

“Processes, Resources, Collaboration: Considerations for Greening Public Art Programs”
Revisited
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It has been seven years since I contributed to CultureWork and nine since I completed my research, *Going Green with Public Art*. Revisiting my article, my initial reaction was that it was very “green” (not just environmentally), as some tips seem very common sense. Reflecting further, even ‘common sense’ is worth addressing.

One might think that environmental sustainability would not be on the forefront of the minds of public art professionals, given major political, economic and social changes since 2008. The economic crash in 2008 and depression that followed had delayed effects on the arts, specifically public art, where consequences paralleled the construction industry, sending many programs into survival mode. Politically, this led to the election of leadership with ‘fiscally conservative’ platforms and the eventual repeal of some public art programs, including my home state of Wisconsin’s Percent for Art Program. A recent development is the prohibition of federal funds in the FAST Act for incorporating art into FTA projects (McClanahan & Walsh). Despite these factors, the public art field has made great leaps forward in considering environmental sustainability in its practices.

Considering the spirit of the article, my thinking has not changed: I feel that it is the responsibility of all industries to consider environmental impact. Maddison, Gasse, and Keogh noted that “while public art is not a major contributor to climate change...the increasing awareness of the global implications of climate change caused by human activity and the role each of us needs to play in arresting this process to keep the earth’s ecological balance intact is a powerful motivator.”

My thinking, however, has altered in my initial conclusion that technology will solve environmental problems by eliminating paper applications. As we are well aware now, “Those server farms that make cloud computing possible aren’t powered by good intentions...the equivalent of some 30 nuclear power plants is needed to keep up with the world’s uploading and tweeting...”

There have been significant developments to this area in terms of research and tools for those working within the public art field. Green Public Art has a very inclusive list [here](#). Closest to my heart is the [Public Art Sustainability Assessment](#) (PASA), created by Chrysalis Arts. These guidelines were what I had in mind in my research recommendations: the development of a green assessment tool specific to public art and, in fact, go a step further in addressing all four pillars of sustainability (economy, environment, social equality and cultural vibrancy). The guidelines are downloadable for free.

Further addressing administrative functions of public art programs, the [Arts Earth Partnership](#) has developed a certification program for arts and cultural organizations, municipalities, universities and artists in sustainable practices.

Looking to the future of environmental sustainability in public art, I hope programs and resources continue to grow. They are necessary now more than ever with the presence of vocal climate change deniers in positions of political power. It will become ever more important to address these issues on a grassroots and local level.

References

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