

STUDENT SERIES:
CCA FALL 2006

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A prefatory note

The following project descriptions were written by students from the California College of the Arts MFA program during the Fall of 2006. Although most were enrolled in the new Social Practices program, others were from the Textile and Sculpture departments. All, however, participated in the Project Art Practicum course I offer in the Fall semester at CCA and their projects came out of one of the class assignments.

My purpose in bringing together these student-written descriptions and issuing them as an Antinomian Press publication is to let others know about some of the project work being conducted by students in our program. It is also to use the Press as a vehicle for these artists to frame their practice and take an active role in the distribution and understanding of their work.

Ben Kinmont
San Francisco
December 2006

Introduction

In conjunction with California College of the Arts' Project Art Practicum class, Ben Kinmont facilitated 8 students' engagement in various forms of project art. Nearly half of the students involved were not previously familiar with working within the Social Practice genre. Each individual crafted a methodology by which they would structure and perform their public art project. Over the course of a few months, we conducted the activities which composed these art works, culminating in a presentation of the outcome of the experience to the class, and these written project descriptions.

General project guidelines that were formulated during class discussion engaged the following issues: Ethics of involving public participants in the production and reception of the works, whether the "art" is located within the interactions themselves or the physical ephemera and documentation that result, and the license given to artists to engage in projects with no clear definition of success.

Natalie Aguilar

Permission

The original intention of the *Permission* project was to readdress certain ethical issues questions in the previous work *Projected Outside In*. The project consisted of two elements. The first was to gain video footage of people living on the streets of the Tenderloin. The stock footage would then be projected first on the outside of the buildings outside of the YMCA. This was to be done in attempt to make neighbors of this area to become more aware of the actual poverty taking place on the streets. The second part was to then project the same videos in the doorway of the YMCA. This was to make those living in the YMCA to question their sense of security.

The second part of *Permission* was to work in collaboration with a non artist participant. This person's role was to simply aid in documentation and conversation along the process of the project. They were to bring into the project an outside view to help set up the boundaries of the ethics within the project. Questions of security and permission upon invasion were such issues addressed.

The project was never completed due to security issues. The outside participant also felt too uncomfortable with the ethics of visually exploiting the homeless even with permission and so wished to no longer collaboration in the project.

Breean Cox
SHE MATERIAL

I created *SHE MATERIAL* in order to provide my body as a material or tool to artists. Supporting apparatus consisted of a postcard advertisement, a phone message service, a website and email account. When the artist requests the use of *SHE MATERIAL* they are asked to sign a contract stipulating that they will return *SHE MATERIAL* in the same functioning and complete condition that she was received in. The advertisement states that *SHE MATERIAL* is not a model for use in referential artwork. This differentiation is at the core of the project; urging artist to incorporate the human body into their art practice, and possibly reassess the use of the human body in their artwork. After an appointment with an artist *SHE MATERIAL* writes an alteration report, which describes changes in the function of *SHE MATERIAL* after the appointment with the artist. I sign the form with my name, the only point at which I use my name in reference to the project. After several discussions with artists about the use of *SHE MATERIAL* it has become apparent that artists who do not already use human bodies in their artwork will be less likely to access the material.

Travis Meinolf*Social Fabric*

On 5 days in November, 2006, I brought my four-harness floor loom to different public places to weave. They were: a street corner in San Francisco's Design District, a privately run plaza between a movie theater and a museum, a public park, and in the atrium of the California College of the Arts. In these places I wove many yards of fabric and had many interactions with folks who were passing by. I demonstrated weaving plain fabric and twill to those interested, and if asked, encouraged people to weave on the piece.

I pushed the loom by my own power to the different locations, on a cart of my own devising. I had many interesting experiences en route, as well. When I arrived at my destination, I set up the loom in an out of the way spot, my back to the majority of foot traffic. This so that people felt absolutely free to scrutinize the situation before coming within my view. I greeted those who made eye contact, but made no suggestions as to what our interaction was to be, unless in response to their questions or statements.

When demonstrating the twill weave, I asked that the participant choose a contrasting color thread for me to use, so that each time this type of interaction occurred it was recorded in the body of the fabric. When others wove, I suggested they use colored thread as well, and this recorded their contributions. The rest of the time I wove using unbleached cotton thread.

The joys of this process were abundant, particularly the opportunity to engage so many people in a dialogue concerning hand weaving and textiles, and the related topics of family heritage, craft, labor, technology... anything that might come up in such a conversation. Dozens of people gained a basic understanding of how fabric is produced, from yarn, using a loom, and facilitating that was another joy. Most of all I enjoyed the attempt to initiate a situation in which meaningful interaction takes place, and information is exchanged, without coercion of any kind.

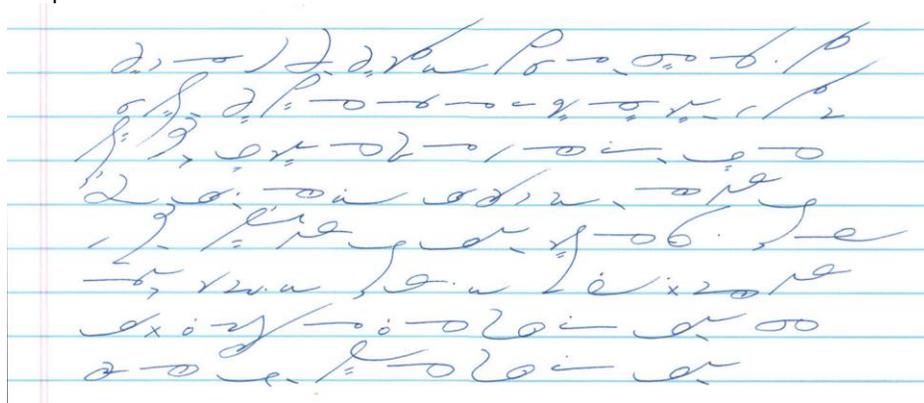
Lauren Parent

I suppose all I am truly asking is...

My original intent for this project was to ask participants for samples of shorthand writing and to display them in an art show. I am interested in shorthand because it is a beautiful form of writing and I wanted to explore the idea of a skill as an art form. I soon discovered that people who know shorthand are accustomed to being put down for practicing an out-dated skill and they were hesitant to contribute to my project. I then began a correspondence with a shorthand teacher, who questioned my ethics regarding this project:

"Please forgive me if my perception of your shorthand interests is incorrect. I have had MANY young people email me with such ugliness of words because they do not believe the shorthand of the past should still be used in our modern times. They indeed, only wanted to ridicule and humiliate my efforts to share what I love. Young people can sometimes be so cruel. Even some of the college students are quite rude with their comments...I will be most happy to participate in your project for a shorthand show as long as your motives are NOT to destroy the joy that shorthand writers share as individuals and with each other...I suppose all that I am truly asking is: are you FOR shorthand writing or AGAINST it?"

After assuring her of my good intentions, she responded to my request for a sample:



Through my discussions with her, I realized that the interesting thing about shorthand is not just the writing itself, but also the people who know it. At this time, I have only received one sample. Wanting to proceed with the project in some way, I decided to open up the discussion to include others by asking them to tell me about their experiences with shorthand; how and when they learned it, do they still use it and do they think it is outdated?

"When I was about 12 or 13, I saw the notes of a female neighbor, Gail, who was learning shorthand in high school. I was fascinated with shorthand and decided to look at books in the San Mateo Public Library. I began to teach myself. At the time, it was a "girl" thing to learn shorthand. This was in the '60's -- especially for an African-American. So, I learned in secret. I was afraid of being ridiculed if I took a class.

Shorthand is like learning a foreign language for me. I enjoy Spanish and French. I know stenotype (I'm a former court reporting student). I use cursive using the A.N. Palmer Method. I like writing systems, languages, and I collect books of all the shorthand systems especially versions of Gregg. Shorthand is fun, practical, and it keeps me out of trouble."

Sara Thacher

Givion, Phase One

Givion determines and produces the perfect gift for a specific person. It uses the structure and format of a traditional service-based business, while keeping the focus squarely on the unique relationship between client and recipient. The business model allows *Givion* to work hard researching and securing the perfect gift on the client's behalf, and translates that effort into a stronger, more meaningful gift.

The first phase consisted of learning how to gather the information necessary to finding the perfect gift and putting that knowledge to work with three different clients. I settled on a format of four to five initial interviews. I started by arranging a structured conversation with the person giving the gift (my client), focused not only on getting to know the eventual recipient, but also understanding their relationship and how this occasion of gift giving fits within that relationship. At the conclusion of the interview, my client gave me the names and contact information for three to four people who know the recipient well. I used the points of accord and divergence between the interviews to triangulate the perfect gift.

With this information, I prepared gift recommendations for each client. These texts combined and abstracted the information gleaned from my interviews to communicate the logic behind the recommendations. Specific interviews were not cited, unless the person had granted explicit permission for use of that quotation. Throughout the process, I tried to think of a way to communicate the value produced by the depth and breadth of the gift search. It became clear that we do not often have the opportunity to describe someone close to us and explain what makes him or her special. At the conclusion of many of the conversations, the person that I was talking with expressed how excited they were to see what gift I would recommend. They felt that they had a stake in finding the perfect gift. When the gift is revealed, I believe that this will not only strengthen the relationship between my client and the recipient, it will also reinforce and celebrate the recipient's community.

Melissa Wyman

The Listening Project

The Listening Project was created to explore listening as a practice to see what it might produce. The questions I asked were: Wow do I create a project with listening as the means, focus, and the medium? Can I listen to how this project will take shape and what will the outcome look like?

For 3 months I actively sought to create listening spaces (opportunities for focusing on listening) through interviewing and engaging in conversations with anyone, anywhere about their listening styles and practices. I wanted to incorporate other peoples' ideas about listening into my own listening practice and the development of the project without filtering anything out. This became a potentially huge project with a wide scope of ideas. In order to stay close to the initial questions, listening to people talk about listening became the core of this project. The project came to exist primarily in the conversations and listening transactions between anyone engaged in participating. I did however create further listening spaces as an extension of the project.

The Listening Room is a room designed for the purpose of listening.

An archive of *the Listening Project* including written and recorded interviews and notes is available for reading/listening to in *the Listening Room*.

The 6 Traveling Books of Listenings are in circulations for short writings on listening.

The Listening Blog with ideas, updates, links to other listening projects (there are many) as well as posts about *the Traveling Book of Listenings* and their whereabouts is accessible @ www.thelisteningproject.blogspot.com



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