

Conflux 08 youTube



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Artists Meeting for Conflux 2008. Sept.11-14th

Sept. 11-14th, Artists Meeting members did a series of performance/interventions in the (POPS) plazas of Lower Manhattan. They were very successful. The initial idea was to work in the plazas as a way to take back the public spaces and engage the public. This has extra meaning after 9/11 and especially downtown which has been a sort of barricaded fortress. The (POPS) plazas in themselves are very unusual privately owned public spaces. Many of them have become privatized with places such as Starbucks claiming that the seating areas are for customers only. Most of the corporate buildings have security guards that have been instructed to stop people from photographing the buildings. This is presumably to stop terrorists from plotting to blow them up. Lee Wells Smiley Face Warning poster made for the Conflux Festival was especially spot on in it's articulation of the 9/11 paranoia. At 55 Water Street, I was told I couldn't photograph the building because it was a Federal law by a steroid pumped up security guard. One landing down below this elevated plaza a group of kids were nonchalantly smoking marijuana. The absurdity of the homeland security protection racket and pumped up Wall Street Neo-Fascism was brought home by the huge American Flag that hangs over the complete facade of the stock exchange building. On a smaller level I was amazed when Leesa & Nicole Abahuni took out their audio synthesizers and magnetically attached them to the exterior metal conversation chairs at 200 Water Street. Their home made devices looked like a made for TV movie of a terrorist device. I guess that the exterior of the NYU dormitory at 200 Water street is not a high value target in the minds of the neo-fascists. It's like the choice between protecting the Oil Ministry or the Art Museum. The most mellow intervention was at 60 Wall Street, Deutschbank building interior plaza where the security guards were dress in military style midnight blue fatigues. They asked us what we were doing and told us we couldn't video the building. Raphael Shirley then set up one of her Melted City installation works and proceeded to do a sound art feed back piece with a small amplifier. I think that the guards were entertained but I don't know about the homeless people or the group of hi-tech computer geeks having a wifi business conference. We did successfully photograph and video tape all of our locations but it's also true that they can all be seen on Google Earth. The range of reactions from the security guards and police ranged from benign to hostile. The more informed realized that we did not need a permit to do a temporary art work. The most aggressive were the corporate security guards who insisted we had no right to be there and that we were on private property. The sweetest art work was the pillows the group made and placed in all the plazas. They were very funny and did indeed make the plazas more homey and comfortable.