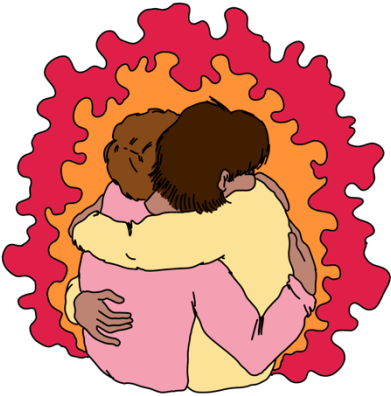


Saving the world w/ DIY

**By Matt Fontes Carroll
for a bachelor's degree in
community economics at the
University of Massachusetts**

Section 1: Structure

(WHAT IS DIY?)



**DIY IS AN ORGANIC
RESPONSE TO THE
SELFISH MONEY-
MAKING MEASURES
OF CORPORATE
OPPRESSION AND
CONSUMERISM**

This pamphlet represents an informational resource on the history, culture, form, and function of the DIY Movement.

In the 1970s, cost-associated barriers to entry to the increasingly corporatized & monopolized music industry forced artists and musicians into the margins.

Artist push back in efforts to regain control over their careers led to the rise of the DIY attitude – doing everything the big labels did, yourself.

From pressing records to booking shows, artists in the emerging DIY scene wouldn't rely on anyone else to make their careers.

DIFFERENT KINDS OF VENUES

The emergence of this movement prioritized accessibility, independence, and community over profits.

This DIY approach to problem-solving, pioneered by alternative music groups like **Black Flag** and their label **STT** led to the creation of an growing network of informal venues whose structure remains in-tact and thriving in underground scenes to this day.

These spaces might include:

- A temporary space in someone's basement (totally off the books)
- A more sophisticated secret venue in an abandoned industrial building or commercial space (still not under radar)
- A registered 501c3 non-profit transparently engaging with local law enforcement and other organizations to provide resources to artists and community members.

LIFE AND LIVELIHOOD IN DILAPITATED PLACES

Understanding the reputation of **radicalism** often associated with DIY culture, sometimes described/modified with references to **anarchy** and **Marxism**, is critical to understanding the movement as a whole.

Key among the tactics employed in DIY methodologies is the principle of **cooperation** as opposed to the alternative **competitive** structures imposed by capitalist systems.

PRINCIPLES OF DIY CULTURE INCLUDE, BUT ARE NOT LIMITED TO:

- Mutual aid
- Non-hierarchical leadership structure
- Rejection of capitalist ideology + profiteering behavior
- Commitment to equity & total inclusivity

“DIY can mold and hold generations of artists; yet, despite this, finds itself constantly struggling to survive in a capitalist society.”

From *Redefine Magazine*
By Vivian Hua

Section 2: Functions of DIY Spaces in Practice

EXAMPLES:

CHICAGO BASED *PO BOX COLLECTIVE*



“... a creative collective & intergenerational social practice center dedicated to building Rogers Park community through radical art making, mutual aid & programming”

From *poboxcollective.us/about*

- skill shares
- writing workshops
- artist salons
- clothing swaps
- free events & sliding-scale member dues/donations
- space sharing w/ local activist groups
 - i.e., “Food Not Bombs”

“The reason that we are drawn to both art and social justice is that we want to remake the world, and DIY spaces offer possibilities for those who don’t want to be caught up within institutional structures and constraints, more direct access to collaboration and community building, and room to move for those without a lot of money”

- PO Box Collective members Mary Zerkel and Salome Chasnoff.

SEATTLE BASED *THE VERA PROJECT*

Washington is basically the birthplace of the underground all-ages venue. Founded in response to Seattle's "Teen Dance Ordinance," Vera was founded to create an inclusive space for young people to interface with the city's creative community.



VOLUNTEER TODAY

Today, Vera is:

- A music venue,
- screen print shop,
- recording studio,
- art gallery,
- and safe space for radical self-expression

Executive Director Ricky Graboski:

"The DIY ethos has always been defined more by equity, empowerment, and direct action than music. Music is an incredibly powerful tool, an effective unifier, and maybe the greatest joy we get out of life, but it's also just the entry point."

From *theveraproject.org*



**BOSTON BASED
DORCHESTER ART
PROJECT (DAP)**

In the Field's Corner
neighborhood of Dorchester, Mass. – this is my
local DIY Spot!

Here's some cool things they do:

- A **storefront** that sells artwork, art supplies, and local branded merch
- Tenancy for the **Melanin Owned Business Market**
- Operation of **The Dorchester Bike Kitchen**, a volunteer-run educational bike-fixing operation in their downstairs space
- Fifteen **affordable studio spaces** (rented monthly)
- The **DAP Zine Library** of independent publications produced around the world
- **Community organization** for protests, events, and all kinds of art projects

After a long and complicated history of operation between different names, spaces, and parent orgs, **The DAP** in its current form operates under the umbrella of the **Brain Arts Organization**, a 501c3 non-profit.

Their mission is to support local artists / the local art scene and “**to realize creative independence in systematically undervalued communities.**”

(As of 2022, the DAP was outbid for its first floor & basement space at 1490 Dorchester Ave)

From ***dorchesterartproject.com***



Section 3: The Unseen Value of DIY Spaces

FAST FACTS ON COVID & THE ART WORLD

(from the Brookings Institute's *Lost Art: Measuring COVID-19's devastating impact on America's creative economy*)

In creative industries, between April 1st and July 31st, 2020, America lost:

- 2.7 million jobs (~ 1/3 of the industry)
- more than \$150 billion in sales of goods and services (~9% annual revenue)

In the fine/performing arts

(think: concerts, touring bands, live theater):

- 1.4 million jobs (50% of the industry)
- \$42.5 billion (~ 25% annual revenue)

The 53 largest metro areas with populations greater than 1 million will account for 80% of the total losses in sales and 68% of jobs.

By share of population, **Las Vegas, Nashville, New Orleans, Orlando, Memphis, Baltimore, Jacksonville, Tucson, and Austin** felt the greatest economic losses.

ALSO:

(All from the Americans for the Arts Organization's *Statement on Arts, Jobs, and the Economy*)

According to the Bureau of Economic Analysis, nonprofit and for-profit arts:

- **Is a \$730 billion industry**
- **Directly employs 4.8 million arts workers**
- **Represents approximately 4.2 percent of US GDP**

ART IS GREAT FOR LOCAL ECONOMIES

Art events come with extraordinarily high multipliers for their communities

Attendees at nonprofit arts events spend an average of **\$24.60 per person, per event**, on outside goods/services beyond the cost of admission

ART IS AN EXPORT INDUSTRY!

In 2014, the BEA reported that the US sent abroad **\$60 BILLION** worth of arts goods (i.e. paintings and jewelry and stuff).

THESE VENUES ARE HAVENS FOR
ARTISTS TO LEARN AND FOSTER NEW
CONNECTIONS.

WITH DIY AN ABANDONED BUILDING
CAN BECOME A CULTURAL CENTER,

A CLASSROOM,

A PLACE TO STAY DRY IN THE RAIN.

SINCE 1968 THE CITY OF FLINT
MICHIGAN LOST 70,000 JOBS AND 100,000
RESIDENTS.

26 YEARS LATER TWO GUYS BOUGHT
AN ABANDONED BUILDING DOWNTOWN
FOR \$500 AND STARTED A CONCERT
VENUE THERE.

FOR A PERIOD OF TIME FLINT WAS
CLASSIFIED AS THE MOST DANGEROUS
CITY IN NORTH AMERICA.

NOW THERE'S A RECORD STORE AND A
NICE PLACE TO GET COFFEE.

*Flint Local 432 is one of the longest-running
all-ages venues in the US.*

From ***flintlocal432.com/about.html***
and ***Punk Rock Entrepreneurship***
by Michael Seman

Section 4: Supporting DIY and Safer Spaces

Every venue works a little differently. Some are legal, registered, 501c3 non-profits and others are **not**.

Some receive government and philanthropic support to maintain their buildings and replace radiators – others don't.

Keeping these places alive (and relatively structurally-sound) has historically been a team effort.

Though organizers are constantly fighting uphill battles for these sacred secret spots, their communities have found a variety of strategies through which to offer support.

Artist Trusts and Relief Funds

The **Seattle Artist Relief Fund** is just a GoFundMe, but it raised \$937,969 for Seattle Artists in eighteen months! It is literally the largest sum of direct Covid relief to go to Artists in Washington ever. Pretty awesome.

Artist Trust is a 501c3 nonprofit and have managed to invest over \$15 million in individual artists over the last thirty-six years!

The **DIY Community Relief Fund** is a fundraising effort by Seattle nonprofits, small businesses, and artists to save vital music and arts community spaces that have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 in Washington and beyond. Started by the fine folks at **The Vera Project!**

SAFER DIY SPACES

Safer DIY Spaces is a non-profit collective of architects, artists, contractors, and community organizers that offer technical and financial support to venues in need of core safety improvements **and** advocacy and lobbying to cities to adopt “safer, more compassionate codes.”

The group emerged in response to a major fire at a DIY venue in Oakland, California called Ghostship in which 36 people were killed and trapped inside.

Other venues forced to survive in unsafe structures since have been shut down by authorities citing safety concerns.

From ***saferdiyspaces.org***

DIY VENUE LIST

Dorchester Art Project, Boston

<https://www.dorchesterartproject.com/>

Rubulad

New York, New York

<https://www.rubulad.net/>

Groundworks

Tucson, AZ

<https://www.groundworkstucson.com/>

PO Box Art Collective

Rogers Park, Chicago

<https://poboxcollective.us/>

Mr. Heads Artist Collective

Tucson, AZ

No-cost to artist gallery + bar on 4th Ave

\$3 well drinks on Sundays

Spoke with Sonora, a glassblower

<https://stayhappening.com/e/mr-heads-artist-collective-E2ISTWDY0ST>

Vera Project Seattle

<http://theveraproject.org/>

Flint Local 432 Venue

<http://www.flintlocal432.com/>

Flint Local 432

<http://www.flintlocal432.com>

Sponsored Economic Development Research

Using Arts and Culture to Stimulate State
Economic Development

Austin, TX

https://austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/Re-development/0901arts_economy_nga.pdf

2020 City of Denver Creative Economy Report

https://www.artsandvenuesdenver.com/assets/doc/2020DenverCreativeEconomyReport_Final-d4b586353d.pdf

Lost Art: Measuring the Impact of Covid on the
Creative Economy

https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/20200810_brookingsmetro_covid19-and-creative-economy_final.pdf

Statements on Arts, Jobs, and the Economy

<https://www.americansforthearts.org/newsroom/arts-mobilization-center/statement-on-arts-jobs-and-the-economy>

Writings on DIY

Westwood ft. Michael Seman

<https://www.westword.com/arts/musician-and-urban-planning-expert-on-the-economic-and-social-value-of-diy-spaces-8574181>

Punk Rock Entrepreneurship

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/334549727_Punk_rock_entrepreneurship_and_the_value_of_all-ages_DIY_venues_in_urban_economies

Why Do Local Artists Need DIY Art Spaces
and How Can You Help Them?

<https://medium.com/the-foundry10-voice/why-local-artists-need-diy-art-spaces-and-how-you-can-help-1c8040cbeb79>

Can DIY venues solve the national endowment
for the arts crisis?

<https://observer.com/2017/03/national-endowment-for-the-arts-solution-diy-shea-stadium/amp/>

Handmade and DIY: Cultural Economy in the
Digital Age

https://trace.tennessee.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2169&context=utk_graddiss

Redefine DIY

<https://redefinemag.net/2021/united-cultural-front-diy-spaces-culture-sustain-life-throughout-covid-19-pandemic/>

Vera Project DIY Fund

<https://www.diyfund.org/>

Fire at Ghost Ship Oakland

<http://www.laweekly.com/music/update-100-silk-artists-cherushii-and-nackt-among-confirmed-victims-of-ghost-ship-fire-7682832>

Homeless evicted from Rhinocropolis in
Denver

<https://www.westword.com/music/rhinocropolis-diy-venue-shut-down-by-denver-fire-department-for-code-violations-8580550>