

***imPERFECT CITY* Town Hall 1 Notes
September 7, 2012**

-People present: see sign in

-Maxine introduces Maiza, announces that she is now full-time

-Maiza welcomes everybody and calls meeting to order

-Maiza explains the concept behind the exhibition-- We want to educate and engage the public; to create an exhibition as city as work of art. Funded by Warhol foundation. Deciding fate of future city inside the DCCA. Imagine the DCCA as a blank slate for the creation of a city that acknowledges itself as imperfect, but still strives for perfection.

-Want people to brainstorm values a city should uphold, and a list of key elements and communities that should be included in the city. Will cull ideas over several months- they will shape the exhibition. Curatorial process will be transparent. You will be able to witness and participate in the conversation. We want to be as inclusive as possible, while also having our profession and experience taken seriously.

-Maiza introduces Stephen, J. Gordon, Maxine, Jane

-Want people to think like artists, think beyond cars, concrete and parking lots. The exhibition is an example of curating in progress. Exhibition will open as empty space; it is conversation-based and will eventually evolve into a form. It is experience-based, not object-based

-Maiza highlights similar participatory exhibitions: Tom Marioni, Free Beer Wednesdays (experience to sculpt social interaction, made new people come to the museum); Mel Ziggler and Kate Erickson (students designed their own picnics, performance art & social engagement), American Idyll: Contemporary Art and Karaoke; Raise your Voice

-View of Wilmington from NYC: we don't exist. Art centers are all across the U.S., not just LA and NYC; the idea of multiple centers, not just one dominant center.

-More examples:

CurEAT- exhibitions as buffets of ideas. Also a radical participation show funded by Warhol Foundation. Notion of assembling ideas in space as an exhibition; art is food for thought, edible.

Z.O.U, Hou Hanru- cities and galleries are zones of urgency. Redefining notions of culture. Interventionist works: tried to disrupt traditional notion of museum; performance-based. Exhibition as place for social transformation

Arden- a local utopian community

Utopia Station- architects built small structures; open call went out for posters, adding another layer of activity; fill station with life through performances, etc.

(Imperfect City is also durational, not fixed and perfect; we're deconstructing the idea of the finished product and bringing people into the conversation from very beginning)

Fritz Haeg- conspicuous gardens in suburban communities to overturn idea of monoculture, alienated suburban neighborhoods

EAT LACMA

Feast: Smart Museum of Art- radical hospitality; artists creating a relationship with the visitor through food and drink

Michael Rakowitz, Enemy Kitchen- serving a minority community as a way to engage the public

-Maiza poses questions to engage people. Opens floor.

The following summarizes citizen responses and contributions

Citizen: What realm are we working with? The gallery? What are the perimeters?

Maiza: In Bieber Ham and Dupont II. Something can also form outside the galleries, though- don't feel limited.

Citizen: Interested in something not ephemeral. Have it happen in the community- go on a tour around the city: region, neighborhood, blocks. Look for a workable scale. Empty lots, for example. Someone from the city to work with us to develop that lot. People in community with interest in gardening, a basketball court, a performance space. Have a series of projects. Get a landscape person, architect, nonprofit, church, neighbors. They form in small groups around doable size projects.

Maiza: I like the idea of an offsite location, engaging a larger community.

Citizen: Is there a city planner in the mayor's office? People dealing with water, energy, crime, education, churches...

Maiza: Maeve is taking notes and we can send them out. We've discussed departments, a newspaper, media, etc.

Citizen: I'm impressed by the dynamics you're creating. Interfacing with film would be worth it- moving images.

Maiza: We're filming this [the town hall] and turning it into a video to get people involved.

Citizen: Wilmington is dealing with a horrendous violence problem. Are we really trying for perfect? Are we staying away from the negativity of the problems of the city?

Maiza: This is not going to solve all social ills and we acknowledge that it cannot.

Citizen: Utopia is flawed because it is human. The success of it depends on its flexibility. A utopia can never be perfect.

Citizen: The word 'utopia' was created by Sir Thomas Moore. That history could be a part of the exhibition.

Citizen: It's a word play from ancient Greece. It comes from 'good' and 'no place'.

Citizen: Cities usually develop around cars. A product generated in that region needs to be moved. What would the commerce be about? What would be going on that we would build a city?

Citizen: Cities come together for a purpose. What is the purpose of this thing? If you shoot for utopia, you shoot for nothing. I like the idea of this and the double-play; realizing the fallibility of the idea [of utopia] is an interesting purpose.

J: We can address issues in the community creatively. We can build conceptual models of Wilmington in miniature

Citizen: Locke said men form societies to protect their private property. This utopia could be void of the political realities that we deal with. Will we able to steer clear of that divide?

Maiza: A city without private property?

Citizen: Just, will we have to choose?

Citizen: It might be interesting to look towards nature and the intent of its system- why do things happen in nature? Getting away from human systems towards natural systems

Maiza: The city as organic, not artificial

Citizen: People are now looking at utopia as process- it's a way of moving forward. Never being able to provide all the solutions; utopia is real, political and activist- it shouldn't be dismissed. Also, cities first arose to run away from nature; takes a long time to realize they're too far removed and need it back. Initially throw up the walls to keep out beasties, then we start to think we're not part of nature

Maiza: City doesn't mean urban only- it can be a combination, without creating binaries [between urban and rural]

Citizen: Cities are structures and systems. The frustrating aspect of interacting with these systems is that they're like software. We should include self-organization from citizens, so they can participate (without free-for-all)

Citizen: There are many subsystems: water run-off, air quality, etc. Many levels interact. We need to recognize all these systems and interactions to optimize everything. That's why you need representatives.

Maiza: One thing affects another; we engage with restraints on a daily basis in the museum- there are many factors in the politics of museum-work and exhibitions. The system is extremely delicate. Understanding all the components of the city is important

Citizen: Systems make me think about the role of government and oversight- who has control over all the systems. What is our role as citizens? Are we governors? Are we deciding the hierarchy? Will there be a hostile takeover? How will we make the decisions?

Maiza: This is the first in a series of meetings- there are no decisions at this point.

Citizen: The systems at the DCCA are there to share art with the public- that's their purpose. Systems are not for no reason- they're always for a need. I'm still struggling with the why. Because that will determine what we produce, etc.

Maiza: Is this an opportunity to teach people how social engagement can be art? It's up to us to think about what we want to do with this as a model- that's part of the dialogue.

Citizen: If it's just conceptual, nobody outside will care. If you engage in something taking some degree of art into something real in the world, then you have another set of players, a different venue.

Maiza: You'd like to see a garden? Let's talk specifics. What would be the tangible manifestation?

Citizen: Make the city better by making it more beautiful. Graffiti was turned into the Mural Project in Philadelphia. People are less inclined to trash something that looks nice.

Maiza: The notion of beauty is subjective. We need to negotiate different conceptions.

Citizen: Transport could generate spaces.

Citizen: We could have powder bins and watch how people move around- study movement

Maiza: The staff mentioned using bicycles to power the electricity.

Multiple citizens express agreement/interest.

Citizen: We've talked about infrastructure, systems, commerce, etc. But is a city defined by walls or people? Don't we frame it based on the community and how they want to come together? It's not about the walls.

Citizen: Is it a city with no people?

Citizen: We have lost communities in so many cities, and that's the essence of the city. Our goal could be to bring that back by bringing people here, to the DCCA.

Maiza: The Brooklyn Museum offers ESL services. Museums are less about traditional fine arts now as they are about the idea of community and ideal urban environments. It is about people and not structure, but we do want to design those structures so that we can inhabit them.

Citizen: Food, drink and performance bring people together.

Citizen: Back to the idea of utopia. Cities are associated with mass murders. You can't imagine a city in this country without these stretches of serious housing issues and homelessness. A component of this would be dealing with that issue, which is always associated with cities. We need to address housing structures. Unless only certain people can live in our city

Maiza: An artist at the Guggenheim created a hotel within the museum—how real do you imagine getting within the space?

Jane: Literally having the homeless live in the DCCA is one thing, but creating space for the urban poor at the DCCA- we're already doing that. We have high-level attendance by lower income people and we do outreach. We could extend these as more than just separate education programs. We can create a space where people can come and enjoy, focusing around the people as opposed to just creating a house. How will we attract people different than the people in this room right now?

Citizen: I'm struggling with the lack of definition of a city. Cities develop for certain reasons-trade, etc. Will there be environmental constraints? Can we grow horizontally or vertically? Like DC or Phoenix? I need parameters.

J: That's the point of the discussion tonight. We have a lot of ideas, but this is for you. What is your purpose for the city?

Citizen: We haven't talked about entertainment at all.

Maiza: This city would be an ongoing site for people to be in the space, have conversations and program entertainment

Citizen: Sports, music...

Citizen: Who's going to do this? Some of this needs to be with kids, some with adults. We could have events with food where aspects of the city are constructed. For example, this week we'll

create a river that goes through the city and the transport that comes to that, then next we'll create the structures for the natural environment. Construct it like a city really grows.

Maiza: Groups can work on individual projects as an event, for kids and groups to attend.

Maxine gives five minute warning.

Citizen: Community is huge. To get people to interact, start with the question of what people's utopia is.

Maiza: We could interview people on the streets of Wilmington about their idea of utopia.

Citizen: We could have a city that doesn't take its own power from the DCCA; a city as a meeting place for the community- audio record these meetings and play them back within the space

Citizen: This is similar to my Neighborhood Association meetings. People out there are doing this, just in context.

Citizen: I live in Arden, which was started based on political purposes. Community dinner is every week- everything is focused on building a community: concerts, etc.

Maiza: That's a great model to start from. We want to address the idea that museums are places that are difficult for people to understand and feel matter in their daily lives. I'm trying to make art museums matter for the community. The DCCA should be meaningful for Wilmington.

Citizen: In terms of building a city within the DCCA confines, on my bus from Philadelphia I saw mayoral candidates' signs. What about having the top two mayoral candidates at an informal dinner within the DCCA- our city intersecting with the people actually running Wilmington

Maiza: Maybe someone wants to run for the *Imperfect City* mayor.

-Maiza thanks people for coming out. Please send along ideas that we didn't get to. Next meeting will be announced shortly and meeting notes will be sent out.