
PILOT PROJECTS

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In the initial phase of Transforma, the national resource team chose three pilot projects to receive seed support in the form of financial and infrastructural assistance. Each exemplifies a distinct model for engaging in social artistic practice: collaboration among artists, community-based organizations, and universities (Home, New Orleans?); an artist-initiated project (Operation Paydirt/ Fundred Dollar Bill Project); and a community-initiated project (Plessy Park). The projects are varied in scale, scope, and duration and are representative of a combination of local, national, and international creative practitioners, including artists, architects, activists, and others. Transforma has supported each project in a unique manner and on an individual time frame.

HOME, NEW ORLEANS?



» Home, New Orleans? (HNO?) is a community-based, arts-focused network of artists, neighbors, organizers, schools, and universities that brings together diverse constituencies in long-term collaborations to create positive change in New Orleans. HNO? is committed to forging a healthier New Orleans through art and community activities that move local participation forward in strengthening, revitalizing, and rebuilding community. It was formed in the wake of Hurricane Katrina and subsequent floods, when a group of New Orleans artists and educators saw a need to involve themselves as activists in the city's rebuilding. With the participation of allies from across the country, the concept was formed, funded, and moved into action in the summer and fall of 2006.

» Community-based arts organizations located in four distinct New Orleans neighborhoods—Central City, Lakeview, and the Seventh and Ninth wards—serve as the loci for the neighborhood projects, all of which address issues of community development and recovery through the visual or performing arts and directly involve residents from the local community. The diverse projects and programs of HNO? take various forms, however, according to the needs and goals of community partners. Interneighborhood collaboration is one goal of this project, especially since New Orleans is a city of proud and sometimes insular neighborhoods.

» HNO? engages local universities through an interuniversity course, Building Community through the Arts, in which professors from Dillard, Tulane, and Xavier universities teach students from multiple departments within those institutions. The course centers on the theory and practice of community-based arts, civic engagement in higher education, and the relationship between art and community development. Students work in cross-institutional teams with local artists on the projects of HNO? Although these three universities and four neighborhoods form the core network of HNO? other relationships have been forged over the duration of the project, such as that with the performance studies, drama, and interactive telecommunications programs at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts.

» As intended, the seed support offered by Transforma in the early phases of HNO? has allowed for the project to develop and become self-sufficient through independent funding and staff support.



ABOVE Home, New Orleans? steering committee meeting. Photo by Jan Gilbert.



RIGHT Performance of "Spaces in Between." Photo by Jan Gilbert.

TOP Theater workshop held at the Porch and LakeviewS bus tour. Photos by Jan Gilbert.

BELOW Safehouse, Fundred collection center, located in St. Roch neighborhood, New Orleans. Courtesy of Paydirt / Fundred.



LEFT AND ABOVE Student inside Safehouse and Fundred armored car making pickup in Roswell, New Mexico. Courtesy of Paydirt / Fundred.

PAYDIRT / FUNDRED

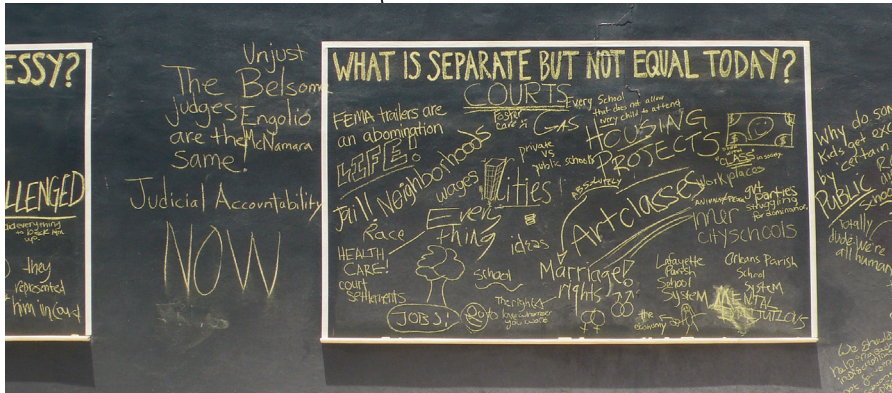
» The project was initiated when conceptual artist Mel Chin was invited by Transforma to contribute to rebuilding the social, cultural, and physical infrastructure of New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina. In researching the impact of the storm and the preexisting conditions in New Orleans, Chin discovered that New Orleans was the city with the second-highest levels of lead contamination in the United States. Elevated levels of lead had existed in the soil before Hurricane Katrina, but as a result of the contamination of almost eighty-six thousand properties, nearly 30 percent of the children living in the inner city suffer from lead poisoning. Scientific studies have linked lead poisoning to elevated rates of violent criminal activity and poor academic performance. The presence of polluted soil and the absence of capital to respond to the situation motivated the creation of this dual-layered project. Paydirt/Fundred is a method to respond to this condition through art and to transform an environment that compromises human health through science.

» Operation Paydirt offers a pragmatic, scientifically proven method to neutralize hazardous lead that contaminates soil and compromises the health of children. This plan has the potential to serve as a model for all cities in counteracting an environmental factor that undermines the health of society.

» Supporting Operation Paydirt is the Fundred Dollar Bill Project, a collective artwork of three million original interpretations of the U.S. one-hundred-dollar bill created by children and adults across the country. These unique artworks will be delivered to the steps of Congress, where an even exchange of this “creative capital” will be requested to obtain funding for implementation of Operation Paydirt.

» The Paydirt/Fundred project seeks to facilitate the complete transformation of New Orleans into a city with lead-safe soil through the delivery of a scientific solution to lead contamination while calling for action through a nationwide drawing project designed to engage young people. The approach extends across the disciplines of art, science, and education and is sensitive to aspects of community development and urban infrastructure. Paydirt/Fundred receives its own funding and has its own staff. — FUNDRED.ORG.

PLESSY PARK



LEFT Temporary chalkboards installed at Plessy site and buttons produced for Plessy Day 2008.



RIGHT State historic plaque installed at Plessy site in February 2009, NAACP Centennial.

» The project was initiated by community activist Reggie Lawson of the Crescent City Peace Alliance, artist Ron Bechet, and other community members to acknowledge the site on which Homer Plessy was arrested on June 7, 1892. The staged arrest of this light-skinned man of color resulted in the historic Supreme Court decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson*, which legalized segregation through the implementation of “separate but equal” laws, which were upheld for more than fifty years. Lawson has worked for several years to create a park honoring Plessy at the corner of Press and Royal Streets. Due to zoning complications and funding limitations, the comprehensive plan remained unbuilt. In January 2008 the New Orleans Center for Creative Arts Institute (NOCCA) purchased the land. Lawson, in conversation with Transforma, decided that organizing an event-based project would be an effective way to bring together the various stakeholders on the site. Transforma and Lawson invited Suzanne Lacy and the students from the MFA Public Practice program at Otis College of Art and Design to participate in developing the events for Plessy Day 2008. Much information about the site and the surrounding sociopolitical context was drawn from *The Long Ride: A Collection of Student Writings for the New Orleans Civil Rights Park*, created and published by the Students at the Center (SAC) Program at Frederick Douglass, McDonogh 35, and Eleanor McMain schools. Although the faculties of SAC and NOCCA did not directly collaborate, the celebration of Plessy Day 2008 effectively incorporated the work of the two groups.

» The day commenced at Frederick Douglass High School with a discussion of the *Plessy v. Ferguson* case and personal stories of segregation shared by the school's alumni. Those participating processed through the Bywater neighborhood to the Plessy site, where they participated a performance-based piece focused on the presence of eight temporary chalkboards. Participants answered questions presented on each that connected historic moments to present conditions of social and racial equity, especially related to the contemporary education system in New Orleans.

» In February 2009 a state plaque was placed on the site. Descendents of Plessy and Ferguson, as well as members of the NOCCA community, were present at the unveiling. This unveiling was a significant event in this history as this date was the centennial of the founding of the NAACP and the bicentennial of Abraham Lincoln's birth. Participants included members of both the Plessy and Ferguson families, the McDonogh 35 High School choir, students of both Frederick Douglass High School and NOCCA, two women who were among the students who integrated Orleans Parish Schools in the 1960s, and an array of community members.