

vtxt001

thinking about mass events. putting together shows, 'making things happen.' or to put it another way: dissecting an old idea - "the rave way." the mass event as the coming together of a large number of people in space as the root of an expansive and liberating experience. an energy and a space radically different from the codified spaces of shows, bars, art galleries, etc. .. cultural resistance.

but lately, it seems like a good time to ask: is it important how many people come to an event? and idea that's out there in many forms, that the number of people attending, the size of the audience, is a measure of the level of success. suddenly, all that talk of cultural resistance starts to slide into marketing.

outside of sponaneous, organic moments, the mass event becomes reliant on the concept of large numbers of people. the rave idea is a good example in that it's not flexible, it couldn't/can't cope with low attendence.. it is 'a failure' when the 'promoters' whose job it is to bring out 'the audience' obviously didn't do their job right. now wait a minute. this sounds a whole lot like creating a consumer base for your product. why is it so important to get all those bodies in the space? i'm not sure: some of the best experiences of my life have been with huge groups of people, others have been with small groups. the point is that "the rave way" is not adaptable. why?

the mass event is aimed towards promotion, marketing, and ultimately creating an audience. therefore it is forced to use the same mechanisms as capital uses to sell products. in the end, these methods have and always will oppose people creating real relationships with each other. when these same individuals get together in a more intimate way, you see people wondering what to do with each other. this is clearly no path.

but how can events be created without this problem? one way might be to avoid organizing events around promotion and tickets and performers up on a stage.. recognize an idea that is already in motion, parties/events/shows can be created as shared spaces in which small groups or collectives can meet. that is to say, instead of gaining support by creating an audience, activating an idea by supporting a community. humans naturally organize themselves into nodes, groups, crews and then attempt to do things, sometimes on a small scale sometimes on a large scale. when we find common ground and work together, we create a community of like mind. the notion of 'audience' deteriorates because we can be invested in creating together on multiple levels. the key is collaborating with other emergent formations. when groups work together to create space together, they themselves are the audience, and the foundation for anything else that might happen.

when organizing is viewed in this way, several things become clear. big amounts of money are never going to change hands, and especially at first. sometimes, there may be very people at a show, but this same show should still be able to be one of the most important of your life (the same goes for other people there). also: you are going to be getting to know other people in a much more personal way, because there are not codified roles causing the kind of icky tension you feel around car salesmen. yes, you guessed it, this isn't a model for a job, it is a model for a way of life.

the flip side of course is that some people will use this way of thinking as an excuse to

be wishy washy about economics. to keep it simple: economics is a reality under all systems of social organization. the best bet is to keep costs low and run a tight ship. expenses need to be paid, avoiding debt is a good thing. if money does accumulate it should be shared. people appreciate being paid, and should be, because it helps them do things. but anyone demanding inordinate amounts is probably not very interested in meetings between affinity groups so why bother working with them in the first place.

concluding: the role of parties/shows/events is not to present a set of ideas to a virgin audience. instead it is to work together to create space together. having a lot of people in attendance is not a bad thing, but it is not the most important thing. sometimes if you think about things differently, the same things you wanted are possible and even better. the goal is to meet face to face and know each other. to have space to listen, to have time/space to talk, to have space to learn who we can trust and who is out to take advantage of somebody else. to have the space to live and interact and learn. shows/parties/events can be spaces for collectives to practice working together, spaces of dynamic collaboration.