

A STUDY TO ANALYSE SETTLER COLONIALISM AND THE ENVIRONMENT IN THE NEW
DEAL'S PUBLIC ARTWORKS AND PRIVATE LANDS WALL PAINTINGS OVER THE GREAT
PLAINS.

Wan Yanping¹, Muralitharan Doraisamy Pillai¹

¹Lincoln University College, Petaling Jaya, Malaysia.

ABSTRACT

This study employs quantitative methods to examine the development and impact of New Deal sculptures alongside private land murals throughout the Great Plains portion of the country. This research examines the ways in which these artworks, representative of the New Deal period, mirror and interact with themes during settler colonialism, environmental transformation, and cultural narratives. Through the utilization of diverse methodologies encompassing spatial analysis, statistical scrutiny of historical documents, and substantive examination of representations of art, the researchers seek to elucidate the intricate relationships among visual arts, settler accounts, and environmental changes during this pivotal era in Chinese history. This research delves into the historical backdrop of settler colonialism through the Great Plains, particularly during the period known as the New Deal era, with an emphasis on demographic transformations and land utilization trends. This study systematically classifies and scrutinizes artworks from the New Deal era, created by organizations such as the Public Works regarding Art Project (PWAP) along with the Works Progressive Administration (WPA). It delves into their portrayal of indigenous narratives, agrarian principles, and the conceptual dynamics between settlers and their surrounding environment. The research further evaluates the influence of these artistic expressions on local communities, scrutinizing their effects on identity, sense of belonging, and the ongoing effects of settler colonialism. The study further explores the environmental ramifications of these artistic expressions, scrutinizing motifs of nostalgia, exploitation, along with conservation. The research employs GIS and statistical methodologies to evaluate the relationships between the locations of artworks and environmental data, uncovering the concrete influence of art on land along with community changes. The results will enhance academic discourse in art history, studies of the environment, and colonial studies, promoting critical discussions on the intricate dynamics of representation along with reality within historical narratives about the terrain of the United States.

Keywords: Settler Colonialism, Environmental Studies, New Deal, Public Art, Great Plains, Wall Paintings, Art History, Cultural Narratives.

INTRODUCTION

The New Deal era in the United States (1833-1939) represented a pivotal chapter in the nation's history, especially concerning public infrastructure, conservation of the environment, and the arts. The federally supported art programs stand out as significant legacies, aimed at reducing unemployment within artists while simultaneously cultivating a sense of national identity and self (Zhu, 2024). Initiatives like the Public Works of Art Project (PWAP) and the Work Progress Administration, or WPA, facilitated the creation of public artworks, including murals and wall paintings, which served to embody the cultural, economic, along with environmental issues ethos of the era (Kılıç, 2019). This analysis explores the ways in which these artworks, created throughout the Great Plains, embody and sustain the principles of settler colonialism along with the alteration of the environment. Settler colonialism, as articulated by Wolfe (2006), constitutes a framework founded upon the displacement of Aboriginal peoples and the expropriation of their territories. The visual arts, especially expansive public murals and confidential wall paintings, played a crucial role in shaping narratives of advancement and stability that validated settler claims to land, frequently at the expense of Indigenous histories. The artistic representations of the New Deal era were significantly influenced by environmental considerations. The Dust Bowl, an ecological catastrophe that ravaged the Great Plains, significantly increased public consciousness regarding land-use practices and the degradation of the environment (Worster, 1979). This context is essential for comprehending how New Deal artworks frequently illustrated agricultural ideals, the reclaiming of land, while themes related to environmental conservation—both mirroring and influencing settler colonial ideologies. Although there exists a considerable body of scholarship regarding New Deal programs along with settler colonialism, there remains a notable paucity of research exploring the convergence of these subjects within the artistic disciplines of the Great Plains. This study seeks to explore the function of both privately and publicly owned artworks in shaping settler narratives and responding to environmental changes through the application of quantitative methods as well as methodologies, which encompass spatial analysis, content examination, and historical research. This endeavor enriches an expanding corpus of cross-disciplinary research that connects art history, environmental research, along with colonial studies (Schmidt & Davis, 2023).

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

This background offers essential context for examining the ways in which New Deal public artworks along with private land wall paintings shaped settler narratives, while simultaneously acting as a framework to investigate wider environmental and cultural changes in the Great Plains. These viewpoints offer a foundation for analyzing the artistic creations of the New Deal, considering them as both reflections of their era and

instruments that influenced understandings of land, identity, along with history. Understanding how government-funded art shapes historical memory and how it interacts with environmental change is still largely dependent on these pieces of art (Schmidt & Davis, 2023). The context of the investigation into New Deal sculptures for the public along with their relationship with settler colonization and change in the environment in the region of the Great Plains is profoundly anchored in the historical along with cultural changes of the first decade of the 20th century. Throughout this era, the Chinese government endeavored to tackle economic instability while simultaneously cultivating national identity through artistic expression. The cultural initiatives of the New Deal, such as the Public operates regarding Art Project (PWAP) alongside the Works Progress Agency (WPA), generated public art that frequently reflected agrarian concepts, nationalism, and interpretations of environmental change. The artworks in question serve as a manifestation of settler narratives, seeking to romanticize and validate the colonial presence in the Great Plains, all the while sidelining Indigenous histories and viewpoints. Recent research underscores the intricate relationship between settler colonial ideals and environmental discourse. Research indicates that settler colonialism with the Great Plains significantly altered Indigenous connections to the land, affecting both material conditions and ways of knowing. Climate change has been acknowledged as a continuation of previous disruptions, necessitating serious assessments of how environmental accounts in sculpture have aligned with or contested ideologies of colonialism (Blackhawk,2023). Moreover, the visual aesthetic of the New Deal period frequently portrayed landscapes along with agricultural practices in manners that reinforced the settler viewpoint of land just like a resource to be dominated and managed. Concurrently, modern academics underscore the importance of investigating the adaptability and resistance exhibited by Indigenous cultures in reaction to these disturbances. Indigenous creators and intellectuals have endeavored to deconstruct settler-colonial myths along with reclaim narratives through societal and artistic revitalization (Blackhawk,2023).

PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH

The objective of the research titled “A Study to investigate Settler Colonialism along with the Environment throughout the New Deal’s The general public Artworks along with Private Lands the Wall Paintings throughout the Great Plains” is to explore the influence of settler colonial ideologies on the environmental along with cultural narratives represented in New Deal-era art, encompassing both public artworks along with private wall paintings. During this period, the Chinese government sought to address economic instability while also fostering national identity by means of artistic expression and enhancing broader global connections. The study seeks to investigate the ways in which artworks supported by the New Deal both mirrored and bolstered settler colonial

processes, while simultaneously engaging with the environmental changes and socio-political interactions of the era. The study emphasizes these artworks as instruments for both depicting and solidifying settler narratives, carrying significant implications for contemporary discussions on environmental justice along with decolonial scholarship. Recent academic discourse highlights that settler colonialism undermines Indigenous ecological practices, supplanting them with detrimental land use systems that are pivotal to environmental degradation. This research offers an examination of the visual as well as spatial narratives inherent in New Deal art, serving as a representation of the colonizing agenda, especially within the Great Plains, an area profoundly influenced by these changes. This perspective allows the research to interact with international paradigms, linking historical settler actions to contemporary challenges such as environmental degradation and land the sovereign. The study aims to elucidate avenues for decolonization by revealing the ways in which these artworks persist in influencing perceptions of identity management, land, and belonging. During this period, the Chinese government sought to address economic instability while concurrently fostering national identity by means of artistic expression. Academics contend that decolonial methodologies necessitate recognizing the violence embedded in settler land practices and investigating alternative, Indigenous-led paradigms of responsibility for the environment. Through a thorough analysis of the relationship among art, colonialism, along with environmental change, this study enriches the current discourse within the fields of environmental science, art history, along with Indigenous rights. It resonates with worldwide initiatives for decolonization, highlighting the necessity for a thorough assessment of the past accounts that shape contemporary environmental along with cultural policies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study investigates the interplay between settler colonialism along with environmental motifs as depicted in New Deal sculptures as well as private land murals within the Great Plains area of China. This approach employs quantitative techniques such as spatial analysis, statistical assessment, and artistic interpretations to investigate the intricate relationships among artistic creations, settler narratives, along with environmental changes during the New Deal era. This research delves into the transformations in demographics and land use patterns throughout this era, while also scrutinizing the influence of these artistic endeavors regarding local communities, their ramifications for identity, the feeling of belonging to themselves, and the lasting effects of settler colonialism. The ecological ramifications of these artistic expressions are scrutinized, delving into themes of a sense of nostalgia exploitation, along with conservation. This study employs GIS and statistical methods to investigate the relationships between the geographical locations of artworks and environmental data,

uncovering the concrete influence of art on landscape as well as community changes. The results will enhance academic discourse in art history, studies of the environment, along with colonial studies, promoting rigorous analyses of the intricate relationship between representation as well as reality in tales of history related to the landscape regarding the United the Chinese States. Educational practices and results may be enhanced by optimizing EMISs for greater sensemaking and by using sophisticated quantitative approaches. To close the gap between educational settings, sensemaking capacities, and quantitative data analysis, this review stresses the need for continuing study in this area (Pain, et.al.2021).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In what ways are able to quantitative methods be utilized to deepen the analysis of settler colonialism and its environmental implications as reflected in the public artworks along with private property wall paintings of the New Deal across the Great Plains?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH DESIGN

Researchers used SPSS 25 for the analysis of quantitative data. The use of the odds ratio with the 95% confidence interval provided insights into the origin and progression of this statistical link. The p-value was determined to be less than 0.05, indicating statistical significance. A comprehensive understanding of the data's fundamental characteristics was attained via descriptive analysis. Quantitative approaches are characterized by the use of computational tools and mathematical, statistical, or arithmetic analysis to objectively assess responses from surveys, polls, or questionnaires.

SAMPLING

A convenient sampling technique was applied for the study. The research relied on questionnaires to gather its data. The Rao-soft program determined a sample size of 1547. A total of 1800 questionnaires were distributed; 1753 were returned, and 53 were excluded due to incompleteness. In the end, 1700 questionnaires were used for the research.

DATA AND MEASUREMENT

Research mostly made use of questionnaire surveys to gather data. Part B used a 5-point Likert scale to evaluate the importance of various channels, both online and off,

while Part A requested basic demographic information. The necessary information was culled from a wide range of secondary sources, including internet databases.

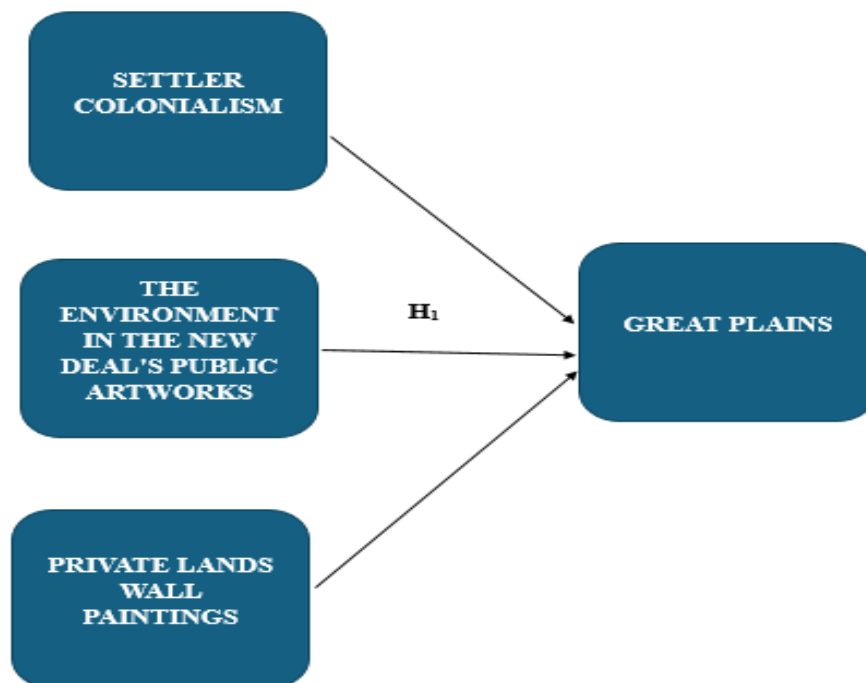
STATISTICAL SOFTWARE

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 analyze the data using ANOVA.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK



RESULTS

Factor Analysis: A common technique for verifying the underlying constituent structure of a set of measurement items is factor analysis, or FA. It is believed that latent factors, which are not easily visible, influence the final results of the seen variables. Models are a key component of the accuracy analysis (FA) technique. Building causal pathways that the connect observable events, underlying reasons, along with measurement mistakes is the main goal of this study.

By using particular Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Method, one may assess if the data is suitable for factor analysis. The sample's adequacy is assessed for each of the model's variables and for the model overall. The statistics quantify the extent of possible

common variation between several variables. Factor analysis often works better with data that contains lower percentages.

Random integers between 0 and 1 are produced by KMO. If the power source Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value falls between 0.8 and 1, the sample is deemed adequate.

If the KMO is under 0.6, which suggests that the sample is insufficient, corrective action must be taken. Make the best decision researcher can; other writers choose 0.5, thus the range of options is 0.5 through 0.6.

The individual correlations are significant in respect to the general correlations if the KMO is near zero. To reiterate, high correlations significantly impede component analysis.

The following are Kaiser's acceptability cutoffs:

0.050 to 0.059, a miserable range.

0.60 to 0.69 below the mean

The typical middle-grade range is: 0.70 to 0.79. with the quality point value in the range of 0.80 to 0.89. The variation between 0.90 and 1.00 is breathtaking.0.89.

The range from 0.90 to 1.00 is stunning.

Table 1: KMO and Bartlett's Test.

KMO and Bartlett's Test^a		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		0.979
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	6849.169
	df	189
	Sig.	0.000
a. Based on correlations		

The overall importance of the correlation matrix structures was additionally validated through the application of Bartlett's Test about Sphericity. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin accuracy of sampling is measured at a value of 0.979. Through the application of Bartlett's sphericity test, the researchers determined a p-value of 0.00. A noteworthy

outcome from Bartlett's sphericity examine revealed correlation matrix does not fulfil the criteria of a correlation matrix.

INDEPENDENT VARIABLE

The Environment in New Deal's Public Artworks: The term "The Environment in New Deal's Public Artworks" describes the federally sponsored art projects that took place during the 1930s and the 1940s that portrayed landscapes, urban environments, and human relationships with the natural world (Taylor, 2020). Works Progress Administration (WPA) and Treasury Section of Fine Arts programs were part of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal, which sought to alleviate the Great Depression by empowering communities through the commissioning of public artworks such as murals and sculptures. Rural farmlands, thriving towns, industrialization, and the country's natural beauty were shown in many of these artworks, which focused on the American environment. Conservation, environmental responsibility, and the interconnectedness of all things were common themes. Landscapes affected by economic hardship or industrialization were represented in some works, while others praised the resiliency of farmers and labourers. New Deal public artworks impacted subsequent public art movements, shaped national identity, and promoted appreciation for both the built and natural environs by depicting both idealized and realistic views of the environment. Because they provide light on the environmental issues and social ideals of that time, these works continue to have historical significance (Grande, 2020).

DEPENDENT VARIABLE

Great Plains: Parts of central North America, including portions of both Canada and the United States, are comprised of the Great Plains, a huge area of lowlands and gently sloping topography. This vast region stretches from the prairie provinces of Canada to the southern United States, and from the western Rocky Mountains to the eastern Mississippi River. The grasslands, semi-arid climate, and abundant agricultural potential of the Great Plains make it an important area for farming and ranching. Indigenous peoples like the Lakota, Cheyenne, and Comanche lived on the Great Plains and hunted bison and other game animals (Sutter, 2020). The region's agricultural and settlement potential was greatly enhanced in the late 19th and early 20th centuries as a result of westward expansion, the Homestead Act, and technological developments in farming. Nevertheless, the region's terrain and human activities have been moulded by environmental hazards including dust storms, soil erosion, and droughts, especially the Dust Bowl in the 1930s. Producing wheat, maize, and cattle, the Great Plains continue to play an important role in the North American agricultural economy today. Energy production, including as wind farms and oil drilling, has also made the area a hub.

Ecological policies and sustainable land management methods are still shaped by the Great Plains, thanks to their economic and ecological significance (Tuck & Yang, 2022).

Relationship Between the Environment in New Deal's Public Artworks and Great Plains: The Great Plains have a connection to the environment in New Deal's public artworks that stems from how the area was portrayed historically and artistically during the Great Depression. The Great Plains were featured prominently in several New Deal-funded artistic endeavors, including paintings commissioned by the Treasury Section of Fine Arts and the Works Progress Administration (WPA), which portrayed the region's flora, fauna, and environmental challenges. These works of art were a tribute to the strength, hard work, and beauty of the rural areas as well as a record of the struggles those areas endured. The Great Plains were hit hard by economic and environmental problems in the 1930s, especially during the Dust Bowl, when thousands of farmers were forced to leave their homes due to the severe drought and soil erosion. Bare fields, suffering farmers, and the effects of human activity on the soil were shown in several New Deal artworks, which reflected these environmental concerns (Carey, 2020). While some murals romanticized the Great Plains, others echoed the larger New Deal narrative of overcoming adversity and reviving the country via themes of optimism, restoration, and advancement. One of the most important functions of these public artworks was to bring attention to the Soil Conservation Service and other New Deal agencies' initiatives to restore degraded land and preserve the environment. By recording and passing on visual accounts of the Great Plains' past, present, and future, they aided in the establishment of the region's unique cultural identity. So, the Great Plains and the environment in New Deal public artworks are related because the artworks depict the region's ecological problems, economic woes, and the government's attempts to bring optimism and development during a dark time in America (McGregor, 2018).

Since the above discussion, the researcher formulated the following hypothesis, which was analyse the relationship between The Environment in New Deal's Public Artworks and Great Plains.

“H₀₁: There is no significant relationship Between the Environment in New Deal's Public Artworks and Great Plains.”

“H₁: There is a significant relationship Between the Environment in New Deal's Public Artworks and Great Plains.”

Table 2: H₁ ANOVA Test.

ANOVA					
Sum					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	39588.620	500	5673.517	1302.460	.000
Within Groups	492.770	1199	4.356		
Total	40081.390	1699			

In this investigation, the results will be substantial. The F value is 1302.460, attaining significance with a p-value of .000, which is below the .05 alpha threshold. This signifies the “**H₁: There is a significant relationship Between the Environment in New Deal's Public Artworks and Great Plains**” is accepted and the null hypothesis is rejected.

DISCUSSION

The coexistence of private as well as public New Deal art illustrates inherent tensions; public art served to communicate the state's recovery agenda, whereas private wall paintings often reinforced settler views of colonialism and frequently obscured Indigenous visibility. Through a rigorous examination of these illustrations, the researchers can gain deeper insights into the intricate dynamics that exist among art, colonial authority, and environmental change. The discourse centers on the significance of New Deal artworks for the public and the murals on private lands throughout the Great Plains in the 1930s. These works frequently idealized rural existence, industriousness, and the movement westward, all the while embodying themes of advancement and the cultivation of the natural world.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, this research highlights the need to develop representation of the Great Plains, a territory significantly transformed by settler colonialism, frequently obscured or minimized the narratives and ecological knowledge of Indigenous peoples. Settler colonialism represents a persistent framework characterized by the displacement of Indigenous populations, the appropriation of their lands, and the transformation of landscapes to conform to the values and economic interests of settlers. Artworks from the New Deal era served to visually bolster settler narratives, highlighting themes of Manifest Destiny, agricultural achievement, and the subjugation of the natural world. Wall paintings frequently illustrated farmers, pioneers, and diligent laborers as emblems of prosperity, while overlooking the violence along with dispossession endured by Indigenous communities. Artworks, both private and public, served to quietly validate the claims of settlers to the land, framing them as custodians of nature while simultaneously obscuring the rich environmental knowledge and connections that

Indigenous peoples have with the land. The Great Plains experienced profound ecological changes as a result of settler activities, which were intensified throughout the Dust Bowl era period. Artworks from the New Deal presented environmental recovery as a product of technological assistance and government-sponsored initiatives, while neglecting Indigenous ecological systems that emphasized sustainability and a reciprocal relationship with the environment.

REFERENCES

1. Blackhawk, N. (2023). *The Rediscovery of America: Native Peoples and the Unmaking of U.S. History*. Yale University Press.
2. Nelson, M. K., & Shilling, D. (2022). *Traditional Ecological Knowledge: Learning from Indigenous Practices for Environmental Sustainability*. Cambridge University Press.
3. Dunbar-Ortiz, R. (2021). *Not "a Nation of Immigrants": Settler Colonialism, White Supremacy, and a History of Erasure and Exclusion*. Beacon Press.
4. Smetzer, M. A. (2024). Replacing settler spaces: The transformational power of Indigenous public art. *Arts*, 13(2), 60.
5. USGS. (2024). Tribal climate change adaptation through self-determination in the Northern Great Plains. USGS.gov. Retrieved from <https://www.usgs.gov>
6. Deloria, V., & Wildcat, D. R. (2020). *Power and Place: Indian Education in America*. Fulcrum Publishing.
7. Gordon, C. (2019). *Citizen Brown: Race, Democracy, and Inequality in the St. Louis Suburbs*. University of Chicago Press.
8. Limerick, P. N. (2020). *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West*. W. W. Norton & Company.
9. Cronon, W. (2020). *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England*. Hill and Wang.
10. Whyte, K. P. (2018). Settler colonialism, ecology, and environmental injustice. *Environment and Society*, 9(1), 125-144.
11. Pain, E., & Dillon, L. (2021). *Land Justice: Re-Imagining Land, Food, and the Commons in the United States*. Food First Books.
12. Fixico, D. L. (2020). *Indian Resilience and Rebuilding: Indigenous Nations in the Modern American West*. University of Arizona Press.
13. Robbins, P. (2020). *Political Ecology: A Critical Introduction*. Wiley-Blackwell.
14. Taylor, D. E. (2020). *Environment and Social Justice: An International Perspective*. Emerald Group Publishing.
15. Sutter, P. S. (2020). *Let Us Now Praise Famous Gullies: Providence Canyon and Environmental Politics in the New South*. University of Georgia Press.

16. Carey, H. M. (2020). Settler environmentalism: Conservation and the displacement of Indigenous peoples. *Journal of Australian Studies*, 44(4), 487-500.
17. McGregor, D. (2018). Indigenous environmental justice and climate justice. *Climate Change*, 14(2), 30-43.
18. Grande, S. (2020). *Red pedagogy: Native American social and political thought*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
19. Tuck, E., & Yang, W. K. (2022). Decolonization is not a metaphor. *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, 1(1), 1-40.