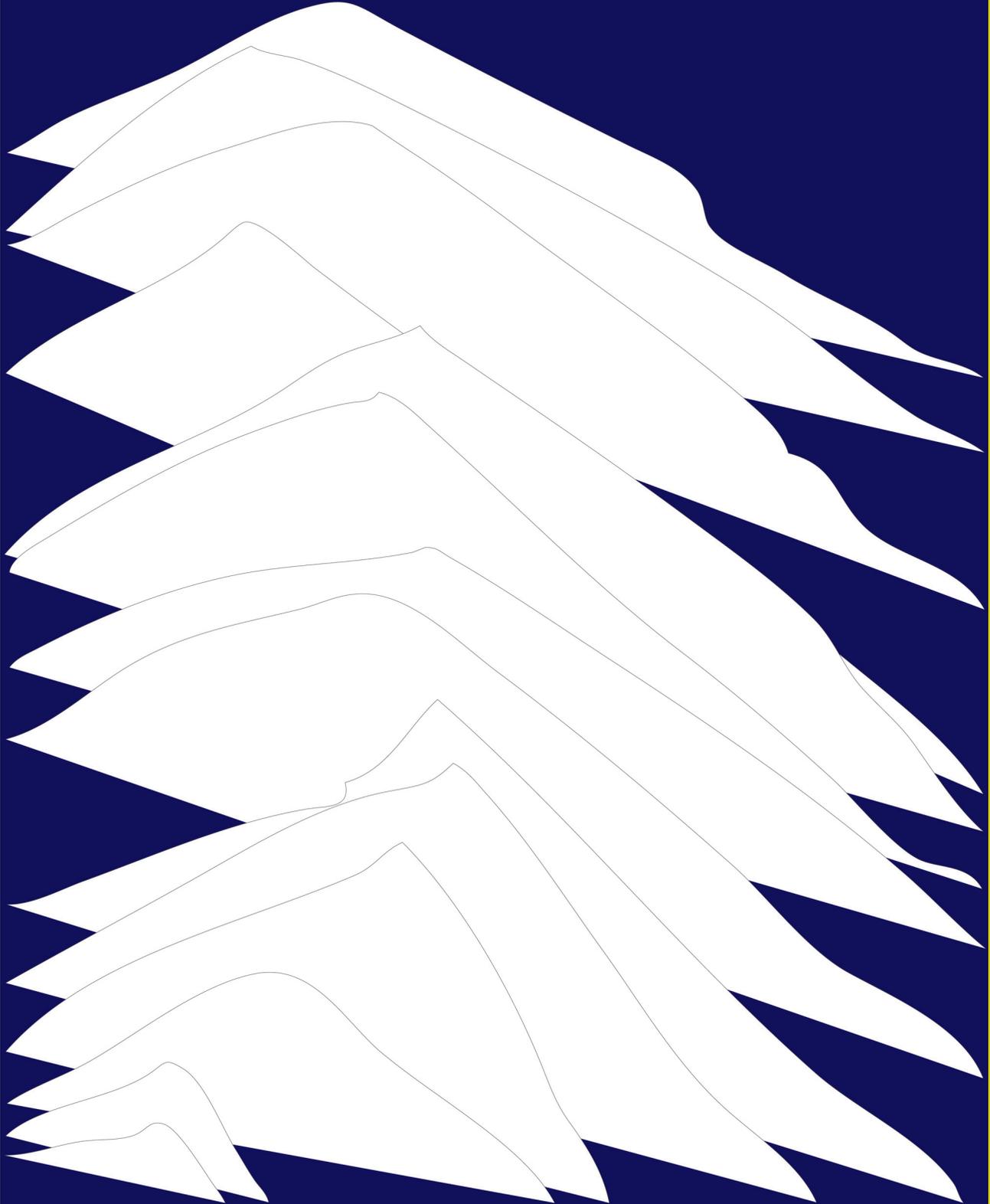


i/o/i/p

information/objects/images/people: aesthetic projects and social spaces: October 2008: Outpost for Contemporary Art



A Compilation of Recent Endeavors Relating to the Arts

This is a proposal for staging a private testimonial discussion pertaining to several art-influenced activities and practices, which run parallel to mainstream visual culture. Target date is Fall 2008.

The collection of information to be gathered is intended to record one small shift in aesthetic production in Los Angeles, which connects to a larger history of activities and projects. These activities and projects expand a performative history of art from happenings and shamanism, body and theatricality to salons and think tanks, workshops and manufacturing.

There are three specific tracks: public art, the aesthetic project, and social practice. Public art is an institutional based proposition closely connected to either a governing public authority or private institution. Art works created as public art can be temporary or permanent. They are usually aesthetic in nature and most typically created as a specific response to a specific municipal or private space. Aesthetic projects are activities developed from the ground up with limited or isolated funding. These projects are projects, because they are usually time sensitive in terms of duration, and are concept generated. The end results of aesthetic projects are diverse in nature and sensibility: artifacts such as objects of art, design ephemera, and exhibitions are produced. Social practice seeks to create a social space based on the adaptable ideological goalposts of education and participation (entertainment). The outcome, in most instances, is process driven. There is some record of achievement, but it remains secondary to the community outreach. All three tracks are content-meaning specific and not didactically educational. This discussion will focus on the latter two areas: aesthetic projects and social practices.

Please note: there are variances and crossovers amongst the practitioners from these types of projects and those artists who produce work for traditional institutional spaces sharing common historical, educational, and ideological interests and strategies.

Purpose: There is currently no overview history of projects and activities. Projects and activities, which operate as real world scenarios, present different types of qualifications for their consideration than studio work, and make the process of categorization an untidy business. Most often activities like these occur, then disappear, so now is good a time to start a record.

The proposed meeting is intended to clarify some of specific concerns, which influence, excite, or complicate the aesthetic process for a number of artists/people working in Los Angeles now.

Basic Questions:

Where did your project come from?

Where do you want your work to go?

How should your work be considered by others?

Where do you see the aesthetic component in your work?

Present: Host [1], Moderator [1], Participants [5], and Witnesses [3]

Mitchell Kane
July 6, 2008

September 6, 2008

ANNOUNCEMENT — A Conversation Project on Recent Aesthetic Projects and Social Spaces Relating to the Visual Arts in Los Angeles

Outpost for Contemporary Art and i/o/i/p are excited to announce a semi-private testimonial discussion pertaining to art-influenced activities and practices that are running parallel to mainstream visual culture in Los Angeles. This meeting will take place on October 6th, 2008 at Outpost for Contemporary Art at 6375 North Figueroa Street, Los Angeles, CA 90042.

The goal of this meeting is to begin collecting information concerning aesthetic projects and social spaces in Los Angeles that have a relationship to other on-going forms of art production such as happenings and shamanism, body and theatricality, salons and think tanks, workshops and social manufacturing.

Currently, because there is no historical overview of projects and activities of this kind, the purpose of the meeting is to get questions answered. Most of the time, these activities occur quickly, then disappear, so this meeting intends to start a record. The conversation will ask a handful of practitioners some basic questions about their work to learn more about their intentions and historical antecedents, and create a resource for future artists interested in this type of work.

The participants will be Mark Allen, *Machine Projects*; Fritz Haeg, *Sundown Salon* and *Edible Estates*; Matias Viegner, David Burns, Austin Young, *Fallen Fruit*. The conversation will be moderated by Mitchell Kane, former curator/director of Hirsch Farm Project, an arts-based think tank, 1990 – 1999 and current director of Fine Art at Art Center College of Design in Pasadena. Because of the intimate scale of this meeting, we have limited space available. Information produced from the conversation will be made available to the public through the Internet or transcription.

If you're interested in attending or receiving more information, please contact Julie Deamer, Director, Outpost for Contemporary Art, at (323) 982-9461 or (323) 899-3533 or email at julie@outpost-art.org.

FACT SHEETS

1. How did you first arrive at your current work; was there a ta-da or eureka moment?

In 1995, I turned an apartment I was renovating into a project space called Revolution Summer, I did three shows there.

I did this in response to two artist projects in Houston at the time, Art of his Century run by Jeff Elrod and Mark Flood, and Arena Productions run by Sean Thornton and Chris Ballou, both of which is inspirational to me as examples of quirky alternative art projects outside the mainstream market system. Seeing their projects, I realized that anyone could create an art space.

The first show I did at Revolution Summer was called "Equal Pay" the idea was that the art was for sale for the amount of time it took to make - so that one could purchase a drawing that took 5 minutes by working for the artist for 5 minutes, etc. this was kind of a ta-da moment for me, in that it was the first curatorial project that I did and first project using social relationships. Previously, I had been producing elaborate parties and this felt like a spinoff of that impulse as well.

2. What was your work like three years prior to starting down this path?

Painting, drawing, installation, video. After Revolution Summer, I went to Cal Arts, did studio projects for a year, returned to Houston for the summer and opened another space called LAX (1996) showing Los Angeles artists. After that I went back to Cal Arts for the second year, did more studio work. Graduated Cal Arts, starting working as a computer programmer, joined a new media art collective called C-Level, started by Eddo Stern, did that for 3 or 4 years, then started Machine Project in 2003. When I opened Machine my goal was to create an art space that could support and present all the different things i was interested in, everything from sculpture to performance to science to technology to poetry to experimental music. I wanted to combine lots of different kinds of events and disciplines to allow conversations to happen that might not normally happen across different fields of intellectual and cultural life. It was very important to create someplace that was friendly and casual so that people would feel comfortable hanging out, meeting new people, participating in those different conversations, to think about new ideas and reconsider old ideas.

3. Who, if anyone, has influenced the direction of your work; historically, and/or personally?

Arena Productions and Art of this Century initially, an art project from Denton, TX called Good/Bad Art Collective. In Los Angeles, Three Day Weekend, MJT, CLUI.

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OUTPOST

Mark Allen

(Machine Project, Los Angeles)

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Other information about projects mentioned above can be found at the following websites.:

Revolution Summer at
http://www.markallen.com/spaces/revolution_summer/

Art of this Century at
<http://www.markallen.com/spaces/aotc/index.php>

LAX
<http://www.markallen.com/spaces/lax/index.php>

4. What do you believe is the most innovative aspect(s) of your work?

I think the big idea about Machine is that we're an educational institution that uses art as the critical framework for what we do. The ways that we differ from other spaces are: 1) multiple levels of pedagogical strategy; 2) education in the community, as part of daily life. social life supporting intellectual life, intellectual life supporting social life; 3) framing activities through art, viewing art as primarily a flexible and permissive sphere for knowledge work capable of applying multiple + disparate critical modalities.

5. What do you believe your work contributes to the current moment? Pardon the vagueness of this question, but your intentions are important.

We're friendly and inquisitive, our values are warm rather than cool, we present a very wide ranging field of inquiry. Emphasis on experience, information, sharing and learning. Because what happens at machine is so diverse (music, poetry, technology, art, fractionating stills in the floor, etc) Machine promotes a certain porosity between different communities of interest. The energy that comes from curiosity and intellectual openness is what motivates and excites me and is what I attempt to encourage and nurture in our audience.

6. Name two challenging aspects of your work?

Finding funding and our space is too small for our audience.

7. Where do you locate the "aesthetic dimension" in your work?

Everywhere - what we do at machine, how we do it, how our events and gallery looks, how we communicate about it in email and speech, these all have an aesthetics and sensibility which attempt to articulate a philosophy of being in the world and relating to fellow humans

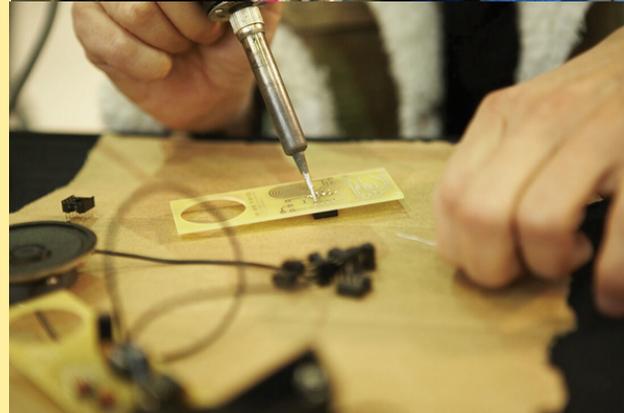
8. Do you see your work in conversation with the visual arts, adjacent to the visual arts, or no relation to visual art?

Adjacent and occasionally directly engaging. I view art as a space that allows us to look at, experience, investigate and perform other disciplines in a critical, investigative manner. So art is how you look at things, rather than the things themselves, or the means in which the things are produced.

Mark Allen

(Machine Project, Los Angeles)

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Other information about projects mentioned above can be found at the following websites.:

Revolution Summer at
http://www.markallen.com/spaces/revolution_summer/

Art of this Century at
<http://www.markallen.com/spaces/aotc/index.php>

LAX
<http://www.markallen.com/spaces/lax/index.php>

1. How did you first arrive at your current work; was there a ta-da or eureka moment?

About four and a half years ago, the Journal of Aesthetics & Protest sent out a call for artist's projects that address pressing social, political or urban issues. The first iteration of Fallen Fruit was a sort of psychogeographic manifesto about neglected neighborhood fruit and the ways in which it might be used to reimagine the city. At first we thought of it as a one-time project, but then new layers and new directions kept appearing to us. What our work has developed into is a set of examinations of urban space, ideas of neighborhood and new forms of located citizenship and community. From protests to proposals for new urban green spaces, Fallen Fruit's goal is to reconceptualize the relation between those who have resources and those who do not, to examine nature in & the nature of the city, and to investigate new, shared forms of land use and property. We seek to generate new rituals, events and formats to express these ideas in kinetic and nomadic ways with all of these avenues passing through the lens of fruit in some form. If there was a eureka realization it was when we saw that the simple metaphor of fruit energized the project, offering us a medium that is cross-cultural, "democratic," classless, transhistorical and ordinary. So probably the ta-da was when we coined the term "Public Fruit."

2. What was your work like three years prior to starting down this path?

Before Fallen Fruit, the three of us had collaborated in different pairings on a variety of projects, especially videos. These were all one-of collaborations however. For David Burns and myself, a lot crystalized around our collaboration for Fritz Haeg's Gardenlab show – in particular our interest in the sociocultural interface of humans and the natural world, the use of a sort of playful, paraphysical strategy and a tendency to layer more than one meaning in the work.

3. Who, if anyone, has influenced the direction of your work; historically, and/or personally?

We've been influenced by a variety of art & political movements, from Act Up, to General Idea, Group Material and Ant Farm to the Situationists. But overall we've made it up as we went along, and we feel very lucky to be part of a sort of flowering of alternative artmaking – so we take a lot of inspiration from our peers. Los Angeles has come to feel like the epicenter of an emerging, innovative art scene, in which a lot of the work has either (experimental) documentary, collaborative or new performative aspects. We feel very enthusiastic about the LA art scene and are a little mystified why the rest of the world has been so slow in catching on.

4. What do you believe is the most innovative aspect(s) of your work?

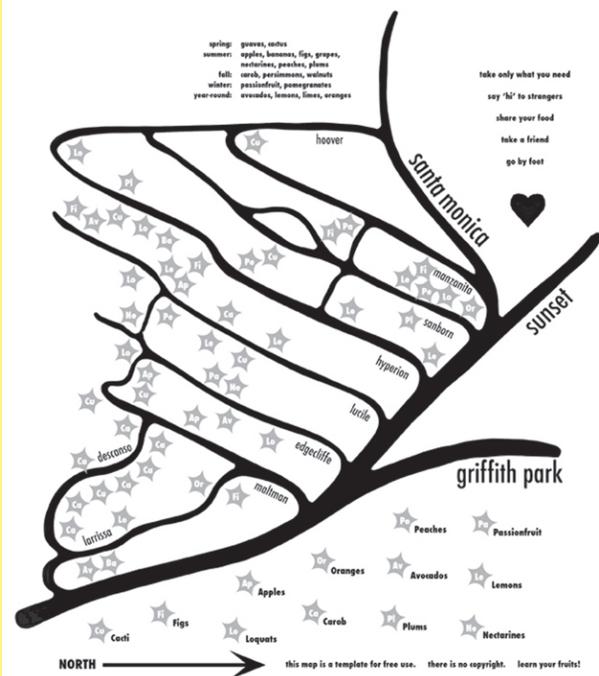
The linkage between new ideas and new rituals gives us the capacity to be nomadic and playful, and never be fixed in one place. An example of this might be our "Neighborhood Infusions" project, in which we take the fruit of one neighborhood or even one block and infuse it in vodka. By proposing that we can capture something as elusive as the "spirit" of a place in a bottle, we can open up ideas of neighborhood, consumption and the local. But it's also a collaboration with a corporation (360 Vodka at the moment) in the same way as our Public Fruit Jams are collaborations with the public. Not only is there no art object, but also no distinction between artist and audience. We all make the jam, and while we value the results, what we hope we've done is laid out a new social ritual that creates relationships more than it imposes an art object or aesthetic system on an audience.

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OUTPOST

Matias Viegner
David Burns
Austin Young
(Fallen Fruit, Los Angeles)

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FALLEN FRUIT OF SILVER LAKE
more information at <http://www.fallenfruit.org>

5. What do you believe your work contributes to the current moment?
Pardon the vagueness of this question, but your intentions are important.

We're addressing people's relationship to the natural world, the city and to each other by proposing new forms of irreverent research. We tend to eschew making precious finished objects in favor of creating new social spaces, new forms of collaboration and new rituals to address as what we see as a set of urgently pressing questions: public space, democracy and community, the environment, and a new urbanism.

6. Name two challenging aspects of your work?

Collaboration is never easy, but we grow in our capacities with each new project. But probably the most difficult thing for us is that as we become more well-known, people often ask us to repeat old projects (or adapt them for new places) rather than asking us for new work, which in some sense we're more interested in. A lot of our new projects thus get developed outside the museum or gallery context, and we just plug them in where we can. Like so many artists we know, despite our successes we still have a negative cash flow in making the work. It's not as bad as before, but grants and commissions are still not keeping us afloat, so we're rethinking our strategies for getting Fallen Fruit to support itself.

7. Where do you locate the "aesthetic dimension" in your work?

Good question. We're actually all aesthetes. One reason we always return to fruit in our work is its aesthetic dimension: color, form and texture. That said, it's also a remarkable frame, as fruit is already a human/natural hybrid, a collaboration of generations of farmers and tree species. This makes fruit both a natural and a cultural object. Fruit appeals to us for its symbolic values: bounty, generosity and goodness. Not surprisingly it's the food that appears most often in the history of art. This gives us a chance to work between its ubiquity and also its seeming invisibility.

8. Do you see your work in conversation with the visual arts, adjacent to the visual arts, or no relation to visual art?

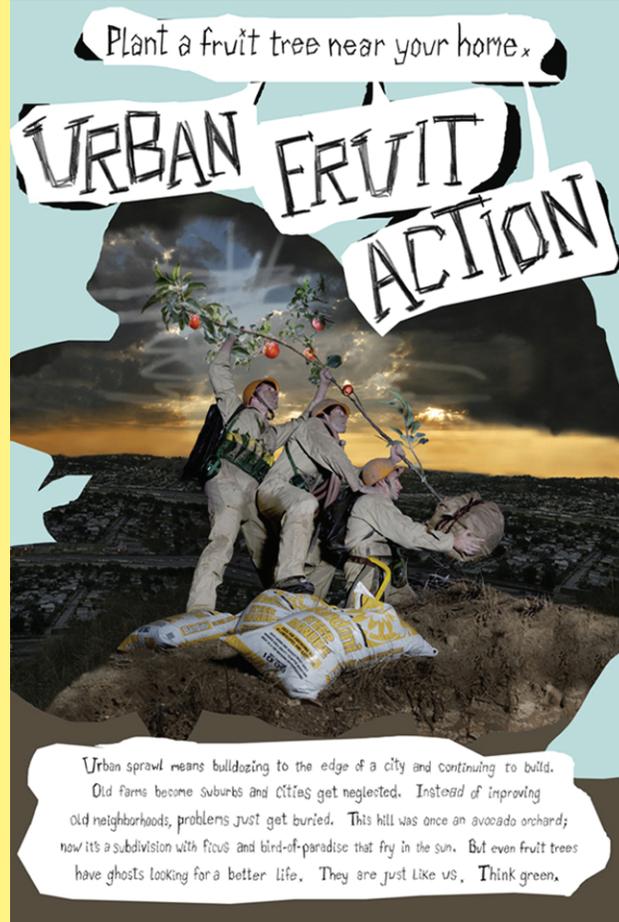
We're certainly outside the mainstream of the art world, which seems fairly self-referential and notably disinterested in one of our prime interests, the ordinary, but in public art there are some very interesting new conversations, and many of them are really happening in LA itself. We're lucky to find ourselves in the context of so much innovative art making here. In thinking about the characteristics of this moment in LA, some of the aspects we observe is how much of the work is process-based, collaborative, non-objective, often rethinking public space, the environment, science, botany, common wisdom, and deploying the role of craft in modern life. A few of the many participants in the scene are Mark Allen and Machine Project, Fritz Haeg, the LA Urban Rangers, Farmlab, Outpost for Contemporary Art, Linda Pollack's Habeas Index, Ari Kletzky's Islands of LA, The Institute for Figuring, Jeff Cain's Shed Research Project, The Bicycle Kitchen, and The Journal of Aesthetics & Protest.

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OUTPOST

Matias Viegner
David Burns
Austin Young
(Fallen Fruit, Los Angeles)

9/13/08, page 2



1. How did you first arrive at your current work; was there a ta-da or eureka moment?

There was no real eureka, moment. It was (and is still) very much a slow evolution. I suppose with each individual project (Edible Estates, Sundown Salon, etc.) there was a moment of inspiration, but each usually grows naturally from something I am already doing.

2. What was your work like three years prior to starting down this path?

I was living in New York, spending my time split between rather conventional pursuits of painting and architecture.

3. Who, if anyone, has influenced the direction of your work; historically, and/or personally?

Gordon Matta Clark, Buckminster Fuller, Ant Farm, Andrea Zittel, Nils Norman, Meg Webster, Anna Halprin, Andy Warhol, John Cage, Merce Cunningham, Agnes Denes...

4. What do you believe is the most innovative aspect(s) of your work?

The combination of many simultaneous, disparate projects and pursuits. Working out in the world, responding to the unique conditions in those various locations, and collaborating with many different sorts of people. Engaging both broad mainstream audiences, and the small local communities I am a part of in Los Angeles.

**5. What do you believe your work contributes to the current moment?
Pardon the vagueness of this question, but your intentions are important.**

Revealing some truths about what it means to be alive today, through projects that focus on the realities of the world we are living in. In particular our relationships to each other and the environment around us. Perhaps offering alternative models for engagement as an artist.

6. Name two challenging aspects of your work?

Keeping track of everything.

7. Where do you locate the "aesthetic dimension" in your work?

Aesthetics play a role in every part of the work, though in a less precious or controlling way than is expected of most art. This includes the website, the garden designs, the gallery installations, all of the associated graphics, the videos, etc.

8. Do you see your work in conversation with the visual arts, adjacent to the visual arts, or no relation to visual art?

Most of the work is commissioned by art museums and institutions, the art community is the primary supporter of the work. Visual art is just one of the disciplines that the work is a part of.

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OUTPOST

Fritz Haeg

(Edible Estates, Sundown Salon)

8/24/08



photos:

#1: "Edible Estates Regional Prototype Garden #4, London, England, 2007" / commissioned by Tate Modern / amilies harvesting & relaxing in the garden {photo by Heiko Prigge}

#2: "Animal Estates Regional Model Homes 1.0", New York, NY 2008, Whitney Biennial / view of beaver pond and purple martin homes {photo by Fritz Haeg}

#3: "Dancing 9 to 5" January 17th, 2007, The Whitney Museum of American Art Altria {photo by A.L. Steiner}

SPECULATIVE INFORMATION

A grossly generalized outline surrounding the topics of social practice, public space, public art, interventionist strategy, performance, real politik, the discourse of outside/inside, happenings, aesthetic urbanism, cultural action, museum education, by decade.

60'S IDEAS AS EXPRESSION

70'S LANGUAGE AND FRAMEWORK

80'S IDEOLOGY/POLITICS

90'S INSTITUTION CRITIQUE/INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

00'S PEDAGOGY/ENTERTAINMENT

INTRODUCTION/SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

1. Interested in how you arrived at your projects.
2. What does social mean to you?
3. Your definition of aesthetics (beauty versus sensibility) and how do you apply it in your work.
4. What do you see as the difference between collaboration and collectivity?

SIMILAR TRAITS

1. Natural, biological + gardening, science + public interest
2. Physical presentations or installations working closely to the art world.

HISTORY/ANTECEDENTS

1. Earlier social spaces and projects based in language
2. Definition of public space
3. Institutional critique
4. Identity

CONCLUSION

1. Farmer's Market sensibility - product of culture
2. Social texturing (rubbing up against other humans)
3. Vision: Director-centric, with input from others, but no specific methodology, beside self-defined interest.
4. Content-aesthetic, best seen as the physical presentation of information. In these cases, the information is a mixture of recycled, low tech, art experiments.)
5. Desire not to make a distinction between science and art, social interaction or street theater.
6. Use-value in the form of functionality strongly implied.

BASE DESCRIPTION

Machine Project: Quirky, scientific directive.
Fallen Fruit: Metaphor/history of fruit
Fritz Haeg: Utopian/Practical

