

PORTable Shipyard Proposal

October 2010—2015 Ongoing Special Project

Project Introduction

We are inspired by the possibilities inherent in the word *PORT*.

- Portable
 1. We can take it to other locations
 2. The results arrived at in our program can be carried to the outside world, the marketplace, and our every-day life
- Unload, Load, Embark: Time and space to unload your ideas and fill up with new ones
- Port of Entry: Where ideas, skills, and actions enter a new situation
- Port of call – A visit to a port other than the home port
- Portal – Entry into another space/idea/mindset
- Portal system – Represents humans networks
- Portamento – In music it's a smooth glide from one note to another. It is how we like to see collaboration.

PORTable Shipyard, is a long-term project utilizing international port and shipyard areas as (con)temporary platforms for research, conversation, exploration, idea development and celebration. The event enables encounters, collaborations and experimentations that are not possible within the boundaries of established conferences, institutions and venues.

Is a crucible for the cross-fertilization of ideas, providing a platform for future collaborations and projects.

- **Goal:**

To engage thinkers and welcome conversation, which invites a proposal, which results in a project, which derives an outcome. What the 'outcome' is—is not important. It is the process which is significant.

- **How will this happen?:**

There is no substitute for real-life experiences, you can research throat singing and download sound bytes, but to stand inches away from the vibrating pulses of sound can have a revolutionary effect on a creative mind. We program the opportunity for deeper learning and provide space and time for experimentation, discussion, and hands-on problem solving amid a festive environment in the shipyard. A diverse flock of invited artists, researchers, innovators, historians, scientists and creative individuals meet for a time of cross-pollination and inspiration, incubation time for new ideas and projects. Away from the familiar and the everyday, old paradigms are abolished, new ideas are born.

Why Shipyards?

- *Carefully positioned shelters from rough seas:*

Harbors which seclude weary intellectuals, artists, workers, and activists, away from the turbulence of their daily lives for long enough to instigate new ways of looking at familiar situations.

- *Convenient transfer points to further networks of transportation*

Networks provide expanded contact with individuals and resources outside of our normal circles, which in turn gives us different places to go and different people with whom to solve problems.

- *Bustling hubs of social, cultural, and financial congress*

A working shipyard employs hundreds or thousands of workers—all with a specific task to perform. The social and logistical possibilities of this scale are staggering and are a microcosm of the world.

- *Unique positions from which to view contemporary social, aesthetic, scientific, and artistic themes.*

As shipyard areas contain ever-changing pressures from urban expansion, shifting technologies, and other modes of transport they are locus points which contain all the debatable urban topics of the day.

- *Visually inspiring*

They offer large (often abandoned) spaces and majestic views. Plus, big cranes are totally rad!

What/Who is Caravansarai?

Caravansarai is the creation of artists Anne Weshinsky and Julie Upmeyer. We gather creative people from around the globe for collaboration, experimentation, research and exchange.

The Caravansarai building is situated in Karakoy, Istanbul, in what used to be the world's largest sea port during the Ottoman Empire. Istanbul, with its direct access to the Aegean, Marmara, Black, and Mediterranean Seas, currently maintains its position as the main shipping point for a large portion of the globe. Istanbul is also home to several historical caravanserais--which are the structures from which we take our name and our inspiration. Just as the historical caravanserais hosted camel caravans along the Silk Road, we invite creative people--with or without camels--from around the globe to work, live (as artists-in-residence,) and trade ideas.

Caravansarai acts as a producer and consultant for organizations, foundations or individuals who wish to do a project or hold an event in Istanbul. We also initiate our own projects--artworks, performances, events, personal artistic collaborations, and larger scale actions like **PORTable Shipyard**.

Utilizing the experience we've acquired by working in Istanbul, we have conceived **PORTable Shipyards** as our vision of the ideal inspirational experience.

Previous Actions:

• *Renovation of Tan Han*

When we purchased it, our 1980s structure was a typical commercial workplace --a building filled with lots of independent shops and offices. Our building was about half-full with various sellers of hardware and motors. Over the course of year, we persuaded the old tenants and tea seller to leave, passed our various military and municipal checks, gained permission for renovation and completely altered practically every wall and area of the building—in Turkish, and not always with a smile.

• *Tea, Tavla and Tall Tales*

The Persembe Pazari in Istanbul's Karaköy neighborhood (in which we are located) has been occupied almost entirely by hardware and construction suppliers for the past 30 years. But, like most of the rest of Istanbul, it has multiple histories, official and contrived, mundane and mythical. What is recorded? What is true? We invited artists to create site-specific artworks based on this theme. We chose six of these proposals, and oversaw their development from conception to completion. They are now permanently built into the Caravansarai building (Tan Han).

• *CaravansarAID*

'CaravansarAID' is our fake aid organization. In jest, we came to the rescue of the impoverished Swedish artists with aid packets of food, healthcare and cleaning products acquired through our other jobs. The products were brought from Turkey as humanitarian aid, presented in our booth at the Supermarket Art Fair in Stockholm, Sweden, then dispersed to artists and guests of the fair as works of art. CaravansarAID also organized and presented the 1st Annual Turkish-Swedish Meatball Eating Competition.

PORTable Activities

Possible topics:

- Trade (formal and informal)
- Measurement systems
- Disease (spread, treatment, containment)
- Architecture (technology, aesthetics)
- Archeology (methods, findings)
- Natural history (before and after port activity) ports usually built in a natural confluence of water and persists over time.
- Culture and society of port areas (services, workers, points of escape or entry)
- Labor, Trades and Unionization
- Renovation, revitalization projects, urban planning, and commercial development
- Large Spaces
- The sea
- Boats / Trains / Trucks / other transportation
- Trade – formal/informal
- Measurement systems
- Ex-industrial facilities
- Mix of people
- Disease
- Services to guests / hospitality
- Modern-day renovation projects / commercial development
- Canteens and food culture

This list is by no means exhaustive, and is subject to availability of experts and the brain power of experts and participants.

Possible participants

People invited and recommended to attend a PORTable Shipyard gathering fall into two categories: 'Presenters' and 'Participants'. We would hope that on many occasions, these fields may overlap as the days progress. Participants can be anybody with an interest and the willingness to share enthusiasm.

- Geologist
- Marine biologist
- Performer
- Architect
- Wood-carver
- Mechanical Engineer
- Sculptor
- Logistical Planner
- Dancer
- Writer
- Historian
- Urban Planner
- Fishing Boat Captain
- Clown
- School Teacher
- Painter
- Chef
- Museum Director
- Business leader
- Sailor
- Shipbuilder

For each event, we will work with local partners, individuals, and groups already active within the port area who are supportive of the event and are closely involved with its development. We foresee participants being approximately half locals and half individuals from other countries.

Event Structure

These 1 or 2-week events are composed of four phases, which offer a mix of formal and informal time. There is open occasion for individuals to play with each other's toys, invent games and then break all the rules, develop their own projects or work with others in collaborative groups. The structured lectures and presentations provide the inspiration and impetus for this development.

Days 1-3: ***Show & Tell***

Local and international guest experts and eyewitnesses present lectures, tours, presentations and performances relating to one of the chosen topics. (see **Topics**). The emphasis of this Show and Tell session will be on creative presentation of facts. We will not be sitting in a conference hall sipping bad coffee and nibbling on dry biscuits. In fact, some presentations may be outside and involve manual labor.

Days 4-8: ***Inspired Experimentation***

Participants will pick items of personal interest from the Show and Tell presentations, and expand upon them in the context of their own work. Now is the time for researching, hypothesizing, testing and developing new projects, theories and ideas alone or in groups of others who share your interest in the topic at hand.

Opportunities to learn who shares your interest and compatible work style can be arrived at either organically over the course of the project, or in the context of one of our working activities. Such activities may include cooking meals, tending boats, treasure hunts, or the old standard—drinking alcohol together! Work sessions are punctuated by coffee breaks, meals, entertainments, and other diversions.

During this period, our hope is that coalitions will form between individuals with mutual or complimentary interests who will then work together on whatever they can conceive of. There are no limitations on the 'work' that can be done. It may range anywhere from nothing at all to bringing about world peace or making a musical in a shipping container. It is up to the participants to decide if and what their 'project' consists of. We will be on hand to assist and manage the logistics of projects.

Day 9: ***It's a Fair!***

Structured and organized like a trade fair - with the gaiety of a graduation ball - the inspired experimentation projects-in-development are brought together and beautifully presented, with time for feedback, suggestions and critiques.

Day 10: ***Into the Future***

This is an opportunity for more concrete planning. Devising where and how the developing projects could potentially extend, how they could be funded, what further research is needed, what the applications are. People can leave, stay, break into groups, brainstorm and plan for the next meeting cycle.

The Aftermath

Although the purpose of these events is not necessarily to produce any quantifiable or qualifiable outcomes, there will be some residual benefits as a result of our activities.

For the shipyards: by re-activating abandoned or transitioning shipyards we spark interest, ideas and debate about these areas and their future. Questions arise as to the role of civil society? Corporate investors? Municipal actors? Surrounding neighborhoods?

For the participants: in the art world, the business world, even the world of science, the idea exists of a time of retreat – rethinking, rejuvenating, and filling your self with new knowledge, experiences and relationships. The advantages of such a time are evident in the number of corporate retreat programs, innovation workshops and artist residencies that exist throughout the world.

For financial supporters: supporters could be those with significant stock in the shipyards themselves, recent purchasers, municipal governments, economic or experimental groups, or architecture firms. Bringing experts into the area will bring new incite to existing projects and ideas, encourage knowledge sharing among disciplines and create a platform for dialogue.

Possible Locations

Other waterfront cities share the designation of having important historical or functioning shipyards and ports of their own. We would like to import the model into various shipyards and enhance exchanges of participants between them.

Stocznia Gdańska, Gdansk, Poland

Tuzla Shipyards, Istanbul, Turkey

Dunkerque Shipyards, France

Batumi Port, Georgia

Long Island City, NY, USA

Bayshore, San Francisco, USA

Baltimore, USA

Kraljevica Shipyard, Croatia

Baku, Azerbaijan

Cape Town, S. Africa

Kobe Shipyards, Japan

Riga Shipyards, Latvia

Hawaii?