

Bella Nelson

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Eng 110

The Big Debate: An Essay On How Artwork Can Be Positive

Is it okay to use other forms to help people if it is not directly impacting their physical health? In Rhys Southan's essay, he speaks of the effective altruistic view of good deeds being only as good as the estimated lives it saves. Someone's emotional health may impact their life almost as equal as their physical stability. In the art project created by Haas and Hahn, we see that they have not given people a cure to illness, although they did give them a positive outlet to let go of negative emotions and a possible start to better living. Haas and Hahn changed people's lives in a brighter way although they had spent money on art supplies. They gave neighborhoods a better sense of community, a new outlook on themselves, and, for some, a new skill that can lead people to earning a steady income. The project lead by Haas and Hahn directly improved the home lives of those in these communities by finishing the outside of their homes, this lead to many other communities reaching out for the same.

Southan's article, *Is Art a Waste of Time?*, speaks of the opinion effective altruists have on using different types of art as a way to help people. The passage discusses how people who believe in effective altruism strongly insist on solely working to relieve poverty and those who are in need. Southan describes the idea of doing good deeds via artwork versus "just handing over the money." The EA idea is to help those who suffer by working as hard as you can and

then “donating as much of it as you can.” This idea steers the reader to believe that EA's do not think that art can be as helpful as donating money.

Haas and Haan prove that artwork can be as helpful and necessary as donating money with their project. Dree Urhahn and Jereon Koolhaas are the creators of a project that turned many poor neighborhoods from slums into artwork. They started as filmmakers for a documentary of a low income city in Rio. As their film was done shooting they came up with the idea to “plaster and paint” the unfinished homes of the town. This soon developed into them wanting to create “one big work of art” across the whole street. This project helped many communities become brighter and happier.

Southan's text states that artwork "demands resources that, in good hands, could have saved lives." This is basically saying that when people spend money on art supplies that they are taking away money from those in need. In the project created by Haas and Haan, money was raised in order to help those directly by the use of art. Although they were spending money, they were still putting it towards bettering the lives of others. Haahn stated that "more than 1,500 people put together and donated over 100,000 dollars." This money was very important to them because they were able to gain the ability to create their project "from the ground on up."

With the donated and earned money, Haas and Hahn were able to hire and teach people in the communities a new skill that gave them a positive outlet and an income. By hiring many people in these towns, they not only were able to help the whole community with their project but also give some the ability to earn money to help kick start a better life. This also gave some a sense of purpose as "together they transformed their own neighborhood." Each place Haas and

Hahn had painted, they hired new people. This not only gave people an income, but also helped people see themselves as artists and no longer view their city as negative.

Insert paragraph about how people view the city.

EA's believe that when creating artwork, artists "paint the beautiful landscape in front of them while the rest of the world burns." This is like the "shallow-pond" analogy. If you see a child drowning, you would go in and save them, but why would you not donate money to save the other children of the world? The idea of EA's on artists creating artwork is insinuating that the artists, because they are painting, are choosing not to save the children in need. Haas and Hahn saw children drowning in the water, and they did choose to save them. The unfinished homes and the people that lived in them were drowning, and by finishing these homes and giving happiness to those who live there, they chose to save them.

Haas and Hahn improved the living situation of many because of how they finished the outsides of their homes. Southan talks about the EA idea of art "making a positive impact" being "rare enough in itself." When Haas and Hahn first arrived at Vila Cruzeiro, almost all of the houses "looked unfinished, and they had walls of bare brick." They said "we saw some of these houses that were plastered and painted," and questioned "what would it look like if all these houses would be plastered and painted?" When speaking with a friend of theirs that ran an organization in Vila Cruzeiro, he told them "everybody here would pretty much love to have their houses plastered and painted. It's when a house is finished." This shows how finishing the houses in Vila Cruzeiro meant a lot to the people who lived there.

Another way that artwork helps is by the way it brings communities together to get through struggle. Haas and Haahn talked about how during the drug war in Vila Cruzeiro, the

community got close to each other. The project brought to their town gave them more opportunities to form a stronger community. One way this was done was during the many barbecues that Haas and Hahn held. They stated how they "decided to throw one almost every other week, and we got to know everybody in the neighborhood." This reminds me of how my mother, a owner of two dance studios in NY, offers a free dance class once a week for transgender male and females from the LGTBQ community in our area. This class gives people the opportunity to have fun while learning an art and build a better community with each other.

Most people can not afford to give ten percent of their earnings to charities every year and Haas and Hahn are a good example of how the arts can give back to those who suffer. Haas and Hahn show that although the EA believe that art is a waste of time and money, that art can be extremely helpful to others. They also show us that artwork can have a huge impact on others in a positive way because of the outcomes of their work. When we give back to our communities through visual arts, filmmaking, books, or any other art form, we are allowing people to gain knowledge and happiness which can be equal to the donation of money.