Notes From Workshop #16: ArtsCommons & The 3 “P’s”- Physical Structure, Programming, Partnerships

FEBRUARY 18, 2015
From Workshop Announcement:

Last December, the second “ArtsCommons” workshop generated a set of core principles to shape the physical and programmatic components of a shared approach to art in public places – with the Rose Kennedy Greenway’s Dewey Square Park as the site.
Lab participants have been examining ways in which these principles can be brought to life. What if we used large steel containers in a variety of configurations? What if we could turn those containers into stages, sculptures, theaters, galleries, and more? What sorts of opportunities would they provide for new, more expansive collaborations? How do we make those collaborations happen?

Helping to facilitate the workshop was Sebastian Mariscal and Brian Militana of Sebastian Mariscal Studio, design concepts; Dan Sternof Beyer New American Public Art, infrastructure; Maria Finkelmeier, Kadence Arts, Cedric Douglas, Cedric Douglas Design, and Alex Castillo-Nunez, HOME Association, programming.

The February 18 workshop continued to explore both the physical and programmatic features, characteristics, and requirements of the ArtsCommons, homing in both on a pilot – for which we are continuing to plan a launch sometime this summer on the Greenway – and on a longer-range plan that will feature the temporary installation of steel containers in various neighborhoods around the Boston area, creating a kind of co-located “ArtsCommons,” that would serve as portable “makers’ spaces” or participatory museums for the work originating in these neighborhoods.

The session began with the presentation, by Brian Militana of possible configurations of one or more 8’ x 20’ steel containers. Dan Sternof Beyer, using Sketch-Up, showed some of these same configurations in scale. Maria Finklemeier, Cedric Douglas, and Alexander Castillo-Nunez followed up with program ideas one of whose key ingredients would be ongoing community engagement, whether the ArtsCommons is situated on the Greenway and/or co-located in multiple neighborhoods. One expressed vision was to bring together on the Greenway, in a kind of festival, the individual neighborhood containers, or
“makers’ spaces,” providing a multi-dimensional collage of Boston, its neighborhoods, and its art – whether dance, theater, music, or visual. During the Lab’s open forum, participants raised a number of questions and offered an equal number of suggestions, regarding physical and programming issues around design, transportation, liability, and costs, leading to a more defined focus on what is feasible at least for the pilot phase. The discussion was both free-wheeling and energetic, and broke into several categories:

• **Portability**
  - Somehow show evidence of the ArtsCommons idea even while the containers are being delivered or situated
  - Construction sponsor for craning to stand crates on end, if necessary
  - What finally are the physical parameters?

• **Purpose**
  - What? Why? Who cares?
  - Bring together multidisciplinary talents throughout the city

• **Ideas/actions**
  - Possible launch/pilot: two weeks, six artists.
  - Art as experience.
  - For roll-out: artists engage with communities
    - Neighborhoods curate shows
    - Respect the people
    - Flexibility, setting the stage
    - Courtesy to neighbors.
    - Outreach with artists/organizations
    - Schedule

• **Physical parameters**
  - Movable performance
  - Open access
  - Event layout. Interaction, visual/performance

• **Getting started**
  - Continue engagement with the Greenway
  - Planning grant application submitted to the New England Foundation for the Arts
  - Design charter scheduled to determine optimal configuration/programming approach for pilot
  - Currently underway: initial steps toward creating 5 working groups
    - Publicity/advertising
    - Structure/layout
    - Artist installations
    - Community partners
    - Funding