Literature Review: Art and The Green New Deal
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Introduction

In the 21st century, our society lives in an age of rapid information. The information we consume whether it be social media or the internet can oftentimes be misrepresenting the actual facts. In one specific case we see this in the conversation around climate change, and more specifically the Green New Deal.

In order to get a better understanding of the misinformation regarding the environmental crisis and how as a society we can educate and combat false claims, we reviewed literature regarding four topics we found most important to searching for a solution. First, we reviewed literature explaining the common misconceptions of climate change and the Green New Deal to pinpoint what we should focus educating the public on. Our next point of research was how to educate on a controversial topic, which we then found that art would be a passive, yet impactful way to educate the public. Therefore, we then reviewed literature regarding the history of art in social movements and the techniques they used to impact the public's perception of such topics. Lastly, we looked into how to make meaningful art that conveys a clear message, so we can educate the public on environmental issues and policies to dispute the misinformation that is circulating.

Overall, we collected information from multiple disciplines to gain knowledge on how to create a meaningful piece of art that combats the false claims around climate change. We aim to educate, not persuade the public on one side or another, so that as a society we face the facts about climate change and start working towards a solution collectively.

Misconceptions

Misinformation and disinformation create a major issue when it comes to the Green New Deal (GND) and climate change in general. Specifically, they cause citizens to have a skewed perception of the GND and other forms of beneficial climate focused legislation. The findings of a study by a team of researchers from Yale University and George Mason University headed by Dr. Abel Gustafson indicates that Republicans are significantly less likely to support the GND after significant exposure to misrepresentation of its policies on Fox News. As their awareness of the GND through conservative outlets increased, their support for its policies decreased [Gustafson, A.]. This study highlights the importance of informing the public about the GND in a manner that is clear and convincing.

Harmful rhetoric similar to that observed in the Yale and George Mason study is not unique to conservative media outlets. Stephen Lewandowsky attributes disinformation to organizations funded by major oil companies. He also points out that false-balance coverage, the practice of giving mainstream and skeptical climate scientists equal air time, creates the illusion in the public mind that scientists are equally divided on the issue of climate change. False-balance coverage was standard practice in traditional new outlets for a long time and skeptical scientists are still given a disproportionate amount of air time. This disinformation can

lower the public's acceptance of climate change. According to Lewandowsky, libertarian and anti-elite views also contribute to people's unwillingness to accept climate change as a scientific fact. Lewandowsky recommends putting forth a message that avoids inciting fear, highlights scientific consensus, and is appropriate for the culture that it is intended to be presented in [Lewandowsky, S.].

Dr. Antonio Lopez and Jeff Share take a similar stance on misinformation and disinformation. They acknowledge that traditional media does an inadequate job of covering climate change and has done so for decades. Lopez and Share also warn against the danger of fake news and other online forms of disinformation and propaganda. They say that fake news can go beyond misinformation to become "a well-organized campaign of disinformation" [Lopez, A. & Share, J.]. They recommend increasing media literacy among the public in order to combat fake news and reforming the mainstream media by encouraging news outlets to stop accepting funding from oil companies and to stop seeing climate news as a threat to ratings [Lopez, A. & Share, J.].

Handling a Controversial Message

We all love to hate controversy – it divides us from some yet unites us with others. We justify that it's okay to have polarized opinions because we must be right and others must be wrong. The more passionate we feel about an issue, the further we stray from seeking common ground. We get so caught up in our emotional response – how do we continue to learn? How do we grow our knowledge on topics that we have such steadfast opinions on? These are questions that we sought to answer in our project. We hope to understand how to communicate with people about controversial issues. Our goal is to educate and hopefully leave people thinking.

Our research has indicated that there are two main strategies to communicating information: direct and indirect [West, J.]. The method chosen depends largely on the audience you are hoping to reach with your message. A direct message is best for people who are already on your side about the message; they are aware and informed about the topic and are interested in learning more about it. A direct message is more of a call to action; it is very clear what the intention of the message is. The message gets right to the point, which is also better for those quick to lose interest in the subject. Indirect messages are better for those who are not well-versed on a topic. This is better for a non-receptive audience who either knows nothing or is misinformed about the topic. This way of communication leaves the recipient thinking rather than just telling them what to do [West, J.].

Our audience will be a mix of receptive and non-receptive viewers. Some will support the Green New Deal; some will avidly hate it. We must cater our message to reach both types of viewers and tailor it to be accessible to all. Our audience is a bit like a classroom- a conglomerate of different backgrounds and ideologies who we are trying to educate and inform. Either method we choose to use requires us to focus on having an expert opinion; we must use ethos and logos to our advantage. Controversy is already too deeply rooted in pathos for it to be effective in informing. In order to be taken seriously by both sides, we must come across as

having a deep and accurate understanding of the topic. We must seem in control of our message, and we must deliver it in an unbiased way.

While we want to come across as educating and not persuading, we cannot be fence-sitters. Our message, by default, takes a side. However, in remaining trustworthy, we shouldn't openly focus on how there are sides. One of the best ways to educate about controversy is to not be controversial. If we are factual, we are offering information that isn't necessarily disputable. If we must address the other side, we should address its opinions, not its people. We should be critical of the other side's platform and not those who believe in it [Filipic, M.]. People will shut off wanting to learn if they believe they are being insulted. We must be respectful to the other side and find shared ground. If we find a goal we both want or locate something we both believe in, it is easier to educate and get our message across.

One of the key concepts behind our solution is making sure our message is seen and heard. Those in the community we place it in will have easy access, but we must plan for our message to have a wider reach. One way we plan to do this is by spreading our message across social media and news platforms [Kandil, S.]. One of the biggest ways that young adults get new about powerful displays is through Instagram and Twitter. People are quick to retweet or add to their story displays that they think have a strong message (generally one they agree with). News stories will often spread like wildfire if they challenge our view on things. Using allies of our message to spread our art piece across social media is an important way to get it out there. We also are considering partnering with a reliable third party. This gives us automatic credibility and takes our display from an independent creation to a backed message. Working with an environmental organization will show that our message is truly based in facts.

We think it is necessary that our message has a sense of urgency, mostly because the situation is urgent [Filipic, M.]. In combining direct and indirect methods, we hope our message creates a sense of urgency without necessarily a call to action [West, J.]. While we want people to take action, and the point of our message is for people to ultimately make more environmentally friendly decisions and support environmental policies, we want the audience to come to these conclusions themselves. We want them to hear the call and decide on their own actions. Our purpose is to inform them, and hope this helps them to make complete, informed decisions. We cannot say for them what that is, but we must let our audience know that global warming is real, our planet is in danger, and we must take action. We leave them to decide what that is. If it is supporting the Green New Deal, that's great. If it's advocating in their community for greener practices, that's great. There are a lot of actions that will help our planet, and we'd like our audience to choose the action they believe is best to do so. We just need to urge them to do it now.

Techniques used in the past

Analyzing how art has been used in the past is essential to understanding how we can create art that will educate the public on environmental concerns and the Green New Deal. One of the major factors of success with art in the past has been the effects of community art. For

instance, Cohen-Cruz examines the activism created by community art in the Harlem Renaissance [Cohen-Cruz, J]. The African American activist art was used to celebrate culture, rather than having a direct political agenda, and it made a huge impact on the community. This is what we need to base our art off of, we do not want the Green New Deal to be seen as only political, we want to shed light on the purpose of it and the benefits it can have on our environment and society. Cohen-Cruz distinguishes between community art and political art, noting that political art is "intended to challenge public perception". Community art is a collective contribution that is created in order to relate to it.

Cohen-Cruz also brings up the importance of context. The Environmental Justice Project in New Orleans was a reaction to low-income African Americans that were victims of toxic chemical exposure in Louisiana. The art they used as activism was in the form of Story Circles, which is a theater technique that allows stories to be shared from a group of people, unifying them under the same struggles. Cohen-Cruz explains "This project evidences a major contribution that activists make to socially progressive artists: context". They then quote Dudley Cocke, director of Roadside Theater in Central Appalachia, saying that "Too frequently, there's nowhere for people to go with what they experience or learn in our performances. Even if we generate all the positive energy and righteous anger in the world, what happens if there's no organization to follow through?". This is an important idea in the concept of our problem because there has to be context. If our art draws attention to climate change issues then it needs to be followed by a possible solution, the Green New Deal. Art without context is just something to look at for a couple minutes.

In "Art, scale, and the memory of tragedy", Post, a professor at Kent State, describes the importance of public art being accessible to anyone, allowing art to have a greater scale of impact [Post]. Based on his research thus far, we can build impactful art by relating it to the broader community and making it accessible for anyone to see and learn and connect from it. The main focus of this article is Tom Lea's mural in the Pleasant Hill post office in Missouri. In 1939 Tom Lea painted *After the War*, a mural that reflected the struggles Pleasant Hill faced during the Civil War era. This mural was impactful because of its public landscape and scale. Post explains that "*After the War* accomplishes an important goal in the public sphere of a local postal office. It increases the works' visibility to all citizens, not just those who desire to, or can, visit an art museum". It is important to emphasize the importance of accessibility to anyone, a public space for anyone to reflect on a piece of art. This idea can also be seen in a powerful climate change piece done in 2014 named "Ice Watch" [Ice Watch]. Olafur Eliasson and Minik Rosing took blocks of ice from Greenland and placed them in a clock formation in a public square in Copenhagen. This experience of ice melting before your eyes was for everyone to see in the area. It was outside, open to all and certainly drew attention. It captured climate change in a unique way for all to reflect on.

How to create impactful art

Our research leading up to this point has displayed potential for educating and making an impact on a group of individuals with a wide range of backgrounds through art. But how exactly do we make a piece of art that resonates and connects with people facilitating new ways of thinking about a controversial topic? Well, there are multiple theories and examples from history that allow us to methodically create a piece of meaningful art.

Luckily, "in a sense all works of art perform a social function since they are created for an audience", so automatically the piece we are seeking to create has a foundation for making an impression on the public [Feldman, E.]. But, besides art functioning as a piece to be viewed by an audience as a social function, there are other forms of social function called *character of response* which creates an awareness of the viewer that they are part of a group which is urged to act by the meaning of the art being viewed [Feldman, E.]. With this theory in mind, we seek to create a piece that creates a feeling of responsibility to the community, by conveying a message of collectively combating climate change.

In the beginning of the 1930s, the Soviet Union had an art movement called Socialist Realism, which was tailored to support the socialist state in all forms of art [Groys, B.]. Although we are in no way trying to communicate a message of socialism to our audience, the Soviet Union used this art period to communicate a message to the public about their policies, therefore we can use some of the methods used to educate our aduneice on environmental policies and climate change. The movement was "oriented towards what had not come into being but it saw should be created to become a part of the Communist future" [Groys, B.]. In the context of our project, we can use this method by displaying the future of our society where initiatives of the Green New Deal are used to aid the climate crisis and society lives in a healthier environment. Building off of this method, in order to display what could be, there is a need for "photographic quality" of the art, making the image "visually credible" [Groys, B.]. The realism that is used during Socialist Realism paints a picture of the future to create a community of support for socialst ideals. That being said, in our piece we can aim for a certain amount of realism to allow our audience to envision a future where as a society, we are actively collaborating to solve climate change.

Not only is the research for the methods in which we communicate our message through art important, but creating a clear message that is interpreted correctly is crucial for our audience's understanding of the piece. That being said the placement of a piece of art can actually change the meaning of it [Newhouse, V.]. For example, Michelangelo's *David* was originally supposed to be placed in front of a cathedral, but as the piece neared completion in front of the town hall. The context of this piece changed from a biblical hero to a warning towards the exiled Medici who was critical of the Florentine Republic [Newhouse, V.]. It is important for our art to be placed in an environment where it will be perceived correctly, therefore by recognizing the importance of placement we will need to consider the surroundings, lighting, the audience most present, and the amount of foot traffic near the potential location.

Conclusion

Based on our collaborative research, we have compiled a set of goals for creating our art piece. We have learned from our study on misconceptions that our biggest challenge is combatting skewed information coming from conservative outlets and organizations funded by major oil companies. We are aware of the need for more education on climate change. With that being said, climate change is somehow controversial in a political sense. The best way that we can educate on this topic is by using factual information that is impactful to both receptive and non-receptive viewers. We plan to have a sense of urgency in our artwork since we do believe there is a sense of urgency in climate change and we want to reflect that. The key to our success is also location. We have learned from the past that public accessibility to art leads to a greater shared impact in the community. Our art should create a feeling of responsibility in the community, and hopefully they will see that the Green New Deal could be a solution to these environmental concerns that we have created.

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