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by

Elizabeth Devlin Bracken

2011

**The Thesis Committee for Elizabeth Devlin Bracken
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The Ideal City Project

**APPROVED BY
SUPERVISING COMMITTEE:**

Supervisor:

Richard Isackes

Michelle Habeck

Susan Mickey

Robert Schmidt

The Ideal City Project

by

Elizabeth Devlin Bracken, B.Arch.

Thesis

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Dedication

This project is dedicated to Dan Rumney for his enthusiasm, patience and unwavering support.

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First and foremost, I would like to thank my key collaborators– Diana Grisanti, Steve Moulds, Halena Kays and Kate Leahy - for their dedication to the success of this project and their unfailing support. I would also like to thank the writers – Ryan Cunningham, Holli Gipson, Tom Horan, Gabriel Jason Dean and Gabrielle Reisman - who contributed the exceptional stories that brought the city of Devlin to life. In addition, I am grateful to the talented performers and our excellent stage manager for their joyful participation in this production: Maki Borden, Daria Davis, Dan Rumney and Katie Erwin.

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May 6, 2011

Abstract

The Ideal City Project

Elizabeth Devlin Bracken, MFA

The University of Texas at Austin, 2011

Supervisor: Richard Isackes

The Ideal City Project was a performance that presented the design for an ideal city with stories about how that imaginary city failed. The design was represented as a 4'0" x 4'0" wood and Styrofoam sculpture. Upon seeing this design, seven writers created scenes and monologues outlining the destruction of the city. The flaws they discovered were not designed into the city intentionally. In fact, the writers pointed to several different sources for the downfall ranging from issues with its layout to socio-political breakdowns. At the end of the performance the audience was left with the ruins of something that was once so full of hope.

This piece was intended to serve as a reminder that cities are not predetermined utopias, but continually changing and evolving environments created by those who live in them. Even the best examples eventually fail or evolve into something different. However, this does not mean we stop trying to create better places to live.

George Bernard Shaw said “A reasonable man adapts himself to his environment. An unreasonable man persists in attempting to adapt his environment to suit himself. Therefore, all progress depends on the unreasonable man.” Theater performances provide an excellent way to explore ideas and create dialogue about what these better places look like and how they function.

Table of Contents

List of Illustrations	x
PROJECT OVERVIEW	1
THE DESIGN OF THE IDEAL CITY	2
The Influential Principles of Urban Design	2
The Influential Principles of Art and Theatre	8
THE CREATION OF THE PERFORMANCE	13
The Collaboration Between Design and Story	14
The Structure of the Story	15
THE IDEAL CITY IN PERFORMANCE	20
The Performance	20
Production Photographs	21
CONCLUSION	25
Appendix A: The poster for <i>The Ideal City Project</i>	27
Appendix B: The performance program for <i>The Ideal City Project</i>	28
Appendix C: The Final Script for <i>The Ideal City Project</i>	29
Appendix D: <i>Swoozie Gilbert</i>	55
Bibliography	59
Vita	61

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The artist as a creator of utopian ideals has long been influential on the course of civilization. We are able to incite change in individuals and political systems through the questions we ask in our work. The theatre has the ability to focus and direct conversations about these utopian ideals. It is with this in mind that I created *The Ideal City Project*: a performance event that presents the representation of an ideal city as a sculpture in combination with a series of scenes and monologues outlining the failure of that city. It is my hope that this performance provided a venue for debate and conversation about the nature of the places in which we live and the hopes we have for our communities.

The weaving of the fabric of cities is important and fascinating to me. For my undergraduate education, I studied architecture and urban design with gifted artists who are examining the world to find ways to build stronger communities. Under their instruction I developed a love of cities and their different characters.

I feel there is an opportunity in theater to question the way we live and the places in which we live. The action and movement of life through performance captures the discursive nature of a site in the urban environment. However, in the design of a building or master plan architects may approach their subject as a static work of art rather than the living organism that is used and activated by everyday life. Performance offers an opportunity to explore how we live and interact with objects, buildings and each other. As a result it can inform architecture. I hope to discover how this theoretical conversation about the issues that face the urban population can exist in a theatrical discourse.

THE DESIGN OF THE IDEAL CITY



Illustration 1: Preliminary sketch of the Ideal City by Lizzie Bracken

THE INFLUENTIAL PRINCIPLES OF URBAN DESIGN

The structure of the city I designed and my own guidelines for its creation are closely related to the teaching and writing of Leon Krier and Jane Jacobs. Krier developed an outline for a successful city (Krier, 119):

To guarantee its efficacy, the master plan must have the rudimentary simplicity of moral precepts. It is divided into five parts:

1. A plan of the city, defining the size and form of its urban quarters and parks, and the network of major avenues, boulevards and landscape corridors
2. A plan of each quarter, defining the network of streets, squares and blocks.
3. The form of individual plots of each urban block: number, shape, and use type and location of floors that can be built by plot.
4. The architectural code describing materials, technical configurations, proportions for external building elements (walls, roofs, windows, doors, porticos, porches, garden walls, chimneys) and all built elements that are visible from public spaces.
5. A code for public spaces, defining the materials, configurations, techniques and designs for paving, street furniture, signage, lighting and planting.

With these guidelines in mind I laid my city out in the following manner:

- The city has a population of approximately 250,000 people living in five distinct urban districts radiating from a central public square. The approximate size of the city is 50 square miles. There are two major axis roads ending in visual icons of the city. While the network of streets adheres to a loose grid, the streets are organized so as to create many three dimensional visual pictures at the end of the axis of several streets. This will both create a beautiful community and provide pedestrians with visual landmarks that assist in navigation through the city.

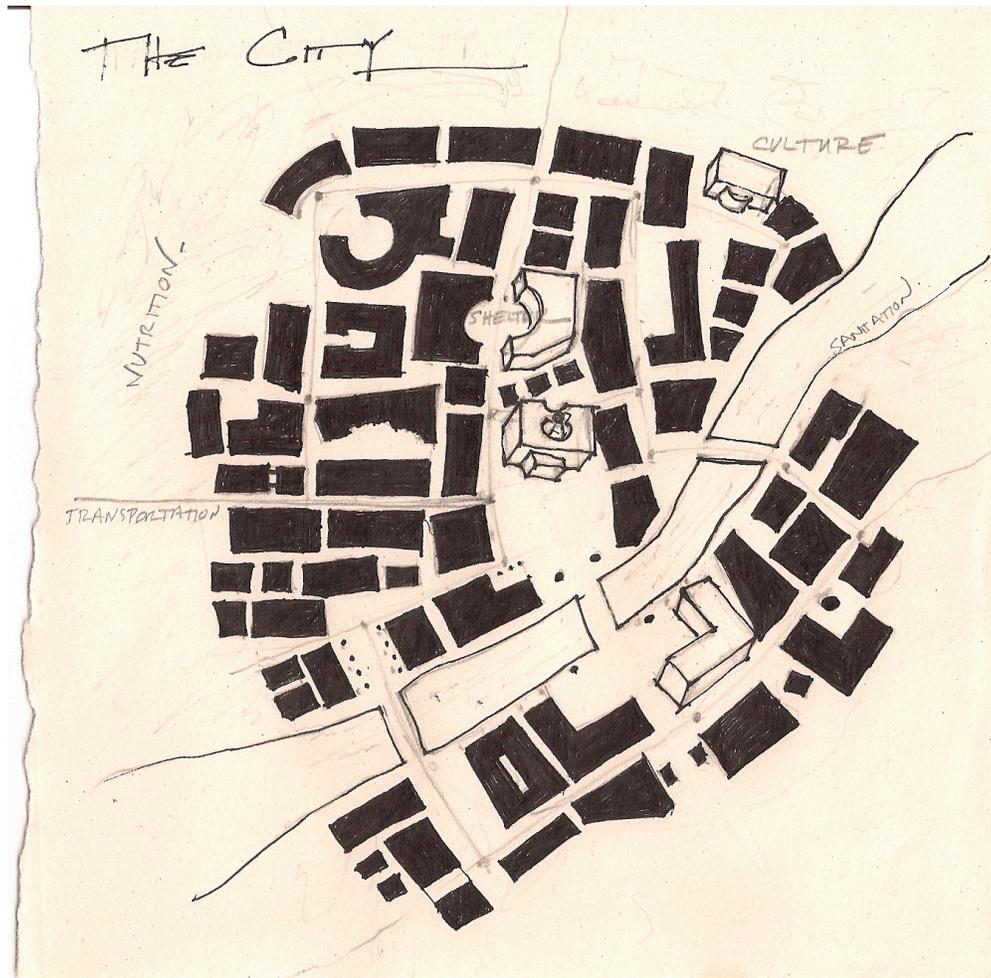


Illustration 2: Preliminary design for the plan of the city

- Each quarter is roughly large enough that a healthy individual can walk across it in approximately 30 minutes. Within each quarter there is a smaller public square as well as a diverse range of business and residential building types.

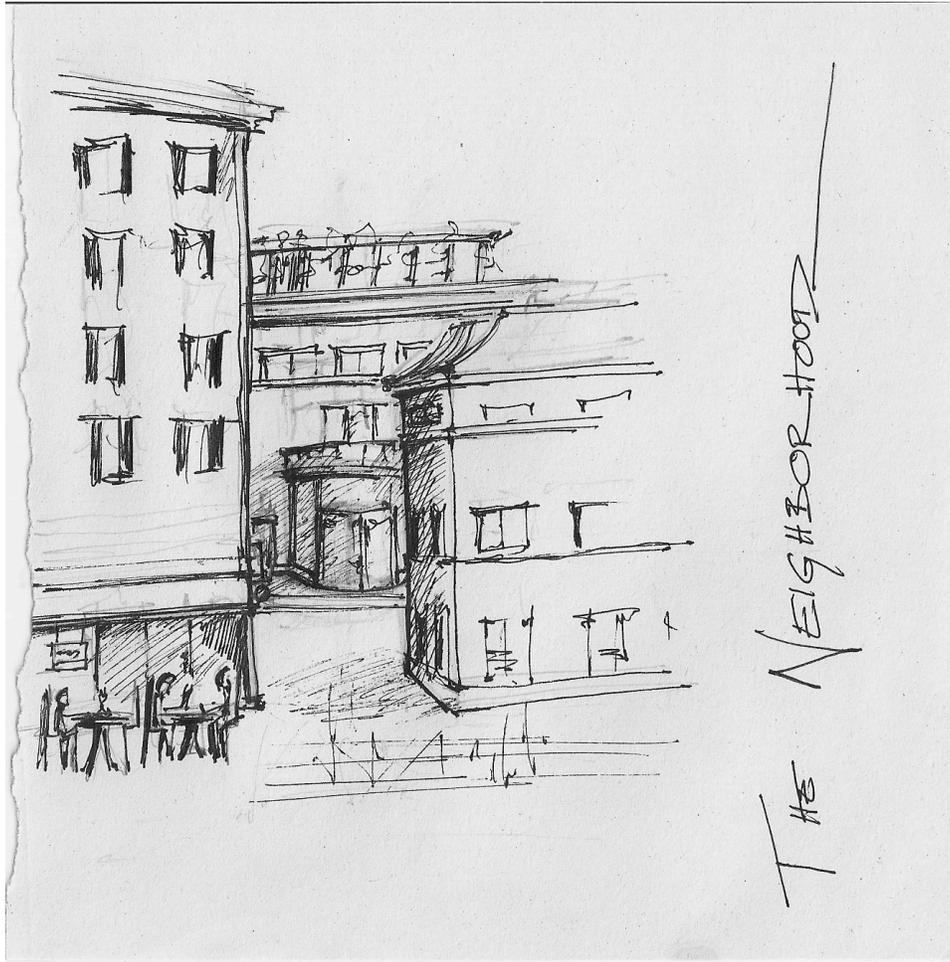


Illustration 3: Preliminary design sketch of one of the neighborhoods

- The predominant building type making up the fabric of the city has commercial use on the ground floor with residential apartments and homes on the upper floors. The major public buildings providing services are located towards the center of the city. However, there are exceptions and the character of a given quarter can be defined by the important public building that it houses. For example, the main library and outdoor theater are located in the neighborhood south of the river. This results in a

neighborhood with a strong intellectual community and more frequent music and dramatic events.

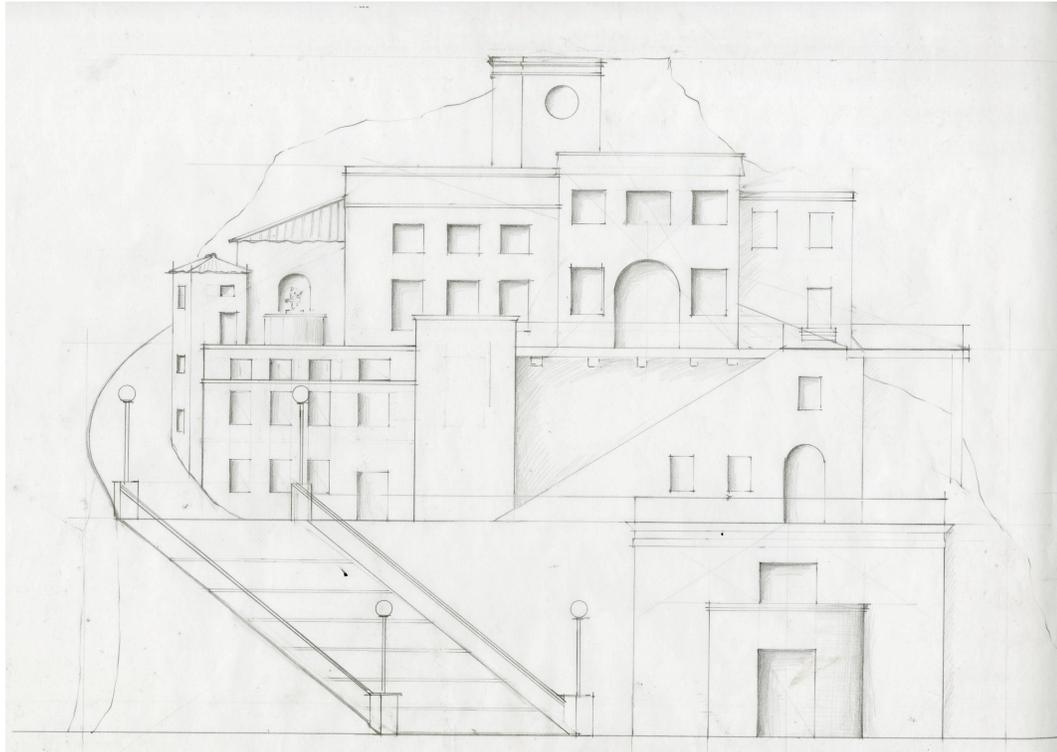


Illustration 4: Design for the neighborhood on the hill

- All construction is made of natural materials when possible, predominantly wood. Traditional building techniques and proportions are adhered to, when possible. Unless there is just cause, a building will not exceed five stories. Major public buildings are examples of types that may be granted permission to exceed height limit.
- When possible, natural materials should be used in the construction of public spaces. Artwork is commissioned for major squares and as end points to major axis roads. All streets and public square are well lit and

have pedestrian walking areas. Major natural areas located just outside the city limits are preserved as much as physically possible. Every effort is made to keep the physical size of the city constant so that construction does not need to expand into the natural landscape outside the city limits. The resources from the outlying areas are necessary for the continued success and quality of life of the city.

As with most rules for design, the inherent failure is built into the structure of the guidelines. While these guidelines, in the right hands, may result in elegant and functional cities, it can lead to a stagnation and artificiality that Krier strives to avoid. Examples of communities like Seaside, Watercolor and Poundbury created under the auspices of the New Urbanist Movement contain a lack of diversity in population and business. Sandy Sorlien, a member of the Congress for New Urbanism, addresses these issues in the May 2006 issue of *Period Homes*:

A legitimate beef is that the New Urbanism is only for the well-off. The truth is that it is intended for everyone, but yes, most New Urbanist towns have been, so far, out of reach for the working class because their real estate prices have increased rapidly. These are very desirable places to live. (And keep in mind that Seaside, the most-cited example of the New Urbanism, is both its earliest example [now 25 years old] and one that was always intended to be a resort.) Solution? Build more of them.



Illustration 5: Seaside. Photo by Duany Plater-zyberk and Company.

Even if a certain level of economic and social diversity can be established, the work of the writers on *The Ideal City Project* demonstrated to me the point at which design can no longer control the actions of a population. How people used buildings and structures in the city became the focus of many of our scenes. For example, the main square of the city that was intended as a place of civic gathering served as a place for the beginning of a violent rebellion in one of the stories in the production. The useful and beautiful river running through the city was a divisive icon of the community and resulted in an easy way for people to segregate the population.

THE INFLUENTIAL PRINCIPLES OF ART AND THEATRE

Beyond Krier's and Jacobs's theories on urbanism, I see this project and the implied call to action as in keeping with the sentiments and goals of many artists in the

Constructivist movement. The inciting work of art for this project was a sculpture by Gonzalo Fonseca, a Latin American artist taught and heavily influenced by Torres Garcia – the creator of constructive universalism. In addition, the writing and work of Naum Gabo was influential in establishing the goals of *The Ideal City Project*.



Illustration 6: *Graneros III* by Gonzalo Fonseca.

While diverse and large in its scope, the Constructivist movement adheres to the principles that art can and should lead to social change and influence daily life. In his book *The Tradition of Constructivism*, Stephen Bann states:

What can be stated quite categorically about constructivism is that it rejects the comfortable assumption of a “given” harmony between human feeling and the outside world. In contrast, it implies that man himself is the creator of order in a world that is neither sympathetic nor hostile, and that the artist must play a central role in determining the type of order that is imposed. (xix)

Constructivism was a call to effect change. The art created under this umbrella reflected life as it should be and resulted in a certain amount of anonymity and communal

responsibility. The Constructivist ideals ring true as much in today's troubled times as they did then. In a letter to Herbert Read, Naum Gabo describes his art:

I am offering in my art what comfort I can to alleviate the pains and collusions of our time. I try to keep our despair from assuming such proportions that nothing will remain in our devastated life to prompt us to live. I try to guard in my work the image of the morrow we left behind us in our memories and foregone aspirations and to remind us that the image of the world can be different. It may be that I don't succeed in that at all, but I would not accept blame for trying it. (Bann, 220)



Illustration 7: *Head No. 2* by Naum Gabo

Like these constructivists, there are many artists and architects who examine theoretical projects to explore the buildings and planning ideas that will result in the best quality of life for its inhabitants. Paulo Soleri has gone so far as to create a full size prototype city of approximately 5000 people. The city, Acosanti, focuses on a principle

he calls arcology – a combination of architecture and ecology in which “the built and the living interact as organs would in a highly evolved being”.

The exhibition “Small Scale, Big Change” at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 2010 displayed several theoretical projects by designers working towards responsible and effective interventions in our communities

The renewed commitment of these architects [in the exhibit] and many of their colleagues to socially responsible architecture is reminiscent of the ideals of twentieth-century masters, but these designers eschew their predecessors’ utopian, wholesale blueprints for change imposed from above. *Small Scale, Big Change* presents radically pragmatic, “acupunctural” projects—limited interventions with wide-reaching effects. (Museum of Modern Art)

Whereas these designers had the ability and resources to create large scale projects, *The Ideal City Project* is played out in a much smaller scale with the performance acting as the results of the experiment. The imagination of the writers creates the scenarios in which this city is successful and in which it fails. In this case, performance allowed us to look not only at a theoretical design but at the theoretical response of people to that design.

Beyond the social ideals of the constructivist movement I found a great source of inspiration in their artistic values as well. The conflict between static and dynamic, order and chaos (Bann, xlix) was a major factor in the creation of our performance. The need to empower a static model with life and surround it with action was ever present in the creation of the production. The proportions and geometric shapes used in the model speak to the constructivist principles. There was even a certain linearity and static quality to the overall setting when the audience entered the Payne Theater. However, the quick and dynamic action of the performers as well as the fact that the model is on a moveable base disrupts the formal presentation of the space and creates a more lyrical and poetic movement through the performance.

For this dynamic aspect of the performance I must refer to the delightful work of Alexander Calder and his Circus. While my performers were flesh and blood, the tone and pace of *The Ideal City Project* drew a great deal of inspiration from this piece. The buildings I carved for the city mimicked his simple but charming set pieces. Our scenes had disjointed and frequently light tone similar to that of his circus. I was reminded by his work that a piece of art can be both effective in asking an important question and delightful in its nature.



Illustration 8: *Calder's Circus* by Alexander Calder

THE CREATION OF THE PERFORMANCE

Upon determining the central idea for the project, I gathered together a group of theater practitioners and artists to assist in determining a structure for the performance. This group consisted of two directors, one lighting designer, two writers and a carpenter. A diverse group of artists meant that many points of view were represented in the conversation about how best to present the information. After debating the various ways in which the city could be presented, I established that I would create a representation of the city coupled with a performance in which the inevitable destruction of the city would occur. Subsequently, I began work on the design of the city using the work of Leon Krier, Christopher Alexander, and Jane Jacobs as my guides.



Illustration 9: Preliminary model of the city in clay

THE COLLABORATION BETWEEN DESIGN AND STORY

The need to collaborate with others on this performance became clear early in the process. Like real cities, this performance had the potential to result in stagnant and flawed dogmatic statements. The piece required different perspectives in order to achieve the kind of open debate and dialogue for which I was striving. I employed the assistance of two head writers – Diana Grisanti and Steve Moulds – as well as five additional writers – Ryan Cunningham, Gabriel Jason Dean, Holli Gipson, Tom Horan and Gabrielle Reisman.

Having a group of writers to participate in this experiment was fundamentally important as they each came from a background other than design. Their study and understanding of human nature is rooted in their observation of relationships as well as the mistakes and success we share as people. Admittedly, design cannot control all aspects of a city such as why it came into being, its economic stability and its social traditions and structures. Even assuming that my design was good, the human element remains. Christopher Alexander begins to address this issue in his book *A Timeless Way of Building*.

Those of us who are concerned with buildings tend to forget too easily that all the life and soul of a place, all of our experiences there, depend not simply on the physical environment, but on the patterns of events, which we experience there.
(62)

My belief that design can cure the ills in cities had to give way, through the words of the writers, to the understanding that design is only as good as the people who use it. Alexander also states “A building or a town is given its character essentially by those events which keep on happening there most often.” (66) Ultimately it is under the control of the population how this space will be used and therefore, what its character will be.

The writers on this project were tasked with making that decision about the behavior of the people.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE STORY

Upon completion of the design for the city and the beginning of construction of the final artifact I held a meeting with the head writers. We determined the basic guidelines for the performance which were conveyed to the other writers:

- This is a completely fictional place. We are free to play with any back-story we enjoy. Similar to the city of Atlantis or Thomas More's Utopia - it was never real until we created it.
- The city was established in the mid-sixteenth century and was completely destroyed in the course of one lifetime. There is no need to be concerned with the events associated with this time. It was selected because the qualities of this city remind the artist of other renaissance cities.
- The location of this city is on an island with an exceptional climate and landscape. We are not bound to historical accuracy of a specific location, as this is a fantastical/mythical place
- With this in mind each writer is charged with writing a scene, monologue or song relating to the devolution of the city to its total destruction.
- The head writers will write the first and last scenes. The first will be set in present time looking back on the ruins of the civilization.

This type of collaboration is not typical of my experience in creating performance to date. Prior to this project a script was completed and provided to me before I began

design work. I viewed my role as one observing the detail of the existing story and respecting the intentions of the playwright. In this case, the story had to come from the city.

I was surprised to find which elements of the city I invented were helpful to the writers and which required further explanation. In an effort to leave as much flexibility for the story as possible I had purposefully excluded some of the information I had created for myself about the types of people or events that occurred in the squares and buildings. For example, while carving a small building in the hill neighborhood I had invented a story for myself about three individuals sharing office space in that building. It was a doctor, and painter and a soap maker. The diversity of their professions delighted me. I imagined them bringing in the mail to each other or sharing a cup of tea from time to time. Perhaps they would occasionally share a drink after work and debate joyfully about the usefulness of their various professions.

To my mind, these facts served to limit the options for the writers and perhaps even mislead them. It was only important to me that I, as the designer, had created a building for offices. I could not actually control who lived there. However, in conversation with the writers it became evident that as a collaborator of the performance and participant in the community it was useful for me to discuss the types of people who might live there. This served to reinforce the diversity of professions, economic status and social standing that each neighborhood housed. I agreed to share my stories as long as the writers were clear that apart from changing what and where the buildings were they had full authority to manipulate the inhabitants or events that occurred in the city. With this in mind I labeled each individual building with its use as well as the potential occupants I had imagined in the creating of the building. All the writers were given access to this information.



Illustration 10: Process photograph of city with labels of building types

Upon completion of the scenes and monologues by the writers the entire company of actors, writers and I gathered to read and discuss the results. Similar themes were evident in several of the scripts: the separation of the north side of the city and the south side of the city, the inciting of some kind of rebellion, and the formation of a dictatorial political or economic system. While maintaining our original notion that this performance was not to have a clear narrative structure we assembled the pieces together and finessed the writing so that they could be loosely connected to each other in a

somewhat chronological manner. We also looked at the pieces that had similar references and made them more consistent. For example, any scene that referred to a character inciting revolution or political violence was referred to as a “rebel” in all scenes. Any scene that referred to a religious leader was altered to refer to a “guru” so that we maintained a consistent title. In this way we hoped to avoid any confusion for audience members creating their own understanding of what happened to the city.

Several weeks prior to the performance I enlisted the actors and commenced rehearsals. Each member of the small company played several different roles throughout the performance. Due to the fact that three of my performers were also directors and all were experienced, invested actors, we were able to work in a very collaborative manner to create the direction and staging of the play. The rehearsal process felt efficient and fluid.

However, I must mention one challenging rehearsal that touched the heart of the very concept of this production. Towards the end of our process, we decided as a group that many severe edits needed making to the script in order to maintain an interesting pace for the performance. This was difficult because it meant eliminating the hard work of one of our writers and cutting large parts of several pieces. We also needed to quickly finalize any adjustments we wanted to make to the way the actors were depicting different characters. While we were making these last major changes I felt myself quickly losing control over the production as a whole. It was rapidly evolving into something of its own that held our collective voice, not solely my own. When discussing this with a colleague he noted that this creative process sounded a lot like what happened to the city we were doing the play about. I designed something and then had to learn to allow others to live within it and create beyond me. Ultimately, I believe my ability to do so greatly

increased the investment of each company member in the work and the overall quality of the production.

THE IDEAL CITY IN PERFORMANCE

THE PERFORMANCE

The Ideal City Project was presented four times during The New Works Festival¹ at the University of Texas at Austin in March/April of 2011. The production took place on the B. Iden Payne stage in the Winship Theater Building. The performances were well attended and we had the opportunity to have one talk back session on the second evening. During this session we asked the audience what they thought was the central question or statement of the piece. Several respondents thought the play was about whether or not a utopian society can exist. Several more were left with the question: is it the design of it or those who live in it that determine the success of a city? Given these responses, I believe we were successful in creating a performance that lead the audience to consider how cities are created and how they live within their own communities.



Illustration 11: The completed city

¹ Full title: The University Co-op presents The Cohen New Works Festival

PRODUCTION PHOTOGRAPHS



Illustration 12: Daria Davis, Maki Borden and Halena Kays performing a scene by Holli Gipson. Photo by author.



Illustration 13: Halena Kays performing a scene by Steve Moulds. Photo by author.



Illustration 14: The ensemble singing the city's anthem by Ryan Cunningham. Dan Rumney in the background with the model. Photo by author.



Illustration 15: Dan Rumney as the character of the Curator introducing audience members to the model of the city. Photo by author.



Illustration 16: Steve Moulds during the final moments of the play. Photo by author.

CONCLUSION

There was a moment in the beginning of this project when I strongly considered creating the model of the city and forgoing the performance element of the piece. I would still have been able to convey my ideas about the nature of the places we live and my own thoughts about design. I believe I might even have been able to ask the question “What do we want from the places we live?” As the constructivists demonstrate there are many static works of art that push the observer to question the world around them.

However, it was the performance that allowed me to ask what I think is a far more interesting question – “Is it design or people that determine the nature of a city?” Not surprisingly, I think it is a little of both, but I believe it is a compelling question to spark in an audience. The dynamic movement and story-telling of the actors brought to life an element of action and change in the city. Unlike the static image that is conveyed by a model or master plan, cities are constantly moving and shifting with the actions of those who inhabit them. Without the performance element, I do not believe we would have been as successful at raising the discussion about this project from what cities should look like to how we want to live.

Likewise the response from the production of *The Ideal City Project* indicated to me that the sculpture and setting of the performance greatly enabled people to connect with the stories and imagine a civilization in growth and decay. A staged reading of the stories alone would have been less successful. As with most scenic design in performance, the visual context in which stories occur helps spark the imagination of the audience so that they can engage with the people and places that are being presented. Although it may be less conventional to have a small sculpture represent place rather than full size objects scaled in relationship to the actors, I believe the model of the city

successfully served the purpose of providing such a context. As the Curator states in his opening monologue of *The Ideal City Project* “This [model] is an *idea*--But the second you looked at it and pictured an actual place, it became real for you too.” Each audience member may have left the performance with a different understanding of our imaginary city, but I believe they all left considering the real places in which they live.

Appendix A: The poster for *The Ideal City Project*

THE IDEAL CITY PROJECT

a production of The University Co-op Presents the Cohen New Works Festival

Created and destroyed by
Lizzie Bracken, Diana Grisanti, Halena Kays, Steve Moulds,
Maki Borden, Ryan Cunningham, Daria Davis,
Gabriel Jason Dean, Katie Erwin, Holli Gipson, Tom Horan,
Kate Leahy, Gabrielle Reisman and Dan Rumney.

Performed in the B. Iden Payne Theater

March 28th, 9:30pm

March 30th, 9:30pm

April 1st, 9pm

April 2nd, 10am



Visit coopnwf.org for
Festival information



March 28 - April 2, 2011

Appendix B: The performance program for *The Ideal City Project*

THE IDEAL CITY PROJECT An Anthology

Created and destroyed by

Lizzie Bracken (city/scenic designer)
Diana Grisanti and Steve Moulds (co-head writers)

Halena Kays (staging)

Kate Leahy (lighting designer)

Katie Erwin (stage manager)

Ryan Cunningham, Gabriel Jason Dean, Holli Gipson,

Tom Horan and Gabrielle Reisman (writers)

Maki Borden, Daria Davis and Dan Rumney (performers)

The Stories

Anthem: by Ryan Cunningham featuring Daria Davis

Founder's Day: by Diana Grisanti featuring Daria Davis, Maki Borden and Halena Kays.

Birth of the Guru: by Diana Grisanti featuring Diana Grisanti, Steve Moulds and Daria Davis.

Anna: By Steve Moulds featuring Halena Kays.

The Soap Maker: by Diana Grisanti featuring the ensemble.

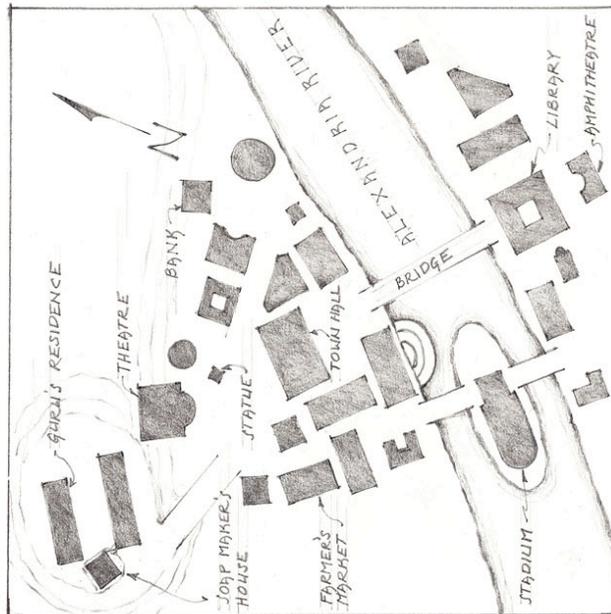
Miriam and the Lion: by Gabrielle Reisman featuring Diana Grisanti, Daria Davis and Maki Borden.

The Stadium: by Steve Moulds featuring Steve Moulds.

April 13th: by Gabriel Jason Dean featuring Maki Borden.

The Librarian: by Holli Gipson featuring Halena Kays and Maki Borden.

The character of Curator was written by Steve Moulds and is performed by Dan Rumney.



Map of the city of Devlin

THE IDEAL CITY PROJECT An Anthology

Appendix C: The Final Script for *The Ideal City Project*

As audience members enter the B. Iden Payne stage they are meet by a table offering “champagne” (white sparkling cider in plastic champagne flutes). Lovely classical music is playing in the background from Lizzie and Dan's weird pig speaker controlled by Katie Erwin. There is an elegant red rope indicating that they are not supposed to head right to their seats. However, they are able to access seats so that they may set down their personal belongings.

As people enter the space the curator, somewhat over eager, is showing off his city. He encourages those who have headed to their seats to join him in viewing the model. He offers information, responses to questions, and his own little stories about the city.

Approximately seven minutes after the official starting time of the performance, and once all audience members have had the chance to get their snacks and view the city, Dan will indicate that it is time for the lecture to begin. Katie Erwin, our stage manager, will cue him to do so.

The five city dwellers will appear and position themselves upstage of the model on five black benches. The lights dim and the lecture begins.

CURATOR:

Oh, are we... It's time? Excellent. Excellent.

The Curator pulls out some index cards—just checking, quickly—then puts them away. He'll do just fine.

He steps in front of the model.

CURATOR:

Ladies and gentlemen. Thank you for coming. I must confess I'm a little nervous.

The Curator steps to the side, and gestures to the model next to him.

CURATOR:

What you see here... well, it's a model. I think you'll agree: It *looks* gorgeous. All sorts of wonderful details. But it's just a model. Look, the pieces move and everything.

He picks up a building, and then quickly puts it back, looking to the booth.

CURATOR:

Okay, my graduate assistant just shit a brick. Sorry about that. Don't worry, nothing has been disturbed. I won't touch it again. My apologies.

Back to the speech.

CURATOR:

I could point at this and tell you, "Here... is a city." And you'd agree with me. Why wouldn't you? Looks like a city, right? But it's not. I told you, it's a model. This is an *idea*--But the second you looked at it and pictured an actual place, it became real for you too.

That's the secret: somewhere between mundane reality and outlandish imagination... we have civic planning.

There's a legend among archaeologists and architects. As the story goes, some pie-in-the-sky-thinking idealists decided it would be groovy if they could live in a utopian society. This was the '60s—the 1560s, mind you, in Europe—and that good old Renaissance humanism had inspired people to think less about the afterlife and focus on... you know, Life. How things *should* be was on the brain. And the legend is that one particular group of idealists—the pie-in-the-sky types I mentioned a moment ago—they actually got together and founded a utopian society. The city... of Devlin.

The Devlinites, as they've been named, disappeared from history as soon as they departed Europe. But they left behind them a simple declaration of values. To found a place where the design of a city and the ideals of its governance are in harmony. To live within and among the peoples they found in that place, not to invade or subjugate. And finally, to suit their city to the land, not the land to their city. Sounds great, right? Problem is, they were never heard from again. History assumed that whatever these expatriates actually did, they failed. Devlin was a nice *idea*. But it wasn't a *place*. They might as well have sailed into the middle of the ocean and built a new Atlantis.

Which, it appears, they did. Three years ago, a team of archaeologists found Devlin. They uncovered its ruins on a remote island. Don't know how we missed it, to tell the truth. But it was real. This model is what we believe it looked like, in its day. Built in the middle of the 16th century, destroyed by the middle of the 17th. And among the papers that were found, a city charter containing the same declaration of values they left behind. It turns out Devlin wasn't imaginary. But it was a dream. A dream that lasted about a century.

This is the story of that dream.

We believe the founding members of Devlin began planning the city in this central square. Around it you find the town hall and a lovely theater as well as...

The Curator trails off as Daria begins to sing and play the anthem. This leads directly into the Founding Day scene.

(Founder's Day Scene by Diana)

BERT and LOIS sing proudly. DAFFODIL, 8,
stands there awkwardly.

BERT + LOIS

PRAISE OUR CITY.
STAND UP PROUD.
RAISE YOUR VOICES.
RAISE THEM LOUD
ALL CREATED
FROM THE MIND.
NOTHING DESTINED.
ALL DESIGNED.
OUR FIVE DISTRICTS
THEY STAND FOR GOOD.
AND OUR BUILDINGS
STAND WITH WOOD.
AND OUR STREETS
HAVE ADEQUATE LIGHT
SO YOU CAN WALK
ALONE AT NIGHT.
SO PRAISE OUR CITY.
STAND UP PROUD.
RAISE YOUR VOICES.
RAISE THEM LOUD.

BERT

Welcome, Citizens of Devlin!

LOIS

Welcome! Welcome, all of you. All of *us*. For without each other, we are but leaves without a tree, kernels without a cob.

BERT

It is a great honor—

LOIS

A tremendous honor—

BERT

To be here today. Founding Day.

LOIS

Our Founding Day.

BERT

As you all know, the council of elders spent nearly a decade planning this glorious city.

LOIS

And then you came in. The builders. The makers. The handy men and women who made something out of nothing.

BERT

Look around, Citizens of Devlin. Look at what we've created together.

They look.

BERT

Spectacular.

LOIS

Breathtaking.

BERT

Perfect.

LOIS

And now, dear citizens, friends and neighbors all, I'd like to introduce you to Daffodil. Daffodil will be entering the second grade at Devlin Elementary. Daffodil has a poem to share about her new home, don't you Daffodil?

DAFFODIL

Yes.

BERT

Break a leg, Daff.

DAFFODIL

Yes, sir.

LOIS

Oh, no. No "yes sirs" in Devlin. He's Bert, and I'm Lois.

DAFFODIL

Okay, Lois. Okay, Bert.

LOIS

Isn't she great, folks? The stage is yours, young one.

Daffodil unfolds a piece of paper and reads.

DAFFODIL

Devlin is my city.
It is very pretty.
The districts number five.
I'm glad that I'm alive.
The North Side is divine; the South Side's that way too.
As long as I am here, I will not be blue.

Devlin is so nice.
There are no rats or lice.
Everyone has food.
The people are not rude.
I hope I die in Devlin, and get buried in the earth.
I hope we all die here. I hope we die of mirth.

Thank you, everybody, for building this fair town.
Since Devlin is my home, I will never frown.

Thank you.

Bert and Lois clap.

LOIS

Beautiful, Daffodil!

BERT

Just glorious!

LOIS

And now, Citizen of Devlin, let us celebrate!

BERT

With music and dancing and the most delicious of foods!

LOIS

But before we sound the Founding Bell, remember this: we must look to young Daffodil. We must adopt her enthusiasm and her joy. Let us not be corrupted by cynicism. Let us live as children live! Let us breathe in that sweet Devlin air, greet our neighbors with a smile, and sustain each other in all we do. Now, Bert.

BERT

Now?

LOIS

Now.

Bert rings the Founding Bell.

CURATOR:

... But I'm not entirely convinced that there was a manatee eaten at the opening ceremony. Anyway, I'm sure you're already struck by this area up here, at the top of the hill. My graduate assistant believes this was where some sort of religious figure lived. But *I* think it was the mayor's residence. *Somebody* important lived here, that's for certain. It had the most fascinating porticoes...

[Birth of the Guru by Diana Grisanti]

PATTY

Where is she? Where's our little bundle / of joy?

CHUCK

Shhhh.

PATTY

Sorry. Where's our little bundle of joy?

CHUCK

Right over here. She's sleeping.

They walk to a cradle and peer into it.

PATTY

Ah! There she is.

CHUCK

Stunning, isn't she?

PATTY

Oh yes.

CHUCK

The first child of Devlin. The first Native of our land.

PATTY

And the mother?

CHUCK

Resting.

PATTY

What's the little one's name?

CHUCK

Oh, we don't know yet. The town guru will name herself.

PATTY
Of course!

CHUCK
For now we shall call her Guru and only Guru.

PATTY
Hello itty bitty Guru. Aren't you just the sweetest little thing?

CHUCK
Please refrain from using diminutives around Guru. At three and a half kilos, she is bigger than all of us.

PATTY
Yes. Yes she is.

CHUCK
And smart. Oh is she smart! Just this morning, she touched her toes. Most infants take months to achieve such a feat.

PATTY
A feat. Hehehe.

CHUCK
Excuse me?

PATTY
A feat?

CHUCK
Yes.

PATTY
Well, that's just wonderful, isn't it? The first Native of Devlin can touch her toes. She's an inspiration.

CHUCK
She's what our people must aspire to be.

PATTY
Strong. Brave. Flexible.

A woman enters holding twin babies.

WOMAN
Is she ready?

CHUCK
Yes, dear.
 (to Patty)
Wet nurse.

PATTY
Oh! Hello! Lovely to meet you.

WOMAN
She's a very hungry baby.

CHUCK
As well she should be. Our Guru must have the fortitude of an ox, the speed of a gazelle, and the dexterity of a monkey.

WOMAN
My nipples are killing me.

CHUCK
Well.

PATTY
...The sacrifices we make for the next generation! Are these babies...

WOMAN
They're mine. Born just before the hungry hippo over there.

CHUCK
Guru. We're calling her guru.

WOMAN
Well, Guru, it's time to eat.

She picks up the baby and leaves, carrying all three children.

PATTY
Ah. Guru is our future.

CHUCK
Yes. And our future looks bright.

PATTY
So very, very bright.

CURATOR:

Archaeology is not an exact science by any stretch. And it's funny, the smallest things sometimes lead to the biggest debates. For instance, this farmers market.... Well, my graduate assistant thinks it's a farmers market. It could be a gym. But *either way*, it sits in a mixed-use neighborhood. All the neighborhoods are mixed use. Evidently, they had no problems mixing business and pleasure. Anyway.... This "farmer's market" has an interesting construction because... you know what? This will be easier if I can demonstrate with a pineapple....

Halena steps downstage with a music stage and begins her monologue.

[*Anna* by Steve Moulds]

ANNA:

Hello. My name is Anna. I work as a grocer's assistant. I would like to thank the city council for its time.

I am here to talk about my home. I live in a building along the river. I know that some of the other residents have complained about the fish market on our block. They feel that the smell, that it never quite goes away. I see the merchants scrub down their stations at the end of the day. But these people, they say the smell stays in their noses, that they find it on every piece of clothing they own. I understand they've requested a housing reassignment to a "better" part of town. In my opinion, these people could move above a pastry shop and still find something to complain about. But they want to live in a purely residential area. "People should not have to live where they do business."

I will tell you a story from the old country. In the city where we used to live, my husband and I ran a produce stand. We traveled there every morning, waking before dawn, and for hours every day our house sat empty. This was how it was with every house on our block. Everyone traveled downtown because that's where the business was, and no one was home. All day no one was home.

Our house was broken into three times. Each time, the police told us to keep a better eye on things. But how could we afford not to work? After the second time it happened, we stopped keeping items of value altogether. It was no longer our home. It was where we slept at night. And it was the same problem at work. How many times did we arrive in the morning to see another shop burglarized overnight? By day, the residential district was unsafe. By night, it was the business district we were afraid of.

But here there *is* no business district. There *is* no residential district. There's only our city. So when I leave in the morning for work, I know that the fish merchant downstairs will keep his eye on my home. And he knows that when I eat dinner on my porch, I'm keeping an eye on his stalls.

This is all Devlin. Every inch of it should be beautiful. Every inch should be safe.

CURATOR:

We haven't discovered yet exactly how the Devlinites conducted business, but we know they were a capitalist economy. In addition to featuring the mayor's residence, this area at the top of the hill seems to have housed a thriving factory. We don't know what this factory produced. I would assume farming equipment. Something useful. If you look closely, you can see the tiniest little...

[*The Soap Maker* by Diana Grisanti]

SOAP MAKER

I am a soap maker. I am a maker of soaps.

My grandmother was a soap maker, my mother was a soap maker, and I am a soap maker.

The Europeans are astounded by how good I smell. I spend half the day raising my arms and letting the hairy men and women take a whiff.

HAIRY MAN

My God!

SOAP MAKER

They say.

HAIRY WOMAN

I could sniff for hours.

SOAP MAKER

And they do! Also? They buy. Oh, do they buy.

HAIRY MAN

I'll have the pomegranate soap, please!

HAIRY WOMAN

The papaya soap for me.

HAIRY MAN

Cinnamon too, please.

HAIRY WOMAN

And throw in a guava. My children just love the guava.

SOAP MAKER

I have become quite a rich woman.

HAIRY WOMAN

Oh, my dear, dear, Soap Maker, you deserve every cent!

SOAP MAKER

This thing called commerce, though, it has caused some tension among the Soap Maker council.

SM MOTHER

Daughter, where have all the soaps gone?

SM

Why, I've sold them all.

SM MOTHER

So quickly?

SM

Of course! They buy. I sell. No one shall be denied soap! No one!

SM GRANDMOTHER

But Granddaughter, too much soap can lead to problems. Dirt under fingernails! Foreign objects down the gullet! These are the things that keep the body on its toes, so to speak.

SM

Oh, Grandmother. This is an old wives' tale.

SM GRANDMOTHER

What does this mean? That the talk of wives is fiction? That everything I say is untrue?

SM MOTHER

Mother, calm down.

SM GRANDMOTHER

I will not. Granddaughter, we have a two-soap limit.

SM MOTHER

We've always had a two-soap limit, dear.

SM

Grandmother. Mother. Times are changing. If the people want soap, they shall have soap! Supply and demand! We are all slaves to the market. And, ladies, the market is good.

SM MOTHER

I wash my hands of you, Daughter.

SM GRANDMOTHER

As do I.

SM

In that case, may I interest you in the hibiscus mint hand soap? It's perfect for such an occasion.

SM GRANDMOTHER

Why, you little...

SM MOTHER

Come along, Mother. If she wants to dig her own grave, well, let her dig.

Mother and Grandmother leave.

HAIRY MAN

More soap, I say!

SM

But of course.

HAIRY WOMAN

Strawberry! Raspberry! Lemon! Lime!

HAIRY MAN

I've started to bathe ten times a day.

HAIRY WOMAN

Twelve for me. My goodness, how I love your soaps.

HAIRY MAN

They're just wonderful. Well, time for my mid-morning bath! Goodbye!

HAIRY WOMAN

Mine too. Goodbye!

They leave.

SM

Goodbye!

Business was booming. Year after year, decade after decade, the Europeans bought more and more soap. After a while, the natives too abandoned the notion of a two-soap limit. Everyone was just swimming in soap! Swimming, I tell you!

And then I got old. And my daughter took over. Then her daughter. Then hers. There she is. Great-granddaughter, will you finish my story? And make sure it has a happy ending.

SM GRANDDAUGHTER

Yes, Great-grandmother. I will finish it. And all will be happy.

SM

Oh goodie. And now I die.

She dies.

SM GRANDDAUGHTER

I'm sorry, everyone. I have told a lie. The ending to my great-grandmother's story is not happy. Not happy at all.

It had been 90 years since Great-Grandmother's initial soap success. My most loyal clients only left their bathtubs to buy more soap.

But then something unspeakable started to happen. Their bodies...they started...dying from the inside out. Bad cells started to attack good cells. Stomachs gobbled themselves up.

HAIRY MAN

Ow my stomach!

SM GRANDDAUGHTER

Livers shriveled to kernels of hard, toxic pulp.

HAIRY WOMAN

Oh my liver! I never had a bit a dirt beneath my nails.

HAIRY MAN

Nor a foreign object in my gullet. I'm clean!

HAIRY WOMAN

So very clean!

SM GRANDDAUGHTER

So very, very clean. Too clean. So clean that even the tiniest germ wrecked havoc. And in a city such as this, havoc goes a long way. Hundreds died.

Hairy Man dies.

SM GRANDDAUGHTER

Then thousands.

Hairy Woman dies.

SM GRANDDAUGHTER

And then I. I too was woefully clean. I too had pristine fingernails. And not an ounce of bacteria in my gullet.

She dies.

The Grandmother from earlier hobbles on.

SM GRANDMOTHER

In my day we had a two-soap limit. In my day bodies could fight.

All ensemble members return to their seats.

The Curator is humming the Flights of the Valkyries.

CURATOR:

There is very strong evidence to suggest that a Devlinites in fact wrote the Ring Cycle and Wagner just stole it. Now outside the city was farmland. But most of the time, Devlinites remained within the city limits. And in the land just beyond those farms... well, we actually have no idea. We've been having trouble finding artifacts from the surrounding areas. These people really did stay within Devlin as often as they could. When you've built the perfect city, why would you ever leave?

One of my favorite parts of the Southside was this...

[*Miriam and the Lion* by Gabrielle Reisman]

(A cluttered first floor fabric mill, a family operation that has grown far too fast. Women sit at large looms. MIRIAM and VIDA weave colored silk strands on foot pedaled looms.)

MIRIAM

I dreamed about the outlands last night.

VIDA

Don't tell me about it.

MIRIAM

There were jaguars sleeping in the clearings and tall tropical palms. It smelled like breadfruit.

VIDA

Pass me the gold thread.

MIRIAM

I'm gonna go.

VIDA

No you're not.

MIRIAM

I'm gonna walk there, just to see. After work.

VIDA

It isn't safe. You read the papers. Plus you're going to have coffee with me after work.

MIRIAM

Not today.

VIDA

Here it's finished.

(She holds up a gold scarf.)

For the mayor's wife, see? Pure gold silk. The Gilberts say they could get 300 brackens for it.

MIRIAM

Vida, I'm going out there.

VIDA

There are rebels.

MIRIAM

That's a story. And what if there are? There are more dangerous things than rebels.

VIDA

Are there now.

(A deep, low whistle. They stop the tread of the looms.)

VIDA

Coffee time.

MIRIAM

No.

(To us.)

I walked to the perimeter. Past the fish market and the central bank, out towards the edge where the elderly sit. I never noticed how the land rose away from the river, like I was climbing a quiet hill. When I reached it, it wasn't the forest I thought. Maybe at one point it'd been there but now it was all vacant hills, full of stumps and low grasses, snakes, a jackalope. You could smell the ocean in the distance. There were no rebels. No danger, save a circling hawk.

(To VIDA.)

Next time, you should come.

VIDA

Are you crazy?

MIRIAM

It's lovely out there. Completely quiet.

VIDA

That's because all the rebels were hiding in the grass.

MIRIAM

No one's hiding in the grass. There isn't a soul around.

VIDA

Are we going for coffee today?

MIRIAM

Tomorrow, I promise.

(To us.)

I kept going out there. After work, I'd take the path up Christopher Street and past the low guard wall to sit in the grass, look at the sky. One day when I came, a lion jumped from the brush.

LION

Excuse me-

MIRIAM

Ah!

LION

Don't worry-

MIRIAM

Don't eat me!

LION

I won't eat you, I don't want to. Do have any real food? Like chips?

MIRIAM

Are you talking?

LION

Anything. I'm starving.

MIRIAM

How are you talking?

LION

I'm sorry, I'm Bruce. I'm a banker really I just- I had a spell cast on me. A soapmaker-

MIRIAM

My cousins are soapmakers. They don't cast spells.

LION

Do you have *any* food?

MIRIAM

(To us.)

I gave him my sandwich.

LION

Oh, that's delicious. This is from that shop by the stadium right? Where they make their own pickles? That place is the best.

MIRIAM

You were really a banker?

LION

I am. Or I was. I'm a terrible lion. You think it'd be easy, killing things with your teeth but it's not. God this sandwich... mmm. I fell in love with a married woman, a soapmaker I was saying. But her husband put a curse on me. He was some sort of wizard, a warlock or witch doctor.

MIRIAM

And he turned you into a lion?

LION

I think he meant for something worse. Like a snail or a rat. He was bad at his job.

MIRIAM

You must be so lonely.

LION

Oh my goodness, yes. I miss the city like crazy. The markets in the morning. Or work. Or company. I'm starving for company.

MIRIAM

You want to come back with me?

LION

Into Devlin? I'd be shot.

MIRIAM

Not if you were my pet. You could stay in my flat.

(To us.)

I scratched behind his ears. Heard him purr from some space between inhale and sleep. I felt his paw on my thigh.

LION

Can we get another sandwich?

MIRIAM

I rode on his back into town. Past the market and the fabric mill. His mane smelled like honey and I could feel the breath in his back. We rode up to my flat. Vida was waiting.

VIDA

Coffee? Ah!

MIRIAM
No, no he's friendly.

VIDA
Stay back.

LION
My name's Bruce.

VIDA
We can't have a lion in our house are you crazy!

MIRIAM
He's not a lion, he's a banker. He was bewitched.

VIDA
What he was doesn't matter. It's what he is now. You know that's not code.

LION
What if I could change back?

VIDA
Change back how?

LION
They say there's a wizard south of the river. He can un-bewitch anyone for 300 brackens.

VIDA
Three hundred! We don't have that kind of money.

MIRIAM
The scarf-

VIDA
Miriam no!

MIRIAM
She couldn't stop me. I ran to the mill and smashed in the window with my shoe. The silk glistened, aurelian. I ran into the heart of the market and pawned it before she could reach me. I sold it like lightning.

VIDA
It wasn't yours to sell!

LION
I promise I'll repay you.

MIRIAM

We rode down to the river, over that bridge I never dared cross. The south side was dark but Bruce found the wizard by smell. I paid him the cash for a little green vial.

LION

Put it on my tongue.

(MIRIAM does.)

MIRIAM

Nothing happened. Bruce.

LION

Rrrrrrrraour! Rrrour.

MIRIAM

Say something.

LION

Meow?

MIRIAM

And that was that. The wizard scratched his head; he tried several hexes and prayers. But the spell the wronged husband wrought was far stronger than expected.

VIDA

He can't speak anymore?

MIRIAM

I'm so sorry.

(The LION licks her face.)

We moved to the edge of town, the lion and I. I started a stand to sell sandwiches and slowly paid back my debt for the scarf, the smashed window. At night we could see the stars over the grassland or the torchlights from the city. Sometimes I imagined I could see all the way out, over the plains and down to the beaches where I'd never walked before. I imagined I could see the rebels hiding, out there where it's truly dangerous. Hiding... and waiting.

VIDA

Want to get coffee today? After work. We could play click-ball.

MIRIAM

I think I'm gonna go out there. Just to see.

End scene. Back to the curator.

CURATOR:

Now before our presentation, a lot of you had questions about this stadium. It was a glorious structure, built to symbolize civic unity. There is actually some evidence that it may have been the birthplace of rugby. By all appearances, the stadium was a constant site of celebration. There were agricultural expos, athletic demonstrations... marching band concerts...

[*The Stadium Report* by Steve Moulds]

BUREAUCRAT:

Settle down. Can I have silence please. *Quiet*. I have the Stadium Commission's report on the recent tragedy. Please hold questions until the end.

In many circles, the decision to hold the spring arts festival during the rainy season has been blamed for the disastrous events of April 13th. While the sudden rainstorm accounts for much of the crowding that took place, it is the opinion of this commission that fair weather may actually have attracted more crowds, exacerbating the situation. In any case, the first panic did not set in until at least an hour after rain began to fall.

Nor is it the opinion of this commission that crowds at the arts festival exceeded what should be considered safe limits. In fact, total attendance for the first three days was lower than in either 1603 or 1602. Any argument that this festival was either "a disaster waiting to happen" or "too popular for its own good" may be ignored.

We have been unable to confirm any of the theories about what specifically triggered the beginning of the stampede. There have been rumors of shouts, or threats, or even that a cannon was fired into the crowd. But even among those who believe a firearm was employed, everyone agrees that the mass flight began within moments of the first claps of thunder.

Without a clear cause to explain why more than ten thousand people suddenly began to run for the stadium exits, we turn our attention to the narrow means of egress from the stadium. Concerned citizens have criticized the two pedestrian bridges, which connect the stadium island to Devlin proper. Safety experts have pointed out that the carnage would not have been nearly as extensive, nor the loss of human life, if the rails on the sides were placed higher to prevent citizens from pushing each other into the river. This seems doubtful, as it is unclear how many of those citizens who drowned had decided to jump. Additionally, if no escape off the sides was available, the excess crowding on the bridges would have led to even more deaths by trampling. It is the opinion of this commission that to alter the pedestrian bridges would destroy their architectural beauty, defeating their purpose as inspirational symbols.

This stampede was not the work of rebels.

In summary, we have concluded that the disaster on April 13 was unforeseeable. Four hundred and twenty-seven deaths have led to an understandable public outcry, but the truth remains: we do not know how it happened, nor how it could have been prevented. In light of the exceedingly rare nature of this tragedy, the commission is hesitant to recommend sweeping but imprecise

reforms. Nor would we recommend any changes to the arts festival, especially given the annual revenue it generates.

We will not be taking questions.

Steve returns to his seat.

CURATOR:

But then it all fell apart. Devlin began to deteriorate. We don't know why. How such a place so rich with culture so vibrant could be erased from the face of the planet so quickly is beyond comprehension. However, our findings suggest the root of the trouble may have begun exactly where the city itself began. In this main square, right under the nose of the city's architect... or rather a statue of the architect...

[April 13th by Gabriel Jason Dean]

MAN

Have you come to run?
Will you run with us?

(Indicating the statue.)

This man will not run. This man will hold firm to his pedestal as long as we let him. Once a man is made a monument, then he is no longer a man. His ideas are not blood, but marble. His convictions are not changeable, but set in stone. And this man—this man dares you to run upon this city and shake its bridges. This man who stands proud—an ideal resolute, he's looking down on us now, expecting that we will carry the burden of his ideals—we who are at the feet of the high minded fathers of our fair city. Let's say it clearly: we are the forgotten. We, the simple and proud, we are the ones left behind when the powerful shouted give us freedom. But who feeds this hunger for freedom? Like this statue, an ideal should never be realized. Once it is made real, then it is doomed to destroy itself.

Will you run?

I was born on the South side of the river, like many of you. My mother and father were happy to live hand to mouth pedaling produce in the market, their livelihoods flipped in an instant by flooding or an inexplicable cold snap. People are always hungry. That's sound rationale. The farmer will always have a job. Yes, but those who are in the business of feeding rarely enjoy the pleasure of eating. We, brothers and sisters, rarely know the luxury of choice. You know as well as I do, the Southside smells like a soured river. The Southside, with its swaths of golden grain looking northward, reeks of decay. And you, no matter how much you wash, when you are in this city, the people, the people like this man made of marble, they will smell you and they will judge you.

Who will run?

Brother, can you equal this man? Can your breaking back ever stand as straight? Can your chin ever be as proud? Can your eyes ever peer as clear?

(MAN shows a long, purple scar on his

leg.)

I will run toward the men who live on that high hill and I will shout that freedom is not equality, that there are those who serve and then those who are serviced. We expect adequate compensation for the service we offer, for the lives we plow away.

Run with me, sister.

I demand equal status on these city streets. That is the foundation of the ideal city. A foundation sits on dirt. And the dirt demands to be respected. I am as much of a man as you or you or even this god-like man on his pedestal. Run and raise your feet, shock the ground, let the men on the hill feel the swell of the earth quaking!

Let's run!

(Lightning.)

Let's run before the rain comes and floods the streets. The mud will wash all of us downriver.

Maki returns to his seat.

CURATOR:

There is one thing that my graduate assistant and I agree on. Our favorite section of the city is the south side. An intellectual haven and a beautiful spot for mulling over life and love. Like Hemmingway's Paris. We think this was the library but it might have been a gym. It's really hard to tell the difference with these buildings between any civic structure and a gym unless we find furniture. Especially since most of the cultural centers were destroyed by fire. But we're pretty sure it was a library. The approach from the bridge is really magnificent...

SCENE.

Mrs. Chase, the revered Librarian
Stands on top of the Library roof for
The very first time. She watches an
orchestra play below in the
amphitheater.
We hear violins.

MRS CHASE

You may have made the Alexandrian River, but we made that monument, this perfect seat...

(closing her eyes)

This sound.

That's ours.

God, I haven't spoken to you in thirty years. I gave you up for books, for knowledge, for service to my community, for this city. I shunned you like an unwanted lover, but I need you now. I can't do this alone.

I never had a lover. A husband, yes, but I wish I had a lover. I wish I had one go in the back of the Self Help section like every other bozo in this city.

God give me the strength...

Alex enters.

ALEX

Mrs. Chase?

Alex?! Oh, dear. You scared me.

MRS. CHASE

ALEX
Lifting the six pack of beer
I always come up here for the concerts. Usually with a bunch of friends/
Which you're not supposed to do.

MRS. CHASE

ALEX

You knew.

MRS. CHASE

Yes, I knew.

ALEX

I've never seen you up here.

MRS. CHASE

It's my first time. It's... truly... awesome.

ALEX

Awesome?

MRS. CHASE

I'm allowed to use that word

ALEX

Yes, yes you are.

MRS. CHASE

Why aren't your friends here tonight?

ALEX

I wasn't in the social mood.
It's a mournful day for all of us in Devlin. I can't imagine what it's like for you

MRS. CHASE

It's like realizing that all your work was for nothing. When other people were dreaming, I was plugging away... I wasted all my dreaming years.

ALEX

No!

MRS. CHASE

They burned along with the books.
They burned them all. Everything but sciences and mathematics.

ALEX

We'll get them back.

MRS. CHASE

Not in my lifetime. At least they get one final concert before they're shut down.

ALEX

We should have had a reading.

MRS. CHASE

They're much more afraid of words than notes. Isn't it ironic how abstract things frighten ignorant people.

ALEX

I just don't get it! What are they going to do without language, without music!
At least you still have a job

MRS. CHASE

I resigned.

ALEX

Mrs. Chase!

She takes the artifact out from under her shirt

ALEX

What's that?

MRS. CHASE

The city charter.

ALEX

I thought they took all of the city's documents and locked them in the capital.

MRS. CHASE

I snuck this one past them.
My great, great, great, great grandfather helped design this city. He signed this charter. If they think they can burn everything this city was built on, they have another thing coming.

ALEX

You're pretty bad ass, Mrs. Chase

MRS. CHASE

Thank you, Alex

They sit for a while, looking out at the amphitheater and listening to the music

MRS. CHASE

I can't believe in my twenty year here I never came to the roof.

Your world's opening up.

ALEX

I suppose so.

MRS. CHASE

Pause

Alex, will you do me a favor?

MRS. CHASE

Anything.

ALEX

Will you tell me one of your escapades in the Self Help section?

MRS. CHASE

Alex takes Mrs. Chase's hand

I would love to.

ALEX

End of Scene.

CURATOR:

It's an interesting thing, building a utopia. One person's idea of perfection is another's idea of madness. What some think of as reform can look to others like tyranny. You get a large enough group involved in almost anything, you're gonna find a way to disagree.

Which brings me to the purpose of this presentation. Archaeological research is expensive. I mean, eye-poppingly, pants-soilingly expensive, and it depends on the support... of people like you.

The Curator looks at all of us. Despite all of his charm, he is strangely uncomfortable in this moment.

CURATOR:

Did I just make it awkward? I kind of killed the vibe, didn't I? Sorry about that. Um, let me just say really quickly, in order to fully excavate, the project needs a few more dollars, say... three million? So if you ever want us to discover how this city was destroyed, maybe you'll write a check for a hundred thousand or so?

We can talk afterwards.

Just sit tight for a second. I'll be right back with your parking vouchers.

As the graduate assistant enters the stage to “clean up” some residents of the city of Devlin approach the model with a large ladder and a bucket. An audience member asks the graduate what she thinks happens. She gives a knowing smile, shrugs and exits. The citizens then realize a plague of frogs/locusts/blood or other such destruction on the city.

Blackout.

Appendix D: *Swoozie Gilbert*

An additional story by Thomas Horan for *The Ideal City Project*

CURATOR:

I'd like to take this moment to point out some of the more iconic touches to the city. Devlin had a fondness for making their structures striking. Look at the bridge connecting the two parts of the city. Now you'd think that the people who lived up here and the people who lived down here would have some differences, but Devlin had nothing like what we think of as social division. Anyway, just look at that bridge. I remember the day we discovered it—no water under the bridge now. Not literally, anyhow. There's lots of "water under the bridge"... but no... actual water. Right.

So when my graduate assistant and I were approaching this part of the site...

Daria walks down stage with her music stand and begins the monologue of swoozie gilbert.

[*Swoozie Gilbert* by Tom Horan]

SWOOZIE GILBERT MONOLOGUE

June 14th - Evening

We traipse up the walkway.

This one stops to tie his shoe.

This one stops to point out a tugboat passing underneath

And that one stops to catch their pulse.

The sun presses against my neck for its last moments
before it dips into the horizon, like an egg into a frying pan.

The pace of the crowd drag my feet forward, wearied from a Founding Day worth of dancing.
My ears buzz from the din of Founding Day music and Founding Day laughter.
My skin is salted with sweat from Founding Day dancing,
And my tongue sweetened with Founding Day treats, allowed only this day of the year.

We squeeze into our spots along the railing,
Like this spot has been waiting for us,
like this brick has been waiting to hold my hand.
Mindy peers over the side for a better look and her mom pulls her back.
On most days they could play this game for hours,
But even the little ones know today is special.

As the light dims there is only the sound of breath.
From inside the stadium,
We hear a sizzle, like electric bees.
And then a
Fwoomp
Like dropping butter into flour.
And then
And then
Pow.
The sky dances with color.

The fireworks feel like they last for hours
and are over in mere moments.
We go home satisfied, slowly and sure,
Content, sun battered and fried.
Dreams settled into our bones, into the architecture.
These are our people.
This is our home.

August 31st - Afternoon

A dozen Eggs
A quart of Milk
Half a pound Butter

I trip over the bridge to the nearest corner market.
The water glows pink with the early sunset.
The air is sweet with the smell of rotting,
and leaves fall like colorful kamikazes.

It's the last day before the little ones, the underlings,
are bused to education practice.
I think how I will miss rattle of swing chains
and the annoying high pitched laughter of the child-folk.

My life is like this bridge,

on one side
there is the day I was first taken from my parents,
to be taught the ways of the city,
to be broken from my left handed writing,
to be formed into something useful.

On the other side,
There is the day I get my first grey hair,
When my ovaries ache for a child-folk of my own,
Even if it is only for five years.

I could live a life in those five years.

A dozen Eggs
A quart of Milk
Half a pound Butter

February 2nd - Morning

I walk my walk quickly.
What was enjoyable exercise a few months back
is now an obstacle to be overcome.
Curse the slippery ice,
Curse the frosty snow
Curse my arched journey
Which has me slipping all the way up
and sliding all the way down.

The handrails are metal and my gloves are thin.

“I must rethink my life” I mutter to myself.
I must rethink living in one side of the city and working in the other.
I’m all too aware of the divide in this city.
One part is the heart,
The other the head.
This bridge is it’s skinny neck and one day it will snap in two.

And I will tumble down with it.

There are more suicides here than anywhere in the city.
Everyone knows that.
When I walk I keep my head down,
I pretend it is because of the cold,
Which it is,
But it is also fear.
I fear I will see someone.
I will know what they’re doing.
They will know that I know.
And I will not know what to say.

Would I say
“No, please don’t.”
Or
“I know how you feel.”
Or
“Do whatever you want.”
Or
“Or take me with you.”

I am scared of
"Take me with you."

April 3rd Evening

My walk to work was stalled today
by sweepers and brushers and cleaners and scrapers.
The winters muck is wiped away,
And it ushered into my soul a kind of grace.

I have decided I'm going to be more graceful.
I am going to move with fluidity.
When I am crossed I will forgive.
Perhaps today I will forgive all library fines.

As I sing this new song of grace I take in the world around me.
I see that bricks have been chipped,
That there are cracks in the road,
And there are places where the railing has come unmoored.

I see the scars of paper-cuts on my hands,
I feel the wrinkles on my face,
I know that today I have a grey hair.

I stop at the top of the bridge and look at my city.
How long can grace last,
For both of us.

Daria returns herself and her music stand to their original place.

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Vita

Lizzie Bracken is originally from Drexel Hill, Pennsylvania. She received a Bachelor's of Architecture from the University of Notre Dame in 2003. During her time at Notre Dame she lived in Rome, Italy for one academic year studying architecture and urbanism with the Rome Studies Program. Upon graduation, Lizzie worked for Robert Adam Architects in Winchester, England and Fairfax and Sammons Architects in New York City. In 2008, Lizzie entered the graduate program at the University of Texas at Austin to pursue a Masters of Fine Arts in Theatrical Design, with an emphasis in Scenic Design.

Email address: lizzie@lizziebracken.com

This thesis was typed by the author.