Public Art in Outdoor Space: How Environmental Art Can Influence Notions of Place

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Public Art in Outdoor Space: How Environmental Art Can Influence Notions of Place

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2018-2019
Oberlin College Environmental Studies
Honors Research

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Executive Summary

Public art has the potential to influence people’s sense of place and inspire environmental stewardship. By visiting existing public art, conducting a literature review, and creating a piece of public environmental art in an outdoor space in Oberlin, Ohio, I aim to learn how site-specific public art influences notions of place. Making connections between artworks that I have visited, public art projects that I studied and my own installation of public art, Hanging Leaves, allows me to place my art in a greater design context. I installed a collaborative, site specific piece of artwork in a public outdoor area in Oberlin, Ohio. This subtle installation of hanging clay leaves in a well-trafficked public courtyard responds to the seasons and a place-based environmental consciousness. When I made the leaves, they evoked the falling leaves of autumn and the changing seasons to winter, but their meaning shifted when the artwork was finally installed in February, and their meanings varied for the range of people who experienced the art.

Over the installation period, I conducted surveys and observed public behavior in relation to Hanging Leaves. By analyzing people’s responses to the artwork through four methods of analysis (descriptive, qualitative, statistical, and field observation), I explore these questions:

- How does art focused on place reflect that place and the people in it?
- How does public art (re)connect people to their place?
- What role does public art play in engaging a wide range of people?

The artwork’s interaction with weather and seasons prompts people to interact with it through their different senses, and their ideas of space are intimately connected to the artwork, demonstrating the range of ways that the artwork affected their senses of place. Hanging Leaves emphasizes the existing space in new ways, and causes some visitors to think more positively of the winter space. With the evaluation of Hanging Leaves, I have learned about how public art in outdoor spaces can impact people’s perceptions of place and community, and I have explored how public art can offer new insights into placemaking in Oberlin by changing or strengthening people’s perceptions of place.
Introduction

An important part of environmental stewardship is the idea of a “sense of place.” By engaging people with the spaces around them, a sense of ownership and stewardship for their communities can be cultivated, and subsequently, these communities can build connections, gain resiliency and develop capacity to deal with a range of environmental problems. “Place” is not just physical location, but the human and time based characteristics of that location. Art in public spaces and especially public outdoor spaces has the ability to engage people in conversations about their local space and consequently their greater role in the world. In my Honors project, *Public Art in Outdoor Space: How Environmental Art Can Influence Notions of Place*, I explore from an art history-framed perspective how public art in Oberlin and elsewhere engages people with the space that they are in.

In Oberlin, a small college town in Northeast Ohio, there are already a few examples of public art that engage people in various ways. Sculptures, in front of the Science Center atrium and in between Hall auditorium and the art buildings, are some permanent installations of public art. Athena Tacha’s *Streams* (1975-76) in the Martin Luther King Jr. park on South Pleasant and East Vine Streets is a permanent example of public environmental art. Occasionally, temporary pieces of art supported by the Allen Memorial Art Museum, like *The Counternarratives Exhibition* (2018), will catch people’s attention because of its impermanence. Straddling the permanent and temporary are the rocks in Tappan Square that are permanently there, but their surfaces constantly change in response to the people and space that surround them.

After conducting a literature review of existing public art, art history critiques of public art, and public art evaluation techniques, I created a temporary work of collaborative, site-specific art for a public outdoor area in Oberlin. *Hanging Leaves* (2019) interacts with the landscape and soundscape of the site to create a new experience in the space. This subtle installation of hanging clay leaves in a well-trafficked public courtyard responds to the seasons and a place-based environmental consciousness. Located in the
East College Street Development, the site is a series of four trees in a transitory space between three walking paths in the plaza of the mixed use development. Responding to the site, I designed and made the clay leaves and wrote a couple of site-based prompts. My collaborators in the Pottery Co-op answered these prompts by carving into the leaves with their own interpretations of the site. After several practice installations of the leaves, in early February I hung them from the trees’ branches with thin fishing wire. The visual and physical aspect of the clay leaves hanging down from the thin branches, blowing in the wind, combines with the listening experience of hearing the leaves clinking against each other. When I made the leaves, they evoked the falling leaves of autumn and the changing seasons to winter, but their meaning shifted when the art was finally installed in February. Through observations of people interacting with the art in the space and surveys of people using the plaza, I aimed to determine if and how people’s sense of place is influenced by public art.

I found myself drawn to this project through the convergence of my interests in art and public outdoor spaces. As an artist, I have recently been expanding my perception of what an artist is and what my role as an artist might be. For most of my life I was taught that the art that I make is a reflection of myself. My previous art projects reflect the ways that I see the world through my personal experiences and imagination. Much of my art focuses on the natural environment through the mediums of paintings, drawings, prints, and pottery. These pieces of art are “mine”; created by me for myself. Since coming to Oberlin, I have been able to expand my perception of art to transcend beyond me. I recently created a collaborative piece of art that focused on the people around me, instead of myself. My role as the artist was more curatorial than creative. I decided on the medium and gave the participants parameters to work with. This art was a lot less self-centered than the previous art that I have made, and it felt significant that the focus was on people around me, rather than just me.

At the same time that I was rediscovering what my role as an artist was, I became interested in the ideas of public spaces, especially public urban parks. Through my Environmental Studies pathway of
Parks in the Urban Landscape, I was able to explore what public open space contributes to cities. I cultivated my interest in parks and landscape architecture as a way to shape people’s experiences and perceptions of place. I learned that design can provide a way to create spaces for the public that are equitable and environmentally sustainable and that public art can be a part of this design.

By comparing my results of public art’s impact in Oberlin with other examples of public art, I hope to gain insight into how public art in outdoor spaces can impact people’s perceptions of place and their role in the environment. Furthermore, I aim to analyze how these notions of place can influence senses of ownership for or belonging in the space, and how the collective sense of belonging can change greater systems and the structures already in place. This research and experiment of creating public art in Oberlin provides me with an opportunity to evaluate how people respond to art and the environment. It explores how public art might have the effect of changing or strengthening people’s perceptions of their place and thus offers new insights into placemaking in small towns/cities like Oberlin.

Below I summarize the research questions and goals I pursue in this honors research.

Questions:

- How does art focused on place reflect that place and the people in it?
- How does public art (re)connect people to their place?
- What role does public art play in engaging a wide range of people?

Goals:

- I research existing public art and its role in strengthening sense of place in the U.S. and beyond. This provides background knowledge and a framework for the next step of the project. It also allows me to familiarize myself with the language surrounding these topics.
- I create a piece of public art to be displayed at a suitable place in Oberlin.
- I evaluate how people respond to the art in relation to the space that it is in.
Public Art

Public art comes in many different forms and subgenres. There are countless ways of creating public art, and there is no right way or common, universal framework. In this literature review, I provide a short foundation of scholarly work about public art as it relates to place and community, and I relate this literature to my own experience with public art exhibits. I focus on the contrasting ideas of temporary and permanent, gallery and public, formal and informal, subtle and bold, interactive and individual, and everything in between these dichotomies. These contrasting ideas influence the environment around public art installations in extremely varied ways. Art has the ability to affect people’s emotions and make them care, so public environmental art has the potential to connect people to place. The works described here will inform the ways that I approach my own piece of public art in Oberlin and provide me with additional perspectives on my research questions. This literature review is by no means a comprehensive study of existing public art; it barely scratches the surface of the many complex forms and theories of public art.

In the Porter Square train station in Cambridge, Massachusetts, bronze gloves lay scattered on a trail from the upper levels of the subway station down three levels of escalators and stairs to the train platforms. I grew up interacting with these gloves without knowing of the artists, having any interest in public art, or even comprehending that the gloves were a piece of public art. From kindergarten to fifth grade, I often took the train home from my after school program with one of my parents and my sister, passing by the gloves all the time. It always amused me and my sister to imagine who the gloves belonged to and why they had ended up on the railings of the escalator and on the platform floor. For us, the bronze gloves are always tied to Porter Square.

For most of my life, I did not think about the artists or meanings behind *Glove Cycle* (1984) because the gloves were part of my immediate environment. But there was thought and intention behind
the gloves’ installation that I had never considered. From the artists’ view, the “continuity” of the gloves from street level to the depths of the station reminds commuters of the connection between the different levels of the station.¹ The “pattern and pauses” of the gloves along the escalators and stairs mimics the pattern and pauses of commuting: walking, standing, and waiting for the crowds to move.² When I began to explore my interest in public art through this Honors project, I started to think more critically about my experience with *Glove Cycle* and was able to learn more about the artists, Mags Harries and Lajos Héder, of Harries/Héder Collaborative.

I had the opportunity to talk with the artists about their work and attitudes toward public art. Harries and Héder have been working together on public art exhibitions for almost 30 years. Before their collaboration, Harries was trained as a sculptor, teacher, and public artist, while Héder had experience in architecture and urban design, allowing them to tackle each project with a multifaceted approach. Their public art responds to the many changing factors of the site’s environment and community. They must start with few preconceptions and be open to adaptations and change. In each project, they emphasize the site-specificity of the art and the engagement that public art demands from the people who experience it. In a public setting, the artists do not have much control over the artwork because the people who experience it bring extremely varied perspectives to the art. Unlike most gallery art, public art is about choreography and movement, and is timeless, not just about the visual. According to Harries and Héder, the public is meant to walk into the experience of art and “cultivate looking.” To them, public art is supposed to bring the public together and is meant to stop people in their tracks, make them question it, and engage with it.

Mags Harries’ first public art project was the Haymarket trash bronze installation, *Asaroton, 1976* (1976) in Boston, MA.³ For this site specific artwork, Harries made molds of spilled fruit, trash, baskets,

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² Harries and Héder, “Glove Cycle.”
and other materials from the market and created bronze castings that were embedded into a crosswalk at Haymarket. As people walked over the bronze pieces, the constant movement of foot traffic polished the bronze. The daily activities of Haymarket added to the chaos of the crosswalk, so when the market was not there, the artwork was a reminder of the bustling market. During Boston’s Big Dig, the artwork was removed from the crosswalk and brought to an indoor museum gallery setting, where the bronzes darkened without the constant polishing of traffic. This installation was meant to be outside with public interaction for the art to look its best, and because it was created for the specific site of Haymarket, being in the museum also diminished its meaning. The artwork’s form was influenced by people and place, just as the artwork is meant to influence them in return.

Patricia Johanson’s art is also meant to influence the public and place. She is an artist and landscape architect that redefined public environmental art through her process of art creation. Xin Wu, an art history scholar and professor, provides a comprehensive study of Johanson’s body of work and her shift of genre in Patricia Johanson and the Re-Invention of Public Environmental Art, 1958-2010. Johanson’s artistic career started with painting, which shifted to sculpture; then to garden art; and eventually to landscape architecture. The shift of genre also meant a shift from individual production of art to “collaborative production of public landscapes” as the artworks became more complex and multidimensional.4 As Johanson’s art moved from gallery art to public art, the differences in how each form is experienced by the audience was also important to the change in genre. Gallery art prompts “distanced contemplation” of the artworks because the institutional and academic history of art galleries forces visitors to become viewers, experiencing the art through sight and written expectations of what the art signifies.5 Public art encourages “multiple forms of experience” through the openness and unstructured quality of the art and its placement in a public space, and it can “allow people to develop new

5 Ibid, 6.
perspectives on certain public issues in a changing society.”6 Visitors become part of the artwork and landscape when art is public. Their experience is not confined to one dimension as it is in a gallery; rather, their experience becomes multidimensional because of the many unexpected and natural elements that surround the artwork. Johanson wanted visitors “to engage with the mysteries of nature,” prompted by her artwork, “not to admire her artworks” for being art.7 Her designs aimed to bring people to the space, but then let nature to take over.

Many of Johanson’s designs and artworks were created to construct “a new ethic of relationships between humans and nonhumans,” focused on the sense of wonder in nature, tradition, and culture of a local public history, and the “palimpsest of positive interactions between humans and nature.”8 One example of a design that met these expectations is Fair Park Lagoon in Dallas, Texas. Large sculptures on either end of the lagoon capture people’s attention through their bold colors and design, and then emphasize the greater goals of environmental and biological restoration. Johanson’s new genre of public environmental art is “engaging, multi-layered, heterogenous and community oriented.”9 The goal is to use art to bring people to nature. Then, people forget about the art as the nonhuman parts of the space take over the experience.

According to the Tate Museum website, Environmental Art is “art that addresses social and political issues relating to the natural and urban environment.”10 The term began to be used in the late 1960s, coinciding with the start of the 1970s Environmental Movement. Environmental art emerged out of Land Art, similarly questioning the importance of the gallery and exhibition. Environmental artists seek “other places where art can happen and where art can exist.”11 They work “in new ways outside, or

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6 Wu, Patricia Johanson, 6.
7 Ibid, 45.
8 Ibid, 6-7 and 186.
9 Ibid, 9.
[bring] natural materials into new settings,” falling into natural cycles of seasons and other flows. Environmental artists seek to change attitudes and perceptions toward the site where the art is situated and bring attention to what was already there. Environmental art sometimes questions the importance of viewership to the concept of the art. Public environmental art brings together environmental art’s focus on place with public art’s focus on people. Johanson takes influence from multiple genres of art to redefine public environmental art.

The expectations and goals of Johanson’s public environmental art can be applied to contemporary public art exhibits that I have visited. Thomas Dambo’s *Forgotten Giants* (2016) is a permanent installation of a series of wooden giants in parks in the Western Copenhagen region. It brings people out to the parks to see the art, but the experience of going through the park to find the sculptures is the artist’s goal. Modern technology allows visitors to go on a scavenger hunt to find the giants. On the artist’s website, a stylized map shows where in the western municipalities of Copenhagen the giants are located. They can all be found in parks or other natural and recreational places in six adjacent towns. The giants are about 20-30 minutes apart by bike, and a full day can be structured around the search for each giant. The giants are also located in places with other attractions nearby, so the scavenger hunt can be spread out over a longer period of time. When I visited the artworks and parks, I took a whole day to bike around the area, biking through parks, farms, and suburbs to get to each sculpture. My goal for this bike ride was to see these sculptures in person, because I had only ever read about them online. An unintended result, that

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12 Da Cunha Lewin and Nichols, “Environmental Art Movement Overview.”
Dambo surely intended for the visitors, was that my search for the giants allowed me to spend time in this part of greater Copenhagen that I had never been to before. Although my goal was to visit the sculptures, most of my day was spent in the neighborhoods and parks looking for the giants, instead of with the giants themselves. I was able to explore the biking network that winds through residential areas, parks, and farms.

Like Patricia Johanson, Dambo hopes that his art can encourage a narrative to be developed between the visitors and nature. His role was to spark that connection. The Forgotten Giants aim to “bring art out of the museum, show the beautiful and often overlooked nature spots, and at the same time give an exciting and different experience.” By actively participating in an expansive scavenger hunt, the visitors’ curiosity is awakened, and they come to view the artworks and the parks as “hidden gems in nature.”

One of the sculptures, Hill Top Trina, is located in the Quark Nature Center, a farm and nature area where visitors can walk along trails and see cows, sheep, and chickens. Trina sits on the slope of a hill with her back against the hillside. Her hands, open to the sky, rest on her bent knee, with her other leg stretched out. She is easily visible from the entrance of the nature center, sitting in an open field. Visitors can climb over Trina’s legs and clamber up to her open hands to get a panoramic view of the nature area. She is a sculpture that becomes a play structure for the young and old alike. Though she is made of

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14 Ibid.
scrap planks of wood and her hair is tree branches, she seems to be alive, inviting the visitors to create their own experience in the nature center.

Another one of the sculptures, *Little Tilde*, takes a different approach to engaging the visitors. *Tilde* is in Vallensbaek, in a wild park with a lake, streams, and forests. Unlike *Trina*, which is visible from the entrance of the park, finding *Little Tilde* is part of the nature experience. Visitors must make their way through unmarked, muddy paths through the woods to get to her. She stands watch over the lake, peeking out between the pine trees with her tail curled up and resting on the ground behind her. Her body is covered in feather-like shingles, some of which have holes that lead to bird houses within the structure.

*Tilde* is perfectly suited for the place where she stands, which simultaneously heightens the beauty of the landscape and strengthens the power of *Tilde*. Each of the *Forgotten Giants* are built from, by, and for the place where they are located, reiterating the place-based nature of the art.

Olafur Eliasson’s *Cirkelbroen* (2015) is a bridge that was built over a canal in Amager, an island on the east side of Copenhagen, as a response to the needs of the people in this area. It is a visible landmark along the canal, and connects people to the waterfront. Five circular platforms, each with a ship’s mast and steel wires as rigging, are connected to each other across a narrow canal. *Cirkelbroen* allows people to walk or bike along the edge of the waterfront, instead of having to walk around the
smaller canal. In this bridge, Olafur Eliasson uses artistic architecture and engineering to reconstruct a place and remind people to slow down. The bridge is a recognizable object in the Amager skyline looking east from central Copenhagen. Along with Cirkelbroen, much of Eliasson’s art uses light, open space, water, and other natural elements to connect people to the surrounding environment. Eliasson was one of the first artists that I knew of that structures his art around people and the natural environment, and this connection to nature inspires much of my work.

Fujiko Nakaya’s Fog x FLO (August - October 2018) is another example of contemporary public environmental art that aims to bring people outside and to their parks. Fog x FLO is a temporary series of fog exhibits dispersed over the Emerald Necklace, a park system in Boston and Brookline, Massachusetts designed by Frederick Law Olmsted (FLO) in the late 1900s. The Emerald Necklace wraps around the edges of Boston, connecting urbanites to riverways and greenery in a diversity of Boston’s neighborhoods. The art exhibit highlights the natural beauty of the parks through the dynamic placement of fog flowing through six sections of the park.

I was only able to visit one section of the exhibition, Fog x Canopy, the closest section to downtown Boston. The Emerald Necklace runs along the Muddy River, a tributary to the Charles River, and Fog x Canopy is located along a bend in the river in the Back Bay Fens. Trees and shrubs grow along the shoreline beyond a grassy field, and the river is visible through the gaps between the trees. Sturdy sycamore trees line the paved path that follows the river’s curves and hold up hanging pipes on either side
of the path. At this location, the fog only appears for 2 minutes on the half hour and hour, so when we got there, a handful of people were standing around, waiting for the fog to appear.

When the fog turned on, it began to emit from the many nozzles on the pipes and spread towards the river. At first, the fog just drifted over the grass toward the water, but as the breeze shifted directions, the fog also shifted to envelop the path and trees, so that the piping and sycamore trees could no longer be seen. In only seconds, the fog had completely changed the landscape. I walked through the fog, and it was impossible to see ten feet in front of me. As I walked through the cool and wet fog, people just appeared next to me, their approach masked by the density of the mist. The other people were also walking through the fog, marveling at its transformative power and beauty. Stepping out of the fog, I saw the ways that the fog flowed across the landscape. It rose up, then drifted lower, staying below the tree’s canopies, so that the green of the leaves and the yellow glow of the sun shone through the white fog.

After two minutes, the pipes turned off and the fog began to dissipate. As the fog became less dense, rays of sunlight shone through, emphasized by the shadows of the trees. The flowing and disappearing fog’s constant motion made the rays of light seem ethereal as they shifted and faded from view. Soon, the fog had drifted away from the path across the grass and through the bushes, until the only
remaining bits of mist hovered over the river, where it then vanished.

The temporality of *Fog x FLO* is what attracted me to visit it. The other sections of *Fog x FLO* are farther south on the Emerald Necklace. Each consecutive section has fog that appears for longer than the last, until the final section in Franklin Park, where fog appears for 18 minutes out of a 20 minute cycle. *Fog x FLO* highlights the natural beauty of the park through the artificial dispersal of a natural element. Fog is such a natural and pure phenomenon that it seems overly simple to create an art exhibition out of it, but the simplicity is effective in drawing people in and connecting them to the park.

In Riverway Park, also on the Emerald Necklace in Brookline, the Spring *Beyond Boundaries* art installation (April 28 - June 3, 2018) integrates temporary art by local artists into the park’s landscape. Over a short stretch of trail, a wide range of sculptures either immediately capture the viewer’s attention or are hidden between the trees and require more effort to find.

Joe Wight’s *A Place For Everything and Everything In Its Place* is a triptic scattered along the trail. Pink lifesize furniture and pink people interact with three different trees in unexpected ways. A pink man hugs a wide tree with an armchair, floor lamp, and small table placed carefully behind him on the grassy top of a small hill. Two wooden dining room chairs at the base of another tree lead up to four other chairs climbing up the tree’s branch and a small pink figure hanging off the highest part of the branch. Another pink child, balanced on a knot in the tree, grabs onto the top of a pink door nestled into the fork of a third tree, twelve feet above the ground. Each part of this artwork is meant to startle and capture the
visitor’s attention. The artificial color of the sculptures contrasts with the artwork’s intimate interaction with nature, prompting the visitor to contemplate the questions posed by the artist, “Do these people have new found connections or have they lost the ground? Are they bonding with nature or is nature rejecting them?”\(^{15}\) The boldness of this piece immediately asks people to interact with it.

In contrast, Anne Eder’s *Cthonic Radiata* blends into the natural and human-made landscape, draped over the side of a stone pedestrian bridge over the Muddy River. Plant material, wire, rubber, paint, and wood make up this large, mythical, octopus-like creature. If the visitor does not look closely, the creature is easily missed because its colors and texture meld into the surrounding ecology, even though its form is almost completely unrealistic. As the artist description reads, “this creature disregards geographical and rational boundaries. It exists on the borderline between the real and the imagined, the expected and the unexpected.”\(^{16}\) The subtlety of the materials and the octopus’s location, hidden along the side of the bridge, requires the visitor to look purposefully for the artwork.

However, once the octopus is discovered by the visitor, the art does not seem subtle at all. *Cthonic Radiata*’s large scale and bold form somehow manage to seem completely out of place and absolutely natural at the same time.

\(^{15}\) Joe Wight, artist description of “A place for everything and everything in its place” in *Beyond Boundaries*, April 8 - June 3, 2018.

\(^{16}\) Anne Eder, artist description of “Cthonic Radiata” in *Beyond Boundaries*, April 8 - June 3, 2018.
*Coddiwomple*, by Stacey Piwinski and Wendy Wolf, is a simple installation of a woven textile looping a grove of trees together. The single piece of long fabric was woven by the artists, using “a variety of brightly colored items gathered from people in [their] community,” situating the artwork in a specific place. The word “coddiwomple” comes from the definition, “to travel purposefully towards an as-yet-unknown destination,” mirroring the ways that the cloth meanders throughout the grove of trees.

The cloth weaves through the trees at different heights, along the gently sloping ground. Although the bright rainbow colors of the cloth are bold and eye-catching, the simplicity of a cloth weaving and meandering through the trees proves that the artwork does not need to have a complicated relationship with the trees in order to catch people’s attention and convey a specific message. The simplicity of the cloth woven between the trees is similar to the simplicity of my public art exhibition.

Subtle public environmental artwork is another type of public art that I explore. The difficulty with subtle art that blends into its environment is that there is sometimes not much documentation of it or excitement around it. Often, the boldness of public art is what draws people to it, while more discrete art may not capture people’s attention immediately. In LAND Studio’s “Kent Public Art Plan,” a review of precedent public art mentioned a few examples of subtle public art. *The Fairy Doors* in Ann Arbor, Michigan is where local businesses around the city host small door installations along the exteriors or interiors of their businesses for adults and children to find. These little doors are unique to each business

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18 Ibid.
and provide an individualized sense of place at each door. People can leave little gifts at each fairy door, a level of interaction that invites closer inspection and sense of ownership. *The Fairy Doors* inspires creativity and imagination from the visitors passing by. The simplicity of *The Fairy Doors* may be relevant to the subtlety of my art.

Another example of subtle public environmental art is the addition of faces on trees. On a trunk of a tree, eyes, a nose, and a mouth animate the tree and bring it to life. These simple additions to the tree are quiet and may not be noticed by everyone, but they bring a new meaning to the trees. The subtlety of this art might also be seen as anonymity, another trend in public art. The face on the trees is unlabelled and blends into the landscape. Although I saw this public art in a publication, I realized that I have seen these faces on trees in urban areas. I just did not consider them as public art at first because their subtlety and simplicity is often overshadowed by the boldness of other public art installations. The whimsical animation of the tree with the simple installation of a face is similar to the playful subtlety of my public art installation.

In the introduction to *Artists Reclaim the Commons*, Barbara Goldstein describes three main types of public art: the collaborative art making process, the anonymous art installations, and the curated public art exhibitions. These categories can overlap with each other and are not strictly exclusive. Collaborative art engages volunteers and the community in the making and purpose of the art. It comes from the community to serve community needs. Anonymous or guerrilla artists usually install their unauthorized works in secret, using their art “as political and social statement.” The temporality that comes with guerrilla art creates a mysterious atmosphere around anonymous public artwork. While I do not explore political guerilla/anonymous art in detail, the subtle public art that I discussed earlier might fit into the anonymous category. Curated public art exhibitions place artworks in specifically designated areas for

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public art, in both traditional and nontraditional spaces. Curated public art is an extension of gallery art in an outdoor setting, meant to introduce a wider audience to fine art. Two art parks that I have visited recently, the Lincoln Street Art Park in Detroit and the Minneapolis Sculpture Garden, are similar in that they are designated spaces for public art, but they are also completely different in their creation and audience. Lincoln Street Art Park falls more under the category of collaborative art, both in its creation and intended audience. The Minneapolis Sculpture Garden is a curated park for well-known artists, meant to bring fine art to the public.

Lincoln Street Art Park is located right next to Detroit’s Green Living Science’s drop-off recycling center. Green Living Science was established to educate Detroit residents about sustainability and recycling because there was no recycling program in the city. Their goal is to make it easy for residents to recycle, and to expand recycling throughout Detroit. The art park next to the drop-off recycling center is created from recycled material by local artists, a site-specific response to the recycling facility’s goals of being sustainable and community oriented. It is located on a small parcel of land on a quiet but industrial looking street. The whole park is full of color, and plants grow haphazardly in between the pieces of art. The scattered sculptures and murals on the side of the building differ from each other in their form, but they all share the aspect of being made from reused materials and by the community. The park provides a space for community engagement and a source of pride. It is obvious that the park celebrates change and flexibility through the temporality of some of the materials and the history of murals and graffiti as a changing
work of art. The artist is not a central part of the park because each piece of art is anonymous; the community and the visitor is placed in the spotlight. The informality of Lincoln Art Park makes the art more relatable to the surrounding community. This art park is collaborative and community-based because it recognizes the strength of Detroit’s people and history, providing a stark contrast to heavily curated sculpture gardens.

The Minneapolis Sculpture Garden has similar community-oriented goals as the Lincoln Art Park, but its form and creation process is almost completely different. It neighbors the Walker Art Center, a well known fine art museum. The garden is created and maintained through a collaboration between the Walker Art Center and the Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Board. “Architects, curators, designers, artists, landscape architects, gardeners, environmentalists, writers, scientists, and many others [worked with] community members” to redesign the Sculpture Garden, which was refinished in 2017. Many of the artists are well-known internationally, and the Sculpture Garden is a prestigious place for an exhibition of their art. Paths guide visitors between the sculptures that are each labeled with the title, artist, materials, funding, and a short description of the piece. In between the sculptures are meadow habitats and sustainable water management design elements that situate the art in nature, and provide important ecological functions like stormwater management and native ecosystems.

Each element of the sculpture park is heavily curated. Artists include big names like Alexander Calder, Kiki Smith, Claes Oldenburg, Coosje van Bruggen, Sol LeWitt, Roy Lichtenstein, Ellsworth Kelly, and many others. The two most recognizable sculptures in the garden are Spoonbridge and Cherry.

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24 Ibid.
(1988) by Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen, and *Hahn/Cock* (2017) by Katharina Fritsch. *Spoonbridge and Cherry* was the first commissioned piece of art for the Sculpture Garden. It is a giant spoon laying across a small pond with an equally large cherry perched on the tip of its bowl. The spoon takes influence from Oldenburg’s past works of 1960s pop art, and the “spoon’s raised bowl [evokes] the prow of a Viking ship or a duck bobbing in a lake.”25 The cherry comes from van Bruggen’s childhood memories of happiness. It is a recognizable symbol of Minneapolis for many people. *Hahn/Cock* is a 25 foot tall blue rooster on a simple white pedestal that, like *Spoonbridge and Cherry*, reimagines the idea of a “traditional public monument”.26 From the other side of the garden, it is eye-catching, and from underneath, it towers over the visitor. Both *Spoonbridge and Cherry* and *Hahn/Cock* are iconic pieces of art for the Twin Cities that provide a sense of place for its residents.

Unlike the Lincoln Street Art Park, the Minneapolis Sculpture Garden is heavily curated in both the art and the landscape in which the art is placed. This public art is of the fine art genre, created by the artists and placed in the park, rather than being created by the artists and community in the park. While many of the sculptures are site-specific and the intentions behind the art may be to reach the public, the audience of the Minneapolis Sculpture Garden is a different demographic than Detroit’s Lincoln Art Park. The Minneapolis Sculpture Garden is much more formal than Lincoln Art Park, both in the creation process and the design of the space, so the audience correspondingly acts more formal in the former, and informal in the latter.

25 “Minneapolis Sculpture Garden.”
26 Ibid.
An even more heavily curated, restricted place for outdoor art is the deCordova Sculpture Park and Museum in Lincoln, Massachusetts, a suburb 20 miles away from Boston. While Lincoln Street Art Park and the Minneapolis Sculpture garden are free for the public to enjoy, the deCordova requires an entrance fee on most days, so it may not even be considered public. Although there is usually a fee for visitors at the deCordova, people who arrive on bikes are always admitted for free, and admission is free for everyone on Wednesdays. I am including the deCordova Sculpture Park in this literature review because its form as outdoor art is very similar to that of the Minneapolis Sculpture Garden, and the deCordova also has ties to public art exhibits in the center of Boston. Their values include the integration of art with nature, a goal that other public art parks have also emphasized.²⁷

At the deCordova sculpture garden, some pieces of art are permanent and others are temporary. Many of the pieces are made by internationally known artists or local artists in New England, and many of the artworks are site specific or ecologically related. Some pieces are not site-specific but are shown because the artist is well-known. The sculptures dot the diverse landscapes around the museum. Different sections in the sculpture park have varying levels of planned vegetation, with some gardens formally planned, some areas with cut lawns and trimmed trees, and others in a more forested setting, providing different environments for the visitor’s engagement experience with each piece of art. In between the artworks, visitors are encouraged to wander at their own pace and direction. Mowed grass allows people to wander

or sit wherever they want in the park, and in the garden on the hillside, many paths allow people to choose where they want to wander.

A deCordova museum exhibit is connected to the temporary mural in Dewey Square on the Rose Kennedy Greenway in Boston. In the museum, a diptych by Shara Hughes, *Carving Out Fresh Options* (2018), is the influence for the large scale mural on the Greenway Wall. Bold and vivid colors create a surreal landscape of water, canyons, and cliffs “to create ecstatic interpretations of the natural world.” 28 The large scale mural on the greenway invites viewers to be drawn into the piece. The collaboration between the Rose Kennedy Greenway Conservancy and the deCordova Museum connects gallery art to a public art installation.

Art that responds to seasons along with place is another genre of public art that has significance to my public art installation. COLD, or the Center for Outdoor Living Design in Cleveland, brought together public artists, architects, landscape architects, and urban designers in the COLDSCAPES competition of 2013 to answer the questions, “How can we design our winter environments to rekindle a sense of childhood adventure, wonder, and novelty? How can we turn winter weather into an asset instead of a liability?” 29 In many cities around the world, winter weather is present for almost half of the year, but people are conditioned to avoid the cold. In the winter, people spend all their time inside, going outside only to run to another warm space in as little time possible. COLDSCAPES aims to open up winter landscapes and urban spaces to the public through enjoyable and interesting design interventions.

In Studio Roosegaarde’s *Interactive Landscapes*, various installations of public art are designed to invite people to “pause, enjoy, and interact” with outdoor artwork.\(^{30}\) These artworks are meant to “help re-awaken these public spaces from their winter hibernation.”\(^{31}\) These goals are what I hope to achieve with my public art installation. In *Interactive Landscapes*, MARBLES and DUNE respond to the presence of humans in different ways. MARBLES utilizes sound, light, and color in large glowing mounds that respond to human touch to “[transform] the landscape into an interactive meeting place of light.”\(^{32}\) DUNE is a “hybrid of nature and technology” with grass-like fibers placed alongside a path that brighten and change when responding to the sounds and motion of visitors.\(^{33}\) Both of these examples are uniquely placed to respond to the darkness of night, which is highlighted in the winter months when it stays dark for longer.

Martin Van Valkenburgh Associates’ *Ice Walls* (1988) brought people outside by emphasizing normal objects in new ways.\(^{34}\) The normalcy of a chain-linked fence and ice in the winter were combined to create a significant public art installation. Utilizing water in the specific time and place of Harvard Radcliffe quad in winter meant that water would form ice on the installed fence, transforming everyday objects into a piece of art. The three sections of chain-linked fence installed in curves on the grassy quad created paths between each other for people to explore the icy fences in new ways. Irrigation pipes lined on the top of the fence emitted water that froze into thin sheets of ice. This exhibit of public environmental art brought people outside to see something that was both very unique and very normal, challenging the ways people think about public spaces in winter.

A more specific example of public environmental art close to Oberlin, Professor Julia Christensen’s *Waiting for a Break* (2017) aims to bring the natural beauty of Lake Erie in the winter to the

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\(^{31}\) Ibid.

\(^{32}\) Ibid, 24.

\(^{33}\) Ibid, 25.

Cleveland public. It was inspired by differing attitudes toward the lake in the summer and in the winter. In the summer people love the lake, but in the winter, cold temperatures and unfavorable weather keep people inside and away from the lake. *Waiting for a Break* intends to bring this hard-to-access winter lake to people through video. Over the winter Christensen installed cameras along the shoreline of Lake Erie and on several islands in the Sandusky and Maumee Bays. Video feeds from these cameras were shown in several locations, including a screen on Public Square, in downtown Cleveland, which was commissioned by LAND Studio. It was also shown in a solo exhibition at SPACES Gallery, and the video feeds can also be found online. The installation of this art reflects Lake Erie in winter in an outdoor, public space and influences the ways that people use that space and view their broader surroundings.

The Tappan square rocks are an example of an ever-changing installation of public art in Oberlin that is both temporary and permanent. An object of self-expression for people at Oberlin, the Tappan square rocks are a symbol of Oberlin’s students and sense of community. Three boulders are placed on the southwest side of Tappan square, and their surfaces are constantly getting spray painted by all sorts of people in Oberlin. While the rocks may not be seen as art because anyone can spray-paint onto them, the rocks exemplify the collaborative and place based public art that the rest of this literature review focuses on. By being placed in a public location such as Tappan square, anyone who paints onto the rocks has to acknowledge the very diverse and unexpected ways that the public can react to them. In some ways, the Tappan square rocks are an example of the anonymous art installations that Barbara Goldstein describes in her introduction to *Artists Reclaim the Commons*, but the rocks are also meant to be painted on, which decreases the level of spontaneity and rule breaking that “anonymous” implies.

In the Martin Luther King Jr. Park in Oberlin, Ohio, Athena Tacha’s *Streams* (1975-76) overlooks Plum Creek. Athena Tacha was an art professor at Oberlin who is well known for her public environmental art. *Streams* “evoke[s] the essence of water,” giving new meaning to the flows of walking, ascending, and descending on the stone and cement steps that are punctuated by pumice rocks and
The various step sizes and meandering pathways created by the broken-up patterns of the steps mimics the ever-changing flows of Plum Creek at the base of the artwork. Weathering from over 40 years has changed the look and feel of the artwork in the park. The darkened stone and cement steps blend into the river landscape, even with the stark difference between the steps and the mowed grass surrounding it. Although *Streams* is located in a public park so that “it could be enjoyed by many people,” MLK park is set away from downtown Oberlin, with little foot traffic. To the people that do walk by, *Streams* is an identifiable feature of the park that brings attention to the river that runs through Oberlin. It made me notice Plum Creek because it opens up to the river, where the river is usually blocked by buildings or trees in other parts of Oberlin. *Streams* is an example of site-specific environmental artwork close to the site of my public art installation, and it influences the site-specificity that I aim for in my artwork.

The many examples of public environmental art that I have seen and studied have influenced the ways that I approached my public art installation in Oberlin in the winter. The goals of artists to connect people to a specific place and time with art has inspired my work. Public environment art bridges the

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36 Ibid, 29.
perceived gap between people/culture and nature. The categories that separate the different kinds of public art that I focused on in this literature review are not strict categories. Works can fluidly fit into multiple categories.

**Public Art Evaluation**

Another major part of public art, that is often not discussed, is the evaluation of public art’s effects. In this section of the literature review, I will review previous studies of public art evaluation and techniques to optimize public interaction. While there is a lot of art historical literature about public art, work about the evaluation of public art is limited because formal evaluation is not often considered by the artist. Since the benefits of public art are hard to quantify, proponents of public art fear that people will use non-conclusive public art evaluations as opportunities to take away funding for the arts. This section of the literature review will inform the methods of my art creation and data collection.

To ensure the success of a public art project, the public space where the artwork is located should be an inviting place for the community that is chosen with care. A good public space ensures comfortable interactions with the artwork. Fred Kent and Cynthia Nikitin emphasize that “flexibility, changeability, evolution, and an appreciation for humanity” on the part of artists and planners will ensure that the public artwork speaks to the community in a meaningful way. When public art is located in a good space built for people, the art does not have to try so hard to draw people in. When I chose the site for my public art exhibition, I worked with the city to identify the place where public art would fit in. We considered the amount of foot traffic and effectiveness of various outdoor public spaces to find the place where people would feel safe and comfortable to interact with the art in a significant way.

Katherine Gressel’s article, “Public Art and the Challenge of Evaluation,” reviews the recent literature on public art assessment to see what evaluation techniques are useful and are being employed.

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For the social sciences, evaluation consists of goals/outcomes of a project and defining indicators to determine when outcomes are met. A guide compiled by Ixia’s OPENspace in 2004 identified four unique values that should be prioritized and measured before, during, and after the artmaking process: artistic, social/community, environmental, and economic. Artists should engage with stakeholders to determine goals throughout the process. Although Ixia outlined specific ways to evaluate public art’s impact, it is unclear whether these tools are actually being used. While public art organizations often tout the positive outcomes of public art, “scarce data... are difficult to connect directly to public art in a cause and effect relationship,” making it hard to “show [a] consistent relationship between [public art] and other theorized outcomes.”38 The limited data and lack of enthusiasm of artists to help with evaluation means that evaluation is often not considered part of the public art process. Some proponents of public art believe that “it’s people looking to weaken public art who are trying to ask these questions about its impact,” so they are wary of conducting evaluations.39 However, evaluations can also be useful to the artists and communities where public art is located.

While evaluation is often not well documented in public art projects, there are some indicators of public art’s impact that are easily measured40:

- “Testimonies on the educational and social impact of collaborative public art projects.” This could include interviews and surveys of people who experience the artwork.
- “Qualitative audience responses,” including if the artwork “provokes any type of discussion, debate or controversy.” The public art installation at Oberlin during Fall 2018, Counternarratives, sparked conversation on campus when it was damaged by the weather, demonstrating that people were personally affected by the artwork.

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39 Ibid.
40 Ibid.
How the artwork is “treated over time by a community.” Is the artwork neglected, vandalised, or taken care of by the community?

“Press coverage” of the public art can show how much people are paying attention to the art.

And finally, measuring the “levels of audience engagement with public art via internet [and] educational programming.” These structured activities can provide qualitative data about the numbers of people who are interested in the artwork. “Smart” technology, like the utilization of QR codes, can provide an “easy qualitative measure of public interest” in the art.

These indicators provide some structure to the evaluation of my public art that I will conduct, but the specific parameters (temporary and relatively low traffic area) of my project limit the usefulness of these indicators. Gressel emphasizes that “surveying project participants and community members about their feelings about a program or project, and how they think they were impacted by it, is one of the most doable types of research (apart from the challenges of getting people to fill out surveys).”41 I will employ this type of evaluation in my research of people’s reactions to my public art exhibition.

Ann Morrison, at the University of Queensland, identifies her methods of evaluating computer-based interactive art in an indoor, enclosed setting. While the setting and the users of her experience are more limited than the public setting and broad audience of my public art project, the methods she used to evaluate the effectiveness of the art can inform the methods that I use in gathering data. Morrison emphasizes that the artwork and artist should be open to not just “eliciting one homogenous experience, but rather a range of experiences.”42 This is because “people come to interactive works… with their own set of expectations,” and the users interpret the art in their own ways.43 Morrison

41 Gressel, “Public Art and the Challenge of Evaluation.”
43 Ibid, 510.
believes that researching the experiences that the art elicits in the audience is valuable for the artist’s future work. With my project, I am learning how my art affects the people who experience it, which will inform how I see my own artwork, how I approach future projects, and how future studies can effectively conduct qualitative public art evaluation.

In this paper, Morrison explains how she evaluated two different interactive art installations: her own work, and a series of other artists’ installations. She used a range of approaches to evaluate how people responded to the artworks, including shadowing, interviewing and informal discussion, and formal questionnaires. The variety of evaluation approaches provided a fuller perspective to how participants experience the art. First, she approached the art as an audience member/participant instead of the artist to try to see what the audience members were seeing and experiencing. The next stage was shadowing, where Morrison observed people while they were engaging with the art, as well as in their everyday routines. In reflection, Morrison believes that a “fly-on-the-wall” observational approach, where the observer is unnoticed by the observed, is more effective than shadowing, where the subject is aware that they are being observed, because being aware of the observation may affect the behavior. In my project, I will utilize the “fly-on-the-wall” method so I can observe participants in their natural and authentic behaviors.

Next, Morrison utilized written questionnaires and informal conversation to gain insight into the participants’ own experiences with the art. She sent out an email for volunteers and approached participants directly to fill in formal questionnaires. The short conversations that the author had with participants before, during, or after filling out the surveys provided valuable context and understanding of their experiences. She received 30 questionnaires for her installation and 25 questionnaires for the second installation. Participants of the installations were people within the fields of art, design, and technology, not the very unpredictable and varied audience of public art, which makes Morrison’s research methods

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44 Ibid, 509.
different from mine. In fact, Morrison utilized the background knowledge of participants to enhance her results because the interactions with and feedback from the general public “focus around how to use the work… in short - education.” The feedback from the general public complicates data because it does not have enough depth. However, I do not have this choice of participants because my art will be located in a public place for potential interaction with anyone of all sorts of background knowledge and varied experiences. Although our research focuses on different types of art installations, there are parts of Morrison’s research methods that can be applied to my methods of data collection.

The concept of interactive art is broad and at times unclear. Ernest Edmonds, a pioneer of computer art, outlines the definitions of interactive art in his article, “Interactive Art.” On a basic level, interactive art is “when audience participation is an integral part of the artwork.” The idea of “audience participation” is where the definitions become unclear and open to interpretation. Participation can mean “looking at, listening to or interacting with an artwork.” Edmonds believes that it is the artist’s duty to facilitate the audience experience, provoke it, and gain knowledge about it.

Artists can observe people interacting with their artwork in order to understand how the work “performs.” Edmonds, like Morrison, utilizes observation as an evaluation technique to inform how the artist’s future work will more effectively provoke responses and experiences from the audience. In conducting observations, Edmonds asks himself these questions: What do the participants do? How do their interactions develop? And do they experience pain or pleasure? These are questions that I can ask myself as I observe the audience experience of my artwork.

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46 Ibid.
47 Ernest Edmonds, “Interactive Art,” 1. [https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/e245/df020f7f8b8a99750f8e9c4f70f4db7971a.pdf](https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/e245/df020f7f8b8a99750f8e9c4f70f4db7971a.pdf)
48 Ibid.
49 Ibid, 4.
50 Ibid, 16.
51 Ibid, 1.
Methods

In this section, I will explain the methods I used in my project. Collaboration has been vital to the success of this project. I worked with many people to find an appropriate place for the art, create the art installation, and determine the ways of collecting data. While the artmaking process was in some ways a realization of my personal vision, I also kept in mind throughout the whole process that public art has the power to influence many people beyond myself. In this methods section, I will explain how I conducted background research, got permissions to install the art and collect data, created the art, installed the final iteration of Hanging Leaves, collected data, and analyzed results.

Literature Review and Field Visits

I conducted a literature review of books, peer reviewed journals and popular media to bolster my knowledge on the topic of public art and refine my research questions, methods and the scope of the project. I visited public art installations and analyzed past visits to develop a deeper place-based perspective. Analyzing the literature and public art installations that I have visited helps to inform the purpose and form of my piece of public art in Oberlin. By researching existing public art, I can be more effective at relating the artwork to its place. Reviewing literature on public art evaluation allows me to understand the ways that this kind of research has been done in the past. The literature review also can answer this project’s research questions through secondary research and meta analysis.

Preparation for Art Installation

To install the art onto the site and get data about people’s interactions with the art, I had to get permission from many different people in the city, community, and at the college. The first step was to choose the site with the guidance of the city.
I walked around Oberlin with a notebook, taking notes on the outdoor places where I could envision a piece of clay artwork. I wanted it to be in a public space with a lot of foot traffic, and also in a place with nature. I considered the arb, outside the hotel, in Tappan square, along the riparian zone around Plum Creek, in the Park Street Park, in the MLK Park, in between city hall and the other building, or in the East College Street park behind Slow Train. I met with Jeff Baumann, the Public Works Director for the City of Oberlin to talk about a site for the artwork and to learn about the history of some of these possible sites. We walked around Oberlin to look at the possible sites, and Jeff suggested Wright Park on the corner of Vine and Main Street, or the space in front of the municipal court. We decided against MLK Park, where I was thinking about installing it on the stone and concrete steps, because the artist, Athena Tacha, would probably not want someone else’s artwork on her art. MLK Park is also not a heavily trafficked place, so it would be hard to conduct observations or ensure that people would interact with the art. We walked past the Park Street Park, which also does not get regular foot traffic.

Finally, we walked through the East College Street Park. When I first thought of this site as a possible place for the art, I was thinking of hanging clay pieces off of the big tree in the center of the plaza. However, the branches of the tree are very high up, so it would be logistically difficult to install artwork on the branches of that tree. A row of four smaller trees on the east side of the plaza seemed like a better place to install my artwork. The branches are easier to reach, the trees are in a heavily trafficked area, it is part of nature, and there are spaces to observe the art nearby. Jeff told me that the development was all privately owned except for the plaza, which is owned by the city, and the owners of the development, Sustainable Community Associates (SCA), maintain the space. After talking about this space with Jeff, I decided that this would be the place for my art. Now I could start the creative process for this site-specific artwork.

To be able to install the art in this place, I had to get permission from both Jeff Baumann, representing the City, and Naomi Sabel, representing SCA. To install public art in Oberlin, there is not a
permitting process; I just had to let people know and get written approval. Once I started the creative process with the site, I wrote a proposal outlining the logistics and my creative process, along with some photos of the work in progress and the trees with the pop-up paper leaves. I sent this proposal to Naomi and Jeff, and it was approved by Naomi, the SCA board, Jeff, and the City. I proposed that the artwork would be installed over the second weekend in December, and I would conduct observations for the following two weeks. I left it up to the city and SCA to decide if it would stay up over January or if I would remove it before the end of the semester. It was decided that I would remove the artwork before I left for winter break or find someone to maintain it and look after it so it could stay for January.

A major part of this research are the observations and surveys of people who interact with the artwork. To get permission to conduct this human based research, I had to get approved by the Institutional Review Board to do exempt research. I came up with a plan to observe the public, through in person observations and a live stream camera connected to my phone. To install this camera in the office space above Kim’s, I got permission from Naomi and the tenant of the space. Over a period of a few weeks I came up with survey questions and the flow of the survey to get the most out of the surveys. Unfortunately, the IRB did not approve my proposal for research in December, so I revised it, taking out the camera, and adjusted my plans to conduct observations and surveys at the beginning of February, instead of at the end of the fall semester.

Creating the Art

My vision for the artwork was to be of multiple pieces and collaborative. I would create the individual units, choosing a shape based on something at the site, and others would carve into the clay with their own interpretation of the site. Talking with Cat Marshall, a landscape architect and professor at Kent State, led me to think more about the site-specificity of the art project and my intentions with the artwork. I approached the artwork through a design perspective, focusing on the artwork’s effect on the
place and people, instead of on my individual artistic goals, which my previous art has focused on. I began to think about the user’s experience in the space through patterns that people interact with. I considered the beginning, middle, and end of the viewer’s interaction, utilizing rhythms and repetitions, and I thought closely about clusters and spacing. I wanted to interact with people’s perceptions of the space and think about how to get people outside in the winter.

At the site, the four trees are on a patch of dirt in the shape of a triangle, surrounded by sidewalk paving. The narrow point of the triangle is at a lower elevation than the wide side. Along the long edge of the triangle is a ramp that slopes down from the wide side to the narrow part, connecting Slow Train and Dave’s Cosmic Subs with Kim’s and the stairs down beyond the plaza. Stairs on the short edge of the triangle, along the wide part of the patch of land, connect the north shops of the plaza with the east side. A concrete bench lines the edge of the middle length side of the triangle, with a flat sidewalk on the other side that connects East College Street with the plaza. Beyond that sidewalk is the Baron Art Gallery and the Alumni Office on the first floor, with housing above. The four trees are young, with thin but sturdy branches. When I first started to consider this site in early November, the leaves on the trees were a dark orange, and many of them were starting to fall off. By the time I decided on this site, almost all of the leaves had fallen off the trees, with a handful still clinging to the northernmost tree, and a scattering still on the other trees. During the warmer seasons, tall grass grows
along the side of the concrete bench, but when I observed the site the grass had been mowed in preparation for winter. When I installed the art, virtually all the leaves had fallen off, and many of them had already been raked up from the ground.

I chose the units to reflect the conditions of the site. I considered clay slabs cut into the shape of triangles, long rectangles, or simple leaves. Triangles would reflect the triangle of land that the four trees are planted in. The site is a transitory patch of land, where people do not normally notice the shape. The clay triangles would draw attention to the triangular piece of land. The long rectangles would hang from the trees like wind chimes. They would be long and thin, like the tree’s limbs. Clay leaves could evoke the falling leaves of autumn and the changing seasons to winter, depending on how they are arranged. They would bring attention to these trees, which are easily passed by because they are in the center of many paths. I was skeptical of the leaves at first, because they seemed too much like the obvious choice, so I thought it might be too cliche and overdone. But the leaves conveyed the seasonality and site specificity that I was looking for, and seemed to be the most understandable, so I decided to choose the leaves as the replicated unit. They would be clustered densely on the narrow (south) part of the triangle, and would get less dense towards the wider (north) part of the triangle. This would evoke the changing seasons’ effect on the trees by showing the gradation of density. In the dense area of clay pieces, they would be close enough that when there is wind they would bump against each other, like wind chimes.

Before committing to the clay, I experimented at the site with a pop-up installation of paper leaves hung with string. I cut out simple leaf shapes from newspaper and strung string through their top corners. On a cold, windy
weekday afternoon, I tied around 20 of these paper leaves to the limbs of two of the trees, attempting to stay true to the gradient of density that I described above. I left them up for only a few moments, to see how the installation would look, and then I took the leaves down. This pop-up installation allowed me to see what I was envisioning in my sketches. It would vary from the final product because clay is heavier than paper and would move differently in the wind. After the pop-up I realized the fragility of the trees limbs, so I decreased the size of the clay leaves from the paper leaves to be smaller and lighter. The hanging leaves would all be of a similar shape but various sizes, no bigger than 6 inches long and ¼ inch thick. I envisioned each piece hanging from the trees with wire, either individually or on a wire with multiple leaves.

To make the leaves, I used recycled clay from the pottery co-op. I was originally hoping to use the scrap clay that is kept in a pile behind the pottery co-op, but I did not have enough time to make it useable. That scrap clay is made of multiple varieties of clay with different characteristics and firing temperatures, so I would have had to experiment with this clay for a while to see if it would fire correctly. Along with the extra time it would take to make that clay useable, I also did not know if using that clay would add to the meaning of the piece. Using easier-to-make clay would contribute to the artwork’s purpose in the same way, so I decided to use the wet “slop” from the slop bucket. Slop is the wet, waste clay produced by throwing pots on the wheel. It can be added to dry mineral powders/sand to create a new batch of recycled clay, or dried out to be useable. I took the slop from the “Speckled Buff” red clay slop bucket, and dried it out for three days on plaster, which absorbs water easily, to be dry enough to roll into slabs. This clay would fire more predictably than the scrap clay.
behind the pottery co-op because it is a single variety of clay. After drying out the slop to make it useable, I rolled the red clay into slabs and cut out the leaves to make them ready for the participation part of the project.

For the participation component of the art project, I considered having a table at the site with the wet slabs of clay, so that people walking by could be part of the project and respond to my place-based prompts by carving their responses into the clay. I decided not to do this because I checked the weather for the weekend of 11/17-11/18, and it was going to be in the 30s and snowing one day. This could be a good idea for another collaborative, community art project one day, in warmer weather.

Instead, I had the collaboration of members of the pottery co-op. The people who participated were mostly college students, with a couple of community members. I wrote prompts for people to respond to, based on my own ideas of place and interpretation of the site. The prompts reference physical and time-based aspects of place, along with both personal and more objective interpretations of the plaza. These are the prompts that I had people respond to. They could respond in images, writing, or both, on either side of the clay leaf:

- Considering the changing season from fall to winter, how does it make you feel? What does it remind you of?
- At the site, there are four trees in the triangle, along with many other shapes. Find a geometry that intrigues you and create repetitions of it.
- A memory of the site.
- What does being at the site make you think of?

Around ten people collaborated with me to carve into the clay leaves. I set up times to be in the pottery co-op to facilitate the participation, and the student assistant of the pottery co-op also had her ex-co participate. Most people who collaborated in the art project responded to multiple prompts and carved into multiple leaves. Not every leaf was carved into, which I thought was fine. Some of them could
stay blank, making the leaves that have carvings more intriguing to look at. One shortcoming of the project was that I had to trust that people knew the site well enough before participating in the project. Because I sent out the prompts with the initial email to the pottery co-op, I allowed people to consider the site before carving into the leaves. To be truer to the site-specificity of the art, it would have been ideal to ensure that people walked around the trees in the plaza and observed the site in the same way that I did, but because participation was voluntary, I thought it was too much to ask people to do this. I just wanted people to show up. Because the plaza is in a relatively high traffic area of Oberlin, I trusted that most people knew where the site was. I also provided pictures that I had taken of the site in early November and mid-November with the pop-up installation of paper leaves.

After people carved into the leaves, they had to dry before being bisque fired for the first round of firings. The bisque firing made them durable and removed all of the water from them, so they would be ready for glazing. I glazed the leaves by myself, using pre-mixed glazes by other people in the pottery co-op. I used creamy shino, and old yellow on the carved leaves, and Ayumi’s matte turquoise and white salt on the smooth leaves because I did not know how those glazes would come out on the red clay. Only one side of the leaves could be glazed, otherwise it would stick to the kiln shelf.

The next stage of the leaves was to fire them in the gas kiln on the first weekend of December. The high heat and reduction of oxygen in the kiln throughout the firing process melts the glazes and gives them vibrant and variable colors. Firing the gas kiln is a major event in the pottery co-op. It requires a lot of time to load the kiln and a whole day to fire it. I helped load the kiln, along with a couple other people. I fit in the leaves among the open spaces on the kiln shelves between people’s mugs, bowls, and vases. To maximize space and improve the efficiency of the kiln, every piece of pottery
should be as close to each other and the top of the shelf as possible. After loading, the firing takes place over a period of 18 hours and then has to cool for two days before the pieces can be unloaded.

Once the leaves were out of the kiln, I gathered them up and got them ready to hang on the trees. I got some thin black wire and looped it through the hole in each leaf, twisting it around itself with pliers to secure it. In December, I installed the leaves on the trees with the help of some friends. Compared to the pop-up installation with paper and string, the clay and wire was a lot faster to install; it only took half an hour even in the cold weather. Similar to how the wire was attached to each leaf, I looped the wire around the tree’s branch, and twisted the wire around itself to secure it to the branch. Like the pop-up, and staying true to my original vision, I placed them on the trees in a gradient of densities, with the highest density of leaves on the southernmost tree, and only three leaves on the northern tree.

The clay leaves did not move around as much in the wind as the paper leaves did, which was expected, but I was disappointed that they did not chime against each other unless it was very windy. The glazes on the leaves and the brownish-red color of the clay made the leaves blend into the muted brown of the trees and the bleak winter landscape. They were small enough that from a distance they seem to be real leaves hanging in a strange manner, but up close they were obviously clay, with patterns, words, and images carved into each one.

Because of the problems with getting IRB permission, I had to remove the artwork and reinstall it in the beginning of the spring semester. I got suggestions to use a more moveable wire so that the leaves blow around more in the wind. When I finally was able to observe, the time period was very far away from my original vision of the seasonality of fall to winter. From my intentions with the artwork, the
site-specificity of it needed to be implemented in a specific time period. By the time I was able to observe, the site-specificity of my artwork that I anticipated was not as relevant to the site. The clay leaves turned out to be relevant to the site and people in a different and unexpected way.

The Installation

In February, I did the final installation of *Hanging Leaves* in conjunction with the public behavior observation and survey distribution period. Instead of the thicker black wire that I used in December, I hung the leaves from the trees with thin fishing wire. On a cold Sunday in early February, I tied the fishing wire to each leaf inside, then tied each leaf to the trees. Once outside, I sorted the leaves into four piles for each of the trees, trying to have a diversity of color, pattern, and size on each tree. The density on each tree was similar to the previous wire installation. The major difference was the change from wire to fishing wire, so the leaves twirled more in any amount of wind. I also placed the leaves closer together so they would clink against one another more often.

The fishing wire allowed the leaves to move more in the wind and have a stronger visual and acoustic presence. Compared to the installation in December, the fishing wire installation was more dynamic, where the leaves seemed to be floating below the branches. The visual and physical aspect of the clay leaves hanging down from the thin branches, blowing in the wind, fused with the listening experience of hearing the leaves clinking against each other. I thought this installation would catch people’s attention more because of the twirling and clinking of the leaves. This iteration of *Hanging Leaves* was the most successful in achieving my artistic goals.
Throughout the observation period, I watched people’s interactions with the artwork, as well as the art’s interaction with the weather and the space. Being outside meant that the leaves were in an uncontrolled environment. Over two weeks, I watched the leaves in the cold, snow, wind, sun, warmth, and rain. They twirled in the wind, got tangled around each other, and many of them fell down to the ground. Halfway through the observation and survey period, when around half of the leaves had fallen off the trees, I went through a crisis about the purpose of the artwork. Although I had planned the installation for the leaves to hang from the trees, I realized that the leaves falling down reflected how actual leaves fall off trees in real life. This was not what I was looking for, but maybe it provided a different function. It was another way that the art interacted with its environment. I had to ask myself, if I put them back does that mean I don’t think they belong on the ground? Am I rejecting the way that the leaves interact with their surroundings? Does putting them back up on the trees mean that that is how the leaves should behave? Do I want people to experience the art in its original form or see it evolving with its environment? If I left the leaves on the ground, the art’s function would be more about its relationship with the surrounding environment, not its intended relationship to the public.

Public art is supposed to be for the public, so I wanted the people to look at it or interact with it to take something away from the experience. Putting the leaves back up would give a more controlled
reaction to my original intentions with the artwork. Ultimately, I decided to put the leaves back up because it was what I envisioned, and I wanted people to understand the artwork the way I originally did. I recognized the significance of the leaves falling down and valued that interaction with the environment, but my fundamental goal was to determine the artwork’s significance to people. I reinstalled the leaves, a week after the initial installation, this time with stronger knots. The rest of the observation period was relatively uneventful. The knots stayed tight for longer, and the leaves only fell down the day before the end of the observation period in a major wind storm.

**Collecting the Data**

I conducted observations and surveys of the public for two weeks in early February. I sat near windows in surrounding restaurants/cafes and took notes on how people reacted to and interacted with the artwork. The people were treated as members of the public and were not personally identified.

To collect “testimonies on the educational and social impact” of *Hanging Leaves*, I surveyed people who had visited the site or interacted with the art in the space and the businesses and residents in the East College Street development.\(^{52}\) Signs around the artwork had links and QR codes for people to participate in the survey. During in-person observations, I personally approached people and invited them to participate in the survey (either on paper or online) by asking, “Would you like to participate in a survey about the clay leaves?” Finally, I mailed surveys to businesses and residences in the development.

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\(^{52}\) Gressel, “Public Art and the Challenge of Evaluation.”
with return envelopes and the option of taking it online. All surveys did not collect peoples’ names, addresses or email information and were anonymous and voluntary. From these surveys and observations I am able to identify trends that answer whether or not the public art affected people’s sense of place.

**Analysis**

After collecting survey results and observing public interaction with the artwork over a period of two weeks, I analyzed this primary data through four methods: descriptive analysis, qualitative analysis, statistical analysis, and field observation. I received 25 survey responses and observed 325 interactions with the artwork. Descriptive analysis takes the categorical questions from the survey and shows how people responded to them. Qualitative analysis is a summary of people’s comments and verbal responses to the artwork. Statistical analysis shows relationships between different factors and survey questions. Field observation looks at trends of people’s actions in relation to the artwork. All of these analysis methods aim to answer the questions I posed at the beginning of this project, along with more specific questions about *Hanging Leaves* that developed throughout the design process:

- How does art focused on place reflect that place and the people in it?
- How does public art (re)connect people to their place?
- What role does public art play in engaging a wide range of people?
- Do people have a better sense of place by interacting with or viewing the art? Do they think differently of the plaza or that patch of trees now that they’ve seen the art? Does the art connect them to the space and to the seasonality that the art speaks of?

For the demographic data summary and descriptive analysis, I used Microsoft Excel to create graphs and charts with percentages and numerical values. I counted keywords in the written responses in the qualitative analysis and connected themes in people’s comments. I used SPSS software to conduct Chi-square tests for the statistical analysis. And for the field observations I used my observation notes to categorize behaviors and count them.
To prepare the survey data for analysis, I coded some of the questions and answers to be able to work with them better, especially with statistical analysis. For checklist-type questions, I created scaled categories to better analyze results. Here are the categories that I coded from the checklist questions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How did you interact with the clay leaves on the trees? (Relative Interaction Level)</th>
<th>How long did you interact with the clay leaves on the trees (Relative Interaction Level)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None - Did not see</td>
<td>A - no time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low - Hear only, look from a distance, or look while walking by</td>
<td>B - a couple seconds, only once</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium-low - Stop and look, maybe hear</td>
<td>C - a couple seconds, multiple times; or a minute once</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium - stopped and looked closely, moved around</td>
<td>D - a minute, multiple times; or more than a minute, once</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium-high - Stopped, looked closely, moved around and touched</td>
<td>E - more than a minute, multiple times; or many types of interaction many times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High - All types of interaction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results

Survey Demographics

Out of the 25 survey responses, 72% of respondents live in Oberlin, with the other 28% living elsewhere and working in Oberlin. 52% of respondents are students; 32% work full time; 2 people (8%) are retired; one person (4%) is self-employed; and one person works part time. Corresponding with the majority of students, fifteen people, or 60% of respondents, are between 18 and 24 years old. 16% are between 25 to 34 years old; three people (12%) are 45 to 54 years; and three people are over 65 years old. In terms of gender identity, 80% of respondents identify as female, 16% are male, and one person prefered not to answer. The survey respondents are overwhelmingly white, making up 88% of responses. Asians or Asian Americans are 8% of respondents, and one person (4%) is Black or African American. The annual household income of survey-takers was a wide range but skewed to more wealthy, with an even 16% of less than $25,000, $100,000 to $149,999, and above $200,000. 8% have an annual household income of $150,000 to $199,999, and one person (4%) is between $35,000 to $49,999. 20% of respondents have an annual household income of $75,000 to $99,999, and another 20% prefered not to answer. (See Appendix A for graphs and charts). Three of the respondents did not see the art installation but live in the East College Street Development.

I wanted to get a sense of people’s connection to place before hearing their opinions about the hanging leaves. For connection to nature, participants chose one of seven diagrams that reflects their connection to the natural world. The mean connection to nature is 5.0, the median is 5, and the mode is 5.
People’s connection to Oberlin is spread out among the 1-5 scale, with a strong skew towards more connected. The mean connection to Oberlin is 3.92, median is 4, and mode is 5.

Respondents’ familiarity with the plaza where the art was located tended toward more familiar. The mean is 3.88, median is 4, and mode is 5.

Survey takers cared a lot about environmental issues. The mean is 4.64, median is 5, and mode is also 5, with 17 respondents saying that environmental issues matter a great deal to them.

How and how long did people interact with the artwork? Interaction levels were spread out among low interaction to high interaction. Compared to the population level interactions with the artwork (see Observation Fieldwork),
survey responses do not accurately represent the population. The sample data from the survey-takers is skewed towards more interactions with the artwork. In these graphs, people’s interactions with the clay leaves on the trees are split into scaled categories.

Generally, interaction levels show a bell curve, with most people participating in medium interactions and several people having either very low or very high interaction levels.

People with significant connections to nature and Oberlin, high concern for the environment, high familiarity with the plaza, and moderate to high levels of interaction responded to the survey. These survey responses are not necessarily representative of Oberlin’s entire population, but they provide greater insight into the research questions based on the sample of population that participated in the survey. The same can be said for work status, income bracket, age range, race, and gender of the survey respondents.

**Descriptive Analysis**

Participants tend to think that the clay leaves on the trees influenced the space in positive ways. Nobody says that the art ruined the space, and only one person says that the artwork was neutral for the space. Nineteen people (76%) think that the artwork adds value and significance to the space. Thirteen people (52%) say that the leaves make them notice the space more, and eight people (32%) think that the
artwork reflects the space’s characteristics. Survey takers were allowed to check multiple answers for this question, and sixteen respondents (64%) checked at least two answers. Thirteen respondents combined “They make me notice the space more” with “They add value/significance to the space.” And six respondents combined “They reflect the space’s characteristics” with “They add value/significance to the space.” Of these respondents, four combined all three of the positive characteristics in their response. That so many people think the value and significance of the plaza is increased by the artwork may imply that their ideas of place were influenced by *Hanging Leaves*.

People’s opinions about the purpose of public art were multifaceted, with every respondent choosing at least two answers to the question. Fourteen people (56%) chose all seven answers. The purpose of public art “to be enjoyed” was the most popular response, with 24 out of 25 respondents (96%) choosing that answer. 92% of respondents said that one of public art’s purposes is “to increase visual beauty.” 84% of survey-takers said that public art’s purpose is “to make people think,” and another 84% recognized the purpose of public art “to connect people to nature.” 72% of respondents thought that one of public art’s purposes is “to reveal and add meaning to society.” Public art’s purpose “to bring communities together” was chosen by 68% of respondents. Lastly, only 64% of participants agreed that public art is meant to “communicate ideas.” The ranking of public art’s many purposes by respondents may indicate how they see *Hanging Leaves’* function and public art’s purpose in general.

People reacted positively to “an art installation in this space in the future,” with all respondents choosing 3 or above in a scale of 1 to 5. 80% of respondents think that a future art installation in the space
“would greatly enhance the space.” Four people (16%) chose 4 out of 5, and just one person (4%) was neutral about a future art installation. Analyzing this question after questions about the art installation might signify how the leaves influenced people’s notions of place.

In response to the question, “What kind of art would you like to see in this space?” people most wanted to see sculpture. Seventeen people (68%) checked off sculpture. Thirteen people (52%) want to see temporary, and another 52% want to see permanent artwork. 44% of respondents would like to see a mural in the space. Sixteen people checked off at least two kinds of art, and five people want to see temporary and permanent sculptures and murals. Of the three people who wrote in a text response, two people reiterated that they would like to see any/every type of art. The other person wrote that they would like to see “temporary [art] (seasonal and by different artists).” People’s opinions about future art in the space may have been influenced by Hanging Leaves’ medium as a site specific, temporary sculpture installation.

Descriptive analysis of checklist and multiple choice questions exhibits trends of how people interpret art in the space, both in relation to Hanging Leaves and in general. These trends can provide an understanding of how public art can affect the surrounding people and people’s senses of place.
Qualitative Analysis

From the text survey responses, an analysis of frequently used keywords demonstrates the themes that visitors found in *Hanging Leaves*. The questions: “What did the clay leaves on the trees make you think of?” and “Other comments” prompted many diverse responses to the art. In this section, I will analyze keywords and connect comments that participants contributed in their written responses.

People noticed the sounds of the artwork. The wind chime-like sounds that the art made in the wind are mentioned in 12 different comments. Nature is mentioned ten times. Happiness and comfort are repeated themes in the survey responses, coming up seven times in people’s written responses. Seasons are also mentioned five different times, and interestingly, all four seasons are mentioned. Beauty is mentioned five times. The space where the art was installed is also mentioned five times. Three people appreciate the subtlety and simplicity of the hanging leaves. Two respondents are reminded of other places through the art installation.

A couple of people realize something new about the space after interacting with the artwork. One person comments, “I think that the leaves installation in winter when there are no leaves on the trees make the work particularly impactful. Usually, I think of trees as dead or dormant in the winter, and these leaves remind me that the trees are still beautiful even when they appear barren.” The artwork reminds them of the natural beauty of the space. One more person thinks that the artwork “brought attention to the trees and created some feelings of comfort with the words.” By seeing the clay leaves on the trees, this person views the space differently and connects that experience with their feelings of comfort. Another person says, “The bell-like sound widened the space, and refreshed it for me! It's such an industrial place, the sound was new and magical.” In this case, the artwork creates a new experience in the space for the visitor. The leaves make another person think of “an appreciation for the trees and how amazing it is that they can make leaves out of sunlight.” This person is reminded of the power of nature and the trees in the space.
Participants consider seasons very differently as a response to the artwork. The artwork prompts two people to think of fall/autumn, which was a theme I envisioned as I went through the design process. For another person, the artwork makes them think of “spring - when the leaves will be adorning the trees once again.” Another respondent thinks of “summer during winter,” and someone else sees “winter when there are no leaves on the trees.” The varied response to seasons probably comes from people’s different background knowledge and experience that they bring to their interpretation of the art installation.

Seasons are a component of place, so the mention of seasons might show how people’s understanding of place is affected by Hanging Leaves.

In the two text responses to “In your opinion, what is the purpose of public art?,” the space where the art is located was emphasized. One respondent thought that one of public art’s purpose is “to reclaim/add value to a communal space” (italics are mine). The other participant thought that “public art makes people stop and pay attention to something (their environment, their community, etc) that they usually do not think about… public art reminds people of the living reality of a space” (italics are mine). Along with the emphasis on the space in participants’ interactions with Hanging Leaves, space is also mentioned in public art’s purpose.

Analyzing people’s written survey responses gives insight into people’s own experiences with Hanging Leaves beyond the multiple choice or checklist answers. It allows us to learn about people’s experiences with the art beyond anticipated responses because people approach artworks through their varied background experiences. The kinds of people that interact with public artwork cannot be predicted, and they bring all sorts of expectations and reactions to the art. Though I may have considered one idea in the design process, the qualitative analysis shows how people’s experience of the art might differ from my own.
Statistical Analysis

Chi-square tests measure the relationship between selected variables. The null hypothesis is that there is no relationship between the variables, meaning that the art did not impact people’s sense of place. To disprove the null hypothesis with 95% confidence, the $p$-value should be less than .05. In this section, I will explain the specific question I asked for each Chi-square test and show the significance of the results.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Row</th>
<th>$p$-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q18: How long did you interact with the clay leaves on the trees?</td>
<td>.195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q17: How did you interact with the clay leaves on the trees?</td>
<td>.333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q11: Connection to Oberlin</td>
<td>.622</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q13: Care for environmental issues</td>
<td>.568</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q14: Familiarity with plaza</td>
<td>.140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q15: Connection to nature</td>
<td>.961</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Do those who interact with the art at a higher level have a stronger preference for future art in the space? For this Chi-square test, I compare the relative interaction level from “How long did you interact with the clay leaves on the trees” with Q22: “On a scale of 1 to 5, what do you think of an art installation in this space in the future?” The $p$-value is .195, showing a corresponding confidence level of 80.5%. There is a very weak significance between how long people interacted with the artwork and their opinions about future art in the space. The participants who interacted longer/more frequently with the artwork are slightly more likely to think that a future art installation “would greatly enhance the space.” With 80.5%
confidence, longer interactions with the artwork has the potential to increase people’s sense of place and preference for future art in the space.

Comparing the type of interaction with people’s preference for future art in the space results in a weaker significance than the previous Chi-square test. Types of interaction are categorized into levels of interaction, from none (did not see) to high (all types of interaction). The p-value for this comparison is .333, showing a confidence level of 66.7% – which is insufficient to establish a definitive relationship between these variables. It is possible that high levels of interaction with the artwork may correlate with a stronger sense of place, but this cannot be concluded with this research.

Do people that have stronger previous connections to Oberlin, the environment, nature, or the plaza have a stronger preference for future art in the space? When conducting a Chi-square test on these four relationships compared to Q22, the analysis does not provide enough confidence level for disproving the null hypothesis. For caring about environmental issues*Q22, the p-value is .568, and the confidence level of correlation is 43.2%. The p-value for connection to Oberlin*Q22 is .622, with a confidence level of 37.8%. Connection to nature*Q22 has a p-value of .961, showing virtually no significance in this relationship. In this research project, significance cannot be concluded for relating future art to people’s connections with Oberlin, the environment, or nature. However, people’s familiarity with the plaza correlates slightly more with their preference for future art. Familiarity with plaza*Q22 has a p-value of .140 – a confidence level of 86%. With very weak significance, a previous familiarity with the plaza is connected with a stronger preference for future art in the space and thus a stronger sense of place. It is worth mentioning that my sample size of 25 is small to begin with and a larger sample size might have produced better results.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2: Chi-square tests</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Row</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q14: Familiarity with plaza</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Does previous familiarity with plaza relate to level of interaction? This question is less related to how people’s sense of place was affected by the artwork, but it connects the previously significant Chi-square tests together. For the Chi-square test comparing people’s familiarity with plaza with levels of interaction type, the $p$-value is .407, giving 59.3% confidence that familiarity with plaza is related to how people interacted with the artwork. However, the $p$-value for how long people interacted with the art compared to familiarity with plaza is .100, showing a confidence level of 90%. This is significant at $p = .1$, demonstrating that familiarity with the plaza is connected to how long participants interacted with the artwork.

Two other statistically significant relationships are between the length and type of interaction with the art; and people’s interest in environmental issues and their connection to nature. These relationships are not explicitly related to connecting the artwork with sense of place, but they provide important demographic information and may influence other analyses. For the Chi-square test of people’s interest in environmental issues and their connection to nature, the $p$-value is .060, showing a confidence level of 94% that interest in the environment is related to connection with nature, a significant relationship. For the length of interactions*type of interactions with the artwork, the $p$-value is .002, giving an extremely strong significance in this relationship. With 99.8% confidence, longer interactions with *Hanging Leaves* correspond to higher levels of interaction types.

For the statistical analysis of Table 1 (to determine how people’s sense of place may have been influenced by different factors), only two factors produced any amount of significance in their relationships. The length of interaction and previous familiarity with the plaza compared with preference
for future art in the space gave weak significance levels. With a low level of confidence, people’s sense of place may have increased because of longer interactions with the artwork and previous familiarity with the plaza. Compared to other relationships’ Chi-square $p$-values, the $p$-values of both length of interactions and familiarity with plaza are more significant, but still may not be considered statistically significant. To increase the importance of the statistical analysis, a larger sample size for the surveys would better represent the population’s opinion.

**Field Observation**

Over the two week installation period in early February (2/11-2/24), I observed public interaction with the art installation. I sat next to the window in Slow Train Cafe, facing *Hanging Leaves* and much of the plaza. Although I did not get to observe at all times of the day, I observed for 37.75 hours over 11 days. Throughout this time, I collected sample data of public behavior. I saw how people interacted with the leaves in unique ways. They usually either did not see them, glanced at them, saw them from afar, looked at them, and/or lingered at the artwork. By comparing daily observations with each other, as well as observations in different weather conditions, my artwork’s ability to engage the public on a surface level can be evaluated.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Didn’t notice</th>
<th>Glanced or looked from afar</th>
<th>Looked and/or lingered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>number of people</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>number of people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/12</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/15</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>59.65%</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/16</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/17</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>56.25%</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Daily Interactions with Artwork
People tend to walk focused on the path in front of them or their phones, not really noticing their surroundings. Of the 59.08% of people that did not look at the artwork, many of them were walking fast or on their phones. Getting people to have positive interactions (found in the surveys) requires them to first notice the art, and since ~60% of people did not see it in the ~40 hours of observation, the art’s positive influence is limited. The people that interacted with the leaves either glanced and looked at them from afar (21.85%) or looked from close up and/or lingered (19.08%). On a day to day basis, interaction levels varied, which may have to do with weather conditions, the time of day that I observed, or other factors. Sample data from each day is not consistent because some days I observed for longer periods of time than others.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Didn’t notice</th>
<th>Glanced or looked from afar</th>
<th>Looked and/or lingered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rain</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>52.94%</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snow</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>58.73%</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sun</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>54.62%</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cloudy</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>62.22%</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Windy</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>54.10%</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Weather (Interactions with Artwork)
Small variations in people’s interaction levels correlated with changes in weather. During rain, sun, and windy conditions, the proportion of people who noticed the artwork was slightly higher than snowy and cloudy weather. Compared to the total level of people not noticing the artwork (59.08%), during rainy weather people didn’t notice the art 52.94% of the time; in the sun people did not notice 54.62% of the time; and when it was windy people did not notice 54.10% of the time. In the snow, people did not notice *Hanging Leaves* 58.73% of the time, and in cloudy weather people did not notice 62.22% of the time. Interestingly, the proportion of people who looked and/or lingered at the artwork did not vary much in relation to weather conditions, ranging from 17.65% (rain) to 22.96% (clouds). The proportion of the public who glanced or looked from afar varied more depending on weather, from 14.81% (clouds) to 29.41% (rain). Weather seems to affect the public’s lower levels of interaction but not higher levels of interaction.

The field observations may not answer questions of place connected to the art, but they give a greater perspective on the ways that people interacted with the art. When considering the survey responses in relation to the field observations, I am reminded that the surveys are only a small proportion of the public response to the artwork and are not representative of the whole population that interacted with *Hanging Leaves*. To understand how the work performs and to grow as an artist, public observations can be really useful. Observation as an evaluation technique can inform how future artwork can effectively provoke responses and experiences from the audience. The public behavior observations allowed me to see how *Hanging Leaves* performed in different weather conditions and in relation to a wide range of people.
Discussion

Public art can be intended to bring the public together and stop people in their tracks, make them question it, and engage with it. Art focused on place reflects that place and the people in it - as demonstrated through artworks discussed in the literature review and the intentional design process behind *Hanging Leaves*. Place is not just location, but community and seasons. The meaning of place, as it relates to public environmental art, is created by people interacting with location, seasons, and each other. Through a long design period, where I consulted with several people, I aimed to create a work of art that reflected Oberlin, and specifically the East College Street plaza. The challenge was to convey the art’s focus on place and people to the visitors that experienced the artwork. Through an evaluation of *Hanging Leaves*, I attempted to analyze the ways that people perceived the art’s reflection of place and people. By reviewing other pieces of public art through my literature review and site visits, examples of art that focused on place and people informed the intentions behind my design process.

*Fog x FLO* (2018) was a temporary public art installation in Boston’s Emerald Necklace that aims to bring people outside and to their parks. Fujiko Nakaya’s scattered fog exhibits throughout the park system utilizes an ordinary natural phenomenon in new ways to bring attention to nature’s beauty and time’s impermanence. Each of the six locations of *Fog x FLO* throughout the Emerald Necklace informed the positioning of the fog in that place. At *Fog x Canopy*, tall sycamore trees line the walking path, so the fog correspondingly starts from the canopy and drifts down to the people. Fog reflects place through the focus on water and nature throughout the park system. It reflects people through its purpose of bringing people outside and together. Visitors become part of the artwork and landscape when art is public. Their experience is not confined to one dimension as it is in a gallery; rather, their experience becomes multidimensional because of the many unexpected and natural elements that surround the artwork. *Fog x Canopy*’s aesthetic changes in response to the weather, temporality, and placement between trees, in a park, and along a walking path show similarities to my installation of *Hanging Leaves*. 

Also on the Emerald Necklace, *Coddiwomple* (2018), by Stacey Piwinski and Wendy Wolf, is a simple installation of a woven textile looping a grove of trees together. The single piece of long fabric was woven by the artists, using “a variety of brightly colored items gathered from people in [their] community,” situating the artwork in the specific place of the park and their community.\(^5^3\) *Coddiwomple* is made from the people around it, just as *Hanging Leaves* reflects its surrounding people and place. Although the bright rainbow colors of the cloth are bold and eye-catching, the simplicity of a cloth weaving and meandering through the trees proves that the artwork does not need to have a complicated relationship with the trees in order to catch people’s attention and convey a specific message. The simplicity of the cloth woven between the trees is similar to the simplicity of *Hanging Leaves* on the four trees in the plaza.

Mags Harries’ *Glove Cycle* (1984) responds to its site in Cambridge’s Porter Square subway station by focusing on the people moving through the space. The scattered bronze gloves throughout the train station situate people as the subjects of the train station, while simultaneously bringing attention to the “pattern and pauses” of commuting.\(^5^4\) *Glove Cycle* reflects the site by connecting the different levels of the station through the continuity of the gloves. It takes a part of a person - a glove - and makes it a collective piece of art by scattering them around the station. The importance of place and people to *Glove Cycle* makes this public art installation successful. *Glove Cycle* is seen as an icon of Cambridge. It comments on place as both a physical location and a seasonal one - reminding people of the world above the train station with the winterness of the gloves. Like *Glove Cycle, Hanging Leaves* utilizes patterns and the movement of people through the space to remind people of their greater place. Just as *Glove Cycle* uses the form of gloves to reminds the public of other people using that space, *Hanging Leaves* reminds people of the collective nature of the plaza through the personalized carvings on the clay leaves.

\(^5^3\) Piwinski and Wolf, artist description of “Coddiwomple.”
\(^5^4\) Harries and Héder, “Glove Cycle.”
Like Athena Tacha’s *Streams* (1975) in Oberlin’s MLK Park, *Hanging Leaves* uses its surrounding space to inform its purpose. *Streams* gives new meaning to flows of walking, ascending, and descending on the stone and cement steps. It overlooks Plum Creek and draws attention to it. Its placement as a site-specific work of art responds to the environmental conditions of the steep slope down to the creek. The people that interact with *Streams* hopefully come away from the art experience with a stronger understanding of place. *Hanging Leaves* brings attention to the bare winter trees in the plaza. It speaks to the changing seasons and emphasizes the physical space. Its position in the center of three walking paths asks people to slow down and notice their surroundings. My temporary art installation and Athena Tacha’s permanent installation both aim to connect people to different public spaces in Oberlin.

*Hanging Leaves* interacts with the physical environment and people’s multiple senses to (re)connect people to their place. Art can encourage a narrative to be developed between the visitors and nature. Thomas Dambo’s *Forgotten Giants* in Denmark truly inspires this bond between visitor and nature. Through the ability to climb, clamber, and crawl over and around the six giant wooden sculptures scattered throughout six western municipalities of Copenhagen, visitors feel a sense of playful connection to each sculpture’s park. The sight of each monumental giant interacting with the world around them in ordinary, human ways is a delight to see. Like *Fog x FLO, Coddiwomple, Glove Cycle, Streams*, and *Forgotten Giants*, *Hanging Leaves* belongs outside and to the public, with the ability to change over time and react to people’s presence in complex ways.

*Hanging Leaves* can be interactive, and the different types of interaction create highly varied meanings for each viewer. The artwork’s meaningful interaction with nature and seasons does not depend on physical human interaction, but human interaction allows the art’s meaning to reach the public. It is open to being touched and experienced by the audience in a multitude of ways. If the meaning of the art does not depend on human interaction, is it interactive art? Edmonds explains the idea of “art systems,” where “interrelated and interacting parts… change either by virtue of their internal mechanisms or
because they are responding to the environment around them.” 55 Hanging Leaves responds to the environment around it and changes its meaning when seasons or weather conditions change. The idea of “art systems” mirrors the systems seen in the natural environment, where conditions change and feed back into each other to enhance the value of the art or ecosystem. Closed systems are contrasted with open systems, where closed systems can exist by themselves regardless of changing conditions or the audience’s interaction. Open systems are changed by external forces, such as wind, weather, or human interaction. A spectrum of open systems, from “kinetic works” affected by wind or temperature to “interactive installations” where human actions affect behavior of system, give deeper context to the nuanced definition of interactive art. 56 The flexibility and dynamic nature of Hanging Leaves categorizes it as a “kinetic work” in an open system, reacting to wind and weather.

The ways that Hanging Leaves interacts with people’s different senses exemplifies its multidimensional nature. In Hanging Leaves, the visual sense is the most obvious, and it is the sense that I considered the most, as a visual artist. The dynamic sight of the clay leaves turning and fluttering is part of the artwork’s beauty. People’s sense of touch also shifts in response to the art. The temptation and ability to touch the leaves is an obvious example of sense of touch. Less obviously, changes in the weather can remind people of their sense of feeling. Seeing the artwork react to the wind and as a representation of the changing seasons corresponds with the temperatures and precipitation they may be experiencing.

Perhaps most significantly, sounds of the wind chimes interact with people’s sense of hearing. The wind chime-like sounds are the most mentioned comment in the survey’s written responses, being brought up 12 separate times. When I wrote the survey questions as a visual artist, I did not expect that the sound of the artwork would be so prominent. If I had known that sound would be so important, I would have focused more specific survey questions on it. More people may have noticed the sounds in the

56 Ibid.
wind but did not mention it because it was not an easy multiple choice answer. Nature and winter weather changed *Hanging Leaves* from my original intentions, and gave people a new and unexpected experience in the space. The unmistakable sounds of *Hanging Leaves*, turning and spinning in the wind, demonstrate how the artwork was meant to be outside and in that space.

In the descriptive analysis of “how do the clay leaves on the trees influence this space?,” the positive influence of the artwork on the space and the people is evident. Around ¾ of respondents believe that the artwork “add[s] value/significance to the space.” The idea of “value” or “significance” of a space comes from people’s personal beliefs of the space. That so many people think the value and significance of the plaza is increased by the artwork demonstrates that it is quite likely that their ideas of place were influenced by *Hanging Leaves*. A little over half of survey-takers say that the leaves make them notice the space more, and everyone who says they noticed the space more also thinks the artwork adds value and significance to the space. These people seem to think differently of the plaza after interacting with the artwork. Like Edmonds’ idea of “art systems,” conditions of the space change and feed back into each other to enhance the art’s value.

In response to “what do you think of an art installation in this space in the future?,” 80% of respondents think that a future art installation would greatly enhance the space, with another 16% responding positively to a future art installation. Thinking positively of a future art installation in the space shows how people’s ideas of place have increased. Statistically, those who interacted with the artwork for a longer period of time are more likely to think that a future art installation would enhance the space. With an 80.5% confidence level (albeit a very low level of significance), longer interactions with the artwork might increase people’s sense of place and preference for future art in the space.

The emphasis on place can also be seen in the written survey responses. Some people realize something new about the plaza after interacting with *Hanging Leaves*. One person comments, “I think that the leaves installation in winter when there are no leaves on the trees make the work particularly
impactful. Usually, I think of trees as dead or dormant in the winter, and these leaves remind me that the trees are still beautiful even when they appear barren.” The artwork reminds them of the natural beauty of the space. *Hanging Leaves* emphasizes the existing space in new ways, and caused some visitors to think more positively of the winter space. Another person writes that the artwork “brought attention to the trees and created some feelings of comfort with the words.” By seeing the clay leaves on the trees, this person views the space differently and connects that experience with their feelings of comfort. Since the leaves and carvings were created as a response to this space, this respondent thus feels comfort from the space itself. One more person says, “The bell-like sound widened the space, and refreshed it for me! It's such an industrial place, the sound was new and magical.” For this person, the artwork’s interaction with its immediate environment, through its sounds, creates a new experience in the space for the visitor, which would not be possible without the artwork. The leaves make another person think of “an appreciation for the trees and how amazing it is that they can make leaves out of sunlight.” By recognizing the trees in the plaza, this person is reminded of the power of nature. For these four respondents, ideas of space are intimately connected to the artwork, demonstrating the range of ways that the artwork affected their senses of place.

Ann Morrison, at the University of Queensland, identifies her methods of evaluating interactive art in an indoor, enclosed setting - a setting different from *Hanging Leaves*’ outdoor, exposed plaza. She emphasizes that the artwork and artist should be open to not just “eliciting one homogenous experience, but rather a range of experiences.” This is because “people come to interactive works… with their own set of expectations,” and the users interpret the art in their own ways. Morrison believes that researching the experiences that the art elicits in the audience is valuable for the artist’s future work. Understanding

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58 Ibid, 510.
59 Ibid, 509.
‘Hanging Leaves’ performance is important for both this research and my own artistic goals. In *Hanging Leaves*, the “range of experiences” can especially be seen in people’s interpretations of seasons.

Five respondents noticed seasons, a time-based aspect of place. *Hanging Leaves* prompted people to consider seasons in very varied ways. All four seasons were mentioned by respondents: “spring - when the leaves will be adorning the trees once again”; “summer during winter”; “winter when there are no leaves on the trees”; and “fall/autumn.” People experience the artwork’s seasonality in different ways, maybe because their varied background experiences inform their interactions. Unlike gallery art, the kinds of people that interact with public artwork cannot be predicted, and they bring all sorts of expectations to the art. Though the change from fall to winter played a considerable role in my intentional design process, the qualitative analysis shows how people’s experience of the art differs from my own. Perhaps people’s distinct understanding of seasons comes from the art interacting with the weather in diverse ways.

Public observation analysis also demonstrated how changes in weather affected people’s interactions with the art. The proportions of people who noticed the artwork varied in different weather conditions, with greater levels of interaction in rain, sun, and windy conditions. In snow and cloudy weather, less people noticed the artwork. Perhaps rain, sun, and wind interacted with the art more and made the art more interesting to people walking by. Wind increased the sounds of the artwork, allowing more people to notice the clay leaves blowing in the wind. Although more people noticed the leaves in different weather conditions, weather seems to affect the public’s lower levels of interaction (glancing or looking from afar) but not higher levels of interaction (looking closely or lingering). The artwork’s interaction with weather and seasons prompted people to interact with it in different ways, which may be interpreted as the influence of the art on people’s notions of place.

The connection to seasons as part of place follows the motivations behind COLDSCAPES. The COLDSCAPES competition of 2013 aimed to open up winter landscapes and urban spaces to the public through enjoyable and interesting design interventions. The Center for Outdoor Living Design in
Cleveland asked the questions, “How can we design our winter environments to rekindle a sense of childhood adventure, wonder, and novelty? How can we turn winter weather into an asset instead of a liability?” As seen with the responses to seasons in the qualitative analysis and the interactions with winter weather in the field observations, the goal of winter-based art is to remind people of the seasonal changes of a place. *Hanging Leaves* utilizes seasonal changes as an asset to its meaning and uses winter weather to enhance its visibility.

In the text responses to “what is the purpose of public art?,” two respondents emphasized the space where the art is located. One respondent thought that one of public art’s purpose is “to reclaim/add value to a *communal space*” (italics are mine). This person builds on the survey question of how the artwork influences the space by reiterating how public art should “add value” to an elaborated “*communal* space.” They recognize the community nature of the space and the importance of people to a place. The other participant thought that “public art makes people stop and pay attention to something (*their environment, their community, etc*) that they usually do not think about… public art reminds people of the *living reality of a space*” (italics are mine). This person also recognizes the value of people in a space and, conversely, the value of the space to people. Along with the emphasis on the space in participants’ interactions with *Hanging Leaves*, space and community is also mentioned in public art’s purpose. These two people recognize public art’s importance in connecting people to place.

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60 Jurca and Valtman, *COLDSCAPES*, 1.
Conclusion

“Sense of place” can be enhanced by engaging people with the spaces around them through interactions with public art to cultivate a sense of ownership and stewardship for their communities. Subsequently, these communities can build connections, gain resiliency and develop capacity to deal with a range of environmental problems. “Place” is not just physical location, but the human and time based characteristics of that space. Art in public spaces and especially public outdoor spaces has the ability to engage people in conversations about their local place and in greater conversations about their role in the world. The public art that I examine often aims to bring the public together, stop people in their tracks, make them question it, and engage with it. It can encourage a narrative to be developed between the visitors and nature. Art focused on place reflects that place and the people in it - seen through artworks I have visited and the intentional design process behind Hanging Leaves, my public art installation in Oberlin, Ohio.

Like other site specific works of public art, Hanging Leaves belongs outside and to the public, with the ability to change over time and react to people’s presence in complex ways. It speaks to the changing seasons and emphasizes the physical space by bringing attention to the bare winter trees in the plaza. The artwork’s position in the center of three walking paths asks people to slow down and notice their surroundings. The installation responds to the environment around it and changes its meaning when seasons or weather conditions change. Hanging Leaves’ unmistakable wind-chime-like sounds, turning and spinning in the wind, demonstrate how the artwork was meant to be outside and in that space. It utilizes seasonal changes as an asset to its meaning and uses winter weather to enhance its visibility. Hanging Leaves is open to being touched and experienced by the audience in a multitude of ways because people’s varied background experiences inform their interactions.

The art installation emphasizes the existing space in new ways, and causes some visitors to think more positively of the winter space. In the evaluation of Hanging Leaves, thinking positively of a future
art installation in the space seems to show how people’s ideas of place have increased. Those who interacted with the artwork for a longer period of time are perhaps more likely to think that a future art installation would enhance the space. That so many people think the value and significance of the plaza is increased by the artwork demonstrates that their ideas of place were likely influenced by Hanging Leaves. Though the change from fall to winter played a considerable role in my intentional design process, people’s written comments show how people’s experience of the art differs from my own. For several respondents, ideas of space are intimately connected to the artwork, demonstrating the range of ways that the artwork affected their notions of place. By recognizing the trees in the plaza, other people are reminded of the power of nature. Public art’s importance in connecting people to place is recognized by some survey-takers and can be seen in the diverse ways that people interacted with Hanging Leaves and interpreted their own experience.

By comparing the results of Hanging Leaves’ impact in Oberlin with existing examples of public art that I have visited, I have gained considerable insight into how public art in outdoor spaces can impact people’s perceptions of place. Through the literature review and my artistic process, I saw how design provides a way to create engaging spaces for the public and how public art can be part of this design. I explored how public art can offer new insights into placemaking in Oberlin by changing or strengthening people’s perceptions of place. I have gained an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of both Hanging Leaves and my evaluation method, which may provide opportunities to create more effective public environmental art installations in the future. With the evaluation of Hanging Leaves, I was able to quantify the impacts of my art installation through several analysis methods, a process that is not often considered by artists.

Although this project explores concepts of place through an art history and public art lens, many other complicating factors may influence dimensions of place that I do not discuss. These other dimensions of place are beyond the scope of my research, but future studies can explore these
possibilities. Throughout this research, I was able to evaluate the various ways that people respond to public environmental art, but there are still opportunities to analyze how people’s notions of place, affected by public art, can change greater systems and structures already in place.
Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the many people that have contributed to this project. My main advisor, Professor Rumi Shammin, has been extremely integral to the completion of this project and was especially helpful with the evaluation methods of survey creation and analysis. So many elements of this project were completely new to me, and Prof. Shammin always made me feel comfortable asking for help during the learning process. Professor Karl Offen, my other Honors committee member and my major advisor, was also very important to the completion of this project, especially by editing drafts of this paper and prompting me to think more critically of my insights.

I would also like to thank the other people that helped bring this project into fruition. Cat Marshall of Kent State’s landscape architecture program, thank you for helping me think through a design lens and prompting me to create the art for people and the space. To the Pottery Cooperative members, especially Jack Flotte, Emma Dreyfuss, and my other collaborators, thank you for your advice and help in creating the clay leaves. Jeff Bauman, Public Works Director of the City of Oberlin, and Naomi Sabel of Sustainable Community Associates, thank you for helping me determine a suitable site for the installation, allowing me to install the artwork in the East College Street Plaza, and being flexible with the installation timeline. To Julia Christensen, Mags Harries, Lajos Héder, and other public artists who paved the way for me to consider public environmental art, thank you for sharing your experience and knowledge - it allowed Hanging Leaves to find its final form and informed the directions of my research. Thank you to Professor Cindy Frantz for IRB advice and survey creation. Rosalind Soltow, Administrative Assistant for ENVS, thank you for helping me with survey creation and distribution. Thank you to Linnea Fraser, in the QS center, for helping me with statistics. And to the people that took surveys and walked through the space during my public behavior observations, thank you for being part of this research.

Finally, to my friends who helped put up the art, and my friends and family who have been with me throughout this whole project, I am so grateful for your continuous encouragement and support.
Works Cited


http://harriesheder.com/project/glove-cycle/.


http://harriesheder.com/project/asaroton/.


Tacha, Athena. Streams, 1975-76. Sandstone, concrete, pumice rocks, and lake pebbles, 10’ x 20’ x 30’. Oberlin, Martin Luther King Jr. Park.


https://walkerart.org/visit/garden.

Wight, Joe. A Place For Everything and Everything In Its Place, 2018. Packing tape, pink latex paint, expanding foam, furniture, Three lifesize scenes at three different trees. Brookline, Riverway Park on the Emerald Necklace.

Appendix A

i. Age

- 18 to 24 years, 15
- 25 to 34 years, 4
- 35 to 44 years, 0
- 45 to 54 years, 3
- 55 to 64 years, 0
- Age 65 or older, 3

ii. Gender Identity

- Female, 20
- Male, 4
- Prefer not to say, 1

iii. Race

- White, 22
- Black or African American, 1
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, 0
- Asian or Asian American, 2
- American Indian or Alaska Native, 0

iv. Annual Household Income

- Less than $25,000
- $25,000 to $34,999
- $35,000 to $49,999
- $50,000 to $74,999
- $75,000 to $99,999
- $100,000 to $149,999
- $150,000 to $199,999
- $200,000 or more
- Prefer not to say
Appendix B

Proposal sent to Jeff Bauman (representing City of Oberlin) and Naomi Sabel (representing Sustainable Community Associates)

11/18/2018

Proposal for temporary art installation:
In the East College Street Park, along the row of trees on the east side in the triangular piece of earth, I hope to install a temporary site specific piece of public art. It will be installed early in the second week of December, 2018 (around 12/9), and I will conduct observations for the following two weeks, until 12/20. At that point, I can remove the art installation because I’ll be away for the month of January, or it can stay up until I come back to Oberlin in February. The duration of the installation is flexible, and can be up to the city/SCA to decide. I will take responsibility for putting the installation up and taking it down.

The artwork will be made out of recycled clay from the Oberlin Pottery Coop and with the collaboration of its members. Clay leaves will hang from the limbs of the trees. The hanging leaves will be of a similar shape but various sizes, no bigger than 6 inches long. All of the leaves will be ¼ inch thick. Each piece will hang from the trees with a piece of wire, either individually or on a wire with multiple leaves. They will be mostly clustered on the narrow (south) part of the triangle, and will get less dense towards the wider (north) part of the triangle. In the dense area of clay pieces, they will be close enough that when there is wind they will bump against each other, like wind chimes. Members will collaborate with me by carving into the clay leaves in response to a choice of prompts that I give them, responding to the site or the changing of seasons, which is what the leaf form is inspired by.
Appendix C

Public Art Survey

**Study title:** Public Art in Outdoor Space: How Environmental Art Can Influence Notions of Place  
**Nature of Research:** Honors in Environmental Studies  
**Researcher:** Elsa Mark-Ng, Environmental Studies Program, Oberlin College  
**Faculty Advisor:** Md Rumi Shammin

I volunteer to participate in a research project conducted by Elsa Mark-Ng from Oberlin College. I understand that the project is designed to explore how public environmental art contributes to a community’s sense of place. By signing below, I affirm that I have read and understand the following:

1. My participation in this project is voluntary and I will not be paid for my participation. Participation involves answering questions in a written survey. I may withdraw and discontinue participation at any time without consequence.
2. I understand that there are no anticipated risks associated with answering the questions.
3. I understand that I will not be personally identified in the survey. My responses may be summarized in a final report, but no information will be included that would personally identify me. Subsequent uses of records and data will be subject to standard data use policies which protect the anonymity of individuals and institutions.
4. I understand that my data from the surveys will be destroyed by May 20, 2019. But professor Shammin may retain the files on his password protected computer indefinitely.
5. I understand that this study has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for studies involving human subjects at Oberlin College.
6. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this research.
7. I have been given a copy of this consent form or given the option to print this page if I am taking it online.
8. I am at least 18 years of age.

_________________________________________  
My Signature  

_________________________________________  
My Printed Name

For questions about this research, please contact: Professor Rumi Shammin at rumi.shammin@oberlin.edu. For questions about your rights as a participant in this research please contact Daphne John, Chair of the Institutional Review Board, at daphne.john@oberlin.edu or 5-8410.
Demographic Questions

Age
- 18 to 24 years
- 25 to 34 years
- 35 to 44 years
- 45 to 54 years
- 55 to 64 years
- Age 65 or older

To which gender identity do you most identify?
- Male
- Female
- Specify: ________________
- Prefer not to say

Are you either Hispanic or Latino?
- Yes
- No

What categories describe you?
- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian or Asian American
- Black or African American
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- White
- Specify: ________________

What is your annual household income?
- Less than $25,000.
- $25,000 to $34,999.
- $35,000 to $49,999.
- $50,000 to $74,999.
- $75,000 to $99,999.
- $100,000 to $149,999.
- $150,000 to $199,999.
- $200,000 or more.
- Prefer not to say
What is your employment status?
- Full time
- Part time
- Self-employed
- Unemployed
- Retired
- Student

Do you live in Oberlin?
- Yes
- No

If no, you are here for:
- Visiting town
- Visiting college
- Passing through
- Work
- N/A
- Other: ___________________

If yes, do you live or work in the East College Street development?
- Yes
- No
- N/A

Questions about connection
On a scale of 1 to 5, how connected do you feel to Oberlin? (circle a number)

Not connected at all

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Very well connected

On a scale of 1 to 5, how much do you care about environmental issues? (circle a number)

It doesn’t matter to me at all

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

It matters a great deal
On a scale of 1 to 7, how connected to nature do you feel? (circle a number)

Please mark the number corresponding to the picture below that best describes your connection to the natural world

[Diagram showing Venn diagrams with intersection of "me" and "nature"

1
me
nature

2
me
nature

3
me
nature

4
me
nature

5
me
nature

6
me
nature

7
me
nature

On a scale of 1 to 5, how familiar are you with this plaza? (circle a number)

This is my first time here

1

2

3

4

5
I come here multiple times a day

Questions about the art

How did you interact with the clay leaves on the trees? (check as many as applicable)

- ❑ Looked at it while walking by
- ❑ Stopped and looked at it
- ❑ Walked around it
- ❑ Touched it
- ❑ Looked closely at the carvings in the leaves
- ❑ Other: ________________________________

How long did you interact with the clay leaves on the trees? (check as many as applicable)

- ❑ A couple seconds
- ❑ A minute
- ❑ More than a minute
- ❑ Multiple times
- ❑ Other: ________________________________
In your opinion, how do the clay leaves on the trees influence this space? (check as many as applicable)
- They reflect the space’s characteristics
- They make me notice the space more
- They add value/significance to the space
- They are neutral for the space
- They ruin the space
- Other: ____________________________________

What did the clay leaves on the trees make you think of? (optional)

In your opinion, what is the purpose of public art? (check as many as applicable)
- To increase visual beauty
- To be enjoyed
- To make people think
- To bring communities together
- To reveal and add meaning to society
- To connect people to nature
- To communicate ideas
- Other: ____________________________________

On a scale of 1 to 5, what do you think of an art installation in this space in the future? (circle a number)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>It would ruin the space</th>
<th>It would greatly enhance the space</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What kind of art would you like to see in this space? (check as many as applicable)
- Temporary
- Permanent
- Sculpture
- Mural
- Other: ____________________________________

Other comments (optional):

Thank you for participating in this survey! Please return this survey to the researcher by sending it in the pre-addressed and stamped envelope provided.