived in the low-income area of Allison Hill and used a strategy of involving the community in design and creation of a huge wall painting with messages endorsed by the neighborhood. She is redeploying that strategy in Millheim and started the effort with two recent brainstorming sessions. The meetings were held in the back of the Elk Creek Café, which is owned in part by her father. During them, she invited area residents to talk about what Millheim represents for them and how they would like to see Millheim represented.

Gyekis' goal is to create a mural that celebrates the natural and cultural heritage of her hometown. "Four years ago, I graduated with very little intention of ever coming back," she said at Wednesday's session. "Now I'm getting to know a community I didn't try to know before." More than two dozen people, from high school students to retirees, braved the cold to join Wednesday's session and share their thoughts about the Millheim community as they see it. As they spoke, some recurring themes emerged. Nicole and Lee Thompson, who chair the borough planning commission and Historical Architectural Review Board, respectively, spoke for those who appreciate the area's history. She talked about how, when you enter Millheim, it's "almost like you take a step back in time. There are very few communities that have kept that historical character." Others noted that Millheim means "home of mill" in Dutch, a nod to both the Dutch settlers who made their
homes there and the many mills that used to dot downtown's Elk Creek. Most talked about the importance of the landscape and many identified the village stoplight as a Millheim icon, considering it's the only one for miles in any direction. Discussion of the intersection led to exploration of the idea of Millheim as a crossroads between cultures, times and industries. As the meeting came to a close, there was a notable excitement and pride in the room. One local business owner, Ronald Fetzer, who is also president of the East Penns Valley Business Association, summed up the progress. "I've heard a lot of great ideas," Fetzer said, "and I don't envy the task of sorting them all out." Once Gyekis does sort them out, there will be fundraising events and more community investment sessions. Through donations and grants, Gyekis hopes to raise up to $5,700 to cover all the costs, though she expects the work could still be done if the effort falls short of that goal. Community input session will be needed to debate concepts and talk about designs. Gyekis hopes to use a voting process to select the final image for the mural. After that's settled she will be able to apply herself to one of the more unique parts of the project: Creating paint-by-number panels. Gyekis uses the process to allow members of the community to help paint the mural without threatening the integrity of the design. The panels are small enough to be transportable, meaning she can take them to places such as senior citizen homes where residents wouldn't otherwise be likely to participate. Utilizing panels also avoid the hazardous proposition of sending volunteers up on scaffolding to paint. To make the panels, Gyekis has devised an elaborate system of tracing a projection of the image in paint-by-number fashion and numbering each blob. She then mixes enough paint to ensure uniformity across all blobs of the same number. "Doing paint-by-number is probably just as hard, if not harder, than painting it myself," she said. While it
is hard work, Gyekis thinks the investment is worthwhile, having seen the results in Harrisburg. During her summer internships she created two murals, one involving community leaders to share messages of non-violence as part of an anti-gun campaign. The second project, along the Mulberry Street bridge, spans nearly 300 feet and stands 6 feet tall. The physical context of the bridge allowed for an artistic interpretation of bridges across time, place and culture. It took nearly two years to complete. In Millheim, the project will be scaled down, taking months instead of years and likely covering an area of about 30 feet by 15 feet. Nonetheless, Gyekis intends it to have the same impact. "Hopefully, you're building some sort of community identity about revitalization and people are claiming responsibility for the future of a place," she said. "It's about the process of engaging people in a conversation about their space." Her adviser at Penn State, associate professor of communication, arts & sciences Rosa Eberly, is also excited about the implications of the project. "Elody's proposal is a splendid example of scholarship and creative work combining for the public good," she said. "The idea is to help create the democratic capacity to get people engaged in a community for the greater good." The plan is to finish the mural by summer's end. For now, Gyekis is planning to seek out locals who aren't likely to attend meetings and make sure they also have a voice in the process. After gathering as many suggestions as possible, the next round of community sessions will be scheduled. Anyone interested in learning about the next sessions, once they're scheduled, can e-mail Gyekis at elody@psu.edu.

Item 2 – Centre Daily Times Article 2 “Mural Shows Town’s True Colors” by Jennie Delay. Published on September 6, 2008.
MILLHEIM -- If only all laundry looked this good. Elody Gyekis' mural of a quilt hanging from an imagined clothesline in downtown Millheim puts most washing to shame. After months of work, the mural that has been an exercise in community involvement through public art will have its official unveiling from 3 to 5 p.m. Sunday at the Elk Creek Café and Aleworks. Many have already had a chance to drive by and see the mural on the side of the café, and their reactions are a range of awe and appreciation.

"I think it's wonderful. It lets everyone who drives by know what Millheim has to offer," said Amy Downs, director of St. John's Childhood Center. She and her summer campers helped paint sections of the mural and watched its installation a couple weeks ago. "I wanted them to be part of this history," said Downs. The ability of any member of the community to participate in the mural's creation is a large part of what makes it distinct. People ages 5 to 85 contributed at nearly every phase of the project. Titled "Valley Roots Community Mural," the installation uses a quilt motif to highlight many of Penns Valley's better-known characteristics. The central scene shows farmers, a fly fisherman and cows across the creek from a table filled with bounty from area fields. Squares around the edge portray vignettes of valley life.

Pride in the Past, Love of Place, Hope for the Future.

This sentiment is what came out of the eight input sessions Gyekis held early in the year. Open to the public, the meetings allowed residents an opportunity to voice their ideas and opinions. Now the mural is a permanent reminder of the community's efforts to promote and celebrate the unique qualities of Penns Valley.
Valley's better-known characteristics. The central scene shows farmers, a fly fisherman and cows across the creek from a table filled with bounty from area fields. Squares around the edge portray vignettes of valley life. One highlights the Millheim fountain, one the Penns Valley Rams, and another Pennsylvanian's state flower, the mountain laurel. Across the top of the quilt are the words "Pride in the Past, Love of Place, Hope for the Future." This sentiment is what came out of the eight input sessions Gyekis held early in the year. Open to the public, the meetings allowed members of the community to brainstorm about what Penns Valley means to the people who live there, whether they’ve been residents for a few years or a few generations. Once the theme was settled, Gyekis, a Penns Valley native and fifth-year senior in the Schreyer Honors College at Penn State, set about creating a design. The quilt was a logical frame, allowing her to incorporate the many elements that define the area. By using technology to develop her design, she was also able to paste photos taken around the area into the final image. The hills in the background are actually those surrounding the valley, including Egg Hill, and the house in the foreground sits along Millheim's Penn Street. Even the duck is a local, photographed on Millheim's raceway. Once the design was created, she used a computer process called posterizing to simplify the image into separate color blocks that could be traced into a paint-by-number image. The paint-by-number scheme was then projected on to the eighteen separate panels that make up the mural and traced to provide a guide for the volunteer painters. Gyekis then created 73 paint colors to match those needed for the mural. To organize the process, she made six shades of each of the basic colors, such as red and orange. She also estimated how much of each color she would need so she could make it all in one batch, guaranteeing the same shade was used throughout. Finally, with
the panels numbered and paints mixed, open painting nights in the studio above Elk Creek commenced. More than 130 volunteers took a turn with the paintbrushes, many showing up at scheduled sessions, others just wandering up the stairs when the door was open. Volunteers relished the chance to be part of something larger than themselves and a part of their town's history. "I thought 'Boy, I'd like to work on that,' but I didn't realize it was paint-by-number," said Ruth Rudy, a former state legislator. "I think it's great to involve the community. Most of the residents here have a lot of pride in their community. That's why I'm here. I'm pleased to be a part of it." After putting in hundreds of hours painting and doing touch-ups, Gyekis, along with fellow artists, David Wrestler, Warren Leitzel and her father, Gary Gyekis, erected scaffolding and installed the most of the 30-by 15-foot mural in two days. For Leitzel, the best part of the project was people's reactions as they saw the mural go up. He recalled the repeated exclamations of amazement with a smile. Sunday's unveiling will mark the end of the Millheim-based portion of the project but Elody Gyekis still has plenty to do on her own. Since development and installation of the mural will be part of her senior thesis project, a requirement for students in the honors college, there will be a paper to write, statistics to gather and presentations to give. But, first, she wants to celebrate. "This is the most involved project like this that I've done. It came out even better than I expected," she said. The unveiling is free and open to the public. Light re-freshments and live music will be provided.
Millheim mural reflects community’s LOVE OF PLACE

By Jennie Delay
For the CDT

MILLHEIM — It’s only half finished, but the mural-esque mural at the Millheim Mural Park is coming along smoothly. After months of work, the mural that has been an exercise in community involvement through public art has its official unveiling Sept. 7 at the Elk Creek Cafe and Millworks.

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Article as seen in Free Centre Weekly.

**Item 4 – Young People For – May 2008 Featured Fellow Article.** Interview conducted by Dan Klein. YP4_InterviewWithElodyGyekis.mp3.

[http://www.youngpeoplefor.org/fellows/featured/archive/may2008_elodygyekis](http://www.youngpeoplefor.org/fellows/featured/archive/may2008_elodygyekis)

Excerpt of article, as seen on website.

**Featured Fellow: Elody Gyekis**

YP4 fellow Elody Gyekis is earning a double-concentration bachelor of fine arts degree with a minor in civic and community engagement. She has designed, organized and painted three community murals in inner-city Harrisburg. She spoke with us recently about her Blueprint for Social Justice, working with the community and what makes it all worthwhile.
Elody, what do you stand for?

I stand for art as a means for social activism.

Tell me about your Blueprint for Social Justice.

I’m working on a project not on my campus but in my community. I’m organizing in a small rural lower-class area of central Pennsylvania—the area where I grew up. The way my process works is that I’m trying to reach out to as many different people in the community [as possible] to get their input and involvement. In my mind it’s not so much about the mural as the process to create it, and what can happen in that. I see it as a forum for conversation about the community in the broadest sense. I’m trying to get the community to share their vision, so it’s not just my vision—like when I talk about vision building in the blueprint—but I want the community to create a vision with me and then I want to design a mural that’s about that vision.

In addition to getting the community involved in the idea building process, I use a very simple mural technique by creating a paint-by-number mural. So all summer we’ll be painting the mural together. So it’s also a casual forum for interaction in the community between people who don’t often get to interact.

So that’s pretty much my project. We’re doing the mural on the main intersection—well, the only intersection—in this community.

How are you reaching out to the participants?
I’m using a variety of different ways, both through the general media and word of mouth. One approach, and the easiest, is to make phone calls and write letters to already established organizations, such as public schools or different clubs and organizations—there’s a women’s club and a seniors’ group and also churches. So I make phone calls to their organizations.

Also, there was article in the newspaper about the project that made the front page in the Sunday paper. We’ve been posting information about community meetings in the newspaper, putting [information] on the radio, putting fliers up in the main part of the downtown area, sending out e-mails. Every means possible—I even went on Facebook and Facebook stalked everyone I knew from my high school to get them to know about the project. Any way I can think of, I try, because I want to reach as broad an audience as possible.

What has been your biggest struggle as a progressive leader?

Oh goodness, that’s a tough question. I’d say there are two very different struggles that I’ve experienced.

One is purely logistical. I’m an artist in the stereotypical sense; I’m a disorganized person. I’m a hard worker, but it’s not easy for me to be an organizational leader and I found that because of my interests and my passions and my leadership capabilities I find myself in an organizational role fairly often. So it’s a constant struggle for me to keep
track of names, things, and numbers and to write grants and do fundraising and organizing budgets—that’s really hard for me because my mind does not work that way. And then the other struggle is much more personal. I think with this kind of work you have to constantly examine your experiences and figure out what your motives are and how effective you are, just how you feel when you’re faced with various obstacles. It’s always a very developmental and personally changing process for me. So I think it’s always a personal struggle as well.

How do you deal with those struggles?

By always examining myself and taking time to reflect on the experiences. I bring it into my own personal artwork a lot. I’m a bachelor of fine arts major at my school so I bring it into the studio as well. I try to be as present as possible and [as] accessible as possible, to be open to get to know people and listen a lot. But I mostly bring it to the studio when I’m having internal battles with myself.

What have been some of your biggest successes?

I think successes come in funny small ways. I mean there are the big moments like when the last mural I was involved in […] had a big unveiling ceremony and the press was there and you get all these congratulations and everything is beautiful and happy, but for me I just feel awkward in those situations.
I think the biggest successes are in the little moments, when you see something or hear something that shows what you’ve done is important or meaningful to somebody. Even in just a small way, when it becomes personal and someone you’ve gotten to know through the process has a positive response and is excited about it, or you can tell that something changed or even something as simple as a relationship or a friendship that was created in that process. I think it’s just little moments. It might be that one sentence you overhear, and that will make everything worthwhile.

What inspired you to apply for the YP4 fellowship?

I’m a civic and community engagement minor, and there’s a woman who I was working with for my minor, and I was telling her about my interests to do some community art projects locally and I was sort of looking for various means to do that—various tools to help me, particularly in the beginning stages of it. So I was telling her and she said, “I just got this e-mail about this fellowship and I know some people who did it before” and she recommended it to me. So I didn’t really know much about it, but I went off of her recommendation when I applied.

What has stood out about the program so far?

The Summit itself was really cool. It was really interesting to be in that setting. I’ve been to a lot of conferences before, but never one specifically around activism. It was really odd and interesting and great to be treated as a professional—and given food and lodging
at an excellent conference on social activist work. Usually the grassroots stuff is a little lower maintenance. So that was cool! Also really great to hear the keynote speakers and do the workshops.

The other thing that was... really useful was to write up the Blueprint because the structure for writing up the project really made me think about my intentions and what the actual goals and deliverables were. It was pretty different than the usual grants I have to write up for funding and such. It was a good exercise for me to think about things differently.

How would you like the progressive movement to change in the future?

I’m not sure. I think the direction that YP4 is taking — putting people who are working on different kinds of activist projects together and having them interact and hear about each other’s ideas — is really good. I think that having that kind of personal level networking between different movements that are obviously related and interconnected is really useful and even necessary on a greater level to make bigger changes.

What’s next for you?

I have another year of school, so I’m trying to finish up everything I’m doing at Penn State and from there I don’t know. I want to go to grad school at some point, but I don’t know exactly when and I don’t know exactly what for. But I’m very interested in three really different things. I’m totally a nerd at heart; I want to continue on the scholarly
approach to doing things as well. I’m using the project I’m doing for YP4 as the thesis project for my honors college senior thesis, so I’m doing a lot of different research on how collaborative public art can be a successful form of community engagement—so I’ll be writing a lot on the topic. So there’s the scholarly side, then there’s the on-the-ground, get-your-hands-dirty, interacting-with-people aspect and then there’s the fine arts—I’m very involved in my own studio work. So one way or the other, I’m going to be involved in all three of those things.

**Item 5 – “Murals in State College and Millheim” was voted on to the Centre Daily Times’ list of Hidden Treasures in Centre County.** Unlocking hidden treasures: The search is on for secret Centre County spots. Monday, Oct. 12, 2009.


A few years ago, with the help of our readers, we compiled a list of Centre County’s 7 Wonders.

But as impressive as that list was, including such iconic places and things such as the Round Barn, Beaver Stadium and Mount Nittany, we know that Centre County has so much more to offer — so many wonderful vistas, places to hike, bike and play, organizations that enrich our lives.

In short, Centre County is full of Hidden Treasures. And we’re asking your help to compile a list of the county’s most notable Hidden Treasures, to go along with the list of its Seven Wonders.

Below is a list of places and things that our readers suggested are true treasures to the people who call Centre County home. We’d like you to help narrow down the list by
choosing up to seven places or things that you think are the county’s most impressive
Hidden Treasures.

Fill out the form on this page by listing your picks, and indicating which is your first
choice, second choice, third choice and so on. If you think there’s a treasure that should
be among the finalists that’s not on the list, there’s a space provided for your suggestions.
You can e-mail your list to cdtonline@centredaily.com, or mail your list to Centre
County’s Hidden Treasures, 3400 E. College Ave., State College, PA 16801. The
deadline is Oct. 31.

In November, we’ll unveil your favorites.

1. Shingletown Gap at the base of Tussey Mountain
2. Black Moshannon State Park
3. Spring Run Mini Golf in Pleasant Gap
4. Lederer Park, State College
5. Sayers Lake in Bald Eagle State Park
6. Sunnyside Paddling Park, along Spring Creek on the border of Bellefonte and Spring
Township
7. Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Park and Pool in Millheim
8. The panoramic view from Allegheny Front Trail in Moshannon State Forest
9. Spring Creek Canyon in Benner Township
10. The Gatehouse to Bellefonte’s Union Cemetery
11. Bellefonte’s Big Spring
12. The Peace Garden, between the HUB-Robeson Center and the Henderson Mall on the
University Park campus
13. The garden behind the Hintz Alumni Center on the Penn State campus

14. Penn State’s Berkey Creamery

15. Centre Volunteers in Medicine

16. The atmospheric phenomenon that makes the skies above Centre County a playground for glider pilots

17. The panoramic view from Penns View, near Coburn in Penns Township

18. Schlow Centre Region Library

19. Penn State’ Arboretum and H.O. Smith Botanic Gardens

**20. Murals in State College and Millheim**

21. The Tavern Restaurant on College Avenue, State College

22. The unusually large number of Dixieland bands in Centre County, including the Tarnished 6, Dixie Lion Jazz Band, Deacons of Dixieland, Swingin’ Dixie, and Summit City Saints

23. State College Area Municipal Band

24. Essence of Joy Gospel choir

25. Annual United Way Trash to Treasure Sale at Beaver Stadium

26. Centre Hills Country Club golf course

27. Walking/biking trail upstream from Fisherman’s Paradise

28. Spring Creek from Talleyrand Park to Fisherman’s Paradise

Give us your top seven picks for Centre County’s greatest Hidden Treasures. E-mail your list to cdtonline@centredaily.com by Oct. 31.

Read more: http://www.centredaily.com/hidden-treasures/story/1561282.html#ixzz0WHfpDiCc

Re: Steve's post -- Yes, Elody received the whole-hearted approval of the Planning Commission and The Millheim Borough Council before beginning this project. Furthermore, she contacted the East Penns Valley Business Association AND The Historical Architectural Review Board for their approbation, despite the fact that their consent was not requisite to commence with painting. It just goes to show how hard she strove to ensure that as many people as possible were in support of her amazing endeavor. It is somewhat disheartening for me to read that you are not, but of course you are entitled to your opinion. I just fail to see how a project that gathered well over a hundred Millheim community members to artistically represent their pride in and love of their hometown ...could be comparable to graffiti. It has already fostered (and will continue throughout the years to cultivate) kinship among Millheim residents, and if that’s not a way of preserving the quaint, small town atmosphere there, I don’t know what is.
Education
   Schreyer's Honors College (SHC)
   School of Visual Arts: Bachelor of Fine Arts with double concentration in Ceramics and Drawing/Painting.
   Minors: Sociology and Civic and Community Engagement.
   GPA: My GPA within my major is a 4.0 and my total GPA is a 3.99.
   Dean's List (each semester 2004 – present)
   Member of Phi Beta Kappa Honor Society (2007- present).
Pennsylvania Governor's School for the Arts, Mercyhurst College, Erie, PA, 2003:
   Visual Arts student, Ceramics Major and Dance minor. (summer art school for high school students. highly competitive)
Penns Valley High School, 2005 graduation: Academic Prep, GPA 4.0.
Scholarships, Grants, and Awards:
   • Simeon and Elizabeth Gallu Scholarship, 2004: awarded to one Penn State incoming first-year student “possessing outstanding and exceptional talent, dedication to their goal of a professional artistic career, and display total dedication to this goal.”
   • Evan Pugh Scholar Award – 2007 and 2008. Awarded to juniors and seniors who are in the upper 0.5 percent of their class and with at least 48 graded Penn State credits.
   • Funding for preliminary research in Russia and China for my collaborative thesis exhibition in visual art: Schreyer Honors College Summer 2007 Research Scholarship: $1,000; and Arts and Architecture Opportunity Fund for Undergraduate Research and Creative Activities: $600 (maximum funds given)
   • Young People For (YP4) 2008 Fellow - YP4 is a long-term leadership development program that identifies, engages and empowers progressive leaders to promote social change in their communities. There were 200 fellowships awarded nationally in 2008.
   • Funding for Valley Roots Community Mural Project: YP4 granted $1,000; SHC granted $500; Centre County Community Foundation granted $3,500
   • Golumbic Award for Design Achievement 2008 – awarded to one undergraduate in the College of Arts and Architecture after a rigorous nomination process who has demonstrated superior design records and who has proven their potential for significant contribution to the Arts and Humanities.
   • Creative Achievement for Visual Arts 2009 – awarded to nineteen students in Arts and Architecture in recognition of outstanding performance in their respective majors.
Exhibitions:
   • School of Visual Arts Undergraduate Juried Exhibitions Zoller Gallery: 2006 – Award: Juried by Marcia Tucker, founder of the New Museum of Contemporary Art in NYC, freelance writer, art critic and lecturer. Received one of five awards. 2007: Juried by Valerie Smith, chief curator at the Queens Museum. Two pieces. 2008 – Award: Juried by Peter Dudek, artist and curator from NYC. Received one of five awards.2009 – Award: Juried by curator, art dealer and consultant, Kathleen Cullen. Received one of five awards.
   • Penn State’s Undergraduate Research Exhibitions: 2006 - Juried Exhibition. First Prize in Public Scholarship for poster titled Crossing Bridges: Community Mural Projects in Allison Hill, Harrisburg. 2009 - Juried Exhibition. First Prize in Arts and
Humanities and Honorable Mention in Information Literacy for poster titled Valley Roots – Creating a Mural as a Process of Community Engagement.


- Solo Ceramics Exhibition in HUB-Robeson Center, Summer 2007: May 18 - September 9 in lobby area, first floor of the main student center.

- Downtown Student Show, November 2005: Two paintings exhibited in the Dragon Chaser's Emporium. Juried by associate art professor Helen O'Leary.


- “The Body in Question” April 2009: Solo Show in Patterson Gallery, April 2009; State College, PA.

- “The Body in Question” July 2009: Solo Show in the Elk Creek Café, July 2009; Millheim, PA.

- Solo Exhibition in HUB-Robeson Center, Fall 2009: Five sculptural works exhibited in first floor of the student center.

Community Art Projects and Internships

- Keeping Pennsylvania Beautiful (KPB) Internships 2005, 2006. I was the artist and head organizer for three murals in inner-city neighborhood Allison Hill, PA.
  - Mulberry Street Bridge Mural, 2005-06, 296’ x 6.4’, Located on the Mulberry Street Bridge next to Harrisburg’s train and bus station. Over 200 community members participated in painting, making it the largest community art project ever done in the area.
  - Derry Street Mural, 2006, 20’w x 25’h: Two additional interns assisted me with this mural at 1449 Derry St on the side of a row-house on one of the main corridors into downtown. Over 150 volunteers were involved in painting the mural or working on the lot and over 200 people were involved counting those involved in brainstorming, planning and community meetings.
  - Shared Ministries Mural, 2005, 24’w x 4’h: Over 30 people were involved brainstorming and 60 people helped to paint.

- Valley Roots Community Mural, 2008, 30’ by 14’, Located in Millheim, PA. This project I conceived of, organized, chose the location, obtained necessary permissions, fundraised for, and was the artist for. With my own project design and timeline, I was able to maximize community input and involvement at every step of the project. 200 people were involved total with 150 involved in painting.

- Williamsport Mural, 2009, 60’ x 28’h. Located on Campbell Street Community Centre in Williamsport, PA. Mural Consultant and Artist. This project was organized by Natalia Pilato. She hired me to teach her the methods and techniques for making a paint-by-number mural, designed the mural, painted the faces of the mural, and installed the mural.


Presentations and Publications:
- **Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful Annual Summit.** September 2006; Harrisburg, PA: Community Art, Pride & Responsibility. • Harrisburg Community Mural- Elody Gyekis
- **Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture (PASA) Annual Conference 2009 – Designed artwork for brochure cover, website page, and other related literature.
- **Colloquium for American Literature and Culture Speaker Series, New York University, Sept 23rd 2009 from 6:00-8:00.** Presentation Title: Maximizing Community Engagement in Mural Projects – Techniques for Community Murals.

Teaching Experiences:
- Penns Valley Elementary Assistant Teacher of 6th grade Art Class, Spring 2004
- Arts and Crafts Class at Danzante, Allison Hill, PA, June/July 2005: Taught an art class to mixed-age group (4-14) inner-city summer camp at the community center.
- **Teaching Assistantship for SOC 119 (Race and Ethnic Relations), Penn State, Spring 2006:** Co-facilitated weekly dialogue on race relations for two groups of about a dozen students each and graded their assignments. Participated in TA group discussions.
- **Teaching Assistantship Supervisor for SOC 119, Penn State, Fall 2006:** I supervised eight sections of the discussion sessions and reported to faculty on group progress.
- **Teaching Assistantship for SOC 001 (Intro to Sociology), Penn State, Spring 2006:** Responsible for creating discussion questions and grading for one section, presenting short solo lectures and longer collaborative lectures with the faculty.
- **Teaching Assistant to Residential Assistant (ATTRA) for Pennsylvania Governor’s School for the Arts (PGSA), Mercyhurst College, Erie, PA, 2007:** teaching assistant in the ceramics studio for this prestigious five week full-scholarship art program.
- **Certified Tutor for the Adult Literacy Training Corps 2008:** included 16 hours of training and 40 hours of tutoring with a learning-disabled adult learner.

Other Service Activities
- President of Penn State Chapter of Asha for Education/Free the Slaves 2007-2008 (member 2005-2007): Organized educational events about modern slavery. Sponsored events and activities to raise funds to support a school in India for 50 children who have been freed from slavery.
- **Penns Valley Conservation Association 2001-2009:** Design and photography painting for website, newsletters, fundraisers and flyers; Volunteering at events.
- **Catholic Worker House, Harrisburg, PA, 2005-2006:** participated in food and clothing drives, distributing donations to community members, prepared and served monthly community dinners, maintained community gardens, and vacant lot revitalization.