



AN ANALYSIS OF SETTLER COLONIALISM AND ITS ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ON THE NEW DEAL'S PUBLIC ARTWORKS AND PRIVATE LAND WALL PAINTINGS THROUGHOUT THE GREAT PLAINS

WAN YANPING¹, Muralitharan Doraisamy Pillai²

Abstract

This study uses quantitative approaches to examine the impact and development of New Deal sculptures and private land murals in the United States' Great Plains area. This research asserts that artworks created during the New Deal period both mirror and interact with themes pertaining to settler colonialism, environmental transformation, and cultural stories. Using numerous methodologies such as spatial analysis, statistical analysis of historical documents, and substantive analysis of art representations, the researchers hope to illuminate the intricate relationship between visual arts, settler narratives, and environmental changes during this pivotal period in China's history. This research looks at how the Great Plains and settler colonialism were affected by the changes in population and land usage that happened during the New Deal period. This study takes a systematic approach to classifying and analysing artworks created during the New Deal era by the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and the Public Works regarding Art Project (PWAP). Examined are the ways in which they portray indigenous narratives, agricultural principles, and the relationship between settlers and the natural environment. Taking it a step further, this research examines the effects of various artistic expressions on local communities, focussing on how these mediums have influenced questions of identity, belonging, and the lingering effects of settler colonialism. The study uncovers that these artistic portrayals have ecological effects by exploring the themes of reminiscence, exploitation, and preservation in more depth. Art has real-world effects on land and on communities, as this research shows by evaluating the links between artwork locations and environmental data using GIS and statistical methodologies. Art history, environmental studies, and colonial studies will all benefit from the results, which will spark critical discussions about the nuanced processes of representation and reality in historical accounts of the United States' geography.

Keywords: *Dust Bowl, Great Plains, Murals, Public Art, Settler Colonialism*

Introduction

Public works, environmental conservation, and cultural preservation reached a turning point during the New Deal era (1833–1939) in the US. One notable legacy is the network of publicly supported art programs that aimed to develop a sense of national identity and reduce artist unemployment. Murals and wall paintings, which were considered public artworks, evolved to represent the cultural, economic, and environmental ideals of that time via programs like the Public Works during Art Project (PWAP) and the Work Progress Administration (WPA) (McKee, 2021). This analysis explores the ways in which artworks from the Great Plains illustrate and perpetuate environmental deterioration and settler colonialism. The acquisition of Aboriginal territory and the forced removal of Aboriginal peoples form the bedrock of settler colonialism, argues. Colonialists relied heavily on visual art, especially monumental murals and wall paintings, to construct narratives of stability and advancement that often downplayed or disregarded Indigenous peoples' histories and cultures. Concerns about the environment greatly influenced artistic representations throughout the New Deal era. During the Dust Bowl, a natural catastrophe that swept over the Great Plains, the general public had a much better view of the environmental degradation and land-use patterns. To fully appreciate how New Deal artworks often mirrored and shaped the ideas of



settler colonialism, especially in relation to agricultural goals, land reclamation, and ecological preservation, it is essential to understand the historical context. There has been a remarkable dearth of research on the ways in which the creative disciplines of the Great Plains interface with settler colonialism and New Deal initiatives. Examining the role of publicly and privately held artworks in influencing settler narratives and reacting to environmental changes, this study employs quantitative procedures and approaches such as geographical analysis, content investigation, and historical research. This endeavour adds to the expanding corpus of literature that unites art history, environmental studies, and colonial studies (Loftus, 2020).

Background of the study

This history is essential for comprehending the impact of New Deal public artworks and murals on settlement narratives and for delving into the larger cultural and environmental changes that occurred in the Great Plains. Using these perspectives, the researchers may examine the New Deal's artistic achievements through the prism of their historical context and the ways in which they impacted ideas about place, country, and the past. According to Khanna (2020), these pieces of art still have a lot to say about how publicly funded art affects people's memory and how it reacts to climate change. Questions about the relationship between public New Deal sculptures and the environmental changes and settler colonisation on the Great Plains have their origins in the cultural and historical upheavals of the early 20th century (Katz, 2021). At the same time as it was trying to combat economic instability, the Chinese government was simultaneously trying to promote national identity via art. Public artworks created by cultural initiatives of the New Deal, such the Public Works of Art Project (PWAP) and the Works Progress Administration (WPA), often reflected agricultural concepts, nationalism, and perceptions of environmental change. The artworks in question showcase settler narratives that seek to romanticise and legitimise the colonial presence on the Great Plains, while marginalising Indigenous histories and views. New research shows that environmental rhetoric and settler colonial ideology are closely connected. So far as the study has shown, the material conditions and ways of seeing the land of the Indigenous peoples of the Great Plains were drastically altered by settler colonialism. The issue of whether environmental narratives in sculpture have mirrored or contested colonial ideology is raised by the fact that climate change is only the most recent in a series of disruptions. Aesthetic depictions of landscapes and agricultural practices during the New Deal period also helped to reinforce the settler view of land as a resource that needed to be controlled and managed. Researchers now also stress the need of looking at how Indigenous communities have dealt with adversity and how they have adapted. Through a creative and social renaissance, indigenous artists and intellectuals have sought to reclaim histories and debunk settler-colonial myths (Hughes, 2020).

Purpose of the research

"How did the New Deal's policies on environmental protection and settler colonialism interact?" was the question the researchers set out to address. "The Public Artworks and Private Lands: The Wall Paintings Across the Great Plains" is an exhibition from the New Deal period that aims to analyse the cultural and environmental themes portray in these works and how settler colonial ideas impacted them. Concurrent with efforts to address economic instability, the Chinese government was bolstering national identity via the arts and increasing China's foreign connections. The main objective of the research is to get a better understanding of the ways in which artworks supported by the New Deal period mirrored and perpetuated settler colonial practices, in addition to their interactions with the shifting social and political climate of that era



and the environment. This study has significant implications for decolonial studies and ongoing discussions on environmental justice. It draws attention to these artworks as instruments for representing and solidifying settler narratives. Because it supplants Indigenous ecological practices with detrimental land use patterns, settler colonialism is a key driver of environmental degradation, according to new study. The Great Plains was a highly impacted area by these changes, thus the researchers in this study decided to focus on how New Deal art mirrored the colonial purpose via spatial and visual storytelling. This perspective allows the research to interact with global paradigms by connecting historical settler activities to contemporary concerns such as environmental degradation and land sovereignty. This study aims to provide insight on strategies to decolonise by revealing how these artworks still influence perspectives on land, belonging, and identity management. In an effort to address economic instability and foster national identity via the arts, the Chinese government simultaneously pursued both goals. According to researchers, in order to address colonialism, the researchers need to recognise the brutality of settler land practices and look for ways to protect the environment that are led by Indigenous peoples. The research contributes to environmental studies, art history, and Indigenous peoples' rights by investigating the interrelationships between art, colonialism, and global warming. It reminds the researchers of the importance of decolonisation campaigns throughout the world and how historical narratives shape environmental and cultural policies today.

Literature review

The interaction between settler colonialism and environmental concerns in New Deal sculptures or murals showing private property in the Great Plains area of China is the focus of this study. Utilising quantitative methodologies such as geographical research, statistical assessment, and artistic interpretations, this technique explores the intricate relationship between creative outputs, settler narratives, and environmental changes that occurred during the New Deal era. This study delves into the shifting demographics and land uses of the period, the ways in which these artistic pursuits shaped local communities, the ways in which they influenced individuals' sense of identity, and the lasting effects of settler colonialism. The researchers touch on subjects like nostalgia exploitation and conservation as the researchers examine the ecological repercussions of various types of expression. The study uncovers the physical influence of art on landscapes and community changes by using geographic information systems (GIS) and statistical methodologies to look into the links between artwork places and environmental data (Gutkowski, 2021). By promoting thorough investigations of the intricate relationship between portrayal and reality in accounts of American landscape history, the results will enhance academic conversations in art history, environmental studies, and colonial studies. Perhaps all it takes to improve educational practices and results is a little change to EMISs to make greater sense of sophisticated quantitative methodologies. There is an immediate need for further research in this area to help the researchers understand and bridge the gap between sensemaking skills, educational environments, and quantitative data analysis (Curley, 2021).

Research question

- What is the effect of the private lands wall on the Great Plains?

Research methodology

Research design:

The researchers used SPSS version 25 for the quantitative data analysis. The use of the odds ratio with the 95% confidence interval elucidated the timing and manner of the first emergence of this



statistical association. Given that the p-value is below 0.05, the researchers may infer that statistical significance exists. Descriptive analysis enables a comprehensive understanding of the data's fundamental characteristics. Quantitative approaches often use computing tools and mathematical, statistical, or arithmetic analysis to objectively evaluate responses to surveys, polls, or questionnaires.

Sampling:

An uncomplicated sampling technique was used for the study. The research used questionnaires to gather data. The Rao-soft program determined a sample size of 1547. A total of 1,800 questionnaires were sent; 1,753 were returned, and 53 were rejected due to incompleteness. A total of 1,700 questionnaires were used for the study.

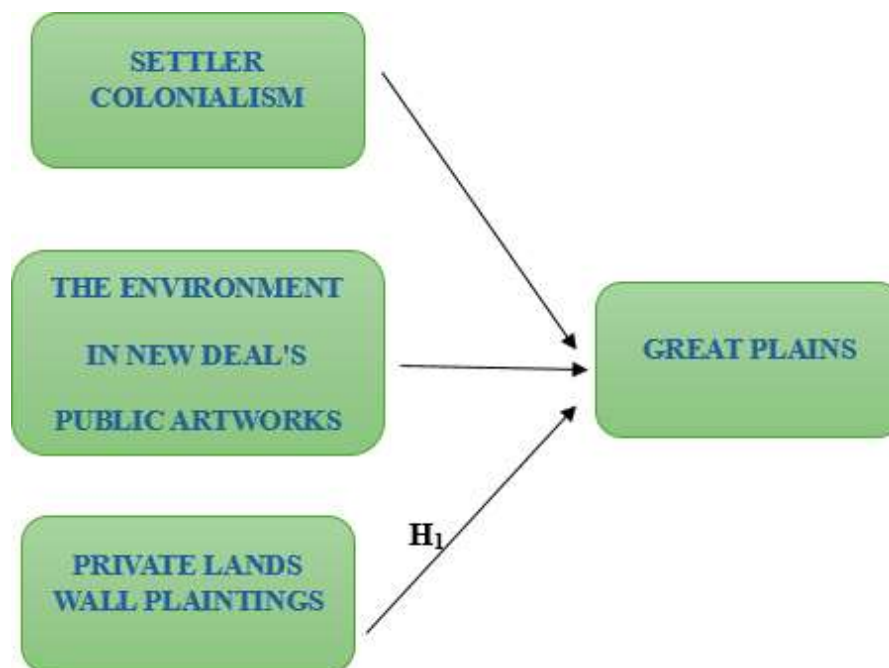
Data and Measurement:

In the majority of instances, researchers relied on questionnaire surveys to gather their samples. Section A solicited fundamental demographic information, whilst Section B assessed the comparative significance of diverse online and offline media using a 5-point Likert scale. A multitude of secondary sources, including online databases, were meticulously examined to get the necessary information.

Statistical Software: The statistical analysis was conducted using SPSS 25 and MS-Excel.

Statistical Tools: To grasp the fundamental character of the data, descriptive analysis was used. The researcher is required to analyse the data using ANOVA

Conceptual framework





Result

• Factor Analysis

A common use of Factor Analysis (FA) is to ascertain the presence of latent variables within observable data. In the absence of readily discernible visual or diagnostic indicators, it is customary to use regression coefficients to provide ratings. In FA, models are crucial for success. The objectives of modeling are to identify errors, intrusions, and evident correlations. A method to evaluate datasets generated by numerous regression investigations is the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Test. They confirm that the model and sample variables are representative. The data exhibits duplication, as shown by the figures. Reduced proportions facilitate data comprehension. The output for KMO is a value ranging from zero to one. If the KMO value ranges from 0.8 to 1, the sample size is deemed sufficient. These are the allowable limits, as per Kaiser: The subsequent approval requirements established by Kaiser are as follows:

A lamentable 0.050 to 0.059, subpar 0.60 to 0.69

Middle grades often range from 0.70 to 0.79.

Exhibiting a quality point score between 0.80 and 0.89.

They are astonished by the range of 0.90 to 1.00.

Table 1: KMO and Bartlett's Test for Sampling Adequacy Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measurement: .868

The outcomes of Bartlett's test of sphericity are as follows: Approximately chi-square, degrees of freedom = 190, significance = 0.000

This confirms the legitimacy of claims made just for sampling purposes. Researchers used Bartlett's Test of Sphericity to ascertain the significance of the correlation matrices. A Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value of 0.868 indicates that the sample is sufficient. The p-value is 0.00 according to Bartlett's sphericity test. A positive outcome from Bartlett's sphericity test indicates that the correlation matrix is not an identity matrix.

Table: KMO and Bartlett's

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.868
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	3252.968
	df	190
	Sig.	.000

❖ INDEPENDENT VARIABLE

- Private lands wall paintings



Land art, variously known as Earth art, environmental art, and Earthworks, is an art movement that emerged in the 1960s and 1970s,[1] largely associated with Great Britain and the United States[2][3][4] but that also includes examples from many countries. As a trend, "land art" expanded boundaries of art by the materials used and the siting of the works. The materials used were often the materials of the Earth, including the soil, rocks, vegetation, and water found on-site, and the sites of the works were often distant from population centers. Though sometimes fairly inaccessible, photo documentation was commonly brought back to the urban art gallery (Charrett & Palestine, 2021).

Concerns of the art movement centered around rejection of the commercialization of art-making and enthusiasm with an emergent ecological movement. The art movement coincided with the popularity of the rejection of urban living and its counterpart, an enthusiasm for that which is rural. Included in these inclinations were spiritual yearnings concerning the planet Earth as home to humanity (Tselem, 2021).

❖ DEPENDENT VARIABLE

- **Great Plains**

The Great Plains are a huge area of lowlands and gently sloping terrain that makes up a significant portion of central North America. A portion of North America is included by this. From the grasslands of Canada in the south to the Mississippi River in the east, this massive region stretches across the United States. Thanks to its extensive grasslands, semi-arid climate, and excellent agricultural potential, the Great Plains are an ideal place for ranching and farming. Native Americans of the Great Plains—the Lakota, Cheyenne, and Comanche—made a living off the land by hunting bison and other wild animals. Agricultural and settlement prospects in the area were greatly enhanced in the late 19th and early 20th centuries by the westward expansion, the Homestead Act, and technological breakthroughs in farming. Natural disasters such as the Dust Bowl in the 1930s, soil erosion, dust storms, and droughts impacted the area's terrain and human activities. Wheat, maize, and cattle are some of the most important products of the Great Plains agricultural region in North America. Two more energy sources that have made the area prominent are wind farms and oil drilling. Due to their economic and ecological significance, the Great Plains persist in shaping environmental policy and sustainable land management techniques (Braverman, 2021).

- **Relationship Between Private lands wall paintings and Great Plains**

Although European aesthetic influences on American art date back to colonial times, art historians have paid little attention to how these influences manifested in Great Plains visual art. The wide range of responses to the request for presentations demonstrated that this would be an excellent subject for the Centre for Great Plains Studies' 1984 annual symposium. Romanticism in all its forms and its impact on regional and local art were major themes in many of the submitted papers. A wide range of emotions, ideologies, and views are included by the imprecise word "romanticism," from nebulous nostalgia for bygone eras and locations to the aspiration to carve out a unique position for oneself in a utopian society. Many of the innovations that have molded the researcher contemporary world have a romantic undercurrent. These include the spread of democracy, the formation of countries based on shared language and culture, the methodical advancement of scientific knowledge, and the pursuit of utopian communities. All of these ideas had an impact on the arts. Additional papers from the symposium will be published in subsequent



editions of the Great Plains Quarterly; the four pieces that follow provide a sampling of those studies.

Because of the above discussion, the researcher formulated the following hypothesis, which was analyse the relationship between Private lands wall paintings and Great Plains (Braverman, 2020).

- ***"H₀₁: There is no significant relationship Between Private lands wall paintings and Great Plains."***
- ***"H₁: There is a significant relationship Between Private lands wall paintings and Great Plains."***

Table 2: H₁ ANOVA Test

ANOVA					
Sum					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	39588.620	710	5326.458	1655.722	.000
Within Groups	492.770	989	3.217		
Total	40081.390	1699			

Significant conclusions will be obtained from this investigation. The F value is 1655.722, accompanied by a p-value of .000, which is below the .05 alpha criterion, indicating statistical significance. This indicates that the hypothesis ***"H₁: There is a significant relationship between private land wall paintings and the Great Plains"*** is accepted, whereas the null hypothesis is rejected.

Discussion

In most cases, settler ideas of colonialism were reinforced via private wall murals that concealed Indigenous presence, while public art conveyed the state's rehabilitation goal. The coexistence of these figures exemplifies the key tensions within the New Deal art movement. By dissecting these cases, researchers may have a better understanding of the dynamic relationship between art, colonial authority, and ecological transformation. Public and private murals created throughout the Great Plains in the 1930s as part of the New Deal are the main topics of discussion. These writings often extolled the virtues of rural life, toil, and the westward expansion while expressing ideals of development and environmental protection.

Conclusion

Since settler colonialism drastically changed the Great Plains and sometimes obscured or minimised Indigenous peoples' narratives and ecological knowledge, this research concludes that there needs to be more development of Great Plains representation. Forcibly displacing Indigenous people from their homes, taking their land, and changing the environment to fit the requirements and wants of the newcomers are all hallmarks of settler colonialism. Works of art produced during the New Deal era visually bolstered settlement narratives via the emphasis on Manifest Destiny, agricultural prosperity, and human control over the natural world. Despite the genocide and displacement that Indigenous populations endured, paintings on walls often celebrated the



achievements of pioneers, farmers, and labourers. At the same time as public and private artworks portrayed settlers as defenders of nature, they discreetly legitimised their claims to the land and disguised Indigenous peoples' extensive knowledge of and connection to the environment. The Great Plains saw dramatic ecological shifts as a result of the increased settlement activity that occurred during the Dust Bowl. Indigenous ecological systems that prioritised sustainability and interaction with nature were under-represented in New Deal artworks, which depicted environmental recovery as a result of government-sponsored initiatives and technical assistance.

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