Notes From Workshop #23: 
ArtsCommons On The Ground

DECEMBER 15, 2015

From Workshop Announcement:
The many participants in the Lab’s November 24, 2015, workshop – where we began to bring the ArtsCommons to life – created a rich set of both general and specific responses to the ArtsCommons’ core questions:

- Location: where can/should the ArtsCommons best be sited?
- Users: who will/can/should be engaging with these spaces?
- Curation: what topics/ideas issues can the ArtsCommons’ programming address?
- Criteria: how do we set priorities - and who is “we?”
- Infrastructure: what are the essential mechanical, electrical, environmental, safety requirements for the ArtsCommons?

One of November’s participants wrote later that the ArtsCommons’ “openness is its generosity once the artists and community get their minds and hands on it, it will go beyond anything we come up with in a workshop.”

The challenge, then: identify the specific steps required to create a successful launch and ensure a residual impact of the ArtsCommons. For example:

- What are the most critical ingredients for structuring an effective ArtsCommons partnership?
- Given the flexibility built into the ArtsCommons’ initial design, what are the most efficient/effective approaches to siting, configuration, use of materials, etc.?
- What kinds of “prompts” will activate what kinds of activities or uses over the course of a two week long residency at a single site?
- What are the definitions of success – immediate as well as ongoing for the ArtsCommons?

The ideas summarized in the notes below suggest the multiple strategies by which participants saw the ArtsCommons coming to life.

Brainstorming kinds/examples of potential partnerships:
- Community Investors: (Ideas are money, time is money)
- Town Hall meetings to provide the community a voice in what happens in their space, as well as a way to find out what we should/can be leaving behind
- Space is money. What is a surplus in the community that needs to be shared?
- “Life Is Good”
- Studio Fresh
- Loft F Gallery, Design Museum Boston, Industrial Designers Society of Boston, Energy companies – solar, batteries etc.
• Blockchain (bitcoin) companies – enabling people to prove concepts • Incentivizing partnerships via potential profitable scalability

• Organizations already established in communities and can foster activity. Places may not have the kind of venue like the Children’s’ Museum; however, they do have organizations like the Boys and Girls Club where children can create a sense of community and are encouraged to express themselves through art. Thus maybe a “leave-behind” or performance is not a physical mark on the location, but enhancing these established communities.

• Community organizations
• Micro communities
• Boston Redevelopment Authority

**Brainstorming kinds/examples of activities:**

• Collaborative/Diverse performances based on communities (anniversaries, memorable dates)
• Themes for local civic engagement; dialogues and themes via installation(s) that would address social issues, and travel from one site to the next
• Incubator for social groups
• Physical platform that can engage and enable communities to evolve/continue • Create frameworks of time
• Location, Location, Location: The “black box” as a means of creating a place of activity? To draw, engage and connect people – perhaps in a place with little/no pre-established social engagement.
• Visual, lecture, performing one of each.
• Theme for X amount of time.
• Social media pulling attention, keeping focus creative direction
• Food and gardening seasonal
• Campfires

**Brainstorming kinds of/criteria for success:**

• Knowledge: Consistency, Accessibility (social media), Word of mouth, visibility – posters/structures
• Create/sustain dialogue with the community to see what the ArtsCommons means to them
• Pre-work with and preparing the community for the ArtsCommons as crucial component of what happens on/in/around the ArtsCommons
• Regularity: Reliable
• Variety of audiences at one time (trick them, be vague enough to appeal to everyone) • Cross-seasonal unit that can scale and be simple/pure/’magical’/intuitive
• Timeline enabling community to engage and adapt to it before taking it away
• Physical “list” that can be passed on
• Growth of community in platforms, groups, friendships
• Educational components such as people learning about local activities or just generally learning from one another
• Cross-fertilization of cultures
• Drop Box – Social Media hype before it gets there “Drop the Box”
• Equal Opportunity: “Natural Selection” shouldn’t rely on funding – kit of parts should enable any idea to be seen through and given the chance to “prove itself.”
• Spatial/ Physical hype: what happens in the space before the physical structure gets there? Excitement, Questions, Mystery, Imagination
• Ideological Hype/Community Influence: community brainstorms for topic/themes Understanding community needs. Who knows best? Insider or outsider?
• Constructive community input – ideals, not problems. Fill the space with good, not remove the negative.
• Involvement – core community vs. outside community
• Incubator for movement: urban gardens, uplift what exists, reality that needs healing
• Creating community: social media ... network > physical space ... destination
• Sponsor a cube  network Kickstarter
• Must haves: power, wifi, security
• Performance: intimate, secured, stage, collecting something – filled with stuff
• Barber shop; mani-pedi
• Transparent walls
• Open studios/Open streets