Richard Florida on Why the Most Creative Cities Are the Most Unequal

ARTSY EDITORIAL
BY ANNA LOUIE SUSSMAN
MAY 9TH, 2017 3:42 PM

Photo by Rick Barrett.

Richard Florida is famous for popularizing
development: Artists and other bohemian t
knowledge workers cluster in open-minded
amenities that generally come with it. Thes

In his latest book, *The New Urban Crisis*, Florida considers the downside of the last two decades of the type of urban renewal he has championed. Thriving cities—many of which developed along the lines of his theory—have become victims of their own success, as breathtaking inequality has risen alongside prosperity and innovation, reaching its peaks, perversely, in the most liberal and creative cities.

That's because the rush of educated, upwardly mobile people to land-strapped cities creates housing scarcity, pushing up prices and leaving the most vulnerable workers behind, particularly over the past two decades. Artists and creativity play a significant role in this process: A vibrant cultural scene, measured by the population of working artists, musicians, designers, and other full-time creative workers, is a key component for urban growth. Creatives function both as a desirable amenity and as sources of the intellectual and creative ferment that drives innovation, particularly in the technology sector.

"Between the year 2000 and now, we begin to see hyper-gentrification and the real transformation," Florida told Artsy. "The artistic, cultural creative has been so successful.…It's a crisis of the success of this very revival."

In addition to his academic work (he directs the Martin Prosperity Institute at the University of Toronto), Florida, as a paid consultant, goes from city to city prescribing a magic brew for urban development that he describes as the "Three Ts of economic development: technology, talent, and tolerance," another way of saying "educated, smart workers in a socially liberal environment."

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the diverse arts scenes of New York and London. “In fact, my research shows empirically that artistic and cultural creativity acts alongside the high-tech industry and business and finance to power economic growth.”

Florida also draws on his experience as a former professor at Pittsburgh’s Carnegie Mellon University, when he saw graduates fleeing to cities like Austin and Seattle, drawn not just by jobs but also their robust cultural scenes. Lycos, then a prominent web company, relocated to Boston from Pittsburgh, where it had a better chance of retaining talented workers in a city with more going for it. Florida joined the boards of Pittsburgh’s Andy Warhol Museum and Mattress Factory in the late 1990s, betting that beefing up the city’s cultural institutions would help keep its talented graduates *in situ*.

“It’s almost become trite,” he acknowledged. “Artists sometimes blanch because they’ve become overly commodified. It’s not what I intended, but it’s part of the reality: Everyone wants to hire artists, to put art on the wall, to have an art walk.”

The flip side of artist-led gentrification, according to the standard narrative, is rising rents that drive artists out of their own neighborhoods. But Florida’s in-depth examination of gentrification turns up little evidence of mass displacement. While he acknowledges that the high cost of real estate in cities like New York, London, and San Francisco have made it harder for young and struggling artists to live in central locations, he notes that the concentration of creative professionals in those cities is as high as ever.

New York, he writes, had, as of 2013, 8.4 million people, or roughly 2.6% of the country’s population, but 8.6% of its creative jobs, including 28% of the nation’s fashion designers and 14% of its television and film producers and directors, “by far the nation’s preeminent creative center.” These cities “are at least as artistically creative as they ever were, and…even more technologi
ago, he writes, and arguably more economi

Instead, he says, the people hit hardest by g
middle-class professionals pushed out by ba
fewest options.

percent were the most likely to leave cities over the same period. Another study of Philadelphia neighborhoods over a similar time frame found a similar effect, with those who did leave gentrifying neighborhoods ("the least advantaged and most economically vulnerable") ending up in higher-poverty neighborhoods marked by higher crime rates and worse schools, and often with higher rent burdens. By contrast, those in the middle- or working-class tended to benefit slightly from gentrification, cashing out on rising property prices to buy into other "decent" neighborhoods in the city or the suburbs.

Artists are more likely to fall into that latter category of those reap gentrification's benefits. As Florida points out, they typically have more social capital and human capital to fall back on than low-wage workers, or those without the education or resources to secure a footing in today's knowledge economy, such as fast-food servers, home health aides, or retail workers.

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"As much as artists may be getting squeezed to some degree, they have skills, a whole range of skills—business skills, intellectual skills, artistic skills—that enable them to survive," he said. "It's not that artists aren't being hurt, it's that other people are being hurt to a far greater degree."

So how does Florida propose addressing th… inclusive urban growth?

The "way forward" chapter of his book is h… empowerment and decision-making, as wel… liberal think tanks have been praying for u…

But Florida's municipal focus ignores some of the structural factors that shape the urban inequality he describes. For example, lower taxes on top earners and deregulation of the financial sector, two phenomena widely considered to have helped contribute to the spike in income inequality over recent decades, are federal matters. Statewide pre-emption bills, which ban cities from setting their own agendas on issues such as minimum wages, benefits or LGBT rights, also stand squarely in the way of achieving his city-led agenda.

And Florida acknowledges that those policy solutions won't go far in bridging the perhaps more serious challenge facing the country: the gaping cultural divide between upwardly mobile Democratic urbanites and rural and suburban Trump voters revealed in the recent election. Cities have become qualitatively different from rural and suburban areas in ways that don't show up in the metrics Florida tracks. It's a problem he doesn't address directly in the book, but has thought about for years.

"It's not just a class war, it really is a values war," he said, marveling that Trump, "a product of New York City in the '70s and '80s," when the city was arguably at its creative peak, had become "this anti-urban, anti-art, anti-creative, 'back-to-the-working-class' but really line my pockets kind of guy," a turn Florida attributed to Trump's having been shunned over the years by New York's more progressive, intellectual and interesting "tastemakers."

His solution for the moment is mutual accommodation, an uneasy coexistence at least for the short term.

"We've been in the face of red America, saying essentially 'You're a bunch of lazy yahoos who don't appreciate art, who don't appreciate all these great things and are uncultured and uncivilized,' and people just got mad and said 'screw you!'" he said. "Too many of us on the left want to impos
them."

"We're divided," he said. "Look at the map

The Venice Biennale's 11 Best Pavilions

ARTSY EDITORIAL
BY ALEXXA GOTTHARDT
MAY 10TH

Each year, the Venice Biennale's nationa
around the world to showcase their mos
the 51 pavilions scattered across the Gia
sought out the highlights you can't miss—from breakout artist Anne Imhof's

United Kingdom

PHYLLIDA BARLOW, "FOLLY"

CURATED BY DELPHINE ALLIER AND HARRIET COOPER

Installation view of Phyllida Barlow, "folly," for the Unit to b
Casey Kelbaugh for Artsy.

3

ENTER SLIDESHOW

Phyllida Barlow's fantastical sculptures stretch high towards the lofty ceilings of the British Pavilion. The group of five bulging, grey columns, topped with tilting rectangular blocks, dwarfs viewers in the central gallery. They also set the tone for an installation in which Barlow explores the precarious relationship between the architectural and the theatrical, between real and fake.

Barlow is known for augmenting and ennobling everyday materials in her large-scale constructions and she pushes this skill to its apex in the Biennale presentation. Across the show, huge forms forged from wood, fabric, foam, mesh, and plaster resemble giant improvised toys and architectural decorations designed for elaborate stage sets.

But while many of Barlow's sculptures might initially read as whimsical, they can also suddenly turn ominous. Entering one side room, you glimpse an enticingly colorful patchwork of panels, only to look up and realize that anvil-shaped forms extend from the panels and loom overhead.

United States

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BY TESS THACKARA
MAY 9TH, 2017 6:52 PM

Sam Contis, *Landscape (View from Gilbert Pass)*, 2014. Courtesy of the artist and MATRIX 266.

High in the California desert, southeast of the Sierra Nevadas and north of Death Valley, the remote, all-male liberal arts school known as Deep Springs College is tucked away between two mountain ranges.

The 100-year-old institution, founded by mining and electricity tycoon Lucien Lucius Nunn in 1917, has achieved near-mythic st
Deep Springs Valley, with the closest gas st
student body is schooled in more than just
ranch hands, alfalfa farmers, and high-minded gentlemen.

The school is something of an intentional r
cashless basis, and there is no television, no

Sam Contis, *Lean Back*, 2015. Courtesy of the artist and MATRIX 266.

Sam Contis, *High Noon*, 2014. Courtesy of the artist and MATRIX 266.

Sam Contis, an Oakland-based photographer, has visited Deep Springs periodically for the past few years, capturing the school in intimate, sometimes wistful photographs that are currently on view at the Berkeley Art Museum, and will go on display at New York's Klaus von Nichtssagend gallery from May 12th. "Part of what drew me to the college was a fascination with the mythology and iconography of the American West," she says. "I wanted to engage with that landscape on a personal level. On the one hand it's associated with ideas of freedom and self-determination, but it's also associated with a rough, aggressive idea of masculinity. I wan

Contis's images show the cowboy-students g to the school's program—shoeing horses, b they also show the young men in quieter m observing the natural world around them.

While a visceral sense of physicality pervades many of the photos, what Contis found at the school was not just a heroic conception of male identity—the dust-gnarled, stoic figures who populate Westerns and who form the backbone of America's dream of Manifest Destiny. Rather, she experienced an open, accepting community in which a

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What's behind the Explosive Growth of New York's Design Week

ARTSY EDITORIAL
BY HEATHER CORCORAN
MAY 9TH

Installation view of “Room With Its Own Rules” at CHAMBER. Photo by David Brandon Geeting. Courtesy of CHAMBER.

By the 24th of this month, more than 500 design-related events will take place across New York City—and that’s just the official NYCxDesign calendar. There are also showroom events, private brand dinners, auctions, art and design fairs and other happenings that, together with the busy spring art season, make May the most action-packed few weeks in New York City. In recent years, the city’s design week presence has exploded from a small, industry-focused trade show to an all-out design festival—and this year promises to be bigger than ever.

Much like the art and fashion industries be
adheres to an international circuit that hop
Design Festival each September to Milan’s
stops ranging from Cape Town to Cologne to Copenhagen. But it’s the Italian show
that’s the epicenter of it all, with a multitu
drew over 343,000 attendees from 165 cou

It can be a grueling exercise, and just weeks after the festival ends, many of the same figures reunite in New York for the city's own design week. Historically, the New York festival centers around the International Contemporary Furniture Fair (ICFF), which is in its 29th year and takes place at the Jacob K. Javits Center on Manhattan's far West Side. This year's ICFF (May 21–24) will feature some 800 exhibitors, about 50 percent of them from outside the U.S., and 35,000 people are expected to attend the show.

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Julian Wasser
Duchamp smoking in front of Fountain, Duchamp Retrospective, Pasadena Art Museum…
Robert Berman Gallery

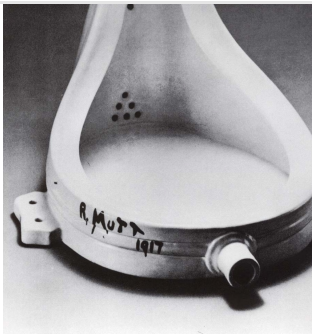

Image of Marcel Duchamp *Fountain*, 1917, via Wikim Commons.

On April 9th, 1917, just over 100 years ag perhaps the most brilliant and absurd art ev

The story is legend. Duchamp, wanting to submit an artwork to the "unjuried" Society of Independent Artists' salon in New York- work of art, so long as the artist paid the ap urinal signed and dated with the appellatio

Duchamp, who was a member of that board himself, resigned in protest.

Is it really art?

Artists and intellectuals surfaced on both sides of the issue, with perhaps the clearest explanation of *Fountain*'s importance coming from an anonymous editorial believed to be written by the artist Beatrice Wood.

It read: "Whether Mr Mutt with his own hands made the fountain or not has no importance. He CHOSE it. He took an ordinary article of life, placed it so that its useful significance disappeared under the new title and point of view—created a new thought for that object." Wood, who had followed Duchamp's work closely,

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