

CreateNYC: Bay Ridge Neighborhood Workshop, 3/25/17

Participants

- Rita Pihra Majurinen – Music Teacher. Runs the Children's Chorus of Bay Ridge and Art on the Corner at Good Shepherd
- Victoria Hofmo – Runs an all arts program for school age children, Runs the Scandinavian East Coast Museum, Founded and runs BRACA (Bay Ridge Arts & Cultural Alliance), which advocates and promotes all arts and cultural activities, groups and individuals,. BRACA created and runs the Embrace Winter Festival, participates each summer in two of Bay Ridge's Summer Strolls and is creating a Dance Festival this year.
- Craig Gabriel– Young Dancers in Repertory, Bay Ridge/Sunset Park, runs arts- based After School Programs in public schools.
- Susan McCormack – neighborhood participant in arts and culture, a member of the community interested in getting involved
- Yassir Khalifa – artist, Egyptian Celebration Corporation, National Council for Traditional Art, bridging Western and folk traditions
- Audrey Anastasi – practicing artist, owns Tabla Rasa gallery in Sunset Park, on the board at Brooklyn Arts Council, Dance Theatre Etcetera
- Joseph Anastasi –co-owner of Tabla Rasa, Musician, witnessing changes in Bay Ridge
- Ellen – art teacher in Sunset Park, just opened a storefront, which is also my studio: Printspace
- Joseph Shahadi – ED of the Art of Brooklyn Film Festival, decentralized across the borough , but Bay Ridge is an important screening location. Bay Ridge is my home
- John Avelluto – artists with my studio in Bay Ridge, founder of Bay Ridge Storefronts Arts Walk (15 independent artists), proprietor of The Owl's Head
- Jeannine Bardo – artist in Dyker Heights; Stand, a curated series where the community finds space, get history, propose and recruit artists. Currently on Stand 4, an active space and four artist studios on 78th at 4th/5th Aves, on the board of 5th Avenue SAW with John. Art Teacher at St. Ephrem's.
- Aeilushi Mistry – performing artist and dancer, brining art from India, a form of storytelling and celebration
- Nicole – an arts participant, used to teach middle school, love public art, help with writing task.
- Fran Gerber and Regina Opera could not make it, asked or a update .

Neighborhood Character/Social and Economic Impact

- MAS exhibit about Jane Jacobs, asked the staff to choose a neighborhood that exemplifies Jacobs ideals. They choose Bay Ridge, as it has a place for long term residents and offers a place for new immigrants. Considering the economic and ethnic range of residents. It's an ideal neighborhood in a lot of ways. Continue to cultivate that.
- The physical development, rooted in northern European heritage, is built to accommodate economic diversity and encourages civility. It also has a diversity of age

and is a NORC

- Considering how many people, the economic range of residents, old and new (immigrant) residents, it's an ideal neighborhood in a lot of ways. Continue to cultivate that
- Is it visible? Is cultural representation visible that reflects Bay Ridge as a diverse place?
- Sunset Park is facing a lot of real estate speculation in a way that Bay Ridge isn't right now.
- There's a vague mistrust of art/artists associated with displacement and gentrification.
 - Asking for more resources is a double edged sword, increasing the risk that Bay Ridge will follow suit in the trend toward a medium of commodified culture that is pervasive in so many other neighborhoods in Brooklyn
 - Economic measures: tourism and real estate development
- How do we preserve our profile of diverse communities?
 - It's going on. Now what?
 - Proactive planning
 - Taking vs. giving
 - How can we support one another across the board? If we don't, after Sunset Park, those things will only happen for those that take

Social and Economic Impact

- Arts is low on the rung in Bay Ridge. But the arts community is doing a lot, in a bit of a bubble.
- Exists alongside significant conservative, xenophobic constituencies, including the use of media for political leadership expediency. Does this portion of the community understand the benefits of arts?
- Commercial business
 - Sunset Park/BID – free concert, a complete model of a closed system. Art of Brooklyn Film Fest has tried to partner with businesses in Bay Ridge, but ignored. There is no appreciation from the Bay Ridge business community, except from John (The Owl's Head).
 - Corporate businesses/commercial chains will do nothing for the community
 - Past commercial partnerships: Brooklyn Industries, Pizzeria Uno
 - a neighborhood Restaurant Week as a way to connect the cultural network
 - can also be a fundraising strategy, bring in surplus diners in exchange for percentage, much like AIDS resource and other orgs have done in the past
- Need a community-wide appreciation of art from bottom to top
 - Audiences show up so we know it's important
 - Are we asking politicians about art?
 - Educating institutional organizations, small/big/corporate business, neighborhood leaders
 - On the board of organizations
 - Bay Ridge Democrats

- Arts education system
- Local schools have strong arts programs. How do we expand that to include the rest of the population?
- Young people need to see art in the community and working artists.

Equity and Access

Distribution

- In dollars and cents toward arts and culture, Bay Ridge is underserved. \$3.81 distribution vs. \$.32 targeted to Bay Ridge. And no new money has been distributed for arts in the last three years.
 - Perception as a working class community, used when they wish to dismiss the arts scene as middle class when they do not wish to fund.
 - Not investing in neighborhood in the same way as the BAM cultural district.
 - Neighborhood is a blind spot – culturally underserved because it's not identified as low-income. So it depends on local resources who also aren't willing. So it's a "double no."

Access to work as reflection of community

- Learn languages and culture, new residents are not secondary to identity of the neighborhood. Art is a tool for that learning.
- Viking Fest – celebrates Scandinavian culture in the tri-state area and internationally, but attracts all communities from the local community as well.
- In conservative context, art and activism isn't even a consideration.

Communication/Exposure

- "The word's not out!" Why don't I know what's going on?
 - A branding void, need a newsletter in the community like BRACA (Bay Ridge Arts and Cultural Alliance)
 - DCLA and Brooklyn Arts Council have online info where you can book publicity. But there are 8,000 artists doing different things and who has access to that specific line?
 - We (John) tried to run our own public news space, but attacked by trolls. And difficult to sustain when stretched in other directions
 - Cross-promote arts and cultural activities at events, like already doing during Viking Fest, Embrace Winter, Summer Stroll

Funding Sources

- Brooklyn Arts Council's discretionary fund application process is so consuming. Why wouldn't I just host a bake sale to come up with that quantity of money?
 - Smaller grant size, easier application process
 - Ridge Storefronts Arts Walk used to work with BID as fiscal sponsor for \$4K for artists, then we were asked to get our own 501c3.
 - Why couldn't that partnership remain, since it reinforces commercial objectives?
 - It now requires a network of people to support grant proposal/application

process.

- We have a build networks/bridges as not to reinvent the wheel. Need pool resources
 - Everyone is working in silos **BRACA is not working in a silo - we are partnering at every event. That is our purpose.**
 - Dearth of staff, time and money to apply
 - Just want to do something. Prove it self-financed, then the politicians come and help going forward.
- Other city resources:
 - Inform the Borough Prez of what's happening locally, as their office is not doing their field work. BRACA was created as a result of conversations had with arts funders and political reps who knew little if anything about the arts/cultural richness of Bay Ridge. It was created to fill this gap.
 - City Council District 43 discretionary fund
 - Need clear vetting process
 - How do you creatively get discretionary funding, which has fewer conditions of access than regrants?
 - Can't do much with \$4K
- Blind spot: corporate funding
- How can we tap into LDCs?
- We have to know how to make our pitch for the value of arts

Arts and Education

- Kids are calm after dance, particular when coming from disadvantaged environments. We need to view/show this effect.
- Youth culture needs funding to develop and hone their work. Current arts and education climate is dissuasive.
 - Education famed in test culture, leaving little room for arts to function out of this strict framework. Alternative frameworks:
 - Aeilushi teaches social studies through dance
 - The Ridge Creative Center uses blended learning of all subjects with articulated outcomes through all art forms.
 - Pulling money away from schools severs ability to be plugged into the arts community
 - Schools like Fort Hamilton High School have amazing arts programs, but the infrastructure for arts and cultural growth and capacity is missing after they leave.

Public Art

- How many park space do we have (a lot), yet how much public art (little)?
 - There are arts and cultural assets in parks (concerts, film series, Shakespeare in the Park, Viking Fest, arts & crafts), but there could be more, given how big of a resource parks are in the neighborhood.
 - There's a lot going on, but it requires longevity and consistently plugging into

networks to know those different access points.

- Community hubs
 - Schools should function as a canvas. Inside and outside.
 - Neighborhood coffee shops
- Cultural center
 - In Norway, in every community, there's a cultural center, with helps distribute funds equitably
 - There's no central place to identify arts and culture
 - Also about central place for knowledge (see access above)
 - Old community board building?
 - Concern over narrow mediums in the sectors and limited gatekeepers
 - Opportunities in local churches
 - Good Shepherd: venue, jazz night, writing
 - Volunteer-based grant writing
 - 4th Avenue is lined with religious spaces
 - Funding more marginalized spaces
 - more engaging
 - context filled
 - there's a heritage of these spaces in NYC
 - most expedient
- Past disappointment: had a large grant to purchase a ship as an exhibition space for the Scandinavian East Coast Museum. Funding was lost because the Bloomberg administration blocked funds for the Floating Dock, a stipulation for reconstructing the pier. With no dock, there was no way to tie up a ship. As a result, our money was lost.

Affordability

Space

- Young Dancers in Repertory can offer exhibition space between programming
- Underutilized spaces
 - BP Eric Adams' Studio in a School
 - Challenged by liability and security
- Artists are challenged by spaces that are always restricted. Artists need expansive freedoms.
 - Some artists work with all elements (Aeilushi)
 - Need spaces for dance practice and performances, which requires physical variables (Yassir)
- Brooklyn Army Terminal
 - Neighborhood is unaware of options there, but Chashama doesn't offer small spaces – must collectively share.

Sustaining work in the field

- Depends on artist determination to persist
- Aeilushi's Aarti ceremony happens annually at Brooklyn Bridge Park. She lost DCLA

funding via Brooklyn Arts Council this year, so she'll be figuring out other means to make it happen. She's determined to preserve the successful and well attended tradition.