



Collaborative Art Practices: Case Studies of Artist Collectives

Mukasa Luwum D.

Faculty of Business and Management Kampala International University Uganda

ABSTRACT

This paper explores the development and impact of artist collectives in Europe and Australia, focusing on their strategies to create resilience against contemporary political, economic, and cultural challenges in the art world. Through a detailed examination of several thematic groups and their particular practices, the study highlights the potentialities of playtime as an artistic experience and the complex dynamics of collaborative creativity. The text addresses ambiguous power relations, questions of representation, difference, authorship, and commodification within collaborative settings. The historical overview traces the evolution of artist collectives, while case studies of notable collectives provide insights into their unique approaches to art-making and social engagement. Theoretical frameworks and methodologies for studying these collectives are also discussed, offering a comprehensive understanding of collective art practices and their relevance in today's art world.

Keywords: Artist collectives, Collaborative art practices, Playtime in art, Power relations in art, Authorship and commodification.

INTRODUCTION

A series of art practices developed by artist collectives are explored in this text. A focus is placed on a few thematic groups of case studies and the particularities of the practices of these groups. Spotlighting artist collectives from Europe and Australia, the difference in development in two distinct geographical areas is outlined. Artist-led temporary spaces are discussed as resilience strategies against the current political, economic, and cultural environment in the art world. Playtime is investigated as an artistic experience gaining a new meaning and dimension in the hands of artists. The potentialities of the ludic capacity of the art experience are examined [1, 2]. Collaborative practices in a more general context are also reflected on, stressing a few questions that cross the text. A concern for the ambiguous power relations in collaborative settings is discussed. Questions about representation, difference, authorship, artistic merit, access to means, and commodification surfaces. A context for interpretation and viewing each of the practices is tendered. Discourse, references, manifestos, and the artists' ideals underpinning the case studies shared by each collective are also commented on. This text proposes to reflect on the affair of artist collectives through personal experiences with art practices located in the juncture between artist collectives and collective art practices. Considering the discourses produced by each collective, the relational artworks produced, and the location of these practices in the art world, wider theoretical and poetic questions arise. Another goal is to give an overview of artist collectives/collective practices and their particularities and relevance in the current art world [3, 4]. An individual and collective project, artist collectives, conceptual and practical possibilities, "the collective" as a utopic notion, avant-gardes and their failure are first addressed. The influences of these concepts on a few collective practices of a younger generation of contemporary artists are outlined. This younger generation is proposed to reacquaint with the artist collective due to what are perceived as renewed conditions for collective practices in the art world. The following chapter outlines an overview of collective art practices. A few thematic groups are focused on, emphasizing their particularities. Presenting historical examples and wider reflections on the affairs of each group are also contemplated [5].

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF ARTIST COLLECTIVES

Artist collectives are groups of artists who come together to create and exhibit work as a unified whole, often with a focus on community and social engagement. While the term "collective" is often used to refer to a group of artists with shared interests who create work based on those interests, it is important to note that collectives differ from artist-run galleries and initiatives in that the latter are groups who come together to create and offer alternative venues for the promotion of their artistic production through exhibitions rather than creating work collectively [6, 7]. Traditionally, artist collectives have had a political edge. At the turn of the 20th century, groups of artists would form coalitions or collectives and follow anarchistic ideologies or radical agendas, often creating work that critiqued social and political systems. However, from the late 1970s onwards, collectives became less politically charged and more focused on community building, specifically in response to the bombing of the American Center in Paris in 1975, which inspired a number of other collectives, such as the New York Co-operative, the Rachel Project, and Creative Time [8, 9]. Historically, artist collectives were most widely known in the late 1960s and early 1970s in the U.S., when large organizations needed painters or sculptors to do large labor-intensive murals or honorable and high-priced public sculptures. Artists began forming collectives, playing with similar modes of operation as architectural firms and other professionals. Although most of these organizations disbanded by the late 1970s, according to sculptor Alice Aycock, artist-initiated projects grew exponentially once again in the late 1970s, "in many different places, with a variation of themes." As such, collectives today can reflect anything from providing artists a space to create work, to exhibition or production budgets, to groups of artists who simply come together to exhibit work under one particular name. Following the excess and abuse of the radical moments from the 1960s and the coming of institutional patronage in the 1970s, collectives seem to balance the agenda of social responsibility with purely artistic concerns [10, 11]. In looking at certain artist collectives in this essay, this study aims to analyze the particular strategies each collective employs in negotiating the complex terrain between the art world and "the real world" while recognizing the limitations of these intentions. According to Marilyn J. G. E., artist collectives and artist-run organizations allow for a stronger support network wherein artists share in decision-making processes, distribution channels, exhibition space, and the costs of production. Taking into account differences in community, economic resources, and the socio/political climate, varying working models and strategies of addressing the particular local community can be seen in four distinct artist-run organizations in New York City and Paris that emerged during this historical moment of a period of unrest (1976-1981): E.A.T., G.R.A.B. (Guerrilla Art Action Group), Art Workers Coalition, and Subversive Co-op [12].

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS FOR UNDERSTANDING COLLABORATIVE ART PRACTICES

Theoretical frameworks concerning collective creativity and collaborative art practices within artist collectives are reviewed. The theoretical frameworks section begins by presenting a number of theoretical perspectives and approaches for understanding collaborative art practices. Artist collectives have been described as socially constructed groupings through collective manifestation or representation, where collectivity emerges through constructed social dynamics. The social playfulness in collaborative practice focuses on the collaborative and interdisciplinary approaches as case studies of artist collectives. Following consideration of collective creativity, the chapter discusses new social dynamics of 'creative togetherness' and the notion of conversation or dialogue in artistic creation, before concluding by addressing the need for more thorough academic analysis of collaborative art practices and encouraging further debate and consideration of new directions ahead, particularly in the wake of ever-increasing call for collaboration and partnership across the creative industries [13]. Collective creativity suggests that creativity is a social product: no-one is 'creative' by themselves but ideas, thoughts and actions become 'creative' when acknowledged as such by others. Agency therefore lies within groups or communities. Artistic collectives can therefore be seen as specific contexts for the social negotiation of creativity, and as institutional settings and protoplasm for claims of collective creativity. Here, collectivity is thought of as constructing socially formative forms of intersubjectivity through shared meaning-making in specific contexts. These collective forms of creativity rely on the negotiation of boundaries separating the individual and the collective. More dynamic perspectives suggest that collective creativity is the fluid interplay of individual and collective forms of agency, negotiating constantly shifting degrees of ownership and social form as ideas or works of art are caught up in discourse communities composed of both artists and non-artists. In such a dynamic model, notions of authorship and ownership need to be flexibly understood according to the social dynamics at play [14].

METHODOLOGIES FOR STUDYING ARTIST COLLECTIVES

Representational art is not the mere imitation of the external world but the fashioning of objects that, by means of conventional signs, are recognized as representations of selected aspects of it, either objects in the external world or presences inferred from it, or some combination of the two. Artworks typically involve the transmission of information from an artist or cultural producer to an audience. In collaborative art practices, interaction occurs between multiple agents to designate this information. Such practices arise under conditions of technological mediation, commodification, or other forms of socio-political constraint. Without negating the potential contributions of individuals, collaborative art production is broadly defined as forms of art-making in which the contributions of more than one person are significant in the conceptualization, development, execution, and reception of artworks [15]. Representational art encourages interaction among multiple participants in designating what is represented. The collaborative nature of the art practices considered in the case studies section arises from, or is enhanced by, the design and applications of new media. These and other technological affordances also constrain selection and representation, allowing some aspects of the art-making or realCollaborative Art Practices: Case Studies of Artist Collectives-world contexts to be represented while excluding others. Each case study chosen for analysis — these outcomes of artist collectives — demonstrates how such representational processes were co-realized through collaborative art practices [16, 17].

CASE STUDIES OF PROMINENT ARTIST COLLECTIVES

An examination of notable artist collectives provides insights into various approaches to collaboration and co-creation. This section highlights five prominent collectives: Grupo de Artistas de Vista, Kurimanzutto, Platform, Chto Delat, and Nocturnal Garden, analyzing their histories, strategies, and impacts on contemporary art. Founded in 1966, Grupo de Artistas de Vista (Group of View Artists) emerged as a response to the Mexican government's covert funding of art to favor its public image. In protest, the collective dedicated its work to the public, employing different media (photography, video, and installations) to expose realities of inequality. Its noted works include the 1976 "Martha L. Rangel Parra, Death by Transparency" video installation and the 1974 "Duarte Sculpture" public intervention. GEVI continues to conduct probing and experimental actions, reflecting a shift in participatory political art since the 1990s and questioning the effectiveness of its own objectives [18, 19]. Since 1999, Kurimanzutto has created a flexible exhibition space for collaborations between artists, curators, and collectors. Notable for its innovative exhibition formats and technical experimentation, the gallery produces funded artists' projects ranging from shows in unusual venues (e.g., office buildings, markets, schools) to artwork producing listening groups and farm shares. Recent group exhibitions include "No hay tal cosa como una comunidad," presenting almost ten years of collaborations exploring economic exchange's role in art exhibited as a Latin American collective during the post-global economic crisis [20, 21]. Platform, founded in 1996 by the artists and activist curators of the '1994 I Biennale for Liverpool' project, integrates art and activism through an independent think tank discussing commodification, equality, and governance in the economic sphere. Since 2006, Platform has instigated the "Oceans Apart" campaign anticipating the 2010 FIFA World Cup's economic benefits on the UK-Latin American trade relationship exploited by multinational companies to rid the right to education, preventing possibilities of employment for the local population. Platform recontextualizes art and social engagement with a tangible political component within a broader struggle against neoliberalism [22, 23]. Chto Delat is a collective (founded in 2003) of artists, philosophers, and writers based in Russia, the UK, and Germany, exploring art's socio-political role in current post-Soviet Russia. The collective uses the coexistence of the term 'to do' and 'what's to be done' (or 'will be done') in the slogan of the Russian 1902 Marxist newspaper of the same name. Since 2008, Chto Delat produces a monthly "Dossier: The Art of the People" on the connection of artistic and historically neglected notions of mass culture proposed and debated by Chto Delat on the 'ex-collective' fate of the common ground as a non-goal driven methodology for existing socio-political dynamics. Chto Delat encourages building relations between emerging artists, audiences, and their contexts through collective actions organized on a charitable basis inviting inhabitants of a particular space to come together in a shared activity [24, 25]. Nocturnal Garden is a group of seven artists whose name references a transient state situated between reality and artifice illuminating the cosmic night hidden from the invigorating glows of daily urban life. In a recent performance, shoes and footwear are removed, becoming the absent characters of quests into social space. Nocturnal Garden develops art by locating and subtly altering spaces, habits, and regimes of perception, creating opportunities for surprise and reflection. Seeking to embrace art's unforeseen intricacies in socially

sculpted experience, notions of collective memory and futility emerge as inseparable from notions of joy and hope, resounding the role of art in unmaking [26, 27].

CONCLUSION

Artist collectives play a significant role in reshaping contemporary art practices, offering innovative approaches to collaboration and social engagement. By examining the historical context, theoretical frameworks, and specific case studies of notable collectives, this study underscores the importance of collective creativity in navigating the complex terrain of the art world. The diverse strategies employed by these collectives highlight their potential to challenge existing power structures, promote inclusivity, and foster a sense of community. As the art world continues to evolve, the resilience and adaptability demonstrated by artist collectives will remain crucial in addressing ongoing political, economic, and cultural challenges. The insights gained from this study contribute to a deeper understanding of the dynamic and multifaceted nature of collective art practices.

REFERENCES

1. Thomas N. Possessions: Indigenous Art/Colonial Culture/Decolonization. 2022. [\[HTML\]](#)
2. Radbourne J. Arts management: A practical guide. 2023. [\[HTML\]](#)
3. Torralba KD, Jose D, Byrne J. Psychological safety, the hidden curriculum, and ambiguity in medicine. *Clinical rheumatology*. 2020. springer.com
4. Wang H, Ran B. Network governance and collaborative governance: A thematic analysis on their similarities, differences, and entanglements. *Public management review*. 2023. tandfonline.com
5. Petersen AR, Nielsen SD. The reconfiguration of publics and spaces through art: strategies of agitation and amelioration. *Journal of Aesthetics & Culture*. 2021. tandfonline.com
6. Plante M, Free C, Andon P. Making artworks valuable: Categorisation and modes of valuation work. *Accounting*. . [\[HTML\]](#)
7. Hernández KJ, Rubis JM, Theriault N, Todd Z, Mitchell A, Country B, Burarrwanga L, Ganambarr R, Ganambarr-Stubbs M, Ganambarr B, Maymuru D. The creatures collective: Manifestings. *Environment and Planning E: Nature and Space*. 2021 Sep;4(3):838-63. academia.edu
8. Brozgal L. Absent the archive: Cultural traces of a massacre in Paris, 17 October 1961. 2020. [\[HTML\]](#)
9. Garon S. On the Transnational destruction of cities: what Japan and the United States learned from the bombing of Britain and Germany in the second world war. *Past & Present*. 2020. [\[HTML\]](#)
10. Diamanti J. Climate and capital in the age of petroleum: Locating terminal landscapes. 2021. [\[HTML\]](#)
11. Fuller LK. Celebrating the Super Bowl: Programs, Profits, Parties. 2024. [\[HTML\]](#)
12. Geekiyanage D, Fernando T, Keraminiyage K. Assessing the state of the art in community engagement for participatory decision-making in disaster risk-sensitive urban development. *International journal of disaster risk reduction*. 2020 Dec 1;51:101847. nih.gov
13. MacDonald RAR, Wilson GB. The art of becoming: How group improvisation works. 2020. [\[HTML\]](#)
14. Pillay N, Park G, Kim YK, Lee S. Thanks for your ideas: Gratitude and team creativity. *Organizational behavior and human decision processes*. 2020 Jan 1;156:69-81. [\[HTML\]](#)
15. Mach KJ, Lemos MC, Meadow AM, Wyborn C, Klenk N, Arnott JC, Ardoin NM, Fieseler C, Moss RH, Nichols L, Stults M. Actionable knowledge and the art of engagement. *Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability*. 2020 Feb 1;42:30-7. sciencedirect.com
16. McMullan J. A new understanding of 'New Media': Online platforms as digital mediums. *Convergence*. 2020. [\[HTML\]](#)
17. Martinec R, Van Leeuwen T. The language of new media design: Theory and practice. 2020. academia.edu
18. Garzon S. Transhistorical Horizons: Contesting the Colonial Past in Contemporary Latin American Art. 2022. [\[HTML\]](#)
19. Hudde HH. Negotiating Politics and Aesthetics: The Untold History of Latin American Modern Art Music in the Berkshire Music Center at Tanglewood (1940-1951). 2021. proquest.com
20. Huitrón CD. Staging the Interstice: Trans-Performance in Contemporary Mexico City. 2022. [\[HTML\]](#)
21. Grennan S. Thinking About Drawing. *Thinking About Drawing*. 2022. [\[HTML\]](#)

22. Post C. Networked alternatives: digital curation and artistic production on artist-run platforms. 2020. unc.edu
23. Mintcheva S. Smart tactics: Toward an adaptive curatorial practice. *Curating Under Pressure*. 2020. [[HTML](#)]
24. Steinbock E, Ieven B, de Valek M. Art and activism in the age of systemic crisis: Aesthetic resilience. 2020. [[HTML](#)]
25. Staunton CL. The post-political curator: critical curatorial practice in de-politicised enclosures. 2022. rca.ac.uk
26. Sun M, Dong L. Impact of the classic Chinese garden soundscape with focus on physiological and psychological effects, tested through eye-tracking, and subjective evaluation. *Frontiers in Psychology*. 2022. frontiersin.org
27. Hanna R, Paans O. CREATIVE PIETY AND NEO-UTOPIANISM: CULTIVATING OUR GLOBAL GARDEN.. *Cosmos & History*. 2022. academia.edu

CITATION: Mukasa Luwum D. Collaborative Art Practices: Case Studies of Artist Collectives. *Research Output Journal of Education*, 2024 3(2):16-20.