

Art Machine installation PULSE Miami

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Artist Meeting Art Machine (AM-AM)

by G.H. Hovagimyan

The Artists Meeting Art Machine is conceived as an armature or structure for the presentation of collaborative art produced by the Artists Meeting collaborative group. The concept was developed through group discussions starting with a playful interchange about Japanese vending machines. The idea of an art machine dispenser opens up a discussion of the role of art in the marketplace with focus on the transaction between the collector/purchaser and the artist/vendor. Components for the Art Machine include drawings, objects, installation, DIY computer hacks, photography, sound art, and social transaction performance. These elements each are created to work within the context of familiar, but altered retail sales environments.

The Art Machine functions by using a token that triggers a computerized mechanism that dispenses artwork. When a token is purchased and put into the Art Machine, an object or drawing selected without human intervention, is dispensed. At this point there is an opportunity for discussion about the Art Machine, the creative process, the idea of authorship, the relationship of the art expert and the collector, and the idea of purchasing art as a life-style verification. A deeper discussion of this concept can be traced back to Benjamin's essay, *Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*.



Objects and paintings dispensed by the Art Machine are widely variable within a few simple parameters. Objects that fit into a 7x9 inch vinyl envelope are chosen and packaged by individual artists. Drawings produced by members fit onto 12 inch wide, 0 ph paper, and are dispensed in varying lengths. Photography, sound art and the design for the Art Machine exterior are produced by artist members. Performance art involves members in addition to participating art buyers.

The object dispensers were created by a team of computer experts using spare parts from the hardware store. Objects are dispensed as they drop down to a shelf for retrieval by the buyer. Drawings roll out through a hacked paper towel dispenser. The dispensing modules are controlled by a single computerized device.

In addition to the dispensing modules, the Art Machine includes a flat screen module programmed to show samples of the drawings and objects, pictures of the artists, and daily updates including live Art Machine transactions. Sound art with custom-designed elements offers effects that create a greater sense of environment. Each element presents the potential to become an art form in and of itself.



If.

All key Art Machine elements can be packed and shipped for installation any place in the world. Material for the Art Machine exterior is purchased locally and can be adapted to fit various spaces. Minimum space needed for the machine is approximately 10 linear feet, with 4 feet backstage, and additional space in front of the machine for artist interaction and the sale of tokens. The Art Machine can be built against a wall, or as a free-standing kiosk.

The Art Machine has inspired questions such as what happens when all of the original 300 linear feet of drawings and 250 objects are dispensed? Is the piece finished or does Artists Meeting restock the machine? Is the machine the artwork or are the objects dispensed the artwork?

The Art Machine was originally shown at Pulse 2009 in Miami. Other venues that add the element of participatory art would also be suitable for the Art Machine and fit within the mandate for new media festivals where public funding and participation demands a public component.

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-- Sally Payen {/xtypo_quote}

As a member in another country one of the intriguing aspects of the **Art Machine** and creative processes both leading into the actual event at Pulse and working mechanisms at the event is how all the individual components arrived together to form a cohesive whole, (this collection of individual narratives behind). I liked that for instance my arrival into the piece in terms of objects was via post that my narrative began over here and had its journey in a brown paper envelope to arrival and start another journey into a plastic

sleeve envelope and then queue anonymously when placed into the machine. I like this idea of queued up artwork, the British can be very polite at queuing particularly for buses, I suspect this queuing of artwork has lots of symbolic meanings and new possibilities. Especially when the machine gets crated up for new journeys in the future.

Another part of the creative methodology I enjoy is that one way we communicate is via computer, we can all dialogue from our individual machines and then this artist machine seems like a temporary and central DIY computer that has us all in; and yet although the machine has layers of richness and activities it seems from over here anyway rather orderly. I really like the openness of the machine and can't wait to see it in action myself.

Sally Payen

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-- Jaime Jackson{/xtypo_quote}

It was a bit frustrating being so far away and not being able to help run the AMAM at Pulse. But of course being an international artist collective means we can make up for that when it arrives in Europe. I enjoyed the Anonymous making of art for the machine together as a group and the chance distribution of work, as well as AM members communicating though the internet and the critical context of the project.

Jaime Jackson

{xtypo_quote}But while the instrument was commercial the experience was rich in the best "ah has" of contemporary Conceptual Art moments...The very action of putting a token into the machine made the user/audience/public a part of the process as WELL as a buyer of an artwork.

-- Eliza Fernbach{/xtypo_quote}

The **Art Machine** defied the PULSE Art Fair's fundamental purpose. It turned the commercial Art Fair process on its head. Art created by Artists Meeting members who are delicately linked in cyber space by aesthetic musing and creative contemplation was available in the most noncommercial way possible via a method that has defined our automatic age; the vending machine!

But while the instrument was commercial the experience was rich in the best "ah has" of contemporary Conceptual Art moments...The very action of putting a token into the machine made the user/audience/public a part of the process as WELL as a buyer of an artwork. The success of the machine speaks to the organized anarchy of the group.

The core members of the Artists Meeting have created an incredible machine of creativity and reflection. Artists collide and collaborate in the group with far-reaching results for everyone- it seems. And the advantages of mixing with fellow seekers never seems to stop! I was so happy to be able to help, albeit for a short time at the fair, and I had the pleasure of spending time with Leesa Abahuni... a rare treat since our schedules don't often collide...this is one of the things that I think was in evidence in the great spirit of the vending machine event at PULSE...Artists Meeting is about so much more than selling...In fact when a collector asked to buy the whole vending machine and its elements GH's apparent chagrin at the idea of the process being stopped by a purchase spoke volumes about the REAL intent of our work...and the integrity of the group. While core members definitely do the lion's share of the nitty gritty- they welcome other members to participate as much as they can or as little as they can... It is amazing how associated members can reach in and help and be a part of the imagining and actualization of the various projects that Artists Meeting does while maintaining the kind of frenzied existence that surviving as an artist often

demands. While ephemera may be available for a modest \$20 token from the **Artists Meeting Art Machine**, the real art of Artists Meeting can never be bought!

Here's to more Artists Meeting.

-Eliza Fernbach
December 2009

[Artists Meeting Art Machine, Pulse Miami '09](#)