

thINKingDANCE

Upping the ante on dance coverage and conversation

Refreshing, Ridiculous, Riveting: A Recap

by Becca Weber

TD's editor-in-chief, Lisa Kraus, and I recently attended a workshop that is part of the "No Idea is too Ridiculous" project. It is a program that The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage organizes to help cultural practitioners "work more creatively and to experiment with new models of practice" and encourage risk-taking. With the guidance of the Pew Center and facilitators Mark Beasley and Kathy McLean, participants develop a "ridiculous idea" that would be a departure from normal operations, and which is implemented over the course of a few months. We were thrilled to represent TD in the first year the program was offered to interdisciplinary practitioners.

The workshop was two days' worth of brain-bending visionary thinking, as we engaged with our creative-adjacents from across the cultural spectrum, including representatives from the Annenberg Theater, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Brandywine River Museum, Historic Germantown, and a poet/programmer pair. As a collective, we set out to recognize and respond to constraints, whether the boundaries were institutional, traditional, or strategic.

The room felt refreshingly like a think-tank where the theme was ridiculousity. Some of my personal favorites that didn't make the cut were making-out-as-performance-art in the art museum's cloisters, or a "Say Yes to the (200 grey, muslin, Quaker wedding) Dress(es)" show. Some projects that are moving forward include the Annenberg Theatre moving audience-engagement strategies offsite, establishing an artist residency in the Kuerner Farm (a Brandywine River Museum location that was a source of inspiration to Andrew Wyeth's work), and the development of a virtual, interactive poetry chapbook. In the intense two-day workshop, so many inspiring ideas were tossed around, concepts investigated, and valuable advice given that it's tough to recap it all. Here are some of the highlights:

- We don't always acknowledge it, because our culture reinforces ease and immediacy, but good work is difficult; it's not always smooth sailing. It's often born from conflict or a fraught process. Expect some difficulty; and value it. Mark Beasley stated, "If we're passionate, of course we're going to get in each other's way."
- People value authenticity. Don't be afraid to "show your hand" as a curator or creator.
- Ask yourself: what would failure look like? And how bad would that be?
- This is an experiment. It's okay to prototype, and work on a small scale.
- If you can't do it all, choose what is feasible. What will give you the biggest bang for your buck? How might you take on change that will have a lasting effect?
- We can learn from failure as much as from success.
- Practice brave investigation by following the basic rule of improvisation: say "Yes, and..." to everything that arises.
- FEAR is our number-one constraint.

We'll reconvene in June to see what everyone came up with and how the projects went. And of course, we look forward to unveiling our own ridiculous idea on the site...look forward to more on that later. I, for one, can't wait to see how these ridiculous ideas fare!

Read more on "No Idea is Too Ridiculous"[here](#).

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April 6, 2013