

# Artists in Maine Communities

## SPACE Application Narrative

### 1. Describe your project.

Following a successful first run in September, 2010, SPACE's 2011 Block Party will connect the myriad new galleries, shops, arts nonprofits and venues in Portland's arts district for a free public event celebrating the vibrancy of the neighborhood. We will work with the City of Portland to close a section of Congress Street to automobile traffic, and invite temporary art installations and performances to take over the street for the evening.

Our lead collaborator at the time of application is the Institute for Contemporary Art at the Maine College of Art. We are in discussion with the 2010 collaborators about working with us again this year. These include: Portland Ovations, Portland Museum of Art, Children's Museum & Theatre of Maine, Pickwick Independent Press, Portland Symphony Orchestra, Portland's Downtown District and Portland Ballet. In mid-April we'll begin reaching out to the galleries, music venues and local businesses to invite their participation, too.

The result will be a lively, engaging event that has enough variety to interest diverse tastes. Please watch the video from last year: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xRY8228rnok>

*This event involves a lot of trust and excitement about experimentation, so we hope that our past success will be regarded as an indicator of potential for future success.*

(Maine Sunday Telegram article about 2010 event:

[http://www.pressherald.com/news/like-no-other\\_2010-09-12.html](http://www.pressherald.com/news/like-no-other_2010-09-12.html))

### 2. What are your goals and anticipated outcomes? Provide a timeline.

Our primary goal is to celebrate Portland's Arts District. Scheduled for the weekend after Labor Day, Block Party is a celebration of the arts for the community that lives here, like a post-tourist-season sigh of relief. The event is meant to be fun, and places artists and audience in close proximity. We anticipate a large audience that will seek out this event, but we are also interested the accidental audience—caught up in the party because they were walking through the area—and their unplanned connection to the arts community.

Our secondary goal is to share in the making of an event with as many organizations as possible. The 2010 Block Party was the first time ever that the Portland Museum of Art, Portland Ovations, Portland Symphony Orchestra, Maine College of Art and SPACE Gallery worked together to create an event. The 2010 experience helped the organizations get to know one another better, and encouraged additional partnerships the rest of the year. We have worked with each of these organizations more since the Block Party than ever before.

#### Timeline:

**April:** reach out to all partners, determine level of 2011 participation  
Solicit corporate sponsorships

**May:** Follow up with partners  
Check in with enlisted artists, determine project progress and needs  
Submit permit applications to city to close street to traffic

**June:** Work with ICA to begin production design for the 2011 event  
Look for a media sponsor  
Finalize list of participating organizations, artists; align project with known funding

**July:** Gather narrative descriptions of each project, send teaser marketing to press  
**Aug:** Promote event, determine last needs from artists and collaborators  
**Sept:** Throw a great party! Document the event with video and photos  
Consult with project partners for feedback, anecdotal reports. Evaluate.

### 3. Describe how the project partners were involved in the planning for this initiative. What will their roles be in implementing the project?

SPACE and the ICA are the primary party hosts, working with the city, creating marketing materials and a map to activities, and providing the structure. We see this event as working like a pot-luck dinner, for which we'll provide guidance and some support to the collaborators but we'll ask them to be responsible for their participation. This worked well last year, for example: the PSO organized two of their musicians to perform and the Portland Ballet organized some of their dancers to participate. Because this event encourages experimentation and risk-taking by the artists involved, it is difficult to plan very much too soon. The bulk of our collaborative work will happen between May and July, as we work with the additional partners to develop their project ideas, help find appropriate artists where necessary, and wade through the city's permit process to pull everything together.

### 4. List the Maine artists involved. Describe their role in presenting a community program of high artistic quality. Provide [URL links](#) showing the work of artists that will be involved in your project

This is a list of the artists we have signed on so far, with brief descriptions of their project concepts. Please note that this is a partial list of projects that will take place during the Block Party, and it is for these projects that we are seeking the Artists in Maine Communities funding. As we sign on more partners and more projects, we will add additional arts projects and performances, which will be stewarded by the partnering organizations, galleries and venues.

These Maine artists are talented folks that we have worked with in the past. Some of them are reaching into new territory, and we are excited about helping them grow as artists trying new projects in this new, public realm. Because of this experimental nature, it is difficult to present relevant web or photo documentation for each project.

**Kimberly Convery:** An installation of 4 double-sided panels with large drawings (8 feet sq.) will be placed in the curb of the street. The drawings will be site-specific, depicting the cityscape behind them, so that they'll be viewed next to the scene depicted. Kimberly intends for the panels to represent how the Portland cityscape changes over time, blended with "idealized" visions of what the sites could look like. Examples of her work can be found on her website: <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Kimberly-Convery-fine-art-drawer/147595178603461>

**Greta Bank:** "Godzilla Attacks" is a model set of Congress Street with an accompanying performance from puppets and costumed actors. The buildings will be modeled into a 1/10th scale, setting the stage for 2 fantastic monster creatures and some smaller props performing an invasion narrative. A 3 hour performance with costumes and props during Block party will be staged as a stop animation film set. This means that viewers will watch the slow progression of the narrative through a sequence of small movements, later orchestrated into a short animated film. Besides highlighting the monster infiltration, this film will portray a unique perspective of the crowds of the Block Party event, as well as an artistic interpretation of the Arts District. Greta will be working with Scott Peterman, Kate Cox, and a team of other artists. <http://www.mysecretstudio.com/>

**Tess Van Horn / Lorem Ipsum Productions:** Drawing inspiration from the traveling performers of theatrical antiquity and mashing that up with the flair of a 1920's fire-and-brimstone church revival, they will create a compact performance (one to six actors and one or more musicians) played on a pageant wagon built of found/recycled materials to be rolled around the Block Party. This will be an original piece based loosely around

the structure of a morality play, incorporating other traditional performances. They don't have a production website, but here is a review of a play they produced at SPACE in January:

<http://portland.thephoenix.com/arts/114063-preview-the-sweltering-classically-elegant-blood/>

**Sean O'Brien:** Sean will install multiple small structural tents that viewers will enter to find various artworks and environments that use natural phenomenon to produce light, sound and motion. These structures will combine ideas of magic and the spiritual world with the realm of high-tech materials that can create these beautiful and mystical experiences. These will be places of curiosity, first engaging people to enter the space, then revealing a phenomenon within, as if a specimen was brought from another planet, realm or dimension. Sean's website: <http://www.seanob.com/>

**Petra Simmons:** Petra will create a structural system that utilizes unwanted phone books as a modular element. Attaching the individual phone-books together with wheat paste and threaded rod, she will construct self-supporting arches throughout the block to create a visual thread to tie together the Block Party site. Petra does not have a website.

**Additional images:** Some of these artists have given us rough sketches in support of their plans, which we have uploaded to our website and can be seen here: <http://www.space538.org/blockparty.html>

## 5. Describe what community means in the context of this proposal. Community of locale? Community of common interest? Other?

Block Party looks at community on two levels:

**Concentrated geography:** Portland's Arts District is than the idea of artistic community in Portland. Block Party highlights the talented people and hardworking organizations that breathe life into the district. Just as a residential neighborhood might band together to celebrate each other, we've created a mechanism for people, organizations and businesses with shared interests to celebrate each other and remember that we're strong because we exist in a healthy community.

**Diversified audience:** The many participating businesses and organizations who make Block Party reach a wide range of demographics. Individually, we reach our own niche communities, but collectively we reach most of the general population of Greater Portland. Block Party presents an opportunity for SPACE Gallery's frequent audience members to engage with a Portland Symphony Orchestra project, while PSO's audience get a first-hand look at a new organization such as Pickwick Independent Press (who, in 2010, created large woodblock prints in the street using a steamroller). We also hope to engage an audience that is perhaps less aware of the arts community, who will be drawn in because the event is free and takes place in a public space. This open-ended idea of community seeks to welcome new members and new energy and enthusiasm for the arts.

## 6. Document the benefits for the community, whether you are defining your community as your town, a school district, an artist collaborative, etc. Does this project fits a larger community vision and if so, how?

As we know more about our Arts District neighbors, we feel more proud of and more interested in their work. Block Party is a celebration but also a time for sharing our missions, our goals, and the elements of our work that we're most excited about. Because so many partners collaborate to make this event work, we capitalize on the sum of the energy put into making it happen. Our vision for Portland, and one that we think is shared widely, is to create a community that celebrates creativity. The public nature of Block Party helps us move towards that vision.

Here are some of the comments we received last year:

*"What a great day! My family and I could not have had a better time at the BLOCK PARTY. Not only were the events and activities fun but seeing old friends and neighbors out and in the heart of Portland was really cool. This was a sentiment that I heard again and again. I hope that these types of events can happen all year so that we can all keep in touch with what is going on in our great city."*—Ray Keith

*"That made me want to move back to Portland!"*— Phil Kaplan

*"I thought the BLOCK PARTY! really, really showed the best side of Portland – inclusive, diverse, fun, serious, so what I like – and really hope and want to - think of as quintessentially Portland . We all had a great time."*— Sara Crisp

*"Our whole family had fun at the SPACE block party. The energy that evening reminded us that our city was alive with creativity. Normally I think of SPACE Gallery events as shifting my understanding of the world ever so slightly; in the case of BLOCK PARTY!, I think it was my view of Portland that was altered, or perhaps, affirmed."*— Patty Howells

## **7. Describe a plan for evaluating the project.**

We will follow the event with data gathering from each of the participating artists and collaborators. We will quantify what resources—financial, administrative, and other—were required to make the event happen, and look for ways to make it more efficient if a future event seems appropriate. We will solicit feedback from individuals like what's listed above.