

MANDATORY FUN, CREATING COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

Thesis presented to the faculty of the
Graduate School of Western Carolina University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts

By Jeannie Regan

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Jeannie's mother; Cheung Kit May, and her aunt Yiu Kit Lan

This thesis is dedicated to Harriet, with the firm belief that a better world is inevitable.

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participatory gameshow exploring creative repair

Welcome to Repair-O-Rama!

This event asks big questions about our relationship with the objects and materials that will outlive us. Who decides what is functional and useful? **What does it mean for an object to be repaired?** What happens when we run out of new materials?

'Creative repair' could mean returning an object to functionality, and that function could be **existing as an art object**. There is a lot of possibility within this concept and we look forward to seeing what you make.

Repair-O-Rama is a collaborative project between MFA candidate Jeannie Regan, Visiting Artist Julia Gartrell and the Social Practice and Public Art class with Tom Ashcraft.

Follow our adventures at [instagram.com/repair_o_rama](https://www.instagram.com/repair_o_rama)

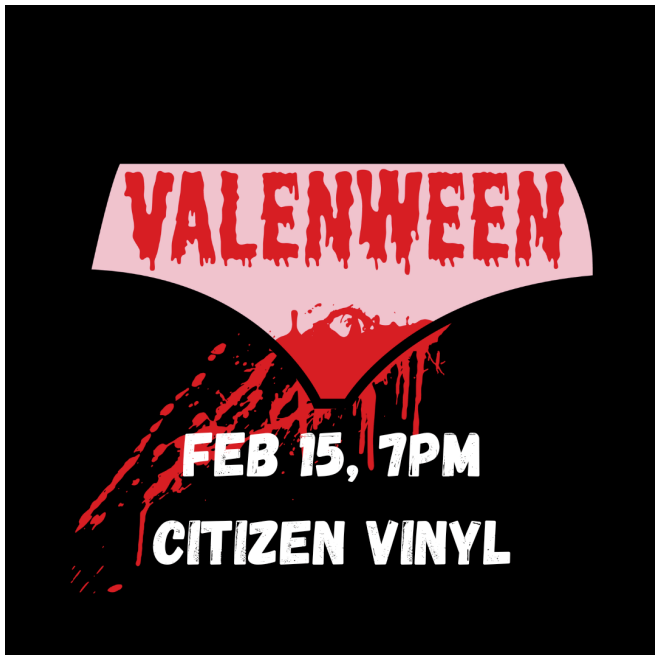
A 1. - Repair-O-Rama Flyer







A 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. Images from Repair-o-Rama, April 18, 2023, Bardo Star Atrium, Western Carolina University. Photos by Nikayla Early Swan, used with permission.



B 1. 2. Valenween social media graphics by Jenny Fares, used with permission.





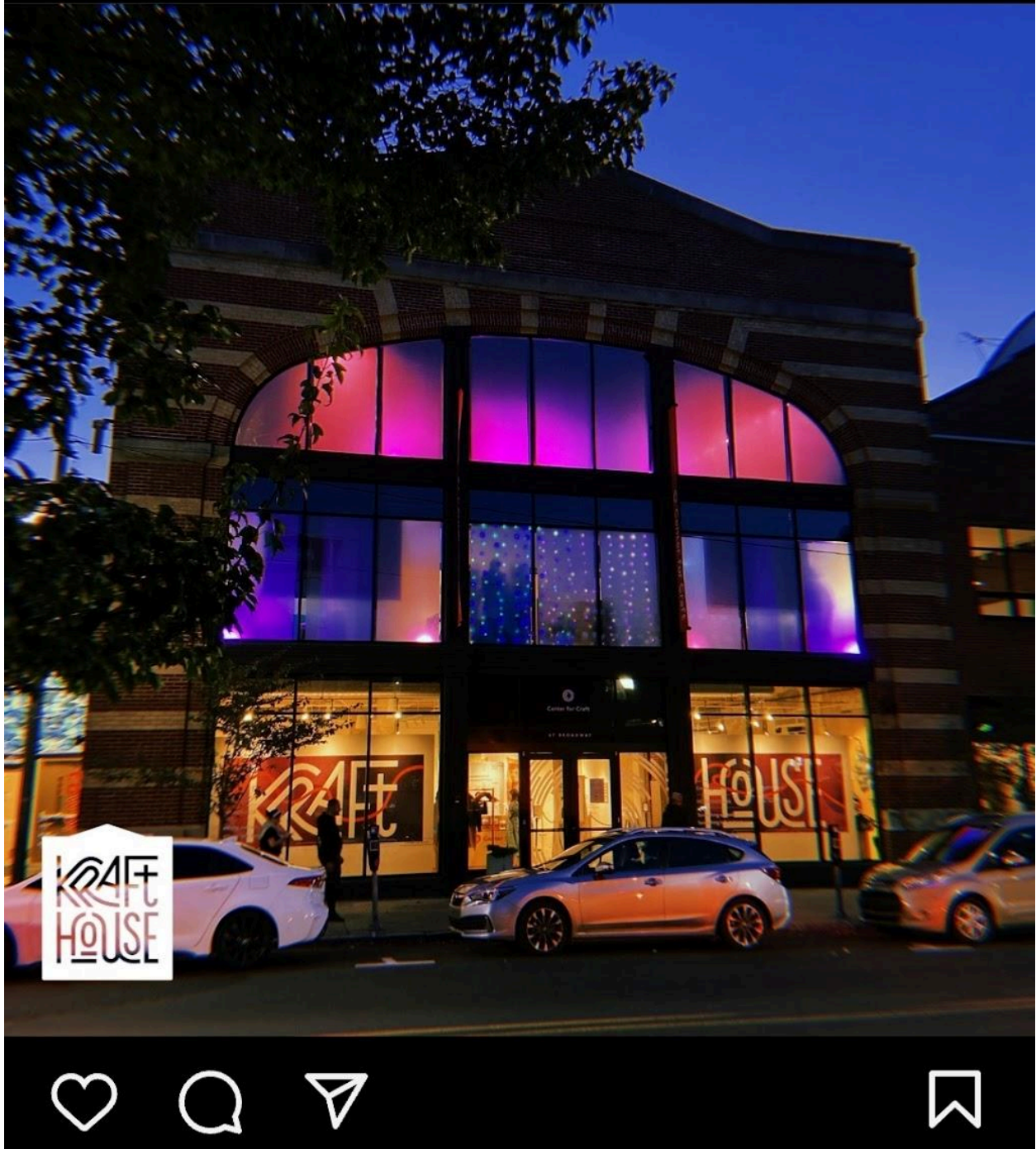
B 3. 4. 5. Images from Valenween, Feb 15 2024, Citizen Vinyl, Asheville. Photos by Molly Milroy and Jas Archer, used with permission.



C 1. KRAFTHOUSE logo, designed by Futures Bright, used with permission.



centerforcraft



C 2. Image from Center for Craft Instagram
<https://www.instagram.com/p/CyTt0pEsXxp/>

FOREST OF THE NEW TREES



A WORLD MADE WITH LOVE

C 3. Krafthouse poster



C 4. Objects made by Krafthouse visitors for 'trade' in the night market



C 5. Krafthouse image by Laura Williams, used with permission.







C 6. 7. 8. 9. 10. Images from Krafthouse: Forest of the New Trees, Sept 28 - Oct 13 2023, Center for Craft, Asheville. Photos by Molly Milroy, used with permission.

LAKE MONSTER PARADE



**FREE, FUN, FAMILY FRIENDLY
COSTUME PARADE
10AM SATURDAY JULY 29
LAKE TOMAHAWK
BLACK MOUNTAIN**

**Bounce house, games and activities
Brass Your Heart Marching Band
and the Upbeats Ukelele Orchestra
@lakemonsterparade
on [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#) for details
Limited parking, walk to the park if you can!
Sponsored and supported by
Arbor House Black Mountain,
Dot Dot Crafters and Mountain Fairy Hair**



D 1. Lake Monster Parade 2023 flyer









D 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8. 9. Images from The Lake Monster Parade, 2023 and 2022, Lake Tomahawk, Black Mountain. Photos by Sue Stieglerman, used with permission.

Donate a blanket and be part of our
Community Quilt
Collaborative Textile Installation!



Bring your blankets to
Warren Wilson College Soccer Field
104 Northwest Lane, Swannanoa
on Saturday July 20 at 10am



Join Local Cloth in laying out our
collected blankets out to form a
Community Quilt
We'll capture the magic with an aerial
photograph



BeLoved Asheville
will deliver the collected blankets to
neighbors in need, so let's get as many
as we can!



**Questions and
suggestions:**
noveltyplususefulness@gmail.com



Special thanks to:

Local Cloth
BeLoved Asheville
Warren Wilson College Athletics



E 1. Community Quilt event promotional material

DONATE A BLANKET TO OUR

COMMUNITY QUILT

A COLLABORATIVE TEXTILE INSTALLATION WITH LOCAL CLOTH
COMPRISED OF BLANKETS (AND LOVE) SPREAD OUT ON A FIELD

SATURDAY JULY 20, 10AM

WARREN WILSON COLLEGE SOCCER FIELD
104 NORTHWEST LANE, SWANNANOVA

BELOVED ASHEVILLE WILL SHARE THE COLLECTED BLANKETS WITH NEIGHBORS IN NEED

noveltyplususefulness@gmail.com / [instagram @noveltyplususefulness](https://www.instagram.com/noveltyplususefulness) / noveltyplususefulness.com
This event is free and family friendly. Rain date - Sunday July 21, 10am



E 2. Community Quilt 2024 flyer



E. 3. 4. Images from Community Quilt, July 20 2024, Warren Wilson College. Aerial photos by Ponkho Bermejo, used with permission.



F 1. Orbit Space Logo by James Huckenpahler, used with permission.



Welcome Message

Jeannie Regan

Orbit Space co-founder

Hello, and welcome to *Orbit Space*, our 'Emergency Response Gallery' located at #744 Tanger Outlets Asheville.

This space was gifted to us by Tanger with the goal of assisting Asheville area artists impacted by Hurricane Helene. Colby Caldwell and I very quickly hatched a plan and it has been a race to get the space ready by Black Friday. We hope that Tanger visitors will enjoy encountering art in this new location, and that the artists displayed here reach new audiences and sell plenty of work. I am very grateful for the talented people that have made *Orbit Space* a reality, it has been a pleasure working with you.

We are online at theorbit.space.com and on Instagram @orbit_space_avl

Thank you for coming to see us. I hope you will visit us frequently, and tell your friends!

-Jeannie

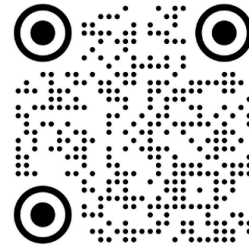


F 2. Welcome message in Orbit Space gallery brochure





F 3. 4. 5. Images from Orbit Space, Emergency Response Gallery at Tanger Outlets Asheville, November to February 2025. Center photo by Colby Caldwell, used with permission.



PLAY TO PAY is a free mobile app that centers in-person game play to help local relief organizations raise money. Download it from the Apple or Google app store, challenge your friends to play and help your community continue vital disaster relief efforts. Learn more at playtopay.org

G 1. Play to Pay promo postcard

ABSTRACT

MANDATORY FUN: CREATING COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

Jeannie Regan

Western Carolina University (May 2025)

All projects lead to the same place, a kinder version of our current reality.

My practice is grounded in problem solving, and inventing new opportunities for people to engage with the arts in public spaces. I make art to contribute to the growth of empathetic, optimistic and resilient communities. I start new work by identifying an issue in the community and devising a creative solution. The goal is for the work to be a combination of kind, clever and elegant. At times the art is in the idea itself, and other times it is in the act of moving units of energy towards a common good. Logistics, strategy and administration are foundational parts of my practice. Instead of sketchbooks I have spreadsheets, in place of materials explorations I send emails, compose text messages and book meeting spaces. The most elusive criteria is humor. “*Yes, but is it funny?*” is a recurring concern. Maintaining humor and elegance while still honoring the gravity of the problem is where the cleverness is tested. Creating a sense of fun and eliciting joy are critical components, the necessary counterspell against the obstacles that my work seeks to overcome. In this thesis I will be describing my practice and placing it within the context of contemporary social practice. I will also reference influential artists and writers; Corita Kent, Es Devlin and Rebecca Solnit.

INTRODUCTION

Social practice art can look like just about anything: journalism, community organizing, even a shop. The goal is to engage the audience and help people think about social issues in new ways. “For me,” says social-practice artist and professor Stephanie Syjuco, “the best social practice projects actually try to attract people to join a conversation.”

Social Practice Art: Engaging Community Through Art - KQED Arts / PBS

“The role of the artist is to make the revolution irresistible.” - Toni Cade Bambara

With origins in the Fluxus movement of the 1960s, Social Practice Art has evolved today to encompass a multitude of sub-definitions and variations including ‘socially engaged practice’, ‘new genre public art’, ‘community art’, ‘activist art’, ‘social turn’, and ‘public practice’. I feel most aligned with the term ‘social practice art’ and consider myself to be a ‘social practice artist’. I describe my work as a series of ‘projects’ rather than artworks, and in most cases, I work collaboratively with a range of artists, designers, activists, organizers and community members.

A lot of my projects veer into craft territory. The Lake Monster Parade and Repair-o-Rama centered the hand-made as a major part of the event. Krafthouse: Forest of the New Trees at Center for Craft featured craft makers and encouraged visitors to make objects to trade. Community Quilt involved the skills of quilters from

Local Cloth to create a temporary quilt-like installation. Craft making is accessible and can often be an effective tool for developing community connection. There are multiple health benefits to engaging in craft activities, and I was fortunate to engage in a research project that aligned with the Center for Craft and UNCA Master of Public Health's joint *Craft and Community Vitality* initiative. My findings relating to the mental health benefits of participating in craft activities have informed subsequent projects. Encouraging participation in making and developing proximity to the arts for populations who may not have access or exposure is an ongoing concern, and to that end I have worked with a cadre of talented people to bring arts programming to both the Asheville Mall and the Outlet Mall. Mall spaces can be more accessible to the general public and seemingly 'friendly' than traditional art spaces and museums. Bringing art events, exhibitions and opportunities for making or performing into these spaces fulfills many of the aims of my practice.

While my work is more gentle in approach than the admirable work of activist groups like the Guerilla Girls and Led by Donkeys, I am very interested in their methods and forms of political commentary, protest and activism. Fine Acts, a European art activism group operating from a base in Bulgaria created a brilliant response to a domestic violence incident that sparked deep conversation about a very taboo subject and resulted in legislative change. Fine Acts also operates as an incubator, advisory body, and research body. I periodically reflect on their operations when developing new projects.

I draw inspiration from artists Corita Kent and Es Devlin. Kent's art career began at the Immaculate Heart College in the 1950s and her work as artist, activist and educator who leveraged advertising and pop culture to deliver messages of faith, optimism and an end to war and poverty has been influential. Es Devlin's art practice evolved out of a highly successful career as a set designer creating for Adele and Beyonce to representing the United Kingdom at the Dubai World Expo with her groundbreaking Poem Pavilion. Devlin's immense sculptures and immersive, world building installations are simultaneously very intimate and human, and I admire how her giant monuments speak to the need for human connection and understanding.

I began reading Rebecca Solnit's 'A Paradise Built In Hell' shortly before Hurricane Helene, and in the aftermath of the disaster I was reading the pages with a flashlight and watching her theories play out in real time - everything from the rapidly emerging mutual aid structures to the jubilation and camaraderie was happening all around me. Her underlying message about how the way humans act in a disaster is a template for a new reality felt more *real* than the version of reality we have now.

When it came to writing this thesis I felt that a play script format would be the most appropriate. Reading through multiple texts for research I developed a sense of a long running and rather convoluted conversation with my primary influences resulting in a dialog of sorts. What follows is a condensation of this mental dialog.

Please note that the font and formatting reflect play script traditions which differ from thesis formatting. Citations for all quotes are provided in the Appendix.

CHAPTER ONE

Her Thesis

By Jeannie Regan

Her Thesis

A short play about a social practice artist who might be about to graduate from an MFA program

By Jeannie Regan, 2025

Her Thesis is set in a run down theater space in the present day. There is a line of chairs on the stage, chairs of many different kinds and levels of comfort. The actors move around and change chairs from time to time.

Visible from the house, there are piles of objects in the wings, some of the objects at times tumble out onto the stage and either become part of the action or come to represent a somewhat chaotic thought process. The background is a white cyc or projector screen.

Projections are marked with [parentheses]

All of the dialog for the characters other than the woman (She/Her) is made up of direct quotes from books or interviews.

The lines may be delivered like motivational messages or given intonation to sound conversational but the actors' overall performances could imply that they may exist in different universes. The cast is encouraged to imagine that this is a fever dream.

Characters

SHE/HER: mid 40s female; has too many cats and always seems to be tired. Carries multiple bags. Dresses like the contents of a lost property box.

CORITA KENT: mid 60s female; an ex-nun, radical, kind and very enthusiastic. Can appear with or without a nun's habit. Confetti randomly rains down on her, but the other characters do not mention it.

ES DEVLIN: early 50s female; British, a theatre designer who has lately claimed the title of ARTIST. She dresses like an angular and modern font. Occasionally she appears as a giant video projection, but the other characters consider this to be normal.

MAXINE HONG KINGSTON: female; early 80s, San Francisco Chinese, a writer who is interested in culture and mythology. She has long, bright white hair - somewhat like a cloud, and throughout the play appears wearing progressively bolder scarves until at the end she is cocooned in a patchwork of silk.

REBECCA SOLNIT: early 60s female; writer, historian and activist. There is somehow always a fan blowing her hair. She dresses like someone has recently died, and that she may have been complicit in their death. She has the air of someone familiar with falconry.

GUERRILLA GIRLS: They could be anyone, wearing gorilla masks. A combination of an anarchic Greek chorus with similarities to Ring Girls from boxing matches.

ACT 1

[ACT 1 OPENS WITH SHE/HER, KENT, DEVLIN, KINGSTON AND SOLNIT SEATED ON A STAGE. IT IS LATE AT NIGHT, AT AN HOUR WHERE MOST ARE UNSURE IF TOMORROW HAS ALREADY BEGUN]

SHE/HER: To write a thesis about a practice that is devoted to the generation of empathy, now - in these times - feels like an absurdity. Can art be a meaningful response, can it stand against the horrors of this new age? How can anyone respond to ...all this...

CORITA KENT: It is a huge danger to pretend that awful things do not happen. But you need enough hope to keep going. I am trying to make hope. Flowers grow out of darkness.

ES DEVLIN: You sometimes have to start without light in order to find it.

[PROJECTED IMAGE OF Alex Jones or a figure like him]

[**GUERRILLA GIRLS** enter from the wings and attempt to cover the face with protest signs, or distract with a range of gestures]

SHE/HER: I cannot understand how people can be so hateful. What are the conditions that make this kind of person possible? Can those conditions be changed? I want to understand the process of becoming incredibly unkind.

MAXINE HONG KINGSTON: Humans are basically good, that's why it takes so much training to march, march, march, kill, kill, kill.

CORITA KENT: To understand is to stand under, which is to look up, which is a good way to understand.

SHE/HER: A little while ago I went down a Reddit forum rabbit hole where people debated the morality of time traveling to kill Hitler. The catch is that it's Hitler as a baby, not an adult man, but the baby was definitely going to grow up to be Hitler. At first I thought *'of course I would do it - take one life to save so many'* but I have since evolved to *'altering the environment of someone who could potentially grow up to be Hitler to reduce the likelihood of this outcome'*. It's convoluted, but essentially I think we all *do* have the ability to time travel and stop future iterations of Hitler, by creating a more kind and empathetic society *today*. I suppose the question is can art do that? Can *I* make art that does that? Maybe things have gotten so out of hand that we are past the point of..

MAXINE HONG KINGSTON: In a time of destruction, create something-

[**GUERRILLA GIRLS** with ROUND 1 placards and posters protesting 'throw-away consumer culture' appear and take obvious delight using cymbals]

[PROJECTED IMAGES OF *Repair-O-Rama*, a 'creative repair' gameshow style competition with around 70 participants from multiple departments across a college campus all engaged in experimenting with how creation can be an act of repair and vice-versa]

(interrupting) **SHE/HER:** I don't really make objects, I make experiences. Events, opportunities to interact, to be creative. An attempt to suspend time so a more hopeful and kind message can slip in. It seems flimsy in light of everything going on.

(overlapping) **MAXINE HONG KINGSTON:** : a poem, a parade, a community, a school, a vow, a moral principle: one peaceful moment...

[AN ASSORTMENT OF BROKEN OBJECTS TUMBLES ONTO STAGE FROM THE WINGS, CHARACTERS ARE FREE TO INTERACT AND INTERVENE IN LINE WITH THEIR NATURE]

ES DEVLIN: Theatre-makers are aware of the ephemerality of what they're making... In the end, everything is only going to exist in the memories of people.

SHE/HER: I like to think of myself as a 'creative problem solver' but lately I have begun to think of myself and my practice as a *place* to generate alternatives to current realities. I see something that is wrong and I imagine a perfect moment where that wrong is righted. I try to create that moment, and then hope that some trace of it continues to exist after the event is over. *Repair-O-Rama* was fun but it was also supposed to be exciting and hopeful - like we could look at trash and be excited by the possibilities and find hope in transforming trash into something - if not beautiful, well, cool and interesting I guess. And maybe people would take a little bit of that with them, back into the world.

CORITA KENT: When you get past making labels for things, it is possible to combine and transform elements into new things. Look

at things until their import, identity, name use and description have dissolved.

[**GUERRILLA GIRLS** appear with ROUND 2 placards, posters protesting the rising costs of childcare and any combination of percussion instruments]

[PROJECTED IMAGES OF *The Lake Monster Parade*, an annual community costume parade event held in Black Mountain drawing crowds of around 200 people]

[AN ASSORTMENT OF SEA MONSTER THEMED COSTUME PIECES DROP FROM THE CEILING, AND INTERMINGLE WITH THE TRASH. CHARACTERS EXPERIMENT WITH COMBINING THE MATERIALS]

SHE/HER: I started the annual *Lake Monster Parade* a few years ago so that there would be something kids and families could do for free over the summer. Kids were encouraged to make their own costumes and people really got into it. I resisted over-planning it and having a strict schedule of events, what I wanted was a more spontaneous and amorphous thing, where the community could collectively make it up as they went along. I wanted to uncover the power in that - this idea that we can meet in a place of creative play and without being told what to do, as a community - we can trust each other and create our own fun. I thought it could be a good roleplay opportunity to practice meeting each other with curiosity and joy rather than suspicion and othering. I am still hopeful that I can refine it and figure out how to really do it...

REBECCA SOLNIT: To be hopeful means to be uncertain about the future, to be tender towards possibilities, to be dedicated to change all the way down to the bottom of your heart.

REBECCA SOLNIT: To hope is to give yourself to the future - and that commitment to the future is what makes the present inhabitable.

ES DEVLIN: Profound curiosity is profound caring.

SHE/HER: Yes to all of that - there's that tenderness of hope that is fragile but you have to be rock-solid to be committed to it. Being curious and caring, well they can't really exist without each other. To get people to commit to caring for others, they have to be curious about the experiences and feelings of other people. I am hoping that I can make opportunities for people to be curious about each other in a playful way, and hoping that-

(Interrupting, speaking rapidly) **REBECCA SOLNIT:** Hope is not like a lottery ticket you can sit on the sofa and clutch, feeling lucky... hope should shove you out the door, because it will take everything you have to steer the future away from endless war, from the annihilation of the earth's treasures and the grinding down of the poor and marginal. Hope just means that another world might be possible, not promised, not guaranteed. Hope calls for action; action is impossible without hope.

SHE/HER: (beat) That is a lot to process.

CORITA KENT: If you work it will lead to something. It's the people who do all of the work all the time who eventually catch onto things.

SHE/HER: Speaking of being curious and caring, do you know what a large section of the population is not curious about? Periods. *Period Poverty*. It's a really big problem that is compounded by a major lack of curiosity regarding the biology of half of the world's population, and how that biology intersects with money. I think it is hard to make people curious enough to care if the subject makes them uncomfortable -

[**GUERRILLA GIRLS** appear with ROUND 3 placard, posters protesting period poverty and one small orchestra triangle]

[PROJECTED IMAGES OF *Valenween*, an annual menstrual hygiene product donation drive and fundraiser with a Halloween x Valentine's theme. This is a holiday that was 'invented' as a way to discuss a serious topic in a fun and engaging way]

[ALL STAGE LIGHTING FADES FROM WHITE TO RED IN INCREASING INTENSITY TO MATCH DIALOG]

SHE/HER: So I thought I could create something that was fun and silly, that would grab people's attention and then when they'd gotten curious I could jump in with DID YOU KNOW THE GOVERNMENT OF NORTH CAROLINA IS ONE OF TWENTY U.S. STATES THAT CONSIDERS PADS AND TAMPONS AS NON-ESSENTIAL, LUXURY ITEMS AND APPLIES A 4.75% SALES TAX PLUS ADDITIONAL COUNTY TAXES? DID YOU KNOW THAT IN MANY STATES CONDOMS AND VIAGRA ARE CONSIDERED ESSENTIAL ITEMS AND NOT SUBJECT TO THESE ADDITIONAL TAXES? DID YOU KNOW KIDS ARE MISSING A WEEK OF SCHOOL PER MONTH BECAUSE THEY DON'T HAVE

MENSTRUAL PRODUCTS. THAT IS A SIGNIFICANT LEARNING LOSS AND IT IS ALSO A PUBLIC HEALTH PROBLEM. NOT HAVING MENSTRUAL HYGIENE PRODUCTS CAN LEAD TO INFECTION -

(beat) And you know, I think the first event went well but really what I want is for people to go off and make their own Valenween events, parties or whatever works for them, but make it their own thing. I'll know it's successful when I hear a stranger talking about a Valenween event that happened in some far away place.

CORITA KENT: Love the moment, and the energy of that moment will spread beyond all boundaries.

ES DEVLIN: Our job is to envision something that doesn't exist yet.

LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK OUT

ACT 2

ACT 2 OPENS ON A SCENE OF TOTAL CHAOS AND DESTRUCTION. THERE HAS BEEN A HURRICANE.

SHE/HER: Brown, oily water came up to the front and back doors of the house. Flooded the crawlspace. We were ok. My neighbors, not ok.

I threw myself into emergency relief work, and for a time it felt so real, so vital and the only important, sensible thing.

Meetings and spreadsheets and zoom calls felt unreal, no longer real, no longer possible.

Making art felt impossible in light of the scale of the disaster. I know some artists jumped quickly to making art out of debris, or recording the scenes around them, but I could not bring myself to do anything like that. The kinds of projects I had been doing prior to Helene felt like I would be trying to stick a bandaid on a volcano-sized wound.

MAXINE HONG KINGSTON: Art is a miraculous creation: that we can take terrible consequences in life and understand it and make art of it. That's a necessary thing for a writer to do.

MAXINE HONG KINGSTON: When the house burned down and we had the big fire here in Oakland, I was writing fiction again but my writing burned. So when I started writing again, I wanted to express myself, my own self. I didn't want to do public writing. I just wanted to crawl into a corner and cry. It didn't have to make sense.

SHE/HER: Right. But I just couldn't seem to even find a starting point. There was something exciting to me though, a sense that a different way of life was increasingly more possible. A more hopeful and kind place that didn't have to be made visible through the tiny portals of art projects, it was here, all around us.

REBECCA SOLNIT: Horrible in itself, disaster is sometimes a backdoor into paradise, the paradise at least in which we are who we hope to be, do the work we desire, and are each other's sister's and brother's keeper.

REBECCA SOLNIT: The positive emotions that arise in those unpromising circumstances demonstrate that social ties and meaningful work are deeply desired, readily improvised and intensely rewarding.

SHE/HER: Yes. There was a cognitive shift. It was proof that reality changes when we collectively demand it to do so. It didn't last long though. I think once the power came back on, and we could be inside our houses with the internet... Some people wanted to go back to 'normal' life as quickly as possible. I know I wasn't alone in wanting to hold onto that cognitive shift, to try and stretch it out, but also to learn from it, because it was clear that for many people things would not be 'normal' any time soon, or ever again.

REBECCA SOLNIT: In the aftermath of 9/11, people had not a good time, but a deep, profound, rousing time, woke up from their ennui and isolation and trivialization to feel engaged, connected, purposeful, ready to give, to engage, to care, to learn.

ES DEVLIN: We asked ourselves, would we ever as humans really be able to make the types of cognitive behavioural shifts that were necessary? This was, of course, before COVID. Before we'd seen everybody put a mask on overnight. And we thought, what if we make a map of all the times in history that we really did make, as humans, a huge cognitive shift. So you start with the room in which Copernicus redrew the map of the universe, and then you go to the room on the boat, where Darwin redrew our position within the biosphere, and then you take the railings, to which Emmeline Pankhurst chained herself, then you take the bus on the street,

the seat which Rosa Parks refused to give up, and then maybe the steps where Greta Thunberg sat down. And if you locate those places in your imagination, suddenly you start to build a map of the world of possible huge cognitive shifts that we've done before.

SHE/HER: I found motivation to make work out of tracing the good that came out of the disaster.

CORITA KENT: Flowers grow out of dark moments.

CORITA KENT: Creativity belongs to the artist in each of us. To create means to relate.

MAXINE HONG KINGSTON: We're all under the same sky and walk the same earth; we're alive together during the same moment.

SHE/HER: I wanted to make art that led back to the moment of being together in person, of physical connectedness and combined effort. I also wanted to make something that would help on a practical level. What's needed now is continued funding for the local relief organizations who are still there, digging people out of the muck literally and figuratively. Right now I am working with mobile app developers to create an app that centers in-person game play to help local orgs fundraise.

[**GUERRILLA GIRLS** appear with ROUND 4, *FINALLY* placards. They are accompanied by a single vuvuzela which they play half-heartedly while laying on the ground]

[PROJECTED IMAGES OF *Play to Pay*, showing the app and people engaging in games]

[1000 BEACH BALLS APPEAR OUT OF NOWHERE]

SHE/HER: I don't know if it is art though, or if it will be successful.

CORITA KENT: Rule 8. Don't try to create and analyze at the same time. They're different processes.

MAXINE HONG KINGSTON: To me success means effectiveness in the world, that I am able to carry my ideas and values into the world, that I am able to change it in positive ways.

SHE/HER: Right - but this feels like a risk though, in terms of a thesis project - I mean what if it-

(Interrupting) **CORITA KENT:** Rule 4. Consider everything an experiment. Rule 6. Nothing is a mistake. There's no win and no fail. There's only make.

ES DEVLIN: I would say that whenever I engage with a work of art, I want to feel a sense of where do I go when I exit the work of art? Where does it point me? Maybe it's a reaction against something that's a dystopian future. Or maybe it's in reaction towards an imagined possible future. I mean, Margaret Atwood's very useful on this, I think, she doesn't call her work 'science fiction', she calls it possible futures. And I think they're often dystopian, but they're sometimes also seeds of futures that we might want to try and work towards.

SHE/HER: Margaret Atwood has been onto this forever. I have been watching Handmaid's Tale on hulu late at night. I sort of have

it on in the background, and I am scanning it for I don't know, the shape and colors of fascism? I notice that there is no fun Under His Eye. Having fun is forbidden because it's a form of resistance. And fun has been an important part of my past projects because I thought it was the way to capture the attention of a jaded, tired and sometimes hostile audience. Lately I have been thinking more about fun, humor and celebration as a means to combat oppression, as a means to make a life.

[1000 MORE BEACH BALLS APPEAR OUT OF NOWHERE]

[**GUERRILLA GIRLS** are ungovernable]

CORITA KENT: Celebration is a kind of food we all need in our lives, and each individual brings a special recipe or offering so that together we will make a great feast. Celebration is a human need that we must not and can not deny. It is richer and fuller when many work and then celebrate together.

LIGHTS BEGIN TO DIM

REBECCA SOLNIT: Every minute of every hour of every day you are making the world, just as you are making yourself, and you might as well do it with generosity, kindness and style.

LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK

END

This play was written as a response to the challenge of sitting and writing a thesis when the world is on fire, and as a conversation between a student and her inspirations. Any resemblance to real persons, living or dead is purely intentional.

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<https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/can-write-shadow-alexis-cheung-interviews-maxine-hong-kingston/>

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APPENDIX 1

QUOTATIONS USED IN THE SCRIPT

Quotes are grouped by author.

CORITA KENT

It is a huge danger to pretend that awful things do not happen. But you need enough hope to keep going. I am trying to make hope. Flowers grow out of darkness.

Kent, Corita - cited in L.A City Clerk. (2021, May 17). Communication from public - clerk.lacity.org. https://clkrep.lacity.org/onlinedocs/2021/21-0120_PC_M_05-15-2021.pdf

To understand is to stand under, which is to look up which is a good way to understand.

Kent, Corita. *to understand*. 1965. Serigraph. Corita Art Center. <https://collection.corita.org/piece/65-42>

When you get past making labels for things, it is possible to combine and transform elements into new things. Look at things until their import, identity, name use and description have dissolved.

Kent, C., & Steward, J. (2008). *Learning by heart: Teachings to free the creative spirit*. Skyhorse Publishing Company, Incorporated, p51.

If you work it will lead to something. It's the people who do all of the work all the time who eventually catch onto things.

From "Rule 7" of the "Ten Rules" by Corita Kent, widely published and distributed in poster form.

<https://store.corita.org/collections/posters/products/ten-rules-poster>

Love the moment, and the energy of that moment will spread beyond all boundaries.

Kent, Corita. *love the moment*. 1965. Serigraph. Corita Art Center. <https://collection.corita.org/piece/77-01>

Creativity belongs to the artist in each of us. To create means to relate.

Kent, C., & Steward, J. (2008). *Learning by heart: Teachings to free the creative spirit*. Skyhorse Publishing Company, Incorporated, p29.

Rule 8. Don't try to create and analyze at the same time. They're different processes.

“Rule 8” of the “Ten Rules” by Corita Kent, widely published and distributed in poster form.

<https://store.corita.org/collections/posters/products/ten-rules-poster>

Rule 4. Consider everything an experiment. Rule 6. Nothing is a mistake. There's no win and no fail. There's only make.

“Rule 4” and “Rule 6” of the “Ten Rules” by Corita Kent, widely published and distributed in poster form.

<https://store.corita.org/collections/posters/products/ten-rules-poster>

Celebration is a kind of food we all need in our lives, and each individual brings a special recipe or offering so that together we will make a great feast. Celebration is a human need that we must not and can not deny. It is richer and fuller when many work and then celebrate together.

Tang Teaching Museum. “Someday Is Now: The Art of Corita Kent.” *The Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery at Skidmore College*, 2013,

<https://tang.skidmore.edu/exhibitions/56-someday-is-now-br-the-art-of-corita-kent>.

Flowers grow out of the dark moments.

Kent, Corita. *flowers grow*. 1977. Serigraph. *Corita Art Center*.

<https://collection.corita.org/piece/77-02>

ES DEVLIN

You sometimes have to start without light in order to find it.

Devlin, E., & Lipps, A. (2023). *An atlas of es devlin*. Thames and Hudson, located on the inside of the front cover, no page number.

Theatre-makers are aware of the ephemerality of what they're making... In the end, everything is only going to exist in the memories of people.

Netflix. (n.d.). *Abstract: The Art of Design | Es Devlin: Stage Design*. YouTube.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jo4aAVjuh2o> (timestamp 29:28)

Profound curiosity is profound caring.

Devlin, E., & Fairs, M. (2020, March 10). "Every time someone wanted me to write an essay, all I wanted to do was paint a picture" says Es Devlin in Dezeen's new podcast.

Dezeen.com. <https://www.dezeen.com/2020/03/10/es-devlin-face-to-face-podcast/>

Our job is to envision something that doesn't exist yet.

CBC/Radio Canada. (2024, March 25). "our job is to envision something that doesn't yet exist": Es devlin on her stage designs | CBC arts. CBCnews.

<https://www.cbc.ca/arts/q/our-job-is-to-envision-something-that-doesn-t-yet-exist-es-devlin-on-her-stage-designs-1.7143549>

We asked ourselves, would we ever as humans really be able to make the types of cognitive behavioural shifts that were necessary? This was, of course, before COVID. Before we'd seen everybody put a mask on overnight. And we thought, what if we make a map of all the times in history that we really did make, as humans, a huge cognitive shift. So you start with the room in which Copernicus redrew the map of the universe, and then you go to the room on the boat, where Darwin redrew our position within the biosphere, and then you take the railings, to which Emmeline Pankhurst chained herself, then you take the bus on the street, the seat which Rosa Parks refused to give

up, and then maybe the steps where Greta Thunberg sat down. And if you locate those places in your imagination, suddenly you start to build a map of the world of possible huge cognitive shifts that we've done before.

Devlin, E., & Shawley, P. (2023, August 14). *EP 117: Es Devlin on the power of art to inspire change*. Ellen MacArthur Foundation: Es Devlin on the power of art to inspire change.

<https://www.ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/podcasts/ep-117-es-devlin-on-the-power-of-art-to-inspire-change> (timestamp 4:36)

I would say that whenever I engage with a work of art, I want to feel a sense of where do I go when I exit the work of art? Where does it point me? Maybe it's a reaction against something that's a dystopian future. Or maybe it's in reaction towards an imagined possible future. I mean, Margaret Atwood's very useful on this, I think, she doesn't call her work 'science fiction', she calls it possible futures. And I think they're often dystopian, but they're sometimes also seeds of futures that we might want to try and work towards.

Devlin, E., & Shawley, P. (2023, August 14). *EP 117: Es Devlin on the power of art to inspire change*. Ellen MacArthur Foundation: Es Devlin on the power of art to inspire change.

<https://www.ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/podcasts/ep-117-es-devlin-on-the-power-of-art-to-inspire-change> (timestamp 9:59)

MAXINE HONG KINGSTON

Humans are basically good, that's why it takes so much training to march, march, march, kill, kill, kill.

Kingston, M. (2010). *The Fifth book of peace Maxine Kingston*. Random House, p254.

In a time of destruction, create something - a poem, a parade, a community, a school, a vow, a moral principle: one peaceful moment.

Kingston, M. (2010). *The Fifth book of peace Maxine Kingston*. Random House, p107.

Art is a miraculous creation: that we can take terrible consequences in life and understand it and make art of it. That's a necessary thing for a writer to do.

López, D., 16, A., Bandrich, R. H., 9, A., Perelmuter, F., 22, F., Lubin, J., 23, F., Crockett, J., 19, J., Gautreau, J., & 20, F. (2016, December 22). "I can write my shadow": Alexis Cheung interviews Maxine Hong Kingston. Los Angeles Review of Books.

<https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/can-write-shadow-alexis-cheung-interviews-maxine-hong-kingston/>

When the house burned down and we had the big fire here in Oakland, I was writing fiction again but my writing burned. So when I started writing again, I wanted to express myself, my own self. I didn't want to do public writing. I just wanted to crawl into a corner and cry. It didn't have to make sense.

López, D., 16, A., Bandrich, R. H., 9, A., Perelmuter, F., 22, F., Lubin, J., 23, F., Crockett, J., 19, J., Gautreau, J., & 20, F. (2016, December 22). "I can write my shadow": Alexis Cheung interviews Maxine Hong Kingston. Los Angeles Review of Books.

<https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/can-write-shadow-alexis-cheung-interviews-maxine-hong-kingston/>

To me success means effectiveness in the world, that I am able to carry my ideas and values into the world, that I am able to change it in positive ways.

Maxine Hong Kingston on Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/maxinehongkingston/posts/10151324971387393:0>

We're all under the same sky and walk the same earth; we're alive together during the same moment.

Kingston, M. H. (2015). *The woman warrior: Memoirs of a girlhood among ghosts*.

Picador Classic, p197.

REBECCA SOLNIT

To be hopeful means to be uncertain about the future, to be tender towards possibilities, to be dedicated to change all the way down to the bottom of your heart.

Solnit, R. (2012, October 15). We could be heroes: An election-year letter | Rebecca Solnit. The Guardian.

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2012/oct/15/letter-dismal-allies-us-left>

To hope is to give yourself to the future - and that commitment to the future is what makes the present inhabitable.

Solnit, R. (2016). *Hope in the dark: Untold histories, wild possibilities*. Haymarket Books. p37.

Hope is not like a lottery ticket you can sit on the sofa and clutch, feeling lucky... hope should shove you out the door, because it will take everything you have to steer the future away from endless war, from the annihilation of the earth's treasures and the grinding down of the poor and marginal. Hope just means that another world might be possible, not promised, not guaranteed. Hope calls for action; action is impossible without hope.

Solnit, R. (2016). *Hope in the dark: Untold histories, wild possibilities*. Haymarket Books. p66.

Horrible in itself, disaster is sometimes a backdoor into paradise, the paradise at least in which we are who we hope to be, do the work we desire, and are each other's sister's and brother's keeper.

Solnit, R. (2010). *A paradise built in hell*. Penguin Publishing Group. p49.

The positive emotions that arise in those unpromising circumstances demonstrate that social ties and meaningful work are deeply desired, readily improvised and intensely rewarding.

Solnit, R. (2010). *A paradise built in hell*. Penguin Publishing Group. p77.

In the aftermath of 9/11, people had not a good time, but a deep, profound, rousing time, woke up from their ennui and isolation and trivialization to feel engaged, connected, purposeful, ready to give, to engage, to care, to learn.

Solnit, R. (2010). *A paradise built in hell*. Penguin Publishing Group. p194.

Every minute of every hour of every day you are making the world, just as you are making yourself, and you might as well do it with generosity, kindness and style.

Solnit, R. (2012, October 15). We could be heroes: An election-year letter | Rebecca Solnit. The Guardian.

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2012/oct/15/letter-dismal-allies-us-left>

APPENDIX 2

Social Prescribing Report - Jeannie Regan, October 2024

Created to conclude the 2024 Summer Research Assistantship, a complement to the UNCA MPH and Center for Craft's Craft and Community Vitality program

<https://www.centerforcraft.org/craft-and-community-vitality>

(Report begins on the next page)

SOCIAL PRESCRIBING

THE POTENTIAL GOOD FOR LOCAL CRAFT ORGANIZATIONS AND THE WNC COMMUNITY

WHAT IS SOCIAL PRESCRIBING?

Social Prescribing bridges the gap between clinical and social care by referring patients to local, non-clinical services that are chosen according to the client's interests, goals, and gifts. It allows doctors, nurse practitioners, and interprofessional health providers to formally refer patients to community-based programs. It empowers clients to improve their health by developing new skills, participating in meaningful activities, and becoming more connected to their communities.

Source: [Alliance For Healthier Communities](#)



WHAT WOULD THIS MEAN FOR WNC CRAFT ORGANIZATIONS?

Social Prescribing could equate to community members being prescribed an activity such as a craft class - in conjunction with, or in place of medication or other traditional therapies. A craft activity such as learning pottery, glass blowing or fiber craft would be considered to be healthcare, and form part of a healthcare plan. *Craft organizations could benefit from increased enrollment in classes and participation in events. This could represent a critical lifeline in economic recovery post-Helene for craft organizations that relied on tourism. It may also open up opportunities for craft organizations to access funding and support for existing and new programming.*

DOES SOCIAL PRESCRIBING REALLY WORK?

Yes! There is a lot of data to support the effectiveness of Social Prescribing, and Social Prescribing is now part of healthcare systems in the UK, Australia, Canada, Finland, Germany, Portugal, Austria, Netherlands, New Zealand, Japan, Singapore, South Korea, China, Spain, Ireland, Poland and parts of the US.

Engaging in art, nature, exercise, music, creative, expressive, social or philosophical activities can elicit stimulatory benefits such as heightened emotional, cognitive and sensory processing, increased social interaction, adoption of healthy behaviours, promotion of physical movement and activity, and decreased stress hormone responses. Alongside this, arts, culture and heritage interventions can also lead to improvements in other areas such as employment and skills, economic development, civic pride and social cohesion. In turn, engagement in arts, culture and heritage can play a public health role in the prevention and treatment of long-term conditions that currently pressurise the healthcare system.

Source: Mughal R., Polley M., Sabey A. & Chatterjee H.J. (2022) How Arts, Heritage and Culture can support health and wellbeing through social prescribing. NASP.

SOCIAL PRESCRIBING

THE POTENTIAL GOOD FOR CRAFT ORGANIZATIONS AND THE WNC COMMUNITY

US PILOT STUDIES: THE CULTURE RX PROJECT IN MASSACHUSETTS

While Social Prescribing is an established practice in other parts of the world, to date it has not been widely adopted in the United States. Mass Cultural Council, the Commonwealth's state arts agency, laid the foundation for this announcement in 2020 with the launch of its CultureRx Initiative, which first introduced the practice of arts prescription in Massachusetts.

After a three-year pilot which resulted in successful and positive reviews from health providers, cultural organizations, and patients, Mass Cultural Council began work to identify a partner to sustainably scale an arts-based social prescribing ecosystem to serve patients statewide. To implement this solution, the Agency sought a partner that would build a network of arts and culture organizations, recruit additional institutional stakeholders, and build sustainable relationships with health systems and health plans. That search led to Georgia-based [Art Pharmacy](#).

"Mass Cultural Council believes this initiative will increase access to arts participation, help drive down healthcare costs, and support vulnerable communities in the Commonwealth," said Michael J. Bobbitt, Executive Director, Mass Cultural Council. "With today's launch, Massachusetts boldly steps up as a national leader in the practice of arts prescription. We know this work to be effective preventive medicine and are thrilled it will also create a new revenue stream for cultural organizations who – for the first time – will be compensated specifically for the health benefits they provide. This is an innovative way to advance the creative and cultural sector in Massachusetts and leverage the benefits of arts participation for the greater good. Thank you to the more than 300 cultural organizations who have signed on with Art Pharmacy to join us in this work, and we look forward to welcoming more healthcare partners to this movement as well."

"We know that the arts have healing powers – both for physical and mental health. Massachusetts is proud to yet again be pioneering a transformative medical innovation with the nation's first statewide arts prescription solution," Massachusetts Governor Maura Healey said. "We congratulate the Mass Cultural Council for this incredible achievement and thank Mass General Brigham and Art Pharmacy for their partnership."

"In the face of the dual mental health and loneliness crises, arts-based social prescribing, like what Art Pharmacy offers, provides an accessible, effective, and enjoyable intervention for people in the Commonwealth," Art Pharmacy CEO Chris Appleton said. "We are excited to bring this innovation to Massachusetts and look forward to further developing the ecosystem to provide even more access."

This announcement marks the beginning of a new type of prescription in Massachusetts. Art Pharmacy is actively engaging with additional local and regional stakeholders, including health systems and health plans, to further grow access to arts-based social prescribing.

Read the full press release by Bethann Steiner, Senior Director of Public Affairs, [here](#).

SOCIAL PRESCRIBING

THE POTENTIAL GOOD FOR CRAFT ORGANIZATIONS AND THE WNC COMMUNITY

HOW COULD WE GET THIS HERE IN WNC?

North Carolina has already begun trialing a 5-domain social prescribing approach to address food, housing, transportation, employment and interpersonal safety / toxic stress. These 5 areas have been identified as non-medical drivers of public health and are part of the 2017 “[Buying Health](#)” initiative set to revamp the state’s approach to Medicare / Medicaid. NCDHHS has been investigating if addressing these 5 areas will result in a reduction in overall medical costs and improved patient outcomes. Examples of the initiative at work include deliveries of healthy food boxes to diabetic people residing in food deserts, referrals to emergency housing, and resources for people fleeing domestic violence. The program has generated success, but NCDHHS needs more data on long term effects.

Other cities and states have enacted social prescribing plans that include access to the arts and a number of social prescribing advocacy groups promoting arts participation have emerged in recent years to act as advisors, resource providers and promoters.

Establishing Social Prescribing *with craft activities* in the WNC region could take a couple of different pathways.

- Integration into existing Medicare and Medicaid offerings
- Adoption by current NC Health Care Plan providers.
- Adoption by major employers in the region with large groups of people covered under the same health plan, eg Counties, Hospitals, Higher Ed systems.
- Using HSA funds. HSA allows for alternative treatments if they are prescribed for something specific, ie they cannot be used for ‘general wellness’ but the funds could be used as treatment for a diagnosis.
- Micro-grants for individuals or specific groups to participate in craft activities, with access provided on a non-medical basis, eg grant funding for veterans to attend a ceramics class.



SOCIAL PRESCRIBING

THE POTENTIAL GOOD FOR CRAFT ORGANIZATIONS AND THE WNC COMMUNITY

DO CRAFT ORGS FEEL THAT THEY HAVE A ROLE IN PUBLIC HEALTH AND HEALTHCARE?

In a small, conversation-based research project involving four Asheville craft organizations it was discovered that not only were all four institutions very aware that they could contribute to the health and vitality of the community, but that they each had a strong desire to do so. Each institution offered services to community members that were either subsidized by the institution and / or from external grant funding and donations. These programs included skills training, access to studios, materials and tools, classes, business mentorship, networking and the development of supportive community bonds. The offerings reflected the interests and concerns of the institutions' management and where their strengths and resources aligned. Examples of these offerings (not an exhaustive list of all that is offered by each institution) included:

Torched AVL (metalsmithing studio): Scholarships for BIPOC makers, support for LGBTQ+ makers, gallery space and mini-markets for new entrepreneurs.

NC Glass: Programs for veterans and veterans' families, including studio access days for family members. Funding, training and mentorship for BIPOC makers interested in learning glass-blowing and developing craft businesses.

Odyssey Clayworks: Classes and studio access for veterans and people in substance abuse recovery programs.

Local Cloth: The ability to gather, learn and share in community classes and drop-in sessions, and opportunities to sell handmade products in a River Arts District gallery. Local Cloth also promoted local 'fiber-shed' farmers, raw-materials producers, spinners and dyers.

All four institutions expressed a desire to offer more to the community and would do so if funding could be procured. Representatives also stated a belief that participating in craft activities had therapeutic benefits, particularly for mental health issues like anxiety, depression, PTSD, and recovery from addiction. This belief emerged from personal experience, anecdotal evidence and from broader research available to the public. None of the representatives had heard of Social Prescribing, but all were very enthusiastic about the concept when it was presented.



SOCIAL PRESCRIBING

THE POTENTIAL GOOD FOR CRAFT ORGANIZATIONS AND THE WNC COMMUNITY

POST-HELENE RECOVERY

Many WNC craft institutions and independent makers relied on income from tourists to fund their operations. The damage from Hurricane Helene included damage and destruction to operating spaces, studios, equipment and machinery, loss of goods, supplies and income, inability to pay staff and rent, and the cancellation of income-generating classes and memberships. Declining tourism in the immediate aftermath and in years to come has been and will continue to be financially crippling.

The losses to the community in terms of lives lost, property damage, income and employment losses are catastrophic. WNC has historically faced severe economic hardship and high levels of poverty as well as reported declines in mental health. WNC mental health services are experiencing a surge in the number of people seeking mental health care for trauma as a result of the hurricane. According to Mental Health America's Access to Care Data 2023, North Carolina ranked 39th in the US for access to mental health services, with very little support for rural communities.

With the proven therapeutic benefits of participating in craft activities, the shortage in mental health providers and the surge in need, there is great potential for arts based Social Prescribing to become part of the solution. Social Prescribing could also be a lifeline for WNC craft institutions and an opportunity for them to directly support their community.



SOCIAL PRESCRIBING

THE POTENTIAL GOOD FOR CRAFT ORGANIZATIONS AND THE WNC COMMUNITY

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS AND REFERENCES

This report is an extension of Jeannie Regan's 2024 WCU MFA Summer Research Assistantship, which stemmed from the Center for Craft and UNCA's MPH collaboration exploring Craft and Community Vitality.

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Jeannie is also grateful for the input and insight from the representatives of the four craft institutes interviewed over the summer, Meredith Tibjash / Torched AVL, Candace Reilly and Mamie Fain / NC Glass, Gabriel Kline / Odyssey Clayworks, and Kimber Gada-Steinauer / Local Cloth.

Useful Links for Further Reading:

[Center for Craft and UNCA MPH: Craft and Community Vitality](#)

[CultureRX Initiative](#)

[AMA Journal of Ethics - What Are Social Prescriptions](#)

[Alternative treatments and the HSA](#)

[High Deductible Plans and HSA](#)

[NHS England: Social Prescribing FAQ](#)

[King's Fund UK: What is Social Prescribing?](#)

[Social Prescribing Academy's report on the impact of Social Prescribing on health service use and costs](#)

[Milbank Quarterly: Financing Approaches to Social Prescribing Programs in England and the United States](#)

[Buying Health for North Carolinians: Addressing Non-Medical Drivers of Health At Scale](#)

[WNC Health Policy Initiative: Access to Mental Healthcare in WNC](#)

[WNC Health Network: Mental Health in North Carolina](#)