

MANIFESTO

THE AVAILABLE CITY

by

Mohammad Massoumi

The 2021 Chicago Architectural Biennial titled The Available City presents the city as a site for a new urban design proposal and global dialogue. The Available City focuses on the potential for creating collective space in Chicago's ten thousand-plus city-owned vacant lots, which are concentrated in eighteen underserved South and West neighborhoods that are home to primarily Black and Brown communities. The Available City's collaborative and improvisational approach to creating a new urban landscape is community first rather than system first, as it works from a small scale to a large scale and over time to provide diverse forms and activities to foster collective spaces that are transformative for the residents and communities of each neighborhood. It's an urban design approach that is informed by Black culture, especially as it relates to improvisation.

By design, the development of ideas to make city-owned lots into collective spaces engages organizations and residents in those neighborhoods, in addition to architects and designers. The Available City foregrounds how under-resourced communities have ideas for their neighborhoods that can contribute to the larger character and design of the city. In The Available City, collective spaces are publicly accessible spaces that possess forms and activities varied enough to generate and accommodate a diversity of interests and needs in a neighborhood or community. Additionally, public safety is addressed indirectly through the livability that collective spaces in a neighborhood can provide. Collective spaces implemented by community organizations can address art and culture, technology, transportation and infrastructure, education and youth development, health and wellness, green and open space, sports and recreation, workplace development, economic development, and capacity building.

The Available City poses four key provocations:

- Our Missions Are Urbanism; recognizes that each community organization has a mission*
- Futures We Could Have Today; underscores the transformative power of new perspectives*
- Something Patterned, Wild, and Free; a work that is simultaneously improvisational*
- A Power That's Stronger than Itself; impact of small things operating individually*

A **manifesto** is a short, punchy declaration of desires and demands, provocations and protests: a call to action and/or a call to pause, think and act differently.

Theatres of Architectural Agency - Research Topics in History & Theory - Prof. Lisa Landrum, Winter 2022

MAELSTROM

CREATIVITY CATALYST

by

Mohammad Massoumi

In today's world, we often live in cities for various reasons. Cities can have great potential. To put it more clearly, a city can make its people grow or flourish, or vice versa, make them miserable and turn them into just zombies who only think about how to make the morning into night. How good it is for a city to increase the creativity as well as make its people happier. Truly, how can this goal be achieved? I call it a beautiful city. In fact, my answer is, turning the darkness and dark spots of the city into a turning point and a potential for growth.

Use of empty and uninhabited spaces and turn it into workshops for neighborhood residents to promote creativity and expression of ideas. Use of urban sub-spaces such as under bridges, street walls, bus stations, etc. Beautifying such spaces makes the city beautiful. And in the meantime, workshops that can be set up in these areas, empty and uninhabited spaces.

Like Hip Hop Architecture Camp. Congratulations to Michael Ford. What a fascinating and beautiful idea!

I always thought how I could express all my ideas as a child without having fear of adult ignorance. This is truly a masterpiece. Giving children the power to express ideas. Children are the future of the world, and the future belongs to them, and we must increase such workshops. How well it could be if we encourage audiences to see Architecture and Design as tools for change.

A **maelström** is a powerful whirlpool – a dangerous swirling of the sea that sucks everything down into its watery spiral. In this seminar, the maelstrom is a model for architectural theory, imagination and agency – an integrative and creative force – a risky and revelatory mode of panoramic vision.