

Revised Research Concept
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Problem Statement: Experimental contemporary art and artists in general are not associated with rural place nor do they seem well supported in rural America. There seems to be a general lack of connectivity between artists, lack of understanding and exposure to contemporary art and its function in society, along with its benefits to society, and little or no supportive framework for it to be sustained or developed. There is little empirical research indicating how contemporary art and artists specifically can contribute to rural communities. Organizing mechanisms such as artist residencies and collectives are commonly utilized to support networks of contemporary artists in the art world, and can provide structure to support experimentation and progress, but again, there is little research indicating what role such collectives have in rural America, and especially what role they might have in generating a supportive environment for contemporary art and artists. We lack understanding as to what effect or influence contemporary art may have outside of urban areas, and what role artist collectives and/or residencies may have in rural communities.

Main research question: How do artist residencies and collectives influence the support and development of experimental contemporary art in rural place?

Sub-questions: What is the relationship between rural culture and rural aesthetics and contemporary art practice? What effect does experimental and/or challenging contemporary art practices have on rural communities?

Purpose Statement: The purpose of this research is to better understand the role of artist-organizing mechanisms such as artist residencies and collectives in supporting and developing experimental contemporary art practices in rural America. By developing a better understanding of how these types of organizations or associations are situated within rural place, and what role they might have, we can gain a better sense of how to increase support for contemporary art in other rural areas, and whether these organizing mechanisms should be part of the means of doing so. On a broader level, this research begins to probe into questions of what effect and/or influence experimental contemporary art and artists might have in rural communities, beginning to answer the question of how experimental contemporary art is currently situated within the field of rural arts.

Data Collection Scheme: This individual research project will explore projects and programs that already exist, falling into the type category of artist residency or collective. I will utilize case studies to examine organizational structures, methods for supporting contemporary art and artists, programming and engagement strategies, and resulting influence and impact in their home communities. Case studies will incorporate a broad range of methods, including interviews, document and data analysis, media analysis and observation, when possible. Interviews will serve as a main data collection tool corresponding with each case study, and will be conducted with resident artists, project and organization staff. Literature review will also be integral to this study, and will help define context within an area that is lacking thorough research.