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Public Art Review

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How artists help us make
sense of climate change

CURATING CONVERSATIONS

Sara Daleiden's social practice
put to work in Milwaukee

BRISTOL'S WILD STYLE

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& innovative artists
make their mark



Van Gogh float in a Dutch dahlia parade—and many other projects we love (p.13)

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Milwaukee Moves

In *Creational Trails*, Sara Daleiden's role as artist involves curating and crafting conversations

BY JACQUELINE WHITE

THINK "ART" AND "MILWAUKEE" and what most likely comes to mind is the dramatic visual spectacle of the Santiago Calatrava addition to the Milwaukee Art Museum set on the shore of Lake Michigan. The architectural landmark features winglike structures that extend twice daily as if to take flight across the lake. But no matter how innovative a vision this kinetic architectural sculpture offers, it's still tied to a traditional aesthetic based on appreciating an object.

Enter artist Sara Daleiden, who grew up in nearby Waukesha and now divides her time between Milwaukee and Los Angeles. A lecturer in public practice at Otis College of Art and Design in Los Angeles, she is helping lead Milwaukee in embracing a more expansive view of public art.

"She's moving away from public art as producing objects,"

observes Evelyn Patricia Terry, who was named an artist of the year by the Milwaukee Arts Board in 2014. Instead, Terry says, Daleiden "produces community."

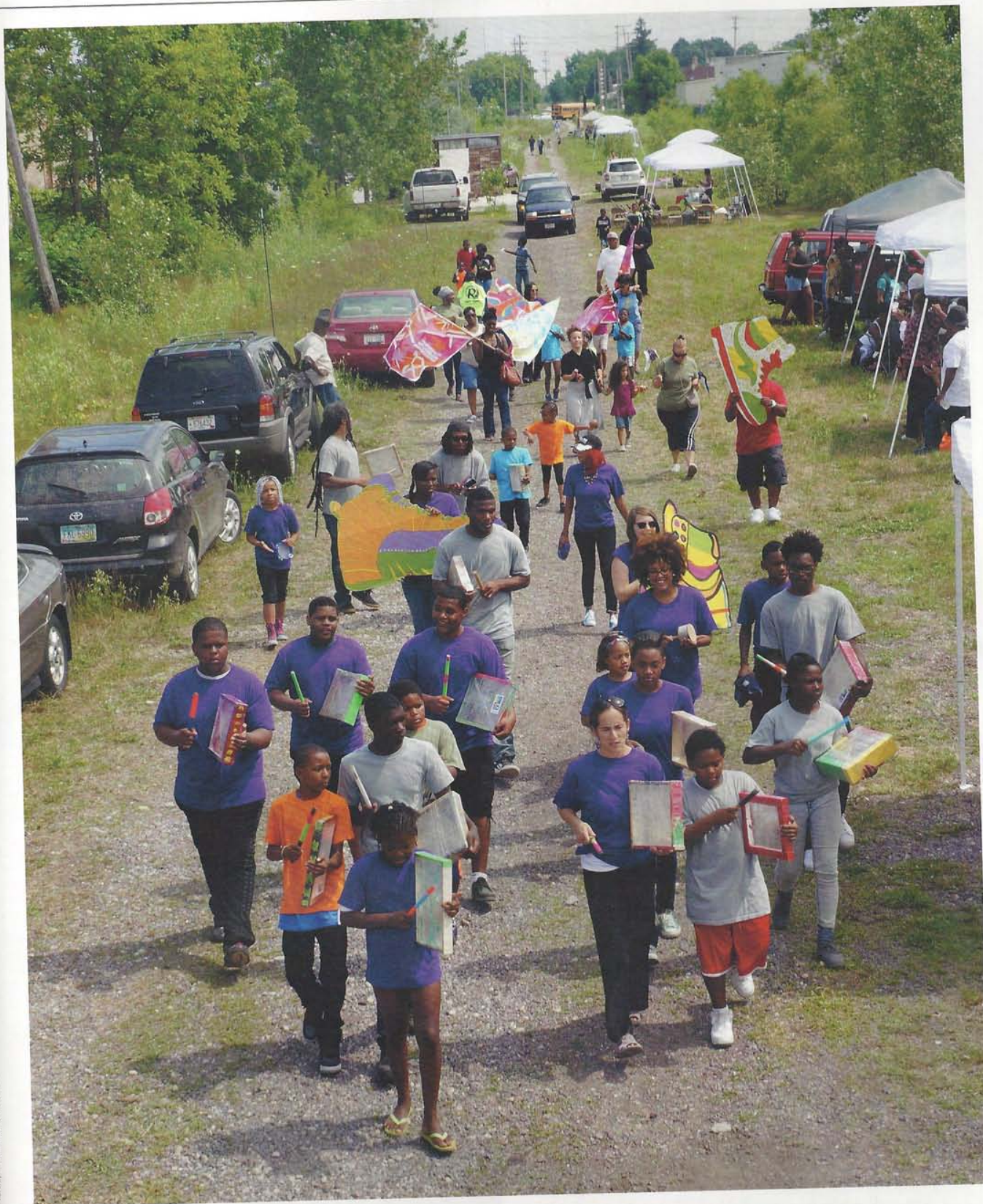
BICOASTAL EXPERIENCE

Officially, Daleiden is a consultant to the Creative Placemaking Committee of the Greater Milwaukee Committee (GMC), an organization of top Milwaukee leaders from the for- and nonprofit sectors that received a two-year \$724,500

creative placemaking grant from the Kresge Foundation in 2014, as well as a \$350,000 grant from ArtPlace America in 2013. The focus of the funding is on "Creational Trails" that seek to reimagine how Milwaukeeans move through their city.

Given that Milwaukee sits on the "Third Coast" of the

"As an artist, the way I use language, the way I understand what's possible, influences the conversation." —Sara Daleiden



ABOVE: Local artists activate the Beerline Recreational Trail Extension, which connects the Riverwest neighborhood near the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee with the Harambee neighborhood, for the ARTery. OPPOSITE: Sara Daleiden (second from left) with Beerline Trail Neighborhood Development Project collaborators Mikal Floyd-Pruitt, Ellie Jackson, and Bridney Chappel at Company Brewing in Milwaukee's Riverwest neighborhood.

Great Lakes, one can say Daleiden brings bicoastal experience to this effort. She developed an abiding appreciation for the pedestrian experience as a child, walking to school in what was then small-town Waukesha (now consumed by Milwaukee-area sprawl)—an appreciation she subsequently brought to her post as a senior ranger with the LA Urban Rangers, an artist-inspired effort (complete with campfire talks!) she co-founded to encourage Los Angelenos to creatively engage with and hike through their city.

Though she saw Milwaukee as the artistic mecca of her childhood, Daleiden felt that in order to make a living as an independent artist, she needed to stay in Los Angeles after she earned a master's degree in public art studies at the University of Southern California. Still, her excitement about the Milwaukee art scene, along with a deep commitment to artists there, eventually led her to set up an artist residency exchange program, MKE<->LAX, and to divide her time between the two cities whose airport codes lend their names to the program.

TRAIL MAKING THROUGH A DIVIDED CITY

One "trail" reinvigorated by the GMC efforts is downtown Milwaukee's main drag, Wisconsin Avenue. On selected summer nights, NEWaukee Night Markets turn a parking lot into a participatory art-making mecca complete with live music and food trucks. In one project, Terry helped Milwaukeeans decorate tree stumps with mosaics made from such objects as buttons, seashells, and Scrabble tiles. The resulting "LUV Downtown StreetSeats" then graced bus stops on Wisconsin Avenue, offering city dwellers a visual treat, as well as a place to rest.

A second effort extends and converts the Beerline Trail, a rail corridor once used by the Blatz, Pabst, and Schlitz breweries, into a walking/biking path and community gathering place. The Beerline Trail connects the Riverwest neighborhood near the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, one of the most racially diverse in the city, with the Harambee neighborhood, which is predominately African-American.

But to create a linear park in Milwaukee that invites residents to travel between neighborhoods involves more than just laying down asphalt and landscaping green space. In a city once dubbed the "Selma of the North" with its own equivalent of the iconic Edmund Pettus Bridge, there's persistent history to confront: In the 1960s, when Milwaukee marchers seeking an open housing ordinance attempted to cross the Sixteenth Street Viaduct from the redlined central city to the predominantly Polish South Side, they were met by hostile, violent crowds. Although federal law and Milwaukee ordinance now officially prohibit discrimination in housing, the city topped *Salon's* 2011 list of the 10 most segregated urban areas in America.



Potluck at the Community Table on the Beerline Recreational Trail Extension in Milwaukee's Harambee neighborhood.

An Artist's Conversations

Relating with people is an important part of the life of a socially engaged artist. Sara Daleiden of MKE<->LAX started to keep a list of who she had talked to in Milwaukee in one week. By Wednesday, she had engaged with...

- an affordable-housing real estate developer
- a neighborhood development corporation director
- a special assistant to the mayor
- a Department of Public Works traffic engineer
- a tow truck driver
- a spoken word performer
- a CEO nonprofit president [clarifying with Sara]
- a coworking-space founder
- a stand-up comic
- a public school system administrator
- a dean of a university's school of public health
- a trail landscape designer
- a neighborhood church pastor
- a restorative justice facilitator
- a local food caterer
- an urban beekeeper
- a poetry bookstore owner
- a foundation program officer
- a teenage journalist

Excerpted from a presentation Sara Daleiden gave at the Americans for the Arts 2015 Public Art Network Pre-Conference along with artist Lauren Woods.



TOP: Local artists Ina Onilu Drum and Dance Ensemble perform for the first season of the ARTery in the Harambee neighborhood. BOTTOM: Neighborhood artist Vedale Hill takes a shot with his *Hoop Dreams* art installation on the Beerline Recreational Trail Extension. The project was a collaboration with other local artists Mikal Floyd-Pruitt of I Am Milwaukee and Fondé Bridges of Healthy Words.

ON LOCATION

"CURATING" CONVERSATION

Against that backdrop, investing in new trails in Milwaukee can be loaded—especially when they connect to areas like Harambee, where, Daleiden observes, "there's been disinvestment." She describes her initial role in the Beerline Trail project as "curating" a conversation, a task that involved something that doesn't happen very often in the city—convening an intergenerational mixed-race group of neighborhood leaders. This two-day gathering of 60 residents became an opportunity, she says, for participants to "revisit what it means to participate in a community process—how people feel their voice."

She includes this conversation in her placemaking work because art, she contends, is "about amplifying voice." In this case, "creating a platform where voices are very audible to government staff." The obvious question is: How can people who live in proximity to a new park have a say in what that park will look like? But the conversation did not confine itself to explicitly aesthetic concerns.

The most trenchant issue raised was basic safety. Although every person was able to say they cared about having healthy green spaces where people could gather, Daleiden says that statement would then be linked to a concern about safety. In particular, Daleiden, who is white, says African Americans were able to speak to their

Good Questions

According to Sara Daleiden, the following questions can guide conversations between artists and the neighbors they engage:

- What does active listening feel like to you?
- How do you want to express your understanding of our discussion?
- How can I support you in caring for yourself?
- What helps you find time to relate with your neighbors?
- Where do you spend quality time in the neighborhood?
- What work do you perform that I can learn to appreciate?
- What cultures do you want to represent in our relationship?
- How can we offer feedback to each other rhythmically?
- What power do you have to produce change here?
- How can we grow the existing efforts of other neighborhood leaders?
- What is a difference between us that you enjoy?
- What would a respectful exchange between us look like to you?
- How can we take turns facilitating our experience together?



COUNCIL BLUFFS, IOWA WHERE ART LIVES



Mark di Suvero, *Big Mo*

Meet the latest addition to the Iowa West Public Art collection. *Big Mo* is a 75-foot tall, spacetime orange sculpture designed by Mark di Suvero. It's located along the bank of the Missouri River on the Iowa side of the Bob Kerrey Pedestrian Bridge that connects Council Bluffs to Omaha.

Come see it for yourself in conjunction with Loessfest, a free, week-long celebration of our community beginning May 28.

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IOWA WEST PUBLIC ART

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ON LOCATION

concerns that they might face harassment in public spaces in Milwaukee.

The conversation was necessary, Daleiden says, because “even if the city made a new public park investment, it doesn’t necessarily mean it’s going to get used.” The question, she adds, then becomes, “What else do we need to be building at the same time that we’re building the park?” Participants raised economic issues like how to attract business development to employ people who live near the park.

PERFORMANCE ART FOR CEOs

For Daleiden, who finds herself working closely with the CEOs of a city recently ranked (after Detroit) as the second poorest in the nation, there is a shared understanding that any efforts to strengthen the cultural base of the city need to be closely tied to buttressing its economic vitality. Once an industrial powerhouse, the city known for beer, brats, and the Brewers was hit hard by the collapse of heavy industry. Rebranded a “legacy city,” Milwaukee is among a handful of municipalities that now has priority access to federal funds for advanced manufacturing.

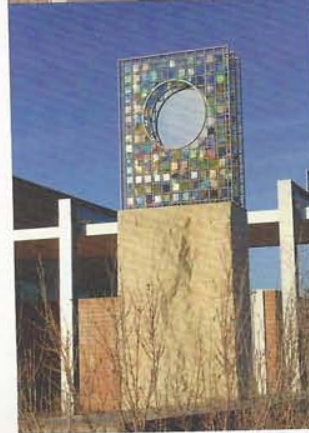
But to successfully make that transition, attracting and maintaining talent will be key. As Daleiden points out, “We have major corporations like Harley-Davidson and Miller Brewing that struggle to bring people in and keep them.” And the kind of people needed to revitalize the city can’t be business-as-usual folks. They will need to be able to innovate—to think, in other words, like artists.

To make the case that a vibrant culture will be key in revitalizing the city, Daleiden has learned to speak to Milwaukee CEOs in language they understand, such as “market outcomes—that we’ll be able to affect the tax base in the neighborhood or the city, or increase the number of jobs.” To that end, identifying local creative entrepreneurs and businesses has also been persuasive.

Although her official role with GMC may be public art consultant, Daleiden sees her work more along the lines of performance: “I get compensated for my body to literally be present in all kinds of settings, such as meetings,” she explains. “As an artist, the way I use language, the way I understand what’s possible, influences the conversation.”

To shape public dialogue, artists have traditionally used teaching as a vehicle. But Daleiden sees “crafting” the kinds of conversations she’s led in Milwaukee as how she contributes artistically. This involves fundamentally rethinking what the role of the artist is. “We need really expansive definitions,” Daleiden contends, “of what artists can do.”

JACQUELINE WHITE is a Minneapolis writer who grew up in suburban Milwaukee.



Portal by artist Greg Reiche

Installed in 2015 at the ABC Library at Central & Unser in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Constructed of Texas Cream Limestone, stainless steel and iridized glass, the work speaks of itself and the library as a portal of human imagination, creativity and intellect.

The library received the 2016 Jeff Harnar Award for Contemporary Architecture in New Mexico.



PUBLIC ART IN SEATTLE



OFFICE OF ARTS & CULTURE
SEATTLE

Bayu Angermeyer,
Seeking Kindred Spirits, 2015.
From *Art Interruptions* 2015,
temporary artworks in public spaces
that offered passers-by
a moment of surprise, beauty,
contemplation or humor.
Photo by Robert Wade.

seattle.gov/arts