

Downtown Council of Kansas City
Art in the Loop Foundation

Downtown Kansas City Creative Placemaking Pilot Project, 2014

Creative Placemaking is a way in which a community can reinvent pedestrian space. Often this type of endeavor speaks to, and reflects, the issues, concerns, and objectives of its surroundings. Creative Placemaking is a site for reimagining our commute, workspace, and residence; essentially, the place we call home. Creative Placemaking is not prefabrication; it is a direct commitment with voices, styles, and rhythms of the city generating artwork. And, Creative Placemaking in Kansas City exemplifies these values.

In this first iteration of Creative Placemaking in downtown Kansas City, visual artists demonstrate talents alongside performing artists to generate an energetic creative culture within the business district of Kansas City. This endeavor hopes to supply a deep arts ecology that represents local artists working in new and innovative ways within the unique and vibrant environment of downtown design. Working with twenty artists to develop projects that respond to the climate, architecture, and composition of downtown Kansas City, the Arts in the Loop Foundation has facilitated a series of works that ask businesses, visitors, and residents to re-imagine the downtown landscape.

Visual artworks from Mark Allen, Rachelle Gardner, Madeline Gallucci, and Robert Bustamente help to envision new ways of exploring our downtown businesses, generating lively two-dimensional pieces that invest in pre-existing architecture to illuminate new visual engagement with spaces we see every day. Muralist Phil Shafer developed a street art-inspired work that illustrated identification politics within a robust, colorful aesthetic. Multimedia artist Laura Isaac utilized video, technology, and narrative to envision the downtown landscape through a dream-like lens.

Performances in Oppenstein Park have promoted a relationship between existing public art projects and a vision for further performative practice within this downtown public space. These performances have been eclectic in scope, ranging from experimental jazz from Mnemosyne Quartet, game playing with artists Charlie Mylie and Lindsey Griffith, interactive installation and storytelling with Jose Faus and Emily Evans Sloan, a site-specific night performance by local band Quadrigarum, a video and sound performance installation by Mara Gibson and Caitlin Horsmon, and a community engaged performance by Sean Starowitz.

Connecting local visual artists with downtown Kansas City is a mutual benefit. Through creating a relationship between these artists the downtown community, Kansas City may begin to develop a new type of local visual arts visibility. This type of connection is crucial to enriching Kansas City's vision of how to engage and develop visual and performing arts culture within the city limits, and how these projects are understood within a national conversation on supporting homegrown creative culture.

Jessica Borusky, Guest Curator
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