Building Community: The Ark on Noah Street

Joshua M. Nason University of Texas at Arlington The project began as a response to a competitive call for community engagement based art projects benefitting the historic "Tenth" district of [City]. The winning project, led by a local artist and a community-based non-profit group, incorporated the efforts of an architecture professor and students as design and construction partners. From this collaboration, and the overwhelming support of the community, an Ark was built on Noah Street as a pavilion-scaled home for exhibiting of local culture, art and history at an annual celebration aimed at raising awareness of and strengthening relationships within the neighborhood by showcasing their family histories/narratives. This included original text, paintings, drawings, photographs, and other family ephemera.

The artist, oversaw the design, assembly, and community engagement for the entirety of the process. The architecture professor articulated the physical structure and involved his students in the process of design communication and on-site construction. As part of a senior design studio centered around tactile learning and building quickly at multiple scales, the project proved a perfect fit offering students valuable experience in making while giving them the opportunity to engage the community and understand the cultural importance of the project and its affect on a district in need.

Far exceeding the time-constrained efforts of students, there was substantial outpouring of effort from the neighbors, both in the preparation of materials and construction. An important element of the project was the collaborative build process, which enlisted many people at varying degrees of involvement. The Ark brought people together by creating a festival template that gets people out, and engaged in the evolution of a tradition that connect neighbors and evolves on their terms. The Ark heightened recognition of community history by becoming an annual repository of these stories and histories that both neighbors and the greater community can expand on, respond to, and

After a two week build process, the Ark Festival commenced with a neighborhood parade and celebration of the art, process and involved citizens through the exhibit opening, featuring live music, food and entertainment from members of the community, and the nearby zoo. The visible pride and camaraderie at the Ark Festival was unmistakable and unforgettable.

The Ark on Noah Street shifts perceptions by activating a vacant parking lot and temporarily exploring the possibilities of that space. It also preserves the history of the Tenth District and promotes local culture by creating an ever evolving archive of family stories, recognizing the history of the area.

Short term, the Ark on Noah Street will encourage neighborhood participation both in the construction and in documentation of families stories through audio recordings, photography and art panels created by the residents themselves. It will be an opportunity for neighbors to know each other. The long term impact would be to create a reproducible ritual and annual tradition that evolves with the community. The neighborhood trajectory will trend upwards with policies that integrate the Ark project into any additional development in the district.

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A collaborative project, engaging designers and residents in a historic neighborhood



tonships within the neighborhood.

The Ark was designed for and built in the vacant parking lot behind the Greater El Bethel Baptist Church at the corner of Noah and North Cliff Street. Constructed by surrounding a 20 ft shipping container with a wooden frame structure cladded with salvaged doors, screens and windows from the area, the Ark serves as an archital space for distributed wood panels on which participating neighbors composed their families' narratives through inagery and writing. During the time of year when the exhibit is not open, the shipping container serves as a containment space for the rometization of the modular, disassembled ark. Many of the materials used were gathered from the neighborhood, including remnants from abandoned homes, doors donated by the church - while some were purchased from merely ocrapy and sor recycled from previous builds.

Pedagogleal Goals*

Christopher Blay, the project leading artist oversaw the design, assembly, and community engagement for the entriety of the process. Assistant Professor Joshua M. Nason of UT-Artinghors School of Architecture articulated the physical structure and engaged his students in some of the process of design communication and on-site construction. As part of a senior design student suitable experience in making while disvolutive to access the structure and and building at multiple cases in site or doret the project control as article for federing students valuable experience in making while disvolutive to access the control than the controllative to access the control than the controllative to access the controllation of the processor and active flowing students without experience in making while disvolutive to access the controllative to access the controllative experience in making while disvolutive to access the controllative to access the controllative experience in making while disvolutive to access the controllative experience in making while disvolutive accesses the controllative experience in making while access the controllat

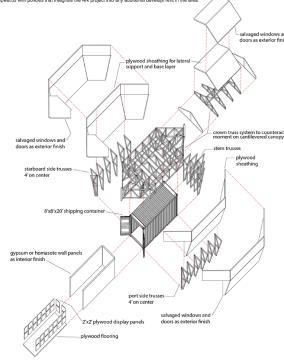
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