

Report to The Art Fund on research conducted into socially engaged arts organisations in Detroit and Chicago

By Kenn Taylor

As documented by Claire Bishop in her book *Artificial Hells*, the lineage of what we refer to as socially engaged art practice can be traced back to at least to the early 20th century, depending on what you think such terminology covers. However my particular area of interest within this field is the relationship of such practice to communities in the post-industrial urban environment.

The impact of industrial decline in western cities has perhaps been most marked in the UK and the US, which have much smaller welfare states and public sectors than many other developed nations. This has impacted significantly on the emergence of such practice in these countries. Having grown up in a post-industrial town near Liverpool and witnessed the development of cultural regeneration before becoming involved in social practice myself, I have been drawn to this field throughout my career and I am well versed in its history in the UK. However, although I had researched it remotely, until this trip I had little direct experience of such practice in the US, where urban decline and lack of alternative state support is even more pronounced. Within this context some striking socially engaged artists, projects and programmes have emerged which, by their very nature, are best experienced first-hand.

On this research trip I principally visited four arts organisations in two different cities, Chicago and Detroit. All these organisations were in their own different ways cultural institutions, but two of them could also be said to be artworks in themselves. All these organisations were united by their use of 20th century buildings that had been previously abandoned and by involving disadvantaged communities in what they did.

The first organisation I visited was The Heidelberg Project. I'd been aware of Heidelberg for several years due to my long standing interest in Detroit as that city that has faced similar challenges to Liverpool in many ways.

Heidelberg began in 1986 when its founder Tyree Guyton, then an art student, decided to paint large bright dots all over the house his family had lived in for decades in on Heidelberg Street in Detroit's Black Bottom neighbourhood. The area had declined rapidly during his lifetime and he wanted to create 'something beautiful' in the already decaying street, which had many empty houses as families had abandoned Detroit for better opportunities elsewhere. He started the project encouraged by his grandfather, who was a house painter by trade. Soon Guyton began to decorate some of the abandoned houses on the street and use reclaimed materials from the neighbourhood, including appropriately enough for Detroit, car hoods, to create his bright and surreal artworks. Thus began a lifetime project to reshape and re-imagine Heidelberg Street and nearby blocks.

Post-industrial decline in the western world had been in progress since the late 1960s at least, however in the early 1980s it was still fairly limited to certain cities and towns. Detroit was the exemplar of this phenomenon at the time and already subject

to extensive negative stereotyping in the media and popular culture around its crime and decline.

Creating something so whimsical and of such a scale in this context early on began to attract interest. It was a shout out that there was another narrative beyond decline and that something could grow culturally and aesthetically in what many people saw as 'barren land'.

On the flipside, the local authorities in Detroit were always hostile to Heidelberg despite the often good publicity it brought. They did not want attention drawn to the really run down parts of the city and from a more pragmatic/bureaucratic perspective they did not want to encourage people to enter abandoned houses. They were in fact keen to demolish such properties so as to reduce the negative look of areas as well as reduce the opportunity for them to be used for illegal activity such as drug dealing. The Heidelberg Project, save for Tyree's still occupied home, was demolished twice by the authorities and twice he re-built it in a changed form. With Guyton constantly adding to and changing the project even as his fame grew and he was asked to create work for exhibitions and projects worldwide.

Early on the project attracted international tourists, something that expanded as Detroit became more fashionable from the mid-2000s onwards as the phenomenon of 'urban exploring' increased in popularity amongst Detroit's grand abandoned buildings. This however also led to a problematic issue for the project, with some of the more irresponsible tourists taking pictures without permission of the neighbourhood's poor residents (trying to capture the 'real Detroit' in what Heidelberg Programming Manager Margaret Grace referred to as the "Christopher Columbus mentality", something that also rears its head in wider considerations about gentrification) and otherwise not being especially respectful of the challenges the remaining community in the area faced. In recent years Heidelberg has experienced some of the buildings in the project being torched – some of it out of spite for the above, other times, I was told by Margaret, kids messing around or 'scrappers' trying to get to valuable non-ferrous metals within abandoned houses. This phenomenon of arson had, more than the local authority demolitions, significantly reduced the scale of the project when I arrived from its most famous images, with many of the buildings reduced to charred foundations.

The view of the project in the neighbourhood was mixed. Guyton and his family is local and he knows many long term residents and frequently employs, in particular homeless, local people to work on maintaining and cleaning the site and they were very warm to him. Another resident on Heidelberg Street, while apparently initially sceptical, had later embraced the project. She now charges visitors a dollar to sign her house, her own personal ongoing artwork, and sells refreshments to tourists – "I meet people from all over the world on my front porch."

The fires had hit the project hard psychologically and CCTV has been installed, but it continues to shift undeterred. Guyton has literally been creating new pieces out of the remains of the houses. The latest addition was a series of clocks painted, Margaret told me, as Guyton is now looking back on a work he has spent the last 30 years on. From the previous overwhelming and intricate nature of many aspects of the installation, post fire he has taken a more minimal approach to what he continues to

create within the project. He is determined, I was told, to carry on what he has been doing for the last 30 years – creating the new out of the remains of the old and in doing so pay tribute to the past while moving forward.

As Heidelberg grew and expanded, almost inevitably it became an official non-profit organisation beyond the existence of the artwork of Heidelberg Street itself. It undertakes community arts and education programmes, uses one of the houses, 'The Numbers House' as an exhibition gallery and residency space for other artists and creates work to sell to collectors and supporters of the project. Thus Heidelberg has also become an institution which encourages and houses the creation of other people's artwork which, with the project's fame, puts such work on an international platform

It is worth considering Heidelberg's emergence could probably only have happened in the context of Detroit's decline. If the city's economy had been better, the street would have been populated and although Guyton would have been fine to paint his own house, the encompassment of most of the block in the project would likely not have been possible. Tyre would have then been seen perhaps as little more than a local eccentric. The emergence of the post-industrial emptied neighbourhood allowed this new form to emerge from its tragic decline.

While Heidelberg does clearly have real social impact through its education and exhibition programmes, its greater power is undoubtedly symbolic. In this respect it is part of a longer tradition of socially conscious art telling stories of urban life. Heidelberg could be linked to a tradition at least as far back as the Pre-Raphaelites and William Morris, in terms of evoking a lost past and advocating for a different social order than the one that rapid economic change has torn apart. This time though, one in which the decayed urban fabric itself is the medium for the work. The, 'Post Hab' environment as Heidelberg refers to it, where space no longer functions in its original use, that has followed post-industry.

I also locate Heidelberg within the realm of a 'Gesamtkunstwerk' or total work of art, given its all-encompassing nature from the sidewalks to the roofs. While members of the local community have been involved in many ways in making Heidelberg what it is, it also remains essentially one man's creative vision in the most traditional sense. This is not a community art project, but an artwork made by a member of the community in his community and using leftover materials from the community. It's worth considering how the power of individual vision remains even with socially conscious projects and how individual passionate drive and determination is possibly the only thing that could sustain such a striking initiative in an often hostile environment over such a long period of time.

Guyton's clocks are timely. Heidelberg's fluid nature led by its founder poses another longer term challenge which I do not doubt Guyton will be considering, what happens to it after his death? My former employer, the Sir John Soane's Museum, for example retained its founder's wishes for it to be unchanged for many years, but then later succumbed to curatorial intervention and almost closure as fashion and taste changed, only for later much of what was changed being restored back. Will Heidelberg eventually become preserved in aspic, like Robert Owen's New Lanark, an art historical reminder a particular time and place, or will it continue to constantly

shift as it has done under its founder? If it is to remain in situ, its scale can be compared to that of much land art or even folk museums in terms of the level of maintenance that would be required to sustain its existence. Of course Heidelberg also has a social underpinning. A symbolic one in terms of reuse and creating beauty and purpose in a place where many would have suggested it was absent, but also as it developed, its employment, educational work and promotion of other artists which added to its more holistic nature. Arguably this is the more striking and important aspect of the project, after all, plenty more artists have worked with reclaimed materials to create installations of one form or another. After Guyton, how would its social mission be continued and would this involve changing the look of the Heidelberg? Which is the most important aspect of the project, the idea of it or the visual impact of Guyton's singular vision for it?

Other site specific work is also relevant. A classic example is Kurt Schwitters 'Merz Barn', which had one section of it retained from its Cumbrian site of creation and shifted to the Laing Art Gallery in Newcastle. In doing so it survived but somewhat out of context, existing only really as a representation of what was there before and the artist's original intention. Representations of the Heidelberg are in collections around the world, signifying the 'main' project and its ideas, but sit outside of its powerful situational context when placed in a gallery. Perhaps Heidelberg will end up something like Cambridge's Kettle's Yard, a once radical space which now has red lines around its founder's unchanging layout. This remains as a core catalyst for other programming, albeit much of it some way from the founder's original interests.

Ultimately Heidelberg's single biggest power may have been to dare to suggest very early on what has so often seemed impossible in post-industrial areas - the potential for a new future. More than that, a future that still incorporates elements of the past history of the area and recognises the importance of that and in doing so rejecting the 'wipe the slate clean' concept that underpinned much Modernist and later Neo-Liberal urban redevelopment.

The Rebuild Foundation

In Chicago my main site visit was to that of the Rebuild Foundation. On the surface, Rebuild has many similarities to Heidelberg. Originally the concept of one man, Theaster Gates, Rebuild has grown over a period of time. Based in the deprived Grand Crossing area which, like Black Bottom where Heidelberg is based, is predominantly an African American community, Gates has used art to re-imagine the area.

However there is also much that remains different between these two projects. Rebuild is much more recent and has expanded much quicker. It has changed the social and arguably the economic situation of its immediate area more obviously for the better. Both projects also have quite a different relationship to their local authorities and something of a quite different aesthetic. Finally, the contrasting context of the cities of Chicago and Detroit is also significant.

Theaster Gates moved to Grand Crossing, where more than half the residents are below the poverty line, when he got a job in the University of Chicago, whose

campus was located nearby. The house he moved to being affordable on his modest salary.

Gates was originally from Chicago's West Side. He studied a joint degree in ceramics and urban planning and had an early job working for Chicago's Transit Authority on their public art programme. The origins of Rebuild really started in 2006 when he began to restore the house he had moved into by Dorchester Avenue in Grand Crossing. After the 2008 property crash he also bought the neighbouring house and began to restore it using reclaimed materials from the area and started to put on arts events in the houses. He then began to gather culturally important artefacts from the area that were under threat of destruction, including the glass slide collections of the University of Chicago, books from closing book stores and a huge collection of LPs from a former record shop.

Gates had seen his West Side neighbourhood demolished and, like Tyree Guyton, was filled with a deep desire to stop this destruction from happening again in Grand Crossing. He wanted to change the area to benefit local people but also change how people from outside the area viewed a deprived black community. Jon Veal, responsible for Rebuild's communications amongst other things, taking me round the area, explained the ethos of the organisation from Gates was to: "rebuild the cultural foundations of underinvested neighbourhoods."

By 2010 Gates had established an official not for profit. Influenced by Rick Lowe's Project Row Houses initiative in Houston, he worked with the Chicago Housing Authority to rehabilitate a public housing block in the area and converted it into 32 townhomes with mixed tenure, including 7 dedicated to artist residency spaces as well as low rent homes, called Dorchester Projects. This initiative also saw the building of a community centre, complete with a group workshop space, sprung dance floor and community garden. A few years later Gates persuaded the Chicago authorities to sell him a striking but decaying former local bank for just a dollar - providing he got the money to restore it. Amongst other fundraising initiatives, Gates cut some of the bank's marble into 100 chunks, engraved them with an image of the building, his signature and the words 'In Art We Trust', and sold them for \$5,000 each. The bank building amongst other things now houses the archive of the Johnson publishing company, an important African American magazine publisher, and the Black Cinema House, which shows films made by people of African heritage from all over the world.

In contrast to Heidelberg, Gates has a close relationship to the Chicago mayor and the city authorities. Jon Veal agreed with my assertion that Gates' planning degree and Transit Authority work experience mean he understands bureaucracy and the establishment and how to engage with it to the advantage of his project. To quote Gates himself from a magazine interview: "By the time I left for college, I knew that our city was a machine to be understood, and that if you could understand it you could make it work on your behalf." A significant contrast between these projects in Chicago and Detroit is that, while Chicago has poor areas, Detroit is poor in general, at least in broad terms. The city has less money and it has fewer companies and local foundations willing to sponsor projects like this, although there was still more philanthropy in Detroit than a typical UK city. This means it is much harder to fund work of this type on a large scale in Detroit than Chicago. The latter city also has a

much larger art scenewhich enables a greater degree of advocacy for innovative work, although Detroit does retain an art market larger than most UK cities. Finally, as a wealthier city in general, Chicago faces the challenge of gentrification at a much higher level than Detroit. Again, in comparison to the UK, gentrification has a much more malign impact on capital flush cities like London or San Francisco than in Liverpool or Newcastle where the process can still see positives outweigh negatives.

At first hand it is striking that Rebuild is a much more visibly socially impactful project than Heidelberg, even though it has existed for a much shorter time. While it is clearly an art project it is also in planning terms a comprehensive neighbourhood renewal project which, in less than ten years, has created housing, community space, education provision, gardens, training, libraries, business space, and yes, arts provision, for local people. The project is now bigger than the art that was its instigator but art remains the glue keeping it together, from the artists' residency spaces in the housing blocks to the creative skills at the heart of its training programme. In Rebuild, art is placed firmly in the hierarchy of needs of a deprived community. Veal quotes Gates: "Beauty is a basic service." While the quality and especially detail of the renovations and new builds in the block or so that forms the project are clear, and some of the buildings share styles, Rebuild has less of a specific aesthetic than Heidelberg. While it is noticeable how new and/or renovated the structures are compared with others nearby, if you were not aware that it was an art project, you could easily pass by without noticing anything different other than recent investment. A significant difference from the surreal whimsy of Heidelberg.

There was a clear link from Rebuild to the Turner Prize winning Granby Four Streets project in Liverpool. In particular Rebuild's utilisation of creativity as a broad catalyst, first to highlight continued life in a decayed area. Not just its continued existence, but also its value and promoting positivity about somewhere that faced an external narrativewhich was largely negative. Like Granby though, the project then moved on more clearly to art as social action, creating first housing then social spaces, gardens, training and employment and on.

The social aspect of Rebuild also brought to mind well established neighbourhood social and development projects in Liverpool I have long been aware of such as the Eldonian Village in Vauxhall and the Communiversity/Alt Valley Trust in Croxteth. These, despite their long history, success and reputation within community development circles, tellingly have rarely received national and international attention in the way Granby or Rebuild has. Art has added a glamorous edge, and crucially, as Gates has stated, this gives "leverage" to attract wider attention and funding. This is without doubt another aspect that art plays in such projects. Would a non-artist community group have been able to sell chunks of old bank for \$5,000 dollars each? Gates has described himself as a "hustler" and an "entrepreneur" as much as an artist, using his creative skills and understanding of the art world and urban systems to benefit his community. Subverting but at the same time collaborating with the mainstream art world and city authorities to achieve his goals. Gates described this mutually exploitative transaction in *the New Yorker* as a way "to fund this struggle".

The 'Tea, Coffee and a Chat' meeting I attended in the Dorchester community space was perhaps an example of the 'social sculpture' that Joseph Beuys once advocated. These weekly meetings are largely self-facilitated by the community of long term

residents in the area, many of whom have keys to the space. Anyone can come for a drink and a chat and engage in the issues of the day relating to the area, whatever they want to bring up. When I attended, they were discussing Halloween provision for the children in the area given the challenges of trick or treating in an area of high crime. Some of the current resident artists passed through and chatted with the permanent residents. In a reminder of Heidelberg some of the locals remarked on how nice it was that they meet people from all over the world through the project right on their doorstep.

Creating such meaningful exchanges between artists and long term residents is key to the project which Gates believes then sparks collaborative action and change in communities. The long term residents in the meeting reflected on how good it was to come together to make decisions and that they'd never been given the space or encouragement to do this before Rebuild began. The residents said it didn't always go smoothly, particularly around tense cultural issues for example around religion and homosexuality, but that there is healthy dialogue. These meetings seemed both symbolic and practical and a key part of the art aspect of the project.

Now, Rebuild grows still further. Most recently the organisation has set up 'Dorchester Industries', which provides training opportunities for local residents with craftsmen and artists in the building and creative industries. Those taking part gain experience either working on the renovation of vacant properties or making objects in the art studio, which are then sold under the Dorchester Industries brand with profits re-invested back into Rebuild. Again, there is a relationship to the Granby Workshop operation being set up in Liverpool funded by the Turner Prize win.

In another expansion Gates is moving further outside the immediate area of Grand Crossing. The Chicago Arts + Industry Commons is a new \$10 million collaboration between Rebuild, the University of Chicago, the City of Chicago and four major foundations to use the arts as a tool for neighbourhood revitalisation. In this project a former power plant will be converted into Garfield Park Industrial Arts, containing art galleries, an industrial arts centre, an amphitheatre, cafe and plaza, while vacant land on Kenwood Avenue will be turned into Kenwood Gardens, a new park filled with art and sculpture, amongst other projects.

An aspect both Rebuild and Heidelberg share is the central figure of the lead artist wanting to create and drive change in deprived neighbourhoods. Both projects' directions and outcomes differ and lots of other people are involved as stakeholders at different levels, but the lead artist's vision and drive remains paramount in how the project develops. There are past examples of artists forming creative communities around themselves with a social mission, such as William Morris, Eric Gill, CB Ashbee, but not to this scale and not involving the same degree of disadvantaged people, despite the social aims of people like Morris.

Gates may have an undercurrent of entrepreneurship and playing the system in his practice, but that slightly cynical view was no doubt born from his direct experience of being a poor African American in the deeply hierarchical worlds of art and urban planning. Meanwhile, providing training in trades and creative entrepreneurship alongside creative art skills in the training programmes at Rebuild provides a practical foundation for those from deprived backgrounds trying to get on in what

Gates knows is a tremendously competitive and often unfair system. Thus the project will likely have more social impact on more people and allow more diverse people enter the creative industries than some 'higher minded' community projects led by external cultural organisations.

A similar danger though emerges from Rebuild as with Heidelberg, given how much the project relies on the central inspirational figure of Gates, what happens when he moves on, or dies? Are enough people being trained up in the right ways to lead without him? There's also a contrasting challenge to Heidelberg though. With Heidelberg, the concern was how would Guyton's aesthetic creation be preserved whilst also retaining a social mission? Rebuild meanwhile, is already fast breaking out not just from the block around Dorchester, but Grand Crossing, becoming a networked up cultural regeneration organisation operating across Chicago. On one hand, by doing this, Rebuild can have more impact on more people and more areas, taking its 'winning' formula to other places in need. Also, crucially in its partnerships and programmes such as Dorchester Industries, Rebuild is working to become self-sustainable which gives it a greater degree of independence in its actions. On the other hand, such developments make the organisation inevitably more corporate and institutional, straying ever further from the power of the 'Tea, Coffee and a Chat' meeting I attended and more to being a big cultural institution with a gap between the managers/producers and participants/consumers. From a community development perspective, this has been the fate of some of the housing associations in the UK as they strayed from their grassroots social missions. It is also worth noting that some critics have highlighted the lack of impact on the wider area of Grand Crossing and the challenges it faces beyond the immediate blocks that Rebuild works on.

Nevertheless Rebuild has utilised art to create obvious social, cultural and economic change in one of the more deprived parts of the western world and highlight the value of the area. The project in its short time has gone far beyond the mere representation of, engagement with or advocacy for deprived communities that is the marker of many socially-engaged art projects. Instead it has created literal and arguably permanent change for the better. Eschewing revolutionary or protest work for instead working the systems of art and the city to the advantage of the area and its residents.

College of Creative Studies

In addition to visiting Heidelberg and Rebuild, the two key projects for analysis in this research, I also visited two other Detroit art institutions to examine their extensive programmes in the area of social practice.

The College of Creative Studies (CCS) in Detroit traces its history back to 1906. It is one of two major art schools in the city and the only independent one. It is regarded as one of the top design schools in the world. It has two campuses, the older Walter and Josephine Ford campus and the Alfred A. Taubman Centre for Design Education located around a mile away. This latter campus was of particular interest for this research as it is the home of its Community Arts Partnerships programme which engages around 4,000 people, especially children and young people, every year. This is an especially impressive figure when you consider the college itself only has around 1,200 students.

The campus building itself is also of interest. Developed from 2008 onwards, it is located in what was the Argonaut building of General Motors, which housed part of GM's research and development department and its advertising and design section. Slowly this was moved away to sites out of town, until by the late 90s, the Argonaut was empty and needing a new use.

As well as being the CCS centre for design and home base of Community Arts Partnerships, the Argonaut now also houses some other relevant ventures. The Henry Ford Academy, a charter high school focusing on art (the UK equivalent would be a free school) and Shinola, a fashionable US brand which assembles watches and bikes on the site (from parts made abroad). The building is also home to the Detroit Creative Corridor initiative. Thus the Argonaut building is a classic example of cultural regeneration of a post-industrial building. An interesting mix of agency, education and 'craft' manufacture focused around art and design. Such combinations are becoming more familiar as the worlds of art, education and urban development coalesce around the creative industries as a way of generating new economies in post-industrial areas.

The Community Arts Partnership (CAP) initiative of CCS is much bigger than anything similar I am aware of in the UK despite the positive widening engagement work done by many universities and art colleges here. The model for CAP is to build on the existing assets in the various 'under resourced' communities that they work in by entering into partnerships with community organisations including schools. Each CAP programme is developed individually with partner organisations and have hands on making at their heart in support of individual and community development. CAPs have a key aim of trying to change perceptions the young people they work with have of their lives and communities. Strands of this work include extra-curricular arts programmes on after school or at weekends and what they call 'community+public arts: DETROIT', which focuses on delivering public art projects and events developed jointly with communities to 'beautify Detroit'. A strand of this is the 'Detroit Arts Corps', which offers paid work to high school age students over summer to create artwork commissions for buildings and donors. Arts Corps members have to apply and are usually only accepted if they have seriously taken part in extra-curricular programmes during the school term. Artists working on CAP projects employ undergo a comprehensive training programme over three days.

The CAP programme has in an ethos similar to The Tetley in that they focus on providing after school creative provision. As in the UK, art is increasingly absent from public school curriculums, although Detroit does have a specialist public art high school and the art charter school at the Argonaut, unlike many UK cities. Academic research in the US has shown, according to CAP Programme Director Mikel Bresee, that 3 – 6pm is the main period when crime by and against young people and various forms of abuse of young people happens and this has influenced this focus.

From a theoretical perspective, the CAP model relates to Rebuild and Heidelberg in its focus on the figure of the artist as catalyst for personal and community development. In contrast though CAP emerges from a centrally-based institution reaching out to communities, which Mikel admits is often funding dependent in terms of the communities they work with. In this respect it is more like traditional organisation-led social practice in the UK. However its very different scale

is impressive. Essentially the CAP model is a systematised, flexible and theoretical model of participatory arts production, that of a partnership between 'professional' artists, who are to a greater or lesser extent outsiders, and members of a community, to create work that is meaningful to both sides. This practice could be linked to the political mural projects in various parts of London in the 1970s and 80s, although like with Rebuild, less overtly political and more obviously operating within wider institutional systems like the CCS and the various funders and city bodies.

This may seem less utopian than the Rebuild or Heidelberg project. Its process isn't a single artistic concept for a neighbourhood, more a process for making artworks in under resourced neighbourhoods with local people. Yet it operates within the same system, arguably involving more people spread over a wider area, even if in a lighter touch way. It is also, crucially, much like Rebuild's move into art and technical education, a direct link between deprived communities and the main art school itself. This can be a crucial link that helps ensure those from more deprived backgrounds have an opportunity to access the 'mainstream' art world and learn how to function as professional artists. Mikel discusses that parental fear is a major issue from encouraging deprived children in this direction "what job will they get with an art major?" But the CAP link with the design industry, with its well paid jobs and desire to have diverse designers in order to link with diverse consumers, aided by the still large numbers of design jobs available in the car industry around Detroit, does help with this challenge. Meanwhile, the Argonaut, a building that was a symbol of Detroit's past industrial and design might is now home to a much more diverse centre for creativity in its post-industrial era. If some art organisations and colleges in the UK operated community programmes of the scale of CAP, a much more diverse field of artists could have the opportunity to emerge.

MOCAD

MOCAD, or the Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit, is an arts institution established now over 10 years in a former car dealership that had been abandoned. It is located in the heart of Detroit's cultural quarter, near the Detroit Institute of Arts, the Detroit Historical Museum and Wayne State University. An early exhibition from 2007 was *Shrinking Cities* which dealt with population loss in urban concentrations all over the world. This show also toured to and featured Liverpool and helped spark my interest in Detroit. MOCAD is also the home of Mike Kelly's work, *Mobile Homestead*.

Mobile Homestead was first unveiled in 2010 and was funded by the UK's Artangel. A recreation of Detroit-born Kelly's childhood home (which itself is still standing and occupied) made as a pre-fabrication construction with a detachable trailer section. Kelly's idea was that this could be transported around Detroit, the ground floor being a community space and the basement for artists. Kelly died shortly before its completion and it was his last major project. In reality, the vast expense of moving and dis-connecting and re-connecting the house to services (around \$7,000 dollars each time, explained MOCAD Curator of Education and Public Engagement, Amy Corle) means that more often than not, it remains at its base behind MOCAD. Here the Homestead functions as intended as a dedicated community cultural space hosting community content exhibitions, which at the time of my visit was a huge collection of US election publicity material owned by Detroit collector, Morry 'the Button Man' Greener. It is also used as a community events space for everything

from local craft groups to, in line with its current exhibition, lively election debate parties. MOCAD do plan to move the detachable part of the Homestead again in 2017 to Flint, Michigan, to host an exhibition that deals with that city's notorious water supply problems.

Inside MOCAD's main ex-car dealership building itself there is a large, main gallery space and a smaller space which houses special projects, including particularly examples of socially engaged practice. As Corle explained, it is important to note that they don't host shows like that in the Homestead, as they see that as a socially-engaged project in itself, to be used specifically for community activity rather than anything led by 'professional' artists, even if they are working with communities in a socially-engaged way. There's also a bar/café which is home to a popular public programme ranging from informal debates to live music and an education programme, including a 'youth led' young people's programme in which paid young people organise events and activities for other teenagers.

MOCAD, as a gallery focused institution which commissions new work and emerging artists was perhaps the organisation most directly relevant to my current work at The Tetley, especially as it too, like an increasing number of galleries, utilises a post-industrial building. Exhibiting *Shrinking Cities* early on and co-commissioning such a significant work of socially-engaged practice as *Mobile Homestead*, especially one which, with its ongoing role as a flexible community space, continues to be a major statement as to the organisation's desire to reflect the challenges that the city it is based in faces.

That the organisation also has a separate gallery where socially-engaged artists are exhibited highlights that it takes head on the challenges that exhibiting institutions face when commissioning and showing such work. The Homestead was designed by Mike Kelley principally as a community space and it would be odd for other professional social practice artists to exhibit in there. Yet with the process being as important, if not more important, than the outcome for many social practice artists, exhibiting their work in main galleries can prove challenging for a smaller arts organisation which inevitably require 'something to look at' for more general audiences. Displaying community produced work can present a similar challenge. My own experience as a programmer is, even when working on projects with community participants, that they still like there to be 'something significant to look at' in an art gallery or museum beyond the work that they themselves have been involved in creating. The 'button man' collection for example, had great visual and historical interest, however showing this on its own or in the main gallery would have made the collection feel somewhat overwhelmed and sparse. However by retaining dedicated spaces, one itself a significant artwork in itself in the Homestead, as well as ongoing commissions and programmes in the field of social practice, such work is elevated to respected if not quite equivalent status to the 'main' exhibitions and highlights the importance of the community and social practice to the organisation. That community groups and a range of community work can always use MOCAD as a resource, helps create a lasting link which, along with their participation programme, has seen it develop as a significant institution for the citizens of Detroit beyond those involved in the 'art scene' in a relatively short time and gives the organisation a wider social as well as creative and economic impact within the city.

Conclusions

In terms of this research, a key area learning point for me was the complex inter-relationship between artwork, buildings and institutions at the sites I visited. The one thing that unites all the sites I engaged with was a re-use of previously abandoned or underused urban space. This was a more or less an important factor dependent on each project but it remains significant. In some cases such as MOCAD, an art institution occupied an old building and in the case of Mike Kelly's *Mobile Homestead*, ended up incorporating a semi-permanent building as an ongoing social practice artwork in itself.

In a contrast, the Heidelberg project started out as the creation of an artwork out of buildings, albeit a 'total work of art' and has morphed into also being partially an institution. Rebuild Foundation started out as a project based around art activity in run down properties using reclaimed materials before growing into a full-scale neighbourhood renewal project and cultural regeneration operation, but one that is also an ongoing artistic experiment.

While there are many links to the history of art in these works, from working with people in creative communities, to using reclaimed materials. For me, a key change is the utilisation of the urban fabric itself as a medium. When such buildings and neighbourhoods ceased to be profitable, they often became exemplars of wider decline and malaise. These projects though, working with local people as partners in creation, are not only re-purposing and re-imagining buildings and areas in a very different way to traditional urban planning and development. They're also moving away from, to quote Margaret Grace at Heidelberg, the "Christopher Columbus" mentality of artists in post-industrial urban space and the classic tropes of gentrification, to something more subtle if inevitably imperfect.

These projects are thus a complex mix of the ephemeral and permanent. They may be led by complex social and artistic theory and an emotional desire for continued community life and growth, but they create outcomes that are very much concrete: housing, crafts to sell, community centres. In particular Heidelberg and Rebuild being adept at creating 'products' to sell to collectors that represent their social mission and help fund the projects in their (semi) permanent heartlands, where space is created for social sculpture and renewed communities.

The social impact of these projects, while open to critique as already described, is palpable and powerful when seen in the flesh, especially at Rebuild. What remains a fascinating question is the impact of time on such organisations. Looking back, key community arts organisations in the UK from the 1960s and 70s such as Action Space and Inter-Action have left powerful legacies and impacts on artistic production and wider culture. Inter-Action in Camden for example pioneered the now familiar city farm concept. Yet the actual artworks they created and the spaces they built have withered or developed into more formal and less radical institutions. Those 70s organisations also inadvertently contributed to the phenomena of gentrification, something which could yet impact Rebuild in particular. It should also be acknowledged that while the likes of Rebuild have social impacts on those with lower socio-economic status in the areas they are based, the interest in terms of those who visit their creations and events still tends to be from the more traditional art

consumers of the middle and upper class.

While artefacts from these projects can be preserved in collections, their social impact and actions well documented, the people who benefit from them are perhaps their most important legacy. Can the power of their social action be retained in the longer-term institutions that may emerge from them? The founder-artist will be key to this if so. It is important again to note that despite the social impacts and community participants, the still very traditional importance of the singular 'visionary' and 'genius' artist and the role that individual ego plays in driving such projects forward. With the now deceased Mike Kelly being an example of this. Kelly setting in stone the community focus for his creation which, albeit not as mobile as perhaps he had envisaged, has ensured as long as the institution which forms around it survives, preservation of this social sculpture is as possible as the continuation of the renewed urban fabric itself.

Outcomes

There have already been several outcomes from my research for both the short and long term.

I was asked to deliver a talk and workshop on my findings from this research trip at the engage, National Association of Gallery Education, national conference 2016 in Liverpool. engage is the key organisation representing those in museum and gallery education and participatory arts in the UK. The focus of my talk was in particular about Heidelberg and Rebuild and was delivered jointly with a Creative Producer from FACT, Liverpool. We unpicked the idea of 'Creativity as a Catalyst' for individual and community change within post-industrial areas and encouraged the attendees to reflect on their own practice in this field.

I was also asked to talk about my experiences of this research trip and my findings on social practice in Detroit and Chicago to the Arts Council Wales national conference 2016 in Cardiff. I was on a keynote panel called 'Tackling Poverty Through the Arts' and spoke about the social impacts of these US arts projects and considerations of them for the sector in the UK.

I have also been booked to deliver lectures in 2017 to students on the Museums and Galleries Studies MA at Leeds University and the Visual Communications BA at Leeds College of Art in relation to my experience of social practice in Detroit and Chicago.

I am presently writing a piece for New Statesman's CityMetric website about my research trip in relation to grassroots urban development through the arts in the US. It is intended this will also be re-published in ArtsProfessional magazine. I am also in contact at the moment with other publishers about other potential articles emerging from this research.

On a longer term basis the research has impacted my curatorial practice at The Tetley and the wider direction of the organisation. At The Tetley we are now seeking to further open out how we work with communities in a more formalised ongoing process framework such as is delivered with by the Community Arts Partnership

programme at CCS. We are also seeking closer working with our local authority, Leeds City Council, and jointly seeking funding with them for a comprehensive culture focused placemaking and talent development programme in inner-south Leeds, which is our key area for engagement. Part of this initiative will be to look at utilising abandoned or under-utilised Council-owned properties in the area for programmes and looking for new uses for them with the community. On a closer level, in relation to the privately owned development site on which The Tetley building itself sits, we aim to further utilise our close relationship with the developers to advocate for the potential of arts projects within the site and engaging local communities in this. The evidence and experience built up on this research trip will provide an invaluable contribution to this.

Ongoing connections have been created with all of the organisations I visited. The Heidelberg Project and the Community Arts Partnership programme in particular were keen to hear more about our practice in the UK and in the future more on how our programme further expands and develops. With MOCAD in particular we also discussed, given they have been part of Anglo-American projects in the past, the potential for ongoing sharing of exhibition ideas and artists.