

Process and Projects

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Artists Meeting â€™ Process and Projects

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Artists Meeting is a group of artists who create interventions and events. Through a series of discussions both online and in regular meetings, the group determines the viability of each project as it comes up and how to proceed. The process is partially by consensus but also depends on different members taking the lead or directing the project as it develops. Some processes demand a lot of hands in a group effort and reflect different ideas, other projects are executed according to a single vision.

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Often Artists Meeting projects begin as proposals to a selected venue, such as an art fair, gallery, or festival. This allows the group to imagine different approaches and determine parameters for the work. As the proposals are accepted the project is executed. Other projects remain unexecuted but often resurface as part of another proposal or in work that is in process. In other words nothing is ever lost. Every bit of information and creative energy is retrieved when appropriate.

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The group represents a range of creative talents including sculpture and installation artists, computer programmers and hackers, traditional painters, videographers, photographers, musicians, sound and performance artists. Some work is political and some is apolitical, but the assumption is that creating art in the face of all the obstacles facing artists is a political act.

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Artists Meeting began with the desire to expand the definition of art and the creative act using digital and traditional tools in a collaborative manner. Over the course of working together, the group methodology and style is constantly evolving.

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Getting started--2007

Artists Meeting's first public project was presented in the 2007 **Art Under the Bridge** festival in Brooklyn. To present the group's collaborative projection piece, **Lee Wells** secured the loan of two 30,000 lumens projectors from a guerilla marketing firm (name) that allowed sharp focus of two simultaneous projections on the side of the Manhattan Bridge Anchorage. A collaborative video was created using work from Artist Group members and was shown with a text crawl at the base of the video displaying online discussions from the group email list serv. For the other projection, **Chris Borkowski** created a custom computer program allowing live video mixing and text messaging to be projected as one image. Adding to the projections, a sound swarm was created by a team of six members and volunteers led by **Leesa and Nicole Abahuni** using mini amplifiers which were clipped to their belts as they carried the projection soundtrack throughout the festival site.

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Other projects completed in 2007 were presented on the Artists Meeting website using rotating banner images. The group created a series of **Logos for Artists Meeting** and an **Anti-Christmas Bad Santa Campaign**.

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2008

Early in 2008 the group was invited to do a series of interventions for the **Conflux '08 Festival** which took place September 10-13 during annual 9/11 services, and as if happened the meltdown of Wall Street finance. The festival's premise was loosely based on the **Situationist** idea of drift or Dérive and also the idea of **Fluxus** type temporal art which suited the timing perfectly. The group created a series of interventions in the **POPS** (privately owned public spaces) of Lower Manhattan to help take back public spaces that were gradually reverting to private ownership in response to post-9/11 hyper-security. Each day during the Festival the group executed interventions in public spaces, notably without prior permissions or permits. During each intervention, the group shot video that was immediately posted on **YouTube**. A search on YouTube with the name Conflux 08 or Artists Meeting Conflux 08 quickly pulls up these videos. Individual artworks for Conflux '08 included--

- **Lee Wells** produced a two-color newsprint 'zine incorporating ideas from other members. It included a map of Manhattan with the locations of the plazas that would feature interventions. **James Andrews** led the group in renaming plazas with absurd notions of alternate uses such as "Dancing Shiva Plaza (tk Plaza): Appropriate for dancing, socializing and light ritualistic activities." Lee Wells also printed a smiley face poster with the unlikely caption, "Warning" as a very succinct reading of the mood in the public plazas in Lower Manhattan. He posted the smiley face along with a 9/11 memorial poster on numerous barricades in the Wall Street area.

- **James Andrews** work involved the entire group as he organized the production of over 40 vinyl pillows. The large pillows were put out at various public plazas to make the spaces more comfortable and encourage public use. The pillows were delivered to the selected plazas by a man festooned with pillows head to toe. They were quickly snatched up by passersby.

- **Maria Joao Salema's** intervention was at the site of the original Dutch New Amsterdam settlement and drew on 17th century fantasy landscapes very popular with early Dutch settlers. Scenes selected by Salema were reproduced on postcards and displayed at the archeological dig of the original Dutch settlement that features an underground display exposed via a sidewalk vitrine. The cards were also handed out to the public. This action prompted security guards in the building adjacent to the site to get very aggressive, and their reaction can be viewed in **Christina McPhee's** video.

- **Thomas Hutchison and G.H. Hovagimyan** used custom-printed barrier tape with the words UNKNOWN UNMADE UNSEEN UNDONE, to cordon off a full block across from the WTC site during the 9/11 memorial services. New York Policemen taking notice were reassured when G.H. told them the artwork was a silent memorial to 9/11 victims. Â Â Â Â

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- **Leesa and Nicole Abahuni** created a successful interactive sound art work presented in front of the former New York Cocoa Exchange building. Participation required people to be hooked up to a custom device that enabled sounds to be produced when two people touched. People waited in line to participate in this piece with its high level of personal involvement as they saw it demonstrated on others

- **Eliza Fernbach** created a billboard for commuters in New Jersey driving into Manhattan. The billboard

read, "Driving to your death?" which speaks volumes as it was displayed on the anniversary of 9/11.

- Daniel Blochwitz's** used customized barrier tape piece printed with the words NOT PUBLIC to completely surround a corporate plaza (name of plaza). It elicited a very funny and heated discussion with the building security guards captured on video by **Lee Wells**.

- G.H. Hovagimyan** used the plazas as a movie set for initial shots of a remake of the **Jean-Luc Godard's** movie *Alphaville*. This led to full-length movie project called *Plazaville*, that was shown at **Pace Digital Gallery** in April of '09 and can be viewed on web.

- Raphael Shirley's** piece closed the weekend taking place during high security meetings with bankers and government officials that resulted in the closing of **Lehman Brothers** the next week. Her work activated the **Deutschbank** building at 17 Wall Street with a light and sound installation suitably titled *Sunken City*.

- Christina McPhee's** video of confrontations with guards vividly show the effect of artwork shown in public spaces and what happens when people use public spaces without seeking official approval or permits.

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Fall 2008 into Spring of 2009

The group created a series of **youTubeparties** at **Postmasters** gallery in New York. Postmasters is known as a gallery with a sustained interest in video work and represents a number of video artists. The group curated a series of YouTube presentations using video projectors with sound to project large scale videos on the walls of the gallery. The informal presentations were billed as parties with Artist Meeting hosting a drinks bar. The first YouTube party featured a single playlist and a single projector. Subsequently the group used **you3B.com**, an internet tool created by **Jeff Crouse** and **Andrew Mahon** for **Eyebeam**, allowing YouTube triptychs.

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YouTube Parties at Postmasters reviewed by Digimag

"An interesting aspect of the event is definitely the "authorial shift" of the final works: "This show mutilates the whole idea of ownership", notes **James Andrews** in **digimag**. "You really can't figure out who on earth owns these triptychs: you have one set of people who created the triptych software, then you have three different groups of people who potentially created the three videos, you have the three different YouTube accounts that published the videos " which may or may not be the same people who created them, you then have the curators, then you have Artist Meeting and you then have Postmasters Gallery. And each of the original videos could be removed from the Net at any time..."

In a sense, this project takes to the extreme not only the concept of authoriality, and the fact that new media art often needs team work in order to be produced, but also, says Andrews, "it could simply obliterate the human factor, which I think is even more interesting. No one in particular got credit for anything in the show " it was just something that happened..."

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For **Raphael Shirley** "this kind of triptych really lends itself to non-linearity: you can't grasp a single image or a single story and follow it through from beginning to end. It's really about cross connections, cross pollination of ideas, like unconscious thinking and the way you create a dream, or the way you connect data..." See the complete discussion in **digimag**, Feb. 09 <http://www.digicult.it/digimag/article.asp?id=1392>

The versatility of this project is such that **Jaime Jackson**, an Artists Meeting member in England presented

the YouTube party at the **Static 3 Festival** in Hereford.

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Spring, 2009

Plazaville by **G.H. Hovagimyan with Christina McPhee** started as a project with Artists Meeting during the Conflux '08 festival. It then won a commission from **turbulence.org** a new media web site that supports qualified art projects. The commission was for an online presentation of the work and also an installation at **Pace Digital Gallery** in New York. The piece was shot in HD video and is a remake/redo of **Jean Luc Godard's** film **Alphaville**. Artists Meeting members worked on the production and acted in the video. G.H. secured professional acting talent for **Plazaville** with the help of **Raphael Shirley**. The finished work is shown as an installation piece in which all 31 scenes are loaded separately into a computer connected to a projector and sound system. Custom computer software then selects the scenes at random and assembles a movie that plays continually and is never in the same order. The viewer assembles the narrative of the movie as it is randomly revealed. The Godard's movie, which can be downloaded from the internet, was deconstructed into separate scenes. The original French dialog was translated to English by members of Artists Meeting. The final piece, **Plazaville**, is a deconstruction/reassemblage of the original movie.

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Raphael Shirley with several Artists Meeting members created the **SBOW (Soap Box Opera Workshop)** project. This evolved from a group discussion about the possibilities of an art world soap opera and the drama inherent in the downturn in the art world as a result of the financial crisis and recession. The group's discussion included analysis of Brazilian Soap Operas and other Latin American soap operas in which the actors play with exaggerated emotions. Raphael advanced that idea with actors speaking art theory in dramatic soap opera style. **Lee Wells** created a video for the installation that mirrored a 1970's revolutionary discourse called **The Freedom Club**. The texts Lee used were excerpts from **Guy Dubord's Society of the Spectacle** and **Ted Kaczinski's Unabomber Manifesto**.

The videos were installed at **OTO** in Brooklyn and can be viewed on the Artists Meeting website.

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Fall and winter 2009

Part of the development of Artists Meeting is an outgrowth of **Lee Wells, Raphael Shirley** and **Chris Borkowski's** project **[PAM] Perpetual Art Machine**. In particular, their curatorial expertise and working knowledge of global art fairs are invaluable to the group. Over the summer of '09 the group began to consider projects that would include the group members diverse talents for presentation at art fairs. The discussion started with a playful online exchange about the Japanese mania for vending machines. This led to the development of **Artist Meeting -- Art Machine, AM--AM**, a complex art vending machine suitable for art fairs. **G.H. Hovagimyan's** familiarity with construction techniques and enthusiasm for digital controllers, and **Olga Lyenko's** design expertise inspired the development of a series of coin-operated art dispensers that can be installed in an on-site constructed fascia. **Artist Meeting -- Art Machine** premieres December, 2009 at **Pulse Art Fair** which coincides with **Art Basel Miami Beach**. This is followed by **Art Cologne** in Germany, spring 2010. Original drawings, packaged underwear emblazoned with the Artists Meeting logos, stenciled t-shirts, artist CD's and DVD's, along with other artworks will be offered and dispensed randomly via a specially designed drop-down machine. Other modules will dispense drawings from a continuous roll of artwork that can be torn off the roll after a length had been purchased. To provide drawings for the dispensers, **Lee Wells** organized painting/silk screening teams to produce working with on 250 ft rolls of acid free paper. The group presents the vending machine operation

as an aesthetic experience to engage the art market in playful commerce.

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Artists Meeting members

Leesa Abahuni, Nicole Abahuni, James Andrews, Daniel Blochwitz, Chris Borkowski, Andrew Erdos, Bethany Fancher, Eliza Fernbach, Jon Handel, Thomas Hutchison, G.H. Hovagimyan, Jaime Jackson, Jerome Joy, Olga Lysenko, Christina McPhee, Alan Moore, Mayuko Nakatsuka, Sally Payen, Maria Joao Salema, Lara Star Martini, Raphaela Shirley, Abigail Web, Lee Wells, Edita Zulic

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