

Documentation from the Chicago Learning Exchange, November 2001

LEARNING EXCHANGES

The Animating Democracy Lab encourages cultural organizations, artists and dialogue practitioners to experiment and test ideas and approaches to arts-based civic dialogue. Animating Democracy Learning Exchanges are opportunities for Lab participants to come together periodically, to share and build knowledge that can help the projects meet their full potential for success. Learning Exchanges encourage critical thinking about the philosophical and practical dimensions of arts-based civic dialogue projects, through peer feedback and exchange. The intent of these convenings is to enable practitioners in various disciplines to inform each other about their work, explore common questions or problems, and draw on differing perspectives. Exchanges occur as the projects are evolving, providing a forum for ideas to develop, as well as in-process analysis of principles and practices of arts-based civic dialogue work. L.E.s range from 70-125 participants, including programmers and artistic directors, cultural organization leaders, community partners, artists, and dialogue specialists associated with Lab projects. Although Learning Exchanges are geared to serve the interests of Lab participants, a small number of guest artists, curators, arts and cultural institution leaders, critics, scholars, and civic dialogue leaders are invited to diversify perspectives and enrich discussion. It is hoped that Learning Exchanges promote a sense of community, cumulative learning, and collective growth. Animating Democracy encourages participants to maintain contact in-between Exchanges and to extend their learning to the broader field.

DOCUMENTATION

Animating Democracy reviews notes from Learning Exchange sessions to identify key findings, and questions for further discussion or investigation, for reporting purposes. Here are notes from two case sessions and two challenge sessions at the November 2001 Learning Exchange in Chicago, hosted by the Chicago Cultural Center. For participants in the Exchange and other interested readers, these summaries capture the key points raised in presentations and the substance of discussion around those key points. This is not a transcript. Material is arranged under clear headings that allow readers to browse or jump to the topics in which they're interested. Session formats vary. Some material has been omitted to respect confidentiality. Animating Democracy has tried to represent all voices with accuracy but was dependent on the quality of notes from each session.

The Chicago Learning Exchange was the first opportunity at which new participants from the second Animating Democracy Lab and participants from the first round of projects came together. It happened two months after the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center. One half-day arts-based civic dialogue experience was facilitated by artist, Marty Pottenger is not documented here due to the experiential nature of the activity.

CONTENT

A. Case Sessions

In these two case sessions, Lab projects sharing common ground or contrasting approaches/ points of view examined philosophies, hypotheses, goals, principles, and/or practices related to their arts/humanities-based civic dialogue efforts. All projects except one were, at the time, still in progress, therefore, the sessions were an opportunity to put forward in-progress investigations, questions, and ruminations regarding dialogue, artistic, and curatorial methodologies and critical issues.

I. ARTISTIC PRACTICE IN ARTS-BASED CIVIC DIALOGUE: CASES IN THEATER

Dell 'Arte, The Dentalium Project

San Diego Repertory Theater, Nuestro Pueblo

Flint Youth Theatre, . . . My Soul to Take

2. THE HIGH STAKES OF HISTORY: PURSUING CRITICAL ISSUES IN THE COMMUNITY
 - St. Augustine’s Church, Lower East Side Tenement Museum,**
The Slave Galleries Restoration Project
 - The Andy Warhol Museum,** Without Sanctuary
 - Rhode Island Committee for the Humanities,** Traces of the Trade

B. Challenge Sessions

1. **Northern Lakes Center for the Arts,** The Water Project
2. **The Jewish Museum,** Mirroring Evil: Nazi Imagery/Recent Art

EVALUATION AND DOCUMENTATION

Animating Democracy advisors, Steve Day and Rebecca Schaffer, explored issues and practices in documenting and evaluating arts and humanities based civic dialogue projects with emphasis on outcomes based and participatory approaches.

Case Session

The High Stakes of History: Pursuing Critical Issues in the Community

The intent of this session was to explore the processes, choices, practices, and outcomes related to confronting history when engaging communities in facilitated dialogue about contemporary issues. Project participants framed key questions reflecting challenges around their project.

This session was part of the Animating Democracy Learning Exchange held in Chicago, November 2001. In it, two Lab projects sharing common ground examined philosophies, hypotheses, goals, principles, and/or practices related to their arts/humanities-based civic dialogue efforts.

PARTICIPANTS:

Traces of the Trade, **Rhode Island Committee for the Humanities**
Katrina Browne, film director; Jude Ray, executive producer
(see below for Project Summaries)

The Slave Galleries Restoration Project, **St. Augustine's Church, Lower East Side Tenement Museum**
Deacon Edgar Hopper, St. Augustine's Episcopal Church, Liz Sevchenko, Vice President of Programs

Without Sanctuary, **The Andy Warhol Museum**
Jessica Arcand, Curator of Educator, Margery King, Associate Curator, Sherry Cottom,
Facilitator/Trainer, YWCA Center for Race Relations, community partner

TRACES OF THE TRADE, RHODE ISLAND COMMITTEE FOR THE HUMANITIES

The film project, *Traces of the Trade*, will trace the history of the filmmaker's ancestors, the Rhode Island DeWolfs, the largest slave trading family in the United States by following nine present-day ancestors on a journey from Rhode Island to Ghana to Cuba and back to Rhode Island, and their own reckoning with the family's past. The film looks not only at the North's role in slave trading, but its complicity in perpetuating slavery as the Northern Industrial Revolution demanded cotton picked by slaves. The film will look at the legacy of slavery on White people, including an amnesia about the North's role and resulting "I'm not racist therefore it's not my problem" attitudes. The film aims to address the denial, defensiveness, and shame among Whites that pose barriers to engaging in dialogue about race. When the film is completed, it will be presented in a statewide dialogue program developed and facilitated in collaboration between the Rhode Island Committee on the Humanities, the National Conference for Community and Justice, and the Heritage Harbor Museum.

Questions for discussion:

1. For a film project with traumatic history as its subject, with layers of injury and scars over centuries—that have shaped not only those in the victim group but in the perpetrator group—what support/guidance do participants (mostly people of African descent in Ghana, Cuba and even Rhode Island) need and how much should this process be made transparent in the final film?

How much do we assume that people of African descent need or want support from us in the dialogue dealing with descendants of slave traders? Filmmakers had not entirely anticipated that crewmembers would be going through their own relationship to the issue during the shooting process. "There were times our sound man couldn't take sound, because he was crying." Filmmakers recognized their impulse to take care of the crew while also questioning whether "they needed or wanted our support."

For white family descendants, how much is the project about therapy and how much is it about dialogue? Given the difficult material, filmmakers emphasized the importance of professional facilitation of dialogue. “You’re inviting people into a space that isn’t safe.” At the same time, Browne expressed concern about how to present the family’s facilitated dialogue in the film. She doesn’t want people to feel they can’t “try it at home” if they don’t have professional support at their disposal.

2. What support/guidance do the filmmakers need and how much should this process be made transparent in the film?

Browne is both the film’s director and, as a family member, a participant in the film. Should the final film show her own struggle and lack of clarity or will this confuse the audience? How much distance should be provided?

3. How do these choices conflict or coincide with telling a good story, making good art?

Heading into post-production, the filmmakers are confronting difficult artistic choices knowing the multiple demands of the market place, future audiences, and the intent for the film to effectively stimulate dialogue about race. Questions raised include: How does one balance the provocative nature of the family-based journey toward understanding and dialogue with the need for critical and professional distance? If art making is about making choices, distilling and finding images and symbols, is it fair then to use a family member as a symbol of one attitude or sentiment knowing that s/he is more complex as a person than that?

Participant discussion:

Browne asked, When the goal is dialogue, does this push for [a balance of] multiple perspectives in the film itself? If the film focuses on the filmmaker as family member, for example, does it privilege her instead of encourage multiple views? Many participants supported, first and foremost, keeping a keen eye on the artistic goal to make a good story—a story that is honest and sincere. They expressed that:

- Art is by nature subjective, a personal journey.
- Representing all voices in the art, aiming for the lowest common denominator can weaken the art and its impact.
- If it’s good art, it will stimulate dialogue. A good facilitator will be able to draw out the range of perspectives.
- There is a range of emotion beyond guilt. Give attention to drawing this emotional range.

The question of how transparent to be about the process of the family journey and filmmaking met with mixed responses:

- In favor of transparency, Valerie Cassel (curator, Houston Museum of Contemporary Art and Animating Democracy liaison) advised, “You don’t want to edit out the messy stuff. The question may be whether to integrate this within the film or as an addendum of some kind.”
- Neill Archer Roan, arts consultant felt differently, “Art is like sausage. Watching it being made can diminish your appetite for it.” He went to say that there is a meaningful distinction between revealing art and revealing assumptions and strategic presumptions that guide the work. If, for example, a presumption is that “the sins of the father are visited upon the sons, that’s a kind of slavery itself. To me that’s the point of the dialogue . . . I feel disquieted. Don’t take away, by revealing your craft, the punch in the gut that your art might offer.”

Artists Suzanne Lacy and Brad McCallum challenged the presumption inherent in the discussion that art and dialogue are always independent activities. Lacy called this boundary “artificial.” McCallum added, “Some artists see civic

dialogue as part of the aesthetic process,” and encouraged Animating Democracy to recognize this more integrated approach.

THE SLAVE GALLERY PROJECT, ST. AUGUSTINE’S CHURCH & LOWER EAST SIDE TENEMENT MUSEUM

St. Augustine’s Church on the Lower East Side of Manhattan was built in 1828 for an all White congregation. Slaves were segregated from the White congregation in a hidden balcony chamber or Gallery where they could see but not be seen. Centuries later, the Church, now an African American congregation, recognized the historic significance of this space. Originally setting out to develop a mini-museum about African Americans’ presence in the community, Deacon Edgar Hopper imagined the space’s greater relevance and use to a wider community grappling with ongoing issues of marginalization. He raised the question, “How do we use the whole tool to speak across cultures?” and sought the help of the Lower East Side Tenement Museum with which the church had a relationship to determine how best to make this happen.

Questions for discussion:

1. How do we offer the African American history of the Slave Gallery as a metaphor that can inspire connections among divisive communities while maintaining specificity of ownership?

Because every new immigrant group has come to Manhattan through the Lower East Side, marginalization of ethnic, racial, and religious groups is an historic and present day issue. Who is at the center? Who is marginalized? Whose community is it? These are recurring and often contested questions. The Slave Gallery and its restoration process offer an opportunity to acknowledge the history of African Americans in Lower Manhattan, while also making this space and its history relevant and useful to a wider community.

The Tenement Museums’ experience with the International Coalition of Historic Sites of Conscience has offered insights into how historic sites can be centers of civic dialogue on important contemporary social issues. History can be divisive (“My people have been here longer than yours.”) or it can inspire collaboration and communication. A dozen community leaders will serve as community preservationists. They will identify issues within and across their own communities for which the Slave Gallery project can provide a space and focus for dialogue. These community preservationists will be trained in dialogue facilitation in order that the community is empowered to address the issues with their own resources.

2. How do we use the Slave Gallery project as a model for historic sites around the world to stimulate dialogue on their own pressing issues?

Participant discussion:

In choosing to bring the Slave Gallery to public light, St. Augustine’s has to contend with:

- Accurate portrayal of the history (for example, just because slavery was abolished doesn’t mean that people didn’t keep slaves or find loopholes that continued the practice)
- The fact that the Slave Gallery has been hidden for the last 170 years and congregation’s own feelings about complicity in hiding this truth;
- The potential that St. Augustine’s will embarrass the mother church which does not want to make the connection between the church and slavery; and
- The response of the media and white public.

Liz Sevckenko indicated that history is a process of story telling and counter-story telling. While a physical end product is the restored Slave Gallery space, the process is as important to the partners.

Segregated seating still occurs in some cultures. How do institutions deal with such cultural practices in our spaces? Afghani is Maine who use the Center for Cultural Exchange's space, segregate by gender. Liz Sevckenko added that one of the Community Preservationists is from an Orthodox Jewish synagogue, where within that community, segregation is a hotly contested issue. They want to bring that discussion into the Slave Gallery.

WITHOUT SANCTUARY, THE ANDY WARHOL MUSEUM

The Warhol Museum is presenting *Without Sanctuary*, an exhibition of photographs and post cards showing very graphic depictions of lynchings of African Americans. Although typically thought of as occurring in the South, lynchings happened all over the country. The Warhol's choice to present this exhibition is, in part, to point out the history of lynching in its own region as well as to move local citizens to dialogue about contemporary issues of race during and after the exhibition's run.

Question for discussion:

- I. If the personal is central to the politics of race relations, how can community affect institutional change and the institution affect change on a personal level?

Can a primarily White institution present this exhibition credibly in the eyes of the African American community? The partnership between the museum and the YWCA's Center for Race Relations has been essential to the exhibition and dialogue efforts having a credible presence for both African American and White people in the community. The relationship developed from a rocky start:

- When a leader from the YWCA's Center for Race Relations was invited by the Warhol to sit on the Community Advisory Committee for the exhibition, Sherry Cottam, YWCA facilitator/trainer rigorously questioned the Museum on its intentions in hosting this exhibition. "I talked with other folks in the community to see if I was on the right raging track!" Cottam was impressed that the museum staff listened and was even more committed to her participation.
- Curator, Jessica Arcand, felt that the institutional lens of the museum had previously allowed her to work with issues of race in a safe way. This exhibition pushed her and the institution to ask, "how do we get to a place where we can deal with emotionally unsafe issues with real rigor?" Arcand and Cottam dismissed initial ideas to do anti-racism training for museum staff in favor of looking at the history of lynching locally.

The history session, however, brought forward more issues. A White history professor from the exhibition's Community Advisory Committee was enlisted. Cottam recounted, "This woman presented *my* history." There were only about five Blacks on the museum staff; the rest were White. "It felt like we were listening to her describe her vacation trip. It lacked the emotion that we needed to buy into this. We were pretty upset." The Black people walked out. The afternoon presenter, a representative from the local historical society, and an African American, also upset by the morning presentation, made sure to emphasize the emotional dimension of lynching history. While his presentation succeeded to resonate with many, an unfortunate homosexual slur he made in recounting a personal story shut down several museum staff members who are gay. This became another opening for this internal group to explore issues of trust.

A third issue to address in designing dialogue activities was to what degree to remain specific to the African American history versus broadening to bigotry and prejudice against other groups. "There was a tendency to turn [the dialogue] to broader strokes."

What dialogue activities would look like and who would facilitate was also a question. As a museum presenting these images, Arcand and Cottam resolved that, the focus of dialogue had to be on the images. This reinforced that the

Warhol's intent for dialogue should not be anti-racism workshops, but rather dialogue that enables people to process the images and "that would meet them where they are" in relation to issues of race.

This also led to a co-facilitation model using the museum's artist educators and community facilitators. Each had done racism dialogues before but different and separate. Cottam secured 80 community facilitators from diverse racial and occupational backgrounds, further building credibility for the exhibition across community sectors. Artist educators would be present in the museum to facilitate daily dialogue opportunities for visitors, while community facilitators would commit to facilitate specific dialogues over the course of the exhibition.

Participant Discussion:

Participants asked: How do you get institutions to recognize and affect their racial behavior in the institution? Are there conversations among trustees and staff? Are issues of power coming forward?

- Arcand reinforced the exhibition's essential alignment with the museum's mission to be a vital forum for discussion of contemporary issues. The exhibition has engendered significant amount of dialogue within the institution. The project has helped the museum to better understand the diversity within the African American community. The addition of African Americans to the leadership and implementation of this project has forced the question, how this will impact practice of the institution as it moves on to the next project.
- Margery King, associate curator, described having to relinquish the control she typically has over exhibition content, to embrace a more collaborative and organic process. King continues to believe that, in arts-based civic dialogue, the art has to come first, but interrelated goals of artistic inquiry and civic dialogue make it essential for everyone to work together.

"As Westerners, we have a cultural proclivity to animate things that are not organic--such as institutions. Individuals perceive and relate to institutions as though they are apart from themselves. This is a difficult issue for the Warhol Museum. It's implied that the museum exists as a monument to Andy Warhol's aesthetic and because of this, it feels even more like the museum is a being of its own as opposed to a collection of people who live and work now. In truth, there is accountability for every person who works at AWM. . . In terms of affecting institutional change, we have to figure out what's at stake in terms of this organization's collective responsibility to its members. Institution cannot do this work unless it first sees itself as a community of conscience already."

Small Group Breakouts

Self-defined small groups discussed the following areas of interest:

1. What is art and what is dialogue in arts-based civic dialogue? Is there a useful distinction?
2. What specific challenges are you facing in your project work that would benefit from peer feedback?
3. How can cultural organizations doing this work more effectively navigate the media and press toward more expansive and less simplified coverage of the project and the civic issue?

(Documentation notes from small groups are not available.)

1. What is art and what is dialogue in arts-based civic dialogue? Is there a useful distinction?

In the arena of arts-based civic dialogue, many find it necessary to draw an artificial boundary between dialogue and artistic practice, when some artists' work so integrates the two that the dialogue becomes a part of aesthetic practice. When is the distinction useful and when not? Definitions of dialogue and civic dialogue were revisited.

Norman Kleeblatt described a documentary film in which the filmmaker explores being gay as an Orthodox Jew. The artist's process of engaging his subjects to create the work both transformed the work from being an "expose on the plight of gay Orthodox Jews," to a "non-partisan" and complex portrayal of living in both worlds. Being open to

multiple realities made it more believable than if it had pursued a “pinpoint perspective.” Kleeblatt reflected that the power of the final film as a possible focus for dialogue originated in the filmmaker’s ability to listen and be himself transformed through the dialogue of his filmmaking process.

Wayne Winborne offered that in dialogue, “intentionality” matters, and in “civic dialogue,” organizers consciously “catalyze the political [civic] issues of the day.” If the artist were seeking to change minds in his artmaking/dialogue process or through the finished work, that would not be true to the intent of dialogue that is open to multiple perspectives on an issue. Also implicit in this definition, is an intent to bring the dialogue out of the personal or internal realm of the institution and into the public realm.

Suzanne Lacy (public artist, scholar, and writer) sought to frame the question from an art theory base. For artists who do dialogue as part of the art, is it necessary to think of the artist wearing two hats? The greatness of the art is not solely based in the formal qualities of the work, but in large part because of the dialogic process. Pat Romney concurred that dialogics, not just dialogue, is important.

Julie Johnson (Henry Gallery) queried whether dialogue is always necessarily a “voice to voice, verbal communication,” suggesting that art itself demands a relationship between the artwork and the viewer that is a form of internal dialogue.

Sarah McCracken (Wintergreen Performing Arts), is challenged in her project by using non-verbal music to stimulate dialogue. When best should the dialogue activity be positioned in relation to the artistic work in order to most effectively catalyze dialogue? How can the dialogue provide entry to challenging contemporary music as well as entry to the civic issue at hand?

I. What specific challenges are you facing in your project work that would benefit from peer feedback?

The Henry Gallery is challenged to facilitate dialogue involving scientists in its exhibition related to issues around the human genome project. Participants pushed the question to, “What are various experts’ stake in the issue? How to get groups whose members are set in their minds to talk with each other?”

Facilitators working with the Warhol Museum have found it difficult to keep the dialogue focused on its purpose related to racism, when there is a tendency to broaden to topics such as the Holocaust, homophobia.

Marty Pottenger asked advice on how to overcome intimidation she feels in interviewing billionaires for the *Abundance* project.

PROJECT SUMMARIES

The Andy Warhol Museum

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

The Andy Warhol Museum presents, in fall 2001, the traveling exhibition *Without Sanctuary: Lynching Photography in America*, 100 photographic prints and postcards from 1870 to 1960 that document the history of lynching in the United States. Recent racially motivated killings in the City have heightened existing racial tensions. The exhibition intends to provide a context for dialogue about race in Pittsburgh. The Warhol is working with a Community Advisory Group to determine how the exhibition should be presented and interpreted both within and outside the museum. Open Forum artmaking dialogues, led by artist/educators, will provide visitors with expressive, reflective, dialogic, and informational outlets to process and learn from their experience of viewing the images. A range of other dialogue opportunities include: daily facilitated public dialogues, group tour discussions, public lectures, panel discussions, performance, use of the museum as a space for community groups to hold meetings and dialogues around race relations, and artist/educator outreach projects that extend the dialogue into the community. Artist/educators and museum staff will be partnered with and trained by the National Conference for Communities and Justice, YWCA Study Circles, and Facing History and Ourselves/New York Chapter. For the year following the exhibition, the museum will coordinate continued opportunities for dialogues on race.

**St. Augustine’s Episcopal Church in collaboration with the Lower East Side Tenement Museum
New York City, New York**

The “Slave Gallery Project” will bring together community leaders, scholars, and preservationists to restore and interpret the 1828 slave gallery in St. Augustine’s Church, a cramped room where African American congregants were segregated during the 19th century. Anchored in what is now the largest African American congregation on the Lower East Side, the slave gallery will be interpreted in consultation with a team of 30 Community Preservationists—leaders representing African American, Asian, Latino, Jewish, and other ethnic groups. Within the context of this emotional and symbolic historic space, dialogue specialists Tammy Bormann and David Campt will engage Community Preservationists in dialogue about how boundaries of exclusion and inclusion are drawn and contested in the Lower East Side. They will train these community leaders to use the slave gallery to facilitate their own dialogues among and between their constituents. This preservation project enables exploration of the high stakes around history and what history and historic sites of conscience can contribute to dialogue about contemporary issues.

**Rhode Island Committee for the Humanities
Providence, Rhode Island**

The Rhode Island Committee for the Humanities and producer/director Katrina Browne are collaborating on the creation of a documentary film, *Traces of the Trade*, and an accompanying dialogue initiative in Rhode Island. *Traces of the Trade* will examine the role of the North in slavery, as exemplified by the DeWolf family of Bristol, Rhode Island, from whom Browne is descended. For three generations, the DeWolfs operated a large-scale Triangle Trade involving sugar, rum, and slaves. The documentary will explore the legacy of this history on the DeWolf descendants and trace the evolution of an amnesia in white New England about its role in slavery and how this amnesia created fertile ground for Northern and national blindness about contemporary racism. In collaboration with the National Conference for Community and Justice (NCCJ), Browne will experiment with creative dialogue and interview approaches in producing the documentary to reveal the emotional underpinnings of issues of race and enhance later dialogues connected to screenings of the finished film. NCCJ, in collaboration with RICH and the Heritage Harbor Museum, will also help design and facilitate screenings of the finished work and multi-part dialogues in all of Rhode Island’s 39 cities and towns. *Traces of the Trade* will experiment with dialogue approaches that most effectively engage white people, as well as interracial groups, in looking critically at issues of white privilege, collective responsibility, and debt.

Challenge Session

Jewish Museum

This session was part of the Animating Democracy Learning Exchange held in Chicago, November 2001. In this Challenge Session, one Lab project had the opportunity to put forward challenges they were encountering in their work and seek comment and feedback from peers to help them with the challenge.

PARTICIPANTS:

Norman Kleeblatt, Curator of Fine Arts, The Jewish Museum
Joanna Lindenbaum, Curatorial Assistance, The Jewish Museum
Carole Zawatsky, Director of Education, The Jewish Museum

PROJECT SUMMARY

The exhibition *Mirroring Evil: Nazi Imagery/Recent Art*, featuring transgressive artworks by young artists two and three generations removed from the events of WWII, will offer a springboard for dialogue about complicity and complacency toward evil in today's society. The museum will show work by 13 artists who have eschewed the deeply entrenched Holocaust imagery that focuses on the victim. Instead, they use images of perpetrators—Nazis—to provoke viewers to explore the culture of victimhood and the seduction of power as well as contemporary manifestations of evil in the form of bigotry, war, and genocide. Exhibition design will facilitate dialogue. An opening video will provide historical and cultural context through transgressive images from television, film and popular culture, and offer questions for dialogue that visitors can consider as they view the artworks. A second video at the end of the exhibition will capture opinions and points of view from artists and diverse members of different communities reacting to the exhibition. The museum will partner with the Vera List Center for Art and Politics at the New School University, Facing History and Ourselves, the Center for Learning and Leadership to design dialogue opportunities both in and outside the museum that connect deeply within the Jewish community and to a broad public of all faiths and cultural backgrounds.

INTRODUCTION

Museum representatives showed slides of works that will be included in the exhibition, including:

- *Lego Concentration Camp Set* by Zbigniew Libera. Using Lego building blocks, Libera built models of concentration camps, photographed them, and then used the photographs, along with the Lego emblem, to create boxes that appear as children's merchandise. By initially appearing as benign consumer products, the sculptures demonstrate how easily innocent toys can be perverted into images of evil, the pervasiveness of violence in children's consumer products, and how messages of evil were effectively disseminated to Nazi youth.
- *Live and Die as Eva Braun*, by Roee Rosen. Rosen's *Eva Braun* works ask the viewer to take on the role of Braun, Hitler's mistress during the last moments of the Third Reich. The viewer is placed in the morally questionable body and psyche of Hitler's girlfriend, forcing the viewer to personally experience evil and banality of it.
- *The Nazis*, by Piotr Uklanski. Polish artist Piotr Uklanski assembled 166 film stills or publicity shots of famous actors in the role of Nazi officers. Taking these photographs out of narrative and out of context, his work shows how pervasive images of Nazis have become in popular culture. He demonstrates society's elision of perpetrator and hero, and reveals its attraction to glossy, lush, and attractive images despite the roles of horror and destruction that they represent.

Past exhibition of these and other works by museums around the world have been controversial and media debate. Exhibition of Roee Rosen's work at the Israel Museum sparked controversy about the role of the Holocaust in the visual arts. Pressure was put on the museum to remove the exhibition, but the museum did not concede. The exhibition raised questions of:

- the appropriateness of these images to place
- sexuality and its appropriateness within a venue of public culture
- the right to interpret events from where one is...removed from the generation that experienced the Holocaust.
- Response without engagement. “Don’t touch my Holocaust.”
- Who has the authority to speak about the holocaust

The Jewish community reacted strong to Uklanski’s work exhibited at the Photographer’s Gallery in London, asking that the installation be exhibited alongside images of Holocaust victims. Insisting that the artwork was about the entertainment industry and not the Holocaust, the artist and gallery did not concede.

CHALLENGES

Museum representatives outlined three key challenges in presenting this exhibition.

- I. How can our institution display provocative art that can put us under attack and, if it is controversial, how can that attack be converted into constructive dialogue? Museum staff elaborated:
 - It is a fundamental intent of this exhibition as well as a challenge to have the audience confront their own moral complicity in these events and other acts of evil in society.
 - The exhibition offers an opportunity to discuss how understanding of the Holocaust for a whole generation of Jews is largely shaped by popular culture, by fiction, rather than fact. Through this lens, the exhibition also questions the way the Holocaust has become sacred in the Jewish community. “The Holocaust is the only secure identity for the American Jew. What other consensus of identity is there? There is a decline in the connection with the Israelis. How can one expand the base of identity? How is this history and morality used?”
 - Understanding how these art works have been received elsewhere, the museum is examining ways to present and interpret them and facilitate dialogue around the work itself and issues of evil and complicity.
 - The museum asks: Does civic dialogue have to be civil? Is dialogue about only bringing people to your points of view, or is its intent to reflect the diversity of voices and perspectives?
 - Planning this exhibition with these questions in mind has necessitated greater collaboration between director, curator, and education personnel.

PARTICIPANT DISCUSSION:

A participant challenged, “If work is made to illuminate or offer insight or create moral ambiguity, then it is not possible to control an individual or an audience’s response? There is somehow an expectation that if we do a good job, then there is no controversy. We have responsibility, but should not take responsibility for others’ responses.”

The museum responded that it can try to better understand what audience members come to the museum with and help those “not savvy about contemporary art with tools such as the videos to understand the intentions of the work. “We are also letting people know that it is OK to have reactions, but help them to further contemplate these responses.”

One participant suggested structuring one-on-one listening/dialogue, instead of the group dynamic connoted by “civic dialogue.”

- I. How can we make art accessible? How can we stimulate dialogue using conceptual art with an audience that is not versed in the art historical frame, but yet is connected with the images of the art? Museum staff

described its use of video within the exhibition as a key interpretive tool aimed help viewers reflect on their own individual responses to these images and the historical event.

- A video at the beginning of the exhibition will pose the questions that the artworks and exhibition as a whole pose.
- At the end of the exhibition, a talking head video will present a range of perspectives and emotions from artists and staff members to survivors and children/grandchildren of survivors. The intent is that these perspectives will help make the work less enigmatic. Maurice Berger, noted art critic and advisor to the exhibition, will discuss art, popular culture, and history; how these images are in the public domain and how the Holocaust has been deconstructed in television, films, etc.

PARTICIPANT DISCUSSION:

Participants expressed conflicting feelings whether and how to prepare audiences for potentially controversial work, understanding the reluctance artists often have to doing so but also the producer's need, particularly if civic dialogue is a goal. One participant suggested the solution is not whether to prepare audiences or not, but to empower participants to make their own choice. Offer an optional session or space that gives interpretation and frameworks for considering the work. "Let the audience determine what their needs are and act in accordance. The museum can provide the resources."

Jewish Museum staff further reflected on choices, "The museum is caught in a quagmire of moral ambiguity in its presentation of a work, as well as the exhibition, itself. The success of the presentation of this work is to be reverent to the aesthetic context of the work as well as our mission. I would like to weave a narrative for the work along the path of the exhibition...perhaps text from one work to the next (each prepares you for the next). The comparison however, is sometimes the most powerful and the space between works is also crucial. Meaning can be changed through display/presentation."

- I. How does the institution control the media's interpretation of the exhibition to ensure communication of: its own intentions in presenting this work; the artist's intentions in creating the work; the use of the work to support the intentions or interpretations of others?

This question was not directly taken up in the session.

Challenge Session

Northern Lakes Center for the Arts

This session was part of the Animating Democracy Learning Exchange held in Chicago, November 2001. In this Challenge Session, one Lab project had the opportunity to put forward challenges they were encountering in their work and seek comment and feedback from peers to help them with the challenge.

PARTICIPANTS:

LaMoine MacLaughlin, Executive Director, Northern Lakes Center for the Arts
Laura Johnson, youth dialogue facilitator and project evaluator
Bridget Draxler, youth dialogue facilitator
Jane Johnson, Amery citizen and community partner

PROJECT SUMMARY

In 2001, the Northern Lakes Center for the Arts commissioned and produced a series of arts activities to frame community dialogues about issues of water usage and pollution related to growth and development, use of farm chemicals, and recreational use of local rivers and lakes in Amery, Wisconsin.

The project was launched on Earth Day, April 2001. The Center presented videos on water issues in the region as well as a WPA-era film about the Mississippi River that provided an opportunity to compare historic and contemporary issues.

Over the summer and fall months, an interdisciplinary set of arts events unfolded.

- The Northern Lakes Writers' Guild worked with author Anthony Bukoski to produce stories, poems, and essays about water and people's relation to it for publication and local readings.
- The Northern Lakes Theater Guild revived a production of Ibsen's "An Enemy of the People," about water pollution and civic discourse, including an interactive Act 4 in which audience members participated in the play's town meeting scene.
- Composer Layton James worked with the Northern Lakes Chamber Orchestra to produce and perform a new original work incorporating writings by noted naturalists and environmentalists, and Smetana's classical work, "The Moldau."
- Photographer Jerry Boucher led the local photography club in a photography project related to the Appel River, creating work displayed in tandem with the concert.
- Sculptor Frank Stone, in collaboration with local artists and students, created a public fountain for Amery's park. The fountain, which includes the form of a car battery, symbolizes the importance of water in daily life and calls attention to mercury as a prime contaminant of the water caused by discarding of batteries in the local waters. Its seasonal turning on and off will provide occasion for sustained dialogue about water related issues.

Arts activities were designed to generate multiple opportunities for public dialogue on water issues. The Center for the Arts worked with dialogue specialist, Pat Romney, who trained a corps of youth and adults in facilitation techniques, with special attention to ways to draw upon the unique opportunity each art form provided. Amery Mayor Harvey Stower, highly regarded for initiating and engaging local citizens in public dialogue about other community issues, participated in facilitating civic dialogues along with these youth and adults.

CHALLENGES

Northern Lakes Center identified several challenges faced and observations made both during this project and that could be anticipated in future efforts.

Challenge: How to effectively translate dialogue training into action

- *Credibility in youth facilitators:* Youth facilitators felt they were not always taken seriously as facilitators due to their age.
- *Relating the art to the issue:* At first, conversations were often broad or the connections were tenuous. Personalizing the connection to the art or to the issue often brought out a deeper level of discussion.
- *How much to structure the dialogues:* The more highly structured dialogues more effectively allowed everyone to be included. Less structure enabled greater flow in the conversation.
- *Getting people to stay for the dialogue:* After sitting through a show, people want to go home. The combination of the concert and photography exhibition was the most successful at retaining people for the dialogue.
- *Dialogue during an event is different than dialogue after.* People could have dialogue while watching photographic exhibit. (???)

Challenge: Assessing the effectiveness of dialogue for the audience and in relation to the issue

Based on audience surveys distributed at three events including the play and concert, the Center discovered that:

- People came to events to see the artistic event, not for the dialogue component.
- There were differences in what people thought was the focus of the dialogue in which they participated.
- Cheryl Yuen offered that there also needs to be clarity, for the audience's sake, about the issue. How is it framed? Is it meaningful for the audience or stakeholders assembled?

Challenge: Developing a shared understanding of what is meant by dialogue and civic dialogue

Although the Center observed on some occasions that everyone participated in dialogue activities, not everyone believed that they had participated in civic dialogue. Interpreting this response leads to other questions: Do people hold different ideas about what dialogue or civic dialogue is? Does it mean that the dialogue did not meet some people's expectations in terms of civic focus? That dialogue was not really achieved?

Sandy Augustin (Intermedia Arts, Minneapolis) wondered if literally naming the activity as "dialogue" would help people recognize it as such. Daniel Banks called upon participants to use the Learning Exchange as an opportunity to further clarify how to name, frame, and format experiences and to be conscious of what the intent for dialogue is in each opportunity. "Not all post-show discussions are civic dialogue." He added that part of the challenge is to create experiences that are not "imposing something on an audience, but rather presenting an audience with something it can buy into or buy out of."

Challenge: Including dialogue as an extension of artmaking

Enemy of the People shed light on Amery's water issues even though the play did not precisely represent local, contemporary issues. The writers group, after having participated, wondered why there haven't been more projects using the classics as a point of reference for dialogue. Northern Lakes Center for the Arts sees more opportunity to look for natural inspiration and connections within future art presentations for exploration of civic issues.

Challenge: How not to sacrifice art for dialogue and dialogue for art

- Local partner organizations such as environmental groups often have a specific agenda, such as preservation of natural areas. MacLaughlin has been concerned that projects such as these can be perceived as propaganda if one point of view is promoted or is even perceived as having a platform. Further, there is a chance that art can move toward propaganda. MacLaughlin sees that his job is "to make sure that the art doesn't become secondary to any other concern. I see art as broadening and allowing for multiple perspectives. Propaganda is narrowing."

- Dialogue can be as creative as art. Northern Lakes was pleased to broaden its own understanding of approaches to dialogue through the range of creative techniques offered by consultant, Pat Romney. Romney added that the facilitation training itself was a dialogical process that served to build valuable relationships within the community.

Challenge: Dialogue is often presented as a one-shot deal. How do you deepen that experience? How do you include people with other points of view?

For the Center, dialogue meant “taking the person who normally doesn’t speak and drawing them out.” MacLaughlin observed that some people might have participated if they had time to reflect on the issue. “There was no means for people to come back after a few days and to have dialogue after they thought about it.”

Gillian Eaton described how Flint Youth Theatre sandwiched its play about school violence between process drama workshops that both contributed to the play’s development and followed it up. “When [people who participated in the workshops] came to the play they saw themselves in it. They owned the play. The follow-up [process drama] sessions were much deeper. There was a fierce devotion to the piece and fierce audience promotion [of the play] outside of the normal channels.” In retrospect, Eaton believes that, even with this extended process, the civic dialogue would have benefited from starting earlier and being sustained longer after the play.

Challenge: How to use dialogue in other contexts

The Center wishes to continue to put to good work its cultural resources to contribute to civic dialogue. Cheryl Yuen, Animating Democracy’s liaison to the Northern Lakes project, observed certain foundational practices that supported this effort toward positive results, and that will enable future arts-based civic dialogue work to continue and strengthen the role of cultural organizations in civic dialogue:

- Allowing for organic evolution: Although the project had a clear framework, the Center remained flexible to changes, including the addition of the photography component and a shift from a singular facilitator (the Mayor) to building skill in a broader base of youth and adult facilitators in the community.
- Stretching, experimenting, and broadening boundaries: Youth facilitators stretched their knowledge and skills and experimented with different techniques as they saw what worked and did not work in various different segments of project. Photographers who had never taken photos with a focus on a civic issue stretched, realizing as they had dialogue among themselves, that their effort was to photograph the multidimensionality of the river.
- Seizing opportunity: The advent of this project gave momentum to a group in town involved in preserving the Appel River. There is now this group of people who feel great ownership and have taken leadership.

CASE SESSION

Artistic Practice in Arts-based Civic Dialogue: Cases in Theater

This session was part of the Animating Democracy Learning Exchange held in Chicago, November 2001. In it Lab projects sharing common ground or contrasting approaches/points of view examined philosophies, hypotheses, goals, principles, and/or practices related to their arts/humanities-based civic dialogue efforts. Key points from Animating Democracy Lab project presentations are followed by notes from small group break out discussions, the topics of which were defined by session participants.

The intent of this case session was to explore:

- the intersection of artistic practice in theater and civic dialogue,
- how artistic process and dialogue may be mutually supportive, as well as where there might be frictions, and
- how process and the final work can be effective for both creators and community people involved.

PARTICIPANTS:

Dell 'Arte, Michael Fields, artistic director, Julie Fulkerson, dialogue consultant/specialist, *The Dentalium Project*

San Diego Repertory Theater, Sam Woodhouse, artistic director, director of *Nuestro Pueblo*; Dora Arreola, choreography, *Nuestro Pueblo*; Bernardo Solano, playwright, *Nuestro Pueblo*

Flint Youth Theatre, Sue Wood, project director, . . . *My Soul to Take*; Gillian Eaton, freelance theater director and educator, . . . *My Soul to Take*

THE DENTALIUM PROJECT, DELL 'ARTE

As Dell 'Arte begins its project, Michael Fields and Julie Fulkerson outlined artistic and dialogue concerns that lie ahead.

Artistic concerns:

- The project allows Dell 'Arte to advance the company's practices in theater of place and physical theater.
- A key, ongoing challenge in Dell 'Arte's work in comedy is how to find the common vein in satire that makes everybody laugh. "You cannot pick and choose" who is the subject. The comedy has to both celebrate community and provoke.
- To decide whether to present the piece indoors or outdoors and as a straightforward theater piece or an event (e.g. with food, stick gambling). Indoors enables higher production values; outdoors will be "raw," but encourages a larger and more diverse audience, i.e. those who are less comfortable stepping inside for a theater performance.
- How to most effectively involve Native Americans in the play and/or the larger project, recognizing that acting is not a part of Native American performance tradition on the West coast.

Dialogue concerns:

- How to focus the dialogue so that it encourages exploration of casino issues but also lays ground for broader, ongoing issues related to development, economics, reparations.
- How to encourage people to talk their personal stories recognizing that these stories may show up in a public theater piece.

- Given that company artists' are both Dell 'Arte artists and Blue Lake citizens, when and how to include the company's artists in the community storytelling circles and dialogue opportunities.
- Dell 'Arte is perceived as pro casino because of its past work with Native Americans. If it is perceived as leading this project, many people who are on the other side of the issue will not get involved. Knowing this, the company has made the project public in the early planning stages in order to let other perspectives emerge.
- Where to hold dialogue activities where everyone feels comfortable.

NUESTRO PUEBLO, SAN DIEGO REPERTORY THEATER

Sam Woodhouse introduced the project. San Diego is positioned along one of the most active border crossings in the Northern Hemisphere. Eight years ago, steel platforms discarded from the Gulf War, were used to build a fence along the U.S.-Mexican border extending into the ocean and 16 miles inland. The fence has dramatically changed the feeling in the region. "It separates people; it is a barrier that defines people." San Diego Rep, in collaboration with Centro Cultural Tijuana, is creating a new play *Nuestro Pueblo* (Our Town), that explores the question, "Should we tear down the fence that separates San Diego and Tijuana, or should we build it higher?" By creating "the most provocative play we can," Sam Woodhouse expects that that will elicit substantial dialogue about border issues.

Arts-based civic dialogue process: Bernardo Solano and Dora Arreola described the artists' research process.

SDR began the process by asking citizens and leaders in Mexicali, Tijuana, and San Diego the core question, whether "to tear down or build up the fence." Based on responses to this and two additional questions:

- Will the fence come down in your lifetime? (most people said no)
- Will the fence come down in your children's lifetime? (most people said yes)

SDR chose to set the play 30 years in the future at a time when the fence has come down.

A bi-national artist team, guided by the Rep's partner, San Diego Dialogue, conducted bilingual interviews and round table discussions with citizens and civic leaders on both sides of the border. Questions such as the following were designed to elicit metaphoric responses as research for the play.

- Describe the region as if it were a person (its physical, psychological characteristics).
- If you could change something that people on the other side think of you, what would that be?
- When you think of the region, what do you see, touch, taste, hear, smell?
- If the fence itself could speak, what would it say?
- What do you think God has to say about all this?
- What need to be said about the border in the play?

From responses, Solano culled transcripts, video, and audiotapes for possible characters, quotes, scenes, stories, themes and issues. What emerged as commonly held or divisive beliefs became significant material for the play.

Challenges and findings from this process:

- Points of view about the same issue or question have been very different in the two countries.
- Working bilingually proved a challenge in conducting research and developing the script, as well as for the cast in presenting readings in both countries. Neither Mexican nor U.S. cast members had worked in the other country before and some spoke only their native language. "Both casts are microcosms of what we face in the community." After multiple scripts and community readings, both Mexican and U.S. artists were presenting bilingual scenes. There will be two distinct versions of the script, one for each country, using elements that both English and Spanish speakers will understand.

- Finding a sophisticated enough community process that provides rigorous feedback and supports the creation of a great work of art.

. . . MY SOUL TO TAKE, FLINT YOUTH THEATRE

Gillian Eaton led participants in a Process Drama exercise, illustrating how Flint Youth Theatre engaged youth and adults in creative exploration of the issue of school violence while gathering material for FYT artistic director, Bill Ward's script writing process. Process Drama is a British form of experiential improvisation and role-play that engages groups in active speculation and reflection on issues or situations suggested by a "pre-text" put forward by the leader. Eaton drew participants into the allegory of the Pied Piper of Hamelin, which was one of three pre-texts used in Flint. She invoked participants, "Residents of Hamelin, what are we going to do about the rat problem?" followed by an exercise to create living photos to accompany newspaper headlines about the rat problem, and then asking for reactions to a disturbing press release issued by the rats.

Sue Wood and Eaton elaborated on the process drama technique:

- Process drama sessions were generally two hours long and each group participating in more than one process drama session.
- Each of three pretexts was done numerous times with several groups in different middle and high schools, with a group of senior citizen crossing guards, and with FYT staff and board members.
- Using the Pied Piper and other situations and metaphors, participants considered what makes a safe place unsafe, what happens to a society that loses its children, what guns have come to mean in our society, and other questions related to violence in society and schools.
- Playwright, Bill Ward, observed process drama sessions, took notes, and debriefed with Eaton on the issues and characters that emerged through the process dramas.

The process drama sessions contributed substantially to Ward's script.

Discussion

Following the three presentations, discussion probed further the relationship between civic dialogue and the artistic process:

Dichotomy of art and dialogue: How does the intent for dialogue affect the artistic process and product?

- Fields said, "I'm interested in how the dialogue translates into art. How does it influence, shape, respond, provoke the form, the art itself."
- Always working toward a high level of artistic excellence, Woodhouse explained, "We're trying to free ourselves from being burdened by dialogue with a capital "D," and just make the best play we can make. That involves imaginative leaps in communication with the people of our region. We have to imagine a work of art through someone's words who hasn't imagined it."
- Solano has drawn substantially from community process and dialogue. "I'm happy to have the onslaught of material from the dialogue, as long as I'm allowed to pick and choose what goes into the play. I like that it does half my work for me. . . It's all there. It's then about inspiration and organization, putting it together, making relationships between the comments."
- Dialogue specialist Ann McBroom (working with the *Understanding Neighbors* project of Out North Contemporary Art House) believes dialogue specialists can learn from artists' process. Speaking to San Diego Rep she said, "You posed amazing questions. I think you're already doing dialogue in your work." Ensuing discussion pointed out the potential for reciprocal learning between artists and dialogue specialists as they work together on projects. Each has skills that may contribute at different points in the dialogue process or the project's overall structure.

- Woodhouse wants rigorous feedback that can advance the work's integrity. San Diego Rep chose intensive community dialogue to support the script development process out of desire for authenticity and nuance around people's feelings and perspectives related to the border issue. Yet, community engagement can be enormously labor intensive without necessarily advancing artistic interests. "I struggle to find a sophisticated enough community process that will enable us to make a great work of art, so that it doesn't just make people feel good."

How can post-performance discussions be more effective?

- Wood concurred that FYT had difficulty with dialogue with a big D. "We feel that theater is dialogue with a small "d," and it was troublesome to set up just talk-backs. So we set up these process dramas which we felt were dialogue. . . What we resisted was the captive audience nature [of conventional talk-backs]. People don't have a choice about whether to participate. It helps to go into different spaces, giving people ways to respond verbally or nonverbally. We're also always wrestling with the difference between art and entertainment." Wood paraphrased noted artist/educator Eric Booth's distinction: Entertainment happens within what we already know and it is confirming. Art happens outside what we already know and it opens up new possibilities. For Wood, this distinction reinforces how dialogue is inherent in art.
- Peter Carpenter, lead artist for Out North's *Understanding Neighbors* project, observed that Out North has cultivated audiences willing and interested in participating in post-show discussions by making them regular. Out North requires this of every artist and while artists have sometimes been resistant, in many cases, "it is a great experience for the artist, too."

Is dialogue that is initiated by one side ever effective or satisfying?

- Fields believes it is the role of art and theater organizations to provoke. "We have a point of view." Fulkerson added that the theater goes into the dialogue not knowing what will come out of it. "The theater provokes us through distance between theater and ourselves, and allows us to see ourselves differently. We ask the questions others are afraid to ask." But the public's perception of the organization and its stance around an issue also comes into play. Sometimes the public makes assumptions.
- San Diego Rep is committed to *Nuestro Pueblo* because of U.S. citizens' misperceptions about Mexico. "There are so many people in my town who think that Mexico is a horrible place," said Woodhouse. There is a personal motivation to be a provocateur." But, Arreola explained, ". . .In addition to provoking, our work is to describe artistically the reality of the environment in which we live. In this manner, the dialogue is both ways. It's not about having a fixed position. It's about points of view, not one point of view. Our job as artists is the description."
- Flint Youth Theatre recognized the importance of having social service partners to which FYT could hand off the dialogue around the issue after its theater project concluded. "We're not therapists or conflict mediators, and we didn't want the ball to be dropped.
- Process Drama situations set up extreme situations that served to provoke participants to consider new dimensions of an issue. At the same time, taking the discussion into an imaginative realm distances participants from the harsh realities of the topic, enabling them to express "in role" feelings and ideas that arise from an intuitive rather than an intellectual place.

SMALL GROUP BREAK-OUTS

Self-defined small group discussions pursued three areas of interest that emerged in the case session:

1. What is the role of neutrality in the dialogue process and in the artistic endeavor?
2. What are the considerations, challenges regarding aesthetics and artistic excellence in arts-based civic dialogue work?

3. What are techniques to enhance post-show dialogue?

I. What is the role of neutrality in the dialogue process and in the artistic endeavor? Is it possible? Is it desirable?

Neutrality in the dialogue process:

- Neutrality in the community process has been fundamental to instilling trust and evoking honest responses to border issues. Dora Arreola described San Diego Rep's process. SDR started with conversations in each of the San Diego and Mexican communities. Local individuals rather than outsiders were enlisted to help facilitate interviews and round tables. It was important to speak in that community's language. "If we started with a mixed/bilingual group, forget it, people wouldn't have come." It was important to explain why the artists and dialogue people were there and to go without an agenda around the issue. If people are unclear about your motivations, they get defensive. "We did not try to convince anyone about the issue. On the contrary, we wanted to provoke them to give us their honest issues."
- E'nkul Kanakan (Center for Cultural Exchange's *Africans in Maine* project) differed. As soon as you decide to consider an issue, you have a position already. "Neutrality is a very academic idea. However, if we take a position, we may not even start the dialogue. In a way, it's a hypocrisy because you have to deal diplomatically with people to get them to come. It's important for me to acknowledge my own real position [in relation to the *Africans in Maine* project]. I came knowing who the players were, and I knew it was important to get these people together. But from the position of the Center for Cultural Exchange, neutrality is important for the dialogue even to begin. There is a moment when you know very well that if you tell the truth to [a particular] person, the conversation will not continue."

Neutrality regarding the organization's position on the issue: Can dialogue that is initiated by an organization known to have a stance on the issue be effective? Is neutrality necessary to ensure that multiple perspectives can be considered?

- Mary Grisco, a Community Coordinating Committee member for Out North's project, Understanding Neighbors, about the role of same sex couples in society, believes an organization can hold a position on an issue but still be fair in facilitating open dialogue. Out North Contemporary Art House is known in Anchorage for the pro- gay rights position of its leaders and recognize this as a potential obstacle to participation for people whose perspectives are different. Grisco believes the issue is "not about being neutral, but about not being in charge. A coordinating committee representing three partner organizations was established and is actively and seriously seeking the most diverse perspectives on the issue. Pulling in community partners and investing the Committee whose members hold a range of views on the issue, "got us to be seen as fair, but not as neutral. . . We're not looking for neutrality but for a level playing field." Additionally, Out North recognizes that, the committee "needs to do a dialogue process internally," to understand its own ideas. "How can we expect a community to come into a dialogue if we're not willing to do it ourselves? Leaders think they are above it. . .but we have to model it and learn from it."
- Cultural organizations may have a dilemma when core audiences, patrons, and/or sponsors hold positions on issues. The partnership for Snug Harbor Cultural Center's Abundance project includes the Working Theater that produces plays for and about working class people. Abundance explores questions around the distribution of wealth in our society and will have major performances at the Cultural Center in Snug Harbor, New York City's only Republican stronghold, and supported by wealthy residents.

Neutrality in the artistic endeavor:

- Dora Arreola sees that fiction creates a kind of neutral space where characters holding different views express their positions and resolve their conflicts. In terms of creating dramatic tension in the piece, "if we take the position that the wall should be down, we won't reach the interesting point." The distancing device of the play further allows audiences to consider different perspectives.

- Bart Mills (Arts Council of Greater Lima, Ohio) and E'nkul Kanakan disagreed that artistic choices in the fictional work can ever be truly neutral. Kanakan believes that “the play tells a story and people want to draw a moral from the story. From an artistic point of view, you want the message to be clear—the writer’s voice is clear.” Therefore, some message is always being communicated.
- Artists may develop their work to be deliberately provocative around the issue. Mary Grisco, from Out North begged the question, “Do we tell the artists what to do because we’re afraid of political fall out? Do we try to get the artists to be neutral? This is censorship.” Bart Mill raised the real concern that the cultural organization’s and/or partners’ credibility may come into question if artists put forward a strong perspective through the work that many community members will find difficult, offensive, or are unprepared for. Rather than removing that perspective, which could be construed as censorship, can artists be asked to add perspectives that provide additional dimension? Implicit in the exchange is the delicate balance between honoring where community members’ are in their connection with an issue and respecting artistic exploration that may be provocative.
- Speaking from both her perspective as an artist, and as a trained facilitator, Andrea Assaf suggested that, when artists are acting as artists, the work is about the artist’s voice. But when they are acting as facilitators, the work s about everybody else’s voice. “the question is not about neutrality or objectivity . . . but akin to the [idea] of fairness, the question, I think, is “whose voice? And how do you facilitate multiple voices being heard?”

2. Artistic excellence and access

Several questions were posed at the outset of this break out discussion: How you define artistic success in the global sense? How does civically engaged art stand up to the rest of your work? How does being involved in a dialogue process influence the work? When you make art in a democratic process there are parameters. A community is being created around the creation of the work. How is that mediated?

- In observing how carefully dialogue and facilitation has to be done in order to bring people along and help them feel safe, Steve Day asked, “Is that carefully created safety at odds with an artist’s goal and right to provoke? The artist wants to be allowed to provoke and at the same time has to create safety to get diverse opinion.”
- Sam Woodhouse questioned how to build multiple points of view into a story without diminishing the work’s ultimate point of view. Shakespeare was able to switch hats and have the same character speak from different points of view. “Can we walk a mile in different shoes as artists? [Even] if we are able to do that we still have to write a story with a point of view. We will have to make a choice. Will we be able to present a dramatic story that has enough diversity where everyone gets their minute? Is this forced diversity?” Sandy Augustin (Intermedia Arts, Minneapolis) and Diane Aldis (Perpich Center for Arts Education) agreed that Liz Lerman’s work exemplifies community based work that engages community people in the work’s creative development and execution, while never losing the artist’s voice.
- In Intermedia Arts’ project in Minneapolis, organizer Sandy Augustin described the work of five artists, each working in different communities to engage disenfranchised citizens around the issue of gentrification of their neighborhoods. “Process not product -- is what we are trying to get across to artists. We are talking about the process of artistic excellence. . . I think a lot of artists [only see product]” If artistic excellence is in the process, it is about making the dialogue more accessible.
- Michael Fields values the time “to stay in process and not jump to product,” afforded by the Animating Democracy Lab, allowing for multiple re-writes, which he hopes will lead to excellence in the final piece. Sam Woodhouse agreed that, while support for process time is valuable, “the hard part is thinking about the same thing for four years.”
- Sometimes the timeline for arts-based civic dialogue is dictated by a window of time when the issue demands public dialogue, such as the building of a casino. Abel Lopez pointed out, however, there are typically dimensions of the issue that will not go away, for example, for Blue Lake, California, the sovereignty issue will

not go away. There are times when a cultural organization will choose to engage in dialogue and times it will choose not to. There may be procedural timelines but there is no timeline on dialogues.

- The art world continues, in general, to view community-based work as inferior to mainstage productions. This perception is also sometimes held even within local communities whose members place higher value on work from the outside or that has the imprimatur of an outside entity. Who gets to define the standards and criteria for excellence is a huge question. Sandy Augustin suggested that the field needs to decenter the authority on artistic excellence and begin to ask audience members and community partners their perspectives on artistic excellence.
- If the work is not excellent, it will diminish the quality of the dialogue, so one does not preclude the other.

3. How can post-show dialogue opportunities be more effective?

What are the goals for post-show dialogue?

- Objectives and expectations for post-show dialogues are often unclear. What is the desired content focus in terms of art and civic issue?
- Is personal catharsis civic dialogue? Civic dialogue may have therapeutic or cathartic effects, enabling people to grapple with social issues such as AIDS, domestic violence, etc. But is dialogue civic if its singular intent is therapeutic?

What is the bridge between question and answer format to dialogue?

- At Cornerstone Theater plays, sometimes the audience is asked to respond to the theme or issue during the play. A dramatic device is used to mark those moments out during the play.
- Consider changing the spatial relationship when one goes into dialogue, e.g. go into a circle, to distinguish dialogue from Q & A or other discussion formats.
- Asking people to write down personal reflections before engaging in dialogue can enhance the quality of dialogue.

What are techniques to bring people into dialogue about the issue?

- To bring closure to post-show dialogues, Northern Lakes Center for the Arts invited people into a circle and asked them to say something about what you take away from this dialogue. A ball of yarn is tossed from one person to another as they speak, creating in the middle, a web that connects all participants. (Participants can pass in this process.) The process and the web promotes a sense of community and everyone is automatically involved.
- Recognize the limitations of dialogue after a single performance and consider building in dialogue opportunities throughout the entire run.
- Alternating different facilitators may bring out different dimensions of the issue based on their own experience base.
- Factors to consider in designing dialogue experiences include: setting, time of day, how much time for dialogue, informing the audience of the questions before the performance (i.e. setting the tone; having them in people's minds during the performance), how to democratize the dialogue; getting the list of issues out and in some type of order for further dialogue, using metaphors and moving into art space
- Cornerstone Theater, working with the National Conference for Community and Justice, has used a "forced choice" technique. In one performance of its Faith-Based Theater Festival, audience members were asked to enter the theater through one of two doors marked "I believe in God," and "I do not believe in God."

- Northern Lakes Center for the Arts uses an exercise called “Take a Stand,” in which statements related to the civic issue are made and people are asked to physically move across a continuum in a room from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The facilitator asks people who wish to, to state why they are in the location they are. The exercise puts individuals in touch with their own feelings and beliefs about an issue (or lack of) and to see other group members’ relationship to the issue.

How do you empower people to speak? Who should facilitate post-show dialogues on civic issues?

- Individuals and communities go through phases and rhythms in civic life. You need to understand where people are in a community in relation to an issue, and you can’t violate that. If you do, people will shut down.
- Actors and theater professionals are often expected to participate in and/or lead post-show discussions. They are not often experts on the issue and may not want the responsibility to lead dialogue.
- Experts may provide a solid connection to dimensions of the issue but may intimidate more shy audience members from speaking. Non-experts may encourage greater participation.

How can dialogue be encouraged and supported after the in-house experience?

- Flint Youth Theatre set up a mini-grant program with support from the Mott Foundation. Schools, social service organizations, artists, and others could apply for small grants to support further work that encouraged public dialogue or actions around the issue of youth/school violence.
- Presenters, working with Guillermo Gomez-Pena, have sometimes set up video stations where audience members can “confess” their feelings about the piece and the issue. Gomez-Pena then recycles these responses into the work.
- How can writers and critics encourage further dialogue?