Activating public space with culture:
The Story of Governors Island
Governors Island **Basic Facts**

- 172-acre [70 hectare] island in the middle of New York Harbor
- 7 minute boat ride from lower Manhattan and Brooklyn
- Former Federal military base, off limits to local citizens its entire history
- Accessible only by boat
- First opened to the public in 2005
• In 2003, 61 hectares transferred to New York, now managed by The Trust with mission of economic development and public use

• Ban on residential housing and gambling

• Remaining 9 hectares owned and managed by National Park Service, Federal agency
New York City is the cultural capital of the world.

What do we not have?
A flexible, free space

for public programming.
This page contains the text "encourage "If you build it they will come.""
How *We* Approach Programming

Open to all ideas

Friendly bureaucracy

No funding

No curation

[a.k.a. The Spaghetti Strategy]
OpenHouseGI

14K m² indoors and 10 hectares outdoors free to organizations creating for public
A Typical Day: Saturday, June 21 2014

Make Music New York’s Porch Stomp

“A Curious Invasion” in Hammock Grove

Spontaneous Interventions

Compost Learning Center workshops

“15 Minute Hamlet”

FIGMENT’s mini golf and treehouse

FIGMENT pavilion

River to River Festival Dance Performance

LMCC’s Trisha Brown exhibition

A dozen indoor exhibits

“A Curious Invasion” in Hammock Grove

FIGMENT’s mini golf and treehouse

FIGMENT pavilion

River to River Festival Dance Performance

LMCC’s Trisha Brown exhibition

A dozen indoor exhibits

“A Curious Invasion” in Hammock Grove

Spontaneous Interventions

Compost Learning Center workshops

“15 Minute Hamlet”
Growth in Governors Island’s Popularity

Year:
- 2006
- 2007
- 2008
- 2009
- 2010
- 2011
- 2012
- 2013
- 2014

Total Visitation:
- 0
- 50,000
- 100,000
- 150,000
- 200,000
- 250,000
- 300,000
- 350,000
- 400,000
- 450,000
- 500,000
OpenHouseGI is the platform where the City’s cultural communities – from the emerging to the established—present, experiment, and reach new audiences.
The Island created by and for New Yorkers: NYC’s shared space for art and play.