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ART AND SOCIAL WELLNESS IN THE CITY OF CHICAGO; A CASE STUDY OF LILLSTREET ART CENTER

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ABSTRACT

The definition of Art bares within itself inherent complexities; as such, it is multifaceted and diverse. There exist numerous postulations, assumptions, thought processes, and conceptualizations of the term. Art however takes various forms and defines the foundation of all human endeavour. Hence, definitions can be coined from philosophical, scholarly, and artistic perspectives. Such has been the case throughout history. To my mind, art evokes the creative, emotional, and intellectual dimensions of beauty, much of which provides the narrative for societal values, and social wellness.

The city of Chicago is diverse and multifaceted. The windy city is arguably one of the most populous cities in the United States. It was founded by Jean Baptiste Point du Sable, a Haitian-French fur trader, and the first permanent non-indigenous settler at the time. The diversity of the city of Chicago is due to numerous factors ranging from geographical locations, history, immigration patterns, and social economic development.

Lillstreet Art Center is an art school, art gallery, and also studio space in the city of Chicago. The center located in Ravenswood's lively Malt-Row district has helped to further enrich not just the Ravenswood community but the entirety of the city of Chicago at large; stimulating and enabling social wellness for all the inhabitants of the city of Chicago.

Hence, the author will establish an appraisal of the meaning of art and social wellness in the city of Chicago, using Lillstreet Art Center as the springboard for analysis.

Keywords: Chicago, Art, Social, Wellness, Center, Lillstreet, Windy, City.

ART AND SOCIAL WELLNESS IN THE CITY OF CHICAGO

Post-war attempts to give a general account of art have tried to move away from the traditional approaches of Kant and Schopenhauer. The most widely discussed theories have tried to show either that a work of art is a symbol, or expresses the intricate parts of a symbol system (Rowe, 1991).

There however exists the Esthetic definition of Art. According to Tolstoy's esthetic definition of art, it simply means to evoke in oneself a feeling one has experienced, and having evoked it in oneself, then through movements, lines, colors, sounds or forms expressed the artist can transmit the feeling one has once experienced. The controversial depiction of art begs the question of whether or not art is essentially expression or communication (Knox 1930).

Social wellness is largely a byproduct of community resilience, health, and social well-being of individuals in a given area. A qualitative study will investigate the quality of social relations and well-being in the Ravenswood community where Lillstreet Art Center is located. It is largely evident that Lillstreet Art Center's innovative and creative contributions not only within the Ravenswood Community but to the city of Chicago at large helped stimulate the state of positive and healthy relationships while actively contributing to healthy social relations and meaningful interactions within the city of Chicago. With numerous programs from the spring up until the fall and its prestigious summer camp program for kids ranging from ages 3-16; artists engage in programs such as ceramics, drawing, painting, digital art, metal smithing, sewing, and many more. This premise is the pre-condition that informs active participation in the community as the

programs, initiations, and events hosted by Lillstreet not only help to create a more inclusive and supportive community but also foster compassion. Much of its goals, objectives, and mission statement can be found at www.lillstreet.com where one can invariably verify the center's classes, summer programs, workshops, and private events.

A CASE STUDY OF LILLSTREET ART CENTER

Lillstreet Art Center was founded by Bruce Robbins in 1975. It was initially a clay manufacturing company on Halsted and Grand under the name Robbins Clay. It has more evolved into a dynamic art center with available creative materials and resources for ceramic artists. Mr. Robbins subsequently bought a former horse stable at 1021 W. Lill in Lincoln Park. Named after the street, LillStreet Studios expanded beyond its traditional scope and included a small variety of ceramics classes and workshops. Due to its accelerative and progressive development, the programming relocated to a former gear factory on Ravenswood Avenue. Lillstreet Art Center as it is now called accommodates a variety of artists. The current 40,000 Sq. Ft. Facility which features 20 classrooms and accommodates well over 2,000 students per session has become a hub for social well class in the city of Chicago.

LILLSTREET'S ORGANIZATION – CULTURE

The contemporary study of organizational culture reflects mainline concerns. Issues such as the theoretical and empirical pose numerous juxtapositions and metrics for inquiry. Can culture be intentionally managed and can organizations establish symbolic and symbiotic interactions that enable the workforce to function optimally? For Lillstreet Art Center, the implementation of contemporary organizational culture produces an organizational behavior that is proactive, goal-oriented, structural, and efficient placing its values on the epoch of art. Hence, Lillstreet Art Center is not just an art-related enterprise but one that fosters the social well-being of the city of Chicago; hence appealing to this richly diverse (Ouchi, Wilkins, 1985).

This organizational culture has also contributed to its high employee retention because Lillstreet Art Center values the importance of taking a macro perspective in its implementation of human resource retention. Lillstreet's cultural values have helped create an enabling environment for both staff and stakeholders (Sheridon, 1972).

Organizational culture also enhances performance, as the effect of management improves the quality of output in every enterprise (Martinez, Benulieu, Gibbons, Wing, 2015).

LILLSTREET ART CENTER: STAFF HIGHLIGHT

The staff highlight principally refers to the most valuable figures and stakeholders of Lillstreet Art Center. The modus-operandi for Lillstreet Art Center is classified into three segments which are:

- Administration
- Department Directors
- Class Advisor

THEORETICAL/METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

The theoretical or methodological approach adopted for this research is the social cognitive theory. Albert Bandura's social cognitive theory is most suitable for this research because it advocates the overall development and improvement of social skills and improves the consciousness of self-efficacy where individuals become aware of their capacity and competence for success. In addition, Wood and Bandura's article titled "Social Cognitive Theory of Organizational Management" analyses organizational functioning from the perspective of social cognitive theory. With regards to the context of this research and Lillstreet Art Center which is the case study for my analysis; it is evident that the social cognitive theory is pivotal in the observational learning and reciprocal interactions of Lillstreet Art Center and the city of

Chicago; much of which is also evident in the organizational management of Lillstreet Art Center as they ensure the implementation of its theory, scope, and methods. This has helped define the incredible modalities of how Lillstreet improves the social wellness of the city of Chicago (Wood & Bandura, 1989).

KIDSTREET PROGRAM

Kidstreet department is home to Lillstreet's young artists. With programs such as classes, workshops, camp, birthday parties, and many more; Kidstreet is an essential part of Lillstreet Art Center. Miss Molly Eisenberg currently serves as Director of Kidstreet and camp operations. This ceramic artist heads Kidstreet and through the structural programs put in place by Lillstreet Art Center, she can leverage her administrative capacity and passion for art into a rewarding and phenomenal endeavor that creates a healthy social life for the city of Chicago.

Tallulah Cartalluca currently serves as summer camp assistant, while Tikal Rivera is the director of student services. Together, this group was able to expound in detail the creative interest of the younger generation in the city of Chicago. They have also been to able incorporate strategic approaches that have and continue to facilitate wellness both in the workplace and the community at large (Conrad, 1987).

Highlighted below is a sample of Miss Molly Eisenberg's ceramic piece:



Copyright: Molly Eisenberg (molly@lillstreet.com)

IMAGE HIGHLIGHTS FROM KIDSTREET





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