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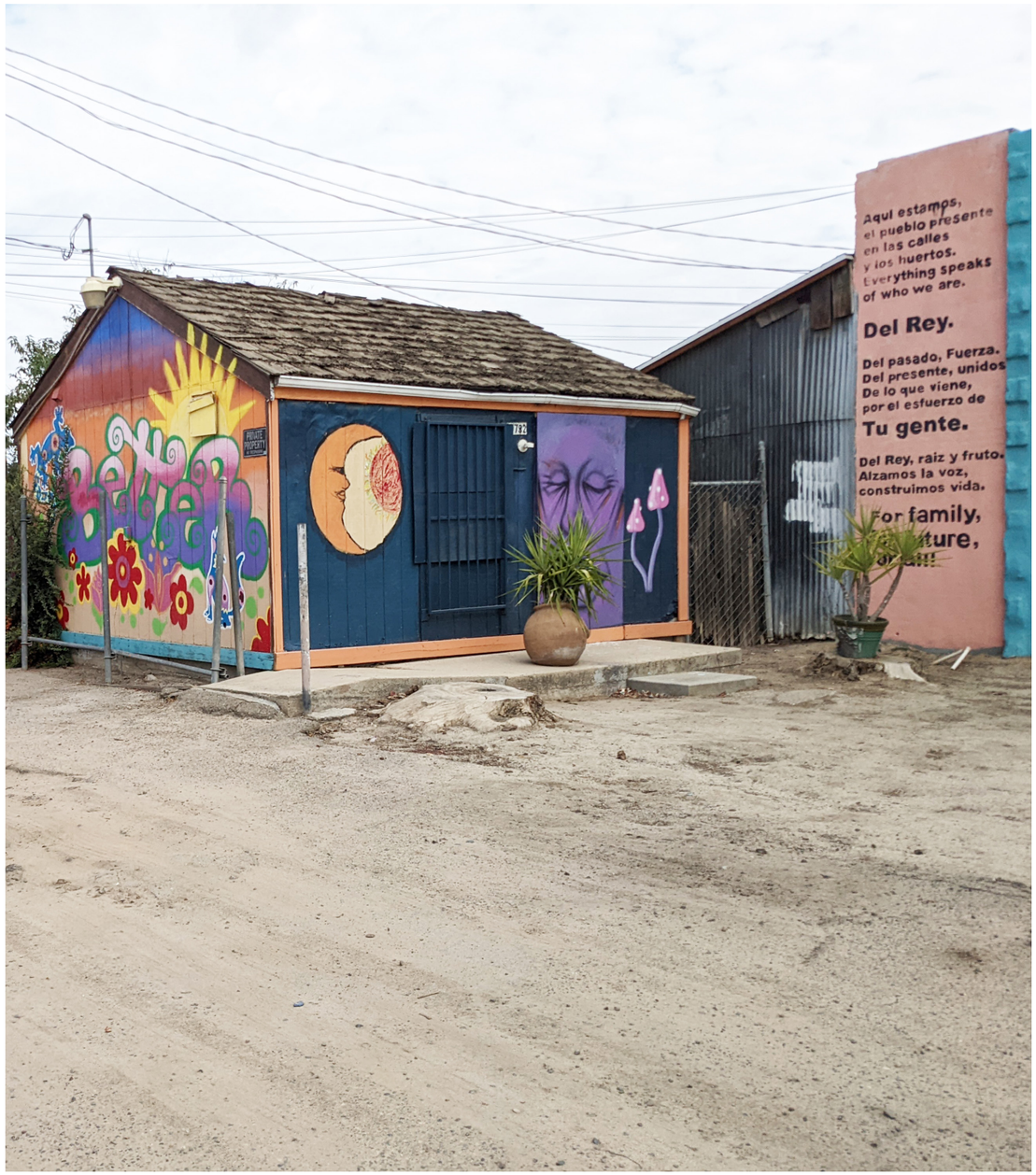
PORTRAIT OF A LOCAL ARTS ECOSYSTEM

FRESNO

California Arts Council Grant Making Evaluation

By Salvador Acevedo and Nikiko Masumoto



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Community members who participated in this research:

1. Carly Tex, Executive Director, Advocates for California Indigenous Language Survival, artist & culture bearer, Mono people.
2. Vicki Treviño, former folklórico teacher, Del Rey community leader.
3. Roberto López, quinceañera choreographer.
4. Diana Rodríguez, volunteer, Arte Américas.
5. Tim Haydock, Chief Development and Communications Officer, Youth Leadership Institute.
6. Leilani Price, drag queen, health advocate.
7. Ome Lopez, OmeDJ, co-founder DulceUP-Front.
8. Charlie Vang, Hmong filmmaker.
9. Melissa Knight, entrepreneur, the Art of Anger.
10. Armando Valdez, Executive Director, Community Center for the Arts and Technology.
11. Rey Guzmán, rapper, Mixteco dancer.
12. Jamillah Finley, Executive Director, BreakBox Thought Collective
13. Rocky Walker, artist.
14. Maria Torres, young artist.
15. Ashens Limon, young artist.
16. Yenedit Valencia, independent researcher, Centro Binacional para el Desarrollo Indígena Oaxaqueño.
17. Deborah McCoy, hip-hop dance teacher and entrepreneur.
18. Jesse Morgan, graffiti artist.
19. Juan Bejar, artist.
20. Steven Camacho Núñez, artist.
21. Ramiro Martínez, artist.
22. Mauro Carrera, artist.
23. Hana Luna Her, graffiti artist.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

This report is part of a Field Scan commissioned by the California Arts Council. The Field Scan combines statistical analysis of the available data on nonprofit arts organizations in California with qualitative research on how the arts are supported in three local communities to provide deep analysis of California's arts infrastructure and access to funding through the lenses of equity and access. The other components of the Field Scan are available for download on CAC's website [arts.ca.gov] and can be made available in other formats upon request.

METHODOLOGY

To complement the analysis of existing datasets, which are limited to nonprofit organizations and likely biased, we explored how the arts are created, shared, and supported through qualitative research in three dissimilar communities across California. We selected the communities based on three criteria:

1. Potential to learn about parts of the arts ecosystem that aren't captured in quantitative datasets;
2. Potential representativeness of other communities across California;
3. Potential for successful community engagement.

In each community, we recruited local "Connectors," who served as our primary contacts, and helped us identify and recruit other local artists and community leaders for the study. After an initial round of video conferences and phone interviews, we visited each community for two days to meet all available interviewees in person, experience the settings in which they live and work, and meet with additional artists and culture bearers. A final videoconference was held to share preliminary findings with the community members who contributed to the research in each location and receive feedback. This research was conducted between summer of 2021 and spring of 2022.

A NOTE ON QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

This report summarizes qualitative data collected through interviews, observations, and group conversations. Qualitative research provides an excellent means of capturing the experiences and perspectives of research participants. Since questions are answered in narrative form, researchers can understand the specific context for each respondent's reply, and also observe how respondents make sense of their experiences and what causal inferences they draw. However, one cannot assume that the views gathered through qualitative research proportionately reflect the views and experiences of the community as a whole. Nonetheless, the range of perspectives shared by the diverse group of participants consulted for this Field Scan can shed light on challenges and opportunities in the field.

INTRODUCTION

In determining which communities to focus on in our three portraits of the arts in California, we sought to include a region that would provide a view of immigrant and racially/ethnically diverse communities and rural communities. Fresno emerged as an ideal choice because it not only serves as the epicenter of the Central Valley, the heart of the agricultural community in the state, but also because of its deeply diverse racial, ethnic, and immigrant communities which have a long history of using the arts as tools for political activism and social advocacy. The region also has a very diverse and multifaceted youth population which was another important focus of our research.

We then needed to identify a local connector in Fresno who could guide us and be part of the research team as we explored the region. Nikiko Masumoto was the perfect candidate to connect us to the long history of art movements in Fresno. She not only belongs to a family of artists and is an artist herself, but also, she and her family have been farmers in the Central Valley for over three generations. In addition, as a Japanese American, queer person, artist, and farmer, among her many other identities, she also brought a wide range of perspectives and connections to this project, as well as a deep, strong, and long-lasting commitment to equitable, respectful, reciprocal, and even loving community relationships. Nikiko is equally comfortable attending a quinceañera celebration or a political rally while campaigning for local public funding for the arts, bringing the best of people into the process while being deeply respectful of everyone. We were aware that any connector would bring different perspectives to our research, and Nikiko provided the right mix of diversity, equity, deep knowledge, and historical perspective.

We began our collaboration with Nikiko by asking her one very complicated question: "If we want to get a perspective on what's happening in the Fresno arts community, not necessarily associated with the non-profit arts sector, who should we talk to? (and with a focus on youth too.)" She supplied a long list of people exemplifying a diversity of identities, business models, neighborhoods, art forms, etc. We interviewed a total of 16 participants representing the following populations, regions, ages, fields, etc.:

- Mixteco (Oaxaqueño), Hmong, and Mono cultures
- Fresno County at large, and also Madera and Modesto
- Non-profit, for-profit, individual artists, community-driven projects, grass-roots movements, etc.
- Traditional dance, film and video making, music (rap, hip-hop), DJ, illustration, animation, muralism, etc.
- Arts education
- Mental health and wellness
- Religious celebrations
- Youth leadership
- Technology and media development
- Entrepreneurship

Starting in the summer of 2021 and until the spring of 2022 we interacted with and learned from each of these participants on at least three occasions: an initial one-on-one interview via video conference, a visit to their physical spaces in Fresno and surrounding areas, and one of two videoconference meetings to share our findings and solicit their feedback. All participants received a monetary incentive as a way of reciprocating for their time and input, although we are fully aware that no financial compensation would be sufficient based on their generosity. Many participants said that sharing their projects and perspectives was rewarding for them, beyond providing input for our research project. Some participants opted to donate their incentives to a local organization and/or enterprise.

The following section provides findings from our research in Fresno. These findings were shared with participants who attended one of our two feedback sessions, and their input helped shape this report.

FINDINGS

COMMUNITY-CENTERED ENTERPRISES

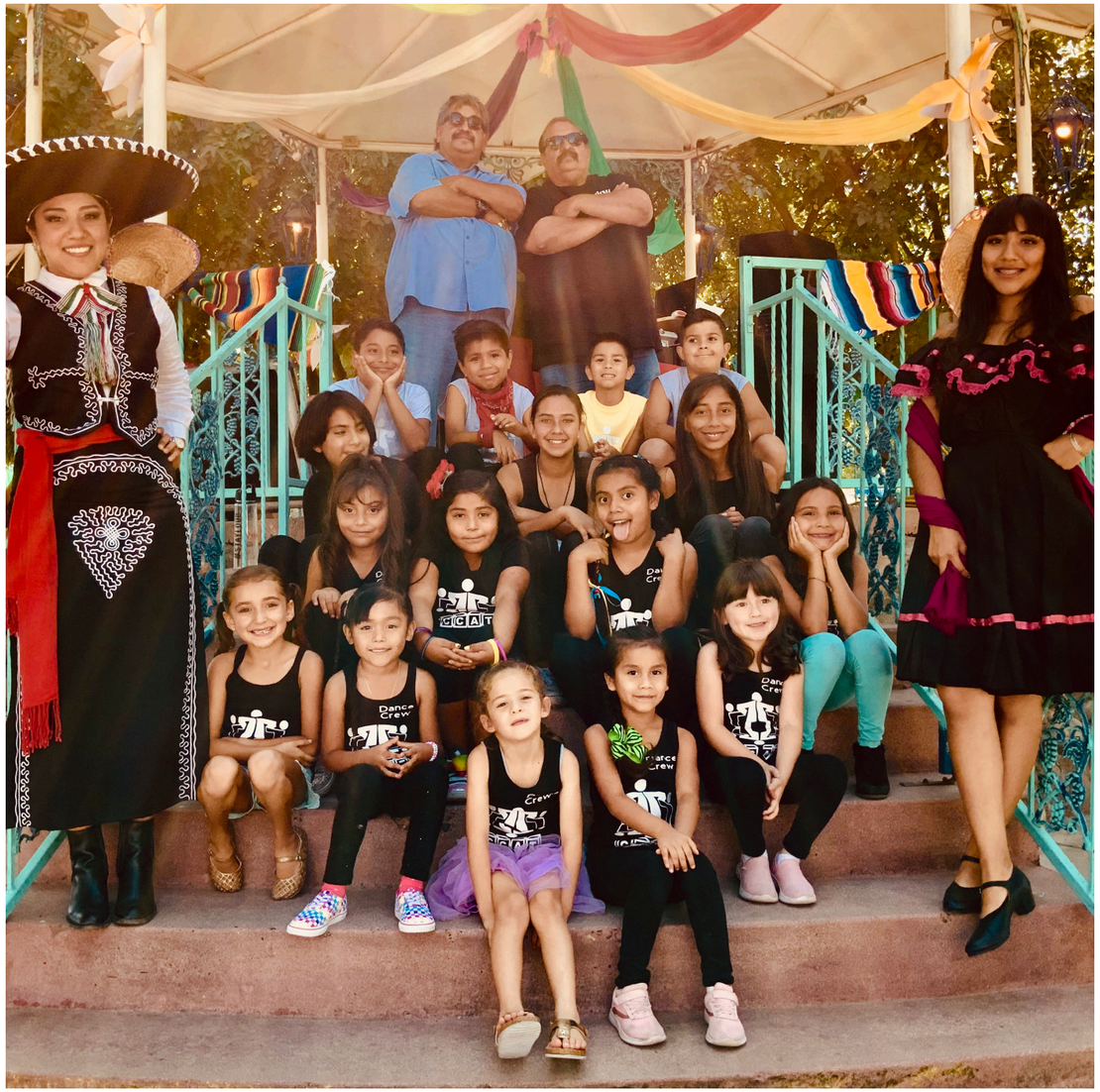
Since our focus was on understanding art activities beyond formal arts organizations, we reached out to several leaders in the broader community who are artists themselves or have a strong affinity and love for using the arts as a way of bringing people together. What we found were highly organized, highly effective art enterprises with an abundance of community will and in-kind donations, as well as enterprises that use the arts as a vehicle for community growth, all of which are making a significant impact in their communities.

Responding to community needs

We're using the term "enterprise" to describe arts activities or projects that occur outside of the non-profit arts sector in Fresno in order to convey their innovative, adaptive, and resourceful nature. They are using the arts as a vehicle to fulfill perceived needs in areas such as education, recreation, wellness, mental health, cultural preservation, etc. An example of how these enterprises adapt to the needs of the community comes from one of our respondents who runs a community center for arts and technology education:

> *We changed our name when we had a large group of Hmong and Black kids from the west side. We also got Mexican indigenous kids, and Filipino kids from Tulare county. And we have kids from Clovis which is considered higher income.*
>
> *Community Organization's Director*

The organizational structure is usually "relational" in the sense that interpersonal relationships are essential to achieving their goals, such as a network of artists and community members who know each other well and get organized to create murals in the city, for example. In some cases, these enterprises could have a formal structure like a non-profit functioning with very limited financial resources or a for-profit venture with a social cause. The key aspect of these enterprises is the arduous work of community members who function as their catalyzers, making things happen, gathering resources, and bringing artists and communities together.



Resourcefulness to ensure inclusion

Most of these enterprises are primarily centered around the perceived needs in specific communities as opposed to centered on the art form per se. Entrepreneurship thrives since there are fewer levels of bureaucracy compared to larger metropolitan areas, although in some cases we heard of discriminatory practices from government agencies detrimental to artists' creativity, as well as tensions between larger and small arts organizations which we'll explain later in this document. Open access to programs, services, and events for everybody who is interested is central to planning from the beginning of projects and there is strong interest in eliminating any barriers to participation, including financial resources, for audiences, participants, and artists. As one of our young respondents said:

> *The thing about Fresno is that it's an environment that allows for growth. In LA there's so much going on and it's sprawled out. It's easy to become just another light on the light board. In Fresno, the community of creatives is small enough. They uplift each other.*
>
> *Young Artist*

It's believed that everyone interested in participating and in need of the programs offered should be able to do so. Many of the artists we spoke to offered either free or very low-cost programming to the public, precisely in response to this community-centered core value. Transportation from more remote and/or rural towns and places to the city can be a challenge, so some artist leaders have responded by going to towns/rural places for example.

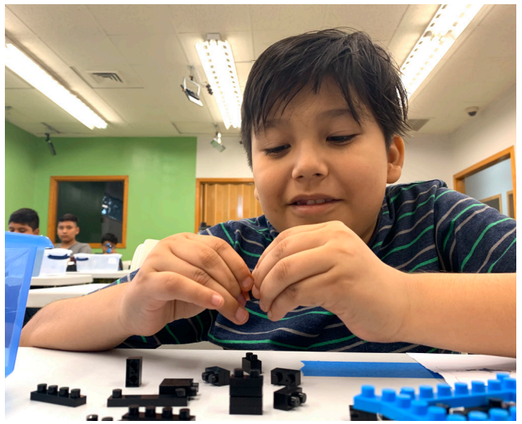
Cultural preservation

Fresno is a region that is inclusive of several cultural communities invested in preserving their cultural heritage, such as the Hmong, Mono, and Mixteco communities to name a few. Being community-centered, many arts enterprises are focused on cultural preservation and/or cultural heritage for these specific ethnic communities which may include celebrating traditional festivities and passing on cultural pride to younger generations. Many events adopt the organizing process based on the cultural norms from their places of origin. Some, for example, are arranged around religious festivities or are overseen by a group of elders in the community. Responsibilities are also distributed following the principles of collaboration for each cultural community. In some cases, some members of the community may be in charge of specific parts of the event or program, or members may be responsible for specific art forms, such as dances, food preparation, or music. Inter-generational transmission and connection are often facilitated during programs through intentional involvement. One of our respondents described the way a festival was created following the cultural norms of their community:

> *When the festivals started, it was a group of people who said, we've got to have a party to show our appreciation. They pulled everyone together and everyone pitched in money. There was a band that was already playing and they asked them for a favor. They asked them in the cultural way. They bring the sodas, the beers, the tequila, the cigarettes. They may or may not accept. Most of the time, they're always going to play. We expected them to ask us [a dance troupe], and we would have been insulted if they hadn't because we had been practicing. The musicians and dancers get food and drinks. A priest comes. They have to pay the priest. And they have to pay for the place. That's how they fund their events. Sometimes people just give money so they can do it again next year.*
>
> *Dance and Rap Artist*

Approaches to organizational structure and growth

The goal of these enterprises is to create a deep impact in specific communities, and while there are different approaches to growth that could be replicable and scalable, the efforts remain centered in the Fresno region and/or the Central Valley. The capitalist vision of growth for the sake of growth is not necessarily a consideration for these enterprises, so organizational structures



remain flexible, adaptive, and lean. The focus is on the community and the desired impact and not on the organization itself, and many of the people involved in the enterprise are volunteers.

As mentioned above, many of these enterprises have an educational component — cultural preservation by teaching younger generations about the traditions and rituals of their own cultures or using the arts as a vehicle for personal expression and growth. In the former, the art form is taught by following cultural traditions and instilling pride in their cultural identity. In the latter case, mastering the art form itself is not necessarily the main objective but rather, attending to the educational needs of the community by supporting their overall development. In both cases, there is open access to all who are interested in participating and there are no, or very few, formal processes such as auditions, structured art classes, or diplomas. The arts are part of the greater good of the community and not a goal in themselves.

COMMUNITY CAPITAL

To explain how community-centered enterprises are possible, we are introducing the idea of "community capital." The concept of capital refers to the wealth, assets, and general resources used by an organization to create or invest in an enterprise. An extension of this idea is "social capital" referring to the interpersonal relationships and networks an organization uses to achieve its goals. We're suggesting that a community also has its own capital through which catalyzers and artists are able to create art that deeply responds to the needs of the community, not only by providing the necessary resources, but also by providing direction, vision, and commentary to the enterprise. As one of our young respondents said, there's a dynamism in Fresno that responds to the needs of the community:

> *It's very unique to the culture of Fresno, with such a community of different artists building each other up. It will be a punk show, and half an hour later there's a fashion show, then there's body art or visual art.*
>
> *Young Artist*

Catalyzers are key

It is important to highlight the role of catalyzers in community capital. Catalyzers are local community members who make things happen by convening, organizing, and mobilizing projects. While some catalyzers have a background in the arts, they don't necessarily consider themselves artists or, in some cases, catalyzers do identify as artists, but the community need might not necessarily align with their previous training or field of art practice; this does not stop them from meeting community needs and diving into other areas of creative practice. Two of the catalysts we spoke to are retired, and one works in an unrelated job at a hospital. Their role is essential, and they work hard to fulfill the vision of the community by not only convening but synthesizing the points of view of those engaged in the process, creating a shared vision for projects. They have the pulse of their own communities and are able to identify and summon key stakeholders and resources to help make projects a reality. One of these catalyzers shared with us her process:

> *When we went to the city council, they were very supportive, although they didn't really understand what we wanted to do, but they were happy to do something. All the schools raised money for the murals. I also went to the Rotary and the Chamber of Commerce, and other very traditional organizations.*
>
> *Community Catalyzer*

There's a strong intergenerational element to the work catalyzers do. Younger generations learn about activism and advocacy from their elders, and older generations share what they've learned over the years about community organizing.

Regenerative versus extractive

It is important to emphasize that the concept of capital, in its most traditional sense, refers to finite resources that are "consumed" in the process. Therefore, the need for more capital remains one of the most important challenges facing an organization. We could venture that the idea of "community capital" is a regenerative one, as opposed to extractive, since the community itself generates the necessary resources for its growth. These resources are not only financial, but human — people willing to volunteer their time and abilities for the benefit of the community, bringing people with new visions, resources, and networks, which enables these enterprises to continue long term. One respondent explained:

> *The way we fund the overhead is by producing events with high production values. The labor comes from our friends and relatives. They want to have the events as much as we do. We have a large group of artists we work with across the state and in Mexico. Now we help organizations producing their multi-access events. We did 13 murals with over 60 artists across the state last year.*
>
> *DJ and Community Organizer*

Vulnerabilities are intrinsic

Yet, the fact that these projects are self-sustained makes them oftentimes more vulnerable to external forces. This might include limited volunteer availability as they attend to other needs, the lack of in-kind donations when more pressing needs arise, or bureaucratic challenges imposed by municipalities or larger, "legacy" organizations.

Some barriers include asymmetrical arts and community organizational structures which succumb to domination by a few large and "legacy" organizations over smaller organizations, presenting high costs for enterprises with a strong community capital. Our interviewees described situations in which larger organizations would take credit for the work the smaller enterprises do themselves. Developing the trust of people, especially those within marginalized communities, is so difficult to achieve and takes so much time that more established arts organizations oftentimes come to these smaller enterprises for "collaborations," or "partnerships." The larger organization has usually secured a grant that provides precious funding for necessary community work, and the small, grassroots enterprise is in dire need of funds to achieve their work. In this scenario, most of the work is done by the enterprise but the larger organization takes the credit for the work and relationships that belong, in reality, to the small enterprise. We heard of a number of situations like this in which larger, White-led, mainstream organizations approach small, BIPOC-based organizations, but also of situations in which both organizations are BIPOC-based.

DIVERSITY OF FUNDING STRATEGIES

The type of work of these community-based enterprises requires creativity when it comes to funding. A diversity of funding strategies is key. Catalyzers and artists typically rely on multiple funding sources that tap into formal and informal structures. As described earlier, some catalyzers might have a formal non-profit organizational structure, although operating with minimal financial resources, or they could be associated with non-profit organizations in the form of fiscal sponsorships. A local catalyzer organization described how they developed a hybrid model to satisfy their needs:

> *We started with money in our sock drawer. We set up a partnership and a business license. We've been given grants and needed a fiscal sponsor, so Fresno Arts Council became our fiscal agent. We got our 501 c 3 in 2017. We also have a for profit LLC. As an artist it feels like there's never going to be financial stability for artists in the non-profit sector. So, we want to make more money on the for-profit side, and we also have intellectual capital and equipment, and if the nonprofit were to fold, we couldn't take that with us. There seem to be more strings attached on the non-profit side. Funders say they want to give us money, but then you start working for them. They become your big brother or boss. Having the two sides allows us to be more flexible.*
>
> *DJ and Community Organizer*

Pursuing formal funding is a distraction

In many cases, local enterprises are open to receiving funding such as federal and state government grants, or private foundation grants. Perhaps the key difference between these enterprises and traditional nonprofits is that they are not willing to spend all their efforts on pursuing this type of funding. They recognize that it takes a lot of time to write grant applications, something they are not familiar with, and also perceive the process to be highly competitive and skewed towards larger, more established organizations. Even if they were to be successful, the arduous administrative process of receiving, managing, and reporting on a grant acts as a deterrent. These enterprises would rather spend their time and efforts working with the communities they serve. Other forms of funding, such as local government grants, are also occasionally tapped but not regularly pursued, in general, due to how highly politicized the process is.

At least in one case among our respondents, we heard that the local catalyzer was approached by a colleague who suggested that applying to a specific grant opportunity would probably be successful. The local catalyzer agreed to apply under the condition that their colleague would write the grant application and do all the necessary follow-ups. The grant application was successful, and the grant was well-received by everybody in the project, but they haven't looked for other grant opportunities. Doing so would distract them from their main interest which is to keep working on the artistic needs of the community.

Informal funding spans a wide range

Other forms of informal funding include crowd-funding in the local community, asking local businesses, tribal funding agencies, churches, schools, individuals, etc. to contribute financial resources, or more frequently, in-kind donations. One respondent explained:

> *We are a non-profit but most of our budget is in-kind. All teachers are volunteers: guitar, ukulele, piano classes. [The instructors] they're all retired. Robotics, drones, sound engineering, graphic design, that's all me. I have some students from Fresno State that do ESL classes and a friend of mine does the citizenship classes.*
>
> *Community Organization Director*

Artists' needs are covered not only with financial support but also in other ways. One form of support is time. The number of hours spent by volunteers attending to the myriad needs of a particular project is staggering, and everybody contributes to the best of their ability because they believe in the project. Artists themselves also often volunteer their time. They see this investment as a way of contributing to a long-lasting legacy of worker artists in the Central Valley.

At the end of the day, these enterprises, which are the quintessential definition of grass-roots movements, mobilize enormous amounts of resources in the form of volunteer hours, in-kind donations, and other forms of contributions, in order to realize projects with very little money. When communities, in the truest sense of the word, get activated and mobilized, things happen, which is a testament to the concept of "community capital" described above.

Appreciating the resource tensions

We feel it's important to underscore the tension between local enterprises and larger, well-established art organizations when it comes to financial resources. We heard from several respondents about situations that are becoming more and more prevalent in which large, well-established art organizations receive funding to do community work with marginalized populations, yet because they haven't established trust within the communities they are supposed to serve, they create partnerships with enterprises that have the pulse and the trust of these communities. But these collaborations are set up in a way that imposes a significant burden on the community-based enterprise, which is not reciprocated, and even worse, not acknowledged. The small enterprises receive no credit or very little recognition, and often very little remuneration because they don't have the relationships with funders nor the organizational capacity to administer the funding.

Another form of tension emerges when a local arts enterprise has to navigate local government requirements that emerge to control their work in the community and are often perceived as a deterrent to the artists' creativity. One of our respondents explained this situation in detail:

> *As the mural project grew, so did the bureaucracy and the barriers. They wanted to have a say in what would be depicted [in the murals]. There was a lot of criticism. [The local community] is very conservative. The local politicians wanted to have a process. To avoid the criticism, they wanted it to reflect the conservative community. They established a process: the proposal had to go to the Arts Commission, and then there would be community feedback, etc.*
>
> *Community Catalyst*

ART AS COMMUNITY SERVICE AND ACTIVISM

The Fresno region was the epicenter of the agricultural labor movement in the 1960s and 70s. The region's deep artistic roots provided identity and visibility to the movement and those roots remain very much alive today. Everywhere around the city and its surrounding towns, you can see how art is used to bring awareness and visibility to social, political, economic, and cultural issues. Political and social messaging proliferates like the "Si Se Puede" street graffiti near a dusty building where El Teatro Campesino used to perform in Del Rey, California,

Youth pushing social awareness

It is not surprising, then, that the arts provide a natural vehicle for Fresno residents to express themselves and share the causes that are important to the community, especially among young people who were an intentional focus of our research in this region. We had the opportunity to listen to young artists ranging from 15 to 25 years old, art students, and practitioners about how they use the arts as a form of community service and activism.

These Fresno youth learn from their parents, grandparents, and other adults and elders in the community about the opportunities that the arts, especially visual arts, provide in sharing their message and also how that message represents the values and identities of their own communities. They feel a responsibility to use these communication tools in a respectful way, while at the same time pushing for inclusion and respect for marginalized groups. One of the murals in the city of Selma, where young, emerging artists painted the image of one of their mentor artists in the mural itself as a homage to this painter who taught and inspired them, is a good example of this dynamic.

In the same way that the arts have served as a vehicle for political discourse, in Fresno we can see how they are now also being used to bring awareness to issues around sexual orientation, gender identity, and other changing social issues, especially among young people. Two of our young respondents shared the following:

> *With my poetry, it's always been a cathartic thing. It's for people like me: not from the best background, intersectional identities, merged identities. Fresno is full of that kind of identities. I am a queer, mixed-race man, half Hispanic half White. It's very strong with me but doesn't steer too much of my life. I was in foster care as a child. I come from divorced parents, a single father. As a teenager, I battled homelessness on and off. A lot of my in-person events are poetry events. [What happens is that] It's usually a community that uplifts each other. It's so engrained in the Black community and in the People of Color and the Queer communities. It's a very safe space. We uplift each other.*
>
> *Young Artist*

And:

> *Starting off I didn't want to lead with my identity because it can be a crutch. But as I've gotten more into my artistry, I've realized that those identities are who you are. That just pours out through the art. It's cathartic.*
>
> *Young Artist*

We identified people in Fresno using the arts in the following ways:

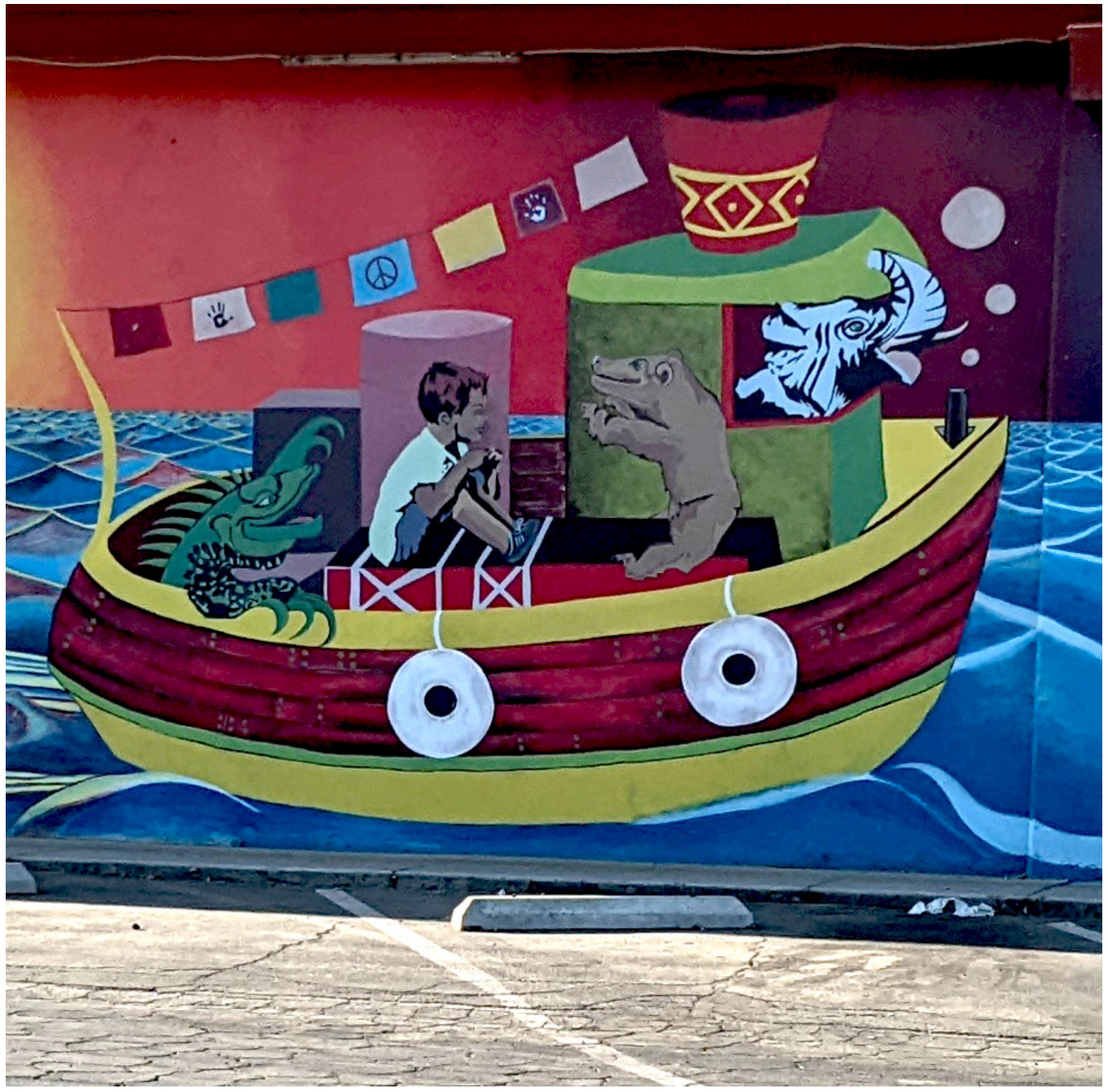
- Arts are used as a way for people to express and share political and social movements, and in a deeper way, personal and group identities
- Arts are used to communicate changing social meaning
- Arts are used as activism around gender identities, sexual orientation, ethnic and cultural identity, mental health, etc.
- Arts are used to express and claim belonging and rituals of culture, especially for immigrants, refugees, indigenous and communities of color

There are numerous networks of young creators using mixed media, illustration, video, and other forms of expression to talk about these topics from their own personal experiences. As one of our respondents said, young people in Fresno grew up looking at the struggles of their parents as agricultural workers, laborers, immigrants, etc. and that's been deeply ingrained in their expressive work. Now, following the example of their elders, youth are using the arts to talk about their own struggles. We should add that the idea of using the arts as a form of activism did not resonate with all our respondents, since some of them see it more as a form of artistic expression that can build bridges among communities.

One of the key differences of younger generations is that they are using electronic media to create their forms of expression, and virtual networks to share them. Vibrant virtual networks provide the sense of community that young people are looking for, are open spaces for activism and advocacy of the issues of interest to them and serve also as repositories of their work.

Sharing and strengthening identity

Beyond using the arts as a vehicle for activism and visibility, the arts are also a means of community service and unity by creating opportunities for people to deepen their sense of cultural and regional identities. This is especially true for BIPOC-identified artists and communities who seek to strengthen their belonging to specific cultural groups and also their Fresno and/or Central Valley identities. Regarding the latter, people reported having a strong sense of belonging to the Fresno community with its deep roots in agriculture. One prime example of this is the bi-monthly event, Art Hop (an open-studio/street festival in downtown Fresno organized by the Fresno Arts Council), where myriad networks and artist collectives, old and new, share their work, with different artist communities existing side by side. There are multiple cross-over and intergenerational collaborations and what we could describe as a network of networks coexisting in a festive, diverse, and inclusive environment.

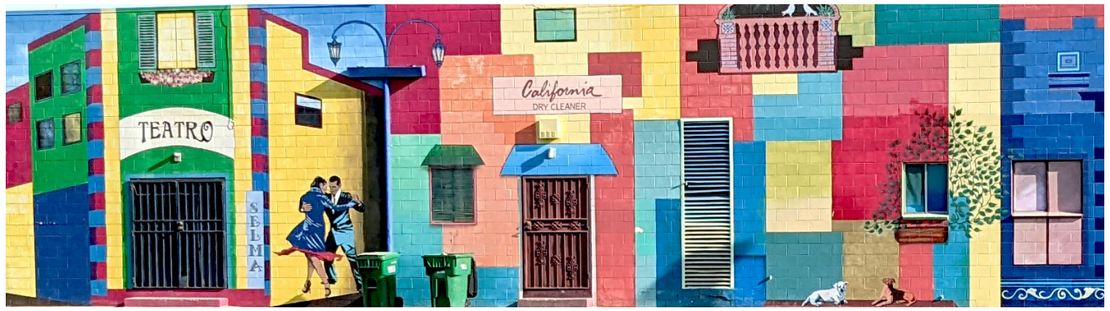


THE MURALS IN SELMA

AN EXAMPLE OF HOW COMMUNITIES IN FRESNO COME TOGETHER TO FULFILL THEIR ARTS AND CULTURE NEEDS

An example that encapsulates all the findings in our research and community consultations in Fresno is the mural "movement" in the city of Selma. Located a few miles south of Fresno, Selma is a small city with a population just shy of 25,000. Most notable about this small community is the number of murals on the facades and sidewalls of private buildings — local restaurants, grocery stores, medical buildings, and even agricultural machinery distribution companies. Although the majority of the murals have been painted by Latino/a/x artists, not all of them represent Latino-oriented themes, topics, or imagery but rather, a universality of symbols and iconography. They have been paid for mostly by local businesses, community members, and, in some instances, with the help of a grant by a local foundation.

This "movement" has been spearheaded by a local retired dance teacher from a neighboring town who has served as its catalyst. She has tirelessly convened, organized, processed the local government permits, approached local business owners, negotiated with neighbors, fundraised among local and neighboring communities, crowdfunded in-kind



donations, and even contributed her own finances. She explains how they've funded some of these murals:

> *I'm not a nonprofit. It's very difficult to get grants if you're not a nonprofit. I was working with the city's non-profit as a fiscal receiver, so I could get donations. But when you work so hard to get the money, it kind of hurts when the people are taking a percentage for writing the checks. I understand that they have to survive, that they have costs. But when you have something that's so good, that's about giving back, that's a reason to do it, to support the cause.*
>
> *Community Catalyst*

Her ideas have not always been fully accepted among the local residents — instead, they have counter-proposed their own ideas. For example, when she approached a local South Asian business owner with the idea of painting a mural representing the cultures and traditions of South Asian cultures, the business owner's cultural heritage, the response she received was "let's paint a mural that represents the universalism and intercultural symbols of peace and harmony that would resonate with everybody, not only with my own heritage."

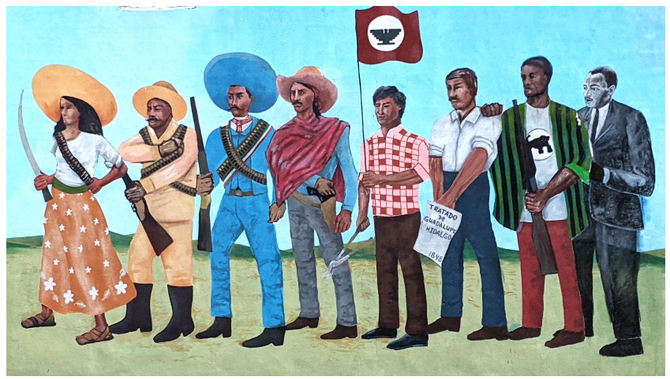
We did a tour of these murals in Selma on the last day of our visit to Fresno, ending it with lunch in front of a "not yet finished" mural of civil rights leaders such as an Adelita, Emiliano Zapata, Malcolm X, and César Chávez, among others, in front of an empty lot cleaned and beautifully taken care of by the local community. We were among a group of muralists and graffiti artists, some of them well-known and established artists in Fresno, some of them emerging and counter-culture artists like a Hmong female graffiti artist whose personal mission is to show how beautiful and peaceful (as opposed to violent) graffiti art could be.

While we were enjoying lunch on a picnic table placed there so people can sit and enjoy the mural, their catalyst pointed out that the mural was not yet complete since it was still missing Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. She then asked, or what sounded more like a joyful dare, "Who's going to step up to complete the mural?" and shared the amount of remaining funds she had available to pay for it. Before we knew it, and after some banter, one of the artists stepped up to complete the mural, not only in response to her "dare" but also as an expression of pride for the local community who had taken care of the mural and the area around it. Stories about how the local youth have protected the artists painting the mural from the local gangs and how the community has taken great lengths in making it beautiful by planting trees started to emerge in our conversation, and the commitment they all felt for this and for all the other murals was palpable.

> *We're currently finishing up the mural projects in Del Rey. We have a meeting with the council in Del Rey next month. We're going to explain what we've done and ask for their support. Del Rey is unincorporated. There are no laws. That's why it's a mecca for artists. Since then, the little stores that are left downtown have been made beautiful again.*
>
> *Community Catalyst*

These murals were made possible because the whole community came together, providing the necessary resources and also providing the vision for the murals. Beyond social capital, which only alludes to the relationships that make it possible to raise resources, communities themselves have their own capital that they use to shape artistic expression for the benefit of the whole community.

The key in this example is that community members and local business owners not only provided resources (in-kind and financial) but also helped decide the subject matter of the murals in Selma, on top of providing wall space in their buildings. And they also found avenues for their own creative expression despite regulations and systems:



APPENDIX

IMAGE CREDITS

Mural images, pages 2, 4, 14, 15, 18, 20, and 21, courtesy of Vicki Treviño.

Images of Community Center for the Arts and Technology (CCAT) program participants, pages 7, 9, 10, and 12, courtesy of CCAT.