

Fort Revere Festival 2012: Community Art Project Proposal

For as long as I can remember I have used art to connect with those around me. It is inherent that art, both viewing and creating, builds human connections and celebrates life. When a group of students come together to create a play they are learning team work, connecting to each other on a personal level and connecting to the audience through the message and performance of the show. I have seen what these connections can do for individuals and communities alike, which is what I want to encourage in Hull. I believe that in coming together to revitalize Fort Revere through community arts projects we can strengthen the bonds that create and hold our community together. I would like to focus on the town's student body, local artists and residents working together for a greater common goal around Fort Revere.

When I first began this project, I was focused on Fort Revere and the deterioration and misuse of a historical landmark. Fort Revere is an eight-acre historic site situated on a small peninsula located in Hull Massachusetts. The park houses the remains of two seacoast fortifications, a water tower with an observation deck, a military history museum and picnic facilities. In talking to Matt Tobin of the Department of Conservation and Recreation, I learned of the rich history of the Fort. Fort Revere is one of the only surviving earthworks forts in America. It was used

throughout the Civil War and World War I as an active post for soldiers and weapons. In 1974 the Fort was dedicated as a War Memorial and Historical Landmark.

I visited the Fort in April 2011 for a photo shoot, not knowing these images would later add to my research for this project. In June 2011, I read in the news paper that Fort Revere, a historical landmark in my town, had been defaced with symbols of hate. I was taking a class at Lesley University that focused on community art, and when I learned of this recent negative action I decided that Fort Revere would be the perfect location for my assigned case study and community art plan development. On two separate occasions, July 4 and July 9, I revisited the Fort to compile photographic research and conduct interviews. My case study was focused on learning why this hateful graffiti may have been painted on the Fort as well as how members of the community felt about the graffiti and the Fort in general.

After spending time at the Fort and talking to people, I developed an overarching concept of how Fort Revere could be used to benefit the community. The space could be utilized for many different purposes such as historical tours, concerts, public meetings and community art displays throughout the greens around the Fort structure. After the creation of this initial plan, my intent was to continue to interview members of the community and learn what the town and its citizens felt would most benefit the people and this historical landmark. Through continued community research I have come to see that there can be a mutual benefit of the Fort and the youth of Hull

through the implementation of community arts projects that focus youth energy toward the betterment of the park, their personal lives, artistic abilities and community situations.

In the article *Teaching With Public Art* – Carol Argiro states that, “Public art makes public spaces more beautiful, encourages us to pause and interact with our environment, or reminds us of important people and events” (p. 25). In creating projects with the youth of Hull centered on Fort Revere we can harness the benefits of public art for the town. This is an opportunity for Hull’s students to engage and make a positive contribution to the town in a very tangible manner. In her article Karen Hutzler suggests that through community art, “... students can reflect on their current place and future direction and learn to respond to the interests of others. They can learn to be more socially and civically engaged” (p. 6).

Through conversations with a few residents and members of Hull’s youth, I have solidified my belief that a project like this would be embraced and have long term benefits for not only the youth and residents on an individual basis, but for the town on a level of tourism and economic stimulus. Because of these benefits I believe that the support of this project by the Town of Hull and the School Board and Teachers is paramount to our success. James Bau Graves shares in his book that “The impact of the arts economy is visible in the most progressive American cities, as well as internationally. Where governments embrace cultural activity, the economic benefits flow” (p. 96). I am asking that we all become a team of allies and focus on the Fort Revere Festival as a way to help our community grow and flourish in these tough economic times.

**What do you want to see when you visit
your town's historical landmark?**



**Join us for a discussion at the next
Town Meeting on revitalizing Fort Revere.**

Lesley University Graduate Student Lindsay “Jag” Jagodowski, Hull resident, will present her proposal to engage the town’s youth in an educational effort to restore, rejuvenate and reclaim Fort Revere through community art.

Fort Revere Festival 2012

RESTORE • REJUVENATE • RECLAIM

Paintings
Dance
Historical
Re-enactments
Sketches
Performance art
Photography
Poetry
Film
Music
and more ...



When an entire community comes together,
amazing things can happen.

Join us for this town-wide event that focuses on engaging
Hull youth, town residents, local artists, history buffs and
Fort Revere fans in an artistic display of town pride.

www.fortreverefestival.com

Acknowledging that the total revitalization of the Fort will be a large scale project which will take time and funds of a greater scale, today I would like to propose to you a smaller scale project that will start us on our way. As a kickoff to the larger Revitalizing Fort Revere project, I would like to partner local artists with Hull Public schools and the student body to create an arts festival that celebrates the history of the Fort as well as the importance of the Fort in our current community. Karen Hutzler states, "Collaborative art provides a mode of reflection as well as a vision for change, as the negotiation between partners requires an intimate dialogue of values and beliefs as well as visions and ideas" (p. 3). By engaging the youth, some of whom presumably are the ones creating the graffiti, we can encourage civic pride and personal responsibility for the state of the fort. Stephens (2006) shared the insight that "Such active student and community involvement provides ownership of the artwork while bringing a sense of civic pride and responsibility" (p. 45).

Starting in the fall of 2012 students, local artists and Hull's school teachers would work together to generate the ideas behind the Fort Revere Festival as well as the art pieces that would be presented in the spring. The festival would be a culminating event showcasing the art work of Hull's students and local artists during the spring of 2012 at the Fort. This would be an opportunity for the Town of Hull to expand tourism. Bringing in people from outside of Hull is important because it would increase the revenue collected through donations, raffles and sales to benefit the revitalization of the Fort and future community projects and activities. Graves (2005) states that,

“Intimately linked to creativity, and the economic benefits that it bestows, is the knowledge of culture and its global importance. If students are to grow into the creative economy, the Others of the world are going to be their customers, their competitors, their colleagues” (p. 129).

While economic benefits for the Town of Hull and Fort Revere are at the front of our minds, I would ask that we remember this is not the full focus of Revitalizing Fort Revere or Fort Revere Festival. By creating opportunities for community members to work together, social connections can be made. Generations working together for a common goal allows for mentorship to happen and for everyone to develop a common goal and expand their community pride. Graves (2005) adds his insight; “When communities participate in determining the desired outcomes, and in shaping their evolution in practice, the results transcend mere economics. This is work that nurtures people’s souls, development of a community’s spiritual resources” (p. 219).

It is though this process of creating the art that I foresee the youth of our town learning life lessons, not only about art itself but about being global citizens and accepting people for who they are regardless of race or religion. Through studying history, engaging with diverse members of the community and working together to better understand their community and culture the youth will gain personal knowledge of how diversity can create a more complex and interesting mission for their art and learn firsthand about the importance of collaboration. I was inspired to begin looking at this project because what we all heard through the news was not just about mindless graffiti in our town. What we heard was that our youth are dealing with greater issues and these issues, such as racism and anti-Semitism need to be addressed so that we can live in a

stable and happy community without fear of these types of hate crimes. Through my studies I have learned many approaches to educating students about these issues and their own assumptions about others around them. It is my belief that by spearheading these projects, working with the teachers and community we can work actively to ensure our youth are more global, accepting, happy and successful in their lives.

Graves (2005) shares that,

“The arts offer a direct path into the constellation of issues surrounding cultural diversity, engaging students both physically and intellectually and providing a springboard into the study of cultural equity, social ethics, historical analysis, politics and religion” (p. 139).

This is why this project connects so well the needs of the town and the needs of our historical landmark, Fort Revere. The tension between the Town of Hull and the DCR must be addressed. Fort Revere suffers in part due to the fact that it is not under the control or protection of one agency. Because it is segmented it is difficult to determine who is responsible for maintenance and repairs. The DCR has stated during an interview that they would accept responsibility for the upkeep of the Fort if the Town of Hull will supply a written memorandum giving them the rights to hire service crews and raise funds for the historical restorations that are obviously needed around the structure. Frazier (2008) shares that,

“The cooperative endeavors of artists, organizers and young people can catalyze social change. This happens because these groups encompass a diverse range of skills, perspectives and approaches. Given time, such collaboration can develop a generation of creative, civic-minded youth leaders who will grow into adult agents of change” (p. 1).

It is this principle which I believe encompasses the reasons for the Town of Hull to collaborate with the DCR and members of its community. We need to focus less on the paperwork or whose 'job' it is and focus more on the overall benefits to our town and its citizens.

To this end, we will need members of the town, historians, artists and teachers to work together if the Fort Revere Festival is to be a success. A community festival cannot simply be one person's planning and others attending to 'support' the cause. What makes an event like this become more than just another art show or just another fundraiser is the involvement of members of the community throughout the process. In the words of James Bau Graves (2005),

“We need participation from the participators, not just simply on the receiving end of the programs but throughout the chain of development. Not only the products but also the culture-production process requires democratization” (p. 77).

As we look at creating an outline for the festival, the teachers must be involved on the ground level with devising the class projects. The investment of Hull's art and classroom teachers will create the opportunity for our students to learn about more than just their art form or the history of Fort Revere. Stephens (2006) points out that students learn the most when, “Teachers become mentors who inspire creativity, guide students in learning adventures, and encourage persistence when answers are difficult to find. Students, in turn, become self-managers who are accountable for their personal learning” (p. 45).

I would like to focus our attention for a moment on the content of the festival itself. By involving the arts faculty of Hull's school and the students' own inspirations, we can display not

only visual art, but performance art pieces, music and more, which will give the event a great energy and make it welcoming to Hull residents and tourists alike who have varying artistic tastes. Some examples of art forms I would like to see the community engaged in creating are paintings, dance, music, poetry, historical reenactments, photography, performance art and films. In order to achieve this broad range of artistic mediums I would like to include local artists in the planning, creation and display of the Fort Revere Festival. Involving as many invested artists with specialties will ensure a level of quality to the various art forms, such as historical reenactment or film production, with which students and faculty may not have extensive experience. This also creates an opportunity for a greater number of community members to be involved early on in the festival.

I envision artists pieces such as a theatrical piece being produced in one of the amphitheaters that would encompass a historical reenactment of activities that may have taken place at Fort Revere during World War I. Slam poetry performed by Hull's youth about the Fort, its misuse, what it means to be from Hull or anything else that is a part of their identity in this community. A film could be produced about the process of removing graffiti and how it makes the community members feel to see these words scrawled or to see their art work removed because they may have nowhere else to express themselves. Students and artists working together to share with the community and the outside world the history of our town, what they see as the issues that need our attention and what is great about being a member of the community of Hull, Massachusetts.

What does it mean to be a member of a community? What does it mean to be from Hull? I think it is time to remember the history of this town and also to celebrate what makes our community great today. Join me in this effort and show your support to create this wonderful opportunity for our youth and our entire community.

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