Off Center: Art Careers in Peripheral Places

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Dissertation

Submitted to the Faculty of the

Graduate School of Vanderbilt University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

Sociology

May, 2014

Nashville, Tennessee

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation would not have been possible without a fellowship from the Vanderbilt Curb Center for Art, Enterprise and Public Policy. This study owes much as well to the many faculty members of the Vanderbilt Sociology Department who encouraged me and allowed me to finish. Extra special thanks to Dan Cornfield, who offered tremendous inspiration, advice, and support. Thanks to Steven Tepper, Shaul Kelner, and Mel Zeigler for reading and cheering on a future book. You all set a high standard and I will always be looking up, thanks. Thanks to Richard Pitt for agreeing to work with me from my remote field site. Thanks to Mariano Sana and Katharine Donato for finding me those extra lines.

Thanks to those that initially inspired this dissertation, Richard Lloyd and Amelia Winger-Bearskin, thanks a bunch. Extra special thanks to Veronica Kavass for believing in me and being there. And thanks to everyone else around me who listened to me ramble on and on.

Most of all, I owe this study to all of the artists, dealers, critics, collectors, catalysts, conduits, consecrators, scenesters, writers, arts-policy makers, arts-advocates, and even the property developers who volunteered their time to tell me about their work and their lives. As in art, a dissertation is truly a social production process, although it can be marked by a grueling isolation. Thank you all for helping me though.

Thank you parents, too.

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Chapter 1

Introduction: Off Center Art Worlds

Leon's Battles

"I wouldn't bet against myself because I've never lost, anytime I pick a fight. I'll fight guerilla until it's unnecessary. But in Portland there's never a battle like that. Once there was…"

I am sitting with Leon in a coffee shop in an old Victorian house in Portland, Oregon. Leon is a local art and architecture historian, curator, critic, and artist. My digital audio recorder picks up the sound of coffee grinding, baristas knocking out portafilters, and some music in the background. Leon has agreed to talk to me about Portland's contemporary art scene, but he is not especially eager. He rather treats our conversation, and the recording device that sits between us, as a matter of course. Portland's art scene has received much outside attention in recent years, and Leon thinks of himself as its mouthpiece. Leon is the founder of LOCATE[1]; a Portland-centric online art journal that he says tracks over 100,000 unique visitors per month, which according to him makes it "one of the most successful sources of online art criticism in the world." That reach makes Leon an influential figure in the local art scene and beyond. "Critics create a wake of fear wherever they go," he says, "and LOCATE means I'm making decisions about people's exposure, which makes me a gatekeeper…"

Like other professional artists that live in Portland and elsewhere, Leon travels often for work. "I *am* interested in the rest of the world," he says, "Just because I live in Portland doesn't mean I'm only interested in Portland." LOCATE focuses on Portland artists though, in part because Leon and other LOCATE writers are more familiar with and have easier access to local

[1] Names of all artists, venues, publications, etc. are pseudonyms.

artists and their exhibitions, but also because Leon is invested in Portland's reputation as an alternative art city, which affects his own career prospects in a larger, global contemporary art world. It is through his local local scene that Leon's influence as a gatekeeper is best realized. In the global contemporary art world, local credibility requires some global connectivity, and global connections begin with local influence in a reputable place.

Leon runs his fingers through his beard, which he says draws him a lot of attention, especially at art events outside of Portland, where, "People sometimes mistake me for a Civil War General or something." Leon comes across as a peaceful guy, although he is not afraid to embellish, and he is not at all modest about his successes in the art world, locally and globally; he turns every experience he has had in that regard into a war metaphor in which he wins. Having a beard would be just another fight that he has never lost, especially in a city where, "having a beard is like an arms race," he says. Leon remembers:

> "In 2003 there was a battle between the old guard and my guard – I was kind of [air quotes] 'the new people' – and I had it out with a former curator of the Whitney Biennial. And he was trying to say things [about Portland], and I was like, 'No your head's up your ass, you don't know what you're talking about.' And I was like, 'Look, you're Custer and I'm Crazy Horse.' That's actually how I started it off. I said, 'Look, I'm sure you're a fine General and you know what you're doing, but I know the territory and I've got more… boots on the ground.' He was trying to say that, 'Portland's a bunch of DIY kids in their basements drinking Pabst.' And I was like, 'No you don't understand, there are people here with degrees from Columbia… They're not just a bunch of kids celebrating their

> own [sic] amateurity. There are consummate professionals here who you are belittling by not seeing this as a more multi-layered, multivalent scene.'"

The exchange between Leon and the out-of-town curator, which took place online, was more of a side-skirmish in a battle that was also fought locally, on the ground. "There was a battle that took place," recalled Leon, again, "…and it was just a total throw down. What happened was there was a series of large warehouse shows…" Leon continued to describe an explosion of contemporary art activity in Portland in the year 2003, as if out of nowhere; a series of "tightly curated" shows in large, empty warehouse buildings, including one titled *Battle of the Artist-Curators*. It was "a year of solid, crazy, warehouse programming," he said. His own curation that year, *Wild West*, featured artists from Portland, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Seattle, and won him a story in the Oregonian's *Arts & Entertainment* section.

> "Basically I told Portland that 'This is an art city,' and 'This is going to happen,' and 'Get out of our way.' That's really what that [local battle] meant. And it pissed people off. But by 2003, the battle was over… Anyone who had been a [Portland] critic before that point really couldn't make any kind of case [against it]. It was just too high profile, consistently… And so that's what happened in 2003, and by 2005, you know, Whitney curators and other major curators had come through, and it was a done deal. Portland was already a hot art city."

So Leon describes a Portland art scene, and his own career, as a war fought on two fronts. On the home front, Leon battles an "old guard" art world. This old guard's critics and journalists had been covering Portland's modest commercial gallery scene in local newspapers for years. According to Leon, their aesthetic concerns were old-fashioned, and whatever local influence

they had would eventually succumb to a rising tide of younger artists and transplants (including himself) whose practices were informed by a larger, global contemporary art world.

The second front is fought against that global contemporary art world, represented here by curators from the Whitney Museum of Art, whose job, as we will see, includes keeping an eye on the pulse of the nation's many local contemporary art scenes, and whose evaluations of such scenes can have far reaching consequences for artists' careers. On this front, Leon works to position Portland as a legitimate site of contemporary art activity against the perception that it is merely the hinterland, far outside contemporary art's U.S. centers, New York City and Los Angeles, which are known to concentrate "serious" artists and artistic scenes.

As an urban and cultural sociologist, I am less interested here in whether Portland *is* either a 'multi-layered, multivalent scene' or 'just a bunch of kids in their basement drinking Pabst,' than I am in the more basic observation that the place is contested as such. Evidence of both alternatives could likely be found in many Portland basements, but such perceptions matter for how artists there are understood on a national and global stage, and therefore, for local artists' career opportunities beyond their local scene. More telling is Leon's use of war metaphors to define Portland's present art scene against its past and against other places.

Leon is not the first to understand the art world as a battlefield. Pierre Bourdieu's (1993) *field* approach also views this world as a universe of struggle for legitimacy, which includes a struggle over the power to consecrate, or the authority to name who and what counts as a worthy of artistic admiration and value, and in this case *where* one might look to find it. The value of art (culturally or price-wise) is never inherent in the work itself, but accrues as an outcome of social and symbolic struggles to position artists' works and careers relative to each other, or to otherwise define what is relevant, what is interesting, what is 'contemporary,' and how so.

Actors within fields need not consciously articulate the stakes and rewards as such, but artists' careers depend in part on their ability to position themselves in terms of these struggles.

Leon's war metaphors in this sense may reveal a certain 'feel for the game' in this symbolically contentious career field, although his overt use of that language draws suspicion from his peers. Still, Leon's strategic orientation also reveals a dimension of this struggle scarcely considered by sociologists and scholars of contemporary art careers: the stakes and rewards associated with the reputation of one's city, place, and scene.

This study follows artists' efforts to navigate career opportunities and constraints in a reputational field where resources for accumulating those reputations are thought to be limited. Although Bourdieu (1993) and several others (Becker 1982; Moulin 1987; Thornton 2008; Velthius 2005) have pointed out that status, reputation, and prestige are key to the production of artistic works, prices, and career maintenance, most of these studies focus at the center of the art world, where art markets, institutions, and other social resources are robust enough to attract and reward many careers. As we will see, cities vary in the kinds of resources they offer artists and other art world actors in their efforts to take up positions in these struggles. As the vignette with Leon demonstrates, places themselves accumulate reputations as such, and place reputations color artistic evaluation processes, art-historical significance, and thus individual artists' career chances, just as individual artists, dealers, collectors, and museums do. Places represent positions in this field of symbolic struggles. Places like Portland are subject to debates about their relative cultural worth, especially among "new guard" artists and actors like Leon striving to win some credibility outside New York in what is supposed to be a "decentered" global art world. Places are actively made as such by local actors with a stake in their own career; and as such places are also moving targets in a global, reputational career field.

Johnny Invective

Portland is not the only U.S. city where contemporary art activity has emerged in recent years. Nashville's Demonbreun Gallery is one of many new art galleries concentrated downtown along the recently renamed Fifth Avenue of the Arts. Two blocks down from the Capitol, and two blocks up from the honky-tonks on Lower Broadway, these galleries add a destination to Downtown Nashville's long trajectory of postindustrial decline and redevelopment. The recent addition of a commercial gallery scene and an arts identity here since 2006 owes much to the efforts of one local developer who opened Demonbreun Gallery on the street level of one of his "artist loft" buildings, as well as to several artist-entrepreneurs that have opened shoestring, "alternative" galleries or "project spaces" in the historic Arcade building across the street. On the First Saturday of every month, Arts Avenue and Arcade galleries coordinate their openings in an effort to draw audiences that might not otherwise attend singular gallery openings. The regular art crawls here have generated some coherence of an art scene in Nashville.

Jaci, a Nashville artist and recent transplant, accompanied me to a First Saturday Art Crawl on one of my first forays into the field. We walked between commercial galleries, artists' studios, and even parking garages that were showing art and serving wine and cheese. We happened into the Demonbreun Gallery, which is a popular venue during First Saturdays, and fits about 150 people at a time. Jaci and I met Barry, a local artist who also doubles as the gallery's coordinator and curator. I told Barry that I am a sociologist, working on this ethnographic study of artists and art scenes in Portland and Nashville, and that I would like to talk with him in the near future about his career. Barry was accommodating and full of lively conversation. During opening events such as this, artists, gallery directors, and curators often assume a responsibility for making sure everyone is entertained. Barry made sure Jaci and I had a cup of wine.

As the three of us were talking, a man walked by with an ominous contraption attached to his face that was part motorcycle helmet, part gas mask, and part bullhorn. The man in the mask casually walked around the gallery, spending a second or two in front of each of the paintings on the walls, as if mimicking the majority of the other art-crawlers. I would later learn that this is the artist known as Johnny Invective. Or, Johnny Invective is the alias of one Nashville artist whom for this particular "guerrilla performance" asked a friend to walk through the First Saturday openings wearing this mask so as to upset gallery etiquette while the real artist stood by as if an unsuspecting observer, taking pictures of people's reactions.

Such was the effect of this particular performance in upsetting gallery norms that Barry, who was hitherto all smiles, became suddenly agitated: "I should just kick that guy out," Barry said, "I mean look at him, he's disturbing the customers who are trying to look at the art." I did not think people were exactly disturbed; most of them seemed to keep their distance from Johnny Invective, not quite sure what to make of him. But Barry continued, "I mean I see that kind of thing in New York. I go to New York all the time. But there it's planned; it's part of the show. Nobody knows that this guy isn't part of this show." Instead of confronting Johnny, Barry got distracted with another conversation. Jaci then whispered in my ear: "that guy [Barry] is full of shit. If he really ever lived in New York, he would appreciate this."

Barry and Jaci do not know Leon, but like Leon, their careers require travel, and their pathways will inevitably lead them through or connect them to New York City in some way or another. New York has long been the center of U.S. and global, modern and contemporary visual art (*c.f.* Crane 1987; Guilbaut 1983; Thornton 2008); it concentrates art market activity, as well as the dominant museums and the internationally circulating publications that generate exposure and legitimacy for artistic professionals. New York matters for more than the institutional

resources it offers, however; it is also a symbolically powerful point of reference. As the vignettes above illustrate, artists can refer to New York to buttress their claims to authority on matters of what is ostensibly real art from what is pretend or "disturbing," regardless if those are opposite claims. For Barry, Johnny's performance appears illegitimate because it is not of New York. For Jaci, Barry's evaluation of Johnny's performance appears illegitimate because it is not really of New York either. Recall that for Leon, art degrees from Columbia University and attention from Whitney Biennial curators (both New York institutions) provide evidence of a serious ("multi-level, multivalent") professional art scene.

Unlike Barry, Jaci, and Leon, however, Johnny Invective has never been to New York for more than a site-seeing trip. He grew up in a small town in the Southwest part of Missouri. He attended a small college in the area that offered some art classes but not an art degree; he majored in philosophy, although he always considered himself an artist. He moved to Nashville after graduating, in part because it was the largest nearby city. Although his art career thus far has been limited to a regional if not local geography, his practices and aesthetic concerns are nevertheless informed by a contemporary arts discourse that has diffused everywhere, including rural Missouri. The contemporary art world is said to be "decentered" in recent decades, diffused throughout countless urban art scenes in both central and peripheral cities around the world, such that it is often assumed that an artist can live just about anywhere and still be a contemporary artist. Indeed, the internet is thought to play a major role in the diffusion of contemporary art discourse and practice, and has been a principal medium through which Leon has found a voice for himself and for his city as a whole on a global scale.

There are differences between Leon and Jonny Invective, however. Unlike Leon's battle for Portland's reputation, the artist known as Johnny Invective is ambivalent about his city. "No,

there is no benefit to calling yourself a Nashville artist," he told me. Leon takes an active role in promoting the image of city as a "hot art city," while Johnny Invective struggles to figure out his own path in an emerging art scene. Johnny wavers between the sentiments: "I have to get out of here," and "maybe Nashville is not the problem." The two artists take different roles in their respective local art scenes, but the difference between Leon and Johnny is also indicative of the difference between the kind of resources and reputations that their respective places offer.

Center and Periphery

The dissertation that follows is based on two years of field observations and 76 interviews with contemporary visual artists and related arts professionals in two *off-center* U.S. cities: Portland, Oregon and Nashville, Tennessee. The central question that animates the chapters that follow is: How do artistic professionals navigate career opportunities and constraints outside of the *centers*, New York and Los Angeles, which are already known to concentrate the social and institutional resources that propel and reward artistic careers? While previous research on art worlds and artistic careers have generated much insight into the social organization and logics of artists careers, these studies take place in single urban contexts, and most of them focus heavily on the centers. The multi-city design adopted here allows a comparison of artists' careers between places, thus answering how career strategies and practices are informed by different places, or unfold in spite of them.

Most of what is known about visual artists' careers derives from studies that focus at the centers of the art world. Not all artists can live in New York and Los Angeles, however, and while those cities concentrate a relatively high population of artists per capita, only 20 percent of American professional visual artists actually live in New York or Los Angeles (see Appendix,

Table A). The majority of artists live elsewhere; they live in a variety of off-center places that vary with respect to the institutions, markets, and symbolic credits those places afford them. Indeed, I evoke the term "off-center" here to complicate what elsewhere has been a residual category – the periphery – and I offer a more nuanced analysis of the role of place in artistic careers and cultural production processes generally in the twenty first century.

Off-center cities are not at all the same; they vary in the kinds of resources they offer for artists; although the global field does generate a common set of practices and dispositions that aim to overcome local, place-based constraints. At the outset of this study, I wanted to understand how artists' careers unfold within a variety of off-center cities, as if those cities and careers were somehow autonomous from, or existed in "parallel" to art worlds found in New York and Los Angeles. The analyses that follow move well beyond the variable resources at the local level, however, and instead view these local scenes as embedded in a larger, global field.

Like artists everywhere, off-center artists' careers include their artistic practices, but also strategies to secure exhibition opportunities, media exposure, and other socially derived means of accumulating recognition and/or "success" as they define that term for themselves, or negotiate it with others. As the vignettes above begin to detail, however, the places in which their careers unfold matter a great deal. Because resources in off-center art worlds are limited, artists in Portland and Nashville struggle to accumulate recognition both within and beyond their local artistic scenes. As well these artists struggle to reconcile the status of their local scene in the global field. They live out *translocal* careers; the opportunities and constraints they face require that they orient their concerns simultaneously at both local and global scales.

The dominant model of the geography of artistic production holds that there is a clear center, which differs markedly from the periphery or hinterland, which tends to be a residual

category. Economists and sociologists have long explained that artistic activity clusters in particular places to facilitate the interaction and exchange required between the various roles and inputs that make artistic production possible (c.f., Caves 2000; White and White 1965). Artists living outside of those clusters, by contrast, are thought to experience a relative disadvantage. In his book *Art Worlds* (1982), Howard Becker writes:

> "Regional segments… are usually oriented to the metropolitan centers of the "big" art world… Their participants suffer from a lack of exhibition opportunities, and even more from the sense that successes in their region will do them little or no good in the larger world they aspire to, a world almost totally unaware of them" (p. 160).

In the contemporary visual art world those U.S. centers are New York and Los Angeles. Globally, its centers also include places like London and Berlin, although New York City has been the dominant global art center in the post WWII era (Guilbaut 1983). New York houses the dominant art galleries and robust concentrations of market activity generally; it houses publications like *ArtForum International* that can expose artists to audiences around the world; it houses the dominant museums that have the power to consecrate, whose collections make up what tends to count as art history. New York is the place that concentrates more daily interaction and exchange between artists, dealers, critics, collectors, and curators, whom jointly produce the *conventions* (Becker 1982) and *beliefs* (Bourdieu 1993) that make art meaningful and possible.

Other cities offer fewer such resources, although there is evidence the geography of the global art world is changing. Sarah Thornton (2008) has recently described this art world's spatial configuration thus:

> "The contemporary art world is a loose network of overlapping subcultures held together by a belief in art. They span the globe but cluster in art capitals such as New York, London, Los Angeles, and Berlin. Vibrant art communities can be found in places like Glasgow, Vancouver, and Milan, but they are hinterlands to the extent that the artists working in them have often made an active choice to stay there. Still, the art world is more polycentric than it was in the twentieth century, when Paris, then New York held sway (p. xi)."

Evident but not explicit in Becker's and Thornton's accounts is that the difference between center and periphery – between New York and Nashville, for example – amounts to more than the relative concentration of social and institutional resources that facilitate artists' careers. The difference also includes *where* certain 'senses' and 'aspirations' toward success are pointed (Becker), and how 'active choices' between 'center' and 'hinterland' would seem to validate the 'belief' that unites professional artists everywhere (Thornton). These authors imply, and the vignettes above demonstrate, that art's spatial centers validate and legitimate artistic concerns; they translate to a "serious" orientation to making art; they produce aspirations and orientations towards them. Center and periphery thus describes a geographic distinction, differences in institutional and social resources, as well as different symbolic markers of relative worth.

Center/periphery differences affect artists' marketability as well as their chances for critical appraisal. Stuart Plattner's (1993) "economic anthropology" of the St. Louis art market in the early 1990s shows how dealers and collectors struggled to evaluate and put a price on artistic works in St. Louis, in part because of uncertainty regarding the quality of the work. Like Jaci and Barry, above, one strategy among artists, dealers, and collectors in circumventing this uncertainty is by making reference to New York. Plattner suggests what I am calling here the St.

Louis Hypothesis: An abstract painting made by a St. Louis artist can command only a fraction of what a New York artist could charge for the same painting, at the same gallery, at any given gallery in the U.S., by virtue of the address attached to the artists' bio alone. Further, a St. Louis art collector is more likely to travel to New York to buy art, and spend more money. The extra cost for the collector is weighed against the uncertainty of the "down home" product in St. Louis. By buying in New York, the collector is assured that their investment is informed by a dynamic art world that presumably rewards critically evaluated art and artists. Plattner refers to "New York hegemony" as the circumstance in which artists and art works are valued and evaluated depending on their associations with, or comparisons and contrasts against New York. In a similar social world, Pinhiero and Dowd (2009) find that Jazz musicians in New York and New Orleans, the centers of the Jazz art world, tend to do better both economically *and* critically than do Jazz musicians in San Francisco, net of individual factors including a musicians' relative accumulation of cultural and social capital.

Why is New York the center of the visual art world? One humorous explanation (stemming from within the New York art world) is that because New York is such an ugly city, its residents are compelled to make and buy art to make their lives more beautiful (Burnham 2000). But certainly there are uglier cities, and New York was not always the center of the art world. Rather, the city's current status as such results from efforts among a variety of individuals to build institutions that isolate and insulate certain kinds of cultural exhibition and exchange (see DiMaggio 1982), and also from various efforts – individual or state influenced – to draw attention to the city as a legitimate site of modern art production *against* other global rivals. This was the case in the early twentieth century when Arthur Stieglitz made an active effort to bring European artists to New York and establish an American school of modern art. The so-called

New York School finally grew up around the Abstract Expressionists in the post WWII era, which required many subsequent efforts to position New York artists as distinct from artists elsewhere (Ashton 1974). *New York City Stole the Idea of Modern Art*, as Serge Guilbaut (1983) has put it. In Guilbaut's account, New York's reputation was made in part by U.S. government investment in the image of the Abstract Expressionist movement as a cultural representative American democracy and individuality against other global, cold-war rivals.

Thomas Gieryn (2008) has recently added that, along with the New York School that came to dominate the world of modern art in the 1940s, so too did the idea that a New York address (including its loft live/work lifestyle) became a necessary component of the artists' vision. New York's 8th Street and 10th Street galleries and hangouts became modern art's "cenacles," or its "truth spots." "You had to be there," Tom Wolfe (1975) described:

> "You can get all the tubes of Windsor & Newton Paint you want in Cincinnati, but the artists keep migrating to New York all the same… You can see them six days a week… hot off the Carey airport bus, lined up in front of the real-estate office on Broome Street in their identical blue jeans, gum boots and quilted Long March jackets… looking, of course, for the inevitable Loft…" (pp. 13).

In the twentieth century, thus, New York *became* the center of the art world as a result of a social production process – institutionally as well as symbolically; its current status is the result of a social production process, not an historical inevitability. Likewise, Los Angeles *became* a second arts center in the 1960s, also following the active efforts among arts boosters there to transmit the image of Los Angeles as such (*c.f.*, Plagens 1999 [1975]; Drohojowska-Philp 2011).

Generally speaking, cities accumulate resources useful for career advancement, but they also accumulate reputations that differently color perceptions and evaluations of artistic works

beyond the various resources that they concentrate. In Gieryn's (2008) terms, "Place-based labels for circles of artists and their works help to establish value and secure reputations" (395). In addition to alleviating uncertainty for dealers and collectors, place reputations are actively produced and reproduced in efforts to negotiate artistic value. Long-time arts writer Peter Plagens recently told a story about a mandate given by his former editor at *ArtForum* when that publication was headquartered in Los Angeles in the late 1960s, before it too made the compulsory move to New York: "You can give me a story about a known artist in an unknown place, or an unknown artist in an known place, but never give me a story about an unknown artist in an unknown place," said the editor (Plagens 2010).

The validating influence of the center is evident as well in many sociological studies of the modern and contemporary visual art worlds, which in turn reify the status of the center (*c.f.*, Crane 1987; Giuffre 1999; Moulin 1987; Halle and Tiso 2010; Thornton 2008; Velthius 2005). For example, Thornton's (2008) recent account focuses exclusively on a small number of highly reputed artists, critics, collectors, and dealers who tend to live between New York, Los Angeles, and London, and who are perceived to set the standards of artistic legitimacy and value. Indeed, Thornton's descriptive account seems to rest only on the star power that it contains. Sociologist Andreas Szanto (2003) likewise suggests that, "New York and Los Angeles are joint custodians of virtually all art activity of consequence in the U.S." (393). Such assessments resonate with an art historical perspective, but by focusing only at the centers, these studies do not allow us to consider the validating influence of the place itself. Becker (1982) might suggest that these studies merely focus on those actors that have already won the "organizational victories" implied by their collectively agreed upon art historical importance in the first place. A more sociologically rigorous model might instead suggest instead that, 'New York and L.A. organize

the joint activities of virtually all of the custodians of artistic consequence.' The perspective offered here takes that a step further, however, to suggest that New York and Los Angeles not only organize but legitimate those custodians as well, and that legitimacy is a part of a social production process, which in turn, animates the field for artists everywhere.

Because of its emphasis on the largest urban centers, our current knowledge of artistic production and artists' careers is at best incomplete, and at worst biased. By focusing away from New York and Los Angeles, this study offers nuance to how we think about artists' careers via the causes and consequences of its global spatial organization. Becker and Thornton are right and wrong about artists' "active choices" or "opportunities." They are right to point out the variation in the type and variety of resources that central and peripheral places offer for artists' careers, but off-center artists do not necessarily "suffer" for lack of opportunity. As the artists' career pathways detailed in this study will illustrate, artists are not fixed in one place, and those places are neither fixed to their reputations. In fact, regarding exhibition opportunities, artists in this study reveal that it is always much easier to exhibit in Portland or Nashville than New York or Los Angeles. For that matter, it is always easier to exhibit in places where one is an active participant of a local scene. Moreover, one's 'place' alone does not determine one's success. Just as there are undiscovered artists from Gee's Bend, Alabama, there are plenty of artists in New York City and Los Angeles (good and bad) whose careers will inevitably lead nowhere.

Twenty-First Century Cities

Contemporary art scenes like the one that Leon describes in Portland, and the one that appears around the First Saturday Art Crawl in downtown Nashville can now be found in many U.S. cities, large and small. Just as New York *became* a center of art in the twentieth century, the

emergence of contemporary art scenes in Portland and Nashville in recent years also corresponds to particular historical conditions. One is the rapid growth of a professional artistic labor force in the U.S. in the latter half of the twentieth century (NEA 2008). This growth corresponded with the diffusion of Masters and Bachelors of Fine Arts degree granting institutions throughout the country in that time, which in turn provide full time jobs for professional artists, which in turn allow them to maintain a steady income and produce work that is (more or less) insulated from market pressures. Artist eventually became a respectable middle class occupational choice; "far from shocking the Bourgeoisie, art became the aesthetic vision of the Bourgeoisie (Zukin 1982). More recently, a paradigm shift among city planners, developers, and policy makers, actively encourages the development of artistic scenes as a source of "creative" human capital and economic development (*c.f.*, Florida 2002; Peck 2005; Shaw and Sullivan 2011; Silver and Grodach 2012).

Meanwhile, it has also been suggested that the world in the twenty-first century is "flat" (Friedman 2006). Friedman argued that recent global political-economic transformations, coupled with the advent and spread of new communications technologies, have rendered distance nearly irrelevant to the flow of global commerce, and this includes cultural production. One may locate anywhere and still compete.

The idea that the art world is "decentering" makes sense in light of this trend. The spread of the internet means that images and information can be shared around the globe instantly. Most contemporary artists have webpages, allowing them some degree of visibility and exposure everywhere at once. Art can be bought and sold digitally, and so the importance of New York as a "shop floor," as some artists refer to it, is also perhaps less relevant. Many artists also blog or have other online profiles and personalities that link up with others, thereby contributing to

virtual communities of shared interests that do not require face-to-face interaction. The growth of donation sites like Kickstarter means that artists can now reach millions of potential patrons at once, and that anyone can potentially be a patron, for example, with minimum donations of one dollar, or simply by "liking" a project to increase its visibility for others. The Internet itself has even served as something of a new artistic medium and subject matter. LOCATE has given Leon's career legs, and in turn he has made it his mission to advocate local artists and increase the whole scene's visibility for audiences and gatekeepers in other places.

Thus we have arrived at two competing hypotheses. The first is that *place matters* for artists' careers because different places concentrate different resources and reputations that translate to different career opportunities and outcomes. Indeed, the vignettes above illustrate clearly artists' anxieties about the relative status of their local art scenes, market chances aside. The second hypothesis would be that place matters *no longer*: contemporary art discourse has spread everywhere; the Internet has a democratizing influence on artistic careers everywhere; New York's "hegemony" in this sense is a relic of an earlier era. If Leon, Jaci and Barry have to reference New York to legitimate their artistic concerns, then this is perhaps a habit of an outmoded, twentieth-century condition.

The resolve of these competing hypotheses in the pages that follow will have much to do with the complex character of what sociologists and geographers call "place." As suggested above, places are not simply geographic coordinates filled with stuff. Places are also invested with meanings that in turn influence how people make sense of their worlds (Gieryn 2000), and this includes how art works and artistic scenes as a whole can be understood as legitimate or not.

In contrast to the "flat world" hypothesis, David Harvey (1990) offers a "conditional" theory of twenty-first century global geography, with special inflection on place as a social and

cultural construct with subsequent social and cultural consequences. Harvey's urban materialist analysis suggests that the global economic crises of the 1970s initiated a shift in the strategies of accumulation and regulation of global capital exchange. He argues that while the *spatial* constraints against the flow of capital, people, and information have been diminishing forever, though with ever-increasing pace, *place* matters more than ever. For one reason, places become a source of identity, or as an ontological mooring against an increasingly fleeting and ephemeral world characterized now by an ever-increasing barrage of images and ideas.[2] Moreover, the postindustrial economic crisis encouraged firms to seek out new labor markets overseas, which in turn changed how cities can go about attracting and accumulating capital. As a consequence, cities everywhere have sought to identify and brand themselves in particular ways. Place is now especially resonant as a marker of authenticity in the production of cultural products. For example, New Orleans brands itself around Jazz (Gotham 2007); Chicago brands itself around the Blues (Grazian 2003); Nashville brands itself around "Music" generally.

It is in this vein that we may consider why cities all over the U.S. have adopted arts-led development strategies in recent decades. From an urban development perspective, artists and artistic scenes are thought to generate certain economic "dividends" (Markusen and Schrock 2006) and art and artists have been seen as a "solve [for postindustrial] urban crises" (Landry and Bianchini 1995). Artists have been utilized as place-holders in transitioning neighborhoods for the symbolic values they generate for places and place-related lifestyles (Zukin 1982), and artists and art scenes have since been observed as key players in gentrification processes in cities

[2] Harvey argues that the conquering time and space in the service of capital accumulation are the driving logics of modernity, although with ever-increasing pace since 1973. Published in 1990, Harvey's *Condition of Postmodernity* could not have foreseen the advent of the internet, nor the collapse of the Berlin Wall, both of which have dramatically opened the geography of global capital flows in the last two decades. Yet, Harvey seems to have predicted quite clearly the crises of economic institutions around the production and exchange of fictitious capital.

everywhere. Most recently, Richard Florida's (2002) *Rise of the Creative Class* made arts-led development discourse popular reading for City Hall secretaries, property developers, and arts-funding institutions everywhere. Florida argued that vibrant artistic scenes lead to rich, innovative milieus, which in turn attract highly educated "young creatives" and generate regional economic advantage in the long run. Although the "creative class" paradigm has been thoroughly criticized, Florida's arguments have been adopted widely (*c.f.*, Peck 2005; Macgillis 2009). But while this has meant that cities everywhere now appear to want to embrace artists and artistic scenes, it does not necessarily follow that such development efforts extend to artists' own career concerns. Contemporary artists' career logics are generated primarily from the field of contemporary art. These concerns have much to do with the relevance of artists' cities or 'places' in the larger, global field, regardless if city officials would like to develop artistic scenes in the service of capital accumulation in other fields (Shaw 2012). Nevertheless, the geography contemporary visual arts production must also be understood as dynamic and unfolding in light of particular historical conditions.

Fields and Scenes: Three Propositions

This study offers a nuanced model of the spatial organization of contemporary arts production that considers the role of place in light of twenty-first century trends, grounded in off-center artists' career patterns and practices. The thesis that organizes the chapters that follow is that *contemporary artists' careers are dually embedded in local scenes and global fields of cultural production*. By dually embedded, I mean that artists' career concerns are enabled and constrained by two different informally organized social arenas, characterized here by different geographies of opportunity and access, and each producing different stakes and consequences for

career mobility and success. To advance this thesis, I propose a series of propositions that will be developed and unpacked in the chapters that follow.

Proposition 1: *Career mobility in the global field requires accessing and accumulating social and institutional resources that exist beyond one's local scene*. Off center cities alone do not offer the kinds of resources that can sustain very many artists' careers. As such, artists must work to develop opportunities elsewhere, market-wise, reputation-wise, or otherwise. In this sense, artists' careers are *translocal*.

Proposition 2: *Translocal mobility is aided by local visibility*. It follows from the first proposition that artists must be able to make connections to other places. One way they can do so is by working within their local scenes to create network opportunities that will bring them outside of that local scene. In turn, this requires being an active member of one's local scene. This implies that local scenes are generated by artists' own attempts to navigate career opportunities on a global scale.

Proposition 3: *Places accumulate reputations, which color perceptions of artistic merit, and which thereby influence artists' chances of securing market values and career visibility and viability*. In one sense, an artist is only as recognizable as their place, city, or scene is visible in the larger, global field, despite the Internet. It follows that place reputations are at stake in the advancement of artists' own careers. As Leon's battle on the global front suggests, one way that artists can work to accumulate recognition in the field is by working to establish their city as a legitimate one, recognizable to outside observers and gatekeepers.

To this point I have alternately used *art world*, *field*, and *scene* to describe the social arenas in which artistic activities cohere. *Art world* refers to a sociological conception of the organization of artistic production (e.g., Howard Becker's (1982) book *Art Worlds*), but the term

originates in aesthetic philosophy (Danto 1964) to describe the contexts in which art can be perceived as "art." Within "the contemporary art world" (in Becker's sense) the term also arises as a dirty word; it is used to refer to a particular power dynamic, namely, to those recognized artists, critics, dealers, and collectors, whose reputations would have an outsize influence on the discourse about contemporary art. These are the names and reputations that sit atop a hierarchy of what Bourdieu would call "symbolic capital;" the gatekeepers who live in places like New York and Los Angeles; this is the "Art World" that Sarah Thornton (2008) wrote about. More generally, the term might refer to an uncritical orientation towards success – to "make it in the art world," for example, might be considered "gauche" if someone said it like *that*. Because of these competing definitions, the term is rather inappropriate for any formal analyses of the population in question here. Throughout the following pages, I still use the term to refer to those whose careers and interests have to do with contemporary art, generally. This is a more sociological (Becker's) sense of the term. The "art world" as I refer to it here includes art stars in New York as well as art-school students in Kansas.[3] I use the terms *fields* and *scenes* to refer specifically to the different geographic scales in which artists' careers unfold. I offer brief definitions here, before elaborating on the global field of contemporary art in Chapter Two, and local artistic scenes in Chapter Four.

A *field* is a principle of stratification that describes a social space of positions in which actors are united by a common orientation to a particular set of stakes and rewards (Bourdieu 1993). Fields generate "specific profits" which actors differently accumulate, which in turn present them with different opportunities to maintain their relative position or contest others. The

[3] But my definition does not include the man-servant that might bring an artist coffee every morning, or any other peripheral roles that Becker includes that would make art making possible (See Becker 1982: 1).

field concept is usefully applied to art and cultural production, where the stakes and rewards that unite actors are both material (money exchanged for artistic products) and symbolic (peer recognition, consecration, and/or art-historical relevance). As suggested above, the value of any given artist or artistic object is the product of social struggles for authority to consecrate. Individual artists, as well as dealers, critics, and other roles, institutions such as museums, and genres, media, and other classification schemes are all at stake in these struggles, as are the places, cities, and scenes through which these individuals and institutional struggles are lived.

As we will see in Chapter Two, the field concept also implies that the practices, dispositions, and 'strategies of accumulation' of actors engaged in it are enabled by each relative position to each other (i.e., each relative accumulation of field-specific profits). In turn, this implies a methodological approach: that the field as whole can be analyzed in light of its actors' practical strategies of accumulation, conceptualized here as career pathways. Thus, while "art world" designates a particular population with similar concerns, the field concept implies that this population is animated by 'forces' and 'struggles' aimed at the accumulation of particular kinds of opportunities in the service of one's career. The boundaries that emerge around term "art world" itself can be understood in light of the symbolic struggles generated by the field.

Finally, *scene* is another concept used by sociologists to describe the informal social organization of cultural production. The scene concept is rather ambiguous in the literature, however, particularly regarding the geographic scales through which careers move and unfold. 'Scene' is also derived inductively here. Portland and Nashville artists refer to the "Portland scene" or the "Nashville Scene" to describe the particular set of actors that regularly make and attend local art events. Thus, I define scenes here specifically as locally specific subsets of actors within a global field. The social and geographic boundaries of 'scenes' are necessarily imprecise,

but the concept will prove useful in considering translocal career strategies in light of local constraints. Contemporary arts discourse has diffused throughout the world, but is processed and reproduced through the interaction of artists and others who can regularly come together and interact in local milieus. Local artistic scenes mediate individual artists' careers and the concerns and strategies of accumulation relevant to the global field. Scenes are made of actors in fields that share a common set of venues, familiar faces, resources, and place-reputations.

Cases: Portland and Nashville

Nashville and Portland represent two theoretically interesting cases. The cities are of similar size, but dramatically different in their populations and population-trend of visual artists. Portland contains a high relative concentration of visual artists, and that population is rapidly increasing. Nashville's artist population is smaller by contrast, and is decreasing.[4]

Nashville ranks as the 25th largest U.S. city with 605,000 residents, and a Metropolitan (MSA) population of 1.6 million. Portland ranks as the nation's 30th largest city with 566,000 inhabitants, and an MSA of 2.2 million. The 2000 U.S. census counted 2,310 "primary-occupation" fine artists in Portland, slightly more than two-per-thousands of its total labor force (NEA, 2008), 29 percent higher than the national average. American Community Survey data estimates that same population by 2010 (2006-10) at 3,077, or 80 percent more than the national average. In Nashville, the 2000 U.S. census counted only 950 fine artists, significantly less than

[4] Recent sociological studies of place follow a two-city, "most-similar-cases" model identified by Molotch, Freudenberg and Paulson (2000) and Paulson (2004). These studies isolate key dependent variables, and then proceed historically to uncover how places (e.g., cities, regions, or even states) follow similar or divergent pathways. This study breaks from those by focusing on two different cases, and proceeds to examine in each both the common logics of artists' career strategies, as well as the differences among artists' career chances and outcomes between places. In this section, I contextualize Portland and Nashville in light of their contrasts.

the relative percentage found in Portland. By 2010, the estimate for this population dropped slightly to 904, making the visual artist population there significantly smaller than the national average – 73 percent of what would be expected given the size of Nashville's labor force as a whole. Table A (appendix) shows location quotients for visual artists in select U.S. cities between 1970 and 2010 based on census (PUMS and ACS) estimates [5]. Portland's visual artist population is over three times the size as Nashville's, and that gap appears to be increasing.

What explains this difference in artist's location patterns? City size appears to be an important factor; New York and Los Angeles, America's two largest cities are also its contemporary arts' "centers," and they concentrate the largest populations of visual artists. But the relative concentration of artists outside of those cases does not follow any consistent pattern (Table A, appendix). The highest relative concentration of professional visual artists is actually in the San Francisco Bay Area, the nation's 13th largest metro area, while the third and fourth largest U.S. metros – Chicago and Dallas – actually concentrate fewer artists than the average. If city size alone explained the spatial distribution artistic career opportunities, we would expect Portland and Nashville MSAs to have similar populations of visual artists. Instead, Portland and Nashville offer different environments that differently enable and constrain artistic careers.

As we will see in Chapter Five, Portland and Nashville offer clearly contrasting brands and "place characters" (Molotch, Freudenberg, and Paulsen, 2000). Portland has established a reputation as an alternative art city in recent years. Local artists like Leon boast that Portland has been well represented in recent Whitney Biennials, a feat of real local importance for an exhibit that overwhelmingly culls from New York and Los Angeles. The arts are also a part of

[5] Location quotients are calculated as a ratio of the artist population in an MSA to the artist population that would be expected given the size of the workforce in that MSA. [(Local Artist Pop/Local Labor Force)/(National Artist Pop/National Labor Force)]

Portland's branding strategy, and resonate with economic policy as well. Portland's economic strategy aims to build an apparel, design, and advertisement clusters. These industries tap labor markets that are congruent with visual artists' skill sets and aesthetic concerns. Visual culture product industries benefit from visual art scenes, and in turn, they provide employment opportunities for visual artists, temporary or full-time (Lloyd 2006). Indeed, leading firms in Portland's advertising and design sector have regularly employ contemporary artists, sponsor arts institutions, and host art events.

Nashville, by contrast is the center of one high profile culture industry – commercial music recording. Theoretically, the concentration of culture industries in particular places provides additive benefits across culture industries (Caves 2000; Scott 2000). While this explains the agglomeration of music, film, and contemporary art in New York and Los Angeles, this appears not to be the case in Nashville, however, where the visual arts pale in comparison to music industry activity, and there appears to be little interaction between visual artists and music industry producers in Nashville. In comparison, Nashville's orientation to cultural markets is decidedly "country," while Portland's appears cosmopolitan and avant-garde.

As we'll see in Chapter's Two and Three, Portland and Nashville also differ in the institutional resources available for artists. One major difference between the cities is their academic environments. Both cities house a number of colleges and universities, but Portland contains two art schools that each offers more than one Master of Fine Art degree. Portland's Pacific Northwest College of the Arts has been called the fasted growing art school in the country, and since 2000 the school has developed three different MFA degrees and has quadrupled its endowment. In the same period Portland State University added an MFA degree in Contemporary Art and Social Practice to complement its long-standing MFA in Contemporary

Art and Studio Practice. The addition of these programs has meant that the city now circulates more students and full-time faculty, whom are now recruited from around the U.S. These academic programs also provide part time adjunct jobs, which also allow local graduating artists to generate income and maintain a studio practice while remaining immersed in a professional contemporary art setting.

Nashville, by contrast, has several colleges and universities, but only one that offers a Bachelor of Fine Art degree, and none that offer an MFA. While many professional artists in Nashville sustain their careers through full time professorships or adjunct teaching jobs, the number of such jobs is considerably less than in Portland. Moreover, the scale of Nashville's academic art scene does not generate the same discourse and energy for contemporary art making; the degrees there are not "professional" degrees. In turn, this means that there are fewer opportunities for serious art students to sustain the dialogue that informs their academic learning. If Nashville artists choose to get their MFA, they will have to go elsewhere to do so.

Following "creative" planning trends in cities everywhere, Portland and Nashville have both adopted strategies of supporting artists and the arts as a source of twenty-first century growth, although they have implemented different policies in this regard. Portland, in particular, has become a celebrated alternative arts city in the last decade. Portland has ranked high on Richard Florida's (2002) "Bohemian" and "Creativity" indices, in part for local policy efforts at "enabling artists" (Bulick et al, 2003). Portland is long known as a planning city. Portland State University also houses the oldest Urban Planning and Design departments in the U.S., and Portland has been innovative in domains such as public transportation and sustainability (Ozawa 2004). The city's current efforts to support artistic scenes can be seen as consistent in their effort to remain at the forefront of issues in urban planning and development. Portland's arts policy

world will be introduced again in Chapter Five. For now it will suffice to say that Mayor Sam Adams (2009-2013) ran on an arts platform and initiated a major overhaul of the city's arts planning document. While Portland has also generated spontaneous art world activity in recent years, it has done so in the context of an active arts policy environment (Shaw 2012).

Nashville's planning and policy environment, by contrast, appears rather "voluntary." Until recently, urban planning and design has not been a Nashville priority. Nashville has adopted "creative" development strategies generally, but their arts policy world is also significantly smaller than Portland's. The Metro Nashville Arts Commission employs eight, whereas Portland's Regional Arts and Culture Council (RACC) employs 33.

Different planning contexts also relate to different built environments. The urban built environment is thought to facilitate art and creativity generally by fostering interaction and exchange (Florida 2002; Currid 2007). Portland is known to be relatively dense for a city of its size. This density owes much to the area's Urban Growth Boundary, which was put in place in 1973 in an effort to limit suburban sprawl, and make development choices publically accountable rather than privately driven. The UGB has effectively reversed the rent gap, however, making development more economical in the inner city than in the suburbs, and thereby spurring gentrification in the inner city. Nashville, by contrast is a sprawling sun-belt city, whose major period of growth occurred in the post WWII period, in the age of the automobile, outwardly unconstrained. Apart from a few select neighborhoods, Nashville lacks the pedestrian scale built environment that facilitates the kind of "street scenes" that generate the kinds of interaction and exchange that are supposed to stimulate creative and artistic milieus.

In summary, Portland represents a case of a thriving off-center art world, while Nashville appears to be striving. These different cases present different contexts, different sets of

opportunities and constraints through which artists' careers are lived and experienced. As such they present varying backdrops against which artists practices and career strategies are enacted. These differences relate to the propositions above in that Portland and Nashville offer different resources for maintaining one's career, and difference resources for overcoming local constraints. These differences are further explored in the following chapters.

Art World Ethnography

The following analyses of artists' career pathways – and the local art scenes and global fields that they are embedded in – begin with two years of participant observation, one year in each of Portland and Nashville. My fieldwork aimed to combine both sited observation of public art events, or, the settings and scenes in which artists come together socially. To do this, I followed a variety of leads, beginning with particular artists, or particular venues, which led to connections with other artists and venues, which in turn led to further opportunities, and so on, until I had reasonably exhausted the meaningful and analytical categories through which careers take shape.

I first met Jaci in Nashville, who became a key informant. Jaci invited me to collaborate and participate in a variety of art projects and performances, and she introduced me to several other Nashville arts professionals. Jaci and I co-applied were accepted into an interdisciplinary arts conference in Portland called Open Engagement in the May of 2010. There I met Neil, a Portland artist ("the soul of Portland's art scene," according to one local writer), who we will meet in Chapter Five. Neil later introduced me to Omar, who we will meet in Chapter Two, who became a key informant in Portland. Omar would later invite me to participate in an artist and writer "residency" in his Portland gallery in the fall of 2011, where I participated by giving a

lecture and by agreeing to develop what might pass for an art "installation" during the residency's "opening."

In addition to the connections that seemed to develop organically throughout the process, I also sought out a variety of individuals and venues on my own that became known to me as key players in their local cities and scenes, like Leon. Between May of 2010 and March of 2012, I spent a total of 10 months in Portland and 12 months in Nashville attending gallery-opening events, artist lectures, as well as a variety of arts-policy and planning events. I got to know many others, like Barry and the artist known as Johnny Invective through consistent interaction and observation during this time. I became a familiar face in Portland and Nashville's art scenes.

Throughout the course of this fieldwork, some informants – especially Omar – identified me and introduced me to others as a "writer" covering the local scene. Omar knew I was a sociologist, and he had a good understanding of what my questions and goals were, but he used "writer" as a title that others could more readily relate too. "Writers" occupy a powerful role in art scenes. These people might be critics or journalists, or in some cases they might be creative writers who draw inspiration from the visual arts. "Writers" often represent an opportunity for publicity, and so they are usually held in high esteem. When I was first introduced this way, I would try to dissociate from the term: "I'm just a sociologist," I would say, "I'm just doing research for my dissertation." If I thought I had their attention, I would mention that I would not be using anyone's real names. When I introduced myself to artists as a sociologist, however, I found that this often led to them asking more questions of me than I of them.

Over time I learned to embrace the "writer" designation. Indeed, I am anticipating that this study will become a book, and it will be accessible by the very people who have shared their stories with me here. While most artists I talked with were very interested that a sociologist was

interested in them, I felt that the writer role gave me a different kind of access. I was invited to artists' parties here and there, and artists were volunteering information that they thought I might find interesting, including details about their artwork, whom they associate with, etc.

In addition to participant-observation, I also interviewed a total of 76 artistic professionals, including: 38 in Portland, 29 in Nashville, and nine artists that moved from Portland and Nashville to New York to pursue their careers. In Portland and Nashville, 28 of those interviewees were artists, and the remaining were a combination of dealers, writers, art-policy professionals, and even arts-advocate property developers.

In each city, my sample began with a short list of artists who I got to know as active members of their local scenes through sited observation. Using snowball methods, I generated a list of artists names in each city, which I then drew upon to tap a range of career experiences, including: men's and women's; early-, mid-, and late-career artists; local, regional, and internationally recognized artists; and highly visible actors in local scenes as well as those who do not often participate. The sample is predominantly White, though not exclusively, as the art world in these cities tends to be. Still, the sample is biased towards those central actors in local scenes; these are the artists I got to know best by making myself visible and active; their friends and those recommended for interviews tended to be visible and active by extension. Indeed, the internal dynamics of local scene activity became a key element in my thinking about artist career pathways. Many interviewees in both Portland and Nashville assumed multiple roles, like Leon, Barry, and Jaci, for example, as artist-curators, artist-writers, artist-professors, etc., which makes them more visible, more influential, and hence more prone to recommendation by others for interview candidates. Although I could only get to know a small percentage of artists in each city

after only one year spent in each place, common types of observations and experiences in both cities led me to general conclusions about artists' career patterns in off-center cities.

Chapter 2

Mapping the Field of Contemporary Art

Omar

I met Omar at the First Friday Art Walk in Portland's Central Eastside Industrial District – now called Central Eastside Arts District. The opening at the Hippo Gallery had received favorable write-ups from the local alt-weekly and on Leon's website, so I made it a point to check it out. The Central Eastside is only the most recent area of Portland to develop an arts identity. Like First Thursday (Northwest Portland) and Last Thursday (Northeast Portland), First Friday is the night of the month that studios and alternative art galleries in the district open and exhibit new artists, host crowds and parties, and bring a public presence to a formerly marginal city space (see Shaw *forthcoming* on the topic of art crawls). The district's ample supply of buildings with wide open space and natural light, central location, and marginal appearances would make it ideal for the material and symbolic concerns of visual artists (*see* Bain, 2003; Lloyd 2006; Zukin, 1982). The Hippo Gallery is housed in an old, large industrial garage building, now partitioned by "built-out" standard-white gallery walls.

The guest-curated group-show this month featured a smattering of contemporary art media: installation art, video, and performance, and very few paintings. There were about fifty-or-so, twenty- and thirty-something artists/art-students in attendance. Many of them held up their iPhones to take pictures of a Beyoncé impersonator in drag performing *Single Ladies*. I did the same. I found Neil, whom I had met two months earlier at the Open Engagement Conference, and whom I would later learn is a celebrated figure in Portland's local art scene. I informed Neil of my research project, again, which caused his imagination to flicker, "You should talk to

Omar!" he said excitedly. Omar is the proprietor of the venue; Neil led me across the room to make the introduction. Omar would become a key informant. I interviewed him several times, and he introduced me to many other artists whose voices and career paths will be depicted in the chapters to come.

Omar is an artist, professor, curator, entrepreneur, and scene-maker. He has lived in various cities around the world, including Paris, Brussels, Boston and New York City. He moved to the U.S. for the first time in 2001; he was invited to exhibit at a museum in Brooklyn, so he packed up and moved to New York. He found New York's art scene "unwelcoming," however, because at the time, he explains, "I had not immersed myself in the American culture of art making." He moved to San Francisco in 2003 to attend graduate school. "Getting the Master's degree (MFA) allowed me to be part of the academic community," he says, "… and get the job teaching." After graduate school, Omar moved back to New York for a short time in 2006, then spent some time in Puerto Rico, and then moved to Portland in 2007. He never liked living in New York. For one reason, he says, "The cost of living is so high, but not just because of rent…" Omar was loft sitting for an artist-friend that lived between New York and Paris, which cost him very little. "…You have to spend $50,000 a year just to go out and network every night," he says chuckling, as if uncovering the truth about the New York art world.

Omar also complains about the contemporary art "industry" in New York. As he tells it, graduate students at top art schools there try to emulate what is selling in the biggest New York galleries. Professors at these schools encourage this because their positions depend in part on remaining relevant in the gallery system. The result is a loosely organized system in which artistic products are more or less standardized by a few high-profile tastemakers. Omar is not at all opposed to selling his work, but he says, "I'm old school. I believe art is like a personal need;

it's like your voice in the world. But after graduate school I realized it's a big business." As a testimony to his anti-business stance, he says, half-joking, "I don't even buy *ArtForum* anymore!" Although *ArtForum* is the most widely circulating contemporary arts magazine in the world, it is also criticized as pandering to the market (i.e., at the cost of focusing on the "art"). Further, Omar decided not to stay in New York. "So my idea was to have a studio here in Portland, and be a part of the [local art] community, and maybe teach, and from here exhibit around the world." Indeed, Omar has since been represented in international art fairs, and has shown his work in various academic and commercial galleries between New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Brussels, and elsewhere.

"Why Portland?" I asked, "If you wanted to get away from New York, Why not Seattle? Why not L.A.? Why not Omaha, Nebraska?"

"I love Portland," Omar says. He has a list of the city's positive attributes, which include lifestyle concerns, and the fact that the size and scale of Portland's art scene allows him to take an active role. It also turns out that Omar once met some Portland art professors in New York at an academic arts conference. They encouraged him to be in touch. He visited those professors in Portland a year later, and was invited to apply for his job, which now provides him a steady income, which in turn he invests in the local scene.

Omar opened Hippo Gallery in 2008 in an effort "to be part of a community." He describes Hippo alternately as an "alternative" or "experimental" venue (also known in the art world as a "project space"), which means that most of the art exhibited there will not be for sale. At least, Omar does not expect to make money on the venture; neither is he an art "dealer," technically speaking, although the gallery does make occasional sales. Omar funds the venue mostly out of pocket from income generated through his job and sales of his own work, which

take place elsewhere. The rent is also relatively cheap; it is worth the investment as he understands it. He knows that the venue is not sustainable in the long run, but it pays off. By opening and directing the Hippo Gallery, Omar helps to facilitate the local scene, which positions himself as a central actor within it. More importantly, the curatorial role itself becomes an outlet to connect with other artists in other places. Through Hippo Omar is able to exhibit around the world, while generating local scene activity in the process, despite that little money is being exchanged through his gallery. As Omar explains:

> "For me, Hippo is like a platform to experiment. Like showing stuff that I don't think mainstream gallery want to show, [or that] mainstream gallery doesn't think is sellable. So most of the work that is shown there is not for sale. Therefore, it is more about experimenting; creating a platform where artists get together and meet. In terms of me as an artist, it actually gives me a chance to be a part of a community. And also, I benefit from having other artists exhibiting work that I can witness and be influenced and use in my own work and career. So it gives me professionalism in terms of curatorial work. My next thing is I want more and more a way of reaching other places. For example, in May I was invited to show in [Europe], so I can use the Hippo platform to create that show. Even though it was my show, I got to negotiate and have four other artists join me in the show, and one was from Portland, one from Belgium, one from France, and one from Africa… So we all went there and did a show and it was quite a success. In November I [curated] a show in San Francisco, with Portland artists, that was installation and performance… it was called *From Portland with Love*, and it [got] a very nice review. And I'm planning to do one in L.A…."

Omar later invited me to participate in a "residency" at Hippo for artists and writers an effort to foment dialogue between them. My participation required giving a public lecture about my research, as well as developing what might pass for an art "installation" during the residency's opening. My installation consisted of early drafts of conference papers derived from this research, printed on paper that was cut to resemble white cubes (like art galleries), placed on my desk alongside a stack of informed consent documents that observers were welcome to sign. My digital audio recorder was also left on the desk, the red, "on" light reminding the audience that it was recording. What would an ethnographer do? The installation was not exactly well received, but the local alt-weekly found room to describe my research alongside the other artists' works.

Fortunately, I am not an artist, and the research at hand is not about art. It is about the social conditions, opportunities, and constraints that artists face in the process of navigating their careers outside the centers of the art world. Omar's move to Portland is instructive in this regard for the newfound opportunities that he found there. In Portland, Omar has found himself a central actor in a local scene, oriented more to an art "community," rather than to an art market, a difference that he understands precisely in terms of the different places he has lived. Indeed, Omar is not only oriented to a local community, but to a global field, where mobility between places matters a great deal in making and sustaining his career.

The purpose of this chapter is to theorize and map the global field of contemporary art as derived from artists' own understandings of the various opportunities and constraints with which they must contend in different places. The field concept adopted here owes to Pierre Bourdieu's (1977, 1984) general field theory all but the historic and geographic conditions around which his specific articulation of *The Field of Cultural Production* (1993) is derived. I have suggested above that the contemporary situation is one in which places themselves accumulate reputations

and resources that matter for career maintenance and success. Here, I focus on urban variation in field-generated opportunities and constraints, specifically between markets and scenes.

I begin by reviewing Bourdieu's field concept, before elaborating on the peculiar properties of cultural fields and a method for identifying any one field's genetic structure (i.e., by analyzing the practical logics and strategies of accumulation evident among the actors that make it up). Next, I offer a critique of the literature that focuses only on art market roles and relationships. As evidenced by Omar's story, a market-centered approach captures only one half of artists' career concerns, and disregards artists in places where markets are constrained. This point will be further demonstrated using artists' own interpretations of the many constraints operating against traditional market roles (i.e., dealers, critics, and collectors) in off-center cities. Finally, this chapter offers an inductively derived typology of off-center cities in light of the resources they do offer for artists, which, roughly consistent with Bourdieu's depiction of cultural fields, belong in the realm of markets on the one hand, and scenes on the other.

The Global Field of Contemporary Art

I refer to the *global field of contemporary art* as the social arena that generates and allocates relevant resources and rewards for all artists in the world that share a common orientation to contemporary art. A *field* describes a social arena, or a "social space of positions," in which actors share a common orientation to a particular set of resources and rewards (or "specific profits," or "species of capital"), such that one's position in that social space is defined by one's accumulation of the field's rewards relative to other contenders. An actor's relative endowment of such profits, in turn, influences their dispositions and practical strategies of accumulation vis-à-vis others. As such, fields are arenas of conflict and struggle, whereby the

dominant actors – those most endowed with its specific profits – can leverage their relative advantages to reproduce their positions and the logics of exchange in the process. As a general stratification concept, a field can refer to any social arena that generates specific rewards that correspond to different structural patterns (different spaces of positions), each with its own unique logics of struggle and exchange. For example, one might think of academic or scientific fields in which credibility and prestige are at stake (and are always contested); a field of citizenship in which laws and rights are contested; a field of class relations in which financial wealth or 'capital' in its strictly economic form is the guiding force and financial accumulation is the logic of exchange; a field of gender relations (Bourdieu 2004); a sexual field (Green 2008; 2011); etc. Originally borrowed from the science of electromagnetism, the field concept can appear to reduce actors to charged particles, whose behaviors by and large conform to the presence of 'forces' external to them (Martin 2011). Social fields are more complicated and dynamic than physical ones, however, and human actors have more agency than atomic particles do. For Bourdieu (1993: 30), fields of cultural production are especially dynamic: they are "a *field of forces*, but it is also a *field of struggles* tending to conserve or transform this field of forces" (emphases original).[6]

Fields of cultural production – of which the field of contemporary art is one example – are particularly interesting because they present a unique set of specific profits and strategies of

[6] Bourdieu has been criticized for emphasizing the reproduction of social structures in such a way that would appear to assign humans very little agency, however. On the contrary, a responsible reading of Bourdieu should reveal that social structures in fact arise through human interaction, and exchange, and struggle. Regarding Bourdieu's conclusions on the inevitable tendency toward social reproduction in social class relations (1984), education (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977), gender relations (2004), owes both to the complexity of the fields that he describes, as well as the historic- and site-specific milieus he describes.

accumulation.[7] Bourdieu (1993) refers to fields of cultural production as "economic worlds reversed," meaning that the specific profits that they generate, which he calls *symbolic capital* (prestige, reputation), accrues not by conventional economic measures (not by "brute wealth" (Thornton 2008)), but instead by a "disinterest" or "disavowal" of ordinary economic motives, or an "art-for-art's-sake" orientation to artistic production.[8] The unique economy of cultural fields (the logics of profit and exchange that it generates) is thus an economy of *belief*, or of defining what 'legitimately' belongs to a class of things known as "art," and people known as "artists," and further, which among those are 'good,' which are 'cutting edge,' or which are 'derivative' etc. In Bourdieu's (1993) words:

> "Given that works of art exist as symbolic objects only if they are known and recognized, that is, socially instituted as works of art and received by spectators capable of knowing and recognizing them as such, the sociology of art and literature has to take as its object not only the material production but also the symbolic production of the work, i.e. the production of the value of the work, or which amounts to the same thing, of belief in the value of the work" (37).

[7] Bourdieu's own sociological concern was explain how cultural fields mediate social reproduction processes in larger political and economic fields (especially in Bourgeois capitalist society), for example, by revealing the symbolic struggles through which dominant groups leverage various cultural codes to mark their tastes and dispositions as 'distinct' and 'legitimate' (Bourdieu 1984). The extent to which cultural fields like art and literature actually contribute to social reproduction across national and historical contexts has been hotly debated, but Bourdieu's insights regarding the internal logics of artistic fields, or of the stakes, rewards, and practices that tether and motivate artists, remains a foundation for any study of artistic career practices and pathways.

[8] "Art for art's sake" (or L'art pour l' art) is a loaded and contested term. For most contemporary artists it refers to an art-historical moment in nineteenth century France, in which artists rejected utilitarian or moralistic functions of art. Bourdieu draws the term from art history, but implies a definition of art as autonomous from market concerns.

Quite often it is the case that true "art" is defined against those who would seek to profit from it. This is exactly what Omar does when he eschews the "big business" New York art world and offers in its place his own "old school" belief that art is a "personal need."

On the other hand, if we are to take Omar's words at face value, contemporary art *is* a big business, and many can and do profit handsomely from it (Velthius and Coslor 2012). This is because, according to Bourdieu, cultural fields are never completely autonomous from the market economy. If they were, the definition of real "art" would be the only stake in the game, and the logic of symbolic capital would be the only strategy of accumulation. Artists and art worlds may strive for autonomy, consecrating as legitimate only those that produce what they define and recognize as "art," but those definitions are always enfolded in broader fields, including the market. When Bourdieu refers to the art market as a "trade in things that have no price" (1993: 74), he does not mean that prices cannot be determined. Rather, he seeks to disentangle this economy of belief from classical economic perspectives. "If it is all too obvious that the price of a painting is not determined by the sum of the production costs – the raw material and the painter's labor time…" writes Bourdieu, "this is perhaps because we wrongly define the… process of [its] production" (p. 76). Again, that process is the production of belief, which depends not on labor time, but on the accumulation and exchange of symbolic capital.

"Who is the true producer of the value of the work – the painter or the dealer…?" Bourdieu (1993: 76) asks, implying that a dealer's reputation, not the skill of the artist, nor the work itself, is the source of the art's value. It is through such reputations that belief is generated, through which art can be valued and evaluated, through which its price can ultimately be achieved, and through which artists' careers, whether they depend on the market or not, can advance. A sociological approach to artistic production thus concerns the generation and

exchange of symbolic capital, or reputations, which exist in a complicated relationship with audiences and markets. On the one hand, the field generates a tension between symbolic capital and marketability. On the other hand, artistic marketability is the result of a social production process that begins with the accumulation and exchange of symbolic capital.

The field that Bourdieu theorizes should nevertheless be understood as situated in a particular time and place. His model is derived from analyses of the nineteenth century Parisian literary scene, which taken by itself, does not require us to think beyond its historical and geographic particularities. But cultural fields do develop historically, and not only, as most art historians might have it, in terms of aesthetic revolutions and artistic innovators. "Disinterest," as a strategy of accumulation in cultural fields, arises alongside Enlightenment concepts of individuality, and Bourgeois capitalism generally. For example, scholars have traced the "genius" around figures like Beethoven (DeNora 1995) and Van Gogh (Heinich 1997) as a unique social construction. With the birth of the modern art market in nineteenth century, the notion of the disinterested, genius artist "offered compensation" for artists that could no longer secure stable salaries in the European art academies (Alexander 2003: 143). "Art-for-art's-sake" was not only a statement about art, but also a practical strategy, or a claim to a higher calling. Such an anti-market, anti-mainstream, or "bohemian" ethos has proven durable, however, and has continued to inform artistic practices in the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries (Simpson 1981; Lloyd 2006). Contemporary visual art might represent a special case of a cultural field, however. Andy Warhol's famous line, "Making money is art, and working is art, and good business is the best art," was scandalous at the time (1960s), but Warhol was already famous and perhaps the richest living artist. Among "sellable" mediums of contemporary art today, the market at its highest levels may be characterized by struggles to appear disinterested

(Velthius 2005), while paintings still sell for $millions (Thornton 2008). Nevertheless, just as the career logics that fields generate develop historically, so too should fields be understood as dynamic with respect to the individuals that make them up, and with respect to the broader economic contexts in which they are embedded. I argue below that these logics and contexts are best articulated through analyses of artists' career pathways.

Field Methods

Adopting a field approach thus requires an appreciation of a) a field's objective social relations (i.e., the positions that actors occupy relative to each other given their accumulation of its specific profits), b) the practical orientations that those objective relations generate (i.e., the habitus), and c) a sensitivity to the broader economic, cultural, and historical contexts in which fields of cultural production are embedded, and through which they continually unfold. In Bourdieu's (1993) terms: "The task is that of constructing the space of positions and the space of position-takings in which they are expressed… The structure of the field, i.e. of the space of positions, is nothing other than the structure of success in the field and the winning of the external or specific profits (such as … prestige) which are at stake in the field" (30).

Analysts have used several methods to study cultural fields. Some have sought to describe the structure of the field – the objective space of positions – by counting each and every actor that makes it up, and then analyzing the kinds of connections among them (i.e. Giuffre 1999; Anheier et al 1995). Network analyses strive to get at the relations of actors in the field, for example, the kinds of ties that develop between those theoretically high in symbolic, social, or cultural capital, but these approaches cannot get at the 'economy of belief' (i.e., the meaningful contents of those networks); they cannot approach artists' actual articulations of their positions

and dispositions, and the practical strategies of accumulation among actors. Moreover, my reading of the field concept established here suggests that efforts to analyze a field by an exhaustive sample of the actors that make it up is be untenable because the extent of any one actor's participation in a field varies, and because the visibility of the most prominent actors are only made possible by those less visible actors whom they are positioned against (see Shollette 2010). That is, the field itself generates a boundary separating who is in and who is out; career logics concern "knowing who is a part of this universe and who is not" (Bourdieu 1993: 164). Other studies have sought to identify how reputations accumulate in artistic fields (Becker 1982; Lang and Lang 1988), whether or not they call it "symbolic capital," and whether or not they find consequences of those reputations in the market. Very few studies, however, have looked outside of locally specific contexts to examine the structure of cultural fields in broader, global formations (except Plattner 1996).

My method for uncovering the structure of the field is rather to map the career pathways, and practical strategies of accumulation of a theoretically interesting group of actors involved in it, i.e., those outside its centers, where art markets and reputations are known to be more tenuous. If practical orientations and strategies of accumulation flow logically from the structure of the field, I suggest here the field can be revealed through artists' practical strategies of accumulation in light of the opportunities and constraints they face in different places. As stated by Randal Johnson (Bourdieu 1993): "It is up to the analyst to establish through research what the specific interests of the field are and what strategies of accumulation (which may or may not be based on conscious calculation) are employed by the agents involved" (p. 8).

Indeed, the utility of the field concept is found not merely the relative social positions it defines, but in the combination of those relations and the (relative) practical logics that it

generates for those engaged in it. Through their engagement in (many, overlapping) social fields, actors develop orientations to the world given whatever resources at their disposal to engage, resist, challenge, or perhaps glide through it with no conscious effort. In Bourdieu's terms, the *habitus* refers to this "system of durable, transposable dispositions… which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming" (1977: 72). Fields are "structuring structures," in that they give rise to the practical orientations and dispositions that end up producing and reproducing its objective structures and logics of exchange, e.g., by defending or contesting the status quo. The habitus, in turn, is also a structuring structure that produces and reproduces the objective conditions of the field(s) that influence it. Field and habitus presuppose and inform each other. While the concepts of field and habitus allow an understanding of social action that does not unnecessarily privilege objective structures or subjective points of view, it follows that a field's structure and dynamics can be observed with regard to the opportunities and constraints, and the practical strategies that artists engage in.

Local Market Constraints

Several art objects are displayed in Omar's apartment living room. One is a tee shirt hanging on a plastic hanger with some words written on it in permanent marker: "That artist wrote on this shirt, donated it to Goodwill, and bought it back, and it became his art," Omar tells me, in a tone that invites me to interpret this art concept for myself. Another artwork is a video looping on a tiny, two-inch monitor fastened to his wall – the power chord takes up more space than the device itself: "Whenever someone gives me video, I put it here," he says. Omar describes his own work as, "Multi-media installation… It's about working with the structure of

the city, and the culture, and that overlap; it's about looking into consumerism; painting, silk-screening, collage, video, all together." Omar has been modestly successful selling his work, although not in a traditional fashion. He has an art dealer in Belgium who represents him at international art fairs, but more often he works on commissions, which he says net him "about five figures per year," he says.

Omar does not have a gallery in Portland, however. This is despite that, "Everyone here knows me," he says, suggesting that his lack of gallery representation is not because of his lack of exposure. Rather, he explains that there is an "old school," conservative, commercial gallery system in Portland, about which he says unfavorably, "They tend to show [pause] *modern* art." "Modern" for Omar might stand in contrast to "contemporary;" he means that most work that sells in Portland is not relevant to his aesthetic concerns, nor to those of his friends and students that make up much of the Hippo Gallery's regular attendance.

Omar breaks down the local art market as follows. He believes that local market constraints lead local market oriented artists to continue to produce conservative artwork. He maintains that local collectors are few and far between, that their tastes are behind the times, and that there is a "locals-only" ethos among them. He suggests that dealers are not encouraged to take risks, because they make few sales in the first place; rather, they are forced to pander to lowest common denominators. As far as artists go, Omar suggests that there is an "old-guard," that has been selling in the local galleries for years, and their work is produced without regard for contemporary artistic concerns taking place elsewhere.

Nevertheless, Omar seems not to care much too much. After all, he does sell some work in other places, and his professorship provides a steady income. More importantly, however, the Hippo Gallery provides an "alternative" or "experimental" outlet for artists like Omar. "Only one

percent of all art that is shown in Portland ever gets sold anyway…" says Omar, "So Portland is like a studio city, a place where artists can experiment and focus on their work, without the pressure of the market."

Cynthia and Harrison White's (1965) *Canvases and Careers* described the transition in nineteenth century France from the art academies to what they called the "dealer-critic" system. Dealers and critics emerged at the time to fulfill new market demand for paintings corresponding to new class relations, new wealth, and to the rapid growth of Paris as a center of exchange. Dealers emerged as middlemen, matching formerly salaried artists to this new buying public in an open market. Critics arose to supplement the market with their opinions on the value of artists and artistic works. The institutional change that White and White describe did not merely change the social relationships of the art world, it also brought about new directions for artistic practices and evaluation processes, and Impressionism flourished as a consequence.

Subsequent empirical analyses of visual art worlds have focused heavily on markets, or on the roles and relationships that culminate in the buying and selling art artists' works on the gallery floor. These studies focus on the "curious" logics of the art market (Thompson 2009; Velthius 2005), revealing both how agents of the marketplace perform disinterest, and how uncertainty inherent in artistic evaluation is overcome through the production and exchange of symbolic capital. Such studies might make convenient use of price points as dependent variables (e.g. *The $12 Million Dollar Stuffed Shark* (Thompson 2009)). Interesting questions in this vein include, among other things: the rapid inflation of prices on the secondary market (Thornton 2008); the market's "winner takes all" character (*see* Rosen 1981), whereby very few artists make millions, but most fail to support themselves at all; or how collectors and dealers reconcile assigning exchange values to objects that have no intrinsic utility (Coslor 2010; Moulin

1987[1967]; Velthius 2005). From this perspective, "Artists sell their skills in a labor market. They compete with other artists for recognition from buyers…" (Alexander 2003: 135).

Other studies of art markets have taken seriously the interceding influence of artists and dealers' reputations in the determining of prices. Velthius (2005) has argued that the "hallow core" of economic analyses of art markets neglects the social relations involved in the pricing of art works. His work points out, for example, the apparent contradictory dual practice among dealers of simultaneously appearing "disinterested" in prices while shrewdly concerned with the status of their gallery relative to other dealers (Velthius 2005). Indeed, as Giuffre (1999) claims, information about prices is complicated by the fact that dealers often keep these secret in the primary art market, in part because dealers do not always sell to the highest bidder, but to those collectors whose own reputations will continue to cement the value of the work in the long run, as well as the reputations of the dealer and the artist.

In his recent study of "outsider" art markets, Gary Alan Fine (2004: 3) takes care to define markets in sociological terms:

> "This is not a world of disconnected or anonymous buyers or sellers – as at a supermarket – but a world in which relationships of trust, friendship, or enmity abound. Such a market is characterized by embedded relationships… Seeing the art world as an economic marketplace deepens, not weakens, our appreciation for its complexity and aesthetic concern" (2004: 3).

While there is nothing wrong with Fine's definition, the picture that his and others' paints remains incomplete. "Markets" might ultimately refer to social processes of buying and selling, but trust, friendship, and embedded relationships among artists and other art world actors do not always culminate in shop-floor exchanges. A narrow focus on markets would seem to conflate

career viability with the market alone. As Omar's pathway demonstrates, however, the field appears more complex than the relationships that ultimately culminate in buying and selling.

There are at least two limits to focusing strictly on markets as such. One is that most artists do not make their careers by selling their art works in the first place (Simpson 1981; Lloyd 2006). As Bourdieu (1993) has pointed out, fields of cultural production generate divisions between those oriented toward production for the market and production for restricted groups of like-mined peers; rejecting the market in the short run is the source of the efficacy of symbolic capital in the long run. Moreover, as Moulin (1987:1) points out: "Not all artists are integrated into the market. Not all 'consumers' of art are buyers of art works." Second, the studies that do focus on markets tend to focus on the relationship between dealers, collectors, artists and critics where those relationship are most evident, at the 'centers' of the art world, thereby neglecting the majority of artists, whom do not live in the centers.

Markets in Portland and Nashville do exist, and like those described elsewhere, they consist of artists, dealers, collectors, critics, and the relationships among them that ultimately produce exchange values. I argue here however, that knowledge of art markets that derives from the centers of the art world does not translate well to off-center cities. Art markets in Portland and Nashville are particularly tenuous, as art markets are known to be in peripheral cities (Plattner 1996). Below I describe the myriad constraints operating on dealers, critics, and collectors in Portland and Nashville, drawing on artists' own points of view, whose careers are thought to depend on the functioning relationships between these roles.

Dealers

Art dealers are "middlemen" (White and White 1965) that must negotiate two distinct social worlds. They must work to win the business of wealthy individuals who can afford the kinds of works that can sustain careers and businesses, and they must work to build the careers of artists, very few of whom can ever expect to make their careers on the art market alone. In off-center cities, these roles and relationships are doubly compromised.

Under the terms "Art Galleries, Dealers, and Consultants," an online Yellow Pages search yields 222 such business in Portland, and 88 in Nashville. In sampling terms, Yellow page counts include both type I and type II errors, however. Most of these businesses, such as interior decorators and frame shops, would not be considered relevant to the aesthetic and career concerns of artists represented in this study. Meanwhile, "alternative" galleries, "project spaces," university art galleries, or otherwise non-profit art galleries, which organize and catalyze much local contemporary art scene activity, usually are not listed in the Yellow Pages. Taken as an indicator, however, there appears to be about three times as many art dealers in Portland than there are in Nashville. Still, artists and dealers in both cities complain that local markets are tenuous. Few serious artists support themselves in their local art market alone.

Established commercial galleries in both cities are organized by the Portland Art Dealers Association (PADA), and the Nashville Association of Art Dealers (NAAD), respectively. These business associations are made up of galleries that have demonstrated some "serious" commitment to art and artists, or at least some ability to stay in business over time. PADA and NAAD galleries "represent" the artists they show; the dealer-artist relationship consists of a formal or informal contract that stipulates what share of each sale goes to the artist, what share to

the dealer, and what share, if any, goes to a curator.[9] Artists typically get 50 percent.[10] PADA and NAAD dealers usually endeavor to "build" the careers and reputations of the artists they represent, for example, by serving as the artist's agent, by making press releases for upcoming openings, by trying to sell their works to local or regional museums, or by showing their works at art fairs in places like New York, Miami, or Chicago. These galleries typically exhibit one or two artists at a time, rotating artists every month or six weeks.[11] Typically, each artist in a gallery's "stable" will show once every two years.

Most of these galleries adhere to a "white cube" ideal that characterizes art galleries elsewhere, and that signifies membership in the global contemporary art world (c.f. Velthius 2005; O'Doherty 1976), but there is variation around that theme. Artworks exhibited in these galleries are mostly two and three dimensional – painting, drawing, and/or sculpture – for which there is a proven market. Sometimes they include works of more contemporary media, such as video, installation, and performance, for which the market is tenuous, and/or perhaps more exclusive. When commercial galleries show "non-sellable" works like this, it is a signal of being updated in the current discourse and relevance to contemporary artistic trends, than an effort to make money.[12] Off center commercial galleries' reputations often depends on such relevance. According to Omar, when commercial galleries exhibit experimental works like this, it is a sign

[9] Some dealers tend to be more "business" oriented, drawing up official legal documents, but others, even the most highly reputed, prefer a verbal agreement and a handshake.
[10] Artists can try to sell their work on their own, for example through open studios or coffee shops, but they will not command the same price. Saying nothing about the quality of the work, such a noble disposition is more typical among non-professionalized artists (i.e., those without a degree in fine arts).
[11] Because most commercial galleries in off-center cities have come to organize their openings around art crawl events, a monthly rotation is more typical.
[12] Such media are likely more sellable where markets are more robust, and where contemporary art discourse is held in higher esteem among collectors, i.e., in the 'centers,' New York and Los Angeles.

that a gallery is doing well, and can afford to be experimental. On the other hand, when economies are down, and sales are scarce, struggling dealers will try to pander to a lower common denominator, in effect sacrificing relevance in the global field to make ends meet in the local market.

PADA describes itself as "a collective with criteria for membership"; not all Portland dealers can join PADA. On their website is written: "PADA includes Portland's *principal* art galleries, who maintain *high standards* of fine art" (padaart.org) (emphases added). An unwritten rule is that PADA galleries be located in or near the Pearl District, a recent development project on the inner Northwest side of the city. Membership criteria for NAAD galleries, by contrast, appear relatively relaxed. NAAD galleries are spread throughout the city; not all NAAD galleries abide by the white cube standard; some appear far removed from contemporary arts discourse (e.g., some sell books, trinkets, and gifts alongside paintings, prints and sculptures).

For dealers, the benefits of PADA and NAAD membership include: 1) collective sanctions against questionable business practices, such as enticing another gallery's regular customers or criticizing another gallery's artists; 2) a collective voice in other business and policy organizations like the Portland Downtown Business Alliance; 3) sharing a website; 4) and collective promotion and marketing. PADA is the principal organization behind Portland's First Thursday Gallery Walk, and NAAD galleries help to organize Nashville's Art After Hours Event on First Thursdays and the First Saturday Art Crawl downtown. Every month, PADA publishes a full-color brochure that advertises new exhibiting artists and plots PADA galleries and its "alliance members" on a map. NAAD, on the other hand, has a hard time keeping up its website. In both cities, gallery association members are actively engaged in urban arts policy and

development concerns. The number of active member galleries in each city fluctuates with ebb and flow of the local market.

Staying in business in Portland and Nashville is a primary concern of many dealers. One Nashville art dealer likes to tell the old joke: "How do you make a million dollars in the art business? Start with two million!" Dealers in off-center cities are fortunate if they can win at least one serious collector who buys repeatedly from the gallery. Sometimes one gallery might be sustained by one such collector; but if that collector stops buying, the whole business is in jeopardy. Moreover, dealers are fortunate if the artists in their stable can command the kinds of prices that keep their business alive. A local dealer would be quite fortunate if most of the artists in their stable sold well and sold consistently; but it is likely that few higher-profile artists carry a dealers' business.

Because of the recent recession, which impacted art markets everywhere, a number of commercial galleries in Portland and Nashville were forced to close between 2008 and 2010, some of which had been in business for decades. Rita is a Portland dealer who managed to survive the recession after a severe drop in sales. When I interviewed her in 2011, she described her business as "still very tenuous." Many of her clients have approached her with resale requests since 2008, a request that she feels compelled to honor if she represents that artist. A dealer has to consider her own "disinterested" reputation too.

Perhaps more surprising is the number of galleries in Portland and Nashville that did not close after the recent recession however. One artist referred to Nashville's commercial art dealers as "recession proof," meaning that their business does not necessarily depend on the money they make selling art. Indeed, a number of dealers in both cities are invested in other kinds of markets, for example, real estate development, or architecture. Those that are not diversified may be

financed by other means as well, for example, by wealthy husbands or other family members. Still, these dealers are affected by recessions. Even if they are flexible financially, and even if they appear "disinterested," they are ultimately concerned when sales stop. Again, Omar's interpretation is insightful: in down economies, artwork that is shown in commercial galleries appears to become more conservative; their ability to stay current in global, contemporary artistic concerns becomes compromised.

While local art markets are generally tenuous, however, they might also be subject to sudden surges of interest, depending on the fluctuating status of an artist, for example, or on the reputation of the city itself. Coco is a Portland dealer who represents an artist that was included in one recent Whitney Biennial. The artist achieved international exposure, and instantly translated to higher prices. Coco's own reputation and visibility increased as a consequence, which in turn increased the reputation and exposure of every other artist that she represents. Coco's gallery has since been accepted into an exclusive art fair in Miami, which she attributes to the sudden success of that one artist.

Artists' opinions of local dealers in Portland and Nashville range from respect to ambivalence to scorn. Dealers may be respected for what they can do for artists, but they are also the "merchants in the temple," as Bourdieu (1993) has put it, whose business practices might be seen as contaminating the sacred character of "art."

Collectors

Local markets depend on local collectors, which are also inhibited in many off-center cities. Art buying publics in Portland and Nashville elude easy description because I did not sample from this group, and the regular crowds that gather at local art gallery openings are not

often buyers or collectors, although my field notes contains some interesting encounters with them. Local art buyers might be individuals with a fascination for art, or with a financial inclination to invest in art. Buyers may be consultants for other collectors, local corporations, or hotels. Many collectors are older, but some are younger; many are apparently wealthy, but some are just compulsive art buyers. Says Thurston, a Portland artist who works as Coco's gallery assistant: "Some people will come and drop $30 thousand like its nothing, and some will come in with $150 every month to pay off something they can't afford."

Sometimes local artists get to know their collectors because collectors want to get to know the artists they collect. Few artists in this sample make their careers in local markets, however, so those accounts are few and far between. Some artists like Thurston get to know collectors through peripheral roles and jobs, for example, as gallery directors, or museum preparators. Still, says Thurston, "It's a small pool. I could count them on four hands or something, the people in Portland that I would call '*collectors*'."

The dominant conception among artists in Nashville is that local collectors would rather buy in New York or London instead of locally. Murph, who directs Nashville's Helmut Gallery, distinguishes between "top-tier" collectors who *are* oriented to a contemporary art market but buy from New York, and "the rest," who are less interested in contemporary art and who buy locally. Local buyers are less serious about art collecting, and less informed about trends in contemporary art. Sometimes the "top-tier" collectors attend local art openings, but not often. Murph tries in vain to turn them on to local artists. Says Kurt, a local art professor, "I can only assume it [buying in New York] is a feeling of a safer investment, but I don't know, I mean there's some prestige I guess in it being able to come back to your rich friends and saying I have this from Mary Boone rather than the Art Box or the Demonbreun Gallery or something."

Kurt's perception corroborates Plattner's (1996) analysis of art collectors in St. Louis in the early 1990s, who were compelled to buy in New York because New York's "hegemony" certifies the value of the work that is produced there. Given the assumption that artistic talent is normally distributed everywhere (i.e., that good and bad artists can be found anywhere), a collector can overcome uncertainty about the quality of an artwork by assuming that the New York product has emerged in a more dynamic social world, that it has presumably passed through more gatekeepers, and it represents an artist "serious" enough about their career to move to New York in the first place. There is an adage that goes: "If you have money to spend on contemporary art, then you have money fly to New York to go and buy it." But as Kurt suggests, art collectors are not *only* concerned with managing uncertainty about the 'quality' of the work. If so, a plane ticket to New York would actually be a small price to pay for certainty. Collectors also trade on the prestige that comes with dealing with big names and reputations, the social value of which might far exceed the cost of the plane ticket.

Beaver is a painter living in Nashville; he is thirty-something; he has a BFA from a nearby college outside of Nashville; he is married with children. He is represented by the Helmut Gallery and he sells his artwork locally, but he does not pay the bills with his art sales alone. Most of Beaver's income comes from his full-time job as an installation designer at a local non-profit art center, which sometimes leads to other, informal, local art-handling jobs. Once Beaver got a call to from an art-shipping consultant from Los Angeles to pick up and install a large painting by an internationally recognized artist that was shipped to Nashville from the gallery in London where it was purchased. Beaver was hired too, "Get it to their residence and hang it on the wall and make sure it was safe," he told me. The job gave the collector an opportunity to tell Beaver his story about the art world. "Collectors just want to be able to tell stories," said Beaver:

> But just because you have the money to buy a Damien Hirst doesn't mean the gallery is going to sell it to you. They are only going to give it to the people that they know are exclusive collectors because they ultimately realized that if a big collector buys the piece, and they end up in that collection, it raises the value of their work because it's in the collection of this major collector. So they sort of like create this sense of false supply and demand and all that… And they're really interested in the status of what the name of that big elite artist is, and you know, they want to be able to like tell stories that are impressive about their art collection and about the people that they hang out with and movers and shakers in the art world. And so because of that, those collectors aren't very interested in looking at Nashville artists. You know what I'm saying? Because they just doesn't offer the story power, the story potential…

Portland's art collectors are understood similarly by local artists, but with a couple differences. The first is the perception that there are in fact collectors in Portland with an eye to the contemporary art world, but who are also specifically interested in supporting local artists, and in collecting specifically Northwest art. The extent to which there is such a thing as "Northwest art" is a contested matter, however (as we will see in Chapter Five). Still, even among those interested in buying specifically from Portland, New York holds sway as a legitimating force. Joni is a Portland art dealer without a permanent venue. She sets up "pop-up" galleries in un-leased real estate in new condo towers (for which there seems to be a constant supply in Portland). She tells me, "My biggest selling point is a local artist who also shows in galleries in New York."

The second difference is the perception that there is a cultural ethos in Portland that frowns upon conspicuous consumption. There is a perception that there is plenty of wealth in Portland to make an art market viable, but that wealth usually does not get spent on art. Says Mitch, "The people with money here, they go camping; they spend their money on like Northface jackets and Subaru racks for their bikes… Restaurants and outdoor activities, that's high culture now, there's no impetus for people to collect art or patronize museums, or anything like that." Wesley, a long-time Portland arts advocate and gallery director put it this way:

> "You've got plenty of wealth here, but that wealth tends to be non-conspicuous… Art is driven by conspicuous consumption, you know… You have buyers who are like, "don't tell my friend that I spent $20,000 on that painting." This place… Portland's really great, you can sit next to a billionaire at a coffee shop and you look the same you know, but when it equates to the arts, it's not that great."

Critics

Finally, art markets also depend on critical writing, which are also constrained in off-center cities. There are a variety of arts "writers" in Portland and Nashville. Some writers write for local newspapers, magazines and/or alternative weeklies; some are independent writers with their own blogs; very few write for nationally circulating arts publications. Some are journalists who are assigned by their papers to cover the local art scene; some consider themselves serious critics (if others do not); some are just looking for something to do. Critics are sometimes referred to as "writers," but not all writers are "critics." The distinction has to do with the depth in which a writer engages the art (e.g. as opposed to rewriting a press release), the degree to which the writer is knowledgeable about contemporary art and art historical discourse, and the

extent to which such writing is useful to artists in advancing dialogue about their work. Some writers are also artists who begin writing to complement their artistic practice, but many write because they perceive there is too little "critical" writing in town. Very few writers or critics in Portland and Nashville have advanced professional training as arts writers specifically.

Most artists' opinions of local writers are negative, however, and many suggest that *real* art criticism just does not exist. "There's just a lack of critical writing in print and online here," says Duncan [Portland artist, 36]. "We have such shitty writers," says Nina [Portland artist/professor, 48]. Local newspapers make an easy target. "They are not *critical* writers," says Bruno [Portland artist, 75]. "I'll read [the newspaper] but then the whole time I'm just rolling my eyes," says Kyra [Portland artist, 37]. Newspapers and local magazines offer exposure for artists, but that is quite different from criticism. "I don't read that society rag," says Bella [Nashville artist/Gallery director, 38] about one Nashville arts publication. "They just want sensational," said Nina about an alt-weekly that once printed a review of her work that featured an image of her breast spraying milk: "[That writer] was so psyched he got them to print that."

Those who might count as "critics" do not often get much respect either, however. "Lacy is a good writer," says Nina. "I don't always think that she knows what she's talking about, but she has passion… Melvin is a fucking nut case. Have you met him?" "Melvin is dedicated to a critical analysis, but sometimes, you know, everyone is going to seem like a bit off when they're trying to make grandiose statements about art here…" says Duncan.

In the absence of good critical writing, many artists try to take up the burden themselves. Cameron was "fed up" about Nashville's lack of critical discourse so he decided to launch his own online blog that could serve as a venue for anyone to write critically and anonymously about Nashville's art scene. Cameron posted his inaugural critique under a pseudonym, which indicted

the Demonbreun Gallery for some of its curatorial choices, for example, for hanging art in the bathroom hallway. Gideon, another Nashville artist tells the story:

> "Cam wrote something that said like, 'Art Box' is the only good gallery in town," and then he went on and trashed the Demonbreun. I happened to be stopping in at Demonbreun the day that he did that and they were just fuming over it. And I read it and was like, 'it's just too small a town because everybody knows each other.' And also he was writing about his own gallery that he shows at: 'This is the only decent gallery in town.'"

Cameron's blog was later removed; in part because there were very few contributors, and in part because word got out that Cam was behind the not-exactly-disinterested criticisms.

Portland and Nashville are not "small" cities, but their contemporary art scenes make up what network theorists have called "small worlds" (Burt 2004; Uzzi & Spiro 2005). Small worlds are social networks in which most participants are directly connected to each other. In small worlds, sources of information and exchange become redundant; social mobility is frustrated because by few opportunities to make new connections. Because everybody seems to know everybody else in off-center art scenes, news and gossip travel fast, and anonymous identities are hard to maintain. At worst, each's interests and affairs may be subject to each other's evaluation and judgment.

Here, small worlds appear to hinder critical writing. Says Gideon, "There are a lot of people who say we have to do it for ourselves, but that doesn't always work either because then it's sort of self-promoting or something, or it can be perceived that way." Says Mitch, "I had a blog for a while where I critiqued shows, and I just found it problematic. I think I closed it down as soon as people figured out that it was me writing it. I was like, 'This just doesn't seem right.'"

Because everybody seems to know each other (or because at least everyone knows who everyone else is), nobody wants to insult anyone else. As a consequence, the local arts writing tends to be more about publicity than critique. Says Kyra: "It doesn't behoove anyone to be so highly critical because the pool of artists is so small. So you want to be positive and help the scene grow, I think, in hopes that the losers will be weeded out over time." Kyra went on to contrast the Portland experience with New York:

> Like in New York, you can go into a gallery and be like, "What is that?" And there'd be like 20 people around and no one would care at all. Here you can't really do that, you can't really be that person and be like, "What is this?" Because it's so tiny here that everybody will know that you said it and everyone's gonna not like you and think that you're a jerk.

In terms of the "dealer-critic system," a lack of criticism would imply an inability to provide disinterested guidance for would-be arts buyers. But the penalty extends beyond informing potential collectors. Says David [Portland artist/professor, 45], who sells work in Portland and New York, "A lot of the art writing here could just be seen as an extension of marketing and not real criticality." In David's thinking, criticism should serve a higher purpose than informing buyers in the first place; "real criticality" should rather circulate and inform conversation and discourse about art among artists as well.

Without such critical discourse, it may be perceived that local artistic standards are lowered. Lower artistic standards, in turn, have consequences that matter well beyond selling work in local galleries; they matter for the artistic reputation of the whole city in a larger, global field. The connection between a lack of critical discourse and the perception that one's scene will

not be taken seriously by observers elsewhere is keenly felt by those artists whose careers have taken them to other places. The following conversation with Omar illuminates this anxiety:

> *SS*: In Portland, do you sense a code of ethics, interacting with other artists?
>
> *Omar*: …You're not allowed to criticize other artists' work.
>
> *SS*: And that's different in Portland than elsewhere?
>
> *Omar*: Absolutely, because it's so small. You know and so self-involved, you know what I mean? It's really, really hard to make a firm opinion about what's going on… I piss people off all the time.
>
> *SS*: Yeah?
>
> *Omar*: Yeah, because the way I try to judge work, you know, I try to judge work based on what's offered in general [i.e., the field of contemporary art as a whole], not what's offered in Portland. So when I see people like being very like lazy, kind of 'do whatever they want,' because it's Portland, I'm like, 'Guy's! You should not be doing this, because it's not happening enough.' Like some shows in Portland, if you take them in other cities, people would laugh at you. Just bad work. But it happens here and you'll see a critic write about it. Because they know the artist and they are friends.

Omar's anxiety about the local scene as a whole being taken seriously is echoed by Nina here, by describing one Portland "writer" who might appear to have many "friends," in Omar's terms: "God if we start exporting him as part of [Portland], then we're *really* are gonna keep Portland weird. Like if that's what represents us in the real world, that's not gonna go over well."

As a consequence of market constraints, artists in off-center cities are compelled to turn their attention elsewhere. Regarding the lack of critical discourse, Nina says, "We have such

shitty writers… We've had artists for a long time but we haven't had the rest of the mix, so we've always had to look to the outside." Cathy [Portland artist/curator, 38] echoes the sentiment:

> "I'd say there's one or two people [in Portland] I respect who write, and they are writing for national magazines or national blogs. Anything that is local I am skeptical of… And so I'm reading journals and other things and from other countries to find out how people are talking about art and how they're thinking about art and the questions they're asking that match up with what I'm asking in my head as I look at work all over the county and the world."

In terms of a lack of a collector base, artists will find that they do better elsewhere as well, and Gavin told me:

> "You have a lot of artists who when they move here, realize that they can't make a career here, because the market itself doesn't necessarily support that. You know, when people start showing in other cities, their work is so devalued in Portland; they live here, and they work here, but they don't show here, because their work is going for thousands less if they show in Portland… but it's a really nice place to live."

I will return to artists' practical strategies for circumventing local constraints after discussing how they articulate the position of their off-center cities in the global field below.

Mapping the Field

Thus the roles and relationships traditionally associated with art markets, which art world studies are typically predicated upon, appear compromised in Portland and Nashville. A field

model does not assume that art markets have to be viable in any given location to sustain artists' careers there. It suggests instead that artists' strategies of accumulation will vary according to the opportunities and constraints available to them. Before exploring those career practices and strategies, this section outlines the structure of the field by building an inductively derived typology of art cities – i.e., through the lens of artists' descriptions of their relative career chances in different cities.

In the process of navigating their careers, artists come to understand the prospects that different cities offer. As participants in a global field, which includes discourse about contemporary art making and artists' career pathways and possibilities, these artists learn about what kinds of opportunities are available elsewhere, and by contrast what is or is not available in their own city. They articulate the global field by describing how cities relate to each other not only in terms of the market opportunities that they offer, but also in light of those places' local artistic scenes, which include opportunities to network with other artists, accumulate exposure for their work, or otherwise secure career chances by other means that selling their work in a gallery. Table 2 presents a typology of off-center cities, given the categories through which the artists in this study describe varying opportunities and constraints between places.

Markets and Scenes

Artists suggest that cities vary along dimensions of *market* opportunities on the one hand, and the vibrancy of a local *scene* on the other. These dimensions are comparable to Bourdieu's (1993) division between "heteronymous" (market orientation) and "autonomous" (peer-recognition orientation) logics of artistic production, although the concept of scene here deviates, as I will explain below. Also, whereas Bourdieu suggested that fields of cultural production

actively generate a tension between winning audiences and winning credibility among one's peers, the typology that follows simply suggests that different places organize different resources towards the accumulation of one or the other, or both, or neither.[13]

Figure 1. Typology of Places in Field of Contemporary Art

Scene[a]	Market[b]: Below	Market[b]: Low	Market[b]: High	Market[b]: Above
Above				**Centers** (New York, London, L.A.)
High	**Residencies and Campuses**	**Studio Cities** (Portland, Atlanta, Philadelphia)	**Second Cities** (Chicago, San Francisco)	
Low		**Flat Places** (Nashville, Indianapolis)	**Market Towns** (Houston, Seattle)	
Below	**Exiles**		**Vacation Resorts**	

a. Social resources for generating artistic reputations and translocal social capital. Topic of Chapter 4.
b. Roles and relationships organized around the valuation and exchange of artistic objects.

The horizontal axis of Table 2 implies that cities vary according to the market opportunities that they offer artists. In keeping with the many extant sociological conceptions of art markets (e.g., White and White 1965; Plattner 1993; Fine 2004; Velthius 2005), I define markets as made up of social relations between various roles (artists, dealers, collectors, critics,

[13] The categories presented here also resonate with Brian O'Doherty's (1998) distinction between *studio* and *cube* – simply, the difference between the places where art is made and where it is sold.

curators, etc.) that ultimately manifest in the negotiation of value, prices, and sales of artistic objects.[14] Having demonstrated that these market roles and relationships are constrained in Portland and Nashville, however, I do not suggest that art markets are universally constrained in off-center cities. Rather, artists describe many alternative places in which they might sell their work. As I will explore in further detail in the subsequent chapters, a field that differently organizes market opportunities in different cities does not mean that artists outside of market towns suffer; rather, such a field generates a logic of accumulating *translocal capital*, or connections and exhibition opportunities between their home cities and places like these.

The vertical axis of Table 2 suggests that cities also vary according to the resources they offer for making, performing, and generating exposure for artists' work and careers. In lieu of a strictly Bourdieuian "autonomous" or "symbolic capital" measure along this axis, I refer to *scene* as social resources for a) generating artistic reputations and symbolic capital, but also b) for the networking and performative opportunities that manifest in places where artists come together, which in turn lead to the generation and diffusion of contemporary arts discourse, as well as to valuable connections to influential actors within and between different places (i.e., *translocal capital*). Chapter Four provides further detail of the career concerns, issues, and exigencies that I am referring to here as belonging in the domain of scenes.

Scenes and markets mutually reinforce each other, of course. To sell work regularly in the art market, it helps to have achieved some social connections and recognition that come through being part of a scene; and to achieve that recognition, it helps to have won the support of at least some dealers, collectors, and critics that can collectively valuate (and validate) an artist's

[14] A more general conception of art markets might well include academic labor markets, city, state, and privately granted public art commissions, and even a reconception of artists as service providers and not merely object makers (Gerber 2013). Still, the definition here is consistent with the literature. My use of the term markets as such contributes to a critique of that literature.

work. In the typology that follows, market and scene resources do correspond in the same cities, but not evenly so in every case, and this is especially true of off-center cities. Scenes and markets are the most robust in the *centers*, New York, London and Los Angeles. They are high as well in *second cities* like Chicago and San Francisco. Likewise, these dimensions are correspondingly low in what I call here *flat places*. However, these resources along these dimensions diverge here in what may be called *market towns*, where market resources are high, but scenes are understood to be low, and *studio cities*, where there are few market opportunities, but many chances to network and dialogue with other artists. By understanding off-center cities as made of differing kinds of opportunities along dimensions of markets and scenes, this typology suggests a more complicated and dynamic field than offered by extant models that focus only on the center, or that offer a simple center/periphery model, which would at best residualize these places, and at worst dismiss off-center cities and the artists' careers that unfold and develop through them.

Centers

There is little disagreement among artists that New York City is the center of the American and global contemporary art world. On scales of both market and scene opportunities, New York City has few rivals. London and Los Angeles also enjoy outsize advantages on these dimensions, but they are usually listed only after New York. Living in one of these cities, artists are not required to worry much about what is going on in other places; all of the resources (social, material, and symbolic) they need to make and sustain their careers can be found in their backyards. According to Leon:

> New York is one of those places, and London is another one, where you can make it just in that one city… maybe L.A. too. But those are the only three places on

> earth you can do that, because there's scene and there's money, and the structure and plumbing that all goes into this… Other places, like even Chicago; you're not going to make it just in Chicago, even though it's a big enough city and there's plenty enough money, it's just not the way it works. And actually in New York, what really happens is that at a certain point you get beyond New York, and then you're really actually bigger than it.

"Scene and money, structure and plumbing": centers exceed on both scales such that artists can "make it" in those cities alone. New York's dominance in light of these resources is such that artists can even "get beyond" the place itself, without ever going anywhere else. This is not to say that any given artist will succeed as such (in fact most will not), but that the opportunity to do so that exists there is especially unique. More important though, New York's influence extends beyond the artists that do live there. New York is the benchmark against which other cities are compared, and upon which artistic success can be evaluated.

"You won't meet an artist that doesn't want to have a show in New York City in the United States," Beaver explains. Artists everywhere are oriented to New York for several reasons. Beaver mentions three. First, "People want their studio practices to compete on the same level as in New York in terms of what they value and sort of the kind of concepts that they put in their work," he says. An artist's "level," as Beaver puts it (meaning skill, concepts, quality of work, etc.), can always be in question in off center cities, as was the legitimacy of Johnny Invective's guerilla performance (Chapter One). If collectors look to New York to manage uncertainty about the quality or value of an art object (Plattner 1996), artists can do the same. Artists might likewise assume that New York artists' "level" is informed by a more competitive and dynamic market and scene, and because artistic quality cannot be objectively determined, the

level of an artists' work can be read by the scene or the market that an artist is a part of, i.e., their address, or the places he or she exhibits. A second reason Beaver gives, therefore, has to do with the status boost that a New York exhibit confers: "It's like a watermark on your resume," says Beaver, "Probably one of the best lines I have in my resume is the fact that a Guggenheim [Museum] curator [from New York] picked my work for something." Finally, New York artists can always charge more, for both of the reasons listed above, as well because there are simply more dealers, critics, and collectors circulating through New York. Beaver compares his style of work to something similar in New York in terms of price: "In New York they charge $30,000, which is like ten-times what I charge." Thus, it would behoove an artist to sell their work in New York, which requires getting shows in New York, which requires making work on that "level," which in turn requires maintaining knowledge about New York's art and artists, as well as connections to the New York world.

As the center, thus, New York shoulders a hegemonic influence and a centripetal force upon the field as a whole. Artists look to New York to sustain their careers, but also to validate their work and learn about what is going on in contemporary art. This dynamic does not only apply to artists. We have already seen (above) how "top-tier" collectors look to New York not only to manage uncertainty regarding artistic quality, but also for the status that might come with buying from a New York dealer. Curators too, given other choices, will likewise make New York their priority. Cathy, for example, is a Portland artist and curator who works for an organization that funds her travels to find artists to program in local shows. On a limited budget, however, she goes only to New York. She asks some rhetorical questions about career opportunities between artists in the and "the provinces":

> Are the curators from [the centers] taking work that's happening in the provinces seriously? Are they mining from there and putting them into really competitive systems of art? And is their worth being valued and sold and collected… and revered in the same way that artists' work is in L.A., Chicago, and New York – Really, only New York, I mean I think L.A. is like an extension of New York. I think L.A. is like a baby version."

Cathy is conscious of the art world's spatial divisions, but the questions that she asks suggest less criticism of such divides than that this space of positions makes it easier to do her job. "New York I feel is driving the entire United States art market, and it's fascinating to me," she says.

Another effect of New York's influence is that by contrast, all other cities, and the scenes, markets, and careers that unfold within and through them simply appear less relevant. Los Angeles, London, and Chicago for example, may be listed alongside of New York, but "really, only New York," as Cathy puts it, has such influence.

On the other hand, artists in Portland and Nashville, and many commentators in New York and elsewhere too, suggest that the field is *decentering*, that the art world is "global" now, and that artists can potentially live and work anywhere. This would include new opportunities for artists in off-center cities to accumulate networks and reputations in scenes, fewer centralized gatekeepers (recognized curators and critics can come from anywhere as well), and perhaps more dealers and collectors willing to look outside of New York as well. Such a process would and should, therefore, change the urban space of positions that make up the structure of the field. New York's hegemony should become less relevant, and artists outside the center would enjoy new opportunities as a consequence. According to some Portland artists, their local scene has

achieved a status boost in the wake of this shift. Nashville artists, on the other hand, have fewer place-based resources to draw from.

Second Cities and Market Towns

"Work is made in San Francisco, marketed in Los Angeles, and sold in New York," David told me, quoting another artist, Paul McCarthy, before musing on his own: "So where does Portland fit into that equation?" David's mental map of the field is drawn by his experience, his current career prospects, and extant discourse. David moved to Portland in 2009 from San Francisco, where he was a curator at a non-profit contemporary art center. In San Francisco he accumulated a reputation both as a curator and as an artist. He was headhunted and hired by a Portland arts organization to take a leading role in its expansion and development. His move was encouraged by a handful of friends, other former San Francisco artists that made the same move years earlier. David exhibits in commercial galleries in New York, San Francisco, and now in Portland. In the 1990s, David traveled up and down the West Coast as a curator, visiting artists and giving lectures.

> "When I visited Portland in 1991 – Portland and Seattle and Anchorage – [Portland] seemed to be suffering from feeling like the backyard of San Francisco. And San Francisco was suffering because it wasn't New York. San Francisco was not suffering because it wasn't L.A. San Francisco was suffering because it wasn't New York, and there was definitely a feeling in the community that – we didn't talk about L.A.; we talked about New York. We feared losing artists to New York; we didn't fear losing artists to L.A. I don't know about Portland. Portland isn't at a point where they fear losing artists."

David's question and answer are instructive for a few reasons. First, he posits a relationship between a select group of cities whereby artistic production roles are functionally differentiated and interdependent.[15] The city where art is made is different from the city's where it is marketed and sold. Secondly, and more generally, such specialization appears as a three-tier hierarchical system in which second cities are oriented to the centers, and everything else (including Alaska, apparently) orients to the second cities (or regional centers). Third, David reveals that there are also status differences between places that help to secure a given places' position in this system, and these status differences are worth defending. When David speaks of a "fear of losing artists," he is referring specifically to successful ones, those who have accumulated some reputation that would help make San Francisco "the place where art is made," those whose careers likely would benefit by locating toward the places where it is sold and/or marketed. That San Francisco artists are oriented to New York (3000+ miles away) instead of Los Angeles (300+ miles away) might indicate that New York is indeed the hegemonic center, but it also indicates a status contest between San Francisco and Los Angeles on the one hand, and between New York and Los Angeles on the other. Thus, the relationship between these cities is not merely one of functional interdependence. Rather, places are made in this field according to artists' various career logics regarding not only markets and scenes, but remaining relevant in light of the status differences between places as well.

David's perspective is biased to San Francisco, because his own reputation derives from that scene. Leon and Cathy (above) would call Chicago a second city. These cities, however, are understood as places that ultimately cannot sustain or reward many careers by themselves. But second cities are related to other places such that artists working there can readily connect to and

[15] Perhaps the difference between 'marketing' (L.A.) and 'selling' (New York) is unclear (at least, I have reduced both of these specializations under the variable "markets").

exhibit in the centers. David and Leon are perhaps modest about opportunities in San Francisco and Chicago. Work isn't only made in San Francisco and Chicago; it is sold in those places as well. These artists' descriptions suggest that what is important is not merely supporting oneself; "making it," as Leon puts it, has to do with both winning markets as well as accumulating a reputation that exists "beyond" the place where you live.

Outside of New York, market opportunities do exist, and these kinds of opportunities can sustain artists' careers. But that is not always what matters, at least not to Leon and David. Markets in off-center cities are sometimes driven by collectors' conscious efforts to support local artists, but many such *market towns* do not have outstanding reputations or artistic scenes, and so the artists that are supported there will likely have little influence on Leon or David. That is, although they are making a living, they would remain "off the map" of the field of contemporary art. Omar describes such market towns in contrast to *studio cities*. Omar says:

> The opportunity in Seattle is more about outreaching with private collectors and foundations… They [Seattle artists] make good work and they get a lot of money from like Bill Gates Foundation or like Boeing or like big hospitals and stuff like that. With Houston it's like the oil money, the Texas money you know, and NASA and all of that, so it's within the parameter of the city. But nothing [like that] really happens [in Portland] within the parameter [of this city] but it can give you a base to actually matter, you know, in the *real art scene*…

Studio Cities

Omar calls Portland a "studio city." Studio cities are, like David said of San Francisco, places 'where art is made,' however, with fewer market resources. According to Omar, Portland

artists are free to experiment, in part because there are no market pressures. Portland has grown its artist population in the last decade, when the U.S. professional visual art population as a whole declined. In the absence of art being exchanged for money, studio cities allow artists to be part of a scene, generate networks, and dialogue about art, and perhaps eventually move on or make connections to other places. In Omar's words: "I think Portland is like Atlanta or Philadelphia, you know, places that are like a nursery to make work and get your degree and have a small residency and from there, you know, use it as trampoline to get somewhere else."

Artists in studio cities might support themselves in a number of ways. According to Omar, however, it is usually not by selling their work in a local gallery. Many Portland artists teach in local art colleges (full time or adjunct), which also contribute to scene activity. Some sell their work in galleries in other cities; some work other jobs to pay the bills. For these artists, Portland offers a relatively cheap city to rent or share a studio space outside of their home. Portland also offers a relatively number of artist-run, "alternative" galleries, or "project spaces," which allow artists to exhibit experimental work, outside of market pressures, and out of view of most of the influential gatekeepers in the contemporary art world. The concentration of studios and alternative exhibition venues generates a vibrant scene, whereby artists are continually interacting around art. Scenes as such also generate translocal social connection such that those opportunities can be pursued elsewhere (see Chapter Three).

Omar's perspective appears biased to Portland, just as David's is biased to San Francisco. And here again it is revealed that distinctions between places do not only include their functional specializations but status differences that are worth defending. The distinction that Omar makes between Seattle and Portland does not seem to affect his judgment about artistic quality. In fact, he says that Seattle artists make good work; and earlier he faults Portland artists for sometimes

making bad work. Still, he says that Portland gives artists opportunities to be in the "real art scene" that "actually matters." If Seattle and Houston artists can make money in the art market, they may as well disappear, content to make a living selling their work, but remaining forever invisible in the eyes of art history. Portland on the other hand offers artists room to experiment, and hone their work, while making valuable connections to other places, or eventually moving on to another city.

To reiterate a point that will remain thematic throughout these chapters, the difference is not only a contrast between markets and scenes. In Omar's scheme, cities vary with respect to making money and "really mattering." Seattle and Portland both concentrate a very high per-capita artist population, but while artists in Seattle might have more chances to sell their work, artists in Portland are thought to enjoy more social outlets and connections, more dialogue about contemporary art making, and a better place-based reputation.

Flat Places

How does Nashville compare? If Portland is for Omar a studio city that offers viable opportunities to make art and make connections, then Nashville artists appear to have even fewer credits by which to compare their city to other global centers and second cities. They are able to identify many positive qualities of their art scene and their city, but they understand Nashville either as a subordinate place, or as just another set of coordinates in a global art world.

Jimmy is one example of an artist that might benefit from the decentering of the art world. He grew up in Alabama, went to art school in Savannah, met his wife there, and moved to the Nashville area because some relatives lived nearby, and has remained there for nearly 10 years. Like Omar, Jimmy does not show locally, but has galleries representing him in New York,

Chicago, and Atlanta. These opportunities stem from social connections originating in art school. Jimmy is not a huge fan of Nashville; he describes it as "the flattest place" he has ever been. "Not literally [flat]," he says, "but in terms of its character…" Jimmy lives in what is technically a suburb, although he does not see much difference between Nashville neighborhoods; he insisted we do the interview at a coffee shop in a suburban strip mall, near his home studio. His description of the art world's geography is decidedly decentered, if not "flat." He says:

> Everything really is decentralized. Even the art world, although people want to think it's [only] New York and LA. There's still New York and LA. It's two cities. You can't - well, some artists do have studios in both cities, but I don't and I don't think you need to. I think you can live in a place and work elsewhere. So [living in the center] is not a requirement. In fact, it may help because the further off the radar you are, location-wise, usually the lower your costs are allows you to make work; hopefully, more work than the guy living in New York or L.A. It depends on how high your rent is, I guess."

Jimmy makes clear that New York and Los Angeles are still the cities that make the art world go around, although they are not the places where most artists live, nor the places where they need to live. Jimmy, Omar, David and other artists living in Portland and Nashville likely enjoy cheaper rents than if they were living in New York or Los Angeles, but not all other places are the same. Unlike Omar's description of Portland, Jimmy's description of Nashville does not include the benefit of being part of a vibrant artistic scene.

As a "flat" place, Nashville is a city where artists can make work, while remaining relevant in global field, though the city itself does not appear to afford artists living there any added benefit. In his recent pop-sociology book *The World is Flat*, Friedman (2006) made the

case that twenty-first century changes in communication technology and travel time have essentially created a world in which anyone can compete from anywhere. Given Jimmy's description of Nashville, the metaphor would seem to work quite well, save for the fact that New York and L.A. are still the dominant centers. Those places are not flat, but Nashville is. Jimmy's perception of Nashville as a flat place is echoed by Cyndi's, who when I asked about the benefits of being an artist in Nashville told me, "It only takes 15 minutes to get to the airport… and then you can be in New York in two hours."

Many relate the art world's shifting geography directly to the influence of the internet. Michele is a Nashville artist that moved from Boston for a job at a local non-profit art center. She says, "The web has allowed a lot of artists to not have to live in New York. They can have their shows there; [but] they can make paintings in Kansas if they want… It doesn't matter really where you are. What does matter is where you're showing… and where you're fed creatively." Her version of the story is similar to Jimmy's: one's address does not matter; places still vary by market opportunities, or here, as sources of creative inspiration. Unlike Jimmy, however, Michele currently only shows her work in Nashville, but does not make her money from her art sales alone. Her studio is her living room.

If the Internet has changed the geography of the art world, however, it must have a flattening influence everywhere, not just in Nashville. Debbie grew up in Oregon and lived between San Francisco and New York throughout the 1980s and 90s. She moved back to Portland in 2001 after struggling as an artist elsewhere. Interestingly, her market opportunities came after she moved back. "I think there is some shift because of the internet… This gallery I'm showing with in New York right now… when I showed [my work] to them, they had already seen it. It was all because of online." Debbie had previously shown in a gallery in Berlin with an

artist that the New York gallery also represented. Debbie's work in that Berlin show was used as the PR image for the show, which "went viral online," as Debbie put it, "So my point is that [New York galleries] are really open to showing an artist from Portland, Oregon."

The internet does not democratize the market as much as Debbie would wish to believe, however. Artists still need dealers to consecrate their work. The Internet has opened a new discourse about "decentering" and do-it-yourself marketing, but the realities are more complex. Debbie's big opportunity in New York came through her connections in Berlin, not just because New York dealers are "open" to showing artists from Portland. That her art was chosen as the PR image for that Berlin show may speak to the quality of her work, but the extent to which that image went "viral," is likely an embellishment. Cyndi's comments on this matter make reveal some anxiety about relying on the internet. As she tells me: "I'm very, very interested in being part of this whole DIY movement of just sort of circumventing that middle person, but at the same time I'm a horrible seller of my work."

Artists in flat places are not absolved of participating in status contests. While Omar and Leon actively fight for or leverage Portland's reputation as a place that "really matters" (as David did of San Francisco), the "decentered" art world argument (i.e., Jimmy, Cyndi, and Michele's contention that spatial barriers do not seem to matter) is perhaps more convenient for artists who have little place reputation to draw from. Still, some Nashville artists find recourse in contesting New York's hegemony, especially from a market perspective. According to Murph, for example, the decentering of the art world would allow artists to get away from market hegemony in New York that dominates contemporary art's aesthetic concerns. "Buying [art] for investment is bullshit," Murph says, while indicting New York's market hegemony as a bad thing. Murph continues,

> The game has changed a lot… The art world is decentralizing and [artists are] moving out to the edges… They're also bringing new ideas. Here's an opportunity in Nashville [or] Iowa City to reinterpret what we've seen in New York… I mean here's an opportunity to kind of get back to why we make artwork. I think this is an opportunity we haven't seen before…"

Murph's take is much different than Jimmy's and Michele's. Beyond their ability to live outside of the centers, Murph would believe that artists are also going to remake the meaning and significance of places other than New York.

Other places

Rounding out this typology, I have listed *residencies and campuses* as theoretically high in terms of scenes but low in terms of markets, and *vacation resorts* as theoretically high in markets but low in terms of artistic scenes. I have listed *exiles* as places where social and market resources are theoretically low enough that the place itself might actually work against artists. But these categories are more theoretical types than observed reality. The exercise is to suggest that markets and scenes theoretically vary in different combinations in different places. Like the periodic table of the elements, the typology constructed here allows us to imagine that more kinds of places exist, if the cases and examples at hand do not allow us to identify specifically what and where these places are (see Becker 1998).

Moreover, these are categories are *ideal typical* constructs, and the examples listed are merely those given by artists interviewed and represented above. Readers may agree or disagree with those examples, and/or find many complicating kinds of places. Sarah Thornton (2008) includes Berlin on her list of global art world centers, for example, but alternative accounts

suggest that Berlin is merely a studio city, where sales do not follow the intensity of artistic innovation and productivity there (e.g., Royce 2011). Santa Fe, New Mexico, the place in the U.S. with the highest per-capita concentration of professional artists, may represent another complicating case. Marfa, Texas, a tiny town of art historical relevance that concentrates many contemporary art institutions and galleries is another one.

Notes on City Size

It may be pointed out here that the agglomeration of resources for artists' career chances appears to correspond to the size of the city. New York is the largest U.S. city and it is the center of the global contemporary art world. Los Angeles is the second largest U.S. urban area and it represents another center in the American art world. Outside of these centers, however, size alone does not explain how artists' in Portland and Nashville understand various places in the global field. While Chicago, the third largest U.S. city, is understood by many to be a second city, David, Omar, and many others understand San Francisco, the 13th largest U.S. city, to be a second city as well.

Finally, an analysis of visual artists' location patterns using census data (Table 1, Appendix) points to dual trends of centering and decentering in the last decade. First, while New York and Los Angeles's relative concentration of visual artists had decreased between 1970 and 2000 as the number of artists in the U.S. grew, the relative concentration of artists in those centers actually increased between 2000 and 2010 again as this population declined. Still, the real number of professional visual artists in New York and L.A. has declined.

On the other hand, despite the decline of this population, the number of visual artists actually grew in a handful of off-center cities. San Francisco's artist population has grown

rapidly in recent decades, and it continued to grow in the recent decennial, however only slightly.[16] Portland, Denver, and Providence, however all show increases in the actual size and relative share of their artist populations.

It may be the case that an artists' relative market chances correspond to city size, whereas scene variation depends on a place's reputation in the global field (but not cost of living). The following comes from part of a conversation with Omar, after he explains the difference to between various cities in the U.S.:

> *SS*: So in the larger, global art world, New York is clearly the center, and L.A. is also a viable city, but L.A. is secondary to New York. But Chicago, although it's the third largest city, it's not necessarily the third largest art city; it's not part of that same system. So it's not city size that matters…
>
> *Omar*: No. Yeah. I think it's the level of productivity and the cultural packaging around it [that matters].

Global Field and Local Context

This chapter has used an artist-centered approach to extend a Bourdieuian conception of cultural production fields to consider the actual places in which career opportunities and constraints are navigated. According to Bourdieu (1993), fields of cultural production generate a division between market-oriented logics of production on the one hand, and those aimed at the accumulation of symbolic capital on the other. By following artists' own articulations of this field in places where those career chances are thought to be limited, a nuanced model arises.

[16] The change in the population estimate in that time increased by less than one percent, but the location quotient shows a more dramatic increase, because most other cities, including New York and L.A., have actually lost their population of artists in the same time (although their location quotients show similar increases).

Not all off-center cities are the same. Artists in Portland and Nashville reveal that the resources and rewards that can be put to use towards one or the other of those career orientations varies between places. This simple finding stands to complicate center/periphery models, which err in making the "periphery" a residual category, while focusing narrowly on the centers to derive knowledge of artists' careers and cultural production practices generally. Not surprisingly, much of this research focuses on the roles and relationships that make art markets possible (i.e., as artists, dealers, critics, collectors, and curators interact to evaluate and generate exchange values for artistic products) because those roles and relationships are indeed robust in the places where that research focuses. While that research is interesting, it manages to overlook the fact that most professional visual artists do not live in New York and Los Angeles (80 percent of American artists live elsewhere), as well as the fact that even in New York, most artists' do not make their career on the market alone (Simpson 1981), and the multitudes of artists everywhere are obscured by those very few high-profile stars that are rewarded by the market relationships described elsewhere (Shollette 2010). Indeed, when looking outside the centers, it is apparent that those market roles are constrained, such that few off-center cities can sustain many artists' careers through markets alone.

It should be clear that the typology presented in this chapter is derived inductively from artists own descriptions of the opportunities that different places afford them, i.e., their mental 'maps' of the field, and not from objective or numeric indicators. As such, the resulting typology may be biased. Nevertheless, such bias is precisely in the spirit of the field perspective outlined above, which suggests that artists own practical strategies of accumulation will vary according to their intuitive grasp of their position in the field, given whatever opportunities and constraints are available to them (i.e., as they understand their relative chances vis-à-vis other artists and other

places). I am not interested here in measuring the relative distance between the New York's and Portland's or Seattle's status and reputations. And I am less interested that the difference between places constitutes a 'hierarchy' or a 'system,' than I am in how artists construct the space of positions in light of their dispositions, or *habitus*, which in turn generate and are generated by the space of positions that makes up the global field. The field will not be experienced the same by every artist, and so the various articulations of its positions will subsequently vary. How artists describe the global field, and their city within it, is rather a reflection their own position, opportunities, and constraints, which are in turn patterned by the field that they describe.

Finally, cities do not merely vary in the markets and scenes that they offer. As David and Leon have made clear, these markets and scenes accumulate also reputations that are also worth defending. Thus, local art worlds are not only more complicated than center/periphery models suggest, and they are much more than functionally differentiated "nodes" in a global "system" of cultural production as well. The perspective offered here suggests that cities themselves occupy positions in a global field that are made and remade in the process of artists' navigating career opportunities and constraints within and between them. Artists navigate opportunities and constraints in both local and global levels, and in which places themselves become symbolic resources and a stake in career navigation.

In future chapters, I will demonstrate that these variable resources correspond to real career concerns, strategies of accumulation, and artistic practices, namely, having to do with reconciling and overcoming place-based advantages and constraints.

Chapter 3

Translocal Careers

Cyndi

Cyndi is a Nashville artist, curator and entrepreneur. She was born in Nashville and moved to Chicago in 1989 to get her BFA. She was a practicing artist for few years in Chicago after graduating, and then moved back to Nashville in 1996. Cyndi said about the move back, "I was brought here kicking and screaming by my ex-husband, but in the end I'm thrilled to be here… I was showing very actively in the galleries [in Chicago]… everything was happening there… [Then] I got plopped down here [in Nashville] and I sort of had to start over." It took Cyndi nine months to find the "art community" in Nashville, by which she means, "The honest, contemporary, working artists… Maybe 'honest' is not the right word, but [artists that] were engaged in the current dialogue at the time… much more than just sort of the landscape painters and sculptors…"

Cyndi characterizes her art practice as, "socially engaged, but object driven… I do sculpture and installation, but I also do community based projects that involve hundreds of people… and some performance work as well." But her work was not always like that. "I came out of a craft-based background," she says. A year or two after moving back to Nashville, Cyndi was "picked up" by a local gallery, which worked for a while, until her artwork started to change. She got a Master's degree in Liberal Arts and Sciences, which she calls, "like a graduate degree for adults that already have careers." Her work became more intellectually inspired, "more conceptual, non-commercial…" as she put it. Her craft-based work was doing well in Nashville, "… But conceptually, as my work was getting less commercial and [my gallery had]

such a craft focus…" Cyndi goes on to tell a story about making breakthroughs in her art work, while simultaneously doing worse in the local art market. Cyndi's dealer told her, "Your work is weird," and encouraged her, earnestly, to "Take it to straight to New York," and they mutually dissolved their relationship. "She [former dealer] gets the business side," Cyndi told me, "She does not understand – and I think she could, if she wanted to – but she's not interested in understanding what contemporary art has [become]." For a short time Cyndi worked with another Nashville gallery that dealt in contemporary work, but that gallery ultimately failed because of a lack of an audience for that kind of work in Nashville.

Since 2004, Cyndi is also a full-time mother, and despite her disappointments in Nashville's art market, she remains a full-time artist. Her career took a turn "in about 2004…" she said:

> "It was like the light bulb went off my head. I just didn't understand what it takes to get your work out there in a broader spectrum, and the things that you have to do that are completely outside of your studio practice… You [have to go to] New York to pound the pavement, to meet the people… The hardcore reality is if you want to do that, you really have to be out there at the fairs and the conferences; you have to be jetting around the world."

Cyndi has since traveled often, and by virtue of "being in the right place at the right time," as she puts it, she has managed to exhibit at academic and commercial venues in and around New York: "On two separate occasions within a span of three days, two people offered me shows up there. I mean, we're just hanging out, drinking, and then like, [someone will say,] 'Oh, I'm putting together a show, do you want to be in it?'" Being a mother does not facilitate jetting around the world, however, let alone spending the studio time to make the work. Cyndi's husband is a big

help, and her travels have picked up recently, "…now that I don't have to change diapers every three hours," she says. Her travels and exhibitions elsewhere do not sustain her career, but they keep her apprised of the contemporary art world, and they allow her to build and accumulate networks with artists in New York and elsewhere, which in turn help to make Cyndi an active and central figure in her local art scene.

Cyndi's career also finds traction in the form of city and state project grants that allow her to take on interns, curate artists locally, and bring in visiting artists, curators, and writers from out of town. One of these projects, Greenhouse, is an "alternative" gallery, or "project space," like Omar's Hippo Gallery. Unlike the large industrial garage building that houses Hippo, Greenhouse is a sixty square-foot box in the middle of her own studio. Just like Omar's Hippo Gallery, however, the Greenhouse allows Cyndi to program contemporary artists that might not otherwise be marketable in the local commercial galleries.

Another of Cyndi's projects is a lecture series that is co-sponsored by other local arts organizations. The lecture series allows (or, requires) Cyndi to invite artists and writers from out of town, which can lead to a) inter-city connections for herself and other Nashville artists, b) reciprocated invitations for Cyndi to exhibit in other places, and c) exposure for Nashville's art scene elsewhere. A third publicly granted project, *Art Makes Place,* Cyndi describes as a "community-engaged" art project, which she hopes will increase the contemporary and public arts profile of the city as a whole. Each of these grant-funded projects falls in line with the current arts-policy environment that aims to foster vibrant art scenes as a source of "creative" development. As a career strategy, however, Cyndi's purpose runs deeper than winning grant money by pandering to current arts-planning discourse. Rather, it is about "building a greater dialog," she says, which requires making connections in and for Nashville artists by forging ties

to people in other places, making Nashville a viable place for contemporary artists like her, and raising the whole city's profile and reputation for observers and connections elsewhere.

Cyndi oscillates between taking credit for helping her city along on the one hand, and lamenting its limits on the other hand: "I'd like to think that there's this underground cabal of serious contemporary artists in Nashville. There is, there really is… but most of them have moved on in one way or another… They just couldn't take the smallness of the city… So they went to San Francisco or New York…"

Cathy

"When I first moved here as a young artist, I thought it was my job to rail against whatever authority structures were out there…" says Cathy, who moved to Portland in 1995 when in her early twenties. Originally from Brooklyn, New York, Cathy received her BFA upstate, and spent a brief time in New York City ("working 14 hour days and living at home") before moving out West with a few friends from art school. When they moved to Portland, says Cathy, contemporary art activity was scarce, "but there was this feeling that you could really do something here." Cathy and her friends quickly integrated into the local art scene.

Like Cyndi, Cathy has made some income selling her paintings local commercial galleries, but that income has been modest. Because she was not able to sustain herself, she has put her gallery career on hiatus. Cathy's regular income instead comes from her position as a curator at the Skidmore Contemporary Art Center and as an adjunct Art History instructor. Cathy's job requires her to travel the world to find artists to curate for Skidmore's events. She travels as often as her budget allows, most often to New York. The job allows her to network

with other artists and curators around the country, which makes her a potential source of extra-local social capital, a conduit, and a central figure in the local scene, as we will see.

I first met Cathy in 2010 at a vacant inner-city school building where the Skidmore Center was setting up for their annual performance art festival. The Skidmore is an art institute without a venue, so for the last few years, the city of Portland has loaned the institute the building to host their annual, 11-day-long, New Media Portland (NMP) art festival. NMP is the Skidmore's signature event, and although the festival lasts less than two weeks, its preparation requires months of planning and the majority of Skidmore's annual budget. When we met at the school, NMP was still weeks away. The city's building loan stipulates that all the "build-out" that Skidmore does for the event (turning classrooms into galleries, playgrounds into beer gardens) has to be removed before vacating the building again. So, each year, the Skidmore spends the weeks leading up to NMP building up the venue, and the subsequent weeks tearing it all down again. I sat down with Cathy at a foldout table in the middle of the school's main hallway and turned the recorder on. In the classroom next to us, interns were busy coordinating volunteers and answering phone calls; other classrooms were being turned into art galleries; construction crews were busy retrofitting the school's auditorium; building equipment and tools were lying throughout the hallways.

> "I remember moving here as a young artist, thinking that Skidmore was this elitist organization. They have this big party called the Anti-Art Ball that happened [then] at my friend's studio building, and we heard that they were shutting down the studio for the day so we staged a protest. And then [the former director of Skidmore] pulled the curtain away from our little scrimmed-in theatre and was

like, ‘this is great, we love you!’ and took the wind out of our sales. We were railing against this thing…”

Skidmore was launched in 1995, the same year Cathy moved to Portland, and as the only non-profit arts institute in town at the time, it became for Cathy and her friends a representation of the local art world’s authority structure that they sought to resist.

> “A year after we were protesting the Anti-Art Ball, we get a letter in the mail from the Skidmore with a check for $25. A bunch of artists got it. It said, ‘Will you make something for this auction? Here’s a box and here’s $25. Will you make something?’ So [in protest], we ground the box down to sawdust and put it in a jar and gave it back to the Skidmore. And they auctioned it off. Sandra Marsau is the one who bought it, and she became our dealer, like two years later. And so that was the kind of thread that kept happening to me here, every time I tried to rail against something I’d get pulled in.”

Now Cathy has a full time job at Skidmore and, although her gallery career itself is on hiatus, she has become an influential figure in Portland’s art scene. But Portland has become too small for Cathy in the process, despite the art scene’s growth in recent years. She characterizes her own art career as, “recognized locally,” but, “it was terrifying to me to be 28 here and to be called a mid-career artist.” Aside from her own work, her experience at Skidmore, her ability to travel to curate artists from elsewhere has opened her eyes to how serious and passionate the “real” contemporary art world is, as she puts it. Although Cathy once positioned herself against Portland’s art world “authority,” she has since, admittedly and perhaps justifiably, become that authority. Now she feels she needs something more to push against, that there is a “real” world beyond Portland, and that Portland cannot contain her.

Cyndi and Cathy do not know each other, although they are both visible participants in their own local art scenes. Like many other artists in Portland and Nashville, these artists live out translocal careers; their careers depend on their ability to transcend local market and scene constraints, and their local scenes are animated in part by artists' efforts to bring outside artists in. Like Omar in the previous chapter, neither Cyndi nor Cathy had gallery representation in their own city at the time they were interviewed, but they each maintain professional art careers; Cyndi and Omar show actively in other places; and while Cathy's gallery career remains on hiatus, her curatorial role takes her career well beyond her local scene. Each of these artists travel often, especially to New York City. Cyndi might even move more often if she did not have children. Their careers depend on building and maintaining inter-city network connections, which can lead to exposure and exhibition opportunities elsewhere. Omar, Cyndi, and Cathy each attribute their particular pathways in part to local market constraints; each complains that the local gallery scene is not conducive to their brand of contemporary art. Cyndi, Cathy, and Omar are also active contributors to their local scenes. They do much to catalyze local art activity by providing exhibition venues that allow them to program the kinds of work and the kinds of artists that are not marketable locally. As will be clear in the next chapter, their venues also enable them to bring in artists from other places, thereby circulating art, artists, and contemporary art discourse through their off-center cities.

My own multi-sited, ethnographic pathway led me to Omar, Cyndi, and Cathy because they are central actors in their local scenes. Omar and Cyndi became key informants as well; they connected me to other artists in Portland and Nashville; and they were highly enthusiastic about this study. Aside from their special energy, however, they are not unlike the dozens of other artists I interviewed in each city. While each artist's pathway is different, and while

Portland and Nashville offer different kinds of opportunities and constraints, each off-center artist's career unfolds within the same reputational field that generates both local and extra-local stakes and consequences. The efforts to circumvent local constraints by securing opportunities and networks that extend elsewhere thus illustrates the basic strategy of accumulation for artists in off-center cities, particularly in those cities that have fewer market opportunities.

In this chapter I describe artists' careers as translocal. Because resources are constrained in off-center cities, artists must struggle to accumulate opportunities beyond the places they live. One obvious way to do so is by traveling and moving often, tapping into scene and market resources in other places, so as to diversify one's career possibilities. Artists are indeed a highly mobile population (Markusen and Schrock 2006) but artists can also work locally to secure extra-local opportunities. This is translocality in a second sense. Omar and Cyndi also play a central role in their local scenes by inviting outside art professionals in and by providing a venue to program and circulate artists and contemporary art discourse. Thus, translocality in this field is evident in local milieus; and this subject is taken up in more detail in Chapter Four. Finally, by translocal, I also allude here to the notion that these local artistic scenes, and the reputations they accumulate, are also dynamic in relation to each other; that is, as in a space of positions in a global field; and that is a subject that I take up in more detail in Chapter Five. This chapter explores translocal careers in the immediate sense: that artists must move, travel, and generate lasting connections between places to help sustain their careers, whether those depend on markets or reputations generally.

Career Maintenance as Success

When asked how they define success, and how they know if they have been successful, most of the artists that I talked to simply answered, "the ability to continue making my art." A smaller number of artists answered that success would be indicated by reaching as wide an audience as possible. These success orientations resonate with questions concerning artists' identities. When asked, *how did you become an artist*? And, *why do you make the work that you do*? artists tended to answer: "I've just always been an artist," and, "Because I have to!" No artist in this study defines success as 'making money,' and none would suggest that they became an artist or that they make a particular kind of work for any other reason than personal need or expressive identity. These artists are not opposed to making money by selling their work, but like Omar (Chapter Two), their art is defined first and foremost as a "personal need."

A sociological perspective need not take these artists' constructions at face value, however. Artists' supposed "personal needs," or their innately expressive characters, unfold in social contexts in which those needs and characters are rewarded as such. "Artist" in this sense is an identity that appears to override an artists' interest in material gain, but it is a social reward nevertheless. As Bourdieu's (1993) field perspective would predict, visual artists' career dispositions appear "disinterested" to the extent that such disinterest allows them to assume an autonomous artistic identity. But if in this field it is the social benefits that stand in for material rewards – i.e., the ability to assume the "honorific title of artist" (Becker 1982) – then those artistic identities must also be won socially. Fields of cultural production are social arenas animated by a struggle to accumulate 'symbolic capital,' or the kinds of reputations that matter for artistic legitimacy, or of otherwise "knowing who is part of the universe, who is a real [artist] and who is not" (Bourdieu, 1993: 164). In other words, that identity means nothing if others do

not validate it, and that validation is a social production process; artistic valuation and validation – the sources of an artists' identity – necessitate social exchanges. So, the ability to 'continue making art' is imperative to the artistic identity, but to continue making their art, to be successful as it were, artists must find ways to support themselves in the process.

Most artists do not make their living by selling their works in galleries. As it was revealed in the previous chapter, art markets are often compromised in off-center cities – particularly in studio cities (like Portland) and flat places (like Nashville). To be sure, there are commercial art galleries in Portland and Nashville, and the majority of the artists in my sample do exhibit their work in local commercial galleries or project spaces. But only a tiny number are able to support themselves by showing their work in local galleries alone. Table 3.1 shows the primary sources of income for artists interviewed in this study.

Table 1. Primary Sources of Income Among Interviewed Artists

	n	**Gallery Sales**	**Academic**	**Arts Job**	**Art Grants**	**Misc. Jobs**
Portland and Nashville Artists	*56*	10/56 (18 %)	16/56 (29 %)	12/56 (21%)	1/56 (2 %)	17/56 (30 %)
Portland	*28*	6/28	6/28	6/28	0/28	10/28
Nashville	*28*	4/28	10/28	6/28	1/28	7/28
NYC	*8*	3/8	1/8	4/8	0/8	0/8

Less than one out of every five artists that I interviewed make most of their income by selling their work in art galleries. Although many artists sell their works in galleries, but gallery sales do not make up the primary source of income for most of them. And while most artists do

exhibit locally (whether or not they sell that work), however, only three artists that I interviewed make the majority of their income by selling work in local galleries. These three artists make between $20,000 and $40,000 per year. One of them, Lenny, is fortunate to have maintained the same dealer in Portland for nearly 30 years, and he enjoys some local status as an eccentric old man. Another Portland artist, Andrea, actually sells most of her work at a gift-shop/art gallery on the Oregon Coast; her style of work is not very popular among the "contemporary" artists that make up the majority of this sample. One Nashville artist in my sample, Olive, makes most of her sales locally, but supplements these sales with gallery sales in other cities around the U.S. These artists that have local market careers may not be bothered by the contemporary/modern art divide that Cyndi and Omar refer to; they simply make the work that they do, and the market appears to validate their aesthetic concerns.

Most artists that support themselves with gallery sales do so by selling their work in other places. Many of these artists complement a local gallery with galleries in the centers, New York or L.A., or second cities and market towns like Seattle, San Francisco, Chicago, or Atlanta. Some artists like Omar and Cyndi exhibit and make sales in other places, but do not show locally at all, perhaps because there is little market opportunities for their kind of work locally. For most off-center artists, however, including Omar and Cyndi, the primary source of income does not come from gallery sales at all, even if they are actively exhibiting in multiple places.

Twenty-five of the 56 (46 %) Portland and Nashville artists interviewed here have a Master's of Fine Art degree. An MFA can benefit an artists' career in several ways. An MFA qualifies an artist to teach in colleges and universities, thereby opening up a line of job opportunities in addition to whatever income artists may make through gallery sales. Of the 26 artists interviewed that have their MFAs, 19 teach classes in some capacity (either full time or

adjunct), and for 16 of them, their academic job represents their primary source of income. An MFA give artists' studio time to focus on their work and further develop their practice and concepts, while working alongside many others with the same goals. Howard Singerman (1999) claims that in MFA programs artists do not necessarily learn new artistic techniques or concepts, however, but they learn new discourse regarding how to frame everything they do as a work of art. In this sense, the MFA better facilitates artistic identity work than artistic production *per se*. Indeed, MFAs appear to validate artistic identities more so than gallery sales. Perhaps more important, MFA programs professionalize artists by providing access to professional and academic artistic milieus, which lead not only to regular-paying jobs as alternatives to market careers, but to lasting social networks through which artistic discourse, exhibition, and hence identity opportunities may arise. As Omar mentioned in the previous chapter, his MFA allowed him to "acculturate" to an American style of art making, "and to get the job teaching."

Like many other artists, Omar's MFA also brought him out of New York, first to San Francisco, then to Portland, where he now plays an organizing role in a local artistic scene. Indeed, the proliferation of MFA degree granting institutions around the U.S. has had much to do with the diffusion of professional artists outside of New York and L.A. since the 1970s, while insulating them from market pressures, freeing them to pursue experimental work, and generating a professional community around such practices. There is little evidence among the artists interviewed here that having an MFA leads to better outcomes in the art market, generally. Among those whose primary source of income is gallery sales, only three have an MFA. Most MFAs are able to balance full time professor positions with active gallery careers, but for only a few of them does this lead to real sales.

Many other artists support themselves with arts related jobs, for example, as gallery assistants, curators, preparators, or some other paid position in a commercial gallery or a non-profit art institution. Some artists do paid creative industry work, like building websites. Cyndi is one of a tiny number who gets a significant portion of their income from public grants. Many artists in my sample supported themselves through office jobs, some were independently supported, and only a few artists subsidized their careers through service sector employment, for example, as bartenders or baristas (as Lloyd (2006) might suggest is the modal job category for artists generally).

Many contemporary artists do not have traditional art market careers at all because their aesthetic concerns are do not lend well to selling their work, or even to making art objects. The contemporary media that many of the artists in this study work with, including installation, video, performance, and social practice are not as sellable as painting or sculpture are. These traditional media are sometimes labeled "conservative," and some younger artists proclaim, "Painting is dead." Many artists that can afford to be so experimental with their work are full time professors, but not all; Cyndi is one exception; younger artists that have just completed their MFAs might also be encouraged and inspired in grad school to pursue a line of work that does not sell well. Nevertheless, most artists struggle to support themselves through means other than gallery sales anyway, while each works to sustain their art career – and their artistic identity – by remaining relevant among peers that share similar aesthetic interests and concerns. Even academic positions cannot insulate these artists from the need to secure and maintain a positive reputation among their peers. Further, even in the academic scene, tenure-track positions are few and far between, and having an MFA does not guarantee a lasting career.

For the majority of off-center artists, whether they are selling their work in galleries, have academic jobs, or are working other jobs to support themselves, maintaining a career depends on their ability to overcome local constraints. It was revealed in the previous chapter that traditional art market roles are constrained in off-center cities. Here it is revealed that most artists do not make the majority of their income through gallery sales anyway, but for those that do, most make those sales in other places. But even for academics and those working in other jobs, and especially for beginning artists, the ability to generate and sustain a career in the long run depends on an artists' ability to tap resources in other places. If artistic careers are sustained through scene and/or market resources, then the logic of career maintenance for artists in off-center places has everything to do with overcoming local market and scene constraints by pursuing market and scene resources in multiple places.

In the introduction, Leon argued that Portland is a "hot art city," but he knows well that it is not a place where artists can sustain a career alone: "It's something that all artists have to do," says Leon, "You're always taken for granted wherever you are as an artist, *so it's important to be able to network and move around*" (emphasis added).

According to Leon, an artistic career that is fixed to one location is one that will be taken for granted. Regardless of how talented an artist is, the artists' career means little to others if it does not extend beyond one's local milieu. Leon continues to describe a successful career as one that includes accumulating resources in multiple places, including the center:

> "New York is not even essential to having a highly successful art career. It's just that once you are successful, you will end up there in some way, shape, or form, with some presence, but it doesn't even have to be the first, second, or even third stop once you hit the international level."

Reputational Geography

If "success" requires mobility between places, it is not only because by doing so artists are able to tap market and scene resources in those multiple places. As Leon reveals in the passage above, artists are often described by the geographic extent of their reputations. Such descriptions are hierarchically ordered, such that the more expansive the geography, the more "successful" the artist. The "international level," as Leon uses the term, describes the zenith of a successful career. A very small number of artists will ever reach that level, however, even when living and working in New York. Most other artists who sustain a career at all will do so at a "regional" level. Other artists might be considered "local," although as Leon implies, if an artist cannot transcend their local milieu, in terms of resources and reputation, they might not be able to sustain their career for long, or they might not be "important" anyway.

An *international* artist is one whose work has exhibited in places around the world (but really just the U.S. and Europe), and one whose name is recognizable to other artists in other parts of the world. An international artist has perhaps made several stops along the way, i.e., has lived or exhibited in several places; and the artists' name and work can be recognized among contemporary artists anywhere. If it is possible to become an international artist from New York only, it is because New York provides more opportunities for publicity and exposure that circulate outside of it, as well because curators and collectors from around the globe travel to New York to be informed about what, and who, is relevant in the art world. According to Leon, it is possible to have an "international" career by building opportunities in multiple other places, although New York will suck any "successful" artist into its orbit eventually anyway.

A *regional* artist, by contrast, is one whose publicity and network connections are limited to a shorter distance. Regional artists might show in "regional" centers: San Francisco, Seattle,

Chicago, Atlanta, and Houston, and they may show in New York or Los Angeles as well. New York and L.A. are still huge markets though, and just because an artist shows there, does not guarantee that this will lead to sales or any greater exposure, as Bruno (below) will make clear. While a number of artists interviewed in this study have some gallery presence in New York, very few of them would be considered "international" artists.

A *local* artist, by contrast, would be one whose reputation is generally confined to the city in which they live, if they have a reputation at all. In this sense, local artists might be at the beginning stages of their career, and may over time establish regional and perhaps international exposure. But the term "local" can mean other things too. The term can be used to describe artists whose aesthetic concerns are not oriented to the "contemporary," for example, like an artist who paints guitars for a tourist market in Nashville. In this sense, "local" might be used alongside "modern" or "old-guard" as a category for contemporary artists to position their concerns against, even if one's career does not extend beyond local geography. On the other hand, "the local" also arises as a category to take seriously in a decentering art world. Regional and international artists might even make "the local" the subject of their work. Still, "the local" remains a contested subject matter, for example, between several internationally recognized artists and their critics (*c.f.*, Lippard 1997; Kwon 2002).

While they derive inductively, these categories are ideal-typical designations. No one individual's career neatly exists within one or another category. Further, an artists' career does not necessarily proceed from a local to an international level. An artist might catch an early career break, for example, and slowly fade out of the spotlight. Often, however, artists whose careers develop at all do so by accumulating opportunities beyond local, and then beyond regional levels. This is in part because of the nature of visual artistic exhibition. For "successful"

artists especially, an artist cannot show too often in one city without exhausting their exhibition opportunities; they have to continue to move on.

Kate would be considered an international artist by Leon's standards. Kate moved to Portland as an early-career artist in the 1990s. She had some immediate successes in Portland galleries and museums, before going on to graduate school in New York City, where she met several influential and important people that would help propel her career on a larger scale. She moved back to Portland to take a teaching job after graduate school, although she continued to show in New York and in other cities around the world. She was subsequently selected for inclusion in the Whitney Biennial, which led to still further opportunities, and to her acknowledgement that, "I am blessed to continue to have opportunities to make and show my work." Kate does not only show in New York; she shows everywhere she has an opportunity to.

> "[When] I went to graduate school it became very clear to me that I was using up my options [locally]. In other words I was showing everywhere in the region, and I was getting awards and at some point there is nothing else you can get… And I - my hopes and desires weren't that I was going to be a, you know, in the next big museum, but that I would be able to continue to show and have venues. And I was getting worried that that might not happen as time went on."

For many artists like Kate, going away to graduate school can result in accumulating network ties and connections to artists and professors in other places, which in turn lead to exhibition opportunities, and then name recognition in those places. As we will see in Chapters Four and Six, generating and sustaining translocal social connections can also give an artist cache in a local scene, which can in turn lead to still further translocal opportunities and connections, and perhaps nomination for prestigious awards, like inclusion in the Whitney Biennial.

Thurston would be considered a regional artist. Thurston achieved his BFA from a prestigious art school on the East Coast, before moving to Portland in the late 1990s. His paintings have won him much acclaim around the region. He sells his work in Portland and Seattle, and his work has been bought by some museums around the Northwest. Portland and Seattle are "almost too close" to have gallery representation in both places, but Thurston is one of very few artists that do, owing in part to an agreement between his two dealers to share him because they don't want to risk losing him.

Local artists are not often career artists, or not yet at least. I asked Duncan if it is possible to sustain a career in Portland alone:

> *Duncan*: It's complicated. I think that you could say yes or no strongly. So no meaning I'll start with no. I'll say you can, but the probability is low. You'd have to teach. We have to. Like to make art, live off that primarily, like 75 percent of your income is difficult because the galleries are too small.
>
> *SS*: Right. Do you know anybody who does that?
>
> *Duncan*: Not really, no. Maybe some of the old guard people at [Gallery X] could do that. But [Artist Y] [is at Gallery X]. He's a full-time artist, but he is also highly recognized and very sellable. And shows in two other cities: New York and LA or something. So he's safe. That's okay. You need - So that's the yes side. It's like yes, but it has to be a part of a network. You couldn't just be here and only show here. No, impossible to survive. You know, I think artists have to be regional at least, and then if not regional, at least have a gallery in another city. You need to have; I'd say two [cities] to really live off of it.

In the process of navigating their careers, artists work to accumulate market and scene resources in other places, and they accumulate reputations accordingly. These reputations do not merely describe career trajectories in a hierarchical manner; they also become stakes and rewards generated by the field. Any artist who wishes only to "continue to make their art," must do so socially, winning the right to claim their artistic identity in a field in which "international" is tantamount to "success" and "local" might just count against you.

Translocal Mobility

Overcoming local constraints by "being able to network and move around," as Leon puts it, is not an easy thing to do. Although many artists claim that the art world has "decentered," and although the cost of living is cheaper in Portland and Nashville than it is in New York, the trade-off is that artists in off-center places must be more mobile between places, and such translocal mobility requires time, money, and effort. Building a reputation that transcends local boundaries is most often achieved by developing resourceful social networks and connections to people in other places. It can also be done, as we will see in subsequent chapters, by working to build the status and reputation of one's city or scene as a legitimate site of artistic production, visible to outside observers and gatekeepers; that is, in effect, how New York is able to generate translocal careers without artists themselves having to be as mobile.

An artist is fortunate if she or he has a dealer that attends national and international art fairs, and especially if her or his work garners attention from an internationally circulating press like *ArtForum*, but these cases are few and far between. Instead, artists have to do much of the work of "getting out there" on their own. It helps to have a website, of course, and many artists will suggest that the Internet has democratized the field, but there are limits to how effective an

Internet presence can be. The art world is still a reputational field where face-to-face interactions and exchange do more for the production of reputations, identities, and beliefs than a website can (see Coslor 2010). Moreover, most artists have websites, and so an Internet profile is less an advantage for any individual artist than it is a necessity for keeping up with the times. As Cyndi rightly surmises about the limits of the Internet,

> "Having a website is good, but there's just too much information out there for people to [pause]… think of it as a job market: there are a hundred applicants, and if they're all sort of equally good, you'll probably go with the one whose name you've heard more… the person who's actually gotten to shake your hand, because that's the nature of humans."

Human nature aside, if it is easier for dealers, curators, and other gatekeepers in other places to select familiar names and faces in a sea of unfamiliar ones, then artists must assume responsibility for making themselves visible and familiar to them.

Cold-calling does not work. Artists that sustain their careers are usually able to exhibit in multiple cities, but those opportunities derive from lasting connections with reputable others, not by chance, and certainly not by talent alone. Artists that hope to get into a gallery simply by mailing their portfolio will find their inquiries unanswered. Some galleries keep piles of unsolicited submissions, but an artist is lucky if an intern sifts through their work. At best, the process results in one more person reading the artists' name. At worst, it separates those who understand the rules of the game as a reputational field (being visible, shaking hands), from the uninitiated, unfamiliar others who might lack the personal connections to make a translocal career work. For their part, dealers are unlikely to take a chance on an artist they have never heard of, even if they do like the work. Says Thurston, who works at a Portland art gallery:

> "People come in every day… like walking into a gallery and being like, 'Hi, here's my stuff.' We get that so much and it just goes into a pile, and then eventually we go through it, but it's just like throwing a penny in a wishing well… The least I can do [as an artist] is I can actually explore places and see if anything does feel like a good fit because that is one thing that I have learned about being on the other side is that people will just come in, and they'd say like, 'Oh, it's an art gallery; they'll show my wood bowls or something.' You know?"

Artists like Thurston have to network; they have to figure out what is a good fit, and then they have to put themselves in the right situations at the right moments, as Cyndi suggests; they have to be visible and shake hands. Cyndi appears to intuit the rules of the game, referring to her career strategy as a "business plan," which consists mainly of networking:

> "My business plan is every time I go [to New York], everybody I know up there knows that I'm there, and I try to meet one more person, which ends up getting pretty hairy because the group keeps getting bigger. I'm interested in meeting everybody but in terms of the business plan I really do hope to continue getting to meet other artists or the curators."

Olive – the Nashville artist that sells most of her work locally – has had a few leads in New York City, but nothing has panned out there. I asked her how her gallery opportunities come about in other cities, and she told a familiar story: "Cold-calling just isn't the way it works." Olive says, "I mean [galleries] get that all the time. I just don't really do that but I do try to, whatever, whoever artist I know there [in New York], I try to connect [with them] and see if something happens *naturally*" (emphasis mine).

‘Naturally’ in Olive’s sense means the potential to be introduced to a dealer or curator through existing social networks; ‘naturally’ has little to do with the quality of her work. As it will be clear in Chapters Four and Six, artistic evaluation processes are abetted by relationships between trusted intermediaries (Lamont 2012), and these may take the form of positions in an impersonal organization (i.e., a dealer, a gallery assistant, or a curator at a prestigious museum), or intimate friendships, or a broad range of relations and exchanges in between. Moreover, the field requires that artists and dealers alike appear disinterested (Bourdieu 1993; Moulin 1987; Velthius 2005), which means avoiding ‘strictly business’ exchanges. As a result, artists’ personal connections and/or ‘friendships’ to artists and art world actors in other places are vitally important.

Olive, Cyndi, Cathy, Omar, and many other artists have such translocal ties; these ties develop over the course of a career that includes living and traveling through many different places. As will be made clear in Chapter Five, such ties often begin with interaction and exchange locally. Indeed, although Olive has lived and worked in several U.S. cities, including Seattle, Memphis, and Asheville, many of her translocal connections develop in Nashville, through her associations with the Demonbreun gallery where she sells most of her work.

> *Olive*: And Barry [the preparator at the Demonbreun, introduced in the introduction] is always [saying], ‘Your next solo show needs to be in New York!’ But Barry is… maybe more talk than… but he’s such a good friend because… if you’re good friends with him and you’re at a party and he’ll introduce you, he’d be like, ‘This is Olive, the best painter in the entire country.’ Awe, I like you Barry. I wanna have you next to me every time.

If Olive had a Barry in every city she visited, she might also have a gallery in each of those places, but then again, Barry already works at the gallery Olive exhibits with in Nashville. Most artists that I talked to do have connections to artists and "friends" in other places. Still, networking is not easy; translocal networks have to be actively cultivated and maintained.

Kurt, a Nashville artist who makes most of his income as a full time art professor, finds that opportunities to exhibit in other places come and go. Kurt grew up outside of New York, moved to Seattle for graduate school, and has shown in places like Chicago, Indianapolis, and Beijing, these opportunities have been sporadic, and the social ties to those places have been tough to maintain. When he lived in Seattle, he had a gallery there, but that gallery recently closed. Kurt's most recent exhibition opportunity was in Virginia, through connections that he established in graduate school. He also has grad school ties in New York and Philadelphia, but these have not led to any opportunities there. Some of his works have been purchased by small, regional museums in Washington and Massachusetts. But despite that he has had some exposure from coast to coast, Kurt would likely be considered a regional artist.

SS: So do try to actively pursue connections elsewhere?

Kurt: Probably not as much as I should.

SS: Do you think most artists do that?

Kurt: I think some do and some don't. [I heard in a lecture that] you should spend at least 50 percent of your time marketing yourself and the other 50 percent making your work. But I have a job too, so it's like trying to manage that is, just not enough time - if you split my time by half it's not enough to do either of those things well, so you kind of like make art for a while and spend a little time I try to

get out there and go back to making work again, so it's sort of unbalanced. But I'm just really good at making connections with people really.

SS: Do you wish you had more time to do that?

Kurt: Yeah, definitely. I mean I wish I had more time in my studio. It may be idealistic, but the thought being that if I had more time in the studio my work would get better and that will [be] it's own marketing as well.

SS: Do you perceive that your friends in those other cities, do they enjoy more benefits being in these other cities… and more opportunities to market their selves or more opportunities to be in their studio?

Kurt: The people in Philadelphia that I know seem to be more active [making art] but my friends that are in New York and Boston like don't end up making work very much.

SS: Oh really?

Kurt: It's just too expensive.

For Kurt, 'marketing' and 'making connections' in other places go hand in hand. And if marketing one's self requires effort that cuts into Kurt's studio time, at least he can afford a studio in Nashville; his friends in New York and Boston do not have as much studio time, or they can't afford to rent studio space. Making and maintaining translocal network connections requires active movement, travel, and socializing, which some artists have very little time and energy for. Younger artists and those without dependents are better able to build translocal networks (Cyndi, a mother of two, is one exception, but she is still relatively young).

Bruno is a late career artist that moved to Portland from New York in the 1960s for a teaching job. He has done well for himself by selling locally as well as in galleries around the

country throughout his career. At over 70 years old, he still spends his days in his studio, which he rents in an old storefront on a busy seven-lane street that attracts little foot traffic; most of the storefronts here, including Bruno's, appear boarded up and vacant. Bruno's studio features a wide space with an office in the back, and a packaging and shipping station in one area. When I visited him there for an interview, a good half of his sculptures where wrapped in plastic, either ready to be shipped out, or having recently arrived from an exhibit elsewhere. He talked to me at length about his many trips to New York earlier in his career, where he would meet and socialize with some big names in the art world, as if that period of his career justifies his continued studio practice. Whatever opportunities arose from those travels back then have since dissipated, however.

> *Bruno*: If anything I'm a regional artist, which is fine.
>
> *SS*: What about LA? LA, we talked a little bit about LA became a much bigger art scene in the '60s. Did that become an opportunity to show?
>
> *Bruno*: Well there was a time when I didn't have as much white hair that I did make forays to New York, to Los Angeles, San Francisco, was able to set up some exhibitions in New York and San Francisco. But once again, if you don't live there and you don't all of a sudden hit a jackpot -- it just doesn't work out.

Being a regional artist is fine, Bruno says, but it is evident that he feels he may have missed out on some opportunities along the way. He has been able to make a living in the art market, and he has sold most of his work outside of Portland, but for most of his life he has been oriented to the New York art world, and success in that art world would be a better indicator of a meaningful career looking back. Although he has shown in New York and San Francisco, he didn't 'hit the jackpot' there. In other words, these opportunities did not lead to lasting ties with the right

people, or, perhaps he was not in the right place at the right time. He is older now and it is just not worth it to him to continue to travel to maintain whatever connections he had in the past.

Artists should not appear to be too discerning in their networking strategies, however. Developing "friendships" for the sake of career benefits (Olive) can appear disingenuous, and "networking" can be a dirty word, especially if one's networking behavior is understood as part of a shrewd business plan (Cyndi). During my first interview with Cathy she described her career successes by telling me, "I am a good networker." In our second interview I asked her to elaborate. "I said that?" she asked me, surprised, "I think that it's weird to hear that word: networking. It feels weird that I would say networking. I'm sure I did. But 'networking' feels of a corporate world and I feel like the people that I know here I have really authentic connections with and that has been my success."

'Networking' can indeed appear inauthentic. As Cathy suggests, and so despite that networking can lead to opportunities in other places, the real trick of networking is to keep those ties authentic. If connections elsewhere can lead to opportunities, but they also lead to demands for reciprocation, which must be honored if one is to not appear disingenuous. As Cam tells me:

> "You know, you get to meet other artists outside of the city. Even though they're professors who are always like, 'Oh, yeah. I really love your work; you should totally show it in our university.' And then they'll be like, 'Do you, guys, have a gallery?' The idea being like we would trade shows… Everybody's trying to, like, living their career, which is totally respectable, but it's just much more present out of the city, like, 'Can you scratch my back?'"

Every artist is looking for opportunities elsewhere, according to Cam, but if artists are socially compelled to 'scratch each other's backs,' then their ability to be artistically discerning becomes

compromised. Or, as Duncan would conjecture, the art itself becomes less important than the social obligation, the winning of influential networks with the right people in the right places.

Duncan moved to Portland from Los Angeles, via Las Vegas, to get his MFA. Duncan does not sell his work in local galleries, but has shown in several non-profit, and "project spaces." He sustains his career in part as an adjunct teacher at a local art school, and in part by winning grants and commissions to make temporary or permanent installations. Mostly, however, his career is sustained through making and maintaining connections to artists and curators in other places. Although his added income from exhibiting elsewhere is negligible, the reputation that accrues from showing elsewhere helps him win grants and commissions locally. Duncan's path is a fairly typical one in this sense; his career involves what he calls "exporting" himself. In his words:

> "It is hard to just start here [in Portland] and then go, because you got to really have relationships in other cities. It's hard to build those. I luckily kind of came from other cities when other people came here, and now I'm trying to export again."

Building translocal networks is difficult from anywhere, but according to local artists, Portland is thought to be easier because, as we will see in Chapter Five, there is a large pool of artists there that also have network ties to other places. In this sense, Duncan corroborates Omar's and Leon's opinions that Portland can be used as a studio city, or "home base," from which to work and also connect to people in other cities. Even so, "exporting" is still hard to do.

> *SS*: How are you connected to other cities?
>
> *Duncan*: Not as much as I want to be, but I've a lot of friends in a lot of cities. That's how I'm connected. It's a friend network really.

SS: Right, right. Are these friends artists?

Duncan: Half of them are in [other] creative industries possibly. Or they're friends with that kind of thing, you know. So it's like really, just a network of people I know, or have met as friends, or have met through the field. Like so I'm friends with some people in San Diego because I showed them in a gallery up here, my gallery, and now, I'm going to go down to San Diego for the San Diego Contemporary Art Fair and do this project, and I'm going to stay with them. And then I'm going to have them come to the show. Networks.

SS: And do you hope that that pans out in other places too?

Duncan: Yeah, I think it's like really, the art world is personal networks. That's extremely true. That is the way that you can involve yourself in the art world. I think networks are the gateway. The personal network is the lifeline. It's become too obvious that that is so important, and it's a little slightly disenchanting because I'd like to think that artworks will become popular because of their power more than their relationship to people or marketing.

Perhaps it is all too obvious that networking is the dominant strategy of maintaining a career in the art world. In a reputational career field, the influence of one's social ties might explain more variation in career opportunity than talent can. The point here, however, is that it is not just networking that matters, but being able to build and maintain those networks outside of one's local milieu that matters most in sustaining a career, which is quite difficult to do, though perhaps easier now than ever before. In a reputational field characterized by constrained social and market resources, maintaining networks between places is the basis of a lasting or "successful" artistic career. As we will see in Chapter Five, networking within one's local scene

is not nearly as difficult, but local social influence accrues to those with outside connections, and cliques and boundaries can develop around such resources.

Translocal Dispositions

Artists develop translocal dispositions. Just as fields of cultural production generate a disinterested disposition, the global field generates an outlook that orients artists to positively value travel, and the accumulation of experiences, opportunities, and networks elsewhere. While artists benefit from traveling and developing connections in other places (i.e., instrumentally), travel and mobility are also prized in their own right because they are thought to expand an artist's horizons, keep them informed of relevant contemporary art discourse as it unfolds globally. Not all places are equally relevant to artists' horizons, and translocal dispositions thus prize the more relevant places and experiences over others.

In the back of Bruno's studio is an office; his counter tops and desk space are filled with stacks of art books, newspapers, art supplies, and various clutter that appears to have been piling up for decades; a coffee machine sits atop a small stack of books. "Well, I spend most of the time in here working on the crossword," he tells me, holding it up so as to make sure I understand that he is referring to the *New York Times'* crossword. There was wisdom in his voice when he told me, as if stating the obvious: "Come Friday, I can't never finish the crossword anymore. I'm getting older." Although Bruno did not "hit the jackpot," when he was more active earlier in his career, he still values travel, and he especially values his connections to New York as the privileged center of the art world. "I think that for me as an artist travel is extremely important," Bruno told me. We talked about why he moved to Portland in the first place:

SS: Was Portland at the time understood as a place that you could have an art career outside of New York?

Bruno: Are you kidding?

SS: No. I don't know. That's what I want to know.

Bruno: No, it was just a place outside of New York, and I was looking for a position, a job in a professional school. So I got a job.

Bruno was once a curator and director of a now defunct non-profit arts center in Portland, much like the one that Cathy curates at now. Like Cathy, the position allowed him to bring artists from New York to exhibit in Portland. Back then, in the 1970s and 80s, bringing artists from New York was a big deal, and Bruno was a major source of exposure for Portland artists. Bruno went on and on describing how slow Portland was to respond to contemporary art, but he recognizes that things have changed: "Finally, the Whitney comes out here. Finally." Despite the changes, Bruno says, "Art is global now, but you still have to be there… Curators still make selections based on reputations and politics; if [you don't think so], you're kidding yourself. Artists have to travel; be informed; and [they have to] be in a place of consequence."

According to Bruno, thus, it would behoove an artist to be in one of those consequential places. More importantly, however, artists have to travel; they have to take in and appreciate multiple places. He continues:

"I always mentioned that to my students that, you know, get out of town, go wherever you're going to go, actually stay there for a couple of years and then come back. Because you'll have some all kinds of new stuff to think about from there as you come here and like how do you integrate what you've learned and what's here. Very, very important to do. And I still think it's essential."

Kate puts it this way: “I think leaving Portland for a little while and coming back helped because I had new experiences, I had new perspectives, I had new friendships; I had a more expansive way of thinking what art could be.”

Cathy echoes the sentiment. Although she usually travels to New York, if she had her way, she would go much further. She tells me, “I had one year in 2007 where for work I was in Spain and then I was in Australia and China and San Francisco and NY and L.A. I was like, ‘This is fucking it; I want to be on a plane all the time. I want to be traveling all the time!’”

“Being informed” as Bruno put it, requires “being there.” Because art is apparently global now, being informed thus requires being everywhere at once. Indeed, if the Internet has changed the game, allowing an artist to live *anywhere* and remain relevant, it has also generated an outlook that requires being *everywhere*. Cathy continues:

> “And it started to feel really small to be here curating off the Internet… I felt like in order to program an artist [from] France I need to be in France. I need to understand the place that they live and what they’re making… I have been hearing about contemporary art in China for a year or two and then suddenly I was there and it’s a culture I've always been interested in. And I was only there for ten days but in those ten days I was like, ‘I get it!’ I may not get everything but I get it. I understand like a sense of history. This new commodity structure [in China]; the illusion of the art market pushing things; what’s really happening. I got to go see shows by all those Hyperrealists who are making work based on the Cultural Revolution and then I was like, ‘What’s next? What are people who are 20 [years old] making?’ Then it was really interesting to see that they’re making work about being all single children… So yeah travel, I want to do it for

everything. And my experience working with other dealers and other artists in other cities is part of what made me dissatisfied with my own experience at my own gallery, which I probably would have grumbled about but kept showing if I hadn't had that experience."

Translocal Capital

Omar and Cyndi identify their aesthetic concerns with the "contemporary" and are able to position themselves against local, "modern" markets as such, but they do not reject the idea that their work could, should, or would be sellable. Rather, their position in the contemporary art market and in the global, reputational field generally, is fundamentally tied to their ability to overcome local market and scene constraints. They struggle alongside other artists in this study to accumulate connections and opportunities in other places; and they develop dispositions that value travel and being affiliated with influential places.

In addition to the concepts of global fields and translocal dispositions, it is useful in these terms to think of off-center artists' career pathways and strategies as involving the accumulation and exchange of *translocal capital*. I define translocal capital as a social resource that accumulates given an artists' affiliation with multiple places and/or reputable places, which can be transposable into other kinds of social, symbolic, and economic resources and rewards that are at stake in the field. Translocal capital may be understood as a kind social capital that involves inter-city network ties in particular, but translocal capital also involves local affiliations in places where inter-city network ties matter.

As artists develop social connections between places, they are better poised to take advantage of opportunities to exhibit and further increase their visibility in other places. Just as

Portland and Nashville artists seek out opportunities elsewhere, however, artists from elsewhere may seek out opportunities in Portland and Nashville as well. The ability to facilitate and exhibit artists from elsewhere allows local actors like Omar and Cyndi to circulate the flow of artists and contemporary-arts discourse through their local milieus. They accumulate and exchange translocal capital in the process. If for Bourdieu, the autonomy of cultural fields revolves around the accumulation of symbolic capital, or the ability to authoritatively define what is culturally valuable or not, that kind of honor appears to be afforded only to those who can already accrue recognition and respect beyond their local scenes. To be relevant in the global field would seem to entail being everywhere at once.

Translocal capital is related to translocal dispositions as a set of accumulated or embodied translocal resources and reputations that all participants in the field are compelled to appreciate by virtue of the translocal dispositions that are generated by the field. As Omar, Cyndi, and Cathy's stories make clear, having connections to people in other places make one a resourceful and sought after connection in one's local scene. Thus, as overcoming local constraints is a career strategy, the ability to do so is a sought after resource and reward. We will see in the next chapter how the pursuit of translocal capital animates local scenes.

Translocality in Studio Cities and Flat Places

In the last chapter, we saw that the types of resources at stake in the field vary between cities. Outside of the centers, market towns and second cities may offer better resources to make a living selling art works in local commercial galleries; studio cities offer resources for producing work, and *flat places* offer neither type of social advantage except those implied by the idea that the art world has 'decentered.' In this chapter I have suggested that translocal

dispositions and translocal capital are generated and flow logically from the structure of resources and opportunities in the place-divided, global field. Thus, we should expect translocal dispositions to look different, and the circulation and exchange of translocal capital to look different in different kinds of places.

Portland concentrates a higher than average density of professional artists, although not many in this sample are able to support themselves primarily through local art markets. This may be explained by the fact that Portland houses several MFA degree programs that provide scene opportunities and resources for young artists looking to advance their careers, and regular paying jobs for professional artist as well. But those MFA degrees are relatively new; newer, perhaps than Portland's newfound reputation as an alternative art city. It is also likely that artists move to Portland because of its reputation as an alternative art city itself. Still, most Portland artists' careers are not sustained within that city alone.

As a studio city as such, Portland offers a relatively high opportunity for translocal circulation and exchange. Most artists that are participants in its local scene have moved there from other places and actively travel and exhibit elsewhere. They may move for a short time, like Omar suggests, to get their MFA and maybe have a small residency, maybe exhibit in project spaces like Hippo, where they will be free to experiment, not worried about nor expecting to sell their work, but guaranteed an audience of like-minded peers, and then move on to another place. Portland also offers plenty of alternative exhibition venues, which as Omar's story suggests, allow him to connect local artists and curators with those elsewhere, and that role in turn leads to Omar being a central figure in his local scene. Cathy is a central figure in her local scene as well; like Omar, she is able to travel and curate artists from other places locally, and make connections for local artists as well. Young artists that move to Portland might find social outlets at one of

many experimental venues or project spaces like the Hippo Gallery, which in turn will provide them with opportunities to connect with artists and curators in other places. Indeed, the opportunity to make experimental work, develop rapport, and network with artists is likely a major reason that artists move to Portland. Subsequently, artists that participate in a vibrant artistic scene as such are likely to develop a translocal disposition that respects and reveres other artists from other places, and the translocal opportunities that may arise from such connections.

Flat places like Nashville have a relatively lower share of professional visual artists. Like their Portland counterparts, most primary occupation visual artists in Nashville do not support themselves in local market either. But unlike Portland, Nashville does not offer the same density of scene resources that can result in translocal exchanges. Although Nashville does not offer an MFA degree program, there are still many colleges and universities that attract professional artists from elsewhere, but by and large, the city does not attract professional artists who want to use the city as a platform to launch their careers like Portland does. Rather, many Nashville artists appear to have "ended up" there, like Cyndi. Still, although Cyndi came "kicking and screaming," most artists that have moved to Nashville in the last decade do not complain about their choice of place. Indeed, if they are able to sustain their careers as professional artists in Nashville, it is either because they already have established a career in other places, or because they have a steady paying academic job. Artists like Cyndi and Jimmy are still able to lead translocal careers, but the social resources for doing so are unlikely to come from within their local scene alone. Instead, they rely on preexisting opportunities, or they must hustle to continue to develop new ones.

Chapter 4

Scene Logics

Sophia

"I'm famous in Vancouver!"

Sophia and I recorded several conversations while walking through Portland's Southeast Industrial District, including the one that consisted of my semi-structured interview schedule. At the time, Sophia was putting together an art project that was an interactive, self-guided tour of her neighborhood. Participants would wear a headset that utilized geo-fencing technology to isolate and play back various segments of conversations and field recordings that Sophia was collecting, corresponding more or less to the locations were those sounds were recorded. This required a lot of walking and talking on her part, and perhaps more time sifting through the audio – much like an ethnographer. Sophia was always trying to get me to read Hal Foster's essay *The Artist as Ethnographer?* Sophia always had a recorder on, at art events, in coffee shops, and while walking through the streets.

Sophia's art resonates with something that the contemporary art world calls "social practice." Social practice refers to a post-studio, post-product orientation to art-making. In a sense, social practice gets beyond an earlier preoccupation with "institutional critique" (c.f., Danto 1964; O'Doherty 1976) by taking art out of the gallery entirely and engaging audiences in ways that make them a material of the art itself. Portland, Oregon is thought by many to be hub for this new kind of artistic practice. One local university boasts one of the only MFA degrees in 'Art and Social Practice' in the world, and hosts an annual social practice conference called Open Engagement (the "conference" format works better than "exhibition" for this kind of work

because the work is not exactly sellable, and because, as such, most professional practitioners of social practice have academic jobs that insulate them from market pressures). But social practice is a relatively new concept; its parameters and its merits still are debated and contested. Sophia does not embrace the term, but she identifies her aesthetic concerns somewhere in this discussion.

"How do you know you're famous in Vancouver?" I asked, while we darted across a five-lane, one-way street.

"I'm not *really* famous there," Sophia admitted, "I just meant that people follow my work more there than they do here… [Inaudible – loud traffic]. They ask questions about it more, and they respect it more, and um… I did a residency there." Sophia spent several months working with an art collective at their live/work venue in Vancouver, B.C. In return, Sophia invited one of those Vancouver artists, Mary, to a residency at her own venue in Portland. "I knew Mary was somehow extraordinarily powerful in the sense that she was well connected within the arts community in Vancouver, but I didn't understand that she was also showing me… she was introducing me to the people there that she thought I would like the most… which ended up being more true than I'd imagined," Sophia told me.

Sophia was just 22 years old and was still finishing up a bachelor's degree when I interviewed her, yet she is an active participant in Portland's contemporary art scene. She is a founding member of Stark Naked, a curatorial collective and "alternative" exhibition venue in the neighborhood we were walking through. Like several similar alternative, contemporary art venues in the neighborhood, Stark Naked is built out on the second floor of an old building in Portland's Central Eastside Industrial District. Like Omar's Hippo gallery which is only blocks away, having a venue allows Sophia and the other Stark Naked curators to program to their

aesthetic tastes, while offering exhibition opportunities to local artists and potentially fostering connections to artists like Mary in other places like Vancouver. It was a drizzly Sunday in Portland, mid-afternoon. Sophia and I had been walking and talking for a while. We stepped into a brewery for refreshment at one hour and 23 minutes into the conversation.

SS: So how did you meet Mary again?

Sophia: Well, I was at The Den [another alternative art/music venue in Portland], and she came into town for the Open Engagement conference… She's from somewhere in the U.S., but… she was introducing me to all these people that… No, no. She came into town to visit, first, a couple times… I guess this would have been two Decembers ago or something. I can't even remember how long ago it was… In any case, it was before I started Stark Naked… So I met Mary because she was a long-time friend of The Den, and she was staying on my couch at my house, and her and I immediately became really close friends because…

The bartender interrupted our conversation. We placed an order, and Sophia asked for chalk. At this bar, the tables double as chalkboards. She began to doodle. Sophia and I clicked well before this interview because when she was not spending months in Vancouver, finishing her Bachelor's degree, running an art venue, and working a part time job, Sophia spent all of her spare time reading and thinking about sociological theory, apparently:

Sophia: "It's interesting, like all these social practice types. I actually wrote a paper, a sociology paper about the idea of like a 'community of practice,' and it being something that is necessarily location based… that people form communities and their identities and behaviors are constructed around the people they see every day. And I was like 'psssh…' And the argument being that you

should look at these little tiny communities of practice… I was like, 'Well I don't think it really works this way anymore,' because, yes those people, like we study them because they have lots of similarities, you know, but I was so amazed by the ridiculous, the gross similarities between all these members of the social practice community that come from [different places.]"

Earlier in the conversation Sophia and I had discussed Bourdieu's (1993) *Field of Cultural Production*. I took the chalk and started to recreate some diagrams from that book, which I must have failed at:

Sophia: "Oh what do we have here?!"

SS: I put social practice high in symbolic capital and low in the field of…

Sophia: No I disagree, because this is what, if I remember correctly. [Sophia makes her own diagram.] So I remember that you have naïve artists over here; Vaudeville over here…

SS: Pop culture? … This is the low-low, right?

Sophia: This is the low-low, and then this is something strange like - yeah this is cultural capital; then you have Intellectuals, then you have Bourgeoisie. So you have Vaudeville, Naïve, Bourgeoisie, Salon. So yeah social practice is over here because, or no actually because, they're probably more like right here.

SS: That's where I put it.

Sophia: You put it at the low end.

SS: But it would be here on my diagram.

Sophia: Oh I see. Um, but like yeah, something like that. But anyway it was amazing to me that… So Mary and I hit it off right away.

SS: Uh-huh.

Sophia: Both [of us were] kind of reading the same things; interested in the same things; have the same problems, you know. So we became friends, she came to visit a few times. [We] went to the social practice conference together…

The sociological concepts included in my conversation with Sophia are not exactly precise, but they provide a convenient rhetorical moment. Sophia's aesthetic concerns and practices resonate for her with a field concept of cultural production that extends well beyond the "community." Nevertheless, her career concerns and her connections to Mary and Vancouver, require some modicum of local participation. Stark Naked simultaneously allows Sophia some local centrality, as well as opportunity to connect and foster ties elsewhere, thereby affording her some recognition, or reputation – "fame" or otherwise – in a global field. [To be continued…]

Bella

Bella is a Nashville native who until recently had never been exposed to a larger, global art world. She managed to get her BFA at a local art school while raising two children and working full time as a tour guide at an historic site in the city. When we interviewed, she was working on her MFA at a low residency art school out of state. Before that, Bella was making work that was "very two dimensional," she says, but her MFA work has moved her in new directions. "I wanted to do something that was incorporating all these different aspects of my life," said Bella, "because I always have to be everywhere at once." Bella described her new approach to making art as a daily performance of ghosts and alter egos, inspired by her job as a tour guide, which allows her to combine all the aspects of her life by never changing costumes.

Bella: "[At my job] I was in costume a lot. Everything was very Victorian like my whole world was very Victorian, and we were always sewing to get the new thing ready to wear, you know. You can totally fall into that and not come out."

SS: "Who are your mentors?"

Bella: "A lot of dead people actually, probably because they are perfect because we don't know any of their flaws."

According to Bella, Nashville has not always had a visible art scene, although artists always seemed to "come out of the woodwork," as she put it. But Bella approached Nashville's limits in that domain as a potential opportunity. Bella's BFA degree led to connections with other Nashville artists, which led to her curating her friends at "random" venues around the city, like coffee shops, bars, or vacant houses. Her curatorial work led in turn to still further local connections. "They don't teach you how to do this in art school," Bella said about staking out and maintaining a practice in her local scene, "and I went to art school thinking you kind of come out of it, you know, knowing how to take care of yourself and make a career out of this, which you really don't, which is fine…" Like many other artists that get their BFA's in Nashville, Bella might have chosen to move elsewhere to pursue her career, but instead she stayed, and she has become an organizing force in her local scene. "I've got all these other things going here, and so I'm trying to change the place. I'm going to make the place I want to be in because I don't feel like I can leave."

Bella and a friend opened the Art Box Gallery on the second floor of the Arcade building downtown in 2006 because some other artists in town convinced her it would be a good idea. Rents at the Arcade are "very cheap," Bella told me, avoiding the specifics. Like Hippo Gallery (Chapter Two), Greenhouse (Chapter Three), and Stark Naked (above), Bella does not expect to

make money at Art Box, but the venue allows her to program whatever she wants. She describes her business model: “It’s really hard to be a nonprofit actually. They make you jump through all these hoops to be [a 501c3]… All our expenses are really low. That’s how we’re able to choose what we do more freely. There may be some folks [i.e., local art dealers] with higher overheads. And so they have to [program] more sellable things maybe.”

Bella tends to present herself as not entirely sure about what she is doing, or never entirely sure how the world around her is supposed to work. But Bella is a trendsetter of sorts. The Art Box was the second gallery to move in to the Arcade at the time, and has since been followed by several others. Some of these art spaces are studios; some are called “vanity” galleries (i.e., artists or collectors trying to sell their own works or possessions); and few, like Art Box, are known as alternative galleries or “project spaces.” Coupled with the commercial galleries across Arts Avenue, this new critical mass has nevertheless led to First Saturday Art Crawls, which indicates for many some semblance of a coherent art scene in Nashville. Said Bella, “We decided to move our openings to be on the same night, and then that meant there was [Gallery X], there was [Gallery Y], there was Art Box, and [Gallery Z]. And we reached some sort of critical mass… Everyone was like, ‘an Art Crawl? We have an Art Crawl? That’s amazing. That’s not supposed to happen here!’”

As a venue entrepreneur, Bella is responsible for organizing much local art scene activity. Like Omar, Cyndi, and Sophia, the venue also makes Bella a source of exhibition and networking opportunities for other artists, locally and from elsewhere. Bella has indeed programmed artists from around the country: “I’ve invited artists from [Chicago] to come here to start making connections.” Thus, like Omar, Cyndi, and Sophia, Bella is also herself a local source of translocal connections. Art Box is not the first alternative art gallery to exist in

Nashville, but the opportunities that it provides for local artists, and the scene that develops around it, contributes to a larger, dynamic, local art scene. Art Box has become a popular venue for Nashville's academic art world, whom Bella has remained close with since getting her BFA, and whom are oriented more to such alternative or "project" spaces than the local commercial gallery world. Art Box has also been a source of opportunity for younger artists who are just beginning their careers. Says Bella, "[Some artists] have their first show here; we changed the whole environment; and everyone's like, 'wow, where'd all that came from?'" When I ask Bella how she finds these local artists to curate, she says, "It's really random… It's really social and organic… when [I] see [art that I like], I just know that that's what I'm going to show." Bella might have realized that 'random,' 'social,' and 'organic' might be vague, if not contradictory terms: "But that's why you're doing this study right?"

Urban Cultural Production Scenes

The vignettes above continue to trace a tension between the local and global scales through which cultural production careers move and take shape. Bella and Sophia do not know each other, but they have much in common. Both are active participants in their local art scenes. Like Omar, Cyndi, and Leon, they are venue builders. Art Box and the Stark Naked provide a space (among many others) for local artists to exhibit and for local scenes to gather. Bella and Sophia thus assume a large share of responsibility for the making and maintenance of the local scene, and their efforts in turn afford them a degree of local centrality. And like Leon, Omar and Cyndi, their influence is not limited to their local scene; their venues allow them to program artists from elsewhere as well, which in turn become a source of connection to other people and other places like Vancouver or Chicago, or wherever else such opportunities might take them.

Although Bella's and Sophia's aesthetic concerns are different, they are both oriented to a discourse about contemporary art making that circulates globally, in part through the translocal connections that these individual artists' depend on, and which they help to foster, and which in turn help to organize the interests and practices of other artists at both local and global scales.

I have argued that artists' careers are dually embedded in local scenes and a larger global field. This includes the proposition that *mobility in the global field requires visibility and influence locally*. As we saw in previous chapters, because local resources for career maintenance are constrained in off-center cities, it is imperative for artists to build and maintain networks and opportunities in other places, and their careers are animated in part by efforts to accumulate and exchange what I have called translocal capital. This chapter further examines the stakes and consequences of the global field by focusing on the internal dynamics of local artistic *scenes*, also as animated by the organization and mobilization of translocal capital. As Will Straw (2002) has written, "The knowledges required for a career in artistic fields are acquired in the movement into and through a scene, as individuals gather around themselves the sets of relationships and behaviours that are the preconditions of acceptance" (413).

As I will demonstrate, however, the scene concept in the literature is fraught with ambiguity, especially regarding the geographic scale in which scenes cohere, and the processes through which careers move through and between places. The concept advanced here specifies that geographic scale and those processes. I define scenes here as geographically constrained subsets of actors and activities – i.e., the individual artists that can reasonably come together to associate, network, practice appropriate dispositions, compete, and solve common problems on a regular basis – that mediate individual careers and the global field. As Bella and Sophia's stories suggest, scenes not only serve as local informal organizations that connect artists and discourse

about art to other places, but they are actively produced through artists' efforts to navigate their careers, particularly among artists like Sophia and Bella whose careers are only beginning, and for whom establishing connections elsewhere is a vital priority.

As geographically constrained subsets, local scenes also generate their own social expectations, rewards, and consequences, which are congruent with those that are at stake in the global field, but which can also contradict and obstruct global orientations and translocal flows. As I will show in this chapter, scenes generate ethos of cooperation as well as practices of exclusion. Scenes provide chances for translocal mobility, but they can also elicit stasis – "they create grooves" through which careers can become affixed in the very logics that produce them (Straw, 2001: 254). Ultimately, scenes are animated by efforts to accumulate and sustain local visibility as a resource of translocal mobility in the global field. Scenes are socially produced, social contexts that allow artists to make and maintain careers at both local and extralocal scales, but scenes are dynamic with respect to the individuals, venues, cliques, and cohorts that make them up, and whom come and go depending on the opportunities that scenes offer them.

The scene concept is elusive in the sociological literature. Scenes are often associated with youth subcultures (Haenfler 2004, 2006), or otherwise with groups engaged in the production of some cultural product, especially music (Bennett and Peterson 2004; Shank 1994). In these veins, scenes are understood to unify a particular set of actors as both producers and consumers of distinct products, styles, dispositions, and knowledge, or a combination of these. Urban scholars have used the term as well to describe particular geographies of consumption. Daniel Silver and Terry Clark (2010), for example, refer to scenes as particular constellations of urban amenities. "Scene" might also be extended from the dramaturgical perspective (*e.g.*, Goffman 1959; Grazian 2007) to examine the social production of particular contexts (like a

theater group designs stages) from which various kinds of performances, scripts, and self-presentations are enacted, encouraged, cohere, and are understood. Taken together, a number of compelling urban ethnographies focus on and describe the performative stakes and consequences of particular urban cultural production scenes, whether or not they explicitly conceptualize the term (e.g., Lloyd 2006; Grazian 2003).

In what is perhaps the most promising conceptual work, Will Straw (2002) defines scenes as follows: "Scenes emerge from the excesses of sociability that surround the pursuit of interests, or which fuel ongoing innovation and experimentation within the cultural life of cities" (412). Straw (2001) insists that as a cultural production concept akin to "art worlds" (Becker 1982), identifying a "scene" as a sociological category and concept requires the analyst to describe the spaces, venues, practices, rhythms, range of participants, and other organizational and contextual elements that unite, coordinate, and perhaps also divide these participants within an otherwise irregular urban order. On the other hand, Straw argues that "scene" emerges in the literature to purposefully designate a messy, unpredictable, never-fully-coherent set of social processes and practices. Indeed, Straw (2002) is purposefully ambiguous about the term:

> "*Scene* designates particular clusters of social and cultural activity without specifying the nature of the boundaries which circumscribe them… A scene's tendency to escape comprehension is not (or not simply) a result of the exclusivity or impermeability that might, at different points, be seen to characterize it. A scene resists deciphering, in part, because it mobilizes local energies and moves these energies in multiple directions – onwards, to later reiterations of itself; outwards, to more formal sorts of social or entrepreneurial activity; upwards, to

> the broader coalescing of cultural energies within which collective identities take shape" (412).

Other scholars have been ambiguous regarding a scene's geographies. Bennett and Peterson (2004), for example, describe *Music Scenes* that form around variety of genres like Jazz (Becker 1964), Riot Grrrl (Schilt 2004), and Rave (Spring 2004) as either specifically and/or simultaneously *local*, *translocal*, and *virtual*. Meanwhile, Straw's conception is situated at the "urban" level, but when he (2002) uses spatial terms to discuss career mobility through scenes, his concept appears more ambiguous: "The "vertical" relationship of master to student is transformed in scenes, into the spatial relationship of outside to inside; the neophyte advances "horizontally," moving from the margins of a scene towards its centre (413)." Still, Straw argues that the term may find its most promising usage deployed in urban/spatial analyses. There it will:

> "Help address a number of thorny questions, most notably that of relations between the global and the local… 'Scene' will suggest more than the busy fluidity of urban sociability. It [also] compels us to examine the role of affinities and interconnections, which, as they unfold through time, mark and regularize the spatial itineraries of people, things, and ideas" (2001: 253).

Indeed, scenes are messy and unpredictable, but I have already outlined a framework that accounts for local and global interconnections and relations: scenes are both a local platform for and a product of global career mobility strategies. We may understand the 'broader coalescing of cultural energies' in this case as the global field of contemporary art; such that this field is mutual shaped by and shapes the many locally mobilized energies that make up urban art scenes.

In the remainder of this chapter, I will attempt to provide basic descriptive overviews of Nashville's and Portland's contemporary artistic scenes through the lens of artists' efforts to

navigate their careers, making reference to emergent issues that are relevant in each place, and that are thematic across cities. I then describe the productive roles around which art scenes cohere – catalysts, conduits, consecrators, and scenesters. These roles, I argue, take us beyond the traditional roles associated with "art worlds" or the "dealer-critic" system, to specify the translocal stakes involved. While many artists would prefer to use the concept of "community" in the place of scenes, I suggest here that scenes require cooperation, but they also produce divisions and exclusions. Finally, I describe some social consequences of these scene logics, such as certain kinds of barriers and sanctions around local and extra-local social mobility.

Nashville: Divisions and Bridges

Cyndi mentioned in Chapter Two that she "was brought back "kicking and screaming" by her ex-husband, and it took her nine months to find the other contemporary artists like her in Nashville. Bella mentioned above that there was not much of a scene in Nashville at all until Art Box "changed the whole environment." Other Nashville artists tell similar stories. Chris moved to Nashville with her fiancée after getting her BFA in a nearby, near-South town. She chose Nashville specifically because she was under the impression that the city had the most vibrant art scene of alternative cities of comparable size in the region (her list included Louisville, Indianapolis, and Cincinnati). Still, Chris estimates that it took her six months to find other artists, "But that's probably because I was in a relationship," she said. Like Bella and Cyndi, Chris is now a staple in the local art scene; she curates a "project space" that often features artists from outside of Nashville, and she attends most local art events. Donna, by contrast, grew up in Nashville, lived between Chicago and Los Angeles for 20 years where she made a modest career

in selling her work in galleries, and had since been back for about nine months when I interviewed her in early 2011. Donna said about her return:

> "I don't really know that much about the Nashville art scene other than kind of a limited, almost-outsider view… Whatever community or things that are happening [here] it's like you really have to kind of search them out… And I get the idea that in Nashville it's – that kind of stuff is geared towards younger artists rather than it being kind of an all-inclusive."

Gideon is Donna's age, but his story is a bit different. He moved back to Nashville with his wife in 2001 after living and working as an artist New York for years. He found a job in Nashville as an art handler, working alongside other artist/art-handlers. Through his co-workers he was able to connect immediately to the Helmut Gallery, and has been selling paintings in Nashville ever since: "Once we got here it was very easy to live; affordable; I found out that there were galleries; there were people who were supportive of what I was doing. You know there's that whole sort of like big fish, small fish kind of mentality," said Gideon.

There are some notable similarities and differences among these artists. For most of them, accessing the local art scene requires some time and effort; it requires attending events regularly enough to meet others that also attend those events, whom can be recognized as others with shared interests, which then can lead to repeated exchange and local opportunities. These efforts can be obstructed by competing obligations in other arenas, such as the family, and so scenes are often the domain younger artists, as Donna suggests, which can make them appear exclusive. Access is aided by taking an active role (as in Cyndi, Bella, and Chris's cases). Coming from New York and Los Angeles, Gideon and Donna, respectively, developed their careers, connections, and market opportunities elsewhere, and so connecting in Nashville has not

been as imperative for them, while Cyndi, Bella, and Chris (all venue builders), on the other hand, have been working to establish their careers from local network bases. Although Donna finds that Nashville is not exactly "all-inclusive," she also does not depend on Nashville, so she does not find it as necessary to access the scene. Gideon likewise might not depend on Nashville's scene, but the city and scene appears to have welcomed him with open arms regardless. Like Donna, Gideon is not exactly active in the local scene. His path was "very easy," as he put it; he does not need to make himself visible by regularly attending local art events.

Most Nashville artists respond to my questions about Nashville's art scene by lamenting that there is not a little more going on. They wish there was more critical writing; more galleries working around a "serious" or "contemporary" aesthetic; more "alternative" venues and "project spaces;" more support from the city; in general, more productive energy and discourse circulating about contemporary art. Nashville artists also characterize their local scene as one of many social divisions, however, which in turn obstruct the flow of scenic energy. Commercial galleries such as the Demonbreun and others that make up the NAAD, and alternative galleries like Art Box and Greenhouse program very different kinds of work, and they organize different segments of the local scene. University affiliated artists tend to eschew the commercial scene and tend to only hang out only in alternative galleries or project spaces. The commercial side on the other hand refers to this scene as "esoteric." Such divisions are hardened over time. Particular segments of the scene stick to each other, generating cliques and insider/outsider boundaries, which makes access difficult, and may deters artists from trying if they haven't already 'found their people,' as Cyndi put it. Chris put it this way:

> "I don't think that we have a very cohesive networking segment. We have art events and stuff like that, but the problem is you go to a thing where you go and you're like, "Hey!" and people are like, "Who the hell are you?"

Access to the local scene is in part a geographic issue too. NAAD galleries tend to locate throughout the cities sprawling West side, while project spaces might be found in the East, Downtown, or in South of Broadway Industrial District. These discrete geographies are organized by art crawls in each district, like downtown's First Saturdays. Local artists' efforts to find other artists like them might thus be obstructed by the requirement of needing to be in multiple places at once, since most openings are taking place simultaneously.

Recently, art scene activity across commercial and academic/alternative segments has begun to cohere downtown with the First Saturday Art Crawls. The spatial proximity between the commercial galleries on Arts Ave and the project spaces in the arcade facilitates bridging segments, but scenes are still made socially. Bella describes the process:

> "Jaci was very helpful with all this for me… She's really helped me think about a lot of the other arts people in the city in a different way… going to see the Demonbreun folks and hanging out… Before, we weren't supposed to talk to them, you know. They were like the other, the big guys. They [are supposed to] hate us, don't they? Jaci said she had a conversation with like [academic artist X] or somebody [who told her], "You can't talk with them," or whatever. You know, "Who talks to them?" And Jaci said, "Bella does. They're friends. And it's fine." And they're all like, "Whoa, really? Okay. I guess if they like Bella, it's okay.'"

As we will see, however, while the monthly art crawl organizes scene activity in a particular time and place, such it is also an opportunity to reformulate and express familiar divisions.

Portland: Scene and Community

Omar once told me, laughing, "Every hipster in Portland is here, man; the whole Portland *scene*." The occasion was opening night at the New Media Portland event, hosted by the Skidmore Center for Contemporary Art, which brings artists from around the world for 11 days of performances and gallery exhibitions. Omar and I were standing on a large outdoor stage that I volunteered to help construct in return for a "ArtsPass" that granted me free admission to a number of events and unlimited access to the outdoor beer garden, of which this stage that Omar and I were standing on was a part. I was expressing to Omar my confusion about the use of the stage, which I supposed was to be used for various performances when I was helping build it. He responded by laughing, and told me that the stage was just for hanging out, and that I should "relax, man," and that the "whole Portland scene" was in attendance. He introduced me to several people that night: "Sammy is writing about the Portland art scene…" he would say.

I was offered a volunteer job for the festival picking up and dropping off artists at the airport throughout the 11-day event, in return for the pass. But when I showed up the day before the opening to pick up my pass, much work still needed to be done, and I found myself outside working on the stage. The stage was made partially with recycled (i.e., rotting) wood. PICA managed within their budget to hire a contractor to build the structure. He wore a sleeveless t-shirt, work jeans, and steel-toed boots. I was wearing shorts and sandals. I informed him that I was nailing into rotten wood, and he told me not to worry, sarcastically adding that he had never seen one of these things collapse. Other volunteers and volunteer coordinators were racing to complete a long list of odd jobs. The stage had to be painted and covered with a roll of donated black Astroturf; planters had to be built and planted out of donated wooden pallets and plants; beer tents needed pitching; and the banners of the local beer sponsors needed hanging. Resources

were limited, the volunteer crew was motley, and it was ninety-five degrees that afternoon – a regular Portland heat wave. There was a water cooler and a stack of paper cups, but the water was warm because it had been in the sun all day. Volunteers, male and female, worked shirtless. One of the volunteer coordinators managed to offer up a cold six-pack to boost morale, but there were about ten of us outside at the moment, so we shared.

New Media Portland is a popular event among local artists, some of whom volunteered to get a pass. Omar gets a free ArtsPass for being involved in other local arts organizations. Probably a good number that just get a free pass. But NMP makes more than local news. Skidmore curators like Cathy travel the world (especially to New York) to find cutting edge contemporary art and artists to program. The festival has even been reviewed in the *New York Times*. 'New Media' is one way to describe an array of art media and practices that purposefully-or-not tend to defy the traditional gallery/market system. Video art, performance art, dance, social practice, etc., break with art as object making (though not always), and art without objects require a different logic of exchange (i.e., ticket sales vs. gallery sales). These new media are basically dynamic; they invite an experience that requires a difference between two points in time, as opposed to traditional two- or three-dimensional painting or sculpture that does not change. NMP is the Skidmore's signature event, and it is one of few festivals of its kind that exist around the world. The event also sutures together a local scene.

When Omar uses the term "scene," he refers to the locally specific set of actors with a consistent public presence at local art events and happenings. "The whole Portland scene" would be the same individuals that regularly attend other local art events too, if not altogether at the same time. Of course, Omar is not accounting for every individual he has ever known to be part of Portland's art scene, but he is suggesting that those 'local energies' (Straw) were particularly

concentrated at that opening party for NMP that night, focused in this case around an event that brings outside artists into a local setting. Sophia was there; Cathy was there; Kate was there; everyone from my Hippo Gallery residency was there.

Also in attendance was Shortstop, a Portland artist who prefers the term "community" to "scene." Shortstop has an MFA from a prestigious art school in the Midwest; she has lived in and involved herself in art scenes in Baltimore, Chicago, and San Diego before arriving in Portland about two years before we talked. I asked her about the similarities and differences between the various places she has lived, and how those art scenes compare to Portland's.

"I feel like I'm finally able to be part of a community here in Portland," she told me, emphasizing that everyone seems to be supportive of everyone else, and everyone helps each other out. I was particularly interested in why she moved to Portland, trying to understand why someone would choose Portland after being from so many other places. "But what about being from everywhere?" Shortstop asked. For her, it is important to have a community, but ultimately it does not matter to her if one is *from* any unique place, as long as she can be "part of a larger conversation, which is placeless," as she put it. She further distinguished between a "scene" and a "community:" Her travels have led her to observe and be part of many "scenes," she says, which are made up of differences – "different places, different people." A "community," by contrast, means, "having stable people around." Shortstop has shown in alternative galleries around the city, and has taken the lead in curating some group shows that mix local artists and artists from out of town. Portland is ideal, Shortstop says, except that "there are no jobs here."

Shortstop is not the only one that articulates a difference. "Community" emerges often when artists in Portland and Nashville describe what here I am calling "scenes." In fact, during the course of this study, I found myself favoring the term "art community" instead of "art world"

or "scene" as a means of getting artists to discuss the social worlds that artists believed they *were* a part of rather than those they *were not* a part of. Junior is one Portland artist who also refers to Portland's art scene as a community. Junior has directed commercial galleries and various non-profit contemporary art centers in Portland for years. He tells me that the many non-profit organizations like Skidmore and his own have to compete for a limited funding stream from the Regional Arts and Culture Council (RACC). But, out of that competition and lack of resources comes a form of interdependency and "community," in which he says, "Everyone has to help everyone else out to get things accomplished." While Skidmore gathers volunteers formally, Junior makes the case that everyone is always helping to 'build out' new venues, install and de-installing exhibits, and perhaps reciprocate exhibition opportunities. Through the non-profit world, Junior says, "I was able to meet everybody in the city."

Junior went on to describe Portland as a "training city," not unlike a 'studio city,' but in his case, "because of the amount of work you have to do here to raise money; those skills will translate well anywhere else." During the course of this study, in fact, Junior moved on to direct a non-profit contemporary art center in a much larger city. Regardless of the terms they use, however, Emily, Paul, and Omar might agree that the Portland's contemporary art world is unified by a particular geographic circumstance and market constraints, and is actively produced by artists in the process of navigating their own careers.

Like Nashville, Portland's artists and art venues are also spread throughout the city. Portland is often referred to as "the city of five quadrants." The Northwest quadrant is home to the PADA galleries, the Pacific Northwest College of the Art, and the Everett Station 'live/work' project spaces. Northwest Portland is home to the "Alberta Arts District," a term with which most local contemporary artists do not associate, but that nevertheless includes at least a couple

staple “alternative” venues. The Southeast Industrial District is home to Hippo, Stark Naked, and a number of commercial venues and alternative galleries that have recently emerged in old warehouse buildings. Like First Saturdays in Nashville; Art scenes in each of these sectors cohere around monthly art walks: First Thursday in Northwest; First Friday in Southeast; and Last Thursday in Northwest. The ambiance and scale of each of these events is unique, however, as are the audiences that each organizes. Like Nashville’s First Saturday, the events consist of a variety of commercial and alternative galleries and their corresponding aesthetic concerns. Unlike Nashville, however, “Everyone goes to everyone else’s openings,” Leon, Gary, and Krya each told me on separate occasions. Unlike Nashville, Portland is known to be relatively dense for a city of its size, which facilitates mobility and interaction required for vibrant artistic scenes.

Productive Roles

Portland and Nashville’s art scenes are informally organized social arenas made up of a variety of venues, artists, audiences, and varying aesthetic concerns; they are animated by the common orientations and interests of those who regularly come together in the process of socializing, working out common interests and problems, and navigating career opportunities and constraints. Thus far I have characterized Nashville as a scene of many overlapping divisions, where access can be difficult, and visibility can be fleeting, but where opportunities can arise in the process of bridging divides. Portland’s scene by contrast may appear as a “community,” in which local scene participants help each other, and where events appear to be regularly attended by everyone else. Portland artists also describe their city as a place that fosters and allows connections to other places. Each of these dynamics is evident in both places, although at varying degrees. One difference is that Portland’s scene is bigger; there are simply more artists and more commercial and alternative venues to organize them in Portland than there

are in Nashville. With the added size comes additional opportunity to make and maintain local social connections on the one hand, but also more obligations and energy required to 'make the rounds' and make one's presence known on the other. Still, both scenes are rather "small worlds" in the network-analytical lexicon (see Uzzi and Spiro 2005; Burt 2004). Social connections can be quickly exhausted once access is achieved. For this reason, making connections to people in other places are vitally important to the continuing unfolding of local art scene activities.

In Chapter Two we saw how off-center cities can constrain the roles and activities through which sociologists, economists, and other scholars typically think about art worlds and art markets, or the "dealer-critic" system. Dealers, critics, and collectors do exist in Portland and Nashville (some might take exception regarding critics), and their work does much to energize and sustain their local scenes. But these roles are ultimately constrained, and artists that want to lead professional careers ultimately have to look elsewhere. This does not mean that local scenes are structurally deficient, however, or that artists do not benefit by taking up additional roles as, for example, writers, curators, or gallery assistants and directors. What it does mean is that a sociological understanding might better aim to explain the logics of local scenes not only as arenas of market exchange, but also as arenas that generate translocal connectivity, through which discourse about contemporary art circulates, and career opportunities (market-wise, reputation-wise, or otherwise) for individual artists can be established. Here I am interested in the kinds of roles specific to translocal accumulation strategies that local scenes and global fields generate. Besides artists, dealers, critic, curators, etc., I suggest scenes are made of *catalysts*, *conduits, consecrators, and scenesters*. These categories are not mutually exclusive; any one actor may embody one or more roles, and with varying degrees of influence. Together, however,

they allow us to articulate how local artistic scenes remain productive in the absence of formal organization, and in the presence of market constraints.

Catalysts

Every artist has an origin story about their career pathway. "I was painting on the walls with butter when I was two years old" Cathy told me. "I've just always been an artist," said Annie, who we will meet in the next chapter. "I make art because I *have to*," is another common refrain. Such accounts almost always appear "disinterested" in ordinary economic logics, but art making is still a socially embedded, and socially generated practice. Art making necessitates a *belief* in art, and those beliefs are the product of a long historical unfolding of the field, which includes all of the relations and positions of artists and art works in the present and forever into the past. But we need not look any further for the origins of art making because, in the first instance, that belief itself is produced, reproduced, and catalyzed through every interaction and exchange, such as the one that leads to the acquaintance and friendship of Sophia and Mary.

A formal definition of a catalyst is a person or thing that causes a reaction between two or more other persons or things without itself being affected. The term originates in Chemistry, but I use catalyst to refer to a moment or an exchange that sparks an inspiration to produce, which implies both a thing and a belief. If such moments or exchanges can be likened to a chemical process, it is not the individuals *only*, but it is the field itself – including all its present and past relations of production of art and of belief in art – that induces them. Fields are made of the relations between the actors that make them up, but they are animated in every preceding and subsequent exchange between those actors.

So scenes also require venues through which such interactions and exchanges can take shape and persist over time. It follows that Omar, Cyndi, Sophia, and Bella, and countless others who reproduce in the course of their social exchanges the beliefs that make art making possible are catalysts. Venues like Hippo, Art Box, Greenhouse, and the Stark Naked are more than places where artists can gather and engage in social exchange, however. Scenes encourage venue entrepreneurship to make such exchange possible, but for venue entrepreneurs also share an outsize responsibility through which other artists benefit from the reproduction of the local scene on the one hand, and they are a source of opportunity, as well, offering local influence and social centrality on the other.

Conduits

Venues catalyze local scenes by providing exhibition and interaction space, but also because they allow local actors to connect elsewhere. Officially, a *conduit* defines an object or entity that connects and transfers a substance between two points. In off center cities, conduits are actors that connect artists to other actors in other places, thus facilitating the flow of discourse, bodies, and translocal capital. Stark Naked allows Sophia to be a catalyst, but she is also a conduit; her position as such allows her to maintain the relationship with Mary, who is in turn a conduit in Vancouver. Bella, Omar, and Cyndi are also conduits.

Conduits are especially energizing and centralizing figures in local scenes; around whom others' might well strategize to position themselves, as "friends," for example (see Olive, Chapter Three). When Leon described Portland's art scene to me, he presented a long list of key players, citing many other, "artist/curators," who run their own venues (like Sophia does): "…Omar, but he's really more of an artist than a curator; and Junior, Junior is more of a curator

than an artist, but he really a connector; he connects people; that's just what he does," said Leon. Junior's gallery has indeed made connections around the world by exchanging with artists with galleries in New York and Berlin. Omar's Hippo Gallery has allowed him to curate artist friends from around the U.S. in Portland, which leads to offers to curate elsewhere. As such, Omar has been able connect himself and Portland artists around the world, which makes him a local conduit, and an important local resource. In Omar's words:

> "I did a show in San Francisco; it was all about the [connections]. You know, I like these three artists and I wanted to show their work in San Francisco, so that they get a bigger exposure, you know, they get a bigger write up, and then from there, it's like a domino effect, you know somebody's gonna pick it up and ask them to do a show somewhere else, and you know… The show I'm doing in Belgium; three artists in the show with me were in the show [I did in] Senegal, and from there they got the connection; we got this proposition in Belgium to do something similar there. But yeah, connections [are] my whole… The way I can work with not much gallery representation is to network, you know, and all the commission work I get is through networking, you know?"

Making art, curating, even being a "hard-nosed critic," as Leon referred to himself, are important parts of the production and distribution process, but the real work of circulating artists and conversation about art comes through the connectivity and influence that such roles afford. Indeed, Leon went on to discuss his work as a critic and a gatekeeper, thus:

> "You got to go about [being a critic] in a way that's ethical and has a moral center to it, which for me [means], 'Well, is the work good? Are they doing their best work?' Those are the determinations [that I make]. It's not good enough that

they're good or that they used to be good, or that they have connections… Maybe actually I am interested in those connections" [laughs].

Connections are made and facilitated in local scenes in a variety of ways. Local colleges and universities bring speakers from around the country; and they hire artists from around the country, especially those with extra-local connections to begin with. Art fairs, regular annual art festivals, biennials, or even triennial can circulate artists, curators, dealers, and critics from around the country. Finally, artists bring and circulate other artists from elsewhere through independent channels, but especially through having their own venues.

Consecrators

To *consecrate* is to declare something or someone an object of veneration, which implies a hierarchy of values and beliefs through which objects and individuals can ascend or descend. But if the terms catalyst and conduit liken social actors to non-human functions, the act of consecration is nothing if not a social act. Consecrators are special actors that can facilitate the roles of the conduits and catalysts by assuring – via all of the social power stored up in their own reputation – the validity of their judgments. In off center scenes, however, we might expect that the ability to bestow status or prestige should be hindered by a relative absence of hierarchical differentiation. According to Straw (2002), mobility in and through scenes proceeds horizontally as opposed to vertically, from its edges to its center. As I will make explicit below, however, local scenes neither have a clear center and periphery; conduits are centralizing figures, but scenes cohere as multiple overlapping segments and cliques, each with its own local influence and degree of connectivity.

Who, then, in a local scene is a consecrator? Consecrators are artists, writers, or dealers whose careers have already been made, and whom already have established reputations elsewhere. They are those whom perhaps moved to Portland or Nashville city to escape the New York "art world." They are those that do not regularly access local scenes because they do not have to, or because their local presence will require more energy of them than they do of the scene. These are people that everyone knows by name, even if one has never met them. Consecrators have resources to connect local artists elsewhere, but their real influence on local scene activity might be a passive one. Despite their relative absence, consecrators are important to scenes in part because they legitimate the cities and places where scenes gather, making them visible in the global field. They are known and recognized by artists elsewhere, and give reason to take these places and scenes seriously. For example, Mary and Sophia are friends who have connected via their common artistic interests and their mutual roles as conduits, but their aesthetic concerns, indeed the places and the scenes they are a part of, are legitimated by still other, more well-known figures in the world of social practice. Their affinities toward each other are made in part by other actors who are not immediately present in the connections they have established themselves.

Scenesters

Finally, "scenester" is the one term that arises inductively. The term is often interchangeable with "hipster." Both terms are more derogatory than not, and are often issued as a slander, but are also used as a reflexive assessment of one's social conditions and cultural position, self-deprecating or not. For example, when Omar once told, "The whole Portland scene is here, every hipster in Portland…" he was including himself and myself in his assessment. If in

the popular imagination "hipster" and/or "scenester" refer to a particular set of subcultural styles that can only exist give certain historical circumstances (c.f., Greif 2010), I use the term here to describe both a role and a boundary object around which cultural production scenes are enabled and maintained.

Older artists are likely to use the term when describing their local scene as made up of so many younger artists that grossly outnumber them. Leon describes to me the difference between "serious" professional artists who "use Portland as a home base," and those that "just want to be part of the scene." He continues:

> "There are, you know, somewhat good looking hipsters that want to meet others, and that's fine. There's nothing wrong with that. They're maybe not as… They're not *not* serious, but they're not *as* serious as someone who really is tactically, saying, 'Okay, what did I do right? What did I do wrong? How can I fix this? What can I do next? How can I really up my game? And how does that play with the *rest of the world"*" (emphasis mine).

Scenesters or "hipsters" in Leon's sense, are practicing artists, and who contribute to their scenes by making work and circulating discourse, but it is not the kind of productive work and discourse that differentiates those artists from other's who understand and are more invested in the circulation and flow of translocal capital. As such, a scenester is one who benefits from the productive roles of others, while failing to generate and maintain the kinds of resources at stake for artists whose careers are focused on maintaining ties elsewhere. Scenesters still benefit from scenes in a number of ways. At least they help to "fill the room," which creates the appearance of importance; but they also serve as a foil against which other artists can define themselves their

more "serious" artistic concerns. If for Grief (2010) and Lloyd (2006), all scenesters or hipsters appear to be artists (see *n*+1), according to artists in this study, not all artists are scenesters.

Cooperation and Conflict

As a consequence of being embedded in a global field that generates place-based status distinctions, scenes take on the properties of the field; they are localized arenas of struggle to generate visibility and recognition and accumulate and trade translocal capital. Scene participants are nevertheless united by a shared set of venues, and a 'place' that has its own reputation in the global field. Scenes are often recognized as "communities," but scenes generate local social divisions, around which particular aesthetic and translocal dispositions develop, and around which networking strategies to transcend local constraints are animated.

Gangs, Collectives, and Cliques

The Appendix Project Space exists in a garage in an alleyway off Portland's Northeast Alberta Street. Despite that Alberta has been dubbed an "Art District" in recent years, Appendix is known by local insiders as one of only few reputable contemporary art venues in the neighborhood, though just like Stark Naked and the Hippo Gallery, the kinds of works that it programs are usually not for sale. And although Appendix often coordinates their openings to fall on the last Thursday of the month in accordance with Alberta's Last Thursday Art Walk (see Shaw, *forthcoming*), the venue is spatially and socially exclusive. To get to Appendix, one has to know exactly where to go in the first place. The alley that leads to it is rather indistinct and during Last Thursdays is obscured by the crowds, street vendors, clowns, fire jugglers, and various other revelers on Alberta Street. Once found, the Appendix alleyway is overgrown with

grass and thorny bushes. There are no streetlights in the alley, so if it is already dark the journey requires some blind faith. Approaching Appendix from Alberta, one's eyes adjust to the flicker of a fire pit 50 yards further down, which signals an Appendix opening.

Those that make it to Appendix are those who already know how to get there. They are not the public that comes to the Last Thursday Art Walk, and they are usually not residents of the Alberta Art District. They are part of the contemporary art scene: artists, art professors, students, writers, and critics. They are mostly familiar faces, and if they are not, Appendix openings are opportunities to introduce each to each other. They come to take in an installation – usually the artwork of an artist or friend from another city that members of Appendix have curated. They also come to gather around a fire, and tell jokes – jokes about art, art school, other artists in town, who's sleeping with who, and jokes about jokes: "Is that a joke?" is Sophia's favorite joke. Appendix's coordination with Last Thursdays effectively juxtaposes this particular subset as distinct from the Art Walk on Alberta Street, which most artists here are quick to dismiss as a street festival that looks "more like Burning Man" than anything having to do with art.

Appendix was formed in 2008 by a group of young artist-curators who moved to Portland from the East Coast together in their early twenties. Seeking a way to get involved in the local scene, they decided to turn one of their garages into an art gallery, and began curating artists they knew back East. During my fieldwork in Portland, I never interviewed any Appendix members, but I came to understand Appendix as a celebrated group of individuals as well as a curatorial organization. Appendix quickly gained local notoriety, in part because they show work that is evidently immersed in contemporary art discourse that transcends local sensibilities, and in part because of their ability to bring in artists from outside the city, thus making them a potential conduit for other local artists. Given these cues, the fact that the venue itself is a garage in an

alleyway off Alberta Street would only seem to help matters in a scene that celebrates its alternative (not "commercial") art venues.

"These kids are smart, and they're just taking over these things," is how Leon described Appendix's influence in Portland's art scene. As evidence, Leon described a moment in which Appendix members were involved in curating and showing at a local university gallery, which led to the sale of an installation piece to a well-known architect and art collector from out of state. Appendix was also recently featured by the New Museum's (of New York) expose on "alternative" art venues around the country, and the collective was named in Peter Plagens' (2012) review of the Portland art scene for the Wall Street Journal. Still, Appendix eludes easy description. I asked Leon about it"

SS: Is Appendix like a collective, then, or just a venue?

Leon: That's the thing; I think they're individuals who are working together… They've got the [garage] space but they're not always doing their shows at the space anymore. It's more like they're presenting work, and they use that as a platform; but then they've got other platforms that they're going through now. And getting tied into something like [the university], and then sort of leveraging their resources, by not being students, and then making hay with it, it's sort of like, okay, alright, that's what you do; that's what it's all about."

'What you do,' and 'what it's all about,' according to Leon, are generating recognition and exposure. Getting 'tied to things,' and increasing the number of 'platforms' from which to 'leverage' collectively generated social resources describes the 'hay' that Appendix has apparently made. By curating their own shows, especially by curating their friends from other cities, and by inviting the local scene to them, Appendix has become a potential source of

exposure for local artists. In turn, members of Appendix have become central actors in the scene, often invited to participate in other events and institutions (as artists or curators), such as the one that led to the sale that Leon described. Moreover, as a group, each of its members is tied to the individual efforts of each other as well, and as a group, Appendix's productive capacity appears to be greater than the sum of its parts. Or, as Leon described them, "I don't even know if the Appendix people are fully developed as artists yet. As a group they make better work than they make individually." Or, perhaps the social influence that the group generates is the 'work' that concerns Leon.

Appendix defines themselves alternately as a "collective," or as "artists coming together." They are also an example of what is sometimes called an "art gang" – a small circle that acts collectively in the artistic production and distribution process (i.e., not only as artists, but sometimes as writers, dealers, etc.), while its members mutually benefit from whatever exposure or reputation the group accumulates as a whole. The art gang concept is a loose construct, defined and described in a variety of ways by art critics and historians. The Abstract Expressionists represent an ideal typical example, in part because their inner circle included not just artists (de Kooning, Pollock, etc.), but also critics (Greenburg) and consecrators (Guggenheim). By contrast, Peter Moore (2011) uses the term to describe a specific series of politically motivated arts collectives arising in New York between 1969-84, noting with ideological zeal pointed against the New York art market that art *is* a collective, not individual endeavor. Art critic Peter Schjeldahl disregards the market vs. non-market distinction in describing arts gangs instead like packs of dogs:

> "An [art] gang is a group of people, who have felt alone in the universe, misfit, wandered out to the edge, and discovered each other… In a gang, everybody

> knows who is best, but they don't have to say it; they know who the alpha is; and everybody knows who is second best; sometimes they rival with the alpha. It's unclear who third best is; everybody could be third best, except for one person who is absolutely hopeless, but is the scapegoat for the group…"

An art gang need not be formally organized, it does not need to be politically motivated, and pack animal theory makes for poor sociological explanation. Appendix is perhaps as organized as a group can be in a local art scene that is not a 501c3; they have a name, they have a website, and they share rent. But this group does not have an overarching political project, and their local influence has little to do with whether or not they rival each other for artistic supremacy. Rather, the benefits of organizing socially simply extend to the local influence that individuals can exert as a member of a group. Between Portland and Nashville, there are many such groups; they may call themselves collectives; others may call them gangs.

From gangs and collectives, local scenes sort into larger assemblages that might be called cliques. Cliques are informal constellations of individuals, organizations, and gangs. According to Raymonde Moulin (1987 [1967]), the French art market may be characterized as a series of overlapping cliques: "Reputations and prices depend on the opinions of the Paris "art world," which is in fact a set of cliques defined by aesthetic preferences much as religious sects are defined by beliefs" (pp. 2). But Moulin's book is about the art market in one historic "center" of visual art. Off center scenes may likewise be characterized as a series of cliques, but at stake in this case concerns not just aesthetic preference, but translocal capital.

Unlike collectives; clique borders are porous, and cliques do not have names or websites. Their formation is the result of repeated interaction and exchange, through which particular aesthetic concerns and problems are worked out, dispositions are practiced and performed, local

social centrality is generated, and translocal capital is exchanged. Cliques can form around particular venues, but more often they are the repeated exchange of actors across multiple venues. Like gangs and collectives, cliques afford their members a modicum of local, social influence, especially if their membership can be transubstantiated in the form of translocal ties. As such, access to and membership in cliques are requisites to larger scene participation. But that access and membership can be guarded and contested, for example, through informal social sanctions, as will be discussed below. Cathy characterizes the organization of scenes thus:

> "[The scene] always kind of comes from these smaller groups to bigger... But I would say within all those groups that it feels sometimes like a little United Nations. Like out of those groups there are one or two people that represent that group and those people seem to come together… Right now I would say there's one developing around Appendix gallery. They develop around [Cathy lists other venues]… which intersects with [other venues]… Within those communities I think they all come together and work together."

Despite that Cathy reveals here that scenes come together and work together, however, scenes also generate stakes and consequences of being an insider. If gangs and cliques facilitate access and centrality locally, they also imply boundaries. Gangs have influence on a local scene if and when they have the power to effectively include and exclude. I asked Cathy what characterizes these different kinds of groups. She first answered in terms of their aesthetic concerns, and then summarized their concerns as an opportunity to network, to make connections, and to draw boundaries, and that these processes ultimately make up local art scenes, and beyond that the "art world," if not society generally. Says Cathy:

> "I think it's aesthetic. I think it's around [the group's] aesthetic philosophy about a certain kind of art they're into or certain kinds of accessibility. So some of those pockets are not about accessibility; they're like, "We know what we like, were only gonna show that. We don't care what you think and here's what it is.' And others are super inclusive and those two are skeptical of each other. And sometimes it crosses because one space has an opportunity. It seems also about opportunity, and friendships, and it's very cliquey. But it doesn't ever seem really bad and I'd think it's the same [anywhere], I think art gangs is how the art world works, how anything works…"

While Cathy posits that gangs and cliques initially come together to work out aesthetic concerns, the scenes that come together as a result are ultimately concerned with the production of the right kinds of connections. Other artists are more cynical, or realistic. In the previous Chapter, Portland artist Duncan is quoted as saying, "It's about a social network. The art is almost all about the social network." Duncan continues to describe an art event that featured some prominent local musicians that had some outside connections.

> *Damien*: That's part of the business is to network. Some artists like, that's how they get art done… A good example of this is like musicians that then also have an art show.
>
> *SS*: I've seen that!
>
> *Damien*: Horrible art. God-awful… It's not even about the paintings on the wall. It's more about you don't want to look at them closely. You just want to look at them all in general with the crowd too, and that's the art. That's what they're promoting, the vibe and the aura.

Cohorts & Guards

After gangs and cliques, artistic scenes sort into even larger groupings that are referred to as "guards." For example, in the Introduction Leon contrasted the "old guard" against the "new guard." If cliques appear to form around aesthetic concerns, which are ultimately social concerns, guards are almost always characterized by aesthetic differences.

Guards are also cohorts, however. Because scenes are generated in the process of navigating career opportunities, and because career opportunities can be quickly exhausted in off-center cities, it follows that older artists eventually cease making appearances in their local scenes. There is a point at which making the scene requires more energy of them than they are getting out of it.

For example, Kate, who we met in Chapter Three, is more or less set in her career. When Kate moved to Portland in the 1990s, she was part of a new energetic art scene cohort. These artists established themselves in particular positions in their respective cliques; for example, as dealers, as curators, as professors, etc. – against an already established group of dealers and curators. Since Kate has been in the Whitney Biennial, she does not necessarily depend on the local art scene anymore. In fact, she recognizes that a newer group of younger artists has taken the reigns, and she defines the situation this way:

> "I guess I'm the old guard too, hmm, that's cool. I'm the middle guard. So I think I know a really diverse population because I've taught them. So many of the… MFA students [and] emerging artists, you know? So I have this kind of younger generation that I know and then I know the generation like previous to me and then my generation. So yeah, I know a lot of artists… And I'm not as social as I used to be. I used to very social… I used to go to a lot of different things. I don't

> do that so much anymore… I've tried to back off on that a little bit… But there was a period of time where I would not miss that. Now it's I just got done travelling to three different cities and I have not been home for any extended period of time since I last saw you [at NMP, 3 months prior]. So I'm tired. And you know, I want to get my head screwed on and reconnect with my cat and my husband and start working through some of these projects before they kick me in the ass… I need down time. And so I backed off. And I've got to chill out. So I don't go to every lecture anymore and I don't go to everybody's openings."

Lenny would be an "old guard" artist in Portland. He shows at an established art gallery in the city, and has, from time to time, shown in other galleries around the country. He makes a modest living in the local art market. He speaks nostalgically about Portland, about places like Reed College in the 1950s and 60s, and lists a number of long-time artists from Portland whom are either dead, or whom are known in other capacities, like Ken Kesey. Lenny has a lot of stories about LSD. "When you're in a place for long enough, the scene will change in front of you," Lenny told me. Like Kate, Lenny used to go to every local event, but not anymore. In contrast to Kate, however, Lenny does not maintain ties across cohorts. And unlike Kate, Lenny draws a sharp line between the commercial gallery scene and what he calls the "hipster culture" scene. And in contrast to Junior and Shortstop's notion that Portland offers a coherent "community," Lenny feels like this scene has only gotten more hostile:

> "The scene has gotten more mean spirited over time; it used to feel communal, now it's just about getting over on people. That's why I tend to keep a distance now from the art scene. I sound kind of paranoid or whatever, but I think that like

a lot of people want to talk about you or want to meet you, and then only in order to gossip about you, not because they're interested in what you're saying."

While Kate and Lenny place themselves in distinct guards, however, younger cohorts do not make up the same distinct kinds of groups. On the one hand, Leon and Omar might make up one guard, slightly newer than Kate's, but older than that of Sophia, Stark Naked and Appendix. Over time, these cohorts might establish a firmer grounding in the city; Appendix or Stark Naked may become formal non-profit art centers, for example. Scenes are dynamic over time with respect to the artists that come and go from them, with the venues that provide places to gather, and with the gangs, cliques, and guards that form around them. Venues more stable than artists, but not necessarily, and should be seen as fleeting.

Horizontal Mobility

Kyra moved to Portland from New York City with her husband two years prior to our interview. She met Omar at a Hippo Gallery opening, mentioned to him that she was from New York, spoke of her artist friends and connections there, and was then invited to guest-curate a show at Hippo, which Kyra obliged, inviting her New York friends to exhibit. One local arts writer was disappointed and gave the show a bad review, apparently expecting more from New York artists. Kyra developed a sour taste for Portland's off-center scene. In contrast to the center, she reveals that there are very few opportunities for mobility in Portland. Her comparative perspective is worth quoting here at length:

Kyra: Everyone goes to all the things; it's like because there's not that much going on so you just go to everything cause it's not hard to go to ten galleries in one night here. It's definitely cliquey for sure, but I don't think it's like cliquey in

a way that you can't become a part of the clique. I think you just have to be around enough. It's not like this, this group of people that you have to aspire to be friends with here, like the people with the power. I don't know who the people with the power are here that I have to be friends with. I don't feel like there are those people.

SS: That is something that exists in New York?

Kyra: Oh, absolutely. You know like you want to be… I wasn't really like this, but there's plenty of people out there that want to be friends with whoever the famous artist are, they want to go to the best galleries, you know, or whatever. Because they think it's gonna get them somewhere. Here you don't really have those people. Just because you own a gallery here doesn't mean that you can help anybody at all because you're just in Portland, nobody cares. It doesn't mean anything… There are definitely not as many people here that have like control and power outside of Portland. And even in Portland I don't really think you can just like rub elbows with [Sandra Marsau] and get a show in her space. I don't think it's as easy as like that.

SS: Well, would you be able to do that in NY?

Kyra: I don't know, I think some maybe, not rub elbows maybe do a little bit more than rub elbows, but I feel like there's definitely those people you know that sleep their way to the top.

According to Kyra, the field at its center (New York) is animated by motivations to befriend the most famous people, and hang out in the most reputable galleries, so as to "get somewhere" by association. She perceives, by contrast, that such strategies do not exist off-center (Portland)

because there are not the powerful players that would get anyone anywhere in the first place. In fact, Kyra makes explicit that "getting somewhere" would mean having power and connections outside of Portland. Still, Kyra reveals that there are cliques in Portland's art world, but their accessibility, relative to New York, is rather simple. Whether she would admit it or not, though, Kyra's status as a New York artist simplifies things for her; it did not hurt in her opportunity to guest-curate; Omar might have benefited by making connections to New York artists in the process. If in New York the stakes seem higher, it is because mobility proceeds vertically, through a hierarchy of reputation and art world prestige. In Portland, by contrast, such vertical mobility is blunted by a lack of market competition, powerbrokers, and gatekeepers.

According to Straw (2001), mobility in and through scenes proceeds not vertically from bottom to top, but horizontally, from edge to center. I have implied above that local centrality is in turn afforded to those that have their own galleries, those that can organize other local actors, and potentially make connections for local artists elsewhere, perhaps to places like New York were vertical mobility is possible. If in New York cliques mobilize around status hierarchies, in Portland gangs and cliques form around catalysts and conduits. As such, however, there is not a clear center in Portland's artistic scene; there are many conduits, consecrators, and cliques through which one might benefit through association. Indeed, one's best chances of mobility in such a social organization would be to align loosely with all participants, so as to be in a position to make connections between them (Giuffre 1999).

Vertical versus horizontal mobility patterns represent ideal-typical constructions, however. The accumulation and exchange of translocal capital implies a hierarchy in its own terms. Proceeding from the periphery to the center in off center cities like Portland, one still confronts many status distinctions. Indeed, mobility through local scenes does not proceed

without effort or consequence. Local centrality can be zealously guarded. Artists whose careers eventually transcend local scenes and markets can be the subject of jealousy and ridicule. Everyone is everyone's friend until it comes time to organize the dinner party with the visiting artist, curator, or dealer.

Starfucking and other Sanctions

According to Leon, "There's definitely an A-list [in Portland]… but you're not going to get anywhere by screwing anybody." Sleeping one's way to the top, as Kyra described, or what is also known as "starfucking," is often evoked as a lesser-moral behavior, usually describing other artists – "I never did that," said Kyra. Such behaviors are often associated with New York's art scene or the "art world," in which hierarchies might be ascended by doing so. In a literal sense, "starfucking" would mean having sex with people for the benefits of their social connections or reputations. Indeed, this happens, even in off-center scenes, and its consequences can range from sexual opportunism to scene divisions based on gender and sexual orientation. High profile gatekeepers might take interest in younger artists and attempt to leverage their status for sex. Some young artists might actively seek such encounters for the benefits that might accrue (but that might not). More generally, however, the charge of "starfucker" is leveraged against any social exchange perceived as blatantly self-serving. For example, one who ditches the friends they came with to end up at an exclusive after-party with a crowd that enjoys a higher social status might be called a "starfucker." A less derogatory sanction against "schmoozing" describes a milder sanction against simply trying to position oneself around other influential people. Such behaviors are not limited to the centers. Local scenes generate divisions too, and they generate opportunities to transcend those divisions. Scenes also generate moral sanctions

against those that transcend divisions may make the process appear too obviously a social rather than artistic one.

"Its Dangerous"

My conversation with Sophia (above) left off with our discussion the kinds of affinities that can link people from distant places. Sophia implied that a field model better defined her experiences as an artist than a "community" model ever would. Mary, from Vancouver, became Sophia's friend. The conversation continues here with me asking Sophia about her friends in the local scene, or "community."

> *SS*: Who are your friends in Portland's art community? Or how would you characterize your relationships with them?
>
> *Sophia*: That's such a personal question. You know that's a personal question right?
>
> *SS*: Yeah, I mean, you don't have to list names…
>
> *Sophia*: Well it's hard for me to say that because I have trust issues, and I don't really know who my friends are, and I have a really complicated relationship with friends... So it's a hard thing to talk about, or to say, because I don't really know who my friends are… On the one hand it looks like I have a lot of friends, but I don't think I do have very many at all. So, what do you mean by friends?

Sophia continued to list a very small number of other local artists that she felt she could trust, or that would actually count as friends. Our conversation then followed the general course that this chapter takes: there are various groups and divisions in the local scene, which create certain

opportunities, but which also create certain rules of engagement, such that it is never entirely clear what people are after. The following texts picks up as I am trying to summarize:

SS: … And to be a part of this community you have to interact with these people, and maybe because they're part of other groups that have some power…

Sophia: I think that maybe it's a little bit different from the way you're perceiving it, because I think that you're forgetting how much – how fake things are, and how everyone knows [that it's fake], you know what I mean? Like what does interacting mean? I think you're forgetting the way in which, to some degree, social interaction, especially with the arts are: '[raises voice] Oh, how are you?' …very performative. Everyone knows they're performative; they do those things anyway, because to not do so would be socially unacceptable. And it doesn't necessarily mean that you have some kind of tie with those people… So I guess I'm not sure what you're talking about, are you talking about people in general? Are you talking about people like Omar?

SS: … Do you think most people understand the art scene to be superficial, in their interactions?

Sophia: I don't know, maybe intuitively. I don't know, probably not. Not to say that I know more or something, but I have distance from the behavior because I'm interested in what motivates that, but I think that maybe there's this intuitive sense that it's maybe performative or something.

SS: I've definitely picked up on that in my research. People have to 'get up' and put on a face. But I guess what you're describing to me is that it can be very superficial and a source of distrust. Especially if people are using their social

influence for manipulative ends, rather than sincere, I don't know, art making, or art-critical ends.

Sophia: Well this is actually something that is really freaking me out. And I don't want to get personal, but the thing is it has to get personal, because the problem is that these things are so enmeshed. This isn't like most professions wherein business and leisure time are pointedly separate from one another. This is the sort of profession; um… they're overlapping, in so many senses of the word… Even in the actual production of these cultural forms, right, it's an accepted trope. And it's actually, we were talking about this; how everything is an art therapy, people put themselves into their work, it's like, it's not really about anything, it's about you, and when someone likes it or doesn't like it, it's not like they like or don't like your work in a sense, it's almost like so much closer to you, that it's like they like or they don't like you also.

Sophia started Stark Naked in the first place because she felt that she could not get a show at other local venues without being hit on in the process.

Sophia: It's very dangerous. It's very dangerous! Like, those are like surface area things… I almost went totally crazy. And that's when I went to Vancouver over the winter because I just couldn't handle not being sure who my real friends were. And I couldn't handle no longer knowing when someone would say something to me, like what was motivating that, because everyone in my life was also in my artistic life; there was no distance, no separation. They're the same, they're one in the same; there's no difference between the two. And it's also very dangerous, because that means that in order to have success, you have to have success with

> people. You have to be fake; you know you have to subscribe to clubs [i.e., gangs, cliques]; you have to perform these kinds of habits and behaviors, which are a part of the job. But I don't want my life to be like that… And so, this has been a very big problem, you know. But like so what do you do? You try to create a space where there's like no hypocrisy or something, but it's not because then you somehow become motivated by things like… Is this person really my friend, or does he just want to hear the things that I have to say because he thinks that somehow I know something about something?

Local Visibility in a Global Field

Artists' careers are dually embedded in local scenes and a larger global field. This includes the proposition that *mobility in the global field requires visibility and influence locally*. Cultural production scenes are defined here as informal social organizations that process global stakes and rewards at a local level. If the global field of contemporary art production generates symbolic and translocal capital, scenes work to facilitate their exchange by generating roles and practices that a) sustain artistic activity and social gathering locally, b) enable social connections between places, and c) legitimating those concerns. In the process of enacting and maintaining these roles, scenes also generate reputations, influential actors and position-taking practices, around which belief in art is reproduced and around which artistic objects ultimately manifest and take on material, shape, color, or sound.

While the traditional roles that combine to facilitate the production of visual arts (dealer, critic, collector, artist, etc.) are constrained in off-center cities, a more basic set of productive relationships and resources operate in their place. Bourdieu's (1993) general theory of cultural

production fields posits that the field generates a divide between market driven logics (production for the masses, or in the case of contemporary art, production for the highest bidder), and those taking up disinterested disposition in opposition to the market. In Portland and Nashville, artists take up an "alternative" or "experimental" orientation, not merely in opposition to the market, but in the presence of local market constraints. Bourdieu might suggest that these artists "make a virtue of necessity," denouncing the market because there is no market for them in the first place. But such analysis stops short of identifying the productive practices that are the consequence of career necessity in a place-divided global field. From off-center cities, it may be suggested that the field produces neither a strictly market-oriented nor 'art-for-arts'-sake' approach, but instead generates strategies of achieving what I have called translocal capital.

Geographic mobility through the field of contemporary art – achievement of reputation and recognition that transcends local boundaries – first requires horizontal mobility through a local artistic scene, whereby one may find resourceful connections to others in other places. To get to the local center, one might take on multiple roles, or build their own venues through which they can program local artists but also circulate the flow of translocal capital. However, one might find along the way that such social opportunities generate divisions as well; indeed, in local artistic scenes there is not a clear center. Aesthetic and social affinities can unite actors, especially those who might find themselves in similar structural positions (i.e., as conduits with outside connections). But friendships can turn to mistrust, as each actor potentially becomes a mere source of opportunity for each other.

Chapter 5

Wellsprings

Appalachian Annie

SS: So would you call yourself a *Southern* artist?

Annie: That term does not offend me.

Annie considered herself "from Nashville" when explaining her address to people elsewhere, although she never lived in Nashville. She was a resident at an arts institution that was over 50 miles outside of the city when I interviewed her. The drive there took me well beyond the suburban ring, into the rolling countryside, gradually up in elevation, where the roads became narrow and windy. She thought her set-up out there was ideal; she could be a lonely, creative artist, isolated and inspired only by the nature that surrounded her. She did not have a television; her main sources of entertainment were her art books and her Bananagrams game. Because art making is a social production, however, Annie endures a social disadvantage in return for her relative seclusion. Still, Annie identifies as a contemporary artist, informed by contemporary arts discourse that has diffused everywhere, including to rural Tennessee. Occasionally she would come to the city to take in a show, and meet up with some friends.

Annie calls herself a "fibers" artist, referring to a category of media that is more often associated with "craft," although the art that she makes often resembles abstract paintings. She alternately calls these works "quilts" and "maps." She also makes paper, books, boxes, and a variety of other objects. But her choice of media and her aesthetic concerns, she believes, works against her "contemporary" artist identity, in part because "craft" might be understood as separate and distinct from "art." Annie is troubled by the hierarchical status that certain styles,

media, and practices occupy in the art world. Genre and media categories matter for how artists and art works are evaluated; a "contemporary sculpture artist," for example, might make the same object as a "craft" artist, and perhaps out of the same materials, but command a much higher price for it (Auther 2010). But Annie identifies, and revels even, at the intersection of the categories of "contemporary art" and "craft."

Not coincidentally, Annie is also very interested in the concept of "place:" artistically, culturally, and socially. In fact, "place" is a core concern for many contemporary artists, although the merits of place-related concepts, as critical artistic concerns or otherwise, have been alternately championed and contested in recent art-historical discourse (c.f., Lippard 1997; Kwon 2002). The idea of "place" is fraught, Annie says, although she wears the concept proudly in her work. She suggests that "place" in contemporary art discourse might just be a twenty-first century way to refer to the "landscape," which is rather out of favor. But Annie tells me, "You won't find another single topic that a textile artist or any kind of craft-associated-media artist examines more than the landscape." Moreover, she suggests that there is an affinity between such "craft-based" artwork and "the South," and although this combination of terms is perhaps more pronounced in the art world imaginary than in reality, such place-based labels affect the status of her artistic concerns: "I don't think that's a bad thing, but it definitely hinders how people perceive the [work] in the contemporary art world," says Annie.

During the course of this study, Annie moved to Atlanta to take on a full time teaching job. "I am NOT a city girl," she said about the move. The change of scenery has affected the content of her art, but not her preoccupation with place and her local landscape. "The most striking thing about moving from the woods to Atlanta is in terms of the way that the landscape has affected my brain and affected my artistic practice…" she told me. "I was working in a very

isolated way [there] and now I'm much more interested in trying to process the idea of what is explicit and implicit; what is public and what is intimate; that becomes far more interesting to me [in Atlanta] than it would have [in Tennessee]."

Heterotopias

Portland artist Mitch began his lecture *Heterotopias* with the line, "Growing up in the Pacific Northwest, the forest was never far away…" He continued to describe the fir trees behind his childhood home as among the other places that have influenced and inspired his artistic vision to an audience of about 50 at the Hippo Gallery. Mitch toggled through PowerPoint slides of his recent paintings, some of which were also hanging in the gallery where he was giving this talk. In fact the paintings were painted right there during the artist-residency program that Omar had organized, which this lecture was a part of.

Mitch's paintings depicted post-industrial Detroit environments – abandoned warehouses, cluttered with mattresses and other evidence of homelessness and postindustrial detritus – that were "near where I went to grad school," he said. But the Detroit scenes were always obscured by a thick of trees in the foreground, as if his adult education should be interpreted through the lens of his childhood. Both environments, recalled Mitch – Detroit and the forests of the Pacific Northwest – appeared to him as "sites of lawlessness and disregard." Juxtaposed together, he suggests that the multi-sited paintings portray "heterotopias." Referencing Michele Foucault's (1967) essay *Of Other Places*, Mitch suggested that the paintings depict places that are, "Neither here nor there; they are between spaces; places of simultaneity."

The site of the lecture itself might well be understood as a heterotopia too. Like Foucault's choice example of the garden, the modern art gallery is "different from all the sites

that [it] reflects and speaks about" (Foucault 1967). An art gallery is a culturally designated space that celebrates "art" as an autonomous domain by isolating it within a white-on-white cube. Indeed, the interior of Hippo is remade in the fashion of the "white cube" – the typical, ideal modern art exhibition space (c.f., Velthius 2005; O'Doherty 1976). Hippo is divided into four rooms by built-out gallery walls painted white, with light fixtures attached to the ceiling. But Hippo is done rather haphazardly in this fashion; paint is peeling from the ceiling and walls; spilled paint stains the floor. Unlike the pristine white cube spaces in the Pearl District across the river, this old building retains its industrial character. Art galleries are fairly typical everywhere, from New York to Los Angeles, and all places in between. Even when they are built out in old warehouses, or fishing boats, or gas stations, and whether they are 10,000 or 60 square foot rooms, the contemporary art gallery regularly consists of white walls and modern lighting equipment. The regularity of this arrangement is such that any alternative can be read either as a critique on the "institution art" (Berger 1984), or it is seen as hopelessly naive. Nevertheless, Mitch evokes the term heterotopia to describe the Pacific Northwest forests and deracinated Detroit environments as if those places are the mythical sources of his own artistic vision. Although those places appear as the wellsprings of Mitch's work itself, the white cube also isolates that experience, puts it on display where it is deliberated, discussed, and celebrated, and in this case, where specific places seem to be simultaneously suspended in that discussion.

For the lecture event, Omar had borrowed a friend's pickup truck to haul in dozens of plastic foldout chairs from the college where he teaches. A podium and microphone were set up for the lectures. The Facebook invitation for the event requested that everyone bring a dish or a drink and arrive an hour before the lectures would begin to share, potluck style. In the main gallery room, a large foldout table was set up where participants placed snacks, dishes, and a lot

of beer and wine. Conversation topics included the various art projects that people are working on, local grants and awards that people have won, where to continue to drink or party after the lectures, etc. It was a late October night and it was cold; the only source of heat in the building was a small propane burner. Earlier that day, Omar, Mitch, Louis, and myself spent some time cleaning up the gallery, which had been used as a studio for the last month-and-a-half. Now it looked like an art gallery again, but with a buffet table in the middle of it. The lecture set up was in a side room. Mitch's paintings were hung on one side of the room; Louis's paintings were hung on the other side.

I was at Hippo as a participant in the same residency program. In exchange for the privilege of sharing the gallery space as a station for my ethnographic work, I agreed to participate in the lecture series too. After Mitch's *Heterotopias*, I gave my own lecture, which I titled *Who Places the Place-Makers?* in homage to Bourdieu's (1993) subsection "Who Creates the Creators?" about the effect of reputations on the production of the *belief in art*. Both lectures were attempts to deal with the significance of place in contemporary artistic practice, one from an artistic and philosophical perspective, the other sociological.

I argued then that artists make efforts to articulate and position the places they are from as legitimate sites of artistic production because their careers unfold in a reputational field in which place-based labels matter for artistic evaluation and career success. In doing so, artists produce *wellsprings.* If traditionally, a wellspring is a place-based resource of artistic inspiration and identity, I add here that wellsprings do not simply exist as such, but are socially produced within the fields in which those place-based resources are a stake and reward. As will be evident in this chapter, artists strive for positive place-based identities vis-à-vis other places. Place

reputations and values are contested as such, and wellsprings depend in part on the ability of artists and other actors to do the work of positioning places relative to each other.

Just as place is a contested terrain in the global field, however, it is so in a historical context in which the art world is supposedly decentering, and the structure of opportunity has supposedly diffused everywhere. "Place" is thus also complicated in art-critical and art-historical discourse and in artistic practices as well. As Mitch's concept of heterotopias makes evident, there is tension between concerns of place and placelessness in artistic practices. Mitch works to communicate that the places he is from are positive source of artistic inspiration, but perhaps more importantly that the wellspring as such emerges in juxtaposing multiple places at once. I argue that while art galleries like Hippo are everywhere, and the contemporary art is 'global' now, positive affiliation with places are still a stake and a reward in the field.

I have already argued here that the global field of contemporary art unevenly distributes resources and rewards between places, and these differences that have far-reaching consequences for career viability, visibility, and maintenance. This chapter takes up the third and final proposition – that *places themselves accumulate reputations that become a stake in artistic practices and careers*. In other words, those resources and rewards are just as symbolic as they are economic (market) and social (scene). As Gieryn (2008) has stated, "Place based labels for circles of artists and their friends help to secure artistic reputations and value," and as Plattner (1996) argued, New York exercises "hegemony" in the securing of those reputations and values. Off-center artists, thus, not only suffer from a lack of institutional and social resources, but also from a place-based, symbolic disadvantage. Nevertheless, Annie and Mitch's stories illustrate that places can inspire artists; they offer resources for artistic work, as well for their artistic identities. Places and place-categories can also color evaluations of art work beyond the local

milieus in which art is made, however. For off-center artists, identifying their work explicitly with off-center places and place-categories can come with certain costs.

I pursue this proposition by demonstrating in turn that: 1) artists strive for positive place-based identities; 2) place-related content often manifests in artists' work in such a way as to communicate the places that are the sources their own creative inspiration; 3) artists strive to transmit positive images of their place elsewhere, often through comparing and contrasting places against each other, as in a reputational field; and 4) New York City ultimately retains a hegemonic influence on artists' efforts to do so, despite that the art world is decentered. I begin by reviewing recent sociological literature on place and place-making to build a framework to think about how places shape and are shaped by artistic practices, and how place reputations can be dynamic, contested as they are as stakes and rewards in a reputational career field. I conclude that artists' abilities to produce their own wellsprings are influenced by a) a place character that resonates with contemporary artistic concerns, and b) the social resources to transmit positive place-based identities.

Place, Character, Reputation, and Change

Thomas Gieryn (2000) gives a formal tripartite definition of "place" for sociological use as: a) a set of geographic coordinates, b) which contains stuff (natural and human constructions), and c) are invested with meaning. One or two of the three attributes does not constitute a place. In keeping with the kinds of places that concern much contemporary sociological research, artists are concerned primarily with cities and regions. Cities and regions organize artistic scenes and markets, as well as the kinds of symbolic resources (i.e., "invested with meaning") that places and place-based categories offer for contemporary artists' careers.

Countless urban ethnographies – *from* Anderson 1923 *to* Zukin 1982 – make particular sited contexts their sociological concerns. So too do studies of tourism (Kelner 2011; Judd and Feinstein 1999), architecture and the built environment (Jacobs 1961; Venturi et al 1972), journalistic accounts (Applebaum 1996), cultural histories (Seigel 1986; Grana 1964, etc.), and even art histories (Ashton 1974; Plagens 1974) all take place somewhere. Scholars in these domains have each examined how a place's attributes influence, and are influenced by, the social life that unfolds in and around them. A more recent lineage of the concept in sociological literature aims to explicitly unpack, theorize, and observe *how* place operates by formally conceptualizing the term (Gieryn 2000), by linking the concept to other theoretical paradigms (Molotch, Freudenburg and Paulson 2000; Smith 1999), by developing specific methodological tools (Paulson 2004), and by carrying out empirical studies that consider place, or more specifically "place-character," as a dependent variable (e.g., Alkon and Traugot 2008; Molotch et al 2000; Kaufman and Kaliner 2011). This chapter carries this tradition further by describing how place matters – as independent and dependent variable – for one particular career field.

Molotch, Freudenberg, and Paulson's article, "History Repeats Itself, But How?" (2000) breaks sociological ground, but ultimately offers only a static model of place. Borrowing from a structuration perspective (see Giddens 1984), the authors argue that places accumulate "character" and "tradition," which they describe as "durable distinctions" that are both the cause and consequence of local social activity. Character and tradition accumulate around particular kinds of local opportunities and constraints that at each point in time are a product of earlier decisions and trends anchored in, for example, the built environment, economic opportunities, organizational foundations, local cultural work, or what they call the "consumptive milieu." Empirically, Molotch et al offer a multi-site comparative study that observes how two places

with many similarities slowly accumulate differences, which inform future opportunities and constraints, thereby producing and reproducing different place characters over time. Their findings lead them to characterize places as sites of "rolling inertia," structured by previous historical events, decisions, and trajectories; place characters accrue and reproduce over time and are the built and named effects of social, economic, and cultural path dependencies. In this model, places are relatively autonomous from each other, processing the same externalities independently, according to their own character.

If places have "characters," then, "They are [also] actors in the drama," as Thomas Gieryn (2000) has put it. Paulson (2004: 244) adds, "If place character is to be of interest to sociologists, and not merely the purview of travel writers, it must impact in some way the exercise of power, the distribution of resources, or other processes germane to the discipline." Places influence social life, not only in terms of the resources that vary between them, but in terms of the meaning that actors assign to them. Joshua Long's (2010) *Weird City*, for example, shows just how the "Keep Austin Weird" slogan developed out of the city's perceived cultural and political differences to nearby Texas cities and towns. But the slogan has also become an identity and a rallying cry, and has since animated a new round of political conflicts aimed against a perceived homogenization of the city through new development interests. Indeed, place characters accumulate through political and cultural conflicts about what place characters are and/or should be.

Places are also dynamic. Not only are places "actors in the drama," but also their characters can change as a plot proceeds. Molotch et al (2000) maintain that "change agents" could potentially work to put the trajectory of local tradition on diverging tracks, but they also write that, "Our prism of character and tradition leads to doubts that very many could work"

(818). I argue in this chapter that places are not only dynamic with respect to their populations, contents, and character, but that their reputations can change as well, and reputations are produced socially vis-à-vis the reputations of other places.

Kaufman and Kaliner (2011) suggest in their article, subtitled contra Moloch et al, "History Repeats Itself, Until it Doesn't," that indeed, place characters do change. They offer a model of the "accomplishment" of place, or, "the achievement of a locale's subjective reputation as perceived by insiders (residents) and outsiders (nonresidents)" (p. 121). Kaufman and Kaliner refer to place-making practices as *transmission efforts*: "A crucial step in this process of place formation …[is] active support for the promotion and circulation of positive affect for a cultural object or practice" (p. 147). These include high-profile promotional campaigns as well as the work of iconic residents or celebrities that "amplify and reify place-related stereotypes" (p. 147). *Negative transmission* on the other hand, refers to boundary maintenance around place related variables. A local conservative paper, for example, "can help to keep politicians on the straight and narrow," thereby reproducing tradition (in the Molotch et al sense). Negative transmission in this sense is akin to cultural exclusion and status competition practices, which are also fundamentally tied to the production of places (c.f. DiMaggio 1982; Shaw and Sullivan 2011; Zukin 1995).

While Molotch et al (2000) focused on economic opportunities and federal building projects, Kaufman and Kaliner (2011) focused at the discursive realm, showing how places are made and contested in reference to other places. Indeed, like art objects, places are cultural productions. Further, they argue that the transmission of place-related discourse produces a set of stakes and rewards through which places can be judged and valued according to each other places. As such, their study provides a framework to understand places as existing in a

reputational field of their own. Or, in various other fields (e.g., business, politics, lifestyle culture, and/or contemporary art) places accumulate reputations in a discursive terrain that color the stakes and rewards of those fields. As such, places can be dynamic because place-reputations are at stake in various other fields. Despite their tendency to accumulate character and tradition, places are accomplished and contested as well; they are moving targets in reputational fields.

Nashville and the South

When Johnny Invective told me, "There is no benefit to calling yourself a Nashville artist," he meant that a Nashville does not have a strong reputation as an art city, that it is not known elsewhere as a vibrant artistic scene. Most Nashville artists I talked to would agree, but it is not only Nashville's reputation elsewhere that they find issue with. Local artists have difficulty drawing from the city as a resource for a positive artistic identity work. The drawbacks include an extant cultural identity that obscures contemporary artistic concerns, and a conservative social environment that blunts artistic risk taking.

Music City

According to economist Richard Caves (2000), cultural product industries tend to agglomerate in particular places because they facilitate interaction and innovation across cultural fields. This might reasonably explain why music, film, and contemporary art worlds tend to cluster in New York City and Los Angeles, for example, but that pattern does not extend to Nashville. According to local artists, the existing "Music City" identity seems to leave little room for alternatives.

Stevie moved to Nashville from Los Angeles where she was an artist and curator for decades. She told me: "When I first came to Nashville, people would ask, 'What do you do?' And I would say, 'I'm an artist,' and then their question would be, 'What instruments do you play?'" When I asked Cameron what it means to be an artist from Nashville, he said, "I think people just don't take Nashville very seriously because our main cultural products are Christian music and Country music." He perceives that Nashville's image elsewhere is dominated by its music identity, such that this place image is so dominant, and Country and Christian music are so distinct from contemporary artistic concerns, that people in other places cannot take contemporary art in Nashville seriously. Murph finds fault in the city itself for promoting that image at the expense of contemporary artists: "And then we've got a business community that starts pushing [Country music]… So where does experimental music and contemporary artwork fit? According to the business community, [art] works against any sort of branding that we already have going for us." The "Story of Nashville," as written by its travel bureau, only elicits one cultural identity, which begins with Davey Crocket strumming his fiddle through town in the eighteenth century. While cultural industries might agglomerate in larger cities, Nashville retains a singular cultural identity and it is not contemporary art.

For contemporary artists, this makes identifying with the city itself somewhat problematic. Outside of the contemporary art scene, a lot of visual artwork in Nashville features what Hazel calls "guitar art," or "music industry art," such as, "paintings of Johnny Cash." Indeed, some artists do make iconic images of Nashville, largely for a tourist market, or for other businesses looking to capitalize on Nashville's place image. These are usually not the artists that are concerned with the global contemporary art world, however, or with gallery and exhibition outlets at all, locally and elsewhere. Artists like Hazel (and Murph in the next chapter) evoke

Johnny Cash as a boundary object; Johnny Cash allows them to draw distinctions between contemporary artistic concerns and the concerns of tourists, or an image of Nashville that is otherwise contrary to that which artists would rather project.

"Don't get me wrong, I love Johnny Cash," said Hazel, "I have a Johnny Cash print on my wall. But there is this sense that the music comes first here…" Hazel is open to the idea that music can inform contemporary art, but contemporary artists are instead informed by a discourse that largely stems from elsewhere. She says, "There are people here… having a dialogue that could be affected by the music industry here in a positive way, but is more about their work and contemporary art issues, or just contemporary issues in general." Hazel does not include country music in the category of 'contemporary issues in general.'

Censorship and Complacency

Nashville is also a conservative place, according to many local artists. The political and cultural climate does not facilitate making work that pushes boundaries. Visual art often gets censored, and local artists in turn, either learn to be complacent, or leave. For example, one Nashville arts college almost had to close its doors following public outrage about a student exhibition. Hattie, a Nashville artist and faculty member there described the controversy:

> "We had a student show, and one of our students did these really beautiful black and white photographs of masturbating, and… ejaculations. It was gorgeous. They were shot like from this weird angle. The same show – and this was a juried competition – [featured a work] consisting of videos of beheadings… like from Iraq… [The videos were pulled straight from YouTube]. You didn't have to watch it there, the real piece of art was that there was a surveillance camera

> mounted watching the reactions of the people watching the video, and so what got fed into the gallery were the facial reactions of the people watching the beheading. So between those two things, and the board of directors… It got out in the public that we were showing beheadings over here, and that we had pornography on the walls. We had people calling us from like soldier's families, denouncing the school."

That student show was not the only episode. One curator at another local non-profit art center was disallowed to show an exhibit that consisted of photographs of nude female bodies. "Nudity is still an issue in Nashville, and that's kind of unheard of [elsewhere]," said Hattie. It is not always a higher power that makes a decision to censor. Another contemporary art center once tried to bring the photography work of a renowned artist from elsewhere, but they pulled the plug on their own accord. Said Bruce, another long-time Nashville artist, "They censored the show. There was an African-American woman who lives in Baltimore; she's nationally recognized. And she did images of Black men with big penises and they were sort of in beads… There was no [public outcry], but they weren't brave enough."

Kurt refers to the overly conservative "culture of the city," which affects artistic exhibition and production in a variety of ways. In public high schools, for example, Kurt thinks contemporary art is ridiculed and discouraged. He gave me an example of a local conservative pundit who often targets public art sculptures to shore up his constituency; public attitudes are often directed against contemporary art by local media.

As a consequence, Nashville artists might take fewer risks in the art work that they make and/or curate. Insofar as such risk-taking is perceived by local artists to be integral to contemporary art discourse and practices circulating through other places, this is problematic for

Nashville's artistic scene as a whole. According to Bella, the managers at the Arcade do not care for certain kinds of artistic expression, such as nudity. So, instead of pushing their buttons, Bella would rather sidestep risky content and maintain her position as a positive influence on local art scene activity. She says:

> "A lot of the reason that galleries come and go in [the Arcade] is because they can't get with the program of this place. You know, it's a very traditional place. It's very old Nashville. You don't hang naked people pictures up in the front window. You might hang it up back here; that's totally fine. They're not saying you can't show anything… [But] there's some influence there. So we've tended to lean more towards the whimsical or big installations that you really can't find anything in them to offend anybody… But I think we've been able to stay here longer because I get where they're coming from, not because I necessarily agree with everything, but I can play ball with that, and I get the old Nashville thing."

Artists thus appear compromised in Nashville. "Nashville art is very mainstream," says Chris, "Even the edgy stuff is relatively tame, and then [artists] stop questioning. They stop because we don't have a strong community that critiques and pushes and challenges us. We get complacent pretty easy." Such complacency would seem to make the whole character of the city rather bland for some artists. "Nashville is the most flavorless town I've ever lived in," said Jimmy, who earlier described Nashville as the "flattest place" he'd ever lived in. Jimmy's long-time friend Cameron added,

> "There's zero edginess in this town which is one of the reasons why I love to live here… but it also, I think, it makes people take the art a lot less seriously…

Nashville likes for everybody to be nice, you know, to be very pleasant and, there's just no edginess…"

In summary, according to local artists, certain elements of Nashville's place character appear to hinder contemporary art production. The conservative political culture influences the work that artists make, while the "music city" identity also seems to color locals' and outsiders' perceptions of what cultural products in Nashville should look like. As a consequence, artists in Nashville have difficulty drawing on the city itself as a source of positive place-based artistic identity.

Painting the South

Like Annie, however, other Nashville artists draw from an alternative place-based source of identity in "the South." Said Hattie, "Maybe regionally… I would say. I like referring to myself as a regional, Southern artist, but I would never say I'm a Nashville artist." Like Hattie, Olive is more like to identify as a Southern, not a Nashville artist. Olive told me, "I don't really have a place to identify as mine yet. I want to have some loyalty to Nashville. I mean I think it's done some good things for me. Maybe I could plant some roots here if there was something I knew if it were really worth being involved in."

Olive describes her art as follows: "I guess [I paint] landscapes, I've always been resistant to that word but I mean the subject matter is trees and forests and stuff. It's landscape, whether I like it or not… I just like to paint the South." Landscape is a term often derided in contemporary art discourse; the term can connote a hobbyist orientation to art making, uninformed about contemporary media, concepts, and practices. In Olive's case, however, like Mitch's, the landscape can also be the subject of a more contemporary approach to painting, and

for Olive the Southern landscape becomes a wellspring represented by the work itself. But Olive's paintings are not merely landscapes. Like Mitch's heterotopias, they are also abstractions. She brought me into her studio to show me.

Olive's studio is in a large shed-like structure in her backyard that resembles an airplane hangar. She was currently working on several large paintings at once. "See this?" she showed me a photograph of some rolling hills and trees. "Now see this?" she asked, pointing at a painting in progress that appeared to me only as various shades of red with some thin, jagged, pencil lines running through it. "Well, this [painting] is from that [photograph], You see?" Olive asked. At that moment I decided I had learned something about abstraction, or perhaps I had learned something about "the South."

Olive was introduced in Chapter Three as one of very few artists' whose primary source of income derives from local gallery sales. She shows in galleries around the U.S. (Nashville, Seattle, Asheville, Sun Valley), but her primary market is at home in Nashville, where she says, "People just seem to appreciate my work more here. There is something about the texture of this place that people who live here really understand… I don't think you have to know this landscape to relate to it, but if you do know this land then you probably relate in a deeper way." Olive spent some time in Seattle, Memphis, and other places around the U.S., but was always compelled to come back to the South, not Nashville necessarily, but the South, and not necessarily because there was a market for her work here, but so that she could continue working out her aesthetic concerns. In her words:

> "When I was driving around the country and headed unknowingly toward Seattle I started to have some vision. It was just like feelings or something. You know how you can remember, like maybe you went on a hike or something and you can

> remember what it felt like to be in this particular spot in the woods or something. That was the kind of thing that was becoming important to me. Then I kind of would have a vision of what I wanted the paintings to look like but I didn't have any idea how to do it. And I knew it was gonna take years [to paint like that] and feel like I'm just landing on it now, which is exciting. But I think as soon as I figure that out I'm gonna be done with landscape."

For Olive, "landscape" describes her current artistic concern, but it is the Southern landscape in particularly that inspires her work.

Other artists appeal to the South's distinctive cultural history as a positive source of artistic identity, which they describe as a place that has inspired a wide variety of artistic and cultural traditions. Lou, for example, grew up in a rural area north of Nashville. Contemporary art for him is a means of expression that has diffused from everywhere, and can be informed by the rich traditions of the South. He says:

> "I've been looking at *Art in America* since high school or *ArtForum,* or whenever I could find a magazine… There are ways that kids in the middle of farm country could listen to Black Flag, you know? There's access if you want it or not… This is an immensely cultural place. The South is immensely cultural. I mean it has projected American culture in many ways: this lack of inhibition; this incredible courage that comes from slavery; and from music and from jazz and from music and from blues; Sun records and Elvis Presley; and incredible writing traditions. Pick up a Flannery O'Conner short story if you want to read something incredible. It's unbelievable. You know, like, Wow that was written *when*, and from *where*? And so I always think about that stuff when I think of the whole cultural fabric of

America. I just can't think of Elvis Presley without thinking of Andy Warhol, and I can't [not] think about people like Robert Rauschenberg and Cy Twombly who are all Southern artists."

Although Rauschenberg and Twombly became famous in New York City, what seems to matter to Lou is that they were *from* the South, or at least that they spent some time there. Again, the South is understood as a wellspring that produces art that is influential throughout American culture. It is not Nashville, or Atlanta, or Memphis or New Orleans that colors this perception, but the whole *South*, a broad geographic and cultural category.

Indeed, if there are "cenacles" or "truth spots" that can be claimed as wellsprings of modern art history and contemporary art making in the South, these seem not to exist in urban settings. Annie, who identifies her work as steeped in Southern traditions, traces her influences to Black Mountain College in Asheville, North Carolina, if not to Appalachia generally. This is not to suggest that Appalachia defines the South. Rather, the South is conceived as a more abstract category that is simultaneously cultural and geographic, and this culture reaches well beyond art making, as a positive source of identity.

"Southern culture" is a category that exists outside of the South as well. I was at a party in Portland at the house of one of my informants there. There was a magazine in the bathroom called *Garden & Gun*. Olive, who is inspired by Southern landscapes, once had a review of her work in that magazine. Before I saw the magazine in Portland, Olive showed me:

Olive: Do you know that magazine?

SS: No, it sounds enticing though. [It] sounds very Southern.

Olive: I know. People who know about it when I say that are like "oh awesome. I love that magazine." People that don't know it are like "what?" It's just kind of like Southern culture.

My informant in Portland said, months later, "Oh yeah, I love that magazine."

Portland and the Pacific Northwest

In contrast to Nashville's many constraints against establishing a positive place-based artistic identity, Portland appears to offer opportunities. When I asked Omar if it was meaningful at all to be an artist from Portland, he told me, "Yes, I think so. I mean there is a very quiet admiration for people who live in Portland, you know, in other places. People aren't loud about it, but they have the admiration." Portland is considered by many – locally and elsewhere – to have accumulated reputation as an alternative art city in recent decades. This is due in part to local policy efforts to brand the city in ways that resonate with and facilitate a contemporary art image, and in part to local scene activity, generated by artists' own career logics and strategies of accumulation that also require transmitting the image of Portland as a reputable site for contemporary art (see Shaw 2012). Portland's political culture is not constraining as it is in Nashville; there are no examples of censorship. On the contrary, local journalists appear to publish sensational images (see Chapter Two). Portland artists claim that Portland has long been a countercultural hub, as well as a place where one can lead a laidback lifestyle. While Nashville's place character is constraining, Portland's appears to offer possibilities.

Creative City

While Nashville artists have to contend with an extant "Music City" cultural identity, the city of Portland pushes one that resonates with the arts generally. As a celebrated example of "creative city," Portland was an early adopter of urban art policies that aim to support artists and arts organizations across a variety of genres, as well as make use of the arts in the city's branding efforts. The public supports the arts too, and so Portland is a place where a mayor can run on a pro-arts platform.

One late-summer night in September 2009, Portland Mayor Sam Adams (2009-2013) crashed a small, backyard send-off party for the local non-profit contemporary arts organization Gallery Homeland. Homeland had recently been awarded a grant from the Regional Arts and Culture Council (RACC) to send a group of artists to Berlin for seven months as part of an artist-in-residency exchange between galleries in Portland, Williamsburg, and Berlin called East/West. The media savvy Adams caught up with Gallery Homeland director Paul Middendorf for a video interview, which appeared on Adams' website a few days later (Portland 2009b).

> *Sam*: And what are you going to do [in Berlin], Gallery Homeland?
>
> *Paul*: Basically what we're going to be doing there is cross-pollinating, and basically together [with the Williamsburg gallery] we're going to be putting our footprint of Brooklyn and Portland in these cities, and our first trial city is Berlin and we'll be there for seven months, enough time that we can actually nurture relationships; we can build relationships; we can build solid bonds, for not just the visual arts, but for the creative economy and for all of us and for the future long after we leave…

Sam: So seven months, getting to know people, getting to know Berlin, which is one of the most dynamic cities right now, in the world. Um… what do you hope to get out of this?

Paul: … Ideally after the seven months, we'll have really solid bonds with Berlin, with their government, with not only their artists, but with their institutions, their galleries, their musicians, a "foothold" if you will… having Portland more widely known as a destination for…"

Sam: [Interrupting]: I like that, because I think many of you who follow what I'm about, I like the fact that this is going to get Portlanders connected with Berlin and Germany, and Germans and Berliners connected with Portland… Thank you Paul [Shakes hands]… this has been a really innovative, really innovative; it's never been done before! Really innovative approach to, uh…"

Paul: [Interrupting]: "Glad you guys were able to make it out and taking some time away to chat."

The exchange between Adams and Middendorf reveals a) that translocal networking is a major concern for local artists, especially on an international scale (see Chapter Three) but also that b) the status and reputation of places are at stake in these efforts to connect. The Mayor appears to be on the same page with Portland's art scene in this regard. Middendorf himself, representing Portland's contemporary art scene, also appears practiced in the language of the "creative economy," which he knows is about more than the visual art scene. "Creativity" here is part of a policy discourse that exceeds the requirements of artistic production, but in Portland's arts-policy environment, nods to "creative" economics might prove worthwhile in securing funding.

Portland's arts policy makers and its art scene do not only benefit each other locally. The city's support for the arts is about more than stimulating creativity; it is also about producing an image of a city that resonates with artists and other creative types around the world. That image, in turn, requires a transmission to other places, and translocal artists like Paul make an ideal carrier because their careers depend on it. Adams and other Portland policy makers encourage efforts to "have Portland more widely known," especially on measures of culture and lifestyle, and supporting the local art scene is a strategy to that end.

Indeed, perhaps part of Portland's newfound reputation as a "hot art city," as Leon described it, is due to the city's efforts to follow the lead of artists' own career strategies in developing their arts policy. As Commissioner appointed to Arts and Culture, Sam Adams initiated a revamping of Portland's arts policy in 2007. Adams' 2007 effort consisted of inviting a select group of local artists and arts organization representatives – dubbed the Creative Capacity Committee – to meet and advise on the production of a new policy document. Portland's arts policy now emphasizes helping artists' network, especially with other artists out of town, as well as "building the brand," or transmitting the image of Portland as an art city.

While the city appears invested in its contemporary artists, however, local artists contend that the city is hopelessly behind on such matters of importance to artists. For example, when I asked Leon to explain Sam Adams' influence on the local art scene, Leon laughed and said: "I don't know if he understands. I've worked with him on a few things… but people are often more serious about things than he is. And that's maybe a bone of contention that he champions sort of middling art." When further asked to describe the influence of the Regional Arts and Culture Council on Portland's contemporary art scene, Leon further offered: "They're maybe five or six years behind what's really going on here. But the good news is that they used to be 15 years

[behind]. They are making up for lost ground very quickly." Policy efforts to transmit the image of Portland as an artistic city, and artists' own efforts to transmit the image of Portland as relevant site of production in the global field are perhaps two different things, but here we find artists and local policy efforts working alongside each other, pursuing the same strategies.

Thus, while Nashville's Music City identity works against contemporary art making, Portland has recently made efforts to build their brand around the arts. For the city of Portland, this effort consists of supporting artists, building an image as a viable art center, and transmitting that image elsewhere. These efforts resonate with artists' own strategies of accumulation, if they do not entirely conform to their aesthetic standards or their immediate goals.

Studio City

In Chapter Two, Omar referred to Portland alternately as a "studio city," a "nursery," and as "a platform to matter in the larger art world." In contrast to New York and Los Angeles, this gives Portland a unique identity. Says Omar, "It doesn't have to be about every city having a big important art scene, you know. New York can be big, L.A. can be big… but other places are like, how you say, like what you need for plant to grow, a nursery." Neil compared Portland to Seattle (market town) in terms of how cities allow and foster experimental work:

> "I have artist friends in Seattle and they always talk about how uptight everything is up there… I was looking at the projects that got grants [in Seattle] and they were all just like standard painting shows, whereas if you look at the projects that get grants here on RACC's site, they're all over the map. So I think we do have more diversity that way. So the double-edged sword being that because things

don't sell [in Portland], people aren't just trying to make commercial work, and that makes it a lot more interesting. People [here] make whatever they want."

Other Portland artists describe the city as a studio city by making positive comparisons to San Francisco. Lenny, who was introduced as one Portland artist that makes a modest living from local gallery sales, told me, "This is why your book is going to be a hit, I have the theory that Portland now is like San Francisco in about 1968." As evidence, Lenny told me about all the acid that artists in San Francisco were consuming in 1968 (one gets the impression that Lenny does, or did, a lot of acid in his life). David, who moved to Portland from San Francisco, describes some other similarities.

David: San Francisco [in 1991] was a place where artists could take risks because there was not such a great market there; not so many collectors there. Housing was inexpensive; studio space could be fairly inexpensive; people could survive on part-time work.

SS: That's very interesting because that's the way Portland was described to me now.

David: That's the reason I'm here… because Portland now is very close to San Francisco when I first moved there in 1991 except people don't take their clothes off… Not as much.

Many Portland artists cite its many lifestyle opportunities and a low cost of living as two reasons that being an artist is easy there. At least two internationally recognized artists in my sample said that they were attracted to Portland because the city offered the opportunity to buy a house. For those without that kind of success, Portland also offers lower rents and plenty of studio space. Debbie compares Portland to Seattle on this score. "You cannot do this in Seattle now. Portland

is winning by default. We're a cool thing. You can come here and work in a record store, and live with some other dudes in Southeast [Portland], and have a life. I don't think a lot of the cities are offering you that anymore."

Finally, Portland is described as a place with wide-open possibilities, a "place where you could do anything," said Cathy. For Kate, Portland has a "spirit of entrepreneurship," where, "new things just happen." Moreover, says Kate, "There's no art world context" in Portland, meaning that artists have some freedom from the dominant voices in established positions in other places like New York and Los Angeles. For Omar, Portland offers "something new." For Leon, Portland "has a certain cultural ecosystem." It is an "open source" city, and it is a place that allows anyone to "do whatever they want," says Leon. Says David, "I can be free here…" David continues by comparing Portland to New York and again to San Francisco.

> "This is a place of possibility in terms of people being able to thrive and not just survive in a city… In New York, many young artists are just surviving and I think that here they can actually -- they can thrive. In New York and in San Francisco, two very expensive cities, it's very hard to find the freedom to be creative to sort of wander and explore, follow your research, follow your experiments because you're always worried about, you know, what you need to show to you art dealer or whatever or how to get a show."

Said Jim, "There's a bunch of good reasons that this is a great town to be an artist in; the bad reasons would be there's too many fucking artists in this town, you know?" Jim was trying to be funny when he said that. He is an older artist, who moved to Portland from Los Angeles, in part to "get away" from the art world there, and in part because he could afford to live and make his

artwork without worrying about having to sell it. Most Portland artists like that there are so many artists around.

The growth and popularity of the local scene there is partially an outcome of the many positive place-characteristics outlined above. The fact that the scene has grown reinforces for each other a positive place character, which in turn allows Portland artists a resource for positive artistic identity work. Not all Portland artists have such positive outlooks about their city's character. Some Portland artists complain that there is a lack of serious artists, that the town is too small, and its 'small-world' dynamics stifles artistic energy. Some complain that Portland is not very cosmopolitan, or that it is "too White." For these artists, other places, like New York City would offer a better alternative. Likewise, not all Nashville artists are entirely dismissive of their city. They grope for some positive place-based resources, even if, for the most part, they also look to other places for positive artistic identities.

Installing the Pacific Northwest

Local critics often suggest that there is something unique about art works produced in Portland. Leon describes Portland's "contribution" to the art world against the "glamorous, postmodernist, what-you-see-is-what-you-get," aesthetic that dominates Los Angeles. "There is a more humanistic attitude that comes out of *us*, as an art city," Leon told me. It is an attitude that Leon believes is resolved aesthetically through attention given to both natural and built environments; an aesthetic that tells a story of collision and change in a rapidly growing place where the environment really matters to people. Leon describes Portland's contemporary artists' aesthetic concerns by contrasting against the "old-guard," which might be preoccupied with

place through their paintings of landscapes, and against Seattle's contemporary artists' aesthetic concerns as well:

> "This new guard, they'll bring the indoors outdoor and the outdoors in, this built-environment/non-built-environment, and they'll produce a kind of collision between the two. So it's more about change. The new work is about how things are changing. The old work was celebrating the way things don't change as much, or as quickly. There's an indoor/outdoor thing going on in Portland that you don't even see in Seattle. When [Seattle] does installation art, they do things about buildings and the built environment, or the nature thing, but they don't have the collision thing going on like in Portland. You see the collision thing all the time, it's not just about one or the other, it's about both, and how things are changing. And that's maybe the difference you see is that Portland itself is in flux, so the work has this indeterminate, flux feel to it, which is more exciting, and more international too, because it is more open-ended that way."

The art is not about Portland itself, Leon insists, but rather it is informed by it and engaged in it, and at the same time "more international." By adding this nuance, Leon is able to contend that Portland artists are still relevant to a global contemporary art world, but in ways that make Portland a unique and differentiated place.

As in the case of Nashville, some Portland artists are artistically inspired by the characteristics of their region too. Like Olive likes to paint the South, Thurston finds his artistic inspiration in the Pacific Northwest. "So much of why I live here is because of the connection to nature that this town has and the mountains and coasts," he tells me. And like Olive, Thurston also describes his work as "landscapes," but, "Not landscape in the sense that I look in a valley

and paint it." Rather, he says, "Landscape is [just] the output." Like Olive and Mitch, Thurston's paintings also work in a way that resonates with "the contemporary," although he is still inspired by the place he is in. "Some of these places that are just awe-inspiring," Thurston says, "[But] I feel like it's impossible to capture that. You know, it's like you can never really capture what it's really like to be on a cliff looking down."

Dealers are adept at branding Portland artists as being from a unique place as well. Rita, for example, deals explicitly with "Northwest Artists." Part of her sales pitch has to do with the natural environment as a wellspring of artistic inspiration. As she tells me: "Living here, it's really difficult to not have a strong influence of the natural world on your work because everything that's around us and so a lot of the artists [have] a strong feeling about the natural world." As we will see, however, Portland artists and dealers are careful not to identify too closely with the Northwest's geography. In fact, Rita recoiled when I asked her if there is something unique about the content of Portland artists' work. "Oh, I don't know about that," she said, "I mean I think it's hard for anybody, whether it's conscious or not, not have some sort of influence about where they are." She offered that perhaps Northwest artists deal with color more than artists do in other places, perhaps as a consequence of the place's short summers and perennial rains. What makes Rita's artists unique as Portland or Northwest artists is that they made an active choice to be in Portland. She says:

> "Historically, artists that came here didn't want the pressures of being in, say New York, or someplace like that where they felt that they would have added pressure on them to do a certain type of work… But they moved to Portland… where you don't have that kind of really heavy influence from sort of an art world on your

work. So I think a lot of the northwest artists sort of started out that way. It was because an independence of spirit that brought them here."

By defining her artists as independent spirits, Rita does her best to free them from particular, ostensibly constraining aesthetic concerns. For Rita, in fact, it is the "art world," in places like New York that would require artists to make a certain type of work. But what is interesting about Rita's artists is that they appear to have actively chosen Portland over New York City, so as to escape that "art world," or to escape the constraining social influences that go alone with it. Rita embellishes, however; it is likely that only a small number among her stable of artists have moved from New York to Portland; and whether or not they are doing so consciously to escape the art world is another question. Still, this narrative suggests that these artists *could* live and work in New York if they wanted to and, as far as dealers are concerned, this is always a better sales pitch than that these artists are inspired by a particular place. Joni also attests to the power of New York in selling Portland artists: "My biggest selling point is a local artist that also shows in New York City."

Thus, I have argued that artists in Portland and Nashville strive to find some positive place based resources for artistic identity work, and that such place-based concerns often show up in artistic work itself. Moreover, positive place based identities are often won in contrast, positive or negative, to other cities. As Rita and Joni – both art dealers – demonstrated, New York appears to retain a hegemonic influence on artistic evaluation processes, and upon efforts to attain a positive place identity. Indeed, they both distinguish their artists by suggesting that they could live in New York if they wanted to. In the last section of this chapter, I discuss how artists articulate their places in relation to New York's hegemony.

New York Hegemony

It is evident in the narratives above that one way in which places are endowed with significance for artistic careers is through comparing and contrasting them against other places. For example, Portland is *like* San Francisco was 20 years ago, or Portland is *different* from Seattle regarding lifestyle opportunities, market resources, and artistic sensibilities. In this section, I consider how New York City, as the center of the art world, holds sway on these place comparisons and distinctions. Off-center artists compare their cities to New York on a number of dimensions, including their relative cost of living, various lifestyle matters, and especially in terms of what is relevant in contemporary art. Most off-center artists acknowledge that New York offers more career opportunities, if also more competition. But New York is evoked as a marker of authority as well, and off-center artists and off-center scenes can be understood as relevant or not in comparison to New York. As we saw in the introduction, New York affiliations can be evoked to legitimate claims to authority on what counts as contemporary art, or how serious one's local scene should be taken.

The lure of New York can cause artists to reject their local scene, so as to identify instead with a bigger art world elsewhere. A local artist's embrace of the New York art world can help authorize a central position in a local scene. Despite that New York retains some 'hegemonic' influence in the field (Plattner 1996), however, not all artists embrace New York. I also discuss off-center artists' efforts to reject New York, not only as the market and scene center, but as the symbolic center of the art world. Many artists are conscious of New York's hegemony, and question the ways in which New York tends to legitimate artists and their works. In some cases, artists may actively work against New York's hegemony, for example by drawing attention to its symbolic influence through artistic interventions of their own.

Embracing New York

Off center cities will always be too constraining for some, and for some artists who have exhausted social and exhibition opportunities in Portland and Nashville, the lure of New York is always enticing. Some artists will consider moving to other bigger cities – e.g., Los Angeles, Chicago, San Francisco, etc., but New York is the gold standard. If nothing else, a move to New York signifies a "serious" orientation to contemporary art, or to one's career. The decision to move can be a difficult one, however. In Cathy's case, it requires positioning oneself against the local art scene that has sustained their career initially.

Cathy was introduced in Chapter Three as an artist and curator that travels around the world for work, but has been frustrated by a lack of opportunity locally. Her travels around the world as a curator have opened her eyes to how serious and passionate the "real" art world is, as she put it. She cites a lack of local critical dialogue: "I have very few people to really talk to about ideas [in Portland]. I need to be pushed and challenged. I don't want to be at the top of the heap. I want to be in the middle amongst a bunch of people still figuring it out."

Like other off-center artists, Cathy does not take local arts writing very seriously. I mentioned that there are some critics in town that do take Portland and its artists seriously. Cathy knew exactly what I meant, or exactly whom I was referring to because it is a small world. She laughed and said, "I'd say that there are one or two people that I respect that write. And most of them are writing for national magazines or national blogs. And anything that is local I am skeptical of." So, while Portland was once thought of as a space of opportunity ("there was a feeling you could really do something here"), Cathy now she feels she needs something more to push against, that there is a "real" art world beyond Portland, and that Portland cannot contain

her. She is skeptical of what is local. She speaks of New York City as a place that she will probably move to.

Many off-center artists do end up moving to New York, for a variety of reasons. Sometimes it is simply because the opportunity arises, for example, because a convenient living space or studio space opens up, or because friends and acquaintances have already moved there, thereby making initial integration into the New York art world easier. An artist might become successful enough that the cost of living in New York is offset by the market opportunities there. It is more likely that artists move to New York to pursue those opportunities and resources, however, not because they already exist.

For the time being, however, Cathy remains in Portland. She might be 'skeptical' of the local art scene, but that skepticism also serves to position herself as someone "more serious" about contemporary art. In turn, her embrace of New York authorizes and legitimates her central position in the local scene. For artists that have already lived there or spend much time in New York, New York can always serve as a reminder of one's credibility in an off-center scene. Their embrace of New York often comes with a rejection of the local scene as well, for example, against the idea that the city is too small or too conservative to understand their ideas or their work. For younger artists, New York is often understood simply as the place to be. They recognize and/or intuit its special significance through their socialization in their local scenes. For example, they recognize the utility of other artists' affiliations with New York in authorizing their evaluations of local artists.

A New York identity might even absolve one of having to identify with any place in particular. Debbie is a long-time artist that moved to Portland after living much of her adult life in San Francisco and New York; before that she lived in a rural place in Southern Oregon. "I'm

happier here," she told me, "but I don't know if that has anything to do with Portland." Unlike the majority of artists included in this study, Debbie appears to buck the trend by consciously *not* identifying with any particular place. She tells me, "I think people defining their identity via geography is wrong, wrong, wrong… But I do think there are people who, you know, define themselves by geography."

According to Debbie, defining oneself by geography is wrong because it should not matter where one is from. She told me, "I saw this [people identifying with a particular place] all the time because I came from nowhere." Debbie may think of herself as living proof that place does not matter; that one can come from a small town, live in Portland, and have a gallery in Berlin or New York. She did not come from *nowhere*, however. Rather, she came from a place that she perceives would not matter to other artists, as refers to that as nowhere. Interestingly, however, later in the conversation Debbie told me, "I've put in my tenure in New York. I'm a New Yorker… I mean I'm totally a New Yorker; more than a New Yorker. I mean even though I'm probably a poster child in a certain way for an Oregon artist…"

How can we make sense of Debbie's apparent ambivalence about place as a source of identity? It may be posited here that in the center of the art world, in New York, having a place–based identity does not matter like it does on the periphery. As the hegemonic 'center,' New York is 'placeless,' while outlying cities and scenes are understood in terms of their relative geographic, institutional, and reputational difference, or their 'place.' Debbie can say that 'place does not matter' in the contemporary art world to the extent that she can base her credibility on her New York experience.

Contesting New York

Not all off center artists embrace New York. Many artists in this study have lived in New York in the past, or they have had the opportunity to. As Omar suggested in Chapter Two, New York can be a difficult city that requires a hustle that has little to do with art itself. Also, according to Omar, art produced there can be compromised by an 'industrial' production process. New York's drawbacks provide Omar a place to position his ideals against, and thereby to find a positive place-based identity (in Portland) that is not of New York. Other off-center artists add that the New York art world holds a hegemonic influence on artistic evaluation processes and on artists' career chances everywhere, and New York's dominance should therefore be resisted.

Says Omar's friend Neil, "There's definitely more sleaze-bags in New York. And anyone with a type-A personality and trying to get ahead here will leave here; soon enough, it seems to be, because they want the bigger fish to skin, or whatever. People are definitely friendlier here [in Portland]." I first met Neil at a dinner hosted by participants of the Open Engagement conference in Portland. Neil described to me his contribution to the event over barbequed corn-on-the-cob at another Portland artists' backyard cookout. Neil had given a lecture that day in which he proposed to build floating orchards out of retrofitted oil tankers that could take advantage of the earth's seasonal cycles by moving freely around the planet, delivering food as needed. Neil was later described to me as the "soul of Portland's art community," in part because his work deals with natural and environmental concerns, which some argue holds special significance in the region. Neil's vision has been described elsewhere as "a silver lining in environmental catastrophe… in which a happy rainbow rings a mushroom cloud" (Spear, 2009).

I met up with Neil again a few months later in his studio for a formal interview about his career path. Neil was born and raised in Portland, but spent most of the 1980s and 90s in New York. "I worked at Leo Castelli's [gallery]," he told me, nonchalantly, "And I did shows for people like Roy Lichtenstein and Jasper Johns." Neil was a preparator; he painted and moved gallery walls and hung exhibiting artists' work. Neil's path landed him back in Portland in 2000 for reasons including: "New York is a rat race," and "There's no other place in the world as nice as Portland." He continued, "But I realized that if those guys were going to be my role models, that if I was going to be a happy old man, and continue to be an artist like them, then I wouldn't be able to stay in New York."

SS: So those guys [Lichtenstein and Johns] had an influence on you?

Neil: Not really aesthetically, but yeah it just made me see that it's possible to make art and get the hell out. Plus all my friends there, whether they had a studio practice or not, were really just struggling to pay the bills or trying to get shows, to make art and to get their art out. Even though they were really dedicated and painted in the evenings and weekends when they weren't at work, they're still there struggling. I got out in 2000 and they're still there trying to get shows and studio visits from curators and stuff and not really getting in shows. And since I've left there I've just really blossomed I think… I mean look at this…"

Neil pointed to his studio space, where we were conducting the interview, a large garage building behind his house with ample natural light, plumbing, electricity, and ventilation. He thinks the building used to house a marijuana growing operation. I thought it looked like an abandoned machine shop; it was cluttered with various tables, machines, sculptures, and various unfinished objects everywhere. Having never had time for the studio in New York, Neil has

found new opportunity in Portland. He now exhibits in galleries around the country, including Los Angeles, Miami, Chicago, and even New York, which he had not done when living there, in part because he never had time to spend in his studio. Like Omar, Cyndi, and many others, however, Neil is not represented by a local dealer. He still shows locally though. He was exhibiting at the Hippo gallery when we met to interview. Omar had given him a key to the building and Neil showed me his work the next day.

Neil's solo show at Hippo featured installations in each of the four gallery rooms. In the main gallery were gold and silver lacquered burls hanging on the walls, as paintings would be. In another room was a fountain made of a sculpture that resembled an iceberg that was chained to the ceiling and that was pouring Pepto-Bismol, which collected in a silver bucket underneath, whereupon the Pepto was pumped back up to the top through a plastic tube. In a third gallery room a "snowman" was made out of balls of ice that were formed around copper coils attached to an electronic "heat sink" that pulled moisture straight out of the air, condensed, and froze it; *Snowman* was about 5 inches tall, sitting on a wooden pedestal, plugged in to an outlet alongside the wall. In the fourth gallery room, Neil made an installation that featured an alpenhorn sculpture made out of twigs, set in a mountain valley created from a sculpture of a mountain on one side of the room, with a light projector shining against it, which cast shadows of the mountain onto a projection screen the other side of the room.

Going to New York

When in New York, artists from off-center places often feel that their city is a marker of their own credibility. Laura is a Nashville artist that moved from Boston to work in a university art gallery. She describes her artwork as dealing with a "sense of place," and this sense of place

has much to do with the place divisions in the art world. Laura was once visiting New York for an exhibit she was included in, and to meet up with some other artist-friends there.

"People would ask, 'How's Nashville?'" Laura relayed the story, "And I basically told them, 'It's a great place to live, and you can make work, and it's affordable.' But Laura felt their judgment: "I felt when the conversation came around that there was this [attitude] like, 'Oh, you're not as committed to your work because you're not here in this city.'" Laura continues to explain how such attitudes color Nashville artists' perceptions of their own city and scene:

> "I think that we've adopted the same stance that the people in New York have about artists in Nashville; like, 'Oh well, we're not as interested in our work as we would be if went to the city.' I think there is something to be said for going to the city [New York], making a go of it, but I also think there are some amazing conversations and relevant things happening here [in Nashville]."

According to Omar, Portland artists get a different treatment when in New York. Although most Portland artists will attest that the city's arts reputation has grown in recent years, it is still an off-center place in the global field. According to Omar, relative to New York, Portland "is still provincial." Omar explained his earlier comment that Portland artists get a "silent admiration" when they are traveling to New York.

> *Omar*: Because you know, it's still provincial… they don't want to put themselves on the wrong side.
>
> *SS*: On the wrong what?
>
> *Omar*: Side. Because if you are from Portland and you are in New York and you make your work [here] and then you exhibit it [there], they know that you have a better living style and a better setting to make work, and the opportunities can be

equal to being in New York. They admire but they don't want to recognize it overtly because then they will think that it's no better for them to be in New York.

Omar and Laura both understand their place to be subordinate to New York's status as the 'center' of the art world. But both of them are able to use look beyond the status difference to position their places positively against New York's hegemonic influence. Still, when in New York, they perceive that they are marked by the status of their city, relative to the center.

Laura told another story about a prominent art critic from New York who was invited to a Nashville university to give a talk. An audience member asked the prominent New York critic, "Do you think you can be a relevant artist and live in the middle of Tennessee somewhere?" The prominent New York critic answered, "No, absolutely not." Laura continued:

> "I thought 'Oh god, I sound like this person… That's how we all sound! We're asking the wrong person. We're asking a guy who's lived in the same apartment on Manhattan for 50 years if it's possible to be relevant outside of his whole life… We need to figure out whom to ask that question to… not the guy from the New Yorker, the standard of East Coast elitism… Who are we asking if we're relevant? At some point we just have to ask different people if this is relevant, but the answer to 'Is this relevant?' is, 'We're asking the wrong people.'"

Bruce also refuses to accept New York as a standard of artistic legitimacy. Bruce is a tenured professor at a Nashville art college and has never needed to make money in the art market to make his living. Early in his career, however, he was told it was necessary to show in New York to get tenure: "[The College] wanted that rubber stamp that I was worthy of showing in New York," Bruce told me disappointedly. Nevertheless, he obliged and managed to have one gallery show in New York, "At a major gallery," he added, but he vowed never to show in a commercial

gallery again. Instead, he has shown in University galleries and museums throughout the country, but not in New York, where he feels like he is not accepted because his Nashville address does not belong there. Says Bruce:

> "First of all, there is nothing more provincial than a New Yorker, okay?" I've been fighting this my whole career. This surfaced in a meeting the other day. I was very upset. We were talking about a job candidate, and one of our faculty members said, 'Well, they're from New York…' Somehow they're better because they are from New York. I mean I've been fighting this my whole fucking career. The Civil War is still on…

Everyday Museum

The Everyday Museum is an effort to contest New York's hegemony artistically. Harvey is a Portland artist that has been represented in one recent Whitney Biennial. As we will see in the next chapter, the Whitney Biennial is a major reward that unites the global field. Like Omar and Neil and Cyndi and many others, Harvey is not represented by a local dealer, but shows often in other cities, including New York. Harvey moved to Portland in 2000 in part as an effort to "get away from the art world," as he put it, but the art world followed him. "People at the time said, 'Oh that's a really bad idea, why would you move to Portland? That's a move in the wrong direction.' If I'm going to move, I should move to New York or L.A." Since arriving in Portland, however, Harvey's career seems to have accelerated. He tells the story about being selected for the Whitney Biennial.

> "I didn't have to entirely be doing my work in Portland, and so, without it being strategic, it wound up being a good move for me, because I was established

> enough already, from what I had done in [elsewhere], and traveling around, that I continued to be asked to do things. And then people sort of thought it was interesting that I wasn't from one of these major cities. So in a way, I was able to be this token person from another region, from a smaller city, and that was interesting, like 'oh yeah, the guy from Portland.' And so it was interesting for people, like the curator of the [Biennial], to be like, 'Oh yeah, we got somebody from Portland…' I became in a way a curiosity."

Harvey takes this experience to heart; he acknowledges that his 'place' in the contemporary art world is informed by Portland's subordinate status within a space of positions that privileges New York above all others.

When Harvey was in New York for the Whitney he was included in, a friend stopped him and mentioned that that particular Biennial was going to be a really good one because she had seen all the artists' works already – almost all of those artists were from New York, and she had already seen their work at other exhibitions in New York. But this artist also avoided the previous Biennial, Harvey told me, which included several artists from other cities, because she "heard it was really bad" and so didn't bother going. Harvey's friends' story indicated to him that artists buy into New York's hegemony, and this distorts their vision of art.

> "And that seemed really indicative to me of this dynamic that was being played out, not [only] among the higher eschelons of the collector base/board people/administration [at the Whitney Museum], but on the ground level of actual artists that don't realize what it is that they've assimilated, or what it is that they're buying into. Which ultimately is not good for artists, I don't think."

In response, Harvey curated the *Everyday Museum*. Harvey and a fellow curator from another off-center place traveled to cities that were, he says, "Not New York or L.A. specifically, to sort of see what was going on in those places." The exhibit featured artists from South Dakota, among other far-out places. The *Everyday Museum*, Harvey suggests, is an intervention against the hegemony of the New York arts establishment. Harvey is prominent actor in the global field of contemporary art, but he is conscious of its spatial divisions. Portland is far enough away from that world, though not completely off the radar. This fact allows Harvey to do things like this that illuminate the art world's spatial divisions.

Visible Locales in a Global Field

This chapter offers an interpretive analysis of artists' understandings of their 'place' in the global field. I have demonstrated that places and place categories matter for artistic careers, beyond the social and organizational resources that particular places concentrate.

Wellspring refers to a positive place-based resource for artistic inspiration, art-making, or career concerns. More than that however, this chapter shows how those places are actively communicated, and place reputations are at stake in artists' careers. Not all artists speak of their place as a positive source of art making or artistic identity, however. Still, most artists reveal at least some anxiety about the 'place' they live and work, and in doing so they strive to achieve some kind of positive place-based identification, be it in their hometown or elsewhere (e.g., New York). Indeed, it has been argued that certain places count more than other for the artistic values that they generate and legitimate, with contemporary arts' centers occupying an outsize influence in that regard (Gieryn 2008; Plattner 1996). Here, I show that off-center places can matter too, and that they are variable in the symbolic values that they generate. Places matter for how artists

make sense of their place in the global field; they give artists material to inspire their artistic concerns.

As places are endowed with meaning, relative to other places, they are contested as such as well. In the introduction, Leon demonstrated this by taking up a Whitney Biennial curator in a "battle" to position Portland as a legitimate site of artistic production. In doing so, Leon engaged in what Kaufman and Kaliner (2011) have called "transmission efforts," or attempts to communicate the positive value of their place for others outside of it. Other artists engage in similar kinds of practices, at varying levels. For example, Cyndi's *Art Makes Place* project (Chapter Two) is explicitly conceived of as an effort to bring attention to Nashville's art scene, and was a collaborate effort with local funding sources. Gallery Homeland's project to exchange artists with those in New York and Berlin (above) is similarly collaborative effort to, "make Portland more widely known," as Sam Adams had put it. On a smaller level, artists engage in transmission efforts every time they travel to another place, and represent themselves as *of* that particular place.

These transmission efforts must always contend with "negative transmissions" (Kaufman and Kaliner 2011), however, or attempts to reify the place-distinctions that, for example, make places like New York the hegemonic center of the art world. Indeed, for those espousing a New York identity, place-based categories used to define art and artists may be considered "gauche," or otherwise irrelevant. The lens of the global field of cultural production offered here allows us to see just how place-reputations matter in the field of contemporary art.

I return here to my interview with Neil, who demonstrates that Portland's newfound reputation in the global field is perhaps the outcome of such symbolic struggles. When I asked

Neil about what it means to be an artist from Portland, he suggested that I talk to Leon. Indeed, I already had:

> "It's funny when… the Portland art world got noticed or whatever, I mean Leon's one of the early champions, like, "Portland's a happening place," and everyone was like, "he's so full of shit, what the fuck is he talking about," But he'd just gotten here and I think he could see it, coming from Salt Lake City or somewhere. And then the people that had been here were like, "oh he's full of shit," or whatever, but then the people - and you know 'people,' that doesn't mean anything right, but a lot of people - started to kind of take his side, or they see it in print enough, and they hear it enough, that they just like started to believe it, you know like "Coke is better than Pepsi," or whatever, right, so for a long time it was just like, "there's nothing going on here, what's he doing, Portland's dead." That is just conversations I've had with other people. And then other people are like, "oh no there's definitely something happening here." And then at some point, there definitely IS something happening here. And I talked to my friends in New York or wherever, and they're like, "Man I hear Portland's hoppin," you know, and then… but people from there are also moving here, talking about how great it is. So there definitely some truth to it…"

This chapter views such place reputations as "accomplishments," arising in part from artists' efforts to draw attention to their off-center cities or regions as legitimate sites of artistic production. While artists make work that is informed by the places around them, I do not conclude that artists make work that communicates their place-related positions. Again, I am not interested in whether or not Portland 'really' offers more inspiration for contemporary art

making than Nashville, or if both are more or less inspiring or productive than New York. Rather, my concern here is to show how artists invest their cities with meaning, such that places provide resources for identity work, as well as artistic work, how those place-based meanings exists in relation to other places, and are variable over time.

Chapter 6

How to Get Into the Whitney Biennial

It is an exciting moment when a curator from the Whitney Biennial travels through a city that is not New York or Los Angeles to survey the nation's art and artists for inclusion in its most widely acclaimed group exhibition. Dedicated to presenting "the state of American Art today" (Graffeo 2008), the Whitney Biennial is as much an opportunity for a curator to make a statement about what counts as the state of American art as it is for an emerging artist to expand their career to the *n*th degree – especially for artists living in places that otherwise lack exposure to the kinds of gatekeepers that make such careers possible.

The Whitney Biennial is conceived of here as one universally recognized award around which the global field of contemporary art is united. I have defined fields as a set of actors united by a common orientation to a particular set of stakes and rewards (also see Martin 2011). For the field of contemporary art, the Whitney Biennial represents one such tangible award. At stake for those selected is immediate exposure of their work on a global stage, chances for "international" recognition, and career longevity. Similar distinctive and tangible awards in this field include Guggenheim Fellowships and critical reviews in internationally circulation publications such *ArtForum*, or perhaps representation by a blue-chip dealer in a center city. Neither of these are technically *awards*, but each serves to generate exposure and visibility well beyond one's local scene, thereby furthering an artist's recognition, reputation, and career viability. Inclusion in the Whitney Biennial is particularly illustrative because it is one example in which an off-center artist can conceivably be anointed without needing previous extra-local exposure, as Whitney curators are the ones that travel to other places to make their selections.

It became clear to me early on in the course of this research just what inclusion in the Whitney Biennial means to local artists and scenes. In the introduction, Leon suggested that a number of Portland artists have been included in recent Whitney Biennials, thereby validating Portland in his view as a "hot art city." Whitney curators were among the other "major curators" that have begun to take his city seriously. In the previous chapter, Bruno similarly articulated Portland as a "place of consequence" because, as he said, "Finally, the Whitney comes here, finally." Indeed, the Whitney matters not only as a source of exposure for the few individual artists that are selected, but also as a potential resource for legitimizing one's city in the global field, even if an artist is not selected.

In this chapter, I illustrate the stakes and consequences of the multi-level, local/global field by tracing the selection process of one prestigious award that serves to unite it. First, the Whitney Biennial selection process calls our attention to the relative status of a city's scene vis-à-vis the many other places that a Whitney curator might choose to visit, and the fact of a Whitney curator visit alone is cause for celebration and animosity. Second, the process reveals – once cities are visited – how local scene dynamics influence who gets a studio visit, and perhaps who gets selected.

The extent to which artists living outside of New York or Los Angeles are actually included in the Whitney is a complicated and contested story, however. While only 20 percent of American professional artists live in New York or Los Angeles, roughly three out of every four artists selected for the Whitney Biennial hail from those cities.[17] This fact is evidence for some artists and Art World commentators that the New York and Los Angeles scenes regularly produce higher quality artists and art works. The perspective adopted here, however, is that fields of cultural production are sites of symbolic struggles for recognition. A New York address, from

[17] Counts are given by Whitney Museum websites that list the artists and their city 2006-2012.

this perspective, is rather a mark of legitimacy won socially and symbolically; it influences perceptions of what is good or "serious" art (Gieryn 2008; Plattner 1996). Specific to this chapter, valuation and evaluation processes are influenced by place-based labels. As should be clear by now, cultural fields generate place divisions, and as such, place becomes a stake in the symbolic struggle to accumulate recognition.

There are few, if any, standardized criteria of evaluation in contemporary art. Artistic evaluation generally is fraught with uncertainty and depends on trusted relationships between social intermediaries (Lamont 2012), especially, one might argue, since the proliferation of new media and postmodernist art manifestos have reshaped the field of contemporary art since the 1960s. Selection for the Whitney Biennial is a social process that involves a series of decisions made by individuals acting on behalf of larger organizations, whom must necessarily interact with other individuals in many local scenes, in many different places, which are also subject to myriad symbolic struggles and perceptions of worth. Thus, this chapter also presents a study in the sociology of evaluation and legitimation (Lamont 2009, 2012) in one highly reputational field, illuminating in the case of contemporary art how few rewards are filtered among countless participants, and thus how these selection processes and practices are dually embedded in local scenes and global fields.

In this chapter, we will meet several artists that have been selected for Whitney Biennials, have had studio visits from Whitney curators, or have been called on to nominate local artists for studio visits. In addition, I use accounts of Whitney Biennial decisions by arts journalists and commentators from around the U.S. to demonstrate how symbolic struggles surrounding selection for this particular award are not limited to artists in Portland and Nashville. I begin by describing the contested terrain upon which selections are made, making evident that perceptions

of artistic value are intricately tied to the places from which selected artists originate. Second, I attempt to piece together the many constraints operating on Whitney curators, including their selection of cities to visit in the first place. Third, cases of studio visits, nominations, and successfully selected artists in Nashville, Portland, and New York illustrate a) how places become contested markers of artistic worth, b) how cumulative network ties between places facilitate selections, and c) how nominations and decisions are filtered through local scenes. No artist from Nashville has been selected for Whitney Biennial exhibitions in recent decades, but the case demonstrates how outside curators make connections to local scenes and how local scenes process their queries, including the meaning and discourse about a city such visits can generate. The case of Portland on the other hand offers a handful of Whitney Biennial selections over the past decade. Portland's art scene has accumulated ties to gatekeepers in New York and elsewhere, which translate to continued exposure, and which generate consequences within the social space of the local scene.

Contesting Geography of Inclusion and Exclusion

Located in Manhattan's Upper East Side, the Whitney Museum boasts hosting the first permanent collection of American art. Says its website: "The Whitney Museum of American Art presents the full range of twentieth-century and contemporary American art, with a special focus on works by living artists" (Whitney). Its Biennial exhibition is billed as a "survey," striving to include "emerging" American art and artists – i.e., young, promising artists who do not already have international exposure and reputations. The Whitney Biennial is thus a unique institution in the contemporary art world; its mission requires that its curators regularly travel around the U.S. to find material to program.

Despite traveling widely, however, Whitney Biennial curators are often criticized for managing to exclude everything outside of New York and Los Angeles. Curators of the 2012 Biennial, for example, supposedly made the rounds to the Pacific Northwest, but only to "snub," as one Seattle writer put it: "[The Whitney Biennial] is [sic] dudecentric, and it doesn't even make any attempt to include the Northwest" … and usually only includes "already-minted art-world darlings from New York with a handful from L.A." (Graves 2011). That 2012 Biennial was relatively inclusive, actually; only thirty-three of the fifty-one selected artists (65%) were from New York or L.A.; six were from San Francisco; and the remainder were scattered around the country (and France and Germany). In 2010, by contrast, Forty-four out of the fifty-five Whitney Biennial artists (80%) were from New York or L.A., and in 2008, sixty-eight of eighty-one artists (84%) had a New York or Los Angeles address.

According to Michele Lamont (2012), evaluation processes that rely on individual expertise rather than standardized systems are most prone to the reproduction of hierarchies. The perception above that Whitney curators only select "already minted art world darlings…" would appear to corroborate that proposition, but what is reproduced is not simply the "already minted status" of those "darlings," but also that they are from New York and L.A. The hierarchy at stake in this evaluation process, according to this writer, concerns not only the work and reputations of those artists, but also the places from which those artists originate.

Commenters from off-center cities are not the only ones to voice a disapproving position of the Whitney selection process. There can be push back from the center as well if a curator is perceived to be too inclusive of artists from peripheral places. While the selection decisions are theirs alone, Whitney curators operate within a world mediated by art critics and arts organizations, and those intermediaries are profoundly concerned with artists' places of origin.

One prominent New York art critic once bemoaned a Whitney Biennial that featured many artists from off-center cities, suggesting that even though there appears to be a New York bias in Whitney Biennials, curators' efforts to include the rest of the country are hardly worth the consequent sacrifice in artistic quality: "I think everyone agrees that art is coming from all over, that it isn't any one thing, and that a curator's job is to see what's out there. But surely, American art is in better shape than this" (Saltz 2002). Perhaps a more powerful sanction against inclusion outside of New York comes from the more formally organized power brokers of that New York art world, as Harvey, a Portland artist explained to me:

> "The year that I was in the Whitney Biennial, I was the only artist included from the entire West Coast other than L.A. I think the year that I was in it there was nobody from San Francisco, nobody from Portland, other than me, nobody from Seattle, or anywhere between, which was completely disregarded… And I think in a way it was actually a backlash against [the previous] Whitney Biennial, in which [the curator] did attempt to go around the country and include more people from out-of-the-way-places. In that year, he included quite a few people from San Francisco, at least one person from Portland, one person from Seattle, and then lots of other places too. And there was a huge backlash against that for a couple of reasons. One was, economically, the board of the Whitney and the people who are the players in that sort of world system didn't like that [artists] were being shown in the Biennial who were not being represented in New York galleries, [whom] they may not have invested in, because they want *that* to happen. It [a Whitney Biennial selection] increases the value of their work; it increases the status of the work that they own and that increases their status and wealth."

The geography of Whitney Biennial inclusion and exclusion – or of opportunities and rewards in the contemporary art world generally – is thus a contentious and contested terrain. From the center, it may appear that New York and L.A. artists consistently produce work that is worthy of inclusion in a show that is supposed to represent the cutting edge of emerging American art. From the periphery, on the other hand, it appears that New York's hegemony in this field consists of much more than blind evaluations of artistic merit. It also involves an organizational apparatus that combines museum pedigrees and dominant market actors investing symbolically and materially in artists from particular places for personal benefit.

Perceptions of inclusion and exclusion have consequences that extend beyond artistic merit and institutional power too. Center/periphery divisions can also generate antagonisms between peripheral cities. For example, the Seattle author cited above also managed to slander at least one of two Portland artists picked for the 2010 Biennial: "The last attempt [to include the Northwest] involved a single, weak Portland artist" (Graves 2011). Meanwhile, one Portland commentator responded smugly to the 2012 list of artists:

> "Over the past decade six Portlanders have taken part [in Whitney Biennials] so we are a little ambivalent to the whole thing... Call us when you give a Portlander a solo show or do a show about how Americans are re-evaluating what American values are (which is what Portland excels at)" (Jahn 2011).

These comments suggest a Portland/Seattle rivalry fueled by the distribution of rewards in a larger, extra-local contemporary art world (granted, that rivalry goes beyond the arts); they suggest how recognition in a place-divided field makes one's city a salient marker of identity worth defending. Indeed, like the New York critic, these comments also illustrate how evaluations of artistic worth are made not only by the work itself, but also by the places artists

come from. The distribution of rewards in the field of contemporary art between the center and the periphery thus generates competition that gets expressed in terms of place distinctions that ultimately may influence how and where artistic evaluation and legitimation takes place. The distribution of rewards in a global field generates local consequences, and one's city or place itself becomes a stake in the game.

Curators' Pathways

Just as there are no clear standards of evaluation in contemporary art, there are also no clear rules around which Whitney curators themselves are selected. Sometimes Whitney curators work individually, sometimes in teams of two or even three; sometimes one of those curators is a regular employee of the Whitney Museum, and sometimes they represent other art institutions around the country. For the 2012 Biennial, The Whitney Museum selected a duo consisting of one former New York art dealer (a minor controversy), along with one Whitney curator (Vogel 2010). For the 2014 Biennial, several potential guest curators were asked by Whitney staff to submit proposals of their curatorial methodology. The curators selected for that future Biennial hail from major arts institutions in London, Philadelphia, and Chicago (Vogel 2012).

Regardless of New York and Los Angeles biases, however real or imagined, Whitney curators do manage to travel widely in their searches. But they do not typically go anywhere and everywhere, and some go further than others. Curators work within the same set of opportunities and constraints that characterize artistic career paths generally. They are likely to travel to convenient places with larger contemporary art scenes. They are embedded in the same global field that makes some places more recognizable than others, and this includes the truism that a recognizably "vibrant" art scene is likely to produce more cutting-edge, statement-making work.

Their paths to and through other cities are likely to lead them to utilize pre-existing network connections, and to initiate contact with other established experts in their field. One does not get to be a Whitney Biennial curator by knowing nobody.

For an example of a city that is consistently represented in the Whitney Biennial (but that is not New York or L.A.), the San Francisco Bay Area contains many artists for a city of its size and makes a convenient trip for a curator (it is close to L.A.). San Francisco may also be recognized as having a more vibrant contemporary art scene than other cities of similar size and convenience (e.g., Boston is close to New York). San Francisco also contains a good number of contemporary art institutions (museums and non-profits) and thus provides opportunities for a curator to forge and renew professional connections. In recent history, the Whitney has even selected its curators from Bay Area arts institutions, which resulted in more artists from that region than would otherwise be expected (or tolerated) (*see* Saltz, 2002).

On the other hand, Whitney curators might choose to scrutinize smaller cities on principle, for example, if cognizant of the geographic divisions that structure the field and obscure artists in off center places. As recent history has shown, however, that might be a risky move (*see again* Saltz, 2002) Or, curators might work around such criticism by making "site-specificity" or "the local" their central aesthetic and programmatic themes, thus requiring consideration of art and artists from a range of places, as one New York writer noted of the team of curators for the 2008 Whitney Biennial:

> "In discussing their methodology, [the curators] emphasize the research they dedicated to "casting the widest net possible," traveling widely and refining their sensitivity to the terrain between discrete artists. Centrally, they claim to have

found unity across the large body of individual creators not in medium, style, or formal project, but in an investment in locally rich culture…" (Graffeo 2008).

But of the eighty-one artists selected for that 2008 Whitney Biennial, sixty-eight (84 %) were from "locally rich" New York and Los Angeles.

In any case, the likelihood that any artist ever gets into the Whitney Biennial is extremely small, but the likelihood that artists not from New York or Los Angeles are included is even smaller. Geographic divisions aside, however, the selection process is still a messy affair. Unknown talented artists from unknown places do get selected from time to time, and it is still an exciting moment in an off center city when (and if) a curator does come through.

Searching for Nashville

Jay moved to Nashville from New York temporarily in 2011 for a teaching position at a local art school. He lasted one semester in Nashville before moving back to New York, which he described as a "tough decision" – a trade-off between a steady job with a laid-back lifestyle (in Nashville) and a reputation as an emerging artist with regular show opportunities and studio space in the center of the art world, however tenuous that living situation (in New York). I first met Jay at a soiree at the Demonbreun Gallery in the second month of his four-month stay, whereupon we conversed for the first time the differences between New York and Nashville.

"I *love* Nashville!" Jay told me, "Everyone is so friendly. You can do so much here; you can just start a gallery or a publication if you want [the party was for the launch of an online arts publication based out of Nashville]. And it's much easier to get into the Whitney Biennial being in a place like Nashville." Slightly confused, I took him up on the subject, "Was there ever such a thing as a Whitney Biennial artist from Nashville, ever?" I asked. Upon further research, there

have been a few Nashville connections to the Whitney, but no artists that lived in Nashville when they were selected, and only one of those was in recent decades.

My question to Jay aroused some hostility. We finished our conversation then, but it was later relayed to me that Jay did not like that I was "going around asking questions about the Art World." I managed to minimize the damages by appealing to other Nashville informants that knew Jay, who then convinced Jay that I was okay, just an outsider with a different perspective on things. It mattered to everyone that Jay was from New York. Although he only lived in Nashville for four months, he was an important source of information to me, and an important social connection for everyone else. I do not know if Jay's hostility was triggered by my questioning of the Whitney selection process, the historical reality of a Nashville's artist's chances, or that I would question him, a New York artist, at all; perhaps it was some combination of these. I finally sat down with Jay for an informal interview on the day of his going away party to get his full story in his own words. By then our conversation was limited to his complaints about what is missing in Nashville's art scene.

In any case, Jay's perception that selection into the Whitney Biennial is easier from Nashville is not as inaccurate as it sounds. Nashville, only the 38th largest Metropolitan area in the U.S. (at the time), is usually bypassed by Whitney curators, but not always. What Jay knows is that the visibility of one's local art scene on the balance of national or global relevance, or the various personalities and aesthetic programs of individual curators, and the distant New York world of power brokers are not the only factors at work. Once a curator has chosen what places to visit, a new set of variables comes into play. Also important is an individual artist's visibility within their local scene.

As the cliché would have it, being in a smaller pond has its perks. Socialized in the New York art world, Jay was a big fish in Nashville, in part because he was a pedigreed New York artist with an MFA from a prestigious art school – quality of his artwork notwithstanding. Jay understood that if and when a Whitney curator were to come to a city like Nashville, they would of course be looking for the best work to fit their program, but their search would also inevitably lead them to the most visible fish. Jay's perception is corroborated by Patti's. Patti moved from Portland to New York four Whitney Biennials ago. "I used to get studio visits all the time until I moved to New York," she told me, "[But] since I've been in New York… I'm friends with Whitney curators [now], but I haven't gotten one studio visit. That's just how it works. Curators are always looking to find something new from somewhere else." Jay moved back to New York before his opportunity arose, but several other Nashville artists have gotten studio visits.

A curator's search usually begins with phone calls or emails to the appropriate local connections, for example, to other curators at local museums or local reputable art institutions. The out-of-town curator might ask about a particular artist that they are already familiar with (e.g., whom might already exhibit in a New York gallery, or whom has otherwise generated a buzz in the art world), or a group of artists (e.g., whom might have previously been reviewed in a publication with national circulation), and/or as often appears to be the case they will simply ask those local curators for new names. Local curators then get to be nominators, heightening their position as local gatekeepers, now responsible to a larger authority for representing the pulse of the local scene, and now with the potential to elevate a local artists' career. The nomination process is an inexact science, of course, because the achievement of local visibility itself is a sociological accomplishment beyond whatever talent bases distinguish one artist from another

(that was the subject of Chapter 4). So when rumor hits the street that a Whitney curator is in town, things can "get political," as one Nashville artist told me.

Lou was working at his preparator job hanging an art exhibit many years ago when he was informed that, within the hour, a curator from the Whitney Biennial would be visiting the building where all the members of his art collective shared studio space. He relayed the story to me as follows:

> "[Our art collective] had found a way to radiate outside the city, and there were people talking about it in other places, so the word was out. So, [the Whitney curator] contacts the curator [at my job], and he said "I'm coming to Nashville and I heard about this place… and I heard there are some studios there…" You know, at that time there were so many more artists here than there are now. So, then it gets all political… Well, I worked at [the place where the Whitney curator called]… and [my boss] made a quick mention about me…"

"Political" is how Lou characterizes the process that led to his nomination. Of the many artists living in Nashville at the time, Lou perceived his own nomination to be a matter of a friendship with or social proximity with the local curator beyond whatever value his work itself might merit. Nevertheless, Lou said, "So I dropped everything in the middle of install," and he told his boss he would be back the next day. Once at the studio building, Lou found that there were a "handful of other guys that also found out about it," waiting around for their studio visit. That curator spent about ten minutes with each artist, Lou recalled, "You could tell right off the bat that [no one] was going to be invited from our city… You could just tell he wasn't interested."

Nevertheless, the fact that a few Whitney curators have come through Nashville in recent memory has been evidence for some Nashvillians that the art world is beginning to take their city

seriously. Said Lou, "For some reason Nashville is on the radar… and at some point we [the Nashville art scene] have to pat ourselves on the back." One Nashville gallery director, Murph, had a slightly different take:

> *Murph*: Why is it that New York finds Nashville interesting? It's the Gospel versus Rock and Roll. It's Johnny Cash. It's that spiritual battle… [But] when Whitney people and other curators come down their reaction is very funny. They come [to my gallery] or [to some studios] which would be showing some installation or video, and they would show up at the opening and look around and say, "We've got this in New York." And I would say, "Yeah, well these artists have degrees from Yale," or "lived in Brooklyn." And they're like, "Why are we looking at this in Nashville?" [But I'm] like, "What were you expecting to find?" And I think they were looking for hillbilly, narrative, finger-painting.
>
> *SS*: They want something that's distinctive of Nashville?
>
> *Murph*: …Of what they would perceive Nashville to be.

Geographic divisions color artistic legitimation processes well beyond the social or institutional differences that exist between gatekeepers in New York and artists in Nashville. Here, Murph perceives that popular stereotypes about a place can influence how curators understand the art that originates there. In recent art historical discourse, regional or "site-specific" artistic/aesthetic differences are alternately argued to signal a resistance to the homogenizing tendencies of late capitalism (Lippard 1997), or are a direct result of dominant modes of capital accumulation that, in the postindustrial period, are increasingly concerned with place differentiation (Kwon 2002; *also see* Harvey 1990). From an interactionist perspective, however, the very *idea* that regional artists deal with particular local issues – cultural, environmental, aesthetic, or otherwise –

represents what Browker and Star (1999) would call a *boundary object* – something around which a symbolically or politically differentiating position can be asserted and articulated. In this case, Murph asserts the idea that New York curators are naively seduced by a caricature of Nashville culture such that they cannot appreciate the ostensibly 'real' contemporary artists that live there. Indeed, Murph defines the situation such that place-based aesthetic differences are more pronounced in the gatekeepers' imaginations than in reality, thus explaining why Nashville artists tend to get overlooked.

Getting into the Whitney Biennial thus requires being selected among presumably hundreds of artists that get studio visits, from New York and L.A., and from any number of places in between. Getting a studio visit usually requires being a visible artist within a local scene, and this means having local connections and consistent showing opportunities. But it also requires the curator's choice of cities to visit in the first place. This in turn implies the production of visibility/recognition for the place itself, which can be generated endogenously (e.g., via the notoriety achieved by Lou's art collective) or exogenously (e.g., via popular perceptions or stereotypes of a place generated elsewhere).

The perception that outside curators are looking to Nashville for any particular reason, or that Nashville has recently managed to capture New York's attention, or that it helps to be from a place "like Nashville," are frustrated by the simple fact that Whitney curators have always passed on its artists, if and when they do travel through at all. Nevertheless, the case of Nashville shows just how the Whitney selection process helps to reproduce the place divided field. The process of evaluating "the state of American art" positions the Whitney curator (perhaps by extension, the New York art world generally) as socially powerful vis-à-vis the Nashville scene. Indeed, the simple choice of stopping in Nashville can have implications for how a city's artists

understand themselves as worthy of a visit. The process can serve to focus local artists' attentions on the cultural attributes of the city itself, for example, as potential cause of a curator's rejection or acceptance of its artists, while also allowing local artists cultural material to position themselves against – in Murph's case, against the clueless outsider.

Packaging Portland

Portland presents a similar set of lessons about the Whitney selection process, but with a different set of outcomes. Like Nashville, the selection process has much to do with intra-scene visibility and place distinctiveness, but unlike Nashville, Portland offers a number of successful cases in recent years, thus revealing how these variables lead to actual selections. While Nashville's "gospel vs. rock-and-roll; spiritual-battle; hillbilly-narrative; Johnny Cash" identity is used to account for curators' failures to accept its contemporary artists, Portland's "Creative City" and "Artisan" identities are offered by locals there as one explanation for its success, or for the city's visibility among art curators at least. And while in both cities it helps to be well connected and visible within the local scene, Portland artists and curators have also established resourceful inter-city ties between local artists and outside curators in recent years (i.e., trusted intermediaries), which in turn generates repeat interest from outside gatekeepers over time.

Harvey, who was introduced above as the only West Coast artist not from L.A. in the Biennial in which he was selected, identifies as a "post-studio" artist. "The work I do doesn't necessarily end in a product," he told me, thereby avoiding the given categories with which artists usually describe their practice. Instead, Harvey's work deals with performances, processes, and audiences, all of which combine to make art out of rather unsuspected social encounters and experiences in unsuspected places. Harvey has established some art-historical

notoriety around his work, and so he has earned whatever terms define his career, but he was only beginning to establish his reputation when he moved to Portland in 2000. The move was part of an attempt to escape the everyday hustle of the New York and Los Angeles art world; he was already regularly traveling through those places anyway. But the art world followed him to Portland, as his story goes, because his unique artistic practice resonated with what was then considered to be a unique place.

> *Harvey:* People at the time said, "Oh that's a really bad idea, to move to Portland. Why would you do that? That's a move in the wrong direction." If I'm going to move [they would say], I should move to New York or L.A. But then people sort of thought it was interesting that I wasn't from one of these major cities. And you know it helped, like, when people were curating things, like the Whitney Biennial, to say like, "Yeah look, we got somebody from Portland." I became in a way sort of a curiosity. And because my work was already so different from the way other people worked, that it could almost be combined. Like, "Oh yeah, he's from this place that doesn't have this commercial scene, and he's not operating in this commercial way, he's doing this other thing." And that can be seen as an interesting package or something.

Like Murph, Harvey perceived that his off-center address provides Whitney curators an opportunity to package him as a product of a unique place – as something that resonates with a place's real or imagined characteristics. Murph perceived curators to be searching in Nashville for something that articulates contradictory morals, something resembling Johnny Cash. For Harvey, it is a non-commercial scene that allows curators to understand his non-commercial work. In both cases, it is not necessarily the artist or the work, but the place that can be presented

to global audiences. Harvey's and Murph's particular accounts need not be taken at face value, however. Harvey also knows, for example, that at least a few commercially oriented artists from Portland have also been included in the Whitney Biennial recently. On the other hand, it may still be consistent to say that outside artists (outside the center or outside conventional media) resonate with outside places (*see* Fine's (2004) study of the "outsider art" world). At least, Harvey and Murph's accounts reveal that cities and their images matter for the resources they offer in accounting for artistic legitimation processes. Still, it is likely that curators and gatekeepers are also influenced by ideas associated with particular places, especially if those associations happen to include arts production.

Portland's "creative" and arts-led branding efforts make up one popular explanation among local artists for the attention they get from outside curators. Says Coco: "Portland is known as a pretty cool place. Who wouldn't want to hang out for a while here? Of course Whitney curators are going to make the stop." Coco added that this is especially true among New York curators who might have read about its restaurants and artisan business scene in the *Portland Journal* section of the *New York Times* (*e.g.*, Asimov, 2007; Gross, 2009; Yardley, 2010). Says Cathy, "I think Portland is on the radar of everyone from like livability to coffee to bike lanes to, you know, urban planning, whatever it is..." But these informants gloss the fact that the arts are as much a part of Portland's branding efforts as are bike lanes and restaurants. Indeed, Portland's official arts policy document – the *Creative Action Plan* (Portland 2009a) – encourages: "build the brand," among other prescriptions designed to distinguish the city as an art city. Portland's "creative" policy efforts have also led to a real increase in the city's population of primary-occupation visual artists in the last ten years, all while the visual artist population in the country as a whole has declined significantly (NEA 2011; Table 1, Appendix).

Thus, while the "art/artisan/creative" brand may persuade outside curators to take a look, the actual pool of selectable artists relative to other places that curators travel has also increased.

As Whitney curators have consistently made the trip to Portland in recent years, professional relationships and network ties between local actors and outside curators also accumulate. Portland has become a regular stop on the curator's tour, not only because it might produce "interesting packages," or because the arts are a distinctive part of its branding strategy, but also because of the social ties that increasingly connect Portland's art scene to scenes in places like New York, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Berlin, etc. Portland has in this time become a place where people know people, and those people know people who know people who have connections (etc.) far beyond the city itself. And in the processes of contemporary arts evaluation – as with contemporary artists' careers generally – inter-city network connections are a resourceful currency and likewise serve to color perceptions about art itself.

Cathy is a Portland artist and curator. Her artwork has achieved modest local recognition and acclaim, but it is her curatorial work that takes her far from Portland, which in turn makes her a central figure within the local scene. As a curator at a local arts organization, Cathy gets to make decisions about whom and what to show (including local art and artists). More importantly, however, Cathy's job takes her around the world to look at art (like a Whitney curator does, or like any curator working for any arts institution with a budget that allows it). These travels lead to connections with artists and others elsewhere that accumulate over time. And so, when outside curators look to Portland, Cathy is one likely point of connection; she possesses artistic/curatorial expertise and can speak knowledgably about the local scene to an outside curator, but she is also rich in translocal social capital too. To be visible from Portland to a Whitney curator, thus means to be visible locally to somebody like Cathy. Because of her power to nominate, she is a sought

connection among local artists, and thus she is well positioned to be nominated by others as well. I caught up with Cathy in the middle of preparation for a huge exhibit that was to feature many artists from around the globe, including from New York, Los Angeles, Tokyo (Portland has its own equivalent to the Whitney Biennial).

> *Cathy*: "When the Whitney curators came [to Portland] this time… you know, they've come like four times in a row… I'm the one who's giving them a list of artists. And I'm an artist myself. I don't put my name on that list. You know what I mean? And I've had Whitney visits, but it's from other people recommending me. So that's an interesting position to be in to like be trying really hard to get other artists out of here… But my own practice is really different from the work that I show and the work that I even promote to other people outside of the city. [It is] so complicated, but I love it.
>
> *SS*: How do you connect with people from that art world? Why do [Whitney curators] come to you when they come [to Portland]?
>
> *Cathy*: Because of my role [as a curator], and I think because I work with so many artists at this point that they know the projects. They sort of are hearing about it. Like an artist from New York that I worked with here recommended [my organization] to the Foundation of Contemporary Art, and we got like a little $1,000 grant. And then, you know, another artist works for the Keith Haring Foundation, so she is there talking to them about that. I think that what's happened is it's really been word of mouth that people go back and [mention my name]. Because, you know, five years ago, [Whitney curators] weren't coming to ask me [about artists]. But I think it's because they see us as sort of a place that is

> making a web of artists that includes people who are right here and people who are, you know, in Europe. So they're interested in that continuum, but like if I were just working as an artist, they wouldn't be calling me. It's because of my role as a curator."

Cathy's connections also lead to her role as a local nominator, which in turn helps in winning her own studio visits with Whitney curators. Indeed, the nominators and the nominees are often the very same people (though they do not nominate themselves, they nominate each other), and this tends to be a small pool in an off-center scene. For this there are several plausible explanations: a) locals with similar endowments of translocal social capital occupy similar local (and thus global) field positions; b) they form a status group; they tend to be friends as such, and they are most visible among each other; (in terms of Chapter 4, they represent an exclusive *clique* and they make up an *art gang*; c) they intuit that Whitney curators might similarly be interested in artists with extra-local connections; and d) this group tends to have the most impressive vitas – their cultural/symbolic capital tend to correlate with their *translocal* social capital. Each explanation leads to a situation in which eventually they tend to nominate each other, reproducing the exclusivity of their group in the process. Suffice it to say that Cathy knows Harvey, and they both know all the other Portland artists that have been selected for recent Whitney Biennials; they are all friends; they are the central local gatekeepers and tastemakers.

When Kate – also friends of Harvey and Cathy – was selected for the Whitney Biennial, her work was featured on the cover of the arts section of the *New York Times*. She described that cover story to me as, "A coup, a major coup." To her, her selection and cover story not only meant that off-center artists were being selected, but that the work itself could win attention. And

in addition to whatever symbolic victory that cover story won for artists living off center, it also resulted in a newfound privilege to nominate. Said Kate:

> "I got into the Whitney Biennial and then that opened up other doors and it just kind of, you know, just started growing… When I first came back from the Whitney, right when the Whitney was first done, like there were all these museums that will do visits, right?, and that was very popular right around that time. Or they would bring in their clientele so people from the Henry [Museum] came through, people from Laguna [Arts Center] came through and they would contact me so then I would say well if you kind of come see, why don't you come see everyone up here, you know? And it became a way to you know get everybody's work exposed."

And so Kate became a nominator as well, and the following Whitney Biennial featured a pair of Portland artists that worked across the hall from Kate in the same studio building. A third person in that building had a studio visit, was not selected, but later won a Guggenheim Fellowship.

Not everyone agrees that any given artist/work selected for the Whitney deserves the opportunity, or that Whitney selections are even supposed to represent the best emerging artists. Because there are few standardized criteria of artistic evaluation that would make artist X better from artist Y, disagreements abound. Despite Kate's "major coup" on in the New York Times, she remains modest about her work, and had this to say about the Whitney selection process:

> "You know, the Whitney is a big group show that's what the Whitney is. The curators are coming and they're looking for things to fit their particular moment. And I fit that. And the next time [artist X] and [artist Y] fit the next thing. It's not a survey of the best artists in the country. What it is, is it's a big group show of

> primarily, but not always, emerging artists, usually dealing not so much with the theme but of a particular maybe moment in art. Each one has a very particular quality to it, particular attributes, particular maybe thematic or material based issues, which are determined by the curators."

If cultural evaluation processes that depend on single professional opinions are most prone to reproduce hierarchies (Lamont 2012), and if quality of work ("best artists") itself is removed from the equation, then it becomes easy to see how selection processes are the result of pre-existing cultural perceptions and social connections. Artist X and Artist Y in Kate's account above did not simply fit the curator's program; they were Kate's friends, and they were right across the hall. Other artists maintain that the Whitney curators' aesthetic choices are only arbitrary next to the effects those decisions can have for a city's art scene. Says Bruno:

> "So the people [Whitney curators] who made those choices… Are those the choices that you think are good choices? I'm for the fact that they came out here and made some choices. Do I personally think those are good choices? Doesn't matter whatever I think. They got included; it puts Portland on the map in terms of artists working in this area."

Indeed, it can be perceived that a Whitney selection may result from no "fault" of the artist at all. Said Harvey about one of the artists that Kate nominated:

> "When I first got here [Artist X] was sort of established locally, and now [Artist X] sort of finally extended beyond that, and I don't know that it was [X's] fault or what exactly happened with that, or why [X] eventually sort of emerged. It will be interesting to see what happens now that [X] is in that zone, whether or not [X] will drift back."

While network ties go a long way in softening the uncertainty inherent in artistic evaluation (or facilitate the selection process at least), being "on the map," as Bruno put it, is critically important to artists regardless of they ever get a nomination for a studio visit. Cities themselves accumulate symbolic currency, which also helps assuage uncertainty in arts evaluation (Plattner 1996; Gieryn 2008), in turn tending to reproduce the geography of inclusion and exclusion in the contemporary arts.

Bruno has lived this experience for many, many years. He is older now; his hair is white; he gets around with a cane. But he has lived the dream; he has been as "successful" as most artists in this study can hope: he is "still making work" as on old man, although he seems to wish there were a little bit more. He is content make his art in his studio all day, every day, but only after working on the *New York Times* crossword puzzle. Socially, he is outside the circles that make up local scene dynamics, although he once was in the very middle of them, traveling the world as an artist/curator like Cathy does now. He is charmingly self-deprecating: "What do I know?" is his choice refrain, which is not meant as a question. On the topic of Portland's newfound reputation as an art city, Bruno is part proud of his role as an early catalyst, and part resigned that he has nothing to do with whatever is going on now. Still, he knows what he means when he says Portland is "on the map." He told me in November of 2011, before the Whitney posted their list of 2012 Biennial artists.

> *Bruno*: And once you [Whitney curators] come out here, you've got to get something. You don't want to go back empty handed.
>
> *SS*: Do you think that the trend is going to continue? Do you think we'll see another Portland artist in [the Whitney Biennial in] 2012?

Bruno: Sure. Oh, I think it would be terrible if they didn't show up. I mean it [would be] like they shut the door. Are you kidding? That's not going to happen.

It did happen, however, in 2012, that a Portland artist was not selected for the Whitney Biennial for the first time in 10 years. In fact, curators did not come to Portland at all. It might be that the pool of nominees or nominators in the city has been exhausted. It may be that the curators were already familiar with Portland's artistic scene (indeed, at least one of the curators was an independent curator with pre-existing ties to Portland). In any case, neither the network connections, nor the place-reputations that help make Portland a successful case in the game of artistic evaluation are forever durable; both are variables that are themselves socially produced; they are moving targets, as are the curatorial programs and the work that gets selected.

Place and Visibility in Arts Evaluation

The global field of contemporary art is united and made coherent with respect to the rewards that are agreed upon and distributed throughout. Selection into the Whitney Biennial is not the only reward in this regard, but the process of selection for it is a particularly important one, according to my informants, and it happens to be a particularly illuminating one as well. The Whitney Biennial selection process amounts to a struggle for legitimation that is played out not only in terms of a nation's artists, but also with respect to the reputations and visibility of the various cities and scenes in which artists, gatekeepers, and other interested actors sort and filter what ultimately becomes visible or worthy art on a national stage. In the social process of valuating and evaluating contemporary art, cities accumulate recognition like artists and art works do, and they are likewise debated and contested as more or less legitimate among the many participants that have a stake in those definitions.

To get into the Whitney Biennial, it may behoove an artist to live in New York or Los Angeles. While only 20 percent of U.S. artists live in New York and Los Angeles, about 75 percent of Whitney artists are selected from those cities. In the center, an artist may tap into the resources and social connections that will lead to a studio visit and a possible selection. On the other hand, as Jay and Patti would argue, 'curators are always looking for something new somewhere else.' In that case, it helps to be a big fish in a small pond. But the pond must not be too small to go unnoticed. Thus, it would behoove artists in peripheral places to draw attention to their city as a vibrant site of artistic production, recognizable to outside observers and gatekeepers. Urban brand images can go a long way in facilitating such "transmission efforts" (Kaufman and Kaliner 2011): Portland's image resonates with the field of contemporary art, while Nashville's might not, apparently. Finally, artists can improve their position in a local scene by making and accumulating network ties to curators and other decision makers in other places (especially New York and L.A.). Perhaps this is a lot to ask. Alternatively, an artist might produce brilliant works of art in their studio, and sit around and wait for nothing to happen.

It is plausible that in the "state of American art today," which includes its various aesthetic paradigms, curatorial programs, systems of training, markets, scenes, etc., art and artists from New York and Los Angeles are more consistently represented in Whitney Biennials because they are consistently better (or better-informed) artists. It is conceivable, for example, that being larger artistic scenes (or containing larger concentrations of players in the global field), New York and Los Angeles generate more artistic competition and therefore more impetus to differentiate and produce new, cutting-edge work of the type that might be included in the Whitney Biennial. Or, by virtue of being the "center" – fueled and informed by larger concentrations of arts institutions, markets, and gatekeepers – New York art and artists also

simply originate in the places where conversation and discourse about contemporary art are most energetic. In this way, artists in the center might also intuit artistic trends and rewards and produce accordingly.

It is also plausible, however, that the pattern of New York and Los Angeles dominance in the Whitney Biennial involves more than aesthetic differences and artistic merit. It is evident in this chapter that artistic evaluation and legitimation processes are also determined by the network ties and institutional positions of Whitney curators relative to all others in all places. Curators' attempts to straddle many off-center cities still originate from a central locus of market power, cultural investment, and social influence. All other things equal, curators' decisions are heavily weighted by the gravity of social intermediaries originating in New York. The collector's quandary of *where* to invest, as explained by Plattner (1996), translates here to the curator's: assuming a similar quality of work (or, given a field in which there are few, if any, standard criteria of artistic evaluation; or still yet, given a situation in which the curator's own choices are trusted to matter most), the curator may safely bet that the New York artist has surfaced in the context of a more dynamic social system; it has passed through more gatekeepers, and/or it represents an artist who is "serious" enough to have made the move to New York in the first place. Also, because New York organizes more power brokers, a New York artist's social ties might weigh more heavily on a selection decision – not least the fact that the Whitney Museum itself, including its board, and investors, is located there – than do those of an unheard of artist from an unknown place. Given the uncertainty inherent in artistic evaluation processes, and the social and symbolic power originating in New York, the curator's career would seem to only benefit by selecting toward the center rather than the periphery.

More generally, however, it may be simply suggested that place reputations influence artistic evaluations. A city's reputation may influence a curator to make a stop, but that may be for different reasons. In Nashville it may be that a curator is looking for a caricature of that place, whereas in Portland, that same curator might be looking explicitly for cutting edge contemporary art. In any case, place distinctions and urban identities are used by local artists to account for the presence of Whitney curators, as well as account for their decisions to accept or deny its artists.

Whether or not the Whitney Biennial actually represents the "state of American Art today," or whether artists living in New York and L.A. better represent that "state" are questions that may be left to artists, critics, and historians. Historically, for example, "American Art" might have meant "New-York-not-European Art" (*see* Ashton 1974; Guilbaut 1983). What is sociologically relevant is less that the majority of Whitney Biennial artists hail from the same places that the Whitney and other dominant American contemporary art institutions are located, but more that the geography of contemporary arts inclusion and exclusion are perceived as reality and are either embraced or contested as such, and these realities are consequential for artists career paths specifically, and patterns of cultural inclusion and exclusion generally.

There need be no conspiracy or backroom deals between curators and investors to produce and reproduce the center/periphery divisions of the field. Rather the social relations that emerge in this field are lived and reproduced by the practical concerns of the actors that make them up. Socialized in this field, with all of its organizational, spatial, and symbolic constraints and opportunities, Whitney curators have arrived at their positions by making the right kinds of decisions for the right kinds of audiences in the first place.

This chapter does not suggest that Portland's artists are better skilled or produce a different quality of work than their counterparts in Nashville (nor that New York artists are more

talented than the rest); rather, it points to differences in the perceptions and choices of gatekeepers owing to differences in the social and symbolic import a scene or a place affords them in the evaluative process. Indeed, comments from Portland artists themselves reveal a local perception that Portland is not regularly represented in the Whitney Biennial because of the quality of its art and artists, necessarily, but instead because it now is "on the map" of the contemporary art world.

Chapter 7

Conclusion: Place and Position Taking in a Decentering Global Field

The field of contemporary art is animated by its geographic divisions. Artists' careers are dually embedded in local milieus that vary in the type of resources they offer artists, and a global field that generates hierarchies of reputation and prestige, and the dispositions, practices, and strategies aimed at advancing through them.

This study identifies a method for analyzing artists' careers in this multi-level, reputational field. By focusing on individual artists' career pathways – including their exhibition opportunities, networking strategies, descriptions of opportunities and constraints, and their definitions of success – this study builds a model of the field in light of the strategies and dispositions that it generates for those who have staked their careers and identities within it. By using a multi-site design that includes two theoretically interesting off-center cities, this study teases out variation in career resources at the urban level, thereby adding nuance to center/periphery models of cultural production, and offering a model of career pathways as contingent on local contexts.

In sum, I find that off-center artists' careers are uniquely *translocal.* As artists recount their career pathways, practices, and dispositions, they reveal much about traveling to and exhibiting in other places, the importance of networking with artists outside of their local milieus, and anxieties about *where* artistic relevance might come from. They reveal that one fundamental division that structure of the field of contemporary art is a geographic one – structured in part by the type and variety of resources offered in distinct local milieus, as well as by the symbolic credits attached to particular places as more or less relevant. The dominant logic

of artistic career maintenance is the overcoming of local constraints by accumulating social opportunities in multiple places, and especially in more recognizable places.

Off Center Cities

According to artists in Portland and Nashville, cities vary in terms of both the market opportunities they offer artists as well as the scenes that cohere there, and they can be characterized as such. Outside of the *centers*, which organize high concentrations of markets and scenes, we find *second cities*, *market towns*, *studio cities*, and *flat places*. Studio cities, like Portland, Oregon, offer fewer opportunities to sell work in local galleries, but many opportunities to produce work, build alternative exhibition venues, generate networks ties with artists locally and in other places, and practice and perform artistic identities and dispositions in a dynamic social milieu. Flat places, like Nashville, also offer fewer opportunities to sell work in local galleries, but neither do they provide the kind of rich local milieus that help artists sustain translocal careers. Artists in flat places must still seek translocal connections and opportunities if they want to have a lasting career, but without the same resources at home. In addition to studio cities and flat places, Portland and Nashville artists identifies second cities and market towns as ideal typical categories that offer different kinds of resources, and that therefore stand to propel and reward artists' careers in different ways.

Off-center cities also vary in terms of the reputations they accumulate, which in turn provide artists with symbolic credits in the production of their own reputations and identities. A cities arts reputation corresponds roughly to the resources offered there, but place-reputations are made by actors' attempts to position their places as legitimate relative to others. In other words, the social and organizational difference between cities generates and implies a hierarchical status

difference that effects how art is perceived and valued. In turn artists' career mobility prospects are enabled and constrained from such place-based, cultural valuation and evaluation processes, as well as by the relative opportunities to transcend local constraints according to whatever resources (social, market, and symbolic) they have access to.

Translocal Career Strategies

Following from the structure of the field as outlined above, this study has identified a series of propositions that aim to summarize off-center artists' career strategies and practices as those aimed at overcoming local constraints.

The first proposition is that artists can overcome local constraints by seeking social connections, and market and scene opportunities in other places. Artists can diversify their portfolios, so to speak, by tapping into multiple, discrete, yet overlapping, artistic milieus. Off-center cities do not offer resources that allow most artists to make and maintain their careers in one place alone. At least, the lack of market resources found in Portland and Nashville requires that artists seek opportunities elsewhere. Still, most artists in my sample do not have art market careers anyway – nearly a third support themselves as academic professors or instructors – but their careers are still animated by efforts to seek social opportunities in other places. Further, off-center scenes work in many ways against the roles associated with the traditional dealer-critic system: in part because they are "small worlds" that do not tolerate much criticism; in part because they contain limited collector bases; and in part because artistic value is secured through a places' reputation itself. Practically speaking, artists can offset the cost of living in New York or Los Angeles by living in a more affordable place, but at the expense of more limited

opportunities to make translocal network connections locally, or traveling and moving more often to make and sustain connections elsewhere.

If for Bourdieu the fundamental stake in fields of cultural production is "symbolic capital" – which accrues initially to those pushing the boundaries of art-historical relevance, i.e., the "avant-garde" – then the fundamental stake in the global field for contemporary artists living in off-center cities appears to be the accumulation of what I have referred to here as *translocal capital*. Translocal capital may be defined as a combination of social network ties that span discrete urban milieus coupled an affiliation to particular places where translocal connectivity is possible and place reputations are relevant. In the field of contemporary art, it behooves an artist to be everywhere simultaneously. For those living and practicing in the 'centers' of the art world, such translocal capital might simply 'come with the territory,' so to speak (i.e., the center is the 'center' because it is already the focal point of every other local and regional artists' career and disposition). For those living and practicing elsewhere, however, the accumulation of translocal capital becomes a career concern and a social accomplishment, and is always at stake in artists' efforts to become or remain relevant in the global field, regardless if those artists are oriented to selling their works on the market or not.

Of course, there is variation regarding the extent to which off-center artists accumulate translocal capital and maintain translocal careers. It is especially worth noting again that artists' career patterns are often characterized by the geographic extent of their reputations and/or market bases. Some artists are perhaps lucky to be able to live and work in one place alone (if only because that means they are not saddled with the costs and anxieties about being everywhere at once). *Local* artists' careers might be sustained by one or more local collectors, or perhaps by supplementing their studio practice with jobs in the arts or other fields. Most artists

will not be able to afford to this and continue to maintain their practice or an "artist" identity for long, however. Further, because the global field generates translocal dispositions, which orients artists towards and reward translocal mobility, *local* careers are valued less, and may be a foil against which more 'legitimate,' careers and artistic concerns can be articulated.

More often, off-center artists strive to exhibit their work in multiple other places. Their careers may be characterized as *regional*, and/or ultimately *international*. Internationally recognized artists are typically those artists whose exhibition, friendship, or dealer network ties comes through New York (or does so eventually at least), and are well-received there, such that the attention and recognition and accumulates around those artists culminates and then diffuses everywhere (again because the 'center' is the common reference point for artists everywhere). According to Plattner (1996), the difference between strictly "regional" and international careers is that regional artists may well exhibit everywhere around the world, except in New York City. And, according to Leon, only New York (and London, and maybe L.A.) can make international artists out of those whose careers are limited to one city alone. Still, Leon also says that New York does not have to be the place where artists go to make a career anymore.

In any case, the global field of contemporary art rewards translocal capital and dispositions, which from an off-center perspective may be more important to maintaining a career than pursuing a strict market or scene orientation in the places where those resources are most available. It behooves artists everywhere to diversity their opportunities, and these include market and scene opportunities, and the multiple places where these may be found. The place-based divisions of the field of contemporary art, in this sense, represent a more basic division that animates the field than that between autonomy and heteronomy.

The second proposition is that translocal career mobility requires a modicum of local visibility, especially for artists at an early stage in the development of their careers. Resourceful social connections to people, organizations, and institutions in other places usually begin with face-to-face interactions on the ground, in locally accessible scenes. In turn, local artistic scenes are formed in the process of artists' negotiating their career opportunities, which require social interaction and exchange. Scenes allow artists to exhibit, discourse about art and artists, and practice and perform the appropriate disposition for each other. But those practices and dispositions are largely legitimated by artistic activity and discourse taking place elsewhere, or rather, that is taking place in multiple discrete and overlapping local scenes, center and off-center, all at once. Artistic scenes thus generate more than local activity, they require and propel the circulation and flow of global artistic activity. Specifically, they allow and encourage the circulation of artists and discussions about art on a global scale, between places.

It is in this sense that we may understand cultural production scenes as local arenas of exchange animated by efforts to pursue career opportunities that transcend local geographies. Indeed, the central actors in local scenes are often those who are positioned to facilitate connections to people in other places. Artists like Sophia, Omar, and Cyndi, Bella, and many others like them build venues that allow them to curate artists from other places, for example, which allow them to connect local artists to others elsewhere as well. As such, these local agents become translocal conduits, and their useful roles in local scenes position them well to capitalize on translocal connections. Local scenes generate and reward translocal mobility.

The third and final proposition presented here is that cities accumulate reputations that matter beyond the institutional and social resources that they organize. Specifically, cities matter for artistic evaluation processes, and hence for artists' career chances. On the one hand, cities

matter for all of the usual reasons already identified by scholars of art worlds. That is, as a set of geographic coordinates in space, cities distinguish one set of actors from another to the extent that they can reasonably interact, socialize, and exchange in face-to-face encounters against the time and cost required to travel between them. Cities also vary dramatically in kinds of galleries, museums, critics, collectors, and other venues that they concentrate, and which can be mobilized in the service of one's career. On the other hand, however, this study adds that places vary symbolically as well, which is also a major concern for artists' careers. As sites that are invested with meaning, cities accumulate characters that vary to the extent that they resonate with the concerns of the global field of contemporary art. Further, cities also accumulate reputations, which vary to the extent that they help secure market values and reputations, or otherwise differentiate what matters, what may be considered worthy, what is "real" or legitimate contemporary art, from that which is not.

Moreover, places are made and contested as such through the transmission of positive images (i.e., images that resonate with contemporary artistic concerns), and by comparing and contrasting the merits of any one given place against others. As the center of the art world, New York symbolically legitimates artists' careers, and artists everywhere can make reference to New York to buttress their claims to authority on what is relevant in the contemporary art world and what is not. Relative to New York, Portland and Nashville do not offer the same symbolic credits. In this study artists reveal their anxieties about where they live; they actively search for positive place-based artistic identities, and they may embrace or reject New York as the hegemonic center in the process. Much contemporary art works deal with place as a subject matter in interesting ways.

If the field of contemporary art may be understood as revolving around the social production of symbolic and translocal capitals, cities may be understood here as positions that represent varying symbolic credits for artists. As such, associations with particular places may also afford more translocal capital. For example, artists with social ties to other actors in New York City can double up on symbolic and translocal capitals.

This also means that another way that artists can achieve translocal mobility is by working to position their city as a visible or legitimate site of artistic production for outside observers and gatekeepers. This is done discursively, for example, as Leon went to 'battle' with high-profile gatekeepers from other places about the relevance of Portland's art scene. This is done artistically, for example, as artists like Mitch and Annie make represent the places that inspire them in their art work itself. Finally, this can be done by building local venues that generate and transmit translocal capital.

Studio Cities and Flat Places

I have presented these strategies thus far as if off-center artists' career patterns and pathways are categorically different from those in the centers. But I have also suggested that the structure of the field is characterized by varying resources between places that differently enable artists to enact the strategies outlined above. Here I summarize how field generated career strategies are mediated and informed by local contexts.

Artists everywhere benefit from establishing opportunities in multiple places, but studio cities offer more resources to make and maintain those extralocal opportunities from local bases than do flat places. Studio cities concentrate more artists per capita; they entice artists to move to there, particularly early career artists looking to build social and production opportunities and

outlets, and so they are sites of vibrant artistic scenes, made of many artists from many different places. Here, a young artist will find more artists to socialize with, and more opportunities for these local connections to lead to translocal connections and opportunities. Artists in flat places, on the other hand, are left to their own devices in making and maintaining translocal connections and opportunities. The difference might be summarized in that while artists in studio cities might make connections and *then* travel elsewhere, artists in flat places are required to travel and then make those connections and find opportunities. Aspiring artists that grow up in flat places are likely to move to pursue career opportunities in other places; they are likely to do better in a center, studio city, second city, or market town. This is not to say that flat places do not generate local scenes at all nor facilitate translocal ties. Indeed, artists everywhere are embedded in the same field that generates translocal dispositions and translocal capital – and that translocality is reproduced in part by local artists that do have connections and opportunities in other places. However, these are by and large the artists that have already established those ties earlier in their career, and then moved to Nashville to take an academic or other arts-related job.

Artists everywhere benefit by being active and visible in their local scenes, but again, studio cities offer more opportunity in this regard than do flat places. Because studio cities contain more artists from more other places, there is more social capacity to form gangs, cliques, and collectives, and to build the venues that organize and bridge them. Indeed, in a studio city there are more alternative exhibition venues, and more entrepreneurs that benefit in the process of organizing segments of the local scene. Thus, there is more opportunity to have a centralizing influence in studio cities, because there are more bridges to be made. And central actors in local scenes are better poised to be conduits, or to generate and circulate the flow of translocal capital. On the other hand, local visibility, entrepreneurship, and centrality are social accomplishments

that can cost heavily, as Sophia's story reveals, and as Duncan suggests, local gatekeepers can become disillusioned that "art" is really "all about the network," or "having the power" to make a decision. Flat places have local scenes as well, although sustaining them over time appears to be a larger, time and energy consuming achievement. Flat places are smaller worlds, characterized by sharper divisions of aesthetic taste and achievement, and efforts to bridge these divides in flat places can also come with social costs.

Finally, while place reputations are at stake for artists in both studio cities and flat places, artists in studio cities are better positioned to make their place reputation work to their advantage. Artists in flat places, on the other hand, are less likely to offer the opinion that place matters at all, although they are still invested in presenting a positive image of place that resonates with contemporary artistic concerns. For these reasons, Portland has enjoyed an upwardly mobile reputation as a legitimate art city in recent decades. The merits of Portland's art scene have been discussed on a national stage, as for example when Peter Plagen's writes for the *Wall Street Journal* about whether or not Portland is the next art capital of the U.S. (he concludes that it is not, by the way). Nevertheless, a reputable place generates exposure for the whole city, as when outside gatekeepers like Whitney Biennial curators come through regularly.

In sum, as a studio city, Portland offers these advantages for contemporary artists looking to build and maintain their careers. These advantages accumulate, such that more vibrant scenes generate more translocal capital, and more translocal capital generates a more reputable place, and a more reputable place draws more artists and outside interests, which in turn compel more young artists to move there, thus generating still more vibrant local scenes. The difference between the size and trend of artist populations in Portland and Nashville thus, is an outcome of this series of cumulative advantages.

Fields and Geographies of Cultural Production

These findings extend existing understandings of art worlds and cultural fields by demonstrating how practical agents generate and respond to spatial divisions. Traditionally, the sociology of artists' careers has been concerned with the production not only of artistic products, but also of the statuses and reputations that surround them, which in turn are the source of artistic convention and differentiation, and which in turn make art meaningful, and careers possible. For artists everywhere, careers unfold within social arenas that generate the conventions and beliefs that make artistic work meaningful and possible – i.e., work that is understood as "art," and careers recognized as legitimate. For contemporary visual artists, these social arenas consist of networks of artists, dealers, critics, curators, collectors, art schools, galleries, museums, and various other roles, institutions, and organizational channels whose joint efforts and interactions collectively make, sustain, and diffuse those conventions and beliefs, provide a format for artistic exhibition and exchange, allow reputations to accumulate, excellence to be rewarded, and careers to develop over time.

Scholars have acknowledged that there is a particular spatial organization to the world of contemporary art, characterized by a clear center (New York and Los Angeles in the U.S.) and many gradients of periphery (e.g., Chicago, Louisville, Paducah, etc.), which bears heavily on artists' practices and career trajectories. But off-center artists' careers are not as simple as typical 'art world' (Becker 1982) or 'dealer-critic' (White and White 1965) models account for, because these artists are disadvantaged by their relative distance from the kinds of social, economic, and symbolic resources that cluster in contemporary arts' centers – New York and Los Angeles. Much previous knowledge of contemporary art worlds is indeed informed by studies that take place in New York and Los Angeles, or Paris, for example, where superstar artists, dealers, and

other powerbrokers tend to exert an outsize influence on the field – whose pedigrees, namesakes, and institutional affiliations help to make and maintain art historical discourse and relevance on the basis of their reputations alone (e.g., Crane 1987; Moulin 1987; Szanto 2003; Thompson 2009; Thornton 2008; White and White 1965). The vast majority of American professional artists live instead in off-center places, where access to dealers, collectors, critics, and the networks that can lead to career opportunities are fewer and farther between (Appendix; *also see* Plattner 1996).

Finally, while Bourdieu uses spatial metaphors in his conceptual language (i.e., "field," "space of positions"), however, his field theory of cultural production is derived from a study of the nineteenth century Parisian literary scene, which, like the field of painting at the same time (White and White 1965), emerged in one central location, and was not concerned with artists efforts to overcome spatial constraints. Thus, typically, a field model of cultural production does not imagine how real places take on significance in a larger, place-divided, global field. As such, this dissertation has presented a series of findings that stands to complicate the way scholars think about artistic careers and fields of cultural production generally, specifically regarding the structures and practices concerned with its geography, and especially as these relate to twenty-first century opportunities and constraints about navigating and overcoming those divisions.

This study offers the following nuances, which amount to an extra-urban sociology of cultural production and reputational careers. As artists struggle to navigate their careers by establishing opportunities in multiple places, they actively produce the local scenes through which contemporary arts discourse is diffused and rewarded and translocal mobility can be achieved. Further, as artists can work to draw attention to their city itself as a legitimate site of artistic production, places are symbolic resources, and they are also moving targets. As such, this

study also specifies a field-generated mechanism of place differentiation and change, which is further set in motion in unique twenty-first century contexts in which place appears to matter more than ever, particularly in cultural fields. The extent to which artists and fields of cultural production can move whole places, e.g., by drawing attention to them as relevant sites of artistic production, is a major concern to contemporary urban branding and development strategies as well. This point will be further articulated below.

This study is not the first to consider artists in off-center locations. Stuart Plattner's (1996) *High Art Down Home* and Richard Lloyd's (2006) *Neobohemia* are two especially relevant, recent examples. Both of those studies make explicit attempts to theorize the geography of cultural production, noting particularly the relevance of places, and the artistic scenes those places organize, within a larger, *global field* – although neither have been as committed to that term as I have pursued it here. This study allows a more nuanced conception of the role of place and space in fields of cultural production. By focusing specifically on one cultural production field (contemporary art), and by treating artists' career pathways explicitly as a dependent variable (i.e., not local art 'markets' and not artists' 'neighborhoods'), this study theorizes the structure of the field in a way that is consistent with the Bourdieuian field concept – i.e., by observing artists' practical strategies of accumulation in a clearly defined field. And again, by using a two-city comparative design, this study allowing us a more nuanced model that gets beyond a simple center/periphery distinction. As such, the conclusions offer important contributions to knowledge about cultural production in peripheral places as the twenty-first century, "creative" city and cultural economy edges forward.

Plattner's "economic anthropology" conceived of St. Louis's art market in the early 1990s as one example of many "regional" art markets among "medium-sized" U.S. cities.

Plattner focused alternately on artists, dealers, and collectors, and found that each group in their own way struggled to reconcile their place-based disadvantage (i.e., against New York's 'hegemony') in generating the kinds of artistic values and prices that make art markets, and hence art careers possible. Plattner is explicit regarding the consequences of New York's institutional and symbolic dominance in the contemporary art world. As one of several other "regional" art markets, Plattner (1996) suggests that so many peripheral places, "form the base of a pyramid, [which is] topped by New York" (p. 3). In such a formulation, New York's hegemony is only possible because of artistic activity elsewhere helps to legitimate and reproduce it. But Plattner is rather ambiguous about the structural relations between places. On the one hand, the St. Louis art market is described as a reality that exists in "parallel" to the art world in New York City (p. 1); i.e., actors in each place exist independently of each other. In contrast to his parallel depiction, on the other hand, Plattner writes, "The spatial geography of markets is cross-cut by networks of artists, dealers, and collectors…" (p. 9).

I find that the geography of artists' careers is characterized first and foremost by their efforts to make and sustain the kinds of networks with artists, dealers, curators, and critics in other places so as to overcome local constraints, which are indeed both organizational and symbolic. I corroborate Plattner by finding that connections and opportunities in New York City matter more than connections elsewhere, although I differ in suggesting that there are many, many, other elsewhere in this picture, not merely New York and one's local milieu. As such, we can understand the global field not merely as a pyramid that generates hegemonic effects, but as a multi-dimensional, shape-shifting field that is actively produced and reproduced by artists' own efforts to overcome local constraints. Portland and Nashville art scenes certainly do not exist 'in parallel' to New York, but are embedded in the same global field in which places do matter, but

are ultimately connected to each other through artists' own networking strategies, cosmopolitan dispositions, and their own place-making efforts as well. New York's hegemony in this respect is not merely given, but is actively regenerated in the process; places are moving targets, and this includes New York, London, Los Angeles, St. Louis, Portland and Nashville.

Lloyd's ethnographic study of one Chicago neighborhood that in the mid- and late-1990s concentrated artists in a variety of cultural fields noted Chicago's 'second city' status, but focused more on the development of a particular kind of neighborhood space as one "privileged site of production" in the postindustrial cultural economy generally. Lloyd produces a slightly different conclusion from Plattner's stating that, "Chicago, New York, Los Angeles, and a host of other cities are not so much in competition as they are differentiated nodes in a networked geography of cultural production, enmeshed in webs of exchange of both cultural products and human capital" (p. 156). I find that actors in Portland and Nashville are indeed enmeshed in webs of exchange, but by focusing on one particular cultural field, and not a specific neighborhood that concentrates artists in many fields, it is apparent that places matter for more than the webs of exchange that they organize. Neither are Portland and Nashville functionally interdependent with second cities like Chicago and centers like New York. Places are stakes and rewards. They are contested as such, and again, they are moving targets.

Dually embedded in local scenes and global fields, contemporary artists activate the logics and the structures of the field in the process of navigating career opportunities and constraints. They seek out translocal capital and live out translocal careers, and that they are active producers of places at the same time. The field of contemporary art is thus made in artists' dual efforts to both transcend local constraints, while actively constructing their local scenes in the process. The result is a global field characterized by a geography in which artists actively

produce and reproduce the structural dynamics of the local scenes, and of their locale's positions in the global field in the process of navigating their careers.

Twenty First Century Cities

My study is also different from previous studies in that the artists' careers here unfold in different historical circumstances. If the postindustrial city of the 1990s revealed new spatial articulations of cultural production scenes in a larger global system, the career pathways depicted in this study perhaps reveal a more fluid geography characterized on the one hand by more opportunities to connect between places, and on the other hand more meaning and salience attached to places in the negotiation of artistic value and relevance.

Cities are particularly dynamic kinds of places. As cauldrons of social interaction and market exchange, cities are continually subject to processes of building and rebuilding, alongside ebbs and flows of capital, which also facilitates artistic production. Therefore, artists' careers unfold in and are enfolded in places that are constantly in flux themselves. This study reveals how dynamic places can be in the twenty-first century, and how instrumental artists can be in making those places. By making places meaningful and relevant to their lives, and by transmitting positive place-based images, artists are part and parcel of the production and differentiation of places themselves.

David Harvey's (1990) *Condition of Postmodernity* suggested that the postindustrial era (1973 – present) marks a shift in the ways in which global capital flows and accumulates. Harvey argued that as geopolitical constraints are increasingly overcome in the capital accumulation process, and as ever-newer communications technologies increasingly diminish the spatial constraints against those flows as the twenty-first century edges forward, the building of cities

becomes increasingly concerned with its symbolic attributes. Artists' careers, the cities they live and work in, and the place-divisions that enable and constrain them are interrelated entities, and are each is dynamic on a multitude of levels, but especially with respect to the reputations that places accumulate, which help to differentiate any one city from each other, which help secure artistic values and careers, and which artists themselves are complicit in constructing.

As such, this study reveals a field generated mechanism of place differentiation, and stands to offer a contribution to the way sociologists think about places and urban development in the twenty-first century. Sociological studies of place have been concerned with theorizing both how places seem to accumulate traditions or "characters" that make them distinct (Molotch et al 2000) as well as how such place-character change is possible (Kaufman and Kaliner 2011). Still, extant sociologies of place reproduction and change follow place-character developments in the twentieth century. For example, Vermont's changing place character – its divergence from New Hampshire – happened over the course of 100 years, a slow process born out of particular actions and events initiated long ago (Kaufman and Kaliner 2011). Molotch et al (2000) might simply suggest that Vermont was, at one point, "set on a different track." Still, their focus on the twentieth century overlooks newfound opportunities for place-making in the twenty-first. If for Molotch et al (2000) recourse is found in Weber's "tracks of history" metaphor, then it might be acknowledged that these "tracks" have frayed in multiple directions in the twenty-first century. Or, what were once called "tracks" of history may now be understood as an overlapping system of highways, air traffic, fiber optic cables, satellite signals, and/or perhaps the many aesthetic codes embodied in contemporary art.

Again, places matter more in the twenty first century, because space matters less. Harvey's (1990) conclusions about the salience of place in the new "postmodern condition" were

in fact written well before the development and the diffusion of the Internet; before the collapse of the Berlin wall; or more notably, well before the latest collapse of speculative capital that he seems to have predicted. Despite Friedman's (2006) ostensibly profound naiveté that the world in the twenty-first century is "flat," the nature of 'place,' or 'sense of place,' and/or 'place identity' have become more, not less, concerning to sociologists, geographers, and urbanists, and here contemporary artists as well.

According to Harvey (1990) place identities offer security against the increasing ephemerality and flood of information and cultural forms coinciding with other 'flattening' influences against the world. *Where* our products are consumed often matters more than *what* is consumable in the first place, and this is especially true of cultural products (Grazian 2003), and other various symbols and images, which it may be noted, are integral to the American post-industrial economy (c.f., Jameson 1991; Klein 1999; Lloyd 2006). Further, while people are more mobile now than ever before, "*local information*… is ever more valuable to people when they are on the move than when they are sitting at a desk" (Lane, 2012). Indeed, cities have strived to develop unique cultural identities in recent decades, including as sites of vibrant, cultural or "creative" production. For his part, Richard Florida's (2002) *Rise of the Creative Class* might ultimately fail to demonstrate that "creativity" actually leads to growth (see Peck 2005), but the insight that young, highly educated people appear more interested in *where* they are than what they are doing there, rings especially true.

Art World Decentering?

The contemporary art world is said to be "decentering" in recent decades. On the one hand, the idea of "New York hegemony" in the art world – introduced by Plattner (1996) –

suggests that artists on the periphery embrace the idea that New York is the place where legitimate careers take place, even if they consciously recognize the costs and inconvenience of such a reality. This perception in turn weighs heavily on the career and location choices of artists so as to reproduce the symbolic economy of artistic evaluation, market activity, and ultimately, the structure and trajectory of cultural development generally.

Throughout this study, on the other hand, it is equally evident among artists that this "New York hegemony" is recognized and contested as a bias. In addition to the concept of New York 'hegemony' (mechanical embrace of the status quo), it may be more useful here to think of an overlapping *conditional* place hierarchy. While some artists embrace New York, others contest it, and suggest that other places, perhaps especially their own place, is equally relevant or more conducive to creative cultural production. In their schemas of contemporary art production and evaluation, artists, curators, dealers, and commentators (or anyone with a stake in the field) tend to favor and positively represent the place that is perceived to afford them greatest benefit, socially, symbolically, money-wise or otherwise. Indeed, "New York hegemony" is explainable by this rule if and when a positive affiliation with New York matters most to one's career. Recognition of and rejection of New York hegemony, however, may be possible when and where enough social influence (in this case, the power to define and consecrate within the global field of contemporary art) accumulates and coheres outside of New York. And this possibility is perhaps a result of recent historical developments in opportunities for networking and exchange throughout the globe generally, and in the field of contemporary art specifically. The 1990s St. Louis art scene, for example, contained a number of artists, dealers, and collectors, but not on a scale that made local careers viable without embrace of the authority of the New York art world. By contrast the emergence of vibrant and dynamic social scenes surrounding arts production in

several off-center cities has meant that artists and other arts actors can increasingly find social outlets locally. Given the structure and dynamics of the field outlined, above, this means that artists can also find symbolic outlets locally. In this way is possible that the urban 'space of positions' in this global, reputational field is subject to change over time.

However, although artists can move around more, and although much contemporary arts discourse appears to celebrate the notion that "artists can live anywhere," place reputations still matter, and the field ends up reproducing itself. On the other hand, change might be gradual, and that new historical contexts at least provide opportunities through which new kinds of practices can develop to contest the global field.

A Place in Art History

As a final point of concern, it may be useful to consider again the concern of place and places among contemporary artists and art historians. Lucy Lippard's (1997) *The Lure of the Local* advocated for artists to "take responsibility for their place." Against the homogenizing tendencies of late-capitalism, Lippard argued, artists are in a privileged position to express the unique contours of unique places – to make place the focal point of their artistic concerns. Miwon Kwon's (2002) *One Place After Another* might be read as a reaction to Lippard's influential book. Kwon argued that certain place-related terms that have surrounded contemporary artistic discourse recently, such as "site specificity" and/or "community-engaged" practices have become divorced from whatever original critical position they articulated. Following David Harvey's (1990) analyses, Kwon argued that, at worst, such place-specific work facilitates the kind of symbolic place differentiation that post-industrial capital thrives upon. Thus, while for Lippard contemporary artists can take some agency in a place-divided

field, for Kwon, these artists only end up facilitating capital flows in the 21st century, and they end up being cogs in an impersonal economy.

Of course, my analyses here say nothing about the connection between contemporary artistic practices and capital accumulation, except that in accordance with Harvey's (1990) analyses, we can understand the post-industrial and twenty-first century city as a historically-specific, broader economic context allowing new opportunities for place differentiation and dynamism. Suffice it to say here that art history and critical theory have long been concerned with the prospect of the autonomy of artists from larger economic circumstances, as Bourdieu (1993) would suggest. Still, the concerns that Lippard and Kwon bring up are instructive. I have described the field of contemporary art here as one characterized by place divisions, particularly between the center and off-center, but also between the many off-center places too. However, there is a second, perhaps more basic division at play here as well, which might be even more apparent if this study were to compare artists in New York, with those from the off-center cities that I have chosen. That is the division between a concern for the relevance of particular places, on the one hand, and a concern for a placeless, global contemporary art world on the other.

Indeed, the very definition of "contemporary art" would have everything to do with the time, but also the place of its practice. Writes Joshua Shannon:

> "The practice of contemporary art history in the United States has found its center, up to now, in the study of art made in America or by Americans—especially a canon of work produced in New York and Los Angeles in the 1960s and 1970s. This arrangement, however, is now shifting." (Shannon 2009: 2).

Of concern among contemporary art historians is identifying contemporary art's temporal and geographic boundaries. Literally, "the contemporary" points us towards 'this very moment,'

which is itself wrapped in a historically specific geographic complexity. At stake is recognizing that art exists in a new global context on the one hand, but that it emerges in specific local contexts on the other. Is art made *everywhere* equally relevant in the field of contemporary art? Does "the contemporary" include Chinese art and artists? Chinese art and artists live and practice in New York, now, after all (Shannon 2009). What about American artists in Portland and Nashville?

While Shannon calls the time-place conundrum of "the contemporary" a "discursive difficulty," however, my analyses suggest that the two geographic orientations – global and local – are two sides of one coin; both are necessary components of the artists' twenty-first century translocal dispositions. For art critics and writers, both geographic scales present themselves as problems to be overcome in their own strategic explanation of artistic expression. For the artist and the sociological observer, these dueling geographic scales present themselves as problems to be overcome in the strategic maintenance of one's career pathway as well.

APPENDIX A: Visual Artist Location Quotients

Table 2. Visual Artist Location Quotients for 44 Largest U.S. Artist Cities

		1970	1980	1990	M	2006-10	2006-10 est
		(PUMS 1%)		(PUMS 5% samples)		ACS (5 yr)	
Total U.S. artists		*135,600*	*183,100*	*249,572*	*292,315*	*258,019*	
Top 50 MSAs		1.49	1.33	1.25	1.17	1.18	153,364
Top 25 MSAs		1.56	1.40	1.31	1.25	1.28	126,627
Top 10 MSAs		1.82	1.54	1.39	1.33	1.35	83,175
NYC & LA		2.10	1.82	1.61	1.73	1.93	49,684
	Size rank						
New York	1	2.35	1.96	1.74	1.65	1.77	26,329
Los Angeles	2	1.65	1.6	1.44	1.83	2.16	23,325
San Francisco	13			1.49	1.98	2.36	* 9,599
Chicago	3			1.20	1.14	0.95	7,334
Dallas	4			1.11	1.14	0.96	4,876
Washington DC	8			1.57	0.89	1.03	4,672
Philadelphia	5			0.94	0.92	0.90	4,017
Seattle	15			1.86	1.82	1.82	3,979
Boston	10			1.60	1.22	1.14	3,900
Atlanta	9			1.18	1.13	0.94	3,794
San Diego	17			1.26	1.26	1.28	3,283
Portland	**23**			**1.60**	**1.29**	**1.80**	** **3,077**
Minneapolis	16			1.37	1.27	1.14	3,010
Denver	21			1.46	0.99	1.40	** 2,955
Houston	6			0.94	0.71	0.62	2,848
Phoenix	12			1.02	1.09	0.87	2,782
Detroit	11			0.79	0.79	0.75	2,742
Orlando	27			1.27	1.55	1.35	2,394
St. Louis	18			1.17	0.73	0.96	2,197
Riverside/San Bern	14			0.62	0.78	0.62	2,159
Miami	7			1.06	0.92	1.01	2,050
Tampa/St. Pete	19			1.09	0.85	0.81	1,893
Baltimore	20			1.07	0.93	0.80	1,799
Austin	35			1.22	1.67	1.29	1,663
Kansas City	29			1.50	1.27	1.02	1,586
San Jose	31			1.09	0.99	1.06	1,567
Las Vegas	30			0.82	0.79	0.90	1,442
Cincinnati	24			1.35	0.68	1.12	1,437
Pittsburg	22			0.78	0.66	0.76	1,435
Columbus	32			0.84	0.82	1.04	1,429
Salt Lake City	48			1.63	1.04	1.10	1,423

Cleveland	26		0.98	0.94	0.72	1,330
San Antonio	28		0.80	0.83	0.70	1,119
Sacramento	25		1.22	0.84	0.69	1,085
Indianapolis	34		0.85	0.94	0.70	1,071
Raleigh-Cary	49		1.05	0.89	0.82	1,058
Providence	37		1.09	0.62	1.14	**1,000
New Orleans	46		1.22	0.92	1.11	955
Jacksonville	40		0.76	0.87	0.86	940
Milwaukee	39		1.57	0.79	0.71	927
Virginia Beach	36		0.88	0.67	0.67	923
Richmond	43		1.13	0.86	0.97	923
Charlotte	33		0.85	0.73	0.57	911
Nashville	**38**		**1.55**	**0.92**	**0.73**	**904**

[1] Location quotients are calculated as a ratio of the artist population in an MSA to the artist population that would be expected given the size of the workforce in that MSA.
[(Local Artist Pop/Local Labor Force)/(National Artist Pop/National Labor Force)]
a. Based on Public Use Micro Sample (1%) population estimates. Sample sizes are too small for accurate estimates in smaller cities.
b. PUMS 5% sample.
c. American Community Survey 1%, 5-year composite sample.
** Indicates significant population increase between 2000-2010.

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