

THE BROOKLYN COMMUNE PROJECT

ABOUT THE PROJECT

The Brooklyn Commune Project is a grassroots initiative organized by Culturebot.org and The Invisible Dog Art Center to educate, activate and unify performing artists of all disciplines to work together towards a more equitable, just and sustainable arts ecology in America.

The project is structured as an iterative, collaborative public visioning project investigating the economics of cultural production in the performing arts.

The project's goal is to create an artist-driven vision of a healthy arts ecosystem in America and to bring artists, institutions, administrators and funders together for mutually respectful, open, non-hierarchical discourse around difficult topics such as resource allocation, capital, value, labor, aesthetics and quality of life.

The Brooklyn Commune Project consists of four large public convenings, smaller weekly convenings and a Cultural Congress to be held at The Invisible Dog Friday-Sunday, November 22-24, 2013.

The events and research are being documented and disseminated iteratively on the project's website <http://brooklyncommune.org/> and will be edited into a platform document to be shared with our colleagues in January 2014 coincident with The Association of Performing Arts Presenters Conference in NYC.

While sited in Brooklyn, the project is inclusive of all NYC and aspires to develop a vision with national relevance. Our sphere of influence is the arts; our sphere of concern is global.

OUR PLATFORM

The Brooklyn Commune Project is predicated on the following ideas:

- Artists and creative people in all sectors – given space, time, information and incentive – are able to imagine a world that operates differently than this one. We will apply our creativity to envisioning meaningful, actionable pathways towards sustainable solutions.
- Artists, institutions, administrators and funders have the same desired outcome for the arts ecology: a healthy, vibrant, dynamic, diverse, inclusive, resilient and sustainable arts and culture sector America.

- We are not in an environment of resource scarcity but rather a resource rich ecosystem that has developed deeply dysfunctional systems for resource allocation & management. We will avoid unrealistic fantasies and unworkable utopianism, instead identifying systemic dysfunctions and obstructions as we work towards real solutions.
- Artists, institutions, administrators and funders must come together in a thoughtful, respectful, collaborative, rigorous way to create a collective path to achieving our shared desired outcomes.
- Members of The Brooklyn Commune will model the behaviors we are asking others to adopt: openness, transparency, inclusivity, responsibility, respect & rigor. And we hold ourselves accountable for our behavior as we work to establish a culture of mutual trust, respect and cooperation.

RESEARCH GROUPS

The following research groups are dedicated to exploring specific issues identified at the Brooklyn Commune Plenary. If you would like to get involved with any or all of the groups, please visit www.brooklyncommune.org for coordinator contact information.

Philanthropy, Foundations & Funding

This group is conducting a critical analysis of existing structures for capital allocation in the non-profit sector to develop recommendations for increasing transparency and renegotiating relationships between grantor and grantee with the goal of achieving mutually beneficial changes in the systems and structures for philanthropic support of the arts. How do we move together towards shared goals rather than in opposition?

Hacking Capitalism

How does capitalism actually work and how can we educate and empower each other to work more strategically in it? How is capital generated and allocated or amassed? What is a market, how is one created and regulated? How does the performing arts economic ecosystem exist in relationship to the dominant economy? This research group will explore issues of sustainability and precarity, interrogating the assumptions of the market and investigating how artists can play in and with the existing financial system.

Labor & Value

What is value and how do we value what we do? How do we associate the work of making art and the art of making work with labor & production? What is the real “value proposition” of live performance beyond economic impact of arts institutions in local economies? How do art workers assess the value of their work and make a case for a living wage?

New Models for Social Organization

Non-profits are corporations, too. If existing organizational structures are values-neutral, how do we hack existing structures devise new models that support our values in practice, not just in theory. In the Internet age, how do we aggregate ourselves in new ways that are not necessarily place-based? How do we create communities of scale to increase our influence? How do we work together outside of institutional structures to share knowledge and resources and build community in a way that is “center out” rather than “top down”?

Cultural Democracy & Representation

How do we insure that people from all points on the age, race, gender, orientation, religion and cultural spectra have a place in the conversation? How do we negotiate difference, acknowledge the unassimilable and develop shared languages for communicating across diverse perspectives and experiences?

Working Outside The Institution

This a group of independent creative producers developing sustainable cultural production models for working outside the institution. How do we develop frameworks for independent producers to fill the gap between institutional and artist project management & planning capacity? How do we make a case for funding this role and build a system for accountability and trust among independent producers?

Aesthetics Of Performance

How do economic conditions, class and production processes affect aesthetics and the appreciation and valuation of the performing arts? How can we envision aesthetic frameworks and vocabularies for the 21st Century? What might they look like and how can we share them?

For more information visit www.brooklyncomune.org