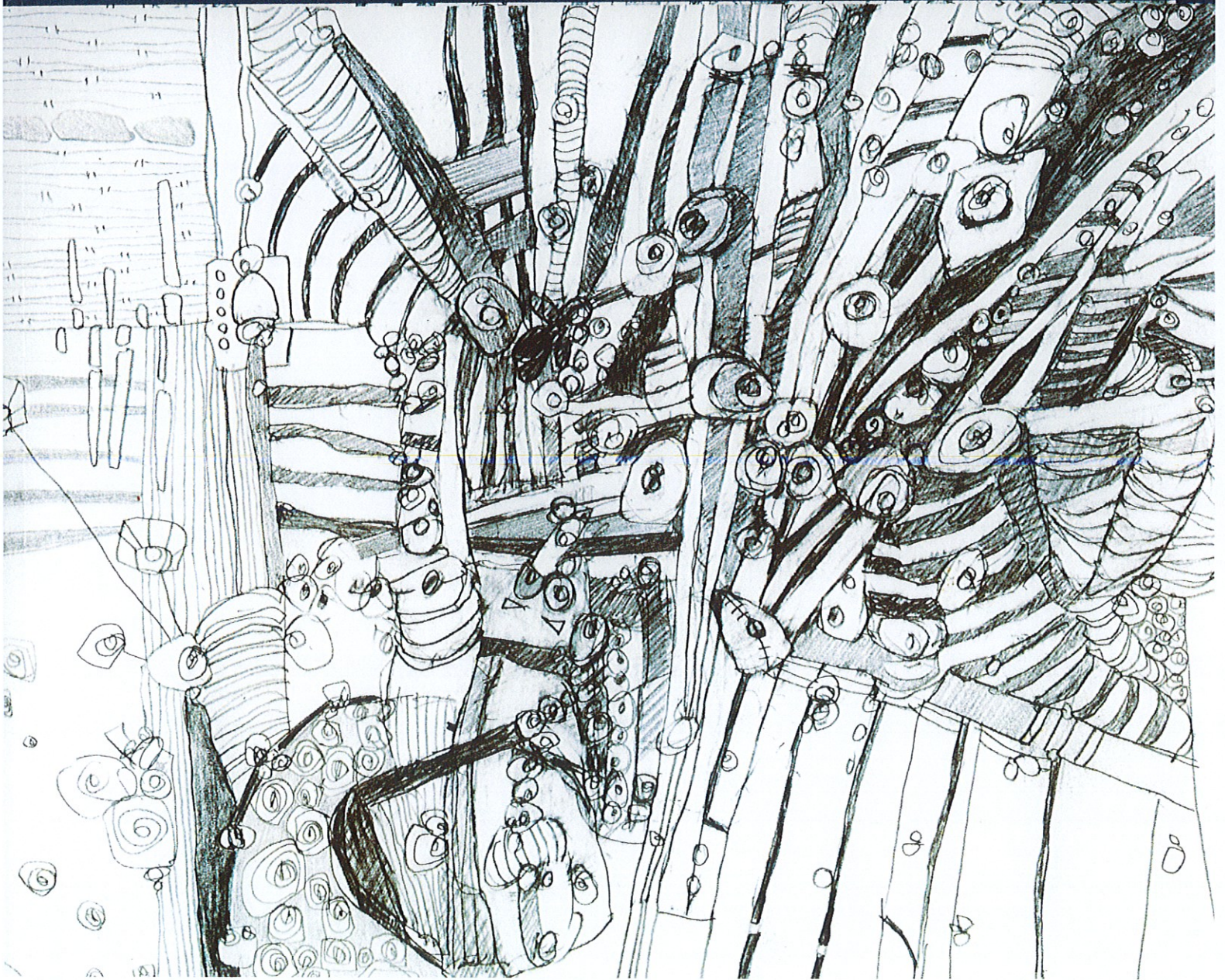


Vol I  
2018

# Beverly Philosophy Journal

Between Vision and Action





# An Ode to the Technicolorcoolness of HUBweek

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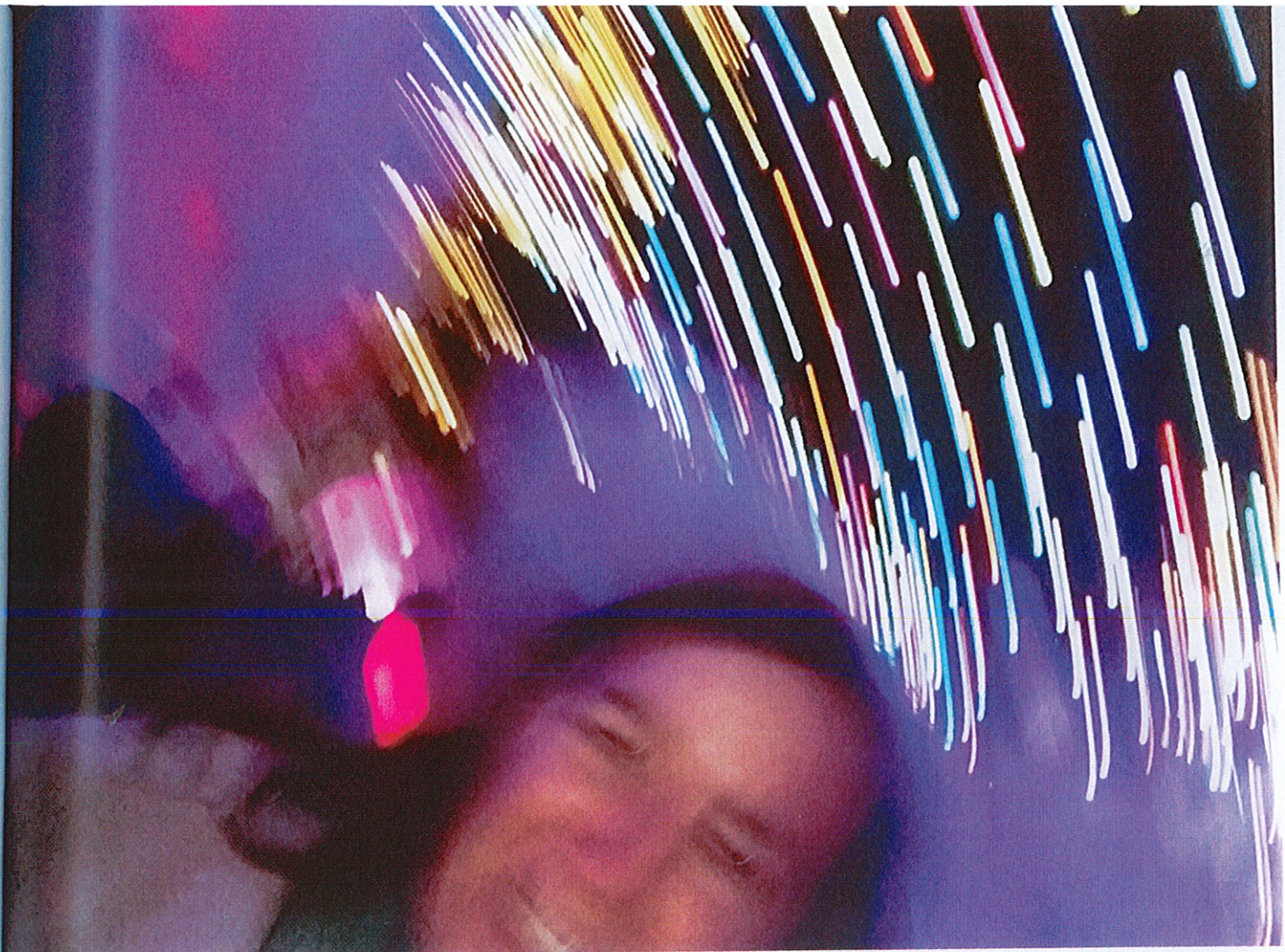
This essay is an ode to HUBweek 2017 and its trace of techno-kindness-generosity-coolness on the city. For those unfamiliar, HUBweek is a week-long festival that convenes over 200 public talks, panels, demos, on ideas of the future - with data visualization, robots, AI, food ethics, civic engagement, society-building.

Hubweek celebrates “the most inventive minds making an impact in Boston and around the world” (from its website). Founded by Linda Henry of the Boston Globe to do for Boston what South By Southwest does for Austin (creating a city through music), or the Sundance Festival does for Park City (creating a city through film), HUBweek takes seriously the challenge to remake a great city into an even more magnificent one through Art + Science + Technology. I will attempt to capture “the beautiful” in the five day festival of the five senses of HUBweek, and to muse on its significance, using the philosopher Brian Massumi as a guide. Massumi presented himself in the form of a study note by Leonie Bradbury, a friend and fellow member of the Beverly Philosophy Salon, who, most importantly for this essay, is the director of the art part of Art + Science + Technology at HUBweek. Leonie writes: “There is one universal in Massumi’s argument and that is the element of surprise as a ‘constitutive force in the world’s becoming.’ Likewise meaning is not to be found in

the world, but rather is always in a process of creation, becoming, ‘it is in the making’ (37). Leonie says, “Art then is also a moment, always in the process of becoming and unbecoming.” (Leonie Bradbury, Discussion Post, April 3, 2014).

Leonie’s curated surprises appeared like unwrapped presents throughout the days and nights of HUBweek. Art made its appearance across the transformed plaza of the HUBweek dome village - in as unlikely moments as callings from wooden birds strung from trees, digitally-drawn moving paintings emanating out of shipping crates, flowers dancing to ABBA, whispered confessions inside makeshift confessionals, silent gazes from spray-painted eyes, chance encounters with packs of performers in drag, dreamy dreamscapes on dome ceilings, gorgeous love duets, glow-in-the-dark graffiti statements and hand-drawn animated films (old school), local vegetables sold out of a grocery bus, and the ecstatic dionysian frenzy of a silent disco. I was going to add mo-





*Selfie of the author dancing at HubBar*

tion-activated art, but it occurs to me that it was all motion-activated art. Massumi would name the how of the surprise element of HUBweek as the “affective tonality” of a “lived abstraction” (113). What is important about these terms is (a) it is the specificity of emotions invoked that most steers change in an event, and (b) the world is not made up of objects - rather, the world is a dynamic series of interlocking events in which objects are ever becoming something else.

HUBweek’s sublime performance of techno-art enfolded in movements with an unmistakable imprint of phrasings of a composer we know and can spot. Leonie’s artistic labor is her life as a curator - this is what she does. She has a great eye and a below-sea level-headedness and ethics I like to think comes from her Dutch childhood. As a curator, Leonie has developed a network of relations with artists who together form a kind of living tapestry. My description above (“a vibration of techno-kindness-generosity-

coolness”) is a fit descriptor for Leonie, yes, but it can also be acknowledged that the art and artists Leonie has encountered in her career, and even more so all the people she has loved deeply, are part of a vibration whose expression leaves trace. (I bet those geneticists from the panel discussions under the big dome have already figured this out.)

If we take seriously Massumi’s affective tonality theory, then we have to take into account the central role that emotion plays in the liveness of lived abstraction: “A multiplicity of singular vitality affects are enveloped in the affective dimension of the event, as it happens, into emotion (152). [...] Human emotion is the royal road to the recontainment of lived abstraction” (153). Worlds become and unbecome in the transindividual dance of reworlding (Massumi’s terms). He explains: “Each time we experience an event, we are non-consciously returning to our own world’s emergence. We are in re-worlding. We are reattuning, and reindividualizing”



(113). The intensity and specificity of emotional imprints of art within the greater fabrication of HUBweek are curated in large part via Leonie's network of relations. That tapestry as a "self-archiving object of a universe of felt emotion" is motion-activated at HUBweek. I contend that the curated art is a moving imprint of Leonie's unique perspective on the world. To appreciate the profundity of unique perspective, just switch places with someone you see face to face - it is an entirely different view of the world. Those of us lucky enough to know Leonie are also writers of that golden thread within our sharable patch of the great tapestry of the world's becoming. Goers of HUBweek are now included in that network of relations. World-becoming always involves our emotions, I might add, and the most intense moments of pleasure and pain loom large in our worlds. Can't we say the same of cities?

I would say that HUBweek is the provocative conversation between the corporate high-tech cybernetic humanistic futurism of the Science + Technology garnered by the sponsoring institutions (Harvard, MIT, Mass General) and Leonie's curated Art. The how is in the artistic form of the dome-city

festival. Think again about the place of surprise. According to Massumi, "the appearance of the effect is a spontaneous experiential combustion event. But the setting-in of the condition is prepared. Meticulously prepared" (148).

Being meticulously prepared is classic Leonie - and those magical surprises arise in the "lived abstraction" of HUBweek out of the dynamic use of imagination of all that is gathered together within the techno-colored dome village pulsating within and without from City Hall Plaza during a transient moment in October in New England.

If Art has something on Science and Technology, it is that it excels at opening up the space of play. Leonie's surprise gifts open up a sense of play that in turn allow HUBweek to enter a greater space to do its magic to remake the city. Massumi reminds us what makes the surprise presents of art at HUBweek powerful tools is that the gift is never held - it moves on: "That - the relation - is not in

the giver. Nor is it in the gift. Nor the recipient. It is what runs through them all, holding them together in the same dynamic" (35). Being held together as one in the many in a techno-kindness-generosity-coolness dance of a city festival, even for a moment, seems a gift worth passing on.

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Brian Massumi. *Semblance and Event: Activist Philosophy and the Occurrent Arts*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2013.

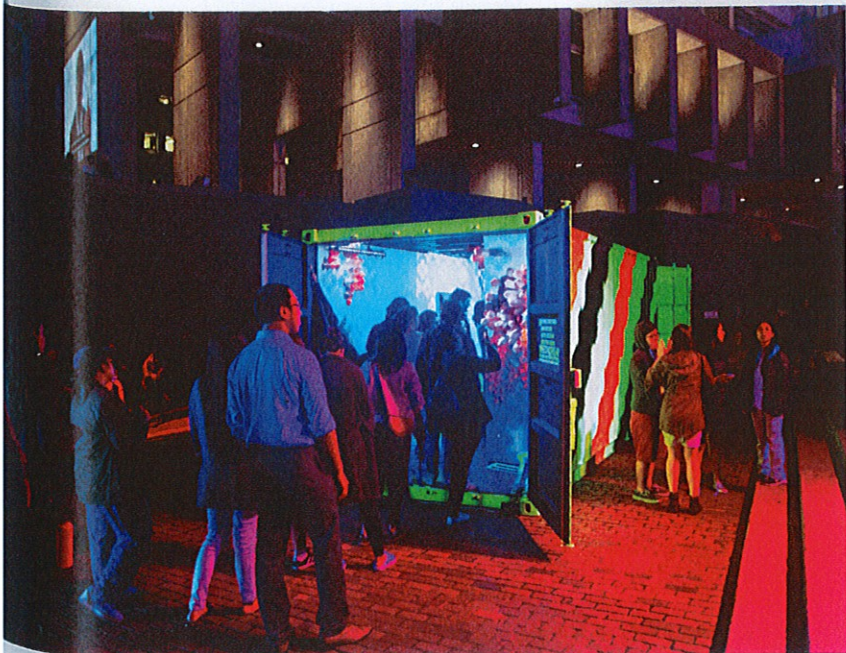


# Event as Art Experience HUBweek 2017

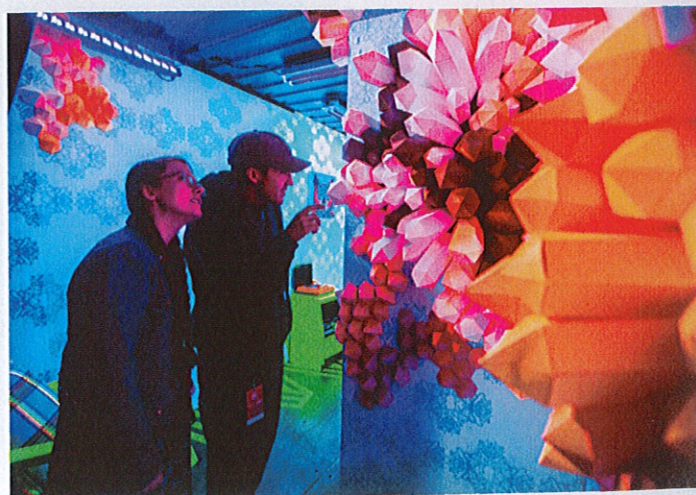
Leonie Bradbury



Front Entrance at night



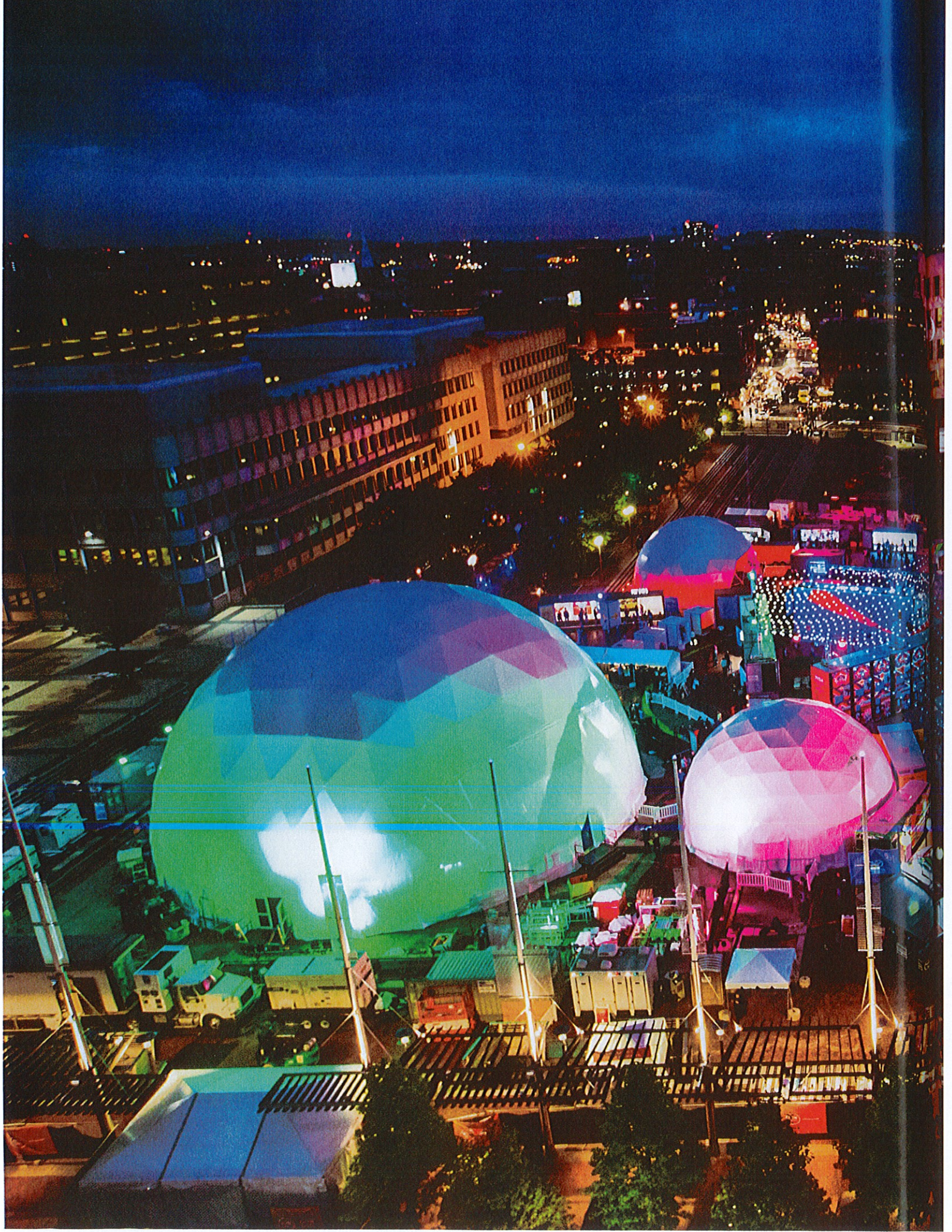
Neon Dream Line



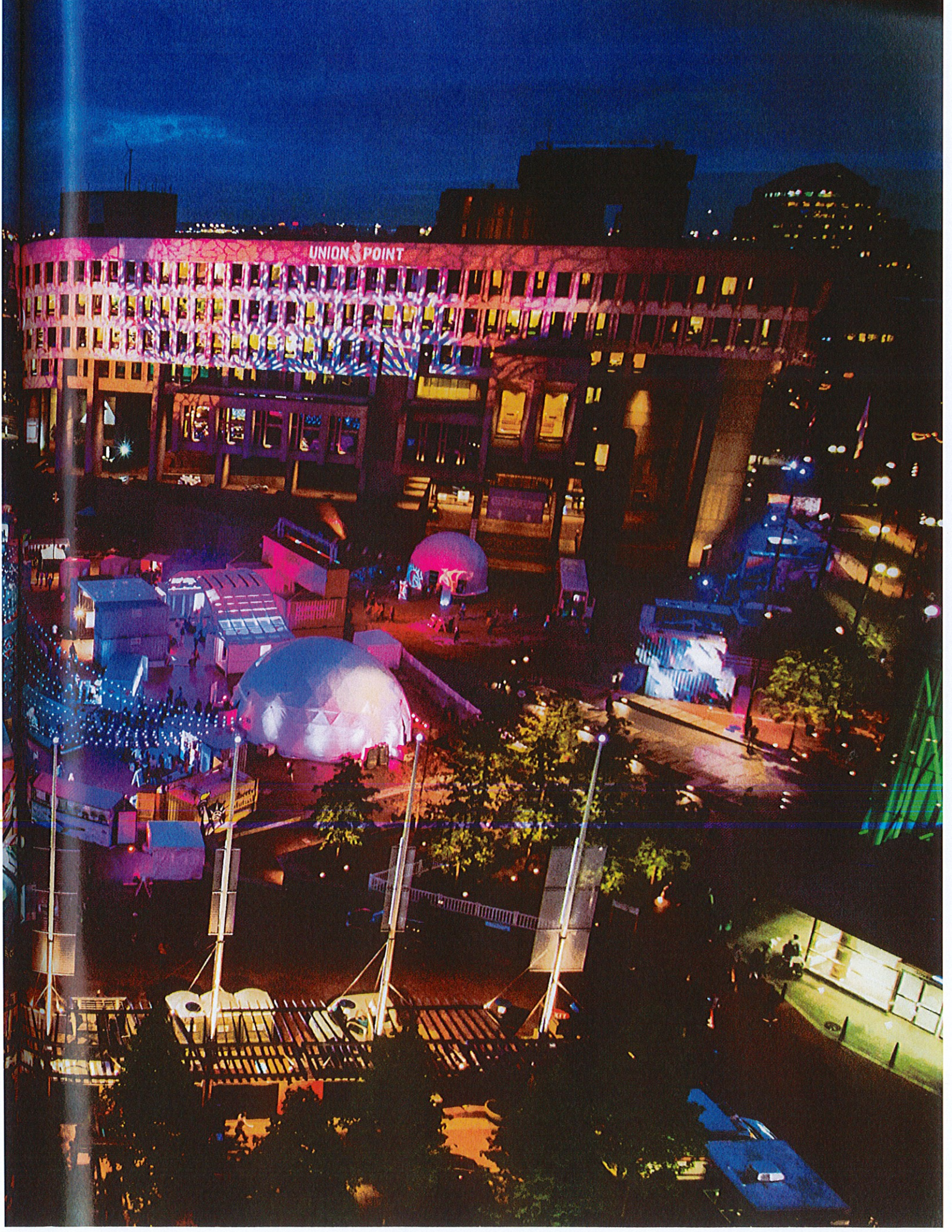
Neon Dream Interior

Photos courtesy of Hubweek  
Next Spread: Aerial View HUBweek >













Community Drawing Wall



Friends in MLA Play Cube



ISNA through Phone





*Nightclub Drag Queen Group*



*Man with Phillips Aura*