

Response to: Personalization of Place: Remixing the Eugene Coloring Book

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In truth: I remain proud in the fact that my graduate research was grounded in a 1979 coloring book from which launched a participatory project that's lessons continue to be foundational in the community driven work I do today.

I still deeply believe in community members finding common threads to connect one another, as well as the need for multiple access points to explore and learn about one another's commonalities and differences. Today, I am still able to witness individuals finding value in shared experiences through creative documentation methods through my job at the Santa Cruz Museum of Art & History (MAH). My beliefs on how people create meaningful experiences through such participatory processes have only gone deeper in that I stand strong in knowing that this kind of work has the ability to encourage community members to bond with one another, bridge across differences, and feel empowered to share their voices. Now more than ever, we need these kinds of spaces to invite inclusivity and build awareness and respect for people other than ourselves.

At the MAH, we ask people to share their stories in relation to our community in Santa Cruz. Whether it's prompting visitors to share a memory of a particular place in our county (*photo*), or to fill in the blank "Keep Santa Cruz ____" (*photo*), we continue to find ways for community members to reflect, connect and contribute to something larger than themselves.

An interesting development that has spurred since my 2012 research rooted in the 1979 coloring book: the adult coloring book trend. In 2013, Scottish author Johanna Basford published "Secret Garden: An Inky Treasure Hunt and Colouring Book," which has since become a worldwide bestseller, selling millions of copies. The rise in popularity of coloring books for adults as sky rocketed ever since (Halzack, 2016). Enter any bookstore and you'll find a wide selection of adult coloring books, something that certainly did not exist when I found the Eugene Coloring Book tucked away at Smith Family Bookstore.

Though these coloring books are not necessarily being used to explore the connection to particular places, they do seem to be building community with ongoing coloring book MeetUp groups, Facebook coloring groups, coloring subscription clubs, and hundreds of coloring ideas now on Pinterest (Keiser, 2016).

"It doesn't matter if you live in a little loft apartment, a country cottage or even a palace --- the appeal of picking up pens and pencils and being creative is felt by us all." Said Jodi Lipson Director of AARP's (American Associate of Retired Persons) book division (Keiser, 2016).

It's this similar spirit that was embodied with my research project: it's content was fun, inviting, relatable, nostalgic, and provided simple methods of connecting a wide range of community members.

Moving forward: it's unclear if and when the coloring book trend may dissipate. However, thinking more broadly, it's instances like the adult coloring book trend, Live Paint Nights, Stitch 'N Bitch groups, Drink & Draws, Make & Mingles that confirm there remains a strong need and desire to bring friends and strangers together through creative measures.

I currently work in a museum, and I think more and more arts & culture spaces are moving in a direction of offering community driven participatory experiences. I would advocate for these kinds of opportunities to take place beyond arts environments in more community spaces, coffee shops, cafes, parks, and not just for adults, but for an intergenerational population. It's experiences like these that are a driving force for uniting and building community in welcoming ways and approaches that inspire one another to share their creative and civic voices.

Halzack, Sarah (2016, March). The big business behind the adult coloring book craze. *Washington Post*. Retrieved from Washington Post Website: https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/economy/the-big-business-behind-the-adult-coloring-book-craze/2016/03/09/ccf241bc-da62-11e5-891a-4ed04f4213e8_story.html?utm_term=.be3ea0dcd3f6

Keiser, Debra (2016, December). Color us amazed: Adult coloring book craze is here to stay. *USA Today*. Retrieved from USA TODAY website: <http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation-now/2016/12/15/color-us-amazed-adult-coloring-book-craze-here-stay/95496842/>