

## HAPPENINGS 3 & 4 of The Future is on the Table

### October 25-26th, 2008

*The following is a personal text by me, Gwylene Gallimard, as well as a compilation of notes. Please do not see that mix as the result of an appropriation, but instead receive it as a pulse for more interaction. Do you agree? Will you agree?*

*Many items in my memory are not part of this report, mostly because their clues are missing: not audible or no clear notes. So sorry.*

*But you are coming back for more, I heard! and for leading, I was told.*

#### **Alice Lovelace sent me that e-mail a couple of weeks before Happening 3 & 4.**

“I would like to see a lively discussion about the conflicting roles and demands put on art. The crux of the debate around art for art sake and art for the people’s sake. I would like to talk about the role of the artist as a worker who either supports and sustains the status quo or opposes it. Would like to discuss the benefits and drawbacks of both. Would like to talk about the significance and relevance of art critics and their role in endearing or alienating artists from the majority population (community). Would like to talk about why the majority population in this country does not think of art as something to support with their money or their time. The connections between art and culture, and the ways both are dying in a commodity driven world. Why the artist has been eliminated from the arts equation in schools (art in education instead of artists-in-education) and in galleries (a return to emphasis on dead artists). The lack of funding for programs aimed at writers. A broader definition of who is a writer and what constitutes writing. Our inability to hold multiple definitions of art and artists in a multi-cultural, multi-dimensional world. The desire to pigeon hold artists—for good and bad. The idea that artists are above the people, smarter than the people, more worthy than the people. Who are the people? The value of artist driven projects. How they differ from institution driven projects. The artist as social archeologist and economic guru—digging deep and creating something from a little bit of nothing. The future of community driven or community based arts and their role in changing the world. Why organizers devalue art. How artists can connect with organizers. Ways to turn around the lack of adequate funding for social change and community based arts. I want this to be a meaty free-ranging discourse. I see myself as a facilitator (asking provocative questions) and a moderator (tying all the parts together).”

*Here I hear an art influencing the social fabric: an art of which each event influences the next one; sort of a journey; an art that leaks into various programs of necessity to question the cultures and socio-politics of the day; an art that is participatory by nature: and one that is based on fair exchange. In the various joints and articulations of art and social change there is a world of possibilities. The Future is on the Table #3 started with a map made of stools. Could a #4 start with an open letter, wild flowers or paintings? The main participants were artists and craftsmen. Could they be active associations engaged in a peace process, inhabitants of our block or representatives – not elected - of ten towns with the same name in the world? The community minded artists have flexibility. They practice a multi-layered art. What can be their leadership when cultural assets are non-existent or denied? Often the best picture of the intent of an institution is a list of wonderful titles, organigrams, invitations, website and the description of an end product, as if everything is first geared to fund searching and raising a history. The Internet as the anchor for a dream. Our actions, thoughts, pictures and plans look good like a finished work - so much clearer than scribbled on notebooks. And we dream that hundreds, thousands of people maybe, access them at once. Yet they are lost in hundreds, thousands of other messages. And no hands have been shaken.*

*Where are the people? In my neighborhood porches and fireplaces have not been built or are not used. My street is a desert. Occasionally someone walks his/her dog. My deceased mother used to say that it was totally unfriendly for older people.*

## SATURDAY OCTOBER 25<sup>th</sup> - MORNING



*Happening 3 is scheduled to be at Redux Contemporary Art Center. Why? To encourage the participation of the energetic white crowd of Redux into a conversation of controversial issues that were raised by or highly intertwined in The Future is on the Table project. I did forget something though: dogs are part of the crowd and painters or printmakers use the space. Fumes and animals cannot be part of Alice Lovelace's life and Alice and Linda Burnham are again this weekend leading our conversations. We decide to move to the City Gallery at Waterfront Park. In the process we are losing one and a half hour of programming, a contingency, which actually brings a gentle human tone to a program that has been voluntarily designed as "uncomfortable". With the move, we also gain the participation of 14 students brought to see the show by Mary Gilkerson from Columbia College. Aurore Gruel, Marcia Kure, Rajni Shah, Latonnya Wallace and Delphine Ziegler had spent September 9 there, presenting their work and projects.*

*When we finally sit down, on the love chairs of "Please have a seat", the benches of the "Hip-Hop shelter" or the folding chairs brought to fill the holes, the MC Omari Fox offers us a poetry/speech introduction. I had been puzzled, even mad at times with Omari's lack of welcome, energy and openness for what I consider an opportunity of a lifetime: to be part of a team of international artists devoted to collaborate together in and with Charleston. They came from Africa, Asia and Europe. Some were here for a month and a half, some for three weeks, others for a week.*

**Omari Fox:** ... I collaborate when I am the leader! To be insular was/is necessary. I don't pay attention to people I am working with. I have inherited that from the Hip-Hop culture, which was born in the 70's. They were not paying attention to people who didn't agree, used hip-hop as a "buffer/cover". "Black Male Culture", some room for it.

**Gwylene Gallimard:** ... Split between you as artist and you as educator? Is your audience different?

**Omari:** ... I know as a hip hop dude I'm not interested in appealing to folks outside my neighborhood, but as an educator and messenger of ideas I am all for exposing my ideas to anyone, particularly folks in circles i don't walk in.

**Jean-Marie Mauclet:** What should we learn from this miss-communication?

**Omari:** ... Pay more attention to people's processes, do more homework on if you can collaborate. A resource map. It is a skill to blend and work together. Also I like being a leader.

**Frank Martin:** ... Is it a difference of culture? It's hard to understand the difficulties in communication since you speak the same language, work together at the cafe and meet so often. Learn the cultural differences behind the friendship.

**Gwylene:** ... We are now leadership/follower, not the leadership you just described, maybe because we are old

**Omari:** but mature!.... *Laughs*

**Arianne King Comer:** All artists have weaknesses and they will come up in collaborations like this. Collaborations bring awareness of many things we just don't know until we practice our creativity... We learn that way because we come with all our luggage, many of it is homemade, hard-worked, hard-thought...

*There is also the de facto responsibility for some of us of being Americans, therefore at the same time part of the host team and discolored by the perception offered by the media abroad today.*

**Alice Lovelace:** I have a problem with the word "American." It is impossible to create a "snapshot" of what it means to be "an American." It would have to be a "polaroid" and change with time.

**Gwylene:** Within the project the different world cultures worked wonderfully. And many people we had never met shared in a mix of humors generated from being and working together. Phinias lived in our house for a month and a half. We had never met him before. It could have been a drama.

*On October 18. Omari had an open hip-hop and spoken word session at the City Gallery. About twenty-five people listened or presented music, songs and poetry at the same place we are now conversing; or at the entrance of the burqua shelter; or within the African shelter or the Arpan market. That day I saw the community I had imagined to be part of his project within The Future is on the Table and understood The Future is on the Table was not his priority, only the proposed opportunities to expose, practice and gather were. Because they are necessary to his present group building process, which nevertheless seems to work without any selection. The Future is on the Table challenges did not fall at the right time and may even have been a burden to his – and others' – strategy. We were not his primary audience, "his neighborhood". Within my sadness I view some next steps, understanding that the best things each of us had brought to the project and to the other participants were on parallel lanes. It needed a few more crossroads beforehand, not just confidence and trust.*

*Now though, how often and where, in Charleston, have you seen or been part of a public conversation on the weight of cultures, races and leaderships between artists? between African-American and Euro-American? between people in their 20's, 30's, 40's, 50's and 60's - I believe Sunday even included someone in her 70's - ? This point of my evaluation credits The Future is on the Table with a plus: the project placed the conversation a little bit more public – therefore more feasible – and a little bit more advanced – therefore creative -.*

## AFTER LUNCH



**SETH CURCIO: “Art in a Class Driven Society: Commodification, Self-Censorship, and the meaning of Selling Out”.**

*The more formal - and brilliant – presentation by Seth Curcio “will touch on ideas related to art market inflation, art fairs, market influence on artists, self-censorship, collection trends, the art market and current economic crisis and how the artist as an individual negotiates the creative process with market demands. Will probably also touch on the introduction of self-aware commodification in art, current artists who use commodification conceptually, and artists whose work is in opposition to the idea of possible commodification. Also the differences between the non-profit and the commercial venue and considering market value and artistic value.”*

**Seth:** People buy art on a commercial level but then there is a degree of wanting to know about the artist... Majority of purchases come from people trying to figure out their own social value through the art. It's hard to figure out the artistic value of a work after the price climbs so high... Compromise. I do not sell a lot of work. I intersperse works I think will sell with those that represent my ideas. Singular creative process- how to survive as curator, writer, and artist...

**Ellen Kochansky:** What I want is to be able to eat and to say something. You get so full of yourself as an artist, the more your value goes up... I learned a way, then worked with others and spread it. Community art... Artists should be teaching the community to ask... what do I care about? In a non-greedy way.

**Seth:** Jeff Koons- will take things like a lifejacket, cast it in bronze, essentially making it useless, and then re-introduce it. Koons is saying that because of “*who I am and with my position in society*” it will become way more expensive and wanted.

Damien Hirst- Interested in creating the most expensive work. A skull made of diamonds. Hard to talk about art without relating it to the economy, government, and society. People tend to look at art as if it is a neutral place not affected by the economy...

**Zelda Grant:** We need to think out of the Gallery Box... Guys become locked up because they miss art and I am so glad some of you bring their art wherever they can.

**Shirley Fields Martin** reminded us how hard it is to maintain a non-profit art association, navigate through administrative hurdles, keep everyone involved and understanding in hard times and develop a challenging viable self-sustained program. She pointed out how painful it is to have to let go.

What is COMMODIFICATION?

“Turning basic Goods and Services into products for capitalist financial markets“ (in Today's Globalization by Project South)

*One of the most engaging presidential campaigns has just ended and it may be time to reflect on it to address our artistic issues.*

“They cater to a nation that now lives in a state of permanent amnesia. It is style and story, not content or history or reality, which inform our politics and our lives. We prefer happy illusions. And it works because so much of the American electorate, including those who should know better, blindly cast ballots for slogans, smiles, the cheerful family tableaux, narratives and the perceived sincerity and the attractiveness of candidates. We confuse how we feel with



knowledge...The most essential skill in political theater and the consumer culture is artifice... In an age of images and entertainment, in an age of instant emotional gratification, we do not seek or want honesty. We ask to be indulged and entertained by clichés, stereotypes and mythic narratives that tell us we can be whoever we want to be, that we live in the greatest country on Earth, that we are endowed with superior moral and physical qualities and that our glorious future is preordained, either because of our attributes as Americans or because we are blessed by God or both.” “*Illiterate*” by Chris Hedges

*There is a necessity for an artist to make money and survive as a partner in the field of art. That said, to refer to Jeff Koons or Damien Hirst as role models for an artist echoes for me the dreams of African American teenagers to become Magic Johnson. It is a fantasy. Jeff Koons and Damien Hirst address the art philosophy of a circle of people who, because of its size will fit in a cruise boat. It is a sub-culture with too much power. And what does it do to us? It takes all the adventure out of the art and moreover it develops an art history that is based on market issues, and is being taught without acknowledging the other issues or the arts own ground, their philosophy, aesthetics and social implications. Doesn't art heal?*

*Among the crowd at the City Gallery that day there are students, administrators, art promoters, activists and plain observers and artists of many different walks of life. A quick test lets me know that Jeff Koons and Damien Hirst are not as well known as Magic Johnson.!*

*We live in a changing society and are taught to admire its decadence as opposed to the energy and potential of the field of art. The practice of so many “other” artists may actually involve in-reach dreams, as opposed to outreach attempts, often close to charity giving without social consequences; audience as participants, communities as equal partners, the trail in-between; analyses of Art worlds as opposed to domination of The art world; review of art history in order to repossess it and understand its mechanism in the selective process; a look at the conditions of existence for strong art, which means all kinds of support, not only \$ ; the necessity or not of producing more of the same; and the promotional factors that may have nothing to do with the products themselves., See Marlboro Man and the cancers it generates! This is not a socialist history, only an awareness of the social and cultural components of our grounds.*

*But what surprises me the most today is how little we seem to care about the production machines of the star artists, even the half stars. How come someone attempting primarily to personallyself-express on a canvas – and nothing is wrong per se with that - can imagine having a direct life line with Jeff Koons? The mind of those two people may be as different as someone who lives in a time where the earth was flat and a CEO in the 21<sup>st</sup> century entertainment industry. Where is the role of scholars in this actual fact? Artists have done a lot about it: some is known and degraded or barely promoted, some is known and bleached out – amnesia -, some is dismissed because of its dangers, some is not known by design from its authors. Why?*

*And how come Redux members did not feel the presentation of their former Executive Director was going to be meaningful? How come Redux Contemporary Art Center is 99.99% White? My community-based art understands the major avant-gardes and artistic confrontations from the 70's. It actually understands their consequences and envisions a future for the arts, which is not built on narcissism, elitism, racism, sexism, classicism and cynicism or 101 destructive competition. That is how I honor my fellow artists from the past. Take their lessons. And yes making art does cost money and is nourished by encounters with activism minded people and the ones who do not look like me. We all do have five senses and know of five dimensions.*



## **LINDA BURNHAM: "Help Wanted: Communities Reach Out"**

*It resulted from a survey Steve Durland and Linda did of about 25 active artists they knew. "We did the survey because most of the projects we are aware of are artist-initiated. We wondered about whether there are projects that are community-initiated. We asked the artists if they had ever been contracted by a community "out of the blue" and hired to help the community with something it wanted to do. We got back quite a few answers. What it means to me is that if more people knew that artists can and do work for and with communities, more communities would seek out and hire artists. I think this is actual news and not opinion. The reason I would like to read this is that the conventional wisdom about artists is that they don't get any support. I think this paper would challenge that wisdom and add something positive. (Note: Not all of the requests from communities were about addressing social justice.)"*

**Linda:** Projects have included after school programs, river clean-ups, highway clean ups, aesthetic engagement. Programs are often launched to solve an issue. Most artists who have been through college are white and middle class. They are trained to work with underserved communities like missionaries.

*As opposed to the privileged artist going to a community with the will to learn and participate?*

That is a problem. Is our ideal community one with its own artists?

**Frank:** An art project may bring together communities that don't get along. Sometimes communities Vs administrators.

**Alice:** ... Duality in United States. The community needs something, you do it: arts "missionaries" yes. Time Warner and paradox of hip-hop. Distortion of cultural centers of color. Old traditions that certain communities hold onto but not seen from outside...

**Seth:** ... How Hip-Hop can function in inner-city communities?

**Omari:** ...Young, black, male; providing creative outlets in ways that appeal to them- to attempt to prevent gang growth- to keep the kids out of gangs. Develop your own following, get labels to contact you. People learning the history of rap- so that they know why it came about and how it has changed some artists... in order to make money, this is what we will do.

**Darryl:** The "cool to be ignorant" buyers of rap: young white males (vs. young black males). Rap is about human experience vs. race. ...

**Omari:** ... Rap as a mandate to be yourself- mandate to be something else... Danger is something that is pure but becoming commercialized... What generates the income for distributors? The n-word rap- it is not about the public...

## **DARRYL WELLINGTON: "Charleston Art Institutions and their Audience"**

*The following excerpts come from notes taken by Jamie Robertson...*

(Emphasizes the fact that what he is saying is from his perspective, his experiences, and his opinions.) Doesn't like most things he sees in Charleston. Stopped going to arts events in Charleston. Weren't exhibiting values he approved of. Social connections-"graph" linking

everyone at an art event in Charleston. Exclusionary. Charleston is a one-dimensional city. No history of political activism. Push to be international.

- Should be culturally progressive vs. politically progressive. Do more to bring in outside audiences.
- Charleston's push on trendiness. Example of one-dimensional thinking- downtown represents all Charleston; art organizations cater to this area.
- Art should address all subjects. Relationship between audience and art. Gentrification. Audience made through social connections. I'm not part of the connection, it's like going to a party you haven't been invited to- can't have an aesthetic experience.
- Footlight Players Program- "we are developing an audience of young urban professionals." Exclusive. Charleston "keeping up with the Jones's" quality.
- Catch 22- If you watch, you must live. If you don't watch, now you do. Know if you live or don't live.
- Everyone enters on an even playing field. Faux progressiveness.
- Arts organizations in Charleston would do well to put as much work into developing an audience and educating an audience as producing their product.

*And this is the point of view of a person interested in the arts- poet, playwright- who doesn't go to plays anymore.*

Comments:

- Education at the core. Not okay to be ignorant. Everyone enters a show with himself or herself as they have been cultivated in the arts throughout their lives. – Education is key.
- What is a success in an arts event? Don't curtail success.
- Arts organizations enhance the cities one-dimensionality and provide art for a homogeneous society, which does not exist.

## **FRANK MARTIN presentation**

*It is becoming very late, past 5Pm. Here is what is still planned:*

*Writers – Readers. Aesthetic evaluation. A catalogue in progress. "L'Avenir est sur la Table", Frank Martin*

*Artists-driven projects: how they differ from institution-driven projects? Why organizers devalue art? Alice Lovelace*

*A community-grant art program at Redux. Jessie Bower*

*It is not going to happen and Frank is not coming to-morrow. We are all tired. I am pushing Frank to at least talk for five minutes.*

*Frank is first referring to the catalog and his text "L'Avenir est sur la Table!!!: a Conceptual Artwork as a Theoretical Model for Global Social Interaction" and the discussions generated by the comments of a few readers, placed along its text and the one of Darryl. Please refer to:*

*<http://thefutureisonthetable.ning.com/profiles/blog/show?id=1908930%3ABlogPost%3A2146>*

*Following that discussion and the openings of the shows I had written a text "An Insider View of the Past/Present of an Art Project"- available as a pdf file at <http://thefutureisonthetable.ning.com/> AN INSIDER VIEW TO THE PAST.pdf*

*This text was partly dedicated and offered to Darryl and Frank as a ball back in the camp of the writers/critics or, more to the point, to continue this effort of learning from the audience and readers of The Future is on the Table.*

*Frank reminded us that he was the curator of The Future is on the Table #1 at the Stanback Museum of South Carolina State University and has been involved with great interest and curiosity in all the steps of the project, including the one which appeared to be stimulating as well as potentially humiliating for his profession. "... global construction of culture that respect difference with an inclination toward the evasion of*



hierarchical, directed, privileged aesthetics judgments. This approach, centered in a Western cultural tradition, but incorporating experimental insights, sifted through the richly literate ideological awareness of the initiating artists, naturally opens an implied conversation on the meanings of quality, issues of authorship and cultural flexibility, and questions on the relevance or irrelevance of concepts of aesthetic unity.”

*Still intrigued by the misunderstandings of some comments and the using of various languages, from questions to interjections to plain comments,, Frank highlighted the connections between the institutionalized parts that I had started to describe: objects, audiences, sites... all elements which could be used to generate strong emotions, opportunity for anger, a dialogue on water and shelter as well as aesthetic research.*

## DINNER



*Latonnaya Wallace had organized a dinner at the Art Institute. It was a fundraising dinner for Alternate ROOTS. See [www.alternateroots.org](http://www.alternateroots.org)*

*“A regional arts service organization with over 30 years of history, Alternate ROOTS is an invaluable national resource to artists, organizers and cultural workers... Alternate ROOTS provides the connective tissue for a distinct segment of the arts and culture field - artists who have a commitment to making work in, with, by, for and about their communities, and those whose cultural work strives for social justice... Alternate ROOTS contributes to the sustained artistic development, increased visibility, and stability of activist artists.” Alternate ROOTS is now very present in South Carolina and the members of the South Carolina Rhizome represent a diverse range of people.*

*The dinner was prepared by the students of the Art Institute following some recipes of Fast & French lunch or dinner specials. During the dinner, there is a wonderful opportunity for some of the staff of Fast & French to exchange about their recipes and ways of cooking with the freshman class.*

*I am struck by the fact that the vision of the students is mostly toward becoming a chef. They seem to be exclusively taught within the dream of becoming a Chef, when actually they may dream and be taught as well to become an entrepreneur, building their own little food business without being the main Chef, but with the advantages of educating others in the process, managing one’s own schedule and salary and even more one’s own aura and small scale social impact. The reward may not be as big money wise but the quality of life it generates may be very gratifying until late in life.*





## SUNDAY OCTOBER 26<sup>th</sup> - MORNING

*My night is not good. I can see "THE END" and want so much more. I am puzzled by the absence of a few people I had considered to be my own audience. At 9am the telephone rings and I hear something like: "It was so great yesterday. Although I told you we could not come today, we are making arrangements and we will be here". Thank you so much. You are blowing up the "THE END" sign in my head and allowing snow to shine in Charleston!*

*Gillian Ellis and Meredith Hutchins took the following notes. Lauren Barsan wrote additional notes from video recordings.*

*And here I feel like performing them. Maybe this is the path to action. Let's see.*



Shelter overall and shelters in this space and how the artist thrived to cover this topic. What is the role of the artist, how to get your idea and passion to put out to the public, how art affects the public. Funding arrangements: Program, "Arts Up" where communities were assigned artists. Stopped because of funding reasons - funding was attached to a politician. It is hard for visual artists to receive money unless they are with a program. Another program in ATL, money is given to communities to buy pieces of art. Community Performance Inc, in Union, SC, a business owner thought that a community play would benefit the community and hired artists to put on a production.

Shelter as a safe space to create, intellectual or literal level. Models of this in the art community?

Are there any safe heavens in your life, money aside, where is a place where you felt safe? Growing up at a shelter, had a playhouse made out of an old chicken coop - very important to have a playhouse, so much time for creation / Was part of a family of 13 kids. Mother did not allow her to sit and write, it meant she was 'being idle', hands were to always be moving; so she would hide behind all the winter coats in the back of the closet and write for hours.

Big city as a shelter. Possibilities for shelters in bigger cities. The squat wave in Paris: Artists invading old abandoned buildings; focus on the art; everything was recycled, not much money involved; public, neighborhood complained because it was different, therefore 'disruptive'; united the artists on the basis of the need for a place.

*Could we do this in Charleston?* Mattress factory building in ATL: artists invaded and claimed the ground to create art installations; would be set up for a few months, then taken down. No selection; whoever wants to be in it: show up, climb, go through walls... very thrilling when you are young. There are places like this in Charleston: port city-empty containers; a show of installations in containers. Pick a neighborhood where we have a connection and set up shop. Street Level Youth Media in Chicago: teach kids how to make their own movies; wanted to show the products; had a block party and outlets in the houses facing the street; literally connected to the community.

Is there a tree outside that could be a meeting place where artists meet once a week or so and have a time to create? A train station, to go once a year, once a month? Gardens/parks need to think about community art. If you propose plans to perform in a park, you are not allowed to, but if you are just to show up randomly, it would be a go. Art can become political if politicians become involved, endorsement. Fear of endorsing "throwing steak around" like it happened in Chicago Millennium park, to reproduce what the Surrealists did.

In some cities, they set aside approx 1% of budget for art. Example of Spoleto, endorsed, funded and accepted. Like an institution. Does the public have the right to not see art? Graffiti, illegal... but it was the result of not having a venue, a classroom or any space.

Does this idea of having a shelter here in Charleston have to be downtown? Really we are larger than just downtown Charleston. Used to be a school in James Island, but was torn down and now it is just an empty public space. Could we use this? What do we really want this space to be? Where could we make it happen?

Do we really need a space? What does space do to your work? What do we want to do with a space? A place to zone out and have the art around. A poetry space. An ambiance to help the creative process. Shelter is to be in a safe space. Could take over and make space in abandoned houses. Collective action is what is so valuable. This space (the City Gallery at Waterfront Park) became a shelter and a workplace, a studio, for one month before the show. The Clemson students for example had a hard time visualizing their project in the space. After many measurements and studies they could build it for the space with the philosophy of The Future is on the Table and meet the artists at work. *"Long Tube and Water Table: Tears of the crying Baby or a Waterfall?" LW*

Like the idea of the foreclosed houses. Could approach a bank with idea of a moving exhibit. Woman House: in LA on Bunker Hill, concerns about women's rights, installation with female mannequins. So many thoughts about shelter, house, and ownership and what it can do for the community. An American artist of Vaudevillian arts, also electrician died in a revolution in

Nicaragua. Group of artists wanted to find his grave. The graveyard filled with colors; people had picnics and children playing, so alive; a graveyard was a public space. Taking back public space.

RECAP of points covered: - in an intellectual and literal way artists need space. - how necessary is funding to find your shelter? - Art raids. - Trees as a meeting place... - Landscape of islands, not only downtown. - Notion of what these places mean. - To be creative, be safe? - Approaching banks about foreclosures and see if we could take over... Relationship between the art world and the audience, institutions and the audience. Contemporary visual arts. Needs to be a group for actions, to be truly community oriented.

Imagine we have a land, then what? Approach the land with intent, broader involvement. Make it mean something to others. What we fail to do is challenge audiences. Art should be outlandish, not pretty, because it is inviting. Example: dinner party that is not in the traditional sense, the invitees become the art. The audience should define what art is, not the art define the audience. Make a space relevant beyond the artists, so the audience can connect.

Large stores have been closing down and spaces are available: talk to owners of buildings. If students were able to participate and co-contribute, the volume of people alone could help out. What we need to do now is decide what is happening now, after the show. Learn lessons from what we have already done. Define our activities and then choose a space. Focus on space is a psychological hang-up.

## BREAK



**Bill Carson** reads some “sounds from home”. A local artist, **Jonathan Brown**, who had stumbled across the exhibit performed a poem about his perception of having a bad day. **Alice** reads a piece she had written during the meeting. **Audrey** presented her piece of Bob Marley and asked for suggestions on how she could improve it.

Based on the discussions of yesterday: Do you think it is possible for a white artist to work in a community that isn't their own and be effective. - Yes, of course! - Does it deal with intent? - Very much so - Also an issue with poor white communities.



**Dona Hurt and Sarah Ferguson** wrote a proposal to work on the House of the Future in the east side of Charleston. Created by David Hammons in “Places with a Past: Site-Specific Art in Charleston”1991. Intent was to take this fallen art and revamp it to bring new life to the community and neighborhood. A public place where the community had claimed ownership to, but it is privately owned. **Alice:** Don’t go to communities with the idea that something is lacking in the children or lacking in the system, you just need to help them dig deeper and help them find what they already possess or your intervention may result in damage, internally in the community. We are all the same. **Darryl:** Be part of the community first. Create an event for artists from the community to come out. See what the local artists have to offer. A community cannot exist without artists. This is part of the myth that they have nothing to offer. **Alice** learned from her mentor (Toni Cade Bambara) to never separate yourself from the people. As a result she took her instructions from the people. It was her job to give the community what they needed to use their skills.

**Omari:** Always treated students as equals, let them have the freedom to practice their own voice. **Audrey:** grateful that she had the freedom to express her creativity and not be held back with her peers. **Linda:** there are trained community-based artists. Cal State Univ. in Monterey Bay, students are given a great experience by being emerged in different cultures. The culture immerses the students. **Tim Taylor:** what do we want to do with a space? **Nathan Koci:** It’s not about space but more about the artists’ role in the community. **Bill Carson:** Every challenge is an opportunity in disguise. **Jean-Marie:** My workspace “keeps me in shape,” but the creativity comes from outside. The studio is a safe-space. **Linda:** Not a hunger for space, but a hunger for creativity.

Does identity always have to involve race? **Latonnaya:** people go on what they first see. **Alice:** do not give into what your race means, define your own voice and identity. But race does exist. **Gwylene:** Nationality or appearance of another nationality can also cause people to have judgments beforehand.

## AFTERNOON

### And what the observers have to say

*The observers were people we intentionally asked to look at our work. We, by decision, were going to provoke and search for their thoughts. They were part of our primary audience and chosen to cover different grounds of income, education and prior experience with the arts.*

“The art form on the burqua and on identifying that the women beneath the burqua are living, breathing people moved me the most. I found that the multiple representations, which all differed greatly, really opened my eyes to the fact that I hadn't really considered the effects on the person beneath the burqua. The art itself became dynamic as people were drawn into discussions about how differently the burqua is viewed in different cultures...

The artwork shown by Phinias was also extremely unique in the fact that it wasn't just confined to what he was showing. The clay, which was a new medium for him, was sculpted in a way that accentuated his story.” **Conner Hansen**

Gwylene reported a story that **Saleha Dhaouahira** shared with her: her sister, a Muslim Algerian mother telling her daughter that if she wears the burqua, she would follow her completely naked..



**Brent Lacy:** worked with Rajni and participated with gift giving. On opening day he was part of the group that gave \$1 to strangers. He was nervous about giving the gifts, it is not something you do in everyday life. He had a range of responses. Some people were extremely happy that someone had talked to them, resulted in small talk but some meetings were extremely awkward, no eye contact, trying to ignore the situation. Very surprised that within a two-block area there was such a range of people. When asked about the point of this project, he would give his interpretation and the artist's perspective. But he didn't want the receiver of the gift to make the association of receiving a \$ and having to check out the exhibit.

About September 14 in the garden of the Gibbes; "As her dance ended, Aurore just stood underneath the (pear?) tree, the two blocks of ice slowly melting over her face. As she stood placid, her eyes seemed to burn a hole into the back of my head and I could almost hear her whisper "Do you see now?"...

The heat of the day seemed palpable and heavy, as if some imminent transformation loomed in the fabric of the air in front of us. Everything about the day was a novel experience." **Brent Lacy**

**Darryl Wellington:** shared story of him walking down King St and a bum asked him for a dollar. The bum ended up giving him a dollar and wanted the interaction with someone. So Darryl left thinking about this transaction long after he walked away – 2 years later!

**Rena Lasch :** volunteered to be an observer, was surprised that to be an observer meant that she had to participate in the project. Amazed at the sense of community she felt between the artists and observers. Intrigued how the international artists interacted, "a buzz" going around the gallery on the opening day. She couldn't focus on one thing. Thought interesting how unique an experience it was to be able to be a part of this international community.

**Meredith Hutchins:** works for the city gallery and her job is to introduce the art. Thought it was amazing how different the responses were from the visitors from off the street. One group of people was shocked, some just walked through, and others were thoroughly intrigued. Shared a story about a group of ladies that came through and they went through every room and were very intent about learning every installation and they said that exhibits like this one should be in every city. Another story, a man came in looked around and ran right back out.

- *It would have been interesting to use the energy of the group of women as a step towards the next project –*



**Tim Taylor:** struck by the warmth and affection between the artists and participants, getting so much from each other and be reaffirmed in their own lands (Ideas, etc.) by each other even though they had differences, for example, the language barrier. Amazed because artists had control over their pieces, but didn't because it was formed with other participants. The willingness to take risks was something he appreciated, the strangeness and newness of it. "That is something to use in our everyday lives. It takes a certain discomfort level that helps us grow." A treat for him to be part of this project. "And a threat! Struck by artists' need to produce. I am wondering if this need is universal".

**Erin Glaze** will post on the website how many people came through the exhibit.

**Shannon Douglas:** participated in Rajni's workshop. Compared it to Christmas and felt so strange about giving gifts without receiving something in return. It raised questions in her mind about gift giving. Feels if she had received a gift, she would not accept it because she had nothing to give back. Thought it was very interesting how the bird exhibit evolved throughout the exhibit. Told a story about a group of women who came through the gallery as well. She gave them a tour. They felt that everyone should receive a tour to know the history and ideas behind it. Responses may be based on the knowledge the observers had, the more knowledge led to more appreciation.

**Latonna:** was an assistant to the artists, which allowed an inside look into the connections, collaborations and artists' process. She had assisted Delphine and Aurore for a while, when she realized they had just met a year or so ago. It seemed like they had been working with each other for their entire lives, like sisters who were able to bring each other's art out. They had such a willingness to connect with everyone. Aurore did work with Rajni and Marcia Kure. And Marcia worked with the young girls and was so interested in getting the info about the burqua out. Students developed a connection with each other. When Latonna was giving gifts at the café, she was uncomfortable and chose not to know what the outcome could be. Interactions with the artists from India were the most interesting. She had conversation with the women through gestures and body language. Watching them open up and have this sense of empowerment was very rewarding and interesting.

**Arianne:** "One of the women was a healer and the director of the embroidery. She always looked at your eyes and knew the truth of your soul. She felt her comfort of looking right through you even though she couldn't communicate very well. She observed that we do not sit down enough as a culture, that we are always moving and do not take enough time for slow down. One of the women became a mother type figure."

**Jean-Marie:** Phinias Chirubvu is an example of giving back to the community and teaching children his trade. Actualization to give a chance to people to create - gives students control and instant power to create. Phinias created his own job and was sharing that freedom as well. "My brother was a strong worker, carving stones all day".

**Taye:** shared her views on performing her dance. It gave her a sense of accomplishment and pride. She had a great time performing her pieces.

**Laura Moses:** became involved in the project because of GG and JM. Has really enjoyed hearing about everyone's experiences. Had too much fun looking at the tree and little extra time to enjoy the works around her.

"I finally made it to the Gibbes today and I just wanted to say how much I enjoyed looking at all of the carts. Aurore, I read your little hanging diaries with the photos -- they were so sweet. and I loved the ice books with the shiny crumpled paper and netting : ) I just wanted to say again (...I feel that whatever I said on Sunday at the gallery was not very eloquent...) how pleased I was to be involved with this project." **Laura Moses**

**Lanyka Lincoln:** found the installation of the Indian women to be the most interesting and intriguing. Enjoyed going to the beach with them and observing their responses to the water. She is making a poster. Rajni inspired her about the idea of gift giving. She carried on Rajni's tradition by giving gifts to her fellow classmates at Trident Tech.

*HAS BEING A PART OF THE PROJECT CHANGED THE WAY YOU WILL ENGAGE IN ART  
IN THE FUTURE?*

**Khary King:** He became involved because he came to help his mom (Arianne) out with her installation. The energy of the show changed his view; people so compassionate about their art. Found out that it was possible to talk about art all day. If you are to be an artist, you have to have the motivation and dedication. He was truly not interested in the entire project at first. Thanks everyone for helping him come into his inner artist.

**Latonnaya:** Talking to the different artists about what they do has inspired her. She always felt a distance in the past between the artists and herself, but now feels the warmth and encouragement from them to express herself.

**Alternate ROOTS**, and its Annual Meeting was mentioned a lot and mainly by young African American artists. Alice gave a brief history of Alternate Roots. Alice, Linda, Jean-Marie and myself are older members of the organization and have lived many rummages. Today we learnt that Alternate ROOTS was live and young. It had succeeded in diversifying the race, sex, sexual orientation and age of its membership. Jean-Marie also expressed that, with the Future is on the Table, we may have made a crack in the system governing the normal exhibitions that are at the City Gallery at Waterfront Park

*Other observations were sent through the mail or are in many places on the website  
***thefutureisonthetable.ning.com.****

"For Rajni Shah's piece... I love the idea of art being interactive. Her work is a remind of the beauty in the transfer of feelings/emotions between different people."

"Omari Fox's piece... It was gripping and visceral. I felt a connection between the people who helped create the comic and poetry."

"Marcia's piece... I think she deftly portrayed the confines of the burqua and the richness of the people who wear them (by choice or not)." **Janelle Ferguson**

"I suspect G&M wanted to open to the community at large, which of course they have done. If the show's success can be measured in what seemed to be first-time visitors to the City Gallery, the project has succeeded...." **Christine Castaneda**

“The discussion between the artist, the collaborators, and the audience at the Gibbes is a clear testament to the project's success in provoking dialogue, ideas, and hopefully action. As Linda observes after the presentation, "We usually don't have differences of opinion in art environments. We know 'the right thing' to say."... Occasionally I slip into moments of doubt when I wonder, "Why art? Is it mine? Is this constructive or should I become more focused on organizing and service-based activism?" Not to pre-judge what my path will be, but after hearing Alice equate humanity and art and take ownership of it, which makes such immediate sense, I won't be doubting the incredible power and importance of art again. ... and when Linda relayed her experience, I started to remember three different sight-specific installations and performances that I saw in Somerville as a child and absolutely loved, which I had completely forgotten until that moment”. **Ruby Thorkelson.**



## AS MUCH AS IT LOOKS TO SOME AND AS LITTLE AS IT LOOKS TO OTHERS

*The City Gallery wrote in one promotional e-mail:*

“Bringing this exhibition to Charleston has been a community effort with various elements presented in visual arts venues in and around Charleston including: The City Gallery at Waterfront Park, The Gibbes Museum of Art, The Halsey Institute of Contemporary Art, Redux Contemporary Art Center, and North Charleston's City Gallery. The City Gallery at Waterfront Park and the City of Charleston Office of Cultural Affairs would like to thank everyone who has been involved with the project. As the exhibition is coming to a close, we encourage you to take advantage of this unique contemporary art experience. “

*The fact that The Future is on the table spread over three exhibition spaces, organized presentations at three more venues and artistically involved four more non-profit or educational organizations did not happen by consensus between the above named art organizations or a real community effort. It happened through the design of the project, a molecule in action. But as far as I know there was never any discussion between organizations about collaboration, partnership, sponsorship or budget; the invitation, the catalog, any promotion, tours or outreach; content, intended effects or meaning. Jean-Marie and I led most of everything and partnered easily with almost everybody. The process was not to bring everybody at the table to talk about the project beforehand, since we could not foresee that working. Institutions have political status, hierarchical structure, commitments to their board and different education. A reality that is often detrimental to artistic research and experiment. This project was not about them - another project could be though -. The possibility for the culmination of The Future is on the Table #3 to be in Charleston started with the City Gallery at Waterfront Park and an attached budget offered by the*



*Charleston Office of Cultural Affairs. The project was welcome in all the meetings we organized afterwards. And each partner, collaborator or sponsor was like an individual in a story circle, bringing something to the table that became a necessity, was used and acknowledged. And yes thank you all.*

**Gwylene Gallimard:** ... I think The Future is on the Table would have never happened if we would have worked together from the start

**Darryl Wellington:** ... But in a way going to different venues, following the trail, well that is not working together but that breaks the insularity of the institutions and is audience development... by that simple act it provides the idea that maybe art is for everyone...

**Jean-Marie Mauclet:** ... need of incentives...

**Christine Castaneda:** ... you have to do it your way. The institutions in this town will never... they are pursuing the same audience and fighting for the same \$...

**Rebecca DesMarais:** ... whatever you have to give is a point of entree to work together.

**Latonna Wallace:** I hope that partnership between all these venues and organizations left them with a sense that it can be done and that they don't have to wait for the artists to do it.

*"My hat is off to you, the artists, and the many community participants. You've achieved something monumental in knitting everyone together for a single purpose." Mark Sloane, The Halsey Institute from the College of Charleston*

*It is at the same time gratifying and worrisome to see the "community effort" view acknowledged by a few people in charge. Could it be analyzed and evaluated? Could it be exemplified? What further role could it play in the future of Charleston Institutions and specially their relationship with artists and audiences?*