

Party remarks – third draft

Thank you everyone so much for coming tonight. *I feel very happy to see everyone and excited to have the chance to celebrate with you.* Thank you to Dena Beard and the Lab for hosting us, thank you Colleen Silva for your wonderful design of the space tonight, thanks to Leah Rosenberg for her gorgeous snacks and thank you Brandon Brown for suggesting our delicious and unusual winter cocktail, the bamboo.

So. I have remarks: In April it will be 8 years since we launched this little blog experiment at SFMOMA. I am certain that not anyone involved at the beginning of Open Space thought this thing would last so long. Or thought about duration at all. It was and is the internet. Here we are 8 years, 2 thousand posts, 600 contributors, 1.5 million visitors later, and what was a scrappy operation of one plus none now has a pint-sized village to run it and a bigger-than-pint-sized budget to support it. Everyone in this room – or nearly everyone anyway – has made something that has become a part of what Open Space is. [let's drink to that!] You wrote something, you shared something, you talked about something, you edited or you fixed something. Or, you talked me through or out of a crisis. Or you created a crisis, and I love you for that. Your hands and your ideas are in it. I confess that I can't quite understand what it is we've made together. What is this thing? Is this a magazine? An archive, a history lesson, a conversation, a blog? What is this strange and brilliant collection of unlike articulations that are all housed under the admittedly indulgent umbrella called Open Space?

I want to tell you something my closest colleagues at SFMOMA have heard me say, a million times maybe. When I am sitting in my cubicle working on Open Space, all I can see is what's going wrong that day, what I need to do better, what I haven't done enough of yet, the latest thing that's gone wonky – I don't mean you guys, I mean me -- I have a punishing perfectionism which is or would seem to be totally at odds with my efforts to beat back the encroachments of institutional perfectionism [& rigidity] so that our writers and artists have space to breathe, to voice, to say what they want to say however they need to get it said, and to whom. I sit in my cubicle, and all I can see is what I should be doing different, or better. Then, I get up and walk over to somebody else's desk, and they are reading Open Space, or I look over someone's shoulder at their phone, and they've got Open Space up on it, and I just think WOW! look at that gorgeous thing. What intelligence, what astonishing writing, what [living, breathing] weirdness, look at all these amazing people saying and doing these amazing things. When I am looking at it anywhere that is not my desk I remember that there is nothing at all wrong with it. It's beautiful. Open Space is absolutely unique, absolutely queer. I mean odd, and I mean queer. Gorgeous. It's Unfit. It's earnest. And it's duplicitous also, because it's never the same space twice, it's always only the voice of whoever is writing there at that minute. And all of you who have made things there are often radically unlike each other.

I have to talk tonight in generalities because to tick off the specifics would take a week. The archive is huge - there is so much history there, playfulness, integrity, commitment, exploration, experiment, critique. And there's so much possibility still untapped in Open Space, too, that the platform is also always ripe for projection, for desire, for wish – it's the proverbial elephant being manhandled, or caressed, whatever. Whatever piece of it you touch is what it is for you. Is this failure or success? I don't know and I'm happy I don't know anything certain about this

changeable, forceful, cheerful, expansive, loquacious, unruly thing, which lives in an art world and comments on it. And needs an endless string of adjectives to define it.

What I most want to say tonight is thank you. I can't believe what we have done together. For eight years I have worked with the smartest, most generous, sharp-minded people, and you have all been so willing – to show up, to write, to see something and say something, to give something of yourself to this thing, and to make it do things I couldn't have imagined it would do. I have been your reader and I have learned from your work, every day for eight years. Your energy and intentionality have changed me, profoundly.

Something I can really never get my mind around is the part of Open Space that is the “suzanne made this”. I am looking forward to stepping back so I can get some kind of a look at what I've done. It's a good time for me to leave. We have a gorgeous new site, which allows us to showcase the archive of everything we've done together so far, and we have new, stronger, and even more visible ways of highlighting the Bay Area arts communities and the individuals who make things happen here. Every page of the new site has been designed as a fresh and supportive backdrop for all of the things our contributors might make. We have a stable budget, which allows Open Space to continue to support not only excellent, exploratory writing *about* art but writing *as* art. Most important, I am leaving you all in truly excellent hands – and this gives me a chance to introduce a few people: Chad Coerver, my boss, has given his unwavering support for Open Space since day one. Bosco Hernandez, the SFMOMA art director, designed our wonderful new site for us, and has given us our new mark, the “O”, which I hope you like as much as I do. Gordon Faylor, our managing editor, worked very closely with me through every step of our re-envisioning process over the last 16 months and I could not have survived this without him. Grace Ambrose is our part-time assistant, she touched every single page of the site during the rebuild and relaunch, has become absolutely indispensable in a few short months, and it is Grace we have to thank for the success of this lovely party tonight.

And, I very much want to welcome Claudia La Rocco, who, starting February 4th, will be the new editor-in-chief of Open Space. Claudia and I someday I hope will have the chance to tell you the very odd, stars-aligned story of how we come to be in this trading places situation – for now I am glad just to introduce her – she comes to us, as many of you know, from New York, where she founded and ran an online publication not unlike Open Space, the Performance Club, and where she has been writing about performance and dance for many years for many publications, including the New York Times and Artforum. She is a poet, she is a critic, she is an editor; she is also a lovely person. Please welcome her and support her as, together with all of you, she takes Open Space into the future. I am very excited to see what you will do.