

Full Circle: Working Towards a Network of Social Infrastructures in the City

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Working in Amsterdam after WWII Aldo van Eyck recognized the potential of play apparatus to breathe new life into the forgotten spaces of the city. The architect called for a transformation the urban environment into a network of nodes of play areas of various scales ultimately turning the city into a playground. Thinking of the experience and the needs of the child in the city, van Eyck was also very conscious of the need of his play-structures to contribute to the urban landscape in general and to be open-ended and "real" enough to add to the city even once the child has gone to bed.

Like post-WWII Amsterdam, Buffalo is a city that finds itself with a surplus of empty lots where buildings once stood. In 2016, CEPA Gallery held a competition for public artworks to temporarily appropriate and occupy a series of empty lots in Buffalo's Westside neighborhood.

Selected through this competition, "Full Circle" is an interactive installation for all ages that playfully rotates a typical linear swing-set to alter and expand its experience, questioning the basic relationships between people in space and to one another. By bringing a piece of playground equipment together with the charged spatial arrangement of political round-tables and corporate boardrooms, the installation takes a playful construct and positions it in the adult-world.

Aiming to create socially conscious dialogue, the project is positioned where diverse Buffalo communities intersect and is adjacent to International School #45 whose student body represents 70 countries and 44 languages. The installation was supported by a vigorous grassroots campaign to engage the teachers, parents, administrators, city council members, community activists, and neighbors to take active ownership of it.

"Full Circle" has become an identifiable spot within the neighborhood, becoming a small-scale meeting place for children and adults alike. In a low-income community with few

maintained green-spaces and little public infrastructure, it is a small but significant gesture.

Thinking of "Full Circle" as a node in a wider network of potential playspaces within the city, one can imagine a series of social infrastructures throughout Buffalo that could contribute in different ways to the making of community through small-scale engagement. Providing spaces where people from different walks of life can come together and share the simple act of play can be one way of taking advantage of the gaps in our city fabrics as van Eyck did in Amsterdam.



FULL CIRCLE

WORKING TOWARD A NETWORK OF SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURES IN THE CITY

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"Full Circle" Buffalo, NY 2016
 Julia Jamrozik and Conyn Kempster
 Commissioned by CEPA Gallery and C.S.1 Curatorial Projects
 Photographs by Brenden Bannon