

The Good Life Bus Stop And Puppet Theater  
and The Helen And Scott Nearing  
Memorial Blueberry Patch And Telecommunication Center  
2004  
Proposal for Public Art Project In Portland, Maine (*unrealized*)

I was asked to make a proposal for a public art project in Portland, ME. It had to have a bus stop and telephone Kiosk in the design. I had read these books called *The Good Life* and *More Of The Good Life* by the early back to the land movement couple Helen and Scott Nearing and they had a bit effect on me. They had lived in Maine and had built stone buildings and grew blueberries, etc. so I thought it would be nice to make a project based on them. Design assistance by Dana Dart-McClean.

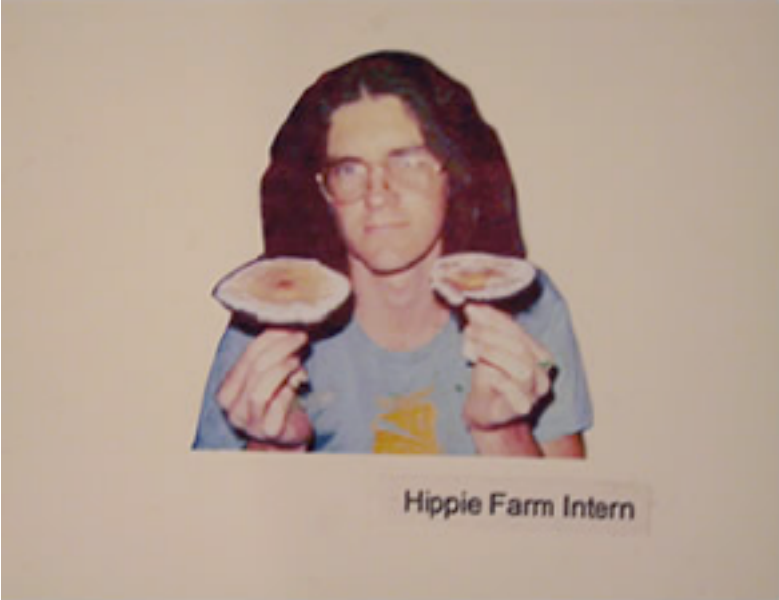
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Harrell Fletcher: Public Projects: The Good Life Bus Stop And Puppet Theater  
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## **Proposal Monument Square Public Art Project**

### **Harrell Fletcher**

I propose that the Bus Shelter and Telephone Kiosk become monuments to Helen and Scott Nearing who lived in rural Maine. The Nearings were founders of the Back To The Land Movement, and authors of several famous books about their homesteading experiences including "Living The Good Life" and "Continuing The Good Life." My project idea is to turn the Bus Shelter and Phone Kiosk area into small scale versions of the Nearing's house and farm on the coast of Maine. The Nearings developed an ecologically sensitive stone and wood building technique that I would also use for my project.

The Bus Shelter would be designed to look like a small scale version of the Nearing's house from the exterior. The interior would include a wrap around bench, simulated wood stove that gives off heat in the winter, and a glass display unit with images and information about the Nearings, including a set of shelves with a simulation of foods the Nearings would have grown and canned in glass mason jars. The other important feature of the bus shelter would be one wall that functions as an interactive puppet theater enclosed in glass with puppets of the Nearings, a Maine Coon Cat, and a hippie farm intern. The puppets would be accessible by people in the bus shelter sitting on the bench by putting their hands up and into an opening that has access to the puppets. The puppets would be manipulated and moved on tracks while remaining protected in between tempered glass so they would be safe from vandals. A non-electric tube sound amplifier would make it possible for the puppeteers to talk and sing so that it would be audible directly outside of the shelter. Up to four people could operate the puppets at one time. A small theatrical curtain would also be incased between the glass and could be opened and closed from inside the structure.

Facing the Puppet Theater wall of the Bus Shelter would be a stone and wood set of small bleachers for the puppet show audience. The seats of the bleachers would have a passive heating element inside of them produced by "heating pilings" using a tube going into the earth that draws heat up to warm the audience in the winter. A transparent roof would block rain and snow for winter puppet shows and general public gatherings on the bleachers. The back side of the structure would open into a sheltered bike storage and lock rack.

Where the Mushroom Phone Kiosk is currently located a slightly elevated blueberry patch would be installed. Blueberries were the Nearing cash crop. These berries would be designed to grow wild with a built in watering system. They would die off in the winter and grow back in the summer for harvesting by the public. Integrated into the blueberry patch would be three stone and wood phone booths in varying degrees of enclosure, along with a sheltered heated bench with a WiFi broadcaster for DSL Internet access so that people with wireless internet cards in their laptop computers could sit on the bench and use a high speed internet connection for free. On the backside of the bench would be a combination community bulletin board and information sign about the Nearings, blueberry production and nutritional information.