

**GOING PUBLIC: THE GUIDE TO CREATING ART IN PUBLIC SPACES**



**PLAN DEVELOPMENT**

**“MURALS ARE THE BEST EXAMPLES OF PLANNED PICTURES. THE CREATIVE PROCESS FOR PAINTING A MURAL IS LIKE WRITING A MUSICAL COMPOSITION AND THEN PERFORMING IT ON STAGE.”**

*WILLIAM WOODWARD*

#### **IN THIS CHAPTER**

Placing paint on the wall is the easiest step during the mural creation. Everything that happens before that is the essential part of the process. In the previous chapters you thought about why you want to create a work of public art, spoke to your neighbors about it, and even learned everything you could about the place where you are painting. Now it's time to look at all of the steps again and see what's next on the list. Now you have a good idea of what you are creating. What other supplies and tools will you need to complete the artwork?

## STEP-BY-STEP PLAN FOR OUR MURAL



All artists need materials and supplies to convert their ideas into a work of art. Proper planning assures that all needed supplies are available before the work starts and that the artists will not get interrupted during their process.

### 1. Meet your collaborators.

Build your team. Divide the labor.

Determine what each person's skills assign roles and then identify any missing elements. If you have a volunteer that does marketing as a job then they would do the marketing. If no one in your group is a photographer, either find a photographer or identify a member of your group that can learn how to document the project and assign them the duty.

### 2. Learn about the neighborhood.

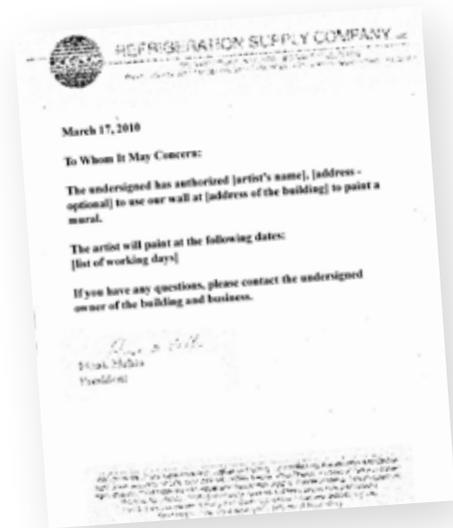
A library or community center is a good place to start. Talk to a variety of people to get a more rounded feel for the neighborhood. Some of these people may be long-time residents, new residents, people who work or go to school in the neighborhood, or civic leaders.

### 3. Select the site for the mural.

Look for a building that suits the needs of your Mural. If you have a small budget you probably do not want a very large wall or a wall that needs repairs. Talk to local building and business owners. Abandoned properties can have water damage or other issues related to lack of up-keep. Another approach is to go to the city and find out about city owned properties.

### 4. Meet the neighbors.

Show them the leading artist's portfolio of past projects. It is an easier sell if you go and talk with people around the area of the proposed site. Everybody likes to know what is going on. That way it is not a shock to them when a bunch of people show up and start painting a mural. The neighbors can also be a great resource for things like storage, electricity, or a water supply.



**5. Obtain permits** from the property owner, local government and civic organizations.

Some cities and townships have guidelines for murals (usually lumped into sign regulations) and require you to have specific permits, while others only require you to get a permission form signed by the owner.

**6. Promote the project.** Let everyone know about your work. Social networking sites such as Myspace and Facebook are great to promote mural projects. It is also good to create flyers and posters to hand out and post in local businesses and venues.

**7. Obtain ideas** from all stakeholders. Crowdfund the project. Have a meeting with your artists, community leaders, partners, sponsors and neighbors to get ideas and brainstorm.

## 8. Develop a sketch.

Get the artists, students and participants together and brainstorm and develop possible ideas, designs, patterns and themes based on the crowdsourcing. The lead artist(s) should pull everything together into a comprehensive sketch.

## 9. Create a detailed budget and approximate timeline.

Outline the budget into sections. Some of the sections may be the Mural, Advertising and Promotion, Party and Opening Event. Call the stores, manufacturers and providers of the items and services you outlined in the budget and ask them how much they cost. These price quotes give you a better idea of the true cost. Be prepared to cut things out if you cannot reach your goals.

## 10. Get sponsors.

Prepare a letter and talk to your community leaders, neighbors and businesses for sponsorship or sponsorship leads. Keep in mind that donations that are not money but the actual items you need (called in-kind donations, such as paint or scaffolding) can lessen the overall budget that you need to raise. If you can borrow certain tools or get specialists to donate their services you do not have to pay for them.

## 11. Prepare the wall.

If your wall is old or has slight water damage scraping or power washing may be necessary. You may need to fill or smooth out areas with concrete. For extensive damage, you should consult a mason or



Careful preparation of the painted surface requires a great deal of energy and time, but it assures longevity and good quality of the final artwork. Works of public art are exposed to the most aggressive environmental factors and must be built to withstand storms, extreme heat or even blizzards. In this photo, the artists and students primed the Edgewood wall and are laying down the grid.

find another wall. Next you will prime/buff the wall with an exterior paint or primer sealer. You can save time if you have it tinted your background color such as sky blue.

## 12. Secure all supplies and materials.

Make a list of items you will need and research vendors who sell them. If possible, buy all supplies from local hardware, paint and art stores.

## 13. Think safety.

Make sure the area is clean and free of debris. Make sure all the participants are wearing gloves, dust masks and goggles. Any ladders and scaffolding need to be properly setup and leveled. Use caution tape to rope off areas if the public is going to be around.

## 14. Transform your sketch to the wall.

The process depends on the artist's preference. Some common ways of transferring the sketch to the wall is gridding or projecting. Very skilled artists may freehand sketch the piece onto the wall. More detailed information is in Chapter 5

## 15. Paint.

Choose your medium to paint the design on the wall. Common mediums are acrylic/house paint or aerosol. You can use a variety of mediums but you may need special sealers to bond the piece to the wall.

## 16. Step back and touch up.

Take note of areas that are not equally worked or filled. Touch up parts that

stick out or don't flow with rest of the wall. Make sure all the line work and shading is consistent.

### 17. Promote the project with the media.

Create a press release and send it to different TV stations, print magazines, and newspapers. Also be sure to promote on social networks, blogs and related websites.

**18. Unveil the mural**, celebrate your work. You may want to have a party if you have the budget with food and refreshments. Invite everyone who was involved in the project. You may want to have a separate party for the general public.

### 19. Collect feedback.

Talk to people and create a paper or online survey to get feedback both positive and negative. Learn what you did well and what you can do better next time. Consider the source of your criticism, a regular person may give you a gut reaction but a specialist may be able to give you more constructive criticism.

## MAKING IT HAPPEN EASY WITH A PLAN

**By Maura Carey**

Early in the summer of 2000, a group of neighborhood residents was struck with the notion of creating a community mural. The effort was in part an accompaniment to a grassroots campaign to elect city council representatives in favor of community driven change in the City of New Brunswick, NJ.

Attached to a repair shop garage, the wall was really only accessible from the shared courtyard of an apartment building. Skirting permission from both the wall's owners and the apartment building's slumlord, we commandeered the site in the public interest, buying supplies out of pocket and improvising a process that we hoped would ensure creative integrity and neighborhood validity for the work.

Lots of folks became involved along the way – children, adults, activists, workers, students – residents whose



Maura and Tamara leading a group of students during one of their C.A.M.P. projects in New Brunswick, NJ. This mural is located on a previously grey concrete structure in one of the local playgrounds.

contributions and participation varied in scope and intensity. What remained consistent, though, was a very open spirit of collaboration. Despite some short-lived peripheral friction from the property owners, upon successful completion, we all felt so positive about the experience that we collectively agreed this would be only the first of many such projects.

Tamara (Dahan) Moreira and I have had the pleasure and the distinguished duty of co-directing the

Community Arts Mural Project (C.A.M.P.) since that first summer. We call it a ‘project’ (as in, a process in progress) and not a ‘program’ because we share the guiding principle that it is the process of creative community collaboration that is in fact the real artwork. The murals themselves are more or less the residue that marks particular neighborhood instantiations of that process, along with the feeling that public art is best conceived as an action rather than a thing.

Over these years, we’ve had a steady stream of challenges. First, was realizing that in order to continue, we needed money that came from someplace bigger than our own pockets. In order to get such money in the form of grants, we needed a certain amount of legitimacy in the form of paperwork, 501(c)3 non-profit status, etc. Although we didn’t know what we were doing, overwhelmed with these formal requirements that felt so foreign to our skills, interests, and experience, it hardly proved insurmountable.

We’ve revisited this foreign feeling every time we’ve had to pitch to a money source or the city for funding or permissions, or appeal to the press for PR. There is some amount of inevitable frustration with anything that distracts from the ‘actual’ work of collaborative mural painting – meeting with neighbors to talk out issues of representation and theme (exchanging concerns, hopes, and values as neighbors); sharing ideas, sketches and found images to compose a visual concept collectively; preparing the ‘canvas’ together; painting and mentoring, experimenting and celebrating breakthroughs; and engendering a sense of common pride through self-expression, when the ‘self’ is at once the individual and the community.

Stepping back it becomes clear that all of the work is the ‘actual’ work, and there are insights to be gained from all aspects of this type of project. We have struggled a bit with sustainability and continue to negotiate trade-offs. Although we don’t always have the budget we’d like, or a smoother route to permission from the powers that authorize property use, we have found that we favor the autonomy of flying ‘under the radar’ in most cases, as art that is beholden to a corporate or governmental sponsor is not entirely free.

Similarly, open and democratically guided creative projects, though rich in their scope of input, tend to materialize more slowly than those springing forth from a singular, controlled vision. When residents can come and go to participate free of regularized commitment conditions, the burden of project progress (particularly in an administrative regard) is at times shouldered by only a few.

Challenges aside, the rewards have been undeniable! Working at less prominent mural site locations, as C.A.M.P. most often does, offers a gift of intimacy not generally afforded by sites located along major city traffic arteries. The borders between participation and spectatorship tend to be

more permeable in these locations, especially once a project overcomes its inception inertia. This intimacy also helps break down the inhibitions of those new to the project who want to participate but may have some performance shyness (we have definitely noticed that adults exhibit this much more than the kids!). So, a big reward of this dynamic is any number of connections that folks wouldn't normally otherwise make with each other or engage in this type of outlet for self-expression.

The reward is also when mothers whose children have become muralists over the summer--painting their ideas and their words right into the work, come walking over on the day of the dedication and say, "Thank you. There's never been anything like this for them around here." It is the beaming fresh confidence of a young artist who is recognized for her/his formerly hidden talents. And it is the galaxy of conversations that occur between the wall and the neighborhood.

But sometimes, it is something else entirely – it is sometimes the experience of responding to censorship and regrouping. For example, a letter from a third grader to a superintendent when a message of welcome for immigrants has been lovingly painted into the elementary school mural and subsequently vetoed for its alleged political inappropriateness – it is then that the reward becomes the experience of knowing how things are, and how

one might go about creatively challenging what doesn't seem quite right. Community art is a mechanism for growth and for change, and there is power in every inch of it.



The artist Pose 2 holding a magazine photo that inspired him to create a mural on Benning Park Recreation Center in Washington, DC.

## INTERVIEW WITH POSE 2

In the following interview, Pose 2 speaks about his approach to painting murals. He puts a lot of attention to the initial research, following steps outlined in the previous chapters. He collects ideas from the residents and uses the ideas in his sketches. Murals are environmental artworks, meaning that their value and significance depends on their responsiveness to the atmosphere and other environmental influences. Therefore, in many cases, after the artist develops the sketch and overall concept for the artwork, this artistic plan gets altered as the artist becomes inspired by the environmental factors. An example of this is when they are approached by a new stakeholder and their conversation suddenly enlightens the artist and inspires him or her to alter the initial sketch to include the new findings.

Be careful when you change your

concept during the painting process. Your entire team is working with the sketch that you all agreed on previously, so make sure that you discuss your changes and alterations with all stakeholders. Explain why you are changing it and how the changes will elevate the artwork to the next level of quality and artistic value.

Pose 2 explains the importance of this spontaneous process and how it is one of the most important ways to create a strong and attractive work of art.

## MOODS, FOODS AND ATTITUDES

**Peter:** What are the things that affect your artwork?

**Pose 2:** The work is affected by the dialogue, the community participation, the materials and structure of the facility and most importantly the artist interpretation.

**Peter:** Personally, I feel my work gets affected by everything; the weather, the color of the leaves, the sky, food that I just ate, the scents in air, and also my mood. Therefore I always create at the last possible minute, so the piece really captures the energy of the moment. This is really critical for participatory artwork. The role of the leading artists is to steer the entire group that is working on the project, not telling them what to create, but to set the right mood and direct them onto the right track.

**Pose 2:** Moods... Foods and attitudes. Ah yeah, emotion plays its part in the creation of a mural, and what's occurring in the world impacts us as well. Most importantly I believe our interpersonal relationships have the biggest impact on how we successfully collaborate providing the respect to hear others' ideas and have them merge together into one cohesive vision. Now that's Power, Beauty and Unity! What?



## TRIBES AND CAVEMAN ART

**Peter:** How come we don't see it more often? The beautiful thing about our process and the whole artist collective is that it's happening naturally, as an answer to the demand. The audience is hungry for art that they can interact with and be direct participants. I think people are getting tired of being

passive consumers of entertainment and all that stuff that is being served to us as art.



**Pose 2:** It's us, all of us, this artist collective, this mind set, this moment in time. If we want more of this to happen, we need to continue to do what we do. What do we do? We create, lead and unify tribes of people. The projects that we do are natural and feel right, that's important. Right now we are on the verge of becoming deeply human and a deep human being is a vivid expressionist who practices the "art of living." This type of individual is committed to his or her beliefs first and foremost as a human being. The currents change!

**Peter:** How can it be compared to tribal / ancient / folk art?

**Pose 2:** How tribes create art is what we would call an art movement today. The whole tribe is involved! There is a sense of purpose guiding the art being created. Tribes create art that is beneficial for its people. The beauty and overall process directly relate to the enhancement of its environment and spiritual upliftment of the tribe. We are the "Urban

Style Shamans" imbuing our tribes of the world with a new spin on the original practice of art ...beautify with a purpose.

## SPONTANEITY

**Peter:** Why is spontaneity important in any artistic process? Or is it important at all?

**Pose 2:** Spontaneity is the essential element of our creative process, because it provides the artists and the community the opportunity to convey the presented ideas and creative energies organically.

**Peter:** Is spontaneity necessary in creation of participatory and interactive pieces?

**Pose 2:** It's necessary when we create interactive pieces because there is a tremendous amount of creating and learning taking place at the same time. The atmosphere of learning is always enhanced where there is excitement fun and total engagement. That's what we encourage and strive for.

## MURAL JAMS

**Peter:** Our work emphasizes the community participation, involvement of the entire audience. Pose 2: Participation... Well yeah, that's why the Hip Hop Movement is so big because it's a participant oriented movement. Graffiti Breakdancing, D-Jaying, and the Emcee are all things you can do, not just look at. That is only energy! Pas-

sionate energy driven by a movement. That is what we are about the creative movement of engagement, enthusiasm and active participation. We want to create art that inspires the creative spirit to reach higher than it ever has before. This is not a stale stagnate process. It's alive, spontaneous and invigorating, but most of all harmonious. Great ideas and concepts are born in the hearts and minds of those willing to understand what's truly needed, and remain steadfast in bringing their dreams to fruition. That's who we are. We are not looking for any call to artist! We are the artists who call to the world!

**Peter:** How can it be compared to music?

**Pose 2:** Like in music, we are the visual improv painters, much like the great Jazz musicians who created an entire movement of music based on skill, rhythm, synchronicity and intuition. We as painters follow the same formula. In their musical creations, there was an underlining beat a structure a texture that these artists all followed; once a cohesive rhythm was achieved, they expanded and enhanced upon it. We create with the same underlining premise; take a concept, reference images, value statements and lay down the overall theme, once that is achieved, embellish and stylize.

**Peter:** Why would you even try that with visual arts?

**Pose 2:** Because it's not static. It's natural and organic and forces you to pay attention. It is the type of creative process that heightens your awareness because you have to be totally engaged.



The finished mural is a part of Concrete Alchemy wall at Benning Park Recreation Center in Washington, DC. The section to the right was painted by Chor Boogie.

**NOTES**

USE THESE PAGES FOR RESEARCH/SKETCHING

## QUESTIONS:

1. What is your vision for your project?
2. What is your suggested name for this project?
3. What are your interests related to this project?
4. Why is it important to think of all costs before you start painting?
5. How would you deal with the situation of not being able to get water on your mural site?

**NOTES**

USE THESE PAGES FOR RESEARCH/SKETCHING

**ACTIVITIES:**

1. Visit your local hardware store and write down prices for all the supplies and tools you need for your work. How much are brushes, five gallons of exterior paint, gloves, and even rental of scaffolding, lights, or a gas-powered generator?
2. Repeat the same exercise but visit an art store and find all of the supplies you need.
3. To create a budget, you need a list of all necessary items. Besides the art and hardware supplies covered in the previous two activities, what else will you need? Write everything down in one column. Next to it, write the price and identify a possible sponsor or donor of the item. Prepare a short speech and visit the sponsors.
4. What events can you envision that could possibly endanger you and your friends while creating the artwork? Can you take measures to prevent those from happening? In case something goes wrong, what do you do? Are you prepared to respond or call for assistance?
5. Randomly doodle for a few minutes, drawing random shapes on the paper. Step back and decide what you see. How do you continue from here? Are you spontaneous enough to improvise and work loosely without any sketches? Color open areas between the lines. How do you choose your colors?

## APPENDIX:

## SAMPLE MURAL BUDGET

	DESCRIPTION	COST
Salary	Coordinators	\$
	Videographer/ Photographer	\$
	Artist Fee	\$
	Guest Speaker Fee	\$
	Instructors	\$
Administrative Cost	Fees, Office use & Misc. Supplies	\$
Rent	Artist Lodging	\$
	Storage	\$
Insurance		\$
Permits		\$
Height Access Equipment	Trailer Mounted DZ- Boom 50'	\$
	Ladders	\$
	Scaffolding	\$
Paint & Art Supplies	Aerosol Wholesale Order	\$
	Acrylic & Brushes	\$
	Sealer	\$
	Primer	\$
	Sprayer	\$
	Rollers etc	\$
	Lights	\$

	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>COST</b>
Transportation	Artists Transportation	\$
	Field Trip	\$
	Local Cargo	\$
Refreshments	Students	\$
	Opening Party	\$
Workshops	Supplies	\$
	Film Screenings	\$
Design	T-shirts	\$
	Flyers	\$
	Website/Blog	\$
Memorabilia for participants	T-Shirts	\$
	Prints	\$
	Stickers	\$
Marketing	Flyers	\$
	Media Relations	\$
Unveiling Ceremony	Sound System	\$
	Performer Fee(s)	\$
	Refreshments	\$
Documentation	Supplies (miniDV)	\$
	<b>TOTAL</b>	\$

**NOTES**

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## SUMMARY:

The planning process allows you to go through the entire process of public art creation smoothly. It helps you to envision various scenarios and prepares you for emergencies and unexpected developments. Think of every brush, every drop of paint you need. Then think of ways to obtain all the necessary supplies. Do you know who to speak to when you want to learn more about the neighborhood? All these questions get answered as you go step by step through your plan. When your plan is completed, you are almost done with the entire project. Painting will be easy

