

# Proposal for The Collaborative

Submitted by JEFF&GORDON (Jeff Foye and Gordon Winiemko)

## **BACKGROUND**

We, JEFF&GORDON, create situations where an audience will reflect on their participatory role in the ever-changing cultural narrative; every one of us contributes to our collective culture, but at the same time we are all defined by culture. As such, our work frequently “takes on” the form of familiar social customs and iconography, and also enters into a dialogue with the site or the context in which the work is exhibited.

## **PROPOSAL**

We propose to expand our collaborative practice, and to honor the name of this community gallery space, The Collaborative, by involving members of the Long Beach community in the construction of a monument dedicated to, and created by the community. Specifically, we will stage a day-long event in which visitors to the gallery will take turns directing us in the construction of a wooden tower, approximately 7- 10 feet in diameter, standing nearly as tall as the ceiling of the gallery will accommodate, and located in the front window space section of the gallery.

The tower will be made out of a collection of wooden boards held together with plywood screws and wire. Fittingly for this community art project, we will use recycled materials taken from discarded crates formerly used in the transportation of artwork (which we will have access to via Jeff Foye’s work as an art handler and preparator). We will also use two by fours for reinforcing and bracing.

The construction of the tower will be a marriage of the creative decisions made in the moment by participants and the work we will do to bring those decisions in line with structural integrity. For instance, a participant might hold up a two by four in mid-air and say, “Can this go here?” And then our job will be to build a structure and an arm and a cantilever to incorporate that two by four into the existing in-progress tower.

We will be the only two people actually performing the labor of constructing the tower, and we will take all necessary safety precautions. The participants will direct us in the construction from a safe distance.

## **THEMATIC SIGNIFICANCE**

This Long Beach community tower will turn the conventional notion of a monument upside down. A singular monument is usually accompanied by a singularity of vision; approved by committee, but designed by one person or a small group of people. This tower will be a monument to the plurality and diversity of the Long Beach community. We as artists will give up the conventional role of self-expression and instead act as facilitators of a community experience. To this end, we will do extensive outreach to the community in advance of the exhibition, both through advertising and by approaching local community organizations. It is vital to the project that the diversity of Long Beach be represented.

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## **ADDITIONAL COMPONENTS**

We will further represent the community by having a professional photographer on hand to take pictures of the members of the community in action as they direct us in the tower's construction. For the duration of the exhibition, we will display these portraits on the rear walls of the gallery.

As part of our outreach, we will request that people bring with them objects of personal and/or cultural significance, to be arranged at the base of the community tower. The tower will thus take on the quality of not just a monument but also a reliquary. During the day-long marathon construction event, associate artists and volunteers will coordinate the events "on the ground." We will also encourage community members to bring offerings whenever they visit the gallery over the course of the exhibition.

The sum of these complementary elements will achieve our desire to instill in The Collaborative the feel of a community center.

## **CONCLUSION**

The collaborative, improvisatory nature of our proposed tower, in combination with the attendant personal contributions by members of the community, is designed to be a reflection of culture and community as they really are – not rigidly conceived and manufactured things, but vibrant and organic processes.

## **ARTISTS' BIO**

Jeff Foye and Gordon Winiemko live and work in Long Beach, California. They received their MFA's in 2007 from California State University, Long Beach and the University of California, Irvine, respectively. In the three years of their collaboration, the artists have arranged for couples to simultaneously perform the same argument in public, staged mock focus groups to question progressive rhetoric during the 2008 presidential election, and performed manual labor for a group show staged in a former furniture warehouse. They also recently had their first solo show at HAUS gallery in Pasadena, and were included in The OsCene 2010, a survey show of art from Orange County and its environs. Currently they are preparing new work for inclusion in an exhibition at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. <http://www.jeffandgordon.net>