

Documentation from the Minneapolis Learning Exchange, March 8-10, 2002

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 (LEs) 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. LEs 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 all Learning Exchange sessions to identify key findings, and questions for further discussion or investigation, for reporting purposes. A by-product of that process is a summary document compiled, organized, and carefully edited by Animating Democracy Project Associate Andrea Assaf. For participants in the Exchange and other interested readers, this summary captures 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. The editor has tried to represent all voices with accuracy but was dependent on the quality of notes from each session.

Intermedia Arts, Children's Theatre Company, and the Perpich Center for Arts Education hosted an artist-centered Learning Exchange in Minneapolis. This Exchange offered artists, practitioners and all interested a focused opportunity to explore questions and issues of artistic practice and civic dialogue. Through experiential learning and inquiry, it provided an opportunity to look deeply into methodology, to share and reflect on approaches, to engage in rigorous and stimulating peer learning among artists, dialogue specialists, and others engaged in this work. Participants contributed to the design of the program by offering questions and areas of inquiry important to them prior to the convening. Some questions included: How do we balance the goals of artistic excellence and civic dialogue? When and how is artistic process dialogic in nature? What are the challenges and approaches to making the transition from response to the artistic experience to dialogue on civic issues?

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Intermedia Arts, People, Places, Connections

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Civic Dialogue and the Multiple Phases of Performance, Presentation by Jan Cohen-Cruz

Neutrality & Multi-partiality (forthcoming)

Heartspace / Headspace: Moving From Personal to Public in Arts-based Civic Dialogue

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Compiled List of Artist Questions

Below is an extensive (and exciting!) list of questions generated by the artists who responded to our call for input in designing the Minneapolis Learning Exchange. Names have been removed to respect confidentiality, but we have tried to retain the original intent and spirit of the questions. We took the liberty of compiling them under general headings where we saw themes emerging; some of them directly informed the design of sessions.

AESTHETICS & DIALOGUE

Our organization holds the conviction that dialogue and/or the desirable effects of civic dialogue are inherent in our artistic process. In addition to facilitated sessions, what other kinds of dialogue are happening for projects in their process?

If dialogue is part of an aesthetic strategy, what is the artist's role in directing, managing or editing the dialogue and to what end (civic, artistic)? To what degree are projects using aesthetic strategies?

How do I find the balance between the explicitness of the issues that dialogue facilitators want to raise and the implicitness of my aesthetic? Should the intent for civic dialogue affect my choice of what to put in the art? Can implicitness be a powerful choice in relation to the intent for civic dialogue?

What is the power of metaphor? When is metaphor more powerful than explication? What is the unique power of art, or of specific mediums (especially the non-verbal: dance, music, imagery) to create the potential for a different kind of dialogue?

When does the ART cause a breakthrough in the public discussion? Does abstraction or not being transparent make the dialogue get stuck?

What are the possibilities, various models, of collaboration between art & dialogue? What are some examples of innovative dialogue experiences that retain aesthetic high benchmarks while allowing high level participation by non self-defined artists?

PERSONAL TO PUBLIC / PRIVATE TO CIVIC

Arts comes closer to our soul than anything else; how do you make the transition from that heartfelt, soulful place to the civic issue?

When a work is most powerful, I am speechless at the end and need private time to reflect before entering public dialogue; what are experimental ways of approaching immediate dialogue? What do we do with that moment when the lights come up? How do we make the *TRANSITION* from emotional to rational response?

Is something lost in switching back to head space? How do we deal with, stay in, or honor the heartspace? What is the relationship between thought and feeling? How can we re-think the assumption that emotion is private, not public, or that public discourse equals rational discourse, so that we don't treat them as a duality, polemic, or hierarchy? What is the public space of emotion?

How do the passions of the artist's work offer an opportunity for dialogue facilitators to begin or move from? How can we open up feeling *and* thinking, and encourage people to articulate from that space?

In a society where most people feel like they don't get heard enough, are excluded historically from the public or civic realm, how do we move from private to public? How do we deal with how hard it is to help people admit their process of change in a public space?

How do we seize the moment, if audiences need to talk when dialogue activity hasn't been scheduled? How can organizations be more flexible and prepared to enable that to happen?

INCLUSION / OVERCOMING DIVISIONS

How do artists and community organizers work together to challenge local paradigms of inclusion when project leaders may inadvertently be inheritors or representatives of the challenging issue of exclusion?

How do we bring opposing factions together for dialogue? If one side of the issue perceives the other side is participating, they'll think this isn't the place for them. How can we overcome the strong we/they attitudes present between different groups of people? How can the art, or the dialogue, break this down?

How do we ensure that regular folks, "laypeople" who are invested in the issue, are there for the artistic work and for the dialogue (not just the intelligentsia)?

What is the "community organizer" perspective on approaches to widening the spectrum of people with whom we're engaging in dialogue? What effective strategies for inclusion are out there from a non-arts perspective?

INSIDER-OUTSIDER

What processes help local tensions surface safely with outside artists and inside leaders or community partners?

How do we make the best use of the outsider artist or dialogue facilitator? They can be mistrusted and respected at the same time. How do we maximize the opportunity of outsider status and minimize the tensions related to being from the outside?

When communities expect the artist to have all the answers, how do we get the community to recognize that they have the answers within? What facilitation strategies are artists and dialogue specialists using to draw out local knowledge and empower participants?

Time: how deep we can expect to go in the time period of a workshop, residency, or project?

What's the legacy and sustainability of this work? As an ethical issue, we're questioning the residency model in which the artist comes in and leaves. What are we leaving behind? What are the ethical implications of an outsider coming into a community? Who gets to leave?

NEUTRALITY / MULTIPARTIALITY

Questioning the dynamic between three forces: civic dialogue, artistic intent, and advocacy. Can we facilitate a dialogue in which we advocate, or at least imply advocacy of, a particular position? Does facilitation have to be based in a position of neutrality? If we are taking a position, can we effectively facilitate the dialogue?

If issue-based art, or an artistic process, is to be the locus/focus of a dialogue, how neutral or plural does the art have to be? Is it possible to be neutral; can art be neutral?

If the intent is to bring multiple voices to a project, what is the role of aesthetic choice? What if the strongest aesthetic choice is not to balance all voices equally? When the work itself is taking a position, but not explicitly -- a position is inherent in the framing, positioning, editing, and aesthetic, structural or documentation choices... How do we look at the implicit?

I'm struggling with the tensions between art by committee vs. art by the artist, or telling a good story vs. trying to get everyone's point of view in. When the purpose is consciousness-raising, where's the line between putting too much in and not being clear enough? How do I frame the relevant issues, and focus on what's pressing?

I'd like to explore the word "provocative" as it applies to creating art with dialogue in mind. Do we seek to provoke in ways that go beyond other kinds of artistic processes? What are we provoking and what are the responsibilities that go along with provocation?

How are our artistic choices shaped by our audiences? How do our understanding and assumptions about our audience's values affect our work, especially when we know we'll be engaging them in civic dialogue?

What is the link between effective arts-based civic dialogue and civic action, mobilization, or social change? If the arts provide new ways of getting people to talk about important issues, how do we leverage that, not squander it?

DOCUMENTATION / EVALUATION

How do we find, excavate, and articulate the *civic* in the dialogue aspects of our artistic work? How do we make this visible, communicate about it, and document it?

Sometimes the dialogue in the artistic process doesn't sound civic, but the effects in the community are civic. If the outcome or impact is comparable, does it matter which way you do it? How do we measure civic impact?

How do we document kinds of dialogue, other than facilitated sessions, that are happening for projects in the artmaking process?

How do we explain the value of what we do? How do we distill the complexity of this work into two paragraphs, to describe it to people who don't do this kind of work?

How do we make evaluation a meaningful process that helps us understand the artistic and civic outcomes of the work? How did it stack up to intent? How does one step lead to the next? How can evaluation help us make decisions along the way? How will I know if civic intents, interests were met?

What innovative strategies for process documentation are Lab groups using?

When is it okay to adapt methodologies? When do I need to respect a particular techniques as they were originally designed, adapt them? It hasn't been an issue working in my own communities, but more requests to write about it have given me pause about how to characterize my work, how to credit others.

STORY / NARRATIVE / TESTIMONY

I'm trying very hard not to betray the trust of interviewees in my project. How much leeway do I have with interview material? How many ways can I manipulate the material for "dramatic purposes without exploiting it or making it come out contrary to what the subject intended?

INTERMEDIA ARTS: CHALLENGES & METHODS

As Minneapolis' Midtown Greenway development project threatens displacement of new immigrants, artists, and other low-income residents, fear and distrust of well-intentioned community development efforts signal the need for new approaches to bringing together the haves and have-nots. Intermedia Arts commissioned Minnesota artists Marilyn Lindstrom, Victor Yopez, Wendy Morris, Ta-coumba Aiken to collaborate with community-based organizations to create and present art that focuses on bringing communities together, with the intent of examining public policy that supports community stability and economic and cultural vitality. In this session, participants actively engaged in some of the artistic approaches employed by the Intermedia Arts team of artists. While exploring content issues of safety, gentrification, and inclusion, we also investigated questions and challenges they encountered in the implementation of their project.

SESSION & BREAK-OUTS INCLUDED:

- Introduction to People Places Connections
- Movement-based Workshop with Wendy Morris
- Painting with Ta-coumba Aiken & Marilyn Lindstrom

PEOPLE PLACES CONNECTIONS

Tom Borrup, Intermedia Arts: The over-arching project is called *People Places Connections*. It's about being aware of artists moving into communities and gentrification. Several years ago, we moved into this building and we started having an impact on the community that we did not intend to have. Rents raised and people had to move out. Some of the responsibility was ours, some was not but we have been aware of that. There is an area right near here that used to be a railway trench that's now being developed into a greenway. To some people it was a home literally; to some it was a safe place to make art. Some people have come to realize that the development cannot only be a green space, but a bike trail and a community space. Corporations want to do things like build a light rail, etc., and you know what that can do. We are interested in equitable community development so we are working with the neighborhoods around the greenway, like HOPE community, in order to use creative process in community development.

We have to make community assets and safe spaces to acknowledge what we have and what we can do. We are working with five artists and most of them are here.

Theresa Nelson: I am from the Greenway Coalition. We have board members who live and work in neighborhoods around the greenway. We focus on the development ideas of the different communities. We are interested in use of the space that is sustainable; we work with public art, with Intermedia Arts, and we are working with bridge design. Another area we work with is adopt-a-greenway. We also want to spread the vision so that communities know how this greenway will affect them. This is an exciting moment now because we get to hear voices that have not been active on the project yet.

Tom: As you could imagine, this greenway will have a huge impact. It stretches through many different neighborhoods with extremely diverse income levels and we want it to be a way to bring people together.

Mary Keefe: I am from HOPE Community. The area where HOPE is located used to be the center of the crack epidemic. HOPE started out as a shelter, but now it is a community building organization. We build nice, low-income houses for people to live in, with a community pavilion. At the intersection where it is now, we are going to be building another 40 units of housing in order to provide affordable housing to people. We think of ourselves as catalysts getting people involved and active in their neighborhoods. We have been involved in projects with kids as urban planners. One of the things that we've done is ask the residents of the neighborhood what would happen if the neighborhood was fixed up. They said that they would not be there, because it would not be fixed up for them. In a sense, we have made the neighborhood more desirable to outside interest. But we have made an effort to build for the community that is there. We want to be the ones there to create the space to provide affordable housing and

preserve the diversity that is there. Building all of this low-income housing is against the city's policy. They want to raise the tax base in the neighborhood. We want to lift up peoples' voices, people who don't have a voice, through community dialogue. I have seen the impact of artists that have been involved in this kind of work. We are excited to have an artist that will work in the community for a few months and help us out.

Q: What is the political context of the twin cities right now?

Tom: There have just been elections, every one elected is a liberal democrat.

WORKSHOP WITH WENDY MORRIS

Introductory Exercise

Find one other person you don't know and ask them what they have to offer the community. In what ways have they been involved in the community? Write these answers down. (Discussion in pairs)

Wendy Morris, artist: I just want to give you a bit of context. These are asset inventories. I find it really useful when people first enter the room to begin thinking of public space. This is the project: the title is *Urban Webs*. The focus is movement, community support and intervention. Something I've been working with for about 12 years has been creating design teams. Paying attention to how and at what point I receive input from individuals. Last year we had very specific goals. Another is designing the structure. Sometimes I say I will do whatever you tell me to do. Sort of stretching myself as an artist. Another issue is who...

People Places Connections is the over-arching (Animating Democracy) project, and mine is one of the individual projects within that. I kept saying I'm overwhelmed. I am dealing with gentrification, with public space, with the greenway? What I got from the design team was that art can make visible the invisible links between these topics. The greenway has a lot to do with gentrification and with public space.

I've been working on this project for 13 years and I am bringing it to *People Places Connections*.

Q: Have you ever found that a person you are working with was not the person you thought they were? For example, some leaders are very participatory and some are not, and you can find out that, wow, this person doesn't have a clue what is going on in that neighborhood.

Wendy: Well, if I'm not getting what I need from one place, I usually get it from other places, like my design teams. I'm going to show you a bit of a video, and I will narrate as you see it. One of the things I work on with my design team is where am I going to have this event. This is about an event at a cultural wellness center with dancers from different cultures.

I have been attending a series of meetings about the future of the grain elevator on the greenway. It is the only site that is eligible for historic preservation. We discussed different options for it. Options include renovation and reuse. We did this (video) last week and there were open bags of grain in the basement of this abandoned grain elevator. Just to tear it down would cost two million dollars because of the asbestos and lead. This could be a link between the greenway and the community. I am hoping that using this video, we can create a dance piece out of it. One of my hopes by attending these meetings is that I will build trust with these folks and they will want to create the dance piece. I hope they'll perform, but they don't know that yet.

So how can I bring the greenway into Intermedia and use this as a catalyst to discuss these issues? I want to focus on three sites.

Q: Do you have any hope, expectation or thought, that somehow your intervention or project will help in some way to develop the greenway and public space?

Wendy: I'm going to take you through one movement thing to take you through how this might work.

Movement Exercise

Move your body like this. Now move it how ever you want; do what your spine needs to do.

Find someone else's movement you like and copy it. Pay attention to your own body.

Notice what's around you. What is in your "neighborhood"? Notice if there's anything in your neighborhood that you might want to get rid of? Use your body as a way of knowing.

Create a gesture that is part of your cultural heritage, something your grandmother might have done. Go back into your body and find it.

Now make a gesture that allows you to greet your neighbors.

Now combining your cultural heritage gesture, your greeting gesture, and come up with a third gesture.

Now imagine how you would walk down the street differently. (Group dancing)

Someone show me what one of your cultural heritage gestures.

Comment: I go back to Africa somewhere, and this gesture has to do with that. It is very giving.

Marty Pottenger, artist: When you said cultural heritage gesture, you didn't say something you're proud of. Mine had to do with something I want to change...It made me walk down the street a little less openly.

Wendy: You see how your cultural background can effect your community in ways you never thought about. Now we're going to do a writing exercise. I don't usually do it this way, but we don't have much time. This is a device to let you analyze what has gone on. (Exercise based on Awareness Wheel model)

5 Areas of Awareness

Sensory data

Thoughts

Feelings

Wants / Desires

Action

This is away of getting a bunch of different perspectives on an issue on the table. I will give you one minute to write. Please write based on what you experienced in this hour.

Wendy: What are some things your saw during the last hour?

- *Myself moving through the space; connecting with the group though process through movement.*
- *Something pretty linear that required a lot of thought.*
- *I saw rhythmic snakes.*
- *I saw manipulation; your voice and our role as followers.*

Wendy: What are some interpretations/associations/stories?

- *The affirmation of the paper.*
- *I felt educated.*

Wendy: When I say feelings, think of gut-based emotions – mad, sad, glad, etc.

- *I was glad because I think that something like this would be really helpful for the design team that we're doing.*
- *I felt conflict in asking myself to participate in what you are doing.*
- *I made the stupidest most cliché cultural association, but I went with it totally and it was fun.*

Wendy: If you use those clichés, there is a great deal of information—in the space between those associations.

Q: How are you weaving the reversal process into the groundwork process?

Wendy: Some will go all the way through and others will go and drift back as audience.

PAINTING WITH TA-COUMBA AND MARILYN

Ta-Coumba Aiken, artist: Please everyone stand around the table and put on a paint shirt.

Marilyn Lindstrom, artist: I am excited to be here because it is an official first step in my community art project in the Phillips neighborhood. Two people are here from HOPE Community, an important organization in Phillips neighborhood. This is Mary Keefe and June Bouye from HOPE.

Mary: We invented this project called *Community Listening*. We go around the neighborhood and build relationships together. We get people together to have intense discussions about issues and then we write a report afterwards. There are so many perceptions about race and class and about how the city views the community. June is the director.

June: We are going to begin with the listening project. This is how we have worked in the past and we have had great things come out of it. There will be so many things that come out, so many issues that people are thinking about, and we don't know what the outcome will be; but we are excited to see what it will be.

Marilyn: One thing we have learned is to find out how much we have in common as far as the visions we have for our communities.

Exercise 1

Find someone that you don't know and pair up with them. You are going to tell your partner 4 things. When you envision a safe place in your community:

- 1) What will you bring for yourself?
- 2) What will you bring for your community?
- 3) What's the first thing that comes to your mind when I say "gentrification" (no thinking!)?
- 4) What will you do to make people feel welcome?

These are short answers. Remember what your partner says, and then you will introduce him/her to the group and tell us what he/she said.

Some answers as examples:

This is Susan. She would bring a book for herself, a fountain for the community, when she thinks of gentrification she thinks money, and food is for welcome.

This is Tressa, when she thinks of a safe place she thinks of being able to walk home at night from work; for the community a sense of pride; when she thinks gentrification she thinks, "Gone."

This is Regie, for himself he didn't know what to bring, for the larger group he would bring open-mic poetry; for gentrification he thought of high rent; for welcome, benches.

He would bring his passport for himself, himself for other people, when he thinks of gentrification he sees moving, and he would bring smiles to make people feel welcome.

This is Sharon, she would bring her whole self, she would also bring food for other people, and gentrification makes her think of restaurants and boutiques.

She would bring water, food for other people; for gentrification she thinks of fences; she would offer music for welcome.

Shoes for himself, a cookie for other people, when he thinks of gentrification (this should have been everyone's answer) Starbucks.

Marilyn: The key thing in that exercise was listening. Of course, there's a troublemaker in every group.

Exercise 2

Now I want you to say five colors, color off and get in groups based on the color you said.

Attention please. Each group has a can like this and in it are about five different colors. One person will take a color and draw a shape and the next person will react to it. Please no talking during this exercise. This first person is the heartbeat. That person will draw a shape and repeat it. The next person will react to it by drawing another shape. Not recognizable shapes, the shape should come from within you. Do not decide ahead of time who will go first, just let it happen.

(People start drawing, taking turns making repetitive shapes. Each group does two of these Spirit Drawings.)

Now here is your challenge: each person will make a connecting line from one drawing to the next.

Ta-Coumba: Come down here once you get done and we'll take a look at all of them.

Marilyn: Take a moment to look at each set. What connects? What's individual? What's collective? All right, beautiful work. Ta-coumba is going to take you into the next room and please make a circle around the table with the blocks. We are going to use this in there.

Exercise 3

Ta-Coumba: On these blocks, on the sides that aren't painted, I want you to paint what you like or are concerned about in relation to gentrification and community.

Marilyn: Remember that you are working in relation to other people.

(People paint on the blocks.)

Ta-Coumba: In four words or less, tell us what went on here.

- Didn't know how to make my mark*
- Confused, challenged, morose*
- Possessive first, then connecting*
- Hopelessness, confusion, competition, grace*
- Collaboration, individual expression*
- Power, shape, line, intimidation*
- Fantasy against realism*
- Forest for the trees*
- Trying to connect beauty with non-beauty*

Ta-Coumba: I am Ta-Coumba and I do this in communities.

GROUP RECONVENES

Sandy Augustin, Intermeida Arts: Welcome Back. We are winding down. I realize the energy is shifting, but I want to gather impressions about what went on today. So I ask, what did you notice and what did you learn?

- *Making connections is the most important thing.*
- *Art and iconography are different things.*
- *Everyone was able to participate and learn things.*
- *I found out how hard it is to give directions to people.*
- *I saw an interesting connection between the choreography that I do and making the art.*
- *It was fun to collaborate on a piece of art that wasn't in our discipline.*
- *When there's no pressure, it is more fun.*
- *I noticed how deep the body of knowledge we are all accumulating is in this work.*
- *When we were asked to do the body movements that related to our cultural heritage and greeting, I noticed how fresh it felt to answer a question through movement.*

Sandy: Do the artists have any questions?

Ta-Coumba: I always want to know if what we did was comfortable. Did anyone feel uncomfortable doing the activity?

Marty: Yeah, I didn't really want to.

Ta-coumba: What happened?

Marty: What was I going to do? I have brought many art forms to people, but I have avoided drawing. Drawing can be a hard one for people to deal with; there is a lot of emotional stuff that comes with it.

Marilyn: Did we give you something that you could take away and use in a different context?

Judith O'Brien, artist: I haven't touched a paintbrush in decades and I was glad for the opportunity to do that. I also thought it was great that you offered such an easy way to collaborate.

Abel Lopez, project liaison: I didn't feel the pressure of having to think about what I was doing, but the process then makes you think.

Marilyn: I do this with kids, and part of it is that you don't have to think. At schools, the kids would be in the hallway laughing and screaming. We would always do the *Spirit Drawings*, and they'd come in and wait to do it—there is no talking, so they would be silent, because there's something so amazing about it.

Kathie deNobriga and Bill Cleveland introduced the Open Space Technology process for the following day. The session ended with everyone singing "We who believe in freedom cannot rest...We who believe in freedom cannot rest until it comes...until it comes."

Cornerstone Theater and the National Conference for Community and Justice: Challenges and Possibilities of Art & Dialogue Working Together

In its *Faith-Based Theater Project*, Cornerstone Theater Company created original community-based plays, in collaboration with specific faith-based institutions as well as inter-faith communities, to address the issue of how faith both unites and divides American society. Working in partnership with the National Conference for Community and Justice (NCCJ), Cornerstone's and NCCJ's experimentation with a range of dialogue formats offered fertile ground to look at what happens to art and to civic dialogue in trying to balance the goals of each. When are art and civic dialogue mutually supportive? When are they at odds? The session incorporated an interactive/creative opportunity for participants to explore their own experiences of these relationships; and presentations from Cornerstone Theater Company, NCCJ, and Michael Rohd about their collaboration.

PRESENTERS

Peter Howard and Mark Valdez, Cornerstone Theater Company (CT)

Diane Burbie, NCCJ

Michael Rohd, Sojourn Theater and collaborator with Cornerstone Theater Company and NCCJ

Peter Howard, Cornerstone Theater: Focus on the collaboration between Cornerstone and NCCJ.

Introductions will present missions and methods of both Cornerstone and NCCJ, and the *Festival of Faith and Zones* production. We'll engage in a few low-key activities, invite personal connections, and leave ample time for Q&A.

Casting the art-dialogue relationship in heightened relief: Cornerstone has as a deep part of its identity in community development, and this project is not NCCJ's first use of art as an entry point into dialogue.

Quotes:

- *It was nice. I mean...we talked. But was it dialogue?*
- *People came to see a play. Do we have to ask them to share more than their time?*
- *Dialogue sometimes means giving up control and going where the group wants to go. From what I've seen, artists don't like to give up control of the script.*
- *The interfaith dialogues always seemed to be about 'making nice.' People politely tiptoed around each other and avoided confrontation.*
- *There's this constant tug-of-war between the safety/trust needed for good dialogue and the risk-taking needed for good art"*
- *When you try to meet the needs of both art and dialogue at the same time, you end up meeting neither.*
- *The needs of theatrical pace and timing conflict with the slow approach needed for dialogue.*
- *Can the dialogue be about art? Does it have to be about 'social issues'?*

Responses to the Quotations:

Joan Schirle, artistic director, The Dentalium Project: I've heard lots of those own voices in my own head—trust needed to create dialogue and risk-taking associated with art.

John Malpede, Los Angeles Poverty Department: Anybody can take a risk, but the idea is to take a risk and succeed.

Treva Offut, The Kitchen: I reacted to the time it takes to put together a piece versus the time it takes to do dialogue. In my project, the two were always at odds, keeping in mind that the dialogue was supposed to inform the re-mounting of the piece.

Bernardo Solano, playwright: It is hard to give up control over the script; it's a hump to get over, but it's worked. I've had a good result when I've done it.

Judith Shatin, artist: Art vs. social issues—it's hard to separate those. Whatever art you're doing, you're taking a stance on social issues. It's not either/or.

PQ Phan, composer: Sometimes when you give up control, you forfeit a smaller circle, but you form a bigger circle.

Michael Warr, consultant: To me it's a question of intent. You're not giving up control, because you're engaging your art to achieve a goal.

Tory Peterson, Perpich Center for Arts Education: Are you giving up control of the dialogue or the aesthetics? It comes down to what your goal is.

Caron Atlas, consultant: I could read that comment the opposite. I've been in dialogues that I felt were controlling, and I felt liberated by the art.

Sondra Farganis, Vera List Center for Arts and Politics: There's a difference between giving up control and democratizing the process. There is a way to bring more people into the process and not let anarchy reign. How do you give up control but retain an authoritative voice?

INTRODUCTION TO THE ORGANIZATIONS

Mark Valdez, Cornerstone Theater: Cornerstone Theater (CT) was founded in 1986. In early years, it traveled doing adaptations of classics for small towns. After the first bridge show, the company settled in L.A. in 1992. It's worked with about 20 communities since '92. There's always an aspect of dialogue and exchange in CT's work. It's inherent in their methodology. Faith-based work has very high stakes, dealing with people's beliefs. We set up a system to have an artistic coordinator and a facilitation coordinator for each venue. Many of these artists were working with CT for the first time, as there was an RFP and selection process. Artists were selected by artistic quality and excitement for the project. Our original plan was to do three plays per venue in five venues. Turned out to be four pieces per venue and a film. I created a play for a temple—worked with members of the temple, learned about the rituals of the temple. All shows operated independently and then came together, with something to tie them together; in the back of our minds, we thought it was the dialogue component. Neighbors complained about noise, we tried to find alternate venues. CT decided to approach neighbors individually to let them know about the performances and invite them in, so they were able to perform outside.

Diane Burbie, National Conference for Community & Justice: The idea of the festival kept evolving. From a facilitation standpoint, the light bulb went on very late for the facilitation end of the project. The meaning evolved for us. At my venue, there was good coordination between artists and facilitators, but the lead artists had never worked with CT before. Their concerns of impressing CT got in the way, scripts were late. The good relationship between CT and NCCJ comes from an organic process of being there from the beginning to end of the artistic process. This wasn't the case for the *Festival of Faith*. NCCJ was not involved in the development of the art. The artists were not aware that they were supposed to be collaborating in creating an evening, which was the facilitator's understanding. The Islamic piece was not as strong artistically, and became very important after September 11. We thought that the evening was already so packed that people wouldn't want to talk after sitting through four plays and a film. So we thought about it as trying to engage people in what they were experiencing rather than adding another program to the evening. NCCJ is a human relations organization. We use theatrical arts as one way to engage people, particularly youth.

Michael Rohd, Sojourn Theatre: I have experience with both CT and NCCJ, separately. CT is about community engagement, and NCCJ is about using dialogue to bring about social justice. There were 27 definitions of dialogue in the room when everyone came together. All of the artists, artistic coordinators, facilitation coordinators, and venue representatives came together for a weekend in August to discuss the festival, and the discussions they had got

everyone on the same page and helped avoid train wrecks down the road. Artists came with the assumption that dialogue facilitators were there to facilitate dialogue between artists and venues, not with the public. The tension was among the artists around each other's content, and whether it was appropriate for the venue, order of the piece, etc. They had expected tension would be between artistic coordinators and facilitation coordinators. Each of the events was provocative and interesting, even if the quality wasn't as good as CT would have liked; but people came together and were drawn in, and everyone survived, including the relationships with the venues, which is important for partnership building. There were separate dialogue events at each venue, and it was OK that some of the dialogue was happening between the artists.

Diane: Some audience members attended multiple venues, and I noticed that some people were processing what had happened the previous week at this week's performances. The dialogue cafés were a new form for NCCJ because of creating the physical space. We got a lot of comments because the atmosphere was very inviting. People talked, but they talked to people they knew. We would use it again, but only if it makes sense given the situation.

Peter Howard, Cornerstone Theatre: It's been a real challenge to sit in both of these organizations, in terms of suspicion and fear about the other side. The perception artists had of working with NCCJ: joyless, humorless, rigid dialogue process allows for no spontaneity, things are truncated to move on, agenda-ed take on dialogue process. Those who are leading the dialogue are leading from a specific point of view. Perception NCCJ had of working with artists: Flippant, controlling, unwilling to give up a single-minded artistic vision to honor the needs of a group, resistant to responding to reality of people in the room.

Zones is 90-minute play written to include an NCCJ-type dialogue process. It's a highly scripted play with five distinct unscripted dialogue segments. Forced choice and wagon wheel exercises are woven into a plot set in a meeting of a fictional community zoning board. People were told that the performance was about engagement, an interactive experience, but were not told exactly what would be asked of them. And this wasn't to everyone's taste. Not everyone wanted to get that involved, but it worked well. *Zones* performed at all five festival venues. It was written to be performed at places of worship or religiously affiliated, but not in a sanctuary—a community space, or social space within the place of worship. Hopefully the host would be there to welcome the zoning board and give the history of the host organization.

Michael Rohd: This was a very exciting experience, because as soon as people walked in the door, there was no indication that they weren't at a zoning board meeting. Many people thought at first that they were at a meeting.

Peter: There were many people who attended more than one and cumulative audiences as the festival went on.

Diane: Attending a *Zones* performance brought audiences into the Festival.

QUESTIONS & DISCUSSION

Q: Did any elected or planning officials attend?

Peter: I invited them, but they did not attend. Funny, because zoning is a hot issue in Southern California.

Caron Atlas, consultant: The people from the Islamic school questioned whether they should engage in the *Festival*. Wondered if they were safer pulling out or staying in and participating with allies. They decided it was better to stay in.

Q: It's an interesting position for the audience to be in, not knowing what was going on. What have you learned by doing that? What decisions went into it?

Diane: I was struck by that dynamics in *Zones*. Was it ethical? We felt that *Zones* came closest to NCCJ's goals of dialogue. There was time for the audience to do something with those emotions. They were able to engage with each other and the characters, knowingly or unknowingly. As a participant, it was hard to get out of it. You were pulled in, and you had to talk about it.

Peter: We ended the performance with hanging questions, like: Is tolerance enough? Can we still love each other if we believe different things? Why was this piece prejudiced against Christians? Dani Bedau (NCCJ) aspires to taking the *Zones* model and conceiving of maybe a 3-actor experience, with a simpler structure: 2 people in conflict in a meeting and a facilitator, a hyped up context where the audience should be prepared for anything in order to generate the emotion to take people to the next level of engaging with each other.

Mark: Going into *Zones*, your very first stop was a box office, so it was somewhat known that they were attending a play.

Q: I would assume by going through the *Zones* experience, that the audience members would begin to speak with each other about what they experienced, so that they would talk to each other at the next show, since you said this was a cumulative audience.

Diane: We did find there was carry-over conversation from *Zones*, but because they had so many venues to choose from, there wasn't much overlap.

Q: With the cumulative participation, did you see audience members role-playing too?

Peter: Yes.

Q: What discussions were important to help you, Peter, shape the piece?

Peter: A lot of the process was about casting actors who would believe in this and could make it work. There was a vital preview process. We took honest feedback about their experience. Since the event was in the hands of our actors—they were the facilitators—the important thing was making sure they felt comfortable and trusting a new facilitator with this important topic.

Q: Once it was out of your hands, did you hear any further feedback?

Peter: The festival was really about relationship-building in the community, which we did.

Diane: Also, the leadership of the different venues has come together.

Q: Do you think that in the human relations field there is recognition of art and artists?

Diane: I think the argument is over who is going to have control and who is going to set the goal. You have to be more forthcoming in admitting what your goal is and how you see art as a way of accomplishing that goal, which is a much more earnest way of entering into a partnership. NCCJ and CT did a lot of pre-work in finding we had a shared commitment in what we thought was our goal for the festival, but the artists invited into the festival had disparate ideas.

Q: Do you know if the artists have changed their perspectives from this experience?

Mark: They were very inspired by their work in the festival. We've had requests for performances of certain pieces from the festival. There were a lot of good things that came out of this partnership, but we decided to present the tensions so that you could learn from our experience.

Q: What looked different to the dialogue specialists?

Diane: I felt it authentically illustrated what the dialogue processes should do for people. I felt better seeing the actors in the play doing it, rather than the facilitators I see doing it all the time, because it showed that it was the process and not the facilitators.

Peter: Lucky Altman said she thought she needed to script the facilitators more after seeing *Zones*.

Q: Can we get copies of the quotes on the walls? A copy of the script?

Peter: As we look toward open space tomorrow, imagine what it would be like to have this circle of people leave the room with hanging questions.

Stretching the Canvas: Civic Dialogue and the Multiple Phases of the Artistic Process

A Presentation by Jan Cohen-Cruz

Jan Cohen-Cruz offered and adapted performance scholar/practitioner Richard Schechner's model of the multiple phases of performance. Incorporating both pre- and post-performance possibilities, she helped us identify the many points at which dialogue (civic and otherwise) is either set up or can take place. We then shifted to workshop mode to gather the knowledge in the room concerning useful dialogue-related practices at each of these phases, and to stretch the model to include multiple artistic disciplines. A descriptive rather than prescriptive opportunity, this session was about sharing how we each approach civic dialogue, where in the process we do it, what prepares the ground and which practices we've found to be the most satisfying.

PRESENTER:

Jan Cohen-Cruz, Associate Professor of Drama and co-founder of the department of Art & Public Policy, NYU Tisch School of the Arts

What are the universals of performances? (Performance used broadly, i.e.; barnitzas, rodeos, etc.) What happens before a performance, during a show, in the aftermath? What has the performance set into motion? What is omitted and presented in civic dialogue?

What's emphasized or de-emphasized in performance reflects a culture's beliefs.

Richard Schechner's model can be applied to different media of art other than just performances.

The different stages of performances: the warm up, the meditation of putting make up on for show, the preparation: the warm up and cool down tell just as much about the show as the show itself.

Schechner's model of the stages of performance:

1. Training
2. Workshop (take material apart and explore)
3. Rehearsal
4. Warm-up
5. Performance
6. Cool down (artist comes back into everyday life)
7. Aftermath

Art helps us paint our experience. Is there a kinship between arts-based civic dialogue and participatory arts experiences? How does art participation reflect civic dialogue? Where do you situate civic dialogue and where don't you?

Adaptation of the model to arts-based civic dialogue (i.e., 8 phases where civic dialogue may occur):

- Pre-existing relationship with a desired audience
- Training
- Conceptualization and planning
- Art-making
- Exhibition / screening / production
- Post-artwork
- Associated activities (activities that naturally follow from the work)

Aftermath

Setting the stage for civic dialogue can be formal and informal.

Informal: interaction between people on the streets

Formal: government action, organized meetings

To what degree do certain aesthetic styles lend themselves to civic dialogue?

Post-performance / exhibit discussion: Artists often want feedback from viewers and spectators right away after seeing art exhibit, but viewers haven't had time to digest material. What feelings are evoked after the post-art experience?

Aftermath describes the choices people make and actions they do in response to the artwork they've seen. A kind of a ripple effect.

Animating Democracy working-definition of dialogue: two or more parties with differing viewpoints working toward common understanding in an open ended, most often face to face, format. In dialogue, assumptions are revealed and judgment is suspended.

Small group discussion on pre-existing relationship with desired audience:

Democracy is not a condition, it is a practice

What is the relationship between artist and audience? Is it collaboration?

Defining community: identifying how people are attached to each other (for example, families). Ways to reach members of the family / community / group

We know that certain people in the community will not see our project because of certain issues, no matter how hard we try. Even if we beat at their door, they will not come. The artistic product is only one aspect of the project.

Our biggest hurdle right now is starting civic dialogue, using small steps in this pursuit. We've identified the community we want to reach, but they haven't identified us.

How can you have a relationship with the desired audience if you don't want to get married?! The levels of involvement with audiences, the idea of dating vs. marriage.

Communities abused through dialogue. "Going all the way" relationship between community and artists, and the message being conveyed. History tells us that it takes a lot for people to trust. Art comes from stories of the community; art to alter perceptions? The problem is that leaders are deciding the decisions rather than the community.

Ideology: people's perception keeps them out of projects, and they don't present their ideas at the table because of it.

Abandoning your subject or issue you're working with. Making a show about homeless people, getting them involved and excited, and then after the show is over, moving on to a different issue and subject; leaving your last "subject" feeling abandoned.

If you let the community get involved in the actual production of the art being made, and let them leave their "finger prints," then they are more likely to visit the final product, such as the art exhibit or show.

You may be willing to put stock in the immediate community, but it may not be reciprocal.

BACK TO BIG DISCUSSION

Small groups read their key points in regards to the 8-step model:

GROUP I. Pre-existing relationship with desired audience

Hard to discuss number one in the model without talking about numbers 6 & 7 (post-art work and associated activities).

If there's a collaborative effort between artist and community at the beginning, people will be more likely to come to the performance / event

Authenticity between the artist and community will always be questioned, unless you're willing to go all the way and be changed yourself as an artist.

GROUP 2. Training

How do you take audience into the experience? The movement and process of art and the final product ...

Myth-making: the process of doing the work is creating history, and your own passage

The importance of communication and "stepping into the light" (transparency)

The cycle, the process of everyday life becomes a ritual...

Art-making provides training for civic dialogue; civic dialogue becomes a shared experience

The difference between visual artists and theatre, and the difference in delivery

GROUP 3 (conceptualization)

There are different emphases in how projects are conceived: artist-driven, artist-listening, community driven, etc. Need to find clarity about how to add dialogue to a project.

Creating a web between people with different experiences

Get people involved over a long period of time

Community input into the form of the artwork, as an artwork in itself?

Important to allow for transformation, to stay open

Look at the assessment of your project in turns – why it was a success, and why it was a failure. How are you defining failure? What are the criteria or rules you set for success or failure?

Being very clear on the intent of work, your mission statement.

GROUP 4. Art-making

(Skipped this subject, there was no small group for this, no one wanted to discuss it)

GROUP 5. Performance / Exhibition / Screening

Concerned that the definition of civic dialogue is too narrow and running the risk of excluding internal dialogue with oneself

Need to keep the integrity of art form and artist

The artist may be the last social critic left...Art is off-center, and it's not the artists obligation to be truthful.

Sondra Farganis, Vera List Center for the Arts: The criteria that something might have to be true: We confuse the notion of truth with scientific truth; we ought to allow art to make contribution to society. Worry that artwork may be compromised under the pressure of creating a certain civic dialogue.

Barbara Schaeffer Bacon, Animating Democracy co-director: Note: the Jewish Museum works are not created under this umbrella.

Tory Peterson, Perpich Center for Arts Education: Whose truth? Artist's or community's?

GROUP 6. Post-artwork Event

How do you deal with it when you know the artist is going to be ostracized by the audience? How do you capture audience after a show when all they want to do is leave?

Dialogue simmer; get feedback after show, so the next night, you can change and shape your performance accordingly.

Putting email in program brochure; ways to comment anonymously

After a 2-hour show, people want to go out for cocktails. They don't want to further talk about the show they just saw.

Change perception of what is expected: put the dialogue on the stage; bring out food and drinks after the show and create an atmosphere where artist and audience can interact and talk about the show and other issues; make it social.

Bill Cleveland: When the subject is provocative, the responsible question arises: what will you provide for people to get help, pursue actions, etc.?

GROUP 7. Associated events / Aftermath

Sometimes things don't happen in a linear fashion, as the 7 step model suggests. Its not a cookie cut equation.

Artists may play a catalytic role; how do we know when we've completed the task? Where does it stop, and no longer become the artists responsibility? When do you let go?

Sometimes the aftermath of a project is the preliminary of something new, a new idea, project, etc.

What validation systems are in place to reward the role of the artist?

Sometimes we are trying to intentionally create a desired aftermath from a piece of art, and sometimes unconsciously; sometimes a different kind of aftermath comes about that is unintentional.

HEARTSPACE / HEADSPACE: Moving From Personal to Public in Arts-based Civic Dialogue

Through creative movement, story-sharing and dialogue, Animating Democracy staff member and artist Andrea Assaf facilitated a multi-layered session exploring the challenges of moving between heartspace and headspace, and from private to civic, engaging questions such as: How do we make the transition from the heartfelt, personal response that art evokes to the public space of the civic issue? What is the public space of emotion, and how does affective learning function in dialogue? Are personal and public, emotional and rational, private and civic useful distinctions? How can we open up feeling and thinking, and encourage people to articulate from both? What is the unique power of art in creating the potential for new kinds of civic dialogue?

Below is the outline of a “Text & Movement” process leading to dialogue, followed by a transcript of the discussion that followed. The structure of many of these exercises are derived from training with Celeste Miller and Liz Lerman Dance Exchange. The co-facilitator for this session, dialogue specialist Sherry Cottom, was ill and not able to lead the dialogue section.

EXERCISE

- 1) Warm-up: Name circle with movement / gesture
- 2) Free-write (3 min): A time in your life when you witnessed something that left you *speechless*: unable to talk at that moment, or for a period of time. Go where you need to go; could be something small, a fleeting moment, could be something monumental; you choose. Could be personal experience, real-life event, or work of art. Describe the scene, event, or what was witnessed; what happened; how you felt; details of the environment; who was there, etc. Keep writing until the facilitator calls stop.
- 3) Snapshot: Look at what you wrote. Take a moment to re-read it, decide what you might share later, and what you'd prefer not to. Underline or circle images, metaphors, striking phrases. Choose a moment in the story, and take a photograph of it in your mind. A snapshot. Notice everything in that picture, zoom-in on the details. Make a list of 6-8 details
- 4) Movement: Choose your favorite 4-5 of your details. Make a movement for each detail. (Facilitator models possibilities). Remember them. And put them together in an order; make them flow into a phrase. (Practice with music).
- 5) Find a partner: Without talking, share your movement phrase with your partner. AFTER both partners have shared movement, you can talk. Tell your partner one thing you liked about what they did. Tell your partner what happened AFTER you were made speechless by the event you witnessed: What did you do? How long did it take you to find words again? Have you ever spoken publicly about what you witnessed? (Your choice to share or not to share what the actual event was; you have the right to keep it private.) [Facilitator's Note: because of the unexpected emotional content/ level of engagement of some of the participants in this section, I allowed more time for it than was originally planned.]
- 6) Group sharing of the movement phrases only: split room in half, with music. (2x, at the request of the participants)
- 7) Full Group Brainstorm: Group generates a list of Civic Issues—that you have worked on, are currently worked on, will or hope to work on in the future. Facilitator records list on board. Group discussion/ editing of list. (Facilitator may intervene if necessary: Is that a *civic* issue? What is the civic aspect of that topic?)
- 8) Column writing: Choose one of the civic issues from the list (yours or someone else's—whatever is most intriguing to you at this moment). Draw a line down the center of your paper, dividing it into 2 vertical columns. On the left hand side, you will write about a personal experience you have had relating to this issue (story, memory, incident; what happened how you felt, details, etc). On the right hand side, you will write about facts, statistics, rules,

laws, policies, social systems, etc. ie macro things you know about this issue. You will begin writing in the right hand column. You MUST switch columns when the facilitator calls SWITCH, even if you're in mid-sentence. You will be told to switch several times. Go.

9) Read what you have written. Read HORIZONTALLY across. Notice new images, phrases, unexpected things that appear. Circle the juicy stuff. What did you notice or discover? Full group - share a few at random. Edit what you have written into a piece of text, a few sentences or phrases long (or just words/ images). Make sure you draw from both columns, in combination.

10) Put it together: Layer the words, your text, onto your movement phrase. You MAY NOT change the order of the text or the movement; just layer (trust the process). You may edit the words; play with timing, repetition, placement, etc. Rehearse (with music). (Because we were running overtime for this section, this final art-making step was really quick – 5 min. Half the group wanted to complete this process, half the group wanted to skip straight to open discussion.)

Full group showing: quick round-robin, those who wanted to show the final text & movement piece did.

GROUP DISCUSSION

Because Sherry was very sick, this portion wasn't really facilitated. Open discussion went where the participants wanted to go. Andrea handed out questions from artists in designing the exchange as conversation starters, questions on the table.

Sandy Augustin, Intermedia Arts: By having to move through something (in the exercises we just did), you made something personal into something public. It can be difficult to find the right words when you're immediately asked to react to something you saw. Liz Lerman's critical response is a good way to approach this difficult situation because they ask what stuck with you.

Diane Burbie, NCCJ: I have to have some level of clarity of what I think or feel before I can express it, and art plays a wonderful role in discovering what my thoughts and feelings are.

Treva Offut, The Kitchen: You have to think about having the proper resources—often we don't think about the resources we need, or that we don't know we need, to go deeper. It's part of making it a safe space. People coming in need to feel that they are taken care of.

Marty Pottenger, artist: Emotional hurt keep us from doing our best thinking and being in a place where transformation is possible. A key challenge in the work is to figure out how to negotiate that.

Sandy: In doing an event about where people feel safe, we worked very hard and thought very carefully about taking care of people. We had chances for people to get there/build up to it, and chances for people to get out of it. How many hits does it take to create change? People need to feel like they can come back again after experiencing an event.

Andrea Assaf, Animating Democracy project associate: How does this idea of safe space relate to artist risk-taking?

Tressa Varner, The Andy Warhol Museum: In art I see artists' safety, but dialogue facilitation is very risky. I didn't know who people were that I was working with, I had a new group every day. It's really scary.

Treva: In terms of the artistic merit of the piece that the dialogue is shaped around—one model is to throw out all the issues in the piece and then talk about them so it's like a big therapy session. But there are so many other models to use, like Wendy's session yesterday. It organically created a safe space because you've moved through a process that is revealing but not intimidating.

Barbara Schaffer Bacon, Animating Democracy co-director: Not everyone in the group is at the same place (heartspace/headspace). For every person who wants to talk about something emotional, there's someone saying "I don't want to hear you have that revelation right now."

Diane: Often, people of color, when given the permission, talk about racism at the emotional level; and white people are expected to talk about it at the cognitive level so that others can determine if they are worthy to be in the conversation.

Shirley Mae Springer Staten, Understanding Neighbors: Example: With the group, talk about a time you felt different, and that gives you some common ground to start from.

Marty: Issue of perspective: We offer perspective; lay it out, before we engage in dialogue. No right or wrong thinking, no villains or losers.

Diane: The best entryway to dialogue is not verbal. If the dialogue begins in a non-verbal way and reflects and draws on something creative for that reflection, what they want to talk about is different, and the conversation is richer for it. We're not re-hashing the same material.

Sandy: The environment needs to allow for a range of expression. When we talk about creating a safe space, it doesn't mean that people aren't yelling at each other.

Shirley Mae: I want to hear more about safety, because that's come up a lot in my project.

Treva: Ask: what would it take you to get in the room? In talking about audience, think about what audience you want to attract, and the singe factor (Jan's session)—how many times can we get burned and come back to this? Pre-dialogue about assumptions on both sides. These assumptions are what are stopping these sides from coming together. And then you can talk about goals.

Andrea: In your projects, do you find people getting confused about what are the emotional aspects and what are the civic aspects? Do you get confused? Do you find it helpful to make those distinctions? Is that helpful to the public in doing civic dialogue?

Treva: For us, the institution needed to spend more time addressing the issue, and resources. For me, it kept things on a certain level, and it could have gone deeper, further. The institution could have taken more responsibility, had we had the foresight to do more preparation, discussions related to the civic issues, more connections with people working in the field. These were missing from the process.

Sherry Cottom, YWCA: Partnership is so important between the artists and facilitators—recognizing that they have their own areas of expertise and respecting the expertise of the group.

Tressa: What we found the hardest was not letting your passion for the issue take over. You want so bad to see the group make the move to the next level and you want to move them forward, but you have to let them do that on their own. As the facilitator, you can't take over. I don't get heart-ful about anything other than this—they are so directly connected.

Armando: I am struggling with the assumption that everyone speaks the same language. Until you identify the culture of the group and lay that as common ground for the dialogue to begin; this dialogue here that is taking place is foreign to me, and no one has checked in with everyone to see if they're engaged. Culturally, there are different ways to address it, and it can be so diverse. The assumption that we're all on the same page culturally is overriding.

Sherry: That is my job here today, but I'm not really able to do it.

Armando Gutierrez: Yesterday had that feeling, too. Yesterday, the directive came from the person in charge, and once you have framed that as the format, I am already somewhat disengaged. And that keeps people out of the dialogue.

Sherry: Model that the Warhol Museum used—use different vehicles to engage. Know what medium works for you personally.

Armando: When you have an overarching question, there is going to be a struggle. Everyone needs to take responsibility for keeping it safe. Everyone has a certain tolerance for when you start to feel unsafe, and acknowledging that is critical—everyone is taking care of each other.

Paul Myers, MACLA: I normally work in dyads, and I think that dialogue occurs in photos, because that's my art form. You guys take it to a whole other level.

Sandy: You have to work under the assumption that everyone is an expert in their own mind and their own belief system. There is some information that has not been shared about where this Minneapolis Exchange came from. People may not understand why are these people facilitating—it's because certain people were asked to share. You need to give that background so that people have all of the information to make the choice about whether they want to participate.

Marty: Sometimes people just need to be really upset. You don't need to turn the whole group to that, though. How do you design it so that it's not the whole discussion?

Diane: The communities I work with have forced me to think differently because they ask: "How is this suppose to be beneficial?" "How does this fit? How does it help or change?" "How is hearing the voices of individual people a structure that works?"

Open Space Sessions

AN INTRODUCTION TO OPEN SPACE TECHNOLOGY

Kathy deNobriga: I want to talk about issues relating to open spaces and maybe plant a seed. Tomorrow you are supposed to spend a couple of hours talking about some things that came up today or things in general that you want to go more in depth into. If you want to propose an open space to dance or make art, you can do so. I want everyone to have their own needs met. What we'll do tomorrow is that you'll have a chance to propose ideas and we'll have a bartering session. I want to take a few minutes to do the big picture stuff. I'll ask the people who have done Open Space before to help me out. This is about trusting the wisdom experience, knowledge, talents that we all bring to the discussion. Think about what it is you have to give and what you want to get. There is one law, the law of mobility. If you feel bored or restless, only you have the power to change that; only you can act. There are two types of people: the bumblebee and the butterfly. The bee goes around listening to everyone talking, cross-pollenating ideas from one group to another. The butterfly goes to take a break, and more people do the same, but those people start talking together and meet in a way that was not on the schedule but is still legitimate.

Bill Cleveland: It's a time to bring forward those burning issues that you've been thinking of. One thing is, you do have to be present at your own session and make arrangements for documentation.

Q: Sometimes lack of facilitation makes for really loose, unproductive conversation.

Bill: That is where the law of two feet comes in. Take responsibility for your own idea. Be respectful and keep it safe.

KEY POINTS & REPORT-BACKS

The following summaries of Open Space sessions are a combination of key points, notable quotes, and report-backs shared with the entire convening. The amount and type of information for each session varies, depending on notes available.

Topics included:

Of what use is an artistically animated democracy?

Civic Space: What is it? How do you find it? How do you create it?

Artistic Control & Community Engagement

Beyond preaching to the converted: How do we get others to engage? / Partnering with Large Institutions

Icebreakers: Working with people who don't consider themselves artists

Success Stories & Train Wrecks

What is the place of ritual in arts-based civic dialogue?

* * * * *

Of what use is an artistically animated democracy?

Participants: Bill Cleveland, Jan Cohen-Cruz, Sondra Farganis, Judith Shaitlin, Walter Hill, Sue Wood, Maggie Hertzig, Andrea Assaf

What does it get us as a society? How do we not squander the promise or diminish the potential?

What are the real issues when we talk about democracy? The difficulty of getting our hands on a definition: understanding the difference between procedures of democracy and the substance of it.

Jan: Is democracy a movement? Is it a success if some other point of view wins?

Sandra: The more political engagement there is, the more things move to the right.

Bill: We are living in a democracy others want to emulate, but it is broken. Can we rise to the occasion to realize our potential through democracy? If there were full participation, I could take an end I myself do not like.

Sue: By engaging citizens in the powerful possibilities of the arts, people can see it is possible for things to change.

What's not on the table is often more important than what is on the table.

How do you gauge a project's intent and its actual contribution? (this relates to comment in the Neutrality session about "the tyranny of vague intent.")

A community's effort to deal with an issue can be set back as well as advanced by an arts-based civic dialogue project.

Example: A play done in Ireland about 'mixed marriage' as a metaphor; is there a commonality of issues we can discuss? The first one was a big success, but they tried to do it again with a different play, and it fell apart. Relationships taking two years and courageous people to form were torn apart again. What caused it? The stakes were raised, but some people were different, with different agendas and goals.

How do you measure the success of a project? How do you leverage success for continued use by the community?

Distinguish short and long term effects, low and high end outcomes

Sandra: Arts as an entry point to bring people together to discuss something, BUT...If at the end of it you have created an alternative consciousness—"There are other things I can do with my life" or "Things may not need to be the way they were in the past"—There are low end and high end answers. High end may include new social or political movements. Ex.: Replacement of political parties by social movements in last 40 years; Civil rights, gay rights, feminism etc. Animating Democracy has planted seeds, having the potential to grow into a successful movement.

There is no other opportunity for social change in my view. What are the next social movements? Anti-corporate globalization...

How are art & dialogue partners? Art matters, dialogues matter—but not the same way all the time.

Jan: Artists & activists—it needs to be understood as a hybrid field. There is power in recognizing that.

Sue: Problems are compounded by a society that doesn't value artistic or even intellectual activity. (Not to be confused with entertainment, which just reinforces what we know and doesn't take us somewhere new like art can.) ... Soap operas (seen by us as popular entertainment) deal with issues well in some countries; deal with AIDS, women's rights, etc. with good writing and actors. Art and dialogue are wonderful partners because both are after the same thing: taking us somewhere new.

Concern about follow through. What happens after we leave the scene? We are concerned with the short-term effects and long-term. Legacy and leadership building strategies within communities.

What if this project REALLY succeeds? Animating Democracy may matter if we have a concern about what happens more than 2 years down the road. We need to take the long view if art will have a real chance to animate democracy.

Civic Space: What is it? How do you find it? How do you create it?

To what degree do others in Animating Democracy think of the goal as creating civic space?

Is civic space a physical space, or a practice?

Tom Borrup: There isn't much civic space in the U.S. Civic space accumulates over time, has history to it; combines privacy and public engagement. It's physical, but also virtual; it's perception ... Animating Democracy is part of a process of creating civic space as a practice; thinking about long-term impact, helping to create a culture of civic practice. It will take time to make it a contagious practice; it has to be renewed over and over again.

Who owns it? Who manages it? What is the initial purpose of a space, and how does it evolve? Civic space is a space where, even though you might not be the owner of it, you have ownership.

Publicly owned, with private commerce. Consumer culture—places where we buy things as civic? Example: Mall of America.

Western idea that you don't need civic space if you have a lot of private space. Example: Coffee shops or diners in small towns (or in the East Village, NYC)

When people can say, "You may own it, but I can say what I want here."

Gene: Example in Alaska: A sports arena, publicly owned but privately managed. Someone put up a banner saying "Soviet Scum, Go Home!" It resulted in a court case, and they won on the basis of Free Speech. But the library was deemed, by the mayor, as an inappropriate space to put up a Gay & Lesbian display.

What make up the aesthetics of a civic space?

Institutions of culture, such as museums, have no built-in obligation to be civic space, but are trying to re-create themselves as a place the community can come, to be a forum. How?

Civic space is a place where people feel they can express themselves in their own way.

Site-specific work: shifting the perception of what is civic space and what is not.

Examples: Cornerstone Theatre turning places of worship into performance spaces, and a theatre production, *Zones*, into participatory civic dialogue event. LA Poverty Dept. performances in a former bank, financial center, retail shop windows. Intermedia Arts working with the potential of the Greenway as civic space in Minneapolis.

Is civic space necessarily neutral or safe?

It's a place where people gather; people have to be able to hang out there. How are people welcomed? How do they feel comfortable? If it's a public area that no one uses, it's not a civic space.

Youth are civic because they are *not* neutral; they are collective. Collectivity as defining civic space.

Working with populations that aren't welcome in most "civic" spaces. A true civic space would feel safe for everyone. Is that possible?

John Malpede: Parks are set up as safe spaces, but become safe only for those who control them. Example: A park taken over by drug dealers; then taken over by non-profit organizations given community development money; then park fenced in and patrolled by police.

Public space doesn't always feel public; it can be mediated or controlled by behavioral norms. Even though a space may be public, whose norms dominate may cause others to feel excluded.

Artistic Control

Present: *Ta-Coumba Aiken, Michael Warr & Kathie deNobriga*. Notetaker: *Kathie deNobriga*

What is the artist willing to give up? Going from artists vision to community vision.

Question of intent: How relevant is intent to artistic control? Where are you trying to go? This should be determined at the beginning of the project, so there is a social contract that is agreed to; can be more explicit, in written goals, parameters. It's important for an artist to be able to say what s/he wants to get out of the collaboration.

Take the time to get pissed off and time to say "Wow!" Time to work through issues and appreciate what the people you are working with are doing.

Artistic control is dependent on conditions of time and place. Everyone agreed that it was good for artists to be able to set their own timeframe.

Any artist participating in collaboration has acknowledged giving up some degree of control.

Art as bridge-builder, connector.

If you're willing to be flexible, then you *have* control.

Lingering questions: How does performance live beyond the moment? Are differences in different artistic disciplines? What about the next generation of artists?

Ta-Coumba: considers this type of work as "guerilla work, speaking for the voices of those not heard." Political change was not the subject of his mural - but it was the effect. Funders often divide who is "good" from who is not. "Quality" becomes a way to eliminate projects for funding. The community and public artists judge success differently from foundations. For communities & public artists, success is partially measured by community input, the inclusion of language and attitudes from the community, the degree of engagement. "Do you want the mural to stay untouched by graffiti, or do you want it painted over?" is one measure of success. His efforts are about "bringing everyone up to and beyond your own level. Not just about CREATING that art—but TEACHING—to achieve a level of quality."

Example: To say "I want symbols" versus "here are the symbols I want." He always shares his previous

work before working with a group, so that they can see his vision, too. Compromise: "If it's just your thing, you didn't collaborate at all." Ta-Coumba said, "If it were my art, it would be in my house." How do we let our art get touched by the community? "You can facilitate a dialogue without changing the art—but the dialogue might change the NEXT thing you do."

Ta-Coumba sees the value of working with others: "artists should allow themselves to be used more than they do - because they will learn more."

Need to build a level of trust and spend time together creating work. Taking the time to work out conflicts as you go along, and also to appreciate the moments of joy & beauty.

How giving up control depends on condition, time and place: We might be perfectly willing to give up control in one place, but want it in another place. That's okay, but we need to make a clear distinction between realms (control or no control). We also need to be able to control *ourselves* first. We need to work with organizations to help them put all this stuff on the table. Talk about what could *possibly* happen.

Intent: We felt that the artists' decision to be involved in this type of work implies a contract from the very beginning of the process, and that it would be very useful to be MORE EXPLICIT about that contract.

Training new artists to do this work: Ta-Coumba says "Give them projects to work on." Suggestion: maybe the next steps for Animating Democracy could include some kind of deliberate mentoring?

Ta-Coumba talked about letting go of the control of the visual image: his postcard images spread like wildfire. By letting go of the control, the image spread much further than if he had held to it tightly ("marketing by epidemic").

Beyond preaching to the converted: How do we get others to engage?

& Partnering with Large Institutions (combined)

There is a tremendous amount of work to do with whomever chooses to be in the circle at the moment, even if a lot alike.

What makes people want to be in the circle? Having more people like themselves.

There is no one activity that will get people to engage. Sometimes it's art, sometimes political action, sometimes it's social.

Go to people's houses first.

Importance of knowing what questions to ask, to be on the same page with different segments of the community.

One-on-one relationships; it always leads back to that. These are rich moments to work through, because there's a relationship at stake.

Where funding resides in a partnership (i.e. with the entity that has been traditionally disempowered) can say how serious the power structure is about giving up power.

Reframe: (when dealing with the powers that be) How do we get to their tables without becoming them? Look at strategy and don't forget the goal.

Bill Cleveland: The question is not who I am but what I have to say. They don't expect you to have anything that speaks to them; the challenge is to blow them away with the good and relevant work you're doing. Talk about the common ground and a miracle can happen.

Does the support for or involvement of large institutions dilute the potential of arts-based civic dialogue work for the communities?

Large institutions (even mid-sized) have to be conservative to survive. What happens when large organizations commit to projects because it's sexy but are scared of social change? When mainstreamers don't want change or are afraid they will be made to look bad by the art.

Issues arise when the leadership of the institution may be impacted personally. Example: a board member who may not want his/her name aligned with social change.

Artists and institutional partners (or communities and arts institutions) don't necessarily have the same goals or values. Even stating values up front is theoretical; when it becomes real, things change.

Large institutions tend to value the end product and don't as easily recognize process as valid and valuable.

Large institutions want to be perceived as inclusive, but are they and are they really about social change?

The institution as a whole doesn't necessarily speak as one voice. Make connections with people within the institution. On the other hand, individuals don't always have power or authority.

Work can be compromised by censorship for fear of disfavor of the funder or host.

Everyone getting heard is a way to take some of the social change energy out of the work.

Large institutions are an endangered species because of the long-term effects of lack of participation.

Jan Cohen-Cruz (report-back): Large organizations tend to create consumers and small organizations tend to create producers. There are different goals and processes; larger institutions usually keep things neat and organized. Nothing replaces one-on-one relationships—you make connections with people, not institutions. If you have a personal relationship, you feel compelled to follow-through with what you said you'd do. Also, the person may not have institutional power, or they may leave the institution. Different points of view on larger institutions' audience development. Some people felt this is an organizational value, and some felt it's a pragmatic approach. Lingering questions: Paradigm shifts? Shifting resources? Presumption that the "underserved" want to be at the table.

Armando: it is important to check in with everyone. It is a mistake not to.

Icebreakers: Working with people who don't consider themselves artists

(Most of this session was exchanging specific exercises).

How to invite people in? Different ways to engage a roomful of strangers.

Ice-breaker exercises are fun and necessary. They help create a safe space.

Each exercise can engage people, so that they are more willing to explore.

Validation of each person's voice.

Question: "Am I an artist in this particular medium?"—How does that translate to the general public who don't consider themselves artists at all? How to adapt these exercises into our own work, with the communities we work with? Questioned how we could take exercises further and how to adapt them to different situations, and questions addressing issues.

It's important for artists who are always giving workshops to have the opportunity to take workshops from other artists, in same and different disciplines.

Some exercises:

The "Yes!" exercise (Diane Aldis): One person walks into center of circle, gradually makes eye contact with a person in the circle. When eye contact is established, the person receiving says "yes" and trades places. This continues. Perhaps the speed is increased. Treva pointed out that this exercise is good for non-dancers so they become aware of their bodies in space. Wendy suggested that non-verbal aspect could be introduced. Example: A person goes into circle, passes a gesture and a thought to the next person.

Energia es ... (Dora Arreola): Begin using an object. What is energy? Can be colors, objects, anything. The exercise has three steps: first is a movement; stop the movement; make contact with another person, then send the object softly to that person, who changes it. Added on to this: incorporate vocalizing: "Energy is..." and as you pass the object, you say what energy is (this can be an emotion, a thing, a quality, ANYTHING. examples: Energy is the ocean ... Energy is blue ... Energy is your eyes ... Energy is love...) The exercise is repeated, but without an object (or an invisible object).

What might follow? (Treva Offut): Vocalizing could be dropped and go into strictly movement. This is especially useful for non-dancers who might be going in the direction of creating movement. Also, it parallels two-person dialogue. It could be taken into pairs: listening and moving. Or, a single word could lead into a writing exercise (Example: "death is...").

"Who are you?" writing exercise (Regie Cabico): The prompt question is "who are you?" Free write. As you write, you have to incorporate words that the facilitator throws in. The words start slowly, then get faster and faster. Then everyone reads his/her writing out loud. Regie also uses books he brings to help pull words out during the exercise. Also, can use other prompt sentences like, "Where do you come from?" "I never told anybody..." "I remember..." etc. The inciting sentence could very well be related to the content/issue that the project deals with.

Name Exercise (Bernardo Solano): Using your name, write what your name smells, tastes, feels, sounds, looks like. Then write what your name reminds you of: something from your past, how you got your name, good, bad, whatever. Then share. This gives each person ownership of his/her name, identity.

Cultural Mapping: A figurative map of the world is created in the space. Example: Imagine the space is a map of the world. Use a direction such as "Go to the place on the map where you were born." People scatter; have to talk to each other to find out which areas represent what spaces. They form small groups. Each group then works together and comes up with three things they have in common; they report results to the rest of group. Repeat with many different variations. Commonality is discovered among a group of people who maybe thought they had nothing in common.

Success Stories & Train Wrecks

There is value in looking at both successes and train wrecks.

What defines a success? What makes something a train wreck? How do you extract lessons learned, and apply them across disciplines? How do they inform other processes?

What tools are left behind? Both the tools of the artist, and the community.

Extreme reactions to exhibit or art event; lack of staff or resources to deal with it. An organization needs to look at itself, to constantly re-group. Not enough planning and resources directed to the practitioners.

The emotion expressed is not the train wreck. It's how you deal with that emotion.

How do you make the difficult things part of the art-making process? How are those events themselves art? Thinking of the artfulness of how things are put together; scripting how to move through process.

Marty: I find my experience with a particular kind of thinking is limited, so some times I can't process things at the time...making it into story form helps me take in information. I use successful stories to draw from.

Tom: What is the difference between dialogues that get so intense and what we experienced (through Intermedia Arts)? Art gives people new tools, in an experience that affects people on different levels. Talking about symbols, communicating in ways other than spoken language. People may set out to talk about it one way, but it might mean something different to someone else.

Caron: Successes and train wrecks might live in the same experience. Can a compromise in one part of the process help fulfill the overall intent later? What was the process you used to get through the train wreck?

Examples:

First, talking about the wreck! Processing grief, and at the same time, moving forward and taking responsibility for the work. Suddenly everybody was invested ... even though they didn't understand/know what all the stories were. We, as a group determined which stories would work for the project.

Shifts from initial agreement with partner institution in dealing with issues of racism: Feeling dishonored and compromised by the people inviting us in...They really wanted to be there to make sure that it would go wrong. There were the people there at each session to see that it wouldn't work...Did change happen? Totally, we changed how much control we have – even in the contract. They couldn't change the fundamentals of the sessions. It completely changed how we train our facilitators to deal with situations like this...From the invitation, we were more assertive about who the participant mix was going to be, and agreed that we would do a session (they wanted).

Caron: We need to be much more deliberate about the pre-conditions for success. Tools that seem apparent from this story: a partner has to come in with intentionality and control.

Diane: If it feels like heightened emotion needs to come out then it does. Re-directing the emotionalism is what can help make the dialogue successful. If there isn't a place to put that, then the person will find a target to vent it.

Cultural differences in communication, and how people feel engaged. You will fail miserably if the people involved don't understand the culture in which they are speaking.

Expectations in relation to success/failure: clarity of expectations is important. If expectations are set too high, the project won't work. Success is very simple: make a connection, let people hear each other from different points of view.

The value of not knowing what will come up: bringing together people of different backgrounds and view points; some might see it as an obstacle, others as a point to grow from. If everyone in the room thinks the same way, maybe that's a train wreck.

What is the place of ritual in arts-based civic dialogue?

Topics:

- The place of ritual in the lives of individuals present
- How it connects to their work
- How they perceive its presence or absence in Animating Democracy

Everyone there had a great need for and sense of higher power or connection to spiritual in their own lives, and felt a need to acknowledge more than head and heart—feeling that framing didn't include the spirituality.

Discussion:

Time, deadlines, and paperwork erode our connection to the spiritual.

Fear factor in organizations connecting themselves to a spiritual identity: people are afraid to speak about it for fear it will become an organizational value; afraid of being “touchy-feely”

When it is appropriate to involve ceremony or ritual, or a sense of spirituality in the work?

When people use their spiritual privilege to lord it over others, and when the new-age-ness of it becomes a power/status tool, it is inappropriate.

Joan: Animating Democracy seems to be staying away from addressing the spiritual. Social change seems to be the focus. Can there be success on that level of awareness in the dialogue? What is the shared basis for ritual?

Treva: Urban Bush Women's statement is “Athlete, Artist and Healer.” How is it manifested? Dance and song; finding common friends; building community and working on ideas.

Kwame: We as artists are priests. Beauty in Life as Ritual ... How do we enter into ourselves? How does one open a conference in a way that allows people to get into it—overcoming resistance to participate in things that are not ordinary calls for order?. Drumming is very personal to me, and no one knows the relationship I have with the instrument. Indigenous instruments have just as much value as western instruments. There is history, transformation in this instrument. Look at the two equally: it raises the issue of *how* people are invited to participate. Need to respect people's traditions and acknowledge the deeper meaning of things. Ask, *would this be wanted, would this be acceptable?*

Andrea: It raises a lot of questions for me: the broader question about holding ourselves to same level of scrutiny that we ask our participants to engage in. What happens in the shift from facilitator to organizer to convener? I have a question about how to frame ritual or spirituality in a group that is so diverse, that we don't know what all the perspectives are in the room. How to do it in a way that is inclusive for everyone? A learning in the process of planning—don't make assumptions that we are all on the same page. Questions should come up in the beginning to allow for conversations to happen.

In response to this discussion, Kwame, Armando, and Treva created and facilitated a full-group ritual closing the convening on Sunday: the blessing of a new drum. Armando, in the center, proceeded in Native American tradition, and asked the group to walk and chant in a circle; Kwame played his Congo drums; Treva led a group vocal improvisation, layering songs from the weekend.