

KKProjects continues its eccentric weekend art exhibits

SOFT OPENING

By Doug MacCash
Art critic

If you missed last weekend's Kirsha Kaechele-hosted pig roast/foosball art spectacle, don't despair. There is another out-of-the-box art event tomorrow night that promises to be every bit as inspiring — and lower in cholesterol to boot.

The "Cochon Ball: A Pig Field Folly," which took the field as it were Saturday, was born some time back, in the mind of New York artist Alisoun Meehan, who observed that the wrist action necessary to play foosball (a table-top soccer game), is similar to the wrist action necessary to remove the spit from a fire-roasted pig. This parallel marinated in her imagination, eventually inspiring an event that drew dozens of art and food lovers.

As luscious pork-scented smoke drifted across the silver-gray sky, rows of players, uniformed in matching magenta and orange T-shirts, kicked in unison, mimicking stiff plastic foosball figurines, as they worked to move a basketball in the direction of each other's wire mesh goals. All would agree the match was more successful as surrealism than athleticism. In the end, everyone dined on pulled-pork sandwiches.

This is what art has become in New Orleans: odd little adventures in out-of-the-way places. And New Orleans' most energetic impresario, Kaechele, is the queen of them.

Last weekend, the locale was the barren footprint of a demolished molasses factory that once stood where Montegut Street meets the Mississippi River. Known as The Brickyard, the anything-goes art playground

is managed (if managed is the right word) by Kaechele.

Since 2006, she has presented a series of similarly eccentric events, usually at her collection of broken down cottages in the St. Roch neighborhood, known as KKProjects. It is an equally laissez-faire creative environment, where artists have dumped a truckload of dirt on a cottage floor, papered the walls with gold leaf, pierced a roof with two dozen enormous tent poles, and cut a 10-foot hole to accommodate a giant safe door.

Preservationists have, predictably, complained that Kaechele is an agent of neighborhood destruction. Kaechele counters that she's thoroughly restored one house and that

the others were beyond salvation in the first place.

"We don't want to do harm to the world in making art," she said.

Kaechele has so far rebuffed city demolition crews, sent to do away with her most decrepit property. Someday she hopes to coat the interior of one of her houses with a thick layer of concrete. When the roof tiles and clapboards eventually deteriorate into oblivion, a sort of residential fossil will remain. She sees it as a way that "art can have a conversation with historic architecture."

An installment of Kaechele's ongoing artistic/architectural conversation kicks off on Saturday night at 7 p.m., with the opening reception of "Soft Architecture," a promising group show at KKProjects' Villere Street location. The visual audacities will include: "The Abracadabra Security System," a stuffed fabric diamond protected by yarn laser beams and embroidered window bars; a street-spanning laundry line created by an artist costumed as a house; and a rainbow-making machine that will colorfully combine water vapor and light.



ELIOT KAMENITZ / THE TIMES-PICAYUNE

Kirsha Kaechele, New Orleans' energetic impresario of artistic outlandishness, with performance artist Seth Damm in coyote disguise.

SOFT ARCHITECTURE

What: Another art adventure at the eccentric St. Roch neighborhood art space.

When: Saturday from 7 p.m. to midnight. Exhibits remain on display through February. Regular hours are Saturday and Sunday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Where: KKProjects / Life is Art Foundation, 2448 N. Villere St., (between Arts and Music streets).

Admission: Free.

Video: To see a video of the "Cochon Ball: A Pig Field Folly," or to take a video tour of The Brickyard and past KKProjects events, go to blog.nola.com/dougmaccash.