

Creative Construct: Building for Culture and Creativity

Note-taking guide for session rapporteurs

METADATA

Session title: Artist Centres as Cultural Incubators: Models and Experiences

Presenter: Sue Beal, Matthew Kwatinetz, Jocelyn Robert, Louise Matte

Day: Tues. April 29

Time: 3:00-4:30

NOTES

1. Short overview/summary of presentation

Four directors discuss their facilities and the ways these connect with the neighbourhood, or locale to develop creation opportunities and artists' careers while managing to keep the doors open.

There was an emphasis on creation of spaces that can be purpose-built, identity of the building or space, and accessibility of the space to the public. Discussion of different types of spaces - that can act as incubators for artists, and those that are more about accessibility to the public for different reasons (i.e. health, recreational, library). For profit, not-for-profit and municipally run models discussed.

2. Key points and significant themes of presentation

Louise Matte, Cultural Officer, Maison de la culture Frontenac, Montréal

The neighborhood-based centres bring knowledge about arts into a more accessible public venue - a more universal space that is completely free to the population. It's always coupled with a library and venue for Internet access.

- There are 3 principal areas in each - registration, exhibition rooms, and performance space.
- 60% or less of the funding is provided by the government
- The centres act as incubators, and as a step into professional presentation for emerging artists.

The spaces have evolved to become very collaborative. Companies and artists work together with a lot of latitude. The staff is able to respond to the needs of artists. An example- short residencies, from three days to three weeks in areas like sound technicians.

The centres also collaborate with other presentation spaces - bring other things into the spaces to bring them to a new public. They work to bring exposure to Montreal-based organizations and develop awareness among the public.

Sue Beal, Manager of Cultural Venues, City of Melbourne

The local government authority works differently in Melbourne than in other local governments.

Australia is very reliant on the government to provide for services, including the government.

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No philanthropy to speak of. The vast majority of funds come from the gov. local, regional and national. The city of Melbourne is very well-off. Melbourne sold off its power plant, asphalt plants, and has invested their money wisely to make for a wealthy city. However, there are a lot of reporting requirements. They spend MOST of her time reporting to levels of government.

There are a lot of old public surplus buildings that have a local community connection, and people want to see them get maintained. **Arts House** - Council put 3.4 million into this space to make it into an arts presentation space.

In 1998 it was a venue for hire. Hardly any artists could use it. So the governing org got 180,000 granting program, to get artists to pay the city. The next step was to get council to agree to fund a curatorial program.

Most funding in Australia goes to large arts organizations and venues. The small orgs were being squeezed out and most state agencies were putting in very limited project funding.

The mobile states curatorial program was developed to support cutting edge works - 5 venues got funded to support this. City council put up money to be part of the program in Melbourne.

Meat Market – originally this old building was a craft centre, but after folding for the third time, the state government conducted research to determine it should be an arts centre.

A vision was developed to support artists for creation not tied to income. The funds for the operation of the building support space, time and some small grant funding made available for production.

The maintenance was kept outside the arts organization. The people who are programming spend their time with the artists. The body that maintains the space is now entering into the production of work too. They work with the artists to produce and to help them find a presentation space, including looking for external opportunities to present.

The work is in an intercultural area - working with indigenous artists and non-indigenous artists. Because the building provides space and time, artists could take the time to produce a new collaborative musical project. What started as a small idea has been very successful and has toured all Australian festivals.

A strong desire to work with the local community, with passive participation through use of space and also more active through introductions and networking type of interactions.

The meat market has 30 multidisciplinary tenants and there is no public access during the day. Potters, performers, etc. in big spaces made for creative development.

The City believed that it was important to have artists working and living in the city. They are developing affordable housing with a portion dedicated to artists - also a development of studio spaces. They work to show ways you can use empty space to make it available for arts and event use. The City has an advisory and arts board that works to identify empty buildings and land banks.

Jocelyn Robert, Méduse Cooperative, Québec City

Gentrification was the impetus for Québec to have interest in a cultural centre.

The centre allows people to share expertise and resources. It was built at a time when multidisciplinary practices were happening (1980s).

Most centers had a hard time being seen. This development benefited from self-management by the artists. All objects are tools to interact with, including space. This building was a place that would enable them to rethink their own creativity - rethink the model. The architect had to work with a rep from each group that would be in the space – 10 members and a rhizomatic structure. Each group is autonomous - each group takes care of itself and its success or failure does not threaten the rest of the group. Community radio, audio arts, visual arts, filmmakers, multidisciplinary theatre group.

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Example: recording studio

The sorts of elements needed for this part of the building were specified by the group. i.e. They only needed plywood in the recording studio. If they had done it another way, it would have cost twice as much.

The groups share resources, and each offers complimentary services.

The building is located in lower Quebec - the lower city has historically been for the workers. At the time of renovation the location was a lot of empty lots. The cityscape had some empty holes. The city built a park and then supported Meduse.

Meduse is a series of buildings that were partly abandoned on a main thoroughfare. It is now renovated, though it has maintained a respect of the old architecture.

Services - 60% production 40% exhibitions/presentations. Quebec city is very production oriented, so this model works. Presentation often happens in Montreal.

Matthew Kwatinetz, Producing Artistic Director/CEO Capitol Hill Arts Center, Seattle

CHAC challenge. The metaphor of a plant is appropriate. You can put seeds in the ground, but you can't make them grow. Incubation.

Capitol Hill Arts Centre was founded in 2002. This area of Seattle has the most arts organizations per-capita of any place in the USA. There was a lack of space and facilities, paying jobs, exhibition and performance opportunity, growth and development paths.

The structure - for profit is a different model. There are many for-profit models that can be explored. This one is triple-bottom-line. Others include linked prosperity.

This centre doesn't quite fit into the traditional model that a city might fund. CHAC went out to raise private dollars, and promised to bring back value to shareholders (not much) and to the community (a lot). The triple bottom line model was taken from Ice Cream Company, Ben and Jerry's.

Different prosperities are linked, and work in a partnership. In times of shortage the organization can come in a fill a need in the community. Building up artists that would then come back to work at the centre. Building up the businesses in the area with high traffic.

3 bottom lines:

- high value and quality
- art is essential, integration with the community. Use of art to help political process, advocacy, education
- show business is a business – committed to paying artists

The venue contains more than just arts groups – restaurant, Pilates studio e.g.

There are 7 kinds of relationships

Rental

Promotional partner

Investment license

Presenter

Sponsorship/marketing

Producer

Community development fund – granting program for artists

3 types of incubation spaces:

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50 seat studio – small rent – low threshold, not about commercially outstanding work

One focus is the development of how-to manuals, and a lot of consulting

There are revenue sharing models for different ventures where there is investment by CHAC
I.e. box office split

Example of incubation:

Circus creates adaptation of Alice in wonderland and the CHAC staff provided:

- Stage management
- Writer
- Director

Innovative use of space – a theatre that can be turned into a club space by two staff members in 20 minutes.
Doubled the use of the space to generate a new revenue stream – inspired by the Shakespeare festival

CHAC as a promotional partner has a specific series of services

Works as an advocacy group

A for profit can advocate for candidates and policy issues, and the arts centre/artists can act as cultural citizens.

3. Notable examples and links to websites

Maison de la culture Frontenac -

www.ville.montreal.qc.ca/portal/page?_pageid=87,1425078&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL

www.meduse.org

jr@jocelynrobert.com

www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/info.cfm?top=75&pg=791

www.capitolhillarts.com

Note taker: Allison Collins