

Creative Construct: Building for Culture and Creativity

Note-taking guide for session rapporteurs

METADATA

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

Presenters:

Louise Matte, Cultural Officer, Maison de la culture Frontenac, Montreal
Sue Beal, Manager of Cultural Venues, City of Melbourne
Jocelyn Robert, Meduse Cooperatie, Quebec City
Matthew Kwatinetz, Producing Artistic Director/CEO Capitol Hill Arts Centre, Seattle

Day: Tues. April 29

Time: 3:00 PM

NOTES

1. Short overview/summary of presentation

- Four directors discuss their facilities and the ways these connect with the neighbourhood, developing new creation and artists' careers while still managing to keep the doors open

2. Key points and significant themes of presentation

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

- Multi-disciplinary facility for performance – includes library
- Budget of \$250,000
- Many collaborators, well-located which assists with carrying out many exchanges, network of twelve artists centres – sharing resources between the network
- The landscape of cultural centres has evolved – not just presenters but actual collaborators – will work with artists or companies
- Three-week residencies without technical support – includes public rehearsals or workshops
- Public development is central to their mandate
- Bring school children from the area to the Maison de Theatre
- Used frequently for large conventions and festivals – will discover new artists
- Many free events, including presentations at the end of the year when the facility is not as busy

Sue Beal, Manager of Cultural Venues, City of Melbourne

- Arts House – creative development institution which includes space (offices, rehearsal, development, studios, performance), producing, touring, partnerships, support for emerging producers, residential studios, grant funding, Creative Spaces website
- General audiences range from 70-80 (max 200)
- Many public heritage buildings such as town halls were re-envisioned as cultural centres – the local community was very concerned about preserving the integrity of the occupied heritage buildings – preserving heritage elements has been able to accentuate the cultural experience of Art House

- Art House managed to convince city council to agree to a curatorial program and fund it as an arts centre (not just to publicize the venue) – consultation with artists ('What did they need?') – before that, government subsidies were squeezing out 'the small guys' because individuals and small companies could only secure individual project funding whereas operational funding was only provided to larger, established companies
- Federal Government program was set up to assist with the touring of experimental works around Australia – Melbourne council was convinced by Art House to be the host site of said tour in the city
- What does being an art centre means? It means not having to worry about 'putting bums in seats' – encourages artists to take time to develop craft and experiment
- Art House now has Artistic Producer, artistic advisors, technical staff, and administration
- Art House will help find funds for artists who approach the centre with projects or will kick in funds themselves to see it through to fruition – encourages partnerships with artists around Australia, and some from around the world – local council initially could not see value in this (especially overseas touring) – Art House managed to convince council that it was about developing artists' careers
- Encouraged the development of a piece created by indigenous artists – has been extremely successful and took two years to develop through the centre – has toured around Australia, Papua New Guinea, and the UK – art centre mandate allowed this to occur
- Encouraged extensive interaction between ethnic groups and artists
- Publishers, woodworkers, theatre artists, galleries, digital artists, etc. work within Art House's Meat Market edifice – "...constantly adapting to the needs of the field"
- As the central business district has become gentrified, many artists have been forced out as a result of rising real estate prices – city council believed it was important to re-integrate artist housing and working spaces within the downtown core – all housing being created in the downtown core has a certain percentage of its space dedicated to housing artists and creative use

Jocelyn Robert, Meduse Cooperatie, Quebec City

- Meduse is a cooperative of artistic producers and diffusers
- It is an anarchic organization – there is no General Manager – 10 independent centres which work within the Meduse complex – they are responsible for their own funding and operations
- Cost approximately \$12, 000, 000 at the time of development in the early 1990s (officially opened in the 1995)
- Moved into an undeveloped, vacant industrial area between the Old and New sections of Quebec City – City encouraged development in the area by creating large park
- Created during the emergence cross-disciplinary arts was emerging – was far more affordable and convenient to share resources among various art organizations than purchasing individual equipment, performance spaces, etc.
- Each group offers services that are complimentary to the other groups in the building
- Each architectural project was approved by the artists – engineers and architects were hired by the artists themselves (not civil servants)
- 60% of space dedicated to development, 40% to exhibition

Contact:

jr@jocelynrobert.com

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

- Founded in 2002 as a result of the severe lack of facilities for mid-range artists, growth and development paths, paying jobs in the cultural sector
- Three small performance spaces oriented towards incubation – reserved for creating works with no independent creative potential, shared use scene/prop shop (theatre space and game designers), cabaret space, bar, offices, small business incubation spaces, small studio, small art gallery, Pilates/massage studio, restaurant, and large performance space
- Was an auto warehouse before moving in
- “Lifestyle Centre” – encourages consumer traffic
- Solicited private donors in order to create a social venture – notion that artists were so important to city’s fabric that corporate sector would benefit from their success
- Mandate was ‘Art nourishes like food’ – found that community was able to rally around a (perhaps somewhat obvious) statement like that
- CHAC is a local incubator and platform situated in Capital Hill neighbourhood – urban community, event rental, producing, concessions and merchandising
- Important to integrate commercial business with cultural components (bars, theatres, production companies)
- Attempts to be a springboard to launch emerging artistic and commercial ventures
- Important not to compromise the quality and reach of each venture (just as important to create bars and restaurants that could hold their own with others in the city)
- 7 relationships: rental, promotional partner, investment license, presenter, sponsor, producer, community development fund
- Revenue sharing agreements, box office revenue
- Did not begin with 7 models; instead approached the project with the question: ‘How can we help artists’
- Example: Pure Cirkus created an adaptation of *Alice in Wonderland* – came in as a loose ensemble wanting to create a theatrical work with CHAC - development lasted two years and included dramaturgy, providing spaces, providing writers, providing a director, providing a band, and then sent them on their way into the ‘real world’
- Created a Business-in-Residence model for a night club called The Vogue – converted studio space into a temporary club each night (little pressure for rent money as space was already used for other applications)
- As promotional partners: PR services, website platform, newsletter, producer’s corner, convening
- Through their programming The Greatest Show on Earth, CHAC attempts to unify all of the disparate programming in the space into one digestible experience
- CHAC is a place where the community has a voice – artist as a citizen – encourages activism and involvement in local political processes
- Neighbourhood planning, reanimating democracy, expansion into other neighbourhoods

Note taker: Jordan Tannahill