

Jane Gilmor

List of community-based “public” art projects since 1985

1986 Bowery/Manhattan Bridge Project. New York City. Interviewed and documented disenfranchised and homeless individuals living on streets of lower Manhattan (then under reconstruction). I lived there during a sabbatical from teaching. Also gathered found notes and writing on streets in this area. These were transferred to metal and used in later installations done in collaboration with homeless and disenfranchised.

1987 Tabernacal Shelter Workshops, Venice, California. Held workshops for children living at Gospel Tabernacal Church’s homeless shelter, Mildred Ave. Venice, California. Children did drawings and writings about their “favorite place.” See *Buelah* slide done by a 5-year old homeless girl, “My name means heaven in the bible, that’s why I wrote my name in the sky over my house drawing.” *Beyond Baroque* (alternative arts center in Venice) suggested this shelter for my workshop, but did not formally fund the project.

1988 Home is Where..., Federal City Shelter, Washington DC, The National Coalition for the Homeless invited me to do a one-month residency/workshop at Mitch Snyder’s Federal City Shelter. This was done during the summer of the Coalition’s Homeless March on Washington. Mary Collins (Rockwell/Collins Inc. Cedar Rapids) from Dallas initiated the project through her brother who worked with Snyder in DC. Mary Collins was familiar with my work from being on the Mount Mercy Board and the Art Museum Board in CR. Also, I know her son who is an artist in New York. I had residency at the Virginia Center for the Arts that summer. They also supported the project by allowing me to prepare while there and helping me with transportation to Washington while in residency. The project exposed shelter participants to non-traditional art forms and to the idea that art can both help making of one’s personal experiences and be used as a critique of the culture we live in.

These workshops were important in developing future projects. I worked with a group of former addicts. They ranged from PhD former music professor to under-educated Appalachian workers migrating to DC for work. The dozen or so men had kept journals of writings as part of a workshop with a visiting writer (several weeks before I arrived.) We used those writings as a basis for drawings. Again using the central idea of a “favorite place”. This personal “place” often became the physical manifestation of a spiritual concept one might call “home.” The work was only shown in the shelter itself (slept 1000 people a night, men, women, children.) The workshops involved group discussions and critiques. The men were truly collaborators in generating ideas for showing the work in the future. One resident, a 19 year-old Aids patient, went on to have a solo exhibit in a nearby storefront. Several of this group of men also used the technique of metal tooling I had taught them to make objects they could sell to benefit the shelter. Each participant kept a metal note for himself and donated one for the installation (and thus to my permanent collection of notes for traveling this work to other venues.)

They also signed a consent form (the “contract” also stated that any money earned from exhibition of their work would go back to the shelter.) All participants were given credit and named (unless they asked to remain anonymous.)

1989 Home is Where... a series of workshops involving journaling, and creating drawings and writings on metal at Cedar Rapids transitional housing for adolescent girls.

1990/91 Windows Project, Davenport Museum of Art (Dan Stetson) in partnership with Quad City Arts Council (Lloyd Shoeneman)

Each year between 1989-94, the Davenport Museum and Quad City Arts hired a nationally known artist to create an installation in an empty downtown storefront and to be the juror for installations created by up to seven Iowa and Illinois artists (in other storefronts). This was done in conjunction with the annual August Bix Spiderbock (sp?) blues/jazz festival and 10k run. The run started at the window I created and involved several thousand people.

I was commissioned by the Museum and given a stipend of \$3,000 plus working materials and lodging/travel expenses. For the month of June I worked in and organized workshops in area transitional housing facilities, shelters and coffee shops. These workshops continued the theme begun in DC project. We did writing and “visualization” activities, kept journals, had group discussions and created metal drawings and messages for the downtown storefront window. In addition some participants helped create video footage to be used in the installation. (See slides)

1992/93 The Home Show...Installation at CSPS Alternative Arts Center, Cedar Rapids, Iowa, used my growing collection from workshops done in shelter throughout the country to create an installation for this theme show.

1993 Home is Where...Bemis Center for Contemporary Art, Omaha This two month long project and retrospective exhibition was initiated and partially funded by Gregg Narber of the Des Moines Art Center Board and then curator of the Principal Financial Groups Art Collection. Ree Schonlau organized my month long series of workshops in area shelters and financed the installation done in a downtown storefront in Omaha. In addition she organized a retrospective of my work at Bemis Gallery (the space was huge- one entire floor of their original warehouse building on 11th). I was again based in the “sense and image of place” as a spiritual as well as physical manifestation. I have reviews from the Omaha Herald and Tractor of the two installations. I worked with about 150 people during the time period. Again all are given credit, all sign waivers, and all money goes into project or back to shelter. In addition, participants were provided transportation to the openings of the installations and honored in the storefront installation.

1994 The Big Issue Project/London, UK I was awarded a residency fellowship at The Delfina Foundation for the Arts in London in 1994. I was given a studio and housing for three months while I completed several projects. *The Big Issue* is a publication by the UK Coalition for the Homeless in partnership with community

grassroots organizations. I have copies if you are interested. I again did workshops with the newspaper's writers, sales personnel, publishers, and area homeless shelter residents in which they kept journals and creates writings and drawing on metal. (See statement) The notes were assembled into a storefront window installation, which I left with the organization in London.

1994-Cedar Rapids Museum of Art, *Home is Where...*, this exhibition began a two year long project in Cedar Rapids shelters culminating in the Bed/Shoe/Home Installation at the YWCA in 1996. (See below)

1995- *Windows '95, Project Art, University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics*, funded by a \$5,000 grant from The Iowa Arts Council. The *Windows '95* installation takes the form of a large, walk-in house-shaped construction covered inside and out with words and images on metal. In a series of weekly workshops begun last November 1995, children in the Child Life Program of the Activities Therapy Department at UIHC were invited to create drawings and writings on metal foil concerning their experiences, feelings, and fantasies while hospitalized. Since this is the major State hospital, some of these children are from low-income, non-insured families. Others are from middle class wealthy families from all over the world (because of the hospitals specialty areas) The equalizer here was illness. Videotaped images of several participating children appear on monitors in the windows-like openings in the structure. Once inside the sculpture viewers are invited to contribute their won written stories, comments, or images.

The *Windows '95* projects was intended to give hospitalized children and their families access to nontraditional art forms for personal expression and to encourage use of the imagination as both a survival tool and as a means of creating a "psychological" home away from home. It is my belief that art can make meaning of one's experiences, particularly when those experiences interrupt daily life.

1996 *Bed/Shoe/Home* Downtown YWCA, Cedar Rapids, Iowa funded by a Diverse Visions Grant (\$5,000) from Intermedia Arts, Minneapolis. Over a two month period I did workshops in Cedar Rapids are shelters (primarily the Madge Phillips Center at The YWCA and The Catherine McAuley House operated by The Sisters of Mercy and Catholic Charities) as well as the Catholic Worker House in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. The theme, "bed/shoe/home," was used to develop journal writings and drawings, which were then contributed to three installations around the central Green Square Park area of Cedar Rapids. These metal notes were combined with those of workshops done during the previous eight years of similar community based projects.

This project was unique in its efforts to bring together a physically close, but diverse area of downtown Cedar Rapids. The Cedar Rapids Museum of Art invited me to do an exhibition a year earlier. During that exhibit I proposed this project as an extension of that exhibit—partnering them with the YWCA and homeless shelters in the immediate neighborhood.

Installations of the metal notes were shown simultaneously in the storefront windows of the YWCA building, and in the boardroom of the YWCA and Madge Phillips Center for homeless.

1996 *Picturepillowstory* A.I.R. Gallery, New York sections of the above installations were exhibited at A.I.R. Gallery in New York, The University of Minnesota Art Galleries, Minneapolis, and at Olsen-Larsen Galleries in Des Moines.

1997-98 *Wisdom Pass* McKnight Foundation Interdisciplinary Artists Fellowship project/ a partnership between Intermedia arts and HealthEast Oncology at St. Joseph's hospital in St. Paul/Minneapolis. (A collaboration with St. Paul Artist Sandra Taylor.)

The piece was installed at St. Joseph's Hospital in St. Paul for two months and at the new St. Paul History Center for a national conference on Alternative Medicine: the Arts and Healing, Oct.1998.

Wisdom Pass was a walk-through tunnel like structure created in collaboration with seriously ill individuals, their families and caregivers during a series of workshops in which they kept journals. They later selected material for transfer to metal. The project was intended to give these individuals access to nontraditional art forms, to encourage use of the imagination as a survival tool, to give voices to those living with life threatening illness, and to create opportunity for contemplating our culture's practices and responses to illness and death.

(Jessica—see attached press releases and grant application goals for this project and the Window '95 project)

1999-2000 Indianapolis Children's Museum, in October I was invited to be a presenter on the panel "The Humanities and Enfranchisement," at the Midwest Museum Association Conference in Indianapolis. Co-Chairs of the presentation were Dr. Steven Fallon and Clark Power, University of Notre Dame, South Bend Center for the Homeless. Their work is based on the pioneering work and writing of Earl Shorris, author of *New American Blues: A journey through Poverty to Democracy*, Norton, 1997.

As a result of the conference, the chief curator of collections at the Indianapolis Children's Museum (the oldest and largest children's museum in the country), Suzannah Koerber, (formerly assistant at The High Museum in Atlanta) purchased two pieces for their collection and has invited me to do a community-based project at the museum in the future.