

Legal Name

Open Channels New York Inc

Project Title

To host James Godwin at Dixon Place to imagine and explore new approaches to demand building for live, alternative theater and interdisciplinary performance

DDCF Grant Number

2013224

Project Progress and Successes

Many of the successes resulting from this project are quite simply related to an invigorated and more consistent social media presence for Dixon Place. Our original concept, developed with artist James Godwin, was to create an "alternate reality game" by utilizing social media and a variety of events such as a drawing group, a gallery show and a series of ongoing free performance "rituals". Having James as a presence around Dixon Place allowed us to creatively problem solve and acquire new approaches to our constituents. It has set us on a new course that we otherwise would not have traversed without the ingenuity and boldness that James brings to the organization.

Challenges / Obstacles / Failures Encountered in the Project

Social media proved challenging because of the variety of platforms and the sheer volume of content. To be noticed amongst the avalanche of cat videos and ice bucket challenges is quite difficult to do in an appealing and dignified way.

James chose a simple strategy of consistency. He posted a drawing a day across several platforms simultaneously. These drawings contained clues and designs for puppets and elements of his upcoming theater piece entitled " The Flatiron Hex".

<instagram@jimbogodwin> Taken together, they would form a over-arching narrative scaffold of the world created in the show.

It became clear that Dixon Place would greatly benefit from a dedicated social media "guru" and equipment such as a computer, smart-phone and camera, much the same as many cultural institutions and live art venues.

Also as a result of James' regular presence at Dixon Place he was able to Interact with the staff and learn the day to day operations as well as the long term challenges faced by a growing and diverse arts organization. James was even able to perform some simple repairs around the theater.

Least successful of the project's strategies would be the drawing group. James sought to engage people and interact through a website known as Meetup.com

This site allows users to form and join groups to share interests and activities. James formed a drawing group that would meet monthly at Dixon Place in hopes of connecting his

"drawing a day" project and some of the performance and so-called gaming aspects. This in turn would attract people who may not ordinarily attend performances. Unfortunately it proved difficult to develop a loyal group of members and attendance was uneven. The time and effort involved in promoting and connecting with potential participants was a bit daunting. When James changed the monthly evenings to become free "ritual " performances of works in progress, attendance greatly increased. These performances also bolster the content of the project with glimpses and clues as to the nature of "The Flatiron Hex", culminating in the premiere of the performance at Dixon Place in May 2015.

Some gaming aspects also proved too difficult or time consuming to be properly implemented. To introduce viral or content based material on social media without being perceived as a marketing ploy was indeed a challenge and some elements were lost in the shuffle of an ever-growing social media and internet landscape. The simplicity and consistency of the drawing a day provided a good anchor for the project and helped develop some new social media visibility for Dixon Place.

What was learned from these that might be of benefit to others?

Social media is an ever-changing platform and we are learning every day about the pitfalls and challenges of this forum. Our lessons learned from engaging James' ideas and engagements through social media would be of great benefit to other organizations of similar size and focus.

Links to relevant website(s) and/or project publications, reports, etc.

If someone wishes to speak with your organization further about your project, would there be a willing contact? Y/N

If yes, please provide contact name and information for preferred method of contact (email, phone, etc).

Ellie Covan, ellie@dixonplace.org, 212.219.0736 x1