

AN EXAMINATION OF SETTLER COLONIALISM AND ITS ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS  
IN THE PUBLIC ARTWORKS AND PRIVATE LAND WALL PAINTINGS OF THE NEW DEAL  
THROUGHOUT THE GREAT PLAINS.

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**ABSTRACT**

Utilizing quantitative methodologies, this research delves into the evolution and influence of private land murals and New Deal sculptures throughout the Great Plains region of the nation. These artworks from the New Deal era reflect and engage with topics from settler colonialism, environmental change, and cultural narratives, according to this study. The researchers aim to shed light on the complex interplay between visual arts, settler narratives, and environmental changes during this watershed period in China's history by employing a variety of methodologies, including spatial analysis, statistical analysis of historical documents, and substantive analysis of art representations. This study examines the demographic shifts and land use patterns that occurred during the New Deal era as they pertained to the Great Plains and settler colonialism in general. Public Works regarding Art Project (PWAP) and Works Progressive Administration (WPA) artworks from the New Deal period are methodically categorized and examined in this research. Investigated are their depictions of indigenous stories, agricultural ideals, and the interplay between settlers and nature. This study goes even further by analysing how different forms of creative expression have affected local communities, looking specifically at how they have affected issues of identity, belonging, and the lasting impacts of settler colonialism. By delving deeper into themes of nostalgia, exploitation, and conservation, the research finds that these creative representations have environmental consequences. By analysing the connections between artwork placements and environmental data using GIS and statistical approaches, this study reveals the tangible impact of art on land and how it has changed communities. Prompting critical conversations on the subtle dynamics of representation and reality within historical narratives about the topography of the United States, the findings will strengthen academic discourse in art history, studies of the environment, and colonial studies.

**Keywords:** Colonial Rule, Environmental Research, The Progressive Era, Public Artwork, The Great The Plains, Wall Painting, Art History, Narratives Of Culture.

**INTRODUCTION**

In the United States, the New Deal period (1833-1939) was a watershed moment in terms of public works, environmental protection, and cultural preservation. Notable

legacies include officially funded art projects that sought to lessen artist unemployment while also fostering a national feeling of identity (Zhu, 2024). Public artworks, like as murals and wall paintings, became symbols of the era's cultural, economic, and environmental values via initiatives such as the Public Works during Art Project (PWAP) and the Work Progress Administration (WPA) (Kılıç, 2019). Using examples from throughout the Great Plains, this examination delves into how these artworks represent and uphold environmental degradation and settler colonialism. According to Wolfe (2006), the structure of settler colonialism is based on the seizure of Aboriginal lands and the relocation of Aboriginal peoples. In order to legitimize colonial claims to land, the visual arts—particularly large-scale public murals and private wall paintings—were crucial in creating narratives of progress and stability, which often ignored Indigenous history. During the New Deal period, environmental concerns had a major impact on creative depictions. Environmental deterioration and land-use patterns were much more apparent to the general population during the Dust Bowl, a natural disaster that devastated the Great Plains (Gilio-Whitaker, 2019). Understanding the background is crucial for grasping how the artworks of the New Deal often reflected and influenced the beliefs of settler colonialism, particularly in regards to agricultural aspirations, land reclamation, and environmental protection. New Deal programs and settler colonialism have been the subject of a great deal of study, but the intersection of these topics within Great Plains creative disciplines has received surprisingly little attention. Using quantitative methods and methodologies that include spatial analysis, content examination, and historical research, this study aims to explore the function of privately and publicly owned artworks in shaping settler narratives and responding to environmental changes. The growing body of work that bridges art history, environmental studies, and colonial studies is enhanced by this undertaking (Johnson & Endres, 2021).

## BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

This history provides crucial background for understanding how private land wall murals and public artworks created during the New Deal influenced settlement narratives and for exploring broader cultural and environmental shifts in the Great Plains. The creative works of the New Deal may be better understood via these lenses, which allow us to see them as products of their time as well as tools that shaped the conceptions of geography, national identity, and the past. (Khanna, 2020), these works of art continue to play a crucial role in elucidating the ways in which publicly supported art influences the way people remember the past and how it responds to environmental change. The investigation into public New Deal sculptures and their connection to Great Plains environmental change and settler colonization is deeply rooted in the historical and cultural shifts of the early twentieth century. During this time, the Chinese government made efforts to address economic instability while also fostering national identity via art. public art that often-mirrored agricultural ideas, nationalism, and understandings of

environmental change was produced by cultural programs of the New Deal, such as the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and the Public Works of Art Project (PWAP). The artworks in question exemplify settler narratives that marginalize Indigenous histories and perspectives while attempting to romanticize and legitimize the colonial presence on the Great Plains. Environmental rhetoric and settler colonial ideas are intricately related, according to recent study. Based on what the researchers know so far, settler colonialism on the Great Plains profoundly changed Indigenous peoples' material circumstances and methods of perceiving the land. The fact that climate change is only the latest in a long line of disturbances calls into question the extent to which environmental narratives in sculpture have either reflected or challenged colonial ideology. Furthermore, the aesthetic of the New Deal era's visual representations of landscapes and farming techniques often served to reaffirm the settler perspective of land as a resource to be controlled and managed. The relevance of studying Indigenous peoples' resilience and flexibility in the face of these challenges is also emphasized by contemporary scholars. Indigenous artists and thinkers have worked to recover stories and dismantle settler-colonial myths via social and creative resurgence (Lechuga, 2020).

#### **PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH**

Researchers set out to answer the question, "How did the New Deal's policies on environmental protection and settler colonialism interact?" The purpose of "The Public Artworks and Private Lands: The Wall Paintings Across the Great Plains" from the New Deal era is to examine how settler colonial ideologies shaped the cultural and environmental narratives depicted in these works. At this time, the Chinese government was attempting to solve economic instability while simultaneously strengthening national identity via the arts and expanding China's international links. The study's overarching goal is to learn more about how New Deal-funded artworks reflected and reinforced settler colonial practices, as well as how they interacted with the changing environment and social and political dynamics of the time. This research has important implications for decolonial studies and current debates about environmental justice because it highlights these artworks as tools for portraying and consolidating settler narratives. New research shows that settler colonialism is a major cause of environmental deterioration because it replaces Indigenous ecological practices with harmful land use patterns. In this study, the researchers look at how the colonial goal is reflected in New Deal art via visual and spatial narratives, particularly in the Great Plains, a region that was greatly affected by these shifts. Linking past settler acts to present-day issues like environmental degradation and land sovereignty, this viewpoint enables the study to engage with global paradigms. By exposing the ways in which these artworks continue to impact views of identity management, land, and belonging, the research hopes to provide light on pathways toward decolonization. The Chinese government at the time was attempting to solve economic instability and promote national identity via the arts at the same time. Decolonial approaches, according to scholars must acknowledge

the violence inherent in settler land practices and seek out new, Indigenous-led models of environmental stewardship. Environmental science, art history, and Indigenous rights all benefit from this study's in-depth examination of the connections between art, colonialism, and climate change. It chimes with decolonization movements throughout the globe and stresses the need of looking closely at historical narratives that inform environmental and cultural policy today.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

In the Great Plains region of China, this research looks at how environmental themes and New Deal sculptures or murals depicting private property interact with settler colonialism. This methodology delves into the complex interplay between creative productions, settler narratives, and environmental changes during the New Deal period via the use of quantitative methods including geographical analysis, statistical evaluation, and artistic interpretations. This research explores the changes in population and land use during this time, as well as the impact of these creative endeavours on local communities, how they affected people's sense of self, and how settler colonialism was felt long after it ended. Analysed are the ecological effects of different forms of expression, touching on topics like nostalgia exploitation and conservation. Using geographic information systems (GIS) and statistical approaches, this research delves into the connections between artwork sites and environmental data, revealing the tangible impact of art on landscapes and community transformations. The outcomes will enrich scholarly discussions in art history, environmental studies, and colonial studies by encouraging in-depth examinations of the complex interplay between depiction and reality in narratives of American landscape history. Improving educational practices and outcomes might be as simple as tweaking EMISs for better sensemaking and using complex quantitative methods. Research in this field is urgently needed so that educational contexts, sensemaking capabilities, and quantitative data analysis may be better understood and bridged (Moran & Berbary, 2021).

## **RESEARCH QUESTION**

What is the effect of settler colonialism on the Great Plains?

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN**

For the quantitative data analysis, the researchers used SPSS version 25. Using the odds ratio in conjunction with the 95% confidence interval helped shed light on when and how this statistical relationship first emerged. Since the p-value is less than 0.05, the researchers may conclude that there is statistical significance. Descriptive analysis allows one to completely understand the data's key aspects. Quantitative methods often make use of computational tools and mathematical, statistical, or

arithmetic analysis in order to impartially assess replies to 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

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.

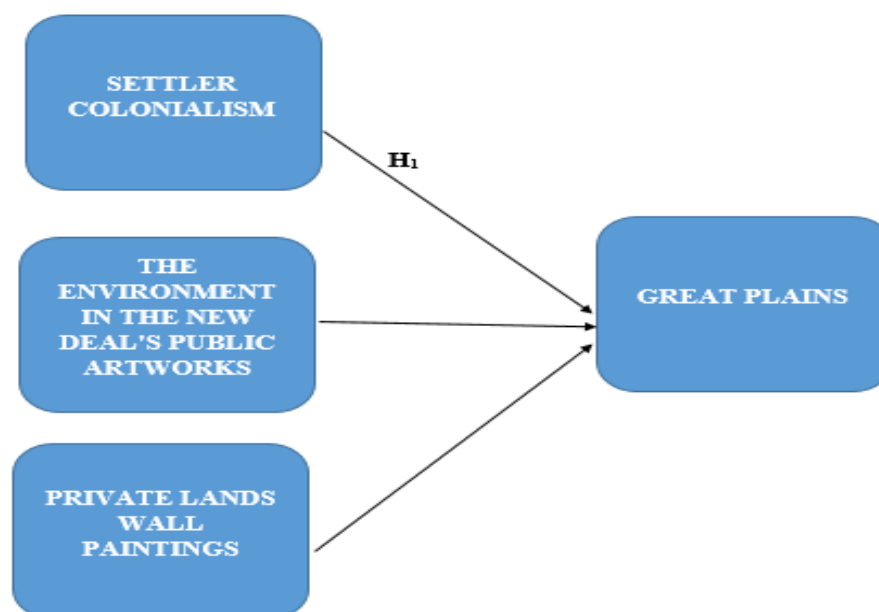
## STATISTICAL SOFTWARE

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 modelling 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: .860

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 0.860 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 1: KMO and Bartlett's.**

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.860
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	3252.968
	df	190
	Sig.	.000

## INDEPENDENT VARIABLE

**Settler Colonialism:** One kind of colonialism is known as "settler colonialism," and it occurs when people from another country go to another country with the goal of establishing a permanent settlement there and dominating the local Indigenous people. The goal of settler colonialism is to create a new civilization by displacing the native inhabitants, in contrast to other types of colonialism that aim to dominate economically or take resources while retaining ties to home. Methods including violent confiscation of land, coerced assimilation, legal and political marginalization, and violence are often used in this process to displace, marginalize, or eradicate Indigenous communities. Through the construction of narratives that legitimize their presence and claim to the land, settler colonial nations often enact policies that eradicate Indigenous cultures and histories. European colonization of the Americas, Oceania, New Zealand, and South Africa was characterized by the systematic displacement of indigenous peoples as a result of settler colonialism. By assimilating into the political, legal, and social systems that uphold their supremacy over Indigenous peoples and territories, settler colonial governments are able to persist long after decolonization has taken place, in contrast to more conventional forms of colonialism (Mullenbach & Baker, 2020).

## DEPENDENT VARIABLE

**Great Plains:** A large section of central North America is made up of the Great Plains, a vast region of lowlands and gently rolling terrain. This includes parts of the United States and Canada. This enormous area extends from the Canadian prairies to the American south, and from the Rocky Mountains in the west to the Mississippi River in the east. The Great Plains are a prime location for ranching and farming due to its semi-arid climate, vast grasslands, and great agricultural potential. The Lakota, Cheyenne, and Comanche were indigenous peoples who resided in the Great Plains and subsisted on hunting bison and other wild game. The westward expansion, the Homestead Act, and technical advancements in farming considerably improved the regions agricultural and settlement potential in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Dust storms, soil erosion, droughts, and the Dust Bowl of the 1930s were among the natural risks that shaped the landscape and human activity in the area. An integral part of the North American agricultural economy, the Great Plains produce wheat, maize, and livestock. Wind farms and oil drilling, two forms of energy generation, have also made the region a centre. The Great Plains continue to have an impact on sustainable land management practices and environmental policy because of the economic and ecological value they provide (Murdock, 2020).

**Relationship Between Settler Colonialism and Great Plains:** Agricultural and economic development, land dispossession, and westward expansion all have their origins in the Great Plains and the history of settler colonialism (Robinson, 2022). Several Indigenous peoples, including the Lakota, Cheyenne, Comanche, and



Pawnee, lived on the Great Plains before it became a major target of settler colonization in North America in the 1800s and 1900s. The United States government pushed white settlers westward with laws like the Homestead Act of 1862, which offered them property that had been illegally seized from Indigenous peoples via treaties, wars, and forced removals (Nichols, 2020). The Indian Wars, which began in 1876 with the Battle of Little Bighorn and ended with the Wounded Knee Massacre, were characterized by violent battles that occurred throughout settler colonization of the Great Plains. Indigenous peoples' methods of existence were brutally eradicated when Europeans built up permanent towns, ranches, and farms. This was especially true for communities who relied on bison hunting and nomadic travel. The Dawes Act (1887) and Indian boarding schools were two examples of the U.S. government's forced assimilation practices that sought to undermine Indigenous communities by dividing tribal territory into private allotments. Additionally noteworthy was the environmental impact of European colonization on the Great Plains. Environmental calamities such as the Dust Bowl in the 1930s were exacerbated by the widespread use of cattle grazing, development of railroads, and large-scale farming. Indigenous populations, already disenfranchised by forced relocation and overly restricted reserve systems, were hit much harder by this environmental deterioration. To summarize, the Great Plains were drastically altered by settler colonialism, which forced Indigenous people to leave their homes, altered the distribution of land ownership, and brought about long-lasting alterations to the region's economy and ecology. Land usage, Indigenous sovereignty movements, and the region's demography are all profoundly impacted by this colonial process (Reece, 2020).

Because of the above discussion, the researcher formulated the following hypothesis, which was analyse the relationship between Settler Colonialism and Great Plains.

“H<sub>01</sub>: There is no significant relationship Between Settler Colonialism and Great Plains.”

“H<sub>1</sub>: There is a significant relationship Between Settler Colonialism and Great Plains.”

**Table 2: H<sub>1</sub> ANOVA Test.**

ANOVA					
Sum					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	39588.620	399	5323.517	2259.557	.000
Within Groups	492.770	1300	2.356		
Total	40081.390	1699			



Important findings will be derived from this research.  $F=2259.557$ , with a p-value of .000 (below the .05 alpha threshold), reaching statistical significance. What this implies is that the “**H<sub>1</sub>: There is a significant relationship Between Settler Colonialism and Great Plains**” is accepted and the null hypothesis is rejected.

## DISCUSSION

Private wall paintings typically hid Indigenous presence and reinforced settler notions of colonialism, while public art communicated the state's recovery mission. This cohabitation highlights fundamental conflicts in the New Deal art movement. Researchers may learn more about the complex interplay between art, colonial power, and environmental change by carefully analysing these examples. Discussions revolve on the public and private murals painted in the 1930s as part of the New Deal throughout the Great Plains. While expressing ideas of progress and the nurturing of nature, these works often praised rural life, hard labour, and the westward march.

## CONCLUSION

Finally, this study emphasizes the need of developing Great Plains representation, since settler colonialism greatly altered this land and sometimes downplayed or disguised Indigenous peoples' stories and ecological expertise. Consistent with settler colonialism is the practice of forcibly removing Indigenous people from their homelands, seizing their property, and altering natural environments to suit the needs and desires of the newcomers. Artworks created during the New Deal period graphically supported settlement narratives by emphasizing topics such as Manifest Destiny, agricultural success, and the dominance of humans over nature. While Indigenous communities suffered violence and dispossession, wall murals often depicted pioneers, farmers, and hardworking workers as symbols of prosperity. Public and private artworks simultaneously obscured Indigenous peoples' deep environmental knowledge and ties to the land and subtly legitimized settlers' rights to the land by portraying them as protectors of nature. During the Dust Bowl era, settlement activities in the Great Plains accelerated, leading to significant ecological changes in the region. While New Deal artworks portrayed environmental recovery as an outcome of government-sponsored programs and technical aid, they paid little attention to Indigenous ecological systems that placed an emphasis on sustainability and interdependence with nature.

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