

## SCHOLARLY AND CREATIVE ACTIVITIES Karen Gergely

I am socially engaged artist and educator that encourages communities to learn together and share experiences, skills, traditions, and stories in the name of art. As a definition, Socially Engaged art is an approach to art that is created with and for a public and is responsive to, and motivated by, the context and community in which that public exists. There is a focus on shared authorship and co-creation of the work throughout the process, in contrast to traditional ways of artmaking where the artist is at the center. It blurs the line between producers and non-producers of culture therefore challenging inherent structures of access and power in the world. Because of this, Socially Engaged work can be hard to quantify in a traditional promotion and tenure portfolio as it is not often “gallery appropriate.”

My scholarship is split into two major categories: lectures and conferences and creating and working with communities. As Graceland is a teaching institution, much of my scholarship falls into the pedagogy category during the academic year, and my community work happens in the summer.

### LECTURES // CONFERENCES

A large part of my scholarship echoes the demands of a teaching institution and focuses on pedagogy. I've been active in applying for conference presentations, involving myself in collaborative curriculum development beyond my normal course load and peer reviews. Most recently, in 2022, I was asked to conduct a **peer review** for SUNY Press for a book proposal titled *Walking as Artistic Practice* by Ellen Mueller. My quote is used on the back of the publication and notes Graceland University. I wrote and received an OER grant from the Iowa Private Academic Libraries (IPALS) to create new theme based open resource Art History curriculum in Fall 21 and have shared this curriculum with IPALS and other grant awardees.

My involvement in the College Art Association (CAA) has been consistent over the past five years and I have been selected to present in almost every national conference in the past few years. In 2019, I co-chaired a panel with Ellen Mueller on “Social Practice and Service Learning,” in 2020, I presented “Cultivating Social Engagement at a Small, Rural Liberal Arts University and Beyond,” in 2021, I cohosted a live edition of the CAA Conversations Podcast “Sustainable Design: Beyond the Stuff, Towards the System:” A conversation between Rachel Beth Egenhoefer and Peter Dean. This podcast is part of a larger series of podcasts for the national organization that I managed for the for three years. CAA Conversations primarily focus on pedagogy, diversity, and inclusion in the university setting and can be found on the CAA website, iTunes and SoundCloud. This February, I will be leading panels on Mysticism in Art and Zine culture at the CAA conference in Chicago.

In 2021, I was selected to presentation at SECAC, Southeastern College Art Conference on Art History and Social Engagement. The conference was canceled due to the pandemic, and I applied and was selected to present this research at the Midwest Art History Society Conference in Houston, TX. My presentation, “Not Waiting on the World to Change: Finding Peace, Fight, and Voice Through Social Engagement,” was part of a larger discussion on socially engaged art history. The presentation focused on pedagogy and course design for my course Art for Social Change, a

studio-based course with emphasis in socially engaged art history and activism.

In 2020, I was invited to present at the Teaching Place Conference in Minneapolis, MN (moved online due to COVID-19) My presentation, "Teaching Rural Community Engagement," discussed how higher education instructors frame "place" in their art/design classrooms and programs, as well as the responsibilities and challenges teaching social engagement in a rural, university town brings.

In 2019, 2021, and 2023, I was selected to present at the biennial Foundations in Art Theory and Education (FATE) conferences, presenting on "Art and Activism in Foundations," "Inclusion: A Commitment to Equality, Diversity, & Justice," and "Reaching Way Beyond Their First Idea." This is a conference I feel like I have a lot to offer and always gain a great deal from as an educator.

On a local level, I was an invited to be one of three keynote speakers at Graceland's Sustainability Symposium, Spring 2023. My presentation focused on Sustainability of Community through Socially Engaged Practices.

#### CREATING & WORKING WITH COMMUNITIES

In the Summer of 2019, I worked with students from the West Virginia Governor's Honors Academy and the Huntington WV, Central City community to create a community mural. Our focus was on revitalizing Appalachia through public art initiatives. Students immersed themselves in the Huntington community and did a great amount of research before working with community members to paint a 50' x 12' mural on a historical building in Huntington's Central City. An article featuring the project was featured in Huntington's Herald-Dispatch. The article was picked up by US News and World Report and was seen in many newspapers all over the country including the Marietta Daily Journal in OH, the Waco Tribune-Herald, the Eagle in Bryan, TX, Star-Telegram in Fort Worth, TX, the Saratogian in NY, and the Miami Herald, among others. <https://www.apnews.com/fd317355e5a940f4825c7bfdb45ef91e>

In the Spring of 2021 a recent Graceland Art graduate, Tacy Cummings, and I applied for and were awarded a mural commission in New Virginia, IA. The project was developed in concert with the community through many town-hall style meetings and story sharing sessions. The wall is 88' long by 2 stories high. [www.karenergely.com/murals](http://www.karenergely.com/murals). This mural brought new challenges for me logistically, but I felt really successful in way in which the community engagement and participation came into focus on this project and the way in which I was able to mentor a former student who has gone on to do more commissions.

In 2022 I worked with the West Virginia Governor's Honors Academy again, this time in Fairmont WV, to create a mural on the Fairmont State campus. My role as the lead artists and teaching artist was to guide students into community discussions, information gathering, story sharing, design formation, and execution. The mural is 50' x 10" mural on Fairmont State University's campus, Fairmont, WV.

I was commissioned by the Honors College at West Virginia University to create an interactive artistic experience for students attending the West Virginia Governor's Honors Academy, program for high achieving high school students from around the state, in 2017 and have been invited to orchestrate something adjacent to this each year since at the academy. The event is a carefully curated set of interactive, community enriching experiences called #Superawesomefunnight and runs for about 90 minutes.

As I look forward to more of these opportunities to create and present, I am really looking forward to returning to the Artists Residency scene as we emerge from the pandemic.