

Book Review

Side by Side?: Community Art and the Challenge of Co-Creativity. By **Maya Haviland**. New York: Routledge. 2016 Pp: Ix + 174 Price: US\$47.95

In *Side by Side?: Community Art and the Challenge of Co-Creativity*, Maya Haviland offers an incisive analysis of cross-cultural collaboration. Noting the flourishing of co-creative artistic and academic practices in recent years, she articulates and expands upon collaborative processes, conceptual frameworks, and terminology. She is especially concerned with the ongoing relationships between collaborators. As Haviland asserts, ‘This book aims to deepen recognition and understanding of art-based collaborative anthropology practices and the works that are produced. It explores the dynamics of co-creativity in the context of these practices, and their implications for practitioners, communities and the way we understand these growing forms of cultural production’ (9).

Rather than focusing on a single project or fieldsite, *Side by Side?* engages dozens of collaborations, drawing on her own extensive involvement within projects in Australia, Vanuatu, Mexico, and the US. Indeed, Haviland’s background as an artist, community facilitator, and researcher ideally positions her to provide insights at the intersection of co-creative theory and practice. In addition to her own experiences, she draws on over 30 interviews with project facilitators from around the world. Haviland is careful to note that this book is not meant to be an exhaustive study of collaborative projects, but rather her aim is ‘to articulate patterns in the dynamics of collaborative and cross-cultural community art practice, and to consider some of the practical and ethical issues that we are faced with when we undertake these practices’ (9). The introduction serves as a chance to lay out these goals, as well as to overview her two broad conceptual frameworks: art-based collaborative anthropology and co-creativity.

In chapter one, Haviland provides an exceptional distillation of collaborative approaches to art-based research. Beginning with projects such as *Through Navajos Eyes*, she traces the genealogy of early engagements through what she describes as the current ‘collaborative turn’. Throughout, she emphasizes Indigenous media and the ongoing negotiation of power and authorship within relationships between facilitators and stakeholders. The two following chapters present a variety of co-creative projects that she engages to analyze the overall landscape and patterns of collaborative practice. In the first she emphasizes her work in the Kimberley region of Northwestern Australia. Chapter two takes a different approach, highlighting an in-depth interview with the facilitator of the New Orleans-based *Neighborhood Story Project*.

The next three chapters integrate the details of specific projects in the service of conceptual refinement around collaborative practice. In chapter four, Haviland theorizes three axes of collaboration in light of varying priorities regarding agency, production values, and outcomes. In chapter five, she considers the role of labor, specifically in relation to the *Chiapas Photography Project*. Chapter six builds on these insights as she theorizes co-creativity as a broader organizing principle of collaborative practice, highlighting the value of work that often remains invisible to granters and audiences. The final chapter synthesizes the previously discussed themes. She traces the afterlives of co-creative projects and expounds upon issues of circulation, access, and obsolescence, as well as non-material social and creative impacts.

Haviland demonstrates the variety of ways in which a facilitator can ethically collaborate. For example, she contrasts her experience in working on two projects with markedly different levels of engagement. In the Australian town of Derby she worked with the Jalaris Aboriginal Corporation on a book-making project titled *Singing Out*. Since Haviland had been building relationships and discussing this project in Derby for several years, she was able to be deeply involved throughout this collaboration. Her relationships made it possible to not only work from a distance, but also to engage in intensive bursts of co-creation during short visits.

Haviland compares this with her experience on the poster-making project *Entre Yanki Et Oké* with the United Houma Nation in Louisiana. She articulates how her involvement was shaped by a relative lack of relationships or project-building discussions. Instead of taking on a central role and being involved in key decision-making processes, she assisted through a variety of supportive roles. This comparison provides the context for considering a range of appropriate co-creative roles from deep collaboration to consultation. Such discussions are interwoven with other topics in the text including participatory/production values and relational/object based outcomes.

As valuable as her insights and suggestions are throughout the book, a key strength in *Side by Side?* is the way in which Haviland centers questions, especially in the conclusion and the title itself. For example, she asks ‘How do we on the one hand render visible and on the other hand learn to better read co-creativity, while it remains embedded in social, administrative, legal and economic structures that default to individual creativity?’ (159). Such queries not only provoke readers to further consider these topics, but their central role also embodies the emphasis within collaborative practice on process and ongoing negotiation over outcomes. The

questions build upon the book's broader strength of grounding critical theorization within specific co-creative projects while triangulating the firsthand experiences of the author with those of other facilitators and stakeholders.

Some readers will likely yearn for more depth on particular projects. However, there are other books that do this well. Indeed, what is lost from a lack of specificity is more than made up for in the book's breadth and scope. By thoughtfully considering so many projects throughout this text, Haviland is able to articulate

the ways in which collaborations work (or do not) and how we might collectively move toward increasingly equitable, ethical, and rigorous engagements. Thus, *Side by Side?* is a powerful contribution to the expanding literature on collaborative practice and serves as essential reading for anyone interested in co-creative facilitation and ethnography.

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