

Sandbox: DIY Community Organizing of Your Neighborhood in Six Steps

Six diptychs, six videos (online).

Sandbox is the name for my communal organizing within my neighborhood, Bay Ridge in Brooklyn; Alliance is the name for organizing my neighborhood in relation to external communities, including New York City's five boroughs. The project as a whole serves as a D.I.Y. guide for others to do their own local organizing.



I approached local people with whom I am interested in forming a community based on my passions (sensibilities and activism), and asked them for an interview in a sandbox situated in an empty lot. I subsequently gave each participant a personalized diptych to express my gratitude for their participation.

The sandbox of the empty lot is situated by the Narrows river, a couple of blocks from where I live. A local told me the story of it being the only remnant left of an entire playground that was donated by Finland to Bay Ridge in the 1950s, when a large Nordic community existed in the neighborhood. Four of the interviews took place in the sandbox, and I conducted the last two offsite - while the project was exhibited in a neighborhood gallery.

The word "sandbox" conjures various associations, from childhood play that often dissipates with age to military slang for desert operations, the Middle East and miniature topography simulating battlegrounds. This sandbox embodies an entire range of possibilities: difficult conversations on complex subjects in a benign setting, drawing on the neighborhood's large Arab population, and local artists doing what they can with what they have.

At the heart of it all, is my belief that engagement is always preferable to isolation.

1. Propose **Curriculum of Feminist Geographers** to Teaching Artist (Jeannine Bardo, December 12, 2015).
2. Make introductions within my network: Teaching Artist and **Climate Change Scientist** (Elena Soterakis, December 15, 2015).
3. Facilitate donation of darkroom for a **Space of Escape + Activism** through the support of a photographer (Salim Hasbini, December 19, 2015).
4. Collaborate with Community Artist through **Queer Activism** (Danielle Bullock, December 28, 2015).
5. Find the **Artist Community Organizer** and make selections from this network (John Avelutto, January 7, 2016).
6. Establish bond with **Grassroots Organization** that does social justice, anti-racist, feminist work - for all of the above (Kayla Santosuosso, February 7, 2016).