

Hustle Harder: Art in Colonial Detroit

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PART 1. The statistics.

It is useful to compare the state of Michigan with the country of Sweden, for reasons that will unfold. (Detroit is the largest city in Michigan). Beware: this does not infer that Sweden is superior: the actions of the 2006-2014 government demonstrates clearly that something is rotten also in Sweden. However, in the noise of general opinion, Sweden is not considered a poor country, while Detroit is considered impoverished, in decline, etc., and, Sweden has not yet produced a Detroit.

First, general statistics on population and GDP help us see that the parallel is not so far fetched as it first sounds. (All sums in USD\$)

Population of Michigan: 9.9 million

Population of Sweden: 9.7 million

GDP of Michigan: \$449 billion

GDP of Sweden: \$454 billion

Per capita income of Sweden: \$58,472

Per capita income of Michigan: \$25,547

Number of Global 500 companies based in

Sweden: 3

Number of Fortune 500 companies based in Michigan: 20

Based on the above numbers from 2014 we see that Michigan has similar population and produces nearly as much wealth as Sweden, has more Fortune ranked corporations, but the average citizen in Michigan gets half as much income as their counterparts in Sweden. Comparisons between cities in Michigan make it transparent that there are clear winners and losers within the same system:

Per capita income of Detroit, Michigan in 2013: \$14,870

Per capita income of Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, (a wealthy suburb of Detroit) in 2013: \$90,995

Let's also have a look at what kind of taxes are collected in each place to see how public wealth is managed.

Michigan Tax Collections in 2012: \$23,968,760,000

Sweden Tax Collections in 2012: \$201,122,000,000

Ah ha! The state of Michigan collects a tiny fraction of the amount that Sweden collects in taxes.

This is consistent with the "Scandinavian welfare state" model that we have all heard something

about. Where does all that cash go in Michigan if it is not collected in taxes?

Michigan, number of billionaires in 2013: 11

Sweden, number of billionaires in 2013: 14

The number of billionaires is similar in each country, but Sweden takes the lead. So where is the money trail?

Metro Detroit, number of millionaires in 2011: 90,100

Michigan, number of millionaires in 2012: 169,991

Sweden, number of millionaires in 2009: 48,300

Now we see the money: the Metro Detroit urban area has the 10th highest concentration of millionaires in the United States, even above the famously wealthy Silicon Valley. In Michigan there is a vast amount of wealth concentrated in the hands of 169k millionaires. The annual difference in tax collection between Sweden and Michigan -- that's \$177,153,240,000 -- funnels through the system into the hands of a fraction of the population. Who are these millionaires? Well, they are mostly white, the 2010 census reported a 70.1% white population in the metropolitan area of Detroit, and these numbers:

Michigan percent White, 2013: 80.1%

Michigan percent Black, 2013: 14.3%

Detroit percent Black, 2010: 82.7%

Detroit percent White, 2010: 10.6%

Tax potential that went towards wealth equality and public institutions in Sweden go instead to corporations and the richest individuals in Michigan. Let's repeat that so it sinks in: in Michigan, a staggering \$177.1 billion every year is funneled towards a tiny population of millionaires and billionaires that otherwise could fix every human problem except love and immortality.

Next, let's have a look at where public tax revenue goes.

1. Amount of Michigan State General Fund spending on k-12 education in 2013: \$312 million
2. Amount of Michigan State General Fund spending on higher education (university) in 2013: \$1.350 billion
3. Amount of Michigan State General Fund spending on "corrections" (prisons) in 2013: \$2.03 billion

Yes, more money is spent on imprisoning citizens than on educating citizens in Michigan. Compare this with Sweden:

1. Annual budget for Swedish public education in 2013: \$33.09 billion

2. Annual budget on “corrections” (prisons) in Sweden: \$935,480 million

3. Prison population in Sweden, 2014: 4,500

4. Prison population in Michigan, 2015: 50,200

(Sources: Statistiska centralbyrån, Kriminalvården, US Census Bureau, and Nobel Prize website.)

Sweden spends \$31 billion more per year than Michigan on education. Michigan spends over 1 billion more than Sweden, per year, in prisons. We also notice that Sweden spends 621 euros per day (or around \$695) on each inmate, and Michigan only \$93.65 per inmate, per day. Where is the rest of the \$2.03 billion a year Michigan prison budget going to if not towards the rehabilitation and living standards of prisoners? The success or failure of each system is suggested by this statistic:

- 1. Murder rate in Sweden: 2 reported incidents per 100,000 inhabitants, 2014
- 2. Murder rate in Michigan: 6.4 reported incidents per 100,000 inhabitants, 2013
- 3. Murder rate in Detroit: 45 reported incidents per 100,000 inhabitants, 2014

The failure of Michigan “corrections” is made even more obvious when we consider that in Sweden suicide and accidental deaths are counted in with murder reports, according to the FBI, and thus the

actual violent murder rate is far lower than what is reported.

(Sources: FBI, <https://www.bra.se>)

The following statistics show more priorities:

- 1. Percentage of private k-12 “charter schools” operating in Michigan 80%.
- 2. Cost for Michigan residents to attend premier public University of Michigan, per year: \$13,977
- 3. Cost for Swedish citizens to attend premier public Uppsala University, per year: \$0

Education in the United States is big business, another millionaire-generator at the expense of a population who must be heavily indebted to pay for even the local public education. In addition to the extreme differences in public and private education, there are also extreme differences in the resources available to different schools in Michigan.

- 1. Detroit Public Schools annual budget for 2013-2014: \$725,557,870
- 2. Detroit Public Schools pupil population: 65,971 (\$10,998 per pupil)
- 3. Grosse Pointe Public Schools annual budget for 2013-2014: \$109,790,237

4. Grosse Pointe Public Schools pupil population: 8,153 (\$13,466 per pupil)

5. Cost to attend Grosse Pointe Academy private school: \$18,910 annual tuition

6. Motto for Grosse Pointe Academy private school: “The advantage lasts a lifetime.”

7. Cranbrook Schools (private) annual budget: “over” \$36 million

8. Cranbrook Schools (private) pupil population: 1659 (\$21,000 per pupil minimum declared, not including the already superior infrastructure of the institution.)

What about the results of education? This is impossible to quantify of course, but let’s just go with the Nobel Prize since it seems to be taken seriously. The number is close, but Sweden wins again.

- 1. Number of Nobel Prize winners associated with Michigan: 22
- 2. Number of Nobel Prize winners associated with Sweden: 30

(Sources: Detroit Public Schools, Grosse Pointe Academy, Cranbrook Schools public websites, SVD, Nobel Institute.)

The other extreme area where wealth is systematically funneled away from the average citizen of Michigan into the pockets of 169,991 millionaires is of course the profit area called “health care”.

- 1. Amount spent by the State of Michigan on healthcare: \$13.9 billion
- 2. Amount spent by Sweden on healthcare: \$7.01 billion
- 3. Amount spent by average U.S. citizen on healthcare per year, not including monthly insurance premiums: \$8,233
- 4. Amount spent by average Swedish citizen on healthcare per year total: \$3,758
- 5. Average life expectancy of a Swedish citizen: 81.89 years
- 6. Average life expectancy of a Michigan citizen: 78.2 years
- 7. Average life expectancy of white Michigan citizen: 79.0 years
- 8. Average life expectancy of black Michigan citizen: 73.4 years

What we see here is that Sweden spends almost half the amount on health care as Michigan, and gets better measurable results. Even if we adjust for whiteness, the average white Michigan citizen dies nearly 3 years before their Swedish counterparts.

Thus, what we see in the comparison between the two places is the clear priority of the ruling policies of the United States: elite resource corralling, at the expense of every pretense of producing a civilized society for all. It is especially at the expense of Black Americans who disproportionately suffer, primarily, it would appear, because the population is easy to single out for resource

extraction. This does not mean only Blacks suffer, in Michigan 16.8% of the entire population lives below the federal poverty line, that is 1.6 million people of all colors and backgrounds who lack basic life resources.

(Sources: Kaiser Family Foundation. <http://kff.org/other/state-indicator/distribution-of-general-fund-spending/>, FBI, Statistiska centralbyrån, Kriminalvården, OECD Health Data 2012, US Census Bureau, and Measure of America.)

In addition to “education” and “health care” what other sorts of models are in place to systematize the funneling of wealth in Michigan? Well, there is the tax structure, first of all: Michigan collects a high percentage of taxes by locally levied and locally spent property tax, preventing distribution of funds between cities. Also, Detroit is home of companies that make a sport out of the vile maxim (everything for me and nothing for you). For example, DTE Energy, the local investor-owned electric utility company, paid no taxes during 2008-2009, although it made a profit of \$2.5 billion. There are a total of 819 individual owners and 505 institutional owners of DTE Energy stock. DTE reached number 270 in the Fortune 500 list of most successful companies in 2014, the same year the company spent \$4.37 million lobbying congress for various self-interested policies. DTE got \$17 million in tax rebates, making its tax rate that year at -1%. DTE also invests strategically in the Detroit “art scene”, as we shall

see in part 3 of this essay, and their stock price recently hit an all time high in Feb 2015.

(Source: Nasdaq.com, Public Campaign. <http://publiccampaign.org/sites/default/files/ReportTax-DodgerLobbyingDec6.pdf>)

PART 2: False Narratives.

There are 3 main false narratives about Detroit that appear in different concentrations on all sides of the political spectrum and especially in all forms of current “journalism”.

1. Racial tensions are caused by black radicals and agitators who complain.
2. Labor and union demands have caused all economic problems in Detroit.
3. Detroit’s manifest destiny is inevitable: creative, white pioneers will establish safe-colonies amidst the frightening, native ‘other’, which will enable waves of business-minded mostly whites to safely invest their private money back into Detroit and thus “save” the city by returning it back to its rightful owners: rich and upper-middle-class white people.

Incredibly, one recent Wall Street Journal report from 2013 contained all 3 main false narratives about Detroit in one shameless rant. Let’s have a closer look at passages from Allysia Finley’s handiwork.

“Not far outside of Detroit’s downtown

business district is the emergent hipster colony of Corktown, where do-it-yourself, brew-your-own-beer types are fixing up cheap, rundown houses. The pioneers grow organic vegetables such as corn on nearby vacant lots. Corktown represents the frontier of civilization in Detroit.”

In the colonial narrative, who are the colonists and who are the natives? When journalists use images of “settlers on the frontier” they do not so much as mention the current population of the city, 750,000 residents. On the south west side next to Corktown lies Southwest Detroit, a thriving, majority Mexican neighborhood of 43,902 residents (2010 census) with the supermarkets, banks, gas stations, schools, cafes, and restaurants that are the classic hallmarks of “civilization” the author seems unable to identify or locate. Furthermore, the Corktown neighborhood of Detroit has historically been majority white, so it is not even a colony of recent transplants.

In order to impress upon the reader that this colony narrative is a meme, here are a few more examples from the press:

1. “Artist Colony Successfully Reseeding Detroit” posted by “Next American City” June 27 2011.
2. “Write a House is Giving Writers Free Homes” Huffington Post, 12/19/2013 “We’ve heard a lot of ideas for “saving” De-

troit -- but turning it into a writer’s colony has to be one of our favorites!”

3. “Detroit’s Hard Edge -- and dirt-cheap real estate -- attract artists from around the world.” The Detroit News, March 13, 2009. “At first glance, the hardscrabble neighborhood north of Hamtramck might seem an unlikely spot for an artists’ colony.”

4. “Detroit’s New “Writers Residency” Poets & Writers, Sept/Oct 2014. “Eventually they came up with the idea, Barlos says, to “build a model like an artists colony, unique to the conditions that define Detroit these days: a lot of available real estate.”

5. “Detroit’s Growing Artist Colonies”. Time Magazine, August 3, 2010

6. “Artists buying cheap houses in Detroit” by Corey Doctorow. BoingBoing, March 17, 2009 “A small colony of artists is cropping up in Detroit, taking advantage of the bottomed-out property prices, buying houses for as little as \$100.”

7. “Reinvigorating a Detroit Neighborhood, Block by Block”, NPR, July 28, 2013. “The debt-laden city of Detroit has been an incubator for new strategies in urban revitalization, including a downtown People Mover, casinos, urban farms, artist colonies and large scale down-sizing.”

There are countless others, but let’s continue to look at Allysia Finley’s Wall Street Journal

text because it should be held up as exemplar.

“Travel a couple of miles farther out, and the scenery begins to resemble the wild, wild West. There are no shopping centers or chain supermarkets. Sixty six thousand vacant lots and 78,000 abandoned or blighted buildings, including the old Packard factory, occupy 130 square miles of no man’s land. Yards are overtaken by knee-high weeds. A house with unbroken windows and shutters is a rarity.”

This description frames the unspoken reality: there are also thousands upon thousands of occupied houses among the vacant houses where hundreds of thousands of human beings live, trim the grass in their yard, go out to buy groceries, and dream of living in a city where they are not invisible citizens. The author of the Wall Street Journal piece also cannot distinguish between the poor, working, middle and upper class populations of non-white groups who are thriving in thousands upon thousands of occupied working, middle and upper class homes in Detroit that comprises one of the greatest political and intellectual capitals of Black culture in the United States. This fact is almost never mentioned in the press.

Let’s continue with the article: “These neighborhoods were deserted over the last 60 years by white, middle-class families leaving for the suburbs. The exodus accelerated after the 1967 race riot and

during Mayor Coleman Young’s regime from 1974 to 1994—a regime that inflamed racial tensions in part by tagging white police officers as racists. “

Coleman Young was an elected public official, a very popular mayor among the a majority of Detroiters. Using the word “regime” is used to frame “black radicals” for enflaming what would otherwise, it is implied, have been pastoral. We are required to ignore businesslike incidents of police brutality such as the murder of Malice Green in 1992, and subsequent conviction of the police officers who perpetrated it. Even the Kerner Report commissioned by (and then ignored by) President Lyndon B. Johnson in 1967 found that “The police are not merely a “spark” factor (in the race riots)... many police do reflect and express these white attitudes.”

Incredibly, in this single Wall Street Journal text, the other false narrative about Detroit is also on display: the laziness of labor and the greed of unions and their full responsibility for the economics of Detroit.

“For a long time the city was dumb, lazy, happy and rich,” he (Detroit Emergency Manager Kevyn Orr) explains. “Detroit has been the center of more change in the 20th century than I dare say virtually any other city, but that wealth allowed us to have a covenant [that held] if you had an eighth grade education, you’ll get 30 years of a good job and a pension and great health

care, but you don’t have to worry about what’s going to come.”

If we understand correctly, Orr’s opinion is that precarity, joblessness, substandard health care, theft of earned pensions and extreme poverty are the keys to fix Detroit rather than the primary problems facing the city. The governor of Michigan appointed “Emergency Manager” Kevyn Orr to implement this strategy from the top-down. The cynicism is extreme when we see that Mr. Orr is black, chosen strategically in order to dilute the race issue into a somehow less-conspicuous issue of public overspending and “entitlement”.

This WSJ example is among the worst and most obvious of its kind, however, the same false narratives show up everywhere one looks, from left and right of the political spectrum. Recently in Vienna, we were interviewed by a liberal, seemingly intelligent radio journalist who began his interview questions about one of our works: “Detroit now is known as a city that is pretty run down.” He had heard from his media colleagues that the city was in economic decline. We get the same ideological line of questioning, repeatedly, from otherwise intelligent, politically minded artists, journalists, thinkers and organizers from across the western world. Ideo-

logical noise has obfuscated all facts, even close up. One local Detroit artist, white, who is otherwise extremely bright said to us one day: “how will the city recover unless someone manages the bankruptcy?”

(Source: Finley, Allysia. “Kevyn Orr: How Detroit Can Rise Again. Motown’s ‘benevolent dictator’ talks about his fight with creditors and unions, and what the city’s leaders can learn from Miami and Atlanta about revival.” The Wall Street Journal, Aug. 2, 2013)

PART 3: Art and Culture.

Art and “creative activity” are wrapped into the mythic rebirth of Detroit. What we see, predictably, is art used as an instrument. What is perhaps new in the formula is that the “creative” life of Detroit is driven from the top down, as a directly implemented strategy via incentives, marketing campaigns, and extra-governmental business advocacy corporations. This is unlike other previous forms of gentrification where development begins organically from the bottom and its results eventually get co-opted by the top. Headlines such as this one: “The Creative Studios Transforming Detroit’s Urban Wasteland Into An Artist’s Paradise”, are purpose-built slogans generated by clearly formulated business models by non-democratic policy groups with massive power to implement self-benefiting development at the expense of the public.

There is a long list of Detroit’s non-

governmental, “neighborhood” business groups that are actively creating a private government more powerful than the government itself, but for the purposes of the brevity of this text, let’s focus on one: Midtown Development Inc., or MDI.

MDI’s mission statement is as follows (italics ours): “MDI’s initiatives are shaped by the collaboration of *key community stakeholders* and are supported by the many dedicated funders that recognize the importance of Midtown’s revitalization and its positive effect on the community.” Areas of action listed on their website include aspects of urban life that have historically been under government responsibility. District planning, “beautification”, maintenance, community development, real estate development, district marketing, planning and economic development, and special events are all mentioned explicitly as mandates of MDI. Private security guards watch over a park, owned and operated by MDI. Midtown Development Inc. have already lobbied to alter public infrastructure such as traffic flows and street lights -- based on plans benefiting its members, corporations and businesses, bypassing democratic processes.

But let’s finally focus on art. Of the “special events” produced by Midtown Development Inc., are two self-declared “art biennials”, Art X Detroit and Dlectricity. The self-proclaimed “festival of light”, Dlectricity’s headline sponsor is DTE Energy, the predatory, highly profitable, tax-evading, shareholder-owned, electric utility previously mentioned in this text. The other prominent sponsors of

the event are the predatory home mortgage lenders Quicken Loans, and Flagstar bank. Both Quicken Loans and Flagstar bank were directly involved in the real estate and home mortgage shenanigans that economists have agreed contributed to the bubble and financial meltdown of 2007-2012, which put Detroit over the edge and into a bankruptcy filing. Quicken Loans benefited greatly from the crisis both from the bubble and the collapse: Dan Gilbert, the founder and CEO of Quicken Loans, acquired around 60 buildings downtown during the worst of the crisis, (including historic skyscrapers), got \$200 million in tax incentives from the former Democratic state governor towards “revitalization”, and is almost guaranteed to see his real estate ventures give dividends. His marketing campaign to “revitalize” or “secure” selected sections of the city is an essential element in the plan to transfer real estate and then increase its value for key community stakeholders. The word community is particularly insidious since it implies a happy little village cooperating in harmony. But what it really means is the community of stakeholders, the tiny village of the 1%.

But let’s focus on exactly what Dlectricity is, how it operates, and what its stated goals are. A Metro Times article from September 2014 lays it out fairly clearly. The spokesperson for Dlectricity, Annmarie Borucki, states: “Our role is really about enhancing Midtown, and showcasing what’s there, and also getting people to feel comfortable in coming out to Detroit at night, coming to our restaurants, and coming out to bars. It’s about the

arts, but it’s also about the development.” An art festival is used expressly to construct an image of a safe, well-lit city-center inviting suburban, mostly white people to return to selected “green zones” and “revitalize” without having to face the dangerous other. From their website: “cutting-edge works of art will illuminate Midtown Detroit”. It is extremely transparent that Dlectricity uses light as its main metaphor: sponsored artists will light up the dark streets in a city where 78.2% of its residents are black, making it safe for white sheep to return.

The form and content of works “curated” by Dlectricity are depoliticized, uncritical displays of mild escapism that promote an agenda of safe, technological optimism. One project called “Kindur: The Adventurous Life of Icelandic Sheep”, perversely invites the audience “to be part of a big flock of sheep”, an all-white flock of sheep, we see in the press photo. It is not clear why Iceland except that its people are clearly white people. Another work “The Legendary Leland City Club” by New York based Sue De Beer, documents a Detroit club that used to throw naughty events such as “Zombie Night” or “Heaven and Hell Party”. De Beer claims to “celebrate the complexity of life (and death) and the edgy energy of the city of Detroit.” Not one project in Dlectricity faced up to why or how the city acquired its “edgy energy”, and not one project remotely resembled criticism of the unaccountable pri-

vate entities reaping endless bounty and causing endless suffering in Detroit. The projects chosen for Dlectricity are not accidental: the event is the paragon of disengaged, obfuscating, instrumental art, commissioned expressly for the benefit of key community stakeholders.

Annmarie Borucki again in her Metro Times interview: “We’re definitely not a democracy here. Most people are willing to work with us, because they really want to be in the festival. This time, I think we’ve been so tightly involved with every project that we know what we’re getting.” Artists have no control over their own work, and citizens have no control over their city.

While there has been endless hype for the supposedly highly creative activities of the city, actual work is almost never seen or written about. The most important art in Detroit is the least spoken or written about: Black artists producing political, anti-institutional art that is repressively called “outsider art” if at all mentioned, because it does not fit the corporate narrative. Incredibly, in a report in Blouin called “Culture Lab Detroit: A Survey of a City’s Outsider Art Scene” we found this gem: “Someone from Detroit should really be up here,” Theaster Gates noted that no “creative talents” from Detroit were even invited to a public panel on Detroit art.

(Source: <http://www.blouinartinfo.com/news/story/1030520/culture-lab-detroit-a-survey-of->

a-citys-outsider-art-scene#)

An attached slideshow highlighted only two black artists out of 12 “artist groups” (including a tech incubator and an interior decorator) that were mostly educated at elite Cranbrook and prestigious University of Michigan, etc. and are thus the complete opposite of “outsider”.

And speaking of the motley crew of corporate sponsors: the Dlectricity spokesperson described their motivation in the Metro Times (again without shame or self-consciousness):

“Sometimes a festival like this may not neatly fit into their mission, but they find a way to fund it anyways, because they know it’s important on so many different levels — economically, what it does for Detroit’s persona, and developing a more positive image,” Borucki says. “It all comes together in the end.”

(Source: <http://www.metrotimes.com/detroit/dlectricity-brings-sights-and-sounds-and-mdash-and-cosmopolitan-flair-andmdash-to-detroit/Content?oid=2249275>, and [dlectricity.com](http://www.dlectricity.com))

In every mission statement we found in websites and publications of the many “development corporations” of Detroit, we saw a desire to explicitly join the interests

of business with art, to produce an image of “bootstraps” entrepreneurial developments, best exemplified by the myth of the independent creative artist who is also an entrepreneur, and probably makes pickles on the side.

Corporate interest is largely symbolic: actual material support of art and artists is extremely limited, thus making it impossible for most artists to live with minimum standards in Detroit. The ubiquitous but symbolic “support” for art by these organizations mirrors the entrepreneurial optimism of neo-liberal ideals: an onslaught of “positive creativity”, explicitly avoiding even slightly critical art in favor of an absolute faith in the market and the individual. The rhetoric goes as follows: artists are rebuilding Detroit and artists are creatives. Creatives are entrepreneurs, and a discussion of entrepreneurs veers straight toward the ideal of Dan Gilbert (the Quicken Loans CEO), or towards any number of other similar entrepreneurs such as major league sports team owner and real-estate mogul Mike Ilitch.

Dan Gilbert is an artist, this is the subtext, and he will fix Detroit. Gentrification has finally bypassed artists all together: what blighted cities need are bankers and real estate developers, and thus the problem is also the solution. There is relatively little art being produced in Detroit, instead there are hustling entrepreneurs and well-lit white sheep.

In fact, there is not even a critical mass

of actual artists moving to Detroit, despite the press. The statistical number of creative migrants is miniscule compared to the total yearly population loss of Detroit, and especially relative to other larger migrations of people that are left out of the narrative, particularly the Hispanic population. Over 20 years, Detroit’s Hispanic population has grown by 70 percent, from 28,473 in 1990 to 48,679, according to the 2010 Census, yet there is very little noise about the energy of this growing demographic shift. Instead, the narrative excitedly invents a movement that is not matched by numbers: the 2012 US Census number for “Independent Artists, Writers, Performers” in the entire metro Detroit area was 7,837, a 7.2% increase from 2007 when 7,270 people self-declared as artists. Why journalists are so fascinated by the 500 or so artists who appear to have moved to the Detroit area (this statistic includes the suburbs) tells the story of false ideological narratives. Compare these numbers: the census data about the New York City area for 2012 lists 90,098 people as “independent artists” and in Los Angeles 71,764. Even little Seattle declared 10,834 artists and tiny Portland, Oregon 8,339 artists. Statistically, and in terms of institutions and networks, contrary to the noise, Detroit does not compare with any of the big artistic centers of the U.S. or the world, and has not had a remarkable population shift inwards according to raw data. The few artists who do live

and work in Detroit are strung along haggardly with the vague promise of dubiously invented honorary titles such as the once a lifetime nomination to be a Kresge Fellow, accompanied by a meager \$25,000 stipend which is hardly enough to live on for one year, an insult to the life-time of work the title is meant to reward. (Meager returns on rarified “honors” also cause artists to fight like buzzards amongst themselves, preventing a cooperative spirit that could generate alternatives to corporate creativity.)

This instrumentalization of art in the urban context is usually called gentrification, however this concept only describes an end-game, and therefore does not go far enough to describe what is happening in Detroit. Instead, we need a concept that describes the legal, political, entrepreneurial, and racial dance of violent resource thievery. Oh, wait, we do have a term, it is called colonialism, expressed this time in internal rather than external movements. The current form of colonialism is similar to the past in that white supremacy is the driving rational. However, in actuality race is only one part of the strategy, class has become an even more important strategy. Class dominance produces higher numbers and greater returns than simple racial dominance, divide and conquer is a classic strategy, which is why one sees spokespeople of various colors. The juridical and moral calculations to prevent the other from obtaining resources is demanding, strategic,

back-breaking work for the colonist, especially if it needs to operate within “legal” bounds – the United States is not a lawless, warlord state after all. Entire professional fields are trained and employed (and paid middle-class salaries), in order to meet this labor need, implemented painstakingly across this great nation, and exported across the globe to shysters who gobble it up like sermon (praise the landlord!). Straight up genocide is tasteless in western cultures, therefore this slower, much less visible version is employed with naturalistic-sounding justifications, (Detroit Hustles Harder!) supported by a tasteful myth of the entrepreneurial artist who looks more like a banker and moves like a contortionist before vanishing into a puff of smoke and a tax-bracket full of dollars.

