

Spirit & Place 2008: *Exploring Imagination* **Brainstorming Session on May 9, 2007**

Attending:

- David Brailow, Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean of the College, Franklin College
- Pete Brown, Manager of Public Programs, The Eiteljorg Museum of American Indians and Western Art
- Judith Cebula, Director, Center for Faith and Vocation, Butler University
- Simon Crookall, CEO, Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra
- Jennifer Gilles, Spirit & Place Program Coordinator
- John Green, Chair, Theatre Department, Butler University
- Pam Blevins Hinkle, Spirit & Place Director (facilitating)
- Melli Hoppe, Artistic Director, Susurrus
- Susan Kent, AMHPA
- Maryvonne Kerzabi, Director, Community Outreach and Language Services, International Center of Indianapolis
- Jim Nulty, VSA arts of Indiana
- Catherine O'Connor, Vice President, Indiana Humanities Council
- Andrea Pactor, Program Manager, Philanthropic Services, Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University
- Leslie Power, Associate Vice President of Family Learning, The Children's Museum
- Susan Pratt, arts marketer
- Linda Proffitt, Executive Director, Global Peace Initiatives
- Stephanie Lewis Robertson, Artist and President, Stutz Artist Association
- Michael Saahir, Imam, Nur-allah Islamic Center
- Elizabeth Weber, Associate Professor of English and Co-director of the Kellogg Writers Series, University of Indianapolis
- Michelle Verduzco, Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis, Campus and Community Life

Guiding Questions

- Where does imagination reside? Who or what is cultivating the practice of imagination in our culture and in our community?
- What is the dark side of imagination? When are social, religious, and cultural boundaries appropriate?
- What is needed to unleash public imagination in ways that benefit our community's economic, social, and cultural health?
- How do we empower young people to flex their imaginations to benefit their communities?
- How does a region with strong traditions embrace imaginative solutions to community issues?

Discussion Notes:

- Will need election relief and humor!
- Imagine Peace.
- Involve young people.
- Hardest task is exercising imagination.
- How to re-awaken imagination?
- Creating video games very creative.
- Cultural trail a great example of grand imagination.
- Imagination as the power to connect and creates empathy
- Imagination is connected to the psychological.
- Need to understand the imaginative process
- Imagination give us ability to see different perspectives – therefore less inclined to be in conflict – creates more hope and possibility (an IMA program is specifically referenced).
- Lennon’s song – Imagine
- Arts a critical teacher of imagination.
- We live in a “plug-in” environment – not creative.
- Young children imagining our future.
- Where is our imagination to solve crime and other community issues?
- Interfaith youth programs important – what if a Muslim imagined what it’s like to be a Christian?
- SIMS – create your own community.
- Need the power to create – to implement the imagination.
- Finding your passion key – where is the best place for you to serve?
- What’s “young?”
- Access to imagination critical – depends on parents.
- What do our arts and educational groups do on a national/global level?
- Imagining Indy in the country? In the world?
- Cultural Trail, Airport, S&P – all imaginative Indy innovations
- Engage different ethnic groups
- 80% of foreign college students here never set foot in an American home.
- Encourage S&P partners to partner with new/absent/underserved groups/populations.
- Are we free as Americans to imagine? Are we rewarded for it?
- Imagination and the multiple choice test.
- How does education foster/inhibit imagination?
- When the “artist” in us is stifled, the shadow emerges.
- Constructive vs. destructive imagination.
- Early literacy is key to unlocking imagination and learning.
- Midrash as creative writing.
- Imagination and scriptural interpretation.
- Mental health and imagination
- Do/make art – improvise!
- Include the global perspective.
- Sidewalk chalk festival all over the city.
- Imagination in the computer age – different kind of imagination.

- Involve tech companies
- Biosciences – imaginative solutions to disease.
- Education failures in IPS – how can kids imagine their futures?
- Impact of peer pressure and socialization on imagination.
- Adults should watch children; they are the models.
- Play-dates at the Children’s Museum.
- Need to make a national impact with S&P – define what this festival is about.
- Have simultaneous events in Sister cities –opens doors, encountering other artists, online creative communities, dialogues might create longer term relationships.
- Encourage those with existing partnerships.
- Need to have these focus groups with young people.
- How about a teen-run festival? Don’t restrict their imagination – might include guerilla art, body art, etc.; take place in youth venues.
- Consider end of life issues, advance directives, etc.
- Demonstrate why we are an interesting city.
- “Imaginopolis”

Identified as most critical:

- Diversity – intentional inclusion – more fertile ground with other views
- Sister city relationship
- Form and structure of S&P programs should be imaginative
- Programs should be interactive
- Poetry on buses – youth voice
- Something that brings people together in neutral space
- Highlight existing imaginative programs
- Imaginary Friends.

Spirit & Place 2008: *Exploring Imagination* **Brainstorming Session on May 14, 2007**

Attending:

- Ahmet Fer, President, Nationalities Council of Indiana
- David Bodenhamer, Executive Director, The Polis Center
- James Cramer, Community Relations Manager, Clowes Memorial Hall of Butler University
- Jeanne Farah, Excelleration, Inc.
- Jennifer Gilles, Spirit & Place Program Coordinator
- Sally Childs-Helton, Special Collections, Rare Books, and University Archives & Librarian, Irwin Library, Butler University, and professional percussionist and ethnomusicologist.
- Pam Blevins Hinkle, Spirit & Place Director (facilitating)
- Rhonda Fox Waltz, Spirit & Place Patron
- Molly Wilkinson Chavers, Executive Director, Indy Hub, Inc.

Guiding Questions

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Discussion Notes:

- Balancing strong Hoosiers vs. imagination.
- Hoosiers viewed as dependable, modest, genuine, but not particularly imaginative.
- How do we show our imagination to others?
- How can we perceive ourselves as imaginative?
- Bragging is not our character. How can we unleash this? Bragging vs. assertion.
- There is a responsibility of sharing your talent/imagination – don't hide your light under a bushel.
- Is there a culture here that squashes creativity?
- What are the institutions and practices in place that help/hinder our creativity?
- Fringe Fest/Fringe Next (for young people) is on the creative edge.
- Hard to get folks to a "state of freedom."
- Many from elsewhere are attracted to live here because of our values – stable communities, stable economy.
- There is a notion that imagination/creativity de-stabilizes.

- Hoosiers are risk-averse.
- Link between generosity (2007 festival theme) and imagination. Basic generosity is charity –getting folks to our level. More complex generosity involves giving yourself and the willingness to experience personal transformation – this takes more imagination.
- An attitude of beginner’s mind is essential to imagination.
- Fear of detaching from heritage is prevalent – need to remember we take our essence with us as we grow.
- Frontiers throughout history are imaginatively explored.
- Perceptions are out of line with reality
- Imagination has different meanings – to project in one’s mind (not otherwise existing) or an image/representation.
- Imaginations are first triggered by stories we hear when we’re young.
- Imagination is a muscle you develop.
- Worlds are created by words – there are parallels in the sciences with model-building.
- The mind creates models in all disciplines.
- Visualization – surfing nonexistent models.
- Parents must tell more stories; imagination should not be in the hands of the media.
- Myths and archetypes sustained in stories.
- We need a spirit of daring.
- What about the darkside?
- Concern about the media inventing our “wants” and “needs.”
- Repression of imagination shuts down energy and has a sociological impact. Imagination can pop out in destructive ways.
- Brain drain – I’ll leave Indy if I can’t express myself.
- Arts curriculum is too fact-based.
- How to be at home with one’s own imagination – it’s inside of us, a spiritual home. Cannot deny who we are intrinsically.
- Imagination grows up to be an entrepreneurial spirit.
- Where is the next generation of great decision makers?
- What do we mean by imagination?
- Public vs. private imagination
- Neurological implications
- How is imagination culturally bound?
- How is our imagination constricted?
- How does our history condition our stories, our imagination?
- What are the pre-conditions for imagination?
- Examine the history of imagination in Central Indiana.
- German heritage here – a practical imagination.
- “What if” comes from the other side of the brain; practical imagination from the other half.
- Ideal is when the visioning and model-building are together – uses both sides of the brain.
- First transistor radio built in Indy.
- Holding onto things resulting from imagination.
- We need the ability to confront/deal with reality through creative power of the mind.

- Imagination blossoms in the sustainable soil of reality (not disconnected) and fearlessness (truth-telling).
- “Earthy” – grounded, dynamic, and organic nature of imagination
- “Plan for change.”
- Confront reality within your context.
- More variety of people means different versions of reality.
- Conformity is a strong IN value – why?
- Is imagination generational?
- What do young people think?
- Science, business, agriculture, sports, entertainment, mass media – all working creatively.
- Impact of technology – gaming environment good and bad. Younger surgeons with gaming experience are better at robotics.
- Kenneth bolding, author of Imaginal Education; we think in images not words.
- Dreams, images, sound images, images in sequences/patterns
- Reading/interpreting different symbols.
- Icons and meaning – cultural context.
- Are we losing the beauty of imagination with technology?
- How do we grow the imagination with technology?
- How can we share the mythic stories with technology?
- Create electronic catalogue of imagination to expose what’s here in Central Indiana. An open-ended internet format that both expresses and explores.
- Involve disabled community.
- ASL is iconic.
- Multitasking younger generation (not linear).
- People should make things.
- Art Center’s Day of Dead sculpture – a communal activity like this is good.
- Take some real questions that need public thinking.
- “Re-imagining Indy” a good sub-theme – identify a set of issues, put diverse teams together.
- Community drumming would be good
- Theater – facilitates local imagination (more than film)
- Problem-solving theatre
- NUVO used to do a closing type event during S&P
- Humanities involvement – put seemingly unrelated disciplines together, e.g. business and poetry (David Whyte mentioned).
- Have fun!
- Need the safety to imagine possibilities.
- Refrigerator art for grownups.
- Nationalities Council involvement – imagining their culture’s development here.

Spirit & Place 2008: *Exploring Imagination*

Brainstorming Session on May 16, 2007

Attending:

- Nate Bick, Intern, Indianapolis Opera
- Kay Crawford, Senior Fellow Center for Aging & Community, University of Indianapolis
- Linda Duke, Director of Education, Indianapolis Museum of Art
- Kara Faris, Education Director, Indianapolis Center for Congregations
- Jennifer Gilles, Spirit & Place Program Coordinator
- Patty Harvey, Director of Education, Indianapolis Opera
- Pam Blevins Hinkle, Spirit & Place Director (facilitating)
- Carol Kiefer, Spirit & Place Festival Volunteer Coordinator
- Anne Laker, Manager of Public Programs, Indianapolis Museum of Art
- Shelle Louer, Director of Music and Fine Arts, Second Presbyterian Church
- Marsha Oliver, Director of Community Relations, Indianapolis Museum of Art
- Kathy Pataluch, Director of Special Events, Conner Prairie
- Gail Thomas Strong, WFYI Outreach
- Milicent Wright, Manager of Artistic Outreach, Indiana Repertory Theatre

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Discussion Notes:

- Proposed questions presume presence of imagination.
- Manipulating technology vs. playing with blocks/playing outside.
- Imagination is not automatic.
- Importance of cultivating imagination in children.
- Build on IMA's 2007 Spirit & Place program.
- Value of "making a mess."
- Creative problem solving important.
- Lack of imagination an issue.
- Crase (author) offers a dark scenario of America's future and make a case for an imagination as opposed to research in developing this scenario.
- How have we imagined the future in our history?

- Imagining the past is important, e.g. writing histories/stories from new/alternative perspectives.
- Imaginary friends and imaginary worlds are important, but lacking.
- Passiveness of some technology-based imagination is a concern.
- Examine the generational differences and definitions of imagination.
- School testing environment doesn't support imagination.
- Lack of opportunity for youth to develop imaginative capacities.
- Ability to look critically, think critically about imaginations tools (films, video, etc.).
- Role of play (not competition) in imagination.
- Need permission to play.
- Who give permission to play in our society?
- Need permission to make ourselves and others uncomfortable with imaginative thinking/products.
- Who are the permission givers/takers?
- Example of the teddy bear video created by IN high school students – this act of creativity, expressing their rage, was punished.
- How has Central Indiana and Indiana evolved with regard to imagination?
- IU Medical School work on brain research should be involved.
- Have more interactive events; people should do/make things.
- Acquiring knowledge without negating myth/imagination.
- Capacity to interact creatively with knowledge is important.
- Imagination in science – these partnerships occurring around the country
- Using Shakespeare to teach leadership.
- Imagination in religion is scary. How to think creatively about religious practice and belief? Importance/tension of conforming to rules, mores, and values.
- Imagination and boundaries – boundaries have social, ethical, and creative value.
- Ask “regular” people to define imagination – how has imagination played a role in your life.
- Stem cell research embraces mind boggling imagination.
- Because we CAN imagine it, should we actually do it (ethics and imagination).
- Have a discussion with Indy's most imaginative citizens/leaders.
- Pop culture impact on imagination.
- The 1970s was the “let's go for it” time.
- Why are certain periods of history particularly imaginative? What conditions prompt/hinder these imaginative bursts and contractions?
- How do these trends connect to Indy's growth?
- Imagine the way our city looks, how to build around human need, cultural trail, sports, downtown living, etc.
- Collective vs. individual imagination – two distinct tracts of programming/themes. Society struggles to balance these; neither should have free reign
- Collective vision/common good – sometime the common good has economic and/or social costs
- What is the “look” of downtown Indy?

- Envisioning a future for Indy – have a community discussion. Ball State hosts forums around architecture, urban planning. Inform community of existing forums.
- “Creative class” – potentially frightening conversation for some.
- Labels/assumptions, sense of “otherness” attached to creative people may clash with Hoosier values.
- Tension between heritage/traditions/values and imagination
- Youth engagement – involve Paul Shepley, Youth as Resources, and Dennis Bland, Center for Leadership and Development.

Identified as most critical:

- Imagining our city’s future – built environment, cultural, economic, etc.
- Technology as the new playground for young people.
- Opportunities to explore both individual and collective imagination
- Have something that everyone can contribute to – community art project, blog, etc. – something accessible to the whole community.
- Blog – invite personal definitions of imagination
- Link the Public Conversation to all this
- Bruce Mau has books/exhibits – massivechange.org – about design solutions for transformation
- “This I Imagine” ala the “This I Believe” from WFYI – invite stories on how imagination is transformative; an exercise for congregations and workplaces perhaps; a prelude to the festival.
- Imagination as healing our world and ourselves
- Imagination is valid in an of itself, without purpose; this must be sacred and validated.
- Impact of imagination on justice, forgiveness, etc.