



Tyler Denmead

Abstract

A key promise of creative city politics is that low-income youth of color will have the opportunity to engage in inventive, autonomous and potentially lucrative work as young creatives. If they develop the skills and dispositions of young creatives, they will become successful creative entrepreneurs whose innovations will contribute to the vitality and sustainability of their neighborhoods, cities, and the world. The creative city is thus promised as a place of social mobility and opportunity for racialized and low-income youth. Creative arts methodologies are viewed as key mechanisms for “urban youth” to become “young creatives.” In this auto-ethnographic analysis, I reflect upon why it is simply a fantasy to assume that more than a few racialized and low-income youth will have the chance to gain good paying jobs in the creative sector. By analyzing labor markets in one creative city, where I founded and led a youth arts program for a decade, I show how these jobs have simply failed to materialize and offer the kind of social mobility that I promised to its youth participants.

Bio

Tyler Denmead is an Assistant Professor at the School of Art and Design, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Denmead has spent his career facilitating and researching highly collaborative community-based arts programs for youth, and his current research examines disparities facing youth in so-called creative cities. He is the founder of New Urban Arts, a youth arts collective for high school students and artists based in Providence, Rhode Island. His publications can be read in *Visual Arts Research*, *Art Education*, *Journal of Arts and Communities*, *International Journal of Education through Art*, and *the International Journal of Education and the Arts*. He is the co-editor of *Visual Arts Research* and serves on the editorial board of *the Journal of Cultural Research in Art Education*.